



**A Seven Step Procedure for a
Chapter-by-Chapter
Analysis of Scripture**

**Using the
*“Stairway of
Communication”***

**to Interpret and Proclaim
the Biblical Text**

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A Doctoral Studies Project for D831

Teaching and Communication Methods that Connect

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CHAPTER ONE

WHAT IS THE “STAIRWAY OF COMMUNICATION?”

Many have sat under preaching of the Word of God since they were old enough to sit in a pew. They have heard hundreds of sermons. Some impacted their lives spiritually. Others did not. What made the difference?

How is it that two men, both sincere preachers of the Gospel, both called to preach, could preach the same passage of Scripture to the same audience, and yet the impact upon the congregation be totally different? The one being that of a prolonged *yawn*, while the other being that of a *life changing encounter*.

Certainly the spiritual walk of a man has an impact on his preaching. Certainly some are more gifted than others in speaking skills. Certainly there are times when the audience itself is inclined to be more or less receptive. *But another reason for the difference is the way in which the preacher packages his message.*

THE GOAL OF PREACHING

The goal of all preaching should be the ...

- **convincing of the listener's mind and heart to believe or not believe**
something which the communicator feels to be important.

- **with the intent to persuade the will of the listener to do or not do**
in accordance with what the communicator wants him or her to believe or not believe.

In order to motivate the will of a listener to a desired action, a good communicator needs to take the listener a step at a time, on what I call the *Stairway of Communication*.



While the terminology is mine, the steps in the communication process are not. They are steps which good platform communicators seem to realize instinctively, like a person would climb steps on a stairway.

These steps are as follows...

1ST STEP PERSONALIZE

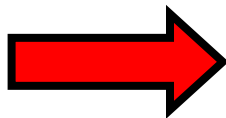
Personalize – Why is it that a speaker is first introduced to his audience before he comes to the podium or pulpit?

Why is it, even if the speaker is well known, and does not need an introduction, that he still seeks to speak on a

personal level in some way before delving into the topic at hand?

It is because a good communicator knows that he somehow needs to connect emotionally with his audience right from the start, in order to win their “want- to-listen” to what he has to say.

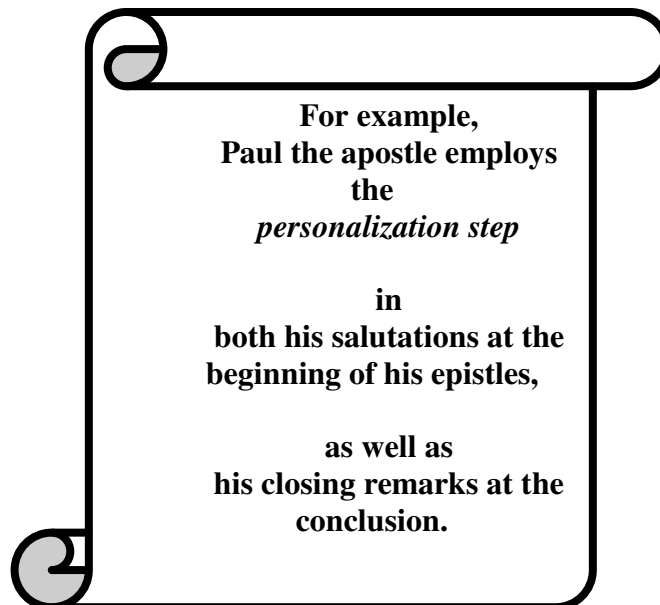
In the personalization stage, the communicator is answering a non-verbalized question on the part of his audience. That question is this:

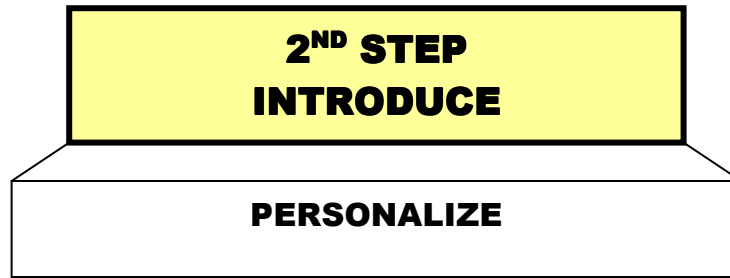


“Who are you?”,
and/or

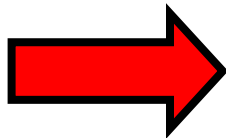
“Why should I want to listen to what you have to say on this occasion?”

Personalization can also take place throughout the sermon, through the use of personal illustrations which connect with the personal experiences of the listeners. Personalization is an effective step in the *Stairway of Communication*, provided it is not overused in the sermon.



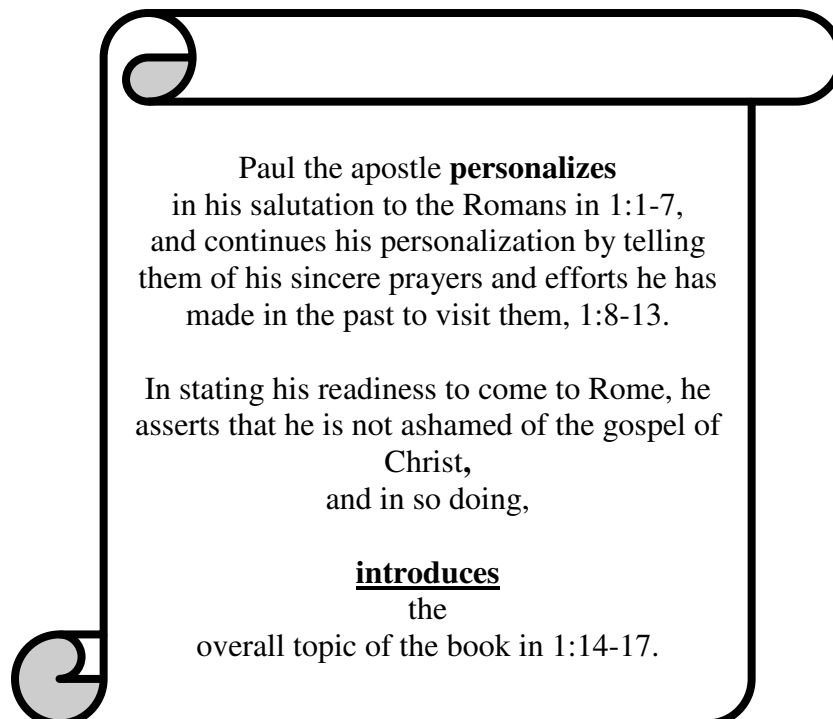


Introduce – Once a speaker feels he has connected with his audience in the personalization step, he then knows he must prepare his audience for the topic he is about to speak on. This is commonly called the introduction, in which the communicator is answering another non-verbalized question on the part of his audience. That question is:



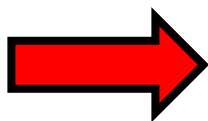
“What is the overall topic you will be talking about or presenting?”

The purpose for the introduction is to raise the interest of the audience in the topic about to be presented. The audience is now not only connected, so-to-speak, to the person communicating, but to the topic he is about to communicate as well.





Highlight – This is the main structure which will govern the flow of thought in the communication process. This is the step which answers the non-verbalized question on the part of the audience which is:



“What are the main points you want me to know about this topic?”

In Scripture, the author does not present his message in outline form. It is assumed that the reader will understand what the main points are as he reads, and follows the train of thought being presented.

For example, it becomes clear in the book of Romans that one of Paul’s main points for highlighting the power of the gospel of Christ to save (1:16), is the fact that the whole world needs salvation (1:18-3:18). This is because all lack the righteousness by which God can justify them on the basis of His Moral Law (3:19-20).

