

A Local Church Training Program for Potential Preachers

Peter Adam

What is preaching?

‘The ministry of the word to the gathered congregation in expository Biblical Preaching that is passionate and applied.’

It is a ministry which aims to convert unbelievers, to mature believers, to mature the church, and to train the congregation in godliness and good ministry.

Its focus is God and Jesus Christ, it is based on the Scriptures inspired by the Holy Spirit of truth, it derives its message from those Scriptures, and it is culturally and pastorally contextualized and addressed to the congregation. It provides information, and also aims to engage the mind, heart, will, and actions of the people. It teaches, exhorts, and encourages a response.

Why train preachers?

- God has gifted some people in your church with gifts of preaching.
- Future preachers are among people in your church. So, run a 'nursery for preachers', to provide labourers for God's harvest field in the present and also in the future, for Australia, and for overseas.
- You are praying that God will raise up gospel workers for his global harvest, and you are mentoring and encouraging and training those you think might be these workers in the future. This program could be part of your program.
- For many people who would be able to train for full time ministry of the word, in Australia or overseas, their main hesitation is that they feel very little confidence about public ministry, public speaking, and public Bible teaching and preaching. So a preaching course and small preaching opportunities can open doors for them, and help them gain in confidence.
- The first training and most influential preaching that future preachers receive will be in their church of origin. The minister of a church should be the main preacher and teacher, otherwise the church will lack edificatory direction and purpose: and public Bible teaching and preaching is at the heart of ordination. However, the minister will benefit from training other preachers and from forming a preaching team, and the church will benefit from having a range of trained preachers. This is a good investment in present and future ministry in the church.
- Even missionaries who go overseas to do medical or other work will need to be able to preach in the country to which they go, and when they return to Australia. They also need training.
- 'How will they hear without a preacher?' 'The sower sows the word.' 'Make disciples of all nations, baptizing them ... and teaching them.' 'Pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out labourers into his harvest.'

A FIRST TRAINING PROGRAM

1. Preliminary to the first training program

You should remember the vitally influential role of the regular preaching in the local church in raising up future preachers. People will not want to preach unless they hear good preaching and are influenced by it, and see others being influenced by it. The strongest influence on preachers is the preaching that they hear and which influences them. This is the style of preaching they will naturally reproduce in their own preaching. You will help others if you preach well, and model good preaching. Potential preachers will be encouraged by good preaching, and discouraged by bad preaching.

So you must ensure that the general preaching is of a high standard, and must include in the expectations of the outcomes of preaching that God will use it to raise up future preachers. Preachers should model good use of the Bible, for the benefit of the congregations' own Bible reading, and also to train Bible study leaders and future preachers.

You should also have in place a general policy of training people to do any ministry you ask them to do. This should include basic discipleship, and training for those who teach young people, those who lead Bible studies or small groups, for evangelism, etc. There are many benefits from this, and one is foundational training for potential preachers.

1. Selection

i. **The selection of the right people is crucial for the training program.**

You will be praying fervently that God will raise up workers for the church and for God's global gospel plan, that God will give gifts to his church, and that the church will recognize and encourage those with gifts to use them to God's glory. You might well ask church leaders for suggestions of people to invite to join the training program.

ii. **You need to select those who will take part in the first training program.**

The program might attract unsuitable people, who over-value public ministry, who think they can do a better job than the minister, or who want an opportunity to promote themselves or their ideas. You may select people by taking the initiative in approaching people, or by announcing that the training program is about to happen, and inviting expressions of interest. But you must finally make the decision to include or exclude people from the program.

iii. **Those selected should show both Christian character and gifts.**

- a. They must show maturity suitable to their age, or the opportunity to preach will damage them and others.
- b. They must have the desire to serve and use their gifts for the common good. This is more than wanting to show off their gifts, or only being willing to do things they are good at. It means a genuine desire to serve others, not themselves.
- c. They must have a track-record of having and using the gifts of understanding, teaching, and applying the Bible. This will include leading Bible studies, leading youth work that includes Bible teaching, evangelism that includes Bible teaching, etc. This means that they will have the gift of explaining things clearly, adapting their knowledge to the capacity of those who hear them, If they do not have these gifts and this track-record of effective ministry, then further training and ministry opportunity will be wasted.
- d. Their effective ministry of teaching others already is an essential pre-requisite, not least because it uses two of the gifts which preachers need: understanding the Bible, and applying it to people.

iv. Those selected should show potential for significant growth in the gifts of understanding, teaching, and applying the Bible.

