LIBERTY BAPTIST THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

A LAYMAN'S GUIDE FOR PREPARING EXPOSITORY MESSAGES FROM EPISTOLARY LITERATURE

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ABSTRACT

A LAYMAN'S GUIDE FOR PREPARING EXPOSITORY MESSAGES FROM EPISTOLARY LITERATURE

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The purpose of this project was to pull together information from the fields of hermeneutics and homiletics, simplify that information, and provide the layman with a practical guide for preparing expository messages from epistolary literature. The writer establishes a biblical basis for expository preaching, then develops a proposed plan for the preparation of expository messages. A Manual in the appendix takes the reader through the step-by-step, eight step process, proposed in the manual.

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PREFACE

The desire for this project arose from the writer's experience as a young preacher called to preach at the age of twenty, with a hunger for the Word of God. Upon announcing his call to the ministry his pastor immediately arranged for him to speak in a church on Sunday morning and Sunday night. When the writer asked his pastor what he should preach, his pastor gave him a book of printed sermon outlines. He himself was a topical preacher who depended heavily on printed sermon outlines. The pastor was very helpful and supportive in providing opportunities for the writer to preach. He did not, however, offer much help in the area of how to prepare original sermons, let alone expository sermons.

As the writer listened to other men who were Bible expositors, mostly on the radio, he learned that preaching did not have to be shallow. His burden to preach developed into a burden to better understand and communicate the Word of God. At the time however, all he knew to do as a young preacher without formal training was to pray, look up the references in the margin, and make a few notes. A helpful friend soon

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taught him how to use a concordance and Vine's expository dictionary. He later bought a copy of William Evans' book on How To Prepare Sermons. This helped him in the area of sermon outlines but not in the area of getting into the text and pulling out its original meaning.

His first step toward a real understanding of the scriptures came during a revival service in which the preacher actually sought to teach something through his preaching. This preacher later introduced the writer to something called "hermeneutics." The word itself was formidable. He bought Edwin Hartill's book on hermeneutics and learned a few principles of interpretation but did not learn a methodical approach for studying the scriptures, which was what he was looking for. He continued to purchase books on preaching and hermeneutics and attended evening school classes, but with little satisfaction. Most of what he found was either over his head as a layman, or not practical enough to guide him through the steps of sermon preparation.

After preaching for four years as a layman he was called to pastor a small church of about 130 members and enrolled in Bible College. He was particularly excited about two of the classes he was to take - hermeneutics, and expository preaching. To his dismay, the writer
discovered that even these classes would fall short of teaching him a step-by-step procedure for developing expository messages. The instructors were ill-prepared, rambled, and discussed preaching related topics, but neglected a methodical approach for preparing sermons.

Since that time the writer has attended several other preaching classes and devoured scores of books on preaching, picking up helpful tidbits here and there. He is yet, however, to find anything that provides a student with a comprehensive, illustrated, step-by-step, methodical approach to preparing expository messages, written on a layman's level.

This is not to say that there are no helpful books dealing with principles of sermon preparation. There are many. But the writer's reading, experience, and interaction with others has indicated to him that a training guide providing the reader with a methodical, step-by-step approach to sermon preparation, on a level simple enough for the layman, is lacking in most of the material that is available. Therefore the writer has sought to develop such a guide with this project.

The writer recently discipled two men one-on-one in expository preaching. One was a Bible college graduate on his way to the mission field that did not take a single course in the area of homiletics. The second was a state university graduate who was called to
preach, could not leave his job to go to seminary, and was struggling with preparing expository sermons for his congregation of about sixty. The writer has also taught an expository preaching class at the Bible institute level. It would be helpful to have a printed guide to use for such training.
CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this project is to develop a training guide that pulls together information from the fields of hermeneutics and homiletics, simplifies that information, and provides the layman with a step-by-step guide for developing expository messages from epistolary literature. It is hoped that as a result of such a guide the layman who reads it will be able to avoid the frustrating journey taken by the writer in his quest to become an expositor.

Statement of Limitations

This study will concentrate on two different fields of practical theology - hermeneutics and homiletics. Due to the extensive nature of both of these fields the writer will not deal with the history of hermeneutics, the problem of meaning, faulty approaches, or special hermeneutics. Many of these topics make for difficult and irrelevant reading for laymen. Hermeneutics will be dealt with only as it relates to how to study a passage for the purpose of determining the author's intended meaning.
It should also be obvious that this study will not address all the areas of homiletics. Such areas as a theology of preaching, types of sermons, and sermon delivery would be helpful but are not within the scope of this paper. The writer will discuss the nature and value of expository preaching and the prerequisites for being an able expositor. The mechanics of sermon construction, such as proposition, body, introduction, and conclusion, will also be dealt with. Other than that, only as they relate to the actual preparation of the message will other subjects be discussed.

This study will also limit itself to epistolary literature. It is not within the scope of this work to deal with how to prepare expository messages from Hebrew poetry, Old Testament narrative, or parables. The epistles are chosen for several reasons. First, they lend themselves more readily to expository preaching. Jerry Vines suggests that the beginner choose a book that is short and simple and suggests either James or Philippians.\(^1\) Note that both of these are epistles.

In Merrill F. Unger's book on expository preaching he provides the reader with three brief examples of the expository method and one complete message.\(^2\) All four


of the messages are from the epistles. William Evans provides his readers with three examples of an expository sermon. All three are from the epistles.\(^3\) This would seem to suggest that the epistles are somewhat easier for beginners to work with in preparing expository messages. The writer's own experience has borne this out. Some of the easiest expository sermons for the writer to prepare have been those developed from the epistles.

A second reason for choosing the epistles is the fact that they are more readily applicable to the church. They were written to New Testament believers and were applied directly to their situation. In many cases the writers were making use of earlier material and applying it to their own circumstances. Regarding this use of earlier material, Sidney Greidanus remarks, "In practically every case that material is used not to focus on the past but to make a point for the present."\(^4\) As a result, the epistles tend to be more practical in nature and easier to develop into a practical outline.

Greidanus mentions that the impression is sometimes given about the epistles that they are more


difficult to interpret because of their detailed truth and careful shades of meaning. However, he argues that they are actually less complicated because the "material is used not to focus on the past but to make a point for the present."\(^5\) In summarizing, he acknowledges the difficulty of interpreting the epistles, but still argues for his case,

Hence while interpretation of the Epistles may be somewhat more difficult because of their closely argued, condensed nature, the fact that one usually deals only with one textual horizon simplifies interpretation considerably.\(^6\)

It is not the purpose of this project to deal with contemporary approaches to preaching. It is not an attempt to deal with dramatic monologue or first person narrative. It is an attempt to help the layman develop inductive and deductive messages that are expository.

