**Society of Mentors Meeting**

**April 19, 2022**

**Theme:**

This call centered on applying the Word in preaching. Guest speakers were Austin Gardner, Chris Gardner, and Morris Proctor.

**[4:00] Introduction:**

Today, we are going to talk about how to preach on the mission field, how to connect on the mission field, and how to not misuse scripture when you are preaching. When it comes to teaching and preaching the Word, we need to stay in context and say what the scriptures say.

One extreme when preaching expository, sequential message with new believers who have just come out of idol worship, or some other extremely pagan background, you may not get to baptism for a while. To the other extreme, you become a Bible teacher who can be very boring and dry, because you don't learn how to connect and how to do well. Then, the other extreme is you become an extremely topical preacher, even though you try to make it expositional and so you end up preaching American customs.

In the sermon Morris preached, “Who’s in Charge,” he connected on a real, personal level.

**[7:06] How to connect in a new culture without abusing the scripture:**

The culture we preach from is not the culture of today. So how do you adapt to it? And how do you look at the new culture, understand the new culture, and adapt to it?

Whatever culture we are speaking in, it is a different culture than the culture of scripture. Nehemiah 8:8 says that they read from the book of the law and they read clearly or translated so that the people understood. They were reading in Hebrew, the people were probably speaking Aramaic, so they were already translating so that the people understood.

Regardless of the culture we are speaking to today, from a Bible student/pastoral standpoint, our first priority is to understand the word as it was originally given in context. As a preacher, our first responsibility is to understand the passage in its original context, and then, once we understand that, we can make a modern day application.

We're all cross-cultural to the Bible because we don't necessarily understand what's going on in the Word of God, locations, customs etc, without some study.

Now we're in a third culture, we're in a culture overseas, we have to learn how to work in that culture, and how to make the application so that you can say this is what the Word of God says. It filtered through me, but I need to get as close to the Word of God and as close to the people as I can. So when I say it, I say what the Bible says.

Even in America, Baptist preachers tend to preach a lot of republicanism. They like to preach American culture, American values. When Paul talks to Philemon, it's interesting that Paul's message was on what it meant to forgive and be forgiven, and what imputation was, and he didn't even touch the subject of slavery. **[11:20] So what would you say about the idea of people in the West or the US preaching Western culture/ republicanism?**

That is clearly a danger, no doubt about that. I've got a good pastor friend, who is constantly telling his congregation don't let the world teach you theology. Now, I add to that, don't let Fox News teach you theology.   
  
I think that's a very real danger in the United States. We're not married to a political party. We're called to be faithful to Scripture. We're called to be obedient to the Lord, and where that lines up with a political party, amen, and where it doesn't, we’re called to speak out against it.

Overseas, American missionaries tend to do the same thing with the American ideal, the ideal of freedom, real capitalism, etc.

Because to go between the two worlds, you have to understand the culture, and missionaries divorce themselves from the political side of religion by moving overseas.

It's understanding what's going on, and making sure you don't tie yourself to the American flag, the Republican Party, or the Democrat Party. We have to understand the passage

When we're doing word studies in Scripture, we have to understand the word in context. So if I just said to you, Hey, excuse me, I need to go to the bank. You don't know exactly what I'm saying, if that's all that I communicated to you. I could be going to a financial institution to make a deposit. I could be going down to the river to fish. I could be going not far from my house, where I take walks, or ride my bike, and there's a sharp turn in the road. You don't know. So I have to give you more context.

**[16:50]** Americans really believe the English Bible, and they would never be critical of the English Bible. However, when they use a Spanish Bible or another Bible, in their intellectualism they can be so critical of the Bible in another language. So sometimes it's like they want to show off their superior intelligence, and the poor national couldn't ever understand that. Indirectly, they're casting doubt on scripture, which ought never be our goal.

Sometimes the American berates the national Bible, he doesn't really do word studies, and he doesn't have scripture studies. So he comes across as, I'm so smart, you'll never be as smart as me, always trust me for your Bible knowledge. Or they reference the original language, and they take the scriptures out of the hands of the common man.

