

Preparing a Sermon from the Word of God **By Barry Wood**

A Biblical sermon is a message from which the major points come directly from the Scripture under consideration. This is exegesis. Too many times preachers are more prone to eisegesis, than they are to exegesis. They read into the Word, rather than extract truth from the Word.

A good sermon is interesting to listen to. The three most important minutes a speaker is on his feet are the 1st three minutes and the last three! You have three minutes to get the crowds attention, or you may never get it! So begin with your best attention getter. This attention getter is to be related to the subject matter of the message.

Good Bible preaching is really an uncomplicated art when practiced consistently. Each major point in the message that comes out of the text itself will have three parts to it:

1. EXPLANATION
2. APPLICATION
3. ILLUSTRATION

For Example: Let's take a simple verse like **John 3:16**

"For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

Preparation: See if you can state the whole sermon idea in a sentence. For example, let's write a sermon on this verse called, **The Greatest Story Ever Told**.

Key sentence: This verse tells us the story of the greatest *lover*, the greatest *love*, the greatest *gift*, and the greatest *choice* the world has ever heard.

Now you create an outline that explains, applies and illustrates these truths.

I. The Greatest Lover...for God

Explanation: (the Who, What, Where, and How of the message.)

Here is where you answer some basic questions:

1. To whom was it written?
Look to the historical setting- why did God say this to them?
What was its meaning to whom it was written?

Note: Jesus says these words to Nicodemus, a ruler and religious leader. In the preceding verses Jesus uses an illustration (verses 14, 15) of Moses lifting up the serpent in the wilderness to show the cross as evidence of God's love.

2. What does the text say?
Look at it in several translations.
Review it in commentaries
Look up key words in a concordance
Cross reference verses
3. How did it happen?

4. What does it say to us today?
Look for the eternal principle in the earthly setting. In this verse seek to explain these things. Explain who God is. God is love (1st John 4:8) anything else that gives truthful information is put here. God is just, merciful, and God is wrath, etc; however, God is love and love must have an object.

Application: (the “so what” of the message).

After explanation we come to application. Just as “Explanation” is the *Who, What and Where* of the sermon, even so application is the “*so what?*” of the sermon. In the application portion of the message the preacher applies the truth to his congregation. He answers the unspoken “so what” of the listener. He may ask, “What is your view of God?” “How do you see him?” The Kikuyu people of Kenya for centuries called God, “Mungo”, and believe he lives on Mount Kenya! The preacher may say, “Do you know that God is love?”

Application makes the message personal. Jesus and the prophets all did this. They applied the truth to their listeners. Peter at Pentecost, turned to those Jewish leaders responsible for Jesus’ death, and said, “*this same Jesus... you nailed to a cross by the hands of godless men and put Him to death.... and Peter said to them, “Repent...” (Acts 2: 23-38)*

The point here is that preaching must be applied truth. If a man cannot go away knowing what God wants him to do or be, then he either wasn’t listening or the preacher didn’t do his job very well.

Illustration: (the visual “windows” of the message)

Now we need a story, a picture to visualize the truth. The illustrations are the windows that let in the light of God’s truth to the soul. Long after a listener forgets the rest of your sermon, they will remember the stories. Jesus knew this and preached picture sermons so men could remember. In **Luke 15** Jesus gave us a picture sermon. He tells the Pharisees a story of a man who had two sons in order to teach them about God’s Grace and Love. In **John 3:16** the preacher can give them an illustration to show that God is love.

II. The Greatest Love...so loved the world

Explanation: there are different kinds of love. This word for love is “agape;” it means unconditional love. Only God can love totally unconditionally. Only God can look beyond your faults and see your need. Because we are guilty sinners we need this kind of love. This is GRACE from the Father’s heart. Notice that God’s love has an object, the entire human race. He loves the whole world. None are excluded.

Application: Has God’s love reached your world? God can love you but if your heart is closed to Him by your sin and unbelief, you will not experience the joy of His love. There is a God shaped hole in every human heart that only God’s love can fill.

Illustration: Now we need a picture again, a window to let in the light. Include a good story, a poem or a saying, even humor to illustrate this truth.

So, on it goes through each point, explanation, application, and illustration. This is a simple tool to create a Biblical sermon.

III. The Greatest Object ...the world

Explain: Here you can explain to your audience that God loves all people, all tribes, all nations, and all sinners –regardless of color, race, creed or condition. Quote scriptures to support this idea. See **Romans 5:8; Luke 19:10; Romans 6:23;** and many more.

Application: Tell your audience that you can write your own name in here. God loves YOU so much He gave His only begotten Son-for you. Jesus died for your forgiveness and YOUR salvation.

Illustration: Now you give them a good illustration of this personal salvation. Some story they can relate too. Maybe you tell the story of the prodigal son in **Luke 15.**

IV. The greatest Gift... that He gave his only begotten Son

Again, you repeat this process of Explaining, Applying, and Illustrating. Sometimes only an illustration is needed- without much explanation.

V. The Greatest Condition...that anyone who believes in Him

Vi. The Greatest Salvation... should not perish but have everlasting life

One point-several applications

One more thought is helpful here. Not every sermon has to have three main points. It does not even need two points. Some sermons only have one main idea. For example, this **John 3:16** verse can be presented as one main idea- That is, “how much God loves the lost”. If you choose to use only one point, you can vary the three parts of your message by using Explanation, Application, Illustration, in different orders.

Mix it up

There are times you can use two illustrations together, or explanation, then illustrate, then apply. You can mix it up if it better serves communication. Your audience and how they “hear” you are vital to how you communicate.

For example: In African cultures the people are story tellers. Their ancestry is an oral tradition. Also, the African way of thinking is not analytical like the western mind. So; if your audience is African-use many stories (illustrations) then use the application to apply the stories to real life.

You can even use explanation to give biblical authority to your illustrating and applying.

Conclusion:

Finally, every sermon needs **a conclusion.** The ending or conclusion is when you ask the hearers to respond, to take action. You want them to do something in obedience to God’s spoken Word. The Conclusion is when you tell them what they should do. Again, you should be brief, be decisive, and be clear about what you are asking for. The action is related to the body of the sermon. It states what the sermon said. Here you are seeking a response to the good news of the message. So, your conclusion is strong on Application. This is the “*what do you want me to do*” of your sermon. This conclusion is where you ask them to do respond. Maybe here you explain what it means to believe in Christ. You can lead them to pray a prayer of faith that invites Christ to come into their lives and be born again

Work at it- you will get better

Do you want to become a messenger of God? If so, you must work hard at your craft. Practice, study, and meditate on God’s Word. The preacher is God’s spokesman. As His Spirit speaks truth into your life, you can learn to speak it back to the people in language they can understand. Ask God to make your voice a prophetic voice for your generation. He is eager to bless His prophets.