Propositions and Main Points

Let us go over some review questions. Is there only one proper way to outline a passage for a sermon? The exegetical outline may be very similar, but what will vary greatly? The homiletical outline may vary greatly. Part of the reason for that is an expositor is bound to represent the truth of a text but not the pattern of a text. You are bound to represent the truth of the text as an expositor but not necessarily the pattern of the text. What then governs how a sermon should be outlined? Your purpose and fallen condition focus (FCF). If there is not one right way to use that material out of an exegetical outline in your other study, what does govern the outline? The purpose and the FCF.

There are three basic types of outlines. What is the most common? Logical outlines. What others are there? Sequential or chronological and picturesque or imagistic. So, the three types of outlines are logical, sequential, and picturesque. What are the qualities of good homiletical outlines? They include unity, brevity, parallelism, proportion, and progression. Also, remember FORM, the little acrostic. They should have FORM—"faithful to the text, obvious from the text, relevant to a fallen condition focus, and moving to a climax." Those are just summary thoughts from the last lesson.

In this lesson we will be talking about basic principles of outlining and moving to greater particulars. And I want to kind of prepare for this by sharing some heart experience that some of you are aware of. There is a very dear friend of mine and a friend of the seminary who has been missing for a couple of days now, and we think he has probably taken his own life. He is a pastor, a pastor to quite a few people who go to this seminary. As I spoke to his wife yesterday, I thought, what great truths can you communicate at such a time? In my mind the great truths are the simple ones. "He is the good Shepherd, and I will ask Him now to carry you close in His arms, close to His heart."

We will do many technical things in the next few lessons. But I do not want the technical things to steal your sight of what we are trying to accomplish. We are just trying to make God's word clear to God's people. There are some technical things about communication that we need to learn, and we need to do that well. But do not lose sight of the goal. We are not trying to make things more complex. We are trying to make the Word of God in all of His eternal truths crystal clear for His people. Let us pray that the Lord would enable us to do that.

Father, we will deal with matters in this class on this day that are highly technical and, in some ways, as we are gaining facility in them, even frustrating to us. But the goal is great. The goal is that the hope that is in Your Word, that You have transferred through the ages, would be proclaimed to Your people with boldness and compassion and great clarity. For there will be moments in life where we will need it to be very, very clear to us. Grant us, therefore, as we do what we confess are some rather mundane tasks this day, a sight of the goal: Your people understanding Your word. Give us Your blessing, we pray for the sake of Your people and the message of Your Son. We pray in His name. Amen.

Our goal for this lesson is to understand the basic features and constructions of good propositions and main points. If you think of this class in large scope, we have talked about the nature of the Word of God in general, we have talked about the nature of the servant of God, and we have talked about the nature of the text and what we are trying to communicate out of it. Now we are moving right into what is the nature of that sermon itself, and we are going to look at some of the skeleton. We are going to come right in and do that hard work of anatomy and begin to think particularly for formal messages. Now, we will not always preach formal messages but particularly for the most formal, classical messages, we will study what those outlines look like. I will readily confess to you that I do not always preach this way.

This is the most classical method; we are learning taxonomy. We are learning very basic things that we will now use in much greater ways and more facile ways in the future. But we will walk down this path for a while and recognize it is playing the scales before we get to jazz. This lesson is like learning the scales. I want to freely confess that to you, but once we have this terminology and these principles down, we can do lots of different things—that is the goal. As we think about it, recognize that after the overview we are now zeroing in on the detailed development of specific components of the homiletical outline.

First, what is a proposition? Now, the traditional definition is as old as John Broadus. The traditional definition of a proposition is "a statement of the subject as the preacher proposes to develop it." This is pretty basic, right? Your English teacher would call it the theme statement. But for a sermon it is "a statement of the subject as the preacher proposes to develop it." Now, that definition is over 150 years old, so let us talk about some additional developments in definition. We will add to that traditional definition some distinctions for what an expository message is, particularly framed according to classical guidelines. A proposition is also a theme statement indicating how an FCF will be addressed in the message. Thus it is not just a statement of the subject, but it is a statement of the subject addressed to the FCF. What is the burden of the message? What is wrong that you will be addressing? The theme is addressed to that problem, as it were, that this text speaks to.

