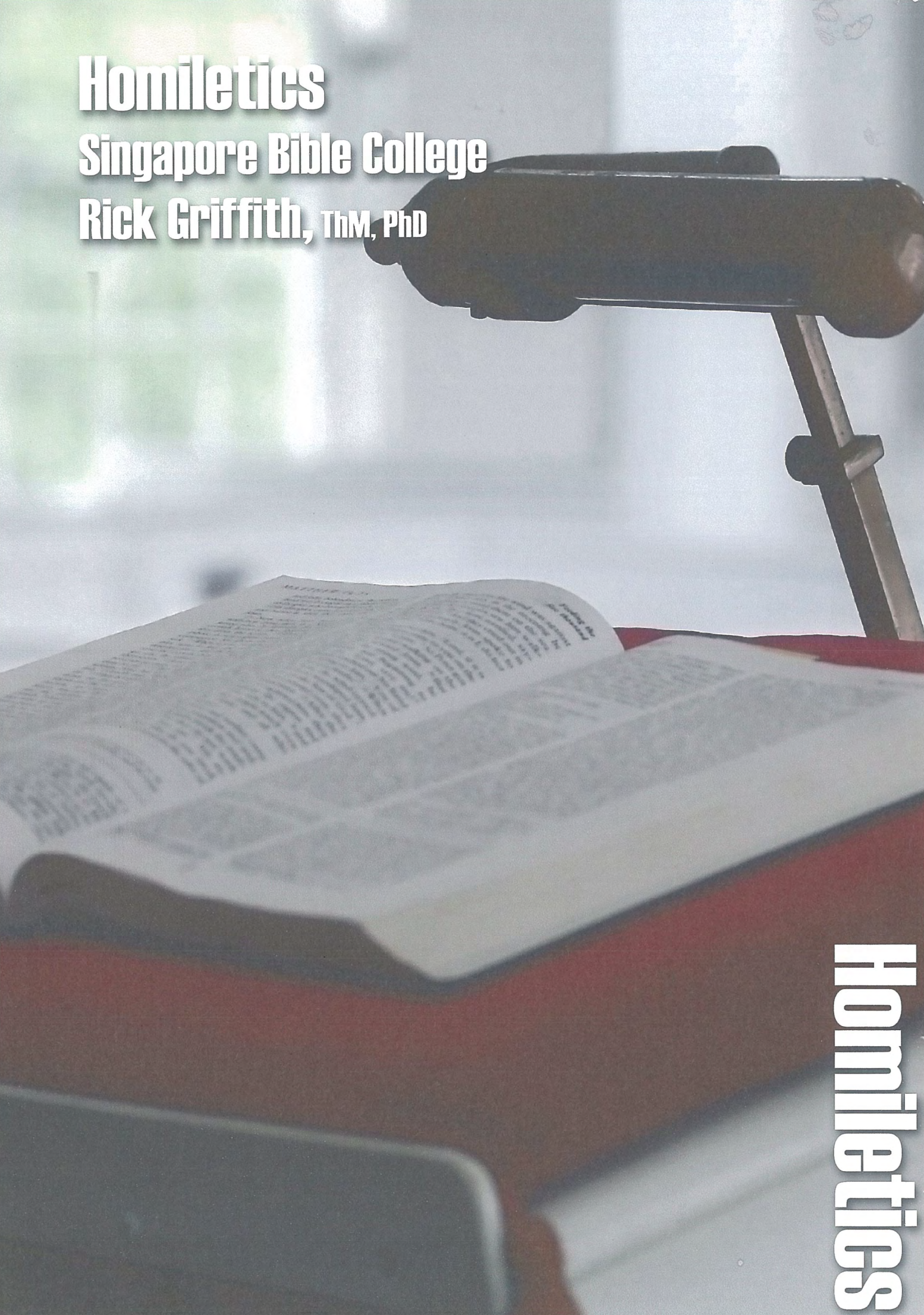
Homiletics

Singapore Bible College
Rick Griffith, ThM, PhD



Homiletics

Homiletics

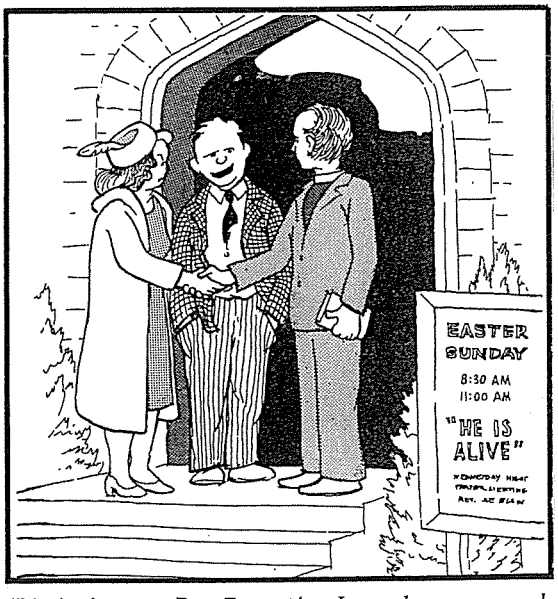
Singapore Bible College

Rick Griffith, ThM, PhD

Twenty-Fifth Edition
© November 2013

1st-39th printings (810 copies; 1st-23rd eds. Mar 92-Jan 13)
40th printing (30 copies; 24th ed. July 13)
41st printing (10 copies; 25th ed. Nov 13)
42nd printing (15 copies; 26th ed. July 14)





"You're in a rut, Rev. Every time I come here you preach about the Resurrection."

Table of Contents

SYLLABUS v

EXPOSITORY PREACHING 1

Three Major Components of Expository Messages 4

Exposition Diagrammed 5

A Mighty Fortress (Assignment #2) 6

PUBLIC SPEAKING 7

Basics of Public Speech 7

Public Scripture Reading 9

How to Sharpen Your Point 10

How to Communicate Ideas 11a

Speaking with Confidence and Self-Control 11b

Good Night, I've Been Asked to Speak! 12

How to Make a Speech 14

GIVING A PERSONAL TESTIMONY 16

How to Prepare a Personal Testimony 16

How to Use a Personal Testimony 17

My Personal Testimony 19

EVALUATION OF MESSAGES 20

Personal Testimony Grade Sheet 20

Speaking Grade Sheet 21

Exegetical Outlining Checklist 22

Sermon Outlining Checklist 23

Exegetical to Homiletical Outline Grade Sheet 23a

Manuscript Grade Sheet 24

Sermon Evaluation Form 25

SEVEN STEPS TO PREACHING EXPOSITORY SERMONS 27

The CPS or Big Idea (Step 5) 29
Subject/Complement Samples 29a
Subject/Complement Exercises 30

Structure & the CPT or Exegetical Idea (Steps 2-3) 31
Exegetical Outlining in Basic Form 31
Exegetical Outlining in Z_1+X+Z_2+Y Form 33
Assignment #3 35

Developmental Questions (Step 4a) 38

The Sermon's Purpose & Homiletical Idea (Steps 4b-5) 40
Contrasting the Exegetical and Homiletical Ideas 40
Exegetical and Homiletical Idea Examples 41
Converting Exegetical to Homiletical Statements 42
A Guide to Structuring Sermons 43
Moving From the Exegetical to Homiletical Outline 44
An Example of Moving from Exegetical to Homiletical Structures 46

Sermon Structure (Step 6a) 47
Types of Sermon Structure 47
Application within Sermon Structure 48
Sample Sermon Outlines 51
A Sample One Page Sermon Outline (Eccles. 5:1-7) 51
Sunukjian's Judges 1 Outline 52
Sunukjian's Psalm 3 Outline 54
Sunukjian's Psalm 16 Outline 55
Sunukjian's Psalm 77 Outline 57
Outlining the Sermon 61

Planning for Oral Clarity (Step 6b) 64
Illustrations 64
Clarity 67
Transitions 68
Restatement Exercises 69
Applications 70
Steps to Applying Scripture in Sermons 70
How to be Relevant to Different Groups 72
Zuck's Ninety Verbs 73

Introductions and Conclusions (Step 6c) 74

Manuscripting and Practicing (Step 7) 78
Writing Papers Versus Writing Sermons 81
Sample Sermon Manuscripts 82
Awe? Or Blah? (Ecclesiastes 5:1-7) 82
The Hand That Rocks the Cradle (2 Timothy 1:1-6) 86
A Student's Example of How Not to Manuscript 91
Words on Target 93
Delivery 95

SELF-EVALUATION IN PREACHING 96

Why are Some Preachers Better Than Others? 96

Getting the Feedback You Need 99

Rev. Keith Brown's Letter 101

Sermon Self Evaluation 104

Expository Steps of Robinson vs. Richard 105

Gunning's Ten Principles of Clear Writing 105

PREACHING NARRATIVES 107

Focusing Your Narrative Idea on Authorial Intent (Neh. 1–2) 115

Focusing Your Idea on Audience Need 117

Outlining Narrative Sermons 120

RELEVANT PREACHING 137

Characteristics of a Good Speech Idea 137

Deciding Sermon Structure 138

Attitudes Toward You and Your Subject 139

Preach the Word—Not Man's Ideas! 140

The Relevance of the Sermon 141

Four Improper Ways of Seeking Relevance in Preaching 147a

Dirty Saints (John 13:1-17) 148

TOPICAL SERMONS 154

What in the World is God Doing? 156
Who Moved the Stone? 157a
Finding Your Mate 157d

MONOLOGUES 158

How Do I Do a Monologue? 158

Sample Monologues 160
A Night in Persia (Book of Esther) 160
My Family is ~~My~~ God's Business (Ezra 9) 170
Christmas Through the Eyes of Joseph 179
Christmas Reflections from a Wise Man 183
Monologue Outlining and Internalizing 188
Introducing Mark! (Book of Mark) 189
I Just Love Those Thessalonians! (Intro. to 1 Thess.) 193
Testimony of Onesimus (Letter of Philemon) 197

SPECIALTY SERMONS 200

Evangelistic Sermons 200
Tips in Preaching Evangelistic Sermons 200
The True Meaning of Good Friday and Easter 199a
Illustrations to Use in Sharing the Gospel 200

Wedding Sermons 204
Sample Wedding Sermons 204a

Funeral Sermons 205
Sample Funeral Sermons 206
Cecil Perry's Home Going 206
Psalm 116:15-16 210
Funeral Packet 211

PREACHING CALENDARS 221

One Year Preaching Calendar 222

How Can You Preach Three a Week? 224

APPENDICES 226

Bible Word Pronunciation 226

Sermons in the Book of Acts 245

Preaching Controversial Topics 246

Preaching Survey 247

Psalm 127 Sermon Outline 248

How to Be a Good Preacher 250

The *Preparing Expository Sermons* Process 251

Pains & Gains of Doctrine 252

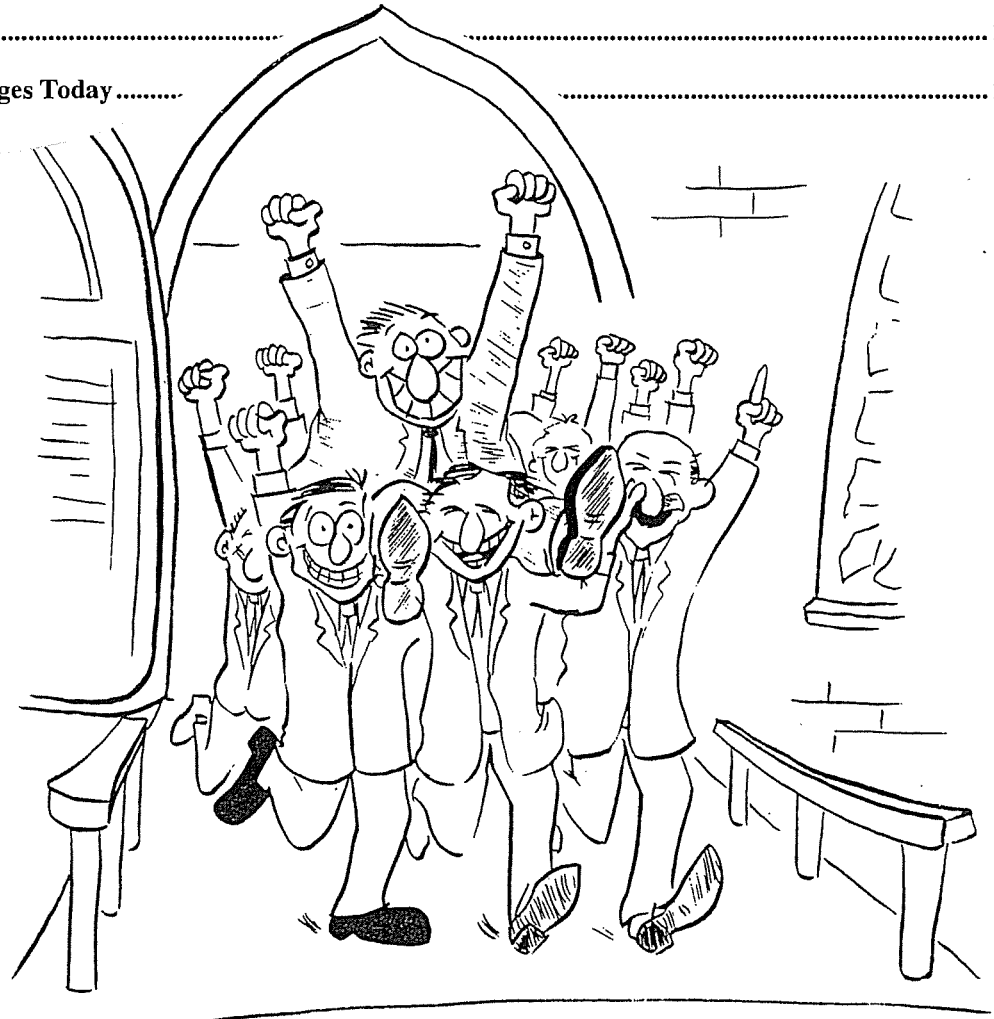
Humour & Storytelling 254

Getting Doctrine from Didactic Passages 256

A Study in Narrative Preaching 260

2 Kings 5 262

Preaching Challenges Today 263



Pastor Neely preaches the perfect sermon.

Homiletics 1 Syllabus

I. Catalogue Description

Instruction in the crafting of expository sermons, through the expositional process of exegesis, theology and homiletics with attention given to the strategic use of rhetorical argumentation, manuscripting (style and clarity) and finally, the preaching of two sermons (an epistle and an OT narrative). 3 hours.

II. Course Objectives

By the end of the course the student should be able to...

A. Articulate *what* expository preaching is and *why* it is the best style of preaching.

B. Form *exegetical and homiletical outlines* based upon a text of Scripture.

C. State the important elements of an *introduction, body, and conclusion* to a message.

D. Begin to gain confidence speaking before groups and actually *preach* biblical passages.

E. *Teach* the basic content of the course in English and/or prepare for this in one's native language.

F. Make relevant *applications* from a text of Scripture.

G. *Evaluate* his/her own and others' sermons and know why they were good or bad so as to know how to improve them.

H. Preach effective *epistle and narrative* sermons.

I. Preach a *true, interesting, clear, relevant* sermon (the basic goal summarized on page 25).

III. Course Requirements

A. **Readings** (10%) will be assigned for most class periods. Mark your reading in the boxes on the Reading Report to be handed in at the end of the course (pp. xiii-xiv). It will be returned to your box with your grade for the semester completed at the top. You are required to *buy* Ramesh Richard's *Preparing Expository Sermons* (formerly *Scripture Sculpture*; available at the SBC Book Centre) and Bruce Mawhinney's *Preaching with Freshness* ($12.00).

B. The **Project** (15%) is designed to help you and others better comprehend preaching essentials.

1. *Translate* assigned Homiletics PPT into your native tongue. Download your 50-70 slides at http://biblestudydownloads.com/Homiletics_Preaching/Homiletics_Preaching.html. After the course I will upload your presentations for all to use. For more instructions, please read the TBB_Translation_Instructions.doc file on pages xix-xxii (also available for download at the TBB link). Your grade sheet is on page xxii.

2. *Teach* Homiletics presentations #4-8 or How to Study the Bible sessions #3-6 & 9 in at least 5 one-hour sessions to a group of 5+ teens or adults (preferably to the same group of adults). You may use or edit the PPT already designed for the course or may make your own. You are not required to develop more materials, but those who work hard in this area tend to get better grades on the assignment and I would love to upload what you develop for others to use in the future. Teaching can be at a home Bible study, cell group, Sunday school class, etc. Have your students fill in the attached course evaluation (p. xxiv) on the last class session, but you should also submit to me with these a 2-page report that explains what you did, what you learned, who you taught, etc. You may teach in another language but submit your edited PPT and translate all student evaluation forms for me before submitting them. You will be graded with the Teacher Report Grade Sheet (p. xxiii), so fulfill its requirements.

C. **Assignments** (25%) must all be typed with your *mailbox* number. Hand back all graded papers too.

1. Use the testimony study (pp. 16-20) to write in one page how you trusted Christ. Make it 2-3 minutes around a simple, main idea (p. 19). Include an interesting start, specific struggles before conversion, how you trusted Christ (share what the gospel is), and results of becoming a Christian. I'll grade you based on the top of page 20, so staple this page on top. Write it as if you are presenting it to a non-Christian audience or individual, so avoid religious jargon.
2. State a big idea (subject-complement) for Luther's hymn, *A Mighty Fortress* (p. 6).
3. State subject-complement statements on the Exegetical Idea Exercises (pp. 35-37).
4. On the Sermon Format document, follow steps 1-3 (p. 27) to design an exegetical outline for Colossians 4:6 in Z_1+X+Z_2+Y form like the *top only* of the Psalm 23 sermon (p. 46; cf. 116, 152, 178, 258). This includes your questions and answers about the passage. I subtract 3% for each point missed on the Exegetical Outlining Checklist (p. 22). Include your sources.
5. Write a single page, full-sentence, sermon outline (HO) on Colossians 4:6. Include a title, the structure, big idea, introduction, main points and sub points (with where ILLS go) in the body, and conclusion. Use the Eccles. 5 sermon outline (p. 51) as a sample and the sermon checklists (pp. 23-24). Do not put "grace" or "salt" in your main points. Include your graded Assignment #4 (EO1) and a new exegetical outline (EO2) with changes suggested by the professor. I subtract 3% for each point missed on the Homiletical Outlining Checklist (p. 23).
6. Evaluate with the Sermon Evaluation Form (pp. 25-26) Thursday's 21 August chapel sermon by David Lang. Include practical tips for improvement, a grade for each quadrant, and an overall letter grade. Look especially for the message *outline, illustrations, and clarity*.
7. Submit an exegetical outline for the 1-2 verses that you will preach for Sermon #1. Make sure it fulfills the same requirements as Assign. #4.
8. Hand in your graded assignment #7 (EO #1), a new exegetical outline (EO #2) which makes changes suggested by the professor, and a corresponding homiletical outline (HO #1) like the Colossians 4:6 one which follows the guidelines of pages 23-24 (Assign. #5). Make sure the Z_1 statements of the EO match those of the HO.
9. Use the Manuscript Grade Sheet (p. 24) on the Genesis 3:1-6 sermon (*Biblical Sermons*, 13-30). in notes, 405-416
10. Evaluate six students' sermons using the Sermon Evaluation Form (pp. 25-26). We will follow this schedule of speakers and evaluators:

Epistle Texts	Speaker Preacher's Name	Epistle Sermons Speaker #	1st Eval	2nd Eval	3rd Eval	Narrative Texts	Narrative Sermons Speaker #	1st Eval	2nd Eval	3rd Eval
Eph. 4:26-27	Yvette	1	3	6	9	Josh. 1	1	4	7	11
Tit. 3:9	Chris	2	4	7	10	Josh. 2	2	5	8	12
Gal. 6:2	Edmond	3	5	8	11	Josh. 3	3	6	9	1
Heb. 3:13	Boaz	4	6	9	12	4:1—5:1	4	7	10	2
Col. 3:22	Wen Pin	5	7	10	1	5:2-12	5	8	11	3
1 Tim. 5:22	Claire	6	8	11	2	5:13—6:27	6	9	12	4
2 Pet. 3:3	John	7	9	12	3	Josh. 7	7	10	1	5
Phil 2:14	Chee Hong	8	10	1	4	Josh. 8	8	11	2	6
Eph. 4:29	Lang	9	11	2	5	Josh. 9	9	12	3	7
Rom 13:8	Samuel	10	12	3	6	10:1-27	10	1	4	8
Col. 2:8-9	Wun Long	11	1	4	7	10:28-43	11	2	5	9
James 3:1	Luwin	12	2	5	8	Josh. 11	12	3	6	10

Evaluation forms will be passed out in class to give each speaker input from fellow students *and* the professor. All graded forms will be returned to the speaker, not to the evaluator. See your +, √, or - grade from the speaker. No top grades will be given to evaluators who do not give the speaker a letter grade and

suggestions for improvement. Try to be honest to benefit your fellow students. If you grade a bad sermon as good, it will show on your evaluation grade—likewise it you are overly critical of a good sermon.

11-12. Repeat assignments #7 and #8 for your Sermon #2 narrative passage.

D. **Classroom Speaking (50%)**: If you fail to speak on your assigned day, you will fail the assignment (no make-ups). Treat this with the same seriousness as preaching at a church (call my HP 9113-7090 if you are late). Students will speak to the class at least five times:

1. Introductions (0%): In session 2 we all will share one little known fact about ourselves.

2. Personal Testimony (5%): Using the pages 16-20 guidelines, tell the class by memory how you trusted Christ. Share 2-3 minutes around a simple, main idea (p. 19) and include an interesting beginning, specifics on pre-conversion struggles, how you came to trust Christ, and some of the results of becoming a Christian. You will *not* be graded with page 20 but only on the five areas on page 21. No notes are allowed, but hand in your graded and updated papers.

3. Persuasion Speech (5%): Take 2 minutes to convince us of something we need to know or do but probably don't know or do. Talk about exercise, quiet time, singleness, interpretation of a tough passage, gun control, SBC life, missions, left-handedness, philosophy of ministry, whether Satan knows our thoughts, why homiletics is important or unimportant, or whatever! Use Borden's model on spare time (p. 7), use your imagination, and make this fun. Practice your talk several times so that you will not need notes (which aren't allowed anyway).

4-5. Sermons (40%, or 20% each): You will preach to the class two 15-minute sermons. Sermon #1 will be on 1-2 verses from one of these texts: Rom. 13:8; 14:22-23; Gal. 6:2; Eph. 2:10; 4:26-27; 4:28; 4:29; Phil. 2:12-13; 2:14; Col. 2:8-9; 1 Tim. 2:11-12; 5:22; Tit. 3:9; Heb. 3:13; 13:2; James 3:1; 1 Pet. 2:2; 3:7; 2 Pet. 3:3. Sermon #2 will be on an OT narrative text (this should not be a dramatic monologue). Get feedback from other students or me before you preach. The sermons should include all of the guidelines discussed in the course and summarized on the Speaking Grade Sheet (p. 21): a clear statement of the main idea, a brief introduction and conclusion, and the development of the body of the sermon with illustrations and applications to at least two levels of subordination: main points (I, II, etc.) and sub-points (A, B, etc.).

Please submit by 1:00 PM the day *before* you speak:
(1) your returned Ass. #7 & 8 or 11 & 12,
(2) copies of your one page outline (like for Col. 4:6) for each student and the teacher,
(3) PPT slide(s) of your one page sermon outline so I can show your outline to the class for discussion and learning, and
(4) a column-annotated full manuscript (approx. 5 double-spaced pages; see sample how to do it on pp. 82-85 and how not to do it on pp. 91-92).

When you preach, bring an empty memory key or digital storage to view later. Points will be deducted for speaking too long (-1%/minute overtime) and for lacking a manuscript column design (-5%), one page outline (-5%), or manuscript itself (-10%). Notes are not allowed and students sneaking them will fail the assignment. Please evaluate your sermon using the Sermon Self Evaluation (p. 104) within four days after your sermon and return this completed sheet to my mailbox (L19). Those submitting reports first receive their grades first (-3% for each day late). Those who do not submit this will receive -10% from their grade.

N.B. Each written assignment has a 3% penalty per class day late. Also, points may be deducted for not including your full name and box number on assignments, exceeding the page limit, and improper grammar and spelling (especially of my name!).

IV. Course Bibliography

* On reserve in the library for this course and/or my other homiletics courses

A. Recommended Reading

Achtemeier, Elizabeth. *Preaching from the Old Testament*. Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 1989. 187 pp.
Though approaches the OT from a liberal mindset, this contains helpful chapters on the various genre and sees the Bible as "the Community-creating Word."

*Alter, Robert. *The Art of Biblical Narrative*. London: Basic Books (Division of Harper/Collins Pub.), 1981. xii + 195 pp.
Explains how all OT narrative conveys theology. Haddon Robinson recommends this approach to literature, although Alter believes that OT narrative is fiction. Alter is a Jewish scholar and Professor of Hebrew and Comparative Literature at the University of California at Berkeley. Although liberal he has many good things to say.

*Bennett, Bill. *Thirty Minutes to Raise the Dead*. Nashville: Nelson, 1991.
Practical advice from a Baptist pastor on preaching expository and evangelistic messages to people who have heard their share. The title alone wakes you up!

Chapell, Bryan. *Using Illustrations to Preach With Power*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992. 223 pp.
Addresses how to use real life situations to make sermons more interesting, as opposed to textbook-type illustrations. Outlines in detail the process preachers should use in constructing and delivering illustrations and includes 34 excellent illustrations. Chapell is professor of practical theology at Covenant Theological Seminary in St. Louis.

*Davis, Ken. *Secrets of Dynamic Communication: Preparing and Delivering Powerful Speeches*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1991. 169 pp.
An excellent resource from a recognized speaker, writer, humorist, and teacher. Deals with areas often missing in preaching books: practical advice on illustrations, humour, body language, audience involvement, evaluating your message—even lighting!

*Erickson, Millard, and Heflin, James L. *Old Wine in New Wineskins: Doctrinal Preaching in a Changing World*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1997. 269 pp.
Co-authored by a theology and homiletics professor, respectively. Shows how to preach theology to our "how to" generation, addressing both doctrinal content and sermonic form in expositional, topical, narrative, and dramatic sermons. Deals with the value and difficulties of doctrinal preaching, including how to express doctrine in universal principles and specific applications. Required for Homiletics II.

Fasol, Al. *A Guide to Self-Improvement in Sermon Delivery*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1983.
Help in often overlooked issues of delivery: voice projection, speaking mechanics, etc.

*Grant, Reg, and Reed, John. *Telling Stories to Touch the Heart: How to Use Stories to Communicate God's Truth*. Wheaton: Victor, 1990. 131 pp.
The art of storytelling is neglected in our fast, proposition-oriented generation, yet people still love stories! The authors sum up their 68 years of storytelling experience into four practical steps. Five monologues and a helpful bibliography are also included. Very readable and basic.

*_____. *The Power Sermon: Countdown to Quality Messages for Maximum Impact*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1993. 198 pp. US$10.99.
"User friendly," 11-steps for sermon development, including exegesis, proposition, purpose, destination, introductions, body, transitions, conclusions, supporting material (illustrations, etc.), manuscript, time lines, memory, creativity and theology (Robinson's *Biblical Preaching* does not address these last four areas). The appendices provide a sample sermon and a basic

form to use in developing expository sermons. Drs. Grant and Reed teach preaching at Dallas Seminary.

*Greidanus, Sidney. *The Modern Preacher and the Ancient Text*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988; Leicester: InterVarsity, 1988. 374 pp.
An in-depth, technical text on preaching various types of biblical literature. Especially helps identify unacceptable methods of applying the text (copied on notes, 142-47).

Hostetler, Michael J. *Illustrating the Sermon*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1989. 87 pp.
Addresses types, styles, qualities, sources, storage, and evaluations of illustrations.

*_____. *Introducing the Sermon: The Art of Compelling Beginnings*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1986. 89 pp. Paper, US$5.95.
A newer work on a much neglected topic with graphic imagery, including summaries at key points, many positive and negative examples, and how to have good introductions. Unfortunately he illustrates only how to introduce a topic rather than an entire subject.

*Hybels, Bill; Robinson, Haddon; & Briscoe, Stuart. *Mastering Contemporary Preaching*. Mastering Ministry Series, vol. 1. Portland: Multnomah, 1989. 171 pp.
Twelve chapters on practical issues preachers face (e.g., preacher's authority, speaking to the secularized mind, giving applications, being interesting, addressing controversial subjects, speaking on sex and money, talking about yourself in the pulpit, etc.).

Koller, Charles W. *How to Preach Without Notes*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1979. 144 pp.
Shows how to preach expository and other sermons more effectively and naturally without notes. He is president of Northern Baptist Theological Seminary, Chicago.

*Kuhatschek, Jack. *Applying the Bible*. Originally *Taking the Guesswork Out of Applying the Bible*. Downers Grove: IVP, 1990; reprint, Grand Rapids: Zondervan. 163 pp.
Explores how to derive principles and applications from selected biblical passages, with many examples. This is a practical guide on an important but often overlooked area.

*Litfin, A. Duane. *Public Speaking: A Handbook for Christians*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1981. 352 pp.
An excellent guide similar in method to Robinson's *Biblical Preaching* but broader as it addresses several types of speaking situations. Comprehensive (yet concise), addresses both religious and nonreligious speeches and settings, has an index, and is practical (a "how-to" book with exercises following each of the ten chapters). Litfin taught homiletics at Dallas Seminary for many years but now pastors in Tennessee.

MacArthur, John, Jr. *Rediscovering Expository Preaching*. Edited by Richard Mayhue and Robert L. Thomas. Dallas: Word, 1992. 411 pp.
Nineteen articles by Masters Seminary faculty (seven by MacArthur), addressing the priority of exposition, preparing the expositor, and method. Has chapters unavailable in most homiletics texts: inerrancy, history of exposition, study tools, Bible translations, titles, and the role of prayer, being a man of God, and the Spirit's role in exposition.

McCarty, C. Barry. *Well Said and Worth Saying: A Public Speaking Guide for Church Leaders*. Nashville, TN: Broadman, 1991. 152 pp.
Especially helpful on the dynamics of speech and delivery. Addresses the steps to effective topical preaching, including organizing ideas, supporting them with illustrations, and manuscripting for proper word choice. Out of print.

McKenzie, Alyce M. *Preaching Proverbs: Wisdom for the Pulpit*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1996. 170 pp.
Argues that proverbs are the least preached biblical genre; contains six model sermons on proverbs. She is a preaching consultant to United Methodist Church pastors.

*Robinson, Haddon and Patricia Batten, eds. *Models for Biblical Preaching: Expository Sermons from the Old Testament*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2014. 208 pp. US$19.99 hb.
Here's a great book with eleven expository messages from the OT, based on Robinson's classic text, *Biblical Preaching* (see it in the required section below). He taught at Dallas Seminary many years but now teaches at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary near Boston, Mass. After each sermon, Robinson comments on the sermon and interviews the preacher, showing how these speakers differ in their preparation and emphases. Batten also teaches homiletics at the same school.

Stott, R. John. *Between Two Worlds: The Art of Preaching in the Twentieth Century*. London: Hodder & Stoughton, and Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982. 351 pp.
Emphasizes the messenger more than the message, the preacher more than the sermon. Begins with a history of great preachers, then explores some contemporary objections to preaching, its theological foundations, and finally (too brief) steps to how to prepare sermons which bridge the cultural gap with sincerity, earnestness, courage, and humility. Unfortunately the book lacks an index which limits it as a reference tool.

Sunukjian, Donald R. *Invitation to Biblical Preaching: Proclaiming Truth with Clarity and Relevance*. Invitation to Theological Studies Series. Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2007. 375 pp.
Practical tips to shape a biblical, interesting, clear and relevant sermon, writing for the ear (not the eye), and giving great transitions. Dr. Sunukjian taught Dr. Rick at Dallas Seminary in 1985 but now heads the preaching instruction at Talbot Seminary in California. Presents the sermon preparation process and two sermons in the appendix. He encourages three outlines of a text: passage outline, truth outline and sermon outline. Translated into French, Korean, and Spanish.

Swindoll, Charles R. *Saying It Well: Touching Others With Your Words*. New York, NY: Faithwords (Hatchette Book Group), 2012. 268 pp.
Practical preaching advice from probably America's best-loved preacher featured on Insight for Living radio broadcasts since the 1970s. Dr. Swindoll was also the President and Chancellor of Dallas Theological Seminary for many years.

Vines, Jerry. *A Practical Guide to Sermon Preparation*. Chicago: Moody, 1985. 173 pp.
Gives steps to preach expositions, starting with the preacher's own personal integrity, devotional life, study, physical fitness, etc. and ending with preaching without notes.

*Wiersbe, Warren, and Wiersbe, David. *The Elements of Preaching: The Art of Biblical Preaching—Clearly and Simply Presented*. Wheaton: Tyndale, 1986. 109 pp.
Composed of 26 preaching principles and 14 preaching prohibitions—most given in bite-size two page chapters. Excellent to read at many sittings.

B. Required Reading

*Borden, Richard C. *How to Communicate Ideas*. Fairfield, NJ: The Economics Press, 1935. Previously published under the title *Public Speaking as Listeners Like It!*
This 20-page booklet will revolutionize your speaking with its four simple steps: (1) Ho hum! (2) Why bring that up? (3) For instance! & (4) So what? It is a classic for public speakers.

*Liefeld, Walter L. *New Testament Exposition: From Text to Sermon*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1984. 180 pp. US$10.95.
A guide to sermon preparation for the busy pastor; emphasizes literary structure and flow of thought instead of parsing, sentence diagramming, and word studies; addresses how to preach from difficult texts such as parables, miracles, proverbs, obscure passages, passages susceptible to contrary interpretations, and especially apparent discrepancies in the gospel accounts.

*Mawhinney, Bruce. *Preaching with Freshness*. Eugene, OR: Harvest, 1991; reprinted, Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1997. 259 pp.

Written in narrative form (which is fresh itself!). Aids good habits in your weekly schedule to prepare well for preaching as well as get out of the habits that make your sermons all sound the same. You may not feel the need for this one yet, but reach for it after your 100th sermon!

*Richard, Ramesh P. *Preparing Expository Sermons* (formerly *Scripture Sculpture*): *A Do-It-Yourself Manual for Biblical Preaching*. 2d. ed. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1995, 2001. 215 pp. US$10.95 pb.

A very practical seven-step procedure for expository preaching is explained by this professor of homiletics at Dallas Seminary. Dr. Richard (from Delhi) has presented this content to pastors all over the world—a tested method! Eleven appendices too! Our course follows his steps.

*Robinson, Haddon. *Biblical Preaching: The Development and Delivery of Expository Messages*. 3d ed. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1980, 2001, 2014. 256 pp. US$21.99 hb.

Here's *the* classic book on expository preaching used in Bible colleges and seminaries worldwide, and for good reason. Robinson built Dallas Seminary's emphasis on exposition through the 10 simple steps in this book. The book, however, is weak in explaining how to get the exegetical idea and how to make applications for listeners. He teaches at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary near Boston, Mass. One of his students noted, "This edition has been expanded with contributions from several of Robinson's students and colleagues, friends and peers. It also incorporates many of the feedback obtained from readers of the past editions. For example, some of the exercises provided have been fine-tuned. Others have been contributed by students and preachers" (Conrad Yap here).

*_____, ed. *Biblical Sermons*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1989. 264 pp.

Whereas his first book has 10 expository *steps*, this one has 12 expository *"steppers"*—one sermon each from 12 of Robinson's students now in ministries of exposition. The sermons don't practice everything in *Biblical Preaching*, but each is excellent and includes Robinson's commentary on the sermon and an interview with the preacher.

V. Other Matters

A. Contacting Me: You can contact me at SBC by box L19 or by phone (6559-1513). Also, my home is at 2-302 on the SBC campus, mobile is 9113-7090, and email griffith@sbc.edu.sg. My office hours when I can talk are from 11:00-1:00 on Tuesday and Friday and afternoons on Tuesday, Thursday, and Friday. Let's have lunch too!

B. Copying Class Notes: Permission granted until you make a lot of money publishing them.

C. Commentaries: Ever wondered *which* of the many commentaries to use when you need help with a passage? For example, for your Colossians 4:6 assignment, what does the verse mean by speech "with grace," "seasoned with salt," and watched by "outsiders" (v. 5)? Get my study of what I think are the best 5-12 commentaries on each book of the Bible and the best reference books (470 books surveyed). It's called *Reference Books and Commentaries You Should Buy* and is available for only $5.00 in the SBC Book Centre (what a bargain!). This will help you choose which sources to look up for assignments in this course. It may also save you money to buy books long-term.

VI. Reading Report Name_____ Course Grade _____ Box ___

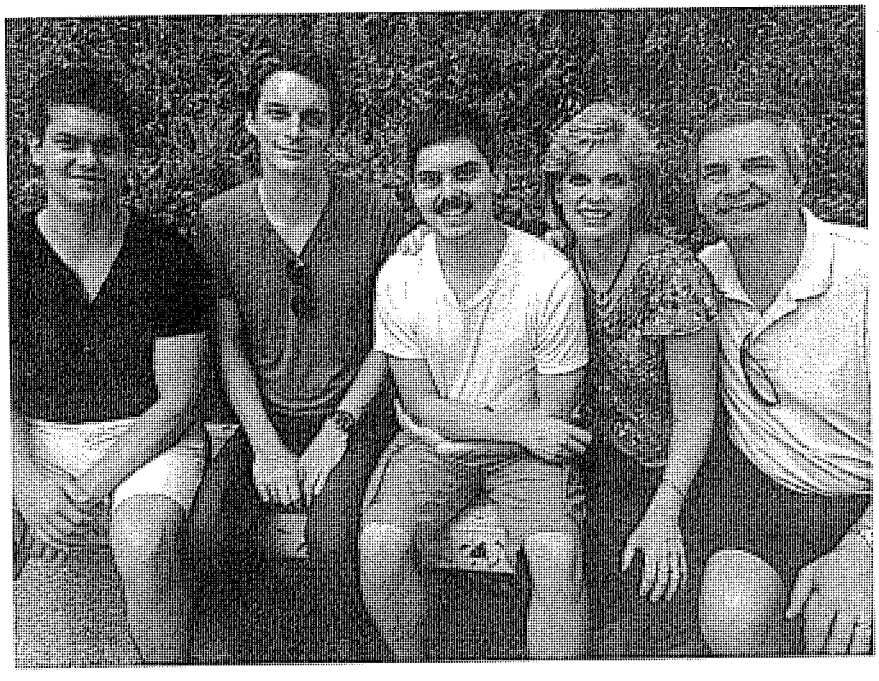
(Please tick if readings completed in full on time. Mark "T" if tardy, "P" if read partially, and leave blank if not read at all.)

1	15 July (T)	Syllabus & Testimony Training	No assignments	
2	17 July (Th1)	Your Unknown Past (1 min.)	Speaking #1; Notes, 16-20	
3	17 July (Th2)	How to Be an Interesting Speaker (i.e., How to Communicate Ideas)	Borden, 1-20 Read the syllabus (pp. v-xii) Assign. #1 (Written Testimony 7-12)	
4	22 July (T)	What is Expository Preaching? Why is EP Important (notes, 1-2)?	Assign. #1 (Written Testimony, speakers 1-6); Robinson, *Biblical Preaching*, 17-32 in notes, 389-97	
5	24 July (Th1)	Advantages & Goals to EP Difficulties & Relevance of EP	Richard, 9-29 (overview)	
6	24 July (Th2)	Testimonies (2-3 min.)	Speaking #2: Students 7-12	
7	29 July (T)	Interview with Dr. Jeff Arthurs	Richard, 33-52 (study)	
8	31 July (Th1)	Testimonies (2-3 min.)	Speaking #2: Students 1-6	
9	31 July (Th2)	Exegetical Idea: Basic Form (notes, 30-31)	Richard, 53-64, 153-54 (structure/EO) Assign. #2 (Luther Big Idea)	
10	5 Aug (T)	Exegetical Idea: Z_1+X+Z_2+Y	Richard, 65-76 (CPT); Notes, 22	
11	7 Aug (Th1)	Developmental Questions The Big Idea (CPS; notes, 28-29)	Robinson, 101-113 (Develop. Questions) in notes, 398-404 Richard, 189-90 (Outline Elements) Assign. #3 (Exeg. Idea Exercises) Richard, 85-93 (CPS), 145-52 (Flesh/text)	
12	7 Aug (Th2)	Public Scripture Reading	Notes, 10-15 (Reading Scripture)	
13	12 Aug (T)	Sermon's Purpose Homiletical Idea (notes, 43-46)	Richard, 77-83 (Purpose Bridge) Assign #4 (Col. 4:6 Exeg. Outline)	
14	14 Aug (Th1)	Persuasion Speeches (2 min.)	Speaking #3: Students 7-12	
15	14 Aug (Th2)	Structure: Deductive/Inductive (notes, 48-50, 59-67)	Richard, 85-93 (CPS) Notes, 43-50 **Project Due**	
16	19 Aug (T)	Outlining	Richard, 95-111 (Structure), 184-85 (Outlines); Notes, 23, 61-63 Assign #5 (Col. 4:6 Hom. Outline)	
17	21 Aug (Th1)	Persuasion Speeches (2 min.)	Speaking #3: Students 1-6 Assign. #6 (Chapel Sermon)	
18	21 Aug (Th2)	Illustrations (notes, 56-58)	Richard, 121-28 (ILLS) Assign. #7 (Epistle EO speakers 1-6)	
19	26 Aug (T)	Clarity	Richard, 111-15 (clarity)	
20	28 Aug (Th1)	Applications	Richard, 115-21, 172-79 (appl/aud) Assign. #7 (Epistle EO speakers 7-12) Assign. #8 (Epistle HO speakers 1-6)	
21	28 Aug (Th2)	Introductions & Conclusions	Richard, 103-7 (intros), 186-92 (sample intro), 127-28 (conclusions)	
22	2 Sep (T)	Manuscripting & Word Choice Gunning's Rules	Richard, 129-40; Notes, 93-94 Assign. #9 (written sermon in notes 405-416)	
23	4 Sep (Th1)	Delivery	Mawhinney, 6-77, 245-58	

23	4 Sep (Th1)	Delivery	Mawhinney, 6-77, 245-58 Richard, 136-40 (delivery), 193-97 (evaluations)	
24	4 Sep (Th2)	Preaching Narratives 1	"Preaching Biblical Narratives" (Notes, 120-134, 140-53)	
25	16 Sep (T)	Preaching Narratives 2	Richard, 169-76 Assign. #11 (Narr. EO speakers 1-6)	
26	18 Sep (Th1)	Epistle Sermons Classroom Sermons/Recording:	Speaking #4: Students 1-2 Prepare for Assign. #10 (6 Sermon Evals. over the next few weeks) Assign. #8 (Epistle HO speakers 7-12)	
27	18 Sep (Th2)	Epistle Sermons	Speaking #4: Students 3-4	
28	23 Sep (T)	Epistle Sermons	Speaking #4: Students 5-6 Assign. #11 (Narr. EO speakers 7-12)	
29	25 Sep (Th1)	Epistle Sermons	Speaking #4: Students 7-8 Assign. #12 (Narr. HO speakers 1-6)	
30	25 Sep (Th2)	Epistle Sermons	Speaking #4: Students 9-10 PPT Tips (notes, xvi-xix)	
31	30 Sep (T)	Epistle Sermons	Speaking #4: Students 11-12	
32	3 Oct (Th1)	Preaching Controversial Subjects	Mawhinney, 78-116 Hybels, 79-112	
33	3 Oct (Th2)	Narrative Sermons	Speaking #5: Students 1-2 Richard, 160-71 (narrative preaching), 172-79 (advanced CPT)	
34	7 Oct (T)	Narrative Sermons	Speaking #5: Students 3-4 Mawhinney, 117-72	
35	9 Oct (Th1)	Narrative Sermons	Speaking #5: Students 5-6 Assign. #12 (Narr. HO speakers 7-12)	
36	9 Oct (Th2)	Narrative Sermons	Speaking #5: Students 7-8 Mawhinney, 173-212	
37	14 Oct (T)	Narrative Sermons	Speaking #5: Students 9-10 Mawhinney, 213-58 (read 245-58 again—I know you read it earlier)	
38	16 Oct (Th1)	Narrative Sermons	Speaking #5: Students 11-12	
39	16 Oct (Th2)	Topical Sermons	Mawhinney, 173-212 Richard, 198-203 (topical preaching)	
40	21 Oct (T)	Monologues	Notes, 160-88	
41	23 Oct (Th1)	Evangelistic, Wedding, & Funeral Sermons	*Biblical Sermons*, 201-19	
42	23 Oct (Th2)	Preaching Calendars & The "Don'ts" of Preaching	Richard, 153-54 Hybels, 45-53 Wiersbe, 71-109 Turn in this completed report	

You need not ask permission to translate additional PPT for this course, but if you translate them, please send me a copy so I can upload the files to http://biblestudydownloads.com for others to teach them too. All files for this course are available in Chinese, Indonesian and Vietnamese on this website, with others being translated into Bisaya, Burmese, Japanese, Lotha, Mongolian, Tagalog, Tangkhul, Tenyidie, Thai, and Vaiphei.

My Biographical Sketch



Rick & Susan Griffith

Stephen (24), Kurt (27) & John (21)

Background

"Never say 'never.'" Rick and Susan Griffith both learned this age-old tip the hard way.

Rick recalls sitting in his elementary school classes thinking, "If there's one thing I'll *never* become it's a *teacher*. Imagine saying the same stuff over and over, year after year!"

Yet after trusting Christ at age 13 and beginning to teach God's Word, Rick's attitude began to change. After his business degree at California State University, Hayward, and Master of Theology degree (Pastoral Ministries) and the Doctor of Philosophy degree (Bible Exposition) from Dallas Theological Seminary in Texas, Dr. Griffith soon found himself on the other end of the classroom—and loving it!

Susan, from Yucaipa, California, also learned not to say "never." As she earned her Bachelor of Arts degree in piano at Biola University, several friends married and worked to put their husbands through three more years of seminary training. "I'll never do that!" she exclaimed. Soon afterwards she invested three years (1981-1983) singing together with her future husband in the Crossroads, Campus Crusade's traveling music team in Asia. This nine member Philippines-based group shared Christ in the Philippines, China, Hong Kong, Korea, Japan, Macau, Thailand, Malaysia, Indonesia, and Singapore.

In December 1983 Susan's "never" became a reality. She and Rick were married and like Jacob and Rachel of old, Susan also worked for her mate. During these seven seminary years Rick served as a pastor, corporate chaplain, and International Students church consultant. Susan taught women's Bible studies and often ministered by singing. Their primary church in Texas is Christ Chapel Bible Church in Fort Worth.

The Griffith family now includes three sons: Kurt (27 yrs.), Stephen (24 yrs.), and John (21 yrs.). During home assignment they minister mainly from the First Baptist Church of Yucaipa, California.

Ministry

However, since 1991 the Griffiths' home has been Singapore where Dr. Rick serves as Doctor of Ministry Director with 30 other full-time faculty at Singapore Bible College. SBC has about 500 full-time students from 23 countries and 25 denominations, as well as many professionals in the certificate-level Centre for Continuing Theological Education (CCTE). During his first term he taught a variety of courses: Old Testament Survey, New Testament Survey, New Testament Backgrounds, Eschatology (the study of future things), Evangelism, Pastoral Epistles, Psalms, Homiletics (preaching), Hebrew Exegesis, and four Old

Testament exposition courses. For many years he also taught Pentateuch, Gospels, Eschatology (theology of the future), Ecclesiology (theology of the church), and Pneumatology (theology of the Holy Spirit). Now he teaches mostly Bible Exposition classes, including Homiletics, World of the OT & NT, and OT & NT Survey. He has also written three Advanced Studies in the Old and New Testament courses at the Internet Biblical Seminary (www.internetseminary.org).

Dr. Rick loves the variety and strategic nature of his teaching. He invests his life into Anglicans from Sri Lanka, Lutherans from Singapore, Presbyterians from Korea, Conservative Baptists from the Philippines, and missionaries from Campus Crusade, OMF, and Operation Mobilisation—sometimes all in one class! One class had 17 of the 20 students training for ministry outside of Singapore. Nearly all SBC graduates enter pastoral or missionary ministries due to Asia's shortage of trained leaders.

Ministry opportunities abound. Rick and Susan have conducted premarital counseling for students and their home has an open door to students and guests traveling through Singapore. They have sung in evangelistic thrusts and in 1992 also participated in founding International Community School, an expatriate Christian primary and secondary school in Singapore now with 430 students. The Griffiths are missionaries with WorldVenture and Rick serves as the Singapore field leader.

Dr. Rick also enjoys several other partnerships. He also serves as Asia Translation Coordinator for "The Bible... Basically International" seminars; web author & editor, Internet Biblical Seminary; and itinerate professor for 52 trips throughout Asia in places such as Lanka Bible College (Sri Lanka), Myanmar Evangelical Graduate School of Theology, Union Bible Training Center (Mongolia), Jordan Evangelical Theological Seminary, and Biblical Education by Extension training in three restricted access countries.

In 2006 the Griffiths also helped begin Crossroads International Church, Singapore. Here "Dr. Rick" is "Pastor Rick" in his role as pastor-teacher and elder. The church meets at 4 PM on Sundays at the Upper Room of the Metropolitan YMCA at 60 Stevens Road. See cicfamily.com for details.

In 2009 Dr. Rick began the biblestudydownloads.com website that offers his courses for free download. This includes 5000 pages of course notes in Word and pdf formats, about 400 PowerPoint presentations in English, and hundreds of translations of these by his students into 37 languages. Current languages include Ao, Arabic, Bangla, Bisaya, Burmese, Chin, Chinese, Dutch, English, French, Hindi, Indonesian, Japanese, Kachin, Khmer, Kiswahili, Korean, Lotha, Malay, Malayalam, Mao, Mizo, Mongolian, Nepali, Nias, Paite, Russian, Sinhala, Spanish, Sumi, Tagalog, Tamil, Tangkhul, Tenyidie, Thai, Vaiphei, and Vietnamese.

Field

Singapore Bible College is strategically located at the "ministry hub" of Southeast Asia, the Republic of Singapore. A small island of only 14 by 26 miles, Singapore is a city-nation at the tip of the Malayan Peninsula. The population of is 75 percent Chinese, 15 percent Malay and 8 percent Indian. Other groups include Filipinos, Thais, Japanese, Americans, and Europeans. This beautiful island nation, with dynamic growth in churches and missionary force, has been called the "Antioch of Asia." The Singaporean cross-cultural missionary force is increasingly contributing to God's work in overseas ministries.

Passion

Rick's passion is for God's leaders to preach and live the Word of God. The servant of God's role is clearly given in the following verses:

- Teaching obedience to Christ's teaching is key to our commission to make disciples (Matt. 28:20)
- The priority of the apostles was teaching and prayer (Acts 6:1-16)
- Paul's legacy to Timothy focused on exposition: "Preach the Word" (2 Tim. 4:2-3)

However, recent trends include the following:

- Church people are biblically illiterate—Amos lamented that his day of prosperity had a "famine for hearing the words of the Lord" (Amos 8:11)
- Pastors are doing too many things so they have too little time to feed the flock
- Preachers give empty and simplistic sermons
  Attempting to be "relevant," pastors preach what people want to hear—not what they need

PowerPoint Tips

5th Edition; Updated 10 December 2012

Dr Rick Griffith, Singapore Bible College

Introduction

Microsoft PowerPoint is become more popular in worship leading, teaching, and preaching. But audiences are also becoming more demanding that PPT be done well. How can you improve the quality of your presentations?

Tips

I. Layout (Slide Design)

A. Put your name and presentation title on the first slide.

B. Design the overall presentation by typing the basic flow into the outline on the left side column when in the normal view mode. This will create a slide that has the slide title repeated on the slide itself. Having these titles in the left column makes it easier to see the presentation as a whole and will help you easily switch the slide order when editing. It also makes it easier to change the look of every slide title simply by changing the master (rather than manually changing every title).

C. Vary the types of layouts by using the built-in layout design templates. This means don't have each slide give a title and bulleted text, but sometimes put the title at the bottom of the slide instead of the top, etc. Change where your image appears on the slide too—sometimes on the right, sometimes on the left, etc. Sometimes use columns that contrast one column with the next. The key is to make sure each slide doesn't look like all the others.

D. Many PPT presentations use the slide master to make every slide background match the others, but I've always wondered why each slide must look like the others. I personally prefer variety in my presentations, so I vary the background to try to keep the viewers guessing as to what the next slide will look like. Sometimes it has a dark background, sometimes it is light or white, etc.

E. Be sure to use the spelling and grammar checker on your Office software to avoid silly typos. Your credibility in presenting your material will decrease if you have several misspelled words.

II. Pictures

A. Use BIG and **BOLD** images that fill the slide. Remember that PPT is a visual medium more than a written medium of instruction. You should have an image on every slide or nearly every slide. For example, rather than describe a location, show it visually on a map. Instead of describing a process verbally or as text, design it in a spatial way as a diagram with arrows going to the next step.

B. Don't include a lot of text that people must copy down—include this in a handout instead. If you have fill-in blanks on your handout, highlight the fill-in words on the slide in an easier-to-read color (not harder to read!). For example, often slides have the most important word in red on black background, which is nearly impossible to see from the back of the room. Instead, use white text and then highlight the most important word in bright yellow.

C. Remember that colors and pictures look better on your computer screen than when projected, so get as high quality images as you can (though blurry ones are OK for a dark background with text in front). Normally 300 x 400 pixel resolution is fine. You don't

need 1200 x 1500 images as they are so detailed that they take up a lot of memory and make your presentation size too large.

D. Import images from google.com.sg by clicking the image link, then clicking on "advanced image search" link. Type in your search data and click for "medium" images. This way you will get only high-resolution images (about 300 x 400 pixels) that can be enlarged. When you enlarge them they will not be blurry on the screen. Be sure to copy these only in full-image mode. Do not save them in a larger size than is needed, though, as this hogs memory.

E. Animation on slides is interesting unless it is repetitive. Avoid using icons that continually blink or flash, as these will distract more that add to your presentation. Also, don't use animation sounds that distract listeners from your message.

III. Fonts

A. Types

1. Avoid using many types of fonts in the presentation, as this requires others who use your presentation in the future to find these odd fonts to show on their computers. Instead, stay with the basic fonts such as Arial and Geneva.

2. Typically sans serif fonts appear best (Arial, Geneva, Helvetica, Futura, Monaco, Tahoma, Verdana, etc.). These are clear fonts without "feet" on the bottom such as in Times, Times Roman, Courier, Garamond, etc.

3. If Greek, Hebrew, or other special fonts are needed to view your presentation, attach these on your CD of the presentation so the viewer can add them to his own presentation computer. I use the BibleWorks® fonts myself available at http://www.bibleworks.com/fonts.html.

B. Size

1. Never use smaller than 24-point fonts on a slide. Each word should be visible from the back of the classroom. It is far better to have five separate slides than to have viewers straining to see everything on a single slide. Extra slides are free!

2. Use of larger fonts will keep you from the temptation to put too many words on a slide. Never put more than 50 words on a single slide.

3. The smallest fonts (24-point) should be only for the source of your information that you put in the lower right corner. (Always cite sources!)

IV. Transitions

A. Insert a transition slide when going to the next section of your presentation. This is a simple word title or phrase across the screen with an appropriate picture or graphic.

B. When moving to the next slide, do not have the slide start completely blank so you must click to bring up the first image or text. Use as few clicks as possible per slide.

C. Vary the type of transition to the next slide.

D. If the slide correlates to the class notes, put the page number of the class notes in 24-point bold **Arial** font in the upper right corner of the slide. This will keep you from having to announce which page you are presenting each time you change slides.

V. Colour

A. Give as much contrast between fonts and backgrounds as possible. Never put red on a purple or black background, gray on a white background, etc. The best way to test how easy the font is to read is to simply squint your eyes while looking at your computer screen. If it's tough to read, then get more contrast between the font color and the background color.

B. Use the glow or shadow feature of PPT to put a dark shadow on the words. This enables them to be seen over pictures that vary between light and dark backgrounds.

C. Make some of your slides black and white only. This eases the eyestrain of the viewers and provides variety in the presentation by bringing a viewer's attention to the speaker rather than always looking at the screen.

VI. Giving the Presentation

A. Project as large an image as possible onto the screen or wall. Bigger is better.

B. When you want to give the audience a visual break, plan this in advance by inserting a black slide. If you decide to make the screen black over an existing visible slide then hit "B" on the keyboard when in "Slide Show" mode in the lower left corner of the screen. Hit "B" again to see the slide and continue the presentation.

C. Do not feel that because you are presenting with PowerPoint that you must do all the talking. Class participation can be enhanced with a small group discussion question put on a slide and left there for groups to discuss or individuals to apply.

D. Use the PowerPoint "Show Presenter View" feature under the Slide Show menu so you can see the next slides on your computer while the audience sees only the active slide. This enables you to skip slides to keep to your time limit, or to present them in a different order that looks seamless to the class, as they cannot see you skipping slides from their perspective of seeing only the main screen.

E. Study the PowerPoint Grade Sheet on the next page to see other issues not noted on this study—especially since this is the actual grade sheet used for presentations in my classes. This sheet will help especially in the content area as this present study focuses more on presentation than it does the actual content.



"The Bible... Basically" Translation Project at Singapore Bible College

Instructions by Dr. Rick Griffith (Updated 25 June 2014)

Singapore Bible College students have translated TBB since 2003. This is in lieu of research papers in both bachelors and masters courses: Old Testament Backgrounds, Old Testament Survey, New Testament Backgrounds and New Testament Survey. The Chinese translation was edited in Beijing and is being taught around China, with its 1.2 billion people speaking Mandarin. Translations of the entire seminar are now complete in Chinese, Hindi, Indonesian, Malay, Mongolian, Russian, Spanish and Korean. In addition, 28 other languages are now in process as well.

Each language requires translation of three parts of Dr. John Fryman's seminar:

1. The PowerPoint comprises 15 presentation files of 945 PPT slides to provide visuals for the audience to see. This is the heart of the seminar, so this was the priority for translation.
2. The Student Handbook is composed of two parts: The Quick Chronology narrates the biblical story to supplement the seminar after it is over and the Study Helps appendix provides fill-in outlines to use during the seminar itself. This handbook comprises 100 pages of material.
3. The Teacher Script is the leader's word-by-word guide as to what to say with each of the 945 PPT slides. This 424-page book is so huge that we have only two translations of it.

The following chart summarizes how much of each language at SBC has been translated to date:

Asian Language	Speakers Worldwide*	PPT Files	Quick Chron.	Study Helps	Teacher Script	Estimated Attendance
Ao (Manipur, India)		6%				
Arabic (Middle East/N. Africa)	170 million	0%				
Bangla/Bengali (Bangladesh)		30%				
Bisayas (Philippines)		6%				
Burmese (Myanmar)		100%	50%	100%	50%	200
Chin (Burma)		40%				
Chinese (Mandarin)	1.2 billion	100%	100%	100%	100%	500
Dutch (Netherlands, Indonesia)		15%				
French (Mauritius, Ghana)	220 million	60%				
Hindi (India national language)	700 million	100%	100%	100%	100%	
Indonesian (Indonesia)	250 million	100%	100%	100%	100%	2000
Japanese (Japan)	120 million	67%				
Kachin (Myanmar)		6%				
Khmer (Cambodia)		100%				
Kiswahili (Kenya)		80%				
Korean (Korea)	60 million	100%	100%	100%	100%	100
Lotha (Nagaland in NE India)		10%				
Malay (Malaysia)	160 million	100%	100%	100%	100%	1000
Malayalam (India)	30 million	85%				
Mao (Nagaland, NE India)		40%				
Mizo (Nagaland, NE India)		10%				
Mongolian (Mongolia)	7 million	100%	100%	100%	100%	3000
Nepali (Nepal)		30%				
Nias (Sumatra Is. in Indonesia)		13%				
Paite (Manipur in NE India)		13%				
Russian (Russia, Mongolia, etc.)	270 million	100%	100%	100%	100%	
Spanish (Americas/Spain)	280 million	100%	100%	100%	100%	
Sumi (Manipur, India)		13%				
Tagalog (Philippines)	50 million	100%		100%	30%	
Tamil (Sri Lanka/India)		100%		100%	80%	
Tangkhul (Manipur in NE India)		100%	50%	100%		
Tenyidie (Nagaland, India)		85%				
Thai (Thailand)	50 million	47%				
Vaipei (Manipur in NE India)		47%				
Vietnamese (Vietnam)	60 million	100%	50%	100%		
35 Languages						

*The Cambridge Factfinder, 1993 (www.davidpbrown.co.uk/help/foreign-language-speakers.html)

Translation Instructions

1. Assignment: Do not have *any* doubt as to *exactly* what you must translate. This is especially true if you have a TBB presentation number. If that presentation PowerPoint has not been translated, then you will work off the English edition. However, if you are to translate the *script*, then first download its corresponding PPT presentation in your language. The script should make sense of the slide in your language. The English TBB is available for download here.

2. Completeness: Make sure you translate *everything* on each slide. This includes the word "Handbook" on many slides. Also, do not change the order of the slides—nor should you change the background. If you paste some slides into your presentation and see that the background changes, simply click on the little pop-up clipboard box next to them and select "keep source formatting." This will apply the original background to the slide in the new presentation.

3. Edition: Often you will see numbers on files and slides that say "7.5" or "8.0" or "9.6." These all refer to the edition of the original English that the slide was based upon. The presentation number and the slide number typically follow this. Thus, 9.6.01.04 refers to edition 9.6, presentation 01, and slide 4.

4. Title Slides: A blank format for the title slide in 01.01 appears in the file called "Translation Title Slides Editable." See at TBB English the file called "Translation Title Slides Editable.ppt" under the TRANSLATION FILES section. If you are starting to translate a new language, use the format slide near the end on the slides on this document. While each of these title slides may look the same throughout the seminar, you will still need to change the small number in the lower right corner of each slide to match the presentation and slide number. It is best to copy the entire slide into a new location, and then change the lower right numbers after that.

5. Paraphrasing: Your role is NOT to produce an exact, literal word-for-word translation. Make your translation sound so natural in your language that your listeners will not realize that the original was in English. This especially refers to stories, pictures, expressions, and memory aids. For example, much of the OT is summarized with the memory aid ARC: Anarchy, Royalty, & Captivity. This appears in an arc graphic, which is fine in English but nearly impossible to translate. So think up a new memory aid in your language that has three letters or else abbreviates something in three letters. Then feel free to substitute the arc picture with a new visual aid on the slide.

6. Animations: Do NOT change the order of the animations on any slide. To translate some words, you may have to move them to the side of the slide to see them, but don't put them on top of other words as these must appear in the same order, no matter what language is being taught.

7. Masters: Sometimes you cannot change the text on a slide. This is either because it is an image that cannot be changed (so put a text box over it instead) or because it is on the master slide. The master slide is a format that needs to be translated only once and then it will appear throughout the presentation. To translate it, select View > Master > Slide Master, make the change only once, and then close the slide master to get back to the regular slideshow.

8. Course PPT Additions: We are not adding additional slides to "The Bible...Basically" seminar. However, some students have a project to update one of my course files (e.g., NTS) that has already been translated. This generally means that I have expanded the English version so the translated version needs to be updated. You can tell how many slides are in both versions on the Excel sheet by looking at the numbers at the top of the page. For example, the NTS link under Philemon says the Chinese has 51 slides (also indicated on its file name that reads "18-腓利门书-51.ppt"); however, the English version now has 56 slides (also noted on its file name). Please download both versions and open them up in PowerPoint, putting them in separate windows side by side. Click on "slide sorter" in the lower left corner so you can see the slides in rows, making sure that the slides of both files are viewed in the same size. Compare the two versions and copy the extra slides of the English version over to the translation *at their correct spots* (please!), then translate these. Make sure you rename your new file with the correct number of slides in the translated file name. If more than one student is editing a file, I suggest that one of them (the editor) copy the slides over and keep track of how many

you copy. For example, this editor should translate the first 100 still in English (perhaps slides 1-156 if 56 were already translated), the next student translates an assigned 100 (e.g., slides 157-300 which has 100 of them needing translation), etc. Once all of the students finish their translations, please give them to the editor, who can add them to his final portion of the project. Then this editor should submit only one file to me on behalf of all of the translators. The editor should also give me a note or email that shows which students translated which slides. I will then give a grade to each student a grade, make any final touches, and load the file up to my website.

9. Copying Slides: Can you copy slides translated by other students? Yes, I actually *prefer* that you do this. This assignment does not have the same requirements against plagiarism that a regular research paper has. For example, if in your translation you see a slide that refers to another book of Scripture, feel free to look up the translated edition of that book's PPT, copy the same slide found there, and paste it into your presentation. This applies to using "The Bible...Basically" slides in my own course PPT. Just look in the lower right corner to see which presentation it comes from, including its slide number. Cross-referenced slides also are common in NTS books with similar themes, such as Matthew and 1-2 Thessalonians slides in Revelation and vice versa, or Galatians and Romans with repeated slides. Also, sometimes slides in a NT PPT book come from the OT or vice versa. Just look up that book and paste the already translated slide into your presentation.

10. Formatting Slides: Often when slides are pasted from one presentation into another, the formatting changes background, fonts and colors in the presentation that receives the new slide. This is because that file has automatic formatting that differs from the other file. To remedy this, just before (PCs) or just after (Macs) pasting the file, make sure you click the little icon at the right corner of the slide to say that you want to keep the original or source formatting.

11. Slides That Can't Be Edited: Sometimes slides have English words, diagrams, or pictures that cannot be edited since text is embedded into the picture. In many cases, you can simply put a text box over an image that covers the English words. Always use the most updated versions of the PPT on the website as I am updating these daily. Many of my edits replace old slides that could not be edited with editable slides.

12. Naming Presentations: Even though most of the file names of translated presentations on the website are presently in English, I am switching all file names over to translated names. Therefore, please submit your assignment file with this threefold order: presentation number—translated book name—number of slides in that presentation. Omit the name of the language and the translator's name. Thus, instead of "11-1 Kings-Chinese-Lee Wan Yee-82.ppt" the file should read "11-□□纪□-82.ppt." This gives each file name a cleaner look. Generally I save files as .ppt instead of .pptx as this enables them to be read on older Office software prior to 2007. However, sometimes saving them as .pptx files saves space by making the files smaller. If this doesn't make sense and you want to read more about this, click my troubleshooting link here.

13. Submitting Assignments: If you are translating scripts, please email them to me at griffith@sbc.edu.sg. However, most PPT files are too large to send as an email attachment—generally Gmail does not send files larger than 20 MB. So send them to me in one of these ways:
    a. Give them to me on a CD or DVD in class or in my mailbox L19.
    b. Put them on your thumb drive and transfer them to me during the class break time (generally we are too rushed before or after class).
    c. Sign up for a free 30-day trial of the website YouSendIt.com, then upload your translated file(s) to that site and have an email sent to me to let me know it is uploaded. I will then simply download the file from the site with your email link. It's quite easy.
    d. Sign up for Dropbox.com and upload your file to your account. Then link to my account at griffith@sbc.edu.sg and email me a note to say that I can now download it.

14. Grading: I will use the grade sheet on the next page for your grade, so use it as a checklist.

PowerPoint Translation Grade Sheet

Student _____ Mailbox _____ Date _____

Bible Book or Presentation Translated _____ Language _____

	1 Poor	2 Minimal	3 Average	4 Good	5 Excellent
Translation					
Overall content translated accurately	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
No English on any slide (design new memory aids) --For example, replace "A Judge Must Judge" or "ARC" with a mnemonic in your language	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Fonts					
Notes page # in Arial bold 24 point upper right screen	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Generic fonts or popular language fonts (e.g, unicode)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Sans-serif fonts used that lack "feet" (e.g., Arial)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Text					
Text **does not overlap** other text, image, or page edge	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Text **shadow** not seen prior to animation appears	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Text **did not need to be enlarged** (should fill the slide)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Text has **good contrast** with background	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Text **fits text boxes** correctly with extra space on sides	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Text box **colors match** surroundings w/o perimeter lines	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Images					
Images **do not overlap** text or edge of page	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Embedded text in **English covered** with translation	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Miscellaneous					
Format of fonts & background colors same as English	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Animations don't need correction; in PPT, not Keynote	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Slide order remains the same as the English version	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Done right the first time (no email trail with me!)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
File name *translated* with dash & number of slides at end	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Easy transfer by CD or Memory Key or Email	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Sent as one PowerPoint file (not separate ones or a pdf)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Summary					
Number of ticks per column	____	____	____	____	____
Multiplied by point values of the column	**x 1**	**x 2**	**x 3**	**x 4**	**x 5**
Equals the total point value for each column	____	____	____	____	____

Net points _____ minus 3 points per day late (____ points) equals % grade of _____%

Comments:

Revised 5 May 2014

Teaching Report Grade Sheet

Student _____ Mailbox _____ Date _____

Presentation Taught _____ Language _____

For students teaching instead of translating Homiletics presentations, this page assesses mostly the *content* of your report (70% of the grade). The Format grade (the other 30%) addresses English grammar, clarity of writing and presentation, etc.

	1 Poor	2 Minimal	3 Average	4 Good	5 Excellent
Introduction					
Class (whom did you teach and in what language?)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Scope (what did you teach in each session?)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Procedure (how did you conduct the sessions?)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Body					
Specifics given rather than general observations	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Challenges faced in teaching addressed adequately	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Improvements suggested in content	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Application					
Action Points given to improve next time teaching	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Personal and transparent (self critical is good)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Conclusion					
Main points or lessons reviewed and/or restated	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Length (2-4 pages, w/o unnecessary info.)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Miscellaneous					
Handouts (student's own material included)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Creativity (pictures of class, video clips, quizzes)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Course Evaluations included & responses totaled	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Form					
Format (typed, title page, length, pages numbered)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Submitted in printed form (not emailed to professor)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Spelling and typos fixed, punctuation good, 12 pt. font	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Grammar (agreement of subject/verb and tenses)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Footnotes (not endnotes, if used; biblio. of resources)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Arranged logically (not a collection of thoughts)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Summary					
Number of ticks per column	____	____	____	____	____
Multiplied by point values of the column	**x 1**	**x 2**	**x 3**	**x 4**	**x 5**
Equals the total point value for each column	____	____	____	____	____

Net points _____ minus 3 points per day late (____ points) for Teaching Report grade: _____%

Comments:

Revised 3 July 2012

SINGAPORE BIBLE COLLEGE

"HOW TO STUDY & TEACH THE BIBLE"

COURSE EVALUATION

(for SBC students to have their students complete on the last day of class)

YOUR NAME (OPTIONAL):..... CLASS SIZE: .....

SBC STUDENT TEACHER:..... DATE:.....

Please summarize how you feel about each question and give this to your teacher.

KEY: SD = Strongly Disagree; D = Disagree; U = Uncertain; A = Agree; SA – Strongly Agree.

	SD	D	U	A	SA
The course objectives were clearly explained.					
The course objectives were achieved.					
The teacher was well prepared for each class.					
The course material was effectively presented.					
The teacher responded well to students' questions.					
The teacher encouraged students to think for themselves and to express their ideas.					
The teacher was accessible to students outside classes.					
TOTAL					

GENERAL COMMENTS:

1. **In what ways did you find this course helpful for your personal spiritual growth?**

2. **In what ways did you consider this course to be helpful for your ministry?**

3. **In what ways did you think this course could be improved for future students?**

4. **Further comments**

Syllabus

I. Catalogue Course Description

Sharpens skills in effective sermon preparation and delivery begun in Homiletics I. Additional instruction on converting exegetical outlines to sermon outlines for accurate expository messages, topical messages, proper use of illustrations, and sermon delivery. Students preach at least two sermons in the class. Prerequisite: Homiletics I.

II. Course Objectives

By the end of the course the student should be able to...

A. More clearly articulate the *essential material* taught in Homiletics I.

B. Better develop *exegetical and homiletical outlines* than was possible in Homiletics I.

C. Gain even more *confidence preaching* biblical passages before the class.

D. Articulate the problems unique to preaching certain *types of sermons* (narrative, evangelistic, topical, wedding, funeral, controversial, etc.).

E. Understand the essentials of preaching better by *translating* them into another language (preferred) or else by *teaching* five sessions (for monolinguals).

F. Make relevant *applications* from a text of Scripture.

G. *Evaluate* his/her own and others' sermons and know why they were good or bad so as to know how to improve them.

H. Preach narrative, topical, monologue, evangelistic, wedding, and funeral sermons.

I. Gain the skill and confidence to design *PowerPoint* to use in preaching.

III. Course Requirements

A. Readings (5%) will be assigned for most class periods. The Reading Report will be handed in at the end of the course and returned to you with your grade for the semester. Required reading includes chapters from selected homiletics texts and additional readings from books of your choice (explained later). Students should all have their volume of my Homiletics notes.

B. A Review Exam (5%) covering the content of Homiletics I will be given after the first week of the course. This exam aims to reinforce the student's foundation in preaching before we "put up the walls and roof" in this course.

C. A Project (20%) is designed to help you and others better comprehend preaching essentials.

1. ***Translate Homiletics PPT*** into your native tongue. Download your 100+ slides at http://biblestudydownloads.com/Homiletics_Preaching/Homiletics_Preaching.html. After the course I will upload the newly translated presentations for all to use. For more instructions, please download and read the TBB_Translation_Instructions.doc file at the TBB link below. Your grade sheet is on page P.

2. ***Teach*** Homiletics presentations #4-8 in at least 5 sessions to a group of 5+ adults (preferably to the same group of adults). You may use or edit the PPT already designed for this course or may make your own. You are not required to develop more materials, but obviously those who work hard in this area tend to get better grades on the assignment and I would love to have what you develop to upload for others to use in the future. Teaching can be at a home Bible study, cell group, Sunday school class, etc. Have your students fill in the attached course evaluation on the last class session, but you should also submit to me with these a 2-page report that explains what you did, what you learned, who you taught, etc. You may teach in another language but please translate all student evaluation forms for me before submitting them. You will be graded with the Teacher Report Grade Sheet (p. Q), so fulfill its requirements. This option also requires 162 or more pages of reading (see p. G).

D. Assignments (20%) must be typed (except #5-6) and submitted on time for full credit:

1. Turn in your Q&A exegetical work with an exegetical idea/outline of your Mark text that you will preach for your first sermon in this course. In your exegetical outline state your single sentence EI and all MPs in Z_1+X+Z_2+Y form (cf. pp. 22, 29-32). I subtract 3% for each point missed on the Exegetical Outlining Checklist (p. 22). Include your sources.

2. Hand in your (a) original graded Assignment #1 or #3 (EO1), (b) a reworked Assignment #1 (EO2) with changes suggested by the professor, and (c) a corresponding homiletical outline (cf. pp. 47, 152). This HO should be a single page, full-sentence, expository sermon outline on your text, including a sermon title, your structure, the main idea at the right place, an introduction, main points in the body (with applications and illustrations), and a conclusion. Use the Ecclesiastes 5 sermon outline (p. 51) as a sample. I subtract 3% for each point missed on the Homiletical Outlining Checklist (p. 23).

3-4. Repeat assignments #1-2 for your topical sermon (#3=#1, #4=#2). Make sure the EI for each passage appears in an overall EI that summarizes the respective passages.

5-6. Evaluate six sermons by students using the Sermon Evaluation Form (pp. 25-26). This way each student will have input from three students and the professor on his/her sermons plus doing a self-evaluation. The first three evaluations will be graded for Assignment #5 and the second three for Assignment #6.

Mark	Speaker	Narrative Sermons				Topical Sermons				
Narrative Passages	Preacher's Name	Speaker #	1st Eval	2nd Eval	3rd Eval	Type	Speaker #	1st Eval	2nd Eval	3rd Eval
1:1-13	KK	1	3	6	9	Wedding	1	4	7	11
1:14-39	Evi	2	4	7	10	Funeral	2	5	8	12
1:40–2:12	Tim	3	5	8	11	Monologue	3	6	9	1
2:13-27	Vincent	4	6	9	12	Evangelistic	4	7	10	2
3:1-19	Leslie	5	7	10	1	Controversial	5	8	11	3
3:20-33	Ki Tam	6	8	11	2	Wedding	6	9	12	4
4:1-34	Samuel	7	9	12	3	Funeral	7	10	1	5
4:35–5:20	Carol	8	10	1	4	Monologue	8	11	2	6
5:21-43	Wendy	9	11	2	5	Evangelistic	9	12	3	7
6:1-13	Zhi Hong	10	12	3	6	Controversial	10	1	4	8
6:14-56	Phil	11	1	4	7	Wedding	11	2	5	9
7:1-23	Zimik	12	2	5	8	Funeral	12	3	6	10

Evaluation forms will be passed out in class to provide each student input from fellow students *and* the professor on his/her sermons plus doing a self-evaluation. All graded forms will be returned to the speaker, not the evaluator. To see your grade, chase down the speaker and take a peek. No top grades will be given to evaluators who do not give the speaker a letter grade and suggestions for improvement. Try to be honest to benefit your fellow students. If you grade a bad sermon as good, it will show on your evaluation grade—likewise it you are overly critical of a good sermon.

E. Classroom Speaking (50%): The cost of not speaking on your assigned day is failing the assignment (no make-ups). All students will preach to the class two times:

1. Narrative Sermon (25%): A 15-minute sermon on a narrative passage (15-40 verses) will be preached to the class. This must be the Mark passage assigned to you on page B. It should include all of the guidelines discussed in Homiletics I and summarized on the Speaking Grade Sheet (p. 21). That is, it should have a clear statement of the main idea, a brief introduction and conclusion, and the development of the body of the sermon to at least two levels of subordination: main points (I, II, etc.) and sub-points (A, B, etc.).

   Hand in by 2 PM the day *before* you preach:
   (1) the three assignments already graded for this sermon (EO1, EO2, & HO1),
   (2) your 1-page homiletical outline (HO2) modified from assignment #2 (or #4)
   (3) your column-annotated full manuscript (approx. 5 double-spaced pages; see sample how to do it on pp. 82-85 and how not to do it on pp. 91-92).
   (4) Your PowerPoint (cf. page L) and one-page sermon outline (cf. page 51)

   On the day you preach bring:
   (1) your digital media device (hard drive, memory key, etc.) to view later.
   (2) 13 copies of your 1-page outline (HO2) modified from assignment #2 (or #4),

   Points will be deducted for speaking too long (-1%/minute overtime) and for lacking a manuscript column design (-5%), one-page outline (-5%), PPT (-10%), or the manuscript (-10%). Notes will not be allowed and students sneaking them will fail the assignment. Please evaluate your video sermon using the Sermon Self Evaluation (p. 104) within two days after your sermon and return your completed sheet to my mailbox (L19) or under my office door. Those submitting reports first will receive their grades first.

2. Topical Sermon (25%): The same guidelines and requirements noted above for the narrative sermon apply here except that this message should be topical (including exposition of at least two texts on the same topic) and one of the special types discussed early in this course (monologue, evangelistic, wedding, funeral, or controversial). Be sure to submit the same items as in Sermon #1 the day before you preach as well as the Sermon Self Evaluation (p. 104) within two days after preaching.

N.B. Each of the written requirements has a 3% grade penalty per class day late. Also, points may be deducted for not including your full name and box number on assignments, and improper grammar and spelling (especially of my name).

IV. Other Matters

A. Contacting Me: Contact me at SBC by box L19 or by phone (6559-1513). Also, my home is at Block 2-302 on the SBC campus, mobile is 9113-7090, and home phone number is 6762-2011 (email griffith@sbc.edu.sg). My office hours to talk are from 11:00-1:00 on Thursday and Friday and afternoons on Tuesday, Thursday, and Friday. Let's have lunch too!

B. Copying Class Notes: Permission granted until you make a lot of money publishing them. You may also copy all course PPT and translate them into other languages.

V. Course Bibliography

* On reserve in the library for this course and/or my other homiletics courses
† Required readings for this course

Achtemeier, Elizabeth. *Preaching from the Old Testament*. Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 1989. 187 pp.
Though approaches the OT from a liberal mindset, this contains helpful chapters on the various genre and sees the Bible as "the Community-creating Word."

*Alter, Robert. *The Art of Biblical Narrative*. London: Basic Books (Division of Harper/Collins Pub.), 1981. xii + 195 pp.
Explains how all OT narrative conveys theology. Haddon Robinson recommends this approach to literature, although Alter believes that OT narrative is fiction. Alter is a Jewish scholar and Professor of Hebrew and Comparative Literature at the University of California at Berkeley. Although liberal he has many good things to say.

†*Bennett, Bill. *Thirty Minutes to Raise the Dead*. Nashville: Nelson, 1991.
Practical advice from a Baptist pastor on preaching expository and evangelistic messages to people who have heard their share. The title alone wakes you up!

*Borden, Richard C. *How to Communicate Ideas*. Fairfield, NJ: The Economics Press, 1935. Previously published under the title *Public Speaking as Listeners Like It!*
This 20-page booklet will revolutionize your speaking ability by following its four simple steps: (1) Ho hum!, (2) Why bring that up? (3) For instance! and (4) So what? It is a classic in secular public speaking circles.

†*Chapell, Bryan. *Using Illustrations to Preach With Power*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992. 223 pp.
Addresses how to use real life situations to make sermons more interesting, as opposed to textbook-type illustrations. Outlines in detail the process preachers should use in constructing and delivering illustrations and includes 34 excellent illustrations. Chapell is professor of practical theology at Covenant Theological Seminary in St. Louis.

†*Davis, Ken. *Secrets of Dynamic Communication: Preparing and Delivering Powerful Speeches*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1991. 169 pp.
An excellent resource from a recognized speaker, writer, humorist, and teacher. Deals with areas often missing in preaching books: practical advice on illustrations, humour, body language, audience involvement, evaluating your message—even lighting!

Fasol, Al. *A Guide to Self-Improvement in Sermon Delivery*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1983.
Help in often overlooked issues of delivery: voice projection, speaking mechanics, etc.

†*Erickson, Millard, and Heflin, James L. *Old Wine in New Wineskins: Doctrinal Preaching in a Changing World*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1997. 269 pp.
Co-authored by a theology and homiletics professor, respectively. Includes practical help how to communicate theology in preaching to our "how to" generation, addressing both doctrinal content and sermonic form in expositional, topical, narrative, and dramatic

sermons. It deals with the value and difficulties of doctrine today, including how to express doctrine in universal principles and specific applications. Out of print.

*Grant, Reg, and Reed, John. *Telling Stories to Touch the Heart: How to Use Stories to Communicate God's Truth*. Wheaton: Victor, 1990. 131 pp.
The art of storytelling has been neglected in our fast-paced, proposition-oriented generation, yet people still love stories! The authors boil down their 68 years of storytelling experience into four practical steps. Five sample monologues and a helpful bibliography are also included. Very readable and basic.

*_____. *The Power Sermon: Countdown to Quality Messages for Maximum Impact*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1993. 198 pp. US$10.99.
Details a "user friendly," eleven-step procedure for sermon development which includes exegesis, proposition, purpose, destination, introductions, body, transitions, conclusions, supporting material (illustrations, etc.), manuscript, time lines, memory, creativity and theology (Robinson's *Biblical Preaching* does not address these last four areas). The appendices provide a sample sermon and a basic form to use in developing expository sermons. Drs. Grant and Reed teach preaching at Dallas Seminary.

*Greidanus, Sidney. *The Modern Preacher and the Ancient Text*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988; Leicester: InterVarsity, 1988. 374 pp.
An in-depth, technical text on preaching various types of biblical literature. Especially helps identify unacceptable methods of applying the text (copied on notes, 142-47).

Hostetler, Michael J. *Illustrating the Sermon*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1989. 87 pp.
Addresses types, styles, qualities, sources, storage, and evaluations of illustrations.

*_____. *Introducing the Sermon: The Art of Compelling Beginnings*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1986. 89 pp. Paper, US$5.95.
A book on a much neglected topic with graphic imagery, including summaries at key points, many positive and negative examples, and how to have good introductions. Unfortunately he illustrates only how to introduce a topic rather than an entire subject.

†*Hybels, Bill; Robinson, Haddon; & Briscoe, Stuart. *Mastering Contemporary Preaching*. Mastering Ministry Series, vol. 1. Portland: Multnomah, 1989. 171 pp.
Twelve chapters on practical issues preachers face (e.g., preacher's authority, speaking to the secularized mind, giving applications, being interesting, addressing controversial subjects, speaking on sex and money, talking about yourself in the pulpit, etc.).

Koller, Charles W. *How to Preach Without Notes*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1979. 144 pp.
Shows how to preach expository and other sermons more effectively and naturally without notes. He is president of Northern Baptist Theological Seminary, Chicago.

†*Kuhatschek, Jack. *Applying the Bible*. Originally *Taking the Guesswork Out of Applying the Bible*. Downers Grove: IVP, 1990; reprint, Grand Rapids: Zondervan. 163 pp.
Explores how to derive principles and applications from selected biblical passages, with many examples. This is a practical guide on an important but often overlooked area.

*Liefeld, Walter L. *New Testament Exposition: From Text to Sermon*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1984. 180 pp. US$10.95.
A guide to sermon preparation for the busy pastor; emphasizes literary structure and flow of thought instead of parsing, sentence diagramming, and word studies; addresses how to

preach from difficult texts such as parables, miracles, proverbial sayings, obscure passages, passages susceptible to contrary interpretations, and especially apparent discrepancies in the gospel accounts.

*Litfin, A. Duane. *Public Speaking: A Handbook for Christians*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1981. 352 pp.
An excellent guide similar in method to Robinson's *Biblical Preaching* but broader as it addresses several types of speaking situations. Comprehensive (yet concise), addresses both religious and nonreligious speeches and settings, has an index, and practical (a "how-to" book with exercises following each of the ten chapters). Litfin taught homiletics at Dallas Seminary for many years but now pastors in Tennessee.

†MacArthur, John, Jr. *Rediscovering Expository Preaching*. Edited by Richard Mayhue and Robert L. Thomas. Dallas: Word, 1992. 411 pp.
Nineteen articles by Masters Seminary faculty (seven by MacArthur), addressing the priority of exposition, preparing the expositor, and method. Has chapters unavailable in most homiletics texts: inerrancy, history of exposition, study tools, Bible translations, titles, and the role of prayer, being a man of God, and the Spirit's role in exposition.

*Mawhinney, Bruce. *Preaching with Freshness*. Eugene, OR: Harvest, 1991; reprinted, Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1997. 259 pp.
Written in narrative form (which is fresh itself!). Will help you build good habits in your weekly schedule to prepare well for preaching as well as get out of the habits which make your sermons all sound the same. You may not feel the need for this one yet, but reach for it after your 100th sermon!

McCarty, C. Barry. *Well Said and Worth Saying: A Public Speaking Guide for Church Leaders*. Nashville, TN: Broadman, 1991. 152 pp.
Especially helpful on the dynamics of speech and delivery. Addresses the steps to effective topical preaching, including organizing ideas, supporting them with illustrations, and manuscripting for proper word choice. Out of print.

McKenzie, Alyce M. *Preaching Proverbs: Wisdom for the Pulpit*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1996. 170 pp.
Argues that proverbs are the least preached biblical genre; contains six model sermons on proverbs. She is a preaching consultant to United Methodist Church pastors.

*Richard, Ramesh P. *Preparing Expository Sermons* (formerly *Scripture Sculpture*): *A Do-It-Yourself Manual for Biblical Preaching*. 2d. ed. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1995, 2001. 215 pp. US$10.95 pb.
A very practical seven-step procedure for expository preaching is explained by this professor of homiletics at Dallas Seminary. Dr. Richard (from Delhi) has presented this content to pastors all over the world—a tested method! Eleven appendices too!

*Robinson, Haddon. *Biblical Preaching*. 2d ed. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1980, 2000. 230 pp.
Here's *the* classic book on expository preaching used in Bible colleges and seminaries worldwide, and for good reason. Robinson built Dallas Seminary's emphasis on exposition through the 10 simple steps in this book. The book, however, is weak in explaining how to get the exegetical idea and how to make applications for listeners.

†*_____., ed. *Biblical Sermons*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1989. 264 pp.

Whereas his first book has 10 expository *steps*, this one has 12 expository *"steppers"*—one sermon each from 12 of Robinson's students now in ministries of exposition. The sermons don't practice everything in *Biblical Preaching*, but each is excellent and includes Robinson's commentary on the sermon and an interview with the preacher.

Stott, R. John. *Between Two Worlds: The Art of Preaching in the Twentieth Century*. London: Hodder & Stoughton, and Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982. 351 pp.
Emphasizes the messenger more than the message, the preacher more than the sermon. Begins with a history of great preachers, then explores some contemporary objections to preaching, its theological foundations, and finally (too brief) steps to how to prepare sermons which bridge the cultural gap with sincerity, earnestness, courage, and humility. Unfortunately the book lacks an index which limits it as a reference tool.

Vines, Jerry. *A Practical Guide to Sermon Preparation*. Chicago: Moody, 1985. 173 pp.
Gives steps to preach expositions, starting with the preacher's own personal integrity, devotional life, study, physical fitness, etc. and ending with preaching without notes.

†*Wiersbe, Warren, and Wiersbe, David. *The Elements of Preaching: The Art of Biblical Preaching—Clearly and Simply Presented*. Wheaton: Tyndale, 1986. 109 pp.
Composed of 26 preaching principles and 14 preaching prohibitions—most given in bite-size two page chapters. Excellent to read at many sittings.

Reading Reflection (Supplemental Reading for Those Teaching Instead of Translating):

Besides required readings, read at least one other whole book. Pick one of these options:

(1) Read one of the above books by Bennett (190 pp.), Chapell (189 pp.), Hybels (171 pp.), or Kuhatschek (163 pp.) or...

(2) Read both Hostetler, *Introducing the Sermon* (89 pp.) and Wiersbe (109 pp.).

(3) Read at least 175 pages from MacArthur (411 pp.) or other preaching books.

Write a 1-2 page reflection, showing how your reading benefited you. Don't just summarize the book's content, but show your applications from it. This is due near the end of the course.

VI. Reading Report Name_____ Course Grade _____ Box ____

(Please tick if completed in full on time. Mark "L" if late, "P" if read partially, and leave blank if not read at all.)

Session	Date (Wed)	Subject	Assignment	
	9 Jan (W)	Dr Jeannie Yip Seminar	No class or assignments	
1	16 Jan (W1)	Syllabus & Introduction	No assignments	
2	16 Jan (W2)	Seven Steps Review (pp. 27-28) Designing Sermon PowerPoint	Review Homiletics, 21-34, 38-51 Read this syllabus through	
3	23 Jan (W1)	Exegetical Outlining	Review Homiletics, 61-90, 95	
4	23 Jan (W2)	Review Exam	Assign. #1: Exegetical Outline	
5	30 Jan (W1)	Topical Sermons	Richard, 198-203 (topical preaching)	
6	30 Jan (W2)	Monologues	Notes, 160-88	
7	6 Feb (W1)	Evangelistic, Wedding, & Funeral Sermons	*Biblical Sermons,* 201-19 (notes, 326-35); Assign. #2: Homiletical Outline	
8	6 Feb (W2)	Preaching Calendars & The "Don'ts" of Preaching	Richard, 153-54; Hybels, 45-53; Wiersbe, 71-109	
	13 Feb (W)	Chinese New Year Break	No class or assignments	
9	20 Feb (W1)	Topical Preaching	*Biblical Sermons*, 31-43 (Adultery in notes, 336-342)	
10	20 Feb (W2)	Gathering Doctrinal Content	Erickson/Heflin, 39-57 (notes, 265-275)	
11	27 Feb (W1)	Narrative 1-2	Erickson/Heflin, 115-131 (notes, 278-286)	
12	27 Feb (W2)	Narrative 3-4	Assign. #3: Exegetical Outline	
13	6 Mar (W1)	Narrative 5-6	Erickson/Heflin, 183-99 (notes, 287-295)	
14	6 Mar (W2)	Narrative 7-8	Erickson/Heflin, 243-60 (notes, 316-325); Submit Sermon #2 texts	
15	13 Feb (W1)	Preaching Controversial Subjects	Hybels, 79-112	
16	13 Feb (W2)	Humour & Storytelling	Davis, 117-30 (notes, 365-372)	
	20 Mar (W) 25-27 Mar	Mid-Semester Break Extended PCG Retreat	No class or assignments No class or assignments	
17	3 Apr (W1)	Narrative 9-10	Erickson/Heflin, 200-219 (notes, 296-305)	
18	3 Apr (W2)	Narrative 11-12	Assign. #4: Homiletical Outline	
19	10 Apr (W1)	Topical 1-2		
20	10 Apr (W2)	Topical 3-4	*Biblical Sermons*, 51-67 (Goliath in notes, 343-351)	
21	17 Apr (W1)	Topical 5-6	*Biblical Sermons*, 89-112 (Ps 127 in notes, 352-364)	
22	17 Apr (W2)	Topical 7-8		
23	24 Apr (W1)	Topical 9-10	Project Due (or finish reading your extra book + reading reflection)	
24	24 Apr (W2)	Topical 11-12		
	1 May (W)	Labour Day & Study Week	No class or assignments	

PowerPoint Tips

5th Edition; Updated 10 December 2012

Dr Rick Griffith, Singapore Bible College

Introduction

Microsoft PowerPoint is become more popular in worship leading, teaching, and preaching. But audiences are also becoming more demanding that PPT be done well. How can you improve the quality of your presentations?

Tips

I. Layout (Slide Design)

A. Put your name and presentation title on the first slide.

B. Design the overall presentation by typing the basic flow into the outline on the left side column when in the normal view mode. This will create a slide that has the slide title repeated on the slide itself. Having these titles in the left column makes it easier to see the presentation as a whole and will help you easily switch the slide order when editing. It also makes it easier to change the look of every slide title simply by changing the master (rather than manually changing every title).

C. Vary the types of layouts by using the built-in layout design templates. This means don't have each slide give a title and bulleted text, but sometimes put the title at the bottom of the slide instead of the top, etc. Change where your image appears on the slide too—sometimes on the right, sometimes on the left, etc. Sometimes use columns that contrast one column with the next. The key is to make sure each slide doesn't look like all the others.

D. Many PPT presentations use the slide master to make every slide background match the others, but I've always wondered why each slide must look like the others. I personally prefer variety in my presentations, so I vary the background to try to keep the viewers guessing as to what the next slide will look like. Sometimes it has a dark background, sometimes it is light or white, etc.

E. Be sure to use the spelling and grammar checker on your Office software to avoid silly typos. Your credibility in presenting your material will decrease if you have several misspelled words.

II. Pictures

A. Use BIG and **BOLD** images that fill the slide. Remember that PPT is a visual medium more than a written medium of instruction. You should have an image on every slide or nearly every slide. For example, rather than describe a location, show it visually on a map. Instead of describing a process verbally or as text, design it in a spatial way as a diagram with arrows going to the next step.

B. Don't include a lot of text that people must copy down—include this in a handout instead. If you have fill-in blanks on your handout, highlight the fill-in words on the slide in an easier-to-read color (not harder to read!). For example, often slides have the most important word in red on black background, which is nearly impossible to see

from the back of the room. Instead, use white text and then highlight the most important word in bright yellow.

C. Remember that colors and pictures look better on your computer screen than when projected, so get as high quality images as you can (though blurry ones are OK for a dark background with text in front). Normally 300 x 400 pixel resolution is fine. You don't need 1200 x 1500 images as they are so detailed that they take up a lot of memory and make your presentation size too large.

D. Import images from google.com.sg by clicking the image link, then clicking on "advanced image search" link. Type in your search data and click for "medium" images. This way you will get only high-resolution images (about 300 x 400 pixels) that can be enlarged. When you enlarge them they will not be blurry on the screen. Be sure to copy these only in full-image mode. Do not save them in a larger size than is needed, though, as this hogs memory.

E. Animation on slides is interesting unless it is repetitive. Avoid using icons that continually blink or flash, as these will distract more that add to your presentation. Also, don't use animation sounds that distract listeners from your message.

III. Fonts

A. Types

1. Avoid using many types of fonts in the presentation, as this requires others who use your presentation in the future to find these odd fonts to show on their computers. Instead, stay with the basic fonts such as Arial and Geneva.

2. Typically sans serif fonts appear best (Arial, Geneva, Helvetica, Futura, Monaco, Tahoma, Verdana, etc.). These are clear fonts without "feet" on the bottom such as in Times, Times Roman, Courier, Garamond, etc.

3. If Greek, Hebrew, or other special fonts are needed to view your presentation, attach these on your CD of the presentation so the viewer can add them to his own presentation computer. I use the BibleWorks® fonts myself available at http://www.bibleworks.com/fonts.html.

B. Size

1. Never use smaller than 24-point fonts on a slide. Each word should be visible from the back of the classroom. It is far better to have five separate slides than to have viewers straining to see everything on a single slide. Extra slides are free!

2. Use of larger fonts will keep you from the temptation to put too many words on a slide. Never put more than 50 words on a single slide.

3. The smallest fonts (24-point) should be only for the source of your information that you put in the lower right corner. (Always cite sources!)

IV. Transitions

A. Insert a transition slide when going to the next section of your presentation. This is a simple word title or phrase across the screen with an appropriate picture or graphic.

B. When moving to the next slide, do not have the slide start completely blank so you must click to bring up the first image or text. Use as few clicks as possible per slide.

C. Vary the type of transition to the next slide.

D. If the slide correlates to the class notes, put the page number of the class notes in 24-point bold **Arial** font in the upper right corner of the slide. This will keep you from having to announce which page you are presenting each time you change slides.

V. Colour

A. Give as much contrast between fonts and backgrounds as possible. Never put red on a purple or black background, gray on a white background, etc. The best way to test how easy the font is to read is to simply squint your eyes while looking at your computer screen. If it's tough to read, then get more contrast between the font color and the background color.

B. Use the glow or shadow feature of PPT to put a dark shadow on the words. This enables them to be seen over pictures that vary between light and dark backgrounds.

C. Make some of your slides black and white only. This eases the eyestrain of the viewers and provides variety in the presentation by bringing a viewer's attention to the speaker rather than always looking at the screen.

VI. Giving the Presentation

A. Project as large an image as possible onto the screen or wall. Bigger is better.

B. When you want to give the audience a visual break, plan this in advance by inserting a black slide. If you decide to make the screen black over an existing visible slide then hit "B" on the keyboard when in "Slide Show" mode in the lower left corner of the screen. Hit "B" again to see the slide and continue the presentation.

C. Do not feel that because you are presenting with PowerPoint that you must do all the talking. Class participation can be enhanced with a small group discussion question put on a slide and left there for groups to discuss or individuals to apply.

D. Use the PowerPoint "Show Presenter View" feature under the Slide Show menu so you can see the next slides on your computer while the audience sees only the active slide. This enables you to skip slides to keep to your time limit, or to present them in a different order that looks seamless to the class, as they cannot see you skipping slides from their perspective of seeing only the main screen.

E. Study the PowerPoint Grade Sheet on the next page to see other issues not noted on this study—especially since this is the actual grade sheet used for presentations in my classes. This sheet will help especially in the content area as this present study focuses more on presentation than it does the actual content.

PowerPoint Presentation Grade Sheet

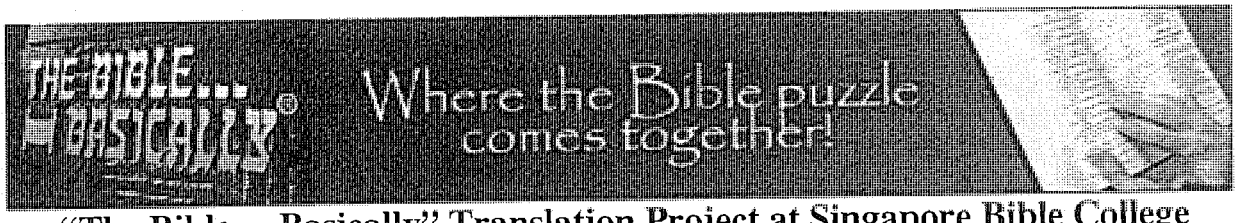
Class _____ Date _____
Topic/Project_____
Group Members_____

The Introduction, Body, Conclusion, and Miscellaneous concern the presentation *content* (70% of the grade). The *form* grade (the other 30%) concerns how you present your material.

	1 Poor	2 Minimal	3 Average	4 Good	5 Excellent
Introduction					
Attention (focuses listener's need on the theme)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Procedure for addressing the text/topic	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Body					
Overall content (charts, other good info.)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Individual work (not excessive quotations)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Key passages/issues addressed well	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Problem Texts (fair to views, supports own view)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Interpretation of passages accurate (exegesis)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Conclusion					
Solution given to issue raised in introduction	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Main points reviewed and/or restated	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Application (exhorts life change in specific areas)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Miscellaneous					
(Applies to the whole presentation)					
Depth leaves no key questions unanswered	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Interesting in voice, illustrations, presence	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Theological content shows insight	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Handouts attractive with sources for further study	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Form					
Format (slides attractive, clear, 24+ point font size)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Many Good Pictures/Visuals (not too much text)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Spelling and typographical errors, punctuation	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Grammar (agreement of subject/verb and tenses)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Length is 20-30 minutes w/o unnecessary info.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
CD of Readable PPT & MS Word File Submitted	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Summary					
Number of ticks per column	____	____	____	____	____
Multiplied by point values of the column	**x 1**	**x 2**	**x 3**	**x 4**	**x 5**
Equals the total point value for each column	____	____	____	____	____

Net points _____ minus 10 points per day late (____ points) equals % grade of ____%

Comments:



"The Bible... Basically" Translation Project at Singapore Bible College

Singapore Bible College students have been translating TBB since 2004. Translations of the entire seminar are now complete in Chinese, Indonesian, Malay, Mongolian, and Korean. In addition, 28 other languages are now in process. Your role in this project is vital to teach TBB to your people in your native tongue. Thank you for your role as a translator! You are contributing to the development of this seminar that has blessed thousands of people in many countries of Europe, Asia, Central America, South America and North America.

Each language requires translation of three parts of Dr. John Fryman's seminar:

1. The PowerPoint comprises 15 presentation files of 945 PPT slides to provide visuals for the audience to see. This is the heart of the seminar, so this is the priority for translation.
2. The Student Handbook is composed of two parts: The Quick Chronology narrates the biblical story to supplement the seminar after it is over and the Study Helps appendix provides fill-in outlines to use during the seminar itself. We're translating the Study Helps first in this 80-page handbook.
3. The Teacher Script is the leader's word-by-word guide as to what to say with each of the 945 PPT slides. This 424-page book is so huge that we have only five translations of it.

The following chart summarizes how much of each language has been translated to date:

Asian Language	Speakers Worldwide*	PPT Files	Quick Chron.	Study Helps	Teacher Script	Estimated Attendance
Arabic (Middle East)		0%				
Bangla (Bangladesh)		10%				
Burmese		100%		50%	30%	200
Chin (Burma)		20%				
Chinese (Mandarin)	1.2 billion	100%	100%	100%	100%	500
Dutch		15%				
French (Mauritius, Ghana)		60%				
Hindi		50%				
Indonesian	250 million	100%	100%	100%	100%	2000
Japanese (Japan)	130 million	50%				
Kachin (Myanmar)		0%				
Khmer (Cambodia)		100%				
Kiswahili (Kenya)		80%				
Korean (Korea)	60 million	100%	100%	100%	100%	100
Lotha		10%				
Malay (Malaysia)		100%	100%	100%	100%	1000
Malayalam (India)	30 million	85%				
Mao (Nagaland, India)		40%				
Mizo (Nagaland, India)		10%				
Mongolian (Mongolia)	7 million	100%	100%	100%	100%	3000
Nepali (Nepal)		30%				
Nias (Indonesia)		10%				
Paite (Manipur, India)		10%				
Russian		100%	100%	100%	100%	
Spanish (Americas/Spain)		100%	100%	100%	100%	
Sumi (Manipur, India)		10%				
Tagalog (Philippines)	80 million	100%		100%	30%	
Tamil (Sri Lanka/India)		100%		100%	70%	
Tangkhul (India)		90%				
Tenyidie (Nagaland, India)		40%				
Thai (Thailand)		20%				
Vietnamese (Vietnam)	90 million	100%	50%	100%		
33 Languages						

*The Cambridge Factfinder, 1993 (www.davidpbrown.co.uk/help/foreign-language-speakers.html)

Translation Instructions

1. Assignment: Do not have *any* doubt as to *exactly* what you must translate. This is especially true if you have a TBB presentation number. If that presentation PowerPoint has not been translated, then you will work off the English edition. However, if you are to translate the *script*, then first download its corresponding PPT presentation in your language. The script should make sense of the slide in your language. The English TBB is available for download here.

2. Completeness: Make sure you translate *everything* on each slide. This includes the word "Handbook" on many slides. Also, do not change the order of the slides—nor should you change the background. If you paste some slides into your presentation and see that the background changes, simply click on the little pop-up clipboard box next to them and select "keep source formatting." This will apply the original background to the slide in the new presentation.

3. Edition: Often you will see numbers on files and slides that say "7.5" or "8.0" or "9.6." These all refer to the edition of the original English that the slide was based upon. The presentation number and the slide number typically follow this. Thus, 9.6.01.04 refers to edition 9.6, presentation 01, and slide 4.

4. Title Slides: A blank format for the title slide in 01.01 appears in the file called "Translation Title Slides Editable." See at TBB English the file called "Translation Title Slides Editable.ppt" under the TRANSLATION FILES section. If you are starting to translate a new language, use the format slide near the end on the slides on this document. While each of these title slides may look the same throughout the seminar, you will still need to change the small number in the lower right corner of each slide to match the presentation and slide number. It is best to copy the entire slide into a new location, and then change the lower right numbers after that.

5. Paraphrasing: Your role is NOT to produce an exact, literal word-for-word translation. Make your translation sound so natural in your language that your listeners will not realize that the original was in English. This especially refers to stories, pictures, expressions, and memory aids. For example, much of the OT is summarized with the memory aid ARC: Anarchy, Royalty, & Captivity. This appears in an arc graphic, which is fine in English but nearly impossible to translate. So think up a new memory aid in your language that has three letters or else abbreviates something in three letters. Then feel free to substitute the arc picture with a new visual aid on the slide.

6. Animations: Do NOT change the order of the animations on any slide. To translate some words, you may have to move them to the side of the slide to see them, but don't put them on top of other words as these must appear in the same order, no matter what language is being taught.

7. Masters: Sometimes you cannot change the text on a slide. This is either because it is an image that cannot be changed (so put a text box over it instead) or because it is on the master slide. The master slide is a format that needs to be translated only once and then it will appear throughout the presentation. To translate it, select View > Master > Slide Master, make the change only once, and then close the slide master to get back to the regular slideshow.

8. Course PPT Additions: We are not adding additional slides to "The Bible...Basically" seminar. However, some students have a project to update one of my course files (e.g., NTS) that has already been translated. This generally means that I have expanded the English version so the translated version needs to be updated. You can tell how many slides are in both versions on the Excel sheet by looking at the numbers at the top of the page. For example, the NTS link under Revelation says the Chinese has 239 slides (also indicated on its file name that reads "27-Revelation-239.ppt"); however, the English version now has 585 slides (also noted on its file name). Please download both versions and open them up in PowerPoint, putting them in separate windows side by side. Click on "slide sorter" in the lower left corner so you can see the slides in rows, making sure that the slides of both files are viewed in the same size. Compare the two versions and copy the extra slides of the English version over to the translation *at their correct spots* (please!), then translate these. Make sure you rename your new file with the correct number of slides in the file name. If more than one student is editing a file, I suggest that one of them (the editor) copy the slides over and keep track of how many you copy. For example, this editor should translate the first 100

still in English (perhaps slides 1-156 if 56 were already translated), the next student translates an assigned 100 (e.g., slides 157-300 which has 100 of them needing translation), etc. Once all of the students finish their translations, please give them to the editor, who can add them to his final portion of the project. Then this editor should submit only one file to me on behalf of all of the translators. The editor should also give me a note or email that shows which students translated which slides. I will then give a grade to each student a grade, make any final touches, and load the file up to my website.

9. Copying Slides: Can you copy slides translated by other students? Yes, I actually *prefer* that you do this. This assignment does not have the same requirements against plagiarism that a regular research paper has. For example, if in your translation you see a slide that refers to another book of Scripture, feel free to look up the translated edition of that book's PPT, copy the same slide found there, and paste it into your presentation. This applies to using "The Bible...Basically" slides in my own course PPT. Just look in the lower right corner to see which presentation it comes from, including its slide number. Cross-referenced slides also are common in NTS books with similar themes, such as Matthew and 1-2 Thessalonians slides in Revelation and vice versa, or Galatians and Romans with repeated slides. Also, sometimes slides in a NT PPT book come from the OT or vice versa. Just look up that book and paste the already translated slide into your presentation.

10. Formatting Slides: Often when slides are pasted from one presentation into another, the formatting changes background, fonts and colors in the presentation that receives the new slide. This is because that file has automatic formatting that differs from the other file. To remedy this, just before (PCs) or just after (Macs) pasting the file, make sure you click the little icon at the right corner of the slide to say that you want to keep the original or source formatting.

11. Slides That Can't Be Edited: Sometimes slides have English words, diagrams, or pictures that cannot be edited since text is embedded into the picture. In many cases, you can simply put a text box over an image that covers the English words. Always use the most updated versions of the PPT on the website as I am updating these daily. Many of my edits replace old slides that could not be edited with editable slides.

12. Naming Presentations: Even though most of the file names of translated presentations on the website are presently in English, I am switching all file names over to translated names. Therefore, please submit your assignment file with this threefold order: presentation number—translated book name—number of slides in that presentation. Omit the name of the language and the translator's name. Thus, instead of "11-1 Kings-Chinese-Lee Wan Yee-82.ppt" the file should read "11-□□纪□-82.ppt." This gives each file name a cleaner look. Generally I save files as .ppt instead of .pptx as this enables them to be read on older Office software prior to 2007. However, sometimes saving them as .pptx files saves space by making the files smaller. If this doesn't make sense and you want to read more about this, click my troubleshooting link here.

13. Submitting Assignments: If you are translating scripts, please email them to me at griffith@sbc.edu.sg. However, most PPT files are too large to send as an email attachment—generally Gmail does not send files larger than 20 MB. So send them to me in one of these ways:
    a. Give them to me on a CD or DVD in class or in my mailbox L19.
    b. Put them on your thumb drive and transfer them to me during the class break time (generally we are too rushed before or after class).
    c. Sign up for a free 30-day trial of the website YouSendIt.com, then upload your translated file(s) to that site and have an email sent to me to let me know it is uploaded. I will then simply download the file from the site with your email link. It's quite easy.
    d. Sign up for Dropbox.com and upload your file to your account. Then link to my account at griffith@sbc.edu.sg and email me a note to say that I can now download it.

14. Grading: For your grade, I will use the grade sheet on the next page. Make sure you grade yourself first by using this sheet as a checklist.

PowerPoint Translation Grade Sheet

Student _____ Mailbox _____ Date _____

Bible Book or Presentation Translated _____ Language _____

	1 Poor	2 Minimal	3 Average	4 Good	5 Excellent
Translation					
Overall content translated accurately	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
No English on any slide (design new memory aids) --For example, replace "A Judge Must Judge" or "ARC" with a mnemonic in your language	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Fonts					
Notes page # in Arial bold 24 point upper right screen	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Generic fonts or popular language fonts (e.g, unicode)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Sans-serif fonts used that lack "feet" (e.g., Arial)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Text					
Text **does not overlap** other text, images or edge of page	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Text **did not need to be enlarged** to be at least 20 point	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Text has **good contrast** with background	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Text **fits text boxes** correctly with extra space on sides	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Text box **colors match** surroundings w/o perimeter lines	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Images					
Images **do not overlap** text incorrectly	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Images **fit** onto each page without crossing edge of slide	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Embedded text in **English covered** with translation	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Misc					
Format of fonts & background colors same as English	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Animations don't need to be repaired	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Slide order remains the same as the English version	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Done right the first time (no email trail with me!)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
File name remains same with dash & language at end	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Easy transfer by CD or Memory Key or Email	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Sent as intact file (don't break a file into separate ones)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Summary					
Number of ticks per column	____	____	____	____	____
Multiplied by point values of the column	**x 1**	**x 2**	**x 3**	**x 4**	**x 5**
Equals the total point value for each column	____	____	____	____	____

Net points _____ minus 3 points per day late (____ points) equals % grade of _____%

Comments:

Revised 1 July 2012

Teaching Report Grade Sheet

Student _____ Mailbox _____ Date _____

Presentation Taught _____ Language _____

For students teaching instead of translating Homiletics presentations, this page assesses mostly the *content* of your report (70% of the grade). The Format grade (the other 30%) addresses English grammar, clarity of writing and presentation, etc.

	1 Poor	2 Minimal	3 Average	4 Good	5 Excellent
Introduction					
Class (whom did you teach and in what language?)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Scope (what did you teach in each session?)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Procedure (how did you conduct the sessions?)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Body					
Specifics given rather than general observations	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Challenges faced in teaching addressed adequately	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Improvements suggested in content	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Application					
Action Points given to improve next time teaching	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Personal and transparent (self critical is good)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Conclusion					
Main points or lessons reviewed and/or restated	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Length (2-4 pages, w/o unnecessary info.)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Miscellaneous					
Handouts (student's own material included)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Creativity (pictures of class, video clips, quizzes)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Course Evaluations included & responses totaled	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Form					
Format (typed, title page, length, pages numbered)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Submitted in printed form (not emailed to professor)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Spelling and typos fixed, punctuation good, 12 pt. font	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Grammar (agreement of subject/verb and tenses)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Footnotes (not endnotes, if used; biblio. of resources)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Arranged logically (not a collection of thoughts)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Summary					
Number of ticks per column	____	____	____	____	____
Multiplied by point values of the column	**x 1**	**x 2**	**x 3**	**x 4**	**x 5**
Equals the total point value for each column	____	____	____	____	____

Net points _____ minus 3 points per day late (____ points) for Teaching Report grade: _____%

Comments:

Revised 3 July 2012

Expository Preaching

I. What's *Required* for a Sermon to be Expository? (adapted from Liefeld, 6-7)

A. Definitions (a distinction is not made here between preaching and teaching)

1. "Expository preaching explains a passage in such a way to lead the congregation to a true and practical application of that passage" (Liefeld, 6).

2. "Expository preaching is the proclamation (or communication) of a biblical concept, derived from and transmitted through a historical, grammatical, literary study of a passage in its context, which the Holy Spirit has first made vital in the personality of the preacher, and then through him applies to the experience of the congregation" (Robinson, 20, adapted by him in a preaching seminar).

B. Characteristics

1. *Explains one primary passage of Scripture*: Reference to other Scriptures is subordinate to the exposition of the main passage (e.g., 1 Cor. 13:1-7).

2. *Faithful to the author's intention*: It does not read into the text what the speaker wants to say but rather preaches the intended meaning (Neh. 8:8; Luke 4:16-22 on Isa. 61:1-2). The text is not a box of candy from which one selects his favorite treats. It is the Word of God, which has come to us to be master, not servant. For example, preaching leadership principles from Nehemiah 1—2 misreads authorial intent. You can preach a biblical message from the wrong verse! In other words, you can be held by a great theology so that you preach truth, but it may not be the message of the particular passage before you.

3. *Cohesion*: In Haddon Robinson's words, true exposition expounds the one, central idea of the text called the *Big Idea* (or homiletical idea or main idea or synthetic statement). Genuine exposition is not a series of exegetical comments, unrelated truths, or a cute outline which gives a survey of a passage.

4. *Movement and direction*: The exposition brings the hearers towards the same point made by the author. The message does not simply state the main idea over and over without some design which brings the listeners along in truth.

5. *Application*: It relates biblical truth to the listener's life in line with the original purpose, meaning, or function of the text. Robinson correctly notes that the application must first be applied to the preacher's life to be effective exposition.

C. Summary: So then, what *is* expository preaching and what is it *not*?

It is not...	**It is...**
preaching from several texts of Scripture	focusing on a single passage*
selecting what *you* want to say from a text	discerning what *God* says through the author
many verse-by-verse exegetical comments or a captioned survey of a passage	focusing on the single main idea
a running commentary without direction	selected, pertinent comments towards an end
explanation without answering need	explanation which relates the text to life
preaching through a book of Scripture	preaching a text (even if not part of a series)

*I'm referring to textual exposition here. There is such a thing as topical exposition (pp. 154-55).

II. Why is Expository Preaching *Important*? (adapted from Liefeld, 7-10; cf. Greidanus, 15-16)

A. It is *based on an inerrant text which shows God's will.* The closer we preach from Scripture, the less prone we will be to error.

B. It *teaches God's Word in the setting chosen by the Holy Spirit.* This will guard against improper "prooftexting" (lifting verses from their context to prove a point) and "principalizing" (deriving a timeless truth or principle which applies to all people).

C. It *has inherent authority and power.* God's Word is much more effective than the best of man's sermons to affect people's will and meet their needs. "The type of preaching that best carries the force of divine authority is expository preaching" (Robinson, 19).

D. It *directs the attention of the hearer to the Bible.* By teaching his people how to get answers from Scripture itself, the pastor frees himself up from always being the authority. Expository sermons remind the people that the final authority is the Bible—not the preacher! Scripture effectively gives us doctrine, rebuke, correction, and instruction in right relationships with people—all which equip us for good works.

E. It *best meets people's true needs for spiritual nourishment.* Good expository preaching does not *impress* the congregation; it *feeds* them.

F. It *protects against the improper interpretation of Scripture.* "Spiritualizing" (drawing a spiritual lesson while ignoring the actual meaning of a passage) is more difficult to fall into when one preaches from a single text than when the pulpit hits at verses all over the Bible.

G. It *best enables the preacher to preach through entire books of the Bible.* Systematic exposition provides a vehicle for people to get to know the big picture of each biblical book.

H. It *saves time by not having to decide what subject to speak on.* By preaching through texts in sequence the task is simplified into understanding God's message for His people.

I. It *enables the preacher to speak by faith.* He must continually trust God that the content of the message for the morning sermon is what *God Himself* has decreed for the people to hear.

J. It *guards us from some of the dangers of topical preaching.* These two types of preaching can be contrasted in several ways:

Topical Preaching	Expository Preaching
preaches 2 or more texts of Scripture	focuses on a single passage
more easily selects what the preacher wants to say from the text	discerning what *God* says through the author
the preacher designs his own outline	the preacher derives his outline from the text
time *may not* be available to put verses in their proper context	time *is* available to put verses in context
the preacher can be accused of speaking to certain individuals	the speaker is less easily accused of targeting certain subjects or people as he preaches systematically

III. What are the *Advantages* of Expository Preaching? (adapted from Liefeld, 10-13)

A. *We can be more confident of preaching God's will when we preach His Word.*

B. *Subjectivism is minimized because we confine ourselves to biblical truth.*

C. *It protects the preacher from imbalance in his preaching, enabling him to speak on the whole counsel of God.* All speakers have weaknesses which topical messages generally hide since, given the choice, most of us speak on areas of strength.

D. *The context of a passage usually includes its own application.*

E. *Scripture often provides a literary structure that can form the basis for a sermon outline.*

F. *We can include touchy subjects in the course of sequential exposition without being accused of directing our message towards certain individuals.*

G. *It provides the preacher a fine opportunity to model Bible study.*

H. *It saves time by not having to provide background material to each sermon passage since it would have been covered in previous recent messages.*

I. *It develops the character of the preacher by exposing his weaknesses.* Expository preaching keeps the speaker alert to areas of personal growth needed.

J. *It helps prepare the congregation for next week's sequential message.*

K. *It is easier for new Christians to grasp.*

IV. What are the *Goals* of Expository Preaching? (adapted from Liefeld, 14-16)

A. Evangelism: To preach the gospel in the context of exposition is to preach it more fully.

B. Meeting Human Needs: Contrary to what some think, expository sermons are more relational than non-expository ones.

C. Declare the Will of God for the Church: Our greatest need is to thoroughly know the ways of God (Eph. 5:10).

D. Motivate us in Faith, Obedience, and Spiritual Growth: It is possible to present a passage in an orderly accurate way, arousing great interest on the part of a congregation, but in a totally aimless way (this is *exposition* but not expository *preaching*).

E. Teaching Doctrine or Theology: This employs a version of the case study method. It is better to start with a foundation in Scripture and then apply it to the lives of people than to start with human need and go to the Bible for a proof text.

F. Worship of God and Exaltation of His Name: Directing people to the Word which speaks of God is directing them to God Himself.

G. Convict of Sin and Rebuild on Grace: God's word will not return to Him void (Isa. 55:10-11).

V. What *Difficulties* Accompany Expository Preaching? (adapted from Liefeld, 16-19)

A. It requires a *thorough study* of the passage. Such study must emphasize literary structure and flow of thought over parsing, diagramming, and word studies.

B. It requires observation of sound principles of *hermeneutics.*

C. It requires constant *attention to the larger context* of the book and even the corpus (e.g., the Pauline writings).

D. It requires *faithfulness to the literary form* (narrative, parable, poetry, etc.) of the passage and its context.

E. It requires skill in *matching the passage to needs* of the congregation. The topical preacher has to constantly ask himself what his people need in order for him to organize his content, but the expositor has the same need as well except he has less work selecting the verses!

F. It requires skill and experience to *determine the single, main idea* taught in a passage.

VI. How can Expository Preaching be Contemporary? (adapted from Liefeld, 22-24)
(How can the gap between the ancient and modern worlds be bridged to be relevant?)

A. *Know both cultures well:*

1. Ancient: Do your homework to know the background and conceptual framework of the passage. Here's when a good knowledge of OT and NT backgrounds is indispensable!

2. Modern: Take into account the listeners' level of biblical knowledge, experience with Christianity and the evangelical subculture, education level, and socio-cultural environment. Get to know your people and their needs! Ideas?

B. *Preach the life situation of the passage before abstracting principles.*

C. *Get a feel for the setting of the passage (events, words, teachings, etc.) and determine what things in modern culture most closely approximate that setting.*

Three Major Components of Expository Messages

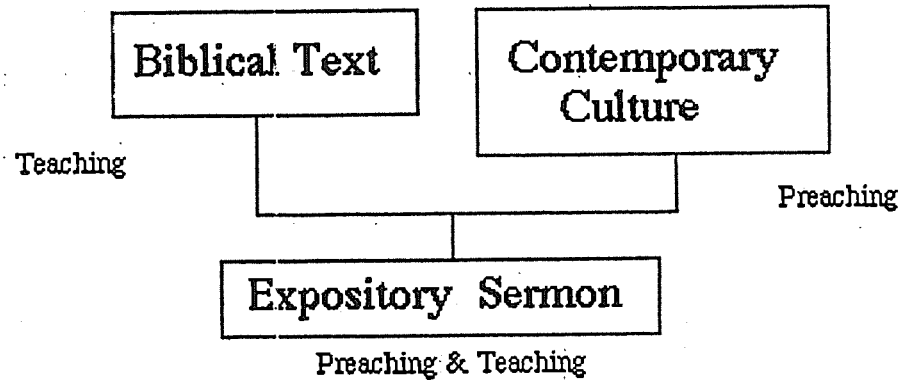
Components	Concerns	Needs	Role	Steps
Conveys faithfully the basic *message* of the passage	Hermeneutics	Biblical	Teaching	Facts
Congregational *needs* met through a Spirit-directed preacher	Human Need	Personal	Pastoring	Function
Communicates well in *structure* to accomplish the sermon's goal	Homiletics	Practical	Preaching	Form

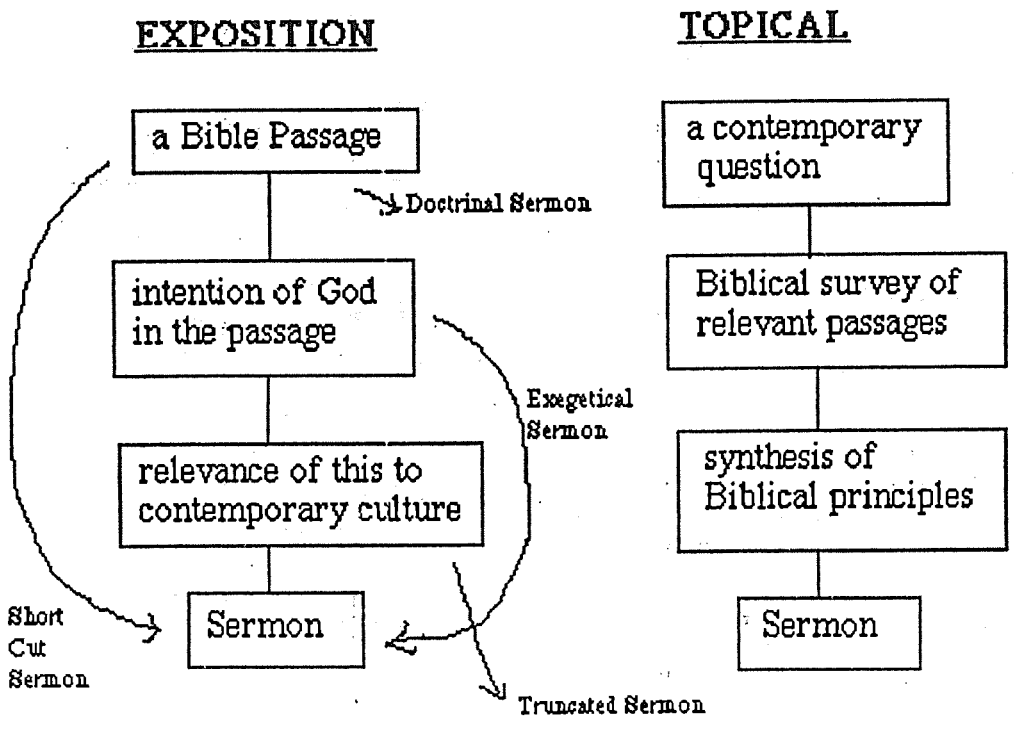
Adapted into chart form from Liefeld, 24-25

Exposition Diagrammed

Dr. Roy Clements

SBC Seminar: "Proclaiming God's Word: The Relevance of Expository Preaching" 11 April 1994





Student _____ Box ____ Assign. Grade _____

"A Mighty Fortress" (Assignment #2)

Directions: Read this famous hymn written by Martin Luther and write what you believe to be the subject (what the hymn is *about*) and complement (what the hymn *says* about this subject) below. The subject should be an *incomplete,* short statement of at least three words which describes the major thrust of a biblical passage but is a sentence fragment without its complement. The complement may be an *incomplete or full* sentence which completes or answers the question posed by the subject. Do *not* use the words "mighty" or "fortress" in either statement and avoid using the same phrases as appear in the text. Follow the helpful guidelines in Robinson's chapter 2 to do this assignment.

Subject:

Complement:

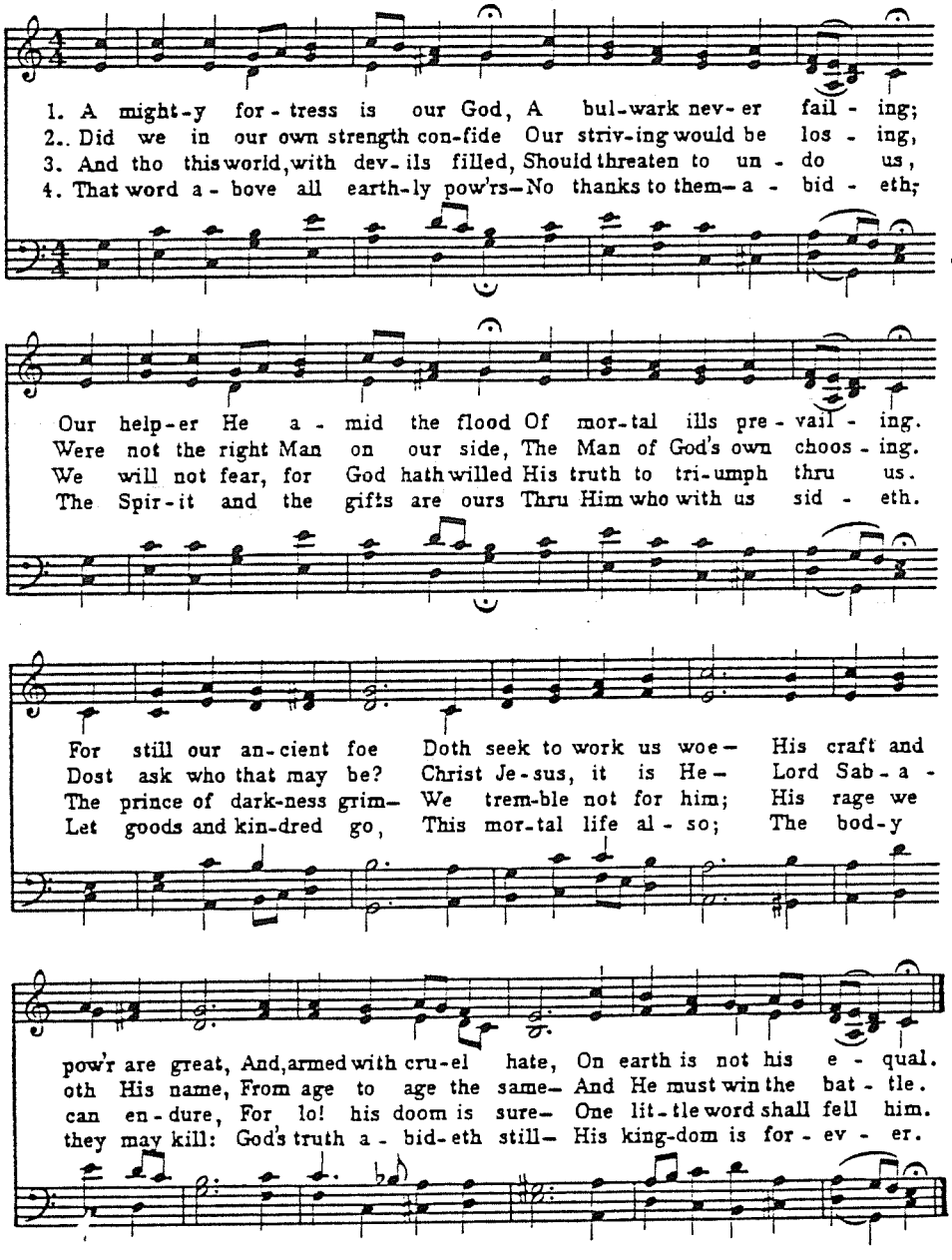
HYMNS OF WORSHIP: THE FATHER

36 A Mighty Fortress Is Our God

EIN' FESTE BURG

MARTIN LUTHER, 1483-1546 MARTIN LUTHER, 1483-1546

Trans. by Frederick H. Hedge, 1805-1890



Basics of Public Speech

Grant & Reed, *Telling Stories to Touch the Heart*, 11-26

I. How do I get over the fear of speaking in public?

Follow this step-by-step procedure:

A. Desire to learn to speak publicly.

B. Realize that you *already* are a speaker. You speak all the time! In fact, you've been speaking for years!

C. Practice reading to others—especially someone who knows you well and will be both encouraging and honest with you. (Oftentimes kids are the best ones to practice with.)

D. Tell stories about yourself.

E. Prepare your message well (more about this later).

F. Practice what you are going to say 20-30 times, each time progressively weaning yourself away from the text. After this you will have it memorized!

G. Deliver the message from memory to someone you know well (similar to "C" above).

H. Deliver the message from memory to your full audience.

I. Use the tips from the "Speaking with Confidence and Self-Control" article (pp. 11b-d) to deal with problem areas (nervousness, dryness of mouth, etc.).

II. How do I approach the podium and begin?

A. Mark the right place in the Bible from which you will be reading or preaching.

B. Confidently walk up to the podium with your Bible close to your side.

C. Open your book (if you have one).

D. Look the audience in the eyes and smile.

E. Pause, then announce your text 2-3 times.

F. Wait until the rustling of pages stops (or nearly stops) as your cue that the audience has found the place.

G. Hold your Bible at chest level (so your head will not bob up and down when looking up and down as you read). Put your left hand under the spine and use your right hand to follow words down the page.

H. Read the first sentence silently, look up, then speak it directly to your listeners—especially if your first words are your introduction. (The ideal is never to read any words aloud while looking at the page.)

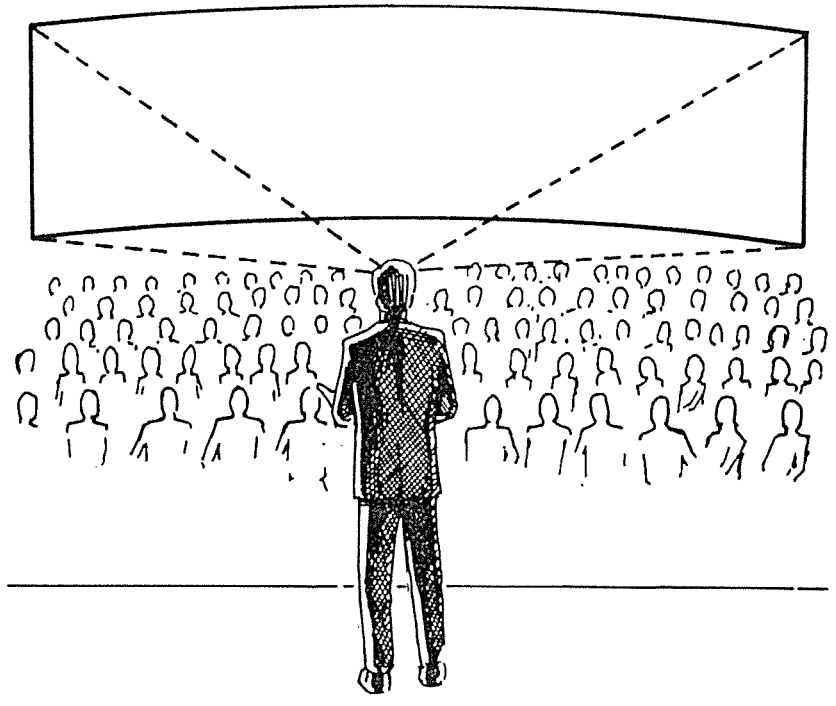
I. In some cases, do <u>not</u> look at your audience, such as when...

1. The text addresses God

2. You want your listeners to visualize ("see") what you are describing

3. The content relates to evil (Don't pick out a woman in the crowd and describe Jezebel!)

Rather, in these cases describe the action above their heads to an imaginary window such as this one:



As you describe characters and scenes in your story, focus and gesture at various parts of the "window" (e.g., Philistines on the left, Israel on the right, David & Goliath in the centre). When citing a dialogue between characters, move them to the centre of the screen as if to "zoom in" on these characters. (Don't ever bring your characters up on stage with you, for twisting back and forth to "play" them is distracting.) See further guidelines from Grant and Reed on pages 113-14.

J. When should you look at your audience? Look at them:

1. During the introduction.
2. When you want to associate them favorably with the group of people in the reading.
3. During the long narrative sections when there isn't much action.
4. During the scene descriptions after you have placed the elements on the screen.
5. During some parts of the dialogue (especially if it is long).

III. How do I end my presentation and get off the stage?

A. Slow the pace of the last paragraph.

B. Coast to a stop (don't screech!).

C. Close the book (if you have one).

D. Look at your audience as you pause for a brief moment.

E. Confidently return to your seat while carrying your book close to your side.

Public Scripture Reading

I. Priority

A. Good Scripture reading habits are foundational to good preaching—if you can't read then you can't preach, especially without notes!

B. Public Scripture reading is the most important part of the worship service but the part that seems to get the least amount of preparation. The choir practices, the preacher rehearses his sermon, the ushers plan out which aisles they'll serve, etc., but the readers "wing it."

II. Problems & Solutions (reading of Luke 5:17-26 or Luke 19:28-44)

A. Too often the Scripture reading has nothing to do with the message of the morning—so make sure they relate!

B. We introduce the reference poorly so people have to ask one another where we are—so in the introduction always announce your text three times for those who did not catch it initially.

C. We begin reading before people have a chance to find the passage—so wait until you hear the pages stop turning before reading the text.

D. We don't give the necessary background to understand the text (e.g., no context for beginning reading at Acts 14:21)—so provide the needed context even before announcing your text.

E. Difficult words are sometimes mispronounced due to lack of preparation—so practice with the guide in the back of the notes to pronounce names correctly (pp. 226-244).

F. We emphasize the wrong words (e.g. accent "gave" not "for" in Gal. 2:20; accent "me" not "before" in Exod. 20:3)—so read with correct emphases and read the passage aloud so many times that you almost have it memorized.

G. The passage is often read with a flat tone of voice—so use variety. Vary your speed of speaking and volume. Read to children—they're merciless!

H. It's hard to teach people to read well who have a "I already know how to read" attitude—so select 5 people at church who are good readers and train them in this mini-seminar.

I. We feel we always have to end every reading with the trite cliché, "May God add His blessing to the reading of His Word"—if we read the Bible well maybe it will already be a blessing without us having to bless it.

III. Scripture Readings

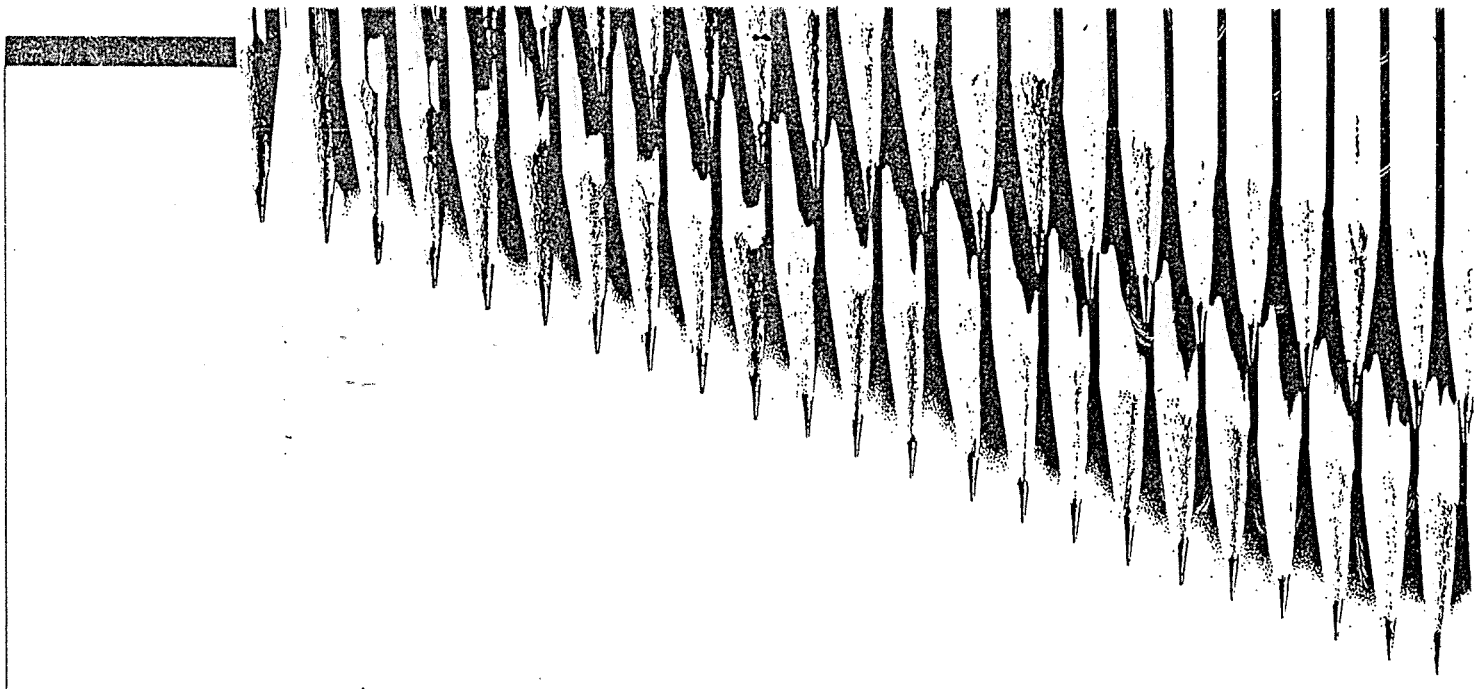
A. Narrative: Triumphal Entry (Mark 11:1-11)

B. Prophecy: Heaven's Throne (Revelation 4:1-11)

C. Lament: Petitioning Help (Psalm 70)

How to Sharpen Your Point

Bruce Shelly (1 of 2)



How to Sharp

Twenty years ago I invited Joe Bayly to one of my classes. In an off-the-cuff remark, he said, "In writing, always keep your reader in mind. Assume that people will have several basic reponses to your ideas:

Ho! Hum!
Why bring that up?
For instance!
So what!"

I'm not sure these tests of effective communication were original with Joe Bayly,* but they have proved to be some of the best advice about writing I have ever heard. They say, "Hey, put yourself in the other guy's place." Sit in your reader's chair. Think what he thinks. Feel what he feels — if you want to communicate.

Let me warn you, writing well will cost you. Most beginners in writing, as in love, think it is something you fall into. They think it is 98% inspiration. The fact is, it is more like 98% *per*spiration, 2% inspiration. If you scribble your thoughts any which way, your reader will feel that you care nothing about him. Your writing will mark you as an egomaniac — and what is worse, readers will refuse to read your thoughts. So mark it down: writing well is a lot of work, but like love, it has its own rewards.

Let me show you what I mean. The next time you write a devotional, an article, a sermon or an annual report, keep your readers' responses in mind.

Ho! Hum!

When you begin to write, assume that first response of your reader is a loud "Ho! Hum!" You must arouse his interest. We call this first paragraph or two "the lead." It can be an anecdote, a news item, a joke, a provocative series
of questions, but to be effective it must do two things: introduce your subject, and seize the reader's attention and not let go. It ought to be a "grabber."

Many preachers fail the interest test. In their opening remarks, they tell how they came to see a certain truth in the Bible or how late they studied the night before. The audience responds with a wide yawn.

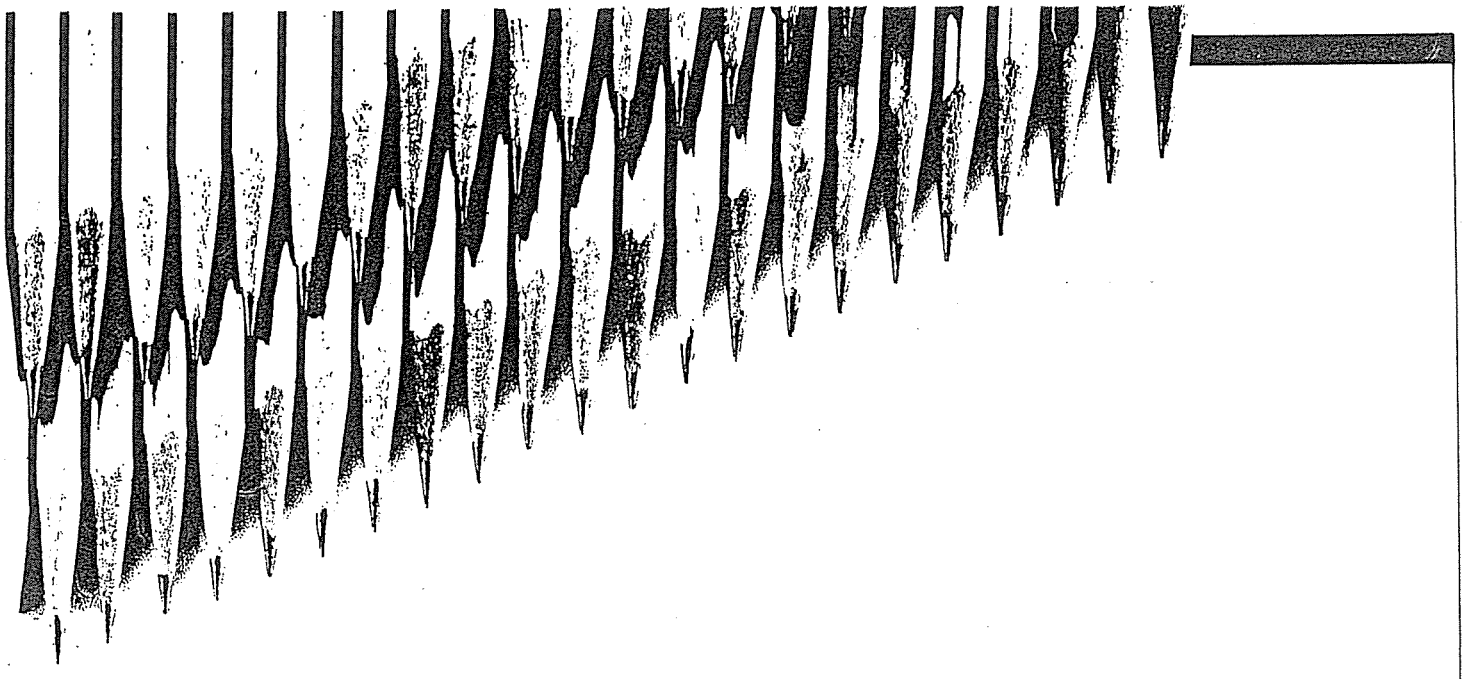
A city editor sent a young reporter out on his first assignment, a major fire at an apartment complex. The young rookie had some difficulty getting the story. He wrote about the traffic jam, about the trouble he had making his way through the scattered hoses, and about the unwillingness of the chief to talk to him. Back at the city desk he handed his story to the hard-nosed editor, who took one quick glance at it and said, "Listen to me! How you got the story is not part of the story!" That's true in journalism; it's true in preaching.

Find something in common with the reader. That's the first principle of writing. Start with a paragraph that grips his attention — and then keep his experiences in mind throughout your writing.

Why bring that up?

Your reader has a second question: "Why bring that up?" This is the test of significance. "Significance" relates truth to life. In communicating effectively we always need to answer two questions: What specifically is the truth? And, why is it important to my reader? You can count on his asking, "Why bring that up?"

* These are actually from Richard C. Borden, *How to Communicate Ideas* (Fairfield, NJ: The Economics Press, n.d.), originally entitled *Public Speaking as Listeners Like It!* (Harper & Brothers, 1935)



en Your Point

by Bruce Shelley

In my writing course one of the first assignments is a news story. We learn to work with *Who? What? When? Where? How?* and *Why?* — questions that develop a student's skill in straightforward factual writing. But news also forces a writer to face the question of significance. Journalists call it newsworthiness. A story must answer several hard questions, or it isn't a story:

Is it timely?
Does it involve conflict?
Is the person involved prominent?
Did it happen nearby?
Does the story have consequences for the readers?
Does it have human interest?

If a news story is not significant, it is not printed.

An author must provide, right after the lead, a "bridge." That moves the reader from the opening to the body of the article. The bridge says to the reader, "This article is important for you." In other words, it faces the question, "Why bring that up?" And it gives a hint at the answer. The full answer comes only after you have made your point completely.

For instance!

As you develop your article, you will face the reader's third question: "For instance!"

Think of Saint Francis of Assisi. He spent his adult life preaching the virtues of poverty and the simple lifestyle. He realized, though, that it is easy to be misunderstood. So he adopted the life of simplicity because he believed deeply that effective communication demanded examples. His life was his message.

In Christian writing, too, it is especially important to provide illustrations. The Christian faith is full of abstract concepts: faith, grace, godliness, freedom, worship, to name a few. To bring abstractions to life, we give examples of our ideas, and plenty of them.

Paint pictures with your words. Edward T. Thompson, editor-in-chief for *Reader's Digest,* once gave a classic example of abstract writing: a scientist wrote, "The biota exhibited a one-hundred percent mortality response." He could have written, "All the fish died." You can speak of a "tome" or a "book." You can write "visage" or "face."

So what?

When your reader understands you — you have made your point and given vivid examples — he usually responds, "So what?" This is the final question: it asks for truth, then consequences. Your ideas should suggest some course of action. If you want your readers to respond in some way, tell them what you want them to do.

While this call for response may be implicit throughout the article, at the conclusion you should state it clearly. After explaining the truth and giving examples, call for action.

Good writing starts with good thoughts. You must have something worth saying before you start. But with a well-thought-out idea in hand, write, listening to your readers sigh, "Ho! Hum! Why bring that up? For instance? So what!" If you listen to your readers as you write, they'll keep reading until you've finished.

Dr. Bruce Shelley chairs the department of Church History at Denver Seminary. He is also widely appreciated as writer and conference speaker.

If you want to know more about punch from the printed page, do what millions of others have done. Get a paperback copy of *The Elements of Style* by William Strunk, Jr., and E. B. White (Macmillan).

– Focal Point magazine 4 (July-Sept 1984)

How to Communicate Ideas

Listener's Laws for Speech...

Adapted from Richard C. Borden, Fairfield, NJ: The Economics Press, 1935

I. Organization

A. Formal Platform Speech

	Audience Reaction	Speaker's Solution	Homiletical Parallel
1.	Ho hum!	Start a fire	Capture attention or interest
2.	Why bring that up?	Build a bridge	Raise need
3.	For instance!	Get down to cases	Illustrations
4.	So what?	Ask for action	Application

B. After Dinner Speech

*This speech follows the same basic organization as the formal platform speech except that it should include a humorous illustrative story with these three characteristics:

1. Tell a story that is actually illustrative whether it is funny or not.
2. Give a casual transition from your speech context into your story (don't announce you're about to tell a funny story).
3. Make a purposeful transition from your story back into the speech context.

II. Substance

*The content of the speech should include "for instances" (illustrations) which (are in)...

A. Story form
B. Involve famous people
C. Animate the pages of history
D. Based on colourful analogies
E. Dramatize important statistics
F. Interwoven with visual aids

III. Phraseology

*The words of the speech should be...

A. Free from wax (avoid unnecessary words)
B. Grammatically surefooted (good grammar in short sentences)
C. Conversational
D. Specific
E. Picturesque
F. Clear

You Are What You Eat!

I. Ho Hum! (Attention)

A. Last May I had a routine treadmill test. I asked the nurse what the record was—she said 13 minutes—so I ran 14 minutes before the machine shut off. I felt really good about this...

B. Until I met with my cardiologist and he told me a different story. My heartbeat was irregular and cholesterol 250! So I had an MRI and it showed a 50% blockage of the main artery going into my heart—the one they call the "widow maker"! My wife doesn't like that term. So I need to get an angiogram at the mid-semester break to clear it—maybe even get a stent put in.

C. The doctor told me to get my cholesterol into the safe range, I need more exercise and less calories. I hate dieting so I decided that maybe the solution is to eat plenty of food—but just eat better food.

II. Why Bring That Up? (Relevance)

A. So you think, "Well, I will have to do something like that when I get to *your* age."

B. But do you realize that, as the old adage says, "You are what you eat"? Makes sense—what else makes up the components of your body? You are storing up your future in your body *now*.

C. I have excellent health. I have never missed a class session of seminary or teaching or preaching—since 1981. That's 31 years without being sick enough to miss an appointment.

D. But I have this life-threatening problem. Aren't *you* what you eat too?

III. For Instance! (Illustrations)

A. So I started reading Dr. Joel Furman's book, *Eat Right America*. He highlights that Americans eat only 7% of their diet in fruits and vegetables—which are the most healthy foods you can eat. It is worse here in Singapore. In 21 years of eating at the canteen, I have *never* seen a salad!

B. He gives sobering statistics (page 6):

1. 40% of all Americans die of heart attacks.

2. 58% of deaths relate to cardiovascular disease.

3. 10% die of strokes.

C. Why? 95% of Americans do not get their minimum daily nutrients! But if we ate 80% fruits and vegetables, we'd have an 80% reduction in cancer! We also could get off most drugs that we take.

D. I've lost 9 kg since I started eating right a year or two ago. Many benefits!

IV. So What! (Application)

A. So now I look at my plate to assure that 80% of the food I eat is fruits and veggies. My cholesterol has gone down from 250 to 123—part from taking a drug, which I am now off. Next month I'll tell you how much the diet change has lowered it.

B. I still need the procedure on 3 September, due to poor eating before now. But now, no more laksa, no biryani, no 3-in-1 posion, no sodas the past 3 years, no fried food, but mostly God's food. I call it the Genesis 2 (fruits) and Daniel 1 (vegetables) diet. It's even scriptural!

C. So make your plate at least 80% God's food, OK?

Chapter 9

Confidence and Self-control

Being nervous about speaking is natural. Like an athlete who is up for the game, you're feeling the flow of adrenalin. If you're prepared and well-rehearsed, you can turn that nervousness into energy. (If you're not prepared and well-rehearsed, you have every right to be nervous.)

You need a certain amount of anxiety and tension in order to perform well. Unfortunately, many speakers start to focus on their anxiety rather than on the business of communicating their message. They compound the problem by telegraphing their anxiety to the audience or openly asking for sympathy. Instead, use that energy to reach your audience. Develop the attitude that the energy is normal and beneficial. It will improve your powers of concentration and communication.

If you develop cold, sweaty hands before speaking, use that as a signal that you're ready to speak. No one is going to be holding your hands so no one but you will know they're cold and sweaty. Here are some things you can control.

Controlling signs of nervousness

1. Dry mouth
If your mouth becomes dry, drop your head thoughtfully during a natural pause and bite the side of your tongue (gently!) This causes the saliva to flow. Have a glass of water handy. Take a small sip during a natural pause. (Don't take a large gulp. You could choke.) Do not use lifesavers or mints. They interfere with articulation and you could inadvertently swallow one and choke.

2. Too much saliva
If your mouth fills with saliva and you feel you're spraying the first four rows, put the tip of your tongue on the hard ridge behind the top teeth (the position for making 't' and 'd'). Open

your mouth and breathe in through the mouth. This position allows the air to dry the saliva without drying the tongue and vocal cords.

3. Drying up
If you dry up or lose your train of thought, take your eye contact away from the audience. Take a deep breath. Let it out slowly as you look down at your notes and collect your thoughts. Focus on what you are saying, not that you are drying. You may repeat part of what you've said to help you and your audience get back on track. Be very natural and conversational. The time it takes to do this may seem horrendously long to you but, in truth, it will be a matter of seconds.

4. Tight throat
Learn to yawn secretly. We all did it in school. Drop the head, keep the lips together, open the back of the throat and pull the air in through the nose. This is the best exercise to release the tension that can build in the throat. When you feel your throat tightening, don't take a sip of water. The swallow can increase the tension. Instead, yawn secretly and open the throat.

5. Shaking
Shaking hands and trembling knees are not fear. It's the homeostatic process of the body dissipating excess energy. Don't try to control this process by clutching the lectern or shoving your hands in your pockets. You're just adding to the problem. Use this excessive energy positively. Make motivated gestures and body movement. Gestures must be motivated by what you're saying. Let them happen naturally and fully. Restrained, nervous little flicks send out the message – nervous. Large gestures are signs of confidence. Bodily movement must also be motivated to bring you closer to the audience, to fill a pause with meaning or to emphasise a point. Random pacing or nervous repeated gestures can destroy a speech. Motivated gestures and body movement support and aid effective communication.

6. Shortness of breath
If you become short of breath or can't get your breath when speaking, stop talking. Drop your head and take your focus from your audience. Cross your left arm across the lowest part

Dr. Rick Griffith Homiletics I: Confidence & Self-Control
Speaking with Confidence and Self-Control
J. Dunkel & E. Parnham, *The Business Guide to Effective Speaking* (International Self-Counsel Press, 1984), 64-68 (1 of 3)
11b

of your abdomen. You should feel the pressure of your abdomen pushing against your crossed arm. Let the breath out slowly through your lips. Take in your next breath the same way while lifting your head and start to speak. This is a condensed version of deep breathing and sighing which relaxes you and centres your breath.

7. Butterflies
You can get rid of the butterflies by tensing the muscles of the buttocks and abdomen. Hold. Relax. (One of our clients has used this exercise to improve his putting.)

8. Facial tension
Smile! Not only will it relax you, it will also relax your audience.

Relaxation exercises

These are exercises you can do in your office or the ante-room before you speak. A few you can do right at a conference table and no one will be the wiser.

1. Breath

- Centred breath is essential. Take in a deep breath low into the body and let it out slowly with a sigh. The sigh relaxes you. Yawn and let the breath out with a long sigh.

2. Face

- Smile broadly saying 'eeeh'. Tighten the area below your jowls so you feel bulges on either side of the front of the neck. Purse your lips strongly and say 'oooh'. Repeat 10 times.
- Screw your face all into the middle. Hold. Relax. Open eyes and mouth as wide as you can. Hold. Relax.
- Pinch your eyebrows between thumbs and forefingers. Hold. Release.

3. Jaw

- Tilt your head back slightly, supporting it at the back with your hands. Push lower jaw out and up until you feel tension in chin and throat. Make 20 little upward thrusts

with your jaw. Relax. Repeat three times.
- Drop the jaw. Repeat the word jaw pushing the mouth open wider with each repetition. Repeat 10 times.

4. Neck

- Sit up straight. Tilt head to one side as if you were trying to touch your ear to your shoulder. Don't lift shoulder to ear. Hold for count of five. Repeat on the other side. Repeat entire exercise four times.
- Facing forward, turn head to one side as far as possible, as if trying to look behind you. Hold for a count of five. Repeat on the other side. Repeat entire exercise four times.
- Keeping shoulders still, rotate head in a wide semicircle to the right, then forward and down, then up to the left. Don't do a complete circle. Rolling the head back may do damage to the spine.

5. Shoulders and arms

- Cross the right arm over the chest and grasp the shoulder muscle. Hold. Circle the left arm backwards three times. Push the arm straight down to a count of five. Release your hold. Repeat the exercise with the left arm holding the muscle of the right shoulder.
- Sit up straight. Raise shoulders as high as possible. Hold for a count of five. Lower shoulders as far as possible. Hold for five count. Repeat three times.
- Sit up straight. Roll one shoulder forward in a wide circular motion making three complete circles. Repeat rolling backwards. Repeat entire exercise with the other shoulder, then with both shoulders simultaneously.
- Reach right arm over left shoulder to touch shoulder blade. Hold for a five count. Repeat with left arm. Relax. Repeat.
- Clench fists tightly. Let the tension go up the arm into the jaw. Hold. Relax. Shake out the arm. Let the jaw drop.

6. Upper body

- With elbows out to the sides, clasp hands at chest height by hooking fingers. Pull back as if trying to break your own fingerhold. Hold for a count of five. Relax. Repeat.

Dr. Rick Griffith Homiletics I: Confidence & Self-Control
Speaking with Confidence and Self-Control
J. Dunkel & E. Parnham, *The Business Guide to Effective Speaking* (International Self-Counsel Press, 1984), 64-68 (2 of 3)
II c

- Stretch arms out in front of you, fingers locked. Push outward with upper arms and shoulders as if trying to force your shoulder blades apart. Tuck head to get a good stretch. Hold for five count. Relax. Repeat.

7. Legs and feet

- Curl toes. Hold. Relax.
- Place hands on outsides of knees and press inward. At the same time try to force knees apart. Keep up the resistance to a count of five. Relax. Repeat.
- Cross right leg over left. Stretch right foot, pointing toe down as far as possible. Relax. Repeat eight times. Then repeat with left foot.

Chapter 10

Today's the Day

Because you're prepared and well rehearsed, you're ready to make your speech or presentation. You know how to turn your nerves into energy, which will give you the edge in making a successful performance. To give you additional assurance use this checklist.

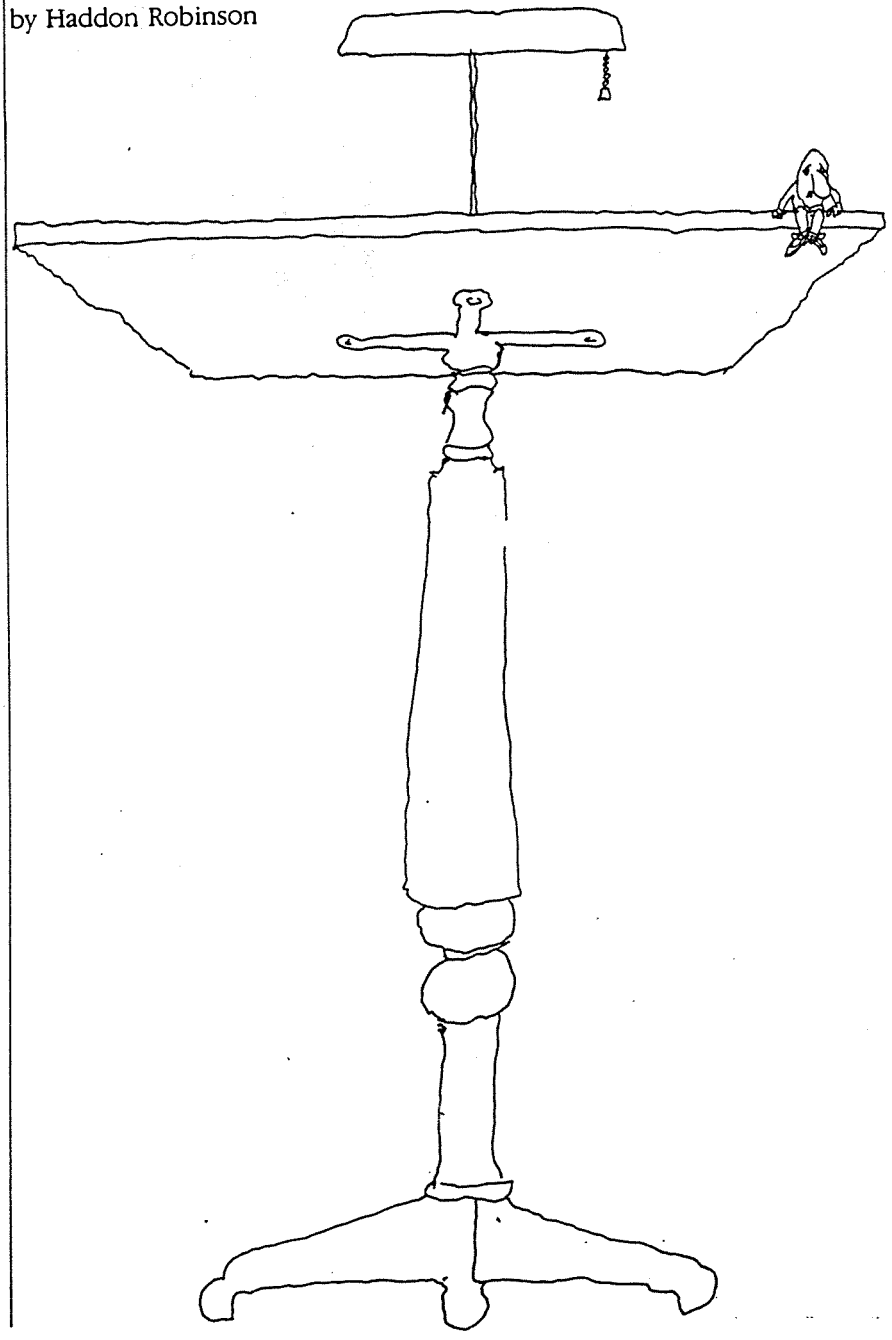
Checklist prior to speech or presentation

1. Check your notes or script. Are they in proper order? Secure them together, but don't staple them. You'll just have to take the staples out. Rubber bands work for cards. Large paper clips work for both cards and pages.
2. Put your notes into your pocket, handbag or briefcase. If possible, have a duplicate set very close by. When travelling, keep notes on your person. Take your slides with you on the plane. If you don't, you won't be the first speaker who arrived in Toronto while the notes and visual aids got off in New York.
3. Recheck all audio-visual material to ensure it is in order.
4. Check to see you have additional bulbs, extension cords, etc.
5. Take your security pack (aspirins, handkerchief, extra pantyhose, glasses, extra glasses). Remember Murphy's Law.
6. Check the news. Does it affect or influence your speech or presentation? Be ready to incorporate or change.
7. If you are making an in-house presentation, take a pulse reading of your company. Very recent decisions could affect your presentation. Be aware of what is going on.
8. Check to see that there have been no last minute changes in the programme or agenda.
9. If you're making your presentation with someone else, allow time to meet and make final reassurances.

Speaking with Confidence and Self-Control
J. Dunkel & E. Pamham, *The Business Guide to Effective Speaking* (International Self-Counsel Press, 1984), 64-68 (3 of 3)

Good Night, I've Been Asked to Speak!!

by Haddon Robinson



If you are invited to deliver a talk, there are only three reasons to say "yes" — (1) a good friend asked, and you don't want to turn her down; (2) you can't think of a convincing reason to refuse; or (3) you have something to say that others ought to hear.

After having said "yes" for any reason, you will probably feel you should have said "no." You will put off thinking about the talk until the event looms before you like an iceberg, and then in panic you will make frenzied preparation as you work against the dreaded deadline. Finally, feeling unprepared, you will deliver your speech and come away from the experience having learned an important lesson — there are *no* good reasons to agree to give a speech!

Most speakers have stumbled through this unnerving experience. It's human, understandable, and completely unnecessary. You can speak well in public if you approach the talk in an organized manner.

You speak effectively if you have something to say and know how to say it.

Preparation for a good speech can't wait until the evening before you speak. Experienced speakers log about twenty minutes in their study for every moment on the platform. You need to plan at least that much time to read, study, think, assemble facts, and find examples. You'll want to talk over your ideas with a patient spouse or friends and put the results of all this research on 3" x 5" cards. Remember, nothing significant comes out of the mouth that does not start in the head.

Good Night, I've Been Asked to Speak! (cont'd)

Haddon Robinson (2 of 2)

Although the raw material for your talk is important, by itself it doesn't make an effective speech. Your material must be organized. An inexperienced seminary student preached in a rural church and rambled on for almost an hour. After the service a farmer shook the young preacher's hand and said, "Son, you had a lot of good things to say. Out here, though, we like a fella to bale his hay before delivering it!"

How do you do that? First, be sure your speech has a central idea. You're not ready to outline until you can state the essence of your talk in a single sentence. Your main points — generally no more than four — relate to that dominating concept, proving, explaining, or showing its implications for your audience. Link your main points with clear transitions. Transitions form word bridges that take your listeners from one point to another by reviewing where you have been and telling them what point comes next.

In developing each point, use illustrations. Incarnate your message in terms of a person or people or events. The most interesting talks consist of examples and plenty of them. Don't shy away from illustrations gathered from your own life, but don't boast. No one likes a braggart.

After sketching your outline, plan a conclusion. Strong conclusions review what you have said and pound home your central idea. They hit like a rifle shot rather than sprawl out like the delta of the Mississippi. Whether you use an effective quote, an apt illustration, a specific suggestion of how to put your message in overalls, or a snatch of poetry, when you quit, quit all over.

Finally, work on your introduction. While the introduction comes first in the delivery, it gets planned last after you know what you want to introduce. You'll want to get the audience's attention and make them feel a need for what you're going to say. You can use quotes, questions, a problem that needs solution, but always try to answer the question, "Why should my audience want to listen to the rest of this talk?" They'll pay attention if they think it's information they need.

You've won a major battle if you have something to say. If you say it well, that adds to your effectiveness. An Indian once said to President Lincoln, "To be great a man must have deep sorrow, he must have anger, and he must TALK STRONG."

To talk strong, rehearse your talk carefully. Don't memorize it, but go over your speech out loud as many times as necessary to control your ideas and the order in which they come. Rehearse on your feet since that anticipates how your speech will be delivered. As you speak, use focus points to polish your eye contact — speak to a chair, a picture, the magazine rack. Don't depend on an elaborate outline. As you speak, you'll want your eyes on the audience and not on your notes.

When the time comes to speak, step up to the podium alertly. After you get into position, square yourself around and look over your audience. If you spot a friendly face, smile. Audiences like speakers who like them.

Speak loudly enough to be heard and clearly understood, and above all, sound enthusiastic!! Any audience responds to a speaker who feels that what he says matters.

Stay mentally alert. Concentrate on what you are saying as you speak. Even if you have rehearsed your speech several times, don't depend on the content to flow through your mind without mental sweat.

Public speaking is "animated conversation," so speak in a conversational tone of voice. We resist speakers who sound affected and unnatural. As you do in lively conversation, you can stress important words and phrases by speaking them more slowly, or loudly or softly, or with a pause to let them sink in.

As you speak, gesture. Don't force them, but don't hold them back. Gestures help you relax and enable your audience to understand.

If you put yourself into the effort — body, mind and spirit — giving a talk can be a rewarding experience. Use your mind as you study, outline, rewrite and remember. Use your spirit as you rehearse and speak. Be your best self, be energetic and sincere. If you are totally involved, your audience will be as well.

- Focal Point Magazine 4 (July-September 1984)

How to make a speech

By George Plimpton



International Paper asked George Plimpton, who writes books about facing the sports pros (like "Paper Lion" and "Shadow Box"), and who's in demand to speak about it, to tell you how to face the fear of making a speech.

One of life's terrors for the uninitiated is to be asked to make a speech.

"Why me?" will probably be your first reaction. "I don't have anything to say." It should be reassuring (though it rarely is) that since you were asked, somebody must think you do. The fact is that each one of us has a store of material which should be of interest to others. There is no reason why it should not be adapted to a speech.

Why know how to speak?

Scary as it is, it's important for anyone to be able to speak in front of others, whether twenty around a conference table or a hall filled with a thousand faces.

Being able to speak can mean better grades in any class. It can mean talking the town council out of increasing your property taxes. It can mean talking top management into buying your plan.

How to pick a topic

You were probably asked to speak in the first place in the hope that you would be able to articulate a topic that you know something about. Still, it helps to find out about your audience first. Who are they? Why are they there? What are they interested in? How much do they already know about your subject? One kind of talk would be appropriate for the Women's Club of Columbus, Ohio, and quite another for the guests at the Vince Lombardi dinner.

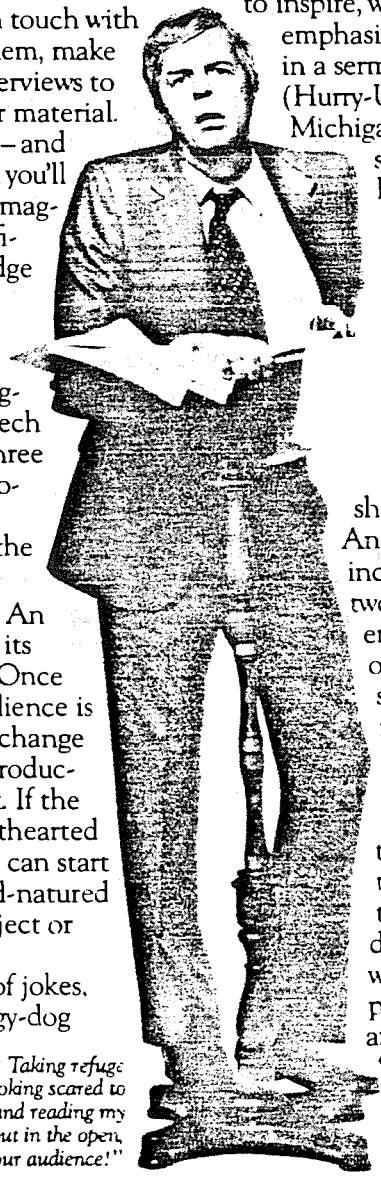
How to plan what to say

Here is where you must do your homework.

The more you sweat in advance, the less you'll have to sweat once you appear on stage. Research your topic thoroughly. Check the library for facts, quotes, books and timely magazine and newspaper articles on your subject. Get in touch with experts. Write to them, make phone calls, get interviews to help round out your material.

In short, gather—and learn—far more than you'll ever use. You can't imagine how much confidence that knowledge will inspire.

Now start organizing and writing. Most authorities suggest that a good speech breaks down into three basic parts—an introduction, the body of the speech, and the summation.



"What am I doing wrong? Taking refuge behind the lectern, looking scared to death, shuffling pages, and reading my speech. Relax. Come out in the open, gesture, talk to your audience!"

Introduction: An audience makes up its mind very quickly. Once the mood of an audience is set, it is difficult to change it, which is why introductions are important. If the speech is to be lighthearted in tone, the speaker can start off by telling a good-natured story about the subject or himself.

But be careful of jokes, especially the shaggy-dog variety. For some reason, the joke that convulses guests in a living room tends to suffer as it emerges through the amplifying system into a public gathering place.

Main body: There are four main intents in the body of the well-made speech. These are 1) to entertain, which is probably the hardest; 2) to instruct, which is the easiest if the speaker has done the research and knows the subject; 3) to persuade, which one does at a sales presentation, a political rally, or a town meeting; and finally, 4) to inspire, which is what the speaker emphasizes at a sales meeting, in a sermon, or at a pep rally. (Hurry-Up Yost, the onetime Michigan football coach, gave such an inspiration-filled half-time talk that he got carried away and at the final exhortation led his team on the run through the wrong locker-room door into the swimming pool.)

Summation: This is where you should "ask for the order." An ending should probably incorporate a sentence or two which sounds like an ending—a short summary of the main points of the speech, perhaps, or the repeat of a phrase that most embodies what the speaker has hoped to convey. It is valuable to think of the last sentence or two as something which might produce applause. Phrases which are perfectly appropriate to signal this are: "In closing..." or "I have one last thing to say..."

Once done—fully written, or the main

points set down on 3" x 5" index cards—the next problem is the actual presentation of the speech. Ideally, a speech should not be read. At least it should never appear or sound as if you are reading it. An audience is dismayed to see a speaker peering down at a thick sheaf of papers on the lectern, wetting his thumb to turn to the next page.

How to sound spontaneous

The best speakers are those who make their words sound spontaneous even if memorized. I've found it's best to learn a speech point by point, not word for word. Careful preparation and a great deal of practicing are required to make it come together smoothly and easily. Mark Twain once said, "It takes three weeks to prepare a good ad-lib speech."

Don't be fooled when you rehearse. It takes longer to deliver a speech than to read it. Most speakers peg along at about 100 words a minute.

Brevity is an asset

A sensible plan, if you have been asked to speak to an exact limit, is to talk your speech into a mirror and stop at your allotted time; then cut the speech accordingly. The more familiar you become with your speech, the more confidently you can deliver it.