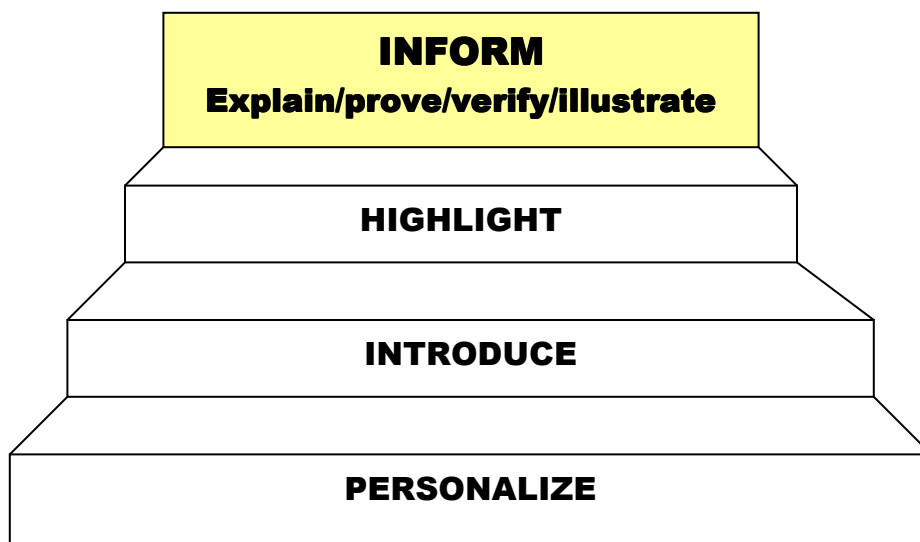
In the book of Revelation, the apostle John **highlights the main points** of the book right in the first chapter.

John is told to “*Write the things which thou hast seen,*” which he does in recording the vision he saw of the Lord (chapter one).

He is told to then to write “*the things which are,*” which he does in recording Christ’s message to the seven local churches which were in existence at that time (chapters two and three).

Thirdly, he is told to write “*the things which shall be hereafter.*” This John does, beginning with chapter four and continues through on that point to the end of the book (see 4:1).

As the communicator relates the main points of his topic, he supports those main points with information designed to either *explain, prove, verify, and/or illustrate*. This is taking an additional step in the *Stairway of Communication*.



Inform: This is the “meat and potatoes” portion of the sermon. This is the step in the sermon which should contain the most Biblical content, which, if properly interpreted and applied, provides the authoritative basis for the main points being highlighted in the sermon.

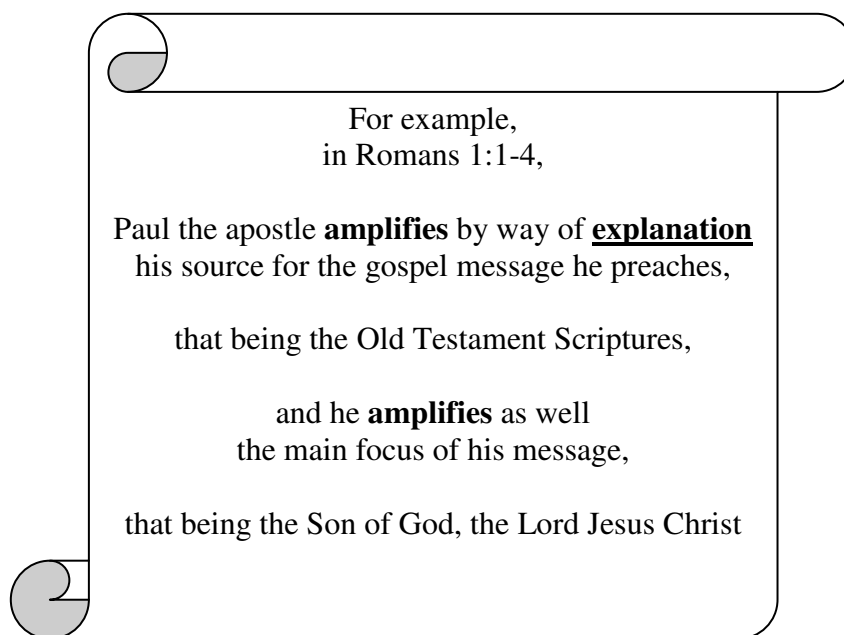
One would expect to find the information given in this step, to be in the supporting points and sub-points of the sermon outline.

Each aspect of the information step in the *Stairway of Communication* answers a different kind of question for the listener. They are as follows:



EXPLAIN: “What do you mean by what you just said.”

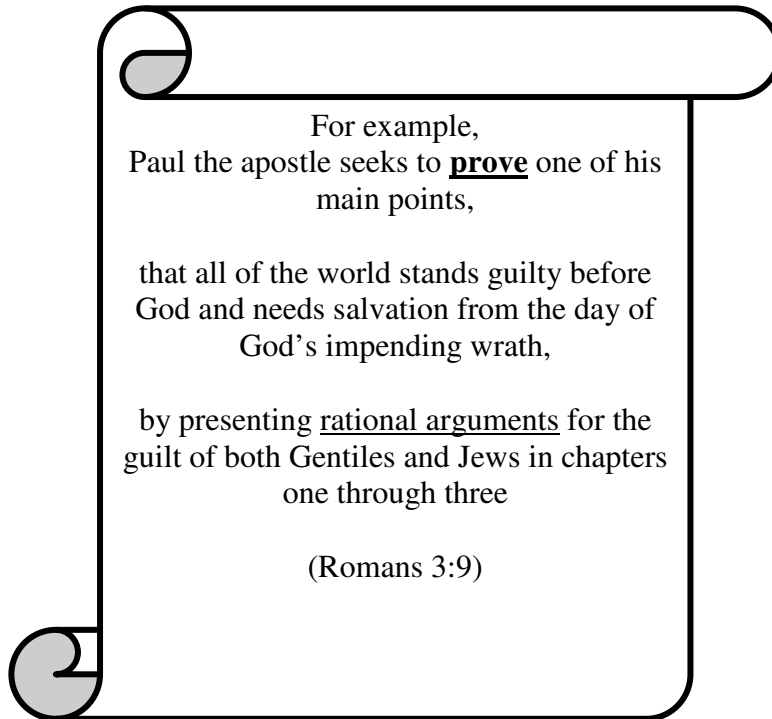
In this aspect of the information step, the sermon amplifies what was just said, to help the listener understand more fully what the speaker intends to communicate. Or the speaker defines terminology.





PROVE: “*Is what you just said really true?*”

This is the speaker’s attempt to reason with the listener, by using rational arguments to prove a point.



VERIFY: This aspect of the informing step is similar to that of proving. Except it goes one step further in answering the question: **How do you know** that what you said is **really true**?

In hermeneutics, this device would also be called “*substantiation*.” Any time a communicator cites or quotes an authority to back up his point, he is verifying on the informing step in the *Stairway of Communication*.

For example,

The apostle Paul cites the Septuagint translation of Psalm 14:1-3 in Romans 3:10-18, to **verify or substantiate** his main point which he has just proven,

which is that all the world is under the condemnation of God's divine moral law as being unrighteous and in need of salvation.



ILLUSTRATE: Which answers the question, "***How can you show me the relationship between what you are saying and something already familiar to me, by which I can better understand or agree with what you are saying?***"

Paul the apostle **shows** from the Old Testament record, the fact that Abraham was proclaimed to be just before God by faith *before* he was circumcized.

He does so, by way of illustration, to relate Abraham's justification apart from circumcision to **justification of both Jews and Gentiles** by simple faith, rather than by any action on their part to keep God's Law.
(Romans 4:9-16)

An illustration *from one's own personal experience* can also be used to serve another purpose, and that is to further verify. This is tactic in communication can be very effective, not only because the speaker is

personalizing with his audience, but also because the audience is less likely to challenge that which the speaker is declaring from his own personal experience.



THE IMPORTANCE OF ANTICIPATION

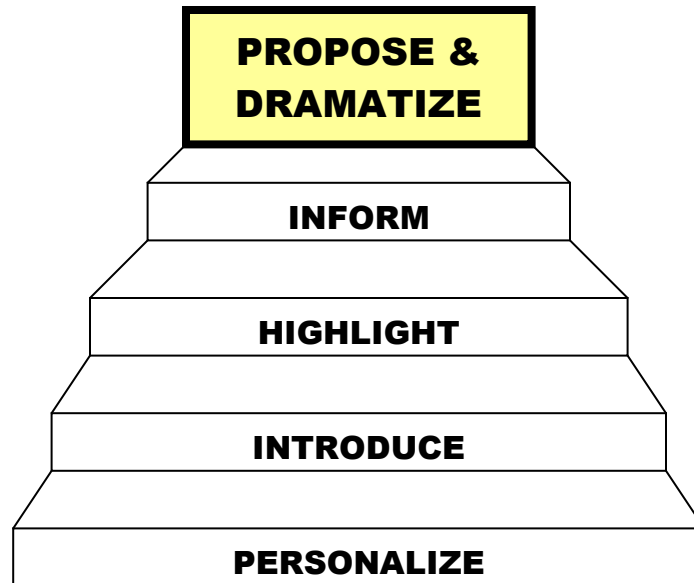
A good communicator learns to anticipate what questions an audience might raise in the minds as he speaks on a topic, such as those listed above, and seeks to satisfy those questions at the appropriate time in the communication before going on his presentation

Otherwise, a speaker may be inclined to ramble, leading his audience confused as to the direction in the sermon he is going.



