

PREACHING



**Teacher Handbook
Nazarene Theological Institute
Africa West Field
Church of the Nazarene**

Note to students of this course:

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Syllabus

TP 201 Preaching

Nazarene Theological Institute
Africa West Field
Church of the Nazarene

Diploma Level

Location of the Course:

Course Dates:

Course Instructor:

Course Description

The course serves in the important task of training others to preach the word of God faithfully. The course will offer the steps to follow in order to prepare and present various types of sermons.

Course Rationale

Narration

This course is an apprenticeship in preaching. It deals with the need to communicate the word of God. It serves as a springboard to other courses such as evangelism and church growth as well as Biblical interpretation. AS much as possible students should have a deep understanding of the theories of preaching, as well as to know how to communicate effectively. They should also master methods of teaching and rhetoric (the art of oral argument).

This course aims to meet certain competencies and aspects of character development in the student. The mission of the Church of the Nazarene demands a solid preaching of the Gospel. What is this mission? It is to go and make disciples of all nations. I twill take into account the Old and New Testaments that are divinely inspired and relevant to today's world.

All the activities of this course will instruct students in how to communicate to the groups they preach to in their cultural context and audience's level of education. This course will permit students to establish a biblical base for the other readings. The importance of reading the assigned texts can not be understated. Serious students will apply themselves so that their local church can depend on them.

Program Outcomes

The following program outcomes assigned to this module are identifiable competencies required of the student in this course.

- | | |
|-------|---|
| CN 3 | Use of the principles of Biblical interpretation |
| CN 5 | Realization of the biblical, theological, and practical implications of holiness doctrine when taught from a Wesleyan perspective |
| CN 10 | Knowledge of the basic theory and art of communication, especially that which concerns preaching and teaching. |

CP 1	Ability to communicate orally and visually according to the culture
CP 2	Ability to preach Biblical sermons that can then be applied to life
CP 5	Ability to plan and lead worship services
CP 7	ability to evangelize in public and private
CP 10	ability to interpret and apply the Bible according to the best principles of Biblical interpretation
CR 4	Ability to allow Christ's character to form the attitudes and actions of one's daily life
CR 9	Ability to engage in continuing formation and education
CX 2	Ability to understand the context within which he or she lives with objectivity
CX 4	Ability to understand the differences between the worldviews of the Western world, that of Africa, and that of the Bible

Course Outcomes – Diploma Level

For achieving the competencies listed above, this module organizes several learning activities and requirements around the following intended learning outcomes for this course.

At the end of the course, the student will be able to:

Course Outcome 1. Students will develop habits of continually becoming familiar with the Bible. (CN 5, CP 2, CP 10, CR 4)

Learning Activity 3: Do the inductive Bible study on your sermon passage.

Course Outcome 2. Students will learn how to use commentaries, Bible dictionaries to prepare better sermons. (CN 3, CP 10, CR 9, CX 4)

Learning Activity 6: Write a sermon.

Course Outcome 3. Students will develop and preach sermon on different theological themes including entire sanctification. (CN 5, CN 10, CP 1, CP 2, CP 7, CP 10, CR 4)

Learning Activity 3: Do the inductive Bible study on your sermon passage.

Learning Activity 6: Write a sermon.

Learning Activity 7: Preach your sermon.

Course Outcome 4. Students will learn basic «exegesis» of one's audience (in other words, how to understand one's audience) and how to put the results of this study into practice. (CN 10, CP 1, CP 2, CP 7, CX 2)

Learning Activity 5: Write a one to two page description of your audience.

Course Outcome 5. Students should have the habit of collaborating with colleagues for better understanding the Bible in various ministry contexts. (CN 5, CN 10, CP1, CP 10, CR 4)

Learning Activity 2: Group Work.

Learning Activity 7: Preach your sermon.

Course Outcome 6. Students should prepare a worship service around a theme of a sermon. (CN 5, CN 10, CP 1, CP 5, CX 2)

Learning Activity 8: Put together an Order of Worship for the service in which you will preach your sermon.

Course Outcome 7. Use the reading of history and current events to adapt sermons to the daily life of the audience. (CN 5, CP 1, CP 2, CR 9, CX 2, CX 4)

Learning Activity 4: Write four illustrations.

Course Outcome 8. Students will grow in their personal spiritual formation, character development, and professional expertise as they work through in their minds and hearts what they are learning in class in relation to their ministry. (CN 10, CR4, CR9, CX2, CX4)

Learning Activity 1: Journal entries

The following sessions and exercises of this course offer the following percentages of the four Cs:

Content	25 %
Competence	45 %
Character	15 %
Context	15 %

Course Resources

The primary textbook is the Holy Bible. Secondly textbooks from where class assignment will be taken are:

James Braga: *How to prepare Bible messages*. (1977)

Truesdale & Lyons. *Dictionary of the Bible and Theology in Everyday English*

Available Bible study tools, such as Bible commentaries, Bible dictionaries, and Bible concordances.

Course Requirements and Evaluation

Class Attendance. Missing up to one day of a five-day course of 30 hours will result in up to 10% decrease in the final mark – see attendance criteria below. Missing more than six hours of class time will result in failing the course.

Attendance Criteria

Points off (subtracted from final grade) for absences in a 30 hours course

½	Miss devotions – 15 minutes
1	Miss ½ hour
2	Miss 1 hour
5	Miss ½ day
8	Miss 1 day (5 hours)
10	Miss 6 hours of class time

Learning Activity 1: Journal entries – Write at least three journal entries during the week based on journal prompts given by the instructor (10 % of the final grade). Writing journal entries is a part of the way you connect the content of the course with your own heart and with your ministry. Your journal entries should show good course content while reflecting your own person insights, ideas and devotional reflections on the content. Each entry should be at least 6-7 lines but no more than 2 pages. You will be graded on the quality and content of your writing.

Learning Activity 2: Group Work as designated by the instructor throughout the course. (10%)

Learning Activity 3: Do the inductive Bible study on your sermon passage according to the procedures outlined in "Preparing a Sermon" in Appendix A. The scripture passage for your sermon should be one of three or four passages presented as options by the instructor, and which are useful for preaching an evangelistic holiness sermon. You will hand in the answers to these questions for a grade. (20 %)

Learning Activity 4: Write four illustrations, such as a story from history, the news (current events), a cultural story of your community, or by describing a word picture. At least two of these illustrations should be ones that you can use in the sermon you are preparing to preach in this class. (10 %)

Learning Activity 5: Write a one to two page description of your audience based on the questions under "Exegeting your Congregation" in Lesson 8 of the Student Handbook. (10%)

Learning Activity 6: Write an evangelistic holiness sermon. This sermon should be based on the inductive Bible study that you did for Learning Activity # 3, as well as some additional study in a commentary and Bible dictionary. And it should include at least two of the illustrations that you put

together in Learning Activity #4. This should be an evangelistic holiness sermon intended to bring the people to the response of seeking the experience of entire sanctification. You will hand in this written sermon for a grade. (15 % of the final grade)

Learning Activity 7: Preach your sermon – it should be 15-20 minutes. (15%).

Learning Activity 8: Put together an Order of Worship for the service in which you will preach your sermon. The various components of the service should reflect and contribute to the theme of the sermon – the theme of the sermon should flow through each component in the whole service. Write out each of the three prayers; give chorus or song titles and scripture references for the readings and for the sermon. Write at least three main points of your sermon. (10%)

The preaching of a sermon on entire sanctification will be the final exam (see Activity 3).

Grading Policy

A	90-100%	Excellent
B	80-89%	Very Good
C	70-79%	Good
D	60-69%	Passable
D-	45-59%	(Passable for the certificate level and toward the requirements for being ordained in the Church of the Nazarene)

If a student marks a final grade lower than 45% he or she must take the course again for credit at the diploma level.

Certificate Level

Course Requirements and Evaluation

Attendance is a major part of taking this course. Active participation is expected from each member. Being late by 30 minutes after a **session** begins will be considered absent for that **session** (there are multiple sessions in each day). To be absent two days will result in not passing the course.

Learning Activity 1: Group sharing of "Journal entries" – There will be at least three of these times during the week based on start-off statements given by the instructor (10 % of the final grade). "Journal entries" are a part of the way you connect the content of the course with your own heart and with your ministry. Your "journal entries" should show good course content while reflecting your own personal insights, ideas and devotional thinking and contemplation on the content. Think about the start-off statement given by the instructor and be prepared to share your thoughts with your group in about 1-2 minutes, and then with the class as the instructor sees that time will allow.

Learning Activity 2: Group Work as designated by the instructor throughout the course. (10 of final grade%)

Learning Activity 3: Do the inductive Bible study on your sermon passage according to the procedures outlined in "Preparing a Sermon" in Appendix A. The scripture passage for your sermon should be one of three or four passages presented as options by the instructor, and which are useful for preaching an evangelistic holiness sermon. You will hand in the answers to these questions for a grade. (20 %)

Learning Activity 4: Think about four illustrations, such as a story from history, the news (current events), a cultural story of your community, or by describing a word picture. At least two of these illustrations should be ones that you can use in the sermon you are preparing to preach in this class. Be prepared to share these in class. (10 %)

Learning Activity 5: Think about how you would describe your audience/congregation based on the questions under “Exegeting your Congregation” in Lesson 8 of the Student Handbook. Be prepared to share about this for 2-3 minutes in class. (10%)

Learning Activity 6: Write a holiness sermon outline full enough that you can preach from it. This sermon outline should be based on the inductive Bible study that you did for Learning Activity # 3, as well as some additional study in a commentary and Bible dictionary. And it should include at least two of the illustrations that you put together in Learning Activity #4. This should be an evangelistic holiness sermon intended to bring the people to the response of seeking the experience of entire sanctification. You will turn in this outline for a grade. (15 % of the final grade)

Learning Activity 7: Preach your sermon – it should be 15-20 minutes. (15%).

Learning Activity 8: Put together an Order of Worship for the service in which you will preach your sermon. The various aspects of the service should help to show in different ways the theme of the sermon — the theme of the sermon should flow through each part in the whole service. Write out each of the three prayers; give chorus or song titles and scripture references for the readings and for the sermon. Write at least three main points of your sermon. (10%)

The final exam will be preaching a sermon on entire sanctification will be the final exam (see Activity 3).

Course Schedule

This course can be taught as an intensive in one week or over the course of two months.

- Lesson 1: Introduction to Preaching
 - Lesson 2: Listening to Scripture
 - Lesson 3: Asking Questions of the Scripture Text
 - Lesson 4: Looking for Trouble
 - Lesson 5: Working with Images, Incidents, and Issues
 - Lesson 6: Pausing to Let the Text Speak to Me
 - Lesson 7: Consulting the Scholars
 - Lesson 8: Exegete the Congregation
 - Lesson 9: Selecting the Form of the Sermon
 - Lesson 10: Analyzing Sermon Form
 - Lesson 11: Writing the Sermon and Preparing to Preach
 - Lesson 12: The Place of the Sermon in Worship
 - Lesson 13: Preaching
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- Appendix A: Preparing a Sermon
 - Appendix B: Bible Storying as a Springboard for Preaching

Lesson 1—Introduction to Preaching

Lesson Introduction

(40 minutes)

Orientation

Open the class with these questions.

Give each person time to share their "balcony" preacher (their hero preachers). List the names of these people, their preaching style, and their characteristics on a continuing list. Review similarities and differences.

Repeat the exercise with the opposite questions.

*Ask the class not to **name** these preachers, only describe them. Be careful not to allow this to become personal in any way.*

Depending on class size, this opening exercise can take up to 30-40 minutes. It is important to create a climate of sharing, conversation, and peer learning. The instructor should take careful notes on the background of each person. This will allow you to teach from within their experiences.

This class has come together from a variety of experiences. Each of you already has a theology of preaching imbedded in your thinking.

- *Who are the preachers in your mental balcony?*
- *Who has preached in a way you aspire to preach?*
- *Whose preaching became formative in your call to ministry?*
- *How would you describe their preaching?*
- *What personal characteristic made each one a great preacher to you?*

- *How did their preaching wound you?*
- *In what ways do you want to avoid their pattern?*
- *What characteristics made them ineffective?*

Our inherent theology of preaching is derived from good and bad models. Compare the two lists of preaching styles and characteristics. Take the next five minutes to write out an answer to this question.

- *What do we already know about preaching before beginning this class?*

In groups of three, share and discuss your response with each other.

Learner Objectives

At the end of this lesson, participants should be able to

- remember the preachers who have shaped them.
- evaluate the preachers' influence on them
- define the role of preacher, listeners, the Scriptures, and the Holy Spirit in preaching

Lesson Body

Lecture: Theology of Preaching

(5 minutes)

It Proceeds from Silence

This lecture summarizes the work of Fred B. Craddock in his book Preaching (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1985), chs. 1 and 3.

Preaching is the revelation of God, who does not always speak, but does address His people when they gather. It requires that the minister listen in the silence until he or she hears the word God speaks.

It Is Heard in a Whisper

God speaks in ways that not everyone hears. You must be listening carefully. God speaks in creation, Scripture, Jesus, and the Spirit. God does not shout people into submission, nor overwhelm them with evidence. Preachers lean forward to hear the whisperings of God. We must be patient with those who do not readily hear the whispering of God. Not even the disciples got it at first. We are often slow to respond. Yelling louder does not make it easier to hear. An elderly grandmother is often not hard of hearing, but hard of listening. She doesn't want to hear what is being said. Realize in your preaching that there will be those who do not yet have ears to hear.

It Is Shouted from the Housetop

Matthew 10:27 says, "What I tell you in the dark, speak in the daylight; what is whispered in your ear, proclaim from the housetops."

This does mean preach loud. At the ear of the preacher, it is a whisper. At the lips it is a shout. Look at the sower of the seed parable. Preaching is public proclamation with confidence in the seed. Jesus sends us out to preach. Preaching is urgent, for all to hear whether they hear or not. It is passionate because it is about God's love for us. Preaching confronts a kingdom of darkness and threatens its grip on God's creatures and creation.

Proceeds from silence—heard as a whisper—shouted from the housetop.

The seed makes its own way into the soil. Our confidence is not in our own ability, but in the power of the seed we hold in our hands. We cannot make people hear. We are not responsible for their response. But we are responsible to raise their concerns and questions, to voice their wonderings, to build a bridge from Bible times to ours, and to remove the obstacles to hearing.

Group Work

(10 minutes)

Refer students to exercise in Student Handbook.

Divide into groups of three. Your group should consist of other students other than those in the first small-group activity today. You will have 10 minutes to discuss Resource 1-2.

Read Mark 4:1-20.

- *What does this teach us about preaching?*

Note how verses 3-8 focus on the sower/preacher.

Note how verses 13-20 focus on the soil.

Lecture: Fundamental Convictions about Preaching

(5 minutes)

The Preacher

Refer students to "Expectation about the Preacher" in the Student Handbook.

The preacher is in a relationship of trust and intimacy, making it impossible to separate character and performance. Preaching is to some extent self-disclosure. It should enhance your journey with God. There are expectations that the preacher be a person of faith, passion, authority, and grace.

- If you have faith, you are believable.
- If you have passion, you are persuasive.
- If you have authority, you understand your calling, gift, and ordination.
- If you have grace, you are one who attends to God.

The Listeners

They are active participants. Preaching is located not on your lips but in their ears. It is more about getting the good news heard than getting it said. Too many preachers are satisfied to "say it well." But we are called to "get it heard."

The message must be appropriate to the listeners. A sermon fits a group of people at a specific time. The listener should be given something to do, think, feel, and decide. Sermons should speak for the congregation as well as to the congregation. We are stating the historic convictions of the congregation. While each sermon will challenge hearers to new obedience, it will also affirm past and present obedience.

The Scriptures

The Scriptures are the living voice of the congregation. Preaching is rooted in this voice. It is in the Scriptures that we have been told who we are and what our lives are about. We know this voice that speaks to us from the Word of God. It is a familiar voice. Preaching is not speeches about things, but the word of God. The Scriptures themselves critique preaching. They tell us not only what but also how to preach. It is a primary obligation of the preacher to interpret Scripture. The primary question about a sermon is, "Does it say and do what the biblical text says and does?"

The Holy Spirit

The partnership between God and the preacher is an important one! The Holy Spirit helps us in the study, in the pulpit, and in the response. Romans 1:16 tells us that we are "not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for salvation." The preached word is the place of God's activity. But the help of the Holy Spirit does not reduce our responsibility.

Good Preaching Comes from Good People

By Wes Tracy

Being a Man or Woman of God Is the First Requirement.

The Church has always required its preachers to be good persons first, good preachers second. The hand that would lead us to Christ must itself be clean, lest it defile the tenderhearted seeker.

We have always known the perceived character of a speaker communicates as much as the words he or she uses. Even Aristotle knew that. "Ethical proof is wrought when the speech is so spoken as to make the speaker credible; for we trust good men more and sooner. . . about what does not admit of precision, but only guess-work, we trust them absolutely. . . the most authoritative of proofs is that supplied by character" (*The Rhetoric*).

Quintilian, the ancient teacher of Roman orators said, "The orator, then, whom I am concerned to form, shall be a good man speaking well. But above all. . . he must be a good man" (*Instituto Oratoria*).

Christians believe that is doubly true for those who pastor and preach. St. Augustine said, "And so our Christian orator, while he says what is just and holy and good. . . will succeed more by piety in prayer than by the gifts of oratory, and so he [or she] ought to pray for himself [or herself] and for those he [or she] is about to address, before he [or she] attempts to speak. . . [The preacher] ought, before he [or she] opens his [or her] mouth, to lift up [a] thirsty soul to God, to drink in what he [she] is about to pour forth, and so be. . . filled with what he[she] is about to distribute.

"But whatsoever will be the majesty of the style, the life of the speaker will count for more in securing the hearer's compliance.... For there are numbers who seek an excuse in their own evil lives in comparing the teaching with the conduct of their instructors. . . .And thus they cease to listen with submission to a man [woman] that does not listen to himself [herself], and in despising the preacher, they learn to despise the word that is preached" (*De Doctrina Christiana*).

George Sweazey wrote his description of a preacher's character with these terms, "As to *character*—honest, straightforward, sincere, patient, grave, courageous. . . self-disciplined, on good terms with himself[herself], living truly and deeply. . . In relation to *God*, passionately seeking God, submitting to his will, striving to please him, depending on his grace, devoted without reserve, knowing God, . . . penitent, aware of the need to be forgiven" (*Preaching the Good News*, Prentice Hall, 295).

Pastoral Search:

Suppose you are on the board of a church looking for a new pastor. The district superintendent comes and asks the board what kind of pastor they want. He or she passes around a list of good qualities and asks board members to check the two most important qualities they want in their next pastor. What would you mark?

- A. Skillful preacher
- B. Gifted administrator
- C. Strong character and good reputation
- D. Knows Greek and Hebrew
- E. Good with youth
- F. Emphasizes personal evangelism
- G. Deeply spiritual, a person of prayer
- I. Good leader in community affairs
- J. Good at raising money
- K. Makes a good appearance
- L. Highly educated
- M. Good at pastoral counseling
- N. Good worship leader.
- O. A person you can trust

Assignment:

After reading "Good Preaching Comes from Good People," choose the two qualities you would look for in a pastoral candidate. Write a one to two-page paper that defines the evidence you think would show a candidate possesses these two qualities. Why do you feel these qualities deserve the board's consideration? At the beginning of the next lesson you will share your paper with a small group and then hand the paper into the instructor.

Heard After Church Service

There is, perhaps, no greater hardship at present inflicted on mankind in civilized and free countries, than the necessity of listening to sermons. No one but a preaching clergyman has . . . the power of compelling an audience to sit silent and be tormented. No one but a preaching clergyman can revel in platitudes, truisms and untruisms, and yet receive, as his undisputed privilege, the same respectful demeanour as though words of impassioned eloquence, or persuasive logic, fell from his lips.

....Anthony Trollope, *Borchester Towers*, 1857

"It is a sin to assemble a congregation each week and enter into the pulpit poorly prepared."

.....Arndt L. Halvorson, *Authentic Preaching*

"Spiritual formation occurs through the ministry of preaching. . . . preaching acts as one of the greatest tools of spiritual formation within the church."

.....Mel Lawrenz, *The Dynamics of Spiritual Formation*

Barbara Brown Taylor tells of her sister who was not raised in the church. She started but said that after listening to the preacher Sunday after Sunday "vent his spleen at God's enemy of the week—alcohol, the lottery, gay people, Santa Claus—she felt as if she had been beaten with a stick" (*When God is Silent*, Boston: Cowley Publications, 1998, 21). Such preaching is not formative preaching.

