

How To Prepare A Message

- *We will study the principles and guide lines that I use in my sermon preparation.*
- *Don't try to imitate the preaching styles of others. Allow the Holy Spirit to lead you in developing your own style unique to your personality and the gifts God has given you.*
- *Eight Components of Sermon Preparation and Delivery:*
 1. *Christ-centered*
 2. *Authenticity*
 3. *Sermon Preparation is a Lifestyle*
 4. *Balanced Teaching*
 5. *Clear, Concise, and Edifying*
 6. *Practical Applications—examples from both the Bible and personal testimonies.*
 7. *Challenge the Congregation to apply the Teaching to Their Lives.*
 8. *Adorn and Magnify the Beauty of the Word of God.*

1. *Christ-centered:*

Colossians 1:15-18 NKJV

¹⁵ He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation.

¹⁶ For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him.

¹⁷ And He is before all things, and in Him all things consist.

¹⁸ And He is the head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things He may have the preeminence.

- *These four verses found in Colossians, Chapter One, say it all! — “that in all things He may have the preeminence.”*
- *Jesus created all things and all things were created for Him.*
- *One can use the Bible to teach principles about living a holy and upright life, but if Jesus is not the center and focus then instead of producing holiness it will produce legalism, self-effort, and self-righteousness, in other words—religion.*
- *For example, one can use the Bible to teach about Divine Healing and God's Blessings but if Jesus is not the center and focus, then instead of stirring a greater love for Jesus and appreciation for what He has done for us it will produce Christians who are self-absorbed and self-centered. They will seek personal gratification rather than a surrendered sacrificial life dedicated to glorifying Jesus. The Gospel becomes all about them and their happiness.*

- *When a Christian's main focus is the blessings found in the Bible it can produce a prosperity Gospel mentality that can result in an attitude of entitlement which will lead to disappointment with God when everything doesn't work out as they had wanted.*
- *However, when we study all the promises and blessings we have received through the lens of seeing Jesus Christ's unimaginable suffering and death at Calvary, it produces a heart filled with gratitude and a desire to live sacrificial lives that will glorify Jesus Christ.*
- *Everything we teach should exalt Jesus Christ. He should never be relegated to a side topic. Jesus should be the very center of each message.*
- *We are not to be motivational speakers but to point people to Jesus. Our lives are to reflect Jesus and not our success.*
- *Remember, Jesus rewards faithfulness not success.*

2. Authenticity:

Romans 12:3 NKJV

³ For I say, through the grace given to me, to everyone who is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think soberly, as God has dealt to each one a measure of faith.

- *Being authentic does not mean denigrating oneself but simply being honest in our self-assessment.*
- *Authenticity means acknowledging areas where we once struggled where God has given us victory.*
- *Authenticity means acknowledging areas in which we still need to grow.*
- *Authenticity means rejoicing in areas where we have grown and matured by the grace of God.*
- *Authenticity allows God to use us as real examples to encourage others to become disciples of Christ.*

1 Corinthians 3:4 NKJV

⁴ For when one says, "I am of Paul," and another, "I am of Apollos," are you not carnal?

- *When we are authentic it enhances Christ's ministry in us for two reasons:*
- *1. People won't idolize us and develop a following around us or our ministry.*

- *2. If we lead people to think we are somehow special, that will discourage them. They will be unable to see that God is willing to do in them what He has done in us and even more!*
- *We can both show our human frailties and God's overcoming grace in our lives.*

3. Sermon Preparation is a Lifestyle

- *Someone once asked me, "How long does it take you to prepare your sermons?" I simply said, "Forty-three years."*
- *Daily I spend time with the Lord reading and meditating on the Scriptures. Through prayer and worship my relationship and love for Jesus continually grows and flourishes.*
- *The time I spend with the Lord is motivated by a desire to grow closer to Him and not to prepare sermons. However, when a verse jumps out at me from the Scriptures or a thought comes to me as I am praying, I immediately write it down for future study and reference. I call these seed thoughts and often, at a later date they germinate into sermons.*

Psalm 62:11 NKJV

¹¹ God has spoken once, Twice I have heard this: That power belongs to God.

