

## The Gospel of Jesus: A Relationship to Every Text A Tutorial for Teachers

“Then beginning with Moses and with all the prophets, He explained to them the things concerning Himself in *all* the Scriptures.” (Lk 24:27, NASB95, emphasis added)

Here’s a question for you: Can you teach an ABF lesson without mentioning the gospel of Jesus? Or better: Can you teach an ABF lesson that doesn’t have any relationship to the gospel at all? The purpose of this tutorial is to answer these questions in a manner that will help you teach God’s word.

### Every Text and the Gospel of Jesus

The presupposition of this tutorial is that every text in the Bible—Old and New Testament—has some relationship to the gospel of Jesus. Some texts are **explicitly** about the gospel. Some texts are **implicitly** about the gospel; they are not the gospel, but they point to it. Jesus, on the road to Emmaus, began with Moses and all the prophets and explained to his disciples the things concerning Himself in *all* the Scriptures (Lk 24:27). He claimed that everything in the Old Testament pointed to him. Paul said the law was a tutor to lead Israel to Christ, so that they might be justified by faith (Ga 3:24). Finally, some texts result from the gospel. They describe the **change** that happens to the believer and the ethical **demands** placed upon him. For example, Paul said that because of the mercies of God (a description of the salvation described in Ro 1-11), believers should present their bodies a living and holy sacrifice (Ro 12:1).<sup>1</sup>

This survey, though brief, helps to demonstrate that every text in the Bible has some relationship to the gospel of Jesus. The gospel isn’t an extra feature added on to the message of the Bible; it *is* the message of the Bible. The Baptist Faith and Message 2000 affirms this truth when it says, “All Scripture is a testimony to Christ, who is Himself the focus of divine revelation.”<sup>2</sup>

CH Spurgeon expressed this truth in his famous quote:

A young man had been preaching in the presence of a venerable divine, and after he had done he went to the old minister, and said, “What do you think of my sermon?” “A very

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<sup>1</sup> A more substantial proof can be found in the chapter entitled “A Redemptive Approach to Preaching” in Bryan Chapell’s *Christ-Centered Preaching: Redeeming the Expository Sermon*.

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.sbc.net/bfm/bfm2000.asp>.

poor sermon indeed," said he. "A poor sermon?" said the young man, "it took me a long time to study it." "Ay, no doubt of it." "Why, did you not think my explanation of the text a very good one?" "Oh, yes," said the old preacher, "very good indeed." "Well, then, why do you say it is a poor sermon? Didn't you think the metaphors were appropriate and the arguments conclusive?" "Yes, they were very good as far as that goes, but still it was a very poor sermon." "Will you tell me why you think it a poor sermon?" "Because," said he, "there was no Christ in it." "Well," said the young man, "Christ was not in the text; we are not to be preaching Christ always, we must preach what is in the text." So the old man said, "Don't you know young man that from every town, and every village, and every little hamlet in England, wherever it may be, there is a road to London?" "Yes," said the young man. "Ah!" said the old divine "and so from every text in Scripture, there is a road to the metropolis of the Scriptures, that is Christ. And my dear brother, your business is when you get to a text, to say, 'Now what is the road to Christ?' and then preach a sermon, running along the road towards the great metropolis—Christ. And," said he, "I have never yet found a text that had not got a road to Christ in it, and if I ever do find one that has not a road to Christ in it, I will make one; I will go over hedge and ditch but I would get at my Master, for the sermon cannot do any good unless there is a savour of Christ in it." Now since you say amen to that, and declare that what you want to hear is Jesus Christ, the text is proved—"Unto you therefore which believe he is precious."<sup>3</sup>

## Finding the Relationship

If every text stands in some relation to the gospel of Jesus, how do you find this relationship? It's one thing to mentally assert this is a fact, but it's another thing to find the relationship that exists in a particular text. Bryan Chapell in his text on Christ-centered preaching lists three ways that you can uncover this relationship in a text.<sup>4</sup> As you work through these ways, keep in mind that it is not your goal simply to find the best way to characterize the relationship of the text to the gospel; your goal is to understand the relationship itself, so that you can teach the text in this light.

1. **A direct reference** – Some texts directly reference Jesus and the gospel. Most of the gospels and portions of the New Testament fit in this category. The passion week detailed in the gospels is the gospel. Peter preached the gospel in his sermon at Pentecost (Ac 2:14-40). Paul defined the gospel in 1 Co 15:1-11 as the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus. Paul opposed Peter's hypocrisy by using the gospel, asserting that justification comes not by works but by having faith in Jesus (Ga 2:11-21). Naturally, these direct references are the easiest relationships to find.