Formative preaching is described by this definition: "Preaching is an event of the Word. The Living Word (Christ) and the written Word (the Scriptures), in conjunction with the spoken word (sermon), create an event of the Word, as the servant of the Word proclaims upon the housetops what he or she has heard in secret" (Wesley Tracy, *What's A Nice God Like You Doing in a Place Like This?*, p. 11).

Lesson Close

(10 minutes)

Overview

Give an overview of the entire course.

Go over the Syllabus. Go over the assignments (learning activities) very clearly with the students and attach due dates to them.

Open your Student Guides to the opening pages.

During the next 10 lessons we will develop 10 specific skills that will help us preach well. The goal of the class is that each person will stand before the class during the last class sessions and preach, using the skills developed in class. We will evaluate each person and offer helpful feedback. The goal of the class is not to know about preaching, but to preach.

Review

Remember the learner objectives for this lesson. Can you

- remember the preachers who have shaped you?
- evaluate their influence on you?
- define the role of preacher, listeners, the Scriptures, and the Holy Spirit in preaching?

Assign Homework

Direct students to the Homework Assignments in the Syllabus of the Student Guide.

Assign a journal prompt (start-off), by which they can begin their journal entry. For example, a possibility might be: "Since being a man or woman of God is the first requirement for good preaching, this causes me to think that . . . "

Also, list the two most important qualities to look for in a new pastor.

You will evaluate these between class sessions, being careful to discern the strength of calling and their understanding of the role of the church. You will discover common issues to address in the next class.

Write a three-page paper answering the following questions:

1. How do you know you are called to preach?
2. What is the basis for your authority to preach? Read: Jer 1:7-9; Mt 28:18-20; 2 Tim 3:16; 2 Pet 1:16-21; 2 Tim 1:3-14; Acts 1:8
3. How do you understand the role of the church in your call to preach and ordination?

Read Resource 1-4, "Good Preaching Comes from Good People." List the two most important qualities you would look for in a pastoral candidate. Write a one- to two-page paper that defines the evidence you think would show a candidate possesses these two qualities. Why do you feel these qualities deserve the board's consideration? At the beginning of the next lesson you will share your paper with a small group and then hand the paper into the instructor.

Journal Prompts

- Why has God chosen me to do the work of a preacher?
- Reflect on your most recent sermon. How does it measure up to what was discussed in this lesson?
- Reflect on the Bible passage that was most meaningful to you.

Lesson 2—Listening to Scripture

Lesson Introduction

(10 minutes)

Accountability

Divide students into groups of three.

Call for reports from each small group. Tabulate the qualities selected by the class.

Collect journal entries from each student.

One of your assignments was to choose the two most important qualities to look for in a new pastor. Your group has five minutes to agree on the two qualities. After five minutes, one of the members of your team will share your findings with the class.

Orientation

Gather some old photos of long-dead people who are recognizable to the class. Ask them to study the pictures quietly, to listen carefully to the past.

What do these pictures say?

Learner Objectives

Restating the learner objectives for the learners serves as an advanced organizer for the lesson and alerts learners to key information and concepts.

To help students

- practice the art of listening to a text through the senses and articulate the experience

Lesson Body

Lecture: Living Words

(5 minutes)

The Bible is often viewed as an ancient book of ancient words. The people who wrote those words are long dead and buried. If the Bible is thought to be a collection of dead words, it has little to say to living humans. That is not to say words of the Bible are magical in any way. But, what if the Holy Spirit still whispers to us through these words? What if these words still have the breath of God in them?

Our understanding of life and spirit are rooted in the same Hebrew word, *ruach*. God breathed *ruach* into us and we became living beings. The Holy *Ruach* of God is the third person of the Trinity. The Spirit that speaks to us in the old words of Scripture is the same Spirit breathed into our clay bodies making us alive. To be a living soul is to be made capable of receiving *ruach*.

Refer students to "The Word" in the Student Handbook.

Indeed, the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing until it divides soul from spirit, joints from marrow; it is able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart. And before him no creature is hidden, but all are naked and laid bare to the eyes of the one to whom we must render an account. (Heb 4:12-13, NRSV)

Refer students to "Different Spoken Forms of Scripture" in the Student Handbook.

The Scriptures were first experienced as spoken words, not written words. The Bible was "speaking" before it was "writings." The one necessary fundamental for speaking is breath. You cannot make human vocal sound without breathing. Note the different spoken forms of Scripture:

- The stories of the patriarchs and matriarchs
- The wise "sayings" of Proverbs
- The sermons of the prophets
- The poetry and songs of the Psalms
- The cries and laments of the Psalms
- The Gospels as oral stories
- The letters to the churches written to be read

The Bible was meant to be heard before it was meant to be read.

Blessed is the one who reads aloud the words of the prophecy, and blessed are those who hear and who keep what is written in it. (Rev 1:3, NRSV)

Group Work

(20 minutes)

After the class is divided, read the passage again, slowly. Allow students to respond.

**Read Matthew 8:28-9:1 silently to yourself.
Close your Bible and write down what you remember.
Share your list with the person next to you.**

We are going to divide into five groups representing the five senses. One group will experience the text through their eyes, another their ears, another their touch, another their nose, another their taste.

Describe what you saw. What did you hear? How about smell? Touch? Taste?

Lecture: Engaging Scripture

(5 minutes)

To experience Scripture as it was originally experienced, we must engage all our senses. Our training in ministry often keeps us from experiencing Scripture with all the senses. We collect information through our ears and organize it into information on paper. There are no colors, textures, smells, shapes, or sizes—only information.

Refer students to "Engaging Scripture" in the Student Handbook.

Much of the educational process today is silent. From grade school through college, students listen to instructors, read, write, take notes, write term papers, sit for exams and graduate. Many students with excellent records enter seminary with 16 years of silent education, now preparing for a vocation that will demand oral presentations every week for the remainder of their lives.

From Craddock, *Preaching*, 21.

Perhaps the single biggest failure in the teaching of preaching is that young ministers are not fully impressed with the difference between textuality and orality. Shaped by mountains of books, called upon to write scores of papers, aspiring preachers train the eye but neglect the ear. It is into the world of sound that they will go, plying their wares 'acoustically.'

From Robin Meyers, With Ears to Hear: Preaching as Self-Persuasion (Cleveland: Pilgrim Press, 1993), 21.

Preaching is an oral art. The skills of preaching are not so different from the skills of giving someone directions to the store, telling a good joke, recounting an event, or putting a child to bed at night with a well-known story. We begin the work of preaching by learning to sense the text in a receptive, listening, and attentive mind-set.

Group Work

(35 minutes)

You can assign four participants or call for volunteers.

Return to Matthew 8:28-9:1.

Four of you are going to help tell this story, from four perspectives:

1. As if giving directions to the place where the pigs died
2. As if telling a funny story about how Papa lost his pigs
3. As if you were there and were retelling the story of a neighbor
4. As a child's bedtime story

Closing Thoughts

(5 minutes)

The goal of a sermon is to tell people what we see, hear, and experience in the text, not to read them what we wrote down about the text. For this reason, the first step in sermon preparation is to experience the text in the same way our people will experience our sermon, as oral sounds and sights.

Refer students to "Thoughts about Preachers" in the Student Handbook.

In writing about preachers, Thomas Troeger says, "I ask them to tell me what they want to preach, and they immediately cast their eyes to a sheet of paper. Their vocal quality and gestures become constricted, and the music of their speech flattens to a drone."

From Thomas Troeger, Imagining a Sermon (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1990), 68.

To speak convincingly of a God who calls us to a life of faith and love requires a voice whose tonality is congruent with the personal character of the gospel we proclaim, and this is not possible if the sermon is delivered as a printed document that is being read to the congregation.

Ibid., 71.

Getting sound and words to be congruent is a complex issue. It requires a spiritual, theological process of finding that place in the heart where the gospel has touched the preacher's own life. Nothing can replace speaking out of that spiritual center. It is the place from which the melody of redemption arises and permeates our voice.

From Troeger, p. 75.

Lesson Close

(10 minutes)

Review

The first move of preparing to preach is to get the text into our body through our senses, to experience it as if we were the people hearing Paul's letter being read to the church at Corinth. To run to commentaries and other sermons is to shortcut this creative move that opens us to the scripture.

Look at the learner objectives for this lesson. Did you . . .

- practice the art of listening to a text through the senses and articulate the experience?

Extra:

Is someone in the class a good storyteller? Would you treat the class to a story?

How is the telling of this story superior to reading it in print?

Assign Homework

Read the stories in Matthew 8-9.

- Describe what you see.
- Read the same stories and list things that can be smelled.
- What role does touch play? Who touches whom?
- Select one of these stories and make a listing of occurrences under each sense.

Possibilities for Journal Prompts (starters)

- Of the 5 human senses, which one or two are most dominant when you experience Scripture? Why?
- How can you increase the attentiveness of the minor senses?
- What was your favorite story as a child? What was its appeal?
- Think back over sermons that really have "stayed" with you. What is it that you remember?

Lesson 3—Asking Questions of the Biblical Text

Lesson Introduction

(25 minutes)

Accountability

Divide into groups of three to share their homework responses to Matthew 8-9.

Have three or four students read the text.

Return and collect homework.

How does each person read the text in a different way?

Learner Objectives

Share learner objectives for this lesson with the students. Stating the objectives for the learners serves as an advanced organizer for the lesson and alerts learners to key information and concepts.

To help students

- practice the art of asking the right questions of the text

Optional Motivator

We are going to play a short game of "20 Questions." You will think of a person, place, or thing. Others may ask questions which can only be answered "yes" or "no." We must arrive at the correct answer before using 20 questions.

Lesson Body

Guided Study

(60 minutes)

The biggest mistake one can make in the early stages of sermon preparation is to go directly to the experts in the commentaries. This quickly removes the suspense, intrigue, and mystery of the text. The power of stories is in their ability to make us wonder and question.

Allow students to respond.

List the questions on a marker board or overhead.

(Call on a student), will you read aloud Luke 24:13-35?

If you had been there that day, what questions would you have asked? What intrigues you about this story?

Allow students to respond.

Turning to a letter written to a church instead of a story being told, (call on a student), will you read Philippians 4:1-7?

Since you were not in the congregation at Philippi on the day Paul's letter was opened and read aloud to the gathered congregation, what questions do you have for this text?

Refer students to "Five Questions" in the Student Handbook.

Record answers on the board. Encourage the students to dig deeper rather than give easy, surface answers.

Knowing the right questions to ask is important in getting the text to open up and reveal its mysteries. Let's examine some good questions.

We will be looking at the two passages of scripture just read to us and asking the same five questions of each. First Luke 24:13-35, then Philippians 4:1-7.

Five Questions

1. *What is the good news here?*
2. *What is the bad news?*
3. *How many places can you stand in these two scriptures? How many different vantage points do we find?*

Possible answers:

Luke—*The two on the road, Jesus, Luke the writer, disciples back in Jerusalem hearing the two tell what happened.*
Philippians—*The mail carrier, the reader, absent Paul, Euodia, Syntyche, one of their husbands, the relative of Clement, a visitor in the church that day.*

We usually take the best seat in the house and see the story as if we are the good guys. It helps to view the text from other vantage points. Sometimes we adopt one of these vantage points as the structure of the sermon. For example, try preaching Matthew 9:9-13 from the perspective of Matthew's wife.

4. *What is God doing here?*
5. *What are humans doing here?*

You may want to go through these questions with several texts to be sure the class understands the process.

The skill of asking these questions is one of the most important steps in sermon preparation.

Heart Cries

Refer students to "Preaching to Heart Cries" in the Student Handbook.

All people of all time and in all places of the world experience universal "heart cries". And God has the answers to these heart cries!

One way to build the hermeneutical bridge (See numbers 8,9, and 10 of "Good Preaching is Based on the Good Book – the Bible" in the Student Handbook) between the heart cries of the people in your congregation and the theological themes (timeless truths), is to match the heart cries with the Articles of Faith, which express God's answer to those heart cries.

Group Work

Discuss the heart cries and God's answers, and ask the students to think about possibilities to add to this list.

Divide into four groups. Give each group three of the heart cries and have them select Scripture passages and/or Bible stories that speak to that heart cry along with its answer found in the theological theme in the Articles of Faith.

Lesson Close

(5 minutes)

Review

Review learner objectives with the students.

Becoming good preachers has everything to do with our ability to ask questions, to wonder, to imagine, to see what lies beneath the surface.

Look at the learner objectives for this lesson. Did you . . .

- practice the art of asking the right questions of the text?

Assign Homework

Direct the students to Learning Activity 3 in the Syllabus. Also, direct them to Appendix A in the Student Handbook. Encourage the students to begin working on that assignment. They will need to work on it along all week.

Learning Activity 3: Do the inductive Bible study on your sermon passage according to the procedures outlined in "Preparing a Sermon" in Appendix A. The scripture passage for your sermon should be one of three or four passages presented as options by the instructor, and which are useful for preaching an evangelistic holiness sermon. You will hand in the answers to these questions for a grade. (20 %)

Read Psalm 137. How do these characters feel? What could have possibly caused these expressions? When have you felt this way? Be prepared to tell this story in class without notes. There will be a three-minute time limit.

For women: Using Matthew 9:18-26, tell the story from the perspective of the bleeding woman. Be prepared in the next class to stand without any notes and assume the role of this woman. Tell us what happened to you. Time limit: three minutes.

For men: Using the same story, tell us the story from the perspective of the synagogue leader. No notes. Three minutes.

Read Resource 3-3, "Good Preaching is Based on the Good Book," and write a one-page paper to compare and contrast this 10-step homiletical process with the five questions presented in Lesson 3.

Journal Prompt

- What would it take to make you a more inquisitive person about a Biblical text?
- How have the five questions changed your thinking about sermon preparation?

Lesson 4—Looking for Trouble

Lesson Introduction

(35 minutes)

Accountability

Begin the class with storytelling from the homework assignments. It is important to get each person on his or her feet in front of the class. Encourage animation, gesture, voice inflection. Be playful with the class. You are easing them into the role of preacher-as-teller of the grand old gospel story. If you can help them become comfortable in their own body before a crowd, you will aid their development as preachers who tell us what they see, instead of script-readers who read us what they wrote. This exercise may take significant time. Hold them to the three-minute limit.

Collect and return homework.

You will each have three minutes to tell a story from your homework assignments. You can choose between the Psalm 137 story or the Matthew 9:18-26 story.

Orientation

Let's look back at the objectives from Lessons 2 and 3 before looking at our objective for today.

Learner Objectives

State learner objectives for this lesson. Stating the objectives for the learners serves as an advanced organizer for the lesson and alerts learners to key information and concepts.

At the end of this lesson, participants should be able to

- detect human trouble in the texts of Scripture as a means of identifying the intersection of Scripture and human experience

Optional Motivator

Allow the class to talk about their favorite detective heroes or main heroes from their favorite stories.

Each culture has some form of mystery story. What is this literary genre in your world and who are its best writers?

Who is your favorite mystery writer or detective? Agatha Christie? Miss Marple? Sherlock Holmes?

Lesson Body

Discussion

(15 minutes)

Refer students to "Trouble in the Story" in the Student Handbook.

Possible answer:
When trouble comes.

When does a story grab your attention? When do you begin to feel the intensity?

Every story in the world is about somebody that had trouble. The hook or grab in the story is the trouble. The story revolves around setting up a scene and talking about characters; who gets in trouble, then declare the trouble, and finally resolve the trouble.

You might need to adapt this list to fit the cultural experience of your students.

I will name a story, you tell me the trouble.

- *The Brothers Karamazov*
- "The Little Boy Who Cried Wolf"
- *Titanic*
- The Creation account of Genesis 1-3
- Daniel
- A well known story (fable, legend, etc.) from your cultural context

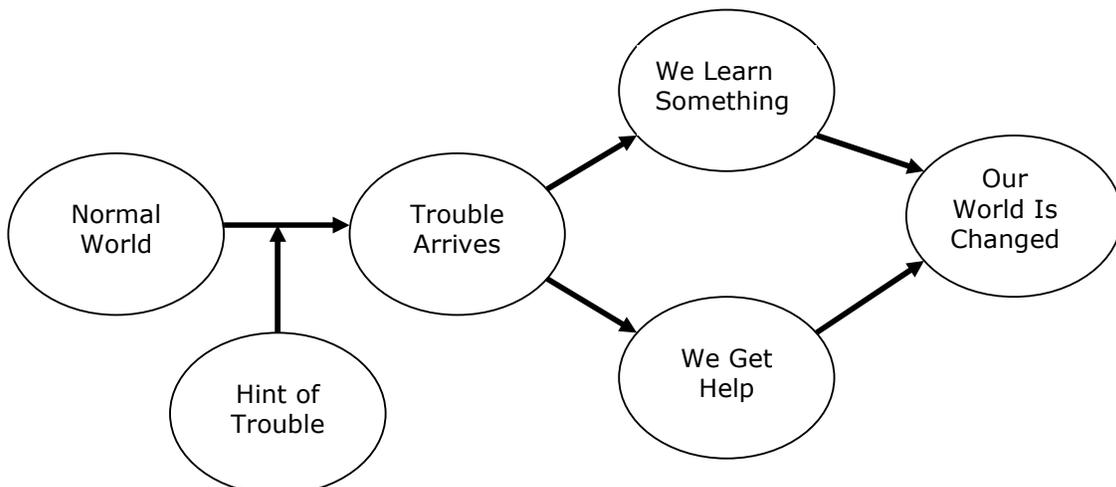
One of the primary connecting points between Scripture and the life of people in the church is that in both places we find people in trouble. People in trouble are always interested in hearing how they might get out of trouble. We are most open to new ways of thinking and living when we are in trouble. We are willing to view our lives differently. We are willing to consider changing our ways. We are open to the story of how God comes to help those who are in trouble.

For this reason, it is very important that a preacher go looking for trouble in a text.

Most stories begin in a normal world. This world is described in a way that makes listeners believe this could be their home, their neighborhood, and their friends. "Once upon a time . . ." Then crisis comes. A part of their world is turned over and examined. We find ourselves wondering what will happen.

Refer students to the "Plot Line Diagram" in the Student Handbook.

The plot line of most stories runs like this:



Let's go back to the stories you just analyzed for trouble and plot one of them using this structure.

Example: *Titanic*

- Normal world—ship sets sail
 - Hint of trouble—builder suggests *Titanic* is unsinkable
 - Trouble arrives—ship strikes iceberg
 - We learn something—ship is not invincible
- Or
- We get help—neighboring vessels to the rescue
 - Our world is changed—we know life is fragile on the sea

Group Work

(20 minutes)

Assign each group two stories. Each story will be assigned to more than one group.

In small groups plot two of the stories and then write out your analysis on a marker board for the class to review.

Lecture

(15 minutes)

Seven Helps for Preaching from a Narrative Plot

Refer students to "Seven Helps for Preaching from a Narrative Plot" in the Student Handbook.

1. Plot the story noting the common thread that holds the story together. Know where the story is going.
2. Develop the characters. Give them shape and form. Let them breathe. Note how they change and are changed as the story develops.
3. From what point of view is the story told? Whose vantage point governs the story? Example: Luke 1:26-38. Is this told from the perspective of Mary? The angel? God?
4. Capitalize on the dialogue. We are given the conversational skeleton in the text. Hang some skin on these bones and allow imagination to flesh out the conversation. Dialogue drives the plot and gives the story depth.
5. Watch the verbs. Go through the story and underline the verbs. This is the heart of God's activity. You want the sermon to be doing what these verbs are doing.
6. Preach the imperatives. Whatever the story calls on its characters to do, you must call on the congregation to do. The story is not told for our enjoyment, but for the sake of our identity and response. The story tells us who we are and how we are to behave in this world as the people of God.
7. Start the sermon with the tension of the story. Get somebody in trouble early on and let them wrestle trying to get out of trouble. Show Adam hiding from God or Jonah running from God. Or tell the story of a non-biblical character with the same trouble as Adam or Jonah. The gospel is bad news before it is good news. We cannot get to a strong theology of grace except via a strong theology of human trouble.

Trouble is early in the plot, not late. And trouble is not the final word. We do not need long bashings about the mess we've gotten ourselves into. Do not fall into the trap of using the pulpit to bash and blame people, then walk away with your guns smoking thinking you have really preached. Good preaching moves to grace and hope that is celebrated!

Good preaching draws people into the process of examining their lives in light of trouble. They connect with the story being told in light of their own story. They anticipate and think ahead in the sermon. This is one of the differences between deductive and inductive preaching.

Deductive Preaching

Refer students to "Deductive and Inductive Preaching" in the Student Handbook.

- Proceed from general truth to specific information.
- Give them the correct answer and then tell them the question.
- Show them the completed puzzle, and then explain how it was put together.

