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## ***PREACHING***



**Student Handbook  
Nazarene Theological Institute  
Africa West Field  
Church of the Nazarene**

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**Note to students of this course:**

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# ***Syllabus*** **TP 201 Preaching**

## ***Diploma Level***

**Location of the Course:**

**Course Dates:**

**Course Instructor:**

### **Course Description**

The course serves in the important task of training others to preach the word of God faithfully. The course will offer the steps to follow in order to prepare and present various types of sermons.

### **Course Rationale**

#### ***Narration***

*This course is an apprenticeship in preaching. It deals with the need to communicate the word of God. It serves as a springboard to other courses such as evangelism and church growth as well as Biblical interpretation. AS much as possible students should have a deep understanding of the theories of preaching, as well as to know how to communicate effectively. They should also master methods of teaching and rhetoric (the art of oral argument).*

*This course aims to meet certain competencies and aspects of character development in the student. The mission of the Church of the Nazarene demands a solid preaching of the Gospel. What is this mission? It is to go and make disciples of all nations. I will take into account the Old and New Testaments that are divinely inspired and relevant to today's world.*

*All the activities of this course will instruct students in how to communicate to the groups they preach to in their cultural context and audience's level of education. This course will permit students to establish a biblical base for the other readings. The importance of reading the assigned texts can not be understated. Serious students will apply themselves so that their local church can depend on them.*

#### **Program Outcomes**

The following program outcomes assigned to this module are identifiable competencies required of the student in this course.

- |       |   |
|-------|---|
| CN 3  | Use of the principles of Biblical interpretation  |
| CN 5  | Realization of the biblical, theological, and practical implications of holiness doctrine when taught from a Wesleyan perspective |
| CN 10 | Knowledge of the basic theory and art of communication, especially that which concerns preaching and teaching.                    |
| CP 1  | Ability to communicate orally and visually according to the culture   |
| CP 2  | Ability to preach Biblical sermons that can then be applied to life   |
| CP 5  | Ability to plan and lead worship services   |
| CP 7  | ability to evangelize in public and private   |
| CP 10 | ability to interpret and apply the Bible according to the best principles of Biblical interpretation                              |
| CR 4  | Ability to allow Christ's character to form the attitudes and actions of one's daily life   |
| CR 9  | Ability to engage in continuing formation and education   |
| CX 2  | Ability to understand the context within which he or she lives with objectivity   |
| CX 4  | Ability to understand the differences between the worldviews of the Western world, that of Africa, and that of the Bible          |

### ***Course Outcomes – Diploma Level***

For achieving the competencies listed above, this module organizes several learning activities and requirements around the following intended learning outcomes for this course.

At the end of the course, the student will be able to:

**Course Outcome 1.** Students will develop habits of continually becoming familiar with the Bible. (CN 5, CP 2, CP 10, CR 4)

**Learning Activity 3:** Do the inductive Bible study on your sermon passage.

**Course Outcome 2.** Students will learn how to use commentaries, Bible dictionaries to prepare better sermons. (CN 3, CP 10, CR 9, CX 4)

**Learning Activity 6:** Write a sermon.

**Course Outcome 3.** Students will develop and preach sermon on different theological themes including entire sanctification. (CN 5, CN 10, CP 1, CP 2, CP 7, CP 10, CR 4)

**Learning Activity 3:** Do the inductive Bible study on your sermon passage.

**Learning Activity 6:** Write a sermon.

**Learning Activity 7:** Preach your sermon.

**Course Outcome 4.** Students will learn basic «exegesis» of one's audience (in other words, how to understand one's audience) and how to put the results of this study into practice. (CN 10, CP 1, CP 2, CP 7, CX 2)

**Learning Activity 5:** Write a one to two page description of your audience.

**Course Outcome 5.** *Students should have the habit of collaborating with colleagues for better understanding the Bible in various ministry contexts. (CN 5, CN 10, CP1, CP 10, CR 4)*

*Learning Activity 2: Group Work.*

**Learning Activity 7:** Preach your sermon.

**Course Outcome 6.** Students should prepare a worship service around a theme of a sermon. (CN 5, CN 10, CP 1, CP 5, CX 2)

**Learning Activity 8:** Put together an Order of Worship for the service in which you will preach your sermon.

**Course Outcome 7.** Use the reading of history and current events to adapt sermons to the daily life of the audience. (CN 5, CP 1, CP 2, CR 9, CX 2, CX 4)

**Learning Activity 4:** Write four illustrations.

**Course Outcome 8.** Students will grow in their personal spiritual formation, character development, and professional expertise as they work through in their minds and hearts what they are learning in class in relation to their ministry. (CN 10, CR4, CR9, CX2, CX4)

**Learning Activity 1:** Journal entries

The following sessions and exercises of this course offer the following percentages of the four Cs:

<i>Content</i>	<i>25 %</i>
<i>Competence</i>	<i>45 %</i>
<i>Character</i>	<i>15 %</i>
<i>Context</i>	<i>15 %</i>

### ***Course Resources***

The primary textbook is the Holy Bible. Secondly textbooks from where class assignment will be taken are:

James Braga: *How to prepare Bible messages*. (1977)

Truesdale & Lyons. *Dictionary of the Bible and Theology in Everyday English*

Available Bible study tools, such as Bible commentaries, Bible dictionaries, and Bible concordances.

## **Course Requirements and Evaluation**

Class Attendance. Missing up to one day of a five-day course of 30 hours will result in up to 10% decrease in the final mark – see attendance criteria below. Missing more than six hours of class time will result in failing the course.

### **Attendance Criteria**

Points off (subtracted from final grade) for absences in a 30 hours course

½	Miss devotions – 15 minutes
1	Miss ½ hour
2	Miss 1 hour
5	Miss ½ day
8	Miss 1 day (5 hours)
10	Miss 6 hours of class time

**Learning Activity 1:** Journal entries – Write at least three journal entries during the week based on journal prompts given by the instructor (10 % of the final grade). Writing journal entries is a part of the way you connect the content of the course with your own heart and with your ministry. Your journal entries should show good course content while reflecting your own person insights, ideas and devotional reflections on the content. Each entry should be at least 6-7 lines but no more than 2 pages. You will be graded on the quality and content of your writing.

**Learning Activity 2:** Group Work as designated by the instructor throughout the course. (10%)

**Learning Activity 3:** Do the inductive Bible study on your sermon passage according to the procedures outlined in "Preparing a Sermon" in Appendix A. The scripture passage for your sermon should be one of three or four passages presented as options by the instructor, and which are useful for preaching an evangelistic holiness sermon. You will hand in the answers to these questions for a grade. (20 %)

**Learning Activity 4:** Write four illustrations, such as a story from history, the news (current events), a cultural story of your community, or by describing a word picture. At least two of these illustrations should be ones that you can use in the sermon you are preparing to preach in this class. (10 %)

**Learning Activity 5:** Write a one to two page description of your audience based on the questions under "Exegeting your Congregation" in Lesson 8 of the Student Handbook. (10%)

**Learning Activity 6:** Write an evangelistic holiness sermon. This sermon should be based on the inductive Bible study that you did for Learning Activity # 3, as well as some additional study in a commentary and Bible dictionary. And it should include at least two of the illustrations that you put together in Learning Activity #4. This should be an evangelistic holiness sermon intended to bring the people to the response of seeking the experience of entire sanctification. You will hand in this written sermon for a grade. (15 % of the final grade)

**Learning Activity 7:** Preach your sermon – it should be 15-20 minutes. (15%).

**Learning Activity 8:** Put together an Order of Worship for the service in which you will preach your sermon. The various components of the service should reflect and contribute to the theme of the sermon — the theme of the sermon should flow through each component in the whole service. Write out each of the three prayer; give chorus or song titles and scripture references for the readings and for the sermon. Write at least three main points of your sermon. (10%)

The preaching of a sermon on entire sanctification will be the final exam (see Activity 3).

### **Grading Policy**

A	90-100%	Excellent
B	80-89%	Very Good
C	70-79%	Good
D	60-69%	Passable
D-	45-59%	(Passable for the certificate level and toward the requirements for being ordained in the Church of the Nazarene)

If a student marks a final grade lower than 45% he or she must take the course again for credit at the diploma level.

## ***Course Schedule***

This course can be taught as an intensive in one week or over the course of two months.

## ***Certificate Level***

### **Course Requirements and Evaluation**

**Attendance** is a major part of taking this course. Active participation is expected from each member. Being late by 30 minutes after a **session** begins will be considered absent for that **session** (there are multiple session in each day). To be absent more than one day will result in not passing the course.

**Learning Activity 1:** Group sharing of "Journal entries" – There will be at least three of these times during the week based on start-off statements given by the instructor (10 % of the final grade). "Journal entries" are a part of the way you connect the content of the course with your own heart and with your ministry. Your "journal entries" should show good course content while reflecting your own personal insights, ideas and devotional thinking and contemplation on the content. Think about the start-off statement given by the instructor and be prepared to share your thoughts with your group in about 1-2 minutes, and then with the class as the instructor sees that time will allow.

**Learning Activity 2:** Group Work as designated by the instructor throughout the course. (10 of final grade%)

**Learning Activity 3:** Do the inductive Bible study on your sermon passage according to the procedures outlined in "Preparing a Sermon" in Appendix A. The scripture passage for your sermon should be one of three or four passages presented as options by the instructor, and which are useful for preaching an evangelistic holiness sermon. You will hand in the answers to these questions for a grade. (20 %)

**Learning Activity 4:** Think about four illustrations, such as a story from history, the news (current events), a cultural story of your community, or by describing a word picture. At least two of these illustrations should be ones that you can use in the sermon you are preparing to preach in this class. Be prepared to share these in class. (10 %)

**Learning Activity 5:** Think about how you would description your audience/congregation based on the questions under "Exegeting your Congregation" in Lesson 8 of the Student Handbook. Be prepared to share about this for 2-3 minutes in class. (10%)

**Learning Activity 6:** Write a holiness sermon outline full enough that you can preach from it. This sermon outline should be based on the inductive Bible study that you did for Learning Activity # 3, as well as some additional study in a commentary and Bible dictionary. And it should include at least two of the illustrations that you put together in Learning Activity #4. This should be an evangelistic holiness sermon intended to bring the people to the response of seeking the experience of entire sanctification. You will turn in this outline for a grade. (15 % of the final grade)

**Learning Activity 7:** Preach your sermon – it should be 15-20 minutes. (15%).

**Learning Activity 8:** Put together an Order of Worship for the service in which you will preach your sermon. The various aspects of the service should help to show in different ways the theme of the sermon — the theme of the sermon should flow through each part in the whole service. Write out each of the three prayers; give chorus or song titles and scripture references for the readings and for the sermon. Write at least three main points of your sermon. (10%)

The final exam will be preaching a sermon on entire sanctification will be the final exam (see Activity 3)

## ***Course Schedule***

This course can be taught as an intensive in one week or over the course of two months.

- Lesson 1: Introduction to Preaching
- Lesson 2: Listening to Scripture
- Lesson 3: Asking Questions of the Scripture Text
- Lesson 4: Looking for Trouble
- Lesson 5: Working with Images, Incidents, and Issues
- Lesson 6: Pausing to Let the Text Speak to Me
- Lesson 7: Consulting the Scholars
- Lesson 8: Exegete the Congregation
- Lesson 9: Selecting the Form of the Sermon
- Lesson 10: Analyzing Sermon Form
- Lesson 11: Writing the Sermon and Prepare to Preach
- Lesson 12: The Place of the Sermon in Worship
- Lesson 13: Preaching

- Appendix A: Preparing a Sermon
- Appendix B: Bible Storying as a Springboard for Preaching

## Lesson 1

# Introduction to Preaching

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## Preachers of Influence

### "Balcony" Preachers (your heroes)

*Who are the preachers in your mental balcony?*  
*Who has preached in a way that you aspire to preach?*  
*Whose preaching became formative in your call to ministry?*  
*How would you describe their preaching?*  
*What personal characteristic made each one a great preacher to you?*

### "Basement" Preachers

*Who are the preachers in your mental basement?*  
*How did their preaching wound you?*  
*In what ways do you want to avoid their pattern?*  
*What characteristics made them ineffective?*

*What do we already know about preaching before beginning this class?*

## Group Work

In groups of three complete the following:

Read Mark 4:1-20.

What does this teach us about preaching?

Note how verses 3-8 focus on the sower/preacher.



Note how verses 13-20 focus on the soil.

## **Expectations about the Preacher**

There are expectations that the preacher be a person of faith, passion, authority, and grace.

- If you have faith, you are believable.
- If you have passion, you are persuasive.
- If you have authority, you understand your calling, gift, and ordination.
- If you have grace, you are one who is attentive to God.

## **Good Preaching Comes from Good People**

By Wes Tracy

### **Being a Man or Woman of God Is the First Requirement.**

The Church has always required its preachers to be good persons first, good preachers second. The hand that would lead us to Christ must itself be clean, lest it defile the tenderhearted seeker.

We have always known the perceived character of a speaker communicates as much as the words he or she uses. Even Aristotle knew that. "Ethical proof is wrought when the speech is so spoken as to make the speaker credible; for we trust good men more and sooner. . . about what does not admit of precision, but only guess-work, we trust them absolutely. . . the most authoritative of proofs is that supplied by character" (*The Rhetoric*).

Quintilian, the ancient teacher of Roman orators said, 'The orator, then, whom I am concerned to form, shall be a good man speaking well. But above all. . . he must be a good man" (*Instituto Oratoria*).

Christians believe that is doubly true for those who pastor and preach. St. Augustine said, "And so our Christian orator, while he says what is just and holy and good. . . will succeed more by piety in prayer than by the gifts of oratory, and so he [or she] ought to pray for himself [or herself] and for those he [or she] is about to address, before he [or she] attempts to speak. . . [The preacher] ought, before he [or she] opens his [or her] mouth, to lift up [a] thirsty soul to God, to drink in what he [she] is about to pour forth, and so be. . . filled with what he[she] is about to distribute.