It must be obvious that they have greater potential for ministry in the future, and this will mean that they are productive and fruitful in their present ministries of the word.

v. Those selected and invited to join the first training program need to understand that doing the program does not ensure that they will subsequently be invited to preach.

If people are not willing to join the program on this condition, then they are unsuitable anyway.

2. The Program

The purpose of this training program is to teach people to expound and apply the Bible, that is, to do effective basic expository preaching. I have usually run twelve evenings, of 2 hours each. Sessions 1-5 are teaching, and in sessions 6-12 students preach their 10-minute sermons.

At the beginning of the training program, the students are allocated the passage of the sermon they will preach during the program. It is best to focus on one book of the Bible, and choose sequential passages from a short epistle, like 1 Peter, Colossians or Philippians. Epistles are easier, because the application is more explicit. If the group is more able, then a gospel or Old Testament book would be more useful.

The 10-minute sermons rule must be applied: for this teaches students to be disciplined, and trains them in the vital skill of focusing on the main point of the sermon, and discarding good material to enable this to happen.

Student also need to learn to benefit from feedback given to others' sermons, and not to be so self-focused that they only concentrate on their own sermon.

These expectations should be made clear in the first session.

The first training program has a two-fold focus:

- a. To help people recognize the gifts, understanding, training and skills that they already have that they will use in preparing and preaching sermons.
- b. To help people learn the new skills that are needed to prepare and to preach.

This two-fold focus should be present in each of the 12 sessions.

There are suggestions for the content of the program below.

3. Launching the Preachers

i. You will need to decide about who will be launched and who will not.

Those who will not be launched as preachers need to be affirmed in their present ministries. This is why it is good to set a 12 week program: at the end of it you can decide who should preach publicly and continue to be trained and mentored, and who should not.

ii. A new preacher should not preach a sermon in church without it being assessed and approved beforehand by the minister.

Difficult feedback should be given before the sermon is preached, not afterwards. And you have a duty to the congregation to maintain good preaching.

This includes three sessions with the preacher.

- a. One session two months before the sermon is preached where the new preacher presents the exegesis and application of the sermon in draft form.
- b. One session one month before the sermon is preached where the preacher produces the full text of the draft sermon.
- c. One session two weeks before the sermon is preached in which the new preacher preaches the sermon in the church in front of the minister.

Give feedback at each session.

iii. You may also find suitable less threatening contexts and to launch preachers.

These include: preaching a sermon at a Bible study group; preaching at a small mid-week service; preaching at an aged care facility; giving a short address at the Youth group; giving a short address in a larger program of street evangelism; giving a short sermon at a church weekend, men's weekend, women's weekend, youth camp.

- a. The minister may plan a sermon series on a book of the Bible, and form a preaching team for that series, including some new preachers. The minister would preach 8 out of the 12 sermons, and new preachers one each. The team works together on the whole book together on the whole series, and then each new preacher preaches their sermon to the team before they preach it in church.
- b. You may be able to find opportunities for participants to preach in other churches nearby, or other ministry contexts which would welcome the ministry of new preachers.
- c. Two years after new preachers have been launched you should talk with them about the shape of their future ministry.
- d. You could ask several of those who have done the training program to help run the next program.

You may find good ideas about training preachers, and good material in Allan Chapple, *Preaching: A Guidebook for Beginners*, London, Latimer Trust.

Another good book is David Helm, *Expositional Preaching: How We Speak God's Word Today*, 9Marks, Building Healthy Churches.

You could use either as the textbook for your training program.

