

HOMILETICS

Preparing and Delivering Sermons



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“Homiletics—Preparing and Delivering Sermons”

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Chapter 1

THE IMPORTANCE OF PREACHING

Homiletics is a study of the preparation and delivery of sermons. It comes from the word *homily*, which is a moral talk or a sermon.

A simple definition of preaching is “a person declaring God’s message to other people.” There are two main words used for *preaching* in the Greek New Testament. The most frequently used word is *kerusso*, which means “to proclaim as a herald.”

It is used about 60 times, such as in Matthew 3:1, Mark 1:14, Acts 10:42, and 2 Timothy 4:2. It emphasizes the importance of the preacher as being a herald, messenger, or spokesman for God.

The other word is *evangelizo*, which means “to announce good news, to evangelize.” This word is used over 50 times in the New Testament. Some examples are in Luke 4:18, Acts 5:42, Romans 10:15, and 1 Corinthians 1:17. This word emphasizes the importance of the message that we are to preach. That message, of course, is the gospel or *good news* of God to man.

The ministry of preaching is of utmost importance. In Mark

16:15, the Great Commission that Christ has entrusted to His disciples, is a command to “Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature.”

Angels have not been appointed to preach to all the world, but men are chosen of God. This is the central task that has been given to the Church. In Matthew 24:14 Jesus prophesied that “this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations, and then the end will come.” The Church will have finished its great work upon the earth, and Christ will come again, when the preaching of the gospel has covered the whole world!

Preaching is the method by which God has chosen to bring His Word to mankind. Titus 1:3 tells us that God has “manifested His word through preaching.” Christ said to the seventy preachers that He sent out in Luke 10:16, “He who hears you hears Me, he who rejects you rejects Me...” As a modern definition, preaching has been described as “revealing the incarnate word (Christ) from the written word (the Bible) by the spoken word (preaching).”

Preaching not only brings God’s Word to man, but it can also prepare the way for God to move by His Spirit. Acts 10:44 declares that “while Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit fell upon all those who heard the word.” In First Corinthians 2:4 the Apostle Paul declared, “My speech and

my preaching were not with persuasive words of human wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power.” Preaching can cause salvation, miracles, healing, and many of the wonderful works of God to be accomplished (study 1 Cor. 1:21, Mk. 16:20, and Acts 14:7-10). This is because “faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God” (Rom. 10:17).

Because of the importance of preaching, God is seeking to prepare and send out multitudes of preachers. The Lord wants to raise up *an army of preachers* around the world so that it can be said again as in the days of David’s mighty kingdom, “The Lord gave the word; great was the company of those who proclaimed it” (Ps. 68:11).

God has always longed to send out preachers to declare His word. The cry of God’s heart was expressed when Isaiah heard the Lord say, “Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?” (Is. 6:8).

Our Lord Jesus also spoke about this in Matthew 9:37-38: “But when He saw the multitudes, He was moved with compassion for them, because they were weary and scattered, like sheep having no shepherd. Then He said to His disciples, The harvest truly is plentiful, but the laborers are few. Therefore pray the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest.”

The Apostle Paul also wrote, “Whoever calls on the name of

the LORD shall be saved. How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher?" (Rom. 10:13-14).

Has this desire from the heart of God also become your desire? Do you want to be a messenger or ambassador of God to speak His word to the people? Do you desire to be a vessel through whom the blessings of heaven can be brought to earth? It is a high and holy calling, but one that also involves great responsibility.

PREACHING IS A GREAT RESPONSIBILITY

The commission that was given to Ezekiel helps show the responsibility given to everyone who would proclaim God's word. The Lord told the prophet in Ezekiel 3:17-21:

"Son of man, I have made you a watchman for the house of Israel; therefore hear a word from My mouth, and give them warning from Me: When I say to the wicked, 'You shall surely die,' and you give him no warning, nor speak to warn the wicked from his wicked way, to save his life, that same wicked man shall die in his iniquity; but his blood I will require at your hand. Yet, if you warn the wicked, and he does not turn from his wickedness, nor from his wicked way, he shall die in his iniquity; but you have delivered your soul.

Again, when a righteous man turns from his righteousness and commits iniquity, and I lay a stumbling block before him, he shall die; because you did not give him warning, he shall die in his sin, and his righteousness which he has done shall not be remembered; but his blood I will require at your hand. Nevertheless if you warn the righteous man that the righteous should not sin, and he does not sin, he shall surely live because he took warning; also you will have delivered your soul.”

A preacher is called to be like a watchman or a soldier on guard duty. Just as the solemn duty of a soldier on guard duty is to stay awake and attentive, so we must ever be ready to hear from the Lord and speak His words. In some armies the death penalty has been given to soldiers who fell asleep on guard duty! In a similar way, Jonah was a preacher who almost lost his life because he refused to speak the message that God had given him for Nineveh.

Not only must a preacher learn to obediently speak what God wants him to say, but a preacher also has to *put into practice* what he preaches. We must live up to the godly standards to which we call others to live.

We see an example of this when Moses was beginning his ministry. In Exodus chapter three we can read how God commissioned Moses to go and declare His word. Moses had a mighty

encounter with the Lord and was given power to work great signs and wonders. After this meeting with God, Moses began the journey back to Egypt. We then read in Exodus 4:24, “And it came to pass on the way, at the encampment, that the Lord met Moses and sought to kill him.” Why is this? How can this be? First God meets with Moses and gives him power to set a nation free. Then He seeks to kill him before he can begin?

First of all, we understand that if God really wanted to kill Moses, He could have done it in an instant. That would have been the end of the story! Yet while Moses’ life was certainly in great danger, his wife had enough time to do something that turned away the anger of God. We further read in the next two verses, “Then Zipporah took a sharp stone and circumcised her son... So God let Moses go.” This shows us the real situation that God was trying to correct.

Moses had not obeyed the command of God, that all the male descendants of Abraham were to be circumcised. After all, circumcision was essential in order to possess the land of Canaan and Moses was going to bring Israel into the land of promise with uncircumcision in his own family. How could Moses preach God’s standards to all the people when his own family was not obeying those same standards? This was important enough in the eyes of God for Moses to be killed if he was not ready to practice what he was going to preach!

If the preacher will not honor and obey the word of God, everyone else will be encouraged to despise and disobey the word of God also. The disobedient preacher can become a religious hypocrite who will warrant God's judgment. In Matthew 23:13-33 we can read how Christ strongly rebuked the scribes and Pharisees who were the Bible preachers of that time. The Lord called them hypocrites, blind guides, and fools; and ended by saying to them, "Serpents, brood of vipers! How can you escape being condemned to hell?"

In visions of hell that some have seen, perhaps the most fearful judgment of all awaits the false preachers who are condemned to hell. The words of Christ will certainly be fulfilled, where He warned, "And that servant who knew his master's will, and did not prepare himself or do according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes . . . For everyone to whom much is given, from him much will be required" (Lk. 12:47-48).

To balance this, it is encouraging to know that visions have also been given which show the great rewards in heaven that await the faithful preacher. Every soul that they help lead to heaven will be added to their eternal joy, reward, and glory. For example, the Apostle Paul said about his converts in Thessalonica, "For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Is it not even *you* in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at His coming? For *you* are our glory and joy" (1 Thes. 2:19-20). The angel told Daniel, "Those who turn many to righteousness [shall

shine] like the stars forever” (Dan. 12:3).

Our Lord Jesus emphasized the great eternal *blessing* or *judgment* upon those who teach or preach the Word of God in His most famous message, the Sermon on the Mount. He declared, “Whoever therefore breaks one of the least of these commandments, and teaches men so, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever does and teaches them, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven” (Mt. 5:19).

To be an ambassador of Christ and preach His unsearchable riches is a great privilege. However, let us also remember it is a great responsibility. (See James 3:1 for the seriousness of teaching wrong concepts.)

Chapter 2

THE PREPARATIONS FOR A PREACHER

There are preparations that must be completed before someone can become a good preacher. First of all, important foundations need to be built within the life of everyone who would aspire to be a preacher.

Called of God

The first requirement is that a preacher must be called and sent by God. Just as an ambassador must be appointed and given the authority to represent his nation, even so a preacher must be appointed and given authority by God to speak His Word (2 Cor. 5:20; Heb. 5:4; Rom. 10:15).

There are many different ways in which one can *sense* that he has been called of God to declare His word. The Lord may speak directly to the person. If he has a mighty visitation of God, and perhaps sees a vision or hears the Lord speak to him that he is called to the ministry, that is wonderful. Yet sometimes a person will quietly hear the voice of God when he is praying or reading the Bible. The aspiration to be a preacher may even start as a simple desire in your heart, which God will deepen and

confirm as you continue to follow the Lord and prepare yourself.

Sometimes a person's calling to preach will first be discerned by a sensitive man or woman of God. Perhaps your pastor or a church leader will see that the hand of God is upon your life. They may encourage you to prepare for the ministry, or give you the opportunity to begin to preach. Yet if God has called you to preach His Word, then God will also start to personally speak to you and place His burden within your heart as you continue to follow Him.

FOUR STEPS TO BECOME PREPARED

After a person starts to become aware of God's call to become a preacher, he needs to make adequate preparations. One's entire life must undergo preparation, much like a soldier that joins an army, or like a young athlete who wants to prepare for the Olympics. Heaven's resources are available to the person preparing to become a preacher. Notwithstanding, the world, the flesh, and the devil will do all they can to oppose him.

In Exodus chapter 5 we can read about the difficulties Moses faced when he went to Egypt and began to preach. Pharaoh (a type of Satan) was certainly against him. Then Pharaoh made life more difficult for the Israelites, and commanded that they make the same number of bricks without being given the straw

to help make them, as before. The result was that the Israelites then blamed Moses and his preaching for making their lives even more miserable! As Moses grew discouraged he also complained to the Lord and said that his preaching had only brought evil, not good. Moreover, these obstacles were only the first of a multitude that would later confront him!

Only a person with the proper preparations will be able to persevere through the oppositions he will face. Thorough preparation is a necessary ingredient to become a successful preacher. Yet a person who is called of God and fully consecrated will also find that nothing can stop him!

We have the example of a Korean brother who as a young man felt called of God to preach. He went to Bible school to prepare, but because of a speech difficulty everyone felt that he would never become a preacher. Even some of his teachers advised him to leave the school. Yet he persevered to graduate and was able to gather a small group of people to hear him preach. He continued to prepare and persevere until the congregation grew to 50 and then 100 people. As the years went on, his church grew to 1,000 people... then 10,000 members... and then 100,000 members; until today, Pastor Yong-gi Cho preaches to the largest congregation in the world with 750,000 members! He also travels on a regular basis around the world speaking to large conferences; and has certainly proven that the God who calls people to become preachers is the same God who can

equip them for a successful ministry.

We can see in the life of Ezra the steps of preparation that are needed for a successful ministry of the Word of God. We read, “For Ezra had set his heart to study the Law of the Lord, and to practice it, and to teach His statutes and ordinances in Israel” (Ezra 7:10 NAS). The four steps that we can see from this verse are: 1.) A consecrated heart; 2.) A study of the Bible; 3.) Obedience to the Bible; and then finally, 4.) Preaching the Bible. Let us have a look at these four steps!

1. A CONSECRATED HEART

The first area of our life that must be prepared is the consecration of our heart. Studying the Bible or preaching it will never hit the mark if our heart is not correctly prepared. There are several reasons for this. One is that we will never understand all the truths of the Word of God if *our heart* is not established in the truth. Many people do not want to understand the Bible correctly because it would reprove the evil in their lives that they enjoy and want to follow! In warning us about deception, Paul tells us in 2 Thessalonians 2:11-12, “And for this reason God will send them strong delusion, that they should believe the lie, that they all may be condemned who did not believe the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness.” God will hand a person over to mental blindness so that he cannot understand the truth if the desire of his heart is for unrighteousness.

A preacher who wants to cling to sin in his life will not understand what the Bible says about that subject, and will even preach error to justify himself. Therefore, the first thing we must understand is that learning the truth of the Bible does not primarily come from our mind, but from our heart. Some theologians think they are experts in preaching the Bible because they know the original Greek and Hebrew. Yet we must remember that the Pharisees and leaders of Jesus' time all were educated men who spoke the original Bible languages—yet they crucified the Lord of glory!

Our Lord taught in John 7:17, “If anyone wants to do [God’s] will, he shall know concerning the doctrine, whether it is from God or whether I speak on My own authority.” If our heart is consecrated to follow the will of God, then He will be pleased to show us His will and teach us pure doctrine.

The Lord Jesus told us another reason in Matthew 12:34-35 why we cannot become a good preacher without a consecrated heart. Christ said, “Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks. A good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth good things, and an evil man out of the evil treasure brings forth evil things.” Even if we know the truth, evil words will spring from our lips if our heart is filled with a mixture of evil and good.

Thus, we must seek for a consecrated heart that becomes saturated with the Word of God. Jesus told us in the Parable of the

Soils that our heart is like a garden. The soil can be stony, thorny, or good soil. Only the good soil will produce a fruitful harvest. Therefore we must prepare our hearts to become like good, fruitful soil.

To prepare the ground of our heart, Hosea 10:11-12 tells us that “Judah will plow” as we break up the fallow ground. Judah means *praise*, and truly it is a heart that learns to praise God that will soften and be prepared to receive the seed of God’s word planted deep within. An unthankful, bitter preacher will always have self-induced difficulties and severely limit the movings of the Spirit in his ministry.

When a farmer plows his ground old roots and stones are turned over and brought to the surface and exposed to the light. If the seed is planted in shallow, stony ground, it will soon wither and die. An industrious farmer will spend the weeks, months, or even years that are necessary to remove the stones and prepare a productive field (Is. 5:2). In a similar way, when we seek to have a life of praise, the hard and stony areas of our heart will surface. We need to cry out to God that He will take the stones out of our heart (Ezek. 11:19). Then we must daily guard our heart that it will not become hardened again by the deceitfulness of sin (Heb. 3:13).

We want our hearts to become like fertile soil where the seed of the Word of God may be planted and bring forth a multiplied

harvest. Isaiah 55:10-11 tells us that the word that goes forth from God's mouth will give "seed to the sower and bread to the eater." The seed that we sow in our hearts will grow and be harvested and processed to become bread that we can feed to the people when we preach. We will have a successful ministry that can feed multitudes the bread of the Word of God if we first prepare our hearts to become like good, fruitful soil.

2. STUDY THE BIBLE

As we seek a consecrated heart, the second way to prepare ourselves to be a proclaimer of the Word is by studying the Bible (Ezra 7:10). Ezra studied the law of the Lord, or the books of the Bible that were available in his time. Jewish history credits him with being the man responsible for gathering together and organizing all the books of the Old Testament.

A preacher must be diligent to study. Second Timothy 2:15 commands, "Study to show yourself approved unto God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth." If we do not properly study the Scriptures, we will be brought to shame. Inadequate knowledge of God's Word will reveal our ignorance and imbalance. In addition to this, we will be unable to meet the needs of others and to answer the questions of our listeners.

We need to meditate on the Scriptures day and night to gain

success, as Joshua was told in Joshua 1:8. Read through the Bible time after time, and do not neglect reading books like Leviticus or Ecclesiastes just because you find them difficult to understand.

Get cassettes of Bible readings to listen to when you cannot read, or record some cassettes for yourself. Obtain a study Bible and a concordance, and use them often. Enroll in a good Bible school or other forms of Bible training. Become skilled in knowing how to handle the Word of God, just as a soldier should spend much time learning how to use his weapons skillfully.

At the same time, we should be careful to not just study the Bible to find sermon material to help others. God warns the preacher to take heed to his own spiritual life *first* (1 Tim. 4:16; Acts 20:28).

Have a daily time of devotional Bible reading where you are asking God to speak to you, minister to you, and personally guide you. Your ability to minister to others will come from the overflow of what God is doing in your own life.

3. OBEY THE BIBLE

The third step of preparation to become a preacher is to obey the Bible (Ez. 7:10). The first step was to prepare our heart (or spirit). Secondly, our mind (or soul) will understand God's truth

as we study the Bible. This brings us to the third step of obeying the truth with our life (or our body). In this manner we will become fully sanctified in spirit, soul, and body (1 Thess. 5:23). Then we will be prepared as a vessel of honor to preach God's Word (2 Tim. 2:21; 4:2). When the Word of God dwells in us richly, it will joyfully flow out and be imparted to others when we preach (Col. 3:16).

The preacher who does not *obey* his knowledge of the Bible becomes of all men most miserable. Such was the case in the life of King Solomon. He was a preacher who violated everything he preached against in the Proverbs. Not only was he a preacher, he was also a king. Everything a king was not to do, he practiced (Deu. 17:14-20).

Solomon became one of the most backslidden, negative, confused, and disenchanted men of all time. Ecclesiastes was his last written sermon. It begins like this: "The words of the Preacher, the son of David, king in Jerusalem. Vanity of vanities says the Preacher; Vanity of vanities, all is vanity."

Throughout the book we can feel the despair that was in Solomon's heart, even while he was still trying to preach to the people. Let us learn from Solomon's dreadful mistake of neglecting his own vineyard.

Instead, may we experience the joy that Solomon's father

had in preaching! We can read of this in Psalm 40:8-10, where David wrote, “I delight to do Your will, O my God, and Your law is within my heart. I have proclaimed the good news of righteousness in the great assembly; indeed, I do not restrain my lips, O LORD, You Yourself know. I have not hidden Your righteousness within my heart; I have declared Your faithfulness and Your salvation; I have not concealed Your loving kindness and Your truth from the great assembly.”

If we do not *practice* what we preach, we will also face the shame of becoming a great reproach to the work of the gospel.

The Apostle Paul tells us in Romans 2:21-24, “You, therefore, who teach another, do you not teach yourself? You who preach that a man should not steal, do you steal? You who say, ‘Do not commit adultery,’ do you commit adultery? You who abhor idols, do you rob temples? You who make your boast in the law, do you dishonor God through breaking the law? For ‘the name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you,’ as it is written.”

May the Lord help each and every one of us who preach *to live* a life that will demonstrate and confirm what we speak, to the glory of God. Otherwise we will end up being a castaway or reject (1 Cor. 9:27).

4. PREACH THE BIBLE

If we have the proper preparations, we can also become *ready* (like Ezra) to be a great preacher or teacher. Ezra is credited in Jewish history not only with arranging the Old Testament, but also with writing I-II Chronicles, as well as the Book of Ezra. He wrote a total of 75 chapters of the Bible! His life was so righteous and his doctrine so effective that King Artaxerxes gave him authority over nations (Ezra 7:11-26).

The nation of Israel was in a great measure restored and prepared for the coming of Christ by the influence of this one preacher: a man who “set his heart to study the Law of the Lord, and to practice it, and to teach His statutes and ordinances in Israel” (Ezra 7:10).

