CALLING OUT THE CALLED

# Practical Preaching Handbook:

A Step-by-Step Guide for Preparing and Preaching Biblical Sermons

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# Foreword

> *Kentucky needs more preachers. Many of us are praying for God to call out men all over our state who will preach in pulpits and pastor churches in Kentucky and beyond. Those who answer that call will need to learn the basic skills needed to prepare sermons. That is the purpose of this book.*

When I answered the call of God and preached my first sermon, I had no training on how to prepare a sermon. I had a relationship with Jesus, a study Bible and a faithful local church that loved me and prayed for me. I did not know anything about biblical exegesis or preaching homiletics. A resource like the one you hold in your hands and someone to teach me the basic skills of Bible study and sermon preparation (or hermeneutics and homiletics) would have been a great gift to me and to those precious saints who endured my feeble attempts to proclaim God's word.

Readers of this book will be given helpful guidance on approaching the text of Scripture and preparing biblical sermons. They will be instructed to pray through and meditate on the text, interpret, and outline the text, build and revise a sermon and then preach that message and review it to continually improve their preaching skills. Preaching is arguably the most important work of any church pastor, and since that is the case, we must learn how to do it well.
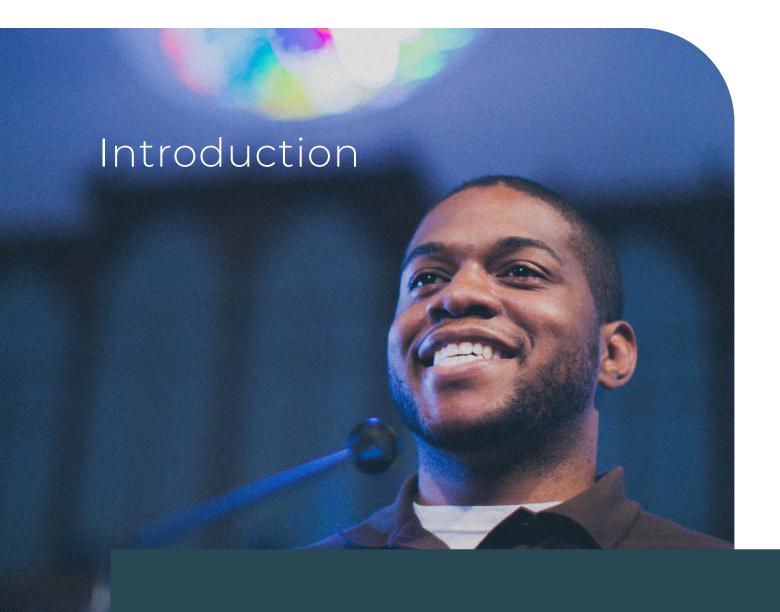
The pastors needed to serve many Kentucky Baptist churches are currently sitting in the pews of other KBC churches on Sunday mornings. These are men who are biblically qualified and already serving in their local church and are sensing a call to do more. This resource will help those men with the skills they need to prepare biblical sermons for the churches where they will preach. Please join me in praying for all who are answering the call in Kentucky that God may use them to preach His word so the lost will be saved, and the saved will be strengthened to live for Christ.

*Dr. Todd Gray*
*Executive Director-Treasurer*
*Kentucky Baptist Convention*

# Introduction

"A call to preach or teach the Word is the distinguishing mark of a call to the ministry."

**Jason Allen**[1]

1  Allen, Jason. *Discerning Your Call to Ministry: How to Know for Sure and What to Do About It* (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2016), 22.

Introduction

## "Brother Jason, can you preach for me on Sunday?"

As I heard those words, my heart skipped a beat. I was both excited and terrified at the same time. Just a few weeks earlier, I had met with my pastor and explained how I sensed that God was calling me to pastoral ministry. Word soon got out, and no one seemed surprised. (Except for me, of course!)

And now, just a few weeks later, a pastor of a neighboring church in the community called and asked me to preach for him on Sunday. And it was already Saturday!

Without considering that I had less than twenty-four hours to prepare the first sermon I would ever preach in a church setting, I quickly said, "Yes, I would be happy to do so."

After hanging up the phone, reality began to set in. I had less than twenty-four hours to prepare a sermon and no idea where to begin.

Sure, I had taught Sunday School lessons in the past. I had led a few small group Bible studies. But preaching a sermon was on a completely different level.

I nervously flipped through my Bible and prayed for the Lord to "give me a sermon." I settled on 2 Timothy 4:3-4, a text I had been thinking deeply about for some time. I spent the remainder of the day searching for sermon ideas online and scribbling as many notes as possible. I asked myself more

than once, "What have I gotten myself into?"

On Sunday morning, there were less than 30 people in attendance. But even if there had been 3,000, I don't think I could have been more nervous.

The order of service was typical. One of the deacons welcomed everyone and shared several announcements. We sang hymns. We prayed. We received the morning's tithes and offerings. And the time finally came for the sermon.

As I stepped behind the pulpit, I whispered a silent prayer and opened my Bible. For the next 30 minutes, I did my best to explain 2 Timothy 4:3-4 and apply it to those sweet folks. After the service, several well-meaning saints shook my hand and told me what a fine sermon I had preached (although I would beg to differ). It was certainly not the best sermon I would ever preach, but it was the first.

After I got home and the adrenaline from the experience had dissipated, I had secretly hoped that the episode would satisfy my curiosity and that I could finally let go of this foolishness and return to my real life. But it was not to be. Rather than discouraging me from ever preaching again, my first preaching experience set ablaze an unquenchable desire in my heart. This was God's call on my life. I was going to preach His Word, and I was already looking forward to my next opportunity.

*My first preaching experience set ablaze an unquenchable desire in my heart.*

Jason Lowe

## Can You Relate?

If you are a preacher, you've probably had a similar experience. You may remember wrestling with God's call on your life. You probably remember the insatiable desire to preach the Word. You remember the nervousness as you prepared for your first preaching opportunity. You may cringe when you remember how bad that first sermon was.

Or perhaps that's where you are right now. Maybe you're trying to discern if God is calling you to preach. Maybe you're preparing for your first preaching opportunity. Perhaps you're like I was, and you don't know where to begin.

No matter what your background and experience with preaching, this resource is for you.

## What This Resource Is

There are plenty of outstanding preaching textbooks available. In fact, we will reference several of them throughout this resource (see recommended reading list in Appendix 4). However, this is a different type of resource. Think of it more like a workbook.

It is intended to help those God has called to preach His Word. However, for different reasons, you've never received formal training on how to do so. Perhaps you are a bivocational pastor, and the demands on your time never afforded you the opportunity to be trained. Maybe you're currently sensing a call to ministry, and the idea of standing before a congregation to preach God's Word both excites you and terrifies you. Perhaps you are a seasoned pastor who needs a resource to put in the hands of young, aspiring potential preachers in your church. Whatever your reasons for reading these words, we hope this resource will be helpful.

In the following pages, you will learn the basic principles of preparing and preaching an expository sermon. But what makes this resource unique is that you will practice the principles you're learning as you go. Throughout this workbook, you will develop your own sermon using the exercises. If you complete each exercise, you will have a complete sermon ready to preach by the time you finish.

The exercises in this workbook will solidify the principles in your mind and will assist in creating good habits that you can use for the remainder of your ministry. Although you might be tempted to skip over the exercises, do everything you can to resist that temptation. Your future self (and your church) will thank you for working through this resource slowly and carefully.

*The exercises in this workbook will solidify the principles in your mind and will assist in creating good habits that you can use for the remainder of your ministry.*

## What This Resource Is Not

This resource is not a comprehensive treatise on the topic of preaching. Because of the nature of this resource, we will not discuss many good topics related to the task of preaching.

**For example, we will not discuss:**
- **The theological foundations of preaching**
- **The biblical rationale for preaching**
- **The challenges of preaching**
- **The nature of preaching**
- **The necessity of preaching**
- **The privilege of preaching**
- **The common mistakes preachers make**
- **The biblical qualifications of the preacher**

Each of these are valid and important topics, but that's not what this resource is about. The purpose of this resource is to provide a concise and practical, step-by-step manual on preparing and preaching expository sermons.

## What is Expository Preaching?

You may have heard the term before but never understood exactly what is meant by "expository preaching." Many pastors and biblical scholars have offered helpful definitions over the years, but its meaning is quite simple. *Expository preaching is preaching that explains the true meaning and structure of the biblical text in a compelling manner and applies that meaning to the lives of the hearers.*

In other words, your goal as an expository preacher is to understand the biblical text so you can explain it and apply it to your hearers in a compelling manner. The goal of this resource is to provide a simple-to-follow process so that you can learn how to do so.

## Eight Simple Steps

In the following pages, you will be guided through eight simple steps to journey from text to sermon. The first four steps will deal with understanding the text. The final four steps will deal with preparing and preaching the sermon. Each of these steps will be covered in detail in the following pages, but take a quick look at where we're headed:

| Step 1 | Step 2 | Step 3 | Step 4 |
|---|---|---|---|
| Pray through the text | Meditate on the text | Interpret the text | Outline the text |

| Step 5 | Step 6 | Step 7 | Step 8 |
|---|---|---|---|
| Build the sermon | Revise the sermon | Preach the sermon | Review the sermon |

*Each chapter will cover one of these steps. Within each chapter, you'll find four elements:*

1. **Explanation:**
   Each chapter will begin with a brief description of the step. Some steps will require more explanation than others.

2. **Example(s):**
   Next, you will see the principles put into action through one or more examples.

3. **Exercise:**
   After reviewing the examples, you will put the principles into practice as you develop your own sermon.

4. **Summary Checklist:**
   Each chapter ends with a Summary Checklist of the necessary tasks to complete each step. A full list of tasks for the whole sermon preparation process is included in Appendix 1.
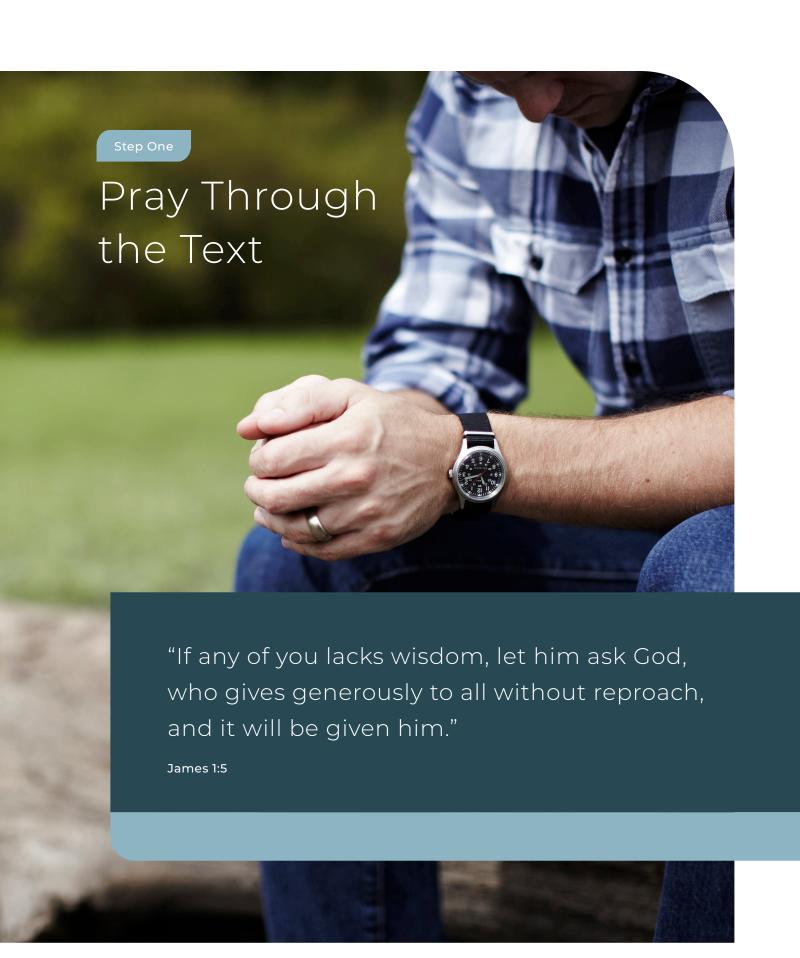
## Select Your Text

If you haven't already done so, go ahead and select a scripture passage you want to develop into a sermon. You will use your selected text as you work through each of the exercises in this resource. By the time you complete the eight steps, you'll have a sermon ready to go.

*Now, grab your Bible and a pen or pencil.*

*Let's begin!*

Step One

# Pray Through the Text

"If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives generously to all without reproach, and it will be given him."

James 1:5

Step 1 - Pray Through the Text

*Preaching God's Word to God's people is an incredible privilege. But it can also be incredibly challenging.*

There's the challenge of finding enough time to prepare your sermon. There's the difficulty of properly interpreting the text. There's the uncertainty of how best to communicate the main point to your hearers. On top of that, there's the church member who believes he possesses the spiritual gift of critiquing your sermon each week.

These challenges (and many others like them) require wisdom. And not just natural wisdom. You need *super*natural wisdom. But the good news is that James says supernatural wisdom is readily available. You just need to ask God for it.

But herein lies the problem. It's much easier to talk about prayer than to take the time to actually pray. But if you want godly wisdom as you prepare and preach your sermon, you must pray and ask God for it. Here are five suggested ways to pray as you begin your sermon preparation.

*The good news is that James says supernatural wisdom is readily available. You just need to ask God for it.*

## Explanation

1. **Pray Through Your Text.**
   In his excellent little book, *Praying the Bible*, Donald Whitney says, "To pray the Bible, you simply go through the passage line by line, talking to God about whatever comes to mind as you read the text."[2] It's as simple as that. Before you begin the work of interpreting, diagramming, or outlining the text, simply take a few minutes to pray through the text. Just talk to the Lord about whatever it is you just read.

2. **Ask God for Wisdom to Interpret the Text Properly.**
   Some Scripture passages are easier to understand than others. We'll talk more about principles of biblical interpretation a little later, but as you begin your sermon preparation process, take a few moments, and ask the Lord for wisdom to interpret your passage accurately.

3. **Pray for God to Use the Text in Your Own Sanctification.**
   Some of Jesus' harshest words were reserved for the scribes and Pharisees whose walk did not match their talk. Those religious leaders who held their followers to standards that they did not keep. It's no wonder Jesus repeatedly referred to them as hypocrites in Matthew 23.

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2  Whitney, Donald S. *Praying the Bible* (Wheaton, Illinois: Crossway, 2015), 33.

As a preacher of God's Word, you must avoid the same hypocritical path of these religious leaders of the first century. How do you do so? Let the Lord use the text in your own sanctification before you step behind the pulpit to preach it to others.

After asking the Lord to help you properly understand the text, ask Him to use it in your personal sanctification. If the text exposes a sin in your life, confess it and repent. If it reveals an area of your life needing improvement, ask the Lord to help you.

4. **Pray for Those Who Will Hear Your Sermon.**
Although the bulk of your time will be spent preparing your sermon, eventually, you will preach your sermon to a congregation that will be comprised of people with different backgrounds. Most will already know the Lord, but some may not be saved. Some people might face difficult circumstances while others are having a great week. Many will eagerly want to hear your sermon, while others may have been guilted or forced to attend.

While you won't know the details of everyone in attendance, God will. He will know what every person is facing. He will know their hopes and fears. He will know those who are struggling with breaking free from secret sin. He will know those on the verge of burnout or a nervous breakdown. He will know everything about everyone.

As you pray, ask the Lord to use your sermon to minister to each person as He best sees fit.

5. **Ask God for Appropriate Applications of the Text.**
Sometimes, the main application for a specific text is obvious. Other times, it may be more challenging to identify. The reality is that while a Scripture passage has only one meaning, it can have many applications, and it can be applied to different people in different situations in different ways.

We'll discuss how to include applications in your sermon later in this resource. However, as you begin, ask the Lord to show you proper applications of the text throughout your sermon prep process.

## Example

### For this example, we will use James 1:5-8:

5 If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives generously to all without reproach, and it will be given him. 6 But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea that is driven and tossed by the wind. 7 For that person must not suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord; 8 he is a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways.

1. **Pray Through Your Text.**
   After reading verse 5, you could pause and pray through the verse like this:

   *"Father, I lack wisdom on a daily basis and about many things. I don't always make the best decisions, and I freely confess that to You. But that's not the case with You, Lord. You are the source of infinite wisdom. And I thank You that You don't keep that wisdom to Yourself. Your Word says that You give Your wisdom generously to all of Your children who ask for it. Thank You for this glorious truth! Your generosity knows no bounds! As Your Word commands, I ask now to receive Your wisdom, and I trust that I have received it. Thank You for being so good to me and to all who call on Your Name."*

   After praying, move on to the next verse and repeat the process.