The writer recognizes that homiletics is both a science and an art. Being such, the criticism is sometimes made of methodical approaches to sermon preparation that it stifles creativity. The purpose of this project is not to stifle one's creativity but to provide helpful guidelines within which one's creativity can be expressed. This is no different from teaching an aspiring artist the basics of art before turning him

\(^5\)Ibid.

\(^6\)Ibid., 312.
loose on the canvas. Fred Craddock writes, "One becomes a concert pianist not by abandoning the scales but by mastering and repeating that most basic experience." Teaching someone the basics of any art does not stifle their creativity, it harnesses it.

**Definition of Terms**

In connection with the title of this project it will be necessary to define three terms - layman, expository preaching, and epistolary literature.

Because of its association with the heirarchy in the Roman Catholic church, the term "layman" has in the past been criticized as an inaccurate description of God’s people. However, the writer feels that the word is helpful when properly used. D. F. Wright gives this brief history of the development of the word:

Laos could mean 'the populace, masses', in distinction from leaders or experts ... and so the people of Israel apart from the priests (Heb. 5:3; 7:27). From this usage the adjective laikos entered Christian literature, first in 1 Clement, which distinguishes the 'lay person' from the high priest, priests, and Levites... Clement is talking about Judaism, not the church, but from c. 200 (Tertullian, Hippolytus) 'lay' became common to designate non-clergy, as the obverse of regarding bishops and presbyters as priests.

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The writer contends that to criticize the term based on its original usage and therefore to vilify it is an unfair criticism. Greg Ogden accurately warns his readers, "Ordination should never create a class distinction where a group of people is set apart from and above the rest of the members of the body."\(^9\) It is true that in its original designation this term implied an extreme separation between the church leaders and its members. But it has become the standard designation in our day for those who are not ordained to the ministry. According to Wright, "This is the conventional designation of church members who are not clergy (ordained)."\(^{10}\)

With that in mind, this layman's guide is a guide designed for men who have sensed God's call upon their life to preach His Word, yet have not been ordained nor formally trained for that task. The commonly accepted term used to refer to such, whether accurately or inaccurately, is "laity." Rather than reinforce an unbiblical distinction between clergy as ministers and laity as onlookers though, such a guide as this will serve the purpose of promoting the involvement of those who are not ordained into the ministry.


\(^{10}\)Wright, "Laity."
A definition for expository preaching is more elusive. Some homileticians define expository preaching on the basis of the length of the text. J. Daniel Baumann says, "Expository sermons are based on a biblical passage longer than two verses."\(^{11}\) However, this writer contends that it is best to define expository preaching on the basis of how the text is dealt with. If the passage is dealt with in such a way that the author’s intended meaning is clearly exposed and made relevant to the hearers, then it is more likely than not an expository sermon.

With this idea Merrill Unger concurs when he says, "The valid criterion, it would seem, is not the length of the portion treated, whether a single verse or a larger unit, but the manner of treatment."\(^{12}\) While it is true that larger units lend themselves to expository preaching, this is not the criterion for determining whether one has preached an expository sermon. Haddon Robinson recognizes this in his definition of expository preaching when he defines it as:

The communication of a biblical concept, derived from and transmitted through a historical, grammatical, and literary study of a passage in its context, which the Holy Spirit first applies to the

\(^{11}\) J. Daniel Baumann, An Introduction To Contemporary Preaching (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1972), 102.

\(^{12}\) Unger, 33.
personality and experience of the preacher, then through him to his hearers. 13

Note that Robinson emphasizes both an accurate interpretation of the text and an application of that text to both the preacher and his hearers. This writer defines expository preaching as preaching that exposes the intended meaning of a biblical passage and applies that message to the hearers in a way that is consistent with the original intent of the author. It generally involves an extended portion of scripture, usually at least a paragraph, and is more than a verse-by-verse commentary on the passage at hand.

While expository preaching may not always involve going through a book of the Bible, doing book studies does allow the preacher to focus on a single book instead of skipping around. Doing so not only gives him a greater understanding of that particular book but also allows him to make the most efficient use of his time. This guide therefore, will provide the reader with a methodology for preparing a series of expository sermon outlines from a New Testament epistle.

Epistolary literature has already been referred to in the remarks above. A clear definition however, is in order here. Samuel A. Cartledge explains the difference between an epistle and a letter when he writes:

A distinction is often made between a letter and an epistle. A letter is actually written from one person or group to another person or group, whereas an epistle is in the form of a letter but is meant for general circulation. ... All the books called epistles and all the epistles mentioned in the New Testament are letters in the fullest sense. Usually we know the very names of the persons who wrote them and also the persons or groups to whom they were written.\(^{14}\)

Epistolary literature is that literature in the New Testament which is written in the form of a letter to individuals and groups. This includes all the writings of the New Testament with the exception of the Gospels, Acts, and some of Revelation.

**Statement of Methodology**

In the first few chapters of this project the writer will attempt to provide the rationale for the thesis itself. He will begin with the biblical basis for such a project as this. The writer will argue from three biblical assertions. First he will demonstrate the priority of preaching. He will then show that biblical preaching was and is expository. Finally he will point out the responsibility of gifted leaders to equip the saints for this ministry.

The writer will then provide a review of the literature available in this area. Although a few

dissertations will be mentioned, the primary focus will be an analysis of what appear to be the most helpful books in the areas of hermeneutics, homiletics, and expository preaching. The surveys, interviews, and books mentioned in various writings will be used to help the author determine which books fall into this category. Those books will then be listed along with a brief, critical review of the more popular ones mentioned.

An analysis of the data will be the subject of chapter four. In this chapter the writer will summarize the results of the survey. Over two hundred surveys were mailed out. Eleven were returned unopened. A little over ninety were returned completed. Most of the surveys were from North Carolina and Virginia. The writer will also provide the results of two interviews conducted with two different men who are known for being Bible expositors, one a pastor, the other an evangelist.

The writer will then offer a proposed plan for the development of expository messages. This plan will consist of a simple, methodical format that guides the reader step-by-step through the process of preparing a series of expository sermons. The plan itself is divided into two stages, broken down further into eight steps. The results of a survey used to analyze the strengths and weaknesses of this proposed plan will be presented in the conclusion.
Following the final chapter, there will be a series of appendices. The first two will be samples of two surveys that were conducted. The third and fourth will be transcripts of the interviews that were held. The fifth, will be a proposed training guide for preparing expository messages. This training guide will consist of a simple, systematic format that will be divided into three parts. Part one will deal with the prerequisites to expository preaching. Part two will be a simplified explanation of the proposed plan. The third part will illustrate the plan using a New Testament epistle. This proposed guide will represent the culmination of the project.
CHAPTER TWO

BIBLICAL BASIS OF THE PROJECT

Is there biblical justification for a project such as this? It is the writer's contention that the scriptures not only provide justification for this project, but also, by implication, encourage it. The writer will seek to demonstrate this contention by arguing from three biblical assertions. First, preaching is a priority ministry in God's plan. Second, biblical preaching was and is expository in nature. Third, the pastor and other gifted leaders have a responsibility to prepare the saints for works of ministry. Therefore, a project that aids gifted leaders in preparing others for the ministry of biblical preaching is justified in scripture, if not altogether encouraged.

