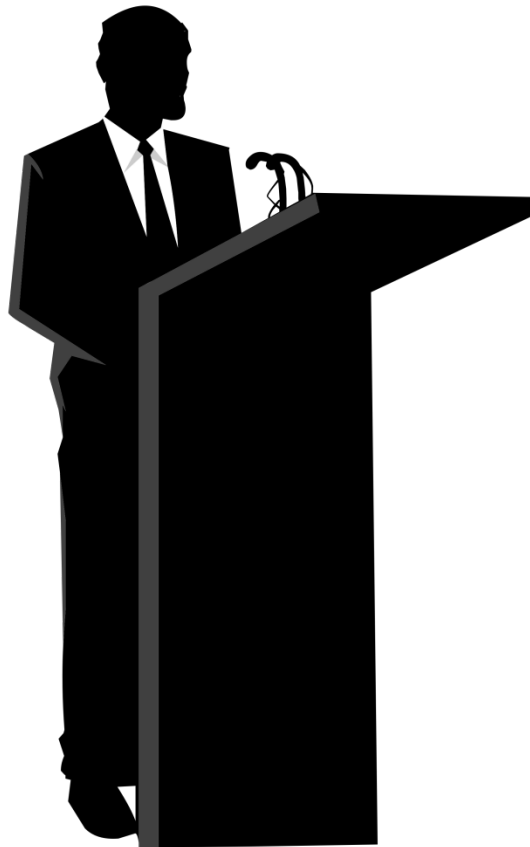


PREACHING & TEACHING GOD'S WORD

2 Timothy 4:2 Preach the word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage—with great patience and careful instruction.



Rev. Dr. Jerry Schmoyer
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WORDS ABOUT THE BOOK BY **PASTOR MOSES**

WORDS ABOUT THE BOOK BY
PASTOR ??????

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PREFACE

When I was a young pastor, I developed a great appreciation for the Bible as the living, inspired Word of God. I developed an awesome respect for it, which continues to grow even today. It is the main tool of my trade – teaching and preaching God’s Word. My knowledge of the Bible and skill in using it has grown as I have grown. My love for God and His Word continues to grow.

It is more than just a tool to help me accomplish my ministry; it has become my lifeline to God, my anchor and rock in life. I not only like and appreciate it, I find myself deeply needing it. The better I know the facts of the Bible the more I realize there is a depth to it that can never be fully understood in this life. I am learning it with more than my mind but also with my heart. It has become very precious and special to me.

My involvement in spiritual warfare ministry has taught me that it is only God’s Word that carries authority, not mine or anyone else’s. Satan and his demons must obey God’s Word when we use it. There is real power in the Word of God when we believe and quote it. That’s how Jesus overcame temptations in the wilderness and it’s the sword of the Spirit, which Paul talks about – our only offensive weapon.

The Bible becomes more amazing to me as I go on in life. The more I know of it, the less I find I really know all there is to know! It’s simple enough for a child to understand, but the greatest scholar can spend a lifetime in just one part of it and never get to the full depth of it. It speaks to our mind, emotions and spirit all at once.

I have been teaching and preaching God’s Word for well over 50 years. God has gifted me to be able to study His Word and turn what I learn into sermons that edify and encourage God’s people. I estimate I have written and preached well over 10,000 messages and lessons in those years. As a result, I have learned much about studying and preaching God’s Word. I have written “Studying the Bible” and “Preaching and Teaching the Bible” to pass on to others what I have learned.

This book is based on having read “Studying the Bible.” It must be understood before using this book for this book takes what has been learned in personal Bible study and applies it to sermon and lesson preparation.

I am an American, and most of my ministry has been in the USA and India. But what this book teaches about developing messages has nothing to do with American or Indian culture. What I describe is God’s way for all cultures and all times. In order to do this, I base what I say on the messages and sermons in the Bible. The way Jesus Himself preached, along with Paul and Peter and others, provides the framework for how we, too, should express God’s Word today.

For the purposes of this book, I use ‘preaching’ and ‘teaching’ interchangeably. To some, preaching refers more to the application while teaching refers more to conveying of content, but both must be present in each. The principles I outlined in this book apply the same no matter.

2 Timothy 3:16 All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.

Psalms 119:9-11 How can a young man keep his way pure? By living according to your word. I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you.

Hebrews 4:12 For the word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart.

INTRODUCTION

2 Timothy 4:2 Preach the word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage—with great patience and careful instruction.

Years ago I read a story about a man who had to give his pet dog some medicine. Every morning he would hold the dog tightly, pry open his mouth and try to force the fluid down his throat. The dog would kick, shake and try to get away. It was very hard for the man to get the dog to swallow the medicine. Then one day, before he could hold the dog down, the man spilled some of the medicine on the floor. Immediately the dog ran over and licked up every drop of it. The man realized the dog liked the medicine, what the dog didn't like was the way that he gave it to him!

As pastors we are responsible to feed God's Word to our people (John 21:15-17; 2 Timothy 4:1-2). What a shame it is when people turn from God's Word because of the way the pastor or teacher feeds it to them! His Word is life-giving and nourishing for our souls. There is no problem with God's Word, but there can be a problem with how we feed it to the people. This book is to help any who teach to be better able to package and communicate God's Word.

Our bodies are designed to need physical food to grow and remain physically strong and healthy. Our souls are designed to need spiritual food to grow and remain strong and healthy spiritually as well. We know it is important for food to be prepared and served in an appealing way. The food must be nutritious, balanced, have variety, look appealing and be easy to digest. The same is true for spiritual food for our bodies. We need to present God's Word in a way that is attractive, appealing, healthy and easy to apply to daily life. The purpose of this book is to help you do that.

It's easy to serve junk food that tastes good but doesn't nourish and give health. Sermons can sound good, be entertaining and fun to listen to, but not bring growth and nourishment to the souls of the listeners. Even good, healthy food can be served in an unattractive, tasteless way so that people don't enjoy eating it. Sermons can hold God's truth but be put together and communicated in such a way that is boring and uninteresting to the people. They sit through the message but don't leave with anything they remember or apply to their lives. That is sad. My previous book, "Studying the Bible," is designed to help you have good content in your messages. This book, "Preaching or Teaching the Bible," is to help you package and deliver that content in a way that people will understand, remember and apply to their lives. Handling the eternal, living Word of God and teaching it to our people is an awesome responsibility and a great privilege. How can we give it anything but our best?

We have the honor of sharing God's Word with others today. The word 'gospel' in the Greek actually means "good news." What a joy it is to share this good news – let's make sure we do a good job so those who hear us leave knowing they have heard good news communicated in a good way.

As far as I am concerned, preaching is the highest calling and greatest privilege in the world. It's greater than being a president or king. There is no responsibility greater than delivering God's Word to His people. It deserves to be done well. God's people need it to be done well in order to fully benefit from it. We who preach or teach are the link between God's Word and people's lives.

Speaking to people is easy – just stand up and talk. Almost anyone can do that. If that is all preaching is, then it, too, is easy. But if by preaching we mean communicating God's Word in a way people understand, remember and apply it to their lives, then that takes focused work and planning. Poor preaching is easy, good preaching is difficult and takes great effort. To do it well week after week, year after year, is a goal very few pastors reach. It is a skill developed over a lifetime. It can only be done with God's help (2 Corinthians 3:5). Reading and following this book will help you become more skillful in sharing the truth of God's Word in sermons or lessons.

THE IMPORTANCE OF PREACHING THE WORD

Teaching or preaching God's Word is the greatest privilege as well as the most awesome responsibility anyone can have. God commands pastors and teachers to communicate His Word in order to prepare His people for works of service (Ephesians 4:11-13). As shepherds we are responsible to feed His sheep so they are healthy and grow (Ephesians 4:11; 1 Peter 5:1-4).

God says the Bible is His inspired, accurate written Word to us and is "useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work" (2 Timothy 3:16-17). The Bible instructs us in truth and knowledge, it exposes falsehood, convicts of error, restores those who sin and provides all that is needed so that a Christian can be prepared for anything they will face in life.

In 2 Timothy 4:1-2 we are charged to "preach the Word." We are to proclaim the message of the King (1 Corinthians 9:16). It's not our ideas or opinions we are to announce but the revealed truth from God Himself. Jesus Himself, in His final charge to His disciples, commands them to teach believers to obey everything Jesus has commanded (Matthew 28:19-20). This is the way we are to make disciples, by teaching them God's Word.

Preaching God's Word is serious business because we will answer to God for what we say (Matthew 12:36-37). We are to feed His sheep with the nourishment He provides in His Word, and do it to the very best of our ability because what we say affects eternity – when we share His Words they have an eternal impact (Romans 10:9-15).

When we faithfully proclaim God's truth, we will be attacked. Those who are not filled by God's Spirit and submitted to Him will be offended by the truth and criticize the messenger – us. Even worse, Satan and his demons will do all they can to silence the truth and keep it from having an impact on those who would listen. Satan knows the power of the Word of God (Romans 1:16) even more than we do, and will use any method to keep it from being accurately and effectively preached. He will work against us as we prepare and preach, and against the listeners to keep the truth from sinking in and changing them.

So why do we preach? We preach because God's Word has changed us and God has put a desire in our hearts to see others changed through His Word as well. We have a truth inside us that must come out for it makes all the difference in the lives of those who listen. We preach because we can't help but speak of Someone so wonderful as Jesus. We preach because we care about the souls of those who don't know Him. As Paul says, "I am compelled to preach. Woe to me if I do not preach the gospel!" (1 Corinthians 9:16)

My prayer is that this book will help you be able to better communicate God's Word. I want to help you learn how to prepare and deliver effective messages. But first, we must talk about being an effective messenger. The vessel must be clean and prepared so that the message it contains will be pure and usable by God.

I. PREPARING THE MESSENGER

A. SELF PREPARATION

1. THE PREACHER'S HEART

“A prepared heart is much better than a prepared sermon. A prepared heart will make a prepared sermon.” E.M. Bounds

A prepared heart means we are spending time in God's Word and growing spiritually. It means we approach sermon preparation by asking God to speak to us through His Word so we can then pass that on to others (2 Timothy 2:6). Too often we just look for something we can say to our people, instead we must listen for what God is saying to us and then we pass that on. The message we teach our people is the same one God is teaching us. We don't just ask God what we should say to the people, we ask Him what He wants to say to us first.

Our chief right to speak God's Word to others is that we have no right to do so! If we think we are good enough, or they need us, then we miss our own unworthiness and preaching becomes about us instead of being all about Jesus.

We must keep growing in our knowledge of God, but even more so in our personal relationship with Him. It's not just knowing about God that is important, but knowing God Himself in a real, growing, loving way (Philippians 3:7-14).

As pastors, before we can even consider preaching to others, we must make sure our prayer life is strong and healthy, that we spend much time talking to God as well as listening to Him talk to us. We must be reading our Bible regularly, not just for study or sermon preparation, but even more for our own spiritual growth. We must read it to draw closer to Him and to hear from Him.

Our respect for Him and awe of Him must keep growing as well. In fact, the longer we preach the more we should be aware of the seriousness of what we do and the majesty of the God we proclaim. To do it lightly or without enough preparation should alarm us. A healthy, holy fear and respect for God is important to handle the responsibility of preaching in the way it needs to be handled. God revealed this to Isaiah (Isaiah 6:1-8; 33:14) and Moses (Exodus 19:18) when He first called them to speak for Him.

It is only when we live a consistently holy, faithful, obedient life that we are filled and used by God's Holy Spirit (Acts 2:1-4; 1 Peter 1:12). Without His presence we shouldn't even consider speaking to others for Him (John 15:5). Our heart needs to be prepared before we can preach, but so does our head.

2. THE PREACHER'S HEAD

Paul commanded Timothy to “do your best” in the way he handled the “word of truth” (2 Timothy 2:15). The Greek word used for “do your best” means “to set your heart upon something.” It means we are to be diligent, dedicated and hardworking in knowing and communicating God’s Word. God expects us to do our best. He doesn’t expect us to be perfect, or to be like other preachers, but He does expect us to put our very best effort into the preparation and delivery of His message, then He takes care of the rest (1 Corinthians 3:6-7).

Paul continues by saying we are to present ourselves “to God” as one approved (2 Timothy 2:15). He is the only one we are trying to please. What others think of our message doesn’t matter, just what God thinks. We are preaching to an audience of One – God Himself. Too often we are more concerned about what others think of our preaching, if they like us or how we compare to other pastors or teachers. We are not to be men-pleasers, only God-pleasers (Galatians 1:10).

Our goal is to “correctly handle the word of truth” (2 Timothy 2:15). Paul was a tentmaker, and the word he uses here means literally “to cut a straight line.” It means we must be able to skillfully examine and accurately interpret the Word of God. This is a command, not a suggestion. My books, “Studying God’s Word,” and “Bible Overview” were written to help with understanding God’s Word. I encourage you to read and use them as well.

So we need to prepare our heart to be fully open to God and sensitive to His leading. We need to prepare our minds to be committed to working hard at preaching and doing our very best. We must also prepare our life before we can preach.

3. THE PREACHER'S LIFE

Someone once asked Billy Graham, the great American evangelist, how long it took him to prepare a message. His answer: “A lifetime.” Preaching or teaching the Bible isn’t just something we do a few hours a week, it is part of our entire life. It’s not just something we DO, it’s who we ARE. We must live what we say, even before we say it. Our people, like our children, are more apt to do what we do than what we say. Both our life and our words must communicate the same thing. Our life must show a respect for God and His Word. Our life at home, when we are alone, with others and when preaching must always be faithful and obedient. We must be consistent in all we are and do.

Be faithful no matter the size of the group that listens to you. A larger audience won’t make you a better speaker, but a growing relationship with Jesus, with your family and with your church will. A good, close relationship with other pastors is important to be all God wants us to be.

Taking care of your health by eating healthy food, keeping your weight down, getting regular exercise, having enough time to sleep at night and taking time to relax and have fun is also important to be the man of God whom He wants you to be. Your heart, your head and your whole life must be right and ready before you can pass on God’s Word the way it deserves to be passed on.

B. SERMON PREPARATION

Before the actual preparation of the message can take place the speaker must have a Biblical approach to preaching. We must realize it is a top priority, the most important work a pastor has (John 21:15-17). That means we must manage our schedule so that there is always enough time for sermon preparation. There will be emergency situations when pressing matters make it difficult to

give all the time we need, but for the vast majority of the time we must be committed to making that a top priority with our time. We must make sure we have time to bathe the whole message in prayer from beginning to end.

In order to do this it helps if we have a regular routine in sermon preparation. We must start early enough to allow time for emergencies and still enough time for getting our message ready. We must use all parts of the Bible and not just keep going over favorite books or passages. We are given something very precious and special in the Bible. God's truth is something to handle carefully while making sure we don't keep it to ourselves. We are not given it just for ourselves, but to pass on to others (2 Timothy 2:1-2; Matthew 28:19-20). Passing on what we know is one of the things God most expects of pastors (1 Timothy 3:2; 2 Timothy 2:24).

After we are prepared spiritually, emotionally, physically and mentally, then and only then can we do our best with preparing the message.

II. PREPARING THE MESSAGE

A. BY FOCUSING ON THE PASSAGE

1. FOCUSING BY PRAYING

Real communication isn't just having the audience hear the voice of the speaker, but through the speaker's voice hearing the voice of God Himself speaking to them. When I teach or preach, I don't want people to just hear me, I want them to hear God speak to them through me. In order for that to happen I must pray before, during and after sermon preparation. If I am submitted to God's Spirit and doing my best preparation, He will use what I say for His glory. In truth, it is God's Spirit Who is the real communicator, not I. He just speaks through me when I let Him. I am the channel for God's message. It takes time with God in prayer for that to happen. It means making the whole process of choosing a passage, studying it and then turning those notes into a preaching outline something that is prayed about. It is a constant talking to God and listening to what He says to us. That is the key to a godly message. No amount of intelligence, learning, skill as a speaker or perfect sermon notes makes up for that. We can't just put together a few notes and then ask God to bless them and use them. We need to be in constant contact with Him from the very beginning to the very end. Ask Him to sit with you, lead you, speak to you, enlighten you and make what you study real in your life. Praying without ceasing is certainly key to sermon preparation (1 Thessalonians 5:17). Pray God would make the passage you are preaching clear to you and that you can make it clear to those who hear you speak (Colossians 4:4).

When you think about preaching God's Word to others, remember you are doing a task that is impossible without His help. All we can say are words, and no matter how fancy or correct they may be, without His Spirit giving them life and meaning they are just empty words (1 Corinthians 13:1).

Remember, too, that every time you begin sermon preparation you are entering into a battle. Satan will do all he can to oppose your progress from your first thoughts to the end of the delivery. He is a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour (1 Peter 5:8) and won't sit idly by while you study and share the life-giving power and freedom found in God's Word. His demons will bring distractions into your mind and schedule. Confusion, sin, laziness, pride, lust, family problems, illness or financial distractions – whatever works will come against you. If something has distracted you in the past, Satan will use it over and over. Alone you are no match for the powers of evil, but God is greater and will give you victory if you turn to Him for it (1 John 4:4).

The enemy knows how to distract your people from hearing your words as well, so pray for them as you pray for yourself. He knows how to snatch the truth out of their minds after they hear it so it doesn't bear fruit in their lives (Matthew 13:19). You are battling an enemy who is smarter and more powerful than you, so you need to stay alert and in prayer every moment of every day, especially when preparing and delivering your message. You can become a master at the principles and training this book will provide, but unless you are fully connected to God Himself in your own life you won't have His power and presence in you and flowing through you.

2. FOCUSING BY COMMITTING TO DO YOUR BEST

You can't wait until a few days before you will be preaching a sermon to begin preparing it. You need to start at least two weeks before, so that when you preach the current message you know what is coming next and can fit them together without repeating yourself or leaving out important material. You need to start early to have enough time to study the passage itself, then to think and pray about the content of your message, to have time to listen to God and put together a message worthy of the living Word of God. The earlier you start the more time the Holy Spirit has to teach you the passage and apply it to your life before you preach it.

I know nothing is impossible with God and He is able to do anything, but never count on Him bailing you out on Saturday night by giving you a good message for the following day when you haven't done much or any work on it up to that point! For a wife to serve a nourishing meal means planning ahead and doing her best to prepare a tasty, healthy meal. The same is true for us who serve the Word of God to hungry souls.

I usually know what I will be preaching about several weeks in advance. Sometimes it changes, but I have a plan laid out. I try to work on several sermons at once. When I get stuck on one, bored with it or don't know what to do next, I'll work on a different one. Then when I am fresh I'll go back to the other sermon and it will flow more smoothly. The end result is always much better as well.

I cannot overemphasize the importance of spending time in Bible study and prayer in order to fulfill your ministry. It takes time away from other things, but this is God's priority for you. When the apostles in the early church became busy helping distribute food and clothing to widows, they ordained deacons to take over that work. Important as that work was, they knew that nothing was more important than studying the Bible and praying (Acts 6:1-4). The same is true today. There is no shortcut to sermon preparation. If you are looking for this book to make your work shorter and easier you will not find it here. Anything worth doing is worth doing well, and that is true of preaching. There is a price to be paid to do something well. If you aren't willing to pay that price then you don't need to read the rest of this book and you shouldn't preach.

3. FOCUSING BY CHOOSING A PASSAGE

a. Share What God is Teaching You

Some pastors have a hard time finding a passage to preach. That's never been a problem for me. There are so many wonderful passages I want to study and share that my problem comes in having to reject all of them but one. How do I know the one to use? If there is a passage, book or Bible person that God is using to speak to me, then I will study that in more detail and use that as the basis of my sermons for others. If there is an area in my life where God is working, I will study and preach on that. I've had series on learning how to listen to God, how to know Him better, fasting, and

similar subjects as I've wanted to learn about them in my own life. When God puts a desire or burden in me to learn something for myself, He is doing it for me to share with my people as well.

At other times I will ask God to show me what I should cover to meet the deepest needs of my people. When He showed me their need for comfort and encouragement, I preached about Job, Esther, and then Daniel. When I was aware of a need for them to faithfully persevere, I taught the lives of Moses and Joshua. David was a great subject when we were learning how to better worship God. I turned to Ephesians 5 when there was a need to strengthen marriages.

b. Keep the Passage Short

When you choose a passage to preach or teach, don't make it too long. It is better to do a few verses well than try to cover too many things at once. Commit to preach from all the books of the Bible and to preach on passages you have never used. Don't keep going back to the same familiar favorite ones. We need variety in our diet and our people need variety in their spiritual diet as well. Give them freshly prepared food; don't feed them what they've already heard.

c. Preach from Your Heart, Not Just Your Head

Don't preach to the people, or at the people. Preach to yourself as well. Use "we" instead of "you." Include yourself as one needing the truth of God's Word. Be honest about your struggles. You don't need to share intimate details, just that you struggle as they do. Life is hard for everyone. Knowing you understand what they are going through will help them better listen to what you say. Encourage them, never scold your people. Everyone responds much better to encouragement than criticism. Remember, you are speaking for God so don't say things to make the people impressed with you, just Him. The focus must be on God and His Word, not on what you say or how you say it. Start with yourself. Don't preach your own ideas and look for Bible verses to support them (2 Corinthians 4:2). We must be very careful to say only what God's Word says! (For help on studying the Bible see my book, "Studying The Bible.")

Whatever passage you are going to preach or teach, make sure you study it yourself and let it speak to you before you turn to any commentary or sermon help. Don't use food someone else has chewed, chew your own food! Good preaching comes from the heart, not just the head. Only when you let God's Word get ahold of you first and speak to you can you then share it with others. If it is just words from your head it will only become words in other's heads. To reach their heart with God's Word and not just their head you must let God first touch your heart with the passage. I have included sample sermon outlines in the back of this book to help you get started, not to become a crutch or keep you from doing your own sermon preparation. Sermon outlines by others helped me learn how to develop my own outlines when I was first starting to preach, so I include them to help you get started. Feel free to change them and use them as you like, but don't let them replace your own sermon development.

d. When You Don't Know What Passage to Use

When you don't know what to preach about, pray and let God speak to your mind or heart. As you read your Bible for your own devotions, listen to where God leads you to go. Think about a topic or book you haven't spoken about for a long time and consider that. Think about what they are facing in life and what Scripture can help them through it. Always look for something that will feed your people, encourage them and help them in the battle of daily life.

e. A Sermon Series is Good

Preaching a series of sermons can help you know what is coming next. Go through a whole Bible book, doctrine, or person's life. That way you can build from one week to the next, the people

can better remember what you say and follow along, and they will want to keep coming to hear what is coming next as you feed them solid truth from God's Word (1 Corinthians 3:2).

f. When You Don't Feel Like Preparing a Sermon

Usually studying God's Word and communicating it to others is a joy, even though it can be hard work. But there are times when we just don't feel like preparing a sermon. We keep putting it off and even dreading it. What should we do then?

First, make sure there is no sin in your life and you are trusting in God no matter what you are facing. Don't ignore problems in your own life, family or church. Do what you can to resolve them and turn them over to God's care. Even if everything is fine between you and God, you won't always feel like preparing a sermon. It takes time, focus and hard work. The flesh opposes these, so does Satan. It is often a spiritual battle, so we need God's Spirit to take control of our own to keep going. Persevere as a matter of obedience to God. Your wife doesn't always feel like preparing a nourishing, healthy meal for you, but forces herself to do so anyway; so must you.

Make sure you pray about your need for God to help you study. Be honest with God about your struggle with sermon preparation. Talk to a good friend, especially another pastor, and ask him to pray for you as well. Sometimes looking for a new passage or subject to preach about can help motivate you to study. But the bottom line is that you must just force yourself to get started, not put it off or look for shortcuts. Open your Bible and start studying and God will speak to you as you listen to Him! Feeding the sheep is God's greatest command to a shepherd (John 21:17). It's something we must do and do well to faithfully fulfill our duties as pastors and teachers (Matthew 25:21; 2 Timothy 4:7).

g. How Long Should It Take to Prepare A Sermon?

How long it takes to prepare a sermon depends on many things, like how long you have been studying your Bible and how much experience you have writing sermons and lessons. It depends on if you have kept good notes when you have studied in the past and how well you manage your time and avoid interruptions. Anything good takes time. We honor God and His Word by giving our best effort to our messages (2 Timothy 2:15).

You can use your time most efficiently if you work on your sermon when you are most alert. For me that is at the start of the day, and it seems to be that way for many others as well. Our minds are less busy and less full of other things so we can hear God speak as He teaches us from the passage we are studying. Make sure there are no interruptions, and allow yourself enough time to avoid rushing. Most good sermons take at least 10 to 15 hours to prepare. A passage you know well may take less, but if it is a difficult, unfamiliar passage, allow yourself more time. Remember, learning God's Word and preparing to share it with others is a spiritual battle. You can count on the flesh and Satan opposing and interfering in any way they can.

h. Knowing When the Message is Finished

There comes a time when a sermon is completed. Continuing to refine details, to wonder about it all, changing a word or two, is wasting time. You have many things to do with your time, like work on other sermons.

How will you know when your sermon is finished? That is another skill you will develop as you preach regularly! You need to know the difference between a good sermon and a perfect sermon. Very few sermons come close to being perfect, and not many are exceptional. Aim for a good message that will feed and encourage God's people while they listen and after they leave: God will take care of the rest. Pray: ask and trust God to show you what, if anything more you should do and

to assure you when it is done. Coming to this point early leaves time to let the sermon sit in your mind and heart and allows God to show you necessary adjustments.

i. How Long Should a Sermon Be?

Your sermons should always be a little shorter than the people's attention span. You should be done speaking before they are finished listening. Talking after they are no longer able to focus and concentrate takes away from what they have heard. Like overcooking food, it can ruin the whole meal. That happened to Paul himself one time (Acts 20:7-9). He had a lot to tell them, and I can't say he was wrong if he was following God's leading, but it was almost disastrous for the one who fell asleep listening to Paul.

