

Constructing A Biblical Message

EXALTING CHRIST PUBLISHING

710 BROADWAY STREET

VALLEJO, CA 94590

707-553-8780

www.cbcvallejo.org

email: publications@cbcvallejo.org

Copyright © 2001

Printed By Permission Only

CONSTRUCTING A BIBLICAL MESSAGE

The goal of sermon preparation is, in part, to develop an outline and message that comes directly from a passage of Scripture. This alone is true exposition. In addition, it brings the full authority of God to bear in the sermon.

I. DIGGING FOR CONTENT.

A. The Observation Of The Passage: Observation Is Before Interpretation.

Observation is done through prayer and the continual reading and meditation of the passage. It involves observation of the following:

- 1. The broad context. The purpose and structure of the book.**
- 2. The immediate context. The preceding and following contexts and the general purpose of the passage.**
- 3. Any problems and significant matters such as: repeated terms, unclear terms, significant terms, cultural and historical concepts, grammatical relationships.**
- 4. The development of ideas: Connectives, main and subordinate ideas etc.**

B. The Interpretation Of The Passage: The Explanation Of The Text As Understood By The Original Author.

By interpretation we mean: What did the passage mean to the original author, and ultimately the Holy Spirit? What the text means to us is application, not interpretation.

1. Principles of interpretation.

- a. It involves specific guidelines and principles: a science
- b. It is a developed skill: an art that depends in the person doing it.
- c. Literal interpretation is the norm.
 - (1) The normal meaning is given to words unless it is incongruous or ridiculous.
 - (2) Symbols are part of normal language and can be understood by common sense.
 - (3) It recognizes accommodations and anthropomorphic expressions. In other words, we must abide by this principle: "If the plain sense makes common sense seek no other sense."
- d. Grammatical interpretation: The meaning and significance of phrases, idioms, modifiers, conjugations, tenses, coordinate and subordinate clauses, and connectives must be noted.
- e. Historical interpretation: Historical propriety must be maintained. We do not read our culture into Biblical concepts and words (John 3;7; Ezek. 36) into the text.

2. Word studies are key to interpretation.

- a. Lexicons for definition or words.
- b. Concordances for the meaning of a word in usage.
- c. Word study books.
- d. Dictionaries and encyclopedias.

3. Commentaries – for the development of the argument and some word studies.

4. Historical and cultural background studies.

- a. Religious.
- b. Political.
- c. Social - values, customs, etc.
- d. Philosophical.

5. Theological studies

- a. These give an awareness of the total biblical teaching on a subject or theme.
- b. Theological sources.

II. DETERMINING THE THEME AND PURPOSE.

This procedure is for a textual message. For a topical message the subject and theme are not derived from a passage, but are chosen independently according to the need or objective. However, the nature of the theme and its relationship to the development of the message are the same in a topical message.

A. Determining The Theme.

1. Identify the subject: This answers the question, what general topic is the passage about?

The general broad topic being discussed - it is what the author is talking about in general (a one word subject such as love, prayer, trials, etc.)

- a. Each of the parts of the passage should relate to and illuminate the subject and vice versa.
- b. It is the general area out of which the theme is developed.

2. Identify the theme: This answers the question, what specific thing is the passage saying about the subject?

- a. It is the specific aspect of the subject which is being discussed. It is the subject and some specific fact or assessment about the subject (the nature of love, the necessity of prayer, the purpose of trials, etc.) It is narrow and specific.
- b. The key words used and the development of the thought in the passage (separate subordinate ideas form main ideas and relate the parts to the whole) indicates the theme.
- c. It is the central thought and principle idea developed in the passage. The main idea that unifies the whole. It is the specific thrust of the passage.
- d. The outline and message will be the development of this one central idea. There is only one main idea in a passage and one central ideas developed in a message.
- e. State it in the fewest possible words and in a way that reflects the content of a passage and the needs of the audience.

What is the subject of : 1 Peter 3:1-7; 1 Peter 5:5-10; James 1:2-12; 1 Thessalonians 3:1-10?

What is the theme of the same passages?

B. Determining The Purpose.

1. Defining the purpose: This answers two questions. First, why did the author write what he wrote? Second, why are you preaching the sermon?