The Proclamation Trust in the UK has DVDs and other material available to train preachers. <http://www.proctrust.org.uk>

The Charles Simeon Trust in the USA also has plenty of good material. <https://simeontrust.org/>

FURTHER TRAINING

You may decide to run another program for those with preaching gifts, because they need more training.

Here are some suggestions of areas in which they may need more training, and some suggestions for basic level resources, which you could use for a training program:

- The inspiration and authority of the Bible. J I Packer, *God has Spoken*, Hodder.
- Biblical Theology. Vaughan Roberts, *God's big picture: tracing the story line of the Bible*, IVP.
- Systematic Theology. Graham Cole, *Faithful Theology: An Introduction*, Crossway; or Robert Letham, *Systematic Theology*, Crossway.
- Key Bible words. J I Packer, *God's Words*, Baker.
- Understanding the literature of the Bible. Gordon Fee and Douglas Stuart, *How to Read the Bible for All Its Worth*, Zondervan, and Leland Ryken, *How to read the Bible as literature, and get more out of it*, Zondervan.
- The process of exegesis. Nigel Beynon and Andrew Sach, *Dig Deeper*, IVP.
- An introduction to each book of the Bible. Gordon Fee and Douglas Stuart, *How to Read the Bible Book by Book*, Zondervan.
- Finding the central ministry purpose of the book of the Bible. e.g., <https://stjudes.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/Finding-the-ministry-purpose-of-a-book-of-the-Bible-Peter-Adam.pdf>
- A practical theology of preaching. Peter Adam, *Speaking God's Words*, IVP.
- Cross-cultural awareness. Evelyn and Richard Hibbert, *Walking Together on the Jesus Road: Discipling in Intercultural Contexts*, William Carey Library.

Or you could work through a practical book on preaching, such as Bryan Chappell, *Christ-Centred Preaching*, Baker; Denis Lane, *Preach the Word*, Evangelical Press; Samuel T. Logan, Jr., [ed.], *The Preacher and Preaching*, Presbyterian and Reformed; and Haddon Robinson, *Expository Preaching*, InterVarsity Press.

The books recommended above are just suggestions. You may well find resources which are more useful to you.

4. Topical sermons: a warning!

I recommend that you do not ask new preachers who do not have a theology degree to preach topical sermons. If you do, they will need lots of help! A topical sermon requires a comprehensive understanding of relevant Biblical material and more theological ability than just linking together relevant words.

For example, for a topical sermon on 'War', there is ample Biblical material, but its relevance to contemporary warfare between competing nations is limited, because we do not engage in OT 'holy wars'. Or a sermon on gender identity is difficult because there is little if any Bible teaching which is directly relevant to the current debate. We have to work from implications of Bible teaching, which requires considerable Biblical theological and pastoral wisdom. I advise young preachers to do regular preaching for ten years before they tackle a topical sermon!

THE CONTENT OF THE PROGRAM

I would spend the first six weeks in teaching people how to preach, and the second six weeks in hearing their sermons and giving feedback. They need to stand up and give their sermons, preaching to the group.

The first session

Introduction, outline of the program, explanation of the purpose of the program, and explanation of the sermons to be preached by students. This includes the passages and dates, the reason for the 10-minute rule, and the expectation that students will benefit from the sermons preached by others, and from the feedback received by others.

Include focus on the book from which the sermons will be taken. Introduce the book, its main message, its particular features, and general issues of interpretation and application. Perhaps you could recommend a good commentary [and have copies available].

People will have lots of questions, so allow plenty of time.

You could also introduce students to these useful aids for the preacher:

- A Bible Atlas.
- A Bible Dictionary.
- Bible commentaries.
- A One Volume Bible Commentary. [These are useful because they do not include any unnecessary information, are usefully brief, and give basic information on every book in the Bible.]

Make sure that the people meet each other, and develop a supportive fellowship for the training program. Perhaps form small prayer groups of 2 or 3, and get them to pray together each week.

Make sure that you include time for prayers in each session: for without God making and sustaining preachers nothing will happen! Take time to pray for the church, for the ministry of the word in the church, for those who preach, and for those in the training program.

