

1. Choose the passage to be preached
  - a. Thought units
    - i. Base the sermon on a literary unit of biblical thought.
  - b. Topical exposition
    - i. Usually takes more study than exposition based on a single passage.
  - c. Sermon lengths
    - i. We must preach our sermons in a limited number of minutes... Cutting should be done in study rather than the pulpit.
2. Study your passage and gather your notes
  - a. The context
    - i. Read the whole chapter to discover how this one paragraph fits within the larger section.
    - ii. Ask questions about how the chapter that contains your paragraph fits within the entire book.
  - b. Try to determine what major assertion(s) the biblical writer is making about the subject, that is, the compliment(s).
    - i. If you cannot state a subject at this point, what is hindering you from doing so?
      1. Is there a verse that doesn't seem to fit?
      2. Is the writer assuming a connection between his assertions that you need to state?
      3. Is it that you can't figure out how this paragraph relates to what precedes or follows it?
      4. OIs there an image the author uses that you don't understand?
    - ii. Are there editorial comments? If there are no editorial comments, you must ask yourself questions like:
      1. Why did the biblical author include this episode?
      2. Are there details in the passage that, at first, seem extraneous?
  - c. Use lexicons, concordances, grammars, word-study books, bible dictionaries and encyclopedias, commentaries, bibliographies
3. As your study the passage, relate the parts to one another to determine the exegetical idea and its development
  - a. Exactly what is the biblical writer talking about?
    - i. Does the subject fit all the parts?
    - ii. Is it too broad? How can it be made mor narrow?
    - iii. Is it too narrow? Is there a larger subject that accounts for all the parts?
    - iv. Is your subject an exact description of what the passage is talking about?
  - b. A series of different questions must be raised when trying to understand a story
    - i. Who are the characters in the story and why did the author include them?
    - ii. Do the characters contrast with one another?
    - iii. How do these characters develop as the story develops?
    - iv. What does the setting contribute to the story?
    - v. What structure holds the story together and provides its unity?
    - vi. How do the individual episodes fit into the total framework?

- vii. What conflicts develop and how are they resolved?
- viii. Why did the writer bother telling the story?
- ix. What ideas lie behind the story that may be implied but not stated?
- x. Can those ideas be stated through a subject and complement?
- c. Interpreting poetry raises its own set of questions
  - i. What meanings lie behind the images and figures of speech?
  - ii. What feelings does the poet express by the choice of language?
  - iii. What elements of form and structure does the poet use to discipline thought?
  - iv. What would be lost if the same thought were presented in prose?
- 4. Subject your exegetical idea to three developmental questions
  - a. When we make any declarative statement, we can do only four things with it: we can restate it, explain it, prove it, or apply it.
  - b. We explain it: What does this mean?
    - i. What does it mean?
    - ii. Does this concept, or parts of it, need explanation?
    - iii. Is the author in the passage before me developing his thought primarily through explanation?
  - c. We prove it: Is it true?
    - i. Is that true?
    - ii. Can I really believe it?
    - iii. Do I and my hearers believe that?
    - iv. Would my audience accept that statement as true? If not, why not?
  - d. We apply it: What difference does it make?
    - i. So what?
    - ii. What difference does it make?
    - iii. Here are some questions that help us discover the author's theological purpose:
      1. Are there in the text any indications of purpose, editorial comments, or interpretive statements made about events?
      2. Are there any theological judgments made in the text?
      3. Is this story given as an example or warning? If so, in exactly what way? Is this incident a norm or an exception? What limitations should be placed on it?
      4. What message was intended for those to whom the revelation was originally given and also for subsequent generations the writer knew would read it?
      5. Why would the holy spirit have included this account in scripture? If it were not in the Bible, would anything be lost?
    - iv. There are other questions we must ask in order to apply God's word to a contemporary audience living in a situation different from that of the people to whom the revelation was originally given.

