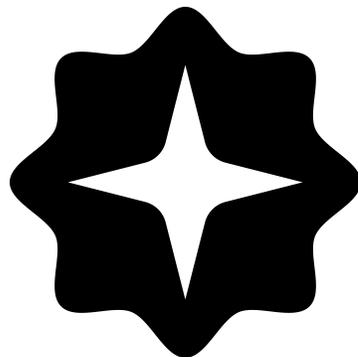


**The Shepherd Preacher Seminar:
Priorities & Practices of Pastoral
Preaching**



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Section #1: Theological and Philosophical Foundations of Shepherd Preaching

¹⁶ All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, ¹⁷ that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work. ¹I 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 3:16-4:2)

Let's spend some time considering the 8 priorities of shepherd preaching, which serve as the foundation of shepherd preaching. These 8 priorities are presented in the form of an acronym that will be easy to memorize and thus utilize in your ongoing growth and practice of preaching. The 8 priorities are:

- Priority #1: Seek a posture of humility and holiness.
- Priority #2: Honor the text and it's authority.
- Priority #3: Exult in God and His glory!
- Priority #4: Proclaim the person and work of Christ!
- Priority #5: Humbly yield to the Spirit's power.
- Priority #6: Exhort through Gospel application.
- Priority #7: Remember to evangelize the lost.
- Priority #8: Demonstrate pastoral love and encouragement.

Shepherd-Preaching Priority #1: Seek a posture of humility and holiness.

Primary posture of a shepherd-pastor/elder: Humility

1.) Definition: Humility is honestly assessing ourselves in light of God's holiness and our sinfulness. – C.J. Mahaney

- But he (God) gives us more grace. That is why Scripture says: "God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble. – James 4:6

2.) Three practical ways we can begin to weaken pride and cultivate humility in our lives as shepherds:¹

¹C.J. Mahaney, *Humility: True Greatness* (Colorado Springs, CO: Multnomah Publishing, 2005), 171-172.

1. Reflect on the wonder of the cross.

- The closer we stand to the cross, the more difficult it is to remain arrogant and prideful.

2. Begin your day by acknowledging your dependence upon God and your need for God.

- Sin doesn't wake up tired. So we must go on the offensive from the moment we wake up.
- We must submit to God, we must rely on God for strength from the moment we wake up to the moment we go to bed.

3. Practice Spiritual Disciplines.

- Specifically prayer, time in the Word, and worship.
- We will grow in humility as we daily declare our dependence on God and our need for Him.

Shepherd-Preaching Priority #2: <u>H</u>onor the text and its authority.

Shepherd Preaching Defined: Shepherd preaching is expositional preaching that aims to glorify God through God-centered, Christ-focused, Spirit-empowered, pastorally applied, evangelistic biblical exposition for the purpose of converting the lost and edifying the found.

6 Foundational Theological and Philosophical Preaching Convictions:

Conviction #1: God Speaks.

1. True Biblical preaching must begin with the conviction that we are called to preach because God has spoken. We preach because God is a preacher.
2. In beginning with God as preacher of his Word, we begin by recognizing that he chose to reveal himself from the beginning of time to his creation. God chose to reveal himself to us, to speak to us directly and clearly that we might know him, serve him, love him,

worship him, and represent him for his glory in this world.

3. While we understand that God has revealed himself through his creation, as well as through the person of his son, a third primary form of revelation comes in the form of Scripture, God's Word.

Conviction #2: The Bible is trustworthy, accurate, authoritative revelation from God.

1. All true Christian preaching flows out of the foundational truth that God has spoken to mankind and revealed himself to his people through the Scriptures.
2. Biblical preaching, then, must foundationally be rooted in the trustworthy, accurate, authoritative Word of God.
3. We preach the Word of God because it is God's perfect Word to us.

Conviction #3: People are lost apart from the revealed word of God.

- For everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved. But how can they call on Him they have not believed in? And how can they believe without hearing about Him? And how can they hear without a preacher? - Romans 10:13-14

Conviction #4: Preaching is central in corporate worship and congregational life.

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: preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke and exhort, with compete patience and teaching. For the time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching, but having itching ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own passions, and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander off into myths. - 2 Timothy 4:1-4

Conviction #5: Preachers must be under the Spirit's control in their

lives and in their preaching.

In our lives:

Our Gospel came to you not only in word, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction. You know what kind of men we proved to be among you for your sake. - 1 Thessalonians 1:5

Do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery, but be filled with the Spirit. - Ephesians 5:18

In our preaching:

“What is meant by this ‘unction’ or ‘anointing’ of the Spirit? ... It is the Holy Spirit falling upon the preaching in a special manner. It is an access of power. It is God giving power, and enabling, through the Spirit to the preacher, in order that he may do this work in a manner that lifts it beyond the efforts and endeavors of a man to a position in which the preacher is being used by the Spirit and becomes the channel through whom the Spirit works. This is seen very plainly in the Scriptures.” – Martyn Lloyd-Jones.

Conviction #6: Good preaching is a result of God’s gifting and hard work.

- To one he gave five talents, to another two, to another one, to each according to his ability. - Matthew 25:15
- Him we proclaim, warning everyone and teaching everyone with all wisdom, that we may present everyone mature in Christ. For this I toil, struggling with all his energy that he powerfully works within me. Colossians 1:28-29

6 Helpful Questions To Consider As We Are Working With The Text:

- As we preach we must clearly, plainly, and faithfully seek to expose God’s message and God’s intention for God’s people from God’s Word. We seek to preach the full counsel of God, as we preach through books of the Bible, chapter by chapter, verse by verse.
1. What is God saying through this text and how can I, by the power of the Spirit explain, illustrate, and apply His intention for His people clearly, passionately, and humbly.
 2. What does God want us to know, feel, think, say, do?

3. How have we failed to think, feel, speak, act in accord/obedience to God's intention?
4. How does Jesus perfectly succeed where we have failed as our substitute righteousness and how does Jesus take the punishment we deserve for our failure as our substitute sacrifice?
5. How do we respond to God's holiness, our sinfulness, and Christ's sacrifice on our behalf in light of this passage? How do we specifically repent, specifically trust, and specifically, now, in the power of the Spirit live as new creations in Christ?
6. In light of this passage, why can we rejoice in the Gospel?

Challenges to Biblical Preaching Today: Loss of confidence in the Scriptures.