As anyone who listens to speeches knows, brevity is an asset. Twenty minutes are ideal. An hour is the limit an audience can listen comfortably.

In mentioning brevity, it is worth mentioning that the shortest inaugural address was George Washington's—just 135 words. The longest was William Henry Harrison's in 1841. He delivered a two-hour 9,000-word speech into the teeth of a freezing northeast wind. He came down with a cold the following day, and a month later he died of pneumonia.

Check your grammar

Consult a dictionary for proper meanings and pronunciations. Your audience won't know if you're a bad speller, but they will know if you use or pronounce a word improperly. In my first remarks on the dais, I used to thank people for their "fulsome introduction," until I discovered to my dismay that "fulsome" means *offensive* and *insincere*.



"Why should you make a speech? There are four big reasons (left to right): to inspire, to persuade, to entertain, to instruct. I'll tell you how to organize what you say."

On the podium

It helps one's nerves to pick out three or four people in the audience—preferably in different sectors so that the speaker is apparently giving his attention to the entire room—on whom to focus. Pick out people who seem to be having a good time.

How questions help

A question period at the end of a speech is a good notion. One would not ask questions following a tribute to the company treasurer on his retirement, say, but a technical talk or an informative speech can be enlivened with a question period.

The crowd

The larger the crowd, the easier it is to speak, because the response is multiplied and increased. Most people do not believe this. They peek out from behind the curtain and if the auditorium is filled to the rafters they begin to moan softly in the back of their throats.

What about stage fright?

Very few speakers escape the so-called "butterflies." There does not seem to be any cure for them, except to realize that they are beneficial rather than harmful, and never fatal. The tension usually means that the speaker, being keyed up, will do a better job. Edward R. Murrow called stage fright "the sweat of perfection." Mark Twain once comforted a fright-frozen friend about to speak: "Just remember they don't expect much." My own feeling is that with thought, preparation and faith in your ideas, *you* can go out there and expect a pleasant surprise.

And what a sensation it is—to hear applause. Invariably after it dies away, the speaker searches out the program chairman—just to make it known that he's available for next month's meeting.

George Plimpton

Today, the printed word is more vital than ever. Now there is more need than ever for all of us to *read* better, *write* better, and *communicate* better.

International Paper offers this series in the hope that, even in a small way, we can help.

Since we started printing it in 1979, we have sent out—at requests from people everywhere, including students, teachers and business people—over four million reprints.

If you would like reprints of this advertisement, write: "Power of the Printed Word," International Paper Co., Dept. 9D, P.O. Box 954, Madison Square Station, New York, N.Y. 10010.

INTERNATIONAL PAPER COMPANY

We believe in the power of the printed word.

© 1981, INTERNATIONAL PAPER COMPANY

Giving a Personal Testimony

I. Advantages of Preparing and Using a Personal Testimony

A. People can argue with your theology but they can't deny your experience (or at least they will be very reluctant to do so!).

B. Almost all people love stories. Your testimony is essentially a story about yourself.

C. Preparing the testimony beforehand enables you to "always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have" (1 Pet. 3:15b).

D. A good personal testimony shares how Christianity is first a relationship (knowing Christ) and secondly a theology.

II. How to Prepare a Personal Testimony

A. Follow the many helpful suggestions on the following two pages in Campus Crusade's manual, *Sharing the Abundant Life on Campus*, 21-23.

B. Be specific and relevant to non-Christians. These two areas are where most testimonies fail.

C. Make your testimony revolve around a main idea that should include Christ's name and be a full sentence written at the top of your page. Examples: "Christ helped me learn to be myself," "Jesus replaced my religion with a relationship," "Jesus Christ gave me significance," etc.

D. The main idea can be determined by answering several questions below. Think through these questions to develop the body of your testimony (also adapted from CCC materials):

1. Pre-Conversion Life: What was your life like *before* you trusted Christ (or totally committed your life to Him)? This will help you determine the *main idea* of your presentation.

   a. What were your attitudes, needs, problems?
   b. What did your life revolve around? What was most important to you?
   c. How did you look for security, peace of mind, happiness? How did you find your activities unsatisfying?

2. Conversion: *How* specifically did you come to trust Christ (or how did you come to give complete control of your life to Him)?

   a. When and how did you first hear the gospel? Or when were you first exposed to dynamic Christianity? Give specific events, people, etc.
   b. What were your initial reactions to Jesus Christ?
   c. When and why did you begin to feel positive about Christianity?
   d. What was the turning point in your attitude?
   e. What mental, family, or social barriers did you experience?

3. Post-Conversion Life: What happened *after* you trusted Christ?

   a. What changes did you see in your life (actions, attitudes, and problems)? Be specific!
   b. How long did it take before you noticed changes?
   c. In what areas are you still experiencing growth?
   d. Conclusion: What does Jesus Christ mean to you now?

Note: Your testimony need not answer *all* of the above questions, but it should answer several. Also, do not try to avoid the use of humor in preparing your testimony, but be yourself.

(b) Use its listing of residents by street address to saturate an entire block, area or building with the letters.

(2) Avoid reducing size of type in reprinting the Van Dusen letter.

(3) Through the pastor's or group leader's cover letter, be sure to:

(a) Challenge each individual to give serious consideration to the contents of the letter.

(b) Give him information regarding whom to contact about questions he might have or to whom to express his interest in further discussion.

(4) Arrange teams of callers to make follow-up calls one week after the Van Dusen letter has been received.

(5) Have the callers trained to use the Four Spiritual Laws.

(6) Have the callers use the same four questions which were used to introduce the Four Spiritual Laws:

(a) "What did you think of the letter?"

(b) "Did it make sense to you?"

(c) "Have you made the wonderful discovery of knowing Christ personally?"

(d) "You would like to, wouldn't you?"

(7)Have the callers introduce the Four Spiritual Laws to those who have not read the Van Dusen letter by saying, "Let me give you a brief summary of the letter."

(8) Follow up those who pray to receive Christ or show special interest. Invite interested Christians to Action Groups. Invite interested non-Christians to an evangelistic Bible study and to church.

d. To saturate an area through a door-to-door personal contact approach, follow these suggestions.

(1) Use teams of callers to take the Van Dusen letter and cover letter to each home in person.

(2) Have the callers simply introduce themselves, give a friendly greeting and leave the materials. (Though the major purpose of this phase of the project is to distribute literature, have the callers be alert for opportunities to share the claims of Christ at this time with those who are interested.)

D. HOW TO USE A PERSONAL TESTIMONY

1. How to prepare a personal testimony.

Any subject matter can be presented more effectively by careful organization. A carefully prepared testimony, given in the power of the Holy Spirit, can be of immediate and effective use in nearly every witnessing situation. It should be our desire to present Christ in such a clear and attractive, yet simple, way that those who hear will not only want to know Him, but they will also know how to know Him personally.

A carefully and intelligently worded three-minute testimony will communicate far more effectively than a prolonged one that includes a lot of extraneous material which will distract from, rather than emphasize, the point of personal commitment to Christ and what this can mean in a person's life.

l. Remember, the same Christ lives in you whether you trusted Him early or later in life. Do not be concerned that your testimony be exciting, just that it be interesting.

m. Be realistic. Do not infer that Christ eliminates all the problems of life, but rather that He enables you to live them out with peace and confidence. "I am with you always."

n. Be positive, not negative, from start to finish.

o. Prepare your testimony so that you can share it in a group situation as well as with an individual.

p. Avoid the following when writing your testimony:

(1) Including statements which reflect negatively on the church and other organizations or people.

(2) Mentioning denominations, especially in a derogatory way.

How to Use a Personal Testimony

Sharing the Abundant Life on Campus (Campus Crusade), 21-23 (1 of 2)

(3) Preaching at people. This is a testimony, not a "preachimony."

(4) Using stereotypes. People who work together for a period of time on a team tend unwittingly to copy one another.

(5) Speaking in generalities or using overworked terms such as:

(a) Strait-laced, sober, and sad.

(b) Fantastic, exciting, and great.

(c) Peace, purpose, and happiness.

(d) Changed (without giving specific changes).

(6) Using words that are meaningless to non-Christians. Terms like "salvation," "saved," "born again," and "conversion," need to be defined if used. Terms like "glorious," and "Hallelujah," are so ridiculed in some areas that you would do well not to use them at all.

a. Ask the Lord to give you wisdom and guidance as you write (James 1:5, 6).

b. Follow a three-point outline: "My Life with Christ." See Exhibit 6, page137, TESTIMONY WORK SHEET.

(1) Life before knowing Christ.

(2) How you came to know Christ (be specific).

(3) Life after you received Christ (changes He has made, what He means to you now).

c. Emphasize point (3) above if you became a Christian as a small child.

d. Begin with an interesting, attention-getting sentence and close with a good conclusion. Include relevant, thought-provoking, personal experiences.

e. Write in such a way that others will feel associated with you in past and present experiences.

f. Give enough details to arouse interest.

g. Use at least one, but at the most two, Scripture verses.

h. Edit carefully and rewrite as necessary before final draft.

i. Note sample testimonies in the Collegiate Challenge magazine.

j. Choose something characteristic of your experience that is of general interest to non-Christians. Build your own testimony around a theme. Examples: personal success (your own past viewpoint and now from God's viewpoint), life's goals (past and present viewpoint), God's personal plan for you.

k. Emphasize the fact that the thing that made the difference in your life was accepting Christ as Savior and making Him Lord and Master of your life. Keep in mind that your testimony should give enough details so that someone else would know how to trust the Lord after hearing it. Tell how He entered your life.

(7) Being long-winded, and using unnecessary words. (Adhere strictly to the time schedule.)

2. How to share your testimony.

a. *Memorize* your testimony and practice it until it becomes natural.

b. Share your testimony with loving enthusiasm in the power of the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 5:18).

c. Smile often! Ask the Lord to give you a happy, radiant countenance. Use a natural speaking voice.

e. Avoid exhibiting nervous habits (especially with your hands) and other mannerisms, such as rubbing your nose, jingling coins in your pocket, swaying, clearing your throat, and using "uh's" and "ah's." Exhibit good posture. Do not talk on the way to or from your seat.

f. Avoid arguing and using other high pressure methods to obtain a "decision" for Christ. Remember, men are born of the Spirit, "not through persuasiveness or logic of men," though God may use both.

How to Use a Personal Testimony

Sharing the Abundant Life on Campus (Campus Crusade), 21-23 (2 of 2)

My Personal Testimony

Main idea: Christ solved my insecurity of trying to be "good enough to reach God"

Introduction

Have you ever experienced the frustration of just missing a higher grade in school? I remember one time back in secondary school I got a "B+" in math. I went to the teacher and asked him how close I had come to getting an "A-" and he said, "Well, Rick, actually you came pretty close. For the term you needed 435 points for the 'A-' but you had only 434 and 2/3 points. You just missed it by a third of a point." I tried to convince him to let me slide just once, but he replied, "I'm just trying to be fair. If I lower the line below you, the next person down will complain." But I was angry.

Pre-Conversion Life

For a long time I thought *God* was like my math teacher! I thought God had an elaborate point system for all the good things I'd done, and that someday He would add up all my points to determine my eternal destiny. So, I tried to be "good enough to make it over the line" to reach God. I was a good student, obeyed authority, and tried to be a nice guy—all attempts to gain God's favor. Outwardly I looked confident, yet inside I was plagued with a real sense of insecurity. As hard as I tried, I knew I wasn't measuring up.

Conversion

At age 13 two friends at school brought me to church, where I saw that this idea of God was distorted. Although I knew *He* was perfect, I learned that He expected *me* to be perfect to reach Him, which I wasn't about to claim for myself! But one night a few months later I learned from a speaker at a youth gathering that God never *expected* me to be "good enough"! God just wanted me to believe that Jesus died for me, taking my punishment for everything I had done wrong.

The speaker also said that Jesus was alive today since He rose from the dead, so He could change my life! What a liberating truth! Since Jesus was God's Gift, I simply received His Gift by saying, "God, I give up trying to be good enough for You on my own. I believe in Jesus."

Post-Conversion Life

Beginning that night over twenty years ago my life changed.

For one, I had a peace in my heart and a security in my relationship with God that I had sought for years through good works. I haven't *stopped* trying to be good, but now it's for an entirely *better* motivation. Rather than viewing God as "the big guy in the sky" keeping track of the good deeds I've accomplished to gain His favor, now a *love* for God motivates me to be good.

Also, knowing God's love for me gave me a new love for people. I began to love my stepfather whom I had formerly despised and now we have a great relationship. This concern for people eventually brought me to Asia to share this good news with people here too.

Conclusion

One favorite Bible verse sums up what I'm saying: "For by God's grace you have been saved through faith, and that's not of yourselves. It is the gift of God, so no one can boast." Now I have what I've always wanted—the assurance that when I die I'll go to heaven—not because I'm good enough, but because God is so gracious!

Personal Testimony Grade Sheet

(A 20 Item Checklist to Help You Design a Good Personal Testimony—Please Use it in Your Ministry too!)

Student _____ Grade _____ Mailbox #_____ Speaker # _____

	1 Poor	2 Minimal	3 Average	4 Good	5 Excellent
Written Presentation					
Introduction					
Gets attention on the main idea (an interesting "Ho Hum!")	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Raises curiosity or need ("Why bring that up?")	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Pre-Conversion Life explains your problem(s)					
Struggles are realistic, specific & relate to your main idea	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Conversion shows how Christ solved your problem(s)					
Notes *what* the gospel is (substitutionary atonement, resurrection)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Explains the story *how & when* you trusted Christ (not just "God")	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Post-Conversion Life shows positive results					
Specific changes in present tense ("For Instance!")	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Conclusion ("So What?") related to main idea & "real"	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Miscellaneous					
Main idea stated in one sentence at top, clear & carried throughout	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Spelling, grammar, punctuation, typos, no Christian jargon, mailbox	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Outline clear (the 5 areas above), only 1 page + this page on top	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Number of ticks per column	___	___	___	___	___
Multiplied by point values of the column	x 2	x 4	x 6	x 8	x 10
Equals the total point value for each column	___	___	___	___	___

Net points _____ minus 3 points per day late (____ points) equals a final % grade of _____%

Please resubmit this sheet *and* your first written draft of the testimony at your oral presentation.
☐ If ticked submit a rewritten testimony (second draft) when your oral presentation is given.

Oral Presentation					
Memorized but conversational (no notes allowed!)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Positive (denominations/churches not mentioned)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Enthusiastic & Confident (smiling, energetic, personal)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Realistic (doesn't imply life now is problem-free)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Terminology (understood by non-Christians?)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Grammar (agreement of subject/verb and tenses)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Length (not longer than three minutes)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Thoroughness (any questions unanswered?)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Flow (easy to follow w/o distracting mannerisms)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Number of ticks per column	___	___	___	___	___
Multiplied by point values of the column	x 2	x 4	x 6	x 8	x 10
Equals the total point value for each column	___	___	___	___	___

Net points _____ minus 3 points per day late (____ points) equals a final % grade of _____%

Other Comments:

Speaking Grade Sheet

Student_____ Speaker # _____ Box _____ Course Grade _____

Key:	1 Poor	2 Minimal	3 Average	4 Good	5 Excellent

Speech:	Testimony	Persuasion	Sermon
Introduction			
Gets attention on the subject or M.I. ("Ho hum!")	☐	☐	☐
Raises curiosity or a need to listen further		☐	☐
Subject/main idea/1st point stated & restated		☐	☐
Announces text properly (& previews outline)			☐
Body			
Main points clear, restated, short, full sentences	☐	☐	☐
Flow easy to follow (point stated, then verses read)			☐
Directs to specific verses (& text-based outline)			☐
Expositional development (not selected verses)			☐
Hermeneutical accuracy (proper interpretation)			☐
Relevant to listeners ("Why bring that up?")		☐	☐
Illustrations adequate, appropriate ("For instance")	☐	☐	☐
Length, thoroughness (unanswered questions?)			☐
Conclusion			
Main Idea stated (inductive)/repeated (deductive), restated	☐	☐	☐
Main points reviewed and/or restated			☐
Application/Exhortation ("So what?")		☐	☐
Delivery			
Voice: speed, volume, pitch, expressiveness		☐	☐
Movement: facial expressions, gestures, mannerisms			☐
Style: grammar, word-choice, articulation			☐
Presence: rapport, eye contact, friendliness, mood	☐	☐	☐
Time: max. 2-3 min., 2 min., 15 min., respectively	____	____	____
Summary			
Sum of numbers in the column (except time)	____	____	____
Multiplied by point values of the column	x 4	x 2	x 1
Equals the percentage grade for each speech	____	____	____

Comments

Testimony	Persuasion Speech	Final Sermon

Exegetical Outline Checklist

Here are 32 things to check in your exegetical outline as the basis for your sermon outline on page 23 (-3% for each one missing)
22nd ed. (see examples on pp. 46, 116, 152, 178)

Form

1. Have you written your questions & answers of the text and the text itself at the top (if preaching 1-2 verses)?
2. Are the Exegetical Idea (EI) and Main Points (MPs) all written in proper Z_1+X+Z_2+Y form?
3. Is the background/previous context given to appreciate the EI? Don't summarize your text here.
4. Have you used single-spacing (except between sections of the outline which is double-spaced)?

Exegetical Idea (EI): If missing then -18% (no credit for 2, 5, 6, 8, 9, and 10)

5. Is your stated subject derived from the main verb in the passage? (Generally this is the best way to find the correct subject in epistles, especially if the main verb is a command.)
6. Is the EI and outline exegesis true to the author's intent? (AI = evaluate Authorial Intent)

Main Points (MPs): If missing then -45% (no credit for 2, 7-18)

7. Do the connectives in the text (e.g., "and," "but," "so that," "because," etc.) match those of the Z_1s in the outline (cf. p. 34)? Note that the NASB is better for connectives than the NIV.
8. Does each MP & EI have but one Z_1 and Z_2? (Not "The reason for... is because...in order that...")
9. Does at least one Z_1 in the MPs match that of the EI?
10. Is each MP's thrust in the EI and each SP's thrust in their MP (cf. #19)? And are there 2+ MPs and 2+ SPs?
11. Do statements give the significance of the text addressed—esp. teaching about God?
12. Is each MP distinct from the others rather than sounding the same? Are phrases redundant?
13. Do the MPs flow without reading the various SPs (sub-points)? Are there 2-4 MPs?
14. Do the MPs use Roman numerals (I, II, III, etc.) and the SPs use letters (A, B, C, etc.)?
15. Is each MP an indicative statement (not a question)?
16. Do statements translate figures of speech rather than use the text's words? ("TF")
17. Do statements translate ambiguities by clearly taking one exegetical option? Compare the NASB and NIV to clarify which verses are unclear ("TA"). Greek & Hebrew students must interact with the original language.
18. Does the EO & EI have the same overall flow (same number of MPs) as the main movements of the text?
19. Do MPs (and SPs) avoid ideas not in the text (e.g., from cross-references)? ("NP" = not in passage)
20. Is the focus the recipients in the past (not present) tense (Write "The way the Colossians should..." not "We should...") and in active (not passive) voice?
21. Are statements two lines or less? Delete all unneeded words in each sentence or I will write "TL" (too long).

Sub Points (SPs)

22. Does each point have a coordinating point ("I" has "II", "A" has "B"; p. 61 [II.A.1.] & p. 55)?
23. Does each point contribute to its superior point? Does your content here explain the text? Is it really needed?

Miscellaneous

24. Is each point one (not 2-3) full sentence ("FS") with *one subject* (cf. #8) and complement(s) and not just a phrase? (Not "The rewards of blessed people are stated" as this only has a subject, but "The rewards of blessed people are prosperity and children" with a complement.)
25. Is each statement specific enough to relate only to this passage and does it make sense without needing to read the text (not "God fights His enemies" but "The way God fought the alliance of southern kings was by causing the sun to stand still")? Are enough details included?
26. Is each level of subordinate points indented in from the previous level? (Don't start or continue each SP from the far left side of the page or from the MP level in outlining.)
27. Does each sentence in the outline include its correct verse, verses, or verse portion (1a, 1b, 1c, etc.)?
28. Are all verses/parts expounded in the order of the text rather than switching verses around?
29. Is each point of the outline numbered/lettered rather than in paragraphs or parentheses or multiple sentences?
30. Do you state at the top your passage, name, mailbox number and speaker number?
31. Did you use a spell-checker or have a friend proofread your spelling and grammar?
32. Did you list at the bottom at least three reputable commentaries used (in full citation)?

Abbreviations Used to Mark Outlines (numbers refer to the points above)

AI	Authorial Intent needs to be rechecked (6)
APP	Application needed
EI	Exegetical Idea or CPT (5-6)
EO	Exegetical Outline
FS	Full Sentence is required (24)
HO	Homiletical Outline
ILL	Illustration needed
MI	Main Idea (same as Homiletical Idea or CPS)
MP	Main Point needed (2)
NC	Not Clear—ambiguous statement (16-17)
NP	Not in the Passage (19)
R	Restatement needed
SP	Sub Point (19-23)
T	Transition needed
TA	Translate Ambiguity—no unclear words of text (17)
TF	Translate Figure—no unclear words of text (16)
TL	Too Long—don't exceed 2 lines of text (26)
Z	Use Z_1+X+Z_2+Y form (2)

Homiletical Outline Checklist

Here are 46 things to include in your sermon outline before starting to manuscript your message (-2% for each one missing)
22nd ed. (see examples on pp. 51, 210 and an expanded outline on pp. 156-57)

Introduction: If missing then -12% (no credit for 1, 2, 5, 8, 9, and 10)

1. Is a contemporary illustration given that gets attention on the subject and includes its point in one sentence?
2. Do you give 2-3 examples of how you will raise need or curiosity listed? Make this a "you" question.
3. Does a single sentence of background/setting of the text cover: (a) the preceding verses, or (b) only *relevant* historical background, or (c) the beginning of the text to be expounded? Don't summarize your text here.
4. Do you single-space except between sections of the outline? Is the design of each point stated?
5. Do you correctly specify whether your direction is towards the subject (theme), MI (= CPS), or MPI?
6. Is this MI and outline exegesis true to the author's intent? (AI = evaluate Authorial Intent)
7. Do you identify a homiletical subject (relating to *us*)—not the EO (exegetical outline) subject? Does the HO subject/MI match the EO subject/EI (correct)? Is it a question that avoids speaking of "points" or "things"?
8. Is the text to be preached clearly noted at the appropriate spot? (In topical messages, give only the first text.)
9. Does the intro avoid promising anything not given by the end? (Are the "goods delivered"?)
10. Do you give the number of MPs to preview the sermon structure? Is this preview linked to the subject?
11. Does a transition make the introduction flow naturally to the first MP by restating the subject in parentheses?

Body and Main Points (MPs)

12. Do the MPs of the HO match the MPs of the EO? (Please edit your EO to make it consistent with the HO.)
13. Does the message flow when you read only the key concept in the introduction (MI, subject, or MPI intro) through preferably 2-4 MPs to the MI in the conclusion? (Don't let MPs sound the same.)
14. Do the MPs use sequential Roman numerals (I, II, III, etc.) and the SPs use capital letters (A, B, C, etc.)?
15. Are MPs and SPs indicative statements with a subject and complement rather than questions?
16. Do statements translate figures of speech rather than use the text's words? ("TF")
17. Do statements translate ambiguities rather than use the text's words? ("TA")
18. Do you show the major movements in the passage—especially in narrative? Do the MPs cover the *whole* story?
19. Is there at least one real life illustration that applies for every three minutes of preaching put within the HO?
20. Is the proper point and key word(s) of illustrations given (don't just write "ILL" or "examples")?
21. Are MPs one line in length? (Delete all unneeded words in each sentence.)

Form and Sub Points (SPs)

22. Does each point have a coordinating point ("I" has "II", "A" has "B"; p. 61 [II.A.1.] & p. 55)? In other words, don't have "hanging subordinate points." Develop the HO at least to the SP level ("A," "B," etc.).
23. Does each point contribute to its superior point? Does your content here explain the text? Is it really needed?
24. Is each point one, short ("TL" = too long), active (not passive voice), clear, full sentence with *one subject* and complement(s)—not just a phrase ("FS" = full sentence is needed)? Are MPs restated in brackets (optional)?
25. Is each verse, verses, or verse portion underlined when it is to be read?
26. Are SPs indented from the MPs at the far left? (Don't start or continue SPs from the far left side.)
27. Does each SP & MP include its correct verse, verses, or verse portion (1a, 1b, 1c, etc.)?
28. Does the sermon at least summarize all verses/parts of the text in 2-4 SPs or MPs?
29. Is each point of the outline numbered/lettered rather than in paragraphs, brackets, or parentheses?
30. Are you direct: "Love others..." (not "Believers should love others...")? Use imperatives!
31. Did you spell-check or have a friend proofread your spelling and grammar? Replace ")(" with ";"
32. Are transitions before MPs in parentheses? Do they repeat the subject rather than say "my second point..."?
33. Is the whole outline on a single page? You should sum up each point in *one* sentence, not a paragraph.
34. Is your EO#1 attached to this assignment with improvements suggested by the teacher clearly seen?
35. Is your EO#2 attached to this assignment with improvements suggested by the teacher now corrected?
36. Is support given for your view on difficult verses or facts in illustrations? (Show *why* you hold to your view.)

Conclusion (note in bold text)

37. Is the Main Idea stated and labeled as the MI (CPS)? Is it parallel to the EI (CPT)? Does it sum up all MPs?
38. Is the MI (and all points) short (TL = too long) enough to be grasped by ear but still applies the text?
39. Does the conclusion review concepts in the MPs? (Avoid adding new ideas in the conclusion.)
40. Are specific examples of application developed rather than simply listed? Do listeners know specifically what to do after hearing you preach? Do applications and the MI relate to us (not to the original readers)?
41. Do you end with a clear exhortation to apply the MI? (Especially use stories here.)
42. Does the conclusion (and introduction) use Arabic numbers in point form? Indent them from the left.

Heading

43. Do you have a catchy title that doesn't reveal the Main Idea so as to draw interest?
44. Is your correct sermon form at the top (cyclical inductive, simple deductive, etc.) with MI at the right place?
45. Is the correct purpose (desired listener response) clearly stated at the top? Is this HO printed (*not* emailed)?
46. Do you state the passage, your name and box number at the top?

Abbreviations Used to Mark Outlines (see the Exegetical Outline Checklist on previous page)

Exegetical to Homiletical Outline Grade Sheet

A 20 Item Checklist to Help You Outline Exegetically and Expositionally—Please Use it in Your Ministry too!
See examples of EO to HO on pages 32, 34c-d, 46, 116, 152, 178, 262 and OT & NT Sermons links at biblestudydownloads.com

Speaker _____ Passage _____ Evaluator _____

	1 Poor	2 Minimal	3 Average	4 Good	5 Excellent
Exegetical Outline					
1. **Subject** (clear, accurate, Z_1—X form)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
2. **Complement** (clear, accurate, Z_2—Y form)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
3. **Correlation** of MI and MPs (e.g., Z_1s match)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
4. **Grouping** of verses: listed and in proper thought units	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
5. **MPs** accurate, clear, full (Z_1—X—Z_2—Y form)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
6. **Exegetical problems** identified & solved	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
7. **Contextual setting** developed	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Homiletical Exposition					
8. **Design** (Hom., 120) and creative sermon title stated	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
9. **MI/Subject** clear, short, accurate, placed properly	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
10. **Correlation** of exegetical/homiletical ideas and MPs	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
11. **Main points** clear, based on text, short, full sentences	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
12. **Hermeneutical** accuracy in universal principles	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
13. **Illustrations** noted where points will be developed	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
14. **Application** (relevant, placed properly, real life)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
English Composition					
15. **Spelling**, typographical errors, punctuation	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
16. **Grammar** (agreement of subject/verb and tenses)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
17. **Clarity** of expression (reflects interpretive choices)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
18. **Continuity** and flow	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Misc.					
19. **Length**, thoroughness (questions unanswered?)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
20. **Insight** and creativity	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Summary					
Number of ticks per column	____	____	____	____	____
Multiplied by point values of the column	x 1	x 2	x 3	x 4	x 5
Equals the total point value for each column	____	____	____	____	____

Net points _____ minus 10 points per day late (____ points) equals a final % grade of _____%

Comments:

Abbreviations Used in Marking Papers:

+	Excellent	MI	Main Idea	SP	Sub Point
EI	Exeg. Idea	MP	Main Point	T	Transition
EO	Exeg. Outline	R	Restatement	TF	Translate figure
FS	Full Sentence	S	Subject	v(v).	Verse(s)
ILL	Illustration	HI	Hom. Idea	HO	Hom. Outline

Manuscript Grade Sheet

(A 20 Item Checklist to Help You Design a Good Expository Sermon—Please Use it in Your Ministry too!)

Writer _____ Passage _____ Evaluator _____ Box _____

State the Main Idea _____

	1 Poor	2 Minimal	3 Average	4 Good	5 Excellent
Introduction					
1. **Gets attention** on (circle one) the subject or M.I. ("Ho hum!")	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
2. **Raises curiosity** or a need to listen further (circle one)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
3. **Background** addressed before body of message	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
4. **Subject, MI, or MPI** (circle one) both stated & restated	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
5. **Announces text properly** (optional: previews outline)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
N.B. Don't make your introduction too short!					
Body					
6. **Main points** clear, restated, short, full sentences	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
7. **Transitions** between main points clear	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
8. **Flow** smooth (MP stated, then specific verses read)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
9. **Exposition** full (not selected verses & vv. written out)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
10. **Hermeneutics** (e.g., theocentric, options discussed)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
11. **Illustrations** adequate, appropriate ("For instance")	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
12. **Relevant** to listeners ("Why bring that up?")	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Conclusion					
13. **MI** stated (inductive)/repeated (deductive), restated	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
14. **Main points** reviewed and/or restated	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
15. **Application/Exhortation** ("So what?") stated/implied	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
N.B. Don't make your conclusion too short (at least 3/4 page)!					
Miscellaneous					
16. **Column** abbr. from below (cf. p. 82)/1 pg. homiletical outline	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
17. **Spelling**, typing errors, punctuation, pages numbered	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
18. **Grammar** (subject/verb and tenses agree)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
19. **Creative title, design stated** (cf. p. 120)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
20. **Length**, thoroughness (unanswered questions?)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Summary					
Number of ticks per column (should sum to 20)	___	___	___	___	___
Multiplied by point values of the column	**x 1**	**x 2**	**x 3**	**x 4**	**x 5**
Equals the total point value for each column	___	___	___	___	___

Net points _____ minus 3 points per day late (____ points) equals a final % grade of ____%

Comments:

Abbreviations Used in Marking & Column Design:

+	Excellent	MI	Main Idea	SP	Sub Point
A	Application	MP	Main Point	T	Transition
FS	Full Sentence	R	Restatement	TF	Translate figure
ILL	Illustration	S	Subject	v(v).	Verse(s)

Sermon Evaluation Form

Speaker _____ Spkr #_____ Evaluator _____ Spkr #_____

Rev. 24 Oct 2013

True to the Text?

Type of Sermon (tick one and complete):

☐ Expository—state passage:
☐ Topical—state theme in 1-3 words:

State the Main Idea (both subject & complement)

How could the MI better reflect the author's intent?

How could the exegesis of any verse be improved?

What bkgrd was given *before* announcing the text?

D D+ C- C C+ B- B B+ A- A
Poor Average Good Excellent

Interesting?

Please comment as needed and/or tick -, √, or + on the speaker's…

Voice
- Speed
- Volume/Variety
- Pitch/Expressiveness

Delivery
- Facial Expressions
- Hand Gestures
- Bodily Movement

Style
- Grammar
- Word Choice
- Pronunciation

Illustrations
- Adequate
- Appropriate/Believable
- Real Life Examples

Presence
- Rapport/Friendliness
- Eye-Contact
- Mood

D D+ C- C C+ B- B B+ A- A
Poor Average Good Excellent

Clear?

The introduction oriented me to the (tick one):
☐ Subject—state it here:
☐ Main Idea
☐ Main Point I.
☐ I couldn't tell

Tick if the introduction succeeded in trying to:
☐ Touch need ☐ Raise curiosity ☐ Both ☐ Neither

The overall structure of the message was (tick one):
☐ Simple Inductive ☐ Simple Deductive
☐ Cyclical Inductive ☐ Cyclical Deductive

Give the outline MPs (don't add during class discussion):

How did the sermon end and was this effective?

D D+ C- C C+ B- B B+ A- A
Poor Average Good Excellent

Relevant?

Tick whether you were ☐ mildly, ☐ moderately, or ☐ genuinely *interested* to listen past the introduction.
Why?

What mental *reservations* or major unanswered questions do you have after hearing the sermon?

What specifics gave you a *concrete* understanding of how the speaker's MI relates to everyday life?

What *specific* application did you make to *your* life?

D D+ C- C C+ B- B B+ A- A
Poor Average Good Excellent

Date_____ Course_____ Beg. Time_____ End. Time_____ Minutes_____ Letter Grade_____

Sermon Evaluation Form (cont'd)

Overall Impact

Areas of Strength

1.

2.

3.

4.

Areas to Improve

1.

2.

3.

4.

Seven Steps to Preaching Expository Sermons

Adapted from Ramesh Richard, *Preparing Expository Sermons*; Robinson, *Biblical Preaching;* and Don Sunukjian (DTS)

1. Study the Text.

a. Choose the Passage no later than Tuesday in your preaching week, making sure it is not too short or too long for a single message.

b. Exegete the Passage (Analyze the Parts) and Gather Your Notes.

1) Pray for wisdom and read the translation most of the church members use. List every question you think the average member would ask. (Otherwise, 15 study hours later you will have all the answers but will have forgotten the questions!) Answer these questions.

2) Read a few other translations and note the differences and additional questions.

3) Read the original text if you can; use tools and do brief word studies on important words.

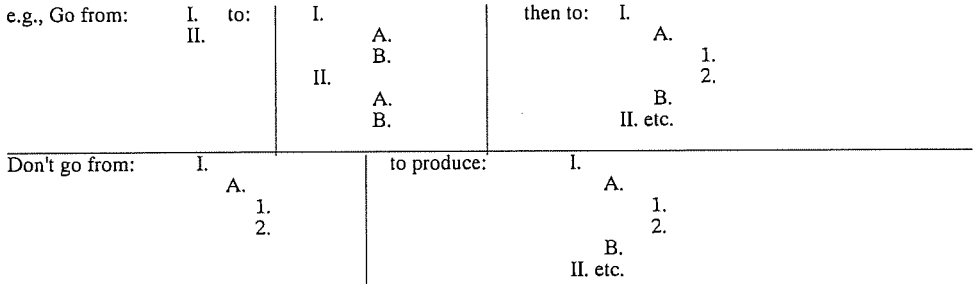
4) Consult the commentaries if you are really stuck (most of the time I do this after step 5).
   a) Look up difficulties in Greek or Hebrew commentaries (if you can read them!).
   b) See the *Expositor's Bible Commentary* for both the big picture and problem areas.
   c) Read a sermonic commentary (by Stott, Wiersbe, Boice, Criswell, Swindoll, etc.).
   d) Listen to tapes on the passage (but this takes much more time than reading).

2. Structure: Determine the Exegetical Outline.

a. Reword each verse in Z_1+X+Z_2+Y form and remove all figures of speech (pp. 33-34). If the text exceeds 15-20 verses or is a narrative then write statements for groupings of 3-5 verses.

b. Group similar statements under main titles to show big divisions ("hunks") in the passage.

c. Write out each "major hunk" tentatively, then make sure the various subpoints (2.a. above) really do fit under each major hunk. Subdivide the subpoints further if you wish.



3. CPT: Summarize the Main Points in a Subject/Complement Sentence called the Central Proposition of the Text (CPT) or "Exegetical Idea" (EI).

4. Purpose Bridge

a. Submit the Exegetical Idea to Three Developmental Questions (pp. 38-39): Which of the following is needed most in your sermon for your particular audience?
   1) *Explain it:* What do I need to explain (about the EI/CPT)?
   2) *Prove it:* Do my listeners believe this idea?
   3) *Apply it:* Where does this concept show up in real life?

b. Write the Desired Listener Response: what you want the hearers to know, feel, or do in measurable results (observable behavior) during or after the sermon (pp. 86, 148, 156, 170).

5. CPS: Write the Central Proposition of the Sermon or Homiletical Idea (HI).

a. Think through how *your listeners* need to know and act upon the exegetical idea (CPT).
b. Convert the exegetical idea into a concise, memorable sentence called the "big idea" (p. 40).

6. Structure the Sermon.

a. Outline the Sermon (pp. 47-50, 138):

1) Place the Main Idea: Taking into account your purpose on Step 4, have the main idea appear where it should best occur in the sermon.

a) Deductive: The main idea is given at the beginning, then developed (p. 50).
i) This outline is clear but less interesting. It closely follows the exegetical subpoints.
ii) Examples: an idea to explain, a proposition to prove, a principle to apply.

b) Inductive: The main idea is not revealed until the conclusion (pp. 49, 51).
i) This outline is less clear, but more interesting. Exegetical points need reworking.
ii) This outline is also better for hostile audiences in that it builds up to a conclusion.
iii) Examples: subject to complete, problem to explain, story to tell, cause with effects.

2) Place the Application Locations: Taking into account your purpose on Step 4, decide the principles to apply and where they should best occur in the sermon.

a) Simple: The entire text is explained before any of it is applied (pp. 49-50, top).

a) Cyclical: Applications appear within the body as the text unfolds (pp. 46, 49 bottom).

3) Write out your main points with their verse references following the order of the passage.

4) Develop each of these points with two things in mind: the developmental questions in Step 4 and answers to the key issues you raised in your preliminary questions in Step 1.

b. Plan for Oral Clarity (pp. 64-73): Remember that you know the sermon in outline form but your listeners don't (p. 67).

* This is what you mean to say ... I. A. B. II.	but this is what the listeners hear ... I.A.B.II.

To alleviate this problem you must clearly emphasize your major points in several ways:
1) Add restatements of the major points—rephrasing them to give the same idea (p. 68).
2) Add transitions in parentheses between the major points (p. 68).
3) Add illustrations to support and clarify the main points (pp. 64-66).
4) Add applications to specifically show how the main idea relates to real life (pp. 70-73).
5) Give the interpretation of verses first, then read them (p. 68, pt. 5).
6) Underline the verse references wherever you plan to read the Scripture (pp. 87, 157).

c. Prepare the Introduction and Conclusion (pp. 74-77):

1) The introduction should accomplish three objectives. It should:
a) Gain favorable attention.
b) Create interest in listening further (touch a need or arouse some curiosity).
c) Orient the listeners either to the main idea or to the subject (or to the first main point).

2) The conclusion should accomplish three objectives. It should:
a) Summarize the major points of the message and state (or restate) your main idea.
b) Apply the passage in areas not already touched upon in the body of the sermon.
c) Exhort the listeners to obedience (reminding of applications stated earlier).

7. Preach: Manuscript and Practice the Message until it is Internalized.

a. Manuscript the entire message (including the verses) to force the best possible word-choice and to preserve the message for future use (pp. 78-90).

b. Memorize your Subject, MI, and MPs, and the general flow of the message.

c. Internalize the sermon by preaching it 6-8 times, each time weaning yourself more from the notes. Practice gestures while standing up with a makeshift pulpit in front of your mirror.

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, in the words of Ramesh Richard, 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 question asked within 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 cannot fully answer the above question. I call these single words that describe sermons a "topic" rather than a subject (theme). If it has more than one word but still can't be reworded as a question, let's just call it a longer topic.

   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

Subject/Theme	("to be" verb)	Complement/Thrust
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 actually apply (i.e., was it actually only a topic or subject, or was it a full idea?). Then in the last column explain why the statement was not a main idea or how to improve it.

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

Subject/Complement Exercises

Haddon Robinson, *Biblical Preaching*, 46-47 (answers on pp. 211-12)

Biblical Preaching

Exercises

Determine the subject and complement in the following paragraphs:

1. A good sermon leaves you wondering how the preacher knew all about you.

Subject:_____

Complement:_____

2. Today's pulpit has lost its authority because it has largely ignored the Bible as the source of its message.

Subject:_____

Complement:_____

3. G. K. Chesterton once said that it is often supposed that when people stop believing in God, they believe in nothing. Alas, it is worse than that. When they stop believing in God, they believe in anything. *Malcolm Muggeridge*

Subject:_____

Complement:_____

4. A good name is more desirable than great wealth; the respect of others is better than silver or gold. *Prov. 22:1*

Subject:_____

Complement:_____

5. Praise the Lord, all nations;
   Extol him, all you people!
   For his love is strong,
   his faithfulness eternal. *Ps. 117*

What's the Big Idea?

Subject:_____

Complement:_____

6. Everybody needs his memories. They keep the wolf of insignificance from the door.

Subject:_____

Complement:_____

7. Do not speak harshly to a man older than yourself, but advise him as you would your own father; treat the younger men as brothers and older women as you would your mother. Always treat younger women with propriety, as if they were your sisters. *I Tim. 5:1–2*

Subject:_____

Complement:_____

8. Walking is the exercise that needs no gym. It is the prescription without medicine, the weight control without diet, the cosmetic found in no drugstore. It is the tranquilizer without a pill, the therapy without a psychoanalyst, the fountain of youth that is no legend. A walk is the vacation that does not cost a cent.

Subject:_____

Complement:_____

9. The nation's latest interest in astrology, brought to public attention in the 60s, is still very much alive. The American Federation of Astrologers has doubled its national membership in the last five years to upwards of four thousand, and its mysteries, as ancient as Babylonia, have even infiltrated such a "no-nonsense" place as Washington, D.C. *New York Times*

Structure & the CPT or Exegetical Idea (Steps 2-3)

I. Introduction

A. In sermon outlining the ultimate goal is to *apply the big idea (homiletical idea) for life change* in your listeners by having all of the main points of the sermon support this main idea.

B. However, there exists a great *temptation to do shallow exegesis* to derive this big idea. This section is designed to force you to do some serious thinking before coming up with a cute sermon outline. This happens by first designing an exegetical (passage) outline before a homiletical (sermon) outline.

C. Note on the "Seven Steps" study (pp. 27-28) that we are picking up at Step 2: "Structure: Determine the Exegetical Outline." The following point follows the three section procedure outlined on Step 2 in order to achieve Step 3: CPT...

II. Exegetical Outlining in Basic Form

The three exegetical outlining steps can be illustrated in Luther's *A Mighty Fortress* hymn (Assignment #2 on p. 6). Basically, the idea is to get the parts in order to determine the whole.

A. *Reword each verse to remove all figures of speech.*

Combining lines 1-2 and 3-4 of each verse provides *two statements per verse*:

Verse 1 God is our unfailing refuge and helper in all human difficulties
No one can defeat Satan's experienced trickery, power, and hate which hinders us

Verse 2 Fighting [Satan] in our own strength fails until we trust God's victorious choice
God's choice is Jesus who is omnipotent, eternal, and victorious [over Satan]

Verse 3 We need not fear demonic threats because God's Word gives us victory
We need not fear Satan's anger since Christ's Word assures his doom

Verse 4 We thank God that Christ's Word, Spirit, and gifts overcome demons
Seek not materialism, relationships, or life itself, as His truth and kingdom are eternal

B. *Group similar statements into sections* to reveal major divisions ("hunks") in the passage.

Combining the two statements per verse gives *one statement per verse*. Also, since vv. 1-2 share what *God has done* for us while verses 3-4 relate to *our response*, so I group these verses:

Verse 1 God is our unfailing refuge against Satan's powerful devices.
Verse 2 God chose Christ as our omnipotent and eternal strength for victory [over Satan].

Verse 3 We have confidence against satanic powers because Satan's doom is assured.
Verse 4 We thank Christ's eternal provisions (Word, Spirit, gifts) rather than temporal ones (materialism, other humans).

C. *Write out a full sentence statement for each section*, then make sure that the sub points ("A" above) really do fit under each of the major hunks. Subdivide the sub points further if you wish.

Now I summarize the vv. 1-2 and 3-4 statements above into single sentences like this:

I. God has provided triumph over Satan only through Christ (vv. 1-2).

II. We must fearlessly trust in Christ's powerful—not our powerless—provisions (vv. 3-4).

Even though I'll add minor transitions later it may help to add in my major transition now:

I. God has provided triumph over Satan only through Christ (vv. 1-2).

(But *how* can we experience Christ's victory over Satan?)

II. We must fearlessly trust in Christ's powerful—not our powerless—provisions (vv. 3-4).

Now I'll add some sub points ("A" and "B" under my main points):

I. God has provided triumph over Satan only through Christ (vv. 1-2).

A. Satan has powerful weapons so we must trust God (v. 1)

B. God says that His solution to Satan is Christ (v. 2)

(But *how* can we experience Christ's victory over Satan?)

II. We must fearlessly trust in Christ's powerful—not our powerless—provisions (vv. 3-4).

A. Don't fear Satan since you have God's Word (v. 3).

B. Don't trust in your temporal provisions (v. 4).

Now I'll add some divisions under my sub points under the second main point & remove "v":

I. God has provided triumph over Satan only through Christ (1-2).

A. Satan has powerful weapons so we must trust God (1)
B. God says that His solution to Satan is Christ (2)

(But *how* can we experience Christ's victory over Satan?)

II. We must fearlessly trust in Christ's powerful—not our powerless—provisions (3-4).

A. Don't fear Satan since you have God's Word (3).

B. Trust eternal rather than temporal provisions (4).
   1. Trust Christ's eternal provisions (4a-c):
      a. Trust in the Bible (4a).
      b. Rely upon the Holy Spirit (4b).
      c. Utilize the gifts of the Spirit (4c).
   2. Never trust in temporal provisions (4d-e).
      a. Never trust in any material thing (4d).
      b. Never rely upon another person for ultimate strength (4e).

Step 3: CPT—Sum up your MPs in a subject/complement sentence called the central proposition of the text ("exegetical idea")

I. God has provided triumph over Satan only through Christ (1-2).

+

II. We must fearlessly trust in Christ's powerful—not our powerless—provisions (3-4).

=

Options:
E.I. Christ alone protects us from Satan's powerful devices so we should trust in His power
E.I. Trusting Christ's powerful provisions is the only way to defeat Satan's powerful devices
E.I. Victory over Satan's devices is possible only by trusting Christ's provisions
E.I. We can triumph over Satan only through Christ
In step 5 we'll reword this into a big idea like: "Trust Christ against Satan—not yourself!"

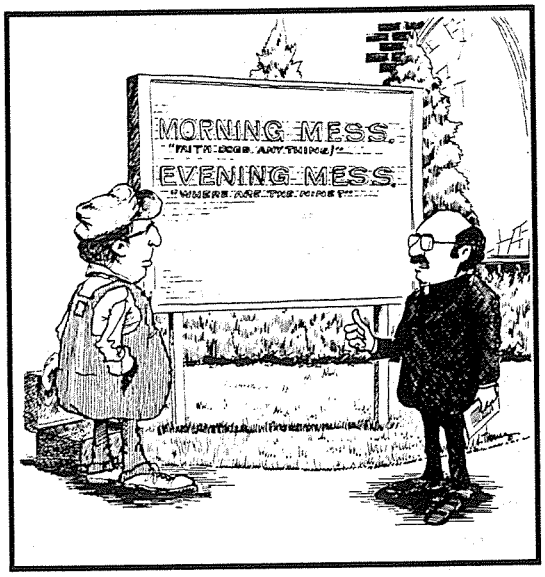
III. Exegetical Outlining in Z_1+X+Z_2+Y Form

A. Sometimes it's difficult to come up with your initial exegetical statements for each verse. In such cases it may be helpful to write each sentence into a four point form which is known as the Z_1+X+Z_2+Y form. Start by determining the theme (X), then add one of the many Z_1 grammatical classifications in "B" below to arrive at the subject (Z_1+X). Then add an appropriate Z_2 phrase and finish with the subtheme (Y) to form the complement (Z_2+Y).

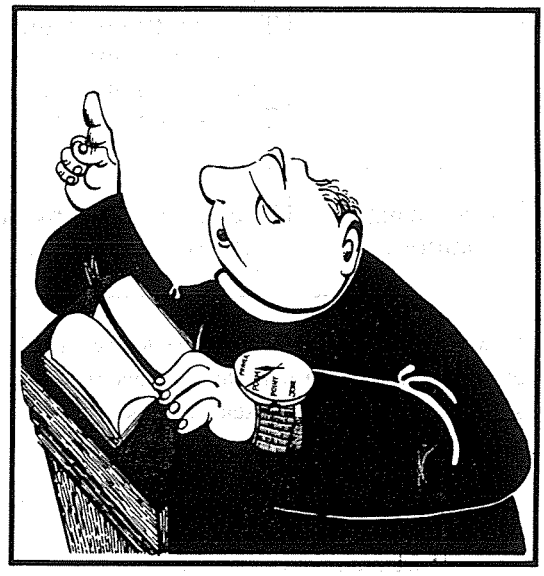
Subject (Z_1+X) **Complement (Z_2+Y)**

Z_1	X	Z_2	Y
	Triumph over Satan		trust in Christ
The means by which (i.e. "The way…"	God provides triumph over Satan	is by	enabling us to trust in Christ alone
The means by which	we must fearlessly trust Christ	is by	trusting His provisions instead of our own
The means by which (i.e., How can we…)	we triumph over Satan	is by	trusting His provisions instead of our own
The reason (i.e., Why can we…)	we can feel secure	is because	God is with us and is stronger than Satan
The reason	God is trustworthy	is because	God is our deliverer and is stronger than Satan
The reason	we can live victoriously	is because	God helps us fight Satan

A correctly written Z_1+X+Z_2+Y statement should be a shorter, grammatically correct sentence if the Z_1 and the "to be" verb ("is" above) are both removed. Thus "The means by which God provides triumph over Satan is by enabling us to trust in Christ alone" becomes "God provides triumph over Satan by enabling us to trust in Christ alone." This will later be worded in a more "catchy" way in a homiletical (preaching) big idea like "You can't defeat Satan in your own strength—only Christ's."



"I think we'd better buy smaller letters and spell the word out."



B. Here's a list of qualifiers which will help you determine future exegetical statements:

----------**Subject (Z_1+X)**---------- --------**Complement (Z_2+Y)**----------

Homiletical Question	Z_1	X	Z_2	Y
Who?	The one(s) to/for/by whom...		is(are) the...	
What?	The advantage(s) of... The characteristic(s) of... The content of... The evidence of... The extent to which... The identity of... The nature of... The object of... The problem of.../solution to... The quality(ies) of... The response of... The result(s) of... The setting of... The test of...		is(are)... is(are)... is/consists of... is(was)... is(was)... is(was)... is(was)... is(was)... is(was)... is(was)... is(was)... is(was)/are(were) that... is(was)... is(was)...	
Where?	The place at/to/from which... The sphere/content in which...		is at/to/from which... was in...	
When?	The time when/before/at/during/after which...		is(was)...	
Why?	The reason(s) for/that... The purpose(s) for... The motivation(s) for... The consequence(s) of... The cause(s) for...		is(was)/are(were) <u>because</u>... is(was)/are(were) <u>so that</u>... is(was)/are(were) <u>so that</u>... is(was)/are(were)... ("<u>therefore</u>") is(was)/are(were)...	
How?	The means by which... The agent(s) by which... The manner in/by which... The way(s) in which... The uniqueness of...		is(was) <u>by/through</u>... is(was)/are(were) <u>by</u>... is(was) <u>by</u>... is(was)/are(were) <u>by</u>... is(was)...	
Under what condition?	The condition(s) by/despite which... The exception(s) of...		is(was)/are(were) if/despite... is(was)/are(were)...	

How do you know *which* Z_1 above to use? Look for key connectives in the text (e.g., "and," "but," "so that," "because," etc.) and match them with the Z_2 above (underlined). For example, Ephesians 6:11 says, "Put on the full armor of God *so that* you can take your stand against the devil's schemes." This leads us to a statement with a corresponding Z_1, such as: "The purpose for consistent spiritual disciplines is so that we can defend ourselves against Satan's attacks."

Remember that correspondence must also exist between your exegetical and homiletical outlines. In other words, the Z_1 used in your exegetical outline should have its matching interrogative (homiletical question) in the homiletical outline. In effect we are starting with the second column and moving across to the right, then finishing with the associated homiletical question on the far left. Notice how the two ideas match on pages 46, 116, and 152.

Steps 1-4 for Matthew 18:15-20

Study Questions (Step 1)

Context: What did the author record just prior to this passage?

1. Christ is teaching his disciples (18:1) concerning the importance of dealing with sin. He has just told them to never be a stumbling block to others (18:5-9) and emphasized that God himself seeks to restore people when they do sin (18:10-14).

2. In the section following (18:15-20) the thought shifts to how believers should respond when they have knowledge of *someone else* who sinned.

Purpose: Why is this passage in the Bible?

1. Jesus knew that the church would have problems so he gave us instructions in advance on how to resolve them.

2. Jesus wants us to see the value of restoring even one person.

Background: What historical context helps us understand this passage?

1. Middle East culture typically used mediators instead of addressing matters directly.

2. The OT law mandated that suspected murderers could not be punished on the basis of only one witness (Duet. 19:15). This prevented one person from taking revenge on his enemy.

Questions

VERSE 15

1. Is "against you" in the original?

2. Who is the "brother"? Is it a literal brother or fellow believer?

3. Can this refer to a "sister" too?

4. How should we deal with a sinning brother?

5. *How* should I show him his fault?

6. *Why* should I show him his fault?

7. Why should we keep the matter just between us?

8. Where should I talk to him—his place or mine or somewhere else?

9. What faults could be considered sins (15)?

10. Why should the brother listen or refuse?

11. What does him listening to me mean?

12. What does winning your brother over mean?

VERSE 16

13. What does "he will not listen" mean?

14. Why should we go again and again (16)?

15. Why take 1-2 others along?

16. Which 1-2 people should we bring?

17. What does it mean for the matter to be "established"?

18. Why must the matter be "established"?

VERSE 17

19. What is "the church"?

20. Is this the whole church?

21. Does "the church" include children?

22. Does "the church" include just members so that guests leave before the announcement?

23. How could Jesus say take to the church when there was no church at that time?

24. What does it mean to treat the person like a tax collector?

25. How do we summarize the steps of this process?

26. How many steps are there?

VERSE 18

27. Who is the "you"?

28. Is "you" singular or plural?

29. Why does verse 18 translate the future perfect passive as a simple future ("will be bound" NIV) rather than the correct past sense of "will have been bound" (NAU)?

    a) Toussaint notes that the error began with Jerome's 4th century Latin translation that allowed for sacerodotal authority (Stanley Toussaint, *Behold the King: A Study of* Matthew, 206).

    b) But Blomberg says "will have been bound" was true of Classical Greek but Hellenistic Greek allowed for a simple future (Craig Blomberg, *Matthew*, New American Commentary, 255).

VERSE 19

30. Is this a reference to prayer?

31. Who are the "two of you"?

VERSE 20

32. Is this a reference to prayer?

33. Does this mean Jesus does hear our prayers when we pray alone?

The Reason for Church Discipline

An Exegetical Outline & Purpose Statement (Steps 2-4) for Matthew 18:15-20

Exegetical Outline

Prologue: Christ is teaching his disciples (18:1) concerning the importance of dealing with sin. He has just told them to never be a stumbling block to others (18:5-9) and emphasized that God himself seeks to restore people when they do sin (18:10-14). In the section following (18:15-20) the thought shifts to how believers should respond when they have knowledge of someone else who sinned.

Exegetical Idea (Step 3): The *reason* the church should restore a sinning Christian correctly is because this restoration is carried out as an extension of God's authority.

Exegetical Points (Step 2):

I. The *way* the church should correctly restore a sinning Christian is by keeping the matter as private as possible (15-17).

A. A private sin should be dealt with only between those directly involved so as to make restoration of the offender easier (15).

B. Unrepentant sin after a private confrontation should be exposed only to one or two more persons in order to facilitate restoring the sinner (16).

C. Unrepentant sin after a small group attempt at restoration should be brought before the entire church body as a deterrent to continued sin (17a).

D. Unrepentant sin after exposure to the church should result in requiring each church member to relate to the sinner as an unbeliever (17b).

II. The *reason* the church can restore or continue to seek to restore errant believers is because it acts as an extension of the authority of God Himself (18-20).

A. Churches that prayerfully restore or continue to seek to restore sinful believers act in the place of the Father (18-19).

1. The church must announce guilt or innocence based upon what God has already determined (18).

2. Church leaders who prayerfully make a judgment can have confidence that they have acted according to God's will (19).

B. Churches that restore or continue to seek to restore sinful believers act in the presence of Christ (20).

Homiletical Exposition With Sermon Title: "When We Don't Agree"

Purpose or Desired Listener Response (Step 4)

The listeners will confess any sin in their lives worthy of church discipline and help others do so.

Why We Practice Church Discipline

Homiletical Outline (Steps 5-6) Based on Matthew 18:15-20

Key Issue: How do we restore sinning Christians properly?

I. God's way to restore members in sin is to keep the matter as private as possible (15-17).

A. The desired end is restoration, not punishment or excommunication.

1. We must be clear that the goal of discipline is behaviour change since many churches "excommunicate" only to punish rather than restore (e.g., Catholic).

2. Restoration is God's goal for a wandering saint in the context (vv. 10-14).

3. Restoration is the explicit teaching of this text in verse 15b.

4. Restoration is the desired goal of church discipline in other passages (Gal. 6:1, etc.).

B. God's restoring process involves four steps that tell more and more people about the sin (15-17).

1. Talk to the person by yourself (15).
2. Take 1-2 others along (16).
3. Expose the sin to the entire church (17a).
4. Treat person like an unbeliever (17b).
   a. Don't refer to the person as a Christian.
   b. Seek to evangelise this person.
   c. Do not allow the person to participate in the Lord's Supper.
   d. Remove the person from membership.
   e. Remove this person from any responsibility in the church.
   f. Prohibit the sinner from attending church (?).

(But *why* can we do all this? What right do we have to discipline our members? Because...)

II. Our church acts as an extension of the authority of God Himself (18-20).

A. We act in the place of the Father when we seek to restore someone (18-19).

1. Too often today's churches act as if they have no authority under God (we should still exercise discipline upon sinning members who leave to attend another church).

2. Our authority to announce guilt or innocence is what God has already determined (18).

3. The Corinthians were to "deliver over to Satan" a believer living in sexual sin (1 Cor. 5: 5).

4. We should trust that our leaders' prayerful judgments are God's will (19; cf. Ps. 82:1).

B. We act in the presence of Jesus Christ when we seek to restore someone (20).

Main Idea (CPS): We restore sinning members properly because we act on God's behalf (Step 5).

Application

1. Remember that as a member of this church you submit to its authority under God. This means that we will lovingly seek to restore you should you fall. As leaders we will take this role seriously.

2. Is there any sin in you now worthy of discipline? Please clean this area up now and avoid pain for us all!

Student _____ Box _____ Assign. Grade _____

Assignment #3
Exegetical Idea Exercises

Directions: Write the subject (what the quote is *about*) and complement (what the quote *says* about this subject) for each of the following statements. The subject should be an *incomplete*, short statement of at least four words describing the major theme of the text but is a sentence fragment without its complement/thrust. Make the complement an *incomplete* sentence also so it completes the sentence begun by the subject. In short, follow a Z_1+X+Z_2+Y form in a single sentence.

(1)

I shall not pass through this life but once.
Any good, therefore, that I can do
Or any kindness I can show to any fellow creature,
Let me do it now.
Let me not defer or neglect it,
For I shall not pass this way again.

SUBJECT: The reason I should do good to others now

COMPLEMENT: is because I won't have the same opportunities again.

(2)

America was discovered accidentally by a great seaman who was looking for something else; when discovered, it was not wanted; and most of the exploration for the next 50 years was done in the hope of getting through or around it. America was named after a man who discovered no part of the New World. History is like that, very chancy.

Samuel Elliott Morison

SUBJECT: _____

COMPLEMENT: _____

(3)

Now that the regular first-class postage stamp is advancing to 13¢, maybe people will discover the virtues of the 10-cent postcard. Except for purely confidential matters, here is an ideal way to write what you have to say without unnecessary verbiage, and still be gracious about it.

Think: no envelope to lick, no paper to fold, and the temptation to say too much denied. And when you receive it, how the advantages do pile up. The message right before you, easy to get at. No envelope to open and throw away -- only one disposal piece. And everything is so aboveboard, so beautifully in keeping with today's emphasis on openness.

Letter to the Editor, New York Times

SUBJECT: _____

COMPLEMENT: _____

Assignment #3 (2 of 3)

(4) A straight-A student may be just as despondent as an academic dunce, a graduate student just as lonely as a freshman. Preliminary findings of a Los Angeles study of college students concludes, "The typical pattern that emerges of the committed suicide is that of a sensitive, lonely, unhappy boy (males outnumber females by about four to one) who may have many acquaintances and even some successes, but who seem to have lacked a close, meaningful relationship. Perhaps the most frequent single comment made about this group of suicides is, 'No one really seemed to know him.'"

SUBJECT: _____

COMPLEMENT: _____

_____

(5) The best executive is one who has sense enough to pick good men to do what he wants done, and sense enough not to meddle with them while they are doing it.

Teddy Roosevelt

SUBJECT: _____

COMPLEMENT: _____

_____

(6) Planning to send your new child to your old alma mater? Well, you had better start putting some money away -- $1,860 a year, to be exact. Predicating it upon present costs for a state college, a one-year-old child, 7% inflation, and 5% interest on your savings, it all adds up to a projected $56,160 for four years at State. For a private college, four years' room, board and tuition -- 17 years from now -- will add up to a horrendous $98,280.

SUBJECT: _____

COMPLEMENT: _____

_____

(7) People of great ability do not emerge, as a rule, from the happiest of backgrounds. So far as my own observation goes, I would conclude that ability, although hereditary, is improved by an early measure of adversity and improved again by a later measure of success.

SUBJECT: _____

COMPLEMENT: _____

_____

Assignment #3 (3 of 3)

(8) Presidents come and Presidents go, but real power in Washington rarely changes. This is why it would be naive to anticipate Jimmy Carter's turning the ramshackle of American life back into Columbia the Gem of the Ocean. Despite the press's myopic obsession with the White House, Presidents still must dance to the music of the power structure encasing them. Although Mr. Carter is new, most of the power centers he must deal with are old, experienced, cunning, entrenched and intractable.

They do not yearn to be born again. They like the country the way it is. And why should they not? America works for them. It has worked successfully for them for a generation and more, through Republican White Houses and Democratic White Houses. Their aim is to keep it working for them.

Among the rest, the old gang is back in good health. The great powers in Washington have long included the South, the suburbs, oil, munitions, big business, big labor, lawyers and the press. All are back as powerful as ever, and most of them are prepared to resist with ferocity any incursions on their power.

New York Times

SUBJECT: _____

COMPLEMENT: _____

_____

(9) And when you pray, do not imitate the hypocrites; they love to say their prayers standing up in the synagogues and at the street corners for people to see them. I tell you solemnly, they have had their reward. But when you pray, go to your private room, and when you have shut your door, pray to your Father who is in that secret place, and your Father who sees all that is done in secret will reward you.

SUBJECT: _____

COMPLEMENT: _____

_____

(10) In order to discover the rules of society best suited to nations, a superior intelligence beholding all the passions of men without experiencing any of them would be needed. This intelligence would have to be wholly unrelated to our nature, while knowing it through and through; its happiness would have to be independent of us, and yet ready to occupy itself with ours; and lastly, it would have, in the march of time, to look forward to a distant glory, and, working in one century be able to enjoy in the next. It would take God to give man laws.

Rousseau

SUBJECT: _____

COMPLEMENT: _____

_____

Developmental Questions (Step 4a)

Adapted from Dr. Don Sunukjian, Dallas Theological Seminary, and Haddon Robinson, 77-96
(For illustrations of these concepts, see also pages 117-119 of these notes)

Proposition: There are only 3 things that can be done with any given idea or statement, whether it be the main idea of the message or one of the points within the outline—explain it, prove it, or apply it. (This sequence is important, as they should be addressed in this order.)

I. Explain it.
This answers the question, "What do I need to explain?"

A. If the biblical writer explains the answer to this question, by all means use his explanation of his idea, statement, or word (e.g., Mark 4).

B. If the biblical writer does *not* explain the idea then *you* as the speaker must do so.

1. Perhaps the author assumed his audience would understand (e.g., John 3:5).

2. Ask, "Would my audience ask for further explanation of this statement?" If so, then this is your developmental question.

C. In an inductively developed message where the subject/question is raised in the introduction, the developmental question is, "*What is the answer* to the question raised in the introduction?"

II. Prove it.
This answers the question, "Do my listeners believe it?"

A. The biblical writer may be proving/defending/arguing something which your modern audience *already accepts* (e.g., deity, humanity, or resurrection of Christ for SBC students). If so, this is not the proper developmental question to address.

B. However, if the author is proving/defending/arguing something which your modern audience *does not already accept*, be sure to develop this issue for your listeners (e.g., the resurrection of Christ in John 20 or 1 Cor. 15 could also fit here for a non-Christian audience).

C. A third option is that the biblical author may *not* be proving it, but the modern audience needs some defense or explanation of why this is true or how such a thing could happen (e.g., Jonah getting swallowed by a great fish and living there three days). If this is the case, you must develop this issue to prove the reliability of Scripture or of your interpretation.

D. When a person needs proof for your idea one of at least three problems exists:

1. He *doesn't see the connection* between what you say and the Bible says.

   a. "Be nice to your grandfather. It will help you have babies."
   b. Col. 1:9-12 — "Knowing God's will leads to patience with other Christians." How so?

2. He sees the connection but simply *doesn't believe it* (it seems contrary to real life).

   a. Eph. 6:1-3 — "Honoring your parents brings long life." But a good boy died at 12.
   b. 1 Cor. 7:10 — "Divorced Christians should remain unmarried for reconciliation."

3. Something else is more important to him.

   a. "Acceptance is more important than purity."
   b. "Employment is more important than honesty."

III. Apply it.

This answers the questions, "So what? What does this mean to me? What difference does it make? What are the implications? Where does it show up in real life?"

A. The biblical author may be showing the implications of his idea or statement.

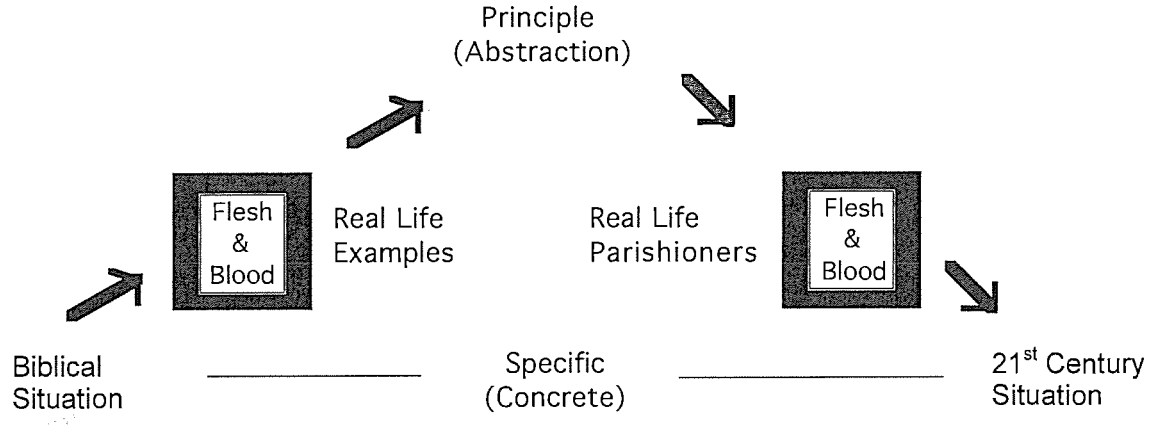
B. Even if the biblical writer doesn't show the implications, the modern preacher must do this for the listeners.

C. The goal of our teaching and preaching should not be knowledge but behaviour change.

1. Knowledge alone makes us proud (1 Cor. 8:1a).
2. Knowledge plus loving behaviour helps both us and others (1 Cor. 8:1b; 1 Tim. 1:5; 3:16-17).

D. Proper application has two parts:

1. What is the valid principle? (hermeneutics)
2. What is the concrete application and extended application? (specifics)



Developmental Questions Summary

Developmental Questions	Explain it	Prove it	Apply it
Questions asked	What does it mean?	Do they think it's true? Do they believe it? Do they buy it?	So what? What does it mean to me? What difference does it make?
Listener's need addressed	Ignorance	Doubt	Relevance
Explores	Explanation	Validity	Implications and applications
Goal	Understanding	Belief	Behaviour

The Sermon's Purpose & Homiletical Idea (Steps 3-5)

I. Definitions

A. Step 3: The exegetical idea (CPT) summarizes the text's message to the *biblical* audience.

B. Step 4: The sermon's purpose (desired listener response) is the behavior change you want in the hearers as a result of your preaching the homiletical idea (pp. 86, 148, 156, 170).

C. Step 5: The homiletical idea (CPS) summarizes the sermon for the *modern* audience (p. 29).

II. Contrasting the Exegetical and Homiletical Ideas

	Exegetical Idea (CPT)	Homiletical Idea (CPS)
Which is written first?	First (step #3, p. 27)	Second (step #5, p. 28)
Place used	In the study	In the pulpit
Study steps	Observation and interpretation	Principlizing and application
Primary concern	Accuracy to the author's intent	Relevance to the audience
Form best stated	Z_1+X+Z_2+Y	A winsome, compelling slogan
Length and style	2-3 lines (commas and "ing" words are OK)	1-2 lines (avoid commas and "ing" words)
Outline Order	Sequential (same as passage)	Logical (not always same as text)
Mode of communication	Written to be read	Written to be heard
Audience addressed	Biblical times (time bound)	Twenty-first century (timely)
Tense and Mood, Person number	Past tense indicative Third person ("Paul," "Colossians," etc.)	Present tense (often imperative) First or second person ("We," "you," etc.)
Question answered	"What was God saying to the first readers of this passage?"	"What is God saying to those who listen to me preach this passage?"
Needs addressed	Original, textual (e.g., wives wouldn't wear head coverings in the church at Corinth)	Modern, cultural (e.g., wife not submitting to husbands against Singapore culture by refusing to raise her children at home)

Despite these differences, write both ideas: (1) in the active voice, (2) in full sentences, (3) with correlating Z_1s and interrogatives (p. 34), and (4) so they include the whole passage.

See examples of EO to HO on pages 32, 34c-d, 46, 116, 152, 178, 262 and by downloading Dr. Rick's sermon manuscripts at the OT & NT Sermons links at biblestudydownloads.com.

Exegetical and Homiletical Idea Examples

Exegetical Idea	Homiletical Idea
"The result of Samson's immorality with Delilah was God's judgment upon his very life in the pagan temple of Dagon." (Judges 16)	**"God judges any 'he-man' with a 'she-weakness.'"** (Chuck Swindoll)
"The manner in which the disciples were to pray was secretly rather than for public show like the Pharisees." (Matt. 6:5-8)	**"God blesses private prayers more than public."** (#9 on pages 37 & 42)
"The reason Jesus washed the disciples' feet was because He sought to set an example of love humbly serving others." (John 13:1-17)	**"When you love people like Jesus you don't mind dirt."** (p. 152)
"The reason Paul stopped praying for his physical defect to be removed was because he began to value the humility and strength it built in him." (2 Cor. 12:7-10)	**"The thing you most pray that God would remove in your life is the thing you most want to keep."** (Dr. Don Sunukjian, Talbot Seminary)

Converting Exegetical to Homiletical Statements

Fill in the statements to capture the central idea of the paragraphs on pages 35-37. Answers need not be exactly like mine but should capture the basic idea:

	Exegetical Components	Exegetical Ideas	State each subject as a question	Convert each EI into a MI (short and catchy)
1.	Subject Complement			
2.	Subject Complement			
3.	Subject Complement			
4.	Subject Complement			
5.	Subject Complement			
6.	Subject Complement			
7.	Subject Complement			
8.	Subject Complement			
9.	Subject Complement			
10.	Subject Complement			

A Guide to Structuring Sermons

From an Anonymous Prof I had at DTS (i.e., I can't remember!)

A Guide To Structuring Sermons

EXEGETICAL IDEA ⇨ { EXEGETICAL CENTRAL IDEA (What was Paul saying to the Corinthians?) / Need: What need was Paul meeting, what question was he answering, what problem was he solving? } ⇨ { HOMILETICAL CENTRAL IDEA (What is God saying to me and my people?) / Need: What needs in the lives of me and my people does this passage address? } ⇨ Need: How can I raise this need in the minds of my listeners? ⇨ INTRODUCTION

For starters, try to state the HOMILETICAL CENTRAL IDEA so that the subject states a need, problem or question, and the complement provides the solution or the answer.

Do I want to simply raise the need in the Introduction and save the complete solution or answer till the end of the message? This would be an INDUCTIVE SERMON.

Do I want to give the solution or answer to the need right away and then raise further (developmental) questions about that answer? This would be a DEDUCTIVE SERMON.

Introduction
Need
Raise subject

I. Part 1 of answer

II. Part 2 of answer

III. Part 3 of answer

Complete answer
= MAIN IDEA

Introduction
Need
Raise subject

I. Preliminary issue

II. Preliminary issue

III. Complete complement (singular, multiple, or unfolding)
= MAIN IDEA

Introduction
Need
State MAIN IDEA (meeting the need)

I. Answers to one or more
II. developmental questions about the IDEA.

III.

Moving From the Exegetical to Homiletical Outline
(Eizenga 1 of 2)

Mike Eizenga
Dallas Theological Seminary, 1986

A Beginner's Pattern for Moving From the Exegetical to Homiletical Outline

One way to make the move from the exegetical to the homiletical outline is to put your textual development at the "A" level in your homiletical outline. In effect, this means that the substance of the main points (I, II, III, etc.) in your exegetical outline will be moved to the subpoint level (IA, IIA, IIIA) in your homiletical outline. The "B" level in the homiletical outline will then often reflect the relevance of the particular point under discussion to the comtemporary audience. The main points in the homiletical outline will be phrased as broader principles which subsume the "A" and "B" levels.

Exegetical Outline

I. The reason the Corinthians are as unable now to receive advanced doctrine as they were when they were immature believers is because they are still acting like unbelievers.

   A. The reason Paul originally had to teach the Corinthians elementary doctrine was because they were immature and unable to receive advanced doctrine.

   B. The reason that the Corinthians are still unable to receive advanced doctrine is because they are still acting like unbelievers, as evidenced by the factions in their assembly.

Homiletical Outline

I. Believers who continue to act like unbelievers will be unable to receive advanced doctrine.

   A. The Corinthians were unable to receive advanced doctrine because they were still acting like unbelievers.

      1. When the Corinthians were immature believers they quite naturally were unable to receive advanced doctrine.

      2. The Corinthians are still unable to receive advanced doctrine because they are acting like unbelievers.

   B. We will be unable to receive advanced doctrine as long as we continue to act like unbelievers.

Note that the substance of I, IA, IB in the exegetical outline has moved to IA, IA1, IA2, respectively in the homiletical outline. Note also that in the homiletical outline, point I presents a principle which subordinates both IA and IB.

Moving From the Exegetical to Homiletical Outline
(Eizenga 2 of 2)

That is, IA deals with the particulars of the text. Point I presents a broader principle. IB deals with the relevance of the principle to the contemporary audience.

I. Believers who continue to act like unbelievers will be unable to receive advanced doctrine.

IA. The Corinthians were unable to receive advanced doctrine because they were still acting like unbelievers.

IB. We will be unable to receive advanced doctrine as long as we continue to act like unbelievers.

Thus, with respect to the order of our reasoning (as opposed to the order of our presentation) we begin at IA, move up to the broader principle and then down to IB.

cyclical

In short, the homiletical pattern that emerges looks like this:

I. Principle (timeless)

A. Textual Development (past tense)

B. Relevance to Contemporary Audience (present tense)

This method of moving from the exegetical to homiletical outline represents a vast over-simplificaton. There is a wide variety of alternate homiletical arrangements. However, upon examination of these alternate arrangements it becomes evident that many of them are in fact simply variations upon this basic pattern.

An Example of Moving from Exegetical to Homiletical Structures

Psalm 23

Responding to God's Provision and Protection

Exegetical Outline

Exegetical Idea: The response of David to God's goodness shown in *providing* for and *protecting* him was to fearlessly commune with God at the tabernacle the rest of his life.

I. (1-4) The response of David to God's provision and protection [like a shepherd does for his sheep] was comfort instead of fear.

A. (1-3) The way the LORD satisfied David was by providing all of his needs.
1. (1-2) The LORD provided quality *physical provisions* (food, rest & water) that satisfied David.
2. (3a) The LORD provided *spiritual refreshment* that restored David's soul.
3. (3b) The LORD provided *guidance in holiness* to protect His own name.

B. (4) The response of David to the LORD's protection during danger was comfort instead of fear.

II. (5) The way God showed His goodness was by protecting David so that he was honored like a banqueting victor before his enemies.

A. (5a) The LORD protected and exalted David like a banqueting victor before humbled enemies.

B. (5b) The LORD honored David.

C. (5c) The LORD provided more blessings than David could possibly enjoy.

III. (6) The response of David to God's continued goodness was to commit to commune with the LORD at the tabernacle the rest of his life.

A. (6a) David expressed confidence that he would see the LORD's goodness and love the rest of his life.

B. (6b) David's response was to commit to commune with God at the tabernacle the rest of his life.

Homiletical Exposition (cyclical inductive form)

Introduce Subject: How should we respond to God's goodness towards us?

I. God shows His goodness by providing everything His people need. *Principle*

A. David saw that God provided for him as a shepherd provides for his sheep (1-4). *Text*

B. None of us can say that God has not properly provided for all our needs (examples). *Appl.*

II. God shows His goodness by protecting His people from harm. *Principle*

A. The LORD protected David from his foes and even honored him before them (5). *Text*

B. Each of us has witnessed God's protecting hand (examples). *Appl.*

III. The right response to God's provision & protection is to publicly commune with Him. *Principle*

A. David sought to regularly and publicly commune with God at the tabernacle (6). *Text*

B. Regularly fellowship with God at church in response to His provision and protection. *Appl.*

Main Idea: God's goodness to us should result in a desire to commune with Him at church.

Types of Sermon Structure (Step 6a)

Dr. Haddon Robinson, *Biblical Preaching*, 126

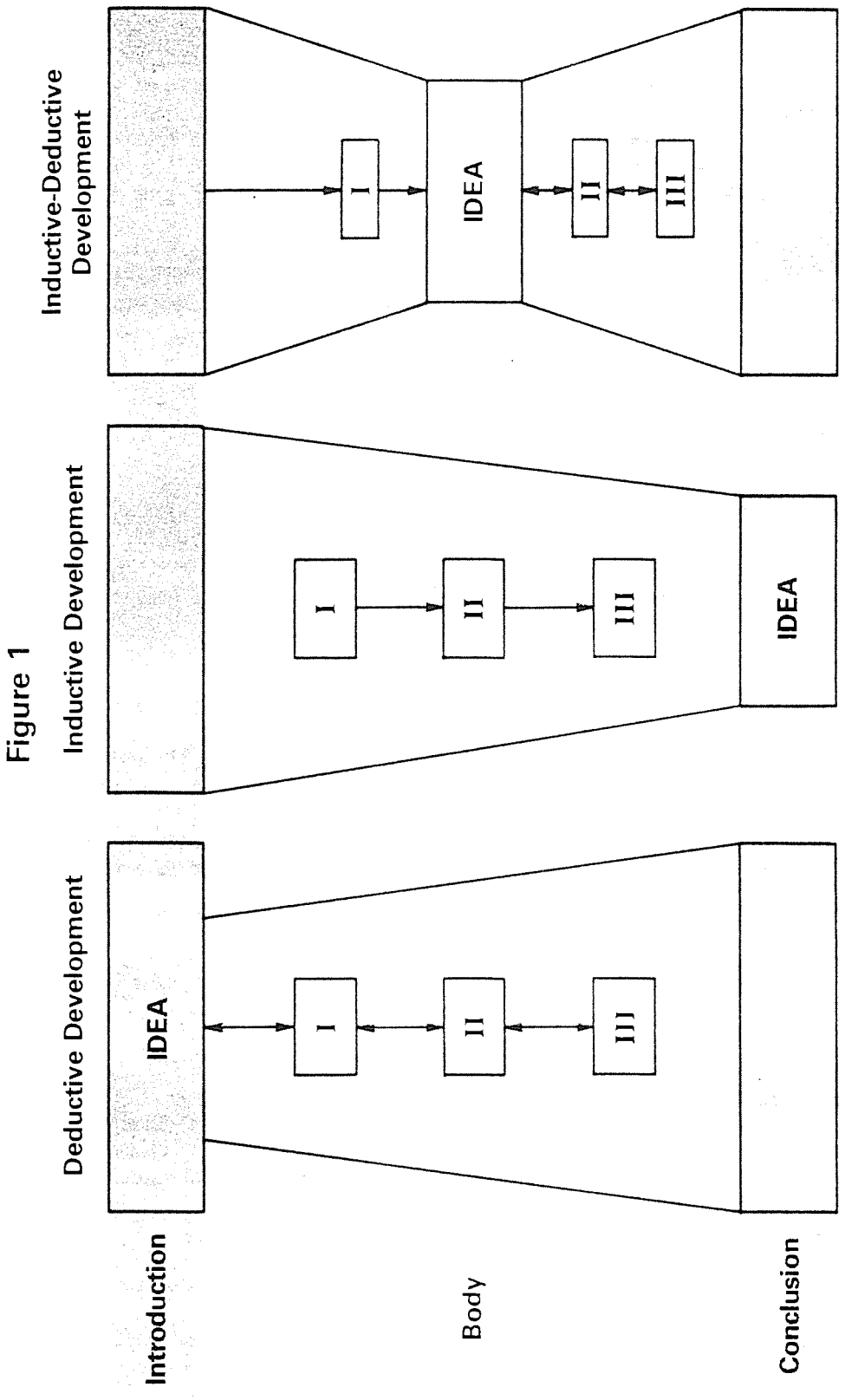


Figure 1

Application within Sermon Structure

Dr. Don Sunukjian, Dallas Theological Seminary (1 of 3)

Simple Inductive

Introduction
1.
2.
3. A statement orienting to the subject

I. (The understood statement of the whole text, toward which the subpoints are building)
A. A statement covering the 1st movement of the text
B. A statement covering the 2nd movement of the text
C. A statement covering the 3rd movement of the text

II. A statement of the Main Idea
A. An application of the M.I. to one area of life
B. An application of the M.I. to another area of life

Cyclical Inductive

Introduction
1.
2.
3. A statement orienting to the subject or the 1st main point

I. A statement covering part of the Idea
A. A statement covering the 1st movement of the text
B. An application of this movement

II. A statement covering the next part of the Idea
A. A statement covering the 2nd movement of the text
B. An application of this next movement

III. A statement adding the final part of the Idea so as to complete the whole Main Idea
A. A statement covering the final movement of the text
B. An application of this final movement or the whole M.I.

Simple Deductive

Introduction
1.
2.
3. A statement of the Main Idea

I. A statement covering the whole text
A. A statement covering the 1st movement of the text
B. A statement covering the 2nd movement of the text
C. A statement covering the 3rd movement of the text

II. An application of the whole Main Idea
A. An application of the M.I. to one area of life
B. An application of the M.I. to another area of life

OR

II. An application of the Main Idea
A. An application of the 1st part of the Idea
B. An application of the 2nd part of the Idea
C. An application of the 3rd part of the Idea

(Rather than doing this, it would be better to go to a cyclical pattern)

Application within Sermon Structure (2 of 3)

ACTS 6:1-6

Simple Inductive

Introduction
1. We would all like to be part of a growing church--examples.
2. We think this would solve all our problems--examples
3. But problems arise even within a growing church, sometimes because of the growth itself.
   a. Example
   b. Example

Subj. 4. When problems like these arise, how should we solve them?
5. For the answer, let's see how the apostles solved a problem within the growing church of Acts 6:1-6.

(I. The apostles solved the problem of growth by designating lay leadership.)
A. The Jerusalem church was a growing church.
B. The church had the problem of the widows' food.
C. The apostles solved the problem by designating lay leadership.

M.I. II. The solution to the problems of a growing church is to designate lay leadership.

III. The solution to our problem . . .

Cyclical Inductive

Introduction
1. We would all like to be part . . .
2. We think this would solve . . .
3. But problems arise even within . . .
   a. Example
   b. Example
4. How should we solve them?
5. For the answer . . . Acts 6:1-6

I. This church, like ours, is a growing church.
A. The Jerusalem church is a growing church.
B. We are a growing church.

II. But problems sometimes arise in a growing church.
A. The Jerusalem church had the problem of the widows' food.
B. We have such problems as . . .
   1. Example
   2. Example

M.I. III. The way to solve these problems is to designate lay leadership.
A. The Jerusalem church solved . . .
   1. Apostles proposed.
   2. People accepted.
   3. Problem solved.
B. The way to solve our problems is for us to designate . . .

Application within Sermon Structure (3 of 3)

ACTS 6:1-6

Simple Deductive

Introduction

1. We would all like to be part of a growing church--examples.
2. We think this would solve all our problems--examples.
3. But problems arise even with a growing church, sometimes because of the growth itself.
   a. Example
   b. Example

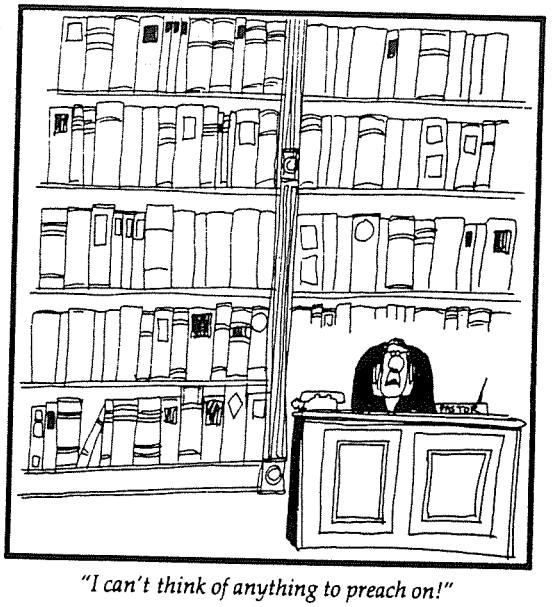
M.I. 4. When problems arise, the way to solve them is to designate lay leadership.

5. This is how the apostles solved the problem in Acts 6:1-6.

I. The solution to the problem of the growing Jerusalem church was to designate lay leadership.
   A. The Jerusalem church was a growing church.
   B. The church had a problem with the widow's food.
   C. The designation of lay leadership solved the problem.
      1. The apostles proposed.
      2. The people accepted.
      3. The problem was solved.

II. The solution to our growing problems will be to designate lay leadership.
   A. We are growing.
   B. Our problems are . . .
   C. The solution will be to designate lay leadership





"I can't think of anything to preach on!"

A Sample One Page Sermon Outline

(This is similar to what I expect for Assignment #5 on Colossians 4:6. See also pages 49-50, 54 for other samples.)

Awe? Or Blah?

Ecclesiastes 5:1-7 (Cyclical Inductive)

Note: The full manuscript is on pages 82-85

Introduction

1. Arouse interest: A wife's marital dissatisfaction and a little boy's desire for God's presence illustrate our going through religious motions without a heart desire for God.
2. Need: Do you struggle worshipping God (QT, clichés)? "Rather than awe, it's blah!"
3. Subject: How can we honour God as he deserves?
4. Background: Jews disrespected God in Solomon's time (temple next to palace).
5. Preview: Today's passage will reveal two ways we should show reverence for God. Restatement: Solomon tells us how to truly honour God in Ecclesiastes 5:1-7 (text). Verses 1-3 tell us to... (transition)

I. Show reverence for God in proper worship (5:1-3).

A. Proper worship can best happen when we *prepare ourselves* (5:1a; house, DTS, tapes).

B. Proper worship also happens when we *listen to God* (5:1b-2).

1. Fools unknowingly sin by offering up a meaningless "sacrifice" (5:1b).
2. Weigh your words and thoughts carefully because of who God is (5:2).
   a. Don't be an obsessive talker or thinker (5:2a; "bless," "I Surrender All").
   b. Realize God is awesome and majestic and we are puny in comparison (5:2b).
   c. Listen by keeping your own mouth shut (5:2c; Ps. 46:10, Scripture overhead).

C. Proper worship happens when we *set aside our cares* (5:3; stand up, list cares).

(Verses 1-3 have said that we must show reverence for God in proper worship. This happens when we prepare ourselves, listen to God, and set aside our cares. Now verses 4-6 give us a second key how to really honor God. They say to...)

II. Show reverence for God in paying vows (5:4-6).

A. All vows must be paid (5:4; vows = purity, Bible, wedding, missions).

B. No vow at all is better than an unfulfilled vow (5:5; Sunukjian pastorate).

C. Don't sin though an impulsive vow then later confess it was a mistake (5:6a; Jew).

D. God's anger at rash vows may wipe out our accomplishments and possessions (5:6b).

(So what's Solomon's key point? This whole passage basically says...)

Conclusion

1. Show reverence for God in proper worship and paying vows (Main Idea).
2. Don't dishonour God by approaching Him frivolously in worship or in unfulfilled, stupid vows (Restated MI). Instead, Solomon exhorts us to fear God by not dreaming and making rash vows (5:7).
   a. Flippant worship and excessive talking are both futile (5:7a).
   b. Fear God (5:7b).
3. Allow God to change your worship (stand, etc.) or vows (remember & obey).
4. Prayer

Sunukjian's Judges 1 Outline (1 of 2)

Dr. Don Sunukjian

Judges 1:8-15

THE GOD OF EXTRA DELIGHTS

Introduction
1. We're going to look at an unusual incident in the book of Judges--delightful, yet surprising.
2. Read Judges 1:8-15.
3. We're tempted to simply say, "This is a nice story: a hero captures an enemy city and wins the hand of a fair maiden."
4. We're tempted to look briefly at it, and then to skip on.
   a. But it's importance is indicated in the many verses given to this incident compared to a single verse given to the capture of Jerusalem, the future capital (1:8).
   b. It's importance is further indicated by the fact that the incident is virtually repeated in Joshua 15.
5. We must focus our attention on this incident, for in it God is saying something important to His people and to us.

I. The text (Judges 1:1-15) records the continuing conquest of Palestine after Joshua.
   A. God specifies Judah to set the example of continuing conquest (1:1-2).
   B. The tribe of Judah gains victories at Bezek, Jerusalem, and other areas (1:3-9).
   C. Individuals of Judah gain victories at Hebron and Debir (1:10-15).
      1. Caleb gains a victory at Hebron.
      2. Othniel gains a victory at Debir.
         a. Caleb offers marriage to his daughter as an incentive to take the city.
            i) Caleb wants the city taken because of military and religious significance.
            ii) Since this is his only daughter, the incentive lies not only in the desireability of the girl herself, but also in the relationship of the groom will have to the revered Caleb.
         b. Othniel captures the city and wins the daughter.
         c. The daughter requests and receives an additional parcel of land as a wedding present.

(Transition: We are tempted to focus on many lessons.
We are tempted to focus on the couple--courage wins the hand of a maiden who has beauty and brains.
We are tempted to focus on Caleb--an elderly man's zeal for God motivates and inspires the next generation of leadership.
But...)

II. The true lesson of the passage concerns what God would do for His people,
   A. For those who fight and struggle in the name of the Lord, God gives them the victory.
      1. For Israel, God wanted them to know that the pattern of victory under Joshua would continue.

Sunukjian's Judges 1:8-15 Outline (2 of 2)

2. For us, God wants us to know that through His strength and provision we'll be able to manage and handle even our 'giant' problems.

(Trans: But just a simple statement, "They took Debir," as was made concerning Jerusalem and Hebron, would have been sufficient to teach the above.)

Idea B. For those who fight and struggle in the name of the Lord, God gives not only the victory, but the extra delights, the special presents, as well.
1. Caleb is a picture of what a father is like--he delights to give the special presents, the extra delights.
2. To those of us who do God's will, who struggle in dependence on Him, the reward is not only the victory, but the extra delight.
a. Business. . .
b. Marriage. . .
c. Children. . .
d. Recent move. . .
e. Any difficult or unknown situation

Conclusion

Idea 1. For those who fight and struggle in the name of the Lord, God gives not only the victory but the special presents as well.
2. Follow Him--He is a God of extra delights.



"That sermon was food for thought, Pastor—but we prefer fast food."

Sunukjian's Psalm 3 Outline (1 of 1)

THE CHRISTIAN AND OPPOSITION
Psalm 3
(by a DTS student)

Introduction

1. Problems, setbacks, and opposition are a real part of life.
   a. It's possible we'll face it early in the ministry.
   b. I experienced opposition to my faith at my college orals.
      i. I was affected by it.
2. The Bible warns believers to expect opposition, but also says not to be alarmed by our opponents.
3. Psalm 3 helps us to see how we can face opposition with courage.

I. David is faced with opposition (1-2).
   A. The psalm is written at a time when his own son has turned against him.
   B. All of Israel is now against him.
   C. The opposition is very personal.

II. A natural reaction to intense opposition is to fear.
   A. This is David's initial reaction (1-2).
   B. This is often our tendency too.
      1. Example . . .
      2. Example . . .

III. But we can find courage to face opposition if we will remember who God is, and pray to Him for help.
   A. To find courage to face opposition, we must first remember who God is.
      1. David remembers that God is his protector and provider (3)
      2. We must remember that God is our protector and provider.
         a. He is our protector in that He . . .
         b. He is our provider in that He . . .
   B. If we will then pray to this God for help, we will find a confidence and courage to face opposition.
      1. David prayed to this God for help, and found a confidence which grew to courage (4-8).
         a. The Lord's answer to his prayer gave him the confidence to sleep (4-5a).
         b. Awakening, this confidence expanded to positive courage (5b-8)
      2. As we pray to this God, who has been our protector and provider, we too will find courage to face opposition.
         a. Application . . .
         b. Application . . .

Conclusion

We will find courage to face opposition when we remember who God is, and pray to Him for help (M.I.).

Sunukjian's Psalm 16 Outline (1 of 2)

Don Sunukjian

Psalm 16

Introduction

1. I had always thought it would be clever to propose marriage using the Greek of Acts 3:6--Peter's words to the cripple: "Silver and gold have I none, but such as I have, I give thee."
2. I've discovered another phrase that I've been tempted to use--Psalm 16:6a.
   a. I have often thought I would give this to my wife to use as she stands before the mirror.
3. It's apparent, however, that the writer is not talking about silhouettes or self-flattery; he's talking about an inheritance he's received.
   a. The "lines" are boundary lines, surveyor lines, property lines.
   b. The imagery is from the division of the land among the tribes.
   c. When the "lots" of life were cast and portions assigned, he received something beautiful.
4. What is it that he's been given? What has he inherited that so captivates and delights him?
5. The answer is in vs. 5--he has received the Lord.
   a. When the lots were cast and the shares were given, when he looked at the portion that would be his--it was "the Lord."
   b. The assignment that came to him was a life filled with God.
6. These verses (vss. 5-6) are a climax to the first section of this psalm, a section in which the psalmist joyfully shouts, "God, you mean everything to me; my life is filled with you."

(Transition: Many of us have this same joyful shout.)

I. God means everything to us; our lives are filled with him (vss. 1-6).

A. No one means as much to us as God does (vss. 1-2).

1. The psalmist values God for what his name "Yahweh" means--creator, sovereign, shaper.
2. We too value God more than anything else.
   a. I personally realized this when I was asked to write down and eliminate among the 5 things that meant the most to me. I realized that without God I would not "make it."

These "a" without a "b" is incorrect outlining (cf. p. 61, II, A.1.)

B. The reason we delight in God's people is because they too fill our lives with him (vs. 3).

1. God's saints are "majestic"; they reflect his shining splendor to us.
2. Some of you have majestically reflected God to me.
   a. Examples, names, situations from among the congregation.

C. We would not trade God for anything (vs. 4).

1. Explain "barter".
2. Those who choose other than God are overwhelmed with sorrow.
   a. This was true of the pagans of the psalmist's day.
      1) Baal--prostitution.
      2) Molech--use of children to achieve own ends.

Sunukjian's Psalm 16 Outline (2 of 2)

b. This is true of any today whose focus is on something other than God.
   1) Adulation
   2) Career
   3) Family
   4) Security
   5) Alcohol
   6) Sex

D. Climax: God means everything to us; our lives are filled with him (vss. 5-6).

M.I. II. Because God has brought us to the point where our lives are filled with him, our confidence and joy will never be shaken (vss. 7-11).

A. It is God himself who has worked in us to bring us to this point (vss. 7-8a)

B. Our confidence will never be shaken (vss. 8b-10).

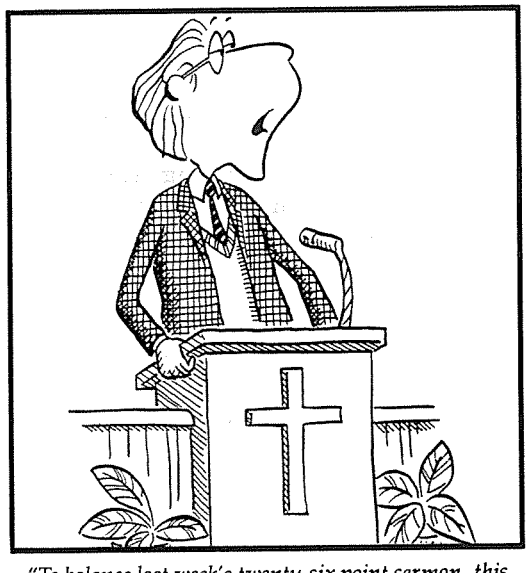
1. We approach the future secure in our hearts.
2. As the grave advances, we do not fear.

C. Our joy will continue to increase (vs. 11).

1. We will find a continuing growth in godliness.
2. We will find an unending pleasure in his presence.

Conclusion

M.I. When our lives are filled with God, our confidence and joy can never be shaken.



"To balance last week's twenty-six point sermon, this morning's message will be pointless."

Sunukjian's Psalm 77 Outline (1 of 4)

Don Sunukjian

Psalm 77

Introduction

1. God seems to deal with his own in a great variety of ways.
    a. Some, in our bodies, seem to enjoy perfect health for most of our lives, while others are called on to endure years of pain and sickness.
    b. Similarly, in our spirits, some of us seem to enjoy almost uninterrupted peace of mind, a happiness and contentment of life, while others are made to pass through deep waters, to face an agony of spirit which seems almost beyond bearing.
2. This morning I want to speak to this latter group--to those of you whose lives are troubled, whose hearts are heavy, who feel battered and exhausted in spirit. I want to speak to those of you who have a desperate need to know the power and love of God.
3. Some of you are undergoing experiences the rest of us can scarcely imagine.
    a. It may be:
        1) Marriage--cold, bitter, blame; pass in angry silence.
        2) Child--unreachable, stubborn, defiant, turning against, angrily and openly casting off.
        3) Business--crisis cannot press through, nothing yields, net tightening, failure.
        4) Disappointment--crushed beyond belief; set heart, dreamed, fallen through, ashes, gone forever.
        5) Sorrow--unbearable, death, days empty, without joy.
        6) Sin--committed, defiling experience, stumbled, shame, loathing, inability to restore spirit.
        7) Whatever may be the cause, is a heaviness, your mind churns with the problem, and there is no rest or peace or happiness.
    b. The nights are the worst.
        1) Lay in bed, no sleep, toss and turn, try relax, mind dwells, tears come to eyes, crying, groaning.
        2) You think back to happier times, when things were good, when days were happy.
            a) Courtship--sweet, sparkled with love.
            b) Child--small, laughed, clung, loved.
            c) Business--bright with promise, successes came easily and with rapid speed.
            d) Disappointment--unknown, all hope, plans, anticipation.
        3) In the words of the song, you remember . . .

            . . . the kind of September
            when life was slow and oh so tender,
            when grass was green and grain was yellow,
            when you were young and a promising fellow.

            You remember . . .
            when life was so tender
            no one wept except the willow
            dreams were kept beside your pillow
            love was an ember about to billow.

Sunukjian's Psalm 77 Outline (2 of 4)

c. You have prayed to God, long, over and over, no response.
   1) Desperately, asked help, again and again, no answer, no change.
   2) "Why won't God do something? Why doesn't he answer? Where is he?"

d. You are almost beside yourself with the heaviness of your burden and no help from God.

4. It is at a time like this when turn to Psalms to meet need; Psalm 77 is one of these.
   a. Psalm 77 is written by one in deep personal distress.
      1) So troubled, no sleep, churned, cried at night.
      2) Desperately prayed, no answer, at point of despair.
   b. But somehow found answer needed; returned to trust, peace, and strength, as indicated by verse 1 (read)
   c. The psalm falls into two divisions:
      1) His words to us about his experience--vss. 2-9.
      2) The answer he discovered--vss. 10-20.

I. David is experiencing a time of deep trouble, sleepless nights, and the feeling that God has forsaken him (vss. 2-9).

A. Deep trouble
   1. Vs. 2a
   2. Not told what, heavy, bothered, weighed.

B. Prayed continually
   1. Vs. 2b
   2. Crying, pleading, asking for help.

C. No answer, no comfort
   1. Vss. 2c-3
   2. Only further trouble; bothered, overwhelmed.

D. Nights are worst
   1. No sleep, churning (vs. 4).
   2. Remembered happier times
      a. Vss. 5-6a
      b. Song:

Yesterday, when I was young,
the taste of life was sweet,
as rain upon my tongue.
I teased at life as if it were a foolish game,
the way that evening breeze may tease a candle flame.
Yesterday, when I was young,
so many happy songs were waiting to be sung,
so many happy pleasures lay in store for me.
There are so many songs in me that won't be sung.
I feel the bitter taste of tears upon my tongue.

   3. Contrasting, going over (vs. 6bc).

E. Where is God? Why doesn't he do something? Will there be any end?
   1. Read vss. 7-9
   2. Where are the two things taught to count on--God's promises and His loving favor?

F. Summary: His experience is like ours--a time of deep trouble, sleepless nights, in which he is haunted by memories, and by the feeling that God has abandoned him.

Sunukjian's Psalm 77 Outline (3 of 4)

(Transition: But then the mood changes. Out of the depths of anguish and despair, an answer begins to form. Thoughts come which bring peace to a troubled mind.)

M.I. (II. In a time of trouble, by recalling God's former deeds--particularly the time he saved us--we will be reminded of his power, wisdom, and love--vss. 10-20).

A. We realize, first, that whatever is happening to us is the will of God (vs. 10).
   1. "Infirmity"--a wound which will heal, a temporary sickness.
   2. It is from God's hand, part of his intention for us.

B. During this time of trouble, we can recall God's former deeds, and thus remind ourselves that God's way is alway right.

   1. We are to recall God's former deeds in our lives (vss. 11-12).
   2. This will remind us that God's way has always been incomparably great (vs. 13a).

C. Specifically, we can remember the time God saved us, and thus remind ourselves that his way is always good.

   1. The psalmist recalls Israel's salvation at the Red Sea (vss. 13b-18).
      a. Vss. 13b-15 reflect Exod. 15:11,13.
      b. Vss. 16-18 reflect Exod. 14:5-9,13-31.
   2. By remembering the day God saved us, we will see how God's way is always good.
      a. We will be reminded of his mighty incomparable power (vss. 16-18)
         1) Restate vss. 16-18 in terms of God's control.
         2) Recall how God moved circumstances at the time of your salvation.
         3) Realize God is capable of exerting the same power now in your difficult situation.
      b. We will be reminded of his unexplainable ways (vs. 19).
         1) Israel never would have thought that God's way would be <u>through</u> the Sea (vs. 19).
         2) You do not know where God's footprints are leading you now.

God moves in a mysterious way his wonders to perform,
He plants his footsteps in the sea, and rides upon the storm.
Ye fearful saints, fresh courage take; the clouds you so much dread,
Are big with mercy, and shall break in blessings on your head.
Judge not the Lord by feeble sense, but trust him for his grace.
Behind a frowning providence he hides a smiling face.
His purposes will ripen fast, unfolding every hour;
The bud may have a bitter taste, but sweet will be the flower. William Cowper

      c. We will be reminded of his overwhelming love (vs. 20).
         1) Read vs. 20.
         2) John 3:16; Rom. 5:8; Tit. 3:5--his love at the time of our salvation too.
         3) He will show this same love in our present circumstances--Rom. 8:35,38-39.

Sunukjian's Psalm 77 Outline (4 of 4)

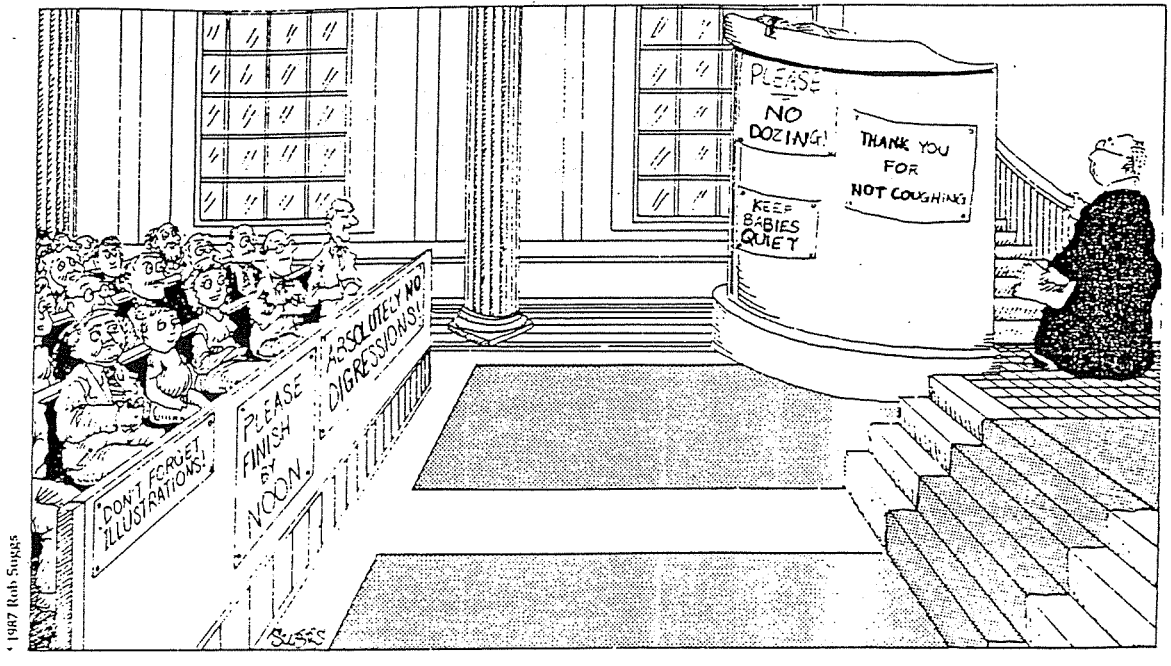
4

Conclusion

1. When the days press so that you cannot bear, when God himself seems unresponsive, remember the day God saved you.
    a. Remember his mighty power, his unexplainable ways, and his overwhelming love in saving you.
    b. And you will conclude as did the psalmist (vs. 13), and you will trust him in the present.

M.I.

2. When your spirit is most troubled, remember the day God saved you.
3. Perhaps this will be the day God saves you . . . (invitation to salvation.)



Outlining the Sermon (Step 6a)

Adapted from Dr. Don Sunukjian, Dallas Theological Seminary

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 which 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":

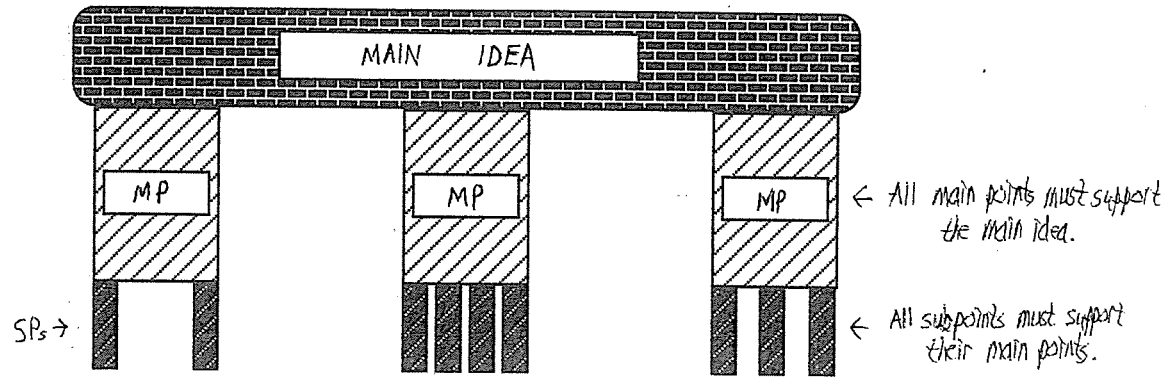
I. _____ (v. 5)
A. _____ (v. 6)
B. _____ (v. 7)

(Notice that subpoints "A" and "B" are coordinate but should also be included in the 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 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:

Avoid this…	This is better…
"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.

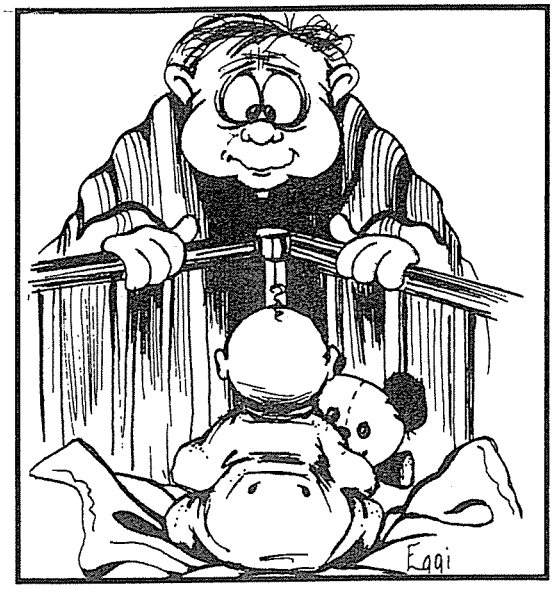
F. There are three main qualities of a good sermon outline:

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.

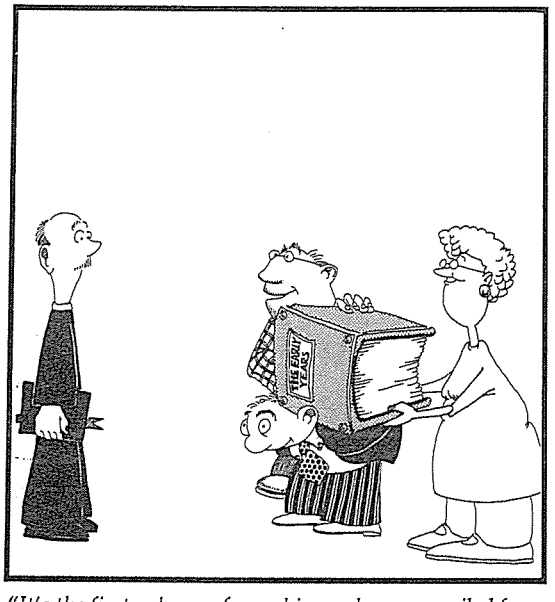
G. The main idea appears in the outline in the place where its statement naturally occurs in the sermon. In other words, if you have an inductive sermon, don't state your idea at the top of the page in the introduction but rather at the bottom in the conclusion (cf. p. 51).



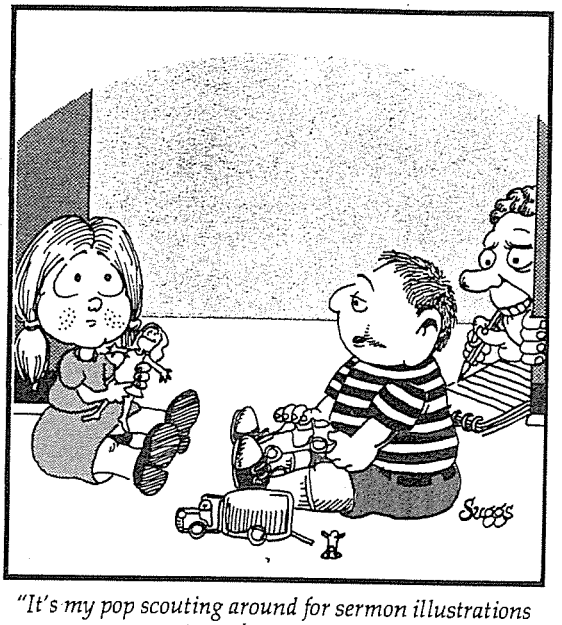
It occurs to Rev. Billings in the middle of point #2 that point #3 misses the point entirely.



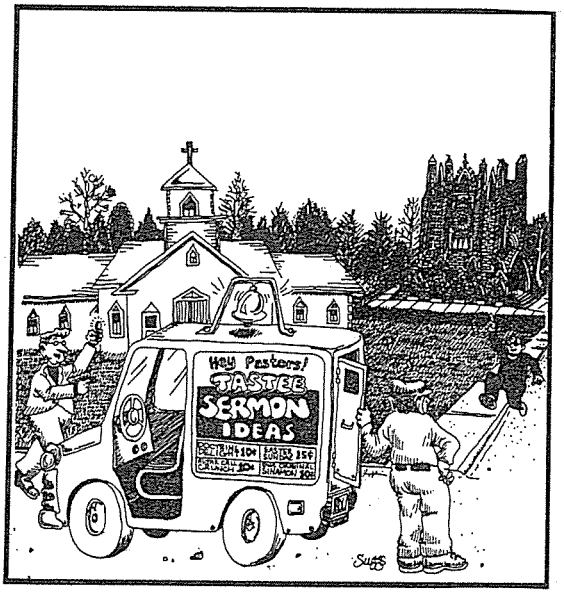
"So how's my bundle of sermon illustrations today?"



"It's the first volume of your biography as compiled from your sermon illustrations."



"It's my pop scouting around for sermon illustrations . . . try to be spontaneous."





Planning for Oral Clarity (Step 6b)
Illustrations

I. The Importance of Good Illustrations

Why it is important to illustrate the text well in preaching? (Robinson, 149-50)

- Illustrations explain, validate, or apply ideas by relating them to tangible experiences.
- Illustrations render a truth believable
- Illustrations aid memory
- Illustrations stir emotion
- Illustrations create need
- Illustrations hold attention
- Illustrations establish rapport between speaker and audience (entertaining is good!)

II. How to Give Good Illustrations

A. Draw illustrations from the *listener's* world—not yours!

B. Get your sermon outline done early enough in the week to be able to find good and fitting illustrations (Mawhinney, 38, 40, 252-53).

C. Vary the type of sermon illustration used. Variety is key!

Hardly ever used	Sometimes used	Often used
• Humor	• Historical incident	• Statistic
• Nursery rhyme	• Definition	• Scientific data
• Bible story	• Quotation	• Poem
• Visualization (use of objects)	• Hymn	• Overused story
• Emotional story	• Newspaper story	• Anecdote

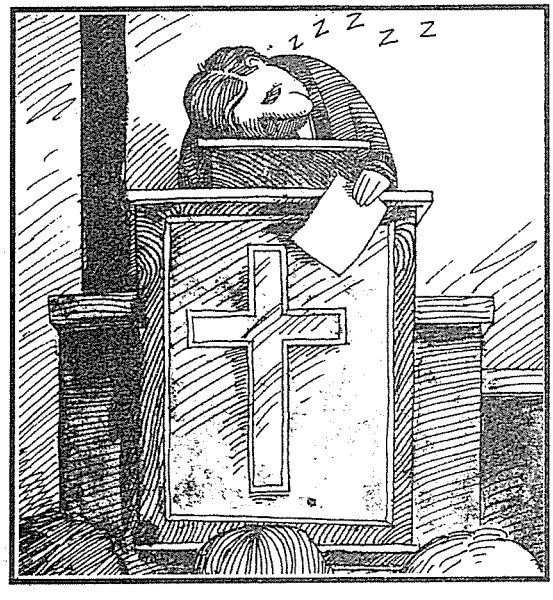
• Personal story (which is true, modest, and does not violate a confidence)

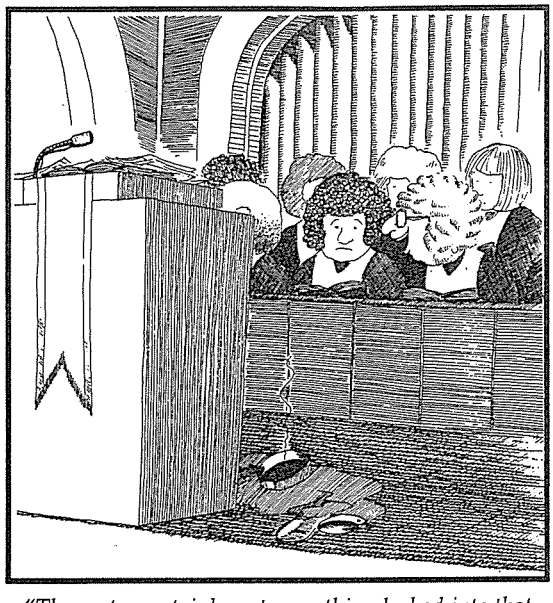
Try to emphasize this first column and you'll be a hero to your listeners as very few Chinese preachers share illustrations in these areas!

(For a good example of variety, see Duane Litfin's sermon in Haddon Robinson's book, *Biblical Sermons*, 89-103, 107. He illustrates from Greek classics, pop music, science, poetry, hot air balloons, and his own experiences—all in one message!)

D. Don't tell stories—relive them! Be dramatic!

E. Illustrate for every 3 minutes of preaching (p. 51 has 18 ILLs in 15 minutes!)





"The pastor certainly put everything he had into that sermon!"

F. Avoid these dangers when illustrating your points
(from *100-Fold*, the EDAA [English Department Alumni Association]-SBC News, February 1992)

The pastor of stern countenance began his sermon by saying solemn/y, "I am not here to entertain you with a lot of interesting stories; I am here to preach the Word of God." He proved to be prophetic. He was neither entertaining nor interesting. As a matter of fact, he was quite dull.

In vilifying the use of stories and illustrations in preaching, he was unwittingly criticizing a style (what we call parables) used most frequently by a well known preacher of the first century. He told stories about families, farmers and financiers. Some of them are quite humorous while others are rather sad.

From that Galilean preacher, we learn that using illustrations from the pulpit is an art to be learned. The most effective preachers are those who can communicate truth with a well-chosen illustration.

However, there needs to be a word of caution - nothing suffers from more abuse than the pulpit story. Certain kinds of stories should be avoided like a hymn with eight verses to the eight stanzas (take this with a pinch of salt).

The embellished story. Here the speaker wastes precious minutes giving a lot of irrelevant details and never seem to get to the point. And if he does, it is lost in the mass of unrelated details. He is usually one who complains about not enough time to preach.

The superflous story. This usually occurs when the preacher has just heard a really good story and can't wait to spring it on his congregation. So somewhere during the message, he makes a herculean effort to apply it, saying, "that reminds me of a story".

The egocentric story. Here the preacher sees himself as a spiritual superstar. His illustrations are usually first-person accounts about his many spiritual triumphs. Like Perry Mason, he never loses. It is not wrong to use first-person incidents as illustrations. They can be quite helpful but the speaker must resist the temptation to become the hero every time.

The specious story. There is nothing wrong with fictitious stories - so long as they are not presented as actual experiences. Nothing will destroy the confidence in a minister as quickly as hearing fiction presented as fact.

The manipulative story. This is where the speaker manipulates the emotions of the audience to obtain certain results. Sometimes referred to as "tear jerkers", the tales can be used for such diverse purposes as obtaining decisions for Christ or raising funds. A moving story is not always an indication of the moving of the Spirit.

Here is a suggested checklist for the pulpit story-teller:

1. Is the story relevant to the point?
2. Does the story contain unnecessary details?
3. Will the story contribute to the overall quality and clarity of the message?
4. What is the motive in telling the story?

We need to think twice before saying, "that reminds me of a story."

adapted from article by LeRoy Patterson Stuart

II. How to Catalog Illustrations

A. *Find your illustrations*. Beg, borrow, or steal illustrations wherever you can—from...

1. *Sermons you hear* (in church, chapel, on tape, etc.)—never be caught without a few 3 x 5 cards in your Bible or purse or daily planner!
2. *Things you read*
   a. Newspaper articles and comics—especially on the morning you preach!
   b. Christian Books—especially by Charles R. Swindoll (read *Living on the Ragged Edge, For Those Who Hurt, Improving Your Serve, Strengthening Your Grip, Dropping Your Guard, Growing Strong in the Seasons of Life*)
   c. Secular Books—see Tan Huay Peng, *Fun With Characters: The Straits Times Collection*. 3 vols. Singapore: Federal Publications, 1982.
   d. Magazines—especially *Reader's Digest, Insight*, and *U.S. News and World Report*
   e. Devotional guides—especially *Our Daily Bread*
   f. Written sermons—especially Haddon Robinson; *Biblical Sermons*
3. *Your own personal experiences in life (but be transparent)*
4. *Other people's life experiences or quotes (good for clarity and authority)*
5. *Your imagination (make up a scenario or conversation as if the listener is in it)*

6. *Published 3 x 5 card illustration files*

   a. Paul Lee Tan, *Encylopedia of 15,000 Illustrations*. 2d ed. Assurance Publishers (P.O. Box 753, Rockville, MD 20851), 1979, 1998. This is probably the best and most complete collection available (especially for teaching prophecy), but for a price! Tan's 3 x 5 card set cost me about US$85 in 1985. Write them to find out current prices.

   b. Michael P. Green. *The Expositor's Illustration File*. rev. ed. P.O. Box 6746, Fort Myers, FL 33906 USA (1982, 1985). His book is *Illustrations for Biblical Preaching* (Baker, 1989) and computer (DOS and Mac) versions are available at this address. Green is more up-to-date than Tan, has better illustrations (but only 4000 of them), is better categorized, and is printed with larger typeface (thus is easier to read). The 3 x 5 card set cost me about US$40 in 1988. Write him to find out current prices.

   You can buy both of these 3 x 5 card files in book form at the SBC Book Centre, but every time you want to bring one to the pulpit you must photocopy it and paste it on a 3 x 5 card or in your sermon notes (if you use them!). Maybe instead you should get the computer versions.

7. *Films and Television—including advertisements (printed ones too)*

8. *Other preachers (exchange your best ones with one another)*

B. *Categorize your illustrations* by pasting them on 3 x 5 cards or else typing each on a separate Word file (see syllabus for directions). For practice, give each of these four illustrations a title and subtitle:

Karl Marx–A Role Model?

Two of his daughters and a son-in-law committed suicide. Three of his children died of malnutrition. Marx felt no obligation to earn a living, but instead lived by begging from Engels. He fathered an illegitimate child by his maidservant. He drank heavily. He was a paid informer of the Austrian police, spying on revolutionaries.

Though Marx and his wife were poor, he kept investing in the stock market where he constantly lost. His wife left him twice, but returned. He didn't attend her funeral. His correspondence with Engels was full of obscenities. His favorite daughter, Eleanor, with her father's approval, married Edward Eveling, a man who advocated blasphemy and worshipped Satan.

Daughter Eleanor committed suicide. Karl Marx died in despair.

Rape Acceptable?

Nearly one-quarter of the boys and one-sixth of the girls responding to a survey on rape say it was acceptable for a man to force a woman to have sex with him if he has spent money on her.

The survey was taken by 1,700 sixth-to-ninth graders who attended the Rhode Island Rape Crisis Center's Assault Awareness Program at schools across the state.

Among the findings:

*65% of the boys and 47% of the girls in seventh through ninth grades said it is acceptable for a man to force a woman to have sex if they have been dating more than six months.

*87% of the boys and 79% of the girls said rape is OK if a man and woman are married.

What Do Americans Believe?

The Roper's USA Reports recently made an opinion survey. The result:

*74% of Americans believe there is a heaven and hell.

*50% believe in ESP

*41% believe there is human life elsewhere in the Universe.

*25% are sure that we have been visited by aliens from outer space via UFOs.

*15% believe in reincarnation.

How We Learn

1% through Taste
1-½% through Touch
3-½% through Smell
11% through Hearing
83% through SIGHT

This shows the importance of audio-visual materials in teaching.

C. *File your illustrations* in a 3 x 5 card file or folder on your hard drive. If you throw your illustrations in an old box you'll have wasted your time! For more help here get ahold of Michael P. Green, *Green's Filing Systems: For Pastors and Christian Workers* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1991?), US$9.95. This book presents filing principles, several filing systems, and how to use them.

Clarity (Step 6b)

Adapted significantly from a handout by Dr. Don Sunukjian, Dallas Theological Seminary

I. The Problem: The "Point of No Return"

A. Need for Clarity: There are differences between manuscripting a sermon and writing a research paper (cf. p. 81). This is because sermons present material *orally* whereas papers present it in a *written* format. In other words, listening and reading are completely different ways of learning.

B. Illustration 1: Suppose you're reading a book and sense you missed an important concept noted earlier (e.g., chapter or paragraph title, definition of a key word or concept, etc.). Since the entire book is in front of you, you simply need to retrace your steps to look back at the previous sentence, paragraph, page, etc. (A glance ahead also shows paragraph length or topic sentence.)

This scenario is completely different when you're *listening*. Suppose you miss the speaker's key point because it is poorly stated, or because you were thinking about what you'll eat for lunch, or for any other reason (the reason doesn't matter). If you miss a key idea then *you missed it*—it's gone! You can't interrupt the speaker for clarification, and if you ask the person next to you, then *two* people lose more of what's being said! This is especially true when the preacher first announces his text, so always state the text at least three times, and only *after* first stating the point of the text. Otherwise everyone will miss your key point while trying to find the right verse in their Bibles!

C. Illustration 2: Note the linear problem on page 28, step 6, point b. You *see* your message in outline form, meaning you see the *whole* at a glance. However, your listeners only *hear* the message, and this can happen only a *part* at a time!

II. The Solution: Be clear by saying the right words in the right order

A. Clarity **Throughout** the Sermon: Make your introduction subject flow to each MP right to the MI.

B. Clarity in the **Introduction** of the Sermon

1. Every time you want to emphasize a key sentence in your message, you must either repeat it or restate it (immediately say the same thing in different words). This applies to a subject, main idea, main point, significant sub-point, preview, review, or transition. See page 69 for practice.

2. Make the focus or direction of the message clear at the end of the introduction.

   a. Does the introduction end with a crisp statement of the *main idea* (thus becoming a deductive sermon)? If so, which developmental question(s) will you raise about the idea?

   b. Does the introduction end by raising only the *subject*, most helpfully as a relevant question (an inductive sermon)? If so, a developmental question will already be in the listeners' minds—they will think, "What does it mean?" or "What is the answer to the question?"

3. Share the background or context of your text in the introduction *before* you announce the passage or state the first main point. Otherwise, you will either disappoint the listener by not providing the answer to your own question, or you will confuse him by stating a point that is unclear without the background. Why frustrate your listener needlessly by forcing him to sort through your ambiguous statement? Instead, follow this sequence:

   Introduction
   1. Develop a contemporary *problem or need* that raises the "subject" or "question."
   2. Bring up the *background/context* to show the same problem or need existed in biblical times. Give only essential background (only as much as is interesting).
   3. Announce the *text* that will give the "complement" or "answer."

C. Clarity in the **Body** of the Sermon

Use these five tools to clearly lead your listeners through your content:

1. Repetition says the same thing *immediately* in the *same* words. Note these examples:

   a. "First Corinthians 7:10 says that God prohibits divorce. God prohibits divorce."

   b. "Let's see John's point in Revelation 1:7. Revelation 1:7. Now at Revelation 1:7..."

2. Restatement says the same thing *immediately* in *different* words. Note these examples:

   a. "The next point in 1 Corinthians 7:10 is that God prohibits divorce. Permanent separation from a living spouse is not allowed by the Lord."

   b. "Let's see John's point in Revelation 1:7. The 7th verse of the Apocalypse, chapter 1. Now that we're at John's vision in Revelation, chapter 1, verse 7, note that it says..."

3. Transitions are sentences that *advance the flow of thought* from one major point to the next. Here are some of the more common types:

   a. *Rhetorical Questions* ask questions which you don't expect anyone to answer but they still help listeners with your flow of thought (e.g., "Why is it important to speak to non-Christians graciously and tactfully?").

   b. *Flashbacks* review what you already said as a basis for what you're about to say in your next main point (e.g., "We've already seen in verses 1-4 that genuine worship acknowledges vows made to God. Now let's see how those vows apply in verse 5.").

   c. *Incomplete Ideas* help the transition state the subject and the MP give a short complement. This involves only a connecting phrase to bridge to the next point (e.g., "The second reason to witness is because... "). The following MPII then could be "God commands it."

4. Key words need to be repeated throughout the message to be clearly grasped by the listener. Therefore, as you develop a subpoint, use the same key words that were in the statement of the larger, superior point. Instead of using a pronoun which has the larger point as its referent, use the actual key words of the larger point. For example, don't say, "A second way that we can do *this* (pronoun) is by not teasing them." Say instead, "A second way that we can *avoid provoking our children to anger* is by not teasing them."

5. Deductive development is generally clearer than inductive. While a sermon's overall development will usually be inductive, each individual point probably should be deductively developed. So...

   a. Preview the conclusion of the point *before* you begin the explanation of it.

   b. Tell the audience the point of the verse/passage *before* you read it.

   c. In rare cases, when you feel the need to develop the MP inductively, put it in parentheses on your outline (see p. 48 top, MPI ; p. 49 top, MPI; and p. 62, point D).

D. Clarity in the **Conclusion** of the Sermon

1. Stating the Main Idea at the end of the message can add much clarity, even in a deductive message where the main idea has already been stated in the introduction.

2. Reviewing the Main Points in a non-mechanical way also reinforces the message.

E. Use **Movement**. Make your gestures backwards to appear left to right to listeners.

Restatement Exercises

Directions

Read the first ("S") statement below and then decide if the second ("R") statement restates it (i.e., says the same thing in different words). If it does, tick "yes" and if it does not, tick "no" and explain why it does not in the Problems column.

	Statements	Yes	No	Problems with "R"
1	S: God shows his grace by protecting His own people. R: God shows his grace to those who belong to Him.			
2	S: To do greater things for God, the Israelites had to trust in God's continuous providence. R: He had done this many times to them and He would continue to do so.			
3	S: We should demonstrate our faith by obeying God's ways of help unquestioningly. R: Israelites showed their faith by obeying God's unorthodox strategies.			
4	S: If you love God, you will obey Him. R: Obedience and love for God go together.			
5	S: Prayer should be the Christian's highest priority. R: Your communication with God must come before everything else.			

Applications (Step 6b)

I. Preliminary Issues

A. Oftentimes a speaker does not make specific applications in his sermon. Why not?

1. He hasn't yet applied the message to *himself.*
2. He *has* applied the message to himself but forgot how much hard work it took to get there.
3. He *doesn't know* what he wants the listeners to do (lacks a clear purpose).
4. He runs out of time because he hasn't practiced sufficiently.
5. He has a diverse audience so he can't think of applications which relate to them all.
6. He feels that he needs to only "preach the Word" because "it is the *role of the Holy Spirit* to make the applications."

B. But why must *the speaker* make applications? Isn't it OK to leave the applications up to the Holy Spirit or the listeners (both of whom know the listeners better than the speaker does)?

1. While ultimately only God can change hearts, He often does that through people!
2. This is only a rationalization for laziness.
3. The pattern in Scripture is to make applications (Acts 2:38; Col. 3—4; Eph. 4—6; etc.)
4. The listeners *can* make applications to themselves but generally *won't* do so.
5. It's debatable whether listeners really do know themselves (problem of self-deception).
6. Knowledge alone is incomplete and only "puffs up" (1 Cor. 8:1; Acts 17:18).
7. Our goal is godly behaviour (1 Tim. 1:5; 2 Tim. 3:16-17).

II. Steps to Applying Scripture in Sermons

A. *Pray* that God would give you a humble spirit of openness to see what He wants you to see in a text.

B. Go through *steps 1-4* in the "Seven Steps to Preaching Expository Sermons" study (pp. 27-28). This procedure will assure that both observation and interpretation precede attempts to apply the text of Scripture wrongly.

C. See the CPS in terms of *relationships in your life*. Step 5 ("CPS: Write the Central Proposition of the Sermon or Homiletical Idea") should have already helped you boil down the truth of the passage into a universal principle. Now apply this truth to various relationships in *your own life* (see III below).

D. Write out some specific relationships in *your listeners lives* in which this principle can be applied (again see III below). Make it measurable and specific enough to know whether the text is actually applied or not. For example, instead of "You should *feel* this way..." make the application, "You should *do* this..." Consult Zuck's 90 verbs (p. 73).

E. Make *immediate* applications (not "when you go home today...do this...") since most listeners won't apply your message later.

III. Areas of Life to Apply the Bible (adapted from Irving L. Jensen's *Enjoy Your Bible*)

The Christian Life is best understood as a series of new relationships (2 Cor. 5:17) involving...

A. Your Relation to God

1. Fellowship to Enjoy
2. Commands to Obey
3. Promises to Claim
4. Prayers to Express

B. Your Relation to Yourself

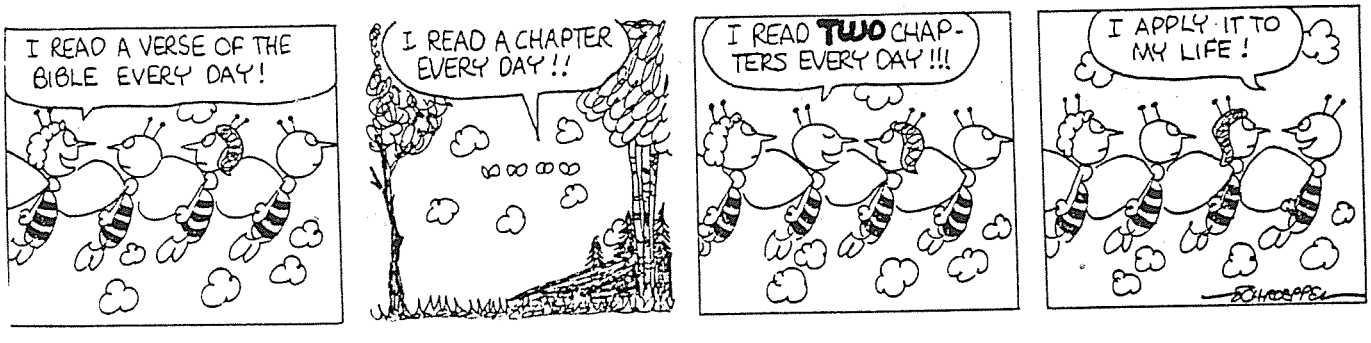
1. Past Experience and Heritage
2. Present Experience
3. Personal Values, Priorities, Standards
4. Future Expectations

C. Your Relation to Others

1. In the Home (parents, marriage, children, in-laws)
2. In the Church
3. In Society (neighborhood, work place)
4. In the World (non-Christians)

D. Your Relation to the Enemy

1. A Person to Resist
2. Devices to Recognize
3. Sins to Avoid
4. Armor to Wear (Eph. 6:10-18)



IV. How to be Relevant to Different Groups

The same Main Idea will apply to different individuals in different ways. Think of how it shows up in real life for the various people in the following scenarios...

A. Men

1. Work (owns own business, works for another, retired, unemployed)
2. Husband (newlywed, mid-life, elderly)
3. Father (small kids, teenagers, grown children)
4. Ministry (church, parachurch)
5. Son (close to father or distant)
6. Citizen/Neighbor
7. Sports

B. Women

1. Work
2. Wife
3. Mother
4. Ministry
5. Daughter
6. Citizen/Neighbor

C. Teens or College

1. School
2. Work
3. Dating Relationships
4. Son or Daughter
5. Ministry
6. Roommates

V. Use Illustrations that Apply the Concept

With limited time to speak you must make the best use of the time available for illustrations. Therefore, use illustrations which *apply* your point rather than those which merely *explain* it.

A. Some illustrations only *explain* a concept because they come from an unrelated area of life.

1. The word used for "restoring" a brother in sin (Gal. 6:1) was used of fishermen mending their nets or a doctor setting a broken bone in place. This explains reconciliation but doesn't apply the concept directly.

2. A monkey grasping shiny tinsel through a small hole in a log gets caught since he won't let go to escape. This only partially illustrates the perils of loving money (1 Tim. 6:10).

B. Better illustrations *apply* a concept because they relate to the same area of life.

1. To show restoration (Gal. 6:1) use an actual situation when you saw someone brought back to fellowship with Christ. Even an imagined one would work better than simply an illustration from the medical or fishing fields!

2. Show the perils of loving money (1 Tim. 6:10) with a story of a pastor or missionary who gave up his ministry simply for better pay.

C. Better to use few illustrations to apply a concept than many in a "grocery list."

D. For further help in applying the text, read Kuhatschek's book, *Applying the Bible.*

Zuck's Ninety Verbs

Ninety Verbs That Help Lead Scriptural Applications into Specific Action

Accept
Admit
Analyze
Ask
Ask myself
Avoid
Be sensitive
Be willing
Build
Buy
Choose
Claim
Collect
Commit
Compliment
Comply
Confess
Control
Count
Create
Decide
Develop
Direct
Discourse
Do
Eliminate
Encourage
Enjoy
Evaluate
Exemplify
Experiment
Find
Follow
Give
Go
Guard
Help
Invite
Isolate
Keep
List
Listen
Look for
Look up
Love
Meet with
Memorize
Organize
Plan out
Praise
Pray about
Pray to
Pray with
Prefer
Pursue
Read
Realize
Record
Rejoice
Repair
Respond
Sacrifice
Save
Schedule
Select
Send
Share
Show
Sing
Spend time
Stay away
Stop
Study
Substitute
Take
Talk with
Teach
Telephone
Thank
Think about
Value
Visit
Wait
Wake up
Walk
Watch
Witness
Work on
Write down
Write to

--Dr. Roy B. Zuck

Introductions and Conclusions (Step 6c)

I. Introductions (several thoughts from Michael J. Hostetler, *Introducing the Sermon*)

A. Importance

1. "For the preacher, the two minute warning comes at the beginning of the game" (p. 11).
2. "There are three types of preachers: those to whom you cannot listen; those to whom you can listen; and those to whom you must listen. During the introduction the congregation usually decides the kind of speaker addressing them that morning" (Robinson, 167).

B. Elements of a Good Introduction (Memory Acronym: "GRIP PAT")

A good introduction will...

1. **G**et Attention on the Subject (*secular* contact point to establish relevance)
   a. This should be your first goal in the pulpit to establish relevance to temporal matters and life experience
   b. Bad opening sentences include those that are biblical, religious, historical (unless very recent), or about the sermon title (since no one reads it anyway).
   c. Be specific: give names, places, times, people, details
   d. Be relevant: make the story or humour match the subject
2. **R**aise Need or Arouse Curiosity (*personal* contact point)
   a. Address universally felt needs of people (family, job, physical health, money, relationship with God, etc.)
   b. Speak to the people there (preach to *your* congregation, not to someone else's)
   c. Recognize and include the various sub-groups in the audience (men, women, children, the old, the young, etc. if they are all there).
   d. Use "you" statements (not "we" or "they") to encourage the listener to say, "I better listen to this sermon because I need this."
3. **I**ntroduce the Subject, Main Idea, or First Point (*structural* contact point): Here's your key statement in the introduction, so do *not* give it just after announcing your text.
4. **P**rovide Background to the Text (*biblical* contact point to establish authority)
   a. What has happened just before this passage contextually or historically (e.g., in a narrative, state where the people are, what's been occurring, etc.)?
   b. Share only information that orients to the subject (i.e., give relevant background).
5. **P**review Outline (tell how many Main Points are in the body of your message)
6. **A**nnounce Text (at least 2 times so the listeners won't have to ask someone next to them which only makes *two* people miss what you are saying)
7. **T**ransition into First Main Point (one sentence to tie your introduction and body together)
8. Length: Introductions should comprise about 20% of the sermon length (5 minutes of a 25 minute sermon). The more complicated the text or sermon, the longer the introduction. The first sermon in a series will also require more time for background information.

II. Conclusions

A. Importance

1. A general principle to heed is this:

> "What people remember most are the speaker's *first* words and *last* words.
> If you are going to make a mistake, let it occur in the middle!"

2. Oftentimes we work hard at our exegesis and introduction, but the conclusion gets "tacked on" only because we feel we must "end the message." We don't give it any real thought.

3. We need to make sure our conclusion has real direction.

B. Elements of a Good Conclusion (Memory Acronym: "STAIN")

A good conclusion will...

1. State (inductive) or Repeat (deductive) the Main Idea then Restate It

   a. The old adage is true for an effective message:

> "Tell them what you are going to tell them,
> tell them,
> then tell them what you told them."

   b. Make sure this MI is clearly stated, even if you mentioned it earlier in the message. It may sound repetitive to you, but it won't to them.

2. Tell the Main Points

   a. Don't allow this to become mechanical in your delivery.

   b. Sometimes the MPs will emerge when stating the MI, especially in a multiple complement MI.

3. Apply and/or Exhort to Obedience

   a. Use your best illustration at the end to drive home your MI with persuasive force.

   b. Explore relationships where the MI makes a difference in your listeners' lives (p. 71).

4. Include Variety

   a. Don't end every sermon with a poem and/or prayer.

   b. The worst type of ending is the one you always use.

5. Never Announce Conclusions

   a. When the speaker says, "And in conclusion..." the audience immediately shifts gears to thinking about what they will do after the sermon (the hymn, what's for lunch, etc.).

   b. Use 10-20% of your time for the conclusion. This is 3-6 minutes for a 30-minute message.

creative mind-set include maintaining a positive attitude, having a questioning mind, writing ideas down so you don't forget them, and lots of hard work. The connections between your experiences and reading and your sermon really are there waiting for you to see and articulate them.

Even the best secular reference, however, once identified, needs to be articulated. The idea must be distilled into words, the words into sentences, and the sentences into paragraphs. Every sermon starts with an opening sentence. Effective preachers concentrate on that sentence. The opening sentence characterizes the whole introduction and deserves the closest attention.

First, let the opening sentence *be* an opening sentence. Let silence separate it from all that precedes it, whether music, Scripture reading, or pulpit small talk ("Thank you Mrs. Murphy, for that truly wonderful solo."). It takes discipline not to muddle or mumble into the sermon. Good preachers are not afraid of silence, especially that moment of quiet immediately before the sermon's opening sentence that sets the sermon apart from the preceding item in the liturgy.

What follows is a list of one hundred opening sentences actually used in sermons.[5] Imagine yourself sitting in the pew ready to hear your pastor preach the sermon. Which of these sentences makes you want to hear more?

One of the key words in the vocabulary of modern man is the word "freedom."

On January 22, 1973, the Supreme Court was meeting in the nation's capital.

These are days of crisis.

Wasn't everybody expecting a resurrection?

Christian culture is dead.

Is the doctrine of the Trinity "pagan" and "a false, unbiblical doctrine"?

The prophet Amos centuries ago warned against complacency, when he said, "Woe to you who are complacent in Zion" (Amos 6:1).

The question of divorce is a real and abiding problem in our society.

Isn't it funny the way life drifts along, and we drift with it?

If you wanted to destroy a society without the use of weaponry, how would you do it?

In order to have a happy and worthwhile life, it is necessary to have a faith to live by, a purpose to live for, and a self to live with.

A faithful member of one of our churches listened to a sermon preached on the text "Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth. . . ." He felt very inspired, and believing what he heard, made some decisions about his own life.

There is much confusion about the will of God.

Just exactly what is the Church about?

Paul Tournier capsulizes the human predicament in a phrase from his book, *Adventure in Living*. He says: "Man is capable of spoiling his life."

I am sure all of us believe in prayer.

A certain man spent most of his life on a South Pacific Island where the weather was always balmy and clear.

The mood of today is one of joy.

At first, this proposition may seem contradictory. (Referring to sermon title, "What the World Needs is Fewer Churches and More Bodies of Christ")

When I first realized that the Gospel reading for this Sunday was about marriage, I said, "Oh good, that should be easy to deal with."

"I give up. Lord, I'm sorry, but I can't take it anymore." (Monologue spoken by Moses to God during his unsuccessful negotiations with Pharaoh)

Sample First Sentences in a Sermon

Michael J. Hostetler, *Introducing the Sermon*, 30-31

AVOID AS A FIRST SENTENCE...
B Bible
H History
R Religious
T Title

Don Sunukjian

INTRODUCTIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

I. INTRODUCTIONS

A. There are three purposes which an introduction should accomplish.

1. An introduction should gain favorable attention.
2. An introduction should create interest in listening further.
    a. Touch some need.
    b. Arouse some curiosity.
3. An introduction should orient the listeners to the development of the message.
    a. Either to the Main Idea
    b. Or to the subject
    c. Or to the first main point

B. Possible materials to use in an introduction include:

1. A startling statement
2. A challenging question or series of questions
3. A pertinent quotation
4. A witty, humorous, or amusing incident
5. An epigram
6. A vivid word picture
7. A concrete example
8. An illustration
9. A definition
10. A comparison
11. A concession
12. A paradox
13. A rhetorical question
14. A statement of a problem
15. A news item
16. A reference to a cartoon
17. An object lesson
18. An announcement of something significant
19. A proposal
20. A personal observation
21. A commendation
22. A statement of the special importance of the theme
23. A parable
24. A conundrum, or riddle
25. A prediction or prophecy
26. A proverb
27. A prayer
28. A reference to a previous speaker
29. An acknowledgment of an introduction
30. A reference to a popular book or TV program
31. A reference to a current event
32. An incident from pastoral experience
33. A reference to a special season
34. A reference to another Scripture passage
35. A dramatic description

Introductions and Conclusions
Sunukjian (2 of 2)

C. Errors to avoid in an introduction are:

1. Flattery
2. Apology
3. Triteness
4. Complexity
5. Lengthiness or verbosity
6. Severity
7. Disjointedness
8. Abstractness
9. Self-importance
10. Technicality
11. False starts or deception
12. Dry details about the background of the text
13. Speaking too softly
14. Revealing too much of what is to follow
15. Lack of variety
16. Remoteness
17. Irrelevant humor

II. CONCLUSIONS

A. The two broad purposes of a conclusion are to summarize and to apply or exhort.

B. One or more of the following can be used in the conclusion:

1. A restatement of the main idea or main points
2. An apt quotation
3. A fitting poem
4. An earnest exhortation
5. A story or illustration
6. A visualization of how the truth will work in life
7. An appeal to the imagination
8. A prayer or benediction
9. An answer to objections
10. A challenge or dare
11. A rhetorical question
12. A proverb
13. A promise
14. A suggestion of ways and means
15. A striking statement
16. A hymn

C. Certain errors to avoid in a conclusion are:

1. Avoid letting interest lag
2. Avoid making the conclusion too long
3. Avoid giving the impression you are about to conclude, when you're not
4. Avoid introducing new material not pertinent to the idea
5. Avoid monotony in conclusions
6. Avoid trite, hackneyed conclusions
7. Avoid apologizing

Manuscripting and Practicing (Step 7)

I. Why Manuscript Your Sermons? (Adapted from Robinson, 175-79; Stott, 254-58)
Writing the message down word-for-word improves your preaching in several ways:

A. It forces you to choose not just *any* word to convey your message, but the *best* word (Eccles. 12:9-10). It obligates you to think straight in advance rather than use the same old clichés.

B. Realism: Very few of us are good extemporaneous speakers who can find just the right words at the right times without prior written preparation.

C. Review: Manuscripting enables you to use the sermon years later without losing the content of your original message. (The abbreviations in brief notes are soon forgotten.)

D. Manuscripting helps you to see how long your sermon will take so you can stick to your time limit.

E. The bottom line is that manuscripting helps you be a more interesting speaker.

II. How Do You Manuscript Your Sermon?
Hopefully these hints will help:

A. One option is to manuscript in *prose*, indenting new paragraphs as you would a research paper. On the side column a summary word or words clarify the place each paragraph takes in the overall outline. See pages 82-85 for an example and an explanation on page 81.

B. An alternative I use is a manuscript in *outline* form. Each point has full sentences, verses underlined are to be read, and words not read to the congregation appear in brackets []. See pages 86-90, 148-50 for a sample and an explanation on page 81.

C. Whichever option you use above, make sure your style (choice of words) has these three characteristics (Robinson, 179-89):

1. Clear: No matter how deep the truth, you don't *know* it until you can *explain* it!

   a. *Clear outline*: clarity at the manuscript level starts with clarity in the "big picture"

   b. *Short sentences*: not more than 17-18 words (cf. p. 106)

   c. *Simple sentence structure*:

      1) Write in this sequence: main subject, main verb, then (where needed) main object.

      2) Package only one thought per sentence.

      3) Concentrate on independent clauses. An example of how *not* to write can be found in Lewis Sperry Chafer's *Systematic Theology*:

> As has been intimated, it is noticeable that the great majority of the works on Systematic Theology have been satisfied to trace the origin of sin no further than to the fall of man in Eden. It is true that human sin began in Eden, but, though Adam merely re-enacted that sin which before him had been committed in heaven, the essential character of sin is to be determined, to a large measure, by the sin of the first angel rather than by its reproduction by the first man.

      4) Now *you* write what Chafer wrote but use simpler terms:

d. *Simple words*: Speak to inform—not to impress.

1) *Avoid "specialized vocabulary"* (jargon) understood only by the theologically literate (e.g., eschatology, angst, pneumatology, exegesis, existential, Johannine, Petrine, superlapsarian, amillennial). See Stott's example on his page 232.

2) *Prefer the short word* over the long one. Seventy-three percent of the words in Psalm 23, 76 percent of the words in the Lord's Prayer, and 80 percent of the words in 1 Corinthians 13 are one-syllable words.

3) *Use words people already know.* No one will complain if your sermon didn't expand his vocabulary.

Rule of Thumb:	Don't overestimate the people's vocabulary or underestimate their intelligence

2. Direct and Personal:

a) Remember that you are speaking to a specific group in a specific place at a specific time.

b) Use *direct address*: Don't say, "The Christian should give of his money..." but say, "*You* should give of your money..." or even better: "Give your money..."

c) Use *questions to advance the flow of thought.* For example, say, "So how does this apply? Look at verses 3-5 which tell us that we should..."

d) Use *contractions and split infinitives* in speaking even though you wouldn't in writing.

e) Use *slang* directly—not thoughtlessly.

3. Vivid

a) Appeal to the senses of sight and sound.

b) Use specific, concrete details. "Specific" means explicit and exact while "concrete" means it paints a picture on the mind.

c) Think in pictures to visualize details for your listeners.

d) Prefer good nouns and verbs over adjectives and adverbs: say "giant" not "tall man," say "he bellowed" not "he talked loudly," say it was "scalding" not "very hot."

e) Write in the active, not passive voice ("The dog pursued the man" not "The man was being pursued by the dog"). The principle: "somebody does something."

f) Employ fresh figures of speech. Similes and metaphors pack more in a phrase than do volumes.

D. How can you be an interesting speaker (Robinson, 189)?

1. Pay attention to your *own* use of language. In private conversation force yourself to use concrete, fresh words.

2. Study how *others* use language.

3. Read aloud.

III. What Should You Do with Your Sermon Manuscript?

At least four options are available (but the last must be followed in this course):

A. *Bring it* into the pulpit. The danger in this approach is that many preachers then *read* their message to the congregation. (Jonathan Edwards did just that.)

B. *Reduce it* to a 1-2 page outline which you bring to the pulpit. (Stott advises this approach.)

C. *Leave it* at home so that you preach from memory without notes. Many preachers (e.g., Stott and Robinson) feel this is too much work and leads to concentration on the memorized script rather than on the message and congregation. I agree.

D. *Leave it* at home and preach without notes but also without attempting to remember the exact words of the manuscript (i.e., extemporaneous preaching—see below).

IV. Why Preach Without Notes?

There are several advantages to preaching extemporaneous sermons rather than using notes:

A. It forces you to really *know your material.* You'll practice with notes until it's internalized.

B. It enables you to *preach with confidence* (memorizing helps you know your sermon well).

C. It frees you up to *work on delivery*—an aspect often overlooked in sermon preparation.

D. It helps you *speak more naturally* rather than tempting you to read your notes.

N.B. For a good study on this topic see Charles W. Koller, *Expository Preaching Without Notes* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1979). He shows how to speak more effectively and naturally without notes. Koller is president of Northern Baptist Theological Seminary, Chicago.

V. Why Should You Practice Preaching Your Message?

A. Practice enables you to know the sermon well.

B. Practice enables you to communicate the sermon well.

C. Practice enables you to know what to cut out to keep to your time limit.

VI. How Should You Practice Preaching Your Message?

Follow these simple steps in practicing the message at least 6-8 times:

A. 3 Days Before: Read the message through word for word *twice.*

B. 2 Days Before: Preach the message *two* more times while only glancing at your manuscript when needed.

C. 1 Day Before: Preach the message *twice* more without any notes at all (especially to a person who cares about you). After each time, look at the manuscript to see what you forgot.

D. The Morning You Preach: Preach through the message another *one or two* times (if possible, do it while looking at yourself in a large, full-body mirror).

Summary

A. "There seems to be only one way to combine precision of language with immediacy of delivery, and that is for us to write the sermon in our study but decline to read it from the pulpit" (Stott, 255).

B. "The whole process of sermon preparation, from beginning to end, was admirably summed up by the American black preacher who said, 'First, I reads myself full, next I thinks myself clear, next I prays myself hot, and then I lets go'" (Stott, 258).

Writing Papers Versus Writing Sermons

I. Introduction

A. It has already been highlighted how reading and writing are different means of expression (cf. p. 67). For example, when reading one can immediately tell when a new section begins. A new paragraph starts or a heading appears, sometimes even underlined and in bold print!

B. This kind of clarity is obviously not true for sermons. In a sermon it is the *speaker's* job to make sure listeners see:

1. He's stating a key point (main idea, main point, subject, etc.), which is accomplished through the use of either repetition (good) or restatement (better) of that point.

2. He's moving from one point to the next in a transition. Manuscripting helps the speaker be clear about when he's shifting from one major section to another in the message.

(Now that we know that reading and writing are different, how can we *express* these differences in sermon manuscripts? What are some "do's and don'ts" of manuscripting? Notice the following...)

II. Contrast Chart

The following chart summarizes some differences between writing papers and writing sermons. For your sermon manuscript make sure you follow the right hand column:

	Research Paper	Sermon Manuscript (Prose)
Existence of headings	Yes—always!	No—never!
Headings/main points	Incomplete sentence OK	Always have full sentences
Repetitions/restatements	Not very important	Vitally important
Transitions	Not very necessary	Necessary
Scripture references	OK to write "(v. 3)"	Write out the verse (no parentheses)
Introducing main text	Once is sufficient	Give it 2-3 times

See the guidelines on the Manuscript Grade Sheet (p. 24) to assure that your sermon manuscript is written properly. Note especially the "Miscellaneous" section at the bottom which reminds you to place your structure in column abbreviations and to include a single page homiletical outline. (For an example see pages 51, 82-85.)

(The preceding are *prose* manuscripts and are the best type for beginning preachers. However, I designed another type of manuscript as a pastor I call an *outline* manuscript. Let's look at these...)

III. Outline Manuscripts

A. Definition: a sermon manuscript in which both the outline and manuscript are *combined* in full sentence form. (For an example see pages 86-90.)

B. There's a few advantages of the outline manuscript:

1. It's *easier to write* if you have a computer. No one page outline is needed and main points can be written first then subordinate material added underneath as it comes to mind.

2. It's *easier to read* if you use it in preaching. You can find your place more easily than a prose manuscript when you glance at it quickly to remind you of a key point.

3. It's *easier to edit.* Prose manuscript side columns generally must be written in by hand, and if a page is edited then these column notations must be recopied.

Sample Sermon Manuscripts

There are two basic types of sermon manuscripts: prose and outline. The next four pages is a prose manuscript for the one page sermon outline on page 51. Pages 86-90 is a sample outline manuscript. Either type is OK for your sermons.

"Awe? Or Blah?" (Ecclesiastes 5:1-7) Prose Manuscript

For abbreviations in the left column see the bottom of page 22

Intro: 1: Arouse interest by shock — The disgusted wife complained to the marriage counselor, "I want a divorce because my husband treats me just like he does Jesus!" "What do you mean?" the counselor asked. "Well, I get twenty seconds of the same comments before every meal, half-hearted praise, one-way conversation for ten minutes a week... and every time I start talking his eyelids droop and he's on his way to slumberland!"

Interest by humour — A little boy attended church with his father one Sunday morning. That evening, before getting into bed, he kneeled at his bedside and the little lips prayed, "Dear God, we had a good time at church today, but I wish you had been there."

2: Raise Need — Obviously God is there when we attend church, and God is there when we approach Him in our own personal quiet time. But unfortunately, we often don't recognize His presence and sometimes we even end up in slumberland.

We don't mean to be disrespectful, but often we are. We know we should burst forth in awe of God, but instead, our thoughts wander, we yawn, and we go through the same motions and mutter the same clichés. Rather than awe, it's blahh!!

3: Subject Restatement — How can we honour God as he deserves? What are the ingredients of a true reverence for God?

4: Bkgrd — This is not a new issue. Way back when the temple was brand new people still had problems honouring God properly. In fact, Solomon probably saw people dishonouring God even as they approached the temple for worship, given that his palace was right next to the temple courtyards.

5: Preview R, Passage — Today's passage will reveal two ways we should show reverence for God. King Solomon discusses these two ways to truly honour God in Ecclesiastes 5:1-7. The Book of Ecclesiastes, at the beginning of chapter five.

T, **MPI** R SP "A" — In the first three verses of Ecclesiastes 5 you'll see we must show reverence for God in proper worship. We show our reverence for God by sensitively approaching Him in adoration. Let's see three observations about proper worship in these verses. First, notice that proper worship only occurs when we *prepare ourselves* to worship God. You'll see this in the first phrase:

5:1a — "Guard your steps when you go to the house of God."

Principle (house) — The "house of God" in Solomon's day referred to the Jerusalem temple, but since there is no temple today and the Spirit Himself dwells within our hearts this must be applied more broadly. I see it as meaning whenever and wherever we approach God in worship.

Explanation — But what does it mean to "guard your steps?" The word for "guard" here means "to watch or to observe." It has the idea of being careful, so in this case it means that we should make sure we are properly prepared to pay homage to a holy God.

ILL (DTS) — One of my observations here at DTS has been that, in general, first year men seem to be better worshippers than us fourth year men. I'm not surprised that the worship and praise night tonight is sponsored by the first year class since they don't yet have their four years of training in obsessiveness.

ILL (chapel) — I remember last semester in an SMF chapel slide show a guy walked around campus and spotted another guy reading by the fountain. He said to himself, "Hey, there's someone reading his Bible between classes—must be a first year guy!" The whole chapel burst out laughing, and I chuckled too. But then I began thinking, "Hey, what happened to my times of worship, praise, and Scripture reading under the trees which fed my soul those first few semesters?"

APP (tapes) — How can you prepare to meet God? One way is to arrive to chapel early for personal prayer. Don't always sit by your friends and don't even bring your mail or study notes. I'm also a fan for prayer in natural settings. Behind my apartment is a beautiful area with a quiet stream. Maybe there's a similar natural setting close to where you live. My wife and I also love to pray with our Maranatha Praise

Strings album on in the background. It stimulates us to humble ourselves before God and be ready for what He wants to teach us.

T, SP "B" Proper worship not only requires preparation for worship, but it also happens only when we *listen to God.* Notice the end of verse one. We're encouraged to:

5:1b "Go near to listen rather than to offer the sacrifice of fools, who do not know they do wrong."

1 The text says that fools unknowingly sin by offering up a meaningless "sacrifice." Notice that this "sacrifice" is contrasted with "listening." I think this indicates that the "sacrifice" probably refers to offering impulsive and meaningless words—words repeated so many times that they've lost their meaning.

2 The next verse continues this idea by exhorting us to weigh our words and thoughts carefully because of who God is. It commands:

5:2a "Do not be quick with your mouth, do not be hasty in your heart to utter anything before God."

a APP: Prayer Here's a command not to be an obsessive talker or thinker. This normally has been applied to prayer like the kind of unthinking prayer Jesus referred to in Matthew 6:7 when he said, "And when you pray, do not keep on babbling like pagans, for they think they will be heard because of their many words." Try praying without using words like "bless" and you'll get the intent here.

APP: Singing (personal ILL) But I think that limiting this only to prayer is too narrow. Why can't this also refer to singing? I remember once when my pastor's wife asked me to pray for her concerning whether she should sing a particular song the next day at the Sunday morning service. Now I knew she sang beautifully, so I asked her why she couldn't sing it. "Look at the words," she replied as she showed me the song, "The lyrics say I'm willing for God to take anything from my life in order to be like Jesus. That includes my husband and my children. I'm just not so sure I can honestly say that." I learned a tremendous lesson that day—that singing is a higher form of speaking, so we should never sing anything which we would never speak. My pastor followed this concept a few weeks later while leading the song, "I Surrender All." He encouraged everyone who couldn't promise that to God not to sing. I was shocked how many refrained when they really considered the words.

T The next phrase jabs us with the reason we should guard our tongue in worship:

5:2b "God is in heaven and you are on earth."

b The reason for the command is because God is awesome and majestic while we're puny in comparison. He dwells in heaven in unapproachable light, in impeccable holiness. We're confined to but a tiny, rotating ball among the millions of planetary creations. How can we earthlings be so presumptuous as to barge our way mouth first into His awesome presence? In light of this Solomon advises:

5:2c "so let your words be few."

APP: Ps. 46:10 Overhead We do well to have times when we listen by keeping our mouths shut. After all, who can listen while he's babbling away? This is God's intent in Psalm 46:10 where He says, "Be still and know that I am God." I've found that's a tough assignment, but one thing has helped. You might toss this in the hopper of ideas for a future church which you'll pastor. Project a Scripture verse up in the front of the church for pre-service meditation in the morning worship service. I've seen how this reminds people not to talk but to prepare themselves to listen to God.

T SP "C" The first two verses have shown us that true worship only occurs when we prepare ourselves and when we listen to God. In verse three we'll see the third observation about how to have proper worship—it happens only when we *set aside our cares*; otherwise we end up daydreaming:

5:3 "As a dream comes when there are many cares, so the speech of a fool when there are many words."

APP: Stand up List cares What we need is more care-less worship. Notice I said "care-less," not "careless." I confess to you that I really struggle with keeping my mind from wandering in prayer. I start off real well, but after ten or fifteen seconds I begin thinking about an errand I need to do, an event which happened yesterday, or whatever. But last month I came across a suggestion to pray standing up! Hey, it works! By the way, did you know that there is not a single place in Scripture where it mentions anyone sitting down while in prayer? Maybe you need to walk, stand or list your cares on a sheet of paper as they come to mind then forget about them to set aside your concerns in order to worship properly.

Big T (flashback) Verses 1-3 have said that we must show reverence for God in proper worship. This happens when we prepare ourselves, listen to God, and set aside our cares. Now verses 4-6 give us a second key how to really honour God. They say to...

MPII, R SP "A" Show reverence for God in paying vows. If we truly respect God, we fulfill our promises. Notice how verse 4 says that all vows must be paid:

5:4 "When you make a vow to God, do not delay in fulfilling it. He has no pleasure in fools; fulfill your vow."

Explain "vow" (ILLS) By "vow" Solomon means an unconditional, solemn promise to do or not do something. I've made four vows in my lifetime. My first was when I promised God in high school that I would remain sexually pure until marriage. Then in 1977 I covenanted to God during an Institute in Basic Youth Conflicts seminar that I would spend a minimum of five minutes daily in the Bible until my death. In my third vow I swore to my wife that I would never divorce her, and, also on that wedding night, I pledged to God that I would never be closed to serving Him anywhere in the world.

T SP "B" That's what I mean by a "vow." Notice that each affirmation is voluntary. No one ever has to vow. That's why verse five says that no vow at all is better than an unfulfilled vow:

5:5 "It is better not to vow than to make a vow and not fulfill it."

ILL (homiletics prof's experience) All vows are completely optional—but if you do vow, God requires payment. Dr. Sunukjian once told me that he really wanted to teach here at DTS, but after ten years of school here the Pastoral Ministries department told him that he needed a Ph.D. He got his Ph.D from UCLA and called the seminary. They told him, "Great! But you need some practical experience first."

(cont'd) So he pursued a pastorate, but was of the conviction that if it took a unanimous vote of the elders to get him in the church, then it should take a unanimous vote to get him out! So he made an agreement with the church not to leave until the entire board approved.

(cont'd) Only two years after beginning that pastorate he got a call from Dallas Seminary, offering him a position on the P.M. faculty. This was the opportunity he'd anticipated for years, and he shared it with great excitement to the board—but they didn't think he should leave. So he stayed.

(cont'd) Three more years passed, then the telephone rang. Haddon Robinson said on the other end of the line, "Don, we really need you now to replace one of our faculty who's leaving." Again, Sunukjian placed it before the board. Their response? "Pastor, we're just getting going on this building project now. We don't want you to leave yet. The timing's not right." Again, he declined the seminary's offer and held to his vow.

T SP "C" You can't help but admire a man like that who made a promise and stuck to it, even though he never suspected that he'd be at that church seven years before coming here. In our day, as in Solomon's, commitments are easily rationalized and broken. That's why Solomon told us in verse 6, "Don't sin through an impulsive vow then later confess it was a mistake." He wrote:

5:6a "Do not let your mouth lead you into sin. And do not protest to the temple messenger, 'My vow was a mistake.'"

Jew Imagine the Jew confidently offering to the priest the required sacrifice for a vow at the temple, only to later be tempted to break it. He rushes back to the priest, "Hey, I really shouldn't have done that! It was just a small goof-up. Can you pull some strings to undo the vow?"

T SP "D" God says, "Don't do that! You're not required to make a vow in the first place, but don't make it worse by going back to the one to whom you made the vow and renege on your commitment!" God takes the breaking of vows very seriously—so seriously that when we treat them lightly God's anger at our rash vows may wipe out our accomplishments and possessions. Look at the end of verse 6:

5:6b "Why should God be angry at what you say and destroy the work of your hands?"

ILL (Scriptural) Remember Ananias and Sapphira? They sold some land and promised God He could have the money. But when that money landed in their hot little hands they had second thoughts about giving it all. "Let's only give a portion of it," they agreed together. God didn't think too highly of their broken vow. He didn't just "destroy the works of their hands," though. He took their lives.

APPs: time Maybe you have an outstanding debt to God in a particular area. You owe Him the time you promise to give Him. You owe the tithe or percentage of income you promised. You made another specific

money priorities	commitment to Him to help keep your priorities straight while here at seminary. God has ways of disciplining his children who neglect payment of their pledge. He once whittled my salary down to a $27.00 a month paycheck because I didn't hold true to return to Him a specific percentage of my income which I'd committed. Maybe He's trying to get your attention through financial difficulty, too. Maybe He's taken away something materially to remind you to take your vows seriously.
Big T	So what's Solomon's key point? This whole passage basically says...
MI (1) R 2	Show reverence for God in proper worship and paying vows. Don't dishonour God by approaching Him frivolously in worship or in unfulfilled, stupid promises. Instead, Solomon concludes by exhorting us to fear Godby not dreaming and making rash vows. Verse 7...
5:7	"Much dreaming and many words are meaningless. Therefore stand in awe of God."
a	Flippant worship and excessive talking are both futile, meaningless. Solomon's conclusion is, in effect, that reverence for God means "cut the dreaming in worship, button the lips that make rash vows, and fear God." This word for "meaningless" literally refers to a vapor. That's about how much substance there is to not seriously worshipping Him or being rash and negligent in fulfilling our vows.
b	He exhorts us instead to fear God—to show awe in His presence not "blah" in His presence, to exalt Him not to exhaust Him with weary worship or wayward vows.
3	Maybe you need to make a specific application to your own life in one of these two areas—worship or vows.
APPs (worship)	Concerning worship, what one way can you change to approach God more reverently in worship? Change your time of personal worship? Stand up while you pray? Get to church or chapel a bit earlier for silent meditation? Try listening to Him as much as you talk to Him?
APPs (vows)	Concerning vows, the second area, I wonder if perhaps you've forgotten about a past commitment you've made to God, to your wife, or to your kids. Regarding your Bible reading? Maybe Bible memorization? A promise to your wife that you'd take her out regularly? Perhaps you've made a commitment to missionary service and need to renew that commitment in preparation for next week's missions conference.
End	Each one of us has a tremendous need to reverence God.
Prayer	"Lord God, we recognize that You are totally worthy of our awe-inspired, reverential worship. You are One who also considers our vows seriously. Help us to fulfill 100% of our commitments and to give you the respect You so deserve. Amen."

GFEFC/ Glory Joy Christian Church (CNEC)/Hebron BP/ Crossroads Int'l
10 May 87/ 10 May 92/ 11 May 97/ 13 May 07
NIV

Dr. Rick Griffith
Mother's Day
30 Minutes

The Hand That Rocks the Cradle...

2 Timothy 1:1-6

Simple Deductive Outline Manuscript

Topic: Motherhood
Subject: A mother's influence
Complement: is the most powerful force in the world.
Purpose: The listeners will thank and appreciate their mothers for the ministry they have had in their lives.

Introduction

1. [Mothers are heroes.]

   a. A schoolteacher giving a lesson in fractions asked, "Johnny, suppose there were 7 in your family—a mother, a father, and 5 children. And suppose there was pie for dessert. What fraction of the pie would you get?"

      Johnny answered, "One-sixth."

      "But don't you understand?" replied the teacher. "don't you know about fractions?"

      "I know about fractions and I know about mothers too," remarked Johnny. "Mom would say that she didn't want any!" ("Mother" tract) Isn't that kind of selflessness so typical of a mother—to work so hard on something that she herself does not enjoy?

   b. During inspection on a Boy Scout outing, a scoutmaster found an umbrella hidden in the bedroll of a young camper. Puzzled, the scoutmaster asked, "Why did you bring an umbrella on a scout trip? The tenderfoot sighed, "Sir, did you ever have a mother?"
      ("The Fine Art of Mothering" tract)

   c. That's just like a mother—one of the most difficult yet rewarding careers available. One writer notes, "Isn't it strange how we elevate careers and lower homemaking to the commonplace? Think how many skills a mother must possess to carry out her duties. She must know something about teaching, interior decorating, cooking, nutrition, psychology, hygiene, social relations, clothing, household equipment, and a host of other things."

      "Still, if a woman teaches someone else's children she is given professional status—a teacher. But if she teaches her own children, she is just a mother. If she does interior decorating she is a career woman; but if she decorates her own home, she is just a homemaker. If she takes care of others, she's a nurse; but if she nurses her own children, she's just 'mom' doing her job" ("Mother" tract). Motherhood demands many skills we easily overlook in "career women."

2. Because of her great position and influence, it is fitting to honor Mom today.

   a. The practice in America of setting aside every second Sunday in May to honor mothers was first practiced in Philadelphia, initiated by Miss Anne Jarvis who lobbied for many years with several Presidents to get the day initiated nationwide.

   b. Perhaps Miss Jarvis got the idea from England's "Mothering Sunday"—a custom where everyone on Mid-Lent Sunday attended their mother church where they were baptized.

   c. The history of Mother's Day actually extends back to ancient Greece. The Greeks celebrated a festival pretty much amounting to mother worship.

d. But the practice of honoring mothers didn't start in America. It goes back even further to OT times. The fifth commandment says, "Honor your father and your mother."

e. In any case, I'm glad that the practice has also come to Singapore. But it's with some sadness that, with two sons heading to the USA for college next month, this may be the last Mother's Day for a while when all five of us will all be together.

3. If I asked you what was the greatest influence in your life that has made you who you are today, what would you say? Why is it that you hold certain values and priorities over others? What source molded you that way more than any other? TV? School? a certain friend or teacher? The Bible? Think about it long enough and you will agree that it is your mother—for good or ill.

4. Today we will observe in the Scripture some excellent examples of influential mothers who passed on a spiritual heritage to their children. My prayer is that you will be convinced that ***mothering is the most influential and important job in all the world*** [main idea]. There's no more significant work than shaping the lives of the next generation [restatement].

5. Let's first take a look at two mothers who influenced the life of one of Paul's most valued traveling companions. The man is Timothy and these godly women are noted in 2 Timothy 1:5. But first let's read verses 1-6 to get the context. Now notice in verse 5 that...

I. Timothy trusted Christ through his mother and grandmother (2 Tim. 1:5).

In fact, Timothy became a disciple through the influence of these two most important women in his life.

A. Notice how Paul claims that *the women* in Timothy's life had the greatest spiritual impact.

1. I find it interesting that Timothy's father is not mentioned here—but when you look at Acts 16:1 you notice that Eunice was a Jewish Christian but Timothy's father was a Gentile—probably an unbelieving Gentile.

a. So we have a boy here born of a mixed marriage—not only between a Jew and a Gentile, but probably a believer and an unbeliever.

b. Somehow Eunice made a mistake by marrying a non-Christian or else became a Christian after the marriage—yet that wasn't going to stop her from having a godly influence on young Tim's life.

2. No doubt some of you find yourself in a similar situation—raising children without the influence of a godly father over them to supplement your efforts.

a. Let the example of Eunice be an encouragement to you.

b. Don't be so concerned that as a sole believing parent that you can't provide the kind of spiritual nurture as other families with two parents.

c. Abraham Lincoln said: "No man is poor who has a godly mother" and he was right!

d. Mothers, as your children grow up and reflect upon you what will they remember most?

1) Some remember their mom's *depression* more than any other trait.

2) One man's most vivid memories are of his mother's *anger*.