"But whatsoever will be the majesty of the style, the life of the speaker will count for more in securing the hearer's compliance.... For there are numbers who seek an excuse in their own evil lives in comparing the teaching with the conduct of their instructors. . . And thus they cease to listen with submission to a man [woman] that does not listen to himself [herself], and in despising the preacher, they learn to despise the word that is preached" (*De Doctrina Christiana*).

George Sweazey wrote his description of a preacher's character with these terms, "As to *character*—honest, straightforward, sincere, patient, grave, courageous. . . self-disciplined, on good terms with himself[herself], living truly and deeply. . . In relation to *God*, passionately seeking God, submitting to his will, striving to please him, depending on his grace, devoted without reserve, knowing God, . . . penitent, aware of the need to be forgiven" (*Preaching the Good News*, Prentice Hall, 295).

## Pastoral Search:

Suppose you are on the board of a church looking for a new pastor. The district superintendent comes and asks the board what kind of pastor they want. He or she passes around a list of good qualities and asks board members to check the two most important qualities they want in their next pastor. What would you mark?

- \_\_\_\_\_ A. Skillful preacher
- \_\_\_\_\_ B. Gifted administrator
- \_\_\_\_\_ C. Strong character and good reputation
- \_\_\_\_\_ D. Knows Greek and Hebrew
- \_\_\_\_\_ E. Good with youth
- \_\_\_\_\_ F. Emphasizes personal evangelism
- \_\_\_\_\_ G. Deeply spiritual, a person of prayer
- \_\_\_\_\_ I. Good leader in community affairs
- \_\_\_\_\_ J. Good at raising money
- \_\_\_\_\_ K. Makes a good appearance
- \_\_\_\_\_ L. Highly educated
- \_\_\_\_\_ M. Good at pastoral counseling
- \_\_\_\_\_ N. Good worship leader.
- \_\_\_\_\_ O. A person you can trust

### Assignment:

After reading "Good Preaching Comes from Good People," choose the two qualities you would look for in a pastoral candidate. Write a one to two-page paper that defines the evidence you think would show a candidate possesses these two qualities. Why do you feel these qualities deserve the board's consideration? At the beginning of the next lesson you will share your paper with a small group and then hand the paper into the instructor.

## Heard After Church Service

There is, perhaps, no greater hardship at present inflicted on mankind in civilized and free countries, than the necessity of listening to sermons. No one but a preaching clergyman has . . . the power of compelling an audience to sit silent and be tormented. No one but a preaching clergyman can revel in platitudes, truisms and untruths, and yet receive, as his undisputed privilege, the same respectful demeanour as though words of impassioned eloquence, or persuasive logic, fell from his lips.

....Anthony Trollope, *Barchester Towers*, 1857

"It is a sin to assemble a congregation each week and enter into the pulpit poorly prepared."

.....Arndt L. Halvorson, *Authentic Preaching*

"Spiritual formation occurs through the ministry of preaching. . . . preaching acts as one of the greatest tools of spiritual formation within the church."

.....Mel Lawrenz, *The Dynamics of Spiritual Formation*

Barbara Brown Taylor tells of her sister who was not raised in the church. She started but said that after listening to the preacher Sunday after Sunday "vent his spleen at God's enemy of the week—alcohol, the lottery, gay people, Santa Claus—she felt as if she had been beaten with a stick" (*When God is Silent*, Boston: Cowley Publications, 1998, 21). Such preaching is not formative preaching.

Formative preaching is described by this definition: "Preaching is an event of the Word. The Living Word (Christ) and the written Word (the Scriptures), in conjunction with the spoken word (sermon), create an event of the Word, as the servant of the Word proclaims upon the housetops what he or she has heard in secret" (Wesley Tracy, *What's A Nice God Like You Doing in a Place Like This?*, p. 11).

## **Listening to Scripture**

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### **The Word**

Hebrews 4:12-13 (NRSV)

Indeed, the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing until it divides soul from spirit, joints from marrow; it is able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart. And before him no creature is hidden, but all are naked and laid bare to the eyes of the one to whom we must render an account.

Revelation 1:3 (NRSV)

Blessed is the one who reads aloud the words of the prophecy, and blessed are those who hear and who keep what is written in it.

### **Different Spoken Forms of Scripture**

- The stories of the patriarchs/matriarchs
- The wise “sayings” of Proverbs
- The sermons of the prophets
- The poetry and songs of the Psalms
- The cries and laments of the Psalms
- The Gospels as oral stories
- The letters to the churches written to be read

## Engaging Scripture

Much of the educational process today is silent. From grade school through college, students listen to instructors, read, write, take notes, write term papers, sit for exams and graduate. Many students with excellent records enter seminary with 16 years of silent education, now preparing for a vocation that will demand oral presentations every week for the remainder of their lives (Fred B. Craddock, *Preaching*, p. 21).

Perhaps the single biggest failure in the teaching of preaching is that young ministers are not fully impressed with the difference between textuality and orality. Shaped by mountains of books, called upon to write scores of papers, aspiring preachers train the eye but neglect the ear. It is into the world of sound that they go, plying their wares “acoustically” (Robin R. Meyers, *With Ears to Hear: Preaching as Self-persuasion*, p. 21).

## Thoughts about Preachers

### ***Imagining a Sermon* by Thomas H. Troeger**

I ask them [preachers] to tell me what they want to preach, and they immediately cast their eyes to a sheet of paper. Their vocal quality and gestures become constricted, and the music of their speech flattens to a drone. (p. 68)

To speak convincingly of a God who calls us to a life of faith and love requires a voice whose tonality is congruent with the personal character of the gospel we proclaim, and this is not possible if the sermon is delivered as printed document that is being read to the congregation. (p. 71)

Getting sound and words to be congruent is a complex issue. It requires a spiritual, theological process of finding that place in the heart where the gospel has touched the preacher’s own life. Nothing can replace speaking out of the spiritual center. It is the place from which the melody of redemption arises and permeates our voice. (p. 75)

## Lesson 3

# Asking Questions of the Scripture Text

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## Five Questions

1. What is the good news here?
2. What is the bad news?
3. How many places can you stand in these two scriptures (Luke 24:13-35; Philippians 4:1-7)? How many different vantage points do we find?
4. What is God doing here?
5. What are humans doing here?

## Good Preaching Is Based on the Good Book—the Bible

By Wes Tracy

Pop psychology, new age fantasy, cheap grace ideology, and other fads in the pulpit cannot produce spiritual formation. The preacher who takes proclamation seriously turns to Biblical preaching. He or she must, in fact, have a deep and lasting love for the Scriptures.

The homiletical process for formative preaching includes the following steps.

### 1. Establish the text.

Find the limits of the passage. Be sure you are preaching from a whole paragraph and not from some sub-point made by the Scripture writer on his way to making a more important point. If you know the Biblical languages translate the passage yourself. If you cannot do that, compare several English translations. If they all agree on the general meaning of the passage you can be assured that you are not dealing with a problematical text. Next write a paraphrase of the text in your own everyday words.

### 2. Isolate the dominant idea(s) of the text.

If you know the Biblical languages you can do this by creating a syntactical display such as you will find in Walter C. Kaiser's *Toward an Exegetical Theology*. If you are not comfortable with Greek and Hebrew, then make a simple outline of the passage in English (or whatever your first language is). Note the topic sentences, sentence subjects, and subordinate modifiers. The point is that the best preaching is done when the preacher proclaims the dominant ideas of the text. To take a subordinate phrase that is just one of several things the passage says is to make a minor point into a major point. At best this creates imbalance, at worst heresy.

### 3. Determine the type of literature.

What sort of literature is the sermon text? Is it a doom saying like Micah 3:9-12; a poem like Psalm 37, a hymn like Philippians 2:5-11; or a letter like Philemon, or a sermon like 1 Peter, or a historical narrative like the Book of Acts, or a "call passage like Exodus 3:1-4:17?

#### **4. Determine the function of the passage in the book.**

Is the text you are working on the introduction to the book, a summary of the book, a greeting or salutation, one of five statements of equal importance in the book, or is it a transition between more important topics? Do not make the Bible book say just one thing when it says five. It is risky business to make a mere transition into a sermon text. It is also risky to build precise doctrinal statements from historical narrative. Know the forms the author used. You will be less likely to abuse his words.

#### **5. Assess the canonical function of the text.**

That is, how is the idea expressed in your text used in other books of the Bible? Suppose you are preaching from a text in Isaiah. Does Jesus or Paul quote this passage or allude to it? Isaiah was a favorite of Jesus. Does this same idea get a different interpretation when it is used elsewhere in Scripture? Compare Hosea 11:8-9 and Matthew 2:15, for example. This step helps you preach on the "general tenor" of Scripture.

#### **6. Probe the socio-historical context.**

For example, think how Jesus' teaching on the second mile must have disturbed His first hearers. If you are forced to carry a soldier's pack a mile, tote it two miles. Judah was occupied by invading Roman soldiers. That stung! Check again how the historical setting affects the interpretation of the Naboth's Vineyard story treated in 1 Kings 21.

Preachers often neglect this step because it is hard work and requires expensive library resources. But social problems and historical issues influenced nearly every Bible story or passage. Doing this work enables the minister to preach a series of sermons from one book. When you have learned the social and historical background for the setting of Ephesians or Daniel or Exodus you do not have to repeat that study from week to week. You merely apply it because you have already done the digging.

#### **7. Soak in the text until it masters you.**

Now is the time for serious meditation and prayer. You do not seek to master the text; you let it master you. You become its servant, its voice. Your task as the preacher is to give the text a new hearing. Hopefully the "wine" of the sermon has some time to ferment. That way it relates itself to many things that you read, experience, or think about. This fermentation process is another good reason to plan your preaching for weeks or even months in advance. "A preacher is a person under the control of a message . . . which must be shared" (Halvorson *Authentic Preaching*, 31).

#### **8. Write out the theological affirmations, the timeless principles, of the text.**

When you can write down in a sentence or two the timeless principle taught in the text you have the theme and subject of the sermon. The theological affirmations of Micah 3; 9-12, for example, were expressed this way by one preacher. *"When false optimism about God's blessing and presence corrupts the faith by condoning or creating injustice, God will absent himself from His people, even rooting out the very symbols of such false faith."*

#### **9. Build the hermeneutical bridge.**

Now that you have written down the timeless principles of the text and thus know the subject or theme of the sermon you are ready to build the hermeneutical bridge. The preacher lives in two worlds: the ancient Biblical world and the contemporary scene. These two worlds must be connected if preaching is to be formative. The preacher must be firmly anchored in both worlds. If the preacher knows only the ancient world the preaching seems dry and irrelevant. That preacher will wake up, hopefully, to discover that the people did not come to church with a burning desire to find out whatever happened to the Jebusites! If, on the other hand, the preacher deals only with contemporary fashion and trends the preaching appears shallow—more water than wine.

**10. Apply the theologies (timeless principles) of the text to your congregation by way of a carefully crafted sermon.**

In what ways does the timeless principle of your text relate to and connect with the contemporary scene of wars, racism, terrorism, divorce, prosperity, wealth, cancer, and prayerlessness? Find ways to be faithful to the Biblical heritage and relevant to the times.

After reading "Good Preaching is Based on the Good Book," write a one-page paper to compare and contrast this 10-step homiletical process with the five questions presented in Lesson 3.

## **Preaching to Heart Cries**

	<b>Heart Cries</b>	<b>Scripture Passages</b>	<b>Heart Cry Answer (Theological Theme)</b>
1	I need to be loved and pursued		Prevenient Grace
2	I need, I long for peace with God—relationship of communion		Salvation's Grace (Restoration)
3	I need the load of guilt lifted from my conscience (a clear conscience)		Justification
4	I need to be alive—my spirit man to be alive		Regeneration
5	I need to belong—to a loving family		Adoption
6	I need to be free from Satan's bondage		Redemption
7	I need to be growing in my relationship w/ God, learning the Scriptures		Growth in Grace (Progressive Sanctification)
8	I need to be free from the downward pull of inward sin; I need a pure heart		Entire Sanctification
9	I need to be forming spiritually in deeper and deeper ways		Spiritual Formation (Spiritual Disciplines; Means of Grace)
10	I need to serve in a place of meaning in Christ's Kingdom		Gifts for Ministry
11	I need 'my deep gladness and the world's deep hunger to meet, to connect		Holy Service (Social Holiness)

### **Group Work**

Divide into four groups. Each group will take three of the heart cries and select Scripture passages and/or Bible stories that speak to that heart cry along with its answer found in the theological theme in the Articles of Faith.

