

## UNIT 4: Sermon Types

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Every sermon should be based on a portion of Scripture. This may be done in three ways:

1. Either by considering the theme or topic of the passage (thus the term *topical sermon*).
2. By exploring the actual wording of a biblical text, as in textual sermons.
3. By expounding on the major divisions of a portion of biblical text (usually a larger portion) in expository sermons.

### Definition of Each Sermon Type:

1. **Topical.** The outline is based on the development of a topic that is the main theme of a biblical text. Interrogation of the topic guides development of the outline. Main outline divisions may be derived from additional passages of Scripture.
2. **Textual.** The outline is based on the logical development of the biblical text. The text itself controls the development of the outline, including the main divisions. Supporting material may be taken from other relevant parts of the Bible.
3. **Expository.** The expository sermon takes not only its theme and outline from the chosen portion of Scripture but also the major part of its supporting material.

**Always begin sermon preparation by carefully reading the biblical text using good hermeneutics appropriate to that text (genre, figures of speech, etc.), to exegete and correctly interpret what the text meant in its original context to the original recipients. Unless that is done well, nothing else matters. You will not be preaching God's word. You will be twisting the Scripture and preaching something God never said.**

### I. The Topical Sermon *(Should be used sparingly, NOT often!) (Subject to many pitfalls.)*

1. The topical sermon is built around a biblical topic or theme, rather than around one specific passage of Scripture. It often uses multiple scriptures. Nonetheless, it must be faithful to the biblical text and apply each text in its proper context.
2. Several possible topics may be found in a given portion of Scripture, but there should be only one dominant theme. Do not use a secondary theme from a portion of Scripture as the launching point for a sermon. Instead, choose a passage in which the dominant theme is also the topic of your message.
3. Some like to use topical sermons because it appears to give more freedom to where you the message. It sometimes seems like it requires less work, because you pull various passages together. *It actually involves MORE work if done correctly. You must research and exegete every passage that you use in the sermon!*
4. A topical sermon may be analytical, illustrative, demonstrative (Why I believe the bible is true, for example), or biographical (*See Downloadable Worksheets for more information*).

- a. Advantages:
  - i. The unity of focus on the biblical topic can strengthen the message.
  - ii. The focus on one truth can result in clear understanding of the biblical topic.
  - iii. The breadth of the sermon can be greater.
- b. **Disadvantages:** *These happen more often than not. Why? Laziness!*
  - i. The danger of superficiality.
  - ii. The danger of subjectivity in selecting passages of Scripture.
  - iii. The danger of dishonesty by using a biblical text only as a launching point for the sermon.
  - iv. The danger of looking for novelty in topics.

## II. The Textual Sermon **(The second most important and effective sermon Type.)**

1. Paul told Timothy, "Preach the Word!" (2 Timothy 4:2). Nothing grips a congregation's attention or excites the imagination so consistently as the clear explanation of the meaning of God's Word.
2. The textual sermon has much in common with both the topical sermon and the expository sermon. Like the topical sermon, the textual sermon takes its subject from the text. However, the biblical text itself controls the development of the outline. Other portions of Scripture may be quoted or referred to in support of the points made, but the whole outline is the outline of the text itself, not the logical development of the topic.
3. The common feature of both textual and expository sermons lies in their close relationship to the portion of Scripture. *These two sermon types are the best for teaching God's people how to carefully read, understand, and apply a passage from God's word.*
  - a. The expository sermon, however, takes not only its theme and outline from the chosen portion but also the major part of its supporting material. It is concerned with the explanation and application of the core of the whole passage in its context to the hearers.
  - b. The textual sermon, on the other hand, uses the context to establish the focus of the text but draws in supporting material from other relevant parts of the Bible. Its primary concern is the explanation and application of a specific theme in its context to the hearers.
4. Part of developing a textual outline involves interrogating the text. Ask questions like, "What? Where? When? How? Why? Who?" By applying questions such as these to the biblical text, we can obtain a sizable amount of material to aid in construction of the outline. The outline should be developed based on the text itself.

## 5. Evaluating the Textual Sermon:

### a. Advantages:

- i. The textual sermon is thoroughly biblical.
- ii. The careful exposition of the words and phrases from the text deepens listeners' knowledge of the Scriptures.
- iii. Since the textual sermon is concerned with the actual words of Scripture, it can be prophetically direct.

### b. Disadvantages:

- i. The danger of false analysis of the text. Not enough attention to context.
- ii. The danger of attaching too much significance to every word of the text.
- iii. The danger of irrelevance because of too much unnecessary information.