Avoid speaking too long by sticking to the main idea and not getting off subject. You don't have to say everything in one sermon, save some for the next sermon. We can only eat so much food at a meal, and people can only take in so much spiritual nourishment at a time. To keep your preaching fresh and exciting, leave the people wanting to know more and looking forward to coming next time. Learn to read your audience; the way they sit or keep eye contact, their alertness or distraction can be clues to their interest level. Trying to force more truth into them when they are full won't work; it will spoil the good things they heard and received earlier.

I estimate I have preached or taught over 10,000 messages in my ministry. I have found those who listen to me can focus for 30 minutes and, if I have a good message that is well prepared, I can go as long as 45 minutes. When I talk for an hour, though, no matter how good I make it, seldom do I have all the people's attention at the end. If I have good visuals to use, even let them stand and stretch for a minute, then I can go longer. But 45 minutes seems to be a good goal to aim for. Watch how your people respond, then adjust the time accordingly.

j. Write Out Your Sermons

Writing out a sermon takes much longer, but it can be time well spent. This helps you clarify your thoughts and choose the right words, staying on topic and developing a clear message without distracting ideas, and controlling the length of the message. You don't need to write out every sermon, although some preachers do. This practice is very helpful when you are new to preaching and for times you may have a particularly difficult or important message to share.

Writing out a sermon is good, but reading it to your people is not. Without eye contact and personal involvement, they will soon stop looking and listening. Use an outline to speak, not your manuscript.

Even if you don't write out your whole sermon, it is very important to write out your introduction, transitions and conclusion. I always make sure I know exactly what I am going to say and how I am going to say these because every word counts in getting and keeping the people's attention. When I get driving directions from someone I always make sure I know exactly where the starting place is (introduction to the message), when to make a turn and exactly what new direction to go (transitions between main points in a sermon) and how to know I have reached my destination (conclusion). I still plan these word for word, even if I don't always write them out anymore, for they are very important parts of a message.

k. Do Your Best But Don't Expect Perfection

In American baseball some batters try to hit the ball out of the stadium for a home run every time they bat. It is very exciting when they do so, but seldom does it happen, and most often they strike out and don't even get on base. The best hitters don't try to hit a home run, they just try to make contact with the ball and get a good hit each time. They end up on base more often that way and do more good for their team. The same is true in sermon preparation. It's great when we have a

special sermon that goes over very well and has a tremendous impact on people, but that doesn't happen often. Trying to make it happen each time we preach will result in frustration and disappointment. But if we just try for a good, solid message based on God's truth, something that has spoken to our hearts and we want to communicate to our listeners, we will be doing a good, steady job of feeding our people. That is what God wants. Peter only had one Pentecost sermon; most of the others were regular, solid messages that God used in various ways.

In preparing messages we must first focus on the passage we will be communicating. But our focus can't be on the passage alone. It must also be on our audience, the people we are speaking to. The food must be well prepared, but it must be the correct nourishment for them at that time.

B. BY FOCUSING ON THE PEOPLE

1. JESUS, PETER AND PAUL PREACHED TO THE NEEDS OF THE PEOPLE

a. Jesus' Preaching Focused on the Needs of the People

Jesus spoke to His disciples and the people who came to Him many, many times. Short examples are given in all the gospels, but only two full sermons are recorded for us: the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5-7) to everyone and the Sermon on the Mount of Olives (Matthew 24-25) to His disciples. Each message was very different, but each was pointed to the needs of His listeners. The first told everyone what He stood for and what He was offering when He offered His Kingdom to them. The second was in response to the disciples' question about what was coming in the future. Every time Jesus spoke what He said was determined by the needs of the people listening to Him.

When Jesus spoke to Nicodemus about his need of salvation (John 3) He approached it entirely differently than when He spoke to the Samaritan woman at the well (John 4). He basically told them the same thing, but a legalistic Jewish ruler and a rejected, shamed Gentile woman needed to be approached in entirely different ways.

b. Peter's Preaching Focused on the Needs of the People

Several of Peter's messages are recorded in the Bible for us. His first was on Pentecost (Acts 2:14-39). He spoke to the temple beggar and the crowd listened (Acts 3:11 – 4:4). He also spoke after his first arrest (Acts 4:8-12), after his second arrest (Acts 5:29-32) and at the home of Cornelius (Acts 10:34-43). The first messages were to Jews, but the last was to Gentiles. To Cornelius he didn't quote any Old Testament passages, as he had done so often on Pentecost to Jewish listeners. Each of these messages was planned and preached directly to the needs of those to whom he was speaking. He knew the people listening and directed his words to them.

c. Paul's Preaching Focused on the Needs of the People

Acts records 12 times Paul preached: in Damascus (9:20), Salamis (13:5), Antioch in Pisidia (13:41-44 and 13:44-48), Iconium (14:1), Thessalonica (17:1-4), Berea (17:10-12), Athens (17:17), Corinth (18:4), Ephesus (18:19 and 19:8) and in house arrest (28:17-29). Certainly he preached many other times as well. The letters he wrote, which are in our Bible, could be considered as sermons, for certainly they were written to teach his readers.

When he spoke to pagan Gentiles (Lystra, Acts 14:8-20; Athens, Acts 17:22-34) the message was different than when he spoke to individual Gentiles who had authority over him (Philippian jailer, Acts 16:25-34; Felix, Acts 24:10-25). At other times he gave his personal autobiography when that was what his listeners needed (Jerusalem mob, Acts 22:1-29; King Agrippa, Acts 26:1-32).

Paul's most complete recorded sermon, an example of what others must have been like, was in the synagogue in Antioch of Pisidia (Acts 13:16-41). Luke didn't record other sermons of Paul in Acts because this one was typical of them all in structure and content. Yet each message was tailored to meet the specific needs of those listening. In Antioch of Pisidia (Acts 13:16-41) he started speaking to the Jews about Jewish history, something they knew and accepted (Acts 13:16-23). But in Athens (Acts 17:22-34), when speaking to Gentiles who didn't care about Jewish history, his opening remarks were about the history of the soul's search for God (Acts 17:22-34). In Lystra he started with focusing on the continuing activity of God in the sun, wind, rain and growing things (Acts 14:15-17). Each was tailored to the needs of his audience.

d. Preaching of Others Focused on the Needs of the People

There are examples of sermons by others in the New Testament as well. For example, in Acts 7, Stephen preached to the religious rulers, trying to show them that the Jesus they rejected was the Messiah. Clearly his words are formed by the needs of the audience and applied to them. Likewise, when Apollos speaks to the Jews in Achaia (Acts 18:6-28) he directs his remarks to their needs.

The writer of the book of Hebrews addresses the needs of the people in his sermons to them as well. He tries to warn them about the danger of turning from Jesus and going back to Judaism (Hebrews 4:14-16; 10:19-21). Clearly the Old Testament prophets also spoke to the needs of the people, especially to the sin and need of repentance for the ungodly, as well as hope and comfort for the godly.

e. Lessons for Us

The Bible records various sermons, some to unbelieving Jews (Acts 2, 3, 13) or unbelieving Gentiles (Acts 17) as well as sermons to believers (Acts 20). They are by Peter, Paul or others, but in all cases they focused their message on the needs of the people they were speaking to. We must do the same. When we preach we must understand the text we are using, but also understand the needs, hurts, disappointments, fears, doubts and struggles of the people to whom we are speaking.

2. WE MUST PREACH TO THE NEEDS OF THE PEOPLE

a. Focus on the Needs of the People

We preach because we love God and want to make His truth known to others. We have the best news ever to share and delight in doing so. But we also preach because we love God's people. We want them to better know this wonderful Lord and Savior Whom we serve. Like a mother has a deep inner compulsion to train, protect and help her children grow, so a pastor feels the same way to the people God has given him to shepherd. Nagging, scolding, criticizing and pointing out faults doesn't help sheep or children mature in a healthy way, and it won't help the people you serve, either. Speaking the truth in love (Ephesians 4:15), like God teaches us, is our goal.

Preaching or teaching the Bible is not like writing a theological lecture for a Bible class or seminary. There the purpose is to convey Bible content to their minds so they know more facts and truths about the Bible. For us who preach or teach, though, that is just the first part. We then must make sure the people understand how to apply that truth to their lives and are motivated to do so. We preach to change lives, not just communicate truth. We must tell them what they need to do and also why and how to do it. Then we encourage and motivate them to do it on their own. That's how Jesus and the others taught.

God cares deeply about our people, that's why He came to earth to die on the cross for them. We must care about them as much as He did. Sermons are not to impress people or show them where they failed, but to help them become more like Jesus (2 Timothy 2:1-2; Matthew 28:19-20).

b. How to Know the Needs of the People

We understand our Bible passage by studying it, looking at it carefully and closely so we notice everything we can about it. We do the same to understand the needs of our people. We spend time with them, we listen to them, we notice things about how they are doing and what is happening in their lives. We ask them questions. We pray for God's wisdom and insight (James 1:5). Listen to your people and listen to God's Holy Spirit. As a parent watches and knows the strengths and weaknesses of each of their children, so a pastor must know the people under his care.

C. BRINGING THE PASSAGE & NEEDS OF THE PEOPLE TOGETHER

1. EACH PASSAGE HAS A MAIN IDEA

Each sermon, lesson or message should have one main idea that is clearly developed throughout. Everything that is said must, in some way, directly relate to that idea. This is the summary of the sermon, as well as the goal it is accomplishing. The speaker must know what goal he is seeking to meet or he will never meet it. This is the truth he wants to convey in his message. It must be clear in the speaker's mind before he starts or it will never be clear in the listeners minds when he is done! If you don't have an exact idea of what you are trying to accomplish, you won't accomplish it, and you won't be faithfully nourishing your listeners with God's Word.

We've all heard messages that rambled on and covered many topics. Perhaps the speaker started talking about trusting Jesus, then talked about tithing, covered the importance of witnessing, even made some comments about how to pray and ended up speaking about the importance of coming to church every Sunday. Those messages are confusing and we leave not quite sure what he really wanted to say. There are too many things to focus on any one of them, but not enough about any to really give us something to use in the week to come. It's like shooting a shotgun, where many pellets are fired from the gun and they spread out in various directions. A sermon, instead, should be like a single bullet fired straight at a target.

When the Bible authors wrote their books, they had a central idea in mind for each book, each chapter and each passage. The main idea of each passage related to the main idea of the chapter or section of the Bible, and the chapter or section related to the main idea of the whole book. In the book of Galatians, for example, Paul writes to show the people that Christ brings freedom, not bondage. In the first two chapters he speaks of how God gave him freedom through Jesus and how his purpose is to share that with others, not bring Christians into bondage. In chapters three and four he shows how legalism and bondage have failed to bring freedom. He refers to his own experience (3:1-5), the Old Testament (3:6-14), God's promises (3:15-22) and other proofs to make his point. The last two chapters, five and six, show the effects of liberty in our lives and what real freedom is like. My book, "Bible Overview", shows the main idea of each book in the Bible and how the rest of the books relates to it. That's how it must be with our sermons and lessons as well.

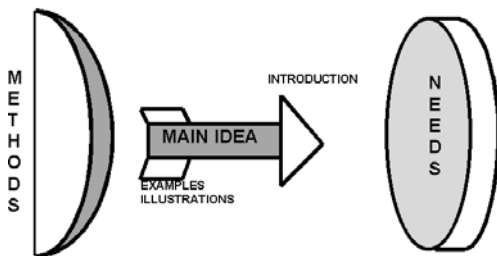
Before you preach or teach, you must be able to give the main idea of what you want to communicate in one simple sentence. When you are done, you will know you succeeded when you ask your listeners what they learned and they tell you that same truth in their own words.

When someone paints a picture it must be clear so everyone who looks at it can tell just what the artist is conveying. If it is unclear and people can't tell, if people come up with different ideas about what it is, then it hasn't clearly communicated to the people. As pastors we paint pictures with words, and those words must clearly communicate our message so everyone understands the same thing and knows what we have been saying.

When Peter spoke on the Day of Pentecost, the main idea of his message was Jesus (Acts 2). Christ was foremost and all was focused on Him. He quoted the Old Testament because the listeners knew it was written by God and had authority with them. He quoted Joel 2:28 (Acts 2:17), David in Psalm 16 (Acts 2:25-28) and Psalm 110 (Acts 2:34) to support his main idea that Jesus is God come to earth to be the Messiah. Peter's focus wasn't to scold or criticize, but to offer good news, the hope of forgiveness available to all (Acts 2:21).

Some speakers have ideas of their own and try to find a scripture to support it. That is reading into the passage. Instead, we must start with the passage and learn what it is saying. We must make sure everything we say comes from Scripture and nothing is our own invention. If the Bible doesn't clearly say it, we should not say it either. NEVER use God's Word to support an idea of your own. We are to speak for God; we are His instruments, the channel through which He communicates with others. We must keep our opinions and ourselves out of the way unless they are clearly taught in the Bible. Then they are no longer our opinions but God's truth.

2. THE MAIN IDEA MUST MEET THE AUDIENCE'S NEED



Think of someone shooting an arrow at a target and you will understand what a speaker must do with the words he speaks. The arrow is the main idea of the passage you are using. It becomes the main idea of your message as well. An arrow must be perfectly straight to go from the bow to the target in a straight line. Your main idea must be accurate, clear and to the point.

The target your arrow is aiming at is the need of the people you are addressing in the message. In a funeral it could be comfort and assurance, so your message would be about the hope we have of eternal life in Jesus. If the people are facing persecution, there are various passages and messages which can apply: faithfulness to Jesus no matter what happens; God's sovereignty over and purpose for everything; the eternal rewards of persevering through difficult times; God uses all things to bring about good (Romans 8:28). Those are all different ways of meeting the need of people facing persecution. Various messages and main ideas can speak to the same need. Whichever is used must focus on the need, though.

For an arrow to stick in the target it needs a sharp point to hit home. When we speak it is important to have a clear, precise introduction to our message so our message hits home and sticks in the hearts of the listeners. An arrow must have feathers in the back to keep it moving in a straight line, just as the examples and illustrations we choose keep our message on line.

Of course, we who speak are the bow that shoots the arrow. There are various methods we can use, but the main one is words. We can use pictures, objects, discussion, interaction or any other number of ways. I sometimes use magical tricks to convey God's truth when I speak.

3. DISCOVERING THE MAIN IDEA

As you do your Bible study, you will discover the main idea of the passage (see “Studying the Bible” by Jerry Schroyer). As you study your people and know their needs, you will see how the main idea of the passage can meet that need in their life. That is the start, the foundation of any message.

For example, suppose you are studying Psalm 103:1-14, one of my favorite Bible passages. You determine the main idea is that God is merciful and forgives our sins instead of holding them against us. Now you think of your people and their needs. Perhaps there are some who are having a hard time accepting God’s forgiveness for something they have done in the past; this passage would apply to them. Or maybe your people are unforgiving towards each other. You could use this passage to show the importance of forgiveness of others as God forgives us. Then it could be your people know they are forgiven by God but are having a hard time forgiving themselves. The truths here could help them – that’s how this passage speaks to me. Maybe it is that some people tend towards legalism and feel they need to do something to earn God’s forgiveness. This passage could meet that need as well.

One passage can be used to meet various needs in your people. Find the main idea in the passage you are preaching, then ask God to show you what need this meets in your people’s lives. Often God will show you this by showing you what need it first meets in your own life!

4. WHAT TO KNOW, WHAT TO DO

Remember we said that we don’t just speak to convey truth to the listener’s minds, but also to affect their lives. Both these areas must be covered in the main idea. The listeners must KNOW God’s truth or they won’t be able to apply it (Romans 12:1-2). But they also must be able to DO something with it, or it won’t change their lives. So each main idea statement must say what you want your listeners to KNOW and to DO when you are done. People who listen to God’s Word want to understand both. If you only teach facts as if in a Bible class at seminary, although it is all very interesting and important, they will leave wondering what good it does to know all that new information. Often I listen to a sermon that does a good job of teaching a Bible passage and I ask myself, “So what?”. So the Bible says this, so what? What difference does that make to me? Why is it something I should know? On the other hand, tell them only what they should do and they will have no understanding of what the Bible says.

Let’s apply that to Psalm 103:1-14. What you want your listeners to KNOW is that God is merciful and forgives our sins instead of holding them against us. What you want them to DO with that knowledge is different depending on their needs. If they have a hard time forgiving themselves, then what you want them to DO is accept God’s forgiveness for their sin. If they are unforgiving towards each other, then what you want them to DO is forgive others like God has forgiven them and like God has already forgiven the other person. If they are struggling with legalism and feel they must do something to deserve God’s forgiveness, what you want them to DO is to accept God’s grace and free forgiveness.

As you can tell from these examples, it is important to make your main idea specific, not general. “Forgive others” is not a good main idea. “Because God has unconditionally forgiven us we must also forgive others who sin against us” is much better. It includes what they must know (that God has unconditionally forgiven them) and what they must do (forgive others). That is a truth you can focus on and which they can remember and use.

God's main goal for all unbelievers is to have them accept Jesus as their Savior. His goal for all who are believers is to have us grow to be more like Jesus in all we think and do. So every sermon must contribute to bringing people to Jesus or having them grow to become more like Him.

Some preachers think studying a passage and the people, then developing a main idea that brings both together is too much work and they just want to get started on the sermon so skip over this foundational part. But that's like starting to build a large building without taking time to make sure there is a good, solid, level foundation after it. The whole sermon will suffer. It will actually take more time and be less effective without starting with this. You may adjust or reword the main idea as you work on the sermon. That's OK. But you need it for a starting point.

You don't wait to the end of your sermon to focus on what you want the people to know and do. You start in the introduction so they understand it all the way through and have plenty of time to think about it and how it applies to them. Don't spend your whole sermon telling them what you want them to KNOW, then use just a few minutes at the end telling them what to DO. Weave the two together from the very start.

III. PLANNING THE MESSAGE

Now that you have studied the passage and the people and know your main idea, you are ready to develop the message or lesson itself. It may seem easier to just jump to this and skip all that went before, but do not do so! There are no shortcuts to communicating God's Word. If you've worked faithfully up to this point, the rest will be easy and you'll have a fine final product. Without the foundational work, you will find the message more difficult to build and the final product far less effective than it could have been.

Now it is time to package the material so you can deliver it to the people in the best way possible. When a cook prepares a meal, the food isn't thrown all together into a bowl, but attractively arranged to appear more appealing to the diner. The nutritional value is the same either way, but the one with attractive arrangement will be more desired and enjoyed. So let's talk about packaging your information for the listener.

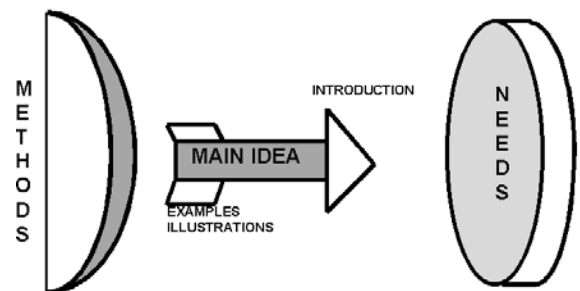
A. THE METHOD

1. LECTURE

We are commanded to preach the Word with great patience and careful instruction (2 Timothy 4:2). Ezra devoted himself to the study and observation of the Law of the Lord and to teaching its decrees (Ezra 7:6, 10). Just how did he do this? What methods did he use to effectively communicate God's truth?

In our illustration of the arrow aimed for the target, we see that the bow is that which propels the arrow. What propels our content to the minds and hearts of our listeners?

For most, it is verbal communication – talking. This is also called preaching or teaching. It's the method Jesus used to teach His followers. He used these in His two main messages: the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5-7) and the Sermon on the Mount of Olives (Matthew 24-25).



Peter used words to share the gospel on Pentecost (Acts 2:14-39), to the crowd around the beggar at the temple (Acts 3:11-4:4), to the religious rulers after his first arrest (Acts 4:8-12) and his second arrest (Acts 5:29-32) and at the home of Cornelius (Acts 10:34-43). The audiences were vastly different, but the method of using words to convey God's truth was always the same.

Paul did the same in his messages (Acts 13:16-41). He spoke to pagan Gentiles (Acts 14:8-20; 17:22-34), Jews (Acts 13:16-41), a mob in Jerusalem (Acts 22:1-29), King Agrippa (Acts 26:1-32), the Philippian jailer (Acts 16:25-34) and Felix, an important roman official (Acts 24:10-25). Basically Paul talked and the audience listened. Lecture was the basic method used.

You may think that verbal communication is the only way of passing on truth. But there are other ways we get our thoughts across to others. We can use written words (as the Bible itself is written), music, dance, drama (plays or movies) or art work. Each of these communicates what is in the heart or head of one person to others. All can be, and often are, used to pass on Bible truth as well. Those who preach or teach can use any of these as well, but usually the main method we use is by talking.

Lecture is a very good way to communicate a lot of truth in an easy way. However, it's harder for people to remember all they hear. If they hear something explained and see it exemplified, they will remember three times as much. That's important! Incorporating some of the other methods I just mentioned will increase the effectiveness of the message.

2. STORY TELLING

Jesus' main method of teaching was lecture, but He incorporated many other methods to help His listeners understand and remember His words! He often used stories – parables. Mark 4:34 says He never spoke without telling stories. He would act out what He said, as when he washed the disciples feet (John 13:1-11) or used a child to teach about faith (Mark 9:33-37; Matthew 18:1-14). He demonstrated His power by doing miracles and healing bodies to show He could heal unseen souls. He multiplied bread and fish to feed people, stopped a storm, caused the disciples to bring in an amazing catch of fish, and did many other things to demonstrate His words with actions. He also asked the disciples questions: who did people say He was and how to solve problems that arose before giving His lesson. He then sent the disciples out by twos to practice what they had learned. His method was far more than mere lecture, and that's why He was such a successful teacher.

3. VARIOUS METHODS

There are various ways we can help people better understand what we say. We can use pictures or signs, or we can write key words or thoughts. We can also draw pictures in their minds using words to describe scenes and tell a story. This can be very effective. Storytelling is a major method of communication in many cultures around the world. The story can be told in narrative form, it can be acted out in a drama or shown in pictures. Everyone loves hearing a good story. That's why movies are so popular. Not only do stories communicate truth, but they illustrate it as well. When Nathan talked to King David about his sin, he told a story of a man with one sheep (2 Samuel 12:1-4). It helped make the truth clearer and easier to understand. Jesus told a story about a good Samaritan when asked who our neighbor is (Luke 10:25-37). We'll talk more about these types of stories when we talk about Illustrations.

Another very good method to keep the attention of the listeners so they remember more of what they hear is discussion. This draws people into the learning process, instead of having them sit

back and passively listening. Asking questions, even if the people only answer in their own minds, is very effective.

When I teach I like to use tricks to exemplify what I am saying: the blood of Jesus removes all sin, the Bible is attacked but can't be destroyed, the name of 'Jesus' is stronger than any other name, and many others. I tell stories and give examples. I draw pictures of what I am talking about. I ask questions, not expecting an answer out loud, but to get the listeners thinking in their own minds. Sometimes I dress in Bible costumes and speak as if I am someone from the Bible.

Think of what methods have best helped you understand and remember a sermon. There is no one best method. A variety is always best. Your choice of method is determined by the age and size of your group, and by the time allowed for your presentation.

4. TOPICAL SERMONS

There are two approaches to teaching or preaching the Bible. One takes a passage of Scripture and teaches it. That is called expository preaching for the text is expository or described. The other is topical preaching. It is when someone picks a subject and then uses various Bible verses that speak to that particular subject. Those verses then should also be explained and taught in an expository way as well. Here the main idea is developed first and then the sermon build around it.

For example, suppose you want to preach about prayer. That's a pretty broad subject, so you limit it to the importance of prayers. Then you find verses about the importance of prayers and talk about why prayer is important, supporting what you say with the Bible verses. That is a topical sermon. This can be a good way to cover the exact subject you know your people need to hear. You can use any of the methods described above to help carry your message.

However there is danger in that sometimes the speaker teaches his own ideas and tries to support them with Scripture instead of drawing his ideas from Scripture. Another danger is that not everything in the Bible gets covered, only a few of the favorite subjects and passages of the speaker. Because each passage is treated separately, the whole flow of a book isn't communicated, the relationship between passages is lost, and so the people can't learn how to use the Bible for their own growth. Harder topics and passages are never covered, and the speaker may be tempted to focus primarily on what he believes instead of what the Bible says.

5. EXPOSITORY SERMONS

The other type of preaching, expository preaching, starts with a passage of Scripture and teaches it verse by verse. The main idea of the sermon comes from the passage and is applied to the needs of the people. The speaker doesn't start with the main idea and then build around it, instead he starts with Scripture and draws the meaning from the passage. My book "Studying The Bible" teaches how to study a passage and discover the main idea of the writer.

This is how Jesus (Luke 24:27), Ezra (Ezra 7:6, 10; Nehemiah 8:1-9), Paul (Acts 17:2), the Bereans (Acts 17:11) and Apollos (Acts 18:24, 28) studied and taught the Word in an expository manner. They used the various methods described above to help communicate what they wanted the people to remember as they conveyed the meaning of a Bible passage to their listeners.

There are many advantages to expository preaching. For one, God sets the agenda, for it is whatever the passage says. This way truth is communicated that might otherwise be passed over because all parts of the Bible are taught, authority is added to what you say since the message

comes from the Bible itself, and the listeners learn not only the importance of God's Word but also how to study it for themselves. By covering the next passage the following week, you can build on the truths week by week which helps your people learn large portions of the Bible and be able to apply it to needs in their own lives. The majority of your messages should be expository. This kind of sermon preparation requires more work, but it is well worth the time.

