

Chapter 1 – Homiletics

Introduction

Preaching the Word of God is among the greatest privileges entrusted to man. It is also one of his greatest responsibilities.

Through the foolishness of preaching (1 Cor 1:21), God has chosen to reveal Himself to men. This knowledge of God, conveyed through preaching, is able to lead men to eternal salvation through faith in Jesus Christ. It is also able to transform them into the image and likeness of God (2Cor 3:18). These pages are the simple basic principles of preaching. They are intended primarily for those thousands of fine church leaders whose circumstances have denied them the training to develop their latent skills.

The notes were originally prepared for the students of the "Africa Christian Training School" in Harare, Zimbabwe.

"I would also like to acknowledge the insight and inspiration I received from reading "Notes on Homiletics" by Aaron Linford (England).

Seven years of ministry in Africa has brought me into contact with thousands of pastors and church leaders; most have never had the opportunity of any formal training in the art of preaching and teaching. They have not been able to study the principles of preaching; consequently, their abilities and skills are largely undeveloped. Their limitations in this area have impoverished congregations. An adequate preaching ministry is essential to the growth and spiritual development of a congregation. It is to these fine men that this simple training is lovingly dedicated. The art of preaching is called "HOMILETICS," derived from the Greek words *homileo* and *homilia*, which mean "to be in company with, i.e., to converse, and communicate".

Acts 20:11 is based on *homileo*. Note how it is translated in The Living Bible: "*They all went back upstairs and ate the Lord's Supper together; then Paul preached [homileo] another long sermon -so it was dawn when he finally left them!*"

Homiletics involves the study of everything related to the art of preaching sermons. Good sermons (communication) are birthed out of good communion (companionship) and fellowship.

There are two distinct aspects involved in preaching: Firstly, the divine; secondly, the human. Homiletics is the study of the human aspect!

A. HOW TO BE EFFECTIVE

Preaching is the art of communicating divine truth through human personality. A preacher is essentially a communicator. He receives truth from God and communicates it effectively to men.

God gives the revelation; man provides the presentation.

In order to do this effectively, he must learn to do several things well.

1. Wait On God

Firstly, he must learn how to wait on God. The preacher must learn how to be still in the presence of God, and discern the voice of the Lord speaking within his own spirit. (See Sections A2.1 and A2.2 of World MAP's book *The Shepherd's Staff* for more instructions on this.)

Every worthwhile sermon begins in the heart and mind of God, Who is the source of all truth. He is the fountain of all knowledge. The effective preacher's first task is to learn to receive the thoughts of God. Rarely will he ever hear an audible voice of God.

Divine truth will distill quietly in his spirit like the morning dew. The prospective preacher must wait patiently in the presence of God. There he will receive the precious thoughts and truths that God is always willing to share with those who seek Him diligently.

It is good to make a habit of spending time in God's presence. Set aside some portion of every day to enter the presence of God and wait patiently on Him. You will soon learn how to perceive the voice of God speaking quietly in your spirit.

We should not enter God's presence with the sole idea of "getting a sermon." We need to enter God's presence firstly to expose ourselves regularly to the scrutiny and counsel of God.

Rushing into His presence with an urgency which "needs a sermon for tomorrow" is certainly _not an attitude of heart that can receive the wonderful truths of God. We should allow truth an opportunity to have its effect on us before we endeavor to share it with others.

2. Study The Bible

Ideally, the preacher should come before God with his Bible in hand. Make time to sit quietly and patiently before God in this way. Ask for illumination and inspiration on His Word. Prayerfully seek out the counsel, wisdom and instructions of the Lord in His Word. Spread out the Bible before you and read it in His presence.

Sometimes it is good to follow a regular pattern of reading, beginning where you left off the previous day. This helps you to go consistently through the Bible, instead of reading here and there and neglecting large portions of the Scriptures.

At other times, you may seek some prompting of the Spirit as to where you should read. In this way, you do not get into a rut.

3. Keep A Notebook

A notebook in which to record the thoughts and ideas that come to your mind in these times of quiet waiting is essential. It is amazing how quickly one may forget the most wonderful truth, if the thought is not recorded while it is fresh in your mind.

Practice writing down every significant thought which comes to mind as you prayerfully read the Scriptures. If a theme suggests itself to you, follow it through as far as you can, and jot down everything you can on the subject. In this way, you will soon develop a good source of sermon material.

Read through the notebook every once in a while. The thoughts will begin to expand in your heart. You will find that some themes will occupy your mind for weeks, expanding continually as you meditate on them.

Get into the habit of talking to the Lord about His Word. When there are things you do not understand, ask the Holy Spirit to reveal the meaning to you. Ask for the spirit of revelation (Eph 1:17).

Then learn to wait quietly and patiently before God as He gently directs the answers into your spirit. Record them as they come to you. Get the truth down in your note- book. Don't trust them merely to memory. Even the best memory is strengthened by writing things down.

4. Be Cleansed By The Word

Try to avoid the attitude that seeks a word from God so that you can preach about it on Sunday morning. Do not always be looking for spiritual bullets that you can fire at someone. Recognize the primary need of your own heart. Let God deal with your heart through His Word and by His Spirit. Let the Word wash and cleanse you first.

Sharing what God has spoken to you about in the way of cleansing and correction is some of the best preaching there is.

It is important for you to feed your own soul. One of the traps that preachers can fall into is this: they are so intent on finding food for their congregation that their own spiritual welfare is neglected.

This is one of the hazards of the ministry. The thought is expressed this way in Song of Solomon 1:6: *"...they made me the keeper of the vine- yard s, but mine own vineyard have I not kept."*

Sometimes a pastor may be so involved in looking after the spiritual welfare of his flock that he sadly neglects his own spiritual well-being. This is one of the prime reasons that ministers fail. A minister cannot afford to neglect his own spiritual life.

Let the Word of God take root in your own heart and spirit. Let it grow strong in your personal life and experience. Then, when you preach, you will minister out of experience. You will not be speaking as one with a theory, but rather, sharing things which you yourself fully comprehend and have experienced.

The following verse teaches us this. *"The hard-working farmer must be first to partake of the crops"* (2Tim 2:6 nkjv). What you plant and harvest (in a spiritual sense), you must partake of (experience) before feeding it to others. You should never feed others what you have not first eaten. You should not try to guide others down paths and trails you have not first walked yourself.

As the Word of God becomes incarnate (that is, indwells you), you will then become a message from God. You will not be one who merely recites sermons, but one whose very life and lifestyle ministers life, blessing and strength to those who know and hear you.

B. TWO FALSE IDEAS ABOUT HOMILETICS

There are at least *two common mistakes* that people tend to make in regard to homiletics.

1. "Preparation Unnecessary"

The first mistaken idea is that preparation is unnecessary and indicates a lack of faith. People who take this view tend to feel that real faith disdains any attempt to prepare the mind, and merely stands before the people -believing that God will then supply the words to speak.

A favorite scripture of such people is Psalm 81:10: "...*open thy mouth wide and I will fill it.*" The context of the Psalm reveals that this verse has nothing to do with preaching! This tendency to ignore the biblical context of a scripture is rather typical of this kind of person. It betrays an irresponsible and naive attitude. This type of person is often known to speak nonsense. We would not wish to blame God for this person's words.

There undoubtedly is a place for inspiration, but there is also a valid place for preparation.

2. "Human Ability Is Enough"

The second mistake goes almost to the other extreme. In this instance, a complete confidence is placed in preparation and human ability. There is little or no dependence on the Holy Spirit, but a self-confidence which is the result of training and the development of natural ability.

Such training can certainly produce a very interesting and convincing talk. However, it is only the anointing of the Spirit on the message that can minister the life of God to the people. The truth is that an effective ministry needs both the divine and human aspects. God can certainly bless and anoint thoughts which have been diligently prayed over and carefully considered. Let your preparation consist of thoughtful preparation and earnest prayer. Determine to be the very best you can, but make sure your confidence is in God and not yourself. Always trust Him for His essential anointing and blessing on your preaching.

C. FOUR AREAS OF HOMILETICS

There are four major areas with which homiletics is concerned:

1. Concept

This has to do with obtaining the original theme for the message. It is the art of knowing how to receive a message from God. It deals with how to get the initial idea and theme for a sermon.

Frequently, a seed-thought is sown in the mind, and may remain there for months before it develops to the size and proportion suitable to be shared with others. Through experience, one is able to develop the ability to recognize a line of truth suitable for sharing with God's people.

As you meditate on the Word, there comes an inner quickening of a particular aspect. Something suddenly lights up for you. It almost seems to leap from the page. A sense of excitement is aroused within you. It is as though you have discovered a large gold nugget! You can scarcely wait to break it open and investigate its value!

2. Composition

Having received inspiration on a particular truth, you must now begin to analyze it to discover all which that truth contains. Your notebook is important right here! As you prayerfully meditate, write down carefully every thought that comes to mind.

At this stage, you may simply make a list of every idea that your subject suggests to you. Stay with it until you feel you have exhausted the theme and uncovered every possible area of truth contained in your subject.

Don't worry about neatness and order at this stage. You frequently need to write very quickly to keep abreast of the flow of inspiration you are getting. Just make sure you get everything down on paper. You can sort it all out later.

3. Construction

Having exhaustively analyzed your subject material and listed every aspect of truth you can find within it, you must now begin to assemble those thoughts in an orderly fashion. This is essential so that you can give further prayerful consideration to the subject.

