

INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTE OF CHRISTIAN MINISTRIES TRAINING SYLLABUS

PuE 102

SPEAKING IN THE POWER OF THE SPIRIT

By

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COURSE OBJECTIVES

It is the purpose of this course to help you learn:

1. The place of the Holy Spirit in sermon preparation and delivery.
2. The necessity of preparing laypersons to be effective public speakers, both for conducting evangelistic meetings and leading out in Sabbath worship.

3. A simpler method of sermon preparation.
4. The absolute necessity of keeping Adventist preaching:

Spirit-prompted,

Bible-based, and

Christ-centered

5. The importance of hands-on training—by preparing a sermon as part of your classwork.

TEXTBOOK

Your textbook will be *Successful Lay Preaching*, written by Dr. Floyd Bresee, preparer of this syllabus. As introduction to the course, it would be well to study the book's Table of Contents, as the course will closely follow the outline of the book.

There will be four units in the course, based on the first four chapters of the book:

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Chapter 1. Why Lay Preaching?

Chapter 2. Before Beginning

Chapter 3. Ten Steps in Sermon Preparation

Chapter 4. A Working Summary (In which you will be asked to actually prepare an evangelistic sermon as part of your classwork in this evangelism course.)

INTRODUCTION

Slide 5

The title of our course emphasizes the place of the Holy Spirit in preaching. The importance of the Holy Spirit in the preaching process can hardly be overemphasized.

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1. THE HOLY SPIRIT HAS GIVEN THE BIBLE, THE PREACHER'S SOURCEBOOK

“And we have the word of the prophets made more certain, and you will do well to pay attention to it, as to a light shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts. Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet's own interpretation. For prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but **men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit**” (2 Peter 1:19-21).

Without the Holy Spirit, there would be no Bible. Without the Bible, the preacher would have no message.

“All Scripture is God-breathed and is **useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness**, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work” (2 Timothy 3:16, 17).

Slide 7

2. THE HOLY SPIRIT INTERPRETS THE BIBLE TO THE PREACHER'S UNDERSTANDING

Only the Holy Spirit who gave the Bible can rightly interpret it. The preacher is as dependent on the Holy Spirit in interpreting the Bible as the prophet was in writing it.

“This is what we speak, **not in words taught us by human wisdom but in words taught by the Spirit**, expressing spiritual truths in spiritual words” (2 Corinthians 2:13).

Slide 8 **3. THE HOLY SPIRIT MOVES THE HEART OF THE PREACHER THROUGH THE BIBLE'S MESSAGE**

The message does not just go from the Bible to the listeners by way of the preacher's mouth but by way of his heart. The Bible message must move the preacher before it can be expected to move the listeners.

“**My heart grew hot** within me, and as I meditated, the fire burned; **then I spoke** with my tongue” (**Psalm 9:3**).

Unless and until the Holy Spirit has moved your own heart with your Bible message, you cannot hope to be effective in moving the hearts of others. The fire must first burn within you before you can hope to set others afire.

Slide 9 **4. THE HOLY SPIRIT, THROUGH THE PREACHER, MOVES THE HEARTS OF THE LISTENERS TO ACT ON THE BIBLE MESSAGE**

“When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place. Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them. . . .

“Then Peter stood up with the Eleven, raised his voice and addressed the crowd: . . .

“Those who accepted his message were baptized, and about three thousand were added to their number that day” (**Acts 2:1-4, 14, 41**).

Whatever your background, surely it is no more limited than was the preacher's that day. Peter was just a fisherman, but when he followed the Lord and when the Holy Spirit came over him and his congregation, there was tremendous evangelistic success.

Slide 10 **5. THE HOLY SPIRIT WANTS TO SPEAK TO YOU THROUGH THIS COURSE SO HE CAN SPEAK THROUGH YOU TO WIN SOULS TO JESUS**

Slide 9 Why are you taking this course? Do you truly want the Holy Spirit to speak through you? Do you seek the experience of David:

Slide 10 “The **Spirit of the Lord spoke through me**; his word was on my tongue” (**2 Samuel 23:2**).

Slide 9 Why do you want to preach? Is there any chance you want to serve yourself, your own ego? Few experiences can be as self-serving as standing before an audience where we get to do all the talking and everybody else is expected to listen. It can be a heady experience. The Holy Spirit does not lead us to serve ourselves. We need to be like the prophets:

Slide 12

“It was revealed to them that they were **not serving themselves** but you, when they spoke of the things that have now been told you by those who have preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven. Even angels long to look into these things” (1 Peter 1:12).

As you begin this course, please first spend a little time in prayer, asking the Holy Spirit to fill your life so He can use you in bringing Jesus to others.

Slide 13**Chapter 1****WHY LAY PREACHING?****Section 101:**

[Note: References to the textbook will not be made by page, but by “section.” The book was written this way because pagination changes with translation into languages other than English.]

Slide 14**PREACHING IS IMPORTANT**

Ruskin said the preaching hour is “that hour when men and women come in, breathless and weary with the week’s labor, and a man ‘sent with a message’ which is a matter of life and death has but thirty minutes to get at the separate hearts. . . to convince them of all their weaknesses, to shame them for all their sins, to warn them of all their dangers, to try by this way and that to stir the hard fastening of those doors. . . . Thirty minutes to raise the dead in.”

There are only 168 hours in the week. Too many people spend the other 167 in secular pursuits and come to the worship hour “breathless and weary with the week’s labor,” hoping that somehow that one worship hour, the preaching hour, will offset all the rest of the week and provide enough spiritual food to keep their souls healthy.

Shame on them for neglecting their own spiritual pursuits. Shame on them for expecting so much of preaching. But they’re there on Sabbath morning nevertheless. Shame on us for not taking preaching seriously enough to give them our very best.

People come to evangelistic meetings with perhaps very little background in the Bible—almost Biblically illiterate. Shame on them. But shame on the preacher for not spending the time in his/her Bible to bring them Bible truth in such a way as to open their eyes to spiritual things.

JESUS EMPHASIZED PREACHING

Slide 14 “He said to them, ‘Go into all the world and PREACH the good news to all creation’” (Mark 16:15).

Slide 15 Discuss:

Jesus’ attitude toward preaching.

Jesus’ example as a preacher.

Slide 16 THE EARLY CHURCH EMPHASIZED PREACHING

“Then the disciples went out and PREACHED everywhere, and the Lord worked with them and confirmed his word by the signs that accompanied it” (Mark 16:20).

What promise for preachers do you find in this text?

Slide 17 GOOD PREACHING REVIVES THE PEOPLE

A physician, after having heard a helpful sermon, wrote to me, “After listening to a sermon effectively delivered and one giving evidence of having been the object of much thought, I will rejuvenate my despairing hope. This hope has been that somehow, in that setting from which our preachers arise, there would be someone who senses the deep spiritual hunger we experience.

“Someone who has a kind of sensitive awareness of the devotedness of people who come to church week after week seeking food yet too often whose efforts are rewarded with scarcely crumbs. It would be my hope that preachers could be impregnated with the vibrant meaning of ‘feeding the flock.’”

Discuss:

1. Can you come up with examples from your own experience as a listener when preaching brought revival and reformation to your own heart?

Slide 18 2. How did it happen?

3. Why did it happen?

Slide 19 GOOD PREACHING REVIVES THE PREACHER

Late in his preaching years, Henry Ward Beecher said, “I have had youth and middle age, and now I am an old man. I have seen it all, and I bear witness that, while there are single moments of joy in other matters that, perhaps, carry a man up to the summit of feeling, yet for steadfast and repetitious experience there is no pleasure in this world comparable to that which a man has

who habitually stands before an audience with an errand of truth, which he feels in every corner of his soul and in every fiber of his body, and to whom the Lord has given liberty of utterance, so that he is pouring out the whole manhood in him upon his congregation. Nothing in the world is comparable to that. It goes echoing on in you after you get through. **Once in a while I preach sermons that leave me in such a delightful state of mind that I do not get over it for two days.**”

Slide 19

Now, I must admit, I’ve preached some sermons that were so poor they left me in a dreadful state of mind for days. Yet, when you step down from the pulpit knowing God has used you to speak to His people, when you know you have been of some meaningful help to someone, you’ll thank God for the privilege of having been called to preach.

Slide 20

CHURCH LEADERS MUST KEEP THEIR PRIORITIES STRAIGHT

If you are a church leader, your responsibilities in the church are likely numerous. But if preaching is one of those responsibilities, it must have first priority, because, all things being equal, preaching does the most people the most good in the least amount of time.

Unfortunately, the least important often tends to be the most demanding. The lawn may need mowing, the church may need cleaning, the Community Services boxes may need to be carried, but they must not detract from time for preaching preparation.

