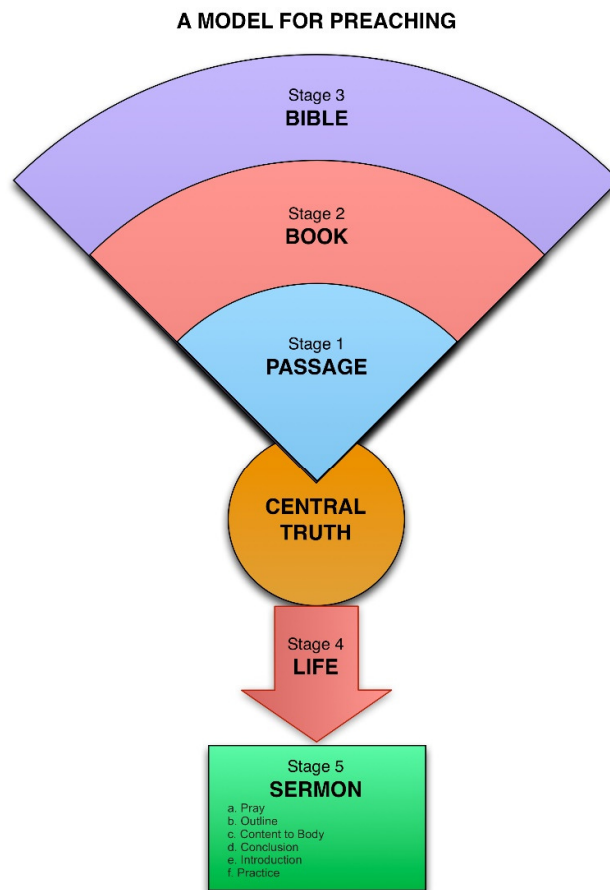


Preaching for Beginners

The Preaching Model – Constructing the Sermon (STAGE 5: SERMON)

It may seem like a lot of work so far to get to this point – it has been. Now we should start to see why that hard work is important. In this section, we want to think about how you actually construct or package a talk.

- There is no 'one-size-fits-all perfect' way to structure a sermon!
- Every sermon should be different – and it will be.
- Yet every sermon should be faithful to the Bible, Jesus and his Gospel.



- All of our work now comes together to help us construct our sermon or talk in a way that honours God, speaks his truth, and speaks it into the hearts and minds of those who will hear.

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- In Stage 5: The Sermon - there are 6 key elements to pull together.

6 key elements to a Sermon

1: Pray

- We have mentioned it before, and we will mention it again it is so crucial and important. Pray.

2: Construct an *outline*.

- The outline of your talk should be simple and clear. A good outline could have:

An Introduction
A Body Point 1...
 Point 2...
 Point 3...
A Conclusion

- Limit yourself to a few points (as opposed to many) depending on the time you have available to you..
 - It forces you to think about what is _____ and what is secondary, what is _____ and what is unnecessary.
- Your outline should help you establish the Central Truth.

3: Add *content* to the body of your outline.

For each point – it is helpful to:

- *State* the Point
- *Explain* what the passage says (pulling upon the work you have done in Stages 1-3 of the Preaching Model)
- *Illustrate* the point
- *Apply* the point to the listener (from Stage 4 of the Preaching Model).

4: Plan the end of your sermon with a *conclusion*.

- We want the listener to respond to what they have heard.
- It can be helpful to restate your sermon points.
- Finish with a challenge.

Preaching for Beginners

5: Plan the start of your sermon with an *introduction*.

- A good sermon will capture the listener's attention in the first words of the talk.
- Give your hearers a convincing reason to listen.
- Use the introduction to get people onto your sermon train and do what you can to get them on before you leave the station and progress with your talk.
- Notice, this is the last thing you write even though it is the first thing you say!

6: Practice.

- When you have done the work to construct your talk – it is time to practice it before you preach it.
- In practice you will work out if the sermon is too long – if it is, cut it back! Less is more.
- In practice you will hear the sermon – the tone, expression, pace, emotion and so on. If it is boring – you have time to work on it.