Getting the material into some proper sequence will help you enormously in this regard. It will also assist you greatly in your presentation of the subject to others. Sharing a developing progression of thought helps others to understand and follow your line of reasoning. If your presentation is all jumbled up, it makes it very difficult for people to absorb your message. Sermon construction aims to make it as simple as possible for your listeners to grasp.

This is the essence of sermon construction. It is very important for every preacher to develop this.

4. Communication

Finally, we come to the presentation of the message:

- The clear and effective communication of the truth.
- How to present your subject in a manner which will captivate the minds of your hearers.
- How to develop your thoughts in such an orderly manner that your audience can easily follow the line of truth you are seeking to convey.
- How to motivate your listeners to appropriate actions, for we are to be "*doers of the word and not hearers only*" (Gal 1:22).

These concepts comprise the essential aspects of sermon preparation. We will be dealing with each of them more fully later in this study.

D. THREE TYPES OF SERMON PREPARATION

1. The Written Sermon

This is a method which demands a great deal of time in preparation. It involves very copious notes. Sometimes the whole message is written out beforehand. The preacher knows exactly what he wishes to say and how he wants to say it. Every thought is written out in full.

This often involves several pages of notes. It gives attention to great detail, the construction of a sentence and the correct word to use. Every aspect of the proposed sermon is considered in meticulous detail.

This method has advantages and disadvantages. An advantage is that the whole sermon has been the subject of very careful attention to detail.

Thus, there should be an adequate coverage of every important area of relevant truth. Nothing has been left to chance. This style should ensure a complete and comprehensive treatment of every subject.

The disadvantage in the presentation of this type of sermon is that it often comes across as uninteresting and does not capture the listener's attention. This style of presentation can easily become extremely boring.

2. "Skeleton-type" Notes

This is the most commonly used method, and the one which I feel is the most effective. Notes are kept to a minimum, affording sufficient outline of the message to prompt the memory.

The brief notes form the "skeleton" of the message. They are the bones which give shape and structure to what the preacher desires to say. As he speaks, he puts "flesh" on the bones and a "body" to his sermon. He amplifies the thoughts that his brief notes have stimulated.

This method allows the preacher much more flexibility. He is not tied to his notes so much. He is more open to the inspiration that will often come to him while he is actually preaching. His delivery is more spontaneous and interesting, but the framework of his message keeps his mind on track. He is able to give an adequate, well-thought-out coverage of his subject, but his presentation is not hard to listen to.

3. The Extemporary Sermon

This style of preaching is spontaneous, and usually presented without notes at the time of delivery. The subject is often given a good deal of careful thought beforehand, and the mind and heart are filled with the vital aspects of the message.

This style is often used to deliver the more inspirational type of sermon. Evangelistic messages can be presented very effectively in this way. The sermon flows from the heart and often carries a strong emotional involvement.

This kind of preaching can be exciting and stimulating when presented by a capable and experienced preacher. It stirs the emotions as well as informing the mind.

There are two potential weaknesses in this style. The first is that it often lacks meaningful content, and the spirits and minds of the hearers are not edified. The second is that the delivery may become over-emotional, and become irrational and unconvincing.

4. Summary

I would suggest that the use of skeleton-type notes combines the better features of both the other styles. The notes are not so heavy that the preacher tends to get bogged down in them. He has room to be flexible, and his mind remains open to fresh inspiration- even while he is preaching.

On the other hand, he does have an orderly format of thought before him. He does not stand before his audience and talk randomly about disconnected concepts.

Skeleton-type notes are suitable for both teaching and preaching. The teaching mode usually requires a fuller treatment of the subject, so some form of notes is almost essential. It is difficult for a teacher to adequately cover his subject without the aid of some notes.

I would, therefore, encourage you to concentrate mostly on mastering the skeleton-type notes approach. Use this method in your study times. As you meditate on the Bible, practice making short, cryptic notes on the inspiration and revelation you receive.

This will help you also when you come to the construction of your message. Familiarity with this style of note-making will help you immensely when you stand to preach. It helps train your mind in orderly patterns of thought. This also makes you more articulate and easier to listen to.

E. SEVEN KINDS OF SERMONS

I want to introduce you now to seven different kinds of sermons. I will try to explain briefly the idea behind each kind, and how you can use it.

A pastor should become familiar with each type. This will give added variety to his ministry, and make it much more interesting for a congregation who may be listening to him week after week.

Over a period of time, it will help him present a much wider coverage of Bible truths. The ministry of any preacher is enriched by versatility.

1. Textual

This style is usually based on one relatively short portion of Scripture. In fact, as the name suggests, it usually concentrates on one Scripture "text."

It involves choosing an appropriate statement of Scripture. Then you investigate it, analyze it, and discover all the truth it contains. Then you present that truth in an orderly and progressive manner that is easy for the hearers to assimilate.

2. Topical

Here the preacher aims to present a specific topic to his congregation.

For example, he may take the subject of "justification." His aim would be, firstly, to discover everything the Bible has to say on this enthralling subject.

He would then arrange all the Scripture references and thoughts he gets into an orderly format. He then develops his theme as fully and faithfully as possible. His objective is to tell his audience everything they should know on this important subject.

Of course, he may not be able to do this in one teaching session; so he will then prepare a series of messages or teachings on that same subject. This ensures a much fuller treatment of the topic.

The Topical Concordance in *The Shepherd's Staff* is of immense value when preparing such a message. There, one can quickly find every Scripture reference relating to the topic concerned. A good reference Bible is also helpful. This will also enable you to follow a given theme throughout the Scriptures.

3. Typical

This is the art of uncovering and communicating truth which is hidden beneath the surface of the various "types" in the Bible.

A "type" is a person, object or event which is prophetically symbolic of someone or something yet to come. It is similar to, and characteristic of, that person or event.

In its biblical application, it refers to a Bible character or event which foreshadows some future one. For example, the Passover Lamb in Exodus is a type of Christ. Every detail of that paschal lamb spoke prophetically of the redemptive role Christ would fulfill as the "*Lamb of God*" (John 1:29). Every prophetic symbol was fulfilled when Christ died for the sins of the world.

Biblical types are often referred to as "*shadows of things to come*" (Heb 8:5; 10:1). Such persons and events are like a person walking with the sun behind him. His body casts a shadow into the future, before him, portraying the shape of things to come.

The Law of God was a shadow of the good things to come. It represented, and was a shadow of, the better things which were to come in Christ (Heb 10:1).

The "holy days" of the Old Covenant were also shadows of things to come (Col 2:17). Those holy days were not complete in themselves. Part of the purpose of their fulfillment was to project a prophetic picture of things which were yet to come.

The interpretation and exposition of Bible types is a rather specialized task; it deserves the skill of those who are mature and knowledgeable in biblical subjects.

Novices should avoid attempting to preach from the more pro- found types, since unskilled interpretations can lead into all kinds of unfortunate error.

A deep and thorough knowledge of the whole Bible is essential to those who seek to expound the meaning of the types. Such teachings should be substantiated and undergirded by the whole Bible.

- a. **Principles For Use.** When you first attempt to teach from biblical types, please try to keep the following principles in mind:

- 1) Use Simpler Types.** Begin with the simpler types, in which the implication is very obvious.

2) Keep To Broader Interpretation. Never try to interpret every tiny detail of the type. Keep to the broader outline of truth.

3) Don't Be Dogmatic. Avoid being dogmatic as to what the type teaches.

4) Illustrate Doctrine. Never base your doctrinal position on the teaching of types. Types should illustrate doctrine, not initiate it.

5) Be Open To Correction. Remain open to correction from those of greater maturity than yourself.

4. Expository

By this method, we endeavor to expound the meaning and truth contained in a particular passage of Scripture. We seek to bring out the truth which is often hidden beneath the words on the page. This is an excellent method of teaching the whole counsel of God (Acts 20:27).

You may take a book of the Bible and explain the meaning of it chapter by chapter. Perhaps you may take one chapter each week - and go through it, verse by verse, explaining the significance and truth as you go. This may develop in to a series of Bible studies that may take weeks or months to complete.

Thus, over a period of years, your congregation will become familiar with every part of the Bible, and be exposed to all the truth God wants to convey to them for their enrichment and spiritual equipping.

5. Biographical

A biography is a life story of a person. Therefore, this method involves the study of the lives of the many characters we encounter in the Bible. Every biography recorded in the Bible holds important significance for us. Every life has something to teach us.

The study of Bible characters is very enthralling and absorbing. Choose a particular person. Read every reference to that person that occurs in the Bible. Make notes of every thought that comes to mind. Begin to assemble those thoughts into chronological order- the order in which they occurred:

- **Study the birth of the person.**
- **Consider the circumstances of his upbringing.**
- **Focus upon the dealings of God in his life.**
- **How did he react to God's dealing?**
- **What did he learn from it?**
- **If he was a success in life, what made him successful?**
- **If his life ended in failure, where did he go wrong?**
- **What can we learn from his life?**

These are all interesting and informative things we can learn from the rich lives of the men and women we meet in the Bible.

6. Analytical

This type of sermon relates to the detailed analyzing of a subject in order to extract the greatest amount of truth from it. From this truth, you can then teach the underlying principles involved.

7. Analogical

Much of the Bible is written in the form of analogy. It teaches a truth from a parallel case. The writers often use a natural subject from which to teach a spiritual truth. It involves the comparison of similar functions, and the process of reasoning from parallel cases. The analogical sermon endeavors to communicate truth contained in an analogy.