In holding evangelistic meetings, the place of meeting must be maintained, advertising must be done, but they must not take the place of time for preparing your evangelistic sermon.

Some of the best advice I ever received was: **“Never let the urgent crowd out the important.”**

Slide 21

Discuss:

Your textbook gives two reasons why Adventists in particular tend to neglect preaching.

1. Can you name them?
2. Can you add some others?

Section 102:

Slide 22

LAY PREACHING IS IMPORTANT

It was lay people whom Jesus sent out to preach:

“When Jesus had called the Twelve together, he gave them power and authority to drive out all demons and to cure diseases, and he sent them out to preach the kingdom of God and to heal the sick. He told them: ‘Take nothing for the journey—no staff, no bag, no bread, no money, no

extra tunic. Whatever house you enter, stay there until you leave that town. If people do not welcome you, shake the dust off your feet when you leave their town, as a testimony against them.’ So they set out and went from village to village, preaching the gospel and healing people everywhere” (Luke 9:1-6).

Slide 22

Discuss:

From the above text:

Slide 23

1. What evidence do you see that these were lay preachers?
2. What lessons can you find for lay preachers today?
3. What lessons can you find for “1,000 Missionary Movement” preachers?

Slide 24

4. What can you learn about lay evangelism?

Jesus said, “As you go, preach this message: ‘The kingdom of heaven is near’” (Matthew 10: 7).

5. According to this text, what was to be the message preached by these lay preachers?
6. What should be the message of lay preachers today?

Slide 25

Slide 26

In the Early New Testament church, the preaching was done by the laity. In the Middle Ages, when the church was at an all-time spiritual low, the preaching was done by the clergy. **Down through church history, whenever the church has been taken over by the clergy, it has invariably run downhill. The clergy are important, but most of the work of the church should be done by the membership of the church.**

How does the church, originally a lay organization, get taken over by the professional clergy? It happens only when the laity becomes too lukewarm to do the work of the church—barely interested enough to pay somebody else to do it.

As the story goes, Grandma was having a birthday and the family arranged for a most unusual birthday present. They were going to have her flown over the countryside where she had lived her whole life. For the first time, she could get a birds-eye view of home. Now, Grandma had never had her feet off the ground and wasn’t sure she wanted to start now. But she was a pretty game old girl. Besides, what do you do with a birthday present?

All went well until they got her to the airport. Well, the plane wasn’t very big and, to tell you the truth, Grandma was. She took one look at the little plane shivering in the wind and began shaking her head, “It’ll never get me off the ground—it’ll never get me off the ground.”

Finally, they got her strapped in, roared off into the blue, circled around a few times and landed. The pilot brought the plane up to the hangar and cut the engine. Teasingly, he turned to Grandma and said, “Well, are you convinced now it’ll get you off the ground?”

Now, one more thing about Grandma, she hadn't lost many arguments in her day. Quick as a flash, she shot back, "Don't be smart young man, I'll have you know I never put my full weight down."

Too many laity in the church are like Grandma in the airplane. They're in it but have never put their full weight down. You'll never enjoy your church experience until you put your full weight down. Get both feet into Christ's church and its mission. Put your full weight down.

Slide 27

Section 103:

LAY PREACHING IN NEW TESTAMENT TIMES

Discuss:

1. How many New Testament lay preachers can you name?
2. What seemed to be their primary qualifications?
3. What should be the primary qualifications of a lay preacher today?

Slide 28

Section 104:

LAY PREACHING IN RECENT TIMES

Discuss:

1. Name some outstanding lay preachers since the Protestant reformation?
2. Name some of their most significant contributions.

Slide 30

Section 105:

LAY PREACHING WOMEN

Slide 31

Ellen White, one of Adventism's founding leaders, did not consider herself a pastor. She had no formal ministerial training. Yet she preached a great deal. Basically, she was a lay preacher.

Slide 30 Discuss:

1. Share with the class what you know about Ellen White as a preacher.
2. What lessons can we learn from her preaching?

Slide 32

Section 106:

LAY PREACHING ADVENTISTS

HISTORICALLY, ADVENTISM BEGAN WITH LAY PREACHING

Discuss:

How many early Adventist lay preachers can you name?

Slide 33 **THEOLOGICALLY, ADVENTISM SUPPORTS LAY PREACHING**

“Now about spiritual gifts, brothers, I do not want you to be ignorant. . . . There are **different kinds of gifts**, but the same SPIRIT. . . . Now **to each one** the manifestation of the SPIRIT is given **for the common good**. To one there is given through the SPIRIT the message of **Wisdom**, to another the message of **knowledge** by means of the same SPIRIT, to another **faith** by the same SPIRIT, to another gifts of **healing** by that one SPIRIT, to another **miraculous powers**, to another **prophecy**, to another **distinguishing between spirits**, to another speaking in different kinds of **tongues**, and to still another the **interpretation of tongues**. All these are the work of one and the same SPIRIT, and **he gives them to each one just as he determines**” (1 Corinthians 12:1, 4, 7-11).

The title of this course is, “Speaking in the Power of the Spirit.” It’s a course in preaching—Spirit-filled preaching. The text above talks seven times about the Holy Spirit, which is basic to the course. A preaching course should teach exegesis, the interpretation of Scripture. It should teach hermeneutics, applying Bible truth to contemporary life. Thus, let’s spend a little time **interpreting the passage** and applying it to your preaching:

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“to each one. . . .gives them to each one” Everyone receiving the Holy Spirit receives a gift for some kind of ministry. To say you have no gifts is to say you have no Holy Spirit.

“for the common good” The purpose of your spiritual gifts is not self-aggrandizement but service. The Holy Spirit has blessed you so you might bless others.

Paul now mentions nine of the gifts of the spirit. Some of these are especially relevant to preaching: wisdom, knowledge, faith, prophecy. You should have some of these gifts before presuming you have been called by the Spirit to preach.

Slide 34 **“he gives them . . . just as he determines”** In other words, you don’t choose your gift, the Holy Spirit does. You do, however, choose the ministry, the place of service, where you will use your gifts to serve others.

“there are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit” Christ did a dangerously divisive thing when he gave different gifts to his church. I believe much of the dispute in a local congregation can be over the variety of gifts represented in the church. If I have the gift of teaching, I feel more emphasis should be placed on education. If I have the gift of helps, I want welfare work emphasized. If I have the gift of healing, I want health evangelism, clinics, and cooking schools. If I have the gift of preaching, I want the pulpit emphasized.

1 Corinthians 12 likens the church to a human body. There’s a parable about the fellow who woke up in the morning and reached over on the night stand to put his glasses on as usual. He couldn’t see a thing without them. But just as he was settling the glasses on his nose, the nose spoke up, “Hold it. No more glasses on this nose. See the ugly red spots they’ve made on either side of me? If the eyes want glasses, let them hold them. No more glasses on this nose!”

Poor man, he had no choice, but to put the glasses back on the night stand. He got out of bed, started across the room and bumped into the door and bent his nose. You see, it was true the eyes needed the nose—but it’s equally true that the nose needed the eyes.

That’s what Paul is talking about in 1 Corinthians 12. All the spiritual gifts are necessary, but unless they’re all operating under the same Holy Spirit, each will belittle the other.

Slide 36 **If God has given you the spiritual gifts needed for preaching, praise Him for it. But never assume your gift is any better than any other.** Preaching can be a heady experience. All our lives we’ve tried to be listened to and often felt nobody heard us. But when we preach, protocol demands that we do the talking and others have to be still and listen. It’s enough to make any preacher proud!

Slide 35 **Discuss:**

1. **As you study the spiritual gifts mentioned above and elsewhere, which gifts needed for preaching do you have?**
2. **Which gifts needed for preaching do you lack?**
3. **For which gift needed for preaching do you most earnestly seek the Holy Spirit just now?**

Slide 37 **PRACTICALLY, ADVENTISM NEEDS LAY PREACHING**

Unfortunately, few listeners prefer to listen to a sermon preached by a lay person. At one time, last minute, shallow preparation was a little more acceptable than now. Today, the very finest

speakers are available to almost everyone through radio, television, etc. Having access to the best all week through the media, they are impatient coming to church to hear poor preaching.

Discuss:

Slide 38 1. Think about the lay sermons you've heard. Were you blessed or bored?

Slide 39 2. Have you felt used of God as you've preached? Or have you been putting people to sleep?

3. Would you like to hold evangelistic meetings and be effective in bringing souls to the Savior?

Lay people can preach well with a little training and a lot of work. As we come to the heart of this preaching course, I challenge you to give it your best. Preaching is fairly easy. Preparing to preach is very hard work. If you're willing to work, this class can, along with your gifts from the Holy Spirit, make you a truly effective preacher.