Chapter 3

FOUR TYPES OF PREACHING

It is obvious that the Apostle Paul trained younger ministers to preach (2 Tim. 4:2-4). Paul wrote, “Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables.” Here we are told that our obligation is to “preach the word” and beware of unsound doctrine and fables.

Furthermore, as we seek to learn *how* to “preach the word,” Paul also tells us that there are *four* kinds of profitable speaking or preaching from the Word of God.

In First Corinthians 14:6 he writes, “What shall I profit you unless I speak to you either *by revelation, by knowledge, by prophesying, or by doctrine?*”

As we examine these four different areas of speaking, we can gain further wisdom in knowing what we can preach that will be of benefit to our listeners.

1. REVELATION

The first of these four kinds of profitable preaching is called “revelation.” This is when God by His Spirit shows you something you did not know (1 Cor. 2:9-10). As Jeremiah 23:28 tells us, “The prophet who has a dream, let him tell a dream; and he who has My word, let him speak My word faithfully.”

Having a revelation from God to preach is a very valuable ministry. It can be a rare ministry, as it was in the time when Eli was the High Priest of Israel. First Samuel 3:1 tells us about this time: “And the word of the Lord was rare [unusual or scarce] in those days; there was no widespread revelation.” However, the Lord does not want revelations to be rare.

The Apostle Paul prayed for the Ephesian Christians that God would give them the spirit of revelation so they would understand God’s calling, inheritance, and power for them (Eph. 1:15-19). This was not because the Ephesian Christians were ignorant of the working of the Holy Spirit. On the contrary, they had already spoken in other tongues and prophesied many years earlier according to Acts 19:1-6.

Yet the Apostle Paul knew that “Where there is no revelation, the people cast off restraint” (Prov. 29:18). He discerned that unless they continued to move on in God, the Ephesian church would soon grow cold (cf. Rev. 2:2-4). We still need to pray for

this same spirit of revelation today so that the Lord can show us His plans to encourage us to press on to hit the mark of the high calling of God.

A revelation can come to you while you are praying, reading the Scriptures, or perhaps in a dream or a vision. A revelation often is just a simple message or little thought that God may speak to you or quicken to your spirit in a moment of time. You may be able to repeat that simple message or short revelation in one sentence, or just a few words. Yet that revelation can become the “seed” or nucleus of a much larger and potent message that you can develop and preach.

You should meditate on that revelation and search the Scriptures on that particular subject or message that the Lord quickened to you. Let that little “seed” of revelation grow in your understanding. Consider how that revelation can apply to the church or people to whom you will deliver it. Even a little or short revelation can often grow in your understanding to become a full, fruitful, and powerful sermon.

As an example, we can consider the message that Daniel preached to King Belshazzar. The setting in which Daniel preached was not where we would normally expect a powerful sermon to come forth—in the middle of a huge drunken feast (Dan. 5:18-28). When the mysterious fingers wrote upon the wall, the three words were a revelation that Daniel interpreted in one sentence.

However, before he declared the revelation, Daniel gave a complete background to the situation. He preached a whole message that led up to his proclaiming the revelation of God's judgment on Belshazzar and his kingdom. That revelation, although only one sentence long, became the basis of a powerful sermon that must have struck the hearts of the listeners with great impact. So if God gives you what may seem to be a small revelation, meditate on it, search the scriptures about that topic, and you may develop a sermon that can be of great benefit to many.

Also, there are times when you are preparing to preach when you may find yourself in a new spiritual battle. This is often a battle for the people to whom you are going to preach. In this battle you can gain revelation that could be very useful in your message to them. If you are visiting a place and you feel a new spiritual battle or oppression in the area, it is often an indication of what the Christians in that territory are fighting against.

Perhaps it comes as an oppression in your thoughts, or perhaps you notice a prevailing sin in the community. The local Christians may have grown weary and blinded to that sin or oppression. It may be that God has brought you in to be a reinforcement to the local army of God to help bring them through into a fresh victory. Preach a message to help them in the battles they face, according to what God reveals to you!

For example, one time I traveled to a city where I was going to

preach the next day. That evening I had a dream about drugs and immorality. When I awoke, I considered the dream and prayed about it. I felt the dream revealed a spiritual battle that was going on in the church that was trying to oppose me as the guest speaker. I felt I should confront these two areas in the church service at which I was to speak that morning.

So in my preaching I found appropriate places to mention those two problems, and what the word of God says about them. Then at the conclusion of the message I said that I spoke about those two sins because God revealed to me that there were people in the congregation who needed to repent of these sins.

After the altar call, the pastor told me that there were several people at the service who were involved in these two areas of sin, but they had come to the altar for forgiveness and deliverance. God did a mighty work in some lives that morning, all because of a little revelation that I had considered insignificant and forgetting as only a bad dream.

2. KNOWLEDGE

The second category of speaking that Paul listed was “knowledge.” This is preaching about something that you already know or understand. God does not have to give us a new revelation every time we preach. Many times the Lord has already taught us the wisdom and knowledge that the people need to hear in

our sermon. Knowledge can be so important that Christ rebuked some of the leaders in His time by saying "...you have taken away the key of knowledge. You did not enter in yourselves, and those who were entering in you hindered" (Lk. 11:52). In Isaiah 33:6 we are also told, "Wisdom and knowledge will be the stability of your times..."

One area of knowledge that you can preach about is something that you have gained through personal experience. We go through many difficulties and trials as we learn to walk with God, that the younger Christians will also have to face and overcome. These experiences can teach us some of the most valuable knowledge that we can share with others when we preach.

When the Word of God has first been "made flesh" in our own life, we can then more effectively impart it unto others! The special lessons we learn as we walk with God become *a life message* that we can both teach and demonstrate to others.

However, if we preach something that we have not experienced, then we are only preaching "theory." Theory brings no life and does not work effectively in the lives of others. If our message has not stood the test of time, it will be unbalanced and it might even be dangerous. A good shepherd will not lead his flock to a new pasture until he thoroughly inspects it and knows that it is healthy for grazing and free of poisonous weeds.

Chapter four of the book of Daniel is a good example of someone preaching from *experiential* knowledge. In this chapter, Nebuchadnezzar published a proclamation that was sent to all the nations in his empire. He testified how the Lord had worked in his life to humble him and cause him to honor and glorify God.

He had paid a high price of suffering to become a humble believer, and he wanted to pass along that knowledge to everyone. If only his son Belshazzar had heeded his knowledge, he would not have become an evil king to whom Daniel later had to preach judgment when they witnessed the handwriting on the wall.

Another area of knowledge from which you may have to preach can concern a need or a problem that you know is in the church. If you *already know* the needs of the people, and you know how God can meet their needs, then it could be wise for you to prepare a message about that topic. If the people are not tithing, you can preach from Malachi 3:10-11 about God's blessings upon obedient givers. If the people are living a defeated Christian life, perhaps you will want to preach to them about spiritual warfare, or faith, or holiness. When you preach, aim to meet the needs of the people.

A third area of knowledge that can be preached, concerns our being sensitive to speak a message that we know is *ap-*

propriate for the occasion. If we are speaking at a special occasion (wedding or funeral), or on a special day (Christmas or Mother's Day), then the hearts of the people will be especially open to hear a message on the same subject as the occasion or day.

3. PROPHECY

The third kind of profitable speaking or preaching that Paul mentioned in First Corinthians 14:6 is “prophecy.” A prophetic anointing can powerfully impart God’s word into the hearts of the congregation. It does not mean that you need to have a vision, or mighty revelation. It can simply be that you feel a special anointing or a burden on your heart, and you begin to speak a message from the heart of God.

Revelation 19:10 tells us that “the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.” This does not mean that you have to say “Thus saith the Lord” as you speak, or have a great revelation. Being prophetic simply means that you are expressing the heart and mind of Christ as you speak. The three areas in which prophetic preaching will flow are shown to us in First Corinthians 14:3 as—*edification, exhortation, and comfort.*

Perhaps as you are preaching, you will feel the anointing of the Holy Spirit stirring in your heart. To express what is stirring in your heart, you may start exhorting the congregation sponta-

neously. Perhaps you will feel the prophetic anointing as a weeping that comes into your heart. You may feel led to plead with, warn, or comfort the people. Let the message come from your heart as God has placed His burden into your heart. This kind of preaching can be prophetic as the Holy Spirit anoints and leads you!

Through prophetic preaching, the Lord can anoint us and guide us into preaching about matters that we had not prepared to speak about in our advance studies or sermon preparations. Do not constrict yourself by always following your sermon notes if you feel the Lord is prompting you to speak about something else.

You should learn to be sensitive and obedient to follow a prophetic flow when you feel the anointing leading you, or when you feel that the heart of God wants to be expressed. Yet it is unwise to assume that you do not need to prepare to preach, but only wait for the prophetic anointing to guide you.

Preparation for your message is almost always essential! It is the rare and very mature prophetic minister who can consistently flow in the Spirit and deliver without advance study, a balanced and fully “nutritional” message that will strengthen and build up the whole congregation.

I have been to church services where the leaders do not pre-

pare a message in advance. The leadership just tries to prophetically “flow” at all the services. However, I have noticed that as a general rule these churches have weak congregations because they have not had solid foundations systematically built into their lives. While we should highly value the prophetic ministry, we must also not neglect the other kinds of profitable speaking such as *knowledge* and *doctrine*.

4. DOCTRINE

The fourth kind of speaking Paul mentioned is “doctrine.” This can also be translated as “teaching” or “instruction.” While this word suggests a more methodical or ordered form of speaking, it does not have to be something lifeless and boring that we should avoid when we preach a message. The most famous sermon in all of world history, the Sermon on the Mount, was where Christ taught doctrine!

In Matthew 5:2 we read, “Then He opened His mouth and taught them...” This message was far from dull, because at the end of the sermon we read in Matthew 7:28, “And so it was, when Jesus had ended these sayings, that the people were astonished at His doctrine.” If we follow the example of Christ we will teach doctrine in some of our sermons, and can find it to be just as anointed and inspirational as any of the other forms of preaching!

We need to systematically preach sound doctrine in order to give our church members strong spiritual foundations. This was the manner of the early Apostles. In Acts 2:42 we read, “And they continued steadfastly in the Apostles’ doctrine,” and in Acts 5:28 the Jewish Sanhedrin told the Apostles, “You have filled Jerusalem with your doctrine.”

The Apostle Paul encouraged doctrinal preaching (1 Cor. 14:6, 1 Tim. 4:13; 5:17; 2 Tim. 3:16; 4:2; Tit. 1:9) and was also personally careful to preach the whole counsel of God (Acts 20:27).

Chapter 4

HOW TO CHOOSE WHAT TO PREACH

When suddenly the responsibility falls upon you to prepare for and deliver a sermon, it is easy to become nervous and confused about what subject or topic to choose.

The preacher who must speak one or more sermons every week can feel a lot of pressure. If the time of the service is approaching, and he still does not know what he should speak about, it can become a great trial!

A pastor or a preacher does not have the option of speaking only when he feels victorious and knows he has a real message from God. A preacher has a responsibility to regularly feed the flock, regardless of his feelings. Imagine what it would be like if a mother decided to only cook meals for her family when she felt happy and inspired to cook! No, she must regularly prepare the meals even if she feels tired or discouraged.

In a similar way, the preacher has a responsibility to regularly prepare good spiritual meals from the Word of God. The Apostle Paul told Timothy, “Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season” (2 Tim. 4:2). Even when we feel “out of season” we still need to be ready to fulfill our responsi-

bilities when it is our time to preach.

The following wisdom will help you to avoid a lot of confusion and pressure when you must decide what to preach about. The following three steps will help you to quickly focus in on what you should preach.

THREE STEPS TOWARDS CHOOSING WHAT YOU WILL PREACH:

1.) Seek the Lord for a revelation to preach. If the Lord gives you a revelation, you may be able to develop it into a powerful message. Often the Lord only gives a hint, a clue, or small word which leads to other thoughts. Once you have a quickened thought, you can begin to develop it. Now, what do we do if the Lord does not seem to give a specific word or revelation?

2.) Decide what knowledge or doctrine would be appropriate to speak on. By God's wisdom and peace, make a decision on what area of need is in the flock, and prepare a sermon. Perhaps they need a message of finance, faith, or family order. Maybe you will feel inspired to prepare a series of sermons on the same topic.

3.) If the anointing flows in another direction, follow the Spirit, not your prepared notes. When you are at the service (and perhaps you are already preaching your sermon), if a pro-

phetic anointing begins to flow in your heart and lead you, then follow the Spirit, not your planned notes. If the anointing begins to lift, you may feel to go in one of two directions. Perhaps you may feel that you should return to your notes again to continue and complete your message. The second possibility is that you may sense that the Lord has completed what should be spoken in the sermon and you should lead the service on to the next step—perhaps a time of prayer, to respond to what the Lord was prophetically speaking during the message.

We will now examine these three steps in detail on the next pages.

1. Seek the Lord for a revelation to preach.

A preacher should always be seeking the Lord for every sermon, to see if God wants to speak something new to him for the occasion. An ambassador or messenger is only effective when he is up to date on the information from headquarters that he is to present. In a similar way we must at times get *a news update* from heaven about the situations that we are going to speak about when we preach.

If God chooses to give you an “update” or a revelation, then we must also consider the following wisdom. First, do you truly understand the *interpretation* of the revelation? It is one thing to get a revelation, but along with this we need to understand what it means! Pharaoh had a revelation from God in Gen-

esis 41:8: “ ... he sent and called for all the magicians of Egypt and all of its wise men. And Pharaoh told them his dreams, but there was no one who could interpret them for Pharaoh.” The dream was truly an important revelation from God, but speculating or philosophizing about it was fruitless until Joseph came and gave the interpretation. When we feel that the Lord gives us a revelation, we should first wait until we *understand* it before we preach it to others.

Sometimes God gives revelations for a future time when we will understand and need that guidance. We can read of this in Habakkuk 2:3, where it says, “For the vision is yet for an appointed time; but at the end it will speak, and it will not lie. Though it tarries, wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not tarry.”

When the Lord gives a revelation to you, or perhaps to your wife or a co-worker, *first* seek to understand it well. Meditate on it and search the Scriptures on the subject. Let that “seed” of revelation grow into a mature message that becomes sustenance for many people (Mk. 4:28-29).

We should not just feed the people a few little “seeds” week by week when we preach. If a father fed his natural children a few crumbs every Sunday, and then told them that their next meal would be a few crumbs next Sunday, how long do you think the children would stay healthy? No, it is our responsibility to let those seeds of revelation grow in our own heart, to become a

fruitful harvest that will enable us (spiritually speaking) to give the people nutritional loaves of bread to eat and take home.

Secondly, are you sure it is the right time to disclose the revelation? Some revelations are given by God for our own personal guidance and prayer, and are not to be quickly proclaimed.

After the three apostles saw Christ transfigured, they were told in Mark 9:9 “that they should tell no one the things they had seen, till the Son of Man had risen from the dead.” We can be sure that they wanted to tell everyone about that great revelation, yet Christ told them it was not the correct time to declare it.

Another example we can learn from is the episode of Joseph's dreams. Joseph was given the revelation that one day he would become the ruler over the family, but he was not wise to quickly tell it to his carnal, jealous brothers.

In Genesis 37:5 it says that “they hated him even more” because of the revelations Joseph shared with them. Luke 2:19 records Mary's wise response to all the revelations that were given concerning her child. It says, “Mary kept all these things and pondered them in her heart.”

2. Decide what *knowledge* or *doctrine* to preach

If we have no new revelation that we feel we should preach,

then we should (by the wisdom and peace of God) decide what *knowledge* or *doctrine* would be appropriate to speak on. Prepare a sermon. See if the Lord gives you any confirmations that the message you are preparing is the correct one. Be open for any new direction or quickening the Spirit may give you.

2a. Knowledge

If you are thinking about preaching according to knowledge, there are many things to consider in choosing an effective topic. Before you decide to preach about a subject or experience that you know about, first ask yourself the following questions:

- Is that subject or experience presently blessing your heart? Do not feed the people old spiritual food if it is dry, cold, or stale! Leftover food is not very appealing unless it is reheated and served properly.

In a similar way, if you are planning to preach an old message, first make it warm and fresh through study and prayer. If something is presently alive in your spirit, then that can become a blessing to others if you share it. Life reproduces life! Stay with what is bubbling in your heart.

- Is the subject appropriate? Proverbs 25:11 tells us, “A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in settings of silver.” Holidays and special events often suggest some appropriate topics to

preach. Some examples are:

- Mother's Day: Ex. 20:12, Prov. 31:10-31, Jud. 5:7.
- Valentines Day: Mt. 5:8, Mt. 22:37-40,
Ps. 139:23-24, Eze. 11:19.
- A Wedding: Eccl. 4:9-12, Jn. 2:1-10, Rev. 19:6-9.
- A Funeral: 1 Cor. 15:51-57, 1 Thess. 4:13-18.

If you are trying to organize a new program in the church, then it could be very appropriate to preach about that subject. Some examples are:

- Home Bible studies: Acts 2:46-47, 20:20.
- Evangelism: Lk. 14:15-23, Lk. 15:4-7.
- Ministry to the poor: Mt. 25:31-46, Lk. 10:29-37.
- Missions program: Mt. 28:18-20, Acts 13:1-3,
Eccl. 11:1, Deut. 33:18-19.

• Who is the audience? Consider who is sitting before you, and speak to their needs. Make your message practical and relevant! Is your audience mainly children or elderly people? Will you speak to farmers, or to educated professionals?

Are they mostly poor, middle class, or rich people? Are they Christians or unbelievers? Are they new believers or pastors? Each body of listeners will have different needs, and you will have to find ways to minister to their level of hearing.

For example, one time I was on an evangelism tour of a very isolated island in the Sulu Sea of the Philippines. Even though it was a large island with many villages, there were no cars, electricity, or running water. The people had very little education. Then we came to one very isolated and primitive village where I preached the gospel to the people. I had an interesting message from John 5:24 that I thought could hold the attention of this outdoor crowd. However, when I gave an altar call, no one responded! So another pastor with me tried preaching to them, but there was no response from the people again.

After several preachers tried to reach them with the gospel message, one evangelist stood up with the microphone and said only one short sentence to the people: “Do you want to die in your sins?” The message finally was simple enough for them to respond, and many came forward for prayer.

The next morning, I saw a baby Mina bird at the house of the family where we were staying. I tried a number of times to feed it a single grain of cooked rice, but when I would put it in the bird’s beak, it would always fall out. Then the evangelist who had reached the people the night before came over to me and said, “Brother Norman, the bird is too young and small to eat a grain of rice.” So then he started breaking off very, very small pieces from a grain of rice, and the bird hungrily swallowed them. When I saw that, the Lord spoke to my heart and said,

“That was your problem last night. You tried to feed the people a bigger meal than they could swallow when you preached to them.”