## Lesson 4

# Looking for Trouble

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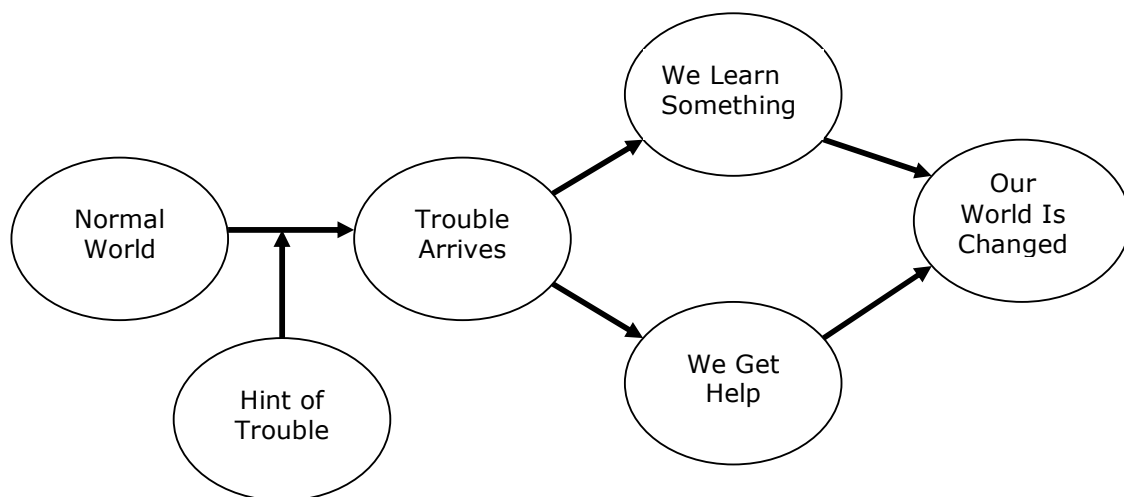
## Trouble in the Story

*When does a story grab your attention? When do you begin to feel the intensity?*

Stories with trouble

- *The Brothers Karamazov*
- "The Little Boy Who Cried Wolf"
- *Titanic*
- The Creation account of Genesis 1-3
- Daniel
- A well known story (fable, legend, etc. from your cultural context)

## Plot Line Diagram





## Seven Helps for Preaching from a Narrative Plot

1. Plot the story noting the common thread that holds the story together. Know where the story is going.
2. Develop the characters. Give them shape and form. Let them breathe. Note how they change and are changed as the story develops.
3. From what point of view is the story told? Whose vantage point governs the story? Example: Luke 1:26-38. Is this told from the perspective of Mary? The angel? God?
4. Capitalize on the dialogue. We are given the conversational skeleton in the text. Hang some skin on these bones and allow imagination to flesh out the conversation. Dialogue drives the plot and gives the story depth.
5. Watch the verbs. Go through the story and underline the verbs. This is the heart of God's activity. You want the sermon to be doing what these verbs are doing.
6. Preach the imperatives. Whatever the story calls on its characters to do, you must call on the congregation to do. The story is not told for our enjoyment, but for the sake of our identity and response. The story tells us who we are and how we are to behave in this world as the people of God.
7. Start the sermon with the tension of the story. Get somebody in trouble early on and let them wrestle trying to get out of trouble. Show Adam hiding from God or Jonah running from God. Or tell the story of a non-biblical character with the same trouble as Adam or Jonah. The gospel is bad news before it is good news. We cannot get to a strong theology of grace except through a strong theology of human trouble.

Trouble is early in the plot, not late. And trouble is not the final word. We do not need long bashings about the mess we have gotten ourselves into. Do not fall into the trap of using the pulpit to bash and blame people, then walk away with your guns smoking thinking you have really preached. Good preaching moves to grace and hope that is celebrated!

# **Deductive and Inductive Preaching**

## **Deductive Preaching**

- Proceed from general truth to specific information.
- Give them the correct answer and then tell them the question.
- Show them the completed puzzle, and then explain how it was put together.

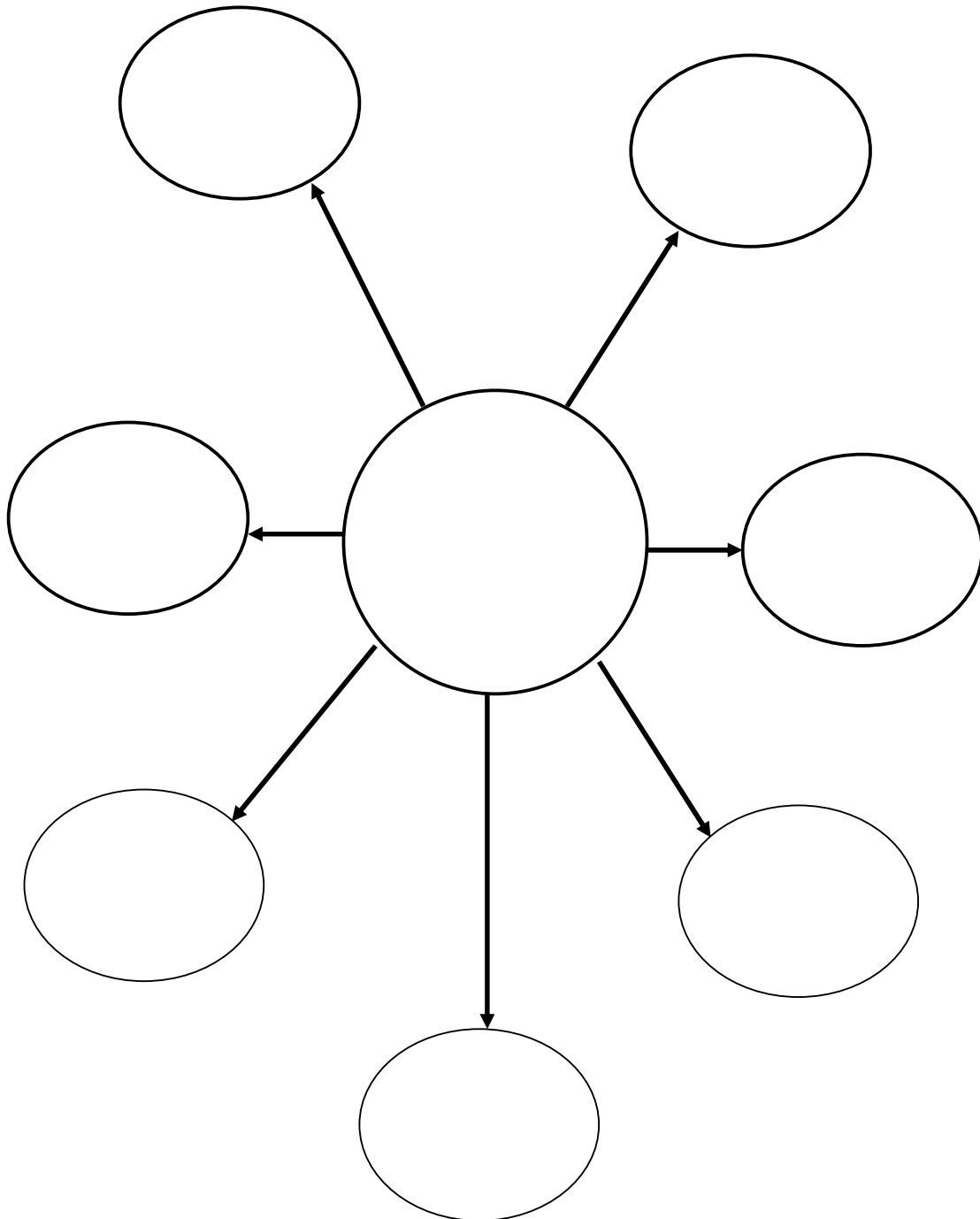
## **Inductive Preaching**

- Proceed from specific situation to a recognized truth.
- Ask the questions and explore the options before arriving at conclusions.
- Empty the puzzle pieces out on the table and construct the puzzle piece by piece.

## Working with Images, Incidents, and Issues

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### Images



## ***Imagination of the Heart: New Understandings in Preaching***

Paul Scott Wilson

### **Excerpts from Chapter One: Imagination's Poles How Imagination Works<sup>1</sup>**

To know how imagination works we need to know how language works, how words act together to produce meaning. I will be arguing here that imagination of the heart is not a mystical experience, although there is still mystery involved, but rather it is similar to other acts of meaning in the communication process. We may understand it as *the bringing together of two ideas that might not otherwise be connected and developing the creative energy they generate*. Normally, however, we may not think of imagination as having anything to do with language. We may think of it as the ability to picture something and may connect it more with vision than with words. This needs to change. Imagination may at times be a kind of wordless mystery that will involve pictures or other forms of mental sensory images. And pictorial imagery may at times enable us to find words, as Ignatian meditation exercises suggest. But in general we may understand that imagination is released by an ability to use polarities in language to create fresh ideas. Many of these ideas will present pictures to the mind, but imagination that finds expression through words is essentially a function of language. Without language we are unable to express thought. It is through the windows of language that we view reality, that we interpret actions, that we understand our emotions and our faith. The subject is a difficult one, however, and it may be useful before going into some of the scholarship in the area, for us to resort to pictures to show how imagination functions.

There are two ways in which it might be helpful for us to picture how imagination works. One way is to consider a close personal relationship like a marriage. In a marriage that works well, both people are confident in their own individual identities. If one person becomes lost in the identity of the other, much of the spark of the relationship may be gone. But if the partners, while being committed to each other, support individual growth and identity, the spark will be maintained. What we have here are three identities: the two individual identities and the third identity that is the relationship itself. It is characterized by the way the couple behaves as a couple. If this relationship is strong, we might say that there is a spark between them. Imagination in language is like this kind of vital relationship, except that in language it is two ideas brought together, each with its own identity, to create a third new identity by their union.

From my senior physics class in high school comes a second way of picturing how imagination works. The teacher had brought out an old generator. Taken from an old farmhouse telephone, it was the kind that had to be cranked by hand. Both the negative and positive poles of the generator had a wire attached. A student kept cranking while the teacher brought the ends of the two wires closer and closer together. When the ends were six inches apart, a spark jumped through the air with a snap. When the ends were four inches apart, there was a crackling sound and a waving but constant spark between the two ends. When the wires were touching there was no visible spark although the current was flowing.

Imagination in language is like this spark between the poles of the generator. The spark of imagination happens when two ideas that seem to have no apparent connection (standing "poles apart," we might say) are brought together. Two conditions are necessary for imagination: (1) some connection between the ideas must be possible and (2) the ideas chosen must not be almost identical, for then they would function like the touching wires that had no visible spark. Most acts of communication happen with the wires touching and the current of meaning flowing directly from one idea to another with little or no spark visible.

Imagination similarly is the product of two ideas or "opposites" in relationship. The case that is being made here is that imagination operates in language, not in just pictures outside of language. Metaphor is language that exercises imagination. Imagination is not something magical or mysterious and unknown, even though its effect may seem both magical and mysterious. We have to know this if we are ever

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<sup>1</sup> Paul Scott Wilson, *Imagination of the Heart: New Understandings in Preaching* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1988). Used by permission.

going to trust our creative abilities. As long as we cast an air of total mystique around imagination, we will assign it to the unknowable and thus also to the unachievable.

### Using Imagination with Individual Words

Perhaps even more important for imagination than this, however, is the understanding that language lives and language dies. The reason it is more important we will see in a moment. Whenever words lose some of their spark for us they have died a little. We experience this kind of death in language when a favorite tune on the radio becomes a matter of indifference; or when in worship the same phrase used week after week without variation ceases to have meaning for us; or when an idea that was fresh and alive for us at a conference becomes dry and shriveled when left forgotten in a drawer for months.

The decay of meaning in language is predictable. This can lead, as noted already, to streamlining language and to effective communication. On the other hand it can eventually lead to dropping entire words from our vocabulary. Anthropologists working with Inuit people in the North American Arctic have actually used this predictable process of decay in language to help them date the origin of some of the isolated communities; assuming that these communities have a common origin, they suggest that every one hundred years they lose half of the words they have in common as new words are invented to replace the old. In 1986 some Canadian Inuit were brought together for the first time with some Russian Inuit, and it was discovered that they still had some words in common. Readers who know the basic physics may find it helpful to think of the decay of meaning in language as being similar to the decay of radioactive isotopes according to their particular half-lives.

The decay of language is important for preachers to understand, particularly those who are learning to use the imagination. Quite simply, many of the words we commonly use to talk about the faith have lost their spark. Repeated use of them without exposing them to imagination will have no more positive effect on the congregation than will raising the voice in giving directions to someone who does not speak our language. As Edward F. Marquart has identified the problem:

Most of the laity do not have "gut associations" with such words as salvation, redemption, incarnation, gospel, and theology of the cross. Ninety-eight percent of our laity don't use these words in their everyday lives. This becomes a problem for many of us clergy because we all have our favorite words . . . (someone) said to Reuel Howe, "If I used that much jargon with my customers, I would lose them."

Too many of our big theological words seem to our people like a lost herd of cattle out on the back forty. The solution is not just to cut back on the use of these words: jargon is still jargon used once or one hundred times. Nor is the solution to eliminate them entirely from our preaching. *The words of the Christian faith are gifts to us. They are treasures of which we are the stewards: We cannot let them die for they can be the route to true life.* The solution then must lie in another direction.

The solution has to do with language renewal. Just as words can defray and die, so too can they be renewed and have fresh life. The words of our faith are precious, yet they sometimes litter the floor like unthreshed husks of wheat. Some people would tread on them underfoot. For them the words are dead; they may have heard the words but they never received them as life. When these same words are gathered up with care and thrown into the air, the Holy Spirit has a chance to blow through them, to winnow them, to sift out the good news anew. They are renewed when they are seen or heard as though for the first time, when they have life again, when people want to use them because they have again become important for them.

Language renewal is not the task of a few. It is the task of everyone in the church, but it is the particular task of preachers. Said quite starkly, *language renewal is faith renewal*. Faith can be renewed by actions, but faith seeks understanding, and understanding comes from words and ideas.

Perhaps it would be better for some people in our society to have never heard about the Christian faith than to have the distorted understanding of it that they have. For them in particular, and for many of our church regulars as well, new ways to understand old words are essential. Because we love the words of our faith, and because we love to use them well and hear them well used, we take care of them. We want to polish them in all of their natural beauty like restored wood, so that others may run their fingers along the contours and know God's truth.

How does imagination give back to us freshness some of our words that are worn out and coming apart at the seams? As noted, retracing the origin of many of our words and recreating opposition is one route. Another is to reach outside of the word itself to create a new opposition or juxtaposition. Let us say that we want to use the word "salvation" in a new way. For imagination we need to have what Coleridge called the reconciliation of opposites. We need two poles and we already have one in the word "salvation." Like the wires of the generator, the "opposites" cannot be so far apart that no connection is possible and yet cannot be so close together than they are touching. "Salvation" can have no legitimate connection, for instance, with "bomb." There is a false connection, of course, of the sort we find in so many of the false salvation promises of our culture such as in the lotteries and the life-style beer advertisements. But since no relationship of truth can be established with "bomb," there can be no spark of imagination of the heart. The wires are held too far apart. Imagination of the heart is scripturally based and the spark must have biblical warrant.

