

INSIGHTS PAGE & TEACHING POINTS WORKSHEET

Christian Education is equal parts content and pedagogical practice. We can have all the latest technology or thrilling games or flashing tools we want but unless we have content our lesson plans are little more than a collection of activities through which people share what they already know. This approach has little need for a “teacher” and risks leaving people in the same place where they were or have always been. A teacher must bring something of value to the teaching and learning space. This means the teacher is called to know, understand and engage with bible, theology, ethics and the world. The teacher employs educational theory and pedagogical strategies as a means of communicating the content generated through research with the people with whom we are on the teaching and learning journey. The teacher is, in essence multilingual, at the intersection of content, process, faith and life.

Scripture is the Word of God written that witnesses to the Word of God Incarnate. It is the closest we can get to understanding the Sovereignty of God, and the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. It is God’s Story – of initiative love, of the pursuing relationship, of unending faithfulness, of redeeming grace and of continuing presence and work in the world. It is God’s Story but it is also our story. It is our ultimate authority for all matters of faith and the life of the faith. The ultimate goal of scripture is to glorify God and when it is used for any purpose other than that – it is being misused.

There are two significant “rules” when interpreting scripture: the rule of love and the rule of faith. The Rule of Love means God’s will is to follow the commandment to love God and neighbor. When we read scripture, we should view it in the light of the love of God and neighbor. If the scripture and love of God and neighbor contradict, the love and God and neighbor prevails. Scripture is intended to instruct us not only what to think but most importantly how we are to live. The Rule of Faith teaches that scripture should be interpreted with consideration of the text’s history as well as current views. Historical documents, confessions and catechisms of many traditions also witness to God but they are subordinate to and must be consistent with scripture as it is interpreted through the Rules of Love and Faith.¹

The interpretation of scripture is best done through a process called “exegesis.”

Exegesis is listening carefully to a text in order to grasp its intention and experience its impact. In one sense, an exegetical procedure asks questions of ancient texts so that they might once more speak with clarity and coherence. Exegesis “slows down” the reader and fosters patient, attentive listening to the text so that its inner movements and intended effects can be observed. In this way, a sort of dialogue between text and exegete is established. The purpose of exegesis is to reach a critically informed and theologically sensitive understanding of the text, appropriate in and for the life of the church in its engagement with the world. The goal is not to

¹ Presbyterian Understanding and Use of Holy Scripture.

*establish the once-and-for-all-time meaning of the text, but to discern the message of the text for a particular occasion and context.*²

You will learn the process of exegesis in your Old and New Testament classes. The use of commentaries, books authored by biblical scholars who have done careful exegetical work, will be a part of that process and, until you learn to do exegesis, a primary source for the biblical content of Lesson Plans. Because of humanity's tendency toward idolatry and misinterpreting scripture to suit our own perspectives, we believe scripture is best interpreted through the communal work of the Spirit rather than individuals. Commentaries are one source for engaging in communal study and interpretation.

Theology, at its very root, means words (logos) about God (Theos.) It is a conversation about the way in which God relates to humanity and creation both in a global sense and in a particular context. Everything we do and say implies a theological perspective, whether we are conscious of it or not. Our espoused theology is that which we explicitly say we believe. Our lived theology is the belief system that is expressed through our actions. The goal is to gain consistency between the two. This aim is aided through intentional theological reflection – thinking about what we believe and why we believe and how it informs our decisions and actions. What difference do our beliefs make in our everyday life - especially when we believe in a God who is present and active at the intersection of life and faith.

As with the study of scripture, you will dive deeply into theology in required course at seminary. Just as with biblical commentaries, there are legions of theological books and resources written by scholars with care and attention to academic and theological integrity. Most faith traditions have theological founders (e.g., Martin Luther, John Calvin, John Wesley, Richard Allen, to name a few.) Theology, however, did not stop there. Each generation and context bring with it the need and the opportunity for theological reflection and applied theology (also known as ethics.) Writers such as Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Reinhold Niebuhr, James Cone, Letty Russell, Katie Cannon, Serene Jones and Jon Sobrino are just a few who have expanded our understanding of who God is and who we are in relation to God. These, and so many others, will be enriching conversation partners as you do you research for theological and ethical content in teaching.

