

The Took: Graft it into Life!



Hook, Book, Look and Took remain excellent handles for structuring, developing, delivering and evaluating a Bible lesson! These four simple words were first introduced to me during my seminary days through a required reading book by Lawrence Richards, entitled “Creative Bible Teaching.” (Lawrence O. Richards, “Creative Bible Teaching,” Moody Press, 1976.) A life-changing lesson requires a few moments when the participants can respond. The Took is the “take away!” The teacher is asking the class to “graft” this truth into their life. Make sure your class has taken the opportunity to respond to your brief appeal to live out the truth you have learned together.

AN INVITATION. If Bible study is to be life-changing, let me urge you to plan for an invitation, or the *Took*. Teachers, myself included, often run out of time during class. In the midst of discussion on verse six, or whatever, we realize our time is gone and we call on someone to dismiss the class in prayer. Usually the prayer goes something like, “Lord, thanks for this great lesson, help us take it to heart, Amen.” Did the class really take something life-changing into the coming week?

GRAB- GRASP- GRAPPLE- GRAFT! In each of these posts I have urged you to guard your class time. There are four elements of a life-changing lesson. The first and last elements should be brief, perhaps very brief. The middle two elements will require a majority of the class time and must be balanced. All four should be well planned!

- The *Hook*, a brief introduction designed to “grab” the learners’ attention.
- The *Book*, an explanation of the text that guides the learner to “grasp” with the truth of scripture. •
- The *Look* or application time is to guide the group to “grapple” with a how the passage applies to their daily lives.
- The *Took*, a brief invitation that invites the learner to personally “graft” the lesson into their life during the coming week.

IN CONCLUSION. A teacher’s invitation to live out the truth of the lesson usually comes in the last few moments of the Bible study. It does not end the lesson; it launches the lesson into the realm of 24/7. I believe it is critical that the leader bring the class back to a main point or big idea and then invite them to live it out. That usually means a time of personal reflection and prayer. Don’t panic, even if you have only covered one verse of scripture, urge them to live that truth today, or in the coming week.

LIFE-CHANGE. The *Took* should present a challenge, “live like this.” Usually it will include a prayer such as, “Lord, we commit ourselves to live like this.” Come Monday morning some class members may not even remember text, but they should remember that a caring teacher challenged them to “do” something and then prayed with them as they decided to “do” that one thing during the week.



ENCOURAGING. In my mind, that is what weekly Bible study is all about. You must have the courage to get deep into the lesson. Deep enough that they decide to live it. Deep enough to personally commit themselves during that personal prayer time to graft that Bible truth into Monday morning and beyond. Now, that is encouraging!

EVALUATION. How do you evaluate a life-changing lesson? I hope it is more than you simply hearing the words, “Wow, teacher that was a good lesson!” I hope you will receive a call during the week. Maybe it will go something like this, “Teacher, let me share with you how I just lived out that lesson; here is what I Took to work today that I received in class on Sunday.” It *Took*!

The Look: Grapple with the Truth

Hook, Book, Look and *Took* remain excellent handles for structuring, developing, delivering and evaluating a Bible lesson! These four simple words were first introduced to me during my seminary days through a required reading book by Lawrence Richards, entitled “Creative Bible Teaching.” (Lawrence O. Richards, “Creative Bible Teaching,” Moody Press, 1976.) Occasionally someone says to me, “Gary, we want deeper Bible study.” I usually respond, “Okay, how much time are you giving to lesson application?”

