

## How to prepare a devotion for Sunday evenings at Freshbrook Church

We want to help you develop confidence and skill in sharing God's Word, to build up your brothers and sisters! These 10-minute devotions on Sunday evenings are intended to be an easy way in. We are not asking for a sermon. You don't need to give a complete explanation of the whole passage. Nor do we expect you to draw definitive conclusions about what it means. After prayerfully following the steps below, there may only be one thing you can confidently share about the passage. That is totally fine!

To help you prepare, we would encourage you to set aside at least 2 hours to do the following:

- 1) Pray! Ask God to help you understand his Word and reveal what he is saying to *you* through this passage. Only then can you safely consider what he might be saying to others (N.B. Matt 7:3-5)!
- 2) Read the passage in different English translations. Read the surrounding sections too, so you get some context to what is said. We recommend the NIV (the version we use in church), the ESV or the NASB, and something more paraphrased, like New Living Translation or The Message. All are available on Biblehub.com and the Bible App. We'd encourage you to look up what key words originally meant, which you can easily do via [stepbible.org](http://stepbible.org) (just choose your Bible translation and passage at the top left, then click on individual words in the passage). Another good resource for understanding the original meanings is [biblehub.com](http://biblehub.com). Just type into Google your passage + interlinear (e.g. 'Matthew 5.3 interlinear') and look for Bible Hub in the search results.
- 3) Consider how Jesus' original audience might have heard and understood his words. How might the Old Testament have shaped their Jewish culture and expectations? The New Bible Commentary, 4<sup>th</sup> Edition, edited by D.A. Carson & Co, and the ESV Study Bible are great resources to help with this. Both are available from church. In your devotion, give us a brief sketch of how the first audience might have heard Jesus' words, if you feel able.
- 4) Then consider how Jesus might fulfil his own teaching in his life, death and resurrection, thus keeping God's law on our behalf. How does he atone for our failure to keep this teaching? How does he model obedience to this teaching? Take time to thank him for doing so and then share what you've learned in your devotion, so we can be encouraged too!
- 5) Finally, consider what might it look like for you (and then us) to grow in this character trait or obey this teaching. Give us one or two examples and encourage us to reflect on what it means for ourselves. Remember, we can only grow in dependence upon the Holy Spirit, so you might like to refer to Him! Pray for this growth in yourself as you prepare, then lead us in prayer or encourage us to pray quietly at the end of your devotion.

In addition to the resources above, we also commend J C Ryle's Expository Thoughts on Matthew, which we have in the church library. Matthew Henry and John Calvin, two older commentators, usually have something helpful to say too and their commentaries are available freely online.

After your devotion and prayer, we'll encourage people to consider the following questions:

- 1) What encouraged you in this devotion?
- 2) Is there anything else in the passage that struck you as important?
- 3) Do you have any questions about the passage?
- 4) What do you need to do or believe differently as a result of this passage?

Don't worry if you feel unable to answer or respond to all of the questions/observations that people make. We will discuss and wrestle with them altogether!

Finally, please note that we will be strict about the 10-minute time limit and will give you a 1-minute warning. Please check your word count, if you write a full script on a computer. Speaking at more than 100 words a minute is too fast, so don't exceed 1,000 words! If you are using notes or writing it out by hand, please time yourself speaking, to check you're ok. Less than 10 minutes is totally fine!

Thank you for being willing to have a go. Dave and Phil are ready and willing to help you if you are struggling. Please don't hesitate to ask!