

How to Prepare and Preach a Sermon

Question 1: Share with the group what you ask God for just before you preach?

- I pray that the Holy Spirit will help me to
 - Inform their minds (I hope to give them helpful information)
 - Convict their conscience (I want to challenge their heart and stir their passion to serve the Lord)
 - Direct their will (I want to give them practical ideas to put help God's word into practice.)

Question 2: How do you prepare your sermons?

- I begin with a short prayer asking the Lord to show me what He wants to teach me through the sermon.
 - At least one person should be challenged by my sermon – me!
 - At least one person should be challenged by your sermon – you!
- It depends on whether I am the pastor of a church or an invited speaker.
 - If I am an invited speaker, I ask the one inviting me –
 - What do you hope that your people will learn after my message?
 - How long should my message be?
 - If I am the pastor of a church – I will gather my leaders every three months and ask them – “What would you like our members to learn in the next 6 months?”
 - I write down these learning goals right at the beginning – but these may change as I gather my material.
 - It is important to be clear what you are trying to achieve through your preaching and teaching.
 - Begin with the End in Mind.
- It depends on whether I am preaching on a topic or explaining a passage from the Bible.
 - If I am preaching on a topic
 - I gather helpful ideas from books, articles, verses from the Bible or from discussion with people.
 - I write down the questions that people have about the topic.
 - If I am preaching from a passage from the Bible
 - I read at least the chapter before and the chapter after that passage – sometimes I read the whole book of the Bible where that passage comes from.
 - I imagine that I am the writer who was inspired by the Holy Spirit to write these words – and I ask myself – “What was I trying to say to those people who lived so many years ago?”
 - I read books (commentaries) that help me understand the background of the people that first heard this passage.
 - After I understand what the passage meant to those in the past – I ask – “Holy Spirit – what does this passage mean for us today?”
 - I write down any helpful ideas or questions I think my listeners may have about the passage.
 - After this point, I follow the same steps whether I am preaching on a topic or from a passage from the Bible:

- From all the ideas and questions that I have collected, I choose a few that I think the Lord wants me to focus on.
- I check to see that there is a balance between ideas that
 - Inform their minds
 - Convict their conscience (heart) and
 - Direct their will.
- I arrange these ideas and questions – usually putting the easier ones first.
- At this point – I already have the outline of my sermon – but I have not written out every word.
- My next step is very important – I look at the whole outline – and I ask myself – “Am I trying to teach them too much?”
 - This is the point where I check whether or not my sermon is too long.
 - It is very good if your listeners say at the end of your sermon – “I wish he would preach for longer”.
 - It is not good if they think while you are still preaching – “I wish he would hurry up and finish his sermon!”
- Next, I look for stories or examples that will help people to understand these ideas.
- I look for pictures or objects that will help me explain these ideas.
- I sometimes make up my own stories or take my own pictures if I cannot find any.
- I put the stories and the pictures into my outline.
- I go through the whole outline and preach the whole sermon to myself – praying that the Lord will change me.
- After this first round – I usually make some adjustments to the outline.
- Then I go through the outline again – imagining that I am preaching to the people – and I pray that the Lord will use the sermon to transform His people.
 - At this point, I make some notes in my outline – I mark the points that I need to give special attention to.
 - At some points – it is helpful to raise the volume of your voice.
 - At other points – you need to speak with strong feelings.
 - It is not helpful to preach your whole sermon at a very loud volume.

Question 3: Is it better to write out your sermons in full?

- Yes and No!
- Yes! – many of the great preachers I have heard write out their sermons in full.
 - After you have written it out – it is much easier to see how you can improve it.
- No! – I prefer to use an outline – because I like to look at the people as they listen to me preach.
- You will have to decide which style is better for yourself – but for your first 20 sermons, it is better to write it out in full.

Question 4: Do you have any other suggestions to help me improve my preaching?

- Always ask for feedback after you have preached from your 'foot washing' group.
- Before preaching – always check the sound system – make sure that the person sitting in the last row can hear you.

Memory Work

- Memorise the 3 points of a balanced sermon. A balanced sermon will:
 - Inform their minds (I hope to give them helpful information)
 - Convict their conscience (I want to challenge their heart and stir their passion to serve the Lord)
 - Direct their will (I want to give them practical ideas to put help God's word into practice.)

Don't Forget this Part

- Ask 2 or 3 people to give you feedback after each sermon.

