

Tuesday (3 hours)

- *2 hours:* Open working doc of ideas for Sunday sermon. Pull out yellow pad to write more ideas. Brainstorm. Get creative. No edit button. If the sermon is exegesis, then read the bible passage naked. No commentaries. Practice lectio divina. Sit with the text. Heck, memorize it. If it's a topical sermon, list out ideas without an edit button – scripture passages (both potential main passages and references), cultural examples (movies, books, people, songs, concepts), personal stories, think of analogies (even if they feel silly), pull out relevant books and stack them on desk. Develop any of the ideas that feel juicy.
- *15 minutes:* Write out at the top of the doc or yellow-pad the “gist” of the sermon as if someone was holding a gun to your head and your life depended on it (or less traumatically, as if you were explaining it to a friend). Then list your best three ideas or points (starting with the best) that support the gist. Use this to explain the likely direction of the sermon to the team that afternoon.
- *45 minutes:* Open sermon calendar doc to look at upcoming sermons. Do you need to change anything? Open working doc of ideas for next two sermons. Work on two things: getting the “gist” and adding more creative ideas. Are there any relevant books or materials you need? If so, order them.

Wednesday (7 hours)

- I know you want to tackle any emails and correspondence and other chores that need to be done because they're piling up. Don't give one minute to this crap right now. You can get to it later in the afternoon when your mind is shot. Remember there's a difference between what is urgent and what is important, and you've got to do what's important first.
- *6 hours:* Time to get cracking. Open working doc of ideas and pull out yellow pad with other ideas. Make an outline at the top if you feel you can. If not, keep brainstorming and developing the other ideas you have. Thumb through books that you stacked on desk. Bring in any other research that's pertinent. Consult commentaries to learn background, details in the original languages, and to make sure you're not inventing anything new.
- *30 minutes:* On the whiteboard, list out the best ideas/points/stories you've got so far. The goal is get these things in front of you so you know what you're working with. Do it around lunchtime cause as the day goes on you'll be more inclined to study and follow up on leads than doing creative & critical thinking.

Thursday (4 hours)

- *2 hours:* Read books, articles, and magazines not related to this Sunday's sermon. If it's for a future sermon, that's okay. But still leave some time to dive into other stuff. This is time for creative intake, following interesting rabbit trails, and to keep developing your mind outside of the immediate sermons.
- *2 hours:* Open working doc of ideas for next two sermons. This is all about getting one leg up before the ride starts. Along with refining the “gist” and adding more creative ideas, study relevant passages and develop any ideas that are shining more than usual today.

Friday (4 hours)

- *1 hour:* Print out working doc of ideas and tear off the yellow pad sheet. Look over everything and start organizing all this stuff in a way that makes sense. Wipe the whiteboard clean and outline this badboy.
- *3 hours:* This is where you turn a corner, the corner you've been struggling with – but not today. Plot the whiteboard where you can see it in full sight. Spread your notes out on both sides close to you like they're your ammunition. Cause they are – and the battle is on. Roll up your sleeves and write the sermon. Even if it's a crappy first draft. As predictable as a communist election, you'll tell yourself you're not there yet and you should probably do more research and you can just write it out on Sunday. That's bull butter. It's gonna help you a ton to get a first draft done, so do it. Don't you dare close the laptop and clock out for the day without the sermon written out. Even if you have to dash through the ending. Even if the whole thing gets chunked in the trash first thing Sunday morning. Produce something with a beginning, middle, and ending. Then sign off and enjoy your Sabbath. No need to think of the sermon – for now. You've done your part. It'll be right there waiting for you Sunday morning.

Sunday (7 hours)

- *1 hour:* Start no later than 10 am. Read over the sermon. Of course you don't think it's good enough, but ask yourself if the skeleton is good enough. If not, salvage what's good and start over. If the skeleton is good, then pull out the red pen and go to work. Switch stuff around. Cross stuff out. Word things better. What's missing? Are there stories, examples, and analogies that make it come to life? Is it too long? Keep in mind that of all the sermons you've preached at Rhythm, one was too short but dozens were too long.
- *4 hours:* By 11 am you've got to start revising or rewriting. Don't get stuck on the intro or first point – you've got to pace yourself. Remember that the last thing folks will hear is your ending. So it needs to be developed, not slapped on once you're already exhausted. If you hit a wall with a point, then highlight it in pink or green and keep moving. You can return to it and by then you'll probably have some insight of where to take it – or whether to chunk it. You have till 3 pm, but hopefully you're done here before that. It would be great to finish an hour or two before schedule. Don't obsess over the sermon. Be willing to say it's finished.
- *1 hour:* Put together the slides at 3 pm. How many words per slide is more important than their appearance – so don't spend time beautifying something no one will even notice. Incorporate pics if you can. Visual images stick. Notice you have a whole hour – so don't feel rushed.
- *1 hour:* Preach the sermon aloud. Make notes as necessary but don't forget you're doing a run-through. So get through it. Get dressed, say a prayer, and at 5 pm head to the chapel. Keep looking over your notes but relax. Remember Revelation 4 & 5 – there's a throne at the center of the universe and you're not on it.