B. OUTLINING THE MESSAGE

1. THE IMPORTANCE OF OUTLINING A MESSAGE

As we see, preaching a sermon is talking to the people. But it is planned, orderly, organized talking. It isn't just standing up and talking about whatever comes to mind. What will be said is planned and organized in the speaker's mind. For example, all Peter's sermons follow a similar pattern. He preached to Jews in Acts 2:21-38 and Acts 3:13-19. He spoke to Gentiles in Acts 10:36-45. The structure for all his messages is similar. Peter starts with an introduction to his audience in which he tells them about Jesus' person and ministry (Acts 2:21-22; 3:13; 10:36-39a). Then he tells them that Jesus was rejected and killed (Acts 2:23; 3:15a; 10:39b) but that God raised Him from the dead (Acts 2:24, 32; 3:15b; 10:40-41). He explains how this shows Jesus is Lord (Acts 2:33; 10:42). Because Jesus is God come to earth to pay for their sins and who came back to life, he concludes by challenging the listeners to repent and turn from their sin of rejecting Jesus (Acts 2:38; 3:19; 10:42). He wants them to show their inner repentance by outer baptism, showing they are committing to follow Jesus in life (Acts 2:38; 10:47-48). He assures them that if they do this their sins are forgiven (Acts 2:38; 3:19; 10:43) and God's Holy Spirit will live inside of them (Acts 2:38; 10:44-45).

There needs to be structure in a message. Truth must be developed and applied. Like food, it must be carefully arranged, not just all thrown into a common bowl and mixed together. Our minds need structure and order to grasp truth and build upon it, so as preachers and teachers we must build that into our messages.

We can't use the same outline for every message, though. We are striving to meet the needs of our audience, and those needs will be different. Therefore, what we say will be different as well. Compare Peter's sermon at Caesarea to Cornelius (Acts 10:34-43) with Paul's message to Jews at Antioch in Pisidia (Acts 13:16-41). The first group was composed of devout Gentiles, the other of Jews. Therefore Paul quoted the Old Testament many times to support what he was saying because his Jewish audience believed in the authority of the Word. But Peter didn't quote the Scriptures at all to Cornelius because, as Gentiles, the Jewish scriptures didn't carry as much weight with them. Still, the structure of both messages is similar. They each start by drawing on history (Acts 10:34; 13:16-22) and then proclaim that Jesus was sent by God to be our Savior (Acts 10:36, 38a; 13:23). They each then referred to John the Baptist and his part in Jesus' life (Acts 10:37; 13:24-25) and concluded by repeating the importance of believing in Jesus as sent from God to redeem mankind (Acts 10:36a; 13:26).

Paul's speaking also follows a similar pattern every time he preaches God's Word. He starts out referring back to history as a preparation for talking about the coming of Jesus. In Antioch in Pisidia it is the history of the Jewish nation (Acts 13:16-23). In Athens it is the history of the soul searching for God (Acts 17:23-28). In Lystra it is the history of the continuing activity of God in nature (Acts 14:15-17). Paul is laying down the foundation that God is not distant and unattached, but always active in the affairs of men. His authority in making these statements at Antioch in Pisidia was the Old Testament, for the Jews there knew and believed it (Acts 13:16-41). The philosophically minded Gentiles in Athens saw the Greek poets as an authority figure, so Paul quoted them (Acts

17:22-34). The listeners in Lystra didn't know either of those so Paul didn't refer to either one (Acts 14:15-17).

Then, in each place, Paul moved to introduce them to Jesus. God entered the human race through Jesus Christ and therefore man has an obligation to follow Him (Acts 13:23, 32, 38-39; 14:16; 17:30). Despite this, though, Jesus was rejected and crucified (Acts 13:27-29) but the resurrection reaffirmed He was God come to earth (Acts 13:26-29; 17:31). To substantiate this at Antioch in Pisidia, Paul used Old Testament prophecies (Acts 13:34-37) and the testimony of the apostles (Acts 13:31) – double proof it really happened. Paul concluded with the importance of believing in Jesus and the warning of judgment for those who rejected (Acts 13:40-41; 17:30-31; 14:16).

His main idea in all three messages was the coming of Jesus Christ as the decisive event in history because He provides forgiveness of sins for those who believe but judgment for those who reject. He developed it differently depending on the needs of the audience, but his messages follow the same pattern and organization. They develop his argument that Jesus is God and Savior in similar ways. Clearly his thoughts are planned and organized, each building on the one before it.

We do the same thing when we outline a message before preaching it. The outline helps us develop our ideas intelligently, explaining one, then building the next one on that foundation. This makes it easier for the speaker to accurately communicate his thoughts in a structured way, and for the listeners to follow and remember what the speaker says. The outline shows the sermon as a whole, like seeing a skeleton. All the other parts and pieces are affixed to it in their proper place. It shows where there are empty spaces, weak spots, or too much information. It helps the message flow from start to finish. It becomes the map that shows the preacher or teacher how to get from where he starts to where he wants to end.

All good speakers start with an outline. So do those who write books, plays or movies. It is a skill every good speaker must develop.

2. HOW TO OUTLINE A MESSAGE

a. Pray

As we saw earlier, praying before, during and after sermon preparation is very, very important. If you are in a hurry and must rush, do not neglect time in prayer. Martin Luther said, "He who has prayed well has studied well." E. M. Bounds said, "The character of our praying will determine the character of our preaching. Light praying makes light preaching. Talking to men for God is a great thing, but talking to God for men in greater still." Personally, I like the example of Bakht Singh who would pray all night seeking God's guidance and power before he spoke to the people.

b. Study the Passage

My book, "Studying the Bible," goes into detail about this. It should be read and mastered in order to prepare Biblical sermons. If you do not have a copy, you can find one on line at <http://india.christiantrainingonline.org/books> or email me at jerry@schmoyer.net and I will email you an electronic copy. Here is a summary of how to study the Bible from that book.

STEP 1. OBSERVATION

1. Pray
2. Read the passage many times, silently and out loud, in various translations

3. Write Down Questions

What would you ask the author if he were sitting with you?

Ask who, what, why, when, where, how

Don't try to answer, just ask

4. Look at the Parts – Outline the passage

5. Look at the Details

Look at passage as if you are seeing it for the first time.

Rewrite the passage in your own words

Look for compared, contrasted, repeated, logical relationships, generalizations, progressions

STEP 2: INTERPRETATION

1. Organize and Save Your Work in a way that is comfortable for you

2. Keep Everything in Context

a. Passage Context – understand what comes before and after the passage

b. Geography Context – where it happened and the significance of that place

c. Historical Context – answer who, what, why, when, where, how

d. Cultural Context – what was life like then that would help understand the passage?

3. The Main Idea

What was the main idea the writer was trying to convey in the passage?

What would the original audience think the main idea of the passage was?

4. Types of Literature

a. History – know who, what, why, when, where and how

b. Teaching – main idea broken down into an outline

c. Poetry – rhyme, relationship of line 2 to line 1; main idea of passage; figures of speech

d. Parables – history questions, also culture of the day, one main idea

e. Prophecy – what did author mean? what did readers understand? know symbols & culture

f. Proverbs - short parables teaching a truth, principles not promises

5. Basic Principles of Interpretation

a. Structure & Grammar – verbs, prepositions, parts of speech

b. Normal, Usual, Literal Interpretation – as writer meant it and readers understood it

c. Figures of Speech – rhetorical question, allegory, metaphor, simile, personification

d. Types – event, person, object which conveys spiritual truth

e. Numbers - as writer meant and reader understood it.

6. Other Resources – books, internet – chew your own food!

7. Deeper Studies – Word, Topical, or Character studies

1) list all the Bible references referring to the word, concept or person

2) write a short summary of what each passage says about it

3) group the verses that say the same thing together, label them

4) define the word or concept as clearly as you can

5) write a summary of what you have learned

STEP 3: APPLICATION

So what? How should I respond? What should I do with what I've learned?

1. Developing Good Applications

Bible written FOR us but not TO us

Only one interpretation – what writer meant and readers understood
But many, many applications
Must agree with interpretation, whole Bible, be specific and measurable

2. Types of Applications

Is there a command to obey? If so, what? How does it apply to me today?
Is there an example to follow? If so, what? How does it apply to me today?
Is there a challenge to heed? If so, what? How does it apply to me today?
Is there a sin to avoid? If so, what? How does it apply to me today?
Is there a teaching to learn? If so, what? How does it apply to me today?
Is there an action to take? If so, what? How does it apply to me today?
Is there something to pray about? If so, what? How does it apply to me today?
Is there a promise to claim? If so, what? How does it apply to me today?

3. Learning to Obey – apply what you have learned to your life first of all

4. Memorize verses that are important or significant for you

c. Focus on the Main Idea of the Passage

The main idea is the key to any successful message. It is like the shaft of an arrow, and it must be straight to go right to the target. If it is crooked the arrow will veer to the side and miss the target. Knowing and developing the main idea is what keeps the message moving in one straight line. That main idea consists of what you want the people to know and to do.

For example, when I dress as Paul and pretend I am him so I can tell about his life, I point out all his talents and accomplishments before and after salvation. I outline my talk like this:

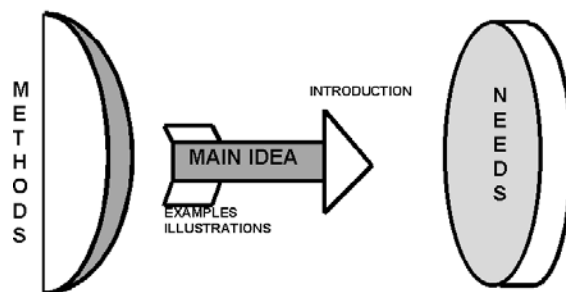
- I. Before Salvation – nothing satisfied Paul
- II. At Salvation – Paul finds that only Jesus satisfies
- III. After Salvation – Jesus continues to satisfy the needs in Paul

My title for this dramatization is “Only Jesus Satisfies.” For my main idea I want people to know that nothing satisfies, only Jesus. What I want them to do is to look only to Jesus for satisfaction in their life and nowhere else.

When I speak to people, my intention is to take them to a goal I have. To do that I must start with where they are presently, then move them in the direction I want their thinking to go. I begin with what they know and what is happening in their lives, and then by my words I start moving them toward the goal I want to accomplish by my message.

When I walk across a room I start at one point and end up at another. How I get there is by a series of steps. Preaching is the same. We get from one point to another by a series of steps, first one, then another and one following that. They are all about the same size and all move in the same direction, one starting where another stops. When developing a lesson or sermon, write down the series of steps it will take to get from where the people are to where they need to be.

There are various parts to a sermon that help form it in an organized way. We will look at them next.



d. The Introduction

The point of the arrow is what first makes contact with the target. It must be straight and sharp, for it contacts the target first. Its purpose is to gain the full attention of the people and show them the importance of listening carefully.

For example, when I dramatize the life of Paul, I come in costume and introduce myself as Paul. Everyone is curious to hear what Paul will say so I have their full attention. More will be said about the introduction later in this book.

e. The Conclusion

The conclusion is a short summary of what has been said. Nothing new is added, it is just a review. The main idea is reviewed and restarted in different words. These words are the last ones heard and most remembered, just as the last bite of food in a meal leaves the taste that will stay in the mouth the longest.

In my message about Paul, when I dress as him, I conclude with Paul summarizing all the things in his life that didn't satisfy, but that only Jesus satisfies. The focus is not on Paul but on Jesus. We'll talk more about conclusions later as well.

f. Transitions

Transitions are changes from one major part of a message to the next. They are very important so those listening don't get lost. When giving someone traveling directions, you give extra detail concerning the turns. If they are missed, the destination will never be reached. The same is true when teaching or preaching.

When I dramatized the life of Paul, I would make sure everyone was with me when I moved from one major section of his life to the next by summarizing what had already happened and then stating what was coming next. That way people could easily follow what I was saying. More about good transitions will come later.

g. Illustrations

Even if an arrow is very straight and has a sharp point, it needs feathers on it to keep it going in the direction it is headed. The feathers keep the arrow straight. Without them it would turn end over end and go in any direction, not hitting the target and sticking as intended. Illustrations do the same thing to a message. They explain abstract truth in concrete terms. They show how the truth applies, as Nathan used the story of the rich man stealing the poor man's only sheep to show what David had done with Bathsheba (2 Samuel 12:1-4). The story brought the truth alive to David so much that he got angry at the rich man (2 Samuel 12:5), then was made to realize he was as the rich man.

3. A BASIC OUTLINE

When I moved into the house in which I now live, I got several large boxes, all about the same size, in which to pack my belongings for the move. I didn't want any much bigger or heavier than any other. All the kitchen things went in one box, all the bathroom things in another box, and so on. Smaller boxes or bags of similar content were also put in. Then I labeled and numbered each one to know the contents and the order of opening them upon reaching my new home. In this way I avoided having to work through a messy pile of stuff when I was ready to unpack and organize my home.

This is how we can package and move thoughts from our minds to someone else's mind as well. When thoughts are grouped together, arranged in order and moved from one to the next it is easier for our listeners to understand and remember the things we are teaching them.

1. DEVELOP THE MAIN IDEA: shaft of the arrow that goes straight to the target:

What you want the people to KNOW:

What you want the people to DO:

2. OUTLINE THE MAIN POINTS (the main, big packing boxes)

I.

II.

III.

3. BREAK DOWN EACH MAIN POINT (smaller boxes in each big box)

I.

A.

B.

C.

4. FILL IN REST OF OUTLINE (small bags in the small boxes which are in the big boxes)

I.

A.

1.

2.

5. ADD INTRODUCTION & CONCLUSION

6. ADD TRANSITIONS

7. ADD ILLUSTRATIONS (to the main points)

4. STEP BY STEP OUTLINE DEVELOPMENT

Suppose you have studied Mark 5:1-20 and discovered the **main idea** that the writer wants his readers to know is that Jesus can free demonized people because He is greater than Satan. Therefore his readers should trust Jesus and follow Him for victory over Satan and demons.

As you've studied the passage you've already broken it down into **main parts**. A common flow in sermons is to show a problem then give the solution. That is the case here. The problem is that the man is demonized. The solution is Jesus who can set Him free.

I. JESUS MEETS THE MAN 1-5

II. JESUS DEFEATS THE DEMONS 6-13

III. JESUS GREETES THE PEOPLE 14-20

That's a good beginning outline, but each section is too large, so it must be broken down further. Each **section** must be developed. It's like dividing the box of kitchen belongings up into dishes, food, pots and pans, etc. Then the same thing is done in the living room and the bedroom.

- I. JESUS MEETS THE MAN 1-5
 - A. THE PLACE (where) 1 Gerasenes
 - B. THE PEOPLE (who) 2 Jesus and the man
 - C. THE PROBLEM (what) 3-5 man is demonized
- II. JESUS DEFEATS THE DEMONS 6-13
 - A. THE MAN COMES TO JESUS 6
 - B. THE DEMONS LEAVE THE MAN 7-13a
 - C. THE PIGS DROWN IN THE LAKE 13b
- III. JESUS GREETES THE PEOPLE 14-20
 - A. REJECTION BY THE PEOPLE 14-17
 - B. RECEPTION BY THE EX DEMONIZED MAN 18-20
 - C. RECEPTION BY US TODAY

Sometimes these can be also be divided into **smaller sections** as well. The dishes can be divided into plates, cups, spoons, etc.

- I. JESUS MEETS THE MAN 1-5
 - A. THE PLACE (where) 1 Gerasenes
 - B. THE PEOPLE (who) 2 Jesus and the man
 - 1. Jesus
 - 2. The man (men)
 - a. Satan – the leader
 - b. Demons – the helpers
 - C. THE PROBLEM (what) 3-5 man is demonized
 - 1. Darkness & death
 - 2. Anger & violence
 - 3. Out of control
 - 4. Pain & self-destruction
 - 5. Sensuality, sexual perversion
 - 6. Signs of demonizing
- II. JESUS DEFEATS THE DEMONS 6-13
 - A. THE MAN COMES TO JESUS 6
 - B. THE DEMONS LEAVE THE MAN 7-13a
 - 1. Demons fear Jesus
 - 2. Demons must obey Jesus
 - C. THE PIGS DROWN IN THE LAKE 13b
- III. JESUS GREETES THE PEOPLE 14-20
 - A. REJECTION BY THE PEOPLE 14-17
 - B. RECEPTION BY THE EX DEMONIZED MAN 18-20
 - C. RECEPTION BY US TODAY
 - 1. God provides authority (Matthew 28:18-20; Luke 10:18-19)
 - 2. God provides power (Luke 17:10; Acts 1:8)
 - 3. We have authority & power (Luke 9:1)

Under each of these sections you can put **notes of what you want to talk about** to explain this part of the outline. For example under I. B. 1. Jesus, you can note that Jesus is God come to earth, that He has been doing miracles to show He is God so people will believe in Him, that he loves this man so much He left all He was doing to cross the Sea of Galilee to come to Him, and that Satan tried to stop Him by sending a storm, but Jesus spoke to the storm and stopped it (Mark 4:35-41).

Now that you know how the sermon will develop and what the main idea is, you need to develop a clear **introduction** that catches everyone's attention and a good **conclusion** that summaries as well as illustrates the main idea of the message.

INTRODUCTION

Tell a story about a time in your life when you faced demonic powers and what happened. Ask the people if they ever experienced anything like that in their lives. This gains their interest to hear what you will say about this subject.

CONCLUSION

Tell again that Jesus can free demonized people because He is greater than Satan and therefore his readers should trust Jesus and follow Him for victory over Satan and demons. This man is an example of that in his life. The same thing can happen in our lives if we trust Jesus, follow Him, and use the authority and power he has given us in Jesus' name. You can add a good, short story from the Bible or life about someone coming to Jesus and being set free. Then close in prayer.

You are now ready to tie everything together so it flows smoothly by writing down your **transitions**.

INTRODUCTION

TRANSITION

*Jesus had more contact with and words about demons than anyone
Dozens of encounters
One typical encounter happened in Gerasenes*

- I. JESUS MEETS THE MAN 1-5
- A. THE PLACE (where) 1

TRANSITION

WE would choose a respected community leader but look at whom Jesus chose!

- B. THE PEOPLE (who) 2 Jesus and the man
- 1. Jesus

TRANSITION

*Jesus defeated Satan in heaven and in wilderness (40 days temptation)
Now takes on his kingdom on earth and his demons*

- 2. THE MAN (MEN)
- a. Satan – the leader
- b. Demons – the helpers

TRANSITION

Now let's apply this to Mark 5

C. THE PROBLEM (what) 3-5 man is demonized

1. Darkness & death
2. Anger & violence
3. Out of control
4. Pain & self-destruction
5. Sensuality, sexual perversion
6. Signs of demonizing

TRANSITION

Problem – demonized, in bondage (1-5)

Solution – Jesus (6-13)

II. JESUS DEFEATS THE DEMONS 6-13 (TO KNOW)

A. THE MAN COMES TO JESUS 6

TRANSITION

Man comes to Jesus but demons still in control

B. THE DEMONS LEAVE THE MAN 7-13a

1. DEMONS FEAR JESUS

TRANSITION

Not only do demons FEAR Jesus

But they must OBEY Jesus as well

2. DEMONS MUST OBEY JESUS

TRANSITION

So the demons obeyed Jesus.

They left the man/men and entered the pigs

C. THE PIGS DROWN IN THE LAKE 13b

TRANSITION

How did this affect them?

III. JESUS GREETES THE PEOPLE 14-20 (TO DO)

A. REJECTION BY THE PEOPLE 14-17

TRANSITION

While the people reject, the man himself follows Jesus

B. RECEPTION BY THE EX DEMONIZED MAN 18-20

TRANSITION

Man himself now has victory over demons

Can help others find victory in Jesus as well - SO CAN WE!

C. RECEPTION BY US TODAY

1. GOD PROVIDES AUTHORITY

TRANSITION

What happens when demon won't submit to God's authority?

2. GOD PROVIDES POWER

TRANSITION

God provides both power and authority for we need both

3. WE HAVE AUTHORITY & POWER

CONCLUSION

The final step is to add the **illustrations**. You can be adding some as you work on the outline and fill in the information you want to add, but now make sure you have good illustrations for some of your major points.

INTRODUCTION

ILLUST: *Tell a story about a time in your life when you faced demonic powers and what happened.*

I. JESUS MEETS THE MAN 1-5

- A. THE PLACE (where) 1 Gerasenes
- B. THE PEOPLE (who) 2 Jesus and the man
 - 1. Jesus
 - 2. The man (men)
 - a. Satan – the leader
 - b. Demons – the helpers
- C. THE PROBLEM (what) 3-5 man is demonized
 - 1. Darkness & death

ILLUST: *example of people today preoccupied with death, darkness, black, etc*

- 2. Anger & violence

ILLUST: *statistics of murder, crime, violence, abuse of women, children, etc., today*

- 3. Out of control

ILLUST: *story of addictions, alcohol, drugs, sex, people who are wild*

- 4. Pain & self-destruction

ILLUST: *example of someone cutting selves, tattoos, suicide, hurting others*
You don't have to have illustrations for each of these points, but one or two

- 5. Sensuality, sexual perversion

- 6. Signs of demonizing

II. JESUS DEFEATS THE DEMONS 6-13

- A. THE MAN COMES TO JESUS 6
- B. THE DEMONS LEAVE THE MAN 7-13a
 - 1. Demons fear Jesus
 - 2. Demons must obey Jesus

*ILLUST: tell story about someone I know, heard about, in history, in Bible.
Tell about the victory Jesus gave them*

C. THE PIGS DROWN IN THE LAKE 13b

III. JESUS GREETES THE PEOPLE 14-20

A. REJECTION BY THE PEOPLE 14-17

B. RECEPTION BY THE EX DEMONIZED MAN 18-20

C. RECEPTION BY US TODAY

1. God provides authority (Matthew 28:18-20; Luke 10:18-19)

*ILLUST: POLICEMAN NEEDS AUTHORITY to enforce laws, arrest criminals, etc
POLICEMAN'S BADGE
GIVEN THEM to enforce laws, authority of government behind it*

2. God provides power (Luke 17:10; Acts 1:8)

*ILLUST: POLICEMAN'S WEAPON
Gun, club, backup help, etc. – whatever needed to enforce authority*

3. We have authority & power (Luke 9:1)

ILLUST: POLICEMAN'S BADGE & WEAPON for believers following Jesus as well.

CONCLUSION

ILLUST: add a good, short story from the Bible or life about someone coming to Jesus and being set free.

5. OUTLINING TOPICAL MESSAGES

Here is an example of a topical sermon called “Servanthood in Marriage” that I did on the importance of husbands and wives serving each other in marriage. I wanted the listeners to know the requirements, reasons and resources concerning serving each other. What I wanted them to do was to apply this to their lives and serve each other as Jesus serves them. I used various passages which spoke about this topic and put them together, making them into a topical sermon.

INTRODUCTION

I. REVELATION OF SERVANTHOOD (Matthew 20:26-28; Philippians 2:5-11)

II. REQUIREMENTS OF SERVANTHOOD (Ephesians 5:21-33)

A. HUSBAND = SERVANT LEADER

1. A servant leader assumes responsibility (Ephesians 5:21)
2. A servant leader leads by serving (Ephesians 5:25, 31)
3. A servant leader loves unconditionally (Ephesians 5:28)

B. WIFE = SERVANT SUBMISSION

1. A servant submitter responds to love (Ephesians 5:22-24)
2. A servant submitter shows respect and honor (Ephesians 5:33)
3. A servant submitter really submits to Jesus (Ephesians 5:21-24)

III. REASONS FOR SERVANT HEADSHIP

A. Obedience to God (Philippians 2:2-8; Ephesians 5:33)

b. Blessing from God

1. For the husband (Ephesians 5:31)

2. For the wife (1 Peter 3:1-6)
3. For both (Genesis 2:18)
4. For the children

IV. RESOURCES FOR SERVANT HEADSHIP

- A. Close personal relationship with God (John 15:1-8)
- B. Commitment to show sacrificial love (Romans 12:1-2)
- C. Filled with fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22-24)
- D. Follow Jesus' example (Matthew 20:26-28; 10:24-25)

CONCLUSION

6. OUTLINING EXPOSITORY MESSAGES

An outline is equally important when teaching a passage or book of the Bible. There we start where the writer starts the passage. We develop it as the writer does. We must see how he packed the boxes and what he put in each one so we can unpack them for the people listening to us. At each point we must make sure the people understand how it applies to them. If not, they won't learn or apply it as they should.

Following is an expository sermon I did on 2 Timothy 3:14-17 called "The Greatness of God's Word." I wanted the listeners to know that the Bible is God's perfect Word which we must know and apply to our lives. This is just the starting outline. Under each point the speaker would explain what the Bible passage means and how it applies. Word studies, illustrations and examples can be used to make the meaning clearer.

INTRODUCTION

I. CONTINUE IN GOD'S WORD 2 Timothy 3:14a

14 But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have become convinced of,

A. LEARN IT (MIND)

continue in what you have learned (Main Idea = what wants them to KNOW)

B. APPLY IT (LIFE)

and have become convinced of, (Main Idea = what wants them to do)

II. TRUST IN GOD'S WORD 2 Timothy 3:14b-15

*because you know those from whom you learned it,
15 and how from infancy you have known the holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.*

A. BECAUSE IT CHANGES OTHER'S LIVES 2 Timothy 3:14b

because you know those from whom you learned it,

B. BECAUSE YOU KNOW ITS WORTH 2 Timothy 3:15a

15 and how from infancy you have known the holy Scriptures (Main Idea = KNOW)

C. BECAUSE IT CHANGED YOUR LIFE 2 Timothy 3:15b

which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. (Main Idea = DO)

III. BE EQUIPPED BY GOD'S WORD 2 Timothy 3:16-17

*16 All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness,
17 so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.*

A. SCRIPTURE IS FROM GOD 2 Timothy 3:16a

16 All Scripture is God-breathed

B. SCRIPTURE EQUIPS US 2 Timothy 3:16b-17

and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, 17 so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.

1. BY TEACHING
2. BY REBUKING
3. BY CORRECTING
4. BY TRAINING IN RIGHTEOUSNESS

CONCLUSION

C. THE BODY OF THE MESSAGE

Now that the speaker knows what his main idea is and how the message will develop and flow, the body of the message must be fully developed. Usually this is done while the outline is being formed and written, but in case it isn't complete, now is the time to make sure it is fully developed.