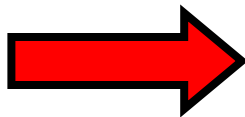
GOOD CONTENT PERSUADES , NOT YELLING

It has been the observation of this writer, that some preachers seek to cover up their lack of preparation and good Biblical content in their sermon, by resorting to more and more yelling in the effort to persuade. While a preacher needs to raise his voice at times to emphasize a point, this should not be at the expense of a proper explanation of God's Word as the basis on which a point is being made.



Propose and Dramatize – is the step in the *Stairway of Communication* when the communicator relates what it is he wants the audience **to believe or not believe**, based upon what he has been telling them to this point. It is at this point in the communication process that the speaker **seeks to convince the mind and heart of the listener.**

The proposal answers the question:



“Okay. So what! What is it that you want me to believe, or not believe about this?”

A common place in the sermon to be on the alert for this step is when the speaker is making an application of a main point in his sermon. This is the real purpose for the sermon, whether the preacher states it as such, or not.

Dramatization is included in this step in the *Stairway of Communication*, because it seeks to move the emotions of the heart by answering the question...

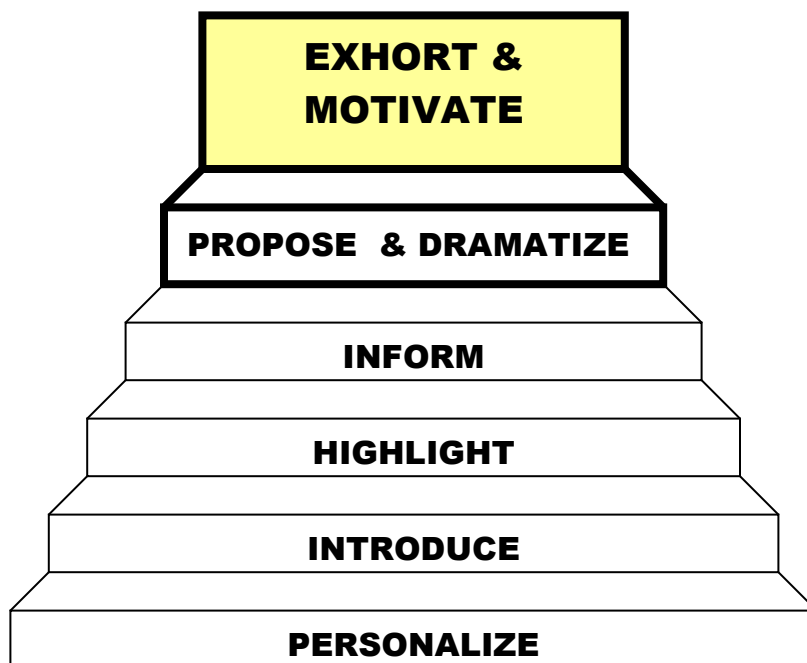


“Why is it important that I believe or not believe?”

A good example of both proposal and dramatization in the *Gospels* is *John 20:31*. The apostle John writes that the whole purpose for his writing the Gospel account, is to convince the reader that *“Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God.”* This is ultimately what he wants them to believe. He then goes on to dramatize his point by pointing out how important it is to believe. For he says that it is in believing *“ye might have life through his name.”*

This separates simple teaching from preaching. A teacher may not feel it necessary to convince the mind or persuade the will of the hearer (although a good teacher will). But a preacher must! A teacher may only inform. But a preacher must teach to change lives for the cause of Christ.

To do so, a preacher must use good speaking techniques, and he must also package his sermons in such a way as take an audience beyond simply being informed; from answering the question, *“What do you want me to know,”* to answering the question, *“What do you want me to believe or not believe, based upon what I now know.”*



Exhort and Motivate – The preacher must not be content to simply convince the mind of his audience. He must also seek to persuade the will to act. This is what brings change for the cause of Christ within a congregation responding to the declaration of God’s Word. *Look for this step again in the personal applications a preacher gives to his main points.*

Exhortation answers the question...



“Okay. So what! What is it that you want me to do, or not do, in response to what I now believe or choose not to believe?”

There is both a positive exhortation and a negative exhortation. A positive exhortation is that which the preacher seeks to persuade the will of his listener to do, and a negative exhortation seeks to persuade a listener not to do.

THE BOOK OF ROMANS

In the Book of Romans, that Paul has moved up the *Stairway of Communication* to this step by the end of chapter eleven, because he begins chapter twelve with an exhortation which he says is based upon what he said to that point. He says, “*I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God...*”

The proposal he has built up to in the preceding chapters, is that the saints to whom he is writing have experienced the blessings of salvation, because of the “mercies” of God. Assuming his intended readers are now convinced of that fact, he goes on to exhort them in the remaining chapters with a series of positive and negative exhortations.

This advance in the *Stairway of Communication* is so obvious, that it is the consensus of commentaries in outlining the book to mark a major division between chapters one through eleven, and chapters twelve through sixteen. It is typical for them to describe the first eleven chapters as being doctrinal, and the remaining chapters as being practical.

Motivation is included in this step in the *Stairway of Communication*, because it seeks to move the emotions of the heart by answering the question...



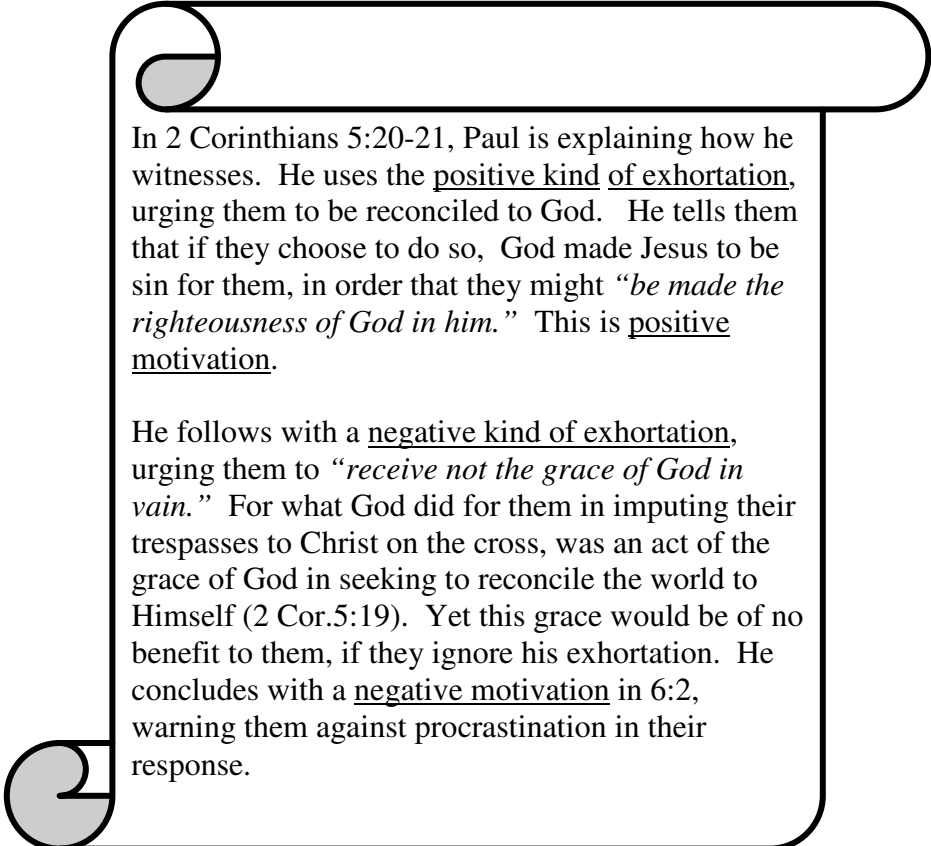
“Why is it important to me to do, or not do, in response to your exhortation? What if I do, or what if I don’t?”

