

BALANCED BIBLE TEACHING/PREACHING¹

“VISA”

INTRODUCTION: A simple formula that is easy to remember and will help you to maintain interesting and balanced Bible teaching is to think of obtaining a “visa” so that you can travel to another country. You must have a visa inside your passport, in order to enter some countries. So too, a good Bible lesson or message will have at least four things whose first letters spell out the acrostic “VISA.”

V-ariety – *Don’t always do things the same way.* Be creative! There are many ways to teach/preach: e.g. expository, topical, textual, object lesson, character sketch, etc. There are also many methodologies you can use (Just make sure that whatever you do and however you do it, that you follow biblical principles!).

Variety is not a license to do ungodly and unbiblical things to draw a crowd or “entertain” a Sunday school class or congregation. The Word of God alone is sufficient to convert souls and transform lives (Ps. 19:7). Today’s popular philosophy of compromising with the world and looking, acting and sounding like the world in order to reach the world for Christ, is faulty and unbiblical (e.g. Jas. 2:15-17; 4:4). People in the world are looking for something different anyway, since those enmeshed in sin know that it doesn’t satisfy. But while maintaining biblical standards, we should seek to exercise creativity, and be willing to change things up now and then in our teaching, in order to keep things interesting for our listeners.

I-nterpretation –² *If we don’t interpret the Bible correctly, our teaching is worthless.* Interpreting any passage of the Bible correctly is absolutely fundamental! Paul commanded believers to “cut it straight” (2 Tim. 2:15). Some key, fundamental principles of Bible interpretation include the following:

1. Interpret Literally. e.g. Ex. 20:11; Rev. 20:1-6; etc
2. Interpret Grammatically. Tit. 2:13; Mt. 25:46; Phil. 2:12-13; etc.
3. Interpret Historically/Culturally. e.g. Dt. 33:12; Ps. 119:105; Rev. 3:14-18; 16:15; etc.
4. Interpret Contextually. e.g. Ezek. 37:15 cf. 19-22; Isa. 11:1-2 cf. vv. 3-11; Isa. 53:5; etc.
5. Interpret According to the Harmony (i.e. according to the whole) of Scripture. e.g. Jas. 2: 14-26 cf. Gen. 15 & 22; etc.

S-tories – **Spurgeon said that “Illustrations are the windows that let the light of heaven in upon your message.”** You can present a solidly biblical message or lesson yet put your listeners to sleep if you don’t include some stories to illustrate your points!

A few examples:

- Christ as our substitute (II Cor. 5:21) cf. a substitute in Cricket, Rugby, Basketball, etc.
- Opposition (II Cor. 4:8-18 cf. going up a large, well-known river (Amazon, Sepik, Mississippi, etc) vs. going down it.
- Fear of death & Satan’s powerlessness (Heb. 2:14-15) cf. a drill or power saw whose cord is unplugged.
- Satan as a lion (I Pet. 5:8) cf. facts about real lions.
- Fear of spirits, *jumbies* and sorcery (“*sanguma*”) (I Jn. 4:4; Ps. 56:3) cf. people using bamboo to find out who “killed” (“*poisoned*”) a relative or friend.
- Hard work cf. Isiah Thomas 800 jump shots/day.
- Failure to value the Word of God cf. Henry Ford & gift Bible he gave a nephew (that contained an undiscovered \$10,000 cheque found after that nephew’s death!), etc.

A-pplication – **As Dr. Peter Masters**, the present pastor of Spurgeon’s Tabernacle once remarked: **“People will not usually apply the Bible to themselves... so you must apply it for them!”** If we don’t apply it, people often walk away saying, “*What a nice lesson that was*” ...but there is no change in their life!

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² These points taken and adapted from Dr. Stewart Custer’s “*Tools for Preaching & Teaching the Bible*” (BJU Press: Greenville, SC, 1979, 1998). Note: Some Melanesian Pidgin terms & expressions as well as British spelling used.

A few examples:

- Gen. 2:24 - marriage = 1 woman (“*wife*” not “*wives*”). Polygamy is out!
- Eph. 5:25-26 - husband is to love his wife like Christ loved the Church i.e. It’s wrong for a husband to bash up his wife.
- Eph. 6:1-14 (child discipline) vs. Kids throwing stones at their parents or a boy beating up his sister, (“*Larim, em bai kamap man*”), etc.
- Rom. 12:17-19 (people who wrong us) vs. settling the score ourselves via a tribal fight or “*payback killings*” etc.