- *David pointed out how he valued what God spoke to his heart and how he took careful note of what the Holy Spirit was showing Him.*
- *The psalms that David wrote contain many Messianic prophecies, profound truths, and glorious revelations about God and how we are to relate to Him. David valued God's Word and the voice of the Holy Spirit and he carefully wrote them down and they became part of God's inspired Word, recorded for all time and for all people!*
- *When I wait on God for a theme for a sermon, I spend time in prayer and worship, much of the time praying in tongues. I wait patiently until a theme springs up in my heart. Sometimes it comes quickly, while other times I may wait on the Lord for a few days, but in God's timing a theme bubbles up in my heart.*
- *Sometimes I may not be able to initially articulate what I received but at that point I begin to write down any thoughts that begin to stir my heart and allow His passion to lead me.*
- *Other times I may be simply driving or doing something else and a thought or theme will come into my mind and I quickly take note of it.*

4. *Balanced Teaching*

Acts 20:27 NKJV

²⁷ For I have not shunned to declare to you the whole counsel of God.

- *Apostle Paul said he did not shrink back or hesitate to declare the whole counsel of God.*
- *Sometimes Christians focus on some truths and exclude the teaching of other truths. This leads to unbalanced teaching.*
- *There can be various reasons why people selectively teach on only certain Scriptures or topics. Maybe in order not to offend some people or maybe to suit their own biases of how they want things to be.*
- *We are to teach the Bible from exegesis and not eisegesis. Exegesis means to have the Bible speak to us while Eisegesis is when we try to force a certain Scripture or biblical text to support our personal theological view.*
- *This is also called proof texting where we take one verse out of the context of the whole counsel of God's Word to support what we believe.*

Acts 17:11 NKJV

¹¹ These were more fair-minded than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness, and searched the Scriptures daily to find out whether these things were so.

- *The Bereans were commended for being more fair-minded because they didn't just listen and accept what Paul taught. They personally searched the Scriptures to see if what he was teaching was biblically correct.*
- *However, for us to empower the congregation to be able to test if what we are teaching is correct requires us to build our teaching around the framework of Scripture. If we try to develop a theology around an experience instead of Scripture then people are not able to evaluate it objectively because they have to accept our experience and our interpretation of our experience as authoritative. Scripture is authoritative, our experiences are subject to interpretation.*
- *As I begin to work on a theme, initially, I usually have one or two verses.*
- *Then I study the verses and write down various ideas. My style is normally Scriptures interwoven together to form a picture. The spine of my messages is always Scripture. In other words, I put the Word of God front and center and then explain how they fit together.*

Malachi 3:16 NKJV

¹⁶ Then those who feared the LORD spoke to one another, And the LORD listened and heard them; So a book of remembrance was written before Him For those who fear the LORD And who meditate on His name.

- *Balanced teaching means not developing it on our own but having Christian brothers and sisters with whom we can bounce ideas and exchanges thoughts. As we do this our revelation and insight into God's Word doesn't just increase numerically, it increases exponentially as each person contributes to the message.*

Matthew 13:52 NKJV

⁵² Then He said to them, "Therefore every scribe instructed concerning the kingdom of heaven is like a householder who brings out of his treasure things new and old."

- *There are treasures found in both the Old and New Testaments and a scribe who is a disciple or pupil of the Word will recognize the treasures found in both and be willing to mine them out.*
- *Some may tend to preach and teach only from the New Testament but when we teach from both the Old and the New Testament it will bring out the richness and depth of God's Word.*
- *The Old Testament is Christ concealed.*
- *The New Testament is Christ revealed.*
- *Balanced doctrine provides the correct perspective so we will not have unrealistic expectations of what life in the Spirit looks like. Balanced doctrine protects us from being led astray or becoming disappointed with God.*
- *Balanced teaching can be compared to two tent cords being pulled in opposite directions to provide balance and stability.*
- *For example, if one only teaches on submitting to authority, it will produce unhealthy dependence on leaders which can lead to authoritarian and oppressive control.*
- *If one fails to teach on submission and accountability it will produce independent and isolated Christians who fail to see the value of accountability, who are unwilling to seek counsel and receive correction.*
- *Another example is that we need to preach on God's promises such as Divine Healing and Divine Protection, but at the same time we must not neglect to understand that this does not mean we will not suffer times of hardship, sickness, or tribulation.*

Psalm 34:19 NKJV

¹⁹ Many are the afflictions of the righteous, But the LORD delivers him out of them all.

