

Sums, Succinctness, Plainness

- A. The accumulation of knowledge and wisdom includes the use of imagery, figurative language, etc.
1. Poetry and song which mingle fact and imagery are powerful methods of communication.
 2. Scripture makes use of psalms, songs, proverbs, parables, figures, signs, etc.
MAT 13:3; 1PE 1:11; 3:20-21.
- B. There are times, though, when the best way to convey information is through plain speech that is easily understood by the hearer.
1. If you want a child to understand clearly what you expect of him, don't express it as a lyrical poem or Shakespearian sonnet. Tell him plainly in terms he can understand and then confirm that he has understood you.
 2. Our Lord once used a figurative expression which His dull disciples couldn't figure out.
JOH 11:11-14.
 - a. OED shows that "sleep" can figuratively refer to many things like *inoperative*, *careless*, *numbness of a limb*, etc. But Lazarus needed more than a massage.
 - b. Christ was justified in using a metaphor to describe Lazarus's state for such language was common in the scriptures. **JOB 14:12; ISA 26:19; DAN 12:2.**
 - c. The matter was clarified to the disciples by "...Lazarus is dead." Given the fact that they knew Lazarus had been sick (**JOH 11:3**), this statement was not ambiguous.
 3. One of the Ten Commandments could have been rendered, "Thou shalt not cause the silver cord to be loosed or the golden bowl to be broken" (per **ECC 12:6**) but "Thou shalt not kill" (**EXO 20:13**) or "...Thou shalt do no murder..." (**MAT 19:18**) removes doubt.
 - a. Remember that it was the subtlety of doubt that deceived Eve. **GEN 3:1-6.**
 - b. Complicating or confusing the plain and simple words of God is how churches and minds get corrupted. **2CO 11:3.**
 4. The O.T. was laden with examples, shadows, figures, etc. (**HEB 8:5; 9:24**) which contributed to them being "...shut up unto the faith that should afterwards be revealed" (**GAL 3:23**).
 - a. But in the light of the N.T.'s superior revelation (**2PE 1:19**), the relative darkness of that O.T. can be properly discerned and discoursed.
 - b. Paul steered away from lofty or ambiguous terminology in favor of plain speech, words easily understood. **2CO 3:12; 1CO 14:9.**
- C. Have you ever noticed that sometimes complex doctrinal matters were reduced to basic points or summaries in order to emphasize, clarify or conclude?
1. If one had doubts as to the details of Paul's arguments based upon Melchisedec in **HEB 6:20-7:28**, consider **HEB 8:1-2**, "...this is the sum..."
 2. The foundational sum of the entire O.T. is two things. **MAT 22:37-40.**
 - a. Many difficult issues can be simplified by the application of these two principles.
 - b. If all the ritual, ceremony and sacrifices of the Mosaic code were strictly observed but to the exclusion of either of these two principles, they would be invalid. **1SAM 15:22; MAT 23:23; 12:7.**
 - c. "Should I yield to pressure of family, employer, civil power, etc., or to God?" Such questions are covered by the order of the two principles: God must have precedence. **MAT 10:37; ACT 5:29.**
 - d. "Should I emphasize my personal liberty in all things or subordinate that to the interests of God and well-being of others?" **1CO 10:23, 32-33; GAL 5:13.**
 - e. Paul *briefly comprehended* all laws of human interaction as one. **ROM 13:9.**
 - f. He even summarized the sentence of the command as "one word" (**GAL 5:14**).
 - g. Because it is a reigning principle, James calls it "...the royal law..." (**JAM 2:8**).

3. After discoursing on life, laws, observation, experiments, vanities, etc. Solomon summed up everything very succinctly. **ECC 12:13-14.**
- D. Sometimes where multiple options (positive or negative) might be under consideration, men of faith would emphasize the “one thing.”
1. David thus emphasized God’s worship and God’s house. **PSA 27:4.**
 2. Knowing his sinful nature and past errors, Paul nevertheless had *one thing* that drove him to keep on keeping on. **PHIL 3:13-14.**
 3. Believers might be anxious or impatient concerning the Lord’s return and the doubters’ scoffing at it but *one thing* should moor them. **2PE 3:3-9.**
 4. The healed blind man didn’t speculate on things he didn’t know but was solid on the *one thing* he certainly knew. **JOH 9:25.**
 5. Many duties of life may seem very valuable and important but Jesus taught that *one thing* was needful: time to be still and listen to Him. **LUK 10:38-42.**
- E. Our Lord Jesus was a master of the succinct response or statement, tearing apart argumentative snarls and challenges with “heart of the matter” wisdom.
1. Consider how He stopped the mouths of the chief priests and elders who demanded to know by what authority He had acted and spoken. **MAT 21:23-32.**
 2. Consider how He stopped the mouths of the Pharisees with a simple observation about David and David’s son. **MAT 22:41-46.**
 3. Consider how He shut down the Sadducees and their concocted “anti-resurrection” scenario. **LUK 20:27-40.**
 4. Such methods were typical of our Lord, and we should learn from this.
 - a. It is good to have a broad understanding of manifold details of the word of God and be able to relate them in volumes to prove or disprove something. Sometimes a discourse might have to be long. **ACT 20:9.**
 - b. But just because you aren’t a Paul or an Apollos doesn’t mean that you can’t be effective on something that is patently obvious. If you know that there is a critical or non-negotiable point that cannot be dismissed, stand mightily upon it and don’t be moved by the noise of complex objections.
 - c. Sometimes the most powerful expression of wisdom is not by many words but by few. **PRO 17:27-28.**
 - d. “Wise men talk because they have something to say; fools, because they have to say something.” (Plato)
- F. Here are a few “mic drop” examples from Paul. **GAL 2:21; 3:21; 1CO 15:12-14, 29.**
- G. Grow in grace and in the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ so as to be better prepared to give a good answer (**1PE 3:15**), but fear not to stand on what you KNOW right now, obeying the light you have, and God will bless it. **JOH 7:17.**
1. Look for, and cleave to the sum, conclusion, brief comprehension, etc. of a matter.
 2. Do this when fighting temptation and you will save yourself from much trouble.
 3. Do this when witnessing and see your confidence grow while you simply, succinctly “...earnestly contend for the faith...” (**JUDE 1:3**).
 4. **1CO 1:26-29.**