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<sup>3</sup> <http://www.spurgeon.org/sermons/0242.htm>.

<sup>4</sup> Bryan Chapell's *Christ-Centered Preaching: Redeeming the Expository Sermon*, 280-288. I encourage you buy or borrow the book and read this entire section for yourself.

2. **An Old Testament type** – A type is something in the Old Testament that foreshadows something in the New Testament. Some of the events, persons, and items in the Old Testament are a type of Jesus and gospel. How do you know if something is a type? Let the New Testament be your guide. If a New Testament writer describes how something foreshadows Christ, then you have a type. Paul said that Adam was a type of Christ; the first Adam brought condemnation to all, but the second Adam brought justification to all who believe (Ro 5:14-19; 1 Co 15:20-24, 45). The high priest, who continually offered the blood of animals in order to enter the earthly tabernacle, was a type of the Great High Priest, who offered his own blood in order to enter a tabernacle not made with human hands (Heb 9:6-12). The bronze serpent, which was lifted up on a standard for the people to see and be saved from snakes (Num 21:4-9), was a type of Jesus, who was lifted up on a cross for all people to see and be saved from sin (Jn 3:14-15). Jesus said that Jonah was a type of himself; as the prophet was in the belly of the fish for three days and nights, so he would be in the heart of the earth for three days and nights (Mt 12:39-40). Melchizedek, the king-priest who had no priestly predecessor or successor (unlike the Aaronic priests), was a type of Jesus, the King-Priest who had no priestly predecessor or successor (Heb 7:1-3).
  
3. **Context** – To be honest, the vast majority of texts, particularly Old Testament texts, do not contain a direct reference or a type of Jesus. In these instances, you can find the relationship by examining the text in the greater context of God’s plan to redeem mankind by the gospel. There are four ways a text can relate to the context of redemption:<sup>5</sup>
  - a. The text may implicitly **predict** the gospel without explicitly, specifically mentioning Jesus. Note that this way has some similarities to the direct reference above; perhaps it should be called an indirect reference. The protoevangelium in Ge 3:15 predicted the gospel when it foretold that Satan would bruise Eve’s descendent on the heel and would in turn be bruised in the head. The blood of the Passover lamb in Ex 12:21-22 predicted the gospel by requiring the shedding of the blood of a perfect lamb. Ps 110, one of the messianic psalms, predicted the gospel by describing the resurrection and ascension of Adonai (see how Peter understood these verse in Ac 2:34-35 and how the writer of Hebrews

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<sup>5</sup> It is possible for a text to overlap multiple ways.

understood them in Heb 7:17). Isaiah's prophecy of the suffering servant in Is 53 predicted the gospel as it described the manner in which God's Servant would suffer and die.

- b. The text may **prepare** you for the gospel by helping you to see that only through the gospel can you meet God's standard. Any text that reveals God's perfect standard and man's inability to meet this standard prepares you for the gospel. The primary example of this in the Old Testament is the Ten Commandments and the Mosaic Law. This impossibly high standard shows you your need for God's grace through Christ.
- c. The text may **reflect** a key aspect of your need for redemption through the gospel. This is the most common way to relate a text to the gospel, particularly Old Testament texts, and it is found by asking two related questions: What does this text teach about the character of man that *needs* redemption through the gospel? And what does this text teach about the character of God that *provides* redemption through the gospel? The story of Abraham and Hagar (Gen 16 & 17) reveals the character of man (even when we know God's promises, we tend to do things our own way) and the character of God (even when we sin, God is gracious and will keep his covenant). The story of David and Goliath (1 Sa 17) reveals the character of man (we tend to be more concerned about ourselves than about God's name) and the character of God (he alone wins battles, and he alone provides salvation). The story of David and Bathsheba (2 Sam 11:1-12:15) reveals the character of man (even a man after God's own heart can commit adultery and murder) and the character of God (God offers forgiveness for any and every sin committed). The story of Jonah (Jonah 1-5) reveals the character of man (we are not gracious and compassionate, instead we desire that our enemies be killed) and the character of God (God is gracious and offers forgiveness to everyone). The entire book of Judges reveals the character of man (we all tend to do what is right in our own eyes) and the character of God (he is gracious to forgive us every time we repent and turn back to him).
- d. The text may show a **result** of redemption. Most of the New Testament after the gospels fit into this category, especially the commands and exhortations of the epistles. How can you consider