Inductive Preaching

- Proceed from specific situation to a recognized truth.
- Ask the questions and explore the options before arriving at conclusions.
- Empty the puzzle pieces out on the table and construct the puzzle piece by piece.

Preaching that follows the plot line from normal world through trouble to a changed world is inductive. It is exploratory. There is a world of difference between inductive and deductive.

Illustrate this by telling the story of *Titanic* both ways.

- Deductive—let me tell you a story about a large ocean liner that sank, etc.
- Inductive—one day a large ship set sail, etc.

Each form has its strengths and weaknesses. Inductive preaching speaks the story of Scripture in a natural way. It is interesting and has a hook to grab and sustain attention. It is less "preachy" to a generation of younger people. It flows more smoothly. It is a time-tested literary form. Deductive preaching, on the other hand, fits the model of teaching. It organizes thought into logical sequence. It has the ability to explore multiple topics. It serves the classical disciplines of rhetoric.

The assumption of the modern world is that if we give people the right answers and tell them what to do, they will go do it. The postmodern world challenges that assumption. All of us "know" better than we "do." Examples: eating habits, listening more than speaking, not worrying about things we cannot change. These are things we know already. Knowing the answers to our problems does not necessarily change us.

Our behavior changes when we experience a preferred future, when we see ourselves in a new light. Inductive preaching enables people to enter the world of Scripture and explore a new way of living. They view their world as "changed by the intervention of God." We need to give people new eyes through which to see their world. To do this we must locate them in their world first, then build the bridge to Scripture.

Henry Mitchell, in *Celebration and Experience in Preaching*, suggests that "tapes" are formed deep inside us. Our childhood is complete with tapes of fear, trust, low esteem, and prejudice. When trouble comes, we play these tapes. Preaching gives people new tapes, new stories, and new ways to respond to the trouble of life. Good preaching records over the old tapes.

Lesson Close

(5 minutes)

Review

Review learner objectives with the students.

Look at the learner objectives for this lesson. Can you . . .

- detect human trouble in the texts of Scripture as a means of identifying the intersection of Scripture and human experience?

Assign Homework

Break the class into four groups. If the class is too small for there to be at least two per group, assign only the applicable number of passages. If it is impossible for the class to meet outside of class time, you can make this an individual assignment.

Looking for Trouble

Go "looking for trouble" in one of the following stories as assigned.

- Acts 16:11-40
- Acts 17:1-9
- Acts 27:1—28:10
- Luke 24:13-35

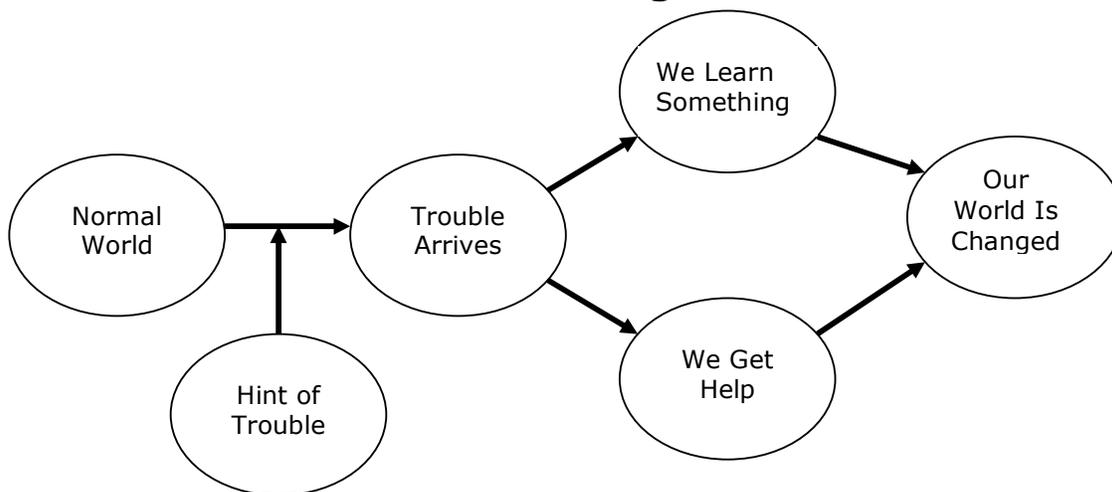
In your group complete the following based on the text:

- Have someone read the text aloud.
- What hints of trouble do you hear?
- What is the trouble?
- Who is the trouble?
- How is the trouble resolved?
- What can we learn from this?
- How is this trouble like the trouble of the people to whom you will preach?

Plot Line Diagram

Using the plot line diagram (page 15 in Student coursebook), plot the story of the Jews in slavery in Egypt. Do the same with the story of Jesus.

Plot Line Diagram



Journal Prompt: Write a brief story of your life including a time you were in trouble and how you experienced God.

Lesson 5— Working with Images, Incidents, and Issues

Lesson Introduction

(10 minutes)

Accountability

Collect and return homework

Orientation

Hold up certain things that mean more than the obvious. Example: a flag means more than colors on cloth. It means history, patriotism, shared story, a political reality, etc. A credit card means more than plastic with letters and numbers. It means purchasing power, the ability to transact business.

An image or symbol is a powerful vehicle for meaning.

These symbols image a larger meaning.

Today, we will work on finding the driving image, incident, or issue of the text to be preached.

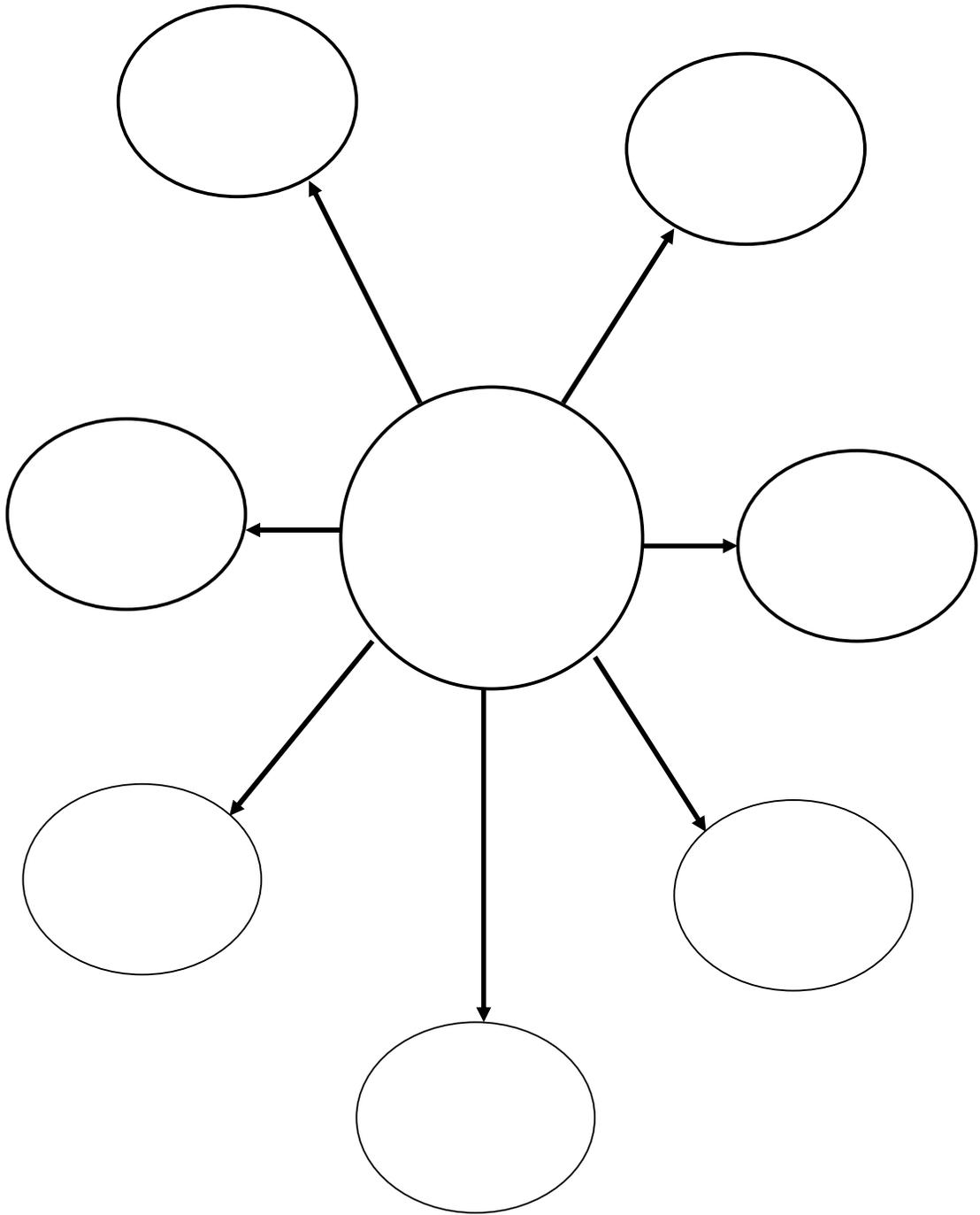
Learner Objectives

State the Learner objectives of this lesson. Stating the objectives for the learners serves as an advanced organizer for the lesson and alerts learners to key information and concepts.

At the end of this lesson, participants should be able to

- practice the art of working with textual images as the means of broadening the interest in a text by preacher and listener

Images



Lesson Body

Guided Discussion

(35 minutes)

Write responses on a marker board or overhead.

Possible responses:

Cross Staff
Lost sheep Towel and basin
Cup Snake
Bread Well of water
Blood Boat in a storm
Father Vine/Branches
Lamb

Christianity is a way of life rich in images. These visible symbols can be named in a few words, but it takes long explanations to declare their meaning. Let's list images that define Christianity.

Examples include the icons in the European cathedrals, stained-glass windows, and churches with banners.

- *Have any of you worshiped in settings adorned with religious images?*
- *How do these images speak to the human soul? Are some of us more visual in our worship?*
- *What images are present where you worship each week? Why these?*

Example:

Cross—lethal injection/noose
Towel and basin—nursing care

When we study a text, it is important to identify the dominant image, incident, or issue of that text. These become the connecting points for the world outside the text. Let's go back to the list above, and beside each image we have listed, let's list a current image that carries similar meaning.

To connect the world of Scripture to the world of our people, we need to make use of the images they already own. We want to attach biblical truth to images they are already conscious of. For instance, the rod of Moses was the image of God's signs and wonders before Pharaoh. What if we said Moses held in his hand God's personal magic wand or God's laser pointer? People begin to connect the dots between the world of the text and our world.

Class Exercise

(40 minutes)

Answer: Light that can be seen.

Refer students to Resource 5-1.

Read Matthew 5:14-16.

- *What is the dominant image?*

Using Resource 5-1 write "light that can be seen" in the middle. Then write all around it everything that comes to your mind when you think of "light that can be seen." Think in the following categories—songs, fairy tales, news event, science, nature, people you know, history, personal experiences, literature, and movies.

Have students share some of their ideas.

Possible ideas:
Campfire
Airport runway
Oncoming headlights
Shooting star
"This Little Light of Mine"

You are allowing the dominant image of the text from which you are preaching to travel through your world and find similarities. You will not use all this material in the sermon, but you will find many of these images useful when you begin to write your sermon. Do not try to organize these thoughts or ideas. Let your mind wander and record all the associations.

Repeat the above process with the following texts and images. Create a page for each image.

- Psalm 137—"exiled"
- Psalm 23—"shepherd who cares"
- 2 Corinthians 4:7-12—"a clay jar that is fragile"
- Luke 24:13-35—"breaking bread"

Conclusion

Thomas Troeger in *Imagining a Sermon* says:

Jesus is my greatest inspiration for drawing parables from life. He did not create his parables from scratch. His stories reveal someone who is attentive to what is, who closely observes common experience—the relationship of family members, the way people behave in the business world, the life of farmers and shepherds. It is striking how secular most of Jesus' parables are. There is almost nothing explicitly religious about them.

From Troeger, 92.

If I could only tell you one thing I think would make you a better preacher, it is this: look for the activity of God in the common places of life and name God at work there. Connect the images of God at work in Scripture with images of God at work in the world around you.

Lesson Close

(5 minutes)

Review

Review learner objectives with the students.

Look at the learner objectives for this lesson. Can you

- practice the art of working with textual images as the means of broadening the interest in a text by preacher and listener?

Assign Homework

Direct students to the Learning Activity 4 in the Syllabus of the Student Guide.

Learning Activity 4: Write four illustrations, such as a story from history, the news (current events), a cultural story of your community, or by describing a word picture. At least two of these illustrations should be ones that you can use in the sermon you are preparing to preach in this class. (10 %)

Reading Assignment

Read *Imagination of the Heart: New Understandings in Preaching*, by Paul Scott Wilson.

Journal Prompt

If you could not use words to speak about the gospel, what Christian symbol would you choose to portray your faith?

Imagination of the Heart: New Understandings in Preaching

Paul Scott Wilson (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1988). Used by permission.

Excerpts from Chapter One: Imagination's Poles How Imagination Works

To know how imagination works we need to know how language works, how words act together to produce meaning. I will be arguing here that imagination of the heart is not a mystical experience, although there is still mystery involved, but rather it is similar to other acts of meaning in the communication process. We may understand it as *the bringing together of two ideas that might not otherwise be connected and developing the creative energy they generate*. Normally, however, we may not think of imagination as having anything to do with language. We may think of it as the ability to picture something and may connect it more with vision than with words. This needs to change. Imagination may at times be a kind of wordless mystery that will involve pictures or other forms of mental sensory images. And pictorial imagery may at times enable us to find words, as Ignatian meditation exercises suggest. But in general we may understand that imagination is released by an ability to use polarities in language to create fresh ideas. Many of these ideas will present pictures to the mind, but imagination that finds expression through words is essentially a function of language. Without language we are unable to express thought. It is through the windows of language that we view reality, that we interpret actions, that we understand our emotions and our faith. The subject is a difficult one, however, and it may be useful before going into some of the scholarship in the area, for us to resort to pictures to show how imagination functions.

There are two ways in which it might be helpful for us to picture how imagination works. One way is to consider a close personal relationship like a marriage. In a marriage that works well, both people are confident in their own individual identities. If one person becomes lost in the identity of the other, much of the spark of the relationship may be gone. But if the partners, while being committed to each other, support individual growth and identity, the spark will be maintained. What we have here are three identities: the two individual identities and the third identity that is the relationship itself. It is characterized by the way the couple behaves as a couple. If this relationship is strong, we might say that there is a spark between them. Imagination in language is like this kind of vital relationship, except that in language it is two ideas brought together, each with its own identity, to create a third new identity by their union.

From my senior physics class in high school comes a second way of picturing how imagination works. The teacher had brought out an old generator. Taken from an old farmhouse telephone, it was the kind that had to be cranked by hand. Both the negative and positive poles of the generator had a wire attached. A student kept cranking while the teacher brought the ends of the two wires closer and closer together. When the ends were six inches apart, a spark jumped through the air with a snap. When the ends were four inches apart, there was a crackling sound and a waving but constant spark between the two ends. When the wires were touching there was no visible spark although the current was flowing

Imagination in language is like this spark between the poles of the generator. The spark of imagination happens when two ideas that seem to have no apparent connection (standing "poles apart," we might say) are brought together. Two conditions are necessary for imagination: (1) some connection between the ideas must be possible and (2) the ideas chosen must not be almost identical, for then they would function like the touching wires that had no visible spark. Most acts of communication happen with the wires touching and the current of meaning flowing directly from one idea to another with little or no spark visible.

Imagination similarly is the product of two ideas or "opposites" in relationship. The case that is being made here is that imagination operates in language, not in just pictures outside of language. Metaphor is language that exercises imagination. Imagination is not something magical or mysterious and unknown, even though its effect may seem both magical and mysterious. We have to know this if we are ever going to trust our creative abilities. As long as we cast an air of total mystique around imagination, we will assign it to the unknowable and thus also to the unachievable.

Using Imagination with Individual Words

Perhaps even more important for imagination than this, however, is the understanding that language lives and language dies. The reason it is more important we will see in a moment. Whenever words lose some of their spark for us they have died a little. We experience this kind of death in language when a favorite tune on the radio becomes a matter of indifference; or when in worship the same phrase used week after week without variation ceases to have meaning for us; or when an idea that was fresh and alive for us at a conference becomes dry and shriveled when left forgotten in a drawer for months.

The decay of meaning in language is predictable. This can lead, as noted already, to streamlining language and to effective communication. On the other hand it can eventually lead to dropping entire words from our vocabulary. Anthropologists working with Inuit people in the North American Arctic have actually used this predictable process of decay in language to help them date the origin of some of the isolated communities; assuming that these communities have a common origin, they suggest that every one hundred years they lose half of the words they have in common as new words are invented to replace the old. In 1986 some Canadian Inuit were brought together for the first time with some Russian Inuit, and it was discovered that they still had some words in common. Readers who know the basic physics may find it helpful to think of the decay of meaning in language as being similar to the decay of radioactive isotopes according to their particular half-lives.

The decay of language is important for preachers to understand, particularly those who are learning to use the imagination. Quite simply, many of the words we commonly use to talk about the faith have lost their spark. Repeated use of them without exposing them to imagination will have no more positive effect on the congregation than will raising the voice in giving directions to someone who does not speak our language. As Edward F. Marquart has identified the problem:

Most of the laity do not have "gut associations" with such words as salvation, redemption, incarnation, gospel, and theology of the cross. Ninety-eight percent of our laity don't use these words in their everyday lives. This becomes a problem for many of us clergy because we all have our favorite words . . . (someone) said to Reuel Howe, "If I used that much jargon with my customers, I would lose them."

Too many of our big theological words seem to our people like a lost herd of cattle out on the back forty. The solution is not just to cut back on the use of these words: jargon is still jargon used once or one hundred times. Nor is the solution to eliminate them entirely from our preaching. *The words of the Christian faith are gifts to us. They are treasures of which we are the stewards: We cannot let them die for they can be the route to true life.* The solution then must lie in another direction.

The solution has to do with language renewal. Just as words can defray and die, so too can they be renewed and have fresh life. The words of our faith are precious, yet they sometimes litter the floor like unthreshed husks of wheat. Some people would tread on them underfoot. For them the words are dead; they may have heard the words but they never received them as life. When these same words are gathered up with care and thrown into the air, the Holy Spirit has a chance to blow through them, to winnow them, to sift out the good news anew. They are renewed when they are seen or heard as though for the first time, when they have life again, when people want to use them because they have again become important for them.

Language renewal is not the task of a few. It is the task of everyone in the church, but it is the particular task of preachers. Said quite starkly, *language renewal is faith renewal.* Faith can be renewed by actions, but faith seeks understanding, and understanding comes from words and ideas.

Perhaps it would be better for some people in our society to have never heard about the Christian faith than to have the distorted understanding of it that they have. For them in particular, and for many of our church regulars as well, new ways to understand old words are essential. Because we love the words of our faith, and because we love to use them well and hear them well used, we take care of them. We want to polish them in all of their natural beauty like restored wood, so that others may run their fingers along the contours and know God's truth.

How does imagination give back to us freshness some of our words that are worn out and coming apart at the seams? As noted, retracing the origin of many of our words and recreating opposition is one route.

Another is to reach outside of the word itself to create a new opposition or juxtaposition. Let us say that we want to use the word "salvation" in a new way. For imagination we need to have what Coleridge called the reconciliation of opposites. We need two poles and we already have one in the word "salvation." Like the wires of the generator, the "opposites" cannot be so far apart that no connection is possible and yet cannot be so close together than they are touching. "Salvation" can have no legitimate connection, for instance, with "bomb." There is a false connection, of course, of the sort we find in so many of the false salvation promises of our culture such as in the lotteries and the life-style beer advertisements. But since no relationship of truth can be established with "bomb," there can be no spark of imagination of the heart. The wires are held too far apart. Imagination of the heart is scripturally based and the spark must have biblical warrant.

Or again, there can be no spark if the ideas are so similar that the wires are touching: the words "salvation" and "redemption" are so similar as to be almost identical. The preacher who talks about salvation as redemption will catch a lot of the congregation snoozing. But if the preacher tries substituting another word to juxtapose with salvation, a spark with biblical warrant may be found. Salvation can imply a positive experience. There are many positive experiences that might be effective, but one obvious one for Christians might be eating a meal. Bring that experience alongside the word "salvation" and there will be a spark that opens fresh and yet familiar biblical horizons for faith: "salvation is eating a meal." A congregation would be interested to hear the preacher develop this idea.

