

Handling the Word Course Outline

Course Aims

This course is designed for church members who wish to learn how to prepare and deliver a Bible talk (e.g. for a youth group, Presbyterian Women's meeting or men's breakfast) or a Sunday sermon. There is no requirement to have any experience although the course would also benefit those who already have some experience. Attendance on the course is normally a prerequisite for the Accredited Preacher Scheme. However, there is no expectation that participants will necessarily go on to that scheme or indeed be given the opportunity to preach.

The Handling the Word course will provide participants training in the basics of preparing a Bible talk. Those who wish to preach on a regular basis are encouraged to seek opportunities to test their gifting and subsequently apply to the Accredited Preacher Scheme. The requirement for application to the Accredited Preacher Scheme would be attending at least five sessions on the course.

Administration of the course

This course is run over six sessions each lasting two hours with lectures and workshops. The only requirement for attending the course is to be a communicant member of a Presbyterian Church in Ireland congregation. A statement to this effect signed by the Minister or Clerk of Session will be required as part of registering for the course. A pilot course was run in Armagh Presbytery with over 40 in attendance in early 2013. The Board of Christian Training are presently course in Belfast, due to conclude at the end of May 2013.

Thereafter, Presbyteries will be able to request the course material and organise their own courses (possibly also inviting participants from neighbouring Presbyteries). The Presbytery of Tyrone have been approved to run the course in the autumn of 2013, and it is hoped to commence this on Tuesday 17th September, running for a total of six Tuesdays, excluding Tuesday 1st October.

Course Content

Participants will be asked to read both Mark and Philippians in advance in order to familiarise themselves with the text and main themes of these books before the course commences. See attached sheet for details of content.

Session	Learning Outcomes	Lecture Content	Workshop
One: The Foundation for Preaching: What is the Word?	To understand why only the Bible is a sufficient basis for preaching.	An explanation of why the Bible must be the basis for preaching by outlining its authority and inspiration as well as a brief description of its unity and diversity in terms of genres.	Discussion questions on what makes the Bible authoritative and useful in application.
Two: Preaching Defined	To understand that a good Bible talk/sermon has one clear focus. To understand the three perspectives necessary to consider for a Bible talk/sermon: the message, the speaker and the hearers.	An explanation of why having one clear focus is the most effective way to give a Bible talk/sermon together with an introduction to the three perspectives on preaching (the message, the speaker and the hearers).	Evaluating one or more Bible talks based on the criteria outlined in the lecture.
Three: Discovering the Message: Finding the Problem	To begin to be able to determine the problems of being in a fallen world for those the Bible text originally addressed that are shared by us today (ourselves and our hearers) as a key to applying the Bible.	An explanation of how the Bible usefully addresses the problems we face in a fallen world and how to make the link from the original context to contemporary situations.	Determining the problems of being in a fallen world for several passages from Mark and/or Philippians in terms of how they related to the original people addressed and now relate to people today.
Four: Discovering the Message: Revealing the Solution	To begin to be able to show how Christ either addresses the specific problem highlighted in a Bible text or how the Bible text reveals how Christ acts in this redemptive way.	An explanation of how Christ's redemptive work is either highlighted by a Bible text or addresses a human need caused by a fallen world that is raised by the Bible text.	Determining how a talk from several passages from Mark and/or Philippians could be Christ centred based on the explanation given in the lecture.

Five: Considering the Hearers	To gain a basic understanding of how to bring a Bible message that will be understood by specific groups of hearers (e.g. children, teenagers, the elderly, unchurched)	An explanation of how a Bible talk must simultaneously bring the Bible message and engage with the hearers and that to miss either is to render the talk ineffective.	Discussion questions on how to prepare a talk from specific Bible texts from Mark and/or Philippians for various groups of hearers (including how to make the talk evangelistic and/or edificational).
Six: Considering the Preacher	To understand the importance of the preacher's relationship with God.	An explanation of the importance of godly character, gifting and the work of the Holy Spirit in the life of the preacher.	Feedback on short Bible talks delivered by several participants based on specific Bible passages from Mark or Philippians for specific intended hearers, e.g. a children's talk (notified from session four). The other participants to have prepared written material on the same Bible passages.