

Preaching the Gospel

A monthly magazine for preachers and those who want to preach.

Paul K. Williams, editor

P.O. Box 324, Eshowe 3815, South Africa, 035-474-2656

E-mail: paulkwilliams.za@gmail.com; Web page: www.knowyourbible.co.za

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How I Teach Women In Africa

Linda Maydell, Modimolle, South Africa

lmaydell@gmail.com

I have presented this lesson scores of times (I have picture cards I have laminated – but I prefer to use board so I can draw as they discover) with hundreds of women – educated and uneducated, Christians and non-Christians, in classes (sometimes whole classes of women when none are Christians) and one-on-one in Namibia, Zimbabwe and South Africa. Many women have become Christians and many have not, but all seem to have UNDERSTOOD. (I am sure some have indicated understanding who did not, but they have to have SOME understanding in order to answer the questions!) Those who have not obeyed the gospel have refused mainly because of sin in their lives which they do not wish to repent of, particularly living with someone they are not married to.

I have NEVER had a negative response to the lesson in that I have made someone angry. I

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think it is because I do not tell them anything. I only ask questions and THEY tell ME how to be saved and what church they will belong to – and what churches they will NOT belong to – after they are saved. They discover the answers to my questions by reading/hearing the Bible for themselves. I am very patient and it takes a LONG time sometimes before they get it, but I feel THEY must "get" it. Before I start, I explain that I am going to ask them questions – not to make them embarrassed, but to help me as a teacher – because otherwise I will not know if they understand or not. And this is such an important subject that they MUST understand. I tell them they must not worry if they say the wrong thing – it is not a test of THEM, but to let me know if I am being a good teacher or not.

Because it takes a long time to ask questions and get them to discover the answers, I do not do the whole scheme of redemption – it is WAY too much information for them – they have too little Bible knowledge. I have met some women who do not know who Adam and Eve are, but I would say 95% know about Adam and Eve, so I use the principle of starting where the person knows something. I ask them to tell me what they know about Adam and Eve. I get them to discover (by reading/hearing Gen.2:17) what God said would happen THE DAY they ate the

fruit. Then I ask them if A&E died that day and they almost always say NO. So then I ask if God would lie? NO. So I say, "This is like a puzzle, we have to THINK and figure out the answer." I talk about physical death and ask them to describe what happens to the body and spirit in physical death. We come to the idea of separation, and then transfer this to spiritual death. So then we come to what separates us from God. Are little babies separated from God? Why not? (I have had some educated women ask about original sin, so sometimes it takes time to deal with that.) Then I ask, "Have **I** ever sinned?" They don't want to answer because it is impolite. They usually say, "I don't know." And I say "Yes, you DO know!" and then they answer. I do this because I want them to see that I am no better than they are; we are all together in the same boat. I ask them then if **THEY** have sinned – we ALL have a BIG problem – we have ALL (adults) become separated from God and we need a way back to God. Now they are motivated to discover that way back to God – and whether they have gone down that path or not. (I put God's name on one side of a small white board and A&E plus us on the other side with two vertical lines and a large space between the lines – the "gulf" that we must cross to get back to God. Then I draw a fat arrow across the gulf – it is the path we have to go down to get back to God.)

Then we talk about the bad news God gave Adam and Eve because they had sinned – almost everyone knows this. Then I get them to discover the GOOD news by asking them questions over Gen.3:15 until they come to an understanding and **THEY** discover who the Seed of woman is. And **THEY** discover how Jesus's heel was bruised and how Satan's head was crushed. This takes a long time sometimes, but I do not TELL them, I ask questions until **THEY** discover it. So already they have discovered two elements of the gospel – the death and resurrection of Jesus – and I do tell them that the old English word for Good News is Gospel and the Greek word is "Evangelii" (which is what most African translations use). I then draw a picture of the cross at the beginning of the arrow and a picture of Jesus' resurrected body just beyond the point of the arrow.

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Then we go to 1 Cor.15 and they discover what the gospel does for us IF we BELIEVE it and the three aspects of the gospel we must believe. And I ask them if they believe those three things. (I then draw a picture of Christ's tomb in the centre of the arrow between the cross and Jesus' resurrected body.)

Then we go to 2 Thess 1:7-8 to get them to see that we must not only BELIEVE the death, burial and resurrection, but must also OBEY it – a bit difficult because "obey" is not as strong in the African languages as it is in English – they just have "listen to."