3) I grew up in a home where my mother was the greatest influence. My father was in the Navy and due to the pressures on their marriage from him being out fighting in the

Vietnam War their marriage dissolved when I was 4 years old. She remarried twice (last in 1972 so the present marriage has lasted), so my background is certainly less than ideal—four children in five years, three fathers, 12 divorces among my parents and those whom they married, several year gaps between father figures ...Yet my mom was a stabilizing force through it all. I especially remember her for her individual encouragement to me.

4) Mothers, what will your kids remember most about you when they grow up?

a) Your pushing and pushing for them to get good grades? Moodiness?

b) Let your children remember you most for your godliness!

(In 2 Timothy 1:5 Paul reminds Timothy that it was his mother's sincere faith that he remembered in his mother. Not only did Paul claim it was *the women* in Timothy's life which had the greatest spiritual impact *in him*, but notice a second thing...)

B. Our mothers are the greatest single tool of God to help us influence the lives of *others*. No person can train us better to serve Christ than our mother.

1. Timothy grew up to be a tremendous tool of God due to his mother's influence.

a. Even when Paul met him he was called a "disciple" [Acts 16:1].

b. Due to his mother and grandmother's influence Timothy had a good reputation not only in his hometown (Lystra) but also nearby towns like Iconium.

c. Soon Paul would call him his "son in the faith," meaning his younger fellow-worker who was so close that he was like a son [2 Tim 1:2; 2:1; 1 Tim 1:2].

d. Timothy became the constant companion of the greatest apostle ever to live, even though he was a very young man. Fifteen years *after* he started traveling with Paul the apostle told him "don't let anyone despise your youth" so he was young when used of God! (By the way, don't believe the lie that the youth are the church of *tomorrow*. They are the church of *today*!)

e. God granted Timothy a ministry in Paul's life just before his execution also. In 2 Timothy 4:9 Paul requests, "Do your best to come to me quickly" and he probably made it to Paul in time.

f. In a real sense, you and I are presently benefiting from the ministry of Lois and Eunice into Timothy who served Paul who gave us one half the New Testament! What an influence godly mothers can have!

2. Susanna Wesley was such a woman also—with such an influence on her 19 children that I don't even know her husband's name.

a. You will recognize the names of two of her sons though:

1) Charles Wesley wrote several hundred hymns, some of which are in your hymnal.

2) John Wesley became the founder of Methodism—a denomination who's influence has been strong for the cause of Christ through the centuries.

3) These two sons, under God, brought revival to England while France underwent a bloody revolution.

b. Susanna Wesley impacted all of England through her children! But how?

** She spent one hour each and every day shut up with God alone in her room, praying for her 19 children by name. She also had several rules:

1) No child was given anything because he cried for it... (In her house the kids rarely cried loudly).

2) No eating and drinking between meals, except when sick.

3) At 7 PM, each child was put to bed; at 8 PM she left the room. She never allowed herself to sit by the bed until the child fell asleep.

4) The little ones had their own table near the main table. When they could handle the fork and knife, they were "promoted" to the family table.

5) Each child had to eat and drink everything before him.

6) Children had to address each other as "Sister _____" or "Brother _____."

7) She never allowed herself to show anger or to scold. She would always explain and explain.

** You can trace the legacy of her children down through the centuries. Her godly life multiplied into the lives of her children and into your life and mine.

3. A modern-day example of this kind of influence is my wife's family background.

a. Susan's Mom (Doris) and grandmother (Signe) never served in full-time ministry.

b. Yet their influence in Susan's life has reached literally hundreds of thousands of people for Christ through her daughter through an evangelistic singing group that shared Christ throughout Asia [cf. "arrows" of Psalm 121].

4. However, since a mother's influence is so strong, the opposite situation can occur too—

a. Like the mother who, although very religious, despised her son, mistreated him and belittled him to the point where one day the young lad of 17 years old got fed up with it all.

b. In the presence of his parents, he turned around on their farm and walked down the road, intending to never see them again. He didn't so much even turn around and wave, let along give his mother a "good-bye" hug.

c. He walked off, his face set like a flint. He never did see them again. But his life did become one of influence, negative influence, and you know his name—Adolf Hilter.

(So, you ask, how does all this apply to me? Good question! I'm glad you asked...)

II. Mother's Day should remind each of us of some important things. I want to suggest an application for each of us no matter who we are.

A. For mothers here today...

1. What kind of legacy are you leaving to your children? For what will they most remember you after they're gone?

A Student's Example of How Not to Manuscript (1 of 2)

need page numbers

HOW GOD RESPONDS TO US WHEN WE SIN AND REPENT

II Chronicles 33:1-20

much too short

Introduction: SIN! WHAT IS IT? → This is not the question you want to address in this passage!

You need an opening illustration that relates to your subject

good, but better for another sermon

- Man calls it a chance; God calls it a choice.
- Man calls it a fascination; God calls it a fatality.
- Man calls it a luxury; God calls it a leprosy.
- Man calls it a weakness; God calls it willfulness.
- Man calls it a liberty; God calls it lawlessness.

S In the light of man's misconception of sin, How does God respond to us when we sin and repent?

Announce text! What book+chapter ~~[illegible]~~ will you be preaching from? This is to be given 3 times. You didn't even do it once.

Please reread class notes, 51 (Homiletics I class notes, 70) → R?

→ MP ~~I.~~ No God punishes us when we sin ~~(~~No vv. 2 3-11~~)~~ No.

FS Friends, let us learn from Manasseh, the King of Judah. How God dealt with him when he sinned .

column ← Story: Manasseh became king of Judah when he was 12 years old. He reigned in Jerusalem for 55 years ~~(~~v.1~~)~~. We see how gracious was God to Manasseh? Of the 20 kings that ruled Judah after King Solomon, Manasseh had the longest term. He ruled for 55 years. Looking at the duration of his rule, we may say that God seemed to be gracious to this fellow. Without looking closely into his activities as king, we may conclude that he could be a good king. But the question is, was he really good? Was God pleased with him?

good to point this out

Let us examine his rule in Judah for 55 years. ~~The Bible~~ Verse 2 says that "He did evil in the eyes of the Lord." Verse 9 says that He was the most wicked king who ever ruled in the kingdom of David. If he were evil, why did God allow him to rule such a length of time? The answer is simple. God is merciful. God is longsuffering.

Are you working against your MP by emphasizing God's mercy?

be specific so your listeners don't have to search for the verse

Your first SP is here somewhere: "Manasseh was evil" (cf. SP #2 p. 4). You neglected again to put a new page homiletical outline to clearly show SPs

2. Your commitment to prayer, teaching, and godly example will bear the greatest fruit in your children's lives.

3. What do you need to do to have them remember what you *want* them to remember?
   a. Commit never to scold?

   b. Begin that time of reading from the Scripture each day with your child? I have a friend who every morning had an individual quiet time with each of her 9, 7, and 3 year old children.

   c. I dare say some of you may even need to quit your job to provide that kind of care! After all, the only command to mothers in Scripture is Titus 2:5 that says they should be "busy at home."

B. For those with Mothers still living...

1. Flowers, cards, gifts, letters, phone calls... these are good and important.

2. But today praise your mother for a character quality she invested into your life.

   a. At our wedding Susan and I took about ten minutes expressing to our parents appreciation for the character qualities they had invested in our lives. I thanked my Mom for her encouragement.

   b. What positive trait can you thank your Mom for today? Prayer life? Commitment to Scripture? Hospitality? Compassion? Discipline?

(Some of you are saying, "I can't do these things since my mother isn't alive anymore...")

C. For you whose mothers have passed away...

1. Write her a letter—tell her things you wished you had expressed when she was alive.

2. A friend of mine did this many years ago and found that it really relieved her of an incredible amount of stress.

(What have I been saying this morning? Simply this...)

Conclusion

1. A mother's influence is the most powerful force in the world [Main Idea].
   No other influence on your life has matched that of your mother! [Restatement]

2. There's a great amount of truth to the old cliché, "The hand that rocks the cradle rules the world"—for good in the case of Timothy and for evil in the case of Hitler.

3. Whatever good you do, do it now!

If you have a smile for Mother,
Give it now.
If you have a kind word,
Speak it now.
If you have a flower for Mother,
Share it now.
She'll not need it when the angels
Greet her at the golden gate;
Give the smiles while she is living
If you wait it may be too late.

A Grade Sheet Example of How Not to Manuscript (2 of 2)

Manuscript Grade Sheet

(A 20 Item Checklist to Help You Design a Good Expository Sermon—Please Use it in Your Ministry too!)

cf. page 24

Student _____ Passage 2 Chron 33 Box 20 Grade ~~D~~ D

	1 Poor	2 Minimal	3 Average	4 Good	5 Excellent
Introduction (too short!)					
Gets attention/interest on the subject or main idea	☐	☐	☒ somewhat / ☐ no	☒	☐
Raises curiosity or a need to listen further	☐	☒	☒	☐	☐
Subject/main idea/1st point stated & restated (yes / no)	☐	☐	☒	☒	☐
Announces text properly (& previews outline)	☒	☐	☐	☐	☐
Body (You're still using outline form −1)					
Main points clear, restated (yes / no −1), short (yes), full sentences (yes)	☐	☐	☒	☐	☐
Transitions between main points in parentheses	☐	☒	☒	☐	☐
Flow easy to follow (point stated, then verses read) (p. 4 center)	☐	☐	☒	☐	☐
Directs to specific verses (& text-based outline) (v-1)	☐	☐	☒	☐	☐
Writes out verses read (ref. *then* v.; no parentheses)	☐	☒	☐	☐	☐
Expositional development (not selected verses) (Lacks structure at SP level)	☐	☐	☒	☒	☐
Hermeneutical accuracy (proper interpretation)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☒
Illustrations adequate, appropriate, believable (more personal would improve here)	☐	☐	☐	☒	☐
Applies text to life (relevant, "how to do it")	☐	☐	☒	☐	☐
Conclusion					
MI stated (inductive) (yes)/repeated (deductive), restated (no)	☐	☐	☐	☒	☐
Main points reviewed and/or restated	☐	☐	☒	☐	☐
Application/Exhortation to obedience given	☐	☐	☐	☐	☒
Miscellaneous (MI identified incorrectly; Rs used incorrectly; no SPs; this only one T)					
Column abbrev. below/1 pg. new homiletical outline	☐	☒	☐	☐	☐
Spelling and typographical errors, punctuation (excessive commas)	☐	☐	☒	☐	☐
Grammar (subject/verb and tenses agree)	☐	☐	☒	☐	☐
Length & thoroughness (unanswered questions?) (pages need to be numbered)	☐	☐	☒	☐	☐
Summary					
Number of ticks per column	1	4	10	5	2
Multiplied by point values of the column	x 1	x 2	x 3	x 4	x 5
Equals the total point value for each column	1	~~8~~ 4	~~33~~ 30	~~5~~ 20	10

Net points ~~60~~ 65 minus 10 points per day late (____ points) equals a final % grade of ~~60~~ 65 %

Comments:

N.B., this grade sheet is designed to remind you of the elements of a good sermon, but I fear that you didn't look at it at all while writing your paper!

I have tried to grade this fairly and it has taken 2 hours to grade. I know you're not pleased with the results (maybe even shocked) but I want to encourage you to follow the principles of pages 48-52 in the class notes. Look on clarity, Intros & Conclusions, and Manuscripting

Abbreviations Used in Marking Sermons:

A	Application	MI	Main Idea	SP	Sub Point
C	Conclusion	MP	Main Point	T	Transition
FS	Full Sentence	R	Restatement	v(v).	Verse(s)
ILL	Illustration	S	Subject	+	Good

Rev. Nov. 16, 1991

Words on Target

Nancy Hardin (1 of 2)

A woman traveling in Europe telegraphed her husband, "Have found wonderful bracelet. Price seventy-five thousand dollars. May I buy it?" The husband promptly replied, "No, price too high." The telegraph operator, however, missed the comma in translation, so the message read, "No price too high."

That was an expensive breakdown in communication. Not all breakdowns run that high, but where communication breaks down, we usually find relationships breaking up. That may be the highest cost of all.

There are a number of reasons our genuine efforts to communicate fall flat. One problem lies in the very medium we have — our words. We learn to speak as a natural result of growing up, so we take words for granted. We assume that as long as we all speak the same native language, we should be able to communicate. That may be our greatest mistake.

While there are about 600,000 words in the English language today, the educated adult uses about 2,000 of them in daily conversation. To complicate matters, the 500 most-frequently-used words have 14,000 dictionary definitions. It's no wonder that words serve as fragile carriers of meaning. Even though you may choose the precise word you want to convey a feeling or idea, you can't always be confident that the meaning you wish to convey will come through.

Lewis Carroll understood the problem, even if his young *Alice in Wonderland* readers may not:

"When I use a word," Humpty Dumpty said, in rather a scornful tone, "it means just what I choose it to mean — neither more nor less."

"The question is," said Alice, "whether you can make words mean so many different things."

Meaning lies in people

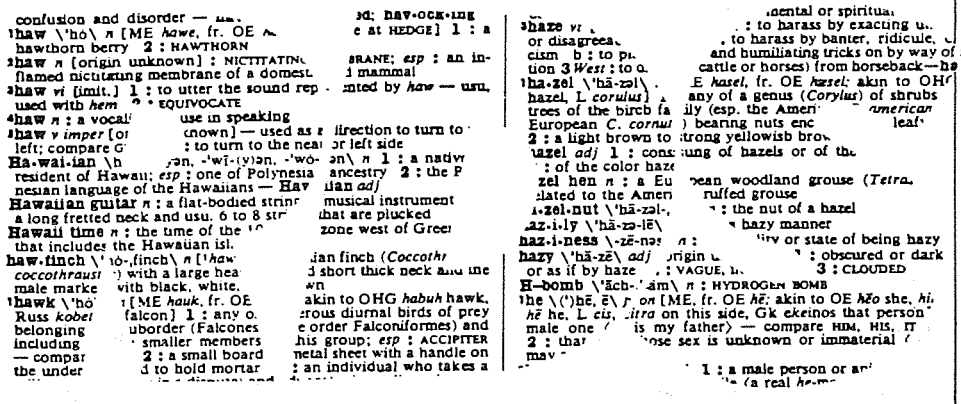
The trouble is that we do give words meaning. In fact, to use words for communication purposes, rather than being used by them, we must understand that meaning lies not within the words, but within people.

Two people can use the same words but mean different things entirely. That happened to me just after college. I had met with a fellowship of single people my age on several occasions. When they announced a barbeque for the upcoming weekend, my first question to the gal sitting next to me was, "What do we wear?" "Oh, just casual clothes," she told me. That Saturday I showed up in blue jeans and T-shirt. All the other girls had come in sundresses and even long skirts. I was mortified and felt betrayed. But the more I associated with that group, the more I realized that's what Dallas gals meant by "casual clothes." Not one had tried to embarrass me. It was simply a case of the same words meaning different things to different people.

Words do not stand on their own as mere abstract symbols. We fill words with meaning from our own backgrounds and experiences. For instance, I am quite comfortable with the picture of God as "Father" because I have a healthy family relationship. But I have friends for whom that picture does not stir happy, affectionate feelings. If they can conceive of God as "Father" at all, they must work at a new image and new feelings. It's dangerous, then, for me to assume that some new acquaintance will understand what it means to relate to God as "Father." I may need to know a bit about her, about her background before I talk to her about God in that way.

We can face a similar problem in sharing the gospel message as we talk about someone being a "sinner." Many religious, moral people cannot conceive of themselves as "sinners." A sinner to them is a thief, a murderer, a total down-and-outer, not a person who has tried to do good and help other people. We have to go back to the word "sinner" and describe it in terms meaningful to a good person, but one uninitiated to Christian jargon.

Words on Target (cont'd)


confusion and disorder — ...
haw \'hȯ\ *n* [ME *hawe*, fr. OE ...
hawthorn berry **2** : HAWTHORN
haw *n* [origin unknown] : NICTITATING ... flamed nictitating membrane of a domest...
haw *vi* [imit.] **1** : to utter the sound rep... used with *hem* ... EQUIVOCATE
haw *n* : a vocal... use in speaking
haw *v imper* [o... known] — used as a direction to turn to ... left; compare G... : to turn to the near... or left side
Ha·wai·ian \h...ən, -ˈwī-(y)ən, -ˈwō-... ən\ *n* **1** : a native ... resident of Hawaii; *esp* : one of Polynesia... ancestry **2** : the P... nesian language of the Hawaiians — **Hav...** ...ian *adj*
Hawaiian guitar *n* : a flat-bodied string... musical instrument ... a long fretted neck and usu. 6 to 8 str... that are plucked
Hawaii time *n* : the time of the ... zone west of Gree... that includes the Hawaiian isl...
haw·finch \ˈhȯ-ˌfinch\ *n* [ˈhaw... ...ian finch (*Coccothr...* *coccothraust...*) with a large hea... d short thick neck and ... male marke... with black, white, ... wn
hawk \ˈhȯ... [ME *hauk*, fr. OE ... akin to OHG *habuh* hawk, Russ *kobet*... ...rous diurnal birds of prey belonging ... uborder (Falcones... e order Falconiformes) and including ... smaller members ...his group; *esp* : ACCIPITER — compar... **2** : a small board ... netal sheet with a handle on the under ... d to hold mortar ... : an individual who takes a ...
...dental or spiritua...
haze *vt* ... : to harass by exacting u... or disagreea... to harass by banter, ridicule, ... cism **b** : to pl... and humiliating tricks on by way of ... tion **3** *West* : to o... cattle or horses) from horseback—**ha...**
ha·zel \ˈhā-zəl\ ... E *hasel*, fr. OE *hæsel*; akin to OH... hazel, L *corulus*) ... any of a genus (*Corylus*) of shrubs ... trees of the birch fa... ily (esp. the Amer... *american* ... European *C. cornut*...) bearing nuts enc... leaf... **2** : a light brown to ...trong yellowish bro...
hazel *adj* **1** : cons... ...ung of hazels or of the ... : of the color haze...
hazel hen *n* : a Eu... ...pean woodland grouse (*Tetra...* ...lated to the Amer... ruffed grouse
hazel·nut \ˈhā-zəl-ˌ... ... : the nut of a hazel
haz·i·ly \ˈhā-zə-lē\ ... hazy manner
haz·i·ness \-zē-nəs\ *n* : ...ity or state of being hazy
hazy \ˈhā-zē\ *adj* ...rigin ... : obscured or dark ... or as if by haze ... : VAGUE, ... **3** : CLOUDED
H-bomb \ˈāch-ˌbäm\ *n* : HYDROGEN BOMB
he \(ˈ)hē, ē\ *pron* [ME, fr. OE *hē*; akin to OE *hēo* she, *hit* ... *hē* he, L *cis*, *citra* on this side, Gk *ekeinos* that person] ... male one ... is my father⟩ — compare HIM, HIS, IT **2** : that ...ose sex is unknown or immaterial ... may ...
... **1** : a male person or an... ...a real *he-m...*

ON TARGET

by Nancy Hardin

Since meaning resides in people and not in words alone, we have to be aware of the listener and his world in order to choose words that adequately convey our meaning.

The difficulties multiply when our culture changes over a generation. In my parents' world the word "gay" was a thoroughly positive term meaning "happy, carefree, warm-spirited." "Fruit," on the other hand, was a derogatory way of speaking about a homosexual. The first time I came home with, "Oh, Mom, he's a fruit," I headed straight for a spanking. To me, it was simply a general term for "jerk" that I'd picked up at school. But my mother didn't want her daughter to use that term! Today, of course, "gay" carries a completely different meaning because the culture of the '80s has changed radically from that of the '40s and '50s.

"A rose by any other name . . ."

Another problem with words beyond meanings and cultural differences is that words affect people differently. Different words can create different emotions about the same thing.

Several years ago, a high school teacher introduced a course called "Home Ec for Boys." No one signed up. When the teacher changed the name, however, to "Bachelor Living," the demand was so great that she had to limit enrollment. Though she still taught cooking, sewing and washing, the name made all the difference.

A friend of mine, trying to explain what the Bible says about how we can demonstrate God's justice, emphasized reaching out to the poor and the socially-outcast. In that way, he said, we could prove God's justice and show ourselves just. After his lecture, he encountered an irate listener who could not accept anything he had said. It happened that she had become a Christian out of a background of religious works. When he talked about "showing ourselves just," all she could hear was that we had to add works to faith. Her background and strong emotional feelings filled in meanings to his words which he never intended. As a result, communication fell apart.

Sometimes we even use the emotional impact of words to our advantage. A tourist stopped where a man was busy hammering nails into boards. The tourist asked, "What are you building?" "Well, if I can rent it," the man replied, "it's a rustic cottage. If I can't, it's a cow shed."

Restauranteurs know the trick. Go to a Japanese restaurant here in the States and order *sashimi* or *nori* and you may be pleasantly surprised. If, however, you found "raw fish" or "seaweed" on the menu, you may not be interested.

Unless we come to terms with words and their emotional effect on people, we may find that our communication breaks down more often than we would expect. Until we learn to use our language, it will use us. We'll find ourselves in the midst of one breakdown of communication after another.

Our communication will improve when we understand that words can mean different things to different people and in different cultures, and that words have emotional effects sometimes greater than their dictionary definitions. The key lies in fitting our message to the listener, rather than expecting the listener to enter our world. Why? Because meaning resides in people, not in words. The more we can match our meaning to the meaning of our listeners, the more satisfied we'll be with our communication and, ultimately, with our relationships.

– Focal Point magazine 4 (July-Sept 1984)

Nancy Hardin, conference speaker and Bible teacher, also serves as assistant to the president of Denver Seminary.

Delivery

How to Preach So People Will Listen

Adapted from Haddon Robinson, *Biblical Preaching*, 191-208

I. Introduction

A. Delivery is neglected both in homiletics books and in preachers.

B. The effectiveness of sermons depends upon two factors:

1. *What* we say (content)

2. *How* we say it (delivery)

C. "In order of significance the ingredients making up a sermon are thought, arrangement, language, voice, and gesture. In priority of impressions, however, the order reverses. Gesture and voice emerge as the most obvious and determinative" (p. 191). In other words, that which takes the longest in the study (exegesis) actually has less impact than how we communicate this content.

D. The importance of nonverbal communication:

1. Silent language communicates more than spoken language.

2. If nonverbal messages contradict the verbal, listeners will believe the silent message.

3. Effective delivery begins with desires. If you don't *want* to say it well, you won't!

II. Nonverbal Factors to Consider in Delivery

A. Grooming and Dress: should fit the audience, situation, and speaker.

B. Movement and Gestures

1. Spontaneous: don't let your gestures look planned

2. Definite: don't make a "half gesture" (either make it or don't make it!)

3. Varied: using even a good gesture all the time will get old fast.

4. Properly Timed: coordinate your mouth and body so they're consistent!

5. Audience Oriented: what should be seen as a left to right move must be reversed for the speaker in order to look natural to the listeners/viewers.

6. Freedom of Movement: Please get out from behind the pulpit and walk around some.

C. Eye Contact: don't speak to the ceiling or only one side of the room.

D. Vocal Delivery

1. Pitch: vary your inflections (raise and lower how high and low your voice sounds).

2. Punch: vary your volume (don't only shout /speak with intensity, but whisper too).

3. Progress: vary your rate (how fast you speak).

4. Pause: vary your silence (give long pauses for effect, but not too much!).

5. Practice: preach your sermon standing up—even in this very classroom to determine what your movement will be.

THE MESSAGE))))

GETTING THE FEEDBACK YOU NEED

"Nice sermon, preacher."

For most of us, that is the extent of the feedback we receive on our preaching. Yet we yearn for something more substantial: How do we come across to people? What aspects of our preaching style, delivery, organization, and biblical interpretation need to be improved to communicate the gospel more effectively?

To grow, we need honest evaluation, but how can we move beyond the haphazard, off-the-cuff "Nice sermon, Preacher" without getting ambushed by pet peeves of chronic complainers?

Creating good listeners

A number of years ago, Dr. John K. Bergland, who at the time was teaching at Duke Divinity School, conducted scores of interviews with people in rural North Carolina United Methodist Churches, asking them to evaluate their preachers' sermons. Bergland discovered that these laypeople were extremely reluctant to criticize a pastor's preaching.

They assumed, apparently, that since the pastor has been called by God to preach and has studied preaching to prepare for ministry, the comments of ordinary laypeople are out of place.

People also hesitated to criticize their pastor's preaching because, according to Bergland, even though the preacher may not be the world's best, he or she is *our* preacher. Most church people tend to be intensely loyal to their local congregation; they want to be proud of it. Drawing attention to the pastor's weaknesses only reflects negatively on their church.

Over the years I have tried, sometimes successfully and sometimes not, to elicit honest, usable reaction to my preaching. Sometimes laypeople are not sure the minister really wants their criticism, so initial responses tend to be positive. However, as time passes and people understand that I sincerely want their responses, even their critical responses, they become more honest.

For instance, when I gave out the standardized questionnaire that accompanies this article and asked people to complete it each Sunday for a few weeks, my scores actually went down in a number of areas!

Why? People were becoming more candid. Their initial "Nice sermon, Preacher" was becoming a more straightforward "Nice sermon, but . . ." Because of my persistence, they realized that I was determined to get honest reactions, even if the reactions were negative.

Plus, in the process of evaluating my sermons, people were becoming better listeners. For instance, a number of them, when first asked, "Was this a biblical sermon?" quickly responded, "Yes." Of course the sermon was biblical: a Bible text was read at the beginning of the sermon.

However, as week after week they continued to evaluate my preaching, they stepped back and asked themselves, *Was this* really *a biblical sermon?* They began noticing that, though some verses were read at the beginning of the sermon, the text sometimes didn't control the movement and the thoughts of the sermon.

In urging my laypeople systematically and carefully to react to my preaching, then, I was making them better listeners. Critical listeners consider sermons with certain criteria in mind. Although I was receiving truthful, and sometimes (to me) painful, responses, I had given them criteria to help them have "ears to hear."

A questionnaire that helps

In the early 1970s, Boyd E. Stokes, as part of his doctoral work at Emory University, performed many months of research, interviewing scores of laypeople, preachers, and professors of homiletics, asking them what they looked for in a "good" sermon. He then selected the criteria most frequently cited. The result was the Sermon Reaction Questionnaire, a version of which is shown here.

I have used this questionnaire in three different congregations, with good effect. It's easily understood. It can be completed in just a few minutes, and it offers standardized scores, whose results can be compared over a period of weeks or months.

This questionnaire has helped me focus on particular problems. For instance, since I had always

Why are Some Preachers Better Than Others?

Charles Swindoll (3 of 3)

think of the broken-hearted, or the emotionally-disturbed young person or older person. I think of the business professional, and I think of those who are divorced and lonely.

Those are the people that want to meet with God. They want to know what that Book has to say about life and how it can change their lives for the better.

But I can hear some of you say, "Man, I can preach like that just by jumping up and getting at it. Why do I have to go through seminary?" Let me answer ...these are principles that are valid

Some say, "I can preach just by jumping up and getting at it. Why do I have to go to seminary?"

at all levels of communication, but the church does need some who have special training.

The reason is said best by C.S. Lewis, an educated Christian who also happened to be a great communicator. "If all the world were Christian it might not matter if all the world were uneducated. But as it is, a cultural life will exist outside the church whether it exists inside or not.

"To be ignorant and simple now, not to be able to meet the enemies on their own ground, would be to throw down our weapons and to betray our uneducated brethren who have no defense but us against the intellectual attacks of the heathen.

Good philosophy must exist if for no other reason than because bad philosophy needs to be answered." Ch



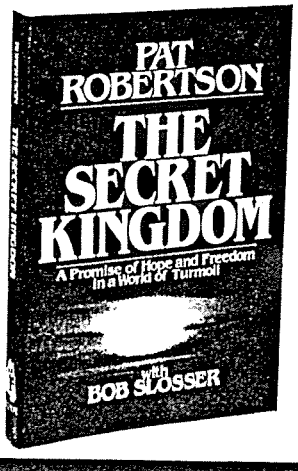
Charles R. Swindoll is pastor of the First Evangelical Free Church of Fullerton, Calif., and the speaker on "Insight for Living" radio broadcast. His best-selling books include *Growing Strong in the Seasons of Life*, *Strengthening Your Grip* and *Strike the Original Match*.



National Bestseller: Over 400,000 hardbacks sold!

NOW IN PAPERBACK

Pat Robertson reveals the eight spiritual principles which promise peace and prosperity.



"Best resource book of 1982" CHRISTIAN REVIEW

"An important, original work." THE SATURDAY EVENING POST

"...a fascinating glimpse inside the spiritual life..." TODAY'S CHRISTIAN WOMAN

At bookstores everywhere.
THE SECRET KINGDOM
Now in quality paperback, $5.95

Thomas Nelson
P.O. Box 141000
Nashville, TN 37214-1000

Why are Some Preachers Better Than Others?

Charles Swindoll (2 of 3)

vine and that all pulpits come up out of the floor as flashing lights dance across the stage. Our congregation would walk out on that kind of nonsense.

That's not the salt Paul was talking about. You can find what it is in the 12th chapter of Ecclesiastes, beginning with verse nine:

"In addition to being a wise man, the preacher also taught the people knowledge. He pondered, he searched out, he arranged many proverbs. The preacher sought to find delightful words and to write words of truth correctly. The words of wise men are like goads, and masters of these collections are like well-driven nails. They are given by one shepherd."

Isn't that a great passage of Scripture? It's full of fertile information for the preacher today!

Let me say three things about what goes into good preaching.

Good communicators are well prepared. They do their homework. They make study a high priority.

In order to teach the people knowledge, preachers have to study. They are worth listening to because they have thought it through. It takes time to ponder the truths of God.

And it is not just pondering the linguistics, although that is part of it. But you think of your audience, those people who are going to be in attendance this coming Sunday. You put yourself in their shoes. You feel where they are, people who want to be fed, people who want to meet God.

Sir Francis Bacon said, "Reading maketh a [broad] man, [speaking] a ready man, and writing an exact man." A great deal of help comes in getting a yellow pad and a pencil and just going through the process of hammering out what the passage is saying. Be exact!

Part of your task is to be broad in your reading. John Wesley said, "Either read, or get out of the ministry."

I read everything I have time for, from Steinbeck to Bombeck. I read commentators, other pastors, the preachers of yesteryear, the newspaper and numerous periodicals. Reading is my world. Without it I get stale. People in the congregation help me with suggestions on what to read.

Many preachers will say they're too busy to study enough. Too busy to study? No wonder you're dull. Stay up later or get up earlier!

Incidentally, I believe we as preachers should be confronted by the congregation when they realize that they have heard those stories before. We need people who will say, "This is old stuff, Chuck. Come up with new stuff." We need listeners honest enough to say, "You could have done better."

The preacher in Ecclesiastes pondered, searched out and arranged many proverbs because he wanted the people to know that God is a God of quality, a God of precision, a God who says what he means and does not stumble or stammer at it.

He says it straight, and it is so relevant that you don't even have to make it relevant—just show how relevant it is.

My second observation about good preaching is that it is interesting. Look at the preacher in Ecclesiastes. He sought to find *delightful* words. The term translated delightful has been described as meaning "to feel great favor toward something" or to feel emotional delight.

Make sure you deliver your message with enthusiasm. If it is not exciting to you, guess what?

There are times in great preaching when you will get from God such an enormous and insightful body of truth that you will want to shout! And under this is a sense of certainty and ring of reliability that your interesting information is also accurate.

In this connection, it's important to use language that is understood by everyone. Don't talk in secret codes if you want to be interesting, if you want to be heard. Too many preachers talk to themselves when they preach.

And make sure you deliver your message with enthusiasm. If it is not exciting to you, guess what?

George Whitefield swept the 18th century with the Gospel of Jesus Christ. In one area he ministered every morning at 6 o'clock and people trudged through the snow to hear him.

The Scottish sceptic David Hume was seen walking to the chapel where Whitefield was to preach. An acquaintance saw him and said, "Mr. Hume, I did not know you believed this message."

"I don't," Hume replied, "but that man Whitefield does and I cannot stay away." It is remarkable how enthusiasm draws people like a magnet to the truth of God.

To be interesting, you will need to stay away from clichés as well. Find new ways to express yourself, and you will be amazed at how much better you can hold people's attention.

A little humor will be great. Perhaps I use too much, but a little from time to time does not hurt at all.

Spurgeon was often criticized for his humor, and on one occasion he said, "If you knew how much I held back you would be proud of me."

In America people laugh, and it's remarkable how a chuckle or an outburst of laughter will assist in communicating God's truth. Don't be afraid of it—I was afraid of it for too long.

Third point: Good communicators are also practical. Look at that word "goads." It suggests prodding, pushing, getting under the skin. If you are good at exposition, you will be good at application.

Exposition is not simply interpreting the Scriptures and then closing your Bible and saying, "Now may God apply this to our hearts and lives." The Spirit of God used you to interpret, and I am convinced he would like to use you to apply.

Are the teen-agers listening to you? If they are not, that's probably telling you something. They vote with their feet, you know.

In our older building in Fullerton we had a balcony full of teen-agers. I'm telling you, they were excitement personified! One dear mother was disturbed about what was going on there.

"Have you seen what they are doing?" she asked. "Yes," I said, "isn't it absolutely wonderful!"

It bothered her to see some of the kids sailing airplanes and doing other distracting stuff. I told her there could be something a whole lot worse, namely an empty balcony. They're here, and loving it, because the words from God's Book are like goads. I talk their language. I live where they live, because I've still got two teens in my home, and I listen to them.

I apply God's Book not just to one segment of the audience or another. I think of teenagers and that world they have to survive in. I think of the abused wife. I

Cover

Why are some preachers better than others?



Photo: David J. Pavol

by Charles Swindoll

This noted author-pastor tells us how to win the battle against boring sermons.

When I began my pastorate in Fullerton, California, I decided that I would stop playing church for good.

I had found that going along with comfortable routines resulted in spiritual mediocrity. To do things out of habit or tradition was the easy way out, and I determined to be different.

I wanted the preached Word to penetrate and meet needs. This meant that I needed to be free enough to develop a style of exposition that was my own. Not a touch of this and a smattering of that. It had to be me if I was going to lead this congregation under God.

That was a turning point in my life, because communications is a serious matter. Sometimes you think you are communicating when you are not. It is never automatic. It is hard work.

Jack Paar, well known from the earlier days of television, has said that the greatest sin you can commit in public is to be dull. J.B. Phillips, the late Christian author who paraphrased the New Testament, said, "If words are to enter people's hearts and bear fruit, they must be the right words, shaped to pass defenses and explode silently and effectually within the mind."

Unfortunately, the laws of good communication are often broken in the pulpit. It is a disgrace to the Scripture to speak without relevance. You convey to the hearers that the Bible is out of date and out of touch.

Many Christian communicators assume that if a Bible is open between themselves and a group of people, magic automatically happens. It does not. If anything, barriers go up. People have this incredible built-in resistance to spiritual truths.

But as the Spirit of God uses his word to break through, people respond beautifully. We must remember Paul's admonition to the Colossians: "Let your speech be always with grace,...seasoned with salt, that you may know how you ought to answer every man."

That message can be thought of as being of particular interest to preachers, but notice that Paul seems to be talking to believers in general. The principles of good communications hold for all who share their faith.

I am not suggesting that you try to be clever or try to do cutsey things or make a fool out of yourself. Some people have the idea that because you minister in Southern California you swing in on a

Copyright © 1984 Charles R. Swindoll. All rights reserved. Adapted from an address delivered at the Sixtieth Anniversary Pastors Conference of Dallas Theological Seminary.

Getting the Feedback You Need (2 of 2)

prided myself in not referring to my notes, I was surprised to see my listeners thought I looked at my notes too often. So over the following few weeks, I disciplined myself to look less at my notes, and my scores improved.

The questionnaire has also helped me see how different groups within the church react to my preaching. In general, younger respondents like my preaching better than do older respondents, and women are more positive about my preaching than are men. I'm not always able to make changes in my preaching based on what I learn, but knowing how I come across has made me a more sensitive preacher.

I've used the questionnaire in a couple of different ways. In one church, I gave the questionnaire to a selected group of laypersons to evaluate my sermons my first two weeks with the congregation. Then, two years later, I gave the same questionnaire to the same laypeople for two more weeks. That helped me gauge my progress over the long term.

I've also randomly selected a group of about twenty laypeople, asking them to attend worship every Sunday for five weeks. (That's important because even one absence can skew the scores.) I gave them questionnaires and asked them to fill them out and return them at the end of each service.

After five weeks, I met with all of the respondents and shared the results of the research. Together we looked at individual sermons and the scores they received, and I asked the people to clarify some of their responses. This discussion greatly increased the value of the questionnaire for me.

In either case, the questionnaires are scored by totaling and then averaging the scores on each item and on the questionnaire as a whole.

Some items (3, 5, and 7, for instance) are stated negatively to keep respondents from simply going down the questionnaire and mindlessly checking off the same number on every question. That means, though, when I tally the scores, I need to reverse the scores: for instance, a score of 1 on item 3, "did not inspire me," would be scored as 5. That way all the results "move" in the same direction.

To remain faithful to Christ, sermons are accountable to Scripture and a church's tradition, but they must also to some degree be accountable to the church, and that means the men and women sitting in the pews each Sunday morning. Through this questionnaire such men and women have improved my preaching and strengthened the church.

— William H. Willimon
dean of the chapel
Duke University
Durham, North Carolina

SERMON REACTION QUESTIONNAIRE

Do not sign your name.
Supply the following information:
Sex: male ____ ; female ____
Age: under 20 ____ ; 20-29 ____ ; 30-39 ____ ;
40-49 ____ ; 50-59 ____ ; over 59 ____

Regarding the sermon you just heard, indicate whether you agree or disagree with these statements. Circle 1 if you strongly agree, 2 if you agree, 3 if you're uncertain, 4 if you disagree, 5 if you strongly disagree.

Your honesty and frankness will be appreciated.

1. My interest was maintained.	1 2 3 4 5
2. The sermon was integrated into the service of worship.	1 2 3 4 5
3. I was not inspired.	1 2 3 4 5
4. The preacher's personality came through.	1 2 3 4 5
5. The Scripture text was not used or illumined.	1 2 3 4 5
6. The preacher used contemporary language.	1 2 3 4 5
7. The preacher did not evidence a personal faith.	1 2 3 4 5
8. The sermon was too long.	1 2 3 4 5
9. I did not understand the sermon well.	1 2 3 4 5
10. The preacher referred to notes too often.	1 2 3 4 5
11. The preacher sounded like he/she loved us.	1 2 3 4 5
12. The sermon spoke to some of my personal needs.	1 2 3 4 5
13. The sermon did not sufficiently emphasize the greatness of Christ.	1 2 3 4 5
14. The preacher showed self-confidence.	1 2 3 4 5
15. The sermon did not make me eager to serve God any more than I'm already serving him.	1 2 3 4 5
16. I identified with the preacher.	1 2 3 4 5
17. The preacher spoke down to us.	1 2 3 4 5
18. The sermon did not have a sufficiently forceful conclusion.	1 2 3 4 5
19. The sermon did not help me encounter God.	1 2 3 4 5
20. I can remember most or all of the sermon's points.	1 2 3 4 5

Rev. Keith Brown's Letter (1 of 3)

5 May 1992

Dear Rick:

I thought you might be interested in the observations I am going to give the Homiletics II class at the end of the term.

Last year in my Hom.II class evaluations several said that it was too much of a repetition from Hom.I. My comment was that apparently many of them had slept through most of Hom. I because the evidence from their preaching and writing didn't demonstrate that they had learned or remembered very much.

Although not everyone has preached in my class yet, the themes which they need to develop more have already emerged very clearly. So I thought you might benefit from what I am observing to give you some guidance for Hom. I. I am going to make two suggestions to the school: (1) that they have the same person teaching both Hom. I and II.; (2) that they add a Hom. III for those who are definitely going to be pastors/preachers. As it is, most of the students treat it more as another requirement to tick off. When I was reviewing one girls sermon with her on the video I commented that what she said and what she wrote were not the same in a lot of places. Her honest, but revealing, comment was, "Oh, I was just saying whatever came into my mind. After all, it was only an assignment." But for those who are going to be preaching and are genuine in their desire to improve in their skills, I think a Hom. III would be very valuable.

OBSERVATIONS:

Introductions: generally very weak. Few of them really grabbed you and made you sit up and say, "I've got to listen to this!" And many of them did not really relate to the message they were supposed to be introducing.

Conclusions: generally weak. I had the feeling from some that the idea was, "Well, I've finished my three main points, but I'm suppose to have a conclusion, so I'll tack something on at the end." It's like playing the piano for a soloist. At the end of the song you say, "Well, I should have an ending on this song, so plunk, plunk."

Applications: Usually none or very weak. They were much too general. "We should all live a stronger Christian life." That doesn't say anything. Tell us how we can do that. Give some specific suggestions. Tell me someone who has done it and how they did so I can try it too. There was very little "call to action". How? With whom? When? What result do you expect? What will you do if it doesn't work like you think it will? "We should all read our bible more." Whoopee. So what! There was very little, "How about you? How does this affect you? What will you do with this truth?"

Rev. Keith Brown's Letter (2 of 3)

After most sermons were finished, if someone would have asked the class, "What did he/she want us to do?", very few would have been able to answer anything. If we can't answer that, then your applications and conclusion are weak.

Illustrations: A lot of illustrations were bible stories, which is fine. But what I observed was that they were used as stories to fill up time (to meet the time requirement), but very little drawing the principles from those stories and then seeking to apply them specifically to us. After taking four or five minutes to relate the story the application was, "And let's be like...." They really didn't "illustrate".

There were very few illustrations from their reading of other sources. Very few experiences of contemporary people's lives. Mostly illustrations from their own observations. That's important to develop that skill (to see illustrations everywhere) but you also need to be getting them from reading, and reading something more than a news clipping.

The illustrations generally had very little emotion in them; very little impact; very few really "grabbed" you and moved you.

USE OF IMAGINATION: There was almost zero use of imagination. Very few projected themselves into the setting and tried to imagine what was happening, what was being said, what was being felt. Nobody really painted interesting word pictures for us.

OUTLINES: Some pretty good, some OK, and some very confusing. Many "forced" alliteration into the text. If it's natural, use it. But don't force a point on the text just because it fits your alliteration. Many outlines did not have a natural progression from one to the other. Many of the points seemed totally unconnected. Many outlines did not have a consistent pattern of the way each point was stated.
I. A Personal.....
II. A Presence that..
III. The God who...
IV. Why we should...

EXEGESIS: Many did not seem to do much in background digging on the text. Some took a minor point of the passage and built a whole sermon around that. Some totally missed the main point of the passage and took us off in another direction.

TRANSITIONS: Only one or two had any consistent transitional sentences that connected things together. For some, there was absolutely no transitional sentence. Things just jumped from one thing to the next without being tied in to anything.

BACKGROUND DIGGING AND READING: Most (from the evidence heard or presented) seemed to totally skip the background reading in commentaries, other sources, books, etc. There was very little material used or quoted from other reading material (other than

Rev. Keith Brown's Letter (3 of 3)

the bible); books on the subject, other sources. Mostly just your own thoughts about the passage with a few well known bible stories thrown in as an illustration. But practically no material from other sources.

CRAFTING OF THE SERMON: I did not sense, as I read the manuscripts, that there was much real "crafting" work done. They were very rough, for the most part. The idea I got from them was that they were simply getting another assignment finished and out of the way. But not a lot of "sweat" effort, rewriting, reworking effort made.

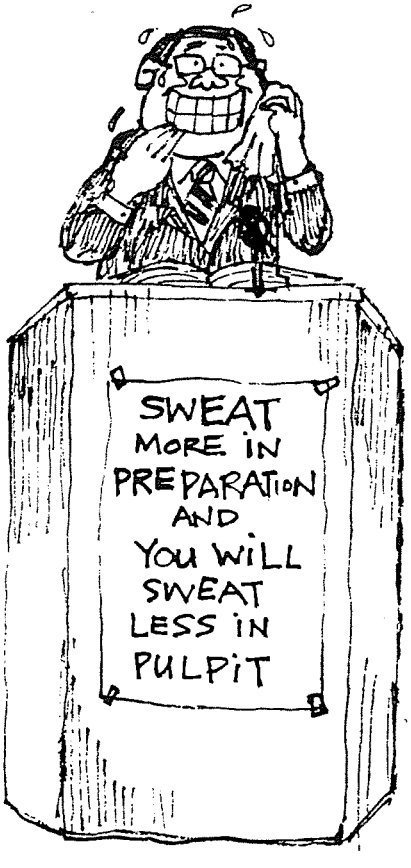
What it all boils down to is "fundamentals", the "basics"; learning them and putting them into practice.

Rick, I don't know if this will be helpful to you or not. But I think it does point up the importance of a Hom. III for those who are going to be preaching. I realize that we all start some place. And I remember back to my first feeble attempts at preaching in Homiletics in seminary. I "thought" at the time, I'm sure, my sermons were probably going to be printed up and circulated to the world because they were so great. Another Spurgeon has arisen. So I don't want to be too hard on them. But they really consistently missed the basic things so much.

For better preachers,

Keith

Keith Brown



Sermon Self Evaluation

Name _____ Speaker # ____ Topic/passage _____ Box ____

Directions: Please complete question 1 *before* you view your sermon on a computer, then watch the message and complete the remainder of this form as you listen and afterwards. Return this form to the professor within 4 days after preaching your sermon.

1. What impressions do you have of your sermon right now before actually seeing you preach? What did you *think* you did or did *not* do—some things that watching your preaching can help verify?

2. What most *pleased* you as you watched you preach?

3. What most *displeased* you as you watched the sermon?

4. What exegetical or interpretive issues gave you the most difficulty in *preparing* the text?

5. Where did you have the greatest difficulty in *delivering* the message? Why was this?

6. What things have you learned from this sermon that will help you in future preaching?

7. What did we *not* study that you wish we *had* covered to help you present this sermon?

8. How many times did you *practice* the entire sermon before delivering it in class? _____

9. How much did you *pray* about this sermon before delivering it in class? _____

Expository Steps of Robinson vs. Richard

Haddon Robinson's method is adapted here on the left (cf. notes, 27-28)

1. **Choose the Passage.**
2. **Exegete the Passage and Gather Notes.**
   a. Pray and write down questions.
   b. Study a few other translations.
   c. Read the original text and do brief word studies.
   d. Consult the commentaries.
3. **Write the Exegetical Outline and Idea.**
   a. Reword each verse in Z_1+X+Z_2+Y form.
   b. Group similar statements.
   c. Write "major hunks" and subpoints.
   d. Form the "exegetical idea."
4. **Submit the Exegetical Idea to Three Developmental Questions.**
   a. Explain it: What do I need to explain?
   b. Prove it: Do my listeners believe it?
   c. Apply it: Where does it show up in real life?
5. **Determine the Desired Listener Response.**
6. **Formulate the Homiletical Idea.**
7. **Outline the Sermon.**
   a. Deductive (MI intro)
   b. Inductive (subject intro)
   c. Simple (appl. end)
   d. Cyclical (appl. repeated)
8. **Plan for Oral Clarity.**
   a. Restatements
   b. Transitions
   c. Illustrations
   d. Applications
9. **Prepare the Introduction & Conclusion.**
10. **Practice the Message until Internalized.**

Richard's 7 Steps
Preparing Expository Sermons

1-Study Text	*Flesh*
2-Structure Text	*Skeleton*
3-Central Proposition of Text	*Heart*
– –	
4-Purpose Bridge	*Brain*
5-Central Proposition of Sermon	*Heart*
6-Structure Sermon	*Skeleton*
7-Preach Sermon	*Flesh*

Gunning's Ten Principles of Clear Writing (Adapted)

1. **Keep sentences short.**

   Tests show that reading tends to become hard when sentences average more than 20 words. Sentences in *Time* and *Reader's Digest* average 16-17 words. Average sentences of business writing exceed 25 words (which is too long).

2. **Prefer the simple to the complex.**

   This applies to sentence structure and the choice of words. Write "try to find out" rather than "endeavor to ascertain." Avoid excessive use of capital letters.

3. **Prefer the familiar word.**

   If the reader doesn't understand the words you use, he is likely to miss your meaning. This does not suggest that you should have a small vocabulary. You need all the words you can master.

4. **Avoid unnecessary words.**

   Nothing weakens writing more than words that you don't need. Read your copy over closely. Make every word carry its weight. Never write, "It goes without saying that..." since this admits that what you'll say is unnecessary.

5. **Put action into your verbs.**

   Active verbs put life in writing. Don't smother action with too many participles and gerunds (an "ing" word functioning like a noun). Write, "We aim to write clearly" rather than "Clarity in composition is our intention." Avoid the passive voice and "to be" verb as much as possible.

6. **Write the way you talk.**

   Well, anyway, a little that way. A conversational tone is one of the best avenues to readable writing. Don't lapse into a stuffy business jargon that has no relation to the way business people talk face-to-face.

7. **Use terms your reader can picture.**

   Be aware that abstract terms tend to make writing dull and foggy. Prefer the short, concrete words that stand for things you can see and touch.

8. **Tie in with your reader's experience.**

   Link your new idea with some old idea already known to your reader. This keeps his attention and leads to greater understanding.

9. **Make full use of variety.**

   Don't smother your individual writing style. Develop a fresh form of expression that represents you. Avoid clichés. Avoid stilted patterns of writing.

10. **Write to express—not impress.**

    Don't show off with complexity. Make your ideas clear with simple, direct writing. The writer who actually makes the best impression is the one who can express complex ideas simply.

Preaching Narratives

I. Advantages: Why Preach Narrative?

A. God likes stories. He must since Scripture has so many stories! In fact, the Bible is narrative more than any other genre. If you don't learn how to preach stories now then you shut out the most common genre God has chosen. God must have thought narrative communicates well—otherwise He wouldn't have given us so many stories in His Word.

B. People like stories. Stories hit our imaginations. People listen to stories. Just watch any audience lift their heads (or wake up!) as soon as the speaker begins to tell a story.

C. Stories speak to the heart. Didactic truths touch the mind, but we must speak to the emotions and will of our audiences as well. Stories address the whole person: mind, will, and emotions. A story was how Nathan got inside David's skin (2 Sam. 12).

D. See also Reed on page 121 for biblical reasons and examples for narrative preaching.

II. Challenges: Difficulties We Face in Preaching Narrative

A. *Didactic vs. Narrative:* Note the obstacles we face by contrasting didactic and narrative sermons:

	Didactic	*Narrative*
Literary Types	Laws, prophetic oracles, poetry, letters, apocalyptic	Stories, parables
Interpretation	Easier	More Difficult
Persons Involved	Generally 2: author & recipients	Generally more than 2: author, recipients, main character, supporting characters
Purpose of the Text	Stated	Implied
Passage Length	Generally Shorter	Generally Longer
Scripture Addressed	OT Poetic & Prophetic Books, Epistles (Romans to Revelation)	OT Historical Books (Genesis to Nehemiah), Gospels & Acts
Audience Interest	Lower	Higher
Application Temptation	To Generalize	To Moralize

B. *Levels of Meaning:* Another challenge relating to narrative preaching concerns the "level" in the text in which the preacher should communicate.

1. Statement of the View: Fee and Stuart (*How to Read the Bible for All Its Worth*, 74), teach three different levels in each biblical story which I have adapted into this chart:

Top	Middle	Bottom
Universal	Israel	Individual
Theocentric	Corporate	Moral
Creation Fall of humanity Power of sin Need for redemption Christ's incarnation Christ's sacrifice	Call of Abraham Abrahamic lineage Slavery in Egypt Exodus Conquest National sin & disloyalty God's patient protection Fall of Israel Fall of Judah Exile Restoration	Joseph sold into slavery Gideon's doubts & fleece David's adultery w/ Bathsheba Plus hundreds of other individual narratives

2. Evaluation: There is no question that God works His divine purposes on the universal, national, and individual levels. But this theory raises some difficult questions:

   a. "At *which* of these levels should the narrative preacher focus?"

   b. "Should one preach at the *same* level in each sermon in a series or *vary* the levels?"

   c. "If the same level is maintained, won't this have problems?" Each message cannot be about God's sovereignty to establish His kingdom (universal level), or His work with Israel (nationalistic level), or simply about individualistic morals (practical Christian living) divorced from God's great plan.

   d. "If the levels are varied in a series, what criteria should tell the preacher the right level for each sermon? the congregation? intuition? cues from the text? the toss of a coin?"

   e. "At the individual level, can we always tell whether the main character is a good or a bad example?" Consider Abigail's behaviour towards David by appeasing his anger against her tyrant husband Nabal (1 Sam. 25). Is she a good example of a wise wife or a bad example of a wife who ignores her husband's authority? The text does not say.

3. These questions do not have easy answers. As an example of the perplexities involved, consider the choice of possible main ideas regarding the story of Joseph being sold into slavery by his brothers (Gen. 37). What is the lesson?

   a. Universalistic? "God sovereignly prepares us as instruments to redeem His people"

   b. Nationalistic? "Israel (or the church?) should not take the place of God during trials"

   c. Individual? "Telling others our arrogant dreams can get us into a heap of trouble"

   Notice how the focus here changes from being on God to the community to the individual. Later in this study we will see how to solve this seeming conflict of ideas.

C. *The Uniqueness of Old Testament Narrative:* Fee and Stuart elaborate on this by describing what OT narratives are *not* (pp. 75-77). These four observations may have some application to NT narrative as well (Gospels and Acts):

1. "Old Testament narratives are not just stories about people who lived in OT times. They are first and foremost stories about what *God* did to and through these people...God is the hero of the story."

2. "Old Testament narratives are not allegories or stories filled with hidden meanings. But... the ways that God works... are not always comprehensible to us."

3. "Old Testament narratives do not always teach *directly.* They emphasize God's nature and revelation in special ways that legal or doctrinal portions of the Bible never can, by allowing us vicariously to live through events and experiences rather than simply learning *about* the issues involved in those events and experiences."

4. "Each individual narrative or episode within a narrative does not necessarily have a moral all its own... In this way, narratives are analogous to parables... in that the whole unit gives the message, not the separate individual parts."

D. The preceding discussion may seem to indicate there are more obstacles than blessings in narrative preaching. This gives you two choices:

1. Forget preaching narrative due to the higher risk of misinterpreting the text or the extra time needed to understand it.

2. Pray that God will give you the understanding needed then proceed with caution to the steps below. (Please pick this choice!)

III. Methodology: How to Preach Narratives

A. We have already studied the "Seven Steps to Preach Expository Sermons" (pp. 27-28) and applied these to preaching from the epistles.

B. Now let's see how these same steps apply to narrative preaching. Most things will be the same, so the following seeks to highlight only where understanding and communicating stories is different *from didactic literature:*

1. Study:

a. Passage: Choose one which is a literary unit, which generally means you must cover more text than in didactic literature. It is generally difficult to preach 1-2 chapters in the epistles in a single sermon, but this is very common in story-telling.

b. *Exegesis:* Follow the principles discussed in Reed's article (pp. 121-29), especially:

1) Biblical narratives have a unity of author (God) so they revolve around a central theme. Look for the individual contribution to this theme in your passage.

a) I believe the Bible is summed up as "God glorifies Himself by restoring His kingdom to Himself." Restated: Every episode in Scripture in some sense (big or small) contributes to the Lord bringing creation (His kingdom) back into harmony with Him for His own honor (p. 122). Here's my plug for preaching primarily at the "top level." We definitely need more theocentric preaching!

b) Good narrative preaching recognizes this central (vertical) theme of Scripture and therefore does not simply treat texts as moral lessons for life (a horizontal perspective). See pages 142-47 for further explanations here by Greidanus.

2) Study the setting, characters, and plot (see pp. 122-23 details).

c. Keep in mind these *ten principles for interpreting narratives* (Fee & Stuart, 78):

1) An Old Testament narrative usually does not directly teach a doctrine.

2) An Old Testament narrative usually illustrates a doctrine or doctrines taught propositionally elsewhere.

3) Narratives record what happened—not necessarily what should have happened or what ought to happen every time. Therefore, not every narrative has an individual identifiable moral of the story.

4) What people do in narratives is not necessarily a good example for us. Frequently, it is just the opposite.

5) Most of the characters in Old Testament narratives are far from perfect and their actions are, too.

6) We are not always told at the end of the narrative whether what happened was good or bad. We are expected to be able to judge that on the basis of what God has taught us directly and categorically already in the Scripture.

7) *All* narratives are selective and incomplete. Not all the relevant details are always given (cf. John 21:25). What does appear in the narrative is everything that the inspired author thought important for us to know.

8) Narratives are not written to answer all our theological questions. They have particular, specific limited purposes and deal with certain issues, leaving others to be dealt with elsewhere, in other ways.

9) Narratives may teach either explicitly (by clearly stating something) or implicitly (by clearly implying something without stating it).

10) In the final analysis, God is the hero of all biblical narratives.

2. Structure: Look for the major movements in the story and make each a Main Point.

3. CPT: It is more difficult to discern the exegetical idea in narratives, so extra care must be shown to assure it is in line with authorial intent (cf. 116, 141-47). See, for example, how both Genesis 23 and 38 contribute to the argument of the book.

a. Sometimes the author plainly states the exegetical idea of his stories (e.g., John 20:30-31). However, this is rare. For example, in John's next section (John 21:1-14) Jesus appears to the disciples on the Sea of Galilee. The intent of this story has few, if any clues in the text, making its meaning difficult to discern.

b. Refer to Reed's other clues to meaning on pages 125-27 (particularly final stress, allusions, synthetic design, and questions to ask regarding the passage).

4. Sermon's Purpose: The three developmental questions are the same as for didactic literature. They require us to either explain, prove, or apply the text.

a. "What does the (exegetical) idea mean?" If your EI needs explanation, you need to rework it and make it more understandable. In narrative, this probably won't be your emphasis in most cases.

b. "Is it true?" Sometimes it is necessary to *prove* that your interpretation of the text is accurate (e.g., that Jonah really was swallowed by a large fish, that the days of Genesis are literal days, that creation is more feasible than evolution, etc.).

c. "What does it mean to me?" Most often this third issue (*application*) will be the developmental emphasis.

* Reed's study (p. 129) places this step on sermon purpose *after* the homiletical idea rather than before it. He says that these three questions relate to the sermon idea rather than the exegetical idea, but actually they come into play to *determine* the sermon idea (and thus chronologically come before it). In actual practice, it is difficult to follow these steps in precise order due to natural overlapping of your understanding in the study process. Sometimes in sermon preparation the steps do not follow in exact order.

5. CPS or Homiletical Idea (Main Idea, or MI): With a little background, people can understand the details and even the exegetical idea of biblical stories, but your challenge is to show how the story relates to them. This sounds easy but then becomes a challenge in cases where obedience means killing someone (e.g., annihilating the Amalekites)! How can an accurate but relevant sermon idea be obtained from narrative texts?

   a. The MI must flow from an understanding of the EI. How would the first readers have understood the message of the passage? Reed (p. 128) elaborates on this.

   b. Generally you will need to find a common principle between the biblical times and modern times. For example, David showed faith in God by *killing* Goliath but our faith is shown in *saving* lives or trusting God amidst obstacles; yet the common element is faith, so this should be seen in your MI.

6. Structure: Outline the Sermon.

   a. Use one of the structures suggested by Reed (pp. 120, 129-34). In particular, you may want to emphasize the inductive format as this is the form used by most narratives. In other words, most Bible stories do not give the point of the story *first* and *then* tell the story. Rather, the point of the story unfolds later as the story is told (inductive design).

   b. When preaching through a narrative series, vary the structure so all your narrative messages don't sound alike. Some samples:

Structure	**Passage**	**Title & Pages in These Notes**
Simple Inductive, Cyclical Inductive, & Simple Deductive	Acts 6:1-6	"Solving Problems in a Growing Church" (pp. 49-50)
Simple Inductive	Judges 1:8-15	"The God of Extra Delights" (pp. 52-53)
Simple Inductive	Ezra 9	"My Family is ~~My~~ God's Business" (pp. 174, 178)
Cyclical Inductive	Nehemiah 1—2	"Where God Guides, God Provides" (pp. 115-16)
Cyclical Inductive	John 13:1-17	"Dirty Saints" (pp. 148-53)

   c. *Oral Clarity:* Narrative preaching seems to allow for the ability to move around the stage more than didactic messages—especially if the narrative is done as a monologue.

      1) Planning your movements in advance can be a great aid to clarity. Grant and Reed's instructions on stage movement reproduced on pages 113-14 are very helpful.

      2) Another example of movement is the series of "Xs" and "Os" in the left hand column of the Ezra monologue (pp. 170ff.). These indicate stage movements, the "X" designating where I stood in relation to the audience (which was seated above the "Xs" and "Os"). My first place to speak was centre stage up front. Then during the background section of the monologue I moved to my left and back, etc.

      3) The above is applied to monologues, but the same works well in normal preaching of narrative passages. In fact, get a clip on microphone and move around (with

purpose) in *all* your sermons! Here's a great advantages of preaching without notes since you need not be tied to the pulpit.

d. *Introduction and Conclusion:* Differences between beginning and ending narrative and didactic preaching are not significant. However, an introduction to a message which starts directly with a story is more acceptable and interesting than starting with propositions. Many "ho hums" (attention grabbers) at the start of a sermon are stories anyway. If the biblical story can be told in an interesting way, this can be an effective way to begin. See my summary of Reed's sample structures (p. 120) for details on introductions and conclusions.

7. Preach:

a. Practice your delivery without notes, using the same guidelines as page 80.

b. An often asked question from my students is: "How do I tell stories?" At first I thought this a rather odd question since we all tell stories all the time. "Sure we all know how to do this!" I reasoned. But after hearing a few hundred stories in the classroom I finally caught on that this is very much a lost art. Perhaps these tips will help:

1) The best source I know is Grant and Reed, *Telling Stories to Touch the Heart.* This practical guide assumes no storytelling experience and gives a very detailed, step-by-step method.

2) Good storytelling begins with good public reading, so practice reading out loud, especially to children (cf. p. 9).

3) The way you introduce your story can make or break it.

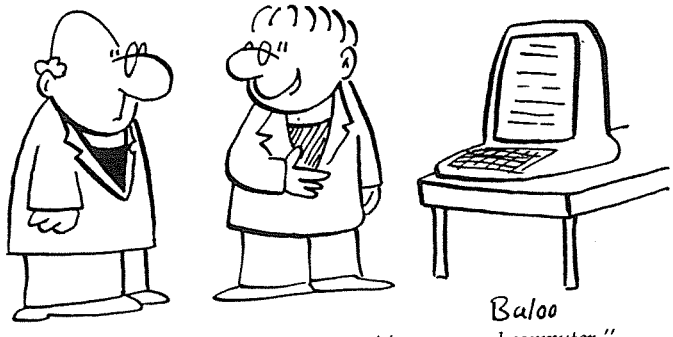
a) Always tell stories inductively. In other words, never give the lesson up front. A student once began with a statement like, "I want to tell you a story about a friend of mine who died and taught me trust in God." The story that followed had no suspense since we all knew that her friend was going to die in the end!

b) Don't tell us that you are going to tell us a story—just tell it! Since people love (well told) stories, your first few words will perk their interest sufficiently without any announcement.

4) Practice movement when you practice your message.

5) Follow the guidelines regarding the "window" on page 8.

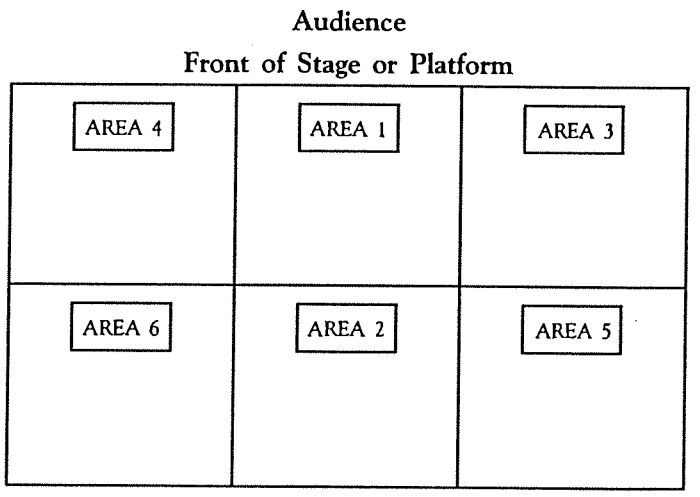
6) Never read a story from an illustration card. Reading quotes is fine but reading takes the life out of a story.



"I use it to write all my sermons — it's a parsonal computer."

Why should I want to move while I tell the story? Wouldn't that be distracting?

It would be distracting if your movements were random and without purpose. Here's another rule of thumb: Every movement you make will either add to or detract from the overall effectiveness of your story. So you want to take advantage of the best, most appropriate movement in order to achieve maximum effectiveness. Block out your storytelling area on a diagram into six equal parts:



Blocking Diagram

The psychology of aesthetics tells us that audiences respond instinctively and uniquely to each area of the stage as marked off above. They perceive each block as relatively "strong" or "weak," "cool" or "warm." You can assign the scenes of your story to each area accordingly.

The six areas are numbered in order of "strength." As a general rule, the closer you are to your audience, the stronger the impression you will make. The farther away you are, the more remote you will seem. As you face the audience, scenes played to your right (stage right) will tend to be warmer emotionally, while scenes played to your left (stage left) will tend to be cooler.

Now that you have identified the dominant emotional tone of

Audience

AREA 4	AREA 1	AREA 3
Cool Distress, Conflict (Ex., David's argument with Eliab)	Medium Confrontational (Ex., David's fight with Goliath)	Warm Intimate (Ex., David praying to the Lord as he picks up the stones.)
AREA 6	**AREA 2**	**AREA 5**
Cold Extreme Alienation (Ex., Death of Goliath)	Medium Distant, Aloof (Ex., David arriving at the camp)	Warm More "Distant" (Ex., David's smaller scene with Jesse)

each of the scenes, try placing the scenes in the appropriate boxes on your blocking diagram. You may wish to have one blocking diagram per major scene or outline point.

You are going through the process of mastering the material even as you decide where to place your short scenes. One word of caution: don't move into a new or different block simply because the emotion of the scene changes. The blocked-out areas do not dictate that you *must* move; they merely suggest that, if movement is appropriate, they would probably be the best places to play out the scene.

You must have a logical reason for a move into a new area. As the storyteller, you may sense a need to move that your character does not share. Let's say that David is in Area 5 receiving instructions from his father Jesse. You, the storyteller, know that he needs to move into Area 2 for the next scene. So you locate the army of Israel in Area 2. Where else would David go?

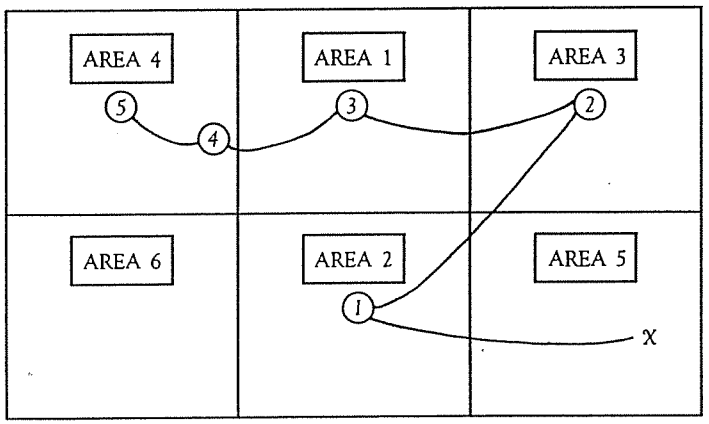
You help your characters by arranging and structuring the different elements of your story in such a way that movement from one area to another is natural rather than forced. The worst reason to move is because you have to change areas, while the best movement is the inevitable one.

Here is an easy way to block your text on a sheet of paper so

you can rehearse with it in hand. Keep the typed copy of your story in a three-ring binder. Be sure to double- or even triple-space when you type it out. Then draw blocking charts on blank sheets of paper and place them in the notebook opposite each typed page of the story. Write "Audience" above the charts and label the blocks Areas 1–6 accordingly. In this way, when you carry the notebook onto the stage for rehearsals, the text and the corresponding movements will be right before you.

Now draw an X on the chart at the point where you wish to begin speaking. If you were performing the story of David and Goliath, your first X would be in Area 5, the block in the lower right-hand corner.

Audience



David and Goliath
Act 1, scenes 1–6

After David has received instructions from Jesse, he will move into Area 2 and probably a bit closer to the audience (see chart above). You can indicate this move by a line beginning at X and ending where you wish to stop in Area 2. Suppose you wish to move when you reach the word "went." In your manuscript, then, put a *1* (for the first move) over the word "went." On your blocking page, place a *1* at the spot where you intend to play out the next scene. In the third scene, David may move into Area 3 to greet his brothers. The fourth scene would find

him in Area 1, seeing Goliath right out over the heads of the people in the back row. David moves over to the edge of Area 4 to play out the fifth scene, then into the center of Area 4 for the confrontation with Eliab in the sixth scene. There he will play out the last scene in the first act.

Draw on a blocking chart *only* the moves that you will make while telling the opposite page of the story. On successive blocking charts, mark an X to show your position on stage as you start the next page of the story. If you make no moves on a given page of the story, the opposite blocking chart will have only an X showing where you are. Remember to write the numbers of the moves over the words (or at the places) in the manuscript where you wish to move.

Once you have decided where you should be and why you should be there, you have blocked your story. Now you are ready to memorize.

The best way to remember your story is to associate your lines with areas and physical movements. Whenever possible, get on your feet and walk the story through according to your blocking. When you can't walk it through physically, do so mentally. Imagine the audience in front of you. Carry your notebook, especially in the beginning, and follow your blocking. If it doesn't feel natural, adjust accordingly. Try moving on a different word or a different sentence. Nothing is set in concrete. Stay flexible.

How much should I memorize at one time?

Take one small scene at a time. Read all the words off the page for that scene. Read the scene through out loud 20 to 30 times. Then say the first line without looking at the text. Once you have it cold, move on to the second line, and say it with the first line. Progress through the scene until you have the whole scene under your belt. There may be some minor movement within the scene, but you will want to save the major movements for scene breaks in order to help punctuate the story's action. Before you know it, you will have the first act down.

Pace yourself. Don't try to memorize a whole act in one evening if you don't feel like it. Each person is different, so don't push yourself too hard. Take it slowly and enjoy it. Memorizing is hard work, but this initial investment of your time will yield great dividends every time you tell the story.

Focusing Your Narrative Idea on Authorial Intent

An Example from Nehemiah 1—2

A Different Approach

Nearly all evangelical commentaries expound the Book of Nehemiah as if it's a manual on effective leadership (see Edwin M. Yamauchi, "Ezra-Nehemiah," *EBC*, 4:591; Donald K. Campbell, *Nehemiah: Man in Charge*, 23; Charles R. Swindoll, *Hand Me Another Brick: A Study in Nehemiah*; Gene A. Getz, "Nehemiah," *BKC*, 1:673-74). I think this emphasis has problems:

1. It is highly questionable that the authorial intent of the Book of Nehemiah is to train readers as better leaders. I feel that it is unlikely that the first readers saw the primary purpose of the book as holding up the man Nehemiah as a model to follow.

2. This perspective places undue attention to the human instrument, Nehemiah himself, rather than on the God who sovereignly led him to accomplish the task (1:5, 9-11; 2:4b, 8b, 12, 18, 20).

3. It puts the stress on *how* the walls of Jerusalem were raised which is but a minor focus. The real emphasis should be *why* the walls needed to be rebuilt (2:17).

4. Ezra and Nehemiah in the Hebrew Bible constitute one book and therefore should share a common theme. Since Ezra is not a manual on leadership then this should not be expected of Nehemiah as well.

5. This view also limits proper application only to those in leadership positions.

6. The leadership view hardly takes into account the historical background and chronology. A careful evaluation of the historical situation and how the book fits into the total plan of God brings the Lord to center-stage as the sovereign, covenant-keeping God (see below).

Exegetical Outline

Prologue

Historical background: About 1500 years earlier God had promised Abraham that He would make his descendants into a great nation possessing the entire land from the River of Egypt to the Euphrates (Gen. 12:1-3; 15:18f.). Hundreds of years later God further spoke through Isaiah and many other prophets that a Davidic king called the Messiah would rule Israel in this geographical domain. However, the nation rebelled against the Lord and went into exile as the Law had warned (Deut. 28). The key question in the minds of the exiled Jews was whether God would still fulfill His promise of a new nation in the land of Israel under the Messiah as ruler. Was He still sovereign even though His people were in such distress?

Historical foreground: No doubt people wondered how a Messiah could be offered to the nation if Israel was still in exile. For example, one of the messianic prophecies stated that He would be born in Bethlehem (cf. Micah 5:2, written nearly 200 years earlier). Surely the nation would have to somehow return to its homeland for the Messiah to offer the kingdom—an offer that indeed did occur under Christ (Matt. 10:7) but was rejected. Furthermore, Daniel had recorded only a few years earlier that Artaxerxes' command to rebuild Jerusalem under Nehemiah (444 BC) would begin "seventy sevens" (490 years) of prophetic years in the nation's history (Dan. 9:25). The 69th prophetic year (483rd year) would culminate in the death of Messiah in AD 33 (Dan. 9:26).

The postexilic era testifies to the gracious hand of a sovereign God who had not forgotten His promises, for under Zerubbabel and Ezra a small remnant had returned from Babylon, rebuilt the temple and begun reforms. The building under Nehemiah completes this record with a direct fulfillment of Daniel 9:25. Thus, the account of Ezra-Nehemiah shows that God is indeed the God over all gods (Ezra 1:2), a covenant-keeping God. Likewise, His people need to keep the covenant as well (Yamauchi, *EBC*, 4:590).

Exegetical Idea: The means by which God sovereignly fulfills His promise to preserve Israel in a restored Jerusalem was through preparing Nehemiah to rebuild the city wall.

I. (Ch. 1) The means by which the sovereign God ("God of heaven," vv. 4, 5) prepared to restore the covenant city of Jerusalem was through placing upon Nehemiah both the burden and position to be used of God.

   A. (1:1-3) God informed Nehemiah that the covenantal people and city were in shame.

   B. (1:4-11a) God moved Nehemiah to recognize both Israel's sin and His promises and ability to restore the nation.

   C. (1:11b) God had placed Nehemiah in a prominent position to restore Jerusalem to the stature befitting Jerusalem as the city inhabited by the sovereign Lord.

II. (2:1-8) The means by which the sovereign God prepared to restore Jerusalem was through granting Nehemiah's requests before King Artaxerxes.

III. (2:9-20) The means by which the sovereign God prepared to restore Jerusalem was through granting Nehemiah honor among the people after his inspection of the walls despite opposition from those outside of the covenant community.

   A. (2:9-10) God granted Nehemiah honor before the Persian officials over the opposition.

   B. (2:11-16) God granted Nehemiah honor before the people by being informed of the task.

   C. (2:17-20) God granted Nehemiah honor before the people by reminding them that God was surely in their work despite opposition.

Homiletical Exposition (cyclical inductive form) Title: "Where God guides, God Provides"

Introduction:
1. Sometimes it seems like things happen without any divine purpose to it all (examples).
2. How we can know that God wills for us to accomplish a certain task (subject)?
3. When Israel was taken away from her land things looked hopeless—could the nation once again be completely restored? The Book of Ezra records a partial restoration, but the city walls were still destroyed. Was God still with *them* and still the sovereign Lord? And how can *we* be reminded that God is really sovereign (subject restated)?

I. God sovereignly *provides both the vision and ability* to do certain ministries.

   A. God gave Nehemiah both the burden and position to be used in rebuilding the wall (ch. 1).

   B. God gives us vision and strategic positions to serve Him when we are obedient.

II. God sovereignly *prepares other key people* as resources to help His people do His tasks.

   A. God granted Nehemiah's requests before King Artaxerxes (2:1-8).

   B. God prepares the hearts of others to enable us to do His will too.

III. God sovereignly *helps His people gain the respect needed* to accomplish His tasks.

   A. God gave Nehemiah honor among the people despite opposition after he inspected the walls (2:9-20).

   B. God gives us the credibility needed to do His will.

Main Idea: God sovereignly gives us the needed vision, resources, and credibility to do His tasks.
Restatements: Where God guides, God provides! He always equips us to accomplish His will.
Application: What vision, place of influence, resources, and credibility has He given *you?*

Focusing Your Idea on Audience Need

A. Duane Litfin, *Public Speaking: A Handbook for Christians*, 122-35 (1 of 3)

Figure 4

The Need of the Audience

Tentative Idea: America needs to look to nuclear power as the energy source of the future.

	Explanation	Proof	Implication
Third graders studying a science unit	Entire emphasis	None	None
College students taking an elective ecology course	Some	Main emphasis	None
A crowd gathered around a soapbox on a street corner	Some	Much	Ultimate emphasis
A group of state or federal legislators	Some	Much	Ultimate emphasis
A convention of nuclear engineers	Little	Little	Almost the entire emphasis

Figure 5

The Response Desired

Tentative Idea: America needs to look to nuclear power as the energy source of the future.

	To Understand	To Believe	To Behave in Some Particular Way
Third graders studying a science unit	*To understand that nuclear power is one of the important sources of energy in America*	None	None
College students taking an elective ecology course	Some, as a basis for belief	*To accept nuclear power as one useful source of energy in America's future, despite its potential hazards*	None
A crowd gathered around a soapbox on a street corner	Some, as a basis for action	Much, as a basis for action	*To vote in favor of allowing a nuclear-power plant to be built locally*
A group of state or federal legislators	Some, as a basis for action	Much, as a basis for action	*To vote yes on a bill which limits environmental controls on nuclear power*
A convention of nuclear engineers	Little	Little, and only as a reinforcement	*To initiate an organized lobbying effort in Congress*

Focusing Your Idea on Audience Need (2 of 3)

Figure 6
Purpose for the Speech
Tentative Idea: America needs to look to nuclear power as the energy source of the future.

	To Inform	To Persuade .	To Actuate
Third graders studying a science unit	*To inform the audience that nuclear power is one of the important sources of energy in America*	None	None
College students taking an elective ecology course	Some, as a step to persuasion	*To persuade the audience that nuclear power can be accepted as one important source of energy in America's future without hazarding the ecology*	None
A crowd gathered around a soapbox on a street corner	Some, as a step to action	Much, as a necessary preliminary to moving the audience to action	*To mobilize the audience to vote in favor of allowing a nuclear-power plant to be built locally*
A group of state or federal legislators	Some, as a step to action	Much, as a necessary preliminary to moving the audience to action	*To mobilize the audience to vote yes on a bill which limits environmental controls on nuclear power*
A convention of nuclear engineers	Little	Little	*To mobilize the audience to begin an organized lobbying effort in Congress*

Figure 7
The Persuasive Process

	1. ATTENTION	2. COMPREHENSION	3. YIELDING	4. RETENTION	5. ACTION
NEED	Explanation		Proof	Implication	
RESPONSE	To understand		To believe	To behave in a particular way	
PURPOSE	To inform		To persuade	To actuate	

Focusing Your Idea on Audience Need (3 of 3)

Figure 8
Arriving at a Final Statement of the Idea

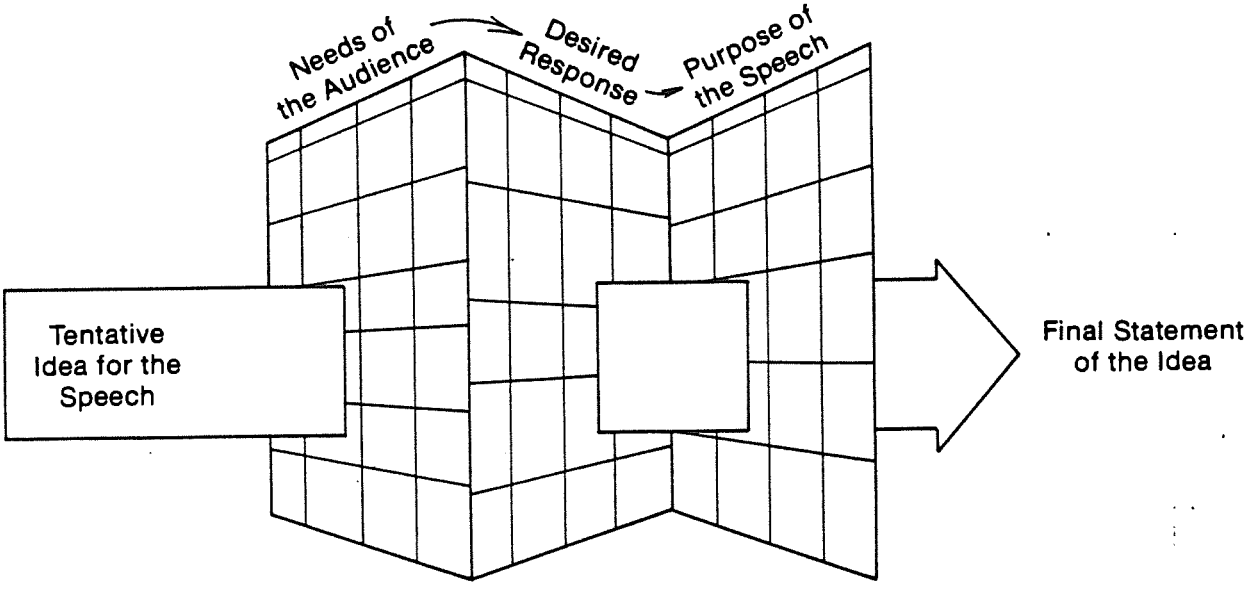


Figure 9
Final Idea
Tentative Idea: America needs to look to nuclear power as the energy source of the future.

	What Was, Is, or Will Be	What the Audience Should Think or Feel	What the Audience Should Do
Third graders studying a science unit	Nuclear power is one of the important sources of energy in America today		
College students taking an elective ecology course		We in America should look to nuclear power as one potential energy source for the future	
A crowd gathered around a soapbox on a street corner			You should vote yes on Proposition 3, which will allow the nuclear-power plant to be built locally
A group of state or federal legislators			You should vote yes on Bill 743D, which will limit environmental controls on nuclear power
A convention of nuclear engineers			You should organize a concentrated lobbying effort in Congress in favor of nuclear-power-plant construction

Outlining Narrative Sermons

Following this page is Dr. John W. Reed's excellent 16 page explanation of narrative preaching entitled "Preaching Biblical Narratives." It includes the need, unique elements, interpretation, and sermon design of narrative exposition. Reed's final six pages on sermon design are summarized below. Please use the following outline as an aid to understanding this section more clearly.

1. **Inductive form**: story—idea—application (i.e., idea given *after* story)

   a. Simple Inductive: story—idea—application pattern *given once*

      1) Basic: introduction—story—idea—application
      2) Replaced introduction: story—idea—application
      3) Replaced introduction/application: story—idea
      4) Replaced introduction/application/idea: story

   b. Cyclical Inductive: story portion—idea—application pattern *repeated*

      1) Multiple Complements
      introduction (subject)
      story (seg. #1)—subject + compl. #1—application
      story (seg. #2)— subject + compl. #2—application
      story (seg. #3)— subject + compl. #3—application
      conclusion (MI)

      2) Developed Complement
      introduction (subject)
      story (seg. #1)— subject (compl. part #1)—application
      story (seg. #2)— subject (compl. part #2)—application
      story (seg. #3)— subject (compl. part #3)—application
      conclusion (MI)

      3) Restated Idea (Single Complement)
      introduction (subject)
      story (seg. #1)—idea stated—application
      idea restated— story (seg. #2)—application
      idea restated— story (seg. #3)—application
      conclusion

2. **Deductive form**: idea—story—application (i.e., idea given *before* story)

   a. Simple Deductive: idea—story—application pattern *stated once*

      1) Basic: introduction—idea—story—application
      2) Replaced introduction: idea—story—application
      3) Replaced introduction/application: idea—story
      4) Replaced introduction/application/idea: story

   b. Cyclical Deductive: idea—story portion—application pattern *repeated*

      1) Multiple Complements
      introduction
      subject +compl. #1—story (seg. #1)—application
      subject +compl. #2—story (seg. #2)—application
      subject +compl. #3—story (seg. #3)—application
      conclusion

      2) Restated Idea (Single Complement)
      introduction
      idea stated—story (seg. #1)—application
      idea restated—story (seg. #2)—application
      idea restated—story (seg. #3)—application
      conclusion

Outline

I. Why preach narrative? (p. 1)
II. What is narrative? (pp. 1-5)
III. How can I interpret narrative? (pp. 5-9)
A. Book's design (pp. 5-6)
B. Passage's contribution (pp. 7-9)
IV. How do I preach narratives? (pp. 9-14)
A. Inductive (pp. 9-12)
B. Deductive (pp. 12-14)
Bibliography (pp. 15-16)

PREACHING BIBLE NARRATIVES

Dr. John W. Reed
(Chairman of the Dept. of Pastoral Ministries, Dallas Seminary)

I. Why should I preach Bible narratives?

A. It is stressed by biblical exhortation.

1. 2 Tim. 3:16-17--All Scripture is profitable.
2. Rom. 15:4--Whatever is written is for our instruction.
3. 1 Cor. 10:1-13--Paul tells us that many of the experiences of the Old Testament are for our instruction.

B. It is stressed by biblical examples.

1. The Bible is primarily narrative in its content. God chose to use narrative to chronicle the history of the creation, the early world, the Hebrew nation, the life and works of Christ, and of the early church.

2. 1 Cor. 15:1-11--The gospel is a narrative.

3. Acts 7 is an example of a sermon based on narrative. This sermon had a very sharp point.

II. What elements are pertinent to biblical narrative literature?

A. Unity of authorship is accepted for the individual books of the Bible. Therefore literary concerns of analysis are highly important.

"The primary understanding of any work of literature has to be based on an assumption of its unity . . . . Further, every effort should be directed toward understanding the whole of what we read."
--Northrup Fry

Cf. Gros Louis, Literary Interpretation of Biblical Narratives, pp. 10-15, Ryken, The Literature of the Bible, pp. 13-30.

B. The characteristics of narrative literature are relevant to an understanding of narrative meanings.

Leland Ryken states: "In order to discuss a story in terms appropriate to the form, a reader must develop an intuitive sense of narrative conventions. The goal is not to run every story through this framework, but rather to develop an awareness of the conventions so you will recognize them when you encounter them in a story. These conventions refer simply to the inner workings of a narrative. To put the phrase into the form of a question, What are the ingredients of a story? What things should a reader pay attention to when reading a story? Every literary form has its conventions and methods; to read with understanding, a reader must know what questions to ask of a given work. The founder of Time magazine once said in an interview, 'Time didn't start this emphasis on stories about people--the Bible did.' A Hebrew saying claims that God created people because He liked stories. Everyone likes a story."

1. Narrative literature presents a discernible design. It does not give a random flow of experience but a literary distillation of experience. This prompts us to search for the organization and pattern in a story.

   a. What is the unifying narrative design? In other words, what is the literary family to which the story belongs? Once a work is put into the context of other similar works, the unifying design at once becomes clear. The chief possibilities for narrative include heroic narrative, biography, tragedy, comedy, satire, epic, parable. David + Goliath

   b. What further elements of structure provide an overriding framework that gives the story unity and coherence? How do the individual episodes relate to this unifying framework?

      The sequential unfolding of the narrative is the crucial factor. The overall story that the Bible tells is an episodic plot that leads to the glory of God in the consummation of His kingdom. One of its major themes is that of salvation history.

Kingdom theme

2. Narrative literature presents an interaction of setting, character and plot.

   a. What is noteworthy about the setting?

      There is usually a correspondence between a setting and the events and characters that take their place within it. The scene is the fit container for the event and agent. We can even deduce the quality of an event or character from the quality of the scene. There is something highly instructive about the King of the World being born in a stable.

cf Naaman

   b. What are the important characteristics of the characters in the story? Among other important considerations, pay attention to the development that characters undergo.

      1) In literary narrative, character motivation is discernible, and when a character undergoes a change, we are given the transition from one state to the other (King Saul, Saul of Tarsus).

      2) It is a characteristic of narrative to embody values and viewpoints in a central character or hero. The protagonist undertakes an experiment in living that leads to a conclusion; this sequence, in turn, constitutes a comment about life (Abraham, Joseph, Moses).

Who is the main character?

      3) The Chroniclers almost always put their heroes into situations that test their ability. The kinds of tests are physical, mental, and moral, or spiritual (the latter category of stories strikes us, usually, as being more profound than the first category--Daniel 1).

c. What are the plot crises and how are they resolved?

1) The central character is called the protagonist. Anything or anyone who gets in his way is an antagonist. The crises that results makes up the plot. Put all of this together and you have an idea.

2) It is characteristic of narrative that a story is structured as a crisis or set of crises that become increasingly intense and then are resolved in a climax or epiphany. Sometimes the ongoing movement is accentuated by foreshadowing, suspense, or reversal (in which an event produces the opposite result from that which was intended by a character--Mordecai and Haman).

3) Many stories about human heroes follow a movement from problem to solution, or a quest that leads to illumination, meaning or fulfillment. At times the plot may best be described as a problem that is finally solved (David and Goliath).

= principles

3. Narrative literature is full of archetypes. Archetypes represent broad universals about mankind in his relation to his fellow men and to God. Archetypes may be very helpful in establishing points of contact and common ground with an audience. "The sickle has become the combine but Ruth is still Ruth."

Frye calls an archetype "a typical or recurring image" and further states, "The fact that the archetype is primarily a communicable symbol largely accounts for the ease with which ballads and folk tales and mimes travel through the world, like so many of their heores, over all barriers of language and culture." Anatomy of Criticism, pp. 99, 107 (cf. also pp. 141-43).

What archetypal images or plot motifs or character types are important in the story?

a. An adventure story. It involves risk. The life of faith in God is more open to the surprising and unexpected and unplanned than the life of the unbeliever. Hebrews 11 recounts the adventures of several Old Testament heroes.

b. A rescue story. God in Christ has done for us what we cannot do for ourselves. What could we do if God did not justify the ungodly? Colossians 1:13-14 states, "He has delivered us from the dominion of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins." Abraham's rescue of Lot (Gen. 14).

c. A hero making the great moral choice (Daniel).

d. A quest story. Hebrews 11:16 says regarding people of faith, "They desire a better country, that is, a heavenly one." In John 14:2-3 Jesus is recorded as saying, "I go to prepare a place for you . . . , that where I am there you may be also." Abraham seeking the promised land.

e. An exile or wanderer story--Cain (Heb. 11:13).

f. A death-rebirth story (Jonah in the whale). The experience of Christ in His death and resurrection is the sublime archetype. The story of Lazarus in John 11 fits here.

Ephesians 2:1, 4-6 states, "And you he made alive, when you were dead through . . . trespasses and sins . . . . But God, who is rich in mercy, . . . even when we were dead through our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ . . . , and raised us up with him."

g. A test. First Peter 4:12 states, "Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal which comes upon you to prove you, as though something strange were happening to you" (Dan. 1 and 6).

h. A story with a happy ending. The broad flow of salvation history is permeated with the optimism of a glorious future. The book of Revelation ends with the conventional story motifs of fairy tales: a hero who kills the dragon, marries the bride, celebrates the wedding with a feast, lives happily ever after in a palace glittering with jewels. "Beloved, . . . it does not yet appear what we shall be, but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is. And everyone who thus hopes in him purifies himself as he is pure" (1 John 3:2-3). The Joseph narrative is a classic example of this.

4. Narrative literature <u>seeks to please the reader by the skill and beauty and artistry of the performance</u>, quite apart from the content of a specific story. This allows us to talk about the sheerly artistic dimension of a story, since this is always an important part of its total meaning.

a. What is stylistically important or interesting about the text? (Cf. page 29 <u>Literary Interpretation of Biblical Narratives</u>.)

5. Narrative literature embodies a <u>theme(s) or world view</u> in the story. Note that this question can be answered fully only after the previous questions have been explored. A story communicates its theme(s) through the <u>form</u> of narrative. It is impossible to do justice to <u>what</u> a story says without observing the form; if the form is a story instead of an essay, it is necessary to ask the narrative questions listed above.

a. It is characteristic of narrative to embody its message in such a way that the reader has to interpret the data--the characters and events, for example--in order to determine what the message is. Literature works by indirection; it <u>places a responsibility of interpretation on the reader</u>.

b. It is characteristic of narrative that there is often a discrepancy between the reader's superior information and a character's ignorance; this is called <u>dramatic irony</u> (Esther). Job

c. Narrative makes abundant use of contrasts and foils and dichotomies.

d. What use does the author make of the standard narrative devices? These devices include the following: foreshadowing, climax, recognition, reversal, suspense, dramatic irony, poetic justice, dialogue, dramatic staging or stationing of characters in a scene, symbolism, allusions, image patterns, foils (parallels and/or contrasts that set off or heighten a primary character or motif).

e. Hebrew narratives are often filled with repetition of significant experiences, authorial comments, or summary statements (Ex. 14).
\ crossing Red Sea mentioned often in OT

f. Historical narrative is often didactic. The author presses a point home, at times with great force (2 Chron. 15:16-17).
\ Asa's reforms

III. How may I find the meaning of biblical narrative?

A. To find the meaning of the author in his full literary design the following exegetical concerns may be investigated:

1. Biblical narratives are often illumined by authorial comments (John 20:30-31).
\ "written that you may believe"

Pharisees' spiritual blindness vs. man's physical blindness

a. Where such explicit commentary is available as in John 9:35-41, the exegetical concerns of didactic literature are often valid in the analysis of this commentary.

"The vivid consciousness of values in biblical literature accounts in part for the subjective stance of the narrator that is found there. Biblical writers . . . are always taking sides. Author intrusion is common, with writers making didactic comments and clarifying the motives of God or other characters. Descriptions of events or characters tend to be evaluative, often in terms of the moral categories of right and wrong" (Ryken, The Literature of the Bible, p. 19).

b. Where authorial clues are lacking the process of finding meaning is much more subjective (John 21:1-14).

2. The law of final stress can be an important factor in the evaluation of clues. Since the natural flow of narrative development tends to be most often inductive, the key to the meaning of a book or a segment of a book may hang at the back door (1 Chron. 10:13, John 9:39-41).
Saul's death from sin Spiritual blindness

3. Allusions by the writer or characters in the narrative to earlier authors or events may reveal important insights (Luke 24:27, 44-48; Dan. 9:13-19).
Christ fulfills OT prophecies
captivity from sin

4. Plot diagrams may be particularly helpful (cf. Robert Speight, Jr. ThM project, 1979, "A Study of the Nature of Crisis in the Narratives of the Gospel of John").

5. The basic analytical methods of Traina, Methodical Bible Study and Jensen, Independent Bible Study are always useful. This approach can be helpful if the process is applied in the light of the characteristics of narrative literature. An analytical chart is excellent to develop the overview. One should be sensitive to break the sections at the episodes of the story rather than chapter headings.

6. Often the methodical Bible study processes fall short in the area of adequate synthesis. The two most vital questions in producing this synthesis seem to be:

   a. What is the writer's purpose in writing his book? Why does the author speak?

      1) The answer to this question is best stated in a purpose clause. For example, it might be argued that Esther was written to show God's providential care in preserving Israel even though the nation was not actively concerned about returning to Jerusalem.

   b. It is also important to express the message of the book by the question, what is the writer saying?

      1) This question should be answered in a full statement with subject and complements.

      2) This idea should be expressed in its exegetical form as it relates to the author's primary audience. In the case of Esther it might be said that the author's subject was God's preserving care of Israel. The completed idea might be stated as follows: God's preserving care for Israel, reveals God's faithfulness to His promises in spite of Israel's apparent indifference.

   c. It would even be possible to attempt an application of the author's idea for his intended audience. If Israel heard this message of God's faithfulness in the face of their indifference, would they not be moved to respond to Him by being faithful?

   d. If one obtains a clear view of what is happening in the overall design of the narrative, the individual episodes will be greatly illumined.

   e. The later analysis of the individual episodes will tend to verify or alter your conclusions concerning the major thrust of the narrative. This is a making-matching, constructive-correlative process that must continually occur as the study progresses.

B. Now that an understanding of the major narrative design has been achieved, one may prepare an individual episode for the sermon.

1. The same general approach described above may be applied to this episode to determine its design and its meaning. These additional questions may be informative:

a. How does the individual episode relate to the larger narrative design?

b. What have I learned about God?

c. What have I learned about God's dealing with the characters and the events of the narration?

d. What have I learned about the interaction of the characters with God?

e. What have I learned about the interaction of the characters with one another?

f. What have I observed about the characters' reaction to events and circumstances?

g. What have I learned about how the characters cope with crisis?

1) What problems did the characters encounter?

a) How was movement impeded?
b) How were the people threatened?
c) What was the nature or the degree of the conflict?
d) What forces were operative in producing crisis?

2) How was the crisis resolved?

a) What was the outcome of the action?
b) What forces interacted to produce victory or defeat?

h. What insights have I gained from relating this episode to the writer's major purpose?

i. What insights have I gained from relating this episode to the writer's message?

j. If I have made a tentative application of the writer's message to his original audience, how is the application related to this segment?

2. How can I best express the meaning of this segment in a life-related sermon idea?

a. What message would the author have wished his first readers to have received? The subject may grow out of interaction with the writer's major purpose and message and should be consistent with these conclusions.

1) It is essential that the subject be isolated and limited initially in the development of the idea.

A study of John 9 would indicate that the author is continuing his emphasis on Jesus being the light of the world (John 8:12). In John 9:5 Jesus states "While I am in the world, I am the light of the world." At the end of the narrative concerning the healing of the man born blind Jesus makes a summary comment, "For judgment I came into this world, that those who do not see may see; and that those who see may become blind." The Pharisees did not understand that Jesus was talking about spiritual blindness in contrast to spiritual sight (John 9:40). In verse 41, Jesus tells them that if they would admit that they were spiritually blind, they could find the way to spiritual sight. Since they would not admit their blindness, they remained in their sins.

It would seem then that the subject of John 9 could be called "gaining spiritual sight" or "gaining a saving knowledge of Christ." Such a subject is clearly in line with the author's purpose-message statement in John 20:30-31. The subject is stated in its exegetical form as it relates to the author's original audience.

2) The complement of the subject should now be stated in its exegetical form.

In the case of John 9 the idea might be stated as follows: "Gaining spiritual sight requires that an individual admit his spiritual blindness (sin) and receive his light (salvation/forgiveness of sin) from Christ when Christ comes to him."

b. What valid reasons can I state for my choice of sermon idea? (We seem to have a natural ability to draw lessons from experience. Evangelical Christian Sunday school literature and teachers may have conditioned us to accept specific ideas for specific stories.)

c. What clues may be found in other parts of the Bible that may illumine the meaning of the segment?

d. Is the idea consistent with the full body of biblical truth?

e. How can I best state this idea for my audience today?

The John 9 exegetical idea discussed above might be refined to meet the needs of a contemporary audience. "Salvation requires admission of sin and acceptance of the forgiveness provided by Christ."

3. How may I relate the functional questions to the sermon idea?

a. What does the idea mean? (explain it)

This question is usually clarified by the narrative itself. If the idea has to be explained, it may not be a correct judgment on the part of the exegete.

b. Is it true? (prove it)

When the narrative is illumined by authorial comment, it should not be necessary to validate the idea to any great degree. Where authorial comment is lacking, it may be necessary to support the exegete's judgments concerning the idea.

c. What does it mean to me? (apply it)

This is the crucial question in preaching biblical narratives. It is often necessary to take an idea from another time, setting or circumstance and relate it to the contemporary scene of the audience. The account of David's victory over Goliath (1 Sam. 17) must be handled carefully both in the development of the sermon idea and the application.

Generally anecdotes and illustration will find their way into biblical narrative sermons in the application phase.

IV. How may I organize a biblical narrative sermon?

Generally speaking, biblical narrative sermons develop using the basic building blocks of story, sermon idea or principle and application. Dewoody, Klaasen and Pancoast studied more than one hundred sermons preached from narrative passages. They observed that in 72% of the sermons the development was inductive with the story being unfolded first, then the sermon idea drawn and the application made. The remaining 28% used some type of deductive development with the sermon idea being disclosed first and then the story told and the application made.

The forms discussed below are only general guidelines and are not intended to restrict the development of other creative dimensions of such preaching.

It would appear that the dominance of the inductive form is a natural response to the basic form that narratives follow. Inductive development provides opportunity for the building of interest through suspense. It would seem possible to treat most narratives in a variety of ways.

A. The inductive forms.

1. The basic inductive form

Introduction

I. Story

II. Sermon Idea (Subject and Complement)

III. Application

Absorbed Elements: Conclusion

introduction 2. A variation of the basic inductive form can be developed with the story itself forming not only the first point but also taking the place of the introduction. Story replaces introduction

I. Story

II. Sermon Idea (Subject and Complement)

III. Application

Conclusion

introduction + application 3. An additional variation of the basic form could be the same as above with deletion of the application. In this case the story is told in such a way that when the sermon idea is stated the application is so obvious that it is not asserted.

I. Story

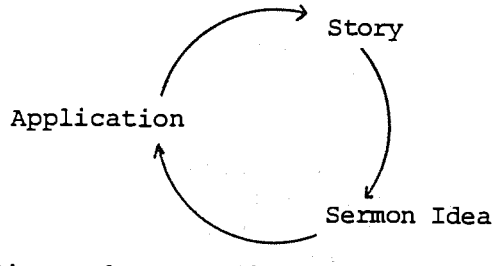
II. Sermon Idea (Subject and Complement)

introduction, application, + idea 4. Another variation of the basic form is the telling of the story in such a way that both the sermon idea and application are understood.

I. Story

5. The inductive cyclical forms

This form is called the inductive cyclical form because the basic building blocks of the inductive narrative sermon (Story-Sermon Idea-Application) are repeated more than once in the sermon. The process might be illustrated as follows:



Each cycle of these elements might be called a movement. A sermon of this type would have more than one movement but probably not more than four or five. Most might have three. The movements will probably develop along the natural order (literary design) of the narrative. In each case the sermon idea is not stated until the story elements have been presented.

multiple complement cyclical inductive

a. The first example used has multiple complements.

Introduction

Introduce Subject or Cold Open (Begins with narration) what characterizes a man of faith? Gen 22

I. The subject is illuminated by the first movement or part of the narrative.

A. Story (1st Segment)
B. Sermon Idea (Subject and First Complement) "A man of faith obeys God" (vv 1-5)
C. Application

II. The subject is illuminated by the second movement or part of the narrative.

A. Story (2nd segment)
B. Sermon Idea (Subject and Second Complement) "A man of faith trusts in God's provisions." (vv 6-12)
C. Application

III. The subject is illuminated by the third movement or part of the narrative.

A. Story (3rd Segment)
B. Sermon Idea (Subject and Third Complement) "A man of faith always experiences God's blessings." (vv 13-19)
C. Application

Conclusion

developed complement cyclical inductive

b. A further variation might involve an inductive development of the sermon idea within the movements of the sermon. The form would be the same as the inductive cyclical form presented above but the progressive movements would disclose portions of the unfolding complement until the final movement reveals the completed idea.

Introduction

Introduce Subject or Cold Open (Begins with narration)

I. The subject is illuminated by the first movement of the narrative.

A. Story (1st Segment)
B. Sermon Idea (Subject and first part of the unfolding complement) "A man of faith obeys God."
C. Application may be given here or held until the idea is complete.

II. The subject is illuminated by the second movement of the narrative.

A. Story (2nd Segment)
B. Sermon Idea (Subject and second part of the unfolding complement) "Because a man of faith is obedient he always trusts in God's provisions."
C. Application may be given here or held until the idea is complete.

III. The subject is illuminated by the third movement of the narrative.

A. Story (Final Segment)
B. Sermon Idea (Subject and final part of the unfolding complement) "The man of faith who obeys God and trusts in His promises will always experience His blessings."
C. Application God blesses us for obeying and trusting Him in faith

restated idea cyclical inductive

c. In an inductive cyclical form that contains an idea that has a single complement a hybrid form may become necessary.

Introduction

Introduce Subject or Cold Open How should we solve problems relating to church growth?

I. The subject is illuminated by the first movement or part of the narrative.

A. Story (1st Segment) The Jerusalem church had a food distribution problem because of growth (Acts 6:1)
B. Sermon Idea (Subject and Complement) Growth problems are solved by lay leadership.
C. Application presented here or later in the sermon.

(When the first movement is completed the full statement of the idea is revealed. The remaining movements then became deductive.)

II. Sermon idea restated. Church growth shouldn't burden pastors with more administration

A. Second segment of the story is told as it explains or illuminates the principle. The apostles refused to neglect their teaching and prayer ministry (6:2-4)
B. Application may be given now or after the final point.

III. Sermon idea restated. More lay people are needed to administer problems related to growth

A. Final segment of the story told as it explains or illuminates the principle. The Jerusalem church chose seven men to administer the food and God blessed (6:5-7)
B. Application

B. The deductive forms

1. The basic deductive form

Introduction

I. Sermon Idea (Subject and Complement)

II. Story

III. Application

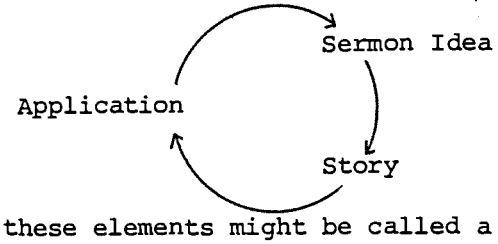
Conclusion

As seen above, the introduction and first main segment of the sermon tend to blend together since the sermon idea constitutes the first building block of the deductive narrative sermon.

2. A variation of the basic form could involve the presentation of the sermon idea and then the telling of the story in such a way that the application is clear without being stated.

3. The deductive cyclical form

This form is called the deductive cyclical form because the basic building blocks of the deductive narrative sermon (Sermon Idea-Story-Application) are repeated more than once in the sermon. The process might be illustrated as follows:



Each cycle of these elements might be called a movement. A sermon of this type would have more than one movement but probably not more than four or five. Most would likely have three.

restated idea cyclical deductive

a. A sermon with a principle containing a single complement might be outlined as follows:

Introduction Pharisees criticized Jesus for eating with sinners (Luke 15:1-2)

I. Sermon idea stated. God loves the wayward

A. The first segment of the story told as it explains or illuminates the principle. A shepherd goes after a lost sheep (3-7)
B. Application may be given at this point or after the final point.

II. Sermon idea restated. The Lord cares for sinners due to their value.

A. The second segment of the story is told as it explains or illuminates the principle. A woman searches for her lowly coin (8-10)
B. Application may be given now or after the final point.

III. Sermon idea restated. The Heavenly Father longs to fellowship with an erring son.

A. Final segment of the story told as it explains or illuminates the principle. A father celebrates the return of his wayward son (11-32)
B. Application

Conclusion Go love pagans like God does!

multiple complement cyclical deductive

b. The deductive cyclical form with multiple complements might be outlined as follows:

Introduction A man of faith is obedient, trusting, and blessed (MI) Gen. 22

I. Subject stated with first complement. A man of faith obeys God (1-5)

A. The first segment of the story is told as it develops the subject and first complement.
B. Application may be given at this point or after the final complement. Usually in this type sermon the application will be made with each complement.

II. Subject stated with second complement. A man of faith trusts in God's provisions (6-12)

A. The second segment of the story is told as it develops the subject and second complement.
B. Application may be given here or after the final complement.

III. Subject stated with third complement. A man of faith experiences Gods blessings (13-19)

A. The third segment of the story is told as it develops the subject and third complement.
B. Application

Conclusion

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Books

Adams, Jay E. Pulpit Speech. Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, 1971.

Davis, Henry Grady. Design for Preaching. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1958.

Frye, Northrop. Anatomy of Criticism. Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1957.

Gros Louis, Kenneth R. R., ed. with Ackerman, James S. and Warshaw, Thayer S. Literary Interpretations of Biblical Narratives. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1974.

Hirsch, E. D., Jr. The Aims of Interpretation. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1976.

_____. Validity in Interpretation. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1967.

Jensen, Irving L. Independent Bible Study. Chicago: Moody Press, 1963.

_____. Jensen's Study of the Old Testament. Chicago: Moody Press, 1978.

Kaiser, Walter C., Jr. The Old Testament in Contemporary Preaching. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1973.

Kort, Wesley A. Narrative Elements and Religious Meanings. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1975.

Perry, Lloyd M. Biblical Sermon Guide. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1970.

Ryken, Leland. The Literature of the Bible. Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1974.

Torrey, R. A. How to Study the Bible. Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1955.

Traina, Robert A. Methodical Bible Study. Wimore, Kentucky: Robert A. Traina, 1952.

Vos, Howard. Effective Bible Study. Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1956.

Wald, Oletta. The Joy of Discovery in Bible Study. Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1975.

Articles

Erwin, Dan R. "Preaching from the Narrative Passages of the Old Testament." The Standard April 15, 1977, p. 14.

Hein, Rolland N. "A Biblical View of the Novel." Christianity Today January 5, 1973, pp. 17-19.

Johnson, Dan R. "Guidelines for the Application of Old Testament Narrative." Trinity Journal Spring 1978, pp. 79-84.

Ryken, Leland. "Good Reading in the Good Book." Christianity Today January 17, 1975, p. 4.

Wilson, Eugene A. "The Homiletical Application of Old Testament Narrative Passages." Trinity Journal Spring 1978, pp. 85-91.

Theses and Projects

Dewoody, Robert L., Klassen, John C., and Pancoast, James T. "A Study of Biblical Narrative Sermon Forms" (ThM project, Dallas Theological Seminary, 1977).

Prehn, Gerhard W. "A Guide to Formulating and Applying Principles form Old Testament Narrative Literature" (ThM project, Dallas Theological Seminary, 1976).

Sherwood, Jeffrey E. "The Forms and Methods of Preaching on Biblical Characters" (ThM project, Dallas Theological Seminary, 1977).

Sundman, Roy D. "Guidelines for the Exegesis of Narrative Literature in the New Testament" (ThM thesis, Dallas Theological Seminary, 1977).

Books Designed for Teaching the Bible as Literature for high school students published by Literature of the Bible, Inc., Chicago, Illinois. Each book also has a teacher's guide.

Edited by Leland Ryken, Heroes of the Bible.
Edited by Leland and Mary Ryken, Heroines of the Bible.
Edited by Dan Vander Ark, The Epic of the Exodus.



"I use it to write all my sermons—it's a parsonal computer."

Characteristics of a Good Speech Idea

A. Duane Litfin, *Public Speaking: A Handbook for Christians*, 83

HOW TO DISCOVER AN IDEA FOR YOUR SPEECH

Idea: *To be a good tennis player one must possess dedication as well as natural ability.*
Subject: the requirements to be a good tennis player
Complement: one must have (1) dedication and (2) natural ability

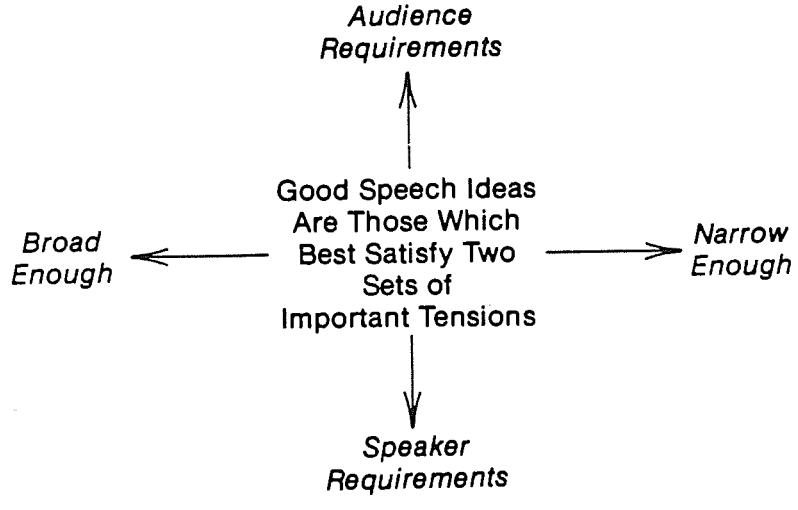
Idea: *Let everyone be quick to hear, slow to speak, and slow to anger.*
Subject: what should characterize all Christians
Complement: they should be (1) quick to hear, (2) slow to speak, and (3) slow to anger

The matter of ideas with their subjects and complements is so basic that we will not be free of it anywhere in the process of preparing a speech. We will return to it again and again.

Characteristics of a Good Speech Idea

Not all ideas are good speech ideas. A good idea for a speech is one which successfully balances two sets of sometimes opposing requirements: First, the idea must meet the needs of both the speaker and the audience; second, the idea must be broad enough to be significant, but also narrow enough to be handled in a relevant way (see Figure 2).

Figure 2



Deciding Sermon Structure

How do you know whether to preach your passage in an inductive or deductive sermon? And how do you know whether to be cyclical or simple in structure?

While no "hard and fast" rules can be determined to answer such complex questions, perhaps the following simple contrasts may begin to help:

	Simple	**Cyclical**
Inductive	Description: Both the main idea and the application come at the end of the message. Good for: • Controversial subjects • Antagonistic audiences • Familiar main ideas • Story telling • Passages where a parallel HO MP for each EO MP is difficult • If the passage doesn't raise developmental questions	Description: The main idea appears at the end of the sermon but application is made throughout. Good for: • Subjects not easily applied • Subjects not easily made interesting • Antagonistic audiences who are not patient enough to wait to hear the implications of an idea
Deductive	Description: The main idea appears in the introduction but is not applied until the end of the message. Good for: • Friendly audiences which have high interest in a subject and can wait for its implications • Unfamiliar ideas which may be readily accepted but take more time to explain or apply	Description: The main idea appears in the introduction and then is also applied throughout the message. Good for: • Friendly audiences who are also impatient to wait for the implications of an idea • Complicated ideas which are not easily applicable (they need application at each point of the message)

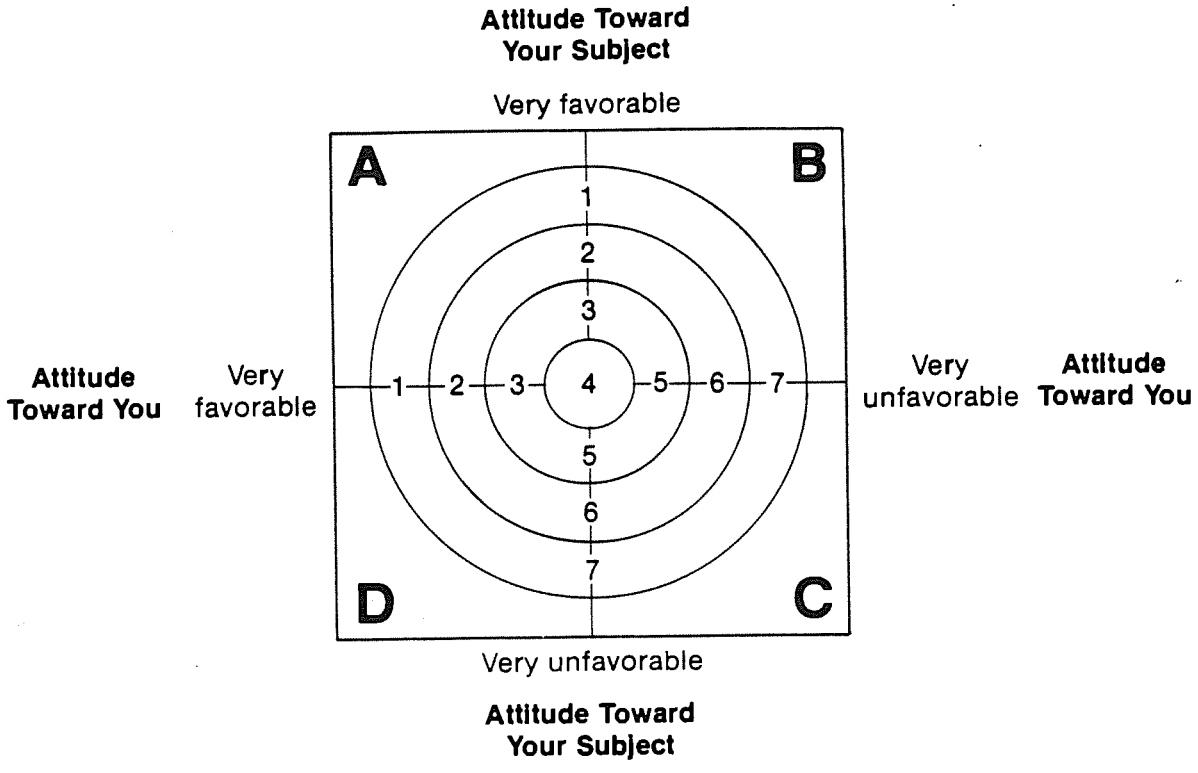
Question: Which of these structures is the *worst* one to use?

Answer: The one you use all the time!

Remember! None of these is actually any better or worse than another as a general rule. But if you use any of them all the time and become very predictable in your speaking, you will lose the edge of surprise which makes an excellent speaker. In other words, use variety!

Attitudes Toward You and Your Subject

A. Duane Litfin, *Public Speaking: A Handbook for Christians*, 234



estimate of the audience's attitude toward your subject, with (1) representing a very favorable attitude, and (7) representing a very unfavorable attitude. Next, do the same for your estimate of their attitude toward you as a speaker. Mark these numerical values on both scales of the graph. Now plot your results by drawing two straight lines until they intersect on the graph: first, a vertical line through the number you selected on the "Attitude Toward You" (horizontal) scale; and, second, a horizontal line through the number you selected on the "Attitude Toward Your Subject" (vertical) scale. The point where these two lines intersect defines the task you have before you. Note the quadrant in which this point of intersection falls and then check the appropriate passage below for a discussion of your task. If the point of intersection falls within the center circle, see the section on the center circle (p. 239).

Preach the Word—Not Man's Ideas!

Singapore Bible College "Pray for Us" Article (December 1994)

The Role of the Bible in Exposition



Rick Griffith
(ThM. PhD, Dallas Theological Seminary)
teaches homiletics full-time at SBC.

The preacher stood and read his text;
The listeners sat and looked perplexed.
For they could see his words after that
Could just have easily been pulled from a hat.
Asked brother to father and sister to mother
How Bible and sermon related to each other.
Asked husband to wife and friend to friend
Why the beginning had nothing to do with the end.

The above scenario has occurred far too often in our churches. How many times have we witnessed the speaker open up his Bible with a sense of authority at the start of his message, only to never again refer to Scripture until the benediction? I once saw a speaker introduce Paul's conversion in Acts 9 as his key text, but then expound "four principles on momentum" without a single comment tied to the passage before him. Why is our preaching less and less biblical, despite the proliferation of study Bibles, Bible software, and books on biblical themes?

The church of Singapore needs to grasp the place of Scripture in preaching. Article 1 of SBC's Statement of Faith states, "The sixty-six canonical book of the Bible are given by inspiration of God and together comprise the only inerrant and infallible authority for faith and practice." Every SBC director, administrator, lecturer, office staff member, and candidate for graduation must believe this statement, and for good reason. If a person thinks that the Bible is only man's word, or has errors, or is fallible in any sense, his foundation for preaching will crumble. The world has millions of books, but only One of these is perfect and authoritative. Why not preach this One? What could a preacher say that could possibly be more important than what he declares from Scripture? We need a revival of relevant, biblical preaching.

How does biblical preaching happen? It starts with a solid foundation in Bible and theology. This is why every degree granted at Singapore Bible College has between 40% to 84% of its credit hours devoted to Bible and theology. God has blessed the ministry here for 42 years with this sure foundation. In the English School of Theology, eleven of the sixteen full-time faculty have earned doctorates, mostly in biblically-oriented subjects (and two more are in PhD studies). Some may believe that having a more educated faculty will inevitably lead to a more liberal institution. Such caution is warranted if we depart from our historical moorings in biblical study. However, we are ever aware that to depart from the text in study will eventually lead to a departure from the text in preaching and practice. Therefore, we train our students to preach the Scripture in line with the author's intent.

Preachers need to recognize the danger of adopting biblical criticism, but an enemy here in Singapore which has made even more inroads is modernity. The modern world constantly cries for the preacher to "be relevant." What should we look for in a sermon-and how can we tell if it is good or not? The Christian often answers, "I didn't fall asleep. The pastor held my attention the whole time!" Relevancy is vital, but even relevancy must be linked to the text. After all, what could be more relevant than what God says? Let us preachers not allow our congregations to "gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear" because this will cause them to "turn their ears away from the truth and turn aside to myths" (2 Tim. 4:3-4). The more theologically ignorant Christians are, the more open they are to heresy. On the other hand, preaching sourced in the text of Scripture will protect ourselves and our hearers from being lead astray (1 Tim. 4:16).

Pastors often complain that they receive very little respect by those in their churches. Pastors run here and there trying to meet every need of their church. Many are bound with a technological chain (beeper). Why do Singapore pastors constantly search for outside speakers to fill their pulpits? Why do they complain that Japanese and Korean pastors get so much more respect? This is a complex question, but part of the answer is for the church members to correctly see their pastor as an equipper through his teaching/preaching ministry (Eph. 4:11-12). If pastors can regain their biblical responsibility to preach the Word (2 Tim. 4:2), this will do much to help their people to recognize the pastor's spiritual authority. It may even free up adequate time in their schedules to prepare properly for an effective pulpit ministry. One can't help but notice that Japanese and Korean pastors rarely give up their pulpits, and as a result they command respect from their people. How much more this is true of a pastor who not only preaches regularly but also preaches based on the authority of the biblical text.

So how can we have better, biblical preaching? We need to get back to the basics: the Bible changes lives, so preach it! Preach it relevantly and frequently. Pastor, "be diligent in these matters; give yourself wholly to them, so that everyone may see your progress" (1 Tim. 4:15). Listener, free up your pastor's schedule so he can adequately equip you for ministry through his preaching. Ask him what he does that you could do instead so that he has time to give his "attention to prayer and the ministry of the word" (Acts 6:4).

THANKSGIVING & PETITION

1. Thank God for His protection and provision in 1994. Pray that we may discern and obey His guidance in 1995.
2. Thank God for His blessing and guidance upon the team of administrators, lecturers and staff. Please continue to pray for quality in leadership, administration and teaching.
3. Praise God for those who have prayed and given faithfully over the years. Pray that God will raise up more who will support the College with prayer and financial gifts.
4. Pray for the new intake of students in July 1995. Pray that the Lord will send students of His choice to be trained for the ministry.
5. Pray for the Lord's guidance and wisdom as students and lecturers proclaim Christ near and far during the holidays. Please pray for travel mercy and fruitful ministry.

they can carry the burden of truth with clarity, thoroughness, and interest, and, therefore, have come to be regarded as standard":

> What is it? What is it worth? How does one get it?
> Explore, explain, apply
> The problem, the solution
> What it is not, what it is
> Either/or
> Both/and
> Promise/fulfillment
> Ambiguity, clarity
> Major premise, minor premise, conclusion
> Not this, nor this, nor this, nor this, but this
> The flashback (from present to past to present)
> From the lesser, to the greater.[54]

Since most of these forms are found in the Bible,[55] chances are that one of them is particularly suited for the selected preaching-text. If not, another form may need to be devised, for the object is to present the sermon in a form that will do justice to the text as well as to the purpose and theme of the sermon.

Whatever form is chosen, all sermons ought to aim at the clarity, pointedness, and coherence of the didactic form and the vividness, movement, and total listener involvement of the narrative form. In practice this requirement means that within the overall form of the sermon, preachers may wish to incorporate other forms: narrative portions in a didactic sermon and discreet teaching in a narrative sermon. For no matter what form is used, the sermon ought to address the whole person; the sermon ought to be "life-size in the sense of touching all the keys on the board rather than only intellectual or emotional or volitional."[56]

54. Craddock, *Preaching*, 176-77. See Stott, *Between Two Worlds*, 230-31, for the five sermon forms suggested by Sangster and ten by Luccock.

55. Craddock, *Preaching*, 176-80, identifies 1 Cor 11:17-34 as problem/solution, Hebrews as constantly arguing from the lesser to the greater, as does Luke 16:10-12; Josh 24:14-15, Matt 7:13-14, and Luke 16:10-12 as either/or.

56. Craddock, *Overhearing the Gospel*, 137. Allen and Herin, "Moving from the Story," 159, suggest that for textual forms such as law codes, prophetic oracles, and wisdom sayings, "it is sometimes vivid and useful to sketch the story out of which the saying grew rather than to plunk it down in the pulpit like a chicken without feathers."

Dr. Rick Griffith Homiletics I
The Relevance of the Sermon
Sidney Greidanus, *The Modern Preacher and the Ancient Text* (1 of 6)
141

CHAPTER 8

The Relevance of the Sermon

WITHOUT genuine relevance there is no sermon. Relevance for the church here and now is the final goal of sermon preparation, yet sermons that have remained on the right track through the process of text selection, theme formulation, and form selection often derail at the point where the message for Israel or the early church must be transformed into a relevant sermon for contemporary congregations. In this chapter we shall seek to discern where and why sermons derail in applying the message and how we can keep the sermon on track right to its final destination.

In discussing the relevance of the sermon, we shift our focus toward the congregation. We cannot, of course, shift our attention exclusively to the congregation because the sermon must hold the horizons of text and congregation together. The sermon has been described as "an ellipse with two foci: the text of the Bible and the situation of the hearers. . . . Preparing and delivering a sermon means that these two foci have to be interrelated in a process of continual reciprocity."[1] Therefore, as one cannot select a text, formulate a sermon theme, and select a sermon form without an eye to the congregation, so one cannot reflect on the relevance of the sermon without an eye to the text—it is, after all, the relevance of the *text* that must lend relevance to the sermon.

Lest the question of relevance start off on the wrong foot, it is important to recognize further that preachers are not called to *make* a text relevant. To formulate the issue in terms of making the text relevant is "self-

1. Runia, *TynBul* 29 (1978) 41. Ian Pitt-Watson makes a similar point with the vivid imagery of a bowstring: "Every sermon is stretched like a bowstring between the text of the Bible on the one hand and the problems of contemporary human life on the other. If the string is insecurely tethered to either end, the bow is useless" (*Preaching*, 57); cf. idem, *Primer*, 46-55, on "exegesis of the text of life."

defeating from the start." If the preaching-text is not relevant, "no technique, however conscientiously and enthusiastically applied, will *make* it so," says Lawrence Toombs. If the text *is* relevant, however, the task of preachers is not to make the text relevant but to *show* "the relevance already inherent in the passage."[2] The key issue here is that preachers see the Bible for what it is, kerygma, proclamation, address, and that they therefore approach the Bible as the relevant word of God—spoken originally, to be sure, to people worlds removed from us, but nevertheless as a relevant word for that situation. The task of preachers, then, is to search "deeply enough into the text and its original situation and intentions to *find* its relevance."[3] The resulting problem facing preachers with respect to relevance is not that of *making* the text relevant but that of transferring a relevant message from the past to the present.

Even though recognizing the text's past relevance puts a different face on the problem of preparing a relevant sermon, the actual problem should not be underestimated. For in transferring a relevant message from the past to the present, preachers will need to cross the historical-cultural gap that separates the world of the text from our contemporary world. James Smart calls it a "perilous road from then to now, perilous because there are so many ways in which he [the preacher] can lose the essential content of his text (or can lose his listeners) in the course of the journey. The broad gap between then and now is the region in which so many students and preachers get lost. Their training in seminary was much more concentrated on the 'then' than on how to get from then to now."[4] Consequently, it will be worthwhile to discuss in some detail both improper and proper ways of bridging the historical-cultural gap.

THE HISTORICAL-CULTURAL GAP

The Challenge of the Gap

CRADDOCK describes the historical-cultural gap as "the geographical, linguistic, psychological, cosmological and chronological gulf between the ancient Near East and modern America."[5] Usually this gap is perceived as an obstacle to relevant preaching—and that it is—but one can also view the gap much more positively. Morna Hooker remarks that "the gospel must be expressed in our own language and culture and situation if it is to be relevant. Its expression will naturally vary from century to century, country to country, person to person."[6] These different historical-cultural

2. Toombs, *Int* 23 (1969) 303.
3. Stendahl, "Preaching from the Pauline Epistles," 307.
4. Smart, *Strange Silence of the Bible*, 34.
5. Craddock, *As One Without Authority*, 117.
6. Hooker, *Epworth Review* 3/1 (1976) 54.

expressions can be observed in the Bible itself, as a comparison between the Old and the New Testaments or between the Gospels will show. Consequently, the historical-cultural gap is not merely an obstacle for understanding the message today but evidence of the fact that the biblical text was *relevant* in the past—it addressed a specific people's needs in a historical-cultural form which was immediately understood. In other words, the historical-cultural gap we perceive from our vantage point is accounted for by the fact that the word of God indeed entered history in a relevant way. If preachers today wish to address their contemporary hearers with the word of God in an equally relevant way, they have no choice but to carry the message across the gap to the present historical-cultural situation. Instead of an obstacle to relevant preaching, therefore, the historical-cultural gap can be viewed as a challenge to preach the message just as relevantly today as it was in the past. The challenge is to let the word of God address people today just as explicitly and concretely as it did in biblical times. As John Stott puts it: "It is across this broad and deep divide of two thousand years of changing culture (more still in the case of the Old Testament) that Christian communicators have to throw bridges. Our task is to enable God's revealed truth to flow out of the Scriptures into the lives of the men and women of today."[7]

Unfortunately, in the laudable attempt to be relevant, many sermons fail to bridge the gap properly and as a result come to ruin. It will be instructive first to examine some of these faulty efforts.

Improper Ways of Bridging the Gap

Allegorizing

Probably the oldest way of trying to bridge the historical-cultural gap is the way of allegorizing. This method of interpretation "arose among the pagan Greeks, [was] copied by the Alexandrian Jews, was next adopted by the Christian church and largely dominated exegesis until the Reformation."[8] The allegorical method searches beneath the literal meaning of a passage for the "real" meaning. For example, the Song of Solomon may be understood as expressing not the love between a man and a woman but the love between Christ and the church. Or the parable of the Good Samaritan may be interpreted in the fashion of Origen: the traveler (Adam) journeys from Jerusalem (heaven) to Jericho (the world) and is assaulted by robbers (the devil and his helpers). The priest (the law) and the Levite (the prophets) pass by without aiding the fallen Adam, but the Samaritan (Christ) stops to help him, sets him on his beast (Christ's body)

7. Stott, *Between Two Worlds*, 138.
8. Ramm, *Protestant Biblical Interpretation*, 28. Cf. pp. 24-45.

Dr. Rick Griffith Homiletics I
The Relevance of the Sermon
Sidney Greidanus, *The Modern Preacher and the Ancient Text* (2 of 6)
142

and brings him to an inn (the church), giving the innkeeper two denarii (the Father and the Son), and promising to come back (Christ's second coming).[9]

Although the method is largely discredited today, preachers desperately trying to cross the gap with a worthwhile contemporary message are still known to fall back on it—not in a flagrant way, usually, but by allegorizing a few elements of a passage. For example, what is a preacher to do with the narrative of the wedding at Cana (John 2:1-11)? It has been suggested that the point of this narrative for today is, "Where we are at the end of our resources, where we have no wine, where we cannot rescue ourselves from our predicament, Jesus manifests his glory (i.e. the saving presence and action of God)."[10] Most will agree that allegorizing is a bridge from then to now that fails to bear the weight of the text: it fails to bring across the plain meaning of a passage in its historical context and thus falsifies the message.

Spiritualizing

A bridge very similar to allegorizing but apparently much more acceptable is spiritualizing. Spiritualizing takes place when the preacher discards the earthly, physical, historical reality the text speaks about and crosses the gap with a spiritual analogy of that historical reality. For example, Gen 37:24 is interpreted as follows: "Joseph is thrown by his brothers into a pit—a dreadful physical fact. But morally and spiritually, too, it may often seem that the soul of man is in a pit."[11] The problem with being thrown into a pit, apparently, is that that "dreadful physical fact" will not cross the gap because the preacher's hearers have not been thrown into a pit by their brothers. But by spiritualizing that experience, at least that element will transfer for instant application because contemporary hearers, being depressed sometimes, can relate to being spiritually or mentally in a pit. Or take the narrative of Jesus stilling the storm (Mark 4:35-41): since not too many of the hearers will find themselves threatened by a destructive, roaring storm on a foaming, raging sea, for the sake of instant application the storm and the sea are spiritualized to "storms" on the "sea of life": "Jesus whose trust in God was not deceived is still present amid the storms and stresses of life."[12] Other examples of spiritualizing abound. "Jacob's physical struggle at Peniel becomes our spiritual struggle; the physical blindness of the two men in Matthew 9 becomes our spiritual blindness; the woman's reaching to touch the border of Jesus' garment becomes our spiritual reaching to touch the spiritual Jesus; and the Cana wedding invitation to the earthly Jesus becomes our invitation to the heavenly Jesus."[13]

Like allegorizing, spiritualizing is also a bridge that fails to bear the weight of the text as is evident both in the discarding of the physical reality and in the transfer of only one or two elements of the text (why only the pit and not the brothers, the stripping, the robe, etc.?). In not doing justice to the text in its historical context, spiritualizing does not preach the message of the text but deforms it. Moreover, the elements that are spiritualized and the parallels that are drawn to the hearers today are subjective and rather arbitrary choices. On several counts, therefore, spiritualizing fails to do justice to the text, and its use undermines the authority of the sermon.

Imitating Bible Characters

A very popular way across the historical-cultural gap is that of imitating the characters in the Bible passage. We are not dealing here with the question of using Bible characters for illustrative purposes but with the question of using the characters in the preaching-text as examples or models for imitation. This way of crossing the gap also has credentials going back as far as the ancient Greeks, and it is still found today in sermons,[14] Bible introductions, and commentaries. For instance, one commonly hears today that the patriarchs are "examples of universal human attitudes toward life": "Abraham exemplifies the man of faith, even though his faith fails on one occasion; Isaac exemplifies the patient and accepting man; Jacob exemplifies the man of steadfast hope, who at first tries to realize his expectations in all too human fashion, but is later portrayed as the man who hopes and trusts in God. The Joseph novella shows even more clearly Joseph's spiritual development from pride to humility. In this way the narratives . . . apply to man in every age."[15]

Christian preachers realize, of course, that the biblical characters are presented not as ideal persons and examples but as sinful creatures with warts and all. This realistic biblical portrayal forces preachers who insist on imitating biblical "examples" to make a judgment whether a particular action is good or bad. But to make this judgment is more difficult than

9. Stanton, "Presuppositions in NT Criticism," 63.

10. Fuller, *Interpreting the Miracles*, 117-18. Note that with allegorizing the historicity of the event no longer plays a role; cf. p. 118: "The changing of water into wine is not something that happened long ago: it is something that happens in our midst, as we become new creatures in Christ."

11. W. R. Bowie in *IB*, 1, 754.

12. C. E. Johnson, *Verbum Vocale*, 239, referring to V. Taylor, *The Gospel According to St. Mark*, 2nd ed. (repr. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1981), 273; and H. E. Luccock in *IB*, 7, 708-11.

13. See my *Sola Scriptura*, 77.

14. See Toombs, *Int* 23 (1969) 307: "Many preachers deal with the great figures of the Bible in a manner thoroughly Greek, holding them up as timeless exemplars and practitioners of eternally valid moral principles." See also my *Sola Scriptura*, 8-18.

15. Fohrer, *Introduction to the OT*, 95.

may appear at first sight. If the author does not make this judgment for his hearers, is one still on the right track in trying to make such a moral judgment? And by what standards does one judge an action to be good or bad? Old Testament standards? New Testament standards? Contemporary standards? Suppose that one comes to the conclusion that a specific action was good at that time, does that mean that one can recommend imitation of that action today? Should one recommend that the poor today deposit their last pennies in the collection plate (Luke 21:2)? That Christians today have their possessions "in common" (Acts 2:44-45)? That all must have an eye-blinding conversion experience (Acts 9:3-9)? That women must be veiled when praying (1 Cor 11:6)? Clowney observes: "Those who find only collected moral tales in the Bible are constantly embarrassed by the *good* deeds of patriarchs, judges, and kings. Surely we cannot pattern our daily conduct on that of Samuel as he hews Agag to pieces, or Samson as he commits suicide, or Jeremiah as he preaches treason. Judged by our usual ethics, Michal was quite right in despising David's performance before the ark, and Judas in criticizing the extravagance of Mary's use of perfume in Bethany."[16]

In spite of these difficulties, imitating Bible characters remains a popular way of trying to *make* the text relevant. "The life experiences of Bible people," Faris Whitesell claims, "illustrate certain timeless and universal truths which preachers can apply to life today."[17] Andrew Blackwood recommends that young ministers prepare once a month a "biographical sermon": "The biographical sermon is one which grows out of the facts concerning a biblical character, as these facts throw light upon the problems of the man in the pew. For instance, on Mother's Day one can preach about the way in which God watched over Baby Moses, and used his mother in sparing him for his life work. . . . In the resulting sermon . . . one can hold aloft the biblical ideal of motherhood."[18]

Problems:
① Ignores the gap

Unfortunately, this popular way to relevance is strewn with problems. As commonly used, this method has not even begun to ask the question of how to bridge the gap; it simply ignores the gap by drawing a historical equation mark between then and now, between Moses' mother and mothers today, between Jacob and us, between Thomas and us: we are Thomas, we are Mary, we are Peter. In the process of this simple identification, the forward movement of history and revelation is ignored, the literary context in which the Bible characters function is largely disregarded, and the uniqueness of each of the Bible characters, their actions and attitudes, is overlooked.[19]

16. Clowney, *Preaching and Biblical Theology*, 80.

17. Whitesell, *Preaching on Bible Characters*, 15. Countless books have appeared on preaching on Bible characters; see the bibliography in Perry, *Manual for Biblical Preaching*, 107. According to Stuart, *OT Exegesis*, 73, "This monkey-see-monkey-do sort of approach to applying the Scriptures is very widely followed, largely because of the dearth of good pulpit teaching to the contrary."

18. Blackwood, *Preaching from the Bible*, 52-53.

Another problem with imitating Bible characters is that it tends to transform the biblical author's *de*scription into *pre*scription for today. ② Ignores author's intent
Should not the question be raised if this was the author's intention? Did he *de*scribe these characters in order to *pre*scribe a certain behavior to his readers? Donald Gowan observes correctly that "most of the Bible quite clearly does not present other human beings to us as models of behavior, although there are some exceptions to that."[20]

Moreover, biographical preaching, character preaching, and the use of human "examples" for imitation tends to shift the theocentric focus of the Bible to an anthropocentric focus in the sermon. ③ Focuses on man - not God "The major function of the OT story is to relate how God has acted, despite the acts of men as much as through them," asserts John Goldingay. "To concentrate on the human deed, then, is often to miss the point of it. Indeed, it is not merely to misuse it: it is to bring a message that is its opposite."[21]

Imitating Bible characters, though popular and superficially easy, is a dead-end road for true biblical preaching. ④ Inaccurate hermeneutics It is a homiletical shortcut that results in a hermeneutical short circuit (see Chapter 9 below). "A legitimate 're-presentation,'" Martin Noth writes, "cannot use the individual human figures of biblical history as its subjects, either as ethical 'models,' which they in fact never are, or as exemplary 'heroes of faith' since in the biblical narratives they are never so presented, or as representatives of true humanity whose experiences . . . are to be imitated."[22]

Moralizing

Another popular bridge across the historical-cultural gap is moralizing. "Moralizing means drawing moral inferences, usually things to do or become."[23] Preachers who use moralizing as a way to relevance are often guided by a genuine desire to set forth the legitimate ethical demands of the Bible. Unfortunately, in overemphasizing virtues and vices, dos and don'ts, and in not properly grounding these ethical demands in the Scrip-

19. Goldingay, *Approaches to OT Interpretation*, 40, writes: "The particular decisions that OT characters had to make were unique to them, as every man's decisions are, so their action cannot be directly relevant to another situation." Cf. Clowney, "Preaching Christ," 187: "We dare not preach David's encounter with Goliath as an example of bravery to be emulated in our conflicts with the 'giants' that assault us. Such an approach trivializes the Old Testament revelation." For an extensive analysis and critique of this method, see my *Sola Scriptura*, 56-120.

20. Gowan, *Reclaiming the OT*, 17.

21. Goldingay, *Approaches to OT Interpretation*, 39.

22. Noth, "'Re-presentation' of the OT in Proclamation," 86.

23. Keck, *Bible in the Pulpit*, 101.

tures, they trivialize them and turn them into caricatures. William Willimon claims that "perhaps the most frequent modern interpretive pitfall is moralizing. . . . The pastor, in an attempt to be relevant . . . , turns every text into some simplistic, moralistic program."[24]

Moralizing is often associated with biographical or character preaching. For instance, Whitesell suggests that in biographical preaching "the preacher can discuss the evil effects of worldliness in the life of Lot, of carnality in the career of Esau, of stubbornness in Moses, of sensuality in David, and be hitting at the same sins in his own congregation without seeming to do so intentionally."[25] A clear example of moralizing is the insistence of one preacher to use 2 Sam 18:31-33, David weeping over his son Absalom, as an occasion for "relevant" remarks about parenting: "The example of this lamenting father is a warning call to all Christian parents to take the upbringing of their children seriously as long as they have the opportunity, lest they too must cry out their despair in a similar bitter lament when the grave of their children is being dug and it is too late."[26] Anyone who is the least bit sensitive to this moving story will experience such a "moral" as a foreign intrusion which is tacked on to an element in the text but misses and detracts from the point of the story.

Moralizing usually fails to bring across the actual point and intention of the text. We saw in Chapter 6 that, though many of the elements of one text may be the same as those of another, each text is unique in the way the elements are combined—the one may be H_2O (water) and the other H_2SO_4 (sulfuric acid). Moralizing tends to draw the moral inferences from isolated elements, such as H or O, without much concern for the specific combination which makes the point of the text. For example, a sermon on John 21:15-19 has three points based on three elements in the text, and each element is carried across the gap by moralizing:

I. Jesus' Question: "Do you love me . . . ?" → Do we love him?
II. Peter's Answer: "Yes, Lord . . ." → This should be our answer!
III. Jesus' Command: "Feed my sheep." → We have a task.

Another sermon, on Acts 3:1-12, is even more selective in picking some and not other textual elements in order to present a few imperatives for today:

v. 4: "Peter directed his gaze at him" (the lame man). → We must give full attention to people in need.

vv. 9-10: People saw change in the healed man. → Do people see change in us?

24. Willimon, *Preaching*, 71.
25. Whitesell, *Preaching on Bible Characters*, 21.
26. Ph. J. Huyser, *Gereformeerd Theologisch Tijdschrift* 50 (1950) 216, as translated in my *Sola Scriptura*, 80.

v. 12: Peter preached. → We must preach![27]

Moralizing not only misses the point of the text by transferring mere elements but also by transforming the *description* of past people into *prescription* for people today. Surely the question must be raised: Is this indeed the intention of the text? Was this the author's purpose for his original audience? Moreover, like character preaching, moralizing tends to transform the theocentric focus of the Bible into anthropocentric sermons. In doing so, it can easily turn grace into law by presenting imperatives without the divine indicative. Moralizing, writes Leander Keck, "has the effect of transforming the Bible into an assortment of moral precepts and examples. The Bible's own agenda is replaced. . . . The Bible's own way of thinking is sidetracked."[28]

And yet, the Bible makes ethical demands which sermons should undoubtedly pass on. How can one tell whether one is passing on legitimate ethical demands or merely moralizing? Carl Kromminga makes some helpful distinctions between moralizing and proclaiming the legitimate ethical demands of a passage:

> First, moralism easily overlooks the author's intention and the divine intention in narrating a given event, or it allows that intention to play only a subsidiary role in the application of the message to life. The *revelational* scope of the text is narrowed to fit the preacher's easy exploitation of the apparent surface "lesson" of the text. The larger themes of revelation which shape the story in its context are for the most part ignored. Second, the *ethical* scope of the text is consequently also narrowed. The broad structures of covenant, theocracy, and holy office, and the ethical responsibilities which they imply, are usually sacrificed to the interpreter's urgent desire to find a limited exemplary moral lesson in the narrative. Third, by narrowing both the revelational and ethical dimensions of the text, the moralistic approach feeds religious individualism and tends to diminish the church's sense of corporate responsibility for God's cause and work in the world and in history.[29]

Moralizing, too, is a bridge that cannot bear the weight of the text. In carrying only a few moral demands across the gap, it is reductionistic;

27. Both sermons heard in Grand Rapids, Michigan, in 1979. Cf., e.g., the exposition of H. E. Luccock, *IB*, 7, 708-11, on Mark 4:35-41:

> [35] Let Us Go Across to the Other Side. . . . Have we kept the lure which the horizon had for Jesus? . . .
> [36] And Leaving the Crowd. . . . Are we able to leave a crowd in our personal life? . . .
> [37] And They . . . Said to Him, 'Teacher, Do You Not Care if We Perish?' . . . Instead of rushing to communicate our panic to him, we should allow him to communicate his calm to us. . . .
> [39] And There Was a Great Calm. . . . If Christ is on the ship, . . . there can come calm instead of storm.

28. Keck, *Bible in the Pulpit*, 102-3.
29. Kromminga, *CTJ* 18/1 (1983) 38.

what is worse, in presenting those morals as the relevance of the text, it distorts the message of the text. According to Keck, "Moralizing has got to go! It ruins the preacher, it obscures the gospel, it distorts the history of biblical groups and communities, and it inhibits the Bible from coming through on its own terms. There has got to be a better way."[30]

CONSIDERATIONS FOR PROPERLY BRIDGING THE GAP

Concentrate on the Original Message

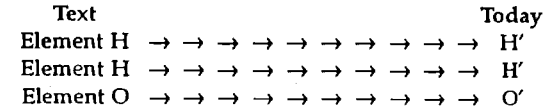
OUR discussion of improper ways of bridging the historical-cultural gap shows that one of the major pitfalls of application is that preachers transfer isolated elements of the text rather than its specific message. Although this practice creates the impression of relevance, it is only pseudo-relevance, for historically the relevance of the text inhered not in the separate elements but in the combination of elements as these formed the specific message which was proclaimed to the original hearers/readers. In order to retain that original relevance and authority, preachers ought to adhere to that original message also in their application.

Concentration on the original message will keep the sermon from being sidetracked by all kinds of "practical" remarks that may be related to elements in the text but have nothing to do with the intended message. For example, concentration on the original message will show that the story of Joseph being thrown into a pit was not intended to be linked to our "pits" of depression, that the information about Moses' mother was not given to teach us about the ideals of motherhood, and that David's lamenting the death of Absalom was not recorded to teach us a lesson on parenting. Douglas Stuart rightly insists: "Unless you are convinced that it is the *intention* of the Scripture that it be applied in a certain way, no suggestion as to application can be confidently advanced."[31]

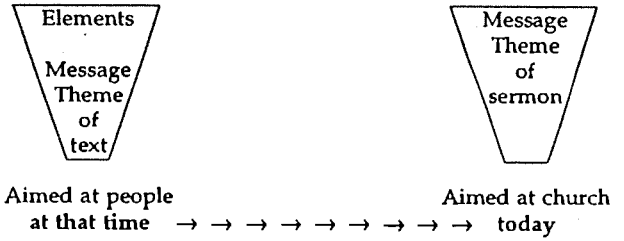
Concentration on the original message is the only way toward valid application. Before one can determine the meaning of a text for today, one must know what the writer intended to convey to his original hearers/readers. Kromminga writes that "this is crucial to the matter of application. The application to our times will take a different shape, but the original hearers, as they were addressed in the text, are the initial recipients of the revelation and its claims. If I am not to distort the Scriptures, I must reach my hearers today with the message of the text *by way of* its meaning directed to and (to the extent the Bible discloses this) grasped by the first hearers."[32] In order to determine responsible application for today, therefore, the questions that beg to be answered first are: What issues did the author seek to address? What questions did he seek to answer? What is the specific message he proclaimed? That relevant message, as summarized in a thematic statement, should be transferred to today. As we saw in Chapter 6, this procedure does not imply that the text's theme necessarily becomes the sermon's theme, but the text's theme (message) is the unit that is to be confronted with the question, So what? What does this mean for today?

30. Keck, *Bible in the Pulpit*, 105.
31. Stuart, *OT Exegesis*, 73.
32. Kromminga, *CTJ* 18/1 (1983) 41. Cf. Richard, *BSac* 143 (1986) 207.

Before we look at further steps, it may be helpful to sketch the contrast between transferring *elements* of the text across the historical-cultural gap and my proposal of transferring only the original *message*. Transferring elements can be visualized as elements being carried across apart from their specific combination in a particular text:



Transferring the *message*, by contrast, may be visualized as carrying across the gap the historical, relevant point of the text:



Recognize the Discontinuity

IN transferring the message of the text to the church today, the message needs to pass through various levels of discontinuity that may necessitate changes in the message. We can distinguish at least three levels where discontinuity may make a difference: the levels of revelation, kingdom history, and culture.

Progressive Revelation

First, the original message of the text will have to be traced throughout the Scriptures. Since revelation progresses within the Testaments and especially from the Old to the New Testament, and since preachers must aim the message at New Testament congregations in the twentieth century, the theme of the text must be traced from Genesis 1 to Revelation 22

before one can confidently assert that this is God's word for today. In comparing Scripture with Scripture, some original messages need not be changed appreciably while others will need to be changed considerably. Jesus himself compared Scripture with Scripture when, being questioned about divorce (Matt 19:3-9), he contrasted the teaching of Deuteronomy 24 with that of Genesis 1 and 2 and changed the teaching in the process. A sermon on Gen 17:9-14 would have to change the original message drastically because of progressive revelation. In this passage God demands covenant keeping in terms of circumcising all males: "Any uncircumcised male . . . shall be cut off from his people; he has broken my covenant." The New Testament, especially Acts 15, changes this message in an astonishing way. Another central Old Testament passage that undergoes an amazing, albeit gradual, change in the New Testament is the commandment to rest on the *seventh* day (Exod 20:8-11; see Col 2:16; Rom 14:5). One can think further of all the laws regarding animal sacrifices—laws which are fulfilled in Christ's supreme sacrifice but which may not on that account be discarded, since they also point forward to our obligation to sacrifice ourselves (Rom 12:1; 1 Pet 2:5). Until one has understood the message of the text in the context of the whole canon, one cannot claim to have heard the word of God for the church today.

Stages of Kingdom History

Discontinuity also takes place at the level of the different stages of kingdom history at which the text and the sermon are aimed. The message of the text was addressed to people living either before Christ or shortly after his death and resurrection. By contrast, preachers today aim their sermons neither at an Old Testament congregation nor at the early church but at the church in the twentieth century. The largest amount of discontinuity will be present, of course, when the text is originally aimed at people in Old Testament times and the sermon needs to address people in the twentieth century; one must then do justice both to the progression of revelation into the New Testament and the fact that the hearers live twenty centuries after Easter and Pentecost. But discontinuity exists even when the text is addressed to the early New Testament church and the sermon must be proclaimed to the church today. For example, a sermon on Rom 13:1-7 will have to take into account that the church today does not live in the time of the Roman empire but in a modern democracy or a fickle dictatorship waiting for the next coup. And a sermon on Paul's instructions to slaves and masters (e.g., Eph 6:5-9), though applicable to employers and employees today, will have to take into account that church and society today no longer accept slavery as an economic fact.

In extending biblical lines from first-century issues to contemporary issues such as nuclear warfare, ecology, population explosion, the role of

women, etc., one may have to follow the trajectory of biblical teaching beyond the New Testament, so that the message today will be as current and relevant as when it was first given. Perry Yoder warns that if we do not take seriously "that all words are given in a specific context and are shaped to that context . . . , our application may be more a repeating of an earlier culture and its own limitations than a realization of God's will for us today in a different setting."[33] Of course, the further one extends the trajectory of biblical teaching beyond the New Testament, the more careful one must be that one indeed follows the direction of Scripture and not private or public current opinion.

Cultural changes

A final area of discontinuity is that of cultural changes. At this level also, discontinuity will be most pronounced between the ancient, Near Eastern, agricultural society of the Old Testament and modern, Western, post-industrial societies. But one should not overlook the discontinuity between the first-century, Near Eastern, agricultural society of the New Testament and modern societies. For example, the essence of Jesus' command that we "ought to wash one another's feet" (John 13:14) is missed today when we literally wash one another's feet on Maundy Thursday. Because of the change in customs, roads, transportation, and footwear, one cannot simply proclaim the same message Jesus proclaimed but must transform it into twentieth-century deeds of humble service if one wishes to make the same point in our culture. Similarly, Paul's instruction in 1 Cor 11:5 that women ought to wear a veil runs into cultural discontinuity, as does his admonition to "greet one another with a holy kiss" (2 Cor 13:12). Cultural changes do not negate the original message but make transformation in the light of our present culture mandatory.

Recognize the Overarching Continuity

DISCONTINUITY by itself would stop relevant biblical preaching dead in its tracks. Happily, discontinuity functions not by itself but within an overarching continuity. We can observe this continuity in at least two areas.

One Faithful God

The God who introduced himself to Moses as "I am who I am" is the source of all continuity we experience on earth. Yahweh is the faithful covenant God who guarantees the continuity of the seasons, "seedtime and harvest, cold and heat" (Gen 8:22). When Yahweh later makes

33. Yoder, *From Word to Life*, 39.

Dr. Rick Griffith Homiletics I
The Relevance of the Sermon
Sidney Greidanus, *The Modern Preacher and the Ancient Text* (7 of 7)
147

Four Improper Ways of Seeking Relevance in Preaching

Adapted into a chart from Sidney Greidanus, *The Modern Preacher and the Ancient Text*, 159-66

	Allegorizing	Spiritualizing	Imitating Bible Characters	Moralizing
Definition	Searches beneath the literal meaning for "real" meaning	Draws spiritual lessons from selected details in the text	Persons serve as examples or models of behaviour	Draws moral inferences of what to do or become
Historical Viewpoint	Non-historical and unimportant	Historical but unimportant	Historical	Historical
Examples	Song of Solomon Good Samaritan Wedding at Cana	Joseph in pit Stilling the storm	Abraham=faith Isaac=patience Jacob=hope Joseph=humility	Lot=worldly Esau=carnal Moses=stubborn David=sensual or poor parent
Problems	Ignores authorial intent Selects only certain elements Speculative Denies historicity	Ignores authorial intent Selects only certain elements Speculative	Ignores authorial intent (description is prescription) Difficult to assess appropriateness of behaviours Anthropocentric Ignores uniqueness of events/context	Ignores authorial intent (description is prescription) Selects only certain elements (ethical above covenantal) Anthropocentric Individualistic (no corporate sense)
Modern Use	Rare	Common	Common	Very Common

Some Tips How to Preach Relevantly Yet Accurately (points 4-7 from Greidanus, 184-86)

1. Preach theocentrically
2. Work hard at an exegetical outline before addressing homiletical concerns
3. When an exegetical MP has no modern parallel, preach a simple (not cyclical) structure
4. Preach to the needs of an individual in the audience rather than to the whole group
5. Preach to emotions as well as will and intellect
6. Anticipate and answer objections of the listeners
7. Use concrete, vivid language
   a. Short sentences
   b. Familiar words
   c. Specific words which speak to the senses (not abstract, generalized concepts)
   d. Figures of speech

SBC Chapel
14 January 1993

NIV text
12 Minutes

"Dirty Saints"

John 13:1-17

Topic: Servanthood
Subject: You willing do humble tasks for others
Complement: when you genuinely love them
Purpose: The listeners will gladly do humble tasks for others.

Introduction

1. Arouse Interest: At SBC we have been exposed to theologies of various types—systematic, biblical, conservative, liberal, etc.

2. However, one theology which you may not considered is a theology of dirt. So my message today is on a biblical view of dirt—teaching really needed in squeaky clean Singapore.

   a. As we all know, dirt was invented by God on the third day of creation.
   b. Shortly afterwards God used dirt to make man.
   c. And throughout the ages dirt has remained to walk on, to play with, and to despise.

3. Background: During the time of Jesus dirt was especially despised. For this reason the Romans built numerous public baths—but only for men.

   a. No doubt Jesus and the disciples used these baths, and certainly on such a special occasion as the Passover they visited the public bath.

   b. However, by the time they made their way to the upper room for their meal, the dirty roads had soiled their feet. Worse than that, upon arriving at the room, they discovered that for some reason the servant wasn't there to wash their feet.

   c. What were they to do? The first disciple saw the water jug, basin, and towel by the door and passed by. Then, one by one, the others did the same. Each one thought to himself, "Why should *I* get dirty for the others?"

4. Raise Need: This question is raised by you and me too: "Why should I get dirty for others?"

   a. Some of you asked that question this week. You said in your heart, "Why does SBC insist on having us do these campus duties? Can't I just pay tuition and avoid the dirt?"

   b. I struggled with this question last night. As I considered helping my wife with the dishes after dinner, I finally told her, "Honey, I better not help tonight. I have to go prepare my sermon on servanthood!"

5. Subject: So why should you get dirty for others? What does getting dirty demonstrate? This issue is modeled by our Lord Himself in today's text. Today we'll see from our text three reasons we should get dirty for others. John 13. Will you turn to John 13 please?

(The first reason we should get dirty for others is because...)

I. Getting dirty shows your love.
You demonstrate that you care when you serve other people. *[Here's my restatement.]*

   A. Verse 1 says Jesus' washing His disciples' feet showed His love in the most humble way possible (1). *[Underlining the verse number means I read the verse at this exact point.]*

      1. Think of it! What was to follow—the washing of their feet—is said to be "the full extent of his love."

2. The Greek says "he loved them to the end." Here was the climax of His love, first shown in the foot washing and then later in the giving of His own life.

B. You know, *you* show your love for others by doing undesirable tasks too.

1. This is exactly what my wife Susan has done for our three sons—especially as babies. One of my seminary professors defined a baby as a person with whom, wherever there's a hole, something's coming out. Dirty diapers defines a mother's love and my wife loves our boys "to the end"—literally!

2. The number of undesirable tasks we can do to show our love is endless. Perhaps you thought your Field Education assignment was going to be preaching, but in the final setup you ended up wiping runny noses in the nursery. Do you do it cheerfully because you love people?

(There's a second reason to get dirty for others—not only to demonstrate our love but because...)

II. Getting dirty shows humility.
Servanthood shows that Christ can curb our pride.

A. Notice in verses 2-11 how Jesus showed humility in His washing of the disciples' feet:

1. He washed their feet while the meal was being served (2a). When the food is right there before us, for most of us the last thing we think about is "eating humble pie"!

2. He washed Judas' feet even though Judas had already committed himself to Satan for betrayal (2b).

3. He washed their feet even though He had all power and divine authority (3).

4. He interrupted His meal to wash their feet as a servant would (4-5).

5. He only washed Peter's feet after being requested to do so (6-11, don't read).

B. Your humble service shows others that Christ has curbed your pride.

1. Of course, humility is seen only when getting dirty is voluntary. A man once gave this true account (SERVING OTHERS resistance to):

> We were standing in line outside a busy restaurant. The harried hostess was checking to find out how many people were in each group. "Party of two," the woman behind us said to her, "and could we please have Michelle?" Annoyed looks turned towards her until she added, "Michelle is my daughter, and just once in my life I want her to wait on me!" Getting dirty is humble when it is voluntary.

2. Humility is also seen when service is done without complaining. Notice that Jesus didn't go around the table muttering, "Good grief, boys! Here I come, all the way from heaven for you, and you can't even wash *my* feet. OK, I'll wash your feet, but remember—you owe me one!"

3. Humility is also seen when service isn't not bound by conventional roles. Can a man wash dishes and still be a man? I suspect that if you can wash *feet* and keep your masculinity, then it applies to dishes too.

4. Generally getting dirty for others requires us to swallow our pride. One friend I knew at seminary gave this testimony: "In Malaysia I was the marketing executive for the largest oil refinery in the country. To come over here and sweep floors is quite a change. It's tough, but I think the Lord is teaching me a lesson." (SERVANT'S HEART by breaking pride)

5. Have you also left a professional job only to clean toilets at SBC? When you perform your campus duties without grumbling you really testify to how Christ can change a life.

6. Someone has well said, "When a man forgets himself, he usually does something everybody else remembers" (SERVICE remembered). [Repeat for emphasis.]

(We've seen so far that getting dirty for others shows both love and humility. One final reason we need to get dirty is because...)

III. Getting dirty shows you imitate Christ.
True servants always follow in the steps of the Master Servant.

A. Jesus washed their feet to set an example of love humbly serving others (12-17).

B. It's amazing to think that doing humble tasks follows the example of God Himself!

Conclusion

M.I.1. This last section provides the main thrust of the passage: *When you love people like Jesus you don't mind dirt.* You *get* dirty! If caring for people is the priority in your life then you won't be concerned with a little dirt.

2. And *why* do you get dirty? To show love, to show humility, and to imitate Jesus.

3. Let's bow together. But before we pray, how is God calling you to get dirty for Him?

   a. Take your roommate's garbage out?

   b. Go the extra mile in your campus responsibility?

   c. Do some chore which is typically the role of the opposite sex?

   d. What one thing do you hate to do for others? Will you do that today in Jesus' name?

   e. Will you ask the person who's closest to you, "Am I a servant to you?" If you're unwilling to ask the question then you already know the answer.

4. "Lord, pride was the first sin and probably the foundation of most of the sin in our lives. Please help us show your wonderful work in us by willing to get dirty in Your name. In Jesus' name, amen."



Preliminary Questions (working copy)

Verses	Questions
General	What did the author record just prior to this passage? (Jesus has just said His last public words to a primarily unbelieving crowd.)
General	Why is this passage in the Bible? (Christ is clear in verses 14-15 that it is to show us that we need to imitate Him by serving one another in the lowliest of ways.)
1	How long before the Passover?
1	Does "now" refer to the foot washing?
2	Why did Jesus wait until the meal was being served before washing their feet?
2	What is the significance of saying here that Judas was the betrayer?
3-4	How does the foot washing have impact considering that Jesus had all authority?
4-5	Why the description of how He did it?
6-11	What's the meaning of the interaction with Peter? (One noted it means "Loving involves being clean for service" but surely it's more than this)
8	Why didn't Peter want his feet washed? Pride? Humility?
14	What is meant by washing feet?
15	Why did Jesus wash the disciples' feet and not the feet of the general public?

Possible Illustrations *(I typed them in as they came to mind but only the first was actually used)*
Roman baths background
No statement of Christ is recorded while washing the feet except His response to Peter.
No-one helped Him as He served
True Jesus Church view on foot washing as necessary for salvation

Possible Applications*(I also typed these as they came to mind but only used the first two)*
Take your roommate's garbage out
Don't be locked into traditional responsibilities in the home (men—wash dishes or cook)
My receiving of a birthday card from Michael Shen and Dr. Webster (my mission boss)—simple ways to serve a subordinate
Are we like the disciples—willing for Jesus to wash *our* feet, but unwilling to wash *others'* feet?
A fellow lecturer at a different school who said to me, "This is absurd! You have a doctorate and here you are stapling papers?"
A pastor friend in the US—spending so much time hammering nails at the church building that he neglected his preaching (possibly share to illustrate that serving others doesn't mean we need to always do the most humble task)

Dirty Saints (working copy)

John 13:1-17

Exegetical Outline

Prologue: The setting is in the upper room the night before Christ's crucifixion, just after His last public statements to an unbelieving crowd and just before Judas left to betray Him. Christ and the disciples had moved from public view in chapter 12 to a private upper room. Peter and John were preparing the Passover (Luke 22:8), but none had volunteered to wash their feet—probably because they had just argued over who was the greatest (Luke 22:24ff.).

Exegetical Idea: The reason Jesus washed the disciples' feet in such a way as to shame them for their pride was to set an example of love humbly serving others.

I. (1) The reason Jesus washed their feet was to show His love in the most humble way possible.

II. (2-11) The reason Jesus washed the disciples' feet in such a humble manner was to shame them for their pride.

- A. (2a) He washed their feet while the meal was being served.
- B. (2b) He washed Judas' feet even though Judas had committed himself to Satan for betrayal.
- C. (3) He washed their feet even though He had all power and divine authority.
- D. (4-5) He interrupted His meal to wash their feet as a servant would.
- E. (6-11) He only washed Peter's feet after being requested to do so.

III. (12-17) The reason Jesus washed their feet was to show how love humbly serves others.

- A. (12-13) Christ did not deny His position of authority by washing their feet.
- B. (14-17) He washed their feet to set an example of love shown in humble service.

Homiletical Exposition (cyclical inductive form)

Intro
1. Today's sermon is on a biblical view of dirt—teaching needed in squeaky clean Singapore.
2. Background (above)
3. Subject: Why should you get dirty for others? What does getting dirty show?

I. Getting dirty shows your love.

- A. Jesus washed the disciples' feet to show His love in the most humble way possible (1).
- B. You show your love for others by doing undesirable tasks (examples).

II. Getting dirty shows your humility—that Christ can curb your pride.

- A. Jesus washed the disciples' feet in a humble manner to shame them for their pride (2-11).
  1. (2a) He washed their feet while the meal was being served.
  2. (2b) He washed Judas' feet even though Judas had given himself to Satan for betrayal.
  3. (3) He washed their feet even though He had all power and divine authority.
  4. (4-5) He interrupted His meal to wash their feet as a servant would.
  5. (6-11) He only washed Peter's feet after being requested to do so.
- B. Your humble service shows others that Christ has curbed your pride (examples).

III. Getting dirty shows you imitate Christ.

- A. Jesus washed their feet to set an example of love humbly serving others (12-17).
- B. Doing humble tasks follows the example of God Himself!

Conclusion
1. When you love people you don't mind dirt. You get dirty! (M.I.)
2. Review MPs
3. Applications
4. Prayer

Reflections on this Particular Chapel Sermon:

1. *Time Limit:* I limited myself to 12 minutes because of translation into Chinese and so that I would preserve the good graces of the students who hate chapel to go overtime (this is most of them—me too!). The actual preaching time with translation ended up being 25 minutes.

2. *Verses Skipped:* Given the above time constraint I was not able to deal with the difficult section on Peter and Jesus (vv. 6-11). In fact, I didn't even read it. I also left off the last two verses, not even reading them either (vv. 16-17). This passage is very familiar to most believers so the explanation part of the message is covered very briefly. I commented on verses 2-11 in staccato fashion—a quick deductive statement followed by the reading of the verse(s). The developmental question addressed is not explanation or validation but application.

3. *Theme:* Most of us at SBC have heard our share of sermons on servanthood. Knowing this, I felt I had to say the same thing in a new, less offensive way. So I had the idea of talking about "getting dirty" in a somewhat ambiguous but cute way in the intro. This theme is carried throughout the message.

4. *Illustrations:* Given the sensitive nature of talking about humility, I purposely chose not to use myself as an example! The comment in the intro about myself (4.b.) is designed to put the listener at ease that the speaker hasn't arrived and to do so in a humorous way. (I generally try to get people to laugh once or twice in a sermon intro as laughter is such a tension releaser. Once the listener puts his defenses down then he can listen too.) I had to leave out the illustration in II.B.1. due to time constraints. (This one related least to SBC life so it was the one to go.) Notice also that after some illustrations is a title in parentheses like "(SERVICE remembered)." This refers to where I found it in my 3 x 5 card illustration file.

5. *Clarity:* Every time the subject, main points, or main idea appears they are restated. (I memorized the statements word-for-word but only had a general idea what I would say to restate each.) Transitions are placed in parentheses and whenever I was to read a verse I underlined it in the notes. Also, I purposely did not announce my text in the intro until I had told them what to look for; otherwise, they would have missed my subject while looking up the passage. Also, the background was given in the intro rather than the body because it worked well with the concept of dirt and enabled me to go through the text fairly quickly. One final thing: I always pencil in my Bible a vertical line wherever I am to start or stop reading the text. This enables me to read with expression without concern for where I should stop.

6. *Applications:* These appear throughout to keep up interest but are not fully addressed until the conclusion due to time restraints. The washing dishes statement (II.B.3.) appears in the form of a question accompanied by a sarcastic, low tone of voice to be less offensive by use of humour.

7. *Practice:* Ideally I would like to practice a message 10 times before preaching it. (Sometimes I have done it only once—or even not at all!) This sermon was preached 6 times in its entirety—4 times the day before it was preached and twice in the morning of the actual sermon delivery. I had to do it this many times and keep the points simple because I'm such a forgetful person. (A few sections I had a problem remembering, so these were practiced about 8-9 times.) Practicing several times enabled me to know the message well enough to preach without notes so it could sound natural.

8. *Procedure:* The step-by-step method of putting this message together was the same in the class notes (pp. 27-28).

Topical Sermons

I. Definitions: What is Topical Preaching?

A. Topical sermons are often contrasted with expository sermons. (In fact, I do this myself on page 2 of these notes!) This is because most topical sermons are not expository.

B. However, *good* topical sermons are also *expository* sermons—their authority is founded in God's inerrant Word—so even topical sermons should expound the Scripture. Expository preaching is simply preaching in which a biblical text is accurately explained and applied.

C. What, then, is a *topical sermon?* For the purposes of this class, topical sermons are sermons that *expound a central idea from more than one main text* of Scripture. Even more accurately, Greidanus would call this topical-biblical preaching since there is topical preaching which doesn't deal with the text at all. However, since *every* message should deal with Scripture I will still use the briefer term "topical" sermons.

D. So what is *topical exposition?* Topical exposition is "the communication of a biblical concept derived from several different passages in accordance with the author's purpose and the subject/complement of each passage presented" (Dallas Seminary class notes).

E. Greidanus helpfully distinguishes the basic types of sermons (p. 12, adapted in the parentheses):

Categories	Types of sermons			
Biblical Content	**Biblical Sermon**			**Non-Biblical Sermon**
Use of Text	**Textual or Expository Sermon**		**Topical-Biblical Sermon**	**Topical Sermon**
Length of Text	**Textual Unit (Paragraph or Chapter)**	**Verse or Clause**	**Many Texts (Multi-textual)**	**Non-Textual (No Text)**

II. Advantages: Why is it Important to Know How to Preach Topically?

A. Most teaching on Christian living is not summed up in a single passage and thus leads the preacher to a type of topical exposition:

1. Theological: Nearly all doctrines are derived from studying the *whole* of Scripture (e.g., the Trinity, angels, the millennium, salvation, etc.). Topical preaching enables hearers to grasp a subject of the Bible as a whole.

2. Biographical: Oftentimes passages about a single person are found in a variety of places (e.g., Peter in the Gospels, Acts, Galatians, 1-2 Peter; King David in 1-2 Samuel, 1 Chron., Psalms, etc.). This necessitates covering several key texts.

3. Procedural: A step-by-step method of how to do something (e.g., discern one's spiritual gift) is generally not given in a single passage.

4. Persuasive: To convince your listeners of an important truth (e.g., abortion, divorce and remarriage) you often will need to address several different passages.

5. Evangelistic: Although many passages are evangelistic in intent (e.g., in John's Gospel), evangelistic preaching often works well in a topical style.

6. Proverbs: Most of this book must be preached topically as the various proverbs are not grouped by topic. A single proverb does not teach a truth in all its dimensions either.

B. Topical sermons often work well between expositional series and can be preached on special days of the year: Mother's Day, Father's Day, National Day, Easter, Christmas, etc.

C. Remember that the worst type of sermon you can preach is the type you preach all the time. Use variety! Even good expository preaching can get old at times, so spice up your people's pulpit diet with a change.

D. Sometimes an issue that needs to be addressed is not specifically mentioned *at all* in Scripture (euthanasia, nuclear war, abortion, etc.). Topical preaching enables the speaker to present relevant biblical principles that at least indirectly relate to a subject.

III. Disadvantages: What are Some Potential Pitfalls in Topical Preaching?

A. Deriving the topic first, *then* the verses, can easily force foreign meanings into texts. Verses can more easily be taken out of context in topical than in expository preaching.

B. A steady diet of topical preaching can convince listeners that the Bible answers every topic with a verse. This simplistic view can lead the people to miss out on the great gems Scripture contains because they falsely perceive the Bible as a systematic theology.

C. With regular topical preaching the preacher tends to only preach on his areas of strength. This is bad for the preacher and congregation alike. In contrast, systematic exposition through books of Scripture reveals our weaknesses and keeps us in balance.

IV. Procedure: How Can I Preach Topically?

A. Follow the basic principles of expository preaching: preach a central idea, preach from the text, use full sentence outlining, etc.

B. Adapt the 7-step procedure that makes expository messages effective (pp. 27-28, 109-112, 251):

1. STUDY

   a. Choose your Topic (instead of starting with your passage) in light of what your listeners need to know. This is almost like placing your sermon idea up front but can be more general.

   b. Choose the Passages: Look up verses that relate to your topic and choose the best 2-4 passages. (You generally won't have time to develop more than these in your sermon.)

   c. Exegete each of these verses in their context, doing so with prayer for objectivity.

2. STRUCTURE (Exegetical Outline)

   a. Determine the Exegetical Idea for Each Passage: The subject of each should relate to your topic, of course. Make sure you don't read your own meanings into the texts.

   b. Arrange the Ideas/Verses: Organize the key verses you exegeted so that a basic structure begins to take shape. Place the verses in a logical manner so that they will make sense to the listeners in the order in which you present them.

3. CPT (Exegetical Idea): Write your overall EI that summarizes the EI of each passage above.

4. PURPOSE BRIDGE

   a. Submit the Topic to the Three Developmental Questions: Choose from the developmental (functional) questions whether you need to explain, prove, or apply your topic.

   b. Determine the Sermon's Purpose by stating the Desired Listener Response: How do you want listeners to respond to the topic in terms of what they should know, feel, and do?

5. CPS (Main Idea): Convert your EI from step 3 into a single MI to accomplish your purpose (step 4).

6. STRUCTURE

   a. Outline the Sermon:

      (1) If you are going to differ from a popularly held position then you probably will want to preach inductively.

      (2) Main points can be stated as questions. Sub-points then provide the answers. The topic can answer the what, why, how, who, where, and when questions (Gibbs, 270).

   b. Plan for Oral Clarity: transitions, restatements, illustrations, applications, etc.

   c. Prepare the Introduction and Conclusion. In the introduction, be sure to introduce only the first verse (not all of them) so as to not confuse the listeners.