6. Some useful material

i. Text and application.

A common pattern is to preach the sermon, then add the application.

Text	Today
1	Application
2	
3	
→	

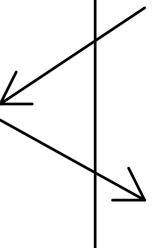
This is not a bad approach, but it has some drawbacks. If used every week, it will become boring; it encourages people to slumber for most of the sermon, and wake up for the last five minutes; and if the preacher runs out of time, then the application is rushed or left out.

Another way to preach is to apply the points of the sermon on the way through.

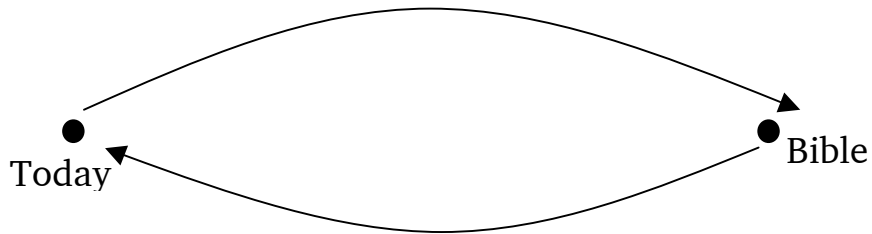
Text	Today
1 →	application
2 →	application
3 →	application
summary →	summary

This encourages people to listen, and each relevant application prompts close attention to the next point from the text.

Another way of preaching is to begin with the confusion and misunderstanding that surround us today on the subject of the text, go to the text for the truth, and then apply the truth to the congregation.

Text	Today
Text	 <p>wrong ideas and practice</p> <p>right ideas and practice</p>

Another way to preach is to put the Application at the start of the sermon, then explain the text that supports the Application, and then repeat the Application briefly at the end.



Or

Text	Today
Text	long application
	shorter application

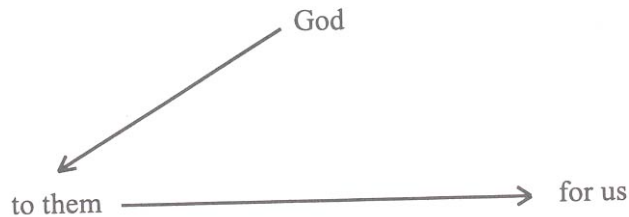
Remember – don't use the same pattern again and again!

ii. 'To them', 'for us'

Read 1 Corinthians 10: 1-13. Notice the theme of 'to them...for us.' This is a good way of thinking about the Bible. For every time we read and preach the Bible we have to travel back to the text, and then back to our world and ourselves.

So preachers need to know the world of the Bible and the world of their hearers so well, that they can help their hearers move to the world of the Bible, and then return from the Bible-world to their own world again.

This is because the Bible was written ‘to them, for us.’ It is not directly addressed to us. Though God intended us to hear it, he caused it to be written to another people at another time, and then preserved it for us.



So at some stage in the sermon, we will need to help our hearers make a journey, to Galilee, Corinth, Colossae, or Patmos in the 1st Century AD, or to Sinai, Moab, Samaria, Jerusalem, Babylon or Egypt in the centuries before Christ. This is a journey to a different time, a different place, a different context, a different culture, a different place in Salvation History, and a different place in the unfolding Biblical Theology of the Scriptures. When we have heard the message of the Bible to those people of that time and place, then we are ready to return to our own world, and apply what we have learnt, while remaining aware of the significance of the journey.

God communicates to us in the Bible, but as the secondary receivers of his words. The primary receivers were the people to whom and for whom the original words were spoken or written down. All subsequent readers and hearers have had to realize that they are the secondary receivers, and so they need to understand what was intended for the primary receivers, and then transpose that meaning to themselves.

