

BASIC HOMILETICS

Teacher's Manual

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OBJECTIVES

At the end of this course, the participants should:

- understand what preaching is and why we need to develop our communication skills as Victory group leaders
- be equipped with tools to preach God's Word effectively
- be inspired to grow as preachers of God's Word

OVERVIEW

Session 1: The Need for Effective Preaching

Session 2: Developing Good Communication Skills

Session 3: The Power of Illustrations

Session 4: Knowing Your Audience

Session 5: Delivering the Message

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SESSION 1 – THE NEED FOR EFFECTIVE PREACHING

INTRODUCTION

This course will assist you with all forms of communication. The principles taught in the following six sessions are applicable in the classroom, the business world, and anywhere else where public communication takes place. But the main emphasis of this course is to train you in the effective communication of the gospel—whether it is from a podium, in a small group, or even in a one-on-one Bible study. Our goal is that this material will inspire you to a lifetime commitment to become better communicators of the gospel message.

Great communicators have often changed the course of history with their public speaking.

Two great communicators of the twentieth century exemplify the power of words to change nations. Adolf Hitler was an accomplished and charismatic speaker. In the early days of his career as a politician, his emotive speeches became popular events attended by thousands. Hitler's speeches exemplify the power of words to persuade people to do great evil.

The speeches of Winston Churchill inspired the nation of England to keep standing against the onslaught of Hitler's forces and eventually win the Second World War. He declared, "We shall go on to the end. We shall fight in France, we shall fight on the seas and oceans, we shall fight with growing confidence and growing strength in the air, we shall defend our island, whatever the cost may be. We shall fight on the beaches, we shall fight on the landing grounds, we shall fight in the fields and in the streets, we shall fight in the hills; we shall never surrender."

¹The heavens declare the glory of God, and the sky above proclaims his handiwork.

²Day to day pours out speech, and night to night reveals knowledge.

PSALM 19:1,2

Why We Develop Our Communication Skills

1. God is a communicator⁽¹⁾ (Psalm 19:1,2).

EXPLANATION

Every day and every night, God is communicating; He is always speaking. The problem is we are not always listening. The transmitter is working fine; the receiver is sometimes on the blink.

Sitting in a room with a multi-frequency radio, a person can hear voices from all over the world: news broadcasts, sporting events, music, etc. The radio does not bring those

voices into the room, it merely tunes into the right frequency and the voices are heard. It is the same in receiving God's communication. His voice is always speaking because He is a communicator; we must tune in to His frequency to hear Him.

Because God is a communicator and our life's goal is to be like Him, we must continually improve our communication ability.

2. God has commissioned⁽²⁾ us to communicate (Mark 16:15; Isaiah 61:1).

And he said to them, "Go into all the world and proclaim the gospel to the whole creation." (Mark 16:15)

Or, "Go into all the world and communicate the gospel." God has commissioned us to communicate His message as we go into the world. Therefore, it is incumbent upon us to learn the principles of effective communication so that we can fulfill that commission. Someday we will give an account before Him concerning our response to His commission. This should motivate us to become the very best communicators we can possibly be.

The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord has anointed me to bring good news . . . (Isaiah 61:1)

3. There are many barriers⁽³⁾ to communication.

Communication is a prodigious challenge. There is so much that can go wrong and there are so many possibilities for misunderstanding. Anyone who is married knows how true this is. Although a husband and wife may have lived together for many years and know each other well, it still happens on occasion that one partner completely misunderstands what the other meant. And if that happens with people who are so familiar with one another, how much more likely is it that it will happen with people you do not know as well!

- Education

John Wesley, the founder of Methodism, was a highly educated and intelligent man. He wrote 233 books and 5,000 tracts, including histories of Rome and England, biblical commentaries, a medical handbook (that went through thirty-two editions), and an ecclesiastical history of Great Britain. He also edited works by John Bunyan, Richard Baxter, Jonathan Edwards, and William Law; compiled an English dictionary, published

twenty-three collections of hymns, and recorded his activities, travels, and spiritual life in his journal. But before he preached publicly, he would often deliver his sermon to an illiterate servant girl to make sure it was comprehensible to the least educated person in his audience.

- Language

Sometimes people speak words, concepts, ideas, and idioms that could be misunderstood. Hence, we have to clarify the meaning of the words we speak so that we may be understood clearly by our listeners.

Colossians 4:3-4 (NIV)

And pray for us, too, that God may open a door for our message, so that we may proclaim the mystery of Christ, for which I am in chains. Pray that I may proclaim it clearly, as I should.

"The great enemy of clear language is insincerity. When there is a gap between one's real and one's declared aims, one turns, as it were, instinctively to long words and exhausted idioms, like a cuttlefish (or squid) squirting out ink."

— George Orwell, *Politics and the English Language*

- Culture

EXAMPLE: A preacher was once asked to preach in a church in Norway. After reviewing several possible messages, he decided to preach on the topic of destiny. The simple theme of the message was, "God has a particular and unique destiny for each individual, but it must be apprehended by faith and diligence". He had preached this message many times and had always received a good response. But that day was different. The harder he preached, the less response he seemed to get. Later, he asked one of the pastors if there was a problem with his message. He informed him that in his nation no one ever spoke about individual destiny. Whenever destiny was discussed it was always in the context of corporate destiny; it was never about what I was called to do, but always about what we were called to do! Now corporate destiny is a biblical concept. But so is individual destiny. If the preacher had been aware of that nuance of cultural difference, he could have adjusted his message accordingly. But because he did not, communication did not happen that day!

- Ideas

Before He departed, Jesus said to His disciples, "*Go into all the world and proclaim the gospel to the whole creation.*" (Mark 16:15) That is what He said, but what His disciples

heard Him say was, “Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all the Jews.” There was a communication barrier hindering the disciples from hearing what Jesus was saying. The disciples’ communication barrier was the idea that Gentiles could not be saved unless they became Jews first. So the disciples did not go as they were commanded. And when they finally did go, spurred by persecution, they spoke only to Jews. It took two visions and an angelic visitation to convince Peter to preach to the Roman centurion. And when Peter did preach to the Gentiles gathered in his home and the Holy Spirit fell upon them then the believers from among the circumcised who had come with Peter were amazed, because the gift of the Holy Spirit was poured out even on the Gentiles (Acts 10:45). They were astonished because they were seeing their prejudices shattered before their very eyes!

Communicating the Word

1. Preaching is the communication of divine truth⁽⁴⁾ through human personality.

This definition is from Phillips Brooks’ 1879 Yale Lectures on Preaching. The key word in the definition is “through”. Preaching is presenting divine truth that has been lived and experienced. It is divine truth that courses not just through your head, but also through your heart and through your life.

The element of divine truth gives objectivity to your preaching. Your message is grounded in something that is true for all people and all times. You are an ambassador, representing the will and desire of God. And as an ambassador, you have authority because you are not delivering your opinion but the Word of God.

The element of human personality gives subjectivity to your preaching. Your message is grounded on your own personal experience. You are a witness, testifying to what you have seen and heard. And as a witness, you have credibility because you are not delivering merely what others have told you but what you have personally seen and experienced.

2. There are at least three implications of this definition.

- The person⁽⁹⁾ is the message.

Martin Luther once said, “Prayer, meditation, and temptation make the preacher.”

The ancient Greeks, with their highly developed rhetorical art form, had three requirements for effective communication. Requirement number one was “logos” or truth. “Logos” refers to the content of your message; are you presenting your opinion or the truth? Requirement number two was “pathos” or passion. “Pathos” refers to the

delivery of your message; are you mouthing the words or do they come fervently from the heart? Requirement number three was “ethos” or character. “Ethos” refers to the person delivering the message; are you actually living what you are preaching?

EXAMPLE: I have a message that I first preached in April 1984. I have preached it approximately seventy times since then with very little variation. And though the message rarely changes, it seems to get better. Why? Because I’ve gotten better—that is, I have been changed more into His image. And the result is a better sermon because the man is the message. —Paul Barker

- There are two kinds of message preparation: specific and general.

Specific preparation is the actual message. This refers to the study and preparation required to give a particular message to a specific group at a given time. Preparation time will vary from person to person based on the situation, but generally the more time you invest in this stage, the better the final product will be.

General preparation is the person giving the message.

Leonard Ravenhill once said, “The preacher should spend one day preparing his sermon and one day preparing himself.”

A well-known and aged preacher came to speak in a certain town. There was a young preacher in that same town that came to hear him because he had admired him for a long time. After the close of his message the young preacher said to him, “That was the greatest sermon I’ve ever heard, so well-crafted and powerfully delivered. I must know how long it took you to prepare that sermon?” The man replied, “Forty years. I’ve been working on that sermon all my life.”

- To become a better speaker, you must become a better person (1 Timothy 4:15,16).

1 Timothy 4:15,16

¹⁵Practice these things, immerse yourself in them, so that all may see your progress.

¹⁶Keep a close watch on yourself and on the teaching. Persist in this, for by so doing you will save both yourself and your hearers.

A.W. Tozer once said, “The scribe tells you what he has read, the prophet tells you what he has seen.”

A visiting minister, preaching at a church he had never been to before, chose the eighth commandment as his theme: You shall not steal. During the sermon he referred to all

the little ways we violate that commandment. The next day he went sightseeing. He boarded a city bus, gave the driver his money and received his change. As he went to his seat, he realized the driver had given him too much change. His first thought was to put it in his pocket and thank the Lord for a blessing. But then he remembered his sermon the day before. As he was disembarking he said to the driver, "You gave me too much change when I got on." The bus driver said, "I know. I did it on purpose. I was in church yesterday and I heard you speak. I wanted to know if you actually lived it. I'm glad you passed the test."

