

The Great Commission Missionary Institute

The Great Commission Missionary Institute is a practical instrument of Baptist associations, fellowships or churches to enlist and train large numbers of dedicated Christian workers to disciple and evangelize the unchurched people of their community and to open new work in unchurched communities.

Required Courses	Classes	Hours
Missions	<i>The Great Commission Is Personal</i>	6
Personal Ministry	<i>Your Little Flock Ministry</i>	6
Disciple Making	<i>Teach to Save Lives</i>	8
Discipleship	<i>First Steps in Christian Discipleship</i>	8
Church Planting, Growth	<i>The Church on the March</i>	9
Spiritual Basis of Ministry	<i>Spiritual Power</i>	6
Pastoral Leadership	<i>The Pastor God Uses</i>	6
Pastoral Ministry	<i>Pastoral Ministries in the Church*</i>	6
Biblical Homiletics	<i>Preach the Word</i>	10
Biblical Homiletics	<i>Dramatic Preaching, Stories of the Bible</i>	12
Christian Doctrine	<i>Doctrines of the Bible*</i>	12
Family	<i>Ministry to Families*</i>	9
Christian Leadership	<i>Dynamic Spiritual Leadership</i>	6
Christian Stewardship	<i>Your Prosperity Pleases God</i>	6
Elective Courses	(Listed separately)	12
Total hours:		120

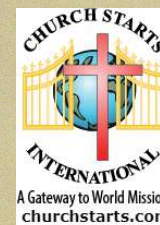
Certificates Offered

Certificate of Study First 60 hours
 Diploma of Missionary Preparation Final 60 hours

PREACH *the* WORD

Instructions for the Preparation of Textual Sermons

GREAT COMMISSION MISSIONARY INSTITUTE



"Every Community on Earth Deserves a New Testament Church"



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Textbook of the Great Commission Missionary Institute

Church Starts International
P.O. Box 177, Henrietta, TX 76365
billdavis@churchstarts.com
www.churchstarts.com

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Lesson One

Preaching and the Preacher

The Beginning of Christian Preaching



Jesus came preaching and teaching in all the villages and towns of Galilee and Judea. When he stood in the synagogue in Nazareth, the same synagogue where he had been instructed as a child, Jesus announced His mission, quoting the prophet Isaiah:

The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord. (Luke 4:18-19).

It is important to see that the public ministry of Christ was preeminently a mission of preaching, of proclaiming the good news that would heal the brokenhearted and bring deliverance to the captives.

In this way, Jesus gave an example for ministry for every believer, and, in a special way, for those who are called to preach. It is for this reason that Jesus called the Twelve who received the title of apostles (the sent ones). Mark affirms that Jesus ***ordained twelve, that they should be with him, and that he might send them forth to preach (Mark 3:14).***

It is important to notice the sequence of events: first, Jesus called them that they should be with Him, and, after this, He sent them out to preach. We do not know with certainty how much time the Apostles were with Jesus before he could send them out to preach. They probably had a year or more of being with Jesus constantly, learning from Him, observing Him in His ministry and preaching, and grasping well His message before going out to preach. We should also note that the reason Jesus taught them was that they should go out and preach the message that had been given to them.

YOUR COMMENTS:

1. Read again Luke 4:18-19. In this passage, what were some of the objectives of Christ for his preaching?
2. According to Mark 3:14, before the Apostles went out to preach, what did they do first?
3. How can we be with Jesus and get to know Him and His message well?

The Preeminence of Preaching in the Plan of God

God powerfully used the preaching of Jesus, of the Apostles, and of later Christian preachers. The Apostle Paul testifies, ***It pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe. For the Jews require a sign, and the Greeks seek after wisdom: But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling-block, and unto the Greeks foolishness; But unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God (1 Corinthians 1:21b-24).***



According to Paul, the Jews wanted many miracles and the Greeks (all people who spoke Greek, the language of the Empire) wanted to discuss philosophy. But God's plan was different. It pleased God to save those who would believe by means of something the world called "crazy", by the "foolishness of preaching." The preaching that saves is the preaching of Christ crucified, Christ as the Lamb of God, the world's only Saviour.

Today, many say, "The world will not believe unless it sees many miracles." Others believe that those of the sophisticated world will only listen when they hear elegant philosophical arguments. But God's plan remains as before - He sends us to preach Christ crucified and those who are saved are those who believe in Christ by means of the "foolishness" of preaching. Christ becomes the power of God and the wisdom of God for all who receive Him as Lord and Saviour.

YOUR OPINIONS:

1. Today, why do many people still believe that preaching is of no value, that it is "foolishness?"
2. Compare the effect of miracles seen by people with the effect on people of simple preaching of the gospel of Christ.
3. What needs to be done for the people of your town and of your nation that they might be saved? Who will do this?

What is Preaching?

Many become excited when they think of the possibility of becoming great preachers. Perhaps they are thinking that through preaching they will become famous.

This warns us that we must be very careful about the reasons we want to become preachers of God's word. However, part of the problem is that many people do not understand what it means to preach. Preaching does not necessarily mean to speak loudly from behind the pulpit in a great auditorium. To preach, in the original language of the New Testament meant to "announce like a herald." Many times, it meant "to teach." To preach does not mean, necessarily, that one speaks to a large congregation. Some of Jesus' greatest preaching was to just one person. Think about His message to Nicodemus and to the out-cast woman of Samaria. There are many preachers today who say, "Give me a pulpit, and I will preach. Other people can visit in the homes and talk to individuals." However, it is possible that the best sermons ever heard are those which are given by one person to another in a visit in a home.

In this study, we will make our major emphasis on public preaching. Even so, it is important to understand that the best preachers, starting with Jesus Himself, spoke more with individuals and small groups than with great gatherings of people. Only by means of the communication of the gospel with individuals and small groups of people can the preacher hear, and not just speak. Personal work and personal visitation help the wise preacher to understand the thinking and the needs of others. This prepares the preacher to speak effectively to larger groups and to the masses.

YOUR COMMENTS

1. What did the Bible mean by the word "preach?"
2. What are some of the advantages to speaking regularly to small groups and to individuals?

Requirements for Preachers

Preaching can be and should be something which is truly glorious! But Satan loves to take preaching and twist it in a way that brings destruction to the listeners and brings shame to the Kingdom of God. The Apostle John, in his third epistle, writes about a certain “brother” named Diotrefes who *loves to have the preeminence* in a certain church. This man speaks *with malicious words* using his privileges in the church to maintain control over it and to exclude brethren of good testimony.



Today, as in the First Century, there is much preaching that is damaging and endangers the souls of those who listen to it. It is wonderful to be able to preach, but it is also very dangerous.

A pastor and a church should not offer the pulpit to anyone who would like to preach. (It should be understood that the pastor of the church has been given responsibility for the use of the pulpit of the church and should approve of, and, personally invite every person who uses it. If errors or false teachings are preached from the pulpit, it is the responsibility of the pastor to correct them immediately from the same pulpit.)