Of course this is only one instance of imagination or reconciliation of opposites. We could create many more with a word like "salvation." Simply try substituting any number of other positive experiences in place of eating a meal. But since salvation is inseparable from the cross, we might want alternatively to try some other fresh juxtapositions that we could develop in our preaching, such as "cross," "electric chair," "humiliation," or "vulnerability." Obviously in developing some of these for preaching we would need to be careful not to justify the suffering and oppression God opposes so clearly in the Scriptures. Moreover, we need not use every one. But as Arthur Koestler noted over and over again in his *Act of Creation*, the imaginative breakthroughs of creative people have occurred because of their ability to go beyond the usual frameworks of their disciplines and to associate ideas in unusual ways.

It takes no genius to play with free association. For us it can be an act of freedom. Part of the process can be a creative mulling, even without words, using music or art to awaken non-discursive realities, before we move to words. But when we move to words, do not dismiss apparently inappropriate juxtapositions before mulling them over in your mind. *Too often we cut off our considerable creative talents because we jump in too quickly to try to evaluate theological truth. As Jesus said in one of the parables, let the seeds grow and then do the weeding.* Ask yourself, "Is there a way this might be true?"

To be creative we need to be willing to live long enough with the tension between ideas to be able to explore freely. Even though every juxtaposition will not be appropriate, there will be a few we could develop and elaborate in preaching. We simply keep free-associating and substituting until something is alive for us.

Creating opposites, either from within the origin of individual words or by bringing one word or idea alongside another, is to begin to see the power of imagination. As preachers we must start with individual words; later on we will be discussing how individual words can function as one-word stories. Once we see how juxtaposition is done, we can see how others have created in exciting ways. For example, when Frederick Buechner said that it was harder for a rich person to enter the Realm of God than for a Mercedes to go through a revolving door, he probably used this process of free-associating and substitution of individual words. As a substitute for "camel" he settled on "Mercedes" (what do rich people ride in today?) and as a substitute for "eye of a needle" he settled for "revolving door" (which a car would have difficulty going through). The reconciliation of these two ideas of "Mercedes" and "revolving door" is an example of imagination.

Imagination creates new windows in language for us, opens up new possibilities of faith for us, gives us new eyes with which to view the world, and gives us new words with which to proclaim the glory of Christ. Is this not also the task of preaching in the life of the church? Preaching renews the language of the faith, even as it preserves and perpetuates it.

Lesson 6

Pausing to Let the Text Speak to Me

Lesson Introduction

(40 minutes)

Accountability

Invite students to share an illustration that they collected. Return and collect homework.

Orientation

Ask these questions for a time of discussion.

How was this like preaching?

Could these stories be a "move" in a sermon plot?

When you were telling your story, did you feel like you were preaching? Why? Why not?

Do you use a different voice when you preach?

Learner Objectives

State learner objectives for the students.

Restating the objectives for the learners serves as an advanced organizer for the lesson and alerts learners to key information and concepts.

At the end of this lesson, participants should be able to . . .

- practice the art of receiving help from a text as a vital part of identifying one's interest in the text

Lesson Body

Class Exercise

(35 minutes)

Who said this?

You may want to write this on the board.

Answer: Jesus said it to the religious leaders in Matthew 23 because they did not take advantage of the Scriptures they imposed on others.

"Do not do as they do, for they do not practice what they teach."

Personalize this from your own experience and home.

In our home we have a formal dining room. There is a special cupboard where our best dishes are displayed. The table is set with plates, spoons, knives, forks, glasses, and napkins. There is a decorative centerpiece in the middle of the table. We rarely eat in there, unless other people come to visit with us. When it's just our family at home, we eat in the kitchen.

In preaching, we are always preparing to serve other people spiritual food. It's sad that we set the table for others, but never sit down to feed ourselves. Today's lesson is about opening our hearts to the Scripture to let it speak to us. One writer calls it "pausing to let the text do me good."

Refer students to "Text Study" in the Student Handbook.

Read through the questions before having the class do the exercise.

Text Study

The following exercises will help you experience the gifts of the text intended for you:

- Underline the key ideas that stand out to you, then go back and ask why this is important to you.
- Where do you find yourself resisting this text? What part of the text do you want to avoid?
- Is there anything in the text that frightens you?
- What issues in your life are similar to the issue of the text?
- Why do you care about this text?
- What sounds like good news to you?
- What sounds like bad news to you?

Have a few students share their insights with the class.

Select one of the following texts and answer the above questions:

John 13:1-17

Psalm 51

Philippians 2:5-11

Luke 24:13-35

Lecture

(5 minutes)

Refer students to "Thoughts from Fred Craddock" in the Student Handbook.

It is impossible to separate who you are from what you do as a preacher. How does our own journey fit into our public preaching? Do we go into the pulpit every week and talk about ourselves? Let's hear Fred Craddock's opinion:

All preaching is to some extent self-disclosure by the preacher. This is not offered as a comment on the practice in some quarters of making the pulpit a confessional. . . . It is simply the truth about communication.

Pertaining to the minister's own faith journey, it is the reflection of many who have spent a lifetime in ministry that of all the exercises for keeping athletically fit one's Christian values, perspectives and faith, none excels that of preparing and delivering sermons.

. . . The preacher is expected to be a person of faith, passion, authority and grace. Faith makes one believable, and if the messenger is not believable, neither is the message. The absence of faith is almost impossible to disguise for any period of time. No one can increase the volume in the pulpit to such a level as to muffle the echo of lost convictions.

From Craddock, Preaching, (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1985), 23-24

When we open ourselves to a text and allow it to bring grace into our lives, the chances are we will have no problem recognizing how it will speak to others. The energy for preaching often comes from having news to share that we already know is effective to meet human need, because it has helped us. This is where passion comes from.

Lesson Close

(5 minutes)

Closing Thought

Read the following and discuss how this applies to preachers who are not personally involved in the text.

In Herman Melville's novel *White Jacket* one of the sailors becomes ill with severe stomach pains. Dr. Cuticle, the ship's surgeon, is delighted to have a patient with a challenge greater than rope-blistered hands. His diagnosis is appendicitis. He prepares the operating table, recruits shipmates to assist him, and goes to work operating. Dr. Cuticle is enthralled with the surgery. He cuts with precision, points out to the sailors the internal anatomy of the patient, marvels at the interior of the human body. Dr. Cuticle knows his medicine and is totally absorbed in his work. It is an impressive performance. But the attending sailors are not impressed. They are appalled. The poor patient, by the time he is stitched up, has been long dead on the table. Dr. Cuticle, enthusiastic in surgery, hadn't noticed that his patient stopped breathing.

Review

Look at the learner objectives for this lesson. Can you . . .

- practice the art of receiving help from a text as a vital part of identifying one's interest in the text?

Assign Homework

Have the students continue to work on the inductive study of Learning Activity 3 in the Syllabus

Read "Preaching from Within Our Own Hope," by Don Wardlaw. Be prepared to share in class what this article says to you about preaching. Resource 6-3.

Survey

Preaching requires that we know ourselves. Unless we are aware of the doubts, questions, and struggles going on inside us, we will tend to project these upon our congregation and preach at them. This is called shadow-side preaching. Fill out "Exegeting Yourself," Resource 6-4.

Journal Prompt

What is it like when God speaks to you through Scripture? When was the last time this happened? What did God say?

Preaching from Within Our Own Hope

Don M. Wardlaw, used by author's permission

Imagine a guide hired to lead an expedition through a dark forest, and then on up a mountain to its majestic peak. The guide deftly steers the party into the deep forest, past ferocious beasts, through infested underbrush, and alongside a treacherous bog. Then, to our shock, the guide suddenly bolts from the hikers and disappears into a thicket, leaving the party stranded in terror, with only a desperate longing for the clear air of the mountain heights far ahead and above.

At first glance we might assume the guide's strange and callous behavior unthinkable. Yet think again. That same disappearing act happens Sunday after Sunday in Christian sanctuaries. The great majority of us preachers set out in our sermons to guide congregations through dark forests of despair and then on up the majestic climbs of hope. But somewhere deep among the vines and shadows, beside the bog of human grief and loss, under the gaze of beasts of war and violence, we preachers often unwittingly abandon our people. I see this kind of fade away too often for comfort in my own sermons. I see it in the dozens of sermons I examine every year as a consultant with pastors and as a teacher at seminary. Whatever the differences in our sermons, I find one nagging constant, strong beginnings but flabby endings. We preachers most often begin strongly by skillfully guiding our hearers through the tangled thickets of their grief and rage to dark campsites where they bed down again with their fears and shudder at the calls of the wild in their hearts. And precisely at this moment where our hearers need us the most to lead them out of this wilderness to the high vista of hope, we frequently fade from view.

At this pivotal point in their journey, our people need to see images of the gospel of hope happening in the flesh, images such as an alcoholic by God's grace smashing her bottle of gin and reaching for the phone to call her sponsor in A.A., or an inventive band of Christians by God's transforming power orchestrating housing for the homeless. Such specific visions of human transformation are the drawing power from the mountain of hope that entices people out of their paralysis of despair. But, instead, what we too often give our people amid the dark forest are abstract treatises about hope. We shift gears from human drama to doctrine, from red-blooded struggle to sky-blue thinking. Don't get me wrong; statements in the reflective mode have a crucial place in preaching, particularly in introducing or summarizing controlling themes. But when at a time when our people most need concreteness we cloak ourselves with the cotton wool of abstractions, we in effect fade away into clouds of generalities that can only obscure the mountain of hope.

Why do we preachers often abscond into the mists at the point our people most need to taste and touch the hope in the gospel? One possible answer is that we are drawn to abstractions at the point where we lose a visceral link with what we preach. My own faith journey could be described as an attempt to connect with what I preach. When we don't live out of a vibrant sense of hope in our own flesh, we won't be prone to tune into it in anyone else's flesh. Hope might be happening all around us: when we see the woman next door receiving chemotherapy and going out to plant her garden; when we see Russian citizens defiantly toppling the statues of the founder of the KGB. But such signs can't dance as symbols before our eyes as if we don't have faith's eyes to see them, if we don't have hope-filled souls that can awake to human possibilities for wholeness all around us. Hence the awkward, intolerable feeling of trying to give to others what we don't own ourselves.

The extent to which we feel this vacuum, whether consciously or unconsciously, measures the extent to which we reach for abstractions to cover the void. To abstract anything is to release it from its earthly

moorings. "Abstract" means "to take from," to soar above ground. Majoring in abstractions in sermons is like riding a hot air (!) balloon high enough to see the whole forest of human struggle and despair. How many times have I talked in general about encounters with God rather than risk getting blown out of the saddle with St. Paul on the Damascus Road. From this safe, lofty vantage we may be working on the clinching section of Sunday's sermon on hope. We may be proud of the quotes from Tillich and Moltmann, and the analogies from a sermon service we plan to use to color our own broad insights. Up in our balloon we sail toward Sunday, once more with borrowed material to quell our anxiety about what to say. Yet, in marshalling all this generic information about hope, we may fail to see that we are, ironically, acting out our own despair. Surely general reflections supported with the wisdom of known experts can play an important role in our preaching by clarifying and lending authority to what we say. But when we most often find ourselves rifling our shelves and files for something to say *about* hope far more than plumb our souls for things to share *from* hope, then we preach mainly from despair. Couching hope chiefly in abstractions in our preaching is tantamount to deserting our people. In taking flight from our people's entangled trail, we may be using generalities to muffle the sound of their pain. Even more, our attraction to abstractions at this moment may be our final defense against coming to grips with our own repressed anxiety, rage, and grief that are aroused by our people's lostness. With abstractions we desert ourselves; not just our people.

Our flight from darkness into the comfort of generics can also keep a congregation paralyzed. "Intellect by itself moves nothing," said Aristotle. What gives people the resolve to rise from the edge of the bog, slay the beast, and move out of the forest is the hope they can experience in and through us. Not borrowed hope, but relational hope that rings true with our own reality. Our people need to know that we, too, experience what it is like to be lost in the woods, to be immobilized by our rage over injustice, our fears for our health, and our depression over sagging self-esteem. Above all, our congregations need to sense that we have glimpsed the way out and have even scouted some paths up the mount of hope. "Preachers err," said Joseph Campbell, "by trying to talk people into belief; better they reveal the radiance of their own discovery" (*The Power of Myth*, xvi).

We preach hope effectively to the extent that we recollect the experiential ground of our own hope. That discovery begins as we fall into step behind Jesus on His way to the final showdown in Jerusalem. If hope places its bets on the future, we see hope in Jesus' eyes and gait as He is drawn by His own sense of completion toward the city set on a hill. We see the horizon beyond Jerusalem that will light up with the glow of resurrection the first Easter morning radiating an irresistible pull the closer Jesus gets to Jerusalem's gates on Palm Sunday. We see with Matthew at the end of his Gospel the picture of the risen Christ in command atop a mountain of Galilee, offering a charge to his disciples. Through this image we see Christ as our mountain of hope, drawing us forth from the fearful forest.

But that magnetic pull toward wholeness also drew Jesus down through the dark wood of Gethsemane and onto the terrible timber at Calvary. Easter horizons necessarily have crosses etched against them. At night in the garden we watch Jesus sweat blood in an immense struggle with His humanity over the price to be paid for wholeness. Under a midnight sky on a Friday afternoon we stand at the foot of the Cross and shudder at the excruciating death He embraces as prelude to fullness. He gives himself to the beast in the shadowy forest.

To follow Jesus in this path of suffering and glory is to pattern paradigms of hope in our personal corporate consciousness. It means opening ourselves to God's future for us, to a mountain up ahead whose living Christ draws us toward a union with the self and society we were meant to be. As individuals it means sensing a pull toward a resurrection horizon in self-understanding and self-acceptance we previously never dreamed was up ahead; ease from obsessive striving to impress; release from a shame-based fixation with duty; relief from a censorious spirit. As the church, it means answering a call from the mountain ahead that draws our faithful company toward an experience of authentic community we never before saw on the horizon: a place where we can lay down our burdens, find strength to suffer for peace and justice, and be nourished by pulpit and table.

But the Christ pattern in our lives not only pulls us toward wholeness but also of necessity leads us down through the dread forests of our own Gethsemanes and Golgothas. Here we come face-to-face with all our griefs and losses, at last, in Edward Whitmont's words "unbarring the door to the stranger." None of us asks for this darkness. Usually foolish indiscretion, abiding depression, sudden bereavement, colossal failure, or life-threatening illness stretches us out on our cross as we moan in apparent abandonment.

Few congregations ask for the wilderness either. Usually we are exiled there by our triumphalism, worship of clay idols, sell-out to Caesar, and internal power struggles. But by God's grace, mentors, counselors, pastors, and friends take up with us as wise guides amid our tangled wood. We learn to trust them in ways we do not trust ourselves because we sense they know the darkness. They help us hone in on the healing, transforming power that draws us as individual and corporate souls toward Christ's mount of wholeness. In that ambience of hope, born of exquisite daily deaths, we find ourselves preaching vividly and passionately about life beyond the forest on yonder slopes. With the writer to the Hebrews, "we who have fled for refuge . . . have strong encouragement to seize the hope set before us." In learning within ourselves to trust the vision of Christ on the mountain, we are learning to trust ourselves as guides on the hope-filled way.

EXEGETING YOURSELF

1. What kind of family did I come from?
2. How was authority used in my family?
3. In what socioeconomic class am I most at home?
4. What do I like to read?
5. What music do I prefer?
6. What are my favorite forms of entertainment?
7. Who do I most easily relate to?
8. What kind of people do I avoid?
9. What is my personality type?
10. What am I afraid of?
11. How do I view the Bible?

Lesson 7—Consulting the Scholars

Lesson Introduction

(30 minutes)

Accountability

*The reading assignment, *Preaching from Within Our Own Hope*, is worthy of class discussion. Read the article and be prepared to summarize it in your own words.*

You should give personal illustrations of how you found hope in the hope of others who dared to preach from the center of their experience with God.

Allow the class to share their thoughts from the article.

Again, this is similar to preaching. A sermon is testimony from the heart that rises out of the scripture. Allow plenty of class time for this. Depending on class size, this could take up to an hour.

Return and collect homework.

Learner Objectives

State learner objectives with the students. Stating the objectives for the learners serves as an advanced organizer for the lesson and alerts learners to key information and concepts.

At the end of this lesson, participants should be able to . . .

- experience the process of studying a text by using available resources

Lesson Body

Class Exercise

(15 minutes)

Discuss this before moving to introduce the topic "Consulting the Scholars."

Preaching is more than plotting the story, using modern images, and telling a congregation what a text means to us.

Most pastors begin sermon preparation by going to commentary resources. When this happens, we eliminate our senses, experiences, and memories. We also locate the meaning of the text in our intellect rather than in our life-journey. Consulting the scholars is step 6 of 10.

In leading this class you will want to research availability of commentaries and direct the class in their use. Also be aware of any web sites that could be useful.

Spend time working on a plan for building a preaching library. Be contextual. Do not talk about resources that are impossible for class members to acquire or books not in print in their language.

If you are near a theological school, take a tour of the library and point out useful materials. Do not assume the class already knows about all available resources.

In this step, the preacher becomes a student of the text and a student of history regarding the text. The primary source for this study is a commentary. Availability will vary from place to place. Among the most useful in print today are *Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching*, *Word Biblical Commentary*, and *The Interpreter's Bible*.

Lecture

(10 minutes)

Studying a Text

Refer students to Resource 7-1.

1. Understand the book of the Bible from which the text comes. Before proceeding to study the text itself, read the overview of the book in which this text is found.
2. What kind of literature is this? Story? Psalm? Proverb? Letter? History? Prophecy? Two outstanding resources for this are Gordon Fee, *Reading the Bible for All Its Worth*, and Tom Long, *Preaching the Literary Forms*. These two books will instruct you in how to preach a parable, a psalm, a narrative, a letter, etc.
3. Select a Bible translation by reading several different versions of the Bible. The most reliable are the *New Revised Standard Version* and the *New International Version*.
4. Read commentaries, word studies, and lectionary resources. One excellent resource is *The Preacher's Magazine*, available in many areas to Nazarene pastors.
5. Read other sermons and articles on the text you are preparing to preach from. Recommended authors: Barbara Brown Taylor, Bob Benson, Fredrick Buechner, Kathleen Norris. Each of these has multiple books of sermons and stories.

The goal of this lesson is arriving at something to say. You want to identify the primary activity of God in this text. You will discover that some of your original thoughts about the text were wrong. This is useful in preaching. If you made initial wrong assumptions about the text, is it not likely that others did the same?

Fred Craddock calls this the first “ah-ha moment.” This is arriving at the point where you have something to say. In one brief sentence you can declare the meaning of the text.

Class Exercise

(30 minutes)

Find a common resource available to the students you are teaching. From this commentary, review the general theme of the book of Scripture your text comes from. This is found in the introduction of the commentary. You will want to use one of the texts the class already has worked with, for example, John 13:1-17.

Guide the students through this summary. Next, lecture from the appropriate chapter of the Fee or Long book on how to preach from this literary genre of Scripture. Then guide them through your work on the text itself in the commentary. Demonstrate how to use this material from the same resources they will be using for their sermons. If nothing is available, you should consider copying material in a useful format and distributing it to the class, for example, the introduction to the book of the Bible as found in the Reflecting God Bible available through Nazarene Publishing House.

Group Work

When the students are in their groups, assign each group a different scripture passage on which to formulate a sermon outline. It would be helpful if their passage is one they have worked on in an exercise previously. Or it could be one of the heart cries and God’s answer that their group had worked with.

Lesson Close

(5 minutes)

Closing Thought

This discussion will allow you to direct students to good theologians and writers.

List the writers on a marker board or overhead.

The people of God have lived from these texts for centuries. They have recorded their findings in books. In studying the works of these faithful scholars, we are honoring the past. We are choosing teachers to help us prepare to preach. This is an important choice.

Who are the writers you trust enough to allow into your study?

Review

Review learner objectives with the students.

Look at the learner objectives for this lesson. Did you . . .

- experience the process of studying a text by using available resources?

Assign Homework

Students should continue working on Learning Activity 3 in the Syllabus.

Lesson 8—Exegeting the Congregation

Lesson Introduction

(45 minutes)

Accountability

Return and collect homework.

Orientation

You have reached an important point in sermon preparation—you have something to say. But this is not the place to begin writing the sermon. The goal of the preacher is not to get the sermon to your lips, but to get it to the ears of the people who will hear the sermon.

In the same way attention was given to the text, it now will be given to the people who will hear the sermon. Exegesis is the technical term for studying Scripture. In this lesson, we will focus on exegesis of the congregation. Good preaching means not only knowing how to get it “said” but also knowing how to get it “heard.”

Learner Objectives

State learner objectives for this lesson. Stating the objectives for the learners serves as an advanced organizer for the lesson and alerts learners to key information and concepts.

At the end of this lesson, participants should be able to . . .

- ask questions about the people who will hear the sermon
- keep them in mind while creating the sermon

Lesson Body

Class Exercise

(40 minutes)

Refer students to "Exegeting Your People" in the Student Handbook.