Motivation and Dramatization are really functioning in the same way, but they should be distinguished. For one is seeking to convince the heart and mind to believe, or not believe, while the other is seeking to persuade the will to do, or not do.

Just as there is both a positive and negative kind of exhortation, there is also a positive and negative way to motivate. A positive motivation is a method by which the communicator emphasizes the good results or benefits he feels will occur, if the listener heeds the exhortation.

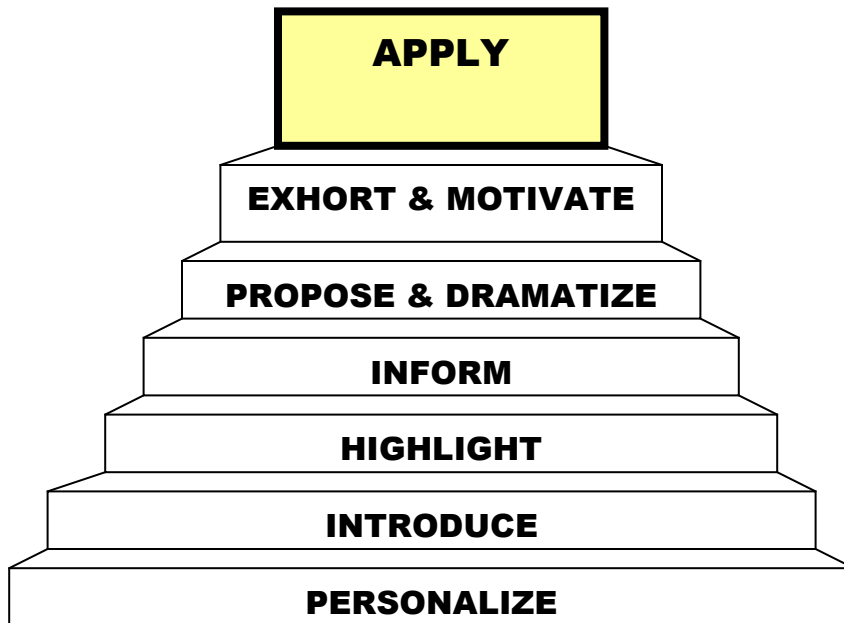
A negative motivation, or warning, emphasizes the bad results or harm which the speaker feels will occur by not heeding the exhortation. An exhortation accompanied by a warning is a negative kind of motivation, which is commonly called an “admonition.”

Under normal circumstances, the positive approach should be taken before the negative, but sometimes both are useful to emphasize the point. For example, Paul used both types of motivation in appealing to the lost on behalf of Christ.

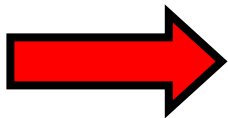


In 2 Corinthians 5:20-21, Paul is explaining how he witnesses. He uses the positive kind of exhortation, urging them to be reconciled to God. He tells them that if they choose to do so, God made Jesus to be sin for them, in order that they might “*be made the righteousness of God in him.*” This is positive motivation.

He follows with a negative kind of exhortation, urging them to “*receive not the grace of God in vain.*” For what God did for them in imputing their trespasses to Christ on the cross, was an act of the grace of God in seeking to reconcile the world to Himself (2 Cor.5:19). Yet this grace would be of no benefit to them, if they ignore his exhortation. He concludes with a negative motivation in 6:2, warning them against procrastination in their response.



Apply – Personal applications can be made throughout a sermon, in order to convince and persuade. The term here is used in a technical sense to refer to a “How to” stage in the communication. This answers the question...



How? The speaker anticipates that the listener is saying to himself, **“Okay. I will do what you want me to do. But how can I put this into practice?”**

**Example of a
“How To”
section of Scripture**

In the book of Exodus, chapters twenty-five through thirty, Moses writes the instructions the Lord gave to him on how to make the articles of furniture of the tabernacle.

Sometimes an entire sermon can be designed to answer this question, high on the *Stairway of Communication*. If so, it is assumed by the speaker that the audience does not need to be convinced or persuaded beforehand, prior to applying.

For example, one would not preach an entire sermon on “How to fulfill the Great Commission today,” unless he felt that the audience to whom he was speaking knew what the Great Commission was, and that they believed it to be applicable to today.

Finally, one reaches the pinnacle of the *Stairway of Communication*. And that is **an invitation, or a call for a decision** on the part of the preacher to his listening audience. This has been his ultimate goal, or should be; to see minds and hearts moved, and lives changed through the power of the spoken Word of God.



Invite – This step is that which is said in answer to the question...



*“Okay. I believe it. I will do it. I understand how. Now **in what manner do you want me to declare my commitment,** to do what you want me to do, or not do what you exhort me not to do?”*



There are some preachers who hesitate to call for some open display on the part of the audience of a decision in response to a sermon. Yet it should seem clear from the events of the beginning of the church on the Day of Pentecost, that Peter was calling for a visible expression of response to his sermon. Otherwise, how would they know who had “gladly received his word” and then were baptized? Acts 2:41.

Please note that one does not *have to* climb the steps of the *Stairway* in precisely the order given, or even include all of the steps in each and every sermon. But one should know where he is on the *Stairway* at all stages in his communication.

A good way to sharpen one’s skills is to evaluate speeches and sermons delivered by others. One should try to determine how a speaker climbed the *Stairway* to convince and persuade, and what they did in the process which seemed to be effective. Then again, one might come to the conclusion that the same topic could have been delivered differently, in a more effective manner. Either way, learning to think in terms of the *Stairway of Communication* will enhance one’s ability to proclaim God’s Word to others.

CHAPTER TWO

**A Seven Step Procedure of
chapter-by-chapter analysis,**

**Incorporating the
“*Stairway of
Communication*”**

INTRODUCTION:

The same steps of communication which apply to preaching also apply to writing. In other words, one can find the same steps in the *Stairway* being applied by the human authors of Scripture.

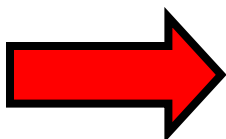
In order to determine how the Biblical author is using the *Stairway*, one must first discover his flow of thought. Every verse of Scripture must be analyzed in light of the verse which precedes it.

There is a purpose in **why** the author says what he says, and **the order** in which he says it.

The purpose for this chapter is to provide a **simple seven step procedure** for examining a book of the Bible, one chapter at a time, whereby a preacher can learn to properly interpret the author's intent behind what he writes.

It is in the **first five steps** where the author's thinking process is analyzed, verse-by-verse. And it is in **the sixth step** where the text is analyzed in light of the "Stairway of Communication," in learning to ask the right questions to determine the purpose or intent of the author in what he has written. **A seventh step** is added to help the student of the Word also analyze the text theologically.

*Following these seven steps, chapter-by-chapter, throughout a book of the Bible, will greatly assist the preacher in his interpretation and proclamation of the Biblical text. **This procedure will bring satisfaction in the process of Biblical study, whether the text is written in narrative, poetic, or didactic form.***



STEP ONE: Title of Verse

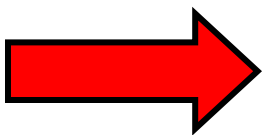
Try to caption that which briefly summarizes what each verse is talking about. While it is recognized that the verse markings are arbitrary, they are helpful in tracing the author's thought pattern. It may be that the same title has to be given to two or more verses.

If done well, a person should be able to quickly review the content of a chapter, simply by reading the titles given to each verse.