If the churches should be careful about the preaching, how much more careful should be those who preach. What are some of the requirements of Bible preachers?

Clean Testimony. There are powerful preachers who, in the past, lived in great sin. However, no one should occupy the pulpit if there are any current doubts about his or her moral life, if they are presently enslaved by some Godless habit, or if they have personal characteristics that are clearly unchristian. Otherwise, the most beautiful, true and Biblical message will be doubted by its hearers and the Kingdom of God will be shamed by the person who wrongly took the privilege of representing it.

Fellowship With Christ. To this day, only Jesus has the authority to send people to preach. This we have already seen in the Scriptures (Mark 3:14). Jesus only sends people to preach who have been with him. If the preacher is a person who does not meet daily with Jesus in prayer and the meditation of the Bible, his or her message will be overly human and deficiently divine.

Divinely Motivated. We have just seen reference to a First Century preacher of whom it is said, loves to have the preeminence. Perhaps the greatest danger that confronts all preachers is the matter of motivation. Why shall we preach? Is it to be admired, to have preeminence, to put others in their proper places? Paul, out of his vast experience, said, ***Some indeed preach Christ even of envy and strife; and some also of good will (Philippians 1:15).*** In this passage, Paul does not complain about the message of those preachers but of the motivation which led some of them to preach. By natural tendency, we are proud. Therefore, the preacher, more than any other person, should be careful to humble himself or herself before the Lord, subjecting oneself to Him, asking that the message glorify Christ alone and that it encourage and build up the saints.

Biblically Instructed. One can only be sure that the message will be blessed and is of divine origin when the message is truly based on the Bible itself. A message is not Biblical just because Bible verses are quoted. We must remember that Satan himself knows how to quote Scripture. A Biblical sermon digs into the meaning of the text or the texts which are used, and never uses verses simply as an excuse to express personal opinions. The firm basis of every message must be the Word of God, the Bible, and not the supposed “spirituality” of the preacher. Paul said to his disciple, Timothy, ***Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all long-suffering and doctrine (2 Timothy 4:2).***

YOUR COMMENTS

1. What are some of the bad effects of some preaching today?
2. Why is the preacher’s good testimony so important?
3. In your opinion, What are some worthy motives for preaching?
4. Is it possible for a sermon to quote Bible verses and yet not be truly Biblical message? Explain your answer.

The primary purpose of this study is to help preachers to be truly preachers of the Word of God. We live in dangerous times when many preachers guide their listeners wrongly, preaching every kind of erroneous doctrine. This happens because they use carelessly verses of the Bible which they twist to support their own ideas. They fail to let the Word of God speak, first, to their own hearts, and, secondly, to the hearts of their listeners.

Therefore, we move on to see how our preaching can be truly Biblical.



Lesson Two

The Basic Principles of Preaching



Ever since the First Century, Christian preachers have dedicated themselves to the “science” of preaching, trying to understand how to communicate God’s message more effectively. Today we call this branch of theology “homiletics.” Every new generation contributes to the understanding of this science. One reason for this is that society is changing and better methods are found to communicate the message of the Bible to people who are a part of ever-changing cultures. Nevertheless, there are certain principles for preaching that have been recognized for many years and which continue to have importance in the preparation of Biblical sermons.

Important Elements in the Preparation of Any Sermon

Biblical preachers must take into account the following:

1. The foundation of the sermon must be the Bible.
2. The purpose of the sermon should be to satisfy important needs of the listeners - needs which the Bible, especially, is able to meet.
3. The sermon should have a single focus, a clear and special emphasis.
4. For clarity’s sake, the sermon should deal with its emphasis in two, three or four subdivisions.
5. Each sermon should begin with an introduction which will introduce the Bible text and clarify for the hearer what is the purpose of the sermon.
6. Secondly, comes the main body of the sermon, usually divided in two or more subdivisions.
7. The sermon concludes with a brief summary, a conclusion and an invitation.

The first two factors mentioned let us know that each sermon should be based on two realities: the reality of the needs of the hearers and the reality of the Bible’s message in response to those needs. We can draw this concept as follows:

Needs of the Hearers The Sermon The Bible

YOUR COMMENTS

1. Think about a sermon in the past that inspired you. What special need did that message fill? What Bible text or texts were used?

Where does the preacher begin in the preparation of the sermon: With some special need of the listeners? Or, with some Bible text? The fact is that sermon preparation can begin with either one of these two elements. In many cases, the preacher will sense that the listeners have a special need which requires a special sermon. Beginning with the need of one’s listeners, the preacher goes to the Bible looking for a single passage (one or more verses) that answers well the need which has been already defined. In other cases, the preacher, on reading the Bible, finds a text that must be preached because it meets so well one or more needs of the congregation. Either way, the sermon reflects the joining of two vital elements: the needs of the hearers and the Biblical answer to those needs. Never just “preach the Word” if that preaching is not focused on meeting important needs of the hearers.

Remember that every good sermon takes into account two elements:

- * The real needs of the listeners
- * The Biblical answer to those needs

Unfortunately, there are sermons on subjects that are of interest to the preacher but which have little importance to the listeners. The preacher should always be interested in the needs of the listeners - related to their problems, their weaknesses, and their opportunities. One should think about all those who listen and their special needs, including adults, youth and children, Christians and the lost, men and women. When one starts a message, it is important to try to convince all the hearers that the message is going to deal with something that is important for them.

A sermon normally consists of the following parts:

- | | |
|---------------------------------------|--|
| Title (Optional) | Each sermon should be unified by three things: |
| Introduction | |
| Declaration of the sermon’s objective | |
| The Bible text | * The Objective (Purpose) |
| Division 1 | * The Bible text or texts |
| Division 2 | * The theme or main idea |
| (Division 3, 4 or 5) Optional | |
| Summary | |
| Invitation | |

Meeting Needs Through Preaching

What should we preach about? There are two things to guide us: We should preach on themes for which the Bible has important answers, and we should preach on themes that are of importance for the hearer (whether the hearer understands this or not). Consider the following needs that should be met by Biblical sermons:

The need:

- To have greater faith in the Lord
- To know God more intimately and fully
- To be saved from one’s sins, surrendered to God
- To understand how to make wise and Godly life decisions
- To know and understand the principle doctrines of the Bible, and live by them
- To know how to manage common life problems, of which there are many
- To have a successful Christian family life
- To be a better son, daughter, father or mother, in accord with the Bible
- To be a worthy Christian citizen
- To testify to others about Christ and the gospel
- To support or participate in local, national, and world missions
- To pray regularly, in harmony with Biblical instructions for prayer
- To successfully resist evil and personal temptation
- To understand the Biblical bases of one’s faith
- To fear hell and to live for eternity
- To be a good steward of material and spiritual resources

2. Mention some themes you would like to hear made clear in good Biblical sermons - themes that reflect the needs of people who attend your church.