**[18:50]** It's a delicate balance. In an ideal world, everyone would read Hebrew and Greek, because those are the languages primarily the Lord chose to give us the scripture in. So it is a balance again, regardless of the language, to not take scripture out of the hands of people because God wants it understandable. He gave it in the Greek of the common man in the New Testament.

Again, we come back to Nehemiah 8:8. It’s the same thing they were reading in Hebrew, but they had to give the translation. They rendered it

Now when I was pastoring, I tried to model Bible study on a weekly basis from the pulpit. I would pause and say this is how I gleaned this right here. So a little mini inductive Bible study tutorial right there in the midst of the sermon.   
  
I would model for them the steps that they can go through to understand while they’re at home. We do have to understand that we do lose something in translation when we go from Hebrew or Greek to English or Spanish or another language; something is lost. So there is not a perfect one to one from one language to another.   
  
So I think we have to be careful that we don't come across as Bible interpretation is for the professional. At the same time, we model that there is some study involved. Bible study is not just reading a verse and a devotion. So it's a balance there. But I certainly don't want to come across as a Bible professional that others would never be able to do.

**[21:37]** Let me give an example for the Americans that are listening to me right now. The first time I was translating a message, an American pastor preached from Proverbs, where there is no vision, the people perish. I'm looking at my Spanish Bible, and I panicked. Because the Spanish Bible said, where there's no prophecy, the people take the brakes off. So I thought that it was a messed up Bible. I'm brand new. I don't know what I'm doing. I don't have Logos yet. I have some very simple Bible tools. But when I looked up that word vision in a Strong's Concordance and some other things, it actually meant prophecy. Then, I looked up, the people perish and basically it means if you don't know the truth, you get all messed up. In our ignorance, we take what we think that word means, and so we end up messing up.

Another example: I was preaching in Arequipa about when Steven died, and I said that when he died, Jesus stood up to welcome him into heaven because basically the King James version gives that idea. I read it in the Spanish Bible and said, Jesus is at the right hand of the Father. So when I finished preaching, a bunch of young men came running up to me, and they said, show it to us, we want to see that. That's great. That's in the Word of God, we want to know that, but I just misspoke on that.

**[23:47] Language shifts:**

That's not even saying the English words are not wrong. The English words that we use today have shifted so much over time. What we say today is not what we said 100 years ago. It shifts over time. So we have to make sure that we understand when it was written and get a dictionary because even the dictionary will explain a lot of it.

We need to make sure that when we approach Scripture, we say the same thing, and we understand how language shifts over time. To truly take the Word and deliver it to people is the most amazing responsibility ever given to us. You've got to make sure and understand; it's a heavy weight on the shoulders of a true preacher.

If someone who doesn't know much of Scripture were to listen to you preach the last message that you sent to us which has depth, but it's not out of reach. Anybody can sit down, hear it, and understand that principle from Scripture.

So how do you how do you get to that? Because I know the depth with which you study, You take that and then deliver it in a way that is applicable, understandable by anybody, no matter where they're at. Tell me kind of the process, what you think about, and what matters when it comes to that?

**[28:24] Making the Scripture Understandable:**

Just read the passage over and over and over again. My advice, one of the things that I would say to young preachers, is work ahead. It is very difficult to preach an accurate, meaningful, connecting with the people message if we start on Friday, and we're speaking on Sunday. I know the demands of ministry, demands of life, especially young families. However, if we can discipline ourselves to work ahead because the thing that has helped me through the years is just reading the passage and letting it just sit there as I go throughout my day, my week, and letting it germinate.

So, before I ever picked up Logos, in the message that you're talking about Jesus and Gethsemane, I had been reading that passage for weeks, and just letting it soak.

