

WRITING

Do you mean *because*, *since* or *as*?

The words *because*, *since* and *as* can all be used as conjunctions that sometimes overlap in meaning. In each of the following sentences, all three words are used quite properly to mean "for the reason that" or "due to the fact that."

- *Because* the minister's sermon ran long, a hymn was omitted from the service.
- *Since* the minister's sermon ran long, a hymn was omitted from the service.
- *As* the minister's sermon ran long, a hymn was omitted from the service.

Confusion arises in the use of these words because only one of them, *because*, has just one definition ("for the reason that"), as illustrated in the above sentence. Using *since* or *as* in place of *because* can cloud clarity because both words have additional meanings.

The primary definitions of the word *since* pertain to the passage of time, usually meaning "from an earlier time to the present." This factor can color how we read sentences that use *since* in place of "because." For example:

Unclear: *Since I was sick, I couldn't attend church.*

This sentence could be construed to mean "from the time that I first became sick until now, I couldn't attend church." Using *because*, in this instance, instead of *since* removes the possibility of misinterpretation.

Clear: *Because I was sick, I couldn't attend church.*

Similarly, the word *as* has several meanings, including "at the same time that" or "while." These meanings can lead to ambiguity. For instance:

Unclear: *As he came into the room, I left.*

Readers might interpret this sentence to mean "Because he came into the room, I left," an undesirable meaning. Rewording is in order here.

Clear: *I left when he was coming into the room.*

Unclear: *I didn't see her come into the kitchen, as I was serving guests.*

This sentence might be understood in two different ways: "I didn't see her come into the kitchen while I was serving guests" or "I didn't see her come into the kitchen because I was serving guests." The use of the word *because* easily clarifies the meaning.

The old rule of grammar that forbade substituting the words *since* and *as* for *because* has gone by the wayside. However, the word *because* is less apt to be unclear. For variety, you may comfortably use *since* or *as*, but at the first sign of ambiguity, use the word *because* to increase clarity. **N**

FEATURE: Spotlighting a subscriber's newsletter

Meet the Deacon-led Ministry Teams

Family Features introduces the church's ministry teams on a full page of the newsletter. The "Deacon-led Ministry Teams" page gives the name of each team, the deacon who leads it, its members and a brief description of its purpose. A photo of each deacon appears on the page with his name and phone number below it. This is particularly helpful for those members who don't know all the deacons, and will make it easier to recognize deacons at church functions.

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