2. **Ask God for Wisdom to Interpret the Text Properly.**
   Next, ask God to give you the wisdom to interpret the text properly. Here's a sample prayer:

   *"Father, You have said elsewhere that Your Word is profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness. Help me to properly interpret this text so that I can teach what it means to Your people. Help me to remove any misconceptions or misunderstandings that I may have about this passage. I need Your wisdom, but so do Your people. Help me understand this text's meaning and communicate it clearly to Your people."*

3. **Pray for God to Use the Text in Your Own Sanctification.**
   Perhaps after reading this passage, the Holy Spirit convicts you that you've regularly sought worldly wisdom rather than God's wisdom. You could pray something like this:

   *"Father, I realize that I too often seek wisdom from other sources rather than You. I confess that those sources are but a shadow of the true wisdom that You provide. I repent of seeking wisdom in the wrong places. Help me to seek Your wisdom as a first response rather than a last resort. Your Word says that You give generously to all who ask, but only if we don't doubt. Help me to trust that You will keep Your promise to give me the wisdom I need."*

4. **Pray for Those Who Will Hear Your Sermon.**
   As you think about those who will hear your sermon, you could pray something like this:

   *"Father, just as I struggle with seeking wisdom from sources other than You, I suspect that's also true for many who will hear this sermon. I pray that You will use this message to show them where they fall short and help them to trust in You as their source of wisdom. Lord, I also recognize that some who will hear this sermon may desperately need Your wisdom as they seek to make an upcoming decision. I pray that You will give them the wisdom and courage they need. May all those who hear this sermon be filled with Your wisdom daily. And, if anyone doesn't know You as Lord and Savior, I pray that You will use this message to show them their need for You."*

5. **Ask God for Appropriate Applications of the Text.**
   Finally, as you pray for ways to apply the text correctly, you could pray something like this:

   *"Lord, the need for wisdom impacts every facet of our lives. I pray that You will help me to share meaningful examples of ways to apply this text. I also pray that You will show Your people ways to apply this passage that I don't even mention. Remind Your people of this text whenever they face a tough decision in the future."*

## Exercise

If you haven't already done so, choose a Scripture passage you would like to use as your sermon text throughout this resource. After selecting your passage, use the tips in the Summary Checklist for this step to pray through your text. Feel free to write out your prayer below.

## Summary Checklist

☐ Pray through your text.

☐ Ask God for wisdom to interpret the text properly.

☐ Pray for God to use the text in your personal sanctification.

☐ Pray for those who will hear your sermon.

☐ Ask God for proper application of the text.

# Meditate on the Text

"Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the wicked, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of scoffers; but his delight is in the law[b] of the LORD, and on his law he meditates day and night. He is like a tree planted by streams of water that yields its fruit in its season, and its leaf does not wither. In all that he does, he prospers."

Psalm 1:1-3

*After you have prayed through your text, it's time to immerse yourself in the text. The best way to do that is through biblical meditation.*

When you hear the word "meditation," you might imagine sitting alone on the floor dressed in white with your eyes closed, legs crossed, feet bare, and palms open, doing your best to empty your mind so that you can enter a state of peace and tranquility. In fact, this picture of meditation is the prevailing view in today's world. However, biblical meditation is much different.

Rather than *emptying* your mind, biblical meditation involves *filling* your mind with the Word of God. Donald Whitney defines mediation as "deep thinking on the truths and spiritual realities revealed in Scripture for the purposes of understanding, application, and prayer.[3] Psalm 1:1-3 (see page 15) explains the spiritual benefits of biblical mediation in beautiful imagery.

Although the benefits of biblical mediation are tremendous, there is a tendency among preachers to bypass this step and jump straight to Bible study tools such as commentaries or study Bibles. As you will learn in Step 3, these tools are useful in properly interpreting the text, but you should not start there. Before researching how others have interpreted the passage, think deeply through the text yourself. After you have meditated on the text and allowed the Holy Spirit to do His work in your heart, then you can move on to compare your observations to the interpretations of others.

So, how do you meditate on Scripture? Here are several practical tips.

*Rather than emptying your mind, biblical meditation involves filling your mind with the Word of God.*

## Explanation

1. **Take Your Time**
   You have likely found the most effective personal Bible study experiences to be when you don't rush the process. Although the temptation to simply allow your eyes to pass over the page is always present, taking the time to think about what you are reading will pay huge dividends.

   As you read through your sermon text, commit to devote sufficient time to meditate on the Word. Read through it multiple times. Give the Holy Spirit time to illuminate your heart and mind with the truths found in your text. Don't rush this process!

3  Whitney, Donald S. *Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life* (Colorado Springs, Colorado: NavPress, 1991), 48.

2.  **Take Good Notes**

    As you meditate on your text, take notes of your observations. *What stands out to you? Is there anything that is difficult to understand? How does this apply to your life or the lives of your church members?*

    A good rule of thumb is to list a pre-determined minimum number of observations. This approach will challenge you to keep digging in the text until you meet the minimum number. It could be 3, 5, or 10. You decide. If you're looking for a good place to start, I recommend at least five observations.

    Keep in mind that you're not obligating yourself to include any of these observations in your sermon, so feel free to note anything that comes to mind. At this point, you're just trying to record your initial impressions. You'll have time later to test those observations as you properly interpret the text. But for now, just get your thoughts out of your head and on paper (digital or physical).

3.  **Look for Keywords**

    As you read through your text, look for keywords. It could be a word that stands out because it's not common in our vocabulary, such as 1 John 2:2: "He is the *propitiation* for our sins." It could be a word that is repeated several times in your text, such as the word "blessed" in the Beatitudes in Matthew 5:2-12. It could be something as simple as a conjunction that serves as a turning point in a passage, such as "but" in Romans 6:23: "For the wages of sin is death, *but* the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord."

    Take note of those words. Dig deeper to discover what they mean or why they are repeated. These words stuck out to you as you meditated on the text. They will likely stick out to others as well.

4.  **Read the Text Out Loud**

    Our eyes sometimes play tricks on us. We can write a paragraph that seems perfectly coherent until we read it out loud! Somehow, reading aloud triggers a part of our brains that otherwise remains unable to function. Therefore, take the time to read your text out loud, and you'll likely *hear* something you couldn't see while reading silently. Take note of any observations you discover while reading the text out loud.

5. **Emphasize Different Words**
   Another way to meditate on the text is to emphasize different words, a technique Donald Whitney discusses in his book, *Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life.*[4] Simply stated, read the same text multiple times, but emphasize a different word each time you do. For example, consider the first part of John 3:16:

   ***"For*** God so loved the world…"
   "For ***God*** so loved the world…"
   "For God ***so*** loved the world…"
   "For God so ***loved*** the world…"
   "For God so loved ***the*** world…"
   "For God so loved the ***world***…"

   As you emphasize each word, the Lord may bring additional insights to your mind. Record any of those observations to aid you in your sermon prep. Emphasizing a different word each time also has other benefits, as it causes you to slow down as you read, and you will need to read the text multiple times.

6. **Read Different Translations**
   Another technique to consider is reading the text in different translations. You probably have a preferred translation. Most of the verses you have memorized are likely from the same translation. However, familiarity with a particular translation might unintentionally tempt you to be less observant as you read the text. However, reading the text in various, *reliable* translations might provide additional insights you would have missed by just reading from your favorite translation. (For a quick reference guide to Bible translations, see Appendix 3.)

7. **Rewrite in Your Own Words**
   Another tip from Whitney's book is to rewrite the passage in your own words. If you want to guarantee that you will take the time to read your passage carefully and repeatedly, set a goal to rewrite it in your own words. While you are not translating the passage, you are paraphrasing it to enhance your understanding and help you share its meaning with others.

8. **Determine the "Big Idea"**
   While all these tips are beneficial, this final tip is critical in your sermon preparation process. You need to determine the "big idea" of your text. Jared C. Wilson defines the big idea as "a simple statement that captures the text's major theme, primary message, or central problem."[5] The big idea goes by many names. Some call it the main point. Others call it the central proposition, central idea, or summary statement. Whatever you call it, it's critical that you determine what it is because you will reference it several times throughout the sermon preparation process.

   To develop the text's big idea, simply answer the following question in a simple sentence: In general, what is the main point of this passage? Your answer to this question is the big idea.

   Not only do you need to determine the big idea, but you need to do so before you begin consulting secondary sources, which will be discussed in Step 3. That's why it's best to do it now as you meditate on the text.

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4  Whitney, *Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life*, 53.

5  Wilson, Jared C. *Gospel Driven Ministry: An Introduction to the Calling and Work of a Pastor* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 2021), 82.

Step 2 - Meditate on the Text

## Example

**Let's use Philippians 2:1-4 as our text for this example. Paul writes:**

"If, then, there is any encouragement in Christ, if any consolation of love, if any fellowship with the Spirit, if any affection and mercy, 2 make my joy complete by thinking the same way, having the same love, united in spirit, intent on one purpose. 3 Do nothing out of selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility consider others as more important than yourselves. 4 Everyone should look not to his own interests, but rather to the interests of others." (CSB)

## Take Your Time and Good Notes

Read the passage again. Now read it again. In fact, read it no less than ten times. After you do so, you would write down at least five observations about the passage. Here are my initial observations:

1.  Paul lists a series of "if" statements.
2.  The criteria for the "if" statements is low. Paul uses the word "any" to describe each condition.
3.  The Philippians can bring joy to Paul by being unified.
4.  Unity will only be present when God's people are marked by humility.
5.  This passage has many applications for the church today.

What other observations do you find in this passage? Record them below:

_____

_____

_____

_____

## Look for Keywords

Next, look for keywords. Here are some keywords I noticed:

- **If** - Paul uses this word four times in verse 1 to introduce his conditional statements.
- **Any** - Paul uses this word in each condition in verse 1: any encouragement, any consolation, any fellowship, any affection. He's not looking for a minimum amount of these things; he's looking for any evidence.
- **Same/United/One** - These words in verse 2 indicate that Paul wants the Philippians to be unified.
- **Humility** - Rather than selfishly focusing on themselves, Paul calls the church to be humble and put the needs and interests of others above their own.

What other keywords do you find in this passage? Record them below:

_____

_____

## Read the Text Out Loud

Next, read the text out loud. Record any additional insights you observed below:

## Emphasize Different Words

Next, reread the text, emphasizing different words each time. As you do so, you will likely see new observations you have not yet noticed. Record those below:

# Read Different Translations

Next, read Philippians 2:1-4 in other translations. You can use your personal printed copies of different translations, your choice of a Bible app, or a website such as BibleGateway.com to look up other translations. The text quoted on page 19 is from the Christian Standard Bible (CSB). Let's read it now in three other translations, the King James Version (KJV), the New American Standard Bible (NASB), and the English Standard Version (ESV).

### King James Version (KJV):
*"If there be therefore any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any bowels and mercies,2 Fulfil ye my joy, that ye be likeminded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind.3 Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves.4 Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others."*

### New American Standard Bible (NASB):
*"Therefore if there is any encouragement in Christ, if any consolation of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any affection and compassion, 2 make my joy complete by being of the same mind, maintaining the same love, united in spirit, intent on one purpose. 3 Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility consider one another as more important than yourselves; 4 do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others."*

### English Standard Version (ESV):
*"So if there is any encouragement in Christ, any comfort from love, any participation in the Spirit, any affection and sympathy, 2 complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind. 3 Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. 4 Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others."*

After simply glancing at these different translations, you will notice a number of observations. For example, the KJV uses words that aren't used as often today, such as "bowels," "vainglory," and "lowliness of mind." How do those terms help you better understand the text? In the NASB, take note of the word "merely" in verse 4. Does that provide any additional insight? In the ESV, rather than using "fellowship of the Spirit" in verse 1 like the other three translations, it is phrased as "participation in the Spirit." How does this translation impact your understanding of the text?

There are numerous new observations that you have likely made. Take a moment to record them below:

## Rewrite in Your Own Words

Finally, let's paraphrase the text in our own words. Here's an example:

*"Therefore, if you have any encouragement in Christ (and you should), if you have any comfort in love (and you should), if you have any fellowship with the Spirit (and you should), or if you have any affection and sympathy (and you should), then here's how you can bless my heart: be unified in mind, in love, in accord, and in purpose. Don't do anything with selfish motives, but maintain a humble attitude by counting others more significant than yourself. Don't just look to your own interests, but look also to the interests of others."*
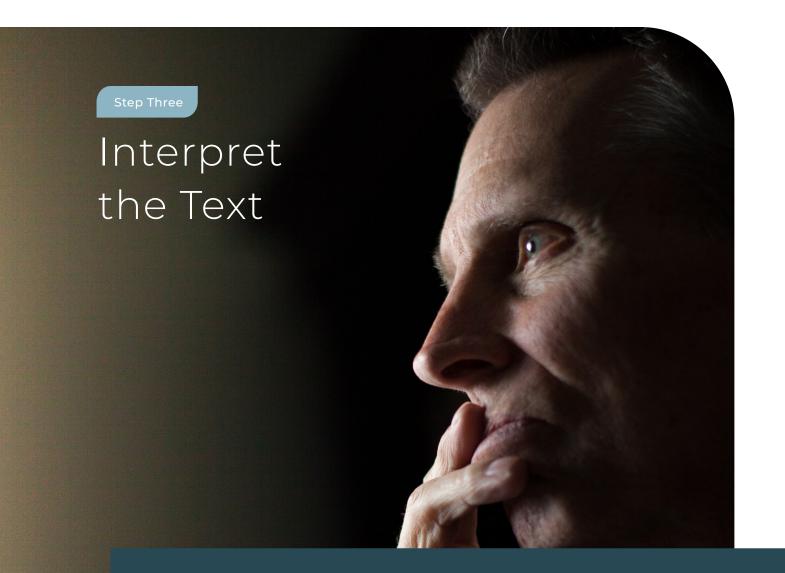
Again, this is a paraphrase. It is not an actual translation and should never be treated as such. It is just a tool to help you comprehend the text. Use the space below to write out your own paraphrase of Philippians 2:1-4:

## Determine the "Big Idea"

Finally, let's answer the question: *In general, what is the main point of this passage?* Based on our meditation of this text, the big idea for Philippians 2:1-4 could be, *"The Philippians can be a blessing to Paul by being characterized by unity and humility."*

**Step 2 - Meditate on the Text**

## Exercise

Now, it's your turn. Using the tips in the Summary Checklist for this step, meditate on your selected sermon text. As you do so, use the space below to record your observations:

## Summary Checklist

☐ Determine a minimum number of observations you will make about your selected text.

☐ Look for keywords in your text. Make a note of any observations.

☐ Read the text out loud. Record any additional observations.

☐ Emphasize different words. Record any other observations.

☐ Read the text in multiple translations. Record any further observations.

☐ Paraphrase the text by rewriting it in your own words.

☐ Detemine the "big idea" of the text in a single sentence.

Step Three

# Interpret the Text

"Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who has no need to be ashamed, rightly handling the word of truth."

2 Timothy 2:15

**Step 3 - Interpret the Text**

*After you have prayed through the text and meditated on the text, chances are that you already have a decent understanding of the text.*

However, there may still be some things that are unclear. For example, you may not understand the meaning of certain words or have a clear understanding of the passage's context. During this step, you'll utilize Bible study tools and other secondary sources to help you clear up any confusion so that you can properly interpret the text.

## Explanation

**General Rules of Interpretation**

**Rule #1: Make sure you understand the author's original intent.**
Ramesh Richard asserts, "The main criterion for a proper method of interpretation is that there be a demonstrable and reliable connection between the author's and the original audience's understanding of a given text and our interpretation."[6] In other words, the original author intended for his audience to understand his text in a specific way. Your goal is to understand that original intent.

**Rule #2: There is only one meaning of a text but many applications.**
Many Christians are tempted to read a text and ask, "What does this mean to me?" That's the wrong question to ask. It mistakenly assumes that the meaning of the text is in the eye of the reader rather than the author. Instead, the reader should ask two separate questions: (1) "What does the text mean?" and (2) "How does that meaning apply to my life?" Asking these two questions separately shows that there is one meaning for the text. However, it can be applied in different ways to different people.

**Rule #3: Let Scripture interpret Scripture.**
Rob Plummer explains, "If we believe that all the Bible is inspired by God and thus noncontradictory, passages of Scripture that are less clear should be interpreted with reference to those that are more transparent in meaning."[7] In other words, when you come to a confusing Scripture passage, allow other passages that speak to the topic with greater clarity to help you interpret the less clear passage.