Now with the Gospels, I read it in harmony. So that particular passage or event of Jesus in Gethsemane, all four gospel writers have something to say about. So I read all four accounts over and over again. Then just started to harmonize what they were saying, because each was bringing details of the passage that others weren't. You put them all together, and then hopefully, you have a complete picture that I was able to communicate there in the message.

So it's amazing what reading the text will do for us. I know it sounds so elementary, but when I'm working with pastors, young pastors, I just drill that in their heads.

Then, after I have an idea of basically what the passage is saying, then I drill down on the grammar, and what does this word actually mean here, what was the emphasis in Hebrew, or Greek. So then I focus on word study, looking at grammar, making sure what I'm thinking is going on here with the rest of Scripture. And then after I've got what I think is a pretty good feel for the passage, I check out commentaries at the end to see if I'm way off in left field, and if so, they'll pull me back in. As much as possible, I try to let the Lord speak to me through His Word.

So to summarize, I live with the text as much as possible, so that it becomes a part of us. And then after all of that, I begin crafting the finished product.

When you're preaching you want to take what might be hard to understand and make it understandable. Not that you're saying the Bible is hard to understand, but getting the context and the background.

So I just want you to know your job is to study the Scripture and find out what it’s got. Sometimes young preachers preach too much. So like, you came away with one simple truth. And I told the guys, we watched it together here, you started opposite who's in charge? And then you said some things and who's in charge? And then we got to the end of it, and you said, you're gonna have to make some bad, hard decisions. You have to figure out who's in charge. How would y'all address the issue that sometimes you've done all this study, and it's hard not to dump it all at one time.

**[34:40] Condensing a large study into a message to be preached:**

The greatest preaching advice I ever received was from my father, and my dad had an eighth grade education. In college, when I told him that I was changing courses in life, he said, would you do me a favor? Would you always preach so that I can understand you? Every message I prepare, I hear my dad saying that.

One of the greatest compliments that I've received through the years, and I just reflected back to the Lord, is people will come up to me and say you took something that was difficult, and you brought it down here where I could understand it. And that goes back to my dad.

I think as preachers, we always have to remember to whom we're speaking. We're not trying to impress anyone, not trying to necessarily get an A in class, and we’re not trying to impress our peers. We're speaking to a needy audience, who may or may not have a biblical background and a knowledge base.  
  
Moreover, we can say a lot of things, but there's got to be a clear point. That was the thesis of Hatton Robinson’s book *Biblical Preaching*, which every preacher needs to read. What's the big idea in the passage? What's the main point the passage is teaching. Then we make that main point, the main point of our message. We amplify it, illustrate it, and get sub points from the passage, but there is one takeaway. We learn so much in our study, but we can't put all of that in one message.

**[37:44]** Never underestimate the impact of illumination. When you are able to put the light on something that nobody's seen before.

My goal is always to figure out how the most common person can understand what you're saying? I think a lot of times we're trying to impress the other pastors, more than we're trying to actually nurture the people. If we're truly a shepherd, we are to nurture the people in the pews. You don't need to impress anybody. We put a stage for you to stand on. We put a pulpit for you to stand behind. There's enough separation between the pulpit and the pew. People that are sitting down understand why you are standing up, and they are sitting down. They understand why you are speaking while they are quiet. There's enough separation already made. So always bridging that gap, and making sure that people understand what you're saying is so important.

**[39:44] Biblical Illiteracy:**

In the United States, we are becoming more and more biblically illiterate. Even when I was in college or in high school, and when my parents were growing up, not everyone was a theologian, but most everyone in the United States had a basic understanding of Bible stories because most everyone went to Sunday school. They heard about Daniel in the lion's den and Jesus feeding the 5000, and so on. That's just not true in the United States anymore.

Therefore, a couple of intentional things that I have done in my speaking is that I have tried to remove all language that indicates they know the stories or have already read the passages, because it's just not true.

So I don't want to put pressure on the person that's coming into the sermon or who's in the service or make them feel bad for not knowing that story when I say something like, well, you all know the story of Daniel in the lion's den. So I don't need to go over that.