7. PREACH: Manuscript the message, memorize the subject, MPs and MI, and then practice preaching it until it is internalized.

"What in the World is God Doing?"

Genesis to Revelation—A Sample Topical Sermon (Abbreviated)

Topic: Missions-God's Perspective
Subject: God has always been actively concerned in world missions
Complement: so every believer should make his decisions based upon how they will fulfill the Great Commission
Purpose: The listeners will see God's priority in missions and decide how they can best be used in the fulfillment of the Great Commission
Attribute: We Worship Our God of World Concern (Missions-Active God)

Introduction

1. A deacon was briefed just before a missionary banquet and cautioned to be very sensitive to guests there from foreign countries who were not accustomed to American culture.

   During the banquet, he found himself seated next to an African man who was hungrily devouring his chicken. Trying to think of some way to communicate with the man, the deacon leaned over and said, "Chomp, chomp, good, huh?" The man, gazing back at the deacon simply replied, "Mmm, good."

   A little while later the African man savored a delicious cup of coffee, so the deacon leaned over and said, "Glug, glug, good, huh?" The man, a bit uncertain replied, "Mmm, good."

   Then the banquet speaker was introduced and—to the deacon's utter dismay—the African man next to him got up, went to the platform, and delivered a flawless message, even with an Oxford accent. Upon concluding, he headed towards the deacon, who was red with embarrassment. The speaker simply replied, "Blah, blah, good, huh?"

2. You might consider that funny only because you've had some embarrassing moments in relating to people from other cultures yourself. Let me assure you, you're not alone.

   a. I think of one foreign guest invited to an American family's home for dinner. When offered tea, he confidently tore open his tea bag and emptied the contents into his cup. The hosts corrected him, "Ah, no... You're supposed to put the bag in also." When he was offered some "Sweet & Low" he followed their advice and confidently tossed the sweetener in his cup, bag and all.

   b. The point is that we're often uncomfortable with things that aren't that familiar—and missions is no exception. When the average person hears the word "missions" a shudder comes up the spine and ties the tongue! No one wants to show his ignorance.

3. But I also think that maybe missions is scary to some of us because we haven't seen God's view of the subject clearly. Today we're going to learn a bit more about how God views missions, but first we need to define what we mean by "missions." Let's look at what it **isn't** and what it **is**.

   a. Missions is **not** evangelism...(explain).

   b. Missions **is** sending forth people from your church to reach people for Christ who are beyond your borders or natural influence. So missions is reaching people who you normally wouldn't or couldn't reach in the normal church ministries (examples).

Sub4. So where we're headed today is to take a look at two things: (1) what God thinks of missions, and (2) what we should do in response. First, we'll see God's involvement in world evangelization as seen in the Scripture, then second, we'll see what we can do.

(First, what does God think of missions/world evangelization? Well...)

I. Missions is God's highest priority.

A. God's missionary concern is first seen way back at the Garden of Eden (Gen. 3:15).

B. God promises to reach the world through Abraham and the Jewish nation (Gen. 12:1-3).

(Well, did Israel accomplish her purpose? Hardly! But the church has a job now...)

C. Our commission is to reach the world for Christ (Acts 1:6-8).

(Well, that still sounds a bit optimistic, some of you might be saying. I'd like to see this from an infallible source. You got it, because...)

D. God says that the Great Commission will be fulfilled (Rev. 7:9).

1. Revelation 7 says God's ultimate purpose is to glorify Himself by redeeming a people from every people.

2. Matthew 24:14 teaches the same thing (read).

(Well, we've seen that we serve a missions-active God. He has acted to save mankind even back in Eden, through Israel, and now through the church. So where does that leave us?)

II. Since missions is God's number one priority, it should be our highest priority as well (MI).

A. As a church, missions should be our highest priority. There's a couple of diagrams in your bulletin to illustrate this truth (explain ingrown verses outward-reaching churches).

B. As individuals, missions should be our highest priority.

1. Perhaps God wants to use you overseas. You say, "Oh, but not me," but have you ever asked the Lord if that's where He wants you?

2. If God doesn't want to use you overseas then He wants you to contribute to the fulfillment of the Great Commission in this church by giving or missions ministry.

Conclusion

M.I.1. Today we've taken a brief tour through Scripture to discover that *since missions is God's number one priority, it should be our highest priority as well.*

2. Maybe you're asking, "I **hear** what you're saying. But what should I **do**?" (Explain)

3. Prayer



5-May-10

Grace Baptist Church Easter Special (Pinetree Town & Country Club)
20 April 1996

Single Message
12 Minutes, NIV

Who Moved the Stone?

Topic: Resurrection
Subject: Proofs for the resurrection of Christ
Complement: lead us to believe this is a historical fact.
Purpose: The listeners will believe intellectually that the resurrection took place.
Note: This talk was preceded by Dr. Wee's proofs that Christ did die and was followed by Dr. Poulson's evangelistic closing (showing implications of the Resurrection).

Introduction

1. Attention: Two weeks ago the BBC reported a rumour that archaeologists in Jerusalem have discovered the bones of Jesus of Nazareth. Is this true?

2. Importance: This is no idle question, for since the first days of Christianity believers have claimed a resurrection for Jesus Christ.

   a. In fact, the resurrection of Jesus Christ and Christianity stand or fall together.

   b. Why? Because Christians claim to have a living relationship with the person of Christ. No one can have a relationship with a dead man.

   c. Also, no other religion makes a claim of an empty tomb for its founder. If this is false then over one billion people have believed a lie—even today 833 people per day are killed worldwide for believing in a resurrected Christ.

   d. In other words, the resurrection is an issue of utmost importance!

3. Background: So let's evaluate what we know are the facts.

   a. Many of you are intelligent people, skilled in the facts in science, law, and business. I trust that you can look at evidence and weigh it for what it is. I was trained this way in business school myself, being forced to make decisions based on balance sheets, cost analyses, etc.

   b. The facts show at least six precautions taken to assure that Christ would not rise again:

      1) Fact 1: Christ was dead. You already heard this from a noted forensic specialist.

      2) Fact 2: He was buried in a solid rock tomb according to the practice of the time—a cave carved out of a wall of rock with no entry except a meter and a half door.

      3) Fact 3: The body was wrapped in a 100-pound encasement of grave clothes. These linen strips and gummy spices hardened into a cocoon case much like a mummy.

      4) Fact 4: Engineers have calculated that a stone of nearly 2 tons would have been required to cover the 1.5 meter opening. The Bible says that after two days of burial this was rolled uphill away from the entire tomb area!

      5) Fact 5: A Roman guard was placed at the tomb to protect the body from being stolen. Some artists have drawn pictures of a few men in miniskirts "guarding the tomb." Hardly! A Roman guard was a 4 to 16 man force capable of withstanding an advancing army of enemy troops. These guys were tough dudes!

      6) Fact 6: The seal. The guard inspected the body and rolled the stone into place, then stretched a cord across it, fastening it with sealing clay at either end. On the clay in the middle was stamped the seal of the governor. Breaking his signet would incur the wrath of Roman law.

4. But something happened two days later which changed the course of history.

   a. Our morning paper testifies to it, for the date at the top—1996, "in the year of our Lord"—bears witness to the events of that day.

   b. In fact, you even have tomorrow off work due to belief in the resurrection, which eventually made Sunday a rest day!

5. So what happened?

   a. Some have claimed that what happened was not a resurrection, but the so-called eyewitnesses went to the wrong tomb. Sounds plausible, especially for people mourning over the death of a loved one.

   b. But the Jewish authorities didn't have misty eyes! When it was proclaimed that Jesus arose, all these unbelieving authorities had to do was to bring people to the right tomb and display the body of Jesus!

6. No, somebody moved that stone. You're thinking, educated people. Let's think through this together: Who moved the massive stone over Christ's tomb? (subject) Well, the...

I. <u>Disciples</u> of Christ certainly didn't move the stone.

   A. They were the ones least expecting a resurrection! Nearly every one of these disciples fled when Jesus was crucified and then locked themselves up like scared chickens in a hen house.

   B. But within a few days they changed from fearful men to fearless men boldly proclaiming the resurrection—and ten of the eleven disciples died a martyr's death for their faith. Would you give your life for a lie? That's not courage but insanity!

   C. Jesus' followers were mostly fishermen by trade. Can we really believe that such men could fight through a Roman guard and move a 2-ton stone? You've heard of the Jewish 6-day war? This would have been the Jewish 6-second war!

   D. Even still, the rumor that the leaders spread was that the Roman soldiers saw the disciples steal the body while they were asleep. Tell me, friends, have you ever seen *anybody steal anything* when you were asleep?

   E. Do you know the penalty for Roman soldiers who fell asleep on duty? Especially at night? Automatic execution by having his clothes set on fire! These soldiers would be banging each other on the head to keep awake!

   F. Not one of these guards would have been asleep—let alone the whole bunch of them!

(So Jesus' disciples didn't move the stone. What about the unbelieving authorities? No, the...)

II. <u>Jewish Leaders</u> didn't move the stone.

   A. They were the ones to try to *prevent* the stone from being moved!

   B. The Jewish leaders were the ones who requested the Roman guard.

   C. They felt that a fake resurrection would lead to even more followers of Jesus. No one out of envy aids his opponent!

(So neither the disciples nor Jewish authorities moved that stone. How about the Romans? No...)

III. <u>The Romans</u> didn't move the stone.

   A. The Roman soldiers were *guarding* the tomb!

B. Do you know the penalty for a Roman soldier who let the seal get broken? Execution again! You can be sure they guarded it for fear of death itself.

C. As hard as they tried to protect it, though, the Bible says that an earthquake occurred, the seal was broken and then the guards became the scared chickens. In fact, they were the first witnesses to the resurrection! They told the religious leaders about it and even made some money by taking a bribe. Their lives were also protected by the Jewish authorities.

(No disciple, Jewish leader, or Roman soldier would have stole the body. And if a body was ever found by an unbeliever, the enemies of Christianity would have paraded it through Jerusalem to kill this new faith in the womb. And who would have become a believer in Jesus by seeing a dead body—or even die for a hoax? No, it stands to reason that...)

IV. Jesus Christ himself must have moved the stone.

A. And why not? Several times before his death he predicted that he would die and rise again.

B. But you say, "Maybe he did it, but he didn't actually die." You already have a noted pathologist's report on that. But suppose Dr. Wee is wrong—Jesus wasn't really dead.

1. No, he was up all night in six trials which included being beaten beyond recognition...

2. Was so weak he couldn't even carry his own cross...

3. Was crucified with seven inch nails driven through his hands and feet...

4. Received a spear thrust into his heart...

5. Was put into a 100-pound cocoon of grave cloths...

6. Laid in a dark, cold, wet tomb with a nearly 2-ton doorway...

C. But, instead of all this killing him, it healed him?

1. He split out of the clothes...

2. He pushed the stone uphill away from the tomb...

3. He conquered the entire group of guards...

4. He appeared to his disciples and never even got any pity from them?

D. Sorry, I don't have enough faith to believe that! That's even more miraculous than a resurrection!

Conclusion

1. Since no human would have or could have moved the stone, a supernatural resurrection must have occurred (MI)!

2. I appeal to you as intelligent friends. Christianity is based on the most incredible event of history—the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

3. Perhaps a "Jesus" tomb *was* discovered in Jerusalem—for this was as common a name as "Tan" or "Lee" in Singaporean graveyards. But this wasn't Jesus Christ's tomb.

4. He came alive and never died since. That means that he is as alive today as you or me. It also means that as God himself he can change your life as a living Saviour.

SBC Evening Chapel
29 October 1998
NIV

Dr. Rick Griffith
Single Message
30 Minutes

Finding Your Mate

Topical Message

Topic: Marriage
Subject: How can you find the right marriage partner?
Complement: Be the right person as you trust God for a compatible mate.
Purpose: The listeners will concentrate more on personal character than on finding a mate.

Introduction

1. [Arouse Interest:]

'Twas the night before my wedding, and all through the house,
Not a creature was stirring—'cept this future spouse!
My good friend named Albert came near to show care—
in hopes to gain wisdom from this bachelare!

2. That night before I got married, Albert and I stayed up really late talking. The whole wedding party was sleeping soundly—but Albert seized upon his last opportunity to ask me questions while I was a bachelor. Long after midnight, in the course of our conversation, he hit me with one of the most intriguing questions I'd ever been asked: "Rick, are you 100% sure that it is God's will for you to marry Susan?"

3. Interestingly, no one had asked me that question—at least in such a direct way. I had told people that I believed that we were doing God's will. She was a Christian, I was a Christian, we had met on the mission field and seemed to have like passions ministry-wise, our parents approved of our marriage, there wasn't anything that seemed to stand in the way. Why did Albert have to be so direct, asking if I was 100% sure?

4. Part of the problem was that a very controversial book had just come out three years earlier (in 1980). It was called *Decision Making and the Will of God* and it addressed this question: Does God have a specific, individual will for your life?

   a) Garry Friesen's book caused a stir in this dimension. He sums up his thesis on page 83: "It is our contention that... the idea of an *individual will* of God for every detail of a person's life is *not found in Scripture.*"

   b) Instead, he argues for what he calls "the wisdom view." You just follow God's Word and then you are doing the will of God.

   c) We don't have the time to discuss this book in detail, but I'll just tell you up front that I was unconvinced with his thesis. I do think that God has a specific will for each believer—especially concerning marriage. Why?

      (1) The biblical pattern is for God to provide not just *any person* as a mate, but a specific person of his calling:

         (a) God gave Eve to Adam as his wife, God desired Isaac to marry Rebecca, God even told Hosea to marry Gomer!

         (b) Friesen calls each of these instances an exception to the general pattern!

      (2) But Psalm 139:16 says, "All the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be." Now how can that be true, if thousands of those days relate to one's most intimate relationship?

      (3) God is concerned about lesser decisions—so why not the big ones?

(But if God does have a specific will regarding marriage, then...)

5. Subject: How can you find the right marriage partner?

   a) Is it through designing your long list of qualities?

   b) I once did this and got a 4-page list! It even included abilities like knowing how to snow ski! Since He called me to Singapore I now see how ridiculous that list was!

6. Preview: Tonight we'll look at three principles in finding the right partner. There's many more, so as an issue comes to mind, write it down and we can talk about it in the Q & A session to follow. Here's the first principle in finding the right partner...

I. *Finding* the right person begins with *being* the right person.

[Be more concerned with the kind of person *your future spouse* will marry than the kind of person *you* will marry!]

How do you do this?

A. Seek God, not a mate—this is the scriptural emphasis.

   1. But doesn't the Bible say, "He who finds a wife finds a good thing" (Prov. 18:22)? Yes, this one verse is in the Bible!

   2. But the rest of the book of Proverbs is about *being* the right person! The whole emphasis of Scripture is on character rather than decisions.

   3. Besides, if I read 1 Corinthians 7:27 correctly, this "finding" can happen without even looking: "Are you married? Do not seek a divorce. Are you unmarried? Do not look for a wife."

B. Seek selflessness—because this is the key quality to have a good marriage as well as to be marriageable!

   1. Philippians 2:3-4 is probably one of the most important texts for a solid marriage [read].

   2. Some people don't ever get married because their key concern is their own welfare!

C. Be willing to remain single for life, knowing that it has many advantages (1 Cor. 7:32-35).

   1. Decision making is easier.

   2. Moving is easier—less material things are needed, no children's schooling concerns you, etc.

   3. My December 1981 commitment: "I'm willing to be single for life if that's your will!"

II. Don't try to help God find a mate for you—He doesn't need your help!

A. My friend Bob decided not to play drums for our Campus Crusade music team "Crossroads" back in 1981. He was 25 and felt he couldn't postpone marriage further by making a three-year commitment to the group. Yet after three years, 4 of the 7 singles on our team had married one another (including me as I met Susan during this time)—and when we got back to America, Bob was still single!

B. Leslie moved to Dallas because it had the most single adults of any city in America—but after 18 months she hadn't even gone on a date!

C. Just serve Him and He will take care of the rest.

III. Compatibility in calling is a must.

A. 2 Corinthians 6:14 says, "Do not be yoked together with unbelievers. For what do righteousness and wickedness have in common? Or what fellowship can light have with darkness?"

1. We normally think of this in terms of contracts or especially marriages with unbelievers.

2. But I wonder if the "unequal yoke" can apply to ministry calling as well as to whether one is believer or not.

B. My friend Steve married a woman who had no heart for the Muslim world. This prevented him from ever becoming a missionary.

C. I broke off my engagement with a Christian woman I was engaged to at age 19 after seeing that our callings were incompatible. This was one of the best choices I've ever made. She later went on to marry and divorce—and now is raising two teenage sons on her own.

(So how can you find the right marriage partner?)

Conclusion

1. The issue is not *finding* the right person but *being* the right person as you trust God for a compatible mate (M.I.).

2. So how did I answer Albert that night before my marriage when he asked, "Rick, are you 100% sure that it is God's will for you to marry Susan?"

a) I told him, "I don't think anyone can ever say with 100% certainty that he knows God's will in an area that is not specifically revealed by God in His Word.

b) "I heard of a groom who was killed in an automobile accident on his way to his wedding—and then the bride married someone else.

c) "So I can't say I'm 100% sure now. But within 24 hours I'll be 100% sure that He wants me to make the very best of the marriage that I have!"

3. How does all this specifically relate to you as you seek the Lord regarding marriage?

a) Be willing to be single for life.

(1) It has many benefits!

(2) Don't be deceived into thinking that marriage will make you happy.

(3) The ideal is: happily single, then happily married.

b) Be selfless.

(1) Learn what it really means to consider others more important than yourself.

(2) That's the kind of person others want to marry anyway!

c) Be an instrument for righteousness in all your relationships. Ask, "Will this person become more like Christ by knowing me?"

(1) If he does want you to marry, you'll have a more fulfilling marriage! The marriage where both partners are most like Christ is the best!

(2) But if God doesn't will for you two marry, then you will be helping some other potential marriage partner for that person!

4. Questions and Answers

The Integrity Factor

Proverbs 10:9; 11:3; 19:1; 28:6 (Cyclical Inductive)

Topic: Integrity
Subject: Walking in integrity
Complement: brings security, guidance and favor.
Purpose: The listeners will see the benefits of walking in integrity and the dangers of dishonesty and thereby commit to a life of integrity more than wealth, success and power.

Introduction

1. Interest: Imagine this. You walk into a grocery store to buy bread that costs $2.50 and you give $10 to the shopkeeper. He has a lot of customers lined up and so in a hurry, he returns $8 by mistake. What will you do? Will you walk away saying the Lord has provided miraculously while trying to justify your conscience? Or will you return the 50 cents that does not belong to you? Most Christians will say that we have to return the money. That's what we know is the right thing to do. But when it actually happens, will you really return the money?

2. Need: This simple illustration will help us to assess whether we value integrity or whether we are dishonest. While we think that returning the money is not a problem for us, how many of us here would be able to say honestly that in school, we have not plagiarized in our papers, cheated in the exams, claimed to have finished reading when we haven't, gave excuses that were wrong, skipped school activities without permission and so on. We can also further reflect on our ministry whether we have done our best, prayed sincerely, prepared our preaching well or did sloppy and lazy work while appearing spiritual in front of our church members? Do we say "I will pray for you" and never actually pray while the other person got the impression that you were really spiritual?

   If we reflect back in our life for the last three months, how would we rate ourselves in integrity on a scale of 1-10, with 1 being really dishonest and 10 showing high integrity? Today, churches and denominations are looking for people of integrity. When others look for a pastor or a leader, they look for people who have integrity, who can be trusted and who can be depended upon. You would do the same.

3. Subject: Why we should walk in integrity? What benefits does it offer?

4. Background: Solomon, the wisest man ever, reflected on the dangers of the lack of integrity in his life, besides studying the Old Testament law. Solomon wrote it down for us so that we may choose wisdom—integrity—rather than folly, or dishonesty. These proverbs are general principles for life that can help us maintain integrity.

   So then, what is integrity? Integrity simply is the harmony between what we say and do and what is in our hearts. Integrity is the harmony between the inner man and the outer man. Integrity is being the same person when you are alone, with people, at the work and in the church. Integrity or lack of it is a condition of our heart, of who we really are, that which cannot be duplicated and sooner or later, it will show up in all our works, ministry and in whatever we do.

5. Preview: From today's topic, The Integrity Factor, we will see *three benefits* of walking in integrity.

   Transition: The first benefit of walking in integrity is…

I. Integrity brings *security* (10:9).

Honesty secures our walk.

Let us read Proverbs 10:9…

"Whoever walks in integrity walks securely,
but he who makes his ways crooked will be found out."

This proverb is called antithetical parallelism because it looks at the same truth from opposite perspectives. Here the truth is explored between one who walks in integrity and another who lacks integrity or is dishonest. The first part of Proverbs 10:9 gives us the first benefit of walking in integrity and that is...

A. Integrity brings security (10:9a).

1. Solomon here derives this godly principle that walking in integrity brings security. Christians or godly people are to posses this character, not just because it makes us more Christlike but because of the benefits that it gives as well. But what does it mean by "security" here that a person walking in integrity is supposed to experience?

2. In the story of Abimelech, King of Gerar in Genesis 20, we learn that the king takes Sarah to be his wife because Abraham had said that Sarah is his sister. God told Abimelech in a dream that he is a dead man. Abimelech responded to God in Gen. 20:5 that he had done it in the integrity of his heart. God responded back in Gen. 20:6 that it is because of his integrity, he had been secured by not letting him sin against Him. Abimelech, a Gentile King, because of his integrity, experienced a two level security:
   a. God kept Abimelech from sinning against Him.
   b. God gave grace to Abimelech not to touch Sarah – a security against immoral sin.
   Sarah was also protected in the process because of Abimelech's integrity.

3. Can you think of a moment in your life when you practiced integrity and how it gave you security and protection? When you have integrity, you will walk securely. You will not be afraid of anything. I remember a time when I was working at the Canadian High Commission and part of my job was handling finances. One of my jobs was to count the money, ensure the full amount and put the cash in the bank and record them. One time, one of the departments brought in a few bundles of cash on my table as usual. As I was counting them, I realized that in two bundles, there were 5 extra 100 Rupee notes (about S$35). My first thought was that I should come clean. The temptation was strong, as I needed money. I prayed and God gave me grace to come clean. After an hour, the manager came over to me and asked me whether there was some extra money in the bundles. If I had messed up, it obviously would have brought fear and insecurity. But I felt secure when asked. I had immediately reported earlier to my senior and this act of integrity was recorded in my favor. This is the type of security we will experience when we walk in integrity.

(The opposite side of this truth is picked up in Proverbs 10:9b and that is...)

B. Dishonesty brings fear (10:9b).

1. Dishonesty is obviously lack of integrity. Certain areas of dishonesty like cheating, plagiarizing, unauthorized skipping of school activities, lies, all forms of deception, etc., are clearly wrong. But the difficult thing is the more subtle area like our negative attitudes towards authority, lecturers, senior pastors, government, races, etc. In order to understand that dishonesty brings fear, take any child for example. The moment they do what they are told not to do, they will come and tell us, "Daddy, I did not do it." The reason is fear.

2. Let me ask you this question: "Have you ever plagiarized in your papers or cheated in your exams? Or how many of us here have slandered others?" If these questions bring insecurity or fear within you, it means you have failed there. That's the fruit of dishonesty or lack of integrity. But, if you have not done those things, it will not affect you at all and you will be as bold as a lion. However, some have become

professionally dishonest and so they may not feel the effect. I hope and pray that none of us will be in that category.

(From Proverbs 10:9, we have seen that the first benefit of walking in integrity is *security*. Proverbs 11:3 gives us a second benefit of walking in integrity, and that is that...)

II. Integrity brings ***guidance*** (11:3).

Honesty leads to the next right step.

Let us read Proverbs 11:3.

"*The integrity of the upright guides them,*
but the crookedness of the treacherous destroys them."

This is another proverb that is called antithetical parallelism. As mentioned earlier, they look at the same truth from opposite perspectives. The first part of Proverbs 11:3 gives us the second benefit of walking in integrity and that is...

A. Integrity brings guidance (11:3a).

1. Guidance here does not mean that we know the future, but it means that as we take that step of integrity, it will lead us to our next step as to what we should do. Similarly, for a person who does wrong, his next step is to lie to cover up that wrong. So, integrity or lack of it guides us to our next step and further to our stage of life and destiny.
2. We all remember the story of Joseph and how he escaped the temptation from Potiphar's wife in Genesis 39. In the story, we see that the immediate consequences of Joseph's integrity are accusation and imprisonment. We can say that his integrity guided him to prison. While to a human mind this seems ridiculous and we may prefer to compromise our integrity, but never look at the immediate results. God will surely guide you out of your mess if you continue to walk in integrity. Joseph's integrity is proven by the favor he received in prison and also later on being lifted up to a position just next to Pharaoh. In other words, Joseph's integrity guided him into leadership and success. Now not all who walk in integrity will experience such phenomenal success, but each will definitely be guided by that step of integrity.
3. While we think Joseph's situation as unique, actually it seems to be the norm. Just try speaking the truth, and see the misunderstanding that is going to be created. People don't like to be exposed. Your integrity will lead you to do right things and your dishonesty will lead you to do things that displease the Lord.

   (The opposite side of this truth is picked up in Proverbs 11:3b and that is...)

B. Dishonesty brings downfall (11:3b).

1. The principle that integrity gives guidance is stated in opposite here. The second part of Proverbs 11:3 says that dishonesty brings downfall.
2. An example that comes to my mind immediately is the story of Gehazi from 2 Kings 5. Naaman, after being healed, offered presents to Elisha who refused them. But Gehazi, the servant of Elisha, because of his greed lied to Naaman, collected the gifts and then even lied to the prophet Elisha. As a result, Gehazi's dishonesty brought his downfall. He was leprous and even lost his ministry with Elisha. While such incidences may be seemingly rare, it goes to show that dishonesty is costly and brings downfall. This is a strong reminder to us that if we lack integrity and ignore its importance, we are headed for downfall.
3. As we study at SBC, our character formation in integrity or dishonesty is crucial as we will individually be the recipients of its benefits or consequences. We may not experience downfall immediately and may think that we can get away with our little acts of dishonesty now. While there are exceptions to the rule, generally our downfall is imminent if we continue to live dishonest, deceptive and hypocritical lives.

(From Proverbs 11:3, we have seen the second benefit of walking in integrity, and that is, you will find guidance. The third benefit of walking in integrity is....)

III. Integrity brings *favor* (19:1; 28:6).

Honest people are preferred.

Let us read Proverbs 19:1 and 28:6.

Proverbs 19:1 "*Better is a poor person who walks in his integrity than one who is crooked in speech and is a fool.*"

Proverbs 28:6 "*Better is a poor man who walks in his integrity than a rich man who is crooked in his ways.*"

These two proverbs are called better-than parallelism to illuminate the fundamental choice between wisdom and folly, that integrity is better than dishonesty. The first part of these two verses gives us the third benefit of walking in integrity, and that is...

A. People of Integrity are favored (19:1a; 28:6a).

1. The two proverbs we have just read said that a poor person with integrity is better off than one who is rich but dishonest. It is not saying that the poor people have an inherent integrity in them. One can be both poor and dishonest. It is also not saying that rich people are necessarily dishonest. One can be rich and can have high integrity. But what the proverb is saying is that if the rich is dishonest and the poor person walks in integrity, this poor person should be favored and is better than the rich without integrity. So, what do you prefer, riches or integrity? If you can have both integrity and riches, that is great; otherwise choose integrity rather than riches.
2. Imagine that you are the senior pastor of a church and that you have been entrusted to find an associate pastor. You would not pick up a dishonest theological graduate who is known for inconsistency and bad habits while in school. You will also not choose those who are known to be dishonest in the community. You are right in your decisions. You should look for people of integrity, not just people who have skills and the degrees. The qualification of leaders mentioned in 1 Tim. 3 and Titus 1 make it clear who we should favor when looking for leadership positions in the church.
3. Most of us want to be leaders. There is nothing wrong in aspiring for leadership, to be in the position of influence. But the question is, "Are you preparing yourself to be favored?" One area to seriously consider is the area of integrity. Integrity for leadership is not an option, but a mandatory quality. God promotes those who walk in integrity but he brings down those who are dishonest.

(The integrity just discussed is better than dishonesty because...)

B. Dishonest people are not favored (19:1b; 28:6b).

1. In today's permissive society, we may not see this aspect very strongly, particularly in the working world and sadly in some churches. But any good church that stands on the uncompromising word of God will never put a dishonest man in leadership.
2. During his time as a rancher, Theodore Roosevelt and one of his cowpunchers lassoed a maverick steer, lit a fire, and prepared the branding irons. However, Gregory Lang, one of Roosevelt's neighbors, claimed the part of the range they were on. According to the cattleman's rule, the steer therefore belonged to Lang. As his cowboy applied the brand, Roosevelt said, "Wait, it should be Lang's brand." "That's all right, boss," said the cowboy. "But you're putting on my brand," Roosevelt said. "That's right," said the man. "Drop that iron," Roosevelt demanded, "and get back to the ranch and get out. I don't need you anymore. A man who will steal for me will steal from me." This cowboy was dishonest and he thought he was helping out Roosevelt by stealing from their neighbor, but he was kicked out. It is the same thing if you slander about

others to me. It is a question of time, you will slander about me to *others*. Choose friends who walk in integrity and whose speech is honest.

So what are the key points of integrity? This whole topic reminds us that…

Conclusion:

1. *Integrity brings blessings but dishonesty brings downfall* (MI).
2. Walking in integrity brings security, guidance and favor while dishonesty brings fear and downfall (restated MI).
3. The benefits of integrity are (repeated MPs):
   a. You will have security.
   b. You will find guidance.
   c. You will have favor.
4. Exhortation/Application: As we reflect on what we have heard, let us open up our hearts to the Holy Spirit asking Him to examine and search our hearts and life and show us if there have been some areas of dishonesty in our lives. As you sit there, think of the last few months on how you have missed integrity or if there has been an area of dishonesty. Reflect on three specific areas:
   i. In ministry and in your FE church, have you served the Lord and the people with integrity? Have you slandered anyone in your church, bad-mouthed your pastors and leaders? Have you been dishonest by showing yourself to be more spiritual when your life is really in a mess or not up to the mark?
   ii. In your personal life when no one sees you, how did you live your life? Can you say that you walked with integrity during those times? If God were to reveal or if you are asked about those times you are alone, would you have the courage to tell everything without hiding anything? If you find you have missed God here, repent right now.
   iii. In the school, have you walked in integrity this semester? Have you been faithful in your assignments by working hard? Have you reported that you have read when you haven't read? Have you copied from other sources for your paper and have not given credit for that, which is plagiarizing? Have you lied for your classmates in any way? Have you teamed up with those who are doing wrong? We need to repent if so.

   I ask you to bring your failures before the Lord, say sorry to Him with an attitude of true repentance. Then make a commitment right now to a life of integrity even though it costs, because the benefits of integrity offset those of dishonesty and also because it is a choice of wisdom over folly.

5. Prayer: Lord, we ask you to forgive us for not walking in integrity but rather choosing the ways of foolishness. We fail in different areas of our life. Show us our blind spots, our failures and convict us, Lord. And as we repent, I pray that the blood of Jesus will cleanse us and your Holy Spirit will empower us to walk in integrity. Help us also to know that much depends on our commitment and decision, and as we recommit our lives to you this morning, we ask that you will cause us to walk in your security, guidance and favor. In Jesus' name, Amen.

OT Poetic and Wisdom books
16 October 2008
NIV

Joni Siau (#97)
Single Message
15 Minutes (length)

The Art of Ruining Relationships

Selected Proverbs

Intro:
1. Arouse interest

Four preachers met for a friendly gathering. During the conversation one preacher said, "Our people come to us and pour out their problems, confess certain sins and needs. Let's do the same. Confession is good for the soul." In due time all agreed. One confessed he liked to go to movies and would sneak off when away from his church. The second confessed to liking to smoke cigars and the third one confessed to liking to play cards. When it came to the fourth one, he wouldn't confess. The others pressed him saying, "Come now, we confessed ours. What is your secret or vice?" Finally he answered, "It is gossip and I can hardly wait to get out of here!"

2. Raise Need

We may laugh at this joke, but do we realize that as pastors or preachers to be, we are not spared on this issue? We may be gossiping as well. For example: sometimes we may find out that our church member's story perfectly fits our need for a sermon illustration; however without permission it would be gossip.

3. Theme R

Do you ever think about the *results* of gossip? What are the destructive *consequences* from gossip? What *effects* does gossip bring?

4. Bkgrd

Gossip is not new; it started in the first book of the Bible, yes the book of Genesis. We all know the story of Joseph. In Genesis 37:2 we read about how Joseph brought bad reports about his brothers to his father, Jacob. Furthermore, in Numbers 12 we read that Miriam and Aaron talked behind Moses back about his Cushite wife and as the result God punished Miriam with leprosy.

5. Text

Today we are going to learn from the book of Proverbs. I have selected some verses about gossip from Proverbs.

6. Preview

These proverbs will show us three results of gossip.

T, MPI, SP "A"

The first result is … **Gossip breaks confidences… Rumors betray assurances.** Breaking confidence equals betrayal. This is seen in Proverbs 11:13, so let's open our Bible to Proverbs 11:13, I will read for you:

11:13

"A gossip betrays a confidence, but a trustworthy man keeps a secret."

Explain

Here we have a contrast between a gossip and a trustworthy man. A trustworthy man keeps a secret, while a person who likes to gossip goes from one to another to spread the "info" that he/she just heard about. He/she cannot wait to share secrets that should be kept.

ILL (Dating)

It is quite sad that most Indonesian churches have problems with gossip. My home church is not spared from this issue. The hottest gossip among the youngster usually will be the dating issue. So if there is a new dating issue, it will spread very fast. I struggled with this, especially when I started dating my wife. Both of us were quite active in the church, so I was quite sure that we would be the targets of gossip. What we did to avoid gossip was not to show public interest in each other until we were quite sure about our relationship. Then when we decided to "go public" all the gossipers came and exclaimed, "What? Both of you are dating? How come I didn't know about that? Am I the last person who knows about this?"

T, SP "B" But how can we not betray confidences?
Your confidences will be kept by watching out for who you talk to. Proverbs 20:19 warns about those who talk too much. Let me read for you Proverbs 20:19,

20:19 "A gossip betrays a confidence; so avoid a man who talks too much."

Explain As I prepared this sermon, I kept thinking about this verse because it says to "avoid a man who talks too much." If we apply this literally, that will mean we will not have talkative friends. However, when I looked at the NASB version, it gave me another insight. NASB translates this sentence as "therefore do not associate with a gossip." Because when we talk too much, we may not able to control our tongue. James says that the "tongue is a small part of the body, but it makes great boasts." So be sparing in what you say to those who easily break confidences.

T Breaking confidences is quite bad, but the second result of gossip is even worse, because …

MPII **Gossip breaks even a close relationship… Rumors split even best friends.** Let us read from Proverbs 16:28

16:28 "A perverse man stirs up dissension, and a gossip separates close friends."

Explain In this verse, a gossip is portrayed as a perverse man who stirs up dissension—so much so that his gossip can even separate close friends. This is very true, because I saw this kind of scenario happen among my friends.

ILL (Church planting team) In 2005 I recruited a group of friends to plant a church; most of them were close friends of mine. Among the group, there were two girls who had been very close friends for about ten years or more. One day we were decided to watch a movie, and one of the girls and some other friends were queuing up for tickets. After we got the tickets we went to the hawker center to have some drinks and talked about some activities for the coming Sunday. During the conversation we mentioned some names in our group. Without any notice a guy came along and we end our discussion. Perhaps because of the sudden end of the discussion, he assumed that we were talking about some names that we mentioned before. Then he went to the other girl and said, "I saw your best friend with your team and they were talking about you." This ended up with a fight between the two best friends. It is quite unfortunate that this happened in the church where people are supposed to love each other.

T, MPIII The last result is… **Gossip hurts others… Rumor harms people's feelings**. This is seen in Proverbs 18:8.

18:8 "The words of a gossip are like choice morsels;
they go down to a man's inmost parts."

Explain "Choice morsels" What are choice morsels? These are small tasty bits of food that go down to a man's stomach, intestines, etc. This also true with the words of a gossip. Can you imagine what would happen if a person who is being gossiped about heard the gossip directly? The words would go into his inmost parts–his heart–and it sure would hurt him.

ILL (Friend's exp.) A few years back, one of my friends was deep in debt. He tried his best to survive but unfortunately he was not on the right track. He cheated his insurance clients and most of his clients were his church members! He was a Sunday school teacher, so

some of the church members reported to the superintendent then the superintendent suspended him from serving in Sunday school. One Sunday morning, a preacher picked up his story for the illustration and this man was there below the pulpit. From that moment he disappeared from church.

Big T — It was very sad gossip exist in the church and even worst that a preacher involved in this issue. As a future church leader, pastor or preacher, are you going to let this happen in your church? Let me summarize all I've been saying…

MI — *Gossip ruins relationships.* That's why I called this sermon "The Art of Ruining Relationships."

R MPI- III — Today we have learned about three results of gossip: it breaks confidences, it breaks even a close relationship, and it hurts others. So what can we do about it?

APPs (Do not gossip) — We can start with ourselves! Do not gossip and do not be involved in gossip by others. Since we know a lot of verses talk about gossip, whether from Proverbs or other books in the New Testament, don't just keep it for yourself. Preach about it! Rid gossip from the church.

APPs (Talk less) — It is not easy to control our tongue. If we talk too much, we may not control the words that go out of our mouth. What can we do is we can talk less, be effective with our words, be an effective communicator.

APPs (Encourage) — As a future church leader, pastor or preacher, your task is to build relationships, not to ruin them. So, rather than talk about others' bad issue, let's build relationships by using words of encouragement.

APPs (Ask permission) — If you really want to use another's story for a sermon illustration, ask permission from the involved person. If we just take it and preach it without permission, it would be like gossip—even worse than gossip.

From my own experience, once my senior pastor asked my permission to use my story. Friends, I was so happy about it, it really blessed me to know that my story could bless others.

Pray — Let us pray… Father, we want to thank you for this opportunity that once again You remind us about gossip. As we expound from Your Word, we learn that the result of gossip is really bad. It ruins our relationships. So help us Father to control our tongue and use our tongue to bless others with words of encouragement. Help us also to be a fervent preacher to preach Your Word, especially in the area of gossip, so that Your church will be free from gossip. We pray all these in Jesus' name. Amen.

Monologues

I. What's a Monologue?

A. The monologue is a first-person dramatic depiction of a biblical character which conveys a scriptural central idea and application to the listeners.

B. Few homiletics texts define or describe how to preach monologues, but two refreshing examples do exist:

1. Haddon Robinson's *Biblical Sermons* has two monologues: "A Night in Persia" by Don Sunukjian on the Book of Esther is told in the eyes of Harbona, a minor character in the book (1:10; 7:9; see pp. 160-69 in these notes), and "For Wait Watchers Only" by George Kenworthy depicts Zechariah's account of the birth of his son, John the Baptist.

2. In *Telling Stories to Touch the Heart* Reg Grant and John Reed admirably detail the steps to telling a story, including monologues, and include five samples.

II. What Advantages Does the Monologue Have?

A. Interest: It presents otherwise boring background details of Scripture in an interesting way. People love to hear stories, especially "first-hand" accounts instead of third-person narratives. It carries the intensity of a "you are there" movie.

B. Variety: After dozens or even hundreds of sermons in a row from the pulpit, hearing Scripture presented in this fresh, imaginative way is much appreciated by the listeners.

C. Delivery: You can't use notes in a monologue, which alone may help delivery.

III. What Dangers are Involved in the Monologue?

A. The central idea of the monologue must be the same as that of the text of Scripture. The monologue should not be used as a vehicle for one's own ideas not rooted in the Word.

B. Deep things of the Word can be trivialized if care is not exercised. Just as much hard work (if not more) must be devoted to exegesis of the passage.

C. A poorly done monologue looks worse than a poorly done sermon.

D. People can perceive it as a performance rather than a message (don't let them clap!).

IV. When Should I Use the Monologue?

A. In general, monologues work effectively *within* the context of any narrative book but probably best at the *beginning* of a new series on an epistle. See the following examples on Mark, 1 Thessalonians, Philemon (Testimony of Onesimus), and Esther (A Night in Persia).

B. Use them when your preaching needs a fresh lift (probably infrequently).

C. Use them for often preached passages or topics (Easter, Christmas, etc.)..

V. How Do I Do a Monologue?

A. Follow steps 1-5 in sermon preparation (pp. 27-28).

B. Instead of outlining the pas sage at step 6, determine which character in the text (or even an imaginary person outside of the text) you feel can best communicate the central idea. Ask, "Who can best tell this story?"

C. Outline the general flow of what you want to say so that it contributes to the central idea. Like sermons, a monologue may be either deductive or inductive (best; cf. step 6a).

D. The general principles of oral clarity (cf. step 6b) need not be followed in the monologue. In fact, it's best *not* to follow these (though Kenworthy and "Ezra" are exceptions).

1. Don't give illustrations from the modern listener's world. (You have come from the biblical world into the 21st century, so you won't be familiar with modern living.)

2. Applications must also be shared more creatively and not so directly as in preaching.

E. Prepare the introduction and the conclusion (cf. step 6c).

1. Introduction

a. Walk in front of your audience in biblical-looking clothes. This is a must! They need not be fancy—even barefoot and a simple robe is sufficient (depending upon the character you are playing). This is sure to arouse interest!

b. Explain briefly who you are and how you got there. (Use some creativity here as in the "Testimony of Onesimus" on the letter to Philemon.)

1) Sunukjian starts his message as a person *other* than his monologue character by a brief introduction to Esther and the statement, "I would like to tell the story of Esther through the eyes of one of the minor characters of the book..."

2) I think it is best to never be out of character. I feel having "someone else" (e.g., you as the preacher) introduce you ruins the effect you can have by always staying in character. Just introduce yourself as the biblical character and continue.

c. Raise need if you want, but generally this is not necessary. Most of the time this novel approach to communication will hold people's interest. Don't state your subject.

2. Conclusion

a. State your main idea here.

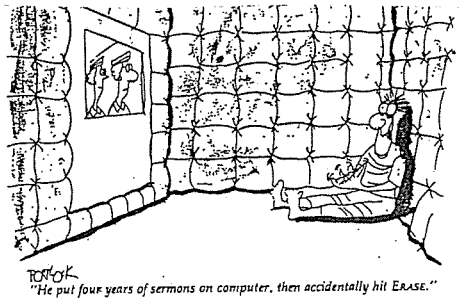
b. Make more subtle applications than in a regular sermon, but still make them.

c. Say good-bye and exit the room while still in your biblical outfit.

F. Manuscript and practice the monologue until it is internalized (cf. step 7).

1. Manuscript for word choice employing a very conversational tone. It should not sound "preachy" even in the least sense.

2. A monologue spoken from notes ruins the effect, so speaking without notes is really imperative. Gradually wean yourself away from your notes until you can give the presentation naturally. (I generally need to do this 6-8 times for both a sermon and a monologue.) Practice moving around the stage since you won't need to stand behind the pulpit with a Bible (cf. pp. 113-14).



"He put four years of sermons on computer, then accidentally hit ERASE."

5-May-10



Rev. Karl Smith discovers that if he lined all his reference materials end to end . . . he still wouldn't have a decent sermon.

Sermon

71

There's a book in the Bible where the name of God is never mentioned—the Book of Esther. But even though God's name is mentioned nowhere in the book, you sense his presence everywhere, controlling what happens.

It's like a dollhouse where the top has been removed and some big father can lean in, move the people around, rearrange the furniture, and do anything he wants. That huge father does not walk around in the dollhouse, yet he controls everything that happens. That's how it is in the Book of Esther. You don't see or hear God there, but you sense his presence dominating everything.

I would like to tell the story of Esther through the eyes of one of the minor characters of the book. The man is on the palace staff, an attendant to the king. He's on the inside. He knows everything that's going on. How would this man, who never hears the name of God and yet sees everything that happens, view it? What sense would he make out of it all?

My name is Harbona. My job? In Britain I would be called a personal valet. In your country I would be known as a male

Chapter 4

A Night in Persia

Esther

Donald Sunukjian

Donald Sunukjian is currently the pastor of Westlake Bible Church in Austin, Texas. He served as associate professor at Dallas Theological Seminary from 1979 to 1988. Sunukjian's articles have appeared in *Bibliotheca Sacra, Kindred Spirit, Walvoord: A Tribute,* and the *Bible Knowledge Commentary.*



"Well, actually, the sermon didn't quite fit my needs. Where do I go to get a refund on my offering?"

© 1992 Lee Johnson

private secretary. In my country I am Harbona, chamberlain to Xerxes, king of Persia. You may know him by the name *Ahasuerus.* At first I hesitated to take the job because you never knew about Xerxes. One day you'd be good friends with him—everything would be great—and then all of a sudden, without warning, he'd turn on you and it was all over.

For instance, once Pythius, one of his leading officials, offered Xerxes four million dollars to pay for one of the Persian military campaigns. Xerxes was so overwhelmed by such generosity that he refused the money and even gave Pythius a present besides. But then a little later when Pythius hinted that maybe his oldest son could be excused from the campaign, Xerxes was so infuriated, he hacked the boy in two and marched his army between the pieces. That's what I mean when I say you never knew about Xerxes. Another time a storm at sea destroyed three hundred of his ships. Xerxes grabbed a strap, went down to the seashore, and beat the sea three hundred times, once for each ship.

So you can see why I hesitated to take the job. But I took it. I made up my mind that I would get along with Xerxes. I would never rub him the wrong way; I'd just "go with the flow."

But let me tell you about a series of amazing coincidences that have happened in Persia lately. It all began years ago after the Bay of Salamis fiasco. Real tragic. Xerxes was making a bid to take over Greece to expand the Persian Empire. He was doing well, too, until in one naval battle at the Bay of Salamis, his entire navy was wiped out and Xerxes had to sneak back to Persia on a fishing boat. For the longest time after that he was down in the dumps. He brooded all day long—no spark, no interest.

Then he started talking about Vashti: poor Vashti, how he'd done her wrong. I'll admit it had been an unfortunate affair. Vashti was the queen he had gotten rid of. But what's past is past. It wouldn't do any good to mope about it. I thought to myself, *Something's got to be done to put some life back into Xerxes. I know: women, and lots of them. That'll get his mind off Vashti.* So I told him my idea. "Xerxes, why don't you gather beautiful young virgins from all over the kingdom here in the palace? You can get to know them, and maybe you'll find one you like well

enough to make a new queen." He went for the idea. It wasn't long before we had the best-looking girls in all Persia right here at the palace. The whole thing did wonders for Xerxes. All those pretty girls—he saw them all.

But there was one in particular who caught his eye. He began to see more and more of her, and pretty soon she was the only one he cared about. Sure enough, Xerxes had found himself a new queen. The girl's name was Esther. As far as I'm concerned, he picked the best one. A real beauty. Only thing, though: Esther didn't look Persian to me. She was dark-complexioned but—well, what difference does it make? She made a good-looking queen, and Xerxes was his old self again.

Things went on after that real smooth for about five years. And then one day when Xerxes was holding court, in hopped Haman. Haman was the king's favorite. He had been rising rapidly in our state department over the course of several years. He was actually now number two man in the kingdom. I didn't care for Haman, though; I didn't trust him. I never told Xerxes that—you know, "go with the flow." Anyway, Haman had this little speech all prepared for Xerxes: "Xerxes, scattered throughout your kingdom is a group of people who represent a very disruptive element. These people have their own peculiar laws and they don't pay attention to our Persian ones. It's really to your disadvantage to continue to tolerate them. Now I suggest that we pass a decree that they all be destroyed, and I myself will give personal funds to take care of the matter."

You know what Xerxes said? "Sounds like a good idea, Haman. Follow through on it. And Haman, keep your money. Use government funds." Just like that! He didn't ask Haman who he was talking about. That's just the way Xerxes was sometimes. But it wasn't Xerxes who puzzled me as much as Haman. I couldn't see what Haman was getting at. It wasn't like him to be so solicitous of the king's welfare or so free with his own money unless he was getting something out of it. So I decided to find out what was going on.

The fellow who taught Haman's sons was a friend of mine. You know what it was? Haman wanted to wipe out an entire race

of people because of one member of that race. Just because he was irritated by one member, he wanted to destroy them all. Here was his problem: We have in Persia what we call a "citizens' council." This council is composed of representatives from all the national and ethnic groups throughout the kingdom. Every group elects one representative. The purpose of the council is to decide those minor matters that you wouldn't bring to the attention of the king. As number two man in the kingdom, it was Haman's job to drop in on the council occasionally just to check how things were going. Whenever Haman came in, all the representatives from the national groups would bow down to him—except for one, the Jewish representative, who stayed seated in his chair. That's all Haman saw: all the representatives down except for one of them sitting there looking at him.

Okay for you, Mr. Jewish Representative. I'll get you and your people. That's who he was after: the Jews. Haman wanted to liquidate the Jews because their representative wouldn't bow down—and I mean *liquidate* them. I saw a copy of the decree after he got through filling it out. It was brutal. "Destroy, kill, and annihilate all Jews, young and old, women and children, on December 13, and confiscate their property." You couldn't misunderstand it. "Destroy, kill, and annihilate"—that ought to do it—"all Jews, young and old, women and children, on December 13." I thought to myself, *Those poor Jews, they've got eleven months to live.*

As I thought about it, the whole thing didn't make sense to me. As near as I could tell, the reason the Jewish representative wouldn't bow down had something to do with his religious beliefs. But we Persians have always been tolerant of other people's religions. That Haman got my goat. I thought of saying something to Xerxes, but why stick my neck out? Besides that, it was too late anyway. The decree was already being circulated throughout the kingdom.

A few days later I was on the second floor of the palace by an open window when I heard a loud commotion out in the courtyard. I looked out and saw some guy wailing and screaming and making an awful noise. He was a real mess: his hair was tangled,

his face smeared with ashes, and his clothes torn. And I thought to myself, *Somebody's got to tell that guy to get away from the palace.* As I was going to the stairway to go down, I bumped into Hatach, the queen's attendant. He seemed to be going the same way I was, only he was carrying some clothes. I asked, "Where are you going?"

"I'm going out to the fellow out there in the courtyard. The queen wants me to take these clean clothes out to him."

"Oh, okay. I'll let you handle it then. And tell him to get away from the palace." I thought to myself, *That Esther. She's all heart. How many queens would care about a bum who needed new clothes?* Hatach came back in, and he still had the clothes with him. "What's the matter? Weren't they his size?"

"Do you know who that is?"

"No, who?"

"It's the Jewish representative."

"Oh. Well he does have something to holler about then"—he'd probably seen the decree—"but why come here around the palace?"

"I don't know. He just gave me this piece of paper and told me to go see Esther about it."

"Here, let me see what it is. Yeah, it's a copy of the decree. But why bother Esther? It's none of her affair."

"I don't know—he just told me to tell her to go and see Xerxes about it."

"See Xerxes about it? Xerxes doesn't know anything about it. He knows about the decree, but he doesn't know it's against the Jews. Besides, why go through the queen? What's she got to do with it?"

"I don't know, but I better do like he said, okay? Let me have it."

"All right."

A little later that day I saw Hatach again. He looked like he was sitting on a powder keg. "Hi, Hatach. How's it going?"

"Harbona? Harbona, you'll never believe it! The queen's a *Jewess!*"

"You're kidding."

"I'm serious."

"No wonder she didn't look Persian to me!"

"Yes, she's Jewish. And when I showed her the decree against all the Jews, she turned real pale but she didn't want to go in and see Xerxes about it. He hasn't called for her for over a month now, you know."

"I know. He's in one of his moods lately."

"Anyway, she told me to go out and talk to the Jewish representative. His name's Mordecai and he's her uncle. She told me to tell him that this was not a good time to go in and see the king. If she went in uninvited, he might do something severe. But Mordecai told me to go back and tell Esther that good time or not, the decree was against all Jews. Being queen won't even save her. And he said, "Maybe she's become queen for such a time as this."

"So what's Esther going to do?"

"She's going to take her chances and go in and see Xerxes. Harbona, do you think we ought to say something to Xerxes about this?"

"Are you kidding? I'm not about to get caught between Haman, Xerxes, and Esther. Let events take care of themselves." I thought to myself, *Boy oh boy, things are going to get interesting around here! Haman's got a decree out against the Jews because of Mordecai, only he doesn't know that Esther's a Jew and Xerxes is in the dark about everything.*

I didn't have long to wait. A few days later Xerxes was holding court. A side door opened, and Esther appeared. Man, did she look good! She had really fixed herself up. Xerxes took a look—got his scepter down real fast. She came forward, and he could tell by looking at her that something was bothering her. He can be real tender when he wants to be. You should have heard him: "What is it, Esther? What do you want? Name it and you can have it." I thought she would come out with it then, but she didn't. Later I saw it was probably better because Haman wasn't there. Instead she said that that day at noon she had arranged a specially catered lunch, and would Xerxes and Haman join her in the queen's quarters? When lunchtime came, Xerxes again tried to

find out what was bothering her, but she wouldn't tell him. Instead she said that she had arranged another lunch for the next day, and would Haman and Xerxes join her again for a second lunch? And I thought, *What is she waiting for? Why doesn't she come out with it?* It's funny that she didn't tell him at that first lunch, because a couple of very interesting things happened before the second lunch. It's strange the way these things fit together. If she had told him at the first lunch, it would have been too soon because of what happened between those two lunches.

The first thing that happened—I got this from the tutor at Haman's house—Haman practically floated home from that first lunch on a cloud. He threw a big party that night for all his friends and told them his personal success story—how much money he had, how he had been promoted rapidly in the state department to the number two spot in the kingdom, and today, the climax, a private luncheon engagement with royalty. The only moth in his Persian rug was Mordecai. Even with the decree out, Mordecai still would not get up and bow down in the council meeting. So that night, Haman and all his friends decided that Mordecai would have to go even before December 13. They made a gallows out of that huge tree in his yard and agreed that first thing in the morning, Haman would talk to Xerxes about hanging the Jewish representative. The second thing that happened between those two lunches—this is really weird—is that night Xerxes had insomnia. He couldn't sleep, though he usually slept like a baby. But about three in the morning I heard it. "Harbona!" I was in the next room.

"Harbona, I can't sleep. Bring something to read to me."

"How about the memoirs of your reign?"

"That'd be fine. Okay."

I got the scrolls and came back and started reading. After I'd been reading for about fifteen minutes, I came to a very interesting paragraph—something about how one day on his way to the council meeting the Jewish representative overheard a plot to assassinate the king, but he had tipped off the queen, foiled the plot, and saved the king's life. Xerxes perked up when I read that. He said, "Yeah, I remember Esther telling me something

about that. Harbona, was anything ever done to reward the—what's his name, Mordicky?"

"Mordecai."

"Was anything ever done to reward him?"

I scanned the next few paragraphs. "No."

"Harbona, first thing in the morning you remind me, and we'll take care of that oversight."

"Okay." *This is a fine how-do-you-do. Haman's going to hang him; Xerxes is going to honor him. I can't wait for morning.*

Sure enough, first thing in the morning Xerxes didn't need any reminding. "Are any of my advisers available?"

Somebody says, "Haman's outside."

"Send him in." In came Haman, eager to tell the king his idea about hanging the Jewish representative. Never got the first word out. "Haman, there's a man in my kingdom that I owe a lot to. I'm deeply indebted to this man and I want in some way to show my appreciation publicly so that all will know how much I owe this man. Do you have any ideas, Haman?"

Did Haman have any ideas? He thought it was himself. "Oh yes, Xerxes, yes! Let's see now—yes, whoever it might be, to do right I would put the king's ceremonial robe on him. I would put a gold crown upon his head. I would set him on the king's stallion and then I would have one of your leading officials conduct him through the public streets shouting, 'This is a man the king wants to honor.' "

"Haman, that's good. Look, you're a leading official. You do all of that for the Jewish representative. Mordicky is his name. He'll be getting out of the council meeting about now. Meet him there with all the trimmings you mentioned. And Haman, shout loud, for I owe this man a lot."

Oh, I wish you could have seen Haman's face! One minute he was beaming and then the next he looked whipped. Xerxes turned to me and said, "What's the matter with Haman? Doesn't he feel well?"

"No, I don't think so."

See what I mean about things falling into place? As the morning went by we got glowing reports on Haman's little parade.

When noon came we all went to the queen's quarters for lunch. When Haman got there he looked a little peaked, but he had pretty well pulled himself together. It was a good lunch—Haman, Xerxes, and Esther. While they were lingering over dessert, Xerxes turned to Esther and said, "Esther, something has been bothering you for the past few days. I want you to tell me what it is. Can I do anything for you? Can I give you anything?"

I thought, *Here it comes.* And sure enough—"Yes, Xerxes, there's something you can do for me. There's something you can give me. Give me my life and the life of my people, for we are about to be destroyed, killed, and annihilated."

You should have seen Haman's face. Each one of those words was like a slap. Xerxes says, "What are you talking about Esther? Who would dare do such a thing? Name the man!"

"Haman."

"Haman? Against the—oh, no." And that was too much for Xerxes. He had to go outside onto the patio to think it over.

When Xerxes went out, Haman fell apart. "Esther, I had no idea! I never . . . I would have—Esther, please. Esther, please!" She turned and walked away from him. He got up out of the chair, came over to where she was, got down on his knees, and began to beg, but she wouldn't pay any attention. He began to grab her to make her listen. She had to shove him away. Just then Xerxes came back in, took one look, and came up with the wrong idea.

"Will you molest the queen in my own palace? Cover his face!" And that was it for Haman. When you cover the face, when you drop the death veil, it's all over.

I spoke up then. I don't usually, but it seemed safe. "Uh, Xerxes? Haman had fixed up that huge tree in his yard to hang Mordecai on. Makes a high gallows."

"Hang him on it!" And they did.

They also passed a new decree. You can't take back a former one in Persia but you can pass another one to balance it off. The new decree said that when December 13 came, the Jews could use whatever means they wanted to defend themselves against anyone who came to do them harm. In fact, it even said they

could band themselves together and take the initiative against any of their enemies, and the government would ask no questions. You should have seen the Jews dancing in the streets when that one came up!

Later that day I was at that second-floor window, thinking back on the amazing chain of events: Esther being picked queen out of all those girls, Mordecai being the Jewish representative who saved the king's life, Xerxes having insomnia on just the right night. As I looked out the window and saw the Jews celebrating in the streets, looked over the palace wall into the distance and saw Haman dangling from the tree, and thought how all those coincidences had worked together, I thought to myself, *Those Jews—they sure are lucky!*

SERMON

Now to the God who never slumbers, never sleeps; to the God who knows your coming in and your going out; to the God who hovers around you to preserve you from harm and to give you the future he's planned for you; to our great and good God be glory and praise forever. Amen.

Commentary

It is human nature to be fascinated with human beings. The first-person monologue, by appealing to that interest, transforms abstract concepts into the stuff of life itself.

The difference between traditional preaching and the first-person narrative resembles the difference between an encyclopedia article about Lindbergh's flight across the Atlantic and a motion picture of the event. The impersonal becomes personal and we experience the adventure for ourselves.

Most biblical narratives, such as those in the chronicles of Samuel and Kings, present the conversations and events of history as stories told in the third person by a narrator-historian. Others, like those in Nehemiah and sections of Acts, sound more personal because they are first-person accounts told by a reporter who was part of the action. In this sermon Don Sunukjian turns the narrative of Esther, recounted in the pages of Scripture in the third person, into a first-person monologue. He presents the account from the vantage point of a bit player who lived as part of the court of Xerxes, king of Persia. By changing the perspective, Sunukjian, without violating the biblical text, presents the story in a fresh, imaginative way.

There are dangers involved in preaching a sermon as narrative. Imagination can degenerate into fantasy and, in an effort to tell a good story, a preacher can scuttle or trivialize the biblical material. Imagination must be linked to the text just as interpretation must be tied to the text. Otherwise the preacher may misrepresent the Scriptures and say in the name of God what God did not say. Sunukjian keeps his imagination in check by his exegesis and historical research, and the central idea of the sermon reflects a dominant theme in Esther.

While some narrative sermons start out telling the story, Sunukjian begins with a formal introduction in which he tells us the foundational concept of Esther and at the same time introduces us to Harbona, the main character of his monologue. With an analogy of a father and a dollhouse, he states his central idea: "You don't see or hear God there, yet he controls everything that happens." Then to orient us to what follows, Sunukjian raises a question that serves as the subject of his narration: "How would this man, who never hears the name of God and yet sees everything that happens, view it?" The full answer to that question waits until the final line of the monologue: "*Those Jews—they sure are lucky!*"

Harbona's monologue follows the chronology of Esther. But, like Esther, it possesses dramatic structure as well. One whimsical formula for constructing a play advises: First, get your hero up a tree. Then put a bear underneath the tree. Finally, get your hero down out of the tree—if you can! This sermon follows that counsel and develops much like a three-act play.

Act One: Background information is presented and the audience is introduced to the central characters. Esther, a Jewess, becomes a Persian queen, and Haman, the villain, schemes to kill his enemy Mordecai by getting Xerxes to wipe out the Jewish people. The heroine is up a tree.

Act Two: The heroine leaves the first limb of the tree and scampers up higher among the foliage as the bear tries to get at her. Esther, the queen, tries to foil the villain's plot, but in doing so, she must risk her life.

Act Three: The heroine gets down out of the tree and the Jewish people are delivered. Haman's plan to honor himself honors Mordecai instead, and Haman's gallows erected to execute Mordecai end up hanging him.

The outline of any narrative sermon, therefore, resembles a scenario for a play. Like a playwright, a preacher should develop the action that will transpire in two hundred words or less. As the late Owen Davis once warned a group of aspiring writers: "If your story won't condense into two hundred words, throw it away."

In developing the narrative, Sunukjian does not merely retell the story; he relives it. He employs dialogue to carry on an imagined conversation with other characters and acts out both parts. Dialogue adds variety to a monologue. At another place, he engages in a soliloquy in which he talks to himself. These devices demand that the preacher experience the story and put movements, gestures, and facial expressions into the presentation that paper and ink cannot capture.

The benediction at the end of this narrative does not simply dismiss the audience but provides an effective application of the sermon. It brings the idea of the sermon to a burning focus and deftly shows what difference it should make in life to live within the providence of the sovereign God.

helps me realize the decisions I'll have to make, not only in translation, but also in exegesis. I try to encounter the passage the way a layperson encounters it when she reads it in English. I jot down whatever questions or observations occur to me or to someone coming to it cold turkey on a Sunday morning.

What next?

Next, I study the text exegetically. If I'm in the New Testament, I open up Arndt-Gingerich and work my way through the Greek text word by word looking up the vocabulary, feeling nuances of each word, noting whatever I can structurally from the grammar, the participles, the imperatives, or the force of the verbs.

When do you consult other resources?

At the end of that process; I usually follow a specific order. First, I look in the exegetical commentaries. They're the most technical works. I'm checking up on my own work, making sure I didn't miss something. Then, I move to the expositional works, such as the *Expositor's Bible Commentaries.*[1] These scholars present a flow of the passage, but are not representing sermons, yet. My final stage is to look at homiletic or sermonic works by others who have preached on this text. I look in my files for articles or messages I have clipped that make this passage relevant to a contemporary audience. I do this last because I want to be faithful to the text, not to some good sermon someone preached. Along the way, I use everything in my library; Bible dictionaries, books on manners and customs, word studies, whatever helps me understand the text and to apply it meaningfully.

I gather you have a filing system?

I have a very extensive file, both an 8½ x 11 and a card file.

How about illustrations? What do you look for in using them?

Very seldom do I use biblical illustrations; even more rarely would I use illustrations from the past. Most of my illustrations come out of contemporary life, and most of those come out of my imagination. I ask myself, "Where does this show up in my life or in the life of my

1. Frank E. Gaebelein, ed., *The Expositor's Bible Commentary,* 12 vols. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1976–).

How long does it usually take you to prepare a message?

Between twelve and fifteen hours. I'd always like to have a few more hours. If I had them, I'd probably feel more comfortable about my language or style.

How long did it take you to prepare the message you submitted?

Between thirty-five and forty hours. Esther was an entire book, so I had to get a handle on everything happening in it. In addition, there were unique things to think through. I was developing a minor character and he had to have a personality; I needed to drop hints early in the message about things that would come later; I had to do a lot of reshuffling and memorizing and thinking about how to locate each scene on the platform. Other narrative messages don't take that long.

How long are your sermons normally?

Between thirty and forty minutes.

How do you develop your sermons?

Usually I read the passage in English several times, first of all in the translation that I'm going to preach from and then in other English translations. This gives me a general overview of the passage. It also

people? What kind of situation would they live through or encounter where this particular biblical truth applies?"

Do you use yourself as an illustration very often?

Yes, but I don't set myself up as a model. I try to look like a human being growing and learning, not somebody who has arrived.

How do you develop the introductions to your sermons?

I try to meet people where they are. I start out with something contemporary; humor, suspense, data, statistics, occupations, something that has a high degree of interest. In the opening paragraph a preacher communicates, "This will be interesting." Then, within the next few paragraphs, I want the audience to say, "This message is one I want to hear." Toward the end of the introduction, I may locate my message very briefly in the context of the passage. I don't spend a lot of time on that. Also toward the end of the introduction, I try to show the listener how to follow the sermon by giving an overview of the broad sections of the sermon. In addition, I give some clue as to whether the sermon will be inductive or deductive. If it's deductive, I will have stated my major idea and probably restated it several times. If the message is inductive, I will have focused on the question that I am asking or the subject I'm discussing.

What then makes an effective introduction?

If I were to identify five ingredients in an effective introduction, they would be: (1) interest in the speaker; (2) interest in the message; (3) some indication of either its deductiveness or its inductiveness; (4) location of the sermon within the biblical context; and (5) some direction on how to listen further.

What was the greatest challenge for you in approaching the biblical text of this sermon?

An attempt to deal with the entire Book of Esther. Not only did I have a massive amount of material to handle in a short period of time, but I had to determine the overall thrust or truth of the book. I determined that the book has to do with God's providential care of his people even when they don't know what he's doing. The next challenge was to get that message across in the same way that the book gets the message across. While the Book of Esther never mentions God, the

story had to be told so that the listeners got the point indirectly. A third challenge was picking the major character, someone who could get the story out so that my listeners could get the point without it being stated.

How does a sermon like this develop in your mind?

This character begins to take on a personality. He comes out as a fellow looking out for his own skin. He "goes with the flow." He won't endanger himself. He is a cynic, a pagan. He talks about coincidences. This line gets dropped often to build his perception climaxing in the last line, "Boy, they're sure lucky!" Hopefully, at that point my listener says, "Buddy, you've got it all wrong. That was God putting it all together." Making it happen comes from that; dropping hints in such a way that they seem very natural but they occur at such points that the listener begins to sense God's sovereignty. I also wanted to be historically accurate. Then, after I had the flow of it, I needed to keep all the characters straight before the people. From time to time I reflected six different characters. To do that, I positioned Xerxes always on my stage right, Mordecai out in the audience somewhere stage center left. Then I wrestled with the techniques of representing those different people in separate conversations.

How do you outline a first-person narrative?

I think you would look at it either as a story or a drama in which you have acts and scenes.

Finally, what counsel would you give a young preacher?

The Lord's Word is joyful wisdom. Pass on to your congregation, "Look how good God is and what he has told us. We are fortunate to have access to this kind of wisdom because it makes the difference in how joyful our lives can be."

Trinity Church (Presbyterian) & SBC Chapel
2 July 1995 & 16 April 1997
NIV

Dr. Rick Griffith
Single Message
35 Minutes

My Family is ~~My~~ God's Business

Ezra 9 Monologue

Topic: Worldliness
Subject: Want a pure church?
Complement: Weed out pagan influences in your own life first!
Purpose: The listeners will rid themselves of ungodly influences which wreck their own spiritual lives and eventually that of the church

Note: The monologue setting is Ezra visiting the church itself after having come back to life and living in Singapore for some time (unspecified length). This allows for more direct application at the end.

INTRO
Heb.
OXO
OOO

Shalom. Baruch Adonai. You probably know that "Shalom" means "welcome" or "peace" and "baruch Adonai" means "bless the Lord." Since I have been in your land I don't believe I have heard your people speak these Hebrew words. Don't you know Hebrew? Surely you do! You say "hallelujah" instead of "praise the Lord," you say "amen."

Lips

Alas, I didn't come this morning to teach you Hebrew. Rather, the Lord has been so gracious to allow me to finally speak. You see, I have been here in your country observing those who claim His name, but until now the Lord has sealed my lips from publicly declaring any of my observations.

Ezra

I suppose I should first introduce myself. I am Ezra, the son of Seraiah. My ancestry goes all the way back to Zadok and even further back to Aaron himself. Perhaps you can tell by this what my occupation was in Israel. You will remember that all descendants of Aaron were priests, so I am no exception.

Priest

Of all the sons of Jacob, only one tribe had their jobs determined by divine order—the Levites. Levites were the "full-time Jewish workers" in the congregation, some of whom served as priests. So all priests were Levites, but not all Levites were priests—only those descended from Aaron. Levites received no land to till as farmers, and we were not to live together in one section of the country as the other tribes who had their allotments. In fact, God ordained that we be spread throughout the land among all the tribes. Why? So we could be close to all the people of Israel. We were to spend our time studying the Torah and teaching God's people God's ways. King David divided the priesthood into 26 divisions, each of which served for two weeks a year at the temple in Jerusalem. But the other 50 weeks we lived in separate towns around the country to teach the children of Israel to live a separated life unto Jehovah. This is why I do not wear the white priestly tunic today, for this is how I dressed most of the year except for temple service.

BKGD
Exile
OOO
XOO

I wish I could say that we were always faithful to our high calling of teaching, but we were not. In fact, the priests themselves often followed other gods and lead the people *away* from the Lord rather than *to* Him. This went on for so many hundreds of years that God's patience finally wore thin and he raised up two powers to judge His people. The Assyrians conquered the northern part of our country and the Babylonians ravaged the south, including Jerusalem. This destroyed the very heart of Israel—the temple, which laid in ruins for 70 years. In fact, earlier under the reign of the evil Manasseh who desecrated the temple with idols, one of the Jewish communities in Egypt so lost hope in God's blessing on the land that it built an alternative temple on the Elephantine Island in the Nile River. This lasted 200 years, was destroyed and rebuilt.

Return Yet God, in His own gracious way, brought our people back to the land. Zerubbabel led 50,000 Jews back to Jerusalem to rebuild the temple on its rightful spot, then 57 years later the Lord used me to bring another 5,000 back. If you paid attention to the numbers I just gave, you would have noticed that I was only able to bring 10% of what Zerubbabel brought. And considering that the Jews had lived in Babylon for almost 130 years, this was a very small amount of Jews who returned.

Why so few "Why so few?" I remember asking. At the beginning of the exile, the prophet Jeremiah had advised us that we would be there for 70 years. He said that we should plant vineyards, marry, and build houses to stay a while. Perhaps we took Jeremiah too literally. My people began businesses—very profitable ones—but when the call came two or three generations later to go to a land of ruins, few responded. In my age there was something about enjoying the comforts of this life that seemed to sap our spiritual energy. I suppose that by now, after all the centuries, you have learned not to seek comforts over the Lord though.

Settle Anyway, we did return, despite our small number. God gave us safe passage to Jerusalem, where we offered sacrifices and began to get settled into our homes.

TEXT When we had been there for a little over four months, one afternoon I was sitting on the
Kidron roof of my newly made home, looking out eastward across the Kidron Valley. I remember thinking about how the Babylonian armies had crossed over the Mount of Olives in front
OOO of me, ruthlessly slaughtering our people. On the south end of the Mount of Olives were
OXO some ruins from Solomon's era 500 years before. Those destroyed buildings housed Solomon's 700 wives and 300 porcupines—I mean concubines. I thanked the Lord that the intermarriage with the pagans which had devastated Solomon's empire was behind us—we'd never repeat that mistake again. We were too smart now.

Report But then I heard some men talking and looked up the hill to my left—up the City of David.
9:1a I saw some of my trusted friends approaching my house, so I hurried down to meet them. Bigthani was the first to speak, "Ezra, I have terrible news to report. The people of Israel, including the priests and the Levites, have not kept themselves separate from the neighboring peoples with their detestable practices, like those of the Canaanites, Hittites, Perizzites, Jebusites, Ammonites, Moabites, Egyptians and Amorites."

Badal I paused, bowed my head, and wondered what they meant. They used the word *badal*, saying that the people neglected to be "divided or separated" from pagans. This immediately reminded me of how Moses wrote in the creation account that "God separated the light from the darkness." Then I remembered that the Lord used the same word for setting apart the Levites to God for special service. What could these leaders mean that our people were not "separate"? Separate in what sense? Hopefully they only meant that some had illegal business deals going with pagans or that someone was lured into a questionable celebration.

Child The men had said that Israel was involved in *practices* of eight pagan peoples, most of
Sacr. whom God had already destroyed by this time. I knew what "detestable practices" meant, for behind me in the Hinnom Valley many Israelite children had been sacrificed to the god Molech. No wonder why the Ammonites, Moabites, and Egyptians were the only groups left! Could it be that this pagan practice has again returned to Israel? But how?

Inter- The men continued their explanation which confirmed my worst fears. They said that
marry some of these priests and Levites had "taken some of their daughters as wives for
9:2 themselves and their sons, and have mingled the holy race with the peoples around them. And the leaders and officials led the way in this unfaithfulness."

Tunic I couldn't believe my ears! Without even a thought, I tore my tunic and cloak. Most of the
9:3 time, those in grief in my land only tear their tunic, but my distress so overwhelmed me that I tore the overcoat or cloak as well. I yanked out hair from my head—I don't ever remember doing this in my life—and grabbed clutches of hair even from my beard. Exhausted and distressed, I sat down appalled.

Crowd 9:4-5; 10:1 A crowd of pious Jews gathered around me and said nothing for several hours. I said so little too as I was in such dire agony from our sin. Occasionally I would lift my head and say something, but then at the evening sacrifice I lifted my hands publicly and prayed in anguish. I confessed the sin of my people, throwing myself down in agony before the Lord, tears streaming down my face.

WHY Word soon spread around the community about my actions. But Sheconiah said that some of the people were saying, "But what was so bad about Jews intermarrying with pagans?
OXO Isn't God the God of all people? Can the Lord who created everyone really be a racist?
OOO Isn't he at all tolerant? Besides, so few Jewish women have returned from Babylon that there're not enough godly women to go around!"

1 History "Have you no sense of history?" I told them. "Abraham made Isaac swear never to marry a Canaanite woman. Isaac obeyed and convinced his son Jacob to do the same, which provided our twelve tribes. Jacob traveled all the way back to Mesopotamia for a legitimate wife, Rachel. But his brother Esau spitefully disregarded this by marrying a Hittite, and their mixed-breed Edomites plague us to this day. Intermarriage led us into the terrible cycles of the period of the judges. Do we want that again? And even our wisest and richest king—Solomon himself—was led astray by intermarriage! Are you smarter than Solomon?

2 Law The law of Moses was very clear on this matter, "Do not marry with [the peoples of the lands around you.] Do not give your daughters to their sons or take their daughters for your sons." We have spurned the statutes of Jehovah God!

3 Samar I told those around me that the intermarried peoples are the very ones who opposed the rebuilding of our temple. [To audience] You see, the Assyrians destroyed the northern nation of Israel and sent all our people out of the land—but they left the very poor. Then the Assyrians brought in other conquered peoples from Mesopotamia and Aram to the north. Well, these pagans intermarried with the Jews who were left, who were pagan enough as it was! Then their ancestors, called Samaritans, began opposing the temple rebuilding. They didn't want another rival temple in their midst.

4 Eleph. At one point I said to the faithful around me, "How could we have entered into the most intimate relationship of all—marriage itself—with those who did not claim the Lord? Yes, *badal* means to separate light from darkness! How could we have invited darkness into our midst!? This will soon extinguish the light! Don't these who have sinned know that the Elephantine Jewish settlement in Egypt intermarried and soon dedicated their temple to 'Anathbethel,' a name which shows a mixture of pagan gods and the true Lord?" Somehow I just knew that this Jewish Elephantine community would later deteriorate and assimilate into the pagan Egyptian culture.

5 Race One phrase stuck out from all the grievous words the men had said: "they have mingled the holy race." This meant that the Messianic line itself was endangered. As far back as Jacob's blessing on the tribes in Genesis, God had said that the Messiah would descend from the tribe of Judah. Here we were, in the land of Judah ourselves, with so few men of Judah. The thought struck me that this type of sin could pollute the very blood line that we were to protect for our Messiah!

EI Do you people here today see why I was so grieved? It wasn't that it was simply an individual sin. I've heard people say, "My family is my business." How arrogant! No, my family is God's business. And my family is Israel's business. We are a corporate community, so the sin of one will affect the entire group.

APPL Is it not so with you in this assembly? Actually, as I have been watching your people, I have noticed that you also have the same problems in family life that plagued my people
OOX long ago. You too struggle with the peril of prosperity. You too wrestle with this
OOO temptation to pursue other gods, although these gods are more carefully disguised than in my age. You too are tempted to intermarry. And you too must watch the influences in your life.

Marry Do you not know that your side of the Book also prohibits intermarriage? The Apostle Paul wrote in 2 Corinthians 6:14, "Do not be yoked together with unbelievers. For what do righteousness and wickedness have in common? Or what fellowship can light have with darkness?"

Yokes Do you understand about yokes? No, not egg yokes! Ox yokes! I remember one time as a small boy my father asked me to hitch up the oxen to plow a small field. I could only find one ox so I put a sheep on the other side of the yoke—the heavy wood brace joining the necks of the two animals together for work. That ox must have thought I was crazy! But I supposed it would work since the sheep was one of the bigger ones I could find. I thought that the ox would teach the sheep the ropes, but you know what actually happened? The ox couldn't steer the plow straight and it weaved all over the place. Looking at the zigzag furrow, you'd have thought I was drunk. No, only stupid. I should have realized that an unequal yoke would drag the ox down rather than strengthen the sheep.

Child Yoke How did we ever get the idea that an unequal marriage would bring the pagan to repentance? Sure, occasionally a nonbeliever comes to faith in God, but this is rare. All of the time, the "yoke" of raising children the right way is born by the believing partner alone, and that yoke gets heavy quickly! Soon it is abandoned and neither partner walks with God.

Ratio Since coming to your country I have learned that the Singapore church has a great imbalance of sexes, with far more females than males. In fact, some churches have 2 or 3 marriageable aged women for every man. This has led many Christian women to feel forced to marry unbelieving spouses despite what Scripture says.

Help What can be said to this? As a married priest myself, I recognize the need to show compassion in this area. Perhaps those of us who are married are partly at fault. Do we see the need of singles for genuine fellowship with married adults? My wife has helped here by often inviting singles to our home. They are too often shunned by families.

Bible Despite the ratios, God's word has not changed. He prohibits the marriage of Christians to non-Christians, and He does so for our fulfillment. He knows that a single person in His will is always happier than a married person out of His will. Just a few weeks ago a single Singaporean woman over age 50 told me, "I still want to get married, but I'm not going to compromise God's standards to do it." May her tribe increase!

M.I. I should point out, though, that my grief at the intermarriage actually went beyond husband-wife relationships. My point was that any pagan influence allowed in the home

OXO OOO can destroy the entire assembly as well as the individual home. When we allow ungodly forces to work within our homes, we plant the seeds of destruction for the whole godly community. Want a pure church? Weed out pagan influences in your own life first!

"No Pagans here" In my short sojourn in your land, I have noticed a peculiar thing among those calling themselves Christians. Many would never marry a pagan, many even say they would never even allow a pagan to enter their homes. But I know that there are literally hundreds of murders, numerous incidents of sexual immorality, and an abundance of pagan philosophies within countless Christian Singaporean homes!

TV Many here do not believe me, but it is true. This can be observed any day in a little box inside the living room of nearly every home. What a strange name— "living room"—for a place where so much *dying* takes place! The kind of people whom Christian parents would never invite for dinner are allowed to have free reign on this picture window. Many images like "Power Rangers," "Care Bears," and "Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles" direct children to tap into themselves for power rather than rely on the Lord.

Advert. I hear some say that the picture box does not affect people's behaviour since everyone knows it is not real. Tell that to the peddlers who sell their wares between scenes and listen to them laugh! They believe that the picture box changes your values or they would never spend so many shekels to try to convince you to buy.

Control Who will control the picture box? It has had such a tight grip on some families that they have had to rid their home of it. Others have been able to control it, only exposing themselves to those people whom they *would* invite over to their home in person. I have even heard of some who place Paul's standards in Philippians 4:8 on a card on top of the box: "Whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things." Good idea. David spoke likewise in the Psalms: "I will set no unclean thing before my eyes."

Others What other pagan influences in your home slowly unravel spiritual fabric like a pagan wife would? Can what I hear about Ouiji boards be true? Some Christians invite evil spirits into their home through these so-called games?

And is it really true that Christians will actually pay for demonic looking toys and then give them to their children? Mighty Morphine Power Rangers are even purchased, despite the fact that they openly admit that their power comes from the sewer!

Is it true that some household servants teach even Christian children to pray to a woman called Mary? Where are our standards? When are we going to draw the line on paganism in our homes so we can truly become godly?

Recently a Christian mother I know turned down an excellent opportunity to live in a beautiful home at a wonderful price. Why did she pass it up? She learned that a godless boy in a Christian family lived next door. She figured that since he had convinced other boys into evil then he may do the same with her own boys. God honoured her commitment and provided another house for her family.

Concl. Will we allow paganism into our homes? I pray we will not! Whether through marriage, friends, servants, or even games or a pagan picture box. The whole Israelite community was grieved at its sin of inviting disaster upon the land. With us Jews, individual sin became family sin which became community sin which nearly obliterated our race. It is the same with you. But you can learn from the mistakes of my people. I know you will.

Outline of the Monologue

I. INTRO: I am Ezra the priest.

II. BKGD: My story takes place during the post-exilic era.

III. TEXT: I was grieved to hear of intermarriages.

IV. WHY: There are many reasons why intermarriage is wrong—the chief is its corporate nature.

V. APPL: Intermarriage is wrong for you too.

VI. M.I.: Want a pure church? Weed out pagan influences in your own life first!

Preliminary Questions

I recorded these questions upon my first reading of the text and attempted to answer them here or in the body of the sermon (cf. p. 28 step 2).

Verses	Questions
Context	What did the author record just prior to this passage?
Purpose	Why is this passage in the Bible?
Background	What historical context helps us understand this passage?

1 Were the people who intermarried those who came with Ezra? (No, they were different than the priests and Levites since they separated themselves from them in v. 1; they were probably other godly leaders concerned about the issue which had affected 113 other leaders)
or were they other Jews who had already lived in the land for 80 years? (We don't know if they were new or not)
How long had Ezra's people been back before he discovered this sin? (7:9 vs. 10:9 shows it was about five months)
Why did the leaders tell Ezra of the sin instead of someone else? (He had enough credibility to motivate the people to discipline their own leaders)
What were the detestable practices of the Canaanites?
What does it mean that they "have not kept themselves separate"?

בָּדַל means to "be divided, separate" (BDB 95c 1a) and is used of God dividing the light from the darkness (Gen. 1:4) and by Ezra concerning separation from pagan peoples (of Jews who had remained in the land or else of Gentiles; cf. Num. 9:14) to eat the Passover (6:21). Besides setting apart Israel as a whole (10:11; Neh. 9:2; Lev. 20:24), it's also used of setting apart the Levites to God for special service (Num. 8:14). Israel was to experience the same problem only 28 years later under Nehemiah (13:23f. in 430 BC; cf. BKC, 694).

Weren't some of these peoples already destroyed by this time? (yes—all but the Ammonites, Moabites, and Egyptians, but the text says that the people participated in practices like these now extinct groups)

2 Was it only pagan women brought into Israel? (apparently) no men? Is this really serious?
What does it mean to "mingle the holy race"? (The Messianic line was endangered)
Were the pagan wives in addition to Jewish wives (polygamy)?

3 Why did Ezra destroy his clothes? What would be a similar modern action?
Why did he pull out his hair? How does this compare with Nehemiah?

4 What was Ezra's action "sitting appalled" communicating?

5-15 Why did Ezra pray publicly instead of rebuking the people publicly?
What does he pray? What is left unsaid?

6 How were their sins so high, given that they were the faithful remnant who returned?
Were the sins referred to only those of intermarriage?

7 Who were these kings and what did they do to Israel? What would be a modern parallel?

8 Who were the remnant? How did they receive relief?

Tentative Subject/Complement Statements or M.I.s

I experienced some unique challenges in communicating Ezra 9. One was to make this passage (which deals with the sin of intermarriage) relevant to singles as well as marrieds. Another task was to address both the individual and corporate aspects noted in the passage.

The following ideas were proposed and then critiqued later on in the parentheses:

Get paganism out of your home! (But this deals only with the individual aspect without attention to the corporate dimension.)

Respond to sin with prayer and remorse. (But I don't think the intent is to set Ezra up as a model of how to deal with sin, is it?)

Never marry non-Christians. (Probably also overemphasizes the individual aspect and also limits the idea too narrowly so it only speaks to singles.)

Guard your relationship with your spouse. (No, since in the following chapter we see them separating from their spouses! Besides, this won't speak to the singles.)

Don't allow compromise into your faith—be pure! (But this deals only with the individual aspect without attention to the corporate dimension.)

The church is only as strong as its homes. (Wording weak and doesn't meet needs of singles.)

Compromise within church families will eventually destroy the whole church. (Wording weak, doesn't meet needs of singles, and more negative in tone than necessary.)

Individual purity is necessary for corporate purity. (More accurate, but not catchy enough.)

If you want the church to succeed, you better start with the influences on your own life. (Too long.)

Want a pure church? Weed out pagan influences in your own life first!

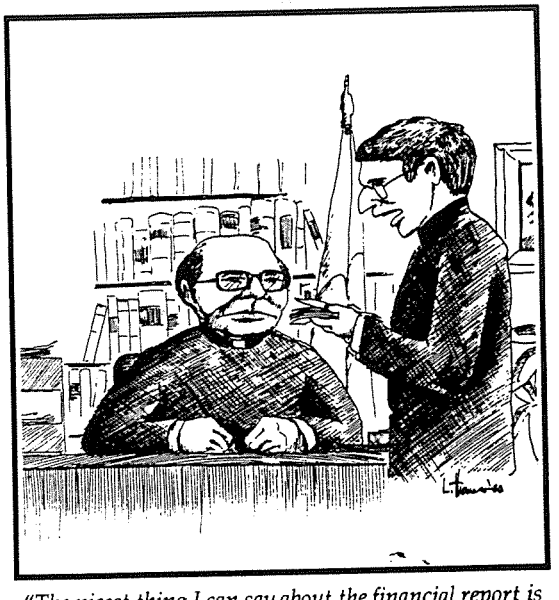




Possible Illustrations

Cannabalizing abortions in China (parallel to Canaanite practices)
Ratio of 3:1 regarding single Christian women to men in Singapore
Elephantine community destroyed through intermarriage (NIV Study Bible on 9:1)
Unholy mixtures always contaminate the pure rather than purify the contaminated (red ink in water) —second law of thermodynamics applies in Christian homes
Rebecca Young's comment: "I will either marry a believer or remain single the rest of my life"
Just this week Yassar Arafat's wife made an interesting comment in regard to their baby due in a few weeks. She said, "Yasser won't have time to give the baby its bottle, but I'm sure that just seeing his child will make him more serene, even if it's only for a few minutes."

Examples of Pagan Influence in Christian Homes
T.V.—Power Rangers, Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles, violence, sex
Friends (Ann declining to live next to boy of bad influence)
Ouiji boards
Maids who encourage children to pray to Mary



"The nicest thing I can say about the financial report is that it's time to make Malachi 3:10 the Sunday morning text again."

Intermarriage Under Ezra

Ezra 9

Exegetical Outline

Prologue: Zerubbabel ended the exile by returning with 50,000 Jews, who built the temple. Almost 60 years later, after an initial trip (?) to explore needs in Jerusalem (7:8), Ezra returned to Babylon and brought 5000 Israelites back to Jerusalem. Chapter 8 records that they had just returned and offered sacrifices. On the heels of this great occasion, bad news about intermarriage came to Ezra. This was a clear violation of God's law.

Exegetical Idea 1: The response of Ezra to Israel's endangered witness as a unique covenant people through intermarriage was public weeping and confession of sin.

I. (1-2) The reason the problem of intermarriage was noted to Ezra by some Jewish leaders was because this endangered the Messianic lineage.

   A. (1a) The leaders approached Ezra with the bad news.

   B. (1b-2) The bad news was that Israel's leaders and people had endangered the Messianic line by intermarrying pagan neighboring peoples with detestable practices.

II. (3-15) The response of Ezra to the intermarriage threat to Israel's existence was humble, public remorse.

   A. (3-5) Ezra's non-verbal response was to tear his clothes, pull out some of his hair, and sit appalled in a public place.

   B. (6-15) Ezra's verbal response was a public prayer of guilt, remorse, and confession of the sin.

      1. (6-7) Ezra noted God's discipline of exile through pagan kings for Israel's sins.
      2. (8-9) Ezra noted God's grace through restoration from captivity.
      3. (10-15) Ezra confessed the people's sin of intermarriage.

Homiletical Exposition (simple inductive form)

Introduce Subject: How should we respond to threats to our spiritual convictions?

I. Ezra grieved over pagan wives who polluted the purity of the Jewish community.
[Israelites who brought paganism into Jerusalem through foreign wives caused Ezra sorrow.]

II. Want a pure church? Weed out pagan influences in your own life first! (Main Idea)

Christmas Through the Eyes of Joseph

Second Edition, December 24, 1995 for Mt. Carmel BP Church (30 min.)

M.I. Jesus came miraculously yet simply—so simply trust Him to do a miracle in your life.
Reading: Luke 1:26-33 (Gabriel's announcement to Mary)

OOO Shalom! I couldn't help but overhearing a familiar story from back there where I appeared
OXO a few moments ago...

XOO What an interesting group of people *you* are! How did you all manage to have the same
OOO color of hair and such different eyes from me? And your clothes—who would have thought that such strange, tightfitting clothes could ever be worn by so many!

Oh, where was I? Oh, yes, I heard someone talking about my wife Mary, and how the angel Gabriel announced the wonderful news to her. Let me tell you, when she first heard that announcement it didn't seem all that wonderful...

You see, we had a problem. Mary was a virgin who going to have a baby and I was engaged to the first-ever pregnant virgin! You can't understand this situation fully unless you know some of the marriage customs of my land.

I know that in some countries, after the wedding the bride and groom leave for a honeymoon. But in my time in Israel, the bride and groom went back to their parents' homes—not to pack up for the honeymoon, but to live separately for an entire year. Why? This period was necessary to prove that the woman was a virgin. Mary and I were considered legally married and our relationship could only be broken through divorce.

Do you understand? Guess when the angel appeared to Mary with the news that she was pregnant? Yes! Right after she became engaged to me legally as my wife—during the time period designed to demonstrate her virginity!

OXO If you were in Mary's sandals how would you feel? What in the world would you do? You
OOO would have good reason to despair of life itself! I have heard of other women found pregnant in their betrothal period running away, having a private abortion or even committing suicide.

In her humanness, Mary could very well have thought...

- What will Joseph think? Will he believe me? Will he bring me before the authorities? Will I be stoned?
- What will my parents say about having a pregnant daughter before the end of the betrothal period? Will they disown me?
- How will my friends in Nazareth respond? We live in such a small little town of only 350 people in 50 families, and word like this travels so fast!
- Should I stay in Nazareth or have the baby away somewhere else?
- Who will ever believe that I am a virgin having a baby? This has never happened before!

Mary *could* have responded like that. But what *did* she do? Even though she didn't quite understand all the details how this situation would be worked out, she ended her conversation with the angel by saying, "I am the Lord's servant. May it be to me as you have said."

OOX Well, what was going on in *my* mind during this time? I thought I had but two options.
OOO

First, I could divorce her publicly—bring her before the Court of Justice in Nazareth (the elders at the city gate) and claim publicly that she had been unfaithful to me. I once witnessed Ishmael son

of Berekiah say before the authorities, "Look at this woman! She was my betrothed, but now, see! Here she is, found with child! I know not which man has done this thing, but I wash my hands free from her!"

My second option was to divorce Mary privately by handing her a bill of divorcement in the presence of only two witnesses. I decided to end our relationship this way—with the least amount of shame possible. My heart was broken. I loved Mary and thought we had a bright future together, but then all my dreams had come to ashes.

Shortly afterwards, as I was praying about these things on my bed one night, an angel came to me and was about to give me a message. I remember thinking, "Oh, this angel must have good news! Mary must have misinterpreted the message! Mary is not pregnant after all!"

But the angel gave me the same message—Mary was indeed pregnant. Then it hit me. The Messiah had to be both God and man to bear our sin. If Jesus wasn't virgin-born and He was *my* son, then He would have inherited a carnal nature from me, since this is always transmitted from the father. Worse still, He would also be under the same penalty for sin. So I asked myself, "Will I place my faith in what the angel said by obeying and taking Mary as my wife?"

OXO I decided to do it. I broke the engagement period by immediately taking Mary into my
OOO house as my wife without waiting for the year long period to end. In fact, I committed myself not have any relations with her until after Christ's birth. If you have any imagination you can envision what the rest of Nazareth said after this. Some said, "Oh, he got her pregnant and so he needed to bring her into his house as soon as possible." And yet the exact opposite was the truth. I had to put up with the sneering and behind-the-scenes gossip around town, but could not offer a believable word in my or Mary's defense.

By Mary's ninth month I really felt like all was well with us despite what the townspeople said. We were willing to put up with it because we knew the truth—and because we had the unique privilege of bringing the Messiah into the world.

OOO While we prepared for Jesus' birth in Nazareth, one morning a Roman herald blew a
XOO trumpet in our town square, signaling an imperial announcement. I was right in the middle of painting a new chair in my shop, but the law says you must go to the street, so I dropped my brush and went out.

This is what I heard: "Attention! By order of his imperial majesty, Caesar Augustus, I issue this decree. The entire Roman world will be counted, person by person. Each family must return to the town of the father's birth within four days."

"Four days!" I thought. "It's already a four day trip to Bethlehem and Mary is due any day! With her pregnancy it will take *at least* four days to travel these 137 kilometers. We better leave by noon!"

Scrambling up whatever supplies we could for the trip, we left in about an hour. It was a very hard trip—almost all uphill to get into the hill country of Judea. I walked while Mary, at nine months pregnant, rode sidesaddle on our donkey—feeling every jolt, every rut, every rock in the road. But by God's grace we made it just in time before they closed the census register. There I reported to the Roman authorities and paid my taxes. Why else do you think they wanted us all to be counted?

OXO But Mary looked at me, "Joseph, I'm feeling really dizzy." I stammered, "Now, Mary, let's
OOO try to get over to my relatives house across town."

"Joseph," she said, "I think it's time!" and she started having more frequent and intense contractions.

I had to think fast. "Oh, the inn on Boaz Street! I'll get you there." We arrived just after the last guest had paid for his room. Seeing Mary in pain, the owners were so gracious. They quickly led us around back to the cave where the guests' animals were kept. It was warm and private in the back of the cave. Within minutes I became both a midwife and a step-father!

Our baby born that night was so beautiful. The joy I felt was so deep! A quiet night—even silent. The thought hit me as I looked at the boy that Mary's baby had been ascribed majesty for generations and generations, but every royal privilege for this One had been postponed since conception.

And yet, after Jesus' birth, one of my first responsibilities was to keep this Majestic One warm. I did my best to try to make the little baby feel comfortable while Mary lay exhausted from the journey, the labor, and the delivery. We packed quickly and carried little on the trip to lighten our load, but I did remember to bring the swaddling cloths. I suspect you use this too in your land, don't you? They are strips of cloths about a handbreath wide and twelve cubits long—the length three or four men.

I gave the cloths to Mary and she skillfully wrapped the boy into a warm little ball. I laughed at the sight but then caught my breath as I realized that Jesus wrapped like that reminded me of the wrapped body a friend of mine who had died recently.

I immediately dismissed the thought from my mind: "Death? For the Messiah and King of the universe? Never! Praise Jehovah that this One, God Himself, would never be wrapped like that." But still the idea lingered—a new baby snuggled tight in strips of cloth like those intended for death?

OOX Mary was extremely tired and fell asleep. Jesus did too. But I couldn't sleep, so I walked
OOO out to the mouth of the cave for some fresh air. To my surprise I saw some shepherds milling about.

"Are you looking for someone?" I asked them.

"Yes. Some angels just appeared to us in the fields and said that the Christ is born here in Bethlehem!" they replied eagerly. "Do you know anything about this? Someone said that a pregnant woman came to the inn tonight?"

"As a matter of fact," I replied, "It was my own wife who gave birth to this Baby! They're asleep inside the cave right now!"

"No, we aren't!" I could hear Mary say from inside. "Tell them to come in!"

OXO We went inside and there was Mary with the sweetest smile on her face! "Visitors?" she
OOO asked me.

"Please excuse us," one of the shepherds said, "But we were out in the field and..."

"Yes, so I heard," Mary said.

We showed them Jesus, lying there in the feeding trough. We didn't have a baby basket, so the next best thing was to put the little guy in the cow's feeding trough. The shepherds were amazed. So were we. They stayed for a while, we prayed together, then they left.

Mary and I laughed with joy as we could hear them running down the street, praising the Lord, shouting in the streets and glorifying God all the way back to their own cave on the hillside. Then I went over to the feeding trough, picked up Jesus, and put Him in His mother's arms. Mary remarked how she has treasured all these memories in her heart, pondering all the difficult but wonderful events of the past few months—the angelic announcements to both of us, the unique manner God moved everyone in the entire Roman Empire just to get us back to Bethlehem to fulfill Micah's prophecy, the rowdy shepherds, and the bundle of God's love in her arms. Truly God must really love us all to send His Son like this.

What do I mean? Well, God sent Jesus in a miraculous, yet a simple way. He works like that, you know. He mixes the plain with the unusual. An ordinary carpenter like me, an unknown woman like Mary, the humblest of delivery rooms—yet filled with His presence and announced with angels. Jesus came miraculously yet simply—so simply trust Him to do a miracle in your life (Main Idea).

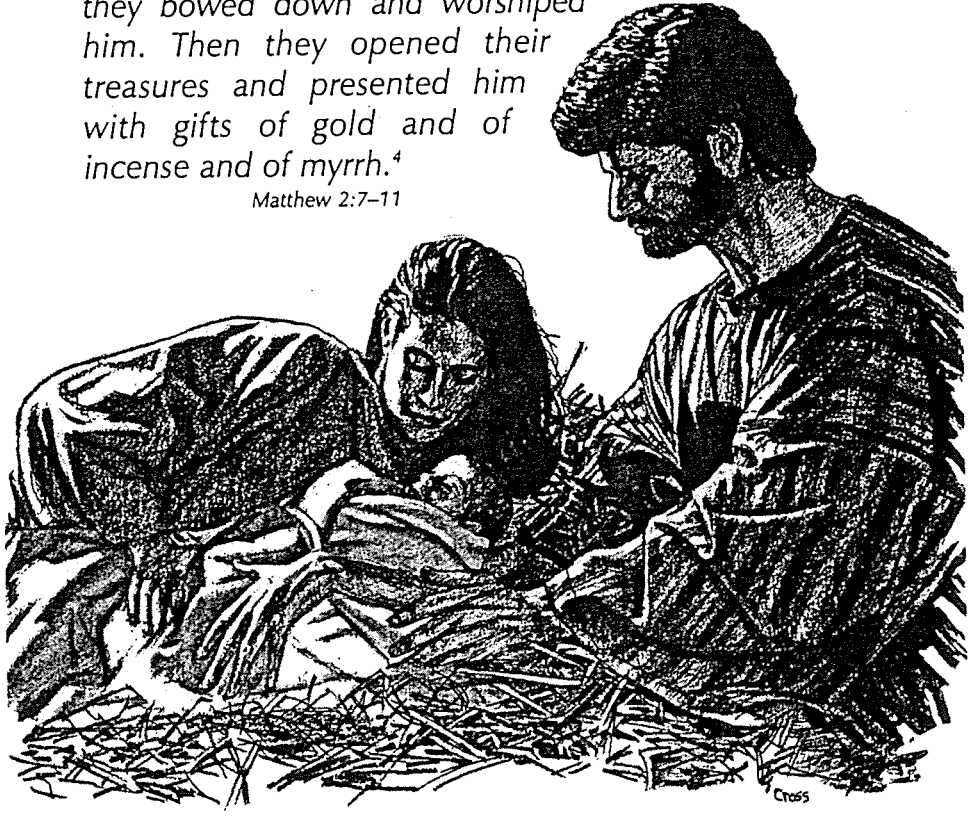
You can even trust Him right now, right where you sit. Trust Him not as a baby, but as the King of the Universe who was once humbled Himself to become a baby—a boy who grew to be a man who once again would be wrapped in swaddling clothes because of undergoing a cruel death. Not because He deserved to die, but because you did! That's right—each of us deserves death for our sins, but this penalty of death God laid on Jesus. Can you simply accept that He died for you? Though there was not room for Him at the inn, is there room for Him now in your heart? Can you say, "Oh, come to my heart, Lord Jesus?" You may accept Him as your Saviour even as we sing these words in our closing song...

Congregational Song: "Thou Didst Leave Thy Throne"

Then Herod called the Magi secretly and found out from them the exact time the star had appeared. He sent them to Bethlehem and said, "Go and make a careful search for the child. As soon as you find him, report to me, so that I too may go and worship him."

After they had heard the king, they went on their way, and the star they had seen in the east went ahead of them until it stopped over the place where the child was. When they saw the star, they were overjoyed. On coming to the house, they saw the child with his mother Mary, and they bowed down and worshiped him. Then they opened their treasures and presented him with gifts of gold and of incense and of myrrh.[4]

Matthew 2:7–11



Christmas Reflections from a Wise Man

Featuring Choirs, Wise Man, Joseph & Mary

Sunday Night, December 24, 1995 at Grace Baptist Church

Main Idea: Jews ignored Christ but Gentiles worshipped Him. How about you?

I. Choir Entrance (Shopping, Sales, Gifts)

(House lights dim. Choir enters briskly and loudly from the back of the church and offstage carrying gifts. Those without speaking parts move to their places while speakers move to center of choir loft.)

Man 1: (With excitement) I finally did it! I finished my Christmas "to-do" list!

Woman 1: (Sarcastically) Whaa, so hard! Your list only had one job—eating! My list as your wife has 231 items! I've walked from one end of this Orchard Road to the other and I'm only half done—but my body feels done in!

Woman 2: (Bitterly) Yeah, my husband only has to put up the tree. I have to decorate it, bake the cookies, buy the presents, wrap the gifts, deliver them to the owners, write and stamp and send all the Christmas cards...

Man 2: (Defensive and interrupting) Hey, that's not true! I have to drive the kids down here to Orchard Road too! They get to see all the multicoloured lights and displays. I only see red—from all the brake lights in front of me!

Woman 3: (To Woman 2) Speaking of Orchard Road... did you see the sale at Tangs? They had Zoe CDs for only $75 each! So cheap, lah!

Man 1: Aiyah! That's cheap? I can buy *three* Christmas buffets at the Carlton for that price!

Woman 1: Yeah, but this year don't eat all three all-you-can-eat meals at the same time! So maloo!

Woman 2: (Wise Man begins walking to stage from back) All you think about is food for yourself! Christmas is about the spirit of giving! Especially to those who give back even more!

Man 2: In my house it's about giving to Singapore's future! But if I hear another plug for Mighty Morphin Power Rangers I'm gonna lose my mind—and my savings!

Woman 3: (With curiosity as she looks at the Wise Man who "freezes" as he walks up the dark aisle) Hey, what's that? They're sure making the displays life-like this year!

Man 1: Either that or tonight's Christmas get-together is a costume party.

(Spotlight moves to Wise Man as he steps to center stage. The men and women quietly sit down in the choir loft.)

II. Wise Man (Part 1: Follow Star)

(To speakers, as he pursues them) Pardon me! Salam! (Apologetically, to audience as he walks up aisle) Excuse me. I'm not sure that I'm in the right place. Do you know what celebration these people were talking about? I was asked to share some of my own experiences about a holiday called "Christmas." Could this possibly be that which they were discussing? (no response) As far as I can remember, the story begins one very unique night when I lived in Babylon...

OXO My evening work that night began as did any other. My colleagues and I at the
OOO observatory set about our task to discern the movements of the heavenly bodies. Others before us had taught us how to predict the daily positions of the moon and sun—and they plotted the paths of the five planets one could see with the naked eye. And the 1000 plus stars we could see? They remained relatively stationary as they traversed the sky each night. Other magi before us had already plotted them into 12 configurations for the 12 months of the year...

Then Sheshbazzar, my fellow astronomer, suddenly had a curious and wonderful look on his face. I asked him about it as he gazed towards the west. "Do you see it?" he said. "Do you see that star within the southwest coordinates? We haven't ever seen this star plotted on our charts!"

I looked intently where he had pointed. Sure enough, it was a star—at least it looked like a star—but it was so low and brighter than all the others. I noticed that it hung directly over the land of Israel. "It's between the Dead Sea and Sea of Galilee," I noted. "Do we have anything in the library about a star at that location?"

"No, wait. The ancient Jewish scroll of Numbers quotes one of our own magi. One of our ancestors named Balaam was a diviner who talked about a star. Remember? He said:

'A star will come out of Jacob;
a scepter will rise out of Israel' [Num. 24:17]."

Sheshbazzar looked at me with curiosity and said, "So a star will rise in Israel? How odd! And why is the star associated with a scepter?"

"Scepters go with kings!" I replied excitedly. "But isn't Israel under Herod's jurisdiction? He's ruled Israel for 33 years already. Why would the star appear now?"

"Ah!" my friend said. "It must be a *new* king! Perhaps one has just been born! Maybe Herod just had a son!"

OOX "No, that wouldn't make sense," I said, "The Jews are looking for a descendant of *David*
OOO to be their king to free them from Rome. Herod is not a Jew but a collaborator with Rome. It must be another king..."

(Pacing) I searched my memory for any other mention of stars relating to Israel. Yes, there was another! I reminded Sheshbazzar, "Years ago during the reign of King Xerxes there was a queen—a Jewish queen over our land. Her Jewish name was Hadassah, but she also took a Persian name, Esther. Surely you know what 'Esther' means in the Persian language. 'Esther' means 'star'! She brought about a miraculous deliverance for her people. A miraculous star, royalty, a miraculous deliverance...

(Stops) Then it dawned on me. A miraculous star points to a *miraculous* birth—not just *any* birth. This new king of the Jews just born must be *from God*—the one the Jews have expected all these centuries! No, he must be divine Himself, for what human has a miraculous star attest to his birth?

(Music starts) "Something wonderful has happened this night!" I declared finally. "We must go at once to Israel to see this Babe with our own eyes—and offer the worship He is due!" (lights dim)

III. Choir: "What Will I Give?"

IV. Joseph & Mary

(Lights come upon Joseph sitting up and Mary lying down at the stable. Mary stirs and sits up...)

Joseph: Oh Mary, you're finally awake. Are you feeling any better now?

Mary: (Sleepily, with a yawn) Yes, I'm OK. Sorry I feel asleep. I was just so tired after the trip and the delivery. How's the baby?

Joseph: He's fine. Now He's the one asleep. (Pause) Mary?

Mary: Yes. What is it?

Joseph: Tell me again what the angel told you.

Mary: Well, he said that I was conceived with the Holy Spirit, so that the baby inside of me would be the Son of God...

Joseph: I trust the Lord in all this, and I know that our Jesus is special, but at the same time I'm a carpenter, not a scholar. (Music starts, and Joseph says to the baby) I know you are God's Son, but what really does that mean?

V. Joseph sings "Little Yeshua"

VI. Mary sings "Isn't He Beautiful?"

VII. Wise Man (Part 2: Trip & Jerusalem)

OOX Indeed, we too thought Him to be beautiful—thus we sought to visit Him. My
OOO companions and I desired to leave quickly, but we had to receive permission from the king, gather supplies and leave our work in the hands of reliable associates. Our entire entourage finally ready, we set out by "desert ship" toward the west, still seeing the star in the distance. You do know what a "desert ship" is, do you not? This we also called a camel.

I laugh when I see our journey depicted as three men trekking alone in the desert. Had we traveled in this manner, our gifts would have ended in the hands of bandits rather than the Christ! No, we were a *large* group which traveled slowly near the rivers (not the desert) for over five months from Babylon to Israel—a long train of camels led by a donkey, for camels are much too stubborn to lead.

And some think we were kings. I wish this had been the case! No, we were *searching* for the King!

OOO Anyway, the star still shone before us until we got into the hill country of Judea, but for
OXO some reason it then disappeared. "Where should we go?" I asked. "Surely the king of the Jews would be born in the capital city," Beltizer replied. So at last we arrived at Jerusalem, bearing the dust of a thousand miles.

And what a stir we caused! We did not intend to make such commotion, but someone in our group disclosed our purpose—that we had come to worship the new king of the Jews.

Now I would think that would have been good news. We thought it was—so much so we bore the heat of the day for months on end. But we soon discovered that everyone knew Herod had not fathered another son recently. In fact, he recently had killed one of his ten wives and two sons. The saying began to be told that it was safer to be Herod's pig than to be his son!

When Herod heard why we had come to Jerusalem, he called in the entire Sanhedrin for questioning. I understand that many of them thought they would all be executed on the spot, for when Herod got angry, heads flew. But when he asked where the Christ was to be born, they had an answer from Micah's prophecy. The Messiah would be born in Bethlehem. In fact, this was common knowledge among all the people—at least any who went to synagogue—which certainly didn't include Herod.

We hadn't intended on having an audience with Herod, but that very afternoon we were secretly ushered into his court for questioning. I must say, I was impressed and fearful at the same time. But he too was disturbed. In fact, Matthew notes that Herod was "troubled" or "shaken" or "stirred." Matthew uses the same word concerning how the disciples shook for fear when they saw Jesus walking on the water since they thought He was a ghost!

XOO So Herod interrogated us, trying to sound objective and compassionate. We were treated
OOO quite well. But he seemed for some reason to be very concerned about the exact time the star appeared, though he did not tell us why. We told him it had been many months, and then he surprised us by actually encouraging us to go to Bethlehem. He told us to return and tell him the exact location so he could worship the child as well.

I thought we might have had a Roman escort to Bethlehem. After all, it was only slightly more than an hour walk from Jerusalem. But I suppose Herod feared that this would cause an even greater stir in the city, so we were allowed to go by ourselves. Even more surprising was that not one of the members of the Sanhedrin desired to go. I remember thinking, "Aren't any of these Jews interested in the birth of their king? After all, this is *their* king, not the king of us Gentiles! Will no one investigate this miraculous birth—the appearance for which Israel has awaited for centuries? Could it be that Jews are so caught up with their daily routine that they exert no effort to seek the very God of the Universe who is right near them?" This kind of news one should shout from the mountain!

VIII. Youth: "Go Tell It On the Mountain"

IX. Wise Man (Part 3: Bethlehem)

XOO It was late, but we decided to go to Bethlehem anyway. As we were wondering how we
OOO would find an infant in Bethlehem, suddenly one of my fellow scholars shouted, "There it is again!" I looked up, and sure enough, the star had reappeared. In fact, it led us not only to Bethlehem but directly to the house we sought.

Within an hour a common-looking peasant woman invited us into her humble dwelling. When I saw the crude walls, the woodworking tools, and sawdust everywhere, I almost felt it improper for us to give our lavish gifts of gold, incense, and myrrh. But we did. We bowed in reverence to a young toddler even without hesitation.

The young couple felt so honoured by our visit. They really hadn't had many visitors—only the very lowest strata of society, shepherds. To my surprise, they invited us to stay the night—the whole lot of us—but we declined and stayed at an inn.

That night each of us had a dream—the same dream. God warned us not to return to Herod. Believe me, this was a relief! So we went back to Jericho through the back route and on to Babylon from there. Such a long journey for such a short visit! But all the way we marveled about the privilege of visiting the very God who had visited us. But what an irony! Those who lived closest to Bethlehem had missed this great privilege. Jews ignored Christ but Gentiles worshipped Him. How about you? The Jews who should have worshipped the newborn King ignored Him—but Gentiles like me embraced Him as God. Have you? (Music starts) The people had no room in their hearts for Him—just as there was no room for Him months earlier at the inn.

X. Shige: "No Room"

XI. Wise Man (Part 4: Transformation)

XOO (Music starts as the Wise Man narrates this introduction to "The Stable of Our Lives")
OOO People missed the stable and the house because it was too simple, too humble, too ordinary. Had they come they would have seen and felt what I did—a transformed stable, a beautiful home where God's peace dwells. Not outwardly, but inwardly where it really counts.

OXO (Walking to right) As He entered the world that night long ago, so He longs to enter our
OOO lives today; transforming the plain into something magnificent, the old into something new, the dying into that which throbs with life. In the midst of overwhelming trials and everyday stresses, He wants to lift us up and make us strong. Why did He come? He came that we might have life—complete and satisfying. His method: Not to change our external surroundings, but to change us from within. He Himself is that light which shines in our hearts—a light worth passing on to you. (Spot dims and Wise Man exits behind manger)

XII. Susan: "The Stable of Our Lives" (candles start to be lit at the end)

XIII. Message & Altar Call (Pastor George)

(Pastor George narrates the ending of the song)

The shepherds were men of humble means who heard God's message and did something about it. The wise men were wealthy astronomers who had studied the Scriptures regarding the promised child. When they saw the rising star, they responded to its call.

(Evangelistic message)



Monologue Outlining and Internalizing

Often when I preach using a monologue the people wonder how I can memorize so many pages of material. Last Christmas I ministered as Joseph twice in the morning and as a wise man in the evening. (Perhaps I would have even been wiser not to preach two different monologues in a single day, as it required learning almost 15 double-spaced pages of script!)

The answer to how to memorize a lot of material is multi-faceted:

1. Don't Memorize: I really don't memorize word-for-word. This is an extremely liberating posture to take! I used to use the word "memorizing" in my classes and this scared students to death. Now I prefer to call it "internalizing."

2. Make a Simple Outline: If your story doesn't flow, you won't be able to deliver it naturally. I love to listen to my young sons tell stories, for while they possess incredible animation, many details are missing, the order is wrong, and much editing from Mom is required. If you don't have a simple structure to your story then your audience will be confused. See the simple outline of my Ezra monologue for an example (p. 174).

3. Practice: Do this with a full voice, marking off the room as if it is the stage. Practice walking through the major movements of the story on the floor, noting which part of the story you will tell at the various locations (cf. pp. 113-14). Expect to run through the monologue at least 10 times to really get it under your belt. If possible, even go through the entire delivery on the actual stage in which you will deliver it. (Go a few days early or arrive an hour or two before the service.)

Actors and actresses must memorize word-for-word much longer scripts than you and me. With God's power working through us, combined with our diligent effort for His sake, we can minister through this powerful medium in a way which will change lives.



SBC Thursday Chapel 30 March 1995 15 Minutes without Translation

"Introducing Mark!"

A First Person Monologue to the Book of Mark

Main Idea: Be a person of action by selflessly serving others.

(Setting: Man in first century garb walks onto the church platform) Shalom, fellow saints of Lord Jesus Christ. Please don't find it strange that I stand before you here today, for I do come by invitation of your principal. You see, somehow he and I bumped into each another not too long ago and we began talking about my book. Well, it isn't often enough that an author can defend his own writings before such a distinguished group such as this so I thought I would be so bold...

Oh, please excuse me, I do not believe I have yet introduced myself, have I? My name is Mark, or, if you are fond of long names, John Mark. John is my Jewish name and Mark is my surname. I come from a well-to-do family in Jerusalem, and, as you might guess, I am privileged to be a child of Abraham. In fact, my mother's name is Mary—quite a distinguished name, you might say, considering that this also was the name of the mother of our Lord. Mother undoubtedly had the gift of service, for she constantly entertained the church of Jerusalem in our home ever since I was a young boy. And man, could she make tremendous Jewish bagels!

Perhaps you've read about one particular time when the church was gathered together to pray for Peter, who at that time was in prison. Remember when the angel led him out of prison to a home where the servant girl Rhoda slammed the door in his face in amazement? Well, that was my home! Rhoda always got a bit flustered whenever a miracle happened. If only Rhoda could have seen *Jesus* perform all those miracles she'd known better. Not that I got to see them a lot myself since I was so young when Jesus came to Jerusalem, but I sure have heard the stories! You see, I always was a bit curious in my younger days...

I especially remember one time as a teenager when I got news of the search party on the way to Gethsemene to arrest Jesus. Boy, I didn't even finish getting dressed to get there as fast as I could! Since the servants hadn't yet done the wash all I could find was a linen sheet so I threw it over my body and rushed out to the garden.

Unfortunately, when the religious fanatics grabbed Jesus, all the disciples fled and one of those Roman cronies grabbed me thinking I was one of the disciples. I couldn't get away from him, so I thought it was either death or leave the sheet behind. What would you do? Well, I chose the latter, which was very embarrassing. Imagine the son of a respectable family running through the garden naked to get home. Good thing it was dark out. Good thing Mom never found out too. That's why I didn't mention my name in my gospel account. I just referred to myself as "a certain young man." Pretty good way of getting into the action without undue embarrassment, don't ya think?

Anyway, where was I? Oh, yes, my family. Perhaps you also have heard of a cousin of mine. He's the son of my aunt and uncle who lived on that vacation spot out in the Mediterranean. It's a wonderful island called Cyprus. Oh, yeh, my cousin's name is Barnabas.

Speaking of Barnabas, what a great older cousin is he! Why, he even made arrangements one time for me to accompany him and the Apostle Paul on their first missionary journey! I was elated! Think of it, the opportunity of a lifetime—traveling with the great apostles themselves, preaching the gospel of the kingdom, healing the sick, seeing churches pop up all throughout Asia Minor. What an adventure! I had never been more excited about anything in my life!

However, by the time we got only a quarter of the way through the missionary journey I discovered it was no picnic. Some people on our team got sick and not everyone was super-excited about hearing about Jesus. Not only that, but my cousin Barnabas discovered that Paul actually had more leadership skills than he did and he let Paul lead our group. I thought we were going to spread the news of Messiah to our Jewish brethren throughout the Roman Empire, but Paul had a real conviction about sharing Jesus with the Gentiles. I wasn't ready for all that cross-cultural evangelism stuff. I was from a nice Jewish home. Besides that, I couldn't stand pork.

Anyway, when we got to the seaport city of Perga in Pamphilia I felt that this was my chance to return home. I knew that malaria was much more possible inland. I caught the next ship back to Israel and soon was home safe in Jerusalem. Paul said I was running home to Momma and needed a "bagel fix." That really hurt, but I must admit that in some respects he was right. Paul was very upset, but I just felt I couldn't go on any farther.

Believe it or not, that wasn't the end of hearing about my flunking my cultural context practicum. Two years later Paul and Barnabas were about to head out on another trip. My cousin Barnabas wanted to take me but Paul wasn't so keen on the idea. In fact, he adamantly opposed it. He didn't forget too easily. I knew and Barnabas knew that this time I was ready, but Paul wasn't convinced. Those two men had such a sharp disagreement I thought they were going to fight! It ended up that Barnabas was willing to split up with Paul over me. What a guy! He'd traveled hundreds of miles with Paul through thick and thin, and yet Barny really believed in me to the extent of jeopardizing his ministry relationship with Paul. So what happened? Well, Paul took Silas and went north by land while Barnabas took me and we sailed west.

I can't tell you what it meant to me to have a pal like Barnabas. He built his life into me. Oh, don't think that the disagreement between Paul and us never was solved, though. Paul spoke very highly of Barnabas in his letter to the Corinthians a few years later, and twelve years later I was helping Paul out in his prison in Rome! He even wrote to our fellow worker Timothy that I was "useful" to him for ministry! Who knows what life would have been like if Barnabas didn't stick with me?

Eventually I got to know the Apostle Peter really well, too. Boy, did he have a lot to share with me! You see, Paul and Barnabas weren't disciples with Jesus, but not so with Peter! Why, he was one of Jesus' top three men. He had lived with Christ day-in and day-out for over three years. I loved to sit under his teaching about Jesus...

About thirty years after Christ had ascended back to the Father one day the Spirit gave me an idea. I was listening to Peter preach in one of our worship services in Rome and I thought, "Wow! I've heard Peter tell this story of Christ healing the blind man so many times and yet so many still have never heard it **once**! Man, if only we could get Peter to travel around to get this message out to more people! But he's almost 70 years old now, and that's too old to be running around the Empire like he did in his younger years..."

Then an idea hit me, "Hey!! Why not write these stories down into a fast moving account of Christ's life? Not cover everything, but hit those topics which especially related to the Gentiles, showing Christ on the move. I could show Christ as the Greatest Servant of all time, even use His well-known statement, 'The Son of Man came to seek and save the lost' as sort-of a theme verse!"

Well, Peter was elated about the prospect. Why hadn't we thought of this sooner? Within months I had Peter's words down in writing right there in Rome, and shortly afterwards he, like nearly all the apostles, died a martyr's death. The Romans crucified him upside-down. Peter requested to be upside-down thinking that he was not worthy of dying as our Lord had suffered.

Since my gospel was written to Gentiles I left out many of the more Jewish elements: Christ's genealogy, fulfilled prophecies, references to the Law, and certain Jewish customs. I also translated some of the Aramaic words. Little did I know that before all the apostles passed into heaven mine would be one of four published gospel accounts. Matthew wrote his own account of Christ's life, and even Luke and John did too. Rumor has it that the Holy Spirit has worked so that all of these gospels along with Paul's epistles, the Law, Writings, and Prophets, and some other epistles are all bound together! Boy, I wish we had that back in the Roman Empire! I never even *dreamed* of being able to carry 66 scrolls to church!

Anyway, I'm glad to contribute what I know. Never did I realize my gospel would make such a contribution to Christianity! But I want people to see Jesus as one who served man, even to the point of sacrificing His own life for our sins. That's why a full third of my book covers the last week of Christ's life. My book's not really a biography since I didn't include everything about Jesus. It's more a topical arrangement, showing how Christ's works and teachings complement one another. This is the reason I included a whopping eighteen miracles in such a short, brief, account. Whereas some of the other gospels emphasize Christ's words, I showed Him as a man of action.

I wrote my gospel during perilous times. Nero took great delight in seeing my friends torn apart by beasts and gladiators, and many of my friends went into hiding or simply abandoned Christ. I felt that my book could help the believers see that Christ, too, was persecuted, but He served to the end. My goal in writing is that from reading my account all people everywhere will first come to know Christ as the Savior who serves, then follow in His steps as Lord by also being people who serve.

Jesus was constantly giving Himself for other people—living the selfless life. Peter used to tell me that it seemed like whenever Jesus wanted to get away by Himself or with the disciples for some time by themselves, the crowds would pop up over the hill and find them. I saw this firsthand one time when I visited Jesus in Galilee. You see, one Sabbath day Jesus was teaching in the synagogue in Capernaum and He ended his sermon with quite a conclusion—he spoke to the demon inside this guy in the service and commanded the demon to come out!

That was an incredible adventure—but controlling the crowds after that was so exhausting! Finally we got over to Peter and Andrew's home for rest. But Peter's wife was upset there over her mother, who had a fever. I remember thinking, "Man, when can we get some rest?" Jesus wasn't upset though. People were always His priority. He just went over to her bed, took her hand, and helped her up. Then she fixed us a great meal.

Well, I like to take a big nap after a big meal—or even go to bed early—especially on a day like that one. But guess what happened? As soon as we were going to retire after sunset, more people showed up at the door. Believe it or not, the whole town came! I was so upset! Why couldn't they come back tomorrow? We'd taught at the synagogue, healed the crazy man, traveled on dusty roads, healed Peter's mother-in-law, finally got some bagels in our tummies, and now people bring all their insane, demonized friends to the door! But Jesus just kept healing them, casting out their demons, and giving Himself.

The crowd didn't even leave until after midnight, and I was bushed! Although Jesus had taught us all to pray in the morning when no one else was up so we wouldn't be disturbed, if there ever was an exception, the next morning was it.

But what did Jesus do? "Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house and went off to a solitary place, where he prayed. Simon and his companions went to look for him, and when they found him, they exclaimed, 'Everyone is looking for you!'" I would have responded, "Hey, leave me alone. Can't I ever have some time to myself?" But "Jesus replied, 'Let us go somewhere else—to the nearby villages—so I can preach there also'" [1:35-38].

You see, while Jesus came to *serve* people, he also came to *save* people. He knew that the people of Capernaum had become enthralled with His miracles more than His message. He knew it was time to preach elsewhere. He knew that the gospel met people's real needs—not physical healing.

So how are *you* doing at serving others? I wonder if you have my tendency to push people out of the way to accomplish your projects? I think we all know that people are more important than projects, but it's easy to lose sight of this.

Are you a person of action for others? For Jesus, people took priority over "papyri." He was a "people person," not a "paper person." He taught a lot, but He also "walked His talk."

I really have no excuse not to sacrificially serve others. So many have served me. I first learned service from my mother Mary, but then God brought Barnabas into my life who risked his relationship with Paul to serve me. Paul himself became an example to me of selfless giving, and Peter modeled it to the point of death. Most of all, though, was Jesus—the Greatest Servant.

I've learned service through failure. Two of the three times I'm mentioned in Scripture I failed at service. I failed to really serve Christ at Gethsemene, and I failed on the first missionary journey. But God helped me see the importance of giving myself for others so that Paul could finally call me "useful" before his death. I hope you have genuinely learned to give yourself for others too.

(Sniffs the air.) Speaking of serving others, can you smell that? That smells like mom's bagels beckoning me, so I better go. Thanks for letting me share my life. (Exits.)

Grace Fellowship Church Series on 1 Thessalonians Fort Worth, Texas
October 12, 1986 Message #1

"I Just Love Those Thessalonians!"

A Monologue Introduction to a Preaching Series on 1 Thessalonians
(I did this one on my first Sunday as pastor of this new church!)

PAUL: (Walks in the room from the bathroom, looking around curiously) Shalom... Excuse me... You people don't happen to be the saints in Christ Jesus in Fort Worth, are you? Possibly Grace Fellowship Church?

CHAIRMAN: Why, yes. We certainly are. How do you know about us?

PAUL: Well, I had just written this letter to Thessalonica and was on my way to give it to a messenger to bring it to the church there. But on the road I met a rather strange looking character, a magician in fact. Well, he said he was working on a new trick that could transport people instantaneously and wondered if he could try it out on me. Before I could say anything he waved his arms like this, said some silly words and the next thing I knew I was in that room back there [the bathroom]. I guess he still has a few bugs to work out yet.

That's where I heard about you all from a man named Rick. He said that he stopped in that strange room back there for a minute and then I appeared. We only talked for a few minutes. By the way, what kind of room is that back there anyway? They sure don't have those where I come from.

CHAIRMAN: Well, maybe we shouldn't get into that right now.

PAUL: Oh... Well, Rick was dressed really strange with several peculiar articles of clothing. In fact, he dressed very much like most of you. I remember asking him why he had this flat piece of cloth around his neck, and he said,"Oh, this [pointing to his tie]. We've been trying to figure out why we wear these for decades."

He also told me that he recently became your pastor which really encouraged me -- you know, that he was a Christian. He asked my name and I said, "I'm Paul."

"You don't mean the Paul of Tarsus?" he responded, as if he's heard of me before!

I said, "Well, that's just who I am. My Jewish name is Saul, but since I became a Christian I've been called Paul."

"You're not going to believe this," Rick said, "But I'm about to preach through one of your letters to my church outside that door for twelve weeks. Remember the letter you sent to the Thessalonians?"

"Do I remember it?" I shouted with glee, "Why those dear people are some of the most precious people on earth to me! How did you ever get a hold of one of my letters, though?"

"That's a long story, Paul," he said, "But right now what we need to do is get you out of this room and have you to tell the people out there about the Thessalonians."

Well, right then he disappeared! So here I am. Are you interested in finding out about the Thessalonians?

Historical/Geographical Background (Acts 17:1-15)

O.K. Well, my good friend Barnabas and I had a tremendous privilege a few years back. We were sent out by the church at Antioch on a missionary journey in the eastern part of the Mediterranean. In fact, it turned out so well that we decided not too long after to revisit all those churches and maybe even go even farther west...

That's when Barnabas and I had a pretty sharp disagreement over John Mark, his cousin who had deserted us during our first trip. We felt that the differences were not reconcilable, so decided it best to separate and each pursue the direction we believed God was leading us. Barnabas took John

Mark and set sail for the island of Cyprus, but I took Silas and began to visit the churches established the year before. During the trip a young man named Timothy came to Christ, so he joined us and we kept pushing westward towards Greece.

We crossed the Aegean Sea over to Macedonia, the Roman province north of Greece and went first to the city of Philippi. After that we came to the wonderful city of Thessalonica.

City of Thessalonica

I sure wish I could take you back to Thessalonica with me sometime—if we don't have to go through that room back there. The city was built in 315 BC by Cassander, one of Alexander the Great's generals. In fact, Cassander's wife was a half sister to Alexander and her name was Thessalonica, so it's no wonder where it got its name.

Cassander chose this place for a city because of its ideal location on the sea and its proximity to Therma, an ancient city named for its hot springs. It's quite an important city, the largest city in the province of Macedonia with a population of about 200,000. Thessalonica lies as the key city on the Egnatian Road, that great military highway stretching from Rome to the Orient. Not only does it have a great highway for land transportation, but it has a sheltered harbor which the Romans equipped with docks to make it into a central naval station and a natural outlet for sea traffic from all points. It is the chief seaport in the whole province of Macedonia.

I guess you caught on that all this commercial activity in Thessalonica makes it a very wealthy city. Most of the native inhabitants are Greeks, and many rich Romans settle there, as well as a lot of Jewish merchants eager for money from the commercial advantages. Macedonian women there have a higher social position than anywhere in the world, too. But don't get the idea that everyone is rich, though. Most of the citizens make their living by manual labor.

But if you've ever been around seaport cities you'll recognize some real negative traits too: evil living and all kinds of sexual perversions. Thessalonica even has strange rites of the worship of the so-called god, Cabiri. That's why near the end of my letter to the church I warned them to keep themselves pure from any kind of sexual sin.

Events at Macedonia

So do you see why Timothy, Silas and I saw Thessalonica as a very important city for the gospel? Thessalonica has direct contact with many other important cities by both land and sea! We felt that if we could reach those people for Christ they would be a sounding board to the other parts of Macedonia and beyond!

Well, as I was saying earlier, after an earthshaking experience in Philippi we went through Amphipolis and Apollonia to Thessalonica and started preaching in the synagogue. That's where I always try to start out in a city since the Jews have much in common with me: I am a Jew myself, we hold a common respect for the Old Testament, we have like theological concepts and share many cultural practices. I preached there for three straight Sabbaths, trying to persuade the Jews that Jesus was the Christ.

But you know what happened? Not only did some of the Jews believe, but a whole multitude of Gentiles, too -- those who were interested in Judaism and attended the Sabbath services at the synagogue. God really worked there among a number of the prominent women who also came to Christ. It was great!

However, the leaders of the synagogue didn't think it was too great, seeing people leave the synagogue. They were jealous -- so teed off that they organized some roughnecks from the market , the kind of guys who love to be in a brawl. These men set the city in an uproar and went over to Jason's home where we had been staying. (Jason was a prominent Greek who had come to know Jesus only a few days before.) They were really ticked off when they got to Jason's house to get us and we weren't there since we had gone out on an errand. The people dragged Jason before the authorities and accused him of treason for taking "revolutionaries" into his home since we taught that Jesus is a higher king than Caesar! The rulers saw through their deceptive plan, though, and only required Jason to guarantee that we would leave the city and not return.

One thing I didn't tell you about Thessalonica earlier is that the people of Thessalonica helped Antony and Caesar Augustus to defeat Brutus and Cassius, their arch enemies. In appreciation the Emperor gave the city status as a free city in the Roman Empire, exempt from taxes, and autonomous in its internal affairs even though it was the home of the provincial governor. You see how serious a threat this was to the Jews after me to think that I was teaching another king other than Caesar? They didn't want to believe in Jesus and lose their tax-free status! The charge of treason was a very convenient way to get us thrown out of the city.

I might add, a very effective way, too. That night the believers immediately sent us away in secret to Berea, a city down the road towards Greece. I wasn't too thrilled about leaving since the church had been planted less than a month earlier, but we knew God had a purpose.

Oh, then get this. While we were preaching in Berea, those same Jews in Thessalonica traveled forty miles and came to Berea also and stirred up the crowds there! This caused me to have to leave Berea, also—this time by sea where they couldn't follow so easily. I set sail and traveled all the way down to Greece, but I left Timothy and Silas to take care of the church at Berea.

Soon Timothy and Silas joined me in Athens, but I was still concerned about the Thessalonians, so I sent Timothy to find out how they were doing. I also sent Silas back to Berea and Philippi.

Not too long later Timothy and Silas met me in Corinth, Greece. When Timothy arrived I immediately asked him how things were for the Thessalonian church, especially since the Jews had been so antagonistic. He told me that the church was doing great, despite all the opposition! Not only had the Jews continued their persecution, but some of the Gentiles had joined in as well, yet the church still remained a strong testimony for Christ.

Purposes of the Epistle

I was thrilled and knew God wanted me to write them to let them know it! This is only my second letter to one of the churches [holding up the parchment]. I wrote my first church letter to the Galatians after I got back to Antioch following the first missionary journey. But this time I felt compelled to write the church right there from Corinth before getting back to Palestine. I needed to encourage them by sharing how excited I am about their progress in the faith. So that's just what I did, and have the letter right here in my hands.

There's a second reason I wrote the letter also. Those Jews in Thessalonica are slandering me to try to discredit me. They're saying that I broke the law in the city and that I only came there for the money! Ha! These charges are so ridiculous that I debated not even defending myself, but Timothy says that some of the believers have started to believe it! After some prayer I decided to devote over half of this letter explaining my real motives. If they don't know the truth this could discredit my entire missionary work in all of Macedonia.

A third reason I wrote the people is because of some doctrinal problems, especially concerning the Lord's Return. Somehow some of the Thessalonians got really confused about the fate of those Christians in their church who have died before the return of the Lord. There's also some misunderstanding about church life and some of the works and gifts of the Holy Spirit. I dealt with these issues in the latter half of my letter.

Paul's Love for the Thessalonians

I don't want to be misunderstood about what I'm telling you concerning the Thessalonians, though. They've had a few struggles, but all in all they are a wonderful group of people. I was there when the church was born—in fact, they are my baby! I have a love for them like a mother does a newborn child. I care for them as a father does his own children.

Rick's Love for Grace Fellowship

In fact, in the few moments I had with your pastor today I can honestly say that I have seen this same desire and care for you in him. He loves you deeply as God's flock, not his own. He told me that his wife and he have prayed for months that God would provide a small church which sincerely desires to follow Christ, and now God has answered their prayers through you!

His anticipation of what God was going to do through you really excited me. I guess that's why he wanted to explain my letter to the Thessalonians to you. (I still don't know how he got a copy of my letter!) Rick feels very positive about what's happening here and thought that the Thessalonian letter communicated the same. As author of that letter, I can tell you that this is exactly what I meant in the letter. You're doing great—just keep doing more of the same!

Rick explained to me that he and his wife have been praying for you all each day that you would live in a manner pleasing to the Lord Jesus. I can tell that you all are embarking upon a great adventure.

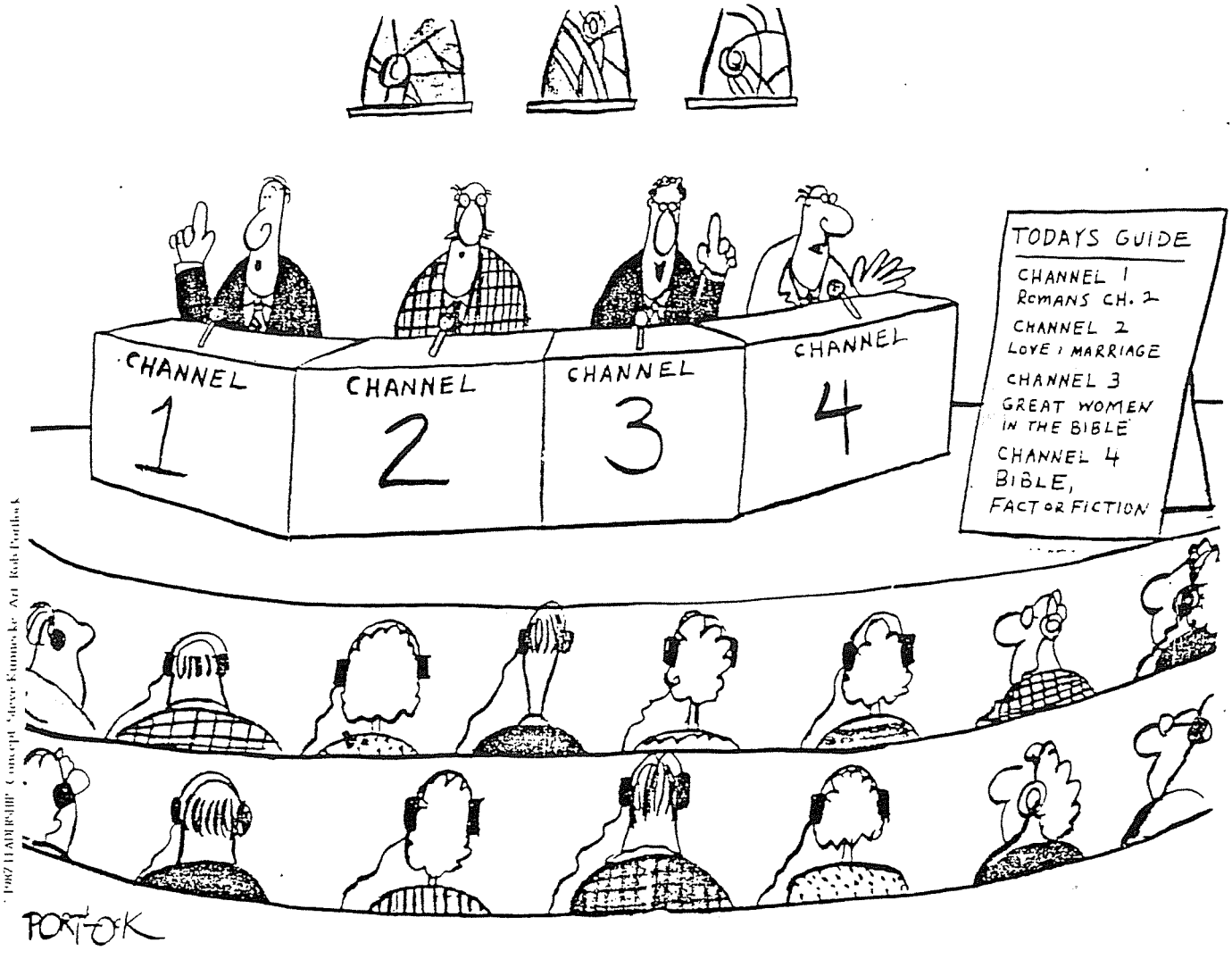
Conclusion

Speaking of great adventures, somehow I have got to get back to my own people of God in my homeland.

[Looking at his hand sun-dial] Wow, from what I can tell by the sun it appears to be approaching midday now. I sure hope sometime someone will invent a more accurate way to tell time. My only problem is: how do I get back where I came from?

CHAIRMAN: Boy, I'm really not too sure how you can do that either, but why don't you give this a try. Go back into that room, look up and say, "Beam me up, Scotty."

PAUL: [Looking confused but willing] O.K., I'll give that a try. Thanks. Shalom and Maranatha! [exits into the bathroom].



Cable Church

"Testimony of Onesimus" (1 of 3)
Dr. Tom Constable

Testimony of Onesimus

Setting: Onesimus, dressed as a first century slave with a scroll in hand, enters the room in view of the audience.

Teacher: Can I help you?

Onesimus: Yes. I seem to have lost my way. I was walking along the main highway from Rome to Colosse with my friend Tychicus when we met this traveling magician. We got to talking and he told us he had this new trick he had been wanting to try out. He said he could transport us directly, instantaneously, to our destination and he asked if we would be willing to let him try it out. We said, "Sure." So he stretched out his arms like this, said some strange rhyming words, and the next thing I knew I was standing outside this building. Obviously there are a few bugs he still has to work out.

Teacher: You wouldn't happen to know a man named Paul, would you?

Onesimus: Yes, I do.

Teacher: How about someone named Philemon?

Onesimus? The one that lives in Colosse?

Teacher: Yes.

Onesimus: I used to be his slave! In fact, Tychicus and I were on our way back to see him when that magician fouled us up. This scroll is a letter from Paul to him. I'm delivering it for Paul. Do you have any idea how I could get back where I came from, and what happened to Tychicus?

Teacher: No, I don't. But as long as you are here, would you tell us about yourself? We have all read about you.

Onesimus: (With great amazement:) You have?! How did you do that?

Teacher: Well, maybe I'll tell you about that later. But for now, tell us about your background and what it was like, or is like, to live where you come from.

Onesimus: It's entirely different than this. (Looking around) I can't believe this. This is wild!

Well, I come from a poor Phrygian family. Our whole family was split up and we were all sold as slaves when I was very young. My father couldn't pay his taxes. We were put on the block and I was sold to Philemon.

I can still remember that day. I thought I was going to die! I mean, really die! You see, Philemon was known all over our

area as a very severe man. When he bought me I thought I was a goner. And for about a dozen years I wished I was dead. Every day was horrible. He shouted at me constantly. He was never satisfied with my work, and I lived in constant fear of the man. I thought about running away many times, everyday. But the thought of being crucified if I were caught was enough to keep me from trying that.

Then something amazing happened. A group of Christians came through our area. They began preaching their gospel in several of the neighboring towns, first at the Jewish synagogues, then in the marketplaces. Well, my master Philemon, who was visiting one of our neighboring towns, heard Paul, who was the leader of the group, preaching, and he got converted.

You wouldn't believe the change that came over him after that! Instead of being hateful and unhappy, he became more gentle and pleasant. Everybody in town noticed the difference.

Well, as time went by, Philemon kept getting nicer and nicer. He even opened his home for the Christians to meet in. They are very unusual people. They were even interested in me!

It didn't take me long to discover that I could get away with quite a bit with Philemon. He gave me a lot of liberties. He often sent me to the market with a bag of money to buy food. I usually kept some of the money and told him the food cost more than it really did.

I got to thinking, "I'll bet if I ran away, Philemon wouldn't crucify me." Then one day when I was down at the wool market I heard two merchants talking about Rome. From what they said it sounded like I could escape to Rome and probably never be discovered. There are millions of slaves in Rome.

So that's what I decided to do. Once when Philemon was out of town on business for several days I ran away. I was pretty scared until I got to Rome. You know, slaves traveling alone are viewed with a lot of suspicion. I got some strange looks.

I remember one night in Philippi I almost got caught. There's a ring of kidnappers working in Philippi. They kidnap slaves, give them drugs, and then use them to do their dirty work. I just missed getting captured by them by the skin of my teeth.

When I finally arrived in Rome I felt safe for the first time. No one would find me there; there were just too many people. But I was wrong.

One day I was stealing an orange in the market, which is how I used to eat. Before I could take two steps this huge gorilla of a soldier grabbed me by the neck. The shop owner wanted my hide, and I was sent to prison. But it was only a minor offense, so I was put in with other relatively harmless prisoners.

Testimony of Onesimus (3 of 3)

It was there that I met Paul. The other prisoners used to call him Shorty. He's a strange looking character. He's short and thin, and he has a massive head with little beady eyes that flash with fire. He's kind of bowlegged, too. Paul liked to sing a lot especially at night. That really used to aggravate the guards. And he would talk to everybody, I mean everybody, about Jesus Christ.

That wasn't the first time I had heard about Jesus Christ. Philemon had told me all about Him. And frankly I was impressed, especially since Philemon gave Jesus the credit for the change in his life.

Well, Paul and I had a lot of long talks. He was especially interested in me when he learned I had belonged to Philemon. He remembered Philemon, and had kept in touch with him after Philemon became a Christian. After a while I became a Christian, too.

I was released shortly after that. But I went back to see Paul, and brought things to him in prison quite often.

Then one day he said, "Onesimus, I think you should go back to Colosse. You have an obligation to Philemon." I was afraid of that. At first I didn't want to do it. But then I realized that I really had to. Paul promised to write a letter for me to take with me. That's what this is (holding up scroll). Paul read it to me before I left Rome. I sure hope Philemon will receive me back like Paul has asked him to. He gave Tychicus, who was with me, another letter for the whole church that meets in Philemon's house.

We were just leaving Ephesus on the last leg of our journey, when we met that stupid magician. How am I going to get back there?

Teacher: I don't know, Onesimus. But maybe if you go back to the same spot outside this building something will happen if you say, "Beam me up, Scotty."

Onesimus: Well, ok. I'll try that. I sure hope everything works out all right.

Teacher: Somehow I know it will. See you again some day, brother.

Onesimus: Goodbye.

Instructions: Onesimus leaves by the same door through which he entered.

Thomas L. Constable
February 9, 1986
Dallas Theological Seminary

Evangelistic Sermons

I. Uniqueness of the Situation

A. People are not there to listen to you. You are only an instrument of God. If you in any way communicate arrogance that listeners are privileged to hear you preach, you have failed.

B. You are addressing the most basic need of mankind and can therefore expect greater spiritual attack from the enemy.

C. Your audience will be mixed—some saved and some lost.

II. Tips in Preaching Evangelistic Messages

A. Don't let the presence of Christians in the audience cause you to feel you have to present the gospel in a "new and exciting way" for them. Just model effective evangelism.

B. The best evangelistic messages are expository ones. Preach a particular text of Scripture which has an evangelistic emphasis (e.g., in John's Gospel). Look up the page number of your text in the pew Bible and announce the page in your message. This way the non-Christians won't look foolish while everyone else knows where to find the passage.

C. Preach as if you actually believe that unbelievers will go to hell (Eph. 2:12; Rev. 6:17; 20:15).

D. Preach as if you believe you have the only solution to people's hell predicament (Acts 4:12).

E. Preach the gospel (1 Cor. 15:1-8)—not church attendance, not baptism, not works.

F. Make sure you include a substitution illustration (pp. 200-3).

G. Follow Bill Bennett's 12 principles of evangelistic messages in *30 Minutes to Raise the Dead*, 130-53:

1. Pray it through
2. Exalt Jesus
3. Proclaim the Scriptures
4. Preach positively (the gospel is good news—not bad news, so emphasize what people should do rather than what they should not do)
5. Personalize sin (get specific enough to convict)
6. Keep the sermon comparatively brief (Billy Graham preaches 25-30 minutes)
7. Stick to the point (focus on your central idea)
8. Make it simple (truth is understandable, don't flaunt knowledge; 1 Cor. 2:4-5)
9. Make the message urgent (never preach in a "take-it-or-leave-it" manner)
10. Press for a verdict (and expect decisions)
11. Plead for souls (don't manipulate people—pray earnestly for them)
12. Depend on the Holy Spirit (John 16:8-11)

Grace Baptist Church Evangelistic Good Friday Youth Meeting
April 2, 1994
NIV

Dr. Rick Griffith
Single Message
20 Minutes

The True Meaning of Good Friday & Easter

Topical Message

Topic: The gospel
Subject: Easter weekend shows us the gospel
Complement: so that we may come to know God personally
Purpose: The listeners will accept Christ as Savior

Introduction (Following a drama on the crucifixion and resurrection...)

1. Arouse Interest: I trust this drama has answered some of your questions about the term "Good Friday." When you take just the term itself, it sounds strange, like "rush hour" refers to the times of day when traffic moves the most slowly. Why is this Friday so "good"?

   a. What's so good about an innocent man getting betrayed by a trusted friend?
   b. What's so good about an innocent man getting framed and enduring six illegal trials?
   c. What's so good about an innocent man getting mocked, beaten, and killed?

2. While Jesus endured all this, He showed an amazingly great sense of confidence.

   a. When betrayed, He showed no surprise and spoke a word which even knocked his captors to the ground.
   b. During unfair trials He kept cool and confidently offered no defense to save Himself.
   c. Even while agonizing on the cross He prayed for His torturers and even asked one of His friends to care for His mother!

3. How could Jesus have such confidence even while looking at death itself? It's because He was confident of knowing where He was going after death.

4. Touch Need: Wouldn't you like to live with this kind of confidence now on earth—even in much less severe circumstances?

   a. Aren't you amazed how your Christian friends live with joy in the midst of exams?

   b. Wouldn't you like the confidence of knowing that the best friend in the universe is right with you wherever you go?

   c. Most of all, wouldn't be great to know for sure where you will go after death itself? Do you know for sure where you are going after death?

5. Subject: Has anyone ever shown you how you can know for sure if you are going to heaven after you die? This is what I want to do in the next few minutes: explain how you can know for sure that you will go to heaven when you die.

6. The Bible tells us both bad news and good news. The bad news relates to you. The good news relates to God. Let's first look at the bad news...

I. The bad news relates to you and sin.

A. You are a sinner.
   1. Romans 3:23 says that evey person has fallen short of God's standards.
   2. Think for a moment how much you've sinned (3 sins/day, see Homiletics, 200)
   3. We may not all be as bad, but we're all as bad off (non-swimmers, cf. Homiletics, 200).

(The bad news even gets worse...)

B. The penalty for sin is death.
   1. Romans 6:23 is that death is the payment we all get for our bad deeds.
   2. When I entered the CBD during rush hour I deserved the $70 fine (see Homiletics, 200).
   3. Judge: Part 1 (A judge saw that his son had committed a crime, see Homiletics, 201)

(This is bad news! We've all sinned and we see the results of death all around us! Now think of what it must have been like for Jesus' friends. They too knew they had sinned and they were putting their hope in Jesus. But just when they thought things were going great, bad news—He was arrested, put on trial, and crucified.)

Cue tape for singing "I've Just Seen Jesus" (then sing the solo)

(I told you the Bible has both bad news and good news. Now here's the good news.)

II. The good news relates to you and God.

A. Christ died to pay the penalty for sin.
   1. Romans 5:8 says that Christ paid for our sin even though we were His enemies.
   2. Judge: Part 2 (The judge paid the fine for his son's crime, Homiletics, 201)
   3. Cancer (substituing bad cells for good ones, Homiletics, 201)

(Just as the bad news got worse, so the good news gets better...)

B. Your penalty for sin will be paid by Christ simply by trusting Him.
   1. Ephesians 2:8-9 says we come to God by trusting Him, not our good works.
   2. Doctor (trusted without knowing all about him, Homiletics, 202)
   3. Niagara (faith is commitment, not intellectual assent, Homiletics, 202)
   4. The resurrection allows us to know Christ personally (you can't know a dead man).

Conclusion

M.I.1. Easter weekend is about the good news that we can know God personally.

2. Anticipating Objections: Can you think of any good reason why you wouldn't want to receive Christ right now?

   a. If you're worried about what your *Christian friends* who brought you would think, remember that this is why they brought you!

   b. If you're worried about what your *non-Christian friends* will think, ask yourself, "Am I going to let them make all my most important decisions in life?"

   c. If you're concerned about what your *parents* might think, why not accept God's free gift now and then trust that they will accept Christ too!

   d. If you think you're *not good enough*, you're right! You don't have to be *good* enough, only *bad* enough—and you all qualify!

3. Would you like to pray right now to tell God that you're trusting Christ alone as Savior?

4. Here's a suggested prayer: "Dear God, I know that I'm a sinner. I believe Jesus died for me and arose. I trust Him now as my Savior. Thank you for forgiving my sins and giving me eternal life. Amen."

5. Assurance: Review truths of 1 John 5:11-13 or Revelation 3:20

Illustrations to Use in Sharing the Gospel

Love

Paternal (God loves us because we are made in His image): Do you have a son or daughter? Do you love him/her? Why? (because he's part of my family, made in your own image) Would you still love that child even if he/she did something wrong against your wishes? We, too, are originally part of God's creation, made in his image. But even though we've turned away from Him, He continues to reach out in love to us.

Sin

Rock (All fall short of God's standards): Let's suppose you and I were both to pick up a rock and try to throw them to China (or some other location mentioned in the conversation). Neither of us would reach the target because it's too far. Well, God is completely holy and perfect, so He's target for us is perfection. None of us can claim to be without sin, so we all fall way short of His standard.

Three a day (All fall short of God's standards): How bad are we in comparison to God's standard of perfection? Let's suppose you were really a relatively good person who sinned only three times a day. This includes every bad thought, word, and action. This would amount to over 1000 sins a year. Multiply this by your age and you'll see that you have fallen much short of God's perfect standard!

CBD (We have no excuse for our sin): I once drove down to a hotel on Orchard Road at 6:15 PM. As I approached the road I noticed that the big sign over the road said "Restricted Zone: In Progress." However, it was too late to turn back and get a day pass. The police wrote down my car's license number and three weeks later I received a ticket for $70. Even though I was sincere, even though I was ignorant of the sign until it was too late, even though I could offer other excuses, in the final analysis I had no excuse.

Archery (All fall short of God's standards): One definition of sin is an archery term which meaning to "miss the mark." There's a bulls eye which is rarely hit. Morally speaking, God is perfect and always hits the "bulls eye." But we always fall short of His standards.

Non-swimmers (Man cannot save himself): Suppose a ship sank but none of the passengers in the water could swim. When each turned to his friend for help, what would happen? Of course, all would die, for they would all be in the same predicament. What if each one tried to save himself by pulling himself out of the water? Death would also result. In like manner, man cannot save himself *spiritually*. In fact, spiritually speaking, we're all in the water together and drowning.

Death

Capital Punishment (Certain sins result in death)
In Singapore the government has established various laws to punish those who sin. If one is caught with a certain amount of drugs in his possession at the airport, the law says that person must die. Why? To uphold standards for society. God's standards are even higher than the government's and He says that sin must result in death.

Wages (We have all earned death): Suppose you were to work for me for a day and I pay you $50. This would be your wages since it represents what you have earned. The Bible says that because of our sin we have all earned death as our wage (Rom. 6:23).

Substitution

Book (Christ bore the weight of our sin upon Himself): Your sin weighs upon you just like this book weighs down my hand. But my other hand represents Jesus, and God desires to take this weight off of you to place it on Jesus (turn book over and place on other hand).

Cancer (Christ exchanges His goodness for our sin): Suppose you had cancer and through some medical means I was able to take your cancer cells into my own body in exchange for my good cells into *your* body. What would happen to me? Right, I would die. What would happen to you? Yes, you would live.

Kai (Christ gave His blood for us)
During the Vietnam War there was an orphanage located near an American Marine Base. One day the Viet Cong fired mortar shells into the orphanage, killing dozens of children and wounding many more. A boy name Kai had a seriously wounded friend who needed a blood transfusion. Kai's friend had a rare blood type and only Kai's blood matched it. Little Kai had never heard of a blood transfusion before but when the American doctors explained it would save his friend's life, little Kai volunteered. As Kai's blood began to flow to his friend, Kai began to whimper. When the doctors asked if it hurt, he said no. A little later he whimpered again. Again he told the doctors it did not hurt. Finally the doctors asked, "What's wrong, Kai?" With tears coursing down his light brown, dusty cheeks, Kai asked, "When am I to die, sir, when am I to die?" You see, little Kai did not know that he was to give only a *portion* of his blood. He thought he would give it all, and he was willing to die for his little friend.

Snake (Christ took the cause of our death upon Himself): A poisonous snake once bit a little girl in her backyard. Seeing that the girl would be dead in just a few minutes, the girl's mother cut her daughter's leg and sucked out the venom. The girl lived, but the poison killed the mother, who in effect had died as her daughter's substitute.

Drawbridge (People take for granted Christ's death for them): A man once had a job to lower a drawbridge twice a day at 8:00 AM and 4:00 PM for people to take a train over a river to and from work. He had a young boy whom he loved very much that was too young for school so he often accompanied his father up to the switching station. They would often wave to the train passengers as the train passed by. One day at about 3:45 while the bridge was up the man lost track of the whereabouts of his son, who had wandered off. He looked for him panicking for several minutes but had to give up the search as the train was coming at full steam towards the raised drawbridge. He made it back to the switching house in time enough to lower the bridge, but just as he reached for the lever he spotted his son, far down below him—in the midst of the gears! The father had to make a split second decision—either to leave the bridge up and cause the train to hit the raised drawbridge and crash into the river, or to allow the gears to crush his only son to save the train passengers. With pools of tears in his eyes and great anguish in his heart he lowered the drawbridge, crushing his small boy in the powerful gears. The people on the train safely passed by as usual, unaware of the great cost to save their lives. Those of us on earth *are* aware of an even greater cost to save us—the precious Son of the Father—who was crushed for our sins. Yet we often act like the passengers and glibly cast aside the tremendous sacrifice on our behalf.

Judge (God balances his fairness with mercy): A judge once had a boy come before him for sentencing only to discover that the lad was his own son. In order to be fair to the law, he set the fine at the appropriate amount, but then did something quite unusual. Laying down his legal robes, he came down from the bench and paid the fine himself to the officer, thus satisfying the legal requirement while at the same time being gracious to the one he loved. In like manner, Christ also saw our awful predicament in our disobedience, except in our case the penalty was much more severe—death itself. But Jesus laid aside his royal robes as God and came and paid that death penalty himself, thus satisfying the penalty and showing us his grace.

Twins (Satisfaction for sin has been paid by Christ): Suppose you killed someone and ran away, then the dead person's family members came looking for you for revenge. However, your twin brother/sister loves you very much and delivers himself/herself over to these people, who vent their anger by killing him/her. This would satisfy the anger of the relatives and save your life.

Soldier (Christ died for ungrateful, ungodly people): A promising, young, American lieutenant graduated from West Point Military Academy and soon found himself leading a group of recruits to fight the Viet Cong in Vietnam. One night they confronted the enemy who wounded one of their men. The rest ran for cover in a trench where they stayed all night, listening to the groans of the dying, wounded soldier a few feet away. Finally, the lieutenant could not bear to hear the groans of his friend any longer and risked his life to save the man. He successfully

pulled him back to the trench, but as he was about to hop in himself he was shot in the back and killed instantly. Sometime later, back in the US, the brave lieutenant's parents heard that the young soldier whom their own son had saved was in town. The surviving soldier came to their home late, drunk, using profanity and insensitive to the great cost given for his own life. After shutting the door behind the young soldier the bereaved mother could only say, "I gave my own precious son to save *that* wretch of a man?" Likewise, the Father gave his precious Son, Jesus Christ, to save an ungrateful, profane, race like ours.

Gift

Birthday (Seeking to earn our salvation insults God): On your birthday people give you gifts, don't they? Have you ever insisted upon paying for a gift? How do you think your friend or relative would feel if you did this? How do you think God feels when He offers us eternal life for free but we insist that we must pay for it (by our good works, baptism, church attendance, money, religious rituals, etc.)?

Pencil (The gift of salvation must be received to apply to us): I would like to give you this pencil for free (extend it to the person). If you pay me 10¢ or *any* price for it, it's not a gift. If you work for me in any way it's not a gift. It's simply yours—you just need to receive it.

Faith

Jet (Christ is trustworthy): Let's suppose I was employed by the ticket counter at an airport in a poor country to lead you to your jet to get you back to Singapore. So I lead you to a jet that hadn't been painted for years, had oil leaking out of the back, had part of a wing broken off, and had a hole in three of the windows? How would you feel? When you hesitate, I simply reply, "Oh, don't worry. Just have *faith* and this jet will get you to Singapore!" The important thing isn't the amount of your faith, it's the condition of the jet!

Ice (Christ is trustworthy): If you walked out on a lake frozen over with ice 1 millimeter thick, what do you think would happen? Of course, you'd fall in! What if you *really sincerely believed* that the ice would hold you up? Yes, you'd *still* fall in! How about if the ice was 1 meter thick, would it hold you up? Even if you had very little faith that it would? You see, the issue is not *how much* faith you have, it's what or *whom you place your faith in!* Many people are sincerely trusting "thin ice" to sustain them in this life and the next, but it won't work. On the other hand, even if you place the little faith that you have in Christ, you place this trust in the right source. He'll sustain you.

Chair (We all exercise faith everyday): Have you ever personally met the designer of this chair? (pause for answer) When you sat down on this chair you exercised faith.

Doctor (Faith can be placed in Christ because of His credentials): Once my wife got very sick and I took her to the hospital. When the doctor gave her some pills to take, she simply took them without asking any questions at all! Can you imagine that? She had never *seen* the man before, we had never *been* to this hospital before, and we didn't know *who* made the pills or even their *chemical composition!* Why would she do such an outrageous thing as take a pill which, for all she knew, could have been poison? (pause for answer) This was a simple act of faith in the credentials of one whom the hospital had deemed competent. As my wife found the doctor competent to meet her physical needs, I have found Jesus Christ competent to meet all of my spiritual needs.

Pilot (Faith can be placed in Christ because of His credentials): Have you ever taken a plane ride? Did you personally know the pilot of the jet? No, you exercised faith in this person to get you to your destination without ever knowing him.

Niagara (Biblical faith is a commitment—not simply intellectual assent): A famous tightrope walker once performed the greatest feat of his career by walking across Niagara Falls with only the aid of a balancing bar. The crowd was very enthusiastic! "Do you think I can do it without the balancing bar?" he asked in response. The crowd cheered him on, so he did it. "How many

feel I can take a wheelbarrow across and back?" The crowd went wild again, "Yes! You can do it!" they yelled. So he went back and forth with a wheelbarrow. "Who believes I can do it again with a dog inside?" the tightrope walker shouted. "We do!" Responded the crowd, so a dog was brought over, placed in the wheelbarrow, and the two made another successful trip. "Now who believes that I can do it with an even heavier load within the wheelbarrow—with the weight of a person inside?" he asked. By this time the crowd was ecstatic and going wild. "Any volunteers?" came the request. (pause) No one volunteered! They believed *intellectually* that he was able to take them across, but they were not committed to this belief. In like manner, many people *intellectually* believe Christ can take them to God but they are unwilling to *commit* themselves to that belief. Such belief without personal commitment is not genuine belief.

Circles (Biblical faith is a commitment—not simply intellectual assent): Two circles can be used to represent two kinds of life. Trusting Christ means being willing to turn your life over to Him to let Him direct your life. (See Four Spiritual Laws)

Wedding Sermons

I. Uniqueness of the Situation

A. People are not there to listen to you. They want to see the bride and groom, talk to their relatives and friends, or get a free meal.

B. Those closest to you in physical distance are the farthest from you in attention to your message (the bride and groom will have to hear the cassette later since their minds are definitely on other things).

C. This is both a time of joy and nervousness.

II. Tips in Preaching Wedding Messages

A. Be brief. Don't exceed 10-15 minutes. A general rule is: the less air-conditioning, the less sermon. In other words, "the hotter, the shorter."

B. Decide who your target audience is. Will you speak to the couple (not advisable)? unbelievers in the audience? the Christians listening? Tailor your message to your intended audience.

C. Remember that people will not have their Bibles so don't ask them to look verses up. If there are pew Bibles then give the page number of your text.

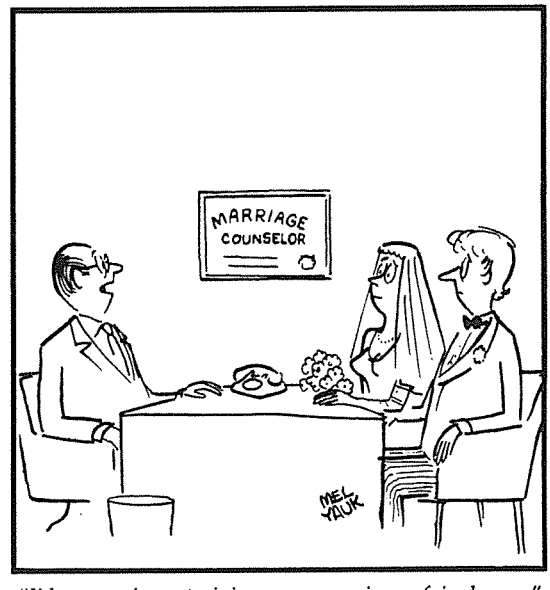
D. Be personal. Talk about the couple by name. Try to avoid phrases like "the bride and the groom" as they sound too detached and mechanical.

E. Use humor. Nothing releases tension like a few good laughs.

F. *Always* include a good explanation of the gospel and an invitation to trust Christ. Weddings always have the unsaved in attendance. Let them know the couple wishes for you to share how to trust Christ.



"Toni and I met during this morning's 'Greet Your Neighbor' time. We'd like you to marry us."



"I'd say you're not giving your marriage a fair chance."

A Wedding of [Bride] and [Groom]

Date _____

WELCOME

Dear friends, we have gathered together in the presence of God and all of you to join together this man and this woman in the state of marriage. This is an honorable estate instituted of God and signifying to us the mystical union that is between Christ and His Church.

Our Lord Jesus Christ adorned and beautified marriage with His presence and His first miracle that He worked in Cana of Galilee. Marriage is also commanded by Saint Paul to be honorable among all men.

Therefore, it is not by any to be entered into lightly or without counsel, but reverently, discreetly, advisably, soberly, and in the fear of God, into which these two persons come now to be joined.

[Groom], will you have this woman to be your wedded wife, to live together after God's ordinance in the holy estate of matrimony? Will you love her, comfort her, honor and keep her, in sickness and in health, and forsaking all others keep yourself only unto her so long as you both shall live? (I will)

[Bride], will you have this man to be your wedded husband, to live together after God's ordinance in the holy estate of matrimony? Will you love him, comfort him, honor and keep him, in sickness and in health, and forsaking all others keep yourself only unto him so long as you both shall live? (I will)

Who gives this woman to be married to this man? (Her mother and I)

SCRIPTURE

Will you attend to the words of Scripture contained in _____? (Read Scripture)

EXHORTATION

[Groom] and [Bride], we come together this afternoon to celebrate the occasion of your marriage. We have listened to the music and the Word of God. Now I want to share with you just a brief word of exhortation before you exchange your marriage vows. [Groom], there are two specific commandments in Scripture with regard to your relationship to [Bride].

First, it is the husband's responsibility to love the wife as Christ loved to Church and gave Himself for her. Peter adds to that your responsibility to dwell with [Bride] in honor.

To love your wife is the hardest part of the bargain. That responsibility encompasses so many things since Jesus Himself is our example—the only One who has ever lived a perfect life!

Seldom does God ever call us to actually lay down our lives physically for our wives, but so many times throughout the course of the life you live together God is

EVANGELISTIC MESSAGE

We're glad, dear friends, that you have come to share this occasion as well. [Groom] and [Bride] would express their delight that you're sharing this afternoon with us. And they want you to know that they have committed themselves to the Lord Jesus.

They have accepted Jesus Christ as their personal Savior and they have committed their lives to Him as individuals, but from this day forth they will live together for Him.

Marriage is the biblical illustration that God has chosen for our relationship to Him. In Ephesians 5 God says that husbands are to love their wives the same way as Christ loved the Church.

Jesus set aside His own interests, took upon Himself the form of a human being, was born, and then lived in this world for a number of years without ever committing a sin so that He might die to pay the price for our sin.

He saw our need. He saw that we were lost in the sinful condition in which Adam left us, and in the sinful condition that we placed ourselves. And Jesus came in much the same way that a husband has the responsibility to sacrifice for His wife. Jesus came and made that sacrifice on the cross to provide for us.

And He woos us to Himself, He draws us to Himself by saying, "I love you. I gave Myself for you. I died for you. I put up with all these things for you as I sacrificed My Own life for you because I want to draw you in relationship with Me."

The Scripture says the wife is to place herself under the husband, to commit herself to the husband. And that's what our responsibility is to God.

If we have never accepted the Lord Jesus as our Savior then as Jesus calls us and has sacrificed Himself for us, He wants us to place ourselves under His authority. He wants us to come to Him and say, "Jesus, I am recognizing my sinfulness and my need and I am placing myself under Your authority. I'm placing my faith and my trust and commitment in You."

This is done in the same way that a wife places herself under her husband, trusting that he will do what is in her best interest. Jesus calls us to Himself and says, "Trust Me. I love You."

[Groom] and [Bride] have told me personally that, as delighted as they are that you are here, they would be even more thrilled knowing for sure that you had that personal relationship with Jesus Christ—that you had come to the point in your life where you very simply had recognized that you've sinned, you've violated God's Word.

And you've understood that Jesus gave Himself for you as well as for each one of us. And then to simply say, "God, I know that I'm sinful, I know that Jesus came and died for me, and I want to trust Him alone to take away my sin. I want to trust Him. I want to place Myself in His hands." Oh, we trust that you will do this.

And this afternoon, as [Groom] and [Bride] share their marriage vows I'm sure it will be very special to you. The

going to ask you to make those sacrifices—to set aside your own interests, your own ambitions, your own use of your own time.

As you assume these responsibilities for [Bride] and, perhaps ultimately, also for children, it means to give of yourself, to set aside your own interests, to set aside the things that you would do if you were single and if [Bride] didn't have any needs of her own.

Those are heavy responsibilities. It is not ruling with an iron hand, it's not simply saying, "These are the way things will be," but it means to do as Jesus did for us—to look at [Bride], to understand her needs, to understand what will cause her to be developed fully in all the potential that God has given her, and then to set aside your own interests in order to meet those needs. To love, to cherish her, to care for her, is the responsibility that God places upon you as her husband.

And then to dwell with her in honor means to give her the place of exaltation, the place of honor, in the home—to always lift her up as the one God has given to you. To lift her up with other people, to lift her up in the eyes of children (if someday God blesses you in that way), to always hold her up and give her in the home that unique position of honor.

It's a big responsibility. It's a good responsibility.

****

[Bride], the Word of God addresses responsibilities to you as well as a wife. It's summed up in placing yourself under the authority of [Groom] as your husband. So often nowadays people understand that to mean that you are less of an individual, that you can't do what you like to do, that you have no say, no input in the relationship, and we know that's not true. We understand from the Word of God that you are just as much created in the image of God as [Groom] is.

What submission means is that in the final analysis when it comes down to the decisions that are made, [Groom] has the responsibility for your home and your life—and that you are to look to him for that responsibility in the same way that we as the body of Christ look to the Lord Jesus as the head of the body.

God has given [Groom] to you to be a protector, to be a provider, to be one who will encourage and sustain you—and He's given you to [Groom] to be one who will encourage him, to be one who will lift him up, to be one who will recognize his headship and his leadership.

And the beautiful thing in all this is that you approach these heavy responsibilities not in your own strength, which can soon fail but in that of the Lord Jesus since you love Him and have committed your lives to Him.

And so, you've already made that commitment to Jesus and now come together in a union which God has blessed to fulfill you and use you for His glory.

PRAYER

Father, You are the One who has designed marriage. Way back in the Garden of Eden, before sin ever entered the world You said, "It is not good for a man to live alone. I will create a helper for him."

And You have designed that a man should leave his father and mother and cleave to his wife and the two should become one flesh. And so our Father we pray at this moment that You would be pleased to seal this union, that You would be pleased to bless this bride and this groom.

Bless [Groom], Father, as the provider and sustainer for the family. Strengthen him, encourage him, give him wisdom and discernment as he seeks to walk with You.

And Father, bless [Bride]. May she always be able to look to [Groom] as her "knight in shining armor," as her husband, as her lover and provider.

Father, we pray that You would be pleased to direct their lives in accordance with Your perfect will and plan. Make the assignments for them that will develop their potential. Give them enough of success that they know they walk with You, and enough failure that they must keep their hands tightly in Yours.

Father, be pleased to lead them through all the days of their life together until one day one of them perhaps will lay the other into Your arms. Father we pray that Your peace, that Your blessing, that Your will may be very much a part of their lives as they walk with You.

We commit them to You in the grace of the Lord Jesus. In Your Own love, in the power of the Spirit of God. Amen.

PRONOUNCEMENT

For as much as you, [Groom], and you, [Bride], have consented together in holy wedlock and have witnessed the same before God and this company, and have given and pledged your trust each to the other, and have declared the same by the giving and receiving of rings, and by joining of hands, I pronounce that you are husband and wife together, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

Those whom God has joined together, let no man separate.

[Groom], you may now kiss your wife.

main reason it will be special is because of that relationship to Jesus Christ, which takes them beyond themselves into a new dimension in life. And they would desire that you experience that as well.

The fact that you are here also gives you another responsibility as well—to pray for them, to encourage them, maybe even at some point to admonish them—to offer advice from time to time, particularly if it is asked for, and to just stand behind them with your prayers and your love as they go forth.

For those of you who are married here, I would encourage you also as they share their wedding vows to reaffirm your own. Think through the vows you yourself made to your partner and reaffirm your marriage commitment. Restate in your own mind that love as they share it with each other.

VOWS

[Groom] and [Bride], please face one other for your vows:

[Groom], take [Bride]'s hands in yours, and state these vows:

I, [Groom], / solemnly agree before God and these witnesses / to take you, [Bride], / as my lawful wedded wife, / to love and respect you, / honor and cherish you, / in sickness and in health, / in prosperity and in adversity, / and leaving all others / I commit myself to remain only unto you / so long as we both shall live.

[Bride], please state these vows to your husband:

I, [Bride], / solemnly agree before God and these witnesses / to take you, [Groom], / as my lawful wedded husband, / to love and respect you, / honor and cherish you, / in sickness and in health, / in prosperity and in adversity, / and leaving all others / I commit myself to remain only unto you / so long as we both shall live.

RINGS

What token do you have of these vows? (A ring)

These rings are made of valuable metal, as you know. They signify the preciousness and the value of these vows that you have just shared.

They are endless in a circular design, signifying that your love and the commitment is endless also.

