



7 TIPS FOR SERMON PREP *from the pros*

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Study. Create. Proclaim.

Starting the sermon writing process week to week can be a challenge. With the dozens of other tasks on your plate as a pastor, how do you find inspiration for each and every Sunday? How do you know what your sermon should be about? And how do you get your church to respond to your message in a meaningful way?

You are not alone; even the most experienced pastors have these same challenges. And we've gotten their input to give you personal advice on how to create life-changing sermons every week. We hope that this guide will help give you renewed insight into your sermon preparation.

I. SEEK GOD'S DIRECTION FIRST

First and foremost, it is important to seek God first while preparing sermons and to stay open to God's direction throughout your preparation time.

In Pastor Frank Damazio's article *How Do I Develop a Sermon?* he states, "The first and most important part of sermon preparation for me is the God-thought for a message or a series of messages...Very simply, the God-thought originates with what God is speaking to you. As you pray for those you are speaking to, what do you hear the Holy Spirit say?"

How do you find your "God-thought" from week to week? God can speak to you through many avenues, but here are a few examples:

- SCRIPTURE READING
- YOUR FAMILY
- INDIVIDUALS YOU COUNSEL
- CURRENT EVENTS
- MENTORS

Once you feel God leading you toward a specific direction or topic, go to His Word and prepare your message. And, of course, be in continual prayer and open to the Holy Spirit's leading through your entire preparation and delivery of your message.

If you do not have a powerful God-experience in your sermon preparation, it is likely that your congregation won't experience Him in your sermon delivery.

-Miles McPherson

Senior Pastor, The Rock Church

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DO YOUR HOMEWORK

Once you have your inspiration, it's time to go to God's Word.

Take the scripture that inspired you and study it. Learn everything there is about the meaning, the writer, and where and when it was written. Study the surrounding and related passages to get a deep understanding of what God is saying. Spend time examining the original language and meaning of the scripture, comparing verses, and reading additional text. And if you don't know Greek or Hebrew, there are tons of other resources available for Bible study. Review lexicons, commentaries, & Bible dictionaries for additional information. All of these steps will help you create a biblically-based message. You can find many tools like these at BibleStudyTools.com, including a variety of Bible translations.

“It's time to go to God's Word”

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SHOW THE RELEVANCE OF SCRIPTURE

In a recent video interview, Pastor Jeff Schreve answered the question, "What is your philosophy of preaching?" His answer was simple: "I want to be true to the scripture. I want to engage people and hit people where they live, and show them how God's Word is relevant to everyday life."

Jeff continues explaining the importance of showing how Scripture is relevant to us, even now in the 21st Century. Do this by referencing common situations that your community may experience and help them connect the dots from their own lives to the Bible. For example, use the story of the five loaves and two fish to emphasize the point that God always provides. Or, use the story of Abraham and Isaac to give encouragement to be faithful to God in any situation.

Lastly, do not ignore the fact that those hearing your message are seeking a true revelation on how the Scriptures apply to their everyday, real lives.

“...show them how
God's Word is relevant
to everyday life.”

“Our people want to know we understand their struggles and that their struggles have been considered as we thought through how best to preach the sermon.”

- Pastor Mike Glenn
Senior Pastor, Brentwood Baptist Church

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LEAVE NO ONE BEHIND

Meeting people where they are is a vital key in preparing a successful sermon. This can also be one of the greatest challenges a pastor may face each week. How do you reach a teenage girl in your congregation but also reach the 85-year-old widower with the same message? How do you reach those that are hungry for a deeper relationship with Christ as well as those who are uninterested or just going through the motions of church?

In Acts 16, Luke talks about engaging the different types of people that are around us through the stories of Lydia, the slave girl, and the jailor. JD Greear describes these three people and how they are similar to your churchgoers. "The spiritually interested needs to be confronted with the Word of God. The spiritually captive needs to encounter someone willing to love them. And the spiritual skeptic needs to see grace before he will listen to it."

To impact the lives of all people, collaborate with your team to ensure you are able to reach across the generations and different stages of life represented in your congregation. Share your message with your staff and look for ways that you can combine everyone's gifts to touch the lives of those who will hear your message. Lastly, incorporate your youth and children's ministry teaching with your sermon's theme so families are able to discuss what they learned on Sunday morning together.

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MAKE PEOPLE YOUR MISSION

At Summit Church, one of Pastor JD Greear's core pastoral values for his ministry team is "People are the Mission." This seems like a no brainer, but we can often get distracted by church programs, our calendars, family – just life in general. In Matthew 28:19, Jesus calls us to "go and make disciples of all nations." As JD puts it, "The focus of our ministries is on people, not on 'projects'...Our priority is to make disciples. Everything we do must serve that end."

Just like your outreach efforts, make sure your ultimate goal in each sermon is sharing the Gospel and helping others come to a deeper relationship with Christ.

Miles McPherson gives excellent direction to this point: "During your final preparation and the delivery, prayerfully merge your God-encounter with your people-burden."

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We don't preach to simply hear the sound of our own voice.

We preach because we've been called by God to listen to His voice, and proclaim His message, so that lives will be changed. Don't assume your job is done when you've finished speaking. Bring your message to life by building momentum with an engaged congregation.

When you deliver a message on Sunday morning, it's most likely the result of countless hours of preparation. You've spent a good portion of your week processing the material and many times your message has become a part of you. Your church, however, is hearing this for the first time. Don't take for granted that they'll know how to respond to the text. Challenge them in specific ways with application points. For example, if your message is about prayer, give instructions on how they can incorporate prayer more into their everyday lives. Then send them out with a challenge to apply those instructions over the next week.

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OFFER AN INVITATION TO RESPOND

Giving an invitation for others to come to Christ and seek God further is a major part of God's commission to us as we seek to make disciples.

Ronnie Floyd, President of the Southern Baptist Convention writes, "As preachers, always be faithful to give people an opportunity in some way to respond to God, either privately or publicly, always leaving it in the hands of God alone. We point people to Him, not to us. They account to Him, not to us."

Provide an opportunity to take a step of action to accept Christ or to ask for prayer. It could be a card to complete. Or they may come to the front of the church to speak with you or another pastor. Whatever your approach, give a chance for people to respond to God.

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**-Ronnie Floyd,
President of the SBC**

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