I had been preaching at too high of an intellectual level for them, and had tried to feed them too many spiritual truths! May the Lord help us to give spiritual food from the Word of God that the people we preach to can chew, swallow, and digest. As Agur said to the Lord in Proverbs 30:8, “Feed me with the food You prescribe for me.”

Perhaps what you are thinking of preaching about is a problem that you know of. As you are considering preaching about it, start by asking yourself these four questions:

- First, does the Lord want me to confront the problem? God does not ask us to personally attack every problem and sin that we see. For example, ask the Lord for His wisdom before you preach against a dangerous local criminal organization, or before you preach against communism or Islam if they are strong forces in your nation and community.

In Second Chronicles 35:20-24 we can study about the premature death of the godly King Josiah. The problem was that he declared war on a heathen king when God never told him to do it! Ecclesiastes 7:16-17 tells us, “Do not be overly righteous . . . nor be foolish: why should you die before your time?”

Preachers often add a lot of unneeded pressure to their ministry by confronting problems in their preaching that the Lord never wanted them to battle!

- Second, should something remain a secret? Be careful not to use examples that will expose and embarrass people. Ministers often learn about situations that they *must* keep confidential. Information we learn in private counseling sessions should never be divulged from the pulpit. Doing that is one of the quickest ways to lose the respect of your people.

- Third, is it the right time to confront the problem? First Corinthians 4:5 tells us, "... Judge nothing before the time, until the Lord comes, who will both bring to light the hidden things of darkness and reveal the counsels of the hearts." So the question we must ask ourselves is; "Does the Lord want to come and expose and judge the problem at this time? Is the situation ripe?" God is very patient and longsuffering in His dealings with us, so we also need to learn how to be patient and longsuffering towards others. (Study Mt. 13:24-30, Gen. 15:16, and Eccl. 3:1-8.)

- The fourth question we should ask ourselves is, do we know the correct way to deal with the situation? Every battle needs different plans, and different problems can need different solutions. Perhaps a problem can even look just the same as one that the Lord already gave you the victory over. Yet you should

not assume that if you repeat what you did or spoke before, that you will get the victory in the same fashion as before!

In First Chronicles 14:9-16 we can study about two battles that King David faced. They both looked the same, but the plans that won the first battle would have led to disaster if David had tried to follow them again. He was careful to inquire of God for the battle plans each time, which insured that he had God's wisdom to gain each victory.

Ministers can think that if they preach the same thing again, then they will get the same results each time. Sometimes this will work, but it can also cause defeat and shame if we do not rightly divide the Word of God and seek God for the key to each situation. There are no master keys in the kingdom of God.

There was a certain time when I attended a service for a pastor who was temporarily resigning his church. He was a good man and a good preacher, but he had become very discouraged. His church had two elders who sometimes would get drunk, and this sin was a great shame to him and the church. He had preached against the sin of drunkenness many times, but his preaching did not correct the problem so he had temporarily resigned. He told me privately that he was planning to make the resignation permanent.

The evening after the pastor resigned, the Lord showed me

the problem. In the Spirit, I saw the two elders sitting by the side of a road that I knew was the highway of holiness (Is. 35:8). They were turned out of the way and were discouraged because of their sin.

Then I started to speak to them and reprove them for their backslidings. But before the Spirit of God could begin to move in their hearts and bring conviction, an evil spirit came and stood between the elders and myself. They could not hear my words of rebuke because the evil spirit was blocking them from hearing. Furthermore, the evil spirit had the word “drunkenness” written across his form.

When I told the former pastor about this revelation, I explained to him the situation. He had resigned from the church because he was embarrassed about the church problem, and about how his preaching was not able to correct it. I told him, however, that preaching against this sin was not the right battle plan. The conviction of the Holy Spirit was not able to reach their hearts when he preached against this sin, because of the evil spirit that was holding them captive. I told him that the correct way to deal with this problem was to first conduct spiritual warfare and bind this spirit of drunkenness. After this was dealt with, the preaching and counseling could be effective to convict them of their sin.

The pastor and I agreed to start praying and binding that evil

spirit. As the spirit became bound, the two backsliding elders became convicted of their sin. One of them repented and was restored to the church, but the other man hardened his heart against the Holy Spirit. However, at this point God stepped in to judge him. His son died in a fight while he was drunk, and this elder left the church in great bitterness.

Yet the church was cleansed of their great reproach of having two backsliding elders. Soon the pastor was back, victoriously preaching to his congregation that then doubled in size.

The pastor told me that he would have never resigned from the pastorate if he had understood why his preaching against the sin of drunkenness was not effective. He was a good man and a good preacher, but he did not possess the proper knowledge of how to deal with the situation until God gave a revelation.

2b. Doctrine

Another area where we need wisdom to choose a topic to preach on is *doctrine*. If we feel that we should perhaps preach doctrine, we should consider the following:

- First, build a good doctrinal foundation in the lives of the people. This should be an important priority in our teaching and preaching. Hebrews 6:1-3 tells us, “Therefore, leaving the discussion of the elementary principles of Christ, let us go

on to perfection, not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works and of faith toward God, of the doctrine of baptisms, of laying on of hands, of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment. And this we will do if God permits.”

These verses show us the importance of having a good doctrinal foundation. While the Lord wants to take us on to perfection, He will not permit everyone to go on to the next level. It is like pupils in school. They need to study and pass the exams for each grade before they will be promoted to the next higher grade or level. If they do not have a proper foundation in the simpler lessons, they must repeat the class. This is similar to the way we go on towards spiritual maturity and perfection in the kingdom of God.

We must have a good foundation in the simple doctrines before we are ready for the deeper truths and revelations. Do not preach what the third trumpet of Revelation 8 means if the people do not yet understand the foundational doctrines of water baptism and the baptism of the Holy Spirit!

Laying a strong foundation in the lives of believers by solid preaching and teaching will protect them from many errors and dangers. Ephesians 4:11-14 tells us that the ministry is to equip and build up the saints “that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of

doctrine.” There are many unbalanced and dangerous “winds of doctrine” that blow through the churches.

These new (or newly repackaged) doctrines tickle peoples’ ears, and start fads or exciting new trends that draw a lot of attention for a short time. Yet after the excitement fades, the end result of these passing winds of doctrine is that they do not help people to become more spiritually stable and mature. The remedy for this problem is to build strong and balanced doctrinal foundations into the lives of those to whom you preach. Then they will grow up to become strong, steady Christians that will not be confused and abused by the unbalanced doctrines that frequently blow through the Church.

- Second, do not major on the minors. In other words, do not use your preaching to speak about topics that are not important to the needs of the people you minister unto. It is very important that we give more emphasis to the important doctrines of the Bible. We do not want to be like those of whom Jesus said, “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin, and have neglected the weightier matters of the law: justice and mercy and faith” (Mt. 23:23).

A graduate from one of our Bible schools was interviewed when he was applying to become the new pastor of a farming community. He was asked the question, “Are you going to

preach all about the prophetic movement, and about the deliverance ministry?" These were very popular seminar topics in the nation at that time. This man wisely replied, "No, I just want to help them to become good Christians with good Christian families." He was chosen to become the new pastor, and has gone on to have a commendable ministry there.

Subjects that might be considered the "cutting edge" topics at seminars or seminaries may have very little practical significance for the people to whom you preach. Or perhaps you may be studying an obscure priestly law in Leviticus that is very interesting to you, but that is no guarantee that it will meet the needs that the members of your congregation are facing. When they come to church, they are hoping to hear from God through your preaching, and receive the answers to their problems. Do not disappoint them by preaching about things that are not relevant for them.

- Third, do not teach any doctrines that are not clearly established in the Word of God. People have preached about many ridiculous things. I once heard an entire message at a fundamental church about spaceships from other planets! Many sermons have been preached in the past that have declared the final great Antichrist as Hitler, or Stalin, Henry Kissinger, or Saddam Hussein. And thousands of sermons have confused people by declaring that the Second Coming of Christ Jesus would take place in 1915, 1925, 1942, 1988, 1992, or 1996! Predictions

come from pride and can become a golden idol to some.

If a doctrine is not clearly stated in the Word of God, do not preach it! It is not important for your people to know about a doctrine unless it is in the Bible. Maybe there is life on other planets, or maybe not, but God has not told us because it is not important for us to know. Another danger to preaching something that is not in the Scriptures is that your doctrine may soon be proven to be wrong, not only to your disgrace, but also to the loss of credibility of your ministry.

3. If a prophetic anointing comes

Step number three in deciding what to preach about is this: When you are at the service (perhaps you are already in the middle of preaching your sermon), if a prophetic anointing begins to flow in your heart and lead you, then follow the Spirit and put aside your preplanned notes.

There have been times when I have gone to a service, having prepared a sermon beforehand that I felt would be of benefit to the congregation. Then during the service the Spirit of God touched my heart and God put another message into my spirit. This can happen during the worship service. It can happen when someone prophesies a particular message and God impresses that upon your spirit. Perhaps the Lord will quicken something directly to your heart. When God changes your

message before you start to preach, you are faced with two possibilities that you should choose between. You may decide to completely drop your planned sermon, to preach the fresh message that God is quickening to you. You may have time to organize a few scriptures and thoughts before it is time for you to speak.

The second possibility is that you can look for an appropriate part of your planned sermon where you can insert the new message that God is quickening to you. Then you will preach both the planned message, as well as the new message or burden that God has placed in your heart. Of course, a third possibility is that you can ignore what the Holy Spirit is speaking, to just mechanically follow your prepared sermon notes. However, I do not recommend this third possibility!

A preacher needs to learn to prepare a message well, but he must also learn to be flexible and follow the burden and guidance that the Holy Spirit may instantly place in his heart. Learning to practice and balance these two factors (prepared and spontaneous preaching) is one of the keys to becoming a fully effective preacher.

Many preachers have a difficult time trying to preach a good, full, spontaneous message without having a prepared sermon outline. Even if your heart is breaking with a fresh message

that God has placed there, how long can you express that burden? Perhaps in only a few minutes you will be done, and you cannot remember any more scriptures or thoughts that will continue to deepen the message. If you stop your preaching at that point perhaps the congregation will have already had their hearts stirred, but perhaps you will have also fed them with very little of the Word of God.

It often seems to be the wisdom of God, that if the Lord quickens something to your heart during the service before you are to preach, you should try to hold that prophetic burden in your spirit (see 1 Cor. 14:32). Then seek to express it at an appropriate point during your preplanned message. Enlarge your message to include what the Lord is freshly speaking to your heart.

As you are preaching, add the spontaneous prophetic preaching that the Holy Spirit is giving you. If you feel that the anointing or burden is beginning to lift, you may then feel to go one of two directions.

Perhaps you may feel that you should go back to your prepared notes again, to continue and complete your message. If you follow this direction, then at the end of your sermon you can return your comments to what the Lord had freshly placed in your heart. Often the anointing will return again when you repeat the new message, to confirm it afresh and lead the people into a time of prayer and consecration at the close of the sermon.

The second possibility is that you may feel that the Lord has completed what should be spoken in the message. In that case, do not return to complete your preplanned sermon. The Lord may lift His anointing off the message if you try to disobediently complete it in the flesh! If you feel that the Lord has completed the message, then lead the service on to the next step. Perhaps this next step will be a time of prayer to respond to what the Lord was speaking during the message.

Chapter 5

HOW TO PREPARE A MESSAGE

Pray

The first thing we should do to prepare a sermon is pray! Spend time in God's presence before you choose your message. Seek to get your basic message from God. It is possible to preach something that was either birthed from the natural, or born of God. But only that which is born of God will overcome and accomplish God's work.

If your message was conceived in your natural intellect or feelings, it will have an inferior and mixed result, even if you add many scriptures to it. However, if a message from the Word of God was first imparted by the Holy Spirit to your heart and mind, then it will accomplish a work from God and have good, lasting fruit.

Isaiah 55:10-11 tells us, "For as the rain comes down, and the snow from heaven, and do not return there, but water the earth, and make it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower and bread to the eater, so shall My word be that goes forth from My mouth; it shall not return to Me void, but it shall accomplish what I please, and it shall prosper in the thing for which I sent it."

Second Corinthians 5:20 tells us, “Therefore we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were pleading through us...” Yet to be Christ’s ambassadors, we need to receive from God what He wants us to declare to the people. Christ Himself said in John 12:49, “For I have not spoken on My own authority; but the Father who sent Me gave Me a command, what I should say and what I should speak.” So we need to seek the Lord to know what we should preach about.

We can look for confirmations also to help show us what God wants us to preach. This does not mean that we need to have a vision while we pray, or have a supernatural experience to guide us. No, many times we will simply receive God’s wisdom in our minds, and peace in our heart, to guide us. The important thing is that we pray and receive guidance from God in any way He chooses to answer our prayers.

Study

After prayer, we should begin to study. The Word of God tells us to study to be good preachers. In 2 Timothy 2:15 Paul commands, “Study to show yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.”

While our major source of reference is the Bible, there are other good study books that are available to help us understand the

Scriptures. A good study Bible is a valuable tool. With this you can study Bible topics, history, maps, cross references, and alternate translations. Yet the single most important book to help you study the Bible is a concordance.

A concordance will list all the words of the Bible in alphabetical order, and tell you where each reference is found in the Bible. With the use of a concordance you can study all the places a word from the Bible is used in other scriptures. In this way, you can let the Bible fully explain itself concerning any word you study (1 Cor. 2:13).

For example, consider if you are planning to preach something about the topic of being faithful. In a complete concordance (such as a Strong's, Young's, or Cruden's complete concordance) you will find that the word "faithful" is used in about 80 verses in the Bible. If you study all of the verses that the concordance lists, you can learn what the Bible teaches about being faithful.

Many other study books can be very helpful, such as Bible dictionaries, Bible handbooks, and some commentaries. Yet another indispensable tool for the serious preacher will be the notebook or notebooks that they must personally compile. As you begin to preach, keep a notebook to store your messages in. This is crucial! Keep an organized copy of all the messages you have already prepared and preached. You may want to preach

a part of a message again, or the same entire sermon. If God gives you a good message, do not forget it or lose it! It may be appropriate to speak from it again in the future. Sometimes your schedule can be very demanding, and it is difficult to prepare one or two new sermons every week.

However, if you have carefully saved good notes, sermon outlines, examples and stories, then you may be able to reuse what the Lord gave you in the past. In Matthew 13 our Lord told his disciples to *remember* all of His teachings well, and then went on in verse 52 to say, “Therefore every scribe instructed concerning the kingdom of heaven is like a householder who brings out of his treasure things new and old.” So when God gives you treasures from His Word, be careful to preserve them. That way they will remain valuable and can be used again.

When you get an inspiration, you should write down your thoughts for a message on any available scrap of paper. Yet when you prepare the final copy of your message notes, use a clean, regular size piece of paper that you can save and organize with your other sermon outlines and notes.

Put them in a notebook, and organize them with an alphabetical index according to their title and or topic. Then if you want to study a message or perhaps use it years later, it will be easy for you to find.

Organize

Before you preach, you must organize the message. King Solomon was a wise preacher who had studied how to organize the truth in an effective manner. He wrote in Ecclesiastes 12:9-11, “And moreover, because the Preacher was wise, he still taught the people knowledge; yes, he pondered and sought out and set in order many proverbs. The Preacher sought to find acceptable words; and what was written was upright; words of truth. The words of the wise are like goads, and the words of scholars are like well-driven nails, given by one Shepherd.”

Solomon organized his preaching so that his words would be effective, like goads and well-driven nails. A goad is a sharp stick that you prod an animal with to keep them moving forward. So Solomon was saying that a good message will be motivational, and convict the people’s conscience like a goad will prick an animal.

These verses also show that the things we speak should be like well-driven nails. This means that through well aimed, logical preaching, we should be able to make the truth stick in the minds and hearts of our listeners.

Also, our listeners will hang their eternity on what we say. This is the kind of preaching that our one Shepherd, the Lord Jesus, desires to give us. Let us learn to be like Solomon, pondering

and searching out acceptable words that we can use to organize into effective preaching.

There are three basic types of messages that we can choose from when we begin to organize a sermon. Each can help us to clearly present Bible truth. These are called topical, textual, and expository sermons.

- Topical Sermons
- Textual Sermons
- Expository Sermons

• **A topical sermon** is where you preach *a topic or an idea*. A few examples of a topic that could be preached include: prayer, the eagle, repentance, joy, Moses the deliverer, running the race, how to be born again; or anything that is scriptural. A topical message can most easily be prepared with the help of a concordance. If you feel that the Lord has given you a topic that you should preach, then look up the important word(s) about that topic in the concordance. Study the verses containing that word, and organize the key scriptures you want to use into a logical sermon outline.

• **A textual sermon** is where you take a verse, and preach *your main idea or thought from something in that verse*. Explain how the verse reveals an important truth. For example, you could preach a message from Hebrews 12:14 where you

could speak about “No one will see the Lord without Holiness.” First you could speak about what it means to “see the Lord.” Then you could explain the meaning of holiness, and after that explain how holiness is needed to see the Lord.

- **An expository sermon** is where you bring out the meaning of a passage of Scripture. *You are explaining or interpreting that verse or verses.* It could be a parable, a story, a chapter, or even a book of the Bible. You explain your chosen section of Scripture while keeping it in the proper settings of context, history, and grammar. This type of preaching can require more skill in explaining the scripture than just preaching a topical or textual message.

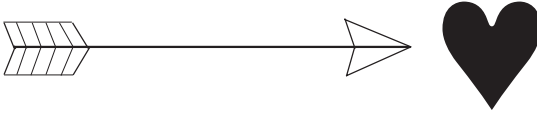
However, expository sermons have the safety of staying the closest to the simple, plain meaning of the Bible. Therefore, it most ably helps to teach the people how to become good interpreters of the Bible for themselves. If your listeners hear you skillfully expounding different passages of Scripture, it will get them into the habit of also trying to do the same when they personally study the Bible.

THE THREE MAIN PARTS OF A SERMON

A sermon should have three main sections: *an introduction, a main body, and a conclusion.* Their functions can be illustrated by the three parts of an arrow: the feathers, the shaft, and the

head. The introduction is the beginning of the sermon. It is to give direction to the message, just as the feathers on an arrow guide the arrow. The main body is the main section containing the content of the sermon. This is like the shaft, the main part of the arrow. The conclusion is the ending of the sermon. This is like the head or sharp point of the arrow that is to penetrate the target. Our target is the hearts of the listeners!

1. The Feathers
2. The Shaft
3. The Head



1. Introduction
2. Main Body
3. Conclusion

PREPARE AN OUTLINE

An outline will help you to organize what you want to present to the people. Just as an arrow must be very carefully constructed for it to fly swift and sure to hit the target, you need careful preparation to make an effective sermon.

Preparing an Outline

There are certain steps to take in organizing an outline. A message will often evolve slowly and develop in our heart and our thoughts. For this reason you may have to return to a certain step to revise what you first wrote down. Yet the following steps

are a good basic guideline to help you to organize an effective message.