The Priority Of Preaching

While there are several ministries that a believer might be engaged in, there is one that God has put a premium upon - preaching. This is not to belittle those engaged in parachurch ministries, or other types of service. God certainly uses Christian drama, puppetry,
audiovisual productions, music ministries, magazines, books, and a host of other means for reaching the lost. Broadus mentions several of these methods of communicating truth, but then asserts that:

They are, indeed a challenge to intelligence, freshness, relevance, and reality in preaching; and they must be utilized for the ends of preaching, but they cannot be substituted for it.¹

Martyn Lloyd-Jones contends that, "The primary task of the church and of the Christian minister is the preaching of the Word of God."²

What is it that makes preaching such an important task in the church? W. T. Purkiser writes about the priority of preaching:

Many reasons may be given for the importance of preaching. Not the least is the one stated by the Apostle Paul: "It pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe" (1 Cor. 1:21).³

The context of this passage makes it clear that the content of the message and not the form is what appears foolish to man. It is the preaching of the cross that is foolishness (v.18), not preaching in general, though sadly that may be true in some parts of the country.


The fact of the matter is that God Himself, according to this passage, chose preaching as the divine means of communicating His message to man. Leon Morris writes, "'Pleased' fixes attention on God's free and sovereign choice." While the emphasis of the passage is on the message and its results, the method of communicating that message is more than incidental. God chose the method of preaching.

Though the word itself is not used as often in the Old Testament, it is clear that preaching was a priority in the Old Testament. The word "preach" is found only four times in the Old Testament in its verb form. The first reference is in Sanballat's letter to Nehemiah accusing him of appointing prophets to preach that Nehemiah was king in Judah (Neh. 6:7). The second reference is of the Psalmist who "preached righteousness in the great congregation" (Ps. 40:9). Isaiah 61:1, later read and fulfilled by Jesus (Lu. 4:18), refers to a special anointing to preach the gospel. The final reference is God's commission to Jonah to preach to the Ninevites (Jonah 3:2).

The scarcity of the word in no way indicates a lack of the important role preaching played in the Old Testament. The Old Testament word which would be

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4 Leon Morris, The First Epistle of Paul to the Corinthians (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1963), 44.
equivalent to that of the New Testament is the word "\textit{qarah.}" According to the Dictionary of New Testament Theology this word appears about 650 times in the Old Testament and is usually translated in the Septuagint by "\textit{kaleo.}" In the Authorized version, it is translated "cry" about ninety times. It is translated "proclaim" about thirty-six times.

A look at these two words in the Old Testament, "cry" and "proclaim," clearly reveal the importance of preaching. The word "proclaim" is used of a message proclaimed by a man of God (2 Kings 23:16), the message of liberty proclaimed by the anointed one (Isa. 61:1), and the message of Jeremiah to a backslidden nation (Jer. 32:12). To cry out in the sense of preaching is used in Isaiah 58:1 of lifting up one's voice as a trumpet. It is used of Jonah's preaching in Ninevah (Jonah 1:2; 3:4), and was inherent in the angel's command to Zechariah to declare the Word of God (Zech. 1:17). Thus it is easy for one to see the role preaching played in the Old Testament.

The New Testament is no less clear on the important role of preaching. The ministry of John the Baptist was not just one of baptizing. The first testimony to his ministry mentioned in the New Testament

is that he came "preaching in the wilderness of Judea" (Mt. 3:1). Jesus Himself came preaching immediately after John was put into prison (Mk. 1:14). Throughout His ministry Jesus engaged in three major activities - teaching, preaching, and healing (Mt. 5:23; Lu. 20:1). When he commissioned his disciples near the beginning of His ministry, He sent them out to preach (Mt. 10:7; Lu. 9:60). According to Mark's gospel, "He ordained twelve, that they should be with Him, and that He might send them forth to preach" (Mk. 3:14).

The disciples may not have realized the serious nature of this calling at first. After Jesus' resurrection and ascension they went everywhere preaching the word (Acts 8:4). In the synagogues and in every city the message of Jesus was being preached (Acts 8:40; 9:20; 13:5; 15:21). So serious were the disciples about their message and calling that, even in the face of persecution and open opposition, "They ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ" (Acts 5:42). In Peter's sermon to the Gentiles in the house of Cornelius he says God "commanded us to preach unto the people" (Acts 10:42). To the question of "Why preach?" John MacArthur replies, "Very simply, God so commanded (2 Tim. 4:2), and the apostles so responded (Acts 6:4)."

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The priority of preaching is seen in Paul's ministry as well. His personal testimony to the Corinthians was, "Woe is unto me if I preach not the gospel" (1 Cor. 9:16). He reminded Timothy in each of his letters to him that he, Paul, had been ordained to be a preacher (1 Tim. 2:7; 2 Tim. 1:11). Then in his second letter he exhorted Timothy to "Preach the Word." (2 Tim. 4:2). He informs Titus that God has "manifested His Word through preaching" (Titus 1:3).

Perhaps Paul's classic text on the importance of preaching is found in Romans 10:13-15. Alfred P. Gibbs argues that "Preaching is the God-ordained means of spreading the gospel." He first gives the recorded, chronological order of the text and then he says:

Now view the passage from the other way around, and trace the order from cause to effect. (1) A preacher is sent by God. (2) He preaches the Word. (3) Someone hears the Word. (4) This person believes the message. (5) He then calls on the name of the Lord. (6) As a consequence he is saved by the grace of God. (7) This saved person then confesses Christ as Lord of his life. Thus, viewed from either direction, the divine cycle of grace is seen to be complete.

Clearly, preaching was and is God's primary method for reaching a lost world with the gospel.

A look at preaching in the Old Testament, in the life of our Lord, and in the lives of the apostles makes

8 Ibid., 92.
it evident that preaching is a priority in God's plan. Without it, the church would cease to exist. John A. Broadus writes:

It follows that preaching is always a necessity, for preaching is inextricably linked to the life of the church. It was the proclamation of good news that brought the church into being. Only the same proclamation can keep life in the church. The record of church history has been that the strength of the church is directly related to the strength of the pulpit.  