1. THE AUTHORITY OF THE WORD

We ourselves have no authority. Our authority comes from God's Word. That's why we are to teach His Word, not our own ideas or thoughts. All that we say must come from Scripture. Showing our listeners this gives them the confidence that what we say is true. It also shows them the importance of making sure everything they believe comes from Scripture as well. I try to include scripture references to what I say in all my books to assure the reader knows it is God speaking and not me.

When you preach or teach a passage, it's good to quote other scriptures to support what you are saying. That's what Peter did on the Day of Pentecost in Acts 2:14-10. He made an opening statement (Acts 2:15) then supported it by quoting Joel 2:28-32 (Acts 2:16-21). Next he made another statement in Acts 2:22-24 and supported that by quoting Psalm 16:8-11 (Acts 2:25-28). He made a third point (Acts 2:29-33) and quoted Psalm 110:1 to support it (Acts 2:34-35). Finally, he drew his conclusion (Acts 2:36-40). He knew his words needed to have authority for his listeners to believe them, and quoting the Old Testament was the authority they accepted.

Paul used Scripture to support what he said as well. In Antioch in Pisidia (Acts 13:13-43) Paul was speaking about the resurrection of Jesus. He supported what he said with the Old Testament. That was his authority. After stating the resurrection of Jesus (Acts 13:32-33a) Paul supports it by quoting Psalm 2:7 (Acts 13:33b). He repeats his claim about the resurrection (Acts 13:34a) and supports it with Isaiah 55:3 (Acts 13: 34b) and Psalm 16:10 (Acts 13:35). He then explains these passages and applies them to Jesus (Acts 13:36-37). He concludes by challenging them to put their faith in Jesus (Acts 13:38-40). In conclusion, he quotes one final passage, Habakkuk 1:5, as a warning if they do not believe (Acts 13:41).

Even Jesus did this same thing. In His teachings He quoted Deuteronomy 8:3 (Matthew 4:4; Luke 4:4), Deuteronomy 6:3 (Matthew 4:10; Luke 4:8), Isaiah 61:1-2 (Luke 4:17-19), Exodus 20:13 (Matthew 5:21), Exodus 20:14 (Matthew 5:27), Deuteronomy 24:1-4 (Matthew 5:31), Leviticus 19:12 (Matthew 5:33), Exodus 21:23-25 (Matthew 5:38), Hosea 6:6 (Matthew 9:13), Micah 7:6 (Matthew 10:35-36), Malachi 3:1 (Matthew 11:10), Isaiah 6:9-10 (Matthew 13:14), and twenty other Old

Testament passages as well. Whenever possible He used the authority of the Old Testament to support what He was saying. As I use Jesus, Peter and Paul as Scriptural examples and my authority to tell this to you, so you should use Scripture for all you say to your listeners.

Virtually every book in the New Testament quotes passages in the Old Testament as support for statements and teachings. The book of Hebrews alone quotes 86 Old Testament verses. Revelation quotes 249 Old Testament verses. In total, the New Testament records about 850 Old Testament verses. That total is about the size of the Gospel of John. It is more than all but 3 of the New Testament books. Obviously, using the Old Testament as authority was important to the speakers and writers of the New Testament. We now have the whole New Testament to use as well!

Therefore, our preaching and teaching must be founded on and supported by God's Word alone. It is our only final, absolute authority and everything we say must be true to it.

2. EXAMPLES FROM JESUS' PREACHING

There is no better example of a perfect communicator than Jesus. We can do nothing better than pattern our messages after His. His messages followed a clear progression of thought, an outline.

As we look at Jesus' speaking, we can't help but notice that Jesus often shocked people by exaggerating something to make His point: we need to tear out our eyes or cut off our hands if they cause us to sin (Matthew 5:29-30); people who judge others have a log in their eye (Matthew 7:3-5); His followers must hate their families to follow Him (Luke 14:26). These statements weren't to be taken literally, but they really caught the listeners' attention and emphasized His point.

When Jesus spoke He said things in a catchy way so people would remember what He said. This isn't always easy to see in our translations but is clear in the language in which Jesus spoke. For example, Jesus memorably said, "Judge not, and you will not be judged; condemn not, and you will not be condemned; forgive, and you will be forgiven; give, and it will be given to you." (Luke 6:37-38a). Another great example is the Golden Rule (Luke 6:31). If you want to preach like Jesus, craft memorable statements.

Instead of making a statement, Jesus often asked a question to get His listener to think of the answer himself. This caused the listener to think, seek an answer; then listen more carefully to grasp the truth and remember it longer. For examples look at Matthew 16:26, or 22:20-21. When you speak, ask your listeners a question occasionally to keep them thinking while attentively listening for any answer you may supply.

Repetition is another tool Jesus used. He taught the same major themes again and again. For example, Jesus spoke of his death and resurrection over and over again (Mark 8:31; 9:31; 10:33-34 – at least seven times), and the disciples still didn't get it. Sometimes people need to hear something many times over before it fully sinks in. Repeated teachings become remembered teachings. However, find various ways of approaching the same lesson while repeating the same points.

Everyone loves to hear a good story, and Jesus was such a great teacher because He was always telling stories, or parables (Mark 4:34) to illustrate spiritual truth in an easy-to-understand way so the people would remember His lessons and be able to apply them to their own lives. Think about the parable of the Prodigal Son (Luke 15:11-32). Jesus could have proclaimed, "God loves you so much that He will welcome you back to Him no matter how far you have wandered away." That is definitely true. However, Jesus instead chooses to tell the story of a boy who disowned his family, partied away his inheritance, came home to beg for mercy, and was surprisingly welcomed with open arms by his father who waited daily for his return. Which is more powerful?

Jesus also used object lessons to communicate as well: He washed the feet of the disciples to teach servant leadership (John 13:3-17); He called a little child to Himself to discuss childlike faith (Matthew 18:1-4); He described unselfish giving after watching a widow drop two small coins into the temple offering (Mark 12:41-44). When he told the parable of the sower, He was probably looking out over a field where a man was sowing seeds (Matthew 13:1-9).

I personally like to use object lessons when I speak because people remember three times as much if they see something instead of just hearing it. When I talk about being filled with God's Holy Spirit I use a glove. At salvation my fist (the Holy Spirit) goes into the glove, but the glove is only filled by the hand when we allow Him to take control of every area of my life. That is like putting all my fingers into the fingers of the glove and completely filling it. The tricks I do are visual lessons that people remember. Be creative and think of ways you can use objects to make the truths you are telling more understandable and memorable.

3. INCLUDE THE GOSPEL

In every message or lesson, no matter the main idea, Jesus must at some time and in some way be lifted up as the only way to God. The gospel is good news (Matthew 4:23; 9:35) and must be part of every message. Each time you speak there may be someone listening who hasn't put their faith in Jesus, or a Christian who needs to reaffirm His faith. Don't just tack this on at the end, but work it into the fiber of the message. It doesn't have to be long and detailed, but there needs to be something in every message that God's Spirit can use to bring the hungry or thirsty soul to Him. There must be some pointing of the way to salvation through Jesus.

D. INTRODUCTION

When you know exactly what your message will be and you are sure of your main idea, then you can finalize the way you want to introduce your message. This is very important to making the message hit home, as is the point on an arrow. When my son shoots an arrow, the weight of the point helps it fly straight and the sharp tip makes it stick into the target. The introduction to the sermon points in the direction you want to go, gets the people's attention, and helps them see the importance of what you are talking about so they will better listen. I like to use an event in my life, an example from history, an analogy from nature, a story or a current event to catch their attention. Our opening words must be right to the point and hit home.

In your introduction you need to identify with your listeners so they know you care about them and aren't just lecturing them and looking down on them. Paul did that when he spoke by referring to the Jews as "our" ancestors (Acts 13:17). In Athens he complimented the people for being very religious (Acts 17:22). By identifying with the people, he assured their trust and interest in what he said.

As speakers we often fear people will stop listening to us. Even worse, though, is if they never start listening in the first place. They may look like they are listening, but their thoughts can be far away. Speakers must start with confidence in their voice and direct eye contact with the people. For that reason you should write down, word for word, your introduction and memorize it so you can say it with confidence and focus. Remember, you never get a second chance to make a good first impression.

For example, I could start my sermon above on Mark 5 by saying "Jesus had more contact with demons and more to say about them than anyone in the Bible." That would introduce the subject

and get everyone's attention. Or I could start with a personal story: "You may not believe what happened to me/someone I know recently! I hardly believe it myself." Or it could be "Some people don't believe in demons, others are afraid of them and even others worship them. As Christians we know they are real, but what can we do to be free from their influence?" Any of these will gain the interest of people and motivate them to be interested to hear more.

Be creative with your introduction. Keep it short but to the point. Write it out so you get each word right. Memorize it so you can start with confidence and gain everyone's attention. It's only one sentence, but it sets the tone for the rest of the message.

E. TRANSITIONS

Making a smooth change from one topic to the next in a message requires a good transition. When one is driving in a car and following another, it is much easier if the leading car signals before making a turn, slows down to allow the following car to stay with it through the turn, then pick up speed again. If not, the second car can easily become lost. The same is true in speaking. Bringing your listeners clearly from one point to the next, building upon what you have said, and then moving forward is a very important part of sermon preparation. Don't lose them, make sure they are following you the end. These transitions are so important you should write them out word for word until you've gained experience. Even then you still need to make a note about how you will transition in your outline. My example of transitions from my sermon on Mark 5 will help you understand the function and importance of transitions.

F. ILLUSTRATIONS

Your message or lesson is almost complete, but there is one VERY important step left – adding examples or illustrations. You may have been doing this as you have worked on your sermon, but now is the time to go through and make sure you have appropriate illustrations of key points – not too many and not too few. Telling a good story or using a clear example sheds light on what you are saying, much like opening a window and letting light into a dark room so unclear things can be easily seen. So practice and develop your skill in storytelling to "light up" your lesson.

Objects can also be used as illustrations. God used the Tabernacle as a beautiful teaching tool because it showed in a practical way the theological truths He was trying to convey. The sacrificial system, the dress and duties of the priests and many Jewish customs all were to show in a clear way truths God wanted them to understand. The speakers and writers in the Bible used many illustrations and objects to help communicate their message.

Illustrations can be used to clarify a point (like Jesus' parables of the lost coin and sheep), convict of sin (Nathan to David about the rich man who took the poor man's only sheep), inspire and move the listeners to action (like the parables of the prodigal son or the good Samaritan), and make the truth more memorable (passing through the eye of a needle, plucking an eye out, etc.).

To be effective, though, an illustration must fit the truth it is conveying like a fine piece of clothing fits the person who buys it. It shouldn't be too long nor draw focus to itself, but should enhance your main point.

Too many illustrations in a message will bring confusion. An illustration emphasizes a point, and only a few points can be emphasized. If you try to emphasize too much, then nothing will really stand out.

Illustrations can be short, even just a simple word. Calling Jesus a shepherd paints a picture with just one word. Be careful about using too many illustrations about yourself, especially ones that build you up, for the focus shouldn't be on the speaker but on the message.

You can find stories and illustrations in the Bible and in everyday life. News events, science, history, other sermons you heard, material from books you read or movies you see, sports, humor, poetry or church history events and people are all sources for good illustrations. Look for them in everyday life. Write them down so you remember them when you need them. If you have access to a computer, thousands of free illustrations can be found online.

E. CONCLUDING THE MESSAGE

1. A GOOD CONCLUSION

Of similar importance is the conclusion. Last words are usually remembered the longest: the significance of a dying person's last words; the lingering last words of a song, a book or a movie. That's true of a sermon as well. The conclusion ties it all together in one neat package so the listeners can review it one more time. No new material can be added, just a short review of what you want them to know and do brings them back to the introduction and ties the whole message in one unit.

A fitting illustration or story is excellent for a review to once more illuminate the main idea. I usually leave my very best illustration of the main point for the conclusion. I use my second best for the introduction.

Writing out your conclusion can be good as well, especially the final sentences, so that you can also end confidently with clear eye contact. A speaker's awkward or abrupt ending can take away from all that has been said before; and a sermon which goes on and on loses whatever beneficial impact was present at the first. So keep your conclusion tightly focused and a good length.

2. PUBLIC OR PRIVATE INVITATION

Some churches close with a public invitation for anyone wanting to put their faith in Jesus by asking them to come to the front of the church for prayer or leading people through a prayer while they remain seated. Some do this every week, others just from time to time. While taking a public stand for Jesus is important for every believer, having to do so isn't necessarily part of what it takes to put faith in Jesus for salvation. Publically going to the front can be a distraction for some people, and the issue really is between the person and God alone. Others can get the idea that just going forward in church gives them salvation and not realize that it is really gained by inner belief in Jesus. Also, a concluding invitation should not just be for salvation, but should have a challenge for everyone based on what you want them to do with what they now know. There certainly is nothing wrong with a public invitation for salvation following a message, as long as its purpose is clearly understood by all. But neither is it necessary every week.

3. CLOSING IN PRAYER

Closing a message in prayer is very important. What you pray here is significant and should be similar to your sermon conclusion, minus the story or illustration. Write it out or outline it to help

you keep pray with the same focus as the sermon. This prayer is for leading the people into talking with God and hearing the teaching of the Holy Spirit from the lesson just received.

Your message is now completed and ready to be delivered. Congratulations on a job well done!

III. DELIVERING THE MESSAGE

Now that you have your message finalized and it is ready on paper, the next step is to orally deliver it to your listeners. If you were writing a book or article, you would follow the exact same steps up to this point, but instead of speaking the words you would write them. You speak and the people listen, it's as simple as that. But even a well-written sermon can be ruined by poor delivery which can hinder it's being received as well as it could. It's like preparing good food but then serving it in a sloppy, messy way. People eat more and enjoy it better when the food is attractively served.

A. THE SPEAKER SPEAKS

1. THE IMPORTANCE OF GOOD DELIVERY

For me personally, writing a good sermon comes more naturally than delivering it. My speaking, when I was starting, was very poor. It was flat, uninteresting and often too quiet for people to hear. My poor delivery spoiled my good message. So, I've been working on my delivery throughout my whole ministry. I'm not a naturally gifted speaker, but I have learned some things to make my delivery more pleasing to those who are listening. I want to share them with you.

Peter was the opposite of me in that he was a natural speaker. More words of his are recorded in the gospels than all the other disciples together! He showed great confidence in what he had to say: speaking boldly, clearly and loudly enough that everyone could hear him (Acts 2:14). Peter's tone of voice was serious (Acts 2:40). He knew the importance of his message, and that many would reject it. His delivery was personal with direct eye contact and practical application to those listening (Acts 2:22, 29, 36). He was filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke with boldness, wisdom and sensitivity (Acts 2:4;4:8).

2. HELPFUL HINTS FOR GOOD DELIVERY

Since I am not naturally a person who talks a lot and shows a lot of emotion, I've had to work on this part of my preaching so I could better communicate the sermon I prepared. I'm shy and feel self-conscience when speaking to others. In order to be a better speaker, I've had to get my thoughts off myself and what others were thinking of me. The sermon isn't about me, it's about God's truth as revealed in His Word. I am just the instrument He uses. I am like a pipe that carries much-needed water from its source to the people who need it. The focus isn't on the pipe but on the water. By praying and focusing on the truth I am conveying to needy people, I've been able to keep my focus off me and therefore do a better job of preaching.

Maybe you are a natural speaker who loves being in front of a group and easily can gain and hold their attention. That is a gift to thank God for; however, the purpose of speaking is not to gain attention or entertain, it is to convey God's truth. Be aware of the temptation to use public speaking

to gain attention for yourself. Don't focus on the admiration of the people, but on the truth of the Bible. May we never be guilty of stealing glory from God by using His Word to gain focus on ourselves instead of Him!

The other danger these speakers must avoid is that they usually aren't naturally as disciplined at study and putting together sermons. They can use their speaking ability to carry the message instead of the content from God. They must learn to work hard at developing good, sound, Biblical messages so people learn and grow, and then keeping the focus off themselves as they speak.

For all speakers it is important to keep the focus on God's truth, not ourselves. Direct eye contact with the people is important. That's why you should have key parts of the sermon like the introduction, transitions and conclusion memorized so you can have eye contact with the people. They listen much more carefully when you do.

When I speak, I like to look at a few people who I know are hungry for what I have to say and are listening carefully. It helps me to speak to individual people instead of to the group as a whole. In fact, I often think of these people when I am preparing the sermon. That helps me prepare a sermon, not just a teaching lecture. Of course, I don't stare at any one person, but move from person to person. Often I see people not paying attention or sleeping, and it's sometimes hard to not let that discourage me, but I quickly pray a silent prayer for them and try not to look at them or think of them.

Also remember to smile as that communicates a spirit of friendship to the people: not one of contempt, anger, or criticism. So do gestures and body motions. They add variety and emphasize important points, making it easier for people to understand you. As with anything else, variety is important, but don't purpose to make too many gestures, or the same one over and over. And be careful of nervous gestures. Too many, or repetitious, or nervous gestures can be very distracting. Watch for body language that shows anger or disapproval as well. Ask your spouse or friend to tell you if these things are happening. Gestures should be natural, moving your arms from the shoulders, not the elbows. Broad, big gestures are a good way to emphasize an important point. Remember that your gestures seem much bigger to you than to the listeners.

Be natural, be yourself, not someone different when you preach or teach. Paul spoke with courage and conviction by the power of the Holy Spirit (Acts 13:9), even as Peter did. Paul's speaking style, however, seems to be different from Peter's. God made you and wants to use you just the way you are. Don't try to copy another speaker's delivery or change to be like someone else. Your whole life is speaking as well, so make sure you are practicing what you are preaching! That's the first rule of good pastoring and good parenting.

As you preach to others, remember you are also preaching to yourself. Make sure you worship and praise God even as you lead your people to do so. Pray for God to use the message to touch you as well as your listeners. Have your message well prepared and finished several days before preaching, for a sermon quickly put together, especially at the last minute, will not come across as well. You can tell the difference between a meal that was planned and prepared compared with one just thrown together at the last minute. Your listeners can tell the difference about what you are feeding them as well. Use the day before you preach, or even the morning you will preach, to review the sermon, not work on it. Then, on the day you speak, get to the meeting early to pray and prepare, and worship with the people before it is your turn to speak.

When you speak, remember to use words everyone can easily understand, even the children that are listening. What a shame it is to bore or confuse people with the Word of God! Don't use Christian terms without explaining them, especially if there are children or adults unfamiliar with the terms. We talk about 'faith,' 'grace,' 'being born again,' 'turning it over to Jesus' and similar things which can be very hard to really understand unless one is a mature Christian.

As you watch the people listening, you can sense when they are understanding something, or are confused, bored and uninterested, or are moved by what you are saying. Learn to read your people so you may adjust your delivery and focus according to their response.

One other thing to remember is to speak clearly and loudly so all can hear. Pronounce your words cleanly, neither speaking too quickly nor mumbling. Keep your head straight up and breathe deeply from your chest, keeping your voice loud and clear for the whole sentence. Don't yell as if in anger, though. Jesus, Peter and Paul always spoke gently but firmly. No one likes to be scolded. Speak the truth in love (Ephesians 4:15). Remember that people are seeing Jesus when you speak, that is an awesome responsibility.

To improve your delivery ask someone you respect to give you suggestions, or ask another speaker to come listen to you. You can record yourself on your phone or tape recorder and listen later to evaluate it yourself. That can be very helpful, also very humbling!

3. TO USE NOTES OR NOT

Some speakers write out their whole sermon and read the manuscript to the people. This makes it very hard to connect with the people, though. There is not much eye contact, the head is tilted down so the voice does not project, and it can sound dull to the listeners. Writing a manuscript can be good preparation so your message flows well and you know exactly what you want to say. However, if you use it to preach the sermon, mark key words in each paragraph so you can just glance down now and then, instead of reading word for word.

Other speakers don't use any notes to speak; they just rely on what they remember from their study. This can allow them to have good eye contact with the people, keep their head up, and speak sincerely from their heart. They can listen to the Spirit as He guides and directs. It does require extra work, for if it isn't memorized one will skip around or forget important points, thus breaking the flow. If you want to speak this way, you must memorize the outline and practice the whole message without notes.

What most speakers do, myself included, is to have an outline of what they want to say. I teach from a fairly complete outline with highlighted keywords. This way I have the entire message so I won't get lost or forget something, but I don't have to look at all the details as I'm speaking; the highlighted words stand out and remind me of what's next. I also make a complete outline so I can keep it for future use or research.

4. LEAVE THE RESULTS TO GOD

We have seen that it is our responsibility to prepare and deliver the best message we can, but beyond that we cannot be responsible. Once the words leave our mouth, it is up to the listeners to do with them what they will. In American football the quarterback is the one who throws the football to his receivers down the field. It is important he do his best to throw a good, accurate pass to make it easy for the receiver to catch, but once the ball leaves his hands it's up to the receiver if he catches it or drops it. The same is true in soccer. The one passing the ball makes the best pass he can, but then it is up to the one receiving it as to what happens next. As speakers we do the best we can, then leave the results to God. If we try to control the results, how people respond, we will manipulate the people with guilt or emotions. That is not our responsibility. Their response is between them and God. It is the Spirit's job to work in them to accept and apply what we say or not. Remember, we are the pipe carrying the water to the people. What they do with it when they receive the living water is

between them and God. Our responsibility is just to deliver it. He will take it from there (Isaiah 55:11).

I recall several times when people came up to me after the message and told me about a certain statement I made which meant so very much to them. God used it to touch them in a deep way and they thanked me for saying it. The only trouble is that I never remembered making that statement. In fact, I was sure I didn't say that in the sermon! I think most preachers have had that happen to them. God's Spirit was speaking to the person during the message and made that truth clear to them through something I said, even if I never said these exact words. God takes our words and uses them for his glory.

It's not uncommon for someone to say My message was particularly for them, that what I said was just what they needed and it was if I was talking only to them. We may not know exactly what they need when we speak, but God does. As we speak, God's Spirit is speaking as well (John 16:13-15). He gives us the words He wants us to use and He then applies those words to the minds and hearts of those who are listening to them. Trust Him to take what you say and use it for His Glory.

5. WHEN YOU ARE DONE SPEAKING

When you are done pray, commit all that was said to God and His use. Don't focus on that which didn't seem to go correctly. Don't keep thinking about what others think of you or about how good it felt to have everyone's attention. Commit it all to God. If there is anything you find you want to do differently next time, make a quick note of it, then don't think about it at that time. Relax and let God minister to you as well. When people tell you what a great message it was, graciously thank them, but in your heart give God the credit. Don't steal His glory for yourself! You know that without Him you never would have been able to do it. Preaching takes a lot of physical and emotional energy out of the speaker, and that makes him very vulnerable to discouragement or pride, depending on how he feels the message went.

B. THE LISTENERS LISTEN

We've talked about the importance of preparing a sound, godly message and then delivering it in a clear, easy-to-understand way. There is still one final step, though – the listeners really hearing what you are saying. You throw the football the best you can, or pass the soccer ball to the best of you ability. Then it is up to the one who receives it (Romans 10:17). Your listeners have a free will choice about what they will do with what they hear you say.

People listen, but they don't always hear. Jesus said this to those who listened to His words but didn't really hear what He was saying (Mark 8:18). Peter delivered basically the same message to Gentiles at Caesarea (Acts 10:34-35) and Jews at Antioch (Acts 15:16-41). The Gentiles gladly accepted it while the Jews rejected. It wasn't the speaker or the message, it was the hearts of the listeners who made the difference.

A pastor or speaker must pray for his listeners and teach them how to listen. Satan will try to distract them while listening, make their minds wander or have them forget what they heard (Matthew 13:1-8). The spirit wants to learn and grow, but the flesh is tired, weak and lazy (Matthew 26:41; Mark 14:38). Many times people don't know how to really listen for more than a few minutes, they have short attention spans.

Train your people to stay seated quietly while you are speaking. This shows respect for you and God's Word, and doesn't disturb others. A few words before the sermon, especially in thanking

them for quietly listening and not moving around, can be very helpful. If it is warm in the room and people seem to be falling asleep or distracted, taking a short break to stand and maybe even sing a chorus, can bring them back into focus.

When I notice people not paying attention I will ask questions instead of making statements. That helps them engage. For example, if I am talking about the need to forgive others, instead of saying "It is important we forgive others" and then give them some reasons, I'll ask "Why is it important to forgive others?" Then I'll pause a bit to let them think, giving direct eye contact. I may follow up with another question, "What if we don't forgive someone?" "How will that affect our relationship with God?" Asking questions keeps people mentally involved; and pausing to break up the flow of just talking grabs attention as well. Appropriate stories or illustrations will get attention back as well. Encouraging people to write down notes about what you say helps them pay attention and listen better as well.

You can help them listen better by sometimes saying, "This is important," "Remember this," or "Write this down." Repeating something also emphasizes it and helps them know it is important. Transitions between main points which quickly review previous main points helps them keep the structure in their mind. They know where they've been and where they are going.

I often talk specifically to the children in my church before or during my message, telling them a story or using an object lesson. I find that the adults listen as carefully as the children, and sometimes get more from that than when I speak to just the adults!

IV. EVALUATING THE MESSAGE

Now you are finished, at least with the current message. You have prepared it, delivered it and the people have listened to it. Before you file it away and forget about it, though, take a moment to evaluate it so you can learn what you can do better in future messages.

A cook likes feedback on her meal so she knows what people thought of it and if there is any way she can improve it next time. After you are done with a message and before everyone goes home, asking someone to summarize the message lets you learn if they understood the main point. Ask them if anything was confusing or hard to understand. A church leader or someone in your family would be good to ask for they should be honest and helpful. My wife is very helpful to me in giving good, honest feedback so I can improve my preaching.

It takes time and practice to become a good speaker, but just talking a lot won't accomplish that. You have to plan what you are saying and evaluate it afterwards so you can learn and do better the next time. Listen to good speakers and see what you can learn from them. Ask one of them to listen to you some time.