- "It is very possible to attend a service of worship in an avowedly evangelical congregation and find out if the Bible is read or referred to at all (and there is no guarantee it will be), it is weightless in its influence because of inadequate presentation or emphasis." – Alistair Begg

<p>Shepherd-Preaching Priority #3: Exult in God and His glory!</p>

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Biblical examples of God desiring to be glorified:²

God created us for his glory:

Bring my sons from afar and my daughters from the end of the earth, every one who is called by my name, whom I created for my glory (Is. 43:6-7).

² John Piper, *Let The Nations Be Glad*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2003), 22-28.

God defeated Pharaoh at the Red Sea to show his glory:

And I will harden Pharaoh's heart, and he will pursue them and I will get glory over Pharaoh and all his host; and the Egyptians shall know that I am the Lord . . . And the Egyptians shall know that I am the Lord, when I have gotten glory over Pharaoh, his chariots, and his horsemen (Ex. 14:4, 18; cf. v. 17).

Jesus told us to do good works so that God gets glory:

In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven (Matt. 5:16; cf. 1 Pet. 2:12).

Jesus said that he answers prayer that God would be glorified:

Whatever you ask in my name, this I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son (Jn. 14:13).

Jesus endured his final hours of suffering for God's glory:

"Now is my soul troubled. And what shall I say? 'Father, save me from this hour?' But for this purpose I have come to this hour. Father, glorify your name.' Then a voice came from heaven, 'I have glorified it, and I will glorify it again! (Jn. 12:27-28).

Herod is struck dead because he did not give glory to God:

Immediately an angel of the Lord struck him down, because he did not give God the glory (Acts 12:23).

Jesus receives us into his fellowship for the glory of God:

Welcome one another as Christ has welcomed you, for the glory of God (Rom. 15:7).

God tells us to serve in a way that will glorify him:

Whoever serves, [let him do it] as one who serves by the strength which God supplies – in order that in everything God may be glorified through Jesus Christ. To him belong glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen (1 Pet. 4:11).

Jesus will fill us with fruits of righteousness for God's glory:

It is my prayer that . . . [you be] filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God (Phil. 1:9, 11).

Jesus is coming again for the glory of God:

They will suffer the punishment of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his might, when he comes on that day to be glorified in his saints, and to be marveled at among all who have believed (2 Thess. 1:9-10).

God instructs us to do everything for his glory:

So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God (1 Cor. 10:31).

- If there is one overriding theme in the Bible that we see from the very beginning to the very end it is this: **God has created all things for his glory.**
- Because God's ultimate goal is His glory, the ultimate goal of our preaching God's Word is to glorify Him through joyful and passionate, expository exultation - both for the preacher and for the listeners.
- True life change comes as a result of heart change and true heart change comes as a result of worshipping the Triune God.

Because God is God-centered and the Bible is God-centered, our preaching must be God-centered.

Shepherd-Preaching Priority #4: Proclaim the person and work of Christ!

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"Every sermon should passionately announce the good news of Jesus Christ. No matter what portion of the Bible we are preaching from, the Gospel should eventually come into view." - Jonathan Leeman

"Preach Christ Jesus the Lord. Determine to know nothing among your people, but Christ crucified. Let his name and grace, his spirit and love, triumph in the midst of all your sermons. Let your great end be to glorify him in the heart, to render him amiable and precious in the eyes of his people, to lead them to him, as a sanctuary to protect them, a propitiation to reconcile them, a treasure to enrich them, a physician to heal them, an advocate to present them and their services to God, as wisdom to counsel them, as righteousness to justify, as sanctification to renew, as redemption to save. Let Christ be the diamond to shine in the bosom of all your sermons."³ - Anglican Bishop Edward Reynolds

As Christ-centered preachers, we must:

- **Expound Christ. (Christ as prophet reveals truth):**
- **Apply Christ. (Christ as King commands obedience):**
- **Adore Christ. (Christ as priest, evokes worship):**

Challenges to Biblical Preaching Today: Challenges against the uniqueness of Christ.

- Jesus is not one savior. He is the only Savior.
- John Piper, in his book, "Jesus, the only way to God," lists seven significant issues that surround this very important topic. Piper says that there are seven critical convictions at stake:
 1. Believing and obeying the Bible is at stake
 2. Genuine love is at stake
 3. The salvation of people in other religions is at stake
 4. The strengthening of missionaries is at stake
 5. Our own souls are at stake
 6. The enjoyment of all the benefits of Christ is at stake
 7. The glory of Jesus is at stake

Shepherd-Preaching Priority #5: Humbly yield to the Spirit's power.

Shepherd Preaching Defined: Shepherd preaching is expositional preaching that aims to glorify God through God-centered, Christ-focused,

³ Charles Bridges, *The Christian Ministry* (Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust), 258.

Spirit-empowered, pastorally applied, evangelistic biblical exposition for the purpose of converting the lost and edifying the found.

As we preach the Word of God, we must constantly remember, embrace, and surrender to these two truths:

- It is ultimately the work of the Holy Spirit that empowers and ensures the effectiveness of our **preparation** and our **preaching**.
- When I came to you, I did not come with eloquence or human wisdom as I proclaimed to you the testimony of God. For I resolved to know nothing while I was with you except Jesus Christ and him crucified. I came to you in weakness with great fear and trembling. My message and my preaching were not with wise and persuasive words, but with a demonstration of the Spirit's power, so that your faith might not rest on human wisdom, but on God's power (1 Cor. 2:1-5).

What exactly is the Holy Spirit's role in shepherd preaching? There are two primary roles the Holy Spirit plays: illumination and anointing.

1) The Holy Spirit Illuminates

"It is not a giving of new revelation, but a work within us that enables us to grasp and to love the revelation that is there before us in the biblical text as heard and read, and as explained by teachers and writers. Sin in our mental and moral system clouds our minds and wills so that we miss and resist the force of Scripture. God seems to us remote to the point of unreality, and in the face of God's truth we are dull and apathetic. The Spirit, however, opens and unveils our minds and attunes our hearts so that we understand (Eph. 1:17-18; 3:18-19; 2 Cor. 3:14-16; 4:6). As by inspiration he provided Scripture truth for us, so now by illumination he interprets it to us. Illumination is thus the applying of God's revealed truth to our hearts, so that we grasp as reality for ourselves what the sacred text sets forth."⁴ – J.I. Packer

- Therefore I also, after I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all the saints, do not cease to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers: that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you the spirit of the wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him, the eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that you may know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints, and what is the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe,

⁴ Ibid.

according to the working of His mighty power" (Eph. 1:17-19).