Construct the Outline

- What I want to do now is go back and talk about what we do to construct the outline.
- There are all sorts of outlines you could use to structure your talk – but just about all will come down to:

An Introduction

A Body

And a Conclusion.

- I want to suggest that the best way to develop your sermon outline is to allow

- Your Central Truth has been developed from the Bible Passage in its wider contexts and so by developing your talk around the Central Truth you will be forced into the text to back yourself up and you know the answers will be there because it is the text that has driven you to the Central Truth.
- So, ask yourself - *What 2 or 3 points do I need to make to establish the Central Truth?* That will become the body of your talk.

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Mark 8:27-9:1

- Let's say that the work we have done on the passage has brought us to the point that we have determined the central truth to be:

'Jesus the Christ, died and rose again – follow him and be saved'

- What 2 or 3 points could you make from the passage to establish that central truth statement?

- If possible, follow the flow of the passage with your structure.
- You don't have to stick to only two or three points – although it is a good discipline.
- Putting effort into working out catchy phrases will also help your listeners to follow your structure.
- Working out a sermon outline is *often the most frustrating part of sermon* preparation and if you get it right, everything else will fall into place.

Preaching for Beginners

The Sermon Grid Template

Text: <i>Mark 8:27-9:1</i>	Central Truth: <i>'Jesus the Christ, died and rose again – follow him and be saved'</i>			
Sermon Outline	State	Explain	Illustrate	Apply
Introduction				
Point 1 <i>His Identity (v27-30)</i>				
Point 2 <i>His Mission (v31-33)</i>				
Point 3 <i>His Requirements (v34-end)</i>				
Conclusion				
Prayer				

Appendix 2 provides you with a blank copy of this grid to use for sermon preparation.

Preaching for Beginners

Exercise – Construct Outline for Luke 9:51-62

1. Using the Sermon Grid Template – using Luke 9:51-62 as our Bible Passage – insert *your* Central Truth Statement (as established last training day).
2. Work out your sermon outline – specifically the points that you want to cover in the body of your sermon for Luke 9:51-62. For this exercise – limit yourself to a maximum of three points.

Text: <i>Luke 9:51-62</i>	Central Truth:			
Sermon Outline	State	Explain	Illustrate	Apply
Introduction				
Point 1				
Point 2				
Point 3				
Conclusion				
Prayer				

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Sermon Outline Handout

- Benefits:

- Weaknesses:

In the end – the decision is either that of your church (as enforced by their regular expectation) or you as the preacher (as exercised by your personal preference).

Sermon Content

- The purpose of this element is to put the flesh on the bones of the outline – and in a way that will help you effectively communicate.
- The suggestion here is that for each point you:
 - *State* (and locate) the point
 - *Explain* the point
 - *Illustrate* the point
 - *Apply* the point

State (and locate) the Point

- The *stating of the point* is just that – it is saying what you want to say.
- It should be said simply, briefly and memorably such that it focuses attention.
- The stated point should be: Easy to Grasp. Easy to Understand. Easy to Remember.
- It becomes a marker that the listener can hang things on.

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- When it comes to giving your sermon, you will need to orally 'underline' these stated points. (e.g. 'First thing to tell you is')
- A sermon that is clear and easy to follow, will more often be a sermon which has stated its points effectively.
- As part of stating the point, you need also to *locate the point* in the text.
- Direct people into the Bible, give a chapter and verse number. Read the verse to locate the stated point. (e.g. 'Please look with me at verse...')

Explain the Point

- Next you need to *explain the point*. That is, make clear what the point means.
- In your research through Stages 1-3 you will have discovered much material that will aid your explanation.
- Some (not all) of that material will find its way into your sermon at this point.
- A caution is this - recognize that the _____ is different to the _____.
- In *written communication* we can say many ideas with a minimum of words – and the reader in order to understand will be able to stop, go over and re-read, think, reflect, check and take notes if they wish – all of which will aid in their (slow) grasp of meaning.
- Not so with the *spoken word*.
- What that means is that the preacher needs to build in the think and digest time.
- The idea will need to be restated.
- Shorter sentences are needed.
- Word economy is paramount – but not by using more complicated terms.
- Language needs to be the language of those listening.
- How you choose to explain the point will be different from sermon to sermon.
- Robinson suggests a range of possible methods that could be used to explain your point.
In brief:

Define (pg. 140)

Used to locate a term or idea in language that the listener can understand. When it comes to theological terms this can be a useful approach because it makes something that sounds complicated (e.g. the incarnation) and defines it understandably (e.g. 'God became man – Jesus').