This was an issue for the first readers of the Bible. The church at Rome was the primary receiver of Paul’s letter to the Romans, but the secondary received of his letter to Galatians. And when the church at Corinth received Paul’s first letter, they were the primary receivers. But by the time they received Paul’s second letter, they were the secondary receivers of the first letter, because the situation had changed: they had to imagine themselves back into their previous situation to understand who to apply the first letter again in different circumstances!

We often use a short-cut, when we say that the Bible is God’s word to us. It is, but only as we read it as firstly God’s words to others. This is

doubly important when reading the Old Testament; but still important when reading the New. For even Christians in New Testament times had to understand that the Old Testament was firstly addressed to God's people in old covenant times, and not take it as direct instructions for themselves. But when they read New Testament books that were not directly and immediately addressed to them, they still had to engage in the same exercise.

This sounds complicated, but even children learn this skill when they read stories of different places, different people, and different times.

We can economise our effort by failing to take our hearers to the world of the Bible, and preaching our own best ideas. Or we can economise by taking them to the world of Bible, and leaving them there. This is false economy, because our message is then either trivial, or irrelevant. Every Biblical sermon involves these two journeys, to hear what God said 'to them,' and then to hear how what it means 'for us.'

Sometimes we try to collapse the gap between 'them' and 'us', by imagining ourselves into the Bible text. The difficulty with this is that we tend to import our own presuppositions, fears, hopes, feelings and experiences into the text, and so obscure what is in the text. Of course, we should make the best sense we can of what is in the text in the light of our own experience, but we still need to be aware of the essential gap between ourselves and the text. We exercise the same self-discipline and awareness of that gap when we talk with other people today. We use our experience to help us understand them, but we must not read our experience into them, or we never really meet them, and they feel rightly misunderstood.

Because we are not the original first receivers of the Bible, we need to exercise pastoral intelligence in know which messages of the Bible are presently and immediately relevant to us and which are not.

Here are some exercises on how going back to the original context will help us get more from the text. Get groups to study John 15: 1-11, Luke 15, Revelation 3:14-22, to see how the original context is the key to its meaning.

iii. Applying the Bible to the church.

Much evangelical preaching is addressed to individuals. However, the Bible is addressed to the people of God, and preaching is a ministry which is addressed to the people of God. So both the message and medium should focus on the church, the congregation.

Good home group and bible study leaders are well experienced in assessing the pastoral needs of individuals: their strengths, weaknesses, sins, gifts, relationships, ministry opportunities and spiritual potential. Preachers have to learn to apply the same skills to the congregation. This needs to be done for the sake of the

congregation. It also needs to be done for the sake of the individual members of the congregation.

Evangelicalism and contemporary society are so irredeemably individualistic that it is very difficult for preachers to allow corporate sin or corporate repentance in their world-view, and therefore difficult for them to apply their sermon to the congregation as a whole.

Part of the problem is that when we read the Bible it is not always obvious when 'you' means an individual, and when 'you' means a group. The context will answer this question.

Corporate strengths and gifts.

Churches can have shared strengths. These might include generosity, patience, welcoming newcomers, evangelism, love for Christ, desire to learn from the Bible, mutual encouragement.

Many blessings will flow from these strengths:

- Those who have these strengths in these areas will be greatly encouraged.
- Anyone who visits the church will be encouraged by the shared strength, and it will be obvious to them.
- New Christians and new members of the church will naturally adopt these strengths.
- Those who have particular gifts will be encouraged to use them.
- The church will encourage itself to grow in this strength as it sees God's blessing in its present life.
- Other churches will be challenged to grow in the same strength.
- Those who leave the church to go to other churches will take the strength with them, and may be able to encourage the church they join to grow in the same strength.

Read 1 Thessalonians and Revelation 2. What are the strengths of these churches, and what is God's response to these strengths?

Corporate sins or ‘body sins’ of a congregation

[here ‘corporate’ means of the body of Christ, not ‘corporate’ as in big business].

This includes sins that are shared by the congregation, and that they will not allow to be challenged. It includes sins of individuals that the congregation does not rebuke or correct. Body sins are the most serious sins, because they are sins which are most universal, and sins which affect all individuals, either because they allow individuals to commit these sins, or because they discourage individuals who do not commit these sins.

