

HOW DO I MOVE FROM TEXT TO SERMON?

INTRODUCTION; BASIC CONVICTIONS AND PRESUPPOSITIONS

1. A preacher of the Word of God must first be an interpreter of it.
2. The first task of the interpreter/preacher is to draw out of a passage the meaning intended by the original author. (Exegesis) –
3. Exegesis is painstaking, sometimes tedious, work.
4. More important than intellectual effort is spiritual preparation.

I. STEP ONE: SELECTION

- 1) Book
- 2) What can I do.

II. STEP TWO: OVERVIEW STUDY

The Purpose: (1) To get a bird's-eye view of the context;
 (2) To answer the question, What does the Scripture actually say?
 The operative word here is OBSERVATION

The Process:

A. Read the Book which you intend to expound

1. Read repeatedly
2. Read imaginatively
3. Read prayerfully

3. What **DOMINANT THEMES** can I discover in the book?

Look for words, phrases, or families of words, which seem to occur frequently, and which may indicate the main ideas of the book.

4. What indications of the author's **PURPOSE** in writing can I find?

a. Is his purpose stated explicitly?

b. Can a purpose be inferred from the historical situation in which he wrote?

c. **What need in his readers was he attempting to address?**

5. What do I observe about the way the author **DEVELOPS HIS THOUGHT?**

C. Make a preliminary outline of the book

[NOTE: All the above work should be done **BEFORE ANY REFERENCE WORKS ARE CONSULTED.**]

D. Read the secondary literature

1. Check your own observations and revise them if necessary

2. Research the setting

3. Improve your outline

E. Break the book into preaching segments

III. STEP THREE: INTENSIVE STUDY**A. Determine the preaching text and seat it in your mind**

1. Set the limits of the text
2. Settle the wording of the text
3. Seat the text in your mind

B. Place the preaching portion in its context

1. Immediate context

Matthew 16:28

Philippians 2:5-11

2. Book as a whole

Philippians

3. Other books by same author

4. Historical, cultural, social Context

5. Bible as a whole

C. Study the meaning of the crucial words in the passage

Note especially:

1. Words which are translated differently in various versions
2. Words which are critical to the meaning of the passage
3. Word which are unknown or obscure to you

E. Study any unclear geographical, historical, cultural or philosophical allusions in the text.

F. Seek to determine how the text being studied relates to the book's purpose.

G. List the main truths taught in the passage.

H. Attempt to formulate a statement of the theme of the passage.

In one sentence, what is the MAIN thing the WHOLE thing is saying?

I. Formulate an outline of the passage.

J. NOW, consult several good commentaries and make a note of any insights they provide which you have missed.

IV. STEP FOUR: ORGANIZING THE SERMON

God is a God of order

A. The Importance of a Good Sermon Structure

1. To the Preacher

a. Gives guidance in preparation

(1) Helps in gathering material

(2) Helps in omitting material

b. Gives confidence in delivery

(1) You know where you are going

(2) It frees you from dependence on notes

2. To the listener

a. Gives confidence in the preacher's knowledge of where he is going

b. Helps the mind to focus and follow the argument

c. Aids the listeners memory

B. Crystallize the Central IDEA of the Passage

"Every sermon should be ruthlessly unitary in its theme. This is the first and great commandment." [Ian Pitt-Watson, Fuller theological Seminary]

Virtually every textbook on preaching makes this point

"I have a conviction that no sermon is ready for preaching, nor ready for writing out, until we can express its theme in a short, pregnant sentence as clear as a crystal. I find the getting of that sentence is the hardest, the most exacting, and the most fruitful labor in my study. To compel oneself to fashion that sentence, to dismiss every word that is vague, ragged, ambiguous, to think oneself through to a form of words which defines the theme with scrupulous exactness--this is surely one of the most vital and essential factors in the making of a sermon; and I do not think any sermon ought to be preached or even written, until that sentence has emerged, clear and lucid as a cloudless moon." [John Henry Jowett, *The Preacher: His Life and Work*]

Terminology varies: central idea, proposition, theme, thesis, topic sentence, main thought, **homiletical idea**

1. The Importance of the Homiletical Idea

- a. It promotes stability of structure (the foundation of the entire structure of the sermon)

- b. It ensures unity of thought

- c. It contributes to forcefulness of impact
(open hand vs. fist)

2. The Characteristics of the Homiletical Idea

- a. It must be an accurate summary of what the passage teaches

- b. It must be a complete sentence, (usually) in a declarative form
Incorrect: "The need of God's people in time of trial"
Better:

- c. It should be a timeless truth generally stated in the present tense
Incorrect: "This passage teaches that Abraham walked by faith."
Better:

- d. It should be stated in the present tense.