EXAMPLE OF GENESIS 12

Step One: Verse Titles

- 12:1 The Lord's Previous Command to Abram
- 12:2 The Lord's Previous Promise to Abram personally
- 12:3 The Lord's Previous Promise to Abram regarding Gentiles
- 12:4 Abram's Departure from Haran
- 12:5 Abram's Wealth upon Departure from Haran
- 12:6 Abram's Arrival in Canaan
- 12:7 The Lord's Appearance and Abram's First Altar
- 12:8 Abram's Encampment at Bethel and Second Altar
- 12:9 Abram Heads Southwards
- 12:10 Abram's Move Towards Egypt due to Grievous Famine in Canaan
- 12:11 Abram's Expression of Concern to Sarah about her Beauty upon Entering Egypt
- 12:12 Abram's Expression of Concern to Sarah about Fears for His Life in Egypt Because of Her Beauty
- 12:13 Abram's Suggestion to Sarah to Alleviate His Concern
- 12:14 Egyptians Observe Sarah's beauty
- 12:15 Sarah taken to become one of Pharaoh's Harem
- 12:16 Pharaoh's Dowry Payment to Abram for Sarah
- 12:17 The Lord's Plague upon Pharaoh's Household because of Sarah
- 12:18 Abram's Rebuke by Pharaoh
- 12:19 Pharaoh's Return of Sarah to Abram
- 12:20 Abram's Expulsion from Egypt



STEP TWO: Key Question (s) and Answer (s)

Turn the verse into a question and answer, by asking yourself, “What is the main question the author is seeking to answer for his intended readers in this verse?” And then, “What is his answer, or answers to the question”

Every verse gives information supplying answers to anticipated questions about ***who, what, where, why, and how***. One needs to learn how to determine which is the key question, and subordinate everything else in the verse to that key question.

Because verse markings have been added to the Biblical text, it may be that more than one key question is being answered in a verse. And it may be that a verse should to be broken down into two key questions being answered. But one should strive to incorporate the entire verse into one key question being answered.

After determining the key question and answer, write it out or type it, using as much as possible the words of the text. Check to see if there is anything in the verse left out. This step is designed to check one’s accurate observation of Scripture as to what it actually says. Accurate observation is usually the first step taught in the practice of Hermeneutics or Bible study methods.

In analyzing the familiar verse, John 3:16, for example, the first word “*For*” is functioning as a connecting link to what was said in the previous verse. The statement “*God so loved the world*” is given to explain **why** God gave His only begotten Son. And the other statements which follow give another **why**, which is to explain the purpose for which God gave His only begotten Son.

So the Key Question of John 3:16 is a **Why** question. And the rest of the verse gives two answers to that question. It can be written out in this manner:

Why did God give His only begotten Son?

- Answer: 1. Because God so loved the world.
 2. And so that whosoever believeth in him, should not perish, but have everlasting life.

It is important to note that this is a key question the author is answering for his intended readers, and is not to be confused with questions a person may have about what is said in the verse.

For example, one may have a question arise in his mind in reading John 3:16, as to what the term “begotten” means. But that is **not** the key question the author is answering in this verse.

EXAMPLE OF GENESIS TWELVE
Step Two: Key Question/Answer
 (based upon the King James Translation)

12:1 What the Lord had said for Abram to do?

Ans: For him to...

1. Get out of his country
2. And from his kindred
3. And from his father's house
4. Unto a land that He would show him.

12:2 What the Lord had said He would do for Abram?

Ans: That He would...

1. Make of him a great nation
2. Bless him
3. Make his name great
4. And that he would be a blessing

12:3 What the Lord had said He would do to others because of Abram?

Ans: That He would...

1. Bless those who blessed Abram
2. Curse those who cursed Abram
3. Bring blessing to all the families of the earth through Abram

12:4 Who was with Abram when he left Haran, as the Lord had told him?

Ans: Lot

How old was Abram?

Ans: 75 years old

12:5 Who and what did Abram take with him, when he went forth to go into the land of Canaan?

Ans: He took with him...

1. Sarai his wife
2. Lot his brother's son
3. All their substance that they had gathered
4. And all the souls that they had gotten in Haran

12:6 Where did Abram go when he arrived in Canaan?

Ans: Abram passed through the land unto the place of Sichem, unto the plain of Moreh.

Who was then in the land?

Ans: The Canaanite

(Example of Genesis Twelve, Step Two, Key Question/Answer, continued)

12:7 What did Abram do when the Lord appeared unto Abram, and said, Unto thy seed will I give this land?

Ans: He built an altar unto the Lord who appeared unto him.

12:8 What did Abram do when he moved from there to a mountain on the east of Bethel, and pitched his tent with Bethel on the west, and Hai on the east?

Ans: He built an altar unto the Lord, and called upon the name of the Lord.

12:9 In which direction did Abram continue his journey?

Ans: Toward the south

12:10 Why did Abram go down into Egypt to sojourn there?

Ans: Because there was a grievous famine in the land of Canaan

12:11 What did Abram say to Sarai his wife, when he was come near to enter into Egypt?

Ans: Behold now, I know that thou art a fair woman to look upon

12:12 What did Abram tell Sarai the Egyptians would do to him and to her, when they saw her and said to one another that she was his wife?

Ans: That they would kill him, but they would save her alive

12:13 Why did Abram beg her to say she was his sister?

Ans:

1. So that it might be well with him, for her sake
2. And so that his soul shall live because of her

12:14 What did the Egyptians behold about the woman when Abram was come into Egypt?

Ans: That she was very fair

12:15 What happened to the woman when the princes of Pharaoh also saw her, and commended her to him?

Ans: She was taken into Pharaoh's house

12:16 How could Pharaoh treat Abram well for her sake?

Ans: Pharaoh had sheep, and oxen, and he asses, and menservants, and maidservants, and she asses, and camels.

12:17 What did the Lord do to Pharaoh and his house because of Sarai Abram's wife?

Ans: He plagues him and his house with great plagues

(Example of Genesis Twelve, Step Two, Key Question/Answer, continued)

12:18 What did Pharaoh ask Abram when he called for him?

Ans: He asked him...

1. What is this that thou hast done unto me?
2. Why didst thou not tell me that she was thy wife?

12:19 (con't)

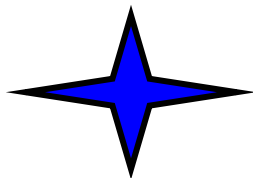
3. Why saidst thou, She is my sister? So I might have taken her to me to wife?

What did Pharaoh tell Abram to do?

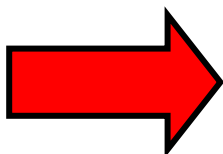
Ans: Now therefore behold thy wife, take her, and go thy way.

12:20 What did Pharaoh's men do with Abram, after Pharaoh commanded them concerning him?

Ans: They sent him away, and his wife, and all that he had



Analyzing the content of each verse in the order they are found, for the purpose of discovering the key questions the author is answering for his intended readers, helps the preacher grasp the overall argument of the book, and the direction of thought the author is taking within the book to support his argument. It helps prepare one for analysis of each chapter in light of the *Stairway of Communication*.



STEP THREE: Flow of Thought

In the first two steps, the content of each verse was being analyzed. In this step, it is the pattern of thought being followed by the author in the sequence of verses, which is being analyzed. There are **common literary devices** used to identify flow of thought. Some of these are now listed.

COMMON LITERARY DEVICES TO IDENTIFY FLOW OF THOUGHT

Continuation (additional information to what is explained in the previous verse, which gives no other contribution to the literary flow of thought)

General to Particular (as a whole to its parts) or **Particular to General** (a part in relation to the whole)

Cause to Effect (reason for, purpose for, or basis upon which, to result),
or **Effect to Cause** (Result, to what caused the result)

Contrast and/or Comparison, or Analogy (extended contrast or comparison)

Problem to Solution or Solution to Problem

Lesser to Greater or Greater to Lesser

Interrogation (Question and Answer sequence)

Protasis ("if," as a condition) **to Apodosis** ("then," as a result)

Interruption (to make a side comment) or **Parenthetical** (an extended interruption)

Pivot (a verse which serves as a transitional statement, pointing out what has been said before and introducing something new)

Identification (naming persons or things)

Description (Explaining what something or someone is like)

Emphasis, or Repetition (usually for emphasis)

Substantiation (cited as evidence for, or proof of)

Illustration (An example cited for the purpose of comparison or contrast)

Proposition (A statement the author seeks to then prove)

Assertion (a statement of fact assumed by the author to be true, from which he then makes deductions)

Deduction (Conclusions based upon propositions or assertions)

Salutation (Greetings, usually at the beginning or the end of a book)

Benediction (A prayer or expression of good will at the beginning or end)

Introduction (The beginning of a new argument)

Insertion (The brief mention of a person or subject, to be expanded later)

Reflection (A reference to something said previously)

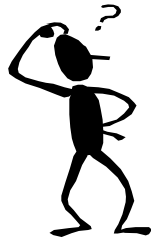
Commentary (author's personal comments on a matter)

Alternation (back and forth in discussing persons or subject matter)

Manner/Means (explains how something was said or done)

Climax (The point of greatest intensity in any series or progression of events; the culmination)

Proportion (the number of verses pertaining to a given subject, compared to the author's treatment of other subject matter)



A question to answer in taking this step is, “**What literary devices** are being used by the author to move the flow of thought of this verse from the verse or verses which precede?”