**Rule #4: Understand the passage's context.**
To properly understand any given Scripture passage, you must understand that passage's context. This final rule of interpretation includes the historical, cultural, literary, and theological context (more about these on page 26). One of the most common mistakes that many readers of the Bible make is to take a verse out of its context and apply meaning(s) to it that the original author never intended. Therefore, before you explain the meaning of any text to others in your sermon, you must ensure you understand the context yourself.

6 Richard, Ramesh, *Preparing Expository Sermons: A Seven-Step Method for Biblical Preaching* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Books, 1995, 2001), 21-22.
7 Plummer, Robert L., *40 Questions About Interpreting the Bible* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Kregel, 2010), 97.

# Tools to Assist Interpretation

If you are to interpret the biblical text properly, you will need some tools to help you. Here is a brief list of some of the most common tools. Choose the ones for your toolbox that will work best for you.

### A reliable Bible translation

This one is non-negotiable. You need an English translation that literally and accurately translates the original languages of the Bible. You will find a guide in Appendix 3 describing different translations in more detail. Still, some of the best English translations available include the New American Standard (NASB), English Standard Version (ESV), Christian Standard Bible (CSB), and of course, the King James Version (KJV) and New King James Version (NKJV).

### Study Bible

Many Study Bibles are available, but not all are created equal. Look for one that provides a generous amount of commentary to help you understand the passage. Three popular options include the ESV study Bible, the MacArthur Study Bible, and the Life Application Study Bible.

### Bible Commentary

For a more in-depth explanation of a text, you'll want to consider using a Bible commentary. Thousands of commentaries are available, so choosing one is often tricky. However, the website BestCommentaries.com eliminates some of the guesswork by providing reviews and rankings for thousands of commentaries. If you're looking for a commentary on a specific book of the Bible, this website will help you select the top one or two that will help.

### Concordance

Another helpful tool is a biblical concordance, which will help you see how a specific English, Greek, or Hebrew word is used in different verses. For example, if you want to see all the verses that use the English word "serve," a concordance will give you that answer. If you want to see a list of all the times the Greek word "agape" is used, a concordance will help you. Many websites (such as BibleGateway.com) serve as online concordances, but Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible is an excellent option if you want a physical concordance.

### Bible Study Software

Another great tool at your disposal is some type of Bible study software. The best on the market is Logos Bible Software. It can significantly increase your understanding of any biblical passage. However, it is quite expensive and won't be an option for everyone. There are many other cheaper options available. A list of budget-friendly options is included in Appendix 5.

As you consider the use of these tools, heed these words from Jared C. Wilson:

> *"It is wise to limit your use of secondary sources. Too much input can overload your own sense of clarity and divert the straightforwardness of exposition ... Employ enough voices that you get a good chorus of wisdom to draw from, a well-rounded consultation, but not so many that you end up composing a research paper more than preparing a sermon." [8]*

In other words, don't allow the work of others to carry too much influence over your own. Use secondary sources wisely.

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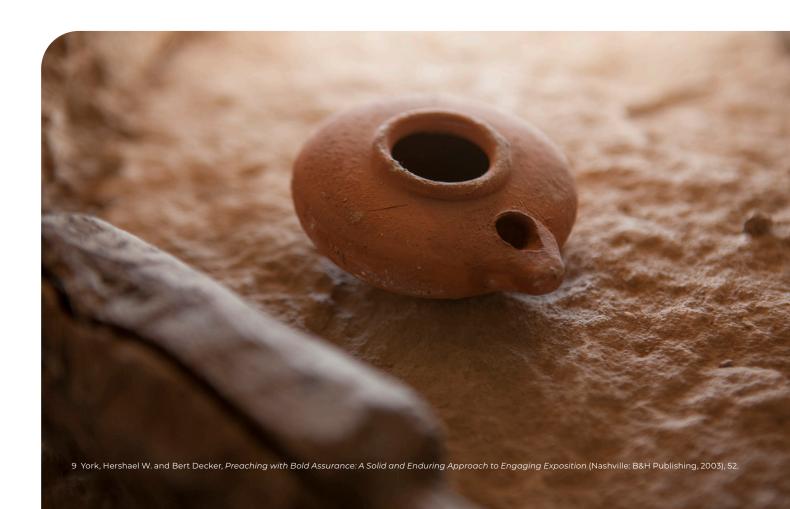8  Wilson, *Gospel Driven Ministry*, 83.

## Understanding the Context

Now that you have a proper understanding of the general rules of interpretation as well as the most common Bible study tools at your disposal, it's now time to employ them to ensure that you properly understand the context of your passage.

Words have no meaning apart from context. It's only when they are surrounded by other words that you truly understand what they mean. Hershael York provides a helpful explanation of the importance of properly understanding the context:

> The word "run" only means something when we place it in a context. It has no inherent meaning, only meaning that we agree on in a cultural setting, and that is revealed through its usage. So when you read the word "run," what, exactly, do you think it means? Does it refer to what a river does, what a nose does, what a woman's hose do, what athletes in a race do, what a politician does, what a car engine does, or what a pool shark does to the table? The word only takes on meaning and significance when placed within a context. [9]

When it comes to understanding the context of a biblical passage, you'll need to consider five types of context: (1) Historical, (2) Cultural, (3) Literary, (4) Theological, and (5) Personal.

9  York, Hershael W. and Bert Decker, *Preaching with Bold Assurance: A Solid and Enduring Approach to Engaging Exposition* (Nashville: B&H Publishing, 2003), 52.

**Step 3 - Interpret the Text**

## Historical Context

Andreas Kostenberger, in an interview with George Guthrie, defined historical context as "historical events in the biblical era, either events recorded in the pages of Scripture or events that form the backdrop for the biblical story."[10] In other words, these are events that either happened during biblical times or those living in biblical times had knowledge of said events. Two-thousand years later, you likely won't have the same knowledge of those events, but a commentary will help you gain a better understanding.

**To understand the historical context of any passage, answer the following questions:**
- **What historical events (if any) are referenced or assumed in this text?**
- **When was this text written?**
- **Who is the author of this text? What do you know about them?**
- **Who is mentioned or referenced in this text?**
- **Who were the governing authorities when this text was written?**
- **Where do the events in this text take place?**
- **How do these historical components affect your understanding of this text?**

## Cultural Context

If someone had asked you 20 years ago if you could text them on their smartphone, you would have had no idea what they were talking about. You would be clueless if someone mentioned Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, or TikTok. But today, we can hardly imagine life without these things. Why? Because these terms are all part of our current cultural context. If our cultural context is so much different than it was just 20 years ago, imagine how much different our culture was to that of another part of the world at least 2,000 years ago! That's why understanding the cultural context of the Bible is so important.

Kostenberger defines cultural context as "attitudes, patterns of behavior, or expressions of a particular society that affect our understanding of a passage."[11] Again, a commentary or study Bible will help you understand the cultural context of a passage.

**Consider these questions when trying to understand the cultural context:**
- **What parts of the text seem to have cultural components?**
- **Are there any attitudes expressed in this text that were typical of the culture at the time but unfamiliar today?**
- **Are there any behavior patterns in this text that were typical of the culture at the time but unfamiliar today?**
- **Are there any expressions or gestures in this text that were typical of the culture at the time but unfamiliar today?**
- **How do these cultural components affect your understanding of this text?**

10  Guthrie, George H., *Read the Bible for Life: Your Guide to Understanding & Living God's Word* (Nashville: B&H Publishing, 2011), 39.

11  Guthrie, *Read the Bible for Life*, 36.

### Literary Context

Whenever you hear someone say that a passage was taken out of its proper context, most likely, they are referring to the passage's literary context. This type of context deals with how the passage fits in a paragraph, book, or the Bible as a whole.

For example, did you know the Bible says there is no God? If you read the Bible without regard to its literary context, you could make such a claim because of Psalm 14:1, which states, "The fool says in his heart, 'There is no God.'" Perhaps you're thinking, "Well, that changes the meaning completely!" Exactly. That's why reading a verse within its literary context is so important.

**When trying to understand the literary context, use the following questions:**
- **What is being discussed immediately before this text?**
- **What is being discussed immediately after this text?**
- **How does this text fit into the author's larger argument, narrative, or theme?**
- **What type of literature is this text? (e.g., poetry, prophecy, narrative, history, etc.)**
- **How do these literary components affect your understanding of this text?**

### Theological Context

Another type of context to consider is the theological context. This helps you to understand how a text or topic connects to other theological themes in the Bible. For example, reading about Jesus Christ as the Passover Lamb in 1 Corinthians 5:1-8 does not make sense unless you understand the theological context of the Passover found in Exodus 12:1-16.

**Here are some questions to consider as you identify the theological context:**
- **What are the theological components referenced or implied in this text?**
- **Are there other passages of Scripture that help to interpret this text properly?**
- **What does this text teach about God?**
- **How does this text relate to the gospel?**
- **How do these theological components affect your understanding of this text?**

### Personal Context

Whether you realize it, each person in your church has a personal context that affects how they read and interpret the Bible (including you). For example, the following items will influence how your hearers interpret the Bible: personal experiences, family of origin, current family dynamics, religious background, educational background, personality, gifts and talents, and community demographics. Recognizing these realities will help you both in your explanation and application included in your sermon.

**Consider the following questions as you seek to understand your personal context:**
- **Are there any personal experiences or other factors within your congregation that will cause this text to be particularly sensitive?**
- **Are there any particular convictions or deeply held beliefs in your church or community that are challenged by this text?**
- **How will this text impact those hearers who come from broken homes?**
- **How do these personal components affect your understanding or application of this text?**

Step 3 - Interpret the Text

## Pause and Reflect

At this point, you have prayed through your text. You have meditated on the text. You have determined the big idea of the text. You have utilized proper methods and tools to interpret the text. Before moving on to developing an outline for your text, pause and reflect for a few moments. Compare your initial observations from your biblical meditation to what you found as you consulted secondary sources. Were your observations similar? Do you need to make any adjustments to the big idea based upon your study of the passage's context? If so, now is the time to make those changes.

## Example

Let's continue to use Philippians 2:1-4 as our example. First, we're reminded from our use of study Bibles and commentaries that Paul started the Philippian church during one of his missionary journeys, outlined in Acts 16. In fact, the church at Philippi was the first church he founded in Europe. Therefore, Paul has an existing relationship with the Philippians. These observations form our passage's historical context.

We also learn that the passage highlights a contrast. Instead of being motivated by envy and rivalry like those who opposed Paul in Philippians 1:15-17, Paul encourages the Philippians to do nothing from rivalry or conceit.[12]  If we simply read Philippians 2:1-4, we would have missed this observation. This is an excellent example of reading the passage in light of its literary context.

When reviewing the notes in the *MacArthur Study Bible*, we learn that the call to unity of mind in verse 2 is repeated throughout the New Testament (Rom, 15:5; 1 Cor. 1:10; 2 Cor. 13:11-13)[13], an example of both literary and theological context.

Using a commentary, we also note that this call to unity is revisited in Chapter 4:2, as Paul implores two women, Euodia and Syntyche, to "agree in the Lord." Again, here is another example of literary context.

After using our Bible study tools to understand the historical, cultural, literary, and theological context, we then make several connections to our personal context. Perhaps you witnessed deep conflict in a church you attended as a child, which ultimately caused multiple people to leave that church. Perhaps the church where you will preach your sermon also experienced a church split in its past. Maybe the church is currently facing significant conflict. If any of these scenarios are present, recognizing the personal context will help you understand the urgent need to exercise wisdom as you preach this message.

12  Derived from notes in the *ESV Study Bible* (Wheaton, Illinois: Crossway, 2008), 2282.

13  Derived from notes in the *MacArthur Study Bible* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2006), 1791.

Step 3 - Interpret the Text

## Exercise

Now, it's your turn. Using the tips in the Summary Checklist for this step, interpret your selected sermon text. As you do so, use the space below to record your observations or include them in a word-processing document.

## Summary Checklist

☐ Select the appropriate study tools to assist in your biblical interpretation of the text.

☐ Identify the historical context of the text.

☐ Identify the cultural context of the text.

☐ Identify the literary context of the text.

☐ Identify the theological context of the text.

☐ Identify your hearer's personal context.

☐ Review the text's "big idea" and make any necessary adjustments based on your work in this step.

Step Four

# Outline the Text

"All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work."

2 Timothy 3:16-17

*Now that you have properly interpreted the meaning of the text, you are almost ready to begin crafting your sermon.*

To do so, you must first build a bridge from the text to the sermon. The best way to build that bridge is to develop two outlines. The first outline describes the text. The second outline will be the basic structure for your sermon. This step will show you how to develop both outlines.

Ryan Huguley describes the importance of developing a sermon outline, "The house you live in hangs on a frame … Sermons are no different. A faithful sermon will hang on a frame. Our frames take many forms, but we all need structured outlines to hold our sermons together or they will inevitably fall apart."[14]

The goal of this step is to help you build a strong frame for your sermon. Keep reading to learn how.

## Explanation

To develop a strong frame for your sermon, you will need to take the following actions. To help you complete these actions, you might consider printing out your text on a sheet of paper so that you can feel free to circle, underline, or make notes in the text.

1.  **Identify Transitional Markers.**
    Transitional markers are words that indicate the thought or structure is changing. For example, you have probably heard a preacher say that anytime you come across a "therefore" in the Bible, you need to understand what the "therefore" is there for. The word "therefore" is a classical transitional marker. It helps the author to transition from one idea or point to another. Other examples would include "for," "because," "since," "so that," "in order that," "from," "and," "but," etc.[15] While there may be a few instances when the thought or structure changes without a transitional marker, the author will — most of the timel — provide clues with one or more transitional markers. A new sentence might also indicate a change in thought as well.

    As you read through your text, look for any small words that may seem insignificant but appear to indicate a transition of some kind. Circle all the transitional markers you find.

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14  Huguley, Ryan, *8 Hours or Less: Writing Faithful Sermons Faster* (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2017), 44.

15  For a larger list of potential transitional markers, see Richard's *Preparing Expository Sermons*, 55-56.

2.  **Separate Major and Minor Markers.**
    After listing all the potential transitional markers in your text, you need to determine the major and minor markers. As the terms indicate, major markers identify the major divisions in your text. As you think about this term in light of your sermon, major markers will likely determine your sermon's major points. Minor markers will likely indicate sub-points within each major point.

    As you read through your transitional markers, place a star or some other symbol beside each word that you believe is a major marker in the text.

3.  **Develop Your Descriptive Outline According to the Major and Minor Markers.**
    Now that you have determined your major and minor markers, it's time to develop your first outline. We will refer to this outline as your "descriptive outline." At this point, you're simply describing the text in outline form.

    Your sermon's major points will likely be separated by your major transitional markers. For each major transitional marker in your text, describe the point that is being made immediately after the transition. Don't worry about developing complete sentences or using proper grammar. This outline will not make it into your sermon. You are just trying to develop an understanding of the structure for yourself right now.

    After you have completed a basic outline of the major transitions in your text, the minor transitional markers will likely indicate your sub-points under each main point. *(Note: Another method for developing an outline for your text is to diagram the text. This method requires more work, but many preachers prefer it. You will find instructions for how to do so in Appendix 7.)*

4.  **Determine the Purpose for Your Sermon.**
    Now that you have completed the descriptive outline of your text, you are about to cross the metaphorical bridge from text to sermon. As you review your outline, you may discover that while it accurately describes the skeleton/frame of your text, it does not produce a great deal of interest or excitement about the text. At least, not yet.

That's why you will need to develop a second outline that you will use in your actual sermon. Jared Wilson describes the difference between the two outlines:

*"The (descriptive) outline is essentially a skeleton of data, the plot points or movements in a text's argument. The (preaching) outline is much more refined. While the points of your (descriptive) outline can be expressed in lengthy sentences, none of which resemble the other in form, the (preaching) outline should be composed of points that are as succinct and clear as possible and that also share a kind of symmetry in form."*[16]

To assist you in developing your preaching outline, take a few moments to determine the purpose of your sermon.

Based on your text's big idea developed in Steps 2 and 3, ask yourself, "What is the one thing that God wants my hearers to understand? What does God want my hearers to understand and obey?[17] If there's only one thing that should change in the life of your hearer as a result of your sermon, what is it? What do you want them to do as a result of the text?" Your answer to these questions will be the purpose of your sermon.

