North England Conference

Lay Preachers' Training Course

Dynamic Sermon Design & Delivery

Adapted by the NEC Ministerial Association

Lay Preachers' Course

Dynamic Sermon Design & Delilvery

Planned & Compiled
By
Gebre Worancha, DPTh

International Institute of
Christian Ministries

Sabbath School and Personal Ministries
of the Seventh-day Adventist Church
World Headquarters

Adapted by the NEC Ministerial Association
(Credit to Pastor F Mapp)

LAY PREACHERS TRAINING PROGRAMME

COURSE:

"Dynamic Sermon Design & Delivery"

I: DESIRED OUTCOME

1. Participants familiar with the format of a Basic Sermon Structure.
2. Participants able to recognise **three** Basic Sermon types: Topical, Textual, and Expository.
3. Participants able to satisfactorily prepare and deliver: Topical, Textual, and Expository.
4. The formation of a Local **Lay Preachers' Club** with membership open to active, trained, Lay Preachers.

II: COURSE REQUIREMENTS

1. Attend all sessions **on time** and participate in group discussions.
2. Complete Assigned Reading(s) ahead of class lecture. From each, select and write out **five** notable/memorable quotations.
3. **Three** short Exercises/Quizzes (Dates to be notified)
4. Listen to & Evaluate **3 sermons**: 1 Your Pastor; 1 Classmate; 1 Lay Person; 1 A Non SDA Preacher of Your Choice.
5. Prepare and submit:
    a. **Six** well-planned sermon outlines (2 Topical; 2 Textual; 2 Expository)
    b. **Two** well-prepared, complete sermons.
    c. Preach **two** exam sermons (one in the presence of other course participants only; one in a church setting)
    d. Submission Date: All assignments must be completed and submitted by the given dates.

III: GRADE DISTRIBUTION

Class Attendance & Participation	(10X1)	10%
Three Short Exercises/Quizzes	(5X3)	15%
Listen to & Evaluate 3 Sermons	(1X3)	03%
Six Sermon Outlines	(6X2)	12%
Two Complete Sermons	(10X2)	20%
Preach two Sermons as per 4c above	(20X2)	40%

Letter Grade	**Quality Points**
A	90 – 100
B	80 – 89
C	70 – 79
D	60 – 69
F (Failure)	59 & less

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II: RESOURCES

1. **Worancha,** Dr Gebre, *IICM Course Notes*
2. **Kerr,** Vassel. *The Power of Biblical Preaching,* Oshawa, Maracle Press Ltd., 2001
3. www.preachingtoday.com/skills/artcraft (Art & Craft of Biblical Preaching)
4. www.WhiteEstate.org
5. **Gugliotto**, Lee J. *Handbook for Bible Study,* Hagerstown, Review & Herald Publishing Association, 1995

INTRODUCTION

THE IMPORTANCE OF PUBLIC SPEAKING

The human voice is one of the most precious gifts that God has given to mankind. Through the voice we are able to tell other people how we feel, what we have seen, what we have done and what knowledge we hold in our minds. God also asks us to use the gift of speech to tell others about his great plan of salvation. God says, *"Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and* ***teaching*** *them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age" Matthew 28:19, 20 (NRSV).*

Teaching is performed mainly through the use of our voices.

"We may have knowledge, but unless we know how to use the voice correctly, our work will be a failure… Knowledge will be of little advantage to us unless we cultivate the talent of speech." ***Testimonies*** **vol. 6, p.380.**

1. JESUS AS PUBLIC SPEAKER

John 7:46 – People recognized Jesus as a great speaker. He was not like other preachers of His time.

Matthew 7:28, 29 – His authority came from God. He spoke clearly and in an interesting way.

> *"His language was pure, refined, and clear as a running stream." —****Desire of Ages*** p. 253.

> *"The Saviour's voice was music to the ears of those who had been accustomed to the monotonous, spiritless preaching of the scribes and Pharisees. He spoke slowly and impressively, emphasizing those words to which He wished His hearers to give special heed." —****Counsel to Teachers*** pp. 239, 240

Study carefully the methods Jesus used to teach His hearers eternal truths. Notice and copy how He held their interest:

- His preaching was preceded by prayer (Luke 5:16)
- His preaching was based on Scripture
- He used many illustrations from nature
- He used simple parables to teach important truths
- His preaching was aimed at meeting the needs of the people
- He visited and talked with all kinds of people. This helped Him to understand what to preach about.

2. CHURCH LEADERS AS PUBLIC SPEAKERS

It is extremely important for church leaders to know how to prepare interesting material and how to present that material in an interesting way. However, it is even more important for them to learn how to speak clearly so that they can present their carefully prepared material in words that can be heard and

understood. Any church leader who neglects the development of his voice is doing discredit to the cause of God.

Titus 2:8 – When Paul was writing to Titus, he encouraged him to develop his speaking voice. His sermons were to be of *"sound speech"*. Church leaders today should be just as careful in developing their speaking voice.

Nehemiah 8:8 – When church leaders preach, they should seek to make the meaning of God's Word clear so that the people can understand.

> *"Ministers of the gospel (including elders and church leaders) should know how to speak with power and expression, making the words of eternal life so expressive and impressive that the hearers cannot but feel their weight. I am pained when I hear the defective voices of many of our ministers. Such ministers rob God of the glory He might have if they trained themselves to speak the word of God with power…if he attempts to speak to the people without knowing how to use the talent of speech, half his influence is lost, for he has little power to hold the attention of the congregation." —**Testimonies*** vol. 6, p. 381.

> *"The culture and right use of the voice are greatly neglected…There are many who read and speak in so low or so rapid a manner that they cannot be readily understood. Some have a thick indistinct utterance, others speak in a high key, in sharp, shrill tones that are painful to the hearers…This is an evil that can and should be corrected…By diligent effort all may acquire the power to read intelligibly, and speak in a full, clear, round tone, in a distinct and impressive manner. By doing this we may greatly increase our efficiency as workers for Christ." —**Christ Object Lessons*** pp. 335, 336.

DEVELOPING YOUR SPEAKING VOICE

1. HOW SOUNDS AND SPEECH ARE MADE. (See Fig. 1, p.8)

The sounds that come from our mouths as words are produced by three different actions.

Abdominal, Diaphragm and Chest Muscles: The diaphragm is a large muscle that stretches across the bottom of our ribcage between our lungs and our stomach. The diaphragm is an important muscle in the production of sound. When it moves upwards, it pushes air from the lungs forcing it out through the vocal chords. The abdominal muscles are also very important for good speaking. These muscles assist the diaphragm to push air out of the lungs. By learning to control both the abdominal muscles and the diaphragm, a good speaker will be able to speak powerfully without his throat becoming sore. The chest muscles also assist in pushing air out through the vocal chords.

Vocal Chords: Vocal Chords are very thin pieces of skin-like material stretched across the voice-box in our throats. When air from our lungs passes over them they vibrate and make a noise.

Tongue, Mouth and Nasal Passages: The sounds that are made by the vocal chords are turned into words by the movement of the tongue and lips. The quality of the words and their tone are produced as the sound passes through the mouth and nasal passages.

For good speech to be produced, the vocal chords, the diaphragm, abdominal muscles, chest muscles, tongue, mouth and nasal passages must all be used.

2. CORRECT BREATHING

Many speakers do not breathe correctly. Their breathing is far too shallow and they only use a half of their lung space. When a person breathes in, his whole chest should fill with air. The diaphragm should move down drawing in air. The abdominal muscles will relax and be seen to move out a little. When a person breathes out, the abdominal muscles will tighten and the diaphragm will move upwards forcing out the air.

When a person is speaking in public, he must think about his breathing. If he is breathing correctly, using the diaphragm muscle to pull air in and to force air out, then he will be able to speak forcefully. If he only takes in shallow breaths, then his throat will soon get sore from talking because he is not getting any help from his abdominal muscles and diaphragm.

Breathing Exercises: Lie with your back on a flat surface, e.g., bed, floor, etc. Place a heavy object on your abdomen. A large book will do. Now breathe in deeply and hold your breath. Did the book on your abdomen rise? If you breathed in deeply, the book should have been raised two to three inches by your abdomen. Next, breathe out. Push the air out with your diaphragm muscles. Watch the book on your abdomen go down. Force all the air out. Practice this exercise for five minutes every day until you are breathing correctly and naturally.

Develop your diaphragm muscle by standing up straight and breathing in and out quickly like a dog that has just been running fast. Force the air in and out with your diaphragm, Ha, a, ha, a, ha, a, ha, a, ha, etc. Feel your diaphragm muscles working. You should be able to feel it getting a little bit sore. Stop the exercise. Try it again. Do this every day also. It will develop your muscle and give your voice more power when you speak.

> *"To ensure correct delivery in reading and speaking, see that the abdominal muscles have full play in breathing and that the respiratory organs are unrestricted. Let the strain come on the muscles of the abdomen, rather than on those of the throat. Great weariness and serious disease of the throat and lungs may be prevented."* — ***Evangelism,*** p. 669.

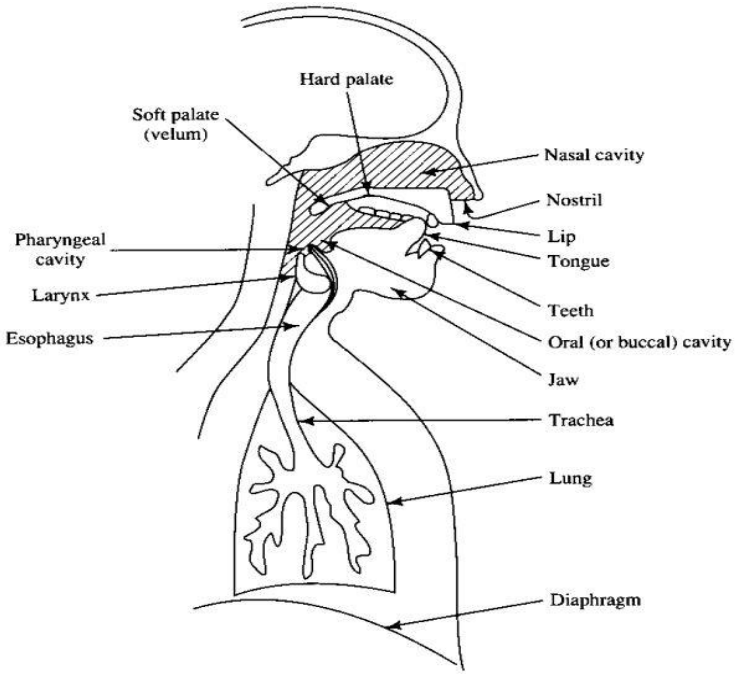

Fig. 1 Physical Mechanism of Speech

3. SPEAKING CLEARLY

Many speakers have lazy mouths. Their tongues do not move enough to pronounce each word clearly. Their mouths do not open wide enough to let the words come out clearly. Often they speak far too quickly and their words get cut off short and tumble out of their mouths all mixed up. Unless you speak clearly and slowly, your listeners will soon grow tired of hearing you and the importance of your message will be lost.

> *"By earnest effort we are to obtain a fitness for speaking. This fitness includes uttering every syllable clearly, placing the force and the emphasis where they belong. Speak slowly. Many speak rapidly, hurrying one word after another so fast that the effect of what they say is lost."* —***Counsels to Teachers,*** pp. 234, 235.

Speaking Exercises: Say the following sounds to practice opening your mouth wide: "Ba a, da a, la a, ma a, ta a." Say them over again. Open your mouth wide. Push the sound out with your diaphragm muscle. Practice this exercise often.

The following exercise will help you use your tongue to speak each word clearly. Put your first two fingers together. Now put the ends of your two fingers between your front teeth. Now, while you are holding your teeth gently on your fingers, say the alphabet through: "a, b, c, d, e, f, g, h, I, j, k," etc. Move your tongue around to carefully form each of the letters. When you have finished this exercise, take your Bible and start reading aloud from it. As you read each word, pronounce each word clearly and distinctly. Speak slowly enough to say each word clearly. Every day, practice reading out loud in this way. Listen to yourself and make sure that each word is sounded clearly.

One final exercise is to record yourself speaking or preaching on a cassette recorder. Play back the recording and listen to yourself. This will help you to hear yourself as others hear you. Try to correct the mistakes you hear yourself making.

4. USE GOOD LANGUAGE

As good leaders, we are often called on to preach and speak for God. Let us speak God's word correctly. Watch that no bad language or impure speech comes from your lips. Do not use expressions of speech that will offend your listeners. Do not be crude or rude in your speech or in your illustrations. Whatever language you are preaching in, use the correct language and the right words.

> *"The workman for God should make earnest efforts to become representative of Christ, discarding all un-comely gestures and uncouth speech. He should endeavour to use correct language."* —***Counsels to Teachers*** pp. 238, 239.

1 Corinthians 1:21 "…it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe."

Many in the world may consider that preaching is foolishness. However, preaching is God's way of using people to reach others with His message of salvation. If God has chosen preaching as His way, let us do all we can to improve our speaking voices so that we will be fit channels for God to work through.

HOW TO PREPARE A SERMON

What is a Sermon? A Sermon is:

- A speech or talk
- Prepared in an ordered form
- Prepared to meet the needs of the listeners
- Prepared to help people make a decision to accept God's leading in their lives
- Preached so that the Word of God becomes meaningful
- Presented to uplift Jesus as Lord.

A Sermon…

- Gives instruction
- Gives understanding
- Gives encouragement
- Teaches responsibility
- Gives information
- Gives hope to sinners
- Gives reproof
- Inspires action

1. **PERSONAL PREPARATION** *Cf. Stickland: "It's Like Growing a Garden Allotment."*

   Good sermons come from speakers who have consecrated their lives to God. Unless the speaker's life is under the control of the Holy Spirit, God will not be able to speak through him to others.

   If you are regularly called upon to preach, then your life should include the following activities:

   - Time to study and meditate upon God's word in the Bible
   - A strong prayer life in which you talk with God and He reveals His will to you
   - Time to read the Bible and other books to increase your knowledge of both spiritual and secular subjects
   - Time spent in improving your speaking voice.

2. **CHOOSING THE SUBJECT**

   Before you decide on a topic for a sermon, think about the needs of your church members. Some of them may be careless about Sabbath keeping or unfaithful in their stewardship. There may be some of them who have become discouraged. Some may be new Christians and need instruction in Christian living. The needs of your church will guide in your choice of sermons topics.

   Ideas for sermons may come from the following sources:

   - From your Bible Study
   - From reading books and newspapers
   - From personal experiences
   - From current events: e.g. natural disasters, wars, crime, etc.
   - From dreams
   - From nature,
   - From visits with church members.

Once you have decided what you are going to preach about, try to find as much information about your topic as you can. Here are some sources that will help you:

- Bible
- Bible Concordance
- Bible Commentary
- Bible Dictionary
- Books
- Magazines
- E G White writings
- Your pastor.

Once you have gathered information on your topic, write down on paper the title of your sermon. Under the title, write down your aim. Your aim should include WHY you are preaching this sermon and WHAT results you want to see from your preaching.

3. PREPARING A SERMON OUTLINE

A sermon outline is a way of organizing a sermon in an orderly and progressive manner. An outline is written in note form and does not include all that the preacher wishes to say. A sermon outline is like the skeleton of an animal. A skeleton allows the animal to stand up and walk around. Without a skeleton, the animal would collapse in a heap on the ground. The preacher takes his outline or skeleton into the pulpit. It is his guide to all that he will say. Without it, his sermon will collapse.

What does the outline do?

- Guides the thoughts of the preacher
- Keeps the preacher on the track
- Helps the hearers understand the meaning of the sermon
- Helps the hearers remember what has been said.

NOTE: Whenever you are called to speak for God, prepare an outline to guide your thoughts. This includes all sermons, Bible studies, prayer meetings, morning and evening worships, Sabbath school lessons, etc.

4. THE THREE PARTS OF A SERMON OUTLINE

Each sermon outline should have THREE parts:

- INTRODUCTION
- MAIN BODY
- CONCLUSION.

THE INTRODUCTION

The introduction of a sermon outline provides:

- A time for the congregation to settle down and be in a receptive mood for receiving what is to be said in the sermon
- A way to arouse the interest of the hearer
- Opportunity for the speaker to tell the hearers what he is going to talk about and how he is going to present it.

The Introduction may take the form of:

- A Story. Everybody enjoys stories. A story gets the attention of the listeners. This may be a Bible story or any other story that will help you lead your hearers to the main topic
- A Bible text or passage
- A Parable
- A newspaper article
- A question.

NOTE: The introduction must be short (4-5 minutes only). It is only the beginning of your talk.

THE MAIN BODY

The Main Body of your sermon is the part in which you will discuss your topic. In the Main Body you should:

- Have from **two** to **six** main points
- State clearly the main points of your outline
- Support your main points with Bible evidence
- Make clear the meaning of each main point
- Illustrate your points with stories or examples
- Move step by step-by-step from one point to the next
- Make bridging statements between each main point so that your hearers will know you are moving on to the next point
- Ask questions to keep your hearers thinking. This will help you to know if they understand what you are saying.

THE CONCLUSION

The Conclusion is used to bring the sermon to a close. Your conclusion should:

- Be short and to the point
- Not introduce any new ideas. This will only distract your hearers from what has already been said
- Summarize quickly the main points of your sermon
- Apply the truths presented in your sermon to the lives of your listeners
- Help each of your listeners to make a positive response to the truth presented; e.g. tell a story, short story, ask a question, read an appealing text, etc.
- Finish in a positive way
- Sit down.

Sample Sermon Outline

Abraham: God has chosen us.

AIM: to show how God calls his co-workers as assistants and messengers to help him in the jobs in which he also is engaged, and how we can respond to his call.

PREACHER'S BACKGROUND STUDY

Abraham had been brought up in heathen surroundings, but God had spoken to him and given him some promises. He entered in blessing because of his faith in and obedience to the Word of God that was revealed to him.

The New Testament shows how Abraham is an illustration and an example for us today – see Romans 4; Galatians 3 and James 2.

Notice particularly how this process continued throughout his life as each step of obedience led him into a new place of blessing.

INTRODUCTION

Describe God as a big landlord who engages servants like an African Farmer. Compare the call of Abraham with that of some of the other Biblical characters such as Moses, Samuel, Isaiah, or Paul. Is there one method by which God calls us? Why does God call? Jesus called the 12 disciples so that he might use them as messengers and errand boys. Show the difference between particular calls which come to specific people at special times and the universal call of God to everyone at all times from which no man escapes.

MAIN POINTS

1. God called (Genesis 12:1)

Who would have imagined, as Abraham packed up his belongings and the caravan of animals started off, that the greatest adventure of human history was just beginning? God saw it all from the beginning: the growth of the Jewish nation and the Jewish religion; finally His own coming in Christ, to pay the price of sin. But in His great wisdom God chose to work through men. So he called one individual. Still today, when God wants to do any great thing, he starts by calling an individual. Are you ready for His call?

2. Abraham believed

Abraham's extended family lived among heathen people who worshiped many gods, a situation similar to many of our communities in Asia. But unlike his neighbours, Abraham believed in one God, the Supreme Being. Abraham was not a Christian but his faith in one God singled him out as outstanding. He blazed the path for many others and became the father of all believers.

3. Abraham obeyed

When God said "Go," he went, not really knowing where. Obedience is hearing a command and doing it. We often hear what God is saying to us, but we lack the courage and the will to put into practice what we hear.

Disobedience has been mankind's cardinal sin from the beginning and has since persisted. Refer to the story of Adam and Eve.

4. Others benefited

Abraham shared his faith and obedience with his family. He did not travel alone but with his wife, children, nephew, and perhaps others. When God blesses he does not only enrich you personally but he also enriches your influence on others. No man is blessed for his own sake. Divine grace begins with the individual, but does not end with him. We reap what others have sown through obedience. What has our country gained from Christian influence? What is our legacy to the future?

5. Our heritage

What have we inherited from our Christian parents? From the church which gave us nurture? What do we share with others? our faith? our education? our culture? our money? Our heritage is not confined only to this world; it goes beyond into the ocean. We share in Christ's obedience here in tribulation; we shall share in His glory as citizens of heaven. We share in His work here as co-workers, we shall share in His triumph as we continue to serve Him around the throne. (Revelation 7:15) (See the sermons of the Pentecost)

CONCLUSION

Our call to faith, like Abraham's, must lead first to response and then to responsibility. Sadly, most people hear the call of God but fail to respond: "Many are called, but few are chosen" (Matthew 22:14). Even those who respond sometimes neglect their responsibility for family, community, and national enrichment. Have you responded? Have you accepted the responsibilities for which God called you?

HOW TO SELECT A THEME

A sermon needs a theme for the same reason that a building needs a blueprint, or a story needs a plot, for the same reason that a picture needs a centre of interest, or a sales talk needs a proposition. Yet it is a lamentable fact that many sermons lack a clear theme which can be intelligently followed. A theme-less sermon is like a flood, which spreads in every direction; a sermon with a theme is like a river flowing within its bank in a certain direction. Rivers are of great value to man; floods are spectacular but seldom of any value. A train cannot go anywhere, no matter how much power the engine has, unless it stays on the track; a sermon may make a great display of steam, but it does not reach home unless it follows a theme.

A sermon is not a thing to be displayed; it is a means to an end. So, one cannot take the first step in preparation until he intelligently discerns the goal to be reached. A good hunter does not fire in all directions hoping to hit something; he first sights his game, and then he takes aim. A preacher who aims at nothing is sure to hit it. Choose a target and then take a careful aim. The choice of a worthy theme is a very large step toward successful sermon construction.

Now, one must not confuse a theme with a subject, topic or title. A topic should accurately suggest the theme, but the theme is nearly always longer and more complete than a topic. The topic is for the Bulletin or the newspaper; the theme is the preacher's own statement of the purpose of the sermon. The topic is announced at the beginning, sometimes before the text is read or more usually, immediately afterward; the theme is stated more fully somewhere in the introduction. Of course the theme need not be stated at all if the divisions make it sufficiently clear; in which case the theme serves simply to guide the preacher in making his divisions. A theme is sometimes called the Proposition. The following will serve to illustrate the difference between the theme and the topic. From 2 Timothy 4:6-8, we may take this theme: ***Paul's last message has significance for every Christian!*** Obviously this is too cumbersome for the Bulletin. The topic (title) may be: **"Paul's Swan Song," "Paul's Bon Voyage,"** or **"Paul's Valedictory."**

The theme above suggests the following outline:

PAUL'S SWAN SONG

2 Timothy 4:6-8

1. Its significance in Life's Battles – *"I have fought a Good fight."*
2. Its significance in Life's Race – *"I have finished my Course."*
3. Its significance in Life's Doubts – *"I have kept the Faith."*
4. Its significance at Life's End – *"There is laid up for me a crown."*

That the words of Paul have significance for all Christians is seen in the expression: *"and not to me only, but unto all them also who love his appearing."*

TWO KINDS OF THEMES

There are, generally speaking, two kinds of themes as regards their grammatical structure: the **rhetorical** and the logical. These terms are used with a specific technical meaning.

- A *Rhetorical theme* or proposition is a subject with its modifiers, such as: "The Blessings of God's People" or "The Perils of Life are Journey," or "The Sinner's need of Repentance." Single words like "Repentance" or "Faith" are too general for themes; they need modifiers such as adjectives or prepositional phrases to make them sufficiently specific for themes.

- A ***Logical theme*** consists of a subject and a predicate, such as: "Faith in Christ is the Only Means to Salvation," or "Happiness is not Found in Possessions Only." The logical theme may be in question form, as: "Why is Faith in Christ Necessary to Salvation?" The logical theme suggests divisions which are proofs of the theme; or in the question form, the divisions are answers to the question. Note that the above themes have a verb as well as a subject.

The right theme for each occasion

The important thing is to select the proper theme for the occasion. Henry Ward Beecher insisted that the sermon be preached to meet the present needs of the people, and that may account partly for his success. The first question the good preacher asks himself upon entering his study is, "What do my people need supremely at this time?" and not, "Where can I find a clever outline?" A doctor does not give all his patients the same medicine, nor does he give medicine at all without a diagnosis, unless he is a quack. A preacher who preaches sermons without a diagnosis of his people's need is a ministerial quack and will do people about as much good as a quack doctor.

The people's needs are discovered in several ways. They may be revealed to the preacher in prayer, for many needs are secret needs. Visitation in the peoples' homes will usually solve the problem of what to preach, for during such visits, people often voice their needs, and make confessions of their weaknesses if the preacher is a compassionate listener. Frequently some general condition of the community such as an epidemic, a calamity, or a general mortal trend will suggest the proper theme.

The special holidays of the year usually call for a related theme for one of the services, preferably for Sunday evening. The stores and the newspapers make people conscious of the sentiment of holidays of which fact preachers should take advantage when there is an appropriately related Bible truth.

The evangelist or special speaker will find it more difficult to discern people's needs that the pastor, though the pastor may help him/her; but by all means the evangelist ought to pray definitely about the choice of his theme. Where he repeats repertoire sermons, he should, after prayer and diagnosis, revise them to fit the present situation. To succeed, a preacher must preach to the people who are present.

Sermon themes should exhibit the following qualities: they should be **comprehensive**, **Biblical, dynamic,** and **specific.**

- The theme should express the whole aim of the sermon; nothing more or less.
- The good proposition is biblical; otherwise its elaboration can hardly be called a sermon. Secular themes may rarely be chosen by a preacher, but they should indeed be rare.

- The proper theme is dynamic; it starts the hearer's mind thinking in a certain direction. The theme which does not arouse interest and stir mental activity is not the right proposition to fit the occasion.
- Finally, the theme ought to be specific. People are not intensely interested in the general subject "Faith," but many are interested in "Faith that Overcomes the World" or, "Faith that Obtains Salvation."

When one has chosen a proper theme he is ready to proceed to the next step.

ADDITIONAL NOTES:

From: The Elements of Preaching, p. 25 - 27

"A sermon ought to be a monograph and not an encyclopedia, an agency for pushing one article, not a general store where one can purchase anything from a button to a coffin." —John Watson, ***The Cure of Souls****, p. 18.*

If the preacher has done his heart-work and his homework, he should be able to state in one sentence exactly what his message is about and what he wants to accomplish. "I have a conviction that no sermon is ready for preaching…until we can express its theme in a short, pregnant sentence as clear as crystal." —John Henry Jowett, ***The Preacher: His Life and Work,*** *p. 133.*

The Sermon Proposition [Theme Sentence, Big Idea] should have the following characteristics:

- *It should be biblical, a timeless truth that is worth preaching about.*
- *It should be important and relevant to the needs of the congregation.*
- *It should be definite and clear, uncluttered by abstract language or literary embellishments.*
- *It should be accurate and honest and not promise more than the preacher can produce. You don't lay a foundation for a skyscraper and then build a chicken coop on it.*
- *It should be interesting so that the listener is encouraged to want to listen to the development of the theme in the Sermon.*
- *It should usually be stated in the present tense, what God does for us today and not what he did for Moses centuries ago. "Jesus helped Peter when he was sinking" is a valid statement; but for a sermon thesis, it would be better stated: "In the storms of your life, your Saviour is preset to help you."*
- *It may take one of several forms:*
  - ***Declarative:*** *"The Holy Spirit helps the Believer."*
  - ***Imperative:*** *"Every Believer should be filled with the Holy Spirit of God."*
  - ***Interrogative:*** *How can we be filled with the Spirit?"*
  - ***Hortatory:*** *"Keep On Praying!"*
  - ***Exclamatory:*** *Just think of the joys of Heaven!*
  - ***Definitive:*** *"Faith means living without scheming."*

Warren & David Wiersbe, ***The Elements of Preaching,*** *Tyndale House, Wheaton, Illinois 1986*

HOW TO CHOOSE AND INTERPRET A TEXT

It is the business of the preacher to preach the gospel. If the gospel is found only in the Bible and if the Bible is the divinely inspired revelation of God's will, then a sermon ought to be based on a text of Scripture. If it is argued that one could preach with divine authority, then unless the preacher cares to give the impression the he is his own authority the sermon ought to be based on a text of Scripture. If it is important that men know the Bible thoroughly then the preacher must use every opportunity to quote, teach, and honour the Scriptures.

The selection of a text will depend upon the preachers approach to the sermon. If the theme is chosen first, then the text must be selected which will best support the theme without distorting or accommodating the text. This can be done by tracing in a concordance the words which are synonymous with the principal word in the theme and then applying the process of elimination. Or a satisfactory text may occur to the preacher's mind, with a little meditation or prayer, which harmonizes with the theme.

When a theme is chosen first, its exact wording should await the selection of a text so that they may be harmonized. For instance, the preacher feels that the present need is for personal evangelism. He tentatively words the theme, "Our Responsibility in Personal Evangelism." Selecting the first chapter of John, verses 40-51, as a text concerning Andrew and Philip finding Peter and Nathaniel, the preacher revises the theme to read, "The example of the First Disciples in Personal Evangelism.

This outline may follow:

John 1:40-51	
I.	They Personally Learned About Jesus
II.	They Preached Jesus to Another
III.	They Invited Another to Meet Jesus.

The Following week, the preacher desires to follow with another sermon on the best methods of personal evangelism. The tentative theme is, "How to Become a Successful Personal Evangelist." After selecting the text in Acts 8 about the Eunuch, the theme is revised to read, "A Successful Revivalist Shows the Way to Personal Evangelism."

This outline might result:

I.	The Guide is the Holy Spirit
II.	The Starting Point is the Prospect's Interest
III.	The Approach is Through the Scripture
IV.	The Aim is Full Surrender.

Quite frequently the text will be chosen before the theme. Then the text will come to the preacher during prayer, or while he is studying the Bible, and he will be strongly impressed with its practical application to the people. Ideally it is best to begin with a text, but when the need of the people gives rise to the sermon, a theme will often occur to the mind of the preacher. However, if the mind of the preacher is saturated

with Scripture and he is accustomed to thinking of people's problems in the light of Biblical solutions, he may nearly always think of a text when a need is suggested, even as a physician thinks of sicknesses in the terms of specific remedies and specific kinds of operations. If the preacher is following a series or course of sermons through a book of the Bible, then, of course, the text will come before the theme, though there will be a general theme for the whole book chosen at the beginning of the series.

FIVE SUGGESTED RULES FOR SELECTING A TEXT

1. **Select a real text**. A real text is one which is a complete statement, precept, or narrative used with the sense intended by the author. Single words or fragment texts are to be avoided. Any legitimate theme can be based on a real text. Texts which are isolated from the context and accommodated to an application foreign to the purpose of the author are not proper texts. The words of Scripture cease to be Scripture when they are accommodated. "Let us do evil that good may come" is a sentence from the Bible, but when isolated from the context it is contrary to the teaching of the sacred author, and, as such, is not Scripture.