[Groom], place this ring on [Bride]'s finger and repeat after me:

With this ring/ I take you as my wife/ in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

[Bride], place this ring on [Groom]'s finger and repeat after me:

With this ring/ I take you as my husband/ in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

THE MARRIAGE SERVICE

of

SUSAN KAY AHLSTROM

and

RICHARD JAMES GRIFFITH

Friday, December 30, 1983 7 o'clock

Rev. Richard Emmons and Rev. Floyd Bergfalk, Officiating

PRELUDE — Wes Harty

LIGHTING OF CANDLES

SONG — "Spirit of God"

CONGREGATIONAL HYMN (congregation please stand)

"O Come All Ye Faithful"

O come all ye faithful, joyful and triumphant
O come ye, o come ye to Bethlehem
Come and adore Him, born the king of angels
O come let us adore Him, O come let us adore Him,
O come let us adore Him, Christ the Lord

For He alone is worthy, for He alone is worthy,
For He alone is worthy, Christ the Lord

SONG — "Wake, Awake For Night Is Flying"

PROCESSION OF BRIDESMAIDS

SONG — "Wedding Song"

PROCESSION OF THE BRIDE

SERVICE

SONG — "Can Two Walk Together"

UNITY CANDLE

PRONOUNCEMENT

SONG — "Jesus, We Just Want To Thank You"

I CORINTHIANS 13

POSTLUDE

please remain seated until ushered out

PARENTS

Mr. and Mrs. Kurt A. Ahlstrom

Mr. and Mrs. Bob Morrison

Captain Harold F. Griffith

MAID OF HONOR

Karen Harrison

My sister and best friend
She is a treasured part of
my life and I love her.

BRIDESMAIDS

Brenda Friesen

My roommate and friend while
overseas with the Crossroads
She is leaving next week to
return to the Philippines and
will be missed.

Kathy Bristol

We first met at a Sunday School
Class party where she asked if
we could study the Bible to-
gether. We did...now she is a
junior at Biola University.

Kathy Griffith

My new sister-in-law and Rick's
sister with whom he has shared
a special friendship with
through the years.

BEST MAN

John Schmidt

Our friendship extends back
to elementary school. He is
a C.P.A. in San Francisco.

GROOMSMEN

Terry Prindiville

Our friendship began at age
seven. He and John led me
to Christ in 1971. Terry is
a manager at J.C. Penny in
San Bernardino.

Bob Griffith

My big brother of two years
(and five inches). He has
always believed in me. He
is a sales representative
in Honolulu, Hawaii.

Albert Cuellar

I've admired his walk with
God ever since he began
dating my sister, Kathy. He
is a Biblical Studies major
in the Bay Area.

CANDLELIGHTERS

Eddie Harrison

My brother-in-law. He is a
Chiropractor in Tustin and
a special part of our family.

Tom Griffith

My younger brother by three
years and a companion of
many childhood adventures.
He's also a special friend.

A special thanks to all who have labored so hard to make
this day so special in our lives.

Funeral Sermons

I. Uniqueness of the Situation

A. People are not there to listen to you. They have come to show respect for the dead and the family. However, though they may not know it, at this time they are *most* eager for the preaching ministry!

B. The listeners are especially interested to hear about the afterlife (Eccles. 7:1-4). Grief has a way of reducing us to the basics in life.

C. People never die at convenient times. If you don't plan ahead for funerals then your preaching will suffer that particular week (either your funeral message or your Sunday morning message will be lousy). It's best to have some funeral messages already prepared in advance at least in outline form for: a Christian, an unbeliever, a tragic accident, etc.

D. The audience is always a mixture of believers and unbelievers.

E. This will be one of your few times to speak in a home, which provides a more natural environment for ministry than a church building gives.

F. Remember that grief is real for your listeners.

II. Tips in Preaching Funeral Messages

A. Rules of introductions need not apply as closely. There is less need to get attention, people already intensely feel their need, and they won't be listening for structure anyway.

B. Include more illustrations and be less didactic nature. It's almost impossible to share too many stories in a funeral message—especially personal ones about the one who passed away. Don't feel you have to share some incredible pearls of wisdom from the Word. Don't be afraid to remind people of what they already know.

C. Remember that people will not have their Bibles so don't ask them to look verses up. Include much more Scripture reading than normal, particularly the favorite verses of the deceased.

D. Funeral preaching must evidence a pastoral tone. Pray that you will find the balance between gloominess (which is overcome by grief) and cheeriness (which ignores the reality of grief).

E. Be personal. Talk about the deceased by name. Try to avoid phrases like "our dearly beloved departed" as they sound too detached and mechanical. Tell details about his life, family, work, worth, influence, and faith in Christ if he knew the Lord.

F. *Always* include a good explanation of the gospel and an invitation to trust Christ. You will have more non-believers at funeral messages than any other ones so don't miss this opportunity. Speak about the "brevity of life, the certainty of death, the need of a Savior, the awesome eternity to come" (W.A. Criswell, *Criswell's Guidebook for Pastors*, 300—see this book for many practical tips regarding funerals).

G. Perhaps one of the most important tips is: *be short*! Never exceed 15-20 minutes. Say what needs to be said, then sit down.

Cecil Perry's Memorial Service
August 8, 1988
NASB

Chaplain Rick Griffith
Entire Service
Message: 15 Minutes

A Sample Expositional Funeral Message...

"Cecil Perry's Home Going"

1 Thessalonians 4:13-18

Topic: Death (Believer's After Suffering)
Subject: We can gain comfort in the Rapture
Complement: because this event will reunite us with Cecil and other loved ones.
Purpose: The listeners will have the comfort that Cecil is with the Lord and will have an opportunity to accept Christ.

Opening Remarks

1. Dear friends, on behalf of the family of Cecil Perry, I welcome you to today's service.
If you came expecting a funeral service, this you will not experience!
Rather, we have gathered together to celebrate the graduation of Cecil to his eternal home.
I think it's more fitting to refer to our time together as a Christian Memorial Service, for Cecil, without a doubt, placed his faith in the Lord Jesus Christ for salvation.

2. As Chaplain at Williamson Printing Corporation where Cecil worked for many years, I had the opportunity to see him several times in hospitals and at home the past eight months. Knowing that he was close to his home going many times I naturally was concerned about what or whom he was trusting for his salvation. When I asked him whom he was trusting he confidently answered each time, "I'm trusting Jesus." Then he'd point his finger up into the air and smile the way only Cecil Perry could do. Let's pray together.

Prayer

Our Father, thank You for the assurance of Your care throughout life. Thank You that one demonstration of Your care for us was to have Cecil's life touch each one of ours in a special way. Thank You for what he meant to us as husband, father, grandpa, relative, co-worker, friend. You blessed him with a sense of humor that brightened our days time and time again. You gave him a tenacity and love of life which inspired us all. Thank You for allowing his journey to last 61 years so that we have much to look back upon.

In these special moments, Lord, we pray for Your strength for Cecil's family. For Wilma we ask that You would fill the void as only You can do. You have promised in the Bible to be a Husband to the widow, so we ask that You would meet her emotional, spiritual, financial and physical needs.

Lord, we also pray for Your comfort for Butch and Cindy. As they reflect upon their father's life we ask that their energies would be directed to pursue only those things which last beyond this life.

Give to us all, Lord, a renewed sense of purpose by being here. Help us to better understand through this time together why You have allowed us to take this brief sojourn on earth we call life. Help us never to spend our lives, but only to invest them. For Your Own sake, Amen.

Solo

Personal Data

Name:	Cecil George Perry
Residence:	10915 Cotillion Drive, Dallas
Entered this life:	September 28, 1926
Born in:	Dallas, TX
Departed this life:	August 6, 1988 4:00 AM

Age:	61	
Married to:	Wilma Lorena Reeves Perry	
Date of Marriage:	July 4, 1949 (39 years)	
Survived by:	Wife:	Wilma Perry
	Daughter:	Cindy Perry Hennessee
	Son:	Jefferson Lewis (Butch) Perry
	Granddaughters:	Kelli Hennessee, Raelyn Hennesee
	Grandson:	Clay Hennessee
	Brothers:	Arthur, Ray, and J. B. Perry
	Sister:	Faye Perry Reed
Church:	Casa View Christian Church	
Employed at:	Williamson Printing Corporation (cutter)	
Committee Member of:	Dal-Tech Association	
Education:	Crozier Technical High School (Class of 1944)	
Military Service:	Merchant Marines & Army	
Special Unofficial Award:	World's Best Grandfather Association	
Interests:	Rangers baseball, golfing, fishing, boating, getting a sun tan, answering Jeopordy questions, country western music, Bible reading	
Life Goal:	Wanted to be a court reporter	
Events of this Year:	Auto accident on January 6 put him into a coma	
	Conversion during coma	
	Cancer discovered end of April but had begun before the accident	
	Home going on August 6	

Scripture Reading (1 Thessalonians 4:13-18)

Solo

Sermon (below)

Introduction

1. I believe God has a word of comfort for us today from the Scriptures. To most of us death is such an uncertain event. We have looked only little or not at all in the Bible to see what it has to say about death—even of a Christian—so we're confused.

2. A group of Christians in the first century had their own questions about what happened to Christians who had died. Some believers in their church had passed away and they wondered when they would see them again.

3. The Apostle Paul answers their questions in 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18. The passage is found on page ___ in the pew Bible.

I. Knowing that Cecil has gone to be with the Lord will keep us from grieving hopelessly (4:13).

A. Paul says that it is not good for us to be uninformed about where Cecil is as one who has "fallen asleep" (4:13a).

B. We don't grieve like those who grieve without hope (4:13b).

1. Cecil underwent much pain this year.

2. Butch confessed, "Dad, I'm getting angry with God. I don't know what to do to help your pain!"

3. Cecil answered, "Son, don't ever get angry with God. He knows what He's doing."

C. So what am I saying?

1. Let's not get angry with God now either.

A. Cecil and other believers who have died will rise before us who have trusted Christ and are living (4:15).

B. I should point out that only Cecil's body is asleep. His soul and spirit is very much alive in heaven where no time exists (DEATH ends time).

C. Someday—perhaps very soon—several spectacular events will happen without a moment's notice (4:16-17).

(Well, how should we respond to this truth about Christ's return?)

Cecil himself said it well the night of his operation. Turning to Butch, he said, "Son, do me a favor. Don't ever give up—and make it big for me."

And again just last week he told his aspiring actor son, Butch, "When you win an academy award or an Emmy, mention my name." (Butch stopped filming just minutes before Cecil entered God's presence Saturday morning.)

Cecil's advice to Butch—and to all of us as well—is to keep pushing on for the heights. But it goes without saying that the Academy Awards is not the heights. The heights is to be among those who are taken up into the air to be with Jesus Christ forever. That's why verse 18 encourages us with these words..."

IV. Therefore comfort one another with these words (4:18).

A. Let's do just that as we move towards the graveside. Let's comfort one another regarding the soon coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our reunion together.

B. DEATH preparation for (optional)

Prayer (thanksgiving for Rapture & Cecil, adjustments for Wilma, see eternal not temporal, salvation of hearers)

DEATH, PREPARATION FOR (Corrie ten Boom)

When Cornelia Ten Boom was a girl, her first realization of death came after a visit to the home of a neighbor who had died. It impressed her that someday her parents would die. Corrie's father comforted her. "Corrie, when you and I go to Amsterdam - when do I give you your ticket?" Corrie answered, "Why, just before we get on the train." "Exactly," responded her father, "and our wise Father in heaven knows when we're going to need things too. Don't run out ahead of Him, Corrie. When the time comes that some of us will have to die, you will look into your heart and find the strength you need - just in time."

The Hiding Place

DEATH ends time

Original Carbon typed 6-23-87

—oOo—

When as a child, I laughed and wept, Time crept;
When as a youth, I dreamed and talked, Time walked;
When I became a full grown man, Time ran;
When older still I daily grew, Time flew;
Soon I shall find in traveling on, TIME GONE!

-Anon.

"You cannot kill time without injuring eternity!"

-Thoreau

—oOo—

a. What to us is separation from our loved one, to God is reunion.

b. Psalm 116:15 — "Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints."

2. Let's not stifle the grief, but let's grieve in hope.

a. There's a saying that we're in the land of the living going to the land of the dying.

b. Nothing could be further from the truth! We're in the land of the dying going to the land of the living. Cecil is the most alive person among us!

(But how do we grieve in hope? The next verse shows us where our comfort comes from...)

II. Christ's death and resurrection assures us that Cecil will rise too (4:14).

A. Christianity stands or falls on the resurrection of Christ. If Jesus is still in the grave I may as well go home, because I would have nothing helpful to say.

B. While visiting Cecil in the hospital after he was able to speak again, one day he said to me, "Where's my rock? I need my rock!"

I thought that strange and looked around the room for a rock but couldn't find one. Finally I said, "Cecil, I don't know where your rock is. What is it?"

"Wilma!" he said, "She's my rock! Where's Wilma?"

It was then that I began to see the depth of love between Cecil and Wilma Perry. Wilma stayed by him through many a night, rubbing him, comforting him, reading the book of Psalms to him, encouraging him.

Cecil had a little teddy bear with a heart on it which read, "I love you"—and when the pain got too tough to be able to verbalize those words to Wilma he just pointed to the bear. After getting to know Wilma better in a very real sense I began to see why she was his "rock."

C. But soon I also began to discover another thing. After a few months in the hospital Cecil had begun to cling to another Rock with a capital "R"— a Rock much bigger than Wilma— in fact, the same Rock that made Wilma a "rock" to Cecil.

Cecil told me time and again, "The Lord is my Rock." "Are you trusting Jesus as your Savior?" I asked. "Yes," came the swift reply, "He's my Rock, too."

D. Most of you here today didn't know Cecil as a believer in Jesus Christ. For the greater part of his life he was nominal as a Christian, by his own testimony. But I have no doubt that if he was here in person today and could speak to you, this is what he would say:

1. God loves you more than you can imagine (John 3:16; 10:10).

2. You have sinned (Rom. 3:23; 6:23).

3. Jesus died and rose again—for you (Rom. 5:8).

4. You must repent from sin and accept Christ as Savior (Eph. 2:8-9; Rev. 3:20).

5. Please bow with me in prayer. If you want to accept Christ now...

(But what will happen if you accept Christ as Cecil did? Well, you will see him again when Christ returns!)

III. When Christ returns Cecil will receive his new body and rise to meet the Lord before you and me (4:15-17).

Psalm 116:15-16

(I didn't preach this one too at the same funeral!)

Topic: Death (Believer's)
Subject: Seeing death merely from a human perspective brings little comfort
Complement: but seeing God's perspective of death brings us great comfort.
Purpose: The listeners will find comfort that God has looked forward to Cecil's home going.

Introduction

1. [God always prepares us for death (DEATH preparation for –Corrie ten Boom—see p. 209)]

2. Seeing death merely from a human perspective brings little comfort but seeing God's perspective of death brings us great comfort (M.I.).

3. This is why we need to see Cecil's death from God's perspective.

I. The home going of Cecil from our <u>human</u> perspective is <u>separation</u>.

A. His home going is separation to us because in Cecil we have lost a warm, close, husband, father, brother, co-worker, friend.

B. It's separation because we think of how he relates to <u>us</u> now—not to God.

C. His home going is separation because we have begun a period when we will not see him for a time. But for him that limitation called time has been removed. As one wrote,

1. [Read quote under file card called "DEATH ends time"—see p. 209]
2. We still dwell in time, but not so with Cecil. For him time is gone.

(So in our humanity we see Cecil's passing as separation, but our human view differs from God's because...)

II. The home going of Cecil from <u>God's</u> perspective is <u>reunion</u>.

A. Psalm 116:15-16

1. "Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints. O Lord, truly I am your servant... the son of your maidservant; you have freed me from my chains."

2. No doubt the Lord has looked forward to Cecil's home going more than we have.

3. But yet in a sense we have been freed from our chains as the psalmist said—chains of not knowing how long she would continue to live, chains of our human limitations of the plan of God, chains of seeing his bound by his body.

B. So from God's perspective—the real, true perspective—Cecil is experiencing a reunion with the Lord he has desired for many years. He now sees this glory firsthand.

C. D. L. Moody saw his upcoming death as his glorious triumph (DEATH believer's—see p. 212)...

Conclusion

1. We see Cecil's home going as separation, but God views it as the reunion He's desired (M.I. shorter).
2. It's wonderful to know Cecil was received into wide-stretched, open arms longing for his coming.
3. Cecil is saying at this very moment, "This is my triumph; this is my coronation day! It is glorious!"

Funeral Packet (1 of 10)
Chaplain Bill Bryan, Dallas Seminary

PASTORAL MINISTRIES 607
Chaplain G. William Bryan

F U N E R A L S

An easy way to function is to establish and maintain a loose-leaf notebook containing the various components of a funeral service. Pages can be added and/or deleted from each section and then compiled prior to each individual service.

SECTION 1 - ORDERS OF SERVICE

SECTION 2 - PERSONAL DATA/OBITUARY ITEMS

SECTION 3 - INTRODUCTIONS TO SERVICE

SECTION 4 - TESTIMONY OF DECEASED'S SALVATION

SECTION 5 - PERTINENT SCRIPTURES

SECTION 6 - SERMONS

SECTION 7 - BENEDICTIONS, PRAYERS

SECTION 8 - POETRY

SECTION 9 - QUOTATIONS RE DEATH

SECTION 10 - APPROPRIATE HYMNS, SOLOS

SECTION 11 - SPECIAL FUNERAL SERVICES

- Infants, Young Children (II Samuel 12:23)
- Suicide
- Tragic Accident
- Unsaved Person

SECTION 12 - GRAVESIDE SERVICE

See attached sheets for samples of several of these sections.

FUNERALS - SECTION 1 - ORDERS OF SERVICE

Itemized below is a sample funeral service. As you observe or perform funerals, you will want to collect alternate orders of service and itemize each on a separate sheet of your notebook.

INTRODUCTION/OPENING REMARKS

SOLO

OBITUARY/PERSONAL DATA

SCRIPTURE READING

PRAYER

SOLO

SERMON

PRAYER

DEATH believers' means more alive than now!

1026 Moody More Alive

Realizing that he would soon be gone from this world one day, Moody said to a friend, "Someday you will read in the papers that D. L. Moody of Northfield is dead. Don't you believe a word of it.

"At that moment I shall be more alive than I am now. I shall have gone higher, that is all—out of this old clay tenement into a house that is immortal, a body that sin cannot touch, that sin cannot taint, a body fashioned into His glorious body. I was born in the flesh in 1837; I was born of the Spirit in 1856. That which is born of the flesh may die; that which is born of the Spirit will live forever."

Paul Lee Tan
7700 Illustrations

FUNERALS - SECTION 2 - PERSONAL DATA/OBITUARY ITEMS

OBITUARY ITEMS - Name
Residence
Date of Birth
Place of Birth
Date of Death
Age at time of Death
Married to
Date of Marriage
Survived by
Church Affiliation
Other organizations
Work Data

PERSONAL DATA (obviously, not all will be applicable to each funeral)

Devoted parent/husband/wife/child, etc.

Reared Christian family

Length of life

Example in life (perhaps a specific incident)

Ministries for the Lord

Civic contributions

Reunited with loved ones (name them if known to crowd)

Circumstances of death (endurance through suffering, expected or unexpected, timely or untimely, etc.)

Outstanding spiritual characteristic(s)

Personal anecdote for your relationship w/deceased

FUNERALS - SECTION 3 - INTRODUCTIONS, OPENING REMARKS

Sample 1 - "We are here in memory of our loved one and friend who has gone into the presence of God (into eternity). He was a husband to one of you,
a son to _____ of you,
a father to _____ of you,
a brother to _____ of you,
and a dear friend to many of us.

Sample 2 - "This last _____, one of God's children, _____, went triumphantly into the presence of the Lord. He/she has departed this earthly life and is now enjoying the blessings of eternal life. Perhaps the best description of his/her departure is a Biblical one from II Timothy 4 - 'He/she has finished his/her course, he/she has fought a good fight, he/she has kept the faith!."

Sample 3 - Perhaps just a verse of Scripture, such as Psalm 116:15.

Sample 4 - "We are gathered here today in memory of _____ and to honor the Lord Jesus Christ, whom he/she loved and served."

Sample 5 - Read one your poems.

Sample 6 - "This is a Christian memorial service rather than a funeral service with no hope, because _____ was a Christian, one of Christ's own children."

FUNERALS - SECTION 4 - TESTIMONY OF DECEASED'S SALVATION

Basic Statement - "_____ had received Jesus, by personal faith, as his/her Lord and Saviour. He/She had trusted in His death, burial and resurrection for the accomplishment of his/her salvation. He/She was therefore prepared for eternity.

Optional additional statements -

Said only recently "I'm ready to go" (or something similar.

Was convinced of Jesus' words - and then give some clear salvation verse(s), such as John 5:24 or John 3:16.

Not only did _____ believe in Jesus this way for personal salvation, he/she also built his/her life on this conviction.

"_____ would want me to say to you this day"- and then give the plan of salvation.

FUNERALS - SECTION 5 - PERTINENT SCRIPTURES

It is of prime importance that you inquire from the family about the favorite Scriptures of the deceased and include some of these in the service, making mention of their meaningfulness to the deceased.

The following is a list of Scriptures that can be woven into the service or form a basis of the sermon. Have a separate sheet for each.

I Thessalonians 4:13ff

John 14:1-6

Romans 8:28

Psalm 103:13-17

II Corinthians 5:1-8

I Corinthians 15:51-57, 19-23

JOhn 5:24

Philippians 1:21, 23

Revelation 21:4

Luke 24:1-9 (re Christ's resurrection)

Psalm 68:20

John 11:19ff (re Lazarus)

II Corinthians 4:14-18

II Timothy 4:6-8

I JOhn 3:1-3

Psalm 116:15 plus many other references in Psalms

Psalm 23

FUNERALS - SECTION 6 - SERMONS

If you really want someone to prepare your funeral sermons for you, you'll have to get someone other than me! There are dozens of books printed that give funeral ideas, including sermons. However, these might be a starting point for your first one - if it happens the second week of your first pastorate!

Sample 1 - "What Death Means to the Christian"

a. Release from suffering
b. Reunion with loved ones
c. Direct fellowship with God
d. A time of departure
e. A universal experience
f. A completed salvation

Sample 2 - "Precious in God's Sight"

a. Death - from God's Perspective
b. Our Responsibility - see Death from God's Perspective

Sample 3 - "Three Questions"

a. "Where are you going?" (John 13:36)
b. ""Why can I not follow you?" (John 13:37)
c. ""How do we know the way?" (John 14:5)

FUNERALS - SECTION 7 - PRAYERS/BENEDICTIONS

Benedictions - II Thessalonians 2:16, 17
II Thessalonians 3:16
II Corinthians 1:3, 4
Jude 24, 25

Content of prayer should include:

...thanksgiving for the loved one -
joy of His love
satisfactions of his life
his family

...petitions for the loved ones remaining
physical strength, supply of needs
spiritual comfort
guidance in decisions
trust in God's plan

...ability to see the eternal, not the temporal

FUNERALS - SECTION 8 - POETRY

As the years progress, you will build quite a collection, I'm sure. Here again, each poem should be on a separate sheet, so you can choose appropriately and re-arrange them for each individual service. Here are a couple that I have found helpful

THIS IS DEATH

This is not death, but triumph and reward:
To walk by faith through all life's little day
And then, at eventide, to meet the Lord
And hand in hand with Him to go away.

This is NOT death - this is abundant life,
Eternal life, the freeing of the soul
For bliss beyond earth's time of toil and strife.
This is not death, but the immortal goal.

But this IS death: In trespasses and sin
All through life's journey carelessly to roam;
To view the Door - and never enter in;
To see the Truth - and never take it home.
Unmindful of the Christ, to draw each breath
As though THIS world were final. That is death.

Helen Frazee-Bower
Christianity Today - 8-1-60

JUST THINK

Just think -
...of stepping on shore and finding it heaven,
...of taking hold of a hand and finding it God's hand,
...of breathing a new air and finding it celestial air,
...of feeling invigorated and finding it immortality,
...of passing from storm and tempest to an unbroken calm,
...of waking up and finding it home!

I Peter 1:4

Upon a life I did not live,
Upon a death I did not die -
Another's life, Another's death -
I hang my whole eternity.

FUNERALS - SECTION 10 - APPROPRIATE HYMNS, SOLOS

Here again - it is most crucial to consider the favorite hymns of the deceased and the family. But, occasionally, they may ask for some recommendations.

"How Great Thou Art"
"Welcome Home, Children"
"The Sands of Time Are Sinking"
"Children of the Heavenly Father" ("Security")
"Beyond the Sunset"
"How Firm A Foundation"
"Amazing Grace"
"Like A River Glorious"
"Face To Face"
"Finally Home" ("Just Think")

Preaching Calendars

I. The Importance of Planning Ahead

Why should you plan your sermon topics and passages months in advance?

A. Planning avoids having to find a new topic each week.

B. Planning keeps you from repeating yourself too much.

C. Planning enables cohesiveness by preaching in a series.

D. Planning improves relationships with your co-workers (music, worship, choir leaders, others who share the pulpit, etc.).

E. Planning increases the congregation's confidence in your leadership—they want to follow someone who knows where he's going.

F. Planning allows time to find appropriate illustrations.

G. Planning provides a balanced spiritual diet for your listeners.

II. How to Make an Effective Preaching Calendar

A. Have your quiet time this year on what you plan to preach next year, then take a personal retreat for two days to a remote, quiet location to review your notes.

B. List those books and topics which you feel the congregation needs in the coming year.

C. Block out special event messages (Christmas, Mother's Day, etc.) on the calendar.

D. Know how many times a week you are expected to preach.

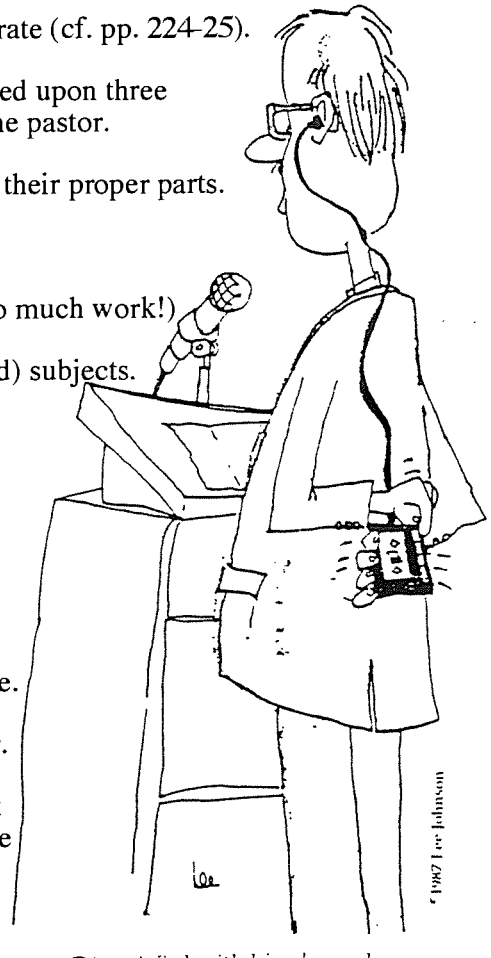
1. Don't regularly preach more than twice a week in a pastorate (cf. pp. 224-25).
2. The preaching calendar on the following two pages is based upon three messages weekly, but these need not all be preached by the pastor.

E. Divide each expositional book series and topical series into their proper parts.

F. Put the series onto a chart. Stagger these series so that you:

1. Never begin two books or two series at the same time (too much work!)
2. Balance masculine (concepts) with feminine (heart-related) subjects.
3. Balance doctrinal with relational subjects.
4. Balance OT with NT preaching.
5. Balance inward growth with outward ministry.
6. Cover pertinent topical issues.
7. Never preach all the way through a long book in Scripture. Notice that both Genesis and Mark are broken up into various "mini-series" in the following preaching calendar.

G. Later on you can fill in the appropriate subject-complement statements for each message so as to give those planning the worship service several months to plan ahead to order appropriate choir music, write dramatic sketches, etc.



Dissatisfied with his planned sermon, Rev. Bratbest goes for a last-minute lip-sync.

One Year Preaching Calendar

638: Seminar in Pastoral Ministries
Dr. John W. Reed
Year Long Preaching Calendar

Rick Griffith
Box 1130
March 26, 1986

NOTE: The following preaching calendar is designed for the first year of a newly planted church in the Philippines. It assumes a congregation composed largely of new believers, most of whom are saved from a Roman Catholic background.

Week		Sunday Morning	Sunday Evening	Wednesday Night
		Basics of the Faith	**Church Life**	**1 John**
Jan	1	Authority of Scripture	Purpose of the Church I	John Dramatic Intro
	2	Salvation by Faith I	Purpose of the Church II	1 John 1
	3	Salvation by Faith II	Church Organization	1 John 2:1-17
	4	Assurance of Salvation I	Ordinances: Baptism	1 John 2:18-29
Feb	5	Assurance of Salvation II	Ordinances: Lord's Supper	1 John 3:1-12
	6	Filling of the Spirit	Church Holiness	1 John 3:13-24
		Ephesians		
	7	Ephesians 1:1-14	Church Discipline I	1 John 4:1-6
	8	Ephesians 1:15-23	Church Discipline II	1 John 4:7-21
Mar	9	Ephesians 2:1-10	Judging Others	1 John 5:1-12
	10	Ephesians 2:11-22	Gray Areas	1 John 5:13-17
			Elders	
	11	Ephesians 3:1-13	Responsibilities	1 John 5:18-21
				Bible Survey
	12	**Palm Sunday**	Qualifications I	Bible Overview
	13	**Easter (Evangelistic)**	**Musical (Evan. Closing)**	Pentateuch
Apr	14	Ephesians 3:14-21	Qualifications II	Historical Books
	15	Ephesians 4:1-16	Submission to Elders	Poetical Books
			Mark (Part I)	
	16	Ephesians 4: 17-24	Mark Dramatic Intro	Prophetical Books
	17	Ephesians 4: 25--5:2	Mark 1:1-15	Gospels
May	18	Ephesians 5: 3-14	Mark 1:16-20	Acts
	19	Ephesians 5:15--21	Mark 1:21-45	Pauline Epistles
	20	**Mother's Day** (5:22-24)	Mark 2:1-12	General Epistles
	21	Ephesians 5:25-33	Mark 2:13-17	Revelation
				Bible Study Methods
Jun	22	Ephesians 6:1-9	Mark 2:18-28	Observation I
	23	Ephesians 6:10-24	Mark 3:1-12	Observation II
	24	**Evangelistic**	Mark 3:13-19	Interpretation I
	25	**Psalm 73**	Mark 3:20-30	Interpretation II

One Year Preaching Calendar (2 of 2)

		Genesis (Part I)		
	26	Genesis 1:1-25	Mark 3:31-35	Application I
Jul	27	Genesis 1:26-31	Mark 4:1-25	Application II
	28	Genesis 2	Mark 4:26-34	Quiet Time Importance
	29	Genesis 3:1-7	Mark 4:35-41	Quiet Time How-To
				Spiritual Gifts
	30	Genesis 3:8-24	Mark 5:1-20	Basics in 1 Corinthians 12
Aug	31	Genesis 4:1-15	Mark 5:21-43	Importance of Gifts
	32	Genesis 4:16-26	Mark 6:1-6	Overview of the Gifts
	33	Genesis 5	Mark 6:7-13	Dangers Concerning Gifts
		Attributes of God		
	34	Holiness	Mark 6:14-29	Intro to Temporary Gifts
Sep	35	Justice	Mark 6:30-44	Foundational Gifts I
	36	Love	Mark 6:45-56	Foundational Gifts II
			Jonah	
	37	Omniscence	Jonah Dramatic Intro	Sign Gifts I
	38	Omnipresence	Jonah 1	Sign Gifts II
	39	Omnipotence	Jonah 2	Speaking Gifts I
Oct	40	Eternity	Jonah 3	Speaking Gifts II
	41	Immutability	Jonah 4	Serving Gifts I
			James	
	42	Sovereignty	James 1:1-8	Serving Gifts II
		Genesis (Part II)		
	43	Genesis 6	James 1:9-18	Discerning Your Gifts I
Nov	44	Genesis 7	James 1:19-27	Discerning Your Gifts II
	45	Genesis 8	James 2:1-13	Using Your Gifts
				Malachi
	46	Genesis 9	James 2:14-26	Malachi 1:1-5
	47	Genesis 10	James 3:1-12	Malachi 1:6-14
Dec	48	Genesis 11	James 3:13-18	Malachi 2:1-9
	49	**Christmas**	James 4:1-12	Malachi 2:10-17
	50	**Christmas**	James 4:13-17	Malachi 3:1-6
	51	**Christmas**	**Christmas(Evangelistic)**	Malachi 3:7-15
	52	**The Year Past**	**The Year Future**	Malachi 3:16--4:6

Next Year:	Revelation 1-3	James 5	Ecclesiastes
	Family Life	How to Share Christ	Eschatology
	Christology	Mark 7-13 (Part II)	How We Got the Bible
	Revelation 4-22	Pneumatology	Angeology

Crossroads International Church Preaching Calendar 2013

CROSSROADS International Church

Edition 62-SM (7 Feb 13)

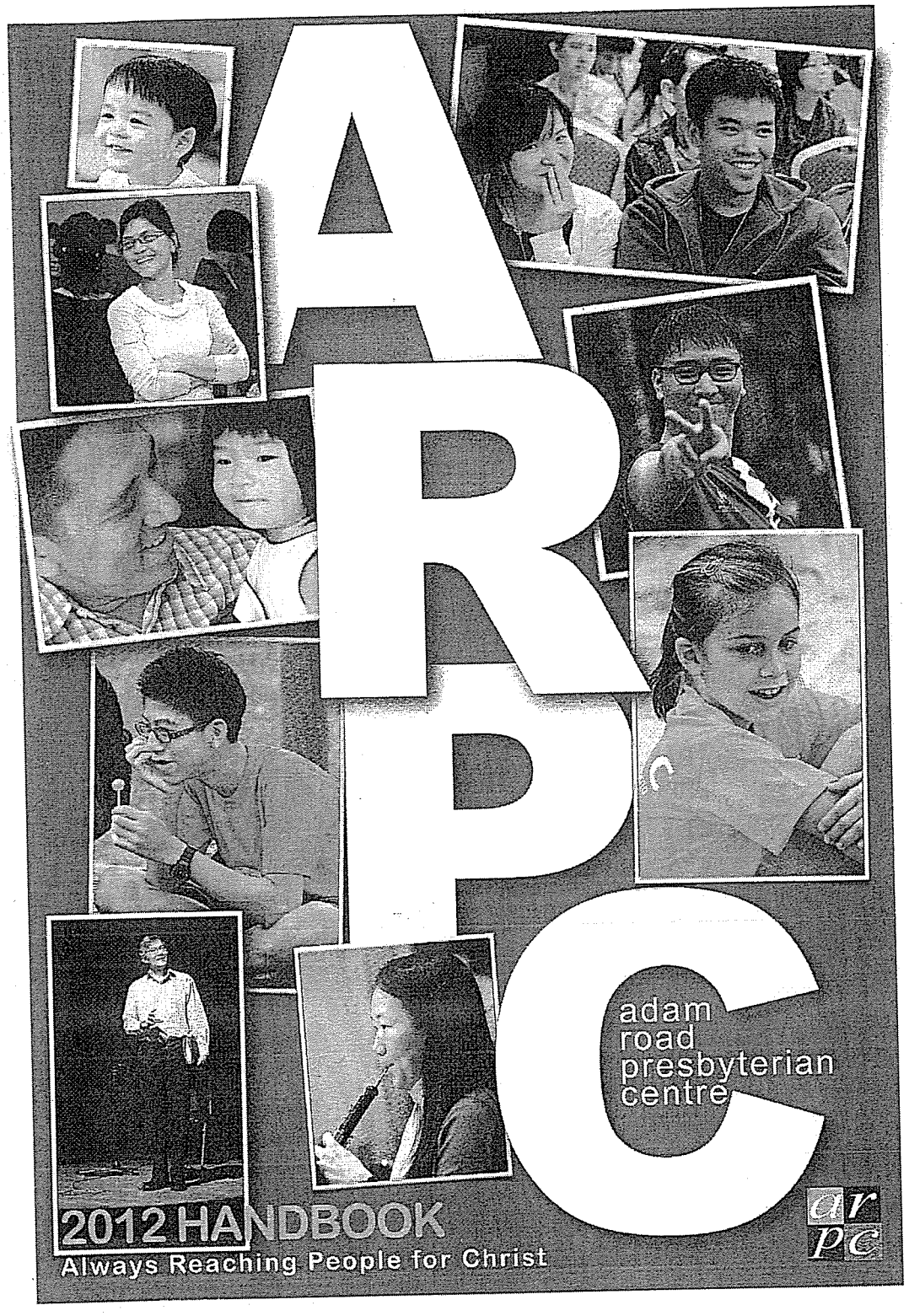
CIC Service Plan for 2013

x = Present - = Absent

AR = Adrielle Randles
BW = Barbara Winkler
CP = Cynthia Peter
CW = Christine Winkler
DL = Deborah Lee
EL = Emma Lieuman
GL = Gilbert Lewis
JS = Jieun Sénéchal
KM = Kim Mang
LW = Lewis Winkler
MB = Miriam Burnett
RG = Rick Griffith
SG = Susan Griffith
SM = Singpu Mang
SB = Sean Bagary
SD = Shannah den Engelsen
TD = Tessa den Engelsen

Date	Sermon Text	God's Attribute	Topic	Sermon Title	Main Idea	Speaker	Rick Present?	PowerPoint Design	Worship Leader	Pianist	Guitarist	Bassist	Drummer	Christine Singing	Cynthia Singing	Deborah Singing	Miriam Singing	Jieun Singing	Kim Singing	Singpu Singing	Shannah Singing	Tessa Singing	Comments
Jan 6	1 Cor. 7:1-24	Joy	Contentment	Straight Talk About Contentment	Be content with your marital, physical, and socio-economic state because each situation has its advantages	RG	x	RG	LW	SG	TD	-	-	-	x	-	-	-	-	-	x	x	Lord's Supper
Jan 13	1 Cor 7:25-40	Joy	Contentment	Why Stay Single?	Singleness has its advantages (especially during difficult times) but marriage isn't prohibited	RG	x	MB	SM	SG	TD	-	SB	-	-	-	x	x	-	x	x	x	Closing duet by Singpu & Kim
Jan 20	1 Cor 8	Meek	Conscience	Using Your Gray Matter on Gray Matters	Avoid amoral issues of conscience if they offend others	RG	x	MB	SM	SG		-	-	-	-	-	x	-	x	x	x	x	
Jan 27	1 Cor 9	Meek	Right	When a Right is a Wrong	Give up your rights to help others mature in Christ.	RG	x	MB	SM	SG		-	SB	-	-	-	x	x	x	x	x	x	
Feb 3	1 Cor 10:1-11:1	Jealous	Idolatry	When You're Idle About Idols	Avoid pagan celebrations or God may discipline you for this involvement with demons	RG	x	MB	SM	SG		-	SB	-	-	-	x	-	x	x	x	x	Lord's Supper
Feb 10	1 Cor 11:2-16	Leadership	Women	Veils, Tales & Females	Husbands should lead their wives because this honors authorities, it follows God's creation order, and prevents society from thinking we're immoral or idolaters	RG	x	MB	SM	SG		-	SB		-	-		x	x	x	x	x	
Feb 17	1 Cor 11:17-34	Redemption	Communion	No Ordinary Supper	How can you participate in the Lord's Supper correctly? Look outward, look back, look forward, and look inward.	RG	x	MB	SM	SG		-	SB		-	-	x	-	x	x	x	x	Lord's Supper
Feb 24	1 Cor 12:1-6	Triune	Gifts	Unwrapping Your Gifts	Gifts praise the triune God—not us!	RG	x	MB	SM	SG		-	SB		-	-	x	x		x	x	x	
Mar 3	1 Cor 12:7-11a	Speaks	Gifts	The Speaking Gifts	If you have a speaking gift, then talk as God's voice	RG	x	MB	SM	SG		-	SB			-	x	-	x	x	x	x	Lord's Supper
Mar 10	Romans 1:1-17	Almighty God	Gospel	The Power of the Gospel	Be Passionate to share the Gospel with others for it is the power of God unto salvation	SM	NEP	MB	SM			-	SB			-	x	x	x	x	x	x	Rick & Susan in Nepal Mar 9-23
Mar 17	Eccl. 12:1-8; 13-14	Righteousness	Judgment	Live for What Matters	Live for God's glory since He will judge you for how you live it.	LW	NEP	MB	SM			-	SB			-	x	-	x	x	x	x	Rick & Susan in Nepal Mar 9-23
Mar 24	1 Cor 12:7-11b	Serves	Gifts	The Serving Gifts	If you have a serving gift, then serve others in God's strength	RG	x	MB	SM			-	SB			-	x	x	x	x	x	x	
Mar 31 Easter	1 Cor 15	Resurrecting	Resurrection	His Body, Our Bodies	Since Christ arose, we will too! So live like it!	RG	x	MB	SM			-	SB			-	x	-	x	x	x	x	1 Cor series out of order for Easter
Apr 7	1 Cor 12:12-31	Diversity	Gifts	Whom Do You Need?	Why do you need everyone in this church? You are only one part of the body!	RG	x	MB	SM			-	SB						x	x			Lord's Supper
Apr 14	1 Cor 13	Love	Gifts	Why Love?	Why must we use our gifts with love? Because love is superior to gifts, love benefits others, and love outlasts gifts	RG	x	MB	SM			-	SB						x	x			
Apr 21	1 Cor 14:1-25	Speaks	Worship	Words from the Lord	God's Word must have the highest priority in public worship because it encourages more people than experiences do	RG	x	MB	SM			-	SB						x	x			

ARPC 2012 Preaching Calendar 1 of 3



ARPC 2012 Preaching Calendar 2 of 3

OVERVIEW OF 2012 JANUARY - JUNE

Dates	Sermon/Passage	Events & Explanation:
Dec 31-Jan 1	No Services	Leaders' Vision Day Sun, Jan 1 (10am-12pm) DG Celebration 1 A combined meeting for all Discipleship Groups (DGs). Sharing the vision for the New Year and introduction to Galatians . Wed, Jan 4, 8 pm.
Jan 7-8	**Series Title:** **Freedom Indeed** **A study of Galatians**	What's the difference between true and false gospels? Why does it matter? The book of Galatians will help us sort the confusion about these life-saving questions!
	A New Year	Communion Service Parents' Briefing (Children's Church)(7-8 Jan) Ministry Signup Discipleship Groups (DGs) begin the Galatians series (week beginning Jan 8) Agape Lunch (Fri, 13 Jan)
Jan 14-15	The Real Deal Galatians 1	English Presbytery ACM. Sat, 14 Jan Prayer & Praise (P&P) Service Our bi-monthly prayer and praise service BB/GB Combined Prayer Meeting (14 Jan)
Jan 21-22	Good or Bad Deal? Galatians 2	Saturday 5pm and Sunday 9am (ONE service due to Chinese New Year Eve)
Jan 28-29	Faith vs Works Galatians 3	Just For Newcomers (Sun, 29 Jan to Sat, 14 Apr) (1 week break on 8 Apr due to Easter weekend) Combined Missions Prayer Evening (28 Jan) Missions Sharing Newcomers' Meal (29 Jan)
Feb 4-5	Are You Illegitimate? Galatians 4	Communion Service Discovering Christianity starts (5 Feb) Men's Fellowship: Men's Movie Nite (9 Feb) Mercy Ministry Retreat Feb 4
Feb 11-12	Freedom! Galatians 5	LeadersPATH EE 1: Overview to Jeremiah (11 Feb) DG Sharing Culinary Arts Ministry – Valentines (12 Feb) Agape Lunch (Fri, 17 Feb)
Feb 18-19	Liberating Burdens Galatians 6	Family Service BASIC: Parents-Leaders' Meeting (18 Feb) Family Fellowship: Family Feud (Outdoor War Games) (19 Feb) Children's Church Leaders'-EE-1-(19-Feb) Potential Leaders' Training – 24 Feb to 30 Mar & 20 Apr
Feb 25-26	Galatians Summary	Mission Sharing Marriage Preparation Retreat (MPR) (25-26 Feb) Newcomers' Meal (26 Feb) Mercy Ministry Talk 1 – Nutrition/Diet during Treatment. E.g. Chemotherapy (26 Feb)
	Series Title: **The Many Sides of God** **A series on Jeremiah.**	God blesses. God curses. God saves. God judges. God is faithful. God forsakes. Just who is this God? There so many sides to Him, that He seems contradictory at times!
Mar 3-4	A Prophet is Born Jeremiah 1	Communion Service BB/GB Combined Prayer Meeting (3 Mar)

ARPC 2012 Preaching Calendar 3 of 3

Dates	Sermon/Passage	Events & Explanation:
Mar 10-11	A Bizarre Betrayal Jeremiah 2	School Holidays (10-18 March) DG Sharing ARPC Combined Youth Day (10 Mar) (TBC) Men's Fellowship: Men & Aesthetics (10 Mar) Women's Table Talk (11 Mar) DG Celebration 2: Movie Night (Fri, 16 Mar) Agape Lunch Outing (Fri, 16 Mar)
Mar 17-18	A Revolting Religion Jeremiah 7	Prayer & Praise (P&P) Service Our bi-monthly prayer and praise service BB Week starts (23 Mar to 1 Apr)
Mar 24-25	A Broken Covenant Jeremiah 11	Missions Sharing SYNOD Youth Leadership Conference (24 Mar) Newcomers' Meal (25 Mar) Missions' Retreat (23-25 Mar)
Mar 31-Apr 1	A Deserved Disaster Jeremiah 14-15	Communion Service BASIC Evangelistic Event (31 Mar) Easter English Presbytery (EP) Convention. (4-5 Apr) EP Good Friday Service @Singapore Expo (6 Apr)
Apr 7-8		ARPC Easter Evangelistic Service Men's Fellowship: Bowling Nite with Retirees (8 Apr) Agape Lunch (Fri, 13 Apr)
Apr 14-15	A Parable of 2 Pots Jeremiah 18-19	DG Sharing JFN Retreat (14 Apr) Annual Congregational Meeting (ACM)(15 Apr) Culinary Arts Ministry (15 Apr)
Apr 21-22	A Righteous Branch Jeremiah 23	Family Service Family Fellowship: Godly Habits in Tech (21 Apr) Children's Church Leaders' EE 2 (22 Apr)
Apr 28-29	A Plan for the Future Jeremiah 24-25	**Annual Congregational Meeting (TBC)** Combined Missions Prayer Evening (Apr 28) Mission Sharing Newcomers' Meal (29 Apr) Discovering Christianity starts (29 Apr) Parents' Day Dinner (1 May) (TBC)
May 5-6	A Grave Letter Jeremiah 29	Communion Service Mercy Ministry Talk 2: Advance Care Planning – In Good Health or When Ill
May 12-13	A Grief Consoled Jeremiah 30-31	DG Sharing Men's Fellowship: Men and Buddies (12 May) BB/GB Enrolment Service (12 May) Agape Lunch (Fri, 18 May)
May 19-20	**Paul Tripp Conference** **(A spiritual feast awaits us. Mark your diaries and take part!)**	Paul Tripp: "Dangerous Calling" Public Talk (17 May) Paul Tripp: "Marriage Conference" (18-19 May) Paul Tripp: Ministry Leaders' Meeting (May 19 Lunch)
May 26-27	Which God? Jeremiah Summary	School Holidays (26 May-24 Jun) Prayer & Praise (P&P) Service Our bi-monthly prayer and praise service Class ARPC (Membership) Newcomers' Meal (27 May)

PASTOR TO PASTOR

by Robert C. Anderson

How Can You Preach Three a Week?

Something has to give when a congregation expects its pastor to prepare multiple quality sermons each week and still minister to its members' other needs.



Dear Dr. Anderson,

Your Pastor to Pastor in October 1985 raises an issue I have struggled with to the point of exhaustion. Where did you find a congregation that allowed you the luxury of one sermon a week?

How would you suggest a pastor handle three per week? My congregation, mature in the Word and responsive to expository, Bible-oriented ministry, expects this format three times a week: twice on Sunday and a full study on Wednesday evening. If I had only one basic preparation per week, every demand would fall into place; I would do an excellent job in the pulpit and still have time for witnessing, counseling, and visitation.

Your "effective scheduling" practice for one sermon a week fits my weekly pattern. I, too, begin early Monday morning and lay out an outline for the week's ministry. I try to take a bit of time off on Friday, as you suggest. Saturday is as casual as I can arrange it.

As you suggest, I use a full written manuscript, which I revise, rewrite, and then review enough to need little use of the final version in the pulpit itself. But preparing for three sermons makes me dwell in my study with monastic detachment for an incredible number of hours each week.

With your evangelical background, I am sure your church has a Sunday evening service and a Wednesday night study. In addition, you must have funeral preparation and other speaking engagements from time to time.

I believe in your guideline of 15 to 20 hours of preparation per sermon. To dig through the Greek or Hebrew, ferret out the well-planned outline, flesh out the meat of the Word, and make it palatable and interesting to the congregation takes that much time. But when the minister is speaking three or four times a week, this becomes impossible.

The evangelical pulpit is often weak when compared with the polished preparation of the more liberal pulpit. I am convinced this is because we are expected to preach far too much. Given your option to preach only one sermon a week, I am sure our evangelical pulpit would strengthen greatly.

Even as I approach retirement, I find myself groping for an answer to what has been my greatest dilemma throughout my pastoral years. I believe I could have been a quality *preacher if I hadn't been forced by the evangelical system to be a* quantity *preacher. And I feel the great host of evangelical believers would have been better fed by one well-prepared meal each week than by three that were put together in haste.*

I have known soundly evangelical pastors who chose a different church setting just to escape the evening or midweek service and its added load of preparation. And I am now counseling young ministers who are so overwhelmed by the pastoral load that they are contemplating other professions or less demanding min-

Dr. Anderson is chairman of the department of pastoral ministry at Western Conservative Baptist Seminary and pastor of Glisan Street Baptist Church, Portland, Ore.

How Can You Preach Three a Week? (2 of 2)

PASTOR TO PASTOR

istries than today's evangelical pastorate. I have seen one move into the Episcopal church because he feels less pressure there to pursue the frantic demands and pursuits of a typical evangelical church. Do you have any suggestions?

As a preliminary answer, let me ask another question: Do you have a word processor? As a manuscript preacher, with word processing equipment I can revise my manuscript as many times as I like throughout the week, then print it in finished form. I also type my correspondence on the word processor and give the disk to my secretary to print. If there is an error, the letter is still on the disk so the correction can be made easily.

My first advice is to run to your nearest computer store and buy the equipment you need to do the job. Then take whatever instruction you need to use the equipment effectively.

In relation to having too many responsibilities, this approach, which has worked for me, may work for you or the men you counsel. In the past I've taken an entire Saturday to sit down with my board members in a retreat setting. I've said to them something like this:

"Brothers, I find myself swamped with too many opportunities and not enough time. I'm too dumb to figure out the answer, and I know there is wisdom in numbers. Will you help me?"

Then I've given them a handout listing all the things that all the people in the congregation expect me to do. After each of these items, I put the average amount of time each week it takes to accomplish, including preparation and performance time. Then I add unexpected contingencies such as hospital emergency calls, funerals, etc.

After board members have looked over the handout, I ask them what is a reasonable amount of time I should be spending in my ministry in an average week. Then I let them brainstorm how I should spend that time, using an erasable surface on which one of the board members plots the alternatives.

Toward the end of the day, after the men have had a good lunch and are "mellow," they will usually be able to help me put together a suggested schedule. The trick is to have them get solidly behind it and present it to the congregation for its changes and approval.

This process alone may help a great deal. I'm sure from your experience you will recognize who in your congregation will be dissatisfied and have differing expectations from those agreed upon. I think it's wise to train board members to field these questions and deal with those folks instead of trying to do so yourself.

After you have a mutually agreed upon schedule, there are some other alternatives to pursue. For instance, in many of the "perfunctory" duties, such as visiting shut-ins and hospital visitation, we need to be equipping people to the extent we nearly work ourselves out of those jobs. We will never quite find ourselves separated from them, but if most of the responsibility were taken from us, we would be freed for what we feel is more important and productive.

Some congregations become so content heavy, they never get around to applying what they know.

If you do not have the time or ability to equip a person in a particular area of ministry, call in reinforcements. Our seminary, for instance, has a battery of courses a person may take by videotape. The Christian college close to you could probably help with such training.

Often I've found it works well to have another person accompany me and observe for the first few times, then take over part of the responsibility while I watch, and finally let him perform that ministry on his own. Afterward, he discusses his observations with me, and I critique his actions. Eventually he can perform that ministry well and be able to equip others to help him.

In regard to preaching schedules, I firmly believe that preparing for three or four sermons a week is much more than an average pastor should be asked to do.

First, it bogs him down in content and gives him no time with his people. Both are necessary to effective teaching. Second, it may tax his brain beyond his endurance. Third, some congregations become so content heavy that they never get around to applying what they know.

If a person starts a new church, it's easy to set his own pace. But when he is involved in an established ministry, it's indeed an accomplishment for him to try to slacken his pace in sermon preparation.

I've been fortunate to pastor churches that wanted me enough to agree I would preach only once a week. That still did not quiet the remarks of some in the congregation who thought I should have been preaching four times a week, however. It was something I had to live with.

Maybe you could try this. I've found it helpful to print out a page each week containing both questions covered by my Sunday morning sermon and springboard questions that arose from the sermon. I've used that discussion sheet for Wednesday evening Bible studies. At times I've conducted an outright discussion session.

At other times I divide the larger group into buzz groups and give them specific assignments to look up Scripture passages and answer questions. The groups then present their results to the congregation. I've found this relieves me of a didactic presentation, while firming up in people's minds the passage of Scripture I covered the preceding Sunday.

In regard to the Sunday evening service, I think you'll find the chapter about it in *The Effective Pastor* to be helpful. Let me caution you, however, about changing to a new format. If your congregation is used to a typical preaching service, you will need to move slowly.

You may want to start by holding communion in the evenings once a month. You may then want to add a missionary emphasis once a month. I've used this format for a number of years, but periodically suspend it to present a special series. I am currently using Sunday evenings to teach a course in ecclesiology, allowing ample time to answer questions. Church history could be another series, as could current moral problems.

You might not need to do these topics alone. Perhaps someone could team teach with you or you could bring in an expert to speak to some subject in which you have little expertise.

I've found it a good policy to work out a balanced program. When several Sunday nights are taken up by presentations other than mine and I notice that some in the congregation are beginning to talk, I simply slip in and do the job myself for a few weeks. This seems to quiet the critics and gives me the opportunity to expose my people to a lot of good material. Some of this is information I gained in seminary, but have never used directly.

As a fellow pastor, I am still only a learner. However, I hope I've provided a little help and a little stimulation. ■

Bible Word Pronunciation

V. Gilbert Beers, *The Book of Life*, 24 vols. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1980), 23:93-111 (1 of 19)

Bible words have caused many readers to stumble, and this is understandable, for they are among the most difficult words we read. Names of Bible people or places are quite different from Mary, John, Danville or Toronto. Who has not found difficulty pronouncing Cushanrishathaim, Shoshannimeduth or Horhagidgad? The following Bible Word Pronunication guide will help you pronounce even the most difficult Bible names.

Bible names are found in each left-hand column, with accents on stressed syllables. Each word, as pronounced, appears in the parallel column at the right, with vowels marked according to these sounds: Lāte, căt, câr; mēte, mĕt, têrm; sīte, sĭt; lōne, lŏt, fôr; rūde, hŭt, pût; oi like oil; ai like aye. Consonant variations are as follows: Ch in chin, g in go, th in thin, *th* in *th*at, y in yet, zh like z in azure.

When you plan to read a Bible verse aloud, it is helpful to mark a difficult word in your Bible or on a piece of paper you insert at that place, using the information from this guide. Practice saying the word aloud several times before reading it publicly. Then you can enjoy new confidence as you read.

	A				
A'alar	ā-ă-lâr	Abi'asaph	ā-bī-â-săf	or	ăb-ĭ-shŭr
	ā-rŏn	Abi'athar	ā-bī-â-thâr	Abí-shur	
Aa'ron	or	A'bib	ā-bĭb	Ab'ital	ăb-ĭ-tăl
	ár-on	Abi'da	ā-bī-dâ	Ab'itub	ăb-ĭ-tŭb
Abad'don	ā-băd-dŏn	Abi'dah	ā-bī-dâ	Abi'ud	ā-bī-ŭd
Abag'tha	ā-băg-thâ	Ab'idan	ăb-ĭ-dăn	Ac'cad	ăk-kăd
Ab'ana		Abi'el	ā-bī-ĕl	Ac'cho	ăk-kō
or	ăb-ā-nâ	A'bie'zer	ā-bī-ē-zêr	Accel'dama	ā-sĕl-dā-mâ
Aba'na		A'bicz'rite	ā-bī-čz-rīt	Acha'ia	ā-kā-yâ
Ab'arim		Ab'iha'il	ăb-ĭ-hā-ĭl	Acha'icus	ā-kā-ĭ-kŭs
or	ăb-ā-rĭm	Abi'hud	ā-bī-hŭd	A'chan	ā-kăn
Aba'rim		Abi'jam	ā-bī-jăm	A'char	ā-kâr
Ab'aron	ăb-ā-rŏn	Ab'ile'ne	ăb-ĭ-lē-nē	A'chaz	ā-kăz
Ab'deel	ăb-dē-ĕl	Abim'ael	ā-bĭm-ā-ĕl	Ach'bor	ăk-bôr
Ab'diel	ăb-dĭ-ĕl	Abim'elech	ā-bĭm-ē-lĕk	A'chim	ā-kĭm
Abed'nego	ā-bĕd-nē-gō	Ab'iner	ăb-ĭ-nêr	A'chish	ā-kĭsh
A'belbethma'achah	ā-bĕl-bĕth-mā-ă-kâ	Abin'oam		A'chor	ā-kôr
A'belma'im	ā-bĕl-mā-ĭm	or	ā-bĭn-ō-ăm	Ach'sa	ăk-sâ
A'belmeho'lah	ā-bĕl-mē-hō-lâ	Ab'ino'am		Ach'sah	ăk-sâ
A'belmiz'ra'im	ā-bĕl-mĭz-rā-ĭm	Abi'ram	ā-bĭ-răm	Ach'shaph	ăk-shăf
A'belshit'tim	ā-bĕl-shĭt-tĭm	Ab'ishag		Ach'zib	ăk-zĭb
A'bez	ā-bĕz	or	ăb-ĭ-shăg	Ad'adah	ăd-ā-dâ
A'bi	ā-bī	Abí-shag		Ad'ai'ah	ăd-ā-ī-â
Abi'a	ā-bīâ	Abish'ai	ā-bĭsh-ā-ĭ	Ad'ali'a	ăd-ā-lī-ă
Abi'ah	ā-bī-â	Abish'alom	ā-bĭsh-ā-lŏm	Ad'amah	ăd-ā-mâ
A'bial'bon	ā-bī-ăl-bŏn	Abish'ua	ā-bĭsh-ū-â	Ad'ami	ăd-ā-mī
		Ab'ishur		A'dar	ā-dâr

Vowels. — Lāte, căt, câr; mēte, mĕt, têrm; sīte, sĭt; lōne, lŏt, fôr; rūde, hŭt, pût; oi like oil; ai like aye.

Consonants. — Ch in chin, g in go, th in thin, *th* in *th*at, y in yet, zh like z in azure.

Bible Word Pronunciation

V. Gilbert Beers, *The Book of Life,* 24 vols. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1980), 23:93-111 (2 of 19)

Ad'beel	ăd-bē-ĕl
Ad'dan	ăd-dăn
Ad'dar	ăd-dâr
Ad'di	ăd-dī
Ad'don	ăd-dŏn
A'der	ā-dêr
A'diel	ā-dĭ-ĕl
A'din	ā-dĭn
Ad'ina	ăd-ī-nâ
Ad'ino	ăd-ī-nō
Ad'itha'im	ăd-ĭ-thā-ĭm
Ad'lai	ăd-lā-ī
Ad'mah	ăd-mâ
Ad'matha or Adma'tha	ăd-mā-thâ
Ad'na	ăd-nâ
Ad'nah	ăd-nâ
Adon'ibe'zek	ā-dŏn-ī-bē-zĕk
Adon'ican	ā-dŏn-ĭ-kăn
Ad'oni'jah	ăd-ō-nī-jâ
Adon'ikam	ā-dŏn-ī-kăm
Ad'oni'ram	ăd-ō-nī-răm
Adon'ize'dek	ā-dŏn-ī-zē-dĕk
Ado'ra	ā-dō-râ
Ad'oraim	ăd-ō-rā-ĭm
Ado'ram	ā-dō-răm
Adram'elech	ā-drăm-ē-lĕk
Adram'melech	ă-drăm-mē-lĕk
Ad'ramyt'tium	ăd-rā-mĭt-tĭ-ŭm
A'dria	ā-drĭ-â
A'driel	ā-drĭ-ĕl
Adul'lam	ā-dŭl-lăm
Adul'lamite	ā-dŭl-lăm-ĭt
Adum'mim	ă-dŭm-mĭm
Æ'neas	ē-nē-ăs
Æ'non	ē-nŏn
Ag'abus	ăg-ā-bŭs
A'gag	ā-găg
A'gagite	ā-găg-ĭt
A'gar	ā-gâr
Ag'ee	ăg-ē-ē
Agrip'pa	ă-grĭp-pâ
A'gur	ā-gŭr
Ahar'ah	ā-hăr-â
Ahar'hel	ā-hâr-hĕl
Ahas'ai	ā-hăs-ā-ī
Ahas'bai	ā-hăs-bā-ī
Ahas'ue'rus	ā-hăzh-ū-ē-rŭs
Aha'va	ā-hā-vâ
A'hazi'ah	ā-hā-zī-â
Ah'ban	â-băn
A'her	ā-hêr
A'hi	ā-hĭ
Ahi'ah	ā-hī-â
Ahi'am	ā-hī-ăm
Ahi'an	ā-hī-ăn
A'hic'zer	ā-hĭ-ē-zêr
Ahi'hud	ā-hĭ-hŭd
Ahi'jah	ā-hī-jâ
Ahi'kam	ā-hī-kăm
Ahi'lud	ā-hĭ-lŭd
Ahim'aaz	ā-hĭm-ā-ăz
Ahi'man	ā-hī-măn
Ahim'elech	ā-hĭm-ē-lĕk
Ahi'moth	ā-hī-mŏth
Ahin'adab	ā-hĭn-ā-dăb
Ahin'oam or Ahino'am	ā-hĭn-ō-ăm ā-hī-nō-am
Ahi'o	ā-hī-ō
Ahi'ra	ā-hī-râ
Ahi'ram	ā-hī-răm
Ahi'ramites	ā-hĭ-răm-ĭts
Ahis'amach	ā-hĭs-ā-măk
Ahish'ahar	ā-hĭsh-ā-hâr
Ahi'shar	ā-hī-shâr
Ahith'ophel	ā-hĭth-ō-fĕl
Ahi'tub	ā-hī-tŭb
Ah'lab	â-lăb
Ah'lai	â-lā
Aho'ah	ā-hō-â
Aho'hite	ā-hō-hīt
Aho'lah	ā-hō-lâ
Aho'liab	ā-hō-lī-ăb
Ahol'ibah	ā-hŏl-ĭ-bâ
A'holib'amah	ā-hō-lĭb-ā-mâ
Ahu'mai	ā-hū-mā-ī
Ahu'zam	ā-hū-zăm
Ahuz'zath	ā-hŭz-zăth
A'i	ā-ī
Ai'ah	ā-ī-â
Ai'ath	ā-ĭ-ăth
Ai'ja	ā-ĭ-jâ
Aij'alon	ăj-ā-lŏn
Aij'eleth Sha'har	ăj-ē-lĕth shā-hâr
A'in	ā-ĭn
Ai'rus	ā-ī-rŭs
A'jah	ā-jâ
Aj'alon	ăj-ā-lŏn
A'kan	ā-kăn
Ak'kub	ăk-kŭb
Ak'rabatti'ne	ăk-râ-băt-tī-nē
Akrab'bim	ă-krăb-bĭm
Al'ameth	ăl-â-mĕth
Alam'melech	ā-lăm-mē-lĕk
Al'amoth	ăl-ā-mŏth
Al'emeth	ăl-ē-mĕth
Ali'ah	ā-lī-â
Ali'an	ā-lī-ăn
Al'lom	ăl-lŏm
Al'lon	ăl-lŏn
Al'lonbach'uth	ăl-lŏn-băk-ŭth
Almo'dad	ăl-mō-dăd
Al'mon	ăl-mŏn
Al'mondib'latha'im	ăl-mŏn-dĭb-lâ-thā-ĭm
A'loth	ā-lŏth
Al'pha	ăl-fâ
Alphe'us	ăl-fē-ŭs
Altas'chith	ăl-tăs-kĭth
A'lush	ā-lŭsh
Al'vah	ăl-vâ
Al'van	ăl-văn
A'mad	ā-măd
A'mal	ā-măl
Am'alek	ăm-ā-lĕk
Am'alekite	ăm-ā-lĕk-ĭt
A'mam	ā-măm
Am'ana	ăm-ā-nâ
Am'ariah	ăm-ā-rī-â
Amas'ai	ā-măs-ā-ī
Amash'ai	ā-măsh-ā-ī
Am'asi'ah	ăm-ā-sī-âh
Amed'atha	ā-mĕd-ā-thâ
A'mi	ā-mĭ
Amit'tai	ā-mĭt-tai
Amiz'abad	ā-mĭz-ā-băd
Am'mah	ăm-mâ
Ammed'atha	ăm-mĕd-ā-thâ
Ammid'ioi	ăm-mĭd-ĭ-oi
Am'miel	ăm-mĭ-ĕl
Ammi'hud	ăm-mĭ-hŭd
Ammin'adab	ăm-mĭn-ā-dăb
Ammin'adib	ăm-mĭn-ā-dĭb
Ammishad'dai	ăm-mi-shăd-dā-ĭ
Ammiz'abad	ăm-mĭz-ā-băd
A'mok	ā-mŏk
A'mon	ā-mŏn
Am'orite	ăm-ō-rīt
A'moz	ā-mŏz
Amphip'olis	ăm-fĭp-ō-lĭs
Am'plias	ăm-plĭ-ăs
Am'ramites	ăm-răm-ĭts
Am'raphel	ăm-rā-fĕl
A'nab	ā-năb
An'ael	ăn-ā-ĕl
A'nah	ā-nâh
An'aha'rath	ăn-â-hā-răth
An'ai'ah	ăn-ā-ĭ-â
A'nak	ā-năk
An'akims	ăn-ā-kĭmz
An'amim	ăn-ā-mĭm
Anam'melech	ā-năm-mē-lĕk
A'man	ā-măn
Ana'ni	ā-nā-nĭ
A'nath	ā-năth
An'athoth	ăn-ā-thŏth
An'droni'cus	ăn-drō-nī-cŭs
A'nem	ā-nĕm
A'nen	ā-nĕn
A'ner	ā-nêr
An'ethoth'ite	ăn-ē-thŏth-ĭt
An'etoth'ite	ăn-ē-tŏth-ĭt
A'niam	ā-nĭ-ăm
A'nim	ā-nĭm
An'tilib'anus	ăn-tĭ-lĭb-ā-nŭs
Anti'ochus	ăn-tĭ-ō-kŭs
An'tipas	ăn-tĭ-păs
Antip'ater	ăn-tĭp-ā-têr
Antip'atris	ăn-tĭp-ā-trĭs
An'tothi'jah	ăn-tō-thĭ-jâ
An'tothite	ăn-tŏth-ĭt
A'nub	ā-nŭb
Apel'les	ā-pĕl-lēs
Aphar'sachites	ā-fâr-săk-ĭts
Aphar'sathchites	ā-fâr-săth-kĭts
Aphar'sites	ā-fâr-sĭts
A'phek	ā-fĕk

Vowels. — Lāte, căt, câr; mēte, mĕt, têrm; sīte, sĭt; lōne, lŏt, fôr; rūde, hŭt, pût; oi like oil; ai like aye.

Bible Word Pronunciation

V. Gilbert Beers, *The Book of Life*, 24 vols. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1980), 23:93-111 (3 of 19)

Aphe'kah	ā-fē-kâ
Apher'ema	ā-fĕr-ē-mâ
Apher'ra	ā-fĕr-râ
Aphi'ah	ā-fī-â
A'phik	ā-fĭk
Aph'rah	ăf-râ
Aph'ses	ăf-sēz
Ap'ollo'nia	ăp-ŏl-lō-nĭ-â
Apol'los	ā-pŏl-lŏs
Apoll'yon	ā-pŏl-yŏn
Ap'paim	ăp-pā-ĭm
Ap'phia	ăf-fĭ-â
Ap'pii Fo'rum	ăp-pī fō-rŭm
Aq'uila	ăk-wĭ-lâ
A'ra	ā-râ
A'rab	ā-răb
Ar'abah	ăr-ā-bâ
A'rad	ā-răd
Ar'adus	ăr-ā-dŭs
A'rah	ā-râ
A'ram	ā-răm
A'ramit'ess	ā-răm-ĭt-ŏs
A'ramnaha'raim	ā-răm-nā-hā-rā-ĭm
A'ramzo'bah	ā-răm-zō-bâ
A'ran	ā-răn
Arau'nah	ā-rô-nâ
Ar'bathite	âr-băth-īt
Ar'bite	âr-bīt
Arbo'nai	âr-bō-nā-ī
Ar'chela'us	âr-kē-lā-ŭs
Ar'chevites	âr-kē-vīts
Ar'chi	âr-kī
Archip'pus	âr-kĭp-pŭs
Ar'chite	âr-kīt
Arctu'rus	ârk-tū-rŭs
Ard'ites	ârd-īts
Ar'don	âr-dŏn
Are'li	ā-rē-lī
Are'lites	ā-rē-līts
Ar'eop'agite	ăr-ē-ŏp-ā-jīt
Ar'eop'agus	ăr-ē-ŏp-ā-gŭs
Ar'etas	ăr-ē-tăs
Arid'ai	ā-rĭd-ā-ī
Arid'atha	ā-rĭd-ā-thâ
Ari'eh	ā-rī-ĕ
Ar'imathæ'a	ăr-ĭ-mā-thē-â
Ar'imathe'a	ăr-ĭ-mā-thē-â
A'rioch	ā-rĭ-ŏk
Aris'ai	ā-rĭs-ā-ī
Ar'istar'chus	ăr-ĭs-târ-kŭs
Ar'istobu'lus	ăr-ĭs-tō-bū-lŭs
Ar'maged'don	âr-mā-gĕd-dŏn
Armo'ni	âr-mō-nī
A'rod	ā-rŏd
Ar'odi	ăr-ō-dī
A'rodites	ā-rŏd-īts
Ar'oer	ăr-ō ĕr
Ar'oerite	ăr-ō ĕr ĭt
Ar'phad	âr-făd
Arphax'ad	âr-făks-ăd
Ar'sareth	âr-sā-rĕth
Ar'taxerx'es	âr-tăks-ĕrks-ēz
Ar'temas	âr-tē-măs
Ar'uboth	ăr-ū-bŏth
Aru'mah	ā-rū-mâ
Ar'vadite	âr-văd-īt
As'ahel	ăs-ā-hĕl
As'ahi'ah	ăs-ā-hī-â
As'ai'ah	ăs-ā-ī-â
A'saph	ā-săf
Asar'ael	ā-săr-ā-ĕl
Asar'eel	ā-săr-ē-ĕl
As'are'lah	ăs-ā-rē-lâ
As'baz'areth	ăs-băz-ā-rĕth
As'enath	ăs-ē-năth
A'ser	ā-sĕr
A'shan	ā-shăn
Ash'bea	ăsh-bē-â
Ash'belites	ăsh-bĕl-īts
Ash'chenaz	ăsh-kē-năz
Ash'dodites	ăsh-dŏd-īts
Ash'dothites	ăsh-dŏth-īts
Ash'dothpis'gah	ăsh-dŏth-pĭz-gâ
Ash'erites	ăsh-ĕr-īts
Ash'ima	ăsh-ĭ-mă
Ash'kelon	ăsh-kē-lŏn
Ash'kenaz	ăsh-kē-năz
Ash'nah	ăsh-nâ
Ash'penaz	ăsh-pē-năz
Ash'riel	ăsh-rĭ-ĕl
Ash'taroth	ăsh-tā-rŏth
Ash'temoh	ăsh-tē-mō
Ash'terathite	ăsh-tē-răth-īt
Ash'teroth Kar'naim	ăsh-tē-rŏth kâr-nā-ĭm
Ash'toreth	ăsh-tō-rĕth
Ash'urites	ăsh-ūr-īts
Ash'vath	ăsh-văth
A'siel	ā-sĭ-ĕl
As'kelon	ăs-kē-lŏn
As'maveth	ăs-mā-vĕth
As'nah	ăs-nâ
Asnap'per	ăs-năp-pĕr
As'patha	ăs-pā-thâ
As'riel	ăs-rĭ-ĕl
As'rielites	ăs-rĭ-ĕl-īts
As'sare'moth	ăs-sā-rē-mŏth
As'shur	ăsh-ŭr
Asshu'rim	ăsh-ū-rĭm
As'sos	ăs-sŏs
As'taroth	ăs-tā-rŏth
Asup'pim	ā-sŭp-pĭm
Asyn'critus	ā-sĭn-krĭ-tŭs
A'tad	ā-tăd
At'arah	ăt-ā-râ
At'aroth	ăt-ā-rŏth
At'arotha'dar	ăt-ā-rŏth-ā-dâr
At'arothad'dar	ăt-ā-rŏth-ăd-dâr
A'ter	ā-tĕr
A'thach	ā-thăk
Ath'ai'ah	ăth-ā-ī-â
Ath'ali'ah	ăth-ā-lī-â
Athe'nians	ā-thē-nĭ-ănz
Ath'ens	ăth-ĕnz
Ath'lai	ăth-lai
At'roth	ăt-rŏth
At'tai	ăt-tai
At'tali'a	ăt-tā-lī-â
A'va	ā-vâ
Av'aron	ăv-ā-rŏn
A'ven	ā-vĕn
A'vim	ā-vĭm
A'vims	ā-vĭmz
A'vites	ā-vīts
A'vith	ā-vĭth
A'zah	ā-zâ
A'zal	ā-zăl
Az'ali'ah	ăz-ā-lī-â
Az'ani'ah	ăz-ā-nī-â
Azar'ael	ā-zăr-ā-ĕl
Azar'eel	ā-zăr-ē-ĕl
Az'ari'ah	ăz-ā-rī-â
A'zaz	ā-zăz
Aza'zel	ā-zā-zĕl
Az'azi'ah	ăz-ā-zī-â
Az'buk	ăz-bŭk
Aze'kah	ā-zē-kâ
A'zel	ā-zĕl
A'zem	ā-zĕm
Az'gad	ăz-găd
A'ziel	ā-zĭ-ĕl
Azi'za	ā-zī-zâ
Az'maveth	ăz-mā-vĕth
Az'mon	ăz-mŏn
Az'nothta'bor	ăz-nŏth-tā-bôr
A'zor	ā-zôr
A'zotus	ā-zō-tŭs
Az'riel	ăz-rĭ-ĕl
Az'rikam	ăz-rĭ-kăm
Azu'bah	ā-zū-bâ
A'zur	ā-zŭr
Az'zah	ăz-zâ
Az'zan	ăz-zăn
Az'zur	ăz-zŭr

B

Ba'al	bā-ăl
Ba'alah	bā-ăl-â
Ba'alath	bā-ăl-ăth
Ba'alathbe'er	bā-ăl-ăth-bē-ĕr
Ba'albe'rith	bā-ăl-bē-rĭth
Ba'ale	bā-ā-lē
Ba'algad	bā-ăl-găd
Ba'alha'mon	bā-ăl-hā-mŏn
Ba'alha'nan	bā-ăl-hā-năn
Ba'alha'zor	bā-ăl-hā-zôr
Ba'alher'mon	bā-ăl-hĕr-mŏn
Ba'ali	bā-ăl-ī
Ba'alim	bā-ăl-ĭm
Ba'alis	bā-ā-lĭs
Ba'alme'on	bā-ăl-mē-ŏn
Ba'alpe'or	bā-ăl-pē-ôr
Ba'alper'azim	bā-ăl-pĕr-ā-zĭm
Ba'alshal'isha	bā-ăl-shăl-ĭ-shâ
Ba'alta'mar	bā-ăl-tā-mâr
Ba'alze'bub	bā-ăl-zē-bŭb
Ba'alze'phon	bā-ăl-zē-fŏn
Ba'ana	bā-ā-nâ
Ba'anah	bā-ā-na

Consonants. — Ch in chin, g in go, th in thin, *th* in *th*at, y in yet, zh like z in azure.

Bible Word Pronunciation

V. Gilbert Beers, *The Book of Life*, 24 vols. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1980), 23:93-111 (4 of 19)

Ba'ani'as	bā-ă-nī-ăs
Ba'ara	bā-ă-râ
Ba'ase'iah	bā-ă-sē-yâ
Ba'asha	bā-ă-shâ
Ba'asi'ah	bā-ă-sī-â
Bab'ylo'nians	băb-ĭ-lō-nĭ-ănz
Bab'ylo-nish	băb-ĭ-lō-nĭsh
Ba'ca	bā-kâ
Bach'rites	băk-rīts
Baha'rumite	bā-hā-rŭm-ĭt
Bahu'mus	bā-hū-mŭs
Bahu'rim	bā-hū-rĭm
Ba'jith	bā-jĭth
Bakbak'kar	băk-băk-kâr
Bak'buk	băk-bŭk
Bak'buki'ah	băk-bŭk-ĭ-â
Ba'laam	bā-lăm
Ba'lac	bā-lăk
Bal'adan	băl-ā-dăn
Ba'lah	bā-lâ
Ba'lak	bā-lăk
Bal'amo	băl-ā-mō
Ba'mar	bā-mâr
Ba'moth	bā-mŏth
Ba'mothba'al	bā-mŏth-bā-ăl
Bana'ias	bă-nā-yăs
Ba'ni	bā-nī
Bar'achel	băr-ā-kĕl
Bar'achi'ah	băr-ā-kī-â
Bar'achi'as	băr-ā-kī-ăs
Barhu'mite	bâr-hū-mīt
Bari'ah	bā-rī-â
Bar'je'sus	bâr-jē-sŭs
Bar'jo'na	bâr-jō-nâ
Bar'kos	bâr-kŏs
Bar'timœ'us	bâr-tī-mē-ŭs
Bar'time'us	bâr-tī-mē-ŭs
Ba'shanha'vothja'ir	bā-shăn-hā-vŏth-jā'ĭr
Bash'emath	băsh-ē-măth
Bas'ilis	băs-ĭ-lĭs
Bas'lith	băs-lĭth
Bas'math	băs-măth
Bath'rabbim	băth-răb-bĭm
Bath'sheba	băth-shē-bâ
Bath'shua	băth-shū-â
Bav'ai	băv-ā-ĭ
Baz'lith	băz-lĭth
Baz'luth	băz-lŭth
Bdel'lium	dĕl-yŭm
Be'aliah	bē-ă-lī-â
Be'aloth	bē-ā-lŏth
Beb'ai	bĕb-ā-ī
Be'cher	bē-kĕr
Becho'rath	bē-kō-răth
Be'dad	bē-dăd
Bed'ai'ah	bĕd-ā-ĭ-â
Be'dan	bē-dăn
Bede'iah	bē-dē-yâ
Be'eli'ada	bē-ĕl-ĭ-ă-dâ
Be'elteth'mus	bē-ĕl-tĕth-mŭs
Beel'zebub	bē-ĕl-zē-bŭb
Be'er	bē-ĕr
Bee'ra or Be'era	bē-ē-râ
Bee'rah	bē-ē-râ
Be'ere'lim	bē-ĕr-ē-lĭm
Bee'ri	bē-ē-rī
Be'erlahai'roi	bē-ĕr-lā-hai-roi
Bee'roth	bē-ē-rŏth
Bee'rothites	bē-ē-rŏth-īts
Be'ershe'ba	bē-ĕr-shē-bâ
Beesh'tera	bē-ĕsh-tē-râ
Be'hemoth	bē-hē-mŏth
Be'kah	bē-kâ
Be'laites	bē-lā-īts
Be'lial	bē-lĭ-ăl
Bel'maim	bĕl-mā-ĭm
Bel'men	bĕl-mĕn
Bena'iah	bē-nā-yâ
Ben'am'mi	bĕn-ăm-mī
Ben'ebe'rak	bĕn-ē-bē-răk
Ben'eja'akan	bĕn-ē-jā-â-kăn
Ben'ha'dad	bĕn-hā-dăd
Ben'ha'il	bĕn-hā-ĭl
Ben'ha'nan	bĕn-hā-năn
Ben'inu	bĕn-ĭ-nū
Be'no	bē-nō
Bennu'i	bĕn-nū-ī
Ben'zo'heth	bĕn-zō-hĕth
Be'on	bē-ŏn
Be'or	bē-ôr
Be'ra	bē-râ
Ber'achah	bĕr-ā-kâ
Ber'achi'ah	bĕr-ā-kī-â
Be'rah	bē-râ
Ber'ai'ah	bĕr-ā-ĭ-â
Bere'a	bē-rē-â
Ber'echi'ah	bĕr-ē-kī-â
Be'red	bē-rĕd
Be'ri	bē-rī
Beri'ah	bē-rī-â
Beri'ites	bē-rī-īts
Be'rites	bē-rīts
Be'rith	bē-rĭth
Berni'ce	bĕr-ni-sē
Bero'dachbal'adan	bē-rō-dăk-băl-ā-dăn
Berœ'a	bē-rē-â
Bero'thah	bē-rō-thâ
Ber'othai	bĕr-ō-thai
Be'rothite	bē-rŏth-īt
Berre'tho	bĕr-rē-thō
Be'sai	bē-sī
Bes'ode'iah	bĕs-ō-dē-yâ
Be'sor	bē-sôr
Be'tah	bē-tâ
Bet'ane	bĕt-ā-nē
Be'ten	bē-tĕn
Beth'ab'ara or Beth'aba'ra	bĕth-ăb-ā-râ or bĕth-ă-bâ-râ
Beth'a'nath	bĕth-ā-năth
Beth'a'noth	bĕth-ā-nŏth
Beth'any	bĕth-ā-nĭ
Beth'ar'abah	bĕth-ăr-ā-bâ
Beth'a'ram	bĕth-ā-răm
Beth'ar'bel	bĕth-âr-bĕl
Beth'a'ven	bĕth-ā-vĕn
Beth'az'maveth	bĕth-ăz-mā-vĕth
Beth'ba'alme'on	bĕth-bā-ăl-mē-ŏn
Beth'ba'rah	bĕth-bā-râ
Beth'ba'si	bĕth-bā-sī
Beth'bir'ei	bĕth-bĭr-ē-ī
Beth'car	bĕth-kâr
Beth'da'gon	bĕth-dā-gŏn
Beth'dib'latha'im	bĕth-dĭb-lă-thā-ĭm
Beth'e'den	bĕth-ē-dĕn
Beth'e'mek	bĕth-ē-mĕk
Be'ther	bē-thĕr
Bethes'da	bē-thĕz-dâ
Beth'e'zel	bĕth-ē-zĕl
Beth'ga'der	bĕth-gā-dĕr
Beth'ga'mul	bĕth-gā-mŭl
Beth'hac'cerem	bĕth-hăk-sē-rĕm
Beth'ha'ran	bĕth-hā-răn
Beth'hog'la	bĕth-hŏg-lâ
Beth'hog'lah	bĕth-hŏg-lâ
Beth'ho'ron	bĕth-hō-rŏn
Beth'jesh'imoth	bĕth-jĕsh-ĭ-mŏth
Beth'jes'imoth	bĕth-jĕs-ĭ-mŏth
Beth'leb'aoth	bĕth-lĕb-ā-ŏth
Beth'lehem	bĕth-lē-hĕm
Beth'lehem Eph'ratah	bĕth-lē-hĕm ĕf-rā-ta
Beth'lehemite	bĕth-lē-hĕm-ĭt
Beth'lehemju'dah	bĕth-lē-hĕm-jū-dâ
Beth'ma'achah	bĕth-mā-ă-kâ
Beth'mar'caboth	bĕth-mâr-kā-bŏth
Beth'me'on	bĕth-mē-ŏn
Beth'nim'rah	bĕth-nĭm-râ
Betho'ron	bĕth-ō-rŏn
Beth'pa'let	bĕth-pā-lĕt
Beth'paz'zez	bĕth-păz-zĕz
Beth'pe'or	bĕth-pē-ôr
Beth'phage	bĕth-fā-gē
Beth'phe'let	bĕth-fē-lĕt
Beth'ra'pha	bĕth-rā-fâ
Beth're'hob	bĕth-rē-hŏb
Beth'sa'ida	bĕth-sā-ĭ-dâ
Beth'shan	bĕth-shăn
Beth'she'an	bĕth-shē-ăn
Beth'she'mesh	bĕth-shē-mĕsh
Beth'she'mite	bĕth-shē-mīt
Beth'shit'tah	bĕth-shĭt-tâ
Beth'tap'puah	bĕth-tăp-pū-â
Bethu'el	bē-thū-ĕl
Be'thul	bē-thŭl
Beth'zur	bĕth-zĕr
Bet'omas'them	bĕt-ō-măs-thĕm
Bet'onim	bĕt-ō-nĭm
Be'zai	bē-zai
Bezal'eel or Bez'aleel	bē-zăl-ē-ĕl or bĕz-ā-lēl
Be'zek	bē-zĕk
Be'zer	bē-zĕr
Be'zeth	bē-zĕth
Bich'ri	bĭk-rī

Vowels. — Lāte, căt, câr; mēte, mĕt, têrm; sīte, sĭt; lōne, lŏt, fôr; rūde, hŭt, pût; oi like oil; ai like aye.

Bible Word Pronunciation

V. Gilbert Beers, *The Book of Life*, 24 vols. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1980), 23:93-111 (5 of 19)

Bid'kar	bĭd-kâr
Big'tha	bĭg-thâ
Big'than	bĭg-thăn
Big'thana	bĭg-thā-nâ
Big'vai	bĭg-vā-ī
Bil'dad	bĭl-dăd
Bil'eam	bĭl-ē-ăm
Bil'gah	bĭl-gâ
Bil'gai	bĭl-gā-ī
Bil'ha	bĭl-hâ
Bil'hah	bĭl-hâ
Bil'han	bĭl-hăn
Bil'shan	bĭl-shăn
Bim'hal	bĭm-hăl
Bin'ea	bĭn-ē-â
Bin'nui	bĭn-nū-ī
Bir'sha	bêr-shâ
Bir'zavith	bêr-zâ-vĭth
Bish'lam	bĭsh-lăm
Bithi'ah	bĭ-thī-â
Bith'ron	bĭth-rŏn
Bithyn'ia	bĭ-thĭn-ĭ-â
Bizjoth'jah	bĭz-jŏth-jâ
Biz'tha	bĭz-thâ
Blast'us	blăst-ŭs
Bo'aner'ges	bō-ăn-ēr-gēz
Bo'az	bō-ăz
Boch'eru	bŏk-ē-rū
Bo'chim	bō-kĭm
Bo'han	bō-hăn
Bos'cath	bŏs-kăth
Bo'oz	bō-ŏz
Bo'sor	bō-sôr
Bo'zez	bō-zĕz
Boz'kath	bŏz-kăth
Boz'rah	bŏz-râ
Buk'ki	bŭk-kī
Bukki'ah	bŭk-kī-â
Bul	bŭl
Bu'nah	bū-nâ
Bun'ni	bŭn-nĭ
Bu'zi	bū-zī
Buz'ite	bŭz-ĭt

C

Cab'bon	kăb-bŏn
Ca'bul	kā-bŭl
Cæ'sar	sē-zâr
Cæs'are'a	sĕz-ū-rē-â
Cæs'are'a Philip'pi	sĕz-ū-rē-â fĭl-ĭp-pī
Ca'iaphas	kā-yâ-făs
Cai'nan	kā-ī-năn
Ca'lah	kā-lâ
Cal'col	kăl-kŏl
Calde'a	kăl-dē-â
Calde'ans	kăl-dē-ănz
Caldees'	kăl-dēz
Ca'lebeph'ratal	kā-lĕb-ĕf-rā-tâ
Cal'neh	kăl-nĕ
Ca'mon	kā-mŏn
Cam'phire	kăm-fīre
Can'dace	kăn-dā-sē
Can'neh	kăn-nĕ
Caper'naum	ka-pêr-nā-ŭm
Caph'tor	kăf-tôr
Caph'torim	kăf-tō-rĭm
Cap'pado'cia	kăp-pā-dō-shĭ-â
Car'cas	kâr-kăs
Car'chemish	kâr-kē-mĭsh
Carc'ah	kâr-kâ
Car'mites	kâr-mīts
Car'nion	kâr-nĭ-ŏn
Car'pus	kâr-pŭs
Carshe'na	kâr-shē-nâ
Casiph'ia	kā-sĭf-ĭ-â
Cas'luhim	kăs-lū-hĭm
Cas'tor	kăs-tôr
Ce'dron	sē-drŏn
Cel'osyr'ia	sĕl-ō-sĭr-ĭ-â
Cen'chrea	sĕn-krē-â
Ce'phas	sē-făs
Chal'col	kăl-kŏl
Chaldæ'a	kăl-dē-â
Chaldæ'an	kăl-dē-ăn
Chaldees'	kăl-dēz
Cha'naan	kā-năn
Char'ashim	kâr-ā-shĭm
Char'chemish	kâr-kē-mĭsh
Char'ran	kăr-răn
Che'bar	kē-bâr
Ched'orla'omer	kĕd-ôr-lā-ō-mêr
Chel'lal	kē-lăl
Chel'luh	kĕl-lū
Che'lub	kē-lŭb
Chelu'bai	kē-lū-bai
Chem'arims	kĕm-ā-rĭmz
Che'mosh	kē-mŏsh
Chena'anah	kē-nā-ă-nâ
Chen'ani	kĕn-ā-nĭ
Chen'ani'ah	kĕn-ā-nĭ-âh
Che'pharhaam'monai	kē-fâr-hā-ăm-mō-nai
Chephi'rah	kē-fī-râ
Che'ran	kē-răn
Cher'ethims	kĕr-ĕth-ĭmz
Cher'ethites	kĕr-ĕth-ĭts
Che'rith	kē-rĭth
Che'rub (a city)	kē-rŭb
Ches'alon	kĕs-ā-lŏn
Che'sed	kē-sĕd
Che'sil	kē-sĭl
Chesul'loth	kē-sŭl-lŏth
Chethi'im	kē-thĭ-ĭm
Che'zib	kē-zĭb
Chi'don	kĭ-dŏn
Chil'eab	kĭl-ē-ăb
Chi'lion	kĭl-lĭ-ŏn
Chil'mad	kĭl-măd
Chim'ham	kĭm-hăm
Chin'nereth	kĭn-nē-rĕth
Chin'neroth	kĭn-nē-rŏth
Chi'os	kī-ŏs
Chis'leu	kĭs-lū
Chis'lon	kĭs-lŏn
Chis'loth-ta'bor	kĭs-lŏth-tā-bôr
Chit'tim	kĭt-tĭm
Chi'un	kĭ-ŭn
Chlo'e	klō-ē
Chora'shan	kō-rā-shăn
Chora'zin	kō-rā-zĭn
Chos'ame'us	kŏs-â-mē-ŭs
Choze'ba	kō-zē-bâ
Chub	kŭb
Chun	kŭn
Chu'shanrish'atha'im	kū-shăn-rĭsh-â-thā-ĭm
Chu'za	kū-zâ
Cili'cia	sĭ-lĭsh-yâ
Cin'nereth	sĭn-nē-rĕth
Cin'neroth	sĭn-nē-rŏth
Cis	sĭs
Ci'sai	sī-sai
Cle'opas	klē-ō-păs
Cle'ophas	klē-ō-făs
Cle'opat'ra	klē-ō-păt-râ
Cni'dus	nĭ-dŭs
Cœl'osyr'ia	sē-lō-sĭr-ĭ-â
Colho'zeh	kŏl-hō-zĕ
Colos'se	kō-lŏs-sē
Colos'sians	kō-lŏsh-yănz
Con'ani'ah	kŏn-ā-nĭ-â
Coni'ah	kō-nī-â
Con'oni'ah	kŏn-ō-nĭ-â
Co'os	kō-ŏs
Co're	kō-rē
Co'sam	kō-săm
Coz'bi	kŏz-bĭ
Cres'cens	krĕs-sĕnz
Crete	krēt
Cretes	krēts
Cush	kŭsh
Cu'shan	kū-shăn
Cu'shanrish'atha'im	kū-shăn-rĭsh-â-thā-ĭm
Cu'shi	kū-shĭ
Cuth	kŭth
Cu'thah	kū-thâ
Cyre'ne	sī-rē-nē
Cyre'nian	sĭ-rē-nĭ-ăn
Cyre'nius	sī-rē-nĭ-ŭs

D

Dab'arch	dăb-ă-rĕ
Dab'basheth	dăb-bă-shĕth
Dab'erath	dăb-ē-răth
Da'gon	dā-gŏn
Dal'ai'ah	dăl-ā-ĭ-â
Dal'manu'tha	dăl-mā-nū-thâ
Dalma'tia	dăl-mā-shĭ-â
Dal'phon	dăl-fŏn
Dam'aris	dăm-ā-rĭs
Dam'ascenes'	dăm-ă-sēnz
Danja'an	dăn-jū-ăn
Dan'nah	dăn-nâ
Da'ra	dā-râ
Dar'da	dâr-dâ
Dari'us	dā-rī-ŭs
Dar'kon	dâr-kŏn
De'bir	dē-bêr

Consonants. — Ch in chin, g in go, th in thin, *th* in *th*at, y in yet, zh like z in azure.

Bible Word Pronunciation

V. Gilbert Beers, *The Book of Life*, 24 vols. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1980), 23:93-111 (6 of 19)

Decap'olis	dē-căp-ŏ-lĭs
De'dan	dē-dăn
Ded'anim	dĕd-ā-nĭm
Deha'vites	dē-hā-vīts
De'kar	dē-kär
Del'ai'ah	dĕl-ā-ĭ-â
Del'ilah	dĕl-ĭ-lâ
De'mas	dē-măs
Deme'trius	dē-mē-trĭ-ŭs
Der'be	dĕr-bē
Deu'el	dē-ū-ĕl
Deu'teron'omy	dū-tĕr-ŏn-ō-mĭ
Dib'laim	dĭb-lā-ĭm
Dib'lath	dĭb-lăth
Dib'latha'im	dĭb-lâ-thā-ĭm
Di'bon	dī-bŏn
Dib'ri	dĭb-rī
Did'ymus	dĭd-ĭ-mŭs
Dik'lah	dĭk-lâ
Dil'ean	dĭl-ē-ăn
Dim'nah	dĭm-nâ
Di'mon	dī-mŏn
Dimo'nah	dī-mō-nâ
Di'naites	dī-nâ-īts
Din'habah	dĭn-hā-bâ
Di'ony'sius	dī-ō-nĭ-sĭ-ŭs
Diot'rephes	dī-ŏt-rē-fēz
Di'shan	dī-shăn
Di'shon	dī-shŏn
Diz'ahab	dĭz-ā-hăb
Dod'ai	dŏd-ā-ĭ
Dod'anim	dŏd-ā-nĭm
Dod'avah	dŏd-ā-vâ
Do'do	dō-dō
Do'eg	dō-ĕg
Doph'kah	dŏf-kâ
Dor	dôr
Do'ra	dō-râ
Dor'cas	dôr-kăs
Do'thaim	dō-thā-ĭm
Do'than	dō-thăn
Drusil'la	drū-sĭl-lâ
Du'mah	dū-mâ
Du'ra	dū-râ

E

E'bal	ē-băl
E'bed	ē-bĕd
E'bedme'lech	ē-bĕd-mē-lĕk
Eb'ene'zer	ĕb-ĕn-ē-zĕr
E'ber	ē-bĕr
Ebi'asaph	ē-bĭ-â-săf
Ebro'nah	ē-brō-nâ
Ecbat'ana	ĕk-băt-ă-nâ
Ecbat'ane	ĕk-băt-ă-nē
Eccle'sias'tes	ĕk-klē-zĭ-ăs-tēz
Eccle'sias'ticus	ĕk-klē-sĭ-ăs-tĭ-kŭs
E'dar	ē-dâr
E'der	ē-dĕr
Ed'rei	ĕd-rē-ī
Eg'lah	ĕg-lâ
Eg'laim	ĕg-lā-ĭm
Eg'lon	ĕg-lŏn
E'hi	ē-hĭ
E'hud	ē-hŭd
E'ker	ē-kĕr
Ek'ron	ĕk-rŏn
Ek'ronites	ĕk-rŏn-īts
El'adah	ĕl-ā-dâ
E'lah	ē-lâ
El'asah	ĕl-ā-sâ
E'lath	ē-lăth
El'beth'el	ĕl-bĕth-ĕl
El'daah	ĕl-dā-â
E'lead	ē-lē-ăd
E'lea'leh	ē-lē-ā-lĕ
Ele'asah	ē-lē-ā-sâ
E'lea'zar	ē-lē-ā-zär
El'elo'he Is'rael	ĕl-ē-lō-hē ĭz-rā-ĕl
E'leph	ē-lĕf
Elha'nan	ĕl-hā-năn
Eli'ab	ē-lĭ-ăb
Eli'ada	ē-lĭ-ă-dâ
Eli'adah	ē-lĭ-ă-dâ
Eli'ah	ē-lĭ-â
Eli'ahba	ē-lĭ-â-bâ
Eli'akim	ē-lĭâ-kĭm
Eli'am	ē-lĭ-ăm
Eli'asaph	ē-lĭ-ă-săf
Eli'ashib	ē-lĭ-ă-shĭb
Eli'atha	ē-lĭ-ă-thâ
Eli'athah	ē-lĭ-ă-thâ
Eli'dad	ē-lĭ-dăd
E'liel	ē-lĭ-ĕl
E'lie'nai	ē-lĭ-ē-nā-ĭ
E'lie'zer	ē-lĭ-ē-zĕr
Eli'haba	ē-lĭ-hâ-bâ
El'ihoe'nai	ĕl-ĭ-hō-ē-nā-ĭ
El'iho'reph	ĕl-ĭ-hō-rĕf
Eli'hu	ĕl-ī-hū
or	
E'lihu	ĕl-ĭ-hū
El'ika	ĕl-ĭ-kâ
Elim'elech	ē-lĭm-ē-lĕk
Eli'oe'nai	ē-lĭ-ō-ē-nā-ĭ
El'iphal	ĕl-ĭ-făl
Eliph'alet	ē-lĭf-ā-lĕt
El'iphaz	ĕl-ĭ-făz
Eliph'eleh	ē-lĭf-ē-lĕ
Eliph'elet	ē-lĭf-ē-lĕt
Elis'abeth	ē-lĭz-ā-bĕth
El'ise'us	ĕl-ĭ-sē-ŭs
Eli'sha	ē-lī-shâ
Eli'shah	ē-lī-shâ
Elish'ama	ē-lĭsh-ā-mâ
Elish'aphat	ē-lĭsh-ā-făt
Elish'eba	ē-lĭsh-ē-bâ
El'ishu'a	ĕl-ĭ-shū-â
Eli'ud	ē-lī-ŭd
Eliz'aphan	ē-lĭz-ā-făn
El'ize'us	ĕl-ī-zē-ŭs
Eli'zur	ē-lī-zŭr
El'kanah	ĕl-kā-nâ
El'koshite	ĕl-kŏsh-ĭt
El'lasar	ĕl-lā-sär
El'modam	ĕl-mō-dăm
El'naam	ĕl-nā-ăm
El'nathan	ĕl-nā-thăn
El'ohim	ĕl-ō-hĭm
Elo'i	ē-lō-ĭ
E'lon	ē-lŏn
E'lonbeth'ha'nan	ē-lŏn-bĕth-hā-năn
E'lonites	ē-lŏn-īts
E'loth	ē-lŏth
El'paal	ĕl-pā-ăl
El'palet	ĕl-pā-lĕt
El'paran	ĕl-pā-răn
El'tekeh	ĕl-tē-kĕ
El'tekon	ĕl-tē-kŏn
Elto'lad	ĕl-tō-lăd
E'lul	ē-lŭl
Elu'zai	ē-lū-zā-ĭ
El'yma'is	ĕl-ĭ-mā-ĭs
El'ymas	ĕl-ĭ-măs
El'zabad	ĕl-zā-băd
El'zaphan	ĕl-zā-făn
E'mims	ē-mĭms
Emma'us	ĕm-mā-ŭs
Em'mor	ĕm-môr
En'eg'laim	ĕn-ĕg-lā-ĭm
En'emes'sar	ĕn-ē-mĕs-sär
En'gan'nim	ĕn-găn-nĭm
En'ge'di	ĕn-gē-dī
En'had'dah	ĕn-hăd-dâ
En'hak'kore	ĕn-hăk-kō-rē
En'ha'zor	ĕn-hā-zôr
En'mish'pat	ĕn-mĭsh-păt
En'rim'mon	ĕn-rĭm-mŏn
En'ro'gel	ĕn-rō-gĕl
En'she'mesh	ĕn-shē-mĕsh
En'tap'puah	ĕn-tăp-pū-â
Ep'aphras	ĕp-ā-frăs
Epaph'rodi'tus	ē-păf-rō-dī-tŭs
Epen'etus	ē-pĕn-ē-tŭs
E'phah	ē-fâ
E'phai	ē-fai
E'pher	ē-fĕr
E'phes'dam'mim	ē-fĕs-dăm-mĭm
Ephe'sian	ē-fē-zhĭ-ăn
Eph'esus	ĕf-ē-sŭs
Eph'lal	ĕf-lăl
E'phod	ē-fŏd
Eph'phatha	ĕf-fâ-thâ
E'phraim	ē-frā-ĭm
E'phraimite	ē-frā-ĭm-ĭt
E'phrain	ē-frā-ĭn
Eph'ratah	
or	ĕf-rā-tâ
Ephra'tah	
Eph'rath	ĕf-răth
Eph'rathite	ĕf-răth-ĭt
E'phron	ē-frŏn
Ep'icure'ans	ĕp-ĭ-kū-rē-ănz
E'ran	ē-răn
E'ranites	ē-răn-īts
E'rech	ē-rĕk
E'rites	ē-rīts
Esa'ias	ē-zā-yăs
E'sarhad'don	ē-sär-hăd-dŏn

Vowels. — Lāte, căt, câr; mēte, mĕt, têrm; sīte, sĭt; lōne, lōt, fôr; rūde, hŭt, pût; oi like oil; ai like aye.

Bible Word Pronunciation

V. Gilbert Beers, *The Book of Life*, 24 vols. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1980), 23:93-111 (7 of 19)

Es'drae'lom or Esdra'elom	ĕs-drā-ē-lŏm
Es'drae'lon or Esdra'elon	ĕs-drā-ē-lŏn
Esdre'lom	ĕs-drē-lŏm
Esdre'lon	ĕs-drē-lŏn
E'sek	ē-sĕk
Esh'ba'al	ĕsh-bā-ăl
Esh'ban	ĕsh-băn
Esh'col	ĕsh-kŏl
E'shean	ē-shē-ăn
E'shek	ē-shĕk
Esh'kalonites	ĕsh-kā-lŏn-īts
Esh'taol	ĕsh-tā-ŏl
Esh'taulites	ĕsh-tā-ŭl-īts
Esh'temo'a	ĕsh-tē-mō-â
Esh'temoh	ĕsh-tē-mō
Esh'ton	ĕsh-tŏn
Es'li	ĕs-lī
Es'rom	ĕs-rŏm
E'tam	ē-tăm
E'tham	ē-thăm
E'than	ē-thăn
Eth'anim	ĕth-ā-nĭm
Eth'baal	ĕth-bā-ăl
Eth'nan	ĕth-năn
Eth'ni	ĕth-nī
Eubu'lus	ū-bū-lŭs
Eu'nice	ū-nĭs
Euo'dias	ū-ō-dĭ-ăs
Euphra'tes	ū-frā-tēz
Euroc'lydon	ū-rŏk-lĭ-dŏn
Eu'tychus	ū-tĭ-kŭs
E'vi	ē-vī
E'vilmero'dach	ē-vĭl-mē-rō-dăk
Ez'bai	ĕz-bā-ī
Ez'bon	ĕz-bŏn
Ez'eki'as	ĕz-ē-kī-ăs
Eze'kiel	ē-zē-kĭ-ĕl
E'zel	ē-zĕl
E'zem	ē-zĕm
E'zer	ē-zêr
E'zionga'ber	ē-zĭ-ŏn-gā-bêr
E'zionge'ber	ē-zĭ-ŏn-gē-bêr
Ez'nite	ĕz-nīt
Ez'rahite	ĕz-rā-hīt

F

Fe'lix	fē-lĭx
Fes'tus	fĕs-tŭs
For'tuna'tus	fôr-tū-nā-tŭs

G

Ga'al	gā-ăl
Ga'ash	gā-ăsh
Ga'ba	gā-bâ
Gab'atha	găb-ā-thâ
Gab'bai	găb-bā-ī
Gab'batha	găb-bā-thâ
Gad'ara	găd-ā-râ
Gad'arenes'	găd-ā-rēnz
Gad'di	găd-dī
Gad'diel	găd-dĭ-ĕl
Ga'di	gā-dī
Gad'ite	găd-īt
Ga'ham	gā-hăm
Ga'har	gā-hâr
Ga'lal	gā lăl
Gala'tia	gā-lā-shĭ-â
Gala'tians	gā-lā-shĭ-ănz
Gal'eed	găl-ē-ĕd
Ga'mul	gā-mŭl
Ga'reb	gā-rĕb
Gar'mite	gâr-mīt
Gash'mu	găsh-mū
Ga'tam	gā-tăm
Gath'he'pher	găth-hē-fêr
Gath'rim'mon	găth-rĭm-mŏn
Ga'zathites	gā-zăth-īts
Ga'zer	gā-zêr
Ga'zez	gā-zĕz
Gaz'ites	găz-īts
Gaz'zam	găz-zăm
Ge'ba	gē-bâ
Ge'bal	gē-băl
Ge'ber	gē-bêr
Ge'bim	gē-bĭm
Ged'ali'ah	gĕd-ā-lī-â
Ged'eon	gĕd-ē-ŏn
Ge'der	gē-dêr
Gede'rah	gē-dē-râ
Ged'erathite	gĕd-ē-răth-īt
Ged'erite	gĕd-ē-rīt
Gede'roth	gē-dē-rŏth
Ged'erotha'im	gĕd-ē-rŏth-ā-ĭm
Ge'dor	gē-dôr
Geha'zi	gē-hā-zī
Gehen'na	gē-hĕn-nâ
Gel'iloth	gĕl-ĭ-lŏth
Gemal'li	gē-măl-lī
Gem'ari'ah	gĕm-ā-rī-â
Genes'areth	gē-nĕz-ā-rĕth
Gen'esis	jĕn-ē-sĭs
Gennes'aret	gĕn-nĕs-ā-rĕt
Gen'tile	jĕn-tīl
Genu'bath	gē-nū-băth
Ge'ra	gē-râ
Ge'rah	gē-râ
Ge'rar	gē-râr
Ger'gesenes	gêr-gĕ-sēnz
Ger'izim	gĕr-ĭ-zĭm
Gerrhe'nians	gĕr-rē-nĭ-ănz
Ger'zites	gêr-zīts
Ge'sham	gē-shăm
Ge'shem	gē-shĕm
Ge'shur	gē-shêr
Gesh'uri	gĕsh-ū-rī
Gesh'urites	gĕsh-ū-rīts
Ge'ther	gē-thêr
Gethsem'ane	gĕth-sĕm-ā-nē
Geu'el	gē-ū-ĕl
Ge'zer	gē-zêr
Gez'rites	gĕz-rīts
Gi'ah	gī-â
Gib'bar	gĭb-bâr
Gib'bethon	gĭb-bē-thŏn
Gib'ea	gĭb-ē-â
Gib'eah	gĭb-ē-â
Gib'eath	gĭb-ē-ăth
Gib'eathite	gĭb-ē-ăth-īt
Gib'eon	gĭb-ē-ŏn
Gib'eonite	gĭb-ē-ŏn-īt
Gib'lites	gĭb-līts
Giddal'ti	gĭd-dăl-tī
Gid'del	gĭd-dĕl
Gid'eo'ni	gĭd-ē-ō-nī
Gi'dom	gī-dŏm
Gi'hon	gī-hŏn
Gil'alai	gĭl-ā-lai
Gilbo'a	gĭl-bō-â
Gi'loh	gī-lō
Gi'lonite	gī-lō-nīt
Gim'zo	gĭm-zō
Gi'nath	gī-năth
Gin'netho	gĭn-nē-thō
Gin'nethon	gĭn-nē-thŏn
Gir'gashite	gêr-gā-shīt
Gir'gasite	gêr-gā-sīt
Gis'pa	gĭs-pâ
Git'tahhe'pher	gĭt-tâ-hē-fêr
Git'taim	gĭt-tā-ĭm
Git'tite	gĭt-tīt
Git'tith	gĭt-tĭth
Gi'zonite	gī-zō-nīt
Giz'rites	gĭz-rīts
Gni'dus	nī-dŭs
Go'ath	gō-ăth
Go'lan	gō-lăn
Go'zan	gō-zăn
Gud'godah	gŭd-gō-dâ
Gu'ni	gū-nī
Gu'nites	gū-nīts
Gur'ba'al	gŭr-bā-ăl

H

Ha'ahash'tari	hā-â-hăsh-tā-rī
Haam'monai	hā-ăm-mō-nai
Haba'iah	hā-bā-yâ
Hab'akkuk	hăb-ăk-kŭk
Hab'azini'ah	hăb-ā-zĭ-nī-â
Ha'bor	hā-bôr
Hach'ali'ah	hăk-ă-lī-â
Hach'ilah	hăk-ĭ-lâ
Hach'moni	hăk-mō-nī
Hach'monite	hăk-mō-nīt
Had'ade'zer	hăd-ăd-ē-zêr
Ha'dadrim'mon	hā-dăd-rĭm-mŏn
Ha'dar	hā-dâr
Ha'dare'zer	hā-dâr-ē-zêr
Had'ashah	hăd-ā-shâ
Hadas'sah	hā-dăs-sâ
Hadat'tah	hā-dăt-tâ
Ha'did	hā-dĭd
Had'lai	hăd-lā-ī
Hado'ram	hā-dō-răm
Ha'drach	hā-drăk
Ha'gab	hā-găb
Hag'aba	hăg-ā-bâ

Consonants. — Ch in chin, g in go, th in thin, *th* in *th*at, y in yet, zh like z in azure.

Bible Word Pronunciation

V. Gilbert Beers, *The Book of Life*, 24 vols. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1980), 23:93-111 (8 of 19)

Hag'abah	hăg-ā-bâ
Hag'gai	hăg-gā-ī
Hag'geri	hăg-gē-rī
Hag'gi	hăg-gī
Haggi'ah	hăg-gī-â
Hag'gites	hăg-gīts
Hag'gith	hăg-gĭth
Ha'gia	hā-gī-â
Ha'i	hā-ī
Hak'katan	hăk-kā-tăn
Hak'koz	hăk-kŏz
Haku'pha	hā-kū-fâ
Ha'lah	hā-lâ
Ha'lak	hā-lăk
Hal'hul	hăl-hŭl
Ha'li	hā-lī
Hallo'hesh	hăl-lō-hĕsh
Halo'hesh	hā-lō-hĕsh
Ha'man	hā-măn
Ham'ital	hăm-ī-tăl
Ham'mahle'koth	hăm-mâ-lē-kŏth
Ham'moth	hăm-mŏth
Hammed'atha	hăm-mĕd-ā-thâ
Ham'melech	hăm-mē-lĕk
Hammol'eketh	hăm-mŏl-ē-kĕth
Ham'mothdor	hăm-mŏth-dôr
Ham'monah	hăm-mō-nâ
Ha'mongog	hā-mŏn-gŏg
Ha'mor	hā-môr
Ha'moth	hā-mŏth
Ha'muel	hā-mū-ĕl
Ha'mul	hā-mŭl
Ha'mulites	hā-mŭl-īts
Hamu'tal	hā-mū-tăl
Hanam'eel	hā-năm-ē-ĕl
Ha'nan	hā-năn
Hanan'eel or Hanane'el	hā-năn-ē-ĕl
Hana'ni	hā-nā-nī
Han'ani'ah	hăn-ā-nī-â
Ha'nes	hā-nēz
Han'iel	hăn-ī-ĕl
Han'nathon	hăn-nā-thŏn
Han'niel	hăn-nī-ĕl
Ha'noch	hā-nŏk
Ha'nochites	hā-nŏk-īts
Ha'nun	hā-nŭn
Haph'ara'im	hăf-ā-rā-ĭm
Haphra'im	hăf-rā-ĭm
Ha'ra	hā-râ
Har'adah	hăr-ā-dâ
Ha'rarite	hā-râr-īt
Harbo'na	hâr-bō-nâ
Harbo'nah	hâr-bō-nâ
Ha'reph	hā-rĕf
Ha'reth	hā-rĕth
Har'hai'ah	hâr-hā-ī-â
Har'has	hâr-hăs
Har'hur	hâr-hŭr
Ha'rim	hā-rĭm
Ha'riph	hā-rĭf
Har'nepher	hâr-nē-fĕr
Ha'rod	hā-rŏd
Ha'rodite	hā-rŏd-īt
Har'oeh	hâr-ō-ĕ
Ha'rorite	hā-rō-rīt
Haro'sheth	hā-rō-shĕth
Har'sha	hār-shâ
Ha'rum	hā-rŭm
Haru'maph	hā-rū-măf
Har'uphite	hăr-ū-fīt
Ha'ruz	hā-rŭz
Has'adi'ah	hăs-ā-dī-â
Has'enu'ah	hăs-ē-nū-â
Hash'abi'ah	hăsh-ă-bī-â
Hashab'nah	hā-shăb-nâ
Hash'abni'ah	hăsh-ăb-nī-â
Hashbad'ana	hăsh-băd-ā-nâ
Ha'shem	hā-shĕm
Hashmo'nah	hăsh-mō-nâ
Ha'shub	hā-shŭb
Hashu'bah	hā-shū-bâ
Ha'shum	hā-shŭm
Hashu'pha	hā-shū-fâ
Has'rah	hăs-râ
Has'sena'ah	hăs-sē-nā-â
Has'shub	hăs-shŭb
Hasu'pha	hā-sū-fâ
Ha'tach	hā-tăk
Ha'thath	hā-thăth
Hat'ipha	hăt-ī-fâ
Hat'ita	hăt-ī-tâ
Hatta'avah	hăt-tā-â-vâ
Hat'til	hăt-tĭl
Hat'tush	hăt-tŭsh
Hau'ran	hau-răn
Hav'ilah	hăv-ī-lâ
Ha'vothja'ir	hā-vŏth-jā-ĕr
Haz'ael	hăz-ā-ĕl
Haza'iah	hā-zā-yâ
Ha'zarad'dar	hā-zâr-ăd-dâr
Ha'zare'nan	hā-zâr-ē-năn
Ha'zargad'dah	hā-zâr-găd-dâ
Ha'zarhat'ticon	hā-zâr-hăt-tī-kŏn
Ha'zarma'veth	hā-zâr-mā-vĕth
Ha'zarshu'al	hā-zâr-shū-ăl
Ha'zarsu'sah	hā-zâr-sū-zâ
Ha'zarsu'sim	hā-zâr-sū-zĭm
Haz'azonta'mar	hăz-ā-zŏn-tā-mâr
Haz'elelpo'ni	hăz-ē-lĕl-pō-nī
Haze'rim	hā-zē-rĭm
Haze'roth	hā-zē-rŏth
Haz'ezonta'mar	hăz-ē-zŏn-tā-mâr
Ha'ziel	hā-zī-ĕl
Ha'zo	hā-zō
Ha'zor	hā-zŏr
Ha'zor Hadat'tah	hā-zôr hā-dăt-tâ
Haz'ubah	hăz-ū-bâ
Haz'zurim	hăz-zū-rĭm
Heg'ai	hĕg-ā-ī
He'ge	hē-gē
He'lah	hē-lâ
He'lam	hē-lăm
Hel'dai	hĕl-dā-ī
He'leb	hē-lĕb
He'led	hē-lĕd
He'lek	hē-lĕk
He'lekites	hē-lĕk-īts
He'lem	hē-lĕm
He'leph	hē-lĕf
He'lez	hē-lĕz
He'li	hē-lī
Hel'kai	hĕl-kā-ī
Hel'kath	hĕl-kăth
Hel'kathhaz'zurim	hĕl-kăth-hăz-zū-rĭm
Hc'lon	hē-lŏn
He'mam	hē-măm
He'man	hē-măn
He'math	hē-măth
Hem'dan	hĕm-dăn
He'na	hē-nâ
Hen'adad	hĕn-ā-dăd
He'noch	hē-nŏk
He'pher	hē-fĕr
He'pherites	hē-fĕr-īts
Heph-zibah	hĕf-zī-bâ
He'res	hē-rēz
He'resh	hē-rĕsh
Her'mas	hĕr-măs
Her'mes	hĕr-mēz
Hermog'enes	hĕr-mŏj-ĕ-nēz
Her'mon	hĕr-mŏn
Her'monites	hĕr-mŏn-īts
Hero'dians	hē-rō-dĭ-ănz
Hero'dias	hē-rō-dĭ-ăs
Hero'dion	hē-rō-dĭ-ŏn
He'sed	hē-sĕd
Hesh'bon	hĕsh-bŏn
Hesh'mon	hĕsh-mŏn
Hes'ron	hĕs-rŏn
Hes'ronites	hĕs-rŏn-īts
Heth'lon	hĕth-lŏn
Hez'eki	hĕz-ē-kī
He'zion	hē-zī-ŏn
He'zir	hē-zĕr
Hez'rai	hĕz-rā-ī
Hez'ro	hĕz-rō
Hez'ron	hĕz-rŏn
Hez'ronites	hĕz-rŏn-īts
Hid'dai	hĭd-dā-ī
Hid'dekel	hĭd-dē-kĕl
Hi'el	hī-ĕl
Hi'erap'olis	hī-ĕ-răp-ō-lĭs
Higga'ion	hĭg-gā-yŏn
Hi'len	hī-lĕn
Hilki'ah	hĭl-kī-â
Hi'vite	hī-vīt
Hizki'ah	hĭz-kī-â
Hizki'jah	hĭz-kī-jâ
Hoba'iah	hō-bā-yâ
Hod'ai'ah	hŏd-ā-ī-â
Hod'avi'ah	hŏd-ā-vī-â
Ho'desh	hō-dĕsh
Hode'vah	hō-dē-vâ
Hodi'ah	hō-dī-â
Hodi'jah	hō-dī-jâ
Hog'lah	hŏg-lâ
Ho'ham	hō-hăm

Vowels. — Lāte, căt, câr; mēte, mĕt, têrm; sīte, sĭt; lōne, lŏt, fôr; rūde, hŭt, pût; oi like oil; ai like aye.

Bible Word Pronunciation

V. Gilbert Beers, *The Book of Life*, 24 vols. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1980), 23:93-111 (9 of 19)

Ho'lon	hō-lŏn
Ho'mam	hō-măm
Hoph'ni	hŏf-nī
Hoph'ra	hŏf-râ
Ho'ram	hō-răm
Ho'reb	hō-rĕb
Ho'rem	hō-rĕm
Hor'hagid'gad	hŏr-hā-gĭd-găd
Ho'ri	hō-rī
Ho'rims	hō-rĭmz
Ho'rite	hō-rīt
Hor'mah	hôr-mâ
Hor'ona'im	hôr-ō-nā-ĭm
Hor'onite	hôr-ō-nīt
Ho'sa	hō-sâ
Ho'sah	hō-sâ
Hosh'aiah	hŏsh-ā-ī-â
Hosh'ama	hŏsh-ā-mâ
Hoshe'a	hō-shē-â
Ho'tham	hō-thăm
Ho'than	hō-thăn
Ho'thir	hō-thêr
Huk'kok	hŭk-kŏk
Hu'kok	hū-kŏk
Hum'tah	hŭm-tâ
Hu'pham	hū-făm
Hu'pham'ites	hū-făm-īts
Hup'pah	hŭp-pâ
Hu'rai	hū-rai
Hu'ram	hū-răm
Hu'ri	hū-rī
Hu'shah	hū-shâ
Hu'shai	hū-shai
Hu'sham	hū-shăm
Hu'shathite	hū-shăth-īt
Hu'shim	hū-shĭm
Hu'zoth	hū-zŏth
Huz'zab	hŭz-zăb
Hydas'pes	hī-dăs-pēz
Hy'menæ'us	hī-mē-nē-ŭs

I

Ib'har	ĭb-hâr
Ib'leam	ĭb-lē-ăm
Ibne'iah	ĭb-nē-yâ
Ibni'jah	ĭb-nī-jă
Ico'nium	ī-kō-nĭ-ŭm
Ida'lah	ī-dā-lâ
Id'bash	ĭd-băsh
Id'umæ'a	ĭd-ū-mē-â
I'gal	ī-găl
Ig'dali'ah	ĭg-dā-lī-â
Ig'eal	ĭg-ē-ăl
I'im	ī-ĭm
Ij'eaba'rim	ĭj-ē-ăb-ā-rĭm
I'jon	ī-jŏn
Ik'kesh	ĭk-kĕsh
I'lai	ī-lai
Illyr'icum	ĭl-lĭr-ĭ-kŭm
Im'la	ĭm-lâ
Im'lah	ĭm-lâ
Imman'uel	ĭm-măn-ū-ĕl
Im'mer	ĭm-mêr
Im'na	ĭm-nâ
Im'nah	ĭm-nâ
Im'rah	ĭm-râ
Im'ri	ĭm-rī
Iph'ede'iah	ĭf-ē-dē-yâ
Ir	êr
I'ra	ī-râ
I'rad	ī-răd
I'ram	ī-răm
I'ri	ī-rī
Iri'jah	ī-rī-jâ
Ir'na'hash	êr-nā-hăsh
Ir'peel	êr-pē-ĕl
Ir'she'mesh	êr-shē-mĕsh
I'ru	ī-rū
Is'cah	ĭs-kâ
Ish'bah	ĭsh-bâ
Ish'bak	ĭsh-băk
Ish'bibe'nob	ĭsh-bī-bē-nŏb
Ish'bo'sheth	ĭsh-bō-shĕth
I'shi	ī-shī
Ishi'ah	ī-shī-â
Ishi'jah	ī-shī-jâ
Ish'ma	ĭsh-mâ
Ish'mai'ah	ĭsh-mā-i-â
Ish'meelite	ĭsh-mē-ĕl-īt
Ish'merai	ĭsh-mē-rai
I'shod	ī-shŏd
Ish'pan	ĭsh-păn
Ish'tob	ĭsh-tŏb
Ish'uah	ĭsh-ū-â
Ish'uai	ĭsh-ū-ai
Ish'ui	ĭsh-ū-ī
Is'machi'ah	ĭs-mā-kī-â
Is'mai'ah	ĭs-mā-ī-â
Is'pah	ĭs-pâ
Isshi'ah	ĭs-shī-â
Is'uah	ĭs-ū-â
Is'ui	ĭs-ū-ī
Ith'ai	ĭth-ā-ī
Ith'amar	ĭth-ā-mâr
Ith'iel	ĭth-ĭ-ĕl
Ith'mah	ĭth-mâ
Ith'nan	ĭth-năn
Ith'ra	ĭth-râ
Ith'ran	ĭth-răn
Ith'ream	ĭth-rē-ăm
Ith'rite	ĭth-rīt
It'tahka'zim	ĭt-tâ-kā-zĭm
It'tai	ĭt-tā-ī
It'uræ'a	ĭt-ū-rē-â
I'vah	ī-vâ
Iz'ehar	ĭz-ē-hâr
Iz'eharites	ĭz-ē-hâr-īts
Iz'har	ĭz-hâr
Iz'harites	ĭz-hâr-īts
Iz'rahi'ah	ĭz-rā-hī-â
Iz'rahite	ĭz-rā-hīt
Iz'reel	ĭz-rē-ĕl
Iz'ri	ĭz-rī

J

Ja'akan	jā-â-kăn
Jaak'obah	jā-ăk-ō-bâ
Jaa'la	jā-ā-lâ
Jaa'lah	jā-ā-lâ
Jaa'lam	jā-ā-lăm
Ja'anai	jā-ā-nai
Jaar'eor'egim	jā-âr-ē-ŏr-ē-gĭm
Ja'asau	jā-â-sau
Jaa'siel	jā-ā-sĭ-ĕl
Jaaz'aniah	jā-ăz-ā-nī-â
Jaa'zer	jā-ā-zêr
Ja'azi'ah	jā-â-zī-â
Jaa'ziel	jā-ā-zĭ-ĕl
Ja'beshgil'ead	jā-bĕsh-gĭl-ē-ăd
Jab'neel	jăb-nē-ĕl
Jab'neh	jăb-nĕ
Ja'chan	jā-kăn
Ja'chin	jā-kĭn
Ja'chinites	jā-kĭn-īts
Ja'da	jā-dâ
Jada'u	ja-dā-ū
Jaddu'a	jăd-dū-â
Ja'don	jā-dŏn
Ja'gur	jā-gŭr
Jah	jâ
Jahal'elel	jā-hăl-ē-lĕl
Ja'hath	jā-hăth
Ja'haz	jā-hăz
Jaha'za	jā-hā-zâ
Jaha'zah	jā-hā-zâ
Ja'hazi'ah	jā-hā-zī-â
Jaha'ziel	jā-hā-zĭ-ĕl
Jah'dai	jâ-dā-ī
Jah'diel	jâ-dĭ-ĕl
Jah'do	jâ-dō
Jah'leel	jâ-lē-ĕl
Jah'leelites	jâ-lē-ĕl-īts
Jah'mai	jâ-mū-ī
Jah'zah	jâ-zâ
Jah'zeel	jâ-zē-ĕl
Jah'zeelites	jâ-zē-ĕl-īts
Jah'zerah	jâ-zē-râ
Jah'ziel	jā-zĭ-ĕl
Ja'ir	jā-êr
Ja'irite	jā-êr-īt
Ja'irus	jā-ĭ-rŭs
Jai'rus	jā-ĭ-rŭs
Ja'kan	jā-kăn
Ja'keh	jā-kĕ
Ja'kim	jā-kĭm
Ja'lon	jā-lŏn
Jam'bres	jăm-brēz
Ja'min	jā-mĭn
Ja'minites	jā-mĭn-īts
Jam'lech	jăm-lĕk
Jan'na	jăn-nâ
Jan'nes	jăn-nēz
Jano'ah	jā-nō-â
Jano'hah	jā-nō-hâ
Ja'num	jā-nŭm
Ja'pheth	jā-fĕth
Japhi'a	jā-fī-â
Japh'let	jăf-lĕt
Japh'leti	jăf-lē-tī

Consonants. — Ch in chin, g in go, th in thin, *th* in *th*at, y in yet, zh like z in azure.

Bible Word Pronunciation

V. Gilbert Beers, *The Book of Life*, 24 vols. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1980), 23:93-111 (10 of 19)

Ja'pho	jā-fō	Jehosh'eba	jē-hŏsh-ē-bâ	Jeth'lah	jĕth-lâ
Ja'rah	jā-râ	Jehosh'ua	jē-hŏsh-ū-â	Je'tur	jē-tŭr
Ja'reb	jā-rĕb	Jehosh'uah	jē-hŏsh-ū-â	Je'uel	jē-ū-ĕl
Ja'red	jā-rĕd	Jeho'vah'ji'reh	jē-hō-vâ-jī-rĕ	Je'ush	jē-ŭsh
Jar'esi'ah	jâr-ē-sī-â	Jeho'vah'nis'si	je-hŏ-vâ-nĭs-sĭ	Je'uz	jē-ŭz
Jar'ha	jâr-hâ	Jeho'vah-sha'lom	je-hō-vâh-shā-lŏm	Jez'ani'ah	jĕz-ā-nī-â
Ja'rib	jā-rĭb	Jeho'vah-sham'mah		Je'zer	jē-zêr
Jar'muth	jâr-mŭth		jē-hō-vâ-shăm-mâ	Je'zerites	jē-zêr-īts
Jaro'ah	jā-rō-â	Jeho'vah-tsid'kenu	jē-hō-vâ-tsĭd-kē-nū	Jezi'ah	jē-zī-â
Ja'shen	jā-shĕn	Jehoz'abad	jē-hŏz-ā-băd	Je'ziel	jē-zī-ĕl
Ja'sher	jā-shêr	Jehoz'adak	jē-hŏz-ā-dăk	Jez'liah	jĕz-li-â
Jasho'beam	jā-shō-bē-ăm	Jehub'bah	jē-hŭb-bâ	Jez'oar	jĕz-ō-âr
Jash'ub	jăsh-ŭb	Je'hucal	jē-hū-kăl	Jez'rahi'ah	jĕz-rā-hī-â
Jash'ubile'hem	jăsh-ū-bī-lē-hĕm	Je'hud	jē-hŭd	Jez'reel	jĕz-rē-ĕl
Jash'ubites	jăsh-ŭb-īts	Jehu'di	jē-hū-dī	Jez'reelite	jĕz-rē-ĕl-īt
Ja'siel	jā-sĭ-ĕl	Je'hudi'jah	jē-hū-dī-jâ	Jib'sam	jĭb-săm
Jath'niel	jăth-nĭ-ĕl	Je'hush	jē-hŭsh	Jid'laph	jĭd-lăf
Jat'tir	jăt-têr	Jei'el	jē-ĭ-ĕl	Jim'na	jĭm-nâ
Ja'ziel	jā-zĭ-ĕl	Jekab-'zeel	jē-kăb-zē-ĕl	Jim'nah	jĭm-nâ
Ja'ziz	jā-zĭz	Jek'ame'am	jĕk-ā-mē-ăm	Jim'nites	jĭm-nīts
Je'arim	jē-ā-rĭm	Jek'ami'ah	jĕk-ā-mī-â	Jiph'tah	jĭf-tâ
Jeat'erai	jē-ăt-ē-rai	Jeku'thiel	jē-kū-thĭ-ĕl	Jiph'thahel	jĭf-thâ-hĕl
Je'berechi'ah	jē-bêr-ē-kī-â	Jemu'el	jē-mū-ĕl	Jo'achaz	jō-ā-kăz
Jebu'si	jē-bū-sī	Jeph'thæ	jĕf-thē	Jo'achim	jō-ā-kĭm
Jeb'usite	jĕb-ū-sīt	Jeph'thah	jĕf-thâ	Jo'ah	jō-â
Jec'ami'ah	jĕk-ă-mĭ-â	Jephun'neh	jē-fŭn-nĕ	Jo'ahaz	jō-ā-hăz
Jech'oli'ah	jĕk-ō-lī-â	Je'rah	jē-râ	Jo'akim	jō-ā-kĭm
Jech'oni'as	jĕk-ō-nī-ăs	Jerah'meel	jē-râ-mē-ĕl	Jo'arib	jō-ā-rĭb
Jec'oli'ah	jĕk-ō-lī-â	Jerah'meelites	jē-râ-mē-ĕl-īts	Jo'atham	jō-ā-thăm
Jec'oni'ah	jĕk-ō-nĭ-â	Je'red	jē-rĕd	Joch'ebed	jŏk-ē-bĕd
Je'da'iah	jē-dā-yâ	Jer'emai	jĕr-ē-mai	Jo'ed	jō-ĕd
Jede'iah	jē-dē-yâ	Jer'emi'ah	jĕr-ē-mī-â	Joe'lah	jō-ē-lâ
Jedi'ael	jĕ-dī-â-ĕl	Jer'emoth	jĕr-ē-mŏth	Joe'zer	jō-ē-zêr
Jed'idah	jĕd-ĭ-dâ	Jeri'ah	jē-rī-â	Jog'behah	jŏg-bē-hâ
Je'diel	jē-dĭ-ĕl	Jer'ibai	jĕr-ĭ-bai	Jog'li	jŏg-lī
Jed'uthun		Je'ricl	jē-rī-ĕl	Jo'ha	jō-hâ
or	jĕd-ū-thŭn	Jeri'jah	jē-rī-jâ	Joha'nan	jō-hā-năn
Jedu'thun		Jer'imoth	jĕr-ĭ-mŏth	Joi'ada	joi-ā-dâ
Jee'zer	jē-ē-zêr	Je'rioth	jē-rĭ-tŏh	Joi'akim	joi-ā-kĭm
Jee'zerites	jē-ē-zêr-īts	Jer'oham	jĕr-ō-hăm	Joi'arib	joi-ā-rĭb
Je'garsa'hadu'tha	jē-gâr-sā-hâ-dū-thâ	Jerub'baal	jē-rŭb-bā-ăl	Jok'deam	jŏk-dē-ăm
Jeha'leel	jē-hā-lē-ĕl	Jerub'besheth	jē-rŭb-bē-shĕth	Jo'kim	jō-kĭm
Je'hale'leel	jē-hâ-lē-lē-ĕl	Jer'ucl	jĕr-ū-ĕl	Jok'meam	jŏk-mē-ăm
Jehal'elel	jē-hăl-ē-lĕl	Jeru'salem	jĕr-ū-sā-lĕm	Jok'neam	jŏk-nē-ăm
Jehde'iah	jĕ-dē-yâ	Jesa'iah	jē-sā-yâ	Jok'shan	jŏk-shăn
Jehez'ekel	jē-hĕz-ē-kĕl	Jesha'iah	jē-shā-yâ	Jok'tan	jŏk-tăn
Jehi'ah	jē-hī-â	Jesh'anah	jĕsh-ā-nâ	Jok'theel	jŏk-thē-ĕl
Jehi'el	jē-hĭ-ĕl	Jeshar'elah	jē-shâr-ē-lâ	Jo'na	jō-nâ
Jehi'eli	jē-hĭ-ē-lĭ	Jeshcb'eab	jē-shĕb-ē-ăb	Jon'adab	jŏn-ā-dăb
Je'hizki'ah	jē-hĭz-kī-â	Je'sher	jē-shêr	Jo'nathe'lemrecho'kim	
Jeho'adah	jē-hō-ā-dâ	Jesh'imon	jĕsh-ĭ-mŏn		jō-năth-ē-lĕm-rē-kō-kĭm
Je'hoad'dan	jē-hō-ăd-dăn	Jeshish'ai	jē-shĭsh-ā-ĭ	Jo'rah	jō-râ
Jeho'ahaz	jē-hō-ā-hăz	Jesh'ohai'ah	jĕsh-ō-hā-ĭ-â	Jo'rai	jō-rā-ĭ
Jeho'ash	jē-hō-ăsh	Jesh'ua	jĕsh-ū-â	Jo'rim	jō-rĭm
Je'hoha'nan	jē-hō-hā-năn	Jesh'uah	jĕsh-ū-â	Jor'koam	jŏr-kō-ăm
Jehoi'achin	jē-hoi-ă-kĭn	Jeshu'run	jĕsh-ū-rŭn	Jos'abad	jŏs-ā-băd
Jehoi'ada	jē-hoi-ă-dâ	Je'siah	jē-sī-â	Jos'aphat	jŏs-ā-făt
Jehoi'akim	jē-hoi-ă-kĭm	Jesim'iel	jē-sĭm-ĭ-ĕl	Jo'se	jō-sē
Jehoi'arib	jē-hoi-ă-rĭb	Jes'ui	jĕs-ū-ĭ	Jos'edech	jŏs-ē-dĕk
Jehon'adab	jē-hŏn-ă-dăb	Jes'uites	jĕs-ū-īts	Jo'ses	jō-zĕz
Jehon'athan	jē-hŏn-ă-thăn	Jes'urum	jĕs-ū-rŭn	Josh'abad	jŏsh-ā-băd
Je'hoshab'eath	jē-hō-shăb-ē-ăth	Je'ther	jē-thêr	Jo'shah	jō-shâ
Jehosh'aphat	jē-hŏsh-ā-făt	Je'theth	jē-thĕth	Josh'aphat	jŏsh-ā-făt

Vowels. — Lāte, căt, câr; mēte, mĕt, têrm; sīte, sĭt; lōne, lŏt, fôr; rūde, hŭt, pût; oi like oil; ai like aye.

Bible Word Pronunciation

V. Gilbert Beers, *The Book of Life*, 24 vols. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1980), 23:93-111 (11 of 19)

Josh'avi'ah	jŏsh-ā-vī-â
Joshbek'ashah	jŏsh-bĕk-ā-shâ
Jos'ibi'ah	jŏs-ĭ-bī-â
Jos'iphi'ah	jŏs-ĭ-fī-â
Jot'bah	jŏt-bâ
Jot'bath	jŏt-băth
Jot'bathah	jŏt-bā-thâ
Joz'abad	jŏz-ā-băd
Joz'achar	jŏz-ā-kâr
Joz'adak	jŏz-ā-dăk
Ju'shabhe'sed	jū-shăb-hē-sĕd
Jut'tah	jŭt-tâ

K

Kab'zeel	kăb-zē-ĕl
Ka'desh	kā-dĕsh
Ka'deshbar'nea	kā-dĕsh-bâr-nē-â
Kad'miel	kăd-mĭ-ĕl
Kad'monites	kăd-mŏn-īts
Kal'lai	kăl-lā-ī
Ka'nah	kā-nâ
Kare'ah	kā-rē-â
Kar'kaa	kâr-kā-â
Kar'kor	kâr-kŏr
Kar'naim	kâr-nā-ĭm
Kar'tah	kâr-tâ
Kar'tan	kâr-tăn
Kat'tath	kăt-tăth
Ke'dar	kē-dâr
Ked'emah	kĕd-ē-mâ
Ked'emoth	kĕd-ē-mŏth
Ke'desh	kē-dĕsh
Ke'desh Naph'tali	kē-dĕsh năf-tā-lī
Kehel'athah	kē-hĕl-ā-thâ
Kei'lah	kī-lâ
Kela'iah	kē-lā-yâ
Kel'ita	kĕl-ĭ-tâ
Kemu'el	kē-mū-ĕl
Ke'nan	kē-năn
Ke'nath	kē-năth
Ke'naz	kē-năz
Ken'ezite	kĕn-ĕz-īt
Ken'ite	kĕn-īt
Ken'nizzites	kĕn-nĭzzīts
Ker'enhap'puch	kĕr-ĕn-hăp-pŭk
Ke'rioth	kē-rī-ŏth
Ke'ros	kē-rŏs
Ke'ziz	kē-zĭz
Kib'rothhatta'avah	kĭb-rŏth-hăt-tā-â-vâ
Kib'zaim	kĭb-zā-ĭm
Ki'nah	kī-nâ
Kir'har'aseth	kêr-hăr-ā-sĕth
Kir'har'eseth	kêr-hăr-ē-sĕth
Kir'ha'resh	kêr-hā-rĕsh
Kirhe'res	kêr-hē-rēz
Kir'iath	kĭr-ĭ-ăth
Kir'iatha'im	kĭr-ĭ-â-thā-ĭm
Kir'ioth	kĭr-ĭ-ŏth
Kir'jath	kêr-jăth
Kir'jatha'im	kêr-jăth-ā-ĭm
Kir'jathar'ba	kêr-jăth-âr-bâ
Kir'jatha'rim	kêr-jăth-ā-rĭm
Kir'jathba'al	kêr-jăth-bā-ăl
Kir'jathhu'zoth	kêr-jăth-hū-zŏth
Kir'jath'je'arim	kêr-jăth-jē-ā-rĭm
Kir'jathsan'nah	kêr-jăth-săn-nâ
Kir'jathse'pher	kêr-jăth-sē-fêr
Kish'i	kĭsh-ī
Kish'ion	kĭsh-ĭ-ŏn
Ki'shon	kī-shŏn
Ki'son	kī-sŏn
Kith'lish	kĭth-lĭsh
Kit'ron	kĭt-rŏn
Kit'tim	kĭt-tĭm
Ko'a	kō-â
Ko'hath	kō-hăth
Ko'hathites	kō-hăth-īts
Kol'ai'ah	kŏl-ā-ĭ-â
Ko'rah	kō-râ
Ko'rahite	kō-râ-ĭt
Ko'rathites	kō-răth-īts
Ko're	kō-rē
Kor'hite	kôr-hĭt
Kusha'iah	kŭsh-ā-yâ

L

La'adah	lā-ă-dâ
La'adan	lā-ă-dăn
La'chish	lā-kĭsh
La'dan	lā-dăn
La'el	lā-ĕl
La'had	lā-hăd
Lahai'roi	lā-hai-roi
Lah'mam	lâ-măm
Lah'mi	lâ-mī
La'ish	lā-ĭsh
La'kum	lā-kŭm
La'mech	lā-mĕk
Laod'ice'a	lā-ŏd-ĭ-sē-â
Laod'ice'ans	lā-ŏd-ĭ-sē-ânz
Lap'idoth	lăp-ĭ-dŏth
Lase'a	lā-sē-â
La'sha	lā-shâ
Lasha'ron	lā-shā-rŏn
Lean'noth	lē-ăn-nŏth
Leb'ana	lĕb-ā-nâ
Leb'anah	lĕb-ā-nâ
Leb'aoth	lĕb-ā-ŏth
Lebbæ'us	lĕb-bē-ŭs
Lebbe'us	lĕb-bē-ŭs
Lebo'nah	lē-bō-nâ
Le'cah	lē-kâ
Le'habim	lē-hā-bĭm
Le'shem	lē-shĕm
Letu'shim	lē-tū-shĭm
Leum'mim	lē-ŭm-mĭm
Le'vis	lē-vĭs
Lib'ertines	lĭb-ĕr-tēnz
Lib'nah	lĭb-nâ
Lib'ni	lĭb-nī
Lib'nites	lĭb-nĭts
Lib'ya	lĭb-yâ
Lib'yans	lĭb-yănz
Lik'hi	lĭk-hī
Lo'am'mi	lō-ăm-mī
Lo'de'bar	lō-dē-bâr
Lo'ru'hamah	lō-rū-hă-mâ
Lo'tan	lō-tăn
Lo'zon	lō-zŏn
Lu'bim	lū-bĭm
Lu'bims	lū-bĭmz
Lu'dim	lū-dĭm
Lu'hith	lū-hĭth
Lyc'ao'nia	lĭc-ā-ō-nĭ-â
Ly'cia	lĭ-shĭ-â
Lyd'da	lĭd-dâ
Lysa'nias	lĭ-sā-nĭ-ăs
Ly'sias	lĭ-shĭ-ăs or lĭs-ĭ-ăs
Lysim'achus	lĭ-sĭm-ā-kŭs
Lys'tra	lĭs-trâ

M

Ma'acah	mā-â-kâ
Ma'achah	mā-â-kâ
Maach'athi	mā-ăk-ā-thĭ
Maach'athite	mā-ăk-ā-thĭt
Maad'ai	mā-ăd-ai
Ma'adi'ah	mā-â-dī-â
Maa'i	mâ-ā-ī
Maal'ehacrab'bim	mā-ăl-ē-ă-krăb-bĭm
Ma'ani	mā-â-nī
Ma'arath	mā-â-răth
Ma'ase'iah	mā-â-sē-yâ
Maas'iai	mā-ăs-ĭ-ai
Ma'asi'as	mā-â-sī-ăs
Ma'ath	mā-ăth
Ma'az	mā-ăz
Ma'azi'ah	mā-ăz-ĭ-â
Mab'dai	măb-dā-ī
Mac'alon	măk-ā-lŏn
Mac'cabæ'us	măk-kā-bē-ŭs
Mac'cabees	măk-kā-bēz
Mac'cabe'us	măk-kā-bē-ŭs
Mac'edo'nia	măs-ē-dō-nĭ-â
Mac'edo'nian	măs-ē-dō-nĭ-ăn
Mach'banai	măk-bā-nai
Mach'benah	măk-bē-nâ
Ma'chi	mā-kĭ
Ma'chir	mā-kêr
Ma'chirites	mā-kêr-īts
Mach'nade'bai	măk-nâ-dē-bai
Machpe'lah	măk-pē-lâ
Mad'ai	măd-ā-ī
Madi'ah	mā-dĭ-â
Ma'dian	mā-dĭ-ăn
Madman'nah	măd-măn-nâ
Mad'men	măd-mĕn
Madme'neh	măd-mē-nĕ
Ma'don	mā-dŏn
Mag'bish	măg-bĭsh
Mag'dale'ne	măg-dā-lēn
Mag'diel	măg-dĭ-ĕl
Ma'gormis'sabib	mā-gôr-mĭs-sā-bĭb
Mag'piash	măg-pĭ-ăsh
Maha'lale'el	mā-hā-lâ-lē-ĕl
Ma'halath	mā-hâ-lăth
Ma'hali	mā-hâ-lī

Consonants.—Ch in chin, g in go, th in thin, *th* in *th*at, y in yet, zh like z in azure.

Bible Word Pronunciation

V. Gilbert Beers, *The Book of Life,* 24 vols. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1980), 23:93-111 (12 of 19)

Ma'hana'im	mā-hâ-nā-ĭm	Mat'tathi'as	măt-tā-thī-ăs	Meron'othite	mē-rŏn-ō-thīt
Ma'haneh'dan	mā-hâ-nĕ-dăn	Mat'tena'i	măt-tē-nā-ī	Me'roz	mē-rŏz
Mahar'ai	mā-hăr-ā-ī	Mat'than	măt-thăn	Me'sech	mē-sĕk
Ma'hath	mā-hăth	Mat'that	măt-thăt	Me'sha	mē-shâ
Ma'havite	mā-hă-vīt	Mat'tithi'ah	măt-tĭ-thī-â	Me'shach	mē-shăk
Maha'zioth	mā-hā-zĭ-ŏth	Maz'zaroth	măz-zā-rŏth	Me'shech	mē-shĕk
Ma'hershal'alhash'baz	mā-hêr-shăl-ăl-hăsh-băz	Me'ah	mē-â	Meshel'emi'ah	mē-shĕl-ē-mī-â
		Mea'rah	mē-ā-râ	Meshez'abeel	mē-shĕz-ā-bē-el
Mah'lah	mâ-lâ	Mebun'nai	mē-bŭn-nai	Meshez'abel	mē-shĕz-ā-bĕl
Mah'li	mâ-lī	Mech'erathite	mĕk-ē-răth-ĭt	Meshil'lemith	mē-shĭl-lē-mĭth
Mah'lites	mâ-līts	Me'dad	mē-dăd	Meshil'lemoth	mē-shĭl-lē-mŏth
Mah'lon	mâ-lŏn	Me'dan	mē-dăn	Mesho'bab	mē-shō-băb
Ma'hol	mā-hŏl	Med'eba	mĕd-ē-bâ	Meshul'lam	mē-shŭl-lăm
Ma'kaz	mā-kăz	Megid'do	mē-gĭd-dō	Meshul'lemeth	mē-shŭl-lē-mĕth
Makhe'loth	măk-hē-lŏth	Megid'don	mē-gĭd-dŏn	Mes'oba'ite	mĕs-ō-bā-ĭt
Makke'dah	măk-kē-dâ	Mehet'abeel	mē-hĕt-ā-bē-el	Mes'opota'mia	mĕs-ō-pō-tā-mĭ-â
Mak'tesh	măk-tēsh	Mehet'abel	mē-hĕt-ā-bĕl	Me'thegam'mah	mē-thĕg-ăm-mâ
Mal'cham	măl-kăm	Mehi'da	mē-hī-dâ	Meth'oar	mĕth-ō-âr
Malchi'ah	măl-kī-â	Me'hir	mē-hêr	Methu'sael	mē-thū-sā-ĕl
Mal'chiel	măl-kĭ-ĕl	Meho'lah	mē-hō-lâ	Methu'selah	mē-thū-sē-lâ
Mal'chielites	măl-kĭ-ĕl-īts	Mehol'athite	mē-hŏl-ăth-ĭt	Meu'nim	mē-ū-nĭm
Malchi'jah	măl-kī-jâ	Mehu'jael	mē-hū-jā-ĕl	Mez'ahab	mĕz-ā-hăb
Malchi'ram	măl-kī-răm	Mehu'man	mē-hū-măn	Mi'amin	mī-ă-mĭn
Mal'chishu'a	măl-kĭ-shū-â	Mehu'nim	mē-hū-nĭm	Mib'har	mĭb-hâr
Mal'chus	măl-kŭs	Mejar'kon	mē-jâr-kŏn	Mib'sam	mĭb-săm
Male'leel	mā-lē-lē-ĕl	Mek'onah	mĕk-ō-nâ	Mib'zar	mĭb-zâr
Mal'lothi	măl-lō-thī	Mel'ati'ah	mĕl-ā-tī-â	Mi'cah	mī-kâ
Mal'luch	măl-lŭk	Mel'chi	mĕl-kī	Mica'iah	mī-kā-yâ
Mama'ias	mâ-mā-yăs	Melchi'ah	mĕl-kī-â	Mi'cha	mī-kâ
Mam're	măm-rē	Melchis'edec	mĕl-kĭz-ē-dĕk	Mi'chah	mĭ-kâ
Man'aen	măn-ā-ĕn	Melchiz'edek	mĕl-kĭz-ē-dĕk	Micha'iah	mĭ-kā-yâ
Man'ahath	măn-ā-hăth	Mel'chishu'a	mĕl-kĭ-shū-â	Mi'chal	mī-kăl
Mana'hethites	mâ-nā-hĕth-īts	Me'lea	mē-lē-â	Mich'mas	mĭk-măs
Manas'seh	mā-năs-sĕ	Me'lech	mē-lĕk	Mich'mash	mĭk-măsh
Manas'ses	mā-năs-sēz	Mel'icu	mĕl-ĭ-kū	Mich'methah	mĭk-mē-thâ
Manas'sites	mā-năs-sīts	Mel'ita	mĕl-ĭ-tâ	Mich'ri	mĭk-rī
Ma'neh	mā-nĕ	Mel'zar	mĕl-zâr	Mich'tam	mĭk-tăm
Mano'ah	mā-nō-â	Mem'phis	mĕm-fĭs	Mid'din	mĭd-dĭn
Ma'och	mā-ŏk	Memu'can	mē-mū-kăn	Mig'dalel	mĭg-dăl-ĕl
Ma'on	mā-ŏn	Men'ahem	mĕn-ā-hĕm	Mig'dalgad	mĭg-dăl-găd
Ma'onites	mā-ŏn-īts	Me'nan	mē-năn	Mig'dol	mĭg-dŏl
Ma'ra	mā-râ	Me'ne	mē-nē	Mig'ron	mĭg-rŏn
Ma'rah	mā-râ	Meon'enim	mē-ŏn-ē-nĭm	Mig'amin	mĭg-ā-mĭn
Mar'alah	măr-ă-lâ	Meon'othai	mē-ŏn-ō-thai	Mik'loth	mĭk-lŏth
Mar'ana'tha	măr-ă-nā-thâ	Meph'aath	mĕf-ā-ăth	Mikne'iah	mĭk-nē-yâ
Mare'sha	mā-rē-shâ	Mephib'osheth	mē-fĭb-ō-shĕth	Mil'ala'i	mĭl-â-lā-ī
Mare'shah	mā-rē-shâ	Me'rab	mē-răb	Mil'cah	mĭl-kâ
Ma'roth	mā-rŏth	Mer'ai'ah	mĕr-ā-ĭ-â	Mil'com	mĭl-kŏm
Mar'sena	mâr-sē-nâ	Mera'ioth	mē-rā-yŏth	Mile'tus	mī-lē-tŭs
Mas'chil	măs-kĭl	Me'ran	mē-răn	Mille'tum	mĭl-lē-tŭm
Ma'shal	mā-shăl	Mer'ari	mĕr-ā-rī	Mil'lo	mĭl-lō
Masi'as	mā-sī-ăs	Mer'arites	mĕr-ā-rīts	Mini'amin	mī-nĭ-â-mĭn
Mas'rekah	măs-rē-kâ	Mer'atha'im	mĕr-â-thā-ĭm	Min'ni	mĭn-nī
Mas'sa	măs-sâ	Mercu'rius	mêr-kū-rĭ-ŭs	Min'nith	mĭn-nĭth
Mas'sah	măs-sâ	Me'red	mē-rĕd	Miph'kad	mĭf-kăd
Mathu'sala	mā-thū-sā-lâ	Mer'emoth	mĕr-ē-mŏth	Mir'ma	mêr-mâ
Ma'tred	mā-trĕd	Me'res	mē-rēz	Mis'gab	mĭs-găb
Ma'tri	mā-trī	Mer'ibah	mĕr-ĭ-bâ	Mish'ael	mĭsh-â-ĕl
Mat'tan	măt-tăn	Mer'ibah Ka'desh	mĕr-ĭ-bâ kā-dĕsh	Mi'shal	mī-shăl
Mat'tanah	măt-tā-nâ	Mer'ibba'al	mĕr-ĭb-bā-ăl	Mi'sham	mī-shăm
Mat'tani'ah	măt-tā-nī-â	Mero'dach-bal'adan or Mer'odach-bal'adan	mē-rō-dăk-băl-ā-dăn	Mi'sheal	mī-shē-ăl
Mat'tatha	măt-tā-thâ			Mish'ma	mĭsh-mă
Mat'tathah	măt-tā-thâ			Mishman'nah	mĭsh-măn-nâ

Vowels. — Lāte, căt, câr; mēte, mĕt, têrm; sīte, sĭt; lōne, lŏt, fôr; rūde, hŭt, pût; oi like oil; ai like aye.

Bible Word Pronunciation

V. Gilbert Beers, *The Book of Life*, 24 vols. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1980), 23:93-111 (13 of 19)

Mish'raites	mĭsh-râ-ĭts
Mis'par	mĭs-pâr
Mis'pereth	mĭs-pē-rĕth
Mis'rephothma'im	mĭs-rē-fŏth-mā-ĭm
Mis'sabib	mĭs-sā-bĭb
Mith'cah	mĭth-kâ
Mith'nite	mĭth-nīt
Mith'redath	mĭth-rē-dăth
Mit'yle'ne	mĭt-ĭ-lē-nē
Mi'zar	mī-zâr
Miz'pah	mĭz-pâ
Miz'par	mĭz-pâr
Miz'peh	mĭz-pĕ
Miz'raim	mĭz-rā-ĭm
Miz'zah	mĭz-zâ
Mna'son	nā-sŏn
Mo'adi'ah	mō-ā-dī-â
Moch'mur	mŏk-mŭr
Mol'adah	mŏl-ā-dâ
Mo'lech	mō-lĕk
Mo'lid	mō-lĭd
Mo'loch	mō-lŏk
Mo'rasthite	mō-răs-thīt
Mo'reh	mō-rĕ
Mor'eshethgath	mŏr-ĕsh-ĕth-găth
Mor'ians	mō-rĭ-ănz
Mose'ra	mō-sē-râ
Mose'roth	mō-sē-rŏth
Mo'ses	mō-sĕz
Mo'za	mō-zâ
Mo'zah	mō-zâ
Mup'pim	mŭp-pĭm
Mu'shi	mū-shĭ
Mu'shites	mŭ-shīts
Muthlab'ben	mŭth-lăb-bĕn
My'ra	mī-râ
My'sia	mĭ-shĭ-ā

N

Na'am	nā-ăm
Na'amah	nā-â-mâ
Na'aman	nā-â-măn
Na'amathite	nā-â-mâ-thīt
Na'amites	nā-â-mīts
Na'arah	nā-â-râ
Na'arai	nā-â-rai
Na'aran	nā-â-răn
Na'arath	nā-â-răth
Naash'on	nā-ăsh-ŏn
Naas'son	nā-ăs-sŏn
Na'bal	nā-băl
Nab'athe'ans	năb-ā-thē-ănz
Na'both	nā-bŏth
Na'chon	nā-kŏn
Na'chor	nā-kŏr
Na'dab	nā-dăb
Nag'ge	năg-gē
Na'halal	nā-hâ-lăl
Naha'liel	nā-hā-lĭ-ĕl
Nahal'lal	nā-hăl-lăl
Na'halol	nā-hâ-lŏl
Na'ham	nā-hăm
Naham'ani	nā-hăm-ā-nĭ
Nahar'ai	nā-hăr-ā-ī
Na'hara'im	nā-hâ-rā-ĭm
Na'hari	nā-hâ-rī
Na'hash	nā-hăsh
Na'hath	nā-hăth
Nah'bi	nâ-bī
Na'hor	nā-hŏr
Nah'shon	nâ-shŏn
Na'hum	nā-hŭm
Na'in	nā-ĭn
Na'ioth	nā-yŏth
Nao'mi	nā-ō-mī
Na'phish	nā-fĭsh
Naph'tali	năf-tā-lī
Naph'tuhim	năf-tū-hĭm
Na'shon	nā-shŏn
Na'than	nā-thăn
Nathan'ael	nā-thăn-ā-ĕl
Na'thanme'lech	nā-thăn-mē-lĕk
Na'um	nā-ŭm
Naz'arene'	năz-ā-rēn
Naz'areth	năz-ā-rĕth
Naz'arite	năz-ā-rīt
Ne'ah	nē-â
Neap'olis	nē-ăp-ō-lĭs
Ne'ari'ah	nē-â-rī-â
Neb'ai	nĕb-ā-ī
Neba'ioth	nē-bā-yŏth
Neba'joth	nē-bā-jŏth
Nebal'lat	nē-bâl-lăt
Ne'bat	nē-băt
Ne'bo	nē-bō
Neb'uchadnez'zar	nĕb-ū-kăd-nĕz-zâr
Neb'uchadrez'zar	nĕb-ū-kăd-rĕz-zâr
Neb'ushas'ban	nĕb-ū-shăs-băn
Neb'uzara'dan	nĕb-ū-zâr-ā-dăn
Ne'cho	nē-kō
Ned'abi'ah	nĕd-ā-bī-â
Neg'inoth	nĕg-ĭ-nŏth
Nehel'amite	nē-hĕl-ā-mĭt
Ne'hemi'ah	nē-hē-mī-â
Ne'hiloth	nē-hī-lŏth
Ne'hum	nē-hŭm
Nehush'ta	nē-hŭsh-tâ
Nehush'tan	nē-hŭsh-tăn
Nei'el	nē-ī-ĕl
Ne'keb	nē-kĕb
Neko'da	nē-kō-dâ
Nemu'el	nē-mū-ĕl
Nemu'elites	nē-mū-ĕl-īts
Ne'pheg	nē-fĕg
Ne'phish	nē-fĭsh
Nephish'esim	nē-fĭsh-ē-sĭm
Neph'thalim	nĕf-thā-lĭm
Neph'toah	nĕf-tō-â
Nephu'sim	nē-fū-sĭm
Nep'thali	nĕp-thā-lī
Nep'thalim	nĕp-thā-lĭm
Ner	nêr
Ne'reus	nē-rūs
Ner'gal	nêr-găl
Ner'galshare'zer	nêr-găl-shā-rē-zêr
Ne'ri	nē-rī
Neri'ah	nē-rī-â
Ne'ro	nē-rō
Nethan'eel	nē-thăn-ē-ĕl
Neth'ani'ah	nĕth-ā-nī-â
Neth'inims	nĕth-ĭ-nĭms
Neto'phah	nē-tō-fâ
Netoph'athi	nē-tŏf-ā-thī
Netoph'athite	nē-tŏf-ā-thĭt
Nezi'ah	nē-zī-â
Ne'zib	nē-zĭb
Nib'haz	nĭb-hăz
Nib'shan	nĭb-shăn
Nic'ode'mus	nĭk-ō-dē-mŭs
Nic'ola'itans	nĭk-ō-lā-ĭ-tănz
Nic'olas	nĭk-ō-lăs
Nicop'olis	nī-kŏp-ō-lĭs
Ni'ger	nī-gêr
Nim'rah	nĭm-râ
Nim'rim	nĭm-rĭm
Nim'rod	nĭm-rŏd
Nim'shi	nĭm-shĭ
Nin'eve	nĭn-ē-vĕ
Nin'eveh	nĭn-ē-vĕ
Nin'evites	nĭn-ē-vīts
Ni'san	nī-săn
Nis'roch	nĭs-rŏk
No'adi'ah	nō-â-dī-â
No'ah	nō-â
No'a'mon	nō-ā-mŏn
Nob	nŏb
No'bah	nō-bâ
Nod	nŏd
No'dab	nō-dăb
No'e	nō-ĕ
No'ga	nō-gâ
No'gah	nō-gâ
No'hah	nō-hâ
Non	nŏn
Noph	nŏf
No'phah	nō-fâ
Nun	nŭn
Nym'pha	nĭm-făs

O

O'badi'ah	ō-bâ-dī-â
O'bal	ō-băl
O'bed	ō-bĕd
O'bede'dom	ō-bĕd-ē-dŏm
O'bil	ō-bĭl
O'both	ō-bŏth
Oc'ran	ŏk-răn
O'ded	ō-dĕd
O'had	ō-hăd
O'hel	ō-hĕl
Ol'ivet	ŏl-ĭ-vĕt
Olym'pas	ō-lĭm-păs
O'mar	ō-mâr
O'mega	ō-mē-gâ
Om'ri	ŏm-rī
O'nam	ō-năm
O'nan	ō-năn
Ones'imus	ō-nĕs-ĭ-mŭs
On'esiph'orus	ŏn-ē-sĭf-ō-rŭs

Consonants. — Ch in chin, g in go, th in thin, *th* in *th*at, y in yet, zh like z in azure.

Bible Word Pronunciation

V. Gilbert Beers, *The Book of Life*, 24 vols. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1980), 23:93-111 (14 of 19)

Oni'as	ō-nī-ăs
O'no	ō-nō
O'phel	ō-fĕl
O'phir	ō-fêr
Oph'ni	ŏf-nī
Oph'rah	ŏf-râ
O'reb	ō-rĕb
O'ren	ō-rĕn
Ori'on	ō-rī-ŏn
Or'nan	ôr-năn
Or'pah	ôr-pâ
Oshe'a	ō-shē-â
Oth'ni	ŏth-nī
Oth'niel	ŏth-nī-ĕl
O'zem	ō-zĕm
Ozi'as	ō-zī-ăs
Oz'ni	ŏz-nī
Oz'nites	ŏz-nīts

P

Pa'arai	pā-â-rai
Pa'dan	pā-dăn
Pa'dana'ram	pā-dăn-ā-răm
Pa'don	pā-dŏn
Pa'giel	pā-gī-ĕl
Pa'hathmo'ab	pā-hăth-mō-ăb
Pa'i	pā-ī
Pa'lal	pā-lăl
Pal'esti'na	păl-ĕs-tī-nâ
Pal'lu	păl-lū
Pal'luites	păl-lū-īts
Pal'ti	păl-tī
Pal'tiel	păl-tī-ĕl
Pal'tite	păl-tīt
Pamphyl'ia	păm-fĭl-ī-â
Pan'nag	păn-năg
Pa'phos	pā-fŏs
Pa'rah	pā-râ
Pa'ran	pā-răn
Par'bar	pâr-bâr
Parmash'ta	pâr-măsh-tâ
Par'menas	pâr-mē-năs
Par'nach	pâr-năk
Pa'rosh	pā-rŏsh
Parshan'datha	pâr-shăn-dā-thâ
Par'thians	pâr-thī-ănz
Par'uah	pâr-ū-â
Par'vaim	pâr-vā-īm
Pa'sach	pā-săk
Pas'dam'mim	păs-dăm-mĭm
Pase'ah	pā-sē-â
Pash'ur	păsh-ŭr
Pat'ara	păt-ā-râ
Path'ros	păth-rŏs
Pathru'sim	păth-rū-sĭm
Pat'mos	păt-mŏs
Pat'robas	păt-rō-băs
Pa'u	pā-ū
Ped'ahel	pĕd-â-hĕl
Pedah'zur	pē-dâ-zŭr
Peda'iah	pē-dā-yâ
Pe'kah	pē-kâ
Pek'ahi'ah	pĕk-ā-hī-â
Pe'kod	pē-kŏd
Pel'ai'ah	pĕl-ā-ī-â
Pel'ali'ah	pĕl-ā-lī-â
Pel'ati'ah	pĕl-ā-tī-â
Pe'leg	pē-lĕg
Pe'let	pē-lĕt
Pe'leth	pē-lĕth
Pe'lethites	pē-lĕth-īts
Pel'onite	pĕl-ō-nīt
Peni'el	pē-nī-ĕl
Penin'nah	pē-nĭn-nâ
Pentap'olis	pĕn-tăp-ō-lĭs
Penu'el	pē-nū-ĕl
Pe'or	pē-ôr
Per'azim	pĕr-ā-zĭm
Pe'resh	pē-rĕsh
Pe'rez	pē-rĕz
Pe'rezuz'za	pē-rĕz-ŭz-zâ
Per'ga	pêr-gâ
Per'gamos	pêr-gā-mŏs
Peri'da	pē-rī-dâ
Per'izzite	pĕr-ĭz-zīt
Per'menas	pêr-mē-năs
Per'sis	pêr-sĭs
Peru'da	pē-rū-dâ
Peth'ahi'ah	pĕth-ā-hī-â
Pe'thor	pē-thôr
Pethu'el	pē-thū-ĕl
Peul'thai	pē-ŭl-thai
Pha'lec	fā-lĕk
Pha'leg	fā-lĕg
Phal'lu	făl-lū
Phal'ti	făl-tī
Phal'tiel	făl-tī-ĕl
Phanu'el	fā-nū-ĕl
Pha'raoh	fā-rā-ō
Pha'raohhoph'ra	fā-rā-ō-hŏf-râ
Pha'raohne'choh	fā-rā-ō-nē-kō
Pha'res	fā-rĕz
Pha'rez	fā-rĕz
Pha'rosh	fā-rŏsh
Phar'par	fâr-pâr
Phar'zites	fâr-zīts
Phase'ah	fā-sē-â
Phe'be	fē-bē
Pheni'ce	fē-nĭ-sē
Pheni'cia	fē-nĭ-shĭ-â
Phi'chol	fī-kŏl
Phil'adel'phia	fĭl-ā-dĕl-fī-â
Phile'mon	fī-lē-mŏn
Phile'tus	fī-lē-tŭs
Phil'ip	fĭl-ĭp
Philip'pi	fī-lĭp-pī
Philip'pians	fī-lĭp-pĭ-ănz
Philis'tia	fī-lĭs-tĭ-â
Philis'tim	fī-lĭs-tĭm
Philis'tine	fī-lĭs-tĭn
Philol'ogus	fī-lŏl-ō-gŭs
Phin'eas	fĭn-ē-ăs
Phin'ehas	fĭn-ē-hăs
Phle'gon	flē-gŏn
Phryg'ia	frĭj-ĭ-â
Phryg'ian	frĭj-ĭ-ăn
Phu'rah	fū-râ
Phu'rim	fū-rĭm
Phut	fŭt
Phu'vah	fū-vâ
Phygel'lus	fī-jĕl-lŭs
Pi'be'seth	pī-bē-sĕth
Pi'hahi'roth	pī-hā-hī-rŏth
Pi'late	pī-lāt
Pil'dash	pĭl-dăsh
Pil'eha	pĭl-ē-hâ
Pile'ser	pī-lē-sêr
Pilne'ser	pĭl-nē-sêr
Pil'tai	pĭl-tai
Pi'non	pī-nŏn
Pi'ram	pī-răm
Pir'athon	pĭr-ā-thŏn
Pir'athonite	pĭr-ā-thŏn-īt
Pis'gah	pĭz-gâ
Pisid'ia	pī-sĭd-ĭ-â
Pi'son	pī-sŏn
Pis'pah	pĭz-pâ
Pi'thom	pī-thŏm
Pi'thon	pī-thŏn
Ple'iades	plē-yâ-dēz
Poch'ereth	pŏk-ē-rĕth
Pon'tius Pi'late	pŏn-shĭ-ŭs pī-lāt
Pon'tus	pŏn-tŭs
Por'atha	pŏr-ā-thâ
Por'cius	pŏr-shĭ-ŭs
Pot'iphar	pŏt-ĭ-fâr
Potiph'erah	pō-tĭf-ē-râ
Pris'ca	prĭs-kâ
Priscil'la	prĭs-sĭl-lâ
Proch'orus	prŏk-ō-rŭs
Ptol'ema'is	tŏl-ē-mū-ĭs
Pu'a	pū-â
Pu'ah	pū-â
Pub'lius	pŭb-lĭ-ŭs
Pu'dens	pū-dĕnz
Pu'hites	pū-hīts
Pul	pŭl
Pu'nites	pū-nīts
Pu'non	pū-nŏn
Pu'rim	pū-rĭm
Put	pŭt
Pute'oli	pū-tē-ō-l
Pu'tiel	pū-tĭ-ĕl

Q

Quar'tus	quâr-tŭs

R

Ra'amah	rā-â-mâ
Ra'ami'ah	rā-â-mī-â
Raam'ses	rā-ăm-sēz
Rab'bah	răb-bâ
Rab'bath	răb-băth
Rab'bi	răb-bi
Rab'bith	răb-bĭth
Rabbo'ni	răb-bō-nī
Rab'mag	răb-măg

Vowels. — Lāte, căt, câr; mēte, mĕt, têrm; sīte, sĭt; lōne, lŏt, fôr; rūde, hŭt, pût; oi like oil; ai like aye.

Bible Word Pronunciation

V. Gilbert Beers, *The Book of Life*, 24 vols. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1980), 23:93-111 (15 of 19)

Rab'saris	răb-sā-rĭs
Rab'shakeh	răb-shā-kĕ
Ra'ca	rā-kȧ
Ra'cha	rā-kȧ
Ra'chab	rā-kăb
Ra'chal	rā-kăl
Ra'chel	rā-chĕl
Rad'dai	răd-dā-ī
Ragu'el	rā-gū-ĕl
Ra'hab	rā-hăb
Ra'ham	rā-hăm
Ra'hel	rā-hĕl
Ra'kem	rā-kĕm
Rak'kath	răk-kăth
Rak'kon	răk-kŏn
Ra'ma	rā-mȧ
Ra'mah	rā-mȧ
Ra'math	rā-măth
Ra'matha'im	rā-măth-ā-ĭm
Ra'mathite	rā-măth-ĭt
Ra'mathle'hi	rā-măth-lē-hī
Ra'mathmiz'peh	rā-măth-mĭz-pĕ
Rame'ses	rā-mē-sēz
Rami'ah	rā-mī-ȧ
Ra'moth	rā-mŏth
Ra'mothgil'ead	rā-mŏth-gĭl-ē-ăd
Ra'pha	rā-fȧ
Ra'phu	rā-fū
Re'ai'a	rē-ā-ī-ȧ
Re'ai'ah	rē-ā-ī-ȧ
Re'ba	rē-bȧ
Rebec'ca	rē-bĕk-kȧ
Rebek'ah	rē-bĕk-ȧ
Re'chab	rē-kăb
Re'chabites	rē-kăb-ĭts or rĕ-kăb-ĭts
Re'chah	rē-kȧ
Re'ela'iah	rē-ĕl-ā-yȧ
Re'gem	rē-gĕm
Re'gemme'lech	rē-gĕm-mē-lĕk
Re'habi'ah	rē-hā-bī-ȧ
Re'hob	rē-hŏb
Re'hobo'am	rē-hō-bō-ăm
Reho'both	rē-hō-bŏth
Re'hu	rē-hū
Re'hum	rē-hŭm
Re'i	rē-ī
Re'kem	rē-kĕm
Rem'ali'ah	rĕm-ā-lī-ȧ
Re'meth	rē-mĕth
Rem'mon	rĕm-mŏn
Rem'monmeth'oar	rēm-mŏn-mĕth-ō-ăr
Rem'phan	rĕm-făn
Re'phael	rē-fā-ĕl
Re'phah	rē-fȧ
Reph'ai'ah	rĕf-ā-ī-ȧ
Reph'aim	rĕf-ā-ĭm
Reph'idim	rĕf-ī-dĭm
Re'sen	rē-sĕn
Re'sheph	rē-shĕf
Re'u	rē-ū
Reu'ben	rū-bĕn
Reu'benites	rū-bĕn-ĭts
Reu'el	rē-ū-ĕl
Reu'mah	rū-mȧ
Re'zeph	rē-zĕf
Rezi'a	rē-zī-ȧ
Re'zin	rē-zĭn
Re'zon	rē-zŏn
Rhe'gium	rē-jĭ-ŭm
Rhe'sa	rē-sȧ
Rho'da	rō-dȧ
Rhodes	rōdz
Ri'bai	rī-bai
Rib'lah	rĭb-lȧ
Rim'mon	rĭm-mŏn
Rim'mon-pa'rez	rĭm-mŏn-pā-rĕz
Rin'nah	rĭn-nȧ
Ri'phath	rī-făth
Ris'sah	rĭs-sȧ
Rith'mah	rĭth-mȧ
Riz'pah	rĭz-pȧ
Rod'anim	rŏd-ā-nĭm
Roge'lim	rō-gē-lĭm
Roh'gah	rō-gȧ
Romam'tie'zer	rō-măm-tī-ē-zĕr
Ro'man	rō-măn
Rome	rōm
Rosh	rŏsh
Ru'fus	rū-fŭs
Ru'hamah	rū-hā-mȧ
Ru'mah	rū-mȧ
Ruth	rūth

S

Sa'bachtha'ni	sā-băk-thā-nī
Sab'aoth	săb-ā-ŏth
Sa'bat	sā-băt
Sab'di	săb-dī
Sabe'ans	sā-bē-ănz
Sab'ta	săb-tȧ
Sab'tah	săb-tȧ
Sab'techa	săb-tē-kȧ
Sab'techah	săb-tē-kȧ
Sa'car	sā-kȧr
Sad'ducees	săd-dū-sēz
Sa'doc	sā-dŏk
Sa'hadu'tha	sā-hȧ-dū-thȧ
Sa'la	sā-lȧ
Sa'lah	sā-lȧ
Sal'amis	săl-ā-mĭs
Sala'thiel	sā-lā-thĭ-ĕl
Sal'cah	săl-kȧ
Sal'chah	săl-kȧ
Sa'lem	sā-lĕm
Sa'lim	sā-lĭm
Sal'lai	săl-lai
Sal'lu	săl-lū
Sal'lum	săl-lŭm
Sal'ma	săl-mȧ
Sal'mah	săl-mȧ
Sal'mon	săl-mĕn
Salmo'ne	săl-mō-nē
Salo'me	sā-lō-mē
Sa'lu	sā-lū
Sama'ria	sā-mā-rĭ-ȧ
Samar'itan	sā-măr-ĭ-tăn
Sam'garne'bo	săm-gȧr-nē-bō
Sam'lah	săm-lȧ
Sa'mos	sā-mŏs
Sam'othra'cia	săm-ō-thrā-shĭ-ȧ
Sam'son	săm-sŏn
Sam'uel	săm-ū-ĕl
Sanbal'lat	săn-băl-lăt
Sansan'nah	săn-săn-nȧ
Saph	săf
Sa'phir	sā-fĕr
Sapphi'ra	săf-fī-rȧ
Sa'ra	sā-rȧ
Sa'rah	sā-rȧ
Sa'rai	sā-rai
Sa'raph	sā-răf
Sar'dis	sȧr-dĭs
Sar'dites	sȧr-dīts
Sarep'ta	sā-rĕp-tȧ
Sar'gon	sȧr-gŏn
Sa'rid	sā-rĭd
Sa'ron	sā-rŏn
Sarse'chim	sȧr-sē-kĭm
Sa'ruch	sā-rŭk
Sce'va	sē-vȧ
Scyth'ian	sĭth-ĭ-ăn
Se'ba	sē-bȧ
Se'bat	sē-băt
Sec'acah	sĕk-ā-kȧ
Se'chu	sē-kū
Secun'dus	sē-kŭn-dŭs
Se'gub	sē-gŭb
Se'ir	sē-ĕr
Se'irath	sē-ĭ-răth
Se'la	sē-lȧ
Se'lah	sē-lȧ
Se'laham'mahle'koth	sē-lȧ-hăm-mā-lē-kŏth
Se'led	sē-lĕd
Seleu'cia	sē-lū-shĭ-ȧ
Sem	sĕm
Sem'achi'ah	sĕm-ū-kī-ȧ
Sem'ai'ah	sĕm-ū-ĭ-ȧ
Sem'ei	sĕm-ē-ī
Sena'ah	sē-nū-ȧ
Se'neh	sē-nĕ
Se'nir	sē-nĕr
Sennach'erib	sĕn-năk-ē-rĭb
Semi'ah	sē-mī-ȧ
Seo'rim	sē-ō-rĭm
Se'phar	sē-fȧr
Seph'arad	sĕf-ā-răd
Seph'arva'im	sĕf-ȧr-vā-ĭm
Se'pharvites	sē-fȧr-vīts
Sephe'la	sē-fē-lȧ
Se'rah	sē-rȧ
Ser'ai'ah	sĕr-ā-ĭ-ȧ
Se'red	sē-rĕd
Ser'gius	sĕr-jĭ-ŭs
Se'rug	sē-rŭg
Seth	sĕth

Consonants.—Ch in chin, g in go, th in thin, *th* in *th*at, y in yet, zh like z in azure.