5. **Develop Your Preaching Outline.**
   After you have determined your sermon's purpose, the last task you'll need to complete is to convert the main points of your descriptive outline to a preaching outline that supports the purpose. Wilson explains, "You want your audience to be able to track with your message. This is the primary purpose, in fact, of sermon points and the reason there shouldn't be too many. (I think three or four is almost always the right amount.) The sermon points serve as handholds, like rungs on a ladder for the congregation to work through the sermon with you."[18]

   One straightforward way to make your sermon points simple and clear is to develop "applicational points," where each point begins with an imperative (action word). Another way is to develop brief, related statements to describe the text. You might even want to use alliterations or acronyms. The examples below will show multiple ways to make your sermon points clear, concise, and compelling.

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16  Wilson, *Gospel Driven Ministry*, 85.

17  Richard, Ramesh. *Preparing Expository Sermons*, 78.

18  Wilson, *Gospel Driven Ministry*, 85.

# Example #1

For our first example, let's look at one verse, Romans 6:23: **"For** the wages of sin is death, **but** the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord" (ESV).

As you develop an outline for this text, begin by identifying any transitional markers. This text has two: "for" and "but."

Next, separate major markers from minor markers. Because you are looking at a single verse, both transitional markers are major markers.

Therefore, the descriptive outline should have two main points that describe these two main ideas.

For example, the descriptive outline might look like this:

1. **The wages of sin**
2. **The gift of life**

While there isn't much to expand under the first point, there are several characteristics of the second point which could be listed as sub-points:

1. **The wages of sin**
2. **The gift of life**
   - The gift is free
   - The gift is of God
   - The gift is eternal
   - The gift is in Christ

For this text, you determine that the big idea is, *"The good news of the gospel is that although sin leads to death, eternal life is freely given to those in Christ Jesus."*

Based on the big idea, you develop your sermon's purpose, the main thing you want your hearers to do as a result. For this example, your purpose could be, *"Because of the penalty of sin, you need to embrace the gospel."*

Now your sermon clearly has a purpose: to help sinners embrace the gospel. In light of its purpose, you convert the two main points of your preaching outline to become applicational points:

1. **Understand the seriousness of sin.**
2. **Receive the gift of life.**
   - The gift is free
   - The gift is of God
   - The gift is eternal
   - The gift is in Christ

Notice that both points begin with an action word. In the first point, you want your hearers to "understand" the seriousness of sin. (Note: you could have easily used a different action word, such as "recognize" or "acknowledge.") In the second point, you want to encourage your hearers to "receive" the gift of life. In other words, you want them to be saved.

Notice that there are several sub-points under Point #2. Don't worry about reworking them into applications as well. Converting your main points to applicational points is sufficient in this example. The sub-points are there to help you explain the main point.

# Example #2

Our second example comes from a text we have examined several times already, Philippians 2:1-4:

> *If, then,* there is any encouragement in Christ, *if* any consolation of love, *if* any fellowship with the Spirit, *if* any affection and mercy, 2 make my joy complete *by* thinking the same way, having the same love, united in spirit, intent on one purpose. 3 Do nothing out of selfish ambition or conceit, *but* in humility consider others as more important than yourselves. 4 Everyone should look not to his own interests, *but* rather to the interests of others. (Philippians 2:1-4, CSB)

As you develop the outline for this text, remember to begin by identifying any transitional markers (indicated above). After listing the transitional markers, determine which markers are major and which are minor markers. This will take practice, but most seasoned preachers would quickly identify the conditional "if/then" statements as major markers. Many of the remaining markers could be considered minor.

Next, it's time to develop an outline based on the major and minor markers. Since the "if/then" statement serves as the primary transition, the major divisions in the outline could be listed in two main sections:

1. **Paul's conditions (v. 1)**
2. **Paul's commands (vv. 2-4)**

Next, we can fill in more of the structure using the minor transitional markers.

1. **Paul's conditions (v. 1)**
   - Any encouragement in Christ (v. 1)
   - Any consolation in love (v. 1)
   - Any fellowship with the Spirit (v. 1)
   - Any affection and mercy (v. 1)
2. **Paul's commands (vv. 2-4)**
   - Paul's request (v. 2)
   - How the Philippians can fulfill his request (vv. 2-4):
     - *Unity (v. 2)*
       - Be unified in thought (v. 2)
       - Be unified in love (v. 2)
       - Be unified in spirit (v. 2)
       - Be unified in purpose (v. 2)
     - *Humility (vv. 3-4)*
       - The Philippians should focus less on themselves (v. 3)
       - The Philippians should focus more on others (v. 4)

Now that you have a descriptive outline of the text, it's time to convert it to a preaching outline. To do so, recall the text's big idea. For this example, the big idea could be, *"The Philippians can be a blessing to Paul by being characterized by unity and humility."*

Based on the big idea, you will need to determine the purpose for the sermon by asking how you want your hearers to respond. A potential purpose statement is: *"Be a blessing to your church family."*

## Example #2 (cont.)

Based on this purpose, you will need to convert your descriptive outline to a preaching outline. While the number of main points in the descriptive outline will usually determine the number of main points in the sermon, that is not always the case. In this example, the second point includes two main sub-points: Unity (v. 2) and Humility (vv. 3-4). While this is a judgment call on the preacher's part, here is one example where the sermon outline could differ from the descriptive outline.

For this text, consider the following three points for your preaching outline:

1.   **Be a blessing by being saved (v. 1)**
2.   **Be a blessing by being unified (v. 2)**
3.   **Be a blessing by being humble (vv. 3-4)**

Remember, your stated purpose for this sermon is to teach your hearers how to be a blessing to their church. Each of the three points supports that overarching goal.

As we develop applicational points for this text, you will recall that you can use imperatives (action words), but another way to word these three points would be in the form of a question:

1.   **Are you saved? (v. 1)**
2.   **Are you unified? (v. 2)**
3.   **Are you humble? (vv. 3-4)**

These three questions still support your stated purpose, but they do so by asking questions rather than issuing commands. As you can see, there's more than one way to craft your sermon points.

# Example #3

For our next example, let's look at John 1:1-5:

> *In the beginning was the Word, **and** the Word was with God, **and** the Word was God. 2 He was with God in the beginning. 3 All things were created through him, **and** apart from him not one thing was created that has been created. 4 In him was life, and that life was the light of men. 5 That light shines in the darkness, **and yet** the darkness did not overcome it. (John 1:1-5, CSB)*

To develop your outline, first look for transitional markers. For this text, there are several, indicated above.

Next, determine which markers are major and which are minor. For this text, notice that there doesn't seem to be any major transitions. Everything John writes seems to flow out of his opening statement. Sometimes, things like this happen. That's why developing an outline is sometimes more art than science. In cases like this, you will need to put your "ability to teach" to the test and make your best attempt at developing a descriptive outline.

For this text, consider the following:

1. **The nature of the Word (vv. 1-2)**
2. **The work of the Word (v. 3)**
3. **The purpose of the Word (vv. 4-5)**

Now that you have the main points, you can fill in some of the sub-points based on the text:

1. **The nature of the Word (vv. 1-2)**
   - He is divine (v. 1)
   - He is eternal (v. 2)
2. **The work of the Word (v. 3) - creation**
3. **The purpose of the Word (vv. 4-5)**
   - He brought life (v. 4)
   - He brought light (vv. 4-5)

In this example, a possible big idea might be, *"The eternal Word is involved in both creation and the new creation."* This statement states simply how the Word was involved in creation (verses 1-3) as well as Jesus' purpose to make fallen sinners a new creation (2 Corinthians 5:17) by providing the way for eternal life (verses 4-5).

Next, develop your sermon's purpose based on the big idea. A potential purpose statement could be, *"Give thanks to the Lord for his active involvement in the affairs of this world."*

Based on this purpose, the following preaching outline could support your sermon's purpose:

1. **Give thanks to Jesus for His nature (vv. 1-2)**
2. **Give thanks to Jesus for His creation (v. 3)**
3. **Give thanks to Jesus for His new creation (vv. 4-5)**

Notice that these sermon points are clear, concise, and compelling. However, imagine if you selected a different purpose for this sermon. Rather than calling your hearers primarily to gratitude, you want to encourage them to be in awe of God's attributes described in this text. That preaching outline might look like this:

1. **The amazing nature of Jesus (vv. 1-2)**
2. **The amazing work of Jesus (v. 3)**
3. **The amazing mission of Jesus (vv. 4-5)**

Note that there are no action words in these sermon points, but they will still help you accomplish your sermon's purpose: to stand

# Example #4

Our final example comes from Matthew 8:1-4:

> **When** he came down from the mountain, large crowds followed him. 2 **Right away** a man with leprosy came up **and** knelt before him, **saying**, "Lord, **if** you are willing, you can make me clean." 3 Reaching out his hand, Jesus touched him, **saying,** "I am willing; be made clean." **Immediately** his leprosy was cleansed. 4 **Then** Jesus told him, "See that you don't tell anyone; **but** go, show yourself to the priest, **and** offer the gift that Moses commanded, as a testimony to them." (Matthew 8:1-4, CSB)

In this narrative passage, first look for transitional markers or noticeable thought changes (indicated above). Next, separate the major markers from the minor markers. For this text, the major markers appear to be "when," "right away," "saying," "immediately," and "but."

Based on these categories, you develop the following descriptive outline of the main points:

1. **The crowds follow Jesus (v. 1)**
2. **The leper asks Jesus to heal him (v. 2)**
3. **Jesus heals the leper (v. 3)**
4. **Jesus gives instructions to the healed man (v. 4)**

After describing the four main points, fill in the outline with some sub-points:

1. **The crowds follow Jesus (v. 1)**
2. **The leper asks Jesus to heal him (v. 2)**
   - The leper displayed humility (kneeling)
   - The leper displayed faith
3. **Jesus heals the leper (v. 3)**
   - Jesus displayed His compassion by touching the leper
   - Jesus displayed His power & authority over disease by healing the leper
4. **Jesus gives instructions to the healed man (v. 4)**
   - Jesus told the healed man what not to do
   - Jesus also told the healed man what to do

To convert the outline to a preaching outline, recall the big idea developed earlier in the sermon prep process. For this example, the big idea might be: *"Jesus responded to the leper's humility and faith with compassion as He healed him and commissioned him."* This summary statement includes both the leper's faith and humility, along with Jesus' response. Jesus healed him and commissioned him to go and testify to the priest that he had been cleansed.

Next, develop the purpose of the sermon based on the big idea. For this example, the purpose might be: *"Come to Jesus with all your troubles."*

In this narrative passage, some of the points of the passage are more relevant to the big idea than others. For example, some might argue that the first point is not a detail that necessitates a point in the sermon. Others may disagree. Don't be too hard on yourself as you prayerfully determine how many points your sermon will take. Your primary goal is to communicate the main point of a text and call your hearers to respond. At the end of the day, the number of points isn't critical.

# Example #4 (cont.)

Still, for this example, let's first use all four points for the preaching outline:

*When you're going through a difficult circumstance:*
1. **Follow Jesus always (v. 1)**
2. **Ask Jesus for help (v. 2)**
3. **Trust in Jesus' compassion (v. 3)**
4. **Obey Jesus' commands (v. 4)**

Another sermon outline could focus on Points #2 and #3 of the descriptive outline and their sub-points:

*When you're going through a difficult circumstance:*
1. **Approach Jesus humbly. (v. 2)**
2. **Approach Jesus in faith. (v. 2)**
3. **Recognize Jesus' compassion (v. 3)**
4. **Recognize Jesus' authority (v. 3)**

Perhaps you choose a different purpose for your sermon that focuses on Jesus' power and authority. Let's imagine that you also choose not to use an applicational preaching outline.

For this example, your outline might look like this:

1. **Jesus' power draws a crowd (v. 1)**
2. **Jesus' power knows no limits (vv. 2-3)**
3. **Jesus' power changes our lives (v. 4)**

Again, there's more than one way to develop a preaching outline that still accurately communicates the proper meaning of the text and calls your hearers to respond.

Step 4 - Outline the Text

## Exercise

You probably know the drill by now. Now it's time for you to develop your outline using the tasks in the Summary Checklist for this step. Use the space below to include your outline.

## Summary Checklist

☐ Identify the transitional markers in your text.

☐ Separate major and minor markers.

☐ Develop a descriptive outline based on the major and minor markers.

☐ Develop a purpose statement for your sermon based on the text's big idea.

☐ Convert your descriptive outline to a preaching outline.

Step Five

# Build the Sermon

"But Peter, standing with the eleven, lifted up his voice and addressed them, 'Men of Judea and all who dwell in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and give ear to my words.'"

Acts 2:14

*Now that you have your preaching outline, you have crossed the bridge from text to sermon.*

The time has arrived to use all your study and preparation efforts to build your sermon. There are several components of the sermon that you will build during this step, such as the introduction, the body, the conclusion/call to respond, and transitions. While you can develop each component in any order, a recommended sequence will be shared below.

## Explanation

Below is a sample template for the flow of your sermon. Many of these components will be covered in greater detail in this chapter.

- **Introduction**
- **Transition to Text**
- **Read the Text / Pray**
- **Transition**
- **Point #1**
  - State the point
  - Explain the point
  - Illustrate the point
  - Apply the point
- **Transition**
- **Point #2**
  - State the point
  - Explain the point
  - Illustrate the point
  - Apply the point
- **Transition**
- **Point #3**
  - State the point
  - Explain the point
  - Illustrate the point
  - Apply the point
- **Transition**
- **Conclusion/Call to Respond**

While you can develop these components in any order, a recommended sequence will be shared below.

**The Body**

A common practice among preachers is to write the body of the sermon first. Since this portion of the sermon expands on the peaching outline you've developed, it makes sense to start here. As you build the body, you will want to work through the main points of your sermon systematically. For each of your main points, your goal is to accomplish four tasks:

**1. State the point.**
**2. Explain the point.**
**3. Illustrate the point.**
**4. Apply the point.**

Let's look at each of these tasks in a little more detail.

### State the Point

The first thing you will want to do with each of your main points is to state it clearly and concisely. You want to be clear that this is one of the main points. If you provide a bulletin insert or a printed outline of your message for your hearers, the main point should be listed on there.

For example, if you return to the sermon outline developed in Step #4 for Romans 6:23, you would say something like this as you state the first point, "As we study this verse, the first thing we must do is *understand the seriousness of sin.*"

Stating the point shouldn't take long - only a few seconds. But as we will see later with transitions, it is helpful for your hearers because it's a sign that the sermon is progressing, and it signals a new thought. Clearly stating each sermon point also helps your hearers follow along.

## Step 5 - Build the Sermon

### Explain the Point

After stating the point, you will want to explain the point. You will spend time explaining the point to your hearers using some of the observations you noted as you mediated on the text (Step #2) and interpreted the text (Step #3). You will point out keywords and phrases that help to explain your main point. You may need to explain the historical, cultural, literary, or theological context. You may need to define a word that is not commonly used today.

A word of caution is in order here. You will likely have much more material in your notes as you studied the text in Steps #2 and #3 than you will have time to explain in your sermon. Many preachers describe the sermon's content as the tip of an iceberg. Only a tiny portion of the iceberg is visible above the water, while most of the iceberg remains unseen. Similarly, only a tiny portion of the notes from your study will make it into your sermon.

Therefore, you must choose to explain only those parts of the text that are critical for your hearers to understand the meaning of the text.

### Illustrate the Point

After you have explained the point, you will next want to illustrate the point. Illustrations are meant to help clarify your point and can range from personal stories, current events, biblical accounts, elements in nature, and more. If you carefully examine Jesus' teaching methods, you will find that he frequently used illustrations. Take the Sermon on the Mount as Exhibit A. Jesus used illustrations such as salt, light, treasures, moths, rust, thieves, birds, wildflowers, logs, specks, doors, gates, sheep, wolves, grapes, thornbushes, figs, houses, and foundations, all within the course of three chapters in Matthew's gospel.

As you seek to illustrate your point, remember that the most effective illustrations are those in which the preacher's personal experience overlaps with the listener's personal experience. For example, illustrations about the attacks on 9/11 don't resonate with those under the age of twenty, while illustrations regarding the Covid pandemic resonate with everyone right now. However, it won't be long before there will be a generation who did not experience the pandemic, and illustrations using the pandemic will become less effective.

As you look for illustrations, remember that they can come from anywhere. Here are just a few sources to consider: personal experiences, the Bible, current events, personal reading, nature, books of illustrations, the internet, history, music, pop culture, etc. Basically, illustrations can come from anywhere, so always be on the lookout for them.

As you use an illustration, keep a record of it and the date it was used. If you use the same illustration regularly, it will likely lose its effectiveness.