Or again, there can be no spark if the ideas are so similar that the wires are touching: the words "salvation" and "redemption" are so similar as to be almost identical. The preacher who talks about salvation as redemption will catch a lot of the congregation snoozing. But if the preacher tries substituting another word to juxtapose with salvation, a spark with biblical warrant may be found. Salvation can imply a positive experience. There are many positive experiences that might be effective, but one obvious one for Christians might be eating a meal. Bring that experience alongside the word "salvation" and there will be a spark that opens fresh and yet familiar biblical horizons for faith: "salvation is eating a meal." A congregation would be interested to hear the preacher develop this idea.

Of course this is only one instance of imagination or reconciliation of opposites. We could create many more with a word like "salvation." Simply try substituting any number of other positive experiences in place of eating a meal. But since salvation is inseparable from the cross, we might want alternatively to try some other fresh juxtapositions that we could develop in our preaching, such as "cross," "electric chair," "humiliation," or "vulnerability." Obviously in developing some of these for preaching we would need to be careful not to justify the suffering and oppression God opposes so clearly in the Scriptures. Moreover, we need not use every one. But as Arthur Koestler noted over and over again in his *Act of Creation*, the imaginative breakthroughs of creative people have occurred because of their ability to go beyond the usual frameworks of their disciplines and to associate ideas in unusual ways.

It takes no genius to play with free association. For us it can be an act of freedom. Part of the process can be a creative mulling, even without words, using music or art to awaken non-discursive realities, before we move to words. But when we move to words, do not dismiss apparently inappropriate juxtapositions before mulling them over in your mind. *Too often we cut off our considerable creative talents because we jump in too quickly to try to evaluate theological truth. As Jesus said in one of the parables, let the seeds grow and then do the weeding.* Ask yourself, "Is there a way this might be true?"

To be creative we need to be willing to live long enough with the tension between ideas to be able to explore freely. Even though every juxtaposition will not be appropriate, there will be a few we could develop and elaborate in preaching. We simply keep free-associating and substituting until something is alive for us.

Creating opposites, either from within the origin of individual words or by bringing one word or idea alongside another, is to begin to see the power of imagination. As preachers we must start with individual words; later on we will be discussing how individual words can function as one-word stories. Once we see how juxtaposition is done, we can see how others have created in exciting ways. For example, when Frederick Buechner said that it was harder for a rich person to enter the Realm of God than for a Mercedes to go through a revolving door, he probably used this process of free-associating and substitution of individual words. As a substitute for "camel" he settled on "Mercedes" (what do rich people ride in today?) and as a substitute for "eye of a needle" he settled for "revolving door" (which a car would have difficulty going through). The reconciliation of these two ideas of "Mercedes" and "revolving door" is an example of imagination.

Imagination creates new windows in language for us, opens up new possibilities of faith for us, gives us new eyes with which to view the world, and gives us new words with which to proclaim the glory of Christ. Is this not also the task of preaching in the life of the church? Preaching renews the language of the faith, even as it preserves and perpetuates it.

## Lesson 6

# Pausing to Let the Text Speak to Me

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## Text Study

Complete the following tasks.

- Underline the key ideas that stand out to you, then go back and ask why this is important to you.
- Where do you find yourself resisting this text? What part of the text do you want to avoid?
- Is there anything in the text that frightens you?
- What issues in your life are similar to the issue of the text?
- Why do you care about this text?
- What sounds like good news to you?
- What sounds like bad news to you?

Select one of the following texts and answer the above questions.

John 13:1-17

Psalm 51

Philippians 2:5-11

Luke 24:13-35

## Thoughts from Fred Craddock

From *Preaching* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1985).

All preaching is to some extent self-disclosure by the preacher. This is not offered as a comment on the practice in some quarters of making the pulpit a confessional. . . . It is simply the truth about communication. (p. 23)

Pertaining to the minister's own faith journey, it is the reflection of many who have spent a lifetime in ministry that of all the exercises for keeping athletically fit one's Christian values, perspectives and faith, none excels that of preparing and delivering sermons. (p. 23)

The preacher is expected to be a person of faith, passion, authority and grace. Faith makes one believable, and if the messenger is not believable, neither is the message. The absence of faith is almost impossible to disguise for any period of time. No one can increase the volume in the pulpit to such a level as to muffle the echo of lost convictions. (p. 24)

# Preaching from Within Our Own Hope

Don M. Wardlaw, used by author's permission

Imagine a guide hired to lead an expedition through a dark forest, and then on up a mountain to its majestic peak. The guide deftly steers the party into the deep forest, past ferocious beasts, through infested underbrush, and alongside a treacherous bog. Then, to our shock, the guide suddenly bolts from the hikers and disappears into a thicket, leaving the party stranded in terror, with only a desperate longing for the clear air of the mountain heights far ahead and above.

At first glance we might assume the guide's strange and callous behavior unthinkable. Yet think again. That same disappearing act happens Sunday after Sunday in Christian sanctuaries. The great majority of us preachers set out in our sermons to guide congregations through dark forests of despair and then on up the majestic climbs of hope. But somewhere deep among the vines and shadows, beside the bog of human grief and loss, under the gaze of beasts of war and violence, we preachers often unwittingly abandon our people. I see this kind of fade away too often for comfort in my own sermons. I see it in the dozens of sermons I examine every year as a consultant with pastors and as a teacher at seminary. Whatever the differences in our sermons, I find one nagging constant, strong beginnings but flabby endings. We preachers most often begin strongly by skillfully guiding our hearers through the tangled thickets of their grief and rage to dark campsites where they bed down again with their fears and shudder at the calls of the wild in their hearts. And precisely at this moment where our hearers need us the most to lead them out of this wilderness to the high vista of hope, we frequently fade from view.

At this pivotal point in their journey, our people need to see images of the gospel of hope happening in the flesh, images such as an alcoholic by God's grace smashing her bottle of gin and reaching for the phone to call her sponsor in A.A., or an inventive band of Christians by God's transforming power orchestrating housing for the homeless. Such specific visions of human transformation are the drawing power from the mountain of hope that entices people out of their paralysis of despair. But, instead, what we too often give our people amid the dark forest are abstract treatises about hope. We shift gears from human drama to doctrine, from red-blooded struggle to sky-blue thinking. Don't get me wrong; statements in the reflective mode have a crucial place in preaching, particularly in introducing or summarizing controlling themes. But when at a time when our people most need concreteness we cloak ourselves with the cotton wool of abstractions, we in effect fade away into clouds of generalities that can only obscure the mountain of hope.

Why do we preachers often abscond into the mists at the point our people most need to taste and touch the hope in the gospel? One possible answer is that we are drawn to abstractions at the point where we lose a visceral link with what we preach. My own faith journey could be described as an attempt to connect with what I preach. When we don't live out of a vibrant sense of hope in our own flesh, we won't be prone to tune into it in anyone else's flesh. Hope might be happening all around us: when we see the woman next door receiving chemotherapy and going out to plant her garden; when we see Russian citizens defiantly toppling the statues of the founder of the KGB. But such signs can't dance as symbols before our eyes as if we don't have faith's eyes to see them, if we don't have hope-filled souls that can awake to human possibilities for wholeness all around us. Hence the awkward, intolerable feeling of trying to give to others what we don't own ourselves.

The extent to which we feel this vacuum, whether consciously or unconsciously, measures the extent to which we reach for abstractions to cover the void. To abstract anything is to release it from its earthly moorings. "Abstract" means "to take from," to soar above ground. Majoring in abstractions in sermons is like riding a hot air (!) balloon high enough to see the whole forest of human struggle and despair. How many times have I talked in general about encounters with God rather than risk getting blown out of the saddle with St. Paul on the Damascus Road. From this safe, lofty vantage we may be working on the clinching section of Sunday's sermon on hope. We may be proud of the quotes from Tillich and Moltmann, and the analogies from a sermon service we plan to use to color our own broad insights. Up in our balloon we sail toward Sunday, once more with borrowed material to quell our anxiety about what to say. Yet, in marshalling all this generic information about hope, we may fail to see that we are, ironically, acting out our own despair. Surely general reflections supported with the wisdom of known experts can play an important role in our preaching by clarifying and lending authority to what we say. But when we most often find ourselves rifling our shelves and files for something to say *about* hope far more than



plumbing our souls for things to share *from* hope, then we preach mainly from despair. Couching hope chiefly in abstractions in our preaching is tantamount to deserting our people. In taking flight from our people's entangled trail, we may be using generalities to muffle the sound of their pain. Even more, our attraction to abstractions at this moment may be our final defense against coming to grips with our own repressed anxiety, rage, and grief that are aroused by our people's lostness. With abstractions we desert ourselves; not just our people.

Our flight from darkness into the comfort of generics can also keep a congregation paralyzed. "Intellect by itself moves nothing," said Aristotle. What gives people the resolve to rise from the edge of the bog, slay the beast, and move out of the forest is the hope they can experience in and through us. Not borrowed hope, but relational hope that rings true with our own reality. Our people need to know that we, too, experience what it is like to be lost in the woods, to be immobilized by our rage over injustice, our fears for our health, and our depression over sagging self-esteem. Above all, our congregations need to sense that we have glimpsed the way out and have even scouted some paths up the mount of hope. "Preachers err," said Joseph Campbell, "by trying to talk people into belief; better they reveal the radiance of their own discovery" (*The Power of Myth*, xvi).

We preach hope effectively to the extent that we recollect the experiential ground of our own hope. That discovery begins as we fall into step behind Jesus on His way to the final showdown in Jerusalem. If hope places its bets on the future, we see hope in Jesus' eyes and gait as He is drawn by His own sense of completion toward the city set on a hill. We see the horizon beyond Jerusalem that will light up with the glow of resurrection the first Easter morning radiating an irresistible pull the closer Jesus gets to Jerusalem's gates on Palm Sunday. We see with Matthew at the end of his Gospel the picture of the risen Christ in command atop a mountain of Galilee, offering a charge to his disciples. Through this image we see Christ as our mountain of hope, drawing us forth from the fearful forest.

But that magnetic pull toward wholeness also drew Jesus down through the dark wood of Gethsemane and onto the terrible timber at Calvary. Easter horizons necessarily have crosses etched against them. At night in the garden we watch Jesus sweat blood in an immense struggle with His humanity over the price to be paid for wholeness. Under a midnight sky on a Friday afternoon we stand at the foot of the Cross and shudder at the excruciating death He embraces as prelude to fullness. He gives himself to the beast in the shadowy forest.

To follow Jesus in this path of suffering and glory is to pattern paradigms of hope in our personal corporate consciousness. It means opening ourselves to God's future for us, to a mountain up ahead whose living Christ draws us toward a union with the self and society we were meant to be. As individuals it means sensing a pull toward a resurrection horizon in self-understanding and self-acceptance we previously never dreamed was up ahead; ease from obsessive striving to impress; release from a shame-based fixation with duty; relief from a censorious spirit. As the church, it means answering a call from the mountain ahead that draws our faithful company toward an experience of authentic community we never before saw on the horizon: a place where we can lay down our burdens, find strength to suffer for peace and justice, and be nourished by pulpit and table.

But the Christ pattern in our lives not only pulls us toward wholeness but also of necessity leads us down through the dread forests of our own Gethsemanes and Golgothas. Here we come face-to-face with all our griefs and losses, at last, in Edward Whitmont's words "unbarring the door to the stranger." None of us asks for this darkness. Usually foolish indiscretion, abiding depression, sudden bereavement, colossal failure, or life-threatening illness stretches us out on our cross as we moan in apparent abandonment. Few congregations ask for the wilderness either. Usually we are exiled there by our triumphalism, worship of clay idols, sell-out to Caesar, and internal power struggles. But by God's grace mentors, counselors, pastors, and friends take up with us as wise guides amid our tangled wood. We learn to trust them in ways we do not trust ourselves because we sense they know the darkness. They help us hone in on the healing, transforming power that draws us as individual and corporate souls toward Christ's mount of wholeness. In that ambience of hope, born of exquisite daily deaths, we find ourselves preaching vividly and passionately about life beyond the forest on yonder slopes. With the writer to the Hebrews, "we who have fled for refuge . . . have strong encouragement to seize the hope set before us." In learning within ourselves to trust the vision of Christ on the mountain, we are learning to trust ourselves as guides on the hope-filled way.

## EXEGETING YOURSELF

1. What kind of family did I come from?
2. How was authority used in my family?
3. In what socioeconomic class am I most at home?
4. What do I like to read?
5. What music do I prefer?
6. What are my favorite forms of entertainment?
7. Who do I most easily relate to?
8. What kind of people do I avoid?
9. What is my personality type?
10. What am I afraid of?
11. How do I view the Bible?

## Lesson 7

# Consulting the Scholars

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## Studying a Text

1. Understand the book of the Bible from which the text comes.
2. What kind of literature is this? Story? Psalm? Proverb? Letter? History? Prophecy?
3. Select a Bible translation by reading several different versions of the Bible.
4. Read commentaries, work studies, and lectionary resources.
5. Read other sermons and articles on the text you are preparing to preach from.

## Consulting the Scholars

In preparing your sermon on Luke 24:13-35 and in completing the homework for this lesson, you will need to consult commentaries on this scriptural passage. Suggested commentaries and resources you may wish to consult are listed below. These may be available in university and public libraries, or the library of your pastor or friends.

Craddock, Fred B. *Luke*. In *Interpretation, a Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching*. Louisville, KY: John Knox Press, 1990.