3. Take two or three of these themes as a group and make note of Bible texts that would make good bases for sermons on the chosen themes.

Sermon Classifications According to Their Biblical Base

Every sermon should be a Biblical sermon in the sense that every sermon must be based upon the clear teachings of the Bible and not on the opinions of the preacher. Any sermon that is not truly Biblical should not be called a “sermon” and should not be preached where the people are expecting a sermon instead of a common talk.

Even so, Biblical sermons can be distinguished one from another depending on the kind of text they use. Traditionally, three classes of sermons are spoken of: textual, expository and topical. The difference between each of these three classes of sermon has to do simply with the kind of text that the sermon is based upon.

Textual Sermons. Such sermons are based on short texts, normally from one to five verses. Such a sermon permits a more carefully detailed analysis of the text, especially when based on just one or two verses.

Expository Sermons. This class of sermon is based on a longer text than that used in textual sermons. Because it covers more Scripture, the preacher must select and emphasize certain parts of the text, and may omit or lightly treat much of the text. The preacher must be careful, with a longer text, to not deal with more than one main theme, since a long text tends to lead the preacher into many different themes and emphases.

A special aspect of expository sermons is what may be called a “biographical sermon.” This kind of sermon is based upon the events experienced in the life of some person in the Bible. It usually deals with special events in the life of a person. For example, a sermon on Jonah deals with just a few weeks in the life of the prophet, and might be called, “Resisting and Obeying God’s Missionary Call”. Often, biographical sermons deal with a single incident in the life of a person described in the Bible. For example, a sermon on Peter’s request to walk on the water might be called “If Your Faith Fails You” (Matthew 14:22-33).



Topical Sermons. Such sermons are based on several texts found in different parts of the Bible. They are especially useful when the preacher does not find a single text in the Bible that deals with the full theme proposed by the preacher.

Normally, a topical sermon will have a different text for each division of the sermon. The preacher must be careful, however, not to let his personal opinion lead him to use a number of texts in a topical sermon primarily to prove his personal opinions. Each text in a topical sermon should be carefully understood and explained.

The Use of Auxiliary Texts

The tendency of many beginning preachers is to mention many different texts in the course of a sermon, without carefully basing the sermon on a clear explanation of any of them. Such sermons try to use the Word of God to prove what one believes. But a sermon should not be like this. On

the contrary, the Word of God, inspired by the Holy Spirit, should use the preacher to explain what God is saying, and not what the preacher thinks.

Even so, it is justifiable to use auxiliary texts. An auxiliary text might be used as an affirmation or as a clarification of what the central text of the sermon is saying. It might be, for example, a simple parable, a proverb, or a short doctrinal text that affirms, illustrates or explains the central text of the sermon.

If the basic text of the sermon is a doctrinal text, it is often wise to introduce illustrative biographical or historical texts to give a human face to the message. If, on the other hand, the primary text is biographical or historic, the auxiliary texts most probably should be doctrinal. In either case, auxiliary texts should be used with economy and the preacher should always return to speak about the central text and not be detoured by a long chain of illustrative auxiliary texts. The preacher should take hold of the basic text of the sermon like a dog grips a good bone, not turning it loose for anything!

This can only happen when the preacher knows how to “chew” a text well. If not, the preacher becomes tired of the text and goes wandering through the Bible in search of something to say. Whether the sermon text is long or short, the preacher has a solemn obligation to study it with much dedication and ability, for the sake of the sermon and the benefit of the hearers. A brief text requires more detailed attention than a long text. For this reason, the rest of this course is dedicated to the analysis and use of brief texts as the basis of sermons. If the preacher learns to study well a brief text, it is probable that the same ability will be used on longer texts.

YOUR COMMENTS

1. What difference is there between a textual sermon and an expository sermon?
2. Describe the difference between the basic text and the auxiliary texts in a sermon and how they should best be used.

The Unity of the Sermon and Its Natural Divisions

When we stand to preach, it is not to talk about everything that might pass through our minds! We are not on an uncertain journey, concerned only with exhibiting different Bible truths. Each sermon should seek to meet one specific need of the listeners and should focus all of its elements to help the hearers in relationship to that need. Therefore, the selected need to be addressed in the sermon serves to keep the entire sermon focused on that one theme. If the text, its explication, the arguments of the preacher, and the illustrations all are used to meet this selected need of the listeners, it is probable that the sermon will make a real impact on their lives. If instead, the preacher is not sure of the purpose of the sermon and speaks about varied things, the message will turn out to be of little power and may confuse and frustrate those who hear. They will say to themselves, “What is the preacher trying to say?”

Although the sermon has a very specific purpose, that is, it has a single theme, that theme is presented in different parts, in natural divisions. In the next study, we will see the different steps necessary to prepare a Biblical sermon. We will concentrate on the preparation of textual sermons - sermons that use only one to five verses as their Scriptural basis.

Lesson Three

The Steps in the Preparation of a Textual Sermon

The preparation of the sermon is, above all, spiritual work in which the preacher lets God speak through the Scripture, showing what is God's message for the congregation. However, when we speak of "spiritual" work, this is not to deny that God uses the mind of the preacher as well as the heart in the preparation of the sermon.



Suppose that the Holy Spirit has indicated to the preacher what is to be the general theme on which the sermon should be preached. The preacher should not preach personal opinions instead of what God has to say. Therefore, the first job is to find the Bible text which is appropriate for the needed message. The steps required in the preparation of a textual sermon are both mental and spiritual, as the preacher deals with the Bible text that will form the basis of the message. These steps include the following:

1. Decide the General Theme of the Sermon. One must decide the theme of a sermon that is seriously needed by the congregation. Many times, it might be an evangelistic sermon. Or, it may be a sermon on stewardship, missions, prayer, Christian family life, personal holiness, the Lord's Supper, etc. The church needs to have a good balance in the preaching themes. Therefore, the preacher seeks to "declare all the counsel of God" (Acts 20:27).

First Task: As a class, make a list of ten different themes for sermons.

2. Find the Appropriate Text. The text should have the following characteristics:

- A. The text should cover the theme which the preacher will deal with in the sermon.
- B. The text should have one, two, three, or four natural divisions which lead to the formation of the different divisions of the sermon.
- C. The text should speak with power and clarity to the heart of the preacher.

The preacher needs a good general knowledge of the Bible to best be able to find the most appropriate text for the message. It may be that several known texts suggest themselves.

In such a case, study each text to find the one which is best. It may be that some of the other texts will be useful as auxiliary illustrative texts for the sermon, bringing greater clarity.

Second Task: As a class, make a list of five different texts that would serve as the basis for sermons on the general theme of the stewardship of finances. Show the class how to use the concordance to find the book, chapter and verse of a known text.