Slide 40 Jesus told a parable about three servants to whom their master gave either five, two, or one talents. The five-talent servant made another five talents. The two-talent servant made another two. But the one-talent servant refused to use what he had and this was what aggravated the master. On the other hand, the master was just as pleased with the two-talent servant as the five. Why? The five-talent servant had made over twice as much. **But the reward didn't depend on how much each accomplished, but whether they did their best with what they had.**

You may be a one-talent preacher, but if the Master calls you to preach, all He expects is a one-talent sermon. But He will expect the best one-talent sermon of which you're capable. The Master is just as pleased with the two-talent preacher's sermon as the five-talent. Now, what if the five-talent preacher preaches a three-talent sermon? He's still doing better than the two-talent speaker. The Master would not be happy. What if the one-talent preacher says he's just not good enough to even try? Jesus lesson is that **your best is always good enough. Less than your best is never good enough.**

Slide 41 Let's move into the heart of our course now, determined to do our very best.

Chapter 2

Slide 42

BEFORE BEGINNING

Slide 43

Section 201:

KNOW YOURSELF

EXAMINE YOUR MOTIVES

Discuss:

Ask yourself:

1. **Why am I in this course?**
2. **Why do I want to preach?**
3. **Do I really want to serve?** Or do I just say that to hide my desire to be important?

Slide 44

FILL YOUR CUP

Your sermon is your experience to date. At the close of a service aboard a ship, a sailor came to his chaplain. “That was a great sermon, sir,” he said. “Tell me what makes you think so,” invited the chaplain. The sailor replied thoughtfully, “It was great because it took something from your heart and put it in mine.” What comes from the heart goes to the heart.

The lame man at the Temple gate asked Peter and John for money. But Peter said, “Silver or gold I do not have, but what I have I give you. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, walk” (Acts 3:6, NIV). Peter didn’t give money because he didn’t have money to give. But the words he spoke brought healing because he had Christ. Our business in preaching is bringing to our listeners healing through Christ. But we must have Him ourselves before we can give Him to others. There’s nothing harder than trying to give what you don’t have.

As preachers, our primary purpose in Bible study is not to find something to say to others, but something that changes us. We should read our Bibles, not so much as preachers on the search for a sermon, but as human beings in search of food for our own souls. This, in turn, is what makes a sermon appealing. **We interest others by that which exceedingly interests us.**

Faithful filling brings effective emptying. Recently I traveled in a country where nearly every house had a large container at one corner of the building for storing drinking water. Rainwater flowed down the roof, was piped into the tank, and from there into the house. In one house, I

We see all three means of persuasion illustrated dramatically in every political election. Invariably, each candidate tells us about his program (logos), then he wraps himself in the flag or kisses a voter's baby (pathos). But through it all, voters are listening for something else. "What kind of man is he?" "Do I dare believe what he says?" "Can I trust him?" Unless a candidate can get most voters to answer those ethos questions positively, he's unlikely to get elected.

If a politician must convince his audience he is a good man before they will believe his message, how much more true is this of the preacher. Don't misunderstand. It's not that preachers are in a popularity contest. Their goal is to attract their listeners to Christ, not to themselves. It's just that nobody is won to Christ by a person he doesn't like. Thus, good audience rapport is a must for the preacher—but it's not easy. Here's why:

The messages about ourselves that we think we are sending are not necessarily the messages our listeners are receiving. When video recording was just becoming practical for amateur use, I was in graduate school, and I experimented with it as a means of teaching preaching. Eventually, the school where I taught made a video camera available. Now student preachers could see themselves just as their audiences saw them! It was exciting and somewhat helpful, but eventually we turned away from it. Young preachers were overwhelmed by the unintended messages their voices, appearance, and mannerisms conveyed. The ethos messages they had thought they were sending were so different from the messages they saw in themselves that they could hardly hear their own sermons.

Imagine that you have on your pulpit a little black box. On the box are listed character traits, each with a button under it. Beside the hymn racks in front of each worshipper are other black boxes, identical to yours except that they have little lights instead of buttons.

As you preach, you want your congregation to view you as a congenial, caring person, so you reach down to your black box and push the button under *Friendly*. You do so, of course, assuming that *Friendly* will light up on your listeners' boxes, but instead, *Gushy* lights up before most of them. Press *tender* at your pulpit, and *Weak* or *effeminate* may come on in the pew. Send *Spiritual*, and they may receive *Impractical* or *Square*. *Enthusiasm* may come through as *Emotionalism*, *Brilliant* as *Cocky*, *Scholarly* as *Dull* or *Aloof*, and *Dynamic* as *Angry*. They aren't receiving what you think you're sending.

Now, you will always have some in your audience whose black boxes are so poorly wired that they get different messages from everyone else's. We can only try to understand and love these people. But if too many are receiving wrong ethos messages, then you are sending the wrong messages.

The more genuine you are in your own Christian experience, the more likely you'll be to send your audience the messages you intend to portray and the more Christlike your listeners will perceive you to be.

And remember, **nobody is led to Christ by a person he doesn't like.**

Section 202

KNOW YOUR LORD

This section of the textbook is so abbreviated and the subject of Christ-centered preaching is so important that we must devote special syllabus time to it:

CHRISTIAN PREACHING MUST BE CHRIST-CENTERED PREACHING

Too often, we preachers give people only something to believe. God won't let them be satisfied until they have found someone to love. And to help your listeners love Christ, you must first love Him yourself.

It makes no difference what your subject or passage is, **all** preaching must be Christ-centered—or it isn't really Christian preaching at all. Spurgeon insisted, "Put me down anywhere, Old Testament or New, and I'll head straight for the cross." Whether your sermon is on Stewardship, The 2,300 Days, or Christian Education, the preacher who knows the Lord will find a way to center the sermon on Him.

Incidentally, there is a little serendipity at work here. Although we don't preach Christ so our listeners will love us, they will. I confess I like being loved. I dare say you do too. Listen to members tell about their spiritual journey and they'll almost invariably speak glowingly and lovingly about the one who brought them Jesus. The sinner invariably loves the one who introduces him to Christ.

But what is Christ-centered preaching? How can you tell if you're a Christ-centered preacher? I've known some earnest preachers who asked someone to count the number of times their sermon included name of Jesus, hoping that would tell them whether or not it was Christ-centered. But that's too inaccurate. If the number of times Jesus name is mentioned determines whether or not we're Christ-centered, some plumbers are more Christ-centered than most preachers.

How can you tell if you're a Christ-centered preacher?

FIVE CHARACTERISTICS OF CHRIST-CENTERED PREACHING

1. Christ-centered preaching uses Christ as proof. In sermon preparation, continually be asking yourself, "What did Jesus say about this?" "What did Jesus do?" Quote often from Christ.

Preach much from the gospels. Your well-worn Bible tends to show your preaching emphasis. A Christ-centered preacher's Bible will be dog-eared and tear-stained in the four gospels.

2. Christ-centered preaching is hope-centered, salvation-centered. The word “gospel” means good news. If our sermons aren’t good news, we aren’t preaching the gospel

Paul counseled, “Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are **lovely**, whatsoever things are **of good report**; if there be any virtue, and if there be any **praise**, think on [and thus preach on] these things” (Philippians 4:8, KJV).

Looking at Paul’s list above, we see it’s not enough to preach what’s true, honest or just. What we preach must also be lovely, of good report and filled with praise. Too many sermons emphasize the former to the neglect of the latter.

People don’t usually have to come to church to know they’re sinners, but they may have to come to know that in Christ there’s hope. The listener who’s fallen down, already likely knows it without your telling him about it. Christ-centered preaching reaches down as Christ did and offers sinners hope.

Negative preaching may sometimes stop wrong action, but it hardly ever motivates to right action.

Now, making a portion of your sermon negative, calling sin by its right name, isn’t totally out of place. But it must never be the emphasis of the sermon. If there’s a negative portion of the sermon, it should be early on, followed by an emphasis of a positive hope in Christ. Never end your sermon on a negative note. Don’t send people home on flat tires.

3. Christ-centered preaching is preaching as Christ preached. Christ was a life-centered preacher. In most societies today He wouldn’t be talking about sheep, but about supermarkets, superhighways, space shuttles and telecommunication networks. He talked about life as His listeners lived it.

Christ was an interesting preacher. He answered His listener’s needs. Too many preachers fail to “scratch where people itch”. Today, He would be talking a lot about such problems as loneliness, a special issue in our times. The “Individual Freedom” movement has left people lonely. People are living longer, moving more, divorcing often and raising children in single-parent homes. Talk to people’s needs and you’ll be an interesting preacher as Jesus was.

Christ was an illustrating preacher. “Without a parable spake he not unto them.”

4. Christ-centered preaching preaches a Biblical Christ. The athletic preacher is tempted to preach an athletic Christ, the artist an artistic Christ. The same is true of the extrovert, the introvert, the liberal, the conservative, the scholarly, the gregarious.