2) The Holy Spirit Anoints

And the Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him, the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord (Is. 11:2).

But as for me, I am filled with power, with the Spirit of the LORD, and with justice and might, to declare to Jacob his transgression and to Israel his sin (Mic. 3:8).

And Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit to Galilee, and a report about him went out through all the surrounding country (Luke 4:14).

God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power. He went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with him (Acts 10:38).

For God gave us a spirit not of fear but of power and love and self-control (2 Tim. 1:7).

As mentioned earlier, D. Martin Lloyd-Jones characterizes this anointing of the Holy Spirit in a preacher as a special form of "unction."

What is meant by this 'unction' or 'anointing' of the Spirit? ... It is the Holy Spirit falling upon the preaching in a special manner. It is an access of power. It is God giving power, and enabling, through the Spirit to the preacher in order that he may do this work in a manner that lifts it beyond the efforts and endeavors of a man to a position in which the preacher is being used by the Spirit and becomes the channel through whom the Spirit works. This is seen very plainly in the Scriptures.⁵

According to Lloyd-Jones, this kind of Spirit-empowered preaching marked by genuine Spirit infused unction is difficult for a preacher to describe or define. Lloyd-Jones writes:

How does one know the unction of the Spirit? It gives clarity of thought, clarity of speech, ease of utterance, a great sense of authority and confidence as you are preaching, an awareness of power not your

⁵ Martyn Lloyd-Jones, *Preaching and Preachers* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing, 1972), 305.

own thrilling through the whole of your being, and an indescribable sense of joy. You are a man “possessed,” you are taken hold of, and taken up. I like to put it like this—and I know of nothing on earth that is comparable to this feeling— that when this happens you have a feeling that you are not actually doing the preaching, you are looking on at yourself in amazement as this is happening. It is not your effort; you are just an instrument, the channel, the vehicle: the Spirit is using you, and you are looking on in great enjoyment and astonishment.⁶

Challenges to Biblical Preaching Today: Preaching is a battle.

- 1) Spiritual Battle
- 2) Emotional Battle
- 3) Physical Battle

Shepherd-Preaching Priority #6: Exhort through Gospel application.

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1) What is Gospel application? Why is it important to preaching?

- 2) **David Murray defines application as** “the process by which the unchanging principles of God’s word are brought into life-changing contact with people who live in an ever-changing world.”⁷

Consider five helpful, key components to effective, biblical application in our preaching:⁸

1. **Passage:** The faithful preacher bases his application not on anecdotes or inspiring stories, but on God’s Word, and on that particular preaching

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ David Murray, “8 Principles of Sermon Application,” *Head, Heart, Hand Blog*, May, 2013, accessed July 10, 2014, <http://headhearthand.org/?s=application>.

⁸ Ibid.

passage.

2. **Primary:** Preachers must not draw applications from the accidental, incidental, or coincidental parts of a passage, but from its essentials alone.
 3. **Persistent:** Although at times it may be appropriate to leave application to the conclusion of a sermon, it is usually best to apply throughout.
 4. **Prepared:** Unprepared application usually means repetitive application.
 5. **Personal:** Hearers must know that they are being addressed personally and even individually.⁹
- 3) As we preach the good news of the Gospel from God's word, we must also seek to expose the multitude of **idols and counterfeit saviors** that our hearers are prone to trust instead of Christ, worship in the place of Christ, and build their life upon rather than on Christ.

"Sin isn't only doing bad things, it is more fundamentally making good things into ultimate things. Sin is building your life and meaning on anything, even a very good thing, more than on God. Whatever we build our life on will drive us and enslave us. Sin is primarily idolatry. So if the root of every sin is idolatry, and idolatry is a failure to look to Jesus for our salvation and justification, then the root of every sin is a failure to believe the Gospel message that Jesus and Jesus alone, is our justification, righteousness, and redemption." – Tim Keller

Here are some heart questions that we can ask as we preach to help our hearers see, own, and turn from their deep idols:

1. What do I worry about most?
2. What, if I failed or lost it, would cause me to feel that I did not even

⁹ Ibid.

want to live?

3. What do I use to comfort myself when things go bad or get difficult?
4. What do I do to cope? (What are my release valves? What do I do to feel better?)
5. What preoccupies me? (What do I daydream about?)
6. What makes me feel the most self-worth? (Of what am I the proudest? For what do I want to be known?)
7. What do I lead with in conversations?
8. Early on what do I want to make sure that people know about me?
9. What prayer, unanswered, would make me seriously think about turning away from God?
10. What do I really want and expect out of life? (What would really make me happy?)
11. What is my hope for the future?
 - As we preach, we must seek to expose the reality that if the answer to any of these questions is anything, or anyone, other than Jesus, then we are guilty of idolatry and our hearts are positioned for disappointment, discouragement, despair, and destruction because no false god or counterfeit savior can truly save us, satisfy us, and secure us. Only Jesus is truly willing and able to provide us with these things.

Shepherd-Preaching Priority #7: Remember to evangelize the lost.

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Spirit-empowered, pastorally applied, evangelistic biblical exposition for the purpose of converting the lost and edifying the found.

Faithful Exposition that is Evangelistic. Is it possible?

Practical ways to preach to believers and non-believers:

- We need to aim Sunday morning preaching at both believers and non-believers. Believers are primary but we must seek to show hospitality to non-believers.
- We need to remember that God saves and sanctifies through preaching.
- Preach in a way that you expect people to get saved! With conviction....believe what you are preaching! People can tell if you believe what you preach.
- Speak to and address non-Christians. Believers will feel comfortable bringing non-Christians because they know you will talk to them. This doesn't mean avoiding theological terms, but we need to define theological terms.
- We need to publically acknowledge our own brokenness and need for Christ.
- Evangelize (share the "good news") the saved and the unsaved in every sermon...the Gospel applies to every unbelieving part of a Christian's life.
- Always B-line to Jesus...preach Christ!
- Look at your sermon and see where non-Christians will object...and address it (when it is appropriate).

Shepherd-Preaching Priority #8: <u>Demonstrate pastoral love and encouragement.</u>
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Shepherd preachers are first and foremost called to be shepherd pastors. What are the functions of a biblical shepherd?

Biblical Function #1: The Shepherd Pastor KNOWS the Flock

- As shepherds, it our responsibility to get to know our flock, one sheep at a time. We must pursue the sheep, engaging our people on a regular basis. Moreover, a good shepherd keeps his eyes and ears open as to what is happening in the lives of the sheep.

