

## Outlining the Sermon (Step 6a)

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### I. The Importance of a Sermon Outline

A. What is preaching like which has no outline?

- preacher-oriented (not listener-oriented)
- the point of illustrations is lost
- rambles (speaker doesn't know what to say)
- harder to listen to (often not interesting)
- harder to understand (confusing)
- harder to get the full picture (overview)

B. An outline serves at least four major purposes (adapted from Robinson, 128):

1. It helps you see the *whole sermon* at a glance and this increases the sense of unity.
2. It clarifies for you which *individual parts* of your sermon are more important (superior) or less important (inferior or coordinate).
3. It helps you put the parts into the *proper order* so they make sense to the listener.
4. It enables you to see where you'll need *supporting material* (illustrations, explanations, background, applications, etc.).

### II. How to Outline Correctly

A. Clearly distinguish the subordinate, coordinate, and superior ideas from one another since not all points in a sermon have equal importance.

1. Subordinate ideas are *derived* from another (more important) idea or support that idea. Each subordinate point (i.e., subpoint) should directly and logically amplify, explain, illustrate, or apply the larger heading under which it comes. Never is there only one subordinate point under a superior point (cf. p. 55 for improper form).
2. Coordinate ideas have *equal* importance or weight and support the same larger heading.
3. Superior ideas summarize the content of their subpoints. They include all of the content of their subordinate points. Ultimately, the sermon's main idea (big idea) is the most superior point under which everything else supports.

a. Here's an *incorrect* way to write the superior point "I":

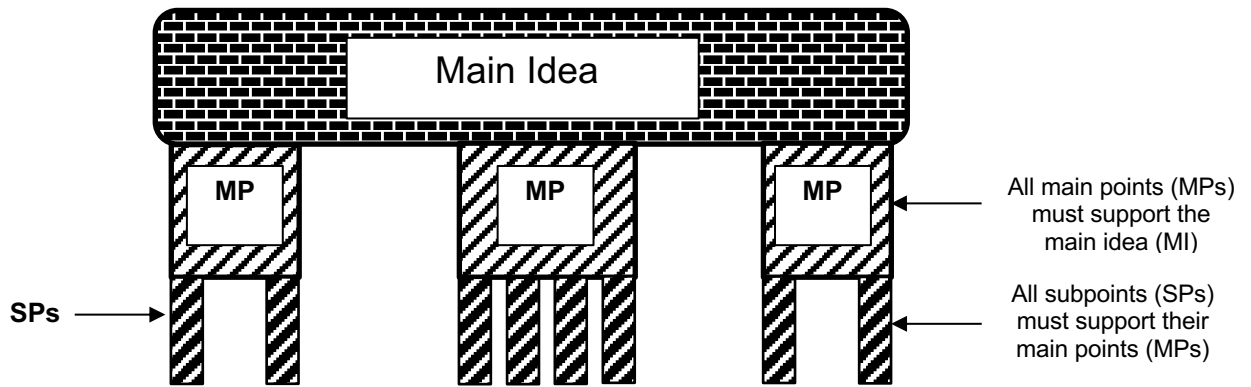
- I. \_\_\_\_\_ (v. 5)  
 A. \_\_\_\_\_ (v. 6)  
 B. \_\_\_\_\_ (v. 7)

(Note that subpoints "A" and "B" are coordinate so they should be under superior point "I")

b. Now here's the *correct* way to write the superior point "I":

- I. \_\_\_\_\_ (vv. 5-7)  
 A. \_\_\_\_\_ (v. 5)  
 B. \_\_\_\_\_ (vv. 6-7)  
 1. \_\_\_\_\_ (v. 6)  
 2. \_\_\_\_\_ (v. 7)

Notice that verses 6 and 7 (subpoints "A" and "B" above but "1" and "2" here) are coordinate *and* also included in the superior point "I." Points "A" and "B" are also coordinate and included in the superior point "I."



- B. Use a consistent set of symbols to demonstrate the relationship between your subordinate, coordinate, and superior ideas.
1. The choice of symbols is arbitrary, but this class will use the commonly accepted symbols:
    - I.
      - A.
        1.
          - a.
            - (1)
              - (a)
2. A different standard will be used for the body of the message compared to the introduction and conclusion (see my Ecclesiastes 5:1-7 outline on page 51):
  - a. The “Body” of the message uses the Roman numerals and capital letters (see previous page).
  - b. The “Introduction” and “Conclusion” uses only Arabic numerals and small letters.
- C. Place all transitions in parentheses. Do not give them symbols since they are not part of the logical structure. (See between points I and II on my Ecclesiastes 5:1-7 outline on page 51.)
- D. Sometimes a point will be developed or arrived at inductively. That is, it will be heard by the listeners only after the various subpoints which support it have been presented. In such cases put inductively arrived at points in parentheses. (For an example see MPI on page 49; cf. p. 59 MPII.)
- E. Always make your points deal with full ideas and not fragments.
1. Write *every* point in the sermon, no matter how small, in a *grammatically complete sentence*.
    - a. A “title” or “phrase” outline is not sufficient since the outline should do more than simply describe the verses or the subject without stating what is actually said about them (e.g., never have, “The work of God” as a point in an outline).
    - b. Avoid sentences that equal a phrase since they express no content about the topic:
 

<u>Avoid this...</u>	<u>This is better...</u>
“Paul discusses the work of God”	“The work of God began when...”
“Two features of salvation are described”	“The two features of salvation are...”
  2. Each point should be a *declarative or imperative sentence*—not a question.
  3. Each point should be a *single idea*. Avoid complex and compound sentences.
- F. There are three main qualities of a good sermon outline:
1. Unity—The outline parts must contribute to only *one* sermon, not two or more!
  2. Balance—Don’t overdevelop only one point and tag other points onto it.
  3. Movement—A natural flow should be evident from beginning to end.

- G. The main idea appears in the outline in the place where its statement naturally occurs in the sermon. In other words, if you have an inductive sermon, don't state your idea at the top of the page in the introduction but rather at the bottom in the conclusion (cf. p. 51).