The young preacher preaches a young person’s Christ. But how can he then reach the old people? The old preacher preaches an old person’s Christ. But how can he then reach the young people?

Unless we continuously study the Bible picture of Christ we will, all unintentionally, tend to picture His personality to be like our own. But the truly Biblical, crucified Christ will attract all kinds of people.

Most of all:

5. Christ-centered preaching is preaching by a preacher whose life is centered in Christ. If Christ is in your heart, He'll just naturally come out in your preaching.

Taylor-Smith, renowned London preacher, came to America and was scheduled to preach in Dwight L. Moody's Chicago church. Harry Ironside was the pastor. But Taylor-Smith came down with a severe case of laryngitis and told Ironside he wouldn't be able to speak. "People won't be able to hear me beyond the first rows." Ironside pled, "The meeting has been announced. People are coming. Please do the best you can." And so he did.

Sure enough, only the first rows heard him. After the service a man came to the platform and said, "I was way up in the balcony. Couldn't hear a word you said. But I couldn't escape the shine on your face. And if Christ can put that kind of shine on a man's face, I want to accept Him as my Savior."

Is Jesus so real in your life that he's put a shine on your face? Your listeners, especially the children, have a right to presume that if they do what you ask, they'll look the way you look.

Before you prepare to preach, make certain Jesus has put a hope in your heart and a light in your eye. When Christ is in your heart, He'll just naturally come out in your preaching.

And one certain measure of your love for Christ is your love for your listeners. True Christ-likeness never draws us away from people, but invariably draws us to them.

The parish priest
Of Austerity
Climbed up in a high church steeple
To be nearer God,
So that he might hand
His word down to His people. . .

And in sermon script
He daily wrote
What he thought was sent from heaven,
And he dropped this down
On his people's heads
Two times one day in seven.

In his age God said,
"Come down and die!"
And he cried out from the steeple,
"Where art Thou, Lord?"

And the Lord replied,
 “Down here among My people.”

Discuss:

1. Which of the five characteristics of Christ-centered preaching do you feel is most important?
2. Which do you find easiest for you to follow?
3. Which do you find hardest? Why?

Section 203:

KNOW YOUR BIBLE

ADVENTIST PREACHING MUST BE BIBLICAL

Biblical preaching isn't shallow. I was pleased recently when a man came to me in the church parking lot after service to thank me for my sermon. Then he went on to say how disappointed he was that most preaching was so shallow—just “Pablum”. He felt preachers had little to say because they spent little time with the Bible.

On the other hand, in the county where I live, there's a country church that's attracting worshipers from many miles around. It's located in an unpopulated area, yet thousands drive 15 miles or more on a winding road regularly to worship there. If you ask them why they drive all that distance, past countless other churches, they'll say it's because the Bible is preached there. The pastor sits on a stool with his Bible in hand and speaks directly from the Word. They feel that Biblical preaching gives sermons a depth of thought that makes them worth listening to.

Truly Biblical preaching will make your sermons worth listening to also.

Biblical preaching provides a never-ending source of material. Flying over Mid-America in summertime, one sees myriads of giant, circular fields. Each is kept green by a huge, central-pivot sprinkler system showering well water on the crop day after day for the entire growing season. But sometimes more water is taken out of the earth than nature is able to replenish. It is with good reason that farmers live in perpetual fear that the water table may drop. What a relief it would be if their wells could be guaranteed never to run dry.

The preacher is a lot like those farmers. His sermons keep pulling ideas out of the limited supply stored in his head. He is expected to go on showering fresh, inspiring, deeply spiritual thoughts down upon his congregation week after week. It is with good reason that preachers often live in fear that they may simply run out. This may be doubly true of lay preachers whose theological

background, knowledge and training may be very limited. What a relief it would be if they knew a secret that would guarantee the sermon well to never run dry.

There is such a secret:

When you begin biblically, you have an inexhaustible supply of sermon material. Your well is guaranteed never to run dry. More than 3,000 of Charles Spurgeon's sermons had been published when that great preacher declared, "After 35 years I find that the quarry of Holy Scripture is inexhaustible. I seem hardly to have begun to labor in it."

When you begin biblically, you don't get bored with your preaching. Why? Because you are continually learning rather than continually repeating over and over what you already know.

Are you a Biblical preacher? Or do you just mean to be?

How can you tell?

Here are three prerequisites to Biblical preaching:

1. BIBLICAL PREACHERS BELIEVE THE BIBLE WORKS

The Christian preacher uses the Bible as a resource because Jesus did. Luke 4:17 explains, "And when he had opened the book, he found the place where it was written." Jesus was not only beginning His sermon, but His entire preaching ministry. He began with the Book. And so should we.

Two of the most important words you could take away from this class are:

Bible first. Bible first. Bible first. Bible first. Bible first. There's just no way I can say it too many times. Now, I'm not talking about beginning your pulpit presentation with a text. That may or may not be the best way to begin. What I am talking about is putting the Bible first in your sermon preparation.

There's a humorous yet thoughtful story about the Quaker who woke up in the night with his wife's elbow in his ribs, "Get up, get up. There's a thief in the house." He sat up in bed, listening. Sure enough, someone was sneaking around downstairs.

As the story goes, he took his shotgun off the wall and started stealthily down the stairs in his nightshirt. There was some rascal helping himself to the family silver. Now the Quaker was in a dilemma, for he didn't believe in violence. But neither did he believe in losing the family silver.

He pointed his gun, cleared his throat and spoke quietly, "Friend, I mean thee no harm, but I am about to shoot where thou standest."

Friend, I mean thee no harm, but I am about to shoot where thou standest. I fear that almost none of us are true biblical preachers. Most don't really follow the "Bible First" rule.

The truly biblical sermon does not just include the Bible. It begins with the Bible. The biblical preacher comes to the Bible first in his sermon preparation. As nearly as possible, he comes with a blank mind, knowing nothing but his passage or topic. **He doesn't open the Book looking for something that agrees with what he wants to say. He opens it asking what it tells him he should say.**

That's Bible First. That's biblical preaching.

Discuss:

Are you truly a biblical preacher?

2. BIBLICAL PREACHERS SPEND TIME WITH THE BIBLE

For years I've had a recurring nightmare that still haunts me every few weeks. It comes in ever-changing versions, but the context is the same: I'm about to preach and I'm not ready. I can't decide what to preach about, or I've forgotten to prepare, or I've lost my notes. I can almost hear Jeremiah 23:2, "Therefore thus saith the Lord God of Israel against the pastors that feed my people; Ye have scattered my flock, and driven them away." I always wake in a cold sweat, my heart beating wildly.

For the preacher there's no worse nightmare than to fail in feeding your flock, or to drive God's people away because you've nothing significant to say about Him.

How can we avoid this? By somehow finding time for Spirit-prompted Bible study. As we stand in the pulpit on Sabbath, how desperately we want to have something worthwhile to say. But as the alarm goes off at five a.m. for our intended study time on Tuesday morning, oh, how hard it is to get out of our warm comfortable bed.

The best sermons result from our spending enough time with our Bibles to have many times more material than we can use. If we quit preparation when we barely have enough, sermons are almost certain to be mediocre. When we have a significant excess and prayerfully sift through it until we keep only the very best, then we know we're doing our best.

3. BIBLICAL PREACHERS APPLY THE BIBLE TO THEMSELVES

Journaling provides one of the surest and simplest sources of sermon ideas. In your private devotions, whenever you find a Bible truth that really warms your heart, write it down. Do it, not just so you'll have something to preach, but because the idea is meaningful to you in your own spiritual walk.

When it comes time to prepare a sermon, if you've been faithful in writing down ideas that interested you, they'll likely interest you again. And, if they interest you, they'll likely interest your listeners. You need never again come up to sermon time without something you really want to say.

Discuss:

It would be an excellent exercise at this juncture to assign each class member to spend a specified time in a journaling experience. Study your Bible, write down what is most meaningful to you and share it with the class.

First applying truths to yourself helps you make them understandable to others. It's an odd yet real fact that we sometimes preach truths that we're not quite sure we understand ourselves. This makes our sermons fuzzy even to us, much less the poor listener. Yet our responsibility is to make truth understandable to our hearers.

Any simpleton can make easy things difficult to understand. Good preaching makes difficult things easy to understand. Never attempt to impress your audience by trying to overwhelm them with your superior knowledge of Scripture or theology. That's the ego speaking, not the Holy Spirit.

The preacher must mine deeply into God's Word. He needs to dig. But he mustn't come to the pulpit with the attitude that his listeners may not be able to understand as he understands. It's his business to bring truth to the surface in such a way that it's available to every sincere worshiper.