- First, write down on the top of your notes *the central idea, theme, or truth* that you are going to speak about. This is the arrow you are going to build and send forth as your sermon. Write it out as a simple sentence. If you cannot explain the message simply to yourself, how will the people be able to understand it?
- Then write down as a simple sentence *the purpose* of your sermon. This is the target at which you will shoot your arrow. You want every sermon that you preach to accomplish something in the lives of your listeners. Make it practical, something that will meet the needs of the people.

Of course, these first two sentences you write down are not something that you will read to the people when you start your preaching. They are only to help you to know what sermon you will develop, and for what purpose you will preach it.

- Now divide your paper into three sections, with the middle section being the largest. Label the sections: *Introduction*, *Main Body*, and *Conclusion*.
- In the Introduction (or perhaps just above it) you will write your sermon title and the Bible text that you will begin with.

You will also write down some of your introductory thoughts in this section. We will study this more fully in the next chapter.

- In the second section of your sermon outline (the Main Body) you will write down the major thoughts or scriptures you have. Organize or number them into separate points. Make sure that each point is related to the central theme of the message. If any of your ideas cannot relate to and reinforce the central message of the sermon, then perhaps you should save those ideas for a different message. We will study more fully the organizing of the main body in chapter 7.

- After you have organized the points of the main body of your message, you should write down some concluding remarks in the third section of your outline, the Conclusion. We will study more about this in chapter 10. In the appendix after this book are a few condensed sermon outlines that I have written and used. After you have read this book, study them as examples of how to apply what you have been learning.

THE FOUR INGREDIENTS IN A GOOD OUTLINE

1. UNITY

The first ingredient in a good outline is unity. Unity makes a message easy to understand. Each part of the message should be

related to the rest. There should be a main theme or message to your preaching. We have said that a sermon is like an arrow. Could you imagine what it would be like if an archer tried to shoot an arrow that was not strongly glued together? What if the feathers and the arrowhead fell off in flight? It would be erratic and uncontrolled, just like a sermon that is not solidly put together.

Unity also concentrates the impact of the message. As an example of this, a machine gun with a hundred bullets may have the same firepower as one artillery shell. Yet if the machine gun sprays the bullets wildly in all directions, it will have much less effect against a target than one well-placed artillery shell. When we preach, we do not want to wildly shoot out unrelated ideas and Bible verses, like the undirected machine gun. We want to concentrate the message, through unity, into being like one well-placed artillery shell that will destroy the enemy.

Newspaper reporters are taught to keep unity in their message when they write a story. They are taught to ask “*the 5 Ws.*” These 5 Ws are: *Who? What? When? Where? and Why?* Each of the answers to these questions may become part of their story, but everything will remain related to the subject that they are reporting about. When we prepare a sermon we should also consider which of the above questions will help explain the meaning of the message to the

people. They can each help keep the message united as well as clear and practical.

As an example of how a sermon can have unity, let me mention a sermon I once heard preached, entitled “The Carpenter and the Cross.” The speaker began by saying that Jesus had been trained to be a carpenter, but the important piece of wood that we know of in relation to His life was the cross on which He was crucified. Yet just as Jesus had learned to take a piece of wood and fashion something useful from it, in a similar way Jesus took His cross and used it for several spiritual purposes.

Jesus figuratively made a balance, a coffin, a door, and a throne out of the wood of the cross. The balance was to reconcile the justice and mercy of God, the coffin was to bury our sin, the door was to open heaven to us, and the throne was where we can be seated with Christ in heavenly places. So through using the imagery of Jesus as a carpenter working with wood, a good unified gospel message was preached, all centered in the work of the cross.

2. ORDER

The second ingredient in a good outline is order. A message should be well presented and logical. An organized sermon will be easier for the people to remember, think about, and put into

practice. An unorganized message can be confusing, and does not logically lead you to a goal or accomplished purpose for the sermon. There is order to everything that God does. First Corinthians 14:40 tells us, “Let all things be done decently and in order.”

This is illustrated by how an arrow also needs order. An arrow with the feathers or the arrowhead *in the middle* would never reach the target! And the arrow’s shaft needs to be carefully polished and be straight and in perfect order otherwise it will be deflected from the mark.

A crooked arrow will not hit the target, and can even be dangerous. In like manner, the parts of the sermon all need to be in order and point in a straight direction. Otherwise the result of your sermon will be very unpredictable.

God had a clearly defined order when He spoke His Word to bring forth His work of creation in the book of Genesis. In a similar way, we want to learn how to have a proper order when we speak the Word of God in our sermons, so that the Word will also be creative. We read in Genesis chapter one that on the first day of creation the Spirit of God began to move.

This is one reason we commonly have a worship service before preaching. We invite the Holy Spirit to begin to move in the church service before we begin the preaching of the Word of

God. After the moving of the Holy Spirit, God said, “Let there be light.” When we begin to preach, the Word of God should begin to enlighten the minds of the listeners (2 Cor. 4:6). Then God divided the light from the darkness; even so, we need the preaching of the Word to show the people the difference between truth and deception, and righteousness and sin.

By the third day of creation, the Lord spoke to separate the waters and cause the dry land to appear. As our preaching continues, we want it to bring separation, and create strong foundations within the people’s lives. Then as the week of creation went on, the crowning work of the sixth day was when man was created in the image of God. This should be the goal of preaching, to conform men to the image of Christ.

Then finally, on the seventh day God rested. Similarly, when we have fulfilled the purpose of our message, we should stop talking and sit down! So if we want to preach God’s word in a creative manner, let us also learn to follow the wisdom of God’s original order.

Proper order is also important to help keep the parts of a sermon in correct proportion. For example, suppose you have about 50 minutes to preach a message. If you have 4 main points or sections to your sermon, then you can estimate (including time for the introduction and the conclusion) that you should not spend

more than about 10 minutes on each of the 4 sections. Suppose that as you are preparing your four point message, you find yourself gathering a great many scriptures and ideas for one of the sections. With a little experience, you can tell that this part of your message will take 30 minutes or more to speak because it is becoming so long. Then you might choose to prune down this large section to enable you to preach all four points.

However, if you feel that this section is becoming the most important part of the message, perhaps you should remove the other three sections and make this large section the central theme of the message. Another option you may choose is to combine the last three points into one main point.

Then your former ideas for these three main points can be placed as subpoints under your new main point. This way you are only preaching two main points which you could give equal emphasis and time to.

The one thing you want to be careful to avoid is to announce that you are preaching four points to your message and then spend far too long on one of the first points. Your listeners will become discouraged if your first point is thirty minutes long. A quick mathematical calculation would warn them that you might preach a two hour sermon! And if you use up most of your time on the first point, you will then have to zoom

through the last points, and their content and impact may become weak.

3. MOVEMENT

The third ingredient needed in a sermon outline is movement. You want to always keep moving forward in your message, to be always progressing towards your goal (Phil. 3:13-14). Every sermon should have the purpose or goal of accomplishing something constructive in the lives of your listeners. Consequently, a sermon should always move the listeners onward toward that goal.

The sermon must move in the proper direction that God wants the message to go. We do not want our sermons to wander aimlessly in circles. Avoid tangents or hobbyhorses, or causes. Do not lead the people down dead-end streets that will take them nowhere. No, our preaching must have purpose.

We want to lead the people forward into greater spiritual understanding, and into a deeper consecration to the Lord. To do this, you must have an understanding of God's purpose for the message you will speak, and you need wisdom to move the people step by step towards that goal.

We can learn more about the need of movement by considering a shepherd and his sheep. The shepherd needs to peri-

odically move his flock onwards to keep them healthy and safe. A green pasture that gave good food to the flock for a time can become overgrazed and barren.

Perhaps the shepherd needs to lead the flock to a quiet watering place, or a safe sheepfold, or to a new green pasture. The shepherd needs to know what the sheep need next, and how to lead them there.

In a similar way, a preacher needs to know where God wants him to take the people, and how to lead them onward to that desired goal. Every step or main point of the message should lead the congregation onward toward that goal. It might be to bring each sinner who is present to salvation.

The goal of the message may be for consecration, or healing, or for whatever worthy purpose we may have felt led to preach about. Yet every one of the main points in your sermon outline should be arranged in such a way as to move the people step by step to the desired goal.

The thrust of the message needs to move along through the various parts of the sermon like a swiftly flying arrow, going forward until it strikes deep into the hearts and minds of the listeners.

4. CLIMAX

The fourth ingredient of a sermon outline is the climax. A message should aim to finish with a climax. Just as a boxer aims for a final knockout punch, or as a piece of music prepares for a moving finale, in like manner a sermon should bring us to a climax. The climax should focus the attention of the listeners on the purpose for the sermon, and motivate them to respond.

The messages in the Book of Acts often have a strong climax. Study Acts 2:36, 7:51-56, 13:38-41, 14:9-10, 17:30-31, 26:27-29, and 28:25-28 to see the moving endings of these sermons. Several times it says that the listeners were “cut to the heart.” The preaching of the Word went like a sharp arrow into their hearts, and the results were often very dramatic.

The message should slowly build step by step through the points of the sermon, to have a single climax near the end. Do not have a big start and then have a boring end to your message! Many a sermon, like arrows, slow down and fall short of hitting their desired target.

You also do not want to have many climaxes or high points in the message. That can leave the people feeling dizzy, tired, and confused, like a roller coaster ride that takes you up and down. *Many climaxes* will cause the people not to respond wholeheartedly at the end of the message.

Chapter 6

THE INTRODUCTION

There are two main purposes for having a message start with an introduction. The most important reason is to make it clear what the message will be about. This will point the message in a straight direction, just as the feathers guide an arrow from the beginning of its flight until it strikes the target.

Be careful to only present the main idea or theme of the sermon in the introduction. Other related points should be developed later in the main body of the message.

The second reason for an introduction is to create curiosity and gather the people's attention. Make the sermon attractive and interesting! A store always displays its best products up front so that the people will quickly be aroused with interest. People often will crowd into a store which has good advertising. However, we have a "product" that is better than any natural salesman could offer.

A preacher can *offer* salvation, eternal life, love, joy, hope and faith. Should not the multitudes flock to the anointed preacher with such a message? Yet the opening introduction can make the sermon seem either appealing or dull to the listeners. You might start with a short greeting to the congregation if you have visi-

tors, or if you are a guest speaker. However, this is not necessary if you are preaching to your own congregation.

Two important ingredients that you should seek to quickly bring out in your introduction are a title and a text verse. Write these down in your sermon notes at the top of your outline.

The title is to simply state the theme or subject of the message. Make it short and precise, perhaps even one word. Announce it clearly at the beginning of the message. Some examples are: Revival, How to be Born Again, The Overcomers, and Three Reasons Jesus Died on the Cross. Interesting titles can help gain the interest of the people. Some examples are: “Matching Footprints” (when preaching from 1 Peter 2:21); “Measuring God’s Love” (for Ephesians 3:17-19); and “Marks of Maturity” (for 1 John 2:12-14).

Be careful to avoid exaggerated titles. Do not promise the people more than you can give them! Some bad examples of this could be: “God has a new Mercedes Benz for *You*” (when preaching from Matthew 21:22) or “The U.F.O.s are Coming” (from 2 Thessalonians 1:7-8).

A text verse is also important for the introduction. This is a verse (or verses) that you announce and read at the beginning of your message. The word *text* comes from the Latin *textus* or *textum* which means woven or spun. This shows

that our text verse is what our sermon is woven out of.

Just like the sermon title, a text verse should help to simply state the content or purpose of the message. Often the title can be taken from the text verse. For example, if your text is John 3:6 then your title might become, “You must be Born Again.” If your text is Hebrews 12:14, your title could be, “Without Holiness no One will See the Lord.”

A text verse will also give the authority of the Word of God to your message. It shows that you are not just preaching your own opinions or the ideas of men. I once knew an evangelist who always started his sermons by giving a vocabulary word and then defining it.

He never started his sermons with a scripture. Yet a preacher should declare God’s word, not just give an English lesson. Also, the Word of God should be our authority when we preach, not Webster’s dictionary!

Reading a text verse is also preparing a good foundation on which you can build the message. Your message will not wander away from your main idea or theme if you repeatedly quote the scripture during your message. It will be like hitting a nail on its head again and again. Each time you can drive it deeper and deeper into the minds and hearts of the listeners.

When you are preparing to read your text, read the reference clearly, pause, and read the reference again. Give your listeners time to find it in their own Bibles before you read it. Read the text slowly, clearly, and with emphasis. Practice reading it before the service, especially if there are any difficult names or words in it.

Along with a title and text, it is important to quickly present something interesting to the people in the introduction to gain their attention. *Vary your introductions* so the people do not become bored with hearing the same presentation again and again. Some ways that you can gain the attention of the people can include any of the following:

- **Recent Happenings.** Refer to anything that happened earlier in the service that helps confirm that God is already speaking about what you are going to preach on. This confirmation could be a prophecy that was given earlier in the worship service that coincides with the message you have prepared. If there was a clear theme in the song service that corresponds to your sermon, then that could be a confirmation from the Lord too.

Perhaps a testimony or scripture reading was given before you preached, that strengthens your message. Point out these confirmations to the people, so that they will realize that God is clearly speaking a message that they should listen to.

- **A short story.** A short story can also quickly gain the interest of the people. People of any age like to hear a good story told to them! I have heard pastors who often start their Sunday morning sermon by beginning with a story for children. They gather the children around them up front and tell them a simple but interesting story before sending them off to Sunday school classes. Then they use that story as an introduction to the sermon's message.

- **Special Occasions.** If the day or the occasion you are preaching on has a special significance, making reference to it can quickly interest the people. Perhaps it is a holiday such as Christmas or Mother's Day. If you are preaching for a wedding, funeral, or a celebration, then all the people will be interested in a message that is connected with that occasion. If you are in a farming community you could refer to the season if it is planting or harvesting time, or you can mention some important news, if any of these things can be relevant to the message you will preach.

- **Related testimonies.** You can show the people how the message is important for them. People are always interested in hearing something that can help them to have a better, more fulfilled life. Show the people how the message can be of practical value to them. A testimony of how someone's life was helped by the same truths that you will now share will interest everyone who has that same need or desire in their own life.

- **Visual Aids.** Your introduction can have added impact if you add visual aids. An object or action can help illustrate the sermon's message. A picture or diagram could attract the congregation's attention and quickly help make the subject of the message clear.

Never apologize for your message when you begin! If you tell the people that the message is not very good, they will believe you and not expect to receive much. Some examples of this are if the preacher says, "I was too busy to prepare," or "I have not spoken very many times," or "I lost my sermon notes," or "I have been discouraged but I will try to preach anyhow." Do not apologize for your message, even if you had many difficulties in getting ready and you do not feel prepared. People are hungry to hear from God, and the Lord is able to minister to them above our own level of ability. When you stand at the pulpit, call on the Lord in your heart, and ask Him to meet the needs of the people.

It is also important to keep the introduction short. Gain the attention of the people, and tell them what direction the message is going. Then, start the main body of the message. An introduction should be less than 10% of the total length of the message. For an average sermon this would be three to five minutes long. Do not add all the possible ingredients to an introduction that are discussed in these notes. A bare minimum in an introduction would be 4 things: announce the title, read a text, present the main idea

or theme, and mention something interesting to gain their attention. If you also want to begin your message with prayer, it is best to pray either before or at the end of the introduction.

Summary of the Introduction

- Introductions define what your message will be and what will follow.
- A good introduction creates interest and curiosity.
- Introductions include a catchy title, and scripture text.
- Vary your introductions to gain the attention of your audience.
- Use some of the following:
 - Recent happenings
 - A short story
 - Special occasions
 - Testimonials of how people were helped and changed
 - Visual aids to help illustrate the message
- Do not apologize for your message.
- Keep your introduction short, concise, and interesting.

Chapter 7

THE MAIN BODY

In the main body of your sermon you want to share the content of your message. This is the time to feed them all the important spiritual food of the message. You could say that the introduction is like the *appetizer* in a big banquet, and the conclusion is like the *dessert*, but the main body of the sermon is like *the main course* of the meal. Just like a meal, it must be arranged and presented properly in order to be appetizing. If the meal is all blended or mashed together, the food would be just as nutritional, but it probably will not be eaten!

In the main body you will need to *explain* your subject. After stating the subject in the introduction you must now go on to enlarge upon it and explain it thoroughly. Show the people what the Bible says about the subject. Illustrate it and make the message clear to all the people.

As you explain your subject you should be seeking to *prove* or substantiate its truth to the people. We do not want to give them another opinion or option about something, but rather get them to believe what the Scriptures declare. As the Apostle Paul said in 2 Corinthians 5:11, “We persuade men.”

While we explain and prove our subject we also want to *apply*

the message to be practical. How will following this message change the lives of those who are listening? People are interested in hearing something that will be practical and profitable for them.

As you present your facts and reasoning, you want your listeners to be able to clearly understand the message. Making an outline of what you will preach is the most effective preparation to help you keep your thoughts in order. By writing an outline down on paper you can remember all the important information and scriptures that you want to share.

Preparing a sermon outline can be similar to drawing a plan or blueprint for a house. If you want to build a large, strong house, then careful planning will be needed beforehand. Proverbs 24:3-4 tells us, “Through wisdom a house is built, and by understanding it is established; by knowledge the rooms are filled with all precious and pleasant riches.” Yet to prepare and develop a sermon outline, we also will need wisdom, understanding, and knowledge.

Wisdom is needed to first choose our basic plan or theme. Understanding the subject we are going to preach about will then enable us to place the proper points or sections in the outline. Then we will need knowledge to fill in the sermon outline with scriptures, facts, and illustrations, just as a person fills the rooms of his house with useful and beautiful things to make it a comfort-

able place to live.

Therefore, in this chapter our objective is to gain an understanding of how we can organize a good structure or outline for the message we deliver to the people. If a farmer goes out to his fields and throws his tomato, bean, watermelon, and lettuce seeds all on the same piece of ground without any order or preparation, he will have a very poor harvest!

Isaiah 28:23-29 tells us that it is God who teaches the farmer how to organize a productive farm, and likewise we need God to teach us how to prepare a fruitful sermon.

ORGANIZING THE OUTLINE

As you organize the ideas of your message, you need to use a consistent pattern of how to make an outline. If you are sharing a short and simple message, perhaps you will merely put 3 or 4 numbers on your paper and list your important thoughts and scriptures. But when you organize a fuller message you may have many scriptures and thoughts that you want to put into a clear and logical order.

