

Sermon Preparation Guide

To preach is to unfold the meaning of a Scriptural text or theme so that the listeners realize that it is God's voice calling them to respond in faith and repentance.

SERMON TEMPLATE

Preacher's Task

Identify the Scripture text or theme

Show its relevance

Provide an overview

Proceed through the main divisions

Within each division at least: 1) point to Scripture, 2) explain, 3) illustrate, and 4) lead into the next division by referring back to the main idea. You may also 5) answer possible objections and 6) make personal life application. Taken together, the divisions should continue to build tension by developing the main idea bit by bit.

Lead listeners to the point of decision

Listener's response

"I understand where we are."

"I need to listen!"

"I see where we're going, and I'm with you."

"I understand it! I feel it!"

PREPARATION PROCESS

- Plan
- Pray
- Discover . . .
 - The meaning of the passage (make sure you are able to answer every question necessary to understand what it is saying.)
 - Its theological themes and the human needs it addresses
- Assemble these discoveries into a written sermon using the best rhetorical practices.
- Allow time
 - to talk it over with others.
 - to consider it from different angles
 - to make sure you are not preaching anything you are not yourself practicing
- Preach, depending fully on the Holy Spirit

READINESS RULES

Do not preach until you can answer yes to the following questions:

- Do I understand my audience and preaching context?
- Do I have a thorough grasp of the passage or theme?
- Have I prayerfully applied this sermon to my own life?
- Are the following components crystal clear in my mind? 1) Main idea, 2) main divisions, 3) key illustrations, 4) how I will begin and end, 5) what I am praying the Holy Spirit will accomplish in the lives of my hearers
- Have I gotten feedback from someone on the main idea and how I plan to develop it?

RHETORICAL RULES

Rule of the Razor: Cut anything that does not move your hearers toward your intended destination.

Rule of the Eye: Sprinkle with metaphors, turning people's ears into eyes

Rule of the Engine: Use tension to create movement to the very end

Rule of the Child: Use language that is active, concrete, and commonplace

Rule of the Story: Draw people into narratives

PURPOSE OF EVERY SERMON

To make spiritual truths real to my audience so they feel it in their hearts

To show them the choice between faith and unbelief and woo them to faith in Christ

To usher them into the presence of God

CHARACTERISTICS OF PASTORAL PREACHING

Manner: expositional

Content: Biblical, doctrinal

Delivery: authentic, clear, humble, joyful, honest, respectful, courageous, prayerful, worshipful

Effect: Christ-exalting, personally transformational, church-building

KEY VERSE: COLOSSIANS 1:28-29

[We proclaim Christ], warning everyone and teaching everyone with all wisdom, that we may present everyone mature in Christ.

For this I toil, struggling with all his energy that he powerfully works within me.