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Compare and Contrast (pg. 140)

Used to develop and explain ideas by putting them up against something which aids in understanding. Place a term or idea in its broad class or grouping and then show how it is different. (e.g. A lion is like a household cat but with much bigger teeth and is more likely to eat you!).

Your skill as a communicator will be seen as you use concepts which the listener is familiar with.

Factual Information (pg. 141-143)

Observations, examples, stats and non-fiction trivia can all be very helpful in supporting what you are trying to explain in a passage.

The background information to your biblical passage is very useful because it helps your listener to put it in a time and space. In many cases the Biblical text was written to men and women who lived in a known place, at a particular time, with a particular issue – that may be very helpful for the listener in understanding what is going on.

The Israelites travelled through a desert which still exists today. David met Goliath in a valley that you can visit today. They used weapons that were common in their time and there are still replicas in existence. Jesus calmed a storm on a sea that is known even today for its wild weather. Showing a verified photo may help your listener to grasp what was going on in the story.

Statistics can be useful to impress on your audience the importance, or scope, or urgency of a topic.

Robinson offers a helpful illustration (pg. 143)

In working with statistics, data can be made meaningful and vivid by comparing them to things within the experience of the audience. In describing the temple of Diana in Ephesus, we might say, 'It was 180 feet wide, over 375 feet long, with columns that towered 60 feet in height,' and then add, 'That temple was wider and longer than a football field including end zones, and the columns were taller than a five-story building'

Now something that was just numbers, becomes a picture which the listener can quite easily grasp.

Note however – care should be taken.

- Facts need to be facts – not fiction!!
- Facts should be reliable and so get the information from a reliable source.

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- Facts should be meaningful in an obvious way. You should not be asking your listeners to analyze the stats to get your point.

Quotations (pg. 143-146)

Quotations support or expand a point by impressing or showing authority.

Quotations *impress* when someone has said something helpful to your point in a powerful and memorable way. For example...

The greatest enemy of the truth is very often not the lie - deliberate contrived and dishonest - but the myth - persistent, persuasive and unrealistic.
(John F. Kennedy)

Quotations *show authority* if the point you are making is enhanced or backed up by someone with greater experience or authority in the area. For this to be helpful, the listener would need to know who the person was. This is particularly helpful if the point you are making is somewhat contentious.

Note: Use Quotations sparingly. And you should always acknowledge your quotations (though all you need to do is give a name, you do not need to give additional details—a listener who wants to track down the quote can ask you for these later).

Narration (pg. 146-148)

Narration draws the personalities out of the text and draws out the significance of the story in the text. The preacher retells the story and in doing so become the narrator of the story.

People love stories – so this is a good way to explain a text. It engages people and invites them to imagine what was going on for the characters in the text. For the preacher it helps to give dimensions to the text.

There are risks:

- You can subvert the biblical narrator's intentions by focusing upon features in the story which were not part of the original intention;
- You can fail to deliver the narration convincingly if you are not confident or lack adequate skill.
- The audience might be confused by your presentation if it is not clear what you are doing.

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Illustrate the Point

- *Illustrations* throw light on a topic. They are designed to help a hearer grasp a point that by nature can be difficult to understand or appreciate.

Illustrations

- Illustrations or stories help the listener to understand the message vividly and can be very useful to persuade people to act.
- The main principle of a good illustration is that you ...

(Tim Hawkins, pg. 132)

The various purposes of illustrations

- Illustrations serve various purposes.
 1. R _____
 - Illustrations can be a means of restating a truth in an engaging manner

Well-chosen, skillfully used illustrations restate, explain, validate, or apply ideas by relating them to tangible experiences. To nail a truth into the mind requires that we hit it several times. While most restatement comes through the repetition of propositional statements, illustrations can present the truth still another time without wearying the listeners. (Robinson, pg. 149)

- Illustrations can help clarify or reinforce the stated truth.