You will need to know how to organize your thoughts into different groupings and levels of importance. To help you to know how to do this, we will share the following standard pattern of outlining that is used throughout the world:

TITLE OF THE MESSAGE

I. MAIN POINT

- A. Subpoint
- B. Subpoint
 - 1. Sub-subpoint
 - 2. Sub-subpoint
- C. Subpoint
 - 1. Sub-subpoint
 - 2. Sub-subpoint
 - a. sub-sub-subpoint
 - b. sub-sub-subpoint

II. MAIN POINT

- A. Subpoint
 - 1. Sub-subpoint
 - 2. Sub-subpoint
- B. Subpoint
- C. Subpoint

III. MAIN POINT

- A. Subpoint
- B. Subpoint
 - 1. Sub-subpoint
 - 2. Sub-subpoint
 - a. sub-sub-subpoint
 - b. sub-sub-subpoint

Depending upon the flow of your ideas you will have a different number of main points and lesser points. But the order to the outline is that the most important ideas are on the far left. These are first the Roman numerals I, II, III, and so on.

The next most important ideas (which support the main points) are listed as capital letters (A, B, C...). The less important ideas under them are progressively listed farther and farther to the right. Each of these lesser points should serve the greater point which is over them and to their left.

The title, text, introduction, and conclusion are not included as numbers or letters in the outline. You will need to put them in your sermon notes in their appropriate places before or after your main body. However, they are not listed among the numbers or letters that are used to organize only the main body of your sermon into a logical outline form.

We will now illustrate how this method of organizing an outline is to work. The following is an outline of how the ministries in a large church might all work together in their various groupings and levels of authority. We could say that the Senior Pastor is the main organizer of the church, just like the Main Title of the sermon organizes the entire message. Then let us suppose our large church has four departments led by four Associate Pastors. Under their authority are the other church workers. Here is our outline:

THE SENIOR PASTOR

(like the Title, he directs everything)

I. The Youth Pastor

- A. Friday night youth activity leader
- B. Sunday afternoon youth activity leader

II. The Pastor of Education

- A. The Sunday School Director
 - 1. 3-5 year old class
 - 2. 6-8 year old class
 - 3. 9-12 year old class
 - 4. 13-15 year old class
- B. The Midweek Bible Study Organizer
 - 1. Bible Study Leader #1- west side of city
 - 2. Bible Study Leader #2- east side of city
 - 3. Bible Study Leader #3- south side of city

III. The Music Pastor

- A. Choir Director
- B. Music Group Leader
 - 1. Piano player
 - 2. Main Keyboard player
 - a. backup keyboard player
 - b. other backup player
 - 3. Guitarist
- C. Song leaders
 - 1. Brother A
 - 2. Brother B
 - 3. Brother C

IV. The Pastor of Administration

- A. Secretary
- B. Treasurer
- C. Janitor

We are not suggesting that this is how a church should be best organized. We are simply using this example to show how an outline can organize something into proper groups and levels of authority. In a similar way you must be able to write down an effective sermon outline. It should organize the thoughts that you will preach into their proper groupings and levels of importance.

When you preach you will not tell your listeners all the numbers and letters of the points and subpoints of your outline. Perhaps you would number the main points and mention them as points, steps, or keys to help them to understand the most basic organization of the message. Later in the message you could number for them the subpoints in one section, if you think they are important for your listeners to remember or write down. However, you would not refer to them as “subpoints” or “sub- subpoints” because that is not normal language that we use daily.

While the outline helps you to organize your thoughts into a clear and logical order, you will not explain all of your outline to the people. An outline is to be like a skeleton that holds something together.

We need skeletons to maintain order, movement, and life. However, a skeleton is not something that should be outwardly seen. You will use an outline to organize a skeleton for your message, but then you must put meat on the bones

and more fully develop the message before you present it to the people.

SEVEN TYPES OF SERMON OUTLINES

There are seven types of outlines that can help us organize the basic structure of our message. Let us now study them, and gain wisdom through which we can organize effective sermons.

1. THE DIAMOND OUTLINE

A diamond outline is where you look at the subject you are preaching about from a number of different sides or perspectives. A diamond is a multi-faceted gemstone which can reflect light from each of its many different sides. There is no special order needed in viewing it. Each side gives you a different glimpse of the diamond's beauty. In a similar way, some subjects can be looked at from different angles, with no special order needed to the viewing. Each view or perspective will show a different beauty, truth, or flash of light to the subject you will preach about. Let us look at some examples of this now.

A person could preach a sermon entitled "Three Reasons to Praise the Lord." Then for these three main points, he could explain that praising the Lord can bring strength, deliverance, and cleansing. You could organize these three points as: 1. Strength, 2. Deliverance, and 3. Cleansing. However, you could

just as wisely put them in the order of: 1. Deliverance, 2. Strength, and 3. Cleansing; or in the order of: 1. Cleansing, 2. Deliverance, and 3. Strength. Each of these three points could be shared in any order, inasmuch as none of them has to follow and build on top of the other. They are all part of the same truth (praising the Lord) but they are each like the separate sides of a diamond that can be observed in any order.

A scriptural example of what we call the “diamond outline” can be seen in Psalm 107. This Psalm contains six sections, with each showing us a different way that God often works with men. We could preach this chapter and entitle it, “Six Ways God Deals with Men.”

In the first section (verses 4-9) we can see how God deals with the wanderer to seek to bring him into a church fellowship. The second section (verses 10-16) is about the backslider in his bondage, and the third section (verses 17-22) is about the fool who became sick.

Then in the fourth section (verses 23-32) we see how God deals with the traveler or the missionary, the fifth section (verses 33-38) with the unreached for church planting, and the sixth section (verses 39-42) with the poor. Now each of these sections is related to the theme “Six Ways God Deals With Men,” but each section is different from each other. Each is like a separate facet on a diamond, that gives its own light. They could have been

arranged in any order by the Psalmist, without any loss of instruction or light.

Here are some other examples of how the writers of the Bible often used the diamond outline when they explained truth. Please study them now: Aspects of Love (1 Cor. 13:4-7); The Works of the Flesh (Gal. 5:19-21); Ways to Praise the Lord (Psalm 150); The Greatness of God's Wisdom (Job 38-39); and Warnings to Religious Hypocrites (Mt. 23:13-33).

2. THE LADDER OUTLINE

When we looked at the diamond outline we saw that the order to the sections was not important as long as they all followed the same theme. Yet in the ladder outline, order is important. Each point or step builds on the one before it. To bring the people to a certain conclusion, you must logically lead them through a series of ordered steps.

For example, this is how a salvation message is usually preached. You start with laying the foundation that all men have sinned as your first point. Then for the second point you may want to say that because of this, everyone is in danger of the judgment of God. Third, you would then tell the people to come to Christ to be saved from God's judgment. As a fourth and final point, you could tell them how they can receive Christ and be saved, and then lead them to a salvation prayer. Each of these points is in a

logical order, and must be presented in this way as a ladder outline, not a diamond outline. The success of your salvation message will largely be determined by how well you can lead the people, step by step, to arrive at the conclusion that they should immediately receive Christ. The following are some Biblical examples of the ladder outline for you to study:

*** Three Steps To Maturity, 1 John 2:12-14.** 1) Little Children, 2) Young Men, 3) Fathers

*** Seven Steps to Christian Perfection, 2 Peter 1:5-7.**

Add to your faith:

- 1) Virtue
- 2) Knowledge,
- 3) Self-Control
- 4) Perseverance
- 5) Godliness
- 6) Brotherly Love
- 7) “Agape” Love

*** God’s Plan for the Redeemed, Ephesians 2:1-7.**

- 1) Past Condition: Dead in Sin, vs.1-3
- 2) Present Condition: Saved and Raised With Christ, vs.4-6
- 3) Future Condition: Blessed for the Ages to Come, v.7

*** Our Assurance of Glory, Romans 8:29-30.**

- 1) Foreknown
- 2) Predestined
- 3) Called
- 4) Justified
- 5) Glorified

*** The Book of Habakkuk**

- 1) Chapter 1 - Sighing
- 2) Chapter 2 - Seeing
- 3) Chapter 3 - Singing

3. THE CONTRAST OUTLINE

Another way you can organize your message is by using a *contrast outline*. This is where you compare two (or more) opposites in your message. By comparing these opposites the people will learn the truth or lesson that you are seeking to teach.

Some examples are: The Spiritual and the Carnal Christian (Abraham vs Lot); Unbelief and Faith (The 10 Spies vs Joshua/Caleb); and The Righteous and the Ungodly (Psalm 1). We can also consider how the most basic organization of the Bible is a contrast outline—the Old and New Testaments! Christ often used contrasts in His preaching such as The Rich Man and Lazarus (Lk. 16:19-31); A Man with Two Sons (Mt. 21:28-31); and also Two Roads, Two Trees, and Two Houses (Mt. 7:13-27). We can see an example in Ecclesiastes 3:1-8 of a message in the

Bible that combines a diamond and a contrast outline at the same time. Each subject is unrelated (born / die), (weep / laugh), (kill / heal), (gain / lose) like a diamond outline, but each subject contains a contrast.

4. THE BIBLE STORY (or Expository) OUTLINE

This type of outline is where you go step by step through the verses of a story, chapter, or book of the Bible. You seek to bring out the message of the scripture by reading and explaining it. Here are three expository outlines:

1. The Lord's Prayer, Matthew 6:9-13

- a) Verse 9, "Pray in this manner" - The Lord's prayer is a pattern of how we can learn to pray. If we learn how to pray the 6 themes taught in it, for 10 minutes each, we will have learned how to pray for an hour (Mt. 23:23).
- b) Theme #1 - Drawing Near to God (Our Father in heaven, hallowed be thy name) Is. 66:1-2.
- c) Theme #2 - Establishing God's Kingdom: Spiritual Warfare (Thy kingdom come ...) Lk. 12:32, Eph. 6:12-18.
- d) Theme #3 - Receiving God's Provision (Give us to day our daily bread) Mt. 6:33, Phil. 4:19.
- e) Theme #4- Receiving and Giving Forgiveness (And forgive us...) 1 Jn. 1:9, Mt. 18:21-35.
- f) Theme #5- Overcoming the World, the Flesh, and the

Devil (And do not lead us into temptation...)

Mt. 26:41, 1 Cor.10:13, Jas. 4:6-10.

- g) Theme # 6- Praising God (For Thine is the kingdom...)
Praise will strengthen our faith (Rom. 4:20) and
balance our times of sorrow in prayer (Neh. 8:9-10).

2. Title: The Presence of Christ (from the story of Jesus walking on the water, Mt. 14:22-33).

- a) The Presence of Christ Far Away, Mt. 14:22-24. But He is praying for us, Heb. 4:14, 7:25
- b) The Presence of Christ Feared, Mt.14:25-26. We do not always recognize how the Lord comes to help us in our trials, 2 Cor. 12:8-9.
- c) The Presence of Christ Trusted, Mt.14:27-29. The Lord wants to give us a miracle in our stormy trial, a supernatural walk, Gal. 5:16.
- d) The Presence of Christ Forgotten, Mt. 23:23. We must walk by faith, not by sight, 2 Cor.5:7, Heb.12:2, Phil.1:6.
- e) The Presence of Christ Secured, Mt.14:31-33. We can trust the Lord, He is faithful, Ps.37:23. We will meet Him in new ways as we go through the storms of life, Mt.14:33.

3. Sit, Walk, & Stand: the Book of Ephesians

- a) Sit, Eph. 1:1-3:21. We sit in the finished work of Christ.
- b) Walk, Eph. 4:1-6:9. We walk in the new life given us.

- c) Stand, Eph. 6:12-18. We stand in Christ's victory against the devil.

5. THE ANALOGY OUTLINE

In this type of outline a Bible story or truth is looked at, and then given a spiritual interpretation (see 1 Cor.15:46). This is to not reject or minimize the importance of the plain, literal story; but sometimes you can add a spiritual or prophetic meaning. The Apostle Paul often did this, as we can see in Galatians 4:21-31, 2 Corinthians 3:6-18, Romans 7:1-6, and Hebrews 12:18-24. The following are two examples of the analogy outline:

1. The 2 Miraculous Catches of Fish, Luke 5:3-10, John 21:2-11. A spiritual interpretation:

- a) The 2 catches of fish by Peter and the disciples are prophetic of the ministry of Peter, Mk. 1:17.
- b) After the first miraculous catch in Lk. 5, Peter left his fishing to become a minister, Lk. 5:10.
- c) In Lk. 5:6 the net began to break. The weak net signified the weakness of Peter's original ministry, which failed when he denied the Lord, Mt. 26:69-75.
- d) Peter went back to fishing, in Jn. 21:3. Peter left his ministry, but God did not bless it, Jn.15:5, Heb.10:38.
- e) Peter was not at first fully clothed, both naturally and spiritually, Jn. 21:7, Is. 35:8.
- f) Jn. 21:15-17 - After Christ tested him 3 times (just as

Peter had denied Christ 3 times), Peter was restored to his ministry.

- g) Jn. 21:7 - Peter brought the net which was unbroken this time. This signified that his ministry would not break again, just as Christ prophesied that Peter would become faithful to death in John 21:18.

MORAL: If you have failed the Lord, He can forgive you, change you, recommission you, and cause you to become a faithful servant of God.

2. The Good Samaritan, Luke 10:29-37. A spiritual interpretation:

- a) The man going from Jerusalem down to Jericho was backsliding - Jerusalem was the holy city, while Jericho was cursed, Josh. 6:26. The road went sharply down in elevation. Falling into sin leads you straight down.
- b) As he was backsliding, he was overcome by the thief, the devil, Jn.10:10. He was stripped of his clothes (or righteousness, Rev. 19:8) and left half dead (in trespasses and sin, Eph. 2:1).
- c) The priest and Levite, examples of heartless religion, would not help him.
- d) The Samaritan was like Jesus (Jn. 8:48): despised (Is. 53:3) but compassionate (Lk. 19:10). He rescued the man, helping him with oil (a type of the Holy Spirit) and wine

(a type of joy). He brought him to an inn (church) and paid the innkeeper (a pastor) to help him until he was restored, and said that if the innkeeper deserved more payment, it would be given him when the Samaritan returned (the second coming of Christ).

MORAL: We need the compassion of Jesus, to help the backslidden. We can be rewarded for our efforts both now and at the Second Coming of Christ.

6. THE QUESTION AND ANSWER OUTLINE

In this type of outline, a question or problem (or several of them) is asked and then answered. This kind of format or outline is sometimes used by newspaper columnists and politicians as well as in the Bible. The following are some examples of how it is used in the Bible:

1. Isaiah 33:14-17 - Title: How To Dwell With a Holy God

- a) Is. 33:14, Heb. 12:29 - How can we dwell with a holy God?
- b) Is. 33:15 - Seven ways we should be holy
- c) Is. 33:16,17 - Six blessings we will be given

2. Psalm 15 and 24 are both Psalms that ask a question and then answer a question.

3. Malachi 1:2, 1:7, 2:17, 3:8, and 3:18 show us the outline of the book as a series of questions and answers.

4. First Corinthians chapters 7-16 are the Apostle Paul's answers to a list of questions written to him by the Church of Corinth.

7. THE SEARCH OUTLINE

In this type of outline, various possibilities are considered (and rejected) until the right answer is found. This is not used as commonly as some of the other outlines, but it can be useful to keep the attention of the people.

Someone giving a testimony of how they became saved will often use a search outline (but make sure the testimony glorifies Christ and does not concentrate on the sins of the former life). We can consider these Biblical examples:

1. Micah searched for the answer to, "How can I please the Lord?" in Micah 6:6-8

2. Job chapter 28 is about searching for (and finding) wisdom.

3. Psalms 139:7-12 seeks to find the answer to the question, "Where shall I go from thy presence?"

It is posed as a question to show that God will “never leave you or forsake you” (see Joshua 1:5).

Summary

- 1. The Diamond Outline** - looking at a multi-faced gem or truth from several perspectives.
- 2. The Ladder Outline** - each point or step builds on the one before it to come to a solid conclusion.
- 3. The Contrast Outline** - comparing two or more opposites in your message for instruction.
- 4. The Expository Outline** - going step by step through the verses of a story, chapter, or Bible book.
- 5. The Analogy Outline** - drawing a spiritual application from a natural Bible account.
- 6. The Question/Answer Outline** - a question is posed in scripture, and then answered by scripture.
- 7. The Search Outline** - various possibilities are considered/rejected until the right answer is found.

Chapter 8

ABOUT ILLUSTRATIONS

THREE REASONS TO USE ILLUSTRATIONS

Illustrations are an important part of a good sermon. They often make the difference between an interesting and a dull sermon. You should use at least one illustration for every major point of your message. They can also effectively be used in the introduction and conclusion of your message. The following three reasons help us to see their importance:

- First, an illustration can get the people's attention. It is like bait on a fish hook! Our Lord Jesus filled His messages with illustrations, stories, and parables that captured the imagination of those who were listening. Many of those who listened to the Master were not scholars who could concentrate on a long theological discourse—and many of our listeners are not either.
- Second, an illustration can demonstrate practical application. You can show the people how the message can help them. A personal testimony, an example from history, or a Bible story could each show your listeners certain practical results. Most people are not interested in listening to impractical theories, but if you demonstrate how your message works and helps lives, then those who hear you will want it also!

- Third, illustrations help the people to remember your lesson. The saying “a picture is worth a thousand words” is a saying that is known throughout the world. Many scientific studies have observed how a large percentage of what we learn is by what we see, not just by what we hear. One study claimed that we remember 10 percent of what we hear and 90 percent of what we see. That is remarkable.

I remember a sermon that began with the speaker comparing two flashlight batteries. One was charged, and could give much light; while the other battery was drained and had no practical use. He then said that Christians can be like either of those two batteries, either full of power or dead and useless.

Then the preacher tossed the dead battery over his shoulder to throw it away as useless. It served as a warning that we do not want to have a powerless Christian life and then be discarded. That introduced a message I have remembered for many years.

Another message I have remembered for twenty years was about the judgment seat of Christ. The main thing that has made that message stick in my memory was the visual illustration that the preacher used. He held up two ears of corn wrapped in their husks. They looked exactly the same on the outside. He compared them with how many Christians look exactly the same on the outside, until the day of judgment reveals what their lives were really like.

Then he stripped the leaves away and took the corn out of one husk to reveal a good fruitful ear of corn, bursting full of yellow kernels of corn. Then as he stripped away the next husk, we saw an ugly, rotten ear of corn, with mold and worms inside! It had only a few kernels of yellow corn. The message had lasting impact on all of us because of the well-chosen objects he used to illustrate the sermon.

TYPES OF ILLUSTRATIONS

In these examples of the two batteries and the two ears of corn, the illustrations were visual objects. Many Bible preachers and prophets used objects to illustrate their messages. Jeremiah used a yoke, Ezekiel made a model of the siege of Jerusalem, and Agabus used the belt of the Apostle Paul. Our Lord, the Master Preacher, used objects to illustrate His messages.

One time in Mark 9:35-37, He set a child down in the midst of His disciples to be an illustration of how we should be the servants of everyone. Another time He called for a coin to reveal God's wisdom about paying taxes in Luke 20:21-26. On another occasion, He used the miraculous illustration of telling the lame man to get up, take his bedding, and go home, to show that He had the power to forgive sin (Mt. 9:2-8).

