

# Hook – Book – Took (HBT), A Directive Teaching Tool by Jim Fredericks

Learning a skill in any walk of life, whether an athlete, entertainer or mother, is a process. Even those with great innate ability reach their full potential best when they initially learn the basic skills in a more structured way with healthy boundaries.

Some call this “*deliberate practice*” especially under the watchful eye of a good coach. Then when the basics are mastered, the creativity has “riverbanks” through which the expression of uniqueness flows powerfully and fruitfully without damaging the surrounding regions.

This simple yet effective way to teach or preach are like those riverbanks. I’ve heard this style called *Hook, Book and Took*.

## 1. **HOOK** (*Why?*)

*What are some concrete purposes why to use a “hook”?*

- Most audiences come with scattered thoughts. “**Hook**” seeks to capture their interest and attention in the first five minutes and links the message relevantly to life.
- It attempts to answer the questions: “*Why should I listen?*” “*How is this relevant for my life?*” since *relevance* is one of the four powerful motivations for adult learners. If we do not, our audience may not re-engage later, even though the message becomes compelling and life-impacting for them.
- “**Hook**” leads naturally into the Bible teaching so announce the Bible text several times as the transition so the audience can take time to turn there.

*What are some helpful sources for “hook”?*

- Create anticipation without hype: “*I have been looking forward to this since...*”
- Common experience or events from the particular group you are ministering to. This is easier if you are teaching in an ongoing community.
- Current events or life events common to many.
- Personal experience. Get in the habit of thinking how to apply the truth of the Word to the needs of your life as you study Scripture. If you have learned to think through the lens of **D-O-I-N-G** as you personally mine God’s Word, this comes easily.
- Use this short time to develop a need or curiosity through humor. A provocative question may encourage them to think and actively relate truth to their lives.
- Historical context of the book or passage also provides fuel although be careful. Keep this short and targeted, even if you are enamored by the extended details of the book. It’s better to salt some ideas during “**Book**” than frontload with long details now. Remember, the purpose for these five minutes is to grab their attention.
- Good, thought-provoking, provocative questions, perhaps with more than one, clear answer. “*How many of you have ever...?*” “*When was the last time...?*” “*What do you think would happen if...?*”

## 2. **BOOK** (“*Inspect*” & “*Interpret*”) – (*What?*)

This is the longest part of the message. *As you study a text*, bombard it with questions. To prepare to teach, here are three crucial sets.

1. “*What is the point?*” (content question). Write out this central truth for the whole message in a single, short, memorable sentence or question (sometimes called the “*thesis*”). Ask yourself, “*What is the one, main idea I am trying to get across to this audience?*” This is your sermon in a nutshell so interweave this sentence a number of times within the message with your textual points, illustrations, or applications in varying ways, especially in key transitions.

2. Then ask, “*How does this relate to this audience?*” (compassion question) Underneath every Biblical passage there is some “need to know” that Scripture is meeting. These are assumed question or need, about God, about humanity, about life.

3. “*Where are the pictures and images in the text? “How can the concepts and images fit together to bring about experience in the audience?”* (communication questions). Images touch hearts and change lives.

If you have learned to mind God’s Word using the simple, yet powerful, **D-O-I-N-G** approach, these three sets of questions bubble up naturally as you do your personal study. This makes it easy to transition your study to a *Hook, Look, Took* preaching style.

*As you teach*, I suggest that a “*Bible Reading*” is the simplest way to preach, but far from simplistic. It works for all passages yet is especially effective for a narrative section (Gospels, Acts, Genesis, etc.). In a “*Bible Reading*,” read a short segment of the entire passage (not the whole passage unless you first read the entire passage, then go back and read each segment). Then explain and illustrate as we very lightly salt it with application (just a little under **Book**, like salting oatmeal in anticipation of **Took**). *Tip:* If you do choose to read a longer segment instead of doing a Bible reading, be careful you don’t lose the audience. My mind tends to wander when a preacher begins by reading a long passage.

A “*Bible Reading*” brings people directly into the text to think along with you. If you announce the passage the week before, the congregation can get used to “*flipping*” their learning and reading and studying the passage **before** the meeting. This raises their investment and accelerates personal learning.

Until I come, give attention to the public reading of Scripture, to exhortation and teaching (1 Timothy 4:13, NASB).

**1. Read:** Read a small, related portion of the total. After working through points 2-4 below on this portion, then read the next portion until we have worked through the entire passage. As an aside, if this is an interactive Bible study, I prefer to use more question to draw them out.

**2. Explain** with bursts with “*popcorn*” teaching. Popcorn teaching is a short burst of energy followed by all of us enjoying the savory taste. If you develop one key sentence for each small portion, it’s then easy to integrate. What does it say in context to its original hearers? Perhaps add a pertinent historical or cultural tip. For clarity, restate the key sentence in different words. Select exegesis points (points drawn from contextual interpretation) as appropriate for the audience.