If the purpose of our teaching is to help our fellow sojourners on the journey of faith explore and clarify what they believe about God, to encourage them to live lives that are qualitatively different because of a transformative relationship with Christ and to make sense and meaning of life, then we, as teachers, must deliberately and critically reflect on theology and life BEFORE we teach. Crafting the Insights Page and Teaching Points - provides us with the tools and process for thinking theologically about the content of our lesson. It empowers our teaching so that our teaching moves beyond managing process and into engaging content in responsible and life-giving ways. The content of our lessons will be determined by our biblical and theological research.

² Union Presbyterian Seminary's "A Basic Guide for Biblical Exegesis and Expository Interpretation."

The Insights Page and Teaching Points focuses our research and hones it down to the essential ideas we want to communicate. As our research informs the creation of our Teaching Propositions, the Teaching Proposition organizes the Insights Page. Both the Insights Page and Teaching Points contain biblical and theological concepts and knowledge we are seeking to understand.

The Insights Page is a way in which we clarify what it we want to teach. It also provides the content of our lessons and gives those who teach the lesson plans we write the substance of their own teaching. what they need to craft their own and provide those who use our lesson plans for their own teaching. The Insights Page model respects and empowers the teacher. The work the curriculum writer does in biblical and theological examination and explication provides the bulk of the research for those who do not have the time or inclination to do so. It condenses the substance of the research into manageable bites. However, it does not provide a prescribed script for the teacher to “read” or “say this.” The teacher learns through the Insights Page and is able to craft their own lesson, incorporate it into slides, discussion or lectures. The Insights Page format is bullet point sentences, rather than paragraphs or essays. It is included in the Appendix. (A sample is included at the end of this document.)

Teaching Points are shorter comments and pieces of information embedded within the content section of the actual lesson plan. These key points of information can incorporate into discussion, mini-lectures and transitions. They provide the teacher with material to deepen the lesson and support the sections of the Teaching Proposition. Here are a few examples of Teaching Points:

Allow time for short answers. Then weave these Teaching Points to work into the transition

- What we know about love comes from any places – experience, books, poetry, films and cultural commentary to name just a few
- There are 740 instances in which the Greek or Hebrew words are translated as love – 595 in the Old and 145 in the New Testaments
- Since it is unlikely that we could responsibly examine all those in this one setting, we will look only at what the New Testament teaches us about love today – two things to keep in mind, though,
 - The God of the Old Testament is the exact same God of the New Testament,
 - Much of what we know about love in the New Testament is steeped in Jewish tradition as it comes from Jesus, the gospel writers and Paul – all of whom were Jewish.
- In New Testament there are several primary words for love
 - Eros – romantic, physical, desiring love
 - Phileo – kindred love
 - Agapao/Agape – love of God
- All the texts we are working with today are steeped in the agapao and agape understanding of love.

Incorporate these into your transition

- 1 Corinthians 13 is a very popular text for weddings.
- Many people can quote, and sometimes misquote, parts of it.
- In light of what his list of characteristics of love, let's take a closer look at this particular passage.

Move into the next section of the lesson by incorporating the following Teaching Points into the transition

- Love is many different things to different people, but scripture has taught us that love is
 - Tangible
 - Concrete
 - Embodied
 - Just
 - Transforming
 - Liberating
- God's love for us is incarnate in Jesus Christ – a gift we neither earned or deserve.
- God's love for us is enduring and constant.
- Our love for God is expressed through the quality of love in our relationships.
- Our love for God manifests in the quality of our love for our neighbors.
- Love of and for God is both vertical and horizontal.