2. **Select the great doctrinal and ethical texts of the Bible.** Do not fear that these have been exhausted because they have been frequently used. They are often used because they are great preaching texts. One need not fear that they will be thought naïve or a beginner because he uses a familiar text; the great preachers of every age have used these great texts. The people are interested in them, because they have used them for comfort and light in dark places.

3. **Avoid texts which are known to be interpolations,** that is, portions which have crept into the later manuscripts through scribes' errors or additions from marginal notes, which are not to be found in the oldest and most reliable manuscripts. These spurious [non-genuine] texts can be avoided by using the Revised Version for comparison in study. Let it be said that they are not numerous. However, the few which are found in the Authorized Version (AV, KJV) have often been used as texts. None of them contain false teaching, but many educated hearers know them, and a sermon based on a spurious text would have no authority with such persons.

4. **Avoid the sayings of uninspired men** when choosing a text. These sayings have their place in the Bible, but they are not proper texts, because they lack divine authority. Many texts, which are the words of Job's three friends, have been selected from the book of Job. Some of these sound good when isolated, but all three of these speakers were in error and were rebuked by God. Others are Pharaoh, Satan, Balaam, Pilate, and any men whose words are reported, but who are not inspired apostles or prophets.

5. **Do not choose texts simply because they are odd or queer.** The serious minister has no time for novelties and curiosities. The preacher ought to be joyful, but not frivolous. Humour is not forbidden in the pulpit when it is in good taste, but one should not be funny at the expense of the Holy Word. Texts which seem queer appear so only because they are oriental or Old English idioms. A preacher once selected the text from Hosea, "Ephraim is a cake not turned," with the topic, "Half Baked." The only thing "half baked" in the modern sense of the term was the preacher's sermon.

EIGHT RULES OF INTERPRETATION

Before a text can be expressed in an intelligent theme and be divided, it must be properly interpreted. Observe the following rules of interpretation.

1. **Interpret the text in the light of the context.** A Verse of Scripture which seems to have one meaning may be seen to mean something else when the context is read. 1 Corinthians 2:9 seems to refer to heaven's future glory, but the context reveals it to be a quotation from the Old Testament predicting the fuller revelations of the age of grace which believers may enjoy in this present world. Hebrews 12:1 appears to be an admonition to believers to live carefully before their unsaved neighbours, but the context (Chapter 11) shows that it refers to the believer's race as encompassed about by the great heroes of faith (the great cloud of martyrs of chapter 11). Colossians 2:21, "Touch not, taste not, handle not," seems to be a good prohibition text, but it is useless as such because it is a quotation of some negative precepts that legalistic teachers were using. However there are some good texts against beverage alcohol. Texts like the above are so numerous that one is never safe in the interpretation of a text until the context has been studied. *[See also John 5:39, 40]*

2. **Interpret a text in harmony with the teaching of the whole Bible.** The Bible does not contradict itself, therefore when the text can have two meanings; the one is to be taken which is in harmony with the teachings of the body of Scripture. Luke 14:26 seems to assert that a disciple of Jesus must hate his near relatives, but since this would be contrary to the great body of Scripture which teachers love, the word "hate" must be taken figuratively as hyperbole. It really means that a disciple must be willing to utterly give up home ties to heed the call to service. *[See also John 21:25]*

3. **The text must be interpreted in harmony with sound, systematic doctrine.** Doctrines are formed after consulting the Bibles teaching on a subject. Therefore a single text which seems contrary must not be used against the well established Bible doctrine. The orthodox tenets of the fundamental church have been subjected to two millenniums of scholarly interpretation; this does not guarantee their infallibility, but one should proceed with great fundamental consensus.

4. **A text should be taken literally** unless it is obviously figurative, or unless a literal interpretation would lead to absurdity or an impossibility. The Bible was written in the common people's language and for average readers. Unrestricted spiritualizing and allegorizing do violence to the Bible and make it a little more than a playground for metaphysical minds. The spiritualizing done by Origen and a few other early fathers has had a bad influence on some later preachers, and some modern preachers. That spiritualizing is in vain is seen by the fact that no two such interpreters get the same result. There are indeed some **figures of speech** in the Bible, but in nearly every case where a Bible narrative is allegorized, the forced application is inferior to the real and literal application.

5. **If possible, consult the original languages as help to interpretation.** But first a few lines of caution are needed. One should not try to make independent translations of words or passages of the Greek and Hebrew texts unless one has studied the grammar of these languages. Some preachers with a doctrinal axe to grind quote Greek and Hebrew with a great show of authority when they have merely consulted a lexicon or an interlinear diglot (bilingual; translation and original side by side). This is an unsafe procedure, if not at times a dishonest one.

There are preachers too, who quote the original words from hearsay, trusting the accuracy of another's research. The author has known of absurd renderings of Greek passages which he has traced through several persons all of whom quoted from hearsay. Furthermore, it is not good taste to quote Greek and Hebrew in the pulpit, for hardly anyone in the average congregation will appreciate the quotations. Give the people the benefits of thorough research, but do not display methods. Everyone knows that an artist uses a brush to paint his pictures, but they do not expect to see brush marks on the finished painting. These warnings need not discourage the Greek student; he can profit immeasurably by his studies. There are scores of passages the full depth of which cannot be seen in any English translation. There are also any number of homiletic hints which are discovered in the study of the original languages. Greek and Hebrew will greatly aid the minister to interpret his texts correctly, but let him keep these aids in his study where they belong.

6. **Make use of the scholarship of other translators.** If the minister does not have a thorough knowledge of the original languages, he will be helped in interpreting the texts by comparing several literal and modern speech translations of the Bible, such as: The Emphasized Bible, by Rotherham; Weymouth's New Testament; Helen Montgomery's Centenary Translation; Moffatt's Translation; Young's Literal Translation. By comparing some of these with the KJV, misinterpretations based upon archaic words will be avoided. For instance, "Study" in 2 Timothy 2:15 will be seen to mean "strive earnestly" not study books; "Charity" in 1 Corinthians 13, will be replaced by "love"; "let" in 2 Thessalonians 2:7, will give way to "hinder"; prevent in 1 Thessalonians 4:15, will be found to mean "precede"; "conversation" in Galatians 1:3 will be seen rather to mean "behaviour," and these are only a few of the many which could be listed if space permitted. These are enough to show the need for consulting either the original languages or several translations.

7. **Furthermore, consult parallel passages.** Scripture is best interpreted by Scripture. If the same idea is expressed several places, but in somewhat different words, it is made clearer by comparison. If an ethical principle is applied to several different cases, it is seen to be general in application and not simply a local emergency measure. Some commands and prohibitions are of only local and temporary significance and others are meant for the whole church for all time. This problem of application can usually be solved by comparing parallel passages.

8. **Finally, consult one of some good commentaries of the critical, exegetical type.** Devotional commentaries seldom give much attention to interpretation, although they are helpful in suggesting points for elaboration. But here we are interested only in the interpretation of the text which must come before elaboration. (Some recommended commentaries of both types are listed at the back of these notes) The writers of the good exegetical commentaries were careful Biblical Scholars conversant with theology and the original languages, and while they are not infallible, of course, their opinions are worth considering along with one's own in the process of interpreting the text. Do not be slavish follower of commentaries, nor reject their explanations without good reason and careful study.

HOW TO ORGANISE A SERMON

Stones, wood, steel, and glass do not make a building; paints, easel, and brushes do not make a painting; stone, hammer, and chisels do not make an automobile; likewise facts, illustrations, proofs, and application do not make a sermon; the only difference in each case between the materials and the finished product is organisation. Not all preachers preach organized sermons; in some cases because the value of organisation is not appreciated, in other cases because the methods of organisation are not known.

SOME REASONS FOR ORGANISATION IN THE SERMON

1. **Organisation facilitates the preacher's delivery.** It is easier to remember the sermon thoughts if they are arranged so that logically related thoughts follow one another. It is easier to keep the body of material in mind if it has a plan. An untrained preacher may suppose that he has more liberty of delivery if he is free to say whatever comes to his mind on any subject, but such talk would have to be labeled "Miscellaneous Thoughts on Religion." With any mental discipline a preacher will find that the organized discourse is easier to follow, furthermore, what he delivers will deserve the name "sermon."

2. **The organized sermon is more pleasing to the hearer; it has more beauty.** If it is argued that one should not strive for beauty in preaching, we answer, "Why not?" Jesus on the mount preached the most beautiful sermon of all, and it was certainly well organized. We precede our sermons with beautiful music to make the sermon more attractive, why should the sermon lack attractiveness? No one admires chaos, nor can hearers be expected to listen attentively to chaotic sermons. Neither will sensational stories, humour, and pulpit antics make up for poorly planned material.

3. **The organized sermon is easier to remember.** A sermon has permanent value only if it can be remembered. The layman does not face his problems during the service hours on Sabbath, but during the week when at work, while transacting business, or in the company of worldly men. His ability to solve his problems as they arise depends upon his ability to call to mind admonitions and counsels given by his pastor in church. If he fails in the time of trial, his pastor who cares only for temporary impressions to some degree responsible. Let any one who is in doubt about the above psychological principle test if for himself. Let him look at a pile of stone on a hillside and see if he can remember the location of each thirty minutes later, but let him pick out the white stones from among them which are of a uniform size and arrange them in a circle around a flower bed and he can remember their design, order, and purpose almost indefinitely. Or let him call to mind the sermons he remembers and see if they did not have design. Now, of course, we strive to get immediate results from preaching, but we should strive just as much for permanent results.

   Compare the two following outlines and judge which of them would be remembered:

1. God Saves Mankind 2. Men Ought to Love One Another 3. Faith is Necessary to Salvation 4. Sin Will Bring Eternal Condemnation 5. There are Many Signs of Christ's Soon Return.

Text: John 3:16 (Alex McClaren)

1. **The Great Lake** – God So Loved the World
2. **The River** – That He Gave His Son
3. **The Pitcher** – Whosoever Believeth on Him
4. **The Drink** – Should Have Everlasting Life.

The second outline by McClaren creates a picture of a lake out of which flows a river into which a pitcher is dipped and from which a drink is taken. Such a picture the mind can grasp and hold. Every time afterward that one sees a lake, a river, or pitcher the sermon is likely to come to mind.

4. **The organized sermon can be more easily understood.** A well organized sermon will seldom be vague, for organization dispels ambiguity. One of the best ways to determine whether one really understands a subject is to attempt to organize the subject. A person could never learn to play a musical instrument and read notes without learning one thing at a time in an organized fashion. It is known by educators that no body of truth can be transferred from one person to another in bulk. The parts must be imparted one by one in systematic order. A sermon is a short course of instruction on a specific religious subject followed by an appeal. The lessons must be separated and given one at a time in their logical order if the hearer is to clearly understand the contents and purpose of the sermon.

5. **Finally, organization increases the effectiveness of the sermon.** Let the preacher learn this from the salesman and the lawyer. The salesman knows how to approach his client and just when to make his appeal. It is needless to say he stays on his subject and presents the merits of his product one by one until he conveys to the prospective buyer a mental picture of himself as a delighted owner of the product. The lawyer carefully builds an appeal for his client step by step until the jury cannot picture him other than an innocent man. An unorganized appeal would be just so much talk which would fall on deaf ears. Now, it is not being overlooked that the Holy Spirit is the largest power in the sermon and commit it to God; but if the man has any part in the sermon, he should make his part as effective as possible. Doing the human part poorly does not make the divine part more effective.

Now that we have seen the advantage of organization, let us look further to the qualities which the organization should exhibit.

FIVE QUALITIES OF GOOD SERMON ORGANISATION

1. First and foremost, the sermon structure should have **unity.** By unity we mean that one theme prevails throughout all the divisions. We mean that each division is related to the theme; that there is something common to each division. One might call it having a common denominator, to borrow terminology from Mathematics; for when a sermon has unity, some common idea will go into each division. A sermon which does not have unity is not truly a sermon, but several little talks strung together. One cannot expect to be sufficiently forceful to alter men's conduct in a thirty-minute sermon unless he stays on one idea or duty. The prayer-less are not going to be turned to a prayerful life just because the preacher makes several remarks a bout prayer in his sermon along with a good many other assorted ideas. On the other hand,

if the preacher devotes his whole half hour to enforcing prayer as a Christian duty, he is likely to get some results. He may find that he will need to preach a series of sermons on prayer before he sees real results. If a carpenter wants to drive a nail he must strike in one place. The quickest way to "go to town" is to stay on one street.

The following outline illustrates unity:

Topic: "The Throne of Grace"
Text: Hebrews 4:16

Theme: "Approaching the Throne of Grace"

1. How We Approach the Throne of Grace – "With boldness"
2. Why We Approach the Throne of Grace – "To obtain mercy and receive help"
3. When Do We Approach the Throne of Grace – "In times of need."

Notice that something is common to each division and that the theme follows throughout. To introduce an appeal for tithing in the above outline would be a violation of unity. If the people need to hear about tithing, devote a whole sermon to it.

2. In addition to unity, the divisions should have **coherence.** Not only should the parts be related to a common theme, but they would adhere one to the other. In the following outline, there is unity but not much coherence:

1. God is the Author of Faith
2. Without Faith A Christian Will Fail
3. Faith is Necessary to Salvation.

Faith is common to all the above divisions, but the divisions have little relation one to the other.

The following outline has unity and coherence:

Topic: "Pauls Three I Ams"
Text: Romans 1:14-16

Theme: Paul's state of mind regarding the preaching of the Gospel of Christ.

1. I Am a Debtor to Preach – v. 14
2. I Am Not Ashamed to Preach – v. 16
3. I Am Ready to Preach – v. 15.

3. Another necessary quality of Organization is **progress.** This quality assures that the hearer's attention will be carried along to the goal. Listening to a sermon is like riding a bicycle, as soon as the progress stops, one falls off. Progress is achieved by the arrangement of the divisions so that each rises a

little nearer the goal. Progress is hindered by digressions from the theme. Side trips do not take one nearer home. Hearers do not care to wait at junctions while the preacher explores bypaths. It is further hindered by too much needless elaboration of a single division. If there are only two or three main divisions, there should be several sub-divisions under each to keep the discourse moving. It may help to make the progress apparent if the preacher announces his goal and the main mile posts at the beginning.

The following outline illustrates progress:

Text Mark 1:14 – 15

1. Jesus came – His advent
2. Jesus came Preaching – His mission
3. Jesus came preaching Repentance – His message.

Note that each division rises a little above the preceding one, reaching a climax. Such an outline properly handled would be sure to sustain interest because it progresses.

4. Further the structure of the sermon should have **symmetry.** Symmetry or proportion is necessary to all works of art. One's sense of taste is offended by that which is out of proportion. A house with a porch as big as the building would be an architectural curiosity, and impractical as well. Not infrequently are sermons lacking in symmetry. Too much time is spent in the introduction and in the first points, so that the latter division must be skimped. Sometimes, a subdivision is enlarged far out of proportion to its importance, in which case both symmetry and progress are violated. If the subdivisions were really that important, another should have been chosen, and the subdivision should have been made a main division. It is not contended that all the divisions should be of equal length, but that an amount time should be devoted to each in proportion to its importance. If all the divisions are of equal importance, then each should receive that same amount of treatment. But this is seldom a fact. It would not be possible to illustrate symmetry with an outline, because it is achieved very largely in the delivery. The sermon may be symmetrical on paper but when it is preached, it may look like something seen in a curved mirror.

5. Finally, the organization should have **climax.** The older meaning of the word "climax" is the same as progress. It is from a Greek word which means "Ladder." The word, however, has come to mean the final highest point of development. A sermon may have progress, but it may not leave the impression that a goal has been reached. A sermon may steadily rise, yet fail to arrive at any point which could be called a proper goal. Therefore a sermon must not only move, it must finally reach an adequate goal indicated by the theme. A merry-go-round has movement, but it never arrives anywhere. An arrow shot into the air makes progress upward bit it does not reach a goal; it falls to the ground when its momentum stops. An arrow shot at a target hits the mark. It then has both progress and climax and the archer is satisfied. Some sermons simply stop from a loss of momentum; others hit a mark and leave people satisfied. Climax is achieved in the construction by the arrangement of the points so that a goal is reached at the end, which is worthy of a sermon. Climax is achieved in the delivery by starting in a deliberate, but

unimpassioned voice, and then gradually increasing the emphasis and gestures as the sermon progresses so that the most intense point is at the appeal. A preacher who shouts in the introduction can never have climax of delivery.

The following topical sermon outline lacks climax:

"Three Reasons for Believing in Immortality."

1. The Bible Promises It
2. Nature Illustrates It
3. All Men Expect or Desire It.

Such a sermon lacks climax because any number of other reasons could well have been added to the three given. It makes progress, but it does not arrive.

Note the following illustration of climax:

Topic: Christian Attainment"
Text: Philippians 3:13-15

Theme: The Christian's Attitude Toward Attainment."

1. His attitude toward past attainment – Humble forgetfulness
2. His attitude toward present attainment – Earnest reaching forth
3. His attitude toward future attainment – Confident expectation of perfection.

Though the above is not a perfect sermon, it does reach a goal to which nothing can be added; it has a climax.

To recapitulate, the qualities of good sermon organization are:

1. Unity
2. Coherence
3. Progress
4. Symmetry
5. Climax.

HOW SERMONS ARE CLASSIFIED

We have seen how to select a theme, how to choose and interpret a text, and how to organize a sermon. Let us now see what kind of sermons there are and what the function of each kind is. Not all authorities classify sermons in the same way, but sermons are most commonly classified as Topical, Textual, and Expository. We will follow this classification which is based upon the **USE** made of the **TEXT** in the construction of the sermon.

THE TOPICAL SERMON

The topical sermon takes from the text only a topic or subject. The divisions are invented by the preacher in accordance with the rhetorical possibilities of the subject and the preacher's knowledge of the subject as it is treated in the whole Bible.

Example:

REDEMPTION 1. The Meaning of Redemption 2. The Necessity of Redemption 3. The Method of Redemption 4. The Results of Redemption.
EVIDENCE OF GOD'S LOVE 1. As Seen in the Bible 2. As Seen in Nature 3. As Seen in Providence.

This method permits full liberty of composition and a full treatment of any subject. It gives unlimited rein to the preacher's inventive genius, and opens a wide door to rhetorical eloquence. However, the topical sermon nearly always is coloured, more than other types of sermons, by the preacher's personal views and prejudices. It is usually too general in its scope, and there is tendency for topical preaching to become too secular. Another objection to the topical method is that it develops a sermon merely by extension so that the divisions are like links in a chain instead of parts of a design structure; and that the number of these chain divisions [links] is arbitrary, there being no reason, in most cases, why there could not be more or fewer divisions without doing serious violence to the sermon. For instance, in the second example given above there is no good reason, except the limitation of time, why other "Evidences of God's Love" might not be included.

Though the disadvantages of Topical Preaching seem to outweigh the advantages, there are several uses of the method, and there are some subjects which are better handled topically. Topical sermons are recommended in the following conditions:

- When the subject is not adequately treated by any one passage of Scripture;
- When one desires to treat a subject in a very general way, such as presenting a doctrine to an audience to which it is entirely unfamiliar;
- When one desires to treat general evangelistic truth to an audience of unsaved persons who are not too familiar with the Bible.
- When treating social or moral problems not existing in Bible times or not treated by Bible writers.

THE TEXTUAL SERMON

The textual sermon takes from the text a subject and the main divisions. The main points of the sermon are only those stated or clearly inferred by the passage of Scripture upon which the sermon is based. However, the subdivisions are invented in the same way that all the divisions are invented in the topical sermon.

Example:

THE MINISTER: AN EXAMPLE

1 Timothy 4:12

"Become an example of believers, in word, in conduct, in love, in faith, in purity." [RV]

1. An Example in Word
2. An Example in Conduct
3. An Example in Love
4. An Example in Faith
5. An Example in Purity.

The text simply mentions the exemplary qualities of word, conduct, love, faith, and purity: no more information is available without drawing upon several other parts of the Bible or upon one's own personal experience. The sermon is textual because the text provides the main divisions, while the subdivisions or the elaboration is drawing from other sources. The KJV was not used for this text because the words "Conversation", "charity", "love", and the word "spirit" do not appear in the old Greek manuscripts and so do not belong in the text. This illustrates the need for consulting other translations in text interpretation.

Textual sermons have the advantage that they are more scriptural in design than the topical variety; they do not disappoint the hearers who expect something from the text which is announced. The textual method permits great variety in construction and selection. The textual sermon seems to the hearer more like a finished discourse, because the number of the divisions is determined by the material in the text; and when each division is treated no one expects anything more. In most cases the textual sermon will be remembered longer, for where the hearer follows the sermon with his bible, a connection is fixed in his mind between the passage and the preacher's admonitions, so that he can recall the message whenever he reads the passage.

It is objected to the textual method that it restricts the preacher's originality, which is not necessarily true; that it does not permit a sufficiently broad treatment of a subject, but most sermons are too broad; and that textual preachers too often accommodate their texts and do violence to the true meaning. The last objection is a real one, but texts need not be accommodated for the real application is nearly always richer than one which is forced. The reason some preachers accommodate their texts is that they are following an outmoded practice which was followed for several generations in Europe and America from which period a great many printed sermons have been borrowed. Very few of the better preachers today who are well-trained and who accept the Bible as the divine revelation are guilty of purposefully forcing their texts.

Textual sermons are recommended:

- Whenever a single passage will provide the principal points to meet the needs of the people;

- When preaching ethical sermons, because a text carries more authority when one is preaching specific evangelistic truth. A strong text bears conviction when it is fully treated, while passing quotations are not so effective.
- When dealing with specific doctrinal truths.

THE EXPOSITORY SERMON

The expository sermon not only takes a subject and main divisions from the text, but all the subdivisions as well. It is usually based on a longer passage than the topical or textual sermon. Often the text is a whole paragraph, whole chapter, or even a whole book. No idea can be introduced into an expository sermon which does not come from the passage of Scripture upon which it is based. It is an exposition of the given passage, and that only.

Example:

TEMPTATION

James 1:12 – 15

1. The origin of Temptation, verses 13-14
    a. Not From God, verse 13
    b. From Inward Desire, verse 14
2. The Results of Yielding to Temptation, verse 15
    a. First Sin, verse 15
    b. Then Death, verse 15
3. The Reward of Enduring Temptation, verse 12
    a. Blessedness, verse 12
    b. A Crown of Life, verse 12.

The text of the above example consists of four verses, a complete paragraph, and it should be clear that every heading and sub-heading is taken from the passage of Scripture used for the text.

In the opinion of the author, expository preaching has many noteworthy advantages. They are as follows:

a. It is most like the preaching of the Apostles and early preachers.
b. It leads both the preacher and his hearers to a wider and deeper knowledge of the Scripture.
c. It promotes a greater respect for the Bible on the part of the laity.
d. It restrains the tendency to loose interpretation and to accommodation.
e. It restrains any tendency to ride a hobby-horse or to preach only pet doctrines.
f. It prevents voice monotony in preaching in that the variety of materials is likely to demand flexibility in volume and pitch.
g. It is recommended where exposition is used in a series, for it makes easier the choice of a text.
h. It makes easier the introduction of unwelcome admonition, and the preacher is less likely to be accused of preaching to/on individuals; for if the offensive injunction falls within the text, no one can blame the preacher for making several remarks about it.

Several objections to the expository method of preaching are commonly made:

a. It is objected that it is not conducive to unity in the sermon. But expository sermons can and should have unity like other sermon types.
b. Some contend that it is not adaptable to meeting up-to-date problems. Nearly all human problems are treated in the Scriptures; if not specifically, at least in principle. God expository preachers are no less interested in application than others.
c. It is further objected that it is not sufficiently sensational for modern times. Truth is said to be stranger than fiction, and certainly the Bible equals any source for human interest and mighty deeds. If one has any dramatic ability whatever, he can make the Bible scenes and Bible people live again in a fascinating manner. Furthermore, the preacher is not interested in sensation for sensation's sake. Cheap journalistic preaching sows only in shallow and thorny soil, it gets quick results, but not lasting results.

Most of the objectors to expository preaching either do not understand the method, or the expository sermons they have heard have been poor examples. Expository preaching is often confused with running commentary to the Sunday School Lesson variety, or the exegetical Bible lecture such as one would deliver at the prayer meeting service. The true expository sermon has its organization, its goal, and it reaches a climax like any other sermon.

Expository preaching is recommended in the following cases:

a. Whenever the need of the occasion can be met with a passage containing all the consecutive points necessary to the need.
b. When preaching a series or course of sermons;
c. When treating narrative, parable or psalm;
d. Whenever one desires to give a treatment of any passage longer than one or two verses.
e. When preaching on a book of the Bible.
f. When preaching on Bible characters where the material is not too far scattered;
g. Evangelistic preaching when the sermon is based on a story, parable or incident.

We have studied the theme, the text, the sermon organization and the sermon classifications with their uses. We have selected a theme and a text, we know what qualities the organization must have, and we have selected the type of sermon which is best suited for the occasion.

HOW TO ASSESS A SERMON: A Checklist for Ruling Elders

By William Shishko

The Form of Government of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church (X:3) requires ruling elders to "have particular concern for the doctrine and conduct of the minister of the Word and help him in his labours." This is "in order that the church may be edified, and may manifest itself as the pillar and ground of the truth" (Directory for Worship, VI:B: 2). No small part of this duty is fulfilled as the ruling elders thoughtfully assess the preaching that comes to a congregation on a weekly basis. Whether the preaching is by the church's pastor or by a visiting speaker, e.g., another minister, a licentiate, or an intern, ruling elders have a responsibility to assess the preaching both to assist the one who preaches and to provide for the edification of the church.

Ruling elders often feel ill equipped to fulfil this responsibility because they do not have objective criteria for assessing sermons. Not wanting to be critical of the servant of the Lord who ministers, and not wanting their subjective reactions to become a standard for assessing preaching, by default they leave this aspect of their ruling work undone. This deprives a preacher of what could well be invaluable assistance in improving his preaching, and it may well deprive the congregation of the kind of pulpit ministry that elders ought to seek to provide for the congregations they are called to serve.

The following list is designed to help ruling elders look for specific elements that should mark every sermon. It is not designed to encourage ruling elders to be unnecessarily critical of sermons, but rather to help them grow in their understanding of what an edifying sermon ought to be or to include. May the list be of help to you as you listen thoughtfully, make suggestions wisely, and as you oversee both ministers and congregations with a view toward their growth in grace, and in knowledge.

- *Was the sermon textual, i.e., confined to a verse or small portion of Scripture, topical, i.e., dealing with a theme that is not confined to one text but rather refers to many verses used to develop a particular point, or consecutive expository, i.e., part of a sermon series on a book or a particular extended portion of Scripture, e.g., the Lord's Prayer, the Sermon on the Mount? Is the preacher clear as to what type of sermon he is preaching?*
- *Was there an introduction? Does the introduction capture the attention of the congregation and, at the same time, actually introduce the sermon?*
- *Did the preacher give his outline and develop the sermon so that it was easy to follow where he was going? Were the points so impressed upon the hearers that they were memorable? Can you state the basic points of the sermon after the sermon is complete?*
- *Did the preacher deal with the actual words and phrases of his text(s), or did he seem to fly over them? (There is a difference between preaching about a text, and preaching a text or texts. Good preaching does the latter.) Did he explain and apply the texts in their context?*
- *Were there sufficient illuminating devices in the sermon, e.g., illustrations, metaphors, so that the more difficult points were made clear to the congregation? Were the illustrations (biblical or extra-biblical) appropriate?*
- *Was the argument of the sermon compelling? Were your mind, your will, and your emotions persuaded by the preacher's message?*
- *Did the preacher make applications of his text(s) throughout the sermon? Did the applications legitimately grow out of the text(s) as he developed them? Did he take the time to impress the applications on the consciences of the hearers so that the hearers knew how they needed to think, feel, and act differently based on what the Word of God says?*
- *Was Christ preached or was the predominant theme something other than Christ and the Gospel? Would an unsaved hearer understand clearly what the Gospel message is as a*

result of that sermon? Are believers challenged to specific repentance from sin and renewed faith in Christ as Savior and Lord? Was the fulfillment of Christian duties presented as coming from the grace, strength, resources, and motivations of Christ and the Gospel, or were the hearers cast upon their own resources to do what God tells them to do?

- *Was there a conclusion to the sermon, or did it just stop? Did the conclusion serve to make a final impression on the hearts of the hearers, or did it simply summarize what was said?*
- *Did the preacher preach with earnestness, and with something of a life and death conviction that his message must be heard, or was there nonchalance in the preacher's manner and delivery? Did the preacher actually proclaim the truth as a representative of Christ the King, or was he content to simply impart knowledge of the Bible?*
- *Did the preacher actually labor to communicate with the congregation or did he speak over the heads of those present? Was there material in the sermon to which even the children could relate and appreciate? Did he so labor to communicate that he cheapened or distorted the message he was delivering?*
- *Was the preacher's language suitable to ministry of the Word? Were there glaring grammatical errors or misuses of words or phrases?*
- *Was there superfluous material in the sermon? Would less have been more?*
- *Did the preacher make use of "you" in his applications, or did he continually use the inclusive expression "we"? (Good preaching will include the frequent [but not necessarily exclusive] use of the second person, i.e., "you" throughout the sermon).*
- *Did the preacher's dress, overall appearance, and pulpit manner befit a representative of Christ? Was it obvious to all that the preacher was a "man of God" (2 Tim. 3:17).*
- *Did he preach so long that it was beyond his ability to hold the attention of the congregation? Did he preach long enough to accomplish what needed to be accomplished by the message? Did the elements of his sermon serve that purpose or not?*
- *What kind of congregational response (if any) did you get regarding the message?*
- *Was the sermon well prepared? Was it obvious that the preacher did not deliver something that cost him nothing (cf. 1 Chron. 21:24)? Could you sense that time, study, prayer, and much thought had gone into the message?*
- *Were you moved to change in some way(s) as a result of the message preached? Why or why not?*
- *Was this preaching edifying to the congregation? Did it faithfully reflect the doctrinal position of the church? Did it contribute well to the church's testimony as a pillar and ground of the truth (cf. I Tim. 3:15).*
- *What encouraging words can you give to the preacher about his sermon? What constructive suggestions could you make? Do you need to make them? If so, prayerfully determine how and when, and make them.*

OPC, Ordained Servant Periodicals
5645 73rd St. SW Carson,
ND 58529

SERMON EVALUATION

Name_____**Evaluator:** _____

Venue:_____ **Date:** _____

Sermon Title:_____

Type of Sermon: ☐ Prophetic ☐ Topical ☐ Expository ☐ Narrative ☐ Other

Category	Quality	Poor F	Fair D	Good C	V Good B	Excellent A	Comments
Introduction	Attention Relation to Topic						
Material	Interesting Original Accurate Quotations						
Organization	Plan Movement Reasoning Evidence Unity Length						
Style	Beauty Precision Grammar Clarity						
Delivery	Voice Diction Fluency Energy Posture Gesture						
Illustrations	Aptness Vividness Hackneyed?						
Conclusion/Application							
Audience Factors	Appropriateness Attention Holding Appeal Response						

Overall Grade: _____

SERMON EVALUATION

Name_____**Evaluator:** _____

Venue:_____ **Date:** _____

Sermon Title:_____

Type of Sermon: ☐ Prophetic ☐ Topical ☐ Expository ☐ Narrative ☐ Other

Section	Quality	Comments	Points
Introduction	Interest Length Relation to Topic		__ **2**
Content/ **Argument**	Theme/Purpose Clarity Reasoning Interest Factor Relevance to Life		__ **3**
Structure	Unity Order Progression of Thought Balance Memory Factor		__ **3**
Exegesis/ Interpretation	Thoroughness Accuracy Sufficient / Insufficient Theological Correctness		__ **3**
Illustrations	Aptness Variety Credibility Number		__ **3**
Delivery	Voice & Diction Gesture Posture "Eye-Contact" Style		__ **3**
Conclusion	Length Effectiveness Application Positiveness		__ **3**

Overall Grade 20

Please make whatever comments you think are relevant and helpful in the above spaces, and give points for each section, using half marks where appropriate.