2. R _____

- Illustrations can add credibility to a truth by comparing the truth to something from everyday experience. Sometimes this can make the truth more understandable and reasonable.
- Consider how Jesus uses common day illustrations to make his point about the Kingdom of God in Matthew 13 – the parables of the Sower, Weeds, Mustard Seed, Buried Treasure and Fishing Net.

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3. R _____

- Illustrations can assist the hearer to understand how truth can make a difference to life. Illustrating by drawing on real life experiences can be a great help.
- A careful preacher can draw on real life or contemporary situations to show how Biblical truth can make a difference.
- The best illustrations are often the immediate ones—from the world about us, from us or people we are close to.
- Illustrations are more powerful if they come from *both* your life experience *and* that of your listeners. Conversely, the illustration that is *neither* from your firsthand experience *nor* from the firsthand experience of your listener, will be less useful and convincing.
- Robinson spends some time developing this idea and it is worth a read. (Robinson, pg. 153).

4. R _____

- Illustrations arouse interest and recall the attention of your listeners. Ever found your mind wandering in a sermon, when something gets your attention and brings you back – chances are, it was an illustration!
- Further an illustration may re-engage a person by appealing to their emotions as well as their mind. Facts and explanation generally address the mind, whereas an illustration can engage the emotions and so the overall effect is strengthened.

5. R _____

- Illustrations allow the listener time to relax and have a breather. The level of concentration needed to listen to an illustration is not as great as what is needed to understand a passage. The mental break can be very helpful for the listener.

6. R _____

- Illustrations reveal something of you as the speaker – your character, influence, passions, sense of humour etc. This can be very helpful in emotionally connecting with the listener and breaking down barriers in listening.

Preaching for Beginners

Finding Illustrations

- From collections of illustrations! In the Library for instance:
Come Alive with Illustrations by L. Flynn (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1987);
750 Engaging Illustrations edited by C. Larson (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2002).

Comment, Caution and Risk

- Be aware, an illustration can make a point beautifully or it can distract and mislead people from the Bible. Obviously, we want to make the point!
- Recognize that an illustration that works for one group of listeners could be offensive to another. Choose wisely.
- Illustrations should be understandable. If it requires explanation, then it is already unsuitable.
- It is important to consider the variety of life-experiences and demographics among your listeners. Obviously for an illustration to work, those listening need to be able to engage.
- The Bible itself can be a great source of illustration – the caution of course is to ensure that you use the Bible in context. Illustrating your point by misusing the Bible is self-defeating!
- If the illustration purports to be true – then be true to what happened.
- If mentioning someone (congregation member, friend, family) in the illustration – get their approval before you deliver it. Anonymity can also be a good thing.
- It should go without saying that if you are told something in confidence that that issue does not get used to illustrate your sermon!!

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- If using yourself as the illustration (especially in Australia) then ensure:
 - it is true.
 - you are modest.
 - you are being transparent regarding struggles, temptations and successes
 - you are careful of parading your life before the congregation *every* time you speak.
- Illustrations should be delivered with energy and enthusiasm. If *you* find the illustration helpful then deliver it as though you believe that your listener will too. The more engaged you are in the illustration, the more your listener will listen and ‘take it on board’.
- Be careful then in recycling a great illustration you heard from someone else’s sermon. Unless *you* are gripped by, and can retell it with equal zing and in *your* way and language, then do not use it.

- Okay in terms of Sermon Content – we have:
 - *Stated* (and located) the point
 - *Explained* the point
 - *Illustrated* the point

We still need to *Apply* the point. I’ll look at that in more detail next time when we get to conclusions.

Exercise – Fill in the Sermon Content for Luke 9:51-62

1. Using the Sermon Grid Template (you have already started working on – page 6) – in bullet point form work out what you will *State*, *Explain* and *Illustrate* for each point in the body of your sermon.

Preaching for Beginners

Appendix 2 – Sermon Construction Grid

Text:	Central Truth:			
Sermon Outline	State	Explain	Illustrate	Apply
Introduction				
Point 1				
Point 2				
Point 3				
Conclusion				
Prayer				