Biblical Function #2: The Shepherd Pastor LEADS the Flock

- Sheep need to be led and God's will is that his flock would be led by shepherds who have a heart that reflects his heart.
- Jeremiah 3:15, God says, "I will give you shepherds after my own heart, who will lead you with knowledge and understanding."

Biblical Function #3: The Shepherd Pastor FEEDS the Flock

- Jesus speaks with Peter in John 21:15, "When they had finished eating, Jesus said to Simon Peter, 'Simon son of John, do you truly love me more than these?' 'Yes, Lord,' he said, 'you know that I love you.' Jesus said, 'Feed my lambs.'"
- Shepherds must understand that sheep cannot find pastures on their own. Sheep have a very difficult time discerning the difference between healthy food and poisonous weeds. Therefore, sheep need a shepherd to help them find healthy food to nourish them. In this way, God's people need shepherd-pastors who will teach them rightly, feeding them and helping them find nourishment for their souls from God's word.

Biblical Function #4: The Shepherd Pastor PROTECTS the Flock

- Shepherd pastors are responsible for protecting their sheep from dangers both outside and inside the fold.
- Keep watch over yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseer. Be shepherds of the church of God, which he bought with his own blood. I know that after I leave, savage wolves will come in among you and will not spare the flock. Even from your

own number men will arise and distort the truth in order to draw away disciples after them. - Acts 20:28-30

9 Pastoral Purposes for Preaching

1. You Preach in order to **feed** the flock.

2. You Preach in order to **lead** the flock.

3. You Preach in order to **protect** the flock.

4. You Preach in order to **show love and care** for the flock.

5. You Preach in order to **encourage** the flock.

6. You Preach in order to **confront** the flock.

7. You preach in order to **inspire** the flock.

8. You Preach in order to **apply biblical truth** to the flock.

9. You preach in order to **pour out grace, joy, and hope** into the lives of the flock.

Conclusion:

In review, these 8 priorities serve as the foundation of shepherd-preaching. The 8 priorities are presented in the form of an acronym that will be easy to memorize and thus utilize in your ongoing growth and practice of preaching. The 8 priorities are:

Priority #1: Seek a posture of humility and holiness.

Priority #2: Honor the text and its authority.

Priority #3: Exult in God and His glory!

Priority #4: Proclaim the person and work of Christ!

Priority #5: Happily yield to the Spirit's power.

Priority #6: Exhort through Gospel application.

Priority #7: Remember to evangelize the lost.

Priority #8: Demonstrate pastoral love and encouragement!

Challenge: Memorize these 8 priorities and let them guide you in your preparation and delivery of shepherd-preaching!

Section #2: The Nuts & Bolts of Shepherd Preaching

Part 1 – Before you preach: Six steps to crafting a God-honoring, expositional sermon

Step #1: Pick a passage (What do I preach?)

Step #2: Meditate on the passage (Have I "eaten" the text?)

- Key Phrase: Think yourself empty.

Step #3: Study the passage (Do I understand the text?)

- Key Phrase: Read yourself full.

Step #4: Structure your sermon.

- Different models and approaches.
- Need a clear outline which includes:
 - 1) The main idea of the passage **AND** 2) The main points (and sub-points)

Step #5: Writing your sermon.

- The discipline and hard work of manuscripting.
- Key Phrase: Write yourself clear.

Step #6: Preparing to preach your sermon

5 things to do (every time) to help you preach a "good to great" sermon.

#1: Print it.

#2: Study it, Mark it up, and Memorize.

#3: Practice it several times out loud (just like you would preach it for others).

#4: Spend time praying over it.

#5: Preach it like it's your last.

- "Preach as a dying man to dying men." – Richard Baxter
- Key phrase: Pray yourself hot and let yourself go!

<p>Part 2 - After you preach: Five Strategies to help you continue to grow as a preacher</p>

Growth strategy #1: Evaluate your sermon honestly but hopefully.

- Listen/Watch your sermon...painful but so helpful in your growth!

Questions to consider as you evaluate your sermon:

- Was the sermon clear? Easy to follow?
- Was your delivery engaging? Why or why not?
- Any distracting quirks you need to work to get rid of (quirks in your speech or movement/gestures)?
- How well did you handle the text?
- Was Christ and the Gospel clearly seen?
- Was God glorified?
- Was there intentional application?
- How well did you love people from the pulpit?
- Overall, what were the strengths of this sermon? Areas for growth?

Growth strategy #2: Listen to other strong expositional preachers.

Growth strategy #3: Keep growing in your preparation and delivery of expositional preaching.

A few excellent books to help you:

- Christ-Centered Preaching by Bryan Chappell
- Biblical Preaching by Haddon Robinson
- Power in the Pulpit by Jerry Vines and Jim Shaddix
- Between Two Worlds by John R.W. Stott
- Preaching by John MacArthur
- Preaching with Bold Assurance by Bert Decker and Hershael York

Growth strategy #4: Get more reps whenever you can.

Growth strategy #5: Be a lifetime student of biblical preaching.

Three recommended podcasts to listen to:

- On Preaching with H.B. Charles Jr.
- Expositor with Dr. Steven Lawson
- Preaching and Preachers with Dr. Jason Allen

Ten great preaching books to read:

1. Preaching and Preachers by Martyn Lloyd-Jones
2. The Supremacy of God in Preaching by John Piper
3. An Earnest Ministry by John Angell James
4. Doctrine that Dances by Robert Smith
5. Preaching the Whole Bible as Christian Scripture by Graham Goldsworthy
6. Him We Proclaim by Dennis Johnson
7. Preaching by Timothy Keller
8. Lectures to My Students by Charles Spurgeon
9. The Christ-Centered Expositor by Tony Merida
10. Preaching to a Post-Everything World by Zack Eswine

Appendix: Different Models for Sermon Preparation

John Stott on Preparing Sermons¹⁰

Author:

Dennis McCallum and Gary DeLashmutt

This outline is condensed from John R. W. Stott, *Between Two Worlds* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1982), pp. 211-216.

I. Choose Your Text

1. It is best to rely on expository book studies for the steady diet of your people.
2. However, the following may be occasions for special sermons:
 - Special calendar occasions: Christmas, Easter, etc.
 - Special external circumstances which are in the public mind.
 - Special needs discerned by the preacher or others.
 - Truths which have specially inspired the preacher.
3. Keep a notebook to scribble down ideas for sermons, insights, burdens, illustrations, etc. Record them immediately wherever they come to mind, because you will usually forget them later.