HOW TO CONSTRUCT A TOPICAL SERMON

The ways of constructing a topical sermon might be multiplied indefinitely depending upon one's ability to distinguish minute variation. For the sake of convenience of classification we will list five: **1.** By aspects; **2.** By proofs; **3**. By illustrations; **4.** By order of materials; **5.** By analogy.

1. A topical sermon may be composed by displaying one by one its aspects; either by simply noting the aspects or by asking questions which will bring out the aspects. By aspects we mean the points of view, or ways of looking at a subject.

Examples:

PRAYER

1. Its Meaning
2. Its Necessity
3. Its Methods
4. Its Results.

FAITH

1. What is Faith?
2. Why is Faith Needed?
3. How is Faith Received?
4. What Will Faith Accomplish?

THE GOSPEL

1. The Origin of the Gospel
2. The Purpose of the Gospel
3. The Power of the Gospel.

2. A topical sermon may be constructed also by stating its proofs. This method is best for controversial themes or where the theme is a statement of fact. (A logical theme.)

Examples:

WE BELIEVE IN THE RESURRECTION OF CHRIST

1. The Argument of Faith – the Bible declares it
2. The Argument From Testimony – there are many competent witnesses
3. The Argument From History – a successful church.

CHRIST, THE MESSIAH

1. Proof from Old Testament Prophecy
2. Proof from Christ's Works
3. Proof from Christ's Claims
4. Proof from the Power of Christ's Gospel.

3. A topical sermon may be constructed, in addition, by advancing illustrations of a theme taken from Bible incidents and biographies, or even by illustration from Church history.

Example:

THE DISCIPLINARY VALUE OF DELAY	THE INFLUENCE OF A GODLY MOTHER
1. As Seen in he case of Moses 2. As Seen in the Case of Elijah 3. As Seen in he case of Paul.	1. Observe it in Moses 2. Observe it in Samuel 3. Observe it in Timothy.

4. Furthermore, a topical sermon may be developed from the order of the kinds of material used in a sermon, which are: explanation, argument, illustration, and application. This is not a very high order of construction, but it is convenient when one needs to make a hasty preparation, and it is better than wandering aimlessly. Something like this method is used often by public speakers for short speeches or sales talks.

   Example:

   CHRISTIAN TITHING

   1. Explain it – what it means
   2. Prove it – quote Scriptures
   3. Illustrate it – give examples of benefitted 'Tithers'
   4. Apply it – urge hearers to adopt it.

5. Finally, a topical sermon may be constructed by analogy. Some familiar object or process may be chosen and treated part by part or step by step where such an analogy can be given spiritual significance.

   Examples:

   HUSBANDRY* OF THE CHRISTIAN LIFE

   1. The Sowing – Working for God
   2. The Cultivating – Prayer, Bible Study
   3. The Reaping – Blessings, Life Eternal.

   THE COURTROOM OF LIFE

   1. The Judge – God, the Father
   2. The Accuser – Satan
   3. The Advocate – Jesus
   4. The Verdict – Not Guilty.

There are almost an unlimited number of sermon analogies which can be used and analogical form is one of he most attractive forms which can be given to a topical sermon.

See also John 15:1-17.

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*husbandry – in agriculture, cultivation

HOW TO CONSTRUCT A TEXTUAL SERMON

As it has already been pointed out, the textual sermon draws its main divisions from the text. Obviously then, the making of the divisions of a textual sermon requires a different technique from that of making topical divisions. Here the topic is not divided to suit the preacher's fancy, but as the text indicates or permits by the scope of its material. The textual sermon differs from the expository sermon, deriving from the text only a skeleton which is filled in anyway that the preacher desires or what the subject requires; while the expository sermon derives from the text both the skeleton and the flesh.

For the sake of convenience, two methods of making textual divisions will be considered. The first method is by **analysis**; the second is by **synthesis**.

I. ANALYSIS

Analysis is the easiest and the most natural way of dividing a text. The ideas, the duties, the arguments, the classifications, the conditions, the doctrines, the questions, or the admonitions of the text are simply taken in the order that they occur in the text. One requires only the ability to discover the parts and to find their relationship one to another. This type of treatment should not be used, however, where no unity exists between the parts or where the order of the parts is not suitable for the purpose of the sermon.

Observe the following examples:

THE CHRISTIAN: AN EXAMPLE

1 Timothy 4:12 (Related Admonitions)

"Be thou an example to the believers, in words, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity."

1. An Example in Word
2. An Example in Conduct (Conversation – See Greek)
3. An Example in Love (Charity – See Greek)
4. An Example in Spirit
5. An Example in Faith
6. An Example in Purity.

THREE DUTIES OF A YOUNG MINISTER

1Timothy 4:13 (Related Duties)

1. Reading
2. Exhorting
3. Teaching (Doctrine).

THREE THINGS TO BE AVOIDED
Psalm 1:1 (Related Admonitions)

1. The Counsel of the Ungodly
2. The Way of Sinners
3. The Seat of the Scornful.

THE PRICE OF A NATIONS HEALING
2 Chronicles 7:14 (Related Conditions)

1. Humbling of Self
2. A Return to Prayer
3. A Seeking After Good
4. A Turning From Sin.

THE BELIEVERS RELATION TO THE TRIUNE GOD
John 14:16 (Related Doctrines)

1. The Son Prays for the Believer
2. The Fathers Gives to the Believer
3. The Holy Spirit Abides with the Believer.

THE SON AND THE FATHER
John 14:6-9 (Related Doctrines)

1. The Son is the Way to the Father (Verse 6)
2. The Son is the Revelation of the Father (Verse 7)
3. The Son is One with the Father (Verse 9).

CONDITIONS FOR ANSWERED PRAYER
John 15:7 (Related Conditions)

1. That WE Abide in Christ
2. That CHRIST'S WORD Abides in Us.

APOSTOLIC WORK
Acts 5:42 (Related Ideas)

1. The Regularity of Apostolic Work – Daily
2. The Sphere of Apostolic Work – In the temple and in every house
3. The Methods of Apostolic Work – Teaching and preaching
4. The Theme of Apostolic Work – Jesus Christ.

From an examination of these examples along with the texts, three things will be noted.

1. the divisions are derived from the text;
2. the points in the outline are arranged in the same order that they occur in the text;
3. the only change made, if any, is in the wording of the divisions, and this is done only when it is needed to make the unity which exists between the parts more evident and easier to remember.

The word **analysis** means "taking apart," and this is exactly the meaning given to the word in its application to the text divisions. To analyze a text is simply to separate its parts so as to note and examine them separately. In this type the whole is exactly the sum of the parts. In some texts the lines of separation are not so clear and must be diligently sought as in Acts 5:42 where such relationships as time, place, method, and theme must be perceived. Sometimes a difficult text will reveal its hidden parts when a series of questions is applied such as: Who is the speaker? Why is this said? Who is addressed? What is required? What are the conditions of success? What lessons are taught? What promises are made? What ideas are expressed? What doctrines are taught? What qualities are displayed? There are many possible questions which can be used in analysis; these are but a few by way of illustration. The text itself will often suggest its own questions. In most cases, however, the texts suitable for analytical division will be quite easy to treat due to the fact that no change is made in the order of the points.

II. SYNTHESIS

The word synthesis means "putting together." The synthetic treatment, as the name implies, has to do with the arrangement of points, or the construction of an outline from the points supplied by a text, but arranged to suit the purpose of the sermon or the pattern of the sermon composition without thought of the order of the points in the text. Here the whole is more than the sum of the parts, as a building is more than a pile of stones; because the building, in addition to the material, has a design. In the analytical sermon, the text is the source of the material, but the sermon includes a design as well as the material. Analysis is like classifying the strata of marble in a quarry, synthesis is like building an edifice out of that same marble. Classifying a rubber tree as to roots, trunk, branches, and leaves would be analysis; making an automobile tyre, or inner tube, would be synthesis.

Often, the aim of a sermon or the rules of sermon organization makes expedient the arrangement of material in the text. The last clause of the text may be made the first point and the first clause the last point in the outline in order to have progress and climax in the sermon. Sometimes a minor theme in a text may be made the major theme in the sermon and then some of the materials in the text are ignored. Here no violence is done to the true meaning of the text, but only that part of the text which is relevant to the aim of the sermon, is utilized. Then sometimes a design is superimposed upon the material of the text; the Biblical material for the outline is from the text, but the total design is invented.

Three kinds of synthetically textual sermon outlines have been described.

i. Inverted order outlines
ii. Minor themes outlines
iii. Superimposed design outlines.

The following example is one in which the **order of the points in the text is changed** in the outline.

"PERFECT MANHOOD IN CHRIST
Ephesians 4:13 (inverted order)

1. Perfect Manhood in Christ is the Christian's Aim
2. Perfect Manhood is seen in Christ
3. Perfect Manhood is Achieved by Unity with and Knowledge of Christ.

In the text of the above example, there are three points: A, B, and C. In the outline they are arranged: B, C, A – because this order is homiletically expedient. The ways of achieving anything should not be treated until ***what one is to achieve*** has been proposed. So the first division (B) treats the aim; the second (C) the pattern, and the third (A) the method of achievement: the order of the points in the text though, was different.

The examples to follow are outlines in which **a minor theme** of the text is made the theme of the outline.

RECONCILIATION
Colossians 1:0-21 (Minor Theme)

1. The Instrument of Reconciliation – the blood of His Cross
2. The Scope of Reconciliation – things on earth or things in heaven.
3. The Power of Reconciliation – enmity of mind and wicked works.

The real theme of the above text and its context is the "pre-eminence of Christ," but "reconciliation," is a minor theme which suits the purpose of the present sermon. In the following example the real theme of the text is "Victory over Worry," but without doing injustice to the truth or the author's purpose, one might make an outline of the minor theme.

THREE WAYS TO TALK TO GOD
Philippians 4:6 (Minor Theme)

1. Conversation (Prayer)
2. Supplication (Request)
3. Adoration (Thanksgiving).

Here a further synthesis is accomplished by **alliteration** (each word in the outline ends with the same suffix "ion."

The following outline is synthetic by the **superimposed design.**

"THE LADDER OF GOD'S ABILITY"
Ephesians 3:20

Introduction: God's working is according to the power that works in us. That working power in us is faith. As faith climbs to each succeeding rung of the ladder of God's power, a fuller view is seen.

God is Able to Do…
1. What We Ask.
2. What we think
3. All We Ask or Think
4. Above all We Ask or Think
5. Abundantly Above All We Ask or Think
6. Exceeding Abundantly Above All We Ask or Think.

Here, the idea of a ladder is superimposed upon the text to make the sermon more vivid. No violence is done to the meaning of the text whatsoever. The truths are the

same except that they are given a new framework and rearranged to make an ascending scale. The value of such a treatment should be clearly manifest.

THE CHRISTIAN'S ATTIRE
Colossians 3:12-14

1. The Turban of Humility – *humbleness of mind, meekness*
2. The tunic of Kindness – *kindness, compassion*
3. The Sandals of Longsuffering – *longsuffering*
4. The Cloak of *Forgiveness*
5. The Sash of *Love.*

Here, greater vividness is achieved by the use of articles of clothing to represent the qualities of Christian character. The superimposed design is suggested by the words of the *"put on".* The articles of attire are arbitrary, but the treatment is textual nevertheless and perfectly true to the meaning of the author.

Many texts must of necessity be treated synthetically, because there is in them no ready order and arrangement of the points. So by analysis the points of the text are discovered and stated on paper just as they occur to the preacher, then they are studied until some relationship is seen between them. Finally the points are studied and ranged. The synthetic sermon begins with analysis in order to separate all the points, but the analysis is only in the first stage of preparation; before the sermon is ready for delivery the points have to be built into a suitable design or arrangement.

HOW TO CONSTRUCT AN EXPOSITORY SERMON

An expository sermon is a discourse based on a portion of Scripture, occupied mainly with exposition, wholly restricted in the outline to the chosen passage, and delivered with a view to persuasion.

There are four features which characterize an expository sermon.

(1) As it has already been briefly explained, the text of an expository sermon provides the material for all the divisions and subdivisions. But not only is the division structure provided by the text, the elaboration, or exposition, is also mainly derived from the passage of Scripture chosen for the text.

(2) The text of an expository sermon is usually longer than the text of a textual or a topical sermon. In fact, the text will usually be a paragraph or a chapter, and sometimes, it will be a whole book of the Bible. However, occasionally one will find a single verse so full and meaningful that it will be sufficient to provide all the material for a sermon. McClaren's texts very frequently consisted of a single verse, but it must be admitted that many of these sermons were textual.

(3) Furthermore, the expository sermon is a treatment of the passage of Scripture, while the topical and textual sermons are treatments of the subject. Though the textual sermon gets its main headings from the text, it is really a treatment of a subject as suggested by a text and the subject is the principal thing. An expository sermon will have a subject, but the subject is subordinate to the text; the text is the principal thing.

(4) Finally, in expository sermons, the Scripture is chosen first, and the subject is derived afterward, while in the other sermon types the subject is usually selected first, and the scripture text is found afterward. The reason for this is that expository sermons are most frequently preached in series of discourses and consequently the individual sermon is selected because it develops a pre-selected subject. Of course, expository sermons may be preached as occasional sermons as well as in a series, but even when this is the case, the Scripture passage is selected because it contains a noteworthy story, parable, conversation, incident or biographical sketch, or it is one of the more familiar chapters which are well known for their appeal or practical application.

Questions about the expository sermon:

1. *Is it necessary for the exposition to follow the order of the verses in the text?*
No, it is not necessary to follow the order of the text. This natural order may be followed if it is the logical order already. This would be the method of analysis. But, if the text order is not the logical order for discourse, the order may be changed to suit the purpose of the sermon. This would be the method of synthesis. On this point, a number of the textbooks are in error, inferring that the natural order of the verses must be followed. (***Analysis*** and ***Synthesis*** were described in the under **"How to Construct a Textual Sermon".** Analysis and synthesis may also be applied to expository sermon construction.)

2. *Will the expository sermon always be of the nature of a lecture seeking only to explain and instruct, or does exhortation and application have a place?*
   A sermon and a lecture are two different things. A lecture instructs or entertains, a sermon should instruct and it may entertain, but its main object is to persuade. An expository lecture is delivered for the purpose of teaching the Word. An expository sermon, like any true sermon, is delivered with persuasion for its principal aim. The expository sermon, then, has room for dramatization, vivid illustration, and forceful delivery.

3. *Is unity necessary in an expository sermon?*
   Yes, unity is essential to any type of sermon. Discourses of the running-comment type are frequently mistake for expository sermons, but a discourse without unity is not really a sermon, because unity and climax are necessary for best success in the persuasion. Therefore, for expository sermons, texts should be selected which have unity of thought.

4. *Is it necessary to treat all the material in a long text?*
   No, only the material in the text which is related, or which is deemed appropriate to the occasion need be treated. It is better for the sermon if the unrelated portions of the Scripture passage be omitted from the discussion.

5. *Is it permissible to quote parallel passages from other parts of the Bible in an expository sermon?*
   Yes it is permissible to quote parallel passages to support any point in the sermon provided that the point is based in some statement or inference found in the regular text of he sermon. Obviously, there must not be too many of these quotations or the text will be lost from sight. Furthermore, quotations must not be expounded; they are merely to be quoted, because the exposition is of the text, not of the parallel passages.

6. *Can illustrations of any type be used in an expository sermon, or must they, too, be derived from the text?*
   One may use any illustration whatever, but if they can be drawn from the text, context, historical background, or the author's experience, the discourse will be more compact and instructive; but success is more important than compactness, so the preacher is to be guided by his taste.

The remainder of this chapter will be devoted to explaining the several ways of constructing the expository sermon outline, the ways of building the elaboration or exposition, and the method of preparing the whole sermon step by step.

Varieties of Expository Sermons:

From the viewpoint of the author, there are six varieties of expository sermons:

1. doctrinal
2. ethical
3. inferential
4. biographical
5. propositional.

The terms topical, textual, and expository describe the methods of constructing a sermon as related to the text; these latter terms describe the kinds of subject matter with which the text deals. A sermon is "expository" because it expounds and is

limited to a consecutive passage of Scripture, but its subject mater is may be "doctrinal," "ethical," or "biographical," etc. These terms will be defined and explained in order that the reader may clearly perceive what the author means by them. When they are used by other writers, they may mean something different. Once these terms are defined, they will be used consistently throughout these notes to refer to the same things. Hardly any two writers use technical terms in the same way. When they are used consistently by the same author, they serve to describe genera, species, and varieties of sermons more directly than one could without the use of technical terms.

1. The ***doctrinal expository sermon*** is one, the aim of which is to expound the doctrinal teaching of a text; one in which the unity of the sermon is based upon related doctrines or related aspects of a single doctrine as the text permits. Paul devotes most of the first part of all his epistles to doctrinal matters. When one preaches upon a text taken from the doctrinal part of an epistle, he nearly always will have as has his aim to teach and enforce Bible doctrine, so, the sermon would be classified as "doctrinal". But in these notes the term "doctrinal" will be used only to describe sermons which point out, explain, and apply doctrines, not to describe sermons which have as their principal aim to prove a proposition. Such proof sermons will be called "propositional" even where the subject matter is doctrinal.

The following will illustrate the nature of a doctrinal expository sermon:

JUSTIFICATION
Romans 5:1-9

1. The Need of Justification
- **A.** Man is without strength – verse 6
- **B.** Man is sinner – verse 8

2. The Provision for Justification
- **A.** God's love – verse 8
- **B.** Christ's death – verse 6

3. The Appropriation of Justification – verse 1-2
-- by faith

4. The Results of Justification
- **A.** Access to Grace – verse 2
- **B.** Peace with God – verse 1
- **C.** Salvation from Wrath – verse 9
- **D.** Victory in Tribulation verse 3
- **E.** Development of Character – verse 3-5
  - i. Patience to experience
  - ii. Experience to hope
  - iii. Hope to shamelessness.

The above example is expository because it is taken entirely from one passage of Scripture; it is synthetic in its construction because the points are not arranged in the same order in which they occur in the text; and it is doctrinal because its aim is to explain and enforce the doctrine of justification. When one sees how easily modern day church members are lured into false cults and persuaded to dabble

with religious fads, one becomes convinced that there ought to be more doctrinal expository preaching from our pulpits.

2. The ***ethical expository sermon*** is one whose aim is to discover, explain and enforce the rules of right Christian conduct. In the latter chapters of Paul's epistles and in some parts of the Gospels, the material pertains to the conduct of the believer's life. Sermons built upon texts dealing with the Christian's morals and behaviour, are called ethical sermons. The divisions of ethical sermons consist of rules of behaviour or related aspects of ones ethical ideal.

Note the following examples:

PERSONAL HABITS
Romans 14:12 – 21

1. Personal Habits Are Accountable to God – verse 12
2. Personal Habits Are Not to be Judged by Men – verse 13
3. Personal Habits Must not Offend the Weak – verses 15, 20, 21
4. Personal Habits Are Subordinate to Kingdom Interests – verses 17, 19.

A CHRISTIAN'S RESPONSIBILITY AS A CITIZEN
Romans 13:1-10

1. Regarding Civil Obedience
    a. Implicit obedience – verse 2
    b. Fearless obedience – verse 3, 4

2. Regarding Financial Obligation – verses 6 – 8
    a. To the State – verses 6-7
    b. To every Creditor – verse 8

3. Regarding Social Morals – verses 9-10
    a. In accordance with Bible ethics – verse 9
    b. In according with Love's law – verse 10.

If there is a tendency for some preachers to neglect ethical preaching, let them notice that a large place is given in the New Testament to the regulation of Christian conduct. To neglect ethical preaching is to overlook much of the Holy Word. If the neglect is due to a fear that ethical sermons will be poorly received, that fear is unfounded. Ethics in a topical sermon might be made offensive, because it might be thought to be personal, but in an expository sermon suspicion of personal antagonism is very unlikely. In addition, the expository sermon which is fully based upon the Scripture has more weight of divine authority and is more likely to be effective.

3. The ***inferential sermon*** is one, the divisions of which are derived from inferences drawn from the facts and details of a narrative text. A narrative text is one which tells a story such as history or parable. In a story, text ideas or facts are not directly stated, but must be inferred from the conduct of the characters in the narrative, their conversations, and their success or failure. The inferences may be of a doctrinal or ethical nature, but the inference is made from a narrative text instead of by direct statement by the author of the Bible book. Inferences, when

they are carefully made, are almost as binding as direct statements and they are often more vivid to the hearer.

Note the following illustrative example.

"A YOUNG MAN'S RUIN"
2 Kings 5:20-27

1. Sin Begins with Covetousness. – verse 26
2. Sin Leads to Other Sins. – verse 25
3. Sin Cannot be Kept Secret. – verse 26
4. Sin's Allurement is Deceptive. – verse 20, 27
5. Sin Receives Sure Punishment. – verse 27.

Notice that none of these facts about sin are directly stated by the author of Second Kings but they are inferred from the details of the story and from the conversations between the characters in the story, such as, Gehazi, Naaman, and Elisha. Nearly all expository preaching from texts in historical sections of the Bible will be treated by related inferences. Paul says about Israel's history (1 Corinthians 10:11), *"Now all these things happened unto them for examples."* Therefore, we are given liberty to construct inferential sermons. Care must be taken, however, not to make hasty inferences which do not harmonize with the teachings of Scripture as a whole. Wild spiritualizing, likewise, must be avoided. Inferential sermons are sometimes called "observational sermons".

4. The ***biographical expository sermon*** concentrates on the successes or failures, the good or bad characteristics of a Bible character. These are discovered, discussed, and presented for the hearer to imitate or avoid. Again the facts deduced may be doctrinal or ethical in nature but if the facts are drawn from an appraisal of a biography instead of being directly enjoined, the sermon will be called "biographical". Observe the following example from the biographical sketch of Cornelius in Acts, the tenth chapter.

"WHY GOD USED CORNELIUS"
Acts 10:1-8

1. He was a Man of Character – verses1 – 2
   A. He was a strong man. Moral – though a soldier
   B. He was a devout man
   C. He was a generous man
   D. He was an influential man – *"with all his house"*

2. He was a man of Prayer – verses 2, 3 & 4
   A. He prayed always
   B. He prayed with faith
   C. He prayed with yielded-ness

3. He was a Man of Action – verses 5-8
   A. He immediately obeyed God.

[illegible] people, because they can be made very vivid and dramatic. Care must be taken in the preparation of the biographical sermon, that it is not simply an array of facts

about an ancient person which lacks an application to real present day problems and conditions.

5. An ***Analogical expository sermon*** is one, the divisions of which are related parts of an analogy. "An analogy is a relation or likeness between two things or of one thing to another, consisting in the remembrance not of the things themselves, but of two or more attributes, circumstances or effects." Life is said to be analogous to a sea voyage, not because there is outward similarity between them, but because they have similar characteristics, such as: a start, painful and turbulent experiences, a purpose, and an end.

   Note the following illustration.

> "THE CHRISTIANS' RACE OF LIFE
> Hebrews 12:1 – 2
>
> 1. The Spectators at the Race:
>   The Martyrs of Chapter 11. – those who have run before us
> 2. The Training for the Race:
>   Putting off the heavy garment of sin
> 3. The Gait of the Race:
>   Patient striving
> 4. The Judge of the Race:
>   Jesus, the Starter and the Finisher
> 5. The Reward for the Race:
>   Sharing with Christ His exaltation.

   The actual activities of a Christian life do not outwardly resemble the running of a race; but there are characteristics of each which resemble, such as: spectators, training, patient striving, a judge, and a reward. This type of sermon can be made very vivid and usually is easy to remember. There are many such analogies in the Bible, nearly all of which make excellent sermon texts. Analogical sermons are very good for children and young people.

6. The ***propositional expository sermon.*** Here the divisions of the sermon are the arguments in proof of a proposition. The New Testament writers, who write to instruct and encourage members of an infant church in the midst of a hostile world, devoted a considerable portion of their epistles and Gospel to argument against pagan and false Judaistic teachings. Many of those same controversies are still raging today, and many of the arguments are as valid today as they were when they were first written. Permanent results in preaching depend upon moving the will, as much as upon moving the emotions. Therefore there is a large place for argument in the preaching of this day of science and reason. Not all argument is a large part of the human element in successful preaching.

   For some purposes, and to some audiences, the preacher can well make the whole sermon a proof of a clearly stated proposition. A sermon is not propositional just

because it has a proposition (theme) or because it contains arguments, but it is propositional when all the divisions are parts of the proof of a single proposition. Example:

THE RESURRECTIONOF CHRIST
1 Corinthians 15:3-23

Proposition: That Jesus Christ arose from the Dead.

1. There are Many Witnesses to the Fact.
   A. Peter
   B. The Twelve
   C. Five Hundred Brethren at once
   D. Paul by revelation.

2. The Opposite Conclusion is Absurd.
   A. Preaching would be vain
   B. Faith would be vain
   C. Holy Men would be false witnesses
   D. Faithful believers would be deluded sinners
   E. All the righteous dead would have perished.

3. Christ's Resurrection is a Theological Necessity.
   A. There must be a second Adam to nullify the sin and death imputed through the transgression of the First Adam.

A sermon without a skeleton is like a man without a back-bone or like an edifice without a framework. But just as a man must be more than bones and a building more than rafters, so must a sermon be more than skeleton. The sermon skeleton must be clothed with living flesh. There must be an elaboration of the skeletal ideas which constitute the sermon divisions. There are six methods of elaboration which many homiletical writers recognize.

METHODS OF ELABORATION

Verbal elaboration consists of defining the words of the text that are not completely clear, or of explaining the idioms and syntax of the grammar. There are two reasons for the need of this kind of elaboration. Our English Bible is a translation from other languages and while it is quite reliable for all matters of doctrine, its teachings are much clearer when read in the original languages. Furthermore, our King James Version is nearly four hundred yeas old and contains many archaic words which need to be explained to modern readers. For instance Philippians 1:27 is made clearer and more interesting by explaining that the word "conversation" means "citizenship". It is then seen that the following verses contain instructions regarding good Christian citizenship which applied quite appropriately to the people of Philippi who lived in a Roman colony, and who had more than average interest in citizenship. In Mark 11:24 one finds the words: "Believe that ye receive," but in elaboration it should be explained that the verb "receive" is past tense (aorist) and should be read "believe that ye have received," for the latter reading indicated a clearer act of faith; thus grammar may be seen to aid elaboration. Verbal elaboration need not always be concerned with the original languages, but may be concerned also with the meanings and grammar of English Words.

Contextual elaboration consists of using portions of the context to throw light on the text. Usually these explanations will come from immediate context, but occasionally a verse from another part of the same book will be valuable for solving a doubtful meaning. In Hebrew 12:1 the phrase "cloud of witnesses," may be misleading if it is not interpreted in the light of the preceding eleventh chapter. This reference to the context is made not alone as a matter of interpretation, but as a matter of elaboration, for it is interesting to the hearer to have familiar Scripture passages connected in a way which is not obvious on the surface.

Historical Elaboration consists of relating historical events or conditions to the people addressed, or to the author. An elaboration of the second chapter of Colossians should include an explanation of the Gnostic heresy with which certain teachers were confusing the Christians at Colosse. Philippians 1:20-25 may be partly elaborated by explaining some details of Paul's imprisonment at Rome and his impending martyrdom. Such historical and biographical data can be learned from good commentaries, Bible dictionaries or Encyclopedias.

Quotation of parallel passages is another form of elaboration. Scripture is often explained by Scripture. A meager statement may be strengthened, or made more lucid, by the quotation of a more detailed statement of the same fact from another part of the Scriptures. Passages of doubtful import are often solved by a parallel passage which is not ambiguous. Here a word of caution is needful. Parallel passages in an expository sermon must not be more than quotations; for the exposition is of the text, not the parallel passages. One quotation can easily lead to another until the discussion is far removed from the original text.

Illustrations may also be used to elaborate the text. These illustrations may come from the Bible, history, experience, or modern life. By all means let there be illustrations in the expository sermon, because they make the sermon both clear and interesting. Illustrations help to avoid dryness, which might characterize an expository sermon which is too largely explanation. The success of Henry Ward Beecher, Charles Spurgeon and Dwight Moody was in no small degree due to an ability to use apt illustrations. A preacher is making a big mistake who does not study some good books on the art of illustrating sermons. The important thing in illustrating the expository sermon is that the illustrations be appropriate, that is, that they actually illustrate some point in the text.

Finally, and considerably important, is **application as a form of elaboration.** Somebody has said, "Where the application begins, the sermon begins." The whole purpose of preaching is to influence men's lives and decisions by divine truth. It is far more important that preachers produce Christian conversion, godly living, and brotherly love, than that they make admirers. That some pulpit idols will fail to gain entrance to eternal life is not entirely improbable, [1 Corinthians 9:27] though it is lamentable. Let us "beseech men to be reconciled to God," that we may be the worthy successors of those who "ceased not to warn everyone night and day with tears" [Acts 20:31] Let it be remembered that expository sermon can be adapted to modern needs and problems and not simply be a discussion of ancient people and conditions. It seems better, in most cases, to make the applications after each point as the sermon progresses, and then to recapitulate the principal applications at the end.

Stages in the preparation of an Expository Sermon

Books on Homiletics which give all the needed facts, classifications, and general information regarding scientific preaching too often fail to demonstrate the actual steps in sermon preparation. This is especially true of treaties on expository preaching. Let us here follow the actual states of preparation in their natural order. Not all preachers follow the same order in preparation, but the steps given here may easily be changed in order to suit the individual preacher's personal preference.

1. Select an appropriate passage of Scripture for a text. The selection may be made because it is the next portion of scripture in a series; because it is the leading of the Holy Spirit; or because it is the obvious text to meet a known need of the people.