3. Decide What Are the Natural Divisions of the Text. As early as possible, the preacher should determine what are the natural divisions of the text. Many times, these divisions are indicated by the different verbs found in the text. As has already been said, a sermon normally should have only two, three, or, at the most, four divisions which come from the text itself.

As an example, in Matthew 7:7-8, there are three verbs that serve to indicate natural divisions of the sermon. These ideas are given in the sequence in which they were presented by the Lord. The sermon, in its essence, is divided in this way:

1. Ask
2. Seek
3. Knock

Many texts put two important truths in contrast with one another. For example, John 3:36 has two principle ideas:

1. He who believes in the Son has eternal life
2. He who refuses to believe in the Son will not see life, but he is under the wrath of God

In this stage in the preparation of the sermon, we are only interested in finding the major divisions of the text. Later, on studying the text carefully, we will enlarge the outline with sub-points and polish our manner of expressing the divisions.

Third Task: As a class, in a simple way, find the natural divisions of the following texts: Matthew 9:9, Malachi 3:10, Acts 1:8, Romans 6:23, Philippians 1:21.

4. Study the Text and Meditate On It. This is the most important task of the preacher and requires the greatest amount of time. The next chapter will deal with this mental and spiritual task.

5. Determine the Applications of the Text and Its Challenges to the Listeners. The preacher makes note of what importance the text has for the lives of the contemporary hearers. He then completes the main body of the sermon with arguments and illustrations that apply the message to the listeners. He studies how he can appeal to the sentiments and the reason of his listeners, finding means by which the Holy Spirit can move the hearers to make spiritual decisions.

6. Prepare the Introduction to the Message. The introduction to the message is of extreme importance, because it is given in the moment that the preacher will win or lose the attention of his listeners. The introduction is prepared after the main body of the sermon has already been finished. This is because the introduction can only be prepared well when the preacher knows exactly what will be covered by the sermon and why it is important to the listeners.

7. Polish the Message. This is time to review the entire message, making what improvements might be possible. Also, this is a good time to add illustrations, to strengthen words of direct appeal to the listeners, and to be sure that the message is all related to one central theme.

8. Prepare the Name of the Sermon, the Conclusion and the Invitation. The name of the sermon may or may not be announced. Even if it is not announced, it helps the preacher to remember the sermon in the future and also to remember what is the central theme of the message. Before preaching the sermon, the preacher should know exactly what kind of invitation he will give to the audience. In addition to an evangelistic invitation, for example, he should ask the Christian listeners to make personal decisions based on what the Scripture taught in the message.



9. Mentally Go Over the Message Several Times. This is necessary if the preacher will preach in the most natural way possible, without constant and bothersome reference to his notes when he is in the pulpit. His familiarity with the whole message helps him to understand and communicate the importance and the main message of the sermon.

10. Preach the Sermon.

11. Evaluate the Sermon. Note problems and weaknesses that you found in preaching the sermon. Make note of the reaction to the sermon and its results in the church.

12. File the Sermon for Future Reference and Use. Be sure to keep all your sermon notes in files, in binders, or in diskettes if you have a computer. We recommend that all sermons be filed according to their Bible text, beginning with Genesis and ending with Revelation. Separately, keep a growing list of general themes with the sermon titles and the Bible texts, so they can quickly be found. Good sermons deserve much use and can be preached in different congregations. Disappointing sermons can often be converted into ideas for excellent sermons in the future. Do not lose the good work that you have done on messages you have received from the Lord and from His Holy Word.





Analyzing the Text Exercises in Romans 6:23

In order to illustrate the principles of homiletics, which are explained in the preceding lesson, we will work together on a simple text from the New Testament, **Romans 6:23: *For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ, our Lord.***

The Sermon's Purpose. Why will we preach a message on this text? Why is it important for others to hear this message? Our purpose is to convince all our listeners of the need to be saved from their sins and explain to them how to achieve this. If they do not understand how to be saved and if they do not respond, they will be eternally condemned in their sins.

Analysis of the Text. Before thinking about any detail of our sermon, it is necessary to let God speak to us clearly from His Word. We must listen before we speak. Let us always approach this task with reverence, humility and prayer. Even if the text be very familiar to us, we may be sure that God will teach us new things through it. If God can speak to us in detail about the text, we will have more to say in the pulpit than time will allow. If we find many jewels through our Bible study, we will have the privilege of selecting and giving the most precious jewels.

Initial Outline of the Bible Text

We recommend that as a first step the preacher analyze what will be the natural parts or divisions of the text before analyzing the text word by word. In this way, the preacher has a concept of the full message of the text and the relationship of one part of it with the others. Very possibly, the earlier study will help the preacher to improve his ability to determine what are the natural divisions of the text. Let's get to work! In future class meetings, all the members of the class will need to work together and express what they find in a chosen text. In a book, such as this, only the writer can express his opinions, which serve as an example to the students. As the writer, I see the following principle ideas in the text:

- | | |
|--|--|
| For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ, our Lord. | I. Sin Brings Death Which is Deserved
II. But God's Free Gift is Eternal Life
III. We Receive This Gift Through the Lord Jesus |
|--|--|

This expression of the parts of the text is quickly written, and these are not usually the words which we will finally use to express the parts of the sermon. It gives us a clear idea of what the sermon is about and what its major parts are.

Studying the Text Word By Word

How should we study a Bible text? We will simply do it by asking questions. The questions we ask will serve as the keys that will open the whole text, as if they were opening a treasure chest

to discover everything that is in it. The meditation of the Word requires concentration, time and love for the truth. We are children who come to the feet of our Father who, by His Holy Spirit, will reveal all things to us.

It is necessary that the analysis of this and every other text be done together by the members of the class with the help of the teacher. For this reason, this guide will only provide a series of questions which the class must seek to answer. The answers to these questions will be the jewels taken out of the chest. In our imagination, we will cover the table with these jewels and only when the table is full of them will we begin to put our message into order.

The Bible certainly is a great treasure. In just a few words found in one verse in the Bible, the student will be able to discover many great truths for his (or her) life and for the lives of others. We will be like miners searching for God's treasures, but to dig them out, we will need some tools that are both simple and special. The mine in which we work is not of stone. Instead, it is a mine of ideas. To get at these ideas, we must use tools which are simple questions. The questions serve as our pick-axes, hoes and shovels.

Receive, dear student, your tools. We will soon try them out.

What? Who? How? Why? When? and Where?

Pick up your tools, and we will go to the part of the mine which is called "Romans 6:23." It may be difficult to work this part of the Bible in the brief time we have in class, but we must begin our task. We will see that some of our tools will be more useful to us than others. After working for a short while, we will begin to understand that this small part of the Biblical mine has more jewels than we would have imagined. If we continue working here for a longer time, we will see that this text will give us much more than we could preach in just one message. Instead of having to fill out the sermon with our own ideas, we will have more of what God Himself has to say than we have time to preach in a 20 or 30 minute sermon. And the sermon will be powerful because it will be, simply, the voice of God, in the Word of God, spoken by means of His servant, the preacher.