I would like us to examine more closely the preparation of a textual type of sermon. I have previously defined this method as an analysis and exposition of a brief portion of Scripture, usually a single verse or text.

A. ADVANTAGES OF HAVING A TEXT

1. Captures Interest

The announcement of an interesting text immediately captures the interest of your audience, thus giving you an attentive congregation. They are intrigued to see how you will deal with it. They want to know what thoughts and implications you will bring forth out of your text. The minds of your listeners are stimulated and alert, affording you an interested congregation.

2. Prevents Wandering

A specific text helps to prevent the preacher from wandering from his subject. It is difficult for an audience to retain active interest in a speaker who wanders in his presentation. Having a particular text - and a context from which you have taken your subject - helps to avoid such wanderings, and to retain the active interest of your hearers.

3. Keeps Sermon Biblical

Centering your talk on a specific portion of Scripture helps to keep you (the preacher) biblical. Having presented text directly from the Bible, your message is obviously biblically-based. The tendency is then to substantiate your theme from other relevant parts of the Bible.

Conversely, if your announced topic is other than a biblical one - whether it be psychological, social, cultural, etc. - then the substantiation for your theme will generally be obtained from a similar source. That is not good. We are commanded to "*Preach the Word!*" (2Tim 4:2).

4. Increases Boldness

Preaching directly from the Bible increases the boldness and authority of the proclamation. When you specifically preach the Word of God, there is a special anointing of the Spirit upon it. God anoints His Word.

Statements taken directly from the Bible can be presented with great feeling and conviction. This is because you are not presenting your own ideas; you are telling the people what God has to say on the matter. It carries enormous weight and authority when you declare, "The Bible says!" and then read or share the verse and give the meaning.

It was when the disciples went forth "preaching the Word" that God worked with them, confirming the Word with signs following. The Lord "*worked with the word*" (Mark 16:20).

5. Aids Recall Of Message

A good text helps to fix the message in the minds of your listeners. They will remember it long

afterwards. When they recall your message, it will frequently be the Scripture on which you based your talk which will be remembered most vividly.

B. CHOOSING A TEXT

1. Read The Bible Regularly

If you wish to become a capable and effective preacher, you must read your Bible regularly. Determine to develop good habits in respect to Bible reading. Have a special time each day to read the Bible. Carry a small Bible with you so that, if you have spare moments, you can spend them profitably in reading the Scriptures.

2. Study The Bible

Do not merely read it superficially. Dig beneath the surface. Meditate diligently on the things you read. Toss them around in your mind. Look at them from every point of view. Practice analyzing what you study. Take it apart in your mind and put it together again.

Learn to "ruminate," which means to "chew the cud." When a cow feeds, it chews the grass, swallows it, and then brings it back from the stomach to the mouth to chew on again.

So when you ruminate in your mind, you keep bringing the thoughts back to think about them again. Meditate on them. Ponder over them. Keep bringing them back to mind for further and deeper consideration.

The more your mind is filled with the Word of God and biblical meditations, the more you will have to draw upon when you stand to minister. *"The Holy Spirit will bring all things to your remembrance"* (John 14:26), but you must have them in your mind for Him to do so.

3. Always Have A Notebook With You

Whenever you read your Bible, get into the habit of having pen and paper with you. Form the good habit of making brief notes of every bit of inspiration you receive. Try to avoid doing this on loose pieces of paper, as you will tend to lose these.

If you use a notebook, it will become like a spiritual diary. Months afterwards, you will be able to go back over your notes and draw fresh inspiration from them. The more you meditate on them, the more revelation you will receive. This will also create a file of thoughts on numerous subjects, from which you will be able to prepare many fine sermons at the appropriate time.

4. Maintain A Prayerful Attitude

This does not mean that you must be on your knees all the time. It is the attitude of heart to which I refer, not the posture of your body.

Ideally, prayer is a spiritual conversation with God. It is a two-way conversation. You speak to God, but He will also speak to you. As you learn to discern His voice, you will discover a continuous flow of inspiration.

God longs to reveal His truth. He waits for hungry, attentive hearts who can recognize and discern His voice. He wants to share His secrets with you.

5. Seek The Holy Spirit's Illumination

Place a high value and priority on the illumination the Spirit can bring upon the Word of God. The Holy Spirit is a Sensitive Person Who can be grieved and driven away.

You must cultivate the quiet, humble, sensitive spirit with which He loves to associate. As your fellowship with the Holy Spirit develops, He will introduce you to many wonderful new truths which will enrich your life and ministry.

6. Your Text Should Be:

a. Biblically Authoritative.

It should harmonize with what the consensus of the Bible teaches. It is possible to take a verse out of its context, and teach from it something which the Bible does not substantiate. It has been said that "a text without a context is merely a pretext."

Always study your text in the light of its context. Never try to make your text say anything which is not confirmed by the verses which precede and follow it. Always endeavor to interpret your text in the light of what the whole Bible teaches on the subject.

b. Complete.

Your text should always form a complete statement of truth. Some preachers merely take a phrase from a verse and use it, regardless of context. This is dishonest! It is called "*hand ling the word of God deceitfully*" (2Cor 4:2). This must be avoided at all costs. It will lead to a dishonest and unbiblical treatment of your subject. In consequence, you will be misled and will mislead your hearers.

c. Reasonably Brief.

A textual sermon should be founded on a reasonable, brief statement of Scripture.

d. Comprehensive.

Although brief, your text should also be comprehensive. It should be a brief but adequate summary of what you wish to share.

When you read your text to the congregation, they should then gain a reasonable idea of the area of truth you are going to present. You should then seek to remain within the boundaries of what your text announces.

C. YOUR APPROACH TO THE TEXT

1. Thoroughly Digest Its Words

Read the text over many times. Ponder it in your heart. Meditate on it. Memorize it. Speak it out to yourself. Become thoroughly familiar with it.

2. Determine Its Language

Is it to be taken literally, or is it intended to be figurative? Does the writer mean what he says in a literal sense, or are his words to be taken as a figure of speech?

3. Analyze Its Message

It will help you greatly to dissect the verse. Separate it into three or four main parts. Discover exactly how much this verse contains and what it has to teach.

4. Investigate The Words

Try to discover what the words were originally meant to convey.

If you are fortunate enough to have a Greek or Hebrew lexicon, look up the word in the original language of Hebrew or Greek. Is there some special significance attached to it? Did the writer have a special reason for using THAT word? This study will help you understand any special application the writer may have wished to convey.

5. Discover Its Development

What line of truth was the writer seeking to develop? What was he ultimately trying to convey? How does he accomplish this?

Try to follow his lead and develop it in a similar fashion.

6. Consider Its Context

a. Biblical Context. What do the preceding and following verses say? Consider the verse in relation to the whole chapter from which it comes. Consider it in the light of the whole Gospel or Epistle in which you find it.

Make sure your understanding of it is faithful to the overall truth conveyed in the book. To do this, you must study the basic theme and premise of the book.

b. Cultural Context. Did the culture of that time influence what was written? Would the people to whom the words were originally written gain a different view of what was said than we would in our situation? If so, what would be the equivalent significance now?

c. Historic Context. When was this statement written? Did what was transpiring at that time influence what was written? Do events at the time of writing have specific bearing on what was said?

d. Geographic Context. Where was the writer when he wrote these words? Where were the people to whom he wrote? Does their geographical location have any bearing on what was said?

e. Total Biblical Context. *"All Scripture is given by the inspiration of God"* (2Tim 3:16). Each part must be faithfully interpreted to agree with the whole.

No Scripture should be removed from its context; it must be interpreted by what the whole revelation of the entire Scripture teaches. Scripture must interpret Scripture, and our exposition of one text should always agree with what the Bible as a whole teaches.

D. ARRANGING YOUR MATERIAL

The orderly arrangement of material is a distinct advantage, both to the preacher and to those who will hear him. For the preacher, it affords the clearest grasp of his subject. His thoughts are not muddled or confused. It also helps him to ensure the most adequate treatment of the subject.

As for his audience, it will obviously assist them greatly in their grasp and comprehension of the sermon.

1. What An Outline Does For You

A good outline is the best and simplest way to organize your material.

- a. It makes you carefully analyze your subject** and the material you have gathered. In doing this, you ultimately select only the best of your material.
- b. It reveals any weak areas** in your treatment of the subject and the development of your presentation.
- c. It enables you to get the most out of your material**, because you reduce it to its most relevant and essential substance.
- d. It makes it easier for you to remember all you want to say**, and to present it in a progressive and orderly fashion, with the least obvious dependence on your written notes.
- e. It makes it easier for your listeners to follow** the development of your presentation, because it is communicated in the most orderly and logical fashion.

2. Concerning Your Notes

- a. Keep Them Brief.** Train yourself to use the "skeleton-type" notes which you can take in at a glance.
- b. Make Them Orderly.** You need to be able to follow them easily at all times.
- c. Let Them Be Comprehensive.** Endeavor to cover every aspect on which you intend to speak.
- d. Concentrate On Ideas.** Condense your thoughts into brief sentences. Learn to crystallize your thoughts and express them in terse sentences. Practice reducing and expressing a concept in

one sentence.

- e. **Make Condensed Notes.** Remember that the notes are there to prod your memory. Even one significant word can remind you of some instance you wish to recall and share with your audience.
- f. **Make Them Easy To Read.** If you possess a typewriter, you may find typed notes easy to read. If not, then print your notes as clearly and legibly as possible. Never scribble out your notes so that you need to ponder over them in the pulpit in order to decipher what you have written.