Well, the majority of the people listening to me do not know that story. So if I'm going to allude to it, then I'm going to give them some sort of understanding.

The other thing that I always try to do is to give a mini contextual story, maybe two-three minutes. Whatever passage that I'm speaking on, I will put it in context of the overall scripture. I don't go back and tell the whole history, but I give a little mini biblical history. That, in and of itself, is instilling a little bit more of Bible knowledge and understanding. I assume zero biblical knowledge.

That's exactly what missionaries have to do. Because you're on the field and in a place and they don't know. They've never heard of Jesus. So this is for missions. Explaining in a way that they can all get the context of it.

**[43:32] Biblical Illustration:**

I think one thing all of you want to consider too, is when you can use a biblical illustration to illustrate your message, it's not making you the heroes doing whatever God wanted done, but it's teaching a side lesson.

For example, if you were preaching on protection, and if you told the Daniel in the lion's den story, then people would understand more Bible. I don't think Americans know, and the people that you as a missionary are dealing with, know nothing and what they do know, they know wrong.

In Morris’s message, he’s not talking about himself, he’s talking about Jesus. He goes through all of that, and had he done just that, they would have known Bible truth. However, they might have said, and it’s something I like to think of when I'm preparing the message, what's in it for me. What's that have to do with me?

And so when he got to the end of that, actually, he was very clear, he said, and now for the application of that. So with all that heady Bible truth, but as an average citizen, what in the world does that have to do with me?

I'm not going to a cross, I'm not going to die, I'm not Jesus, but he brought it down. I think one of my favorite things he said is that there ought to be some prayer times every now and then, when you look like you just came out of a boxing match, because Jesus was sweating blood. So let's talk about making it relatable and applicable to the lives of our people.

**[46:43] Making your message relatable and applicable:**

First of all, we have to understand that that is the goal of Scripture. The emphasis of Scripture is obedience. God gives us the Scripture to inform us, but primarily to transform us. I always go back to the parable Jesus told about the one man who built his house on the sand and another built his house on the rock. The guy who built his house on the sand is like the guy who heard my words, but didn't put them into practice, the storms came, and his house was washed away. The guy who builds his house on the rock is the guy who hears my words, then obeys them, puts them into practice, the storms come, and he stands firm. So Jesus is very clear, they both heard the Word, but one applied, one didn't apply.

Strength, stability, and transformation come from putting the Word into practice.   
We can't get any clearer than what James said, don't just be a hearer of the word, be a doer, and it's the responsibility of communicators to help with that.   
  
God has just dropped people in my life that have made a big impact on me. When I was younger, first starting an elderly man in the church came up to me after one of the first messages that I preached, and was very, very encouraging. It was not in any way derogatory, because I was so young. He said I appreciate your hard work and what you said. You've obviously studied and prepared, but so what? I said, What do you mean? He says, so what do you want me to do with what you just told me? And that made a big impact on me.

Application is the most difficult part of sermon prep for me. I see what the text is saying, and understand what the author is communicating. I see what in this text Jesus was going through. All right now. So what? No one is going to be asked to do what Jesus did; that was very unique, but what's the principle? Then again, in that specific instance, I went back to Philippians where we had a couple of people arguing in the church at Philippi. Out of that, Paul gave perhaps the greatest passage ever about the person and work of Jesus. He said, you're arguing and putting your own interests ahead of others. He said, have this mind in you, which was also in Christ Jesus. Then he went through how he was God, but he didn't consider equality with God something you had to grasp and hang on to at all costs. He emptied himself, became a servant, became a man, became obedient and submissive. So that was what drove home that passage for me. Yes, what Jesus went through was unique, but there is application here. That was specific to that message.

We as communicators have to go into this as I'm here to help communicate what this text is saying, and then make it applicable for the audience. I always ask myself in study, what was the desired response of the text? If Paul was writing to the Corinthians, what did he want them to do as a result of this paragraph or this chapter. Then that becomes the application, and the application has to be born right out of the text.