The Miner Begins to Dig

<u>The Text</u>	<u>The Tools</u>	<u>The Jewels That Are Found</u>
<i>For</i>	(This word connects the teachings of the previous verse with this one.) To save time, we will consider only the words that follow and not do a review of the earlier teachings that lead up to this one.	
<i>the wages</i>	What?	In the ordinary sense of the word, what are wages? What does God mean by the word "wages" in a spiritual sense? Spiritually, what did we do to deserve such wages?
	Why?	Why are wages ordinarily paid? What does one do to earn them? Why would God pay such wages? Do we deserve such wages?



- How?** How does one come to deserve wages?
- When?** Normally, when are wages paid? When are the wages of death paid? Are there other wages of sin that are paid before death itself? Describe sufferings that sinners experience right now as a consequence of their sins, even before receiving the final wages of sin.
- Who?** Who will pay the wages of sin? Who will receive the wages? Are others affected by one's sin? Do they also end up paying something for our sin?
- Where?** Where do we earn the wages of death? Where will we receive the wages of sin?

Of sin

- What?** What is sin? What are the sins that lead to death?
- How?** How do we sin? How does sin affect others? How does sin affect God? How many are affected by our sin?
- Why?** Why do we sin? Why do we want to continue to sin? Why does God hate sin so much?
- Who?** Who deserves the payment of death? Who is most offended by sin? Who is especially affected?

Is death

- What?** What is death? What kind of death is this verse referring to? How long lasting is death? What affect does the death of one have on others? What is the difference between physical death and spiritual death?
- When?** In what sense is spiritual death a present experience? What is meant by eternal death?
- Who?** Who suffer spiritual and eternal death? Such death separates what people from whom?

But

What a beautiful word! It tells us that there is still an option; there is still hope for the sinner in spite of the fact that the wages of sin is death.

The gift of God

- What?** What is a gift, in the ordinary sense of the word? Who pays for a gift? Can gifts be expensive? What happens if the gift is refused or, for any other reason, is not received? What has God done to offer the gift to us?

- How?** How much does the receiver have to pay for a gift? How much did the gift of eternal life cost God, the Giver? How does the giver feel if his or her gift is refused? How does God feel if we refuse His gift of eternal life? Will He insist on giving it to us anyway?
- Why?** Why can we only receive eternal life as a gift rather than to earn it? Can we partly earn it and share the cost with God? Why does God insist that eternal life is altogether His gift?
- When?** When does God's gift belong to us? Since when has God been preparing the gift for us?
- Who?** To whom is given the gift of eternal life? Who gives it? Does God use others to offer His gift to those who need it? Whom did God use to make it possible for us to have eternal life?

Is eternal life

- What?** What is eternal life?
- When?** When do we receive eternal life? When does it end?

Through Jesus

- Who?** In whom is wrapped the gift of eternal life?
- What?** Is there any other way that we can receive eternal life? What must we do to receive eternal life? What happens if we decide we will get eternal life in our own way and not through Christ?
- Why?** Why does Jesus Christ have such importance in our receiving eternal life from God? Why does God use only Jesus for us to receive eternal life?

Our Lord

- What?** What is a "lord"? What privileges does a lord have over those who acknowledge his authority? In what sense must Jesus be our Lord? Jesus has the right of lordship over what aspects of our life? What right does Jesus have to be our Lord? What did he do to save us?
- How?** How do we make Jesus our Lord?
- When?** Since when is Jesus one's Lord? Until when will he be one's Lord? Since when does one have eternal life as a gift of God?



The Basic Outline of Our Sermon

Before we carefully studied the meaning of every word in the verse, we had decided what are the basic parts of the sermon. Now, we are better able to prepare it, having made a careful study of the meaning of each word in the text. Some preachers are able to make very clever or rhyming sermon divisions. I believe that the most important thing is to express the divisions as accurately as possible so the preacher and the audience understand God's message from the text being preached. Certainly, there is no one way to do this and the following is simply an illustration of how the sermon can be outlined.

Sermon Title: **Life or Death for You?**

Introduction

Read the text: Romans 6:23

Divisions

1. Your Sins Earn Eternal Death
2. God Offers You Eternal Life as a Free Gift
3. You Receive the Gift of Eternal Life When You Receive Christ as Lord

Conclusion: Summary of the Sermon and the Invitation

The Divisions of a Sermon. I recommend that this text be preached under three divisions, which come directly from the three natural parts of the text itself.

Normally, each Scripture text will have different parts and these parts serve as the basis of the different divisions of the sermon. When the Bible texts are logical in their development, we normally follow in sequence the ideas as they appear in the text.

Notice that the title and the divisions of this sermon are expressed in a personal way. We say "Your Sin Earns Eternal Death" instead of an impersonal statement such as "The Sins of Mankind Result in Death." The sermon should be made as personal as possible, so the hearers will have no doubt that God's message is for each one. In the same way, the sermon title speaks of "**Life or Death for You?**" It is a personalized title. By contrast, fifty years ago, it would be more common to speak in general terms, perhaps giving the sermon the title, "**The Way to Death and the Way to Life,**" or, even more abstractly, "**Doctrines of Condemnation and Salvation.**"

The Sermon's Purpose does not have to be elegantly stated at all, and it may be that the preacher not state it to the audience. It is important that the preacher be able to write in a few words what he hopes to achieve by means of the sermon. If the sermon does not have a clear purpose, it will easily be insipid, like watered down soup. Some speak of the purpose of the sermon as being its "theme." The theme described, in essence, the contents of the sermon and helps the preacher to concentrate the entire message on something that is important and well defined.



The purpose of this sermon might be thought of as follows: Every listener is condemned because of his or her sin, but God wants to give each one eternal life through the work and grace of Jesus Christ. It is imperative that each one receive Christ as Lord and Savior, and thereby be forgiven of sin and granted eternal life.

The Sermon Title is the name that the preacher might give to the sermon. If the preacher announced the title, it is important that the title cover the full contents of the sermon. In this case, it would not be good to call the sermon "God's Gift for You" because this only speaks about the second division of the sermon. Sermon titles are normally brief, may develop curiosity, and should clearly identify what the sermon will be about.

The Sermon Introduction consists of the preacher's first words to the congregation. In the introduction, the preacher should reveal, briefly, what he will be preaching about and why the message is of importance to each listener. In a real sense, the preacher tries to convince the listeners that the message will be important and interesting for them and will help them to meet a special need they have. He might begin with an interesting fact or event in history. Or he might begin with an important question which he challenges the listeners to answer in their own minds. The introduction is normally given before reading the sermon text. The introduction prepares the congregation to concentrate on the text, finding in it the answer to the important question or to discover how it meets their special need.

