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Part of the South East Gospel Partnership

**Bible Handling Guide**



# Kent Gospel Partnership

## Preparation

Whether you are preparing a sermon, small group study, 1:1 or evangelistic talk there are **four simple questions** we can ask of any passage to help us get to the heart of what God is saying in it.

But first, prayer…

But before you do any of those steps there is one important thing that must permeate all your preparation – **PRAYER**

**Our preparation** (before, during and after) **must be saturated with prayer –** you are dependent on the Spirit of God using the word of God to transform lives.

Now we can move in to the questions we can ask of a passage….

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**Pulling it together**

* What should your **headings** be? Mix it up – they don’t always have to be ‘three points beginning with P’!!
* **Illustrations**: Beware of square pegs in round holes – does this illustration really open up my point or do I just think it is an engaging story I think I can twist the passage in to?
* Illustrations: need to be diverse – don’t always use sports or movies. They need to appeal to the diversity of your listeners.
* **Intro & Close** – how are you going to take off and land? How are you going to get people in to the passage, and what are you going to leave them with at the end? The flow of the passage will help you!
* **Tell the story** – this is especially true of a narrative. It will be full of intrigue, excitement, suspense, humour, shock, gore – so tell the story!!

**CAUTION**

This short handbook has been written as a guide, not a dictate or rule book. Don’t put a straightjacket on yourself or the passage when looking at God’s word – let both shine through!

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**Question 2**

**What did it mean?**

* **CONTEXT IS KEY!!!** Ask yourself, what is being said/what is happening in the passages around? What’s the main message of the book? Where is it in the big Bible plot line?
* **Wide angle lens –** Using your work from question 1……What is the big idea/thrust/main point of the passage? Summarise this in one sentence.
* **Narrow angle lens –** What don’t I understand? What questions do I have? What doesn’t make sense – in the story, in the characters, in the speech, in the logic?
* Consult the commentaries (don’t go there too early!!!)
* What are the sub headings to your summary statement?
* **Wide angle lens –** take a step back again – do my sub-headings fit with the summary statement? If not, which is wrong?

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**Question 3**

**What does it mean?**

* **COVENANT IS KEY!!!**
* Are we in the Old Covenant or the New Covenant?
* How do we move from the Old Covenant ***through*** Jesus to the church? (This stops us from moralising; the church is similar but different to the nation of Israel.)
* How do the New Testament principles work in the church of 21st Century Britain?
* What do other Bible passages have to say? How does the NT use the OT passage? How do other parts of the Bible develop or apply the passage/idea you are looking at?
* Write a summary statement for your talk/study (look at how this relates to the summary sentence from Question 2 – it ***may*** be almost identical).

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**Question 4**

**What difference should it make?**

**Applying the text…**

* This is where most talks/studies fail to hit the spot – work hard at this and leave yourself time to mull it over.
* Is it something to believe and/or something to do?
* Does the passage provide a direct application?
* Use the voice of the passage – Carrot or Stick? Praise, joy, encouragement, rebuke, warning, or instruction?
* Know your people – remember you are preaching to people!! How does this apply specifically to the different types of people in front of you? There should be diversity and reality in your application.
* Remember humility and empathy – remember you need to hear the message too. Most Christians need strength and encouragement, ***some*** need a stick.
* Remember grace – that is what will motivate and equip a Christian to do this!!
* Think about the non-Christian – either those present, or how does this passage equip the Christian to answer the questions non-Christians are answering?

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**Question 1**

**What does it say?**

* Read, re-read and read the passage again!
* Get the passage into your head & your heart
* This is especially important if the passage is familiar – don’t assume you know it - there will be things you have missed before.
* Think about the type of writing – narrative, wisdom, poetry, prophecy, epistle, apocalyptic etc…
* What is the plot?
* Look for repeated phrases and/or editorial comments
* Look for natural breaks in the passage
* Look for link words – therefore, so that, now then etc…