### Apply the Point

After illustrating the point, you'll want to apply the point to your hearers. David Veerman describes the application as follows:

> *"Simply stated, application is answering two questions: So what? and Now what? The first question asks, "Why is this passage important to me?" The second asks, "What should I do about it today?"*

> *Application focuses the truth of God's Word on specific, life-related situations. It helps people understand what to do or how to use what they have learned. Application directs and enables people to act on what they have been persuaded is true and meaningful.[19]*

If you developed an application outline in Step #4, part of the work in this step is already complete. In that case, you would repeat your main point and then provide examples of specific applications. If you chose not to develop an application outline, you have a little more work to do.

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19  Veerman, David, "Sermons: Apply Within," *Leadership* (Spring 1990): 121

Ramesh Richard describes several possible "arenas of life" in which you can apply the point, including the hearer's personal life, home life, work or study life, church life, and community life.[20] In addition, he lists several helpful "avenues of life" as well. In other words, how should the truth from this point affect your hearers' attitudes, knowledge of God, behavior, relationships, motives, values and priorities, or character?[21]

As you work through the body of your sermon, repeat this process for each of your main points. State it, explain it, illustrate it, apply it, and repeat.

## Example

If you have been following along closely, you may have noticed that the previous four chapters have provided the full explanation before moving on to the examples and exercises. However, this step is different. Because there are so many components to cover, you will work through the examples and exercises for each component before moving on to the next component. Let's use our sermon outline for Romans 6:23 for the first example. The two main points are:

1. **Understand the seriousness of sin.**
2. **Receive the gift of life.**

Again, the first main point would be stated in the sermon like this, "As we study this verse, the first thing we must do is understand the seriousness of sin." Next, you would spend time explaining the first half of the verse, highlighting the keywords "wages," "sin," and "death."

After explaining the text, move on to an illustration. You could also use "wages" as your primary illustration and talk about the "minimum wage" a worker can receive and then connect it to the wages we earn as sinners. You could use an illustration that includes some type of penalty. It could be something as simple as a penalty flag in football or the penalty box in hockey,

the penalty given to a child for disobeying their parents, or the execution of an inmate convicted of a capital crime.

After illustrating the point, then you need to apply it. For this text, you could challenge your hearers to think back over the past week and ask the Lord to show them how they have sinned in their attitudes or actions. Perhaps they have been prideful. Maybe they have selfishly put their interests above the interests of others. Perhaps a child has disobeyed their parents. Perhaps a parent has lost their temper with their child. Maybe an employee has fudged their timesheet. The possibilities are endless, but the reality is that no one is perfect (other than Jesus). All of us have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. And unfortunately, we must understand that our sins earn a strict penalty. In fact, they earn the death penalty. Therefore, we must not overlook the seriousness of our sins.

Then, you would transition to the second point (more on transitions below) and do the same thing. State the point, explain the point, illustrate the point, and apply the point.

**Step 5 - Build the Sermon**

## Exercise

It's time to begin building the body of your sermon. For each point in your preaching outline, state the point, explain the point, illustrate the point, and apply the point. Some space is provided below, but you might want to use a Word or Google document for this part of the exercise.

# Explanation

### Conclusion/Call to Respond

Regarding conclusions, Haddon Robinson once said, "An experienced pilot knows that landing an airplane demands special concentration, so an able preacher understands that conclusions require thoughtful preparation. Like a skilled pilot, you should know where your sermon will land."[22]

Unfortunately, I've heard many preachers have difficulty landing the plane. They circle the runway multiple times, indicating that the sermon is approaching the ground, only to take off again. This is incredibly frustrating to your hearers.

To land your plane, you want to accomplish two goals in your conclusion, and only two:

1. **Provide a concise summary of the message.**
2. **Call for your hearers to respond in some way.**

The first goal is to provide a concise summary of the message. It could be as simple as restating your main points. However you choose to summarize the message, *do not introduce any new material*. Your goal is to wrap up the message, not to wander off in a new, unexplored direction.

After summarizing the message, you'll want to call your hearers to respond in some way. Remember that your sermon doesn't just present biblical material. Your goal is life change. Your goal is application. Therefore, you will want to include some type of call for a specific response at the conclusion of your sermon.

Perhaps you'll want to call your hearers to be saved. Maybe you will encourage them to repent of some type of sin addressed in the sermon. Maybe you will call them to come to the altar and pray. Perhaps you'll encourage them to love one another or forgive one another. Maybe you will call them to give to a specific missions cause or

sign up for a class to discover their spiritual gift(s). The possibilities are endless, but your sermon is not concluded until you have called your hearers to respond to the message they've just heard in some way.

After you call them to respond, immediately give them the opportunity to do so. The sermon is over at this point, so close in prayer and allow the congregation to respond as instructed.

# Example

Let's continue with our example from Romans 6:23. After you have stated, explained, illustrated, and applied each main point, it's time to conclude the sermon. First, let's summarize the main points again. You could say something like this, "*The reality is that sin is serious. It carries deadly consequences. But the good news is that God has graciously provided the only way to escape those consequences.*"

After summarizing the main points, transition to the call to respond. Let's address both those who are saved as well as those who may not know Christ. For example, you could say to those who are not saved:

> "*Perhaps you're here today and realize you are a sinner. Maybe you now understand the seriousness of your sin, and you recognize that sin carries the death penalty. There's nothing you can do to save yourself. If that describes you today, I want you to know that you can receive the free gift of eternal life. You can receive God's gracious forgiveness if you will confess and repent of your sins and trust in what Jesus Christ has done for you. Today, you can be saved! In just a moment, I'm going to pray. Right after I pray, we will stand and sing, and I will be standing at the front. If you need to trust in Jesus Christ, I'm going to ask you to come and join me at the front, and we can talk more about it.*"

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22  Robinson, Haddon W., *Biblical Preaching: The Development and Delivery of Expository Messages*, 2nd edition (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Academic, 1980, 2001), 175.

For those who are saved, you could say something like this:

*"For those who are saved, remember that you're not sinless. We all still stumble in many ways. But the good news of the gospel is that God has forgiven the Christian of all of our sins: past, present, and future. Therefore, never take your sin lightly. Remember that your sin and mine placed Jesus on the cross. Perhaps this morning, you realize that you've lost the awe and wonder of God's grace. Maybe today, you need to confess that to the Lord. In just a few moments, as we stand and sing, you can come to the altar and ask the Lord to remind you of the seriousness of your sin and the wonders of His grace."*

For this specific sermon, there's one more way that you could call your hearers to respond:

*"For others, perhaps you know someone who has not yet received the free gift of eternal life in Christ Jesus. Maybe it's a family member or friend. Perhaps it's a neighbor or a co-worker. Perhaps today, the Lord is bringing this person to mind. If that's the case, you can respond in two ways. First, pray for that person. Pray that God will open their eyes to the truth of their spiritual condition. Pray that He will help them recognize the seriousness of their sin and the gracious offer of salvation. As we stand and sing in just a few moments, perhaps you'll want to come to the altar and pray for them. And after you have finished praying, make it your goal to go and talk to them this week and pray for an opportunity to share the gospel with them."*

In this example, we have summarized the main point and provided three specific ways your hearers could respond. All that's left is to pray and provide a time for your hearers to respond to the message.

## Exercise

Now, it's your turn. Write out the conclusion for your sermon by summarizing the main point and listing multiple ways that your hearers can respond. Use the space below, on a separate sheet of paper, or in a word processing document.

### Introduction

You may be surprised to find the Introduction discussed after the Body and Conclusion. This decision is clearly a preference issue, but there are some valid reasons why you might want to wait until now to develop your Introduction. First, you will know where you're going. If you build your sermon's Body and Conclusion first, you'll know exactly what will be said, and you can create an Introduction that will transition smoothly to the rest of the sermon.

Second, developing the Introduction last will ultimately save you time. If you develop the Introduction first, you may end up taking the Body and Conclusion in a slightly different direction than you had initially planned, and the Introduction may not connect as well. Then, you may rewrite the Introduction to fit the rest of the sermon better. But, if you wait until later in the sermon writing process, you'll only need one draft of the Introduction.

Again, this is a preference issue. You may choose to write the Introduction at any time during this step, but there are a couple of reasons why you might consider waiting until the end of the process. Regardless of *when* you develop your Introduction, here are some tips on *how* to create it.

## Explanation

Introductions come in all shapes and sizes. Some introductions might be short, such as a simple assertion or an intriguing question. You might begin with a famous quote or share some startling statistics. Other introductions might be longer, such as recounting a personal experience, current event, or another story.

Keep in mind several goals in your Introduction. First, it should gain the attention of your hearers. Second, it introduces the subject to be covered and shows how it relates to your hearers. Finally, it transitions to the body of your sermon. With those three goals in mind, let's look at some examples.

## Example

Let's return to our sermon from Romans 6:23. Here are several ways that you could introduce your sermon:

> *"Studies show that ten out of every ten people die. For centuries, medical professionals have been trying to find a cure for this terrible reality for humanity. But they keep coming up empty-handed. No matter how many new medical technologies and treatments are developed, that grim statistic never changes. But have you ever stopped to ponder why this is the case? Why is death an uncompromising reality for all of us? This morning, we'll find the answer in Romans 6:23."*

Notice that this Introduction accomplishes all three goals. First, it gains the attention of the hearers. Second, it introduces the subject to be covered and shows its relevance. Finally, it transitions to the Body of the sermon. Let's look at another example:

> *"Benjamin Franklin once wrote, 'Our new Constitution is now established, and has an appearance that promises permanency; but in this world nothing can be said to be certain, except death and taxes.' While you might add a few other items to the list, Benjamin Franklin was correct about death. Unless Jesus returns during your lifetime, death is a certainty. You can't escape it. I can't escape. No one can. This morning's text in Romans 6:23 explains the reason behind this reality but also provides hope for life beyond the grave. Let's examine it together."*

Again, this Introduction checks all three boxes. It gains attention, introduces the subject, and transitions to the Body of the sermon. Let's look at one more example:

> *"Five words changed the course of human history. These words set countless disasters, wars, diseases, and assassinations into motion. These words have also caused multiple genocides, global pandemics, and suicides. Not to mention the emotional, mental, and physical sufferings of billions of people. What are those five words, you ask? 'You will not surely die.' With these words, the serpent convinced Adam and Eve to sin against the Lord, and we are all dealing with the consequences. In our text this morning, we'll see that these five words were truly from the pits of hell, and brought about grave consequences."*

This final example certainly grabs the attention of the hearers! It also introduces the subject and transitions to the Body of the sermon.

## Exercise

Now it's your turn. Write the Introduction to your sermon in the space provided below, on a separate sheet of paper, or in a word processing document.

## Explanation

### Transitions

The final part of your sermon is the transitions.[23] Although they contain little raw information, they are vital to assist your hearer in following the thought and flow of your sermon. Transitions connect the Introduction to the Body of the sermon. They connect the main points within the Body to one another, and they connect the Conclusion to everything that has preceded it. Haddon Robinson describes transitions as "road signs to point out where the sermon has been and where it is going."[24] In other words, transitions connect what has been said to what will be said next.

Transitions often use connecting words or phrases to indicate the transition. One phrase often used to transition between main points within the sermon is, *"Not only...but also..."* In the example from Romans 6:23, a transition from the first point to the second would sound like this, *"Not only do we need to understand the seriousness of sin, but we also must receive the gift of life."*

Other connecting words and phrases include *therefore, next, however, besides, yet, consequently, in addition, what is more, as a result of this,* or *finally.* Each of these words and phrases indicates a transition is coming.

Another approach would be to pose a question during the Introduction, and then allow each main point to be another answer. For example, you could ask, *"What in the world does this verse mean?"* Returning to our Romans 6:23 example, you could answer, *"First, it means that we need to understand the seriousness of sin. Second, it means that we must receive the gift of life."*

Another approach could provide a more formal transition by stating your points. For example, you could say, *"The first point we considered was to understand the seriousness of sin. We now turn to the second point, which is to receive the gift of life."*

Remember, the goal with transitions is to connect what came before to what is coming next. Use one of the approaches listed above or develop your own.

23   Much of this material on transitions is drawn from Bryan Chapell's *Christ-Centered Preaching: Redeeming the Expository Sermon*, 2nd edition (Grand Rapids, Michigan, Baker Academic, 1994, 2005), 260-265.

24   Robinson, *Biblical Preaching*, 187.

## Examples

We have already looked at transition examples for Romans 6:23. Let's transition through the points of the sermon from Matthew 8:1-4:

> *"Whenever you're going through a difficult circumstance, not only do you need to approach Jesus humbly and in faith, and recognize His compassion, but you also must recognize His authority. Look again in verse 3."*

Let's examine our example for Philippians 2:1-4 as well:

> *"Remember that we're asking three questions this morning. The first question was, 'Are you saved?' The second question was, 'Are you unified?' Now, let's answer the final question, 'Are you humble?'"*

## Exercise

Now, it's your turn. Insert transitional statements between your Introduction to your Body, between the main points within the Body, and between the Body and the Conclusion.

## Summary Checklist

- [ ] State each of your main points.

- [ ] Explain each of your main points.

- [ ] Illustrate each of your main points.

- [ ] Apply each of your main points.

- [ ] Provide a concise summary of your message in your conclusion.

- [ ] Call for your hearers to respond appropriately in your conclusion.

- [ ] Gain attention in your introduction.

- [ ] Introduce the sermon's subject and show its relevance.

- [ ] Transition smoothly from your introduction to your first main point.

- [ ] Include smooth transitions between each major component of your sermon.

# Revise the Sermon

"24 Now a Jew named Apollos, a native of Alexandria, came to Ephesus. He was an eloquent man, competent in the Scriptures. 25 He had been instructed in the way of the Lord. And being fervent in spirit,[a] he spoke and taught accurately the things concerning Jesus, though he knew only the baptism of John. 26 He began to speak boldly in the synagogue, but when Priscilla and Aquila heard him, they took him aside and explained to him the way of God more accurately."

Acts 18:24-26, ESV

*Congratulations! If you have followed the previous steps, you should have a completed draft of your sermon.*

However, it is just a *draft* at this point. If you are like most preachers, you will likely make significant revisions to the sermon before you preach it. In this step, you'll learn several tips to improve your initial draft.

## Explanation

1. **Take a break**
   After you complete your first draft, take a break from it for a little while. Get a good night's rest, and review it again the next day. You will be able to see it with fresh eyes, and you'll likely spot several items that you'll want to change.

2. **Read through the sermon**
   After you have taken a long break, read through the sermon from start to finish. Note any sections that are confusing or don't seem to flow well, but don't make any changes yet. It's important to read through the whole sermon before you begin changing any part of it.

3. **Revise any confusing sections**
   Now that you have read through the whole sermon, go back and make revisions to any confusing sections. Perhaps you want to re-word a statement. Perhaps you want to delete an entire paragraph. Maybe that illustration doesn't work after all. Anything that is confusing to you will probably be confusing to your hearers, so feel free to make any revisions that you deem necessary.

4. **Check your transitions**
   Did you remember to include intentional transitions between your introduction and your main body? Did you remember to include them between your main points? How about your transition to your conclusion? As you read through your sermon, note any rough or absent transitions and make the appropriate revisions.

5. **Check your sermon's length**
   When you first start preaching, it may be difficult to gauge how long it will take to preach your sermon. However, over time, you'll learn to estimate the length of the sermon by the number of words or pages. After a while, you'll know if the sermon is too long. Whenever that happens, look to see what you can safely remove without negatively impacting the sermon in any meaningful way.

6. **Repeat the process**
   After you've completed your revisions, it's time to repeat the process. Read through your sermon from start to finish again. Note any sections that are still confusing or unclear, and make further revisions to those areas. Read through your transitions again, and check the sermon's length. Repeat this process as many times as necessary until you are satisfied with your final draft.

Step 6 - Revise the Sermon

## Examples

Let's return to our example from Romans 6:23. After completing a sermon draft, you read through the draft and realize that your Introduction doesn't seem to fit the overall direction the sermon takes. You decide to scrap the whole Introduction and rework a new one.

You also note that the sermon was much longer than anticipated, so you read through the sermon again. You notice that one of your illustrations is too long and doesn't add much value to the sermon, so you delete it. You also note that you included multiple quotes from the same author. You pick the most helpful quote and remove the rest from the sermon. You hope that these deletions have cut some time out as well.