Ask them to answer the questions now.

Allow each person two minutes to stand and describe the setting in which they will preach. If there are class members who are not assigned to a preaching role, have them assume they are preaching to the congregation they regularly attend. It is important that you NOT allow someone to generalize this skill. They need to exegete a specific, known congregation.

Imagine you are preaching from Luke 24:13-35. Using the questions in "Exegeting Your People," describe the people who will hear your sermon.

During the week of normal sermon preparation, there are other exercises for knowing how your listeners might hear a particular text.

Refer students to "Exercises for Knowing your Listeners" in the Student Handbook.

1. List the names of 20 listeners and ask what the text might mean to them.
2. Play a game called "what is it like to be _____." Fill in the blank with common situations. Examples: 5 years old and starting school, 13 with pimples, engaged, losing your job, in a difficult marriage. By identifying places where people often find themselves, you can ask how people in these situations might hear this text.
3. Gather a group of people and ask them about their hopes, fears, hurts, and beliefs. Keep the text in the back of your mind as you listen to people. Connect the dots between the activity of God in the text and the trouble of these people.
4. How will children hear this text? Youth? Older adults?

The skill you are developing is the ability to interpret your culture. You can become a pastor who moves through life inquisitively. Ask questions like these:

- What is sin doing to people?
- What are the most popular songs, movies, TV shows? What are they about?
- What issues are unique to this town?
- What are the leading news stories?

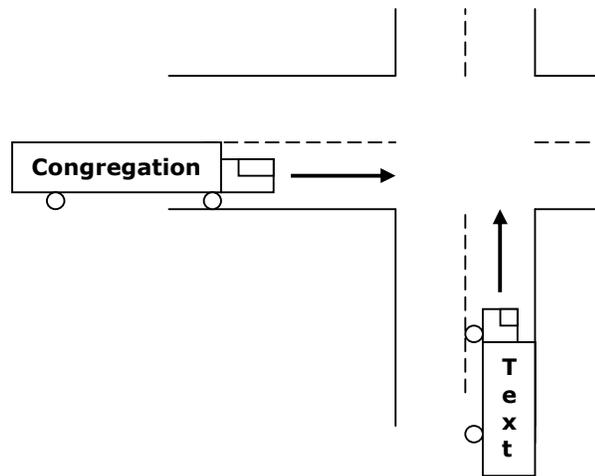
Lesson Close

(5 minutes)

Closing Thought

In the sermon, your role as a preacher is to create a collision at the intersection of text and congregation. The encounter between text and people must be unavoidable.

Refer students to "Intersecting the Text and Congregation" in the Student Handbook.



Another way to view this is an illustration from electricity. When we bring a positive wire and a negative wire together, it creates a spark. We must bring the world of the text and the world of the congregation close enough to create a spark.

Review

Review the learning objectives with the students.

Look at the learner objectives for this lesson. Can you . . .

- ask questions about the people who will hear the sermon?
- keep them in mind while creating the sermon?

Assign Homework

Direct students to the Learning Activity 5 in the Syllabus.

Learning Activity 5: Write a one to two page description of your audience based on the questions under "Exegeting your Congregation" in Lesson 10 of the Student Handbook. (10%)

Lesson 9—Selecting the Form of the Sermon

Lesson Introduction

(15 minutes)

Accountability

Ask two to three students to share their one page paper.

Have students turn in their work on Learning Activity 3 (the inductive study for their sermon). Review it to make sure they understand and are on the right track.

Return and collect homework.

Orientation

What vehicle do you take when you want to go somewhere?

Allow the class to wrestle with the response before giving any clarification to your question. You will get answers ranging from bicycle to jet plane.

Of course, the answer is, "It depends on where you want to go." If you want to go to the corner market, you may walk or ride a bike. But if you want to go to the other side of the globe, walking and biking are out of the question.

This lesson is about selecting the right sermon form to allow the text/Spirit to go where it wishes to go and do what it wishes to do. We will explore four basic sermon forms and illustrate them. Then each of you will select one of these and use it in the delivery of a sermon in Lesson 12.

Learner Objectives

State the learner objectives for the students. Stating the objectives for the learners serves as an advanced organizer for the lesson and alerts learners to key information and concepts.

At the end of this lesson, participants should be able to . . .

- become acquainted with some of the basic sermon forms
- illustrate how a text could take shape with each form

Lesson Body

Lecture: Different Kinds of Preaching

(20 minutes)

Refer students to "Different Kinds of Preaching" in the Student Handbook.

Allow the students to discuss their understanding of what these different kinds of preaching mean and suggest to them for their ministry.

The preacher is the person called of God to stand between two worlds. One hand is clasped in the hand of the Master, the Messiah, the Savior, and the other hand is lovingly beckoning to fellow members of the human race to be reconciled to God and to live the holy life by grace. And so as a pastor, there are different kinds of preaching to minister to your people. Some of these types of preaching are teaching, evangelistic, nurturing/feeding, and admonishing.

Lecture: Four Sermon Forms

(50 minutes)

Different sermon forms may provide helpful means for these different types of preaching.

You are going to take the class through the four sermon forms. They will preach their sermon from their study of Luke 24.

You will want to use a different text for illustration. I would suggest Exodus 3:1-12. You should move through the preparation steps in Lessons 2-8 and be prepared to share your own personal discoveries in this text.

You will share how you sensed it, the questions you asked of the text, the trouble you found, the image you placed in the center of a page, how this text helped you, what you learned from the commentaries that led you to a summary statement, and the exegesis of the congregation to which you would preach this text. You are modeling the skills in front of the class. For illustration's sake, let's say your summary statement for this text is "Only God can tell us what our life is to be about." From this vantage point you will demonstrate the four sermon forms.

Running the Story

Refer students to "Four Sermon Forms" in the Student Handbook.

Remind the class of the "Plot Line Diagram" in Lesson 4.

You will want to review the lecture notes from Lesson 4, "7 helps for preaching from a narrative plot."

This sermon form uses the plot line that already exists in the story itself. It follows the pattern of normal world>hint of trouble>trouble arrives>we learn something/we get help>our world is changed. We become storytellers who use our imagination to fill in the details of the senses. Our study of the text helps us describe the geographical and cultural setting of the biblical world.

A sermon that runs the story of Exodus 3 might go like this:

Normal world—move 1

Describe the flock-tending world of Moses. Fill out the character—how big is he—who is his wife? How does he feel about doing a job for which he is overqualified?—he has a palace education, etc.

It was an ordinary day on the backside of Midian . . .

Hint of trouble—move 2

Moses finds himself thinking about the people he left behind in Egypt when he fled. He can see them in the mud pits in Goshen. But this is a troubling memory. He tried to do something once, but he ended up killing an Egyptian. His reminiscing is interrupted by a strange sight. A bush is on fire, but the leaves are as green as a grasshopper. They aren't burning. He goes over to see.

Trouble arrives—move 3

Stay in this mind-set and explore how Moses feels about this interruption from God.

God wants Moses to see and hear what He sees and hears. This will send Moses back to the place from which he ran. It will place him in jeopardy and at risk. His life is about to become very complicated. Sometimes, following God does not make life simpler.

We get help—move 4

Look ahead in the text for some of this.

Talk about the God who never asks us to do something without divine resources.

God promises to be with Moses. He will not have to do this alone. God even tells Moses what success looks like: standing with the liberated people at this mountain to worship God.

Our world is changed—move 5

Moses now knows what his life is to be about. He has direction for tomorrow. He can live into the promise of God, assured that his future matters to God. After multiple excuses and arguments, Moses says yes. And aren't we glad? Which brings us to ask, "What is God calling each of us to do with our lives?"

This five-move plot runs the story as we find it. There are three variations on this sermon form.

1. Running the story in biblical times. This is the example just given. Moses is in his time, culture, and context.
2. Running the story in contemporary times. This is easily accomplished by bringing Moses into your world. His name is Mo. He has a Ph.D. but works a minimum wage job at the local school. He sees a bush out behind the school . . . you get the idea.
3. Running the story with windows. This can be done with either biblical or contemporary times. Imagine yourself inside the "house" of the sermon form. While inside the house, you walk to a window and look outside. You are taking a brief step away from what you are talking about to mention something of importance.

Example: in move 2 above (hint of trouble), you step out of the story and say, "Sometimes our memory reminds us of who we are. There are those times in our lives when something happened, like with Moses confronting that Egyptian over an injustice to an Israelite, and we know there was more to that than we understood at the moment. Could it be that hints of our calling in life are imbedded in our past experiences? That reminds me of a time when I was five years old and we played church. I always insisted on being the preacher. Was that God at work?" These window observations can come from several places—your work on letting the text help you, the stories of people in your congregation, the image page, songs, books, history, etc.

The windows need to be brief. Don't leave the main plot line very long or people will forget the story you are in. Make sure you don't have more window than wall in the sermon. The walls of the story support the window, not the reverse. One of the best places for windows is in the final move. In this example, you might name people in the congregation who have done what Moses did: the couple who brought elderly parents into their home to care for them, the busy executive who volunteered to teach junior boys, the widow who helps single mothers care for their children.

Stitching Stories

Have you ever watched someone stitch a patchwork quilt? They connect small pieces together to make a whole. In this sermon form, the preacher uses similar size stories with a common thread, and connects them. The beginner should aim for three or four stories, one of which is the text told as story.

Move 1—the story of Nelson Mandella being called by God to work for freedom in South Africa.

Move 2—the story of Moses called by God to liberate the slaves in Egypt.

Move 3—the story of a local high school teacher in your town who sensed the call of God to influence a generation held in the grip of a godless world.

Move 4—what is your story? Where is God seeking to set people free today? How does this involve you?

These stitched stories can come from children's tales, Bible characters, the community, national history, a popular book, or something that happened to you.

Four Pages of the Sermon

Paul Scott Wilson has written a book by this title and given this form popularity. This sermon has four moves and is balanced in the middle with move one-two on one side of the seesaw, and move three-four on the other side. The form name is not intended to suggest that the sermon have four literal pages, but rather that there are four distinct moves.

Page 1—sin/trouble in the text

Page 2—sin/trouble in the world

Page 3—grace in the text

Page 4—grace in the world

Using our illustration from Exodus 3, the sermon might look like this:

Move 1—The people of God down in Goshen crying out under their harsh treatment. They have no power and there is no one who can deliver them.

Move 2—There are people all over our town crying out to God. Can you hear them? Listen. A lonely woman in a rest home. A junior high kid thinking about suicide. A single mom left with the burden of being parent and provider. A young man at the local bar who numbs his anxiety with alcohol at the end of every day.

Move 3—God appears to a man named Moses and calls him to invest his life in setting these people free. God will empower this man and do mighty deeds through him in the interest of the slaves. God cares about His creatures in bondage.

Move 4—God appears to people like us and calls us to invest our lives in setting these people free. We cannot do it in our own strength, but God can do it through us.

Three-Point Sermon

This is a classic form and still useful for preachers today. However, we must be careful lest this form strip stories of their mystery and power. Do not go looking for three points in a text as raw material for a sermon. Let the text suggest how it wishes to be preached. One of the best three-point forms is one called sociology, psychology, and theology.

Give several illustrations

Move 1: Sociology—describe the world as it is. “Have you ever noticed people everywhere are trying to figure out what they want to be when they grow up? They have no idea what their life in this world is to be about.” From this you survey the world around you and point out the anxious wrestling of people to figure this out.

Move 2: Psychology—“Why do you think we have such a hard time knowing what we are to do with our lives? Could it be . . . ?” From here you go in search of dead-end answers. Suggest solutions that won’t work. These are called straw men. You set them up with the intention of knocking them down.

Move 3: Theology—“I wonder if God has anything to say about this? Well, I remember this man named Moses who was frittering his life away on the backside of nowhere. Maybe his story can help us. Let me tell it to you.”

You should be prepared to play with these four forms in class. Allow students to suggest components for these sermons.

Place students in discussion groups and have them share what form they lean toward.

Now that we have explored four sermon forms, which form do you think your sermon on Luke 24 might take? Why?

Group Work

Have the student work in their groups again on developing another sermon outline on a different passage and with a different theme than the previous time. (Lesson 9)

The Sermon Purpose Statement

by Don Wardlaw, used by the author's permission

The purpose statement declares your strategy of persuasion for the particular preaching situation in light of your learning goals for the Preaching Ministry Project. The purpose statement suggests why and how you intend to ask your people to travel with you in the sermon.

The purpose statement reflects the dynamics of each preaching situation. Every preaching moment, whether or not you are with the same congregation, calls for a different purpose and statement. The purpose statement consists of three stylized parts:

1. SITUATION an introductory clause that indicates the situation of your congregation that elicits this sermon at this time
example: "In view of the Elmview congregation's recent vote to lower their giving to benevolence causes . . ."
2. GOAL a simple statement that suggests what you want the hearers to experience, where you hope the congregation will "travel" experientially during the sermon. Generally, sermons do not dispense information for the hearers to recall; they are not cognitive lessons. Rather, the hearing of a sermon is a lived experience that touches the hearer in ways other than the intellectual.
example: ". . . I want the people to experience the satisfaction of sacrificial giving for worthy causes . . ."
3. MEANS A qualifying phrase or clause that pictures how or by what particular rhetorical means you will lead your hearers into this experience in order to be persuasive; the means for enabling the experience of the sermon to happen.
example: ". . . by means of a series of vignettes showing how sacrificial giving has strengthened a congregation's faith."

Hence, a sermon purpose statement: "In view of the Elmview congregation's recent vote to lower their giving to benevolence causes, I want the people to experience the satisfaction of sacrificial giving for worthy causes, by means of a series of vignettes showing how sacrificial giving has strengthened a congregation's faith."

Consider, for instance, a sermon on inner peace preached before a parish composed of seminarians. Assume the gist of your sermon is:

Our hope for inner peace lies in surrendering to God's grace rather than trying to earn God's forgiveness.

Your sensitivity to particular needs at Hoping and Praying Seminary now enables you to shape your purpose statement.

(situation) in view of the number of the Hoping and Praying community that seem self-conscious about their goodness and so tense about their well-being. (goal) I want my H and P hearers to experience salvation as a gift rather than as something earned, (means) by means of a reenactment of what happened in theology class one day.

Suppose, however, your sermon on peace is to be preached before an affluent congregation in the established suburb of Oak Hills. You note that many of the congregation plod incessantly either on the business or social treadmill, trying to establish and maintain some sense of belonging and self-worth in the community. Again, the theme is the same as above. But this time your purpose could read:

(situation) In view of apparent hunger in Oak Hills for a sense of well-being that neither successful careers nor social status seems to satisfy, (goal) I want my Oak Hills hearers to experience a deep sense of well-being as God's gift and not as a result of their own attainment, (means) by means of dramatizing several different types of Oak Hills residents.

Once more, you anticipate preaching this sermon before a congregation of elderly people in a changing neighborhood. These people are the few who either chose or were forced to remain with this local parish when the majority of the members fled to the suburbs. Now you see your hearers preoccupied with inflation, crime in the streets, and the loneliness that belongs to the forgotten elderly. Your purpose statement:

(situation) In view of my elderly congregation's fear that they have little strength to provide for and protect themselves, (goal) I want to enable them to experience possibilities for opening themselves to God's provision and protection amid an alien environment, (means) by means of three stories depicting how senior citizens banded together to bring about peace in their changing neighborhood and to discover the gift of peace in themselves.

Group Work

In groups develop a sermon outline based upon a particular passage and theme of the sermon. Include a statement purpose for this sermon that comes out of the sermon theme.

Lesson Close

(5 minutes)

Review

Review learner objectives with the students.

Look at the learner objectives for this lesson. Did you . . .

- become acquainted with some of the basic sermon forms?
- illustrate how a text could take shape with each form?

Assign Homework

Students should now complete Learning Activity 3 so that they can begin writing the sermon.

Read Resource "The Sermon Purpose Statement" in the Student Handbook.

Using the above article for guidance, write a summary of intent for your sermon. Your written summary of intent is due at the beginning of Lesson 9.

In Lesson 10 we will listen to two sermons and discuss their structure and form. Read "Good Preaching Needs Good Structure," in the Student Handbook, and be prepared to analyze these sermons in light of the principles presented here.

Good Preaching Needs Good Structure

By Wes Tracy

Good sermon structure does not guarantee good preaching, but poor structure nullifies good preaching. It is important to know how the culture or generation to which you preach makes meaning, how it expresses and receives communication.

In the current North American and Asian cultures, for example, narrative style and inductive structure seem to be most effective. Try to incorporate these principles of induction into your sermon preparation.

Principle No.1: Inductive preaching helps people listen longer and better, promoting interest, involvement, and suspense by strategically delaying conclusions.

Induction is that form of logical discourse that establishes the general by way of the specific. That is, the inductive argument moves from the specific to the general. The proofs, the evidences, are revealed one step at a time. As the series of examples, questions, cases, and illustrations unfolds, a pattern develops, and then the general truth testified to by real-life specifics is established.

In an inductive sermon the preacher may explore "answers" or ideas suggested by the newspaper; a bumper sticker; an overheard conversation, a poem, an incident in Mr. Jones's family. All of these put together may show a pattern of God's providence in human life. After establishing the principle (and only after establishing the principle) by real-life specifics, the preacher then anchors the specifics on a rock of Biblical truth by citing a Scripture about the very hairs of our heads being numbered and the God who notices every sparrow that falls. Enhanced by existential proofs, the text then carries a ton of truth home to the mind and heart. Though inductive logic is not as airtight as deduction's syllogisms, it can be even more powerful.

But we all have been taught to preach deductively. We announce the general truth and try to apply it to life's specifics. This is valid. Deduction has a good record, but it is less effective today than before.

Next Sunday the typical pastor will step to the pulpit, announce his or her conclusions, and then try to get the people to pay attention while the preacher explains why his dogmatic affirmations are true. They probably are true. He has struggled with them all week in prayer and study. But instead of sharing the steps he went through to arrive at his conclusions, the preacher simply announces them. Usually the conclusion is announced in the title of the sermon and, if not there, at least the introduction tells all. To announce the conclusions in advance conspires against interest and attention, and if these are lost, the power of the gospel is frittered away.

In a sermon I heard recently, a preacher who ought to know better gave us his three points in the first minute of the sermon. They were all conclusions:

- I. All Persons Are Sinners
- II. God Hates Sin
- III. God Loves Sinners

What was left to tell? Why listen further? We know how the story ends. To announce your deductive conclusions ahead of time is like printing the solution to a mystery on page 1 of a novel. Who will read the other 300 pages?

More of the nature and strengths of induction is seen in these pairs:

Deduction announces truth—Induction demonstrates or dramatizes truth.

Deduction produces little suspense—Induction heightens suspense.

Deduction is frequently abstract—Induction is usually concrete.

Deduction is authoritative—induction is democratic.

Deduction paints with a large brush—Induction paints with a fine brush.

Deduction does the thinking for the hearer—Induction involves the hearer in the thought process.

Deduction starts with the conclusion—Induction delays the conclusion until the end.

Deduction tends to drive—Induction leads.

Deduction is that old saw, "Tell them what you are going to tell them, tell them, and then tell them what you told them." Nothing could be more fatal to a sermon. Induction, on the other hand, is a finely crafted narrative as carefully tuned, as strongly plotted, and as powerful as the story of the Son of God born in a donkey stall.

Instead of the 19th century style of sermon that had "three deductive points and a poem," the notes to an inductive sermon will be more like a sketch of a story with the sermon moving from one scene to another with the new scene unfolding naturally out of the former one.

Principle No.2: Induction suits the new human sensorium.

When Christianity chewed up the Roman Empire, turning the world upside down with evangelistic fervor; the human sensorium was tuned to oral communication. It was a world controlled by classical rhetoric. Public address was the way of politics, of the judicial world, of democracy, of worship, and of evangelism.

In that time when the human sensorium (the way people perceived, understood, and communicated) focused primarily on aural (hearing) and oral (speaking) communication, the Early Church preachers changed the world. Many of the best: Jerome, Chrysostom, Augustine, and apparently St. Paul, were trained in classical rhetorical theory—that force which swayed the destiny of souls and nations. This is still the starting place for preachers. If the classic canons—*inventio*, *dispositio*, *elecutio*, and *pronuntiatio*—are all Greek to you, much study awaits you like a father awaiting a son who is already four hours late.

With the invention of alphabetic script, movable type, and the printing press, that human sensorium changed. It became print-oriented. The written word became superior to the spoken word. If you wanted to say something important, you were told to "put it in writing." Preaching fell on hard times as sermons became literary documents drearily read on Sunday and rushed off to the printer's on Monday. Bibliolators made the Bible into a "paper pope." Books and magazines were regarded as having more significance than a spoken sermon.