Bible Word Pronunciation

V. Gilbert Beers, *The Book of Life,* 24 vols. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1980), 23:93-111 (16 of 19)

Se'thur	sē-thŭr
Sha'alab'bin	shā-ăl-ăb-bĭn
Shaal'bim	shā-ăl-bĭm
Shaal'bonite	shā-ăl-bō-nīt
Sha'aph	shā-ăf
Sha'ara'im	shā-â-rā-ĭm
Shaash'gaz	shā-ăsh-găz
Shabbeth'ai	shă-bĕth-ā-ī
Shach'ia	shăk-ī-â
Shad'dai	shăd-dā-ī or shăd-dai
Sha'drach	shā-drăk
Sha'ge	shā-gē
Sha'hara'im	shā-hâ-rā-ĭm
Shahaz'imah	shā-hăz-ī-mâ
Shahaz'imath	shā-hăz-ī-măth
Sha'lem	shā-lĕm
Sha'lim	shā-lĭm
Shal'isha	shăl-ī-shâ
Shal'lecheth	shăl-lē-kĕth
Shal'lum	shăl-lŭm
Shal'lun	shăl-lŭn
Shal'mai	shăl-mā-ī
Shal'man	shăl-măn
Shal'mane'ser	shăl-mā-nē-zêr
Sha'ma	shā-mâ
Sham'ari'ah	shăm-ā-rī-â
Sha'med	shā-mĕd
Sha'mer	shā-mêr
Sham'gar	shăm-gâr
Sham'huth	shăm-hŭth
Sha'mir	shā-mêr
Sham'ma	shăm-mâ
Sham'mah	shăm-mâ
Sham'mai	shăm-mā-ī
Sham'moth	shăm-mŏth
Shammu'a	shăm-mū-â
Shammu'ah	shăm-mū-â
Sham'shera'i	shăm-shē-rā-ī
Sha'pham	shā-făm
Sha'phan	shā-făn
Sha'phat	shā-făt
Sha'pher	shā-fêr
Shar'ai	shăr-ā-ī
Shar'aim	shăr-ā-ĭm
Sha'rar	shā-râr
Share'zer	shā-rē-zêr
Shar'on	shăr-ŏn
Shar'onite	shăr-ŏn-īt
Sharu'hen	shā-rū-hĕn
Shash'ai	shăsh-ā-ī
Sha'shak	shā-shăk
Sha'ul	shā-ŭl
Sha'ulites	shā-ŭl-īts
Sha'veh	shā-vē
Sha'veh Kir'iatha'im	shā-vē-kĭr-ī-ă-thā-ĭm
Shav'sha	shăv-shâ
She'al	shē-ăl
Sheal'tiel	shē-ăl-tĭ-ĕl
She'ari'ah	shē-ă-rī-â
She'arja'shub	shē-âr-jā-shŭb
She'ba	shē-bâ
She'bah	shē-bâ
She'bam	shē-băm
Sheb'ani'ah	shĕb-ā-nī-â
Sheb'arim	shĕb-ā-rĭm
She'ber	shē-bêr
Sheb'na	shĕb-nâ
Sheb'uel	shĕb-ū-ĕl
Shec'ani'ah	shĕk-â-nī-â
Shech'ani'ah	shĕk-â-nī-â
She'chem	shē-kĕm
She'chemites	shē-kĕm-īts
Shed'eur	shĕd-ē-ŭr
She'hari'ah	shē-hā-rī-â
She'lah	shē-lâ
She'lanites	shē-lăn-īts
Shel'emi'ah	shĕl-ē-mī-â
She'leph	shē-lĕf
She'lesh	shē-lĕsh
Shel'omi	shĕl-ō-mī
Shel'omith	shĕl-ō-mĭth
Shel'omoth	shĕl-ō-mŏth
Shelu'miel	shē-lū-mī-ĕl
Shem	shĕm
She'ma	shē-mâ
Shema'ah	shē-mā-â
Shem'ai'ah	shĕm-ā-ī-â
Shem'ari'ah	shĕm-ā-rī-â
Shem'eber	shĕm-ē-bêr
She'mer	shē-mêr
Shemi'da	shē-mī-dâ
Shemi'dah	shē-mī-dâ
Shemi'daites	shē-mī-dâ-īts
Shem'inith	shĕm-ī-nĭth
Shemir'amoth	shē-mĭr-ā-mŏth
Shemu'el	shē-mū-ĕl
Shen	shĕn
Shena'zar	shĕ-nā-zâr
She'nir	shē-nêr
She'pham	shē-făm
Sheph'athi'ah	shĕf-ā-thī-â
Sheph'ati'ah	shĕf-ā-tī-â
She'phi	shē-fī
She'pho	shē-fō
Shephu'phan	shē-fū-făn
She'rah	shē-râ
Sher'ebi'ah	shĕr-ē-bī-â
She'resh	shē-rĕsh
Shere'zer	shē-rē-zêr
She'shach	shē-shăk
She'shai	shē-shai
She'shan	shē-shăn
Sheshbaz'zar	shĕsh-băz-zâr
Sheth	shĕth
She'thar	shē-thâr
She'tharboz'nai	shē-thâr-bŏz-nā-ī
She'va	shē-vâ
Shib'boleth	shĭb-bō-lĕth
Shib'mah	shĭb-mâ
Shi'cron	shī-krŏn
Shigga'ion	shĭg-gā-yŏn
Shigi'onoth or	shĭ-gī-ō-nŏth
Shigio'noth	
Shi'hon	shī-hŏn
Shi'hor	shī-hôr
Shi'horlib'nath	shī-hôr-lĭb-năth
Shil'hi	shĭl-hī
Shil'him	shĭl-hĭm
Shil'lem	shĭl-lĕm
Shil'lemites	shĭl-lĕm-īts
Shi'lo	shī-lō
Shilo'ah	shī-lō-â
Shi'loh	shī-lō
Shilo'ni	shī-lō-nī
Shi'lonite	shī-lō-nīt
Shil'shah	shĭl-shâ
Shim'ea	shĭm-ē-â
Shim'eam	shĭm-ē-ăm
Shim'eath	shĭm-ē-ăth
Shim'eathites	shĭm-ē-ăth-īts
Shim'ei	shĭm-ē-ī
Shim'eon	shĭm-ē-ŏn
Shim'hi	shĭm-hī
Shi'mi	shī-mī
Shim'ites	shĭm-īts
Shim'ma	shĭm-mâ
Shi'mon	shī-mŏn
Shim'rath	shĭm-răth
Shim'ri	shĭm-rī
Shim'rith	shĭm-rĭth
Shim'rom	shĭm-rŏm
Shim'ron	shĭm-rŏn
Shim'ronites	shĭm-rŏn-īts
Shim'ronme'ron	shĭm-rŏn-mē-rŏn
Shim'shai	shĭm-shai
Shi'nab	shī-năb
Shi'nar	shī-nâr
Shi'on	shī-ŏn
Shi'phi	shī-fī
Shiph'mite	shĭf-mīt
Shiph'rah	shĭf-râ
Shiph'tan	shĭf-tăn
Shi'sha	shī-shâ
Shi'shak	shī-shăk
Shit'rai	shĭt-rā-ī
Shit'tim	shĭt-tĭm
Shi'za	shī-zâ
Sho'a	shō-â
Sho'ah	shō-â
Sho'bab	shō-băb
Sho'bach	shō-băk
Sho'bai	shō-bā-ī
Sho'bal	shō-băl
Sho'bek	shō-bĕk
Sho'bi	shō-bī
Sho'cho	shō-kō
Sho'choh	shō-kō
Sho'co	shō-kō
Sho'ham	shō-hăm
Sho'mer	shō-mêr
Sho'phach	shō-făk
Sho'phan	shō-făn
Shoshan'nim	shō-shăn-nĭm
Shoshan'nime'duth	shō-shăn-nĭm-ē-dŭth

Vowels. — Lāte, căt, câr; mēte, mĕt, têrm; sīte, sĭt; lōne, lŏt, fôr; rūde, hŭt, pût; oi like oil; ai like aye.

Bible Word Pronunciation

V. Gilbert Beers, *The Book of Life*, 24 vols. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1980), 23:93-111 (17 of 19)

Shu'a	shū-â
Shu'ah	shū-â
Shu'al	shū-ăl
Shu'bael	shū-bā-ĕl
Shu'ham	shū-hăm
Shu'hamites	shū-hăm-īts
Shu'hite	shū-hīt
Shu'lamite	shū-lăm-īt
Shu'mathites	shū-măth-īts
Shu'nammite	shū-năm-mīt
Shu'nem	shū-nĕm
Shu'ni	shū-nī
Shu'nites	shū-nīts
Shu'pham	shū-făm
Shu'phamites	shū-făm-īts
Shup'pim	shŭp-pĭm
Shur	shŭr
Shu'shan	shū-shăn
Shu'shane'duth	shū-shăn-ē-dŭth
Shu'thalhites	shū-thăl-hīts
Shu'thelah	shū-thē-lâ
Si'a	sī-â
Si'aha	sī-ā-hâ
Si'ba	sī-bâ
Sib'becai	sĭb-bē-kai
Sib'bechai	sĭb-bē-kai
Sib'boleth	sĭb-bō-lĕth
Sib'mah	sĭb-mâ
Sib'raim	sĭb-rā-ĭm
Si'chem	sī-chĕm
Sid'dim	sĭd-dĭm
Si'don	sī-dŏn
Sido'nians	sī-dō-nĭ-ănz
Sigi'onoth or Sigio'noth	sĭ-gī-ō-nŏth
Si'hon	sī-hŏn
Si'hor	sī-hôr
Si'las	sī-lăs
Sil'la	sĭl-lâ
Silo'ah	sī-lō-â
Silo'am	sī-lō-ăm
Silo'e	sī-lō-ē
Silva'nus	sĭl-vā-nŭs
Sim'eon	sĭm-ē-ŏn
Sim'eonites	sĭm-ē-ŏn-īts
Si'mon	sī-mŏn
Sim'ri	sĭm-rī
Sin	sĭn
Si'na	sī-nâ
Si'nai	sī-nai
Si'nim	sī-nĭm
Sin'ite	sĭn-ĭt
Si'on	sī-ŏn
Siph'moth	sĭf-mŏth
Sip'pai	sĭp-pai
Si'rah	sī-râ
Sir'ion	sĭr-ĭ-ŏn
Sisam'ai	sī-săm-ā-ī
Sis'era	sĭs-ē-râ
Sit'nah	sĭt-nâ
Si'van	sī-văn
Smyr'na	smêr-nâ
So'cho	sō-kō
So'choh	sō-kō
So'coh	sō-kō
So'di	sō-dī
Sod'om	sŏd-ŏm
Sod'oma	sŏd-ō-mâ
Sod'omites	sŏd-ŏm-īts
Sod'omitish	sŏd-ŏm-ĭt-ĭsh
Sop'ater	sŏp-ū-tĕr
Soph'ereth	sŏf-ē-rĕth
So'rek	sō-rĕk
Sosip'ater	sō-sĭp-ā-tĕr
Sos'thenes	sŏs-thĕ-nēz
So'tai	sō-tā-ī
Sta'chys	stā-kĭs
Steph'anas	stĕf-ā-năs
Sto'ics	stō-ĭks
Su'ah	sū-â
Suc'coth	sŭk-kŏth
Suc'cothbe'noth	sŭk-kŏth-bē-nŏth
Su'chathites	sū-kăth-īts
Suk'kiims	sŭk-kĭ-ĭmz
Su'sa	sū-zâ
Su'sanchites	sū-săn-kīts
Su'si	sū-sī
Sy'char	sī-kâr
Sy'chem	sī-kĕm
Sye'ne	sī-ē-nē
Syn'tyche	sĭn-tĭ-kē
Syr'acuse	sĭr-ā-kūs
Syr'ia	sĭr-ĭ-â
Syr'iama'achah	sĭr-ĭ-â-mā-â-kâ
Syr'iac	sĭr-ĭ-ăk
Syr'ian	sĭr-ĭ-ăn
Sy'ropheni'cian	sī-rō-fē-nĭ-shĭ-ăn

T

Ta'anach	tā-ă-năk
Ta'anathshi'loh	tā-ă-năth-shĭ-lō
Tab'baoth	tăb-bā-ŏth
Tab'bath	tăb-băth
Ta'beal	tā-bē-ăl
Ta'beel	tā-bē-ĕl
Tab'erah	tăb-ē-râ
Tab'itha	tăb-ĭ-thâ
Ta'bor	tā-bôr
Tab'rimon	tăb-rĭ-mŏn
Tach'monite	tăk-mō-nĭt
Tad'mor	tăd-môr
Ta'han	tā-hăn
Ta'hanites	tā-hăn-īts
Tahap'anes	tā-hăp-ā-nēz
Ta'hath	tā-hăth
Tah'panhes	tâ-păn-hēz
Tah'penes	tâ-pē-nēz
Tah'rea	tâ-rē-â
Tah'timhod'shi	tâ-tĭm-hŏd-shĭ
Tal'ithacu'mi	tăl-ĭ-thâ-kū-mĭ
Tal'mai	tăl-mai
Tal'mon	tăl-mŏn
Ta'mah	tā-mâ
Ta'mar	tā-mâr
Tam'muz	tăm-mŭz
Ta'nuch	tā-nŭk
Tan'humeth	tăn-hū-mĕth
Ta'phath	tā-făth
Taph'nes	tăf-nēz
Tap'puah	tăp-pū-â
Ta'rah	tā-râ
Tar'alah	tăr-ā-lâ
Ta'rea	tā-rē-â
Tar'pelites	târ-pĕl-īts
Tar'shish	târ-shĭsh
Tar'sus	târ-sŭs
Tar'tak	târ-tăk
Tar'tan	târ-tăn
Tat'nai	tăt-nā-ĭ
Te'bah	tē-bâ
Teb'ali'ah	tĕb-ā-lī-â
Te'beth	tē-bĕth
Tehaph'nehes	tē-hăf-nē-hēz
Tehin'nah	tē-hĭn-nâ
Te'kel	tē-kĕl
Teko'a	tē-kō-â
Teko'ah	tē-kō-â
Teko'ite	tē-kŏ-ĭt
Tel'abib	tĕl-ā-bĭb
Te'lah	tē-lâ
Tel'aim	tĕl-ā-ĭm
Telas'sar	tē-lăs-sâr
Te'lem	tē-lĕm
Tel'hare'sha	tĕl-hā-rē-shâ
Telhar'sa	tĕl-hâr-sâ
Telme'la	tĕl-mē-lâ
Te'ma	tē-mâ
Te'man	tē-măn
Tem'ani	tĕm-ā-nĭ
Te'manite	tē-măn-ĭt
Tem'eni	tĕm-ē-nĭ
Te'rah	tē-râ
Ter'aphim	tĕr-ā-fĭm
Te'resh	tē-rĕsh
Ter'tius	tĕr-shĭ-ŭs
Tertul'lus	tĕr-tŭl-lŭs
Thad'dæus	thăd-dē-ŭs
Tha'hash	thā-hăsh
Tha'mah	thā-mâ
Tha'mar	thā-mâr
Tha'ra	thā-râ
Thar'ra	thăr-râ
Thar'shish	thâr-shĭsh
Thar'sus	thâr-sŭs
Thas'si	thăs-sĭ
The'bez	thē-bĕz
Thela'sar	thē-lā-sâr
Theoph'ilus	thē-ŏf-ĭ-lŭs
Thes'salo'nians	thĕs-sā-lō-nĭ-ănz
Thes'saloni'ca	thĕs-sā-lō-nĭ-kâ
Theu'das	thū-dăs
Thim'nathah	thĭm-nā-thâ
Thra'cia	thrā-shĭ-â
Thum'mim	thŭm-mĭm
Thy'ati'ra	thĭ-ă-tĭ-râ
Tibe'rias	tĭ-bē-rĭ-ăs
Tibe'rius	tĭ-bē-rĭ-ŭs
Tib'hath	tĭb-hăth

Consonants. — Ch in chin, g in go, th in thin, *th* in *th*at, y in yet, zh like z in azure.

Bible Word Pronunciation

V. Gilbert Beers, *The Book of Life*, 24 vols. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1980), 23:93-111 (18 of 19)

Tib'ni	tĭb-nī
Ti'dal	tī-dăl
Tig'lathpile'ser	tĭg-lăth-pī-lē-sêr
Ti'gris	tī-grĭs
Tik'vah	tĭk-vâ
Tik'vath	tĭk-văth
Til'gathpilne'ser	tĭl-găth-pĭl-nē-sêr
Ti'lon	tī-lŏn
Timæ'us	tī-mē-ŭs
Time'us	tī-mē-ŭs
Tim'na	tĭm-nâ
Tim'nah	tĭm-nâ
Tim'nath	tĭm-năth
Tim'nathah	tĭm-nā-thâ
Tim'nathhe'res	tĭm-năth-hē-rēz
Tim'nathse'rah	tĭm-năth-sē-râ
Tim'nite	tĭm-nīt
Ti'mon	ti-mŏn
Timo'theus	tĭ-mō-thē-ŭs
Tim'othy	tĭm-ō-thĭ
Tiph'sah	tĭf-sâ
Ti'ras	tī-răs
Ti'rathites	tī-răth-īts
Tir'hakah	têr-hā-kâ
Tir'hanah	têr-hā-nâ
Tir'shatha	têr-shā-thâ
Tir'zah	têr-zâ
Tish'bite	tĭsh-bīt
Ti'tus	tī-tŭs
Ti'zite	tī-zīt
To'ah	tō-â
Tob'ad'oni'jah	tŏb-ăd-ō-nī-jâ
Tobi'ah	tō-bī-â
Tobi'jah	tō-bī-jâ
To'chem	tō-kĕm
Togar'mah	tō-gâr-mâ
To'hu	tō-hū
To'i	tō-ī
To'la	tō-lâ
To'lad	tō-lăd
To'laites	tō-lā-īts
To'phel	tō-fĕl
To'phet	tō-fĕt
To'pheth	tō-fĕth
To'u	tō-ū
Trach'oni'tis	trăk-ō-nī-tĭs
Tro'as	trō-ăs
Trogyl'lium	trō-gĭl-lĭ-ŭm
Troph'imus	trŏf-ĭ-mŭs
Tryphe'na	trī-fē-nâ
Trypho'sa	trī-fō-sâ
Tu'bal	tū-băl
Tu'balcain	tū-băl-kān
Tych'icus	tĭk-ĭ-kŭs
Tyran'nus	tĭ-răn-nŭs
Tyre	tīr
Tyr'ians	tĭr-ĭ-ănz
Ty'rus	tī-rŭs

U

U'cal	ū-kăl
U'el	ū-ĕl
U'lai	ū-lā-ī
U'lam	ū-lăm
Ul'la	ŭl-lâ
Um'mah	ŭm-mâ
Un'ni	ŭn-nī
Uphar'sin	ū-fâr-sĭn
U'phaz	ū-făz
Ur'bane	ŭr-bā-nē
U'ri	ū-rī
Uri'ah	ū-rī-ā
Uri'as	ū-rī-ăs
Uri'jah	ū-rī-jâ
U'rim	ū-rĭm
U'thai	ū-thā-ī
U'zai	ū-zā-ī
U'zal	ū-zăl
Uz'za	ŭz-zâ
Uz'zah	ŭz-zâ
Uz'zenshe'rah	ŭz-zĕn-shē-râ
Uz'zi	ŭz-zī
Uzzi'a	ŭz-zī-â
Uzzi'ah	ŭz-zī-â
Uz'ziel	ŭz-zī-ĕl
Uz'zielites	ŭz-zī-ĕl-īts

V

Vajez'atha	vā-jĕz-ā-thâ
Vani'ah	vā-nī-â
Vash'ni	văsh-nī
Vash'ti	văsh-tī
Voph'si	vŏf-sī

Z

Za'ana'im	zā-â-nā-ĭm
Za'anan	zā-â-năn
Za'anan'nim	zā-â-năn-nĭm
Za'avan	zā-â-văn
Za'bad	zā-băd
Zab'adæ'ans	zăb-ā-de-ănz
Zab'ade'ans	zăb-ā-dē-ănz
Zab'bai	zăb-bai
Zab'bud	zăb-bŭd
Zab'di	zăb-dī
Zab'diel	zăb-dĭ-ĕl
Za'bud	zā-bŭd
Zab'ulon	zăb-ū-lŏn
Zac'cai	zăk-kā-ī
Zacchæ'us	zăk-kē-ŭs
Zacche'us	zăk-kē-ŭs
Zac'chur	zăk-kŭr
Zac'cur	zăk-kŭr
Zach'ari'ah	zăk-ā-rī-â
Zach'ari'as	zăk-ā-rī-ăs
Za'cher	zā-kêr
Za'dok	zā-dŏk
Za'ham	zā-hăm
Za'ir	zā-ĕr
Za'laph	zā-lăf
Zal'mon	zăl-mŏn
Zalmo'nah	zăl-mō-nâ
Zalmun'na	zăl-mŭn-nâ
Zamzum'mims	zăm-zŭm-mĭmz
Zano'ah	zā-nō-â
Zaph'nathpa'ane'ah	zăf-năth-pā-â-nē-â
Za'phon	zā-fŏn
Za'ra	zā-râ
Za'rah	zā-râ
Za'reah	zā-rē-â
Za'reathites	zā-rē-ăth-īts
Za'red	zā-rĕd
Zar'ephath	zăr-ē-făth
Zar'etan	zăr-ē-tăn
Za'reth-sha'har	zā-rĕth-shā-hâr
Zar'hites	zâr-hīts
Zar'tanah	zâr-tā-nâ
Zar'than	zâr-thăn
Zat'thu	zăt-thū
Zat'tu	zăt-tū
Za'van	zā-văn
Za'za	zā-zâ
Zeb'adi'ah	zĕb-ā-dī-â
Ze'bah	zē-bâ
Zeba'im	zē-bā-ĭm
Zeb'edee	zĕb-ē-dē
Zebi'na	zē-bī-nâ
Zeboi'im	zē-boi-ĭm
Zebo'im	zē-bō-ĭm
Zebu'dah	zē-bū-dâ
Ze'bul	zē-bŭl
Zeb'ulonites	zĕb-ū-lŏn-īts
Zeb'ulun	zĕb-ū-lŭn
Zeb'ulunite	zĕb-ū-lŭn-īt
Zech'ari'ah	zĕk-ā-rī-â
Ze'dad	zē-dăd
Zed'echi'as	zĕd-ē-kī-ăs
Zed'eki'ah	zĕd-ē-kī-â
Zeeb or Ze'eb	zē-ĕb
Ze'lah	zē-lâ
Ze'lek	zē-lĕk
Zelo'phehad	zē-lō-fē-hăd
Zelo'tes	zē-lō-tēz
Zel'zah	zĕl-zâ
Zem'ara'im	zĕm-ā-rā-ĭm
Zem'arite	zĕm-ā-rīt
Zemi'ra	zē-mī-râ
Ze'nan	zē-năn
Ze'nas	zē-năs
Zeph'ani'ah	zĕf-ā-nī-â
Ze'phath	zē-făth
Zeph'athah	zĕf-ā-thâ
Ze'phi	zē-fī
Ze'pho	zē-fō
Ze'phon	zē-fŏn
Zeph'onites	zĕf-ŏn-īts
Ze'rah	zē-râ
Zer'ahi'ah	zĕr-ā-hī-â
Zer'ai'ah	zĕr-ā-ī-â
Ze'red	zē-rĕd
Zer'eda	zĕr-ē-dâ
Zered'athah	zē-rĕd-ā-thâ
Zer'erath	zĕr-ē-răth
Ze'resh	zē-rĕsh
Ze'reth	zē-rĕth

Vowels. — Lāte, căt, câr; mēte, mĕt, têrm; sīte, sĭt; lōne, lŏt, fôr; rūde, hŭt, pût; oi like oil; ai like aye.

Bible Word Pronunciation

V. Gilbert Beers, *The Book of Life*, 24 vols. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1980), 23:93-111 (19 of 19)

Ze'ri	zē-rī	Zil'lah	zĭl-lâ	Zo'ar	zō-âr
Ze'ror	zē-rôr	Zil'pah	zĭl-pâ	Zo'ba	zō-bâ
Zeru'ah	zē-rū-â	Zil'thai	zĭl-thai	Zo'bah	zō-bâ
Zerub'bael	zē-rŭb-bā-ĕl	Zim'mah	zĭm-mâ	Zobe'bah	zō-bē-bâ
Zerub'babel	zē-rŭb-bā-bĕl	Zim'ran	zĭm-răn	Zo'har	zō-hâr
Zer'ui'ah	zĕr-ū-ī-â	Zim'ri	zĭm-rī	Zo'heleth	zō-hē-lĕth
Ze'tham	zē-thăm	Zi'na	zī-nâ	Zo'heth	zō-hĕth
Ze'than	zē-thăn	Zi'or	zī-ôr	Zo'phah	zō-fâ
Ze'thar	zē-thăr	Zi'phah	zī-fâ	Zo'phai	zō-fai
Zi'a	zī-â	Ziph'ims	zĭf-ĭmz	Zo'phar	zō-fâr
Zi'ba	zī-bâ	Ziph'ion	zĭf-ī-ŏn	Zo'phim	zō-fĭm
Zib'eon	zĭb-ē-ŏn	Ziph'ites	zĭf-īts	Zo'rah	zō-râ
Zib'ia	zĭb-ī-â	Zi'phron	zī-frŏn	Zo'rathites	zō-răth-īts
Zib'iah	zĭb-ī-â	or		Zo'reah	zō-rē-â
Zich'ri	zĭk-rī	Ziph'ron	zĭf-rŏn	Zo'rites	zō-rīts
Zid'dim	zĭd-dĭm	Zip'por	zĭp-pôr	Zorob'abel	zō-rŏb-ā-bĕl
Zidki'jah	zĭd-kī-jâ	Zippo'rah	zĭp-pō-râ	Zu'ar	zū-âr
Zi'don	zī-dŏn	Zith'ri	zĭth-rī	Zuph	zŭf
Zido'nians	zī-dō-nĭ-ănz	Zi'za	zī-zâ	Zu'riel	zū-rĭ-ĕl
Zi'ha	zī-hâ	Zi'zah	zī-zâ	Zu'rishad'dai	zū-rĭ-shăd-dā-ī
Zik'lag	zĭk-lăg	Zo'an	zō-ăn	Zuzims	zū-zĭmz

Consonants.—Ch in chin, g in go, th in thin, *th* in *th*at, y in yet, zh like z in azure.

Sermons in the Book of Acts

One of the special features of the book of Acts is the appearance of numerous, abbreviated sermons. In fact, 24 of the 28 chapters include a sermon or sermon portion. This study contrasts three key sermons to discover some of the clues as to what made them so effective.

	Acts 2:14-39	**Acts 13:16-41**	**Acts 17:21-31**
Speaker	Peter	Paul	Paul
Audience	Jews	Jews and God-fearing Gentiles	Pagan Gentiles
City	Jerusalem	Antioch	Athens
Place	House (v. 2) at the Temple (Luke 24:53)?	Synagogue	Areopagus Meeting
Type of Place	Religious	Religious	Secular
Time	Day of Pentecost	1st Missionary Journey	2nd Missionary Journey
Subject (theme)	The reason some Jews miraculously speak unknown languages	The fulfillment of Israel's national history	The activities of the unknown God
Complement	is because God's Spirit is poured out on them through Jesus, Israel's resurrected Messiah	is in Jesus as our risen Savior who is worthy of our trust	are creation and judgment of man which makes idolatry unreasonable
Short M.I.	Jesus is Messiah (36)	Believe in Jesus (39)	Repent of idolatry (30)
Application Structure	Simple—application at the end (38-39)	Cyclical—application in centre (26) & end (38-41)	Simple—application at the end (30-31)
Main Idea Structure	Inductive (36)	Inductive (23)-Deductive (24-37)	Deductive (24)
Type	Topical-Biblical	Expositional	Topical-Secular
Style	Extemporaneous	Narrative	Reasoned polemic
Introduction "Ho Hum!" (How he gets attention)	Cites a recent event: Spirit baptism (14-15)	Tells a familiar story: Identifies with listeners by citing common history (16-22)	Notes local interest item: altar to an unknown god (22-23)
Thrust of Introduction	"Why do you think these people appear drunk?"	"I am an informed Jew who also has longed for the Messiah"	"I have been observing your town"
How the Speaker Draws in His Listeners	Raises curiosity about the miraculous speaking in other languages	Raises curiosity about how his Judaism differs from theirs	Raises curiosity about who the unknown God is
Body	"The Spirit descended from the risen Messiah Jesus" (16-36)	"Jesus is Israel's risen Messiah" (23-37)	"Idolatry is incompatible with the living creator God" (24-28)
Illustration Sources	Scripture (Joel 2:28-32; Ps. 16:8-11; 110:1)	Scripture (Ps. 2:7; 16:10; Isa. 55:3; Hab. 1:5)	Secular (v. 28: poets Epimenides & Aratus)
Resurrection of Christ Noted	Extensive with scriptural support (24-32)	Extensive with scriptural support (30-37)	Brief & no mention of Jesus' name (31)
Conclusion	Main Idea: Jesus is the Messiah (36)	Scripture: Habakkuk 1:5 quoted: "I will do something that you won't believe" (41)	Burning questions: "Who will judge us?" and "Who is it who was raised?" (31)
Application	Indirect: Left them to ask the implication: "How can we be saved?" (37)	Direct: "Forgiveness is offered to you" so "don't be scoffers" (38, 40)	Direct: God "commands all people everywhere to repent [of idolatry]" (30)
Result	3000 saved (41)	Invited to speak again, some believed, he turned to Gentiles (42-48)	Many believed but others sneered (32-34)

Preaching Controversial Topics

Directions: Discuss the following questions in your small group. Devote no more than 3 minutes per question. In a few minutes you will share some of your answers with the class.

1. What are the most controversial topics a preacher could address in Singapore?

2. Now put a letter (either "A" or "P") by each of the topics you listed above to show if this topic should be preached or not:

   A = Avoid this topic at all costs
   P = Preach it because avoiding it will impoverish the people from God's will in this area

3. What guidelines (principles) have you discovered that helped you know how and when to preach controversial issues?

4. What are the benefits of addressing controversial issues?

5. What dangers should the preacher of controversial issues avoid?

6. What Scriptural examples are there of courageous, controversial preaching?

Preaching Survey

Name: _____

Please complete this survey as information to help me to know how best to teach this course. In each blank indicate a *number*, not an ambiguous statement such as "many" or "few." If you can only guess a range of numbers (e.g., 50-100 times), please average them (e.g., 75 times).

1.0 Reading
1.1 How many times have you read Haddon Robinson's *Biblical Preaching?* _____
1.2 How many times have you read Haddon Robinson's *Biblical Sermons?* _____
1.3 How many times have you read Bruce Mawhinney's *Preaching with Freshness?* _____
1.4 How many times have you read Sidney Greidanus' *The Modern Preacher...?* _____
1.5 How many other homiletics books have you read? _____

2.0 Writing
2.1 How many exegetical outlines have you designed? _____
2.2 How many exegetical outlines in Z_1—X—Z_2—Y form have you designed? _____
2.3 How many sermon outlines have you designed? _____
2.4 How many sermons have you written in outline form? _____
2.5 How many sermons have you written in full manuscript form? _____

3.0 Studying
3.1 How many homiletics courses have you taken? _____
3.2 How many times have you studied epistles preaching? _____
3.3 How many times have you studied narrative preaching? _____
3.4 How many times have you studied preaching wisdom literature? _____
3.5 How many times have you studied preaching prophetic literature? _____
3.6 How many times have you studied preaching parables? _____

4.0 Preaching
4.1 How many sermons have you preached in class? _____
4.2 How many times have you preached in other settings besides the worship service? _____
4.3 How many sermons have you preached in a regular church worship service? _____
4.4 How many sermons have you preached with a full manuscript (include 4.1 to 4.3)? _____
4.5 How many sermons have you preached with only an outline (include 4.1 to 4.3)? _____
4.6 How many sermons have you preached without any notes at all (include 4.1 to 4.3)? _____

5.0 Filing
5.1 How many sermon illustrations do you have organized in a filing system? _____
5.2 How many of your sermon illustrations are written on 3 x 5 cards? _____
5.3 How many days a week do you carry 3 x 5 cards with you to record illustrations? _____

6. What personal desires or goals do you have for this course? (How do you want to grow?)

7. What kind of regular preaching ministry have you had in the past? How much was in English?

8. What kind of preaching ministry do you anticipate in the future?

9. What other insights into you will better help me teach you preaching (background, style, etc.)? Use the back of this page if necessary.

Psalm 127 Sermon Outline

Preaching Relevantly on a Foundation of Solid Exegesis

Challenges of the Psalm

Psalm 127 presents several challenges for the preacher:

A. Structure: How are verses 1-2 related to verses 3-5? At first they seem to be two separate psalms (some scholars consider them so). The first section shows the folly of strenuous efforts without resting in God's care, but then the subject shifts to the value of children. How can both points fit under a central idea? Getting both of these in a M.I. is a challenge.

B. Imperatives: The psalm has no commands and only speaks of warnings (1-2) and blessings (3-5). Is the implied response supposed to be: *invest yourself* in God's projects (Litfin), *involve/fear God* in raising your family, *trust in /seek* God for success/blessing, or *respond* to the providence of God?

C. Exegetical Options: Key exegetical decisions will affect the main idea and the development:

1. Does the "house" of verse 1 mean Solomon's temple, David's dynasty, no particular dwelling (any house), or is it a figure for the family? The last two seem to have the most merit in my eyes.

2. Should verse 2b read "he grants sleep to those he loves" (NIV) or "He gives to His beloved even in his sleep" (NASB)? In other words, is the idea that one who trusts self can't sleep or is it that God blesses those who trust Him even while they sleep?

3. Who is the "beloved" (v. 2b)? Is this anyone God loves or specifically Solomon?

4. What is the significance of sons being like arrows (v. 4)? Does this connote defending parents (my view), serving God where parents have never been (Litfin), or being special and unique since arrowheads were engraved with the archer's name (Swindoll)?

5. Does the contending with enemies (v. 5b) refer to battle or a legal dispute? Is the idea confidence when opposed (Swindoll) or the defense and security for parents that children provide them in their old age (my view)? And what is the significance of the gate?

Options in Outlining

How the outline will turn out depends largely on what one determines as the subject.

If the subject is "how we spend our lives," the outline could look like this
(Duane Litfin, "Riding the Winds of God," in *Biblical Sermons*, ed. Haddon Robinson, 92-94, 106):

Subject: How are you are spending your life? (Have you evaluated this?)

I. The value of our life's work is only as good as the cause for which it is expended (1-2).

II. We can invest our lives for eternity by spending them on God's projects (M.I.)

Please read Litfin's whole sermon above to see a masterful job of inductive, interesting preaching. Unfortunately, Litfin doesn't include "sons/children" in his MP or MI and his statements can be shortened for clarity. I prefer to simplify Litfin's main points in the following way:

Subject: How can you make your life count?

I. Invest your life in the right causes (1-2).

II. Children are one of the best investments in life (3-4).

If the subject relates to both security and the family, an outline might look like this:

Subject: How should you balance career and family?

I. Realize that pursuits without God's blessing can't provide security for your family (1-2).

II. God gives us security through our children (3-5).

Some may see a contrast in the psalm at the end of verse 2 as the major break:

Subject: Where ultimately is your security?

I. Don't try to find security in a house, guard system, or a workaholic lifestyle (1-2a).

II. Trusting God for security leads to genuine rest and the blessing of a family (2b-5).

Substituting "security" with "trust" yields a simpler outline:

Subject: In whom or in what do you place your trust?

I. Only God can guarantee success (1-2).

II. Only God can bless you with children (3-5).

Main Idea: Look to God alone for success, children, or any other blessing.

This next outline shifts the focus from man to God (but it misses the vanity aspect of verses 1-2):

Subject: How does God bless us? (in contrast to how people think He does)

I. God blesses us with security (1-2)—in shelter, protection from enemies and provision of food.

II. God blesses us with children (3-5).

Another problem with the above is that it doesn't tell us what we should do. Try this:

Subject: How should we respond to God's blessings?

I. God blesses us with security, so don't be a workaholic (1-2).

II. God blesses us with children, so give them priority (3-5).

Continuing with a subject of "blessing" note this outline:

Subject: How can you experience God's richest blessings?

I. Seek God to experience His blessing in what you do (1-2).

II. Recognize God's blessing in giving you children (3-5).

The possibilities are endless. One student says Psalm 127 shows we need God in our working (1-2) and our family life (3-5). Swindoll claims it depicts stages of family development from inception (1-2) to expansion (3-5). So the question is, "Which of these outlines is the best—or are they all legitimate?" The answer: "I don't know." Seriously. No doubt, one of them is the closest to authorial intent, but I need to study more to determine this. Perhaps we can ask Solomon himself when we meet him in heaven, but until then, let's seek to genuinely preach the text, always looking to the Lord for exegetical and homiletical insight.

Excellence In Biblical Preaching
Edmund Chan
Covenant Evangelical Free Church, Singapore

HOW TO BE A GOOD PREACHER

1. **Prepare Thoroughly.** Avoid the last minute rush known as "the Saturday Night fever". Start early. Allow time for careful exegesis. Think coherently, write clearly and rehearse thoroughly. It allows you to be "faithful to the text" and to preach extemporaneously.

2. **Make It Interesting.** Speak to felt needs. Make it highly relevant. Let your hearers say: *"I've got to listen to this!"* Also, liven up your message with personal anecdotes and humour. Learn to tell a good story.

3. **Tell Your Hearers Something New.** A predictable sermon is a boring one. Preach with biblical insight! Let your hearers say: *"Hey, I've never seen it this way before!"* What we need is more biblical exposition rather than mere exhortation.

4. **Have a Clear Outline.** A good outline allows your sermon to have a sense of meaningful progression. Let your outline be derived from the text. Alexander Mclaren had this great gift of opening the text and "it immediately broke up into natural and memorable divisions". Work on your outline!

5. **Craft Your Words Well.** Avoid well worn clichés. Instead, communicate in word-pictures. Don't just say *"It is hopeless"*. Try this: *"It is like facing a charging rhino armed with a rubber band"*. We are in an age of visual literacy. Speak metaphorically. Also, discover the power of aphorisms. Collect a list of quotable quotes.

6. **Make Realistic Applications.** If there is no summons, there is no sermon. However, many summons to action are too unrealistic, like *"we must never get angry"*; or too general, like *"we must love one another"*; or too idealistic, like *"we must share Christ with someone every day"*. Make concrete applications that are realistic and challenging. Show in specific ways how it can be done. Call to action!

7. **End With Emotional Appeal.** End with a strong conclusion. Don't be afraid to end with emotional appeal. The Sermon on the Mount ended with the story of building on sand or solid rock. That has emotional appeal!

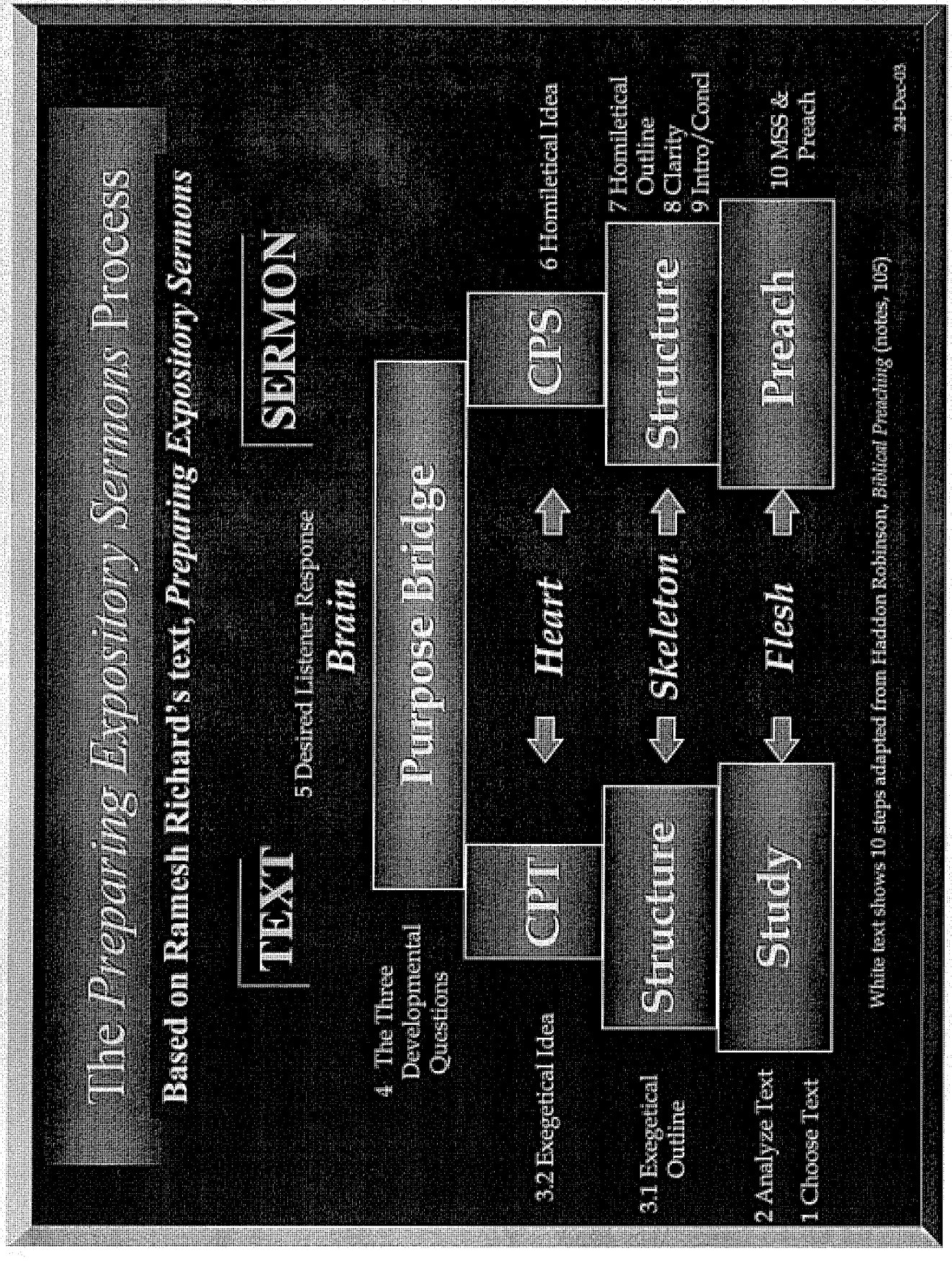
8. **Feed Your Mind Daily.** A keen mind is a preacher's asset. Read daily. A good preacher works with ideas, not just with words. Keep your thinking sharp and your mind fresh. Read!

9. **Grow In The Word.** Preachers are not merely public speakers. They are not peddlers of human opinions. They are proclaimers of God's Word. They are to be truly Word-saturated people. Martyn Lloyd Jones aptly warns: *"One of the most fatal habits a preacher can fall into is to read his Bible simply to find texts for his sermons. This is a real danger"*. Grow in the Word!

10. **Unction Is The Key.** Cultivate a vital walk with the Lord. Be alone with God. Seek the Lord's anointing. Be one who has something to say rather than one who has to say something. Preach with passion. Preach from your heart. Preach "thus saith the LORD"! Finally, to echo a very wise preacher -

"Pray Yourself Empty.
Read Yourself Full.
Write Yourself Clear.
And Let Yourself Go!"

The *Preparing Expository Sermons* Process



Pains and Gains of Doctrine

Adapted from Erickson & Heflin, *Old Wine in New Wineskins*, 20-57

DIRECTIONS: In your small group discuss which of the factors in your section below is the most relevant in your own ministry experience. Appoint a speaker to share with the class specific examples of how this issue makes preaching doctrine difficult (stories, Scripture, etc.).

I. Pains of Doctrine

Why is it so Tough to Teach and Preach Doctrine Today?

A. General Cultural Factors

1. Evolution
2. Relativism
3. Visually-Oriented Generation
4. Distrust of Old Ideas
5. Specialization
6. Theological Terms Replaced with New Terms

B. Religious Factors

1. Competition from World Religions
2. Pseudo-Religions
3. Belief that All Religions are the Same
4. Pluralism

C. Christian Factors

1. Pragmatism
2. Stress on Unity (Feeling Doctrine is Divisive)
3. Move Towards Generic Christianity
4. Feeling-Oriented Christian Faith
5. Indifference to Theological Differences
6. Distrust of Any Kind of Learning
7. "Prophetic Approach" to Determining Truth
8. Tradition
9. Proof-Texting

10. "Sloganism" (confidence in a word or phrase as a test of orthodoxy)
11. Self-Centred Christianity
12. Overemphasis on Psychology & Mental Health
13. The Bible Doesn't Always Explicitly State Doctrine

D. Clergy Factors

1. Difficulty Teaching What People Aren't Clamoring For
2. Conducting Ministry Without a Theological Basis
3. Difficulty Abstracting Doctrine from the Bible

II. Gains of Doctrine

Why is it so Beneficial to Teach and Preach Doctrine Today?

A. Christianity is Doctrinal by Definition

1. Prominence in the Bible (Gen. 1:1; Gal. 1:8-9)
2. Prominence in Church History
3. Essential to One's Relationship with God
4. Foundation of Behaviour (Christian Living)
5. Effects Emotions
6. Being is More Important Than Doing

B. Doctrinal Beliefs Influence the Christian's Relation to Society

1. Many Issues in Society are Doctrinal in Nature
2. Doctrine is the Basis of Applying Scripture to Today
3. Christians are Being Exposed to Many Viewpoints
4. Liberals are Redefining Theological Terms
5. Christians Grasp Doctrinal Meanings Only Superficially
6. Pluralism and Relativism Affect the Church

C. Doctrine Has Practical Effects

1. Doctrine Influences the Nature of Our Ministry
2. "Trendy" Ministries are Short-Lived

Humour & Storytelling

I. Humour

A. Why is Humour so Important?

(Adapted from Ken Davis, *Secrets to Dynamic Communication*, 117-22)

1. Humour softens the heart (it builds rapport with the audience—it breaks down barriers between speaker and listener)

2. Humour benefits the mind and body

3. Humour let's the audience talk back—a laugh, nod, or chuckle transforms a benchwarmer into a participant

4. Humour provides instant feedback—it let's you know whether you are communicating

5. Humour gets the listener's attention

6. Humour entertains listeners to keep their interest

7. Humour typically catches people by surprise

8. Nearly everyone enjoys humour—it is truly universal

9. Someone defined humour as "'a gentle way to acknowledge human frailty.' Put another way, humour is a way of saying, 'I'm not okay and you're not okay, but that's okay, he loves us anyway!'" (Davis, 117).

B. How to Be Funny

1. Start with low-risk humour.

   a) High-risk humour can embarrass you if it is not considered funny.

      (1) Comedy (an obvious joke) demands a response from the audience.

      (2) Ridiculous exaggeration is very visual and less cerebral.

   b) Low-risk humour is better for beginners and comes in two types:

      (1) Some jokes are so good that they never fail.

      (2) Other true stories or illustrations come from simple truth—even if the audience doesn't laugh, the truth still remains.

2. Work on facial expressions and body language.

3. Work on eye contact—make sure you're looking at the people!

4. Be yourself—if it feels like you are overdoing it, tone it down.

5. Never wait for laughter—if it doesn't come, just continue on.

6. Types of humour to avoid include those which make others look bad: other ethnic groups, politicians and other persons of authority (e.g., pastors).

7. If you know a church which does not appreciate humour, tone down your presentation in content and especially facial expressions and body language.

8. If you are unsure whether a certain story or joke would be appropriate, check it out with a leader in the group which will hear it. Sometimes I email my opening joke to the board chairman or pastor if I suspect it might have offensive elements.

9. Watch other people succeed or fail in using humour—ask why it worked or didn't work.

10. Practice your stories with your spouse, friends, and others who will listen. Have them watch for timing, order, details in the story, facial expression, voice inflection, and body movement.

C. Sources for Good Humour

1. Hodgin, Michael. *1001 Humorous Illustrations for Public Speaking.* Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994.

2. James, G. D. *Tales Worth Telling.* Dr. G. D. James Multimedia, P.O. Box 122 Epping, N.S.W. 2121 Austrailia. Has many funny stories, especially in an Asian context.

II. Storytelling

A. How to Tell Stories

1. Follow the same guidelines for humour above (see also the advantages to stories on page 107).

2. Follow the guidelines on page 112.

3. Never give the conclusion to the story up front.

   a) If you use a story to illustrate a point, do not state that point deductively.

   b) Rather, place the point in brackets in your outline, which means that you won't be saying the content of the bracketed area at that time. Instead, say this after the illustration (e.g., p. 86).

B. Sources for Good Storytelling

1. Barrett, Ethel. *Storytelling—It's Easy!* Los Angeles: Cowman Pub., Inc., 1960. Here's a genuinely funny woman's practical advice.

2. Grant, Reg and Reed, John. *Telling Stories to Touch the Heart: How to Use Stories to Communicate God's Truth.* Wheaton: Victor, 1990. Some of their helpful suggestions are summarized on pages 7-8, 113-14 of the Homiletics I notes.

Getting Doctrine from Didactic Passages

Adapted from Erickson & Heflin, *Old Wine in New Wineskins*, 97-114

I. What are didactic doctrinal passages?

These are texts which are not stories (narratives), such as:

- Statements from God— "Thus says the Lord..."
- Writer's personal testimony—Ecclesiastes
- Sermons
- Letters
- Christ's formal teachings
- Editorial comments
- Prophecies
- Psalms
- Proverbs

II. Why is it hard to teach from didactic doctrinal passages?

These texts pose some problems as they...

A. Deal with a specific problem that likely isn't our problem (e.g., Colossian heresy).

B. Address a cultural setting (e.g., headcoverings at Corinth).

C. Precede progress in revelation (e.g., "Do not take your Holy Spirit away...").

D. Are viewed by us who bring our historical setting into exegesis (e.g., post-Luther).

E. May not be fully doctrinal themselves (e.g., historical, ethical).

F. Use language that is not always literal (e.g., "God-breathed")

III. How can I preach doctrinal sermons?

Erickson's method is very similar to ours (pp. 27-28)...

A. CPT: Central Proposition of the Text (Exegetical Idea): Determine the exact meaning and application of the original teaching in that culture and to that audience. How can you do this (cf. p. 27, steps 1-3)? Decide if you want to preach just the doctrinal portion or the whole text (e.g., Phil. 2:1-30 or just the doctrinal portion, 2:5-11).

B. Systematic Theology: Assess the place of this particular teaching in the whole of the doctrine. (I have assumed that theology from other texts will be used to determine the CPT so it will not contradict other texts.)

C. CUP: Central Universal Principle: Isolate the underlying permanent or eternal basis of the CPT. (This is an assumed idea fitting between the EO and the HO which I never required. Maybe this is also similar to the Purpose Bridge, p. 27, step 4.)

D. CPS: Central Proposition of the Sermon (Homiletical Idea): Place the passage in the present time and context by saying what the biblical writer would say to our audience if he were here (cf. p. 27, step 5).

IV. One Doctrinal Sermon I Preached...

Romans 1:4

Structural Outline of 1:1-4

Paul,		1
	a servant of Christ Jesus,	
	called to be an apostle	
	and set apart for [the purpose of proclaiming] the gospel of God—	
	the gospel he promised beforehand	2
	through his prophets	
	in the Holy Scriptures	
	regarding his Son,	3
	who was a descendant of David,	
	as to his human nature	
4d	and who was declared to be the Son of God	4
4a	through the Spirit	
4b	of holiness	
4c	with power	
4e	by his resurrection	
4f	from the dead	
4g	Jesus Christ	
4h	our Lord.	

For Verse 4 Fill in These Four Steps (Using the Structural Context)

A. CPT: Central Proposition of the Text (Exegetical Idea):

B. Systematic Theology (may be already included in the CPT above):

C. CUP: Central Universal Principle:

D. CPS: Central Proposition of the Sermon (Homiletical Idea):

CPT (and Exegetical Outline)

Prologue: In this introduction to the book of Romans Paul has already noted in verse 1 his person: that he was commissioned by God to preach the gospel. In verses 2-4 he notes two aspects about his message, the gospel: (1) it was prophesied in the Old Testament, and (2), it concerned Jesus Christ. But what does the gospel say about Christ? Here in verses 3-4 the different language seems to indicate that Paul is quoting a confessional statement. After noting in verse 3 that the gospel includes the human side of Christ, in verse 4 he notes a second characteristic of the gospel.

Exegetical Idea (CPT): The content of the gospel *which Paul shared included* Christ's deity proved in his powerful resurrection caused by the Holy Spirit.

I. .(4a-d) The content of the gospel which Paul shared included the fact that the deity of Jesus Christ was shown by the *powerful ministry of the Holy Spirit.*

A. (4a) The agent of the powerful ministry was the Spirit.

B. (4b) The nature of the Spirit was holy.

C. (4c) The nature of the Spirit was powerful.

D. (4d) The result of the Spirit's ministry was the revelation of Christ's deity.

II. (4e-h) The content of the gospel which Paul shared included the fact that the deity of Jesus Christ was shown by the *Spirit's power in raising Jesus from the dead.*

A. (4e) The means by which the Spirit declared Christ's deity was through raising Christ.

B. (4f) The sphere from which Christ was raised was the realm of the dead.

C. (4g) The identity of the one raised was Jesus.

D. (4h) The authority of Jesus is ultimate as He is sovereign over all.

Systematic Theology

The focus of Romans 1:4 is the resurrection, a doctrine central to the NT. So this is not the first or the last word on Christ's resurrection. However, it does appear that Paul is emphasizing the ***power*** of the resurrection here to show Christ's deity. As this point is rarely preached and is exegetically sound, I chose to also emphasize it in my sermon.

Central Universal Principle (CUP)

CUP: The content of the gospel *every Christian should share includes* Christ's deity proved in his powerful resurrection caused by the Holy Spirit.

CPS & Homiletical Exposition (cyclical inductive form) **Title: "Because He Lives"**

Introduction

1. Faruk: What do I say to this non-Christian who sees no uniqueness to Christianity?
2. Maybe you can relate...
3. We need the gospel, but what's the gospel? (bad examples)
4. Subject: **How do you know what to say when you want to share the gospel?**
5. Romans 1:1-7

I. Tell them that God's power was on Jesus through the Spirit (4a).

A. We live in a power hungry age (PowerBook, power tie, power breakfast, power sermon, Power Supply, Hindu idols drinking milk, holy laughter, etc.)

B. But what about *holy* power like that of the Spirit?

1. The phrase "Spirit of holiness" is used only here in Paul's writings. It emphasizes the pure nature of the Spirit's work.
2. Here is power to do good (miracles of healing/changing nature, greed obliterated in Zacchaeus vs. Turf Club, present Jesus as narrative, etc.).

C. Paul noted that the Spirit's holy power proved his deity (4a).

1. "Son of God" indicates deity (cf. John 10:25-33).
2. Who does the "declaring" here? The Holy Spirit!

(So what should you say when sharing the gospel? First, emphasize God's power. Tell them that God's power was on Jesus through the Spirit. Second, tell them that the greatest ever manifestation of power occurred with Jesus...)

II. Tell them that Jesus proved to be God by defeating death itself (4b)!
Power may be one of our greatest aims, but...

A. No human has defeated the power of death (death rate, Alisa Bonaparte, medical advances, etc. but no one can give eternal life—ask your doctor for it and see what he says!)

B. Christ proved his deity in the resurrection (4b; broke up funerals, Charles Maurice de Talleyrand-Périgord).

C. The apostles proclaimed the resurrection (cf. refs. in Acts and 1 Corinthians 15:1ff.).

D. No wonder so many see Jesus as "just another religious teacher." We need to get back to proclaiming the resurrection! (He can change lives because he's alive.)

Conclusion

1. **CPS or MI: How should we share the gospel? Tell how Christ must be God because He's alive and powerful!** [Restated: Share the gospel's power to show Jesus as God in the resurrection.]

   a. Recognize that people today are obsessed with power.
   b. Share Christ's resurrection: his power over our greatest foe—death.
   c. Share your testimony: the power of your changed life.

2. What would the Apostle Paul say to Faruk? (Power in the resurrection and in his own life.)

A Study in Narrative Preaching

2 Kings 5

Naaman Healed of Leprosy

Directions: Follow the seven steps to narrative preaching with your study partner. These steps are found on your notes (pp. 109-112) but don't look these pages up right now. Begin each step at the time listed even if you are not finished with the preceding step.

1. Study (11:55)

a. *Passage*: We will read the entire chapter as a literary unit and plan to preach the whole chapter.

b. *Exegesis:* Address these key issues...

1) 12:00 What key questions come to mind when reading the text for the first time?

2) 12:05 Study the setting, characters, and plot. Three individuals are noted in the text. If the teaching revolves around one or more of them, what would the lesson be?

a) Naaman

b) Elisha

c) Gehazi

2. Structure (12:10): Look for the major movements in the story and make each a Main Point. What are these key sections of this narrative—how does it flow? (Don't be overly concerned about using Z_1+X+Z_2+Y form unless it just comes easily.)

3. CPT (12:15): Write your exegetical idea below (Z_1+X+Z_2+Y form preferred but not required).

4. Sermon's Purpose (12:20):

a. What is the common principle between the Elisha's time and modern times?

b. What is the desired listener response based on this common principle?

5. CPS or MI (12:25):

a. The MI must flow from an understanding of the EI (cf. p. 34).

b. Put your EI (CPT) into a short command for us (MI or CPS).

6. Structure (12:30): Outline the sermon in very rough form (only the subject, MPs, and MI). Please use the following simple inductive structure only.

Subject in Intro:

I. (=EI)

II. (=MI)

Note some specific applications of the MI:

7. Preach: You won't have time to manuscript, practice, or preach in class today!

2 Kings 5
Naaman Healed of Leprosy

Exegetical Outline

Exegetical Idea: The way God demonstrated His superiority over Baal was by transferring leprosy from the believing foreigner Naaman to the hireling-minded Jew Gehazi.

I. (1-7) The way God demonstrated His superiority over Baal was through Naaman the foreigner seeking *healing* of his leprosy from Israel's God.

A. (1) Naaman thought he had conquered enemies in his own strength but actually the LORD had given him victory and he still couldn't defeat leprosy.

B. (2-7) Naaman's pilgrimage for healing from Israel's God was misunderstood by Jehoram but still emphasizes that even Joram knew that healing comes from God—not Baal.

II. (8-14) The way God demonstrated His superiority over Baal was by healing Naaman's leprosy through Elisha's "silly" Yahweh solution instead of the "more respectable" Baalism ritual.

A. (8-12) Naaman initially rejected Elisha's healing counsel because of the humility involved (he had already humbled himself to go to a foreign country to seek help from an "inferior" king).

B. (13-14) At his servants' request Naaman followed the advice and received miraculous healing.

III. (15-27) The way God demonstrated His superiority over Baal was through judging Gehazi's hireling attitude which was akin to Baal's prophets who used Baal for materialistic purposes.

A. (15-19a) Elisha refused reward from the believing Naaman and granted his concession to feign pagan worship.

B. (19b-27) Gehazi's hireling perspective (in contrast to Elisha who lacked his greed and lying) was disciplined with Naaman's leprosy.

Homiletical Exposition (cyclical inductive form)

Introduce Subject: How does God show us that He alone can solve our problems (that He is sovereign and thus better than any other solution)?

I. God shows us that solutions other than Him are unreliable.

A. The pagan Naaman recognized that his own strength and god couldn't remove his leprosy so he went to Israel's God (1-7).

B. During trials we must trust God rather than unreliable sources (such as ourselves, charms, temple rites, astrology, doctors, government, advisors, etc.)

II. God asks us to obey a seemingly ridiculous command so He'll get the credit.

A. Naaman wasn't healed through his own efforts but through a silly procedure prescribed by God's servant Elisha (8-14).

B. God may meet our needs through "inferior" people and "silly" though biblical advice.

III. God judges us for prideful acting as if He is only there to meet our needs.

A. God judged Gehazi for greedily trying to take advantage of Him (15-27).

B. God will discipline us for trying to use him for selfish interests (pride judged through a humbling experience, sickness as in James 5:16, etc.).

Main Idea: Humbly submit to God as the only solution to your problems.

Preaching Challenges Today

Based on Erickson & Heflin, *Old Wine in New Wineskins*, 58-93

What solutions would you propose to these hazards to relevant preaching today?

I. Preaching on the Decline

*Preaching in today's worship service is being replaced by music, drama, etc. (pp. 58-61).

Solutions/Advantages to Preaching (some ideas from pp. 62-75):

A. Preaching gives God's Word (pp. 62-63)

B. Preaching is personal and spontaneous (p. 63)

C. Preaching confronts (p. 74)

II. Listener Obstacles

A. General Characteristics (pp. 76-80)

1. Apathy
2. Superstar Mentality
3. Impatience
4. Lack of Commitment
5. Competition
6. Demands and Concerns

B. Characteristics Specifically Related to Listening (pp. 80-84)

1. Indifference to Authority
2. Need for Visual Stimulation
3. Need for Movement & Action
4. Attraction to the Spectacular
5. Short Attention Span

III. Preacher Obstacles

A. External (pp. 84-86)

1. Time & Priority Pressures

2. Pressure to Succeed

3. Pragmatism

B. Internal (pp. 86-89)

1. Lack of Training (in drama, literary theory, and how people learn)

2. Uncertainty About Role (numerous hats, declining prestige)

3. Difficulty Speaking to a Culture which One Does Not Want to Imitate

4. Uncertainty About Style

5. Struggle whether to give listeners what they want or what they need

IV. Church Obstacles

1. Internal (pp. 89-91)

a) Lack of Emphasis on Doctrine

b) Lack of Denominational Loyalty

c) Many Activities Not Specifically Christian (e.g., more time for announcements than reading of Scripture)

2. External (pp. 92-93)

a) Demand for Instant Relevance

b) Lack of Interest in Religion in General

c) Members Changing Churches Frequently

d) Preacher's News is Old (they already heard it before Sunday)

Stuart Briscoe, Senior Pastor, Elmbrook Church: "Many preachers who were taught to 'preach the word' are in a bind because they are now being told that people don't like preaching and they can't abide doctrine. So what should preachers do? Find an alternative to preaching or avoid doctrine like the plague? Neither! They should read this book which will encourage them to believe that preaching is still God's method and that doctrine is still food for the soul. But it will also give them practical help in understanding the problems, avoiding the pitfalls, and developing preaching that is God honoring, truth telling, and life changing."

Duane Litfin, President, Wheaton College: "'For those wrestling with the task of how to communicate God's truth to a self-centered, sound-bite generation that has lost confidence in the very notion of truth, *Old Wine in New Wineskins* may be just the book to turn to. Erickson and Heflin have done an excellent job of understanding the challenge and offering usable instruction on how to meet it. This book is recommended reading for preachers of the Bible as we launch out into a new millennium."

David L. Larsen, Professor Emeritus of Preaching, Trinity Evangelical Divinity School: "If, as one evangelical savant has well argued, 'Theological ideas rest inconsequentially upon the evangelical world,' Millard Erickson and James Heflin's *Old Wine in New Wineskins* is a bold and direct antidote. This is a substantive and an insightful inquiry which faces into the questions we must confront in doing doctrinal preaching today. The treatment of how doctrine is derived from the various literary genres is particularly strong."

David S. Dockery, President, Union University: "The church has lost its understanding of the importance of doctrine. The need for doctrinal preaching is great and the need for guidance in this area for preachers is greater! Erickson and Heflin have produced a well-informed volume that will positively shape and influence the life of the church in the 21st century. The reader will here find engaging, challenging, and helpful material. I heartily recommend this book."

Paul Scott Wilson, Professor of Homiletics, Emmanuel College, University of Toronto: "This is a thoughtful, well-researched, up-to-date book on doctrinal preaching written from an evangelical perspective. It is the best such book available and will benefit readers from various backgrounds."

J. I. Packer, Sangwoo Youtong Chee Professor of Theology, Regent College: "Any seminary student who wants to become a disciplined and accurate preacher, and any pastor who wants to keep clear of bad pulpit habits, will find help in these pages."

Bill Hogan, Professor of Preaching, Reformed Theological Seminary: "In this day when preaching, and especially doctrinal preaching, is being minimized in some quarters, this book provides a well-reasoned and nicely balanced remedy. This book deserves to be read, and used, by every preacher."

Old Wine in **New Wineskins**

Doctrinal Preaching in a Changing World

Millard J. Erickson
and
James L. Heflin

265

This effect of theology is not limited to any one variety of theology or one position on the theological scale, however. Thus, certain very ongly Calvinistic Christians, such as the "Hard-shell Baptists," did really engage in evangelism, thinking this unnecessary, in light of ir theology. They have diminished to negligible sized groups.

Doctrine is important, perhaps more in our time than at almost any er period in the history of the church. We must continue to sharpen own understanding and find creative ways of teaching others.

3

The Difficulty of Doctrine Today

In the first chapter we noted the importance of doctrine. This importance is not diminished in our day. In fact, in many ways the need today is greater than previously. Not only are the perpetual reasons for the importance of doctrine still with us, but they are heightened; some facets of our current situation especially call for it. Yet, at the same time, it is in some ways more difficult to do doctrine, especially correct biblical doctrine, than at some times in the past. There are unique obstacles to thinking doctrinally and emphasizing the doctrinal dimensions of Christianity. While some of these are continuations and even amplifications of trends, others are of relatively recent origin.

The factors currently militating against the formulation and the proclamation of doctrine can be classified into four major groups, in terms of the nature of the challenge they present. The first group stems from general cultural factors. The second collection is religious, but represents non-Christian religious alternatives, such as one of the other world religions or a popular cultural phenomenon such as New Age. Third, there are those objections or hindrances from within the practicing Christian community itself. These contend that doctrine, at least as conventionally conceived, is a problem or a hindrance or at least unnecessary to the work of the church. This might be termed the antidoctrinal Christian objections. Finally, there are obstacles unique to the preacher, which we might term clergy factors.

General Cultural Factors

1. One major movement of our time that works against Christian doctrine is naturalism, the view that reality is basically composed of nature, or of the observable universe. Consequently, everything that occurs within our experience is caused by natural forces within that

(1) Evolution

closed arena. While this may be either highly sophisticated or very simple in its construction, it is the operating philosophy for large numbers of persons in the world, especially in the West. It is an implicit assumption underlying much of science, which studies the observable. It carries with it the powerful argument that we know what we can perceive exists (barring the views of some idealists). Religion, especially theology, can offer little to match this. The problems raised regarding observable phenomena can be settled in relatively simple fashion as well. One has only to look at something (with however sophisticated a viewing device) to see whether it is one way or the other. By contrast, conflicting opinions in matters theological seem insusceptible to any sort of easy mediation.

The very difficulty of doing doctrine stems in large part from the fact that it deals with intangibles, and these are notoriously difficult to describe or induce others to believe in. Persons who have sold tangible items (pots and pans, automobiles, etc.) and then begin selling intangibles such as insurance can attest to this difficulty. While an insurance salesperson can place a policy in the hands of the prospective purchaser, the paper is not really what is being sold; rather, what is being sold is protection against certain unfortunate possibilities. In a sense the salesperson is selling money, money that will be received by the policyholder or the beneficiary if one of those possibilities becomes actual, but that means that the money is hypothetical money, money one will receive *if*. Doctrine similarly deals with matters like forgiveness, eternal life, the nature of God—all of which fall outside verification by sensory perception. Attempting to make doctrine intelligible and relevant to people who live in this natural world and who are concerned with the here and now is a difficult task.

2. A further obstacle to doing and expressing doctrine is the set of issues in our culture that together form what we might best term relativism. This general term denotes the idea that there is no truth that is true for everyone, a truth that simply is how things are. One facet of this is intense individualism. This may take the form of opposition to authority in any form. It may be a reflection of an epistemology in which truth is apprehended through intuition, rather than through discursive objective thought and argument. In any event, the conclusion is that I alone am the judge of what is right for me.

This is also related more specifically to relativism proper, the idea that there may be several true positions on a given issue. Traditionally, it was believed that if view A was true, then its contradictory, not-A, must be false. In the contemporary environment, however, there is a tendency to regard both A and not-A as capable of being true simultaneously. This may be based on the idea that there is no objective standard of reality, of what is true or right. One cannot evaluate two ideas by measuring them against some absolute standard of truth. One can only compare them against one another. This, of course, generally appeals, perhaps tacitly, to some other form of understanding about the nature of truth, frequently a pragmatic view.

That this general sort of relativism or even pluralism is gaining strength in our society has been well documented. What is surprising and disturbing is research indicating that such ideas have made serious inroads into conservative Christian thinking. Thus, research done by the Barna organization reveals that even a majority of persons who claimed to be born again agree with the statement, "There is no absolute truth; different people can define truth in conflicting ways and still be correct."[1] While the way the question is framed may have caused some who simply did not want to be dogmatic to agree, it nonetheless appears that a substantial number of persons indeed think that there are various truths for different persons.

Part of this may simply be what James Davison Hunter has termed "the ethic of civility."[2] This refers to the tendency not to want to tell anyone they are wrong. Thus, truth becomes secondary to etiquette. I am right and you are also right becomes the easy way to avoid conflict between two persons whose views are actually diametrically opposed.

A more extreme form of relativism, and one still largely at the level of intellectuals but beginning to trickle down to the person in the street is deconstruction. This way of thinking, which arose as a school of literary criticism, may well represent a paradigm change from the modern to the postmodern period of our culture. In the traditional view of language, words ultimately referred to something other than words, to objects or states of affairs existing independently of personal beliefs about them. In this newer understanding, words refer only to other words. There is no bedrock of extralinguistic material on which they rest.[3] In such a situation, the value of language is in expressing the feelings of the speaker or writer and in evoking feelings in the hearer or reader. As this view of language is translated into the idiom of the people, its relativizing effects can be expected to continue.

In this atmosphere, anything that claims to be "the" way things are encounters resistance. Doctrine, however, makes such claims. It affirms that certain teachings are true, and therefore are to be believed.

1. George Barna, *What Americans Believe: An Annual Survey of Values and Religious Views in the United States* (Ventura, Calif.: Regal, 1991), pp. 84–85.

2. James Davison Hunter, *Evangelicalism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), pp. 183–84.

3. Richard Rorty, *Consequences of Pragmatism: Essays 1972–1980* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1982), p. xxxv.

The claim is that all persons should believe this, since it is an expression of something existing independently of how persons feel about it.

Part of the difficulty experienced by the purveyors of doctrine is the dispute over who establishes or determines what is true and right. In an earlier period, truth was thought of as originating from God. Then, as belief in the supernatural declined, there was a shift to seeing nature as the source and guarantor of truth and right. More recently, humans are seeing themselves as making truth. One of the most interesting revelations of this phenomenon occurred during the confirmation hearings for Clarence Thomas for the United States Supreme Court in the fall of 1991. While most of the attention was directed to the attempt to determine whether Thomas or Anita Hill was telling the truth regarding his alleged sexual harassment of her, this other issue was also being played out, largely unnoticed. Some of the more liberal members of the Senate judiciary committee conducting the hearings were concerned that because Thomas had been educated in Catholic schools, he might believe in natural law, the idea that certain values are objectively present in the nature of things. The climax of the discussion came when the committee chairman, Senator Joseph Biden of Rhode Island, declared, "Right and wrong are what Congress decides they are!" A more overt declaration of the philosophy that truth and morality are human constructs could hardly be found.

Actually, of course, persons do not really hold to this relativism in practice. They cannot, if they are to function and contend for their ideas over against those of others. There is a belief that these ideas are not merely preferences, but reflect the way things really are, making these beliefs superior to those of others. During the Viet Nam War, the protesters were often college and university students who ostensibly were relativists in their official beliefs in many areas. Yet they steadfastly insisted that "The war is immoral!" They did not merely mean that they disliked the war, although they surely did, but they seemed to hold that somehow this was contrary to the way things are, or the ways things should be.

3. One reason doctrine is more difficult today is because of trends in the nature of communication. We hear continually that our age is a visually, rather than verbally, oriented generation. The old adage that "a picture is worth a thousand words" is becoming more emphatic. Consequently, Christian ministries are adopting other forms of communication than the traditional verbally oriented preaching and teaching. The use of drama and multimedia presentations comes to mind. Some of these types of communication, however, are inherently not as capable of doctrinal refinement as are verbal presentations. The analysis, elaboration, and interpretation done in a spoken sermon are difficult to

present in a drama. Greater ambiguity exists. Several years ago one of the authors attended a Kabuki theater in Tokyo with a Japanese pastor who had been his student several years earlier. Because he did not understand Japanese, the American was given a small radio receiver with an earphone, over which he could hear an English summary of what was being said. At the intermission, the two men discovered to their surprise that the American visitor understood more about the play than did his Japanese host. The narrative he was hearing included explanation and interpretation of the words and actions of the actors, which could not be conveyed in the script being followed by the actors.

4. Another difficulty for the formulator and purveyor of doctrine comes from the passage of time, with its concomitant apparent obsolescence of ideas. The doctrines Christianity holds as tenets and commands for belief are based on centuries-old documents, which claim to be a revelation from God. They have been articulated in their basic form almost that long ago. Since that time, great cultural change has taken place in our world. How, then, are people today to understand these doctrines, and how can they be expected to believe them? Virtually no one in a developed society believes today that the sun revolves around the earth or that bloodletting is a good way to cure certain diseases. How, then, can people be expected to believe Christian doctrines that apparently partake of the same cultural ethos? In some cases, the difficulty is not simply whether one can believe the doctrine, but rather whether one can even understand what one is being asked to believe. The upshot of this is that doctrine must be constantly redone. It will not suffice simply to continue to repeat the expressions of a given doctrine that were delineated several centuries ago. Yet this becomes an exceedingly delicate undertaking, something like performing brain surgery. One might successfully remove a tumor, but destroy the brain in the process. In the endeavor to give a fresh, intelligible, relevant statement of an ancient doctrine, how does one ensure that the doctrine is really preserved? In other words, how can one be certain that it really is the Christian doctrine of divine love, or immanence, or atonement?

5. A further factor is atomism. By this we mean the tendency to think only in small pieces, rather than in a great synoptic whole. Doctrine, to the extent that it is systematic theology, is concerned with a full synthesis or integration of the various elements of Christian belief into a coherent whole, within which everything has meaning. This kind of "worldview-ish" approach is becoming ever scarcer in our society.

In part, this is a result of the tremendous information explosion. The time of the greater metaphysicians, the spinners of grand synoptic systems, was a simpler one; one person, if a true genius and intellectually versatile, could know, at least on some level, enough about all areas of

earning to be able to look over all of truth and see its interconnections. hat time is past. Information is growing at an incredible rate. It is very ifficult for anyone to keep abreast of the growing body of knowledge one field, let alone know what is happening in others. The resultant sual method of coping is to become more and more specialized. There as a time when a person had one doctor, who basically knew what ere was to know about medicine. It may have been possible then to y, "An apple a day keeps the doctor away," but if that slogan were to e used today, it would have to be doctors, in the plural. One's primary re physician is frequently someone who has specialized in internal edicine, and who knows enough about the various fields of medicine know where to refer a patient.

The same phenomenon occurs in theology. A church historian can- ot ordinarily also be conversant with all the latest trends in Old Testa- ent studies. Thus, the very idea of doctrine as a summation of the en- re Bible's teaching on a subject appears to be an impossibility, or at ast, an endeavor of great difficulty. Doctrine must give way to much ore modest treatments of Christianity's teachings.

On a popular level, some persons simply are detail-oriented, and ve difficulty fitting these details together into a whole. They can see the trees, but cannot see the forest. They have difficulty with the "big cture."

6. A final general cultural problem is the fact that some biblical and eological concepts and terminology have been displaced by secular ought. In some cases the concepts have been replaced by alternative ncepts; in others, the terminology has been retained but has been so defined as to become virtually meaningless. We have an example of e former in the substitution of "psychological wholeness" for "per- nal holiness," a matter of psychology usurping theology's usual nction. Another example is seen in the idea of "fate," according to ich events occur because they were destined to happen, but with- t any real question being raised regarding who or what does the stining. Here a blind force of some kind serves the function that an elligent god was previously thought to serve. The idea is retained t some force greater than the individual human is responsible for luencing what occurs, but without any real specification of what t may be.

The other type of factor is seen in the redefinition of terminology in r language and culture. Much of this is simply popular jargon or ng. As much as theologians, doctors, and others are regaled for the of specialized terminology, the same problem pertains in more pop- r circles as well. Any adult who has ever attempted, without previous guage study of some kind, to understand adolescent conversation,

especially that of certain cultural subgroups, knows that there is a language there just as impenetrable as any technical vocabulary and much more difficult because of its instability. This has a detrimental effect on the ability to communicate theologically. We have in mind, for example, something such as generalized use of the word "awesome." That has been a perfectly good and expressive adjective to use of God. Now, however, a substitute must be found for that adjective, since it has been so trivialized.

In some cases, this breakdown in the traditional meaning of language occurs without the awareness of the persons using it in the traditional fashion, thus exacerbating the misunderstanding. As one evangelism teacher observed, "We say, 'God loves you,' and the person seems to indicate recognition, so we assume communication, where it has not really occurred. The hearer thinks, 'God means the force, and loves means lusts after.' Thus, the speaker says, 'God loves you,' and the hearer hears, 'The force lusts after me.'" This development is not only a difficulty for doctrine; it is a reason for the importance of such doctrine.

Religious Factors

Not all of doctrine's opposition comes from the outright rejection of religion or doctrinal concepts. It stems from the fact that, like the Athenians whom Paul addressed in Acts 17, people are religious—in fact, too religious.

1. There is competition from other world religions. The time is past when even for North Americans the alternatives are either Christianity or nothing. Formerly people believed that the choice between Christianity and Islam, Hinduism, or one of the other religions faced only previous devotees of the non-Christian religion. Now, however, Christians, nominal and genuine alike, are faced with this choice. Other major religions, especially Islam, are targeting the West for their evangelistic endeavor. Islam, in particular, is growing rapidly and is coming to be considered in the West as a viable alternative to Christianity and Judaism.[4] This means that people have more options. It is not Christianity or nothing. There are other variations of belief in the supernatural that will become increasingly appealing. Thus, with the presence of a variety of religious ideas within our culture, some of the tenets of these other religions will begin to creep into our thinking and even modify or dilute our Christian beliefs. The apparent novelty of these ideas will make them especially appealing to some.

4. Harold A. Netland, *Dissonant Voices: Religious Pluralism and the Question of Truth* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991), p. 72.

2. There are also pseudo- or quasi-religions in our society. The pantheistic philosophy/religion known as New Age is becoming quite widespread. In some cases, this is not substituted for the Christian faith so much as attached to and blended with it, with a diluting and corrupting effect on those Christian beliefs. Beyond that, however, there are numerous psychological and sociological ways of life, some of them of the self-help variety. They will prove to be difficult competitors for Christianity.

3. A growing factor within the understanding of religions is the idea that they really are not that distinctive. On the intellectual level, and to a growing extent also on the popular level, there is a tendency to regard all religions as basically the same. They are all saying pretty much the same thing, but in different conceptual "languages." Hinduism is the way Indians attempt to understand the universe and their place in it, and it serves them well in their endeavor to live happily and successfully. Islam does the same thing for Arabs.[5] In such a setting, the attempt to discuss specific teachings of Christianity as if they were *the* correct understanding of things seems quaintly naive.

4. Finally, there is a sort of unofficial pluralism growing out of the tensions of our divided world. It is no longer possible to live in one's own corner of the world and ignore the way others in it believe and act. We must learn to understand each other and live with one another. Globalization and cultural shrinkage require that. Rejection or disdain for other cultural practices must be supplanted by learning to appreciate. So, says much modern thought, we must also accept as equally valid the religious views of others. To fail to do so is as intolerant as to reject their dress, language, form of family organization, or other mores.[6]

Christian Factors

In addition to the factors that in one way or another are hostile to the whole of Christianity, or to certain of its doctrines, there are also problematic factors at work within Christian circles themselves. We are referring here to elements or varieties of the Christian faith that object to the use or legitimacy of doctrine within Christianity. These may not be overt forces of opposition. They may in some cases be simply characteristics of the church and of doctrine that make the task of the theologian difficult to carry out.

1. The first of these is the growing pragmatism in ministry. For some time, there has been a decline of the Christian faith in Europe. Only single-digit percentages of the general population attend Sunday worship in virtually any of the countries of Western Europe. Throughout much of this period of decline, Christianity's popularity has continued unabated in North America, especially in the United States. Periodic resurgences of religious interest have brought things back, just when it appeared a slide was beginning.

Now, however, that trend may be overtaking the churches of the United States as well. Secularism seems to be affecting the religious practice of many Americans. One facet of this is decline in worship attendance. One denominational group in Ohio and Pennsylvania that studied the attendance patterns in its churches over a ten-year period discovered that 51 percent showed a moderate to severe decline, 33 percent showed a moderate to large increase, and 15 percent showed little change (an increase or decrease of 5 percent or less).[7] In even such a conservative and aggressively evangelistic denomination as the Southern Baptist Convention 49.5 percent of all churches are plateaued (membership change of less than 10 percent increase or decrease in the past five years), and 20.2 percent have declined by more than 10 percent.[8] This decline is not atypical of evangelical churches, and it is accentuated when one turns to more liberal churches (often labeled "mainline," for some inexplicable reason, presumably because these were the large groups, but perhaps for more "politically correct" reasons).[9]

Such a situation places great psychological pressure on pastors. They, after all, want to succeed for a variety of reasons, and beyond that, in many cases their church members also want to see results, frequently defined in terms of numerical increase. Some of these laypersons, involved in management, sales, or marketing positions, are accustomed to being held responsible for the results in their department, and expect no less from their pastor. It is a difficult situation for a pastor, who works with volunteer workers, not simply employees, and who possesses no rights of tenure in office. Some studies of the present predicament of the church, while basically on target, display a lack of empathy for the difficulties facing the local church pastor, often betraying a lack of experiential familiarity with the pastorate.[10]

5. Peter Berger, "The Pluralistic Situation and the Coming Dialogue between the World Religions," *Buddhist-Christian Studies* 1 (1981): 33.

6. Netland, *Dissonant Voices*, pp. 32–33.

7. Dan Peterson, *Middle East Baptist Conference District Assessment* (Youngstown, Ohio: Middle East Baptist Conference, 1994), p. 6.

8. Terri Lackey, "Plateaued, Declining Church Growth Is Pervasive, Pesky, Sneaky Illness," *Baptist Press*, April 2, 1996.

9. Dean M. Kelley, *Why Conservative Churches Are Growing* (New York: Harper and Row, 1972), pp. 20–35.

10. E.g., David Wells, *No Place for Truth: Or, Whatever Happened to Evangelical Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993); *No God But God: Breaking with the Idols of Our Age*, ed. Os Guinness and John Seel (Chicago: Moody, 1992).

In such situations, where there is pressure to succeed and such success is measured by statistics, there is a strong tendency to make decisions regarding programming and emphases on the basis of pragmatism rather than ideology. Examples abound. In 1993 one of the authors lectured at a Seventh-day Adventist College. At a faculty luncheon he was asked how he felt about the practice of Seventh-day Adventists of worshiping on Saturday rather than on Sunday. He replied that while differing with their practice and belief on this matter, he respected them because this practice was based on a genuine conviction that this is what the Bible teaches, a practice he assumed may have impeded somewhat their growth in a culture in which, if they are going to worship at all, most people will likely do so on Sunday. Quite different, he said, is the establishment of a worship service on Saturday evening to reach persons who would prefer to worship then in order to keep Sunday free.

Denominational distinctives are being blurred today. Originally, these distinctives were matters of deep conviction. Those who held to believers' baptism by immersion could not be part of a church that practiced infant baptism, because the command to be baptized as a public testimony to one's faith was considered a matter of obedience to an important command given by the Lord Jesus Christ himself and the mode of that baptism was considered essential to the practice. Today, however, some Baptist churches are opening their membership to those who have not undergone such baptism. In some cases, the decision may be made on the basis of having deeply studied the matter and concluding that the Scriptures are not sufficiently clear to justify such a practice. In other cases, however, the decision is being made on pragmatic grounds: It will make it easier to attract more people.

This has not always been so, however. Among the pioneers of a Baptist group now allowing open membership were two nineteenth-century Swedish immigrants, John and Brita Sundstrom. They had come from Sweden in large part for religious freedom. When they settled in rural Minnesota they found that the nearest Baptist church was eleven miles away. Rather than attending a nearby Lutheran church, they walked that distance to the Baptist church each Sunday, carrying their infant daughters, Ida and Christine, on their backs. After several years of this practice, they founded a Baptist church in their home, John serving as the lay pastor of the church for the first five years of its existence.[11] Twenty miles away another Baptist church was formed by a group that had emigrated from a town in Sweden where the persecution of the Baptists had been the most severe. One leader of the group had been imprisoned for twenty-three days on a diet of bread and water, a punishment of which twenty-eight days was considered the equivalent of life imprisonment.[12] January prayer week revivals often occurred in that church and the converts were unwilling to wait until spring to be baptized. Consequently, two- to three-foot-thick ice on Rush Lake was cut through, and in 1876 a total of thirty-two persons were baptized; in the winter of 1878, fifty-four persons.[13] To those people, Baptist doctrine was important, and they preached it in their churches. Lest you think these are fictitious cases or "preacher stories," we can assure you they are not. Ida Sundstrom was the mother of one of the authors, who grew up in that second church mentioned.

11. P. Ryden, *Svenska Baptisternas i Minnesota Historia; Från 1850 -Talet till 1918* (Minneapolis: Minnesota Statskonferens, 1918), p. 122.

The point here is not whether Baptist doctrine is correct, or whether one ought to be a Baptist or something else. The point is that doctrinal beliefs were considered important in earlier generations. One did not make the choice of church primarily on the basis of geographical proximity, beauty of building, or quality of program or preaching. To many leaders of churches today, there must be change to meet the times, a concern that is basically correct in its emphasis. One of the changes envisioned, however, is that the church must not be so doctrinal, so doctrinaire, that it narrows the possible field of its appeal.

2. Some object that doctrine is divisive. Like many other concerns today, this stems from a correct and noble intention and desire, in this case, the desire for unity in the church. That this is important to our Lord himself is indicated by his prayer that his followers might be one as he and the Father are one (John 17:20–23). But, say some of today's church members and leaders, we are actually formally divided from other believers by our teachings and beliefs on such matters as the nature of sanctification and the order of events surrounding Christ's second coming. Because this is the case, we should avoid discussing such doctrines.

There is, of course, a large element of truth to this complaint. Sometimes the church has been divided into numerous smaller and smaller subdivisions over matters of doctrinal minutia. The youth pastor of one evangelical church asked the youth pastor of another similar church to consider having a combined activity of their two groups, in this case a wiener roast. The latter youth pastor replied that he could not do that, since some of the young people from the first church might not be premillennial.

12. Adolf Olson, *A Centenary History; As Related to the Baptist General Conference of American* (Chicago: Baptist Conference Press, 1952), pp. 106–7, n. 1.

13. Ibid., p. 109.

(2)

271

In actuality, this sort of division is not the result merely of doctrinal differences. In many churches today, the disputes are over more practical than doctrinal matters. One of these, which will probably be with us for some time, is the style of worship, particularly of music. Another is the role of women in the church and in ministry. While these may be related to and even based on doctrinal issues, they are primarily a question of practice. To some extent such differences cannot be avoided, and must not be, if the issues are important.

The result of this fear of the divisiveness of doctrine is not necessarily rejection of doctrine, so much as neglect of doctrine. There is a broad-based avoidance of any kind of doctrinal discussion, whether acrimonious or irenic. When, however, this is done, it leaves the way open for perversions to enter, which would be rejected by both parties to some of these minor disputes. It is something like avoiding changing the motor oil in a family's automobiles because various family members prefer different brands of oil, and changing oil using one of these brands would be divisive. Thus, the needed lubrication that all family members agree is important is neglected, with serious consequences.

3. A third difficulty for doctrine today is the tendency toward generic Christianity and even generic religion. One quality of the baby boomer generation is a lack of "brand loyalty" as consumers. If a baby boomer's father drove Chevrolets all his life, that has little effect on the boomer, who may change to another make of car if it seems to be of better quality or a better value for the money, or simply if the local dealer offers better service. This, in itself is wise consumerism. When applied to the choice of church, however, the considerations that bear most strongly on a selection are not doctrinal in character. They are the questions of convenience of parking, quality of educational program, or nursery facilities. In such an environment, the trend is toward doctrinally generic Christianity. That which distinguishes one church from another doctrinally, that is, the specifics, is not perceived as being important.[14]

At present, most persons seeking "consumer-friendly" religion tend to go to evangelical churches, largely because these are the churches providing aggressive quality programming. If that were different, however, in other words, if more doctrinally liberal churches had better recreational or counseling programs, persons of this type might not be terribly reluctant to make the change. Indeed, the trend toward deleting the denomination from the church name both reflects and contributes to this trend. More churches are becoming simply "community churches," or are even deleting "church" from their advertised name, instead identifying themselves as "Grace Christian Community" or

14. Leith Anderson, *Dying for Change* (Minneapolis: Bethany, 1990), pp. 81–83.

"New Hope Praise Center." The issue is larger than this, however. Those patronizing the full-service churches are traditionally Christian and so seek for their needs to be met in a Christian context. What, however, happens if other religions, some of which are now becoming quite aggressively evangelistic, come to provide the best-quality religious and educational programming? To date, of course, most of these competitive religions are more doctrinaire than much Christianity. Yet, these religions may well learn from the strategy of Christianity, becoming much more generic, emphasizing experience, personal health, and so on. They may even learn to use identities that are not clearly non-Christian. Does a religious or psychological experience in a Christian versus a Muslim religious context matter?

4. Another problem for doctrine in our day is the move toward a more feeling-oriented approach to the Christian faith, and indeed to life in general by those in the West. This represents a trend that has been in place for approximately two centuries. Friedrich Schleiermacher asserted that the domain of religion is neither doctrinal belief nor ethical activity, but feeling. This has grown and taken various forms over the years.[15] I can remember a conference held at a Christian college more than thirty years ago. During the testimony sharing time, one of the college students indicated his enthusiasm for Jesus by saying, "Jesus is the greatest!" He did not indicate the greatest "what," just the greatest. While some of the pastors present were at that time somewhat taken aback by this expression of vague piety, that young man was the vanguard of things to come. What he was expressing, of course, was not primarily something about Jesus, but about himself and how he felt about Jesus.

This feeling approach to Christian faith is both reflected by and encouraged by a type of worship that focuses primarily on the emotions. One has only to observe the type of congregational singing that is becoming increasingly popular in evangelical circles to note this trend. At one time, hymns were a primary means of teaching or reinforcing doctrinal beliefs. The lyrics reflected this. Each stanza of a properly composed hymn advanced the thoughts of the preceding stanzas. In many popular songs today, however, the content of the lyrics is minimal. A few words and sentences are repeated numerous times, often more than the songwriter called for. There may be an ascending shift of key. All of this has the effect of elevating the emotions, as any observer trained in social psychology or even a discerning although untrained observer, can tell. As important as the emotional dimension of Chris-

15. Friedrich Schleiermacher, *On Religion: Speeches to Its Cultured Despisers* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1958), second speech.

tian faith is, it has a tendency to eliminate or minimize the need for any fine distinctions among beliefs. In so doing, this brand of Christianity makes itself exceedingly vulnerable to the traditional charges of intellectuals, particularly in the behavioral sciences, that this brand of religion is simply a matter of emotional expression, as well as the contention of persons like John Hick that all religions are essentially different expressions of the same experience, veiled under different thought forms.[16]

5. Some Christians are quite indifferent to, or insensitive to, theological differences. To them, the difference between an understanding of justification as something God does in declaring the person righteous, and something he does by actually changing the person's moral and spiritual condition, seems inconsequential. They are as insensitive to such nuances as tone-deaf persons are to the sounds of adjacent notes on the musical scale. Thus, the attempt to teach doctrine, with its inevitable distinctions, seems superfluous and counterproductive.

6. Some laypersons have a strong distrust of any kind of learning. As Helmut Thielicke has pointed out, this is not without some justification, on the basis of both principle and experience.[17] This is especially the case with theology, which appears to be the most abstract discipline.

7. A further problem for doctrine comes from what might be called the "prophetic approach" to settling the matter of truth in certain areas. By this we mean the approach that expects God's direct communication of his truth to those who are alert and sensitive to such manifestation. This is of course found in the various Pentecostal, charismatic, and Third Wave movements, where something like prophecy or a word of knowledge is considered an important way to apprehend God's truth. It is also, however, found in less officially charismatic groups in which lay Bible study is undertaken, with the expectation that one will find the meaning in the process of reading and meditating on a portion of Scripture. This approach short-circuits the hard work generally involved in getting at the truth in doctrinal matters, such as exegesis of Scripture, examination and analysis of all the viable alternatives, and evaluation of those in such a way as to identify the most probable. This approach purports to dispense with that, providing a quick and easy solution to complicated doctrinal dilemmas.

Such prophetic solutions often emanate from authoritarian leaders. All goes well until two or more of these supposedly prophetic ideas come in conflict with one another. Then the weakness of the approach

16. John Hick, *God Has Many Names* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1982), pp. 64–66.
17. Helmut Thielicke, *A Little Exercise for Young Theologians* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1962), pp. 3–8, 21–24.

becomes apparent. If rational means do not enter into the original formulation of these views, they will not be easily mediated. Thus, some sort of power struggle between the holders of these opposed views ensues, however well concealed this may seem to be or what form it may take. Either one subdues the other, or a division of the group takes place. Indeed, this approach to identifying the truth is major raw material for religious splits.

8. Yet another major problem for doing doctrine, although not necessarily for holding doctrine, is tradition. By this is meant holding something because it has been taught or received, or because it is the status quo. The very familiarity of the idea creates an aura of truth about it, which settles matters, or even precludes the consideration of any different way of thinking about things. In many cases, there is a generalized conception that this idea is held because this is what the Bible teaches, without any concerted inquiry regarding the specific location of such references. In one church, a middle-aged woman came to her pastor after a service and asked, "Why don't you preach about the ———, like other pastors do?" "What ———?" responded the young pastor. "Why the ——— that is taught in the Bible," was the woman's comment. When the pastor inquired exactly where in the Bible this doctrine was taught, the woman hesitated, then promised to come the next Sunday with the texts listed. Upon seeing the pastor the next Sunday morning, the woman immediately exclaimed, "How could they have so misled me at ——— [a school she had attended]? The word does not even appear in the Bible." Not all holders of traditional views allow them to be corrected that easily, however. Tradition frequently substitutes for the hard work of doing theology.

Not all traditions are necessarily old, however. It is impressive to see how quickly some of today's young people, with their lack of awareness of or concern about history, absolutize a recently accepted idea, or allow a very old idea to become their belief, not recognizing that the church may have condemned the teaching centuries earlier. Sometimes the persons or groups that pride themselves on being the most innovative hold to their young traditions most tenaciously. Among the dozens of congregations one of us has served as interim pastor there were two that particularly thought of themselves as avant garde, innovative, and flexible. Yet in one, the interim pastor was told quite clearly that the congregation wanted him to perpetuate a practice called "the prayers of the people," which the previous pastor had introduced, in which he came down from the pulpit and stood among the people. In explaining the procedure to him, the church chairman actually said, "Here is where X [the preceding pastor] stood when he prayed." In the other church, the leadership strongly suggested to the interim pastor a partic-

ular pattern of topics for the advent sermon series, because that was how it had been done the two previous years. Attempts to preach from a different location than the customary place on the platform met with no enthusiasm in either church, less so in fact than in almost any of the other churches where such an innovation had been attempted. It was almost as if these churches were saying, "We want to be innovative, and our form of innovation is the right and the final way to innovate."

There is here, of course, quite frequently a doctrinal conception, albeit held for a poor reason. It may quite frequently be poor doctrine. The real difficulty, however, stems from the fact that holding this doctrinal conception for this reason may prevent one from holding or teaching a better version of such a doctrine.

9. Another obstacle to doctrine in our day is the presence of what might well be referred to as bizarre conceptions. All sorts of strange ideas, held for various reasons, affect people's thinking. These are frequently based on taking a single text out of its context and extrapolating it without regard for other portions of Scripture. Such an idea is often thought of as the very key to the Christian faith, and the resulting preoccupation frequently diverts people from the appropriate concern with doctrine. For example, one church mailed to its entire community an invitation to attend its vacation Bible school. A letter was received from one person, objecting to the idea of mailing invitations and citing a biblical reference that could be vaguely construed to relate to this. The entire effort and concern of the person seemed to be focused on this matter. Here was a case of drawing an extremely questionable inference from Scripture, and then making primary what, even if taught in Scripture, would appear to be very secondary.

10. This is closely related to what might be called "formulism," or "sloganism." By this is meant the tendency to place great confidence in a single word or phrase, and to regard it as the measure of orthodoxy. Apart from the fact that the expression may not really be understood, the danger is that formal use of the language may divert attention from what is actually believed and asserted, or what, in other words, is meant by that expression. Formulism, in other words, short-circuits inquiry and reflection in doctrinal matters. For example...?

11. A very real cause of difficulty for the doctrinal enterprise is the increasing self-orientation of much popular Christianity. This has several manifestations. One is the primary concern for human welfare, often conceived of in terms of personal pleasure or satisfaction. This affects to a large extent the doctrines of God, humanity, sin, and salvation. A second dimension is the tendency to consider our ideas right and our judgment correct. The rest of doctrine is then construed in light of this. For example, it is now fairly popular to object to the doctrine of

hell on the ground that it is offensive to moral sensibility. God therefore is evaluated by whether he conforms to my conception. It may mean that the biblical statements are interpreted in light of my ideas, so that God's love is understood in a more permissive fashion. Or it may be that God is seen as actually not fitting my understanding, and therefore is judged to be less than fully loving and benevolent. The underlying assumption in all of this thinking is the inherent goodness and integrity of human personality. The human is able to judge what is right and wrong, and Christianity's doctrines must conform to this. The human, in other words, has become his or her own authority. The result may be a severe distortion of biblical doctrine. What is needed, if that revealed truth is to be held and proclaimed, is a virtual Copernican revolution, in which God is made the center of our moral and spiritual universe, rather than we ourselves.

12 ~~13~~. Closely related to this development is another powerful factor (13) (12) bearing on the formulation and proclamation of doctrine. In recent years there has been a strong emphasis within Christian circles on psychology, mental health, and related matters. This is frequently considered more important than biblical content and doctrine, at least in practice if not in overt theory. This then influences doctrine in several ways. One is the temporal character of this concern. Concern for mental health and emotional soundness is primarily a concern for that which is here and now. Doctrine, on the other hand, concerns matters that apply to eternity.

What this means is that a different set of categories is being employed and claimed to be completely adequate as means of description and explanation. For example, what was in the past considered self-centeredness and consequently labeled sin may now be treated as exclusively a psychological phenomenon, involving one's concern for adequate self-esteem or one's reaction to a situation of insecurity. This is aggravated by the tendency toward euphemism in Western (especially American) society. Thus, a student no longer does poorly; rather he or she "can do better." What formerly was an "F" grade for an extended case of the former now becomes "no credit" in the context of the latter explanation. In such a setting, no one is seen as "handicapped" or "disabled" or "abnormal." These terms are instead replaced by such concepts as "disadvantaged" or "challenged." Thus, persons who in an earlier period would have been thought of as short are "vertically challenged" and those who would have been referred to as overweight or even stout are now understood to be "dietarily enhanced" or "horizontally gifted." This type of language when carried over to discussion of other kinds of behavior virtually exterminates any thought of sin. Writing in *Christianity Today*, "Eutychus" offered a series of such redefinitions of sin, including

2.14

spiritually dead as "eternal-life challenged," Satan as a "divinity-impaired being" and Anti-Christ as "alternative leader."[18]

A further difficulty stems from the fact that while doctrine is found throughout the Bible, it is not always stated in explicitly doctrinal form. Much of the Bible is narrative in form, a type of material that is the subject of considerable attention currently. Other portions are poetic. The difficulty is how to obtain the doctrine found in these portions, so that it can be understood as doctrine.

The formulation of Christian doctrine has never been easy; but that is particularly true in our time. Because doctrine is so important and helpful, however, the effort to find ways to develop and state doctrine today will be well worthwhile. We turn to this endeavor in the chapters ahead.

Clergy Factors

1. One obstacle to clergypersons being true pastor-theologians is that theology is hard work. Doing theology correctly and effectively requires a broad knowledge of Scripture, care in the choice and application of methodology, and reflection and deep thought. Given the time constraints and the multiple demands on the preacher, it is difficult to motivate and discipline oneself to do that for which most members of the flock are not clamoring.

2. For many pastors, there is a disjunction between theory and practice, a tendency to conduct their ministry without a clearly thought-out theological basis for what they do. This in turn frequently goes back to the nature of the theological education one has had. Just as universities tend to be pluriversities, with collections of noncohering and even conflicting disciplines, so do theological seminaries. The Issues Research Advisory Committee of the Association of Theological Schools in the United States and Canada sponsored research into the nature, problems, and improvement of theological education. At the end of several years of studies, underwritten by a major foundation, a conference was held to assess the results of that research. The chairman summarized by saying that the number one problem that had been reiterated throughout the studies was the lack of integration of the "classical" and the "applied" fields (e.g., New Testament and pastoral counseling, or theology and preaching). Given this lack of a theological basis for preaching, then, there will quite possibly be a tendency to deal with the myriad problems of the Christian life that the preacher addresses without regard for the theological basis of those issues.

18. "A Differently Sensible Idea," *Christianity Today*, 37, no. 2 (February 8, 1993): 6.

3. Finally, there are some preachers whose understanding of the nature of truth and revelation makes it difficult for them to abstract doctrine from the Bible, or to make the transition from the divine self-manifestation to declare that manifestation or discussion of the nature of that deity. While this factor goes beyond the scope of this treatise, it is one problem that a certain segment of the clergy find difficult to overcome.[19]

19. For a treatment of this issue by one of the authors, see Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1986), pp. 191–96.

authors of radically different orientations will almost surely lead to internal inconsistency.

All of this says as well that if we are going to do an expository doctrinal sermon from a given passage, it may be necessary to qualify what we say. This may be done in terms of the degree of universality or the degree of dogmatism we display in connection with it. It may also be done by calling attention to the existence of other facets of the doctrine, or by pointing out other passages and how they relate to what is being said in this passage.

7

Getting Doctrine from Narrative Passages

I pulled my car into the parking lot, got out, and walked over to the guard rail. Below me was an open-pit iron mine, one of the largest in the world. I looked at the reddish-colored iron ore, then turned and looked at my automobile. I thought of how a large part of that car, sheet metal, mechanical parts, even some of the trim, had begun with unmined, unrefined ore such as I saw below me. Between the raw ore and the finished vehicle a number of carefully planned and executed steps had intervened.

Steps to the Doctrinal Sermon

There are basically three stages involved in the process of making a car. The first is the actual mining of the iron ore, the extraction of it from the ground. That provides only raw materials, however. The process of making steel is a complex one, which involves removing impurities from the iron and combining it in a process known as alloying, with other elements, to produce steel. The result at this stage is finished steel, in the form of bars or sheets. The next stage is reforming the steel into particular shapes, as automobile parts. Bars are transformed into fenders, gears, knobs, and other parts. Finally, these parts are combined with others to produce an assembled automobile.

The process of preparing a doctrinal sermon follows a course somewhat analogous to that of producing a car. There is first exegesis, which is the process of determining the meaning of the relevant biblical passage(s). This corresponds to the process of mining the iron ore. What is obtained here is meaning and truth, including doctrinal assertions, but

278

not necessarily theology as such.[1] The second stage is theology, both biblical and theological. This is, for our purposes, the process of refining, of extracting the theological material from the other types of material (e.g., devotional, ethical, etc.) and casting the doctrines into contemporary expression, not unlike the production of bars or sheets of high-carbon alloy steel. The final stage is homiletics, the shaping of these contemporary expressions of doctrine into sermonic form. This corresponds to the actual fabrication of automobile parts. This chapter and the previous one are primarily concerned with the exegetical task, although they do not deal with specific topics of exegetical methodology. Rather, they address the question of how to do exegesis in such a way as to obtain the theological result from that process. Chapters 8 and 9 concern themselves with theology: how to formulate doctrines in a contemporary and relevant fashion. Chapters 10 through 13 deal with homiletics—the casting of these doctrinal truths into sermons of various types.

The Nature and Role of Narrative

In addition to a large amount of didactic doctrinal material, there is an even larger and potentially very useful body of material, namely, the narrative portions of the Scriptures. There is a large amount of this material, found in different settings and covering a long period of time. Some theologians, practicing what they term "narrative theology," have even made this the normative source of doctrine. In some ways, this is a carryover from a view of revelation according to which historical events constituted the primary variety of revelation. Whether we concede that this is the primary mode of revelation, we would probably agree that it is one of the modes God utilized in making himself known. This is also a primary form of communication used by some theologians and others today. For example, rabbis today often answer a question, not by a direct affirmative answer, but by telling a story. We will want to ask ourselves whether this is also closer to the ancient Hebrew mind as well.

Biblical Narrative

It is important that we make clear that it is biblical narrative that we are referring to. Currently, there is a great deal of emphasis on narrative in theology as well as in preaching. There are various conceptions of the role of narrative. One is that it is basically a communication device. An-

1. Charles Hodge appears to have held that what we find in the Bible are the "facts of theology," and that the task of the theologian is simply to arrange them in systematic fashion. Charles Hodge, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1952), pp. 18–19.

other is the hermeneutical use, as the key to unlocking the meaning of the biblical message. The final use is heuristic. This is the idea that narrative has certain inherent powers of discovering truth. Indeed, narrative as a literary form is sometimes thought of as having certain inherent capacities for enabling knowing. Stories, simply because they are stories, are better means of revealing truth and creating insight than are propositions. When this move is made, story as such takes on theological significance, even when drawn from outside the biblical canon. Dialogue between persons is thought of as generating truth. "Tell me your story and I'll tell your mine" is often the slogan that underlies this approach. Biographies drawn from outside Scripture may reveal truth.[2] Underlying this approach is, of course, a particular conception of the relationship of truth to revelation and of general revelation to special revelation. We cannot here discuss at length the issues involved in this approach. We do, however, want to make clear that the narratives we are referring to as the source of our doctrine, and ultimately of our preaching, are those found in the Bible.

If narrative is a primary mode of revelation and of communication, is it a means of conveying doctrine, and if so, how? This will be a clue to the answer to an even more important, and in many ways, more difficult, question: How do we identify, isolate, and extract doctrine from such passages? For if this is a large lode of useful raw material for doctrinal construction, the problem is that the ore, in this case, is difficult to extract and then to convert into doctrine of a more conventional sort.

Narrative and Special Revelation

Our justification for the use of narrative for obtaining doctrine is found in the nature of special revelation. God has revealed himself through the use of several modes or modalities. One of these is what Bernard Ramm has called divine speech.[3] This includes the visions and dreams that came to biblical prophets, as well as the direct address by God we sometimes find reported in Scripture, and the concursive action or inward speaking of God guiding the Scripture writers' thoughts as they wrote. Alongside these are the divine acts of God as self-revelation. These are those historical events in which God acted in such a way as to make known something of his nature and activity. It is the report of these that constitutes narrative. Because they are revelatory, they are proper subjects of our doctrinal exegetical endeavor.

2. James McClendon, *Biography as Theology: How Life Stories Can Remake Today's Theology* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1974).

3. Bernard Ramm, *Special Revelation and the Word of God: An Essay on the Contemporary Problem of Revelation* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1961), pp. 53–69.

There are many examples of this, and numerous cases where Scripture writers identify the events as revelation of God. One of those most frequently cited is the exodus and the complex of events associated with it. Here God demonstrated his power, both in the series of plagues culminating in the Passover and then in the miraculous crossing of the Red Sea.[4] Here God was showing his benevolence by his provision for and deliverance of his people. He was also showing his judgmental or destructive power in the death of the firstborn of Egypt and in the destruction of the Egyptian army. This event was referred to on several occasions by the psalmists and other Scripture writers as evidence of God's power and goodness (e.g., Pss. 66, 78).

Another passage that clearly is a manifestation of the nature and especially the power of God is the account of the contest between Elijah and the prophets of Baal on Mount Carmel (1 Kings 18). Elijah and the 450 prophets of Baal agreed that whichever god was able to send down fire to consume the sacrifice would be established as the true God (v. 24). Then Jehovah revealed himself by sending fire (v. 38), and the people acknowledged that he was indeed the true God (v. 39).

In the New Testament, we have a coalescence of two modalities of revelation in Jesus Christ. Here we have both divine speech and divine act coming together in the fullest revelation of God. Jesus' words were God's words and Jesus' actions were God's acts, for he was God in human form. John refers to Jesus' mighty acts as "signs." They were divine action. Jesus indicated the revelatory character of his miracles when he said to the Pharisees, "But if it is by the Spirit of God that I cast out demons, then the kingdom of God has come upon you" (Matt. 12:28). He made this point even more clearly when he said, "He who has seen me has seen the Father" (John 14:9).

The event regarded by the Scripture writers as God's supreme act of self-revelation is the resurrection of Jesus. Time and time again, the apostles refer to the resurrection as God's work and indicate the revelation that was involved. An example is Paul's speech in the synagogue in Antioch in Acts 13. He recited the history of God's Old Testament working and promises to Israel, and then shows that these were fulfilled in Jesus Christ, as evidenced by the resurrection: "And we bring you the good news that what God promised to the fathers, this he has fulfilled

4. The authors are aware of the contention of some that it was not the Red Sea that was crossed by the Israelites, but the Reed Sea, a much shallower body of water. The miracle then becomes, as someone has put it, "that God could drown all those Egyptians in three inches of water." For a recent thorough discussion of the issues and defense of the traditional view, see Robert L. Hubbard Jr., "Red Sea," in *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, rev. ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988), vol. 4, pp. 58–61.

to us their children by raising Jesus; as also it is written in the second psalm, 'Thou art my Son, today I have begotten thee'" (vv. 32–33).

Values of Narrative Passages

There are certain advantages or benefits to taking doctrine from narrative passages. The most significant is that doctrine is in a more usable form than in didactic passages, at least in terms of our ability to preach it. This may seem like a contradiction of what we have just said, but while doctrine may not be as easy to identify in this form, it can nonetheless be more easily communicated. It makes the task of doctrinal preaching easier.

There are two major problems in doctrine: intelligibility and credibility, or, in other words, the problem of understanding the meaning of the doctrine and the problem of believing it. Sometimes we have one of these without the other. Frequently, persons understand a doctrine, but do not believe it or are not convinced that it is true. Sometimes, a more devout person may believe that something is true without fully understanding it. A common example of the latter is the doctrine of the Trinity. Yet we can have both understanding and belief, and they are facilitated by being presented in narrative.

Enhancing Credibility

It is possible to believe doctrines that occur in narrative because the very fact of the narrative, if true, demonstrates the reality of the doctrine. If something is actual, it obviously is possible, and narrative provides a demonstration, not just a discussion, of the doctrine at issue. For example, take the doctrine of the power of God. When we look at the miracle narratives, such as the Passover, the crossing of the Red Sea and the destruction of the Egyptian army, or the birth of Isaac, we see that the God who did those things is indeed powerful—more powerful than the most powerful things we know in this world, including the laws of nature.

Facilitating Understanding

Beyond that, however, the doctrines come illustrated. If we ask what the omnipotence of God means, we find out by seeing it connected with actual human circumstances. We are thus able to relate it to our own experiences. These may not always be the same, but at least we can often find some congruence or parallel between what happened then and what is happening today or what persons in that time and place experienced and what we experience today.

280

Problems with Narrative Passages

Having said this, there are some special problems or particular difficulties in attempting to deal with doctrine in narrative passages. We recount them here, not as a discouragement, but to alert us or prepare us for what we will need to do.

Normativity

One problem centers around the question of whether a passage is to be regarded as normative. This is how it was, on that occasion, but is this how it is to be, how it always is? To put it another way, can this passage be taken as universally true, or is it only true on that occasion and in that situation? The question concerns the nature of the authority of narrative material. Is it only historically authoritative, that is, reliable as an indication of what indeed happened on that occasion? Or is it normatively authoritative, that is, binding as an indication of what will and must happen in other situations, at all times? In fact, this may be a negative case. It may be the exact opposite of how things are to be. Take, for example, the dispute between Paul and Barnabas in Acts 15:36–41, when they were unable to agree whether to take John Mark with them. Is this to be understood as part of the normal variation within the doctrine of sanctification, or as a case of one or both of these men acting in an unsanctified way? That problem must be wrestled with before the passage can contribute to the understanding of sanctification.

Induction

Part of the problem is that we are dealing with inductive logic. In inductive logic, one instance alone does not establish a law. It is necessary to have more instances, until a sufficient degree of probability has been reached. In the case of didactic passages, on the other hand, we are dealing with deductive logic. There is a universal truth, now to be applied here. The nature of inductive logic, however, is such that trying to establish correlation by finding positive instances of agreement has a major shortcoming. How many positive cases, where a particular situation is accompanied by a certain consequence or evaluation, are required to validate the connection between the two? On the other hand, where there are negative situations, where the absence of one factor is accompanied by the absence of the other, then the method of difference enters in, and this is a more powerful factor. In the nature of the case, however, what we are generally dealing with in these cases is the method of agreement, rather than that of difference.

Need of Interpretation

Further complicating our use of narrative passages for doctrine is the fact that this approach involves a different modality of revelation than do didactic passages. This is a matter of revelation as divine acts, whereas the didactic is a case of revelation as divine speech. This means that there will need to be a considerable amount of analysis of the events in order to be able to interpret them correctly. For example, when an event occurs, we need to determine who is the ultimate cause of the event, and whether this causation is direct or indirect. Which occurrences are God's doing and which have been satanically inspired?

These conclusions may not be immediately evident on the surface. We will have to find a way of distinguishing them. For example, when some great disaster strikes in Scripture, such as a famine, how is this to be understood? Does this mean that God maliciously sends harmful experiences to the human race? Does it mean that God is weak, and unable to prevent certain events that he might wish to? Does this argue for the character and power of Satan, or of the forces of evil in general? Does it mean that God allows a considerable amount of leeway to human beings, that he simply maintains a sort of loose control over the creation? Or does it mean that nature is capricious, rather than following some sort of natural laws? Or does it indicate that nature, however personified this may be, has some sort of inner directive force, which responds in certain ways to human actions, so that if humans treat it unwisely it "fights back"? Another way of putting this is that nature is so structured that unwise human use of it, or human exploitation, results in adverse consequences.

All these questions may lead us to the conclusion that in order to interpret these matters we must bring to bear on the passages some of the insights gained from didactic passages. It is common to say something like, "Just let the facts speak for themselves," and some would want to cite that principle here. The one thing that facts cannot do, however, is speak for themselves. In themselves, they are frequently mute. They do not always come interpreted for us, nor do they always interpret themselves.

This caution is necessary even with respect to the supreme case of revelation, the incarnation. In the incarnation the divine acts and the divine speech coincided. Jesus was truly God in human flesh; what he did was God acting in human nature, and his words and teachings were God's own words. Yet, with respect to any given action, was this a manifestation of Jesus' deity or his humanity? If deity, then it does not tell us directly anything about the human nature and the human condition. On the other hand, if it is a manifestation of Jesus' humanity, it can give us

281

insight into ourselves and enable us to imitate Jesus, but it does not really give us direct knowledge of God. Beyond that, however, suppose he truly was the God-man and this was a true incarnation, so that his deity was never separate from his humanity and he never acted simply as God in abstraction or as human alone. Then were any of his actions really usable revelations of deity, such as we find it in God the Father, and were any of his actions really revelations of humanity, such as we find it in ourselves?

The dilemma can perhaps be grasped by considering a problem posed by a paper read at a professional society several years ago. The thesis was that a given practice is not normative for a believer unless it is found in the life of Jesus. This means, for example, that since Jesus is never spoken of as praying for his own forgiveness, this prayer is not mandatory for a believer today. Since there is no recorded instance of Jesus ever speaking in tongues, how can this be an expectation of the believer today? These and other problems point out the difficulty of using Jesus' life as a direct revelation of the nature of humanity, and thus as an example for us.

Contradictory Narratives

A final difficulty in using narrative passages as a basis for doctrine is the existence of apparently contradictory instances of a given doctrine. For example, Clark Pinnock, in commenting on Acts 4:12, "Neither is there salvation in any other; for there is no other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved," maintains that this salvation includes physical healing, which he observes is present in this passage.[5] It may be possible to argue that from this passage, although that is, to say the least, not beyond dispute. There are other passages that appear to support this contention. For example, Jesus said to the man who asked for healing for his son, "All things are possible to him who believes" (Mark 9:23). We are not told, however, that this person possessed salvation in terms of eternal life.

The biblical testimony is not so clear in every case, however. For example, Paul prayed three times for removal of what he terms a "thorn in the flesh" (2 Cor. 12:7). While there has been much debate about the nature of this "thorn," it appears that it was a physical illness that he experienced. It might have been a disease of the eyes, since he writes to the Galatians that it was because of a bodily ailment that he had first preached the gospel to them and testifies that if they could, they would have plucked out their own eyes and given them to him (Gal. 4:13–15).

5. Clark Pinnock, "Acts 4:12—No Other Name Under Heaven," in *Through No Fault of Their Own? The Fate of Those Who Have Never Heard*, ed. William V. Crockett and James G. Sigountos (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1991), p. 109, n. 6.

Yet although Paul was certainly a born-again believer, apparently a rather sanctified Christian at that, and a specially significant servant of Jesus Christ, the threefold request was denied. Instead the response came back, "my grace is sufficient for you." Instead of removal of the ailment, that is, healing, Paul was promised grace to be able to endure the difficult condition.

How, then, are we to reconcile this passage with the hypothesis drawn by Pinnock from Acts 4, which he states, not as a hypothesis, but as a dogmatic fact? If we are to make an induction of all the passages of Scripture that seem to bear on this in narrative fashion, it would have to be as follows: Healing is sometimes given to those who are believers, but sometimes it is not. Its presence is not correlated with the spiritual maturity of the believer, the amount of requesting that is done, or the degree of faith of the asker. It also may come at times to those who are not believers. There is, in other words, no invariable connection between salvation and spiritual healing, and the latter should not be considered a part of the former.

Need of Transitional Doctrine

Part of what we are saying is that we cannot simply make a transition from a biblical narrative to our own narrative, and apply the passage directly. We must ascertain that the two narratives are commensurable, in other words, that they are dealing with the same issue. Unless the question is the same, we cannot necessarily utilize the same answer. But this means that ultimately the narrative must be translated into some sort of propositions, which can then be carried over and applied to the new narrative, that of our lives today. To fail to do this will result in inaccurate and even unfortunate consequences.

A vivid illustration of this is the story of the farmer who decided he would seek to ascertain what he should do by the old method of closing one's eyes, opening the Bible at random, and placing one's finger somewhere on the page. He did so, and his finger landed upon 2 Corinthians 9:6, "The point is this: he who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully." Concluding that this was a message from God, he went out and rented additional acreage and planted intensively. It was a good year, and it was apparent that the bumper crop was more than he could store in his existing barns and granaries. He needed another message of guidance from God regarding what he should do, so he used the closed-eyes-finger-in-the-Bible method again. This time his finger fell on Luke 12:18: "And he said, 'I will do this: I will pull down my barns, and build larger ones; and there I will store all my grain and my goods.'" Since this was obviously

a divine indication that he should do the same, he demolished his old barns and replaced them with new, larger ones, even though the old barns were in quite good condition. This enabled him to store his large crop, but it also saddled him with a large debt. The next year was not nearly so favorable; in fact, because of a drought, the crops failed. Soon the bank demanded payment on the loan, and he had nothing with which to pay. He decided to use his time-tested method of determining God's will once again. This time, when he opened his eyes, he found his finger resting upon the words: "chapter 11." Although we might not use this haphazard approach to biblical interpretation, we must also make certain that the lesson to be drawn from the passage parallels our situation. This involves getting at the specific doctrinal import of the passage. From that we can then derive a more abstract doctrinal principle, which we can then again apply in a specific fashion in the present time.

The Method of Doctrinal Exegesis of Narrative Passages

These foregoing observations should make us sufficiently aware of the difficulties of obtaining our doctrine from narrative passages. We must now ask, however, what procedural processes we should follow in order to make usable those materials that are available to us in this form. While it need not always be done in this step-by-step fashion, there is value in enumerating the aspects of the method in this way.

1. A first step will be to make sure we have interpreted the passage as thoroughly and accurately as possible, apart from the question of its doctrinal content and affirmation. It is not that the doctrinal content is unimportant, or that doctrinal issues are not part of the interpretative process; simply put, we cannot begin to deal with the specifically doctrinal issues until we have understood the entire meaning of a passage. We should be especially careful to avoid drawing doctrinal conclusions prematurely. That would be like attempting to apply a practical application before ascertaining what it is that is being taught in the passage.

In particular, we must work very hard at determining the cultural background. If we do not, we may find ourselves mistaking the event for what it would be and mean in our own culture. Was this a social custom or a business transaction, and whichever it was, what did or would it mean in that setting?

2. Having done this, we should then ask what doctrine or doctrines are involved in this passage. The question of the passage's doctrinal content should always be asked, rather than simply when we are primarily looking for doctrinal teaching of the Bible. This will frequently reveal to us fruitful passages for doctrinal preaching of which we might otherwise not be aware. We should ask whether this illustrates actions of God, and if so, which actions. We should also ask about whether the relationship between God and humans is illustrated here, and if so, what aspects of it. Further, to the extent that humans are involved in the passage, which will most certainly be at least partially the case in virtually every instance, what do their actions reveal about humanity, whether in the natural state or in the state of grace? Or, if both God and humans are involved, what can we learn about the relationship between the two?

Not all narrative passages will be equally fruitful for all doctrines. The doctrines for which we can more confidently turn to narratives are those that especially involve the intersection of the divine person, nature, and working with history. This means that doctrines such as providence, redemption, sin, and judgment are likely candidates. One might well develop a checklist of doctrines to look for. This is logically and methodologically separable from the question of just what is said about this subject.

3. Once we have identified who is acting in the passage and what they are doing, we need to push the process a step further. If our focus is on one or more humans, who was each, and what sort of person was each? Is this person a believer or an unbeliever? Was this an outstanding Christian, or a merely nominal one, based on what else we know about the person? Was this an Old Testament believer? Was this an unbeliever, and if so, what type of unbeliever? Was this a hardened, determined opponent of the things of God, or was this a person who showed openness to the God of Israel, or perhaps was even a "god-fearer"?

This means finding out all we can about the person under consideration. One way in which this is done is through the use of a concordance, by looking up every reference to the person. That will provide us with some additional narrative passages that shed light on the person's life. In some cases, we find, not additional narrative, but discursive statements about the person that may give us God's evaluation. Another way is to use a Bible dictionary or encyclopedia, making sure that the inferences the author of the article draws regarding our subject person do not go beyond the data or evidence.

4. If we are dealing with an action of God, we should ask what this action presupposes in terms of the qualities of God necessary to produce it. Similarly, where the narrative involves the historical person of Jesus, what can and must we deduce from his actions to account for those actions? What sort of being must he have been to have performed such acts? Here we are going beyond the "functional" theology that was so popular a generation or so ago,[6] which focused on the "mighty

6. E.g., Oscar Cullmann, *The Christology of the New Testament* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1963).

deeds" of God, but did not really ask about the fundamental character of the God who so acted. With its anti-metaphysical bias, it avoided such inquiry into more ultimate questions of "nature" or "being." Yet those questions cannot be avoided, and with the resurgence of interest in and confidence in the discipline of metaphysics, they no longer need be ignored.

5. We must also ask about the conditions that brought about this situation. For example, in the case of the Tower of Babel, what led to God's action to scatter the people and confuse their languages? What preceded the great flood in terms of calling for such action? A similar case could be made in connection with the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah. In each of these, the unusual and intense evil of the persons involved led to God's destructive judgment. The action, therefore, is a demonstration of God's righteousness, wrath, and judgment. What we have in mind here are actions of the persons involved. We also, however, should examine the resulting factors. For example, when Moses interceded with God on behalf of the people of Israel, what change in God did this bring about, and what does this tell us about the nature and activity of God?

6. We should ask what interpretation or evaluation of the event may be given within the passage, and by whom. To what extent can we say that God has supplied the word of divine revelation to go with the revelation through divine act? Whether in this passage or elsewhere, this is what frequently enables the narrative to function as narrative. As we noted earlier, in themselves events may have been relatively mute, but facts seldom if ever come to us uninterpreted. Indeed, Bernard Ramm, in discussing historical event as a modality of special revelation, examines several significant events of redemptive history and contends that without the revealed word of interpretation, those events would be opaque. This is true, for example, of the crucifixion of Jesus or the events of Pentecost.[7]

7. We will also want to look for other places in Scripture where there is a word of explanation, interpretation, or evaluation of the event(s) described in this passage. Usually this will be a passage following this one chronologically. Sometimes, however, it will be a passage that comes from an earlier point historically. In this case, it is prophecy, rather than history, as in the former instance.

Examples of this former type of reference can be found in a number of places. For example, when we seek to use the narrative of the conversion experience of Saul of Tarsus (Paul) (Acts 9:1–22), we will also want to examine the two passages in which Paul later refers to the event and

7. Ramm, *Special Revelation*, pp. 77–83.

interprets it (Acts 22:1–21; 26:1–23). Similarly, one may attempt to use the story of the conversion of Cornelius (Acts 10:1–48) to determine whether persons can be saved based on a knowledge of general revelation alone, without exposure to the special revelation. Here, Peter's reference to it may well shed light on this (Acts 11:1–18).

Some references that interpret an event may not even refer to it overtly. For example, as one seeks to grasp and interpret the dispute between Paul and Barnabas over whether to take John Mark with them, 2 Timothy 4:11 is helpful. There Paul asks Timothy to bring Mark with him, because Mark is profitable to him. There is no reference to the earlier incident, but there is certainly aftermath here, which tells us something about Paul's reaction and assessment.

If we have done the type of comparative research described in point 3 above, we will also have helpful and fruitful insight into these issues. For what really was happening will often be interpreted by the nonnarrative references to persons elsewhere. Hebrews 11, for example, sheds considerable light on the actions of a number of Old Testament characters. One of these is Abraham's taking Isaac up onto Mount Moriah, there to offer him as a sacrifice to Jehovah (Gen. 22:1–19). The writer to the Hebrews gives us some additional insight into what Abraham might have been thinking with respect to how Jehovah was to keep his promise of a son (11:17–19). There also is an interesting reference to Rahab's action in concealing the spies from her own countrymen (Josh. 2:1–6). Was this a sinful action on her part, or a commendable and right action? It appears from the statement that it was "by faith" that she did this (Heb. 11:31), that this was a right action, which of course leads us to the issue of how to interpret just what it was that she did (i.e., was it a justifiable lie, the lesser of two evils, or a legitimate ruse of war?).

This last point brings out a matter that needs more complete treatment. We should look for indications in Scripture, whether in the immediate context or elsewhere, of divine approval or disapproval of what is done and said by persons in narrative situations. For example, Job's "friends," who sought to offer him counsel in his predicament, had a great deal to say about God. One might attempt to build a theology on the concepts that emerge out of the narrative. That would be a risky business, however, for there are indications of disapproval of these men and their ideas in Scripture. On the other hand, we have Thomas' famous confession, "My Lord and my God" (John 20:28). If this was an incorrect assessment of Jesus' person, here was the perfect opportunity for him to correct Thomas, and it would have been very desirable and even mandatory for him to do so, if Thomas was mistaken. Jesus did not do this, however. He simply accepted what Tho-

284

mas said. This constituted a certification of his confession of faith and the theology it contained.

8. We will want to make certain that, since this is an inductive use of Scripture, we have done a sufficiently complete induction. We must ask ourselves whether we have looked at all the instances of this type of doctrine in the narratives, so that we know that this case is representative of the entire biblical testimony. There are three possibilities of what may emerge as we begin to compile these. One is that the other instances may confirm this particular teaching. The second is that there may be other instances that contradict this particular view. The third possibility is that the others may supplement it, thus helping round out our conception of this doctrine.

There are various ways in which we may identify those passages that deal, narratively, with the same topic. One way is to consult a good systematic theology text, or preferably, several, and look at the index. This will lead us to the topic that we believe our passage is dealing with. It will also give some indications of other passages that the author of the systematic theology text we are examining thinks deal with this same doctrine. Some of these will be narrative in nature. We will, of course, want to look at each of these to make sure that they do indeed pertain to the same topic.

9. We will look for didactic statements about this kind of action. Once we have classified the doctrinal topic or topics of the passage, we can consult didactic passages written on this subject. This can be done with a concordance, a topical concordance, a topical Bible, or a theological wordbook, such as the *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*[8] or the *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*.[9] Since didactic material is generally clearer, more easily identified as to its subject, and more direct, this serves as an important check against our incorrectly identifying or overextending the teaching in this passage.

It may be helpful to illustrate this methodology in connection with a sample passage, Acts 16:6–10. Let us suppose that one is preaching through the Book of Acts and comes to this passage. What is the doctrinal teaching of the passage? The first step would be to interpret the passage as clearly as possible. Having done that, the next step is to identify the doctrine or doctrines involved. This involves the relationship between God and a group of Christians, in which God directs the latter. Thus, it seems to be a matter of providence, or the form of providence

8. *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*, ed. G. Johannes Botterweck and Helmer Ringgren, 5 vols. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974–88).

9. *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, 6 vols., ed. Gerhard Kittel and Gerhard Friedrich (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964–69).

proper sometimes referred to as government. Specifically, it appears to be a case of God giving guidance to some of his children. We then ask who these people were and what kind of persons they were. Here it is apparent not only that these were Christians, but that they were rather outstanding Christians, persons whose commitment to the Lord involved their serving in missionary work, and even risking their lives for the sake of the gospel. It therefore renders it likelier that they were correctly understanding and interpreting God's action than if they were unbelievers or carnal Christians. Further, this account is presented in the first-person plural, so that the description of what happened is from the standpoint of one of the participants, who then also is the Scripture writer. Paul, as we know, went on to become the great missionary to the Gentiles, and many of the churches to which he wrote his epistles were founded during this particular missionary journey.

When we ask about what qualities and abilities of God underlie this action, this would include both his knowledge and power. Knowledge would enter in terms of his ability to know what is good, to know the future, to know the need of the different areas and persons, and to know the specific characteristics and abilities of the person involved in ministry. As to the immediately preceding incidents, we are not told enough about the situation in any of these regions to have basis for knowing which would be more in need of Paul's ministry than would others. We do know that Paul has just had a disagreement with Barnabas about whether to take John Mark with them, and that he and his group have been traveling among the established churches, delivering a message to them and seeking to strengthen them in their faith and usefulness.

What is of special help to us in interpreting this incident, or actually two incidents, of God's direction, is that we are given a divinely inspired interpretation by one of the participants in the drama, the Scripture writer Luke himself. Thus, it presumably is an accurate explanation of what actually occurred.

We must also look for other places in Scripture where some word of explanation or interpretation of this passage is given. Here we may turn to two passages that may give us some light. One is Galatians 4, where Paul speaks of how he first came to preach the gospel to the Galatians. He says that it was because of an illness that he first did this preaching (v. 13). There also seems to be some hint that this may have been an affliction of the eyes, since he says that the Galatians would have plucked out their own eyes and given them to him, if they could (v. 15). If this understanding is correct, the means by which Paul and his companions were turned aside from their original plans and went to preach in Galatia was because of a physical ailment. We may also turn to 2 Corinthians 12, where Paul describes a "thorn in the flesh" that he ex-

perienced. He there tells us, not that it was sent by God, but that it was "a messenger of Satan" (v. 7). Although not sent by God, it was apparently used by him to accomplish his purpose in Paul's life, which was to keep him from being unduly exalted. Thus, we may be able to form a hypothesis that the doctrinal thrust of the passage is that God is capable of using all sorts of factors, even evil ones, to accomplish his purpose, in this case, specifically, to guide people into his desired course of action.

We would then want to look at other portions of Scripture, to see whether they support this idea or whether the opposite may emerge. Here we may indeed find that not all instances of adversity are to be understood as meaning that God is telling us to desist from or avoid a particular course of action, and follow a different one. For example, in the Garden of Gethsemane it was apparent to Jesus that his disciples would not stand by him in the moment of trial. In the temptation of Jesus, his attempt to carry through on the Father's will meant that he encountered difficulties, such as intense hunger, and even danger, such as being placed on the pinnacle of the temple. We therefore should understand this passage as teaching, not that God also uses adversity or that he and no one else (Satan) can, but that he is capable of using all things, even the actions of evil beings, to accomplish his will.

Another narrative passage that bears on this same matter is the story of Joseph in Genesis 37–50. Here a whole series of wrongs was done to Joseph by humans, some intentional, some inadvertent or careless. Joseph's brothers sold him into slavery. Then Potiphar's wife, whose advances had been spurned by Joseph, falsely accused him of the very thing she had in effect been attempting, and her husband had him cast into prison. There one of the king's servants, whose dream Joseph had interpreted, promised to remember Joseph to the king when he was restored to favor, but neglected to do so. Eventually, however, Joseph was made the second in power over the entire kingdom. When his brothers came to him, Joseph eventually revealed himself to them. They feared that he would take advantage of his position of power to take revenge, but instead he expressed his understanding that God had used their evil intentions to accomplish his good will. Twice he expressed this. In 45:8 he said, "So then, it was not you who sent me here, but God." In 50:19–20, he told his brothers, "Don't be afraid. Am I in the place of God? You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives." Here is a clear understanding that God uses even the evil deeds of wicked persons to accomplish his good.

Finally, we can look at some of the clear didactic statements in Scripture. One of these is found in Romans 8:28: "And we know that in all

things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose." Notice that the promise is that God works not simply in the obviously good things, but in *all* things, good and evil. Lest we apply too broadly this lesson that God's providence can be exercised to provide for and guide us even through the evil things of life, rather than just the obviously good things, note to whom the promise is given and to whom this providence was extended in the narratives. It was not just to anyone, and so not everyone can claim these. It is believers, God's spiritual children in the fullest sense, who are the recipients of both the promise and its fulfillment.

Conclusion

We conclude that the large amounts of narrative material found in the Bible provide a rich resource for formulating doctrine. Although the task is not easy, when we make the effort to apply an appropriate method of exegesis to these passages, they can prove very useful to us as a basis for preaching doctrinal sermons.

In this chapter and the preceding one, we have considered how to obtain the doctrinal content of didactic and narrative passages. In the next two chapters, we will examine the next step: bringing that doctrinal content into a form more understandable for the context in which we plan to preach or teach it.

on the doctrine. For example, the doctrine of the resurrection is prominent in Romans 6:1–11. Paul employs the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus as an analogy for understanding the meaning of baptism. Both teach that the Christian is dead to sin and alive to God. A sermon from this text may conclude that the doctrine of the resurrection is central to our understanding of the act of baptism. Baptism, a dramatic portrayal of the resurrection, shows that the person baptized has died to sin and been made alive in Christ.

A sermon of this type takes the entire passage and explains its central teaching, organizing the sermon to reveal the doctrine with which it deals. Baptism followed by the living of a new life reemphasizes the sacrifice of Jesus followed by his post-resurrection glorification.

The opening remarks of Paul to the Philippian Christians in Philippians 1:1–11 represent an outpouring of love and joy based on the grace of God. Paul mentions the "good work" God has done (v. 6), "the day of Christ Jesus" (vv. 6, 10), the sharing of God's grace (v. 7), "the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ" (v. 11), and "the glory and praise of God" (v. 11). In order to preach a doctrinal sermon from the passage, one would search for a unifying word or concept. The word appears in verse 6. It is the word "perfect" (as in the KJV), or "carry to completion" found in the declaration that "He who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus." The Greek word in the verse derives from a word that means to accomplish a purpose. Paul was declaring that God would finish what he started with the Philippians when they believed the gospel. He based his confidence on what God could do. Related truths are that they are separated unto God ("saints," v. 1), they are recipients of grace as he had been (v. 7), and they would prove themselves until the day of Christ (v. 10). Implicit in the entire passage is Paul's belief that Jesus would return soon. That belief had a direct bearing on his present life and the lives of the Christians in Philippi, for whom he had great love and gratitude.

The first seven verses of chapter 1 of 1 John refer to the preexistent Christ, the fellowship of believers, confession of sin, and cleansing from sin. The latter emphasis, cleansing from sin by the blood of Jesus, is prominent. A sermon from this text could be inductive, building to verse 7. Indeed, 1 John is a good choice for book preaching. The first sermon suggested here would prepare the congregation for a continuing discussion of the reality of sin, which is John's concern in the early part of the Epistle.

Some doctrines require that the preacher go beyond the contents of one passage of Scripture in order to prepare sermons on them. Each sermon then has a multiple-passage text, with a common doctrine or theme. This topical sermon is the concern of the following chapter.

11

Topical Doctrinal Preaching

A number of difficulties attach to the discussion of topical preaching. One is that the word "topic," according to the traditional system of definition and sermon classification, is a rather broad, vague term. The categories expository, textual, and topical seem to suggest that the topical sermon cannot be either expository or textual, yet it can be preaching. The topical sermon, by definition, speaks to an issue, personal or social in nature, which comes from the context of economics, politics, sociology, law, or some other realm of human life.

Another difficulty is that the topical sermon relies on no specific biblical text for its structure. Thus the sermon has a limited biblical authority. The role of Scripture is secondary; it may, at best, speak of the topic in some indirect way. Given its breadth and its loose biblical connection, we may ask ourselves whether we still need the topical sermon. Perhaps we should admit that the topical sermon is invalid and abandon the category altogether. To do so, however, would be to ignore important facts.[1] One of them is historical: Topical preaching is an important part of the history of preaching. Indeed, numerous preachers have demonstrated its effectiveness.

One of the most influential preachers in American history, Harry Emerson Fosdick, was a topical preacher. His method was to raise some problem of life and then propose an answer based on a biblical truth. People stood in line outside Riverside Church in New York City

1. A recent handbook of homiletics lists them first among considerations of sermon form. Another contains essentially the same material. A volume dedicated to the issue of hermeneutics retains the system of classification. See Sidney Greidanus, *The Modern Preacher and the Ancient Text: Interpreting and Preaching Biblical Literature* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988); Michael Duduit, ed., *Handbook of Contemporary Preaching* (Nashville: Broadman, 1992); Donald L. Hamilton, *Homiletical Handbook* (Nashville: Broadman, 1992).

to hear him. Others listened to him on network radio. Still others purchased his printed sermons. Because of Fosdick's particular style, the topical sermon has sometimes been called the life situation sermon.

Halford Luccock, professor of homiletics at Yale and author of numerous books on homiletics, was also a renowned topical preacher. Some of his more famous sermons include "On Catching the Wrong Bus" and "Keeping Life out of Stopping Places."

One of the factors accounting for the popularity of such preaching was the time in which Fosdick and Luccock lived. The world was passing through great crises—two World Wars with a global depression in between them. Poverty, worry, loneliness, sorrow, fear, and gloom seemed to envelop the entire human race. The Bible did not speak directly about such issues as dictatorships versus democracies or savings and investments versus stock market crashes. Preachers who would speak to those issues had to go topical. They did not abandon the Bible to do so, but the relation of their sermons to biblical texts could not be described as direct. They spoke of the issues and referred to the Bible for general principles or teachings that would relate as closely as possible.

As the twentieth century draws to a close, the appeal of topical preaching has not waned. Robert Schuller's popularity is documented by attendance at his church's worship services and the extent of his media ministries. Norman Vincent Peale, whose preaching ministry spanned most of the century, was one of the most popular persons in American public life. The sermons of both preachers majored on the topics of the power of optimism and a positive outlook on life.

To abandon the category of the topical sermon would fail to take into account a second important fact—the nature of human existence. Some issues of the post–Cold War era are different but social, moral, and personal crises are just as numerous as ever because of human nature, which remains the same in every generation. The church should not ignore them. We should speak to those issues that are the same in every generation, as well as to those that are distinctive to our own, such as abortion, euthanasia, capital punishment, and prayer in public schools. The Bible does not raise these issues by their modern names, but one part of the preacher's task is to tell how the Bible speaks, in principle, to human existence. Biblical-theological principles surface when we consider the witness of the whole of Scripture,[2] which may not be as obvious in the study of a single text or word. The discipline of systematic theology is predicated on this axiom. Fruit of the labor of theologians in the form of summary statements is found in the various confessions

2. See the earlier chapters on the value of theology for preaching and on extracting biblical truth from numerous passages.

and creeds of Christendom. These Christian principles, too, may serve as sermon texts.

Confronted with the proof of its effectiveness in the history of preaching and the stark reality that the issues that called it forth in other generations still plague humanity, the minister can include the topical sermon in the arsenal of sermon forms. Some issues may be handled from the pulpit better in this manner, such as personal freedom, choice, citizenship, voting, individual responsibility to governing authorities and rights, to name a few. At the same time, the qualities of the topical sermon require the minister to limit its use.

Because it has some association with biblical truth, the topical sermon qualifies as a sermon. Ronald J. Allen underscores this connection with Scripture and contends for the retention of the topical sermon.[3] He defines the topical sermon as one that "interprets a topic in light of the gospel but without originating or centering in the exposition of a biblical text or theme."[4] This definition is consonant with the traditional understanding of the topical sermon. Allen also offers a helpful definition of a topic. It is "a need, an issue, or a situation which is important to the congregation . . . which calls for interpretation from the perspective of the gospel, and which can be better addressed from the standpoint of the gospel itself than from the standpoint of the exposition of a particular passage (or passages) from the Bible."[5]

Having affirmed its value, he recommends that the preacher serve up a topical sermon for the congregation, but only for a healthy change of diet. Expository preaching, he insists, should be the staple in the diet. Furthermore, Allen states, interpretation of the topic in light of the gospel ought to be the center of the topical sermon. The sermon answers the question "How does the gospel lead us to understand the topic?"[6]

Scripture's Relation to the Topical Sermon

Two major qualities of the topical sermon have a direct bearing on the answer to this question. First, the topical sermon begins with consider-

3. Ronald J. Allen, *Preaching the Topical Sermon* (Louisville, Ky.: Westminster/John Knox, 1992). Allen reminds us that three other contemporary writers discuss the topical sermon and retain it as a valid option for preachers. See Fred B. Craddock, *Preaching* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1985), pp. 171–75; David G. Buttrick, *Homiletics: Moves and Structures* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1987), pp. 333–448; and Thomas G. Long, *The Witness of Preaching* (Louisville, Ky.: Westminster/John Knox, 1989), pp. 80–84, 92–95. None of these authors discusses the topical sermon as a part of the former method of classification of sermons as expository, textual, and topical.

4. Ibid., p. 3.

5. Ibid.

6. Ibid., p. 5.

ation of the topic. A topic may originate from a wide variety of sources outside the Bible. With the topic in mind, the preacher begins to search for the text to help with the topic, instead of reading the text first in search of the topic.

Second, the structure of the topical sermon is determined by the nature of the topic itself instead of by the biblical text. The content of the biblical text, then, serves to illumine the topic, that is, enters the sermon through allusion, inference, or implication. Exposition of specific words, phrases, or sentences is not characteristic of the topical sermon.

The topical sermon may relegate the text to an indirect role, one of providing support for the controlling idea of the sermon instead of serving as the direct basis of that idea. The preacher is, in fact, taking the sermon idea to the text, then employing the teaching of the text to lend as much confirmation, validation, and authority as possible to the content of the sermon. In addition, the topic, which determines the structure of the sermon as well as choice of the sermon text, may in fact tend to dominate the text. This structural requirement weakens the biblical authority of the sermon.

Scripture's secondary role in the topical sermon creates distinct differences in sermon preparation. Because the topical sermon begins with a subject, not an idea, the minister must manage a larger amount of information. Also, due to the nonbiblical nature of the subject, the minister must conduct a different kind of research, looking into some realms far removed from lexicons and commentaries. The entire sermon preparation process becomes more demanding and laborious. Failure to do adequate preparation means the minister runs the risk of revealing an amateurish ignorance.

Another great difference arises at the point of crafting sermon structure, which derives from the topic instead of the text. In some cases the nature of a topic makes it possible for the preacher to take mental flights of fancy into previously unknown regions during the preparation of the sermon, as well as during the preaching of the sermon. Without the guidelines of the text, the topic's design may lead one farther and farther from the Bible and lessen to a greater degree the connection with the text, which is already loose. During the sermon, the preacher may lose sight of the text and never mention what Scripture says about the issue. This is especially likely to happen with moral-ethical issues. When a sermon fails to bring the teaching of a text to bear on the topic, it loses its relation to Scripture, which is already ill-defined, and risks venturing into the realm of opinion trafficking—a veritable minefield. Someone "out there" may have a better opinion. Someone surely is going to have a different one, and your listeners may prefer it to yours.

The preacher eventually loses the authority that comes from being a spokesperson for God.

Knowledge of the qualities of the topical sermon and the ways in which they affect preparation to preach, coupled with a determination not to forfeit all biblical authority, should prevent the minister from making fatal errors and enable him or her to preach the topical sermon with confidence. Besides, many of the vital issues confronting humanity raise, in one way or another, biblical-theological issues. Topics are not always clearly nonbiblical versus biblical, although some arise in culture while others are clearly derived from the Bible. The preacher's task is to clarify each issue, then present a word from God about it. We may shine the light of the gospel on some issues that otherwise would have no light shed on them from the church.

The Topical Sermon

For example, consider a topical sermon on happiness, an important personal issue. The desire for happiness is basic to humanity. Many people seem to want it, though few seem to find it. Surely there must be a way to be happy. The Bible has a word for "happy." The word is "blessed," found in numerous biblical passages, the best-known of which is the Beatitudes, which constitute the first part of the Sermon on the Mount (Matt. 5:1–12). A Bible teaching may help us understand this crucial topic. One may correctly assume that God wants his children to be happy. Further, one may surmise, on that basis, that there is a way to be happy. The Bible legitimizes the sermon subject. Therefore, a topical sermon on "How to Be Happy" is a valid one. The "how to" title, so popular in books, magazines, and manuals, suggests some means by which happiness may be achieved, that is, a sermon structure. Why not propose some ways (three, of course) to achieve happiness? First, know good. Knowledge of what is good will lead to the desire to practice goodness. Second, be good. After all, a person must be at peace with self, or that person will never be happy. Third, do good. Making others happy, especially family members, brings great joy.

Three ways to attain happiness are established. All are clear statements of truth associated with a general biblical teaching. Thus, the sermon appears to meet the test of a good topical sermon. The mere mention of something that is true generally and can be found in the Bible does not necessarily make for biblical preaching, however. References to words and ideas that appear in the Bible do not make a sermon biblical. The topical sermon, though, is a discussion of an issue in light of Scripture. Jesus' use of the word "happy" implies, at least, that he

287

wishes his followers to be happy. He does not go so far as to say the threefold plan of our proposed sermon is how to achieve it.

As outlined here, the sermon is a development of an implication found in Scripture, which can be a valid pattern of organization for a sermon.[7] The sermon on "The Way to Happiness" takes us from a topic—happiness—the idea for which originated outside Scripture, to a Scripture passage that mentions happiness, to an implication found generally in the Beatitudes about happiness. These steps, to be sure, remove us a great distance from the textual sermon and from the exposition of scriptural teachings about happiness.[8]

Because of all the limitations of the topical sermon, the minister should preach it as an occasional sermon. The ease with which we may think of slogans, catchy phrases, and other witticisms that are so prevalent in our culture may tempt us to "go for it" too frequently. A series of three or four snappy words strung together to form an outline, along with some illustrations from the latest newspaper or television sitcom, make sermons interesting and appealing. The subject of happiness lends itself more easily to topical preaching because one may take it from the Bible as well as from culture. Besides, it is a popular subject. Three easy words or phrases, however, will not be adequate or come so quickly with other issues.

Hoping to attract more listeners, some ministers prepare next Sunday's sermon by picking a word out of their cultural, secular vocabulary, and then look for that word in the Bible. They then refer to its occurrence in the Bible and classify the sermon as a biblical sermon, instead of recognizing it for what it is—a topical sermon. Such preaching shows a great disregard for the use of the word by the biblical writer and the thought pattern of the language that caused the writer to incorporate it in the exact spot and manner in which he did. Correct interpretation of Scripture always takes into account the way the biblical writers thought and used their words. The best topical preaching also gives due regard to the relation of that interpretation to the sermon topic.

The phrase "Just do it," popularized by a brand of sports shoes, is a cultural buzzword. When the company employed a famous basketball player to promote its shoes, the slogan caught fire. In a society so enamored with superstar athletes, the phrase quickly became a neologism. "Just do it" is a synonym for action. Eager pastors seized on the

7. See discussion in H. C. Brown Jr., *A Quest for Reformation in Preaching* (Waco, Tex.: Word, 1960), pp. 88–89.

8. A verse-by-verse exposition of the Beatitudes reveals that happiness comes as a result of proper ethical behavior by kingdom citizens.

phrase as an equivalent of living the Christian life. If you are hesitant about living for Christ, "Just do it," they intoned. Did James not say: "Anyone, then, who knows the good he ought to do and doesn't do it, sins" (4:17)? The simple solution, then, is to "Just do it." If only the matter of living for Christ should be so easy. Of course, James said to do good. His instruction becomes quite specific. In its context (4:13–17), his exhortation to do good relates to proper consideration of the will of God and knowing what is right. Without due regard for the message of James, as it relates to doing, the minister risks preaching a sermon that will have the ring of a television commercial. Members of the congregation may retain an image of a skilled professional basketball player gracefully dunking a basketball and fail to remember the biblical injunction. James spoke of knowing what is right to do and failing to do it. Know the topic. Know the Bible. Know how the latter relates to the former. Adherence to these guidelines will make for a stronger topical sermon.

The topical sermon may reveal the church's acquaintance with her world, her ability to communicate, and her determination to speak a word from God about the issues inherent in life. Also, it can perform a more vital function: making the congregation aware that the great issues of life are theological in nature. How persons relate to each other, to societal issues, to institutions—all these are significant. More vital than all these, though, is humanity's relation to God. Preaching is unique because it pinpoints this relation. We may accomplish this pinpointing through the topical doctrinal sermon.

The Doctrinal Topical Sermon

We define the topical sermon as one which interprets a topic, with reference to a biblical text or theme which illumines, or informs, the topic.[9] A topic usually originates in culture. Aware of its importance, the minister decides to preach on it. With a topic in mind, such as abortion, capital punishment, or the teaching of religion in public schools, the minister turns to the Bible for support in the sermon.

The definition of text is vital to the ultimate form of the sermon. "Text" may mean a specific passage, or it may mean something broader, including a number of passages from different locations in the Bible. The former would lead to a textual sermon; the latter would lead to a multiple-passage text sermon.

First, the minister may employ one passage of Scripture and tell how it speaks to a specific need, issue, or life situation. This methodology re-

9. Cf. Allen's definition, *Preaching the Topical Sermon*, p. 3.

sembles that of the expository-textual sermon, but differs in that the subject itself directs the interpreter to the text. The preacher does not happen upon a topic while reading or preaching serially, but decides on the basis of a desire to preach on a specific topic. Driven by the topic itself, the preacher is looking for a text which contains information about the topic. Second, the preacher may combine multiple passages and use them as a sermon text. In the sermon the minister will declare the particular common truth which they teach, as one would do a topic of systematic theology.

In either case, at the conclusion of the process of interpretation, the preacher should allow the text to determine the content of the sermon, thus preventing discussion of the topic per se, with no scriptural monitoring of contents. The sermon speaks what the text says about the topic. At the center of the doctrinal topical sermon lies explanation of Scripture. This, in turn, establishes some limits for the discussion of the topic, but assures biblical authority for the sermon.

A variation of the proposed sermon on happiness illustrates the first of these forms. Point of origin: The desire to be happy is a part of being human. What does the Bible tell us about happiness? A word search on "happy" or "happiness" leads to Psalm 1, the first part of which states "Blessed (happy) is the man who. . . ." Our topic raises two questions: (1) What is happiness? (2) How may a person have it? Psalm 1 responds by declaring that a happy person is one who walks on one of two pathways through life. One is the way of godliness; the other, the way of ungodliness. The text, then, speaks of happiness, but limits the discussion of the subject. In the first line it states that the happy person is one who leads a godly life. We may affirm, on the basis of this psalm, that a person will find happiness through godly conduct. The psalmist describes the way of the godly in both negative and positive terms, then contrasts it with the way of the ungodly. With beautiful imagery he portrays the prosperity and stability of the godly person. A listener should find this life so appealing as to want it. These six verses suggest a sermon on "The Way to Happiness," complete with its own structure for the discussion of the topic. Psalm 1 exceeds the "know good," "be good," "do good" approach to happiness.

The textual approach to the preaching of a topical sermon may seem too restrictive for some topics, such as happiness. Sometimes one wants to draw on the teachings of several biblical passages. Thus a multiple-passage text provides a helpful way in which to accomplish the topical sermon. For example, a word study of the term "blessed," employed by the King James translators in Psalm 1 and Matthew 5:1–12, confirms that "happy" is a good translation and lends credence to the idea that happiness is a quality of character to be desired. The passages

state explicitly that the happy person is one who is godly, and describe the kind of behavior associated with happiness. The remark by James that "we consider blessed those who have persevered" (5:11), along with Nehemiah's words that "the joy of the Lord is your strength" (8:10), substantiates the truth that happiness is attainable and durable.

In both forms of the topical doctrinal sermon the preacher starts with the topic in mind and then consults Scripture for the sermon text. The text, in turn, becomes the primary factor in the development of the sermon. That is, the preacher attempts to say what the text says about the topic, instead of straining to find a place to tie a topic into Scripture.

Topics may be social, ethical, or personal, as well as doctrinal in nature. Principles for the treatment of doctrinal subjects here apply to the treatment of these other issues as well. The Bible is a book about life. Thus it will have something to say about any issue related to life, whether directly or indirectly. Indeed, some topics that appear in the Bible also are public issues as well. Instead of proceeding from general life topic to Bible topic, the minister may prefer to reverse the procedure.

Doctrinal preaching provides us a way to address some of the volatile issues of the day without going entirely topical. We can give theological orientation and practical wisdom to the discussion. The church, after all, is supposed to offer a Christian message. If we are content to echo the culture, we blur or forfeit the distinctiveness of our identity and our message ceases to be unique. Other voices are crying in the wilderness.

For example, one of the most hotly debated topics for the past quarter century has been abortion. A sermon on this issue is certain of a hearing (as well as some kind of response). The Bible does not address the issue directly, by name. Is the preacher then limited to the strictly topical sermon?

The central issue in the abortion debate is the sanctity of life. Life is a subject about which Scripture says much. The Bible places a high premium on human life; it is a gift from God. A sermon on the biblical account of God's creation of humans in his own image will speak to the matter of abortion. Life is important because we humans are made in the image of God. To take a life is to violate that image. This is a doctrinal issue; it deals with the very nature of humankind.

Another subject that has generated extensive controversy is creationism. From the schoolroom to the courtroom to state legislatures, this issue has taken center stage. Some states of the United States have passed laws related to the teaching of creationism in public schools. Churches and pastors have not failed to raise their voices in this discussion. Topical sermons dedicated to presenting the "Christian" position, however, generally have revolved around the issue of whether the government ought to prevent the teaching of the biblical account of cre-

ation in public school classrooms. Ministers have said more about government limitation than about the biblical account of creation, which is the theological subject. The public issue has become the pulpit issue. Without a biblical message to clarify the subject, ministers have not advanced the discussion beyond the social level.

Attempts to speak a relevant word on these vital issues should not be limited to the topical sermon in which the minister begins with a topic. Perhaps a more fruitful approach would be to begin with the biblical teaching, i.e. preach doctrine to enable a better understanding of the topic.

Doctrine for Doctrine's Sake

Doctrines are also topics, albeit Christian topics. As much as people need to hear a doctrine associated with an issue, they need to hear doctrine much more. Then they know better how to understand and face a life issue. Too often, in our sermons we are attempting to equip our hearers to handle issues without a firm doctrinal underpinning. We have contended in earlier chapters that those local churches are stronger and more stable whose members know what they believe. Likewise, we have appealed to local churches to build and maintain their ministries on a solid doctrinal base. One way to build that foundation is for the minister to preach on the great doctrines of the faith. Both forms of the doctrinal topical sermon, the textual and the multiple-text sermon, serve well for such preaching.

For instance, the minister may begin by teaching the congregation about God, humanity, sin, and creation, then apply those teachings to worship, respect for life, and the ownership of property, as is the pattern of the Ten Commandments. Also, if the congregation is acquainted with the life, ministry, and teachings of Jesus, they will comprehend more easily ethics and the treatment of their fellow humans. Pulpit discussion which draws initially from the Scripture, with emphasis on the divine dimension, avoids the dilution or diminution of biblical authority which attends a strictly topical discussion, with emphasis on the human.

Preaching stresses the human encounter with the divine, thus the importance of a textual sermon on God. One distinguishing characteristic of the topical doctrinal sermon is that it is more subject oriented than idea oriented. Thus the immediate difficulty in such a sermon is determining how to preach on a subject so broad as God (or any of the other categories of systematic theology such as the Bible, the church, the Christian life, the person of Jesus Christ, the atonement, the resurrection, the second coming, or the Holy Spirit).

One way to narrow a subject is to find a limiting word or phrase. Theology professors often suggest that we do this with the doctrine of God by thinking of some great biblical statements about God: "God is spirit" (John 4:24); "God is light" (1 John 1:5); "God is love" (1 John 4:16). A sermon on the God whose essence is love will offer help for a world that knows so much hatred, violence, and abuse. To make love more specific, John declares, in the context of his remarkable truth about God, that God has given proof of his love (1 John 4:7–21; note vv. 7–10; cf. Rom. 5:8). Thus, we may narrow the topic to the demonstration of God's love through the death of Jesus on the cross. Given that 1 John 4:7–10 becomes the text, the passage then does its work of making a broad subject more manageable.

A textual sermon from 1 John 4:7–10 raises a doctrinal issue that is vital to daily life. This text does not exhaust the doctrine of God or tell all that the Bible says about the love of God, but it does say something important about it. The biblical-textual sermon model provides a structure that can make clear what it does teach, while giving the sermon unity and focus.

The second option for the sermon on God is to employ the multiple-passage text, which requires reading a number of passages that refer to God in order to discover the common teaching among all the passages. The Book of Hosea, for example, tells a story of love. It all begins well, with a happy home, with children. Then the story takes a tragic turn. The wife abandons her family and returns to a life of prostitution. The husband buys her back at a public auction. In the same story, the prophet declares that God cares for his people as a father pities his children. God searches for his people in the wilderness. These images communicate the story of God's love for his people. This remarkable Old Testament book provides a basis on which to relate divine love, redemption, and restoration to the issues of family trouble, infidelity, and brokenness, which are so prevalent in today's society. Likewise, the Book of Amos offers a biblical base for speaking on maltreatment of the poor and neglect of justice. Doctrine makes good topical preaching. Instead of looking for the doctrine in the topic, look for the topic in the doctrine.

The multiple-passage text doctrinal sermon requires diligent preparation. The preacher who plans to refer to several passages in one sermon will need to study all those passages to determine what they say. Otherwise, mere mention of them during the course of a sermon will only establish that the Bible mentions the subject numerous times—God's love, for example—but the preacher never gets around to saying exactly what the Bible says about it. This we might call "concordance preaching." Computer software makes this listing of all Scriptures on

one word or subject quite simple. The Bible mentions love hundreds of times. With a click or two, a minister soon can know the precise number and announce it in the sermon with confidence without ever clarifying anything about love.

Passages that come from a single book make the entire book, in effect, the text and the result is a Bible book sermon. The multiple-passage text may also come from several passages in different books. Matthew 1:18–25 and Luke 2:1–20 both give accounts of the birth of Jesus. Though each has a distinctive emphasis, both identify Jesus by his names. All names they give capture the meaning of Old Testament prophecies about the one who would come from God.

Exodus 19:1–9, Joshua 24:14–24, and Nehemiah 8:1–10:39 share a common lesson on the solemnity of the covenant made with God. God initiated the covenant, which he made with Israel at the time he delivered them from Egyptian bondage. In all three passages the people declare their acceptance of the covenant and their intent to abide by its terms. Joshua and Nehemiah were reminding them of their agreement and calling them to renew it. Covenant in Old Testament bound both parties. Although Israel continuously broke its part of the agreement, God remained faithful to the terms of the covenant. His people's failure never caused God to alter his commitment to his people.

In a similar manner one may preach on the doctrine of the Holy Spirit. The fascination with glossolalia prompts one to think initially of the events of Pentecost and the gifts of the Holy Spirit. Gifts of the Spirit are prominent in Romans 12 and 1 Corinthians 12–14. These passages help limit the doctrine to a manageable textual unit. Romans 12:3–8 or 1 Corinthians 12:1–11 would serve well for a textual sermon on the gifts of the Spirit. For a sermon on the person of the Spirit, the Gospel of John is a good beginning point, relating words of Jesus found nowhere else in the Gospels. In John 14–16 Jesus himself identifies the Spirit several times. These references suggest a sermon pattern in which multiple passages are linked to serve as a text. In 14:16 Jesus speaks of the Spirit as "another Counselor" ("comforter" in the KJV). The Greek term for "another" means another of the same kind. Thus the Spirit is one of the same kind as Jesus. In 14:25–26 and 15:26–27 Jesus refers to the Spirit as the "Counselor" and as "the Spirit of truth." Then, in 16:7–16 he repeats the term "Spirit of truth" and outlines the work of the Spirit. The Spirit is to be to the believer what Jesus was when he was present on the earth.

Preparation of the doctrinal sermon requires honesty about presuppositions. The minister is not searching for a proof text to bolster a position already decided; that is, he has already made up his mind what he is going to say and is trying to find something that proves he is right.

To the contrary, he is looking for a text that will illumine the topic and must be willing to test all presuppositions against the truth of Scripture. The proof text method sometimes requires one to disregard all texts except those that affirm the interpretation already decided. An area in which we ministers are especially vulnerable is eschatology. With a scheme for the endtimes already in hand, the preacher needs only to align Scripture to prove the correctness of the scheme.

The doctrinal topical method seeks understanding of the text, which it in turn applies to the topic. No text is ignored a priori. The interpreter locates a specific text that contains teachings about the topic, then appropriates the truths related to the topic and incorporates them into the sermon. What the text says about the issue is the primary consideration. Scripture may validate, confirm, clarify, alter, or correct preconceived notions.

Conclusion

The biblical text is important to the topical sermon. "Without the built-in reminder of the text, the topical preacher may be tempted to regard critical theological analysis as only an option."[10] This is especially true in our generation when so many preachers are venturing into the political realm. Sermons on topics discovered in that faraway land tend never to get around to the biblical text. Instead, they tend to gravitate toward sensationalism.

Thus we see that topical preaching, with its beginning point outside the biblical material, poses numerous threats to good biblical preaching. On the other hand, with proper followthrough and regard for orienting the sermon theologically, topical preaching becomes a valid option for the preacher who seeks to achieve variety in preaching without sacrificing content or playing to the gallery of the current generation.

In some ways, topical preaching reflects positively on the church. The minister demonstrates that the church is willing to confront life instead of retreating into platitudes. In addition, the topical sermon brings a Christian perspective on social issues. Also, by insisting on a biblical perspective the minister helps the church retain the distinctiveness of the Christian message. Topical preaching, done well, helps the church answer the charge of some critics that the Bible is an antiquated book, a mere relic of the past to be viewed in a museum. The message of the Bible becomes a present-tense reality.

The doctrinal sermon is also a topical sermon—on a Christian topic. Starting with theological issues seems a wise course of action for a pas-

10. Ibid., p. 7.

tor and church who are convicted about the issues that confront us all in our human existence. The church specializes in the theological, the relation of the divine to the human. If we begin with doctrine, we have begun with the Christian answer to life itself.

Representative Topical Sermons and Preachers

For analysis, we choose sermons from the two topical preachers mentioned earlier in the chapter. One of the more famous sermons of Harry Emerson Fosdick is "The Power to See It Through." The issue of the sermon is "staying power." Fosdick's thesis is that "starting power and staying power are not the same thing in any realm."[11] He draws the idea from Demas, the one-time companion of the apostle Paul, and "familiar experience of a fine beginning and a poor ending." His purpose apparently is to encourage his listeners to cultivate those personal qualities that will see life through to the end.

The sermon begins with reference to Demas, who is mentioned briefly three times in the New Testament—in Philemon, Colossians, and 2 Timothy. Fosdick took the last statement about Demas to be an indication that Demas failed to see his commitment through to the end of his life. Paul stated that "Demas forsook me, having loved this present age." From the brief references made to Demas, Fosdick drew the conclusion that Demas had no staying power. He then surmised that our experience has taught us that too many persons have the same problem. The sermon, then, follows a structure suggested from consideration of the topic. His points, of which there are three, are implications drawn from the life of Demas.

Another sermon that grew out of an idea from the life of Paul is probably Fosdick's most famous. The title is "Handling Life's Second Bests."[12] Fosdick begins the sermon with a reference to a personal problem: "[N]amely, that very few persons have a chance to live their lives on the basis of their first choice."[13] In the introduction he mentions that Whistler, the artist, had to settle for second choice in his life. In the third paragraph, within two minutes of the spoken sermon, he clearly poses the problem addressed in the sermon: the "inescapable human problem of handling life's second bests."[14] He then proposes

11. Harry Emerson Fosdick, "The Power to See It Through," in *Riverside Sermons* by Harry Emerson Fosdick with an introduction by Henry Pitney Van Dusen (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1958), p. 29.

12. Harry Emerson Fosdick, "Handling Life's Second Bests," in *Riverside Sermons*, pp. 54–62.

13. Ibid., p. 54.

14. Ibid.

that one of the most impressive exhibitions of handling the problem in human history is Paul. His basis is Acts 16:6–10, especially verse 7, which states that Paul desired to go to Bithynia but the Spirit told him "No," and that Paul went to Troas instead. At Troas he heard the Macedonian call. He responded and went to Europe instead of Asia.

Fosdick surmises that because Paul wanted very much to go to Bithynia, Macedonia was second choice for him. By use of historical imagination, he draws a word picture of a missionary who is disappointed because of a change in plans. Paul, however, followed through and "rendered his most significant service with the left-overs of a broken plan."[15]

His contact with common human experience, so typical of Fosdick, is made when he declares that wanting Bithynia and getting Troas is a familiar experience. We often have to take second-best in our lives and make the most of it. To do that successfully is not so familiar an experience.

The sermon unfolds along the lines of making the most of second best, lessons drawn from Paul's response to his Macedonian call that enabled him to succeed. Paul had two elements in his life that enabled him to be victorious: his religion and his concern about people.

This sermon is not an exposition of biblical passages relating that Paul accepted Macedonia as a second choice. It is the development of an implication contained in the declaration that Paul intended to carry the gospel into Asia. The sermon does contain numerous references to Paul and some explanation of the biblical story of his call to a mission in Europe. The genius of the sermon, as of Fosdick's preaching in general, is its appeal to a common personal problem. As Fosdick states in the first sentence, the difficulty of having to live on the basis of second choice is almost universal.

In each of these sermons, Fosdick speaks to personal issues in light of the gospel. He bases each on a biblical text and explains some biblical material. Sermon structure, however, derives more from the nature of the topic suggested by the text than from the text itself. Staying power, for example, is associated with a certain integrity of conscience, with being captured by a cause, and with resources of interior strength renewed by great faiths (sic). These are not expositions of particular Scripture verses, but certainly are not inconsistent with the biblical teachings about the living of the Christian life.

In the chapter on dramatic preaching, the authors suggest a way to preach a sermon on Paul's staying power by means of an imaginary conversation with the great missionary about his refusal to give up,

15. Ibid., p. 55.

294

even in the middle of a terrible storm at sea. The secret: The providence of God controlled his life.

Other possibilities exist for preaching on the topic of living life on the basis of second choice, a vital issue for the Christian. A biblical thematic sermon on the will of God, based on passages about Paul, is one way to approach the matter. Another is to propose the teachings of Jesus about doing the will of the Father as a guide for accepting God's will as our choice, no matter our personal desires to do otherwise.[16]

Halford Luccock, who distinguished himself as preacher and professor of preaching, also preached the topical sermon effectively. On the subject of living through change, he proposed that one of the great liabilities of life is "sleeping through a time of great change, and failing to achieve the new mental attitudes which the new situations and conditions demand."[17] The idea came from his reading of Washington Irving's story of Rip Van Winkle, who slept through the American Revolution. That, followed by a conversation with a man who was giving uninformed opinions on "nearly everything in the world" caused Luccock to think about the number of people who were sleeping through the revolutions of their own generation. By revolution he did not mean political or military revolutions, but "the broader sense of real changes in the conditions of life which call for changes in thinking and attitudes and actions to fit them."[18]

Luccock then crafted the sermon to speak of changes that require new thoughts and attitudes. The biblical passages he cited as a basis for the discussion were Matthew 4:17 and Revelation 21:4, which declare that Jesus came preaching repentance and that God will make all things new. Luccock equated repentance with a call to change to fit new conditions. The sermon, then, is a brief look at three changed situations in which "former things are passed away."

The changes cited were: (1) changes in thinking about the necessity of a religious foundation for life; (2) the new fact that, potentially, there are enough natural products to suffice for the whole human race; and (3) the splitting of the atom made old words sparkle with new meaning. The conclusion of the whole matter is that Christians cannot ignore their responsibility to bring the Good News to a changing world. To fail to do so would be tantamount to sleeping through a revolution.

16. None of these suggestions is intended to detract from the genius of Fosdick for appealing to human experience in his sermons. His contribution to twentieth-century preaching is at the very point of relevance; he had the gift of making each person who listened to him feel as though the preacher was speaking directly to him or her.

17. Halford E. Luccock, "Sleeping through a Revolution," in Halford E. Luccock, *Marching Off The Map* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1952), p. 120.

18. Ibid., p. 131.

The topic of change dominates the sermon. It is timely (still) and one about which the Bible speaks. Accurate biblical exegesis, however, reveals that the word for repentance has a broader meaning than change, though it does include that meaning. Luccock developed his sermon along the other lines suggested by the word "change." His sermon properly called for Christians to have new attitudes and actions in light of the changes discussed in the body of the sermon.