You also discover that you did not include any transitions, and your sermon felt "choppy." Therefore, you insert smooth transitional statements to make the sermon flow better.
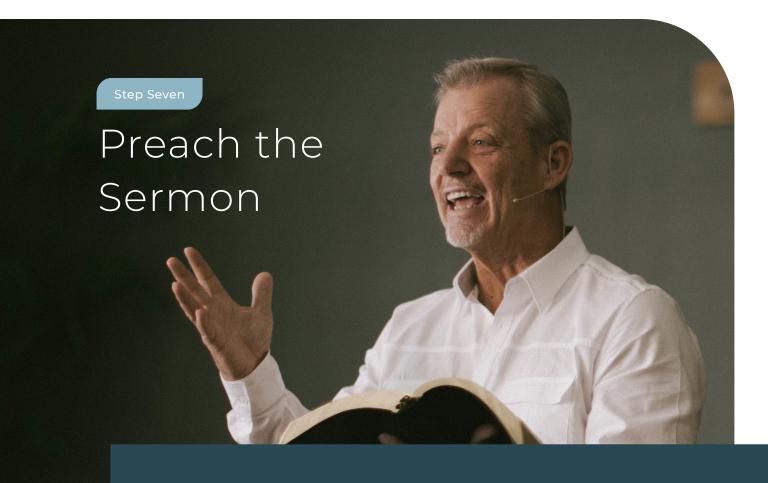
Finally, you read through your revised sermon and are pleased with the final product. You print the final draft and prepare your heart and mind for what comes next: preaching the sermon.

## Exercise

It's your turn once again. Using the tips from the Summary Checklist, make appropriate revisions to your sermon.

## Summary Checklist

☐ Take a break after completing your first draft.

☐ Read through your whole sermon the next day.

☐ Revise any confusing sections of your sermon.

☐ Check your transitions and make any corrections.

☐ Check your sermon's length.

☐ Repeat the process until you are satisfied with the finished product.

# Preach the Sermon

"I charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by his appearing and his kingdom: 2 preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching."

2 Timothy 4:1-2, ESV

## *Your sermon preparation is complete.*

You have prayed through the text. You have meditated on the text. You have interpreted the text. You have outlined the text. You have crossed the bridge from text to sermon. You have built the sermon. You have revised the sermon. And now, it's time to preach the sermon. In this step, we will discuss the vital but often most neglected component of the preaching task: *sermon delivery.*

Not only is the content of your sermon essential, but also how you say it. In fact, Haddon Robinson asserts, "The eyes, hands, face, and feet say as much to a congregation as the words we utter — in fact, more … Only seven percent of a speaker's message comes through his words; thirty-eight percent springs from his voice; fifty-five percent comes from his facial expressions."[25]

Robinson goes on to argue that "both research and experience agree that if nonverbal messages contradict the verbal, listeners will more likely believe the silent language."[26]

In other words, your sermon delivery *matters.*

## Explanation

As you prepare to preach your sermon, here are fifteen items to consider. The fact that there are fifteen may seem a little overwhelming. Remember that even seasoned preachers aren't perfect in each of these areas. Improving your sermon delivery will take time. Therefore, avoid a shotgun approach. Begin with mastering one of these items before moving on to another.

1. **Notes**
   Before you preach your sermon, you must determine the number of notes you will take into the pulpit. Some preachers preach from a full manuscript. Others memorize their sermon, so they preach without notes. Still, others use a hybrid model of abbreviated notes.

   There is no right or wrong answer to the question of notes. You need to do what's most comfortable for you. If you choose to use a full manuscript, you'll need to ensure you're making appropriate eye contact. If it looks and sounds like you are simply reading your sermon to them, the congregation may have just preferred that you emailed it to them!

2. **Eye Contact**
   Hershael York asserts, "The primary skill for gaining credibility is the ability to make and to maintain eye contact."[27] Robinson agrees, "Eye contact probably ranks as the single most effective means of nonverbal communication at your disposal … Almost without exception, a congregation will not listen attentively to speakers who do not look at them."[28]

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25  Robinson, *Biblical Preaching*, 203.

26  Robinson, *Biblical Preaching*, 203-204.

27  York, *Preaching with Bold Assurance*, 226.

28  Robinson, *Biblical Preaching*, 211-212.

**Step 7 - Preach the Sermon**

Unfortunately, many people do not use their eyes effectively. York mentions several ineffective ways that we use our eyes.[29] First, there's the eye dart in which a person looks away the moment someone else looks them in the eye. Then there's the "prayer eyes," in which the person speaks with their eyes closed for considerable amounts of time. Finally, some people have "novel eyes," where they keep their eyes down like they are reading a novel. (Again, those who preach from a manuscript must be very careful to avoid "novel eyes.")

As you stand to preach, make a personal connection with the congregation with your eyes. Look around the room and focus on several people for a few seconds each. Even if you single one person out to make eye contact, several people sitting close to that individual will think you are looking directly at them. Throughout your sermon, repeat this process. Look at different people sitting in different areas of the room. It just takes a few seconds to establish that connection.

Effective eye contact is essential to establishing a connection with your hearers. To evaluate how well you maintain eye contact, watch a video recording of your sermon and make any adjustments as necessary.

3. **Facial Expressions**

   Imagine that you are listening to a sermon. The topic is "the joy of the Lord," but the preacher's face reminds you of Eeyore (from the story of Winnie the Pooh). There's no joy on his face whatsoever. Does he believe what he is preaching? Or imagine a different preacher preaching about God's eternal judgment on the unrepentant, but he does so with a big smile. Both of those scenarios probably seem weird. And maybe a little creepy.

   The reality is that our facial expressions matter. Remember to smile when it's appropriate. Remember to refrain from smiling when it's not appropriate. Don't preach with a scowl on your face the whole time. Again, watch a video recording of your sermon. It may be painful, but it will help you improve your facial expressions in future sermons.

4. **Hand Gestures**

   Your hands are one of the most active parts of your body. Just think about all the things they can do. They can shake other hands. They can write. They can wave. They can comfort. They can lift. They can put food in your mouth. They can text and scroll through your smartphone. They can communicate through sign language. They can direct traffic. They can praise the Lord. And the list goes on and on.

   But during your sermon, your hands don't know what to do! Or, more accurately, many preachers don't know what to do with their hands. Some preachers end up waving them around like they are conducting an orchestra. Some keep them glued to the pulpit, certain it might get up and walk off the platform if they let go. Others put their hands in their pockets. Some allow them to rest at their side. Some hold their Bible or their notes the whole time.

   Whatever you choose to do with your hands, be purposeful and varied. Don't allow them to become a distraction to your congregation, but don't always leave them in the same position, either. (Otherwise, you'll look like a statue.) As with most items on this list, reviewing a video recording of your sermon will help you learn if your hands distract your audience.

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29  York, Preaching with Bold Assurance, 226-227.

30  York, *Preaching with Bold Assurance,* 236.

31  Rogers, Adrian, *Preaching for Impact* (Memphis, Tennessee: Love Worth Finding, 2021), 69.

5.  **Posture**

    Depending on the context where you preach, you could stand behind a pulpit (either wooden or glass). You might stand behind or beside a high-top table. You might only use a music stand or nothing at all. You may not stand at all but sit on a stool or chair.

    Regardless of your physical surroundings, you need to practice good posture. Stand or sit up straight—no slouching or slumping over. Check your posture as you review your sermon recording.

6.  **Movement**

    There are two extremes to avoid when it comes to movement. The first is to never move at all. Hershael York asserts, "No matter how strong the temptation to stay in one place, whether behind a pulpit or lectern, resist that temptation! Get out and move, and you will make emotional contact with your listeners. You will convey excitement, enthusiasm, and confidence in your movement. Remove any physical obstacle between you and your audience — which is the traditional lectern or podium. They are great note holders, but also great energy blockers. Move to the side."[30]

    The other extreme to avoid is to never stop moving. Some preachers never stop pacing back and forth. It makes their hearers feel like they are watching a tennis match, constantly moving their heads left and right to follow the preacher's pacing.

    A good balance is to practice intentional movement. Move to one side of the platform and stand there momentarily. Then move to another spot and stand there for a few moments. Move back behind the pulpit and stay there for a few moments. Then move again. This type of movement feels more natural and engages your audience. And it also won't give them whiplash!

7.  **Voice**

    Your voice is critically important for your sermon. One of the greatest preaching voices of the twentieth century belonged to Adrian Rogers. He once told a group of aspiring preachers, "Learn to use your voice. It doesn't matter how good you are if you're not heard."[31]

    When it comes to your voice, you need to be intentional in varying (1) your volume, (2) your pace, and (3) your pitch. At times, you will want to speak loudly to emphasize a point. At other times, it may be most effective to whisper for a moment. Sometimes, you will speak rapidly, while at other times, you will speak very slowly and deliberately. Sometimes, you'll raise your pitch; other times, you will lower your pitch.

    Your goal in varying your volume, pace, and pitch is two-fold. First, you want to avoid dull, monotone preaching. In Acts 20, Paul was engaged in a lengthy discourse, but in verse 9, we read, "And a young man named Eutychus, sitting at the window, sank into a deep sleep as Paul talked still longer. And being overcome by sleep, he fell down from the third story and was taken up dead." While you'll likely never avoid one or two nodding off during your sermon, you will probably never kill someone with boredom! However, you still want to avoid boring, monotone preaching if you can help it.

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30  York, *Preaching with Bold Assurance*, 236.

31  Rogers, Adrian, *Preaching for Impact* (Memphis, Tennessee: Love Worth Finding, 2021), 69.

Another reason to vary your volume, pace, and pitch is to preserve your voice. Adrian Rogers once said, "You should never be hoarse after you preach. If you're hoarse, you either have a sickness or you're doing something wrong…Your preaching should not cause you to have voice issues."[32] In other words, just as you shouldn't preach using only a monotone voice, you should not yell the whole time either. If you do, you will eventually damage your vocal cords.

Learn to use your voice in a way that engages your audience.

8. **Attire**

Another question you will need to answer is, "What is the appropriate attire?" The short answer is, "It depends." You need to determine the cultural expectation whenever and wherever you preach. Does the congregation expect the preacher to be in a suit and tie? What about a sports coat, but no tie? Are they comfortable with you preaching in a polo or buttoned shirt with the sleeves rolled up? Is it a casual context that is comfortable with jeans and a T-shirt?

You will want to do your best to identify what is culturally accepted or expected wherever you preach. If unsure, a general rule is to dress up, not down.

9. **Fillers**

Do your best to avoid using "fillers" — words that you say repeatedly and often subconsciously. Examples of "fillers" include "uh," "um," "you know," and "like." Preachers and teachers often use these words at an alarming frequency, which can be highly distracting. For example, a preacher who uses a lot of fillers might begin his sermon like this:

> "Let's — uh — turn to our text — um — this morning in — uh — Acts 20, verse — um — 9. In this text — uh — we're going to read — you know — about Paul — um, uh — who preached such a long sermon that — uh, like — he killed someone — you know? I mean — that's pretty bad, you know? It's — like — the worst thing ever. But — uh — the good news — you know — is that the young man didn't — um — stay dead. The Lord — uh, through Paul — raised the young man back to life. This is a pretty cool story — you know? And — uh — I'm so glad that I'm not — like — preaching on the third floor. I mean — uh — there's no danger of any of you — like — falling out a window while I preach. Um — I'm thankful for that. Aren't you?"

On paper, this type of introduction sounds ridiculous. And yet, many preachers use fillers like these all the time - and many don't even realize they are doing so. Again, watch a video recording of one of your sermons. Note the number of fillers you used. The total may - um - surprise you!

You are more likely to use fillers when you're nervous or rushed. Take your time. Slow down. Use your words carefully and wisely. Cut out the fillers as much as possible.

10. **Distracting Habits/Mannerisms**

We have already discussed a few habits that might be distracting for your hearers. The use of fillers is certainly one example. The preacher who constantly paces back and forth is another, as is the man whose hands look like he is conducting an orchestra. There are certainly others. It could be the preacher who claps his hands more than once or twice per sermon. It could be the preacher who steps on his tiptoes dozens of times during the sermon. It could be the preacher who keeps adjusting his microphone or drinks twenty ounces of water during the message. It could be the one who takes alliterations to the extreme.

32  Rogers, *Preaching for Impact*, 70.

The bottom line is that every preacher has at least one habit (often nonverbal) that distracts his listeners. Discover what it is for you, and do your best to free yourself from it.

11. **Sermon Aids**
It's no secret that people have different preferred learning styles. Some learn best by hearing. Others learn best by doing. Some learn best by reading or writing. Some learn best through logic. Still, others are visual learners. And all those preferred learning styles will likely be represented in the audience whenever you preach. Therefore, you should seek to use sermon aids whenever appropriate.

Don't misunderstand. The preaching of God's Word is primary. But sermon aids are helpful if they assist the hearer in understanding the biblical truth that you are presenting. However, you must use them sparingly. No more than one sermon aid per sermon. And if you serve as a pastor, no more than two or three per month.

Examples of sermon aids might be a brief video clip or a picture on the screen. It might be a graphic that you've created. It could be a physical object lesson. It could be a uniform. The possibilities are endless. Whatever it is, its sole purpose is to help your hearer understand the Bible better.

12. **Humor**
In Charles Spurgeon's day, Christians weren't known for their sense of humor. In fact, the Prince of Preachers wrote in his autobiography that the 12th commandment must have been, "Thou shalt [wear] a long face on Sunday."[33] But, he did not take that approach. He remarked that it's "less a crime to cause a momentary laughter than a half-hour's profound slumber."[34]

Although you're not a comedian, humor can sometimes be appropriate in sermons. In his excellent article "Should We Use Humor in Our Preaching?"[35] Jeff Robinson offers four guidelines for using humor in your sermons. First, use humor only if it's natural to your personality. Second, use humor sparingly. Third, don't use humor gratuitously. Finally, never allow humor to distract from the seriousness of God's Word.

13. **Listener Engagement**
As you preach, you will recognize that some people are more engaged in your message than others. While you can't *make* anyone engage with or listen intently to your sermon, you can provide opportunities to re-engage them throughout the message. For example, consider including a fill-in-the-blank sermon outline in the church bulletin. Utilize PowerPoint or other presentation software to help your listeners follow along.

Invite the congregation to answer a question by raising their hands. Include them in responsive readings during the message. Have them stand while you read the text. For the younger generation, ask them to count the number of times you say a specific word throughout your sermon.

There are multiple ways to ensure that your sermon is not a passive experience for your listeners. Keep them engaged by using some of these simple suggestions.

33  https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/use-humor-preaching/
34  https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/use-humor-preaching/
35  https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/use-humor-preaching/

14. **Sermon Length**

    Keep in mind your sermon length. As was noted in the previous step, you will learn to estimate the time it will take to preach your sermon based on the number of pages or words. While each church context is different, you will want to discover the general expectation for sermon length whenever and wherever you preach. If the church is used to 30-minute sermons, and you unleash a 55-minute sermon, they likely won't hear a word you say after the 35-40 minute mark. Regardless of whether you agree with the sentiment, the only thought going through their mind will likely be, "When is he going to be finished?"

    If you are unsure what the general expectation for the length of the sermon should be, a general rule of thumb is 30-35 minutes. If you go a few minutes longer, that's fine. If you preach more than 10 minutes longer than the congregation is accustomed to, you'll lose them before you finish.

15. **Rehearsal**

    The final item to consider as you prepare to preach is the rehearsal. Seasoned preachers don't usually do this, but it is a valuable tool for aspiring and inexperienced preachers. Some preachers stand before a mirror and preach the whole sermon to themselves. Others record themselves preaching the message and then review the rehearsal. Others just practice the sermon out loud in their bedroom or study. Still, others rehearse the sermon in their minds multiple times without actually preaching it. Choose the method that works best for you and give it a try.

