

Read the Bible “with prayer in my heart that God will direct me to the choice of a subject and a text upon which to pitch my mental tent.” (R. G. Lee)

I embrace Rev. Billy Graham’s statement that it takes a lifetime to prepare a sermon and it’s hard work.

Use a sheet or software to hold/record all of the information below.

Read the text in several English translations

If available, use biblical language resources to look at the text.

Identify every action word (verb) in the text – look for who is the actor or being acted upon. What is God doing or will do? What are the other actors doing?

What is the reader or believer doing or should do? Is it a single person acting or more than one?

Brainstorm with yourself and write down **EVERY** thought and idea that comes to mind about the text. Do not assess/evaluate/critique the thought or idea.

Simply write them **ALL** thoughts and ideas down!

Let the text and thoughts “incubate” for 1-2 days.

After “incubation,” rite down **EVERY other** thought and idea that comes to mind about the text.

Pray that you “experience” God in your sermon preparation.

What does the text say?

Who is speaking or writing?

To whom was the passage addressed and why

Where and when did it all take place?

What are the circumstances and location of the writer?

What are the circumstances and location of the original hearers?

What else was happening in the society/culture at this time?

What message was the writer or speaker trying to convey?

Are there any parallel passages elsewhere in Scripture that can help me understand the passage?

What did the text mean to the original hearers?

How do I understand the context?

Are there any repeated words or phrases that indicate the major theme?

What pictures, if any, are found in the text?

What is God up to in this text?

Is God affirming the status quo or calling for a change?

What is the status quo?

What is the change being sought?

What is going on with each character (heroes/heroines and bad guys/girls)?

Is the character emotional?

Is the character independent?

Does the passage deal with power?

Does the passage deal with or affect relationships?

Does the passage deal with a rule?

What does this passage say to the needs of people in our time?

What is the “bad news” in the text?

What is the “bad news” for our time?
What is the “good news” in the text?
What is the “good news” for our time?

How does this text speak to –

Suffering, pain, hurt, fears, frustrations –

Tragedy –

Evil –

Death –

In no more than 3 sentences, what is the Central Idea of the Text (CIT)?

What senses are directly or indirectly stimulated by the text?

What can you *taste* as you read the text?

What can you *hear* as you read the text?

Do you hear any *sounds*?

Do you see any *colors* (objects or a person’s skin)?

Are there any *sizes* (stated or unstated)?

Are there any *shapes* (stated or unstated)?

What can you *see* as you read the text?

What can you *feel* as you read the text (e.g., loneliness, jealousy, greed, fear, joy, depression, sorrow, pain, love)?

What can you *touch* as you read the text?

Is there a *texture* that can be seen and felt? (Is there some material or substance in text?)

What do you *smell* as you read the text?

Is there a (social or geographical) *distance* involved?

What is the behavioral purpose – what action is demanded by the biblical text & its verbs?

What should I believe?

What should I not believe?

How should I behave?

How should I not behave?

Trust?

Perseverance (ability to hold on)?

Deeper faith?

Priority to change?

Lesson to learn?

Command to obey?

Activity to avoid or stop?

New direction to take?

How do I propose to experientially illustrate the purpose? Illustrations care gathered from wide general and specific observations, experiences and reading faith-based and materials that are not.

How does the text say it? (i.e., the literary genre of the text--parable, allegory, proverb, narrative – See Preach On, J. Alfred Smith, Sr.)

What are the figures of speech employed--hyperbole, apostrophe, simile, or metaphor? Consider how these figures of speech should be preached (See: Preaching and the Literary Forms of the Bible, Thomas G. Long).

In a narrative, note the change in time or place in the text; and consider each change in time or place as a “scene.”

In a narrative, mark/separate each scene in the text. Compose in your own words a brief synopsis of what’s said and happening in each scene.

What *does* the text mean to the church today?

How did the church come to believe it?

What’s the cultural context in which you will be preaching?

What or who is the audience and what is the occasion?

Prayerfully exegete your audience

What does the text mean to *me*, the preacher, on a personal level?

What does this passage say to the needs of people in our time? What is this passage of Scripture saying to me about the condition of God’s people?

What answers to today’s problems may be culled out of the Biblical story?

How can I make the text meaningful to my hearers?

Will this passage of Scripture bring healing to people who have been hurt in life and crushed by the materialistic impersonal forces of our mechanical, industrial world?

Will this Scripture bring comfort to those who are dying and cheer to those who mourn and are challenged by life, thereby giving them the courage to “Hold on to God’s Unchanging Hand” in spite of life’s vicissitudes?”

Allow the opposing forces in the text to become the opposing forces in the sermon.

Allow the mood of the text to set the mood of the sermon.

In no more than 3 sentences, what is the Central Idea of the Sermon (CIS)?

As the people hear the development of the outline, will they see something?

What does this look like?

How does this show up?

What’s the desired “end” of your preaching?

During your final preparation and the delivery, prayerfully merge your God-encounter with your people-burden.

What is there to CELEBRATE out of this text?

Through this text, how can you celebrate God’s presence, activity and goodness in the world?

Through this text, how can you lift up what God has done, is doing, and will continue to do?

What “materials” of celebration shall I use? Scripture, songs/music, poetry, heightened rhetoric, creative imagery, hyperbole, or embellished language?

Use any material that triggers the imaginative capacity by releasing affirmation, hope, peace, joy, and love.

A traditional approach to developing a sermon by points which may also facilitate the ability to preach without notes is:

For each point

Exposition of biblical text

Illustration to illuminate the text

Application – how does the text apply?

Preaching Resources:

Preach On! – A concise handbook of the elements of style in preaching (J. Alfred Smith)

Biblical Preaching: The Development and Delivery of Expository Messages, 2nd Edition (Haddon Robinson)

A Practical Guide to Sermon Preparation (Jerry Vines)

A Guide to Effective Sermon Delivery (Jerry Vines)

A Guide to Self-Improvement in Sermon Delivery (Al Fasol)

The Art & Craft of Biblical Preaching (Haddon Robinson and Craig Brian Larson)

They Like to Never Quit Praisin' God: The Role of Celebration in Preaching (Frank Thomas)

SERMON DEVELOPMENT QUESTIONS

(Your Text:)

ANSWER ALL QUESTIONS BELOW AS THEY RELATE TO YOUR TEXT

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