- *This verse prepares us for the reality that there will be times when believers will experience times of hardships, but it also teaches us that through those times God is there to comfort, deliver, and give us the victory no matter what obstacles we may face.*

2 Timothy 3:12 NKJV

¹² Yes, and all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution.

- *Some refuse to teach on the Book of Job because they say it is no longer applicable and does not apply to New Testament believers. However, they are depriving those under their ministry from being equipped to deal with hardships, trials, and adversities.*
- *Balanced teaching empowers us to experience the joy of the Lord in the face of the adversities of this life. Balanced teaching enables us to enjoy the times when we are walking through a lush valley and also gives us strength, peace, and joy when we are walking through times of hardship.*
- *Balanced teaching addresses sin but the central focus is not to preach against sin but to preach on the remedy for sin which is repentance, faith in Christ, and how to overcome sin by walking in the Spirit.*

5. Clear, Concise, and Edifying

- *We want our messages to be unambiguous and clear so people know exactly what we believe and understand how to apply it to their lives.*
- *When I am teaching I literally write down 80 - 90% of what I am going to say on PowerPoint slides. I normally have between 75 to 100 slides. Many people comment on how much they appreciate reading as well as hearing the message. This way they have time to meditate and contemplate each thought. I try to make every point important and impactful.*
- *However, I am not saying that one should use PowerPoint or one should use it as extensively as I do. What I am saying is that it is important to write down your main thoughts so you are able to clearly and concisely articulate what you are trying to teach.*
- *I have someone who edits my notes to help make the message is as smooth as possible and to help me to make sure what I have said is clear.*
- *Although my teachings are highly structured we need to also be spontaneous and sensitive to the Spirit to add and share additional thoughts or examples.*
- *I look for patterns in God's Word that make it easier for the congregation to remember principles or thoughts.*

- *Often, I pose a question and then I weave together the Scriptures to reveal the answer.*
 - *Always seek the Holy Spirit to give you joy, peace, and faith when sharing God's Word.*
6. *Practical Application—Use examples from the Bible and from personal testimonies.*
- *What we teach must be real in the Bible, real in our lives, and have practical applications so people can understand how to apply it to their lives.*
 - *We must make what we teach relevant and not just theoretical. For example, we can teach about the silver bases that supported the tabernacle but in the end there must be something that is relevant to our daily lives with Jesus.*

2 Timothy 3:16-17

¹⁶All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness,

¹⁷that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.

- *Paul laid out the pattern so we can learn from the Word of God and those who instruct us through the Word of God.*
- *All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness.” Listed here are the four aspects of how the Word of God fully equips us for every good work.*
- *The Word of God “is profitable for doctrine.”*
- *Doctrine teaches us the way we should be and act. It is our goal or the ideal.*
- *Doctrine sets the standard so we can understand what true holiness, consecration, and godliness look like.*
- *Doctrine enables us to understand what a fruitful and victorious life looks like.*
- *Doctrine is not meant to demoralize us. Its purpose is to encourage us to understand and live the great and abundant life that God offers to every believer.*
- *Doctrine not only enables us to understand how God wants us to live, but it enables us to understand how we can achieve it: “the righteous will live by faith.” (Romans 1:17).*
- *Correct doctrine energizes and encourages us when we realize that we do not accomplish this in our own strength. Anything we accomplish is by the grace of God in us. “Christ in you, the hope of glory.” (Colossians 1:27).*
- *We can discern when our doctrine is correct and complete, because it will produce within us a deep desire for God as well as an unquenchable joy, “whom having not seen you*

love. Though now you do not see Him, yet believing, you rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory” (1 Peter 1:8).