GET DEEP. A teacher is to guide people to understand the scriptures and to live it out! From my prospective, you can not get any deeper into scripture than focusing the very words of scripture on Monday morning! When an in-depth Bible lesson moves the text toward Monday or the ‘work-a-day’ world of the learner, you move the group toward genuine deeper- life Bible study. I do not want to be too redundant, but these elements all fit together. A life application Bible lesson requires giving time within the lesson for all of these elements:

1. *Book* – what does the passage say? Do not try to apply something that is not there. A life lesson must get into the *Book* and discover the truth of the scripture passage. The learner must take a serious look at what the text says before he or she will move to make adjustments in their life.
2. *Look* – how should this truth impact our lives? Examine how the Bible lesson should impact life on Monday morning and throughout the coming week. Seldom will the learner understand and internalize the truth unless they can interact or relate to the truth. Most often application requires learner involvement and participation.
3. *Took* – how will I adjust my life? Give a brief invitation. (I will deal specifically with *Took* in my next post). Every lesson needs a closing moment to allow the learner to decide if what they have experienced is to be life-changing. Application does require a broad *Look* at how the passage applies to us, but it also requires a personal *Look* at how it applies to me.

RELIVANCE. Many Bible teachers have wrestled with the desire to dig deeper into the Word of God. I just want to caution the Bible teacher to make sure each lesson has adequate time for life-changing application before you strive to go any deeper. I am not always sure what a teacher really wants when they ask for deeper life lessons. In my mind, most ongoing Bible study

should be a “ministry of encouragement to live out God’s word.” Relevance is essential for life-change, spiritual growth and living God’s word.

LEARNER INVOLVEMENT. Many Bible teachers have wrestled with learner involvement and relevance during lesson application time. Remember, application usually requires some learner involvement and therefore, some creativity. Often teachers have a class member(s) who are reluctant to participate in any way and at the same time have a class member(s) who dominate the class time and can cause “rabbit chasing.” This “rabbit chasing” is not Bible study! It may seem as though the best way to comfortably control the situation is to lecture most of the hour.

TRIADS? To bring balance to class time, I urge teachers to consider discussion triads when asking questions, seeking opinions or getting reactions. Clusters of three, with an assignment that can be completed in a few moments, allows the leader to guide discussion, and still guard the time.

PREPARE FOR A DECISION. Again, the *Look*, the lesson application element, is aided by learner involvement, implication and self-evaluation. *Look* allows the learner to prepare this heart for the final moments of class time where he must decide if he will place this truth into life.

The Book: Grasp the Truth

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HIT A LICK. My father often used the words, “he never hit a lick” in referring to someone who totally missed the point or failed to accomplish the task. Bible study preparation begins with prayer and a personal study of the text. If you are to guide your group to carefully read, understand a passage and apply it to their lives then you must first grapple with the content and personalize it. Once you have personalized the passage you can prepare to guide the class to “grasp the truth.” The lesson commentator (curriculum writer) may suggest a teaching aim, learning goal or intended outcome, but if the passage does not “grip” you with a personal message then it will be difficult for you to hit any target during class time.

PREPARATION. Good lesson preparation requires setting appropriate time to guide each critical element of the class session! The *Book*, the second element in a life-changing lesson process, will require more time than the other three elements. After a brief *Hook* you should be ready to take the class to the truth of the scripture passage but remember you still have application, which we will refer to as the *Look*; and the *Took*, or the invitation, ahead of you. I believe there are three critical parts to this element of the lesson.

1. **Read the text well.** Regardless of whether you are teaching verse by verse or dealing with the passage as a whole, put some thought into reading the text. Perhaps you could enlist a reader in advance who becomes a critical part of the teaching process by using appropriate voice inflection and emphasis as each verse is presented. Let the Word speak!
2. **Present the background.** No passage or scripture really stands alone and therefore, understanding of your text requires some knowledge of the author, setting, context, theme of the book and so forth. Again, great teaching does require disciplined time management.
3. **Develop an understanding of the text.** Lecture moments are appropriate here but don't just lecture. Present the content and the key points with creativity knowing that the scripture has the power to change lives. Teaching does require group participation so I urge teachers to plan for and allow spontaneity and interaction throughout the session but I also suggest that a good leader will safeguard this element of the lesson carefully. You will want more interaction when the time comes for application. If you have given adequate time to personal preparation, you are a primary source of information at this point. Don't give in to chasing rabbits! Make sure you take the class to the truth of scripture.

