

Answer—Sermon Preparation

This is an outline from a ministry called “Rookie Preacher” by Brandon Kelley

Quick note: go to God in prayer throughout this process. I don’t see prayer as a step, as it should be constant throughout.

A Step-by-Step Approach to Efficient Sermon Preparation

Step 1: Identify Your Main Bible Passage

I wholeheartedly believe in an expositional approach to preaching (a blend of both expository and topical) where you always have a main Bible passage and maybe (I really mean maybe) have one or two supplemental texts.

Step 2: Read Your Main Bible Passage and its Surrounding Context

To preach a biblical sermon, it’s important to know how your main Bible passage fits into the overall context of the specific book of the Bible it is within as well as the Bible overall.

For example, if you’re preaching John 13:1-20 where Jesus washes the disciples’ feet, you’ll want to read John 12, the rest of John 13, and all of John 14.

For passages in a smaller book of the Bible, like Colossians, take the time to read the entire book all the way through.

Step 3: Identify the Passage’s Main Point Through Taking Notes

If you were asked to re-word and summarize the passage you are preaching on, what would you say? Write that down.

Are there a couple of key verses in the passage? Write them down.

Sometimes it also helps to create a passage outline. By breaking down the passage in an outline form, you may find that it is easier to see the arc of the passage and the flow of the author’s thoughts in a better way.

Step 4: Look Up What You Don’t Understand – Write Down What You Discover

I highly recommend you check out the Bible tools listed in the list of 7 Online Sermon Preparation Resources You Need. They will save you money and save you time.

At this point, we only want to look up what we don’t understand in the passage. We’re not digging deeper on the entire passage right now. Remember, we want to stay efficient.

Step 5: Make it 3D and Process How the Different People in the Passage or the Recipients of the Passage Would Have Reacted – Write Down Your Thoughts

This step requires some imagination because the biblical text doesn’t always tell us. But if you want to preach in a way that places people in the text, it helps to consider the emotions of the text.

Here, we’re seeking to show the congregation the text. Put them in the first Century or prior. Let them feel it.

For more on this step, I dive deeper in How to Powerfully Preach a Narrative Passage.

Step 6: Zoom Out and Discover How the Main Bible Passage Connects to the Gospel

I believe that every opportunity you have to preach is an opportunity to preach the gospel.

Every passage of Scripture has a connection to Christ and our need for Him.

Here's how to do this: [3 Simple Steps to Preach the Gospel No Matter the Passage](#).

Step 7: Think Through Possible Illustrations From Your Own Life – Write Them Down

How have you seen the passage's main point play out in your life? Do you have a story where you experienced the same kind of emotions the people in the passage were (possibly) experiencing?

Write down anything that comes to mind.

Step 8: Outline Your Sermon

This is where everything comes together. How will you take what you have discovered about the text and how it relates to life and, most importantly, the good news of Jesus Christ and communicate it?

I have six parts to my outline: Engage, Tension, Truth, Application, Inspiration/Action, and Action/Inspiration (the order of the last two are interchangeable).

The great thing about this outlining method is that it gives the sermon a flow that is similar to a story structure. More on that: [Improve Your Preaching: How to Structure Your Sermon Like a Story](#).

Step 9: Write Your Sermon

I manuscript my sermon (but I don't preach from the manuscript – more on that in step 10). You may not. That's okay, but if you don't, consider these 4 reasons why manuscripting your message is a must.

Step 10: Create Your Preaching Notes

This last step may not be the most efficient step in terms of time, but it is vital for me. I don't preach from my manuscript, but I do use some notes on my iPad mini when I preach.

With two windows of Pages (Mac's version of Word), I proceed to copy and paste key phrases and headings to a document that will turn into my preaching notes.

My goal is always to have as little of notes as possible with me when I preach so I cut and cut and cut when it comes time to go from manuscript to preaching notes.

Now, all that is left is to preach!