

ORAL INTERPRETATION OF SCRIPTURE

Open



Oral interpretation of Scripture involves the memorization and oral recitation of a passage of Scripture in an interpretive manner. You are to bring out the meaning of the text through vocal and facial expressions and through gestures without costumes or props.

SCRIPTURE PASSAGE

You are free to choose your Scripture passage. Possible selections to consider are Jonah, Matthew 5 and 6, John 13—15, Romans 7 and 8, Ephesians 1—3, Titus, Hebrews 11 and 12, 1 Peter 1 and 2, and 2 Peter. The Scripture you choose must be a continuous passage. You may use either the King James Version or the New King James Version of the Bible for your recitation. You are to present your oral interpretation from memory, reciting verbatim from the Scripture text. Give the judges the Bible you used in preparing the passage.

INTRODUCTION

You are to present an introduction of your passage that is not more than one minute in length. The introduction should include such items as the primary argument, the point of view, the topic, the characterization, or the theme.

TIME

Including the introduction, your presentation is to be eight to ten minutes in length. The timekeeper will stand at the end of eight minutes as a two-minute warning and will stand again at the end of ten minutes, to signify the end of your presentation time.

IMPROMPTU READING

In addition to your prepared recitation, the judges will ask you to present an impromptu reading of a designated Scripture passage of their choice. The passage will take one to two minutes to read. You will have thirty seconds to look at the passage before you present it. This presentation is not from memory.

BIBLE STUDY

To enable you to interpret your Scripture passage correctly, you are to spend three or more hours studying the passage, using at least two sources. Consult your pastor for recommended Bible study books and commentaries. Prepare a one-page summary of your Bible study and

include a bibliography and a statement of your time spent in study.

PREPARATION

You will find it helpful in your preparation to videorecord your presentation so you can see and hear areas that need improvement (e.g., posture, gestures, vocal inflection). Use the guidelines below for your preparation:

- Use a translation with which you are familiar. If you use the King James Version, you may want to secure a recording of someone reading the KJV so you get a good sense of the flow and the natural cadences of early seventeenth century English.
- Become familiar with your text by reading it aloud. Memorize your portion by repeatedly saying it aloud, and regularly rehearse it aloud.
- Understand what the portion of Scripture means. Enlist the aid of your pastor to properly interpret the meaning of the text. Understand the character of the speaker so you can better express his or her point of view.
- After you have memorized your piece, add your gestures and rehearse them diligently. Be natural in your movements and gestures. Do not saddle your presentation with overly stylized movements and gestures that disrupt the flow of the text. The gestures add to what you are saying and not detract from it.
- Consider the character or the point of view of the one speaking. When speaking as a character, it is best not to make eye contact with your audience. When speaking from a point of view or in a narrative, it is good to make eye contact with your audience. When telling a story that moves from narrative to characterization to narrative, use both techniques.
- Portray the different characters in a passage through vocalizations and gestures. Changing positions to denote character change is usually not effective in oral interpretation of Scripture.
- Believe what you are speaking. Your belief adds much to how your audience listens and how much they want to listen. If you believe what you are speaking, if your audience can clearly hear and understand what you are saying, and if you are true to your text, you will succeed as a communicator of the Scriptures.

Most high school speech textbooks have one or more chapters about oral interpretation principles and procedures. Additional resources include college textbooks for courses in oral interpretation, such as *Oral Interpretation* (tenth edition) by Charlotte Lee and Timothy Gura (Houghton Mifflin), *Performance in Life and Literature* by Paul H. Gray and James VanOosting (Allyn and Bacon), and *Guide to Oral Interpretation* by Louise Scrivner and Dan Robinett (Bobbs Merrill Educational Publishing). In addition, *Ruth Draper and Her Company of Characters* (www.drapermonologues.com) is highly recommended as a model of this talent at work.

CHURCH MINISTRY

To help you prepare for state competition, you are to present your oral interpretation of the Scripture passage you have chosen in your church or in another ministry opportunity approved by your pastor. Prepare a church ministry statement that specifies the date and setting in which you presented your oral interpretation and submit it to the state judges as described under **Submissions**.

CRITERIA

You will be judged in the following areas:

- **Introduction**—time, appropriateness, clarity, well stated
- **Memorization**—accuracy
- **Interpretation**—proper emphasis, clear meaning, proper understanding of text
- **Enunciation and projection**—clear, understandable
- **Voice control, variety, and inflection**—appropriate to text, good characterization, aids interpretation
- **Gestures and facial expression**—appropriate, natural, aids interpretation
- **Pacing, timing, flow**—smooth, interpretive, appropriate for text
- **Audience relationship**—eye contact, focuses on audience, connects with audience
- **Impromptu reading**

DEDUCTIONS

- **Attire**—You are to wear business dress as described in the TFC guidelines: a dress shirt and slacks for men and a dress or skirt ensemble for women. Attire should be modest. A three-point deduction will be made for attire that does not follow these guidelines.
- **Required materials**—You are to provide the Bible you used in preparing the passage, a one-page summary of your Bible study including bibliography, a statement of time spent in study, and your church ministry statement. A three-point deduction will be made for having only some of the materials; a five-point deduction for having none of the materials.
- **Time**—Your oral interpretation is to be eight to ten minutes long. A three-point deduction will be made if you speak less than eight minutes or more than ten minutes.

SUBMISSIONS

Submit your one-page summary with bibliography, statement of time spent in study, and your church ministry statement to the state TFC director by the deadline specified. Submit to the judges on the day of competition the Bible you used in preparing the passage.