Second, a proposition is a statement of the main thing the message is about. It is broad enough to cover the content of all the main points, and it is proven or developed by each of the points. Now, if you could imagine a stool, the proposition is the seat and the main points are the legs. The proposition has to be broad enough to cover all the legs (the main points), but it also has to be supported by the specific main points. So, the proposition is to cover and be supported by each of the main points. The main points should not be about something else; they are to be about this specific proposition.

Third, a proposition is a summary of the introduction and an indication of what the rest of the message will be about. Thus the proposition points both forward and backward. You can kind of think about it in the hourglass mode here. A proposition is a summary of the introduction, and in that way it is pointing back. The introduction also says, "Here is what I will be talking about: here is the problem, and here is how the text addresses it. Thus the proposition summarizes what the introduction has been about, but it also signals what the rest of the message will be about. The proposition is both a summary of the introduction and a preparation for the rest of the message.

A key idea to which we will return many times in this semester is this: the introduction prepares for the proposition in two major ways, in concept and terminology. On our hourglass again, if the proposition is kind of at the neck of the sermon, if the proposition is a summary of the introduction, then it will certainly use the concepts of the introduction. The introduction should get us ready to hear what the subject of the sermon is. But, again, we are in an oral medium. People are listening for what we say, and we need to give them cues, not just conceptually but even in the terms that we use in the introduction. Thus if in my introduction I talk about, "God is a friend to sinners," then my proposition will be "God is kind to all people." You may think, "Well, that is the same subject." It is the same subject, said in different terms. As a result, the ear is now confused. So, unlike your English teacher who would say, "Use different words," your homiletics instructor says, "Use the same words." We are preparing the ear as well as the mind for what will follow. The introduction prepares for the proposition in concept and terminology.

Let us refine our definition of a proposition, then. A proposition is this, going back to the classical definition: a statement of the subject as the preacher proposes to develop it. That is still true. A

proposition is a statement of the subject as the preacher proposes to develop it, with (in light of an FCF) the concepts and terms of the introduction.

That is the general definition. Now let us begin to talk about the marks of such propositions in the most formal structure, so in classical terms. The statement from Henry Jewitt is the one that virtually every homiletics book has quoted for the last half century. Over and over again, in a statement of what a proposition is, Jewitt says, "I do not think any sermon should be preached or written until that proposition has emerged clear and lucid as a cloudless moon." This is good graphic language. The proposition should just shine there in the darkness of the text to say, "Here is what this message is about," as clear as a cloudless moon. Now, we can begin to think about what that proposition includes by what we know the rest of the sermon will be about. Remember, we said a sermon is not just what is true, but it is also what to do about it. It is not just about what to do, because that is a kind of preacher arrogance, "Do this, do this, do this." Nor is it just about what is true, because that is preacher abstraction. It is these two things together: what is true and what to do about it. Thus if the proposition is about all of those things, you might easily guess that it is going to be a wedding of a principle and an application or exhortation, which is also known as the application. Now again, that means that what is true, the principle, is wed to what to do, the exhortation or application. The formal way homileticians say this is "A proposition is a universal truth in a *hortatory* mode." A proposition is something that is universally true, and I can exhort you on the basis of it. Because it has those two elements, what is true and what to do, principle and application, we recognize that a proposition is not principle alone. For example, "Jesus is the only hope of salvation." That is a good statement, and it is all true. But it is not a proposition, because what is it lacking? It is lacking the application—it is just principle. Neither is a proposition just application alone, like, "We should preach Christ at every opportunity." This is true and it is a great application, but the truth for it has not been established. So a proposition is principle wed to application. For example, "Because Jesus is the only hope for salvation, we must preach Christ at every opportunity."

There are two basic forms of doing this. Here I will give you terminology to learn so we can use it later on down the road. There are two basic forms of presenting universal truths in hortatory modes. The first is a consequential form. The key word here is "because." In this form you will say, "Because something is true, do this." There is a causal effect between the principle and application. An example of the consequential form is "Because Jesus is the only hope of salvation, we must present Christ at every opportunity."

The second major form is conditional. You are saying that, because some condition exists, there are necessary implications. The key words here are "if," "for," and "since." In this form you will say, "If (or since) this condition exists, there are these implications." For example, "If disciples are to preach Christ at every opportunity, then we must prepare to proclaim Him." My first clause there, the principle, could also be "Since all are born in sin…" Do you hear the condition there? That is the condition in which people exist. "Since all are born in sin, then we must teach them the Gospel." If all are in this condition, then what are the necessary implications?