- a. It is the specific thing the author (and now you) wants your audience to do or be as a result of your message.
 - (1) Be informed
 - (2) Be motivated (encouraged and challenged)
 - (3) Be convinced (persuaded)
- b. It is the purpose that the Holy Spirit had in mind when He inspired the passage (not only the original purpose of the passage, but the passage's purpose for future application) - 1 Corinthians 10:6, 9-10 .

"If the Holy Spirit has determined to do something specific by means of a unit of material devoted to that particular purpose then it must be preached in order to achieve that purpose."

NOTE: The Bible, as a whole, each book as a unit, each section and each passage has a purpose. It is our task to determine each and keep them in their proper relation to each other. Prayer is vital!

2. Identifying the purpose.

- a. Ask questions and pray - What does this amount to? What is the Holy Spirit seeking to accomplish here?
- b. Look for indicators in the passage (1 Thessalonians 4:13; Luke 15:1-3; Romans 8:12-14; 1 John 1:6-10).
- c. The example of Jesus (Matthew 5:31-32).

III. DEVELOPING AN OUTLINE.

A. The Preliminary Elements, Foundational To The Constructing Of The Outline.

- 1. The subject has been determined: The general topic under construction. This answers the question: What is the sermon about?**

Examples: 1 Peter 3:1-7, Marriage
1 Peter 5:5-10, Humility (pride)
James 1:2-12, Trials

- 2. The theme has been determined: This is the specific aspect of the subject.**

The theme answers the question, not only, What is the sermon about, but also what is it saying about it?

- a. It is the central idea that is developed in the passage. A passage of scripture has one main idea and it has to be determined.
- b. A sermon also must have one main idea. It is the unifying center and core of the passage and the sermon. This one main idea has come from the passage.
- c. An exegetical/homiletical statement of the theme
 - (1) It is stated to reflect the meaning of text.
 - (2) It expresses the theme as it was understood by the original readers, but relevant to hearers.

Examples: 1 Peter 3:1-7, responsibilities of marriage.
1 Peter 5:5-10, the need to be humble.
James 1:2-12, the purpose of trials.

3. The proposition is developed with a transitional statement as a bridge to your outline. It answers the question: What is the sermon? What do you propose to do in this sermon?

- a. It is the sermon condensed.
- b. It indicates the form and substance of the message.
- c. It indicates how the sermon will develop and unfold.

The definition of the proposition: It is the statement of the theme in the form of a proposal or evaluation which summarizes the content of the sermon with a transitional connecting word.

Examples: 1 Peter 5:5-10 The obligation and duty of believers is that they must be humble people. For the following reasons ...
1 Peter 3:1-7 Husbands and wives can enjoy a Christ glorifying marriage by realizing ...
James 1:2-12 Trials are necessary and profitable as can be seen by the following realities ...

4. The aim (purpose, objective) is stated, answers the question, why is the sermon?

It is the specific life response desired as a result of the message. Your purpose and objective in terms of life response for preaching the message. Sometimes it is mentioned, sometimes not. It however is clear in your mind.

Examples: 1 Peter 3:1-7, To move couples to glorify Christ in their marriages.
1 Peter 5:5-10, To move Christians to submit to God and to not fight their battles - move Christians to endure and submit to their trials.

B. The Procedure For Building An Outline.

- 1. State the subject and theme as determined from the text.**
- 2. Divide the passage into its main segments: (see "Developing An Outline" notes).**

If we know the flow of thought leading to a passage and the flow of thought away from it, we can predict with some certainty the flow of thought within the passage. Ramm

- a. Note the recurring words or phrases.
- b. Note the grammatical relationships.
 - (1) Key conjunctions and connectives.
 - (2) Main and subordinate clauses.
- c. Note the literary structure.
 - (1) Comparisons and contrasts (1 John 4:1-5).
 - (2) Cause and effect (Matthew 25:34-43).
 - (3) Repetition (Hebrews 11).
 - (4) Progression of ideas - time, place, action (Romans 6) or incidents (Luke 15:11-32).

3. Develop the proposition.

A proposition is a - "Statement of the theme in the form of a proposal or an evaluation that summarizes the content of the sermon."

- a. The elements of a proposition.
 - (1) There is a core statement.

- (a) An evaluation - "trials are profitable."
- (b) An obligation - "it is necessary to deal with pride."
- (c) An ability - "husbands and wives can glorify Christ in their marriage."

