

## **APPENDIX 3 – THE 9 STAGES OF SERMON PREPARATION**

**STAGE 1: DECIDE ON THE TEXT BASED ON THE OCCASION**

**STAGE 2: PRAY AND DO AN INITIAL ANALYSIS:  
DEVELOP AN INITIAL OUTLINE AND STRUCTURE OF THE SERMON  
– USING ONLY THE PASSAGE & VERSE YOU WILL PREACH ON**

**STAGE 3: PRAY AND DO ADDITIONAL EXEGESIS:  
DO DEEPER INTERPRETATION, THEN MAKE ADJUSTMENTS  
TO THE SERMON STRUCTURE**

**STAGE 4: COPY THE ENTIRE TEXT TO ANOTHER MICROSOFT WORD  
DOCUMENT (OR SEPARATE PIECE OF PAPER), AND SAVE IT AS  
YOUR FINAL SERMON OUTLINE**

**STAGE 5: DEVELOP THE MESSAGE AROUND THE FINAL OUTLINE**

**STAGE 6: DECIDE ON A CONCLUSION**

**STAGE 7: CHOOSE AN APPROPRIATE INTRODUCTION**

**STAGE 8: EVALUATE THE MESSAGE**

**STAGE 9: PREPARE TO DELIVER THE MESSAGE**

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Developing a sermon from the time we feel led to share a message or are called upon to preach is a **process**. There *are* times when we just need to “be ready” (2 Tim. 4:2), but many times people will be gracious to us and give us advanced notice and we will have some time to prepare. What follows is a **process** that I use. Each person’s method of preparation is different, so please use the steps suggested below as a guideline. Then, as you build up experience, you can develop your own approach to sermon preparation.

Having said that, most preachers will follow some **process that involves many steps or stages** so that they start at one point and develop the message over a period of time. Personally I like to use a PC to type up my notes. It saves a lot of time. But if you do not have a PC, then you can use a writing pad or notebook. This appendix contains the stages in summary form. During the Preaching Course, we will look at each stage in more depth.

## STAGE 1: DECIDE ON THE TEXT BASED ON THE OCCASION

- Once you know what occasion you will share your message at, decide on your text.
- All messages should be Bible-based. We are called by God to "Preach the Word" (2 Tim. 4:2), not our ideas or human wisdom.
- Select the passage and / or verse that will be the basis of your message – one that is appropriate for the occasion. If you do not have one, pray for God to lead you.
- Then start to pray for God to guide you from beginning to end.

## STAGE 2: PRAY AND DO AN INITIAL ANALYSIS: DEVELOP AN INITIAL OUTLINE AND STRUCTURE OF THE SERMON – USING ONLY THE PASSAGE & VERSE YOU WILL PREACH ON

- Copy the text to a document (and save it). Then read and reread the passage a few times. What stands out for you in the passage / verse?
- Start to analyse the structure of the passage or verse and start to develop an outline. Look for main divisions in the passage. These could become your headings. Then develop sub-headings.
- Once you have done this, you could start to number the main headings and subdivisions. Be careful to not to over-analyse longer passages and make too many smaller subdivisions. For longer passages, group verses together so that a few verses form one section, and fall under one heading.
- Use only a good English translations of the Bible that are translations based on the original languages (e.g. NIV; NKJV; ASV). Avoid using a paraphrase of the Bible at this stage (e.g. The Message)
- Look for certain parts of speech such as Verbs, Nouns, Unique Key Words, Words used repeatedly; Images that stand out; Conjunctions – "and", or "but"; commands, etc.
- At the end of this stage, you will already get an indication of what the main theme of your message will be, plus what your main points will probably be.
- At this stage **ONLY** use a good translation of the Bible and the passage and / or verse you have selected. Do not consider any other related passages at this stage.

**EXAMPLE 1: "Let your conversation be always full of grace, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer everyone" – Colossians 4:6**

1. Let your conversation
  - 1.1. be always
    - a. full of grace,
    - b. seasoned with salt,
  - 1.2. so that you may know
    - a. how to answer
      - i. everyone.

**EXAMPLE 2: Psalm 119:105 : Your word is a lamp for my feet, a light on my path.**

1. Your word
  - 1.1. is a lamp
    - 1.1.1. for my feet,

- 1.2. and a light for
- 1.2.1. my path.

### **STAGE 3: PRAY AND DO ADDITIONAL EXEGESIS: DO DEEPER INTERPRETATION, THEN MAKE ADJUSTMENTS TO THE SERMON STRUCTURE**

- Continue to pray and ask God for guidance. God may highlight different emphases from the same passage or verse, depending on what He wants to say to His people.
- Stage 2 was developing an initial outline. This stage is "Exegesis". Exegesis means "exposition or explanation." Biblical exegesis involves the examination of a particular text of scripture in order to properly interpret it. Do the following:
- Read Bible commentaries, starting with "Critical" type commentaries. Look for further explanations of the words and phrases in the passage/verse (word studies) plus how the passage is structured.
- Read Other English Versions of the Bible and see how they structure and translate the words.
- Use Biblical Cross References
- Reading sermons on the same text and topic.
- In all of this you will be wanting to (1) ascertain the correct actual meaning of words and phrases, and the correct structure of the passage so that you can develop a good structure for the sermon.
- You will also do this so that you can start to group similar material and decide what to call each heading and sub-heading.

**NOTE:** It is okay to make notes of sermon illustrations, and applications that you may feel you will be able to use during stages 2 and 3. However, it will be best to list these separate to your outline, perhaps at the bottom of your page in a PC document, or on another sheet of paper if you are writing it out by hand.