In the sermon on Romans 6:23, we could introduce the sermon with a declaration and a question as follows:

"The world we live in is full of different religions and different ideas about eternity. Some do not believe in hell. Others do not believe in heaven. Others believe in both, but cannot agree how one avoids hell and how one can be sure of going to heaven. You yourself must decide what is the truth for the good of your own life, your own soul. To decide, it is very important to understand exactly what the Bible has to say. I invite you to examine, with me, God's answer to these questions as found in Romans 6:23. It is a text which raises the question, "Life or Death for You?"

After reading the text, it will be good to explain the three parts of the message. Many preachers read to the congregation the divisions of the sermon. This gives the listeners a mental and spiritual map of where they will go with the sermon. After tracing the road the message will take, read again the first division of the sermon: "Your Sin Earns Eternal Death." Discuss this part of your sermon.

The Sermon Body has to do with the preaching of all the divisions of the sermon. It consists of a careful analysis and explanation of the text, the application of the truths found in the lives of the listeners, and arguments to convince the listeners of these truths. These may be strengthened by illustrations from the Bible, from history or from present-day experiences. The preacher should directly challenge each listener to believe and respond to the teachings of the Scripture.



The Conclusion and the Invitation. After the preacher has completed his treatment of the last division of the sermon, he will do well to briefly summarize the message and to extend an invitation by which the listeners respond to God's invitations and commands revealed in the text.

Our sermon could end in this way: "So, you see, my dear friend, beloved of the Lord, that the Bible tells us that our sin results in eternal death. But God invites us, He invites you, to receive, instead, eternal life as a free gift. This is a gift paid for by God through His Son, our Savior, as He died for your sins and mine. Do you understand that your sin must receive its deserved wage, which is death? I invite you at this very moment, on the authority of the Word of God, that you receive from the hands of God the free gift of eternal life. Do this by receiving Jesus Christ as the full payment for your sins and as the new Lord of your life.

Class Task: On a whiteboard, develop a sermon on Romans 6:23, based on the class's answer to the questions given earlier in this lesson. The outline given above can be used, or the class can develop its own outline.



Lesson Five



Practice With the Analysis of Texts and the Preparation of Textual Sermons

Both preaching and the preparation of sermons improve with experience. The greatest part of this course should be dedicated to practicing the principles of homiletics that have already been presented. This practice should take place individually and in class. The courses on homiletics, perhaps more than any other courses, requires home work efforts on a personal level. The class activities help the students to understand better the work to be done.

For this reason, the rest of the course should be dedicated to individual and class efforts to prepare textual sermons. In the classroom, it is necessary to have a good white board and the teacher will guide the class in examining the texts and developing sermon outlines based on the texts. Every student should participate in the effort, contributing his or her analysis of the text and their observations. From a single text, different sermons can be developed. Therefore, there is no single "correct" sermon for a given text.

The class should agree on the text which will be used in the next class, from the list of texts listed below. Each individual should study the text at home and write his or her analysis of each word or phrase in the text and suggest a resulting sermon outline. When the class meets together, it should analyze each word of the text and hear the conclusions and ideas of the different students.

Texts To Be Used

- | | |
|------------------|---|
| 1. 2 Kings | 6:16 |
| 2. Psalms | 9:10, 37:21, 37:39, 42:11, 46:1, 91:14, 126:5-6 |
| 3. Proverbs | 4:18, 11:24-25, 22:4, 23:17-18 |
| 4. Isaiah | 43:2, 54:10, 55:7 |
| 5. Matthew | 24:40, 25:40 |
| 6. Mark | 11:25 |
| 7. 2 Corinthians | 5:17 |
| 8. James | 4:6 |
| 9. 1 John | 1:8-9 |

How Each Text Should Be Studied

In every meeting of the class, it is important to work as a full class on one or two single Bible text, taken from the list above. Then, the class should proceed with the "Steps in the Preparation of a Textual Sermon" found in chapter three of this course.

Since we have already chosen the text and not with a decision about the general theme of the sermon, our first task is to determine the natural divisions of the text. To help with this process, we will illustrate this using Psalm 9:10.

1. Decide the Natural Divisions of the Text. As has been noted before, the natural divisions of a text can often be found by means of the verbs which are found in the text and the actors. This is true in Psalm 9:10.



And they that **know** thy name will **put their trust** in thee. For thou, Lord, **hast not forsaken** them that **seek** thee.

The first part of the verse speaks of those who know God. The second part of the verse speaks of how God deals with those who know him. Therefore, the text can quickly be divided into two main ideas:

1. Those who know God will trust in Him.
2. God will not forsake those who look to Him.

Usually, the preacher will preach the teachings of a verse in the same order they appear in the Bible. However, there are many occasions in which it is better to change the order of the text in a sermon. In this case, it is well to do so, starting with the work of God and ending with the response of those who have faith in Him. Because sermons should end with a personal appeal, it is well to think which part of the text best lends itself to personal appeal. This is another reason why we change the order of the sermon as follows:

1. God will not forsake those who looked for Him.
2. Those who know God will trust Him.

2. Study the Text and Meditate On It. This is a work in which we must think carefully about each word or phrase in the text. We proceed with an abbreviated study of the words of this text.

1. *For thou, Lord, hast not forsaken them that seek thee.*

Who? *For thou, Lord* Demonstrates confidence and familiarity with God, addressing him in familiar form, as an intimate Friend. The word for relates the idea of faith with the fact of God's faithfulness.

What? *hast not forsaken* God never abandoned the believer; never left or turned His back upon the believer. We remember that this is said of God, not of others. Others may forsake us, misunderstand us, turn away from us, lose interest in us.

When? The verse specifically speaks of God's acts in the past. The believer looks on God's treatment of him or her in the past in order to look forward with faith to the future.

Illustrations: Who are some people in the Bible who, in spite of great trials, were not abandoned by God? If we are preaching to young people, we might think of Joseph, who was abandoned by his own brothers, but never forgotten by God. If we speak to women, we might think of Ruth, who lost her husband and her homeland because of her faith, but was not abandoned by God. If we are preaching to a group of men, we might speak of Moses, who left everything to follow God and who endured many trials, but was given the privilege of bringing Israel into freedom.

In addition to Biblical examples, we might think of contemporary examples, of ourselves or others who went through great trials but found that God had never abandoned us and will win for us the victory.

Who? *them that seek thee.* Those who are blessed are those who are described as people who **seek** God. **Seek** is in present tense, and not past tense as we might have expected. The present tense lets us know that this is about people who always trust God - this is their normal attitude toward God.

How do we seek God? Of course, daily Bible meditation and prayer come to mind. We also think of those who earnestly follow God wherever He leads and through the midst of adversities.

Where do we seek God? In worldly parties? In the company of those who deny God's authority in life? In places of sin? Of course not. Where do we seek God, then? In the quiet place of fellowship with Him. In the fellowship of the church and of people who love God. In Christian friendship.