E. THE STRUCTURE OF A TEXTUAL SERMON

The outline of your sermon will usually contain three major elements:

- **The Introduction;**
- **The Main Statement Of Truth;**
- **The Conclusion And Application.**

Let us examine these in greater detail.

1. Introduction

Your introduction may well be the most important part of your message, for if you do not win your listeners' attention in this initial period, they may pay little attention to the remainder of your sermon.

The introduction often takes the form of a condensed version of your subject. You tell your listeners briefly what you plan to speak about and the area you intend to cover.

You may also explain just how you plan to treat this subject. In this manner, you endeavor to whet their appetites and make them keen to hear more.

a. What Your Introduction Should Accomplish:

- 1) **Capture Interest.** It should immediately capture the interest and imagination of your hearers.
- 2) **Establish Rapport.** It should establish a rapport between you and your audience.
- 3) **Afford Acceptance.** It should afford you an acceptance from them. You need to win their interest, confidence and esteem.
- 4) **Inform.** It should inform them of what your subject is and how you intend to deal with it.
- 5) **Convince.** It should convince them of the importance of your topic, and win their careful attention for the remainder of your talk. Never open your introduction with an apology. Never say: "Unfortunately, I have not had sufficient time to prepare my sermon, and I am afraid that it will not be a very good one!" If that is the case, the unfortunate people will find out soon enough. They will not need to be told! Such an apology will only lessen your own confidence in your abilities, and it will certainly not increase the people's confidence in you.

b. Characteristics Of A Good Introduction:

- 1) It Does Not Promise More Than You Can Deliver!** Sometimes a preacher may make a most dramatic introduction to his sermon. He excites the audience for what is to come. He promises them a wonderful and enlightening exposition. If his message does not then reach the level he promised, it will be an anti-climax. His audience will be disappointed. They will also lose confidence in him.
- 2) It Should Not Be Too Sensational.** Do not set a pace which is impossible for you to maintain. Rather, let your introduction be modest, and then your audience will be pleasantly surprised when they discover the sermon to be much more interesting than they anticipated.
- 3) It Should Not Be Too Long.** Remember, this is only your introduction, not the sermon.
- 4) It Should Bear Obvious Relationship To Your Theme .** The introduction should lead into your theme, so it must always be vitally related to your subject. It may be a condensed version of the subject matter you intend to share. It may be a story which illustrates the truth of what you plan to say.
- 5) It Should Be Carefully Prepared.** Since your introduction is vitally important in winning the attention of your hearers, it surely deserves careful thought and preparation.
- 6) Try to put yourself in the place of your audience.** Ask yourself: What would successfully gain my attention? Of all that I propose to say, which particular aspect would really capture my interest? By using your imagination in this manner, you can determine the best style your introduction should take.
- 7) It Should Provide A Natural Transition Into Your Theme.** When properly presented, it should be obvious to your listeners just where the introduction concludes and the sermon begins.

This is applicable to all your message. It should be in several distinct sections or points. All points should relate to the central theme or text.

2. The Main Body Of Your Message

I would suggest that you divide the main part of your subject matter into three major sections. These sections need not all be the same length. There should be a natural, logical and smooth progression from one point to the next.

These divisions do not have to be obvious when you present them. Sometimes it is helpful to say, "Now, my third point is...." Perhaps the sections might take a form like this:

A. STATE THE TRUTH.

- 1.** Declare It.
- 2.** Explain It.
- 3.** Clarify It.

B. AMPLIFY THE TRUTH.

1. Develop It.
2. Substantiate It.
3. Prove It.

C. CLIMAX.

1. Present Your Conclusion.
2. What May We Learn From This?
3. How May We Practically Apply It?

3. Conclusion

Appeal to the mind. Summarize your talk. Restate it briefly. Appeal to the will. Seek to persuade. Appeal to the emotions. Try to motivate.

F. HOW TO PREPARE YOUR SERMON

1. Prepare A Rough Plan First

An outline affords the most effective means of properly organizing your material. Once you master the art of producing a good outline, you will find it much easier and more convenient to organize your talk.

As you begin to examine and evaluate your subject material, write down every thought on a large piece of paper. Don't worry at this stage about getting things into their correct sequence. Simply write down every valid thought which occurs to you as you consider the subject.

2. Select Your Main Thoughts

It is generally easier to find three main thoughts.

- What are the three most important statements you have written on that large sheet of paper? Get them into a natural sequence.
- Which statement should come first?
- What is the foundation statement that needs to be laid? Make it your **number-one heading**. WRITE IT OUT IN CAPITAL LETTERS AND UNDERLINE IT!

Now ask yourself: "Which statement naturally follows on from the first?" **Make that main heading number two**. Now you are left with one more main thought which should be a conclusion of the matter. This will now be **main heading number three**.

Set them out on paper like this:

A. MAIN HEADING NUMBER ONE

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

B. MAIN HEADING NUMBER TWO

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

C. MAIN HEADING NUMBER THREE

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Now begin to go through the rest of your material on your ROUGH PLAN. Get those thoughts into order under the particular headings you have designated. Let each of these be placed under the appropriate main heading: A, B, C. Each thought then becomes a "minor heading." Designate them 1, 2, 3, etc.

All your thoughts and material are now coming into an orderly arrangement. This makes it easier for you to study the subject further.

SERMON EXAMPLES

a. Example 1. Allow me to illustrate this method from one of the best-known verses in the Bible, John 3:16: *"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."*

INTRODUCTION

The world has known many people who are said to be great lovers. But I wish to speak about the One Who is, without doubt, THE greatest lover of all. It is God Himself!

He loves the greatest number of people, with the highest quality of love, which prompted Him to make the greatest possible sacrifice.

A. GOD'S GREAT LOVE FOR THE WHOLE WORLD

1. He created the world and all mankind.
2. He loves every person in the world equally.
3. He wants every one of them to live eternally.

B. LOVE CAUSED HIM TO GIVE HIS ONLY BEGOTTEN SON

1. How precious the Son is to God the Father. No earthly father loves his son so much.
2. How great was God's sacrifice!
3. God gave Jesus freely for whosoever (everyone in the world).
4. He gave Him to die to pay the penalty for our sin and guilt.

C. WHOEVER RECEIVES CHRIST NEED NOT PERISH

1. This wonderful offer is available to all.
2. God loves even the worst of men.
3. Salvation is a free gift through faith in Jesus.

CONCLUSION

God now offers you the greatest possible gift...eternal life in Christ! How foolish you would be to reject or neglect so wonderful a gift. Accept Christ now without delay!

b. Example 2. Now, let us consider a simple narrative from the Gospels. In Luke 8:41-48, we find the story of a woman who, after twelve years of chronic suffering, came to Christ and was immediately healed. She went away with a deep peace in her heart and mind.

Our text could be a phrase from verse 48: "*GO IN PEACE.*" (This could also be the title of your message!)

INTRODUCTION

Surely every person desires to possess inner peace and security. There are many factors in life which may rob us of such peace. One of these is sickness. It is difficult to maintain inner peace when one is plagued by serious illness. The mind is filled with uncertainty and despair.

Here is a story of just such a person. She had been sick for twelve years. Though she had visited many doctors, none had been able to help her. In fact, she even became worse.

Then one glorious day, she met Jesus Christ. Through this wonderful encounter, she was instantly healed of her long-standing sickness. She was also blessed with a deep sense of inner peace.

This same Jesus can also bless your life today. Let us look into this story, and discover how she received her healing - and how you too can be healed!

A. THIS WOMAN HAD NO PEACE

1. She had been constantly ill for twelve years.
2. She had spent all her money. Now she was penniless!
3. She was disappointed and frustrated.
4. She was tempted to despair. It seemed that none could help her. How typical she is of so many today who are lonely, frustrated and insecure.

B. HOW SHE CAME TO CHRIST

1. She heard what He had done for someone else.
2. She determined that she, too, would seek His healing.
3. She encouraged herself in faith. She said within herself: "*If I can but touch the border of his garment, I shall be healed*" (Mark 5:28).

4. She overcame many obstacles.
5. She came to Christ.
6. She touched Him by faith.
7. His life flowed into her. Immediately she was made whole!

C. HER SALVATION

1. The disciples could not help her. They did not even know her need. There are times when no human being can help us. Only God is able to meet our deepest needs.
2. Christ required her confession. *"Who touched me?"* He already knew who had touched Him, but He wanted her public confession. Romans 10:10 says: *"With the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation."*
3. Christ called her *"daughter."* He accepted her as a member of God's family.
4. He told her to *"Go in peace."* From that moment, she knew real peace. Uncertainty and anxiety were banished, and the peace of God filled her heart and mind.
5. It was her faith which made her whole (Luke 8:48). God desires everyone to be whole: perfectly sound in spirit, soul and body.

CONCLUSION

She went away a transformed person. You too can be transformed if you come to Christ in faith!

4. Summary

Practice dissecting and analyzing such incidents from the Bible. Try to discover the three main thoughts or sections of the story.

Once you have determined the three main thoughts, begin to analyze each of them separately and break them down into their component parts.

There may be four or five smaller truths within each main statement. Analyze the various parts. Get them into sequence and order. Then, arrange them progressively.

This is excellent practice for you. It may not come easily at first, but persevere. Determine to master it. After a while, it will become easy for you.

I often liken the construction of a sermon to the building of a house:

- The introduction is like a path leading up to the house. It takes you from the front gate to the door by which you may enter.
- Each main heading is like a room in the house.
- The minor headings are the furnishings in each room.
- Illustrations are windows built into each room to throw light on the furnishings in that room. (Illustrations are simple examples which help us to understand profound truths.)