Isaiah 41:15

Behold, I make of you a threshing sledge, new, sharp, and having teeth; you shall thresh the mountains and crush them, and you shall make the hills like chaff . . .

Ecclesiastes 10:10

If the iron is blunt, and one does not sharpen the edge, he must use more strength, but wisdom helps one to succeed.

My first job was washing dishes at a country club in St. Louis. One day I was conversing with a cook about the very sharp knives they used in the kitchen. He said something to me that I've never forgotten; "It's always the dull knife that cuts you." I was puzzled and I asked him to explain. He said, "The sharp knife cuts with very little effort. But the dull knife requires more effort and therefore you have less control. And when you finally cut through on the other side, the force of the blade usually slices something you did not want it to slice."

When we are sharp in the Spirit we can usually cut through most situations with very little effort. But when we are dull in the Spirit we must exert more effort and often we end up cutting something we did not mean to cut. That is why if you want to become a better speaker you must become a better person.

ACTIVITY

1. Knowing that God is a communicator who wants to use us as His mouthpiece, how will you change the way you think of yourself as a communicator?
2. Which barrier to communication do you often encounter? How have you managed to overcome that barrier?
3. How did the three implications of the definition of preaching challenge you as a preacher of God's Word? What practical steps do you plan to take in light of this?

SESSION 2 – DEVELOPING GOOD COMMUNICATION SKILLS

If the iron is blunt, and one does not sharpen the edge, he must use more strength, but wisdom helps one to succeed.

ECCLESIASTES 10:10

Ecclesiastes 10:10 (NLT)

Using a dull ax requires great strength, so sharpen the blade. That's the value of wisdom; it helps you succeed.

Effective communication can be developed. You can get better with effort and hard work.

Illustration: The most brilliant orator in Greece (Option #1)

Demosthenes was perhaps the greatest of all Greek orators; he lived from 384 to 322 BC. He did not, during his early years, find it easy to speak in public because he stuttered when he tried to speak, and the stuttering was compounded by a shortness of breath that caused him to be able to speak only a few words at a time before having to deeply inhale. The combination of frequent inhaling and stuttering through the few words that came out between his inhalations made him embarrassed to go out in public, fearful of the moment when he may have to speak.

Then, after being laughed at by an audience he was forced to address, a man who had been in the audience followed him home and spent time coaching him on how to overcome his problem.

First, Demosthenes practiced speaking in his private, underground study, with pebbles in his mouth.

Second, he practiced reciting poetry while running uphill. He was diligent; he would not give up, and over time both the stuttering and the shortness of breath were overcome and he emerged as the most brilliant orator in all of Greece.¹

Illustration: Larry Bird (Option #2)

One of the best players to ever play in the NBA was Larry Bird. He led the Celtics to NBA championships in 1981, 1984, and 1986. He won the Most Valuable Player award in 1984, 1985, and 1986, and was a frequent starter in the NBA All-Star Game.

The six-foot and nine-inch Bird did not have the innate talent and ability to get to the level he did, but he made up for it with desire and hard work. In high school, Bird would shoot five hundred shots every morning before going to school. Even as a pro he continued the work ethic that propelled him to the top of his profession. Every summer

¹ <https://bradley MCCOY.wordpress.com/2013/01/04/struggle-to-speak-how-demosthenes-became-the-greatest-orator-in-greece/>

he would hire a high school student to come to his house and rebound for him. Through diligence and effort he honed his skill to an art form.

In the same way, the ability to communicate effectively can also be developed. This session will explore some of the characteristics necessary to taking whatever natural ability you might have and honing it into an art form.

Introduction

1. The art of good communication is intuitive, unlearned, and a gift⁽¹⁾ from God.

EXPLANATION

EXAMPLE: I once invited a traveling minister to speak at a series of meetings at the church I pastored. The first two nights went very well. But on the third night the speaker was late for the meeting. When he arrived he pulled me aside and said, “Do you have anything I can preach tonight?” I was dumbfounded. “You must be kidding,” I said. But he was not; he had nothing prepared to say. During the last few songs of praise and worship I saw him paging through his Bible. But when he stood to preach, he delivered a very powerful and effective sermon. All through his message I kept thinking, “It’s not fair, Lord! I could work all month and never preach that good, but he did it without any preparation.” There are those who have that kind of gift. For them, communication is intuitive and unlearned. But there is hope for the rest of us. There is a science to good communication and those principles can be learned. (Paul Barker)

2. The science⁽²⁾ of good communication can, however, be learned.

Acts 18:24-26 (NIV)

²⁴Meanwhile a Jew named Apollos, a native of Alexandria, came to Ephesus. He was a learned man, with a thorough knowledge of the Scriptures. ²⁵He had been instructed in the way of the Lord, and he spoke with great fervor and taught about Jesus accurately, though he knew only the baptism of John. ²⁶He began to speak boldly in the synagogue. When Priscilla and Aquila heard him, they invited him to their home and explained to him the way of God more adequately.

We are not told whether Apollos lodged in Priscilla and Aquila’s home, but this act of inviting Apollos into their home is typical of the open home attitude that this couple had.

Though Apollos was a learned man, with a thorough knowledge of the Scriptures, he was willing to learn from his hosts when they took him home to complete his education.²

Desiderius Erasmus once said, “If elephants can be taught to dance, lions to play, and leopards to hunt, surely preachers can be taught to preach.”

Effective communication is about getting your message across. Specifically, it involves capturing your audience's attention, ensuring your audience understands the idea you are trying to convey, and encouraging your audience to do something with that information, such as remember it, apply it, or provide feedback.³

Qualities to Develop as a Communicator

1. The first quality is empathy⁽³⁾, the ability to understand and share another person's experiences, thoughts, and emotions.

Halford Luccock once said, “Nothing is more central to genuine ministry than the faculty of feeling one's way into the lives of others . . . It is more than sympathy, it is empathy, the imaginative projection of our consciousness into another's being.”

To be able to think like the person you are communicating with, to be able to feel what they feel, to somehow work your way into their mind, is the absolute key to getting what is in you into them.

- Empathy is synonymous with imagination.

Percy Bysshe Shelley once said, “For a man to be greatly good, he must imagine intensely and comprehensively; he must put himself in the place of another; the pains and pleasures of his species must become his own. The great instrument of moral good is the imagination.”

Henry Ward Beecher once said, “The first element on which your preaching will depend for power and success is: imagination, which I regard as the most important of all elements that go to make a preacher.”

- Imagination allows you to enter the mind of Bible authors and witness the scenes.

² Ajith Fernando. *The NIV Application Commentary: Acts* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1998), 504-505.

³ <http://www.nature.com/scitable/topicpage/effective-communication-13950970>

This is what imagination enables you to do when you study the Bible. It allows you to enter the scenes and experience them firsthand. This will not only greatly enhance your own Bible study, but will make your communication of the Scripture much more vivid.

EXAMPLE: Have you experienced playing a reality game at an arcade? You will be given a computer-controlled pad and will need to put on a special visor equipped with a video screen inside. With an electronic gun, you can enter a virtual world of villains and moving targets. And as you turn your head, your view of the virtual world will turn accordingly. You are not just playing a game, but you are in the game.

Imagination will enable you to enter the “virtual world” of the Bible and experience the scenes as a participant and not just as an observer.

- Imagination allows you to enter the minds of your listeners, anticipating their questions and objections.

Joseph Parker once said, “In preparing a message, bring your listeners imaginatively around your desk.”

Warren Wiersbe once said, “As you put yourself in their place, you discover mental obstacles that must be removed, prejudices that must be exposed, and objections that will need answers if the listener is to receive your material.”

- Imagination allows you to see the universal in the particular.

This is the essence of illustration making—finding universal principles in mundane particulars. (More of this in session four.)

2. The second quality is clarity⁽⁴⁾.

The following is probably the best definition of preaching in the Bible.

They read from the book, from the Law of God, clearly, and they gave the sense, so that the people understood the reading.

Nehemiah 8:8

NEHEMIAH 8:7-8 (NIV)

⁷The Levites—Jeshua, Bani, Sherebiah, Jamin, Akkub, Shabbethai, Hodiah, Maaseiah, Kelita, Azariah, Jozabad, Hanan and Pelaiah—instructed the people in the Law while the people were standing there. ⁸They read from the Book of the Law of God, making it clear and giving the meaning so that the people understood what was being read.

Thirteen men assisted Ezra to ensure that the people of Israel understood what they read from the Torah. They went among the people and helped them comprehend the Scriptures. Because the Jews had been exiled to Babylon for a long time, they translated the Hebrew Torah into Aramaic, the language that people spoke. The people understood the Scriptures as the Levites gave meaning to what Ezra read.

Our responsibility, as those who have been commissioned to communicate, is to make the Word of God clear so that the people can understand its meaning.

The preacher must communicate the sense of the passage of Scripture, and not his own agenda or favorite personal topics. The people must leave understanding God's Word better, not understanding the preacher's opinions better.⁴

In the King James Version of 1 Corinthians 13:1 it reads, Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal. A typist once accidentally transposed the 'h' in 'charity' with an 'l'. The result may not have been scripturally accurate, but it certainly illustrates the point of this section: "Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not CLARITY, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal."

