



Preach Like a Lady



Module 1

Tools of the Trade

Equipping Yourself to Preach & Teach

Unit 3

SERMON WRITING

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SERMON WRITING

A prepared heart will make a prepared sermon.

— E.M. Bounds

NOTES

LESSON 1: HOMILETICS—THE ART OF PREACHING

Homiletics is the art of preaching. It includes the composition and delivery of sermons and other religious communications with words. In addition to preaching, it also includes teaching and formal religious discussions. Using principles of rhetoric, homiletics includes analyzing, classifying, preparing, composing, and delivering messages of faith.

Jesus called himself a preacher. He said he came to preach, deliver, heal, and more (see Luke 4:17–21). When it came to speaking and teaching, Jesus primarily used two forms of sermons:

- **missionary:** focused on people outside the faith
- **ministerial:** focused on His disciples and followers in the faith.


Jesus certainly had an advantage over every other preacher. He knew beyond a doubt the will of God. He had the mind of God for each ministry moment and message. There is no more important factor in sermon preparation than being connected with God through his word and prayer.



SERMON SELECTION

Selecting the right topic includes many components, but as Jesus exemplified, we should certainly know who we are addressing and why. What a preacher would speak to leadership couples at a ministry retreat is generally not what would be appropriate at a Friday night youth outreach event.

Choosing the topic to speak on at a service or event most often begins with finding the heartbeat of God in your own devotional life. So often the Lord has people minister from the ledgers of their own life lessons. Don't discount the personal words the Lord opens to you in reading, meditating, and prayer. What he gives you may well be for the benefit of the church. But do use a filter. Be discerning. Some words may be for you alone. Others may be for the congregation. Many times, however, they are for both.



⇒ The most powerful messages are those that come from seeds God plants in your heart in your daily devotion with Him.

Sermon selection should be intrinsically tied to prayer—and not just a prayer for a message. It is in your personal devotion the Lord gives “nuggets” and promptings. Write them down, and when it is time to minister, ask the Lord what he would have you speak. Those thoughts he dropped into your heart can rise to the surface, and you can deliver a word that impacts your hearers in ways an eloquent composition never could.

That said, your messages do need to be real and reach into the real lives of real people with real, life-changing words. Don’t just deliver interesting or entertaining sermons. Give people more than Bible stories and tales of old. Deliver concepts and principles they can embrace and exercise at the altar and then apply to their lives in the church, in their homes, and in their communities.

Sermon ideas can come from reading books other than the Bible. Along with your journal notes, utilize books that provide topical studies. Annual themes, holidays, and current events can also provide seeds for sermons.


CHOOSING WHEN IT’S NOT REALLY YOUR CHOICE

Choosing the right topic is not always at the discretion of the speaker. Sometimes you may be asked to speak or teach on certain subjects. When this is the case, it is your duty to cover the topic assigned. To do otherwise is to be disingenuous. And how could anyone expect God to anoint and use dishonesty? Of course, the Spirit of God can direct and give you the opportunity to weave in threads of Scripture and doctrine just about any time and with any audience, but you must be true to what you agree to do or have enough integrity to decline an invitation if you feel you cannot deliver what was asked.

In my ministry I have had the opportunity to speak at political events with prominent officials present, even presidential candidates. Although the thought of throwing in some “zingers for Jesus” flashed through my mind, I believe being a person of integrity and authenticity was more important. Of course I was God-honoring and non-compromising in what I said, but I was not asked to give a sermon. So, I did not.



Being **trustworthy** is an essential component of Christianity and a believer’s Christian witness. If I had spoken inappropriately in these types of situations (even with the best motive) relationships could have been damaged rather than built. How can I speak so authoritatively on this subject? Because I learned the hard way. I did it wrong before I did it right. I had the opportunity to share at the memorial service of a loved one, and I gave a Bible lesson instead of a tribute. I was



wrong. I have always regretted speaking what I thought they should hear (soap boxing for Jesus) instead of truly honoring the person who passed and offering comfort. I should have built bridges, but I took my “Acts and two thirty-eights” and misfired (Acts 2:38).

PLANNING

At times ministers teach in series, especially pastors. Some pastors plan an entire year in advance. This would seem unfathomable to some, but those who do this type of preparation seek the Lord in advance and relieve themselves from lots of pressure during the year. This approach doesn’t mean a pastor won’t “flex” when circumstances warrant or if the Lord redirects, but structure can provide focus and can be helpful. Pastors and others who serve in organizational leadership may at times preach on certain topics because an issue arises in the church, community, or culture that needs to be addressed from a biblical standpoint.

Some ministers plan quarterly, and some may not plan ahead at all. Itinerant ministers often preach the same messages over and over. An evangelist’s approach is often quite different than that of a pastor. What’s important to remember is there isn’t one “right” or “wrong” approach to sermon selection as long as you truly seek the Lord. God lives in time and beyond time at the same time, and he knows in advance what you will face as you stand in the pulpit—regardless if you are seeking him for this week, next month, or in the next season.

⇒ A planning pastor and an on-the-spot evangelist may select sermons in completely different ways and both be in the perfect will of God.

Tips on sermon selection:

- If you are a guest minister, avoid controversial topics or what would be considered “pastoral” in nature unless you are specifically asked to address them.
- When speaking at conferences with themes, “pray into” the theme trusting the organizers also prayerfully sought the Lord for their meeting. Ask the Lord what he would have you contribute. Other times organizers have themes, but if they encourage you to “take your liberty,” you may.
- Your title may be the only part of your message some people remember. Give it careful and prayerful thought and make the most of it.

- Whether you have been given liberty or specific instructions, one of the most important things to consider is your target audience. Will you be speaking to a co-ed group? Young people? Camp meeting? Formal gathering? Mixed-denomination or even interfaith? Many different factors impact the dynamics of an event or meeting.
- Assume people need to hear the fundamentals of the new birth experience. When preaching, this should be referenced somehow in every message. Not everyone comes to a church or religious event with an understanding of the basics of Christianity. Referencing Bible stories off-the-cuff without giving any meaning or application would mean nothing to someone with no biblical background.
- Wherever the Lord opens a door, you can be sure there will be a wide variety of needs represented among those who will hear you speak. More often than not people are coming for a “thus saith the Lord” from *your* lips. The importance of being prepared, anointed, and relevant cannot be overstated.
- When you select your sermon topics, remember to speak as much as possible to all who are attending in person and online through internet streaming or archiving.

⇒ Wherever and whenever you speak, always make it a point to **offer hope**. Our world is hungry for hope.