    This rehearsal helps the auditory learner identify parts of the sermon that might be confusing. It helps other preachers internalize the sermon without being so tied to their notes or manuscript.
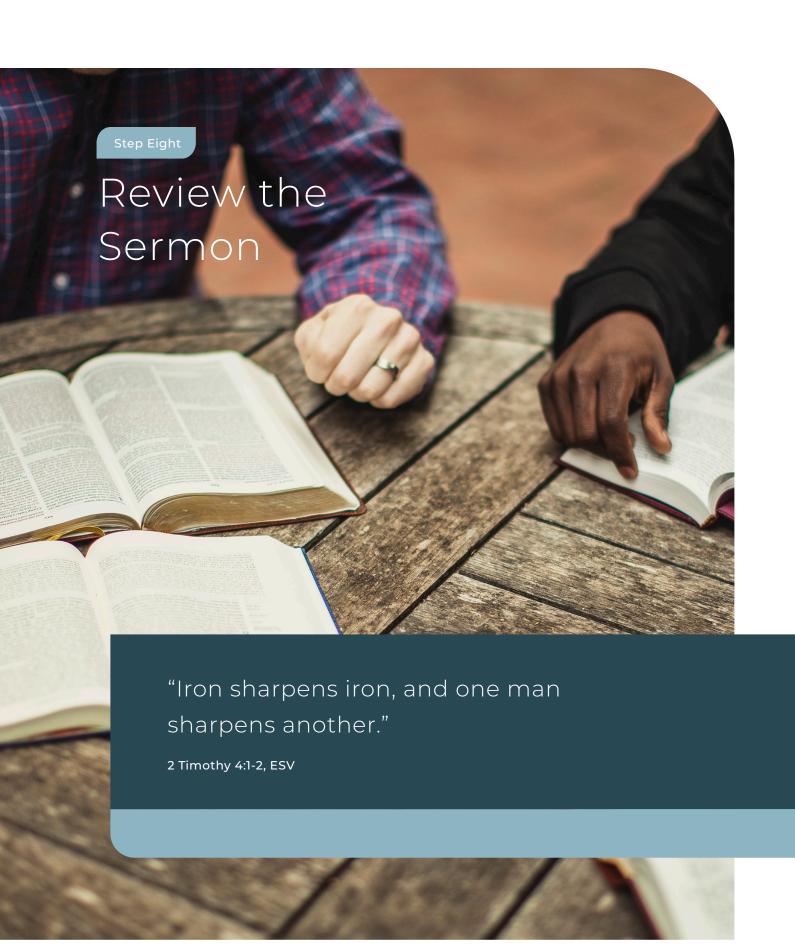
    If you have never rehearsed your sermon, try it a few times. You may find the exercise to be highly beneficial.

**Step 7 - Preach the Sermon**

## Exercise

At this point, you have completed the final draft of your sermon. Now, it's time to practice it. Using your smartphone or other recording device, record yourself rehearsing your sermon. After doing so, review your recording. Did you use a lot of filler words? Did you have any distracting habits? Did you vary your voice's volume, pace, and pitch? Was the sermon an appropriate length? Did your use of humor add to or detract from your sermon? Use the Summary Checklist as a guide for your sermon delivery.

## Summary Checklist

- [ ] Determine the number of notes you will use while preaching.

- [ ] Maintain effective eye contact with your hearers.

- [ ] Make sure your facial expressions are appropriate.

- [ ] Be purposeful and varied with your hand gestures.

- [ ] Practice good posture.

- [ ] Practice intentional movement.

- [ ] Vary the volume, pace, and pitch of your voice.

- [ ] Dress appropriately for the occasion and the audience.

- [ ] Eliminate "filler words" as much as possible.

- [ ] Discover your distracting habits and mannerisms and work to correct them.

- [ ] Utilize sermon aids wisely.

- [ ] Use humor appropriately.

- [ ] Take practical steps to keep your listeners engaged.

- [ ] Make sure your sermon is an appropriate length.

- [ ] Consider rehearsing your sermon and making necessary adjustments.

# Review the Sermon

"Iron sharpens iron, and one man sharpens another."

**2 Timothy 4:1-2, ESV**

## *Congratulations!*

*If you are following the eight steps, you have successfully preached your sermon. And all the people said, "Amen!"*

*But the sermon process is not quite over yet. The final step in the process is often the most painful but also the most beneficial. Whether this is your first or your thousandth sermon, the process is incomplete until you review and evaluate your message. There's simply no better way to learn and grow in your preaching than to assess the good, bad, and ugly elements of your sermon. In this final step, you will learn how to do so.*

## Explanation

The process of evaluation can take many forms. It can be formal or informal. It can be general or specific. It can be a personal or group exercise. The specifics of how you review your sermon are not as important as the fact that you set aside regular time to review, evaluate, and learn from each sermon. However, consider implementing the following three general recommendations to assist your sermon evaluation process

1. **Enlist the Feedback of Others**
   Is the glass half-full or half-empty? Depending on how you answer that question will shed light on how you will probably evaluate your sermon. If you are a half-full type of guy, you'll be more likely to highlight the positive elements of your sermon. If you are a half-empty type of guy, you'll likely focus on the negative aspects of your sermon. While you need to review your own sermons, the reality is that you cannot give an unbiased evaluation by yourself.

   That's why you should enlist the feedback of others. Therefore, identify those who will offer honest, constructive feedback to help you improve. Here is a list of individuals to consider inviting into this evaluation process:

   - **Your wife**
   - **Your pastor or spiritual mentor**
   - **A close friend**
   - **Fellow pastors**

   Asking others to speak into your life requires humility. It will also require thick skin at times. But it will tremendously benefit you and your hearers in the long run!

2. **Review Each Element of the Sermon**
   Using the Sermon Evaluation Form in Appendix 6, honestly evaluate each of the following elements of your sermon:

   - **Introduction**
   - **Main Points**
   - **Conclusion**
   - **Delivery**
   - **Overall Impressions**

   The Sermon Evaluation Form includes sample questions for each of the elements listed above, but feel free to modify the existing questions or add your own.

3. **Develop a Small List of Ways to Improve**
   The purpose of your sermon review is to learn and grow. If you simply review your sermon but make no adjustments based on what you observe, the review is a waste of time - both for you and others you invite into the evaluation process. After you have completed your review and received feedback from others, make a *small* list of ways to improve.

   Notice that there is an emphasis on the list being **small.** If you complete a review each week, you'll only be able to make one or two slight changes each week. There also might be some weeks when no changes are necessary. The only thing you want to avoid is including three or more recommended changes each week. You'll wear yourself out quickly and begin to despise the review process or skip it altogether. Take baby steps!

## Example

Pastor Mark had just preached his sermon on Philippians 2:1-4. Several church members shook his hand as they exited the church building and enthusiastically supported his message.

"Great sermon, Pastor!"

"That was a blessing, Pastor!"

"Thank God for you, Pastor!"

"Your sermons just keep getting better!"

Pleased with himself, he turned to his wife, Hannah, as he got in the car and asked, "Well, what did you think of that one?"

Hannah replied quietly, "It was okay."

"Just okay?" he asked.

"Well, do you want me to be honest?"

"Yes, please. It's the only way I can improve."

Hannah responded, "Okay. To be honest, your second point was confusing, and your opening illustration was just plain weird. You know I love you, but please don't tell jokes in your sermons anymore. You're just not very good at them."

The next day, Pastor Mark watched the sermon recording. As usual, his wife was spot on. Later that day, he met his friend Jerry for lunch.

Jerry serves as pastor of another church in the community. After ordering their food, Mark asked his friend, "So, did you watch yesterday's sermon?"

Jerry replied, "Yep. I filled out our weekly Sermon Evaluation Form. Mind if I take a few minutes and walk you through it?"

Jerry's observations were similar to Mark's and Hannah's. There were several positive elements to the sermon, but everyone agreed that the opening illustration was odd and failed to connect well to the sermon's main idea. And Hannah was right. Mark isn't the best at telling jokes. After further discussion, Mark decided to refrain from telling jokes anymore. He also decided to be more careful in his selection of opening illustrations.

After Jerry affirmed Mark's action plan, he took a deep breath. "Ok, now it's my turn. Did you have time to listen to my sermon?"

Mark smiled as he pulled out Jerry's completed Sermon Evaluation Form, "As a matter of fact, I did."

## Exercise

Now, it's your turn. Use the Sermon Evaluation Form in Appendix 6 to assist in the review of your sermon. Share a blank copy of the form with your wife, pastor, and other close friends. If they were not present to listen to the sermon live, send them the video and ask them to complete the form as well. After they have completed their evaluation, sit down and talk with them about it. Based on the feedback of others and your own observations, list one or two ways you will improve your next sermon.

## Summary Checklist

- [ ] Secure a video recording of your sermon.

- [ ] Use the Sermon Evaluation Form to evaluate your sermon.

- [ ] Share a copy of your sermon and the Sermon Evaluation Form with at least three people.

- [ ] After they have completed their evaluation, discuss their observations.

- [ ] Compare their observations to your own.

- [ ] Make a small list of ways you will improve.

- [ ] Keep preaching the Word!

# Appendix

## Step 1 - Pray Through the Text

- [ ] Pray through your text.
- [ ] Ask God for wisdom to interpret the text properly.
- [ ] Pray for God to use the text in your personal sanctification.
- [ ] Pray for those who will hear your sermon.
- [ ] Ask God for proper application of the text.

## Step 2 - Meditate on the Text

- [ ] Determine a minimum number of observations you will make about your selected text.
- [ ] Look for keywords in your text. Make a note of any observations.
- [ ] Read the text out loud. Record any additional observations.
- [ ] Emphasize different words. Record any other observations.
- [ ] Read the text in multiple translations. Record any further observations.
- [ ] Paraphrase the text by rewriting it in your own words.
- [ ] Detemine the "big idea" of the text in a single sentence.

## Step 3 - Interpret the Text

- [ ] Select the appropriate study tools to assist in your biblical interpretation of the text.
- [ ] Identify the historical context of the text.
- [ ] Identify the cultural context of the text.
- [ ] Identify the literary context of the text.
- [ ] Identify the theological context of the text.
- [ ] Identify your hearer's personal context.
- [ ] Review the text's "big idea" and make any necessary adjustments based on your work in this step.

## Step 4 - Outline the Text

- [ ] Identify the transitional markers in your text.
- [ ] Separate major and minor markers.
- [ ] Develop a descriptive outline based on the major and minor markers.
- [ ] Develop a purpose statement for your sermon based on the text's big idea.
- [ ] Convert your descriptive outline to a preaching outline.
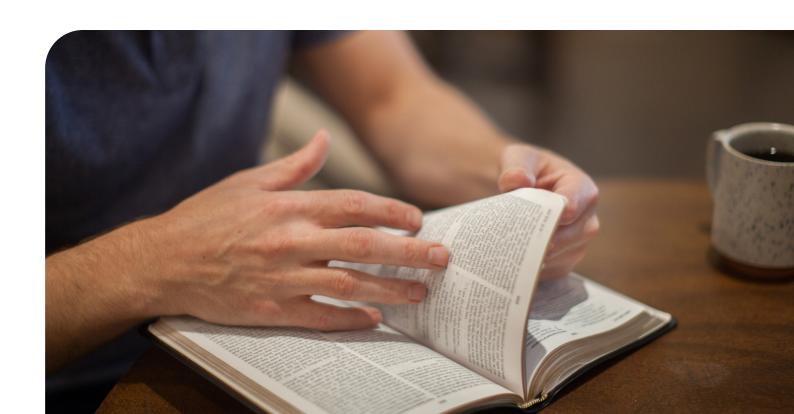
## Step 5 - Build the Sermon

- [ ] State each of your main points.
- [ ] Explain each of your main points.
- [ ] Illustrate each of your main points.
- [ ] Apply each of your main points.
- [ ] Provide a concise summary of your message in your conclusion.
- [ ] Call for your hearers to respond appropriately in your conclusion.
- [ ] Gain attention in your introduction.
- [ ] Introduce the sermon's subject and show its relevance.
- [ ] Transition smoothly from your introduction to your first main point.
- [ ] Include smooth transitions between each major component of your sermon.

## Step 6 - Revise the Sermon

- [ ] Take a break after completing your first draft.
- [ ] Read through your whole sermon the next day.
- [ ] Revise any confusing sections of your sermon.
- [ ] Check your transitions and make any corrections.
- [ ] Check your sermon's length.
- [ ] Repeat the process until you are satisfied with the finished product.

## Step 7 - Preach the Sermon

- [ ] Determine the number of notes you will use while preaching.
- [ ] Maintain effective eye contact with your hearers.
- [ ] Make sure your facial expressions are appropriate.
- [ ] Be purposeful and varied with your hand gestures.
- [ ] Practice good posture.
- [ ] Practice intentional movement.
- [ ] Vary the volume, pace, and pitch of your voice.
- [ ] Dress appropriately for the occasion and the audience.
- [ ] Eliminate "filler words" as much as possible.
- [ ] Discover your distracting habits and mannerisms and work to correct them.
- [ ] Utilize sermon aids wisely.
- [ ] Use humor appropriately.
- [ ] Take practical steps to keep your listeners engaged.
- [ ] Make sure your sermon is an appropriate length.
- [ ] Consider rehearsing your sermon and making necessary adjustments.
- [ ] Convert your descriptive outline to a preaching outline.

## Step 8 - Review the Sermon

- [ ] Secure a video recording of your sermon.
- [ ] Use the Sermon Evaluation Form to evaluate your sermon.
- [ ] Share a copy of your sermon and the Sermon Evaluation Form with at least three people.
- [ ] After they have completed their evaluation, discuss their observations.
- [ ] Make a small list of ways you will improve.
- [ ] Keep preaching the Word!

## Appendix 2 – A Word on Plagiarism and Artificial Intelligence (AI)

In recent years, sermon plagiarism has become a hot topic. With the amount of free online resources available (see Appendix 5), it has become tempting and relatively easy to access sermon outlines, manuscripts, and illustrations developed by others. For those serving in bivocational roles with limited sermon prep time, you may feel as if you have no choice but to take advantage of someone else's work. After all, the great Adrian Rogers once said, "If my bullet fits your gun, shoot it, but use your own powder."[36]

While benefiting from the work of others is inevitable if you choose to use any study Bibles, concordances, or commentaries, there is a line that preachers must not cross. If you benefit from the work of others, say so. On the rare occasion you choose to use someone else's outline, ask their permission first (if possible). After gaining their consent, let your listeners know who developed the outline. If you use an outline or illustration from a commentary, don't try to pass it off as your own. Give credit where credit is due. But, as a regular practice, follow the eight steps provided in this resource and preach your own material.

Another development in recent days presents a new challenge for preachers. Artificial intelligence (AI) has become popular with apps like ChatGPT, assisting in all types of creative endeavors. AI has become such a growing trend that the messengers to the 2023 Southern Baptist Convention meeting in New Orleans passed a resolution calling for discernment in using these technologies.

One of the statements in the resolution is especially pertinent to those of us who regularly prepare and preach sermons, "RESOLVED, That we encourage all who employ these tools to do so in honest, transparent, and Christlike ways that focus on loving God and loving our neighbor as ourselves, never seeking to willfully deceive others or take advantage of them for unjust gain or the accumulation of power."[37]

The reality is that AI is such a recent development that it is unclear how it will impact sermon preparation. However, preachers must exercise discernment and use any such technologies to assist in sermon preparation, but never to do the work for us.

*While benefiting from the work of others is inevitable if you choose to use any study aids, there is a line that preachers must not cross.*

36  https://www.logos.com/grow/should-we-borrow-from-other-preachers/

37  https://www.sbc.net/resource-library/resolutions/on-artificial-intelligence-and-emerging-technologies/

**What are the original languages of the Bible?**

The sixty-six books in the Bible are God's written revelation of Himself to mankind. However, the Bible was not originally written in English. The thirty-nine books in the Old Testament were primarily written in Hebrew (although a small portion was written in Aramaic). The twenty-seven books in the New Testament were originally written in the Greek language. Therefore, all English Bibles are translated from the original Hebrew and Greek languages.

**Why are there so many different English translations?**

There are two different approaches to Bible translation. First, there is the formally equivalent translation approach. This approach aims to produce a "word-for-word" translation in which the number of words and the grammar are roughly equal in both the original language and English. Examples of formal equivalent translations include the New American Standard Bible (NASB) and the English Standard Version (ESV). The second approach is the dynamic equivalent approach to translation. This approach aims not to produce a "word-for-word" translation as much as a "thought-for-thought" translation. Examples of this type of approach include the New Living Translation (NLT).

**Are some English translations better than others?** Both approaches have strengths and weaknesses, so it is difficult to say which approach is better. In fact, most English translations fall somewhere in the middle of both approaches anyway. The most important characteristic of any Bible translation is that it accurately conveys the same meaning as in the original languages. That's why it is helpful to read from multiple English translations to gain a better understanding of the biblical text.

**Summary of Major English Bible Translations**

## DYNAMIC EQUIVALENCE
**"thought-for-thought"**

## FORMAL EQUIVALENCE
**"word-for-word"**

MSG    LB    CEV    TEV    NLT    TNIV    NIV    CSB    ESV    NKJV    KJV    NASB

| Code | Bible Translation | Date Published |
|------|-------------------|----------------|
| MSG | The Message (Paraphrase) | 2002 |
| LB | The Living Bible (Paraphrase) | 1971 |
| CEV | Contemporary English Version | 1995 |
| TEV | Today's English Version (Good News Translation) | 1976 |
| NLT | New Living Translation | 1996 |
| TNIV | Today's New International Version | 2005 |
| NIV | New International Version | 1978 |
| CSB | Christian Standard Bible | 2017 |
| ESV | English Standard Version | 2001 |
| NKJV | New King James Version | 1982 |
| KJV | King James Version | 1611 |
| NASB | New American Standard Bible | 1971/1995 |

**What are paraphrases?**

Paraphrases are sometimes considered to be a third approach to translation, but they should not be regarded as actual English translations. They are usually completed by only one person (as opposed to a translation committee), and sometimes they are not based upon the original languages. Paraphrases can be helpful for devotional reading, but they should not be used as your primary English translation of the Bible. *The Message,* written by Eugene Peterson, is a good example of a paraphrase.