### **STAGE 4: COPY THE ENTIRE TEXT TO ANOTHER MICROSOFT WORD DOCUMENT, AND SAVE IT AS YOUR FINAL SERMON OUTLINE**

- Copy the entire text of your document to another document on your PC. Remember to save your original document! This will be a second PC file with just your outline in it.
- Now finalise the outline and structure of your message.
- During this stage you will confirm the following:
- The start and end of your passage and/or the verse(s) that your message will be based on.
- What your main headings will be, and what your sub-headings will be. You can also number these properly, e.g. 1: a, b, c - 2: a, b, c - 3: a, b, c - etc.
- Evaluate the message. You may want to rearrange points so that the message flows more smoothly. You may also want to edit the message outline, removing unnecessary points and perhaps adding new points.
- Now state your points in your own words
- By looking at your structure, and the content, you will now be able to confirm the message's theme, and you will be able to see if your theme is unified enough.
- You will use this outline to make your Power Point Slides.

## **STAGE 5: DEVELOP THE MESSAGE AROUND THE FINAL OUTLINE**

- Copy your finalised outline back to your main document
- You can now fill in the message's content around your final outline. Now that you have finalised your outline, you will be able to see if any content that you have stored in the original document still applies.
- It may be a difficult decision to make, but you will probably need to remove some material because it doesn't fit the theme closely enough.
- You can now fill out the content. You may have some already in your notes, but you may have rearranged some, removed some, and you may need to add others:
  - Add Explanations
  - Add Applications
  - Add Illustrations
- Just remember that you do not need to have an explanation, Application and Illustration for every single heading and sub-heading. Carefully choose which ones you will add.

## **STAGE 6: DECIDE ON A CONCLUSION**

- Now that you know what your theme is and what your main points are, consider how you will conclude your message. We will look at different types of conclusions later in more detail. But briefly, decide if you
- Making an appeal – a call for a response, such as an altar call. For example, this type of conclusion is suited to an Evangelist Message.
- Doing a summary. In this type of conclusion you will list your main points as a reminder. This type of conclusion is suited to a Teaching-type of message.
- An application type of conclusion. Sometimes the content of the message may be mostly teaching and explanations. Then most of the application can be left for the end. In summary (or Conclusion), we answer the question, "So what should we do about all that we have learned?"

## **STAGE 7: CHOOSE AN APPROPRIATE INTRODUCTION**

- A disciplined preacher will only select the correct introduction after they have finalised the Body and Conclusion of their message. After all, it is only after we know what it is that we're going to say that we will know what to introduce!
- During your preparation many ideas for introductions may have come to mind. Now you will be able to see if any of them are applicable, or if you will need to find another type of introduction.

## **STAGE 8: EVALUATE THE MESSAGE**

- At this stage all the content of your message will be finalised. You can sit back and reflect on the message. Consider the following:
  - Have you heard God's voice for the situation? What do you have faith for that God will accomplish through this message?
  - Does the message flow smoothly
  - Are the points clear?
  - Are the explanations clear?
  - Are the applications relevant to the people whom you will be speaking to?
  - Do you have enough illustrations to bring the message to life and make it interesting?
  - Is the message an appropriate length
  - Is the level of the language used clear enough?

## STAGE 9: PREPARE TO DELIVER THE MESSAGE

- Finally prepare to deliver the message. You may want to practice speaking the message making sure that you can pronounce certain names clearly. Practice stating your points clearly and even practice your voice speed and tone, and your body postures.
- Practise delivering the message with the right tone – a good attitude when speaking will help people to receive the message better.
- You may want to read through your notes taking note of where your points are, where your illustrations and other relevant information is on your pages
- If time allows, prepare media such as PowerPoint slides of your main points and anything else you would like to use. Check that your media files are complete.
- You may be using an object so that part of your message is an "Object lesson" – now is the time to see if that 'magic trick' works.

## FINALLY – PRAY & RELAX

Now that you have done your part, believe that God will honour your preparation. If you feel you would like to, pray over the message. Otherwise take a little time out and relax. Preparing messages can be mentally and spiritually intense!

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### FOR HOMEWORK:

**A. CHOOSE ONE OF THE FOLLOWING PASSAGES AND DEVELOP A SIMPLE OUTLINE - AS IN STAGE 2 OF THIS APPENDIX.** You may also choose a passage of your own – not more than 6 verses long.

- ❑ Ecclesiastes 4:9 Two are better than one, because they have a good return for their work: Ecclesiastes 4:10 If one falls down, his friend can help him up. But pity the man who falls and has no one to help him up! Ecclesiastes 4:11 Also, if two lie down together, they will keep warm. But how can one keep warm alone? Ecclesiastes 4:12 Though one may be overpowered, two can defend themselves. A cord of three strands is not quickly broken. Ecclesiastes 4:13 Better a poor but wise youth than an old but foolish king who no longer knows how to take warning.
- ❑ Galatians 5:22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, Galatians 5:23 gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law.
- ❑ 2 Corinthians 13:14 May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.
- ❑ Proverbs 30:7 "Two things I ask of you, O LORD; do not refuse me before I die: Proverbs 30:8 Keep falsehood and lies far from me; give me neither poverty nor riches, but give me only my daily bread. Proverbs 30:9 Otherwise, I may have too much and disown you and say, 'Who is the LORD?' Or I may become poor and steal, and so dishonour the name of my God.

**B. TEST: "WRITE DOWN THE 9 STAGES OF PREPARING A SERMON"** – the main points of page 1 of Appendix 3 only.