2. Read the text through carefully several times in a standard version [AV, KJV, or NKJV; RSV or NRSV; NIV; ASB or NASB; JB or NJB]; then read it in the original language, or in several modern translations.

3. Next write on paper every thought which occur to the mind regardless of order or relevance. This will include explanations, proofs, illustrations, or applications.

4. Consult a good commentary of the exegetical type. This should not be done, however, until one has exhausted his/her own ability to find original thoughts.

5. Examine the material until one theme stands out above the rest or until one theme is detected which is common to all or most of the thoughts. This may be done by listing all the possible themes and then trying each until all but one are removed by the process of elimination. It will help to interrogate the material in the following manner. Are there here related doctrines? – Related ethical instructions? – Related inferences or observations? – Related biographical traits? – Related parts of an analogy? – Related arguments in the proof of a proposition?

6. Next eliminate all material which does not relate to the chosen theme in some special way.

7. Arrange the remaining material in an outline of main divisions and subdivisions so that they have coherence, progress, climax. The main divisions are the big related ideas; the subdivisions are the lesser ideas which are related closely to one or another of the main divisions.

8. Prepare an introduction and conclusion for the sermon.

9. Invent a name for the sermon which may or may not be the same as the theme. The subject may be shorter than the theme, but it should accurately convey the nature of he sermon theme. By all means let it be striking, but not cheap.

10. Finally, study the outline until it can be delivered without the use of notes.

If all this seems to require too much time and study, let the preacher be reminded of the many hours the lawyer, architect, teacher, or almost any professional person must devote to his/her work. Some may reason that God can get the preacher sermons without study or effort, but we will reason that the Bible represents God as being pleased with the diligent labours of his servants. God will give his servants strength, wisdom and inspiration for their work.

EXPOSITORY SERMON PREPARATION

Jud Lake, Southern Adventist University

Renowned expository homiletician, Haddon Robinson, describes sermon preparation as a "dynamic process" that involves "insight, imagination, and spiritual sensitivity–none of which comes from merely following directions." Nevertheless, "an awareness of how others approach the task produces confidence and contributes to a more efficient use of time and energy."1 With this homiletical wisdom in mind, I propose the following seventeen-stage approach for preparing expository sermons.

While seasoned expositors may merge and mix some of the stages, each one is a vital ingredient to the process. The first ten stages focus on exegetical analysis, the last seven focus on homiletical synthesis. The entire process should take between 12 to 20 hours a week, depending on the expositor's experience.

I. Exegetical Analysis

Three important questions should be asked during exegetical analysis from start to finish: **(1) What** is the biblical author saying? The answer to this question is the main idea of the text. This is a concise past tense statement interpreting what the text meant in its original context. This central or exegetical idea is often found at a single point in the text, sometimes sandwiched between two related ideas, or sometimes found in recurring ideas. **(2) Why** is the biblical author saying this? The answer to this question reveals the biblical author's purpose.

Just as each passage in Scripture has a main idea, so it also has a purpose. Thus, ask these questions throughout your study: Why did the author write this? What effect did he expect to have on his readers? The answer to these questions should be stated in another concise sentence indicating what the biblical author is trying to do. The purpose of a text is often found in the larger literary context of the passage. **(3) How** is the biblical author saying it? The answer to this question is the particular literary genre of the passage, that is, the literary structure the biblical author used to communicate his idea and purpose. Here the focus is on determining the rhetorical structure of the passage which issues in the exegetical outline. With these three questions in mind, the expositor should engage the ten stages of exegetical analysis.

II. Homiletical Synthesis

Homiletical synthesis translates exegetical analysis into the popular and contemporary language of the listeners. As such, it transforms exegetical data into an organized pattern with unity and focus, rhythm and symmetry, movement and climax. Just as the Spirit of God brooded over the earth at creation (Gen 1:2), so the expositor desires the same Spirit to brood over the exegetical notes during the creative process of homiletical synthesis (John 14:26). Having completed the foundational work of exegetical analysis in stages 1 through 10, stages 11 through 17 complete the process of expository sermon preparation.

Three Questions:

- What is the biblical author saying?
- Why is the biblical author saying this?
- How is the biblical author saying it?

Stage 1: Pray for the guidance of the Holy Spirit. It is important to emphasize at the outset of sermon preparation that the expositor seeks the presence and aid of God's Spirit.

Stage 2: Determine the textual unit. Define the textual parameters according to the literary context of the passage. If the text is part of a systematic expository series, then the parameters already set from a previous study can be used.

Stage 3: Get an overview of the passage. Read it prayerfully and meditatively numerous times. Get a sense of its flow. Make tentative notes of ideas that come or issues that need to be explored.

Stage 4: Determine the genre or literature type of the passage. Possible options are: narrative, poetry, wisdom, law, prophecy, gospels, parable, epistle, apocalyptic, and figure of speech. Apply the special rules of the particular genre to the passage during stage seven below.

Stage 5: Analyze the literary context of the passage. This stage involves reading and studying the larger book context, the section context (chapter or chapters), and the immediate context (surrounding paragraphs/verses) of the passage.

Stage 6: Analyze the historical/cultural context of the passage. Use the following research tools: Bible dictionaries and encyclopedias, specialized studies on the historical/cultural context of the Bible, and commentaries. Notes should be taken in the following areas appropriate to the text: author, recipients, date, situation, culture, politics, and geography.

Stage 7: Analyze the passage in detail. The grammar and syntax of the passage, including its significant words and genre, should be analyzed with the following research tools appropriate to the expositor: Hebrew, Greek, or Aramaic texts, lexicons, concordances, grammars, and word-study books. At this point, a diagram of the passage is very helpful. The end result of this stage is an articulation of the exegetical idea, exegetical purpose, and exegetical outline of the passage.

Stage 8: Analyze the theological context of the passage. This stage involves studying the passage in its larger canonical context—the whole Bible. Is it applied in later passages of Scripture? What are its antecedent passages? At this point, it is important to look at how the passage relates to Christ. What does it say about Him?

Stage 9: Consult the commentaries on the passage. Make notes of any relevant insights that apply or make any needed changes in your conclusions thus far. Generally, it is best to study the commentaries after completing your own exegetical work.

Stage 10: Summarize your findings. Write out the exegetical idea, exegetical purpose, and exegetical outline or structural outline of the passage. These three elements of exegetical analysis will be very relevant as you move through the process of homiletical synthesis.
The exegetical idea will become the homiletical idea, the exegetical purpose will become the homiletical purpose, and the exegetical outline or structural diagram of the text will become the homiletical outline which will connect the text with the congregation. The minister of Christ is to preach the Word, not the opinions and traditions of men, not pleasing fables or sensational stories.

Stage 11: Translate the exegetical idea of the text into the homiletical idea of the sermon. During this stage, the expositor transforms the wording of the exegetical idea into "the most exact, memorable sentence possible."3 This sentence is a statement of the timeless, universal truth of the passage in terms relevant to your particular audience. The entire sermon is built around this homiletical idea. It answers the question, "What am I saying in this sermon?"

Stage 12: Translate the exegetical purpose into the homiletical purpose statement. The issue here is to write the sermon's purpose in the framework of your written exegetical purpose. Thus, simply answer the question: In light of this exegetical purpose, what does God desire to accomplish through this sermon in the hearers today? Your answer to this question is what you want the listeners to do as a result of hearing your sermon. This specific, moral, action statement influences the form of the sermon and provides guidance in application and the conclusion. It answers the larger question, "Why am I preaching this sermon?"

Stage 13: Decide on what form the sermon will take, based on the exegetical outline, and generate a homiletical outline. The form or shape of the sermon depends upon two factors: **(1)** the literary genre reflected in the exegetical outline and **(2)** the homiletical purpose statement. Based upon these two factors, the expositor decides which sermon form fits the text and the purpose best. The deductive form introduces the homiletical idea at the beginning of the sermon and divides it into two or more parts (movement from the whole to the parts). The inductive form begins with the specific parts and carefully works its way through them to the conclusion– the homiletical idea (movement from parts to the whole). The inductive-deductive form starts with the parts and works its way towards the homiletical idea in the middle and then divides it into specific parts for the rest of the sermon (movement from parts to whole and whole to parts). Under the umbrella of inductive sermon forms is the popular narrative form, which essentially tells the biblical story in a relevant and meaningful way (often follows inductive or inductive-deductive movement). There are many types of sermon forms available to the expositor that will captivate the attention of audiences and accurately reflect the content of Scripture. The sermon form answers the question, "How am I going to preach this sermon?"

Stage 14: Expand the sermon outline with supporting material. Homileticians have likened the sermon outline to a skeleton of thought. As a person's bones are covered with skin and flesh, so a sermon's bones should be covered with the skin and flesh of supporting material. Supporting material fleshes out each major division of the sermon (this applies to any form—deductive, inductive, and narrative, etc.). It provides support by amplifying or expanding each thought in its relationship to the main idea. Without supporting material actively integrated into the expository sermon, it can become tedious, boring, and even lifeless. But when properly blended into the expository sermon, supporting material will add understanding, insight, interest, excitement, relevancy, and humor. While there are numerous types of supporting material for expository sermons, the basic four are explanation, illustration, application, and narration.

Stage 15: Prepare the introduction and conclusion. Once the sermon body is complete, it is time to finalize on how to introduce and conclude the sermon. Both of these components are extremely important to the expository sermon and should receive great attention.

Stage 16: Produce a sermon manuscript. Most homileticians recommend that preachers, especially novices, type their sermons in full. The advantage of this is the clarity of thought it brings to the sermon. A manuscript allows the expositor to see the sermon as a whole and thus discover any disconnected thoughts or misplaced parts. At the very least, a detailed outline should be typed or written. It is better to find out in the study that the sermon is unclear or uninteresting than to make the discovery in the pulpit.

Stage 17: Rehearse the sermon in order to internalize it. Read through the sermon manuscript prayerfully and carefully; then preach through it out loud, staying alert to any potential problems, and make the necessary corrections. Then convert the manuscript into notes you will preach from. These notes should contain only enough material to stimulate memory during delivery. Then rehearse the sermon for familiarity so that it can be delivered with as much freedom as possible.

Today's audiences do not tolerate very well a preacher tied to his or her notes. Connecting with the listeners is imperative. If there was ever a time for Seventh-day Adventist preachers to engage in expository preaching, it is now. Commenting on Paul's charge to "preach the word" (2 Tim 4:1-2), Ellen White wrote: *"In these direct and forcible words is made plan the duty of the minister of Christ. He is to 'preach the word,' not the opinions and traditions of men, not pleasing fables or sensational stories, to move the fancy and excite the emotions. He is not to exalt himself, but as in the presence of God he is to stand before a dying world and preach the word. There is to be no levity, no trifling, no fanciful interpretation; the minister must speak in sincerity and deep earnestness as a voice from God expounding the Sacred Scriptures"* (GW 147). Let us all strive to follow this counsel!

HOW TO GATHER AND USE MATERIALS

Sermon materials are most frequently classified as four, namely:

1. Explanation
2. Argument
3. Illustration
4. Application

I. EXPLANATION

All sermon, whether topical textual, or expository, should contain some explanation. A proposition can be more successfully enforced if the hearers have first been shown what the proposition means and that it is reasonable and Scriptural. If our hearers are trained to accept propositions without explanation, they will come to be easy dupes for preachers of false doctrines. Some sermons require more explanation than others and some types of sermons will be naturally more explanatory than other types; for instance, the expository sermon will usually contain more explanation than a topical sermon. Paul said to Timothy, *"Until I come give attention to the reasoning, to the exhortation, to the teaching"* (RV). Teaching is not possible without explanation. There has been no lack of exhortation from the pulpit, so many are becoming very eager to be taught in the Scriptures.

The principal source of explanation is the Bible itself. Little, however, need be said here; the use of the Bible as explanation has been treated in chapter seven on Expository Preaching under the heading: Methods of Elaborations. Another source of explanation is Christian literature; such as commentaries, concordances, dictionaries, and books on Bible subjects. If there is objection to the preacher's use of Christian literature such as commentaries, it would have to be reasoned that the people ought to get all their facts from the Bible only instead of giving heed to sermons which are manmade. If it is argued that sermons can be God-given, why should it be denied that written works by Spirit-filled men can be motivated and directed by God? Preachers, above all men, who expect to be heeded by others, ought to be willing to respect the sermons and writings of other Christian preachers and teachers. Of course, the Bible should always have first place and should always be consulted first in prayer and meditation before other sources are consulted.

II. ARGUMENT

A second kind of material is argument: a process by which it is proved, demonstrated, or inferred that a certain proposition is true or false. The epistles of the New Testament are filled with arguments by which some propositions are shown to be true and some to be false. From this it can at least be strongly inferred that argument has a place in Christian preaching. Preaching ought to appeal to the human will, as well as to the intellect or to the emotions. Did not Jehovah say by the mouth of Isaiah, *"Come, let us reason together"? Isaiah 1:18.* Luke said about Paul when the Apostle was before Felix: *"And he reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgement to come." Acts 24:25*

The following are some of the most practical forms of argument:

A. **Deduction.** This is reasoning from the general to the specific; that is, from a law or an authoritative premise to a specific case. It is accepted that the premise, *"Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap,"* is authoritative because it is revealed in the Holy Scriptures (Galatians 6:7) which are divinely inspired. John Smith is known to be sowing evil violence, so it is reasoned from the accepted premise that John Smith will reap evil and violence. This reasoning can be used only where all persons accept the major premise as true.

B. **Induction.** This is reasoning from the specific to the general, the opposite of deduction. In a circumstance where an opponent does not accept the Biblical statement about sowing and reaping, one must gather wide evidence that the axiom is true because it is known to be true in a sufficient number of specific cases. If every person who is known to have sown evil and violence has reaped the same, then a general rule or law is established. This reasoning is inductive. This is the method of Physical Science. The danger of this argument is that a law will be formulated on insufficient evidence and experimentation. This has often happened in science so that most premises of science are now called theories or hypotheses.

C. **Cause to effect (*a priori*).** In this manner we reason that God, who is loving, an all-powerful and all-wise cause will affect the working together for good in the lives of His people who are yielded Him. In this reasoning the cause must be known and admitted by all concerned. For the Christian who has faith, God is accepted as the only infinite cause whose attributes are those revealed in the Bible. This argument has little value in argument with non-Christians.

D. **Effects to Cause (*a posteriori*).** When we reason from design in nature that there must be a powerful and an all-wise Providence, we are reasoning from effect to cause. If we reason that because there have been conversion in a Christian service, God's Spirit has been present to convict, it is *"a posteriori"* argument. On the contrary, if we reason that because God's Spirit is present, there will be conviction of sin; this is "a priori" argument.

E. ***"A fortiori"* – from the lesser to the greater.** By this we reason that something which is valid in an unlikely situation will be much more valid in a likely situation. Jesus argued "a fortiori" when he said, *"Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which today is and tomorrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith?" (Matthew 6:30)* By this method we may reason that if the heathen make great personal sacrifices for heathen deities, how much more should Christians who serve the true God give themselves wholly to His service!

F. **Analogy.** This is arguing that what is true in one realm is probably true in another realm. Because the lily bulb which is put in the ground is able after dying to come forth to new life, it is reasoned by analogy that man likewise in a higher realm will probably come forth from the grave with new life. This is never a conclusive form of proof, but it can be used to strengthen a proposition which has other forms of argument in its favour. For almost every spiritual law or fact there is an analogy in the physical realm.

G. **Tradition.** This is arguing that there is presumption in favour of established institution, tradition, or practice. This does not mean that all old tradition and traditional things are true, but that they are to be respected until something demonstrably superior can be found to take the place of the old and traditional. We reason from tradition that the doctrines of the orthodox historic church are to be accepted as valid until it can be shown from the Bible to the satisfaction of the majority of spiritual and thinking Christians that they are false and that there are more satisfactory doctrines to replace the old. Likewise, the Christian may insist that those who would overthrow the church must produce something better, and that he who attacks Christian doctrines has the burden of proof. It is not the responsibility of the Christian to prove the Bible to be a divine revelation, but the responsibility of the Bible's enemies to prove that it is not. Of course, if the Christian assumes a proposition, then he has the burden of proof.

H. **Testimony.** This is one of the most common kinds of argument. It is used in all courts of law and is a strong form of proof under controlled conditions. For the testimony of a witness to be valid, he must be examined as to character, competence, and familiarity with the facts. A witness of deceitful character is of no value. A witness must also be competent to judge concerning the facts, that is, he must be intelligent, and he is better if he is an expert in the matter in which he testifies. Furthermore, the witness must have first-hand testimony; it must not be hearsay. Finally, there must be a sufficient number of witnesses to make sure there is no delusion or mistake due to the unreliability of the senses.

I. **Experience.** This argument is used by a great many persons, but it does not have great value, because almost anything can be proved by somebody's experience. Experience is of value to the person who had the experience, but not of much value to others unless the experience is shared by so many persons as to be a common human phenomenon; then we refer to it as an argument from *consensus.*

J. **Authority.** Argument from authority is also a common form and has weight when the authorities are accepted as such by all parties. The Bible is a final authority for true Christians when it is rightly interpreted.

K. ***Reducto ad absurdum.*** This is reducing the opponent's proposition to absurdity. When the Pharisees insisted that Jesus was a sinner because He healed on the Sabbath, He reduced their premise to absurdity by showing them that they helped even their animals which fell into a ditch on the Sabbath, which mercy they were not willing to extend on the Sabbath to human sufferers.

L. **Process of elimination.** This consists of listing every possible alternative and disposing of them one by one until only one is left. Suppose we have three possible statements about God relative to love: God loves to men; God loves only some men; God loves all men. The first is eliminated by the Scripture, "God is love"; the second is eliminated by the Scripture, "God is no respecter of persons," so the last only is possible in the light of the Scriptures. There are other forms of argument used in logic, but these are deemed sufficient for this treatise; if a fuller treatment is desired let the reader consult a textbook.

III. ILLUSTRATIONS.

Someone has said, "Illustrations are the windows of sermons." The analogy is a good one, for through illustrations, needed light is let into the sermon. It is not enough that men hear sermons; they must see them also if sermons are to stick. Illustrations make it possible for the abstract truth to be vivid. Jesus constantly spoke in parables and used such words as salt, light, bread, sheep, vine, king, house, water, and mountain to give imagery to His spiritual ideas. A preacher who neglects to illustrate will invariably be dry and hard to understand. It has been said that there should be one illustration for every abstract idea in the sermon. There are several kinds of illustrations all of which should be used with variety in the sermon.

A. The One Word Illustration. To say the Bible is "bread" is such an illustration: or that a Christian is "salt," or that the Gospel is "light," or that God is a "judge." There are hundreds of words which make apt illustrations.

B. Analogy. Besides being a form of proof, it is an excellent kind of illustration. Likening the various duties of a farmer to the work of the ministry, or the growth of a plant to a Christian's growth, or an ocean voyage to the course of human life, would be using analogy in illustration.

C. Anecdote. This is the use of a true incident in one's own experience or the reported experience of another as an illustration. This is the commonest kind of illustration used by many preachers, but should not be overdone, because too much time is required for an anecdote leaving insufficient time for other necessary materials (especially when too many are told). Many points are better illustrated by word pictures or brief analogies.

D. The Story differs from the anecdote in that it is not an actual incident, but fiction, or at least not sufficiently verified to be told as truth. However, stories are more effective when they are true to life. Stories should not be told as anecdotes and certainly not as real experiences of the preacher himself. A preacher may invent his stories or take them from fiction. Stories should not be told merely to entertain, but to illustrate, in apt manner, doctrines or applications in the sermon. The story often differs very little from a parable.

There are **many sources of illustrations** the commonest of which are as follows:

- **The Bible:** This is one of the best sources of illustrations, because it is most adaptable to the sermon, being of like nature with the other materials.
- **Science:** Many scientific laws and facts may be used with great advantage as sermon illustrations. The opposite magnetic poles may be used to illustrate the conflict between the flesh and the Spirit.
- **Nature:** All around us in nature are facts which declare the glory of God.
- **Fiction:** The great works of classic literature are filled with stories which can be used in sermons.
- **Poetry:** All know how a well chosen poem can enhance the interest and appeal of the sermon.

- **History:** The historic deeds of men and fates of nations make some of the commonest illustrations found in the great sermons of the world's successful preachers.
- **Current Events:** Of great interest are the latest happenings from the pages of the newspaper and news magazine, and when they are used, they must be appropriate and relevant.

IV. APPLICATION OR PERSUASION

It is this material which distinguishes a sermon from a talk or a lecture. A sermon should instruct and inspire, but whatever else it does, it should persuade. The preacher seeks not for simple approval, but for action. He deals not with intellectual and cultural luxury as such, but in life and death decisions and consequences. So let a preacher when he goes to the pulpit go prayerfully determined to turn sinners to righteousness and believers to higher planes of faith and service; then will he truly be an ambassador of God.

The Ideal sermon will contain some of each of these **four** kinds of material.

- If the sermon is all explanation, it will be too dry
- If it is all argument, it will be too contentious;
- If it is all illustration, it will be too hortatory.

If the sermon has a balance of all four materials, it will…

- instruct the mind,
- impress the will,
- hold the attention,
- stir the emotions, and
- motivate to action,

provided that it is delivered under the anointing of the Holy Spirit.

Filing the Sermon Material

The following system is suggested for filing sermon material. Let the preacher secure an alphabetized card file such as can be secured inexpensively at various stationers. Whenever an idea for a sermon occurs, let it be written on one of the cards along with a text and a tentative subject. After several months, dozens of these germinal ideas will have been entered and arranged by subjects in alphabetical order. Whenever illustration are read or occur to the mind which could be used with any of the sermon ideas, let them be filed with the cards. Let this be done with all facts, arguments, and applications likewise, so that week by week the sermons are growing. When one of the developing sermons seems to fit the need and occasion, it can be taken from the file, organized and be brought to completion. It will be found that many of these sermons after they have been preached, should be dated and put in another file in the order of the time it was preached so that the preacher can keep the subjects of his past sermons in mind, and in this manner secure a variety of subjects. There should be a separate file also for illustrations which do not fit any of the sermons in the first file, for sooner or later they will be found useful. The illustration file should be alphabetically indexed and the illustrations listed under topics like *Atonement, Salvation, Decision, Death, Faith, Consecration, Sabbath, Stewardship, Family Life, Relationship,* etc. Among these illustrations should be filed all personal observations and experiences which at the same time seem to have illustrative value,

for these personal matters are very quickly forgotten unless they are immediately jotted down and filed, but they are among the most valuable illustrations one uses.

The sermons may be arranged in a loose-leaf notebook, [or a folder (3 or 4 rings) and pockets, or a filing cabinet, or a system of used A4 Envelops, or the computer] instead of card files; or a card file may be used for the developing sermons and a notebook for the past sermons. If you store material on the computer it is advisable to back up your material regularly on an external hard drive. It is unfortunate that so many preachers are unsystematic in their work and find sermon preparation burdensome, a task which they leave until Friday night.

HOW TO PREPARE AN INTRODUCTION AND A CONCLUSION

There seems to be a common tendency to underestimate the value of small things. The introduction and conclusion of a sermon are small parts, but they are extremely vital to the success of the sermon. However, because they are small parts, many preachers overlook their importance. Preachers who quite carefully prepare the body of the sermon leave the introduction and conclusion for the inspiration of the moment of speaking, not realizing that the introduction is little likely to come by inspiration no matter how much spontaneity the rest of the sermon may have; and while the conclusion may borrow inspiration from the climax, it will, without forethought, lack other desirable qualities. Some writers on homiletics insist that the introduction and conclusion should be given more preparation than any other part of the sermon; however, this may be going too far in the other direction, but not much. When the desirable qualities of the introduction and conclusion are considered, it will be quite clear to the reader why these parts of the sermon need careful preparation.

THE QUALITIES OF A GOOD INTRODCTION

1. First, and among the most important qualities a sermon introduction should exhibit is that it should be **Striking.** First impressions are usually lasting and not easy to change. If the preacher is uninteresting in his first few sentences he will find it more difficult to maintain interest than it would otherwise be were the sermon to begin with a striking approach. An introduction is striking when it goes straight to a point of interest to the hearer, and when the idea is expressed in an original manner. Or it might be said that anything is striking which strikes one so as to attract his interest. When the first sentence of a sermon strikes the hearers' interest, the preacher gains an attentive audience and a better hearing. If the sermon begins in a dull manner the hearers say, "Just another sermon." Then too, the preacher has a much more friendly audience if he gives the impression at the outset that he has something of value for the people, rather than that he seeks an audience to hear his speech. One writer on "Public Speaking" has a good formula for an introduction which is, *"Start a Fire!"*

2. In addition to being striking, the introduction should be **Clear.** The minds of the hearers are not at first sufficiently alert to apprehend abstract or involved concepts. Not only that, thoughts must be transparent in order that interest may be aroused in the theme. It is hardly possible to be interested in a proposition which one does not quite understand. Then, an obscure introduction will invariably give the impression that the whole sermon is to be obscure or over the heads of the people. If a sermon is really quite deep in content, it needs a clear introduction just so much more, because quite abstruse ideas can be made clear if they are built on a lucid foundation and approached gradually. It makes for clarity in the introduction to give the introduction careful study and meditation.

3. Closely related to clarity and equally necessary to the introduction is **Unity.** The prelude to the sermon should have only one idea, because a multiplicity of ideas is inconsistent with both clarity and interest. Having several ideas in the introduction is like having a speaker introduced by several persons, either the first does not make a proper introduction or the others are unnecessary waste of time.

4. One of the most important requisites of an introduction is **Brevity.** Everyone resents the person who takes thirty minutes to introduce a speaker. So, too, they are annoyed when the speaker takes half his time approaching the subject. Every Bible reader wonders why the children of Israel took forty years to enter the promised land of Canaan; and many modern laymen wonder why the preacher who wanders so long around the margin of his text does not "go over and posses the land." In almost every case, the sermon which is too long, is too long in the introduction. In these days of rush and competition, the hearers appreciate the preacher going straight to the point with as little delay as possible.

5. Furthermore, the introduction should be delivered in a conversational tone of voice and should not be too pretentious or eloquent, that is, it should be **Modest.** When the introduction is too impassioned in tone, the sermon is likely to seem dull by comparison; or if the intensity and volume are maintained uniformly throughout, the passion loses its power to impress and monotony finally becomes annoying. When the prelude is too eloquent, the sermon will be seen commonplace; or if the sermon is equally eloquent, it becomes too saccharine after a while. An introduction can be striking without thunderous volume or unduly eloquent and pretentious language.

6. While the sermon introduction should indeed, be modest, it is equally important that it be **Unapologetic.** It is safe to advise that one should never make any kind of apology in the introduction. Anything for which one feels called upon to apologise should be avoided or omitted. Unavoidable states of health and voice or accidents are only more greatly accented by an apology. If one has had insufficient time to prepare, he should simply ask God's help and go ahead, because an apology does not make the hastily prepared sermon any better. Very prayerful preachers have preached effective sermons by God's help in spite of physical weakness or lack of preparation when not due to laziness.

7. Finally, the introduction should be **Specific.** That is, it should be prepared for one specific sermon. Some of the older preachers used stock stereotyped introductions which were used with most any sermons with a little adaptation. But, an introduction which is so general that it can be used to introduce any sermon is not really suitable to adequately introduce any sermon. A good introduction will contain a clear statement of the theme of the sermon and its purpose. Obviously, then, the proper introduction must be specifically prepared. However, while it is related to the specific sermon it should not be a part of the body, nor should it anticipate the material of any of the divisions; it is simply an approach to the theme which briefly lays the foundation in such a way as to prepare the listeners for the sermon and arouse their interest.

HOW TO FIND THE PROPER INTRODUCTION

1. *What has this text to do with the context?*

   It will often be best to introduce a sermon by showing the relation of the next to the context, especially when one has chosen a narrative text which will not be clear without a little historic background to set the scene. The story of Namaan the leper is clearer when one knows something about the preceding events and the state of affairs between Israel and Syria. Most of the texts in the book of Revelation are meaningless until surrounding verses or chapters are summarised. This might be true of any text from any part of the Bible.

2. *What relation has this sermon to a preceding sermon in a series?*

   Sermon in a course or series can often be best introduced by a brief synopsis or summary of the preceding sermon in the series.

3. *What has this sermon to do with the special day or occasion?*

   If the sermon theme is derived from the sentiment or tradition of a special day or occasion, it will often be introduced best be an explanation of that sentiment or tradition.

4. *What has this sermon to do with some special need of the congregation?*

   The introduction often will consist of a statement of the need or needs of the congregation; especially when the sermon has been prepared to meet this need or condition. This type is especially valid when the need is generally recognized by the people who are eager to have the need supplied. If the need is not recognized or admitted, it is best to approach the treatment in another manner. Suppose, for instance, that there is a general prayerlessness and coldness among the people, the preacher may approach his sermon by pointing to the condition and then hopefully proposing a sermon which he trusts will show the way to a higher spiritual plane. One should not fall into the habit of despairingly bewailing the condition of the people, which habit only leads to hopelessness.

5. *What personal experience has suggested this sermon?*

   If the sermon has been suggested to the preacher's mind by a personal experience, he may introduce the sermon by briefly telling of the experience and how it suggested the sermon. Such experiences should be told modestly and without uninteresting details. This type of introduction should not be used too frequently.

6. *Why is this sermon of special importance?*

   When one is treating a truly important subject, it may suffice as an introduction to call the attention to its importance to the hearers. The listener becomes interested at once when he perceives that the preacher's subject is of considerable import, but he will not be impressed by such introductions after a while if the sermons prove to be disappointing. So, while this type of introduction is effective, it should be used only when the sermon is of special importance. However, there are certainly a great many momentous themes in the Holy

Scriptures which, if properly treated, are worth the time and attention of any hearer.

7. *What story or anecdote will introduce this sermon?*

   When a truly apt story can be found, it makes one of the most attractive types of introduction. One must make sure that the story clearly suggests the sermon theme and he must omit distracting details which prevent clarity and brevity. It is important, too, that the story or anecdote be fresh, for hackneyed anecdotes arouse no interest. Story approaches are used widely with success by prolific speakers.

8. *What current event will introduce this sermon?*

   Current events are usually quite striking and they make excellent introductions to sermons when they are relevant to the theme. There is one caution: it is best not to refer to news events which agitate people's mind too greatly or cause too much distress, because the people will continue to think on the news and will not follow the sermon.

Finally, one may approach a sermon simply by appealing for the attention of the people when there is only a limited time for the sermon. *[Cf. Stephen's sermon in Acts 7:2-53]* Usually, however, a sermon should have a proper introduction, because the mind has natural aversion to abruptness and is not usually ready to concentrate on an idea without preparation. In rare cases one may dispense with an introduction when all time is needed for the treatment.