I do not want you to try to solve all the questions about which to use at which time. Your ear will tell you. What I really want you to hear is that you have options. It could be "because," it could be "if," or it could be "since." I just want you to hear the options and not wonder about which is the right one to use. If it sounds right to your ear, it will sound right to other people's ears. So either "because," "since," or "if."

There are many other ways of doing this wedding of what is true and what to do about it. We will concentrate this semester on these conditional and consequential ways of wording things just to learn some basic principles. The key thing, again, is to know your options: either the "because" statements or the "if" or "since" statements. These forms reflect our preaching commitment to preach in accord with biblical priorities. We want to preach truth and apply it to our lives. This is kind of what we have said from the beginning, right? "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness" (2 Timothy 3:16). Here are the applications, it is truth, it is inspired by God for these purposes, and we will try to preach it that way.

Now, those are propositions. You recognize we are not talking about propositions alone, but also good main points. So let us talk about good main points as well. First, what is the mark of a good main point? A good main point is, like the proposition, a universal truth in a *hortatory* mode. Main points are also universal truths in *hortatory* modes. That is, they are a wedding of principle and application. Just like propositions, good main points are also a wedding of principle and application. Here is Haddon Robinson, another of the classical writers on homiletics. Many seminaries use his book, as he is one of the sterling writers on homiletics. Here is how he does it in his book, *Biblical Preaching*. You will see here again some classical forms: "We should praise God because He has elected us in Christ." Is this main point conditional or is it consequential? It is consequential. It uses "because" here in the middle rather than at the beginning, but it is still consequential. Which is the application? The phrase that comes before or after the "because"? The phrase that comes before, that is right. "We should praise God…" There is the application. The principle is here: "…He has elected us in Christ." Thus this is a universal truth wed to an application by "because." That is a truth and application in consequential form.

Now look at the parallelism happening in addition to these other things in his second main point, "We should praise God, because He has dealt with us according to the riches of His grace." Is this conditional or consequential? It is again consequential. To have parallelism, you would have to use consequential again, would you not? So you know that if one main point is consequential, the rest will also be consequential. Otherwise your parallelism will fall apart. "We should praise God…" Which is the application, the first or last part of the statement? The first, "We should praise God…" And then we have a new principle: "…He has dealt with us according to the riches of His grace."

His third main point is "We should praise God, because He has sealed us with the Holy Spirit until we acquire full possession of our inheritance." Now, this last main point may have trouble passing the 3:00 AM test. If you were to cut it short, to give it some brevity, how would you do that? You could say, "We should praise God, because He has sealed us with the Holy Spirit." You could then develop the rest of the original statement under that main point. What Haddon Robinson is doing here, of course, is simply quoting more of the verse. But if, for homiletical purposes, we wanted to make it more brief, we could put the period there and then talk about how the Holy Spirit seals us within the body of that main point. Do you notice that, in these three main points, the applications are the same? "We should praise God…" They are the same throughout the outline.

What kind of consistent message is this? This is an application-consistent message, because the application clause stays the same. Could you have a principle-consistent message? Yes, you could keep the principle consistent and change the other side. Do you have to start with the application? No, it could be on either side. Do you have to put the "because" in the middle? No, it could have been at the beginning. So we recognize there are variations, but what makes it consequential is that there is a "because" somewhere; what makes it a valid main point is that it has both truth and application; and what makes it application consistent is that the application is what is unchanged throughout the three main points. If the principle had stayed the same, it would have been principle consistent.

A student has asked how we make sure our proposition is broad enough to cover all of this? The proposition will have the same anchor clause, which will take care of the consistent clause. That is how it will cover that. The proposition will have the same consistent element. The developing clauses we will call the magnet clauses, the ones that are changing and therefore drawing attention to themselves (that is why we call them magnet clauses—they draw attention to themselves). For these clauses that change, you will need to have a proposition conceptually large enough to cover them. If we were to create a proposition for Haddon's three main points, we know "We should praise God" will be part of it. That will stay the same; we know that is the first part of our proposition. The changing or magnet clauses are "He has elected us in Christ," "He has dealt with us according to the riches of His grace," and "He has sealed us with the Holy Spirit." Can you think of a clause that is broad enough for that? "We should praise God because…" what? We could say, "We should praise God, because He has accomplished our salvation." And then I say, "How did He do that? He elected us in Christ, dealt with us according to the riches of His grace, and has sealed us with the Holy Spirit." Thus we have a conceptual entity that is broad enough to cover all the developing clauses. We will need to create a proposition that is enough of an umbrella that it will cover conceptually the main points that come beneath.