it all joy when you encounter various trials? Because it is the testing of your faith, the faith you have in Jesus Christ (Jam 1:2-3). Why should you praise God? Because he chose you, redeemed you, assigned you as his inheritance, and sealed you since you are in Christ (Eph 1:3-14). How can you submit yourself to civil authorities and to masters, especially when they mistreat you? Because Jesus is your example, and he died on the cross so that you might die to sin and live to righteousness (1 Pt 2:13-25). Why should you offer your bodies as holy and living sacrifices to God? Because you understand the mercies of God that you have received from the gospel (Ro 12:1). Once you have been redeemed, you begin to understand God's love and mercy towards you and desire to obey him.

### More Examples

The tutorial "Teaching with Scriptural Authority"<sup>6</sup> used four texts from four different genres of literature. These same texts are used here as examples to show their relationship to the gospel. You are encouraged to review the lesson outlines that were modeled in those examples before continuing here.

- The first example is Ja 2:1-13, where James commanded his readers, "Do not hold your faith in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ with an attitude of personal favoritism." This text shows a **result** of salvation. Because Jesus is now your Lord and he is a glorious Lord, you are motivated to reflect his character purely to those around you. To do this, you cannot hold your faith in him while showing favoritism. Instead, you love your neighbors and show them mercy.
- The second example is Is 38:1-8, the narrative of the miraculous healing of King Hezekiah. This text **reflects** a key aspect of salvation. What does this text teach about the character of man that *needs* redemption through the gospel? Isaiah had promised Hezekiah that God would heal him in three days;<sup>7</sup> Hezekiah only had to trust God for three days, and yet he still asked for a sign to strengthen his faith. Everyone lacks faith. Even when God reveals his will to you, you still need faith to trust God. You need God to give you faith to save you and keep giving you faith so you can keep trusting him. What does this text teach about the character of God

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<sup>6</sup> The tutorial taught how to use the principles of biblical exposition to prepare an outline for a teaching lesson.

<sup>7</sup> The timing is found in the parallel passage in 2 Kings 20:1-11.

- that *provides* redemption? When Hezekiah trusted God with his whole heart, even though his faith was weak he found God to be faithful. This text teaches that God is faithful to those who trust him with their whole heart. When you trust in Jesus for salvation, you will find that God is faithful to save you and faithful to keep you saved forever. You can be saved because God is faithful, not because you can earn our salvation.
- The third example is Lk 16:1-13, the parable of the shrewd manager. This text also shows a **result** of salvation. When you understand the great price that God paid to save us, you are willing to recognize his ownership of everything you have, including your money. You realize that you are a steward of your money, not an owner. And as a steward you are willing to give your money away so that others may come to know Jesus, too.
  - The fourth example is Is 55, where Isaiah presented to Judah God's calling to all men to accept his plan of salvation. This text **predicts** the gospel. Although the function of the Messiah is mentioned in verse 4, neither the Messiah or Jesus is specifically mentioned.<sup>8</sup> It gives seven characteristics of God's plan, including: It is based on the promise of God; it was fulfilled by the Messiah; it requires repentance and faith; and it is accomplished by his word. This text shows what the gospel will be like.

## Now What?

If every text stands in some relation to the gospel, and if you can find this relationship, now what? How and where do you use it in your ABF lesson? The "how" question is easy: Use it glorify and magnify Jesus Christ! Exalt the name of the Savior to your class! Give him the honor and preeminence that he is due! "Then I looked, and I heard the voice of many angels around the throne and the living creatures and the elders; and the number of them was myriads of myriads, and thousands of thousands, saying with a loud voice, 'Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power and riches and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing'" (Re 5:11-12, NASB95).

The "where" question is less simple. There's not a simple pattern that you should follow every time; for example, you don't always present this relationship in the conclusion. Here are two general guidelines: One, you can show the relationship when you get to the verse in your text that most clearly shows the relationship. Two, if the relationship isn't tied closely to a particular verse, then

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<sup>8</sup> If the text had mentioned the Messiah more clearly, this probably would have been a direct reference.

do it wherever it makes most sense to you. But somewhere you need to take the time to bring out the relationship of this text to the gospel and then glorify him.

So back to the opening question: Can you teach an ABF lesson that doesn't have any relationship to the gospel? Yes, you can, but if you do, you've not faithfully taught the intended purpose of the text. Teacher, make much of the Savior! That's the purpose of your text.