

The foundation

How do you know what to preach?

Out of all the passages, all the stories, all the scriptures, how in the world do you decide what to preach?

And even if you have a topic when is the right time to preach it?

Pray and listen to the Lord

Your preaching, your teaching, your lessons should come out of the overflow of your personal time with the Lord.

What is God speaking to you?

What have you been studying?

Let that be a starting point of what to preach or teach.

Sometimes God just fills the room and downloads a sermon or an idea that just comes from heaven

[Dad at youth convention a few years ago. He wrote a sermon on a scratch piece of paper from mom's purse, during one of the worship Songs.](#)

Those are awesome moments! And as we walk with the Lord and talk with the Lord and spend time in His presence, sometimes he just speaks and it comes easy, but sometimes....

Sometimes you just have to decide what to preach

You have holidays, you have cultural things, you have series, you have calendars and you want to preach on things that are relevant. Some pastors plan their preaching calendar for the year.

Spiritual vs natural wisdom

Those things are not at odds with one another... if we are walking with the Lord, if we are following him then he is using the wisdom he gave you, it's still his idea!

If he fills the room and speaks, or if God works through our planning and decision making, it's still God.
We trust that God is in the planning.

Personally I plan ahead, I plan series, but I only plan so far so I always have room for a sermon that God just gives me on a random day.

Who is your audience

What do they need to know?

What are they dealing with and going through?

How can I communicate this topic or this scripture in a way that they grasp and they can apply it to their life?

If I'm teaching the senior adult sunday school class where the average age is 70+, I probably don't have to do a whole lesson on choosing good friends. That is a perfect topic for teenagers.

Recently I have had to change some of my sermons and some of my preparation because in the new role as lead pastor, I'm preaching to a different crowd of people. They have different needs and issues, so I have to present in a different way, make it relate in a different way.

Crafting your message

Once you have a topic and an idea of where you want to go and what you want to say, you can begin to construct your message.

I'm going to walk you through my sermon prep from last week

We are in a series called Who Is God? And we are looking at the names of God. Last week we looked at Jehovah Shalom - The Lord is my peace.

Research and study

I begin with research and studying

2 Timothy 2:15 - Work hard so you can present yourself to God and receive his approval. Be a good worker, one who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly explains the word of truth.

I researched the definition of peace

I looked up different scriptures that talk about peace

I tried to remember is there any story in the Bible that applies peace

I didn't for this particular sermon, but you can read a commentary, you can research detail about the passage of scripture.

(side note: ask questions of the writers. Why was it important you included that detail? Then look it up, sometimes that uncovers a historical reason, sometimes it unlocks some new information, sometimes you learn something about their culture, and sometimes it puts the whole passage into perspective.)

I looked up where in the Bible God was given that name, and it's in Judges 6. So I read Judges 6, if you are unfamiliar with the story or what is happening I would suggest that you read around the passage to gain the context of what is going on.

Compile information

Pull out points

Sometimes points just jump out at you

As I read Judges 6, two points were pretty evident to me.

- 1) Remember who God is
- 2) Peace requires obedience

Those were just straight from the passage of scripture

My third point I pulled from the overview of the sermon. Gideon's circumstances had not changed when he said the Lord is my peace... he was still in hiding, he hadn't been delivered, in fact the hard part, the battle hadn't even happened yet.

So my third point was “peace is found in his presence, not changed circumstance”

I still had some thoughts and research that I felt I needed to share, but it didn't fit into those three points

(you do not have to use all your compiled research. Sometimes it just doesn't fit in the flow of the rest of the sermon.

Sometimes it's just so much info that you can't possibly use it all, save it for a different message, or speak on a different angle of that topic at a later date, or make it a sermon series.)

So my last point was “you can have peace”

The other points talked about peace, and they talked about how to find peace, but this point made it personal, YOU can have peace today.

I think it is coming in the next session but this is where I told some personal stories to really make the point that peace is obtainable.

Bolster your points like mini sermons

Do the same process with your points

Make that point like your sermon topic, research what can go under that topic: scriptures, other Bible stories, research and expand that point under the greater title of the sermon.

For example, for point one “Remember who God is” I used the scripture **Hebrews 13:8 - He is the same yesterday, today, and forever!**

I spoke on the faithfulness of God and that the same God that healed blind eyes, the same God that raised the dead, and the same God that came through for you last time you are in a valley, is the same God that will come through in this valley!

You just have to make sure that it all falls in line under the title and topic of your sermon. Keep the main thought or the main message at the forefront, otherwise your sermon can feel jumbled like hits hits 22 different topics but doesn't flow together or connect. It all needs to points back to the main idea.

You have a topic

You have research, studies, scriptures, etc...

You have 3 points

Fill those points with your studies and research

That is the foundation of a message!

Practical Information

I use an outline style for my notes as you can see. It helps me keep my information in order. I know my points and can find them easily because they are **bold**.

The information goes under that point, and if I have subpoints that information goes under that.

Scriptures are in **red**, again they are easy to find as you look up and use the stage and look back at your notes, you can remember where you are on your page.

Personal stories I put in **blue**, again it breaks my notes up so I can better find my place after I have looked up from them.

I didn't use it today but if I have a specific transition, or a statement I want to read exactly the way I wrote it, it will be in **purple**

I space my notes as best as I can to not have a page break in the middle of a thought.

Know your material well enough that you can engage with your audience. Look up at them, move around the stage, don't just read your notes.

Don't be tied to your notes. Let the Lord speak through you! You may get a little out of order, you may say something that wasn't in your notes, you may skip something that was in there, that's alright! Deliver the message God gives you, follow the Holy Spirit, even if He leads off the written notes.