Such a vital ministry to the church requires preparation and training. This manual is designed to help those who lack such preparation.

The Nature Of Biblical Preaching

A look at the nature of preaching in the Bible indicates that the expository method was paramount. The expository method is that method that concerns itself primarily with the explanation and application of the text. According to James Stitzinger, "Preaching in the Bible is in two basic forms: revelatory preaching and explanatory preaching." By "revelatory preaching" Stitzinger means that the man of God proclaimed a message revealed to him by God. He would then explain the meaning of that revelation. But does this constitute two different forms of preaching?

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9 Broadus, 7.
It appears that explaining the revelation was part and parcel of receiving that revelation. God did not give a man a revelation to keep to himself. He gave him a revelation that needed to be proclaimed and explained to the people. To receive a revelation from God without proclaiming and explaining it was nothing short of disobedience. The classic example of this is Jonah who received revelation from God, yet refused to proclaim that message to the people of Ninevah until after God had chastened him.

It was necessary of course for God's man to receive a revelation from God because there was no canon of scripture. But rather than view this as a different form of preaching from the explanation, it is best to view the revelation as the basis of the explanation. Often, the explanation came much later than the revelation. Stitzinger writes:

What is clear in the Old Testament is that after a body of revelation had been given, the people would return to it with a need to have it expounded or explained.11

This being the case, the primary role of God's man, both in the Old Testament and in the New Testament, was the declaration and explanation of the message God had revealed to him. Now with the canon complete, there is no need for additional revelation. This leaves only

11Ibid., 40.
one responsibility for God's man today - the declaration and explanation of what God has already revealed. Stitzinger affirms this when he writes, "As the New Testament era drew to a close, the work of biblical preachers became that of explanation only...."12 The term more commonly used in place of Stitzinger's "explanatory preaching" is "expository preaching."

Another unnecessary distinction is that made by Leon Wood who draws a sharp distinction between the role of preaching and teaching. Commenting on the role of the Old Testament prophet as a preacher he writes:

Here the idea of preaching is used as over against the idea of teaching. In teaching one addresses primarily the mind of the hearer, while in preaching he addresses the emotion and will. The interest of teaching is to impart information, the interest of preaching is to stir reaction and response. The work of Israel's priest was to do the former; that of the prophets was to do the latter.13

Such a distinction, however, does not appear to be so sharply made in the biblical data. Both Samuel and Jeremiah speak of their prophetic ministry as teaching (1 Sam. 12:23; Jer. 32:33). There are, according to Stitzinger, "A number of passages in which explanation was the focus and purpose of the messages...."14

12Ibid., 42.
14Stitzinger, 39.
Therefore, in the Old Testament, preaching included both the proclamation of God's Word and an explanation of it. Perhaps the clearest example of this in the Old Testament is found in Ezra's address to the returning remnant in Nehemiah 8. The people requested that Ezra read to them from the law of Moses (8:1). Following Ezra's reading, other priests read the law and explained it to the people (v. 7). The key passage is verse eight which reads, "So they read in the book of the law of God distinctly, and gave the sense, and caused them to understand the reading." The translation of the phrase, "gave the sense," is the translation of a single Hebrew word which means "to give the sense of the meaning." Jerry Vines calls this "a very good picture of what expository preaching is all about."15

The importance of exposition is seen in the New Testament as well. It is seen first, in the juxtaposition of the words "teaching" and "preaching." According to Matthew, "Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom..." (Mt. 4:23; 9:35). Luke writes about Jesus: "He taught the people in the temple, and preached the gospel..." (Lu. 20:1). It appears that in the

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16Ibid.
ministry of the Lord Jesus there was no clear distinction between these two. While preaching the gospel He was also engaging in teaching.

As one moves through the New Testament this same juxtaposition is evident elsewhere. For example, it is said of the apostles, "And daily in the temple, and in every house, they ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ" (Acts 5:42). Of Paul and Barnabas' ministry Luke writes: "Paul also and Barnabas continued in Antioch, teaching and preaching the word of the Lord, with many others also" (Acts 15:35). While Paul was at Rome he spent two years in his own hired house "preaching the kingdom of God, and teaching those things which concern the Lord Jesus" (Acts 28:31).

In both of Paul's letters to Timothy he refers to himself not only as an apostle, but also as a "preacher" and a "teacher" (1 Tim. 2:7; 2 Tim. 1:11). It is interesting to note as well, that the only qualification mentioned for elders relating to abilities, is "apt to teach" (1 Tim. 3:2). This is especially interesting in light of Paul's admonition to Timothy to "preach the word" (2 Tim. 4:2). Perhaps Paul recognized that a call to preach was also a call to teach. It appears that these two activities are very closely related.

These are, of course, different words. The word for "preaching" is either "euangelizo" (Lu. 20:1; Acts
5:42; 15:35) or "kerusso" (Mt. 4:23; 9:35; Acts 28:31). "Euangelizo" means "to preach the good news." "Kerusso" means "to proclaim." The word used for "teaching" is the word "didasko" and means "to teach or instruct". Could it be that these three words represent a single act? This writer contends that they do. Jerry Vines concurs when he writes, "New Testament preaching also includes the element of teaching. Jesus was a teacher. New Testament preachers were teachers." 

Examples of New Testament preaching also support this view. The expository method is clearly evidenced in the preaching of Jesus. Two passages in particular reveal this. The first is found in Luke 4:16-22. In this passage, Jesus goes into the synagogue at Nazareth and reads from Isaiah 61. He explains how the passage relates to Himself, as the people sit in wonder. Concerning this passage, Douglas R. White writes:

Though he read only two verses from Isaiah 61, it is quite possible, even probable, that He gave them an extended exposition of those statements in their context.... That was exposition at its best. 

The second passage is found in Luke 24:13-45. In this passage Jesus meets two sad, discouraged disciples on the road to Emmaus following His

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17Ibid., 16.

resurrection. Jesus proceeded to explain to them the significance of the events that had just occurred in Jerusalem. Two words stand out in this passage which relate to the nature of Christ's preaching. "He expounded" (v. 27), is the translation of the word "diermeneuo" and means "to interpret fully." "He opened" (v. 32), is the translation of "dianoigo" and means "to open up completely." Jerry Vines writes, "His method reveals a systematic presentation of Scripture. Beginning at Moses and in all the prophets He 'explained through' the Scriptures." It appears from these two passages that Jesus was an expository preacher.