Remember that not every sermon will be a great one. Some will be more effective than others. Just do your best to prepare and deliver, and leave the rest with God. My first sermon was about the rapture. I prepared thoroughly. The notes took me 45 minutes to preach when I practiced, but when I spoke I was so nervous I rushed through them and was done in 7 minutes! Billy Graham himself said the same thing happened to him when he preached his first sermon. Even Paul had someone fall asleep while he was speaking. The man fell out the window and was killed; God brought him back to life (Acts 20:9). It was probably hot in the room and very late at night, so that contributed to it as well.

If someone criticizes your message in a nasty way, see if there is anything true you can learn from their words and then forgive them and the spirit in which they spoke (Luke 23:34). Keep your

mind focused on what is good, right, noble and pure, not on negative words or criticism (Philippians 4:8). Satan will use those things to discourage and defeat you! As you work on the next message, learn from the last message so you can improve, but other than that put it out of your mind. If it was extra good or extra bad, put it behind you and do your best on the next one (Philippians 3:13-14).

CONCLUSION

Building a sermon is a lot like building a house. A good home, like a good sermon, brings comfort, growth, protection and encouragement. First the builder of a home must know the kind of ground on which he is building. Marsh, sand or a place that can be easily flooded are not good for home building. The preacher must know the hearts of the people into whom he is trying to build truth.

The first thing needed before building can start is power to dig, drill and build. The Holy Spirit is our source of power as we build a sermon. Trying to build it without Him will fail.

Before construction the home builder plans how his home is to be arranged, where each room will be built. Sermons must be planned ahead of time as well. In order to build, the builder must know how to use the tools of his trade: hammer, saw and plane. The pastor must know how to use his tools, the Bible and concordance, to construct a good message. Builders learn from others and build their skills over time, so do good preachers.

First a solid foundation must be laid for the house to be firm and strong. The foundation of a good sermon is solid Bible study so the passage to be taught is thoroughly understood. It must be built on God's Word as its firm foundation. After the foundation the frame for the house is built. The walls, roof, windows and door all are held together by a good frame. A sermon, too, needs a good, solid frame, or outline, to which everything else is fastened. There must be a clear main idea, what you want the listeners to know and do. The main points of the sermon all develop this main idea. This is the frame for the sermon, and its effectiveness depends on how well the frame is built.

The walls of the home cover it all to keep out rain and cold and to keep in warmth. The sermon needs to flow smoothly without cracks or holes to provide what the people need. But all walls with no windows is dull and dark. Windows let in light and illuminate what is inside. In the same way stories, illustrations and examples illuminate key points in a message so the people can better see the point you are making.

Of course a home must have a door to go out into the world during daily life. Sermons need applications so they can apply in daily life and make a difference in how people live. They aren't just for entertainment while listening; they are so the people can take the new truths taught with them into their daily life in the world.

Covering over a home with a good roof protects it from the elements that would destroy it. Prayer is the necessary covering for the words you will speak to people. They must be strong, consistent and direct to cover the message and the needs of the people.

You can probably think of even more parallels, but I'm sure you see the point. Proclaiming God's Word to others is a great privilege and honor, but it demands hard work and careful attention to be done well. Jesus was a carpenter, literally a house builder, by trade. He also built and delivered strong, Biblical messages to feed and equip His followers. May we follow His example and become more like Him as we carry out our God-given responsibility to feed His sheep (John 21:15-17; 2 Timothy 4:1-2).

May God bless you richly and feed you from His Word as you feed others (2 Timothy 2:6). There is no greater privilege in this world than to serve the Lord Jesus Christ. If He has chosen you

to be one of the special ones to feed His sheep, then thank Him and do your very best to carry out this great honor and privilege. There is none greater, nor is there any better way to spend your short life on this earth. You will be richly rewarded for all eternity, so use every opportunity you have now to serve Him in any way you can! When you get to heaven, look for me and together we'll praise our Savior and King, the Lord Jesus Christ!

SAMPLE SERMONS

I have included sample sermon outlines in the back of this book to help you get started, not to become a crutch or keep you from doing your own sermon preparation. Sermon outlines by others helped me learn how to develop my own when I was first starting to preach, so I include them to help you. The first sermons are more detailed in their outline; towards the end they are very broad and general. They are outlined in different ways to show you various ways you can do it yourself. Feel free to change them and use them as you like, but don't let them replace your own sermon development.

Remember, they are simply outlines to help you get started. Add your own notes, illustrations and Bible verses. They are just a skeleton for you to develop and flesh out. There are more, complete sermons on my web site, <http://india.christiantrainingonline.org/>. Just click on "Sermons" and you will see 70 full length sermons of mine you can use. If you want to download them click on "Sermon Downloads" at the bottom of the list or go to <http://india.christiantrainingonline.org/sermons/sermon-downloads/>. If you have any questions or I can help you in any way, you can email me at jerry@christiantrainingorganization.com

Spiritual Warfare and Jesus (Mark 5:1-20) – Spiritual Warfare (page 50-55)

Power & Authority in Jesus' Name (Luke 9:1; 10:1, 17-19) – Spiritual Warfare (page 56-58)

Jesus Gives Meaning to Life (Ecclesiastes 1:1-8; 3:1-8; 12:1,13) – Funeral Service (page 59-62)

Authority of the Word (2 Timothy 3:16-17; Hebrews 4:12) – The Bible (page 63-65)

Following Jesus (1 Corinthians 2:15; 3:1-3) – Discipleship, Baptism (page 66-67)

Listening for the Trumpet (John 14:1-3; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18) – Prophecy, Rapture (page 68-70)

Signs of Life: How Can I Be Sure I Am A Christian? (1 John) – Assurance of Salvation (page 71-72)

What God Expects of Husbands & Wives (Ephesians 5:22-33; 1 Peter 3:1-7) Marriage (page 73-76)

What God Expects of Parents (Ephesians 5:22-33; 1 Peter 3:1-7) – Family, Children (page 77-79)

Child-Like Faith (Mark 10:15; Matthew 6:25-34; 18:3; 19:14) – Faith (page 80-82)

What Christmas Teaches Us About God (Luke 2:1-20) – Christmas (page 83-84)

The Purpose & Function of the Church (Acts 2:41-42, Hebrews 10:25) –The Church (page 85-87)

God's Grace (Luke 7:11-17; Mark 12:41-44) – God's Grace (page 88-89)

Jesus Restores Needy People (Matthew 15:21-28; Luke 5:12-14; Mark 5:25-35) – Guilt, Shame, Honor (page 90-91)

The Serious Business of Following Jesus (Luke 9:57-62) – Discipleship (page 92-93)

Thanksgiving in Three Tenses (Psalm 66) – Thanksgiving, Worship (page 93-94)

Lessons from Funerals (2 Cor. 5:8; Psalm 23:4; 1 Cor. 15:20-26) – Funeral Service (page 95-96)

Children are Special (Matthew 18:2-6; Mark 9:35-37; 10:13-16) –Child Dedication, Birthday (page 97)

Daniel: Faithfulness (Book of Daniel) – Faithfulness (page 98-99)

Wedding Devotional (Ephesians 5:22-33; 1 Peter 3:1-7) – Wedding, Anniversary (page 100)

Children are Like Arrows (Psalm 127:4-5) – Baby or Child Dedication (page 101)

Evangelism Sermon – Evangelism (page 102-103)

SPIRITUAL WARFARE & JESUS

Mark 5:1-20

(This sermon is different than most of the others in that it is written out word by word. It is one I use in every pastors' conference in India. You can change it or add to it any way you want.)

MAIN IDEA: To understand the victory we have over Satan and demons and to apply that to our own lives

INTRODUCTION

Illustration: tell about a time you or someone you heard about confronted a person with demons and had victory in Jesus' name. Make sure God gets the glory and credit, not any human being.

Before God created the world He created angels to serve Him

But one of the angels didn't want to do that,
he wanted to be worshipped instead
He wasn't able to defeat God so God cast him out of heaven.
1/3 of the angels followed him
We call them demons and the one who leads them Satan

Their whole purpose is to oppose God and control the world
He isn't nearly as powerful as God, but He is more powerful than us

The only people he doesn't control are Christians

We are the only ones who can bring light into his darkness
So for him to succeed he must stop the church
God is greater, but we must know how to have victory in Him
We will look at an example of God's power over demons – Mark 5:1-6

I. JESUS GOES TO GADERENES – Mark 5:1-6

Jesus left everyone He was with to take a boat across the lake
He wanted to go help a man who couldn't come to Him
Satan didn't want Him to go free that man
so he sent a storm to sink the boat
Jesus spoke to the storm and got safely to the other side

READ MARK 5:1-13

When Jesus got there he was met by a man who was controlled by demons
that were living in him
When we look at this man's life we can see some of the things
demons do to people

A. SYMPTOMS OF DEMONIZING

They influenced this man to **live in a cave** with dead bodies
Demons love death and darkness
God is light and life, Satan is death and darkness

We see, too, that this man was filled with **anger**
If anyone came near him he would do all he could to hurt them
He loved to bring pain and destruction to others

He wanted to cause **pain to himself also**
He would cut himself with sharp rocks

He did all these things because the demons put thoughts in his mind to do them
They weren't thoughts he wanted and they weren't thoughts God gave him
They were from demons, but he didn't know that
He'd hear the thoughts and then he'd act on them

That's how demons work with people today as well
 putting thoughts in a person's mind which they don't want
And they know they aren't thoughts God is giving them
But the thoughts keep coming back and back

It might be thoughts of doing an awful sin
It could be thoughts of anger
It might be thoughts of hurting others or hurting themselves
It could be thoughts of greed or jealousy
It may be thoughts of fear and not trusting God
It could be thoughts of lust
It could be blasphemous thoughts
 "Jesus isn't God"
 "God will never love me and take me to heaven"

We all get thoughts we shouldn't have
When we confess them and pray we can grow and stop them
But if the thought doesn't go away no matter what we do
 Then it is a demon putting it there

This can happen to Christians as well as unbelievers

WHY SOME AFFECTED MORE THAN OTHERS?

The Bible doesn't tell us why this man had so many demons doing these things to him
But it does give us some reasons that demons can get into our lives and attack us

If we allow a **sin in our life** that opens the door to them, they will come in
If we open ourselves to a power other than God, they will use that
If someone uses idols or goes through rituals, that will open the door for demons to come in

When they come in they claim everything the person has
When the person has children they will **claim those children**
Then when they have children they claim those children as well

That's why sometimes you see the same sin from generation to generation in a family line
It could be a man has a problem with **alcohol**
When he has a son, that son has a problem, and then so does his son
Or it could be a man who **beats his wife**
He tells you his father beat his wife and so did his grandfather

Another reason they can work against you is because you are a **pastor in India**
Satan divides up his demons like a big army
He has different groups assigned to various countries and works
He has many strong demons assigned to India
He has kept India in darkness for many years
When you come to bring light, they will do anything they can to destroy you

There are some **places in India** that are even more open to demonizing
If something happens on a piece of land that invites demons' presence there, they will claim that piece of land
Maybe there was a shrine there at one time or some rituals were performed there
Maybe some awful sin happened there and they claim that land
Then if you build your house or church there they will work against you
If someone lived in your house before you that had idols or other things there, demons will still claim that house
Maybe you have noticed that since you moved into this house or church everyone seems to be getting sick
Or maybe people can't get along and there is always fighting
Or it could be that you have more and more expenses and never have enough money
That could be demons claiming that land

Another reason demons can work against you, if someone puts a **curse** on you
Maybe someone knows you are a pastor and doesn't like you
The demons in them can put anger for you in the person's heart
They say "I hope something awful happens to that pastor"
"I hope his church doesn't succeed"
These are like prayers to Satan
Demons hear them and try to answer those prayers

These are all reasons why demons can work against us
Before we are done today we will pray and break all that
Before we do that, I want to finish my story about Jesus' power over demons

II. JESUS DEFEATS THE DEMONS

When Jesus landed, the man knelt before Him
No matter how many demons are in a person, he can still turn to Jesus
Jesus is greater than any number of demons
I John 4:4 Greater is He that is in you than he that is in the world
This is a good verse to memorize and use for spiritual warfare

There were many demons in this man

The demon who was the strongest was the leader and spoke for all of them

What did he say his name was?

A Legion is 5,000 or 6,000 soldiers!

This demon was saying, "We're very strong, Jesus, there are thousands of us!"

But who is stronger, thousands of demons or one Jesus?

When Jesus commanded these demons to be gone, they had to leave.

Where did they want to go? Into the pigs

If demons can't indwell a person, they want to indwell an animal

What happened to the pigs when the demons went in? Died
Demons always bring death and destruction.

How many pigs were there?

2000, so there must have been at least 2,000 demons

What happened to the man when the demons were gone?

He was changed and in his right mind

Instantly, once the demons were gone he was perfectly fine

When Jesus removes the demons his life is changed

When the demons left, this man was completely healed

He could have changed the other people, too, if they let Him

READ MARK 5:14-20

III. THE PEOPLE WANT JESUS TO GO

People came from everywhere to see what had happened

They knew what this man had been like, they saw how he changed

You would think they would want Jesus to do that for them as well

But they don't want Jesus to stay

They were afraid of upsetting the demons

Demons use fear to control people

Their power isn't as great as they want us to think

So they try to use fear to have us think they can do more

After this conference they will try to put fear in your heart so you forget what you learned

Demons can only do what God allows

Satan had to have God's permission to attack Job

God will only allow them to do what is for His glory and our growth

Because they were afraid of the demons, these people wanted Jesus to leave

You tell people today that Jesus can set them free, but they'd rather stay in darkness.

Jesus didn't force Himself on these people, he left

IV. THE MAN STAYS TO TESTIFY

But He did leave a **missionary** there

That was one of the reasons He went there, to give them a witness to the light

You think He would have chosen someone important, well educated

But look at the man He chose!

Sometimes we think, God how can you use me

I don't have any education, I'm not influential

Like this man, I have this awful sin in my past

But those are the very people God chooses to use

He has an important job for this man

The man wanted to leave and travel with Jesus

It seems strange Jesus wouldn't let Him

Jesus wanted Him to stay right where He was

He knew the people and the people knew him

God put you right where you are to minister.

Jesus told Him to **tell the people** what happened.

He had never been to Bible school

All he knew is what Jesus did in his life
Has Jesus done anything in your life?
God wants you to tell others what He has done for you.
Jesus wants you to be a **witness** for Him
In a court of law a witness tells what he knows
There are lawyers in a court of law as well
What is the difference between a lawyer and a witness?
A lawyer argues to convince other people he is right,
A witness just tells what he saw, what he knows
Does Jesus want us to be a lawyer or a witness? - a witness

This **man stayed** and told everyone what Jesus had done for him
Jesus went back to his own country and continued teaching
 A little later He was crucified & then ascended into heaven
The early church started growing in Jerusalem
As they grew they started sending out missionaries
Most of the missionaries had a hard time witnessing to the people
But when they came to the area where this man was, many turned to Jesus
Do you know why?
This man had been faithfully telling what Jesus had done for him

This man had been faithfully preparing the soil and planting seeds in people's hearts for years
So when Christians came they could harvest the crop

This man didn't see the harvest,
 he may not have been alive any more
But he kept faithfully telling what Jesus had done

God has called **many of you** to a ministry just like that man
You are in a place of darkness and are sowing the seed for the first time
It's hard, you don't see many results
But stay faithful and keep telling people about Jesus
One day God will use that to bring a great harvest where you are
You may not bring in the harvest, you may not even be here any more
But God will use what you started to bring great results

Don't get discouraged, **stay faithful**
Don't think there is something wrong with you as a Christian
 because you don't see lots of results
It's a special privilege God gives you to start working the soil in a place
You'll be blessed and rewarded for the harvest the same as the man who brings it in

Jesus used this man for His glory and His kingdom
He used it to teach His disciples how to have victory over demons

V. WE HAVE SAME AUTHORITY & POWER

Jesus gave the disciples power & authority to drive out all demons (Luke 9:1)
He sent them out and said they had authority over demons
When they came back they were very excited
"Even the demons must submit to us in your name" they said
It is in Jesus' name we have power, not my name or your name
Demons don't need to listen to you or me, but they must obey Jesus!

Paul used this authority

One day he was walking down a street and a demon possessed slave girl was following him

He turned around and he commanded the demon to be gone in Jesus' name

Immediately the demon was gone

I want us to use that power and authority now to make sure no demons are working against you or your family

I want us to pray for any demons to be gone

I want you to see how you can pray for yourself and your church

GROUP PRAYER FOR DELIVERANCE

Dear Jesus, we thank you for the salvation we have in Jesus.

We know you are greater than Satan and His demons (quote 1 John 4:4)

“Greater is He that is within us than he that is in the world!”

We know you have power over them and have given us that power in Jesus' name.

In Jesus name, I forbid any demons to work against me or my family or my church

If I have committed any sin that they would use to work against me, I put it under the blood of Jesus. (1 John 1:9)

In Jesus' name, I break any claim that comes down through my family line. (2 Corinthians 5:17)

In Jesus' name, I dedicate the land where my home and church are to God.

In Jesus' name, I break any curses anyone has made against me, my family or my church.

(Jesus has become a curse for me Galatians 3:13)

In Jesus' name, I forbid any demons to work against me or my family or my church for any reason.

I commit myself and my family and my church only to God.

Fill me with Your Holy Spirit

Surround me with Your angels

Use me for Your glory.

POWER & AUTHORITY IN JESUS' NAME

Luke 9:1; 10:1, 17-19

(This sermon is different than most of the others in that it is written out word by word. It is short but you can add to it, or combine it with the sermon on Mark 5, Spiritual Warfare and Jesus. You can change it or add to it any way you want.)

MAIN IDEA: To know that we have power and authority over Satan and demons and to understand how to use it for victory.

INTRODUCTION

Illustration: tell about a time you or someone you heard about confronted a person with demons and had victory in Jesus' name. Make sure God gets the glory and credit, not any human being.

Jesus' power is greater than that of Satan or demons
He shares that power with us as well:

READ Luke 9:1

I. AUTHORITY

He gave them power and authority so they could drive out all demons
He gives us authority to speak in His name

Illustration: When I came to India I came to the Delhi airport. There were many soldiers there. They wore uniforms and badges. The badge gave them the authority to enforce the laws of India. They couldn't do that on their own. When India gave them the badge, they had the governments authority to act in its name.

Jesus has given us as Christians His authority to act in His name.

When we became Christians He gave that to us.

He gave us many things at that time

He forgave all our sins forever

He made us His sons and daughters

He gives us the right to talk to Him in prayer whenever we want

He guarantees we'll be in heaven with Him forever

(add more.....)

He gives us many things when we become a Christian.

But sometimes we forget and don't use those things.

Illustration: There was an orphan boy who lived in the slums. He didn't have any family or anyone to take care of him. One day a rich man was driving through the slums and saw the boy. He wanted to help him so he took him home and adopted him as his own son. Now the boy had everything the father had. It was wonderful for him. But sometimes he'd forget all he had. He'd get hungry and start begging or steal food. Then he'd remember all he had with his father and come back to him.

Sometimes we are like that boy. We have everything we could ever need in Jesus

But sometimes we forget and we live in defeat instead of in victory.

Never forget that God has given you His authority.

But He's given us something else as well

II. POWER

He's also given us power.

Those soldiers in the airport had more than a badge. What else did they carry? A gun

If someone didn't listen to their authority, they had a gun to enforce it

God has given us His authority, but He has also given us His power

It's not our power, it's His power

The Bible says we have power when the Holy Spirit comes on us

III. DISCIPLES USE AUTHORITY & POWER

We have authority and power over demons

The Bible says the early disciples used that power and authority which Jesus gave them

READ Luke 10:1, 17-19

When the disciples came back they said, "the demons submit to us in Your name!"

Jesus said they must submit

Jesu was there when Satan was kicked out of heaven

Satan didn't have power to overcome God then, and he doesn't have it now.

Verse 19 authority to trample on snakes and scorpions = picture of Satan and demons

He has given us authority and power over them

He says we can overcome ALL the power of the enemy

He says nothing will harm us – we don't have to fear Satan and his forces

IV. PAUL USES AUTHORITY & POWER

The disciples used that power

Paul used it also

READ Acts 16:16-18

Paul is followed by a slave girl who is possessed by a demon

The demon pretended to foretell the future and the owners of the girl are making a lot of money

Demons don't really know the future

But they have been around a long time, are very smart and can make good guesses

Also demons work together to seem like they know the future

The demon in the girl would say something was going to happen

Other demons would make it so that did happen

Thus it seemed like they knew the future

Paul was very bothered by the demon in this girl

So he turned around and he commanded the demon

"In the name of Jesus Christ I command you to come out of her"

Immediately the demon left

V. "IN THE NAME OF JESUS"

Notice what Paul said – In the name of Jesus Christ

What if he would have said in the name of Paul I command you?

When disciples came back (Luke 10) they said the demons obeyed when commanded in Your name

We can do that in the authority of JESUS' name, not in ourselves but in Him only

Our name means nothing, but His name means everything
Which is better, our name or Jesus' name
 We pray in Jesus' name
 We have authority in Jesus' name

We want to pray and use that authority now
All those reasons we said that demons can come in
 We want to pray and close those doors in Jesus' name
I will pray and then you pray after me
 REMEMBER IT'S NOT MY NAME BUT JESUS' NAME!

I want you to see how to use the power and authority you have
 So you can pray for yourself
 And also pray for your family and church that way

But first let's close the door to any reason those demons claim to work in your life or family

GROUP PRAYER FOR DELIVERANCE

Dear Jesus, we thank you for the salvation you give us in Jesus
We know you are greater than Satan and His demons
We know you have power and authority over them
We know you have given us that power and authority in Jesus' name.

In Jesus name, I forbid any demons to work against me or my family or my church
In Jesus name, I close the door to any reason they think they can work against me.

If I have committed any sin that they would use to work against me, I put it under the blood of Jesus.
In Jesus' name, I forbid them to work and command them to be gone.

In Jesus' name, I break any claim that comes down through my family line.
I am a new creation in God's family.
I forbid any claim against me through my name or family line.

In Jesus' name, I dedicate the land where my home and church are to God.
I ask for His presence only to fill and use those places.
In Jesus' name, I break any claim demons may make through those places.

In Jesus' name, I break any curses anyone has made against me, my family or my church.
Jesus has taken all my curses on the cross.

His power has broken any power of the enemy against me.
So in Jesus' name, I forbid any demons to work against me or my family or my church.
I commit myself and my family and my church only to God.
Fill me with Your Holy Spirit. Surround me with Your angels. Use me for Your glory.
In Jesus' name I pray. Amen

JESUS GIVES MEANING TO LIFE

Ecclesiastes 1:1-8; 3:1-8; 12:1,13

MAIN IDEA: Using the context of a funeral to show people how life without God is empty, but with Jesus there is meaning and purpose. Encourage all to put their faith in Jesus for salvation and to live in obedience to Him.

INTRODUCTION

READ Psalm 42:1-2, 19

Other good funeral scriptures include Psalm 23; John 14:1-3, 27

Solomon was the wisest man who ever lived

He knew more about life than anyone ever

It would be interesting to talk with him and ask him questions

Many would ask him what the purpose of life was and how to find meaning and significance

Fortunately he had already answered these questions in his book of Ecclesiastes

Let's look at what he tells us about life and eternity in that book

I. EMPTINESS OF LIFE WITHOUT GOD

READ Ecclesiastes 1:1-2

MEANINGLESS = Hebrew hebel 35 times in 29 verses

Meaningless = without real substance, value, permanence, significance, meaning

READ Ecclesiastes 1:3

UNDER THE SUN = 29 times in 27 verses

Look at life from perspective of this life only

Can't find meaning, significance in things of this world

- a. Who am I?
- b. Where did I come from?
- c. Why am I here?
- d. What happens after this life?

The very kinds of thoughts that funerals bring to mind

Life without God is empty and meaningless

Illustration: example of this from own life, someone you know or heard about

Can't find the answers in looking around us

NOTHING SEEMS TO CHANGE in life

READ Ecclesiastes 1:4-7

WORSE YET, NOTHING SEEMS TO SATISFY

READ Ecclesiastes 1:8

TRANSITION

After showing the emptiness of life lived without God, Solomon then shows the fullness of life lived for God

II. PURPOSE OF LIFE LIVED FOR GOD

In this context Solomon starts giving his answer to why we are here and what life is about

READ Ecclesiastes 3:1-8

READ Ecclesiastes 3:1 again

time/season = appointed cycle

GOD IS IN CHARGE OF THIS LIFE

– has a time and plan for everything

Everything happens as He plans it

REST OF ECCLESIASTES 13

14 opposites (7 perfect number of completeness, this double seven)

2 a time to be born and a time to die,

man has no control over these, only God does

pattern set: time to start/begin and time to stop/end

person who died had time to be born, not appointed time to die

both are part of life

a time to plant and a time to uproot,

must plant in spring – can't plant in fall and harvest in spring

can't harvest before planting

God has proper times for everything in our lives, we can't change them

3 a time to kill and a time to heal,

God allows plagues and death to sweep nation, then healing comes in cycles

a time to tear down and a time to build,

destruction and decay are part of the cycles of life, but don't last forever

then comes times of growth and building

4 a time to weep and a time to laugh,

a time to mourn and a time to dance,

Life isn't always fun and happiness, but it isn't always sorrow, either

Both pain and pleasure have their times in life

(Illustration: example of this from own life, someone you know or heard about)

5 a time to scatter stones and a time to gather them,

cast stones out of a garden, gather them to build a building

a time to embrace and a time to refrain,

husband and wife – time to embrace, time to not but do other things

6 a time to search and a time to give up,

Time to look for lost things, then time to give them up as gone forever

a time to keep and a time to throw away,

times of very important work, other times to relax and take life easy

7 a time to tear and a time to mend,

tear clothes in mourning = mend when mourning over

a time to be silent and a time to speak,

good to listen and not always talk

but there is a time to say something and not be silent, then we must speak

(Illustration: example of this from own life, someone you know or heard about)

8 a time to love and a time to hate,

love family, God = hate sin, evil, injustice

a time for war and a time for peace.