An acted out illustration can also add meaning to the message you preach. Hand movements, walking, carrying an imaginary

burden, and many other gestures and actions can reinforce your verbal message and can help keep the attention of the people. I can still remember how a street preacher would get the attention of the people before he would preach in the market place. He would sneak up to a big hat that had been placed on the ground. When he lifted up the side of the hat just a little, he would jump back and say, “It’s alive!” He would continue to do this several times, saying “It’s alive!” louder and louder and getting the attention of more and more people.

Everyone would look and wonder, “What is under that hat? An animal, or what?” Then the man would sneak up to the hat for one final time. He would quickly pull out a Bible from under the hat, and while holding up the Bible he would say “It’s alive!” and then begin to preach about the power of God’s Word.

A written or drawn illustration can also help the people to focus in on your topic better. A picture, something written on a blackboard, or something shown on an overhead projector can help show the meaning of your message.

Charts, graphs, and pictures are often used by businessmen when they are making a presentation, because they produce results. Even the Lord used this form of illustration when He caused the mysterious words to be written on the wall during Belshazzar’s feast, in Daniel chapter five.

However, the majority of the illustrations we will use when we preach will be verbal illustrations. A story or spoken illustration can sink into the thoughts of the people as effectively as David's stone sank into the forehead of Goliath! The parables that Jesus continually used explain spiritual truths in a simple way that can help reveal truth to people of every culture and educational background.

A form of verbal illustration that can sometimes be very useful is called an acrostic. If you make an acrostic out of the points of an outline, the people can much more easily remember it. Most people can easily remember a three point outline, but fewer people will remember a four, five, or six point outline. If you can construct a meaningful word out the first letter of the first word of each point, most people will retain more of the message. Most of us have heard and remember a simple way to have J O Y. This is by having Jesus first, Others next, and Yourself last! This is an acrostic. It can help illustrate the message and make remembering it easier.

SOURCES OF ILLUSTRATIONS

Illustrations are very important, but it can become difficult for the person who preaches regularly to always come up with new ones. Always be looking for fresh illustrations that can be used in your preaching. When you find one, write it down. You might remember it in your memory to be able to use it within the next

week or so, but then you would probably forget it. However, if you write a good illustration down, you keep it and can use it several times in future years. Keep a good story to use again.

The Bible should be a main source of our illustrations. You can always find a Bible story that illustrates the truth you are speaking about. Read through the Old Testament, and know all of the stories there. As the Apostle Paul said in 1 Corinthians 10:11, “Now all these things happened to them as examples, and they were written for our admonition.” Our Lord Jesus often referred to Old Testament stories such as Nineveh’s repentance, the Queen of Sheba’s visit to Jerusalem, Lot’s wife, Solomon in all of his glory, Jonah in the belly of the great fish, and others.

Nature and science are full of useful illustrations. Solomon was a preacher anointed with the spirit of wisdom who could discern spiritual truths in all the works of God’s creation. First Kings 4:33 shows his understanding of nature: “Also he spoke of trees, from the cedar tree of Lebanon even to the hyssop that springs out of the wall; he spoke also of animals, of birds, of creeping things, and of fish.”

If you are preaching about the danger of sin, you could illustrate your message with a story about quicksand, the spider web, or the bite of a snake. If you are explaining the Trinity, you could use the example of how water can be in three forms.

Another good source of illustrations is *history*. As the saying goes, “History repeats itself,” so if we know history well then we can find a wealth of relevant stories and examples. Having a knowledge about natural wars can be very useful in explaining spiritual warfare. Read a book about *athletic events* and see what lessons you can learn about running the Christian race.

Read a biography, perhaps about a famous Christian or a world leader like Napoleon, Winston Churchill, or Mahatma Gandhi. Always be searching for spiritual truths that can be gleaned from the pages of history. The story about General McArthur’s promise of “I will return” and how he fulfilled it could illustrate a message about the Second Coming of Christ.

Jesus told a parable in Luke 19 about a nobleman who went into a far country to receive his kingdom, but then his subjects sent a message of protest. Those who heard Jesus preach this story in Jericho would relate it to a historical event. Herod the Great had previously given Jericho and all Judea to become the inheritance of his son, Archelaus. When he went to Rome to receive his kingdom, many people in Judea sent a petition to Caesar against him to try to stop his appointment. Jesus chose to make a story that would come alive to them because of this historical event which all the people still remembered.

Current news can also be used for illustrations. Jesus used this to sharpen his message in Luke 13:1-5, when he used two re-

cent calamities to illustrate the reality of judgment. Another possible example from Christ's ministry could have been when He spoke the parable of the Good Samaritan. The road from Jerusalem to Jericho was called "the bloody way" because of the frequent robberies that took place on it, and perhaps a new violent robbery paved the way for Jesus to tell the story of the Good Samaritan.

Personal experiences can always be a powerful source of illustrations. Explain how your subject matter has worked in someone's life! The Apostle Paul often mentioned his own conversion as a powerful example of God's works. Many victories of faith and testimonies of every type of Christian experience are waiting for the preacher to discover and share from the lives of both famous and unknown Christians.

Fictional writing can also offer many good stories. You can take them from famous literature such as one of Aesop's fables, or a useful folk tale, or a popular book. Sometimes you can "invent" your own story to illustrate your message.

There are also many books available which are collections of useful illustrations for sermons. Your local Christian bookstore may have several of these available. Make sure that the illustrations are relevant and fresh before you use them.

SOME CAUTIONS

When you use an illustration, make sure it is relevant to the point you are making. You want it to “hit the nail on its head” to drive the truth deeper. If you are clumsy with applying an illustration, it can be as distracting as hitting your fingers with the hammer instead of the nail!

If you feel that you have one particularly powerful illustration, share it near the end of your message. It can be used like the “knockout punch” that a boxer uses to win the fight. Use it to help make a strong climax to the end of your message, so that the people will be motivated to make a decision and respond at the close of the sermon.

Finally, do not make your illustrations too elaborate. In this case they can take too much time away from the rest of the sermon, and can sidetrack the people’s attention. Leave room for the people to do some of their own imagining. Our Lord often made his stories very short so that His listeners could think them out and gain their own truths and wisdom.

Summary of Illustrations

- Illustrations capture the attention of people.
- Illustrations should be simple and relevant to life—they should show them how to live and be blessed.
- Illustrations and object lessons help people remember your

lesson.

- The Bible is filled with illustrations from the prophets and Christ Himself.
- Something seen is often remembered more than something heard.
- We should draw most of our illustrations from the Bible.
- Nature and science are filled with useful lessons.
- History and athletic events make good teaching tools.
- Current news can make useful illustrations.
- Personal experiences of victories of faith and answered prayer are very helpful.
- Fictional writing and stories are sources for good illustrations.
- Make sure your illustration is relevant to your message or it will distract from the main theme.
- Save your best illustration for the end of your message so the people will be motivated to respond.
- Do not be too elaborate in your illustrations.
- Leave room for the people to do their own imagining.

Chapter 9

WHILE YOU ARE PREACHING

EXALT CHRIST

The most important thing you must seek to do while you are preaching is to exalt Christ and lead the people closer to Him. The need of every Christian is to get closer to God. I can remember standing behind a pulpit that had a scripture printed inside it for the preacher to continually see. It was the request of the Greeks in John 12:21, where it says, “*Sir, we would see Jesus.*” When we preach it should always be in our mind and heart, that our mission is to bring the people closer to Christ—the believers as well as the unbelievers!

We should endeavor to show our listeners how Christ is the answer to their every need. He can save, deliver, heal, and sanctify. Preach that all we need is found in Christ (Col. 2:10; Heb. 13:8). Show how Christ should be our guide and example (Prov. 3:6, Ps. 16:8). When you preach about a difficulty, show how Christ faced the same situation yet overcame it (Heb. 4:15; Rev. 3:21). Instill into the minds and hearts of the congregation that when they face a decision they should ask, “Lord, what would You do?”

From whatever scriptures you preach, show how the Bible con-

tinually points to Christ. In John 5:39 our Lord said to the religious people of His day, “You search the scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life; and these are they which testify of Me.” We do not want to produce religious scribes and Pharisees through our preaching, but spiritual Christians. The scribes and Pharisees knew the Bible, but did not discern Christ in the Bible. Help your people to always see Christ in the scriptures.

Be careful not to exalt people when you preach (Mt. 23:6-12). Do not praise people in the congregation to seek to gain their favor. Don’t mention the names of important people you know, to show that you are important! Make sure that your clothes, jewelry, and appearance are not “flashy” or overly expensive to gain people’s admiration. “For we do not preach ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord...” That is our admonition from 2 Corinthians 4:5. Present Christ to the people, not yourself!

BE SENSITIVE TO THE ANOINTING OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

While we seek to exalt Christ, we must also seek to bring and maintain the anointing. The power of the Holy Spirit is what will minister remedy to the people as we preach. As our Lord Jesus said in John 6:63, “It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing. The words that I speak to you are spirit, and they are life.” Unless we preach the Word of God by the power and leading of the Holy Spirit there will be nothing eternal accom-

plished in the lives of our listeners. All our human abilities and talents can do nothing to meet the real needs of the people. A talented speaker who is like an actor, philosopher, or psychologist can sometimes fill a church. Yet the important question remains: is the eternal Church of Jesus Christ being built up by the preaching of the Word of God in the power of the Spirit? All the accomplishments of the flesh will only be like the grass that soon fades away, Is. 40:6-8. That which will accomplish an eternal work must be done “Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit,” Zech. 4:6.

The Apostle Paul reminded the Corinthian believers how he had been able to quickly start such a large church among them. In First Corinthians 2:1-5 he said about his preaching, “And I, brethren, when I came to you, did not come with excellence of speech or of wisdom declaring to you the testimony of God. For I determined not to know anything among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified. I was with you in weakness, in fear, and in much trembling. And my speech and my preaching were not with persuasive words of human wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, that your faith should not be in the wisdom of men but in the power of God.”

This is the kind of anointed preaching that we also need to have. We want to be able to say of our converts what Paul said of his in Second Corinthians 3:3-6: “You are our epistle

written in our hearts, known and read by all men; clearly you are an epistle of Christ, ministered by us, written not with ink but by the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of flesh, that is, of the heart. And we have such trust through Christ toward God. Not that we are sufficient of ourselves, but our sufficiency is from God, who also made us sufficient as ministers of the new covenant, not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.” Paul knew how important it was for the work of the Holy Spirit to be accomplished through his preaching. May we also experience the same anointing and results that Paul had when he preached!

Along with learning how to obtain the anointing, we must also be sensitive to the leading of the Holy Spirit. We need to look for the Holy Spirit to be our guide both when we are preparing our message, and while we are preaching it. In John 16:13-14 our Lord taught, “. . . When He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come. He will glorify Me, for He will take of what is Mine and declare it to you.” As we allow the Holy Spirit to lead us in the things we proclaim, we are allowing Him to perform His wonderful ministry in the lives of our listeners.

Another key that a preacher must learn is to stop preaching when the anointing has stopped. We must heed the warning of the

Apostle Paul in Galatians 3:3, “Are you so foolish? Having begun in the Spirit, are you now being made perfect by the flesh?” We need to be *prayed up* and have the anointing when we step up to the pulpit to begin our message. Then we need to be led of the Spirit as we preach. Finally, we must keep the anointing as we continue to speak. A message can sometimes start off with an anointing, but if the preacher is going off the subject, he may lose it!

If you feel that the anointing of the Holy Spirit is lifting from you as you are speaking, you must quickly seek for wisdom as to what you should do. One possibility is that you have begun to speak about something that the Holy Spirit does not want to speak about, so that He has been quenched or grieved and is departing. If you feel that is the situation, stop talking about the things that are causing the Holy Spirit to depart.

Even if you think your topic is interesting, or humorous, or appealing to the people, it is only what the Holy Spirit thinks of the message that is important! Perhaps you should return to the theme you had been speaking about earlier in the message when you sensed the anointing. Otherwise, you should quickly move on to the next point of your message if you feel that the Lord has a message in it that He still wants to speak to the people.

Another possibility is that the anointing is lifting because the

Lord has already spoken everything that He wanted to say in the message. Perhaps it has become time for the people to respond to the message with a time of prayer.

If you continue to speak your own words without the anointing and wisdom of the Spirit, you may dilute or even contaminate the message God has already spoken. Proverbs 30:5-6 tells us, “Every word of God is pure... *Do not add to His words*, lest He rebuke you, and you be found a liar.”

Because a preacher can be a channel of spiritual impartation while he speaks, it is also very important for you to keep pure attitudes in your heart. Bitterness, unbelief, and impurities in your heart can be imparted while you are preaching. These things can spiritually defile your listeners (Heb. 12:15).

I once knew a preacher who was secretly practicing immorality. That spirit of adultery was in his heart and in his thoughts as he would preach week after week. As a result, an evil anointing became imparted to many in the church and they also fell into the same sin. If you are going through a struggle against sin, make sure that you are in the victory before you step into the pulpit to preach. Make sure you are covered by the blood of Christ and are seeking righteousness, or else you may multiply a very grievous mixture throughout the congregation.

Consider also the twelve spies that Moses had sent out. Be-

cause ten of them returned to speak words of unbelief, it poisoned the entire congregation and they all missed God's best for their lives (see Numbers 13:32 - 14:4). This still happens to churches today and causes them to miss going on with God into the full plan and calling that the Lord had for them. They spend years going around in circles, just as the Israelites wandered and died in the wilderness. However, if you impart faith and righteousness as you preach week by week, you will be used by God to help raise up His victorious, glorious Church through your ministry. The preacher who learns to speak with the power and in the purity of the Holy Spirit will gain a great eternal reward for his labor!

BE SENSITIVE TO THE PEOPLE

While you are seeking to be sensitive to the Holy Spirit, you must also be sensitive to the people to whom you are speaking. As you receive a message from the heart and mind of God, you must be able to share and impart that message into the hearts and minds of the people. If you are not sensitive to either of these sides (the Lord and your listeners) then you will not be a clear channel through which God can reach the people. In that case you will either not receive much from the Lord to give, or you will have a lot from the Lord, but be unable to communicate it to your listeners!

When you are preaching it is important for you to consider what

type of audience you will speak to. Be sensitive to speak to them according to their educational, cultural, and spiritual background. Are you speaking to children or adults? Will they be uneducated people, or professionals? You will speak differently to the people depending on whether they are Christians or unbelievers, or whether they are young converts or pastors. The Apostle Paul said in First Corinthians 9:19-22 that when he ministered, he was careful to relate to the people according to their culture and ability. In the last verse of that passage he concluded by saying, "...to the weak I became as weak, that I might win the weak. I have become all things to all men, that I might by all means save some."

While you are endeavoring to speak on the level of the people, you must also be careful to hold their attention. A good message will have no results if the congregation is no longer listening to it! Keeping the concentration of the listeners can be especially difficult if you are speaking outdoors where the audience can easily wander away. The message must stay interesting to the people in order to hold their attention.

Many years ago when I was in Bible school, I heard some wise counsel from my own homiletics teacher. He said that if you can learn to hold the attention of the 12 and 13 year olds when you speak, you will be able to hold the attention of just about any kind of person. Then he gave some counsel for anyone who knows he is called to preach, but has not yet been given an

opportunity to begin to preach in a church. He suggested that they go to their pastor and offer to teach a Sunday school class to those who are about 12 to 13 years old. This ministry will be good practice that will help the beginning preacher to learn how to communicate with and hold the attention of his listeners. If this should be your situation, I would also pass this advice along to you. If you are only beginning to learn how to preach, do not wait for someone to give you their church pulpit. Get all the practice you can by learning how to hold the attention of a Sunday school class. This could greatly help you to become a good speaker.

Another way that we have to learn to be sensitive to the people, is to be sure not to speak beyond their attention span. Young children will not sit and listen beyond 5 to 10 minutes, while a trained adult congregation may listen for one hour. Some congregations are used to only having a 30 minute sermon (or less), and if you come in and speak to them for an hour, they might stop listening to you after their normal 30 minutes.

It is good for you to train your own Bible study students or your own church members to be attentive to a good, full message. Slowly stretch their ability to concentrate on the Word of God until they can listen to full sermons that will help them to grow strong in the Lord. Yet if you try to stretch the length of your messages far beyond the ability of the people to absorb them, you can suffer a negative reaction. The people might not want to

hear you preach again. They might dread going to the service at which you are scheduled to speak! How much better it is that you stop speaking while the people are still interested in what you are saying. Then they will be interested in returning to hear you preach again.

WAYS TO USE YOUR VOICE

The voice that God gave you is an indispensable tool for the preacher. Learn to use your voice well and protect your vocal cords. You want them to serve you well through a long and fruitful career of speaking.

When you speak, make sure you can be clearly understood by all the people. If not, perhaps you need to be louder. This can be done by speaking louder, or if you have a microphone you can get closer to the microphone or turn up the amplifier. Yet sometimes you do not need to be louder—the problem is that you need to be careful to speak more clearly. Pronounce your words better, and do not speak too quickly!

Make sure your voice is not too loud. People can have a hard time listening to a message if it seems that you are “yelling” at them all the time. Make sure the amplifier is not distorting, or sounding harsh or shrill. A good amplifier will make your voice sound just the same as your normal speech, only louder.

Do not speak monotone and drone on and on with the same boring pitch. Make your voice sound interesting! Use variety in your speech to reinforce the content of your message. You can slow down and speed up, speak softer and louder, and use higher and lower pitch.

Do not speak too fast. Some preachers can sound like a machine gun when they speak, but the people have no time to consider the message properly because the speaker has moved on too quickly to another thought. Pauses and repeating your words can add impact to what you say.

Avoid useless phrases and repetitions. Be careful not to always be saying “you know?” or “aaaah” or “right?” at the end of every thought. This can be very irritating and distracting. Once when one of my daughters was young, she listened to the message only to count how many times the preacher said “amen!” It is easy for a person to get into a bad habit of repeatedly saying the same phrase again and again. Someone who is nervous about speaking in front of people will be very prone to do this.

Yet once someone points it out to you, or once you notice it yourself, you must discipline yourself and remove this bad habit from your speaking. Ask a close relative or friend to remind you every time you repeat your distracting phrase in normal conversation. After a few days or weeks of working at it, you will be gaining an awareness of your bad speech habit, and will begin to

delete it from your daily speech.

Be very careful not to ruin your voice. A preacher must protect his voice, because it can become damaged and unusable. Shouting or using a hoarse voice can hurt your vocal cords. Using an amplifier can save your voice. If you are preaching outdoors, having a wall behind you can echo your voice and make it louder.

Preaching downwind when you are outdoors also helps to carry your voice farther. Have a glass of water available while you are speaking. Menthol cough drops can be helpful, but do not use very strong cough drops or medication that can numb your throat to all pain. You can permanently damage your voice if you use strong medication to stop all pain so that you can continue to preach while your vocal cords are damaged.