**[51:00]** The three questions I ask are what does the passage say? So what? Now what? What does it do for me personally; what does it do for the people in the congregation?

In regards to making scripture applicable, I don't have a better illustration than what we find in 2 Samuel 12.

One of the biggest crimes you can do is to make the Word of God boring. It's the living Word of God, but sometimes we present it as if it was anything but that.

**[52:20]** Another passage that I try to live by is Ezra 7:10. It says Ezra set his heart to study the law, to practice the law, and then to teach the law. As preachers, teachers, that's the model for us. We study, then we make a personal application, and then we teach. Now, that does not mean that we're going to be perfect. If we all waited till we were perfect and 100% always, absolutely applying the Word, none of us would ever speak. However, there has to be a personal internalization of the Word to ourselves, then out of that overflow, we can communicate.

**[55:15] MP seminars and online material:**

I'm (Morris) the trainer for Logos Bible software. So I've been privileged to have been doing that since 1997. A friend of mine in the church was an executive at Thomas Nelson Publishers in Nashville, Tennessee, and they were starting to use Logos for their electronic books. So he gave me my first copy of Logos. I started using it for myself, and getting my pastor friends on board. So they would get it at my recommendation, but they didn’t know how to use it. So I showed them the two or three things that I knew. So I just started getting my pastor friends equipped with a few features in Logos. Then my same friend at Thomas Nelson introduced me to the Logos folks out in Washington State, and it was a sovereign connection. It was a God story. So we connected and since 1998, I've been training their users.   
  
So technically, MP Seminars is a third party, but we have a very unique partnership between Logos and MP seminars. Also, I'm not a techie. I am a Bible student, Bible teacher. One of the reasons that the Lord allowed me to be involved with Logos is because I speak Bible, I speak preacher, I speak sermon, I don't speak tech stuff. So I have to make stuff simple, so that I can understand it.   
  
[MPseminars.com](https://mpseminars.com) is where you go to learn how to use Logos once you have the program.

**[57:22]** Number one way to know that you need MP seminars is if you use Logos like a gigantic library where you just pull a commentary off of the shelf to read, you are in desperate need of being trained in how to use it. It takes time to be trained, but once you are trained, it will speed up your sermon prep process, and revolutionize the way you use the software once you truly understand it.

**[58:19]** If you go to [mpseminars.com](https://mpseminars.com), Morris breaks it down into bite size studies. You're paying a subscription, and I find it well worth it. I love Logos Bible software, and I don't do 1,000th of what I ought to do with it. Even the fact that my library is all completely searchable, and I can find anything out of about 11,000 books that I have now. We like to buy Logos for young students and interns. By the way, they just bought Word Search so it's a good deal. So I challenge you to get involved with the program.

**[59:37] How do we train our young men to study the Bible to be effective pastors?**

Bear in mind, Logos is not available in Turkish, and they probably only have one or two commentaries. They only have the most rudimentary tools.

You're working with Turkish believers, and you will teach a young preacher, a young Turkish believer that has become a pastor, or is working to become a pastor. He has very few tools at his disposal, even down to maybe only one or two commentaries. And so we want to teach him how to preach well, understand the Scripture, and study the Scripture. What would your suggestion be on how to teach that preacher?

You have the ability to hire a translator. Or in Google Translate, at least for Spanish, you now can use Google Translate and translate pretty much anything. Then you just have to read through it and make sure that it's correct. Randy Stirewalt helped his ministry by taking great material that he found, and he took the Logos Bible software and gave information to the national believers.

**[1:02:09]** Make sure that you're not the answer. A thirst for the Word of God can be bred into people when they understand that the answer is not you as the leadership. Always take them to Scripture. No matter what the question is, always take them to the Word of God. They understand the importance of the Word of God.

