

## Checklist For Writing Expository Sermons

### What is an expository sermon?

An expository sermon is a sermon which takes Scripture seriously as inspired and infallible in its understanding of the Christian faith and its application to the Christian life. In an expository sermon, **the content, thought, meaning, teachings, and admonishment is from Scripture itself.**

An expository sermon follows the structure and thrust of a pericope according to its context and genre. It makes the same point that the biblical author intended for their original audience and then applies it faithfully and clearly to today's sermon audience.

The importance of this is stated in 2 Timothy 3:16 -17: "All scripture is inspired (God-breathed) and is useful for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, so that everyone who belongs to God may be proficient, equipped for every good work." And further in 2 Timothy 4:2: "proclaim the message; be persistent whether the time is favorable or unfavorable; convince, rebuke, and encourage, with the utmost patience in teaching." (NRSV)

**In expository preaching, it is critical for the preacher to remember that it is a matter of "what does the scripture say?" It's not, "what do I say about the scripture."**

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As an aid to those who are tasked with writing expository sermons, the following preparation checklist is offered.

### **Checklist for writing expository sermons:**

#### **Get to Know the Text.**

- Begin with the selected text from the Revised Common Lectionary for the date selected.
- Read the pericope and its context in multiple translations.
  - Note: If you notice a wide variety in the way a word or phrase is translated, it is a best practice to check further and consult an interlinear and a Greek or Hebrew lexicon.
  - Check Bible margins or notes for possible manuscript problems.

- Select the English translation you will use for the sermon. ([GCI recommends](#) the: NIV, NRSV, ESV, ASV, and NKJV.)
- Immerse yourself in the passage in humble submission to the Spirit's voice.

### **Analyze the Text.**

- Begin to study the pericope, seeking the wisdom of Holy Spirit. Prayerfully consider: who is God as revealed through these verses?
- Go to the best commentaries on the Bible book in which the pericope is found. (Check out [bestcommentaries.com](#) or use software programs such as Logos) Do not rely on any one commentary. Compare and contrast as many as possible. Commentaries are not always accurate or correct.

### **Consider the historical context as it relates to the original author's intent and the original audience. \***

- Familiarize yourself with the genre and consider how the genre will affect the way this pericope will be preached. Here are examples:
  - narrative,
  - paraenesis
  - warning,
  - parable,
  - Midrash,
  - exhortation,
  - poem,
  - section of a letter,
  - rhetorical argument,
  - speech,
- Consider the placement of the pericope within the chapter and the book. Why might the author have located this pericope where they did?
- Determine if there are geographical terms or locations that need to be explained.
- Clarify unfamiliar cultural terms and phrases, if necessary. Here are examples:
  - firstborn
  - gird up loins,
  - betrothed,
  - son of
  - break bread,
  - recline at the table,
  - first fruit,
  - share salt,
- Learn about any biblical imagery present in this pericope. Discern if it needs to be included for the audience to understand what is being discussed. (A good resource is *Dictionary of Biblical Imagery*, Ryken, Wilhoit, Longman III, InterVarsity Press.) Here are examples:

- archetypes,
- metaphors,
- chiasms
- symbols,
- figures of speech,
- cosmological imagery
- motifs,

**\*Note:** Remember! This is a sermon for the Hope Avenue. It is not a scholarly study or a history lesson. Focus on the hope of who Jesus is and who we are in Him.

### **Discern the significance and application for today's audience.**

- Note repeated words or phrases in the pericope and consider the purpose. What might the author be doing with these repeated words or phrases?
- Take a careful look at key theological terms and explain their meaning and significance in this pericope. Any unfamiliar words should be explained in easy-to-understand language, so the message is accessible for all listeners. Here are examples:

- sanctification
- heaven,
- Hades,
- Gehenna,
- sin,
- repentance,
- forgiveness,
- justification,
- eternal,
- everlasting,
- righteousness,
- faith,
- kingdom of God

- Have I identified the theology of this pericope? What is the author doing? What is the big idea (or ideas) of this pericope? What should my audience understand from this pericope?

### **Draft your sermon.**

#### **Review your notes and create your outline.**

- What are the main points I need to bring out in preaching this pericope for my audience to get what it is all about?
- Are there sub-points I need to fill in necessary background and color?
- What is or are the application/s my audience might get from this pericope? How will this application help my audience become more Christ-like?

- How am I going to introduce this pericope? Should I begin with a question, or a shocking statement, or a story, or a joke? How am I going to “hook” the audience? Does my introduction logically lead into and set the stage for the pericope? Have I kept it appropriately short?
- How am I going to conclude? Have I written a conclusion that is powerful? Is it passionate? Should it be exhortative or lovingly encouraging? Should it be a concerned warning? Should I conclude with a powerful prayer and/or emphasize the invitation God is extending through the text? Is it short but effective?

Adapted from a lesson by Dan Rogers