

TTT 389. Start With Yourself

Teaching Tip 389 | “How to Prepare Christmas Lessons. Part 1 - Start With Yourself.” | Malcolm Cox

How do we keep things fresh when we're discussing something for the hundredth time? It can be challenging to speak about the Christmas story while keeping your audience's attention. I hope these recordings will inspire you to think fresh thoughts that will benefit your lessons and your congregations.

In this series, we're not just talking about sermons but lessons, welcoming people to a Christmas-themed service, a communion, or a family devotional. The tips we will explore in the series will cover all eventualities.

By the way, I am aware that some feel that the traditional Christmas focus is a distraction from the gospel. You might find the article in the footnotes enlightening. ^[1] While it is true that commercialisation is a challenge, I regard the Christmas season as an opportunity. In my part of the world, you cannot get away from it, and you might as well use it to speak of God's love and the beauty of the nativity.

So, where do we start?

Start with Prayer and Reflection

1. Reflection

Reflect on how the Christmas story has an impact on *your* faith—personal authenticity resonates deeply. To do this, you might like to read one of the Gospel accounts of the Nativity or one of the great prophetic passages such as the one in Isaiah 9.6-7.

Isaiah 9.6-7

“For a child has been born for us, a son given to us; authority rests upon his shoulders; and he is named Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. His authority shall grow continually, and there shall be endless peace for the throne of

David and his kingdom. He will establish and uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time onward and forevermore. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will do this. ”

Read them meditatively, slowly, more than once, and use them as inspiration for prayer. We are not looking for the story of 'Christmas' as such but to refresh our gratitude for God's love and the extraordinary beauty of the birth of the Messiah. The question is not, "What does Christmas mean to me?" but "What do the actions of God that led to the events that we currently celebrate under the title of 'Christmastide' mean to me?"

2. Prayer

Talk your discoveries over with God. Pray through the Scripture passages that are most meaningful to you. Ask God to guide your preparation and focus on the specific message He wants you to communicate. Now that you know what the nativity means to you, take that to God in prayer and ask him to shape your thinking about how to bring that across meaningfully in the context of your speaking opportunity.

You might find Scriptures like these inspiring in this regard:

Psalm 119.18

“Open my eyes, so that I may behold wondrous things out of your law.”

James 1.5

“If any of you is lacking in wisdom, ask God, who gives to all generously and ungrudgingly, and it will be given you.”

Conclusion

If we do not find the Christmas story inspiring, we must start there. Even if we love Christmas, it's important to reconnect with the heart of the events before preparing lessons.

What is your best tip for helping speakers prepare inspiring lessons around the Christmas story? Please let me know.

Next time, we will explore some less common angles for Christmas lessons.

Please add your comments on this week's topic. We learn best when we learn in community.

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If you'd like a copy of my free eBook on spiritual disciplines, "How God grows His people", sign up at my website: <http://www.malcolmcox.org>.

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Keep calm and carry on teaching.

God bless, Malcolm

1. <https://www.biblicalarchaeology.org/daily/people-cultures-in-the-bible/jesus-historical-jesus/how-december-25-became-christmas/> ↩