War is inevitable sometimes to protect innocent and our freedoms

But war isn't constant, there are times of peace as well.

Solomon argued that God has appointed a time for everything (3:11),

READ Ecclesiastes 3:11

Not only has God given a time to everything – He is in charge

He gives beauty (life, meaning, purpose) to things

He has also set eternity in the hearts of men;

God has put it in our hearts to search and find meaning in life, only through Him

We spend much more time dead than alive – life short, eternity is forever

Natural for man to wonder what will happen after we die

“Why am I here?”

“What is the purpose for my life?”

“What happens after I die?”

CAN'T find these answers “under the sun” - in this life

CAN find it in God

What God does lasts forever

READ Ecclesiastes 3:14

What we do is temporary, doesn't last – what God does will last eternally

As Solomon develops this thought through this book he comes to the final chapter:

READ Ecclesiastes 12:1

START LIFE by living it for God, not for self – then find meaning/purpose

Solomon concludes his life philosophy with these words:

READ Ecclesiastes 12:13

Fear God

Fear = RESPECT, recognize His might and power
Live for Him, not self

keep his commandments,

OBEY Him and His commands

Purpose of life – living for Jesus

We live for Him because He died for us:

CONCLUSION

(EXPLAIN THE PLAN OF SALVATION so all know what it is and how to live for Jesus)

CLOSING PRAYER

AUTHORITY OF THE WORD

2 Timothy 3:16-17; Hebrews 4:12

MAIN IDEA: To show that God exists and the Bible is His true Word for us and it is important for us to know and obey it. To help know how to study and apply the Bible.

INTRODUCTION

What is your favorite book? Why do you like it?

I. THE TRUTH OF GOD'S WORD

A. GOD IS TRUE

Existence not explained, proved – just assumed

Seen in nature – Romans 1:20; Psalm 19:1-6

Design in the world finds God

If you find a watch in a field you know someone created it, it didn't just happen

Our world is filled with wonderful design in nature and our bodies

God-created vacuum in heart only He can fill

Why so many reject? – not want to humble self, be accountable to His absolutes

TRANSITION

If God exists, how can we know about Him?

B. BIBLE IS TRUE

Only authoritative record, true and inspired

READ 2 Timothy 3:16-17; Hebrews 4:12

A true, accurate revelation from God is POSSIBLE and it is NECESSARY

It is **POSSIBLE**

If there is a God, then it is only reasonable that He reveal Himself to man

-in creation, conscience only rough image/sketch of what God is like

-by written word most complete, accurate revelation

If He can create universe, He can reveal Himself in a book and keep it accurate today

It is **NECESSARY**

Without it we wouldn't know about God or how He wants us to live

Bible not a book man would write if he could, or could write if he would

Man doesn't know: creation, one God, trinity, eternity, future

Science and history (archaeology) confirm everything in the Bible

Hundreds of Fulfilled prophecies – show the Bible is true

Chances of fulfillment = enough silver dollars to fill every star thousands of times

TRANSITION

If the Bible is God's Word, why do so many reject it?

WHY DOES MAN CONTINUE TO REJECT THE BIBLE?

Many years ago, while on a visit to England, a wealthy businessman was fascinated by a powerful microscope. Looking through its lens to study crystals and the petals of flowers, he was amazed at their beauty and detail. He bought one and took it home. He thoroughly enjoyed using it until one day he examined some food he was planning to eat for dinner. He discovered tiny living creatures were crawling in it. He was especially fond of this food and didn't know what to do. Finally he concluded there was only one way out of this dilemma: he smashed the microscope to pieces.

That is what many do with the Bible because it reveals their sin.

They don't want to be accountable to a holy God so they deny Him and His Word

They want to live and do whatever they want so they say there is no God and Bible

If they admit God exists and the Bible reveals His will then they are accountable

Then there are absolute standards to go by instead of doing anything they want

TRANSITION

So since God's Word is true and inspired, it is important for us

II. THE IMPORTANCE OF GOD'S WORD

A. GOD'S WORD IS ETERNAL

World today unsteady, nothing to depend on

- Can't build life on
 - finances, shaky and can go at any moment
 - job, economy take that, eventually too old to work anyway
 - health, will get old and health deteriorate
 - relationships, they change, people leave, all have own imperfections

Only stability is God and HIS WORD, that stays and lasts forever

READ Psalms 119:89

B. GOD'S WORD IS OUR WEAPON

GOD'S WORD our only offensive weapon

READ Ephesians 6:17

Jesus quoted Bible when tempted!!! If He needed to so do we!

WORD OF GOD useful, powerful, does what a sword does

READ Hebrews 4:12

WHAT DIFFERENCE DOES IT MEAN TO YOU THAT THE BIBLE IS TRUE?

1. All it says is true: heaven, hell, sin, salvation, grace, God's love & mercy all exist
2. We have an absolute standard to go to in a world full of instability and change
3. We have insight into the very mind and thoughts of God! – His world view is mine!
4. Comfort and promises in the Bible are true, won't be broken
5. Victory of Jesus over sin, world is assured – He will establish His kingdom here and soon!

III. THE USE OF GOD'S WORD

A. DAILY PRACTICE

READ Acts 17:11

Bereans searched Scriptures daily – do you?

No one ever became a Bible scholar on one sermon a week

The Bible is our sword – must learn how to use it

No one ever learned how to use a sword looking at it in museum
Or hearing one sermon about someone else using it
To learn to use sword must practice with it daily, hour after hour
Not come naturally, take time to get good at it
Satan interfere with time, priorities, emphasis

TRANSITION

Learning the Bible from others is fine, but must also study and learn it on our own

B. PERSONAL PRACTICE

Don't wait for others to give you the word, study it yourself

SERMONS, BIBLE STUDY good, but don't rely on it only

BOOKS, RADIO, SPEAKERS, AUDIO TEACHING good, but still 2nd hand

You don't want someone else chewing your food then giving it to you to swallow, do you? You want to chew it yourself. When you only learn the Bible from others you are swallowing what they have chewed. Learn to chew your own spiritual food, study the Bible for yourself

READ 2 Timothy 3:16-17

God-breathed –meaning? 'in breathed' = "inspired" by God

Teaching - meaning? How does Bible do it? Example of it in own life?

Rebuking - meaning? How does Bible do it? Example of it in own life?

Correcting - meaning? How does Bible do it? Example of it in own life?

Training in righteousness - meaning? How does Bible do it? Example in own life?

Equipped - meaning? How does Bible do it? Example in own life?

Thoroughly equipped - meaning? How does Bible do it? Example?

Good work - meaning? How does Bible do it? Example?

Every good work - meaning? How does Bible do it? Example?

C. MEMORIZING THE WORD = VICTORY IN LIVE

READ Psalms 119:9-11

JESUS knew it by heart, much of Old Testament – quoted Deuteronomy 3 times when tempted

Same for us to have victory over temptation, Satan, demons

D. MEDITATING ON THE WORD

READ Psalms 1:2 Think about it, fill mind/heart with Scripture and let it form thoughts and attitudes

TIME to let it soak in

Write down your thoughts, insights, etc. about the verse – spiritual journal

CONCLUSION

GREAT PRIVILEGE to own Bible of your own

Very words of God Himself

Will last, still true, after everything in this world gone!

Words of life – so important to read, study it!

READ Isaiah 40:8 and 55:11 The Bible will not be destroyed, it lasts forever

READ Matthew 24:35 and 1 Peter 1:24-25

What you learn about the Bible is important for this life and will be with you for all eternity

Bible knowledge is the only thing you can take to heaven with you and use for all eternity.

So learn it and obey it now.

FOLLOWING JESUS

1 Corinthians 2:15; 3:1-3

MAIN IDEA: To teach the meaning and purpose of baptism for those who have accepted salvation and committed their lives to live for Jesus, and to encourage them to make that commitment if they haven't done so.

INTRODUCTION

Any relationship takes commitment for it to work

Marriage for example, both must be committed or not grow together

Same with relationship with God – takes commitment to make it work

HE has committed to us – dies on the cross so we could be with Him

WE must make full commitment to Him as well.

TRANSITION

There are 2 steps we must take in this process

I. SALVATION *READ John 3:36*

A. THE NATURAL UNBELIEVER

READ 1 Corinthians 2:14

Dead in sin, without God

SELF on throne in life

Jesus no real place in life

Heard about Him, know about Him, try to be a decent person

PROBLEM: sin separates from God

Illustration: An operating room in a hospital must be pure, no germs or disease, no contamination.

So, too, heaven must be pure and perfect for God is there, there can be no sin in God's presence.

SOLUTION: Jesus on cross for our sins

B. THE WORLDLY BELIEVER

READ 1 Corinthians 3:1-3

Accepted God's free gift of salvation

Illustration: Tell about when this happened in your own life – own short testimony about your salvation

SELF still on throne, living like before salvation, but have accepted Jesus as Savior

YOU accepted Jesus long ago, but life not much different?

Jesus is in your life but not on the throne of your life – YOU are

-decent, moral person – not living a life of sin

-but not committed to living for Him, service to Him, put Him first in all

-turn to Him in troubles, then mostly forget again

use God, not letting God use you

TRANSITION

OUTWARDLY both seem the same to world, live for world not Jesus

INWARDLY different, worldly believer going to heaven, natural unbeliever to hell

But there is a 3rd alternative, best one yet

II. DISCIPLESHIP

JESUS many rejected, large group followed for free food, healing – challenged and left
Few who stayed were His DISCIPLES, followers

READ 1 Corinthians 2:15; 3:1

Salvation PLUS decision to put Jesus first in every area of life
NOT use Him to make my life better, but let Him use me for His glory

Illustration: Tell about when this happened in your own life – own short testimony about deciding to follow Jesus

SALVATION

Accept salvation
Eternity in view
Christ as Savior
I can count on God
Free to me
If not: Hell

DISCIPLESHIP

Give self (not really giving God anything, taking hands off His prop)
This life in view
Christ as Lord
God can count on me
Costs me everything
If not: still to heaven, not living for Jesus in this life

EVERYONE serving something: only 2 choices God or self (what all others really amount to)
If not serving, living for God, then for self (what get out of it, own benefit)

We make ourselves the servants of that one to whom we yield

DISCIPLE – follower, lives for Jesus, not self - what Jesus calls us to

Read Luke 14:25-27, 33; Philippians 3:7-8; 1 John 2:15-17

Illustration: Very difficult to sit on 2 chairs at once, keep falling between them. Must choose one or the other. Same in life, can't live for self and Jesus, must choose one or the other.

SALVATION first step

DISCIPLESHIP next – who live for – self or Jesus?

BAPTISM – show they have made this decision

FOLLOWING JESUS – keep eyes on Him, not problems, self, world

DON'T HAVE TO FIX UP LIFE FIRST – God wants you just as you are!

READ Revelation 3:20

Remember – God always fills in all hearts all the room which is left Him there.

CONCLUSION

SALVATION is a free gift, Jesus paid for it, we just freely receive it

Know we are forgiven and will be with Him in heaven for all eternity

But what about this life, who we live for now?

DISCIPLESHIP – commitment to follow and live for Jesus in this life

That is very costly, for we do what He wants, not what we want

Doesn't determine if we go to heaven or not, that free gift already given

Does determine how we live and who we live this life for.

Illustration: Woman going on a long trip didn't want to leave her jewelry at home in case she was robbed so gave most of it to her best friend to keep it safe for her. She kept a few of the best pieces at home, not trusting them to her friend. When she returned her friend had her jewelry safe, but what she kept at home was stolen. What we give to God He keeps safe for us, what we hang on to for ourselves we will eventually lose.

LISTENING FOR THE TRUMPET

John 14:1-3; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18

MAIN IDEA:

KNOW: The return of Jesus and the importance of being ready for it

DO: Realize how temporary this life is and focus on living for Jesus, knowing we could be with Him at any moment.

INTRODUCTION

We look at the world around us and we see sin, suffering, evil and misery

We know God has something better for us than this – but when will it be?

What does the Bible say about when Jesus comes back?

I. THE PROMISE OF JESUS' RETURN

READ John 14:1-3

1st mention of return of Jesus (Rapture) in Bible

Night before Jesus' arrest, had Last Supper, washed their feet

Jesus foretold His arrest and death

"DON'T BE TROUBLED" = Told to encourage them

"I GO TO PREPARE A PLACE FOR YOU" = literally "furnish, equip"

Jesus building our HEAVENLY HOME now

NO price spared, everything done to perfection

world took just 6 days to make

our heavenly home worked on 2,000 years +!

"MY FATHER'S HOUSE" = literally "dwelling places"

Children built houses around courtyard & parents

We will be living with God for all eternity

"I WILL COME AGAIN" = Greek present tense, guaranteed true, absolute, literally "good as done"

"THIS SAME JESUS" = very same one, with the nail prints in hand

CRUCIFIXION not the end

RESURRECTION makes the crucifixion valid, shows it's value & power

ASCENSION completes resurrection. Back to heaven but still not the end

Jesus is away but not gone!

NOW praying, interceding, gifting, leading us, preparing our home with Him

RETURN one day

culmination of what accomplished by crucifixion & resurrection, so with Him forever

"WILL COME BACK" = promise, guarantee

Illustration: USA General Douglas MacArthur left Philippines early in WW II he seemed to leave in defeat. Upon reaching Australia he sent back word "I SHALL RETURN.", 3 years later said "I have returned." Kept his word.

"IN THE SAME WAY YOU HAVE SEEN HIM GO" = visible, physical, actual

READ Acts 1:10-11 at Ascension angels say Jesus will return just as He left

TRANSITION

MEANTIME we are waiting and preparing for His return

II. AWAITING JESUS' COMING

READ Ephesians 5:25-27 Jesus working in us to make us holy & ready for His return
We are to be looking forward to being with Him, always watching (Matthew 25:1-13)

READ Mark 13:32 don't know when Jesus will return so always be ready

III. THE GROOM COMES

READ 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 Description of Groom & attendants going for bride
Describes Jesus coming for us!

"ASLEEP" = About the body, not the soul/spirit

Immediately at death the real us, the part inside that loves and thinks, goes to heaven

"Today you will be with me in Paradise"

"Depart and be with Christ" Philippians 1:23

"Absent from the body is to be present with the Lord" 2 Corinthians 5:8

ORDER OF EVENTS

1. Those who have already physically died

BODY dead, decayed

SOUL, SPIRIT went straight to heaven when body died

given temporary spiritual body until earthly one resurrected

2. Those still alive on earth next

SOUNDS

"TRUMPET OF GOD" = call to fall in, announce

"VOICE OF THE ARCHANGEL" = Michael & angels, cheering for Jesus is coming

"SHOUT OF THE LORD" = Greek 'military command,' God calling His people home

"COMFORT" = "encourage, exhort" this truth brings great peace and comfort

TRANSITION

Paul adds more details in 1 Corinthians

READ 1 Corinthians 15:51-55

"MYSTERY" = Jesus' return not revealed in Old Testament, just New Testament

"TWINKLING OF AN EYE" = this takes as long as it takes to blink an eye – suddenly happens

"CHANGED" = physical body to eternal body

"INCORRUPTIBLE, IMMORTAL" = be like Jesus' body
It was unlimited (appear/disappear, go thru walls)
It was physical (He could eat and speak)
It was eternal (last forever without change)

Illustration: Two little birds had a nest in the bushes in the back part of garden. Five-year-old Amy found the nest. It had four speckled eggs in it. One day, after she had been away for some time, she ran into the garden to take a look at the pretty eggs. To her dismay she found only broken shells. "Oh," she cried, "the beautiful eggs are all spoiled and broken!" "No, Amy," said her brother, "they are not spoiled. The best part of them has taken wings and flown away." So it is with death. The body left behind is only an empty shell, while the soul, the better part, has taken wings and flown away.

WHAT HAPPENS NEXT: we will be in heaven with Jesus forever
On earth will be 7 terrible years of judgment
then earth will be cleansed and restored to Garden of Eden conditions
(for more information see "Biblical Prophecy" by Jerry Schmoeyer)

CONCLUSION

EFFECT ON DAILY LIFE NOW

1. ACCEPT JESUS AS SAVIOR

Plan of Salvation

2. LIVE FOR JESUS EACH MOMENT

Don't get so entwined with this life, world, etc.

Meaning, purpose, satisfaction, etc. from Jesus, Not from this world!

Trials, discouragements, heartaches temporary, Over at any second!

faithfully serve where He has placed you

READ Romans 8:18 eternal reward and blessing with Jesus far greater than suffering here

READ Matthew 24:42, 44 don't know when He is coming so always be ready

Illustration: A man came one day, talked to children in school, said he had a prize for ones who had perfectly clean desk when he returned. One little girl wanted prize, but always had sloppy desk. She would clean it up every Friday, what if came Tuesday? She would clean Tuesday & Friday but what if came Wednesday? She said she'd clean it clean every morning, what if end of day? Finally she realized she should just keep it clean all the time. Same is true of us

If we are a believer in Jesus we will be raptured when He comes, even if sin in our lives

But how much better to not be living in sin when He returns!

3. BE COMFORTED, ENCOURAGED

Trials, discouragements, heartaches temporary - Over at any second!

All temporary, with Jesus eternally!

Life hard, but remember Jesus coming soon so hang on!

SIGNS OF LIFE : How can I be sure I am a Christian?

I John

MAIN IDEA: TO KNOW the signs that show one has accepted Jesus as Savior so that no one doubts they really have salvation nor ever fear losing it
TO DO Have assurance of their salvation without any fear of losing it.

INTRODUCTION:

Illustration: When a baby is born, how can you tell if it is alive or dead?

What are some of the signs that show physical life?

When a person is born again spiritually, how can you tell?

I. VITAL SIGNS OF NEW LIFE (I JOHN)

When a baby is born everyone checks immediately to make sure it is alive and healthy
Certain 'signs' to show this has happened physically - Same is true spiritually

A. BELIEF IN JESUS AS SAVIOR AND LORD

READ 1 John 5:1

SIGN: know in heart that Jesus is God who came to earth to pay for our sins
You are not a Christian because you grew up in a Christian home or go to church now

REVIEW - Explain plan of salvation (see "Evangelism Sermon")

B. VICTORY OVER WORLDLY WAYS

READ 1 John 5:4

SIGN: instead of living for the world and looking for needs met there, Jesus meets them
New, different view of things, priorities, motives, goals
Not perfect for we still sin, but now we battle sin because we don't want to sin
Before we couldn't stop sinning, now with God's power we can have victory

C. STRONG DESIRE TO OVERCOME SIN IN LIFE

READ 1 John 5:18

SIGN: entirely different view to 'sin' – can't 'enjoy' it as before
Not always able to overcome all sin (lifelong process)
Progressively have victory over areas of sin in life as grow spiritually
If we are truly saved, we will grieve over our sins, confess them, and seek victory over them

D. DOING WHAT GOD CONSIDERS RIGHT

READ 1 John 2:29

SIGN: 'Righteous' – living holy life, 'right' in God's life
Newfound desire to live holy life, pleasing to God
Changed life, Desire to grow in faith, want to become more like Jesus
NOT grow to get salvation BUT grow because already have salvation

Illustration: A man without a wife had a housekeeper whom he paid to take care of his home. After awhile they got married. She continued to take care of his home, but now wasn't paid to do it because she did it out of love, not for the money. That's how we are to serve God, out of love.

READ 2 Peter 3:18 GROW in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ

Command to Grow in: 1. GRACE - Christian daily experience (Outer growth)
 2. KNOWLEDGE - Learning God's Word (Inner growth)

E. LOVE FOR OTHER BELIEVERS

READ 1 John 3:14 .

SIGN: feel automatically 'connected' to other believers because have Jesus in common

Care about them, want to help them, be with them

Those who are truly saved also bear the birthmark of compassion. To believers & unbelievers both

Do you love your brothers and sisters in the **family** of God? Those who are truly saved are those who enjoy and bless the household of **faith**, the family of God.

TRANSITION

When baby born look for signs of life to make sure alive and healthy

If not have the signs in life (PRAY PRAYER FOR SALVATION NOW WITH ALL)

Then take measures to protect baby from disease for very vulnerable when first born

New believers vulnerable to disease of doubt

II. PROTECTION FROM DISEASE OF DOUBT

A. DISEASE OF DOUBT

Doubt salvation: didn't 'do it' right, not really saved

Promise: IF you believe you DO HAVE eternal life - Satan puts doubt in mind to take away joy & peace

Write down date (or even today's date if don't know date) so can look back to it

READ Romans 3:28; John 3:16

free gift. – FREE FOR US, NOT FREE FOR GOD!

Illustration: I give you a gift – free to you, I bear the cost (same with salvation, Jesus paid the cost)

READ EPHESIANS 2:8-9 ALL salvation is by God's grace, so nothing to do wrong or to lose it

When you Doubt: shows WANT salvation, proof God is working,

Wouldn't care if no work of Holy Spirit in life

B. DISEASE OF FEAR

Fear of losing salvation, not good enough, commit sin and therefore lose salvation

READ Romans 6:14 we are under grace, not law – don't fear losing salvation

READ 2 Timothy 2:11-13 born into God's family – can't be 'unborn'

Illustration: PRODIGAL SON – left, sinned, but still in family

READ Matthew 12:20; Psalm 37:24 God protects us, no way will He lose us

READ Romans 4:6-8 our sins are totally gone forever because Jesus paid for them

READ John 10:28-29; Romans 8:37-39 nothing can separate us from God, even if we want to be

CONCLUSION

Illustration: close with story of baby (you, one of your children, etc.) who grew physically healthy and spiritually healthy as well. Apply that to spiritual growth as well.

MARRIAGE

What God Expects of Husbands & Wives:: PUT THE OTHER FIRST

Ephesians 5:22-33; 1 Peter 3:1-7

MAIN IDEA: To understand that men are to show sacrificial love to their wives and wives are to show a submissive spirit to their husbands, and to learn how to do these.

INTRODUCTION

The first thing God did when He created people was to create marriage

Even though they walked and talked with God there was something missing

So God created woman for man and He created man for woman.

He said they were incomplete without each other (Genesis 2:16)

The husband-wife relationship is to be a picture of Jesus and His Church (Ephesians 5)

If a man isn't a godly husband to his wife God won't hear his prayers (1 Peter 3:7)

In fact, it is so important that God says a man can't be a pastor if he isn't a good, godly husband to his wife first (1 Timothy 3:4-5)

TRANSITION

So a godly husband (man), and a godly wife (woman), is very important

Just what does it mean to be a godly husband or wife?

READ EPHESIANS 5:22-33

I. HUSBANDS: SACRIFICIAL LOVE

HUSBANDS FIRST – leader, responsible for family

NOT what can she do to make it easier for him

BUT what does God want him to do for her?

WHAT GOD EXPECTS OF A HUSBAND = **SACRIFICIAL LOVE!**

Loving your wife unconditionally important for her growth

Is your wife a better Christian because of you? - Or in spite of you?

READ 1 Timothy 3:4-5

Not just pastors, but God's standard for ANYONE who wants to serve Him, live for Him

Putting her first = sacrificial love

A. WHAT SACRIFICIAL LOVE IS

COMMANDS by God, not suggestions, for all husbands all cultures all times – USA, India, etc

READ Ephesians 5:25, 33

LOVE IN THE BIBLE

PHILEO: friendship ('Phila'delphia), affection – first married

depend on recipient, conditional, love "because of" "if"

IF clean home, make good food, not talk back

AGAPE love in spite of, no matter what

Unconditional, love for herself, not for what she does

Illustration: Hosea for Gomer (tell story found in book of Hosea)

LOVE KEY to good marriages

TRANSITION Command #1 Husband have unconditional love so wife feels loved

B. HOW TO BE A SACIFICIAL LOVER

1. LOVE BY INITIATING LIKE CHRIST

READ Ephesians 5:25, 28-29 “*just as Christ loved the Church*” (2 times)

Standard/pattern of husband's love for wife: AGAPE love

"For God so loved the world He gave..." Jn 3:16 following the example of God the Father make the first move showing love - woman a 'responder' marry and treat her like Jesus treats you!!!

LOVE HER AS JESUS LOVES YOU!!!! - Command, not suggestion or option

READ PHILIPPIANS 2:5-8 (Talk about Jesus' sacrificial love for us, what He gave up for us)

Do you love your wife enough to DIE for her?

Do you love her enough to LIVE EACH DAY for her?

Think about her needs and how to meet them?

Listen to her and show love and sympathy?

Many men think the woman is here to serve and honor them,

But first we are to honor and serve her as Jesus honors and serves us!