I love the story of the Feeding of the Five Thousand, for what it illustrates about preaching. The disciples didn't make any bread. Jesus made the bread. Then were the disciples superfluous? What was their part in the miracle?

The disciples came to Jesus for the bread. They weren't in the bread baking business. All they had to do was come to Jesus. What a relief it was to me when I learned that lesson in my preaching! When I began ministry I was frightened. I knew I didn't know enough to have something worthwhile to say week after week. But I eventually learned that I wasn't in the baking business. All I had to do was go to the hands of Jesus through His Word. Providing the bread was His business.

Now, when feeding of the Five Thousand was finished, low and behold, there was still bread left over. The hands of Jesus never ran out of bread. If you're fearful of not knowing enough to have something worthwhile to say in sermon after sermon, learn the lesson. So long as you keep coming back to Jesus, through Scripture, you'll never run out of truth to share. When your preaching years are over, there'll still be more bread there.

The disciple's job was to take the bread from Jesus hands and bring it bite-size to the people. And that's the preacher's task. We take the bread from Jesus Word and bring it understandably to the congregation.

First applying truths to yourself helps you make them interesting to others. Enthusiasm in the preacher tends to breed enthusiasm in the listener. First, the fire must burn in you, before it will kindle a fire in your people. People tend to be very attracted by a fire. When the pulpit is on fire, people will come to see it burn.

The truths that interest and move you are almost certain to interest and move your listeners.

First applying truths to yourself helps you make them practical to others. Fosdick made one of the most poignant statements on preaching ever published in the 20th century: “Nobody but a preacher would ever assume that people come to church desperately anxious to know whatever became of the Jebusites.” The message is, don’t let your sermon be about places people have never been, but about where they are now. Don’t let it be about the past, but the present. Shake the sands of Palestine out of your Bible. Let your listeners know you know something about Palestine and the past, but that you’re speaking to people’s pressing needs in the present. The simplest and surest way to accomplish this is to first apply your truths to yourself and your own practical needs. Then it’s easy making your truths practical to your listeners.

An intellectual may love truth and use people. A preacher must love people and use truth. Preachers are in the people business—not just the truth business.

Our business is not to lecture on botany, but to raise flowers. Now, if you’re going to raise flowers, it’s important to know something about flowers. But the purpose of the knowing is the flowers. The preacher needs to know something of Christian doctrine, but must never forget that the purpose of this knowledge is not just for the knowing, but for helping his listener.

It may sound heretical, but if you’ll think it through, I think you’ll agree that **truth isn’t really true unless it helps people.** You see, biblical truth comes from God and God’s first love is always people. He doesn’t love knowledge or theory for their own sake, but for what they can do to help people. With God, people come first. The biblical preacher must love people and search the Scriptures continually, not just for knowledge, but for knowledge that helps people.

A biblical preacher needs at least three things to prepare a biblical sermon: one Bible and two chairs.

Now, the chair must be comfortable enough to spend time in. It’s his study chair and he knows that the preparation of truly biblical sermons takes a lot of time.

As he seats himself in that chair he opens his Bible with a prayer, “Lord, what do you have for our people this week? I love these people and I know you love them even more. Please give me something that will help them. I ask you to send the Holy Spirit who wrote the Book to interpret it to me so I can use it to help them.”

As the preacher studies his Bible, suddenly a light comes on. Now, everything up to this point has just been work, requiring significant self-discipline. But now comes the excitement! The Holy Spirit plants a lesson in your mind that has come to you out of the Word.

Now you need the second chair—probably an imaginary one. In your imagination, you place in that chair the different kinds of people you expect will be listening to your sermon.

Put in that chair the young. Always preach to the young. We tend to preach over the heads of our listeners. But if you'll remember the twelve-year-olds as you prepare, you'll end up with a sermon everybody can understand. What is there in this lesson that will help the boys and girls, the young people?

Put in that chair the old folks in your congregation. Their situation in life is different. Their needs are unique. For example, young people seldom think of their death. Old people think of it every day. How can this lesson help them?

Put in that chair the educated, who require significant depth of thought and are bored by the shallow. Put in that chair the ignorant, who must have things plain and simple before they can carry it away. How can this lesson help them?

Put in that chair the non-Christian. Always preach with the assumption and hope that there will be someone in the audience who has not accepted Christ as his Savior. Put in that chair the lifetime member who may have heard this passage or topic a hundred times before. How can this lesson help them?

Put in that chair the man who's just learned he has cancer, the husband who just married his wife, the wife who just buried her husband, the single mother who's trying desperately to support and raise her family alone. Ask the Holy Spirit how this lesson could be used to help them.

Try it and it might be said of you as it was said of Spurgeon: The little boy poked his mother as Spurgeon preached, "Mother, why is he always talking to me?"

That's how we pray people will respond to true biblical preaching.

Discuss:

Now think through again the prerequisites to biblical preaching and ask yourself once more, "Am I truly a biblical preacher?"

Section 204

KNOW YOUR TOOLS

BIBLE VERSIONS

Discuss:

1. Define: formal, dynamic and paraphrase.
2. Identify which of these three categories each of the listed Bibles falls into.

3. Discuss the limitations and proper use of each.

You may also want to discuss the advantages and disadvantages of the King James Version. It is surely to be respected, because it is loved by many. However, when we study the history of its development we may become less enthusiastic about its superiority. It is not more sacred, just more familiar.

A basic rule for the use of versions in the pulpit is to use what your people use. One problem is that, in many congregations, many different versions are being used. As you read from yours it's natural to assume your people are reading the same thing from theirs. However, the listener using a different version may be so impressed by the difference from what you're reading that he is thinking about the difference while you read, instead of concentrating on what you're trying to teach.

I'm a strong supporter of pew Bibles for this reason. The preacher would then, of course, use the same version as those in the pew. Listeners, following along in the same version as the speaker, tend to be less distracted from the preacher's message.

In your study, use a Parallel Bible if available. You can get more Bible ideas faster than having to look up your texts in several different Bibles. And it's especially important for busy lay preachers to be always looking for ways to save time in sermon preparation.

BIBLE REFERENCE BOOKS

If I were to suggest my preferences, I would rank the Concordance, SDA Bible Commentary and Topical Bible as most needed reference works. The Topical Bible has an advantage over the Concordance if you are doing topical preaching. You can look up the main words of your topic in a Concordance, but you'll waste a lot of time looking up texts that don't really refer to your topic. On the other hand, there are a lot of texts that will refer to your topic though they may not include these words at all.

One advantage of the SDA Commentary is, you can depend on its theology. Another is that Ellen White's views and writings are often included.

Discuss:

1. What Bible reference books do you have?
2. What such books do you need?
3. What can others in the class tell you about how you might get the books you're lacking, also computer software, which may sometimes actually be cheaper than buying all the books you need.

ELLEN WHITE BOOKS

Even Spirit of Prophecy books should not be consulted in sermon preparation until after you have gotten everything possible directly from the Bible. Ellen White said her writings were the lesser light leading readers to the Bible, the greater light. Never substitute the lesser light for the greater light.

Unfortunately, we find it easy to look to Ellen White's writings, because her counsel is so direct and easy to understand. Thus, they can provide a lazy way to prepare sermons. We can look to her to tell us what to do without understanding why.

There are significant numbers in many congregations who are prejudiced against Ellen White. This is often because this is what they have been spanked with. Instead of using her writings in this negative way, introduce her quotations with, "Look how beautiful it's stated here." Then read a short, pithy quote. Never read long quotes from Ellen White and seldom from the Bible. Read just the part that says exactly what you're trying to teach.

It is sometimes hard to know how to introduce Spirit of Prophecy quotes without offending nonSDAs. The moment some of them hear "Ellen White" they remember what they've been told about Adventists putting her works above Scripture.

My solution is to name the book from which you're quoting, such as "In the book *Desire of Ages*, page 100, it says. . . ." Thus, SDA's will automatically know you're quoting from Ellen White, while most nonSDA's, who might be prejudiced, won't.

Discuss:

1. How have you used Ellen White in your sermon preparation?
2. How have you used her in the pulpit?
3. How do you intend to use her writings in the future?

MISCELLANEOUS BOOKS

The most effective preachers are invariably avid readers—and broad readers.

Working in a sunny garden you come away with a sun tan although that was not your purpose at all. Everywhere you go, the results of the sun will show. Reading widely in both good religious and secular books will affect both your thinking and your language, so that although that was not your purpose, it will show everywhere you go.

I would not recommend your planning to do a lot of reading outside Scripture in your sermon preparation, however. You really don't have time to read other books without shorting your time with the Bible. Do most of your reading of other books at other times.

If your book budget is limited, try used books. Used bookstores are available most everywhere and the material in a good used book is just the same as that in a new one.

