A Sermon Preparation Guide

Theme & Purpose of the Preaching Text

1. To determine the THEME, or the “Big Idea” of the Text, ask two questions. [1] What is the writer talking about (the subject)? [2] What is the writer saying about what he’s talking about? Or, how does the writer limit the scope of what he’s talking about (the complement)? That would be the answer to the 4w’s & h questions (Who? What? Why? Where? When? How?)

2. To determine the PURPOSE, ask: What mutual condition do we share with
   - Those to (or about) whom the Text was written, and / or
   - The one about whom the Text was written?

   Then ask, What does the Text reveal about:
   - God’s Nature, His character, capabilities, intentions, record (acts), provision(s), Law.
     and / or
   - Human nature, our fallen condition “depravity factor,” our mind-sets, actions, needs, obligations, and responses to God?

THE “PREACHING POINT”: A present tense (nail it to the now!), active voice sentence joining together a timeless universal Biblical Truth from the Text, with the timely application of that Truth -- stated in a memorable and picturesque way, if possible.


KEY WORD / UNITING WORD: A plural noun used when at least two parallel or contrasting ideas exist in the preaching portion.

ACTION RESPONSE: The change God desires in the behavior or character of those who hear the Word preached. That my hearers would (believe, feel, value, desire, discern or do...)

** Ultimately, we want people to be enabled by The Spirit to experience something of the grace, power, and glory of God.

SERMON OUTLINE: The analytical outline + relevance to hearers. Should be related to the “PREACHING POINT,” clear, present tense, anchored to & obvious from the Text, personal (God + “I,” “you,” or “we”), logical, parallel, & written in complete sentences.
SERMON BODY: Explain, illustrate, and apply each point. Bring abstract principles and concepts into the realm of the concrete, the sensible, and the experiential. Look for word pictures in the Text. For illustrations, look into these arenas of life: animals, art, athletics, Bible, biography, business, children, common objects, current events, education, entertainment, family, friendships, history, hymns, imaginary stories, literature, medicine, movies, music, nature, past experiences, politics, popular music, quotations, radio & TV, travel, world affairs. When applying, ask the question(s) of DUTY: “What” does God require of me to believe, value, feel, or obey? Why? When? Where? How?” Ask the question of CHARACTER: “Who or what should I be?” Ask the question of GOAL: “Where should I go?” Ask the question of DISCERNMENT: “How can I see things God’s Way?” Inform the mind, engage the emotions, appeal to the will.

INTRODUCTION: To command, capture, & secure attention, establish rapport (commonality) between the preacher / Text and the listeners (help them identity, empathize, and answer the question “Why listen?”), to orient to the theme and purpose of the sermon. Begin with the here and now, link to the Bible, make it personal, then bridge into the body of the sermon. Include some of these elements: Novelty, movement, proximity, concreteness, familiarity, suspense, intensity, humor, life relatedness.

CONCLUSION: The logical, emotional, and volitional climax and close of the sermon. Options include: {1} Summary, or paraphrased reiteration calling for action; {2} Illustration; {3} Practical application; {4} Framing, circling back and repeating or developing an image, story, or quote from the introduction to give the sermon a frame and a sense of completeness; {5} Personal appeal -- From the heart. It should really conclude and end on a positive note, pointing people to the LORD. Relate the whole message to Christ. Preach Christ as the source, the model, and the strength to do what the Text requires, the encouragement that comes from His forgiveness, and the resources He provides for knowing, glorifying, and enjoying God for who He is.

TITLE: Ask four questions: {1} Will this title capture their attention? People need relief, answers, solutions. {2} Is the title clear? Will it stand on its own, without additional explanation? {3} Is the title Good News? Focus on the redemptive element of the exposition. {4} Does the title relate to everyday life? Appeal to hurts, needs, and interests.

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