Keep this analogy in mind when you are preparing your sermons.

Here, we deal with the art of expounding a passage of Scripture. To expound means to interpret and explain; to set forth a matter in detail.

For example, you may decide to go through the Gospel of John, chapter by chapter. Commencing with the first chapter, you would seek to interpret and explain the meaning and significance of it, verse by verse.

You might deal with one chapter each week - and thus, over a period of weeks, finally go through the whole book.

A. ADVANTAGES OF EXPOSITORY PREACHING

This is an excellent method of teaching the Bible. It has many distinct advantages, and is a good style to cultivate. Here are some of the obvious advantages of this method:

1. It Is A Biblical Method

Jesus Himself frequently used this method. He would take a portion of the Old Testament Scripture and interpret the meaning of it to His hearers.

Peter also used this method on the Day of Pentecost. He took some of the Old Testament Scriptures referring to King David, and explained the true meaning of them to the great crowd. He carefully showed the prophetic implications of those Scriptures and how they pointed to Christ, and proved Him to be the Messiah.

Again, we find Stephen using this method of expository preaching in Acts 7. The Bible is literally filled with fine examples of expository preaching.

2. It Produces Bible Preachers & Bible-Oriented Congregations

Expounding the Scriptures ensures that there is plenty of Bible content in your ministry. As you proceed through a chapter, verse by verse, your congregation is being filled with the Word of God.

3. It Invites Holy Spirit Reinforcement

The Spirit of God always agrees with the Word of God (1 Jn 5:7). Therefore, the more Bible content we preach, the more of the Spirit's anointing there will be upon the proclamation. The Holy Spirit delights to confirm the Word of God. He does so many times with signs and wonders (Mark 16:20).

4. It Encourages Deeper Interest In The Bible

The more of the Bible you share with people, the more hungry they become for it. They will soon begin to study it for themselves at deeper levels. Their lives will be transformed. They will be strengthened and reinforced by the Word. You will have a Bible-oriented church.

B. SUGGESTED PROCEDURE

1. Carefully Choose An Appropriate Passage Of Scripture

Make sure the passage is one which will minister life and strength to your hearers. Do not choose a subject merely because it interests or intrigues you. Never select a subject which engenders dispute, division and strife.

You are seeking to be a channel for God, that He might speak His Word to His people through you. You are therefore responsible to get the mind of God for the people over whom He has given you responsibility. This ministry is one of the greatest privileges given to mortal man. It is also one of the most awesome responsibilities!

2. Seek A Theme Relevant To The People's Present Situation

God always has "present truth" that He wants to speak to His people (2Pet 1:12). There is a constant progression and development of God's purposes among His people. He has a specific purpose for each body of believers.

Every congregation should be moving forward in the particular purpose of God that He has defined for them. In order to accomplish this, it is essential that His specific word of truth is ministered to them consistently.

It is sometimes a useful exercise to ask yourself: "If this were to be my last chance to speak to this people, what is the most important thing they need to hear?"

Preaching with this kind of thought in mind helps you. It will ensure that your topics are relevant and vital to the development and maturing of the people in the purposes that God has for them.

3. Study The Passage Carefully From Every Angle

Read it through several times until you begin to become very familiar with it. Then study it carefully, verse by verse. Whenever there is an obvious link with some other passage of Scripture, read that portion, too.

If you have access to any reference books, then by all means read them. But above all, keep your mind open and alert to the Holy Spirit, to glean whatever thoughts He may share with you.

4. Endeavor To Thoroughly Understand Your Theme

Always seek to discover the underlying theme of the passage. What was the Holy Spirit seeking to convey when He inspired this passage? What is at the very heart of this teaching? What is it that God would say to His people through this?

5. Have A Definite Objective In Mind

Your objective should be in complete harmony with God's objective.

Having discovered what you sense He is wanting to communicate through this Scripture, your task is to be as faithful to that as possible. So, you need to soak yourself in the message.

It is not sufficient to mentally comprehend what God is saying. You need to feel what He is feeling. He wants to communicate His heart as well as His mind. So His Word must flow through your heart as well as your mind.

You are to be God's instrument to convincingly relay His message to His people. You are His mouthpiece!

You are not called to share YOUR mind with the people. You are called to share HIS mind with them. This awareness should be your motivating factor. It should be the compelling reason for your preaching.

6. Speak From Your Own Experience

In order for you to effectively communicate truth, it should be something which God has worked out in your own life first.

Many preachers present theories. They preach platitudes which sometimes have no practical relevance. No man can convincingly preach a "born-again experience" unless he has experienced it himself.

You must know the experience as a reality in your own life before you can effectively share it with others. The preacher is called to be a living epistle. He is not only required to preach the truth; he is also required to practice and demonstrate it. He is to be a living example of all he preaches.

7. Make It Meaningful

Exegesis means "to bring out the true meaning." You are responsible to ensure, to the best of your ability, that the true meaning and significance of the Scripture becomes clear to your listeners. Always endeavor to make your subject simple. This is obviously what Jesus did. This was an important reason why His ministry was so powerful and effective. He took profound issues and made them so simple.

Many modern preachers do the very opposite. They take the simplest subjects and make them so profound and complicated that their audience understands little of what they hear. Remember this: the simpler, the better!

8. Make It Practical

Always try to clearly show the practical applications your message may have for the people. A grave danger among Christians is often "too much knowledge, too little practice."

Many Christians have listened to sermons for years. Yet, there is little change in their lives or practical expression of the teaching.

Do not be content to merely speak to people. Make your conclusions abundantly clear. Endeavor to make practical suggestions as to how the people may meaningfully respond to God.

Follow up your messages with practical programs in which people may become involved in order to be doers of the Word and not hearers only!

C. GATHERING RELEVANT MATERIAL

In addition to studying the passage of Scripture, how do we collect additional relevant material? Here are a few questions to ask yourself:

1. What Have I Ever Heard Or Read On This Subject?

Begin to stir up your memory. Perhaps you once read a good book on this subject. What was the book? What did it say on this matter? Push your memory until the thoughts come back to your conscious mind.

Perhaps you once heard someone preach on this subject. What was said? How was it presented? Frequently something that was said will become a seed-thought in your mind. From this, a whole train of new thoughts will come.

2. What Has The Holy Spirit Ever Shown Me On This Subject?

This is where the benefit of keeping a notebook is realized.

Sometimes months or even years previously, God had given you some interesting thoughts and insight on this very theme. If you did not write down those thoughts, you may have a problem recalling them again.

But if you have a notebook in which your devotional thoughts are recorded, you can go back to it again to familiarize your mind with what the Spirit showed you then.

If you have not been keeping such a book, get away somewhere quietly so your mind can dwell on the subject without interruptions. Meditation will help you recall those things you were taught by the Spirit.

3. What Have I Ever Observed That Relates To This Theme?

Frequently, we have observed things which throw light on the subject we are considering. We may recall incidents from our experience which illustrate some aspect of truth we are now considering.

Sometimes it is a thing we have observed in nature which confirms a principle we are studying in the Word of God.

Illustrations from nature often bring tremendous light to a Scripture. African preachers are usually very adept at this. I have often been thrilled listening to an African preacher illustrating Bible truth from those things he has learned about nature. The God of nature is also the God of the Bible!

4. What Thoughts Have I Ever Had On This Subject?

Many of our previous thoughts on a given subject are now buried in the subconscious mind. They need to be brought to the surface again. This can often be accomplished in a time of deep meditation.

As we sit quietly, focusing our minds on the Bible, buried thoughts will float to the surface again. I often tell my students: "Push your memory; make it work. You will not damage it by making it work for you. You can only improve it." Never be afraid to do this.

Sit and concentrate. Will to remember what your thoughts were. Refresh your mind with them again.

5. Who Or What Can I Consult On This Subject?

Discussing a biblical topic with a fellow preacher is always a stimulating and valuable experience. If you have opportunity to do this, then seize that chance! It will be edifying and enlightening for all concerned.

This kind of exercise should take place every time preachers are together. Engaging in discussion on edifying Bible subjects would do a tremendous amount of good and foster true fellowship and unity: I feel very sad for many of my minister friends who have no reference books. But they do have each other!

Share your knowledge and experience with each other. Pool your Bible knowledge through good discussion and frequent conversation. Don't waste those golden opportunities when you come together.

D. PREPARATION OF YOUR MATERIAL

Having found a suitable, relevant passage, deal with it as follows:

1. Be Open-Minded About It

Put aside your preconceived ideas on the subject. Let your mind be open and unbiased to receive and learn something new.

Someone has said that if we really want to grow spiritually, then we must read all those parts of the Bible which we have NEVER underlined.

Frequently, we have firmly established concepts; and we tend to see only those things which confirm what we already believe. We must approach God's Word with openness and honesty.

Don't nullify or make of "*no effect*" the Word of God because your religious tradition has shut off your mind to anything other than what you presently believe (see Mark 7:13).

You certainly do not have the sum total of all the knowledge God wants to impart to you. Be ready to learn whatever new truth God may have to share with you.

2. Investigate It Thoroughly

Analyze the passage. Interrogate it! Take it apart and examine it thoroughly. Do this with your mind open to the Holy Spirit. Anticipate fresh thought and revelation from God. Expect to discern truth which you have never noticed before.

