

HOW TO PREPARE A MESSAGE

Compiled by the Leadership of a Local Church

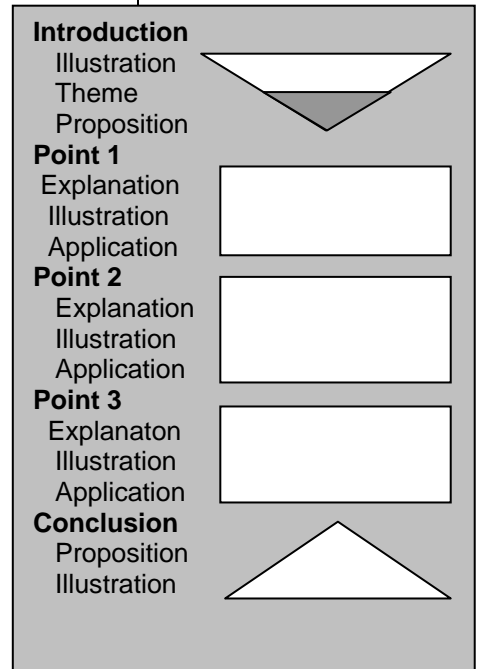
THE FORUM

1. Has the host, or a holiday or a special event determined the theme of my message?
2. Is my message one of several on a theme?
3. What are the characteristics of my audience?
 - Gender?
 - Age span?
 - Common interests?
 - Christians, non-Christians? Disinterested or seekers?
4. What are the time parameters for my message?
5. Under what circumstances will I be speaking? Campfire with poor lighting? Podium? Sound system? Competing noise? Late in the evening after a big meal?

THE PREPARATION

1. PRAYER - Begin with prayer and ask the Lord to guide your thoughts as you study so that He will speak through you to those who are listening.
2. CHOOSE PASSAGE AND THEME – Choose your passage (if one has not been provided for you) and your theme preliminarily. In an expository series, the passage will determine the theme. Your passage should not be merely a sentence fragment (unless it's one of Paul's run-on sentences!), but should include the whole thought or story. Choose a preliminary title for your message.
3. KNOW THE TEXT WELL – Read the passage through several times. Read the surrounding passages to understand the context, and if the book is short enough (like the epistles), read the entire book. Research the writer of the book, the cultural setting and history of the book's writing.
4. EXEGETE – Analyze the grammar of the passage to determine principal and dependent phrases. Break down the text into smaller phrases, and begin to analyze the main words within each phrase using a concordance and comparing your version with other translations to determine how scholars have otherwise translated the words. Bible dictionaries such as Smith's Harper's, Vine's, IVP's or the New Bible Dictionary are helpful as well.
5. ADJUST THE THEME – Now put the phrases back together and consider their expanded meaning. Consider the main thrust or the key message of the passage and adjust your theme accordingly. What change will this truth bring about in your audience? How should they be different 2 days afterward as a result of your message? Don't be satisfied with concluding, "They'll know more about this topic, and they'll make their own application."

6. **ADJUST THE TITLE** - Brainstorm different titles for your message based on your new information. Make the title something catchy, and begin to think of how your introduction can build up to the title of your message.
7. **BUILD AN OUTLINE**. Develop an outline based on the flow or argument in the passage. Sometimes your passage will have three or four phrases that can naturally serve as the main points in your outline. To help folks retain the main points, try to add alliteration or assonance to the main points (i.e., Exaltation, Edification & Equipping, OR Meeting Satan, Seating Satan & Beating Satan).
8. **FLESH OUT THE OUTLINE** – Add appropriate information to your outline such as:
 - ❑ An Introduction. Begin with an illustration that will get people thinking about your theme. Use a personal story, a Bible story, a recent news clipping, etc. It may be funny or sad. Introduce your theme broadly, and then narrow your comments down to your main proposition – the main truth you want them to grasp. OR Introduce your theme, and then ask a series of questions about the topic that you will answer in your message.
 - ❑ The fuller meanings of the words. Don't take them through your research! Avoid use of Greek words unless they are commonly known; it's better to say, "This word can also be rendered . . ." or "this word has the idea of . . ." Avoid saying something is wrongly translated unless scholars are agreed on it.
 - ❑ Stories to illustrate the truth being taught. Remember how frequently Jesus used stories to illustrate truth! There are books and websites that can help with illustrations.
 - ❑ Specific application. Give them things they can do differently this week. Remember that Jesus' sermons, Paul's writings, and the sermons of most great preachers contain 50-70% application of truth!
 - ❑ A Conclusion. Restate your proposition (central truth) and use a story, poem, hymn, etc., for a punchy closing that will drive home the thrust of your theme and leave them thinking.
9. **CONSULT THE COMMENTARIES** – Note that this is something you do *after* you have developed your message unless you fall upon a very difficult issue in your passage. You want to give the people something God has taught you, not something God has taught some scholar. It is not your task to give people what four different commentators have said and have them pick the best interpretation for themselves.
10. **TEST YOUR TIMING AND POLISH** – If you're not an experienced speaker, do a "dry run" of your message in front of someone who will be honest with you, and keep your time. Sometimes it helps to make a video or audio recording of yourself. You should be familiar enough with your material to not be glued to your notes. Over time, you will get to know how many notes you should have (i.e., 3 pages is good, 4 will make the message too long). Is your message of appropriate length and style for your audience and the occasion?



THE DELIVERY

1. Introduction – Get their attention!
 - ❑ Open with an illustration.
 - ❑ Introduce your theme and move to your central proposition.
 - ❑ You could read your main text here or wait until after the prayer.
2. Prayer
3. Body of the Message
 - ❑ Restate the main phrases of the passage. Give the background of the book and passage.
 - ❑ Point 1
 - Flesh out the meaning of the phrase(s)
 - Illustrate the point
 - Make an application of the point.
 - ❑ Point 2
 - Flesh out the meaning of the phrase(s)
 - Illustrate the point
 - Make an application of the point.
 - ❑ Point 3
 - Flesh out the meaning of the phrase(s)
 - Illustrate the point
 - Make an application of the point.
4. Conclusion
 - ❑ Sum up the total meaning of the passage as your theme and state your central proposition again.
 - ❑ Give a closing illustration, poem, etc.