I just returned from a Campmeeting in Canada where the Adventist Book Center, for the first time in my experience, actually sponsored a used book display. Books that were selling for 30-40 dollars new, were selling for two dollars used.

Closer to home, you can begin a book sharing program in your local church. Invite members to bring the books they're finished with and exchange them for books they'd like to read.

Although copying sermons from other preachers isn't ideal, you may have noticed there are 10 abbreviated sermons and 20 sermon outlines in the back of this book. Their principal purpose is to serve as examples of what is taught in this course. However, if you're really stuck for a sermon sometime, you may find one that will help you get started in preparing your own sermon.

Although a computer is not the same as a book, I would like to put in a word in favor of using one in your sermon preparation. If money is scarce, you might find a computer that has been replaced with an update, yet will still work perfectly well as a word processor, which is all you need for sermon preparation.

Computers save time in the sermon preparation process. Changes, reorganizing and deletions are so much quicker and easier than in handwritten or typed material. We're always looking for ways to save time.

Discuss:

1. What religious reading other than Scripture or Ellen White do you find most helpful?
2. What secular reading do you find most helpful?
3. Do you hand-write? Type? Use a computer in sermon preparation?

Why?

KNOW YOUR PREPARATION TAKES TIME

Discuss:

Do a little math. Multiply the number in your congregation by 30 minutes. Now, are you willing to somehow find the time in sermon preparation so you can be certain you're not wasting that much of your listeners' time?

TAKE TIME TO PRAY

The title of this course is, “Speaking in the Power of the Spirit.” We all long to preach with power. How can we have that power? Power for preaching comes from the Holy Spirit and the Holy Spirit comes through prayer.

Discuss:

1. What kind of prayer brings Holy Spirit power?
2. What specific thoughts should be expressed in this sermon preparation prayer?

START EARLY

Starting sermon preparation early is actually a time-saving device.

Discuss:

1. Share your thoughts on each of the three rewards of starting sermon preparation early.
2. How long before your preaching appointment do you usually start your sermon preparation?
3. When do you think you **should** start?

PLAN YEARLY

Discuss:

1. How does yearly planning save time?
2. How does yearly planning produce balanced preaching?
3. Has your preaching, or that of other preachers you’ve heard, been balanced? What areas of Bible truth do you think may have been neglected?
4. Is yearly planning really important to the lay preacher who only preaches a few times a year?

GET HELP

One of the best preachers I know, says he has often gone to his church school during the week to talk with the boys and girls about his upcoming sermon. He has tried various other means of getting help in sermon preparation, but found that some of the best help came from children.

Discuss:

1. What kinds of help from others have you used in your sermon preparation?
2. What kinds of help from others is available to you if you choose to use it?

Section 206

KNOW YOUR SERMON TYPE

Unfortunately, lay preaching is too often viewed as boring. One way to improve that reputation is to spend more time in sermon preparation. Another, is for the lay preacher to purposely provide variety in his preaching by using different sermon types.

Before we look into the different sermon types, it is important to emphasize that no one type is necessarily more biblical than any other. Any can be highly biblical. Any can be hardly biblical at all. Don't choose any type over another assuming it is automatically more biblical.

Nevertheless, we'll look at four types of sermons in what I consider to be a descending order of their importance.

Discuss:

1. Do you feel it important to you personally to use different sermon types?
2. Why?

EXPOSITORY

Discuss:

1. Define the term "Expository Sermon".
2. Study the sermons in Sections 502, 503, 504 in your textbook. What are the three different ways these three sermons use the Bible?
3. Which of these three do you feel you would most like to use?
4. What are the strengths of Expository preaching?
5. What are the potential weaknesses of Expository preaching?

TOPICAL

The issue of Topical preaching deals somewhat with the theology of Biblical Inspiration. Your textbook's quote from Ellen White may be a bit thought provoking and even upsetting to you, for it indicates that no one Bible author is likely to grasp and write the whole truth on a given subject.

She says, "One writer is more strongly impressed with one phase of the subject; he grasps those points that harmonize with his **experience** or with his **power of perception** and **appreciation.**"
...

To illustrate my understanding of Biblical Inspiration as defined here, say there are ten truths on a given subject which the Holy Spirit wants shared through Scripture. One writer picks out maybe three that "harmonize with his experience or with his power of perception and appreciation." Another writer picks another two, someone else picks four. Thus, you never get all the truth from any one of them, but only through all of them.

On the other hand, since all ten truths came from the same Holy Spirit, although the emphasis chosen by each Bible writer may be different, all will be in harmony. Thus we say we must study any subject from different Bible authors to find the full truth of it.

Discuss:

1. Define the term "Topical Sermon."
2. What have you learned from Sections 508 and 509 of your textbook about Topical preaching?
3. What is the danger in neglecting or omitting Topical preaching?
4. What are the strengths of Topical preaching?
5. What are the potential weaknesses of Topical preaching?

BIOGRAPHICAL/NARRATIVE

Alton McEachern observed, "The gospel itself is made up principally of narration. It is a series of accounts of people, places, and happenings, not simply rational arguments. Modern preaching appears to have reversed the percentages: while the gospel is nine-tenths narration, most of our sermons are nine-tenths exhortation."

Biographical/narrative preaching probably relies on the preacher's imagination more than any other of the types. In this, there are two special dangers to watch out for.

First, the imagination must be an “informed” imagination. Begin by learning all the Bible facts possible then add all the historical facts available. Only then should you add your imagination and feel prepared to preach a Biographical/Narrative sermon.

Second, don’t get so caught up in either your imagination, or the character or characters involved, that you forget these are not the reasons we preach. Our business in preaching is teaching lessons and motivating our listeners to follow them. The lesson, not entertainment, is always the bottom line.

Discuss:

1. Define the term “Biographical/Narrative sermon.”
2. Though enough alike to include them in the same category, Biographical sermons are a little different from Narrative. In what way are they different?
Section 506 exemplifies this difference in the same sermon. Does it work?
3. According to the textbook, 90% of the Bible is narration. Why?
4. What are the strengths of Biographical/Narrative preaching?
5. What are the potential weaknesses of Biographical/Narrative preaching?

TEXTUAL

Discuss:

1. Define the term “Textual Sermon”.
2. What are the strengths of Textual preaching?
3. What are the potential weaknesses of Textual preaching?

COMBINATIONS

At times it is possible that a sermon is a combination of Expository, Topical, Biographical/Narrative and even Textual. There is significance, however, in whether we begin our sermon preparation by investigating a passage, a topic, a narrative or a single text.

Determining sermon types serves a more important purpose than establishing correct homiletic theory. These sermon types involve four very different approaches to sermon preparation. You can quickly determine which sermon type you use by asking yourself how you go about preparing a sermon. If you’re an Expository preacher, you likely begin by settling on a passage of Scripture. If you’re a Topical preacher, you probably start by picking a subject. If you’re a Biographical/Narrative preacher, you tend to begin by choosing a Bible character or incident. If

you're a Textual preacher, you start with just a verse. And where you begin has an overwhelming influence on where you end up.

Our purpose in preaching is to teach a biblical Christ and motivate our listeners to follow Him. We never do it well enough. Maybe a little experimentation with different sermon types will help us do it better.

Discuss:

1. Study Section 507. Where does Exposition end and Topical begin?
2. Do you see an understanding of sermon types of significance to you personally?
3. What percentage of your preaching in the past has been: Expository _____ %, Topical _____ %, Biographical/Narrative _____ %, Textual _____ %?
4. What percentage of your preaching in the future would you like to be in each of these four sermon types?

Section 207

KNOW THE SEGMENT METHOD OF SERMON PREPARATION

We come now to the heart of this course's uniqueness—sermon preparation using the “Segment Method.”

SEGMENTS DEFINED

The preparation of a sermon is such a complicated and daunting task as to be frightening to the most experienced minister, much less the lay preacher. But you can come up with one good lesson that can be developed into a sermon segment. And you can come up with another. Eventually, you'll fit several of these sermon segments together in a logical fashion, add an introduction and a conclusion and have a sermon. It's so much easier to take a long hike if you think of it as taking just one step at a time.

Ellen White seemed to encourage this segment approach to preaching when she wrote to an evangelist on June 5, 1886, “Take up one point at a time in a discourse, make it strong and clear and plain, with reasons drawn from the Word of God. . . .”

When finished, a segment sermon might look something like this:

Introduction 2-5 minutes

Segment 1	2-5 minutes
Segment 2	2-5 minutes
Segment 3	2-5 minutes
Segment 4	2-5 minutes
Segment 5	2-5 minutes
Segment 6	2-5 minutes
Conclusion	2-5 minutes

Now, segment one must logically lead to segment two, etc. This is where the segments are like the compartments of a ship. Each compartment is separated from the next one by a bulkhead, yet each leads to the next and, altogether, they form one well-designed and functional ship.