Nickle, Keith F. *Preaching the Gospel of Luke: Proclaiming God's Royal Rule*. Louisville, KY: John Knox Press, 2000.

Talbert, Charles H. *Reading Luke: A Literary and Theological Commentary on the Third Gospel*. New York: Crossroad, 1984.

Tannehill, Robert C. *The Narrative Unity of Luke-Acts: A Literary Interpretation*. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1986-1990.

Green, Joel B. *The Gospel of Luke*. Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1997.

## Group Work

In groups develop a sermon outline based on one of the "heart cries and God's answer" that you worked on in Lesson 3.

## Lesson 8

# Exegeting the Congregation

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## Exegeting Your People

1. What age groups are most strongly represented in my congregation?
2. What socioeconomic groups are represented?
3. How do most of my people relate to authority?
4. Are my people in authority in their world or under authority?
5. What do my people like to read?
6. How do they entertain themselves?
7. What music do my people listen to?
8. What is their educational background?
9. What is the history of this people/congregation?
10. How do these people learn? Listen? Process decision?
11. How do my people view the Bible?

## Exercises for Knowing Your Listeners

1. List the names of 20 listeners and ask yourself what the text might mean to them.
2. Play a game called "what is it like to be \_\_\_\_\_." Fill in the blank with common situations.

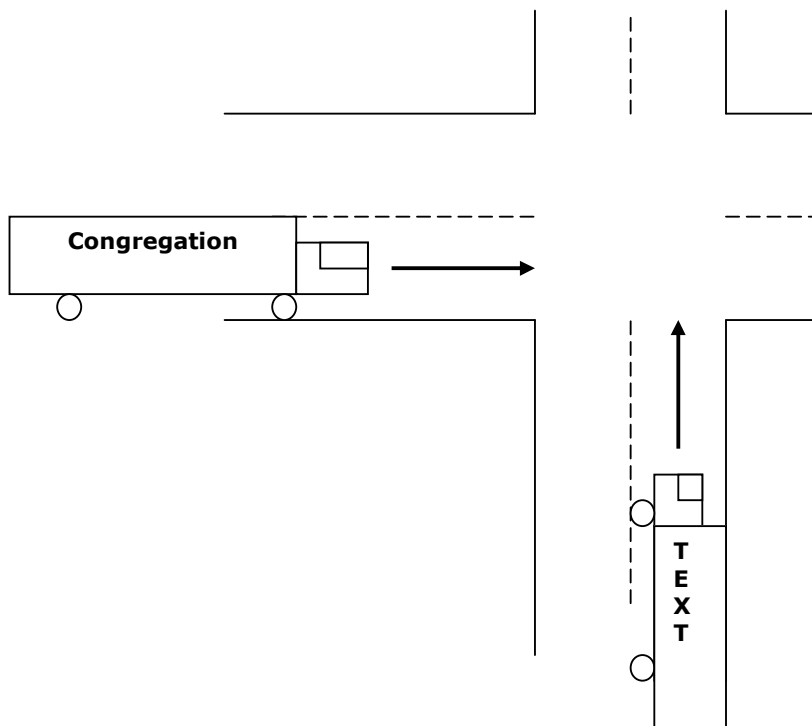
Examples:

- 5 years old and starting school
- 13 with pimples
- engaged
- losing your job
- in a difficult marriage
- 

By identifying places where people often find themselves, you can ask how people in these situations might hear this text.

3. Gather a group of people and ask them about their hopes, fears, hurts, and beliefs. Keep the text in the back of your mind as you listen to people. Connect the dots between the activity of God in the text and the trouble of these people.
4. How will children hear this text? Youth? Older Adults?

## Intersecting the Text and Congregation



## Lesson 9

# Selecting the Form of the Sermon

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## Different Kinds of Preaching as a Pastor

Teaching

Evangelistic

Nurturing/Feeding

Admonishing

## Four Sermon Forms

### Running the Story

This sermon form uses the plot line that already exists in the story itself. It follows the pattern of normal world>hint of trouble>trouble arrives>we learn something/we get help>our world is changed. We become storytellers who use our imagination to fill in the details of the senses.

### Stitching Stories

Have you ever watched someone stitch a patchwork quilt? They connect small pieces together to make a whole. In this sermon form, the preacher uses similar-size stories with a common thread and connects them.

### Four Pages of the Sermon

This sermon has four moves and is balanced in the middle with move one-two on one side of the seesaw and move three-four on the other side.

- 1—sin/trouble in the text
- 2—sin/trouble in the world
- 3—grace in the text
- 4—grace in the world

### Three-Point Sermon

This is the classic form and still useful for preachers today. Do not go looking for three points in a text as raw material for a sermon. Let the text suggest how it wishes to be preached. One of the best three-point forms is one called sociology, psychology, and theology.

# The Sermon Purpose Statement

by Don Wardlaw, used by the author's permission

The purpose statement declares your strategy of persuasion for the particular preaching situation in light of your learning goals for the Preaching Ministry Project. The purpose statement suggests why and how you intend to ask your people to travel with you in the sermon.

The purpose statement reflects the dynamics of each preaching situation. Every preaching moment, whether or not you are with the same congregation, calls for a different purpose and statement. The purpose statement consists of three stylized parts:

1. SITUATION    an introductory clause that indicates the situation of your congregation that elicits this sermon at this time  
example: "In view of the Elmview congregation's recent vote to lower their giving to benevolence causes . . . "
2. GOAL        a simple statement that suggests what you want the hearers to experience, where you hope the congregation will "travel" experientially during the sermon. Generally, sermons do not dispense information for the hearers to recall; they are not cognitive lessons. Rather, the hearing of a sermon is a lived experience that touches the hearer in ways other than the intellectual.  
example: ". . . I want the people to experience the satisfaction of sacrificial giving for worthy causes . . . ."
3. MEANS       A qualifying phrase or clause that pictures how or by what particular rhetorical means you will lead your hearers into this experience in order to be persuasive; the means for enabling the experience of the sermon to happen.  
example: ". . . by means of a series of vignettes showing how sacrificial giving has strengthened a congregation's faith."

Hence, a sermon purpose statement: "In view of the Elmview congregation's recent vote to lower their giving to benevolence causes, I want the people to experience the satisfaction of sacrificial giving for worthy causes, by means of a series of vignettes showing how sacrificial giving has strengthened a congregation's faith."

Consider, for instance, a sermon on inner peace preached before a parish composed of seminarians. Assume the gist of your sermon is:

Our hope for inner peace lies in surrendering to God's grace rather than trying to earn God's forgiveness.

Your sensitivity to particular needs at Hoping and Praying Seminary now enables you to shape your purpose statement.

(situation) in view of the number of the Hoping and Praying community that seem self-conscious about their goodness and so tense about their

well-being. (goal) I want my H and P hearers to experience salvation as a gift rather than as something earned, (means) by means of a reenactment of what happened in theology class one day.

Suppose, however, your sermon on peace is to be preached before an affluent congregation in the established suburb of Oak Hills. You note that many of the congregation plod incessantly either on the business or social treadmill, trying to establish and maintain some sense of belonging and self-worth in the community.

Again, the theme is the same as above. But this time your purpose could read:

(situation) In view of apparent hunger in Oak Hills for a sense of well-being that neither successful careers nor social status seems to satisfy, (goal) I want my Oak Hills hearers to experience a deep sense of well-being as God's gift and not as a result of their own attainment, (means) by means of dramatizing several different types of Oak Hills residents.

Once more, you anticipate preaching this sermon before a congregation of elderly people in a changing neighborhood. These people are the few who either chose or were forced to remain with this local parish when the majority of the members fled to the suburbs. Now you see your hearers preoccupied with inflation, crime in the streets, and the loneliness that belongs to the forgotten elderly. Your purpose statement:

(situation) In view of my elderly congregation's fear that they have little strength to provide for and protect themselves, (goal) I want to enable them to experience possibilities for opening themselves to God's provision and protection amid an alien environment, (means) by means of three stories depicting how senior citizens banded together to bring about peace in their changing neighborhood and to discover the gift of peace in themselves.

## **Group Work**

In groups develop a sermon outline based upon a particular passage and theme of the sermon. Include a statement purpose for this sermon that comes out of the sermon theme.



# Good Preaching Needs Good Structure

By Wes Tracy

Good sermon structure does not guarantee good preaching, but poor structure nullifies good preaching. It is important to know how the culture or generation to which you preach makes meaning, how it expresses and receives communication.

In the current North American and Asian cultures, for example, narrative style and inductive structure seem to be most effective. Try to incorporate these principles of induction into your sermon preparation.

## **Principle No.1: Inductive preaching helps people listen longer and better, promoting interest, involvement, and suspense by strategically delaying conclusions.**

Induction is that form of logical discourse that establishes the general by way of the specific. That is, the inductive argument moves from the specific to the general. The proofs, the evidences, are revealed one step at a time. As the series of examples, questions, cases, and illustrations unfolds, a pattern develops, and then the general truth testified to by real-life specifics is established.

In an inductive sermon the preacher may explore "answers" or ideas suggested by the newspaper; a bumper sticker; an overheard conversation, a poem, an incident in Mr. Jones's family. All of these put together may show a pattern of God's providence in human life. After establishing the principle (and only after establishing the principle) by real-life specifics, the preacher then anchors the specifics on a rock of Biblical truth by citing a Scripture about the very hairs of our heads being numbered and the God who notices every sparrow that falls. Enhanced by existential proofs, the text then carries a ton of truth home to the mind and heart. Though inductive logic is not as airtight as deduction's syllogisms, it can be even more powerful.

But we all have been taught to preach deductively. We announce the general truth and try to apply it to life's specifics. This is valid. Deduction has a good record, but it is less effective today than before.

Next Sunday the typical pastor will step to the pulpit, announce his or her conclusions, and then try to get the people to pay attention while the preacher explains why his dogmatic affirmations are true. They probably are true. He has struggled with them all week in prayer and study. But instead of sharing the steps he went through to arrive at his conclusions, the preacher simply announces them. Usually the conclusion is announced in the title of the sermon and, if not there, at least the introduction tells all. To announce your conclusions in advance conspires against interest and attention, and if these are lost, the power of the gospel is frittered away.

In a sermon I heard recently, a preacher who ought to know better gave us his three points in the first minute of the sermon. They were all conclusions:

- I. All Persons Are Sinners
- II. God Hates Sin
- III. God Loves Sinners

What was left to tell? Why listen further? We know how the story ends. To announce your deductive conclusions ahead of time is like printing the solution to a mystery on page 1 of a novel. Who will read the other 300 pages?

More of the nature and strengths of induction is seen in these pairs:

Deduction announces truth—Induction demonstrates or dramatizes truth.

Deduction produces little suspense—Induction heightens suspense.

Deduction is frequently abstract—Induction is usually concrete.

Deduction is authoritative—induction is democratic.

Deduction paints with a large brush—Induction paints with a fine brush.

Deduction does the thinking for the hearer—Induction involves the hearer in the thought process.

Deduction starts with the conclusion—Induction delays the conclusion until the end.

Deduction tends to drive—Induction leads.

Deduction is that old saw, "Tell them what you are going to tell them, tell them, and then tell them what you told them." Nothing could be more fatal to a sermon. Induction, on the other hand, is a finely crafted narrative as carefully tuned, as strongly plotted, and as powerful as the story of the Son of God born in a donkey stall.

Instead of the 19th century style of sermon that had "three deductive points and a poem," the notes to an inductive sermon will be more like a sketch of a story with the sermon moving from one scene to another with the new scene unfolding naturally out of the former one.

## **Principle No.2: Induction suits the new human sensorium.**

When Christianity chewed up the Roman Empire, turning the world upside down with evangelistic fervor; the human sensorium was tuned to oral communication. It was a world controlled by classical rhetoric. Public address was the way of politics, of the judicial world, of democracy, of worship, and of evangelism.

In that time when the human sensorium (the way people perceived, understood, and communicated) focused primarily on aural (hearing) and oral (speaking) communication, the Early Church preachers changed the world. Many of the best: Jerome, Chrysostom, Augustine, and apparently St. Paul, were trained in classical rhetorical theory—that force which swayed the destiny of nations and souls. This is still the starting place for preachers. If the classic canons—*inventio*, *dispositio*, *elecutio*, and *pronuntiatio*—are all Greek to you, much study awaits you like a father awaiting a son who is already four hours late.

With the invention of alphabetic script, movable type, and the printing press, that human sensorium changed. It became print-oriented. The written word became superior to the spoken word. If you wanted to say something important, you were told to "put it in writing." Preaching fell on hard times as sermons became literary documents drearily read on Sunday and rushed off to the printer's on Monday. Bibliolators made the Bible into a "paper pope." Books and magazines were regarded as having more significance than a spoken sermon.

The print-oriented way of perceiving prevailed for centuries, but the print-oriented sensorium is gone. Oh, some of us are old enough to still be geared to print, but at least two generations of Americans now have an aural/oral/visual orientation. In this sense at least we are closer to the classical sensorium than before. This is good news for preaching, but there is one key difference. The classical oral/aural orientation was plugged into deductive thinking; today's new human sensorium is inductively oriented. Therefore, the preacher who would reach the minds and hearts of the modern generation must master inductive technique.

Two things have shaped the aural/oral/visual way of perceiving, understanding, and communicating. One is the televised image. The visual, visceral, aural, emotional, oral are combined in powerful experiences. Television's mode is inductive. Most of the commercials and, almost without exception, every adventure story, romance tale, and mystery show is inductively plotted. A story, a moral, sometimes a truth is dramatized (demonstrated) before the viewer's eyes. The viewers are not just told—they are shown. Only a deductive person will vote the "News Break" as his favorite program.

Typically, the people to whom we preach watch television as many hours each week as they work on their jobs. Every 30 or 60 minutes they are led to inductive conclusions.