¹⁰ <https://www.xenos.org/essays/stott-preparing-sermons>

II. Meditate on the Text

1. Whenever possible, plan out texts weeks or months in advance. This gives the benefit of "subconscious incubation".
2. Concentrated "incubation" should begin at least one week before preaching. It should involve the following:
 - Read, re-read & re-read the text.
 - Be sure you understand what it means. Do your own interpretive work. Never use commentaries until you have formulated specific interpretive questions which you have been unable to answer, or until you have completed your interpretive work.
 - Brood longer over how it applies to your people, to the culture, to you, etc.
 - All the while, pray for God to illuminate the text, especially its application.
 - All the while, scribble down notes of thoughts, ideas, etc.
 - Solicit the insights of others through tapes, talking with other preachers, etc.

III. Isolate the Dominant Thought (this is the purpose of II.)

1. Your sermon should convey only one major message. All of the details of your sermon should be marshaled to help your people grasp that message and feel its power.
2. You should be able to express the dominant thought in one short, clear, vivid sentence.

IV. Arrange Your Material to Serve the Dominant Thought

1. Chisel and shape your material. Ruthlessly discard all material which is irrelevant to the dominant thought. Subordinate the remaining material to the dominant thought by using that material to illuminate and reinforce the dominant thought.
2. Your sermon structure should be suited to the text, not artificially imposed. Avoid structure which is too clever, prominent or complex.

3. Decide on your method of preaching for this text: argumentation, faceting, categorizing, analogy, etc.
 4. Carefully choose words that are precise, simple, clear, vivid and honest. Write out the keys sections, phrases, and sentences to help you in your word choice. Stick to short declarative and interrogative sentences with few, if any, subordinate clauses.
 5. Come up with illustrations and examples which will explain and convict. Employ a wide variety: figures of speech, images, retelling biblical stories in contemporary language, inventing fresh parables, retelling true historical and/or biographical events, etc. Keep a file of these, especially if they do not come easily to you. Avoid making illustrations and examples so prominent that they detract from the dominant thought. Also avoid applying them inappropriately or overusing them.
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V. Add the Introduction and Conclusion

1. The introduction should not be elaborate, but enough to arouse their curiosity, whet their appetites and introduce the dominant thought. This can be done by a variety of means: explaining the setting of the passage, story, current event or issue, etc.
 2. The conclusion should not merely recapitulate your sermon - it should apply it. Obviously, you should be applying all along, but you should keep something for the end which will prevail upon your people to take action. "No summons, no sermon". Preach through the head to the heart (i.e. the will). The goal of the sermon should be to "storm the citadel of the will and capture it for Jesus Christ". What do you want them to do? Employ a variety of methods to do this:
 - Argument: anticipate objections and refute them
 - Admonition: warn of the consequences of disobedience
 - Indirect Conviction: arouse moral indignation and then turn it on them (Nathan with David)
 - Pleading: apply the gentle pressure of God's love, concern for their well-being, and the needs of others
 - Vision: paint a picture of what is possible through obedience to God in this area
-

VI. Write Down and Pray Over Your Message

1. Writing out your sermon forces you to think straight and sufficiently. It exposes lazy thinking and cures it. After you are thoroughly familiar with your outline, reduce it to small notes.
2. Pray that God will enable you to "so possess the message that the message possesses you."

Ryan Huguley on Preparing Sermons¹¹

D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones said, "The work of preaching is the highest and the greatest and the most glorious calling to which anyone can ever be called." I'm so thankful to be a preacher. It's my favorite part of being a pastor. While I love the act of preaching, I often find the art of prepping sermons tedious. I love to study and preach what the Lord gives me. It's the blood, sweat, and tears in between that makes me long for the time when I was a vocational coffee maker.

Because I preach about 45 times a year, I'm always prepping a sermon. I've tried just about every means possible, but finally seem to have fallen into a consistent rhythm. I'm a bit of a nerd, but I'm obsessed with hearing about the process other preachers use to prepare sermons, so I thought I'd share my own. Here are the 6 steps I take to prep a sermon start to finish...

1. Pray With Persistence.

The development and delivery of Spirit-filled, eternity-altering, life-changing preaching demands a posture of prayer. Preachers are called to a task we're incapable of accomplishing. Prayer is an acknowledgement of our dependence. We petition the Spirit of God to do what we can't do. Prayer must persist throughout the preparation and presentation of the sermons we proclaim.

2. Read And Record.

If your sermon prep starts with something other than an open Bible, you're doing it wrong. The Apostle Paul told a young pastor named Timothy to "preach the word." We don't preach our creativity, thoughts, feelings, ideas, or stories. These may be PART of the sermon, but if they ARE the sermon we've wasted the time of our listeners.

Monday's for me are marked by coffee, my Bible, and a blank piece of paper. I'm marking up the text, writing it out by hand, recording my observations and questions, and beginning the difficult, but rewarding work of letting the text

¹¹ <http://ryanhuguley.com/ryan-huguley/2013/4/25/6-steps-to-prepare-a-sermon-start-to-finish>

speak. I LOVE this part. Every week, even when I'm worn out, the Spirit reminds me that the Word of God is living and active. Every sermon starts with Scriptures and a sheet of paper.

3. Supplement Your Study.

By Tuesday morning, I've done my own work and have hopefully begun to get my heart and mind around the text. While the Holy Spirit speaks to me directly through the text, I also know that He uses the work of other men and women to sharpen and clarify my thinking as well. This means on Tuesday I have Logos open and I'm checking my own interpretation against the best commentaries I can find. I typically have one primary commentary that I'm studying in depth and two or three others I'm skimming as well. BestCommentaries.com is a very helpful site for picking and choosing the ideal commentary.

4. Frame It Out.

Wednesday is my day off, so all the work I've done on Monday and Tuesday is marinating throughout the day. Thursday morning I'm back in my office, my Bible and notes are out, and it's time to find and frame the sermon. I'm crafting my Big Idea and looking for how to best outline my main points.

My outline changes week to week, but with each point I preach I'm seeking to do the same three things: 1) Interpretation 2) Illustration (3) Implication - explain what the text is saying, illustrate for the purpose of clarity, and bring the text to bear on our lives. For me, this is the most difficult step. Once I have this in place the rest is merely discipline.

5. Write. Write. Write.

I know a growing number of people preach with no notes. While fine for some, preaching with no notes often results in rabbit trails, rants, and random thoughts that go unfiltered. Unless you have an abnormally strong memory, I believe everyone should take some type of notes into the pulpit with them.