Another mark of good main points is that they are parallel. The language lines up. They are parallel in their wording. Another mark of good main points is that they are progressive. We do not say the same thing over again. In fact, typically, we move forward to greater and greater concepts. Thus we are progressing in our understanding and not standing in the same place.

The next three items I will mention about main points all apply to the application clause specifically. The first three qualities I just mentioned—that good main points are universal truths in *hortatory* mode, they are parallel, and they are progressive—apply to all portions of every main point. But these next three things I will mention apply only to the application clause.

The clause is first positively worded. Do you remember how we said this last time? You take out the "not's." This semester, we will not word our main points in negatives, "do not…" You may say, did not the Lord set a different precedent when He gave the Ten Commandments? Then I will say, well yes, but you are not in that position yet. We will learn by taking out the "not's" and try to word things in the positive—what people should do rather than what they should not do. The application clauses of good main points will also be actively worded. Take out the "be's." Take out all the "being," all the passive verbs. We will word them actively. The last thing for the application clauses is that we will seek to word them as "you" or "we." Now, technically that is wording them in either the first or second person plural. "What should you do?" "You must do something" or "We must do something."

I have already been down this path a little with you. Homileticians, especially classical ones, debate this: should you say "you" or "we"? What are the advantages? If you say, "you," what is the power of that? It is very directive. Do you have the authority to say to people, "You should do something…"? Do you have the authority to do that? On what authority can you do that? Not on your authority, but on the Word's authority. You can, with the authority of the Word of God, say, "You must stop, this is not the way Christians live." Do you have the ability to say "we"? "You" communicates great authority. What is the advantage of using "we"? It communicates community identity. It is identifying with people. At times, do you need to identify with people? At times, do you need to confront people? The answer to both is yes. Again, I do not want to say using one or the other is right or wrong. Rather, I will use that great word of judgment, "pastoral prudence." As a pastor, knowing what the Word says and who your people are, which is most appropriate? Sometimes you will need to say "you," and sometimes you will need to say "we." "We are really struggling with Greek today, some of us in this community." And sometimes I need to say to people, "You must stop entertainments that are hurting your heart as you

prepare to proclaim God's Word to God's people." Sometimes I need to say "you." And the same will be true for you many times down the road.

So, those are our options, and they work well in the application clause. Is that clear? The first three qualities I mentioned for main points apply to everything in the main point: principle and application, parallelism, and progression. And the last three things—taking out the "not's," taking out the "be's," and using either "you" or "we"—apply to the application clause only.

How do we harmonize these things, propositions and main points? Keep the wording of the proposition and the main points parallel. How do we make sure we are keeping things together so that this message has unity? Let us look at an outline that is principle consistent, in consequential form: "Because Jesus commands believers to obey Him boldly, we must proclaim Christ at every opportunity." Now, I hope when you see a classical form you already recognize one test it may have trouble passing. What is it? Any classically worded main point or proposition does have trouble passing the 3:00 AM test. It is just a lot of words. Ultimately we will move beyond this, but we will learn the classical form, because it does something. It teaches us basic hermeneutics even before we have had the rest of the curriculum.

In other classes, such as New Testament Introduction and Biblical Hermeneutics, we will talk about how you take something that is true and turn it into an imperative. That is always a difficult step biblically. "Jesus told His disciples to go into all the world, so you should go into all the world." "Jesus and His disciples wore sandals, therefore…" Well, why is one an imperative and the other not? Why does one truth lead to an imperative and the other does not? You are kind of forced to wrestle with that already, by wording main points and propositions with a truth and application. This forces us, before we have been trained in many principles that will come down the road, to begin to look at a text with basic hermeneutical principles in mind and allow us to proclaim truth accurately and boldly for God's people.