The same could be said of the apostles. Stephen's message in Acts 7 is referred to by White as "an expository dissertation covering the historical portions of Genesis and Exodus ... with a very pungent application to that generation." In Acts 17:1-3 Paul went into the synagogue of Thessalonica and "as his manner was ... reasoned with them out of the scriptures." White says, "'As his manner was' depicts

20 Vines, s.v. "Open."
21 Jerry Vines, 13.
22 White, 21.
the characteristic method of Paul, which was that of the exponent." In Acts 28:23, Luke records Paul's preaching ministry in Rome by saying, "He expounded and testified the kingdom of God, persuading them concerning Jesus...."

A careful examination of the nature of preaching in both the Old and New Testaments reveals that the method of choice was the expository method. James Stitzinger writes:

> All preaching must be expository preaching if it is to conform to the pattern of scripture. It is an extension of the explanatory or expositional dimension of preaching by Old Testament and New Testament preachers.

Therefore, in order to accurately and effectively preach the Word of God, in this writer's opinion, one must be committed to expository preaching.

### The Responsibility to Equip

It is the responsibility of gifted leaders to equip the saints for the work of the ministry. The major teaching passage that reveals this truth is Ephesians 4:11-13. According to this passage, God has given gifts and gifted men to the church "for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the building up of the body of Christ." A key word

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23 Ibid., 22.

24 Stitzinger, 42.
in this passage is the word, "perfecting." The word used by Paul is "katartismos" and is not used in this form anywhere else in the New Testament.

The corresponding verb form is, however, found a number of times. In its verb form the word is used in Matthew 4:21 of repairing nets. It is used of restoring someone who has been overtaken in a fault in Galatians 6:1. In Hebrews 11:3 it refers to God's bringing the universe into its intended shape and form. And it is used of completing what is lacking in one's faith in three passages (1 Thess. 3:10; Heb. 13:21; 1 Pet. 5:10). According to Francis Foulkes, the word denotes, "the bringing of the saints to a condition of fitness for the discharge of their functions in the Body."25

Another key word is the word "ministry." This is a translation of the word "diakonia," from which we get our English word "deacon." While some take the word to refer to service in an official sense, it is best, because of its anarthrous construction, (without the article), to take it in the more general sense of ministry or service.27 Foulkes writes that, "Every


26Ibid.

Christian has a work of ministry, a spiritual task and function in the body. The NIV perhaps translates it best as, "To prepare God's people for works of service."

A key question in the translation and interpretation of this passage is the relationship of the three clauses it contains. F. W. Nicoll writes, "The main difficulty is the relation in which they stand to each other and to the preceding edoke." He goes on to mention three possibilities. The first is that the clauses are parallel or subordinate. That is, Christ gave gifted men to the church so that they could perfect the saints, and do the work of the ministry, and edify the body. This, however, does not fit the natural construction of the clauses.

A second possibility is that the second and third clauses are parallel to each other and dependent on the "edoke." This view sees the first clause, the perfecting of the saints, as the ultimate goal of doing the work of the ministry and edifying the body of Christ. Nicoll argues that this interpretation is a construction that "reduces the force of the third clause which would naturally bring us to the larger, ultimate purpose of Christ's giving."

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28 Foulkes, 120.
29 Nicoll, 330
30 Ibid., 331.
A third view according to Nicoll is the simplest and best. He writes:

It takes the sentence to be dependent as a whole on edoke, and understands the three clauses as successive, the first looking to the second, the second to the third, the third forming the climax and expressing the ultimate object of the giving on the part of the ascended Christ.  

This view takes the building up of the body as the ultimate purpose that is in view. This appears to best fit the natural construction of the passage. According to Foulkes, "The church is increased and built up, and its members edified, as each member uses his particular gifts as the Lord of the church ordains...."  

This passage clearly demonstrates the responsibility of gifted leaders to equip and prepare others for ministry. But how does this relate to the ministry of expository preaching, and in particular, a guide for preparing expository messages?  

While not every member of the congregation will be called to preach, certainly every pastor desires that God call some out from under his ministry to preach. This training guide will help the pastor fulfill his obligation to equip such a person for ministry. It will provide him with something to put in their hands, or to guide them through personally, that will equip them for

\[31\] Ibid.

\[32\] Foulkes, 121.
the ministry to which God has called them. It will also provide the pastor who has had no formal training with a training guide for learning how to prepare expository messages himself.

The writer has sought to provide justification for a training guide for preparing expository messages. He has done so by demonstrating the priority of preaching, the nature of biblical preaching, and the need to equip the saints for such a ministry. In the next chapter the writer will examine the strengths and weaknesses of literature already available on this topic.
CHAPTER THREE
LITERATURE REVIEW

It is the purpose of this chapter to review the literature currently available on this topic. This review will demonstrate that, of the material available, only a limited amount is written with the layman in mind. Most is written for the experienced preacher. Many works are too technical for the average layman. Fewer still are written from a practical standpoint. The works reviewed in this chapter consist primarily of books recommended by pastors responding to the survey. A few are notable books worthy of mention. The writer will mention a few dissertations, then look at texts on homiletics in general, hermeneutics, and finally, expository preaching.

Dissertations

In his review of the literature, the writer came across three dissertations somewhat related to this topic. In 1984, John Talley wrote a homiletics manual which explored different expositional methods.¹ The

manual is built around certain communication principles with which the preacher needs to be concerned. The three principles suggested by Talley are structure, argumentation, and persuasive procedure. The manual emphasizes communication techniques to be used in training aspiring preachers.

A dissertation was done in 1990, by Karl Lachler, based on a philosophy and methodology used for over ten years with Bible college students in Sao Paulo Brazil. The writer argues that expository preaching through books of the Bible is a valid option for any culture. He emphasizes studying the text grammatically, inductively, and dynamically.

A D.Min. dissertation done in 1992 by Larry Halsey appeared to be promising, but upon closer examination the writer discovered that the emphasis of the project was on the characteristics of the people of rural Appalachia, rather than the preparation of expository messages. Only twenty-four pages are devoted to expository preaching, primarily as it relates to the people. One does learn from the dissertation the need


to be acquainted with the preaching audience and how such an acquaintance can improve one's ministry. This dissertation is not designed, however, as a manual for preparing expository messages.

Homiletics In General

There are several helpful books written in the general area of homiletics. The one mentioned most often by those surveyed was Jay Adams', *Preaching With Purpose*. This is a brief work consisting of twenty-two chapters in only 158 pages. Yet it is filled with helpful information.

After an introduction explaining the failure of seminaries to train preachers, Adams justifies the title of his book and argues that everything the preacher does in the sermon should be done with a specific purpose in mind. He then explains the elements of preaching and points out that the biblical purpose of preaching is primarily edificational.