For example: Is the author showing a *contrast or comparison*, a *cause or effect*? Is he moving from *general to particular*, or vice versa, or *problem to solution*? Is he arguing from *greater to lesser*, or the reverse? Is he emphasizing through *repetition* or *substantiating* a point already made? Is he moving from the *protasis* to the *apodosis* in a conditional statement?

And there are others. Terminology may differ in what one describes the flow of thought to be, from verse to verse, but the *important thing is to properly interpret what that flow is*, in the author’s thought processes.

It is important to note that there is a reason an author makes statements in the order he does. One should never determine the meaning of a text without noting what was said before, *especially immediately before* in the context!

EXAMPLE OF GENESIS 12:1-5

Step Three: Flow of Thought

(King James Translation)

Step Three

INTERRUPTION

For purpose of
Comparison with what
Abram was told to do
(12:1) and what he did
(11:31-32)

COMPARISON

Between what Abram
was to do (v.1), and
what God promised He
would do for Abram (v.2)

SPECIFIC-TO- GENERAL

From what God would
do for Abram (v.2), to
what God would do for
Gentiles through Abram
and his offspring, (v.3)

Step Two

12:1 What the Lord had said for Abram to do?

Ans: For him to...

1. Get out of his country
2. And from his kindred
3. And from his father's house
4. Unto a land that He would show him.

12:2 What the Lord had said He would do for Abram?

Ans: That He would...

1. Make of him a great nation
2. Bless him
3. Make his name great
4. And that he would be a blessing

12:3 What the Lord had said He would do to others because of Abram?

Ans: That He would...

1. Bless those who blessed Abram
2. Curse those who cursed Abram
3. Bring blessing to all the families of the earth through Abram

END OF INTERRUPTION OR PARENTHETICAL SECTION

CONTINUATION

Of the story from 11:32
Comparison with what
Abram was told to do
(12:1) with what he did.
Repetition of "Lot" for
Emphasis (cf. 11:31-32)

12:4 Who was with Abram when he left Haran, as the Lord had told him?

Ans: Lot

INSERTION OF AGE

For purpose of story
Yet to be told

How old was Abram?

Ans: 75 years old

REPETITION

to Emphasize Lot's
continued presence
(cf. 12:1)

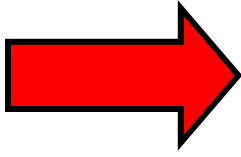
12:5 Who and what did Abram take with him, when he went forth to go into the land of Canaan?

Ans: He took with him...

1. Sarai his wife
2. Lot his brother's son
3. All their substance that they had gathered
4. And all the souls that they had gotten in Haran

COMPARISON

Between what the Lord
Had promised and what
He did.



STEP FOUR: Comments

As the student of Scripture analyzes the text of a chapter, using the first three steps, different thoughts of personal questions about what the text says, or different ideas of personal interpretation, will surface. This is the time for a *closer inspection* of the text to determine meaning.



As these thoughts occur, *they should be recorded before they are forgotten*. The best way to keep records of these comments, are by listing the words or phrases of the verse in question, and then by making comments as they come to mind.

For example, one may record that a certain word or phrase is that which one would like to do further research when time permits; perhaps a word study, etc. Or, one may record a comment which was read from another resource, such as a commentary, which was felt to be useful. Be sure to give appropriate credit for any such comments, so as to know the source for future reference.

As one keeps files on each chapter of a book, it is step four which should increase in size, as one reviews his study of the text. This becomes an excellent way to build upon previous research and thought pertaining to a passage of God's Word. These comments will be useful when reviewing a particular chapter of the Bible, serving as a reminder of what has already been observed, as well as what further research was felt to be needed in the future.

GENESIS 12:1-4

Illustrating the Fourth Step of Sermon Preparation: Comments

12:1 The Lord's Previous Command to Abram

Now the Lord had said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will shew thee.

Comments:

Now the Lord had said unto Abram - refers to God the Father in particular, as noted in Stephen's sermon (cf. Acts 7:2-3 with 7:55).

Moses is reflecting back upon what he has just said in 11:27-32 in order to compare what Abram did in response to a command the Lord had given to him.

One would normally expect Moses to follow 11:32, where he mentions that Terah died in Haran, with the next sequence of events he mentions in 12:4. But Moses interrupts the sequence of events to make a parenthetical statement about what the Lord had told Abram originally before he left Ur of Chaldees, as mentioned in 11:31. The reason he does so is to set up a comparison and a contrast between what the Lord had told Abram to do, and what Abram actually did.

It becomes obvious that while Abram did obey the first command, he did not obey the last three commands. He took his father with him, and Lot his nephew, and he dwelt in Haran rather than going on to the land the Lord would show him. Perhaps this is the reason that Moses says in 11:31 that Terah took Abram, for in those days the culture of society would expect that the patriarch be recognized as the head of the extended family.

The NAS translates this verse as "*Now the Lord said,*" rather than "*had said,*" as translated by the KJV, the NKJV, and the NIV. This would leave one with the impression that the Lord spoke these words to Abram after Terah died in Haran. But common sense would indicate that the Lord would not tell Abram to leave his country (being Ur of Chaldees) after he had already done so, or to leave his father's house after Terah had died. Furthermore, Luke records that Stephen said that these words were spoken to Abram before he dwelt in Haran, and that Abram did not actually go on to the land of promise until after his father Terah had died in Haran (Acts 7:2-4).

(Genesis 12:1-4, Fourth Step: Comments, continued)

Get thee out of thy country - means the Lord told him to leave his homeland, being Ur of Chaldees, in lower Mesopotamia towards the Persian Gulf.

and from thy kindred - means those related to Abram by birth.

and from thy father's house - or literally, *the house of your father*. Terah was Abram's father, and the reason the Lord commanded Abram to leave his father when he departed from Ur, was because of his father's idolatry. The Lord is a jealous God, and He will not bless those who compromise with idolaters, even when those worshipping other gods may be those of one's immediate family. Separation is commanded. Joshua many years later told the Israelites to "*put away the gods which your fathers served on the other side of the flood (or the Euphrates River), and in Egypt; and serve ye the Lord*" (Josh.24:14). Compare what Jesus said in Luke 14:26.

unto a land that I will shew thee - indicates that the Lord did not tell Abram where he would end up. It would be up to Abram to just go, as the Lord had commanded, and the Lord would show him when he had arrived at the land of promise. Abram naturally followed the river north along the Euphrates, but he stopped to dwell in Haran. Evidently Abram's father was in charge, being the patriarch, and his father liked this city which was dedicated to the worship of the moon god and goddess - like that of the city of Ur from which they came.

12:2 The Lord's Previous Promise to Abram Personally

And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing:

Comments: This continues the parenthetical section to set up a comparison between what the Lord had said to Abram, and what the Lord actually did. The significance of what Moses is doing will become apparent in the verses which follow. Abram's faith was weak, but he nevertheless demonstrated faith in leaving Ur. So God encouraged Abram by blessing him, even when Abram's obedience was not complete. This should be of encouragement to Israel as Moses is writing to them, as well as to us today in our sojourn of faith.

(Genesis 12:1-4, Fourth Step: Comments, continued)

I will make of thee a great nation - means that the Lord will cause Abram to have a son, even though Sarai was barren, as noted by Moses in 11:30. And not only have a son, but through that miracle son, enable Abram to become the father of a great nation. The nation Israel which came forth from the loins of Abram was therefore a miracle of God.

And I will bless thee - refers to financial blessing and good health. The physical needs of this life would be met.

And make thy name great - means that Abram's name would become famous.

And thou shalt be a blessing - means Abram would be a source of divine blessing to those associated with him and in his favour.

12:3 The Lord's Previous Promise to Abram Regarding Gentiles

And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all the families of the earth be blessed.