USING YOUR BODY PROPERLY

The ways that you use your body while you speak can either greatly help or hinder the delivery of your message. Learn to use your gestures or body actions effectively. If your actions correspond to the message, they can confirm and illustrate what you are saying. Nevertheless, if you excessively repeat the same action it will lose its effectiveness. In all that you do, remain dignified. Remember that you are standing up to preach as an ambassador for Christ, and an ambassador should carry himself as a worthy representative of the authority delegated to him.

Do not distract the people away from your message by having unusual or overly repeated mannerisms. It can be irritating to look at a speaker who is always scratching his nose, or fixing his hair, or swaying back and forth. Avoid meaningless motion. Let everything you do reinforce the message that you are speaking. The best kind of delivery is when your listeners do not notice it!

Keep good eye contact with the people. You should develop this ability until you can spend 85 to 90 percent of your speaking time looking at the congregation. Do not always be staring at your sermon notes. If you are nervous, look a little above the heads of the people in the back. Then the people will feel as if you are looking at them, while you do not need to look directly at any of them.

Remember, you are God's ambassador to them—be friendly, and relate to them through keeping eye contact. However, be careful to not continue to stare at anyone, or have a few people that you are always looking at. Using different facial expressions can also help communicate your message. Do not look like a statue, but on the other hand, do not look like a clown!

Hand movements can add impact if they are not excessively repeated (Acts 21:40). If you are offering something from God as you are speaking, you can stretch out your hands as if you are seeking to give it to them. If you are saying some-

thing very solemn, you could lift up one hand as if taking a vow (Dan. 12:7). If you are sharing a thought that is to have impact, you might strike your hands together or slap the pulpit. However, be very careful not to repeat the same action too often. Do not move your arms and hands around too much, as this will become distracting. If you do not know what to do with your hands, let them hold the pulpit and be still.

In all of your actions, learn to express the message in your own creative way. Learn from other people, but do not blindly copy or imitate someone. You will develop your own personal style as you mature. This will be more effective in expressing the ministry that God is giving to you than if you merely try to copy the style and ministry of someone else.

YOUR PREACHING SKILLS WILL DEVELOP THROUGH PRACTICE

All of these instructions may seem impossible for a beginning preacher to remember and practice. Start by learning how to control the following three basics: *speak clearly, avoid distracting actions, and establish eye contact with your listeners.*

As you preach more, your skills will develop. You will begin to feel more comfortable and controlled while speaking in front of people. The various instructions given in this chapter will be-

come easier and easier for you to use together, until you can feel like a skilled conductor who is comfortably directing a large orchestra.

END YOUR MESSAGE POSITIVELY

A good general rule to follow is to end your messages *positively*. Preaching the *gospel* literally means to preach the “good news!” We want to build faith and hope in the people’s hearts, not discouragement and condemnation. A prophecy about the ministry of our Lord Jesus in Isaiah 42:3 says, “A bruised reed He will not break, and smoking flax He will not quench...” This speaks of His tenderness and patience, and the fact that He will not destroy someone who is weak and failing.

In a similar way we need to seek to be able to lead the people through their difficulties and failures into the victory of Christ. Encourage the people that God can bring them through! Tell them that the blood of Jesus cleanses from all sin. Assure your listeners that He who began a good work in them will complete it as they continue to look to Him.

There are a few preachers who usually end their messages with harshness, warnings, and condemnation. There is a “glory” to preaching an unbalanced message of Old Testament legalism and condemnation. Your message can appear to be powerful and important. However, in Second Corinthians

3:6-11 we are told that this kind of preaching has a fading glory that is not to be compared to the glory of preaching the New Covenant. Yes, we need to proclaim holiness and rebuke sin, but the purpose of the law is to lead us to Christ (Gal. 3:24).

There are times when we should preach holiness, expose sin, and ask for repentance. Perhaps an occasional message will end with a serious air of warning. Yet go on to lead the people into the forgiveness, cleansing, and righteousness of Christ. The purpose of our ministry is to lead the people into the “promised land” of God’s kingdom of righteousness, peace and joy.

So do not lead the people halfway, and finish your preaching still in the Old Covenant message of condemnation for sin. If you leave the people there they may become like the Israelites who died in the wilderness, halfway to the promised land! (Heb. 8:7-12).

Chapter 10

THE CONCLUSION

The ending or conclusion of your message is the most important part. This is the part of the message that is to triumphantly finish the work. It is like the orchestra climaxing with a moving finale, or the fisherman finally grabbing the fish, or like the arrow striking deep into the intended target.

SIGNAL THE ENDING OF THE SERMON

When you have finished presenting the truths and arguments of the main body of your message, you should in some way give a signal to the people that you are beginning to conclude your message. You could say something such as “In conclusion...” or, “In closing...” or, “To summarize this morning’s message...” An action may tell the same thing to the people, such as closing your Bible, or looking at your watch, or perhaps motioning the musicians to return to their instruments. Then keep your conclusion short.

Do not say “In closing...” two or three times, or spend 15 minutes on your conclusion. The people will grow weary and restless. They may also begin to doubt the trustworthiness of what you are speaking, if you say that you are concluding but then you do not do it! A conclusion should usually take 10 percent or less

of the total time of your message.

By letting the people know that you are preparing to end your message, it will do several things. First, some of the people will be encouraged to know that they will not have to keep sitting for much longer! More importantly, the people will know that they have heard you finish your logic and ideas, and that now they must decide if they will agree with and act upon what you have spoken. Excitement and anticipation will arise because the time of decision and commitment has come.

Did the preacher have a message from God for them? Will they decide to become doers of the Word, and not just be hearers? What will they be asked to do to respond to the message? Will it be hard to do? Sometimes there is a price we have to pay, even as it is stated in Proverbs 23:23: “Buy the truth and sell it not.”

SUMMARIZE THE MESSAGE

State clearly and quickly the main content of the message. Do not repeat every idea that has been spoken, but reinforce the central idea you have been presenting. Like an arrowhead, make it sharp. Be careful not to introduce any new ideas at the end of your message. This would distract from the message you have been building up all along.

APPLY THE MESSAGE TO EACH PERSON'S HEART

The message we preach may start in the hearer's mind, but it should end in their heart. The conclusion of the sermon should be like the arrowhead that hits its target, as it penetrates into the heart of the listeners. Ask God to give you His heart on the subject that you have preached about, that you may in turn impart it into the hearts of your listeners. You might plead, exhort, warn, comfort, or encourage the people. The effectiveness of the message hinges upon whether you can earnestly convey the truth in a way that the person will be persuaded to believe and follow it.

An appropriate story or illustration that is emotionally moving may touch the people's hearts. A personal testimony of how the message worked in your life or family can also have great impact. However, be careful to not overdo it and repeat the same idea or words in your ending remarks. Repeating yourself too much in the conclusion can dissipate the message. Make sure that what you share is adding impact and reinforcement to your message.

LEAD THE PEOPLE TO A DECISION AND RESPONSE

When we preach, we want to have results. There are souls who

need to be saved, and Christians who need to grow! People may come to the service who are experiencing many types of trials, bondages and sin. It is our duty to help them through the preaching of the Word of God.

Yet for us to help them, they must make new decisions and have their lives changed by the grace and power of God. With wisdom from God, we can direct them to make those needed commitments and receive the grace of God to fulfill them.

The first thing the people must do after they have been persuaded by the truth, is that they must *determine* to obey the truth. As James 1:22 tells us, “But be doers of the Word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves.” We should encourage our listeners to make a *practical response* to the message.

This can seal the work of God in their lives that our preaching began in their hearts. Joshua sought to do this in the conclusion of his last sermon, when he spoke those famous words at the climax of his message, “...Choose you this day whom you will serve... But as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.” (Josh. 24:15).

When the people are ready to respond, you need to have an appropriate action you will suggest to them that will confirm their new commitment. The following are some *examples*:

- Invite the people to raise their hand, stand up, or come to the altar (Ex. 32:26).
- Have a time of prayer. You can pray, but also encourage each person to pray for themselves. Sometimes you can lead them in repeating a prayer after you.
- Have a time of worship. Sing a song that is appropriate to the theme of the sermon, perhaps a song of consecration.
- Invite people to confess their sin and ask forgiveness, perhaps to an individual or to the church.
- Conduct a communion service.
- Have the people perform a symbolic act as a testimony of their new commitment. They could sign a covenant, as was done in Nehemiah 9:38. Other scriptural possibilities are to have a “Jericho” march, shout a victory shout, or blow a trumpet (Josh. 6:15-16). Some modern ideas of symbolic acts can also be effective, such as burning a piece of paper, stamping your foot, or doing some other appropriate action.
- You can sometimes take up an offering if a special need was presented. However, in this case it is best if you as the preacher be the first to give generously, as an example to the flock!
- Invite the people to meet you somewhere to do something. It could be to go to a prayer meeting or be involved in a practical ministry to help someone.
- Some of the people could give a testimony about their new dedication. The public declaration can seal a commitment they have made in their heart.

- Invite the people to speak to a counselor, and perhaps have the counselors ready in a side room where the people are to go.
- Invite the people to make an appointment to see the pastor.

LET THE HOLY SPIRIT MOVE AFTER THE MESSAGE IS OVER

The Holy Spirit must work with the message that was spoken; to confirm, convict, impart, or seal the message in the hearts and lives of the people. Do not be quick to move the service on to another activity or to dismissal if the Holy Spirit desires to still move. Perhaps the gifts of the Spirit will begin to operate in the service if you continue to wait upon the Lord. Give the Holy Spirit the opportunity to continue the work begun by the preaching of the Word. Prayer, praise, and prophecy are three things that we can have at the end of a message that can help allow room for the Holy Spirit to continue to move.

IF YOU ARE NOT THE LEADER OF THE SERVICE

If you are not the leader of the service where you are the invited speaker, then you must also be submissive to the leadership of the service as well as to the Holy Spirit. The leadership may want to take control of the service at the end of the message. In that case you will not be able to lead the people into responding to the message. If this happens, just release

the leadership of the service back into their hands. If you feel that the Lord wants to do something further, perhaps you can privately whisper that to the leader who comes to take your place at the pulpit. Sometimes they may follow your suggestion, or may offer to let you continue to lead the service in that direction. At other times they may feel they have God's wisdom to go in another direction.

Occasionally the person who directs the service after you preach may entirely miss the leading of God. You may feel that the message could have had a greater impact if the ending was handled better. Yet if that is not your responsibility, then commit the situation to the Lord and quietly rest in Him. As long as you have fulfilled your responsibility as the preacher, you will have God's approval and blessing.

Often you will have the full trust of the leadership and they will give you the liberty to do whatever you feel led to do at the end of your preaching. In this situation, seek to be obedient to what the Lord may show you to do. Allow the message to become sealed in the hearts of your listeners as the Spirit of God moves in the direction of His choosing.

Learn to let the Lord use you, and your ministry will gain effectiveness. You will be building eternal results into the lives of your listeners as you also are gaining eternal rewards from the results of your ministry.

IN CLOSING

It is a most wonderful privilege to be called of God to declare His word. Yet as we prepare to become an ambassador of Christ, we will often sense our own inadequacy. Like Moses, we may say to the Lord, “send someone else!” However, First Corinthians 1:27-28 tells us, “... God has chosen the foolish things of the world to put to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to put to shame the things which are mighty; and the base things of the world and the things which are despised God has chosen, and the things which are not, to bring to nothing the things that are...”

If you are ever discouraged about becoming a skilled preacher, then you qualify for the most necessary ingredient of all - *the grace of God* that can cause you to fulfill the call of God upon your life! The Lord has chosen to reveal the treasures of His word through weak and ordinary vessels of clay so that the excellency of the power may be seen and known to be of God and not of us. All that the Master Potter requires of us is that we allow Him to change us and teach us. *Availability, not ability*, remains the most important factor in preparing a preacher.

Through the ages of time God still asks, “Whom shall I send, and who will go for Us?” The question today is, will you continue to offer yourself? Will you continue to pray, study, prepare, and learn to preach? You have completed reading this book, but

it is designed to only be a door that will open to you the beginnings of what you must grow into and become. Continue to give your life wholeheartedly to the Lord, and refer back to the teachings in this book again and again. May the Lord continue to raise you up to become a part of the great company of preachers that will preach His word throughout the world before the Second Coming of Christ!

“I charge you therefore before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, who will judge the living and the dead at His appearing and His kingdom: Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching.”

- 2 Timothy 4:1-2

APPENDIX

The following sermon outlines are *examples* to help show you how you can also prepare your own outlines. The illustrations I would use when these messages are preached have not been included.

1. The first is a *diamond outline*:
“Three Keys to Gain the Anointing”
2. The second is a *ladder outline* (with a contrast included):
“The Counterfeit Way, Truth, and the Life”
3. The third is a *contrast outline*:
“The Spiritual and the Carnal Christian”
4. The fourth is an *expository outline*:
“Solomon’s Last Sermon”
5. The fifth outline is an *analogy outline*:
“The River from the Temple”
6. The sixth outline - we want you to determine which one it is!
“The Star and the Scepter.”

Sermon 1 - The Diamond Outline

THREE KEYS TO GAIN THE ANOINTING 2 Kings 2:9

INTRODUCTION: The mighty anointing of the Holy Spirit is needed to accomplish the works of God (Lk. 4:14-19, Acts 1:8). There are several important keys to help us enter into the reality of having the anointing.

KEY # 1 - RELATIONSHIP: The Holy Spirit can come to us from two directions: *vertically* - from heaven (by our relationship with God), or *horizontally* - from anointed servants of God (by our relationship with them).

A. From Our Personal Relationship With God. Many times the Lord pours out His Spirit upon us directly from heaven as we are seeking Him and waiting upon Him.

1. The disciples of Christ had been waiting on the Lord for 10 days before the Lord baptized them with the Holy Spirit, Lk. 24:49, Acts 2:1-4.
2. Joshua waited upon the Lord, to increase his relationship with the Lord. This helped him gain the anointing that prepared him to become the next leader, Ex. 33:11, Num. 27:18-20.

3. We need to learn how to wait on the Lord and enter into the moving of the Spirit, Is. 40:31.

B. From Our Relationship With Anointed Servants of God: Many times the Lord will seek to bring us close to anointed servants of God, that they may train us and impart to us an anointing.

1. Moses and Joshua - Moses imparted a further anointing to Joshua, that prepared Joshua to carry on the work of Moses as the next leader of Israel, Num. 27:18, Deut. 34:9.
2. Paul had imparted a spiritual gift to his spiritual son, Timothy, 2 Tim. 1:6.
3. Elijah gave his mantle (the anointing of a prophet) to his servant and spiritual son, Elisha, 1 Kgs. 19:16, 19-21; 2 Kgs. 3:11-12.

KEY # 2 - OBEDIENCE: God gives the Holy Spirit to all those who obey Him, Acts 5:32.

A. Saul. The Lord gave unto Saul an anointing to equip him to be the king, 1 Sam. 10:1, 5-6. Yet when he *disobeyed* God, God judged him by sending an evil spirit to anoint him, 1 Sam. 16:14, 15:23.

B. Jesus. Jesus obeyed the Father and was filled with the Holy Spirit when He was water baptized, Lk. 3:21-22. When Jesus obeyed in a further way (fasting for 40 days in the wilderness), He then received a further work of the anointing, and was given the power of the Holy Spirit, Lk. 4:14.

C. Elijah. Elijah had a servant who followed him during the time of revival (1 Kgs. 18:43) but did not follow him in the difficult times (1 Kgs. 19:3); thus, he did not receive an anointing from Elijah. Elijah had many spiritual sons (known as “the sons of the prophets”) whom he trained for ministry, but they did not fully follow him (2 Kgs. 2:3-7) so they only received part of his prophetic anointing. *Elisha*, fully faithful to follow Elijah (2 Kgs. 2:2,4,6), received the full mantle of Elijah and became the next national prophet, (2 Kgs. 2:9-15). We must be faithful to God and to His anointed servants!

KEY # 3: TIMING: The Lord has progressive anointings He wants to give us, as we become prepared and as it becomes the time when we will need the new anointing.

A. David received three anointings in his life. Each anointing gave him what he needed at each stage of his life to fulfill the will of God, 1 Sam. 16:13, 2 Sam. 2:4, 2 Sam. 5:4.

B. Elisha was touched by the mantle of Elijah in 1 Kgs. 19:19-21. At this time the Holy Spirit began to move in his life. Yet it

was years before Elisha received the a second touch of the mantle of Elijah, and became anointed to be the next national prophet of Israel, 2 Kgs. 2:9; 14-15.

C. Job received a double portion of the blessings of God and the anointing after he saw himself in God's light and experienced new cleansing in his trial, Job 42.

CONCLUSION: We need to learn these *three* keys because the Lord is preparing to pour out great anointings of the Holy Spirit upon His people in these last days, Joel 2:28-29. Mighty anointings will be given to help God's servants to prepare the world for the Second Coming of Christ. (Mal. 4:5, Lk. 1:17).

Sermon 2 - The Ladder Outline

THE COUNTERFEIT WAY, TRUTH, AND THE LIFE Jude 1:11

INTRODUCTION: Jesus is the way, the truth, and the life according to John 14:6 - but there is a counterfeit presented to us in Jude 1:11.

The Way of Jesus vs. The Way of Cain
The Truth of Jesus vs. The Error of Balaam
The Life of Jesus vs. The Destruction of Korah

I. JUDE 1:11- THE WAY OF CAIN (study Genesis 4:1-16)

A. Cain was a believer: He worshipped God (v. 3), and he talked with God (v. 6-15). He even knew God's face (v. 14). Christians today can still go the way of Cain to their destruction, Prov. 14:12.

B. Cain offered a wrong, natural sacrifice in v.3 of the fruit of the ground. However, the ground was cursed, Gen. 3:17. Cain tried to serve God his own way, not God's way, Is. 58:8-9.

C. Cain and his offering were not accepted by God, v. 5. If we do not serve the Lord the right way, our service and offerings

will not be blessed. Our ministry will not be accepted by God and the Church.

D. Cain became angry and sad, v. 5. Modern “Cains” have the same reactions when their ministries are not accepted.

E. God corrected Cain, but Cain rejected it, v. 6-7. If Cain had been meek and teachable he would have been able to go God’s way. But he angrily went his own way - the way of Cain! Are we meek, or do we become angry and depressed when we are admonished by God or our church leaders?

F. Cain killed his brother because of anger (v. 8) and jealousy (I Jn. 3:12). People in the church can grow jealous, bitter, or angry at other Christians - but it is evidence that they are going *the way* of Cain!

G. Cain left the presence of God to become a wanderer, v. 16. People who go their own independent way and allow wrong attitudes to grow in their hearts will leave the presence of God, and will then leave their Church! They may become “church-hoppers” who wander about looking for a place where they and their ministry will be accepted and honored!

*Are you considering leaving your church because of a bad attitude or similar responses? It is the way of Cain, and it leads to the deception of Balaam.

