

Preaching the Gospel

A monthly magazine for preachers and those who want to preach.

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Vol. 1, No. 1--May 2005

OUR AIM

How happy I am to come to you with this first issue of *Preaching the Gospel*. I am hoping this publication will fill a need which I think is great. I pray that it will help preachers in southern Africa to do a better job, and that it will help those who are learning to preach. May God bless our efforts together.

The articles will probably fall into three areas: 1) How to prepare a sermon. 2) How to deliver a sermon. 3) The work of a preacher.

I am also offering a tutorial service. Send me your sermon outline, include a self-addressed stamped envelope, and I will send it back with my suggestions.

I am hoping that I can distribute the magazine through those who have e-mail and printers. I will send the magazine by e-mail ready for printing. Those who receive it will, I hope, print it for others and distribute it to many.

I am formatting this for printing on both sides of A4 paper. I am using a wide left margin for the first page and mirror margins for the page printed on the other side in order to give room for you to punch holes for saving each issue in a notebook.

I will, rather reluctantly, send this magazine by post to those who request it and who send me R24 to cover the cost of printing and mailing 12 issues. But I am hoping there will be few who need me to mail it.

Please add your prayers to mine that good will be done by this magazine.

—Paul Williams.

Preach With Purpose

One of the greatest failures in our preaching is that the preacher sometimes does not have a clear purpose for preaching his sermon. He may have a theme, but it does not give him a clear goal to aim for. The result is a sermon without proper organization and which does not accomplish what a sermon is meant to do.

Here is some homework: Read Peter's sermon in Acts 2 and decide what his purpose was. You will find that he was not just preaching on a theme. He wanted to accomplish a specific goal and he preached to do just that. Then read Acts 15:13-21 and decide what James's goal was. Then notice how the goals shaped the sermons.

How To Outline A Sermon

A sermon is not a sermon until it has a proper form, which we call an outline. Too many times someone gets up to preach with a list of scriptures but no proper order to his sermon. His effort may include many good things, but it does not do what a sermon really should do. He wastes the time of himself and his hearers. In this article I will set forth the main steps in outlining a sermon.

Step 1—The Purpose Statement

This is a sentence which tells what you want to accomplish in your sermon. This purpose statement will help you in your study, it will help you to select the scriptures, illustrations and applications to use in your sermon, and it will help you in outlining the sermon as a whole. The purpose statement will determine your conclusion and it will help you to shape your entire sermon to make the conclusion a strong one.

I urge you, especially when you are beginning to preach, to write out a purpose statement for your sermon. As you work on the lesson you may change your statement. But when your sermon is designed to accomplish a clear purpose it will be a powerful one.

Step 2—The Main Divisions

This is a very important part of preparing your sermon. When you divide your sermon into its main steps you are forced to be logical—to think in an orderly way.

Your main divisions are the main steps on your way to accomplishing your purpose. If you think of the main divisions as the steps of a stairs and at the top of the stairs is your goal (purpose), you will begin to see how to divide your sermon.

Main divisions make the train of thought (the way of thinking) plain to both the hearers and the preacher. They are the skeleton (bones) of the sermon. They are the basket in which hearers can carry the lesson home. If your divisions are made properly, and if you state your divisions clearly and in an interesting way, your sermon will be interesting and understandable.

Here are some rules for proper main divisions: 1) No division should include the whole of your subject. 2) Each must be distinct from the others. Don't have two that are almost alike. 3) Each should be of almost equal importance. 4) They should be stated in sentences that are similar. 4) The divisions should cover the subject in such a way as to accomplish the purpose of the sermon.

Step 3—Completing the Outline.

Here is where you put the flesh on the skeleton. Under each main heading you must have subheadings, with illustrations, explanations, and applications.

The usual way to outline is this way:

- I.
 - A.
 - 1.
 - 2.
 - a.
 - b.
 - B.
- II.
- Etc.

Step 4—The Conclusion

Now write out a few sentences to form your conclusion. It is important that you know what you are going to say here, for this is where you want to bring the force of your sermon to press on the point of your purpose.

