

How to Prepare a Sermon

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I. The speaker needs to establish a basic filing system. The purpose of this system is to have material to use in the next sermon. There are three parts to this system:

A. Scripture file

The speaker should begin with one folder for each book of the Bible. The folders should be heavy duty, with a 1/3 cut on the tabs. In time, more folders can be added for specific chapters of each book, and ultimately he may want to have one folder for each chapter in the Bible (1189).

B. Topical file

There will need to be folders on basic topics for lessons. For example: God-Existence, Baptism, Jesus Christ-Birth, Jesus Christ-Old Testament, Suffering, David, Paul, etc.

Note: There are many outstanding bulletins that are free. As you receive these weekly bulletins, scan them and put them in the appropriate folder. There are also tracts that many congregations have in their lobby. They can be filed either in the Scripture section or the Topical section.

C. Illustration file (a special drawer, large envelope, or folder)

From time to time, you might read a great newspaper or magazine article; it can be put into this folder. There may be personal experiences that were very moving or significant. It is good to make notes on those events and put the notes into the Illustration file.

A two-drawer filing cabinet (with full-suspension drawers) will work well. There are usually such filing cabinets for sale in the classified ads of the paper or at garage sales. They can also be bought at SWAP in Madison, Wisconsin (ask Baxter Exum for details).

II. The speaker will also need a collection of basic reference books and brotherhood magazines.

- a Bible dictionary (Nelson's or Zondervan)
- Bible encyclopedias (Zondervan)
- Bible commentaries (GA Matt.-Acts & James-3 John, Beacon Bible Commentaries)
- the best prices: Christian Book Distributors, POB 7000, Peabody, MA 01961
- Gospel Advocate* magazine, Gospel Advocate Company, 1006 Elm Hill Pike, Nashville, TN 37210, \$16.98 per year, monthly issues)
- Many schools of preaching have excellent lectureship books (e.g.: ETSOPM).
- Most congregations have a church library that can be used for reference.

You can also take advantage of these Internet sites:

- <http://sermoncentral.com> (be careful with denominational doctrines)
- <http://www.christiancourier.com> (great material by Wayne Jackson, with an excellent search engine!)
- http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Main_Page (Wikipedia has an excellent article on "expository preaching")

III. The speaker must first choose the type of sermon that he will most likely want to preach. There are three types of sermons:

A. Topical (e.g.: baptism, instrumental music in worship, gambling, etc.)

-Advantages: Some topics can only be dealt with in this way.

-Disadvantages: It is very easy to misuse the Scriptures; the listeners do not get much Bible knowledge; the listeners do not get the "whole picture" of the Bible; it can put the emphasis is on the preacher's wisdom, not the wisdom of God.

B. Textual: The speaker selects a verse and uses the wording of the verse to preach a sermon on that general topic (e.g.: a sermon for young people based on 2 Sam. 18.29).

-Advantages: None.

-Disadvantages: The Bible is easily misused, plus the other disadvantages listed above.

C. Expository (the outline of the passage becomes the outline of the sermon; e.g.: Psalm 23)

-Advantages: It is the safest way to handle the Scriptures; it teaches the congregation the Bible in the shortest possible time; it is the least damaging way to deal with problems within the congregation; it emphasizes the wisdom of God, not of man (even if man's part of the lesson is a failure, the word of God is still taught, more so than with the other two types of sermons).

-With expository lessons, begin by asking the question: "Why did the Holy Spirit choose to record this event?" or "What does the Holy Spirit want us to learn from this passage?"

-Read the text through several times and then go to the commentaries, etc. (not the other way around).

-Disadvantages: None, since the mind of God is flawless (1 Cor. 1.20-21)

My personal recommendation is that about 95% of one's lessons should be expository, and the remaining 5% should be topical. Textual sermons are dangerous and greatly misuse the Scriptures. Sermons should be numbered in the order of preparation, not in the order of delivery.

IV. How is the sermon written? 5 steps:

1. Select a topic. E.g.: a parable or a miracle of Jesus, great Psalm, a powerful chapter from the letters of Paul, the Beatitudes, a Bible character (Joseph in the OT, an Apostle such as Andrew, a scene from the life of Moses, such as the burning bush).

2. Make a very brief outline that you think the passage will support. For example, the Parable of the Good Samaritan has 3 men who see the wounded man beside the road (a perfect outline). Another e.g.: Proverbs 6.16-19 lists six things that God hates (another perfect outline).

3. Begin gathering all the material you can find on that passage (your filing system, reference books, Internet material, etc.).

4. Read the material and write in any references into the rough outline (e.g.: GA, 1/4/08, p. 23, Net sermon A, ZBE II, p. 37, Story about man in store, etc.).

5. Begin writing the sermon from the outline and using the material you have gathered.

6. When the rough draft is finished, go back through it word by word, smoothing out the rough spots, simplifying the language, making the message as easy as possible to understand (from 5 year old kids to the older members). You want the simplest language possible, not the most impressive vocabulary. As Ernest Hemingway said, we should use a 50¢ word instead of a \$10.00 word (the fewest number of syllables possible). Paul said:

1 Cor. 2.4 - ...my message and my preaching were not in persuasive words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power....

V. How to have an effective delivery

1. Rehearse the lesson 4-5 times (as if you were delivering it before an audience). With each rehearsal, try to simplify the lesson (eliminate sections that are confusing, or rewrite those sections).