- The clearer a concept is in your own mind, the clearer you will be able to communicate it to others.

Charles Spurgeon once said, "When a man does not make me understand what he means, it is because he does not himself know what he means."

Halford Luccock once said, "It is not enough to insure that people understand you, but to insure that they cannot misunderstand you."

"How well we communicate is determined not by how well we say things but by how well we are understood."

- Andy Grove, CEO, Intel Corporation

- One of the keys to clarity is developing a logical mind.

⁴ <https://www.studylight.org/commentaries/guz/nehemiah-8.html>

An audiocassette is linear; if you are listening to the second song on the cassette and you want to listen to the fifth song, you must fast forward the tape until you find the selection you want. A CD however, is digital; if you are listening to the second song and want to hear the fifth song, you simply push the forward button three times and you are there. Some people have minds like an audiocassette and some have minds like a CD. Audiocassette minds are linear; they process everything in a logical manner. Their reasoning usually goes something like this, "If 'a' is true and 'b' is true, and 'b' is equal to 'c', then 'c' must be true." CD minds are digital; they can access information with very little logical progression. Their reasoning usually goes something like this, "I just know 'c' is true." The order of their thoughts may be clear to them, but they are rarely coherent to others. If you have a CD mind, you must work harder to help others understand you.

3. The third quality is passion⁽⁵⁾.

Passion is the ability to feel deeply about your subject.

4. The fourth quality is humor⁽⁶⁾.

Paul Johnson once said, "Next to self-consciousness, the ability to laugh is perhaps the most important human characteristic."

Some people are not innately funny.

EXAMPLE: I have a friend who fits that category. I once asked him to rate himself on a humor scale of 1 to 10 with 10 being the funniest human on earth and 1 being a dead person. He said, "-3." (Which is funny when you think about it!) Though you may be like my friend, there is hope for you: you can improve.

Learn to laugh at yourself.

The more you learn to laugh at yourself, the more you will see the humor in life and the funnier you will become.

How to Develop as a Communicator

1. Read voraciously⁽⁷⁾.

"When I get a little money I buy books. When I get a little more money, I buy

food and clothes.”

—Desiderius Erasmus

- Readers are leaders⁽⁸⁾.

The people who have changed the world have generally been readers. John Paul Sartre, the father of Existentialism and one of the most influential men of the 20th century, read 300 books every year; that is six books a week. Karl Marx, a voracious reader, once said about himself, “I am a machine condemned to devour books.” John Wesley, while riding over 250,000 miles on horseback, preaching over 40,000 sermons and writing 233 books and 5,000 tracts, still managed to read three books every week. (He read while riding his horse and claimed he only fell off twice!)

Sadly, not many Filipinos read nowadays. This is evident when (mostly young) people attempt to speak English but end up expressing themselves superficially, ungrammatically, or in “Taglish.”⁵

- Reading causes you to grow⁽⁹⁾.

Reading is mental weight lifting. To build physical muscles you must push your body beyond what it thinks it can do. If you continue to lift the same weight you lifted last month or last year, you will maintain the muscle mass you have but you will not build new muscle. You must push yourself beyond your current limits in order to increase. The same principle applies to reading. You will increase in wisdom and brainpower when you force yourself to read material that you thought was beyond your current comprehension level.

Luke 2:52

And Jesus increased in wisdom . . .

The average college student in America reads one book a year after graduation. Morris Berman, in his book *The Twilight of American Culture*, states, “120 million adult Americans are completely or functionally illiterate; and 60% of adult Americans have never read a single book.”

According to the Filipino Reading Habits Survey in 2013, Filipino readers read an average of 21.96 books. Of these books, 19.51 of them were for leisure reading. 83% of Filipino readers say they read ebooks. Ebook readers (the 83%) read an average of 11.89 ebooks in 2013, but bought only 4.88 ebooks.⁶

⁵ <http://opinion.inquirer.net/18095/philippines-losing-reading-habit>

⁶ <http://fantaghiro23.blogspot.com/2014/03/filipino-reading-habits-survey-results.html>

- Reading will equip⁽¹⁰⁾ you to win the battle of ideas.

C.S. Lewis once said, “If all the world were Christian, it might not matter if all the world were uneducated. But to be ignorant now, not to be able to meet our opponents on their own ground, would be to throw down our weapons.”

- You should read deeply.

Charles Spurgeon once said, “A student will find his mental constitution more effected by one book thoroughly mastered than by 20 books merely skimmed.”

Deep or slow reading is the active process of thoughtful and deliberate reading carried out to enhance one's comprehension and enjoyment of a text. It is the contrast of skimming or superficial reading.⁷

- You should read thoughtfully.

Charles Spurgeon once said, “Without thinking, reading cannot benefit the mind, but it may delude the man into thinking that he is growing wise.”

- You should read the Christian classics.

C.S. Lewis once said, “Every age has its own outlook. It is especially good at seeing certain truths and especially liable to make certain mistakes. We all, therefore, need the books that will correct the characteristic mistakes of our own period. And that means old books. Not, of course, that there is any magic in old books. People were never more clever than they are now; they made as many mistakes as we. But not the same mistakes. They will not flatter us in the errors we are already committing; and their own errors, being now open and palpable, will not endanger us. Two heads are better than one, not because either is infallible, but because they are unlikely to go wrong in the same direction.”

- You should read biographies.

⁷ <http://grammar.about.com/od/d/g/Deep-Reading.htm>

When you associate with another person, you gradually become like that person. Close friends even absorb things as trivial as the mannerisms and vocal nuances of one another. Reading biographies allow us to associate with the great men and women of the past, and hopefully some of the character that made them great will rub off on us.

- You should read history.

Winston Churchill is considered by many to be the greatest political leader of the 20th century. In 1932, he was the only international leader who resisted Hitler in his early rise to power, a stand that made him unpopular and the subject of much abuse. But on May 10, 1940, after Hitler's surprise attack on Holland and Belgium, King George VI asked him to replace Neville Chamberlain who had resigned as Prime Minister. At 65 years of age, he assumed the leadership of the nation. He said, "My whole life has been a preparation for this moment." Churchill attributed his ability to lead and his understanding of the times to his ardent study of history.

- You should read works of the best contemporary authors.

Every year there are three thousand new Christian books released and many of them are of very little substance—like the medical prescription bottle that reads, "5% active ingredients; 95% inert ingredients."

Before committing time to read a book, it is advisable to get a recommendation from someone you trust.

- You should read material that challenges⁽¹¹⁾ you intellectually, emotionally, and spiritually.

Franz Kafka once said, "I think we ought to read only the kind of books that wound and stab us. We need books that affect us like a disaster, that grieve us deeply, like the death of someone we loved more than ourselves, like being banished into forests far from everyone, like a suicide. A book must be the axe for the frozen sea inside us."

- You should read what the other side is saying.

Halford Luccock once said, "No one does a man's mind a larger service than a vigorous

and dangerous challenger.”

2. Develop an insatiable curiosity⁽¹²⁾ about everything.

The great lexicographer Samuel Johnson once said, “Curiosity is one of the most certain characteristics of a vigorous intellect. It is, in great minds, the first passion and the last.”

Proverbs 25:3 (HCSB)

It is the glory of God to conceal a matter and the glory of kings to investigate a matter.

Ask questions and listen to other people.

3. Listen to and watch⁽¹³⁾ other communicators.

“Every time I listen to a message, I am listening on two levels. First, I want to hear what God has to say to me personally through the speaker. And second, I want to hear how it is being said to learn from the example of the speaker what is effective and what is not.”
—Paul Barker

4. Observe life⁽¹⁴⁾.

Proverbs 24:32 (NIV)

I applied my heart to what I observed and learned a lesson from what I saw . . .

ACTIVITY

1. Which quality of a good communicator do you think you have? Which one do you think you need to improve? What practical steps do you plan to take to develop that quality?
2. Do you like reading? What books do you like reading the most? What other kinds of books, which were mentioned, do you plan to read as well?
3. Who is your favorite communicator or preacher? What qualities do you like about that person?

SESSION 3 – THE POWER OF ILLUSTRATIONS

INTRODUCTION

In this session, we will examine why we should use illustrations in our communication, where we can find illustrations, and how we should use illustrations.

MATTHEW 13:34

All these things Jesus said to the crowds in parables; indeed, he said nothing to them without a parable.

What do Illustrations do?

1. Illustrations let light⁽¹⁾ in.

“If didactic speech fails to enlighten your hearers, you can always open a window and let in the pleasant light of analogy.”⁸

EXAMPLE: (Note to teacher: You can share a similar story like this).