Discuss:

1. What is a sermon segment?
2. What are the three listed advantages of the Segment Method of sermon preparation?

SEGMENT'S THREE PARTS

In the pulpit, the normal order in presenting a segment is: lesson, then proof, then illustration/application, then probably a repetition of the lesson.

In the study, however, the order begins with the proof. We use Bible First. Next would be the lesson that the Holy Spirit brings to you out of the Bible. Your illustration/application may come to you later as you go about your everyday business.

The illustrations help keep your audience listening so they'll hear the lessons. They are never an end in themselves. Even sharing Bible is not our focus. Our primary concern is finding and sharing the lessons we find in the Bible.

As electricity travels along the wire toward your house the power of the current gradually drops in strength. But, before it enters your home, it passes through a transformer that boosts it up again. As you preach, trying to share lessons and proofs, the attention of your congregation gradually drops. And so we use illustrations that work like the transformer to boost the attention back up so they'll hear your lessons again.

Segment preaching, since every segment is meant to include illustration/application, almost forces the inclusion of illustration every few minutes. Listeners hardly have time to wander, because continual use of illustration continually gets their attention again. The illustration need

not be long, for telling stories is not our business. They should be just long enough to regain attention and open a window on the lesson being taught. The lesson is the main thing and the effective preacher keeps the main thing the main thing.

When you worm an animal, you may need to wrap his favorite food around the worming pill in order to get the pill down. It's getting the pill down that's your objective. The food is the way of getting it down. In preaching, getting the lesson in is our objective. The illustration may help in having the lesson understood, and it's surely a big help in getting the lesson to go in.

Discuss:

What do you personally see as the logic behind the textbook's statement, "Enough illustration so they'll hear, enough lessons so they'll be helped"?

SAMPLE SEGMENTS

Discuss:

1. Be prepared to share a segment taken from one of the sermons in the back of your textbook.
2. Be prepared to share an original segment of your own based on Luke 13:28, 29. Incidentally, you might want to keep this segment, to help you fulfill an assignment you're going to receive later in the course.

RULES FOR GOOD SEGMENTS

Discuss:

Be prepared to share from memory the six rules for good segments. This is not difficult if you remember that 1-3 deal with the segment lesson, 4 deals with the proof, 5, 6 deal with the illustration/application.

Chapter 3

TEN STEPS IN SERMON PREPARATION

Section 301:

Step 1: CHOOSE YOUR BIBLE PASSAGE OR TOPIC

It's perfectly proper to choose your passage or topic ahead of time. It's not proper to decide what you're going to say about them. This would break the Bible First rule.

This part of sermon preparation can be difficult and frustrating if you have no plan for choosing your passage or topic ahead of time. On the other hand, if you are following the "journaling" or the "sermon garden" plan as suggested in your textbook, this first step is a simple one.

Discuss:

1. How have you chosen your Bible passage or topic in the past?
2. How do you intend to choose them in the future?

Section 302

Step 2: STUDY YOUR PASSAGE TO FIND SEGMENT LESSONS AND PROOFS

Remember to focus principally on just lesson and proof at this juncture! Note that the emphasis in these 10 steps in sermon preparation are going to emphasize Expository preaching. However, the same general rules apply for the other sermon types.

HOW TO STUDY YOUR PASSAGE

Discuss:

1. What are the three questions you should ask as you read your passage rapidly?
2. In studying your passage, what is meant by "context"?
3. In studying your passage, what is meant by "setting"?

4. Why are context and setting so important?
5. What are the five rules for using quotations in sermons?

A SPECIAL WAY TO TAKE NOTES

From now on we'll be referring to two kinds of note paper:

3x5's is an arbitrary size for small pieces of note paper. The actual size is insignificant. They simply need to be small and inexpensive enough that you'll feel free to use lots and lots of them. It's a little neater if they can all be of the same size.

8 1/2x11 is again an arbitrary size. This sheet, though it can actually be of any size, needs to be a large one. You'll do a lot of scribbling on this page. Begin by writing "Possible Outline" at the top of the sheet and "Possible Theme" in the center.

Discuss:

1. How can 3x5's save time?
2. How can 8 1/2x11 save frustration?
3. Discuss organizing a sermon before you research—after you research—as you research.

DEVELOP YOUR THEME AS YOU GO

Discuss:

1. Define "theme."
2. What's the difference between "topic", "title", and "theme"?
3. Why is the theme so important?
4. Your text says, "...Do not tax listeners by saying a great many things, but inspire them by saying one thing in a great many ways."
How does that fit your own preaching?
5. Explain, "A sermon is like a river with tributaries running into it."

Section 303:

Step 3: ADD ILLUSTRATIONS/APPLICATIONS TO COMPLETE YOUR SEGMENTS

Discuss:

Do you carry pen and paper with you as you go through your daily activities? Why?

IMPORTANCE OF PRACTICAL APPLICATION

Discuss:

1. How can the preacher reach the Old Timers, the Baby Boomers and the Baby Busters, all three in the same sermon?
2. What is the significance to your preaching of the textbook statement, “The disciples saw things, but Jesus saw people?”

IMPORTANCE OF ILLUSTRATIONS

Dad used to assign my older brothers and me the task of sacking grain. Being the youngest, I held the mouth of the sack open while my brothers shoveled the grain. There’s a bit of a trick to putting your forearm into the sack in such a way as to make the mouth of the thing stay open so the grain would go in.

My brothers thought I was a lousy sack holder. I thought my brothers were terrible shovelers. Suffice it to say that we shoveled a lot more grain than we sacked. Dad was funny about that. He never gave us credit for how much grain we shoveled, only for how much went into the sack.

The preacher who is proud of “shoveling” a lot of truth may need to be reminded that our Heavenly Father is like my earthly father. He credits us, not with how much truth we present, but how much goes in.

Illustrations help the truth go in.

Discuss:

What are the three good things that happen when you use illustrations?

HOW TO USE ILLUSTRATIONS

The segment’s three parts are: lesson, proof, illustration/application. That order should seldom be changed. It’s the lesson that we want people to carry away. Then we prove it to convince people it’s true. Then we use illustration/application to show how it works in life. If your lesson is not obvious to both preacher and congregation as the illustration is used, it may be only entertainment.

First, give and prove your lesson. Then, shine the light of an illustration on it so the lesson is seen more clearly. It's usually a pretty good plan to then repeat the lesson as you end the segment. It'll stick better.

HUMOROUS ILLUSTRATIONS

Discuss:

Do you ever use humor in the pulpit? Why?

SOURCES OF ILLUSTRATIONS

Some preachers take considerable pride in taking most of their illustrations from the Bible. I would suggest that for the typical Adventist audience, stories from the Bible serve better as proof than as illustrations. Watch a congregation as an old Bible story is told in the same old way. Attention begins to lag, rather than to be captured, as an illustration is meant to do.

Discuss:

“Homiletic bias means keeping our minds focused on finding _____
in _____”.

FILL OUT YOUR SEGMENTS

Discuss:

Which two parts of your sermon segment usually come to you at the same time?

When you're absolutely stuck for an illustration, you'll usually find some practical application readily available.

Example from an Expository sermon on Psalm 46:

Lesson—Every physical, every human refuge can eventually fail, but Jesus never fails.

Proof—Psalm 46: 1-3 “God is our refuge” “mountains quake” “mountains fall”. We think of mountains as nature's fortresses, immovable, unshakable.

Practical Application—What are you going to do when the unshakable shakes? When the pastor misbehaves, your Sabbath school teacher apostatizes, the elder cheats in selling you a used car? Some hurt is pressing on every heart here. Some refuge has failed: the failure of a church leader, the death of a loved one, a troubled marriage, work that isn't working, a child that's left the Lord, failing health.

Lesson repeated—Every physical, every human refuge can eventually fail, but Jesus never fails.

Section 304:

Step 4: CHOOSE THEME AND OUTLINE

Now's the time you'll be thankful if you faithfully scratched out on your 8 1/2x11 sheet possible themes and outlines. You'll have lots of possibilities to choose from. And, since they grew out of your research, some will surely fit the material you've gathered, the segments you've prepared.

CHOOSE YOUR THEME

As you look at all the scratchings under the words "Possible Theme" on your 8 1/2x11 sheet you may find that by combining ideas from two or more you come up with a strong theme. However, beware of letting your theme get too long or complicated. It should be just one simple sentence carrying one profound truth.

If you have possible themes you want to use later, plant them in your "Sermon Garden" for future sermons.

CHOOSE YOUR OUTLINE

Your segment lessons should form the heart of your outline. If you have a segment that doesn't fit the theme, it doesn't fit in this sermon no matter how good the segment may be. Save it till later.

