

## The CPS or Big Idea (Step 5)

### I. Introduction

- A. Importance of a “Big Idea”: “A major affirmation of our definition of expository preaching, therefore, maintains that ‘expository preaching is the communication of a biblical concept.’ That affirms the obvious. A sermon should be a bullet and not buckshot. Ideally, each sermon is the explanation, interpretation, or application of a single dominant idea supported by other ideas, all drawn from one passage or several passages of Scripture” (Haddon Robinson, *Biblical Preaching*, 33).
- B. Synonyms for “Big Idea”: central proposition of the sermon (CPS), biblical concept, central idea, central thought, dominant idea, homiletical idea, main idea, main thought, proposition, sermon idea, subject/complement statement, synthetic statement, and thesis statement.
- C. Forming the “Big Idea”: The big idea is the sum of a subject and a complement (or, as Ramesh Richard says, the central proposition of the sermon is the theme plus the thrust).
1. Subject (Theme): an *incomplete*, short statement of at least two words that describes the thrust of a Bible passage but is a sentence fragment without its complement.
    - a. It answers the question, “What am I talking about?”
    - b. It can be worded as a question that doesn’t elicit a “yes” or “no” response.
    - c. It can never be a single word since one word can only partially answer the above question. I call these single words a “topic” rather than a subject (theme). Let’s call it a longer topic if it has more than one word but still can’t be reworded as a question.
    - d. Examples of Subjects (themes):
      - 1) The reason people should praise God...
      - 2) The test of a person’s character...
  2. Complement (Thrust): an *incomplete or full* sentence that completes or answers the question posed by the subject.
    - a. It answers the question, “What exactly am I saying about what I am talking about (i.e., what am I saying about the subject)?”
    - b. It often is a brief series of two or three points mentioned in the passage that are sub-points to the big idea.
    - c. It should be able to be worded as an answer to the question posed by the subject. However, this answer should be more than a simple “yes” or “no” response.

### II. Examples

<u>Subject/Theme</u>	<u>(“to be” verb)</u>	<u>Complement/Thrust</u>
The reason people should praise God	is because	God is worthy to be praised.
The test of a person’s character	is	how he acts when he’s alone.

## Subject/Complement Samples

Study these student attempts at writing main ideas and tick which of the three descriptions apply (i.e., was it only a topic or subject, or was it a complete idea?). Then, in the last column, explain why the statement was not a central idea or how to improve it.

	<u>Student's Example</u>	<u>Topic</u>	<u>Subject</u>	<u>MI</u>	<u>Evaluation</u>
1.	God has put us together as a family so that we can help one another.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
2.	What is a peacemaker? Who is a peacemaker?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
3.	No substitute for leadership.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
4.	What is God's prescription for anxiety?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
5.	One of the essential qualities of a servant of God is dependence on God.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
6.	Consecrated Christians, courageous commitment, and continuing convictions are the three foundational pillars of the missions-minded church.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
7.	How and why your work matters to God.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
8.	To be a faithful servant of God till the end is the third quality of a faithful servant of God.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
9.	As a Christian, we must set our mind on Jesus.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
10.	Why will many who are first be last and many who are last will be first?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	