- e. It should be as concise as possible, consistent with clarity
General rule: no more than 17 words

~~f~~ e. It is generally useful to state it in the first or second person (I/we or you) rather than the third person (they, he, she)

g e. It should not contain all the main divisions of the outline.

Example: "Christians can be gloriously triumphant in the face of adversity, opposition, and death."

Better: "Christians can be gloriously triumphant through Christ"

- I. In the Face of Adversity
- II. In the Face of Opposition
- III. In the Face of Death

Better still: "We [or you] can be gloriously triumphant through Christ."

3. 4. The Process of Developing the Homiletical Idea

- a. Do a thorough exegetical study of the passage
- b. Determine the subject of the passage: provides a full and accurate answer to the question, What is this passage talking about?
- (1) Determine, in just a word or two, the main topic the deals with
- (2) Narrow the topic: what aspect of the topic does it deal with?
- c. Determine the complement of the sentence: answers the question, what is he saying about what he is talking about?
- d. Combine the subject and the complement to form a sentence which summarizes the main idea of the passage. (the Exegetical Idea)
- e. Restatement the sentence, if necessary, to make it timeless and memorable. (Homiletical Idea)

C. Relate the Homiletical Idea to the Main Divisions of the Outline

1. What natural question does the Homiletical Idea raise in the mind?

mark 16:

Text: I Thessalonians 2:1-12

Homiletical Idea: The servant of God has an exemplary pattern for his ministry.

Question: What is that pattern? or What are the characteristics of that pattern?

2. Formulate a transitional sentence

- a. This sentence answers the Question asked of the Homiletical Idea
- b. This sentence should contain a KEY WORD which will link together all the main divisions

In the preceding illustration the key word is "characteristics"

Each division of the outline would then be one of the characteristics of that exemplary pattern.

- I. There is the Characteristic of Holy Boldness (I Thess. 2:1-2)
- II. There is the Characteristic of Faithfulness to God (vv. 3-6)
- III. There is the Characteristic of Gracious Condescension (vv. 7-9)
- IV. There is the Characteristic of Integrity (vv. 10-12)

D. Determine the Main Divisions of the Outline

1. Each division should be a sentence
2. Each sentence should be succinct
3. Each sentence should be distinct
4. The sentences should be parallel to each other
 - a. Grammatically parallel
 - b. Use the same key word
5. If possible, the sentences should be expressed in a contemporary manner

Not this:

- I. The Woman of Samaria Needed Acceptance
- II. The Woman of Samaria Found Acceptance in Christ

But this:

- I. We Need To Feel Accepted
- II. We Are Accepted By Jesus

6. Above all, each sentence must be faithful to the text

✘ Every point should be obvious in the text.

7. Indicate in parentheses following each division the verse reference from which that point is taken

8. All main divisions must support the Homiletical Idea

E. Work Out the Subpoints

1. Subpoints should all support their respective main divisions
2. Apply three functional questions to each main divisions
 - a. Will they understand this? What will it take to make it clear?
 - b. Will they believe this? What will it take to convince them?
 - c. How should this affect them? Is there something they should do, some way they should change?

F. Formulate An Introduction

1. Purposes of an introduction
 - a. To introduce the minister to the congregation
 - b. Relate the congregation to the sermon
2. Characteristics of a good introduction
 - a. It gets attention
 - b. It introduces a need
 - c. It orients the audience to what you have to say

Two common mistakes:

 - (1) Preacher begins with background about the text
 - (2) The introduction doesn't actually introduce the sermon about to be preached

G. Formulate a Conclusion**1. Some common mistakes in concluding sermons**

- a. Some sermons end too abruptly
- b. Some wander off into uncertainty
- c. Some take an unexpected detour at the end
- d. Some sermons end twice
- e. Some sermons let the listener off the hook

2. Some shapes conclusions can take

- a. Recapitulate the main points of the sermon
- b. Let the last point serve as the conclusion
- c. Use shock or surprise
- d. Ask a penetrating question
- e. Use a strong quotation
- f. Tell a powerful story that drives home your point