Biblical Illustrations of those who sought God: We might think of Daniel, who prayed to God in spite of the law against prayer or of his three friends who refused to worship a false god in spite of mortal danger or of the Jerusalem Christians after the Apostles had been beaten and warned not to speak of Jesus.

Contemporary examples: consider husbands or wives who follow God though their spouse does not accompany them and may even oppose them. Think of young people who, surrounded by modern temptations, decide to live God's way.

II. *And they that **know** thy name will **put their trust** in thee.*

*they that **know** thy name*

Who? What? When? How? Who are the special people that know God? "Know" is in the present tense, indicating that this is the nature of these people. How do people get to know God? What is it to know God?

We see that those who know God know Him from past experience. They are the people of whom it is said *Thou, Lord, hast not forsaken them that seek thee. They are the people who always **seek** God and who have never been forsaken of God.*

will put their trust in thee



When? What? Why? In Whom? This speaks of the uncertain future. In spite of all that may come, they will put their trust in thee. What will this trust mean for their lives in terms of their sense of peace, their courage in the face of challenges, their faithfulness in the face of temptations? Why will they trust in God? How does God's faithfulness in the past mold our faith in Him in the future? In whom or what do they trust - in the God of past faithfulness or in human reason, in self-confidence, or in favorable circumstances?

3. Determine the Applications of the Text and Its Challenges to the Listeners.

What does the text have to say to the people who will hear our message? Perhaps we understand the need to trust in God, but let us look at this from a negative standpoint first.

What happens when people do not really know God? How much can they trust God, if they have no experience with Him? If they do not trust God, in what do they trust? Does trust in circumstances, possessions, or in self inspire peace, courage, self-control? What is life like without a constant faith in God? What are the terrible handicaps of such a life? How does this affect one's own life, one's future, and one's impact upon the lives of their family members and others?

We are not to treat lightly the teachings of this verse. We must think of what the verse promises and also what the lack of this verse and its promises means to those who do not have faith. Our preaching, then, deals with the great struggle between true and continuing faith and the

empty and dangerous life without faith. When we can preach this with clarity, our listeners will be gripped by God's truth and moved to action.

4. Prepare the Introduction to the Message.

There are many ways that this text might be presented. A current example of the tragedy of certain people who live and die without faith can be used to create interest. The inspiring life of someone known in the past to the congregation can awaken their attention. The awfulness of modern life without God might be briefly described in some detail, before speaking of the text and its lessons of God's faithfulness and the believer's divinely given courage.

5. Polish the Message

We will want to go over the sermon and cut out all that can be spared, leaving what seems to be the most important and what makes the most impact. We may want to add short illustrations and think of special and direct appeals we might want to address to each listener from the pulpit.

6. Prepare the Name of the Sermon, the Conclusion and the Invitation.

We leave these tasks to the class, referring the class to lesson three for instruction. The invitation should certainly encourage those who are living with faith, should challenge Christians whose faith is slight or partial, and should invite the lost to pass their faith from unworthy objects or persons to the Lord Himself, Who alone never forsakes those who seek Him.

7. Mentally Go Over the Message Several Times.

8. Preach the Sermon.

9. Evaluate the Sermon.

How could it have been better? What were its strongest parts?

10. File the Sermon for Future Reference and Use.

It is hoped that this lesson gives an example of textual analysis and sermon preparation that will help the class to work, in a similar manner, with the verses listed at the beginning of the chapter under the title **Texts to be Used**. Each week, the class should work together on one of these texts. The text should be agreed upon a week before it is considered in class and each student should bring his or her notes on the text, using the principles of analysis we have presented.



Lesson Six

Giving Body to the Sermon

Many sermons seem to be unorganized. Listeners try in vain to understand exactly what the preacher is trying to say, since he or she moves from one idea to another without showing any clear relationship between the ideas and the text. For this reason, it is very important that the preacher be clear in understanding the Bible text and dividing the sermon into its logical parts. The previous lessons have given emphasis on how to best give organization to a textual sermon.

Some students may say that they can now outline a sermon but still do not know how to give it flesh. Their sermon is like a skeleton that has no meat on it. They can say everything about the text in five minutes, and little blessing is experienced. Once the preacher has the skeleton of the sermon, he needs to know how to put flesh on the skeleton. We have given some introduction to this in the preceding chapter, under point **2. Study the Text and Meditate On It.**

Let us now think more about how to give body to the sermon. A good sermon is like a body: it has a skeleton (outline) which gives it form and unity. But a sermon has more than a skeleton; it also has flesh that give it meaning and strength. If the preacher has a clear sermon outline, based on the text, how does he “put flesh” on the sermon?

Example: Building a Sermon on James 4:6b

The following example is given as a serious exercise by the class. It may require two hours of work together. After completing this work, the class may study any other brief text already outlined by the class, and build a sermon on the outline. The only way to learn to do this work well is to do it repeatedly. Every student should learn to do the same kind of work with every sermon or devotional prepared in the future. Ability grows quickly when the preacher applies himself carefully to this work.

Preparing a good sermon is work. It is spiritual work, asking God’s illumination and guidance. It is also serious mental work, requiring much thinking and meditation. The members of the class should now begin exercising their mental and spiritual muscles in the following exercise:

Text:

Wherefore he saith, God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble. James 4:6b

Preliminary division of the text:

Part 1 ***God resists the proud***

Part 2 ***God gives grace to the humble***

Part 1 God Resists the Proud

Definitions: **Proud:** haughty, arrogant, conceited, insolent, overbearing. A good dictionary will help the preacher to understand the different shades of meaning of a word. As the preacher sees these different meanings, he will understand more clearly what the Bible is trying to tell us.

Key Questions: **Who** are the proud, the haughty, the conceited, the insolent, the overbearing? Give examples of people in the Bible and in modern life who are proud. **How** do the proud act? Give examples. **Who** is affected by the proud and **how** are they affected? Examples? **Why** do the proud act as they do? **Where** are the proud to be found? In the home? In the church? In the world? **Why** would God oppose such people?

Applications: What tendency is there in Christians to be proud? How can we identify a proud spirit in ourselves? How can we rid ourselves of a proud spirit? What should be our attitude about proud people? How can we help them?

Instructions to the class: Deal seriously with every question. Give special attention to finding several Biblical, historic or modern examples for each question. As the students think of examples, the meaning of the verse becomes more and more alive and exciting. The preacher becomes a story teller, giving life and meaning to every text he preaches. For each sermon, make note of the answers to the questions on the text and a brief notation of the examples and illustrations. Soon, the preacher will have more material than he can use in his sermon. This permits him to choose the best of the material and preach the strongest possible sermon. Preachers who do not know how to seriously study a text are not able to bring life to their text, and tend to skip from text to text or from one opinion to another without giving spiritual depth to the message.