A closer look at the INTRODUCTION. (Stickland, p. 56)

- *An introduction needs to be at the beginning! You want to capture attention and interest at the outset. Therefore keep your random comments (or forgotten announcements!) away from the head of your sermon.*

- *Give your introduction careful thought. If in doubt, write out your opening sentence or two so that you do not flounder for words at such a crucial moment.*

- *Your introduction needs to be brief but not abrupt. Make it striking, but not sensational. Make it pertinent, but not impertinent. Make it clear, compelling, worthwhile. By it you must grip your congregation.*

- *Your introduction should be relaxed. Never begin until there is silence. Wait a moment if people are moving about, particularly if a child is screaming or if a parent is removing an infant. A tense congregation results from an over-tense preacher. Take a deep breath while people settle, and begin in an attitude of confidence and peace.*

- *Vary the style of your introduction from sermon to sermon. It is boring and predictable when the preacher repeats each week "My text for today is . . . "*

Introduction possibilities:

1. *A striking quotation*
2. *An illustration or story*
3. *A dramatic description*
4. *A current news item*
5. *A true life experience*
6. *The statement of a problem*
7. *The use of provocative questions*
8. *The direct reading of your text*
9. *A summary of the content of your sermon.*

Some hazards in introductions:

A. *Do not apologise, even if less then prepared*
B. *When using a life experience, beware of length*
C. *Beware of wandering aimlessly round*
D. *Do not state a problem unless your sermon will answer it*
E. *Do not leave unanswered questions or greater doubt.*

(M Stickland, Heralds of God's Word: Lay Preaching Seminar Textbook, (Ed Joel Sarli), Ministerial Association, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 1998)

THE QUALITIES OF A GOOD CONCLUSION

1. Like the introduction, the conclusion ought to have **Clarity.** The conclusion is the part of the sermon in which the preacher calls for action or decision; it is the most vital part of the sermon, so there must not be any obscurity of thought. *"If the trumpeter blows an un-certain sound who will prepare himself for the battle?" (1 Corinthians 14:8)* A lawyer would never win a case if his appeal to the jury was in ambiguous or equivocal language. Even the deep sermon must be crystal clear in the conclusion or it can have no practical success. The great soul winners without exception, in the conclusion of their sermons, made it perfectly clear what they wanted their hearers to do, and what decision they wanted them to make.

2. Another quality of a good conclusion is **Specificity.** If we call on our hearers to do too many things, they are not likely to do any of them, but if we put before them just one exhortation, or one decision, with clearness and earnestness there is good chance of success. The reason some sermons lack unity as well as clarity in the conclusion is that the preacher has no clear conception of the result he expects the sermon to accomplish. Paul reveals to us one of the elements of his success in the words, "This one thing I do." If the first rule for the conclusion is, "***be clear***," the second is "***be specific."***

3. In addition to these qualities the conclusion should have **Brevity.** If the sermon has been properly constructed and God is dealing with the hearers, the conclusion need not be long; and if the sermon has been weak, a long conclusion will be futile. There is no ironclad rule for the length of a conclusion, because "circumstances alter cases," but if there is any doubt it should be decided on the side of brevity.

4. Finally, and emphatically, the good conclusion should be marked by **Intensity.** This is not necessarily intensity of volume; more important are moral and spiritual intensity, sincere earnestness, or godly zeal. The preacher should not be ashamed for his eyes to fill with tears when he is beseeching men to be reconciled to God, though there is no merit in "crocodile tears". If preachers are as earnest before their audiences as lawyers are before the jury, our country would have a great revival. We could learn, too, from the salesman's manner of closing a sale of goods which "perish with the using." A preacher who cannot be intense in his appeal for decisions which have eternal consequences is not "fit for the kingdom of God". If Peter the Hermit could arouse a whole continent to leave all for the futile Crusade, why cannot modern preachers provoke their hearers to give up a few carnal pleasures in exchange for a higher spiritual life and peace?

THREE TYPES OF CONCLUSIONS

1. **The Lesson Conclusion.** This type of conclusion consists of stating the lesson which the sermon teaches. In most sermons the applications are made within the body of the sermon, but sometimes in doctrinal or propositional sermons the doctrines are explained or the proposition is proved in the body and the practical lesson is saved for the conclusion. This will most often be true with sermons of the teaching type which call for no immediate decision at the close, but suggest a final lesson for the departing to contemplate. For instance, in a sermon on the "Deity of Christ," the body of the sermon may be entirely devoted to proof. But not wishing the sermon to be closed without a clear practical application, the

preacher may conclude by pointing to the fact that the truly divine Christ is sufficiently able to keep all his promises and sustain his people at all times. Thus a lesson of confidence is taught by what would otherwise be merely a lecture. One should avoid concluding the sermon with a whole list of lessons as some of the older preachers did, for this violates unity, and is not effective.

2. **The Summary Conclusion.** This type is also used to terminate the sermon where no immediate decision is sought, nor altar call given. This consists of briefly repeating the salient points of a sermon in order to aid the hearers in remembering the sermon. If possible, the applications which are repeated should be brief. This makes a splendid conclusion for a teaching sermon, because there can be no learning without repetition. The summary conclusion is also called ***recapitulation.***

3. The Appeal Type of Conclusion. This consists of making a direct appeal for immediate decision, action or obedience, such as the altar call, or invitation to the inquiry room as was the practice of Dwight L Moody. Certainly every preacher should preach at least one sermon per week which is followed with an appeal to men to decide for Christ. *[Cf. C D Brooks: Opening the doors of the Church]* Even when men make such decisions in their heart during a service or alone at home, there should be a public confession of Christ before men. It should be made clear that an altar call is a proper conclusion, and when one is given, there need be no other conclusion between the sermon and the appeal. A decision call is more effective when it is given before the hearer has anticipated.

Nothing spoils a sermon's effect more than the hackneyed apologetic clause, "one more story and I'll close," or "this s my last point." As soon as men are warned that the sermon is about to conclude, their thoughts wander to other things and some begin to leave. There is no reason why one should say that a point or story is the last unless he wishes to assure the patient hearers that the tribulation is nearly over. Let the sermon be of reasonable length and omit any anticipatory references to the end. Then let the appeal follow the final point of the body without a break. One of the worst things about promises to close is that too frequently, the promises are not kept. If one has not promised, one is not obligated. If the Bible is true, even evangelists ought to be truthful.

HOW TO PREACH A SERMON

1. BE PREPARED TO PREACH

1 Samuel 10:26 be spiritually prepared. Feel God's touch in your life.

Make right:

- Known sins that have not been confessed
- Dishonest practices
- Careless speech
- Refusal to follow God's commands
- Unresolved disagreements with other people.

The preacher should:

- Spend time everyday in Bible Study and Prayer
- Have an earnest desire to overcome sin
- Be careful to follow standards of behaviour both in public and in private
- Live at peace with others.

Luke 24:32 When we enter the pulpit, there should be a fire in our hearts.

That fire comes from:

- A heart made right with God
- The conviction that our message comes from God
- The assurance of the Holy Spirit [its presence and enabling]
- The confidence of knowing our topic well.

2. SPEAK CORRECTLY

Because the voice is very important in preaching, we should be very careful to use it in the best way possible. Take care of the following things:

Volume: Always speak loud enough so that all may hear you. However, do not shout for you will offend people. Do not speak quietly for people will not hear you. The easiest speaking voice to listen to is the one that varies the volume. You may speak loudly at times and sometimes you may speak quietly. Change the volume to fit what you are saying. Use your diaphragm muscle to change your volume. Beware of Disability Regulations: Use the microphone.

Tone & Pitch: Someone who speaks through their nose in a high pitched, squeaky voice is very hard to listen to. Practice speaking in your own house. Practice so that your voice comes out round and full. Listen to yourself on a tape recorder. Push from your diaphragm and open your mouth so that the sound will come out clearly.

Speak Clearly: Many speakers have lazy tongues. Form each word carefully and speak it clearly. Open your mouth and let the words come out. Do not mumble with your mouth half closed. If you do not speak clearly, God's truth

will not be clearly understood. Practice to pronounce each word correctly and distinctly.

Speak Slowly: Often, carefully prepared sermons are not understood by the listeners because the preacher speaks too quickly. Slow down your speaking so that you can clearly pronounce each word. This will help your listeners to understand what you are saying. Listen to yourself on a tape recorder. Ask your wife, your husband, or a friend to tell you if you are speaking too quickly. Then practice speaking more slowly.

3. SPEAK POSITIVELY

- Be positive; do not express doubts in the pulpit
- Be truthful and accurate in all that you say
- Be respectful of the feelings and opinions of others. Never condemn or speak disrespectfully of another person or church
- Be humble. Do not give the impression that you know everything
- Be earnest. Preach to the hearts of the people. Preach for decisions for Jesus.
- Uplift Jesus, not yourself (John 12:32; John 3:30).

4. HOLD THE ATTENTION OF YOUR HEARERS

- Look your listeners in the eye. Do not stare out the window or at the ceiling as you talk. Let your eyes move around to each of the listeners. Let them know that you are speaking to them.
- Smile as you preach. Be carefully not to look angry. Do not condemn or speak harshly to your listeners. This will make it much easier for them to accept your sermon.
- Ask questions. Make them think. By their answers you will know whether they understand what you are saying.
- Ask them to open their Bibles and turn to the texts. Ask church members to help those who are having trouble finding the text. Involve them in the Scripture readings. *[Be mindful that not everyone use the same version!]*
- Use visual aids: Pictures, Video Clips, Slides, Sound Effects, Objects, Photographs, etc.
- Act out characters in your sermon; for example, Zacchaeus – bend down to show how short he was.
- Have the children guess who you are describing.
- Use hand gestures.
- Speak like you imagine the person in your story might have spoken.

5. USE ILLUSTRATIONS AND STORIES

Perhaps the best way to hold the interest of your listeners is to tell stories. Stories are like windows in a house. They let in light and fresh air. Most people can concentrate on something for about ten to fifteen minutes. Then they loose interest. If you plan to tell a story or use an illustration every ten minutes during your sermon, then you will hold your listener's attention and interest right to the end of the sermon.

Illustrations and stories come from:

- the Bible
- books, newspapers
- traditional stories
- other preachers
- people's lives
- incidents that take place around us everyday
- personal experience.

Different types of stories and illustrations are:
- personal experiences
- Bible Stories
- parables
- poems
- current events.

6. USE THE CHALKBOARD; WHITE BOARD; FLIP CHART [VISUAL AIDS]

By using the blackboard, your message will enter the minds of your listeners through their eyes as well as their ears. The action of writing on the blackboard will capture their interest.

On the blackboard you can:
- write words
- list Bible texts
- list your main points
- draw pictures and charts.

Even though you may not be able to write neatly or draw well, still use the blackboard. Whatever you write or draw will still strengthen what you have said in your listeners thinking.

7. DEVELOP YOUR THEME LOGICALLY

Your sermon should contain three parts:

The **Introduction** in which you will gain the attention of the congregation and prepare them for what you are going to talk about.

The **Main Body** of the sermon in which you will develop your theme. You will take the congregation step-by-step from one point to the next, helping them to understand the truth you are presenting.

The **Conclusion** in which you will quickly summarise the main points of your sermon. The conclusion will include some device (question, story, text, etc) to help each listener make a decision for Christ.

As you preach, develop your theme. Make your point, and then carefully explain it. Be alert to the reactions of your listeners. Ask them if what you have said is clear. Then move on to your next point. State each main point clearly. Repeat your main points in different ways so that your listeners will understand where you are heading in your presentation. Part way through your sermon, summarise the main points you have already covered. Move step by step through the sermon joining together your main points with transition sentences.

8. CHALLENGE YOUR LISTENERS TO A VERDICT

Note how Martin Luther King's sermonic appeals for justice and personal activism helped change the course of American life. His prophetic words and actions resulted in his recognition as a recipient of the Nobel Peace Prize.

Open the doors of the church. Make a direct appeal for immediate decision, action or obedience, such an altar call, (or an invitation to the inquiry room as was the practice of Dwight L Moody)

9. READ BIBLE VERSES CAREFULLY

Often the power of God's word is lost by poor reading. While reading the Bible, many preachers stumble over some words and pronounce others incorrectly. Practice reading the Bible texts while you are preparing your sermon. Read them out loud using the right expression and pronunciation. In the pulpit, do not look down as you read. Hold the Bible up in your hands and read clearly. You are handling God's word. Read it carefully and correctly.

John 12:21 As we stand up to preach, the people listening are saying to us, *"Sir, we would see Jesus."* Let us not disappoint them. Let us uphold the Saviour before them that they may experience His saving grace in their lives.

APPENDIX A

Making Preaching Persuasive

What causes some preaching to be more persuasive than other preaching? A consideration of valid techniques of presentation.

We begin this chapter with some words from one of the foremost Seventh-day Adventist preachers of the latter part of the 20th Century. Elder Charles Bradford once wrote: [1]

The preacher's message should call for a verdict, a conscious decision, some life-changing reaction

"We are commissioned to make disciples, that is, call upon men to submit themselves to the claims of Christ, to become His followers. It follows, therefore, that our preaching should naturally lead to decision. By decision I mean primarily coming to Christ and identifying with His church by baptism. Our messages should be so pointed that those who hear cannot remain comfortable while outside of Christ. . . It is our task to pull them into the lifeboat. We can't afford to be fuzzy in our thinking here. To remain outside is to be in definite peril.

"All our preaching and teaching is done on the basis of this philosophy, this conviction. Men must be urged to flee from the wrath that is to come. This is the hour of God's judgement. All true Adventist preaching has a note of warning. The message is given in an eschatological setting. It does make a difference, a terrible difference, if men accept or reject.

"There is one thing the true preacher cannot endure, and that is that his message be taken lightly, like a song, an oration, a lecture — impressive, pleasing, intensely interesting, but not a life and death matter. **He cannot be satisfied with the applause of the saints who come by each Sabbath with the same 'Thank you for the sermon — I enjoyed your talk' commendation.** The preacher must aim for more. His message calls for a verdict, a conscious decision, some life-changing reaction. It doesn't always work out that way, as far as the preacher can see, but he cannot afford to settle for less."

ELEMENTS OF PERSUASION:

"How can we learn to preach for a verdict? How can we change lives?" — these are the driving questions of this chapter, and we shall approach them by considering the major elements of a persuasive sermon:

- **1. Passion** for the theme held personally by preacher.

[1] Selected from pages 95-102, "Preaching to the Times", published by the General Conference Ministerial Association.

- **2. Relevance** of theme to the experience of listener.
- **3. Cohesion** of subject development.
- **4. Careful forethought** given to psychological method.
- **5. Clarity** of thought, diction and delivery.

Personal passion for the subject:

The preacher must be passionately convicted about his theme and its relationship to the Lordship of Christ.

Possibly the biggest single factor in persuasive preaching is that the preacher must first be dynamically persuaded him/herself. He must be passionately convicted about his theme if he would have his listener recognize any need for response.

At this point, you should study the three passages from Acts (listed as assigned reading for this lesson), each one recording a presentation Paul made in defense of his faith — the first to the Jewish crowd in Jerusalem, the second to Felix, and the third to King Agrippa. What made Paul so forceful? Was it not that he was defending something for which he felt deep personal passion, because he had experienced so much since coming under orders from the Lord! Was it not that he was totally convinced that his listeners also needed to know, and they needed to change? When one feels that passionately, one cannot help but be animated and enthusiastic — the first element in speaking persuasively.

Combine the thoughts of Charles Bradford with the record of Acts. Here, surely, is our first lesson in persuasive preaching! We must not get the cart before the horse in this matter. It is right, and it will help your sermons, to study the theory of persuasive speaking, but only after you have been so convinced and shaken to the roots that Jesus is your Lord and that He is coming again soon. Without this (to lift Paul's excellent words out of context) we are just a "sounding brass or a clanging cymbal!"

Once we have that inner burning conviction, that burden to see others take the vital step into the Kingdom of God, then we can begin to consider with prayer the mechanical techniques of presenting a sermon persuasively.

Relevance of theme to the experience of the listener:

Meeting the needs of the congregation gives the message relevance.

We have previously considered the steps that the preacher will follow in order to determine what his subject shall be. We have noted that sermon selection should not be on the basis merely of what appeals to the speaker, or what is currently on his/her mind, but that the needs of the congregation should be a highly influential factor. A sermon which ignores the actual experience and felt needs of the listener is going to be limited in its appeal and less effective in its persuasive power.

This is not to say the preacher may only ever speak on subjects of present interest, for one of the challenges of preaching is to create interest where there is none, and to stimulate concern for the matters of the Lord. Thus the introductory sentences of the sermon will entice the listener to involuntarily say "Yes, I am interested in that theme!" An essential technique of provoking a positive verdict and life-changing reaction is to speak on a theme you know presently holds interest or to kindle an awareness and feeling of consequence in themes you believe should hold interest.

Cohesion of subject development:

'Cohesion' means your theme is well-thought-through, your sermon is soundly constructed, and your delivery has well-paced movement

Your theme must be well thought-through, soundly constructed, and presented with a well-paced movement which the listener can follow comfortably.

Your sermon needs a sound basic construction. If a sermon is not carefully built, it will miss the essentials to be persuasive. Whatever sermon subject you have chosen, and whatever structure you will employ, the finished product must have quality if it is to be convincing. Rambling, ill-connected thoughts are not influential, whereas a sermon which has coherence and movement creates interest and curiosity. Our minds like to be challenged by form and movement. People are inclined to listen, and are cued to make a response.

Your sermon needs movement through a thought-pattern. If it lacks that, it will not be persuasive. So the order of argument must be logical, rising in importance as you progress through the sermon. Start with minor points and move to the major point, thereby building the weight of the reasoning and the anticipation that one must make a response. Sometimes this means a shocking start thought that is then made sense of in the sermon; sometimes it builds up to the shocking truth – either way a tension needs to be there for thought to wrestle with. As Sangster puts it, "If you start on the top rung, you can only progress downward. In most cases the listener will go down the ladder with you, except that he will reach the bottom before you!"

Your sermon needs to advance emotionally. Just as the weight of logic builds to a crescendo, so must the progression of emotion begin on a low key and rise to an appropriate zenith. This is not to demand that you must wring-out the listener emotionally, but that you should have some accumulation of pathos which acceptably carries the listener from a 'cooler' to a 'warmer' sense of responsiveness.

Experience and observation is the surest way to learn how to pace this movement of thought and emotion. Too fast or too slow, and you will lose some along the way. Good use of illustrations is a wonderful way of helping the slower listener to catch up, and retain the attention of the quicker listener by making an apt application.

Careful forethought given to the psychological method:

It may seem offensive to suggest that preachers use psychology, because it sounds too much like mind-manipulation, but such fears need not trouble you. The fact is that we use psychological techniques in every conversation we hold, and there is no reason why recognizing that and building it into our sermon construction should be disagreeable.

Sangster has analyzed the basic psychological approaches available in sermon presentation, under the categories:

- **AUTHORITATIVE MODE**
- **PERSUASIVE MODE**
- **CO-OPERATIVE MODE**
- **SUBVERSIVE MODE**

Using the 'authoritative' mode

Think back to your childhood days in school, when the teacher explained the principles of mathematics, history, science or language. She (or he) spoke with authority, on the basis that she knew and you had to learn.

Using the "authoritative mode" is simply adopting an authoritative teaching mode. You are not tentative or apologetic as you stand to speak, because you know that **"God has spoken; it is written; and God commissioned me to preach".** You speak on authority, and you adopt an appropriately commanding attitude.

If genuine, this is not self-assertion. The preacher is notably humble about himself, for it is not him as a person but him in the office of preacher that gives him authority. Frequently your most effective method will be to relate to your congregation as a teacher relates to a class.

Using the 'persuasive' mode

Sometimes the classroom scenario is not best suited to your subject, and you may wish to persuade your listener that you are right rather than tell him you are. In this setting, you are more like a lawyer seeking to convince a jury. By the time you have concluded presenting your evidence and they retire to consider their verdict, you wish the congregation to be totally won over.

So your technique will be to follow the sequence of a lawyer. You will tell the listener what you are setting out to prove; you will present the evidence; and you will call for a response. But you wish to carry the will as well as the reason. You need to find a way behind the natural resistance, and this is best done by mingling love with logic, and by identifying oneself with the listener: "I've been guilty of the same myself, but this proposal makes good sense, doesn't it?"

Using the 'co-operative' mode

In some settings, you need neither to be a teacher nor a lawyer, but a fellow-struggler. You deliberately identify yourself with the same perplexities that face the member of the congregation.

This is often done well by posing a mystifying text, or a life-problem common to your church member. Describe a difficult belief or seemingly-insoluble puzzle, but answer it by admitting "I am as troubled by this as you are, and how can we find an answer?" rather than by the authoritative statement or the advocate's argument. Gradually you will 'discover' the answers together. They will be clear answers, recognizably satisfying, and by choosing to stand in solidarity with your listener, you can expect him/her to move forward in solidarity with you.

Using the 'subversive' mode.

Of the four models, this is probably the one which should be used with greatest discretion, because it can easily backfire.

The method is to be "devil's advocate", and apparently argue for a position that the congregation would have expected you to argue against. Sangster uses an example of speaking against the football pools. The tactic is to appear to present all the arguments in favour, though using irony and satire to expose the weakness of this position. The purpose is to bring to light the fallacy of the argument and thereby win a decision "against".

The reason for caution is that only the most expert can hope to carry this off, and even then many listeners will not recognize the intention.

For an example of this method, refer to page 66.

Clarity of thought, diction and delivery:

If a sermon is to be persuasive, then by definition it must be communicated. This means that the thoughts of the preacher must bridge the gap to the listener. The listener must hear the words, and hear the thoughts which the words convey.

If a sermon is to be persuasive, then by definition it must be communicated!

To cross that gap between 'transmitter' and 'receiver', the preacher must give clarity to his ideas and to his voice. Audibility in preaching is, in most cases, entirely the responsibility of the preacher. It is true that he/she may have the aid of a PA system but with or without, there should be no excuse.

The seven elements of an audible and persuasive voice:

A) **BREATH CONTROL**. In preaching one should stand erect, with rib cage out and held steady without tension, and control breathing by diaphragmatic action. The throat should be relaxed and open (often achieved by a good yawn!). "To ensure correct delivery in reading and speaking, see that the abdominal muscles have full play in breathing, and that the respiratory organs are unrestricted. Let the strain come on the muscles of the abdomen, rather than of those of the throat." (E. G. White, EDUCATION, p.199).

B) **ARTICULATION.** Sometimes when people ask you to speak up they are meaning that you should speak out. It is not a matter of volume or loudness, but of clarity and articulation. You do not need to shout, but to pronounce words distinctly, sounding the voice through the end of the sentence without tailing off.

C) **RESONANCE.** The tone of the voice is important. 'Think' your voice into fuller resonance rather than speaking in a higher and thinner note. The deeper more resonant voice tones are more audible, carry better in a public setting, and are more reassuring and convincing. A high-pitched 'strangled' voice is hard to listen to and not very convincing. A relaxed throat will help considerably in achieving this.

D) **PITCH.** The mid-section of your voice range is the most effective mainstay of a speaker's delivery. Try out your own voice range from your lowest 'bass' pitch to your highest 'tenor' pitch, then cultivate use of the mid-range. This will be least strain on you, and will be most comfortable for the listener. Move to higher or lower pitch for intonation and emphasis, thereby creating greater impact. Some preachers "have fallen into the error that they cannot have liberty in speaking unless they raise their voices to a high pitch, and talk loud and fast. Such should understand that noise, and loud, hurried speaking is not evidence of the presence of the power of God." (E.G.White, Testimonies 1:644).

E) **INFLECTION.** Inflection is that subtle quality of tone that conveys the emotional reactions of the speaker. When speaking of the majesty of the living God, for example, your words should be robed with feelings of awe, reverence and wonder. The commencement of a new phrase or section of the sermon will generally provide opportunity for 'stepping back' to a lower mid-range note. Let your words feel warm, welcoming, encouraging.

F) **ACCENT.** This is not to be confused with dialect. Dialect varies depending on where you went to school, because you have picked up the dialect of your childhood. Accent has to do with stress of words or sentences to place force of emphasis. A life-or-death message cannot be given as though we were reading the weather forecast. Our message is vital, dynamic, and our preaching should be spirited.

G) **TEMPO AND PAUSE.** You are not paid for the number of words you say within a specified time. Do not speak too rapidly. Slow down. Pause. To speak easily and effectively, you need to pause every fifth or sixth word on average. Sometimes a pause before, and sometimes a pause after an important point, helps to carry that point more powerfully.

Summary of lessons so far

We have talked about the need for a conscious, continuous preparation for preaching. We used the simile of cultivating an allotment, because 'growing' sermons is rather like growing crops. We proposed that husbandry of the soul in making ready to preach, calls for wide and deep reading of scripture. Becoming saturated in what God has to say helps to make sense of life experience, and so all of life becomes the seed bed. Observation of life, coupled with reading from both Christian and general sources, germinates, waters and fertilizes seedlings of ideas. As those seedlings bloom, they become a useful supply for the pulpit.

We suggested the process by which the preacher can decide on his subject. Firstly it is essential to take into account the real needs of the members of the congregation — for it would be wrong just to speak on what takes the preacher's fancy. There was a need to take account of the calendar, bearing in mind special seasons or occasions. Above all, there was a need for a prayerful searching for the word which God intends shall be given.

Lessons Five, Six and Seven demonstrated different techniques by which sermons may be varied in style, structure and mode of delivery.

I. We followed Dr Bob Gordon in defining six major sermon styles: Expository, Didactic, Devotional, Evangelistic, Prophetic, and Apologetic. Thus we may

meet varying listener needs or preacher objectives by making use of a diversity of sermon styles.

II. In the same way, we followed Sangster's suggestion that sermons may be constructed on distinct patterns — EXPOSITION, ARGUMENT, FACETING, CATEGORISING, or ANALOGY. By this we understood that each sermon will have a clear introduction, body, and conclusion but that structure may differ from one sermon to the next.

III. The final variable was the mode of presentation — Authoritative, Persuasive, Co-operative, or (on rare occasions) Subversive. This has to do with the manner in which the preacher will speak in order to achieve the objective of a particular sermon.

In the next chapter we will move to a new line of lay preacher training by standing you in front of a mirror so that you can take a look at what others see as they look at you.

(M Stickland, Heralds of God's Word: Lay Preaching Seminar Textbook, (Ed Joel Sarli), Ministerial Association, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 1998)

APPENDIX B

How Sermon Delivery Affects Credibility

A preacher's body language onstage says a lot. An interview with Bob Parkinson.

Preaching Today Sermons: When an audience assesses a speaker's credibility based on delivery, how much occurs consciously and how much sub-consciously?

Bob Parkinson: When a congregation is listening to a sermon they have a sub-conscious feeling about how the speaker is coming across. For example, listeners might think, "Gee, he's uncomfortable," or "She's angry or upset." They wouldn't think, "He is not standing up straight;" or "...not speaking loudly;" or "...is not looking at me." Those observations are really conscious decisions – where somebody is looking, or how someone is standing. They detect the unconscious emotion: discomfort, ill at ease, anxious, angry, and upset.

What should speakers do with their bodies and voices in the delivery of a message to enhance credibility?

How the preacher is standing or talking is important because the listeners are going to respond to those signals; the speaker must be conscious of not just the word, but how the word is being packaged. I use a phrase that I think sums it up nicely: "Whatever you do, do it on purpose." The preacher must pay attention to how he is standing, where he is looking, what he is doing with his hands, how loudly he is speaking and how he is constructing the messages that he is delivering.

Where the preacher is looking is important because in our culture, if a speaker does not look at his audience they don't trust him; they don't believe him. Now, does that mean he has to look at one person in the congregation the whole time? Of course not! But try to focus on people individually throughout the congregation. Here is an analogy that might help. If you were going to take a photograph of someone on the right side of the congregation, and you focused in on someone sitting way over to the left-hand side, opened the shutter of your camera and then just turned it around until you got to the right side of the congregation, you wouldn't have a picture. You would have a big blur. If you want focused photographs, you must click the shutter and then with the shutter closed, move, find somebody else; focus on that person and click the shutter again. So the first thing the preacher must do to enhance credibility is to ensure that he is making eye-to-eye, emotion-to-emotion, person-to-person contact with his audience.

The second step to enhancing credibility is to make sure that the voice is strong. Often because we are so used to talking across a desk or in a small room, we tend to have our voices down at a rather moderate level; and that's appropriate for a small room. However, when we get into a larger area, that small voice is not sufficient to carry. When a speaker increases the volume of his voice, not only does the voice get louder, but it gets richer; fuller. The inflection range expands dramatically, and there's a direct relationship between volume and inflection. If we are used to speaking in a "small room voice," and we're standing in front of a large audience, the result is difficult to hear, the inflection range is narrow, and it sounds boring. If we rely on a microphone to give us the volume rather than using our own internal energy to get

that additional volume, what we end up with is “loud-boring.” It doesn't help the congregation to follow the messages that we're delivering.

How does this specifically apply to credibility? If I'm speaking in a quiet tone with less inflection range, what are people assuming about my believability?

The audience’s general perception given these factors is, "I'm not sure this person believes what he's saying.” This is something that we as preachers have to be very conscious of. Another factor in developing sermons is the actual reason for delivering the message. So many times we don't give as much thought to "Why am I saying this?" as we do to "What am I saying?" Now, the “what” is significant. But the “why” will also have a dramatic impact on the listener’s reaction. For example, will the sermon be given to inform? Will it be given to elicit emotion? Will it be given to encourage reflection? These are very different strategies. When the preacher decides up front what the reason for the message is, it will help him pick and choose the words, the phrases, and the examples that will evoke the desired reaction or emotion. The preacher must ask himself not only, "What am I going to say?" but "Why am I going to say it?"

Let me go back to the physical presentation skills that we talked about a moment ago. We talked about eye contact and volume. One of the other elements that are important is stance. Often, we will have a stand or pulpit to preach from. What typically occurs when there is a podium on the stage is that the preacher will naturally lean on it. When this occurs, the audience’s sub-conscious impression becomes, "Well, this really isn't that important." However, if he just balances his weight and ceases leaning on the podium, the audience’s subconscious impression becomes, "What the speaker is talking about now is very important because he is in a performance mode."

I’m referring to performance in a positive sense, much like in a sporting event. You cannot play any sport well if you’re off-balance. If you are delivering a sermon, and you are not perceived as being erect and solid in stance, the impression will be diluted. None of us would deliberately dilute the power of our message. Sometimes it just feels good to stand on one foot and then shift the weight over to the other, or to lean on the pulpit; but we must always remember when we're delivering a presentation, the mission is not to feel good. It is to effect that reaction, involvement, reflection, and emotion we talked about before.

Let’s move now to the hands and arms. What can a preacher do in this area to enhance or detract from his credibility?