For me, this means spending each Friday holed up in my office. With my door shut and my headphones on, I write. I write what I call a "broken manuscript." It doesn't contain everything I WILL say, but it contains everything I MUST say. Here's how I format my notes:

- Two pages printed front and back on cardstock in landscape with two columns so my notes can be folded in half to fit in my Bible.
- Typed in Adobe Garamond Pro with main points bolded at 13 and regular text at 11 with all Scripture italicized.
- I use bullets to better visualize complete units of thought.

If I have framed my sermon well, writing takes as few as four hours. More often than not I write from 9am-2pm each Friday and at times have to write a bit more on Saturday. It's tedious and I often loathe Friday. However, when done right, I feel the fruit of this work on Sunday.

6. Vandalize To Internalize.

I'm not sure there is anything worse than a pastor taking a word-for-word manuscript into the pulpit and proceeding to read it to his people (I fell asleep writing that sentence, it sounds so boring). NO ONE WANTS TO HEAR YOU READ! You can't just write a good sermon, you have to PREACH it! This means you have to get all the work in you so that it can come out of you with conviction, clarity, and compassion. I have to vandalize my notes in order to internalize them.

I edit, circle, and underline. I write out transitions, jot down illustrations, and clarify my application. I also highlight. BLUE is main points, GREEN is illustrations, YELLOW is textual, PINK is implications, and ORANGE is transitions. At times on Sunday mornings, someone will catch a glimpse of my notes and think I've lost my mind. When I'm done they look like the walls of every serial killers hideout in every movie you've ever seen. But, somehow this is how I get them in me.

Conclusion.

In talking with pastors about preaching, one thing has become clear: Every preacher has their own process. This is mine. It's hard work, but it's fruitful work. I'm humbled that God uses this work to grow others, but I'm most grateful that God uses this work to change me. I have a pastor friend who says, "Sermon prep is the crucible of my sanctification." I couldn't agree more and I thank God for the honor of studying and preaching His Word.

John Piper on Preparing Sermons¹²

¹² <https://www.desiringgod.org/interviews/how-do-you-prepare-your-sermons>

My pattern is not to be followed by anybody except those who are wired exactly like I am, which is probably no one. We are all so different. When I teach preaching to the guys, I really stress, "Look how I do it and take that into account. But please don't try to imitate me, because it might not work for you."

This is my approach. If I know my text fairly well and it is familiar to me, I don't work on it until Friday. I pick out the title and text either weeks or days ahead of time because I have to get it to the worship guys by Tuesday. But I don't study it, and I don't write or work on a sermon until Friday morning. I devote all of Friday to sermon preparation.

If I need to I will stay up all night. I've never stayed up all night on Friday, but I've stayed up until 2am when I didn't know what I was going to say and needed more time to study. Or I might get an interruption because of a ministry crisis during the day that is totally unexpected, which causes me to stay up late studying on Friday. The nights are always there as buffers, however, I almost never stay up that late.

So I start on Friday by putting the text up on my computer in English-Greek or English-Hebrew. I read through the original language getting all the help I need with my mouse. I will also have a half sheet of paper in front of me on the desk where I write out the text and make comments as I go. As I write out the text I'm praying, "God show me what's here for my people. Show me what's really here, not something in my head that I force inside the text. Let me see new things that I've never seen before."

And as I write, for whatever reason, I see things. The pen, the computer, the Greek, the Hebrew, the writing it out. I circle things and make little comments in the margin. The little half sheet looks like an absolute jumble when I'm done, and I've generally got a whole slug of questions that can be answered. I've got lines drawn all over the place.

Then I step back and say, "Lord, what am I going to do with all that? I could talk on that for three hours, but I've only got 35 or 45 minutes to do this." In prayer and thought some of those circles come together, and I say, OK, I'm going to make those two, three, or four points. And I take out another sheet of paper and try to figure out how those points should fit together. Backwards? Forwards? Should I start in the middle? All of this may happen by lunch time.

Then I go eat lunch, and when I get back I put up my word document and I just start writing. I take my thoughts that I scribbled out and I compose straight on to the computer, editing as I go. As I write I think and preach out loud, feeling it and praying. That takes four, five, six, seven, or even eight

hours to get written. And after it is written I print it out and go to bed, or go to be with Noel or whatever.

Then Saturday after lunch, after Talitha and I go to Leanne Chin or Jimmy John's, I come home and I really go to work on internalizing it with all my little markings. What I take into the pulpit on Sunday is about 10 double-spaced pages that are so marked up they look like chicken scratch, and they function as my outline while I'm talking.

It works for me. Most people who hear I do it that way say, "No way can I start on Friday." Or, "No way can I take a manuscript into the pulpit and not have it be canned." No problem. Wear your own armor, not mine.

Joe Thorn on Preparing Sermons¹³

I've been preaching for over 20 years. Over those two decades my approach to preparation and my preaching has changed, and I continue to work on it. Continued growth is needed in this area since it is such a major part of my calling. But my basic method at this point have been in play for a while now and enough of you have asked me to share how I prepare a sermon. So, here it is.

You can see by the title of this post that this is not the way to prepare a sermon, but away. It is my method. If you find anything here that is helpful, take it! You can leave the rest.

Determine Your Time

Many preachers struggle with how much time to put into sermon preparation and are further confused by the stories of Pastor So-and-so who somehow puts in over 20 hours of sermon preparation a week. Whatever.

10 hours. That's it. Most pastors do a lot more than preach and do not have several staff members to whom they can hand off other responsibilities. 10 hours. That's what I give myself and what I recommend other pastors and church planters to allot for themselves each week. If you can't prepare a good sermon in 10 hours you're definitely doing it wrong.

When I say 10 hours, I'm speaking of "desk time." I'm not counting all the time I spend on the sermon in my head and in prayer away from the desk. I'm thinking about it while driving, mowing the lawn, and just going about my everyday business. So the 10 hours is filled with what I describe below.

¹³ <http://www.joethorn.net/blog/2016/3/7/how-i-prepare-a-sermon>

Know Your Text

You have to have a text before you can have a sermon. You can give a nice talk without a text, but if you want to preach and see the power of God breathe life into the dead, you need a text. I map our series and sermons 6-12 months in advance. Scheduling sermons that far out allows me to not only see what's coming, but also gives me more chances of finding relevant material for future sermons that I can file away until I need them. I'd rather start with a text than a topic. The former will give me the latter.