TRANSITION

1. Man to love wife as Christ loves the church

2. Man to love wife by sacrificing for her - NOT just expecting her to sacrifice for him

2. LOVE BY SACRIFICING YOURSELF

READ Ephesians 5:25 “*gave Himself up for her*”

servant means putting others first

SOME wives do this, but out of duty not love, fear if they don't

Husbands do not always put wives first and serve them as Jesus does us
real love = putting others first, sacrificing self

Marriage = knowing her needs as a woman, Putting her needs before your own

Help her with children, house work

Take care of her when she is not feeling well

Help with shopping, carry heavy bags

Time off – go do what she wants

Visit her family, not just yours

TRANSITION

-sacrifice for her -putting her before others

3. BY LEAVING & CLEAVING

READ Genesis 2:24-25

Key verse to making marriage work (quoted 4 times in the Bible)

a. LEAVE – put her before your parents

forsake, abandon, loose, release from dependence

leave relationship with parents so depend on wife not them, not stop helping them

NOT parents #1, mate #2 - BUT mate #1, parents #2
Put wife before parents & self
Not abandon parents, ignore them, just not put before mate
Still love, help them, but depend on mate to meet emotional needs

b. CLEAVE – commitment

“TO HIS WIFE” = singular (no polygamy)

"cling, keep close" in Hebrew (as skin to bone in Heb) - 100% commitment - 'till death do us part'

Closer to her than anyone but God - Best friend

Share hurts and hopes, dreams, what learning

She meets your needs, not church, others, etc

TRANSITION

What God expects of husbands is sacrificial love

READ Proverbs 18:22 godly wife great gift from God

What God expects of wives is a submissive spirit

II. WIVES: SUBMISSIVE SPIRIT

A. WHAT A SUBMISSIVE SPIRIT IS

COMMANDS by God, not suggestions – to all husbands all cultures all times

READ Ephesians 5:22-24; 1 Peter 3:1

SUBMIT = Greek word, military term – **respond to authority**

"RESPOND" & SUBMISSION - woman is a RESPONDER

NOT: man the boss, gets his way, tells wife what to do

BUT: man like Jesus, initiates, puts her needs/best first

Sacrifices to do what is best for her

She trusts and responds to sacrificial husband like to sacrificial Jesus

*"Wives, **respond** to your own husband as unto the Lord!"*

WOMAN to respond, as to Jesus

MAN to treat her as Jesus does so will respond right

submitting = responding, trusting, allowing him to lead

done with unconditional love, not just fear, duty!

helps him feel like a man, do what God made to do

Husband responsible to God for family

Initiate with love, then woman respond with submissive spirit

Illustration: Joseph put Mary first, willing to marry her if unfaithful, so she trusted him

Step 1: Man initiates with sacrificial, unconditional love

Step 2: Wife responds with trust, submission, unconditional love back

MEN: EARN woman's trust, love, respect by actions

Don't just demand her obedience as your right - Like Jesus to us!!!

TRANSITION

I WHAT submissive spirit is - II WHY wives are to do it

B. HOW TO HAVE SUBMISSIVE SPIRIT

1. BY RESPONDING TO HIS LOVE

READ Ephesians 5:22-23 "as to the Lord"

willingly, lovingly, for own benefit, freely

can't really submit to husband if don't to Lord!

Wife to God: "How can I show You my love & devotion?" God to wife; "By submitting to husband!"

FEAR big enemy of intimacy - All women deal with it (men as well)

TRANSITION

HOW to have a submissive spirit:

-by responding to his love

-by respect, reverence

2. BY RESPECT, REVERENCE

READ 1 Peter 3:2; Ephesians 5:33 "reverence," "respect"

RESPECT HIM

Every man needs the respect and support of his wife

Men need respect like wives need love

A few words of praise from a wife go FAR

Thank him for trying, caring, putting family first

Tell him you are proud of him, need him, appreciate what he does for you and the family

DO NOT COMPARE HIM TO OTHERS

do YOU like to be compared to other wives? To his mother?

ENCOURAGE HIM

"encourage" = like throwing drowning man a life preserver

"How can I serve him?" not "how can he serve me"

unconditional love = encourage, reach out to him - not withhold approval because feel you don't get it
what you put into your husband you'll get back 10-fold

HE WON'T BE PERFECT, ALWAYS DO RIGHT

GO TO GOD WITH YOUR UNMET NEEDS

Ask God to change you first, then your husband

And for God to meet needs husband doesn't meet

NO husband ever meets all – leave need for God!

CONCLUSION

What God expects of husbands is sacrificial love

What God expects of wives is a submissive spirit

NOT expect mate to change so better marriage

BUT be what God wants you to be, change self!

Illustration: tell a story about a husband and wife that loved each other as God loved them and what their marriage and family were like.

What God Expects of Parents: GODLY TRAINING

Ephesians 5:22-33; 1 Peter 3:1-7

MAIN IDEA: To learn what the Bible says about raising children and how to do it in your family

INTRODUCTION

Illustration: tell the story of someone who is a good parent and how that has helped their children grow up to follow God – it could be someone you know, your own parents, someone from the Bible

TRANSITION

Training children to live for God is a difficult responsibility but God tells us how to do it in the Bible

I. WHAT GODLY TRAINING IS

READ Genesis 18:19 Abraham led his family to follow God

READ Proverbs 22:6 parents commanded to train children to follow God

TRAINING TO FOLLOW GOD

TRANSITION Why is it important?

II. WHY TO HAVE GODLY TRAINING

READ Ephesians 6:4 “bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.”

So can become the men or women God created them to be

So not suffer consequences of ungodly, immaturity

TRANSITION We all agree it is important, but we don't all know how to do it.

III. HOW TO HAVE GODLY TRAINING

READ 1 Timothy 3:4, 12 FATHER responsible to God for family

A. BY SHOWING UNCONDITIONAL LOVE

CHILD needs to feel LOVED UNCONDITIONALLY

When you were a child, did you feel loved unconditionally, no matter?

Main thing we need from our Heavenly Father is LOVE

Main thing our children need from us is LOVE

UNCONDITIONAL LOVE

NOT "I love you IF you" (good grades, chores)

"I love you BECAUSE you"

BUT "I love you IN SPITE OF"

"I love you UNCONDITIONALLY, NO MATTER WHAT...."

The kind of love we want from God & mate!

Family is where children must experience & learn it so they can learn to trust God for it

*Illustration: **JOSEPH: GODLY FATHER***

Tremendous impact on Jesus' life!

No wife or family for Jesus to talk to, talked with father!

*Raised James (head of church) and Jude to be fine men
God the Heavenly Father picked Joseph as an earthly father for His son! Why?
Patient – not expect too much, especially when young
Respectful – children need to be treated with honor, respect
Peaceful – not speak in anger
Kind & Caring – go out of way to be gentle, helpful; talk & listen to them*

DAVID: NOT GODLY FATHER

*Not close to father (forgot about him with sheep when Samuel came to anoint next king)
Not close to brothers, they looked down on him
Many wives, not close to sons II Samuel 3:3
Didn't handle own children right when Ammon raped Tamar, then Absalom killed Ammon
ABSALOM – sister Tamar raped by step-bro Ammon*

TRANSITION

Who are YOU more like as a father? Joseph or David?
We train our children by showing them unconditional love, and by reflecting God's character

B. BY REFLECTING GOD'S CHARACTER

GODLY EXAMPLES – not say one thing, do another - Set example in home of godliness
Father = sacrificial love
Mother = submissive spirit

Be like GOD in how you treat them - How would God treat me in the same circumstance?
NO hypocrisy, Lying, Angry words, Criticalness, Laziness

Develop FRIENDSHIP with them
Illustration: like Joseph with Jesus

PRAY for them daily,
Illustration: as Jesus prays for us and Job prayed for his children

TRANSITION

We train our children by showing them unconditional love & reflecting God's character
We also train our children by teaching them spiritual truths

C. BY TEACHING SPIRITUAL TRUTHS

1. BIRTH (Salvation - John 1:12,13; 3:3)

Teach them about salvation and lead them to salvation, spiritual birth in Jesus
Set -example of following Jesus in your own life
-daily specific prayers for children
-talking, teaching, training child daily

TRANSITION - after birth comes growth - takes nourishment to grow physically & spiritually

2. NOURISHMENT (Eating)

Physical growth = eating healthy food
Spiritual growth = studying the Bible (I Corinthians 3:1-2; Jeremiah 15:16)
Need physical & spiritual nourishment often, can't go long without it or weak, sick

READ 2 Timothy 3:15 - start teaching them as soon as they are born
Each day read the Bible, talk about it, pray with them and for them

Teach them to read the Bible and pray to God for themselves
Teach them Bible memory verses, review them with them

READ Deuteronomy 6:6-7 – do these things every day, throughout the day, apply God to life
Teach them by example and words to obey and follow God, live a holy life for Him

TRANSITION – How to train your children for God
Show them unconditional love, like God shows you & reflect God's character
Teach them about salvation and living the Christian life & encourage them to life for Jesus

D. BY ENCOURAGING THEM

READ Ephesians 6:4

FATHERS mainly responsible for children, not mothers!
Illustration: Abraham chosen because directed family after God
Illustration: Eli lost everything because didn't train sons right

1. +TRAIN & INSTRUCT

Train = correction, discipline when needed
Instruct = prevent, teach right way

2. -DO NOT EMBITTER OR EXASPERATE

Don't expect too much (too many/hard rules)
Don't speak in anger or criticize (remember your childhood)
Do say something encouraging every day
NOT motivate by fear, withhold love
BUT compliment, encourage, thank

E. BY CONSISTENT DISCIPLINE IN LOVE

Do you love your children enough to discipline them?
God's love for us proven in His discipline of us (Hebrews 12:5-12)

BE CONSISTENT in discipline

Not one parent hard, other easy – both parents same standards and discipline
Not one time something OK, another time not OK
Not different standards for girls than boys
Not different at home or away around others
Not depend on parents mood

Illustration: Manoa & wife of Samson – let him get away with sinful activities when young, lost control

TIPS FOR GOOD DISCIPLINE

Children need punishment but it must be done in love (Proverbs 22:15; 23:13)
The purpose of discipline is to mature the child, not punish for what they did wrong
Don't nag, criticize, yell, use anger, complain or put the child down with your words
Young children can be spanked, but as they get older other means should be used instead
Let them suffer the consequences of their actions, lose privileges, etc.
When the discipline is over forgive them, hug, restore, talk about what to do next time

CONCLUSION

Children belong to God, just on loan to us! - Parents are just baby-sitters for God

READ Joshua 14:15 “...but as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD!”

Having godly children starts with being a godly parent

FAITH

CHILD-LIKE FAITH

Mark 10:15; Matthew 6:25-34; 18:3; 19:14

MAIN IDEA: True faith in God is to humbly trust and obey him like a child does their parents.

INTRODUCTION

TODAY focus on growing up, be adult, etc.

Church, world focuses on adults – we rule!

Children seen but not heard, secondary

Looked down on

Church also – put children in own places so adults can do own thing

School, church, home = try to make child like adult as soon as possible

One area adults supposed to be like children!!!

READ Matthew 19:13-15 and Mark 10:13-16

I. CHILD-LIKE FAITH DOES NOT MEAN:

CHILDREN AREN'T PERFECT – I wasn't as a child and neither were my children

CHILDREN ARE IMPERFECT– They can be

Irresponsible

Immature

Self-centered

Impatient

When Jesus says we are to be as little children He isn't referring to these.

TRANSITION

But there is one trait they have which God wants us to copy in our lives – faith in God

II. CHILD-LIKE FAITH DOES MEAN:

A. CHILD-LIKE FAITH IS TRUSTING

Children trust their parents to meet their needs. Children cannot provide their own food, clothing and shelter. So they rely on their parents for these things.

CHILDREN SHOW TRUST BY LOVE

Children love at all times.

Rarely will you find a child that is not loving.

Those that don't have been taught that from those that are around them.

Children love everything, they love animals, other kids, no matter what their color may be.

They have a capacity for love and sympathy.

(Illustration: Example of a child trusting, from your children or others)

Children in a hospital or a day care.

When one starts to cry they all start to cry out of sympathy for the one that is hurting.

As we grow older we become harder.

WE NEED CHILDLIKE TRUST

READ Matthew 6:25-34

TRANSITION

Childlike faith is trusting. It is also humble

B. CHILD-LIKE FAITH IS HUMBLE

DISCIPLES ARGUING over who greatest in kingdom, who had most power and authority, who closest to Jesus

Jesus uses child as example, know their place

READ Matthew 18:1-4

The biblical change that Jesus is after in his disciples is humility.

If they really wanted to be great in His eyes, in His kingdom, then they were going to have to humble themselves. It wasn't about who was the smartest, or who was the strongest, or who was the best orator and so forth. In Jesus' mind, it was about who was most willing to serve.

The disciples look at themselves and they want to feel great.

When a child looks at himself, he knows he needs help. Dependence is natural to a child, he never thinks that he can face life by himself. He is perfectly content to depend on those who love him and care for him.

Humility: realizing we need Jesus

Can't advance to higher plane of spirituality

Only advance by going down, recognizing own need all the more

Never arrive, if think we do then moving in wrong direction

Child never thinks they have arrived

Know their limits, comfortable with them

CHILD: knows he doesn't know everything, needs to trust others

Wise child: knows his limits

Trusts adult for needs

TEEN: thinks he knows more than adults – very dangerous

If only men and women would turn to God and place their dependence on Him, they will find a world of peace and strength, a world of joy.

So to become like little children we need to stop chasing after the greatness that comes from human achievements and ACKNOWLEDGE OUR DEPENDENCE ON GOD for everything.

TRANSITION

Childlike faith is trusting and humble. It is also exciting.

C. CHILD-LIKE FAITH IS EXCITING

Children have a sense of wonder at the world. Christmas, birthdays, parades, zoo, vacation very special, enjoy them through their eyes.

Wonderful to watch children as they discover the beauties of the world – new animals, sunsets and night skies. We miss out on these wonders.

Children enjoy the simplest things in life.

Children are curious and they like to take risks. They have lots of courage. They venture out into a world that is immense and dangerous and trust their parents to take care of them.

Do we trust our Heavenly Father as much as children trust their earthly father, or for that matter as much as children trust their Heavenly Father.

Child: strong desire to be fed, grow!!!

Want to grow up

TRANSITION

Childlike faith is trusting, humble and exciting

But there are some things that come along with this kind of faith

III. CHILD-LIKE FAITH IMPLIES:

A. CHILD-LIKE FAITH IMPLIES RISK

Childlike faith is risky because of failure

Fear of being hurt by God not coming through

(Illustration: Example of times a child was disappointed by those they trusted)

B. CHILD-LIKE FAITH IMPLIES FORGIVENESS

The power to forgive and forget

Grown-ups keep grudges – children don't. They can be fighting one minute and best friends the next

C. CHILD-LIKE FAITH IMPLIES OBEDIENCE

A child is expected to be obedient. Parents expect their child to obey immediately without fussing or complaining. Adults have a lot to learn from little children about how to obey God!

Faith = action of trust, obey despite circumstances

Child imitates parent

Wants to please parent

Wants to be like parent – hero, example, always right

(Illustration: Example of a child obeying, from your children or others)

CONCLUSION

How did we lose our childhood faith and optimism? Does that come automatically from the passing of time, or said another way, from AGE? That same thing happens with our faith sometimes.

PRAY

CHRISTMAS SERMON

WHAT CHRISTMAS TEACHES US ABOUT GOD

Luke 2:1-20

MAIN IDEA: From the story of Christmas we learn that God humbly seeks us, but He doesn't do things in the way we would. We also see that Jesus sacrificed Himself to put us first and provide for our salvation. Therefore we should trust and serve Him totally and forever.

INTRODUCTION

Hundreds of sermons on the lessons of Christmas, what we learn from story, etc
I want to take a different slant – not what God teaches us about Christmas
But what Christmas teaches us about God!

I. WHAT CHRISTMAS TEACHES US ABOUT GOD

OLD TESTAMENT shows God's majesty, power, glory

So man thought we had Him figured out!

But came in totally unexpected way!

WHAT DOES THIS SHOW US ABOUT GOD???

(let some of the people answer out loud, or all quietly think of answer)

A. HE DOESN'T DO THINGS AS WE WOULD

READ Luke 2:1-20

Didn't enter the world with fanfare and announcements

-only to a few rejected, bottom of the barrel shepherds in rural field at night

Shepherds rejected in society, Not even announced to all shepherds, just a few

--only to a few Gentiles out of the millions living then

NOT born in Rome but tiny backcountry Bethlehem -Not in fine palace but stable/cave with animals
We would expect God to make a big entrance, show off His power and might

If you were God making an entrance would you put a few shepherds on top of the 'to invite' list?

come to a stable in an unknown area, rejected nation/

choose 2 poor Jewish teenagers as parents?

Come as a helpless baby, totally dependent on others?

God doesn't do things as we would if we were God!

ILLUSTRATION: QUEEN ELIZABETH II recent visit to USA. She brought 4,000 lbs of luggage - 2 outfits for every occasion, 40 pints of plasma, white kid-leather toilet seat covers, a Hairdresser, 2 valets, Many attendants – the brief visit here cost \$20+ million

God Himself born in barn, laid in feed trough wrapped in rags

B. WE DON'T SEEK HIM, HE SEEKS US

We don't seek and find God, He seeks and finds us

If we went looking for Him, where would we go? Vatican? Crystal Cathedral?

Certainly not a stable in Bethlehem!

C. GOD IS HUMBLE

HUMILITY

Something we never would have associated with God
Something we never would have looked for in God
Would have totally missed Him! -like religious rulers and people alive then!
We would never have looked in a barn in Bethlehem!
So God came to us because we couldn't and wouldn't go to Him

GOD IS HUMBLE

Not just in circumstances
Also in purpose - Came to serve us, not be served, Came to give, not get
God willing to give up dearest possession because of love for us!
How much would you give up for loved one? What about enemy!?!?!

GOD IS WHERE WE DON'T LOOK FOR HIM
HE SEEKS AND COMES TO US, NOT US TO HIM

TRANSITION

ASK PEOPLE WHAT CHRISTMAS TEACHES/REVEALS ABOUT JESUS
(you can let some answer out loud, or quietly think of answer)

II. WHAT CHRISTMAS TEACHES US ABOUT JESUS

A. HE PUTS US BEFORE HIMSELF

Did all this for us!!!
Not self-centered
We think He doesn't care for us, care about us, lets us suffer
Manger & cross prove it otherwise

B. IT COST HIM EVERYTHING

CHRISTMAS IS EXPENSIVE

Did Jesus ever hesitate when it was time to leave heaven & glory to go to womb of a young girl?
Especially knowing what would have to happen before He could return?
2nd Person of Trinity never the same – added humanity to His nature forever

Philippians 2:6-7 Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness.

Voluntarily made himself nothing

How did angels feel about God the Son doing this?

Do you think they considered us worth it?
Earth a speck in the universe
People on it rebellious, sinful, dirty, unclean, no worth (except in God's love)

What did Christmas cost Jesus?

For Jesus to go from God to nothing; there is no greater cost.

Suppose you went from being president of the country to a street cleaner, just to help someone who hated you. Would you do it? Jesus went God to man, a much greater loss.

CONCLUSION

It would be a shame, if Christmas cost Jesus that much, to leave Him out.

It would be a shame, if Christmas cost Jesus that much, that you don't worship & serve Him
Let us pray!
THE CHURCH

THE PURPOSE & FUNCTION OF THE CHURCH

Acts 2:41-42, Hebrews 10:25

MAIN IDEA: To understand what the Bible says the church is and does, and to apply it today

INTRODUCTION

Illustration: tell about a church you were involved in, what it did that was good, how it helped you, etc.

I. THE NATURE OF THE CHURCH

Church = ekklesia, 'assembly,' 'community'

Literally in Greek "out – called" assembly, special group of people

TRANSITION The word 'church' is used in two ways in the Bible:

A. THE UNIVERSAL CHURCH

Join by salvation - All believers from the cross of Christ to when He returns (Acts 2:47)

Body of Christ - Christ is the Head of the church, His Body (Ephesians 5:23; Colossians 1:18)

TRANSITION

The other way the word 'church' is used in the Bible is of the local group of believers

B. THE LOCAL CHURCH

Local community of believers joined by membership (baptism, etc.)

The church not a building we go to but something we ARE as a group of believers (Matthew 18:20)

Called a FLOCK under a shepherd - Jesus real Shepherd

Pastor local representative of Jesus, under-shepherd

II. THE ORIGIN OF THE CHURCH

The church STARTED on Pentecost with the coming of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2)

READ John 14:16, 26 - the Holy Spirit came at Pentecost when the church started

The Holy Spirit now comes and indwells every believer at the moment of salvation

HOLY SPIRIT IN CHURCH

Leads believers in worship Ephesians 2:18

Inspires believers in prayer Romans 8:26-27

Guides believers in activities Acts 13:2; 16:6-7

Raises up church leaders Acts 20:28

Gives spiritual gifts for the church Ephesians 4:11

Guides believers into all truth John 16:13

Empowers preaching 1 Thessalonians 1:5

III. THE PURPOSE OF THE CHURCH

What is the purpose of the church? What is the church to do?

Different ideas by everyone, must know what God expects of His church

Can't hit target if don't know what the target is

A TO ITSELF (INWARD)

READ Acts 2:41-42

1. Teaching (God to man) - Commanded by Jesus

READ Matthew 28:19-20 (explain, talk about these verses)

EVE tempted through ignorance of God's Word

JESUS resisted temptation of Satan by God's Word

READ Ephesians 4:11-12 (explain, talk about these verses)

ALL NEED TRAINING: soldiers, farmers, doctors, etc

Moses 40 years in desert learning; Paul 4 years in desert

Jesus taught disciples before sending them out

2. Worship (man to God) - Attitude of praise to God, thankful heart

Thanksgiving: for what we know He did and are glad

Worship: for Who and What He is, if we understand or like what He does or not.

3. Fellowship (man to man)

READ Hebrews 10:25 (explain, talk about these verses)

Jesus needed fellowship with 12 disciples

Illustration: trees which grow together last better in storms for their roots and branches intertwine and support each other

B. TO OTHERS (OUTWARD)

Evangelism – witness to others to bring them to salvation in Jesus

READ Matthew 28:19-20; Acts 1:8 (explain, talk about importance of telling others about Jesus)

IV. OFFICERS OF THE CHURCH

Elders = spiritual leadership (men)

Pastor, minister, elder, bishop = all the same

Deacons = physical leadership (men)

Acts 7 men to free apostles to pray, teach, counsel, study, minister, etc.

Deaconesses – female deacons to help with work among women

Leaders are to be appointed by other leaders, not voted on by majority of the people

V. ORGANIZATION OF THE CHURCH

Not an ORGANIZATION but an ORGANISM – but needs structure and planning

FORMS OF GOVERNMENT

HIERARCHICAL form of government – 1 person (bishop, etc.) absolute power over church

Episcopal, Roman Catholic, Methodist, Eastern Orthodox

REPRESENTATIVE form of government – duly appointed representatives are church authority



Presbyterian, Reformed, United Church of Christ
CONGREGATIONAL form of government – each person equal authority, all make final decision
Baptists, Disciples, Congregationalists
READ 1 Peter 2:5, 9 Every believer a priest, equal in God's sight

ROLE OF PASTOR

Like father to family Church is a family in miniature, pastor like father (1 Timothy 3:4-5)
Final authority, responsibility, accountability to God
Doesn't do everything but oversees, makes sure it gets done

Like shepherd to sheep Responsible to do what is best for them for sake of Chief Shepherd
READ 1 Peter 5:1-3 Responsible to lead, feed, guard, total overall well being in all areas etc.
Not abuse, use, make them serve Him

Like Jesus to believers Treat others as Jesus treats you: love, patience, firmness, etc.
Jesus example to us, we become examples to others

VI. ORDINANCES OF THE CHURCH

A. BAPTISM DONE ONLY ONCE IN A LIFETIME

SIGNIFICANCE

Outward testimony to inner cleansing, death and resurrection with Jesus
It has nothing to do with salvation, second blessing, becoming more spiritual, etc.

BAPTISM IS FOR BELIEVERS

Public testimony to having given life to Jesus
John & Jesus' disciples baptized believers (John 1:33; 3:28; Matthew 3:13-17)
Jesus tells us to baptize those who have believed (Matthew 28:16-20)
In early church when a Jewish person became a Christian their family had a funeral for them and never spoke to them again – it was a public way of taking a stand for Jesus

BAPTISM IS BY IMMERSION

Greek word means "immerse"
New Testament baptism was immersion (Mark 1:10; John 3:23; Acts 8:38)
Baptism symbolizes dying and rising with Christ to live a new life with Him. (Romans 6:1-4 and Colossians 2:10-12) Under the water is as good as dead, but then coming up again pictures new life in Christ

B. LORD'S SUPPER DONE OVER AND OVER, EACH TIME MEET IF PREFER

SIGNIFICANCE

Memorial to Jesus' body broken and blood shed for salvation.
As the bread and drink are received so is salvation freely received.
It was paid for by another but we must receive it.
Nothing changes in the bread and juice, no special grace attained.
Can be done by anyone: in family, with friends, church, etc.

VII. THE FUTURE OF THE CHURCH

Jesus returns, church raptured, Old Testament dispensation finishes in Tribulation

CONCLUSION

Illustration: tell a story about a church that God was using to help people come to salvation and grow in Jesus

GRACE SERMON

GOD'S GRACE

Luke 7:11-17; Mark 12:41-44

MAIN IDEA: To reaffirm the greatness of God's grace and to motivate us to thank God for His grace and appreciate it in our lives.

INTRODUCTION

Illustration: Ever go into someone's office, important person, pictures on wall of all kinds of people they shook hands with? Suppose invited into office of JESUS, whose picture He put up? I bet among them would be two nameless widows He met

WIDOW Alone, hard time financially, old, doesn't fit in

Many women dread thinking of widowhood - Most end up being widows – hard life!

JESUS' DAY: Much worse off, no government help

Women then had very few options except to depend on men

Only options to many: beg or prostitution

One day JESUS RAN INTO A WOMAN who just became widow

I. RECEIVING GOD'S GRACE - WIDOW WITH DEAD SON

READ Luke 7:11 Jesus & disciples walking toward Nain

Funeral Procession: paid mourners in front, etc

Already dead: father, other children, husband, all male relatives in family

Now Lost: son, companion, support

Future: slowly starve unless others took pity on her, no real reason to live anyway

Feel sorry for her? Jesus did, too:

READ Luke 7:13 Ridiculous thing to tell her

insensitive thing to say! - unless had good reason to say it!

READ Luke 7:14a ritually unclean -- couldn't go to temple, synagogue

Why touch it? Not have to touch to do miracle

Shows compassion, identification with her loss

READ Luke 7:14b People thought Jesus crazy!

1. Stops funeral procession

2. Touches coffin

3. Tells mother to not cry

4. Tells dead boy to get up!

READ Luke 7:15 People MORE astonished when boy really did sit up!

What would you have thought had you been there?

WHY did Jesus do this?