The second major shaper of the new aural/oral sensorium is progressive education. Here again at least two generations have been educated by a system that deliberately aims at teaching students how to think, not what to think. Today's younger generations have been schooled by way of problem solving, values clarification, learn-by-doing exercises, study teams, critical inquiry, open-ended questions, and the like. All these have one thing in common—they are inductive devices. "A person who has been trained in

this way is no more likely," says Ralph Lewis, "to let someone else chew... his Sunday dinner for him than he is to allow the preacher to do his thinking for him in the Sunday sermon" (*Inductive Preaching* Cross Way Books, 1983,p.46). The preacher may think with him (induction) not for him (deduction).

In their study time, work time, and leisure time, Americans live inductively. Fred B. Craddock says that the preacher who preaches only with neatly subdivided deductive syllogism today commits an immense crime against the normal currents of life (*As One Without Authority*, Abingdon, 1983, p.63).

The print-oriented past was the time of the deductively airtight lecture-sermon. Today induction must be considered, for has not Christ charged us to do whatever it takes to reach the people for whom He died?

So I must learn to use the tools and ingredients of induction. They are story, narrative, analogy, metaphor, parable, dialogue, experiences, and questions. But that is not so bad—that is the Bible way. The Bible is full of such devices. Many of the stories of Genesis are inductively plotted, the Psalms are filled with analogy and metaphor, the prophets tell stories about rotten fruit, plumb lines, and symbolic marriages gone bad and the like. Jesus used questions to preach and teach. He used dialogue. John alone preserves seven interviews of Jesus. And Jesus raised the parable to new heights. Perhaps induction is the Bible way, God's way. The Incarnation itself is inductive in nature.

**Principle No. 3: Induction increases the preacher's authority by decreasing it.**

Today's inductive person is part of a democracy. Authoritarian approaches will be squarely challenged. Today's inductive thinker will be led but not pushed. Today, the preacher who comes out flinging "musts," "oughts," "shoulds," and "have tos" will be resisted or ignored. Induction is the method of common ground, vulnerability, and "let's," not "you." So by taking a less authoritarian stance the inductive preacher increases his authority-and the gospel's.

I have four more principles for which I do not have enough space. The other principles are:

**Principle 4. Induction has a flesh-and blood reality about it because of its specificity and concreteness (the opposites of generality and abstraction).**

**Principle 5. Induction can make deduction more effective.**

**Principle 6. Induction cannot carry' the whole preaching task alone anymore than deduction can.**

**Principle 7. Inductive discourse may sound less scholarly, less weighty than deductive discourse, but this is frequently an Illusion.**

If all this has "induced" you to desire further exploration of inductive preaching check out these books:

*As One Without Authority*, by Fred B. Craddock (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 3rd ed, 1983).

*The Homiletical Plot*, by Eugene L. Lowry (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1980).

*Inductive Preaching*, by Ralph L. Lewis (Westchester; III.: Crossway Books, 1983).

*What's A Nice God Like You Doing in a Place Like This*, by Wesley Tracy (Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City, 1990). This book contains nine sermons which are narrative in style and deductive in structure.

In Lesson 12 we will listen to two sermons and discuss their structure and form. Read the above article, "Good Preaching Needs Good Structure," and be prepared to analyze these sermons in light of the principles presented here.

## Lesson 10

## Analyzing Sermon Form

## Listening Guide

Sermon Title: \_\_\_\_\_

Preacher: \_\_\_\_\_ Text: \_\_\_\_\_

Intended Audience: \_\_\_\_\_

1. What are the moves (the outline) in this sermon?
2. What sermon form guides this particular sermon? Is this sermon more narrative? More exegetical? More topical? Why did you categorize it as this form?
3. Is this inductive or deductive?
4. Is the sermon form clearly evident or does it represent a mixture of forms?
5. How does the form match the content of the message?
6. What response was required of the hearer?

## Listening Guide

Sermon Title: \_\_\_\_\_

Preacher: \_\_\_\_\_ Text: \_\_\_\_\_

Intended Audience: \_\_\_\_\_

7. What are the moves (the outline) in this sermon?
8. What sermon form guides this particular sermon? Is this sermon more narrative? More exegetical? More topical? Why did you categorize it as this form?
9. Is this inductive or deductive?
10. Is the sermon form clearly evident or does it represent a mixture of forms?
11. How does the form match the content of the message?
12. What response was required of the hearer?

## Lesson 11

# Writing the Sermon and Preparing to Preach

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## Six Qualities of a Good Sermon

**Unity**—it is specific, clear, and simple; it hangs together as one message

**Memory**—it knows who is listening to this sermon

**Recognition**—it says what we already know

**Identification**—it draws the listeners into the plot/story; it causes them to identify with the characters

**Anticipation**—it sustains interest and delays resolution

**Intimacy**—it cares, loves, respects, and trusts

## Sermon Presentation Questions

1. Did the sermon have unity? What unifying theme held it together?
2. How did the sermon connect with the existing memory of the congregation?
3. What did the sermon say that you already knew? What did the sermon say that was new to you?
4. Where did you identify with the sermon? At what point did you connect?
5. Where was the suspense? Did the preacher keep your interest? How?
6. How did the preacher establish a sense of intimacy and nearness with the listeners?

## **Purpose of Writing a Sermon**

1. It keeps the mind in focus and does not allow the preacher to wander.
2. It orders the material in some sequence and creates movement.
3. It allows you to look at each move and work on that move separately.
4. You can craft any sections of the sermon that need careful attention due to the possibility of misunderstanding.
5. You can rearrange the pieces should a different sermon form suggest itself in the process of writing.

## **Effective and Ineffective Public Speaking**

### **Six characteristics of an ineffective speaker**

- Monotonous voice
- Stiffness
- Lack of eye contact
- Fidgeting
- Lack of enthusiasm
- Weak voice

### **Five characteristics of an effective speaker**

- Direct eye contact
- Alertness
- Enthusiasm
- Pleasant voice
- Physical activity

### **Six effective uses of the body**

- Be relaxed
- Be definite
- Be appropriate
- Be yourself
- Use variety
- Adapt your movement to the audience

### **Ineffective uses of the body**

- Random movement
- Nervous pacing
- Shifting weight
- Adjusting clothes
- Fiddling with keys, wallet, money, glasses, etc.

## Lesson 12

# The Place of the Sermon in Worship

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### Sermon Evaluation

Preacher \_\_\_\_\_

Sermon Text \_\_\_\_\_

Title \_\_\_\_\_

1. What sermon form was used?
2. What unifying theme held the sermon together?
3. At what point did you connect?
4. When did you sense that the preacher "cared"?
5. How was your interest sustained?
6. Of the following communication issues, check any that are areas for attention:
  - \_\_\_\_ Lack of eye contact
  - \_\_\_\_ Fidgety, distracting movement
  - \_\_\_\_ No voice inflection, monotonous tone
  - \_\_\_\_ Nervousness
  - \_\_\_\_ Speaks too fast
  - \_\_\_\_ Speaks too slow
  - \_\_\_\_ Shifting weight back and forth
  - \_\_\_\_ Fiddling with keys, money, etc.
  - \_\_\_\_ Too loud
  - \_\_\_\_ Too soft
7. How were you helped?

Evaluator: \_\_\_\_\_



# Order of Service

## Constant Components of Worship

(Below is an example of worship experience in the Church of the Nazarene)

Call to Worship – Scripture or song

Invocation Prayer

Worship Through Congregational Singing  
(including Praise & Worship Choruses)

Theme Presentation (briefly describes the theme or main idea intended for the service)

Welcome Chorus/Welcome Fellowship  
(Choose one of three or four choruses for this purpose)

1<sup>st</sup> Scripture Presentation (Old Testament)

Preparation for Prayer through Worshipful Music or a Prayer Chorus

Pastoral Prayer (the pastor lifting his people to God in prayer)

Hymn or Chorale

Creed, Responsive Reading, or Liturgy  
(May be meaningfully selected or written to address the Theme of the Service)

2<sup>nd</sup> Scripture Presentation (New Testament)

Tithes and Offerings

Special Music Presentation

Message/Sermon

Moments of Response

- Response to the call to the Kingdom (Call to Salvation and/or Sanctification)
- Response to the call to Discipleship & the Kingdom life (Service)

Benediction Prayer

Share the Grace

# Preaching

## Making Space for Grace

By Don M. Wardlaw<sup>2</sup>

Possibly the most formidable challenge in preaching is in discovering how to make space for grace in our sermons. Perhaps we can get some clues about how better to open our sermons to grace by first hearing a story about life with Aunt Grace.

Aunt Grace, a widow for 20 years, finally admitted at 84 that she was too old to manage the farm. So she willed her lovely, old, Victorian farmhouse and the 200 acres to her only living heir, her nephew Sam. Her will provided Sam and his family the house only if he took occupancy immediately. She would build her own efficiency apartment next to the garage so Sam, his wife, Laura, and son, Jimmy, would have the run of the house as their own.

The deal seemed a winner for both parties. Aunt Grace could live out her days on the farm with the privacy she desired, while enjoying the comfort and support of family on the land. Sam and his family could take possession of a lovely home and farm at no cost to themselves. The agreement also carried the intuitive assumption that while Grace would honor the privacy of Sam's family, she, nevertheless, was welcome as family in this house that she had lovingly maintained for over 50 years.

The new arrangement proved a special boon to 10-year-old Jimmy. When Sam and Laura lived in town, son Jimmy heretofore had gone home from school to an empty house, since his mom, Laura, worked till 5:00. Now that they lived in Aunt Grace's house in the country, each afternoon Jimmy skipped from the school bus straight to Aunt Grace's apartment where she always smothered him with a big hug and put warm, freshly baked bread before him. He loved her lilting laugh that made her portly tummy jiggle. He loved the stories she told. He especially loved how she listened to his stories as if he were the most special person in the world.

Aunt Grace seemed to Jimmy to light up the old house when she dropped in. She'd sit down at the piano in the living room and play the old-time songs one after another and then sing along, sounds that somehow made Jimmy feel more solid inside. She'd eat Sunday dinner and linger over apple pie talking with Laura about canning and recipes. She pops in the kitchen with some more canned vegetables or sits with coffee at the breakfast table and talks for a while.

Jimmy sensed a difference between his parents and Aunt Grace. Sam and Laura's breakfast table was different from Grace's table. Laura usually listened to Jimmy as if waiting for him to stop talking so she could remind him to straighten his room, or wash his hands, or act more mature in church next Sunday. Laura seemed to Jimmy a nervous bundle of "shoulds" and "oughts." Sam listened to Jimmy with glassy eyes, waiting for a break in the conversation to insert one of his usual motivational pep talks about trying harder, whether playing ball or doing homework. These speeches usually began with, "Jimmy, when I was your age . . ." Jimmy was attracted to Aunt Grace because she came to him with a different spirit. Oh she had her standards aplenty, but she didn't breathe all over him with them. She delighted in him, giving him space to make of it what he would. He'd straighten his room and make his bed for Grace in a minute if he knew that's what she wanted.

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<sup>2</sup> By Don M. Wardlaw, McCormick Theological Seminary, Chicago, IL 60637.  
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As time went on there seemed less space for Grace in the house. Laura ostensibly always had so many “shoulds” and “oughts” to do, cleaning, bills, errands, that she made it subtly clear that she didn’t have much space in her life for Grace to hang around. Sam, the minute he got home, was out to the barn to tend to the feed, or check out that broken part on the tractor, thus signaling to Grace when she peeked into the kitchen that she shouldn’t get in the way of his program of progress. The Aunt Grace whose ringing laughter used to fill the den, whose stories of early farm days used to bless Sunday dinner, who used to sit in Jimmy’s room and hear his secrets, that Grace was now more an absence than a presence. She had gotten the message that she wasn’t wanted. Now and then she’d pop into the kitchen for a minute just to maintain contact with a cheery hello. But for the most part Aunt Grace stayed out back in her apartment minding her business, living in deep sadness that she didn’t seem welcome in her own house, the one she freely gave away.

A year to two later, as Grace grew more distant and feeble, Jimmy was old enough to begin to understand some things. His parents weren’t so much busy as they were nervous when Aunt Grace came into the kitchen. It seemed to Jimmy that Sam and Laura didn’t know what to do with Aunt Grace. They felt awkward in her presence. They didn’t have her spontaneity and delight. They couldn’t get with people in the natural ways Grace does. Though Jimmy couldn’t put it neatly in words, he knew in his soul that his folks had crowded Aunt Grace out of her own house. They had filled the place with a censorious and laborious spirit. Grace’s music, the food, delight, and stories were no longer there. Only an occasional knock on the kitchen door in the back of the house, a brief welcome and nod, and that was it. The wallpaper was never more faded and the fireplace never more cold.

Thus the challenge in our preaching, to make space for grace in the house of our sermons. Grace lived in that house long before we were born. We have been called simply to testify to the Christ-spirit that pervades and defines the walls of this sermon. We are called in this sermon house to retell the old stories of grace, to recapture the lilt of grace’s laughter, to offer her courage that can keep hope alive. We are called in the house of this sermon to honor every Jimmy or Jane’s story out there in the pew as if each person were the most important person in the world. We are asked as preachers to take our people on a tour of grace’s house so they can absorb into their souls the sense of reconciling acceptance there, and catch a vision of the difference grace can make in us as individuals and institutions.

Nor is this preaching merely whistling in the dark. In grace’s name we stand in pulpits and look racism, poverty, sexism, and war gods in the eye, and call out their demons one by one. In grace’s power we help our people find the courage to name the devils involved in our self-seeking, aggression, anxiety, fear and self-loathing. Grace is a gutsy lady. She enables us to name the demons, but even more importantly she envisions for us and celebrates every personal victory over fear or greed, and every breakthrough of a Berlin Wall. Preaching grace means taking people to her house to show them how she lives there and the changes her spirit makes there. In her house we hear the sound of her singing and come to her table for the warm bread she has for us there.