These two representatives of topical preaching illustrate that preachers may speak on the basis of broad biblical teachings as well as from specific chapters and verses. Their sermons can be relevant and interesting even when not done in the traditional sermon style. One factor that motivated Fosdick was the desire to demonstrate that the Bible had not been lost to modern humans.[19]

These representative topical sermons remind us of the importance of considering the position of the listeners with reference to the sermon topic.[20] Fosdick, Luccock, and others of their generation accomplished such consideration to a remarkable degree. We should remember, at the same time, that consideration of what the listener wants may lead to the sensational. Topical sermons already have an indirect connection with the biblical text. Once that connection is broken, the sermons easily may drift so far away from Scripture as not to have a connection at all.

Thus the preacher should be alert to the dangers of topical preaching. One of the most obvious is that the preacher will never bring the text to bear on a topic. Having begun with a topic that originated outside the text, we never get it into the text. We do not talk about the text, but merely refer to it. This is especially easy to do when discussing social, personal, or political issues. The danger is not present in expository preaching, in which "the biblical text tends to remind the preacher to ground the sermon in a theological point of view. If the hermeneutical movement leads biblical preachers from the text to local political issues, the text tends to remind the preachers to interpret the issues in light of theological conviction and not simply to air their own beliefs."[21]

19. That was the thrust of his Yale Lectures, *The Modern Use of the Bible* (New York: Macmillan, 1961).

20. Allen, *Preaching the Topical Sermon*, pp. 9–11.

21. Ibid., p. 7.

12

Narrative Doctrinal Preaching

Much of the Bible is narrative. Thus narrative preaching should be a more natural way to preach the contents of the Bible, and one would expect it to be very common. Yet narrative preaching is not commonplace. We may account for this lack by recalling the methodology so many contemporary pastors and teachers of homiletics learned during their seminary days. Our professors taught us that stories are important, but are to be used primarily as illustrations in sermons. The value of story used for illustration increases when it comes from the Bible. A subtle difference is evident: *Stories* are important. We did not learn as much about *story*. During the past twenty years, however, we have discovered that story has power as a sermon within its own right, not merely as support for sermon points in rhetorical outlines. The members of our congregations had been telling us all along that they remembered our stories, which we used to help make points, better than they remembered anything else. If that is true, why not make the sermon a story?

History of Narrative Preaching

About forty years ago a theologian, H. Grady Davis, wrote a book on preaching in which he suggested that a sermon idea can take the form of a narrative.[1] He observed that "too little use is made of narrative in contemporary preaching."[2] Davis obviously meant "story" when he spoke of narrative. That he meant for us to preach story sermons apparently was not so obvious at the time he wrote. Sermon as story only became a part of homiletical method more than a quarter of a century later.

1. Henry Grady Davis, *Design for Preaching* (Philadelphia: Muhlenburg, 1958).
2. Ibid., p. 162. Davis first argued, on behalf of homiletics, that a thought, or idea, is inseparable from the form in which it is expressed. The form is the shape of the thought (p. 9). "The only way to extend or limit a thought . . . is by the words used to express it" (p. 4). He argued that "there is a right form for each sermon" (p. 9). Davis also noted that the ideas of the gospel "are mainly in the form of a story told" (p. 57).

With the publication of *Preaching the Story* in 1980[3] came a clarion call for the use of narrative in preaching. Soon followed Richard Jansen's *Telling the Story*, which echoed the emphasis of Steimle et al.[4] The publication of these two volumes achieved for the story sermons what Davis failed to do earlier. In the decade of the 1980s, a number of complete volumes were dedicated to the subject of story preaching, and some general homiletics texts included chapters on the story sermon. Meanwhile, a few ministers had begun preaching narratives. Story preaching, in both theory and practice, has become more common.

We may attribute this interest in story to several recent developments. First, homiletics has made more extensive application of the research within other academic fields, especially biblical studies and hermeneutics, to its own discipline. Recent findings related to narrative as a form in Old and New Testaments, and the significance of narrative for understanding Scripture could not escape the notice of homiletics, to be sure. The appropriation of some of the fruits of that research by homiletics, however, is a relatively new development.[5] The practice of taking the various forms of biblical material into account in the preparation of sermons has come about as a result of the new awareness of the work of biblical scholars. This practice, in turn, has led preaching to a greater consciousness of its dependence on biblical studies, hermeneutics, and the other disciplines. Subsequently, preaching has recognized that an interrelatedness exists among the various departments of theological education. Such awareness has led to a new appreciation of the contributions each department makes to all others and to the whole of which each is a part.

For much of the twentieth century, the divisions of seminary, or Bible school, comprised departments with different assignments. Each of the departments tended to view its task in isolation from the others, with no specific responsibility to discuss the relationship its subjects bore to those in the other departments. Cross-area classes with teams of teachers from various disciplines were rare, if not nonexistent. The biblical studies area taught the contents of the Bible. Hermeneutics classes explicated the history and methodology of interpretation. The

3. Edmund A. Steimle, Morris J. Niedenthal, and Charles L. Rice, *Preaching the Story* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1980).
4. Richard A. Jensen, *Telling the Story: Variety and Imagination in Preaching* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1980).
5. For example, Tom Long in *Preaching and the Literary Forms of the Bible* (Atlanta: John Knox/Westminster, 1992).

homiletics department taught rhetoric, that is, how to take the facts gained from Bible study and construct intelligible sermons from them. In other days, one of the great difficulties of sermon preparation was that of "getting up an outline." Preaching classes were placed in the curriculum to ease the difficulty. The homiletics department, perhaps more than any other, bore the responsibility of demonstrating how to integrate all the disciplines of theological education for communication to congregations.[6] Each professor accomplished the task by showing how, in the process of sermon preparation, the minister draws material from all other areas of the seminary curriculum.[7]

Thus homiletics has gained a more comprehensive view of its role and has become a more willing conversation partner with biblical studies and hermeneutics, as well as with the other disciplines in the theological curriculum.[8] Its responsibility is no longer that of merely teaching methods of crafting sermon outlines. Preaching professors have a larger assignment than to tell their students to bring the "cargo" from all other classes and to promise that the homiletics class will provide a vehicle for delivering the cargo. Content and form, we know now, are not always separable. The form of the content may be the exact form of the sermon. This is especially true with narrative. The result: story sermons.

Second, we may attribute the interest in story to its success among oral cultures. In parts of Asia and Africa, chronological storytelling has become the primary means of communicating the gospel.[9] The reason, according to missionaries and missions strategists, is that people who are part of an oral culture understand a story sermon when they cannot understand a sermon developed in outline form. They may listen, and listen attentively, to a three-point sermon. When asked to tell what the sermon was about, they may remember points in a different order than they were spoken, or they may recall only one of the points. Rarely do they see the connection of the points or understand their meaning as a whole.

6. See the analogy of the "homiletical car" assembly line in chapter 7.

7. This includes Christian education and music.

8. This may mean that in the past homiletics has viewed its task differently, or that homiletics was not taken seriously as a partner in an academic discussion. Such an attitude as "We teach form while others teach content" perhaps has been a hindrance to the joining of the conversation by homileticians. On the other hand, the view that "Preaching is a practical, not a theological, discipline" has kept homiletics out of the discussion! The motivation for the writing of this volume came through a team-teaching assignment, combining systematic theology and homiletics.

9. New Tribes Mission experiments began on the island of New Guinea circa 1983. Their successes have been phenomenal and have been copied by missionaries throughout Asia. On a recent trip to the Philippines, one of these authors discovered the practice of storytelling is widespread and growing in popularity as an evangelistic method.

When the same people hear a story, on the other hand, they not only remember the story, but often can recite all or part of it after hearing it only once. They understand because they comprehend plot, character, and other components of story. Their education came through story. This discovery has profound implications for story sermons.

The communicative power of story is not restricted to illiterate peoples. A missionary in the Philippines has begun a Bible class among professional persons in the inner city where he lives, employing story as the means of teaching. He holds the class in a large bank conference room during the lunch hour once a week. Interest has remained high from the beginning, and the attendance increased for several weeks in a row. The missionary now has plans for expanding into other areas of the city.

Third, story has received more interest from preaching due to the success of drama. Drama's appeal is so widespread that ministers all over the world are incorporating it into worship services. Churches and church groups in various parts of the world, Europe in particular, invite pastors who employ drama in worship to speak at pastors' conferences. Taking their cue from the nature and impact of drama, increasing numbers of preachers are doing the sermon as story.

Definition of Narrative Preaching

Preach the story. Employ the narrative. That sounds simple enough. In practice, the decision to preach in story is only the beginning point. The first step in the implementation of the decision is to recall or to review the exact nature of a story sermon.

The story sermon may be defined in a manner consistent with the traditional form of story, a "Once upon a time" beginning, followed by an unfolding story line (plot) featuring characters, places, and events, then a conclusion that completes the story. This traditional structure is the one followed in this chapter.

Some authors, though, make a distinction between story and narrative. Eugene Lowry, for example, proposes a sermon scheme for narrative that differs from story understood in the traditional sense.[10] Lowry's method progresses through five stages. The first stage is to upset the equilibrium, or set a tension. The second is to analyze the discrepancy created in stage 1. In the third stage the preacher proposes clues to the resolution of the discrepancy. Fourth, the preacher helps the congregation experience the gospel or find the answer. The fifth and

10. Eugene L. Lowry, *The Homiletical Plot* (Atlanta: John Knox, 1980). Cf. *Doing Time in the Pulpit* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1985).

final stage is to anticipate the consequences that may come as a result of resolving the entire process begun with upsetting the equilibrium.[11] This plan, Lowry states, applies to both narrative (story) texts and non-narrative (didactic) passages. It provides a method for interjecting drama into the sermon, thus enhancing its appeal and avoiding the authoritarianism often associated with propositional preaching.[12] In this volume the authors employ the term "narrative" first in its broader meaning of "story."[13] Thus story holds much value for preaching and the story sermon may assume any one of a number of forms, depending on the kind of story in the text.

Types of Narrative Sermons

Possibilities for narrative sermons are numerous.

1. Story may be a recital of history, such as the Book of Exodus. At the end of Genesis Joseph's family is relocated in Egypt, due to the severe famine in Palestine. There they languish while hundreds of years pass. After several generations the Hebrews number in the thousands and remain in Egypt. As Exodus begins, the Hebrew population numbers in the hundreds of thousands and the burden of their bondage has increased to the point that it is unbearable; they cry out to God for help. The entire Book of Exodus is the telling of the story of their deliverance; it is a story of redemption.

Within the larger story a number of related subplots unfold. For example, the story of Moses the servant of God teaches much about God's ways of relating to human leaders, even when they fail.

2. Story may be a sketch of the life of a person. In the lives of Bible characters we often learn great truths about God. Some of the more prominent include Abraham, Sarah, Jacob, Rebekah, Moses, Miriam, Deborah, Gideon, Ruth, Esther, David, Daniel, John the Baptist, Mary the mother of Jesus, Simon Peter, Paul, and John the brother of James. Abraham's life reveals that Jehovah is a covenant-making God. Sarah's life is a testimony to the wonder-working power of God. Rebekah played a key role in the struggle between her two sons Esau and Jacob. Jacob's name was changed to Israel, meaning "one who perseveres with God." Jacob personified the identity of God's people. Moses and David both committed serious crimes and experienced the forgiveness of God. Ruth's story illustrates the beauty of loyalty. Daniel's life testifies to

11. In *The Homiletical Plot.*

12. It also allows for the moment of discovery, as does the inductive method of Fred Craddock.

13. We also include a chapter on dramatic preaching, in which we discuss the use of elements of drama in the sermon. See chapter 13.

faith. The birth of Jesus unfolds through the narratives about Mary and Joseph. John the Baptist's identity is that of one who speaks for God. His message was a thunderous cry for repentance. Every mention of the name of Simon Peter recalls the great confession: "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God" (Matt. 16:16) and the founding of the church (Matt. 16:13–20). Paul gave us in life and in word the term "grace" (1 Cor. 15:10). John's name is synonymous with the love of God, expressed best in the Gospel of John (3:16).

3. Story may be shorter narrative passages. Brief narratives in both Old and New Testament are rich in doctrinal content. Amos' encounter with Amaziah (Amos 7:10–17) is brief, but makes the point about judgment quite clear. Ezekiel's vision of the wheel within the wheel (Ezek. 1:10) dramatizes that the presence of God is a fiery presence and that God may go wherever he wishes. Doctrine is self-evident in the accounts of the birth of Jesus (Luke 2:1–20), the epiphany (Luke 2:22–39), the coming of the Holy Spirit in the story of Pentecost (Acts 2:1–13), and the mission of the church in the report of Peter's visit to the home of Cornelius the centurion (Acts 10:1–48). One also finds stories within stories in both Old and New Testaments. These shorter narratives underscore again that stories communicate, *as stories*.

4. Story may be presumed story, that is, story behind the text. Numerous didactic passages have underlying stories that are found elsewhere in Scripture. This provides another alternative (in addition to Lowry's) for handling the non-narrative text. For example, each of the Epistles of Paul grows out of the story of his missionary journeys in Acts. When the apostle says to the Philippians that God will bring to completion the work which he began in them (1:4–6), one immediately remembers the Macedonian call and Paul's subsequent trip to Philippi, reported in Acts 16:6–40. Jesus referred to the story of Jonah when he said, in reference to his own death and resurrection, "For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of a huge fish, so the Son of Man will be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth" (Matt. 12:40). Paul's discussion of sin via comparison of Adam and Jesus in Romans 5:12–21 presumes the stories of creation and redemption.

5. Story may be implied. A number of the short, pithy remarks of James bring to mind stories with doctrinal-ethical lessons. For example, the rebuke of the church for treating the rich and the poor with a double standard (2:1–12) sparks the imagination and pricks the conscience. James surely had in mind one or more specific instances of maltreatment of some poor persons who had come into the assembly. Each person has worth and dignity in God's sight, whether or not that person has wealth. Perhaps James knew someone in the congregation who had judged another because of economic standing. In our own

world of the haves and the have-nots, the issues of preferential treatment of the rich and the rush to judgment are quite real.

These references indicate the vast amount of biblical material available for the minister who is trying to decide about story preaching.

Decisions Involved in Narrative Preaching

All the possibilities make the decision to preach in story easier. Once the minister decides to do one of the narrative forms in a sermon, other decisions follow in rapid succession. The first is to determine the limits of the unit of Scripture, pericope, which is the text. Classic stories, such as the call of Abram in Genesis 12:1, have clear beginning points. The end of Abraham's personal pilgrimage comes with the record of his death in Genesis 25:8. Matthew 1:18 declares that the birth of Jesus happened in a certain way. Matthew 2:12 completes the story of the child's birth with the visit of the Magi.

The definition of a story text can be more difficult than in a didactic passage. When a story is embedded within a long narrative, the interpreter must grasp the flow of the larger passage and determine the beginning and ending points of a smaller portion of the story. For example, Saul's visit to the witch of Endor (1 Sam. 28:7–25) is part of a narrative detailing Saul's pursuit of David. His insistence on calling up Samuel from the dead so he could confer with him raises interesting questions about the afterlife, not to mention that Saul went against a specific prohibition of God about conferring with one who had a familiar spirit.

The second decision is to decide the level from which to tell the story—social, personal, political, emotional, or spiritual.[14] At the social level the minister tells how a biblical person functioned within the community. Jeremiah's speeches at the temple entrance reveal an essential part of his ministry (Jer. 7:1–8:22; cf. the story of Amos): to warn of God's judgment. The personal level may be done in the form of character analysis. Samson, great hero of the Old Testament, was quite clever in word and deed (Judg. 13:24–16:31). His penchant for riddles and practical jokes makes an interesting study of personality. The chronicles of the kings are filled with political intrigue on the part of the various monarchs of ancient Judah and Israel. Why, when they represented God, would they seek military and economic ties with neighboring states? Their failures speak vividly to God's people about the object of our trust. Simon Peter makes an interesting study in emotion. His moods ran the gamut from a declared willingness to die for his master (Matt. 26:35) to a denial that he ever knew him (Matt. 26:74). Spiritual qualities of biblical persons provide the minister with specific and helpful suggestions for members of the congregation to emulate. Mary's desire to listen to Jesus revealed a quality of character Jesus himself noted (Luke 10:42). Her compassion and devotion that led her to anoint the Lord's feet with costly perfume, which brought scorn from Judas, resulted in a statement by Jesus about his coming death (John 12:1–8).

14. The authors are indebted to Professor Dan Kent for this idea. He refers to the surface level, at which one scans the whole landscape and points to the landmarks. Next is the emotional level, the one in which the preacher seeks to identify with the feelings of the biblical persons. Then there is the spiritual level, at which the preacher assesses the motives of certain characters. He warns, quite properly, that one must guard against reverting to allegory! (Dan Gentry Kent, unpublished Ph.D. colloquium paper, Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary.)

The third decision about preaching a narrative is to select a perspective from which to relate the story. Possibilities include the following: (1) tell the story in connection with the continuing story; (2) tell the story as a free-standing entity; (3) tell the story as an interruption or parenthesis within the larger story; (4) tell the story from within the story—as seen through the eyes of one of the characters. Positioning oneself with reference to the story is a major decision in the preparation to preach.[15] The minister also (5) may take a position on the outside and repeat the narrative as an observer, such as a news reporter would do. One may (6) retell the biblical story in the present tense. The story of the prodigal son, for example, has been repeated in many families. In this case, the contemporary story becomes the biblical story. The identification must be unmistakable.

The fourth matter to be decided is the language of the sermon. Craft the language of the sermon to communicate the story best. Tense is an important consideration. The narrative tense may be the simple past or the imperfect. Some stories, such as the historical events, seem naturally to require some form of past tense. Descriptions of qualities of character, on the other hand, may have strong appeal when done in the present tense, as though the minister had transported his congregation into the past and is describing what they actually "see."[16]

This process of creating the language of the sermon, encoding the sermon, is a major task. One can scarcely overestimate the importance of writing manuscripts to improve the use of language. Encoding goes

15. This is also a feature of the dramatic monologue versus other dramatic sermon forms. The preacher may pose as a reporter looking in on the event, or as a participant, or as a reporter on the scene reporting to the outsiders, among other options. See the discussion in the chapter on "Dramatic Preaching," chapter 13.

16. The dramatic monologue done as role playing, treated in another chapter, is quite effective done in this manner.

beyond verb tense to include the choice of words, images, and ideas with which to tell the story. Good stories require active verbs and expanded descriptions of places, people, and events. They come to life in the imaginations of the listeners only if the preacher "sees" them and can tell what is seen. The storyteller should paint word pictures with color, should employ words that provide action and sound and infuse conversation with emotion.

Encoding also means telling the story in a precise sequence. Missionaries who employ chronological storytelling in oral cultures stress the significance of sequence. The storyteller is, in fact, giving an oral Bible to those who hear. The writing of manuscripts, in such cases, is not optional. With each repetition of a story the preacher must be careful to tell it exactly the same way. Stories abound concerning those who have not taken such care. Individual listeners have actually stopped the missionary and corrected him or her in those places where he or she said something in a different manner. In oral cultures missionaries find persons who can remember the stories word for word after hearing them only once.

The fifth decision is to find a way to clarify the doctrinal aim of the sermon in story. For a doctrinal sermon the preacher should have a specific doctrine in mind, in order to give direction to the sermon application. In the case of a doctrinal sermon, the specific objective is that the hearers understand some doctrine, something vital to their system of belief. This means the doctrinal sermon is highly cognitive in nature. To hear the sermon and to get the point is to learn the doctrine.

The sixth decision is to determine specific application. At some point the preacher should bring the story into the lives of the listeners; that is, should tell or show how "this means you." The minister may leave application to indirection and trust the individual to "find oneself in the story." The frequent employment of personal pronouns throughout the sermon may accomplish identification. A preacher may state the purpose for telling a story before beginning, the deductive approach that leaves no doubt about application. Also, one may step forward at the conclusion and clearly state that the story is complete and "we can see the point." The inductive method leaves the matter entirely to the listener, making numerous applications possible.

Constructing a Narrative Sermon

With all these preliminary matters decided, the minister is ready to write the sermon. Structure is significant in the story sermon. Though it has no outline as such, it has a distinct pattern. The pattern follows the structure of story: a beginning that sets the stage and suggests the

plot, a middle portion that reveals the plot, and a concluding section that resolves issues related to the plot.[17]

Early in the formulation of the sermon one must decide how to introduce the theme (the beginning). The preacher has help from the text itself, which is a story. Narrative texts range from the introduction of timeframes—"In the year that King Uzziah died" (Isa. 6:1); to the introduction of places—"The angel of the LORD came and sat down under the oak in Ophrah" (Judg. 6:11, the beginning of the story of Gideon); to the telling of events—"When the people saw that Moses was so long in coming down from the mountain, they gathered around Aaron and said, 'Come, make us gods'" (Exod. 32:1); to the identity of persons—"Jesus continued: 'There was a man who had two sons'" (Luke 15:11); to references to geography—"Now an angel of the Lord said to Philip, 'Go south to the road—the desert road—that goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza'" (Acts 8:26). Each of these signals a story and the first words of the sermon may be the exact words of the text.

The use of language that will "invite" the listener into the story at the very beginning is critical. A common approach in literature is to say "Once upon a time. . . ." With the Bible story, the preacher needs to exercise caution with this kind of beginning. The listener's familiarity with fairy tales and fictional stories may trigger the mental response: "I am entering a fairy land." Yet, the preacher does wish to create that "Once upon a timeness" with the Bible story. To accomplish that feat, perhaps a formulistic beginning will suffice. "One day about two thousand years ago in the land of Palestine" signals that the event occurred in a real time in a specific place. Some Bible stories told as events that happened somewhere at some time seem real enough, but the listener has no knowledge of a specific location or date for them. We will also want to exercise the same caution with the "They lived happily ever after" kind of ending.

The next major consideration is the movement—progression, unfolding—into the middle portion of the story. This movement may be accomplished by means of a change of character. The account of the Lord's promise to Abraham that he and Sarah would have a son in their old age (Gen. 18:1–15) begins with the discussion of the three men with Abraham (vv. 1–3). When they asked about Sarah, Abraham replied that she was in the tent. Sarah was standing in the tent door behind him

17. These, we may note, conform to the rhetorical outline so long suggested as the proper method of sermon development—introduction, body, and conclusion—but do not result in a standard, that is, three-point, sermon. The story evolves (develops) along certain lines and will not be signaled by "first, second, and third" because its nature is different.

at that very moment, and overheard the conversation (v. 10). At that point in the narrative, she becomes the key figure.

Mark tells the story of Jesus' discussion with the Sadducees about the law of levirate marriage. In the middle of the discussion, "One of the teachers of the law came and heard them debating. Noticing that Jesus had given them a good answer, he asked him, 'Of all the commandments, which is the most important?'" (Mark 12:28).

Movement also may be achieved by a change of scenes. At the conclusion of his temptation in the wilderness, "Jesus returned to Galilee in the power of the Spirit" (Luke 4:14). Later, in Nazareth, he went to the synagogue where he read prophecies concerning himself from the Isaiah scroll.

Another way to make progress is to change the timeframe. The story of Jesus healing a blind man (John 9:1–41) apparently covers several hours. After he anointed the man's sightless eyes with clay, Jesus told the man to go and wash in the pool of Siloam. The man obeyed and returned with sight. Immediately his neighbors asked him how the miracle happened. When he told them about Jesus, they took him to the Pharisees, whose only concern was that Jesus had violated the Sabbath. An intense discussion followed, at the conclusion of which Pharisees threw him out of the temple. Jesus heard about their deed and found the man to speak with him about believing on the Son of God (v. 35).

The tragedy of Judah and Tamar in Genesis 38, a story within a story, changes in each of these ways: First characters dominate the story; then the scenes change; next, action moves very slowly; and suddenly jumps in time of several years take place. So it is with narrative structure.[18]

The revelation of plot is essential to narrative. This plot, or theme, equates with the central idea of the rhetorically developed sermon. The storyteller must know from the beginning the underlying theme, or themes, but does not reveal them in a deductive manner. He reveals them, instead, by filling in details of the story. The plot becomes evident through the words and actions of the persons, or in the changes of events that occur, or through the passing of time. The listener is involved and, ideally, will begin to see the plot developing along certain lines. These are suggested by certain words, phrases, or character traits. The listener begins to see the constants among the variables in the story. Sometimes the "point" becomes clear only at the end of the story.

Language, character portrayal, and plot presentation help make the story happen. History, geography, culture, and numerous other factors

18. This observation also came from Dan Kent in the colloquium paper referred to above.

must be interwoven into the story in order to retain the dynamics and keep it moving.

At the conclusion of the story, the plot becomes obvious and the whole of the story becomes clear. Resolution of all issues raised in the story must occur here. Questions are answered; open issues, addressed. At the end of his story, popularly known as "the story of the good Samaritan" (Luke 10:25–37), Jesus required the lawyer to answer for himself the question: "Who is my neighbor?" The listener should have a mental grasp of the whole, as one views the landscape from the perspective of the mountaintop. No part of the story is complete or understood completely apart from the whole. The story in Mark 12:28–34, for example, concludes with a discussion between Jesus and the scribe who asked him about the greatest commandment. Jesus replied that the commandment to love God with all one's heart is the first commandment, and the second greatest is to love one's neighbor as oneself (vv. 29–31). The story ends with Jesus' remark that the scribe was "not far from the kingdom of God" (v. 34).

Jesus appeared in the synagogue in Nazareth (Luke 4:14–30) to announce that the prophecy of Isaiah was fulfilled, in him, before the very eyes of those present. The conclusion of the story of the healing of the blind man is complete when he declares his belief on the Son of God (John 9:38).

Several facts become clear in this method. First, the story takes time.[19] A storyteller cannot rush; rushing will cause the storyteller to neglect essential elements of the story. Second, details are essential. Details create signposts along the pathway of the story journey. Third, description is vital and brings characters to life. People are interested in other people. Character qualities of persons in the story are indicators of lessons to be gained from the story. One must determine where in the narrative to point to these lessons. If they are not left until the end, then the preacher must determine how and when to step outside the narrative and state the lessons as they appear (as done in a verse-by-verse commentary method of preaching).

An Example of a Narrative Sermon

The story of Joseph (Gen. 37–50) serves as a good example for doctrinal narrative preaching. In this story, the reader, or the listener, sees the righteousness of Joseph contrasted to the wickedness of the brothers. Their bent toward evil dominates the early part of the narrative, but the

19. This is the thesis of Lowry's *Doing Time in the Pulpit*. In the sermon we are "doing" time instead of managing ideas.

goodness of Joseph becomes more and more obvious as the story continues. At the point of the famine in Canaan, the destiny of the evil brothers appears certain: They will starve to death and Joseph's revenge will be slow and painful. Genesis 50:19–20, though, reveals the underlying theme of thirteen chapters of the book: "God meant for good what the brothers intended for evil." A story sermon from Genesis 37:1–50:26 may follow this plan:

The Beginning

About fifteen hundred years before the birth of Christ, the second generation of Abraham's family was established in the land of Canaan, or Palestine. Isaac, the son of Abraham, had twin sons, Jacob and Esau. The Bible tells the story of Jacob. In his own family, Jacob had some problems. Favoritism by a parent will create problems. Jacob loved his son Joseph more than he loved all his other children, because Joseph was born when Jacob was an old man. To show his love, the elderly father made for his son an ornamented robe and presented it to him. No doubt the very sight of the conspicuous robe caused the anger of Joseph's brothers to seethe. They hated Joseph and could not speak to him without losing their tempers. The potential for an explosion within the family grew with each passing day. Soon some spark would ignite the fire of some brother's anger.

The ignition came as a result of a dream. Young Joseph dreamed, not once but twice, that his brothers would bow to him and serve him. In the dream he saw himself and his brothers tying bundles of grain in a field. His bundle of grain stood taller than the others and looked around. The other bundles bowed to his. In his second dream, the sun, moon, and stars paid homage to him. For some reason, he told his brothers the contents of his dreams and provided his own interpretation. He would rule them. They could stand it no longer. His words stirred their anger and hatred toward him. Even his father was disturbed by his favorite son's dream.

The flash point came when the brothers worked out a scheme to get rid of Joseph. One day, as they sat in a field near Dothan with their flocks, Joseph walked right into their plans. Jacob had sent him to check on his brothers. They must have been delighted to see him walking toward their camp. Their chance had come at last. All of them except one wanted to kill him. At Reuben's insistence, they compromised and decided to seize Joseph, strip him of the distinctive robe, and throw him into a pit. Nature would take its course and they would have no guilt. With one lie to their father, they would be free. Meanwhile, Reuben was secretly planning to sneak away and help Joseph out of the pit.

As they were eating their breakfast of bread and cheese, the brothers saw a company of traders passing nearby. They were on their way to Egypt with spices to sell. Why not sell Joseph to them as a slave, thus ridding themselves of their pesky brother without murdering him and making a little money on the side? The scheme worked out better than they had hoped. They agreed on the plan and, to cover their tracks, dipped Joseph's coat in animal blood and took it back to their father to substantiate their "theory" that wild animals had devoured his favorite son. How they kept Reuben quiet is still a mystery. Joseph was gone and life was going to be better for them. So it seemed.

The Middle

Down in Egypt, the merchants sold Joseph to an officer in the Pharaoh's army, who made him a slave.[20] More than once, hope for his life seemed to be lost. His owner's wife accused him of assaulting her. Though innocent, he was locked away in an Egyptian jail and forgotten. Throughout all his trials Joseph remained true to God and behaved wisely. His behavior eventually vindicated his good character, and he rose to the position of second in command in the Egyptian government.[21]

Then came another dream. The dreamer was not Joseph, but the Pharaoh. He, too, had two weird dreams. One was about skinny cows coming out of a river and eating fat cows. The other was about thin ears of corn on the stalk eating full ears of corn. Immediately upon awakening, the king sent for his magicians and demanded that they tell him the meaning of his dreams. No wise person in the entire kingdom could interpret them.

A butler in the court, who recently had served some time in prison, overheard the king telling his dreams and froze in his tracks. He had been in prison with a man who could interpret dreams. In fact, that prisoner had interpreted a dream or two for the cupbearer. He asked in return for the favor only that the cupbearer, whose dream he interpreted to mean release from prison, remember to give the king a message from Joseph. How could he forget? Upon hearing about the king's dreams, he remembered Joseph and told the Pharaoh his own story. Pharaoh quickly sent for Joseph and asked him the meaning of the two dreams. Joseph told him. It was the bad news, good news reply. The bad news was: A famine of seven years' duration was on the way. But there was good news, too. Seven years of plenty would precede the famine.

20. Note how the scene of the story changes in 39:1—after a story within a story in chapter 38. Joseph's life as a captive surfaces during the middle portion of the story.

21. This paragraph, a summary of part of the story, is done in this manner to make transition without losing continuity.

He suggested a plan for storing grain during the good years to sustain the nation during the famine. The king appointed Joseph to execute the plan, and gave him power to act on behalf of the government.

Everything happened exactly as Joseph predicted. The famine struck the land of Canaan as well as Egypt; Joseph's family there soon ran out of food and faced starvation. Jacob heard that the Egyptians had grain to spare and sent his sons to buy some. They were in for quite a surprise.[22] They had no idea with whom they would be doing business.

They did not recognize him. Besides, they figured he had been dead for a long time. Joseph recognized them, though, and his heart burned with compassion. He decided not to reveal his identity at the moment, choosing instead to wait until he could find out about his father back home.[23] At that point he held complete control over their lives. Something in his character, the same quality that helped him resist temptation and gave him patience to suffer during an unjust sentence in prison, prevented him from punishing his brothers. He had only to do nothing and they would die from starvation. He could murder them in a passive manner. He would be as free of guilt as they had assumed they would be when they planned to leave him in a pit to die. What's more, he could revel in his detachment and innocence; he could assure himself that they would die, and through no fault of his!

Joseph manipulated the brothers for a while, like a cat playing with a mouse. After discovering that his father was alive and well and that another son had been born to Jacob since the loss of Joseph, he accused them of being spies. He ordered that one of them be held in prison until the others could go and fetch the younger brother.

At that moment the burden of guilt fell on the brothers like the proverbial ton of bricks. Believing that Joseph could not understand them—he had been speaking to them through an interpreter—they discussed their deed of years ago. "We are receiving our just dues," they agreed. Reuben said, "I told you so. Remember, I tried to stop you from harming the child, but you wouldn't listen to me. Now look at what has happened." Joseph, who could understand them, turned away and wept. He held fast to his plan, though.

Back in Canaan, the brothers told their father about their unusual encounter. Jacob refused to send his young son, Benjamin. He now had suffered the loss of two sons, he declared, and that was enough.

22. Clues to the resolution of the story jump out at the listener, who knows something the brothers do not.

23. Here one begins to anticipate the moment when Joseph will reveal his identity. Suspense builds as he tricks and threatens the same men who attempted to kill him. Revenge is sweet.

But the famine continued and the family ran out of food a second time. Jacob relented, and even sent Benjamin with them. The second visit was no improvement on the first. Joseph tricked them again. He had a servant plant his personal silver cup in the sack of food given to Benjamin. Then, after the brothers had started on their return trip, he instructed his steward to go after them, accuse them of theft, and escort them back to Joseph's house. There Joseph spoke harshly to them about their treachery and said he would make Benjamin a slave for the crime. Judah began to plead for the life of the young Benjamin and told Joseph that if the boy did not return with them, their father would surely die.

Upon hearing these words about their father's loss of his youngest son two times, Joseph could not restrain himself. He sent everyone else out of the room. "Come close," he said. "I am Joseph your brother." Stunned by what they heard, they could not immediately believe their ears. He was alive! Their lives must have flashed before their eyes in that moment. Yet the earth's second most powerful man did nothing to them except embrace them and weep. He wept for joy; they perhaps wept out of anxiety or relief. Then they talked for a long time.

The Conclusion

The story ended when Joseph sent his brothers back to Canaan to bring their father and the entire family to Egypt. Then came another reunion and the joy of it exceeded that of the first. The old man Jacob died in peace, knowing the truth about Joseph. The brothers, meanwhile, figured among themselves that Joseph was waiting until Jacob died to exact his revenge. Were they right? After all, that is what any reasonable man would do. I suppose that is what any of us would at least want to do.

Joseph's brothers reported to him that Jacob's last request was that Joseph forgive the sins of his brothers. The only thing they could do was throw themselves on his mercy, bow before him, and wait for him to respond. Then Joseph said: "Don't be afraid. Am I in the place of God? You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives" (Gen. 50:19–20).

Something was going on behind the scenes all the time. God was at work bringing about his purpose for Jacob and his descendants. Joseph sensed that. Time revealed his spirit and the rightness of his actions. A man of integrity (a fact obvious through his behavior in Egypt), he behaved in keeping with his character; he waited to see the revelation of God's purpose. When he saw that he could be an instrument of keeping alive the promise extended to his father and his father's father, he will-

ingly did so. Then he revealed his true identity, practiced forgiveness, and stated the purpose of God to his brothers and his father.

This story tells us that God is at work in the course of human history in ways we do not know and would not understand. Our responsibility is to remain faithful to God and leave the rest to him. Then we can be patient, remain strong, and forgive those who mistreat us. In the end, right and truth prevail.[24]

Cautions about Narrative Preaching

The minister should keep in mind several considerations about the narrative sermon, especially the "pure story" kind such as the sermon about Joseph.

1. The sermon tends to become a recitation of history, and may leave the impression that Christianity is a past-tense phenomenon. Skeptics and critics may actually see the benefits of studying the Bible, but view it from the same perspective as the study of any historical document, thus failing to find any application to persons or events of the present. The Bible, for them, may become the object of admiration, even scrutinous study, but of no personal religious value. Thus the sermon may make no particular difference to those who hear it. In fact, they do not truly hear. Faith, though, comes by hearing. The preacher proclaims the message of the Bible in order that those who hear will believe and live by faith in the God who speaks to us through his Word.

2. The sermon may become simply another story, such as found in any other great literature. The Bible is story and great literature, but it is a distinctive story. Preachers always should treat it as such and not leave the impression that the Bible is only literature. The doctrine that underlies Bible story sermons is the doctrine of revelation.

A corollary to this second caution is that the preacher is merely another storyteller. Connotations of this word could erode the image of the minister. He is more than a raconteur, peddling stories in the manner of the pied piper.

3. Storytelling may lead to a disregard for or neglect of the non-narrative sections of the Bible, especially if one is dedicated to the pure story and does not subscribe to Lowry's theory of narrative or find another way to do the other text forms. Lowry's scheme provides some avenues for preaching numerous portions of the Bible that preachers tend

24. This is a suggested sermon, giving the essentials of Joseph's story. The minister will need to make some decisions about whether to insert application statements at critical points in the story. These are only hinted at in this sermon. The movement here is more inductive, with the statement of meaning at the end. The reader should remember that this is a doctrinal sermon, intended more for understanding than for action.

to neglect.[25] Doctrine often is found in these areas, especially in the didactic passages; thus the storyteller could present doctrine in pure story sermons and treat some doctrines in other sermon forms.[26]

4. The minister may decide to begin preaching story sermons without proper regard for the amount of hard work required. Storytelling is an art; the story sermon becomes an art form. All works of art require time, work, and persistence.

5. The storyteller runs the risks associated with a method of communication that seems to have lost its appeal. News reporters, politicians, advertisers, and other experts in communication have made us the "sound-bite" generation. Story preaching seems to fly in the face of conventional wisdom about communication with the generation in a hurry.

On the other hand, story has a compelling quality. Recently a major television network aired a report about story writing as therapy for a group of persons who had tested HIV positive. The reporter told how the group meets regularly, sits around a table with lined paper notebooks in front of them, and writes. For many the telling of their stories is the therapy. After a designated amount of time for writing, individual group members read their material aloud. In that manner the others around the table identify emotionally and enter the stories of their friends. Those who spoke with the reporter emphasized the therapeutic value of expressing oneself and of telling one's story.

Rewards of Narrative Preaching

Great satisfaction comes, however, to the minister who completes the task and preaches in story. Rewards are numerous. First, the story sermon enables the preacher to retain a familiarity with the Bible. Instead of extracting "points" from the text, the preacher is telling the actual text, as in the story of Joseph. Telling the story means knowing the story. In the preparation of a story sermon the preacher enters the world of the text, as much as that is possible.

A second benefit is acquaintance with the characters. Every minister identifies with Isaiah, Amos, Peter, or Paul at the point of a call. Others have resisted the call and run away with Jonah, or sat with Elijah in the cave, or begged with Jeremiah for a place among wayfarers, out of the

25. Some of the forms proposed in the chapter on "Dramatic Preaching" are actually short stories, including the interview sermon from John 21; the famous encounter between Jesus and Peter following the resurrection; the diatribe featuring Jesus and Nicodemus in John 3; and the famous exchange in Matthew 16 when Jesus founded the church.

26. One may review the other sermon structures proposed in chapters of this book to find possibilities for doctrinal sermons with different forms.

Goh

traffic. Conversely, who has not wished for the certain revelation of God, such as Ezekiel's fiery wheel within the wheel? When a call to do the impossible comes, some perhaps have wished to put out Gideon's fleece to make certain God is speaking.

Third, knowledge of the setting of the Bible—place, time, event—comes with the in-depth study required for narrative preaching. The telling of a narrative gives the preacher opportunity to paint the big picture, complete with details. He or she takes time to give size, color, and flavor, in addition to character, at the end, standing back and inviting the congregation to view with him or her the complete picture. This benefit multiplies exponentially for the minister who has visited the land of the Bible. Description and explanation give the original story lasting impact.

Fourth, the minister may enable the listeners to find themselves in God's story. A good story identifies the listener in the story vicariously. Identification creates commonality; something mysterious happens and, though this community is in the realm of the spiritual and the mental, specific, concrete results occur. The resolution found in completion of a story may leave a feeling of spiritual satisfaction and create an understanding of meaning. That is precisely what the preacher wants to have happen in a doctrinal sermon! This "getting the point" is application. In story, much of this application is implicit and must be discovered by the listeners without any instruction or assistance from the preacher. They "see" the point on their own.[27] The sermon is more meaningful to the persons who see for themselves. This "seeing," of course, is accomplished by the work of the Holy Spirit, who is our constant companion in preaching and hearing sermons. Storytelling employs inductive movement; the preacher does not tell the point, then tell the story. He or she tells the story and, to a degree, leaves it with the listener to discover the point. The best application is that which the listener makes unassisted. Understanding of the story that teaches doctrine, then, is understanding of the doctrine.

Thus, listeners receive benefits from story sermons. They also learn the Bible. One hears much lament about the biblical illiteracy of the persons who fill church pews, both believers and nonbelievers. Story preaching helps solve this problem. Those who listen also become participants in the sermon. What's more, application is self-realized instead of imposed by external pressure. Discovery of oneself in the story is application of the best kind.

Perhaps best of all, benefits also come to the church, the community of believers. One is recognition. The church finds her identity in her

27. Lowry, *The Homiletical Plot*, pp. 51–52.

story. Another is mission. The drama of redemption becomes the message the church proclaims to the world.

The preacher has a number of options available for the shaping of the sermon. An exciting part of the weekly and daily task of preparation is deciding which one to employ in a given passage. The nature of the text itself, that is, its form, facilitates the decision. With so much narrative in the Bible, the story sermon is a good and viable option.

13

Dramatic Doctrinal Preaching

A hush fell over the audience as the members of the drama group took their places on the platform. The lights dimmed, a signal for the action to begin. A man lay sprawled on the floor, motionless and apparently lifeless.

As a man came walking onto the stage with his head held high and with his jaw firmly set, a narrator informs the audience that he was a certain Religion Professor from a prominent Christian college. As he passed by he saw the helpless man. He looked at him, discovered that he was seriously injured, and then remembered that he had errands to run. He left the scene wondering aloud whether others had been called to a ministry of helping such unfortunate people. Then, a young lady, whom the narrator identified as a medical student, stumbled across the injured man. She, too, stooped to look but did nothing but hurry away, mumbling something about an anatomy test.

By now the reader recognizes this scenario as a dramatic reenactment of the parable of the good Samaritan and can anticipate the remainder of the story. "Good Sam" is the retelling of the parable, with characters from contemporary life. The audience caught on quickly and got into the story, and the action held them captive throughout the entire drama.

This chapter addresses the question: Is drama compatible with doctrine? Perhaps it should be part of a larger question: Are drama and preaching compatible? The answer to the larger question, at one time, would have been a resounding "No!" Times are changing, however. The story of "Good Sam" is typical of dramas presented in worship services across America every Sunday. Congregations respond positively to them. Now the answer to the question of drama is "Yes." The pastor should consider doing the sermons in this format. Preaching should change.

The term "dramatic," however, conjures up the notion of the spectacular when associated with "sermon." We tend to associate drama with acting, performing, which employs histrionics, exaggeration, and affectation. The term, though, does have a broader and more positive meaning. Drama also applies to situations in life and literature that stir the imagination and emotions, according to the dictionary definition of "dramatic." The retelling of such real life situations or the reading of literature that recounts them also qualifies as dramatic. With specific reference to the Bible, much of it is dramatic. For example, the story of the exodus runs the gamut of human emotion and fires the imagination. Cecile B. DeMille's film *The Ten Commandments* has retained a popularity that all but defies explanation. Before the magic of special effects generated by computer and superimposing of images, the producers of *The Ten Commandments* portrayed the parting of the Red Sea with breathtaking realism. Some persons have seen the picture literally dozens of times. That speaks of its compelling power to attract and to retain interest.

Thus, the presentation of a message from God may be serious, indeed doctrinal, yet have in it elements of drama. We may look to the Bible for clear examples.

Biblical Precedents

One of the most dramatic moments in the Bible came when Nathan confronted King David with the story of a man who stole his neighbor's choice pet lamb to feed his company, when he himself had herds of animals from which to choose (2 Sam. 12:1–14). The prophet had one goal: to inform the king of his own sin through drawing a comparison.

Another famous confrontation in the Bible occurred when the eighth-century prophet Amos stood before Amaziah the priest of Bethel (Amos 7:10–17) and spoke bluntly about the judgment that was coming to Israel. Emotions ran high, doubtless, as Amaziah told Amos not to make such declarations and Amos retorted that he would speak because he had instructions to do so from God.

Stories and sermons often were accompanied by dramatic actions. Early in the Bible, in the case of Moses, one finds a striking example. When Moses appeared before Pharaoh, he punctuated his demands concerning the release of God's people in numerous ways. The first was the turning of Aaron's staff into a serpent (Exod. 7:8–10). When Pharaoh was unimpressed and had his own magicians perform similar feats (Exod. 7:11–12), Moses performed several other miracles to validate his speaking for God.

The prophet Ezekiel acted rather strangely, by human standards, to accentuate his sermons on God and judgment. For example, he drew an outline of Jerusalem on a clay tablet and then acted out the siege of the city. He then took an iron pan, placed it between himself and the city to represent an iron wall, and turned his face toward the pan (Ezek. 4:1–

3). Later, he dug a hole in a wall, strapped a pack onto his shoulders, and attempted to crawl through the hole. His action symbolized the exile of God's people in Babylon (12: 1–16). Other examples include cutting his hair and whiskers and burning them in a fire (5:1–17) to dramatize the burning of Jerusalem. In all these scenes Ezekiel acted alone.

Jeremiah, another Old Testament prophet, recounted his trip to the potter's house to teach Israel a lesson about the guiding providence of God (Jer. 18:1–17). He took a clay bottle, stood at the east entry into Jerusalem, and spoke to the people. As he presented his message he broke the pot, as God had instructed him to do, and declared that God would break the city and its people in a similar manner (19:1–15, especially vv. 10–15). Jeremiah also hid a leather belt in a hole and retrieved it after it began to decompose. He used it to teach the necessity for God's people to cling to him, as a belt clings to the waist (13:1–11).

The Old Testament contains numerous illustrations of appeals to the imagination and other dramatic actions. Isaiah told of a wood carver who made himself an idol and used the wood shavings to build a fire to keep warm. What kind of God is that? he asked (44:6–23). Micah and Hosea appealed to the courtroom image when bringing charges of infidelity against God's people (see especially Mic. 6:1–8). Elijah struck the waters with his mantle and parted them, so that he and his company of followers could cross the Jordan on dry ground (2 Kings 2:1–18, especially vv. 13–14). The Book of Hosea relates a real-life drama. Through the retelling of the prophet's marriage to Gomer, who becomes unfaithful to her husband and family, it tells the story of Israel's wandering from God. The story is filled with the agony of a broken home and a sad husband's reclaiming and reinstating an errant wife.

The prophets of Saul's era often acted in a rather strange manner when in fits of ecstasy. When Saul "prophesied" someone wondered aloud whether he was "one of the prophets" (1 Sam. 10:11). Some rather unusual actions sometimes accompanied pronouncements of Old Testament prophets.

In addition to these Old Testament instances we can also cite New Testament examples of drama. Jesus employed a number of elements of drama in his teaching and preaching. One was the object lesson. He took a coin and, while pointing to it, asked whose image was impressed on it. When told it was that of Caesar, he drove home his point: "Give to Caesar what is Caesar's and to God what is God's" (Matt. 22:21).

Matthew tells us that Jesus placed a child in the middle of the circle of disciples during a lesson on true greatness. "Therefore, whoever humbles himself like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven," he said (Matt. 18: 1–9, especially v. 4).

One of the more dramatic moments in the life and ministry of Jesus occurred at the Last Supper. He took a piece of bread and a cup of wine, handed them to the disciples, and gave an entirely new meaning to the Feast of the Passover as he told them: "This is my body . . . This is my blood" (Luke 22:19).

Jesus' use of metaphor, simile, and similar stylistic devices provides illustration of the use of elements of drama in the language of the sermon. Drama may come through words alone, as they do their work in the imagination.[1]

All of this is to say that dramatic preaching does not always indicate the use of exaggeration, histrionics, and acting with the sermon. Oral style that employs elements of drama may enhance our sermons by appealing to the imagination and emotions.

Paul stood before Agrippa shackled with chains (Acts 25:23–26:32). Perhaps he lifted his hands, chains and all, and held them toward Agrippa when he said: "I pray God that not only you but all who are listening to me today may become what I am, except for these chains"(Acts 26:29). He was retelling the story of his conversion when on trial before the Roman governor. Of course, Paul did not choose his props! He only made use of the ones provided him.

Paul's use of imagistic language, especially metaphor, personification, and analogy, are particularly instructive in the matter of emotional appeals. He mixed athletic images in his remarks about the end of his life (2 Tim. 4:6–8).

The Book of James also is rich in imagery. His words about the tongue are unforgettable: "The tongue also is a fire, a world of evil" (3:6).

The entire Book of Revelation is a cosmic drama. John's use of language is effective and compares favorably with contemporary media. The reader can see the beasts, the angels, and Satan as they perform on the universal stage. Preachers may learn from the Revelation the value of vision and presentation, the power of words, and the retelling of the dramatic.

Types of Dramatic Preaching

These biblical illustrations demonstrate that drama and the presentation of a message from God, with doctrinal content, are compatible. We may draw other precedents from everyday life and from preaching itself to underscore the effect of drama and dramatic reinforcement of a message.

1. Elton Trueblood, in *The Humor of Christ,* gives a different slant on the language of Jesus, insisting that some of it was quite humorous (New York: Harper, 1964).

One of these authors remembers the lessons of a chemistry teacher from a long time ago because of dramatic actions used to punctuate lectures. For example, he presented a comparison between chemical change and physical change with great effect. He placed a vial of water on the Bunsen burner and brought the water to a boil. He pointed to the rising steam and noted that heat had changed the water to gas. "That," he said, "is a chemical change." Then he picked up a glass jar from the table, quickly turned and threw it against the wall, shattering it into a thousand pieces. To a startled class he reported: "That is a physical change." We laughed *and* we remembered the lesson.

An evangelist relied on the same principles during a sermon on backsliding. At the beginning of his sermon he placed a chair beside the pulpit. The sermon consisted of a list of sins Christians commit that separate them from God. He did not draw attention to it, but occasionally during the sermon he picked up the chair and put it back down. Each time he placed it in a different spot, a little farther from the pulpit. At the conclusion of the sermon he stood behind the desk and pointed to the chair, now several feet away, and declared: "You see. You did not pay much attention to my moving the chair a little at the time, but now it is a long way from where it originally sat. That is the way it is with backsliding. An almost imperceptible step once in a while and, before long, you are a long way from God." He made his point well, with a dramatic action, but without being spectacular.

Evangelist Billy Sunday was famous for his imaginary conversations with the devil, as well as his antics in the pulpit. This author once served as a pastor of a church in which Sunday had held revival services. As he stood by the pulpit with a senior minister who had heard Sunday, he asked: "You mean to tell me that Billy Sunday actually preached in this pulpit?" The older preacher replied: "Well, he preached all around it, but I would not say he preached *in* it."

These examples from Scripture, school, and church may provide guidance for the preacher who wishes to include elements of drama in sermons. What are the possibilities?

Dramatic Monologue

This is one of the most effective ways to communicate the contents of the Bible. The central events of the Christian story provide a natural starting place. Who does not associate character reenactment with the story of Christmas?

Christmas is a good time for the preacher to begin with this form of sermon. Consider telling the story from Joseph's viewpoint, or from that of the innkeeper, one of the shepherds, or one of the wise men.

Congregations expect and appreciate drama. This makes the task easier for the beginner. Also, the preacher is beginning with a cardinal doctrine—the birth of Jesus.

Presentation of a dramatic monologue as Joseph works well. After telling his story, Joseph could step forward into the congregation and relate the lessons he learned. First, he repeats that he refrained from sexual union with Mary, as required by the law and the practice of betrothal. At the same time he trusted Mary to do the same. Besides, both of them received personal messages from God declaring that the conception took place by the work of the Holy Spirit. This is the message of the virgin birth: God accomplished the conception of Jesus by working a miracle in Mary's body. She did not conceive in the normal manner. Joseph and Mary were both devout believers in God.

Second, Joseph could attest to the birth of the baby to a human mother. He was present at the time. Also, he was there when the shepherds came in from the fields and reported the message they had received, that is, the Savior had been born. Later, the wise men came in search of the newborn King of the Jews. Then, when Joseph and Mary took the child to the temple to dedicate him, Simeon and Anna had declared that, with the birth of Jesus, the promise of God finally had come true. How could Joseph forget the scene in the temple when Jesus was twelve years of age? "Yes," declares Joseph, "Jesus is God in the flesh. I know from my personal experience from before his birth."

The preacher could proclaim the same message by presenting the story as Joseph, then stepping out of character to provide explanation and application of the story. If he dresses as Joseph, he must physically move from the platform or from one location on the platform to another to signal that he has become the contemporary preacher and is no longer speaker in character. Another possibility is to announce the change of character. This is easier to accomplish if the preacher does not dress differently for the presentation. In that case, he must prepare to make appeal to the imagination as he asks the listeners to see and hear him as Joseph for the duration of the retelling of the text. These same principles apply to any character portrayed.

Easter also provides an occasion on which to do dramatic monologue sermons. The characters surrounding Jesus are familiar and their actions well known. Consider Simon Peter's declarations and subsequent denials, Pilate, Judas, the centurion at the cross, the thieves who were crucified alongside Jesus. Following the resurrection one may wish to plan portraying the two on the road to Emmaus, "doubting" Thomas, or Peter by the seashore.

The preacher may perform a dramatic monologue as Simon Peter, for example, recounting the story of his discovery of the empty tomb.

308

Then he could step out of character and explain that the point of the story is to establish eyewitness accounts of the resurrection of Jesus. The monologue captures the "you are there" quality of the historical event and the explanation, coupled with application, brings the message of the Bible into the present. Such a presentation may carry much stronger appeal than the traditional approach, which is: "Let me tell you three things about the discovery of the empty tomb." Having Peter or Mary Magdalene tell what it was like to be there adds a dimension that is unavailable in the format of the rhetorical outline.

The Bible is a book about people. People who come to church are interested in other people. The dramatic monologue sermon appeals instantly to the imagination and provides a means by which listeners may identify with persons in the biblical story.

The Interview Sermon

Some incidents, such as the post-resurrection appearance of Jesus to Mary in the garden or the disciples by the sea (John 21:1–25) may be done as interview sermons. This is another example of form and content being equal.

The preacher may wish to tell the story from the different perspectives of the characters or may act it out. In either case, the form requires preparation. Fred Craddock speaks of this as "experiencing" the text.[2] During the process of interpretation the preacher enters into the text to identify with the biblical persons and dialogues with the text to determine its depth of meaning, thus developing a "feel" for the text. Craddock speaks of this as finding a place to stand in the text. Others, including Gardner Taylor, stress this identification with the text as a necessary part of understanding it.[3] This is one of the fruits of the continuing rapprochement of homiletics and hermeneutics. By living for a while in the world of the text, meeting its characters, sensing their moods, breathing the air of the world of the Bible, the preacher is prepared to speak the message of the text. The sermon becomes an act of reliving the text and recreating its experiences in the lives of the listeners. A sermon thus may do more than talk about a text; it may become a reenactment of the spirit of the text. The best preaching occurs when spirit (of the text) meets spirit (of the listener). This kind of preaching requires additional time for reflection on the meaning of the text; it includes more than word study and involves the preacher's emotions in

2. Fred B. Craddock, *Preaching* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1985), pp. 119–20.

3. Gardner Taylor, "Shaping Sermons by the Shape of Text and Preacher," in *Preaching Biblically: Creating Sermons in the Shape of Scripture*, ed. Don Wardlaw (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1983), pp. 137–42.

the making of the sermon. The preacher must take time to become acquainted with the persons and events of the text. More innovative approaches to sermons require more study, which is good for preaching and preachers. The preacher who studies more for creative sermons will improve the ability to preach the more traditional sermon forms, thus doubling the benefit of varying forms.

Other Scriptures that are stories of encounters between persons and naturally may become interview sermons include the encounter of Jesus with Nicodemus (John 3:1–21), Jesus and Simon Peter at Caesarea Philippi (Matt. 16:13–20), Jesus and the rich young ruler (Mark 10:17–31), Jesus and the Syro-Phoenician woman (Mark 7:24–30), Jesus and the disciples at the Last Supper (especially John 13:1–38), Jesus and Paul on the road to Damascus (Acts 9:1–19), Peter and John before the authorities (Acts 4:1–22), and Paul before his accusers (Acts 22:1–23:11; 24:1–26; 25:1–12; 25:23–26:32). The more familiar ones are those with which to begin. Paul on Mars Hill in Athens is a case in point (Acts 17:16–34). The word used for "reasoning" with the philosophers is the one from which we get the word "dialogue."

A number of possibilities exist for doing such interview sermons. For example, the preacher may act as both characters in a story, such as Jesus and Nicodemus. The interchange between those two followed the classic lines of diatribe: Two persons talked together in a common search for truth. As the conversation develops, the preacher may step from one side of the pulpit to the other, or may look from side to side as though looking at the other person involved in the conversation.

In a seminary sermon delivery class, a student presented a sermon on Micah 6:1–16 in the form of a courtroom drama. He acted as the attorney for God as he presented the charge against Israel. Then, with a change of voice, he spoke as the attorney for Israel and presented the response to the charge. The sermon followed the lines of argument between the attorneys for the prosecution and the defense. Of course, the world was looking in on the scene, as invited to do by God's attorney, and God himself was watching as well. For application, he took off his glasses, put the manuscript on the pulpit, looked at the congregation (class), and asked us to decide the case by our own vote. Was Israel guilty of unfaithfulness to God?

An interview sermon may take the form of a person from the present talking with some person from out of the past, the Bible. A member of the congregation may act as the biblical personality and the preacher may do an actual interview. The presence of a second person requires preparation by someone other than the preacher. Some complications may arise from such an arrangement, but it may be less a matter of preparation than of desire. Surely presentations involving two are less

complicated than those by drama groups. Scripts, rehearsals, props, and stage management become large factors as well with the inclusion of a number of people in addition to the preacher.

A practical question arises from such considerations: When does the sermon cease to be the responsibility of the preacher? Another is: At what point does the act of proclamation become something other than a sermon? The traditional sermon is prepared and delivered by one person. In the preaching of the sermon, one person is the preacher. Those inclined to do some of the more creative kinds of proclamation ought to be prepared to answer such questions for themselves. A change in sermon form may have a ripple effect on one's understanding of the whole of the worship event. Taking the senior minister out of the role of preacher carries with it questions of identity as well. On the other hand, if the whole church proclaims the gospel, if the sermon is itself an act of worship, if the whole of the worship service is an act of proclamation, we may be prepared to think again about the preacher as the single leader of worship and the traditional sermon as the central event of worship.[4] The interviewer may conduct a "person on the street" kind of interview. This may be done with imaginary persons who pass by the pulpit and offer testimony or commentary on Bible events. Persons who witnessed the crucifixion could recount their exact feelings at the moment of Jesus' death. Mary Magdalene could tell of her elation upon discovering that the Lord had risen. Such an interview could have sense appeal, require proper use of the powers of imagination, and capture the attention of the listeners through personal involvement in the sermon.

A difficulty arises for the preacher who must act alone in a dramatic sermon (i.e., assume the identity of more than one person). The preacher must act as two different persons if this is to differ from the story sermon. A good storyteller may advance to this form quite easily. In many respects, the interview sermon resembles the dialogue sermon.

The Dialogue Sermon

This sermon form holds potential for great variety, as Harold Freeman suggests.[5]

4. This author prefers to think in more traditional terms. Preaching is not the only form of proclamation, but it is the highest form. Other acts of worship, indeed, proclaim the gospel. The sermon, however, as the preaching of God's Word, is the climactic event of worship. It is a part of the whole, granted, and not the whole itself. Nevertheless, the oral proclamation of the Word of God is the means God chose to bring the message of salvation (see 1 Cor. 1:17–21).

5. *Variety in Biblical Preaching: Innovative Techniques and Fresh Forms* (Waco, Tex.: Word, 1987).

Baptism appears to be a natural for the dialogue sermon. The pastor may wish to discuss with the candidate, perhaps in the baptistery, the decision to publicly profess faith in Christ, the commitment to baptism, and the importance of giving public witness of a changed life. The act of baptism is itself an act of proclamation. A dialogue based on Romans 6:1–14 is one way to declare one of the major passages on the doctrine of baptism found in the entire New Testament.

The Lord's Supper (communion), a regular feature of church life, presents the pastor with opportunities for innovation in sermon delivery. What pastor who serves in the free church (nonliturgical) tradition has not searched for another way to express the meaning of this valuable ceremony?

One possibility is to act out the Supper. In this presentation, the pastor could introduce the observance while standing behind the pulpit, then move to the table. At that point, the pastor could take each element of the Supper and comment on it just prior to inviting the congregation to partake. Those who assist in the service then would distribute the elements among the members of the congregation. In this manner, the worship leaders enable those in the pews to participate in the proclamation of the gospel. Indeed, the Lord's Supper is a visual representation of the entire gospel story. Participation, which is a renewed emphasis in worship among church growth advocates, may add depth of meaning for worshipers. The participatory sermon carries with it application for each individual who takes part.[6]

When Reuel Howe began the discussion of the dialogue sermon, he emphasized the nature of feedback during the presentation of the sermon.[7] Later authors such as Harold Freeman speak of dialogue as an act, that is, action instead of a communication phenomenon.[8] The dialogue sermon may take the form of an actual conversation between the preacher and persons sitting in the pews. It (the dialogue) may range from the completely spontaneous to the prepared script. This sermon form also may be presented as a panel discussion, with participants standing before the congregation or seated on the platform. One pastor invited the listeners who attended Sunday morning worship to return for the evening service, during which time he led a discussion of the morn-

6. David H. C. Read observes that proclamation is an act of the whole church. See his *Sent from God: The Enduring Power and Mystery of the Gospel* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1974), for this discussion and the presentation of an excellent theology of proclamation. "The Bible does not belong to the preacher alone. When the preacher's voice is the only voice heard, that preacher still is giving voice to the church's message. This underscores the value of a participatory sermon (pp. 73–76).

7. *The Miracle of Dialogue* (New York: Seabury, 1963).

8. *Variety in Biblical Preaching*.

ing sermon. Another reviewed the morning sermon prior to the evening sermon and asked those present questions about the sermon idea and purpose, then invited comment on the sermon's application to life.[9]

The common thread running throughout all these approaches to dialogue is involvement. Listeners physically participate in the delivery of the sermon. Their participation excites interest within each one who hears the sermon. While it may have appeal, this method also carries with it numerous pitfalls.[10]

The Media-Augmented Sermon

The "Community Church" movement (Willow Creek primarily) has thrust media (and dramatic) sermons to center stage in all discussions of innovative worship methods. The "preaching service" has given way to the "worship service." The traditional sermon is no longer the centerpiece of such worship.

The media-augmented sermon is not an altogether new phenomenon. Ever since denominations and churches have been sending out missionaries, the same sending agencies have invited missionaries on furlough to report to churches. The report almost always included the showing of color slides and a table filled with items of interest from the country served. Although considered a "report" or a "testimony," this presentation usually came during a regular service of worship—at the time normally reserved for the "sermon." If one's theology of preaching includes preaching as bearing witness,[11] the missionary report surely qualifies as proclamation.

Slide presentations have given way to multimedia presentations, some of which would be the envy of major television producers. The single slide projector now has others stacked above it, all of them driven and synchronized by a computer and projected onto a giant screen. Pictures appear and disappear from all the machines. Sound and other forms of video now are fully integrated into the presentation. With the advent of multimedia computers, along with projection screen technology, text, graphics, and video may appear on the screen simultaneously. Often the person provides only the voice. Some presentations are professionally prepared, including narration. One risks the possibility that the media themselves eliminate the need for a real live person up front.

9. This is a variation of Freeman's "spontaneous congregational dialogue." See *Variety in Biblical Preaching*, pp. 113–14.

10. See a discussion of those pitfalls later in this chapter.

11. This is the metaphor Tom Long chooses for his understanding of preaching. See *The Witness of Preaching* (Atlanta: John Knox/Westminster, 1990), especially chapter 1.

Some churches feature a blend of two or more of these methods. Contemporary churchgoers may hear a preacher who is accompanied by a drama group, orchestra, rear screen projection, and sound effects. Multimedia sermons have progressed far beyond sounds on audiotapes, slides, and object lessons.

Others

Other choices for dramatic sermons include the following:

1. News reporter approach describing scenes and actions. This may include the "you are there" format so popular with satellite transmissions of live news coverage.

2. News reporter approach reporting, with edited video, after returning from the scene. This is kin to the multimedia sermon. Imagine the impact of a report from the day of Jesus' resurrection, complete with video of an empty tomb and quotes from the women who first discovered it.

3. Third-party observer, so popular in today's news reporting. For example, consider Peter's testimony in Acts 4:20 that he and John could not help speaking about the things they had seen and heard.

4. The hymn sermon. Lavonne Brown has written a helpful book in which he suggests ways to preach through hymn texts, many of which are based on Scripture texts.[12] An example is "A Mighty Fortress" by Luther, building on Psalm 46. Innovation may include singing the sermon, inviting the congregation to sing, or asking a musician to play the melody to ignite memory and prompt association of events with particular hymns (e.g., "They sang that hymn at my mother's funeral. Every time I hear it, I think of Mother.").

5. Question-and-answer format. This form is similar to the interview sermon. The minister may act alone or invite another person to assist.

6. Use of historical imagination. Some preachers do this frequently, and often incorrectly, with the story of David and Goliath. Background study may help with information the text alone does not provide and establish limits for the imagination. Done properly, this is quite effective.[13]

12. *Preaching the Great Hymns* (Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 1992).

13. Books proposing these kinds of innovative forms, appeals to the imagination, and the place of preaching in the life of the contemporary church include Elizabeth Achtemeier, *Creative Preaching: Finding the Words*, Abingdon Preacher's Library, ed. William D. Thompson (Nashville: Abingdon, 1980); Francis C. Rossow, *Preaching the Creative Gospel Creatively* (St. Louis: Concordia, 1983); Paul Scott Wilson, *Imaginations of the Heart: New Understandings in Preaching* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1988); Thomas H. Troeger, *Creating Fresh Images for Preaching: New Rungs for Jacob's Ladder* (Valley Forge, Pa.: Judson, 1982); *Imagining a Sermon* (Nashville: Abingdon: 1990); Webb B. Garrison, *Creative Imagination in Preaching* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1960); and Clyde Fant, *Preaching for Today*, rev. ed. (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1987).

311

The Preparation of Dramatic Sermons

This kind of preaching does not just happen, any more so than does any other kind. Dramatic preaching, however, requires additional time for reflection on the meaning of the text; it includes more than word study and involves the preacher's emotions in the making of the sermon. The preacher must take time to become acquainted with the persons and events of the text. This requirement for more study, though, means the more innovative approaches to sermons are good for preaching and preachers.

Ordinarily, the minister sits in a study, surrounded by books, journals, papers, commentaries, tapes, and files to prepare the sermon. It is a solo performance from beginning to end. Innovations in preaching include all the usual steps in preparation and go beyond the ordinary.

First, the interpreter must linger over the text longer in order to identify with characters. Word study, sentence structure, paragraph formation, transition, and the usual components of exegesis must be more than facts to be grasped by the intellect; they must spring to life. The preacher must take time to interact with the text, to dialogue with the people there. He or she must investigate the historical, geographical setting of the text. The time of an event in Scripture assumes additional significance. In short, the preacher should remain with the text until he or she feels at home there.

Second, the interpreter must carefully craft the sermon in writing. Good drama requires good script. This will summon all the creativity learned in composition class and in sermon preparation class. Beginning with a summary of the meaning of the text, which in dramatic sermons often will include several chapters of the Bible, he or she will describe places, people, and events, adding color, flavor, sound, and motion.

Third, the preacher should practice the sermon by speaking it aloud, considering how the words will sound. Taping the sermon and playing it back is helpful for evaluating the quality of content and delivery.

Fourth, the preacher will give thought to the manner in which he or she will move from the world of the text to the world of the listener. This distance is not easy to traverse. With the traditional sermon, one may change verb tenses from the past to the present or say: "This means you." The dramatic sermon, however, requires some transition from a character who lived thousands of years ago to a preacher talking to the Sunday morning congregation, or movement from a scene far away to the local church. The very act of stepping forward or turning one's back and then turning around may suffice. The minister may say: "Now I wish to step out of character and speak to you as your pastor." To relocate in time and space, one may suggest: "Now we will return to Specific City and ponder the lessons of the Bible message."

Fifth, the preacher should plan carefully the transition to time of appeal or public invitation. Possibilities include the invitation to respond to God in faith as biblical personalities responded, or a forthright challenge to act out lessons learned or to go out from worship and live out a biblical principle. In each sermon the preacher ought to answer the question: "What do I want the hearer to do, be, or become as a result of hearing this sermon?"

Cautions in Preparing Dramatic Sermons

While it may have appeal, this method also carries with it numerous pitfalls. Primary among those is one that is an outgrowth of the component of preparation. The study for a group drama includes other persons. Such study may prompt the need for a worship committee in the church membership or a team of researchers and writers to assist with sermon preparation. The preacher, then, becomes dependent on the results of the study and writing of others, while retaining personal responsibility for the outcome.

How far may a pastor go and still retain personal control of sermon production? With conventional sermon preparation the minister is sole owner of the sermon and sermon preparation. The preacher who senses the need to prepare and deliver a sermon due to a divine call may request help from others who do not share a similar call. How thin can one spread this without diluting the message?

On the other hand, if the gospel belongs to the church, and if proclamation is an act of the whole body, dramatic preaching may force more persons in the congregation to take seriously the church's responsibility to bear witness to the world.

A related issue, perhaps, is that of biblical authority. Is the preacher, in fact, the custodian of the message by virtue of calling and office?

Second, in order to perform a dramatic sermon the preacher will need items not found in a pastor's study, such as a shepherd's staff, a robe, a pair of sandals. More advanced presentations will require stage props, sound effects, different kinds of lighting, and other kinds of equipment.

The pastor, already harried by a demanding schedule, bears responsibility for oversight of supplemental preparation. The involvement of a number of additional persons in the process increases the likelihood that some part of it will go undone and lessens the likelihood that the minister can monitor all the preparation. Although the people who would agree to assist usually are among the most reliable in the congre-

gation, the pastor should remember the extra time required and the additional tension created.

Preachers who become more dramatic run the risk of appearing as actors instead of proclaimers. This risk, a third pitfall, becomes greater for the pastor who preaches in a traditional manner. The congregation may think of the pastor as artificial, as a pretender, or as a different person (in the negative sense of hypocrite). A dramatic flair may put the listeners into communicative shock, thus disrupting all communication.

Thus the need for additional study and preparation assumes greater importance. The pastor should consider preparing the congregation for a departure from normal sermon delivery. Congregations are amazingly flexible when not surprised or shocked.

For all the challenges offered by dramatic preaching, the preacher who pays the price of preparation for creative sermons will become able to preach better the more traditional sermon forms, thus doubling the benefit of variety in preaching. Moreover, the benefits for the congregation are numerous. They will see the amazing variety in the contents of the Bible. They will "meet" biblical characters. They will "visit" biblical places. The Bible will become a book that pulsates with life, no longer a collection of words on pages.

A Sample Sermon

An interview with the Apostle Paul, based on Acts 21:27–28:16.

Moderator: Today I am talking with the church's first missionary about his trip from Jerusalem to Rome. This trip is well known because of the giant storm that blasted the ship on which Paul traveled. Paul, please tell us why you were on board the ship sailing to Rome in the first place.

Paul: The Romans themselves encouraged me to go to Rome because I appealed my trial case to Caesar. My dual citizenship entitled me to that when the Jews in Jerusalem accused me of defiling the temple and attempted to kill me. The commander of the Roman garrison in Jerusalem intervened when they created an uproar that disturbed the entire city. As the soldiers were about to wrench me away from the unruly mob, I asked permission to address them. The commander agreed. I then gave the testimony of my salvation to the crowd. When I mentioned that God sent me to the Gentiles, they screamed: "Kill him! He is not fit to live."

With that, the Romans took me away. The commander ordered his men to lash me until I confessed my crime. When I asked if it was proper to whip a Roman citizen without so much as a trial, that stopped them in their tracks. His soldiers melted into the crowd and

the commander unshackled me. He turned me over to the Jewish council for trial.

The proceedings were a mockery, of course. When Ananias the High Priest ordered someone to slap my face, the whole thing took an ugly turn. I called him a whitewashed tomb and informed him that he was breaking the law in order to try me! I remembered that the Council was half Sadducees and half Pharisees, told them that I was a Pharisee, and watched as a great clamor arose. They got into a shouting match, began to pull me in different directions, and very nearly tore me apart. The Roman commander came to my rescue by ordering his soldiers to take me back to the armory.

The next morning more than forty Jews got together and took an oath to kill me. They even got the priests and elders to join the conspiracy. My nephew got wind of the plan and warned me. I sent him immediately to the commander with instruction to tell what he had heard.

The commander arranged to send me to Caesarea at nine o'clock that same night. He sent two hundred spearmen and seventy mounted cavalry to escort me. He prepared a letter to Governor Felix that put the entire case in his hands. You can imagine how relieved he was finally to place me under someone else's care.

The Jews discovered what had happened to me and, five days later, sent their best lawyer to press the charges against me in Caesarea. He misrepresented the case against me, naturally, but the governor allowed me to speak in my own defense. Again I recounted the story of my conversion and mission. You know, Felix himself almost became a believer when he heard my testimony. He put me in prison, saying that he would hear me again at a more convenient time. Some convenient time: Two years dragged by; then Festus succeeded Felix. There I was, still in chains when Festus came to power.

Three days after he arrived in Caesarea, Festus left for Jerusalem. That was just the chance for which my accusers had been waiting. Somehow they gained an audience with Festus and told him about me. They insisted that he return me to Jerusalem for trial, with another secret plan to waylay me and kill me. Festus replied that the proceedings would go better if they held the trial in Caesarea upon his return. About ten days later he returned and reopened my case.

The Jews came gladly and accused me falsely again. Festus was anxious to please them, so he asked me if I were willing to go with him and my accusers to Jerusalem for a trial. "No," I replied. "I demand the privilege of appearing before the emperor." A Roman citizen could do that in a capital case. Festus had no choice; he declared that I could go to Caesar.

A few days later King Agrippa arrived in Caesarea with Bernice for a visit with Festus. During their visit Festus told Agrippa about my case.

312

He informed Agrippa that I was a leftover from the days of Felix and repeated the story of the Romans' involvement with me. Agrippa decided that he would like to hear me.

The next day, then, they brought me before Agrippa. Bernice was there, too, along with Festus and military officers, prominent citizens, and conducted the whole matter with great pomp and ceremony. Festus moderated the meeting. He told the crowd that I had appealed to Caesar, but he had no case against me. He could not send me to the emperor without a case. He was really trying to get Agrippa to handle the problem and get it out of his own hands. Agrippa agreed to hear my story.

Again I told my story, with joy and enthusiasm. I gladly retold my conversion experience and my call to be a missionary to the Gentiles. The power came upon me, and, as I stressed to the king that my call came from heaven and I could only obey, he stopped me with a shout. "You are mad," he screamed. "Your study has broken your mind." Of course, I was not insane, and quickly told him so. I could see that he, like Felix, had come under conviction, so I told him I knew he wanted to believe. He reacted with shock. "You expect me to become a Christian on this kind of evidence?" he asked. "Yes," I told him. "Whether my evidence is weak or strong, I wish you were as I am, except for these chains."

That did it. Agrippa left with the others of the royal entourage. They talked among themselves and Agrippa declared that I had done nothing worthy of death. If I had not appealed to Caesar, he added, he could set me free. But I had appealed to Caesar, and to Caesar I would go. That all accounts for my voyage to Rome.

Moderator: You had a lot of courage to stand before your accusers and your judges and give your testimony. Just think, you could have been set free if you had not appealed to Caesar. Please tell us about the journey itself.

Paul: I only knew that the encounter with Jesus had changed my life. I was not guilty of the charges the Jews made against me, and I wanted to prove it.

Finally, the Roman authorities made arrangements for my transportation. Several other prisoners and I were placed in the custody of an officer named Julius, a member of the elite imperial guard. They informed us that the boat was to make several stops along the way; thus we knew we were in for a long, hard trip.

At least Julius allowed me to go ashore and visit with friends along the way. The second day, for example, when we docked at Sidon, I enjoyed the hospitality of friends.

Setting sail from Sidon, we ran into strong headwinds and the sailors had a difficult time holding course. So they sailed north of Cyprus and followed the coast by Cilicia and Pamphylia, then landing at Myra. There the officer in charge transferred us to a ship from Alexandria bound for Italy.

After several days of rough sailing, we drew near to Cnidus. The winds had become so strong, however, that we cut across to Crete. Overcoming great difficulty with the wind, we finally landed at Fair Havens, near the city of Lasea. The weather simply was too dangerous for us to continue, so I talked to the officers about continuing the trip. I told them we were headed straight toward disaster—shipwreck, loss of cargo, injuries, eventual death.

Although I was a veteran traveler, they ignored me, choosing instead to listen to the ship's captain and owner. Winter was coming and Fair Havens was not a safe harbor in which to spend the winter. The majority of the crew voted to sail up the coast to Phoenix and spend the winter there. At exactly the same time, the winds died down and began blowing lightly from the south. It was a perfect day for sailing, so they weighed anchor and set sail, as they had planned, close to the shoreline.

Soon my worst fears came true. A fierce wind began to blow us straight out to sea. It was a literal tornado on the water. They tried at first to fight it and turn the ship back toward land, but it was no use. They gave up and let the ship drift at the mercy of the violent storm. As we flew past a small island we hoisted the small lifeboat we were towing and lashed it down. All the possibilities we faced were bad ones. Some even talked of being hurled against the coast of North Africa.

The next day the storm grew more ferocious, so we began throwing cargo overboard. A day later we threw out everything we could lift. The storm continued to rage, for how long I do not know. We appeared to have no hope.

Moderator: You gave up hope?

Paul: At that point it looked hopeless. I guess I gave up hope for the ship.

I took over and called a meeting of the crew. I did not really want to say "I told you so," but I said it. "You should have listened to me at Fair Havens," I told them. "Then all of this would not have happened." Then I shocked them by adding: "But cheer up. Not one of us will lose his life, even though the ship will be destroyed. God will save all our lives," I continued, "so take courage. I believe God. We will be shipwrecked on an island, but we will be safe." Surely they thought I had lost my mind.

For two weeks we drifted on the sea, completely at the mercy of the wind. The fear of 275 people for their lives increased with every passing day until it held all in its grip. Finally, in the middle of the fourteenth night, the experienced sailors, with their ability to sense what is happening, decided among themselves that we were coming near some

land. They sounded the depths repeatedly and, sure enough, each time the water grew more shallow. At first the water was 120 feet deep. Then, the next time, it was only ninety feet. Hallelujah! a sign that we were approaching land. Then we threw out four anchors to steady the vessel and waited for the day. Could we, after all, be saved?

Some of the sailors conspired to pretend they were letting down the emergency boat in order to put out more anchors and abandon the ship. I overheard them and cautioned them that they would all die unless everyone remained on board the ship. They gave up their plan and let the boat fall away into the night.

As night began to give way to day, I begged everyone to eat something. After all, I reminded them, no one was going to perish. We all ate a good meal and threw the remaining wheat overboard.

When daybreak came the sailors hoisted up the main sail so that we could drift to the shore. They aimed at a creek that ran inland. As we approached, though, and attempted to sail into an inlet, the bow of the ship stuck in the sand. We had run aground in sight of safety. The wind and water continued to batter the hindmost part of the ship and it began to break apart. Some of the soldiers on board cried: "Kill all the prisoners," but Julius, for my sake, prevailed on them to let everyone have an equal chance to make it to land alive.

Each one of us grabbed a piece of the timber from the broken ship and held on for dear life. The tide drove us right to the shore. Alive! Safe! Could anyone believe it? God had brought us safely through the worst storm and the sailor's worst nightmare. After two weeks in constant danger we stood, at last, on firm, dry ground.

Moderator: Paul, how can you explain that a man could stand on the deck of a sinking ship and say: "Cheer up, no one will die"?

Paul: The answer is quite simple: the promise of God. You see, the Lord had stood beside me one night after the second day of my ordeal in Jerusalem and told me not to worry. "Take courage! As you have testified about me in Jerusalem, so you must also testify in Rome." I believed God. I believed that, in his providence, I would go to Rome. Moreover, the angel of the Lord appeared to me at the height of the storm and told me not to be afraid, that I would stand trial before Caesar and that not a life would be lost. I believed him. Our God is mightier than a hurricane on sea. He is in control of nature and he is in control of me. I believed all the time the storm was raging that I would arrive in Rome.

This great story from Acts tells us how the doctrine of God, specifically God's sovereignty and providence, made an impact on the life of Paul. He never gave up, even in the worst storm of all his travels. He clung to the promise that he would someday arrive in Rome.

Do you believe God? If he assures you through his Word, through the inner voice of his Spirit, that a specific event will happen in your life will take place, you can live in confidence that he will keep his promise. You may have no other reason for your courage than his word. That is faith.

The purpose of this interview sermon is to reveal how a doctrine made a difference in life. Other possibilities for presenting this same sermon include a dramatic monologue or a simple retelling of the story in the third person in a narrative tense. The preacher may plan to make one point at the end of the story, as in the case here. This is the inductive method. You may prefer, instead, to do a dramatic monologue, then step out of character, and make the point followed by application to the listeners. The preacher could retell the story in segments, drawing a lesson, or point, from each segment in order to show application of the text.

For example, as Paul concludes his testimony in Jerusalem (23:23–35), the story reaches a turning point when the Roman commander decides to send Paul to Caesarea for his own safety. The next natural break in the sequence comes at Caesarea when Agrippa acknowledges that he has no choice but to send Paul to Caesar (26:30–32). If seeking to achieve the traditional three points, the preacher could do so by making a transition to conclusion at the end of the storm at sea (27:42–44).

315

14

Planning a Strategy and Program for Doctrinal Preaching

All preaching requires good planning and preparation. Doctrinal sermons will require additional effort due to their special nature. The busy pastor has difficulty finding enough time to prepare well, no matter what the subject matter of the sermon. Sermons with theological depth require even more time. This additional time is imperative, however, because this kind of preaching demands more reflection and awareness of the broader contents of Scripture. Planning ahead actually facilitates one's preparation, however, for when one knows that he will be preaching on a given subject (in this case, a given doctrine), material that he comes upon is recognized as usable for that message. There is also the benefit of having time to reflect on the topic, thus allowing ideas to mature. Good planning is a necessity for effectiveness in the ministries of the local church. This is particularly true for pulpit performance. The present chapter is devoted to the development of a strategy for preaching the doctrinal sermon.[1]

1. General works on planning a preaching program include Andrew W. Blackwood Sr., *Planning a Year's Pulpit Work* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1975); J. Winston Pearce, *Planning Your Preaching* (Nashville: Broadman, 1967); Glenn Asquith, *Preaching According to Plan* (Valley Forge, Pa.: Judson, 1968); T. T. Crabtree, *The Zondervan Pastor's Annual* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1968–); *Ministers Manual: A Study and Pulpit Guide* (early issues known as *Doran's Ministers Manual*), ed. G. B. F. Hallock, M. K. W. Heichner, and Charles L. Wallis (New York: Harper and Row, 1926–); *The Revised Common Lectionary: Includes Complete List of Lections for years A, B, and C / Consultation on Common Texts* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1992); Reginald H. Fuller, *Preaching the Lectionary: the Word of God for the Church Today* (Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical, 1984); Hoyt L. Hickman et. al., *The New Handbook of the Christian Year: Based on the Revised Common Lectionary* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1992). Denominational publishing houses print planning manuals each year. They also publish planning calendars and notebooks for ministers.

Approaches to Planning Doctrinal Preaching

Assessing Congregational Needs

Since preaching does not take place in a vacuum, but in a concrete setting, the more one knows and understands that setting, the more one can plan intelligently the preaching to be done there. This assessment can be done in several ways.

1. One way in which this can be done is through the use of some sort of survey. This can be done either by asking people directly what doctrines or doctrinal problems they have questions about or want to know more about, or by asking people their understanding of certain doctrines and then inferring from their answers what areas need teaching. In either case, bear in mind that many lay people are not accustomed to being asked for their opinions and may misunderstand what is expected or feel threatened by the questions. One of the authors, as a young pastor, asked his congregation to fill out a questionnaire, indicating the subjects on which they felt they needed sermons. One person wrote on the back of the form, "I have heard of men-pleasers before, but I never heard of anyone who asked his people what to speak on so he could do what they wanted." Efforts will need to be made to prepare the congregation for such a questionnaire and ensure that anonymity will be preserved. When this is done, quite reliable results can often be obtained. If the pastor has some skill in constructing and interpreting questions and answers, the indirect type of questioning is often the more effective variety.

2. Another way of assessing the needs of the congregation is by the use of focus groups. These groups are assembled by carefully selecting persons who reflect the makeup of the congregation. Group members can be trained in terms of the functioning of the group and the type of response the pastor desires, as well as the use to which their responses will be put. This type of approach also allows for explanation and interpretation, which is not possible with questionnaires.

3. Another useful method is to have people submit the questions they have. One pastor had a regular feature in his Sunday evening services called "The Question Box." People could place their written questions in a box in the sanctuary and each Sunday evening he would answer one of them. When several had accumulated, he would take an evening and instead of a message, would deal with all of the remaining questions. This also provided him with a clue to topics that needed fuller treatment than that provided by a sermon.

4. A pastor may do a sermon series giving a brief overview of Christian doctrine, perhaps devoting one message to each major doctrine. Verbal comments and questions will often supply clues as to which

areas need greater elaboration. This can be done by having an insert or a tear-off portion of the worship folder on which worshipers can register the questions that they think need to be answered. This can also be done with an adult study class covering the same subjects.[2]

5. The pastor will also want to take note of what other learning experiences of a doctrinal nature are taking place or have taken place within the congregation. For example, the Sunday school curriculum should be examined, to see whether there are areas that need to be supplemented, or even some less than fully adequate ideas that need correction or augmentation.

6. An analysis of the influences affecting one's congregation is also important and helpful. Some of this can be accomplished by a broad cultural analysis of the social and literary ethos. Reading and observing contemporary literature, music, television, and the daily newspaper are very helpful in identifying general cultural trends to which one's church members are also susceptible. Surveys of religious beliefs and opinions, such as those done by the Gallup and Barna organizations, are very helpful.

Beyond that, however, attempting to discern something of the church's history can be of great help. Sometimes a church arose out of a particular doctrinal dispute, or has come under a special influence, and the result is that certain topics need special attention, and care has to be taken to deal with these in a wise and tactful way. If relatively large numbers of members have been with the church for several years, then the history of the church going back some time may be significant. One of the authors served as interim pastor of a church that had carried on merger discussions for several months with another church, with the discussions finally breaking down. One factor in the discussions was the very strongly Calvinistic theology of the senior pastor of the other church. Because of the lingering questions in the minds of many people, the interim pastor decided to give a four-week series of Sunday evening messages on the issues of Calvinism and Arminianism. Normally, the evening service was held in the lower auditorium of this downtown congregation with an aging membership, and attendance averaged fifty to seventy. The first evening ushers were scurrying about getting more chairs to seat the two hundred people who came. The pastor had tapped a topic of great interest. An examination of the previous

2. A lay-level treatment of these topics, including study questions and teaching suggestions, is Millard J. Erickson, *Does It Matter What I Believe?* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1992). Others in the same genre are Paul E. Little, *Know What You Believe* (Wheaton, Ill.: Victor, 1970); A. J. Conyers, *A Basic Christian Theology* (Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 1995); James Montgomery Boice, *Foundations of the Christian Faith: A Comprehensive and Readable Theology* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity, 1986).

317

pastor's preaching plan will also be of help, even if it is merely reconstructed from the titles in the church bulletin file. Care must be used to ensure that one does not appear to be criticizing even implicitly one's predecessor, but areas of neglect or overemphasis may be evident from this endeavor. Consulting some of the longer-standing members of the congregation regarding the oral history of the church will often also be helpful.

We are not here minimizing the power of the Holy Spirit to guide the preacher in the selection of subjects. In one group that was less than a year old and still not officially organized as a congregation, one of the authors was brought in as interim pastor because the church planter had already left because of some problems that were present. At the interim pastor's farewell, one woman remarked to him, "You were like a man walking through a field filled with land mines. If you had made one wrong step and said something on the wrong issue in a sermon, the whole church could have blown up. You never stepped on a single land mine." Yet he did not know what those issues were. The Holy Spirit had guided him. We will certainly want to pray for that guidance, but we can also use the best of available information in the process.

Seizing Uniquely Timely Opportunities

Even when we have planned for some time in advance what we are going to speak on, it is still important to be sensitive to the Holy Spirit's leading. Even in the midst of a series one should pray, "What would you have me preach on this Sunday?" and be prepared to deviate from that series if necessary. This is especially appropriate when some event occurs that captures the attention of people. It may be a political, sports, or even weather event. When these things occur, one will want to ask whether there is something here that can become the basis for a sermon capitalizing on that attention. One will, of course, want to be sure to avoid exploiting a specific news event in such a way as to appear to be attacking an individual involved in that event, or even of passing judgment on the guilt or innocence of someone alleged to have committed a crime. Tastefully done, however, this can be quite effective.

One of the authors was serving an interim pastorate in a town of 20,000 persons some fifty miles from a major metropolitan area. The morning worship service was broadcast over the only radio station in that town. One Saturday a surprise major snowstorm hit that town, effectively closing it down. The chairman of the church called the interim pastor to tell him that the streets were unplowed and might not be open by Sunday morning, and that he should plan on not coming. When he verified that the interstate highway that passed through the edge of the

town was open, the interim pastor assured the chairman that he would be there for the service, even if he had to walk in from the highway. He left early, allowing extra time for the walk which, it turned out, was not needed. On the drive to the church, he thought of the situation. He knew that the radio audience would be larger than usual, since there would be people from other congregations unable to reach their own church, and thought of the fact that this storm had caught everyone, including the highway authorities, by surprise. During the drive, he thought out a sermon on "The Surprises of Life," went to the pastor's study upon arrival, and roughed out an outline. He explained to the congregation before the broadcast began that the sermon they would hear would not be the one listed in the bulletin. He preached that message on the surprises of life, culminating with the biblical teaching that the Lord's second coming and judgment would catch people unprepared.

Analyzing One's Preaching Distribution

We will want to plan our doctrinal preaching with an overall strategy, not simply on an ad hoc basis. One way to ensure this is to keep a record of what we have preached on doctrinally. While this is a good idea with respect to various books of the Bible and issues of Christian living, it is especially important with respect to doctrine, where it will help preserve us from either fixating on one subject matter or neglecting certain doctrines and leaving holes in our doctrinal coverage. We will ask ourselves, for example, how long it has been since we preached on the doctrine of the Holy Spirit or the authority of Scripture. Keeping a chart with each doctrine and subdoctrine listed, and then marking the date we preach on it will help ensure this coverage. As we do so, we will want to note not only the sermons that were overtly and primarily doctrinal, but all the doctrinal dimensions of sermons that have had some other orientation as their major thrust.

This will of course involve some of the historical research we spoke about above. To make easier the task of a successor, who will inevitably come sooner or later, it is important to keep a good record of our preaching, preferably in some detail.

Expanding the Impact of Preaching

We will also look for ways to continue the thought about or discussion of the content of the doctrinal preaching beyond the actual preaching event itself. This may be done in several ways. One is to have some type of immediate feedback. In some churches, the worship service precedes the Sunday school, which includes at least one class at which the

pastor is present and the group discusses the content of the message. At times it is possible to incorporate interaction time into the actual service itself. This works especially well when the group is a relatively small one. The evening service, being more informal, allows for this in a special way. In one church where one of the authors was interim pastor, he introduced a feedback session after the message in the evening service, something that had never been done in that congregation before. The church chairman told him, "We've never had this feedback feature before, and we don't know yet who the new pastor will be, but one thing we know: he is going to conduct these feedback sessions." Even where quite a large group is present in the service, feedback is possible. By placing microphones at appropriate places in the auditorium, or by having people write their questions on cards to be collected and given to the speaker, interaction can also take place in such a setting. Although this procedure is desirable for many kinds of sermons, it seems especially appropriate for doctrinal sermons, where there is often a need for additional clarification.

The pastor may also plan to correlate the sermons with the studies taking place in the adult Bible study class, without duplicating the lesson itself. This enables mutual reinforcement to take place between the two types of experience.

There are other ways to prolong the impact. One is by providing a place in the bulletin or insert for taking notes, and suggesting applications as well as urging worshipers to think of their own action applications of the doctrine. Then they are encouraged to keep track of these and see what sort of progress they are making. Checking periodically on these is especially helpful.

Reviewing the Calendar

Churches of all sizes plan calendars of activities. Each week newsletters from several churches come to this professor's desk. Each of them contains mostly promotional material related to a calendar. Is it too modest to propose a preaching calendar? For the preacher who needs help with planning, the calendar is a ready reference. What events on the schedule promote something for the congregation's instruction? For each of those plan a doctrinal sermon. In fact, newsletters usually follow a larger denominational calendar. On that calendar one will find such emphases as Religious Liberty Sunday, Christian Home Week, Missions Week (Home, State, and Foreign), Race Relations Sunday, and Stewardship Sunday. Some of them are distinctively doctrinal in nature, such as Christmas and Easter. The others, with some work, may imply some ways to preach doctrinal sermons.

The pastor may wish to review a full year's schedule, even if it is one from a past year, and circle all the occasions that lend themselves to doctrinal preaching. The events mentioned in the preceding paragraph recur annually, so he may project the same events year by year. Religious Liberty Sunday comes on the Sunday closest to Independence Day. It provides the pastor a wonderful opportunity to speak on the free moral agency of humans, an endowment from the Creator. Christian Home Week, usually Mother's Day, is a good time to speak of God as ideal parent. Various missions emphases are the best occasions on which to speak of the mission of God's people, given by Christ himself.

Christmas and Easter are the two best times to preach doctrine. These two cardinal events of Christianity, the birth of Jesus and the resurrection of Jesus, are by their very nature doctrinal. In all the preaching conferences this author leads, the preachers who attend speak of the difficulty of the special occasion sermon. They fear that they cannot say anything new; everyone has already heard, dozens of times, accounts of the birth of the Savior and his resurrection from the dead. This leads, naturally, to dread as one anticipates speaking of them yet another time. This fear can lead to intimidation. We soon feel overwhelmed by the need to speak on the most joyful occasions of the church year. Who of us has not revised Christmas sermons in the fond hope that we can say the same thing a little better this time? Each time, though, we walk away from the pulpit with the all but paralyzing fear that we have not yet said it the way we had hoped or planned.

Perhaps repetition and revision are not the best solutions. With proper long-range planning, the preacher can resolve to prepare new sermons for these red letter events. Newspapers, magazines, devotional guides, and denominational periodicals mailed during the last quarter of each year carry literally dozens of articles and stories about the upcoming celebrations of Thanksgiving, Christmas, and New Year. These articles, human interest stories, and statistics can become sermon starters or sermon illustrations. With these clipped and saved in files, the diligent pastor is getting ready for the sermons of the Christmas season.

The texts are decided by the events. The preacher with years of experience has studied the biblical material and has a backlog of notes ready for quick reference when the actual writing of each sermon begins. Each year's published material provides current and interesting illustrations and other support for the development of the sermon. Joy comes through the discovery of new ways to tell the old, old story. In addition, the people who gather in churches at the most special of times find excitement in hearing again what they already know. In the familiar they find assurance, comfort, and security. The story of the birth of Jesus, one we have heard repeatedly, never loses its fascination; it re-

tains a compelling quality. The same is true about the story of the resurrection of Jesus.

Other events on the calendar may be more challenging for the preacher who wishes to plan doctrinal sermons. Some of them may call for more innovation and creativity proposed in the chapters of this text on dramatic doctrinal sermons. The preacher should remember, as well, that doctrine may not be the most appropriate content for sermons on all occasions. Some other pastoral emphasis may be more to the point, such as on Mother's Day.

Consider the Lectionary

An alternative to the local church calendar is the Christian Calendar, based on the Christian Year. This calendar also is constructed around the major events of Christmas and Easter. It differs in that it does not contain events that are not specifically or uniquely Christian in nature, events found on many local church calendars.

The Christian Calendar begins with preparation for the celebration of Christmas, Advent Season, four weeks prior to Christmas. It also suggests observation of several special events following Christmas, beginning with the dedication of Jesus in the temple (Epiphany). Other celebrations continue for the Sundays prior to preparation for Easter, Lenten Season. The Season of Lent culminates with Easter Sunday. Following Easter the calendar points toward Pentecost, then life in the kingdom of God, Kingdomtide.

Observance of the Christian Calendar is made easier by following the lectionary. This collection of Scripture readings is keyed to the major events of the Christian Year and its three-year cycle will take one through the major portions of the Bible. It takes all the work out of selection of the sermon texts. This decision about the text, as testimony from preachers verifies, is one of the most difficult in the entire sermon preparation process. In a recent volume on preaching from the lectionary, Eugene Lowry echoes this sentiment and recommends the lectionary preaching plan: "The most immediately obvious advantage of lectionary preaching is that it provides a thoughtful and well-established comprehensive plan for our preaching. Almost all the preachers with whom I have visited on this subject say there is nothing so chronically worrisome about the preaching office than to wonder 'well, what now?'"[3]

One of the lectionary readings for each week usually serves as the best one for the Sunday morning sermon text. With the text already determined, the preacher may get to the task of exegesis early in the week. The other Scripture portions may be read at other times in the worship service.

3. Eugene L. Lowry, *Living with the Lectionary: Preaching through the Revised Common Lectionary* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1992), pp. 26–27.

Herein lies another of the advantages of the lectionary (beyond the provision of the sermon text): It is a valuable guide for worship planning. Indeed, the lectionary was designed to serve liturgical goals, rather than homiletical ones.[4] Numerous denominations, not in the liturgical tradition, now employ the *Revised Common Lectionary* in their worship. Pastors who use it speak of the joy of having the texts for their sermons for three years in advance.

Some pastors object to the lectionary on the basis that it is completely objective; it rules out their freedom to follow the Spirit's leadership in the choice of sermon texts.[5] One should note, however, that the decision to follow the lectionary for planning purposes does not rule out, a priori, the necessity to make changes occasionally. This holds true especially for those churches and pastors who are not in the liturgical tradition (as are Roman Catholics, Lutherans, and Presbyterians). It may serve as a guide, particularly for those occasions in the Christian Year observed by all churches of all traditions. The best calendar may be one that blends those of the denomination or local church and the Christian Year.

Certainly a partial use of the lectionary is a workable arrangement. It is possible to utilize certain important days of the year to call attention to crucial doctrines. This has the virtue of avoiding their slipping past without notice. Some of these and the appropriate doctrines are as follows:

Palm Sunday. The lordship of Christ.
Good Friday. Sin and atonement.
Easter Sunday. Christ's resurrection and the justification of humans.
Ascension Sunday. Christ's ascension and present mediatorial role.
Pentecost Sunday. The person and work of the Holy Spirit.

Use of Special Events

In addition to dates on the Church Calendar, there are special functions or rites that occur in the church. Some traditions call these sacra-

4. Ibid., p. 15. The opening statement in the introduction to *The Revised Common Lectionary:* "A lectionary is a collection of readings or selections from the Scriptures, arranged and intended for proclamation during the worship of the People of God." *The Revised Common Lectionary* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1992), p. 9.

5. Lowry presents the liabilities and assets of lectionary preaching in *Living with the Lectionary*, pp. 15–35.

320

ments; some, ordinances. They are special events of importance in the life of the church family. One of these obviously is baptism, and it provides occasion for doctrinal instruction regarding the new birth and about the doctrine of the church. The Lord's Supper is another of these, and it contains especially important teaching about the nature of atonement and salvation. Weddings hold many potentials; if, for example, the officiant traces the institution of marriage back to the creation by God, the doctrine of creation will be a logical emphasis to develop. Ordination, if administered by or in the local church, is an opportunity to discuss the doctrine of the church and of its officers and the nature of ministry.

Serial Preaching

Another strategy for the pastor who preaches through books of the Bible is suggested by the preaching method itself. Plan a certain number of sermons from the book chosen—perhaps one from each chapter. The Gospel of John, for example, would require twenty-one sermons. That, in turn, would mark out more than twenty-one weeks on the average calendar, in consideration of the other events to which worship services are dedicated (such as choir presentations). The pastor who plans such a series will discover that he has a six-month plan already in hand. Nothing remains for him to do except to place it on the calendar. For the pastor who prefers more than one sermon per chapter of the book, the plan extends. Remember the ancient divine who preached more than three hundred sermons from the Book of Ecclesiastes!

To plan for preaching doctrinal sermons would require the choice of a Bible book that contains much doctrine. The other, and obvious, choice would be to select only those passages from books such as John that contain specific doctrine. Beginning with the prologue to the book, John contains numerous exciting possibilities. Books that are noted primarily for their doctrinal content, on the other hand, include Romans and Galatians in the New Testament, and Genesis and Ezekiel in the Old Testament.

Serial preaching is regaining popularity in the contemporary church, and is an excellent methodological tool for didactic preaching. As verse-by-verse commentary, it requires much time. One may spend several years in one book of the Bible. While on study leave in England, one of these authors listened to a sermon by the late Martyn Lloyd-Jones which was just short of forty-five minutes in duration. It covered one phrase from one verse in one chapter of Romans. Projected over the entirety of the book this method would focus on Romans for a considerable length of time. In those denominations with average pastoral

tenure of three years or less, this could present a formidable challenge: how to preach the whole counsel of God during one's stay as pastor.

The serial approach, then, may best be done in concert with another method of preaching. In those churches with two services per week, the pastors may plan for one sermon per week generated from the calendar planning method and one sermon per week from the book preaching method.

Preaching on Issues

Another approach to doctrinal preaching is to discuss current ethical issues and then relate them to doctrine. The debate on abortion is one such issue. Central to understanding of the Christian position is the doctrine of the sanctity of human life; life is valuable because humans are made in the image of God. Address the subject of abortion by preaching on the image God? That appears to be the answer. That is not to say that one should refrain from preaching an ethical sermon. There is a moral oughtness of the faith in the abortion issue. Moreover, there is a pastoral dimension. Some who have chosen abortion suffer great emotional distress and a deep sense of guilt. They need comfort and assurance such as a pastor would include in a supportive or therapeutic sermon. That will focus upon the nature of forgiveness, as one dimension of the doctrine of salvation.

Many of the contemporary social and personal crises stem from an incomplete or inadequate understanding of God and his ways of relating to humanity. A series of doctrinal sermons, followed by a series on these crises, would reveal that a church and a pastor understand what is at stake and have compassion for all who come short of the ideal human behavior. An example would be preaching on marriage in terms of the doctrine of creation, and then the problems of marriage and divorce today. By doing doctrine first, the pastor lays a foundation for ministry, his and the congregation's. A standard of reference is necessary for the construction of a system of values. For the Christian, that standard is found in the contents of the faith.

Indeed, the foundation in the building and operating of a local church is theological. Its existence is a result of a number of individuals who have been called out and shaped into a community of God. From the Old Testament story of Israel at Mount Sinai to the founding of the church by Jesus in the Gospel of Matthew, the Bible tells the story of God and his people. Essential to an understanding of the Church is an understanding of this ideal: "I will be their God and they will be my people" (Lev. 26:12). The Bible closes with the presentation of the ideal in

321

a cosmic setting. The picture of the new heaven is a picture of God with his people with uninterrupted and unbroken community.

The church's mission comes from Christ himself: to penetrate the world and bring others into the community of faith. The Christian mission is grounded in the person and work of Jesus. He was God present with us (John 1:1–18). He preached the gospel of the kingdom of God (Mark 1:14ff.). He worked the works of the Father while he was here (John 9:1–4) and then entrusted that work to his followers (John 14:12ff.).

All this suggests that whether the pastor is talking about the nature of the church, its mission, its membership, or its future, the point of reference is doctrine. All forms of a church's ministries spring from theology. A generation in which our churches and leaders are preoccupied with demographics and utilitarianism needs this corrective word. Our being and doing cannot spring entirely from concerns for what people like, want, or will tolerate. Our ministries cannot be based completely on accommodation (catering). We who are God's people plan a strategy based on our knowledge of God and of humans. Needs differ from wants and provision differs from supplying.

Additional Strategies

1. Observe Denomination Days. Reformation Sunday will be a logical one, but there will be other days that are especially significant for various traditions.

2. Conduct Doctrine Weeks. These could be annual periods of special doctrinal studies, just as some denominations now have a week for study of a particular book of the Bible, or a special prayer week.

3. Sponsor Doctrine Conferences. Some churches have church growth conferences, evangelism conferences, or stewardship conferences. Why not have this as part of the life of the church, also, perhaps with a theology professor brought in as the visiting lecturer?

4. Promote Stewardship Sundays—held by many denominations. This gives the preacher the opportunity to emphasize doctrines such as creation, discipleship, and the final judgment and accounting.

5. Schedule Discipleship Emphases—comparable to catechism classes held by some denominations. These could include both doctrinal and practical dimensions of teaching.

6. Begin a new pastorate with doctrinal series. This is an excellent opportunity to familiarize the congregation with the doctrinal platform on which the pastor will conduct the ministry of the years to come.

7. Preach on Bible Distribution Days. This especially will expose people to the doctrine of Scripture.

8. Plan a series on favorite passages, both the preacher's and the congregation's.

9. Do a series on most familiar passages. This can be both review of beliefs long held and an opportunity to view them in a fresh way, as well as perhaps to see insights that have not been observed before.

10. Do a series on least familiar passages. This has the potential for broadening the textual basis for doctrines held.

11. Teach the doctrine in hymns (also good for dramatic sermons). Many traditional songs are rich in doctrine, especially those of composers such as the Wesleys, Luther, and other theologians. Much contemporary Christian music covers a somewhat narrower range of doctrines. The use of songs as sermon illustrations is a useful way of teaching that continues to bear fruit. Careful selection of songs sung, perhaps together with explanations of the doctrines, will enable much doctrinal instruction.

12. Sponsor "Answers to Contemporary Religions" series. There are many fruitful avenues of teaching here. At a conference he led on the New Age Movement in Interlaken, Switzerland, one of the authors found the interest level amazingly high. His belief that people in general are fascinated with, if not mesmerized by, numerous emphases of the movement was confirmed repeatedly during the three-session conference. Some expressed surprise, if not shock, to discover the affinity of much New Age thought with Christian beliefs. The emphasis on self-fulfillment, for example, is consistent with biblical teachings. The central feature of the Human Potential Movement, self-realization, is parallel and, in some respects, identical with the Christian doctrine of humanity.

The big question that followed, naturally, was: What can we do about these subtle and often indirect teachings? One part of the answer is to know what you believe about each of these. The Christian faith teaches, for instance, that each person has worth because each is made in the image of God. That image has been marred, however, by sin. To realize one's full potential, one must know God. The way to do that is to deal with sin and be remade in the image of Christ. God has provided a way in which to do that: through faith in Christ.

The all-pervasive influence of the New Age Movement is one incentive for doctrinal preaching. Persons who do not know what they believe are subject to this and other influences and may become easy prey for persuasive advocates of alternatives to the Christian faith. Thus we suggest that a place to begin with a doctrinal series is to preach on the doctrines of God and humanity. Who is God? Who am I? How does one know God? These may be the first three sermons in the series.

322

Guidelines to Bear in Mind in Doctrinal Preaching

1. Be aware that questions related to the doctrine in the sermon may arise. This reminder grew out of our classroom experience. The class talked about Saul's going to the witch of Endor and asking her to bring Samuel back from the dead so that Saul could communicate with him. This, in spite of the command of the Lord, underscored by Saul himself as king, that the Israelites should have no trafficking with witches, sorcerers, and the like. The discussion took place in the context of a discussion of a sermon on witches at Halloween.

The pastor who raises questions of a theological nature faces an obligation to be prepared to answer those same questions. In the case of the witch of Endor passage, for example, the issues are complex. Why would Saul defy a commandment of God, reaffirmed by his own mandate, not to consult with spirit agents? Why would the witch cooperate in an unlawful exercise? What about calling people back from the dead and conversing with them? This issue of communication with the spirit world is a very hot one in the New Age Movement agenda. Consorting with witches and communicating with departed spirits is common practice with some New Age followers. The Old Testament contains information about witchcraft that is intriguing. Listeners who are acquainted with that information may become interested in hearing further from the preacher, just as the curious on Mars Hill wished to hear more from Paul about the resurrection. For them his message stirred emotions very deeply.

Thus the preacher who started out to preach a dramatic sermon on a relevant biblical issue may arouse the imagination to a greater extent than intended and send the minds of listeners off into related areas that have no easy solutions. The discussion of these issues, as well as the central one originally addressed, should be a part of the preacher's agenda in the creative sermons.

The authoritarian stance in preaching is: I have the answers. In the sermon I will tell you the conclusion I have reached. Implied in this method is the assumption that those with any degree of intelligence will accept the answer given and agree with it (and with the preacher). Fred Craddock has objected to this stance on the basis that it allows the listener insufficient participation in the sermon.[6]

In this dialogical stance of the preacher, the listener is invited, indeed encouraged, to play an active role in the sermon. The best preaching

6. This statement is attributed to Fred Craddock. See Fred B. Craddock, "The Inductive Method in Preaching," in *A New Hearing: Living Options in Homiletic Method*, ed. Richard L. Eslinger (Nashville: Abingdon, 1987), p. 96.

will give those who hear something to think about, to act on, and something left over to take out of the worship service with them. The best preaching will bring people to the pastor's office in search of further answers, or in search of a way to converse further about the sermon's application. Good pastoral preaching will lead to opportunities for pastoral counseling or other forms of followup to the sermon. This is especially true of dialogical preaching.

2. Remember that thorough preparation is a necessity. Preparation for various kinds of creative doctrinal sermons may become a more complicated process than usual for the minister, and may involve more persons than just the preacher. For a dramatic monologue, for example, one must decide whether to dress for the part. Some parishioners joke about the "bathrobe dramas" presented at Easter and Christmas. Should the preacher defer to that mentality and present the sermon in the customary apparel, he or she faces the difficulty of employing language with sense appeal, that is, preparing to engage the imagination of the listeners by asking them to "see" what the preacher is saying.

Advance planning is necessary that has nothing to do with the actual content of the sermon. In addition to writing the manuscript, the pastor now must secure props to support the delivery. With other sermon forms, this process can become a time-consuming one that involves numerous persons. A doctor of ministry student at the seminary where the authors teach proposed a series of dramatic sermons for his final ministries project. His proposal included plans to make audio and video tapes, slides, photographs, charts, and backdrops, and to write scripts, hold practice sessions, and prepare handouts for some of the presentations to the members of the congregation. The idea received enthusiastic approval from the student's supervisor, church, and from the Doctor of Ministry Committee.

At the conclusion of the project, the student testified that the series demanded far more time and energy and involved more persons than he ever had imagined. A simple matter such as taking film to be developed can become a major factor, not to mention returning to pick up the photos when they are ready. Who can anticipate a problem with equipment at the processing lab? Ministers who may consider doing such a series should take note of the additional demands and make long-range plans before preaching the first sermon. When others become involved in the preparation of the sermon, their schedules, abilities, and commitments become factors with which the minister must reckon. As a rule, they bring enthusiasm and devotion to the task, yet they may lack the sense of call and urgency that are a part of the minister's life. At the same time, their participation is an occasional matter for them and is somewhat novel, while the pastor views the entire pro-

cess from a quite different perspective; this is his or her call and vocation. Far from being occasional in nature, it is an integral part of life, if not every day, at least every week.

3. Anticipate the rewards of doctrinal preaching. Having said all this, we stress that knowledge of these facts should inspire the minister to greater effort to do doctrinal preaching. Surely each of us desires that our listeners become active participants in the preaching event. We pray for them to think about what we say; to let their minds dwell on the sermon so that they may discover further application of its truths to their lives. That each hearer would see how believing influences doing is our constant prayer. That we would be prepared to handle the response may be an altogether different matter.

As you think about how to prepare a plan for doctrinal preaching, weigh all the options and survey the scene presented in this book. Remember also to avoid too much experimentation. Your congregation, in all likelihood, is accustomed to listening to you in a certain way.[7] Confusion may arise from changing the structure of the sermon too frequently. Similarly, watch practicing creativity for creativity's sake. The best artistry does not call attention to itself.

4. Bear in mind the objectives of doctrinal preaching, and be alert to the presence of such factors. One should do so by keeping in mind the objective for such preaching, both generally and specifically. An overarching plan may be to edify the members of the congregation. Some of the more fruitful research in homiletics currently involves this very area: the way people listen to us. Recent texts, such as those of Fred B. Craddock[8] and David Buttrick,[9] have reminded us of the importance of the listener in the preaching event. These are good reminders, especially for some of the more creative sermon presentations discussed here.

First, to counter the widespread opposition to Christianity. A minister may preach on a doctrine with the specific objective of responding to threats and challenges to Christian doctrine that come from the world around us. Much popular culture has a different view of the origin, nature, and purpose of the human than that revealed in the Bible. Both criticism of the competitor and response to its charges is important.

Second, to present doctrine to refute error. That was the case, apparently, for Paul in writing of the Book of Galatians. Immediately after his

7. See David H. C. Read, *Sent from God: The Enduring Power and Mystery of the Gospel* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1974).
8. Fred B. Craddock, *Preaching* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1985), pp. 84–98.
9. David Buttrick, *Homiletic: Moves and Structures* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1987).

greeting in the first six verses of the book, the apostle expresses surprise that the Galatians have gone astray so quickly after a false gospel. Then he speaks of the nature of the true gospel and declares anathema anyone who preaches any other. That purpose underlay the Book of 3 John as well.

Third, to present your own case in the sense of positive apologetics. Today persons may well accept the idea that Christianity is true; but so are several other religions or worldviews. What do we mean when we say something is true, and why do we claim a uniqueness about the truth of Christianity?

Fourth, to compare doctrines, with other denominations, or with parachurch movements. For example, some church groups understand speaking in tongues as a validation of the experience of salvation. If yours understands it differently, a comparison of the two interpretations makes for a good sermon. In many congregations today, the persons present have come from a variety of denominational backgrounds. Without seeming to demean the alternatives, the positive beliefs of one's church need to be presented cogently.

Fifth, to prepare your congregation to face the advances of some sect or cult. Such groups often target members of churches that have the reputation for not understanding the doctrines of their own churches.

Sixth, to prepare a home Bible study group or a cell group for the formation of a new church congregation. In the initial stages of church planting, the specifics of doctrinal belief are often not heavily emphasized. The closer the group comes to actually organizing into a congregation, the greater is the need for particularizing.

Seventh, to reaffirm beliefs already held. We sometimes forget that those who have held a set of beliefs, even for a long time, are also subject to questions about those beliefs, and need to have them reviewed and reaffirmed.

Eighth, to orient new members and to build up young Christians in the faith. Since, as we argued earlier, doctrines have very practical implications, this is of great importance.

Ninth, to acquaint seekers with your particular church. Community churches often follow the pattern of the "Community Institutes" practiced by Willow Creek Community Church in North Barrington, Illinois. These institutes introduce members and seekers to doctrine in a relaxed, informal class setting.

Tenth, to establish identity if you are new in an area. Residents may ask: "Who are you people?" A doctrinal series will answer for the community to which you belong. Doctrine is held by the body, not by the preacher alone. When the pastor speaks, he gives voice to the church's message.

324

The objective will influence the sermon form as well. A preacher is more likely to be didactic with orientation of new members, and to be more innovative with lifetime members. Conversely, age groups may require different forms. Narrative sermons appeal to children, more dramatic forms communicate with youth. Young adults may respond to propositional sermons, strangely enough, because of their "soundbite" orientation. A pastor may wish to consider the age grouping of the church membership before deciding a strategy for presenting doctrine.

When Paul went to Athens he discovered a city consumed by idolatry. He entered the synagogue and reasoned with the Jews and visited the marketplace to talk with the philosophers. The term translated "reasoned" is the New Testament word that is the root word for "dialogue." Since he was in the company of philosophers, he employed a means of communication with which they were familiar. He even quoted from one of the Stoic philosophers in the middle of his sermon on the God of creation. His desire to communicate may have sprung from his conviction to "become all things to all men . . . in order to win some."

Scripture Index

Genesis
Book of 252
1:1 21
1:26 21
1:26–27 25
3 21
3:15 21
11:17–19 127
12:1 206
18:1–3 209
18:1–15 209
22:1–19 127, 134
25:8 206
37:1–50:26 212
37–50 130
38 210
45:8 130
50:19–20 130, 212, 215

Exodus
Book of 204
3 99
3:1–9 174, 175
3:1–22 177
3:5 154
3:5–6 143
3:9 175, 177
3:13–15 177
3:14 175
3:22 175
7:8–10 221
7:11–12 221
19:1–9 194
20:2 34
32:1 209

Leviticus
11:44–45 27
26:12 253

Joshua
2:1–6 127

Judges
6:11 209
13:24–16:31 206

Ruth
Book of 179

1 Samuel
3 99
10:11 222
28:7–25 206

2 Samuel
12:1–14 221
12:15–23 64

1 Kings
1:18 118
8:27 144
18:24 118
18:38 118
18:39 118

2 Kings
2:1–18 222
2:13–14 222
6 144
6:24–7:20 64

Nehemiah
8:1–10:39 194
8:10 191

Psalms
27:1 172
31:7 27
40:16 27
46 231
66 118
78 118
100:3 154

Ecclesiastes
Book of 252

Song of Solomon
Book of 169

Isaiah
6:1 209
6:1–5 99
6:1–7 143
6:1–8 177
44:6–23 222
55 143, 145, 160
55:8–9 143–44
55:8–13 63
61:1–2 67
61:10 27

Jeremiah
1:1–10 177
1:4 99
7:1–8:22 206
13:1–11 222
18:1–17 222
19:1–15 222
19:10–15 222
20:9 62
37:17 62

Lamentations
Book of 74

Ezekiel
Book of 179, 252
1:10 205
4:1–3 221–222
5:1–17 222
12:1–16 222

Hosea
Book of 193, 222
1:1 99

Chapter 10

How to Stand Perfect in the Sight of God

Romans 4:5

Larry Moyer

Larry Moyer began his ministry of evangelism in 1973 when he founded EvanTell, an evangelistic organization based in Dallas, Texas. He has traveled throughout the country speaking to adults and young people in churches, areawide crusades, camps, Bible conferences, and conferences on evangelism. He has also held crusades outside the United States.

346

The story is told of an immigrant who enlisted in the United States Army during World War II. Being a foreigner, he had great difficulty with the English language. One day as the troop prepared for inspection, the men realized that unless they gave this soldier some help, he would flunk, simply due to his difficulty with English. So one of the men said to him, "Now look. In a few days, the general is going to come around, and unless you are extremely careful, you could fail inspection simply due to your problems with the language. Let me tell you the questions he'll probably ask and the answers you need to be prepared to give.

"The first question he'll undoubtedly ask is, 'How long have you been in the army?' When he asks that, simply answer, 'Two years.' The second question he will undoubtedly ask is, 'How old are you?' When he asks that, answer, 'Twenty-two.' The third question he will undoubtedly ask is, 'Have you been receiving good food and good treatment?' When he asks that, tell him, 'Both.' Two, Twenty-two, and Both. As long as you can remember those three answers you should have no difficulty. But whatever you do, don't forget: Two, Twenty-two, and Both."

ILL

Catches Attention

- Easy for non-Christian to relate to (esp. men w/ NS bkgrd)
- The kind of joke unbelievers are used to telling + hearing ("this speaker is like me")

327

The day of the inspection came and, sure enough, the general did ask three questions. The only problem was, he did not ask them in the order in which the soldier was prepared to answer them. Instead, he said, "I'd like to ask you a few questions. First, how old are you?" The soldier answered, "Two years." The general looked at him and said, "Well, how long have you been in the army?" and the soldier answered, "Twenty-two years." The general looked at him and said, "What do you take me for—an idiot or a fool?" And the soldier answered, "Both."

I am certain all of us are delighted that we did not stand in the shoes of that poor soldier when it came to the day of inspection. Yet each of us is keenly aware that we are going to participate in a far greater inspection, because we are going to stand before the Architect of the universe, the God of everything living and everything not living, and there give account of ourselves. Hebrews 9:27 says that "man is destined to die once, and after that to face judgment."

It has been my experience that when you mention a day of judgment to people, their thoughts are many and varied. Some look forward to it, and others seem to fear it. Some feel hopeful, while others feel hopeless. Some think they stand a chance, and others wonder if they have any chance at all. But for the most part, when you mention the day of judgment to people, their thoughts are not pleasant. They dread the idea of standing before God, knowing their life will be as an open book before him. For that reason, most people get about as excited about the day of judgment as they get about their dentist appointments.

Some time ago, a teenager called the dentist's office and told the secretary, "I need to make an appointment." The secretary answered, "The dentist is out of town. Can you call back again?" The teenager responded, "I'd be delighted to. When will he be out of town again?"

That is the way most feel about the day of judgment. It is not something they are particularly looking forward to. Yet, in one verse of Scripture God has an encouraging word to give every person here. Because in that one verse, he tells you how you can stand as perfect before him as his own Son stands—not five

years from now or fifty years from now, but now, right now, you can stand as perfect before God as his own Son stands. That verse is Romans 4:5. To understand what God is saying in this verse and why he is saying it, you have to understand that there are three questions God is *not* asking you—the very questions most people are convinced he *is* asking.

The first question that Romans 4:5 makes clear that God is not asking is, "How many good works have you done?" Most are of the opinion that being accepted by God is based on what you do. Therefore, the more you increase your good works down here, the more you increase your chances up there. Ask someone, "Do you think you're going to heaven?" and he'll likely reply, "I'm working toward it." But the first question that Romans 4:5 makes clear that God is not asking is, "How many good works have you done?" If you will notice, the first phrase says, "to the man who does not work. . . ." God does not accept anyone on the basis of how many good works he or she has performed.

God even tells you why he cannot accept you on that basis. Glance back to verse 4. "Now when a man works, his wages are not credited to him as a gift, but as an obligation." If God were to accept you on the basis of your good works, all he would be doing is paying a debt, giving you something he owes you. What the Bible is saying is that God will not be in debt to any individual. God is not about to owe you anything. Therefore, he is not asking, "How many good works have you done?"

Let's suppose that you own the most spacious mansion in the state of Texas. It is a three-story house with a two-story basement. It has carpet one-inch thick throughout the whole house. It has the latest in modern furniture. It has a fireplace and a chandelier in every room. It has a bowling alley, a tennis court, and a swimming pool all in the basement! It has trees in the front yard whose limbs look like they would touch heaven. It has an acre of grass on all sides of the house.

Let's suppose that I come to you and ask, "May I come and live with you?" You say, "Sure, Larry. I'd be glad to have you. All I ask is that you do these ten things," and you give me a list of ten things that includes everything from loving my wife—which

I do—to loving my mother-in-law—which I'm *trying* to do. Nevertheless, I do those ten things. At the end of the time, you let me into your house. All you'd be doing is paying a debt, giving me something you owe me. What the Bible is saying is, if God were to accept you on the basis of your good works, all he would be doing is paying a debt, giving you something he owes you. What the Scriptures are saying is that God will not be in debt to any man. God is not about to owe you anything.

So the first question that Romans 4:5 makes clear God is not asking is, "How many good works have you done?"

Romans 4:5 makes clear that there is a second question God is not asking you. Not only is he not asking how many good works you have performed; the second question he is not asking is, "How well have you behaved?" If you asked some people, "Do you think you're going to heaven?" one of the first things they'll say is, "I think I stand a better chance than a lot of people!" If you ask, "Why do you say that?" they reply, "Because I've never been in jail, I don't stick my nose in other people's business, and I try to do what is right." The only problem with that is that God is not asking, "How well have you behaved?" If you will notice, the middle of verse 5 says, "but trusts God who justifies the wicked. . . ." It's a matter of believing, not a matter of behaving—and the two are as different as day is from night.

Notice again, God tells you why he cannot accept you on the basis of your behavior. No matter how well you behave, you are still "ungodly." Look again at the middle of verse 5. We think we know what "ungodly" means, but then again we're not sure. For years I heard the word *epistle* but I could not figure out for the life of me what an epistle was. Finally, I concluded that an epistle was probably the wife of an apostle. I mean, that made a lot of sense to me. Here's Mr. Apostle and here's his wife Mrs. Epistle. We have that same kind of problem with the word *ungodly*. But all that word *ungodly* means is that there have been times when you've been irreverent and you have not lived as righteously as God says you ought to live.

You're probably thinking, "Now, Larry, hold everything just a minute. I am not convinced that's true." The reason you're not

convinced that's true is that when you consider how ungodly you've been, you compare yourself with the worst criminal you've ever heard of, and you come out looking like an angel. But when God considers how ungodly you've been, he compares you to the most perfect individual who ever lived, his Son Jesus Christ. Now, his Son never told a lie; you already have a pocketful of those. His Son never had one wrong thought; you average a minimum of two a day. His Son never even hated his enemies; you have times when you can't stand the person you're married to! It doesn't matter how you slice it. He knows everything you've done. He knows every word you've spoken. He knows every thought you've had. All he can say about you is, "Ungodly."

If you go back in the pages of history, you'll find there was once a wicked emperor named Dionysius. One day, he discovered that near to where he lived was a cave shaped in the form of an inverted funnel with an opening right at the earth's surface. Dionysius decided to use that cave as a workshop for his slaves. He would put all the slaves into the cave and then go up and put his ear to the top of it. Inside were the slaves uttering all kinds of harsh and cruel things about him. The next day they were brought before him to hear everything they had said repeated to them. For many of them, it cost them severe torture or their lives.

Obviously, God is a good King, not a wicked one. At the same time, he knows every thought you've had. He knows every word you've spoken. He knows everything you've done, and all he can say about you is, "Wicked." Even your best does not impress him; therefore, he is not asking, "How well have you behaved?"

You say, "Then, Larry, if it's a matter of believing and not behaving, what does 'believe' mean?" Before we examine that word, there's one other word we have to examine. That is the word *justifies*. Notice that the middle of verse 5 says, "but trusts God who justifies the wicked. . . ." Now all that word *justifies* means is to declare you the opposite of what you are right now. In other words, you have told a pocketful of lies; God would like to declare you a person who has never told one. You have had one wrong thought after another; God would like to declare you

a person who has never had a wrong thought. You've had times when you hated your best friend; God would like to declare you a person who has never known hate.

You ask, "How can he do that?" There is only one way he can. Sin cannot be passed over. Sin must be punished, and the punishment for sin is death. But the reason God can declare you righteous is that somebody else, his Son, has taken that punishment and died in your place.

Some of us remember reading back in 1974 about the new twenty-four-story bank building in São Paulo, Brazil, that burned to the ground. Several air conditioners on the twelfth floor had not been wired properly. There were 600 employees in the building at the time; 188 of them died. One-third died when they either jumped or fell to their death. One-fourth died when they went to the top floor to escape the flames and, instead, were trapped by them. The reason even more people did not die was an elevator operator. She had been told to get out of that building and forget about the elevator, but she refused to do so. Instead, she kept going up and down the building, bringing as many as twenty-five people to safety every time. She went up to get a fourth load, and when the elevator hit the twentieth floor, the power shut off. The next day, they found her charred body lying by the door of the elevator. She saved people by dying for them. She died in their place.

What the Bible is saying is, Christ saved you by dying for you. He died in your place and arose again the third day. Therefore, the reason God can declare you righteous is because somebody else, his Son, has taken the punishment. All you have to do is believe.

Now, quite honestly, we use that word *believe* for everything and anything under the sun. For example, a husband says to his wife, "Believe me, I will be in from golfing by three o'clock." What she doesn't realize is that he means three o'clock A.M., not P.M. A wife says to her husband, "Believe me, the dress was on sale." Then she tells him what the sale price was! A child says to his parents, "Believe me, I did my homework." But, apparently

after he did it, he made an airplane out of it and somebody hijacked it.

We use that word *believe* for everything and anything under the sun, but the word *believe* in the Bible means two things. It means "to accept something as being true," and then it means "to trust." For example, of all the people who ever walked across Niagara Falls on a tightrope, the most spectacular had to be the Great Blondin. The first time he crossed was on June 30, 1859. The next year, he walked across on stilts, walked across with his hands and feet chained, and even carried a stove across on which he cooked an omelet at the halfway point. Now that really fascinates me. I can't cook an omelet when I'm *not* on a tightrope, and he did it on a tightrope. His most spectacular feat of all was carrying his manager on his back across the tightrope.

I've been told that one time the Great Blondin walked up to somebody who had seen him do all these things and asked him, "Would you like me to take you across?" The man "split"! All he left behind was a cloud of dust. Frankly, he may have believed the Great Blondin could do it, but he did not trust him to do it. When the Bible uses the word *believe,* it means to accept as true that God the Father will declare you righteous because his Son took your punishment and trust his Son as your only way to heaven—not trusting yourself and what you've done to get yourself there, but trusting Christ and what he did. But it's a matter of believing; it is not a matter of behaving. Therefore, God is not asking, "How well have you behaved?"

If you will notice, Romans 4:5 makes it clear that there is a third question God is not asking you. Not only is he not asking, "How many good works have you done?" Not only is he not asking, "How well have you behaved?" the third question he is not asking is, "How long will you last?

Some time ago I was talking with a businessman in Del Rio, Texas. He admitted to me that he was not a Christian, so I asked him, "Well, do you understand the gospel?" He said, "Yes, I do. Christ died for me and Christ arose. If I put my trust in him, he will save me." So, I said to him, "Then why don't you do that?" His answer was, "Because I don't know how long I could last."

My response was, "The interesting thing is, that is one question God is not asking you." Notice, the end of verse 5 says, "his faith is credited as righteousness." That word *credited* means "to reckon or credit something to your account."

Let's suppose there's a big sheet of paper with a line right down the middle. One side represents your sins. The other side represents Christ's righteousness. All the Bible is saying is that the moment you put your trust in Christ, God takes his Son's righteousness and puts it on your account.

Years ago there was a well-known preacher by the name of Harry Ironside. One time he was visiting a sheep ranch in Texas where he saw one of the most peculiar animals he'd ever seen. It looked like it had two heads instead of one, four front feet instead of two, and four back feet as well. Then the rancher explained what had happened. He said, "We had a sheep bear a lamb, and the lamb died. Then we had another sheep bear a lamb, and the mother died. We needed a mother for that lamb. The other mother would not accept it. She knew it was not her own. So, we took the skin of her dead lamb, and we draped it over the living lamb. As soon as we put it in the pen, she walked over to it and seemed to say, 'That's mine.' " What the Bible is saying is, the moment you put your trust in Christ, God takes his Son's righteousness and clothes you with it. Therefore, when God looks at you, he does not see your sins; he sees only the righteousness of his Son Jesus Christ.

Therefore, it does not matter if you live five years or fifty years; you do good, pretty good, or very good; you will never be any more righteous before God than you are the day that you trust Christ.

Now, this is not to say you ought not to live a good life, you ought not to do good things. The Bible has much to say about a good life and good works as the distinguishing marks of a believer. But they cannot increase your righteousness before God. You are never any more righteous before God than you are the day that you trust Christ and God takes his Son's righteousness and clothes you with it. Therefore, he is not asking, "How long will you last?"

I know of a man who was once approached with the question, "When you stand before the Lord, what do you think is the first question he's going to ask you?" And the man responded, "I don't think he'll ask a thing! I think he'll just look at me and say, 'He's mine.' " The truth of the matter is, when God looks upon you right now, he either sees your sin because you've never trusted Christ, or he sees his Son's righteousness because you have. If he sees his Son's righteousness, all he will say is, "he belongs to me." Therefore, he is not asking, "How long will you last?"

How to stand perfect in the sight of God? The answer is simple: Trust Jesus Christ as your only way to heaven. God is not asking, "How many good works have you done?" It is to the man who does not work. God is not asking, "How well have you behaved?" It's a matter of believing, not behaving. God is not asking, "How long will you last?" The moment you trust Christ, he clothes you with his Son's righteousness, and you stand perfect in his sight.

How to stand perfect in the sight of God? The answer is so simple that there are millions who are missing it: trust Jesus Christ. We by nature want to work to get it, behave to deserve it, and try in order to keep it. So, when God wants to do something simply out of his own goodness, it's extremely difficult for us to receive it.

Some time ago, I flew to Indiana for some meetings. When I got off the plane, the pastor who greeted me said, "There is a lady driving a hundred miles to see you tomorrow morning. She says she just has to talk to you. If you remember, the first time you were at our church, you spent hours trying to get this woman to see the simple plan of salvation." I clearly remembered the woman. I had spent whole afternoons trying to get her to see it.

She came the next morning. When she walked up to me after the service, she said, "I just had to come to tell you that I'm saved." I looked at her and said, "I don't know who is the most excited—you, the Lord, the angels, or me—but I do know that I'm glad to hear that. Now tell me a little bit about it."

She said, "Well, it happened six months after you and I talked." She continued to explain what she meant by that. Then I said to her, "Well, look, just for my own benefit in helping others to

understand the gospel, is there anything I may have said that finally helped you to see it?" She said, "Yes, in fact, there was. You kept saying over, and over, and over, and over, and over, 'It's too simple. That's why you can't get it. It's too simple. If God said to you, 'To get to heaven, you've got to go to church three Sundays, you have to be baptized four times, you have to take five sacraments, and you have to live a good life for six years,' you would go to church three Sundays, you would be baptized four times, you would take five sacraments, and you would live a good life for six years. But when God says, 'Will you trust Christ and be declared righteous in the sight of God?' that is so simple you can't get it.' "

She said, "Six months later, it dawned on me what you meant. I trusted Christ, and I know I'm saved."

Frankly, you don't have to wait six months. You can trust Jesus Christ this moment and be declared perfect in the sight of God. For the moment you do, he makes you a promise, and he puts it in no more than twenty words: "However, to the man who does not work but trusts God who justifies the wicked, his faith is credited as righteousness."

SERMON

212

Commentary

Expository sermons and evangelistic preaching sometimes make a difficult marriage. The passages that ask the right questions appear to give the wrong answers. For example, "What must I do to inherit eternal life?" asked by a Jewish theologian comes up with the answer "Keep the law with regard to God and neighbor" (Luke 10:25–28). The preacher must spend quite a bit of time explaining why Jesus' answer was an impossible requirement to fulfill and, after that, introduce the gospel which isn't clearly given in the passage. Other passages which explain the gospel often do so in contexts that raise questions modern audiences don't care much about or are separated by paragraphs from where the biblical writer brings up the question.

Larry Moyer provides an evangelistic sermon from Romans 4:5 that handles both Bible thought and the audience with integrity. Three factors in this sermon make it worth studying. First, the sermon is fashioned for non-Christians. Its inductive development is ideal for an audience indifferent or antagonistic to a direct presentation of the gospel. The evangelist starts with the assumptions of the listener before he gets to

the message of God. After discussing questions God is not asking, Moyer then presents what God is asking and God's answer.

The sermon, therefore, presupposes that thoughtful unbelievers have questions that must be surfaced before they will trust Jesus Christ. Not only does the outline develop around three key questions non-Christians have but in the development of the sermon Moyer poses at least twenty-six other questions.

The sermon also relates to non-Christians by its use of humor. Research shows that nonchurched people feel that churches are gloomy and preachers constantly talk about money and death. Although Moyer talks candidly about the day of judgment, he gets to that topic with humor; and having introduced it, he uses humor again before assuring us that God offers an encouraging word about that dreaded day. An evangelist does not dress in sackcloth and carry a sandwich board warning of doom. He wants to get people to interact with him. Humor helps a listener to accept ideas that otherwise may be hard to hear.

A second factor worth noting about this message: it is clear. Obscurity builds a wall between a speaker and the audience. An evangelist sins against his hearers when he fails to tell them in terms they can understand what God's Good News is. Jargon and unclear thought destroy life and hope and make God sound as boring as a test pattern on television. Moyer states his three questions at the beginning and the end and in the middle of each major point. His transitions before his second and third points and before his conclusion review what has been said and anticipate what follows. The sermon, although inductive, flows clearly.

Moyer's clarity is also enhanced by his generous use of illustrations. The sermon is not an abstract discussion of soteriology and *sola fides,* but the presentation of the gospel in easily understood pictures. Medieval scholars argued that universals have objective reality in the mind of God, but in the minds of ordinary men and women they are as exciting as a

yawn unless captured in an illustration. Examples make generalities understandable and believable. In this sermon illustrations serve several functions: they explain, prove and apply the ideas, raise and answer objections, and infuse warmth and interest into the message.

Moyer also touches curiosity. It is the thrust of his introduction. "To understand what God is saying in this verse (Rom. 4:5) and why he is saying it, you have to understand that there are three questions God is *not* asking you—the very questions most people are convinced he *is* asking."

I. God is *not* asking "How many good works have you done?"
   A. Romans 4:5 says "to the man who does not work. . . ."
   B. Human experience shows God is not asking how many good works you have done.
II. God is *not* asking "How well have you behaved?"
   A. Romans 4:5 says "but trusts God who justifies the wicked. . . ." God calls for *belief,* not good behavior.
III. God is *not* asking "How long will you last?"
   A. Romans 4:5 says "his faith is *credited* as righteousness" which shows when one believes he belongs to God.

The idea of the sermon also emerges clearly: To stand perfect in the sight of God on the day of judgment, trust Jesus Christ and nothing else.

A third important factor about this sermon: it is essentially biblical. Its content is derived from a single sentence of Scripture. While the major questions do not come from the text or even the context, the answers do come both by direct statement and necessary implication from the verse.

Although expository sermons usually draw both their ideas and development from the passage, they cannot always do so. Sometimes for the sake of listeners, the preacher approaches a text at an angle different from the biblical writer. Moyer uses the context of Romans 4:5 only once to help prove a

point, but he does not appeal to the context in any other way. Yet, the ultimate test of exposition must be: "Does the content of the sermon come from the text or is it imposed on the text?" While Moyer's questions were not Paul's questions as he wrote Romans 4, Moyer's answers which form the bulk of the sermon do reflect the apostle's answers.

How long does it usually take you to prepare a message?

A minimum of twenty hours.

How long did it take you to prepare the message you submitted?

Roughly about twenty hours.

How long are your sermons normally?

Thirty minutes. I try to keep evangelistic messages to a maximum of thirty minutes. They should be short.

What passages do you think make effective evangelistic presentations?

John 3:16, John 5:24, Isaiah 53:6, Romans 3:10–18, Luke 19:1–10, Romans 5:6–8, Ephesians 2:1–10, John 3:1–15, and Luke 18:9–14 are very effective. In developing these passages, however, the art of evangelistic preaching is not only knowing what to put in, but knowing what to leave out. In an evangelistic sermon you can't go as deeply into the text as you might with an audience of believers. You have to pull out what is significant and of interest to an unchurched audience. Evangelists have been accused of ignoring the text. We've got to deal with the text, but we can't deal with it as thoroughly.

334

You use illustrations well. How do you come up with them?

There are two keys to getting illustrations: (1) You never go around without 3×5 cards in your pocket. This develops the drive to look for them. (2) You have to set a goal for yourself. My personal goal is ten a week. I never go under it, often I go over it. I get a minimum of 520 a year. You've got to stay committed.

What sources do you find most profitable?

My main source comes from reading. I read everything I can get my hands on. I read at least two books a month. I find *Time* magazine useful, especially for an evangelist because it tells life the way non-Christians see it. *Reader's Digest* is also helpful.

What was the greatest challenge for you in approaching the biblical text in this sermon?

Making it interesting to an unsaved person. I felt those three questions (How many good works have you done? How well have you behaved? How long will you last?) would appeal to some unconverted.

Do you often preach from a single verse?

The smaller the unit of thought the better for non-Christians. I preach many one-verse sermons, but that's not my only method. Sometimes the passage dictates that you must use several verses to get the entire idea across.

Comment on your use of humor. Do you use it often?

I don't think I've ever preached a nonhumorous evangelistic sermon. Once I step up to the pulpit I have thirty seconds to get attention (at least that is the pressure I put upon myself). Humor helps that. Humor shows that the evangelist knows how to laugh. You must use humor for communication's sake, not for humor's sake. In other words, you don't use a series of jokes and tack the gospel on at the end.

What other elements do you put into an evangelistic sermon?

Illustrations. On the average, I use ten illustrations per message. Enthusiasm! You have to be enthusiastic. You won't sell someone something you're not sold on yourself. Repetition. An evangelistic message is more repetitious than a normal message, because you are usually talking to men and women not accustomed to sitting and listening to

sermons. The main idea must be stated and restated and then stated again. Simple organization. Although you're dealing with profound thoughts, the audience must be able to follow you. The best evangelistic messages are the simplest messages. Authority. Non-Christians are unimpressed with phrases like "Paul said it." So I stick to saying "God or the Bible said it." This gives the message authority. An evangelistic sermon has a clear and simple purpose—to inform and to invite. It has to be life-revealing. You not only exegete the Bible; you exegete the congregation. It has to be direct. At times you stop saying "we" and start saying "you." "You have to trust Christ." "You are here tonight, and you are lost."

If you had one comment to give to a young preacher, what would it be?

Listen and learn from preachers you respect. Old preachers have more to teach than old sermons. Charles Spurgeon's approach to sermon making has helped me more than his sermons.

sermons as a group, I guess I fail in my transitions most often. I don't take time to build a bridge between my major points, to review or go back to my central idea. The sermon is clear to me as I preach it, and I assume it's also clear to the listeners. Listening to a sermon on tape three or four weeks later, I discover that the link between the points got lost in the preaching.

Does that discourage you?

Yes and no. Yes, in that you'd think if you teach homiletics, you'd get it right yourself, and I don't always. No—sermons are not literary masterpieces. They are living communication, and when you concentrate on getting something across to another person, there's a roughness to it. Battles for clarity never stay won and, while I strive to improve, I can't let reality defeat me or I'd never preach again.

Do you always preach without notes?

Yes, and we teach our students at Denver Seminary to do that. Research shows that a very limited amount of notes doesn't get in the way, but a couple of pages of notes hinders communication. So, I don't use them except for quotes or material like that.

How do you do that?

I think the secret lies in clear, full-sentence outlining. A preacher needs to "see" his flow of thought not as a series of individual points, but as a complete unit. If you know what you want to say and it hangs together logically or psychologically, then preaching resembles an animated conversation. If you're an expository preacher, the text often serves as "notes." After all, that's where you found the sermon. If a communicator trusts his or her mind, it's not that difficult and it adds to the directness of the sermon.

A final question. What advice would you give to a young minister?

You can't do better than Paul's counsel to Timothy. "Devote yourself to the public reading of Scripture, to preaching and to teaching." As you grow as a person, your sermons grow, too. But it's also crucial to grow as a preacher. As people see your progress, they will respect you and respond to your ministry.

Chapter 2

Thou Shalt Not Commit Adultery

Exodus 20:14

Erwin W. Lutzer

Erwin W. Lutzer is senior pastor of Moody Memorial Church in Chicago. Books he has authored include *Failure: The Back Door to Success, How in This World Can I Be Holy?, Dorie: The Girl Nobody Loved, Exploding the Myths That Could Destroy America,* and *Pastor to Pastor: Tackling Problems of the Pulpit.*

* Indicates powerful one line quotes from adulterers or others

Sermon

In his book *The Myth of the Greener Grass* J. Allan Peterson tells the story of a woman who was at lunch with eleven other people. They had been studying French together while their children were in a nursery school. One woman asked the group, "How many of you have been faithful to your husbands throughout your marriage?" Only one woman at the table raised her hand.

That evening, this woman told her husband the story and added that she, herself, had not raised her hand.

"But I have been faithful," she assured him.

"Then why didn't you raise your hand?"

"I was ashamed."[1]

Ashamed of fidelity! In the past, the burden of shame fell on those who broke their vows but in our society, that has been changed. We've all seen television interviews of people who freely confess to having affairs. It seems to be the modern, sophisticated thing to do. Only killjoys still believe in fidelity.

1. J. Allan Peterson, *The Myth of the Greener Grass* (Wheaton, Ill.: Tyndale, 1983), p. 17.

Raises need by exploring how listeners are tempted

Pornography sends out a not-so-subtle message to our society: have as many relationships as you want, with anyone you want, just as long as they are pleasurable and "don't hurt anybody." Most of the sex in movies is not between married people. The impression given is those who live in the fast lane are the only ones who know what life is all about. Everyone else is out of step with society.

ILL: scriptwriter

One man who writes scripts for television says that his goal is to get people to laugh at adultery, homosexuality, and incest. He says, "If you can get them to laugh at these things, it breaks down their resistance to them." One recent survey suggests that perhaps as many as one-half of all marriage partners, at some time or another, have an affair.

Bridge: "People are all doing it — why shouldn't you?"

Subject: Proposition proved

Yet, the seventh commandment says, "Thou shalt not commit adultery." Why did God give this command? Isn't this unrealistic, considering the strong sexual desire that all of us experience? But even in the twentieth century, there are some valid reasons why we should obey this command. Let's consider some of them.

SERMON

34

Restatement

MPI

First, we should not commit adultery because God says we shouldn't!

Restated Complement (not restated subject) answers objections

Already I can hear a chorus of objections to the idea that we should do something (or not do something) just "because God says so!" After all, we live in a day and age when everyone is educated and we should be able to make our own decisions on these matters. How can God saying, "No," make it wrong? Mark Twain railed in anger against a God who would give us such a strong sexual drive only to limit its expression to one person within the marriage bond.

"God is unfair" accusation voiced

ILL: Mark Twain

SP "A" begun (deductively proved)

"God is not a cosmic killjoy."

But, of course, there was a reason why God gave this commandment. He created us in such a way that we are unable to have sex outside of marriage without guilt and emotional tension. Adultery destroys us on the inside; it brings about an inner death.

Scriptural support

SP "A" The Bible specifically teaches that the sex act joins two people together—body, soul, and spirit. "Do you not know that he who unites himself with a prostitute is one with her in body? For it is said, 'The two will become one flesh' " (1 Cor. 6:16). Even a casual relationship with a prostitute means that there is more than just the joining of two bodies. Sex is more than a biological act; there is an inner psychological bond that develops between two people during the sex act. When sex is practiced outside of the protection of a marriage covenant, there is inevitable hurt and the bruising of the emotions. Sexual immorality of all kinds is a blow aimed at the heart of self-respect and personhood.

Contradicted by the following illustration

ILL: 16 yr old

Sex is bonding

I once counseled a sixteen-year-old woman who had been seduced by an older married man who was the father of several children. When the affair, which lasted several months, was discovered, he blamed it all on her. She had been led along by the sweet, deceptive words of this older man. Who can understand the rejection she felt when it all blew up, and he refused to take any responsibility for it? Yet, interestingly, she said, "That happened three years ago and I still can't get him out of my mind. I'd go to bed with him today if he were to ask me to." Why would this young woman still feel such an attachment to a man who had betrayed her? Psychologically, she was feeling the effects of the "one flesh" relationship. That's the nature of illicit sexuality.

ILL lacking here as she doesn't seem damaged & hurt!

SERMON

35

Don't misunderstand: to have sex is not equivalent to marriage. Marriage is protected by a covenant; it involves a promise to live together "in sickness and in health till death do us part." The covenant constitutes the marriage, sex completes it. But when there is sex without a covenant, there is a psychological "joining together" of two people that has emotional repercussions. The result of such an affair is either guilt or a hardened conscience.

SP "B" (it seems) Clarifies a possible misunderstanding

We've all met people who tell us that they have an affair that is both loving and caring. One woman told me that she lived with an alcoholic husband and if it wasn't for a relationship she had with another man, she would have lost her sanity. Another adulterer said, "I have found an oasis, and now you're telling me to go back to the desert."

SP "C" (it seems)

ILL: Helped

ILL: Oasis

There's no question that there can be loving adulterous relationships. People have often "found each other" and discover levels of communication that they've not had in their own marriages. Yes, some of these relationships are loving and meaning-

Answers another objection here

388

ful. The problem is an adulterer has to break at least five of the Ten Commandments to have this "meaningful relationship."

Let's consider the commandments an adulterer breaks. The first says, "Thou shalt have no other gods before me." An adulterer says that there is a relationship that is more important than the relationship with God. What about the command, "Thou shalt not bear false witness"? An adulterer breaks his vow, and usually lies to cover his sin. Another commandment is "Thou shalt not steal." When David sinned with Bathsheba, Nathan the prophet basically said that he had stolen another man's wife. The last commandment says, "Thou shalt not covet." Adultery begins with a coveting heart. Finally, we return to the seventh commandment which says explicitly, "Thou shalt not commit adultery."

Perhaps now we can understand why adultery is such a serious sin. One must shake his fist in God's face in order to have the relationship. When God said, "Thou shalt not commit adultery," it was not because he was against sex, but because he believed sex was so good, he wanted to protect it from being misused.

For those who have been involved in sexual sin, there is hope. God can forgive the past, cleanse the conscience, and give the adulterer a new beginning. The scars may still be there, but the guilt and frustration will be gone. For the God who gave the command is the same God who is able to forgive.

Second, we should not commit adultery because of the consequences. Sexual sin is the most deceptive temptation we can face. It promises so much, but in the end is bitter. Our desires tell us that they must be fulfilled regardless of the cost. A popular song says, in effect, "I'll fulfill my passions today and deal with the devil tomorrow." We've all known people who have said they would have this relationship at any cost. One man said, "I'd rather go to hell with my mistress than to heaven with my wife."

What are the consequences that come to those participating in an adulterous relationship? First of all, there is an inner destruction, a feeling of guilt. No matter how well the sin is hidden, it is always accompanied by a nagging conscience. One girl, who was a virgin until the age of twenty-nine but became angry at God because he didn't give her a husband, had a relationship with a man she didn't even respect. After it was over, the words *Now you are defiled* came to mind, almost as if from Satan. Illicit relationships promise like a god, but pay like the devil. This explains why those who practice immorality are caught between conflicting emotions. On the one hand, there is exhilarating pleasure; but on the other, the nagging knowledge that one is living a lie. For some, the guilt is overwhelming. No matter how well the affair is concealed, no matter how many precautions are taken so that it will never be discovered, it always is there in the mind. When the telephone rings, the adulterer wonders, "Does someone know?" And when friends come for a visit, the adulterer wonders whether, perhaps, they know the secret. Even in the most holy moments, when an adulterer wants to worship God in church, the memory of his sin flashes through his mind. As David said, "My sin is always before me."

But there is also the outer destruction, the hurt when the affair is finally discovered. The sense of rejection experienced by the partner who has been betrayed and the mistrust that accompanies it are unbelievable. Many people find it difficult to regain their own sense of self-worth when they know that their partner has been cheating. In one sense, adultery is one of the most selfish sins. However gratifying it may be to the adulterer, to those around him and to his family in particular the hurt not only is deep; but it may last forever.

God gave this commandment for the stability of the family. Every child grows up wanting parents who love each other. There is nothing as debilitating in the life of a child than to know that his father has found someone more attractive. Recent studies indicate that children whose parents are divorced experience much more hurt than originally realized.

One day on a talk show, someone asked me, "Don't you think that someone whose wife is in a wheelchair, and therefore unable to have sexual relations . . . don't you think that in a case like that it would be all right for a man to have an affair?" The hidden presupposition behind this question is that our passions must be fulfilled at any cost. In our society, controlling passion is an un-

pardonable sin. Every sensual desire of the body that screams for gratification must be fulfilled.

No one can justify illicit sexuality. If you make exceptions for such a person, then what about singles, widows, and those that are divorced? Our passions lie—it is not true that they must always be fulfilled. There are thousands of Christians sitting in jail today because of their faith in Jesus Christ who have no opportunity for sexual intimacy with wives or husbands. Yet they manage even in the midst of such repressive circumstances. Henry Bowman said, "No really intelligent person will burn down a cathedral to fry an egg, even if he is ravenously hungry." The cathedral of marriage is so special, no one has the right to burn it down just because he happens to have met someone who fulfills his needs or is sexually attractive.

Ultimately, we are answerable to God. However much sin may be hidden, it will eventually be brought out into the open. "Marriage should be honored by all, and the marriage bed kept pure, for God will judge the adulterer and all the sexually immoral" (Heb. 13:4). One reason we should live in sexual purity is because it is the command of God. Second, there are bitter consequences that come to those who flaunt their freedom. And finally, there is the compensation that comes from successfully resisting temptation.

A blessed promise comes to those who resist sexual temptation. When speaking about lust, Christ said, "If your right eye causes you to sin, gouge it out and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to be thrown into hell. And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to go into hell" (Matt. 5:29–30).

Christ here refers to the two parts of the body that are often involved in sexual arousal. The first is the eye which, particularly for men, causes sexual desire. The second is the hand; women are often stimulated with tender caresses. Jesus says in no uncertain terms: "Whatever you have to do to take away the stumbling blocks—do it!" It's worth it!

He says, "It is better." The handicapped person, with only one eye and one hand, is better off than the person who is whole but has attracted the displeasure of God. It is better to be sexually frustrated and lonely than to bear the scars of infidelity. The person who obeys the commandment retains his dignity and self-worth. He escapes the inner conflict and guilt associated with low-commitment sex. But more importantly, he keeps his fellowship with God. "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God" (Matt. 5:8).

Sexual temptation gives us one of the clearest opportunities to prove our love for God. We're not asked to sacrifice our son on an altar as Abraham did (though God may take one of our children in death to test our faith). But there are other ways that God has of testing us—and for many, it is sexual temptation. At stake is whether we value our relationship with God more than we do the fulfillment of our own desires.

What about the person who has committed adultery in the past, or is involved in a relationship now? One of the most accurate barometers of the human heart is how we respond when sin is pointed out to us. There are many people who, when caught in adultery, simply tell one lie after another trying to hold on to their cover.

There was a man whose wife suspected that he was committing adultery, but she didn't have conclusive evidence. Yes, he admitted that he had been with another woman, that he had even been up to her apartment, but "they hadn't done anything." To prove it, he put his hand in the air and said, "If I'm lying, may God smite me dead."

But lying he was! Later, he was forced to admit that he had indeed put God to the test—if the Lord had taken him up on that oath, he would have died in his tracks. Yet, for all that, when I asked his wife whether or not he asked for her forgiveness, she said, "Well, sort of. . . ." In a roundabout way, he said he was sorry, but he still wouldn't face his sin directly.

That's hardheartedness! It's one thing to sin; it's quite another to keep justifying yourself once it is pointed out. Peter and Judas

both denied Christ. One repented and the other refused to face his sin and committed suicide.

David eventually confessed his sin, but it took several months before he stopped pretending. Eventually, he was able to say, "Blessed is he whose transgressions are forgiven, whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man whose sin the LORD does not count against him, and in whose spirit there is no deceit" (Ps. 32:1)

God gave us the commandment "Thou shalt not commit adultery." We should never be ashamed of believing that he knows best. And with the command comes the divine enablement to live up to this standard. Blessed are those who are not ashamed to obey his Word.

Commentary

While biblical sermons usually deal with a paragraph or several paragraphs of Scripture, this sermon focuses on a single verse from the Ten Commandments: "Thou shalt not commit adultery." It is one of a series of messages Erwin Lutzer preached on the Decalogue.

The sermon is a "proposition proved." In the introduction the preacher sets this commandment up against the prevailing attitudes of our society and then asks, "Isn't this unrealistic, considering the strong sexual desire that all of us experience?" In other words, he raises the functional question, "Is this true? Should I believe it?" The sermon then takes the form of proofs for the statement, "Thou shalt not commit adultery." The big idea stands like a proposition in a debate. The reasons supporting the proposition emerge clearly.

I. We should not commit adultery because it is against God's command.

A. The Bible says that the sex act joins two people together, body, soul, and spirit (1 Cor. 6:16).

B. An adulterer breaks at least five of the Ten Commandments.

II. We should not commit adultery because of the consequences of an adulterous relationship.
   A. One consequence lies within us (Ps. 51:3).
   B. Another consequence lies outside us.

III. We should not commit adultery because of the compensation for fidelity (Matt. 5:8).

In every sermon he preaches, Lutzer uses a key word, a plural noun that groups his ideas, to achieve parallelism in his points and centrality of purpose for his sermon. In this sermon his key word is "reasons" and his major points are alliterated "The Command of God," "The Consequences," and "The Compensation for Fidelity." The development is clear and easy to follow and that stands as a major strength of the sermon. While the statement of the points contains the common letter *c*, the points are not stated in parallel fashion. The advantage of alliteration is that it provides a hook for the memory. The danger comes when the foot is altered to fit the shoe.

The sermon is relevant. When the flint of people's questions strikes the steel of the Word of God, a spark emerges that makes a sermon glow. The twentieth-century outline and the content of this message are as up-to-date as tomorrow's soap opera or the surgeon general's campaign against AIDS. Five specific examples of sexual encounters between particular men and women fix the sermon firmly in life. Lutzer's other supporting material comes from pornography, television, a talk show, a pop song, and surveys and stories drawn from American society.

The sermon also reflects an awareness of the listeners. Lutzer sits with his audience by using phrases such as "We've all seen . . . ," "We've all met people who . . . ," "We've all known. . . ." In addition he anticipates reactions from his congregation. "Already I can hear a chorus of objections . . . ," "Someone asked me . . . ," "What about the person who has committed adultery in the past? . . ." An effective communicator keeps his hearers in mind when he prepares his sermon as he preaches.

Exegetes and some homileticians will ask an important question of definition: "Can a sermon based on a single verse qualify as exposition?" A great deal depends on the text and how the sermon develops. When the sentence treated lies within a broader passage—for example, John 3:16 which is a fragment of Jesus' larger conversation with Nicodemus—then the sermon can be expository if it derives its content and development from the wider context of thought. A sermon cannot be called expository which merely tips the hat to the context or ignores it completely and uses the single verse as a launching pad for the preacher's own thought.

Some verses, however, stand alone. That is true, for instance, of many of the proverbs or, as here, each one of the Ten Commandments. The immediate context of Exodus 20 does not elaborate on the commands; therefore, the minister must wrestle with why God makes the prohibition. A biblical sermon, however, first looks at whether the Scriptures speak to this command in any other place and then works with that material to develop the thought. Lutzer summons Paul, David, Jesus, and the commandments themselves as well as examples from life today to support his reasons for the command against sexual looseness. The verse, then, becomes the focal point of a concept dealt with extensively throughout the rest of the Bible. In the final analysis, a sermon is biblical if the substance of its thought comes directly from the Scriptures. It is expository when the passages chosen govern the development of the entire sermon or its individual points. There is no doubt that this particular sermon reflects the teaching of Scripture, but in the strictest sense it is not expository.

A sermon based on a negative text can produce a negative sermon. While Lutzer preaches from the Law, he also preaches grace and hope. His conclusion sounds a positive note and offers some direction to men and women who desire to change their attitudes and behavior.

Chapter 3

The Big Valley

1 Samuel 17:1–51

James O. Rose

James O. Rose presently is senior pastor of Calvary Baptist Church in New York City. Prior to this, he served churches in Connecticut, Texas, and Florida. Jim's tapes of sermons and "how-to" tapes on preparing dramatic presentations have a national and international distribution. Jim has written articles for various magazines and journals. He speaks regularly at pastors' conferences, in churches, and in the Far East, India, and Europe. Jim and his wife, Phyllis Ann, often speak at Bible conferences and in Family Life series. Jim speaks regularly on university campuses.

The stillness of early morning was reinforced by the mist filling the floor of a sprawling valley. It is like that in spring; it's the time of green grass and gorgeous wildflowers. It's the time of gentle warmth and it is the time of going out to war. On this morning men are moving in silence out to the very lip of the great valley, called Elah. Some are shoving the last few bits of bread and cheese into their mouths. Others are adjusting their spears, slings, and war gear. Now all are finally in place; again there is eerie silence.

In the middle of the attack line an officer raises his arm and at the signal, the army of Israel shouts, "*Ruah,*" their war cry. From the other side of the valley, there should come a response from the Philistines. After all, they had initiated this conflict. These same Philistines had been beaten badly at Michmash in their last outing, beaten by this same army of ignorant Hebrew farmers. The Philistines were a big power. They had to put these farmers in their places before they got too big for their political britches. But where were the Philistines on this morning? There was something going on over on the Philistine side; it sounded like a tank rumbling into place, except they didn't have tanks.

Begins with the setting (but draws you in immediately)

Good use of imagination

Background

Nice word picture Goliath = tank.

Yes, there is definitely movement down on the valley floor. As the breeze pushes the mist aside, murmuring breaks out down among the Israelites. "It's a big rock! No, it's a tree. No, it moves!" A roar from the valley floor removes all questions. "It's a man!" Still no one moves, and can you blame them?

A champion named Goliath, who was from Gath, came out of the Philistine camp. He was over nine feet tall. He had a bronze helmet on his head and wore a coat of scale armor of bronze weighing five thousand shekels; on his legs he wore bronze greaves, and a bronze javelin was slung on his back. His spear shaft was like a weaver's rod, and its iron point weighed six hundred shekels. His shield bearer went ahead of him. (1 Sam. 17:4–7)

He's nine foot six! This human tank is wearing a bronze shirt that weighs one hundred twenty-six pounds and the head of his spear alone weighs nineteen pounds. (An Olympic shotput weighs only sixteen pounds.) He's a man . . . with a message, a challenge to single combat. This ugly giant is a real threat, and Israel's petrified! Not to worry: they have Saul! Saul's also big, head and shoulders bigger than everyone else in Israel. "Saul, that's your kind of challenge. Saul, hey, Saul. . . ." Israel is retreating, running. It's a rout and Saul is running with the rest.

The problem? Saul, God's first king-elect, is on his own now. He wanted it that way and now he's got it. God has left him. Did I say on his own? Not completely. When someone has tasted God's opportunities and turns away, the Lord lifts the energy shield and the other side sends in a discomforter.

Saul is looking at life from ground level. Giants are overwhelming to those who look at life from that level. Giants are terribly hard to handle on your own. Israel ought to know: they've had giant troubles before. The report of Goliath's imposing ancestors stopped a whole generation of Israel at the door to the Promised Land. When the new crew finally did enter the Promised Land, only Caleb invaded giant country. He handled most of them, but at eighty years of age, we wouldn't expect him to get them all. Goliath is a leftover, a big leftover. And it only takes one giant leftover to unglue folks looking at life from ground level. From ground level giants fill up our screen. The closer we get, the bigger they look. We shouldn't consider giants unusual or unexpected. They roam in every generation—theirs at 1000 B.C. in Elah Valley and ours at A.D. 2000 in our valleys. I'll bet you've got one in your valley, a valley you must cross, if you're going on with God. I do, too. My giant has been waving at me lately.

The issue is: What are we going to do about our giants? Those locked into ground-level living refuse to face them. Goliath is down there day after day, and there's no getting around him. Still Israel has all but ignored him.

Without God, facing giants is impossible, and God is no longer with Saul. God, however, is still with Israel; he has moved into David's life. We remember David—king-elect, farmhand, shepherd.' He's still tending sheep—although he has been able to spend a bit of time at the palace.

So Saul said to his attendants, "Find someone who plays well and bring him to me."

One of the servants answered, "I have seen a son of Jesse of Bethlehem who knows how to play the harp. He is a brave man and a warrior. He speaks well and is a fine-looking man. And the LORD is with him."

Then Saul sent messengers to Jesse and said, "Send me your son David, who is with the sheep." (1 Sam. 16:17–19)

Even if his family ignored David, others have noticed. So he came to the court, a singer and Saul's armor bearer.

Actually that wasn't such a big deal. It was more like going to West Point, Annapolis, or the Air Force Academy. Saul had lots of armor bearers. If you were to become an officer, that's the way you did it. David would do whatever armor bearers did and then play his harp and then he would go back for flock duty. In fact, David was back at the ranch when Goliath started his taunts. David probably wouldn't have gotten to go to battle as a soldier anyway. Junior armor bearers usually weren't invited to the big

battles. He goes to battle, not as a warrior, but as a grocery boy. "Now Jesse said to his son David, 'Take this ephah of roasted grain and these ten loaves of bread for your brothers and hurry to their camp. Take along these ten cheeses to the commander of their unit. See how your brothers are and bring back some assurance from them' " (vv. 17–18). David doesn't get any respect at home either; he's still the insignificant one. Jesse even doubts he can deliver groceries. At least it was a break from watching the sheep and he could sneak a peek at the war.

David arrives just as the army is moving into attack position and just as they are shouting the "*ruah,*" although I suspect the "*ruah*" is like cheering when you're behind 55 to zip at half time.

As he has done every day for forty days, Goliath trudges down, shouting his challenge and with a yawn, waits. That is all it takes to turn Israel's line of skirmishers into a mob of soldiers, sprinting in the wrong direction.

Doesn't something strike you as strange about this? For forty days Israel has done the same thing. They prepare to fight a conventional war and scatter when Goliath shows up. The problem? They fail to deal with the real problem of confronting the giant in their valley. It's amazing how we deal so often with every problem but the real one, the one which takes God to resolve. Looking at life from the ground level causes you and me to ignore the giants, the giants God has equipped us to defeat by depending on him. Our marriage is struggling, but instead of trusting and correcting the problem, we increase our activities—joining another Bible study, taking up karate, and so on. God has given us giants to force us to look at life from his level. When we ignore the giants, godly living comes to a grinding halt. So it is with Israel's officers. Every night they gather in Saul's tent around the planning table and decide on the same strategy that ignores Goliath. They probably even pray about it. Then someone adds, "And God, get rid of that giant! He is ruining our strategy," at which point "amens" are heard throughout the tent. Yet on the fortieth day Israel is still doing the retreat shuffle. But on this day a startling thing happens in Elah Valley. David, the farmhand, the shepherd, stops running!

All of this happens as David is conversing with some soldiers in the rear of the ranks. When Goliath roars, David must have asked, "Why the retreat?" (vv. 24–25). "The one who fights him gets the king's daughter and money . . . and doesn't have to pay taxes," someone comments. "I'm already married and money is a curse and I love paying taxes and . . . have you seen Goliath?" No, David hasn't. But then David has never been bothered by gigantic obstacles. Sure, he's interested in what Saul has to offer. What has he ever gotten at home? He was probably ten years old before he knew his name wasn't "shut up," which in biblical language is "hold your peace." That's only a minor part of David's dynamic. The real fire that ignites his fuse can be found in his response: "Who is this uncircumcised Philistine that he should defy the armies of the living God?" (v. 26).

David, whose heart decides issues according to God's plan, sees life from God's perspective. David has a different way of looking at things. Israel and Saul are ground-level lookers, but David is, first and last, a man who looks at life from God's level. His mental screen is filled by the Lord, which makes every problem small in comparison. What ignites David on this day is Goliath blocking the plan and path of God. Those of us who see life from God's level, like David, are ignited into action by the giants that block the path of God.

It was my first year out of seminary in my first church and we weren't even being paid regularly. Giants were everywhere. Money was tight. Still Phyllis Ann and I saved enough for me to go to a pastors' conference. In one of the messages, the speaker stated something that refocused my life. "We," he said, "are all faced with a series of great opportunities brilliantly disguised as impossible problems." What was an impossible problem to Saul was a great opportunity for David.

David's determination to solve the problem impresses everyone, except David's brother Eliab, a sergeant in Saul's army. After all, what could a cadet know! When Eliab, David's oldest brother, heard him speaking with the men, he burned with anger at him and asked, 'Why have you come down here? And with whom did you leave those few sheep in the desert? I know how conceited

you are and how wicked your heart is; you came down only to watch the battle.' 'Now what have I done?' said David. 'Can't I even speak?' " (vv. 28–29). This is an expanded version of "shut up!" The word does get out and around, however—all the way around to Saul.

> What David said was overheard and reported to Saul, and Saul sent for him.
>
> David said to Saul, "Let no one lose heart on account of this Philistine; your servant will go and fight him."
>
> Saul replied, "You are not able to go out against this Philistine and fight him; you are only a boy, and he has been a fighting man from his youth."
>
> But David said to Saul, "Your servant has been keeping his father's sheep. When a lion or a bear came and carried off a sheep from the flock, I went after it, struck it and rescued the sheep from its mouth. When it turned on me, I seized it by its hair, struck it and killed it. Your servant killed both the lion and the bear; this uncircumcised Philistine will be like one of them, because he has defied the armies of the living God. The LORD who delivered me from the paw of the lion and the paw of the bear will deliver me from the hand of this Philistine."
>
> Saul said to David, "Go, and the LORD be with you." (1 Sam. 17:31–37)

Saul, who knows there's no human way around Goliath, sends for David and is finally convinced the young man (a better rendering of the word of the text would be "youth") might have a chance. From David's answer Saul senses something of what had been, but was gone forever. To David Goliath would be like the lions and bears who bother the flock. These were, in David's view, actually attacking God. When our lives are lived for God's glory and great plan, those attacking us, those in our path, are actually attacking God; they are blocking his plan. David could go after lions, bears, or giants with the same conviction; God was working through him to remove obstacles. Giants in my valley and yours are in God's right-of-way, if we are living to do his will and looking at life from his level.

Well, Saul is convinced, but then it isn't hard to convince Saul with Goliath breathing down his neck. Rejecting Saul's armor, not because it is too big, but because he has never worn armor, David gets ready for Goliath. Saul's armor would not be too heavy for a man who could swing Goliath's sword. David does, however, get ready for Goliath in another way. God works that way; he works through us where we are with what we know to destroy the giants we face. David is at slingshot level (v. 40). Of course the sling in David's hand was lethal. It was the early version of the machine pistol with a five-shot clip.

The time has come. David steps out of the perimeter, where suddenly he is, by himself, against Goliath. One fall, winner takes all. He just pushes out; giants were always God's open doors. But the closer he gets, the bigger Goliath looks. Goliath is really bored by now; he wants his captain to signal a return. "Why, what's that kid doing out there? Looking for souvenirs? No, he's coming. No!" He's challenging "the Philistine." " 'Am I a dog, that you come at me with sticks?' " (v. 43). While part of single combat was yelling slogans at each other, David's response is a bit out of the ordinary.

> David said to the Philistine, "You come against me with sword and spear and javelin, but I come against you in the name of the LORD Almighty, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied. This day the LORD will hand you over to me, and I'll strike you down and cut off your head. Today I will give the carcasses of the Philistine army to the birds of the air and the beasts of the earth, and the whole world will know that there is a God in Israel. All those gathered here will know that it is not by the sword or spear that the LORD saves; for the battle is the LORD's, and he will give all of you into our hands." (1 Sam. 17:45–47)

Watch out, big fellow! You see, Goliath, you are facing God today, and his plan is to let the earth know who he is. Sorry, but David's going to lay your body down! "As the Philistine moved closer to attack him, David ran quickly toward the battle line to meet him. Reaching into his bag and taking out a stone, he slung

it and struck the Philistine on the forehead. The stone sank into his forehead, and he fell facedown on the ground." Like a quarterback on a roll-out, David darts to one side and with a move that's a blur, draws and throws. Zing! "Kid, I'm not moving until . . ." and the world goes black for Goliath. "So David triumphed over the Philistine with a sling and a stone; without a sword in his hand he struck down the Philistine and killed him. David ran and stood over him. He took hold of the Philistine's sword and drew it from the scabbard. After he killed him, he cut off his head with the sword. When the Philistines saw that their hero was dead, they turned and ran" (vv. 50–51). It is over, just that quickly. The Philistines have fled. Israel and Saul have won.

David sits exhausted and exhilarated by it all. What a day! He had arrived that morning a nameless errand boy, delivering groceries. Now as the sun is setting, he is the champion of Israel. It happens that way with those who see life from God's level. David, the boy with the sheep, is gone forever. David, the man of blood, the warrior, king-elect, has taken his place.

ERMON

0

Almost a clear M-I.
better... "Those who see life from God's level end up champions."
-or kill their giants/Goliaths

A non-traditional introduction (begins with the text - not modern life) is matched with a non-traditional conclusion (ends with the text - no applications)

Rose preaches narrative as narrative - he doesn't ruin it with 3-point outlines

From childhood on we beg, "Tell me a story." In the world outside the church, ideas are wrapped up in stories. Novels, movies, and television do more to shape American thinking and values than scholarly position papers. The mini-drama in the sixty-second commercial moves the merchandise. When God communicated himself through the Bible, it is not surprising that he often used narratives about events and people. Robert Alter, in *The Art of Biblical Narrative,* argues that Old Testament authors were such skillful storytellers that what they wrote was really "fictionalized history" or "historical fiction."[1] We do not have to accept that verdict to agree that the biblical writers were skilled storytellers. Preachers true to the Scriptures and aware of their audiences also know the attractiveness of a story. Jim Rose turns into a storyteller in this message from 1 Samuel, one of a series of sermons he preached on the life of David.

Narrative sermons often prove difficult to outline. Transitions, points and subpoints, introductions and conclusions

Uniqueness of narrative preaching

1. Robert Alter, *The Art of Biblical Narrative* (New York: Basic Books, 1981).

simply do not play the part in narratives that they do in traditional sermons. Then too, most narratives develop inductively rather than deductively so that the idea emerges gradually near the conclusion. That is true of this sermon. It makes two major points and the second point also serves as the big idea that generated the sermon.

I. Giants threaten those of us who look at life from the ground level (1 Sam. 17:1–25).
   A. Those living with ground-level perspective are overwhelmed by giants.
   B. Those living with ground-level perspective refuse to face giants.

II. Giants ignite those of us who look at life from a "God-level" perspective (1 Sam. 17:26–58).
   A. Giants look like great opportunities to those with a "God-level" perspective.
   B. Giant obstacles are open doors to those living with a "God-level" perspective.

While there are many different ways to tell a story, Jim Rose chooses to work with this incident as a third-person narrator recounting the events. While he seems to do little more than relate the events and fill in some background, Rose obviously had to work through the passage, understand its place in 1 Samuel, capture the historical background, and then stage that material in the theater of his mind. Although story sermons sound simple, the art is concealed. When done creatively and with integrity, they demand study and thought.