These sins might be gossip, failure to evangelise, failure to welcome newcomers, selfishness, prayerlessness, or indifference to the honour of Christ or the teaching of the Bible.

Let’s think what happens if any of these are prevalent in a congregation:

- The leaders must be colluding in the sin, failing to challenge; failing to provide leadership. So the leaders are leading the congregation to commit the sin.
- The mood of the congregation is that those who commit this sin are not corrected either corporately or privately. It is a publicly acceptable sin.
- Most of the congregation will be committing the sin in the shared activities of the church.
- Most of the congregation will also be committing the sin in their individual lives.
- Those who do not commit the sin will be increasingly discouraged, as they see that the majority commit the sin, get away with it, are not challenged, and do not repent.
- New converts will automatically adopt the sin for themselves as part of the normal Christian life, or they will react against it and leave the church or give up Christianity.
- Those who have a special gift that is negated by the sin will be discouraged. For example, gifted evangelists will be discouraged if the church is not committed to evangelism, gifted encouragers will be discouraged if there is lots of gossip, gifted pray-ers will be discouraged in a prayerless church.

In general, churches don’t mind preachers rebuking individual sins: they tend to object to preachers who rebuke corporate or body sins.

There are books of the Bible that are addressed to individuals. But in the case of Luke and Acts, this is a literary device designed to gain a wider readership. In the case of 1 and 2 Timothy and Titus, the main recipients are the named leaders: however each letter ends with a greeting of grace to the church. Even Philemon is addressed to the church, see 1:2.

Here are some exercises to help potential preachers to begin to think this way. You could get three small groups to work in two of these, and then report back to the others.

- a. Read Daniel 9:1-19. What were the sins that Daniel confessed, and who committed them? Read 2 John. What were the strengths of the church, and what were its sins?
- b. Read Haggai 1:1-2:9. What were the sins of the people, and how should they repent? Read Revelation 3. What were the strengths of the three churches, and what were their sins?
- c. Read 1 Peter 1:1-2:10. What was Peter's message for the churches? Read 1 Corinthians 1. What was the sin which Paul rebukes, and how did he show that it was wrong?

It would be appropriate for the minister to talk about the current body sins of the church, and how they are being tackled in the sermons. The members of the preaching program might have some ideas as well! This session should end with prayers for the church.

FROM BIBLE TO SERMON: 25 STEPS

[This is a slow-motion description of sermon preparation for beginners.]

1. Time

Don't be surprised if a sermon takes you a long time to prepare. Most of us take 8-10 hours. If you are starting to preach—or do so infrequently—it will take you longer. And one-off sermons take longer to prepare. Most people find it best to use 1 or 2-hour blocks of preparation time.

I try to spend half my total preparation time on steps 1-11, and then half on steps 12-25.

2. Pray

Pray for God's help in preparing the sermon. Pray that you will understand the text. Pray for the people whom you will serve by preaching. Pray that you will be pastorally sensitive, that the people will hear and respond, and that the fruits of obedience will be found in their lives.

3. Bible passage

Choose your Bible passage. It may be given to you, or you may have to choose one. Make sure that it is not so short that it is meaningless, nor so long that it is unmanageable. Topical sermons are more difficult to preach: if you are asked to give one, then preach on the Bible passage that is most relevant.

4. Find the meaning of Bible passage and its intended impact

Work through the text word by word, asking yourself, “What does this word mean?” “Why is this sentence here?” “What is this and why is it here?” You may find commentaries—or discussing the text with friends—helpful at this stage.

5. Find the theological meaning of the text

Ask yourself: “What basic and important theological themes are reflected in the text?” “What particular aspect is expressed through the text?” “What does the text say about God and his purposes?” Go deeper than immediate practical application.

6. Study the text in its context in the chapter and section of the book.

Look for major themes, repeated ideas, developing arguments or ideas.

7. Study the text in its context of the whole book in which it occurs.

What is the pastoral purpose of the whole book? How does this passage fit into that pastoral purpose?