One of the biggest issues facing a pastor standing in front of an audience is what he should do with his hands. Consequently, what often happens is that the hands clasp together, in a limiting position. In conversation, most of us are animated. We become descriptive with our hands. When we're in front of a larger group of people, because of the adrenaline that's going through us, we often feel uncomfortable and tend to hold back on our hand gestures. We consequently put forth a different kind of personality then we would in a social setting.

What I suggest is when you are ready to begin the sermon, let your hands fall down at your side, at neutral. When you begin to talk, if you give yourself the license to move, you'll find the hands instantly moving away from the body, being descriptive. They will help the congregation to see, not just hear. When we're standing in front of

a congregation, the energy that we feel comes from an adrenaline rush. If we let the energy work for us the way we do in everyday conversation, we become more expressive and more interesting to look at. However, a preacher must be careful not to go overboard with hand gestures. If he falls into this trap, he could damage his credibility because it says to the congregation, "I am uncomfortable saying what I'm saying." If we as preachers are not seen as being at ease, the congregation becomes uncomfortable. If we cause the congregation to become uncomfortable, it will have a deleterious effect on the impact of the message. Congregations want the preacher to be strong. How do we create the impression of strength? Stand up straight. Use a strong voice. Let the hands work naturally for description and emphasis. Finally, look at individuals in your congregation as you speak.

Are there any other "credibility enhancers" that you would add to that list?

Yes, and that is we should be excited about what we're preaching. We can convey this excitement by utilizing the body language techniques we just discussed. When we're excited about what we're saying, we will excite our congregations. And that's our job.

One of the strongest recommendations I can give to preachers to increase the credibility their preaching is to rehearse their sermons in front of a camera. Make believe that there is a congregation, and deliver the sermon to the pseudo audience. Then sit down and watch-- you will see yourself as your congregations see you. Most of us spend the greatest portion of our preparation time on the content. Now, the content is certainly important. But the audience is going to assume that we will deliver the Word accurately. They will make judgments, however--rightly or wrongly, fairly or unfairly -- on how the Word has been delivered. If we give ourselves the opportunity to see and hear ourselves the way our congregations do, then we can make the necessary changes.

How do these factors change with the size of the audience?

Well, one of the factors is that if you have a big congregation, physical moves need to be larger, so as to be seen by the people in the rear of the congregation. It's similar to the difference between acting on a stage and performing on a television program or a motion picture. On the stage, because of the great distances between actor and audience, the movement and gestures must be big. Whereas the television camera or the motion picture camera can come in close and, in effect, move the audience within a theoretical arm's reach of the actor, so the moves can be small. So, we have to make the adjustments based on the size of the audience.

Are there any common mistakes that detract from credibility that we haven't already addressed?

Yes, there are a few more that we should cover. Pacing is another problem that preachers must be aware of. Movement can be a significant part of the delivery of a message, if it is purposeful. But if the preacher starts pacing back and forth, that's going to diminish the credibility because the audience thinks, "I don't think he's comfortable. He's just running us off."

Holding notes is another potential problem simply because if we're holding something in our hands the chances are that we're going to play with it. If we're using computer generated visuals, slides or overheads, we might use a pointer. This is

another example of a potential distraction. If you're using a pointer, use it to point, put it down and continue preaching.

Could holding onto the pulpit potentially be a distraction?

Well, most of the time we hold onto the pulpit because it's there. As soon as we do that, however, all of the energy that should go toward description, emphasis and enthusiasm is wasted on the pulpit. Consider this alternative: put your printed material or Bible on the pulpit. Take just a half step back from the pulpit and distribute your weight evenly. Then, rest your hands on the shelf of the pulpit, without leaning on or grabbing onto it. This way, when hand gestures are called for, because your hands are not supporting your body, they will just move, and help to convey the impact of the message.

Can you offer any coaching related to how a preacher should read from his or her notes?

Yes. I'm glad you brought that up, because by definition preaching involves reading, either specific Scripture or our notes. Let's talk about notes first. When you look at your notes to recall what you want to say, pause briefly. If you talk while you look down at your notes rather than at the members of your congregation, your words will get lost in the notes. Also, voice volume tends to decrease because your eyes are focused on something that's a couple of feet away from you rather than on the rear of the congregation. When you're pausing to check your notes, at first the silence will seem long, but it won't seem nearly as long to the congregation. If they see you stop talking and refresh your memory, your actions will communicate, "I'm very comfortable here, and I don't have the need to keep talking all the time."

Another benefit of pausing as a preacher is that it gives your congregation a moment to think about what you just said. If you are constantly talking without pausing, the congregation does not get the opportunity to assimilate the message. Again, the reason we are preaching is to evoke a reaction, emotion or reflection from the audience.

When you are reading text from the pulpit, and you near the end of a sentence, try to raise the eyes and deliver the last two, three, four words from memory. End your sentence looking at a specific individual in the congregation. Then go back to the text and begin reading the next sentence. If you implement this simple strategy, you will find yourself delivering your ideas at a manageable pace. Secondly, you'll be establishing credibility by finishing your thoughts. Very often, the ends of sentences are really the most significant parts; the powerful words reside there.

To recap, establish credibility by reading with a strong voice and looking at your audience often. When you're proclaiming the words, stand erect and keep your hands free so they can move in a natural way which will communicate, "I'm comfortable; I'm assured." Your message will be delivered appropriately and effectively if you follow these guidelines.

This interview is a workshop transcript from the Preaching Today Audio Series.

APPENDIX C

Figures of Speech and Rhetorical Devices

Definition:

A word or phrase used in a non-literal sense for rhetorical or vivid effect (CO); a departure from the normal rules of grammar or word usage. E.g.: "breadth and length and depth and height" "The mountains will sing."

What is the purpose of Figures of Speech?

1. To give special emphasis
2. To call attention to the point
3. To add force or power to an expression.

Why are Figures of Speech in the Bible?

1. Figures of Speech are universal to human communication.
2. Every language, including the Biblical languages, has them.
3. God used Figures of Speech to call attention to a point in the Scriptures.

Why is it important to understand Figures of Speech in the Bible?

1. To get the correct interpretation of Scripture.
2. Serious misinterpretation occur when:
    a. We call something figurative that is literal. E.g.: the days of Creation.
    b. We call something literal that is figurative. E.g.: John 8:58. (*heterosos* – switching of word form [verb tense] to emphasize the certainty of Jesus' coming.
3. God has a reason for everything he says – where he says it; when he says it. To whom he says it; how he says it.
4. Figures of Speech in the Bible are precise and exact, not haphazard.

How do we know when the words should be taken literally or figuratively?

1. The Bible should be understood *literally* whenever possible.
   But when a statement appears to be contrary to our experience, or to known fact, or to the general teaching of truth, then we can expect that a figure of speech is present.

2. If a word or words are truly a figure of speech, then that figure can be named and described. It will have a specific identifiable purpose.

How can we recognize figures of speech?

1. The words don't make sense literally. 1 Cor. 11:16-21; Isaiah 55:12.
2. The words are clear and literal, but meant to convey a deeper lesson or application, such as in a parable.
3. The words are clear and literal, but are put together in a grammatical or structural way that brings emphasis to the section. (This kind of figure may be lost in translation.) Genesis 2:17 – The Hebrew reads, "dying you will die," using the figure "many inflections," that is the same word in different forms; Eph:318 – many ands gives separate emphasis to each part, more than a comma would.

What are the various kinds of figures of speech?

1. The study of figures of speech is complex because of the number of languages (Hebrew, Greek, Aramaic and English) involved, and because each language has many figures.
2. The patterns of language are so universally common to mankind, however, that most of the figures of speech cross over from language to language in a recognizable way.
3. Various scholars through the centuries have offered systems of classifying figures of speech. The clearest and best documented is by ***E. W. Bullinger**, as follows:
    1. Figures Involving Omission (words or meaning left out)
        a. Affecting words (grammar or sentence structure)
        b. Affecting the sense (the meaning)
    2. Figures Involving Addition (words or meaning inserted)
        a. Affecting words (grammar or sentence structure)
        b. Affecting the sense (the meaning)
    3. Figures Involving Change (words or meaning changed)
        a. Affecting the meaning
        b. Affecting the order of words
        c. Affecting the application of words (interpretation of words).

Examples of Figures of Speech:

allegory A story, poem, or picture which can be interpreted to reveal a hidden meaning (CO); a symbolic representation of a truth about human conduct or experience (IBD); John 15:1-17; Isa. 5:1-7.

alliteration use of words starting with or containing the same letter or sound: *The furrow followed free.*

anacoluthon grammatically inconsistent sentence or phrase, with a shift of construction midway: *My advice is, since time is running out, shouldn't you get started at once.*

anadiplosis Repetition of a word or group of words at the end of one phrase and the beginning of the next one, for rhetorical effect: Psa:121:1, 2.

analogy Comparison between one thing and another made for the purpose of explanation or clarification.

anastrophe Rhetorical inversion of normal word order: *Full many a glorious morning have I seen.*

anthropomorphism The practice of describing God in human terms, as if he has feet (Ex 24:10), hands (John 10:29), a face (Matt 18:10), a heart (Hosea 11:8) and so forth.

anthro-popathism The practice of describing God as if He displays human emotions, such as jealousy (Ex 20:5), anger (Psa 77:9) love (Jon 4:2), and mercy (Psa 103:8).

antiphrasis Ironic or playful use of words in an opposite sense: *Eight years young.*

antithesis Expression in which contrasting ideas are carefully balanced: Rom. 5:12;

Isa. 59:9; Gal. 5:16-23.

antonomasia — Use of a personal name or proper noun to refer to anyone belonging to a class: e.g. Use of *an Einstein* to refer to a genius.

aposiopesis, ellipsis — Omission of words, or sudden breaking off in mid-sentence, for dramatic effect: Matt. 11:18.

apostrophe — Direct address to an absent or dead person or personified thing: 2 Sam.18:33; Psa. 68:15,16Jer. 47:6; 1 Cor. 15: 55; Matt. 23:37; Rev. 18:10.

assonance — Repetition of vowel sounds, producing a half-rhyme effect: *Slow progress across the cold plateau.*

asyndeton — Omission of conjunction: *I came, I saw, I conquered.*

chiasmus — Rhetorical device in which the grammatical structure of one phrase is reversed in the second, as in: *As they came out, in went we.*

euphemism — Use of an inoffensive expression to stand in for a sharper or more explicit one: Gen. 4:1; 15:15; John 11:11, 14; 1 Cor. 15:18.

hendiadys — Use of two nouns joined by *and* to express an idea that would normally be expressed by an adjective and noun; or a similarly expanded phrase: Psa. 27:1; Luke 1:17; 1 Tim. 1:17; 1 Thess. 5:23; Titus 2:13.

hyperbole — Exaggeration or overstatement for emphasis: 2 Sam. 1:23; Job 30:1-23; Matt. 19:24; John 21:25; Rom. 8:38,39; Luke 14:26; Matt. 5:29.

idiom — Peculiar usage of words or phrases; a group of words established by usage as having a meaning not deducible from those of the individual words - Exod. 3:8; Prov. 17:22; Jer. 25:15.

irony *eironeia* — Use of word or words to convey something markedly different from the literal meaning: Jud. 10:14; 2 Sam. 6:20; Job 12:12; Luke 6:42; 1Cor. 4:8,10; 1 King 22:15; Matt. 22:15,16; Matt. 27:19.

litotes, *meiosis* — Understatement in which an idea is tellingly conveyed, typically in contradicting its opposite: Gen. 18:27; Num. 13:33; 1 Cor. 15:9, 10.

malapropism — Word used through confusion with a similar sounding word, sometimes deliberately for comic effect: *He's being used as a prawn in the game.*

metaphor meta + phero =a carrying over — Description of one thing in terms of another that is related to it by analogy – Gen 49:27; John 21:15-17; Matt 5:13,14; 26:26; Psa. 5:9; 23:1.

metonymy — Use of a term to refer to some wider idea that it characterizes: Prov. 12:15, 18; Matt. 3:5; Luke 13:32; 1 Cor. 10:21; Rom. 3:30. Luke 16:29; 2 Cor. 5:21.

onomatopoeia — Use of words whose sound suggests their meaning: *e.g. sizzle, splash, ping-pong.*

oxymoron	Linking of incongruous or contradictory terms: Isa. 58:10, 1 Cor. 1:25.
parable	Continued simile. A simple story used to illustrate a moral or spiritual lesson – Matt 13; Matt. 21:33-46.
paradox	The statement of two things which together seem to be self-contradictory (Text); a seemingly absurd or self-contradictory statement or proposition that may in fact be true; an apparently sound statement or proposition which in fact leads to a logically unacceptable conclusion (COED).
pathetic fallacy	Assigning of human feelings or characteristics to natural or inanimate objects: *The trees groaned*
personification, prosopopoeia	Representation of an object or idea as human: Lev. 18:25,28; Num. 16:32; Psalm: 114:3,4; Matt. 6:34;
pleonasm	Use of superfluous or redundant words: *How did the story end up?*
polysyndeton	Repetition of conjunctions for rhetorical effect: Acts 1:8; 2 Peter 1:5-7; Rev. 1:4,5;
rhetorical question, erotema	Question asked for effect or to convey information rather than to elicit and answer – Rom 2:3,4; 7:1,7,13; Prov. 27:4; 1 Cor. 12:17,29,30
simile similis - like	Comparison of two unlike ideas or objects, using the word *like* or *as* to make it explicit – Psa.17:8; Eph 5:22-27; Prov. 25:11ff; 26:6ff;
syllepsis	Use of a single word to apply to two others, in different ways: *He held his tongue, and my hand*
synecdoche	Use of the name for a part to refer to the whole, or vice versa: - Judges 12:7; Luke 2:1; Deut. 32:41; Phil. 3:19;
tautology	Repetition of an idea by needless or emphatic use of words: *Reverse backwards and then do a U-turn to face the other way*
transferred epithet, hypallage	Deliberate misapplication of an adjective to a noun, for a compact or dramatic effect: *A sleepless night; the poisoned cup; the condemned cell*
zeugma	Use of a single word to apply to two others, especially when it is appropriate to only one: *He held his tongue and his promise*

Reference:

COED	Concise Oxford English Dictionary
IBD	Illustrated Bible Dictionary
RD	Readers Digest Reverse Dictionary

Note:
Figures of Speech Used In the Bible by ***Ethelbert William Bullinger** (December 15, 1837 - June 6, 1913), a Vicar of the Church of England, Biblical scholar, and dispensationalist theologian.

APPENDIX D

Getting the Gold from the Text

How do you capitalize on the inexhaustible riches of Scripture in your preaching without sounding like a Bible commentary? ***An interview with author John Koessler***

PreachingToday.com: **John, you are strongly attuned to how well the preacher uses the text in developing the sermon. What role should the text have in a sermon and why?**
The text has to be the foundation of the sermon. The sermon grows out of what the text says, so it's the controlling factor. My goal, then, as a preacher, is to help the audience understand the meaning of the text, to help them interpret it, and then to understand what the implications are for them.

The text is critical not only because it's a source of applicational ideas, but also because the power of the sermon is rooted in the text. 2 Timothy 3:16-17 says the Scriptures are inspired, they are God-breathed, they are useful for equipping the believer for every good work.

We work so hard on our sermons that we sometimes forget the power of the message is the Word. We have to do the work, but the power is in the Word itself.

What are some of the imposters that get in the way of Scripture being the driving force of the sermon?
One imposter is where the text is simply a springboard for the rest of the message, where you start out with a text and then it disappears from the message. I heard a sermon a number of years ago where the preacher began by reading, but then he closed his Bible, put it underneath the pulpit, and that was the last we heard of what the text actually said. So in that case, the Scripture was ornamental. It had no meaningful role in the message.

By that you mean the main points, the sub points, the main idea of the sermon didn't come out of.

Right! He never showed how the main points and the sub-points related to the text. The text gave the appearance that he was preaching from the Bible, but when you listened to what he said, it didn't come from it.

Another imposter is the kind of sermons I sometimes hear in a seeker context. This sermon spends a lot of time establishing common ground with the listener, which you have to do, but perhaps because of oversensitivity to the way the audience is going to respond, the preacher doesn't even use the Bible. It's biblical in the sense that what's said is consistent with biblical truth, but there's no explicit biblical content in the sermon. That's not a sermon. That's a motivational speech. That has no place in the church.

So in that case the authority for the sermon is not made clear.
Correct. The authority for the sermon becomes primarily the experiences described in the message.

Or the charisma of the preacher.
Or the personality of the preacher: the ethos. All of that is important, but as a preacher my authority and my power is in the Word. It's not in my persuasive ability or in the cleverness of the stories I use. When you remove the Bible from the sermon, you don't have a sermon anymore.

What about the argument, "If I quote from the Bible, my hearers won't respect that authority; if I quote from a current celebrity, they'll believe that?"
You don't find the apostle Paul or Peter or even Jesus steering away from God's Word. They're not afraid to base what they say on God's Word or to identify biblical truth as the basis for their authority. Now you do find, with the apostle Paul in particular, a sensitivity to his audience. For example, when he is preaching to the Jews, there is a Jewish flavour to his preaching. And when he's preaching to the Gentiles, he's sensitive to their culture. In one case he even quotes a Greek philosopher. But he always goes back to biblical truth. He preaches the gospel, the message of Christ.

There may be a false fear that because they don't respect that authority I can't lean on that authority. It does give me a greater responsibility to, number one, understand their assumptions so I can address the objections they might have, and number two, to communicate what biblical truth says in a way that connects with the audience. The fact that the text is the foundation of the sermon doesn't relieve me of the responsibility of exegeteing my audience or applying the text.

I can't use the Bible like a magic spell where as long as I just read the text, it's going to have this magical impact on the audience. If that were true we wouldn't need to preach a sermon at all. We'd just read the Bible on a street corner, and when the sound comes out over the audience something magical will happen and people will change. It would be good in churches if we did have more reading of Scripture. But a process of argumentation and reasoning and understanding the audience is necessary. In his epistles, Paul is always anticipating how his readers are responding. He raises the questions for them: "Some of you will say this." "Some of you will say that." "But what about this?" and "What about that?" We have to do that. But his anchor is always God's truth.

I would use a less pejorative word. Many who wouldn't say the Scripture has a "magical" effect would say it has a supernatural power to it that will supersede anything else. You're saying Paul, who knew a lot about the supernatural, used the Word, but he also knew you have to appeal to people, you have to understand them, you have to deal with their culture.
One of the preacher's roles is to mediate God's truth to the audience. There's often application explicitly in the text. There is a cultural context the passage deals with. But it may not be the application my audience has to deal with, and it is often not the immediate cultural context my audience finds itself in. So here I have this recorded truth. It is inerrant. It is inspired. Everything it says is true. And then I have my audience. I'm in the middle, and I'm trying to take that biblical truth and show them the implications. But they have to understand what it says, and the things that I urge them to do and the authority of that has to come from God's Word.

What if we begin with the authority of someone they respect and then move into Scripture and say, "This is the authority for what I'm saying to you?"

That's a valid approach and is often the function of the introduction, to start with common ground. You start with their experience, or you start with some authority that they recognize.

So you quote a statistic on marriage or cohabitation that says cohabitation is a bad idea for a number of reasons.

Or you might quote it to show that most people think it's a good idea, to get them to think about it. And then you take them to a dissenting voice in the Scriptures. But your goal is to move the focus to the Word.

I want my audience to be thinking about what the Bible says and what its implications are going to be for them. I want to anchor it to the text. I don't want to baptize the sermon with the text just because it's a sermon and has to have the Bible in it. We want hearers to be dwelling on what this says.

Grant Osborne talks about a hermeneutical spiral where you go back and forth throughout the sermon: text to audience, text to audience, text to audience.

But ultimately what you say in the sermon is God's claim on that person's life. That person needs to know that it comes from Scripture.

Yes.

What would cause a preacher to stray from having the text in that central driving role for the sermon?

No one I know sets out to compose a sermon that's disconnected from the text. I suspect if you asked preachers on any given Sunday what they were preaching, they'd answer that they're preaching God's Word. But there are several factors that inadvertently move us away from the text.

One of the most common is that we're driven by application. It's important for me to be relevant to the audience. So I spend a lot of time thinking about the audience and their life situation. But the more I move towards the audience and the more I move out of the life situation that the text explicitly addresses, the greater the temptation to disconnect from the passage.

One common pattern in expository preaching is to begin with the text and talk about what the text says, to provide a kind of commentary for the audience. We'll talk about the grammar, the syntax, and maybe the cultural background. And then we move to application. But often, when we get into application, we forget about the text. The danger is that the further I remove myself from the text, the more likely I am to press home an application that is inconsistent with what the passage says.

In addition, there's a danger when we're overly familiar with the text to assume that we already know what the text means and what implications it has for the audience. But then I may not do the work of the exegesis, because I think I already know what it says. My handling of the text becomes clichéd and shallow.

There's also the temptation to ride a hobbyhorse. Sometimes there's an issue in the life of the congregation we want to address, and that's appropriate. That's part of my role as a preacher, a prophetic responsibility to focus on issues in the church and say things that people don't want to hear. The problem develops when we're so focused on addressing an issue that we fail to notice the passage we're using doesn't really

address it.

Recently I was preaching in a church I have attended, and I had become concerned with what seemed to me to be a spirit of legalism. And my text was, Samuel's anointing of David where the Lord looks on the heart not on the outward appearance.

In one of my points I started down an applicational path that I thought was pretty good. I liked it because it zoned in on my concern in that context. But the more I reflected on what the text was saying, I realized that the passage didn't address the issue I was bothered about. I had inadvertently turned the message of the text inside out to make my point. I had to go back and rewrite it, and I didn't end up saying what I wanted to say.

But that's a good thing. That's letting the text control what the message says. It has two advantages. First, if you let the text control the message, sooner or later every problem issue in your church is going to be addressed. Secondly, nobody can blame you for it. Nobody can say that you're picking on them, that you've singled them out. And so it also protects you.

In your screening of sermons for Preaching Today you often write, "He's preaching his illustration." What do you mean by that?

Illustration is an important part of the sermon. I spend almost as much time thinking about finding the right, illustrations for the message as I do the exegesis of the text. But there's tremendous energy in a good illustration, particularly a story, and we can get caught up in this great illustration and feel the power of it, and then we move to application, but the application may be grounded in the illustration rather than the text.

There's a dimension where that should be the case. It's legitimate to move from illustration to application when the illustration is reflective of what the text says and I'm either pressing home a principle from the text, trying to show you what that looks like in real life, using the illustration as an analogy, or using it to motivate. In those cases, you even want to use the language of the illustration to make the application. Bryan Chappell talks about having the words of an illustration "rain down" through the application.

But when we get caught up in the illustration itself, and the illustration is the focal point, then that's what we're preaching. The text then becomes a pretext to introduce the story, and the application points the audience back to the illustration.

"How-to" preaching is driven by a legitimate desire to connect with people where they are and to lead them to where God is. But can how-to preaching lead us away from text-driven sermons?

Not every text gives a how-to formula for responding to the issues in the text. In fact, few do. If every text gave me a formula, then I could slap it on the sermon and everybody would go home happy. But because the text, in an overwhelming majority of cases, deals on a principle level, I'm left with the responsibility of thinking about the implications for the audience.

I may, as I'm thinking about that, try to translate the implications into a methodology, a step-by-step response. The danger, though, is that it becomes

formulaic. The preaching becomes trite. The listener quickly senses that your formula is not a construct that grows out of the text. Often the formulas are superficial.

I like to think of it in terms of diagnosis and remedy. When I look at the text and my audience, and when I am trying to give them something concrete to walk away with, it may not be a step-by-step process. Instead, I urge my preaching students to think in terms of diagnosis. How does the truth of this passage help the audience to understand the nature of the problem? When I preach on a problem that I could point out in myself, I usually already know I have that problem. So then the question is, *Why do I have that problem?* Try to diagnose the nature of the problem.

Then, in view of that, how should I respond? What is there in the text that helps you to understand the nature of my need for God's grace? And what is there in the text that helps me to understand God's remedy?

Once I've worked through that, maybe I want to think about a concrete strategy for responding to it. That strategy doesn't have to be explicitly mentioned in the text, but it has to be consistent with what the text says.

One of the missing dimensions in relating text to audience is motivation. We often go for the formula, and we don't think about why. Ask the question, *Why should the listener respond that way?* The text won't necessarily give a step-by-step formula, but it frequently addresses the issue of motivation.

What steps should we take to insure that the text has its proper place in our sermon?

It begins with exegesis. You study the text. You're trying to understand what the author wanted to communicate to his original audience and trying to understand what application he had in mind for them, either explicitly or implicitly. You have to do the hard work of exegesis before you think about any other issues of style or application.

Secondly — and I found this to be the most challenging thing as a pastor — you have to try not to rush. When you think of how many messages the typical pastor has to produce on a week-by-week basis, the pressure to produce is phenomenal. But I've found I have to live with a text for a few days before I can really understand it. Discipline yourself so your exegetical work doesn't take place the same week as your sermon preparation. I recommend trying to incorporate that into your devotional life so that you study God's Word for yourself on a deep level before preaching through it.

Because most pastors have multiple preparations to do, you have to prioritize. When I was preaching several messages in a given week, I would do full-blown exegesis, textbook style the way I learned in seminary, on one message. The second one I had to do a bit less. You do the best you can. But the more time you take with a text, the more careful you are, the more likely your sermon is going to be consistent with what it says.

Is it possible to have too much text in a text-driven sermon?

In one sense, the text can never be too foundational to the message. But when your handling of the text never moves to application, then there's a problem. My role as a

preacher is not to function primarily as an exegetical commentary or a Bible handbook, but to take biblical truth and apply it to the audience. If you haven't applied the text, you haven't preached. Now if you apply without the text, you haven't preached either. You must have both.

It seems as though the central issue is not the form or style of the sermon. It boils down to making sure people understand that what God wants them to do, comes from this text.

Yes, my confidence as a preacher is in the power of God's Word. That's one of the most exciting things about preaching. It's not because we like to lecture. It's not because people are staring at us and waiting for us to say something. It's because we are driven by the conviction that God's truth, that those truths recorded in human language, have the potential to transform people's lives. And that's the most exciting thing, isn't it? When you proclaim that and you see God work through it? That's what gets you hooked. And once you're hooked, you never go back.

This article appears in *The Art & Craft of Biblical Preaching*, a comprehensive encyclopaedia of preaching.

APPENDIX E

Clearly
How to preach so everyone understands
Haddon Robinson

When Napoleon sent out his messengers he gave them three instructions: be clear, be clear, and be clear. There are several challenges facing preachers who desire to do just that.

First, there's a tendency to roam through the whole Bible, bringing in all kinds of things to enhance what we're saying. We end up saying too much; and as a result, communicating too little. We start out stalking bear, but are soon distracted by some rabbits we'd like to chase. Before long, we're chasing this and adding that and missing the bear we started after at the outset. So less is more.

We also deal with the challenge of oral communication. Preachers have to work at clarity because the spoken word lacks some of the built in aids inherent to writing. When you're writing, you can utilize paragraph divisions, punctuations marks, and things in quotes. You can't do that when you're preaching. Also, if I don't get what the preacher is saying the first time, I can't go back and mentally review; because if I do I won't hear what he is saying now. The preacher has the responsibility of helping his congregation think clearly.

Someone who writes out his sermons in an effort to be clear can often cause the opposite effect because of the written style. If that's the case, then how can we bridge the gap between clarity in our notes and clarity in our presentation?

Begin by being clear about your subject. When you've worked through your notes, you ought to be able to answer two questions. One is, "What am I talking about?" You ought to be able to state in precise, definite terms what this sermon is about. For example, "Why I should be committed?" or, "Where do I serve Christ most effectively?" We call this the subject, but it's really the answer to the question: "What am I talking about?"

Then, you should be able to answer the next question: "What am I saying about what I'm talking about?" "What are the major assertions I'm making about that question?" Clarity often fails because we haven't nailed those two things down prior to arrival in the pulpit.

Expository preachers have to ask themselves an additional question: "What's my purpose?" Topical preachers have the advantage of having a purpose, often embedded right in their title. An expository preacher, however, tends to start and end with the text, never answering "Why are you preaching this sermon this Sunday?" The fact that you're supposed to fill the pulpit from 11:25 to 12:00 isn't good enough.

A good outline always helps with clarity. You can use the outline to design the sermon as you would a conversation, so that each point is related to what goes before. For example, if you were preaching a sermon on forgiveness, the introduction might deal with why you're bringing this up. Your first movement could say, "Forgiveness is necessary." The second could be, "But even though forgiveness is

necessary, we often find it difficult." Likewise the third could follow, "But I have good news. As difficult as forgiveness might be, Christians can excel at it because we are followers of Jesus Christ."

These major movements in the sermon can be read like a conversation rather than three bare statements. This enables you to have an outline, but it doesn't stick out like a skeleton. It also acknowledges the fact that the "one-two-three things I have to say" type of outline seems to be less popular today. Sometimes that's what you want if your purpose is to be clear. But if every sermon takes this form, it can lead to boredom.

Another way to add clarity to a sermon is, first, clearly orient the audience to the body of the sermon right in the introduction. A preacher might say at the end of the introduction, "God sometimes keeps his promises to us by performing miracles or performing miracles in us." But if that's all he's going to say, folks already have the sermon. If he asks, "Now what exactly does that mean, to say that God performs miracles or performs miracles in us?" he secures the chance to develop clarity, because the congregation has the whole idea, and the preacher has the opportunity to clarify that idea through the body of the sermon.

You can also add clarity by restating key ideas. Suppose you begin by saying, "We want to talk today about how to know the will of God." Continue by restating this idea several times: "When we are confused about what God wants us to do, how can we determine his direction in our lives? Where would we turn to determine God's will? How do we go about knowing the will of God?" It seems laborious when you're preaching, but restating the subject several times in different ways makes it stand out in people's minds.

Take time to state what you've been talking about, restate it, then introduce people to what follows.

In addition, avoid pronouns requiring the listener to remember the reference. For example, rather than saying, "A second thing we must do is consult the Bible," include the subject it is referencing: "A second thing we have to do in trying to determine God's will is to consult the Bible." It may be clear to you what the subject is, but pronouns require a listener to recall a previous reference, possibly diminishing clarity.

You can also give the audience a map of where you're going. Suppose you are preaching on Christians and government in the Roman epistle. You might say, "Christians are to be subject to the government. Christians are to obey what the government demands. I want to talk about the basis for this command. I want to talk about how we show submission to the government; what the implications are in daily life. And third, what exceptions, if any, are there to this command." In beginning this way, you have given the people a road map of your sermon so they can track with you.