Comments: This concludes the parenthetical section with again a promise from the Lord to Abram. The difference between this promise and that of verse two, is the Lord switches from promises to Abram personally to promises regarding the rest of the families of the earth, i.e. the Gentiles. The Lord promises to protect Abram and his great nation from those who would despise him, or them, because of their association with the Lord of Abram. He also promises to bless all the Gentiles because of what He will do for Abram.

I will bless them that bless thee - means good things will come from the Lord upon those who treat Abram and his offspring well. The book of Genesis will demonstrate that God kept His word to Abram personally, and He has continued to do so down through history in relation to those who treat the nation Israel well. This makes a great study through the Scriptures as one traces the history of the nation Israel.

I will curse him that curseth thee - right down to the individual. Note the switch from the "them" of the previous clause, to the "him" of this clause.

(Genesis 12:1-4, Fourth Step: Comments, continued)

in thee shall all the families of the earth be blessed - is a promise that God fulfilled through one seed which would come forth from the great nation of Abram's offspring; that one seed being Christ. Compare Gen.22:18 with Gal.3:16.

12:4 Abraham's Departure from Haran

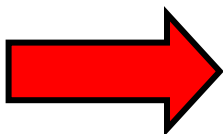
So Abram departed, as the Lord had spoken unto him; and Lot went with him: and Abram was seventy and five years old when he departed out of Haran.

Comments: Moses picks up the narrative again he departed from temporarily in 11:32. He points out that Abram did depart from Haran after his father Terah died, because Abram did remember what God had told him to do back in Ur. This is implied by the words "*as the Lord had spoken unto him.*" Thus, the cause-to-effect relationship.

So Abram departed, as the Lord had spoken unto him - means that Abram didn't fully obey the Lord's original command until after Terah had died. Perhaps the Lord removed Terah to get Abram going again in his sojourn of faith. Nothing, not even our parents, are more important than obedience to the Lord's command.

"*and Lot went with him*" Moses also points out that Lot went with him as well. Why would Moses do so, especially in light of the fact that he had already mentioned Lot's being with Abram in 11:31? Is it not obvious that he is contrasting again what the Lord had told Abram to do back in Ur, and what Abram is still not completely obeying, and that is God's command to leave his kindred and his father's house?

Note how easy this format is to follow. The title given to the verse in Step One is typed in bold print and underlined next to the chapter and verse marking. The verse is then typed under the title in italics and non-bold type. What follows then is the word "Comments" in bold print, and the comments are typed out adjacent to the words or phrases of the verse being discussed.



STEP FIVE: Paragraphs of Thought with Titles

In the previous four steps, each verse has been analyzed separately, in the sequence they are written. It is now time to link verses together, which seem to have a common unit of thought by reason of the key questions they are answering. This grouping of verses into small sections of thought, usually from three to six or seven verses, will become paragraphs.

This grouping of paragraphs will, of course, be subject to one's interpretation, but this step in the analysis process will greatly aid the student in seeing how each chapter fits together. This process also enables a preacher to break down a chapter into more than one sermon, if he chooses to do so.

Give a title to each paragraph, summarizing basically what it is discussing. Underneath the title, basically summarize why these verses are grouped together into one paragraph, and explain the relationship between the paragraphs.

THE FIFTH STEP: GENESIS 12 DIVIDING A CHAPTER INTO PARAGRAPHS

12:1-3 The Lord's Previous Command and Promise to Abram

In this paragraph, the author pauses in the narrative to reflect on what God had said to Abram before he left Ur.

12:4-5 Abram's Company in Leaving Haran

In this paragraph, the author takes up the narrative again from chapter eleven, to describe Abram's departure from Haran after his father Terah died. Moses repeats the fact from 11:31 that Lot was with Abram.

(Illustrating the Fifth Step, continued)

12:6-8 Abram's Worship when the Lord appears to Him upon Arrival in the Land of Promise

In this paragraph, the author relates how the Lord appeared to Abram only when he finally arrived in the land God had intended for him to go. Evidently God had not intended for Abram to stop traveling when he arrived in Haran, and it took his father's death before Abram started traveling again. Abram's response to the Lord's personal appearance was to worship the Lord in a public manner among the Canaanites, who revered other so-called gods and lords.

12:9-10 Abram's Departure from the Land of Promise due to Famine

In this paragraph, the author tells of Abram's original settlement at Bethel, but then his decision to leave towards Egypt when a severe famine occurred. This is again a failure on the part of Abram, though very understandable to us, to believe in the provision of God. Had not God appeared to him and revealed that Abram was where God wanted him to be? The situation will go from bad to worse to the end of the chapter, at which time God has to intervene to bail him out of trouble.

12:11-13 Abram Suggests that his Wife Lie

In this paragraph, the author informs us of Abram's concern regarding the beauty of his wife in the eyes of the Egyptians (she must have been a "knock-out" even at her age), and his suggestion for her to lie about her relationship to him in order to spare his life. He asked her to do this for both her sake, as well as his. This failure on Abram's part is an effect of the previous failure in 12:9-10. The cause-to-effect relationship of one failure leading to another should not be overlooked.

(Illustrating the Fifth Step, continued)

12:14-16 Pharaoh Takes Sarah into his Harem

In this paragraph, the author substantiates the fear of Abram regarding the response of the Egyptian men to the beauty of his wife. Yet Abram did not anticipate the fact that it would be Pharaoh himself who would desire to have her. Abram did accept the large dowry given to him, but at the cost –he thought at the time - of losing his wife for good. This must have caused great heartache to Abram. But what else could he do. He was trapped in a difficult situation in a foreign land, outside of the geographical will of God.

12:17-20 The Lord Plagues Pharaoh to Deliver Abram and Sarah

In this paragraph, the author points out the Lord's intervention to prevent Pharaoh's touching Abram's wife, because of the Lord's promise made to Abram as recorded in the first paragraph, 12:1-3. It is Pharaoh himself who commands that Abraham be escorted out of the land.

Notice that Abram leaves Egypt a very wealthy man, much of which was given to him by Pharaoh, Gen.13:1-2.

Note: One cannot escape the similarity between this event in Abram's life, and that which happened to the nation of Israel over four hundred years later, when the Egyptians permitted the Jews to take whatever they wanted to induce them to leave because of God's plagues upon them.



STEP SIX: *The Stairway of Communication*

A proclaimer of God's Word does not want to miss the purpose for which the author of Scripture writes to his intended readers. This is why this sixth step, the *Stairway of Communication* is helpful to keep in the back of one's mind, in the process of analyzing a book, one chapter at a time.

It is important to remember that the goal of good communication is convincing the mind to believe, or not believe, and persuading the will to do, or not to do. The same applies to Scripture.

To this point, each chapter in a book has been looked at verse-by-verse, and paragraph-by-paragraph. It is the purpose of this next step to *view the chapters and book as a whole*, and seek to determine **why** the author says what he says to his intended readers? **What is he trying to convince them to believe or not believe? What is he trying to persuade them to do or not do? And where is he on the *STAIRWAY OF COMMUNICATION* in this chapter in his efforts to do so?**

To accomplish this step, one must have an *overall view* of the book, to be able to determine where the author is taking his readers by way of subject matter. One must also know the *historical setting* of the author and his intended readers. And one must be familiar with the *Stairway of Communication*, as set forth in the first chapter, to determine where the author is in his efforts to communicate.

A reference Bible, or commentaries on a book of the Bible, provide helpful information as to the historical setting. More than one should be consulted for this information before beginning the seven step analysis.

Some of the following questions would have already been answered in the mind of the student as he goes through a book of the Bible, a chapter at a time. But it is helpful to not assume one will always remember them or the answers to them. So it is time in Step Six, to write them down for future reference in preparing sermons.

1. To whom is this author addressing these remarks?
2. At what time in history is he making these comments?
3. Why is the author interested in making these remarks to them at this time in Biblical history?
4. What is the author trying to convince his intended readers to believe, or not believe (overall, to this point)?
5. What is the author trying to persuade his intended readers to do, or not do (overall)
6. Why does the author feel it necessary to convince them, or persuade them?
7. How do the verses of this text contribute towards the author's objectives? Where is he on the *Stairway of Communication*?
8. How do the objectives of the author affect application to our lives today, in what we are to believe or not believe, to do or not do?