SAMPLE THEMES AND OUTLINES

Notice that, in each of the three sample sermon outlines, the theme is given in the introduction—before the segments are presented.

Discuss:

As you study the textbook's one topical and two expository sample sermon outlines, which sermon type do you think fits the segment method best?

Section 305:

Step 5: ORGANIZE YOUR SERMON

PURPOSE OF ORGANIZATION

Discuss:

1. Why is a well-organized sermon easier to preach?
2. Why is it more important for speakers than for writers to show their “skeleton”?
3. Your goal as a preacher should be “_____, thoughts _____expressed and _____ applied.”

INTRODUCTION

Please give thought to an issue that applies to both the sermon theme and the sermon segment. To illustrate, the backwoods preacher was having exceptional success in his pulpit. People were flocking to hear him. Asked the secret of his success, he answered, “Well, I tell ‘em what I’m gonna tell ‘em. Then I tell ‘em. Then I tell ‘em what I done told ‘em.”

I urge you to consider this approach to preaching. Do it with your theme. Do it with the lesson in each segment. Too simplistic? Never, if your theme and segment lessons have good depth of thought.

Remember, in even the best of sermons, people hear only a small percentage of what you say, and they understand only part of what they hear. Repetition will not bore unless your thoughts are shallow. Simple does not mean simplistic.

Discuss:

1. Why should the sermon introduction be one of the last parts of the sermon to be prepared?
2. What percentage of the sermon should be introduction?
3. What is deductive preaching?
4. What is inductive preaching?
5. What is the recommended third alternative?
6. “Clever is _____, but _____ is essential.”

7. “You can’t hit people between the _____ while you’re preaching over their _____.”

8. After studying Sections 502-505, what’s your feeling about use of a sermon pre-summary?

BODY

A horse has a head and a tail and everything in between is body. A sermon has an introduction and a conclusion and everything in between is body.

CONCLUSION

Discuss:

1. Why is the conclusion the most important part of a sermon?
2. Do you feel that preparing your conclusion ahead of time thwarts the Holy Spirit’s leading as you preach?
3. “Don’t present any new arguments in the conclusion.” Why?
4. “The summary instructs the _____. The call to action confronts the _____.”
5. What have Sections 504-507 taught you about conclusions?
6. How would you call for action in an evangelistic sermon?

LAY OUT 3X5’S

The importance of putting each part of your outline on a separate 3x5 will be obvious in step 6 of your sermon preparation.

Section 306:

Step 6: CHANGE AND DELETE

CHANGE OUTLINE

With each part of your sermon on a separate 3x5 it’s so much easier to make changes than if your material were on large sheets of paper.

CONTROL LENGTH

1. How long do you like to listen to a sermon?
2. How long do you usually preach?
3. How long do you think you **should** preach?
4. “Stop preaching before your people _____.”

DELETE MATERIAL

Deleting material is a cinch with the 3x5 method of taking notes. Each piece of paper can be moved around till it finds the place where it fits best. Material taken out can easily be filed away.

It may seem odd, but this part of sermon preparation is one of the hardest. It takes strong self-discipline to delete material that doesn't quite fit this particular sermon, or that makes the sermon too long. But it's this discipline that moves a sermon from mediocre to effective.

Section 307:

Step 7: WRITE OUT YOUR NOTES OR MANUSCRIPT

NOTES VERSUS MANUSCRIPT

Discuss:

1. Give and define the four options in sermon delivery.
2. What are the advantages and disadvantages of each?
3. Which method have you practiced in the past?
4. Have you used what is, for you, the easiest? Or the most effective?
5. What method do you intend using in the future?

PREPARE EVERYTHING POSSIBLE

Admittedly, this suggestion is very nitty-gritty and detailed, but don't overlook it. Be so prepared that, as you preach, the mechanical never interferes with your being totally immersed in the spiritual

Section 308:

Step 8: PREPARE YOURSELF

Remember again that a sermon should be the preacher up to date.

As you opened your Bible and started your sermon preparation, you prayed, asking the Holy Spirit to give you something worthwhile to say. Now, as you finish your preparation, get on your knees again and ask that Holy Spirit to, through Christ, make you worthy of saying it.

Section 309:

Step 9: PREACH

Discuss:

When is a sermon preached, but not delivered?

STAGE FRIGHT

Discuss:

1. Give your textbook's five suggestions to help you handle stage fright.
2. What has been your personal experience with stage fright?
3. Which of the five suggestions above do you think you'll find most helpful?

USE OF WORDS

You've so much to think about as you preach, that wording should not have to be one of them. Rather, focus on your use of words and grammar in your daily activities, so that you learn to speak correctly. Then concentrate on your **message** in the pulpit and just let the wording come naturally.

VOICE

There's bound to be some in your audience who have trouble hearing you. Usually, this is because they have become hard of hearing, often without admitting it to themselves. Sometimes, however it is because we have developed habits that make us harder to be heard.

We may get to speaking too fast. We may drop our voice at times, especially at the ends of sentences. One of the advantages of taping your sermon is so that you can learn to detect and thus address the problem.

APPEARANCE

Discuss:

1. In preaching, what do we mean by “static”.
2. “Three helpful criteria for pulpit dress are _____, _____ and _____.”
3. What does it mean to “dress invisibly”?
4. “A good rule for use of gestures is ‘ _____it, _____it and _____ it'.”

At a certain age in life we begin to need glasses for reading, but may not yet have become accustomed to wearing them all the time. Thus, in the pulpit, we’re forever putting them on and off. Don’t do it! Everytime we perform such a simple mechanical act as this, we risk the danger of people thinking about our glasses, when we want them thinking about our message.

TRANSITIONS

Discuss:

One of the clearest and most natural ways to make transitions in your sermon is to “repeat the lesson of the _____, show how it teaches _____, then announce the lesson of your _____.”

SPEAK NATURALLY

Be yourself in the pulpit. One of the surest ways of sounding hypocritical is to speak or act differently when you’re in the pulpit than when you’re in the pew.

Section 310:

Step 10: CRITIQUE

Discuss:

“To grow, preaching must be followed by _____.”

PARTNER EVALUATION

Discuss:

How can you overcome the congregation's reluctance to honestly critique your sermon?

PERSONAL EVALUATION

Discuss:

Why is personal evaluation so difficult immediately after you preach?

PRESERVING EVERYTHING

This and accurate critiquing may be the parts of preaching most neglected. You may have been disappointed by the sermon, or merely have gotten tired of it. But don't waste all that sermon preparation effort on just one presentation. Develop some way of preserving what you've prepared. Don't ever preach it the same way, but improve it, re-work it and build in the future on what you've developed in the past.

Chapter 4

A WORKING SUMMARY

Now we're going to shift gears and close our class with a very practical exercise. Your first time through the 10 steps of the Segment Method may have left you a bit confused at this juncture. Putting them into practice will make their learning easier. Besides, we learn best by doing. And so your assignment now is to actually do in class what we have been talking about in theory.

Either in your classroom or as a homework assignment, each student should now prepare a sermon following each of the 10 steps of the Segment Method. Please follow Sections 402-410 in your textbook carefully.

This course is meant to be especially helpful in the preparation and preaching of evangelistic sermons. Thus, you will not be preparing an Expository sermon on Matthew 18:21-35 as is illustrated in Chapter Four of your textbook, but a **Topical sermon on the Second Coming of Christ**.

I've done Step One for you by choosing the topic so the whole class will be working on the same subject. You'll find the assignment much more interesting and practical if you assume you're working on a sermon you expect to preach, either in class or later. Presenting your sermon in

class can be done by dividing the class into groups of about three. Take turns listening and preaching--two listen while one preaches.

Because you may not have reference works available in your present setting, I'm listing below, texts you might consider using in your sermon. There are far too many to include all of them in your sermon, but I would recommend your studying them all in the process of choosing those you will use:

Isaiah 11: 6-9

Isaiah 25: 8, 9

Isaiah 35: 4-10

Daniel 2: 34, 35, 44, 45

Matthew 7: 21

Matthew 13: 39-49

Matthew 24: 1-14, 27-51

Matthew 26: 63, 64

Matthew 28: 20

Mark 13: 24-37

Luke 17: 24-39

Luke 21: 25-28

John 14: 1-3

Acts 1: 9-11

1 Thessalonians 4: 16-18

Titus 2: 12-14

2 Peter 3: 3-14

Revelation 1: 7

Revelation 6: 14-17

Revelation 22:12-20

After completing this assignment,

Discuss:

In what ways do you now expect the Segment Method will be helpful in your future preaching?

I leave you now with the charge of Paul to his student, Timothy, **“In the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who will judge the living and the dead, and in view of his appearing and his kingdom, I give you this charge: PREACH THE WORD; . . .”** (1 Timothy 4: 1, 2).