The print-oriented way of perceiving prevailed for centuries, but the print-oriented sensorium is gone. Oh, some of us are old enough to still be geared to print, but at least two generations of Americans now have an aural/oral/visual orientation. In this sense at least we are closer to the classical sensorium than before. This is good news for preaching, but there is one key difference. The classical oral/aural orientation was plugged into deductive thinking; today's new human sensorium is inductively oriented. Therefore, the preacher who would reach the minds and hearts of the modern generation must master inductive technique.

Two things have shaped the aural/oral/visual way of perceiving, understanding, and communicating. One is the televised image. The visual, visceral, aural, emotional, oral are combined in powerful experiences. Television's mode is inductive. Most of the commercials and, almost without exception, every adventure story, romance tale, and mystery show is inductively plotted. A story, a moral, sometimes a truth is dramatized (demonstrated) before the viewer's eyes. The viewers are not just told—they are shown. Only a deductive person will vote the "News Break" as his favorite program.

Typically, the people to whom we preach watch television as many hours each week as they work on their lobs. Every 30 or 60 minutes they are led to inductive conclusions.

The second major shaper of the new aural/oral sensorium is progressive education. Here again at least two generations have been educated by a system that deliberately aims at teaching students how to

think, not what to think. Today's younger generations have been schooled by way of problem solving, values clarification, learn-by-doing exercises, study teams, critical inquiry, open-ended questions, and the like. All these have one thing in common—they are inductive devices. "A person who has been trained in this way is no more likely," says Ralph Lewis, "to let someone else chew... his Sunday dinner for him than he is to allow the preacher to do his thinking for him in the Sunday sermon" (*Inductive Preaching* Cross Way Books, 1983,p.46). The preacher may think with him (induction) not for him (deduction).

In their study time, work time, and leisure time, Americans live inductively. Fred B. Craddock says that the preacher who preaches only with neatly subdivided deductive syllogism today commits an immense crime against the normal currents of life (*As One Without Authority*, Abingdon, 1983, p.63).

The print-oriented past was the time of the deductively airtight lecture-sermon. Today induction must be considered, for has not Christ charged us to do whatever it takes to reach the people for whom He died?

So I must learn to use the tools and ingredients of induction. They are story, narrative, analogy, metaphor, parable, dialogue, experiences, and questions. But that is not so bad—that is the Bible way. The Bible is full of such devices. Many of the stories of Genesis are inductively plotted, the Psalms are filled with analogy and metaphor, the prophets tell stories about rotten fruit, plumb lines, and symbolic marriages gone bad and the like. Jesus used questions to preach and teach. He used dialogue. John alone preserves seven interviews of Jesus. And Jesus raised the parable to new heights. Perhaps induction is the Bible way, God's way. The Incarnation itself is inductive in nature.

Principle No. 3: Induction increases the preacher's authority by decreasing it.

Today's inductive person is part of a democracy. Authoritarian approaches will be squarely challenged. Today's inductive thinker will be led but not pushed. Today, the preacher who comes out flinging "musts," "oughts," "shoulds," and "have tos" will be resisted or ignored. Induction is the method of common ground, vulnerability, and "let's," not "you." So by taking a less authoritarian stance the inductive preacher increases his authority—and the gospel's.

I have four more principles for which I do not have enough space. The other principles are:

Principle 4. Induction has a flesh-and blood reality about it because of its specificity and concreteness (the opposites of generality and abstraction).

Principle 5. Induction can make deduction more effective.

Principle 6. Induction cannot carry' the whole preaching task alone anymore than deduction can.

Principle 7. Inductive discourse may sound less scholarly, less weighty than deductive discourse, but this is frequently an Illusion.

If all this has "induced" you to desire further exploration of inductive preaching check out these books:

As One Without Authority, by Fred B. Craddock (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 3rd ed, 1983).

The Homiletical Plot, by Eugene L. Lowry (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1980).

Inductive Preaching, by Ralph L. Lewis (Westchester; III.: Crossway Books, 1983).

What's A Nice God Like You Doing in a Place Like This, by Wesley Tracy (Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City, 1990). This book contains nine sermons which are narrative in style and deductive in structure.

Lesson 10—Analyzing Sermon Form

Material and Room Preparation

Sermon CD #1 and Sermon CD #2 are required for this lesson. This lesson is optional if there is no CD player available.

Arrive early enough that you can setup the classroom before students arrive. You will need a portable CD player with adequate amplification so all students can hear the sample sermons clearly.

Materials Needed:

- Sermon CD #1 (containing two sample sermons)
- Sermon CD #2 (containing two additional sermons)

Prepare an introduction for the two sermons you will play in class. Keep the introduction short. Students will need the preacher's name, sermon title, scripture text, location, and approximate size of the intended congregation.

Prepare notes on how you will lead the class discussion and analysis of the two sermons. Remember to guide students to answer the questions in the Listening Guide. Avoid the tendency to give the answers you have written.

Lesson Introduction

(10 minutes)

Accountability

Give students an opportunity to respond. Continue to solicit oral responses until most of the principles have been stated or no more are suggested. Writing the principles on an overhead or white-board as they are given will help generate additional recall.

Refer to "Good Preaching Needs Good Structure." in the Student Handbook.

Without opening your Student Handbook, let's see if we can reconstruct the seven principles of inductive preaching presented in "Good Preaching Needs Good Structure."

Who remembers one of the principles?

Good. What was another of the principles?

Let's compare the list we created with the list in the handbook. How does our list compare with the original?

Do you have any questions about the principles stated here?

Orientation

Today we will listen to two sermons and examine the sermon form of each. Each sermon has elements of the plot line and forms discussed in the last lesson, but each may not fall neatly into a single category.

Learner Objectives

At the end of this lesson, participants should be able to

- Recognize different sermon forms represented in sample sermons
- Detect the moves and plot lines in a sermon

Lesson Body

Hearing the Sermon

(25 minutes)

Refer to the "Listening Guide" in the Student Handbook.

Give your brief, prepared introduction.

Play one of the sermons you have previewed.

Open your Student Guides to the "Listening Guide" in Lesson 12. As you listen to the following sermon, write down the sermon moves or outline the preacher uses. Following this first sermon we will discuss the moves you have identified and complete the rest of the "Listening Guide" together.

This sermon is titled . . .

The preacher is . . .

The congregation where this sermon was preached is in . . .

The church has a (small, medium, large) congregation in (a rural, urban, metropolitan) area in (region or country).

Analyzing the Sermon

(20 minutes)

Use your notes from previewing this sermon to guide students through Resource 10-1.

Pay particular attention to the sermon moves (outline) and its effectiveness in communicating the message.

Hearing the Sermon

(25 minutes)

Refer to "Listening Guide" (copy 2) in the student guide.

Give your brief, prepared introduction.

Play one of the sermons you have previewed.

For this sermon, use the "Listening Guide" (copy 2). As you listen, write down the sermon moves or outline.

This sermon is titled . . .

The preacher is . . .

The congregation where this sermon was preached is in . . .

The church has a (small, medium, large) congregation in (a rural, urban, metropolitan) area in (region or country).

Lesson Close

(3 minutes)

Review

Review the learner objectives with the students.

Look at the learner objectives for this lesson. Can you . . .

- recognize different sermon forms represented in sample sermons?
- detect the moves and plot lines in a sermon?

Look Ahead

In the next lesson we will examine the steps for writing your sermon.

Assign Homework

Complete your written summary of intent for your sermon.

Journal Prompt

How does the preacher's personality influence his or her preferred sermon form? What form do you find the most effective? How do you select a form for your sermons?

Punctuate the Finish

Which of the sermons spoke most clearly to you? Was it a function of form (how it was presented) or content (what was presented)?

As preachers of the word, we can learn several different forms for sermons. Scripture itself seems to suggest certain forms for each text. It is best to choose one or two forms at a time and work on these until we become comfortable with them.

Lesson 11—Writing the Sermon and Preparing to Preach

Lesson Introduction

(30 minutes)

Accountability

Have the students share with another classmate their summary statement of intent for their sermons.

Return and collect homework.

Orientation

Give each member of the class ten (10) Popsicle sticks (or drinking straws).

You are involving them in shaping something that up until now exists only in their imagination. Move from exhibit to exhibit and have the class guess what form is suggested by the arrangement of the sticks.

Arrange the sticks or straws in a form that indicates the sermon form you have chosen for your text.

This activity shows that in writing a sermon, we bring structure to ideas.

Learner Objectives

State the learner objectives for this lesson.

At the end of this lesson, participants should be able to . . .

- understand the process for writing the sermon
- define six qualities of a good sermon
- identify characteristics of effective speaking

Lesson Body

Lecture

(2 minutes)

The human body hangs on a skeleton. We would take a very different shape if our skeletal structure were different. The skeleton is not the visible part of a human, but without it, humans could not stand up and function. The sermon has a sort of skeleton structure suggested by the form.

- The narrative sermon follows a plot line.
- Stitched stories have an order of appearance.
- Four pages have . . . well, four pages.
- Three points have . . . you guessed it, three points.

Each of these skeletal parts may have smaller parts. For instance, in the first move/skeletal segment of a "four page" sermon, you may be working on trouble in the text. In this section you may suggest the travelers on the Emmaus Road have:

- Lost hope
- Forgotten what Jesus had said
- Failed to believe the Scriptures

The beginning of writing the sermon is to create a skeletal structure that will guide the direction of your writing. This sounds a lot like an outline. In many ways, it is. But outlines tend to become speeches with points instead of stories with plots. And the Bible is not a collection of texts with points, but rather a collection of stories that tell us who we are. Think more in line with the spine of a story rather than an outline with points and subpoints.

One way to do this is storyboarding. Create your sermon in cartoon characters. Draw one page per move and see your sermon as a series of pictures rather than a page with words. Some preachers have learned to preach from sketches rather than manuscripts. They tell people what they see rather than read them what they wrote.

Class Exercise

(45 minutes)

Create the skeleton of your sermon by summarizing each move on the Popsicle stick. Write a few words that suggest the function of this part. Note: you may have some sub-sticks. Then try storyboarding your sermon, with one drawing per move. (A move is any part of a narrative plot line, any story to be stitched, any of the four moves in a "four page" sermon, or any point in a three-point sermon.)

Once the structure is clear, you can proceed to put muscle and skin on the bones. This is the creative writing exercise that allows you to choose words to say what you see.

Refer students to "Six Qualities of a Good Sermon" in the Student Handbook.

Six qualities of a good sermon

Fred Craddock suggests that a good sermon has six qualities:

- **Unity**—it is specific, clear, and simple—it hangs together as one message
- **Memory**—it knows who is listening to this sermon
- **Recognition**—it says what we already know
- **Identification**—it draws the listeners into the plot/story—it causes them to identify with the characters
- **Anticipation**—it sustains interest and delays resolution
- **Intimacy**—it cares, loves, respects, and trusts

Soon, you will begin preaching 20-minute sermons. The class will provide feedback by answering questions that indicate the presence or absence of these six qualities. The questions are:

Refer students to "Sermon Presentation Questions" in the Student Handbook.

1. Did the sermon have unity? What unifying theme held it together?
2. How did the sermon connect with the existing memory of the congregation?
3. What did the sermon say that you already knew? What did the sermon say that was new to you?
4. Where did you identify with the sermon? At what point did you connect?
5. Where was the suspense? Did the preacher keep your interest? How?
6. How did the preacher establish a sense of intimacy and nearness with the listeners?

The goal is not to write a sermon, but to preach it. When writing shuts down the creative process before Sunday arrives, it has done a disservice to the task of preaching. Writing also causes one to think writing rather than speaking. Be sure to write for speaking rather than for reading. This may mean written sentences are incomplete, or that there are drawn stick figures on some pages reminding you to tell a story from memory. Writing needs to be in the service of preaching. To put something on the page and then have to retranslate it into the air in a different form is one wasted move.

From Craddock, *Preaching*, 189-93

This is not to say that writing is unnecessary. It is very necessary. But it must not hinder the process of telling people what you have seen. Writing serves preaching in the following ways:

Refer students to "Purpose of Writing a Sermon" in the Student Handbook.

1. It keeps the mind in focus and does not allow the preacher to wander.
2. It orders the material in some sequence and creates movement.
3. It allows you to look at each move and work on that move separately.
4. You can craft any sections of the sermon that need careful attention due to the possibility of misunderstanding.

You can rearrange the pieces should a different sermon form suggest itself in the process of writing.

Allow the remaining time of this 45-minute segment for the students to work.

One further note before you begin to write: each text we preach from is "doing something." Some texts encourage, others teach, others call for confession, etc. Be sure you are in the same mood as the text when you write the sermon. If the text is "loving people," be loving as you write.

Lecture

(10 minutes)

Effective and Ineffective Public Speaking

Refer students to Resource 11-4.

As you teach these traits and characteristics, you should play with the class by demonstrating them in your lecture. For instance, speak boringly or rattle the keys in your pocket while you are talking. They will understand these habits better if they can see them demonstrated rather than hear a lecture about them.

Allen Monroe has discovered six characteristics of an ineffective speaker:

- Monotonous voice
- Stiffness
- Lack of eye contact
- Fidgeting

- Lack of enthusiasm
- Weak voice

The five characteristics of an effective speaker are:

- Direct eye contact
- Alertness
- Enthusiasm
- Pleasant voice
- Physical activity

In using the body to speak, there are six effective traits:

- Be relaxed
- Be definite
- Be appropriate
- Be yourself
- Use variety
- Adapt your movement to the audience

The ineffective use of the body is seen in these traits:

- Random movement
- Nervous pacing
- Shifting weight
- Adjusting clothes
- Fiddling with keys, wallet, money, glasses, etc.

Being nervous at the thought of public speaking is common. The best ways to control nervousness are slowing the rate of your speech, rotating your shoulders to remove stress before you begin, taking deep breaths, and stretching your upper body. Nervousness is a physical reaction that can be helped by consciously slowing down and relaxing your body.

Some of the common voice problems are listed below with suggestions for improvement:

- Too high pitch—slow down
- Too low pitch—speed up
- Monotone—intentionally vary the pitch
- Too harsh/tense—breathe more and pause longer
- Boring—increase your rate and pitch
- Nervousness—pause, breathe deeply, stretch muscles
- Mumbling—slow down, be intentional

Lesson Close

(3 minutes)

Review

Review learner objectives with the students.

Look at the learner objectives for this lesson. Can you . . .

- understand the process of writing the sermon?
- define six qualities of a good sermon?
- identify characteristics of effective speaking?

Assign Homework

Students are ready to write their sermons. Direct students to Learner Activity 6 in the Syllabus and have them do this assignment.

Read *The Worship Plot* (if it is available).

- Apply the principles to the sermon you are writing.
- Create a worship service for the sermon you are preparing.
- Be prepared to give an oral summation of *The Worship Plot*.

Begin writing your sermon as in Learning Activity 6 in the Syllabus:

Learning Activity 6: Write a holiness sermon according to #2 at the bottom of the assignment "Preparing a Sermon" at the end of Lesson 5 in the Student Handbook. This sermon should be based on the inductive Bible study that you did for Learning Activity # 4 and some additional study in a commentary and Bible dictionary. And it should include at least two of the illustrations that you put together in Learning Activity #9. This should be an evangelistic holiness sermon intended to bring the people to the response of seeking the experience of entire sanctification. You will hand in this written sermon for a grade. (15 % of the final grade)

Journal Prompt

- What would listeners say about you as a preacher?

Lesson 12—The Place of the Sermon in Worship

Lesson Introduction

(2 minutes)

Accountability

Return and collect homework.

Orientation

In the same way biblical narratives have a plot, worship has a plot. We are going somewhere and doing something together.

Learner Objectives

At the end of this lesson, participants should be able to

- present a worship structure that flows out of the text
- suggest a way of going about planning a worship service

Lesson Body

Class Discussion

(30 minutes)

If students have read THE WORSHIP PLOT, ask for volunteers (or assign students) to review each of the five moves in the worship plot. They should stand in front of the class to make their summary presentations. If the students have not read THE WORSHIP PLOT, the teacher should be prepared to fill in any key thoughts missing. This is also a good time to coach their speaking habits. Note the characteristics of effective and ineffective speaking in their presentations. To correct them at this point will be easier than stopping them mid-sermon to point out bad habits.

Five moves in the worship plot

1. Entrance—locating us in the presence of God
2. The Bad News—how sin separates us from God and destroys us
3. The Good News—preaching the gospel
4. Response of the People—Use methods like the altar, Communion, testimony, deeds, offering
5. Benediction and Blessing—sending people into the world under the blessing of God

Class Exercise

(30 minutes)

Divide into groups and have them create a service for the sermon they are writing. Place them in "same text" groups so they can help each other with creative ideas around the text. All worship forms will not look the same for each text, but there may be similarities.

Give the groups at least 30 minutes. Walk around and listen to their work. Provide hymnals, drama resource books, and other available worship resources. Knowing their texts in advance will allow the teacher to have suggestions for the services. As each group finishes its work, ask them to write it on a marker board for all to see.

Sermon Evaluation

Preacher _____

Sermon Text _____

Title _____

- 1. What sermon form was used?**
- 2. What unifying theme held the sermon together?**
- 3. At what point did you connect?**
- 4. When did you sense that the preacher "cared"?**
- 5. How was your interest sustained?**
- 6. Of the following communication issues, check any that are areas for attention:**
 - Lack of eye contact**
 - Fidgety, distracting movement**
 - No voice inflection, monotonous tone**
 - Nervousness**
 - Speaks too fast**
 - Speaks too slow**
 - Shifting weight back and forth**
 - Fiddling with keys, money, etc.**
 - Too loud**
 - Too soft**
- 7. How were you helped?**

Evaluator: _____

Order of Service

Constant Components of Worship

(Below is an example of worship experience in the Church of the Nazarene)

Call to Worship – Scripture or song

Invocation Prayer

Worship Through Congregational Singing
(including Praise & Worship Choruses)

Theme Presentation (briefly describes the theme or main idea intended for the service)

Welcome Chorus/Welcome Fellowship
(Choose one of three or four choruses for this purpose)

1st Scripture Presentation (Old Testament)

Preparation for Prayer through Worshipful Music or a Prayer Chorus

Pastoral Prayer (the pastor lifting his people to God in prayer)

Hymn or Chorale

Creed, Responsive Reading, or Liturgy
(May be meaningfully selected or written to address the Theme of the Service)

2nd Scripture Presentation (New Testament)

Tithes and Offerings

Special Music Presentation

Message/Sermon

Moments of Response

- Response to the call to the Kingdom (Call to Salvation and/or Sanctification)
- Response to the call to Discipleship & the Kingdom life (Service)

Benediction Prayer

Share the Grace

Lesson Close

(10 minutes)

Review

Review learner objectives with the students.

Look at the learner objectives for this lesson. Can you . . .

- present a worship structure that flows out of the text?
- suggest a way of going about planning a worship service?

Look Ahead

For each student, this process will require 28-33 minutes. Two students per hour is a good pace.

You will need one copy of the "Sermon Evaluation" for each student per sermon. If there are 10 people preaching, you will need 100 copies. Be sure to fill one out for yourself. Be sure to make enough copies. On the day of preaching, the student will preach. Immediately upon completion of the sermon, the class will fill out the evaluation form. Students are learning to look for certain skills, habits, and patterns in preaching. This is a vital learning exercise.

If there are 10 students in your class, it will take at least five hours to hear everyone preach once. Do not eliminate this exercise. The only way to learn to preach is to preach. The goal is not to know about preaching, but to preach.

If time permits or there is student interest, you can assign a second sermon and repeat the process. In this second sermon, you will be looking for improvement in areas noted during evaluation of the first sermon.

In the next session, you begin preaching. You have a time limit of 15-20 minutes. This time limit will be strictly followed to allow everyone enough time to preach. Test your sermon for length before preaching it in class. After each sermon we will allow three minutes for the class to write an evaluation of the sermon, and 10 minutes for discussion/feedback from class and teacher to the preacher. We will not begin to discuss the sermon before everyone has completed his or her form. Use the Sermon Evaluation form for student feedback.

We will meet as many times as needed to allow everyone to preach.

Assign Homework

Direct students to Learning Activity 8 in the Syllabus.

Students should now complete their sermons and prepare to preach them.

Learning Activity 8: Put together an Order of Worship for the service in which you will preach your sermon. The various components of the service should reflect and contribute to the theme of the sermon — the theme of the sermon should flow through each component in the whole service. Write out each of the three prayers; give chorus or song titles and scripture references for the readings and for the sermon. Write at least three main points of your sermon. (10%)

Complete and prepare to preach your sermon.

Journal Prompt

- How will you go about planning a worship service?

Individual Work

During the remaining class time students may work on your sermon. The teacher will be available to answer any questions or concerns students may have.