If for example, one were to select the Scriptural passage of Genesis 12:1-4 for a sermon text to preach in a particular church service, answering these questions related to the *Stairway of Communication* **prior to** developing a sermon outline would be most helpful.

EXAMPLE OF STEP SIX: GENESIS 12:1-4

Answering Questions in light of The Stairwell of Communication

- 1. To whom is this author addressing these remarks?**
Moses addresses these remarks to the nation of Israel as the beginning segment of the Torah, or the Law, otherwise known as the Book of the Covenant, Exodus 24:7. The Mosaic Law includes the first five books of the Old Testament.
- 2. At what time in history is he making these comments?**
Moses began writing these remarks as the children of Israel were gathered at Mt. Sinai, after having been redeemed from bondage to Egypt for 400 years.
- 3. Why is the author interested in making these remarks to them at this time in Biblical history?**
Moses is interested in communicating these truths to the Israelites, because he has been chosen of God to lead them as they go to take possession of the land God promised to Abram many years before. Abram is the father of the Jewish people, Gen.12:1-3.

(Example of Genesis 12:1-4: Step Six, *Stairway of Communication Continued*)

4. What is the author trying to convince his intended readers to believe, or not believe (overall, to this point)?

Moses is writing the book of Genesis, which means “beginnings,” for the following reasons: To convince his people that...

- a. The God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, is the only true God, and will share His glory with no other so-called God.
- b. God has delivered the Israelites from bondage to Egypt because of the promises He made to Abraham. These promises being to make of him a great nation, to give to him and his posterity a land, to bless those who bless him and his offspring, to curse those who curse him and his offspring, and to make his name great.
- c. God has the power to provide for their basic needs as a people.
- d. The land occupied by the Canaanites, to which they will be going, is the land God promised to them as Abraham’s physical offspring.
- e. God knows their responses to Him and rewards obedience.
- f. God keeps His promises, even when they are not completely faithful in their obedience to Him.
- g. Any area of failure on their part to trust and obey God completely, will result in trouble for them and personal heartache.

5. What is the author trying to persuade his intended readers to do, or not do (overall)?

To be willing to leave Mt. Sinai and possess the land God has promised to them.

(Example of Genesis 12:1-4: Step Six, *Stairway of Communication Continued*)

6. Why does the author feel it necessary to convince them, or persuade them?

Because at the time Moses writes this Book of the Covenant, the nation has not been demonstrating the kind of faith they should have by now, especially in light of God's recent action at the Red Sea to deliver His people from Pharaoh and his Egyptian army. Compare Exodus 15:22-17:7

7. How do the verses of this text contribute towards the author's objectives? Where is he on the *Stairway of Communication*?

The verses in Genesis 12:1-4 relate to the above stated purposes for the book as a whole...

Genesis 12:1-3 are the initial promises God made to Abraham, which became the basis for the right of Israel to possess the land of Canaan. (see point 4b)

Genesis 12:4 emphasizes an incomplete obedience on the part of Abram, which causes him trouble later, as recorded in chapters thirteen and fourteen. (see point 4e)

8. How do the objectives of the author affect application to our lives today, in what we are to believe or not believe, to do or not do?

- a. It helps to explain why the Jews are still around, in spite of their history of disobedience to the commandments of the God of Israel. He will yet fulfill His promises to Abraham and his offspring, and prove to the Gentiles that He is the only true God of both Jew and Gentile.
- b. It helps to emphasize the importance of complete obedience.
- c. It helps to encourage us in our walk of faith, in that God did bless Abraham for the faith he did demonstrate in leaving his homeland, even though his obedience was partial rather than complete.



STEP SEVEN: Systematic Theology

The reason Steps Six and Seven receive a star, is because these two steps are the climax of one's analysis of Scripture. All Scripture is given for *doctrine* (which is what we should believe), for *correction* (which is what we should not believe), for *reproof* (what we should not do), and for *instruction in righteousness* (what we should do), 2 Timothy 3:16.

The word "doctrine" includes teachings about God, about man, and about the world in which he lives. Learning to categorize these teachings is a Biblical science called Systematic Theology.

There is a dearth of theological, doctrinal preaching today, and churches are suffering the consequences.

Many church attenders are not able to articulate their own faith to others, beyond a recounting of one's personal testimony.

And many have no idea what to look for in a church, by reason of what it stands for, or what it doesn't, in light of the foundational doctrines of the Christian Faith.

One of the reasons for this is because many preachers themselves are not thinking theologically through Scripture. This step is designed to help one think in the following terms when preaching:

TERMS FOR SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY

Theology Proper

What the chapter says about God in general, and God the Father in particular.

Christology

What the chapter says about the Son of God, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Pneumatology

What the chapter says about the Holy Spirit.

Anthropology

What the chapter says about man in his spiritual, psychological, and physical being.

Hamartiology

What the chapter says about sin and its consequences.

Soteriology

What the chapter says about salvation.

Ecclesiology

What the chapter says about the church, both universal and local.

Eschatology

What the chapter says about that which would be future from the time the author wrote. Or what the chapter says about previous prophecy.

Angelology

What the chapter says about angels.

Cosmotology

What the chapter says about the universe of the heavens and earth.

Bibliology

What the chapter says about Scripture.

One should keep in mind the different Biblical Dispensations, in the presentation of this step.

**ILLUSTRATING THE SEVENTH STEP: SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY
GENESIS 12:1-4**

Theology Proper

12:1

- The Lord is a personal God. He spoke to Abram.
- The earth and possession of it is the Lord's to give.
- The Lord reveals His will.

12:2

- The Lord enabled Abram to have a son.
- The Lord promised to make a great nation of Abram. He has the power over the womb.
- The Lord promised to make Abram's name great. So He has power to promote.

12:3

- The Lord has the power to bless or do good for, as well as curse or do harm to his creatures.

Christology

12:3

- While Christ is not mentioned specifically, he is indirectly referred to when the Lord promised to bless the families of the earth through Abram and the nation which would come forth from his loins. For Paul says this was a prophecy ultimately fulfilled in the coming of Christ. Gal.3:16.

Anthropology

12:1

- Man's home land is important to him, and so it cost Abram to obey the Lord's command.

12:2

- Man desires to have a good name or the Lord's promise would mean nothing to him when He said, "I will make thy name great."

12:3

- The family is the foundation on which all society is built.

12:4

- Man's life span at this time soon after the flood was longer than man's is today.

(Illustrating the Seventh Step: Systematic Theology, Genesis 12:1-4)

Hamartiology

12:3

- Men will abuse their fellow man. So the Lord promised to curse those who cursed Abram.

Soteriology

12:3

- The ultimate blessing promised through Abraham would be the coming of Christ and the provision of salvation from sin. (cf. 12:3 with Gal.3:16.)

Eschatology

12:2

- God promised to make a great nation out of Abram, which turned out to be the nation of Israel.
- God promised to make Abram's name great, which has been fulfilled in the world today.

12:3

- God promised to bless the families of the earth through Abram, which blessing has now been provided through the coming of the Christ to provide salvation from sin for all mankind. They will ultimately be blessed with the coming of Christ to institute God's kingdom on earth, Romans 11:12, 26.

Note: There is nothing noted by way of contribution in the other areas of theology in these particular verses of chapter twelve.

IN CONCLUSION...

Once these seven steps are completed, they may be used to supply the content of a variety of sermons. The *style of sermon outline* to be selected would depend upon one's dependence upon the guidance of the Holy Spirit, as a preacher seeks to address the current needs of the congregation. Information regarding the different types of sermon outlines is provided in Homiletics Class.

As a preacher *records* these steps, chapter-by-chapter, book-by-book, keeps good *files*, and *reviews* what he has accomplished each time he studies a particular passage of Scripture, **the less he will need to rely upon other extra Biblical material to fill up his speaking time.**

It is the Bible content which counts the most in preaching. A preacher many years ago once asked this writer, when he was young and preparing for the ministry, "*Where is the power in preaching?*" My response was, "*The Bible.*" To which he replied, "*Then use it!*" That was good advice!

What has been provided in these seven steps to analyzing Biblical content, as well as the *Stairway of Communication* –

whereby a good communicator seeks to convince the mind and heart to believe, or not believe, and persuade the will to do, or not to do –

should enable a serious student of Scripture to proclaim God's Word for many years to come.

I redid pages 5,9 27-32, 41,43,48