The Word of God is like a mine shaft. The deeper you go, the more precious the deposits you find. Many people are content to dig around the surface. Their conclusions are always superficial. They are able to share only what others already know.

A secret of effective teaching is to investigate those areas of truth which have not previously occurred to people. In this way, you can share fresh and refreshing truth with them.

3. Do Some Original Thinking About It

Do not let your mind stay in the ruts you have created. Trust the Holy Spirit to illuminate your mind. I am sure He will share something with you that you have never known before.

Check it out with the rest of the Bible. No "truth" ever contradicts the whole body of truth revealed in the Scriptures. Check it, too, with a fellow preacher -, one who knows more about the Bible than you do, and not one that you know will always agree with you!

Do not be afraid to have some original thought. Let the wind of the Spirit blow the cobwebs from your mind!

4. Approach It Creatively

God is a Creator. His Word is a creative Word. Everything which God made, He created by His Word! The Word of God should not be bound. It is still a creative and powerful Word. When released into redeemed hearts, it will create and transform.

Always be aware of the creative potential of God's Word. Handle it with an attitude of faith and expectancy. Always be mindful that it is filled with creative ability. It has far more energy and ability than you will ever understand. It is always capable of producing far more than you could comprehend.

Remember, it is a miracle Word. God is in His Word. His creative genius is in it. Your ministry should be aimed at releasing this creative ability into the lives of your hearers.

5. Treat It Constructively

Remember that you are a laborer together with God. You are involved in CONSTRUCTING something, not destroying it. Your task, under God, is to build up the Body of Christ. Therefore, your messages should be constructive, not destructive.

Sometimes your emphasis may be very searching. The word you deliver may bring your listeners to heart-searching and repentance. Their reaction may be brokenness and tears, but they should not be left like that!

Consider Ezra and Nehemiah (Neh 8:5-12). God had delivered a very heavy word to the returned exiles. As they listened to the exposition of the Law, they realized how far they had gotten away from it during the years of exile.

This caused them to weep, bowing their faces to the ground in repentance. The prophets allowed them to do this for a while. Then they interrupted their weeping and mourning and got the people on their feet again.

They said: "...go ...eat...and drink ... neither be ye sorry; for the joy of the Lord is your strength " (vs 10). Do not constantly bring the people under condemnation. Your ultimate goal is to see them built up, strengthened and edified. To accomplish this, you must minister constructively.

6. Study It Comparatively

Scripture must be compared with Scripture. It must always be interpreted within the total context of the Bible. This demands a maturity of understanding of the whole Bible.

You must study the Bible consistently *"to show yourself approved unto God, a workman that does not need to be ashamed, rightly 'applying' the word of truth"* (2Tim 2:15 pph).

7. Conclude It Practically

All effective Bible preaching and teaching must have a practical conclusion and application. Ministry is not merely to inform the mind, but rather to form the life. You should always have a practical conclusion to make. Suggest to your audience some meaningful response. People need to respond to the word you have brought.

E. DELIVERING THE EXPOSITORY MESSAGE

1. Turn To Passage

Have your congregation turn to the appropriate passage in the Bible.

2. Read Passage Aloud

If you plan to expound a particular chapter, read it out to the people. Perhaps the congregation may share the reading with you, each one reading out a verse or two.

3. Introduce Your Theme

Explain how you intend to deal with it. Explain your purpose and intention, so that the people may cooperate with you. They will then understand where you are heading and will be able to follow along with you.

4. Read Passage Aloud Again

You may then decide to read the chapter through again, one verse at a time, making a suitable commentary on each verse.

F. SEVEN PRINCIPLES

At this point, I would like to introduce to you seven vital principles which are extremely important, particularly in expository preaching. Remember them, and seek to cover them whenever you expound the Word of God.

1. Clarity

Make sure that your commentary is easily understood. Do not try to be too profound or mysterious. The aim of effective expository preaching is to make the relevant passage as easy to understand as possible. Do not try to be clever or to display your knowledge. Try to break the Bread of Life in such a way that your entire audience is able to easily follow the emphasis you are making.

2. Consistency

Keep your comments consistent with the theme you are expounding. Avoid the temptation to wander off down various devious pathways which may occur to you. By keeping faithful to your subject, you reinforce it in the minds of your audience.

Do not be afraid of some repetition. A certain amount of it is necessary in order to fix a truth into the hearts of the people.

3. Coherence

To "cohere" means to hold together. So be sure your thoughts have a clear unity. A person speaking incoherently is one whose speech is lacking in unity. It is often impossible to connect to the point he is trying to make.

Let the expression of your thoughts have obvious unity. Do not wander from thought to thought. Be clear and concise. Make sure your thoughts have cohesion and hold together well, each supporting and complementing the other.

4. Continuity

There should also be a clear progression of thought. Your statements should be continually moving your audience towards the proposed objective. Each point should follow clearly the previous one.

Your comments should flow freely from one to the next, with unity and clear development and progression. Keep moving forward smoothly to your ultimate goal.

5. Concise

Aim to be brief. It is far better to have your audience wishing that you would continue, than to have them wishing you had finished twenty minutes previously.

Avoid the temptation to speak for the sake of speaking. Don't get into the habit of rambling on. It only confuses your audience. A good piece of advice was once offered to preachers in this form: STAND UP! SPEAK UP! SHUT UP!

6. Comprehensive

This point may seem to contradict the previous one in which I advised brevity. To be comprehensive means to cover the subject as fully as possible. But there is no contradiction.

It is certainly possible and desirable to cover a subject comprehensively and yet as briefly as possible.

Being comprehensive does not necessitate speaking at so great a length that your audience becomes tired of the sound of your voice. Try to balance the two!

7. Conclusive

Here is the most important point. What is the conclusion of all you have said? What is the end result? What will your words achieve?

The desired conclusion should dominate your mind from the commencement. You should be moving relentlessly towards it. Minister in faith, expecting God to bring to pass His desired objective. Remember that it is not your responsibility to achieve the desired result. That is God's task. You must keep looking to God, not to the people. Confidently expect Him to give the increase.

A. ADVANTAGES OF THE BIOGRAPHICAL SERMON

I have intimated previously that this type of sermon relates primarily to teaching from the lives and examples of Bible characters. It entails the detailed study of such characters in order to learn as much as possible from their lives.

An interesting feature of the Bible is the manner in which the men and women who form the narrative are presented just as they are. There is no attempt to cover up their weaknesses and reveal only their strengths and virtues.

Many of the great heroes of the Bible have their human flaws. We are very much aware that they are flesh and blood as we are. They faced temptations common to all men; frequently, their response was little different from that of the average Christian today.

In all the narrative of Bible history, there is only one truly perfect man -, the man Christ Jesus! Even the great heroes of faith are manifestly human. This certainly helps us identify with them.

The art of expounding truths learned from studying the lives of these men and women is an extremely valuable one. It is a style of preaching which may be used to great effect by a pastor.

1. Deals With Realities Of Life

It deals with the realities of human life, with its strengths and weaknesses. We can frequently learn so much from the struggles, triumphs and failures of those who have gone before us.

2. Are Examples To Learn From

They are examples for our benefit – that we might learn from them, rather than from our own painful experience.

B. HOW TO BEGIN

1. Choose Characters From The Bible

You could begin this style of preaching by studying some of the greater characters of the Bible such as Abraham, Moses, Joshua, David, Paul and Peter.

These are men whose deeds illuminate the history of God's dealings with mankind. There is SO MUCH to learn from their lives. There are many great women in the Bible, too, whose lives have a special message to convey.

2. Study Their Lives

Begin by reading the narrative which tells of the birth of the person. Find out the meaning of his or her name, for most Bible names have tremendous significance. Study the circumstances of his or her upbringing. Pay special attention to the purpose of God in his or her life.

a. What did God want to accomplish through him (or her)?

- b. How did He make His purpose known?
- c. What was the reaction of the person?
- d. What can we learn from the dealings of God in his (or her) life?
- e. Are there some dangers we should be aware of?
- f. What was the secret of his (or her) success?
- g. What was the conclusion of his (or her) life?

C. EXAMPLE OF A BIOGRAPHICAL SERMON

There are so many lessons we can learn from these great characters.

1. The Life Of David

Let us look briefly into the life of David to give a simple example of a biographical sermon.

TITLE: DAVID, A MAN AFTER GOD'S HEART (Acts 13:22).

INTRODUCTION

His name means "Beloved of God." He is called a man after God's heart. Why did God call him this? What was it that appealed to God's heart? There is obviously much we can learn from this man!

A. A MAN AFTER GOD'S HEART

1. David had a special place in God's heart.
2. It is wonderful that God finds such delight in a human being.

B. WAS NOT A PERFECT MAN

1. His weakness became known to all. Yet this did not alter God's feeling about him.
2. We too are far from perfect, yet God can find delight in us.

C. WAS A VERY "HUMAN" PERSON

1. Typical mixture of strengths and weaknesses.
2. Longed to please God, yet so often grieved Him.
3. Longed for God's rule in his life, yet did his own thing.
4. Ascended to great heights... descended to sad depths.
5. David was not a superman. He was truly human as we are!

D. CHOSEN FOR SPECIAL TASK

God chose him from among his older, outwardly more impressive brothers.

E. HE HAD TO BE TESTED

1. Every man called of God must be tested and proven.
2. Jesus was tested in the wilderness (Matt 4:1-11).
3. *"Don't think it strange when you are tested"* (1 Pet 4:12).
4. *"After you have suffered a while, God will make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you"* (1 Pet 5:10).