Lesson 13—Preaching

Lesson Introduction

(5 minutes)

Accountability

Return all homework.

Orientation

Instructions for this session have already been given in the Lesson Close of Lesson 11. This part of the class could take several sessions to complete. It is the most essential session because students are applying all they have learned in other sessions. Be aware of teaching moments to remind the class of specific skills and issues.

Do you have any questions about the procedure or format we will be using for your sermons?

Learner Objectives

At the end of this lesson, participants should have . . .

- successfully presented a sermon

Lesson Body

Preaching

(80 minutes)

Ask for volunteers, assign the order or draw names out of a hat for the presentation of the sermons.

Be sure to have plenty of copies of Resource 11-1.

Lesson Close

(5 minutes)

Look Ahead

It is important to end the class on a note of celebration and affirmation. This is a perfect opportunity for the teacher to offer a service of encouragement and blessing. Create it as a model of everything you have taught.

You may wish to share Communion during the final gathering. End the class by lifting your hands and pronouncing a blessing on their preaching.

Assign Homework

Commit to continual improvement in the preaching of the Word.

Read *Making Space for Grace* by Don Wardlaw. The story is a great reminder of our call to offer grace each time we step into a pulpit.

Journal Prompt

- What frightens you about preaching in front of your peers?

Making Space for Grace

By Don M. Wardlaw, McCormick Theological Seminary, Chicago, IL 60637
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Possibly the most formidable challenge in preaching is in discovering how to make space for grace in our sermons. Perhaps we can get some clues about how better to open our sermons to grace by first hearing a story about life with Aunt Grace.

Aunt Grace, a widow for 20 years, finally admitted at 84 that she was too old to manage the farm. So she willed her lovely, old, Victorian farmhouse and the 200 acres to her only living heir, her nephew Sam. Her will provided Sam and his family the house only if he took occupancy immediately. She would build her own efficiency apartment next to the garage so Sam, his wife, Laura, and son, Jimmy, would have the run of the house as their own.

The deal seemed a winner for both parties. Aunt Grace could live out her days on the farm with the privacy she desired, while enjoying the comfort and support of family on the land. Sam and his family could take possession of a lovely home and farm at no cost to themselves. The agreement also carried the intuitive assumption that while Grace would honor the privacy of Sam's family, she, nevertheless, was welcome as family in this house that she had lovingly maintained for over 50 years.

The new arrangement proved a special boon to 10-year-old Jimmy. When Sam and Laura lived in town, son Jimmy heretofore had gone home from school to an empty house, since his mom, Laura, worked till 5:00. Now that they lived in Aunt Grace's house in the country, each afternoon Jimmy skipped from the school bus straight to Aunt Grace's apartment where she always smothered him with a big hug and put warm, freshly baked bread before him. He loved her lilting laugh that made her portly tummy jiggle. He loved the stories she told. He especially loved how she listened to his stories as if he were the most special person in the world.

Aunt Grace seemed to Jimmy to light up the old house when she dropped in. She'd sit down at the piano in the living room and play the old-time songs one after another and then sing along, sounds that somehow made Jimmy feel more solid inside. She'd eat Sunday dinner and linger over apple pie talking with Laura about canning and recipes. She pops in the kitchen with some more canned vegetables or sits with coffee at the breakfast table and talks for a while.

Jimmy sensed a difference between his parents and Aunt Grace. Sam and Laura's breakfast table was different from Grace's table. Laura usually listened to Jimmy as if waiting for him to stop talking so she could remind him to straighten his room, or wash his hands, or act more mature in church next Sunday. Laura seemed to Jimmy a nervous bundle of "shoulds" and "oughts." Sam listened to Jimmy with glassy eyes, waiting for a break in the conversation to insert one of his usual motivational pep talks about trying harder, whether playing ball or doing homework. These speeches usually began with, "Jimmy, when I was your age . . ." Jimmy was attracted to Aunt Grace because she came to him with a different spirit. Oh she had her standards aplenty, but she didn't breathe all over him with them. She delighted in him, giving him space to make of it what he would. He'd straighten his room and make his bed for Grace in a minute if he knew that's what she wanted.

As time went on there seemed less space for Grace in the house. Laura ostensibly always had so many "shoulds" and "oughts" to do, cleaning, bills, errands, that she made it subtly clear that she didn't have much space in her life for Grace to hang around. Sam, the minute he got home, was out to the barn to tend to the feed, or check out that broken part on the tractor, thus signaling to Grace when she peeked into the kitchen that she shouldn't get in the way of his program of progress. The Aunt Grace whose ringing laughter used to fill the den, whose stories of early farm days used to bless Sunday dinner, who used to sit in Jimmy's room and hear his secrets, that Grace was now more an absence than a presence. She had gotten the message that she wasn't wanted. Now and then she'd pop into the kitchen for a minute just to maintain contact with a cheery hello. But for the

most part Aunt Grace stayed out back in her apartment minding her business, living in deep sadness that she didn't seem welcome in her own house, the one she freely gave away.

A year to two later, as Grace grew more distant and feeble, Jimmy was old enough to begin to understand some things. His parents weren't so much busy as they were nervous when Aunt Grace came into the kitchen. It seemed to Jimmy that Sam and Laura didn't know what to do with Aunt Grace. They felt awkward in her presence. They didn't have her spontaneity and delight. They couldn't get with people in the natural ways Grace does. Though Jimmy couldn't put it neatly in words, he knew in his soul that his folks had crowded Aunt Grace out of her own house. They had filled the place with a censorious and laborious spirit. Grace's music, the food, delight, and stories were no longer there. Only an occasional knock on the kitchen door in the back of the house, a brief welcome and nod, and that was it. The wallpaper was never more faded and the fireplace never more cold.

Thus the challenge in our preaching is to make space for grace in the house of our sermons. Grace lived in that house long before we were born. We have been called simply to testify to the Christ-spirit that pervades and defines the walls of this sermon. We are called in this sermon house to retell the old stories of grace, to recapture the lilt of grace's laughter, to offer her courage that can keep hope alive. We are called in the house of this sermon to honor every Jimmy or Jane's story out there in the pew as if each person were the most important person in the world. We are asked as preachers to take our people on a tour of grace's house so they can absorb into their souls the sense of reconciling acceptance there, and catch a vision of the difference grace can make in us as individuals and institutions.

Nor is this preaching merely whistling in the dark. In grace's name we stand in pulpits and look racism, poverty, sexism, and war gods in the eye, and call out their demons one by one. In grace's power we help our people find the courage to name the devils involved in our self-seeking, aggression, anxiety, fear and self-loathing. Grace is a gutsy lady. She enables us to name the demons, but even more importantly she envisions for us and celebrates every personal victory over fear or greed, and every breakthrough of a Berlin Wall. Preaching grace means taking people to her house to show them how she lives there and the changes her spirit makes there. In her house we hear the sound of her singing and come to her table for the warm bread she has for us there.

But, to repeat my opening words, possibly the most formidable challenge in preaching is finding space for grace in our sermons.

How often are you and I in our preaching tempted to feature more of the spirit of Sam and Laura's table than that of Grace's table? I examine dozens of parish ministers' sermons every year. The majority of these preachers, however inadvertently, demand good behavior more than declare saving grace. A random check of radio and television sermons, homilies, or books of "best sermons of the year" regularly reveals preaching that weighs us down with demands more than buoys us up with grace. Preaching that defies grace could be called hortatory preaching. The word "hortatory" means to incite, to stir up, to prod, a kind of preaching that majors in imperatives. The hortatory preacher is the Laura in us who takes to the pulpit as a venous bundle of "shoulds" and "oughts," pushing all the people out there to love the crab next door, or demanding more honesty with income taxes and more truthfulness in marriage, or insisting that the hearers come down on God's side regarding issues over abortion or human rights. The hortatory preacher is the Sam in us who has a hundred different ways to insist that the people try harder, whether in their prayer life, or their stewardship, or their struggles with addictions.

Some might be wondering at this moment, however, "What's wrong with putting some heat on the folks from the pulpit, even in the name of grace?" Don't we all need a kick in the pants or a rap on the knuckles pretty regularly if we are to stay on the straight and narrow? You just can't hand everyone a warm loaf of Aunt Grace's bread and expect them automatically to be transformed into loving saints and social crusaders. Besides (goes the argument) people need to be shown what to do. Look where permissiveness has gotten us in our society. We can't forget Dietrich Bonhoeffer's

words when he said, "Cheap grace has been the ruin of more Christians than any command of works." And further (continues the argument), what's so objectionable about a bunch of imperatives when we see Scripture is full of them? Even Jesus said we "ought" to tithe, "ought" to wash one another's feet, "ought" to lay down our lives for one another. Jesus was full of commands: "Love thy neighbor"; "Seek first God's kingdom"; "Judge not." In short, some stern warnings and demands in grace's house never hurt anybody.

As formidable an argument as this is for Sam and Laura's way in the house of preaching, the hortatory sermon, one that majors in demands, is vulnerable on four counts. First, the hortatory sermon suggests an understanding of both hearer and preacher that is limited psychologically. To tell people what they ought to do and expect them to do it suggests a simplistic understanding of the workings of the human will. You and I don't do anything just because we are told we ought to. The hortatory sermon is also limited psychologically because in prescribing behavior for other people we presume to have a working knowledge of the blueprint of transformation the Holy Spirit has for our people. Even Jesus said that only God knows the times and the seasons of transformation.

If hortatory preaching is limited psychologically, it is, second, imprisoned culturally. From the cradle to the grave we are all immersed in a cacophony of hortatory rhetoric. If we are used to strings of imperatives from the breakfast table, the athletic field, and the Rotary Club, why not the pulpit? If in one sales convention after another we keep bringing in the Lee Iacoccas and Mike Ditkas to insist with Aunt Grace's nephew Sam that we try harder, then why not expect the same from the pulpit? No wonder people expect us to preach to them as if they were the little engine who could. The only problem is such preaching saturates our hearers' minds with a works-consciousness. It deludes our people into feeling that well-being is a human achievement rather than a gift. It's devoid of Aunt Grace's transforming spirit.

Hortatory preaching founders, third, because it is questionable ethically. When we take advantage of someone, we've got an ethical problem. Hortatory preaching takes advantage of people by demanding of them what they are not equipped to deliver. It's like when you fell to the ground in pain and I come over to help, and I stand on your chest, demanding that you get up and dance. Hortatory sermons major in demands without dwelling on the source of power that enables one to live up to that demand. I remember hearing two women coming out of a fashionable church in Richmond, VA, having heard yet one more week the eloquent demands of their preacher. One said, "He keeps insisting on what we ought to do, but he never tells us how." When we demand that people drink the living water, but don't show them where it is or how it vitalizes, we've got an ethical problem.

Hortatory preaching runs aground, finally, because it is simplistic theologically. The theological problem with hortatory preaching turns on the relation between the imperative and the indicative. The term "indicative" refers to the given of God's grace, supremely revealed in Jesus Christ and imputed by the Holy Spirit, a grace that works within us and among us to make both our personal and corporate lives truly human. Scripture constantly holds its imperatives in a close, vital interrelation with its indicatives. "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling," demands St. Paul, but in the next breath he shores up the imperative with a great indicative, "for God is at work in you both to will and work God's good pleasure." Or, take the imperative with the writer to the Hebrews, "Let us run with perseverance the race that is set before us"; notice the enabling indicative that comes right behind it, "Looking to Jesus the pioneer and perfecter of our faith." The writer is saying that the presence of Jesus enables us to run with perseverance. Every imperative in Scripture has an indicative lurking somewhere nearby that makes it possible to carry out that imperative. When you and I drift into hortatory preaching, we are offering naked imperatives, that is, imperatives without the presence of empowering indicatives. In those moments we lose touch with the fact that what drives Jimmy to want to clean up his room and make his bed is the great indicative presence of Aunt Grace in his life.

If hortatory preaching is a half a loaf, and a stale one at that, why do you and I get trapped serving this kind of bread? Well, for one, anxiety can make hortatory preachers of us all. When we grow

anxious about the lagging parish program, or our own leadership abilities, or our own sense of authority, how tempting to begin majoring in imperatives in hopes of cajoling the congregation into appearing dedicated. Or, in those moments of heart-burnout, when our own sense of commitment is at stake, how easy it is to nervously push out people with imperatives to live the kind of dedicated faith that we cannot admit is not presently within us.

Such hortatory sermons have a telling shape. Most begin with what I call the “ain’t it awful” section, a cataloguing of what’s wrong with the world, usually occupying up to 75-80% of the sermon. Then comes the answer to the problem, now offered in a flurry of imperatives in the few minutes that remain.

It sounds like the ring of Laura’s voice in Aunt Grace’s house. The wallpaper’s faded and the ashes in the fireplace are cold.

Still, why do we do it? What’s behind the anxiety that drives it? Could it be that we, in all Kingdom busyness to run Laura’s errands and to fix Sam’s tractor, have had less and less space for grace in the house of our being? In allowing ourselves to get so caught up in the imperatives of the parish, how easy to lose touch with grace’s warm bread, her songs and lilting laughter, her nourishing presence. How easy, ironically, to be out of touch with the lady who gave us this house in the first place, and who called us to tell others what she is about.

How, then, to make space for grace in our sermons? How do we interplay indicative and imperative in such a way in the sermon that the hearers experience grace? In keeping with my subject I cannot so much prescribe as I can describe how grace comes into the house. Preaching grace starts with a fundamental orientation before we ever sit down to prepare that sermon. It means a life-stance where we are always leaving the door ajar for grace to make herself at home in all the rooms of our being. It means focusing our vision to see how many faces she wore in our household just yesterday; maybe the smile of a clerk amid a hurried errand; maybe the glance of understanding from a counselor friend; maybe the look of forgiveness from a spouse who suffered our insensitivity yet one more time. Grace-filled preaching comes from a grace-filled house where daily she gives us varied gifts of acceptance that move us along a little further toward wholeness. In prayer, meditation, musing, contemplation, focusing, dreaming, we constantly cultivate a consciousness that leaves the door open for grace to come in and celebrate God’s gift in Christ—that we are somebody!

Preaching grace means, further, coming to the house of the scriptural text, and leaving the door open there to meet grace and to talk with her. So often when we are under the pressure of old hortatory habits or of the demands of others where we are losing control, we seize the passage by the throat in order to control it, explain it, master it.

We come to our study desk in a panic to squeeze out of the passage a worthy theme sentence so we can get on with the business of writing a sermon and surviving for one more week the rigors of preaching. With the nervous hands we take down a handful of commentaries from the shelves, pleading with them to deliver us from the valley of the shadow of “no ideas.” Yet, in so doing, we close off possibilities for an engagement with grace there in the passage. As Fred Craddock so wisely says, “Who is going to venture a thought or an interpretation when at the very same desk are six internationally known Bible scholars?” (*Preaching*, p. 106).

But look what can happen when we take a deep breath and begin to believe that our best moments in sermon preparation come when we trust ourselves enough to begin the sermon process by swapping stories with Grace. We ease back into a comfortable position, as if we had come home from school, to let Grace talk with us. On the ground of this passage Grace welcomes us so she can tell us her story . . . an old, old story of Jesus and His love. And then Grace asks us to tell her our story through this text. She asks you and me through the biblical text, “O Prodigal, what’s it like in your far country?” or, “O wounded Traveler, how does it feel for a Samaritan to gather you in his arms and care for you?” or, “O fearful Jonah, tell me of your surprise when even the belly of the whale could not hide you from God.”

When you find yourself in that text, then that text finds itself in you. Now the door is open for Grace to enter the house of the sermon. And we're not talking about a few moments in the kitchen at the back of the sermon, patronizing Grace. We're not thinking about simply allowing Grace and word or two at the end on the way out the back door. Rather, we are talking about giving Grace the space to do her thing. This means turning the corner on "ain't it awful" at least halfway through the sermon in order to picture the possibilities of Grace at work in the households of the hearers' lives. This means spending time describing rather than prescribing new life happening in the streets and alleyways of your people's lives. This means, to put it in Karl Barth's terminology—showing people ways Grace turns demand into permission.

With this kind of preaching the imperative in the presence of the gracious indicative becomes the possibility. We major in picturing those possibilities, in engraving upon the consciousness of people in the pews portraits and images of what it looks and feels like for a people to live in the chemistry of God's transforming acceptance.

We don't just talk about such transformation, we enable people to experience it in the sermon. Through the major part of the sermon, you come home with your hearers from the far country. You've wakened on that vomit-stained mattress in that cold-water walkup in Greenwich Village, stared at that naked lightbulb and been surprised by a resolve rising within you to head home to the waiting Parent. Back home in Paducah the waiting Father strolls to the edge of the hill after dinner each evening and longs to see you coming up the trail from the highway down below. Each evening as she looks out the window at the sinking sun, the waiting Mother holds in her heart the deepest yearning to take you back into the comfort of her arms. In that hovel in Greenwich Village, you put on the only pair of jeans you have left, scrape up enough cash to buy the bus ticket home, and you are on your way. As the bus winds down through Philly and Cincinnati, and on into Kentucky, you discover someone a stop or two back has left a legal pad on the shelf above you. You take a stub of a pencil, draw a line down the middle of the page, and begin listing reasons on the left why they will reject you at the door, and reasons on the right why they might still take you in. With an equal number of reasons in each column your gut tightens at the thought of climbing that hill to the old homestead.

And now your bus carries you around that long gentle curve on the highway outside Paducah where you will get off at the Amoco station at the foot of the trail that leads up to the home place. You catch your breath and step down on the gravel as the bus roars off, leaving you lost in a cloud of dust. You feel momentarily paralyzed in your desire to return. But before you can clear your eyes, you are encircled and held tightly by Mama's arms. You don't need to open your eyes to see who it is. You know who it is. You know those tears that co-mingle on your cheek with hers.

And before you can blurt out how unworthy you have been, you realize that you left that legal pad on the bus. But never mind, we're going to have a party. You were lost, and now you're found.

Now that will preach! And so you preach!

Appendix A

Preparing a Sermon

As the minister combines the skills of this course with the questions of the inductive method of Bible study learned in Interpreting Scripture (Hermeneutics), these study questions provide a sequence for helping to prepare a sermon. For explanation of questions of the inductive method, see Interpreting Scripture (Hermeneutics), "Inductive Method".

Exegete (study) the passage(s) as background study in preparation for writing a sermon. Follow these steps in the process of exegesis of the passage assigned to you (write a **short** answer for each question):

1. Listen to the Scripture. What about the background and broader context of the sermon passage:
 - A. What section of the Bible does the book belong to (e.g. Gospels, Prophets, etc)?
 - B. Who is the author?
 - C. Who is this Scripture passage talking to?
 - D. What is the approximate time period in which this passage was written?
 - E. What is the particular historical situation of that period; political leadership and political developments of that time?
 - F. What type of spoken form is this book of the Bible?
 - G. What type of spoken form is this passage within this book of the Bible (if different)?
 - H. What is the function of this passage in the book? – introduction, summary, greeting/salutation, one of several statement of equal importance in the book, etc.?
 - I. What is the relationship of this passage to the passages that come before it and that follow it?
 - J. What did this passage mean to the original hearers? How did they feel and think about it?
 - K. Does the text contain references to particular cultural customs of that period?
 - L. What were the religious practices or beliefs of the people being addressed?
2. Ask questions of the Scripture text. Read the text of the passage several times (at least 10). Listen to the text. Meditate on the passage, ponder it, **soak** it into your mind and heart. As you read the passage answer these questions – write a **short** answer to each question:
 - 1) What is the good news here?
 - 2) What is the bad news? Look for trouble – where do you first 'smell' trouble?
 - 3) How many places can you stand in this passage? How many different vantage points do you find? How many characters are in it, receiving, or involved in this passage?
 - 4) What is God doing here?
 - 5) What are humans doing here?

3. Look for trouble in the passage or story.
 - A. Diagram the flow of the plot line.
 - B. Start the sermon with the tension of the story – trouble is early in the plot, not late.
 - C. How is the trouble resolved? Good preaching moves to grace and hope that is celebrated!

4. Identify the image, incident, or issue – create an image page.
 - A. What is the “feel” or atmosphere of this passage – give one word descriptions such as “hate”, “love”, “action”, etc.
 - B. What are the key words and phrases in the passage? – list them. What “picture” do they paint? – briefly describe it.
 - C. What are the main idea(s) of this passage? How is it pictured?

5. What are the major theological theme(s) in the passage?
 - A. What does this passage say about sin, rebellion, or spiritual failure?
 - B. What does this passage say about Christ?
 - C. What are the names of God in this passage?
 - D. What timeless truth flows out of these major theological themes?
 - E. What timeless truth was intended to communicate to the ancient listeners?
 - F. What timeless truth should be communicated to your congregation?