So, what do we do? In a proposition, we will make one side of it become the same with the same side in the main points. For example, "Because Jesus commands believers to proclaim Him boldly, we must proclaim Christ at every opportunity." This is the proposition, and that last section is the overarching portion. The parallel phrase and anchor clause is "Because Jesus commands His believers to proclaim Him boldly…" Thus your first main point could be "Because Jesus commands His believers to proclaim Him boldly, we should proclaim Christ in difficult situations." Again, that last section is the key word change, right? This is what changes: "…we should proclaim Christ in difficult situations," "…we should proclaim Christ to difficult people" (second main point), and "…we should proclaim Christ despite our difficulties" (third main point). These three last sections are all about how we should "proclaim Christ at every opportunity," which was the overarching clause of the proposition. In this particular case, the principle stays the same, and thus it is a principle-consistent outline. The clause that changes is the application, and therefore it is the magnet clause, the one that draws attention to itself. Ultimately we will say the subpoints, applications, and illustrations are about the magnet clause, the clause that changes. This is because that is what the ear focuses on because it is different. That is what you have to talk about, what you said that was different. That will draw much attention to itself.

What would an application-consistent outline look like? Let us look at an application-consistent outline that is in consequential form. Here is the proposition, "Since Jesus alone provides salvation, we must proclaim Christ to the world." Then the first main point is "Since Jesus alone purchased salvation…" Notice here the changing clause is at the beginning, while the anchor clause is the second—it is the application. "…we must proclaim Christ to the world" occurs in the proposition and each of the main points, and that is an application. We must do something. Thus it is an application-consistent outline. And what changes is the reason for that same application. What is one reason for that application?

"Jesus alone purchased salvation." What is another reason? "Jesus alone possesses salvation." What is another reason? "Jesus alone bestows salvation." So the application is consistent, but the principle changes. You are saying, "Here is reason to do this thing. Here is another reason to do the same thing. Here is another reason to do the same thing." It is application consistent with a change of principle. Again, here it is in conditional form.

Keep one side of the proposition consistent in main point development. Not only do we have parallelism in the points, but also one side (either principle or application) stays the same, it is consistent. The side of the proposition that stays consistent in the outline is called the anchor clause. If the principle of the proposition becomes the anchor clause, what kind of outline is this? If the principle is the anchor clause, it is a principle-consistent outline. If the application of the proposition becomes the anchor, this is application consistent. We keep the non-consistent clauses of the main points as parallel in wording as possible except for key word changes. Thus even in the clause that changes, we will still try to line up the verbs, subjects, and objects. We will try to line them up as well as we can, but something will be changing, and of course those are the key word changes. The non-consistent side of the main points is each main point's developmental component, also called the magnet clause. It draws attention to itself. The magnet clause is what the exposition of the main point supports or develops. The magnet clause draws or attracts the exposition to itself, which is why it is called the magnet clause. Thus the subpoints of each main point develop or support that main point's magnet clause.

Something seems to be missing, then. When will we ever deal with that anchor clause? When do we ever explain how that is true or how that got there? Well, we also establish the truth of the anchor clause. We establish the truth of the anchor clause early, just before or just after the proposition. Usually it is in the introduction that we establish the truth of the anchor clause. But occasionally it can be established toward the beginning of the first main point. The early establishment of this premise is necessary since the whole sermon rests on the adequacy of the anchor clause. The proposition, at the neck of the sermon (if we think of it as an hourglass), will be based on what was developed in the introduction and prepares for everything that follows. Typically that means the anchor clause is something rather apparent, rather taken for granted. This is because you do not have much time to explain it. It should be something fairly obvious from the passage. Occasionally it will not be. So if you do not have time to explain it in the introduction, you will need to do it right after the proposition, usually very early in the first main point. Otherwise, the sermon does not have the foundation you need to follow. Thus if I were to say, "We must proclaim Christ at every opportunity," I will also say, "Here Jesus says to take the Gospel to all nations. Everyone needs to hear this." This is something rather obvious there in the text. But if my first anchor clause is something like, "God elects us by grace alone," that may need some further explanation to establish it. I may have to do a little more on that. That may even be too difficult to handle as an anchor clause. That may need to be in a developmental clause—that may even take the whole sermon to develop. But if I cannot just say it quickly, and I still want it to be the anchor clause, I should be able to explain it fairly quickly in either the introduction or at the beginning of the first main point. This is because it is the developmental clauses that I will talk about in the rest of the sermon. Therefore the anchor clause should be fairly clear early in the message. Almost always we can get the anchor clause (if properly chosen) explained before the proposition even appears. Then people can say, "Of course, that is what you said you are talking about, I see that, I know what we will be talking about."