Love Insights Page

The bolded statements are the main Teaching Points. The material under them is information to give you confidence in teaching and responding to questions.

- **Love is the essence, the core, of who God is.**
- **God does not act in ways that are inconsistent with God's very being.**
- **God loves is initiative. God loved us before we knew what love was or could ask for it.**
- **We love because God loved us first and taught us how to love.**
- **God's love became incarnate in Jesus Christ – God's extravagant gift and act of self-giving.**
- **God's love is transforming and liberating. When we encounter and experience God's love we are changed.**
- **God's love is persistent and pursuing.**
- **God's love is constant and enduring. God's love never ends.**
- **God's love defines our worth** – not our own achievement. William Sloane Coffin, Jr, said it this way,
 - "Of God's love we can say two things: it is poured out universally for everyone from the Pope to the loneliest wino on the planet; and secondly, God's love doesn't seek value, it creates value. It is not because we have value that we are loved, but because we are loved we have value. Our value is a gift not an achievement."
- **Love in New Testament perspective**
 - The NT is written in Koine Greek – a version of the ancient Greek language that was different from the Classical Greek in which Plato, Aristotle and other philosophers and writers.
 - There are three primary words for love in the New Testament – eros, phileo and agape/agapao. (agape is the noun and agapao is the verb)
 - Eros is passionate or desiring love, which is connected to romantic feelings of love.
 - Phileo is the love and affection we have for our family and friends.
 - Agape/Agapao is selfless, compassionate, unconditional and all-encompassing love.
 - Agape/Agapao takes center stage in shaping our understanding of what it means to love through the theological lens of God in Christ.
 - It is the distinctive characteristic of what it means to be love by God and to love God.
- **Agape/Agapao is the expression of God's love for us and sets before us the standard by which we are to love one another.**
- **Jesus Christ is the embodiment of love.**
- **He lived his life as an expression of his devotion to God and called us to do so as well.**

- **Jesus place the commandment to love God and love neighbor as the highest priority for a faithful life.**
 - Our Jewish siblings believe there are 613 commandments that comprise the covenant made by God through Moses and to the people.
 - The Shema, the Hebrew word for Hear and the first word of Deuteronomy 6:4-9, is considered to be a summary of all the commandments.
 - The commandment to love neighbor is also in the Mosaic Covenant (Leviticus 19:18)
 - Jesus was drawing on his Jewish faith when he answered the question of “which is the greatest commandment.”
- **Jesus gives us a new commandment, we are to love one another.**
- **Jesus raises the stakes for love when he requires us to love, - not just those we like, who are share our values, priorities and religion, but – our enemies.**
- **This ethic of love becomes the ethos of the New Covenant in Jesus Christ and the standard for all who follow him.**
- **The characteristics of love as defined by scripture raise the level of personal interactions with one another and public systems.**
- **There is an expectation of mutuality, genuine respect and care for one another – even if it means putting the other person’s needs as equal and equitable to our own.**
- **The New Testament shows us that love of God and love of neighbor cannot be disconnected.**
- **Our love for God is expressed and seen in our love of neighbor. For Christians, one without the other is impossible.**
- **Love, as understood through the biblical and theological lens of the New Testament, is not simply an emotion but rather must be expressed. It is an action, a verb, that is**
 - Incarnate
 - Life-giving
 - Concrete
 - Tangible
 - Embodied

All of which foster transformation and liberation.

- **Love and justice are unalterably interwoven**
 - It is God’s love of, care for, and commitment to people, especially those who are most vulnerable, powerless and marginalized, that brings about the commandment and expectation of justice bell hooks provides an example,
 - “There can be no love without justice. Until we live in a world, in a culture that does not only respect, but also upholds the basic civil rights for children, most children will not know love.”
 - Personal acts of love are made tangible in relationships
 - The public or communal act of love is justice.
 - Justice is the way in which God’s love is codified through systems and governments.
 - Cornel West’s famous quote is,
 - “Never forget that justice is what love looks like in public.”