HOW TO PREPARE A SERMON

What is a sermon?

A sermon is:

- a speech or talk
- prepared in a ordered form
- prepared to meet the needs of the listeners
- prepared to help people make a decision to accept God’s leading in their lives
- preached so that the Word of God becomes meaningful
- presented to uplift Jesus as Lord

A sermon

- gives instruction
- gives understanding
- teaches responsibility
- inspires action
- gives information
- gives reproof
- gives hope to sinners
- gives encouragement

1. PERSONAL PREPARATION

- Good sermons come from speakers who have consecrated their lives to God. Unless the speaker’s life is under control of the Holy Spirit, God will not be able to speak through him to others.
- If you are regularly called upon to preach, then your life should include the following activities:
  - time to study and meditate upon God’s word in the Bible
  - a strong prayer life in which you talk with God and He reveals His will to you
  - time to read the Bible and other books to increase your knowledge of both spiritual and secular subjects
  - Time spent in improving your speaking voice.

2. CHOOSING THE SUBJECT

Before you decide on a topic for a sermon, think about the needs of your church members. Some of them may be careless about Sabbath keeping or tithing. There may be some of them who have become discouraged. Some may be new Christians and need instruction in
Christian living. The needs of your church/community will guide in your choice of sermon topics

- Ideals for sermons may come from the following sources:
  - from your Bible study
  - from reading books and newspapers
  - from personal experiences
  - From current events; for example, floods, wars, tsunami, etc.
  - from dreams
  - from nature
  - from visits with people /church members

Once you have decided what you are going to preach about, try to find as much information about your topic as you can. Here are some sources that will help you:

- Bible
- Bible Concordance
- Ask your pastor for help
- E.G. White Writings
- Bible Dictionary
- Magazines
- Bible Commentary
- Book

Once you have gathered information on your topic, write down on paper the title of your sermon. Under the title, write down your aim. Your aim should include WHY you are preaching this sermon and WHAT results you want to see from you’re preaching.

3. PREPARING A SERMON OUTLINE

A sermon outline is a way of recognizing a sermon in an orderly and progressive manner. An outline is written in note form and does NOT include all that the preacher wishes to say. A sermon outline is like the skeleton of an animal. A skeleton allows the animal to stand up and walk around. Without a skeleton, the animal would collapse in a heap on the ground. The preacher takes his outline or skeleton into the pulpit. It is his guide to all that he will say. Without it his sermon will collapse.

What does the outline do?

- guides the thoughts of the preacher
- keeps the preacher on the track
- helps the hearers understand the meaning of the sermon
- Helps the hearers remember what has been said.

NOTE: Whenever you are called to speak for God, prepare an outline to guide your thoughts. This includes all sermons, Bible studies, prayer meetings, morning and evening worships, Sabbath School lessons etc.

4. THE THREE PARTS OF A SERMON OUTLINE

Each sermon outline should have THREE parts:

1. INTRODUCTION
2. MAIN BODY
3. CONCLUSION

1. THE INTRODUCTION

The introduction of a sermon outline provides:
• a time for the congregation to settle down and be in a receptive mood for receiving what is to be said in the sermon
• a way to arouse the interest of the hearer

The Introduction may take the form of:

• A story everybody enjoys stories. A story gets the attention of the listeners. This may be a Bible story or any other story that will help lead your hearers to the main topic
• a Bible text or passage
• a parable
• a newspaper article
• a question

NOTE: The introduction must be short (3-4 minutes only). It is only the beginning of your talk.

2. THE MAIN BODY

The Main Body of your sermon is the part in which you will discuss your topic. In the Main Body you should:

• have from two to six main points
• state clearly the main points of your outline
• support your main points with Bible evidence
• make clear the meaning of each main point
• illustrate your points with stories or examples
• move step-by-step from one point to the next
• make bridging statements between each main point so that your hearers will know you are moving on to the next point
• Ask questions to keep your hearers thinking. This will help you to know if they are understanding what you are saying.

3. THE CONCLUSION

The conclusion is used to bring the sermon to a close. Your conclusion should:

• be short and to the point
• Do not introduce any new ideas in your conclusion. This will only distract your hearers from what has already been said
• summarize quickly the main points of your sermon
• apply the truths presented in your sermon to the lives of your listeners
• Help each of your listeners to make a positive response to the truth presented; for example, tell a short, short story, ask a question, read an appealing text etc.
• finish in a positive way
• sit down
SAMPLE SERMON OUTLINE - HOW TO PREACH A SERMON

1. BE PREPARED TO PREACH

1 Samuel 10:26. Be spiritually prepared. Feel God’s touch in your life

Make right:

- known sins that have not been confessed
- dishonest practices
- careless speech
- refusal to follow God’s commands
- unresolved disagreement with other people

The preacher should

- spend time every day in Bible study and prayer
- have earnest desire to overcome sin
- be careful to follow God’s standards of behaviour both in public and in private
- live at peace with others

Luke 24:32 When we enter the pulpit, there must be a fire in our hearts.