## Appendix 4 – Books on Preaching

- *On the Preparation and Delivery of Sermons (Fourth Edition),* John A. Broadus (New York: HarperOne, 1979)
- *Christ-Centered Preaching: Redeeming the Expository Sermon (Second Edition),* Bryan Chapell (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 1994, 2005)
- *On Preaching: Personal & Pastoral Insights for the Preparation & Practice of Preaching,* H.B. Charles (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2014)
- *8 Hours or Less: Writing Faithful Sermons Faster,* Ryan Huguley (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2017)
- *Preaching & Preachers (40th Anniversary Edition),* D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2011
- *Rediscovering Expository Preaching,* John MacArthur (Dallas: Word Publishing, 1992)
- *Faithful Preaching: Declaring Scripture with Responsibility, Passion, and Authenticity,* Tony Merida (Nashville: B&H Publishing, 2009)
- *Saving Eutychus: How to Preach God's Word and Keep People Awake,* Gary Millar and Phil Campbell (Matthias Media, 2013)
- *He is Not Silent: Preaching in a Postmodern World,* R. Albert Mohler, Jr. (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2008)
- *Preparing Expository Sermons: A 7-Step Method for Biblical Preaching,* Ramesh Richard (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1995, 2001)
- *Biblical Preaching: The Development and Delivery of Expository Messages (Second Edition),* Haddon W. Robinson (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 1980, 2001)
- *Preaching for Impact,* Adrian Rogers (Memphis, TN: Love Worth Finding Ministries, 2021)
- *The Passion Driven Sermon: Changing the Way Pastors Preach and Congregations Listen,* Jim Shaddix (Nashville, B&H Publishing, 2003)
- *Between Two Worlds: The Challenge of Preaching Today,* John Stott (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing, 1982)
- *Power in the Pulpit: How to Prepare and Deliver Expository Sermons,* Jerry Vines and Jim Shaddix (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 1999)
- *Progress in the Pulpit: How to Grow in Your Preaching,* Jerry Vines and Jim Shaddix (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2017)
- *Preaching with Bold Assurance: A Solid and Enduring Approach to Engaging Exposition,* Hershael York and Bert Decker (Nashville, B&H Publishing, 2003)

## Appendix 5 – Budget-Friendly Bible Study Resources

**Note:**

Most of the resources on this list are free, although some require a small financial investment. This list should not be interpreted as an endorsement of the material you may encounter on each site, so please exercise biblical discernment. May this list benefit you as you study and preach God's Word!

- Bible Gateway: biblegateway.com
- Bible Hub: biblehub.com
- The Bible Project: bibleproject.com
- Bible Study Tools: biblestudytools.com/library
- Biblical Training: biblicaltraining.org
- Blue Letter Bible: blueletterbible.org
- Christian Classics Ethereal Library: ccel.org
- Desiring God: desiringgod.org
- E-Sword Bible Study Software: e-sword.net
- For the Church Institute: ftcinstitute.com/library
- Free Online Commentaries: freecommentaries.com
- Gospel Coalition: thegospelcoalition.org/commentary/
- Love Worth Finding (Adrian Rogers): lwf.org/pastor-church-resources
- Olive Tree Bible Software: olivetree.com
- Preaching Today: preachingtoday.com
- Right Now Media: rightnow.org
- Sermon Central: sermoncentral.com

## Appendix 6 – Sermon Evaluation Form

**Preacher's name:**

**Date of sermon:**

**Context of sermon:** *(e.g., in church, youth group, dinner, etc.)*

**Bible passage:**

**Introduction:**

| | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| It produced interest. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |
| It established relevancy. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |
| It introduced the topic of the sermon. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |
| It gave momentum to the rest of the sermon. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |
| It transitioned to the main points smoothly. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |
| It was an appropriate length. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |

**Overall, what was your impression of the sermon's introduction?**

**Main points:**

| | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| The main points were clearly stated. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |
| The main points were derived from the text. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |
| The main points were adequately explained. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |
| The main points were adequately illustrated. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |
| The main points were adequately applied. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |
| Smooth transitions between the main points. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |

**What were the most effective elements of the main body of the sermon?**

**What were the least effective elements of the main body of the sermon?**

**Conclusion:**

| | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| The sermon built to a climax. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |
| The content was summarized clearly. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |
| The conclusion did not include any new information. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |
| There was a clear and compelling call to respond. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |
| The conclusion did not drag on unnecessarily. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |

**How was the content summarized?**

**What type of response was encouraged/offered?**

## Appendix 6 – Sermon Evaluation Form

**Delivery:**

| | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Appropriate eye contact | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |
| Appropriate facial expressions | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |
| Effective use of hand gestures | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |
| Purposeful movement | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |
| Variation in voice's volume, pace, and pitch | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |
| Sermon aids helped, not hindered | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |
| Appropriate attire | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |
| Limited use of "filler" words | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |
| Humor was appropriate and purposeful | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |
| The sermon was of reasonable length | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |
| Sermon was clear | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |
| Sermon was engaging | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |

**What were the most effective elements of the delivery of the sermon?**

**What were the least effective elements of the delivery of the sermon?**

**Please list any distracting habits/mannerisms:**

**Appendix 6 – Sermon Evaluation Form**

**What are your overall impressions of this sermon?**

**How could this sermon have been improved?**

**Are there any other thoughts you would like to share?**

**What was your one-sentence takeaway from the sermon?**

In Step #4, you learned the basics for outlining the text. Another way to outline the text is to diagram the passage. A sentence diagram is simply a visual representation of the sentence's (or verse's) structure. If you would like to try to diagram your text, you will find instructions below in this bonus chapter.

If you have never diagrammed a passage before, don't worry. It's not hard once you get the hang of it. In fact, whenever I have taught Scripture diagramming in the past, my students have commented that this study technique was one of the most helpful parts of the training. We will walk through several examples before you try to diagram your own Scripture passage, so there's no need to worry if it takes more than one example to get comfortable with the technique.

## Explanation

When you diagram a passage, there are some general principles to keep in mind. *First, you are diagramming the grammar of the text.* This means you're not as concerned about the order of the words that appear in the text but the type of words that appear. If you remember the jingles from School House Rocks, that's what you are diagramming: nouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs, conjunctions, etc. However, don't get discouraged if it's been a few years since you have used those terms! You don't need to remember the terminology. We are more concerned with the method, which will make much more sense once we work through some examples.

*Second, you will want to look for words that serve as transitional markers.* Just like in the basic method discussed in Step #4, transitional markers indicate the thought or structure is changing. Refer to Step #4 if you need a refresher on the list of transitional markers.

*Finally, keep in mind that diagramming a passage is more of an art than a science.* There's no right or wrong way to do it. Once you understand the process and the goal of the exercise (to identify the structure of the text), you can feel free to use a diagramming system that is most comfortable for you.

## Example #1

With those general principles in place, let's work through the same examples covered in Step #4. Let's begin with Romans 6:23, which states, "For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord" (ESV).
As you diagram this verse, grab a clean sheet of paper and begin at the upper left corner of the page. The verse starts with the word "For," a transitional marker from the previous verse. Next, you'll want to look for the subject, which is "wages." Notice that "of sin" is not the subject because it describes the wages. The verb is just the word "is," and the result is "death." So, the main part of this first phrase is:

**For the wages is death**

Next, you'll notice that the phrase "of sin" describes the type of wages that Paul is talking about. When diagramming the verse, you would draw a small line under the word "wages" and write "of sin" like this:

**For the wages is death**
        ↳  **of sin**

The next word we find is a transitional marker: "but." With this word, Paul is introducing a new thought. Therefore, you would begin a new line in your diagram like this:

**For the wages is death**
       ↳ **of sin**
**but**

The next phrase is "the free gift." Again, let's first identify the noun or the subject. In this example, the noun is "gift," and "free" is an adjective describing the gift. So, using the same method as before, you would insert "the free gift" into the diagram like this:

**For the wages is death**
       ↳ **of sin**
       ↱ **free**
**but the gift**

Please note that you could have just as easily placed "free" under "gift," but the following phrase is also associated with the gift, so I chose to put "free" above "gift." Here's an example where diagramming is an art rather than a science.

As you continue reading, the next phrase is "of God." This phrase also describes the type of gift, so you could add the phrase to the diagram like this:

**For the wages is death**
       ↳ **of sin**
       ↱ **free**
**but the gift**
       ↳ **of God**

The next phrase in the verse reads, "is eternal life." The word "life" is the noun, while "eternal" describes the type of life Paul means. So, you can add to the diagram like this:

**For the wages      is death**
       ↳ **of sin**
       ↱ **free**      ↱ **eternal**
**but the gift**     **is life**
       ↳ **of God**

The next phrase reads "in Christ Jesus." Again, this phrase describes the type of life that Paul means. So, this can also be added to the diagram:

**For the wages      is death**
       ↳ **of sin**
       ↱ **free**      ↱ **eternal**
**but the gift**     **is life**
       ↳ **of God**    ↳ **in Christ Jesus**

The final phrase of the verse reads, "our Lord". This phrase describes who Jesus is, so it can be added to the diagram like this:

```
For the wages        is death
            ↳  of sin
            ↱  free        ↱  eternal
but the gift              is life
      ↳  of God      ↳  in Christ Jesus
                              ↳  our Lord.
```

And with that, the diagram for Romans 6:23 is complete. You now have a visual picture of the verse's structure. Note how easily you can now see the two main points in this verse: (1) the wages is death, and (2) the gift is life. These two points stand in stark contrast to one another, and the diagram helps to highlight those differences.

## Example #2

For our second example, let's return to Philippians 2:1-4:

> *If, then, there is any encouragement in Christ, if any consolation of love, if any fellowship with the Spirit, if any affection and mercy, 2 make my joy complete by thinking the same way, having the same love, united in spirit, intent on one purpose. 3 Do nothing out of selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility consider others as more important than yourselves. 4 Everyone should look not to his own interests, but rather to the interests of others. (Philippians 2:1-4, CSB)*

Let's begin with the first phrase: "If then there is any encouragement in Christ." Using our previous example, this phrase could be diagrammed like this:

```
↱  then
If there is
        ↳  any encouragement
                  ↳  in Christ
```

Because the first four phrases are all "if" statements, I chose to list the condition under a single "If" statement. The second phrase would follow like this:

```
↱  then
If there is
        ↳  any encouragement
                    ↳  in Christ
        ↳  any consolation
                  ↳  in love
```

Now, let's add the last two if statements to our diagram:

↱ **then**
**If there is**
        ↳ **any encouragement**
                ↳ **in Christ**
        ↳ **any consolation**
                ↳ **in love**
        ↳ **any fellowship**
                ↳ **with the Spirit**
        ↳ **any affection and mercy**

The next phrase at the beginning of verse 2 is the action to take if the conditional "if" statements are satisfied. We will move it slightly to the left in our diagram to distinguish it from the "if" statements themselves:

↱ **then**
**If there is**
        ↳ **any encouragement**
                ↳ **in Christ**
        ↳ **any consolation**
                ↳ **in love**
        ↳ **any fellowship**
                ↳ **with the Spirit**
        ↳ **any affection and mercy**
  ↳ **(then) make my joy complete**

The remainder of the passage will explain how the Philippians can make Paul's joy complete. Therefore the rest of the diagram will be listed under this command. The remainder of verse 2 would be diagrammed like this:

↱ **then**
**If there is**
        ↳ **any encouragement**
                ↳ **in Christ**
        ↳ **any consolation**
                ↳ **in love**
        ↳ **any fellowship**
                ↳ **with the Spirit**
        ↳ **any affection and mercy**
  ↳ **(then) make my joy complete**
          ↳ **thinking the same way**
          ↳ **having the same love**
          ↳ **(being) united in spirit**
          ↳ **(being) intent on one purpose**

**Appendix 7 – Diagramming the Text**

Moving on to verse 3, the diagram would look like this:

↱ **then**
**If there is**
      ↳ **any encouragement**
              ↳ **in Christ**
      ↳ **any consolation**
              ↳ **in love**
      ↳ **any fellowship**
              ↳ **with the Spirit**
      ↳ **any affection and mercy**
  ↳ **(then) make my joy complete**
       ↳ **thinking the same way**
       ↳ **having the same love**
       ↳ **(being) united in spirit**
       ↳ **(being) intent on one purpose**
       ↳ **Do nothing**
          ↳ **out of ambition or conceit**
              ↳ **selfish**
         ↱ **in humility**       ↱ **than yourselves**
      ↳ **but consider others as more important**

Finally, let's add verse 4 to the diagram:

↱ **then**
**If there is**
      ↳ **any encouragement**
              ↳ **in Christ**
      ↳ **any consolation**
              ↳ **in love**
      ↳ **any fellowship**
              ↳ **with the Spirit**
      ↳ **any affection and mercy**
  ↳ **(then) make my joy complete**
       ↳ **thinking the same way**
       ↳ **having the same love**
       ↳ **(being) united in spirit**
       ↳ **(being) intent on one purpose**
       ↳ **Do nothing**
          ↳ **out of ambition or conceit**
              ↳ **selfish**
         ↱ **in humility**       ↱ **than yourselves**
      ↳ **but consider others as more important**
      ↳ **Everyone should look out**
            ↳ **not only for his interests**
                  ↳ **own**
           ↳ **but also for the interests**
                ↳ **of others**

## Example #3

For this example, let's study John 1:1-5, which states:

*In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. 2 He was with God in the beginning. 3 All things were created through him, and apart from him not one thing was created that has been created. 4 In him was life, and that life was the light of men. 5 That light shines in the darkness, and yet the darkness did not overcome it. (John 1:1-5, CSB)*

Now, it's your turn. Try to diagram these five verses before looking at the complete diagram below. Use a blank sheet of paper, and turn it landscape-style for more room. After you have completed your diagram, compare it to the diagram below. How does it compare?

**In the beginning was the Word**
      ↳ **and the Word was with God**
      ↳ **and the Word was God.**
    **He was with God**
       ↳ **in the beginning**
    **All things were created**
       ↳ **through him**
         ↱ **that has been created**
      ↳ **and not one thing was created**
        ↳ **apart from him**
    **In him was life**
     ↳ **and that life was the light**
        ↳ **of men**
       **That light shines**
         ↳ **in darkness**
       **and the darkness did not overcome it**

How did you do? Remember, diagramming is more an art than a science. Your diagram may look different from the one above, and that's fine. You'll develop your own system for diagramming. The goal is to identify the passage's structure so that you can communicate it to your hearers.

## Example #4

So far, we have diagrammed teaching passages from the New Testament. But, this technique also works with narrative passages, such as Matthew 8:1-4:

*When he came down from the mountain, large crowds followed him. 2 Right away a man with leprosy came up and knelt before him, saying, "Lord, if you are willing, you can make me clean." 3 Reaching out his hand, Jesus touched him, saying, "I am willing; be made clean." Immediately his leprosy was cleansed. 4 Then Jesus told him, "See that you don't tell anyone; but go, show yourself to the priest, and offer the gift that Moses commanded, as a testimony to them." (Matthew 8:1-4, CSB)*

A summary diagram of this passage might look like this:

```
                            ↱  down from the mountain
When (Jesus) came    ↱  large
                        ↳  crowds followed him
      ↱  with leprosy
   A man came up
          ↳  right away
        and knelt
                ↳  before him
                    ↱  Lord
        saying, "if you are willing
                (then) you can make me clean."
   Jesus
      ↳  reaching out his hand
      ↳  touched him
      ↳  saying,
         ↳   "I am willing.
         ↳  Be made clean."
    His leprosy was cleansed
                      ↳  immediately
    Then Jesus told him,
             ↳  "See that you don't tell anyone;
             ↳  but go
                   ↳  show yourself
                            ↳  to the priest
                ↳  and offer the gift
                              ↳  that Moses commanded
                         ↳  as a testimony
                                  ↳  to them."
```

## Exercise

Now, it's your turn. Using your selected sermon text, try to diagram the passage. Take out a sheet of paper and give it a try!

**CALLING
OUT THE
CALLED**