8. Study the text in the context of the whole Bible.

How does this passage fit into the whole Bible; in the light of its gradual revelation—from promise to fulfilment in Christ—in the light of Salvation History and Biblical Theology?

9. Focus on the question, ‘Why was it written?’

We often focus on what is happening in the text or on what it means to us. We need to ask: “What did the person who wrote these words hope they would do to the people who first received them?” “What did God intend these words to do when he inspired them?”

10. Don’t individualise a text that addresses God’s people as a whole

Most Bible books are addressed to the people of God—the church as a whole. Don’t individualise their message.

11. Don’t universalise the message of the text

No one text of the Bible says all that the Bible teaches on a topic, so don’t pretend that it does. (For example, if you preach on John 5:1-16 about the healing of the paralysed man, on the basis of v. 14, you might be tempted to say that all sickness is the result of sin. That is not the case, as you will find in John 9:1-3!)

12. What questions will the congregation have about the passage?

Think of the people who will hear this sermon, such as enquirers, new believers, mature Christians, outsiders, atheists. When they hear this passage read, what questions will they have? What will they find difficult? What are they likely to misunderstand? What do they need to know?

13. How does it connect with, and apply to, the congregation?

What are the connections between the Bible passage and the everyday lives of the congregation? How does it apply to the particular congregation to whom I will preach? It may help you to think of particular individuals, or types of people, and ask yourself the question: “If they lived according to this text what difference would it make to their lives?” Think about and pray for the people who will hear it.

14. Decide what aspect you will preach

Almost any text you choose will have far more in it than you can possibly cover in one sermon. You have to decide which one aspect you will preach on. Write a one sentence summary of your theme: “What I really want to preach on is ...”

15. Write your one sentence

Write down the aim of your sermon in one sentence, including the content, the means, and the end/purpose of the sermon. Use interactive language: not “my topic is ...”, but “I want you to ... so that ...” Unless you can give the purpose of your sermon in one sentence, your congregation will never understand it.

16. Prune away the rest

This is a most important step where you discard what you will not preach on this time. You have to prune away what you won't preach on, so that what you *will* preach on is left in simple clarity.

17. Shape what remains

Here your task is to organise your material according to the one sentence purpose you have just decided on. Achieving that one sentence will involve a number of steps—now is the time to choose and shape them.

18. Arrange the application

Decide whether to leave all the application to the end or whether to integrate it into the body of the sermon (so that you are continually moving from the text to the people in front of you). Or you could begin with the application, to give the congregation motivation to listen to the rest of the sermon, then restate the application at the end.

19. Write the conclusion

You are now in a position to write the end of your sermon. It will include:

- a summary of the sermon;
- that one sentence repeated;
- the specific action which you expect to occur on the part of your hearers.

20. Write the introduction

Now that you have written the body of the sermon and the conclusion of the sermon, you can write the introduction. It is good to begin with a question, or a statement of the problem that leads directly and naturally into the sermon.

21. Check back with the Bible passage

Now that you have your sermon before you, check back with the Bible and make sure that what you are preaching is in the passage. Beware of distorting it, or reading your own thoughts and agenda into it. If you have not been true to the passage, rewrite the sermon.

22. Review for hearing

Hearing something is very different from reading it. Don't preach an essay! Make sure that you present your sermon with the right language and style for hearing. This will mean that the steps will need to be simple and that you will need to summarise all the way through what you have done and where it fits into the sermon. Perhaps preach it to a few friends in the place where you will preach it later.

23. Arrange your notes

You may choose to have your sermon written out entirely or you may decide to use brief notes. Either way, make sure that you can read them without squinting. If you have brief notes, make sure that you have your one sentence summary clear—and perhaps include one-sentence summaries of each of the paragraphs or main points. Make sure that the lectern and microphone are well placed when you preach.

24. Know it

Spend time reflecting on the sermon and reading it through so that you know it well.

25. Pray again

Praise God that he will use your hard work for his glory; that he will use the Bible to build up his church and convert unbelievers to Christ.