Definitions: **Resists:** to withstand, to strive against, to defeat, to frustrate.

Key Questions: **Who** are some arrogant people in the Bible that God resisted? Examples? **How** did God resist them? **When** did He resist them, immediately, or after awhile? **Why** did God oppose them, frustrate them, or defeat them? Give modern examples of people that God has opposed or defeated. **What** will happen to those who persist in a prideful spirit?

Applications: **How** does this serve as a warning to Christians? To non-Christians?

Part 2 God gives grace to the humble

Definitions: **Humble:** not proud or assertive, modest, meek, lowly

Key Questions: **Who** are humble people? Examples in the Bible. **What difference** is there between the proud and the humble? In **what** ways does humility express itself in the lives of people? **Why** would God favor the humble but resist the proud? **How** does humility contribute to one’s relationship to God? **How** does it contribute to the lives and faith of others? When is humility a continuing attitude or is it something that occurs at special times? With **whom** are people humble - with all, or with only certain people?



Definitions: **Grace:** favor, kindness, mercy, beauty.

Key Questions: **What** are some of the ways God gives grace to the humble? **How** does He give this grace? Examples of people who received a special measure of God's grace in the Bible or in modern life. **When** is God's favor shown: immediately or over a period of time? Examples from the Bible and from modern life. **What** does this teach us about **who** God is and **what** He is like?

Applications: **How** does this truth give encouragement to Christians? **Why** should we seek to be truly humble? **How** will this affect the way we talk to others, act with others, relate to others? **What** can we teach our children, our family, our friends about Godly humility - **what** it is and **how** it is rewarded? For **whom** is this promise of God?

In the classes that follow, the class should go over sermon outlines prepared in earlier class sessions and work together to give body to these sermons.

Remember that progress is made only through repeated efforts and experience. Do not shorten this course thinking that it consists only of completing the text book. This textbook is intentionally short, leaving time for the class to have repeated experiences working on Bible texts in the preparation of sermons. With each text, the class should complete the sermon, following the twelve steps outlined in lesson 5.



Lesson Seven

Preach the Sermon



The large study has been dedicated to the preparation of textual sermons. Even so, we must conclude with some important recommendations about the delivery of each sermon.

The Attitude of the Preacher. We communicate our message to people through many different ways - and not just through our words from the pulpit. Those who hear us learn much about us and our message just by looking at us.

How do we walk to the pulpit? Slowly or hesitatingly, as if we were unsure of what we were going to say? Do we understand that we are sent by God to be His chosen spokesman for the occasion, or do we doubt that we should be there? Is our message important, is it from God, or is it just another chance to talk to the people? Will we apologize to the people, telling them that we are unworthy, or will we speak with the authority with which God sends us to the pulpit? Did He send us to the pulpit? We began our study considering the sacredness of God's call to preach. Let every preacher be sure that he (or she) is called of God to speak for Him from the pulpit. And if that is so, let the preacher take seriously the task of preparing a truly Biblical message, one which God's people need to hear. And let the preacher act with the authority that God gives to His preachers.

The Preacher's Appearance. Paul wrote, ***Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us (2 Corinthians 5:20a).*** In a real sense, this is true of every Christian, but it is especially true of those who represent Christ as a public preacher. Will the preacher look like an ambassador or a beggar in the pulpit? Some say that their sense of humility will not permit them to dress well when they preach. Let these recall that they do not represent themselves, but, instead, the King, when they preach.

The Bible says clearly, ***for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart (1 Samuel 16:7c).*** People are greatly affected by superficial appearances, and if their eyes are offended, they will not pay attention to the preacher. This is particularly true of the lost listeners and of the carnal Christians - the very people who most need to hear, understand and respond to the Word of God.

Practically speaking, what does this mean in terms of the preacher's dress code? We must recognize that even in the same country, there are different attitudes about how men and women should dress. For example, in Guatemalan Latin society, it is important for the preacher to wear a tie, even if, because of the heat, he does not wear a coat. In Guatemalan Indian society, it is often thought improper for an Indian preacher to wear a tie, but he should certainly wear a coat. As a general rule, we would suggest that the kind of clothes a man or woman would wear to visit the mayor's office are the kind of clothes he or she should wear to represent Jesus Christ in the pulpit.

Appearance is more than a matter of clothing. One's hair should be clean, well cut and combed. The preacher should be physically clean and have cut and cleaned his or her fingernails. One should have freshly polished shoes, clean and well pressed clothes, and a fresh handkerchief. The man should be well shaved. If he has a moustache or a beard, it should be well trimmed. Personal sloppiness on the part of the preacher is inexcusable and brings dishonor to the God and the gospel being represented.



COMMENTS BY THE GROUP: Without giving any offense to anyone present or in the membership of the church, class members may speak of both positive and negative experiences they had upon observing the appearance of preachers in the past.

The preacher speaks. God has given us different kinds of voices and personalities. Rarely do two preachers preach in the same way, and this is the way it should be. However, there are certain principles that guide all preachers.

The preacher should speak as clearly as possible. He should open his mouth wide and speak out. Every word should be enunciated clearly. If people cannot clearly understand the words, their attention will soon be lost.

The preacher should dramatize the sermon by the use of gestures and/or facial expressions. In this, there is great difference between preachers. Some preach very loudly and gesture constantly like a windmill. This is natural to them. Others tend to speak much more softly and rarely raise even a hand during the message. This is natural to them.

Every preacher, however, should give attention to making his sermon as lively and visually interesting as possible, without distracting the listeners by exaggerated gestures or an exaggerated use of the voice. I will always remember one preacher who never used his hands to gesture, but whose face was full of expression. The listeners cannot take their eyes off his face, which communicates almost as much about the message as his voice.

"Preaching," said one, "is the communication of God's message through the personality of the preacher." Since our personalities are different, our preaching mode will also be different, but we must work to make it as interesting as possible.

GROUP COMMENTS: Why can there not be a single preaching style, which all preachers should try to imitate?

The preacher's deportment. Humor in the pulpit is normally a good thing, if it is well used. Many of the stories in the Bible have their humorous aspects. Certainly, there is much in life that makes us laugh, and the preacher should not always be somber, as if he or she were preaching in a funeral. However, a preacher must never be confused with a clown or a stand-up comic. Jokes are rarely in order from the pulpit. As we come into the last days, we hear of preachers who make sexually suggestive comments from the pulpit. Be assured that they are not messengers from above, but from below.

Those who preach must not only watch their manner of speech and actions in the pulpit but must carefully watch their manner of life 24 hours a day. Preachers are marked men, and are carefully watched by all those who know them. Each is an ambassador of the heavenly courts and must act accordingly at all times - at home, in the community, and in the church.

OPINIONS: When is a sense of humor in good taste in the pulpit? How can a sense of humor be perverted and badly used in the pulpit?