Again, before the class can apply the passage to their own life, it will be essential for them to "grasp the truth." Make sure you take them to the *Book* and they come away knowing what the Word of God says.



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CRITICAL TIMING. The first few moments of a Bible lesson are critical to the outcome of that lesson. Regardless of whether the learner has been in your class for years or whether this is their very first session with you, you must prepare each attendee to receive the content, the truth of the scripture passage. Be honest, you have sit through a class session or a sermon and realized you were not engaged; your mind was elsewhere! You failed to focus on the text or the topic. Life-change as a result of confronting Holy Scripture was highly unlikely!

BEGIN. Consider the master teacher's parables (stories and illustrations) He presented throughout the gospels to bring the students to class. First, Jesus "grabbed" the learner's attention. The apostle Paul often says to his reader, "Listen up" by beginning a topic with a very pointed question. Yet, at times, I drop in on a Bible teaching session that begins with the words, "Turn in your Bibles to today's passage and

let's begin reading." Often, I am not anticipating a life-changing encounter as I begin to read and at best I skim the text rather than read for comprehension.

FOCUS. If the learner is prepared to genuinely "hear" the Word of God, teaching begins immediately! If the first few moments of the lesson do not "grab" his or her mind, and perhaps even the heart, then the attendee sits through another session thinking about yesterday's challenges or tomorrow's to-do list and never relates those things to today's text. A good *Hook* will bring the learner to class, mentally; and prepare him or her to "grapple" with a relevant and life-changing passage of scripture. *Book, Look* and *Took* must be approached with enough emotion, or excitement, or anticipation that your class members will personalize the passage and begin to "engage" with the group as they consider how the passage should change lives.

BRIDGE. I hesitate to simply use the word introduction. Sometimes it is called "creating interest." Awaken, arouse or provoke are better ways to define a *Hook* used to launch a great study. The *Hook*, usually a brief three to five minutes, does need to be a bridge that immediately connects the learner with life issues and points them toward today's lesson.

LIFE. Good *Hooks* come from life. As I mentioned, Jesus used stories. He also used questions, object lessons or referred to a current event. Read the passage early in the week and as you consider the "big idea" found in the lesson text, look for the *Hook* to "bring the learner" to class. You can do it! "Grab" the learner's attention, prepare for him to hear the text and engage him so that he can apply the truth to his own life!

The Four Elements of a Life-Changing Lesson

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First, let me overview these four steps from my prospective. I will discuss each step in the blog posts to follow throughout the month. Consider the four elements:

1. **HOOK.** The first step prepares the learner to hear the word of God and guides him or her to anticipate the teaching or encouragement that is found in the lesson's Bible passage. We are talking about Bible study so we must get into the

Book.

2. **BOOK.** The second step focuses on reading the passage and providing some commentary on the actual words of scripture.
3. **LOOK.** Step three in the structure is the Look or basic application. Here the class must look at key questions concerning the text, such as what did this passage said to the very first reader and what does it say to our class today. Together the class should look at how they could and should live their lives based on what these scriptures teach us.
4. **TOOK.** Fourth, a life-changing lesson must have a personal outcome. Each attendee should be challenged to make a decision! The Took guides them to decide what they will take away from this session and place into their daily life. The fourth step is critical and yet is the most neglected by today's Sunday School teachers or small group leaders. Unless the Took is included in the lesson plan, when all is said and done, more is said that done – as a result the lesson and, thus, life goes on without a genuine life-changing encounter with the Word of God.

Lawrence Richards writes “It’s best to avoid thinking of these as mechanical steps. They are more like four parts of a continuous, systematic but exciting process. In class the students probably won’t even notice passage from one part of the process to another. No part is marked by routine; each is full of opportunity for spontaneity and interaction. Yet each of these parts in the process has its own – and essential – role” (p. 108). Now, join me as we revisit each step in additional posts.