That fire comes from

- a heart made right with God
- the conviction that our message comes from God
- the assurance of the Holy Spirit
- the confidence of knowing our topic well

2. SPEAK CORRECTLY

Because the voice is very important in preaching, we should be very careful to use it in the best way possible. Take care of the following things;

- **Volume:** Always speak loud enough so that all may hear you. However, do not shout for you will offend people. Do not speak too quietly for people will not hear you. The easiest speaking voice to listen to is the one that varies the volume. You may speak loudly at times and sometimes you may speak quietly. Change the volume to fit what you are saying. Use your diaphragm muscle to change your volume.

- **Tone and Pitch:** Someone who speaks through their nose or in a high pitched, squeaky voice, is very hard to listen to. Practice speaking in your own house. Practise so that your voice comes out round and full. Listen to yourself on a tape-recorder. Push from your diaphragm and open your mouth so that the sound will come out clearly.

- **Speak Clearly:** Many speakers have lazy tongues. Form each word carefully and speak it clearly. Open your mouth and let the words come out. Do not mumble with your mouth half closed. If you do not speak clearly, God’s truth will not be clearly understood. Practise to pronounce each word correctly and distinctly.

- **Speak Slowly:** Often carefully prepared sermons are not understood by the listeners because the preacher speaks too quickly. Slow down your speaking so that you can clearly pronounce each word. This will help your listeners to understand
what you are saying. Listen to yourself on a tape-recorder. Ask your wife or a friend to tell you if you are speaking too quickly. Then practice speaking more slowly.

3. SPEAK POSITIVELY

- Be positive, do not express doubts in the pulpit
- Be truthful and accurate in all that you say
- Be respectful of the feelings and opinions of others. Never condemn or speak disrespectfully of another person or church
- Be humble. Do not give the impression that you know everything
- Be earnest. Preach to the hearts of the people. Preach for decisions for Jesus
- Uplift Jesus, not yourself (John 12:32; John 3:30)

4. HOLD THE ATTENTION OF YOUR HEARERS

- Look your listeners in the eye. Do not stare out the window or at the ceiling as you talk. Let your eyes move around to each of the listeners. Let them know that you are talking to them.
- Smile as you preach. Be careful not to look angry. Do not condemn or speak harshly to your listeners. This will make it much easier for them to accept your sermon
- Ask questions. Make them think. By their answers you will know whether or not they understand what you are saying
- Ask them to open their Bibles and turn to the texts. Ask church members to help those who are having trouble finding the text. Involve them in the Scripture readings.
- Show them pictures that illustrate your point
- Hold up objects; for example, a stone, lamp, knife
- Act out character in your sermon; for example, Zacchaeus – bend down to show how short he was
- Have the children guess who you are describing
- Use hand gestures
- Speak like you imagine the person in your story might have spoken

5. USE ILLUSTRATIONS AND STORIES

Perhaps the best way to hold the interest of your listeners is to tell stories. Stories are like windows in a house. They let in light and fresh air. Most people can concentrate on something for about ten to fifteen minutes. Then they lose interest. If you plan to tell a story or use an illustration every ten minutes during your sermon, then you will hold your listener’s attention and interest right to the end of the sermon.

Illustrations and stories come from

- Bible
- books, newspapers
- traditional stories
- other preachers
- people’s live
- incidents that take place around us everyday

Different types of stories and illustrations are:

- personal experiences
- Bible stories
- parables
- poems
- current events
6. **USE THE BLACKBOARD**

By using the blackboard, your message will enter the minds of your listeners through their eyes as well as their ears. The action of writing on the blackboard will capture their interest.

On the blackboard you can:

- write words
- list Bible texts
- list your main points
- draw pictures and charts

Even though you may not be able to write neatly or draw well, still use the blackboard. Whatever you write or draw will strengthen what you have said in your listener’s thinking.

7. **DEVELOP YOUR THEME LOGICALLY**

Your sermon should contain three parts:

- The **INTRODUCTION** in which you will gain the attention of the congregation and prepare them for what you are going to talk about.
- The **MAIN BODY**
  - The main body is the sermon in which you will develop your theme. You will take the congregation step-by-step from one point to the next, helping them to understand the truth you are presenting.
  - The **CONCLUSION** in which you will summarize quickly the main points of your sermon. The conclusion will include some device (question, story, text etc) to help each listener make a decision for Christ.

As you preach, develop your theme. Make your point, and then carefully explain it. Be alert to the reactions of your listeners. Ask them if what you have said is clear. Then move on to your next point. State each main point clearly. Repeat your main points in different ways so that your listeners will understand where you are heading in your talk. Part way through your sermon, summarize the main points you have already covered. Move step-by-step through the sermon joining together your main points.

9. **READ BIBLE VERSES CAREFULLY**

Often the power of God’s word is lost by poor reading. While reading the Bible, many preachers stumble over some words and pronounce others incorrectly. While you are preparing your sermon, practice reading the Bible texts. Read them out loud using the right expression and pronunciation. In the pulpit, do not look down as you read. Hold the Bible up in your hands and read clearly. You are handling god’s word. Read it carefully and correctly.

John 12:21. As we stand up to preach, the people listening are saying to us, “Sir, we would see Jesus”. Let us not disappoint them. Let us uphold the Master before them that they may experience His saving grace in their lives.