

## Developmental Questions (Step 4a)

*Adapted from Dr. Don Sunukjian, Dallas Theological Seminary, and Haddon Robinson, 77-96  
(For illustrations of these concepts, see also pages 117-119 of these notes)*

**Proposition:** There are only 3 things that can be done with any given idea or statement, whether it be the main idea of the message or one of the points within the outline—explain it, prove it, or apply it. (This sequence is important, as they should be addressed in this order.)

### I. Explain it.

*This answers the question, “What do I need to explain?”*

- A. If the biblical writer explains the answer to this question, by all means use his explanation of his idea, statement, or word (e.g., Mark 4).
- B. If the biblical writer does *not* explain the idea then *you* as the speaker must do so.
  1. Perhaps the author assumed his audience would understand (e.g., John 3:5).
  2. Ask, “Would my audience ask for further explanation of this statement?” If so, then this is your developmental question.
- C. In an inductively developed message where the subject/question is raised in the introduction, the developmental question is, “*What is the answer* to the question raised in the introduction?”

### II. Prove it.

*This answers the question, “Do my listeners believe it?”*

- A. The biblical writer may be proving/defending/arguing something which your modern audience *already accepts* (e.g., deity, humanity, or resurrection of Christ for SBC students). If so, this is not the proper developmental question to address.
- B. However, if the author is proving/defending/arguing something which your modern audience *does not already accept*, be sure to develop this issue for your listeners (e.g., the resurrection of Christ in John 20 or 1 Cor. 15 could also fit here for a non-Christian audience).
- C. A third option is that the biblical author may *not* be proving it, but the modern audience needs some defense or explanation of why this is true or how such a thing could happen (e.g., Jonah getting swallowed by a great fish and living there three days). If this is the case, you must develop this issue to prove the reliability of Scripture or of your interpretation.
- D. When a person needs proof for your idea one of at least three problems exists:
  1. He *doesn't see the connection* between what you say and the Bible says.
    - a. “Be nice to your grandfather. It will help you have babies.”
    - b. Col. 1:9-12 — “Knowing God’s will leads to patience with other Christians.” How so?
  2. He sees the connection but simply *doesn't believe it* (it seems contrary to real life).
    - a. Eph. 6:1-3 — “Honoring your parents brings long life.” But a good boy died at 12.
    - b. 1 Cor. 7:10 — “Divorced Christians should remain unmarried for reconciliation.”
  3. Something else is more important to him.
    - a. “Acceptance is more important than purity.”
    - b. “Employment is more important than honesty.”

**III. Apply it.**

*This answers the questions, “So what? What does this mean to me? What difference does it make? What are the implications? Where does it show up in real life?”*

- A. The biblical author may be showing the implications of his idea or statement.
- B. Even if the biblical writer doesn’t show the implications, the modern preacher must do this for the listeners.
- C. The goal of our teaching and preaching should not be knowledge but behaviour change.
  - 1. Knowledge alone makes us proud (1 Cor. 8:1a).
  - 2. Knowledge plus loving behaviour helps both us and others (1 Cor. 8:1b; 1 Tim. 1:5; 3:16-17).
- D. Proper application has two parts:
  - 1. What is the valid principle? (hermeneutics)
  - 2. What is the concrete application and extended application? (specifics)

Biblical  
Situation

21<sup>st</sup> Century  
Situation

## Developmental Questions Summary

Developmental Questions	Explain it	Prove it	Apply it
<i>Questions asked</i>	What does it mean?	Do they think it’s true? Do they believe it? Do they buy it?	So what? What does it mean to me? What difference does it make?
<i>Listener’s need addressed</i>	Ignorance	Doubt	Relevance
<i>Explores</i>	Explanation	Validity	Implications and applications
<i>Goal</i>	Understanding	Belief	Behaviour