-Response to woman's great faith? No faith in her, she didn't know Him

-Impress everyone around? Not that many people there, other better times

-HIS HEART WENT OUT TO HER IN HER LOSS – the only reason

GRACE GIFT She did nothing to earn or deserve it

He took away her hurt & loss and gave her a life and a future **GRACE**

"Grace" = "Unmerited, undeserved favor"

Illustration: Suppose someone brutally murders your child, you get them freed, bring them into own home to live! = grace!!!

READ Luke 7:16-17 GRACE: brought to God for salvation
not guilt, judgment, fear, but love, grace, mercy

READ Ephesians 2:4-9; Romans 3:23-24; Titus 3:5

II. RESPONDING TO GOD'S GRACE - WOMAN WITH 2 MITES

COURT OF WOMEN 13 "trumpets" to put offering in
Story starts with Jesus watching PEOPLE GIVE MONEY!

Mark 12:41 God watches us worship: sing, pray, give!

Matthew 6:21 *where your treasure is, there your heart will be.*

MOST GIVERS: play trumpets, slowly pour in coins (noise!)

Mark 12:42 Smallest gift allowed - too small to count
Jesus got all excited about her!!!

Mark 12:43-44 couldn't give any less (not allowed), couldn't give any more (didn't have it)
AMOUNT not what matters to Jesus

PROPORTION matters – Jesus doesn't look at what we give but what we keep!
Jesus looks at what is left - Heart Attitude counts with Jesus

APPLIES TO: Time, Talent, Treasure

Mark 12:38 Took offerings for selves - cheated, deceived widows, took advantage

WHY DID SHE GIVE?

Not make any difference among temple \$ (not even buy 1 wick for a candle) -

Did God really need/care about 1/2 cent? She needed it badly, for life itself!

Not to show off - Intimidated by great givers all around, Feel inferior, not worth anything
Gave as unto God, not unto temple (church) etc, to show love and appreciation to God

WHAT DID SHE HAVE TO THANK GOD FOR?

Widow: very tough in those days

Poor: penniless, poverty level or worse

Future: go home to starve to death!

Must be something that caused her to give to God!

NOT: fear, guilt, bribe to God, etc.

BUT: love response to God's grace in her life!

Came to express love to God

Gave in response to all God gave her

WHERE WAS GOD'S GRACE EVIDENT IN HER LIFE?

NOT in outer circumstances

BUT in inner contentment, peace, joy

Where do you look for God's grace in your life?

OUTER: like widow whose son back to life

INNER: like this poor widow in Jerusalem

READ 2 Corinthians 12:9

CONCLUSION

NO END TO GOD'S GRACE

Illustration: Think of a small fish in ocean afraid to drink the water because it doesn't want to use it up!

Illustration: give example of God's grace in your life or someone in your family

GUILT, SHAME TO HONOR

JESUS RESTORES NEEDY PEOPLE

Matthew 15:21-28; Luke 5:12-14; Mark 5:25-35

MAIN IDEA: to know Jesus gives honor to everyone, and to accept that from Him for us as well

INTRODUCTION

In the world there are many people in shame, guilt, fear, bowed down, broken, rejected, alone

Illustration: tell story about someone you saw or know about who is like that

We can't do much to help them, but Jesus can and does

I. DEFILED WOMAN HEALED

READ Matthew 15:21-28

SHAME of the m

Canaanite (rejected by the Jews as inferior) – not Jewish

Female – seen as inferior to men

Daughter demonized – family looked down on by all

Ignored by Jesus, rejected by disciples

FAITH of the woman

Came to Jesus, sought Him out

Calls Him "Lord, Son of David" - Asks for mercy, Knows she doesn't deserve it

Sees Him as MESSIAH: **PLAN OF SALVATION**

He took our shame on the cross – gives us His honor!!!

Persisted to come to Jesus even when turned away by disciples

HONOR given by Jesus

"woman" term of respect, honor

'great faith' – verbally affirmed before all

Granted request, daughter healed – suffering and shame gone

LESSONS for us today

Take your shame to Jesus, No matter what others say, turn to Jesus

Trust Him in faith

Persevere although it seems He isn't answering

II. LEPERS CLEANSED

READ Luke 5:12-14

SHAME of the man

Leprosy = rejection, separation, appearance awful, death

No one come near a leper, very very contagious

Rejection by own family as well

FAITH of the man

Falls down before Jesus

Begs for mercy, healing

Recognized Jesus could miraculously cleanse him

HONOR given by Jesus

Jesus TOUCHED him – no one ever touched a leper
Jesus SPOKE to him – everyone ignored, rejected him
Jesus CLEANSED him – shame and guilt gone
Priest shown, officially cured, back in Judaism, to family

LESSONS for us today

Jesus reaches out, touches those who humble self
Jesus will cleanse your soul for sure (maybe body)

III. BLEEDING WOMAN HEALED

READ Mark 5:25-35

SHAME of the woman

Woman = seen as inferior, not speak to or look at man in public
Bleeding = unclean, not into temple, not touch others
12 years = long time no temple, no touch
Suffering in pain, rejection, loneliness
Doctors couldn't help = no hope - Poor, no money, resources left

FAITH of the woman

Came to Jesus, sought Him out
Touched Him in faith - Believed He could heal her

HONOR # 1 given by Jesus

Immediately stopped bleeding, cause of shame gone!

HONOR # 2 given by Jesus

Spoken to, in public, by man, important Rabbi
Sought her out to free her from shame and fear
Wanted her to know, accept His love
Honored by His attention, affirmation
Restored publically, in front of all who knew her

LESSONS for us today

Seek Jesus out, no matter need
Trust, believe in Him
Accept His love, restoration

CONCLUSION

YOUR shame, guilt now – take it to Jesus, He'll honor, restore

Rejected?
Lonely?
Illness or pain?
Female?
Lower cast?
Demonized

THE SERIOUS BUSINESS OF FOLLOWING JESUS

Luke 9:57-62

MAIN IDEA:

KNOW: Jesus demands full, complete commitment to Him in all areas of life. Watch out for making impulsive, reluctant, or indecisive decisions for Him because they won't last.

DO: Each one evaluate own decisions for Jesus to make sure they are total, complete, unconditional, 100% for Him.

INTRODUCTION

Salvation is free and simple – put your faith in Jesus as God and His work on the cross

Then the question is how we live our life, whom do we live for: self or Jesus

Living for Jesus, Discipleship, is costly – it means we put Jesus first in everything, before self

TRANSITION

The Bible tells of 3 men who had to make this decision and how they responded

I. THE DANGER OF IMPULSIVE DECISIONS Luke 9:57-58

A. THE CHOICE OF A SCRIBE Luke 9:57

He wanted to join Jesus for the fun and excitement of following Him.

B. THE CHALLENGE OF THE SAVIOR Luke 9:58

He showed the man the cost of following Jesus.

(Talk of this cost and what it means)

(Illustration: give an example of someone following Jesus and the cost)

TRANSITION

Jesus was right about the man, he didn't stay but left when he discovered the cost of following Jesus. He wasn't willing to pay the price.

There was a second man who had to decide as well

II. THE DANGER OF INDIFFERENT DECISIONS Luke 9:59-60

A. THE REQUEST OF A SON Luke 9:59

Willing to follow Jesus, but not just yet. He put it off

B. THE RESPONSE OF THE SAVIOR Luke 9:60

Must be willing to give up EVERYTHING to follow Jesus

(Explain what this means, to give up everything to follow Jesus)

(Illustration: give an example of someone giving up everything to follow)

(Abraham willing to sacrifice Isaac is another example – Genesis 22)

TRANSITION

This man, too left.

#1 VOLUNTEERED but was impulsive, didn't count the cost

#2 RELUCTANT so drafted, but not fully committed

#3 AGREES to follow Jesus, with one condition

III. THE DANGER OF INDECISIVE DECISIONS Luke 9:61-62

A. THE PULL OF PARENTS Luke 9:61

Man really was indecisive, not too sure, open to being talked out of it.

B. THE PURPOSE OF PRIORITIES Luke 9:62

Jesus requires single-minded, full attention from those who follow Him.

(Illustration: When Cortez sailed to Mexico to conquer it, all his soldiers got off the ships and while they were watching he set all the ships on fire so they knew there was no way to go back. They had to move ahead no matter how hard it would be. We must 'burn all our ships' and never go back after we start following Jesus.)

CONCLUSION

Apply to each one there.

Challenge: which problem is more like you?

What to decide about it now?

What do you need God's help with this week?

(Illustration: give an example of someone completely following Jesus and the joy and peace they have in doing so.)

PRAY

THANKSGIVING, WORSHIP

THANKSGIVING IN THREE TENSES

Psalm 66

MAIN IDEA: No matter how bad things are, we can and should thank and worship God anyway for yesterday, today and tomorrow.

INTRODUCTION

We know we are always to thank God, but sometimes that is hard

We have problems, trials, difficulties, sorrow

People have thanked God in worst times than these - Psalm 66

PSALM 66

God saved author (probably a king) & whole nation from an enemy threat

Perhaps Judah saved from Assyria - II Kings 19

Praise offered at altar at temple, publically for all

READ PSALM 66

I. THANK YOU LORD FOR YESTERDAY

Read Psalm 66:5-6

about how God **delivered their nation** in past

(talk about how God has provided for and cared for your country in the past)
(talk about how God has provided for and cared for your family and you in the past)

(Illustration: give examples of how God has cared for someone in the past)

Especially dear to them was their past **spiritual heritage**, what God had done for them sp.

(Illustration: give examples of what God has done for all of us in the past)

TRANSITION

Not only can we thank and worship God for what He has done in the past
We can do the same for what He is doing today

II. THANK YOU LORD FOR TODAY

Read Psalm 66:8-9

Thanking God for **recent deliverance** from their enemies
Much good recently going on to be thankful for today

(Illustration: give examples of what you and your people have to be thankful for now)

How can you still worship and thank Him even when things are going bad in life?
Worship is all about Who and what God is. It isn't about how we feel. Focus is on God.

(Illustration: Job worshipped God when he went to the graveside of his dead children. Abraham worshipped God when he took Isaac up the mountain to kill him. How could they worship at times like these?)

TRANSITION

Not only can we thank and worship God for what He has done in the past and present
We can do the same for what He is going to do tomorrow

III. THANK YOU LORD FOR TOMORROW

Read Psalm 66:4

Future day when God will reign and even nature will bow in worship
God will ultimately conquer all, He is still in control no matter what

(Illustration: examples of what we have to be thankful for in the future)

CONCLUSION

Read Psalm 66 again

(Ask people to share some things they are thankful for, past, present or future)

Summarize what everyone has to be thankful for

PRAY

LESSONS FROM FUNERALS

2 Corinthians 5:8; Psalm 23:4; 1 Corinthians 15:20-26

MAIN IDEA: To provide comfort and assurance for believers and also show unbelievers the importance of accepting Jesus so they will spend eternity with Him when they die.

INTRODUCTION

As we gather here we're reminded that funerals are not for the dead but the LIVING.
Gather here because of _____, but this time really for US

I. FUNERALS MAKE US THINK ABOUT DEATH

Death is CERTAIN - all social classes, etc.
Methuselah 969 years

Death is NEVER WELCOME - separates loved ones

Death is NECESSARY

- Reunites the Christian with God
- Resets our perspective, priorities
- Reminds us of what really matters in life
- Right motive to live new for God
- Assurance it'll be all right for when our turn

Death is SOBERING - reminds us life is short, all die

TRANSITION

Funerals make us think about death, but death is not the end

II. FUNERALS REMIND US DEATH IS NOT THE END

Sin separates man from God (Garden of Eden)

Death came from sin

God came to earth as man to pay for that sin

Show need of **salvation** (explain plan of salvation)

READ John 3:16-21

Paid for our sins on the cross

Resurrection shows He conquered death, sin

Jesus never conducted a funeral!

Every time encountered death - resurrection

Body dies, soul lives forever

If accept Jesus' free gift of salvation

Immediately to God at death

Death = change, not the end - Body dies, real person lives

Death the beginning for believer, not the end Read 2 Corinthians 5:8

Death is not a period, but rather a comma in the story of life.

NOT: going from land of living to land of dying

BUT: going from land of dying to land of living

Earth is the land of the dying;
Heaven is the land of the living.

Illustration: Our view of death is like a group of mourning caterpillars carrying a cocoon like a corpse. Above there is a beautiful butterfly inside the cocoon staring down in unbelief. What the caterpillar calls the end, God calls a butterfly.

Death just a shadow Read Psalms 23:4

Illustration: A little girl was seen skipping light-heartedly through a cemetery at dusk. Someone asked, "Aren't you afraid of this place?" "Oh, no," she replied, "I only cross through here to get home." Death for the Christian is only a crossing through to get home.

Jesus not only takes away the fear of dying, but he gives you something worth living for!

Illustration: when people fly the plane may take off in rain and bad weather, but when it gets above the clouds everything is clear and beautiful. That is how death is to life as well.

Death is like that - looks so different from the other side!

Illustration: A pastor had just received the news that he had a terminal illness. The next Sunday he said to his congregation, "I walked the 5 miles from the doctor's office to my home. I looked toward that majestic mountain that I love. I looked at the river in which I rejoice. I looked at the stately trees that are always God's own poetry to my soul. Then in the evening I looked up into the great sky where God was lighting His lamps and I said, 'I may not see you many more times, but mountain, I will be alive when you are gone. And river, I will be alive when you cease running towards the sea. And stars, I will be alive when you have fallen when God recreates the universe.'"

A wonderful hope lies beyond the grave for all who are trusting Christ as their Savior. Death is not the end. Innumerable, indescribable, eternal glories await the child of God.

TRANSITION

Funerals make us think about death, but death is not the end

When we die our eternal destiny is sealed, but while we are alive we still have a choice

Funerals remind us we have to decide how we will live and who we will live for

III. FUNERALS REMIND US TO DECIDE HOW WE'LL SPEND OUR LIVES

All of us face death one day - plan now for it

When go on trip, PLAN AHEAD first

_____ went on their trip. I will go on mine one day. You will go on yours

Prepare now - accept Jesus' free gift of salvation

Live for Him now – you only have one life to live so live in light of eternity.

BE READY FOR WHEN OWN TRIP COMES!

CONCLUSION

READ 1 Corinthians 15:20-26

Illustration: Someone noted that our view of death is like a group of mourning caterpillars carrying a cocoon like a corpse. Above there is a beautiful butterfly inside the cocoon staring down in unbelief. What the caterpillar calls the end, God calls a butterfly.

CHILDREN ARE SPECIAL

Matthew 18:2-6; Mark 9:35-37; 10:13-16

MAIN IDEA: To know that children are special because they totally trust and desire to please their parents. To motivate adults to put their total trust in God and please Him by serving and obeying.

INTRODUCTION

Children are special to us. They are special to God as well.

They can be immature and self-centered – they will mature out of that

They are innocent, trusting, open and sincere – that’s what makes them special to God.

God never tells children to act like adults, but He does tell adults to act like children!

Read and talk about: Matthew 18:2-6; Mark 9:35-37; 10:13-16

I. CHILDREN ARE SPECIAL BECAUSE THEY TOTALLY TRUST THEIR PARENTS

They are aware of their own helplessness

They depend on their parents for everything they need in life

(Illustration: give an example about yourself or another child when you really needed your parents)

We are to be like them in the way we trust God – totally, completely, in everything

We are as dependent on God as a child is on their parents

That’s why we call Him our Heavenly Father

(talk about these, using stories and examples of how we are to trust God)

We must trust God for 1) salvation, and 2) discipleship, to follow Him in everything we do

TRANSITION

Children are special because:

1. They totally trust their parents
2. They desire to please their parents.

II. CHILDREN ARE SPECIAL BECAUSE THEY DESIRE TO PLEASE THEIR PARENTS

They have love and appreciation for their parents because of all they do for them

They want to please their parents and do things to make them happy

They say: “watch me!” “I want to help!” “I made this for you” (give examples)

(Illustration: give an example about yourself or another child trying to please parents)

Our main goal, desire in life should be to make God happy, to have Him smile at us

For that to happen we must do what pleases Him, we must obey Him and serve Him

(talk about these, using stories and examples of how we are to please God)

CONCLUSION

(Illustration: A 4 year child had a baby sister born into his family. One day when he was alone with his sister his parents heard him say to her, “Baby, tell me what God feels like. I’m starting to forget.”)

Have you forgotten God? You can return to Him just as a child returns to its parents: with love, trust and obedience.

DANIEL: FAITHFULNESS

Book of Daniel

MAIN IDEA: learn about faithfulness from the life of Daniel, and how to be more faithful in life

INTRODUCTION

Illustration: SPONGE – under pressure shows what is within! Squeeze it and what is inside comes out

Same true of believers - How do YOU respond to pressure, trials, pain, difficulties?

Trait of believer is that he is FAITHFUL under pressure

Anyone can follow when things going great, harder when problems and difficulties come in life

READ 1 Corinthians 4:2 Pressure: opportunity to trust, stay faithful – what God wants most

TRANSITION Daniel great example whole life!

1. DANIEL at age 14 – INTO CAPTIVITY

READ Daniel 1:1-2 = Taken into captivity

Family believers, name “God is my judge” = accountable to Him

FAMILY DEAD - Prayers for protection of self and family not answered

2. DANIEL at age 15 – STAND FOR BELIEFS

READ Daniel 1:3-21 = Not eat king’s food

Small compromise, save life so could do more good for God

God not answer prayer to save family, Why stay faithful now?

READ Luke 16:10-12 Faithfulness starts: -young -with little things

READ Mark 8:35 CONVICTIONS IN LIFE – stood faithful for what he believed

3. DANIEL at age 18 - KINGS CRISIS

READ Daniel 2:1-48 = CRISIS EXPERIENCE

King’s dream, no one can tell, all put to death

GREAT time to minister!– want to help king, others, not just self

Prayed with friends, God answered!

Statue, outline of history from then to when Jesus returns

4. DANIEL at age 20 – COURAGE

READ Daniel 3:1-27 = IMAGE of Nebuchadnezzar to worship

JESUS the ONLY Way! (John 14:7)

Friends into fiery furnace (Daniel probably gone working in another part of kingdom)

God delivered, Neb gave credit to God

READ Acts 21:13 Be ready even to die for Jesus!

TRANSITION Daniel faithful whole life long
reward this life (prophecy) and future (heaven)

5. DANIEL’S VISION # 1 & 2 at age 53 yrs old

Daniel 7 and 8 VISION: same as large image, but animals
again show history of world, then to end

Illustration: Christian life a MARATHON, not series of 100 yard dashes

6. NEBUCHADNEZZAR HUMBLLED at age 76

NEBUCHADNEZZAR: dream , great tree cut down! Daniel gave meaning/interpretation
Nebuchadnezzar abel but pride & self-centeredness ruled
Nebuchadnezzar be humbled, cut down - Pride in way of submitting to God
lost mind, lived/ate like animal - 7 years
did humble self, restored by God (Grace) wrote tract about God for all to read

7. HANDWRITING ON THE WALL at age 86

BELSHAZZAR replaced father NEB as king of Babylon
proud, mocked God - blasphemed God, utensils from Tabernacle in an orgy
God wrote on wall - judgment coming - Only Daniel could interpret it! - Dan promoted, rewarded
DARIUS & Medo-Persia replaced Bab as world ruler - Daniel given high job by Darius

8. THE LION'S DEN at age 93 yrs old

DARIUS: proud, self-sufficient, tricked into signing law so only he is worshipped
purpose: catch Daniel, execute, remove (couldn't find sin)
DANIEL: faithful in praying to God, even if die
God protected in lion's den - Enemies destroyed
READ Revelation 2:10; Acts 20:24 PAUL willing to die for his faith
Don't be surprised when believers have to stand for faith
God will bless and reward when we are faithful!
When facing these things just keep eyes on Jesus, let Him lead
Don't fear, panic, etc – trust him all the more

9. DANIEL'S VISION # 3 95yrs old

DANIEL praying (GREAT prayer life)
1. confession of sin of nation
2. thanksgiving/praise: God keeps His word, right, sovereign
3. intercession: for Jews to return to land
4. request for self: answer my prayer

ANSWER TO PRAYER (future of Jews?)
70 7-year periods (God sovereign over history)
Olivet Discourse, Revelation fill in details

CONCLUSION

Trials and pressures are to show our faithfulness
-example to others, like Daniel to Neb, Bel, others in country

Daniel faithfull his whole life
JUST LIKE PAUL

READ 2 Timothy 4:7; 1 Corinthians 4:2

READ Matthew 24:45-46 STAY FAITHFUL whole life - Always be ready to serve

WEDDING DEVOTIONAL

Ephesians 5:22-33; 1 Peter 3:1-7

MAIN IDEA: To remind those getting married and those who are married about how their love is to reflect Jesus' love for them, and to show Jesus' love for us and challenge all to follow Him. To help them know that the husband-wife relationship is a picture of Christ and Christians.

READ: Ephesians 5:22-33; 1 Peter 3:1-7

I. HUSBAND TO WIFE like Jesus to us

Sacrificial love
Shown by actions
Put other first, love better than self
Focus on giving, not getting
Motive for all: love for her

JESUS TO US same way
Greater - He is God, died on cross for our sins

II. WIFE TO HUSBAND like us to Jesus

Respond to that love with own love
Not take advantage of it, use it, presume on it
Respect and trust Him
Give self 100% to Him - He deserves it

US TO JESUS same
What if wife not 100% faithful to Christ?
What if us not 100% faithful to Christ?
Loving Jesus gives meaning & purpose
direction & guidance
peace & joy

III. SALVATION

Salvation like marriage vows - 1 time commitment
Freely accept love given
Commit self to other person

IV. DAILY LIVING

After vows of commitment must continue to live for
each other, put other first, show & receive love
Work at living for other, not self
NOT to earn, deserve, but because have it already!

V. CHALLENGE

Any here not made those 2 commitments or carrying them out...

PRAY

CHILDREN ARE LIKE ARROWS

Psalm 127:4-5

MAIN IDEA: To show parents the importance of raising their child to serve God as they dedicate their child to God.

INTRODUCTION

I've always liked arrows

Psalm 127:4-5 *Like arrows in the hands of a warrior are sons (and daughters) born in one's youth. Blessed is the man whose quiver is full of them.*

ARROW = CHILDREN

Form, make straight, takes time
Spiritual growth, example, Bible
Not stay in quiver

BOW = PARENT, God's help

Designed to hit a target with life
Send to place to go for God, live for Him

(Illustration: Timothy's family raised him to follow God, went with Paul on missionary journeys)

What we are doing:

Dedicate parents & children to God to use for His glory

Help them raise him to reflect God presence to all

As you know, this has nothing to do with salvation
own choice later

Thank Him for loan of children for a few short years

Ask for His help in raising them

PASTOR: On your part as parents, do you confess your own faith in Jesus Christ as your personal Savior?

PARENTS: I do

PASTOR: Do you dedicate your whole lives to Him, recognizing that He is in charge of everything and knows what is best for you?

PARENTS: I do

PASTOR: In recognition of God's gift to you of these children, do you dedicate them to the Lord?

PARENTS: I do

PASTOR: Do you promise to bring them up in the teachings of the Bible and set a good Christian example for them in everything you say and do?

PARENTS: I do

PASTOR: Do you promise to instruct them in the plan of salvation and to pray for them and with them?

PARENTS: I do

Having heard these vows and promises, we do solemnly and joyfully commend these children to the divine care and protection of God, our heavenly Father, for all the years of their lives. May the grace of the Lord be upon your children and you.

EVANGELISM SERMON

(This is not a sermon ready to preach, but the basics of what should be included in a sermon on evangelism. You can use whatever part you want and arrange it in any order you want.)

FOCUS ON WHAT THE MESSAGE IS

Not church membership

Not changing life

But accepting free gift of salvation

'Gospel' = 'good news' – not focusing on their sin, but on Jesus' forgiveness

NOT kicking their crutch out, BUT giving them something so they don't need the crutch

THE NEED OF SALVATION

READ Romans 3:23; 6:23

SIN: anything we do, think, don't do, do for wrong reason

Anything not in character of God/Jesus

THE PROVISION OF SALVATION

READ Ephesians 2:8-9 by His grace, not our works

READ John 19:30; Hebrews 1:3 Jesus completely finished salvation, nothing we can add

READ Romans 3:28; John 3:16 we simply receive salvation by putting faith in Jesus

Illustration: Think of a door that is locked on the inside. The door represents the human heart. Jesus stands outside and knocks. But he will not come in unless we open the door.

READ 1 Thessalonians 5:9; 2 Timothy 2:10; 3:15 salvation comes through faith in Jesus

READ John 19:30 "It is finished"

Illustration: Jesus' final word on the cross was the Greek word Tetelestai, which is translated, "It is finished." Archaeologists have repeatedly found it written across tax receipts used in those days, indicating it also meant "paid in full,"

READ John 3:36 if salvation is rejected we are under God's wrath.

EXPLAINING THE GOSPEL TO CHILDREN

Yellow: God's love, light, black = darkness

Black: sin

Red: blood of Jesus – removed black sin and makes us white

White: salvation, cleansed from sin by the blood of Jesus

Green: things that grow – spiritual growth

THE ROMANS ROAD

READ Romans 3:10 no one is good enough to be in God's presence

Illustration: no germs in operating room in hospital, must be pure

READ Romans 3:23 everyone is sinful in God's sight

Illustration: swimming across ocean, some better but none make it

READ Romans 5:12 sin brings death and judgment

Illustration: spiritual HIV that all get/have at birth

READ Romans 5:8 Jesus died for us

Illustration: judge who leaves his stand to come pay fine for the person himself

Read Romans 6:23 sin brings death but Jesus brings eternal life

Illustration: wage: earn (pay check), deserve; free gift – do nothing to deserve

READ Romans 10:9-13 just accept Jesus' free gift of salvation

Illustration: giving someone a free gift, they must receive it

GOOD WAYS TO WITNESS ONE TO ONE

1. Ask these two questions

If you would die tonight, would you go to heaven?

Why should God let you into His heaven?

2. Share your own testimony

A witness shares what they know. We aren't to be lawyers who argue with people but witnesses who tell what Jesus has done for us