THEN we go to Romans 6 to see how we obey the gospel. I ask them to find the word "die" – and then we talk about what it means to die to sin. I especially make sure they know what fornication is as many think that as long as they are faithful to one man (even though they are not married) or

they are not a prostitute, they are not committing sin. I get them to list other sins as well, and we go to verse 6 to see that crucifying self is VERY PAINFUL – but we must be willing to undergo that pain since Jesus' death was also VERY PAINFUL. I then demonstrate this process of TURNING from sin by walking in my own way and then I have to "crucify" myself by denying what I want to do and TURN and walk in the way of Christ. I ask them what that is

called and they usually can come up with repentance since in the African languages "repent" is usually their word for "turn." (I write "repent" and "confess" under the cross.) This is a good place to insert that Jesus does also ask us to confess that He is Lord/Son of God (the one we will obey from now on) – which is the way we let others know that we have repented. "Burial" is easy for them – and just to make sure I always ask what we are buried IN. (I write "baptism" under the tomb.) When we get to the resurrection, I tell them that I want to just speak a little bit about the new life.

We go to 1 Cor.12:12-13 to see that when we are baptized we are baptized into Jesus' body – and I ask who is the head and who is the body and what does that picture MEAN? (have to obey) And whose body is it? And how many bodies? (I draw a stick figure of myself inside the picture of Jesus' resurrected body.) Then to Eph. 1:22-23 to find out whose church it is. And how many churches? And why are there so many "churches"? To answer this question I talk about how some teach a different gospel – e.g. you get sprinkled instead of buried, you believe you are raised to a new life and then get baptized later, you don't really have to repent, etc. – and I ask THEM if those variations are the right gospel. So then it is fairly easy to see that if they do not believe, repent and get buried in water for the remission of their sins, they are not going to be raised into the body of Christ. Each denomination has its own rules – a different gospel – and so following those rules will make them a member of that particular denomination.

In the end they all TELL ME how to be saved and how to become a member of the one true church. Only then do I ask them if they have done those things – because even if they have been baptized at some time in the past, by the time they have understood about the church they realize that they have not done the right thing.

This all takes between 1 and 2 hours, depending on how educated the woman is. I can't imagine burdening them with the Jewish nation's purpose, etc. I used to do it – but I found out it confused them more than it helped them. If I come across a woman who already knows the OT (VERY VERY RARE), I will do it – I do have the cards for it.

I have come to the conclusion that African women need to be separated from men to grasp this (unless it is a husband/wife being taught together) because in African culture women do not answer in front of men – and if any person is not involved, but they are only a spectator, their mind goes into neutral and they do not understand properly. They may obey the gospel, but I have found many of the Christian women I have contact with cannot really tell me why they obeyed the gospel or how to be saved or even answer the most basic questions about the gospel – to the point that I wonder if they are really Christians. Only God knows. I want to be sure that if any woman obeys the gospel, her faith is in GOD (as revealed in His Word) and not in what I said.

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The Main Points of a Sermon

In June I said that it is important to have a good introduction to your sermon. This month I want to write about your MAIN POINTS.

Most sermons can, and should be, divided into sections. These sections are called “The Main Points” or “The Major Divisions” of your sermon. In your introduction you made your audience eager to hear what you are going to say. You made your subject very important.

If you are going to do the best job of presenting your material, it must be organized. The usual way to do this is to work out for yourself the logical path to the goal of your sermon. If it is logical, you will be able to see what you should say first, second, and third. Those steps are the Main Points of your sermon.

It will help you, and usually help your hearers, if you state your main points clearly. Here are some points to help you.

1. Your main points should be like stepping stones taking you to your conclusion. This means that they must be in a progressive order, each one leading to the next, and the last one leading to the conclusion.
2. They should be of equal importance, although you may take more time speaking on one than on the others.
3. Most of the time they should be stated in full sentences, exactly the way you intend saying them to the audience.
4. When they are written, you should be able to read them and see how you are going to preach your sermon. You should see that it will “flow”. No main point should be off the subject or should delay your progress to the conclusion.
5. When you have written your main points, examine them to see if they are in the proper order. Sometimes changing the order of the points can strengthen the sermon.

Preaching Simply

My 12-yr.-old grandson said, “I like his preaching. I can understand him.” This implied that other preachers are difficult for him to understand.

When I was in my early 20’s I was preaching in The Dalles, Oregon. A brother always prayed, “Bless Bro. Williams to preach so that the little children will understand.” I was greatly impressed by that prayer, and I have attempted to preach that way.

I was helped by coming to South Africa where I have to speak simply when preaching through an interpreter. I am still working to make my writing and speaking clear and easy to understand.

Jesus was able to state the deepest truths in simple, easy-to-understand words. We can, too, if we try. We should try!