6. Pause to let the text speak to you for personal preparation.
 - A. Underline the key ideas that stand out to you, then go back and ask **why** this is important to **you**.
 - B. Where do you find yourself resisting this text? What part of the text do you want to avoid?
 - C. Is there anything in the text that frightens you?
 - D. What issues in your life are similar to the issue of the text?
 - E. Why do you care about this text?
 - F. What sounds like good news to you?
 - G. What sounds like bad news to you?

7. Consult the scholars – use whatever other study materials you have available to you.

8. Study your congregation and build the hermeneutical bridge – connect the ancient biblical world to the contemporary scene.

9. Determine what sermon form will best fit for your sermon.

10. Apply the timeless truths of the passage to your congregation in a carefully crafted sermon. Write out a sermon in full enough form that you can preach it in your local church.

Appendix B

Bible Storying Can Provide a Springboard for Preaching

Lesson Introduction

(5 Minutes)

Accountability

Hand out returned homework

Orientation

Bible Storying can serve to help study a Scripture passage in preparation for preaching, and can also become a resource for worship services.

Learner Objectives

At the end of this lesson, participants should be able to . . .

- Craft a Bible Storying session (Introduction, Story, and Discussion Questions).
- Use Bible stories as a springboard for sermon preparation.

Lesson Body

Lecture: What is Chronological Bible Storying All About?

(20 Minutes)

What is Chronological Bible Storying (CBS)?

Chronological Bible Storying is a systematic way to present God's Word to a group of people over time, so that they can come to have a good grasp of how God thinks and of what is important to God about redemption for all people. This systematic way of teaching/learning God's Word actually gives people their "Oral Bible". This means that all people at any time and anywhere in the world can learn God's Word well and hide it in their hearts by this means.

So, Chronological Bible Storying is a specific system and way of using Bible stories for teaching God's Word in church planting. Bible Storying in this way can be used as a "stand alone" in Bible Storying sessions. And Bible Storying can also be used as a foundation for preparing and preaching your sermon on Sunday morning. It simply is a specific way of teaching God's Word to the people.

Why do Chronological Bible Storying?

Story telling is the best way to learn. Everyone loves a story. Jesus knew this, and continually used this method of teaching – He was the model storyteller. And stories are easy to tell, easy to understand, and easy to remember. Anyone can tell a story!

Every culture has its stories and oral literature, and they become the main way that children, youth and adults are trained in the traditions of a society. Stories are the main way that people communicate with each other. And so, stories have shaped our worldview – how we look at our world or what is real to us. They shape our beliefs or what is true for us. They shape our values of what we consider good or best. They shape our behaviour or what we think is how we should act.

Every culture uses stories to teach their children from generation to generation about what is real, what their beliefs are, what they should value, and how they should act. It is also true that the culture of God's Kingdom can be taught very effectively by this same means. Through Bible stories, any group of people can learn how God thinks about what is real, and about the beliefs, values and behaviour that are acceptable in His Kingdom culture.

Stories help people understand new ideas. They help them picture in their minds things they have never actually seen before, but a story can actually create that picture in their imagination. And so stories help people understand God's culture and to think how God thinks. Stories even have the power to change how we view our world, and to even change our beliefs, values and behaviour. That means that stories have power to change the world we live in and make it better.

How much more do the stories from God's Word have the power to change how we think, what we value, and how we live! Because God has promised that His Word is powerful to do this. And because the Holy Spirit gives people the inner conviction of the truth found in the stories and uses His Word in the transformation of lives.

Bible stories help God's people to avoid syncretism. This means that people learn how God thinks, and how they should not mix up all together different kinds of religious beliefs and practices that are not according to God's ways. Bible stories help people keep true to what God teaches are right beliefs and practices.

And Bible Storying helps the church to reach the most people quickly. Since stories are easy to tell and easy to understand, anyone can do it. And there is virtually no cost to tell a story. Through Bible Stories, we learn who God is; how God thinks; what He expects of human beings; how we're to relate to each other; how to live by faith; all things necessary for our salvation & for living holy Christian lives (growing strong Christians); and how to grow strong churches.

Bible Storying is one of the most effective ways to lay a solid foundation for a Church Planting Movement.

How is Chronological Bible Storying actually done?

Chronological Bible Storying is a specific way of presenting God's Word. This system involves 1) how a story session is put together, 2) what stories are told and 3) in what order they are told.

Each story session involves not only the story itself, but also an introduction to the story, as well as discussion questions after the story is told. The introduction tells where the story fits in the Bible, and it also tells what you want the people to be thinking or looking for as they hear the story. After the introduction comes the story itself. And then after the story is told, the 8-10 discussion questions help the people to understand what the story was about, and to grasp the doctrinal truth that you intend for them to learn from the story.

This means that each aspect of the story session (Introduction, Story, and Discussion Questions) will be important and has its own purpose to accomplish.

In Chronological Bible Storying, the stories are told in series. Determining what stories should be told in a series depends on the purpose of the series, whether for "stone clearing" (preparing the way for the Gospel message), evangelism, discipleship, training, or developing church leaders who will go out and do the above all over again. For instance, in a stone clearing series, you would include some Old Testament stories in the order that they occurred over time, especially stories that prepare people to receive the message of Christ. An evangelism series might be some of the stories in the Gospel of Luke. A training

series might be stories from the book of Acts. And in each series, the stories would be presented in the specific order appropriate for the purpose of the series.

Who are the Bible Storyers?

Anyone can be trained to be a Bible storyer! Children, youth, and adults all love a story, and can learn to tell Bible stories, even in this specific way.

It is best if the pastor who is preaching the message is not also the one who tells the Bible Story earlier in the service. Of course, there are situations when a church is just beginning when the pastor will need to tell the Bible story – until he has trained others to do so.

Where can we do Bible Storying?

Bible Storying can be done anywhere that people can gather together on a regular basis. It can be done in the church, in a home, in a school classroom, in a village community center, at the village gathering point, or under the shade of a tree.

When can we do Bible Storying?

Bible Storying can be done in any service. It can be used in worship services, in Sunday School, Bible studies, or in special times set aside just for Bible Storying – any time when you can tell one or more (up to two or three) Bible stories along with their introductions and discussion questions.

If you want to use Bible Storying in a worship service, you can use it as one of the "Scripture readings". It works especially well in the intimate atmosphere of small churches, house churches, or church plants. This can work smoothly into the flow of the service.

In the more formal setting of a big church, it can work well when used from time to time as a "staged" presentation by a small group (4-6 people) in the front of the church. One person would be the storyteller and the others would be the listeners who also answer the discussion questions. They would need to have prepared this very well ahead of time, so that the listeners know the appropriate answers to the discussion questions and can interact well together in this discussion time. It is important in this context that the Bible Storying session held the service move along smoothly and quickly.

During worship services, the Bible Storying session can also be "staged" as a small drama presentation that serves as the "Scripture reading." And then the discussion time with the questions can be done with the drama cast – still "on stage".

There is also another option for using the Bible Storying session in the worship service of a large church. When it comes time for the Bible Storying session, you can have all the children gather in the front of the church and sit there on the floor during the story time. This not only provides space in the service for the Bible story, but it also provides special space especially for the children of the church, even in the worship service.

Whenever Bible Storying is used in a worship service, no matter the size or location of the church, you will want the Bible Storyer to be well prepared to tell the story effectively and interestingly, and to keep it moving. The Bible Storying session in the worship service should not take more than 12 to 15 minutes at most. Eight to twelve minutes is best. During the worship service, it should not feel like an interruption in the "flow" of the service and in the spirit of the service. And so, it is important that the Bible Storying session is well prepared ahead of time so that it "flows" with the rest of the service, and so that it contributes to the quality, substance, and spirit of the service.

Lecture: How does Bible Storying Relate to Preaching?

(20 Minutes)

Significance of Bible Storying in Teaching Truth

Since stories shape our worldview, beliefs, values and behaviour, then we realize that stories can actually even change our worldview, beliefs, values and behaviour. This becomes important for new believers as they learn to understand and follow all the new ideas and ways of Kingdom culture. They help them learn to think how God thinks.

Especially as we create Church Planting Movements, Bible Storying helps build God's Word into the new believers quickly by giving them their oral Bible to hide in their hearts. While doing that, it is building strong foundations for sound doctrine, so that the people can develop and be strengthened spiritually. It helps them know what truth is and what is not, and so it helps them to avoid mixing religious beliefs and practices from their backgrounds into their new Christian faith. Bible stories help people keep true to what God teaches are right beliefs and practices. And so, systematic Chronological Bible Storying is one of the most effective ways to lay a solid foundation for a Church Planting Movement.

Discussion questions in relation to the main idea or intended theological theme (doctrinal truth) of the sermon

It is especially through the discussion questions after the story itself that sound doctrinal truth can be taught from the story. This means that how the questions are put together and what they express is critically important. And so, the kinds of questions used, determine what truths will be taught by those questions.

The purpose of telling a particular story determines the kinds of questions that are brought together for discussion at that time. So you decide what questions should be asked for the discussion time based on the main idea you want to teach with that particular story. The theme or doctrinal truth that the story demonstrates can be taught by using certain well-crafted questions. The questions will be different when you are using that same story to teach a different purpose, theme, or doctrinal truth.

In places where specific Bible Stories have already been put in place (written) along with their particular introduction and discussion questions, these stories can not only be used earlier in the service as a Scripture presentation, but they can also be used by the pastor as a basis for building/preparing his sermon. So long as the previously prepared story along with its introduction and questions are in line with the theme or purpose of your sermon, then it can be used just as it is.

However, if the purpose of your sermon and the theme of the service are on a completely different track, then you may want to write a different introduction and set of questions that will help prepare the people to understand the doctrinal truth and intended purpose of your sermon more clearly.

Refer the students to "The 10 Step Process" in the Student Handbook.

These steps are designed to guide a person to carefully and purposefully craft (put together) a Bible story, along with its introduction and discussion questions.

GENESIS 4:1-17

CAIN AND ABEL — God looks at the heart

INTRODUCTION: Let us review our last story. *[Allow one or two people to tell what they remember about the story. Spend one or two minutes asking questions to review the story.]*

So in our last story, we heard about the first family's disobedience and God's punishment for them. As you listen to today's story, I want you to listen and answer the question, "Why would God accept one offering and not the other offering? Do you think the reason might have any relation to their different attitudes?"

This is the story from God's Word.

STORY: Adam slept with his wife Eve, and she conceived and gave birth to a son. She named him Cain, which means "I have created." She explained, "With God's help I have received a man from the Lord." And after a time, she gave birth to Cain's brother, and they named him Abel. Abel became a shepherd, and Cain became a farmer.

Now at harvest time, Cain brought some of the harvest from his farm – he brought it as an offering for the Lord. Abel also brought an offering for the Lord. He brought a firstborn sheep that he selected from his flock and the fat from that sheep. The Lord looked on Abel and his offering with favor, but the Lord did not look with favor on Cain and his offering. As a result, Cain was very, very angry and disappointed. He was so angry and disappointed that you could see it in his face.

Now the Lord asked Cain, "Why are you so angry? And why is your face red with rage? Don't you know that if you do well, you will be accepted also? But if you do not do well, sin is waiting at the door to attack you, longing to destroy you. But you must master this sin."

Afterwards Cain talked with his brother Abel. And at a time when they were alone in the field, Cain took the opportunity to kill Abel. The Lord then came to Cain asking him, "Where is your brother Abel?" Cain answered, "How should I know? Am I my brother's guard?" God asked Cain, "What have you done? The voice of your brother's blood calls to me from the ground. Now I tell you, you are cursed from the earth, which has opened its mouth to receive your brother's blood from your hand. And so, when you plow the ground, it will no longer yield its harvest to you. You will be a fugitive and a wanderer from place to place."

During this judgment, Cain answered God. He said, "My punishment is greater than I can bear. Don't you see, you have driven me away from my farm, and from your face I will be hidden, and I will soon be a fugitive and a wanderer throughout all the earth. And as a result, among those who find me, one will end up killing me." So the Lord then said to Cain, "Whoever kills Cain, revenge shall be taken on that person seven times more." And the Lord put a mark on Cain so that anyone who found him should not kill him.

After that, Cain went out from the presence of the Lord and lived in the land of Nod on the East of Eden. Later Cain had sexual relations with his wife and she gave birth to Enoch. And then, Cain built a city and named that city after his son, Enoch.

That is the end of our story for today.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS: Let's talk about this story.

1. Why do you think the two brothers brought God an offering?
2. Did God accept both men and their offerings? Did God look only on the offerings that they brought, or was God looking at the person as well? *[God look with favor on **Abel** and his offering, but with disfavor on **Cain** and his offering – God looked at the whole person as well as on their offerings.]*
3. How did Cain respond to God's disfavor? What did God say about Cain's response?
4. Did God know what they were thinking and feeling while they brought their offerings to God? What wrong attitudes did Cain show? *[jealousy, hatred, self-centered anger, etc.]*
 - a. What did God say that Cain must do about the wrong attitudes in his heart? *[he must master them]*
 - b. If Cain did not master the sinful attitudes in his heart, what did God say would happen? *[sin was waiting at the door to attack him, longing to **destroy** him]*
 - c. Do you think that God sees bad attitudes to be just as sinful as wrong actions? Why do you think that would be so? *[wrong actions come out of bad attitudes in the heart].*
5. Did Cain master his sin? What happened – what did he do?
6. When God confronted Cain concerning his murder of Abel, how did God describe what happened? What was it that God said kept calling out to him so that God could not turn away from it?
7. What punishment did God give to Cain?
 - a. What did Cain think about that punishment?
 - b. How did God respond to Cain's request concerning this punishment?
 - c. What does this show about God?
8. Where did these feelings and actions of Cain come from? *[his heart]* Have any of our stories that we've told earlier included this kind of feelings and deeds? Why did Cain do such a bad bad thing? *[After Adam and Eve sinned, everyone born after that, was born with a sinful nature in their hearts – their heart is **bent toward sinning**]*
9. And how did the story end? *[Cain married, had a son, and built a city – God protected him and provided for him even while he was punishing him.]*

Group Work

Examine the introductions and discussion questions for the story of Cain and Abel. Notice how the first introduction and set of questions were designed to teach about attitudes of the heart. The second introduction and set of questions were designed to show God's faithfulness to try to draw Cain back to Himself in prevenient grace. The discussion questions when teaching about attitudes of the heart are different than when teaching about prevenient grace.

Put together another introduction and set of questions from this same story of Cain and Abel. The purpose this time would be to show how original sin was already evident in Adam and Eve's firstborn son! Jealousy is a carnal characteristic of the heart that is curved in upon itself. And show how original sin, if allowed to remain in the heart, can take a person farther than they ever wanted to go – Cain even murdered his own brother!

GENESIS 4:1-17

CAIN AND ABEL — God is Faithful to Draw People to Himself

INTRODUCTION: The story of Cain took place when the earth was still new, after God had created everything. And when God saw everything that He had created, He saw that it was good. He created the first man and woman, Adam and Eve, in His own image, and He put them into the beautiful Garden of Eden. And He said it was all very good.

But one day, sin entered into the soul of mankind because Adam and Eve disobeyed God. And when that happened, everything was changed! Sin brought pain and suffering and heartache into our world. It spoiled relationships of mankind, both with each other, as well as with God Himself.

And so, in our story today about Cain and Abel, I want you to think about: How did sin show itself as being destructive to relationships – Cain and Abel’s relationship with each other, as well as their relationship with God? And I also want you to think about: What did God do to try to bring Cain back into right relationship with Abel? And especially think about: What did God do to try to bring Cain back into right relationship with God Himself?

STORY:

(Same as above)

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. What did Cain’s behaviour in this story show about his relationship with his brother?
2. What did Cain’s behaviour show about his relationship with God?
3. When Cain showed bad attitudes of jealousy, hatred, and self-centered anger toward Abel, how did God show care for Cain to try to bring him back into a good relationship with his brother?
4. Does this story show you anything about God being faithful to deal with Cain in ways to try to bring him back into right relationship with God Himself? How did God show His love and care to Cain to try to do this?
5. When God pronounced the judgment, Cain said it was too much! So what did God do? How does this show God’s love and concern for Cain that he would still one day come back into relationship with Himself?
6. How did Cain respond to God’s dealings with him?
 - a. Did he respond positively and come back into right relationship with God?
 - b. Or did he choose to resist God?
 - c. So would you say that this was a personal choice that Cain made to resist God’s faithful and loving dealings with him about his sin?
7. What happened in Cain’s heart when he chose to resist God’s dealing with him? Did Cain come closer to God? Or did he move farther away from God?
8. What does this story show about how sin is destructive and destroys relationships?
9. What is the name that we call this – these faithful dealings of God to bring people to Himself? [*prevenient grace*]
10. What does prevenient grace show us about God?

The “10 Step Process”

This is the process you can use to prepare a Bible Story session (Introduction, Story, and Discussion Questions) if you do not have one that has already been prepared/written for you.

- 1. Identify the one biblical truth** that you want to communicate. Make it clear and simple.
- 2. Consider the worldview issues** of your people. This may be a particular part of a society. It may be a certain age group. But the ways they think and the ways that they look at life must be considered in relationship to this biblical principle you want to teach.
- 3. Identify the important**
 - bridges** that will help you take this truth and put it in their lives in a natural, normal way that they can see, visualize, relate to, and apply.
 - barriers** that they have put up against that truth. Think, “How are the ways that I’m going to get around these barriers in this Bible Storying session so that they can then deal with the issue?”
 - gaps**, that they may not have any way to relate to this particular story or this particular Bible truth. So you are going to say, “How can I bridge that gap to make this work?”
- 4. Select the biblical story** that you need to use that will best communicate the biblical truth you want to teach.
- 5. Craft the story and plan the introduction to the story and the Discussion Questions** that are going to follow the story so that they focus on the task (objective, goal) that you are trying to accomplish. And then you craft the story in such a way that it highlights the key issues that you want to deal with in that story.
- 6. Prepare the way for the story with the Introduction.** The introduction should be short. Its purpose is to tell where this story fits in the “big story” of God. The introduction also says what you want the people to be thinking about and looking for as they listen to the story.
- 7. Craft the story itself carefully.** Make sure that your facts are accurate. Keep the story as close to the Bible as you can, while telling it in an interesting flow. Do not include unnecessary details that don’t contribute to the end purpose for the story. Keep it as short as possible without neglecting important aspects. While telling the story is not the time to teach practical truths – that will come later during the discussion time with the questions – keep the story simple and accurate to Scripture. Remember, this story will become a part of the people’s “oral Bible”, so be careful! Remember to set the story itself apart by saying, “This is the story from God’s Word” before you begin telling the actual story itself, and then again when you come to the end of the story and before you begin working with the discussion questions. This sets the story itself apart as the Word of God.
- 8. Smooth the way to understanding with the discussion questions** in your group, to help them discover the meaning and the application of the story. It is best to have a few questions about basic facts in the story first. And then you can begin to talk about relationships of the different people in the story. And then ask questions that lead the way through to the biblical truth and application that you want to draw from that story. Be sure to write your questions ahead of time and know them well before telling the story, so that you can use the questions effectively to come out to the desired end result.
- 9. Help the group to obey the biblical principle.** With one or two questions, help them apply the truth to their daily lives. When you are using Bible Storying with preaching, you may want to bring your people to this response during the conclusion of the sermon instead of during the story time.

Tell the story in a culturally appropriate way. It may be that you know a song or write another one for the story. You could act it out. Try to get the story beyond just a story and into real life action and involvement with all the senses involved. No matter what people say, what you really learn is what you have already experienced.

Lesson Close

Group Work (20 Minutes)

Refer the students to the Bible Storying session on the story of Cain and Abel.

Look at the two sets of introductions and questions for the story of Cain and Abel. Notice how the first introduction and set of questions were designed to teach about attitudes of the heart. The second introduction and set of questions were designed to show God's faithfulness to try to draw Cain back to Himself in prevenient grace. The discussion questions when teaching about attitudes of the heart are different than when teaching about prevenient grace.

Have the students put together another introduction and set of questions from this same story of Cain and Able. The purpose this time would be to show how original sin was already evident in Adam and Eve's firstborn son! Jealousy is a carnal characteristic of a heart that is curved in upon itself. And show how original sin, if allowed to remain in the heart, can take a person farther than they ever wanted to go – Cain even murdered his own brother!

Punctuate the Finish (5 Minutes)

The Bible Story can be used as a springboard for sermon preparation.

And so, as you prepare your sermon, the Bible story can become a springboard. You can use the story to shape the flow of your sermon. And you can use the questions to guide you as you develop the intended theological truth that you want to emphasize. In this way, the Bible story becomes not only a teaching tool, but also a basis or foundation for preaching the Word of God.