Once you have your text, **read the passage multiple times**. Become familiar with it. **Study the passage** in its immediate and broader contexts to understand where it falls in the book and the history of Redemption. **Develop an outline of the passage** that clarifies the story, the argument, the poetry, or whatever it is you are reading. **Distill the text to its main idea** or central theme.

Highlight the specific doctrines taught and emphasized in the passage.

Throughout your sermon development you can use helps like commentaries, systematic theology, etc. (I use Logos Bible Software) to assist you. I usually wait until I have done as much as possible on my own before cracking open other books, articles, other sermons, confessions, catechisms, etc.

Reflect on the Passage

Now that you know the text on a deeper level, you can continue to work on it through the discipline of meditation. I mean it's time to **preach this text to yourself**. What is God confronting in your heart and life through those verses? What promises does he hold out to you? Seek to be convicted and encouraged. You must feel the power of the Scripture if you want to preach earnestly.

A help for me in this process is journaling. I write out thoughts, prayers, questions, and ideas to dig deeper into the Bible and my heart. Once you have preached this to yourself and have come to see God working in you, then **transition to the application and implications of the text for the congregation to whom you are preaching**.

I like to close my eyes and visualize the people in their seats, or I work through our Community Group rosters, and take note of the condition of the people. Is our church in a period of joy or sorrow? Who is lonely, frightened, frustrated, and struggling? Who is rebelling and who is rebuilding? You want to preach more than generalities to the people. Be specific in how the Scripture addresses the people in calling them to repent and believe, to mourn and rejoice, to hear and obey.

Clarify Your Main Idea

I believe that **every sermon should have one, central idea that drives the whole message**. This is the one thing what you want the people to know and experience. This is what they should remember from the sermon, and then be able to unpack it a bit for themselves and others. This may not be

the main point of the passage itself, as you may want to focus on a minor point being made by the original author. For help on determining the main idea of a sermon see Haddon Robinson's, *Biblical Preaching*, or my favorite, Bryan Chapell's *Christ-Centered Preaching*.

The sermon notes in the photo above is from a recent sermon I preached on Psalm 115:1 called, "Soli Deo Gloria." The "sermon summary" for that message was, "The Purpose of God is the Glory of God." That was the idea unpacked throughout the sermon.

Build the sermon

All that you have done up to this point is the material you will use to build the actual sermon. Using the passage studied and applied, and the central idea you want to emphasize, you can now develop the structure (homiletic outline) of the sermon itself: introduction, main idea, supporting points, conclusion. Don't worry about alliteration. Don't waste time on making sure the points rhyme. People aren't going to remember all the points in your sermon, but they are likely to remember the main idea and various aspects of the sermon the Holy Spirit impresses upon them.

Finalize notes

People have different approaches to sermon notes: full manuscript, detailed outlines, no notes at all. And a lot of people are a bit dogmatic about why their way is best. The reality is preachers are all different and you want to use the notes that helps you preach to the best of our abilities. I've tried every method, but for the last 10 years I have been preaching from one sheet of notes that I tuck into my Bible.

Whatever your approach to notes is, if you use them, get the finalized form together close to the day of preaching. I start preparing on Monday and by Thursday my sermon is pretty much done. On Saturday morning I put everything I am using onto one sheet, and I am finished. The notes to the right are from last week's sermon, "The Crucifixion of Jesus Christ."

This is the big picture of how I prepare a sermon, and as I said this is only one approach. It's simple and experiential, feeding me before I seek to feed others.

Matt Chandler on Preparing Sermons¹⁴

PreachingToday.com: Are there any key questions you normally answer, or paths of thought you typically take, as you study a text and write the sermon?

Matt Chandler: I am predominately concerned with the text, but when preparation moves to application of the text, I think through the following questions:

¹⁴ <https://www.preachingtoday.com/skills/themes/sermonprep/mattchandlersermon.html>

- What objections will those who aren't believers (both pagans and those who are the religiously lost) have to this text?
- Has this text been taught incorrectly in recent history?
- How does the application of this text vary to people across the different stages of life—from High School student, college student, single adult, married adult, or empty nester? How does the application vary from a male or female perspective?
- Have I correctly and faithfully pointed people to the person and work of Christ and the gospel in this text?

What schedule routine do you follow in sermon preparation?

I have three separate two-and-a-half lockdown study days a week: Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Saturday mornings. I am at least six weeks ahead and can be almost six months ahead at certain times of the year. I usually adhere to the following schedule:

- On Tuesdays I do most of my exegesis and build out sermon outlines.
- On Thursdays I begin to put flesh and blood to the sermon outlines. Illustrations, word pictures, and so on all happen on Thursdays. The questions listed above get asked and answered, and the sermon can have radical shifts on that day.
- Saturday is more about making sure the text has read me. I get up to my study at noon, pray over my message, and pray through the text leading up to our first service at 5:00 p.m.

Jeremy Roberts on Preparing Sermons¹⁵

I love to proclaim the Word of God. When I do it, it feels like fulfillment of my calling. I remember the first time I preached. I was on a mission trip in England, and I was 16. The pastor of the small, rural, British church where we were visiting had recently resigned and they didn't have anyone to preach. So, they asked me. I called my dad to ask how to prepare a sermon, and he gave me some pointers. The moment I preached that message, I began falling in love with homiletics. When it comes to preparing a sermon, please keep in mind some background work would've already been done by the time I sit down to prepare a large majority of my sermons. I would've already prepared a preaching calendar and determined what I was going to preach. This post is about what I do when I sit in the chair and start pounding out a sermon. This is a typical step-by-step process that I follow:

1. Pray

Praying shouldn't just take place at the beginning of the sermon prep process, but should be laced throughout it. I find myself talking to God, sometimes

¹⁵ <http://jeremyroberts.org/sermonpreparation/>

audibly, while sitting at my desk. I ask God to give me wisdom, to reveal what He wants me to preach, I pray for the hearts of those who will hear it, and I ask the Lord to encourage me.

2. Review the Preaching Calendar and Evernote Files

Keep in mind that when I sit down to prepare a sermon, I have already determined what I'm preaching and done a slight bit of exegesis. Review these things. I keep all of this info in Evernote.

3. Read through the Text I'm Preaching in Various Versions

Within Logos, I open various versions of the Bible and read the same text over and over. This helps me to see the text with greater clarity.

4. Write Down Main Observations of the Text

Are certain words repeated? Are there key words I should expound upon in the message with thorough word studies? I scribble all of this down within a Word document.

5. Determine the Key Backgrounds of the Text: Geography, Language, History, Cross-References in the Bible

In order to engage in proper hermeneutics, one must go through all of these things.