Adams then moves to determining the preaching portion and its purpose, analyzing the congregation, and how to develop a preaching outline as opposed to a lecture outline. He argues strongly against following the form of the text to develop the outline. His argument is that the text must be translated from a

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written form into a preaching form. He also discusses how to develop purposeful introductions and conclusions, and give a purposeful invitation. Adams then offers a helpful plan for developing a preaching calendar.

Adams also deals with appealing to the senses, how to use illustrations, and how to develop a preaching style. As one would expect, he addresses how counseling relates to preaching, and emphasizes the application and implementation of what is preached. He then challenges the reader to emphasize Christ in his preaching, followed by some brief comments on sermon delivery. He closes the book with the mention of a good sermon he had recently heard. What made it a "good" sermon, according to Adams, was the fact that it was preaching, it was biblical, interesting, organized, and practical.

Characteristic of his writing style, Adams is to-the-point, and practical, and says a great deal in a few words. He often carries on a dialogue with his readers. Especially helpful are his chapters on preaching as opposed to lecturing, developing a preaching plan, and application and implementation. This would be an excellent companion volume to an expository preaching text. Adams does fall short, however, in providing his readers any sound principles of biblical exegesis.

The classic text for many years, and perhaps still, is John A Broadus' *On the Preparation and*
delivery of Sermons. Jay Adams refers to this text in his preface as a "landmark book," and says "There has not appeared a significant textbook on preaching since." The book, now in its fourth revision, was originally published in 1870. The current revision was done by Vernon L. Stanfield, professor of preaching at New Orleans Baptist Seminary.

The book is divided into an introduction and eight major divisions, broken down further into thirty-six chapters. The author begins with some brief comments about the importance of preaching and the preacher. He then moves to the foundational elements of the sermon, which includes a discussion of the text, the subject, the title, the proposition, and the objective. Broadus then deals with the classification of sermons under three categories he calls homiletical structure, subject, and pattern.

In section three under formal arrangements, Broadus deals with the importance of arrangement, the divisions of the outline, the introduction, and the conclusion. This writer found Broadus' treatment of the functional elements of the sermon to be most helpful. The four elements discussed include explanation,


7Adams, ix.
argument, application, and illustration. He then addresses style and delivery. Between these two sections is a disappointing section on preparing sermons, which is beneficial to the beginner, but brief. He closes with a section on ideas for public worship.

This is an excellent text on the subject of homiletics in general. It is comprehensive and appears to cover everything the aspiring preacher needs to know about the subject. Anyone who has not read the book would certainly benefit from it. The book, however, is not a textbook on expository preaching but homiletics. Very little is said about expository preaching, (under the classification of sermons), and nothing at all is said about the process of preparing expository messages. While the book is comprehensive in scope, and contains a helpful bibliography at the end of each section, it lacks examples and a practical methodology for arriving at the finished product.

Other books mentioned in the surveys relating to homiletics in general include Robert Delnay's, Fire In Your Pulpit,8 and Between Two Worlds by John R. W. Stott.9 Delnay's work is similar to that of Adams. He


combines into a single volume, a series of articles on preaching related topics. Stott focuses on bridging the gap between the contemporary world and that of the Bible. These books contain a tremendous amount of helpful information for both the beginner and experienced preacher. They are not, however, practical, methodical guides for preparing expository messages.

**Hermeneutics**

Without a doubt, the most helpful book to this writer, in the development of expository messages, has been Walter Kaiser's book, *Toward an Exegetical Theology*. Because of the nature of this book, especially the history of interpretation in the first section, the writer considers it a hermeneutics text.

Kaiser's work is divided into five major sections. In the first section, which he labels the introduction, the author examines the crises in hermeneutics of bridging the gap between what the text meant and what it means. He then traces the history of hermeneutics from the apostolic period to the present.

The second section is the major portion of the book. In this section Kaiser explains what he calls the "syntactical-theological" method of interpretation. He

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emphasizes analyzing a passage in five different areas. First, the context must be examined. Second, the interpreter must examine the relationships of words clauses, and phrases. Kaiser refers to this as "syntactical" analysis. He offers several examples of block diagrams to illustrate this analysis of a passage. For Kaiser, this is the key to finding the outline of the message that will be preached.

The author then deals with studying significant words and other unclear terms. Under the term "theological analysis" Kaiser recommends interpreting a passage in light of its chronological history and revelation up to that point. Only after looking at the passage in light of previous revelation, (antecedent theology), should the interpreter look at the total revelation of that particular doctrine. Kaiser's fifth step is "homiletical analysis" and relates to moving from the syntactical display to a preaching outline. Outlines are placed side-by-side with the block diagrams mentioned earlier to illustrate this approach.

In the third section of the book Kaiser deals with the interpretation of prophecy, narrative, and poetry. He explains the characteristics of these types of literature, inadequate approaches to them, and how his method is to be used as an alternative. He closes the book with a stirring chapter on the spiritual aspect of
biblical interpretation. In this chapter he emphasizes the need for the exegete to depend upon the power of the Holy Spirit, both in preparation and delivery.

Kaiser's approach is very informative and practical. He not only tells the reader what to do, but also how to do it. His examples of the syntactical block diagrams are extremely helpful. No book has impacted the writer's preaching as much as this one. Especially appreciated by this writer is Kaiser's emphasis on the author's intended meaning, and the spiritual dimension of depending on the Holy Spirit. As impressive as the book is to this reader, however, there are a few shortcomings.

First, Kaiser fails to emphasis background study. Although he does mention it, his emphasis is on getting into the text itself. It would also be helpful to have a few examples of his approach with the special issues he addresses under prophecy, narrative, and poetry. The major problem with Kaiser's work is his frequent use of technical language that places him over the average layman's head. This was true in the writer's own experience upon first reading the book. He has since gained tremendous appreciation for the book, but only after some help in understanding it.

Two other hermeneutics texts were mentioned by the pastors surveyed. One was written by a student of
Kaiser, Henry A. Virkler.\textsuperscript{11} His book is similar to Kaiser's, except Virkler deals more with the historical, and cultural background than does Kaiser. Virkler also offers a series of questions that should be asked as one moves through the hermeneutical process. He includes a summary and a series of exercises at the end of each chapter. He also has an interesting chapter on translating biblical commands from one culture to another, with examples from the biblical text.

Also mentioned in the surveys was Bernard Ramm's, \textit{Protestant Biblical Interpretation}.\textsuperscript{12} Ramm covers the traditional areas of the history of interpretation, and general, as well as special hermeneutics. He also deals with the doctrinal use of the Bible, and the issue of inerrancy especially as it relates to science. It has been the standard textbook on hermeneutics for many years in colleges and seminaries across the country.

