

Sermon Worksheet

To preach is to unfold the meaning of a Scriptural text or theme to an audience so that they realize that God is calling them to respond in faith.

Date _____ Text _____

EXEGETICAL STAGE

What is the structure and meaning of the passage or theme?

Identify the component parts of the passage or theme (whether analyzed grammatically, theologically, literarily, or thematically) and how they relate to each other.

What is the aim of the passage?

In its immediate context, discover how this text contributes to the overall burden of the passage or book. In its redemptive context, discover its organic connections with the rest of Scripture, and which feature/s of our fallen condition this passage, if embraced by faith, would restore.

What key themes are present?

Identify key themes or issues (theological, but also psychological, social, etc.) present in or raised by the text. This will help you build the bridge from the Biblical text to contemporary life, provide ideas for the introduction, and ground the sermon in "the whole counsel of God."

SERMON STAGE

1 KERNEL: What is the kernel of the sermon?

The **kernel** is the one statement people must grasp, so it should be a simple and memorable sentence (subject and predicate). It is also the organizing component of the sermon. The **tension/s** (see below) serve to highlight the need for the kernel, and the **outline** unfolds its meaning and reinforces its impact.

2 TENSION/S: What tension/s provide the momentum for the sermon?

A **tension** is a part of your listener's lives that is uncomfortable, off-balance, or inconsistent. You may think of it as a problem (raised by the text) in the listeners' lives or worldviews that will leave the listeners feeling incomplete until it is resolved. Although it is important to show smaller tensions between sub points, the main momentum should come from the main tension point, which the kernel addresses.

3 IMPACT: What residual impact should this sermon have on your listeners?

The **residual impact** is that impact that "resides"—that is, what listeners take home with them, even after they forget the outline. It should be linked to the **kernel** in this way: the residual impact is the full effect of what the kernel implies. This is also called the "aim sentence," what you "are praying the Holy Spirit would be pleased to do in the lives of the hearers as a result of the sermon." Consider how the sermon should impact people intellectually, affectively, and emotionally.

4 OUTLINE: What rhetorical structure (introduction, main headings, subheadings, and conclusion) will best guide the audience through the sermon from beginning to end?

The **outline** or **rhetorical structure** refers to the way the sermon is divided and subdivided. It provides the mental map for the audience so that, throughout the sermon, they experience clarity, movement, and finality. Each **main heading** should develop the theme of the sermon, be grammatically parallel with the others, and progress toward the conclusion. That is, it unfolds the truth bit by bit until the final impact is delivered and the sermon is complete.

5 JOURNEY: What narrative journey should the listeners experience?

While the **outline** provides the mind map for the listeners, the **narrative journey** is the basic ebb and flow of feelings your listeners should experience throughout the sermon. The narrative journey is never stated in words, and may have less variety from sermon to sermon. A common narrative journey may be as follows: (1) I want what you're describing, (2) I can't see how it's possible to achieve, (3) I understand that it's possible only through Christ.

6 ILLUSTRATIONS: Which illustrations will best illuminate important concepts?

Throughout the sermon, you will present certain theological concepts, which the audience must not only hear, but also vividly experience. Unless clothed in **metaphors** and **illustrations**, however, these concepts will appear to the audience as wispy ghosts. When illustrations are added, the audience can *see* and *feel* the concepts. Accordingly, illustrations should be sprinkled throughout the sermon, but especially at strategic points along the way, so that the hearers' affections are activated as well. This happens when the theological concept is connected with some area of life already familiar to the audience.

7 INTRODUCTION AND CONCLUSION: How should the sermon begin and end?

The **introduction** should arrest the listeners' interest by revealing to them a need they feel in their lives (or, if they do not yet know it is a need, by proving that it is). It should then lead into the main theme of the sermon. The **conclusion** should effectively seal the **residual impact** (see above) to the hearers' minds and hearts.