I once preached a seventeen-part series on the first eight chapters of Romans. While trying to explain some of the more confusing parts of chapter six, I used the following illustration to explain the vicarious nature of water baptism. I said, “The word vicarious means to experience the experiences of another without actually experiencing them yourself. For example, in 1980 I took my wife to the resort town of Gatlinburg, Tennessee to celebrate our first anniversary. We went to a restaurant that had special meaning to us and ate a large meal. Afterwards, as we strolled through the town, I decided we would go in an attraction called The Adventures of America. After paying our money we were led into a theater with a large concave screen. There were no seats in place; instead there were rows of railings to hold on to. The movie was a seventeen-minute adventure through various different environments—speed boating through the Florida Everglades, navigating the Grand Canyon in a helicopter, etc., and because of the shape of the screen, you had the very definite sensation of actually being there. The movie began on a roller coaster as it made the ascent to the top. Once it reached the apex it began the precipitous decline. On the first turn, I realized how important the railings were: without them I would have fallen over! That is how real the experience was. Although I was not on an actual roller coaster, I was having all the physiological experiences of being on one. That is the essence of what a vicarious experience is. That is the essence of what water baptism is: a vicarious experience of the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ. (Paul Barker)

2. Illustrations make a message interesting⁽²⁾.

⁸ Charles Haddon Spurgeon, Lectures to My Students, p. 337

“The sin of boring an audience is in a speaker an exceedingly mortal sin.”⁹

It is true that sermons can be interesting because of various qualities, but above all the key to preaching interesting sermons, is the preacher’s interest in his hearers.¹⁰

The Apostle Paul writes in Philippians 2:3,4,

³Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. ⁴Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others.

3. Illustrations encourage attention⁽³⁾.

There are many forces that conspire to distract people from listening to your message. And if there is a substantial quantity of didactic material involved then the temptation is even stronger. But as soon as you introduce a story, attention is immediately restored.

4. Illustrations make the preaching relevant⁽⁴⁾.

One of the processes by which learning takes place is through comparing already known ideas with new, unknown concepts. For example, if I am told that x is similar to y, and I already know what y is like, then by comparison I now have some idea what x is like. That is why illustrations are so helpful to make your message relevant. You take a common, known idea, and compare it to the unknown concept you are trying to explain. Jesus once said, “The kingdom of heaven is like a treasure hidden in the field, which a man found and hid; and from joy over it he goes and sells all that he has, and buys that field.” In this brief illustration, the kingdom of heaven is x, the unknown, and the treasure hidden in the field is y, the known. Because we understand y, we now have a greater understanding of x.

EXAMPLE: When my oldest son was young, one of his relatives died. When we tried to explain what had happened to him it was obvious he had no concept of death and could not grasp what we were talking about. But a few days later one of his goldfish died. When his mother scooped the fish out and disposed of it she told him that the fish had died. Immediately you could see by the look in his eyes that the concept that was unclear to him a few days before now was very vivid. He understood death (at least partially) because he had an experience to compare it with.

⁹ Bishop Quayle, Quoted in *Imagination: The Preacher's Neglected Ally*, Warren Wiersbe, Leadership Spring 1983, p. 25

¹⁰ <https://www.thepillarnetwork.com/to-make-for-interesting-preaching/>

5. Illustrations persuade⁽⁵⁾ people.

Our goal whenever we speak is to convince our audience to make choices. Choices that last are always made by the will. But the will is not alone—it is assisted by the emotions. And though we do not want to elicit decisions that are purely emotional, we also cannot neglect the role of emotions in the decision-making process. Illustrations appeal to the emotions and aid in the process of persuading people.

EXAMPLE: I once heard the story of a noted church growth expert who produced an inspirational film on location at a circus to teach principles of effective church growth. After the filming, several of the circus performers jokingly challenged the minister to “practice what you preach,” and swing from the trapeze. What began as a joke soon escalated to a formal challenge and the minister felt duty-bound to respond. As he surveyed the trapeze he noted that it did not seem very high, and, after all, there was a very large net below. So with fear and trembling he began the ascent to the trapeze. When he arrived at the top he realized that the huge net did not look so large from his new vantage point. And yet he was now certainly committed. As agreed, one of the performers was on the other platform, prepared to swing the trapeze at the appropriate moment. After a very deep breath, the minister pushed off from the platform and began to soar through the air. He said later, “In mid air I learned three things. Number one: you have to let go of some things to take hold of others. Number two: it is a lot easier to keep holding on to the one you have. And number three: you do not have forever to decide!” At the apex of his swing the other bar was right where it was suppose to be and he reached for it and successfully swung to the other side. I once used this story during a message at a particular church. When I finished, I called for people to respond to the new challenge they believed God was giving them. In the crowd was a man who was sure the Lord had called him into vocational ministry. But this was his last meeting at the church; he was flying to his home overseas as soon as the service was over. He told me a few years later that my story haunted him the entire plane ride. And though he tried to pursue his plans in his native country, he could not shake the sense that he had missed God’s call. He finally responded, and today he is in the ministry. He often tells me that my story was the catalyst God used to persuade him!

6. Illustrations assist memory⁽⁶⁾.

EXAMPLE: A man once spent a week with his friend who was the owner of a circus. At the end of the time he asked his friend about something he had observed during his time at the circus. When the huge circus elephants were not performing they were secured with a shackle around one leg connected to a chain and a stake in the ground. The same apparatus was also used to secure the baby elephants and yet it seemed as they pulled and tugged they were almost able to break free. He asked the owner how it could be that a chain, stake, and shackle that could barely contain a baby elephant was secure enough for a full-grown elephant. The owner replied, “It is true that an elephant never forgets and when he is a baby he tries so many times to break free from the chain

he finally decides he never will be able to and he never tries again.” I told this story in January of 1984 while preaching in Caracas, Venezuela. Two years later when I returned, everyone I spoke with remembered the story, and, even more importantly, remembered the point it illustrated.

7. Illustrations arouse the emotions⁽⁷⁾.

In his book, *The Heart of a Champion*, Bob Richards tells the story of Olympic gold medalist, Charley Paddock. After the 1924 Olympics, Charley Paddock traveled throughout the States speaking at high school rallies. One day, after speaking at East Tech High in Cleveland, Ohio, a young spindle-legged boy asked for his autograph. As he signed his name, the young student said, “Mr. Paddock, I would give anything if I could be an Olympic star like you.” Charley Paddock encouraged him that if he would believe and be willing to pay any price, he could see his dreams come to pass. From that day forward this young man was inspired and motivated to accomplish just that. And in 1936, at the Olympics in Berlin, Germany, he accomplished his goal, winning not one, but four gold medals. His name: Jesse Owens. Returning to Cleveland for a ticker-tape parade, his motorcade was forced to stop occasionally to sign autographs. While signing his name for a boy who was so skinny he was nicknamed “Bones,” the boy said, “Mr. Owens, I would give anything if I could be an Olympic star like you.” Jesse Owens encouraged the boy saying, “I was a little older than you when I said those same words, and if you will believe and be willing to pay any price, you can see that dream come true.” Several years later, at Wembley Stadium, England, Harrison “Bones” Dillard won the 100-meter dash, tying Jesse Owens’s Olympic record.

Where do we find Illustrations?

Collectors of anything (e.g. stamps, coins, antiques, etc.) are always on the lookout for something new. Illustration collectors are the same. When you discover how important illustrations are in effective communication, you will become a collector: always on the lookout for new illustrations. And you will realize that they can be found almost anywhere! Some of my former students used to play a game on long car trips. The first person to start would point to something along the road (a sign, fence, cow, or anything), and then the others had fifteen seconds to think of an illustration from that item. The game developed an ability to see an illustration in everything.

1. Personal⁽⁸⁾ examples

Personal examples develop rapport and establish credibility with your audience.

2. Visual media⁽⁹⁾

Some of the most powerful illustrations available to us are those produced in Hollywood every year. They are timely, vivid, and poignant. Caution: any movie you reference will automatically be sanctioned for your audience—it is a license for them to see it. If there is an excessive amount of objectionable material in the movie, you should probably find another film to use as an illustration.

3. Current events⁽¹⁰⁾

Jesus used current events. In chapter 13 of Luke, He refers to two recent events: the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices, and the tower in Siloam that had fallen and killed eighteen. The mentality of the Jews was that those tragedies pointed to a clear indication of divine judgment. Jesus turns the events on His listeners and says, “I tell you, no, but unless you repent, you will all likewise perish.”

4. Nature and science

Jesus made constant references to nature in His illustrations: the sower and the seed, the tares in the field, the pearl of great value, a mustard seed. And all those illustrations were taken from just one chapter of the Gospels! (Matthew 13)

5. Sports

Illustration (option #1): Topography, Basketball, and the Gospel

Jack went to an Ivy League School and was a star on the basketball team and graduated with a degree in topography—that is, the study of mapping. What do basketball and topography have to do with the gospel? Nothing. Except that years later Jack found himself in Turkey as the pastor of a small congregation. His church by state law was illegal, so he took a job as a semi-pro assistant basketball coach. Since he had a job as a basketball coach, no one suspected he was an illegal pastor. Later, a mission organization in Turkey was establishing churches in rugged unmapped regions of Turkey and Iraq – guess who was available to help? Now, what are the odds of that?

See, God had picked out Jack from before time. He thought basketball had no connection to the gospel, he thought topography had no connection to the gospel.¹¹

Illustration (option #2): Marriage Is A Team Sport. Think of a Basketball Team. Marriage is a team sport. Think of a basketball team: The coach must spend hours scouting, preparing offensive and defensive strategies, finding out the strengths and weaknesses of his own players, and making a game plan in order to take his players to a game, but unless the players submit to his leadership, they will not win. Neither the coach nor the players can be done without, but neither is more or less important than the other—they are a team. And such is the case with marriage.¹²

6. Children⁽¹¹⁾

Stories and experiences with children are often used as illustrations because of the candidness of each experience.

Example:

A mother was talking to her young child.

Daughter: I also want to be a factory worker.

Mom: In what kind of factory?

Daughter: A chocolate factory, so I can try all the yummy chocolates!