II. JUDE 1:11 - THE ERROR OF BALAAM (from Numbers 22 - 25). Error can look like truth! What was Balaam's error? Balaam deceived himself. He thought he was obeying God when he was doing just the opposite! Balaam was following his own greed and quest for man's honor, not the will of God. When a man rejects God's reproofs as Cain, it will lead to the deception of Balaam and he will think he is right.

A. The command not to go. Num. 22:9-14 - God told Balaam not to go.

B. Balaam asks again, God is angry. Num. 22:15-22 Balaam asked again, God let him go but was angry with him. (God may permit us to disobey Him if we keep asking for permission!)

C. Balaam is furious with anything that hinders him. In Numbers 22:23-29, the donkey kept disobeying Balaam so he wanted to kill him.

D. God is about to destroy Balaam. Num. 22:31-33 Balaam kept disobeying God, so God wanted to kill Balaam!

E. No true repentance. Num. 22:34 - Balaam did not truly repent! He reasoned, "If you want I will turn back," but Balaam was still greedy to go!

F. God let him go anyway. Num. 22:35 - God permitted Balaam to continue. God spoke to him and led him according to

the sin of his heart, Ps. 125:5. Sin leads to deception, II Thess. 2:11-12.

G. His death. Num. 31:7-8 - Balaam was killed by the sword of God's judgment, just as the angel had warned.

BALAAM DECEIVED HIMSELF - Are we allowing any disobedience in our life to deceive us? We could end up thinking God is leading and supporting our evil direction.

III. JUDE 1:11 - THE DEATH OF KORAH (from Numbers 16)

Korah died when he rebelled against Moses and Aaron. What Korah thought would improve their lives and bring happiness led to death instead!

A. Insurrection. Num. 16:1-3 - Korah and 250 leaders rebelled: Their cry was for a warped sense of equal rights, democracy, and people power!

B. Sympathizers. Num. 16:19 - Korah got the whole congregation to oppose Moses and Aaron. Men who oppose God's leaders always solicit the support of the people.

C. Korah and all supporters judged. Num. 16:28-32 - These all died in the rebellion of Korah. Rebellion, church splits, and

criticizing God's leaders will always lead to the judgment of God! (Either spiritual or natural death.)

CONCLUSION: We can go our own independent way and ignore correction (like Cain), become deceived (like Balaam), and then lead an insurrection against God's leadership (like Korah) until we are *destroyed!* INSTEAD, let us meekly learn to follow God's way (the way of holiness), be led into the truth (which will make us free to obey God's will), which will lead us into the abundant life of Jesus, John 10:10.

Sermon 3 - The Contrast Outline

THE SPIRITUAL AND THE CARNAL BELIEVER

Romans 8:5

(A Comparison of Abraham and Lot)

INTRODUCTION: Abraham became a spiritual believer, his nephew Lot was a carnal believer. We will consider how this affected *three* areas in their lives: their call, their walk, and their reward.

I. THE CALL

A. The Call of Abraham - is revealed in Genesis 12:1-3.

There were 4 consecrations required (v. 1) / and 4 blessings offered (v. 2), Heb. 10:9a

#1 Leave your country
Mesopotamia, which was full of idolatry and sin, Rev. 18:4

Become a great nation
Naturally - Israel; spiritually - the Church

#2 Leave your kindred
Their earthly lifestyle and blessing, Psa. 45:10

I will bless you
A spiritual blessing to replace an earthly blessing.

#3 Leave your father's house
Leave their iniquities, Ex. 34:7, Mt. 10:34-35

I will make your name great
After the separation, Abraham's house was made great

**#4 Go to the land I will
show you**

v.4-5 naturally - Israel,
spiritually - heaven
Heb. 11:13-16

You shall be a blessings

Israel to be a blessing
(Rom. 9:4-5); all believers to
be blessed, Gal. 3:8-9

B. The Call of Lot - was never revealed to him! He was a believer (Gen. 19:14) but Lot had no vision (Prov. 29:18) and no mark to aim for (Phil. 3:12-14). Abraham was a man who built altars and called on God, but Lot did not make a habit of seeking the Lord.

II. THE WALK

A. Abraham Learns to Walk With God:

1. Gen. 11:31 - Abraham obeys requirement #1 (leave your country) but not the rest.
2. Gen. 12:4-7 - Abraham leaves his fathers' house and goes to the land God shows him (he obeys requirements 3-4), but he does not yet obey #2- he brings his kindred, Lot. This also hinders him from receiving blessing #2, and there is famine (Gen.12:10).
3. Gen.12:8 - Abraham dwells between Bethel (God's House) and Ai (a ruin). Instead of correcting the problem, he backslides to Egypt in vs. 8-10, Is. 30:1-2.
4. Gen.13:3-4 - After trials / suffering, Abraham returns to his former place of decision in Gen. 13:3-4. There he deals with the real problem (#2, leave your kindred), and he separates from Lot in Gen.13:5-12, and receives

- God's full blessing in Gen.13:14-17.
5. Genesis 16 records how Abraham and Sarah tried to fulfill God's plan by their own reasoning and plans. Abraham (with the call) was united with Hagar (an Egyptian, Is. 31:1). God multiplied this mixture, Gen. 16:10-12. Ishmael became the founder of the Arab nations (naturally) and Islam (spiritually). We need to sow in the Spirit to reap a good harvest, Gal. 6:7-8.

B. Lot Walks According to the Flesh. When Lot had to choose his course in life, he chose to walk in the way that seemed good in his own sight, Gen. 13:9-13, Prov. 14:12, 2 Cor. 5:7. His carnal walk led him to compromise and corruption, Prov. 13:20, Gen. 19:6-8, 19:30-38. Christians will be conformed to this world unless we offer ourselves completely to God, Rom. 12:1-2.

III. THE REWARD

When God moves, He brings both rewards and judgment, Mal. 3:1-3; 4:1-3, Mt. 21:12-14, Amos 5:18-20.

A. Abraham Received the Promised Son, Gen. 18:1-10, 21:1-2. Naturally this speaks of Isaac, whose children became the nation of Israel. Spiritually this speaks of Christ coming forth out of our lives, the greatest reward! Col. 1:27, Rom. 8:29, I Jn. 3:2. Although Abraham lived in a tent in the barren hills, because

he became a friend of God he also inherited the New Jerusalem (Heb. 11:16, Jn. 14:2), became heir of the world (Rom. 4:13), and became the father of all believers, Rom. 4:12,16.

* We need Christ to be birthed in our lives (just as the manchild will be birthed by the woman in the last days, Rev. 12) in order to become fathers in Christ with a great reward.

B. Lot Was Saved But Was Judged, Gen. 19:1-16. While Abraham had been visited by the Lord Himself and the two angels, the Lord would not visit Lot in wicked Sodom! The two angels rescued Lot but brought judgment upon Sodom. Lot lost his riches and house and had to live in a cave (Gen. 19:30). Lot lost his position as an elder (he sat in the gate, Gen. 19:1). He lost most of his family—his wife (Gen. 19:26, Lk. 17:32); his sons-in-laws (his daughters had married unbelievers, Gen. 19:14); and their families. Even his unmarried daughters who were saved had been corrupted by the immorality of Sodom, Gen. 19:31-32. Lot lost almost everything he had. His soul was saved, but he had very little eternal rewards because he compromised with the world, Mt. 6:19-21. His descendants were the Moabites and Ammonites, who are perpetual enemies of Israel.

CONCLUSION: We need to seek God for His calling for our life, and learn to follow it as Abraham. Then there will be great reward. However, if we live a carnal life like Lot, a Christian can

be saved but his works judged by fire (1 Cor. 3:12-15) and obtain little eternal reward.

Sermon 4 - The Expository Outline

SOLOMON'S LAST SERMON

(The Book of Ecclesiastes)

INTRODUCTION: Ecclesiastes means “The Preacher,” from chapter 1 verse 1. It is a sermon and personal testimony of a famous preacher, King Solomon. He was the son of David, king in Jerusalem, Ecc. 1:1. Solomon wrote the book of Ecclesiastes when he was an old, backslidden man, (see 1 Kings 11:4-6). The tone and spirit of the sermon was negative and sorrowful, because that was what filled his heart.

I. THEME: Solomon states his sermon’s theme in chapter 1 verse 2: “All is Vanity.”

A. Vanity Defined - “meaningless, empty, useless.” Solomon’s life had lost all purpose and meaning.

B. Vanity from an earthly point of view. What Solomon preached is true for someone who is far from God. But someone who draws near to God will find that life is joyful and full of purpose. Solomon’s father David had preached this other side of the truth - the joy and purpose of someone who was close to God, Ps. 16:11, 27:4.

II. PROOFS: In this book King Solomon (by his own ex-

perience) testified that all this world can offer is only vanity and emptiness, apart from God. His personal testimony should be highly respected, because he was perhaps the richest, wisest, most famous man in all of world history!

A. Wisdom and Knowledge is Vanity apart from God (Eccl. 1:12-18).

1. Solomon became wise (Eccl. 1:13-16); in fact, the wisest man on earth, (1 Kings 4:29-31).
2. For a man far from God, much wisdom and knowledge multiplies grief and sorrow, Eccl. 1:18.

B. Pleasure, Great Works, and Riches are Vanity apart from God (Eccl. 2). A person who is backsliding will turn to natural substitutes for spiritual things, Prov. 14:14. Solomon substituted the following:

1. Eccl. 2:3 - Wine instead of being filled with the Spirit, Eph. 5:18.
2. Eccl. 2:4-9, 1 Kgs. 10:14, 23 - Earthly riches instead of heavenly treasures, Mt. 6:19-21. A believer can be successful and busy while his relationship with God grows lukewarm, Rev. 3:17-18.
3. Eccl. 2:9, 1 Kgs. 4:34 - The praise of man instead of the praise of God, 1 Kgs. 11:9. - Ministry does not satisfy. Solomon was one of the world's greatest religious leaders as a preacher, author, leader, counselor, administrator,

songwriter, and church builder. But God never intended for our ministry to take the place of our relationship with God, Song. 1:6, Jer. 2:13. Jesus alone can truly satisfy the desires of the human heart, Phil. 3:7-8.

4. Eccl. 2:10a, 1 Kings 11:3 Solomon substituted human love for the love of God, 1 Kings 11:4.
5. Eccl. 2:10 - He had no self control and did not practice his preaching, Eccl. 10:1, Song. 2:15.
6. Eccl. 2:11 - This led him to become spiritually empty, seeing only vanity.

C. Many things are vanity in a life without God. (Eccl. chapters 3 -10)

III. THE OUTCOME:

A. Even a good life without God is a failure. Eccl. 11:7-8 - Even a person with a long, happy life (apart from God) will find it will end in sorrow and vanity.

B. Sow the right seeds when young. Eccl. 11:9-10 - A young person who enjoys a selfish, evil life will be judged by God and will find that it was a life of vanity and emptiness.

C. You will reap in your older years. Eccl. 12:1-8 - So remember your Creator while you are still young, before you be-

come old and your body becomes infirm. Solomon died young at about the age of 59. He may have suffered the many infirmities he spoke about in this chapter (poor sight, bowed stature, few teeth, impaired hearing, fear and anxiety, etc.) at an early age because of his own profligate life, Gal. 6:7-8.

D. His conclusion. Eccl. 12:13-14 - Solomon's conclusion was that we should each fear and obey God. Solomon died as a repentant backslider, who preached his last sermon to warn us not to follow his own example!

CONCLUSION: Solomon's last sermon teaches us that the "good life" is not found in all that the world can offer, Mk. 8:36. King Solomon had the opportunity to try to enjoy worldly pleasure and reward far beyond what any of us could, but he found that it only leads to bitterness, emptiness, and sorrow, Prov. 14:12. Let us learn from his mistakes and suffering, and wholeheartedly follow the Lord from our youth, Eccl. 12:1.

Sermon 5 - The Analogy Outline

THE RIVER FROM THE TEMPLE

(Ezekiel 47:1-12)

INTRODUCTION: Ezekiel saw a vision of a river coming out of the restored temple of God. The interpretation which we will consider is that the river is the Holy Spirit (Jn. 7:38-39) that will flow out of the New Testament temple of God (the Church, 1 Cor. 3:16) as God restores the Church in these Last Days.

I. THE BEGINNING OF THE RIVER, vs.1-2

A. Verse 1 - At the door, the beginning of the river was seen: Christ is the door, Jn. 10:9. From Christ flows the river of the Holy Spirit, Rev. 22:1

B. Verse 2 - The water flowed under the threshold: it is the lowly and humble who will see the water of the Holy Spirit begin to flow, Mt. 11:29

C. Verse 2 - The water began as a trickle. Don't despise the day of small beginnings, Zech. 4:10. Great rivers all start as little trickles and streams. Value the little beginnings of how the Holy Spirit is moving in your life, and let it grow into a deep river of revival power!

II. THE DEEPENING OF THE RIVER, vs. 3-5

A. Verse 3 - Water up to the ankles. Ankles refer to our ability to walk, Acts 3:7-8. This depth of the moving of the Spirit shows that to begin, we are to *walk in the Spirit*, Gal. 5:16.

B. Verse 4a - Water to the knees. The knees refers to prayer, Eph. 3:14. As moving of the Holy Spirit deepens, we are next to learn how to *pray in the Spirit* 1 Cor. 14:15, Jude 20.

C. Verse 4b - Water to the loins. Loins speak of strength, Job 40:16, Pr. 31:17. This speaks of the deepening work of the Holy Spirit to make us *strong in the Lord* and make us victorious in *spiritual warfare*, Eph. 6:10-13, Joel 3:10.

D. Verse 5 - Deep water to swim in. A river that you could not cross or pass through. At this depth, we cannot stand on the ground, but are taken where the river leads. It speaks of being *led by the Spirit* and being the *sons of God*, Rom. 8:14. When we are swimming, the body is covered by the water and only the head is seen. When we are covered and led by the river of the Holy Spirit, only Christ our Head (Col. 1:18) will be seen!

III. THE RESULTS OF THE RIVER, vs.6-12

A. Verses 6-7 Many trees will grow along the river, speaking of

fruitful Christians, Ps. 1:3.

B. Verses 8-9 Wherever the river (of the Holy Spirit) flows, it will bring *healing and life*, Rev. 22:17.

C. Verses 9-10 The river will be *full of fish* that fishermen will catch. Wherever the Holy Spirit flows, many *souls will be saved* by the fishers of men, Mt. 4:19.

D. Verse 11 Wherever the river does not flow freely, the waters will become polluted with no fish or trees. Where the river of the Holy Spirit is not allowed to flow through the Church in these Last Days, there will be no souls saved and no fruitful Christians growing.

E. Verse 12 Yet where the river flows, many trees (Christians) will produce consistent fruit for food, and leaves for healing. In Revelation 22:2 the leaves are for the healing of the nations. The river of God will move in national revivals that will heal nations in these last days, Zech. 2:11!

CONCLUSION: The Lord has a river of the Holy Spirit that will flow out of His restored Church. We want to learn how to enter into a deeper and deeper moving of the Spirit, so that we can be a part of this great revival that will save many souls, produce many fruitful Christians, and heal nations in these last days.

Sermon 6

THE STAR AND THE SCEPTER

Numbers 24:17

(Entering into the Authority of Christ)

INTRODUCTION: This was a prophecy of Balaam about the coming of Christ. The star over Bethlehem led the wise men to the child who was born to be a king, who would receive the scepter of God. However, this prophecy also has a second spiritual fulfillment. Christ is to be formed in us (Gal. 4:19), so Christ's life is also a pattern for our spiritual growth. There is a star and a scepter offered to each of us!

I. THE MEANING OF THE STAR AND SCEPTER:

A) The STAR - Speaks of a Heavenly Vision.

1. The stars in heaven are to give light to the earth, Gen. 1:14-15.
2. Light from heaven guides us on life's journey (as sailors and travelers aim their course from the light in the heavenlies, Mt. 2:2).

B) The SCEPTER - Speaks of the Authority of a King.

A scepter or rod is a symbol of their power.

1. Ps. 2:9 and Rev. 19:11-15, Christ shall rule with a rod or scepter of iron.

2. Rev. 2:26-27 and Rev. 20:5, Many overcomers will gain authority to rule with a rod of iron.

II. THE ORDER OF THE STAR AND SCEPTER: First the Star, then the Scepter!

A) 2000 years ago, God gave a star as a sign to help prepare for the new thing He began to do. The star was to lead the wise men to the coming King who would hold the scepter.

B) TODAY, God is placing a spiritual star in our hearts: new light from heaven, or a fresh vision, Ps. 119:130. God is preparing to give authority to the overcomers of the Body of Christ. This vision is given so that we can prepare to receive the scepter and rule and reign with Christ! *We must understand* that we must do more than just see the star. We also have to follow it! We will have to pay a price to follow the new light and see it's fulfillment, like the wise men.

III. RECEIVING THE STAR AND THE SCEPTER:

WHO gets the Star? WHO gets the Scepter?

The prophecy of Balaam reveals more clearly to us how we can obtain both the star and the scepter. The star comes out of JACOB but only ISRAEL gets the scepter, Num. 24:17.

To understand this we have to study about Jacob and Israel, a man with two names (and two natures).

- A) Gen. 25:24-26** The name Jacob means a supplanter, or deceitful (see First Samuel 25:25). This was his natural adamic nature from birth. He stole his brother's birthright (Gen. 25:29-34) and lied to his father to have him pray God's blessing over him, Gen. 27:1-36. Yet, he wanted God and His blessing.
- B) Gen. 28:10-22** Jacob (while running away to protect his life) saw a heavenly vision, a ladder to heaven. The call of God began to apprehend his life. Jacob followed God's call, and the Lord prepared him for the scepter through many trials and suffering!
- C) Gen. 31:41** Laban deceived Jacob 10 times. Jacob reaped for his sin, Ps. 18:25-27, Obad. 1:15. Suffering changed him, Prov. 27:17, Is. 48:10. After many years the dealings of God made Jacob a desperate man, Gen. 31:3; 32:3-8. He desperately needed God's blessings and power. Jacob's ability, natural strength, lies, and deceptions, were not enough to save him! The natural man cannot obtain God's call.
- D) Gen. 32:24-28** Jacob wrestled with the Angel until he became Israel, a prince with God! Jacob's character had been transformed, and as Israel, he was ready to receive the scepter.

ter, “as a prince you have power with God and with men”, Gen. 32:28. We need to wrestle with the Holy Spirit in prayer until we are changed and empowered!

E) Gen. 33:1-4 Esau did not want to kill Jacob, because the Jacob he hated was dead, Gal. 2:20. Israel had a scepter of power with God and with men, and was saved.

CONCLUSION: We all need to see a star (or the heavenly enlightenment) to realize that the Lord is preparing overcomers who will rule with His authority. As the vision shines bright in our heart, we can press on to apprehend this high call of God. We will then let God *change and prepare us* to become like Israel - a prince who will inherit the scepter!