2. Practice speaking in a normal way, with a slightly elevated volume. This is known as the "enlarged conversation" method of public speaking. Avoid wild gestures and wandering all over the pulpit area. The emphasis should not be on the speaker, but on the wisdom of God and the gospel of Jesus Christ.

3. Time the lesson. With today's audiences, anything over 30 minutes becomes useless and irritating. About 25 minutes is ideal. It is amazing to see how many speakers never time their lessons before the actual delivery!

4. Consider getting more training in sermon preparation:

A. Dale Carnegie courses and books (*How to Win Friends and Influence People*)

B. Toastmasters (there is a group in Crystal Lake)

C. For high school students, there is the National Forensic League and area speech tournaments; there is also 4-H, which has a division for public speaking, and the Boy Scouts (a merit badge in public speaking)

D. Most towns have a community college which will have courses in public speaking (advanced platform speaking, not body language and speech theory).

E. There are correspondence courses from some of our schools of preaching (e.g.: Sunset School of Preaching, Internet School of Biblical Studies, etc.).

F. There are several great lectureships sponsored by our schools of preaching and Christian colleges.

G. The best source of training: attending a Christian college (e.g.: Freed-Hardeman University) and majoring in Bible and public speaking or attending a brotherhood school of preaching (e.g.: East Tenn. School of Preaching and Missions)

5. Please remember that nervousness is good; it is the difference between a race horse and a plow horse. It means that the speaker cares what people think about the lesson. The worst speaker in the world is the one who does not get nervous before an audience! That type of person rambles and goes far beyond the time limit and delivers a very boring lesson.

The only thing that will bring nervousness under control is thorough and complete preparation. Then, after the first few sentences you begin to concentrate on the message and the delivery and how to influence people for Christ.

Jeremiah 20.9 – But if I say, I will not remember Him or speak anymore in His name, then in my heart it becomes like a burning fire shut up in my bones; and I am weary of holding it in, and I cannot endure it.

List of free bulletins

Beacon
Bellview Church of Christ
4850 Saufley Field Road
Pensacola, FL 32526
(805) 455-7595

Belt Line Road Church of Christ News
1202 N. Belt Line Road
Irving, TX 75061
(972) 790-8606

The Forest Hill News
Forest Hill Church of Christ
3950 Forest Hill-Irene Rd.
Memphis, TN 38125
(901) 751-2444

Good News
Getwell Church of Christ
1511 Getwell Road
Memphis, TN 38111-7299
(901)743-0464

House to House Heart to Heart
Jacksonville Church of Christ
321 Nisbet St NW
P.O. Box 520
Jacksonville, AL 36265

Mabelvale Church of Christ
P.O. Box 345
Mabelvale, AK 72103

Old Paths
10th and Rockford Church of Christ
829 S. Rockford Ave.
Tulsa, OK 74120-4696

The Shield
Church of Christ
510 N. Kaufman
Seagoville, TX 75159
(972) 287-2036

The South Florida Avenue Messenger
South Florida Avenue Church of Christ
1807 South Florida Avenue
Lakeland, FL 33803-2653
(863) 682-4702

Villa Avenue Church of Christ
750 S. Villa Avenue
P.O. Box 805
Addison, IL 60101
(630) 832-0169

Another excellent resource would be the Gospel Advocate, which you can subscribe to for \$16.98 per year.

Gospel Advocate Company
1006 Elm Hill Pike
Nashville, TN 37210-9910
1-800-251-8446
www.gospeladvocate.com

Sermon Evaluation Form

“As iron sharpens iron, so one man sharpens another” (Proverbs 27:17).

Speaker: _____ Date: _____

Subject: _____ Text: _____

Key (circle one):	5=Very Good	4=Good	3=Fair	2=Poor	1=Very Poor
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CONTENT

- 5 4 3 2 1 — 1. Did he open with effective introductory remarks?
- 5 4 3 2 1 — 2. Was the lesson well-organized?
- 5 4 3 2 1 — 3. Was there an evident central purpose?
- 5 4 3 2 1 — 4. Was the central purpose the communication of a Biblical concept?
- 5 4 3 2 1 — 5. Was the Biblical concept drawn primarily from one thought-block of Scripture?
- 5 4 3 2 1 — 6. Was the Biblical concept responsibly interpreted in context?
- 5 4 3 2 1 — 7. Was the subject appropriate for the audience?
- 5 4 3 2 1 — 8. Had he done sufficient preparation and research?
- 5 4 3 2 1 — 9. Was the message meaningfully applied to the hearers?
- 5 4 3 2 1 — 10. Were effective illustrations used?
- 5 4 3 2 1 — 11. Was the lesson Biblically accurate?
- 5 4 3 2 1 — 12. Were the concluding remarks accurate and effective?

DELIVERY

- 5 4 3 2 1 — 13. Did he keep the lesson moving?
- 5 4 3 2 1 — 14. Was he grammatically correct?
- 5 4 3 2 1 — 15. Did he have any distracting mannerisms?
- 5 4 3 2 1 — 16. Was his pronunciation correct?
- 5 4 3 2 1 — 17. Did he speak loudly and clearly?
- 5 4 3 2 1 — 18. Was his attitude warm and friendly?
- 5 4 3 2 1 — 19. Was eye-contact sufficient and effective?
- 5 4 3 2 1 — 20. Were visual aids (including PowerPoint) clear and effective?

OTHER COMMENTS

Reviewed By: _____ Phone: _____ E-mail: _____