A more recent publication, though not mentioned by those surveyed, is worthy of attention. In 1991, Grant Osborne published an exhaustive 415 page volume entitled, \textit{The Hermeneutical Spiral}.\textsuperscript{13} Osborne's work is


\textsuperscript{13}Grant R. Osborne, \textit{The Hermeneutical Spiral} (Downers Grove, Ill: InterVarsity Press, 1991).
much more difficult reading than either Ramm or Virkler. It is quite thorough, with the exception of a history of interpretation. Osborne also attempts to move the reader from the hermeneutical process into the homiletical process. It is perhaps, destined, to become the standard text of the future for many seminaries.

Expository Preaching

A standard text for many Bible colleges and seminaries today is Haddon Robinson's book on expository preaching. This may be the reason why this book was mentioned most often among those surveyed. Haddon Robinson taught homiletics at Dallas Seminary for nineteen years. At the time the book was written he was president of Conservative Baptist Seminary in Denver. The book consists of ten chapters with a helpful bibliography at the end.

In chapter one Robinson clarifies and expands upon his lengthy definition of expository preaching. He then moves to an explanation of what he calls "the big idea." This idea, according to Robinson, consists of a subject and a complement and ties the sermon together. He gives several examples and exercises to help his reader understand how such an idea is formulated. Answers to the exercises are given in the back of the book.

Robinson then moves into a ten-step plan for preparing an expository message. First, select the passage. Here Robinson emphasizes finding a unit of thought. Step two and three involve studying the passage and determining the exegetical idea. Here the preacher looks for the idea of the text. He then expands it into a homiletical idea that is memorable and true to the text. Robinson mentions three exegetical questions to be asked in formulating the homiletical idea: What does it mean? Is it true? And what difference does it make?

The sixth step in the process is to determine the sermon's purpose. Step seven involves determining how to accomplish that purpose. This leads to the sermon outline itself. Here Robinson offers several examples of different types of outlines. Step nine for Robinson is to fill in the outline through a variety of supporting materials. The final step is the preparation of the introduction and conclusion. Robinson closes his work with one chapter on how to have a clear, direct, and personal style, and a final chapter on personal appearance and delivery.

This is an excellent work on the topic of expository preaching. It offers a practical, ten-step plan for preparing an expository message. It includes some helpful exercises and a good bibliography. However,
it does fall short of helping the reader get into the
text itself and determine its meaning before developing
an exegetical idea. Although the author mentions some
helpful ideas on studying the passage, he leaves much to
be desired for the novice or layman without any
experience in interpreting the Bible.

It is also difficult to follow his movement from
an exegetical idea to a homiletical idea. The writer's
own experience in reading the book was one of confusion
in this area. Also lacking are examples of moving from
the text to the sermon. While Robinson does illustrate
how to move to the homiletical idea in a few passages,
it would have been helpful, especially for the layman,
if he had illustrated his ten stages from beginning to
end with a single text.

Another popular book among those surveyed was
Jerry Vine's book on expository preaching. 15 At the time
of the writing, Vines was pastoring First Baptist of
Jacksonville Florida. With over thirty years of
pastoral experience, Jerry Vines is able to write from
a pastor's perspective to pastors.

The book consists of five chapters covering less
than two hundred pages. In chapter one Vines defines
expository preaching and traces the roots of expository

15 Jerry Vines, A Practical Guide to Sermon
preaching from the Old Testament into the New. He refutes the supposed disadvantages and offers several advantages to expository preaching. In chapter two the author explains how the pastor can prepare himself and his people for a ministry of expository preaching. He emphasizes the need for the pastor to trust fully in the Word of God and to develop himself spiritually, intellectually, and physically. His discussion on preparing the people deals more with how to select a biblical book to get started in the expository method.

Chapter three deals with the process of exposition. Here, Vines mentions three steps in the process of preparing a message. The first step is investigation and involves reading the passage to get an understanding of what it says. Step two is to interpret the passage to determine what it means by what it says. The third step involves relating the passage to life and working through its relevance to the congregation.

In chapter four Vines discusses the steps involved in organizing the sermon. He mentions five steps that are necessary in putting the message together. First, the preacher develops unity by determining the sermon's proposition and purpose. The writer then explains the qualities of a good outline. Step three involves amplifying that outline. Here, Vines offers a variety of suggestions that are helpful in putting flesh on the
skeleton. Step four and five deal with how to prepare the introduction and the conclusion.

The final chapter deals with how to prepare for the delivery of the message. In this chapter Vines emphasizes the need to use one's subconscious mind to develop creativity and clarity. He also mentions the characteristics of good style that need to be used in composing the sermon. He concludes this section with a discussion of the value of and principles for preaching without notes.

Vines has done a fine job of pulling together the principles of interpretation and sermon preparation into one volume. Due to Vines' own experience as a preacher for over thirty years, and his familiarity with what others have written on the subject, he is able to provide his readers with some very practical, workable ideas. Especially helpful is the way he breaks the process down into that of exposition and then organization. His writing style is simple and straightforward. The book makes for easy reading and moves the reader along in the process of sermon preparation.

The problem with Vines' book, however, is a glaring omission of examples of sermon outlines developed from the text. There are absolutely none, except for those illustrating alliteration, and one that illustrates numbering the points in an outline. He
doesn't even illustrate a block diagram for his readers, even though he initially refers to this as his most difficult assignment. Other than that, the book provides the preacher with some excellent guidance in the process of preparing expository sermons.

An older work that was quite popular until Haddon Robinson's work came out is Merrill Unger's *Principles of Expository Preaching*.\(^{16}\) Merrill F. Unger was a pastor in Buffalo New York for six years and was for many years chairman of the Old Testament department at Dallas Theological Seminary. The book was published in 1955.

Unger deals with the traditional introductory elements regarding expository preaching. He discusses the need for it, why there is a lack of it, and the benefits to be derived from expository preaching. After defining expository preaching, Unger suggests a variety of approaches to this method. He mentions both topical and textual exposition as legitimate approaches. He then discusses the spiritual and intellectual qualifications of the expositor. He also emphasizes the need for the expositor to have confidence and respect for the authority of God's Word.

Unger then moves to the more practical elements of preparing expository messages. He first deals with laws

of logic, and inductive and deductive reasoning. Following this he discusses grammatical, historical, and doctrinal interpretation. He then moves into a discussion of special hermeneutics. He explains how the interpreter should deal with figurative language, parables, typology, and prophecy. His closing chapter offers a four-step plan for expounding any passage in the Bible, complete with an example.

Unger's work, although older, and dated when he mentions the threat of communism as a reason for expository preaching, is a very helpful volume on expository preaching. The reader will learn things that are not normally dealt with in a work on this topic. The reasons for the dearth of expository preaching and the laws of logic are just two examples. His chapters on historical and grammatical interpretation are especially helpful. By far, the most practical section is the final chapter on how to expound any passage in the Bible.