(2) There is a connective statement.

A proposition with an interrogative. A proposition with a question - the following are examples:

- (a) Why? 1 Peter 5:5-10 - Why is it necessary to deal with pride?
- (b) How? 1 Peter 3:1-7 - How can husbands and wives glorify Christ in their marriage?
- (c) When? When are trials profitable?

(3) There is a key word.

- (a) It is always a plural noun.
- (b) It characterized the main points.
- (c) It connects directly to main the points.

Ex: Why? Believers should overcome pride because of the reasons given.
 How? Husbands and wives can glorify Christ in their marriage by following the instructions given by Peter.
 Why? Trials are beneficial for the reasons shown by James.

b. The full expression of the proposition

The full expression of the proposition should be made for the sermon. It will include the above elements, but a smooth and clear statement. Christians should be humble (basic statement, why - implied question) because of the reasons given in 1 Peter 5:5-10.

3. The aim is stated.

- a. What is the desired result of the message?
- b. State specifically the life response you want to achieve.

4. Develop your conclusion.

5. Develop your introduction.

DEVELOPING AN OUTLINE

I. THE CASE FOR OUTLINING.

A. It Stimulates, Organizes Thoughts.

B. It Gives Freedom And Control.

C. It Makes It Understandable And Clear.

D. It Aids Memory.

II. THE COMPONENTS OF AN OUTLINE.

A. The Body.

The body is the development of the theme or purpose. The main points elaborate the theme and the purpose. It includes three things: interpretations, illustrations and application.

B. The Introduction.

- 1. Prepares for understanding: leads them into the message (it is not an apology for speaking).**

- 2. Gains attention and creates an interest: (overcomes indifference, prejudice and doubt).**
- 3. Orients the audience: Makes it vital and significant; shows importance and relevance - makes them want to listen.**
- 4. Sources: Make sure they are reasonable short - relate to the theme and are simple.**
 - a. Startling statements.
 - b. Illustrations.
 - c. Quotations.
 - d. Carefully worded questions.
 - e. Recent current events.
 - f. Historic events.
 - g. Context of passage.

C. The Conclusion: Do At Beginning If Possible.

The conclusion is an earnest summarization of the main thrust of the message, with an earnest appeal for a specific life's response in order to honor and glorify Christ.

- 1. It brings completeness to a sermon.**
- 2. It gives direction and freedom - prevents wondering and concentrates energies.**
- 3. It is natural: The logical result of the development, the inevitable response, rests upon the force of the message.**

4. **It is personal: It is direct not general. It is specific, a decision and responsibility to be done.**
5. **It is emotional: Earnest and heart felt - a sincere, compassionate and compelling challenge.**
6. **The types of conclusions: All conclusions should be short, concise and positive; don't circle the airport — land.**
 - a. Recapitulation.
 - b. Summarize and concentrate.
 - c. Appeal and challenge.
 - d. Exhortation.
 - e. Illustration.

III. THE CONSTRUCTING OF AN OUTLINE

A. After Having Determined The Subject And The Theme, Develop The Main Points.

They should be derived from the biblical text. They must be characterized by the following:

1. **They must be unified: They are to be a development of the theme and purpose of the text.**
2. **They must be progressive: Each adds to the prior statements - they do not repeat a thought.**

- 3. They must be orderly: Arrange them naturally and logically - the less vital and important first; negative statements first.**
- 4. They must be proportionate: Each has approximate equal force - no undue emphasis on a minor point.**
- 5. They must be parallel: Parallel in expression, easy to remember, interrelated; they should be clearly and accurately stated.**
- 6. They must have simplicity: The less points the best - if you can do it in three, do not do it in four - any one can complicate truth.**
- 7. They must be a transition between the main points.**

B. Development of Subpoints.

- 1. Support, explain, and clarify the main points.**
- 2. Some characteristics as main points.**
- 3. Develop transitions between.**

C. Formulate Conclusion.

D. Formulate Introduction.

II. SECOND MAJOR POINT.

A.

B.

C.

III. THIRD MAJOR POINT.

A.

1.

2.

B.

1.

2.

CONCLUSION

Make an appeal or conclude so as to make the congregation respond to what has been said: Seek some type of commitment.