But, to repeat my opening words, possibly the most formidable challenge in preaching is finding space for grace in our sermons.

How often are you and I in our preaching tempted to feature more of the spirit of Sam and Laura’s table than that of Grace’s table? I examine dozens of parish ministers’ sermons every year. The majority of these preachers, however inadvertently, demand good behavior more than declare saving grace. A random check of radio and television sermons, homilies, or books of “best sermons of the year” regularly reveals preaching that weighs us down with demands more than buoys us up with grace. Preaching that defies grace could be called hortatory preaching. The word “hortatory” means to incite, to stir up, to prod, a kind of preaching that majors in imperatives. The hortatory preacher is the Laura in us who takes to the pulpit as a venous bundle of “shoulds” and “oughts,” pushing all the people out there to love the crab next door, or demanding more honesty with income taxes and more truthfulness in marriage, or insisting that the hearers come down on God’s side regarding issues over abortion or human rights. The hortatory preacher is the Sam in us who

has a hundred different ways to insist that the people try harder, whether in their prayer life, or their stewardship, or their struggles with addictions.

Some might be wondering at this moment, however, "What's wrong with putting some heat on the folks from the pulpit, even in the name of grace?" Don't we all need a kick in the pants or a rap on the knuckles pretty regularly if we are to stay on the straight and narrow? You just can't hand everyone a warm loaf of Aunt Grace's bread and expect them automatically to be transformed into loving saints and social crusaders. Besides (goes the argument) people need to be shown what to do. Look where permissiveness has gotten us in our society. We can't forget Dietrich Bonhoeffer's words when he said, "Cheap grace has been the ruin of more Christians than any command of works." And further (continues the argument), what's so objectionable about a bunch of imperatives when we see Scripture is full of them? Even Jesus said we "ought" to tithe, "ought" to wash one another's feet, "ought" to lay down our lives for one another. Jesus was full of commands: "Love thy neighbor"; "Seek first God's kingdom"; "Judge not." In short, some stern warnings and demands in grace's house never hurt anybody.

As formidable an argument as this is for Sam and Laura's way in the house of preaching, the hortatory sermon, one that majors in demands, is vulnerable on four counts. First, the hortatory sermon suggests an understanding of both hearer and preacher that is limited psychologically. To tell people what they ought to do and expect them to do it suggests a simplistic understanding of the workings of the human will. You and I don't do anything just because we are told we ought to. The hortatory sermon is also limited psychologically because in prescribing behavior for other people we presume to have a working knowledge of the blueprint of transformation the Holy Spirit has for our people. Even Jesus said that only God knows the times and the seasons of transformation.

If hortatory preaching is limited psychologically, it is, second, imprisoned culturally. From the cradle to the grave we are all immersed in a cacophony of hortatory rhetoric. If we are used to strings of imperatives from the breakfast table, the athletic field, and the Rotary Club, why not the pulpit? If in one sales convention after another we keep bringing in the Lee Iacoccas and Mike Ditkas to insist with Aunt Grace's nephew Sam that we try harder, then why not expect the same from the pulpit? No wonder people expect us to preach to them as if they were the little engine who could. The only problem is such preaching saturates our hearers' minds with a works-consciousness. It deludes our people into feeling that well-being is a human achievement rather than a gift. It's devoid of Aunt Grace's transforming spirit.

Hortatory preaching founders, third, because it is questionable ethically. When we take advantage of someone, we've got an ethical problem. Hortatory preaching takes advantage of people by demanding of them what they are not equipped to deliver. It's like when you fell to the ground in pain and I come over to help, and I stand on your chest, demanding that you get up and dance. Hortatory sermons major in demands without dwelling on the source of power that enables one to live up to that demand. I remember hearing two women coming out of a fashionable church in Richmond, VA, having heard yet one more week the eloquent demands of their preacher. One said, "He keeps insisting on what we ought to do, but he never tells us how." When we demand that people drink the living water, but don't show them where it is or how it vitalizes, we've got an ethical problem.

Hortatory preaching runs aground, finally, because it is simplistic theologically. The theological problem with hortatory preaching turns on the relation between the imperative and the indicative. The term "indicative" refers to the given of God's grace, supremely revealed in Jesus Christ and imputed by the Holy Spirit, a grace that works within us and among us to make both our personal and corporate lives truly human. Scripture constantly holds its imperatives in a close, vital interrelation with its indicatives. "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling," demands St. Paul, but in the next breath he shores up the imperative with a great indicative, "for God is at work in you both to will and work God's good pleasure." Or, take the imperative with the writer to the Hebrews, "Let us run with perseverance the race that is set before us"; notice the enabling indicative that comes right behind it, "Looking to Jesus the pioneer and perfecter of our faith." The writer is saying that the presence of Jesus enables us to run with perseverance. Every imperative in

Scripture has an indicative lurking somewhere nearby that makes it possible to carry out that imperative. When you and I drift into hortatory preaching, we are offering naked imperatives, that is, imperatives without the presence of empowering indicatives. In those moments we lose touch with the fact that what drives Jimmy to want to clean up his room and make his bed is the great indicative presence of Aunt Grace in his life.

If hortatory preaching is a half a loaf, and a stale one at that, why do you and I get trapped serving this kind of bread? Well, for one, anxiety can make hortatory preachers of us all. When we grow anxious about the lagging parish program, or our own leadership abilities, or our own sense of authority, how tempting to begin majoring in imperatives in hopes of cajoling the congregation into appearing dedicated. Or, in those moments of heart-burnout, when our own sense of commitment is at stake, how easy to nervously push out people with imperatives to live the kind of dedicated faith that we cannot admit is not presently within us.

Such hortatory sermons have a telling shape. Most begin with what I call the “ain’t it awful” section, a cataloguing of what’s wrong with the world, usually occupying up to 75-80% of the sermon. Then comes the answer to the problem, now offered in a flurry of imperatives in the few minutes that remain.

It sounds like the ring of Laura’s voice in Aunt Grace’s house. The wallpaper’s faded and the ashes in the fireplace are cold.

Still, why do we do it? What’s behind the anxiety that drives it? Could it be that we, in all Kingdom busyness to run Laura’s errands and to fix Sam’s tractor, have had less and less space for grace in the house of our being? In allowing ourselves to get so caught up in the imperatives of the parish, how easy to lose touch with grace’s warm bread, her songs and lilting laughter, her nourishing presence. How easy, ironically, to be out of touch with the lady who gave us this house in the first place, and who called us to tell others what she is about.

How, then, to make space for grace in our sermons? How do we interplay indicative and imperative in such a way in the sermon that the hearers experience grace? In keeping with my subject I cannot so much prescribe as I can describe how grace comes into the house. Preaching grace starts with a fundamental orientation before we ever sit down to prepare that sermon. It means a life-stance where we are always leaving the door ajar for grace to make herself at home in all the rooms of our being. It means focusing our vision to see how many faces she wore in our household just yesterday; maybe the smile of a clerk amid a hurried errand; maybe the glance of understanding from a counselor friend; maybe the look of forgiveness from a spouse who suffered our insensitivity yet one more time. Grace-filled preaching comes from a grace-filled house where daily she gives us varied gifts of acceptance that move us along a little further toward wholeness. In prayer, meditation, musing, contemplation, focusing, dreaming, we constantly cultivate a consciousness that leaves the door open for grace to come in and celebrate God’s gift in Christ—that we are somebody!

Preaching grace means, further, coming to the house of the scriptural text, and leaving the door open there to meet grace and to talk with her. So often when we are under the pressure of old hortatory habits or of the demands of others where we are losing control, we seize the passage by the throat in order to control it, explain it, master it.

We come to our study desk in a panic to squeeze out of the passage a worthy theme sentence so we can get on with the business of writing a sermon and surviving for one more week the rigors of preaching. With the nervous hands we take down a handful of commentaries from the shelves, pleading with them to deliver us from the valley of the shadow of “no ideas.” Yet, in so doing, we close off possibilities for an engagement with grace there in the passage. As Fred Craddock so wisely says, “Who is going to venture a thought or an interpretation when at the very same desk are six internationally known Bible scholars?” (*Preaching*, p. 106).

But look what can happen when we take a deep breath and begin to believe that our best moments in sermon preparation come when we trust ourselves enough to begin the sermon process by

swapping stories with Grace. We ease back into a comfortable position, as if we had come home from school, to let Grace talk with us. On the ground of this passage Grace welcomes us so she can tell us her story . . . an old, old story of Jesus and His love. And then Grace asks us to tell her our story through this text. She asks you and me through the biblical text, "O Prodigal, what's it like in your far country?" or, "O wounded Traveler, how does it feel for a Samaritan to gather you in his arms and care for you?" or, "O fearful Jonah, tell me of your surprise when even the belly of the whale could not hide you from God."

When you find yourself in that text, then that text finds itself in you. Now the door is open for Grace to enter the house of the sermon. And we're not talking about a few moments in the kitchen at the back of the sermon, patronizing Grace. We're not thinking about simply allowing Grace and word or two at the end on the way out the back door. Rather, we are talking about giving Grace the space to do her thing. This means turning the corner on "ain't it awful" at least halfway through the sermon in order to picture the possibilities of Grace at work in the households of the hearers' lives. This means spending time describing rather than prescribing new life happening in the streets and alleyways of your people's lives. This means, to put it in Karl Barth's terminology—showing people ways Grace turns demand into permission.

With this kind of preaching the imperative in the presence of the gracious indicative becomes the possibility. We major in picturing those possibilities, in engraving upon the consciousness of people in the pews portraits and images of what it looks and feels like for a people to live in the chemistry of God's transforming acceptance.

We don't just talk about such transformation, we enable people to experience it in the sermon. Through the major part of the sermon, you come home with your hearers from the far country. You've wakened on that vomit-stained mattress in that cold-water walkup in Greenwich Village, stared at that naked light bulb and been surprised by a resolve rising within you to head home to the waiting Parent. Back home in Paducah the waiting Father strolls to the edge of the hill after dinner each evening and longs to see you coming up the trail from the highway down below. Each evening as she looks out the window at the sinking sun, the waiting Mother holds in her heart the deepest yearning to take you back into the comfort of her arms. In that hovel in Greenwich Village, you put on the only pair of jeans you have left, scrape up enough cash to buy the bus ticket home, and you are on your way. As the bus winds down through Philly and Cincinnati, and on into Kentucky, you discover someone a stop or two back has left a legal pad on the shelf above you. You take a stub of a pencil, draw a line down the middle of the page, and begin listing reasons on the left why they will reject you at the door, and reasons on the right why they might still take you in. With an equal number of reasons in each column your gut tightens at the thought of climbing that hill to the old homestead.

And now your bus carries you around that long gentle curve on the highway outside Paducah where you will get off at the Amoco station at the foot of the trail that leads up to the home place. You catch your breath and step down on the gravel as the bus roars off, leaving you lost in a cloud of dust. You feel momentarily paralyzed in your desire to return. But before you can clear your eyes, you are encircled and held tightly by Mama's arms. You don't need to open your eyes to see who it is. You know who it is. You know those tears that co-mingle on your cheek with hers.

And before you can blurt out how unworthy you have been, you realize that you left that legal pad on the bus. But never mind, we're going to have a party. You were lost, and now you're found.

Now that will preach! And so you preach!

# Appendix A

## Preparing a Sermon

As the minister combines the skills of this course with the questions of the inductive method of Bible study learned in Interpreting Scripture (Hermeneutics), these study questions provide a sequence for helping to prepare a sermon. For explanation of questions of the inductive method, see Interpreting Scripture (Hermeneutics), "Inductive Method".

**Exegete (study) the passage(s)** as background study in preparation for writing a sermon. Follow these steps in the process of exegesis of the passage assigned to you (write a **short** answer for each question):

1. Listen to the Scripture. What about the background and broader context of the sermon passage:
  - 1) What section of the Bible does the book belong to (e.g. Gospels, Prophets, etc)?
  - 2) Who is the author?
  - 3) Who is this Scripture passage talking to?
  - 4) What is the approximate time period in which this passage was written?
  - 5) What is the particular historical situation of that period; political leadership and political developments of that time?
  - 6) What type of spoken form is this book of the Bible?
  - 7) What type of spoken form is this passage within this book of the Bible (if different)?
  - 8) What is the function of this passage in the book? – introduction, summary, greeting/salutation, one of several statement of equal importance in the book, etc.?
  - 9) *What is the relationship of this passage to the passages that come before it and that follow it?*
  - 10) What did this passage mean to the original hearers? How did they feel and think about it?
  - 11) Does the text contain references to particular cultural customs of that period?
  - 12) What were the religious practices or beliefs of the people being addressed?
2. Ask questions of the Scripture text. Read the text of the passage several times (at least 10). Listen to the text. Meditate on the passage, ponder it, **soak** it into your mind and heart. As you read the passage answer these questions – write a **short** answer to each question:
  - 1) What is the good news here?
  - 2) What is the bad news? Look for trouble – where do you first 'smell' trouble?
  - 3) How many places can you stand in this passage? How many different vantage points do you find? How many characters are in it, receiving, or involved in this passage?