- *The Word of God is for reproof. Reproof is pointing out to someone where they have gone wrong or have fallen short.*
- *If we do not have sound doctrine we will misunderstand and misinterpret the reproof that the Word of God is speaking to us.*
- *Reproof is not meant to bring shame, guilt, or condemnation. Reproof points out those areas in our lives where we need to improve, so we can grow in the grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ.*
- *Reproof is a sign that God is our Father and that He loves us and His favour is extended toward us. “‘For whom the LORD loves He chastens, And scourges every son whom He receives.’ If you endure chastening, God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom a father does not chasten?” (Hebrews 12:6-7).*
- *The Word of God is for correction. Correction is given to show us how to do something correctly. Correction helps us to improve what we were previously doing incorrectly.*
- *Here is the difference between correction and reproof: Reproof points out what was done incorrectly and correction shows us how to do it correctly.*
- *The Word of God is for instruction in righteousness. The word translated as “instruction” in Greek means “discipline or training.” Instruction relates to putting into practice what we have learned until we are able to do it properly.*
- *Summarizing the four things that the Word of God does for us in terms of doctrine, reproof, correction, and instruction can be seen in the example of a teacher and a student.*
- *First, the teacher teaches the students how to perform a certain task or to solve a certain type of problem. This can be compared to doctrine.*
- *Next, the teacher asks the students to apply what they have been taught and hopefully learned.*
- *The teacher then observes how the students are doing and points out those things that are being done incorrectly. This is reproof.*
- *Then the teacher explains to the student how to do it correctly. This is correction.*
- *Finally, the teacher gives the students assignments so they can practice what they have been taught until they are able to do it correctly. This is instruction or training and is often learned by repetition.*

- *We train ourselves by repeatedly applying the Word of God to our lives. A level of excellence will be developed in those areas of our lives in which we persevere.*
7. *Challenge the Congregation to apply the message to their lives.*
- *People need have an opportunity to respond to the message they have just heard and not just to rush to end the service.*
 - *We are to invite the people to respond. However, we are never to try to force people to respond to the message but encourage them to step out in faith with an expectation that God is waiting to meet them at their point of need.*
 - *Summarize the sermon in terms of calling the people to pray.*
 - *Invite unbelievers to find Jesus as their Saviour.*
 - *Invite believers who are struggling to turn to Jesus, our merciful High Priest, for help and strength in their time of need so they can overcome.*
 - *Invite believers who have already experienced areas of victory in their lives to rejoice in what Jesus has already done in their lives.*

2 Timothy 1:6 NKJV

⁶ Therefore I remind you to stir up the gift of God which is in you through the laying on of my hands.

1 Thessalonians 3:2 NKJV

...and sent Timothy, our brother and minister of God, and our fellow laborer in the gospel of Christ, to establish you and encourage you concerning your faith,

8. *Adorn and Magnify the Beauty of the Word of God.*

Titus 2:9-10 NKJV

⁹ Exhort bondservants to be obedient to their own masters, to be well pleasing in all things, not answering back,

¹⁰ not pilfering, but showing all good fidelity, that they may adorn the doctrine of God our Savior in all things.

- *If we are not excited about God's Word how will those listening to us be excited? To preach and teach God's Word effectively we need to develop a deep love and reverence for the Bible.*
- *The Bible is filled with so many rich nuggets of truth and revelation.*

- *The Word of God is filled with such simple truths that even a small child can fully embrace the Gospel message and receive Christ.*
- *The Word of God is so deep and rich that even the greatest minds can never fathom or fully explore its depths.*
- *The Word of God is like the ocean. A child can play in the shallows of the sandy beaches without fear of drowning while even the best equipped divers are unable to reach the bottom of its depths.*

1 Timothy 6:1 NKJV

1 Let as many bondservants as are under the yoke count their own masters worthy of all honor, so that the name of God and His doctrine may not be blasphemed.

- *The most important thing we can do is allow the truths of God's Word to be fully reflected in our lives. Many have preached beautiful sermons only to mar their testimony and bring shame to God's name through their ungodly conduct.*
- *Let us exalt God's Word by having Jesus Christ live His life through us!*