7. Words⁽¹²⁾

When you examine the etymology of some words an illustration will often emerge. For example, the word sincere comes from a Latin word and prefix meaning “without wax.” The word evolved from the ancient practice of filling the cracks in pottery with wax to cover its many defects that formed during the firing process. So to be “without wax” or sincere means that you are making no attempt to falsely hide the defects in your life.

How should we use Illustrations?

1. Frequently⁽¹³⁾

There are approximately five hundred verses in Luke's Gospel where Jesus is teaching. Nearly two hundred and fifty of those verses contain some kind of illustration.

¹¹ Peter Loughman. *Topography, Basketball, and the Gospel* (Sep 16, 2008)

¹² Rob Clifton. *Marriage Is A Team Sport. Think Of A Basketball* (May 23, 2001)

2. Accurately⁽¹⁴⁾

Make sure you get your facts straight before you use an illustration.

3. Appropriately⁽¹⁵⁾

Choose illustrations that fit your audience.

If you were speaking to the Nashville Garden Club, you would not want to use illustrations from Professional Wrestling or Monster Truck Pulls! If you were speaking to the university Rugby Team, you would not want to use illustrations from the ballet or symphony.

4. Dramatically

Learn to tell a story with passion and feeling.

Example

Did you hear the story about the man confined to a maximum-security prison where no one was allowed to speak? At his first meal, one of the prisoners stood to his feet and yelled “17.” The entire place erupted in laughter. After a minute the guards quieted everyone down. Several times during the meal others stood and shouted different numbers and were all met with the same result. Late that night, the new prisoner risked speaking to the inmate in the next cell, “What happened at lunchtime?” The prisoner replied, “There is a book called The 100 Funniest Jokes of All Time, and we have all memorized it. Whenever anyone wants to tell a joke, they simply stand and repeat the number.” The new prisoner asked for a copy of the book and set to studying the 100 jokes. After mastering the jokes he stood during one meal and shouted, “39.” No response. A few minutes later he tried again, “79.” Again, no response. Three times he tried that day with the same lack of response. Late that night, he whispered to the other inmate, “What happened? I learned all the jokes. I stood and said my number, and nobody laughed.” The other inmate replied, “Some people just can’t tell a joke.”

5. Initially

An opening illustration will create interest in your audience and draw them into your message.

6. Finally⁽¹⁶⁾

A concluding story ends your message on a high note and leads naturally into some sort of response.

ACTIVITY

1. How have illustrations helped you understand what was being communicated in the past? Share one of the most memorable illustrations you have heard.
2. Share a Scripture or truth that has spoken to you in the past. Use an illustration to support or emphasize your point.

SESSION 4 – KNOWING YOUR AUDIENCE

INTRODUCTION

In Scene One, Act One of Shakespeare's Hamlet, Bernardo is trying to convince Horatio that he and Marcellus have twice seen the spirit of the dead king wandering the castle after midnight. Bernardo says to Horatio, "Sit down awhile, and let us once again assail your ears, that are so fortified against our story."

That is an accurate description of much of the culture of the twenty-first century: they have fortified their ears against our story. Our job is to assail their ears with a message that is relevant and compelling. And to do that, we must understand our audience.

1 CORINTHIANS 9:22

To the weak I became weak, that I might win the weak. I have become all things to all people, that by all means I might save some.

The Role of the Audience

EXAMPLE: Several years ago, I spent six months traveling and teaching the Bible from church to church. I had three or four main messages that I would give at each different church. I often noticed during that time that messages I preached successfully in one place would not go over well in another place. That piqued my curiosity and I began to analyze the phenomenon. I knew there were certain things that were constants: they did not change from night to night. The message was the same—I rarely made even the slightest change to it. The Holy Spirit was the same—He never changes! My preparation for speaking was the same. The only thing I could determine that was different was the audience. Then it dawned on me: communication is a dynamic interaction between the speaker, the Holy Spirit, and the listener. —Paul Barker

1. Communication is a dynamic interaction⁽¹⁾ between the speaker, the Holy Spirit, and the listener.

EXPLANATION

A man once wrote a book entitled 101 Things to Do While Listening to a Sermon. I am sure there must be at least that many things to do! One of the things people do is play a game (consciously or unconsciously) called Rate the Speaker. Good speakers that keep their attention and inspire them receive high scores, perhaps a nine or a ten; and poor speakers that confuse them or bore them receive low scores: two or three. For a speaker, that can be daunting! So I invented another game: Rate the Audience! Because the way people listen is as important as the way you speak!

2. The way people listen is as important⁽²⁾ as the way you speak.
3. Our culture has produced passive⁽³⁾ listeners.

EXPLANATION

Marshall McLuhan (1911–1980), the communication theorist and cultural commentator, is best known for coining the phrase “the medium is the message.” What he meant by that phrase was the medium in which information is transmitted is as important as the content of the message in shaping the character of a culture. Some media is hot—it requires very little from the receiver. Other media is cool—it requires much from the receiver. To McLuhan, television and film were hot media, requiring little from the receivers, and producing passive listeners who demanded to be entertained at increasingly higher levels. This makes our task as communicators much more difficult.

4. Some of the general characteristics of today’s audience are:
 - Feeling-oriented

They are not generally moved by syllogistic logic and tightly reasoned arguments but by emotional appeals and poignant stories.

- Pragmatic

Pragmatism says that truth is what produces results, and today’s listeners are primarily interested in results. They want to know, “What’s in it for me?”

- Visually-oriented

In many studies, experimental psychologists and educators have found that retention of information three days after a meeting or other event is six times greater when information is presented by visual means than when the information is presented by the spoken word alone.

“Studies by educational researchers suggest that approximately 83% of human learning occurs visually, and the remaining 17% through the other senses – 11% through hearing, 3.5% through smell, 1.5% through touch, and 1% through taste.”¹³

¹³ <http://twotensolutions.com/warning-good-visuals-may-help-your-audience-remember-your-presentation/>

Inductive versus Deductive Communication

1. Deductive⁽⁴⁾ communication involves leading people from general principles to particular and specific conclusions.

EXPLANATION

While Arthur Conan Doyle was preparing for his medical career, he studied under a professor named Dr. Bell. Bell had developed an amazing ability to briefly examine a student and deduce specific particulars about him from the general clues he observed. After graduation, Doyle wrote stories in his spare time, creating a fictional character from the example of his professor. His stories became wildly popular and he soon abandoned his medical practice and devoted himself to chronicling the adventures of Sherlock Holmes.

Deductive reasoning is what Sherlock Holmes uses. For example, once at the scene of a grisly crime, Holmes noticed a small residue of cigar ash. Because he was familiar with the 256 different cigar brands sold in the greater London area—and what shops they were all sold in—he was able to ascertain where the criminal came from and what tobacco store he frequented.

Holmes began with general principles (the 256 different cigar brands) and it led him to a specific conclusion (the location of the criminal). That is the essence of deduction: using general principles that will lead to specific and particular conclusions.

The Greek method of instruction was primarily deductive.

2. Inductive⁽⁵⁾ communication involves leading people to general conclusions from particular and specific examples.

Inductive reasoning is the exact opposite. In inductive reasoning, you begin with particular examples and those particular examples lead you to general conclusions. For example, a number of surveys have shown that a large percentage of Americans believe the earth have been visited by inhabitants from other planets. How did most people reach that general conclusion? From scientific lectures where trained and capable researchers presented a logical and airtight presentation of irrefutable facts? No. Most of them arrived at the general belief in UFO's from watching countless movies and television shows featuring either lovable (E.T.) or dangerous (Alien) extraterrestrials.

The Hebrew method of instruction was primarily inductive.

Jesus communicated inductively. For example, when He wants to communicate important truth about how the Word of God affects different people based on the condition of their hearts, He does not present a careful reasoned theological argument, but He tells them a specific story about a sower who went out to sow (Matthew 13:1-23). He led them to a general principle from a particular example.

3. Inductive communication tends to be:

- More visceral than cerebral

The word visceral is from the medical term viscera or, the guts. Visceral refers to emotions that are instinctual, intuitive, and deeply felt. It is the opposite of cerebral, which is associated to the intellectual and analytical.

- More concrete than abstract

Abstract is defined as without reference to a specific instance, not applied or practical, but theoretical. Concrete is defined as relating to an actual, specific thing or instance, existing in reality or in real experience.

- More open than dogmatic

Deductive communication is dogmatic and authoritative, and, of course, there is a place for that in communication. But sometimes a more powerful way to reach a person is through an open, less authoritative approach. For example, let us look at the way Nathan addressed David's sin concerning Bathsheba. He did not rebuke David for his egregious violation of the law of God, but he told him a story.

2 Samuel 12:1-7

¹*He came to him and said to him, "There were two men in a certain city, the one rich and the other poor. ²The rich man had very many flocks and herds, ³but the poor man had nothing but one little ewe lamb, which he had bought. And he brought it up, and it grew up with him and with his children. It used to eat of his morsel and drink from his cup and lie in his arms, and it was like a daughter to him. ⁴Now there came a traveler to the rich man, and he was unwilling to take one of his own flock or herd to prepare for the guest who had come to him, but he took the poor man's lamb and prepared it for the man who had come to him."* ⁵Then David's anger was greatly kindled against the man, *and he said to Nathan, "As the Lord lives, the man who has done this deserves to die, ⁶and he shall restore the lamb a fourfold, because he did this thing, and because he had*

no pity.”⁷Nathan said to David, “You are the man! . . .”