- **Humor:** Add appropriate humor. People are more humorous when they feel safe and accepted. Laugh with people (which includes laughing at ourselves). Don’t laugh at them. Humor is an attitude so be open to the unexpected, silly, and ridiculous that life deals us (sometimes during our teaching time!)
- Craft your segues or transitional phrases and questions carefully ahead of time. When we move from one idea to another, showing the learners that we are moving out of one “room” and into another helps maintain their attention and maximize impact.

**3. Illustrate:** Help the audience to see and experience the passage. Don't use all of these, but perhaps use some of these.

- "Images feed concepts; concepts discipline images. Images without concepts are blind; concepts without images are sterile" (McFague).
- *Images touch hearts and change lives.* Jesus used language to craft word-picture that brought up an image in people's minds. Experts tell us that we think in images. An image is a window to throw light on the concept or truth since the audience often remembers this more than the truth, so it is critical to tie the image to a biblical concept to link the concept with the image.
  - *Use appropriate humor* because it provides a break in the midst of the intensity of the message, refreshes them and raises the level of rapport, especially when you poke humor at ourselves.
  - *"Journalize"* by opening ourselves up to our audience for the purpose of helping them understand how we have wrestled with the truth and applied it to the mysteries in our own life. These include both successes and failures.
  - Be willing to share not only our experiences in Christ, but also our needs and failures and God's subsequent working through that. Be sure to point to how good Jesus Christ is rather than how bad you are. Paul *"shared his own life"* (1 Thesalonians. 2:8).
  - *Learn to tell stories memorably*, like Jesus. Stories illustrate and bring the truth current. I'm still on a large learning curve here.

**4. Apply:** *Quickly* show them how this may impact their life, like lightly salting food. This is called *exhorting* and anticipates **Took**.

### **3. TOOK** ("Implement") – (Now what?)

Our responses include both "me" and "we," both my personal response and the response of the community (*direct applying questions*). The question we answer is: *"How will I/you/we relate this truth to specifics of life?"* This is the challenge of the exhortation question, **"Now what can we do about what we've learned?"**

Lead people to learn to be **doers** of the Word and not self-deceived hearers (James 1:22). Over 50% of Jesus' teaching was application so don't back off calling people to Life-Change. Don't skimp here, yet also be sensitive to where the audience is in this season of life. *"No summons, no sermon."* Yet without shaming or guilt tripping.

For instance, if you see three key concepts from a Gospel passage you are teaching, perhaps sum up your **"Took"** something like this. *"I see three clear ideas Jesus conveys. How do these relate to your life today? First in verse 35, ...."* Make the summary of the context short and memorable. Don't reteach the passage. Arrange these in your order of importance rather than in the text order so you finish with the point of greatest emphasis for this audience at this time.

You may call them to a short time of reflection, for them to ask someone around them to pray for them, or to come up front for prayer. Be sensitive to the people and to the Spirit, yet carefully and consistently exhort them to apply truth to encounter their life. When we begin to tie our life responses to specific Scripture and experience God's favor and blessing, my what a powerful motivation!

One caution as you draw timeless truths to bring home for application. Don't try to make the passage say something to this audience that it never said to the original audience. Yes, all Scripture is divine, in-breathed by the Spirit of God. Some Scripture though is occasional or

deliberately changed (like Mosaic sacrifices have been fulfilled by Jesus). Still, look over their shoulder and see what God wants to say today since He's changeless. A good connection point are "*feelings*." "What could have the original hearers *felt* then?" "*Have we experienced similar feelings?*"

Sometimes use indirect questions. "*How could the church at large respond to this message?*" "*What are some of the timeless truths for all generations?*" This opens people to be honest with the truth since it's not pointed at them. Then you may want to follow with a *direct* question like "*How do you...?*" Note Jesus' use of *indirect* and *direct* applying questions in Mark 8:27+29. Word pictures often help the audience connect God's truth to life needs.

Some homiletics profs (homiletics is the art of preaching) encourage you to develop three outlines: a passage outline (*happened*), a timeless outline (*happens*), and a sermonic outline (*happening*). For time sake since we are also called to shepherd people, I'm more inclined to study the passage historically, note timeless truths as I study, then develop one outline, a sermonic outline that is directed to my audience(*happening*). That's me. You decide for you.

This same format adapts easily to an interactive, question/answer style of Bible study also either *discussion* or *discovery* teaching). In this case, you will "draw out" from them what's within with launching and guiding questions. Although always be prepared to insert a "*burst of teaching*" where necessary to set up questions and accelerate their learning.