If the subject is interesting, people almost automatically begin developing questions. If you anticipate where you're going in the map and promise that before you are through you will deal with that question, it puts that question to rest for a while so your people can hear the rest of what you're saying.
Visual preaching aids clarity. We use illustrations because they take an abstract concept and ground it in life. A good illustration paints a picture in people's minds; it

creates clarity and understanding. Weak preachers constantly say, "Well, in other words," to clarify something that is unclear. Better preachers will substitute "For example," "For instance," or "Let me illustrate." Following an abstract statement with a "for instance" or an example increases its clarity.

It is also critical to use a story that really illustrates the point. Every preacher knows the temptation to follow a story because it is powerful. But if the story doesn't shed light on the point, then it will reduce clarity, because it causes the audience to focus in the illustration's connection to the sermon, rather than on the point of the sermon.

Another practice that reduces clarity is the tendency to begin with text and follow with background. Imagine the following scenario. "Do you have secrets? Every single one of us comes to this auditorium with secrets. Some are difficult to carry. Some make you afraid. In Psalm 51, David has a secret. He goes to talk to God about it. He had sinned against a woman by the name of Bathsheba; committed adultery with her. And he had tried to cover that sin by having her husband, Uriah, killed. As he tried to cover things up, he came to feel very guilty. His secret overwhelmed him. Now in Psalm 51 he tells us how to handle our guilt." That's a long way of going about it, and it's the wrong way of going about it.

A better approach is to give the background or setting before you announce the chapter and verse. "You have secrets. All of us have secrets. David had secrets. The sin he committed with Bathsheba and the murder of Uriah were David's secrets. He was overwhelmed by guilt because of it. But he had to deal with that guilt. Now, in Psalm 51, we see how David handled the guilt he had before God."

When you refer to a passage, people start turning to it, and they expect you to deal with it right then. But if you're going on and on, giving background about his guilt and how he's going to handle it, and only then getting to the passage, it's a confusing sequence for the listener. You are better off discussing contemporary matters, biblical background, and the subject first. Then announce the scripture and deal with it immediately.

Transitions can be a challenging part of maintaining clarity in sermons. Transitions are difficult because if the message is clear to you, you will tend to not clarify it for the audience. The idea is so evident to you that you don't think it's important to build the bridge. A good transition, however, reviews what has already been said. It takes you back to the subject of the sermon, and then anticipates what is coming. A good transition secures the point you're going to make in people's minds.

One way you can transition from one thought to another is by asking a question. Suppose in your first point you've been talking about picking up the cross and following Jesus. In transition, you might say, "Well, that's pretty clear, isn't it? It says we're to pick up a cross and follow Jesus. What does this look like in life if you pick up the cross and follow Jesus? What does it look like in your business or your home to carry a cross?" Transitional questions can help you move into your next point with clarity.

What part can conclusions play in clarity? A strong conclusion brings your sermon to a burning focus. It can help you return to the question you raised in the introduction, giving the audience some satisfaction and closure.

It's very difficult, however, for a conclusion to salvage an unclear sermon. Conclusions can salvage sermons in the sense that they make the last five minutes clear, but they usually cannot create clarity in retrospect. It may drive home the point and illustrate it, but your hearers still may not understand what you talked about for the first 25 minutes.

Haddon Robinson is Harold John Ockenga Distinguished Professor of Preaching at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, in South Hamilton, Massachusetts; senior editor of PreachingToday.com; radio teacher on Discover the Word; and author of Biblical Preaching (Baker, 1980, 2001).

APPENDIX F

Five Bird-dogging Questions for Biblical Exposition

How asking the right questions produces
a wealth of relevant material for the sermon

Earl Palmer

To preach with relevance, I suggest you become a commentator on the text. If you develop a method of Bible study in which you work through five great questions, you will put yourself under the text and see how it affects preaching.

The five great questions that make up a commentary are the technical questions, the historical questions, the content-theological questions, the contemporary questions, and the discipleship questions. Bible study is a journey in the text from the technical to the discipleship issues.

Technical questions

The technical questions are those that establish the text. The first half of Bible study is to establish the text. What do the words mean? What is the syntax? What is actually being said? Don't worry about what the meaning is now. Be sure you understand what's being said. What do the words mean individually? Linguistically? If you develop a birddog interest in establishing the text, if you can develop a fascination for vocabulary, a fascination for words, a fascination for the way the sentence is put together, you will have advanced tremendously your ability to do an exposition on this text.

C. S. Lewis says, "When I inquire what helps I have had in this matter of doing literary criticism, I seem to discover a somewhat unexpected result. Evaluative critics come at the bottom of the list for me." That is to say, when I read the evaluative critics of Dante or *Paradise Lost*, they're at the bottom of the list of help to me. Lewis says, "At the top of the list for me comes 'dry as dust.'" That's his coined phrase, and here's what he means by "dry as dust." "Obviously I have owed and I must continue to owe far more to editors, textual critics, commentators and lexicographers than to anyone else."

What's a lexicographer? That's your theological dictionary of the New Testament, your Arndt-Gingrich lexicon, your Moulton and Milligan. "Find out what the author actually wrote and what the hard words meant and what the allusions were to, and you have done far more for me than a hundred new interpretations or assessments could ever do."

Lewis felt you should never bypass this technical work. I realize that's hard work. You've got to keep your Greek and Hebrew up. It will pay off as you do the hard work of establishing the text for yourself. I say to Bible students, "Stretch out at least five current translations on every text, because every translation of the text is an attempt to grapple with what the words mean." And as different words or different organizations of the sentence appear, you can see different textual critics struggle with what the words mean. Even that will give you a clue as to what Lewis calls "a hard word." If you can get that hard word, it will be an important clue that could be the basis of a great sermon, because you may be at the fulcrum point in the development of the text.

Historical questions

There are two types of historical questions.

Historical material within the material itself
If you develop a historical curiosity within the material it will reap many benefits. If you see any name, pursue it. I was studying about Paul's two-year trial at Caesarea before Antonius Felix, the Roman governor from 52–60 A.D., and Luke has a one-liner with regard to Felix that captured my imagination. For two years, Felix kept Paul in his prison at Caesarea and kept having him up to talk to him, "hoping to receive some money from Paul." Ah, but Paul never paid him off. Luke, the historian that he is, is always understated. For instance, Luke just mentions that Felix's wife was "Drusilla, a Jewess." Well, actually she's the daughter of Herod Agrippa I, and had been married to another man. Felix stole her by seduction and by the use of his great power as a governor. That was such a scandal that Josephus goes into detail about how he lost all the respect of the Jews.

Josephus said Felix was so cruel that the number of people crucified under Felix was incalculable. In 60 A.D. Felix was fired by a direct order from Seneca himself, who was prime minister under Nero, for corruption, the very thing Luke notes. For two years he kept Paul rotting in this prison, though Paul's a Roman citizen and has made an appeal to Caesar, and for two years he sits in Felix's prison at Caesarea because Felix knew Paul had brought a large amount of money down to Jerusalem. He had taken an offering through all the Greek churches for the Jews.

It's a tribute to Paul that he sits there and rots. By historical study, you know what Paul is up against.

Historical questions behind the material
Scholars call this form criticism. Now, form criticism has dangers when it becomes arrogant, but form criticism rightly handled can be useful. Form criticism tries to understand the setting in the church that produces the documents.

In John 1:1–18, John has a marvelous song to the Word. "In the beginning was the Word, the Word was with God, the Word was God, all things were made through him." But three times he interrupts the song to say: Oh, by the way, John the Baptist is not the Messiah. Then he goes back to the song.

The historical question within the material asks, ‘Who is John the Baptist?’ Obviously you have to study that. But the form critical question says, ‘Why does John interrupt his song three times to tell us that John the Baptist is not the Christ?’

Maybe there's a great controversy. Maybe some people do think John the Baptist is Messiah. Actually we know that from the New Testament. In Luke 3, Luke says some were wondering whether John was the Messiah. Is there still a debate going on about John the Baptist when John writes this book from Ephesus? And of course we know there was. From Acts we know it was at Ephesus where Paul met the people who knew about John the Baptist and not about Christ.
I want to get you inside the text just for the sake of the text, because when that happens you're going to end up with so many things to talk about that you're going to have no problem preaching a sermon. In fact, when you get inside the text, the biggest problem in preaching is the narrowing process.

Content-theological questions

With this question we are now beginning to move out of the first century. We now ask, what does it mean? That's a big transition, a dangerous one too. That's why it's important you answer the first two questions first. Once you say, *I think it means this*, you're a theologian, good or bad. You have to be a theologian to stay under the text, because the text demands it. I have to come to some judgment as to what it means, not only what it says. And when I do that, I'm at the content-theological core of a commentary.

Contemporary questions
There are two sorts of contemporary issues.

Contemporary within its own setting
I now bring the material into collision with other worldviews around it.

For example, after you study John the Baptist, his theology, and his sermons, you could ask, "*I wonder how what John the Baptist is expecting collides with what Jesus is doing?"* When I try to understand that collision, I'm doing the contemporary question. We know a collision did occur because in Luke 7 John says, "Are you the Messiah? Or shall we look for somebody else?"

The contemporary question asks, How would this teaching collide with the Pharisee movement? Or how does it collide with the Sadducees or the Essenes or the Romans or the Greeks? And of course the more you study and develop a curiosity at this level, the better you can do this job.

Contemporary down through the centuries
Now that I know what this text means, how does it collide with other worldviews down through the generations? For instance, as a sixteenth-century commentator, Calvin does a masterful job of bringing the text into collision with scholastic thought, Roman Catholic theological thought, Aquinas, and Augustine. That's the role of the theologian.

But as great a commentator as Calvin is, you see why we need new commentators in every generation. Because Calvin, as great as he is, doesn't grapple with Karl Marx with Eastern thought with Woody Allen's or Stephen Spielberg's movies, but you have to. The context keeps shifting.

Discipleship questions
In the discipleship question the commentator dares to ask, "What does this text mean to me? Where am I under this text? Where is it rubbing me or challenging me?" And then, of course, "How does it speak to those who will hear me preach?"

If you do this journey for its own sake, when you're finished you're going to have far too many things to say, and your job is going to be narrowing. Because of your study, you will be contemporary, and you will be relevant.

Earl Palmer is pastor of University Presbyterian Church in Seattle, Washington, and author of Mastering the New Testament: 1, 2, 3 John and Revelation (W Publishing Group, 1991)

APPENDIX G

Illustrating with Integrity and Sensitivity
7 questions for staying above reproach

Wayne Harvey

Several years ago I heard a sermon illustration I thought was great for demonstrating determination. I decided to use it. Here's the story:

On the last day of the 1956 Olympic Games, Austria had yet to win a gold medal. Its only hope was in a young Austrian named Johann who had entered the rapid-fire pistol competition. His teammates weren't disappointed. As he fired his last shot, he gave his country their single gold medal.

When Johann returned to his homeland, his country gave him a warm welcome and a huge parade in his honour. Tragically, only a few weeks later, his right hand, his shooting hand, was blown off in an accident.

But this didn't stop Johann. After his body had healed, he walked out the back door of his home one day with something stuffed under his shirt. His wife noticed the bulge and followed him to a place where she saw him loading a pistol, holding it between a tree and his leg. Shot by shot, he emptied the pistol with his left hand and reloaded. After months of this daily practice Johann became proficient. Almost miraculously, he went to the 1960 Olympics where his determination paid off for himself and his country as he won a second Olympic gold medal in the pistol competition.

Isn't that a great story?

If only it were true.

When I heard this story about Johann, I was so impressed I decided to learn more. In an Olympics book, I found, to my surprise, little of what I had heard in the sermon was accurate. The man's name wasn't "Johann" but Karoly Takacs. He wasn't Austrian but Hungarian. The years he won gold medals were not 1956 and 1960 but 1948 and 1952, years in which his country won not one gold medal but ten and sixteen, respectively. And his right hand wasn't blown off between the Olympic Games but during World War II, after he'd won the European championship.

I was amused after I learned the truth about "Johann," so I called the pastor who had preached the recorded sermon and told him what I'd discovered. After we had a good laugh, he told me he had gotten the story from a well-known preacher, who in turn had received the story from a nationally known writer and pastor. Who knows how many people have been impressed and inspired by an almost entirely fictional man named "Johann"?

But telling half-true or untrue stories to our congregations can threaten our integrity. Accuracy is critical also because our listeners will remember illustrations far longer than our sermon points. I have created a check-up to ensure my illustrations stay healthy.

Am I inserting myself into someone else's illustration? A cartoon showed several church members giving three large volumes to their pastor. The caption: "Pastor, since you've been with us for a year now, we wanted to give you a copy of your biography that Mrs. Smedley has put together from all that you've told us about yourself in your sermons."

To take someone else's personal experience and make it yours is theft. If you find someone else's good personal illustration, don't say that it happened to you. Attribute it accurately, and it can still be effective.

In the illustration, is someone described as "a member of my former church"? This phrase may irritate present church members, who tire of hearing about people in "that other church." It also broadcasts this message: "I'm telling this story about something confidential a former parishioner told me. If you confide in me, I may tell your story at my next church."

Just say, "I once knew someone who … "

Should this illustration be checked for accuracy? Some illustrations are like investments: If they seem too good to be true, they probably are.

For years I've enjoyed using an illustration about the introduction of Coca-Cola in Korea, to show how easily we can misunderstand one another. I found the story in a sermon magazine, which said that when the soft drink was first introduced, the company wanted to use Korean letters and words which sounded as much like "Coca-Cola" as possible, so they used "Ko Ke Ko Le." However, sales were flat because that set of Korean words means, "Bite the wax tadpole." So Coca-Cola changed the name to "Ko Kou Ko La," which means, "May the mouth rejoice," and sales increased.

I planned to use this illustration recently, but because we have a number of internationals as members, I decided to confirm it. When I showed the two Coca-Cola names to a Korean member, she informed me that neither set of words means anything in Korean. On bottles in Korea, "Coca-Cola" is "Ko Ka Kol La," which means nothing but sounds just like Coca-Cola.

I won't be using that one anymore.

Will this illustration be sensitive to people in the congregation? It's simply good manners to be sensitive to gender, age, and ethnic group. The phrase "little old lady" will turn off at least some older women; so will "girls" when talking about women. One man in my church told me how offended he was when he read in our local newspaper about an "elderly man" who was listed as 65, just his age!

Will this particular congregation relate to the illustration? Do most of your listeners read *Vogue* or *People?* Do they watch professional wrestling or public television? Do they prefer jazz or country? Every church is different, so some illustrations will work better than others.
If you have a story about a king, you might make the character a CEO, a business owner, or a union boss, if the illustration can be adapted. Your listeners will be better able to put themselves into those stories than stories about people from another age and setting.

Relate also to local people, events, and places when possible. For example, if a member of your church has overcome cancer and gives permission to use the story as a sermon illustration that will have great impact.

Is this illustration too detailed? Early in my preaching ministry, I thought the only good illustration was a detailed illustration. If I told about a day in May, I would describe the weather, the colour of flowers, how much rain had fallen during the month, and more.

What adds impact, though, are *relevant* details. One of my favourite sports stories is about Glenn Cunningham, a student at the University of Kansas who set an American record for the indoor mile run in 1932. What makes him even more remarkable is that at age 8, his legs were so severely burned that his doctors said he would probably never walk again. Yet with hard work and perseverance, Cunningham became a winner.

The details make the story better than just, "A young man once won a record in the indoor mile run even though his legs were burned as a child and doctors told him he might never walk." Details do have an important place if they're the right ones and they aren't too numerous.

Am I clearly differentiating true and imaginative stories? Sometimes we add unsubstantiated details to true stories: "As David gathered the stones to fling at Goliath, he gathered the smallest from the stream, knowing that even one of these, aimed by God's unerring hand, would be enough to knock down the giant." These kinds of details can alter a story's substance (and make the story saccharine).

However, imagined details that don't change the substance of the story can help listeners. I recently heard a Bible teacher tell the story of Hosea buying back his prostitute-wife. The only biblical description of this incident is in Hosea 3:2-3: "So I bought her for fifteen shekels of silver and about a homer and a lethek of barley. Then I told her, 'You are to live with me many days; you must not be a prostitute or be intimate with any man, and I will live with you.'"

This teacher embellished the sparse story this way: "Imagine Gomer, Hosea's wife, standing on the auction block, about to go to the highest bidder. Dressed in rags. No makeup or pretty clothes to attract men as she had done before. Looking at the crowd of bidders and seeing the grinning faces of men who'd had her. But then among the crowd she sees the face of her husband she'd abandoned. Imagine how stunned she would have been to see him come for her, his rightful wife, to buy her back with all he had. All for one woman who had rejected him, left him, and been with her many lovers. *How can he love me so much?* she must have thought."

I liked this illustration, in spite of the license the teller took with the story. He has brought a simple transaction to life by dramatically portraying the important scene—yet he never presented his version of the story as if it really happened. He asked us only to imagine his version, and that exercise painted a beautiful picture of God's grace. [Editor's note: For an audio example of this principle see track ____ on the supplemental CD]

Wayne Harvey is pastor of First Baptist Church in Sanford, Florida.

APPENDIX H

The Dress of Thought

Improving your way with words
An article by Haddon Robinson

The preacher of Ecclesiastes waited until his conclusion to write down his credentials: "Not only was the Teacher wise" he says with unsettling candour, "but also he imparted knowledge to the people. He pondered and searched out and set in order many proverbs. The Teacher searched to find just the right words, and what he wrote was upright and true" (Ecclesiastes 12:9-10). To impart his knowledge and to come up with just the right words, the ancient preacher evidently wrote a manuscript.

Not all preachers write out their sermons, nor do preachers who write out sermons write out every sermon, but the discipline of preparing a manuscript improves preaching. Writing scrapes the fungus off our thought, arranges our ideas in order, and underlines the important ideas. "Writing," said Francis Bacon, "makes an exact man exact in thought and in speech."

An expository preacher professing a high view of inspiration should respect the power of words. To affirm that the individual words of Scripture must be God-breathed, but then to ignore our own choice of language smacks of gross inconsistency. Our theology, if not our common sense, should tell us that ideas and words cannot be separated. Like Jell-O, concepts assume the mold of the words into which they are poured. As pigments define the artist's picture, so words capture and color the preacher's thought.

The sage of Proverbs compares a word fitly spoken to "apples of gold in settings of silver" (Proverbs 25:11). "The difference between the right word and the almost right word, "wrote Mark Twain, "is the difference between lightning and the lightning bug." The English poet John Keats was keenly aware of how words shape ideas. One evening as he sat in his study with his friend Leigh Hunt, Hunt read while Keats labored over a poem. At one point, Keats glanced up and asked, "Hunt, what do you think of this? 'A beautiful thing is an unending joy.'"

"Good," said Hunt, "but not quite perfect."

There was silence for a while. Then Keats looked up again, "How about this: 'A thing of beauty is an unending joy.'"

"Better," replied his friend, "but still not quite right."

Keats once more bent over his desk, his pen making quiet scratching noises on the paper. Finally he asked, "Now what do you think of this?' A thing of beauty is a joy forever.'"

"That," said Hunt, "will live as long as the English language is spoken."

Most of the Scriptures that we love best express God's truth in memorable language—John 3:16. Even though Paul disdained eloquence as valuable in itself, he wrote his inspired epistles in inspiring language. While a painting such as Rembrandt's *Christ at Emmaus* can leave us speechless, anyone who generalizes that "a picture is worth a thousand words" has never tried to capture John 3:16, a twenty-five-word sentence with a picture.

There are bright words, as brilliant as a tropical sunrise, and there are drab words, as unattractive as a country bus station. There are hard words that punch like a prize fighter, and weak words as insipid as tea made with one dunk of a teabag. There are pillow words that comfort people and steel-cold words that threaten them. Some words transplant listeners at least for an instant close to the courts of God, and other words send them to the gutter. We live by words, love by words, pray with words, curse with words, and die for words. Joseph Conrad exaggerated only slightly when he declared, "Give me the right word and the right accent, and I will move the world!"

"But language is not my gift." That is the protest of a one-talented servant in the process of burying his ministry. Gift or not, we must use words, and the only question is whether we will use them poorly or well. If you're willing to work at it, you can become more skillful with them than you are. If you compare yourself with C. S. Lewis, Malcolm Muggeridge, or Philip Yancey, you may feel like declaring bankruptcy. Let those artisans provide an ideal toward which you can move. But in every sermon you can strive to be clear and exact in what you mean.

Our choice of words is called style. Everyone possesses style—be it bland, dull, invigorating, precise—but however we handle or mishandle words becomes our style. Style reflects how we think and how we look at life. Style varies with different speakers, and an individual speaker will alter his or her style for different audiences and different occasions. Addressing a high school class, for instance, may demand a different style from what you use in addressing a Sunday morning congregation. The polished wording used in a baccalaureate sermon would sound completely out of place in a small group Bible study.

While rules governing good writing also apply to the sermon manuscript, a sermon is not an essay on its hind legs because what you write serves only as a broad preparation for what you will actually say. Your manuscript is not your final product. Your sermon should not be read to a congregation. Reading usually kills a lively sense of communication. Neither should you try to memorize your manuscript. Not only does memorization place a hefty burden on you if you speak several times a week, but an audience senses when you are reading words off the wall of your mind. Agonize with thought and words at your desk, and what you write will be internalized. Rehearse several times aloud without your manuscript. Make no conscious effort to recall your exact wording. Simply try to get your flow of thought clearly in mind. When you step into

the pulpit, your written text will have done its work to shape your use of language. Much of your wording will come back to you as you preach, but not all. In the heat of your delivery, your sentence structure will change. New phrases will occur to you, and your speech will sparkle like spontaneous conversation. Your manuscript, therefore, contributes to the thought and wording of your sermon, but it does not determine it.

Writing a sermon differs from writing an essay or a book. Write as though you were talking with someone, and as in conversation, strive for immediate understanding. Authors know that their readers need not grasp an idea instantly. Readers can examine a page at leisure, reflect on what they have read, argue with the ideas, and move along at any rate they find comfortable. Should they stumble across an unfamiliar word, they can get up and consult a dictionary. If they lose a writer's path of thought, they can retrace it. In short, readers control the experience. Listeners, on the other hand, cannot afford the luxury of leisurely reflection. They cannot go back to listen a second time. If they do not take in what is said as it is said, they will miss it completely. Should they take time out to review the speaker's argument, they will miss what the speaker is saying now. Listeners sit at the mercy of the preacher. Speakers, unlike writers, must make themselves understood instantly.

Strong transitions

There are several techniques that can help you think with fierceness and communicate with clarity. Try indenting and labeling your manuscript according to your outline. For example, the material that you would have under a Roman numeral is flush with the margin. The supporting material for that point would be indented. By doing this, you will imprint on your mind the coordination and subordination of the ideas in your sermon. Listeners, of course, do not hear an outline. They hear a sermon. The outline and the manuscript are for your benefit.

In addition, because transitions carry a heavy burden in spoken communication, they take up more space in a sermon manuscript. Listeners hear your sermon only as a series of sentences. Transitions serve as road signs to point out where the sermon has been and where it is going. Transitions, therefore, are longer and more detailed than in writing.

It is hard to overestimate the importance of clear transitions for clear communication. Major transitions will appear between the introduction and the first major point, and then between the major points within the sermon, and between the body of the sermon and the conclusion. Strong transitions will usually review the major points already covered and show the listener how the points relate to the major idea and to each other, and then they introduce the next point. As a result, major transitions can take up to a paragraph or more in the sermon manuscript.

Minor transitions that link sub-points together may be shorter: sometimes a single word (therefore, besides, yet, consequently), at other places a phrase (in addition to that, what is more, as a result of this), and even more often a sentence or two. Although a writer may imply

transitions, a speaker must develop them. It is important to state your point, restate it "in other words," even restate it again, and then repeat it. Clear, full, definite transitions look clumsy on paper, but they run easily in a sermon, and they enable your congregation to think your thoughts with you. A major reason that sermons fail to be clear is that the transitions have not been well crafted.

A clear style

What characteristics of style should you try to cultivate? First of all, you must be clear. Talleyrand once remarked that language was invented to conceal, not reveal the thoughts of men and women. Educated people sometimes speak as though Talleyrand had been their speech instructor. They attempt to impress their audience with the profundity of their thought through the obscurity of their language. A sermon is not deep because it is muddy. Whatever has been thought through can be stated simply and clearly. Poincar, the brilliant French mathematician, insisted, "No man knows anything about higher mathematics until he can explain it clearly to the man on the street." Similarly, we do not understand a passage from the Bible or a point of theology unless we can express it clearly to the men and women sitting before us.

Make no mistake about it. For preachers, clarity is a moral matter. It is not merely a question of rhetoric, but a matter of life and death. Imagine a physician who prescribes a drug but fails to give clear instruction as to how and when the drug is to be used. The physician puts the patient's life at risk. It is a moral matter for a doctor to be clear. So, too, when we proclaim God's truth, we must be clear. If we believe that what we preach either draws people to God or keeps them away from him, then for God's sake and the people's sake, we must be clear. Helmut Thielicke reminds us that the offense of preaching doesn't come when people do not understand us, but because they understand all too well, or at least they are afraid they will have to understand it.

Imagine a mass meeting in China with a Communist launching a tirade against Christianity. Someone jumps to his feet and shouts, "Jesus is the Messiah!" The audience would be startled, and the Christian would be ejected for disturbing the meeting. But suppose he cried out, "Jesus Christ is God! He is the only Lord, and all who make the system into a god will go to hell, along with their Communist leaders." The objector would risk being torn to pieces by the authorities. Clarity reveals the offense of the gospel. It also provides life and hope.

A clear outline

How then can you bring clarity to your sermon? Clear manuscripts develop out of clear outlines. Communication originates in the mind—not in the fingers, not in the mouth, but in the head. Some preachers have jerky minds. While they have stimulating insights, their thought follows no natural sequence, and their zigzag thinking runs listeners to death. After a bewildering half hour trying to keep up with a jerky speaker, hearers will feel that listening to a dull friend comes as a soothing relief, like taking a cat in your lap after trying to hold on to a squirrel. Zigzag thinking can be straightened out only by outlining your overall thought

before working on the details. Labouring over an individual paragraph or sentence is pointless unless you know the broad sweep of thought in your sermon. Clear manuscripts and clear sermons develop from clear outlines.

Short sentences
Furthermore, to be clear, keep your sentences short. Rudolph Flesch, in *The Art of Plain Talk*, maintains that clarity increases as sentence-length decreases. According to his formula, a clear writer will average about seventeen or eighteen words to a sentence, and will not allow any sentence to wander on over thirty words. In your sermon manuscript, short sentences keep your thought from tangling and therefore are easier for you to remember. When you deliver your sermon, you will not concern yourself at all with sentence length, just as you do not think about commas, periods, or exclamation points. As you preach, your words tumble out in long, short, or even broken sentences, punctuated by pauses, vocal slides, and variations in pitch, rate, and force. Short sentences in your manuscript serve your mind; they have little to do with your delivery.

Simple sentence structure Keep sentence structures simple. A clearer, more energetic style emerges when you follow the thinking sequence: main subject, main verb, and (where needed) main object. In the jargon of grammarians, concentrate on the independent clause before adding dependent clauses (an independent clause can stand alone as a complete sentence; a dependent clause cannot). If you start into a sentence without pinning down what you want to emphasize, you may end up stressing insignificant details. If you add too many dependent clauses, you complicate your sentences, and that makes them harder to understand and remember. Generally, style will be clearer if you package one thought in one sentence. For two thoughts, use two sentences. Arthur Schopenhauer scolded the Germans, "if it is an impertinent thing to interrupt another person when he is speaking, it is no less impertinent to interrupt yourself." Complicated sentences have an additional disadvantage: they slow the pace of the sermon. As Henry Ward Beecher put it, "A switch with leaves on it doesn't tingle."

Simple words
Simple words also contribute to a clear style. Ernest Campbell tells of a wag who, in a moment of frustration, declared, "Every profession is a conspiracy against the layman." Any citizen who has battled with an income tax return wonders why the Internal Revenue Service cannot say what it means. Lawyers assure themselves of a place by embalming the law in legalese. Scientists keep the little person at bay by resorting to symbols and language that only the initiates understand.

Theologians and ministers, too, seem to keep themselves in office by resorting to language that bewilders ordinary mortals. Beware of jargon! Specialized vocabulary helps professionals within a discipline to communicate. But it becomes jargon when it is used unnecessarily or with people who do not understand it. While it takes three years or more to get through seminary, it can take you ten years to get over it. If you

pepper your sermons with words like *eschatology, angst, pneumatology, exegesis, existential, Johannine, the Christ-event*, you throw up barriers to communication. Jargon combines the pretentiousness of big words with the deadness of a cliché, and it is often used to impress rather than to inform an audience.

Use a short word unless you find it absolutely necessary to use a longer word. Josh Billings struck a blow for simplicity and clarity when he said, "Young man, when you search Webster's dictionary to find words big enough to convey your meaning, you can make up your mind you don't mean much."

Long words have paralysis in their tails. Legend has it that several decades ago a young copywriter came up with an ad for a new kind of soap: "The alkaline element and fats in this product are blended in such a way as to secure the highest quality of saponification, along with the specific gravity that keeps it on top of the water, relieving the bather of the trouble and annoyance of fishing around for it at the bottom of the tub during his ablution." A more experienced ad-man captured the idea in two simple words: "It floats."

George G. Williams estimates that from 70 to 78 percent of the words used by W. Somerset Maugham, Sinclair Lewis, Robert Lewis Stevenson, and Charles Dickens have only one syllable.…All the big things in life have little names, such as *life, death, peace, war, dawn, day, night, hope, love,* and *home*. Learn to use small words in a big way.

No matter how accurately a phrase or word expresses a speaker's meaning, it is worthless if the listeners do not know what it means. "Speak," said Abraham Lincoln, "so that the most lowly can understand you and the rest will have no difficulty." Billy Sunday, the noted evangelist, understood the value of simplicity when he said, "if a man were to take a piece of meat and smell it and look disgusted, and his little boy were to say, 'What's the matter with it, Pop?' and he were to say, 'It is undergoing a process of decomposition in the formation of new chemical compounds,' the boy would be all in. But if the father were to say, 'It's rotten,' then the boy would understand and hold his nose. 'Rotten' is a good Anglo-Saxon word, and you do not have to go to a dictionary to find out what it means."

This does not mean that you should talk down to a congregation. Instead, your rule of thumb should be: Don't overestimate your audience's religious vocabulary, or underestimate their intelligence.

A direct and personal style

In addition to being clear, a second major characteristic of spoken style is that it must be direct and personal. While an essay is addressed "to whom it may concern," a sermon is delivered to the men and women of the First Presbyterian Church near Ninth and Elm Streets on June 15 at 10:30 in the morning. The writer and the reader sit alone, distant from each other and unknown. Preachers speak to their hearers face to face and call them by name. Written language communicates the results of

thinking, while spoken language represents a spontaneity of thought that Donald Bryant and Karl Wallace describe as "the-vivid-realization-of-idea-at-the-moment-of-utterance." Therefore a sermon should not sound like a thesis read to a congregation. It sounds like lively conversation where the speaker is thinking in the act of speaking. The feeling of good preaching is that you are talking to and with your hearers. You are thinking about ideas the instant that you utter them. Both speaker and listener sense they are in touch with each other.