David’s response to Nathan’s approach is recorded in Psalm 51:1-4,10:

¹Have mercy on me, O God, according to your steadfast love; according to your abundant mercy blot out my transgressions. ²Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin! ³For I know my transgressions, and my sin is ever before me. ⁴Against you, you only, have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight, so that you may be justified in your words and blameless in your judgment. . . . ¹⁰Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me.

Four Principles of Inductive Communication

1. Lead people to make their own conclusions⁽⁶⁾ rather than making these for them.

This approach is typified by the television detective, Columbo. Columbo never confronts the suspected murderer directly about their crime, but attempts to lead them to the inevitable conclusion on their own.

2. Draw⁽⁷⁾ people into the message with stories and examples.

This is the method of Jesus. He got His audience emotionally involved in a story before they even knew the story was about them.

Matthew 13:34

All these things Jesus said to the crowd in parables; indeed, he said nothing to them without a parable.

Matthew 21:45

When the chief priests and the Pharisees heard His parables, they perceived that he was speaking about them.

3. Use secular sources to confirm⁽⁸⁾ scriptural principles.

EXAMPLE: I had a conversation once with an unsaved university student who felt no conviction of sin. I found it difficult to convince him that he really was guilty before God and needed to repent. He was thoroughly unchurched and had no respect for the Bible, so I turned to an illustration from a movie that was popular at the time: The Island of Dr. Moreau. The movie, adapted from the H.G. Wells novel, chronicles the experiments of a discredited and outcast scientist to evolve intelligence in feral creatures by injecting them with human genetic material. In order to control his creatures, he implants in them

an electrical device that he calls “the Law.” In the case of an uprising, he turns on the current and the beasts are quickly cowed. But one of the more intelligent and devious of his creatures discovers the source of the pain in his body and rips through his flesh to remove the device. Once freed from “the Law,” he teaches the other beasts how to free themselves and a violent melee erupts.

After reminding my student friend of the relevant facts of the movie, I then made the application to his life. God, I told him, implanted in him (and in every human being) a device that causes pain whenever he violates His “Law.” The device is called the conscience. I assured him that there was a time when he felt guilt about the choices he was making in his life. But every time he made a wrong choice, the voice of conscience grew quieter, until eventually, it ceased to make a sound. This, I said, was similar to when the creature finally rid himself of the sting of the “Law” forever. After that, chaos ensued.

My student friend connected with the story and understood that the lack of conviction he felt was not a sign that he was innocent, but actually that his guilt had reached an advanced and dangerous state. I could not reach him with a deductive approach, but a secular example effectively brought him to genuine conviction.
—Paul Barker

4. Ask⁽⁹⁾ questions instead of giving dogmatic declarations.

In Matthew’s Gospel, Jesus asked the Pharisees this question four times: “Have you not read?” This approach was more effective than a direct dogmatic declaration.

ACTIVITY

1. Why do you think we need to have a good understanding of who our audience is? What other principles or skills do you know that have been very helpful to you in knowing your audience?
2. Describe the people in your Victory group as an audience. Are they more feeling-oriented, pragmatic, or visually-oriented?
3. Do you consider yourself more as a deductive or inductive communicator? Why?

SESSION 5 – DELIVERING THE MESSAGE

ACTS 14:1

Now at Iconium they entered together into the Jewish synagogue and spoke in such a way that a great number of both Jews and Greeks believed.

INTRODUCTION

The emphasis in this verse is not on the content of the message, (as important as that is), but on the way the message was delivered.

In this section, we will examine some of the skills that contribute to an effective delivery of the message.

Vocabulary

J.B. Phillips once said, “If words are to enter people’s hearts and bear fruit, they must be the right words, shaped to pass the defenses and explode silently and effectively within the mind.”

Mark Twain once said, “The difference between the right word and the almost right word is like the difference between lightning and a lightning bug.”

1. Vocabulary development⁽¹⁾ is vital because words are what we use to understand the world, and words are what we use to communicate.

EXPLANATION

Vocabulary development is one of the most important skills needed to improve our delivery. Language is the tool of the trade for a communicator. For a communicator to not push himself to improve his vocabulary is as ludicrous as an artist not bothering to learn about color. The artist may have an inner image he wants to convey to the world, but having never mastered the medium of expression, the vision remains within. Our medium of expression is language. The better our mastery of language, the more effective our communication will be.

The Oxford English Dictionary has over 600,000 entries including slang, dialect expressions, and scientific and technical terms—there are more than one million words available to speakers of English. It has been estimated that Shakespeare used 25,000 different words and Mark Twain used over 12,000 in their writings. While the average man on the street uses around 300.

2. Improving our vocabulary will require hard work⁽²⁾. It will also involve the use of some systematic method.

There are many readily available Dictionary websites and apps that have the word-of-the-day feature that can be used to improve one's vocabulary. Reading books and articles will also help improve vocabulary.

There are also many books available for vocabulary improvement including:
30 Days to a More Powerful Vocabulary / Wilfred Funk & Norman Lewis
All About Words / Maxwell Nurnberg & Morris Rosenblum
I Always Look Up the Word "Egregious" / Maxwell Nurnberg

The Pause

One of the problems we face as communicators is that the average speaker talks at a rate of 150–200 words per minute while the average brain processes information at a much faster rate. This means that while you are speaking, people will take trips. Everyone's minds wander off somewhere. You can see it happen while you are speaking. People who were attentively listening just a minute before develop a glassy, faraway look in their eyes. Your job, when you encounter this, is to bring them back as quickly as possible. The techniques we will examine will be useful in doing just that.

Pauses are valuable because:

- They hold the audience's attention.

(Pause at this point for an inordinately long time and watch how everyone looks up and gives you their undivided attention!)

- They emphasize important words and ideas.

Not every idea in your message has the same importance. There are usually a few ideas that are crucial to be understood by your audience. Pause at those ideas to emphasize the importance of what is being said.

- They add drama.

Holding a punch line or the conclusion of a poignant story will greatly intensify the effect.

Voice Quality

1. Speak at the appropriate⁽³⁾ volume for the audience, setting, and topic.

Usually the larger the venue, the more dramatic your delivery must be. Movement, gestures, and volume appropriate for a large gathering will seem forced and out of place at a small Bible study.

2. Speak clearly and articulately⁽⁴⁾.

Largely forgotten today, George Whitefield (1714-1770) was probably the most famous religious figure of the eighteenth century. Newspapers called him the "Marvel of the Age." Whitefield was an English Methodist preacher capable of commanding thousands on two continents through the sheer power of his oratory. In his lifetime, he preached at least 18,000 times to perhaps 10 million hearers.¹⁴

His voice, which is affirmed to have been so clear and powerful as to be audible at the distance of a mile, appears, by general testimony, to have been in all other respects one of the most effective ever possessed by man, capable of taking every varied tone of emotion, and whether poured forth in thunder to rouse, or in softer music to melt, making its way to the heart with irresistible force and effect. Its tones, too, were singularly varied, and at the same time so truly natural, expressing every tender feeling of the heart with such touching pathos, that the dumbest hearer was riveted as by an invincible charm as soon as he opened his lips.¹⁵

3. Speak in complete sentences to avoid embolalia⁽⁵⁾.

Embolalia is the use of hesitation forms and verbal fillers when we are not sure what to say.

Verbal fillers are terms such as, "you know," "like," "um," etc.

Tempo and Volume

¹⁴ <http://www.christianitytoday.com/history/people/evangelistsandapologists/george-whitefield.html>

¹⁵ http://gracegems.org/18/george_whitefield.htm

The dictionary's definition of the word drone is "to talk in a persistently dull, boring, or monotonous tone." The droning delivery is one of the great enemies of effective communication. The safeguard against droning is variety—that is, using all the diverse techniques at your disposal at varying times and without getting stuck on any one technique for too long. The following are just some of the techniques available to you.

1. A fast⁽⁶⁾ tempo communicates intensity, energy, and movement.

EXAMPLE: I once had a young man in my church that was called to the ministry and wanted to preach. He was a very dynamic person with a lot of energy and zeal and so I gave him an opportunity. I will never forget his delivery! He spoke so fast and so continuously I do not think he took more than seven or eight breaths the whole time. And he said more in forty minutes than I could have said in two hours! Not more content, just more words—he was like a runaway locomotive. But as enthusiastic as he was, the constant tempo eventually became a drone. If he had slowed his tempo at regular intervals, he would have been considerably more effective.
—Paul Barker

2. A slow⁽⁷⁾ tempo communicates solemnity, drama, and importance.

You usually say the most important things softly and slowly for emphasis. Like the way you speak to your children when you want to make sure they hear and comprehend what you are saying: "Look – at – me! Do – not – ever – do – that – again – if – you – want – to – see – your – sixteenth – birthday!"

3. A loud⁽⁸⁾ volume communicates grandeur, authority, and power.
4. A soft⁽⁹⁾ volume communicates attention and drama.

At the turn of the century, the American Film Industry voted Citizen Kane as the number one movie of all time. The film, based on the life of William Randolph Hearst, begins when Charles Foster Kane lies dying at Xanadu, his palatial estate. As the camera pans in on an extreme close-up of his mouth, Kane utters his last word in tones that are barely audible, "Rosebud." The remainder of the movie consists of flashbacks of Kane's life, as an inquisitive reporter tries to learn the significance of his last word. The point of the illustration is that the most important moment in what is considered the greatest movie of all time is spoken at a volume that is so soft it forces you to exert all your energy to concentrate.