F. DAVID TESTED THROUGH BATHSHEBA (2Sam 11)

1. He was spiritually "off guard"... Was now fifty years old... Had been king for 20 years. How easy to drop one's guard!
2. Was overly self-confident. Never trust the arm of flesh!
3. Idle moments led to his downfall. Should have been at battle-front. Satan takes advantage of idle time.
4. Material prosperity bred sensuousness. Paul disciplined his flesh to ensure he was not disapproved (1 Cor 9:27).
5. Failed to overcome temptation while it was still in mind. All temptation begins in thoughts. This is the easiest place to defeat it. Cast down thoughts and imaginations (2Cor 10:5). Failure to do so may lead to disaster.

G. HIS REPENTANCE (Ps 51:1-10)

It was David's sincerity in repentance which endeared him to God.

1. He acknowledged his transgression. Did not try to blame someone else.
2. Repented thoroughly of his iniquity.
3. Sincerely sought forgiveness.
4. Cried out for cleansing.
5. Sought a clean heart and right spirit.

H. HIS SUFFERING (Ps 32:3,4;77:2-6)

1. Heavy conviction day and night.
2. Tears of remorse.
3. Bones waxed old.

I. WHAT GOD SOUGHT TO ACCOMPLISH (Ps 51:6, 10, 17)

1. Truth in the inward parts.
2. Clean heart and right spirit.
3. Broken spirit and contrite heart.

J. THAT HIS SERVANT MIGHT BE:

1. A meek and humble soul.
2. A truly joyful person.
3. Sustained by God's free Spirit.

4. A man after God's own heart.

This is a brief and simple example of a biographical sermon. Determine to spend some time studying some of the great characters of the Bible so that you can teach important truths from their lives.

I mentioned previously that effective preaching is largely the product of two factors, one divine and the other human. Both are necessary - for "without man, God will not, and without God, man cannot." It is the human aspect with which we are dealing primarily in these studies.

A. PERSONALITY GUIDELINES

An elderly preacher was once asked by a group of young ministers: "With regard to the human aspect of preaching, what is the most important factor?" His immediate reply was: "Personality!" "But tell us," they persisted, "what is personality?" "Ah," he said, "if only I knew!"

Preaching involves communicating divine truth through human personality. So the development and proper use of personality is important.

Someone has analyzed effective public speaking (I refer to public speaking as distinct from preaching) in this manner:

An effective speech is composed of:

- 50% subject matter;
- 20% psychology of approach and conclusion;
- 20% effective delivery;
- 10% personality.

Yet, that 10 percent "leavens" the whole speech! It can make the difference between a boring talk and a fascinating speech. I have, therefore, felt it desirable to devote some space to the matter of the preacher's personality. The following are some simple guidelines.

1. Be Yourself

Be relaxed, natural and unaffected. One of the most important aids to effective speaking is to be relaxed.

Tension creates nervousness. Under tension, the memory does not function well. Speech does not flow fluently. Your nervousness will be communicated to the audience, and they too will feel tense.

The best way to relax is to commit your message to God. Do the best you can and leave the results to God.

2. Try Not To Copy Others

God chose YOU because He wants to use YOU. You have some special features peculiar to you alone, and God has a purpose for them.

It is a great mistake to try to copy any other preacher. No matter how effective that person may be, it will not enhance your ministry to try to copy him. To do so would be like David trying to wear Saul's armor. It just did not fit him, and would have been more of a hindrance than a help (1 Sam 17:38,39).

If you are endeavoring to copy or imitate someone, your listeners will quickly become aware of this. They will realize that your preaching is not wholly sincere and genuine. It communicates shallowness or superficiality.

You will never be completely relaxed and at ease, if you are not yourself. Your ministry will be stilted and artificial. Determine to be yourself, and be the best that you can be!

3. Be True To Yourself

Integrity and honesty are essential for a preacher. You are a channel for God - a mouthpiece that He might speak to mankind through you. Therefore, He wants a vessel which is honest, free from hypocrisy and guile.

4. Be A Clean Vessel

It is unlikely that your hearers will rise higher than you. If your life is polluted, you will pollute your hearers. If there is bitterness in your spirit, you will communicate it to your listeners.

If you are critical, this will come through your preaching, and your congregation will become critical, too. If you allow yourself to be controlled by negative attitudes, the people will also become negative.

You will always reproduce after your kind (Gen 1:12, 21). You have a grave responsibility to BE the kind of person God wants to reproduce. The fruit of your ministry will be of that variety as well.

5. Be Sincere

Sincerity means to be free from pretense or deceit. It means to be the same person in reality as you are in appearance. Do not try to appear to be in public what you are not in private. Be genuine, honest and sincere.

Many preachers develop a public image. They have a religious facade. Please avoid this - it is religious hypocrisy and an abomination to God. God is certainly unimpressed by such a false image, and people are not fooled by it for very long either.

6. Have A Clear Purpose And Objective

The personality is properly shaped and developed when one has a real objective in life. If your life is truly dedicated to becoming an effective minister of God's Word, your personality will be developed to that end. It will take the shape best suited to a communication of truth.

Such dedication will foster the development of your personality in the best manner suitable to be a spokesman for God.

Do not allow preaching to be a hobby for you. It is the highest calling of God available to man. If God has called you to declare His glorious truth, devote yourself wholeheartedly to pursue the ultimate development of that calling. It is the most important thing in your life. Never allow it to be relegated to a secondary position.

7. Be Wholehearted

Nothing worthwhile is ever achieved by half-hearted people. Nothing of value is ever obtained without cost. Give yourself wholeheartedly to the great task of preaching.

Let this goal be uppermost in your mind. Study everything you can on the subject. Let it absorb and motivate you. Make it the most important thing in your life; determine to be, in every way, worthy of the high calling God has put upon you.

B. PERSONAL INVOLVEMENT IN PREACHING

1. Naturalness

Be relaxed and be yourself. 'God wants to use YOUR personality as a channel to communicate His Word. That is why He chose and called YOU. Do not be overly critical of yourself. Accept yourself. God has accepted you. No one can be YOU nearly as well as YOU!

2. Originality

Let your message and the manner in which you present it be your own unique product. God has made us different one from another. He enjoys our uniqueness and the variety this gives to the human race.

Use the unique personality God has given to you, and allow Him to express His mind through your life in the special and unique way He has desired.

3. Simplicity

There is something extremely attractive and appealing about simplicity. Don't try to be overly complicated or profound. You don't have to impress people. You are there to minister to them, not to impress them.

4. Attractiveness

I am convinced that the most winsome and attractive personality this world has ever seen is Jesus Christ!

I don't mean particularly in physical appearance. Isaiah said: "*...when we see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him*" (Isa 53:2).

The attractiveness of Christ was not primarily in His physical appearance. It was His character and personality which were so appealing.

The average people of His day responded to Him with great enthusiasm. The Bible says: "*...the common people heard him gladly*" (Mark 12:37).

They flocked to Him. They were drawn like steel filings to a magnet. There was a sweet graciousness about Him which gave Him an enormous appeal. It was partly this personal magnetism which drew huge crowds wherever He went. The Holy Spirit can develop a similar attractiveness in you!

5. Spontaneity

Don't act unnaturally. Be free and unimpeded, doing things naturally. Spontaneity means that things happen easily without being forced or coerced. Don't develop a religious style which is heavy and unnatural. Let your style of communication flow freely and naturally. Don't let yourself be bound and restricted.

6. Adaptability

A good preacher must learn to be flexible and to adapt to many different circumstances. Every gathering you preach in will be different in some way from others. You need to be able to discern in each situation what the Holy Spirit is desiring to accomplish.

God has a specific objective to achieve in every gathering of believers. The preacher is a very important key to the accomplishment of that purpose.

Try not to be too rigid or orthodox in your mental approach to a preaching occasion. Endeavor to keep your mind flexible and open. Learn how to wait on God continually in your spirit. Keep your spirit open to His still small voice within you.

This can make all the difference between a very ordinary church service and a dynamic encounter with God through His Word.

The Holy Spirit can create many different kinds of moods in meetings. Sometimes they will be joyful and lively; at other times they will be quiet and reverent. The skill to recognize this, and take advantage of the unique situation created by the Spirit, can enable you to reap the results desired by God.

The key to success in Christian service is to "discern the way in which God is moving, and move with Him."

7. Dynamic

There is a mysterious dynamic in preaching which is quite unique to this particular function - a dynamic expression of authority which can be quite awesome to witness.

Peter illustrates this awesome dynamic on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2). Up until this time, he had shown himself to be fearful and afraid. His cowardly denial of Christ had proven this. His refusal to acknowledge Christ even before a mere serving-maid reveals his timidity and insecurity.

But he was transformed on the Day of Pentecost. We see a very different Peter as he stood to preach that morning. There is something glorious to behold about this man as he fearlessly proclaims the Word of God to a vast crowd.

There is a majesty which thrills the soul as we witness such a preacher in action . Who can explain just what constitutes this phenomenon?

I clearly recall some of the times when I have been privileged to hear Dr. Billy Graham. What power and authority is released through the preaching of this man! It is a combination of the power of God and the cooperation of man.

He is an example of how wonderfully a human being can become a channel for the wisdom and counsel of God to be brought to men.

Truly, preaching is a high and holy task. A person called to this work must feel honored indeed. Anyone called to fulfill this role should surely dedicate himself wholeheartedly to ensure the highest possible level of effectiveness.

C. VITAL EQUIPMENT

I would like to speak to you now about three things which are vital to effective preaching: VISION, VOCABULARY AND VOICE!