We live in a dangerous day and age. YouTube has taught us that we can just watch and become experts. Even in America, everybody has an opinion about everything without having done anything. So you have to be very careful because they do have access to information, whether it be of the right belief system or not. Make sure that you're driving them every time to the scriptures. Show them that the scripture truly is the answer; the missionary is not.   
  
If we're not careful, it's way easier to give ourselves as an example. So always take them to the Scriptures, and when they understand how important the scriptures are, make sure that they study them and spend more time on them.

**[1:04:00] Importance of a Mentor Relationship:**

The importance of a mentor relationship. Rob mentored Morris with the Bible and a couple of books.

They spent time together, and met once a week during which he would give Morris assignments. Then they would meet again to go over those assignments.   
  
The first couple of assignments were an overview of the book of the Bible with reading the passage several times before meeting again looking to understand the main emphasis. Then, break it down to study smaller passages. Be a model and mentor, give assignments, allow them to work on their own, meet again. There's no replacement for the meeting one on one, one on five, or one on 12 mentoring.

The biggest weakness in preaching is people don't read the passage. If they have the Word of God, there's no excuse for that being a weakness.

**[1:06:19]** Number one, get them a copy of the Bible. Get more than one version of the Bible in the language. You can use the standard version that the conservative believers have chosen, and the other version can act as a commentary. Then, they need to read the Bible over and over until they basically memorize those stories.   
  
The second tool you buy for them, help them get, or challenge them to get is the largest language dictionary they have in their language, so that they can look up every word. Because whoever translated that set of scriptures was using words that were probably around long before the current people are using them, and language changes.

Third, get the absolute best concordance that you can find. If there is a concordance available, take that and teach them how to use a concordance so they can find things.

Some missionaries have taken their Bible, created an electronic copy of the Bible, and made their own personal book of the Bible.

The note system is one of my favorite features of Logos. So then you go in Logos, and you can take that word study, translate that word, study that word in the language.

You're giving them a Bible, they have a great dictionary in their language. They've got a concordance. If you can get one, once you do the Bible, Logos Bible software will build you a concordance of any book you own. So then your Bible would have a concordance in that language. You could take notes, do word studies, etc.   
 **[1:10:08] Logos Basic (Free) Program:**

Go to [logos.com](https://www.logos.com). In the search box, type the word basic, and it will show the basic library. It's absolutely free. You will have to create an account. No credit card required. Then you can download the Basic, and you will have access to a couple of dozen books. Now, granted, they're going to be in English, but if the trainer had created notes, then he could share those notes, and then they would show up for his students.

**[1:11:10]** Contact Paul Taube, who has done an amazing job with the personal book. He has his Bible in Nepali. He also made it where you can double click on any word, and he actually made the dictionary pop up. So he has the dictionary and everything inside of Logos Bible software, all created through the tool of personal books.

Here's two things I would encourage you to do. Show them how to use that, and then use Google Translate to help them get their stuff into their language. If you use a mechanical translator or computer, internet translator, check the translation, just read it, and have some nationals read it to make sure they understand.

Subscribe to Austin Gardner’s notes. As you study, take notes in the language, and then share those with people, and it will help them grow.

**[1:13:50]** Well, I think one of the first things mentors need to do is hire a translator. They don't necessarily even need to know English, if Google Translate is decent. If you hire a translator or someone who can read through what was translated. You could translate Austin Gardner’s notes file into the target language, and it would give them a ton of information that would help them grow. Austin has over 12,000 notes. If you learn how to use notes, it's like having Dropbox or Google Storage, you can actually put them up and Logos saves everything. Logos actually backs up everything so it's hard to mess up what you do in Logos without being able to recover it

**[1:17:45] Recommended books on preaching:**

“I-Beam of Sermon Building” by Morris Proctor

“Christ Centered Preaching: Redeeming the Expository Sermon” by Bryan Chapell

“There's No Such Thing As Public Speaking” by Roy Henderson.

\*Morris’ favorite public speaking book is not a Christian book. It's not about preaching. It's about public speaking. It's universal in terms of its principles of communication.