Animation and Gestures

1. Animation is the general energy and enthusiasm that says, "I believe everything I am saying, and it has changed my life."
2. Gestures⁽¹⁰⁾ are the specific motions of the arms, hands, and body made to help express your thoughts and to emphasize your speech.

Gestures should be natural and reflective of your personality and subject matter.

Movement

1. Movement⁽¹¹⁾ is useful for getting and keeping attention.
2. Avoid the abuses of excessive movement and nervous movement.

Excessive movement is that which hinders people's attention rather than aids it. For example, watching a speaker who paces incessantly back and forth across the stage is like watching a Ping-Pong match.

Nervous movement is swaying, tapping, or fiddling with your notes, pencil, or other item, which can be highly distracting for audiences.

Practical Tips

1. Always walk confidently⁽¹²⁾ onto the stage.
2. Pause before you begin, take a deep breath, and look straight at the audience.
3. Speak clearly⁽¹³⁾, with good articulation so that ends of words are heard.
4. Breathe evenly⁽¹⁴⁾.
5. Make sure your posture⁽¹⁵⁾ is good and that you are standing evenly balanced.
6. Communicate in your normal⁽¹⁶⁾ speaking voice.
7. Make eye contact⁽¹⁷⁾ with the whole audience, not just a particular section.
8. Develop a style of presentation that is natural. Don't copy others.
9. DO NOT:
 - Sing the audience to sleep through repetitive speech patterns.
 - Sway.

- Fold your arms.
- Put your hands in your pockets.
- Brush your hair continually from your face.
- Scratch or rub your nose.
- Lean on the furniture.
- Pace up and down.

Facilitation Skills for Victory Groups

Good facilitation skills are vital in leading Victory groups. Be it in the warm-up or application part, a good Victory group leader should be able to draw out and facilitate the flow of ideas in the group. It creates an environment where ideas are expressed. The following are some of the practical tips you can use in facilitating groups.

1. Clarify by asking questions⁽¹⁸⁾.

Asking questions makes the members know that you are genuinely listening and that you are interested to hear their thoughts. When an answer is a bit vague you can use questions to probe a deeper response hoping to lead to a personal realization or action step.

2. Wait patiently⁽¹⁹⁾ for people to answer.

Silence is not our enemy. Waiting gives people time to think before they talk. A lot of leaders are uneasy with silence but sometimes people are just contemplating on what they have just learned. Waiting shows to your members that you value what they have to say. Hence, a good practice is to wait for responses for five seconds. You can also apply the “three-before-me” approach—let three other people share their thoughts first before you do. This is because our tendency is to speak and give a lecture instead of waiting and listening to others.

3. Affirm⁽²⁰⁾ to encourage further participation.

In facilitating groups, affirming every voice in the group immediately and consistently plays a vital role. Saying “Thank you, (name)” to a person who shared their experience or opinion shows that you value or respect them and encourages others to speak up as well. Stay away from generic comments like good, great, excellent. Instead cite or connect to specific reasons or points shared.

4. Weave⁽²¹⁾ to increase relevance and reinforce truths.

Weaving in facilitation is the art of tying together concepts that were shared and reinforcing or affirming thoughts so as to keep the pace of the discussion going and drive home important truths. Weaving is about connecting thoughts, holding them together, and recognizing patterns they make. It increases the relevance and reinforces the thoughts communicated in the material and the good thoughts shared.

Remember, these skills do not necessarily need to be used in order. Use them only when necessary.

Handling Facilitation Challenges in Victory Group Meetings

(Note to Teacher: You can use this time to ask the students how they plan to handle the following challenges.)

1. Long-winded answers
2. Negativity
3. Opposition or hostility
4. Apathy
5. Tangential answers

ACTIVITY

1. Which among the skills that contribute to an effective delivery of the message are you good at? Which one do you think you need to improve on? What action steps can you make in the next few weeks to improve on it?
2. Among the practical tips given on effective message delivery, which one was most helpful to you? Why?
3. Which among the tips for effective facilitation do you consider very helpful to you? Share why and how you plan to apply it in your Victory group.

SESSION 6 – CRAFTING THE MESSAGE

INTRODUCTION

Victory group materials are made available for us as Victory group leaders. These materials are already crafted in terms of structure or content. However, in the event that you need to craft your own message either for your group or somewhere else, this session aims to equip you on how to develop a message.

Charles Spurgeon once said, “Don’t just throw the seed at people. Grind it into flour, bake it into bread, and slice it for them. And, it would not hurt if you put a little honey on it!” Spurgeon is describing in metaphorical terms the process of shaping a message into a form that makes the maximum impact upon our listeners.

When we speak we are not just voicing random thoughts about God and the Bible, but we are attempting to form a compelling and logical presentation of truth. This requires a considerable amount of work to shape and structure the message into a form that will accomplish our purpose.

The Importance of Structure

1. Structure makes your message portable⁽¹⁾.

EXAMPLE: A good structure is like a shopping cart at the grocery store: it allows you to carry many items home with you. I have occasionally stopped at the grocery store for my wife to “pick up a few items.” Invariably, I assume I can carry everything without bothering with a cumbersome cart. I do all right with a few loaves of bread and a gallon of milk (the items I was dispatched to get), but then I start adding items not originally on the list. By the time I get to the checkout line, the bread is mush, the milk is freezing my hand, and I have dropped several things I wanted. My conclusion is always the same: next time, get a shopping cart!

2. Structure makes your message memorable⁽²⁾.

Our retention rate on verbal information is generally not good. Anything we can do to assist our audience in remembering our message is worth taking the time to do.

3. Structure makes your message interesting⁽³⁾.

EXAMPLE: I like reading a book with short chapters because it makes me feel as if I am

progressing. Even if the book is long, the short chapters become like signposts along a road: I know where I am and how far I have to go. A well-structured sermon is like reading a book with short chapters: your audience knows they are progressing toward the conclusion.

There are three stages of message preparation. And though we are presenting them in a systematic order, the creative process of message building does not always proceed so logically. Message building is an art and, as with any artistic creation, there is order but there is also inspiration. You need not be locked into the order we are presenting here. These are just the component parts that will generally be part of the process. Use them as general guides to assist you as you create messages.

The most frequently played song in the history of American radio is ‘Yesterday’ by Paul McCartney. The story of how McCartney wrote the song is illustrative of how the creative process is not always orderly. McCartney woke one morning humming a melody. He was sure it must be from a song he had heard before, but no one he asked had ever heard it. Finally, realizing it was an inspiration; he wrote words to match the melody.

Stage One: Developing the Message

1. To develop your message, you must first accumulate material through research⁽⁴⁾ and reasoning.

The development stage starts with an idea. The idea can come in many different ways. It can come from your study of the Bible. It can come from an experience. It can come from a counseling or ministry situation. It can come from hearing another message. Or it can come from thinking of a catchy or creative title. (A friend of mine, who wrote songs for a living, once told me that many of the best songs came from thinking of a title.) The accumulation phase can be augmented by making copious notes of all your study. David said in 1 Chronicles 28:19 that, “*All this he made clear to me in writing from the hand of the LORD.*” There is something about writing your thoughts that helps to clarify and crystallize them for you.

2. This is the most time-consuming part of the message-building process.

There are no shortcuts to the accumulation stage. Every hour you spend in preparation will benefit you in presentation.

Stage Two: Planning the Message

1. First find a focus⁽⁵⁾.

Whatever stands out to you in the course of your study as the most important idea is the focus of your message. It is important to decide exactly what you want to say because then you will know what not to say. Some messages suffer from the author's attempt to accomplish too much in one message. Other messages suffer from the author's inability to focus on one clear idea and to present it with clarity and cogency.

Charles H. Spurgeon once said, "One large house nail thoroughly driven is more useful than a dozen tacks loosely placed."

2. Then write your objectives⁽⁶⁾.

An objective should answer this question: "What am I trying to say?"

Objectives define⁽⁷⁾ the parameters of your topic and protect you from meandering thoughts.

As you sift through all the material you have accumulated, your written objectives will help determine what should be used and what should be saved for another message.

One of the occupational hazards of public speaking is meandering thoughts, also known as rabbit trails. Rabbit trails always lead you away from your defined objective and therefore are counter productive to your purpose. Written objectives help you avoid rabbit trails by keeping you focused on your stated goals.

This can be further explained by looking at two different people driving their cars for two different reasons. Driver number one must be at a particular place at a certain time, and so he chooses the most efficient and direct route to get there. Driver number two is on a Sunday afternoon drive in the country with his family. He does not care which road he takes or which direction he goes. He is out to see the countryside and enjoy the autumn colors and has no need to be anywhere at any certain time. And while the approach of driver number two may be better for recreation, the approach of driver number one makes for a better message.

Stage Three: Building the Message

The first concern in building the message is determining what structure you want to utilize in organizing your material.

1. The following are six different message structures.

- In the Ladder⁽⁸⁾ outline, each idea builds on the previous point.

To climb a ladder you must begin at the first rung and systematically work your way up to the top—one rung at a time. When you use the Ladder Outline, you progress from the beginning to the end, one point at a time in a logical order. The key phrase to remember is logical order. Point number one cannot be transposed and become point number three. Point number three cannot be point number two. Each point must logically follow from the previous point and build upon it.

- In the Diamond⁽⁹⁾ outline, an idea is turned around so that the different facets can be seen.