Someone has asked if it is merely arbitrary whether you use a principle- or application-consistent outline. No, it is not arbitrary. It is a feature of purpose. What is the purpose of this message? I may say, "In this message, what I really want is for people to change their behaviors." In that case I may use a principle-consistent application: "Because this is true, you should do this, and this, and this." Other times I may want people not to change their behaviors, but only to reinforce a behavior. Then I may use

an application-consistent outline: "Do this for this reason, for this reason, and for this reason. You already know to do this, but you are not doing it. You need to reexamine this reason, this reason, and this reason, so you will be doing what you already know to do." For example, "You should pray more." Well, I knew that before I came here. Why should I do it? Thus the message will be about reinforcing that application. Now, it may be that an application- or principle-consistent message could be preached on the same text, given what you know pastorally is the purpose to which you are directing this message.

It has also been asked if one type (application- or principle-consistent) lends itself better to web or flow. Probably not. Almost always, web will occur when there is some hard situation to be addressed. Then you will be looking for a text to address a certain situation. In those times I would probably be most often looking to reinforce already known concepts. For example, "You already know to believe and have faith in God in this position. Here is another reason and another reason…" That may be true, but I have not really thought that through. But web and flow usually relate to how we select texts rather than to how we form the message.

What if your proposition comes from a different text than the rest of the message you are preaching? Technically, that would be known as a textual message, and we will not do that this semester. An expository message will get its proposition and main points from the text. Textual preaching has a rich history in homiletics, but we will not do that this semester. We will do expository messages. I will say, what does this text say? We may go to other texts to support or corroborate, "Here is what it says here, and I can show you it is here, but just so you know it is true, I can point you to other texts as well." But we will not say, "Here is something from 1 John. Now let us see how it is played out in the life of David." We will not do that yet. That is technically called a textual message, where main points come from the text but developmental features come from somewhere else. We will say main points and subpoints come from this text. This semester we will do expository preaching only. We will talk about some of those definitions in the lessons to come.

Now, if the text you are dealing with is a repetition of a previous text, it provides context. We will say that context is part of the text. In order to understand this text, you need to know where that repetition was. It is necessary for interpretation of the text to identify its context. However, that is different from a textual message. You can have a series of messages on a topic, and an individual message can be preached expositorily. However, that would be known as a topical message and is different from an expository message. A topical message takes its topic from the text, but its development comes from other texts. That technically is not an expository message. That does not mean it is not from the Bible or could not be developed scripturally. But an expository message solemnly binds itself to say, "I will tell you what this text means." Now, I may have a subject in it, but I am not saying, "Here is the subject: prayer. Now let me tell you what five texts say on prayer." We are saying, "This is what this text says." You can preach the topic of prayer expositionally, drawing it from Scripture. But an expository message according to its historical definition gets its main points and subpoints from this text. That is its definition.

Here are some cautions for propositions and main points. First, make sure propositions and main points are not coexistent. Coexistence occurs when the thought or wording of a main point is too much like the proposition or another main point. It is when the thought or wording of a main point is too much like the proposition or another main point. Here is an example: the proposition is "Because Jesus is the only hope of salvation, we must preach Christ at every opportunity." The first main point is "Because Jesus is the only hope of salvation, we must preach Christ whenever there is an opportunity." Those are different words, are they not? But what is the first main point conceptually like? It is just the proposition over again. Even though I have chosen different words, the concept has not changed. Now, what does the

hearer, who is not looking at an outline but just listening, wonder? "Was that a development or was that the same thing over again?" Or, let us say you use that main point as the third main point. "Because Jesus is the only hope of salvation, we must preach Christ whenever there is an opportunity." What if that was the third main point? People would say, "Wait a second, we already talked about that. We have been there already." Coexistence usually happens when you choose different words but the concept is too much like the first one. You have already been there. Do you know when you usually notice that you have done this? When you start doing the application and you have nothing different to say than what you said in that other main point.

As another example, "We should pray more" could be the application for the first main point. Then, "We should pray more frequently" might be the application of a coexistent main point. You may think, "What can I say now that would be different from what I just said?" The applications seem to be the same. Thus we want to make sure the concept as well as the wording differs between the main points. In other words, coexistence may be conceptual as well as terminological.