1. What was the setting in which God's word first came? What traits do modern men and women share in common with that original audience?
  2. How can we identify with biblical men and women as they heard God's word and responded- or failed to respond- in their situation?
  3. What further insights have we acquired about God's dealings with his people through additional revelation?
  4. When I understand an eternal truth or guiding principle, what specific practical applications does this have for me and my congregation? What ideas, feelings, attitudes, or actions should it affect? Do I myself live in obedience to this truth? Do I intend to? What obstacles keep the people in my audience from responding as they should? What suggestions might help them respond as God wants them to respond?
- v. Several questions help us test the accuracy of our application:
1. Have I correctly understood the facts and properly formulated the questions involved in the issue? Can those questions be stated another way so that other issues emerge? Would those who disagree with me state the issue another way?
  2. Have I determined all the theological principles that must be considered? Do I give the same weight to each principle? Are there other principles that I have chosen to ignore?
  3. Is the theology I espouse truly biblical, derived from disciplined exegesis and accurate interpretation of biblical passages?
- vi. As you study, then, there are at least four questions you want to ask of a passage:
1. What is the vision of God in this particular text?
  2. Where precisely do I find that in the passage?
  3. What is the function of this vision of God? What implications for belief or behavior did the author draw from the image?
  4. What is the significance of that picture of God for me and for others?
- vii. Think about specific ways this biblical truth about God and people would actually work out in experience:
1. Where do the dynamics of the biblical situation show up today?
  2. So what? What real difference does this truth about God made to me or to others? What difference should it make? What difference could it make? Why doesn't it make a difference?
  3. Can I picture for my listeners in specific terms how this vision of God might be one they need in a particular situation? Would there ever be an occasion when someone might come to me with a problem or need and I would point them to this passage and this truth? Listeners feel that a sermon is relevant when they can say, "I can see how that would apply to my life?"

- e. Three developmental questions
        - i. What does this mean? Explores explanation.
        - ii. Is it true? Do I believe it? Explores validity.
        - iii. So what? What difference does it make? Explores implications and applications.
5. In light of the audience's knowledge and experience, think through your exegetical idea and state it in the most exact, memorable sentence possible.
  - a. Here are some general suggestions for framing a homiletical idea:
    - i. State the idea as simply and as memorably as possible. Make each word count. State it for the ear. Listeners should not have to work to remember it.
    - ii. State the idea in concrete and familiar words. Study ads in magazines for slogans you remember. If you were given one sentence in which to communicate your idea to someone who didn't know religious jargon and who couldn't write it down, how would you say it?
    - iii. State the idea so that it focuses on response. How do you want your listeners to respond? Instead of "you can rejoice in trials because they lead to maturity," try "rejoice when hard times come." If you know what your listeners should do, tell them.
    - iv. State the idea so that your listeners sense you are talking to them about them.
6. Determine the purpose for this sermon
  - a. The purpose defines what that truth should accomplish
7. Thinking about the homiletical idea, ask yourself how this idea should be handled to accomplish your purpose
  - a. An idea to be explained
  - b. A proposition to be proved
  - c. A principle to be applied
  - d. A subject to be completed
8. Having decided how the idea must be developed to accomplish your purpose, outline the sermon
  - a. The introduction introduces the idea, the subject, or in the case of inductive sermons, the first point.
  - b. The body of the outline then elaborates on the idea.
  - c. The conclusion brings the idea to a focus and ends the sermon.
9. Fill in the outline with supporting materials that explain, prove, apply, or amplify the points.
  - a. Restatement
  - b. Definition and explanation
  - c. Factual information
  - d. Quotations
  - e. Narration
  - f. Illustrations
10. Prepare the introduction and conclusion of the sermon

- a. An effective introduction commands attention
  - b. An effective introduction uncovers needs
  - c. An effective introduction introduces the body of the sermon
  - d. An effective introduction may exhibit other characteristics
  - e. The conclusion is a summary
  - f. The conclusion could be an illustration, a quotation, a question, a prayer, specific directions, visualization
11. The dress of thought
- a. Strong transitions
  - b. A clear style
    - i. A clear outline
    - ii. Short sentences
    - iii. Simple sentence structure
    - iv. Simple words
  - c. A direct and personal style
  - d. A vivid style