6. Go through the Process of Performing Word Studies (if necessary)

This is the time I actually perform the word studies. Sometimes I use commentaries to do this, but I usually use Logos because it helps do the word studies for me. I occasionally reference my personal notes from Hebrew and Greek classes in seminary.

7. Read through Various Commentaries, Other Pertinent Books, and Files

I used to read through commentaries much earlier in the process, but I determined the author of the commentary was giving his or her two cents on the text without me thinking through it on my own at first. Now, I wait until this time in the process to do this.

8. Determine the Bottom Line and Outline the Sermon

It is now time to build the skeleton. At this point, I write the main points and sub-points of the text with additional cross-referencing of other Scriptures for the message.

9. Determine Illustrations and Application Points

You would've already read what you need in order to examine this message. This is the time to sift what you read, and what the audience needs to learn for the sake of understanding the text more easily.

I spend more time on application than I ever have before. People don't want to just hear what the Bible says, but also how it impacts their lives, and what to do with it.

10. Write the Sermon Manuscript

I'm a big believer in manuscripting a sermon...I also color code my sermons: I use yellow for important things to state, blue for illustrations, green for Scripture, and purple for biblical illustrations.

11. Prepare Ancillary Tools Related to the Sermon

At this point, the actual sermon is written. It is now time to simply prepare all of the other stuff that goes with it.

12. Trickle the Sermon from Your Head to Your Heart

I read through the manuscript in my devotional time because I already have the message in my head, but I ask God daily to trickle it from my head to my heart.

H.B. Charles Jr. on Preparing Sermons¹⁶

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

¹⁶ <https://www.hbcharlesjr.com/2012/11/19/on-sermon-preparation/>

A pastor's primary responsibility is to preach and teach the word of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ (2 Tim. 4:1-5). Faithfulness to this holy charge requires personal devotion, diligent study, and laborious preparation. Sermons don't grow on trees! Well, biblical, Christ-exalting sermons don't. Good preaching is hard work.

But how do you get from text to sermon? What steps should a preacher take to preacher a sound, clear, and helpful sermon?

The following steps represent my regular process of sermon preparation. It is not the only way to do it. But you may find it beneficial to compare another preacher's process of sermon preparation.

Pray. Start your sermon preparation with prayer. Pray that the Lord would open my eyes (Ps. 119:18) and give me understanding (Ps. 119:34). But do not let this become a perfunctory act. Prayer needs to pervade every aspect of the process. Pray that Christ would oversee your study. Trust the Holy Spirit lead to you to the truth. Seek the mind of God in the text. Repent as the text confronts you with sin in your life. Pray for wisdom as you read. Ask for clarity as you write.

Read and reread the text. Before you understand what a text means, you need to listen to what it says. So don't begin crafting an outline before you have spent time reading the text. Read prayerfully, slowly, and carefully. Read it aloud. Mark it up as you read. Read expecting the text to speak to you. Then read the text again. And again. Saturate your mind with the text until it gets into your system.

Compare translations. You may study and preach from a particular translation. But it pays to read the text from several different versions. It can help you to see the text with fresh eyes. It will highlight words that need to be studied further. And it will further get the text into your heart and mind. Read the committee translations, like the New King James, New American Standard, English Standard Version, and New International Version, and the Holman Christian Standard Bible. Likewise, read some good paraphrases, like the Living Bible, J.B. Phillip's paraphrase, or Eugene Peterson's The Message.

Do observations of the text. The inductive Bible study method asks four big questions of the text: (1) Observation: What does it say? (2) Interpretation: What does it mean? (3) Application: How does it apply? And (4) Correlation: How does it relate (to the rest of scripture)? But it all begins with Observation. Start your formal study of the text with an open Bible, pen and paper (or computer keyboard). Just work through what you see in the text. Note long, important, repeated, difficult, or repeated words. Do sentence

diagrams. Ask journalistic questions (who, what when, where, and why?) Do “sanctified brainstorming” until you have thought yourself clear.

Perform word studies. You may not be an expert in the original languages. But with all of the study helps available, there is no excuse for you misreading the words of the text. Study word meanings, grammar, and usage. Then make sure you put what you learn in clear, picturesque language, so that you do not drown your people in technical details unnecessarily.

Review the cross-references. This is the Correlation part of the inductive Bible study method. You want to make sure your reading of your text lines up with what the rest of scripture has to say on the subject. If you have an idea that cannot be backed up anywhere else in scripture, you’re wrong. So let scripture interpret scripture by carefully reviewing pertinent cross-references. Some may suggest themselves as you study. Or use a topical Bible (like Nave’s) or The Treasury of Scripture Knowledge.

Read the commentaries. There is wisdom in the multitude of counselors. So take advantage of the wisdom of diligent Bible commentators. Don’t treat commentators as if they are divinely inspired. But be humble enough to learn from the wisdom of others. Read exegetical commentaries for insights into the text. Read homiletical commentaries with a view toward shaping the text for the pulpit. Read devotional commentaries to get at the heart of the text for application. Read the commentaries to sharpen your thinking, not to steal material. Milk a lot of cows, but churn your own butter.

Survey additional sources. Thank God for the Internet! There are many church and ministry websites where sermons outlines, manuscripts, and audio messages are posted. Likewise, there are books of sermons, which may have a chapter on the text you are working on. And there are sermons tapes, CD’s, and mp3s you can pick up to hear how different preachers have dealt with your text. Take advantage of these resources to broaden your thinking as you prepare your message.

Develop a Sermon Skeleton. A “Sermon Skeleton” is a statement of your sermon’s purpose, aims, and structure. This is where you put your study material together in sermonic form. Pick a title. Identify the doctrinal theme of the message. State the point, thesis, or Big Idea of the sermon in a single sentence. Work through the objectives for the sermon (What do you want the hearer to think, feel, do?). Craft your outline. Write out your transitional sentences.

Write a complete sermon manuscript. If you develop your Sermon Skeleton carefully, you may be tempted to slap an introduction and conclusion on it and declare yourself ready to preach. Resist that temptation. Take the time to write out a complete, word-for-word manuscript. You may not take it to the pulpit. In fact, I recommend you don’t. You should prepare a brief set

of notes for preaching. But these pulpit notes should be pared down from a complete sermon manuscript.

In summary, your sermon process should consist of several practical steps: Think yourself empty. Read yourself full. Write yourself clear. And pray yourself hot. Then go to the pulpit and be yourself. But don't preach yourself. Preach Jesus to the glory of God!