1. Vision

Every preacher needs a vision. By this I mean a concept of what his ministry can achieve in God.

Our vision is that concept of the ultimate achievement towards which we move through life. You could say it is a dream of what you can ultimately be for God and the function you can fulfill to His glory. Every preacher needs such a vision to motivate him. He needs a definite, ultimate goal to move towards - something to strive for, something to achieve; something for which it is worth sacrificing; a goal which will bring out the best in him.

Most preachers encounter plenty of discouragement one way or another. They need something which will counterbalance this and eventually make everything worthwhile. Unless you have an inner awareness of God's ultimate purpose for you, you could be overcome with discouragement and fail to achieve your divinely-appointed goal.

2. Vocabulary

A preacher's vocabulary is composed of the number of words he knows and with which he is familiar. Obviously, words are the tools which a preacher employs in the pursuit of his calling. The more words he knows and understands, the more fluent and expressive he can be.

Words are to the preacher what brush and paint are to the artist. A preacher can paint vivid pictures with words. As he describes a scene, his audience can almost see what he describes. Words are so important to an effective communicator. A preacher without words is a tradesman without tools.

As a preacher, you must be interested in words. Try to read widely, for reading good literature will enrich your vocabulary. Whenever you encounter a word you are not familiar with, investigate it. Find out what it means. Add it to your collection. Begin to use it in its right context and application.

Build up your vocabulary; you will become more fluent as you do. People will listen to you with much more interest, if you can adequately communicate your topic.

3. Voice

Surely the voice is a preacher's greatest natural asset. Therefore, you should endeavor to take good care of it. You should always be aware of your voice and seek to improve your use of it.

D. PRINCIPLES OF PUBLIC SPEAKING

Here are a few principles about which a public speaker should be mindful:

1. Breathing

Correct breathing is extremely important for a speaker.

- Practice breathing through your nose.
- Breathe deeply right to the bottom of your lungs.
- Practice filling your chest and lungs with air.
- Hold it and then breathe out slowly. Control the expiration.
- Let the air come right up from the bottom of your lungs, through your larynx (voice box) and hit the roof of your mouth. The roof of your mouth should act as a sounding board. When you bounce your voice off your palate, it will gain extra resonance. Learning to do this correctly will strengthen your vocal chords.

2. Articulation

Articulation is the art of uttering speech clearly. An articulate person speaks very clearly. He is easy to understand. He pronounces his words well.

Every preacher should aim to become adept in this skill. He ought to be easy to listen to. It should not impose strain to listen to him; it should be a pleasure. Even in everyday conversation, he should practice speaking clearly.

3. Inflection

Inflection in speech has to do with the pitch of your voice.

The human voice has a very wide range of tones. If you speak at the same pitch and on the same tone all the time, your voice can sound very boring. You must develop the ability to modulate your voice.

As a singer can go up and down the scale - giving forth a good variety of tones - so can the public speaker.

If your voice tends to be naturally rather high-pitched, practice speaking in the lower registers. Develop a variety of pitch in your voice.

4. Speed Of Delivery

Some people tend to speak at the same rate all the time. This, too, can become rather boring.

You should endeavor to vary the speed at which you speak. Most of your message will be delivered at a moderate rate which is easy to listen to.

From time to time, however, you should quicken or slow down the pace to give variety and added emphasis to your presentation.

5. Volume

This is another factor of importance. Varying the volume of your voice can give added emphasis to a point you wish to make.

The major part of your message should be delivered at a conversational volume. This ensures that it is loud enough for all to hear, yet not so loud that it assaults the ears of your audience.

Some preachers seem to feel it necessary to preach so loudly that they hurt the ears of their hearers. Try to avoid this.

If the whole of your message is delivered with loud volume, it is difficult to give special emphasis to those sections which are the most important.

Endeavor to begin your message at a conversational volume. Only turn the volume right up when you have a special point to emphasize strongly.

If you occasionally drop the volume, this will also serve to give special emphasis. Your congregation will give special attention when you drop the volume. They will endeavor to hang on to every word.

6. Pausing

Don't be afraid to pause once in a while. This can also give added emphasis to some point you make. Some preachers are frightened of quiet spots. Their delivery pours forth like a river, without any pause. This can be difficult for people to absorb.

Don't race through your message, keeping up a fast tempo and hardly pausing for breath.

Your congregation needs time to think and consider what you have said. This helps to really absorb the truth of your message.

You need to inform the mind as well as stir the emotions. The mind can absorb things only at a steady rate. If you preach too quickly without suitable pauses, you will leave your hearers behind.

7. Repetition

A certain amount of repetition can be good. It helps to emphasize your point and fix it in the minds of your listeners. This is the kind of emphasis which you purposely give. You are aware that you are doing it, and have a good reason for doing so.

Try to present the same point in a variety of ways. You want the truth you are sharing to become part of the thinking and action of the people. In order to accomplish this, the mind needs an adequate exposure of truth and must be convinced.

E. SIMPLE TIPS FOR PREACHERS

1. Be Yourself!

Don't try to project some image that is insincere. Being yourself is the only way to be completely relaxed. If you try to imitate some other preacher, this will be communicated to your audience. They will sense the artificiality of your preaching. Be the very best that you can be, but always be natural and be yourself.

2. Forget Yourself!

Self-consciousness can be a real hindrance in public speaking. It may produce hesitancy and uncertainty.

Chronic self-consciousness can even make a person "tongue-tied." It can severely restrict your flow of speech. Your actions and demeanor will also be restricted. You should prepare yourself as thoroughly as possible in every necessary way.

- Let your study of the subject be adequate.
- Let your notes be comprehensive and clear.
- Be "prayed up" and filled with the Spirit.
- Be filled with the word of truth you intend to share.

Pay attention to every area of preparation you are aware of; but when you stand to speak, forget about yourself. Be completely absorbed in what you have to share. Be aware of your audience rather than of yourself.

You are a channel for God's Word to flow through. Just seek to be utterly yielded to Him, aware only of God and the people to whom you are speaking on His behalf.

3. Don't Develop A 'Religious Voice' When You Are Preaching

Some preachers do this, and it is most disconcerting. Their pulpit voice is so different from their normal one.

This conveys a sense of insincerity. It is almost as though this person is "acting out a part." It also sets him apart from his congregation; they tend to see him as a different breed or species.

It almost seems as though he belongs to a different world than they. This makes it difficult for them to identify with him.

Practice preaching in a normal voice - the same voice, accent and tone that you use every day in the normal communications of life. This conveys a sense of reality and sincerity.

4. Do Not Speak Too Softly

Make sure that everyone in your audience can hear you clearly. Don't make them strain to hear your every word. If necessary, ask the crowd; "Can everybody hear me clearly?" It is pointless to proceed with

your message if part of your audience cannot hear well enough to follow you. This would be wasting your time and theirs.

5. Do Not Shout

Endeavor to speak with a normal conversational tone and volume, which may have to be increased somewhat according to the size of the crowd and whether or not you have the use of an amplifying system.

6. Remember To Vary The Speed And Pitch Of Your Delivery To Avoid Monotony

7. Get The Audience To Accept You

Win their confidence. If they do not accept you, they probably will not accept your message either!

8. Dress Appropriately

Your appearance should never detract from your ability to communicate with your audience. Ideally, you should dress rather modestly, in a manner which is not likely to offend anyone.

What is the point of antagonizing your audience by your manner of dress? Your aim is to win and influence your listeners, not to antagonize them.

Your clothing should not draw undue attention to you. If possible, you should be neatly, suitably and modestly attired.

Certainly, your dress should not be offensive to the culture of your audience.

9. Learn To Stand Properly

On most occasions it is proper to stand when addressing an audience. You should stand firmly on both feet, giving yourself a good solid stance.

Stand upright, facing your audience. Avoid leaning on anything. If there is a pulpit or rostrum, by all means use this to place your Bible and notes on, but don't use it to lean on. Standing upright will help your breathing. It will also engender a feeling of quiet confidence as you face your audience.

10. Learn To Move Naturally

Your body conveys a message as well as your voice. It is important how you conduct yourself while speaking.

The key to proper movement is to let it be natural. Avoid unnecessary physical gesticulations. If you are verbally describing something, it is natural to also convey the idea with your hands.

Let such descriptions come naturally and spontaneously. You can emphasize a point very forcibly with your hands. All hand movements should be appropriate to what you are emphasizing.

11. Establish And Maintain Eye Contact With Your Audience

Your eyes convey a message too! Don't stare into space or above the heads of the listeners. Look directly at the people you are addressing.

Let your glance rove around the congregation, so that everyone f eels that you are speaking to THEM. By this means, you will establish a good contact and rapport with the people.

12. Remember That Facial Expressions Are Important, Too!

The look on your face conveys a message very eloquently. Avoid any extreme facial expressions unless you are emphasizing some particular point. Above all, let your facial expressions be natural, and let them be appropriate to your theme and topic. Be happy and confident, unless your subject is a sad or serious one.

These suggestions are made with respect to the natural art of public speaking.

Obviously, the factor of greatest importance in preaching is the presence and anointing of God upon your life. However, God can bless and anoint a person who is well-prepared and has some understanding of the principles of communication.

Never despise such skills. But, on the other hand, do not depend on them either.

Ultimately, only God can accomplish what you are seeking to attain through your preaching.

Let your confidence be placed firmly in Him. Understand that the only really worthwhile development in your preaching abilities is that which God accomplishes.