Sermons use direct address. While a writer may say, "In their conversations, Christians must be careful of how they speak about others," a preacher will more likely say, "You must be careful of how you talk about others." The personal pronoun *you* give both minister and audience a sense of oneness. While *you* can be effective, at other times you will say *we* because you mean *you and I*. Though the *we* of direct address stands in contrast to the editorial *we* that substitutes for the pronoun *I*, an editorial *we* sounds as though the preacher were speaking for a committee. The *we* of oral style, like the *we* in good conversation, means *you and I* together.

Speakers will use questions where writers may not. A question invites the listener to think about what the preacher will say next, and often is used in a transition to introduce a major point or a new idea. Questions are sometimes employed in the conclusion of a sermon. Questions show clearly that the audience and speaker are face-to-face. Good questions provoke thought and help listeners anticipate what will come next.

Personal style pays little attention to the conventions of formal writing. Public speakers use contractions (such as *can't, we'll, wouldn't*) and often split infinitives (such as *to deeply disapprove*). Any speech appropriate in lively conversation fits preaching. This doesn't mean, of course, that anything goes. Poor grammar, gutter language, or faulty pronunciations may unsettle listeners, and like a giggle in a prayer meeting, all of these raise doubts about a preacher's competence.

What about the use of slang? It gets mixed reviews. When it is used deliberately, slang can capture attention and inject a sense of casualness and informality into the sermon. When it is used thoughtlessly, slang sounds trite and even cheap, and it betrays a lazy mind. Personal, direct speech does not call for careless use of language or inappropriate or undignified English. The language of effective preaching should be the language of stimulating conversation between thoughtful people.

A vivid style

Vividness is a third characteristic of effective style. Wayne Minnick argues that communication that taps into a listener's experience appeals to both mind and feelings. We learn about the world around us through hearing, sight, smell, taste, and touch. To get your listeners to experience your message, therefore, you must appeal to their senses. You do this directly through both sight and sound. Your congregation sees your gestures and facial expressions and hears what you say. You also stimulate the senses indirectly through your use of words. Language

helps listeners recall impressions of past experiences and, to some degree, they respond to the words as they did to the events. For example, gastric juices may flow when we hear the words *hot buttered bread*, and then stop in a shudder if we think of roaches crawling on it. Your words cause people to connect with new experiences out of feelings about past experiences.

Your vividness increases when you use specific, concrete details and plenty of them. We label a phrase *specific* when it is explicit and exact, and *concrete* if it paints a picture on the mind. The figure $1,923,212.92 is *specific* down to the penny, but it is not concrete. The figure $275 on your monthly electric bill is concrete. While you can't visualize the first figure, you can the second.

Specific details add interest if they are concrete. They communicate because they relate to the experiences of the audience. Therefore, instead of *produce, say cabbages, cucumbers, carrots, and oranges*. Rather than weapon, talk about a *heavy lead pipe*. Instead of *major cities*, be specific: *New York, Chicago, Dallas, San Francisco*. The following statement is abstract: "In the course of human experience, we observe that the events of our existence have definite cyclical characteristics. Awareness of this will direct observers to a high degree of appropriateness in their actions." The preacher in Ecclesiastes expressed that same thought this way: 'For everything there is a season, and a time for every purpose under heaven: a time to be born, and a time to die; a time to weep, and a time to laugh; a time to mourn, and a time to dance; a time to keep silence, and a time to speak" (Ecclesiastes 3:1-7 ASV).

Like an artist or a novelist, you must learn to think in pictures. That means you must visualize details. Gustave Flaubert gave his writing disciple, Guy de Maupassant, an assignment: "Go down to the [railroad station] and you will find there about fifty cabs. They all look pretty much alike, but they are not alike. You pick out one and describe it so accurately that when it goes past, I cannot possibly mistake it."

Your speech will become more vivid if you let nouns and verbs carry your meaning. Adjectives and adverbs clutter speech, and they keep company with weak nouns and verbs. According to E. B. White, "The adjective hasn't been built that can pull a weak or inaccurate noun out of a tight place." Strong nouns and verbs stand alone. *A tall man*, should become *a giant; a large bird* should become *a pelican* or *an eagle* or *a vulture*. Say *he bellowed*, not *he talked very loudly*, or *he trotted* rather than *he went quickly*. Be especially careful of qualifiers like *very, so, quite, rather, too*. They betray our failure to choose words of substance.

Scalding has a strength that *very hot* does not; *excruciating* hurts more than *too painful*; and *scintillating* paints a better picture than so *interesting*. When choosing your verbs, use live ones. Finite, active verbs make a sentence go. The principle to follow is "somebody does something." Too many passive verbs suck the life out of speech: *opinions and judgments are formed by us on the basis of what we have known* sounds dead. *We think as we have known* possesses vitality. *A good time*

was had by all lies there while *everyone had a good time* moves.
Verbs, like nouns, wake up the imagination when they are precise. *She went* gets her there, but not as clearly as *crawled, stumbled, shuffled, and lurched.* He *shouts, shrieks, rants, whispers* tell us what *says* does not say.

Your vividness also increases when you employ fresh figures of speech. Metaphors and similes produce sensations in listeners and cause them to recall images of past experiences. Alexander Maclaren stimulates the sense of touch when he says, "All sin is linked together in a slimy tangle like a field of seaweed so that a man, once caught in its oozy fingers, is almost sure to drown." Lord Byron appeals to sight when he tells us: "The Assyrian came down like a wolf on the fold, and his cohorts all gleaming in silver and gold."

Charles H. Spurgeon captured the senses in a simile that refers to a past era: "The great universe lay in the mind of God like unborn forests in the acorn's cup." Alfred North Whitehead touched on sight and smell when he reflected, "Knowledge doesn't keep any better than fish." Figures of speech conserve time by packing more into a phrase than word-wasting speakers express in a paragraph. Consider a few:

Fig-leaf phrases that cover naked ignorance

Words that have been hollowed out on the inside and filled with whipped cream
Clichés that stand like tombstones over dead ideas

If Protestantism is found dead, the sermon will be the dagger in her heart.

He avoided the sticky issues as though he were stepping around puddles of hot tar.

Metaphors and similes, like lobsters, must be served fresh. Both the literal and figurative meanings should strike the mind of the listener at the same instant. When the literal image fades because the comparison has been overworked, the figure loses its force. Hearers become tone-deaf to them. The following that once may have hit like a one-two punch, now hardly reaches the chin:

a. Outreach of the church

b. Tried and true

c. Lost and dying world

d. Born-again Christians

e. Throw the baby out with the bathwater

f. Souls for your hire

g. A prayer-hearing and prayer-answering God

h. Straddle the fence

i. Sharing

j. Fellowship.

When a comparison has turned stale, toss it out and come up with a fresh one that clarifies your point and keeps your audience alert. Relevance shows up in style as well as content. While we speak the eternal message, it must be in today's words. Study magazine ads or radio or television commercials for easily understood language that speaks to the inhabitants of our culture. Common observation tells us what linguistic tests have proved—much of the language used in our pulpits is "imprecise, irrelevant, and insignificant."

Effective style cannot be taught like a mathematical formula. Mastery of "the well-dressed word" requires an eye for particulars and a search for significant resemblances between things not ordinarily associated with one another. In short, doing away with hackneyed and tired speech demands your imagination. In expository preaching, nothing has been more needed—or more lacking. Expositors who represent the creative God dare not become, in Robert Browning's description, "clods untouched by a spark."

How can you shun the sin of boring people?

1. *Pay attention to your own use of language.* In private conversation, don't shift your mind into neutral, using phrases that idle rather than move. Cultivate fresh comparisons in ordinary conversation and you will find them easier to use when you preach. Beecher gave this testimony about illustrations, which also applies to style: "while illustrations are as natural to me as breathing, I use fifty now to one in the early years of my ministry. I developed a tendency that was latent in me, and educated myself in that respect; and that, too, by study and practice, by hard thought, and by a great many trials, both with the pen, and extemporaneously by myself, when I was walking here and there."

2. *Study how others use language.* When writers or speakers shake you awake, examine how they did it. Because poetry bursts with similes and metaphors, studying verse develops a feel for figurative language. *Reader's Digest* has a regular feature called "More Picturesque Speech" that offers similes and metaphors that are alive and compelling.

3. *Read aloud.* Reading aloud does two things for you. First, your vocabulary will increase. As youngsters, we learned to speak by listening and imitating long before we could read or write. Reading aloud recreates that experience. Second, as you read aloud a style better than your own, new patterns of speech and creative wording will be etched on your mind. You will develop a feel for picture-making language. Read to your spouse

and children so that you'll be forced to interpret what you read. Read novels, plays, sermons, and especially the Bible. The King James Version presents God's truth in Shakespearean grandeur, and the New International Version puts it into more up-to-date dress. Both have impressive style.

Haddon Robinson is Harold John Ockenga Distinguished Professor of Preaching at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, in South Hamilton, Massachusetts; senior editor of PreachingToday.com; radio teacher on Discover the Word; and author of Biblical Preaching (Baker, 1980, 2001).

APPENDIX I

Effective Introductions

An interview with Leadership managing editor Eric Reed

PreachingToday.com: We want to learn from excellent communicators how to improve our introductions, one of the most important elements of a sermon. Let's begin with Max Lucado, who is the pulpit minister of Oak Hills Church of Christ in San Antonio, Texas. Here is the introduction of the sermon "The Touch of Christ," which comes from Preaching Today issue 197:

Some years ago when I had been in the ministry only a few months, I went to visit the wife of a man who had just passed away. They were an older couple. He was a Bible teacher in our Sunday school class, and I really liked him. He was a gracious fellow, and it was a sad day for all of us when he passed away. I went to their house, and as his wife was walking me down the hallway to a room where we were going to plan the funeral, we passed a row of family portraits hanging along the walls.

I noticed something familiar out of the corner of my eye. Tacked on the wall were notes I had written. I stopped my friend in the hallway and said," I don't understand this. Someone tacked on the wall all these notes I wrote him. "She said, "John did that. It meant so much to him that the minister wrote him a note."

I was 33 years old; he was 74. I was brand new in the ministry; he had been in the church and had forgotten more than I'd ever learned. He had served as an elder in several congregations on two different continents, but still something from the hand of the minister meant a great deal to him.

The power of a hand — to touch and encourage! When surrendered to God, our hands belong no longer to us, but become the very hands of God.

Were we to see a documentary about the hands of Christ, we wouldn't see abuse, greedy clutching, or self-centred yanking. We would see one occasion after another of the kind hand of Christ on people as their lives were changed — infants being brought to Christ, parents coming to him for encouragement. Each one is touched; each one is changed.

None were touched or changed more than the unnamed leper in Matthew 8: " When Jesus came down from the hill, great crowds followed him, and then a man with a skin disease came to Jesus. And the man bowed before him and said, 'Lord, you can heal me if you will.' And Jesus reached out his hand and touched the man and said, 'I will! Be healed.' And immediately the man was healed from his disease."

Mark and Luke also chose to tell this story, but with apologies to all three writers, I don't think any of them tell us enough. The fellow appears and

disappears, and we don't know his name. We know his disease, and we know his decision, but we're left with questions. Sometimes my curiosity gets the best of me, and I begin to wonder.

I wonder what it's like to receive the touch of Christ — to feel his hand on my shoulder, to feel his hand on my disease?

Eric, talk about some of the things you liked about this introduction.

Eric Reed: He accomplished a lot in a relatively small amount of time. The flow of his introduction was important. He moved through six distinct elements, things that had to be dealt with, but he got through them quickly and moved the listener from a personal story to personally entering the biblical story. He did that well.

He started with a personal story that offered many entry points. You could identify with the wife who was grieving or the man who appreciated a note from the minister or the young minister or an old person.

Then he had a "nut 'graph" — a thesis statement, more or less. It establishes why he is preaching this sermon. He tells the story, and then he gives us the nut 'graph.

Then he gives us a point and counterpoint, positive and negative definitions of what he's talking about — the hand — and moves seamlessly into and out of Scripture. I think his personal statement of dissatisfaction with the biblical account is a positive thing, because it gives the listener room for questions, which they're going to need, because he's going to start answering a lot of questions and bringing colour into this story. And it foreshadows that he's going to tell the story with more detail than is in Scripture.

Finally, the question at the end — "I wonder what it's like to receive the touch of Christ, to feel his hand on my shoulder?" — it's a restatement of the nut 'graph, that we are the hands and we're going to be doing the touching. But he poses it in the form of a question, so we're eager to find out what the answer is.

You used an interesting phrase: *entry points*. What do you mean by that?

If you're reading a sermon or story or article, entry points are the places where you tune in, where you identify with a person in the story and start thinking, *If I were in this account, who would I be? What would I be doing? What do I have in common with this person?* Or if your attention has wandered, those places are where you can come back and not have lost too much. So entry points get you back into the story.

Another strength?

Another strength is, again, this personal story at the beginning. The text

is about healing a man with leprosy. This has few contemporary equivalents. Some people might think, *He can't preach about leprosy. We don't have much of that anymore. Maybe he can talk about cancer or AIDS or homelessness.* But he doesn't do that. By setting it up with this personal story about the thank-you notes on the wall, he establishes that the sermon will take some unexpected turns and make some achievable applications. He's going to be looking for ways in everyday life to bring this principle he's going to explain through the story to our lives.

One of the things I liked about the introduction was the tone. All introductions create expectations. One of the expectations he creates in me as I hear this is that there's going to be a sense of compassion and tenderness, and my heart is going to be warmed. And he fulfils that promise, because throughout the sermon there is a tremendous sense of tenderness. I also like the way that instead of talking about the abstract concept of compassion, he gave us the hand and focused on something concrete that symbolized the idea of compassion. That's especially important in the introduction, because that's where we've got to get people with us. Anything that's concrete in the introduction helps people to connect with us.

We often think the concrete part is the application. Sometimes it's along the way or it's gathered together at the end, but you're saying you have to do something concrete in the beginning too.

Especially in the beginning, in the introduction. Application begins in the introduction. It's got to start there, and concreteness needs to begin there as well. We've got to take people from where they are in this world, the way they daily live, and begin to move them into bigger ideas.

He didn't start talking about leprosy or healing. He started with something we can actually do and feel at this point in our lives.

Any other strengths?

He had a clear purpose for his introduction. He intentionally moved through the phases, these elements I mentioned earlier. And in giving us a point of personal contact, he prepares the listeners to hear the story. We know he's a storyteller. That's what Max does. But along the way he's preparing us to enter into a story that's not contemporary and that's beyond what's on the page in the Bible. He's preparing us in a good way to wonder, to have a sanctified imagination.

One of the most helpful ideas I've heard regarding preaching is that it's a series of tasks. There are communication tasks you have to do in order to help people understand Scripture and so on. The introduction especially is a series of tasks: connecting with people, getting them interested, raising curiosity, seeing the relevance, and so on. You've pointed that out in his introduction here. He moves through a series of tasks, and by the time the introduction is done we're ready to hear.

Let's move on to our second example by Mark Labberton, who is the senior pastor of First Presbyterian Church in Berkley, California. This sermon is titled "Combining Conviction and Compassion" and appeared in Preaching Today issue 191. He addresses the subject of homosexuality.

What does the Bible teach about homosexuality? Since I have been at this church, I have had to answer this question as well as a number of related questions multiple times. There have been dozens of people, both men and women, both heterosexuals and those who are conflicted about their own homosexual orientation, who have come to see me and expressed their dilemmas about this issue.

Some have come to see me as married people involved in secret homosexual relationships outside the bounds of their marriage. Some have come to see me as single people who have committed themselves to a pattern of celibacy. Some are single people who are sexually active as homosexuals. Others are people who are in committed homosexual relationships. In every case, each person asked questions regarding their faith and understanding of the Bible in relation to homosexuality.

In this sense this question is not just for "them" but a question for believers. To ground my sermon, I want to first consider some assumptions and experiences that I bring to the topic of homosexuality, and then I want us to look closely at what the Bible teaches.

Eric, what did you like about that introduction?

He establishes the boundaries for his sermon right up front. It's a controversial issue, and most people in the congregation are going to come with their minds made up already. He establishes from the beginning what this sermon is and is not about, and that is extremely helpful. He sets up the fact that many people deal with this issue, people we know. He establishes that believers and heterosexuals have a reason to listen to this sermon. And he says he is approaching a difficult issue from a biblical perspective. I appreciate that. But because he's used these examples of people he has counselled, he's establishing also that he has a great concern for the people and the personal nature of their problem; so he's bringing the Bible to bear on that.

I like the word you use: *boundaries.*

If you're bringing up a controversial subject like homosexuality, you need to let people know from the beginning you're going to deal with it in a certain way, and there are some things they're thinking about that you're not going to deal with at this point and maybe some things they're not considering that they need to know. In his case, they need to know he is dealing with this from a biblical perspective. That's an important thing, because he's not dealing with homosexuality in society, and he's not dealing with church politics. So the boundaries are important.

I like the way the sermon began: "What does the Bible teach about homosexuality? "He lays it right out there.

Yes, there are no nice little stories to get started with on this one. You just dive in.

And you don't need anything else. The interest is already there.

I appreciated the way he used examples from his counselling experiences. He cited specific ways people are dealing with the issue of homosexuality. He said several times: some people have come to see me, and some are single, some are married, et cetera. It's helpful to let people know that he as a pastor is dealing with these issues, and for people who might think, *That's their issue out there*, it lets them know it's our issue here too. That was a good thing. But that also leads me to a caution.

What's the caution?

He said he had been there two years. For a pastor who hasn't been in his church long or who is in a smaller church, to use examples borne out of one's counselling experience can be a dangerous thing. If a pastor in a smaller congregation said, "I've met with dozens of people who are dealing with a controversial sexual issue," heads are going to turn and everybody is going to say, *Whose problem is that?* We have to be careful. He phrased it tactfully, and certainly there were no examples that could be traced. But even in a smaller setting using these same words, people would begin to wonder who he's talking about.

One of the tasks he needed to accomplish was to signal his compassion and sympathy and experience and understanding, and I thought he accomplished that well. If someone was sitting in the congregation and struggling with that, I think they would feel at the end of that introduction, *I can trust him. He's going to try to approach this fairly. He's going to be looking at what the Bible says. He's not going to be wielding it like a hammer. He's going to be wielding it in a compassionate manner.*

He established himself as someone who is going to be true to Scripture and concerned about the people at the same time.

Let's move to Rick Warren, our final example, pastor of Saddleback Church in Lake Forest, California. The sermon "What Difference Does Easter Make?" appeared in Preaching Today issue 223.

One of my favourite magazines is *U.S. News & World Report*. I like it because there's a section called "News You Can Use." I don't want to waste my time or your time, so we're going to talk about news you can use.

I want to ask two questions: Easter — what does it mean, and why does it matter?

A lot of people say, "I believe in the resurrection; I just don't understand it." George Gallup said even 84 percent of people who never go to church believe Jesus rose from the dead. It is historical fact; it wasn't done in secret. The whole city of Jerusalem and the whole Roman Empire knew about it. It was news. If CNN had been there, they would have had it live. There are at least 15 historical references to Jesus meeting people, touching people, and talking with people after he had been crucified. One time he cooked breakfast for some people. One time he talked to about 500 people — after he had risen from the dead. A lot of people saw him.

But what does his resurrection mean? It means three things: (1) Jesus is who he claimed to be; (2) Jesus has the power he claimed to have; and (3) Jesus did what he promised to do.

Eric, what worked well in that introduction?

It's hard to introduce something like an Easter sermon, something you have to deal with regularly. You're steeped in it. Most of the congregation is steeped in it. We all know about the resurrection. He does a good job of letting people know there is value and application, something fresh and meaningful there for them. He promises here that a doctrinal sermon will have meaning for everyday life. He tells believers they're going to hear a new angle or something they can take away from it, and he gives people who don't believe or are unsure a reason to stay tuned.

Warren's lens is the "yes, but how?" question. He takes something that could be a fairly dry doctrine — the value and meaning of the resurrection — and approaches it like this.

When I think about the expectations this introduction created for me, first of all, I knew this is not going to be an artistic sermon, an experience-oriented sermon, like Max gave. It's not a story that's going to elicit a lot of emotion. This is about information. This is about explaining and proving what he's going to say.

My other expectation is that he wants this message to be relevant, as you mentioned. He does that by mentioning contemporary culture — *U.S. News & World Report*, CNN, the George Gallop survey statistics. He wants us to know this happened 2,000 years ago, but it's going to be relevant for today, right now, where we live. So there's going to be a strong takeaway.

I especially liked that he contemporized the eyewitness accounts by saying, "If CNN had been there, they would have covered it live" and "He cooked breakfast." Those are things we can relate to.

APPENDIX J

PREACHING SKILLS
Satisfying Conclusions
Principles of effective conclusions
Kent Edwards

Conclusions do more than simply end a sermon; they bring a message to a *satisfying* finale. Conclusions are to sermons what the final chapter is to a good mystery novel. What the final two minutes are to a great basketball or football game. What a great cup of coffee is to a gourmet meal.

Effective conclusions accomplish two objectives:

1. **Reinforcing the Main Idea of the Sermon**

Good conclusions *reinforce the main idea* of the sermon. They should enable the listener to understand with even greater clarity what the sermon is all about. It should bring all of the information of the message into burning focus. To achieve this level of intellectual precision in the conclusion, the wise preacher will do the following.

Avoid introducing new concepts. By this time in the sermon, all of the relevant concepts should have been presented and adequately developed. Serving up leftover thoughts will only diffuse the clarity you have worked so hard to achieve.

Review the main points. Briefly draw the points together into your central idea. While restatement is often more effective than rote repetition, the results of this review can be profound. In oral communication, it is almost impossible to repeat yourself too often. Repetition leads to clarity in the mind of the listener, and clarity is a critical component of legitimate behavioural change. People cannot obey a biblical passage they do not understand.

Avoid an exhaustive review of the sermon. It is more effective to hit the highlights. Those who try to re-preach their sermon during the conclusion risk dissipating any interest they might have generated.

Utilize appropriate emotion. Good sermons crescendo as they conclude. They end with a bang, not a whimper. A dull anticlimactic closing can ruin an otherwise excellent message.

2. **Good conclusions emphasize application**

Effective conclusions reach beyond the listener's mind to the will. They call listeners to embrace the action that the sermon calls for. While some application will usually be given during the main body of a sermon, it is in the conclusion where the clearest and most compelling call for response often occurs. This is where the answer to the question "so what?" is communicated with maximum clarity and specificity.

Many of the sermons recorded in Scripture conclude with strong applications. In the end of his message, Peter tells his audience in Acts 2 that they should "repent and be baptized." Joshua climaxes his sermon to Israel by saying, "Choose for yourselves

this day whom you will serve." Jesus, in his Sermon on the Mount, finishes by exhorting his listeners to build their lives on the rock of his words. The preachers of Scripture conclude their sermons with a call for concrete behavioural change. We need to do the same.

Here are several methods of concluding a sermon:

Give suggestions concerning the ways and means that the central idea can be carried out. Take the time to give specifics of what should take place because of the truth. Good preaching occurs when a sermon is shaped and spoken with a consciousness that the weekend will soon end. Monday morning's world must be brought into harmony with Sunday morning's truth.

Paint a picture. Visualization can intensify desire and lead to action. Preachers can place their audience into a plausible scenario that allows them to experience the benefits of applying God's truth. Or, they could select a situation that highlights how bad things will be if the listeners were to choose to ignore the biblical concept. What is important, however, is that the preacher's visualization stands the test of reality. To be effective, the conditions chosen should be probable. To be highly effective, the preacher must make the situation so vivid that it touches the senses of those listening. The audience should be able to see, hear, taste, and smell God's word in action.

Give an illustration that applies the truth. More than just a heart-warming story to close out the message, this is a slice of life that embodies the big idea of the sermon. It shows either positively or negatively (although positive illustrations are often more effective) how the biblical idea has worked itself out in the lives of people past and present. This testimonial approach allows congregants to "connect the dots" of theory and practice.

Use a poem or hymn. Although this approach may have been overused in a previous generation, it can still be utilized with great effect. Preachers need not restrict their poetry search to old high school textbooks. Lyrics from a contemporary song or a line from a well-known movie may be appropriate. If concluding with an older hymn, it is worth the effort to quote it from memory.

Employ a contrasting truth. When the biblical text presents an idea in the negative, for example, "do not commit adultery," the preacher may choose to apply that idea positively: "build a strong marriage."

Be audience specific. Do the research necessary to learn how to best apply the truth to the individuals you will be speaking to. Ask questions such as: How old? What education level? What work situation? What ethnicity? What sex?

Kent Edwards is associate professor of Christian ministry and leadership of the Doctor of Ministry program at Talbot School of Theology in La Mirada, California. He is past president of the Evangelical Homiletics Society. He is author of Effective First-Person Biblical Preaching (Zondervan, 2005).

APPENDIX K

No Voice, No Preach:

Safeguarding and improving your voice

Emily Shive

Many ministers fill their weeks with sermons, committee meetings, and countless conversations. Unintentionally, they abuse their voices. Voice fatigue sets in. Even if they don't develop chronic hoarseness, weakness, or vocal nodes, their effectiveness as speakers may be diminished by weakened or forced voices.

Not everyone has "golden pipes," but everyone can improve the sound of their voice. The point is not to develop a "stained-glass voice" but to strengthen the natural voice we've been given. Here are some things to improve the voice.

Good posture

Since our bodies house our voices, good posture becomes an important prerequisite for the best use of our vocal instruments. Proper *external* posture means your head lines up with your back, causing your rib cage (not your shoulders) to lift. Your feet will be flat on the floor with the weight evenly distributed, your knees unlocked. Poor posture crowds the breathing process. After adopting good posture, one speaker's voice stayed strong to the end of his sermon for the first time.

The *internal* posture maintains a space inside your mouth for a perpetual "Ahh." This helps relax your jaw and tongue and opens your throat. The volume of speech determines the size of the "Ahh"—the softer your voice, the smaller the "Ahh."

Reduced muscle tension

Tension is an enemy of good performance, whether we're speaking, singing, or trying to sink a putt. Reduced tension means we'll be free of tightness in our bodies generally, tightness in our shoulders, jaws, and tongues specifically. If the muscles above and below the vocal cords relax, then the breath can freely vibrate the vocal cords in the larynx, or voice box.

Incidentally, a mirror works well as an effective, but inexpensive, teacher. Speakers can use a mirror daily as they practice to monitor their posture and watch for signs of tense muscles.

Proper breathing

The vocal process that produces sound can be divided into three basic areas: (1) the breathing technique—the activator of the sound; (2) the vocal cords—the source of the sound; (3) the resonators—the re-enforcers of the sound, adding quality, volume, and control.

Breathing should be free and silent with no obstruction in the way. Any tightening of the muscles above or below the larynx can inhibit the breath and keep it from carrying the sound into the resonators. Here are some steps that can help ensure effective use of the breath:

- Open your throat as if to begin a yawn ("Ahh"),
- Relax, then open your jaw, inhaling through both your nose and mouth.

- Think of aiming the moving air about three feet in front of you. This helps keep the sound from hanging in the back of your mouth, projecting it out instead.
- It also helps to imagine your lips not touching your teeth. This keeps the muscles around your mouth from tightening and allows enough room for consonants to flow over your tongue and for vowels to resonate in the chambers.

Good vocal health

Friedrich S. Brodnitz, M.D., says, "To no group should the preservation of physical health be more important than to men and women who make professional use of their speaking and
singing voices." Here are some things to do to keep your body and voice in good condition:

- Get enough rest to restore body energy.
- Never yell or force your voice.
- Drink lots of liquids, preferably not too hot or too cold. Many speakers request ice water, but tepid water would be better. Cold contracts muscles—and vocal cords are muscles. They'd do better to be kept warm and flexible.
- Avoid clearing your throat. Often this is simply a nervous habit, but it irritates your vocal cords.
- Avoid medicated lozenges, mint, or menthol. These dry the throat and tend to create more phlegm. Drink warm tea or water instead.
- Avoid extended time in a loud environment, such as basketball games. When I attend a Portland Trail Blazers basketball game, I wear ear plugs. This protects both my hearing and my voice. Ear plugs automatically cause me to cut down the volume of my voice. Because I hear it louder inside my head, I'm not so apt to push my voice to be heard above the noise.
- If there seems to be a chronic voice problem, consult a throat specialist.

Exercising your voice

Vocal exercises will help develop your voice. They should be done consistently, even on days when you have no sermon to preach. Spend five to ten minutes doing the following exercises before speaking or singing:

- Loosen your jaw: Take your jaw between your thumb and index finger and shake it up and down rapidly without moving your head. Repeat, "Yah, yah, yah" vigorously. Move your jaw from side to side.
- Massage your face from the hinge of the jaw to the temples. Place a finger at the jaw hinge on each side, move your fingers in a circular motion from there, up to the side of the forehead.
- Move your head slowly to one side as far as possible and then back to the opposite side. Drop your head slowly back to the shoulders and then on to the chest. This isometric exercise should be done often. I do this in the car when I stop for red lights or at my desk.
- Maintaining good posture, inhale slowly. Then let out a slow, breathy sigh, starting in a high voice and going down, much like a descending fire siren.
- Do the same descending breath exercises as a short sentence: "How are you? I am fine." If you produce these sounds freely, you should have the sensation that your vocal cords are doing nothing at all. Your breath should move your voice, and the resonators should reinforce the sounds. Learn to trust these

sensations. When you can visualize the correct technique, the sound will take care of itself.

- Practice humming a scale (from high to low) maintaining a relaxed jaw and tongue, keeping an "Ahh" space inside your mouth. Keep your lips together, but not tightly. If your breath freely moves your voice, your lips will vibrate noticeably. My husband, a preacher, always hums during a hymn before his sermon to make sure his lips tingle. This assures him he has the correct room for the breath to bring his voice forward in the mouth.
- Read aloud when practicing a sermon or speech. This helps make the procedures a natural part of your speaking process.

With daily practice on these techniques, your voice can be strengthened and revitalized. You might wish to evaluate your progress by recording your voice.

Rick, a pastoral student, listened carefully to his voice on tape. As a result, he gained new appreciation for the value of good vocal technique. His voice felt more relaxed the next time he preached, and his wife noticed a marked difference in its sound.

If possible, studying with a voice teacher can provide another set of ears to listen for things you cannot hear. Because the techniques for singing are so similar to those for speaking, singing instructors can often help speakers.

Recommended reading:

Jerry Vines and Jim Shaddix, *Power in the Pulpit* (Moody, 1999), pp. 263−290

Emily E. Shive is speech and voice instructor at Western Seminary in Portland, Oregon.