When a diamond is cut according to the traditional brilliant cut, it has 58 facets. This allows the maximum amount of light to be refracted from the stone. As you turn the diamond, different facets reflect the light causing the diamond to sparkle. The diamond outline does not have the logical order of the ladder outline. Instead, it takes a subject and examines it from different perspectives, turning it as you would a diamond to reveal its many facets. An example of a diamond outline would be an examination of what various people saw when Jesus was on the cross. What did the thief on the cross see? What did the disciples see? What did the Pharisees see? What did the devil see? What did Jesus himself see?

- In the Acronym⁽¹⁰⁾ outline, the points spell a related word.

For example, a message on faith might have these points: Faith is a Fight; Faith is an Action; Faith is an Inspiration; Faith is a Test; Faith is a Harvest.

- In the Chase⁽¹¹⁾ outline, a question is asked and several wrong answers are given before the correct answer is revealed.

EXAMPLE: I saw this done in a sermon I heard in 1977 (Obviously this method has a great power to stick in the memory!). The sermon was called: “What is the Purpose of Life?” and it was drawn from the life of Solomon—the smartest man in the world. The question was asked to Solomon and then three possible answers were proposed from his writings in Ecclesiastes. The first answer was: certainly the purpose of life is to get as much money as you can. Solomon’s reply was: ¹⁰He who loves money will not be satisfied with money, nor he who loves wealth with his income; this also is vanity.

¹¹When goods increase, they increase who eat them, and what advantage has their owner but to see them with his eyes? (5:10,11) The second answer was: certainly the purpose of life is to have as much fun as you can. Solomon's reply was: ¹⁰And whatever my eyes desired I did not keep from them. I kept my heart from no pleasure . . . ¹¹and behold, all was vanity and a striving after wind, and there was nothing to be gained under the sun (2:10,11). The third answer was: certainly the purpose of life is to accumulate as much wisdom and education as you can. Solomon's reply was: ¹²So I turned to consider wisdom . . . ¹³and I saw that there is more gain in wisdom than in folly as there is more gain in light than in darkness. . . . ¹⁵*"What happens to the fool will happen to me also. Why then have I been so very wise?" And I said in my heart that this also is vanity. . . .* ¹⁷So I hated life, because what is done under the sun was grievous to me, for all is vanity and a striving after wind (2:12,13,15,17). Then Solomon, what is the purpose of life?

¹³The end of the matter; all has been heard. Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man. ¹⁴For God will bring every deed into judgment, with every secret thing, whether good or evil. (12:13,14)

- In the Analogy⁽¹²⁾ Outline, the entire sermon is an analogy.

In the analogy outline, you do not just use analogies but the entire message and all your points are tied to one big analogy. In early 1997, the movie Star Wars, originally released in 1977, was upgraded and re-released. Shortly after, I heard a sermon that used the re-release as an analogy to compare what God was doing in the '70s with what He was doing in the '90s. Some of the points were:

It is the same movie. God is always doing the same thing—advancing His kingdom through evangelism and discipleship. There may be slight changes and adjustments in methods but essentially it is the same.

The sound is clearer and the picture is better. God is showing us a clearer and better picture of what He wants.

There are more monsters in the upgrade. The demonic kingdom is also growing and putting forth a more concerted attack against the Church.

- In the Chorus⁽¹³⁾ Outline, a phrase is repeated throughout the message.

The famous I Have A Dream speech by Martin Luther King, Jr. is a classic example of the chorus outline. Dr. King uses several minor choruses (underlined in the text), but the main chorus is the phrase: "I have a dream."

The second concern in building a message is deciding on the beginning of your message.

2. The beginning⁽¹⁴⁾ is vital because it gets the audience's attention and establishes you in control.

Every coach knows the importance of the opening minutes in a game. If he can get his players to enforce their game plan on the other team, he knows they will have a good chance for victory. But he also knows that if his team gets behind early, they may not have enough strength to get back in the game and win. The beginning of your message is very much like the beginning of an athletic contest.

Everyone listening to a speaker asks the question, whether consciously or unconsciously, "Why should I listen to this person?" It is the responsibility of the speaker to convince them very early in the message that they have something substantial to say.

- Your beginning should be brief—it should take you quickly to the main point of the message.

In this section, I will compare the qualities of a good beginning in a message with the qualities of a good beginning in a movie. I love a movie that does not take half the film to introduce the characters and start the plot. Good movies have good beginnings and good beginnings are brief and will take you straight to the point.

- Your beginning should be arresting—it should get people's attention.

One of the best action movies of all time is the Raiders of the Lost Ark. It has one of the most arresting beginnings of any movie I have ever seen: poisoned darts, bottomless chasms, snakes, spiders, treachery, a mysterious location, suspense, and even humor! The first ten minutes reach out, grab you, and pull you into the movie with great force.

- Your beginning should be conducive—it should lead directly into the body of the message.

Conventional wisdom suggests that you begin your message with several jokes or miscellaneous comments to loosen your crowd up and establish rapport with them. And while there is some value in that approach, I prefer to get to my message as quickly as possible. I only have a few precious minutes to say what I have to say and every minute is valuable to me. I want my beginning to loosen up my crowd, establish rapport, and be relevant to what I want to communicate! For example, the opening film in the Lord of the Rings trilogy began with a brief history of the Ring. It was brief, arresting, and

conductive—it leads you into the action of the story.

- Beginnings can be informative, shocking, or personal.

Example of an informative beginning: I once heard a series of messages on the book of Colossians. The minister began with a thorough introduction into the geographical, historical, demographical, and spiritual background of Hierapolis, Laodicea, and Colossae, the three cities in the Lycus River Valley that made up metropolitan Colossae. From that informative background, he then exegetes the epistle verse by verse. The result was a staggering amount of revelation. Every verse seemed to come alive in the context of the information we had received concerning what was happening in the church of that region. That is the potential power of the informative background. Just be careful not to overwhelm your audience in too much information.

Example of a shocking beginning: I was attending an outdoor Jesus festival in 1978 when I first heard Loren Cunningham speak. After his introduction he stood silently on stage for a few moments surveying the crowd. Then, with no introductory comment, he bellowed out the words, “Jesus Christ is a liar!” After an excruciating moment of silence he shouted again, “Jesus Christ is a lunatic!” The atmosphere in the outdoor arena was thick with tension. Finally, after what seemed an interminable pause, he concluded with, “Or Jesus Christ is the King of Kings and the Lord of Lords. You must decide today.” His shocking introduction had worked; there was not one member of the audience who was not completely absorbed in what he had to say.

The personal beginning is just what it sounds like: a story or event in your life that is relevant to your theme. The personal beginning helps to build rapport with your audience and draw them into your message.

3. Endings should be dramatic and demand a response⁽¹⁵⁾.

Always end on a high note—a place of dramatic tension. I once heard a man speak who had an amazing testimony. He was a former gang member who had been saved while serving a jail sentence for shooting a woman in a JC Penney store. After he had spoken for a while he told a riveting story about his prison days. The story was very poignant and very powerful and everyone was gripped with emotion as he concluded it. I thought to myself, “Now is the perfect time to end. The atmosphere is so thick with conviction. If he ends now, there will be a great response at the altar.” But he didn’t. He spoke for another ten minutes and by the time he prayed the moment had passed and there was very little response.

Every message should end with a challenge. When we present God’s Word, we are not giving our opinions and we are not just making suggestions; we are confronting people

with truth that must be acted upon. So make sure that your challenge is clear. Tell people exactly what response God wants from them. Many altar calls lose their power because the audience is confused over who should respond and in what way.

Knowing what length your message should be and when to end is a difficult but important skill to learn. Just how long should you speak? That depends on many factors, some of them cultural and some of them personal. If you were a Puritan minister living in the 17th century New England, you would be expected to deliver a weighty two-hour message every week. Charles Spurgeon, preaching in London during the middle of the 19th century, usually spoke about 40 minutes. The noted Baptist minister Calvin Miller always speaks for 20 minutes. Different cultures and different abilities warrant different lengths. But generally you will not want to speak beyond your ability to hold your audience's interest.

The Role of Feedback

1. Feedback comes before⁽¹⁶⁾ a message is delivered.

Try to put yourself in the mind of the listeners and hear according to the condition of their hearts.

2. Feedback comes during⁽¹⁷⁾ the message from the response of people in the audience.

This is a delicate issue. We are not speaking to entertain or please people (Galatians 1:10); and we cannot be dismayed by their response (Ezekiel 3:8,9). For in the end, if we deliver the message God gave us with humility and conviction, we do not care what their response is. But if we are careful not to be swayed by their countenance, we can discern if our message is connecting or not. And often a slight adjustment as we deliver the message can make all the difference between communicating and confusing.

3. Feedback comes after⁽¹⁸⁾ the message from people who love you and will tell you the truth.

EXAMPLE: My friend, Pastor David Houston, has for many years listened to and evaluated every sermon he preached. That is a very effective way to improve your speaking—painful, but effective.

ACTIVITY

1. Name a public speaker or preacher that you like listening to. Which of the different message outlines or structures (ladder, diamond, acronym, chase,

- analogy, and chorus) does that person often use?
2. How does the importance of having good beginnings and endings help you as a Victory group leader? What improvement do you plan to make in light of it?
 3. Who among your Victory group members gives you good feedback? How often does that person do so? How do you plan to consistently tap him or her for feedback?