- 4) What is God doing here?
- 5) What are humans doing here?
- 3.** Look for trouble in the passage or story.
  - 1) Diagram the flow of the plot line.
  - 2) Start the sermon with the tension of the story – trouble is early in the plot, not late.
  - 3) How is the trouble resolved? Good preaching moves to grace and hope that is celebrated!
- 4.** Identify the image, incident, or issue – create an image page.
  - 1) What is the “feel” or atmosphere of this passage – give one word descriptions such as “hate”, “love”, “action”, etc.
  - 2) What are the key words and phrases in the passage? – list them. What “picture” do they paint? – briefly describe it.
  - 3) What are the main idea(s) of this passage? How is it pictured?
- 5.** What are the major theological theme in the passage?
  - 1) What does this passage say about sin, rebellion, or spiritual failure?
  - 2) What does this passage say about Christ?
  - 3) What are the names of God in this passage?
  - 4) What timeless truth flows out of these major theological themes?
  - 5) What timeless truth was intended to communicate to the ancient listeners?
  - 6) What timeless truth should be communicated to your congregation?
- 6.** Pause to let the text speak to you for personal preparation.
  - 1) Underline the key ideas that stand out to you, then go back and ask **why** this is important to **you**.
  - 2) Where do you find yourself resisting this text? What part of the text do you want to avoid?
  - 3) Is there anything in the text that frightens you?
  - 4) What issues in your life are similar to the issue of the text?
  - 5) Why do you care about this text?
  - 6) What sounds like good news to you?
  - 7) What sounds like bad news to you?
- 7.** Consult the scholars – use whatever other study materials you have available to you.
- 8.** Study your congregation and build the hermeneutical bridge – connect the ancient biblical world to the contemporary scene.
- 9.** Determine what sermon form will best fit for your sermon.
- 10.** Apply the timeless truths of the passage to your congregation in a carefully crafted sermon. Write out a sermon in full enough form that you can preach it in your local



## **Appendix B**

### **Bible Storying Can Provide a Springboard for Preaching**

#### **What is Chronological Bible Storying (CBS)?**

Chronological Bible Storying is a systematic way to present God's Word to a group of people over time, so that they can come to have a good grasp of how God thinks and of what is important to God about redemption for all people.

#### **Why do Chronological Bible Storying?**

- Story telling is the best way to learn.
- Stories shape our worldview, beliefs, values, and behaviour.
- Stories help people to "picture" new idea.
- Stories can change how people think
- Bible stories teach us Kingdom culture.
- Bible stories help us learn to think how God thinks.
- Bible stories have the power to transform lives.
- Bible stories help God's people to avoid syncretism (mixing other religions with Christianity).
- And Bible Storying helps the church to reach the most people quickly.
- Bible Storying is one of the most effective ways to lay a solid foundation for a Church Planting Movement.

#### **How is Chronological Bible Storying actually done?**

Chronological Bible Storying is a specific way of presenting God's Word. This system involves 1) how a story session is put together, 2) what stories are told, and 3) in what order they are told. Each story session involves not only the story itself, but also an introduction to the story, as well as discussion questions after the story is told. In Chronological Bible Storying, the stories are told in series of stories for a specific purpose.

#### **Who are the Bible Storyers?**

Anyone can learn to be a Bible storyer!

## **Where can we do Bible Storying?**

Bible Storying can be done anywhere that people can gather together on a regular basis.

## **When can we do Bible Storying?**

Bible Storying can be done in any service. It can be used in worship services, in Sunday School, Bible studies, or in special times set aside just for Bible Storying.

## **Significance of Bible Storying in Teaching Truth**

- Bible Storying helps build God's Word into the new believers quickly by giving them their "Oral Bible".
- They help new believers as they learn to understand and follow all the new ideas and ways of Kingdom culture.
- Bible stories help people keep true to what God teaches are right beliefs and practices.
- They build strong foundations for sound doctrine.
- Systematic Chronological Bible Storying is one of the most effective ways to lay a solid foundation for a Church Planting Movement.

## **Discussion questions in relation to the main idea or intended theological theme (doctrinal truth) of the sermon**

It is especially through the discussion questions after the story itself that sound doctrinal truth can be taught from the story. This means that how the questions are put together and what they express is critically important. And so, the kinds of questions used, determine what truths will be taught by those questions.

## ***The Bible Story can be used as a springboard for sermon preparation.***

As you prepare your sermon, the Bible story can become a springboard. You can use the story to shape the flow of your sermon. And you can use the questions to guide you as you develop the intended theological truth that you want to emphasize. In this way, the Bible story becomes not only a teaching tool, but also a basis or foundation for preaching the Word of God.

## GENESIS 4:1-17

## CAIN AND ABEL — God looks at the heart

**INTRODUCTION:** Let us review our last story. *[Allow one or two people to tell what they remember about the story. Spend one or two minutes asking questions to review the story.]*

So in our last story, we heard about the first family's disobedience and God's punishment for them. As you listen to today's story, I want you to listen and answer the question, "Why would God accept one offering and not the other offering? Do you think the reason might have any relation to their different attitudes?"

This is the story from God's Word.

**STORY:** Adam slept with his wife Eve, and she conceived and gave birth to a son. She named him Cain, which means "I have created." She explained, "With God's help I have received a man from the Lord." And after a time, she gave birth to Cain's brother, and they named him Abel. Abel became a shepherd, and Cain became a farmer.

Now at harvest time, Cain brought some of the harvest from his farm – he brought it as an offering for the Lord. Abel also brought an offering for the Lord. He brought a firstborn sheep that he selected from his flock and the fat from that sheep. The Lord looked on Abel and his offering with favor, but the Lord did not look with favor on Cain and his offering. As a result, Cain was very, very angry and disappointed. He was so angry and disappointed that you could see it in his face.

Now the Lord asked Cain, "Why are you so angry? And why is your face red with rage? Don't you know that if you do well, you will be accepted also? But if you do not do well, sin is waiting at the door to attack you, longing to destroy you. But you must master this sin."

Afterwards Cain talked with his brother Abel. And at a time when they were alone in the field, Cain took the opportunity to kill Abel. The Lord then came to Cain asking him, "Where is your brother Abel?" Cain answered, "How should I know? Am I my brother's guard?" God asked Cain, "What have you done? The voice of your brother's blood calls to me from the ground. Now I tell you, you are cursed from the earth, which has opened its mouth to receive your brother's blood from your hand. And so, when you plow the ground, it will no longer yield its harvest to you. You will be a fugitive and a wanderer from place to place."

During this judgment, Cain answered God. He said, "My punishment is greater than I can bear. Don't you see, you have driven me away from my farm, and from your face I will be hidden, and I will soon be a fugitive and a wanderer throughout all the earth. And as a result, among those who find me, one will end up killing me." So the Lord then said to Cain, "Whoever kills Cain, revenge shall be taken on that person seven times more." And the Lord put a mark on Cain so that anyone who found him should not kill him.

After that, Cain went out from the presence of the Lord and lived in the land of Nod on the East of Eden. Later Cain had sexual relations with his wife and she gave birth to Enoch. And then, Cain built a city and named that city after his son, Enoch.

That is the end of our story for today.

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS: Let's talk about this story.

1. Why do you think the two brothers brought God an offering?
2. Did God accept both men and their offerings? Did God look only on the offerings that they brought, or was God looking at the person as well? *[God look with favor on **Abel** and his offering, but with disfavor on **Cain** and his offering – God looked at the whole person as well as on their offerings.]*
3. How did Cain respond to God's disfavor? What did God say about Cain's response?
4. Did God know what they were thinking and feeling while they brought their offerings to God? What wrong attitudes did Cain show? *[jealousy, hatred, self-centered anger, etc.]*
  - a. What did God say that Cain must do about the wrong attitudes in his heart? *[he must master them]*
  - b. If Cain did not master the sinful attitudes in his heart, what did God say would happen? *[sin was waiting at the door to attack him, longing to **destroy** him]*
  - c. Do you think that God sees bad attitudes to be just as sinful as wrong actions? Why do you think that would be so? *[wrong actions come out of bad attitudes in the heart].*
5. Did Cain master his sin? What happened – what did he do?
6. When God confronted Cain concerning his murder of Abel, how did God describe what happened? What was it that God said kept calling out to him so that God could not turn away from it?
7. What punishment did God give to Cain?
  - a. What did Cain think about that punishment?
  - b. How did God respond to Cain's request concerning this punishment?
  - c. What does this show about God?
8. Where did these feelings and actions of Cain come from? *[his heart]* Have any of our stories that we've told earlier included this kind of feelings and deeds? Why did Cain do such a bad bad thing? *[After Adam and Eve sinned, everyone born after that, was born with a sinful nature in their hearts – their heart is **bent toward sinning**]*
9. And how did the story end? *[Cain married, had a son, and built a city – God protected him and provided for him even while he was punishing him.]*

## Group Work

Examine the introductions and discussion questions for the story of Cain and Abel. Notice how the first introduction and set of questions were designed to teach about attitudes of the heart. The second introduction and set of questions were designed to show God's faithfulness to try to draw Cain back to Himself in prevenient grace. The discussion questions when teaching about attitudes of the heart are different than when teaching about prevenient grace.

Put together another introduction and set of questions from this same story of Cain and Abel. The purpose this time would be to show how original sin was already evident in Adam and Eve's firstborn son! Jealousy is a carnal characteristic of the heart that is curved in upon itself. And show how original sin, if allowed to remain in the heart, can take a person farther than they ever wanted to go – Cain even murdered his own brother!

**INTRODUCTION:** The story of Cain took place when the earth was still new, after God had created everything. And when God saw everything that He had created, He saw that it was good. He created the first man and woman, Adam and Eve, in His own image, and He put them into the beautiful Garden of Eden. And He said it was all very good.

But one day, sin entered into the soul of mankind because Adam and Eve disobeyed God. And when that happened, everything was changed! Sin brought pain and suffering and heartache into our world. It spoiled relationships of mankind, both with each other, as well as with God Himself.

And so, in our story today about Cain and Abel, I want you to think about: How did sin show itself as being destructive to relationships – Cain and Abel’s relationship with each other, as well as their relationship with God? And I also want you to think about: What did God do to try to bring Cain back into right relationship with Abel? And especially think about: What did God do to try to bring Cain back into right relationship with God Himself?

**STORY:**

(Same as above)

**DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:**

1. What did Cain’s behaviour in this story show about his relationship with his brother?
2. What did Cain’s behaviour show about his relationship with God?
3. When Cain showed bad attitudes of jealousy, hatred, and self-centered anger toward Abel, how did God show care for Cain to try to bring him back into a good relationship with his brother?
4. Does this story show you anything about God being faithful to deal with Cain in ways to try to bring him back into right relationship with God Himself? How did God show His love and care to Cain to try to do this?
5. When God pronounced the judgment, Cain said it was too much! So what did God do? How does this show God’s love and concern for Cain that he would still one day come back into relationship with Himself?
6. How did Cain respond to God’s dealings with him?
  - a. Did he respond positively and come back into right relationship with God?
  - b. Or did he choose to resist God?
  - c. So would you say that this was a personal choice that Cain made to resist God’s faithful and loving dealings with him about his sin?
7. What happened in Cain’s heart when he chose to resist God’s dealing with him? Did Cain come closer to God? Or did he move farther away from God?
8. What does this story show about how sin is destructive and destroys relationships?
9. What is the name that we call this – these faithful dealings of God to bring people to Himself? [*prevenient grace*]
10. What does prevenient grace show us about God?

## The “10 Step Process”

This is the process you can use to prepare a Bible Story session (Introduction, Story, and Discussion Questions) if you don't have one that has already been prepared/written for you.

1. **Identify the one biblical truth** that you want to communicate. Make it clear and simple.
2. **Consider the worldview issues** of your people. This may be a particular part of a society. It may be a certain age group. But the ways they think and the ways that they look at life must be considered in relationship to this biblical principle you want to teach.
3. **Identify the important**
  - a. **bridges** that will help you take this truth and put it in their lives in a natural, normal way that they can see, visualize, relate to, and apply.
  - b. **barriers** that they have put up against that truth. Think, “How are the ways that I’m going to get around these barriers in this Bible Storying session so that they can then deal with the issue?”
  - c. **gaps**, that they may not have any way to relate to this particular story or this particular Bible truth. So you are going to say, “How can I bridge that gap to make this work?”
4. **Select the biblical story** that you need to use that will best communicate the biblical truth you want to teach.
5. **Craft the story and plan the introduction to the story and the Discussion Questions** that are going to follow the story so that they focus on the task (objective, goal) that you are trying to accomplish. And then you craft the story in such a way that it highlights the key issues that you want to deal with in that story.
6. **Prepare the way for the story with the Introduction.** The introduction should be short. Its purpose is to tell where this story fits in the “big story” of God. The introduction also says what you want the people to be thinking about and looking for as they listen to the story.
7. **Craft the story itself carefully.** Make sure that your facts are accurate. Keep the story as close to the Bible as you can, while telling it in an interesting flow. Do not include unnecessary details that don't contribute to the end purpose for the story. Keep it as short as possible without neglecting important aspects. While telling the story is not the time to teach practical truths – that will come later during the discussion time with the questions – keep the story simple and accurate to Scripture. Remember, this story will become a part of the people's “oral Bible”, so be careful! Remember to set the story itself apart by saying, “This is the story from God's Word” before you begin telling the actual story itself, and then again when you come to the end of the story and before you begin working with the discussion questions. This sets the story itself apart as the Word of God.
8. **Smooth the way to understanding with the discussion questions** in your group, to help them discover the meaning and the application of the story. It is best to have a few questions about basic facts in the story first. And then you can begin to talk about relationships of the different people in the story. And then ask questions that lead the way through to the biblical truth and application that you want to draw from that story. Be sure to write your questions ahead of time and know them well before telling the story, so that you can use the questions effectively to come out to the desired end result.
9. **Help the group to obey the biblical principle.** With one or two questions, help them apply the truth to their daily lives. When you are using Bible Storying with preaching, you may want to bring your people to this response during the conclusion of the sermon instead of during the story time.

**Tell the story in a culturally appropriate way**, whatever that may be in your particular situation. It may be that you want to develop a song or maybe you already know a song for the story. It may be that you want to act it out. But in whatever appropriate ways, try to get the story beyond just a story, and into real life action and real involvement with all the senses that we're given. Because that's the way that people basically learn. We learn by experience. No matter what people say, what you really learn is what you have already experienced.