One of the greatest conclusions ever preached is found in Acts 2:36. *“Therefore let all the house of Israel know for certain that God has made Him both Lord and Christ—this Jesus whom you crucified.”*

Another great conclusion is found in Joshua 24:14-15, which ends with, *“Choose for yourselves today whom you will serve: whether the gods which your fathers served which were beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you are living; but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.”*

Jesus concluded the Sermon on the Mount with the story of the wise and foolish men who built on different foundations. Paul warned the Jews who listened to him when he was a prisoner in Rome, *“The Holy Spirit rightly spoke through Isaiah the prophet to your fathers, saying,”* and then he quoted Isaiah 6 and applied it in this way, *“Therefore let it be known to you that this salvation of God has been sent to the Gentiles; they will also listen.”* (Acts 28:25-28)

Work hard to get a strong conclusion for your sermon.

Step 5—The Introduction

Usually it is best to wait until last to plan the introduction to the sermon. Once you have the sermon constructed and the conclusion written you can think of how to start.

The introduction should capture the interest of the audience and focus that interest on the purpose of your sermon. It is good to read your text and explain it, then to explain the particular point you want to preach about. A good illustration, a good question, or something similar can get people ready to follow you on your journey to your conclusion. Often if you give the main points of your sermon in the introduction it will help people to follow your preaching.

More on outlining to come

Outlining sermons will be one of the main things emphasized in *Preaching the Gospel Magazine*, so there will be a great deal more written about each of these things. I hope you will gain good from them.

Who Should Preach?

A good number of years ago a church was having difficulties. They had the practice of using all the men as preachers. Each man took a turn preaching whether he was a good teacher or a poor one, whether he understood the Bible well or not, whether he was an example in life or not. Each man was jealous of his privilege of preaching and insisted on his turn to preach.

The result was confusion because men preached different things, and boredom because poor teachers wasted much time with many words.

When I spoke to these brethren I called their attention to James 3:1 where James writes: *“Let not many of you become teachers, my brethren, knowing that as such we will incur a stricter judgment.”* It is an awesome responsibility to teach. If we teach something

which is wrong, God will judge us! If we waste time and keep people from understanding, God will judge us! And He will judge us strictly, because we are influencing many people.

I told them that they could never solve their problem as long as each brother was jealous of his turn to preach. Only when we recognize that each person has his own abilities and place in the body of Christ, and that all cannot have the same job, can we have the kind of teaching God wants us to have.

Teachers are to be “faithful people” (2 Timothy 2:2). The one who gets up to instruct people in the way of God must himself understand and follow the truth. This takes some time and practice because *“the mature”* are those *“who because of practice have their senses trained to discern good and evil.”* (Hebrews 5:14)

Teachers are to be examples. Timothy was told, *“Let no one look down on your youthfulness, but rather in speech, conduct, love, faith and purity, show yourself an example of those who believe.”* (1 Timothy 4:12)

Preachers are to be “able”. 2 Timothy 2:2 says, *“The things which you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, entrust these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also.”* Ability to teach depends partly on the gifts God has given us. Good teachers have to have intelligence, ability to communicate, etc. Ability to teach also depends on developing what gifts we have. If you are serious about preaching, you will pay attention to the articles in this magazine, you will work hard at learning to outline properly, you will study your Bible carefully, you will learn how to present lessons in the best way.

Preaching good sermons is an art, an art which is learned by study and practice. It takes hard work, much study and much prayer. When a faithful man puts in that work and becomes the kind of preacher God wants him to be, he is able to profit his brethren in a great way and able to persuade sinners to come to Christ. What a privilege! What a great work! Let us value this work enough to be serious about our preparations.

Preach With Energy

The preacher is preaching the most important message in the world. He must preach with conviction and power. He should:

- Preach loud enough so all can hear without effort.
- Look at the people in his audience so they can truly be involved in his sermon.
- Show from the expression on his face that he is concerned about those listening.
- Use his body to show his earnestness, which means he will not slouch or do things with his hands or feet which call attention away from his words.
- Emphasize with voice and gestures the important points of his sermon.

Try by all means to show that what you are saying is very important.

And He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as **evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers**, for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ; until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ. – Ephesians 4:11-13.