Stories hold their magnetic appeal because they stay close to the way we learn best. While most classroom teaching and much preaching is deductive—the lesson is stated, explained, proved, and applied—life teaches us inductively as we live it. We learn our deepest lessons through experience when we smell, see, touch, hear, and feel for ourselves. Life is not an abstraction.

A storyteller uses words to stimulate the senses. Rose uses many: "stillness" (sound), "mist filling" (sight and touch), "moving in silence" (sight and sound), "tank rumbling" (sight and sound). His word choice brings David's battle into the twentieth century. "Tank rumbling," "human tank," "Olympic shotput," "like cheering when you're behind 55 to zip at half time," draw from our experiences which relate the past to the present. Both humor and human interest in the sermon come from seeing, hearing, and reacting to the appearance of Goliath while he taunts the Israelites from a distance. " 'It's a big rock! No, it's a tree. No, it moves!' A roar from the valley floor removes all questions. 'It's a man!' " To preach this sermon, Rose not only had to understand the story; he had to experience it. Then out of his imagination he selected the words that recreated that experience for his congregation.

While a preacher must rely on research and creativity to present a biblical narrative, much is also demanded of the congregation. The people in the pew must relate that message to their experience. Rose merely hints at how the biblical account relates to life today. "We are all faced with a series of opportunities brilliantly disguised as impossible problems," he warns us, but he doesn't display a rogue's gallery of problems that might prey upon us. The sermon ends when the story ends without a formal conclusion or appeal. Application in this sermon, therefore, is indirect and the hearers must fill in the blanks for themselves. Is that sufficient? Can a listener identify a "giant" in her life that needs conquering? Should the preacher say more? If so, what? When does a conclusion added to a story sound like a religious commercial? All of these questions arise as we weigh the strengths or weaknesses of a narrative sermon.

How long does it usually take you to prepare a message?

The genesis of a message starts a year before I preach it. I put together a sermon calendar for that year (I take a week off and put this together, including sermon titles, big ideas, and the chunk of Scripture for each sermon). Then I center my devotions on what I'll be preaching on a year from that date. At the most, I put in two hours per chapter then. A week and a half before I give the actual message, I pull out what I've done. I keep all of the material that I've been collecting for that sermon in a file. I usually spend an hour just looking over this material. The week of the message I put in seventeen to twenty-two hours on a sermon. This depends, of course, on the individual message.

How long are your sermons?

My messages normally will take from thirty to forty minutes. Narratives tend to be just a little longer.

How do you develop the biblical content of your sermons? To what extent do you use commentaries, original languages, Bible dictionaries, and so on?

That depends on the passage. I always translate the passage. In the New Testament I work only with the Greek text. Then I start thinking

about the organization of the passage, how it flows. That is the hardest part. What is this author saying? How is he putting it together? The next thing I do when dealing with a New Testament passage is to go back to word studies or grammatical elements that need some work.

Where do you go from there?

I come up with an exegetical outline. This is an outline of the text as the author gave it, paraphrasing his thought. On Wednesday, I read commentaries about the passage a good bit. I work with the lexicon, with dictionaries, with encyclopedias, or look up the geography. After that, I develop a homiletical outline. This relates my study directly to the audience. Then I draw in illustrative material. Doing a sermon calendar one year in advance allows me to keep gathering illustrations. On Thursday I write out an abbreviated manuscript on all my previous study. That will come out about half or 40 percent in length of what the final manuscript will be. This helps me see the movement and connection and direction of the sermon. On Friday I manuscript the message. Saturday, I internalize it. I don't memorize it, but internalize it. And Sunday, I preach it.

Where do you get your illustrations?

From *U.S. News and World Report, Harper's, Atlantic Monthly,* the *Oxford Review.* Also, from the newspaper. I try to read a variety of books. Also, I pick up illustrations when I'm traveling. People send me articles or anecdotes they have enjoyed.

You use word pictures throughout your sermon. How do you come up with them?

They come naturally, I guess, but I also work at them. If I could get away with it, I'd do all narrative sermons because the illustrative material lies more in painting the picture with words. If a person doesn't work at it, even if words come easily, he may paint only with the same hues.

How do you develop introductions to your sermons?

The trap in introductions is that we gain interest but we don't connect. An introduction has to grab attention, but then it must direct that attention to what you're trying to communicate. In narrative messages, I'll usually try to start with a narrative introduction. I will try to paint a scene that has drama and leads into the passage. Second, variety is the key. Don't jump out from behind the same tree every week. Some weeks I'll use a visual for an introduction; I may use an illustration from life; or something right out of the morning paper. I may plant someone in the audience to ask a question. I may show the congregation a slide or a picture.

What do you think is the secret to effective narrative preaching?

Putting the narrative in present-day terminology. That makes its own application. I consciously try to repeat more in a narrative than I do in a didactic sermon. I find it necessary to repeat again and again, because people get lost in the story. If I don't repeat, they may have heard a good story, but it won't stick in their minds.

Your sermon on 1 Samuel 17 ends assuming that the audience will personally apply the message. Did you do this deliberately?

Let me explain the "response for life" time in our church. The response is a reflection on the application for today. I will literally step to a different point on the platform and say, "This is what we can do with this." I want people to know how this affects them in their world. This time is never over three minutes. I want to nail the big idea and try to relate it to the audience. I always have one after a narrative, and all my messages generally have a response. The narrative will, of course, have more detail. The first-person drama is the most difficult sermon to follow with a response time. Actually, it's usually more effective to have someone else do it.

You've been out of seminary for two decades now. What has lingered on from your homiletics classes?

First, the conviction that preaching is a tremendously effective tool to help people to grow up in Christ. Second, I have learned the importance of preaching one main idea. Third, I have come to appreciate the power of words. They are like barbs which catch in people's consciousness.

story had to be told so that the listeners got the point indirectly. A third challenge was picking the major character, someone who could get the story out so that my listeners could get the point without it being stated.

How does a sermon like this develop in your mind?

This character begins to take on a personality. He comes out as a fellow looking out for his own skin. He "goes with the flow." He won't endanger himself. He is a cynic, a pagan. He talks about coincidences. This line gets dropped often to build his perception climaxing in the last line, "Boy, they're sure lucky!" Hopefully, at that point my listener says, "Buddy, you've got it all wrong. That was God putting it all together." Making it happen comes from that; dropping hints in such a way that they seem very natural but they occur at such points that the listener begins to sense God's sovereignty. I also wanted to be historically accurate. Then, after I had the flow of it, I needed to keep all the characters straight before the people. From time to time I reflected six different characters. To do that, I positioned Xerxes always on my stage right, Mordecai out in the audience somewhere stage center left. Then I wrestled with the techniques of representing those different people in separate conversations.

How do you outline a first-person narrative?

I think you would look at it either as a story or a drama in which you have acts and scenes.

Finally, what counsel would you give a young preacher?

The Lord's Word is joyful wisdom. Pass on to your congregation, "Look how good God is and what he has told us. We are fortunate to have access to this kind of wisdom because it makes the difference in how joyful our lives can be."

Chapter 5

Riding the Wind of God

Psalm 127

Duane Litfin

Dr. Duane Litfin is senior pastor of the First Evangelical Church in Memphis, Tennessee. His articles have appeared in *Central States Speech Journal, Western Speech,* and several Christian journals and magazines. He is the author of *Public Speaking: A Handbook for Christians* and co-editor of *Recent Homiletical Thought: A Bibliography.*

Some people might be turned off by mention of Socrates

"People don't examine their lives"

It was Socrates who said that the unexamined life is not worth living. Socrates may not have been a Christian, but his was a very Christian notion.

Every Christian should live an examined life. I was reminded of this recently in reading a book on the subject of the Old Testament sabbath. The book raised an interesting question: What is sabbath? Not just the Sabbath Day; what is sabbath rest in general? In other words, what does it mean to take a sabbath?

Sabbath rest does not mean merely a time for recreation, a time when you cease work and start playing. Sabbath is something deeper and more significant than that. It is modeled after the activity of God himself who, having worked six days, took a sabbath. He ceased from his labors, not in order to go off and play, but to examine what he had done. He looked back over those six days and declared, "It's good; that was worth doing."

That is what sabbath rest is and that is what it is for. It is designed to provide us an opportunity to pause and look at what we have done and to decide whether it was worth doing. It is a time to stop and examine our lives.

Unfortunately, for some people an examined life is something

to avoid at all costs. There is a great emptiness at the core of their lives, covered only by a veneer of busyness. The busyness is what enables them to avoid looking at the hollow interior. So one must do anything but pause and examine; you must keep on the move, avoid being by yourself, or if you are by yourself, be sure the television is on. Above all, avoid those moments when you pause and examine.

No preacher will ever be able to exhort such people to examine their lives because to examine is to look into an abyss of wasted time, a life that is going nowhere and accomplishing nothing of lasting value.

But there are other people who do not examine their lives for a very different reason. It is not that they need to avoid the truth; rather, they are simply not very good at self-examination. They have not done much of it and they do not know where to begin, or even quite what to look for.

Here is where Psalm 127 may be able to help us. If, like me, you sometimes have a difficult time knowing where to begin examining your life, we have come to the right passage. This brief psalm is perfectly suited to provide the centerpiece, the main criterion of what it is we are to look for when we settle back for a time of self-examination.

As we approach this psalm, we note that it was written by Solomon, and that it is divided into two sections: verses 1–2, and verses 3–5. Verses 1–2 lay out a contrast, while verses 3–5 explore an illustration of that contrast.

The contrast in verses 1–2 is actually unbalanced. Each of this psalm's first seven lines speak about only the first side of the contrast. It is not until we arrive at the last line of verse 2, probably the most important line of the psalm, that we discover the other side of the contrast.

Solomon elaborates the first side of the contrast as follows:

> Unless the LORD builds the house,
> its builders labor in vain.
> Unless the LORD watches over the city,
> the watchmen stand guard in vain.
> In vain you rise early
> and stay up late,
> toiling for food to eat—(vv. 1–2a)

If you mark your Bibles, you would do well to underline the word *vain*. It occurs three times in these two verses. It is vain; it is empty; it is worthless. This repetition is a pointer to what the psalmist wants to tell us.

It is important for us to sort out what kind of activity Solomon is describing as "vain" in these verses. Contrary to first impressions, he is not referring to activity that is somehow in opposition to God; in other words, he is not saying it is worthless to try to oppose God.

To be sure, this is an important truth and a very biblical one. As a pastor, I often see people attempting to get the best of God, and, of course, it doesn't work. As the old Jim Croche song put it,

> You don't tug on Superman's cape;
> You don't spit into the wind;
> You don't fool around with a junk yard dog,
> And you don't mess around with Jim.

It's foolish, says this bit of wisdom, to take on something you cannot handle, and that is especially true when that something is God.

But that truth is not really the lesson of this psalm. The psalmist here is talking about a very different kind of activity. He is referring to all of those activities, all of that time, all of those energies one gives to projects that God does not care about, ventures in which he is not interested, or to the success of which he is not committed. You pour your life into that kind of project, says the psalmist, and your efforts will be vain, wasted, down the drain for nothing.

Thus, when we look closely, we discover that the subject of this psalm appears to be spending; not so much the spending of our money, but the spending of our very lives.

There are three things we typically spend: our money, our time, and our energy. Yet money should not be categorized with time and energy. It is as if we were to speak of hydrogen, oxygen, and ice. Hydrogen and oxygen combine to make water, but ice is one of the forms that water takes. You do not categorize those three things together. So it is with time, energy, and money. Money is simply one of the forms that our time and energy take.

There are people who seem to have unlimited quantities of money. But no one has unlimited quantities of time and energy. Every one of us has a restricted amount of both. That's why as commodities they are far more basic and important than money. So let us not concern ourselves for the moment with the spending of money; let us allow this psalm to focus our attention on the budgeting of our time and energy. If we set that in order, how we spend our money will take care of itself.

Psalm 127 is about how we spend our limited quantities of time and energy, the most precious commodities that we possess. And spend them we inevitably do.

We recently enjoyed a visit from my parents, so that there were three generations in the home. First there were the children who seem to have boundless energy; they just go on and on. Their whole life seems to lie in front of them and they have little sense of their limitations, either of time or energy. They think they can do anything. Their bodies can take anything. Well, I'm forty-three now and I know better. Even at age forty-three, which for many still sounds young, I can begin to feel my limitations. In fact, that is one of the characteristics of the so-called mid-life syndrome: You begin measuring your life from the end rather than the beginning; you start asking the question, How much time do I have left? Then there were my parents, in their sixties, who feel this process even more keenly. And then you visit the nursing homes, or you visit a terminally ill patient in the hospital and you are looking at people whose reserves of time and energy are almost spent—there is not much left. You become profoundly aware of how limited are the quantities of these two basic commodities the Lord has given us, our time and energy.

The psalmist's question is, How do we spend them? What do we spend them for? That's what this psalm is about, spending our lives. And what he is saying is that if we are spending our days on projects in which the Lord has no interest, the success of which he does not care about at all, we are wasting our time. We will look back and say, "I wasted my life. It accomplished nothing of any lasting significance."

Notice that the issue is not whether we build the house; the house may well be built, but in the end the question will be, so what? The business may well be established, but if Christ was not in it, what of any lasting value was accomplished? The practice may well thrive, but in the long run, if this is anything other than what God wants me to do, what difference can it make? Unless the Lord is interested in accomplishing this particular task and it's one of his projects, then every ounce of energy we pour into it, every moment we give to it, every effort we spend to build it is wasted, meaningless, worthless.

This, then, is the one side of the psalmist's contrast. But there is also the other side, which we discover in the final line of verse 2: "For He gives to His beloved even in his sleep."

To appreciate fully this line, we must remember that this is poetry, and poetry is not always easy to read. We have to give ourselves to poetry and explore it. Poetry is compact and full of images; so in order to understand it, we must go slowly and unpackage the author's meaning.

We have in this tightly packed line several poetic allusions. Do you recall what a poetic allusion is? It's the sort of reference which, if you do not understand its background, you will miss the poet's point. For example, in a book of poetry on the subject of Oxfordshire in England, I recently ran across a poem by the poet laureate of Britain, John Betjeman, entitled, *Summoned by Bells*. In this poem we find these lines:

> Take me my Centaur Bike down Linton Road
> Gliding by newly planted almond trees
> Where the young dons with wives in tussore clad
> Were building in the morning of their lives
> Houses for future dragons . . .

There are a number of easily understood references here: Linton Road, the Centaur Bike, the dons who are the tutors at Oxford University—but "building houses for future dragons"? What could that possibly mean?

This poem is about the neighborhood in Oxford where we lived for two years. We lived just off Linton Road, as had John Betjeman many years before. In fact, Betjeman also attended the Dragon School, the elite private boys' school in that neighborhood past which I rode my bicycle every day to travel to the library. Hence Betjeman's poetic allusion to "dragons." This is one of the beauties of poetry; there is so much folded into it that it merits our study and concentration.

Modern poets do this to us all the time—but so did the ancient Hebrew poets, and we are unlikely to find a more tightly compressed line in the psalter than this. Let's look at several of the poetic allusions in that single line.

The word translated "beloved" here is the Hebrew word *yadid.* Do you remember the name that God gave to Solomon when he was born? In 2 Samuel 12:24–25 we read:

> Then David comforted his wife Bathsheba, and he went to her and lay with her. She gave birth to a son, and they named him Solomon. The LORD loved him; and because the LORD loved him, he sent word through Nathan the prophet to name him *Jedidiah.*

Solomon was named by the Lord himself: Jedidiah, the *yadid* of *Yahweh,* "Beloved of the Lord." Built into the Lord's own name for Solomon is this word *yadid,* "beloved."

How utterly fitting. When you think of Solomon, what comes to your mind? His wisdom, of course. Listen to 1 Kings 3:5: "At Gibeon the LORD appeared to Solomon during the night in a dream, and God said, 'Ask for whatever you want me to give you.'" As we know, Solomon asked for wisdom and the Lord approved; he gave Solomon the special gift of his wisdom. "Then Solomon awoke—and he realized it had been a dream." God's greatest gift to his beloved Solomon was given to him while he was sleeping.

The poetic allusion to the "beloved" in Psalm 127 is, then, first and foremost to Solomon, but it serves as an example of how God gives to all his "chosen people, holy and dearly loved" (Col. 3:12). Not only does the beloved one receive the fruit of his labor; he also receives dividends even when he is resting.

This reference to God's beloved one, then, reaches far beyond Solomon. In fact, it makes for an interesting study to pursue the concept of the "beloved of the Lord" throughout the Bible. Perhaps the most striking passage of all is Deuteronomy 33:12, where, speaking of the tribe of Benjamin, Moses says,

> Let the beloved (*yadid*) of the LORD rest secure in him,
> for he shields him all day long,
> and the one the LORD loves rests between his shoulders.

The beloved one is the one who dwells between the shoulders of God. Do you recognize the image? The beloved of God "rides piggyback" on the Lord.

It is as if a son were to join his father on a long journey. As they travel together, the boy becomes weary and cannot continue. So the father takes his son onto his back and carries him. He carries him piggyback, so that even while the son sleeps, he still makes progress. Why? Because he is traveling on his father's journey.

The beloved of the Lord dwells between the shoulders of his heavenly Father. That's essentially what the psalmist has in mind when he says, "for He gives to His beloved even in his sleep." The contrast here is not between the one who works hard and the one who sits back and does nothing; this is no commendation of slothfulness. It is a poetic contrast between the one who works very hard, spending long toilsome hours for a meaningless project, and so winds up with nothing to show for his efforts; as against the one who invests himself in a project the Lord is doing and finds himself earning dividends beyond expectation.

Let's see if we can capture this contrast visually by conjuring up two very different pictures. The first has to do with a fellow named Sisyphus. Do you remember Sisyphus? Probably not, but

perhaps you have heard the term *a Sisyphean task*—an endless, difficult, and pointless task.

If you look up Sisyphus in your dictionary, you will discover that he was a mythological figure in Homer's *Odyssey,* a Greek poem written almost a millennium before Christ. Poor Sisyphus. Homer portrays him in hell, and this was his punishment:

> And I saw Sisyphus in violent torment, seeking to raise a monstrous stone with both of his hands. Verily he would brace himself with hands and feet, and thrust the stone toward the crest of a hill, but as often as he was about to heave it over the top, the weight would turn it back, and then down again to the plain would come rolling the ruthless stone. But he would strain again and thrust it back, and the sweat flowed down from his limbs, and dust rose up from his head.[1]

Poor Sisyphus, doomed to an eternity of rolling that huge stone up the hill, only to have it roll back down; only to struggle with it back up the hill, only to have it roll back down; over and over throughout eternity. Long hours, difficult labor, in a pointless and meaningless task.

Homer intended Sisyphus to be a sad figure. But sadder still is the thought that many people today spend their days on equally worthless pursuits. Struggling week in and week out, rising up early and sitting down late, eating the bread of painful toil, all in order to accomplish eternally meaningless projects, projects about which Christ could not care less and which will have no lasting value. They are our projects, not his; we may be committed to their success, but the Lord is not. All of that energy, all of that effort and precious time wasted, being poured down the drain for something that has no future.

But now contrast that strange image of Sisyphus with an entirely different picture. We stepped out of our home recently only to discover rising across our neighborhood and passing unbelievably fast, no more than two or three hundred feet up in the sky, a beautiful, vividly colored hot air balloon. It was a huge thing with three people in the gondola hanging beneath the billowing colors. They were just high enough that you could still have called out to them. They were so close you could see the people easily, but they were moving amazingly fast across the sky.

Have you ever ridden in a hot air balloon? They say it's a lot like sailing with the wind. You may be moving very quickly, but there is complete silence and no sense of any wind. How can that be? The answer is simple. You may be traveling forty miles per hour, but you are riding on the wind, so to speak; it's carrying you with it. And so, as you travel *with* the wind, there is no sense of your own motion except as you see the earth glide by beneath you. The journey is startlingly quiet and peaceful.

That's the kind of thing Solomon has in mind on the positive side of the contrast: the one who lives with the wind of God at his back.

The beloved of the Lord rides piggyback on God when he pours his time and effort into projects to which God is committed; they are his heavenly Father's projects and the child is simply along for the ride. To such a one the Lord promises eternal fruit for his labor. There may well be hard work, but it will be to great purpose and of genuine value. And not only that, all of the hard work becomes capital that earns dividends even while we are not working. Why? Because like a father carrying his son on his back, even while we are asleep, God is still at work, moving ahead to accomplish his purposes. Thus it is that the one who invests his time and effort in Christ's projects appears to move through life "with the wind of God at his back."

As a pastor I see both kinds of people so very clearly. On the one hand, I see people who are struggling with life. All of their existence seems in the end to be wearisome because they are committed to projects and goals in which Jesus Christ is not in the least interested. They are their own projects and goals, not the Lord's.

But I also see other people who seem to ride the wind of God. As these Christians move through life, they see great purpose and meaning in their work, and such fruit and blessing that

1. Homer, *Odyssey* (ed. A. T. Murray; trans. T. E. Page) 11.593–600.

Extended Transition

they look up and say, "Where did that come from?" The difference is that they are giving themselves to the projects of the Lord; they have set his goals before them. They are riding piggyback on the Lord.

Obviously, then, the key, as we attempt to examine our lives, is to ask, What are the tasks to which I am giving my time and my energy? The mainspring of my life is winding down. I can see it and feel it. What are my goals? What are the projects to which I am committed? Are they Christ's projects, assigned to me, or have I created them for myself?

To help with this kind of self-examination, Solomon offers us a concrete example of the kind of project that is worthy of our lives. "Look," he says, "here is a case in point."

should state verse

> Sons are a heritage from the LORD,
> children a reward from him.

Solomon might have chosen any of several illustrations, but children are perhaps the best example because they leave so little room for ambiguity. Children are precisely the sort of project that this psalm has been commending from the outset. They are not merely our projects; they are God's projects assigned to us.

A. Children are the psalmist's prime example of a divinely ordained project. p. 107

Notice the subtle and intricate poetic connection between how we conceive children, and Solomon's reference to God giving to His beloved even in his sleep. Children are the product of that portion of our lives that we spend in repose, yet they are the most beneficial blessings we possess. The poetic beauty of this psalm should not be missed.

Solomon is operating on the sound biblical assumption that if we have children, we may be assured that they have been assigned to us specifically by the Lord. The purpose of a public ceremony of baby dedication is expressly to acknowledge this fact. Contrary to what people may sometimes think or feel, we do not have children by mistake or accident. Solomon reminds us that our children are a project custom-tailored by the Lord specifically for us. And as such, they are a venture into which we can confidently invest our time and effort with eternal dividends.

According to Solomon, the attention we give to our children will continue to pay rewards all the days of our lives. That's what he means when he says:

... in vv 4-5

> Like arrows in the hand of a warrior
> are sons born in one's youth.
> Blessed is the man whose quiver is full of them.
> They will not be put to shame
> when they contend with their enemies in the gate.

Nice wording

Children are one of the best investments of our time and energy, both for this life and for eternity. ~~They are,~~ as Solomon says, the parents' projectiles. ~~Like arrows in the hand of a warrior,~~ so are children in the hand of their parents. They are the means by which parents reach out and make their greatest impact on time and eternity. For good or for ill, we multiply our influence through our children.

Paraphrase of vv. 4-5

I was thinking this week of my own ministry. Here I am pastoring a congregation in a city which my parents had never before visited. Yet what this congregation is seeing in me is to a large extent the product of what my father and mother invested in me all those years in our home at 804 Symes, Royal Oak, Michigan. They are, in a very real sense, ministering in this community today, through me. And they assure me that what they see me doing here remains as one of God's greatest delights to them in their own lives. Thus do they continue to receive dividends on time and effort they invested in me years ago.

Personal Illustration

I saw a father send his son to the mission field this past week. From that home a projectile is going out to touch France for Christ. Another of their children, a daughter, is a missionary to Pakistan. Another is a godly housewife here in the States. All of the time and energy those parents poured into those three children was invested for time and for eternity. Nothing else those parents did with their time could have been more important than what they invested in their children.

observation Illustration (Another family)

Those who dedicate their children to the Lord, says Solomon, will not be ashamed. Such children will be the crown of a full

life. In our old age, when the accuser of the brethren stands to challenge us in the gate, charging us with a wasted life, godly children will constitute his prime refutation. They are the best example of a divine project which has ongoing rewards.

But they are not the only example. Not all of our time can be invested in our children, and not everyone will have children. Children are a prime example of a divinely worthwhile project, but there are many others.

For example, if you are a business or professional person, think of how you are spending your life. If you are spending your time and energy to build a company or a position or a practice, in order to become affluent, to grow in influence and prestige and personal comfort, there is nothing that I know of to suggest that Jesus Christ is the least bit interested in your success. You're on your own. You are involved in a project of your own choosing, not his.

On the other hand, if you are committed to the business or professional world in order to use the gifts God has given you to build Christ's kingdom, then you have enlisted in one of God's choicest projects. Your time and energy are being invested with eternal dividends. Your efforts will be directed toward functioning as a beachhead for righteousness, and for the gospel of Jesus Christ, wherever God has put you. Like Daniel shining in a pagan world, personal profit will have become unimportant; the glory of God, manifested in all you do and say and demonstrated in the sheer excellence and integrity of your work and witness, becomes your priority.

Or let us suppose you are working to provide yourself with a home. To the extent that you are giving of your life's energies to build a place of personal luxury, beautifully furnished, in the right neighborhood, designed to indulge your personal tastes and, not incidently, to impress those who may be watching, God's Word would seem to indicate that your efforts are being eternally wasted. You are pouring your most precious possessions—your time and your energy—down the drain of self-indulgence.

On the other hand, if you make decisions about what sort of house you need in the light of God's purposes for a home, every thing you invest there may be of eternal value. For instance, viewing your home as the prime place to model godly values to your children will mean that the choices you make will be geared to God's purposes; treating the house as a center of Christian hospitality and as a launching pad for the gospel in your neighborhood will dictate God-centered decisions. In this way the efforts you put into providing a genuinely Christian home wind up invested for eternity.

It was C. S. Lewis, I believe, who said, "Everything that is not eternal, is eternally out of date." As usual with Lewis, it is a well-turned phrase. But Solomon expressed the thought with still greater charm long before Lewis, in Psalm 127.

Are you willing to pause and examine your life, to evaluate those tasks into which you are pouring your time and energy? Are they your projects or Christ's? Do you ride between the shoulders of your heavenly Father, or are you traveling your own road? Solomon says the value of our life's work is only as good as the cause for which it is expended. If we choose wisely, we can invest our time and energy for eternity by spending them for Jesus Christ. It's a thought that ought to guide all of our self-examination.

Simply flip through the pages of the Old Testament and glance at the layout on the page of any modern translation and you'll discover God is a poet. Poetry turns up everywhere. In fact, poetry makes up about one-third of the entire Bible and takes up as much space as the entire New Testament.[2] Biblical Hebrew had no word for "poetry." The short terse lines of a psalm or proverb, however, along with their metaphors and similes, set poetic literature apart from the prose found in a book like Leviticus.[3] A preacher true to the Scriptures, therefore, must understand Hebrew poetry, how a poet communicates his message, and how a preacher communicates that poetic message through a sermon.

Duane Litfin explains the imagery of Psalm 127, but he does not subject his congregation to a dry lecture on Hebrew poetry. As a preacher, Litfin tackles a larger question, "How should

2. Tremper Longman III, *Literary Approaches to Biblical Interpretation* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1987), p. 119.

3. For a discussion of biblical poetry, see James L. Kugel, *The Idea of Biblical Poetry* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981); Robert Alter, *The Art of Biblical Poetry* (New York: Basic Books, 1985); and Longman, *Literary Approaches*.

Subject

we invest our time and energy for what counts in life?" and turns to the psalmist for an answer. To get to the solution given in the psalm, however, the preacher must become a teacher. Able expositors respond to a congregation's questions and increase a congregation's knowledge. In this sermon, Litfin devotes a significant amount of time to a discussion of poetry in general and the specific images within the psalm. In handling these poetic elements in the passage, he draws parallels to a pop song in the twentieth century and more directly with the poem *Summoned by Bells* by John Betjeman. He demonstrates that explanation in a sermon does not have to sound as dull or complicated as instructions on how to assemble a Christmas toy. Just as important, Litfin does not talk down to his congregation, but introduces his excursion by saying, "We have to give ourselves to poetry and explore it." As an effective teacher, a preacher helps his hearers learn without insulting them or talking down to them.

A well-crafted sermon has two centers, one in the Bible and the other in the congregation. A skillful expositor exegetes both. While Litfin works in the psalm, he works with his audience as well. He remembers that without the Bible he has nothing to say, but without his congregation, a sermon has no place to go. Litfin does not give everything away in his introduction, but keeps a sense of tension alive until his second major point, also a full, strong statement of the central idea of the sermon. The development of the sermon in outline form looks like this:

Difficult to understand and Not stated until the last paragraph (p. 103)

Better: "If you want your life to count, invest it in the right priorities"

I. The value of our life's work is only as good as the cause for which it is expended. (vv. 1-2)
   - A. The issue in Psalm 127 is how we spend our lives. (vv. 1a)
   - B. Everything we spend on projects in which God is not interested is wasted. (vv 1-2a)
   - C. Everything we spend on God's projects is invested. (v. 2b)

M.I. → II. We can invest our lives for eternity by spending them on God's projects.
   - A. Children are the psalmist's prime example of a divinely ordained project. (vv 3-5)
   - B. There are other numerous examples of God's projects as well.

or... I. Security is God's blessing (1-2)
II. Sons are God's blessing (3-5)
→ M.I. Thank God for His blessings of security and sons

or... I. We are ultimately dependent on God (1a) (but...)
II. He often provides us security through our children (3-5)
M.I. Consider your children God's blessing

The sermon takes the shape of a principle applied. It moves by induction up to the second major point, where a fundamental principle is stated. After that, the sermon applies the principle to rearing children but then moves beyond the psalm to suggest other spheres in which this principle can work out in experience. This particular form focuses strongly on application and always has a ring of relevance to it.

Litfin states his big idea several times throughout the sermon and then uses a quote from C. S. Lewis to state it again in the conclusion. In developing his points, he constantly moves from an abstract statement to a concrete, specific example that nails the sermon into life. He employs a number of illustrations from a variety of sources: Greek classics, pop music, science, poetry, hot air balloons, and his own experiences.

Repetition

Variety

It is important to notice the preacher's stance. He does not talk to the audience about the Bible, although the passage is clearly explained, but instead talks to his hearers about them and their decisions from the Bible. That is the stance of effective biblical preaching. It is not a lecture or an essay, but a conversation with a congregation.

Style/Stance

I. Invest your life in God's projects which last. (My "simplified" M.I.)

Strengths
- Repetition of subject + M.I.
- Variety in illustrations (down to earth, contrasting)
- Selective explanations
- Conversational stance
- Rhetorical questions for flow

Weaknesses
- Structure somewhat undefined (slides into a point)
- Interpretation of "beloved"
- Statement of MP I (?)
- No crisp M.I.

195

How long does it usually take you to prepare a message?

Probably in the neighborhood of ten to fifteen hours.

How long did it take you to prepare the message you submitted?

This particular message was closer to fifteen hours because of the exegetical puzzles and the enigmatic references that must be understood.

How long are your sermons normally?

My sermons average somewhere between thirty and forty minutes.

How do you develop the biblical content of your sermons?

It varies with the message and with the passage. I do whatever it takes to exegete the passage. Sometimes it takes a great deal; other times it is there on the surface waiting for me as I open the text. I'm not going to invest hours in exegeting something I already understand.

You use helps, then?

Yes, I'm shameless. I use anything that is useful, both in exegesis and in homiletics. I'm a great believer in commentaries. I think it's best to bring in the commentaries later in the process than earlier. I depend on anything that will prompt me, stimulate me, give me insights or little

glimmers. Commentaries don't answer questions as much as they stimulate me. I use the original languages (my Greek is stronger than my Hebrew today). I don't translate a passage from scratch. That's a waste of time given the helps and resources that we have.

Where do you get your illustrations?

I'm a great believer in the illustration file, but I don't always follow through on it the way I'd like to. It requires an enormous discipline to keep the file fresh so that it's usable and useful in your preaching ministry. I find that my file lets me down because I've let the file down.

Where do you get most of your supporting material, then?

The bulk of it comes from the tools that are at hand—what I have in my mind, my heart, my memory, my recent experiences, my imagination, sources, something in the commentary that triggers something in me. I will take them from any place I can get them.

You've taught homiletics at Dallas Seminary, and now you're a pastor. What changes has that brought in your ministry?

A pastoral ministry drains your creative energies. When you spend three and four hours with people whose lives are falling apart and you try to help them and then you try to work on a sermon . . . the well is dry. Apparently, I only have so much creative energy. Eleven o'clock Sunday morning is always staring at you, and you have only *x* number of hours. When you are in seminary (in my case, as a professor), you are preparing far fewer messages and you have time to give to preparation because your schedule is much more your own. In the pastorate, so much of your time is not your own. It is dictated by things over which you have little or no control.

What are you saying, then, about preaching in your role as a pastor?

The impact of coming back to the pastorate, therefore, has hit me in the sheer amount of speaking I have to do. Proverbs says that in many words transgression is unavoidable, and I feel that. Not only that, but all of this speaking gobbles up huge amounts of material. It eats up material like television. When you're a seminary professor, you have lots of stimulation, and the outflow is much more restricted. That reverses when you go into the pastorate. The outflow is heavy duty, but the time you have to replenish becomes more limited as the church gets bigger. I feel that in my lack of supporting material, my lack of time to polish and the need to take shortcuts. I have to settle for more limited objectives.

How do you develop the introductions to your sermons?

You can either introduce the sermon as a whole or you can introduce your first point. Almost always, I introduce the entire message. I look for a basic pattern in developing a sermon. I introduce the idea of the entire message in the introduction and then return to it. I want to have echoes of where I started, so people have a feeling of coming full circle, the sense when I'm through, "We've covered this ground; we're home; we're where he said we would go." I try to see the sermon itself as an answer to a question. Therefore, I have to ask, "What's the question to which, if somebody asked it, I would offer this kind of material as a response?" I try to focus that to get clearly in mind what I'm answering, why people need to hear this. I raise that need in the introduction. You can't do this until your sermon is in hand. So, at least for me, introductions get done last.

"I preach deductively"
contradicts?
"I preach inductively" or "I raise need"

What was the greatest challenge for you in approaching the biblical text of this sermon?

The challenge was to preach a poem without destroying it. Preaching a psalm can be like taking a flower apart. By the time you're finished, you've got a bunch of petals lying on the table but you don't have a flower anymore. I tried to make this almost an excursion into literary criticism. I wanted people to come away understanding this psalm better because I had explored it.

Another difficulty lay in the exegetical problems to be solved in Psalm 127. The trickiest was in the line about God giving to His beloved even in His sleep. How do we translate that? Depending on how you translate it, you take off in two different directions. If God is "giving sleep" to His beloved, rather than "in His sleep," you start on a different flow of thought. Even when you've made that decision in translation, you still struggle with an enigmatic phrase having poetical allusions.

Why did you take your sermon in the direction you did?

I was trying to give a glimpse of how poetry works. Most people today do not read poetry. So, I surfaced an example of poetic allusion. Unless you do this, the explanation of "the beloved" sounds farfetched. The author packages poetic allusions into the text, and we have to

363

unpack them to get the most out of the poetry. Only in this way can an audience understand what Solomon is doing in his poem. That has further implications as to whether or not they will hear what God is saying to them in this psalm. The sermon fell naturally into two major sections, because the psalm has two very distinct movements.

Is your sermon inductive or deductive?

Both. The first point is designed to surface the principle of the psalm. Then out of that principle, you're saying, "Look. Here are some cases in point." So, I moved from the principle to specific application. It's a move from the details of the text to its overall principle back down to the details of life. In other words, this is a "principle-applied" sermon.

What skills have stayed with you out of your early training in homiletics?

More than skills, I came away with deep commitments. A commitment to the Word, a commitment not to bore people, a commitment to be clear. As a means of being clear, I focus what I'm doing on a single unit of discourse. That, in turn, allows me to have this so-called "big idea."

Chapter 6

He Who Has Ears to Hear . . .

Jeremiah 1

Bo Matthews

Bo Matthews serves as pastor of Hinson Memorial Baptist Church in Portland, Oregon. Previously, he served as pastor of congregations in Delaware and New York.

304

2. It is the way we determine his perfect will.
3. It is what gives life meaning.

The third rationale is not found in the immediate text and may not be found in exactly those words anywhere in Scripture. But even an overview of Bible characters from Abraham to David to Paul will show that life took on meaning for many of these saints in direct relation to their commitment to a living God. Paul summarized this truth in his letter to the Philippians when he wrote, "For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain" (1:21).

ADD ILLUSTRATIONS AND OTHER RESOURCES

Draw illustrations from personal experience and from biblical and extra-biblical sources to bring light and color to the truth taught by Scripture.

EVALUATE

It is important to evaluate and to be willing to make any necessary changes throughout the entire process. It is much easier to continue the preparation of a message simply because it must be finished than it is to insist on the academic and intellectual integrity that should be a part of every preparation evaluation.

Throughout your sermon preparation, you should constantly ask yourself the following questions:

Is my sermon true to scriptural truth?
Do I know what I am talking about?
Are my objective and the resulting outline crystal clear?
Am I living what I am preaching?
Will this message touch the needs of my audience?
How can I give them a way to respond?

IN CONCLUSION

The very nature of the SCORRE process makes it an excellent tool for Bible study and the preparation of expositional messages. Follow the seven steps as you prepare your next textual message and discover how it helps you identify the objectives of the author and keeps you focused in your presentation.

9

The Use of Humor in Communication

When God created me he did not give me athletic ability, intellectual prowess, or any of the other talents that seem to be so highly valued by our society. Yet he did not pass me by. He gave me a gift that will help me live longer and enjoy life more, and it has opened doors to present the gospel to hundreds of thousands of people around the world. He gave me a twisted mind, a sense of humor that causes me to see the world in a different light. There have been times when I have struggled with this gift. The communicator of the gospel must discover the balance that allows humor to be used as an effective tool to enhance rather than distract from the message.

Someone defined humor as "a gentle way to acknowledge human frailty." Put another way, humor is a way of saying, "I'm not okay and you're not okay, but that's okay, he loves us anyway!" Humor is possible only when people are willing to acknowledge their frailty. The same attitude that makes it possible to admit to God that we are imperfect sinners and rejoice in the fact that he loves us in spite of our imperfection makes it possible to laugh at human imperfection and the imperfections in the world around us.

A misguided television evangelist once wrote that anyone who uses humor in the communication of the gospel is not Spirit-led. Humor, he said, is a tool of the devil. On the contrary, the human spirit can laugh from the depths of the

soul only when freed from the bondage of sin. Much of today's negative perversion of comedy and humor is inappropriate in its own right, but just because humor has been misused doesn't mean it can't be properly used to glorify God.

This chapter is designed to help you develop humor as a tool in your communication arsenal. It will show why humor is important, what makes something funny, and how you can use this valuable resource in your communication. It also covers ways to know what is appropriate, where to look for humor, and how you can develop this skill to fit your own communication style, personal ability, and ministry situation. Whether you think of yourself as a humorous person or not, whether you believe your audience will be receptive to humor or not, this chapter has some valuable insights for you.

THE VALUE OF HUMOR

Before you would even want to develop the skill of using humor in your communication you would have to be convinced of its value. Humor is important for several reasons.

First of all, *humor benefits the mind and body.*

How did a man who sells ice cream ever get to be called the Good Humor man? He didn't tell jokes. It was because of the reactions he elicited in the faces and hearts of hundreds of children when they heard the music played by the ice cream truck. Little eyes would sparkle and children would wake out of sound sleep to greet the man who drove that truck.

Audiences greet the speaker who effectively uses humor the same way. There is anticipation and excitement that causes the blood to flow and the mind to be more alert. Someone has said that humor is internal jogging. It's just plain good for you. Norman Cousins chronicles the simple health benefits of laughter:

> It worked. I made the joyous discovery that ten minutes of genuine belly laughter had an anesthetic effect and would give me at least two hours of pain-free sleep. When the pain-killing effect of the laughter wore off, we would switch on the motion picture projector again, and, not infrequently, it would lead to another pain-free sleep interval. Sometimes, the nurse read to me out of a trove of humor books. Especially usefully were E. B. and Katharine White's *Subtreasury of American Humor* and Max Eastman's *The Enjoyment of Laughter.*
>
> How scientific was it to believe that laughter—as well as the positive emotions in general—was affecting my body chemistry for the better? If laughter did in fact have a salutary effect on the body's chemistry, it seemed at least theoretically likely that it would enhance the system's ability to fight the inflammation. So we took sedimentation rate readings just before as well as several hours after the laughter episodes. Each time, there was a drop of at least five points. The drop by itself was not substantial, but it held and was cumulative. I was greatly elated by the discovery that there is a physiological basis for the ancient theory that laughter is good medicine. (*Anatomy of an Illness as Perceived by the Patient: Reflections on Healing and Regeneration* [Norton, 1979], 39)

There have been times when I have struggled over whether or not to use humor in my presentations. Because of the importance of the gospel I am anxious to get right down to business. I've asked myself, "Is there any benefit to making people laugh?"

A church once asked me to come for the sole purpose of making the people laugh. Of course I was free to share the message of the gospel, but they asked me to keep it light. That evening, I spoke to about seven hundred adults at a Valentine banquet held in the church basement. The audience roared with laughter throughout the evening. Even though I shared with that group what the power of God's grace had done in my life, at the end of the evening I felt a little guilty that I didn't get "more heavy."

When I finished an elderly lady, her face still flushed from laughing came up and clutched my hand. "I don't know how to thank you," she said, her eyes brimming with tears. "Three months ago I lost my husband after forty-five years of marriage. Tonight is the first time I have laughed since he died. I thought that life held no joy without him, but tonight you lifted that burden of depression from my soul. You helped me see that in spite of my sorrow Jesus still has a

rich life for me to live." With a heartfelt thank you she gave me one of the most rewarding hugs I have ever received.

Minutes later the pastor of the church drew me aside. (I am always a bit leery when this happens.) He told me how the church had been going through difficult conflict as a result of a building program. "This . . . this . . ." he struggled to find the right word, ". . . cleansing we experienced tonight is just what we needed." A letter that followed a few weeks later confirmed that the evening had served as a catalyst for some serious prayer, reconciliation, and a new spirit of cooperation among the members of his congregation.

I'm not suggesting that humor is the answer to every problem; however, there are times when humor breaks down the barrier that keeps people from *seeing* the answer. Humor is just plain good for you.

Second, *humor softens the heart.*

In the foreword to my book *How to Speak to Youth . . . & Keep Them Awake at the Same Time*, Tony Campolo recalled a time when humor broke the stiff-necked spirit of a group of teenagers and opened their hearts to the gospel. After an evening of laughter and inspiration Tony said of this audience he felt had been unreachable the night before:

> The atmosphere of the convention changed. The next morning the young people greeted me with rapt attention. They hung on my every word. . . . Ken had done more than just entertain, he made the kids want to listen and respond. He set the stage for one of my most positive experiences speaking with young people!

I have lost count of the times I have stood before an audience that was hostile to the message of Christ, only to see their hearts made soft and receptive by the appropriate use of humor. Whether the audience is six or sixty, humor can break down barriers that almost nothing else can.

After I had spoken before several hundred successful businessmen, one man wrote to say,

> I came prepared to be offended by your religious talk. I wouldn't have been there at all but for a friend who coerced me into going. I was so disarmed by the delightful humor that I forgot to be offended. Before I had a chance to put up my armor I was deeply moved

> by the truth you presented. My friend and I talked all the way home and I prayed to trust Christ for the first time in my life. Thank you for presenting the truth in a way that could reach someone like me.

Third, *humor lets the audience talk back.*

When people laugh or chuckle or just nod their heads in recognition of the funny truth, they are no longer benchwarmers. They have responded. That move from observer to participant plants whatever truth you are communicating deep into the heart. Chances are much greater that they will remember and act upon what you teach.

Fourth, *humor provides instant feedback.*

It is not always easy to tell when you have lost the attention of an adult audience. Teenagers will roll their eyes and begin to play a miniature game of touch football when you have lost their interest, but polite and savvy adults know how to keep looking at you. You can use humor to find out where you stand with them. If your audience laughs, nods, or chuckles, and the humor you used is solidly connected to the truth you are teaching, then you know immediately that they have heard and understood.

Finally, *humor raises the dead.*

Humor also provides an audible and physical break that snaps an audience back to attention. Many of the best speakers use humor at regular intervals in their presentations because they understand its power to bring the wandering mind back to attention even when the audience doesn't seem to respond.

Once, while making a presentation in the Northeast, I found myself speaking to an audience that didn't seem to be present. There was no visible evidence that they heard what I was saying. Some stared out the window. Others just looked in my direction without any expression. I tried my best humor to get them to respond, but except for an occasional chuckle, it seemed I was getting nowhere. I was particularly disturbed by an elderly gentleman who sat in the front row with arms and legs crossed. With the furrow that he kept in his brow it was lucky his eyes didn't cross. His body language indicated that he wasn't about to enjoy any part of this program even if he had to fight it the entire hour.

After a very long hour of intense work with little visible response, I finally closed the program.

The man with the furrow in his brow cornered me by the door. "That was the funniest program I ever heard," he said. "I thought I was going to die." It took all of my will power not to respond, "I thought you had already died."

The point of this true illustration is that even when you are not aware of it, humor is bringing people to life. It recharges batteries and gives the audience the attentive capacity to handle more truth.

WHAT MAKES SOMETHING FUNNY?

That's a serious question. If you know what makes something funny, you can use that knowledge to make anything funny. Some books go into explicit, hair-splitting detail about what makes people laugh. This chapter simply looks at the broad principles so that, without a degree in psychology, you can use those principles to bring humor to your presentations.

To Tell the Truth

The most powerful kind of humor is the humor that is born of simple truth. Few people realize that simply pointing out truth can bring laughter. Consider these: the sign in a jewelry store that offers to pierce ears while you wait (You have to wait to get your ears pierced, don't you?) or the one at the summit of a 14,000-foot mountain that warns "Hill." What makes these things humorous is that they exist.

As I write this I am in the commons area of a Christian cruise ship where most of the passengers are sixty-five years old or older. Last night we hit rough weather that tossed the ship so much that you could barely walk down the hall without bumping into the walls on both sides. As I started my talk for the evening I mentioned that I had never seen so many staggering Baptists in all my life. I was totally surprised by the outburst of laughter. A statement of simple truth coupled with its mental image of staggering Baptists brought smiles and laughter from the entire group.

I often point out to parents that we take ourselves far too seriously. When I remind parents of some of the silly

things they say, they laugh as they recognize the truth. How many times has a parent cornered a child with the words "You look at me when I'm talking to you!" followed immediately by "Don't you look at me like that!" leaving the child with absolutely no place to direct his or her gaze. I laughed out loud at my own ignorance one day when I cornered my teenage daughter and asked, "Do you think I'm stupid?" I suddenly realized that I didn't want a truthful answer. Judging from the laughter of audiences who hear this story, I am not the only one who has asked that question.

Humor that comes from simple truth is low-risk humor. Even if people don't laugh the truth still remains. If that truth is tied securely to the rationale or objective of your message, its purpose is well served whether the audience caught the humor or not. When I ask students of the Dynamic Communicators Workshop if they have ever heard Bill Cosby tell a joke, almost every hand in the class goes up. But they have never heard Bill Cosby tell a joke because Cosby doesn't tell jokes. He talks about real life. His portrayal of family situations and the remembrance of his childhood are simple recollections of slightly exaggerated truth.

The craziness of bureaucracy is suddenly center stage when the speaker mentions the warning tag on his mattress that threatens five years in prison and a $10,000 fine if it is removed. This kind of humor can be used to point out pride, fear, jealousy, and other imperfections that we often ignore except when we are able to laugh at them.

Ridiculous Exaggeration

This is the kind of humor most often associated with comedy. It is very visual and less cerebral than other types of humor. It is high-risk in nature because it will be obvious to the audience that you are trying to be funny. If it fails, it can be embarrassing and can become a barrier to further communication. This is not the kind of humor for beginners or the faint of heart, and there are situations where this kind of humor is not appropriate.

My dad used to say, "If you're going to make a scene, be seen." Exaggerated humor requires total commitment of

mind and body and often must be accompanied by acting, exaggerated facial expression, and unique voice inflections. Sunday morning service, an address at the Rotary Club, or an adult Sunday school class would probably not be enhanced by someone making funny faces or talking in a strange voice to get a laugh. On the other hand it might be just the thing that a youth leader would use to grab the attention of his students. Once again, regardless of the situation this is the kind of humor that must be done well in order to succeed.

Examples of exaggerated humor are most often found with outright comedy. Bill Cosby screws up his face and threatens to run over his son because he brought the car home without filling it with gas. Steven Wright wonders out loud whether some skeletons might have humans hidden in their closets. Robin Williams impersonates a Martian who has just opened a container of L'eggs panty hose. These are all hilarious routines that make full use of exaggeration. They are often limited to performance situations and require exceptional confidence and skill to be effective.

Your own personality and communication situation may eliminate most exaggerated humor from your repertoire. Don't be discouraged by that fact. If you can't sing opera, there are many other kinds of music you can use to express yourself. Similarly, you can find humor that fits your style and situation even if you never use exaggerated comedy-style humor.

Surprise Surprise

The kind of humor most often used in the telling of a joke is humor based on surprise. The punch line is a line that often takes the listener in a direction opposite of the direction the story was leading. It is the clever surprise of this punch line that tickles the funny bone. This kind of humor is also high-risk but does not require the same level of skill that exaggerated humor does. It is acceptable in a wider range of communication situations.

> I broke a mirror the other day and heard I was supposed to get seven years of bad luck. My lawyer thinks he can get me off with three.

> A lady who continually refused to fly because of fear was challenged by her son, "Your refusal to fly shows the weakness of your faith," he exhorted. "Jesus said that he would be with us always." "No he didn't," the woman retorted, "He said, *Low*, I am with you always."

There are many other subtle forms of humor such as special plays on words, unique definitions, etc., but almost all of them fall into one of the categories listed earlier. It is also important to note that much humor makes use of a combination of the elements I've described. If you experience something that you wish to share with your audience you can use the principles already suggested to make it funny.

A little boy working on a report for school laid down his pencil and inquired of his mother. "Mom, where did I come from?" The mother had intended to talk with her son about this but was too busy at the moment so she responded, "The stork brought you." Finding his grandmother in the living room he asked, "Grandmother, where did I come from?" Grandmother was not about to broach this subject so she responded. "The stork brought you just like he brought me and your mother." The boy went back to his room, picked up his pencil and began his report with these words: "There hasn't been a normal birth in our family for three generations."

When I heard this story, I burst out with laughter at the surprise of the ending. How much less effective this would have been if the speaker had said, "A boy once thought that his family had abnormal births because they told him the stork brought him." This demonstrates the principle of timing in humor. Arrange the telling of your story so the surprise is saved until last. Don't give away the surprise and then expect laughter. Even when using simple truth for humor, try it out on your friends before you deliver it in public. Learn to tell your story in such a way that it maximizes the principles that will make it funny.

GET SERIOUS ABOUT HUMOR

Following are some considerations important to the communicator who wants to develop humor.

Know your own style and ability

Many are reluctant to try humor because they believe that to be humorous you must be a comedian. However,

369



many excellent communicators who use humor are not naturally funny people. I have come to accept gratefully the fact that God has made me a funny person. Many times people laugh when I say things that I don't even consider funny. I enjoy making people laugh and find it quite easy, but you don't have to have a twisted mind like mine to use humor. The range of humor extends all the way from wit that elicits a knowing nod to comedy that triggers uncontrollable laughter. Somewhere within those boundaries you will find humor that is consistent with your own style and ability.

Whatever you do it is important that you don't try to be someone you are not. If you are not a naturally funny person the humor you use will probably be closer to intellectual wit or poignant anecdote than outright comedy. Some of my favorite humorists are people who would never make it as a stand-up comedian.

Mark Twain had a dry, satirical wit that also conveyed intelligence and wisdom, yet I don't think there were a lot of belly laughs in response to his speeches.

One of my favorites, Will Rogers, elicited laughter yet remained dignified and intelligent in his delivery. "I don't belong to an organized political party," he said, "I'm a Republican!"

Tony Campolo uses a unique and dynamic delivery that is peppered with exaggeration, surprise, and truth. He uses the full range of humor to communicate a message that is very serious.

Even Billy Graham frequently uses humor in his presentation, but you will never hear him use voice inflections, or exaggerated facial expressions, because for him that would be totally out of character. Be yourself.

Don't set yourself up for failure

All humor can be divided into two basic categories: high-risk humor and low-risk humor. High-risk humor is the kind that demands a response of laughter. An obvious joke or exaggerated humor falls into this category.

If you stand in front of an audience and announce, "I heard a good one the other day, you're going to love it," you are attempting high-risk humor. If the audience doesn't laugh at the end of your story, there is going to be an

embarrassing silence that comedians call death. It doesn't matter that you don't consider yourself a comedian, if you set your audience up for laughter and don't deliver, you will die just like a comedian.

Even without an introduction some jokes and stories are high-risk. Consider telling a story that begins like this: "One day a man walked into a pet shop and asked if he could buy a Christian parrot." You are already in high-risk territory. The very concept of the story tips your audience that this is supposed to be funny. Now you've got to deliver. When humor fails, it hinders communication and takes a painful slice out of the speakers self-esteem. For that reason I suggest you use low-risk humor to start with. There are two kinds of low-risk humor. The first kind includes jokes and stories that are so good that they never fail. Those kind are few and far between. Test them first and practice your timing before you deliver them in a critical situation. Even a sure-fire story can be ruined with a sloppy delivery.

The second kind of low-risk humor is the best. This type of humor is composed of true stories or other illustrations that carry their own weight even if no one laughs. Humor born of truth falls into this category. These kinds of stories are perfect for developing humorous skills because you have nothing to lose.

Our four-year-old daughter threw her hip against our bedroom door one morning and with indignation announced, "I've had a tooth under my pillow for three days." With her hands firmly planted on her hips, she groused, "If the fairy doesn't come tonight she is going to be missing some teeth of her own." Then she turned on her heel and left the room.

I often use this story to show how we begin early in life to lose patience over little things. Most of the time this story gets laughter, but even when it doesn't nothing is lost. It is low-risk humor, and the story stands on its own as a good illustration. This kind of humor also gives you the opportunity to try it more than once, practicing your timing and delivery until you get it right. Just be sure that you don't deliver your story and then wait for laughter. Doing that immediately turns a low-risk situation into a high-risk situation. If you expect laughter and it doesn't come, just continue without pausing and no one will ever know.

Be aware of the double edge of humor

Humor is like a double-edged sword. One edge can be used to build up and encourage, and the other edge can be used to destroy. You must be very careful to know which edge of the sword you are wielding. It is interesting to watch children use both sides of this sword with skill.

Teenagers will often adopt nicknames for each other derived from some perceived imperfection. A boy with large feet may be called "Shoes" by his buddies. This demonstrates that his friends recognize that he has big feet, but they like him anyway. A boy in my school walked through a plate glass door and from that day forward was affectionately referred to as "Spook" because he had the ability to walk through walls. Yet teenagers use the same type of humor to ostracize and humiliate people they don't like. They know how to use both edges of the sword.

Some people contend that this kind of humor should never be used. I disagree. Among friends it is a way of showing intimacy and acceptance. However, it should never be used with strangers. What you meant to be a gesture of humorous acceptance can easily be taken as a cruel remark by someone you don't know. An audience that is not familiar with you may not take kindly to this kind of humor even if it is directed toward a friend. They have no way of knowing you are friends and simply conclude that you are insensitive and cruel. In this regard ethnic humor is potentially lethal and should be avoided. Although you may have an ethnic friend in the audience with whom you are accustomed to making such exchanges, the chances are slim that the audience will accept such humor even if delivered with the best intentions.

I should caution you that you will not please everybody with your humor. If you use humor you are going to receive some criticism. The key is to know your audience and use humor that is appropriate. If you are unsure whether something is appropriate, it is probably good counsel not to use it. Remember, humor is a tool to enhance your communication. If you feel a story or joke might stand in the way of that communication, don't hesitate to eliminate it from your presentation.

Unfortunately, there are also those who feel that humor

371

has no part in any presentation of the gospel. If you are in a church where that view prevails, or if you find yourself in a situation where the audience would be offended if you used humor, deliver your speech with power and dignity and move on. In fifteen years of ministry in which I have used humor extensively, I have run into few people who are totally humorless and few churches that won't accept some humor even in worship.

Usually it's the style of delivery that determines whether it is appropriate or not. There are stories I use in concert where I jump all over the stage, contort my face, and use strange accents. When I tell the same stories in a worship service, I do it without all the accompanying body English and it's perfectly acceptable.

Watch other people

Develop the eye of the hunter as you look for humor in everyday situations and watch and learn from people who are experts at humor. Listen to how Bill Cosby gets people to laugh by telling a story about something that most people have experienced. Stand-up comedians are not so valuable a resource as communicators who use humor well. Howard Hendricks and Tony Campolo are a couple of examples. Watch these people and see how they make their delivery. Be aware of the timing that can make or break humor and watch how the audience responds to different attempts at humor. When you see humor fail, ask yourself why and try to analyze how it might have been done differently.

Practice, practice, practice

Use friends, a spouse, or anyone who is friendly enough to listen. Begin to work low-risk humor into your presentations and don't be discouraged with occasional failure. This entire chapter is devoted to humor because it is a powerful tool and well worth developing.

Recall the definition of humor attributed to Victor Borge: "The shortest distance between two people." That puts it in a nutshell. We have the greatest message in the universe and any legitimate method of opening hearts to receive that message should be explored to the fullest.

10

Body Language

Appearances can be deceiving. How many times have you judged someone on the basis of outward appearance only to discover you were wrong? A sloppily dressed person may surprise you with the delivery of a well-organized, persuasive speech. But first you must overcome the barrier of that first impression. Likewise the importance of a well-prepared speech may be lost if the communicator delivers that speech without passion or expression. Body language, facial expression, and gestures convey the conviction that makes you believable. This chapter deals with how you can use your body to enhance the power of your communication.

BE AWARE OF YOUR APPEARANCE

Why should those of us who communicate the message of the gospel be concerned about how we look? Because the audience we are trying to reach is very much affected by outward appearance. Sloppy dress, outdated styles, and poor choice of clothing can distract and cause the audience to prejudge the value of what you are about to say. As much as I try to concentrate on the content of the speech, I even find myself distracted by careless dressing.

Here are some principles that may keep you from hindering your communication efforts.

1. Be stylish, but don't overdo it.

It is always a good rule to dress slightly more formally than the audience. Although some may come to church dressed in jeans and sweatshirts, it enhances the image of the pastor, teacher, or youth leader to be "dressed up." This doesn't mean the speaker has to wear a designer suit or dress, it simply means that your appearance should convey the idea that you are to be taken seriously.

In many ways vestments, which some ministers wear, solve this problem. Clerical garb not only symbolizes authority, it also nullifies the tendency to criticize style. If the pastor is wearing such a garment no one is going to be distracted by the loudness of his tie, the cut of her dress, or the specific label of the garment.

But many pastors don't wear vestments. The communication efforts of youth workers and Sunday school teachers would be hindered by such a garment. Still, your goal in dress ought to accomplish the same end. You should strive to be stylish enough not to distract by being old-fashioned, and conservative enough not to distract by being flamboyant. As a communicator you are trying to make a *statement*, but usually not a *fashion* statement.

Your audience should determine how you will dress. When speaking to the corporate executives of IBM, dress accordingly. When speaking to youth, be careful not to be too formal. I worked with youth for many years and became fully aware of their obsession with style and dress. I'm sure they would be distracted if at camp I got up to speak in a three-piece business suit. As a teenager, however, I was always distracted by the other extreme: the speaker who presented his message dressed in shorts and a sloppy T-shirt. The knees of anyone over thirty are not usually a pretty sight. Teenagers don't expect adults to dress exactly like them to be accepted, but they will expect you to be up-to-date.

Not only is it important to wear the appropriate clothing, but it is also important to know how to wear it. I am always distracted watching a man try to communicate a serious and intelligent message with a tie that reaches only halfway to his belt. This is especially bad if the skinny part of the tie is hanging two inches below the wide part. Many people would have a difficult time taking seriously a person with this appearance.

I used to laugh at the concept of color coordination until I was made to realize that we live in a society that is very aware of poor color combinations. On more than one occasion I have given thanks for a wife who sent me back to the closet to take off the green tie because it didn't go with the navy suit.

Here are some simple rules:

- Always try to dress slightly more formally than your audience.
- Know how to combine colors and the proper way to wear clothes.
- When traveling bring clothes that will give you flexibility. Nothing is more uncomfortable than to arrive at an informal gathering in formal clothes or vice versa.
- When in doubt lean toward the conservative.
- Seek the advice of those who know.

2. Keep clean and well groomed

Recently I received a videotape of a speech I had given in front of 11,000 teenagers. I heard my children chuckling as they watched the tape. I was mortified to see that I had given that entire speech looking like Dennis the Menace. Several hairs on the back of my head were sticking straight up in the air. Not only did it show up on the small television, but at the actual event my image had been projected larger than life on a thirty-foot screen. Those few hairs must have looked like palm trees swaying in the breeze. No one walked out of the meeting because of those hairs, but I am sure that they were a distraction. Well-kept hair, freshly ironed clothes, clean fingernails, shined shoes, and fresh breath are all an important part of a professional appearance.

3. Do a last-minute check

Few speakers approach the microphone intending to look disheveled and unkempt, but unless you do a last-minute check you could easily give an impassioned speech with one side of your collar sticking straight up. On three separate occasions I have tried to communicate to an audience who would not listen because I had neglected to check my fly. (I have talked with dozens of other speakers who have made the same mistake.) I watched in amazement one night as a woman gave an entire speech with an earring caught in her hair. Through the entire speech, it hung just below her jaw, suspended by an invisible thread of hair.

378



Before you move to the front of any room to do any kind of communication make a last-minute check of your hair, tie, buttons, zippers, shirt tail, and accessories.

ESTABLISH GOOD EYE CONTACT

"Look at me when I'm speaking to you." How many times a parent has used those words to establish eye contact with a child. The most well-prepared speech delivered with poor eye contact will lose much of its effectiveness. It is the eyes that convey sincerity and conviction. All the passion you can muster in the tone of your voice as you proclaim, "I love you," will not register if you don't look into the eyes of the one you say you love. Parents insist that children look into their eyes to see whether they are telling the truth. Few people will buy a used car from a salesperson with shifty eyes. If a person won't look at you, you feel he can't be trusted. Lack of good eye contact will be interpreted by your audience as a lack of confidence, insincerity, apathy, or outright deception. Recognize and avoid the bad habits associated with poor eye contact.

DON'T BE A SWEEPER

One of the most common bad habits among speakers is the practice of sweeping the audience without ever focusing on any one person. An audience is simply a group of individuals. If you neglect to recognize those individuals by never establishing personal eye contact, your whole audience will feel left out. Even though you may not look at every person, your presentation will be much more personal if you establish eye contact with individuals. Don't be a sweeper.

DON'T BE A SHIFTER

A shifter can establish individual eye contact, but only for a brief moment. This undesirable habit will cause your audience to think that you are ashamed or have something to hide. Shifty eyes have always been associated with someone who can't be trusted. As one who is entrusted with the most

important message on earth, you don't want to be misread in this way. Don't be a shifter.

DON'T BE A BIRD WATCHER

The speaker with the bird-watcher habit occasionally acknowledges the audience with a glance or two but spends much of the time looking at other items of interest. The bird watcher gazes out the window, examines flaws in the woodwork, or finds any other safe haven that will keep him or her from seeing real people. I once watched a man give an entire message watching a spider crawl across the ceiling. Instead of being focused on the speaker, most of the eyes in the room were on the spider.

Nothing other than people in your audience should capture your attention. Professional stage entertainers are taught early in their careers not to be distracted by backstage sound. Don't be a bird watcher.

DON'T BE A DREAMER

The dreamer is the speaker who gazes into empty space during the presentation of the message. The eyes are focused on nothing. Unfortunately, the audience listening to a dreamer will often conclude that there is also nothing between this speaker's ears. The most intelligent presentation delivered by a speaker who seems to be in another world will not be received with the respect it deserves. Don't be a dreamer.

DON'T BE A READER

The reader finds sanctuary from personal eye contact by keeping his head buried in a script. Although a motivated audience might survive such a delivery, most audiences will quickly lose interest. Even if you prepare scripted messages it is important to be familiar enough with that message to be able to look up and acknowledge your audience. If you intend to read a speech it would save much time and effort simply to put it on tape. Don't be a reader. Establish the habits of good eye contact.

SPEAK TO INDIVIDUALS

An audience is made up of individuals who want to be acknowledged. One evening I watched a speaker get up and spend about thirty seconds looking around the audience, making eye contact with many of the people there. Occasionally he would nod or smile as someone acknowledged the eye contact. Just as I began to wonder if he was ever going to speak, the man took a deep breath and said, "I can see that I am going to enjoy the next half hour." Wow, what a way to win an audience. Basically he was saying, "I see you and I like you." Even those who had not been directly affected by his kind gaze felt that he was aware of their presence.

As you speak, pick out individuals in the audience and speak directly to them, make sure that you include those who sit farther back and at the edges of your audience.

COMPLETE A THOUGHT WITH ONE PERSON

In a society that craves intimacy and fears it at the same time, eye contact can be a little uncomfortable. I used to tell my students that they should "look until it hurts." In other words, they should keep the eye contact with a single individual until it begins to feel uncomfortable. Unfortunately it got uncomfortable so quickly, that they changed from dreamers and sweepers into shifters. They would establish eye contact and then immediately look away. Since then I have asked students to complete a thought while keeping eye contact with one person and then move on to establish contact with someone else.

I am always asked whether eye contact won't make the audience uncomfortable and turn them off. I can't remember ever seeing someone establish such intense eye contact that it negatively affected communication, but I have seen hundreds who seemed to communicate a lack of confidence and even shame by their refusal to acknowledge the individuals in the audience with sustained eye contact.

KNOW HOW TO HANDLE LARGE AUDIENCES

In a large audience it is still important to practice the principles of good eye contact. Even when you cannot make

375

out the faces of those in the back of the auditorium, pick out one person and complete a thought with that person. Imagine that it is just you and she in a conversation, and communicate your thought with sincerity and personal conviction. If you speak to no one, no one will think you are speaking to him or her. On the other hand, it has been proved that if you pick out someone far back in the audience and speak directly to that person, many seated near that person will believe that you are speaking to them.

Many times I find myself speaking in situations where I can see absolutely nothing. The auditorium lights have been dimmed and two or three spotlights render me legally blind. I used to struggle in these situations until a kind pastor who was actually close to legally blind shared a secret. "I can't see a thing beyond my notes," he confided, "but I know most of the families that are out there. Although I can't see who the people are I direct my message to specific members of my congregation. I may not be looking at Mr. Smith, but in my mind I'm talking to him personally. Then I talk to little Jenny Horton awhile. In this way my audience is never aware that I can't see who they are."

This man in his seventies is one of the finest communicators I have ever met. Even though he can't see, he talks to individual people. Eye contact is a very important ingredient in dynamic communication.

REMOVE YOUR GLASSES WHEN YOU SPEAK

If at all possible, remove your glasses when you speak. Most of the time the light reflecting from the lens of a pair of glasses will completely obliterate any glimpse of the speaker's eyes. Most communications courses make this recommendation, yet only a few speakers follow the advice.

If you use a manuscript and your eyesight is so bad that you can't read without your glasses, then it may be more of a hindrance to do without them, but with a little practice most speakers find it quite simple to put their glasses on when they need to read and remove them when they are speaking. Let the audience get the full benefit of good eye contact.

PRACTICE UNTIL GOOD EYE CONTACT IS NATURAL

Developing the habit of good eye contact does not come easily. It takes a lot of practice. Have friends or your spouse constantly critique your eye contact. Describe a dreamer, shifter, and sweeper and ask them to point out when you slip into those bad habits. My wife reminds me when I slip into the habit of speaking to only one side of the room. I have excellent eye contact; it's just that I tend to discriminate and give it to only half the audience. I treat the audience on the right side of the room as though they don't exist, and it is only with her help that I become aware of it.

You can also practice with a video camera. Place the camera somewhere in the audience and as you speak make a conscious effort to use good eye contact. Include the camera. That's right! Several times make an effort to look into the lens and complete a thought. When you watch this video you will immediately spot any tendency to shift or sweep, and you will be amazed at the power of eye contact when your own gaze comes to rest on you. You might even get convicted by your own message. The video camera is a powerful tool for growing in excellence as a communicator. Use it often to check up on your eye contact.

Daily conversation provides another opportunity for practice. Look at people as you converse with them. Don't just look in their direction, look into their eyes. You will find it easier to practice the same kind of eye contact with large groups.

LET YOUR BODY LANGUAGE MATCH YOUR WORDS

Have you ever watched a speaker talk about the joy of living for Christ with an expression that seemed more appropriate for attending the funeral of a favorite pet? When someone says, "Boy, was that speaker enthusiastic!" he is not describing the words but the facial expressions, the body language, and the tone of voice that accompanied the words.

It is the face that makes the audience believe that you believe what you say. When you really believe what you say, your whole body gets involved. Can you picture a woman

376

walking slowly down the corridor of her apartment building repeating quietly, in a monotone voice, "Fire. Fire. Help. The building is on fire." Of course not. If such a scene should occur, I doubt that anyone would pay attention. But such a scene would never happen. A woman with that kind of urgent message would be wide-eyed, waving her arms, and screaming at the top of her lungs, "FIRE! FIRE!"

When you speak of joy, does your face show it? Can people see in your body language those things that make you sad? Does your expression leave no doubt that you are excited about the Christianity you proclaim?

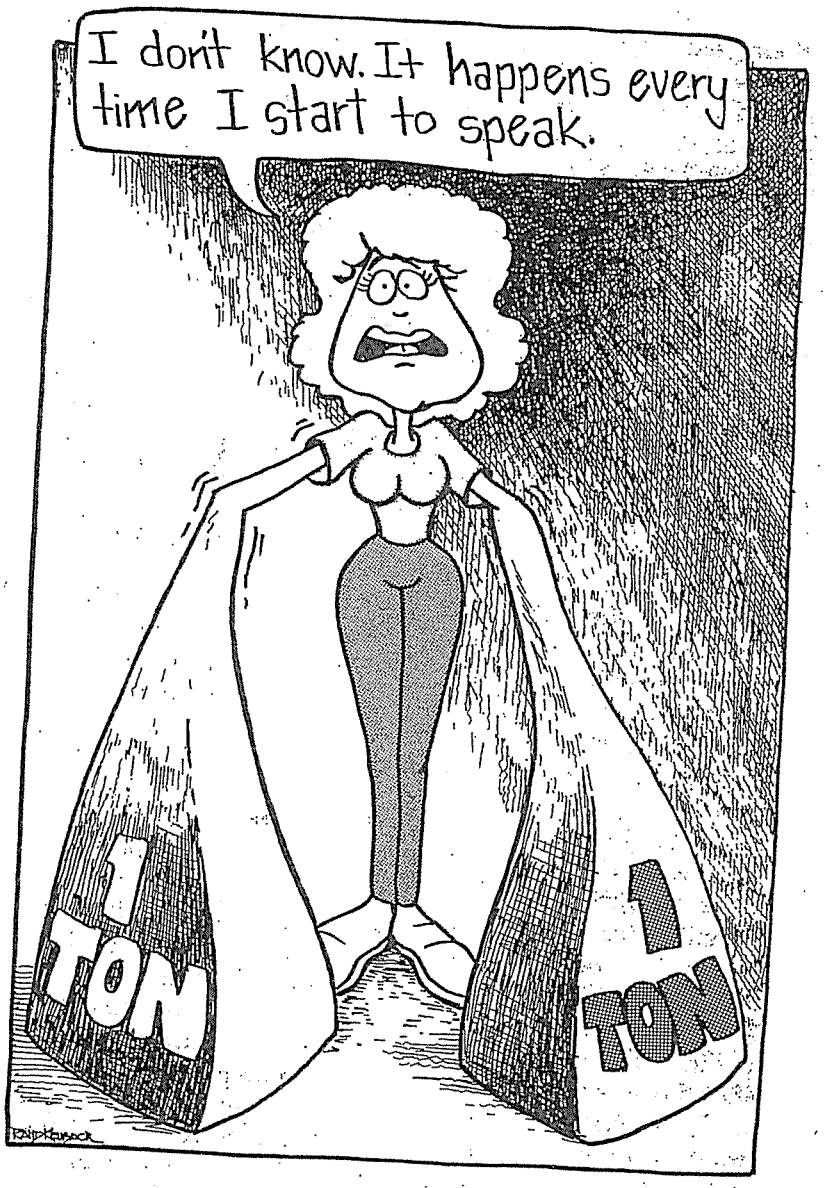
One student responded to that question by saying, "Oh, I can do that. I took drama classes for three years in college." He missed the point. There is no need to act. Simply allow your whole body to communicate. Of all people, communicators ought to be the ones who wear their hearts on their sleeves. Of course, it is possible to get too emotional and hinder your communication, but in all my years of teaching I have seen only a few who carry body language to the extreme. Most don't even begin to tap the potential of this aspect of communication.

Before you give your next sermon or talk, deliver it into a mirror or video camera. Ask yourself, "If I were listening to this person, would I think that he or she was excited about what is being said? Would the enthusiasm make me want to hear more?"

Ask, "How would I express myself if I were sharing this truth with a close friend?" If messages were delivered with half the excitement we use in everyday conversation, audience interest would pick up dramatically.

USE APPROPRIATE GESTURES

The same advise given above applies to gestures. We walk around all day waving our arms and making extensive use of our hands as we communicate to everyone around us. But when we step up to speak it's as though the arms are hollow and someone has poured them full of cement. Or in front of an audience we repeat one gesture over and over like a robot with a short circuit. Nervous tension and habit are the culprits. Relax and carry your gestures to their fullest extent.



377

Tension turns even experienced speakers into flippers. Flippers let their arms hang like lead at their sides, and all their gestures are reduced to a little helpless flipping motion of the hands. It doesn't matter whether the speaker is describing a tiny breath of wind or a major hurricane, the same anemic flip of the wrist is used to describe both. Others interlock their fingers at about waist level just to make sure those hands don't get out of control. Free yourself up! Let your hands paint the pictures your lips describe.

Just as it is nearly impossible to have too much eye contact, so it is almost impossible to overdo gestures. Occasionally I run across a flapper (one whose gestures are so exaggerated that they detract from the message), but it is extremely rare. Practice with the mirror, videotaping, and constructive critique from friends. If you think of your speech as a conversation with a friend, it will help you relax. The only difference between talking with a friend and talking to a group is the number of friends in the room.

Enlist others to help you identify those habitual gestures and quirky motions that detract from communication. It was only after repeated suggestions from my wife that I took the time to watch a video to see one of these gremlins in my own presentation. Out of habit I would constantly pinch my nose. In one speech alone I reached up and grabbed my nose twenty-one times. This unneeded gesture did nothing to enhance my talk, and I was totally unaware that I was doing it.

At an Easter service I heard one of the finest messages on the Resurrection ever presented. Unfortunately the pastor had a distracting habit that no one had ever been kind enough to bring to his attention. As he began a dramatic phrase he would pull his head down until it looked as though he had no neck. Then as he delivered the phrase he would increase in volume and slowly, with a jerky mechanical kind of motion extend his neck to its maximum length. After the service we were invited to attend a luncheon along with other visitors to the church. The conversation in several groups centered not around the excellent content of the pastor's message, but the unique turtle-like quality of the pastor's neck.

Very seldom will you find someone in your audience willing to risk telling you that you look like a turtle. So it is of

utmost importance that you use video and the critique of friends to spot those distracting motions and exorcise them from your presentations.

STAND AND DELIVER

One very important aspect of your communication is the way you stand. I have watched communicators of every age, sex, and ability sway rhythmically as they speak, causing seasickness in a significant proportion of the audience. I have watched as they paced like a caged lion or simply walked in small circles like a bewildered beast. I've seen speakers draped on the podium like a lion in the afternoon sun or watched as a person shifted weight from one foot to another with a frequency that caused me to worry if the hip joint would hold. I personally have become rooted on one side of the platform to deliver the entire speech to one side of the audience. Most of these tendencies can be corrected by practicing correct posture and stance.

To communicate with authority and confidence, stand with your feet slightly apart and one foot slightly ahead of the other. With your weight evenly distributed between both feet, bend slightly at the waist and lean toward the audience. Communicate a complete thought using this confident stance, then if you are going to move, do it between thoughts. When you move, move with purpose. Do it only to emphasize your next point with a different segment of the audience. Random pacing is very distracting. Get where you want to be, take a solid stand, and communicate again.

Stand on your own two feet. Avoid leaning against podiums, pulpits, music stands, or other solid objects.

In conclusion, the object is not to become an actor or entertainer who plays with people's emotions, but to allow your body to express the concepts and emotions you are teaching with your lips. When communicating the Good News of Jesus Christ don't be afraid to let your body talk.

378

11

Controlling Your Environment To Enhance Communication

While visiting a church not long ago I found myself strangely depressed. The music was excellent and the pastor's message was well-prepared and to the point, yet I couldn't shake a dreary feeling. About halfway through the service I realized the cause of it. I couldn't see anything. The dark stained-glass windows held out much of the light, and the available light in the church threw foreboding shadows over the eyes of all who ventured near the front. To make matters worse, the sound system gave the pastor's voice a tinny quality and rang with an annoying squeal whenever his voice hit a certain tone. This sincere man of God was trying to communicate a message of love and hope in a depressing environment.

Your environment profoundly influences the effectiveness of your communication. This chapter will cover the steps you can take to control your environment to enhance the effectiveness of your communication.

LET THERE BE LIGHT

One of the first things that God did after he created the earth was to command, "Let there be light." Ever since that day he has chosen to work in the light, he refers to himself as light, and he created a people that prefers light to darkness

376

unless they are seeking to do evil (John 3:19). Why then are the buildings we call his house so often dark and dingy?

Lighting sets the atmosphere of a room. As far as I'm concerned, the atmosphere of a monastery is not conducive to twentieth-century worship. The church service I mentioned earlier was rendered impersonal and cold by the faceless bodies that spoke from the podium. Furthermore, the faces were made downright spooky by the inadequate lighting coming from above.

If you want to set a temporary mood of dreary darkness, have a lighting system that will adjust to that level at *the appropriate time*, but the sermon is *not* the appropriate time.

When the communicator's face is visible, the communication is much more powerful. When the communicator's eyes are visible the communication is a hundredfold more powerful than that.

Many people have become so accustomed to poor lighting that they are unaware of its negative effect. But it does have an effect.

I was once asked to speak at a gathering of about eight hundred people in Canada. When I arrived I discovered that the lighting was terrible. The meeting was held in a huge gymnasium, and the only light came from dim incandescent bulbs high in the ceiling. As one of the organizers of the event walked across the stage I could see none of the features in his face. I couldn't tell whether he was smiling or frowning or whether he had been born without a face. I was standing in about the third row at the time, so you can imagine what the people in the back could see.

I make maximum use of facial expression in my speaking, yet I was being asked to communicate in darkness. I begged the man to find some way to light that stage. I had kindly requested adequate lighting months before coming, but those requests had been ignored. Because they had never used additional lighting in the past, they saw no reason to start now. I could tell that my host was a little angry about my concern even though I explained that my only desire was to create an environment in which to communicate effectively. After some scrambling he located a light used for a home movie camera and improvised a stand to hold it. It was far



from perfect, but the harsh light provided just enough illumination so everyone could see my face.

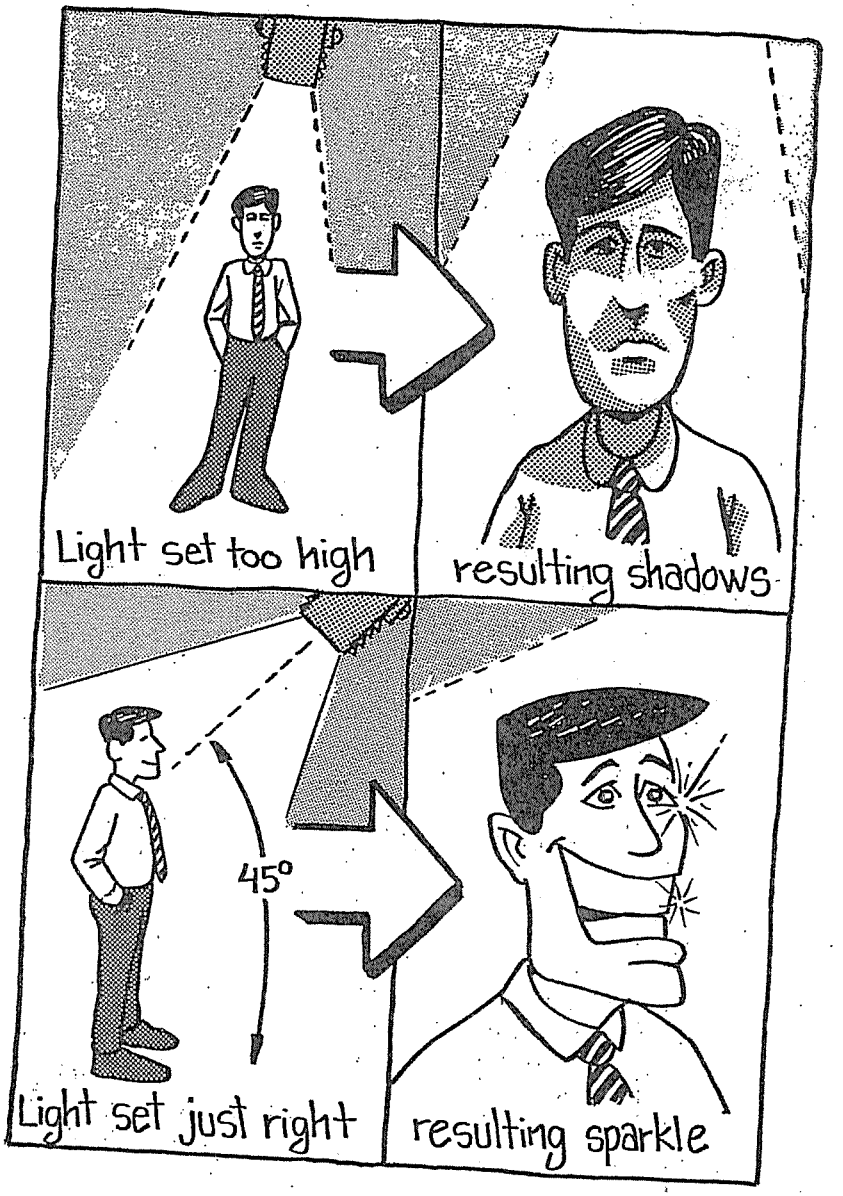
For the first fifteen minutes of the speech, the audience responded with enthusiasm and spirit. Then suddenly the light went out, leaving only the dim ceiling lights. I continued my presentation, but the spirit of the audience changed immediately. The audience laughter seemed forced and died away as quickly as it had begun. I rarely have trouble controlling a group, but within minutes I could hear some of the young people in the back begin to have their own conversations. After several minutes someone discovered the plug had been kicked from the wall and plugged it back in. When the light came back on there was spontaneous applause from the audience. The attention of the kids in the back snapped back to the stage, and the group responded with the same delighted enthusiasm that they exhibited at the beginning of the program.

The audience would never have been conscious of the lack of light had they not been able to see clearly in the first part of the program, but its absence would have affected their attitudes and responses throughout the entire program. The host apologized profusely after the program. "I never realized," he said, "the difference that good lighting makes."

Christianity is about new life in Christ. Does the place that you present this wonderful message look like a place to celebrate life or is it more like a morgue?

Here is a test you can conduct to see whether the lighting in your situation is adequate for good communication. Have someone stand where you usually stand when you speak, then walk to the back of the room or auditorium. If from the back you can see all the facial features of the person in front clearly, give yourself a C+. If there are no shadows in the eye sockets or under the nose give yourself a B+. Lighting that is too close to the front and coming from too sharp an angle will create these hideous shadows. They make the eyes look hollow and sunken, and give the speaker the appearance of a talking skull. If you can see a pinpoint of reflected light in the eyes of the person up front give yourself an A+.

That is the kind of lighting that is most conducive to good communication. That kind of lighting makes a room feel warm and interesting and has a way of brightening the



spirit. If you take out a recent professional photograph of yourself or a friend you will see that pinpoint of light in the eye. It is so important to bringing life to the photo that if it does not appear in the original print the photographer will touch up the photo and paint it in. In larger auditoriums you won't see this pinpoint of light from the back, but if the lighting is right, it should be visible from closer up.

They say that the eyes are the window to the soul. The eyes are the first place to see indications that your children are sick or that they are lying. The sincerity and integrity that can be communicated only with the eyes will be lost on the audience if they can't see the eyes. Time after time I have seen poor lighting draw power from an excellent message. I have given substantial space to this subject because of the important role this overlooked factor has on communication.

For small groups such as Sunday school classes and Bible studies, the lighting is not so critical because the teacher or speaker is close enough to be seen. Even so, make sure these rooms are bright and cheery. For larger youth groups and Sunday school classes (fifty or more) some kind of additional lighting will usually be beneficial. If the room is relatively small, this can be done inexpensively. Light these rooms so that you can clearly see facial expressions and the pinpoint of light in the eye.

Objections to Good Lighting

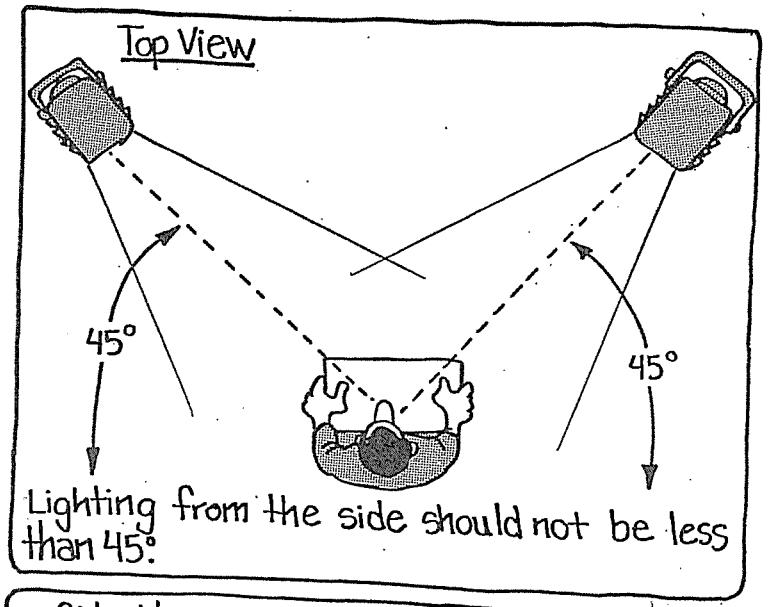
Although lighting a church sanctuary properly need not be expensive, it is often difficult to get a church body to agree to purchase the necessary equipment. Here are some common objections.

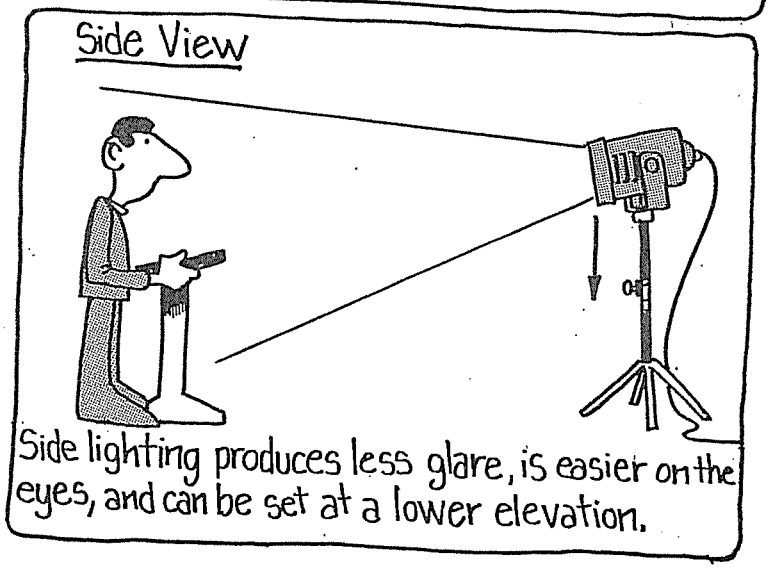
The light gets in our eyes.

This objection will be raised by those who speak from the platform. The truth is that good lighting will always be in the eyes of the speaker. Good lighting is a little uncomfortable for the speaker, especially at first. Eventually you get used to it and forget it is even there. But be prepared—the budget committee chairman will never get used to it.

It focuses attention on the pastor instead of the Lord.

I have never understood this kind of thinking, but it comes up all the time. Carried to its conclusion, this argument would require the pastor to be out of sight





382

completely to give his message. It is the pastor's calling to proclaim the gospel to those in the congregation. To do that effectively, he must be visible. Once he is seen it is his responsibility to focus the attention on Jesus. If the communicator of the gospel is in the dark, I can't guarantee where the attention of the audience will be, but I bet it won't be on the message.

We've done without it for fifty years. There is no need to change now.

Unfortunately this is one objection that is hard to overcome. The best solution I have found is to let the congregation experience the right kind of lighting for several Sundays. Then in the middle of the sermon have someone kick out the plug. You will have a new lighting system within a matter of weeks.

If you decide to enhance the quality of your speaking environment, contact lighting specialists and stay with them during the planning and installation to make sure the guidelines in this chapter are met. In most churches you can buy and install the lights yourself at significantly reduced cost. Once again you can do this effectively if you follow the guidelines. Here they are in simple review.

1. Facial expression should be clearly visible from anywhere in the audience.
2. The lights should be at a low enough angle to avoid casting shadows over the eyes. You can determine this by turning all the other lights off when you do the test. Lower the angle of the lights until the shadows are gone and stop at that point. The glare in the eyes of the speaker will be at a minimum. See Figure 1.
3. Look for the pinpoint of light in the pupil of the speaker's eye. That pinpoint is a primary indication that the lights are at a low enough angle and bright enough. Remember that in larger auditoriums not everyone in the audience will be able to see that pinpoint, but those sitting toward the front should be able to. Two lights can be mounted at an angle off to the side as long as they still create the pinpoint of light and are equal in intensity. Sometime this reduces the glare in the speaker's eyes and allows the lights to be placed at a lower angle. See Figure 2.

4. Make the light as unobtrusive as possible.

You don't want the front of the church to look like a night club stage. Use soft, unfocused light and flesh-tone gels to get the warm, well-lit effect that doesn't distract.

LET THOSE WHO WILL HEAR, HEAR

Know the importance of good quality sound.

Almost as bad and just as common as poor lighting is a cheap sound system that detracts from the message with its poor quality reproduction and constant squealing feedback.

For three reasons a sound system is important for groups of more than one hundred. First, it enables everyone in the audience to hear clearly. Second, it saves strain on the speaker's voice. Third, it gives the speaker tremendous versatility in voice inflection. With a good sound system even a whisper can be heard.

Know how to recognize good quality sound.

As with lighting, there are methods to determine whether you have or need a good quality sound system. The need for a sound system is as dependent on the acoustics of a room as it is on the size. Some rooms resonate sound well enough so that you can talk in a normal voice and be easily heard by a hundred people. Other rooms soak up sound like a sponge and need a sound system for any size group. Still others reverberate sound, making anything the speaker says unintelligible.

If you can speak softly and the entire audience can still hear what you say with ease, you probably don't need a sound system. If not, then some kind of system would be helpful.

If the system you have sounds tinny and thin, if it tends to give off feedback or a hollow-barrel kind of ringing when the speaker hits certain tones, then you would do well to consider getting something that helps rather than hinders your communication efforts. Test out several systems and look for one that has adjustable equalization (or tone control) so that you can get rid of feedback in a variety of situations. Look for a system that reproduces sound with a rich quality that doesn't make the hair stand up on the back of your neck. If you feel inadequate to make these judgments, find someone who knows about the quality sound systems that

383

music groups use and will be able to tell you what works and what doesn't. Don't rely on the word of a salesperson.

It is also important to remember that a good system is useless unless it has a quality microphone. In almost all church situations it should be omnidirectional and capable of picking up sound from a foot or two away without diminishing its quality. With an omnidirectional microphone you don't have to be exactly in front of the microphone for it to be effective. Get the opinion of someone who knows good sound and will not benefit personally from your purchase.

I recently did a presentation in a new multimillion-dollar facility that had dozens of tiny speakers recessed in the ceiling. Most of them rattled and the feedback problems were tremendous. When I heard what that system cost I almost fell over. For less than half the money this church could have had the best of sound. Make sure you have what you want before you invest. A small church may wish to have portable speakers that can be used in a variety of situations. I have even seen larger churches use such systems economically.

Know how to use the microphone.

1. If the microphone is attached to the podium make sure that it extends far enough back toward the speaker to be useful. Microphones work their best when they are within a few inches of your lips. At first this is uncomfortable, but after awhile you won't even know it is there.
2. Ideally the microphone should be located at a forty-five degree angle just below the lips. If you position the microphone parallel to the floor and at lip height you will get a popping sound every time you pronounce hard consonants like "p."
3. If the microphone is attached to the podium or pulpit, don't allow your hands, books, or papers to hit the podium. Microphones magnify such sounds into loud booms. As a precaution, cushion the microphone holder to minimize this tendency.
4. When you speak into a microphone that is attached to a stand, don't touch the stand or keep removing the microphone. This makes an unbearable noise that is impossible to ignore. If you must remove the microphone, stop speaking, remove it as carefully as

possible, and then continue speaking. In the same vein, *never* adjust a gooseneck microphone holder without first removing the microphone. If you adjust it while it is still in the stand the resulting sound is not unlike the sound of a garbage truck compacting trash.

5. Do not fondle the microphone or its stand. This distracting habit is common among singers and entertainers. It should never be the practice of an effective communicator.
6. Stay close to the microphone. Speakers who are not used to using a microphone often act as if it is electrified. You should never be more than a few inches from it.
7. Adjust the sound levels and height of the microphone before you begin speaking and then *leave it alone.* Chances are that you will remain the same height throughout the speech. Do not allow someone to keep adjusting the volume levels as you speak. These well-meaning people nullify the value of a microphone by trying to keep the volume the same level throughout the speech. One of the assets of the microphone is that it allows you to work with a wide variety of volumes. Learn to use the microphone to your advantage.

The audience isn't even aware of the microphone when it's used properly. Improperly used, it is a distraction that inhibits communication.

ONE SIZE DOESN'T FIT ALL

Match the room to the size of the audience.

When you're trying to set up a good environment for communication, one of the most important rules to remember is to match the size of the room to the size of the audience. This is easier to do for a Sunday school class or youth group than for a small congregation in a big sanctuary.

I was teaching a Sunday school class of about twelve teenagers in a sanctuary that seated about five hundred. In fact, we shared that sanctuary with an adult class about the same size. Our group gathered in the front two pews, and the other class used the back. Not only was it a difficult

3841

seating arrangement, but each class could easily hear the teacher of the other class. This is about the worst kind of situation for communication.

Sunday school time is one of the most important learning opportunities in the life of a Christian. Unfortunately it is often treated as a tacked on, second-rate part of church. Give your Sunday school classes and youth groups the environment they deserve.

We solved the problem of two classes in the sanctuary by converting a room that had been used to store banquet tables to accommodate the class. The kids helped me brighten the room with paint and additional lighting. They called the room "the happy dungeon," and the attention level of those kids increased dramatically when we began to meet there.

Another time I taught a small class of adults that was moved from the sanctuary to the living room of a nearby home. Again, the difference in the atmosphere affected the attitude of the group. There is nothing wrong with a sanctuary. But there is something about a small group meeting in such a large place that sets a mood that is not conducive to good communication.

What do you do when the congregation is small, and there is a large sanctuary? You certainly can't move them to the "happy dungeon" or a nearby living room. The answer lies in creating a feeling of community and giving your communication efforts a chance by having the group sit together near the front. A small audience in a large auditorium tends to spread out, leaving the front pews empty. If they sit together near the front, they will be much more receptive then if they are isolated and far from you. It also creates a feeling of community. Be prepared, because some will resist this move. But once they have tasted the warmth of such an arrangement they will not want to go back.

A church in Florida did an experiment with their youth. For three Sundays the entire youth department sat in the front rows of the church during worship. After the third week, even though they were no longer required to do so, the youth stayed in front. They had found the service so much more interesting that they weren't about to give up

their seats. The pastor told me that his next project was to get the adults to move up.

Another pastor moved the pulpit halfway down the aisle when the congregation refused to move forward. When people are spread out all over an auditorium, it communicates a coldness that affects the attitude of the audience. Let your congregation know your motivation and get them together and close to you.

LOOK OUT BEHIND YOU

Just as it is important to be seen if you are going to communicate, it is also important not to have other scenes distract from your message as you speak. I have been in beautiful churches that have glass fronts that display breathtaking scenery behind the pastor. To this day I can remember the scenery, but I can't remember anything about the message. Very few churches make the pastor compete with background scenery like this, but if your church is in this situation, lighting can help save the day. Use bright lights so the speaker can be clearly seen against the background.

I remember a discipleship class where the teacher chose to stand in front of a large window whose bottom was at ground level. I spent the entire class trying to tear my attention from a cat that was ambushing every small animal that ventured near. I wanted to listen to the teacher but the visual distraction was just too much.

At a camp in Alaska the speaker chose to stand with his back to a large picture window that looked out on a beautiful snow-covered landscape. Not only was the scenery distracting, but the brightness of the background rendered the speaker only a dark silhouette. I could hardly look toward the front because the brightness hurt my eyes.

It takes only a little planning to avoid these environmental hindrances to communication.

The Alaskan camp speaker moved to the other end of the room where we could see his face, which was illuminated by the natural light coming through the window. And we could look in his direction without going blind. When I first suggested this change, people were reluctant to try it. It would take too much work to rearrange things, they said. (It took less than two minutes.) When the speaker experienced

the difference in audience attention he thanked me profusely for the suggestion.

The discipleship class in the basement of the church could have been much more effective if the speaker had recognized that he couldn't compete with a hungry cat and had stood against a different wall. It would have taken only thirty seconds for us to scoot our chairs around.

Here are some simple rules for watching what is behind you.

1. Don't ever stand in front of a window to communicate. The back lighting will make your face only a shadow, it will be uncomfortable for the audience to look in your direction, and you can't compete with scenery.
2. Avoid busy, brightly colored backgrounds. If your church has adjustable lighting, dim the lights on everything that is behind you before you speak.
3. Avoid having anything behind you that moves while you speak. Pastors, if at all possible, dismiss the choir before you begin your message. If you can't dismiss the choir, instruct them to remain as still as possible with their attention fixed on you. I find myself constantly distracted if the choir remains behind the pastor as he speaks. It is particularly difficult if they talk to each other or allow their attention to be drawn away from the preacher.
4. For Sunday school and youth groups, look at the room and ask, "What mood does this room put me in?" Sometimes just a coat of paint can change a dingy, depressing environment into a cheery warm one.
5. Eliminate intrusions into your communication environment. Consider as precious every minute you've allotted for teaching Sunday school, holding a youth meeting, or preaching a sermon. Don't let distractions like taking attendance or the offering interrupt. Arrange to have these activities take place at other times so that you are free to communicate without interruptions. In the best of circumstances communication is a difficult task requiring the best efforts of the speaker. Make sure that your environment is a help and not a hindrance.

12

Beyond Technique—Qualities of an Effective Communicator

In writing a book about the *techniques* of effective communication, I run the risk that someone might infer that *technique alone* can make a good communicator. Clearly, technique can make a difference. In fact, in many cases, it is the single most important factor in making a communicator effective. Still, there is more to communicating than just technique.

An entertaining after-dinner speaker can enhance his presentation by applying proper techniques. So can speakers presenting the gospel. But technique alone will not make a gospel message successful. That doesn't mean that we shouldn't work at perfecting our methods. It means only that we should make sure we establish a proper foundation upon which to build.

If I didn't feel that there is a great need for more excellent presentations of the gospel, I certainly would not have endured the agony of writing a book on the subject. However, in this chapter I would like to discuss issues beyond technique that are important for every messenger of the gospel to consider.

Aristotle said that a good leader must have *logos, ethos,* and *pathos. Logos* is the ability to give solid reasons for an action, to move people intellectually. *Ethos* is the moral character at the source of a leader's ability to persuade. *Pathos* is a leader's ability to touch feelings, to move people

385

presentation was only doing his job, but the inventor believed in his product and enjoyed showing others how it worked.

That same kind of passion shows through when you present the gospel. If you believe in it and love sharing it with others, people will be able to tell.

We've all had the experience of listening to preachers who were like these two salesmen. Some preachers just seem to be "doing their jobs." What a difference it makes to sit at the feet of teachers or preachers who are excited about their message! They hold your attention, and you listen to what they are saying because you know they believe it. This kind of enthusiasm is difficult to fake and is almost impossible to hide. Not even the wonderful techniques of preparation and delivery covered in this book can substitute for a vibrant daily relationship with the author of our message. There is such an obvious difference between the speaker who searches for messages because it is his job to deliver them and the speaker who can hardly wait to share what he is learning about the God he loves and lives for daily.

THE EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATOR CARES ABOUT THE AUDIENCE

A third aspect of this *ethos* is a loving concern for people. People who know that they are loved by a speaker will overlook many faults in style and delivery.

It is easy to seek personal gratification from the audience and forget you are there to serve them. For many years I sought out the laughter and response of my audiences for personal satisfaction. If they didn't respond to my message I would get angry. What a rotten audience, I would think. Once I discovered that my personal worth is not grounded in applause or laughter, it changed my whole approach to preaching, teaching, and entertaining. I am there to give, not to get.

It is a heady experience to be able to hold the attention of an audience. You can use the audience selfishly to feed your ego, or you can choose to allow God to meet the needs of those who hear you through a clear and caring presentation of the Word of God. When you care, it shows. A

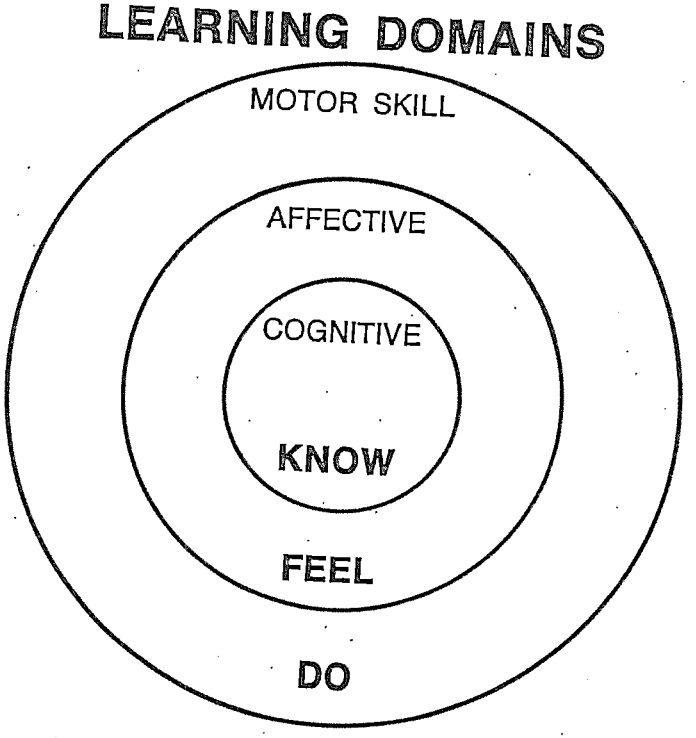
genuine love for the people to whom you speak will enhance the power of your communication.

THE EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATOR TOUCHES THE EMOTIONS OF THE AUDIENCE

The *pathos* of which Aristotle spoke was the ability to move the audience emotionally. *Pathos* does not refer to manipulative toying with people's emotions. It has to do with personalizing the message so an audience can respond.

Educators acknowledge that three specific learning domains closely parallel Aristotle's statement. These are represented in Figure 1.

Figure 1



The *cognitive* domain is what we know. It is the sterile accumulation of facts. The *affective* domain is what we feel. This domain can be accessed through truth or with lies. It

384

can also be manipulated as an end in itself. The *motor* domain is accessed by action.

It is very easy to concentrate on any one of these domains at the expense of the others. A good storyteller can use the emotion of a story to move people's feelings without an underlying foundation of truth from God's Word. Without that foundation people will quickly abandon whatever they have heard when the feelings have gone. An academic may find herself simply relaying great amounts of information in the mistaken belief that people will respond to raw data because she does. This kind of "cognitive dump" leaves the majority of the audience cold and unmoved. Finally, the activist will always have his audience doing something.

The best learning takes place when the teacher accesses all three domains. The most effective communication takes place when there is a balance of information (cognitive, know) brought to life with illustration (affective, feel) and personalized with application (motor, do).

A careful study of the ministry of Jesus reveals that he touched people emotionally. People responded strongly to his personal delivery of the truth. Some hated him, some loved him, but few ignored him. Some believed and others decided that he was of the devil and should be killed.

He was presenting the most important cognitive truth in history. This truth had existed in the prophetic writings for years, but his pathos, his personal delivery, and his application of that truth left no room for people to sit idly by.

If you wish to communicate the gospel effectively, you will have to do more than just dump information on the audience or pepper the forest with theological buckshot. Your message is more than a message to be heard, it is a message to be felt and lived. If you are to be effective, your teaching and preaching must touch the emotions of your audience.

THE EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATOR TOUCHES THE LIVES OF THE AUDIENCE

The last important aspect of your communication is your ability to touch the lives of your audience.

As an itinerant speaker I often hear pastors, youth workers, and volunteers say how they wished they could be

in my line of work. They seem to feel that because I have been on television and radio and speak to large numbers of people, somehow my communication is more effective. I believe that is not true. The most effective communicator is one who can live with and touch his or her audience on a day by day basis.

When I was in youth work in northern Minnesota this truth was burned into my heart forever. For several months we had been working with a teenager named Lisa. Although she had heard the gospel message dozens of times she continued to resist giving her life to Christ.

One night my wife, Diane, announced that we were going to a play in which Lisa had a small part. She felt that it was important for us to encourage her and show that we cared by being there. Because I was tired I fought this decision with stern determination. I reasoned that since Lisa had only one or two lines in the entire play, she wouldn't care if we attended. I lost the argument and with a grudging attitude drove to the play. On the way Diane insisted we stop to get some flowers for Lisa. We purchased a half dozen roses, but I made it clear to everyone near me that I was not happy. The play went without a hitch, and Lisa did her few lines with enthusiasm. I was still smoldering when Diane fanned the flames to life by insisting that we go backstage and give Lisa the flowers.

When she saw us standing backstage she was ecstatic. "What did you think?" she bubbled. "Did I do okay?"

We assured her that she was marvelous, and then I remembered the slightly wilted flowers that I was holding behind my back. "Here," I said clumsily, "these are for you."

I will never forget what happened next. Lisa's mouth dropped open as she took the flowers and slowly sank to the floor. With tears streaming down her cheeks she thanked us for coming to her play. "I thought that no one would come because I had such a small part," she cried.

Of course, I felt terrible and the "I told you so" glance from my wife made it even worse. I asked for God's forgiveness that night, but the following week he gave me a gift that was even greater. Lisa came to our home and prayed to receive Christ. If you try to tell me that her decision had

387

nothing to do with a backstage visit and six wilted roses I will disagree.

When you attend a play or basketball game or sit in the home of one who is working through a family crisis, it puts your message in an entirely new light. For those you have touched with your life, your message is clearer and more personal than ever before. Being at the bedside of a sick teenager or playing softball with adults Saturday afternoon makes you more than just the man or woman who gives a talk every week. It makes you a minister, a true communicator of a beautiful message.

My daughters are not impressed by fancy programs and articulate speakers. They have been around both all their lives. If they respond to the message of the gospel, it will be because they are touched by the love of Christ as it is demonstrated in the lives of the men and women who work with them. Likewise, the teachers and speakers who had the greatest influence on me were those who touched me with their lives by their personal involvement.

Speak with clarity and power. Model the message with your life and never stop touching the lives of those to whom you minister. Those characteristics coupled with the techniques of dynamic communication will raise the level of your communication to its fullest potential.

Other Services and Materials Available From Ken Davis

PERSONAL APPEARANCES

A recent survey by a major book publisher revealed Ken Davis to be one of the most sought-after communicators in North America.

Ken Davis, recently featured on *Focus on the Family*, is one of the top inspirational communicators in the country. His performances are a unique combination of side-splitting humor and a solid gospel challenge. Ken has appeared on television and stage around the world. His energetic style and expert use of humor reaches people of all ages and backgrounds.

An evening with Ken Davis will definitely make you smile. It may also change your life.

BOOKS

How To Live With Your Parents Without Losing Your Mind, Zondervan, 1988.

How To Speak to Youth . . . & Keep Them Awake at the Same Time, Group Books, 1986.

How to Speak to Youth—Resource Kit (Includes the book, two sixty-minute tapes, and user's guide)

I Don't Remember Dropping the Skunk, but I Do Remember Trying to Breathe: Survival Skills for Teenagers, Zondervan, 1990.

Secrets of Dynamic Communication, Zondervan, 1991.

388

And my wife, Bonnie! How much I owe her! Only she knows as she reads these words how much she has done for me. Only I can know the profound influence she has had on my life.

Now that the preface is written, we can be on to the task. Anyone sensitive to the Scriptures knows the awe of the ministry. Matthew Simpson in his *Lectures on Preaching* put the preacher in his place: "His throne is the pulpit; he stands in Christ's stead; his message is the word of God; around him are immortal souls; the Savior, unseen, is beside him; the Holy Spirit broods over the congregation; angels gaze upon the scene, and heaven and hell await the issue. What associations, and what vast responsibility!"[2]

2. (New York: Phillips & Hunt, 1879), p. 166.

one

THE CASE FOR *Expository Preaching*

This is a book about expository preaching, but it may have been written for a depressed market. Not everyone agrees that expository preaching—or any sort of preaching, for that matter—is an urgent need of the church. The word is out in some circles that preaching should be abandoned. The moving finger has passed it by and now points to other methods and ministries that are more "effective" and in tune with the times.

The Devaluation of Preaching

To explain why preaching receives these low grades would take us into every area of our common life. Because preachers are no longer regarded as the intellectual or even the spiritual

286

leaders in their communities, their image has changed. Ask people in the pews to describe a minister, and their description may not be flattering. According to Kyle Haselden, the pastor comes across as a "bland composite" of the congregation's "congenial, ever helpful, ever ready to help boy scout; as the darling of the old ladies and as sufficiently reserved with the young ones; as the father image for the young people and a companion to lonely men; as the affable glad-hander at teas and civic club luncheons."[1] If that description pictures reality at all, preachers may be liked, but they will certainly not be respected.

In addition, preaching takes place in an over-communicated society. Mass media bombard us with a hundred thousand "messages" a day. Television and radio feature pitchmen delivering a "word from the sponsor" with all the sincerity of an evangelist. Within that context the preacher may sound like another huckster who, in John Ruskin's words, "plays stage tricks with the doctrines of life and death."

More important, perhaps, is that some ministers in the pulpit feel robbed of an authoritative message. Much modern theology offers them little more than holy hunches, and they suspect that the sophisticates in the pew place more faith in science texts than in preaching texts. For some preachers, therefore, fads in communication become more alluring than the message. Multimedia presentations, videos, sharing sessions, blinking lights, and up-to-date music may be symptoms of either health or disease. Undoubtedly, modern techniques can enhance communication, but on the other hand, they can substitute for the message. The startling and unusual may mask a vacuum.

Social action appeals more to a segment of the church than talking or listening. What good are words of faith, they ask, when society demands works of faith? Some people with this mind-set judge that the apostles had things turned around when they decided, "It is not right that we should forsake the Word of God to serve tables" (Acts 6:2 ASV). In a day of activism, it is more relevant

1. Kyle Haselden, *The Urgency of Preaching* (New York: Harper and Row, 1963), pp. 88–89. Note that full bibliographical information is not supplied in the footnotes for books included in the bibliography. Nor is bibliographical information that is given in the text repeated in the footnotes.

to declare instead, "It is not right that we should forsake the service of tables to preach the Word of God."

THE CASE FOR PREACHING

In spite of the "bad-mouthing" of preaching and preachers, no one who takes the Bible seriously should count preaching out. To the New Testament writers, preaching stands as the event through which God works. Peter, for example, reminded his readers that they had "been born anew, not of perishable seed but of imperishable, through the living and abiding word of God" (1 Peter 1:23 RSV). How had this word come to affect their lives? "That word," Peter explained, "is the good news which was preached to you" (1:25). Through preaching God had redeemed them.

Paul was a writer. From his pen we have most of the inspired letters of the New Testament, and heading the list of his letters is the one to the Romans. Measured by its impact on history, few documents compare with it. Yet when Paul wrote this letter to the congregation in Rome, he confessed, "I long to see you, that I may impart to you some spiritual gift to strengthen you, that is, that we may be mutually encouraged by each other's faith, both yours and mine" (Rom. 1:11–12 RSV). Paul realized that some ministries simply cannot take place apart from face-to-face contact. Even the reading of an inspired letter will not substitute. "I am eager to preach the gospel to you . . . who are in Rome" (1:15 RSV). A power comes through the preached word that even the written word cannot replace.

Moreover, Paul recounted the spiritual history of the Thessalonians who had "turned to God from idols, to serve a living and true God, and to wait for his Son from heaven" (1 Thess. 1:9–10 RSV). That about-face occurred, explained the apostle, because "when you received the word of God which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men but as what it actually is, the word of God, which is at work in you believers" (2:13 RSV). Preaching in Paul's mind did not consist of someone discussing religion. Instead, God Himself spoke through the personality and

296

message of a preacher to confront men and women and bring them to Himself.

All of this explains why Paul encouraged his young associate Timothy to "preach the Word" (2 Tim. 4:2). Preach means "to cry out, herald, or exhort." Preachers should pour out the message with passion and fervor in order to stir souls. Not all passionate pleading from a pulpit, however, possesses divine authority. When preachers speak as heralds, they must cry out "the Word." Anything less cannot legitimately pass for Christian preaching.

The Need for Expository Preaching

Those in the pulpit face the pressing temptation to deliver some message other than that of the Scriptures—a political system (either right-wing or left-wing), a theory of economics, a new religious philosophy, old religious slogans, or a trend in psychology. Ministers can proclaim anything in a stained-glass voice at 11:30 on Sunday morning following the singing of hymns. Yet when they fail to preach the Scriptures, they abandon their authority. No longer do they confront their hearers with a word from God. That is why most modern preaching evokes little more than a wide yawn. God is not in it.

God speaks through the Bible. It is the major tool of communication by which He addresses individuals today. Biblical preaching, therefore, must not be equated with "the old, old story of Jesus and His love" as though it were retelling history about better times when God was alive and well. Nor is preaching merely a rehash of ideas about God—orthodox, but removed from life. Through the preaching of the Scriptures, God encounters men and women to bring them to salvation (2 Tim. 3:15) and to richness and ripeness of Christian character (vv. 16–17). Something fills us with awe when God confronts individuals through preaching and seizes them by the soul.

The type of preaching that best carries the force of divine authority is expository preaching. It would be fatuous, however, to assume that everyone agrees with that statement. A poll of churchgoers who have squirmed for hours under "expository"

preaching that is dry as corn flakes without milk could not be expected to agree. While most preachers tip their hats to expository preaching, their practice gives them away. Because they seldom do it, they too vote no.

Admittedly, expository preaching has suffered severely in the pulpits of those claiming to be its friends. Yet not all expository preaching necessarily qualifies as either *expository* or *preaching*. Regrettably the Bureau of Weights and Measures does not have a standard expository sermon encased in glass against which to compare other messages. Ministers may paste the label *expository* on whatever sermon they please, and no consumer advocate will correct them. Yet, in spite of damage done by admirers, genuine expository preaching has behind it the power of the living God.

What, then, is the real thing? What constitutes expository preaching? How does it compare or contrast with other kinds of preaching?

The Definition of Expository Preaching

Attempting a definition becomes sticky business because what we define we sometimes destroy. The small boy who dissected a frog to find out what made it jump learned something about the parts in the process, but he killed the frog. Preaching is a living interaction involving God, the preacher, and the congregation, and no definition can pretend to capture that dynamic. But for the sake of clarity we must attempt a working definition anyway.

> *Expository preaching is the communication of a biblical concept, derived from and transmitted through a historical, grammatical, and literary study of a passage in its context, which the Holy Spirit first applies to the personality and experience of the preacher, then through the preacher, applies to the hearers.*

The Passage Governs the Sermon

What particulars of this elaborate and somewhat dry definition should we highlight? First, and above all, the thought of the biblical writer determines the substance of an expository ser-

391

mon. In many sermons the biblical passage read to the congregation resembles the national anthem played at a baseball game—it gets things started but is not heard again during the afternoon. In expository preaching, as R. H. Montgomery describes it, "the preacher undertakes the presentation of particular books [of the Bible] as some men would undertake the latest best seller. The preacher seeks to bring the message of definite units of God's Word to his people."

Expository preaching at its core is more a philosophy than a method. Whether or not we can be called expositors starts with our purpose and with our honest answer to the question: "Do you, as a preacher, endeavor to bend your thought to the Scriptures, or do you use the Scriptures to support your thought?" This is not the same question as, "Is what you are preaching orthodox or evangelical?" Nor is it the same as, "Do you hold a high view of the Bible or believe it to be the infallible Word of God?" As important as these questions may appear in other circumstances, a passing grade in systematic theology does not qualify an individual as an expositor of the Bible. Theology may protect us from evils lurking in atomistic, nearsighted interpretations, but at the same time it may blindfold us from seeing the text. In approaching a passage, we must be willing to reexamine our doctrinal convictions and to reject the judgments of our most respected teachers. We must make a U-turn in our own previous understandings of the Bible should these conflict with the concepts of the biblical writer.

Adopting this attitude toward Scripture demands both simplicity and sophistication. On the one hand, expositors approach their Bible with a childlike desire to hear the story. They do not come to argue, to prove a point, or even to find a sermon. They read to understand and to experience what they understand. At the same time, they know they live not as children but as adults locked into presuppositions and worldviews that make understanding difficult. The Bible is not a child's storybook; rather it is great literature that requires thoughtful response. All its diamonds do not lie exposed on the surface. Its richness is mined only through hard intellectual and spiritual spadework.

The Expositor Communicates a Concept

The definition of expository preaching also emphasizes that an expositor communicates a concept. Some conservative preachers have been led astray by their doctrine of inspiration and by a poor understanding of how language works. Orthodox theologians insist that the Holy Spirit protects the individual words of the original text. Words are the stuff from which ideas are made, they argue, and unless the words are inspired, the ideas cannot be guarded from error.

While an orthodox doctrine of inspiration may be a necessary plank in the evangelical platform on biblical authority, this sometimes gets in the way of expository preaching. Although we examine words in the text and sometimes deal with particular words in the sermon, words and phrases should never become ends in themselves. Words are stupid things until linked with other words to convey meaning.

In our approach to the Bible, therefore, we are primarily concerned not with what individual words mean, but with what the biblical writers mean through their use of words. Putting this another way, we do not understand the concepts of a passage merely by analyzing its separate words. A word-by-word grammatical analysis can be as pointless and boring as reading a dictionary. If we desire to understand the Bible in order to communicate its message, we must grapple with it on the level of ideas.

Francis A. Schaeffer, in his book *True Spirituality*, argues that the great battles take place in the realm of thought:

> Ideas are the stock of the thought-world, and from the ideas burst forth all the external things—painting, music, buildings, the love and the hating of men in practice, and equally the results of loving God or rebellion against God in the external world. . . . The preaching of the gospel is ideas, flaming ideas brought to men, as God has revealed them to us in Scripture. It is not a contentless experience internally received, but it is contentful ideas internally acted upon that make the difference. So when we state our doctrines, they must be ideas and not just phrases. We cannot use doctrines as though they were mechanical pieces to a puzzle. True doctrine is an idea revealed by God in the Bible and an idea that

392

fits properly into the external world as it is, and as God made it, and to man as he is as God made him, and can be fed back through man's body into his thought-world and there acted upon. The battle for man is centrally in the world of thought.[2]

If we are ever to get sermons, therefore, we must get them first as ideas.

The Concept Comes from the Text

This emphasis on ideas as the substance of expository preaching does not in any way deny the importance of vocabulary or grammar. The definition goes on to explain that in the expository sermon the idea is derived from and transmitted through a historical, grammatical, and literary study of a passage in its context. This deals first with how expositors come to their message and, second, with how they communicate it. Both involve the examination of grammar, history, and literary forms. In their study expositors search for the objective meaning of a passage through their understanding of the language, backgrounds, and setting of the text. Then in the pulpit they present enough of their study to the congregation so that their listeners may check the interpretation for themselves.

Ultimately the authority behind expository preaching resides not in the preacher but in the biblical text. For that reason expositors deal largely with an explanation of Scripture, so that they focus the listener's attention on the Bible. Expositors may be respected for their exegetical abilities and their diligent preparation, but these qualities do not transform any of them into a Protestant pope who speaks *ex cathedra.* Listeners also have a responsibility to match the sermon to the biblical text. As Henry David Thoreau wrote, "It takes two to speak the truth—one to speak, and another to hear." No truth worth knowing will be acquired without a tussle, so if a congregation is to grow, it must share the struggle. "To have great poets, there must be great audiences," Walt Whitman confessed. Effective expository preaching requires listeners with ears to hear. Since the souls of listeners depend upon it, we

2. Francis A. Schaeffer, *True Spirituality* (Wheaton: Tyndale, 1971), pp. 121–22.

must offer our hearers sufficient information so that they can decide for themselves if what they are hearing is indeed what the Bible says.

If the listeners in the pew must work to understand the preacher, the preacher must labor to understand the writers of the Bible. Communication means "a meeting of meanings," and for communication to occur across a sanctuary or across the centuries, those involved must share things in common—a language, a culture, a worldview, communication forms. We try to pull up our chairs to where the biblical authors sat. We attempt to work our way back into the world of the Scriptures to understand the original message. Though we may not master the languages, history, and literary forms of the biblical writers, we should appreciate the contribution of each of these disciplines. We should also become aware of the wide assortment of interpretive aids available to us for use in our study.[3] As much as possible, expositors seek a firsthand acquaintance with the biblical writers and their ideas in context.

The Concept Is Applied to the Expositor

Our definition of expository preaching goes on to say that the truth must be applied to the personality and experience of the preacher. This places God's dealing with the preacher at the center of the process. As much as we might wish it otherwise, we cannot be separated from the message. Who has not heard some devout brother or sister pray in anticipation of a sermon, "Hide our pastor behind the cross so that we may see not him but Jesus only"? We commend the spirit of such a prayer. Men and women must get past the preacher to the Savior. (Or perhaps the Savior must get past the preacher to the people!)

Yet no place exists where a preacher may hide. Even a large pulpit cannot conceal us from view. Phillips Brooks was on to something when he described preaching as "truth poured through personality."[4] We affect our message. We may be

3. Some of these aids will be discussed in chapter 3.
4. Phillips Brooks, *Lectures on Preaching* (New York: Dutton, 1877), p. 8.

393

mouthing a scriptural idea, yet we can remain as impersonal as a telephone recording, as superficial as a radio commercial, or as manipulative as a con man. The audience does not hear a sermon, they hear a person—they hear you.

Bishop William A. Quayle had this in mind when he rejected standard definitions of homiletics. "Preaching is the art of making a sermon and delivering it?" he asked. "Why, no, that is not preaching. Preaching is the art of making a preacher and delivering that!" A commitment to expository preaching should develop the preacher into a mature Christian. As we study our Bible, the Holy Spirit studies us. As we prepare expository sermons, God prepares us. As P. T. Forsyth said, "The Bible is the supreme preacher to the preacher."[5]

Distinctions made between "studying the Bible to get a sermon and studying the Bible to feed your own soul" are misleading and even false. A scholar may examine the Bible as Hebrew poetry or as a record of the births and reigns of long-dead kings and yet not be confronted by its truth. Yet no such detachment can exist for one who opens the Bible as the Word of God. Before we proclaim the message of the Bible to others, we should live with that message ourselves.

Regrettably, many preachers fail as Christians before they fail as preachers because they do not think biblically. A significant number of ministers, many of whom profess high regard for the Scriptures, prepare their sermons without consulting the Bible at all. While the sacred text serves as an appetizer to get a sermon underway or as a garnish to decorate the message, the main course consists of the preacher's own thought or someone else's thought warmed up for the occasion.

Even in what is billed as "expository preaching" individual verses can become launching pads for the preacher's own opinions. One common recipe found in homiletical cookbooks reads something like this: "Take several theological or moral platitudes, mix with equal parts of 'dedication,' 'evangelism,' or 'stewardship,' add several 'kingdoms' or 'the Bible says,' stir in a

5. P. T. Forsyth, *Positive Preaching and the Modern Mind* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964), p. 11.

selection of stories, add 'salvation' to taste. Serve hot on a bed of Scripture verses." Such sermons not only leave a congregation undernourished, but they also starve the preachers. They do not grow because the Holy Spirit has nothing to feed them. William Barclay diagnosed the cause of spiritual malnutrition in a minister's life when he pointed out that if our minds grow slack and lazy and flabby, the Holy Spirit cannot speak to us. "True preaching comes when the loving heart and the disciplined mind are laid at the disposal of the Holy Spirit."[6] Ultimately God is more interested in developing messengers than messages, and because the Holy Spirit confronts us primarily through the Bible, we must learn to listen to God before speaking for God.

The Concept Is Applied to the Hearers

Not only does the Holy Spirit apply His truth to the personality and experience of the preacher, but according to our definition of expository preaching, He then applies that truth through the preacher to the hearers. Expositors think in three areas. First, as exegetes, we struggle with the meanings of the biblical writer. Then, as people of God, we wrestle with how God wants to change us. Finally, as preachers, we ponder what God wants to say to the congregation through us.

Application gives expository preaching purpose. As shepherds, we relate to the hurts, cries, and fears of our flock. Therefore we study the Scriptures, wondering what they can say to people living with grief and guilt, doubt and death. Paul reminded Timothy that the Scriptures were given to be applied. "All scripture is inspired by God," he wrote, "and is useful for teaching the faith and correcting error, for re-setting the direction of a man's life and training him in good living. The scriptures are the comprehensive equipment of the man of God, and fit him fully for all branches of his work" (2 Tim. 3:16–17 PHILLIPS).

Dull expository sermons usually lack effective applications. Boring sermons evoke two major complaints. First, listeners grumble, "It's always the same old thing." The preacher gives all

6. William Barclay, *A Spiritual Autobiography* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975).

passages the same application, or worse, no application at all. "May the Holy Spirit apply this truth to our lives," incants a minister who does not have a ghost of a guess as to how the biblical content might change people.

A second negative reaction is that the sermon does not relate to the world directly enough to be of practical use: "It's true enough, I guess, but so what? What difference does it make?" After all, if a man or woman decides to live under the mandate of Scripture, such action will normally take place outside the church building. On the outside, people lose jobs, worry about their children, and find crabgrass invading their lawns. Normal people do not lose sleep over the Jebusites, the Canaanites, or the Perizzites, or even about what Abraham, Moses, or Paul has said or done. They lie awake wondering about grocery prices, crop failures, quarrels with a spouse, diagnosis of a malignancy, a frustrating sex life, or the rat race where only rats seem to win. If the sermon does not make much difference in that world, they wonder if it makes any difference at all.

We should forget about speaking to the ages, therefore, and speak to our day. Expository preachers confront people about themselves from the Bible instead of lecturing to them about the Bible's history or archaeology. A congregation does not convene as a jury to convict Judas, Peter, or Solomon, but to judge themselves. We must know the people as well as the message, and to acquire that knowledge, we exegete both the Scripture and the congregation.

After all, when God spoke in the Scriptures, He addressed women and men as they were, where they were. Imagine that Paul's letters to the Corinthians had gotten lost in the mail and instead had been delivered to the Christians at Philippi. The Philippians would have puzzled over the specific problems Paul wrote about because they lived in a situation different from that of their sisters and brothers in Corinth. The letters of the New Testament, like the prophecies of the Old, were addressed to specific assemblies struggling with particular problems. Our expository sermons today will be ineffective unless we realize that our listeners, too, exist at a particular address and have mind-sets unique to them.

Effective application thrusts us into both theology and ethics. Traveling from exegesis to application, we make a hard trip through life-related and sometimes perplexing questions. In addition to grammatical relationships, we also explore personal and psychological relationships. How do the characters in the text relate to one another? How are they related to God? What values lie behind the choices they make? What apparently went on in the minds of those who were involved? These questions are not directed to the "there and then," as though God dealt with men and women only back in the "once upon a time." The same questions can be asked in the "here and now." How do we relate to one another today? How does God confront us about similar issues? In what way does the modern world compare or contrast with the biblical world? Are the questions dealt with in Scripture the questions people ask today? Are they put forth now in the same way or in different forms? These probings become the raw material of ethics and theology. Application tacked on to an expository sermon in an attempt to make it relevant skirts these questions and ignores the maxim of our Protestant forebears: "Doctrines must be preached practically, and duties doctrinally."

Inappropriate application can be as destructive as inept exegesis. When Satan tempted Jesus in the wilderness, he tried to achieve victory through misapplication of Scripture. The tempter whispered Psalm 91 with admirable precision: "He will give his angels charge over you to keep you in all your ways . . . lest you dash your foot against a stone" (vv. 11–12). Then Satan reasoned, "Because you possess this strong promise, why not apply it to a leap from the pinnacle of the temple and demonstrate once and for all that you are the Son of God?" In refuting the devil, Jesus did not debate the grammar of the Hebrew text. Instead He attacked the application of Psalm 91 to temple jumping. Another passage of Scripture better fit that situation: "You shall not tempt the LORD your God" (Deut. 6:16 NRSV).

We must preach to a world addressed by the TV commentator, the newspaper columnist, and the playwright. If we do not, we will have hearers who are orthodox in their heads but heretics in their conduct. Of course in speaking to a secular world we dare not speak a secular word. William Willimon observed that some

395

preachers seem to have bent over backwards to speak to a secular audience and they have fallen in. While biblical ideas must be shaped to human experience, men and women must be called to conform to biblical truth. "Relevant" sermons may become pulpit trifles unless they relate the current situation to the eternal Word of God.

F. B. Meyer understood the awe with which biblical preachers speak to the issues of their age. They are "in a line of great succession. The reformers, the Puritans, the pastors of the Pilgrim fathers were essentially expositors. They did not announce their own particular opinions, which might be a matter of private interpretation or doubtful disposition, but taking their stand on Scripture, drove home their message with irresistible effect with 'Thus saith the Lord.'"

Let's sum this up. We preach expository sermons when

- We have studied a passage in its context, giving attention to its historical, grammatical, and literary setting;
- We have in some way experienced, through the work of the Holy Spirit, the power of our study in our own lives;
- And from this, we shape the sermon so that it communicates the central biblical concept in a way that is meaningful to our hearers.

New Concepts

Expository preaching

Definitions

Expository preaching—the communication of a biblical concept, derived from and transmitted through a historical, grammatical, and literary study of a passage in its context, which the Holy Spirit first applies to the personality and experience of the preacher, then through the preacher, applies to the hearers.

For Further Reading and Reflection

Many writers attempt to define or describe biblical preaching. Some describe the trees and others settle for the forest.

- Richard Mayhue spends a chapter of *Rediscovering Expository Preaching* (Dallas: Word, 1992) grappling with what it is not and then what it is. An expositor, he concludes, "explains the Scripture by laying open the text to public view in order to set forth its meaning, explain what is difficult to understand, and make appropriate application" (p.11).
- Jerry Vines and Jim Shaddix put more emphasis on the listeners in their definition of biblical preaching as "the oral communication of biblical truth by the Holy Spirit through a human personality to a given audience with the intent of enabling a positive response" (*Power in the Pulpit* [Chicago: Moody, 1999], p. 27).
- Bryan Chapell allows for a broader definition when he makes the observation that "any sermon that explores a biblical concept is in the broadest sense 'expository,'" but he cannot leave it there. He adds that "*the technical definition of an expository sermon* [his emphasis] requires that it expound Scripture by deriving from a specific text main points and subpoints that disclose the thought of the author, cover the scope of the

passage, and are applied to the lives of the listeners" (*Christ-Centered Preaching* [Grand Rapids: Baker, 1994], pp. 128–29).

- John Stott, in his book *Between Two Worlds* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982), makes the flat statement, "All true preaching is expository preaching." He goes on to say, however, that "expository" refers to content and not to method, and then he describes what it looks like. "In expository preaching the biblical text is neither a conventional introduction to a sermon on a largely different theme, nor a convenient peg on which to hang a ragbag of miscellaneous thoughts, but a master which dictates and controls what is said" (pp. 125–26).
- Fred Craddock, who might not be comfortable with my definition, recognizes that we are wrestling with "a fundamental theological question of authority." He goes to the central issue of what any of us do in the pulpit. "The preacher is obligated, regardless of the sermons the parishioners may like," he says, "to ask and respond to the questions, What authorizes my sermons? If the authorization is by the Scriptures, in what way? How do I prepare so as to enter the pulpit with some confidence that my understanding of biblical preaching has been implemented with honesty and integrity? . . . It is not likely that any preacher will arrive at a satisfactory position that does not involve serious grappling with the text of Scripture" (*Preaching* [Nashville: Abingdon, 1986], p. 100).

On another level, at sometime or other, you will have to respond to the question, "How does the centrality of Jesus Christ affect the way that I handle the biblical texts? If a thoughtful Muslim or a Jew would be satisfied with my interpretation of the Old Testament, could it really be Christian?" Two books that work toward a way of solving this problem are Sidney Greidanus, *Preaching Christ from the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), and Graeme Goldsworthy, *Preaching the Whole Bible as Christian Scripture* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000). An older book by Walter Kaiser, *Toward an Exegetical Theology: Biblical Exegesis for Preaching and Teaching* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1981), approaches the same question from a different angle.

two

WHAT'S THE *Big Idea?*

I do not appreciate opera; what is worse, I have several friends who do. Being around them makes me feel as if I exist in a cultural desert, so I have taken several steps to change my condition. On occasion I have actually attended an opera. Like a sinner shamed into attending church, I have made my way to the music hall to let culture have its way in me. On most of these visits, however, I have returned home unresponsive to what the artists have tried to do.

I understand enough about opera, of course, to know that a story is being acted out with the actors singing rather than speaking their parts. Usually, though, the story line stays as vague to me as the Italian lyrics, but opera buffs tell me that the plot is incidental to the performance. Should someone bother

397

8. "Work today has lost many traditional characteristics; so has play. Play has increasingly been transformed into organized sports, and sports in turn increasingly resemble work in the arduous practice and preparation, in the intense involvement of coaches and athletes (in the spirit of work), and in actual economic productivity. In a final paradox only those sports which began as work—that is, hunting and fishing— are now dominated by the spirit of play." *(Sport and Society)*

   Subject: _____

   Complement: _____

   Developmental question being addressed: _____

   _____

9. The law can prompt us to sin. I am told that several years ago a high-rise hotel was built in Galveston, Texas, overlooking the Gulf of Mexico. In fact, they sank pilings into the gulf and built the structure out over the water. When the hotel was about to have its grand opening, someone thought, "What if people decide to fish out the hotel windows?" So they placed signs in the hotel rooms, "No fishing out the hotel windows." Many people ignored the signs, however, and it created a difficult problem. Lines got snarled. People in the dining room saw fish flapping against the picture windows. The manager of the hotel solved it all by taking down those little signs. No one checks into a hotel room thinking about fishing out of the windows. The law, although well-intentioned, created the problem.

   Subject: _____

   Complement: _____

   Developmental question being addressed: _____

   _____

(Answers are in appendix 1.)

five

THE ARROW *and the Target*

Stages in the Development of Expository Messages

1. Selecting the Passage
2. Studying the Passage
3. Discovering the Exegetical Idea
4. Analyzing the Exegetical Idea
5. **Formulating the Homiletical Idea,** p. 103
6. **Determining the Sermon's Purpose,** p. 107

Let's take a moment to review. In the first two stages of your preparation, you study the text to determine the exegetical idea and its development. You want to state the subject and the complement of what the biblical writer wrote to his readers. Also make a rough outline, or sketch, of the passage. How did the author develop his idea?

398

Having done that, you still face the question, "Do I have anything to preach?" While every good sermon is the development of a central idea, not every idea in the biblical text can be turned into a sermon. In the next stage, therefore, you submit your exegetical idea and its development to the three developmental questions:

- What does this mean?
- Is this true? Do I believe it?
- So what? What difference does this make?

These three questions deal with the meaning, validity, and implications of any idea. The questions should be addressed not only to the main idea but to the supporting ideas and the details of the passage as well. This helps you decide what kind of supporting materials you will need to communicate the message of your text.

You also keep your audience in mind as you answer these three questions:

"What does this mean?" What has to be explained so that my listeners will understand the passage?

- Does the biblical writer explain his statements or define his terms? Does he assume that the original readers understood him and needed no explanation?
- Are there concepts, terms, or connections that modern listeners might not understand that you need to explain to them?

"Is this true? Do I really believe it?" What needs to be proved?

- Is the author arguing, proving, or defending at length some concept that your hearers would probably accept—for example, that Jesus was human, or that Christians don't have to be circumcised?
- Is the author arguing, proving, or defending a concept that your listeners may not readily accept, and therefore they need to understand the argument of the passage—for instance, that slaves were to be obedient to their masters?
- Is the author assuming the validity of an idea that your listeners may not accept right away? Do they need to be convinced that what the passage asserts is actually the case—for instance, that Jesus is the only way to God, or that demons actually exist?

"So what? What difference does it make?" How should this concept be applied?

- Is the biblical writer applying his idea? Where does he develop it? Exhortations in the Scriptures grow out of the context. Some sermons resemble cut flowers: the admonition of the author is cut off from the truth that produced it. The imperatives are always connected to the indicative. The effect should be traced to its cause.
- Is the author presenting an idea that he doesn't apply directly but will apply later in his letter? Where does he do that? How do you apply this truth to your listeners now?
- Does the biblical writer assume that the reader will see the application of an assertion? The writers of the gospels often assume that the readers will see the implication of a parable or a miracle. In narrative literature especially, ask yourself, "Why did the author include this incident?"

As you work through these questions, jot down what you must explain, prove, or apply to your hearers. You will soon know whether you have anything to preach and what research you must do. You will see the general direction your sermon must go and what you must deal with in your sermon.

Stage 5 In light of the audience's knowledge and experience, think through your exegetical idea and state it in the most exact, memorable sentence possible.

In stage five, state the essence of your exegetical idea in a sentence that communicates to your listeners. This sentence is your

homiletical idea. Remember that you are not lecturing to people about the Bible. You are talking to people about themselves from the Bible. This statement, therefore, should be in fresh, vital, contemporary language.

Advertisers know that while we do not remember abstractions, we do remember slogans. Although advertising slogans are usually "much ado about nothing," we should not underestimate the power of an idea well stated. People are more likely to think God's thoughts after Him, and to live and love and choose on the basis of those thoughts, when they are couched in memorable sentences.

Some statements of the homiletical idea may be identical to the statement of the exegetical idea. That is the case when you are dealing with universal principles that apply to anyone at any time: "Do not commit adultery," "Do not steal," or "Love your neighbor as you love yourself" need no translation into the twenty-first century. They are already there. "A soft answer turns away wrath, but a grievous word stirs up anger" is timeless. Habakkuk declared, "The righteous [person] shall live by his faith" (Hb. 2:4 ASV). This foundational idea of Scripture doesn't need to be made contemporary. It needs only to be explained and applied.

Other exegetical ideas, however, are turned into homiletical ideas when you make them more up-to-date or personal. The exegetical idea of 1 Thessalonians 1:2–10 might be, "Paul thanked God for the Thessalonians because through the apostle's ministry, God had brought them to himself and made a noticeable difference in their lives." The preaching idea should be more direct and personal: "Thank God regularly for the Christians you know because of what God has done for them and is doing through them."

An exegetical statement of 1 Timothy 4:12–16 might be, "Paul exhorted young Timothy to win respect by being an example to others both in his personal life and in his public ministry of the Scriptures." Were this passage the basis of a sermon to seminary students, the idea might be stated: "Win respect for yourself both by the way you live and the way you teach."

Your homiletical statement can be more contemporary and less tied to the words of the text. Don Sunukjian preached a sermon on Exodus 13:17–18:

> Now it came about when Pharaoh had let the people go, that God did not lead them by the way of the land of the Philistines, even though it was near; for God said, 'Lest the people change their minds when they see war, and they return to Egypt.' Hence God led the people around by way of the wilderness to the Red Sea; and the sons of Israel went up in martial array from the land of Egypt. (NASB)

Sunukjian's preaching idea was, "The shortest distance between two points may be a zigzag." That was true to the text, and it is also true to life.

When James Rose expounded Romans 12:1–17, his homiletical idea was, "When the effect of the gospel is all-important in the church, the force of the gospel is unstoppable in the world."

In preaching Romans 2:1–19, you might have as your central concept, "If you use the law as your ladder to heaven, you will be left standing in hell."

The exegetical statement of Romans 6:1–14 might be, "Through their union with Jesus Christ in his death and resurrection, Christians have died to the rule of sin and are alive to holiness." Here's a more striking statement for that idea: "You are not the person you used to be; therefore, don't handle life as you used to handle it."

The central lesson from the parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25–37) might be, "Your neighbor is anyone whose need you see, whose need you are in a position to meet."

As you can see, the homiletical idea is simply the biblical truth applied to life.

Here are some general suggestions for framing a homiletical idea:

- State the idea as simply and as memorably as possible. Make each word count. State it for the ear. Listeners should not have to work to remember it.

- State the idea in concrete and familiar words. Study ads in magazines for slogans you remember. If you were given one sentence in which to communicate your idea to someone who didn't know religious jargon and who couldn't write it down, how would you say it?
- State the idea so that it focuses on response. How do you want your listeners to respond? Instead of "You can rejoice in trials because they lead to maturity," try "Rejoice when hard times come." If you know what your listeners should do, tell them.
- State the idea so that your listeners sense you are talking to them about them.

The Power of Purpose

The noted preacher R. W. Dale was evidently a man who was as secure as the Rock of Gibraltar. Every Saturday evening he delivered his sermon to his wife. One day, after he had gone through this exercise, his wife asked, "Tell me, why are you preaching that sermon?"

That obvious question faces all of us as we prepare, and it receives many inadequate answers. For example, "When 11:25 comes on Sunday morning, I'll be expected to say something religious." Or "Last week I covered Genesis 21, so this week I'll preach on Genesis 22." Sometimes our response to the question, "Why are you preaching that sermon?" is as clear as a thick fog: "I'm preaching this sermon because I want to give the people a challenge." Such answers, usually implied rather than stated, produce sermons that resemble a dropped lemon meringue pie—they splatter over everything, but hit nothing very hard. They lack a definite purpose!

No matter how brilliant or biblical a sermon is, without a definite purpose it is not worth preaching. We have no adequate idea of why we are speaking. Imagine asking a hockey coach, "What is the purpose of your hockey team?" He had better know the answer. All kinds of activities take place on the ice—skating, stick handling, checking, passing—but the purpose of a hockey

team must be to outscore the opponent. A team that does not keep that firmly in mind plays only for exercise. Why preach this sermon? We do an assortment of things when we face our congregation. We explain, illustrate, exhort, exegete, and gesture, to list a few. But we are to be pitied if we fail to understand that this particular sermon should change lives in some specific way. A. W. Tozer speaks a perceptive word to all of us:

> There is scarcely anything so dull and meaningless as Bible doctrine taught for its own sake. Truth divorced from life is not truth in its Biblical sense, but something else and something less. . . . No man is better for knowing that God in the beginning created the heaven and the earth. The devil knows that, and so did Ahab and Judas Iscariot. No man is better for knowing that God so loved the world of men that He gave His only begotten Son to die for their redemption. In hell there are millions who know that. Theological truth is useless until it is obeyed. The purpose behind all doctrine is to secure moral action.[1]

The purpose behind each individual sermon is to secure some moral action. We need to know what that action is.

Stage 6 Determine the purpose for this sermon.

The purpose states what you expect to happen in your hearers as a result of preaching your sermon. George Sweazey maintains that a purpose distinguishes a sermon from an essay: "An essay looks at ideas, but a sermon looks at people."[2] A purpose differs from the sermon idea, therefore, in the same way that a target differs from the arrow; as taking a trip differs from studying a map; as baking a pie differs from reading a recipe. Whereas the idea states the truth, the purpose defines what that truth should accomplish. Henry Ward Beecher appreciated the importance of purpose when he declared: "A sermon is not like a

1. A. W. Tozer, *Of God and Men* (Harrisburg, Pa.: Christian Publications, 1960), pp. 26–27.
2. George E. Sweazey, *Preaching the Good News* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1976).

Chinese firecracker to be fired off for the noise it makes. It is a hunter's gun, and at every discharge he should look to see his game fall." That presupposes, of course, that the hunter knows what he is hunting.

How then do you determine the purpose of your sermon? You do so by discovering the purpose behind the passage you are preaching. As part of your exegesis, you should ask, "Why did the author write this? What effect did he expect it to have on his readers?" No biblical writer took up his pen to jot down "a few appropriate remarks" on a religious subject. Each one wrote to affect lives. For instance, when Paul wrote to Timothy, he did it "so that you may know how one ought to conduct himself in the household of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and support of the truth" (1 Tim. 3:15 NASB).

Jude changed purposes for his letter after he sat down to write. "While I was making every effort to write you about our common salvation," he confessed, "I felt the necessity to write to you appealing that you contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints" (Jude 3 NASB). John designed his account of Jesus' life to win belief in Jesus as "the Christ, the Son of God" and to secure in believers "life through his name" (John 20:31 KJV). Whole books, as well as sections within books, were written to make something happen in the thinking and the actions of the readers. An expository sermon, therefore, finds its purpose in line with the biblical purposes. You must first figure out why a particular passage was included in the Bible, and with this in mind decide what God desires to accomplish through your sermon in your hearers today.

The inspired Scriptures were given so that we could be "adequate, equipped for every good work" (2 Tim. 3:16–17 NASB). It follows from this that you should be able to put into words what beliefs, attitudes, or values should change or be confirmed, or what quality of life or what good works should result from the preaching and hearing of your sermon. You accomplish that purpose, Paul told Timothy, through (1) teaching a doctrine, (2) refuting some error in belief or action, (3) correcting what is wrong, and (4) instructing people on the proper handling of life.

Educators realize that an effective statement of purpose goes beyond procedure and describes the observable behavior that should come as a result of teaching. A purpose statement not only describes our destination and the route we will follow to get there, but, if possible, tells how we can know if we have arrived. If we are not clear about where we are going, we will probably land someplace else.[3]

Roy B. Zuck has drawn up a list of verbs valuable for stating course objectives. These verbs are useful for dealing with the purpose of giving knowledge and insight (the cognitive domain) and changing attitudes and actions (the affective domain). This list is reproduced in table 1.

While preaching differs significantly from lecturing, stating the purpose of a sermon as though it were an instructional objective makes the sermon more direct and effective. Here are some purposes stated in measurable terms:

- The listener should understand justification by faith and be able to write out a simple definition of the doctrine. (Whether the hearers actually write out the definition or not, you will be much more specific if you preach as though they will.)
- A listener should be able to list the spiritual gifts and determine which gifts he or she has been given.
- A listener should be able to write down the name of at least one non-Christian and should resolve to pray for that individual each day for the next two weeks. (If listeners do something for two weeks, they have a better chance of doing it for several months.)
- My hearers should identify one morally indifferent situation about which Christians disagree and be able to think through how to act in that situation.

3. For a discussion of instructional objectives helpful to any teacher, see Robert F. Mager, *Preparing Instructional Objectives*, 2d ed. (Belmont, Calif.: Fearon, 1975).

Table 1

If the goal is:	Knowledge	Insight	Attitude	Skill
Then the verb can be:	List	Discriminate between	Determine to	Interpret
	State	Differentiate between	Develop	Apply
	Enumerate	Compare	Have confidence in	Internalize
	Recite	Contrast	Appreciate	Produce
	Recall	Classify	Be convinced of	Use
	Write	Select	Be sensitive to	Practice
	Identify	Choose	Commit yourself to	Study
	Memorize	Separate	Be enthusiastic about	Solve
	Know	Evaluate	Desire to	Experience
	Trace	Examine	Sympathize with	Explain
	Delineate	Comprehend	View	Communicate
	Become aware of	Reflect on	Plan	Assist in
	Become familiar with	Think through	Feel satisfied about	Pray about
	Become cognizant of	Discern		
	Define	Understand		
	Describe	Discover		
	Recognize			

- Members of the congregation should understand how God loves them and explain at least one way in which that love makes them secure.
- Christians should be able to explain what people must believe to become Christians and should plan to speak to at least one person about the Lord in the coming week.
- Listeners should be convinced of the necessity to study the Bible and should enroll in a church Bible class, a home Bible class, or a Bible correspondence course.

Framing purposes that describe measurable results forces you to reflect on how attitudes and behavior should be altered. That, in turn, will enable you to be more concrete in your application of truth to life. After all, if a sermon accomplishes anything, it must accomplish something.

David Smith, a Scottish preacher, describes a sermon as "a speech concluded with a motion." One effective means of incorporating the purpose into the sermon, therefore, lies in writing out a conclusion with the purpose in mind. State in a rough way what you are asking the congregation to do as a result of what you have preached. Be as specific as possible. If someone came to you next week and said, "I have been thinking about what you preached last Sunday, but I don't know how what you said applies to my life," would you have an answer? Picture the truth you have preached being acted upon in some specific situations. Then put that into your conclusion. Here are some examples:

- "Is there someone with whom you have a broken relationship? A spouse, a parent, a friend? As a follower of Jesus Christ, you need to take the first step today to make it right. Is there a letter you should write? Is there a phone call you should make? Is there a visit you should make or a conversation you should have? Then will you ask God for the courage to make that contact and take that step to get that matter settled?"
- "Your job is the will of God for you. Tomorrow when you go to your work, take out a Post-it note and write 'God has put

me here to serve Him today' and then place it on your desk or in your locker—some place where you can see it easily. Whenever you look at that note, breathe a prayer, 'Lord, I'm working this job for you. Help me to do it to please you.' In that way you can remember the workday to keep it holy."

You may change the conclusion later in your preparation, but you have determined where you purpose to go. You concentrate your thought with greater efficiency if when you begin, you know what you intend to accomplish.

New Concepts

Measurable results
Purpose
Homiletical idea

Definitions

Measurable results—the purpose of the sermon stated in terms of observable behavior.

Purpose—what one expects to happen in the hearer as a result of hearing this sermon.

Homiletical idea—the statement of a biblical concept in such a way that it accurately reflects the Bible and meaningfully relates to the congregation.

"A Case Study in Temptation" (Gen. 3:1-7)
Preached by Haddon Robinson

Sermon

A few months ago I received a letter from a young man in a penitentiary in Texas. He is serving from ten to twenty years for attempted rape. He is a Christian, and he asked if I would send him a book that was not available to him in the prison. I gladly responded to his request. But his letter deeply disturbed me, because the young man had been a student of mine when he was in seminary.

When he left the seminary, he left with notable gift and great vision. He pastored two different churches, and both of them, humanly speaking, were successful congregations. In the second church, which I knew better, he demonstrated the gift of evangelism. Many of the people in that church were led to Christ as a result of his witness. He was a careful student of the Scriptures. There were those in the congregation who testified that again and again as he stood to speak they could sense the power and the presence of God. He had a discipling ministry; he left his thumbprint upon the men in that congregation. In fact, when his crime was discovered and he had admitted his guilt, men in his church raised over $20,000 for his legal defense. And now he is a prisoner in a penitentiary in Texas. In one dark hour of temptation he fell into the abyss. He ruined his reputation, destroyed his ministry, and left an ugly stain on the testimony of Christ in that community.

When I read that letter and knew what had happened, I found myself wrestling with all kinds of questions and emotions. What happens in a person's life who does that? What went through his mind? What was it that caused him to turn his back on all that he had given his life to?

I realized as I was asking those questions that I was not simply asking about him, but about myself. I was asking about men and women who have graduated from seminary who, in some act of disobedience, have destroyed the ministry to which they have given themselves. What is it that causes someone to mortgage his ministry to pay the high price of sin? What is it that lures us to destruction?

It's a question you face. You're a Christian. Temptation dogs your path and trips you at every turn. The question you must face sometime in your life is, "How does the tempter do his work? How does he come to us? How does he destroy us?" Here, early in the ancient record, we have one of the themes that appears again and again throughout the Scripture, the theme of sin and its destructive power.

What we have here in Genesis 3 is a case study in temptation. In a case study, you get rid of the independent variables to study the thing itself. As Eve is approached by the tempter, many things are true of her that are not true of us. For example, she has no poi-

Haddon W. Robinson, *Biblical Sermons: How Twelve Preachers Apply the Principles of Biblical Preaching* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1989).
Exported from Logos Bible Software 5, 1:48 PM 18 September, 2013.

soned blood in her veins. She does not have a heritage on which she can blame her sin. Eve comes, as Adam does, as the direct creation of God; and when God created Adam and Eve, God declared that the creation was very good. Unlike people today, Adam and Eve were not half-damned at birth. What is more, Eve and Adam lived in a perfect environment. Nothing in the pollution of that atmosphere would lead them away from God. So Eve stands in the morning of creation, a creature of great wonder. No sinful heritage, no savaged environment. We have a case study in temptation.

As we watch the way the tempter comes to Eve, we recognize that while this story comes to us out of the ancient past, it's as up-to-date as the temptation you faced last night—the temptation you may be feeling this morning, the temptation you face in your study, in your home, in your ministry, in your life. The scene has changed, but the methodology has not.

As you read this story, one thing is obvious. When the tempter comes, he comes to us in disguise. The writer of Genesis notes the serpent was "more crafty than any of the wild animals the LORD God had made." When the serpent approached, therefore, he did not come as a creature of ugliness. This scene happens before the curse, before the serpent crawls on its belly over the ground. No rattlers here warn of an approaching danger. There's nothing here that would make Eve feel alarmed.

When Satan comes to you, he does not come in the form of a coiled snake. He does not approach with the roar of a lion. He does not come with the wail of a siren. He does not come waving a red flag. Satan simply slides into your life. When he appears, he seems almost like a comfortable companion. There's nothing about him that you would dread. The New Testament warns that he dresses as an angel of light, a servant of God, a minister of righteousness. One point seems quite clear: when the enemy attacks you, he wears a disguise. As Mephistopheles says in *Faust*, "The people do not know the devil is there even when he has them by the throat."

Not only is he disguised in his person, but he disguises his purposes. He does not whisper to Eve, "I am here to tempt you." He merely wants to conduct a religious discussion. He would like to discuss theology; he doesn't intend to talk about sin. The serpent opens the conversation by asking, "Did God really say, 'You must not eat from any tree in the garden'?" You can't argue with that. Satan asks only for clarification. "Look, I want to be sure of your exegesis. I want to understand the idea God was trying to get across. Did he really say you can't eat of any of the trees of the garden?" You see, he is a religious devil. He doesn't come and knock on the door of your soul and say, "Pardon me, buddy, allow me a half hour of your life. I'd like to damn and destroy you." No, all he wants to do is talk

about a point of theology. He only desires to interpret the Word of God. It is possible, isn't it, to discuss theology to our peril. We can talk about God in an abstract way, as though he were a mathematical formula. You can concoct a theology that leads you to disobey God.

You're convinced about grace, very strong on Christian liberty. You know the freedom of the sons and daughters of God and you will debate grace with anyone. You can do anything you want, at any time you want, with anyone you want. No restrictions, no hangups; you're free; you know God's grace! Every person who's ever turned liberty into license has done so on theological grounds. "Even when I sin, God's grace abounds. Isn't it wonderful that I always have God's grace because when I sin, I demonstrate his forgiveness?"

You can be strong on God's sovereignty. No one will outpace you when it comes to that doctrine. God is sovereign over the affairs of men and nations. God's eye is not only over history; his hand is on history. His hand rests upon your life, but before long God is so sovereign that you have no responsibility. In a sense "all the world's a stage, all the men and women merely players." God maps out the action, plans the dialogue. We go through our paces, but it's all of God. Even our sin. And out of that discussion you find good sound reasons—or reasons that sound good—for disobeying God. All because you discuss theology with the wrong motive. One advantage of graduating from seminary is that you can manufacture a lot of pious excuses for doing wrong and be theological in your disobedience.

Another thing that Satan does in this conversation, this discussion about God, is to focus Eve's attention on that single tree in the center of the garden. He says, "It is inconceivable to me that God wouldn't let you have any of these trees." Now Eve jumps to God's defense. She's a witness on behalf of God. "No, we can eat of all of the trees in the garden but that one tree—that tree there in the center—we can't eat from that, we can't touch that tree." God didn't say that. He didn't say anything about "touching" it. Some people defend God by becoming stricter than God. They not only know God's commands, but they believe they are holier if they go beyond those commands. There is danger in that. Eve says, "You know we can't taste it; we can't even touch it." What Satan has done, of course, is to focus her mind on that single tree, the one thing God prohibited.

Sometimes people turn their backs on all the good things, all the blessings that have been poured into their lives—throw all that away for a single sin in their lives. They no longer can see God's goodness. Satan shifts your focus, and there emerges that one thing you want so desperately, you'll do anything to get it. It becomes the obsession of your life, and everything else God does for you, you forget. So Satan comes in disguise. He conceals who he is. He conceals what he wants to do.

Haddon W. Robinson, *Biblical Sermons: How Twelve Preachers Apply the Principles of Biblical Preaching* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1989).

Exported from Logos Bible Software 5, 1:48 PM 18 September, 2013.

The second part of his strategy is to attack God's Word. When Eve responds, "We may eat from all the trees in the garden, but we must not eat the fruit from the tree that's in the middle of the garden. We must not touch it or we will die," then Satan throws his head back and with irrepressible laughter says, "Surely you don't believe that, do you? That you will surely die? Oh, come now. A bit of fruit? Surely die? That's just a bit of exaggeration God's using to get your attention. He doesn't mean that. Surely die? You're too sophisticated to believe that God who gave you this marvelous garden and all these trees, and that bountiful fruit is going to be that upset about your taking that one piece of fruit. Surely die? You can't be serious! God doesn't mean that. God certainly doesn't mean that."

I can believe in the inerrancy of the Bible as a whole, except on one particular issue between God and me; I'm sure God doesn't mean it when he says, "You will surely die."

For thousands of years Satan has repeated that strategy. It is the theme of modern novels. The author manipulates the plot so that his characters live in deep disobedience against God, yet at the end everything has turned out well. It's the subject of modern movies in which the characters rebel against the moral laws of God but live happily ever after. It's the word from the sponsor on television. It appears in four-color ads. Here's a perfume—it's been on the market for a long time—called "My Sin." A huckster on Madison Avenue named that fragrance. "Here is a fragrance that is so alluring, so charming, so exciting," he whispers, "we can call it 'My Sin.' " You would never guess the fragrance of sin arises as a stench in the nostrils of God.

How do you respond to the warnings against disobedience that fill the pages of Scripture? Does God mean it when he says, "The mind of sinful man is death"? Does God mean it when he declares, "The one who sows to please his sinful nature, from that nature will reap destruction"? Does God mean it when he urges, "Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows"? Does God mean it when he states, "But all the wicked he will destroy"? Does God mean it when he warns, "The LORD will judge his people"? Does God mean it when he promises, "God will judge the adulterer and all the sexually immoral"? Does God mean it when he tells us that sin brings punishment?

God is serious about sin because God is serious about you. God is serious about sin because he loves you and knows the devastation that sin can bring in your life, in your relationships, in your character, in your ministry. God is serious about sin as a loving parent is serious about fire and warns a child about it, knowing that it can maim that child for life, destroy the home he lives in, and do untold damage. But how do you feel about it? Do you take God seriously when he utters those warnings?

Not only does Satan attack God's Word, but he drives deeper and attacks God's character, which lies behind his Word. The serpent explains to the woman, "For God knows that when you eat of it [that tree] your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil." Satan slanders God's goodness. He implies, "Do you know why God gave you that command? He wants to spoil your fun. He wants to hold you on a tight leash. He doesn't want you to be free and experience the good life. He is out to deny you pleasures. He desires to keep you down. He wants to forbid you the excitement that life offers. He knows very well that when you eat that fruit, you'll be like him and will know good and evil. Then you'll enjoy experiences beyond your wildest dreams. God has an ulterior motive, a hidden agenda, and it's an evil one."

Once the well is poisoned, all the water is polluted. One of the most beautiful confessions of love and faith in the Bible is the confession Ruth makes to Naomi. June embraces November. Ruth pleads, "Don't urge me to leave you or to turn back from you. Where you go I will go, and where you stay I will stay. Your people will be my people and your God my God. Where you die I will die, and there I will be buried." An expression of loyal devotion as beautiful as any in all of literature.

But suppose someone whispered to Naomi, "Naomi, listen. Ruth's a gold digger. She's a manipulator. What Ruth, this Moabitess, really wants is to get into Israel and marry a wealthy Jew. She knows you are her passport. She'll tell you anything to get a visa into Israel." If Naomi believed that, the well is poisoned. Every good word Ruth speaks, Naomi now suspects. Every kind act Ruth does, Naomi will reject. When you poison the well, all the water is contaminated. If you question God's Word because you doubt God's goodness, then Satan has done his work. How easily we succumb. All of us have served the Prince of Darkness and lived in his realm too long. When we enter the kingdom of God's Son, we carry our doubts and suspicions with us. If something painful happens in our lives, we ask "why?" and the question mark is like a dagger pointed at the heart of God. How easily we suspect that when some reversal happens in our lives, God has lined up against us. We suffer such a twisted will that even when good things happen to us we doubt God's goodness. If something marvelous comes into our life, something completely unexpected, at first we're delighted. Then all at once a shadow crosses our mind that it will soon be snatched away. God doesn't really want me to enjoy this expression of his goodness; just as I start to enjoy it, he'll pull it back like a sadistic parent. So we "knock on wood" and hammer at the heart of God. When we doubt God's goodness, we will doubt his Word. If we believe God wants to hold us back from enjoying a full life, then the work of the tempter is complete.

Haddon W. Robinson, *Biblical Sermons: How Twelve Preachers Apply the Principles of Biblical Preaching* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1989).

Exported from Logos Bible Software 5, 1:48 PM 18 September, 2013.

At that moment, "when the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it." Now the forbidden fruit pleases her eye. She has listened to the lie of the tempter and her senses take control. When you get God out of your life, if you come to question God's Word and God's goodness, then your senses come alive to what is evil; what was once out of bounds to you becomes what you desire more than anything else on earth, even if it is something that can destroy you.

"Piece of fruit?" someone might say. "Surely not a piece of fruit. You're not going to tell me that Eve sinned by eating a piece of fruit in the orchard. You're not going to tell me that's why Adam sinned and why murder came into their family. You're not going to tell me a piece of fruit damned the race."

No, not a piece of fruit, but disobedience to God's Word, an ugly suspicion of God's character. The fruit is out at the periphery; the sin stands at the center. Whenever you come to doubt or deny the goodness of God, then at that point you'll come to reject his Word—the fruit is only the point of disobedience.

If Satan had come to Eve that early morning and said, "Look, sign this paper. Say that you are through with God," she would never have signed it. When Satan approaches us, he never comes dragging the chains that will enslave us. He comes bringing a crown that will ennoble us. He comes offering us pleasure, expansiveness, money, popularity, freedom, and joy. In fact, he never hints about the consequences; he only promises we will fill all the desires of our hearts. That is how we are destroyed. That's the lesson: the temptations that destroy us strike at the heart of God, at God's integrity and God's goodness. As we deny God's goodness, we reject his Word. When we reject his Word, we do so at our peril.

Hear me well. I do not advocate some kind of tight religion. Christianity is not morality—toeing the line and keeping the rules. Christianity is a relationship with God who loves you so much that he gave you his Son, and values you so much he has made you his child. God's every gift is good and perfect. He can never cast a shadow on your life by turning from his goodness. The essence of sin lies in doubting God's goodness and then rejecting his Word. The garden belongs to you as a gift from his hand. Enjoy it. Trust him.

Commentary

The account of the fall describes how, as Helmut Thielicke says, "evil streams out like an icy breath into the world, into a world that once was sound and whole, a world over which there rang the joy of the Creator: 'Behold, it was very good; behold it is very good.' "[1] While this episode comes to us like an epic out of the ancient past, all of us recognize in this account seductions as up-to-date as our most recent fall.

I preached this sermon at a chapel service for the students and faculty of Denver Seminary. While the message itself is as universal as sin, like any sermon, it was prepared and preached for a particular audience. Glimpses of those hearers flash throughout the message.

The sermon takes the form of a "subject completed." The subject gets restated three times in the introduction with three different questions which ask the same thing, "How does the tempter do his work? How does he come to us? How does he destroy us?" The sermon makes two basic observations about that subject.

I. When Satan tempts us, he comes to us in disguise.
   A. He disguises his person.
   B. He disguises his purpose.
II. When Satan tempts us, he levels his attack against God.
   A. He causes us to doubt God's Word.
   B. He causes us to distrust God's character.

The sermon, therefore, elaborates one central idea: "Satan comes to us in disguise to cause us to distrust God's character and to doubt God's Word." While it takes thirty minutes to say it, the sermon says no more than that. The purpose for preaching this sermon grows out of the idea: to help the listeners guard against the tempter by knowing his strategy of attack.

An introduction should do three things. First, it gains attention for the idea; second, it establishes need for what follows; and third, it orients the listeners to the body of the sermon.

The opening illustration, therefore, catches attention and establishes a need to listen to what follows. The story prompts the question, "If an effective Christian leader can end up in a penitentiary, who among us can assume we don't need to know how the enemy works?" In the third, fourth, and fifth paragraphs the sermon probes that need and relates

[1] Helmut Thielicke, *How the World Began: Man in the First Chapters of the Bible*, trans. John W. Doberstein (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg, 1961), p. 123.

it in a personal way both to the preacher and his hearers.

An introduction also does its work when it orients the congregation to the biblical passage and the body of the sermon. In doing that, it usually answers two questions: "Why are we turning to this particular passage today?" and "How will this sermon go about meeting the need that has been raised?" The sermon presents the account of the fall as "a case study of temptation," and the passage in Genesis governs the development. Both major points as well as the subpoints come out of the biblical account of the fall. The Bible is used throughout the sermon in other ways. An illustration of a minor point comes from the story of Ruth and Naomi, and another subpoint is reinforced by a series of warnings from other parts of the Scriptures.

The sermon is also personal. That note sounds not only in the introduction but throughout the development. The pronouns *we, us, our, you,* and *your* are used frequently. The points are also stated in terms of the audience, not in terms of the passage in Genesis. Satan comes to us; he attacks us. An expository preacher trades a sword for a butter knife when he sounds like a lecturer in ancient history discussing a saga from the long ago and far away. Biblical preaching does not simply deal with the text; it talks about people from the text. Relevance is found in part when the minister speaks to the congregation as though the sermon was designed for them.

The wording of the sermon adds something to its basic thrust. Wording in a sermon must attack the barricades of a listener's inattention with ferocity. Language close to the senses peppers any relevant sermon: "Satan ... does not come in the form of a coiled snake" or "with the roar of a lion" or "with the wail of a siren" or "waving a red flag." While this sermon uses only two longer formal illustrations, it bristles with short one-line examples drawn from Faust, Shakespeare, modern advertising, motion pictures, television, and novels. Images flash into the mind with sentences like "once the well is poisoned, all the water is polluted" and "when Satan approaches us, he never comes dragging the chains that will enslave us."

The sermon has weaknesses. While the subject "How does the tempter do his work?" comes through clearly, the statement of the sermon's central idea does not. The transitions link the two major points to each other and the supporting points to their main points, but they do not clearly restate the subject or the big idea of the sermon.

The conclusion, too, could have had more strength. While "the essence of sin lies in doubting God's goodness and then rejecting his Word" restates the basic thrust of the message, the closing would possess more force had it been more specific and sharply focused. People need to know what to do with what they know and, if possible, they need

clues as to how to do it immediately. The best conclusions provide that direction.

Interview

How long does it take you to put a sermon together?

My quick answer is eleven to twelve hours. If I kept a log of my time, like a lawyer accounting for every ten minutes I thought about a sermon, I suspect it would be longer.

How about this sermon? Did it take eleven to twelve hours?

I guess so. I preach regularly in our chapel here at Denver Seminary. I keep folders on messages I want to develop. Whenever I come across something in my reading or in my study of a passage, I put it in the folder. When I actually sit down to work through the sermon, it takes eight to ten hours, but I have a lot of work already done in the folder in front of me.

How long do you preach?

That varies from twenty-five minutes to forty minutes. It depends on the sermon and where I am preaching.

Where do you get ideas for your sermons?

Well, either you start with the Scriptures and go to people's needs, or you start with people's needs and go to the Bible. I usually start with a passage that has caught my attention and work from there. When I teach a businessmen's Bible study, I work through a book of the Bible or a section of a book. That's an advantage of consecutive exposition of the Scriptures. You know what you will preach next even if you may not know exactly what the text is saying when you come to it. Unfortunately, in my role as president of a seminary, I can't always do that when I speak.

Can you remember how this sermon came about?

I had been reading through Genesis and trying to understand how narrative literature in the Bible communicates its concepts. I found the opening chapters of Genesis intriguing and a

bit puzzling. After all, you and I don't have much contact with talking serpents or gardens like Eden. Yet, behind these stories lies theology. I'm persuaded that the opening chapters of the Bible don't simply tell us how the world began or about primordial days. They transcend specific history. At any rate, I read *How the World Began* by Helmut Thielicke and I felt he provided a workable lead to the application of the passage. That was in my folder. I also had some notes from a lecture that my friend, Bruce Waltke, gave fifteen years ago. Finally, I was deeply bothered about the young pastor who ended up in a Texas prison. All of that drew me back to this chapter and that material.

How do you go about preparing your sermon?

First, I spend time in the text until I think I understand what the biblical author was saying to his readers. Why did he write this? What difference would it make were it not there? How does this account relate to the context that precedes it and follows it? I look for structural clues or clues in the narrative that open up the passage. The biblical writers were marvelous storytellers. They didn't simply spin yarns. They taught theology. I try to be aware of how they went about doing that.

What do you actually do? What lies before you on your desk?

I use a series of legal-size yellow pages; one page for each verse, or each paragraph, depending on the length of my passage. Any observation that comes to me from my study or reading that relates to a particular verse, I put there. I usually have a page to sketch an outline and to write down the subject of the passage and the complement. When I think I understand the passage, I feel a sense of relief. That is the first major aim of my study, to capture what the biblical writer is saying and why.

What do you do then?

Having that material in hand, I then ask myself, "What is the most effective way to communicate this message to men and women today?" To bridge the gap between the dynamics of the situation in the ancient world and where we live today, and to do that with integrity, is probably the most challenging part of preaching. Scholars have seldom given application the attention it deserves. So I try to ask how this passage speaks to me and to other people I know and then how I can best get it across. I try not to think about preaching a sermon, but how to communicate a biblical concept from the passage to my audience.

Where do you use commentaries?

Pretty early in the process. I use any help I can get to understand the text. I find, though, that I need to have the content of the passage in mind before I use the tools. Otherwise I don't know what the commentaries are talking about. I read the more technical material first.

What about illustrations? How important are they?

I think they are crucial. They plant truth in people's lives. Illustrations can explain an idea, help people see its validity, and understand what difference it makes in their lives.

You collect them?

Yes, collecting illustrations is my hobby. Other people collect postage stamps and baseball cards; I gather illustrations. I think the process is as important as the product. As you look for illustrations, it turns the world into God's picture book and stimulates your imaginative glands.

Where do you find your illustrations?

Everywhere. From my reading, of course. Magazines, books, newspapers, the comics. From conversations or something that strikes me in life that I think could be turned into an illustration. I steal them from other preachers as I listen to them or read their sermons.

What do you think is the weakest part of your own preaching?

For any given sermon, I might answer that differently. Sometimes I feel my conclusion needed more work, especially in showing people how to make the truth a part of their lives. At other times, I feel that the tension was weak or that the sermon was too long. Thinking of sermons as a group, I guess I fail in my transitions most often. I don't take time to build a bridge between my major points, to review or go back to my central idea. The sermon is clear to me as I preach it, and I assume it's also clear to the listeners. Listening to a sermon on tape three or four weeks later, I discover that the link between the points got lost in the preaching.

Does that discourage you?

Yes and no. Yes, in that you'd think if you teach homiletics, you'd get it right yourself, and I don't always. No—sermons are not literary masterpieces. They are living communication, and when you concentrate on getting something across to another person, there's a roughness to it.

Battles for clarity never stay won and, while I strive to improve, I can't let reality defeat me or I'd never preach again.

Do you always preach without notes?

Yes, and we teach our students at Denver Seminary to do that. Research shows that a very limited amount of notes doesn't get in the way, but a couple of pages of notes hinders communication. So, I don't use them except for quotes or material like that.

How do you do that?

I think the secret lies in clear, full-sentence outlining. A preacher needs to "see" his flow of thought not as a series of individual points, but as a complete unit. If you know what you want to say and it hangs together logically or psychologically, then preaching resembles an animated conversation. If you're an expository preacher, the text often serves as "notes." After all, that's where you found the sermon. If a communicator trusts his or her mind, it's not that difficult and it adds to the directness of the sermon.

A final question. What advice would you give to a young minister?

You can't do better than Paul's counsel to Timothy. "Devote yourself to the public reading of Scripture. to preaching and to teaching." As you grow as a person, your sermons grow. too. But it's also crucial to grow as a preacher. As people see your progress, they will respect you and respond to your ministry.