Another thing to do is to make sure the proposition does not inadvertently indicate a development or structure the main points do not reflect. If the magnet clause of one of my main points is "Jesus saves and keeps," what do people automatically assume the subpoints will be? "Saves" and "Keeps." What gave them the clue that those were the subpoints? The conjunction "and" in the wording of the magnet clause. If you use conjunctions, the ear hears that as divisions. Do you hear that? You meant to unite two concepts, but the ear hears it as a division. Thus if you say, "Jesus saves and keeps," you have already signaled to people what your subpoints are. But what if you meant to say, "My first subpoint is 'He hears and responds,'" well, the ear was not prepared for those words. What if your first subpoint was simply something like, "He saves and responds"? The ear is still not prepared for that, it is still confused. If you create what is called "branching," which is what conjunctions create, you have orally told people where you are going. This can be very effective, can it not? You may even word the clause with a conjunction rather than saying, "Here is what we will be talking about." But what you do not want to do is to create a development you do not follow, because then you only create confusion. If, for example, you work on a Philippians passage, you may want to say, "Because Jesus died and rose again, we should follow Him." What will people automatically assume your subpoints will be? "Jesus died" and "Jesus rose again." If you want to communicate that as one concept, what would you say? "Because Jesus rose…" That is the overarching concept, because in order to rise, Jesus must have died. If you have to choose, choose the overarching concept.

Now, what if you wanted to say, "My first subpoint is that Jesus died"? What if my first subpoint is "Jesus died" and my second is "He rose again."? Then what would I want to do? I may very well want to put those branches into the wording so that those subpoints follow. But here is the idea: we want to avoid branching unless we use it. If you want to use it, then put it in, by all means. It can be very helpful. But avoid branching unless you use it.

Here are some helpful hints to know whether or not we are wording main points as we want. The first is the "imperative test": do you have within that main point a "we should" or a "you should"? Is there an imperative clause? Is there a "we" or "you should…" (or a "we" or "you must…")? Is there an imperative clause? By the way, if you do not use the "we" or the "you," you could use a verb in the imperative mode, right? For example, "Pray, because God listens." What is the missing implied pronoun there? "You," "You should pray." So you can use an imperative mode verb. But the danger would be if you have two clauses and neither has an application. "Because God is sovereign, He raised Jesus from the dead." What is missing? I have two clauses, but what is missing? There is no imperative. "Because God is sovereign, He raised Jesus from the dead." There are two clauses, but there is no "you" or "we."

These are technically known as statements of fact, but not exhortations. There is no exhortation. It is simply a statement of fact about something because it has no exhortation clause.

Second, there is the "stand-alone test." Will the principle clause stand alone? If you were to only read the principle clause, would it make sense unto itself? You kind of chop it apart from the other clause and say, "Does that make sense or not?" Here is a non-example: "Because Jesus promises it, we should love Him." If you were just to chop off the principle clause, which would it be? "Jesus promises it." Does that make sense? What are all your questions? "Jesus promises it." I have no idea what that means. So look at the principle clause and say, "If I were to make that stand on its own, does it make sense?" It is supposed to be a universal truth. Thus if I just look at it unto itself, will it stand alone? A better example is "Because Jesus promises His love, we should love Him." In that case, "Jesus promises His love" makes sense unto itself.

Now, here is one key hint: do not use pronouns in both the magnet and anchor clauses. This is known as a double pronoun error. "Because Jesus loves us, we should proclaim Him." To whom does the "we" refer? It refers to "us." This is a pronoun referring to a pronoun. Who is the "us"? You could say, "Because Jesus loves His people," "Because Jesus loves believers," or "Because Jesus loves His children." Make sure the pronoun refers to a noun, if you have a pronoun. You do not always have to have a noun in the first clause. But you do not want a pronoun referring to a pronoun. You need a noun or an implied noun.

There is also the "*non sequitur* test." Make sure the application clause logically flows from the principle clause. The simple fact that you have two clauses does not mean they work together. "Because God comforts the grieving, we should tithe." Now, there is both principle and application there. But they do not go together. Thus you want to make sure that they go together. The simple fact that you have both principle and application does not make it work. You want to make sure the thought flows: that is a *sequitur*, not a *non sequitur*.