## III. The Expository Sermon

### **The most important and effective sermon Type.**

1. The effective use of expository sermons can make the Word of God come alive. The expository sermon takes not only its theme and outline from the chosen portion of Scripture, but also the major part of its supporting material.
2. The term "expository" comes from the Latin *exposui*, "to have laid open the truth for inspection and understanding." Exposing the message of a Scripture passage will directly provide all the main divisions and subdivisions of the sermon. Therefore, this type of sermon can have a strong impact as a message taken directly from a chosen passage.
3. The expository sermon should have cohesion, movement, and direction. The various elements discovered in the portion of Scripture should be woven into a harmonious discourse that will move listeners toward the predetermined goal.
4. No portion of Scripture was written solely to record information; therefore, at every stage in our preparation of the sermon and in all our exegesis, we must keep before us these questions:
  - a. What is the point of this passage?
  - b. What is its message?
  - c. What affect is it intended to have on the reader?
5. The expository sermon must have the same aim if it is to be true to the text. Application may vary according to the needs of the audience, but the purpose should remain the same.
6. The Expository Sermon is not:
  - a. An exegetical paper.

- b. A mere Bible reading sermon or running commentary on a passage. The difference is application.
- 7. What the Expository Sermon is:
  - a. A message that takes not only its theme and outline from the chosen portion of Scripture but also the major part of its supporting material.
  - b. A message that faithfully moves through exegesis of the passage itself to discover the aim and intention of the passage for the original audience and then applies the message effectively to today's audience.
- 8. An expository sermon can be developed from any self-contained unit of Scripture, ranging from a single paragraph (such as a parable of Jesus) to an episode (such as a miracle of Jesus); or a chapter (like Hebrews 11), psalm, or even entire book of the Bible.
- 9. Once we select a text, we must analyze its theme. This usually requires reading it several times. Even if the passage is a whole book, we should read it through completely in one sitting, so we clearly understand the flow of the material. Until we can express the theme in a simple statement, we do not understand the portion sufficiently to preach it faithfully.
- 10. The expository outline may be developed either naturally or analytically, as with the textual sermon. The aim that we have prayerfully established for the sermon will determine the approach we adopt. So, the expository sermon may be evangelistic, doctrinal, ethical, or apologetic.
- 11. Advantages of Expository Preaching:
  - a. Expository sermon preparation demands that the preacher study the Scripture portion carefully, use sound hermeneutics, and learn how to relate the Scriptures directly to the audience. This leads to better biblical preaching.
  - b. The expository method allows the preacher to speak with greater confidence and authority because it derives directly from Scripture. Listeners recognize that they are hearing God's Word rather than merely the preacher's opinions, leading to a more receptive and responsive congregation.
  - c. Expository preaching can also help create a more perceptive congregation that sees truth in its larger context.
  - d. The expository sermon aids the congregation by modeling to each individual the correct way to study God's Word.
  - e. **Preaching through a book of the Bible in a series of expository sermons is by far the best way to teach God's people how to read and understand each book of the Bible for themselves, how the Bible as a whole fits together, and how to grow into mature people of God. It is the best way to slowly grow a church deeper, stronger, and larger over many years.**
- 12. Avoiding the Dangers of Expository Preaching:
  - a. The Danger of Dullness or Dryness. We must be careful when researching details of a text's background to include only what is pertinent and helpful to the message. The material must be relevant and interesting to the audience.

- b. The Danger of a Disjointed Outline. By constructing a clear outline and keeping a clear sense of direction, we can avoid rambling from one thought to another. The divisions and subdivisions of the outline must be clearly tied to the theme.
- c. The Danger of Confusion. To avoid confusion, we should focus on the theme of the Scripture passage and not include too many extra details.
- d. The Danger of Imbalance. Though much could be said about any text, information must be focused and in balance with the biblical truths being presented. Outline divisions must be clear and in balance with the information surrounding the text.

There you have it: A basic, fundamental survey of how to develop a sermon. There is so much more that we would explore, and there is a lifetime of material that we can learn. As you begin your journey in preaching, give yourself grace and remember that your message doesn't have to be perfect for God to use it. He uses imperfect vessels all the time. So, enjoy the journey and trust that the same God who called you will be faithful to use you for His glory.

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I hope that you have enjoyed this course and that it has helped equip you for the ministry of preaching!

Questions? Comments? I'd love to speak with you. You can reach me through:

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Blessings and Peace be with you!

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