For the average layman, however, Unger's work appears to be lengthy and hard to follow. Although helpful, one might question the need to discuss laws of logic, or inductive and deductive reasoning. It is at times too technical, especially in his discussion of grammatical interpretation. This work also, with the exception of the last chapter, lacks the examples needed
to help the reader move along through the process of preparing an expository message.

The most recent, quality work available on expository preaching is *Rediscovering Expository Preaching*,\(^\text{17}\) put out by the Master's Seminary faculty. The book consists of seventeen chapters divided into five parts. Each chapter is written by a member of the faculty of the Master's seminary. There are nine contributors altogether, including John MacArthur, Jr., who wrote seven of the seventeen chapters.

The first part is entitled "Proving the Priority of Expository Preaching." It contains a chapter on the expository process and its advantages, along with a history of expository preaching from the biblical period to the present. John MacArthur, Jr. contributes an article, initially given at the International Council On Biblical Inerrancy in 1982, relating expository preaching to biblical inerrancy.

Part two focuses on the expositor himself and his spiritual development. One chapter is on the priority of prayer. A second chapter is a revised sermon by MacArthur from 1 Timothy 6:11-14 on "The Man of God." A third chapter in this section emphasizes the illuminating ministry of the Holy Spirit.

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Section three covers the study of the text. One chapter emphasizes the study of the context, grammar, and other hermeneutical principles. A second discusses the importance of being adequately prepared and doing adequate exegesis. Sixteen practical suggestions are mentioned relating to exegesis. A chapter on grammatical analysis follows, which deals mainly with methods of diagramming and outlining the passage. Several good examples are provided.

Chapter ten provides the reader with a list of study tools and an excellent, up-to-date bibliography. In the final chapter of this section MacArthur provides the reader with a study method that includes observation, interpretation, and application. He also takes the reader through his own seven-step method of Bible study.

In part four the authors discuss the mechanics of sermon construction. The first two chapters of this section give the reader information on central ideas, outlining, titles, introductions, conclusions, and illustrations. In the final chapter of the section, MacArthur explains to the reader how to move from exegesis to exposition, and includes seven "Be's" of expository preaching (Be prepared, be interesting, be biblical, etc.). In between is a chapter on different approaches to the expository method. Such approaches as
thematic, biographical, historical, and theological, are mentioned, followed by a chapter on preaching from Old Testament narrative.

The fifth and final part is devoted to preaching the sermon. One chapter deals with Bible translations. The author compares thirteen different translations and explains the difference between a literal and a dynamic-equivalent translation. Chapter eighteen covers the topic of delivering the exposition. Here, MacArthur does not deal with the voice, gestures, or appearance. His focus is on preaching with passion, and offering the sermon unto the Lord. The closing chapter consists of frequently asked questions about expository preaching which are answered by MacArthur. An appendix at the end contains John MacArthur, Jr.'s preaching notes.

This book is a clear and comprehensive work on the subject of expository preaching. Each article is equally practical, helpful and informative. The only topic that was difficult for this writer to follow was Busenitz' discussion of historical expository preaching. The insufficiency of this work for the layman may be found in its attempt to cover too many areas. This writer was left with a sense of, "Here are a lot of things to do, but where do I start?" The book is a compilation of related articles, all very important, but sometimes overlapping. It is not a methodical, step-by-
step guide that carries the reader through the process of preparing expository messages.

Two other works on expository preaching mentioned in the surveys were Charles Koller's *Expository Preaching without Notes*,18 and Doug White's *Excellence of Exposition*.19 Koller is helpful in both the study of the passage and the structuring of the sermon, as well as White. Both authors stress the need for thorough study of the passage before preparing the outline. White does offer more examples, and stresses alliteration, at least by example.

These reviews demonstrate that there are several good works in the area of homiletics, hermeneutics, and expository preaching. However, very few works exist that pull together information from both fields and simplify it into a practical, methodical approach for preparing expository messages. Those that do so are either too technical for the average layman or fail to provide the reader with a practical methodology for moving from the text to the sermon. The writer's proposed plan is designed to simplify the material and make it practical and methodical for the reader.

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CHAPTER FOUR

SUMMARY OF THE DATA

The data received for this project consists of information from two interviews and a survey. The interviews were conducted with two recognized Bible expositors in the Winston-Salem area - Dr. Mark Corts, and Dr. Billy Martin. The surveys were conducted primarily in North Carolina and Virginia. A total of 213 surveys were either mailed or handed out. One was returned incomplete, eleven were unopened, and ninety-six were completed. The results of the survey will be given first, followed by the results of the interviews.

Survey Results

The first question was designed to determine how long the respondents had been in the ministry. They were given six categories from which to choose. Six percent had been in the ministry one to five years. Eight percent had been in the ministry for six to ten years. The second largest group (20.8%) were those who had been in the ministry for eleven to fifteen years. Thirteen percent had been in the ministry for sixteen to twenty years. Nineteen percent of those responding had
been in the ministry for twenty-one to twenty-five years. The largest group, by far, (32%), consisted of those who had been in the ministry for twenty-six years or more.

The second question asked the respondent how often he preached expository sermons. There were six categories to choose from. Not a single respondent replied that they almost never preach this way. Nine percent said they occasionally preach an expository sermon. Only two percent said once a month, while almost fifteen percent (14.5%) said once a week. Over half (51%) said they almost always preach an expository sermon.

The third question gave the respondents an opportunity to define expository preaching. They were given four choices and an option to write in a definition. Only six percent said expository preaching is a sermon that deals with more than one verse. Fourteen percent described it as a consecutive treatment of a book of the Bible. Almost half (45.8%) described expository preaching as verse-by-verse preaching from the text, while exactly half described it as a sermon that focuses on explaining the text.

Many of the respondents to this question checked more than one definition. Several wrote in a definition. Some of the responses were similar to the items that could be checked on the questionnaire. One
characterized it as propositional preaching. Another defined it as a sermon that deals with a minimum of eight to ten verses. Still another referred to it as a sermon that deals with a section of scripture. One respondent defined expository preaching as a sermon that derives both the outline and its content from the passage. Several emphasized both the explanation and the application of the text. One respondent sent in a typed definition attached to the survey emphasizing an accurate interpretation and interesting presentation.

To determine the consistency of their definition, the respondent was then asked to give the names of some contemporary expository preachers. The top five names mentioned were: John MacArthur, Jr., Warren Wiersbe, Chuck Swindoll, David Jeremiah, and Charles Stanley. The name given most often was that of John MacArthur, Jr. He was mentioned by almost twenty-four percent (23.9%) of the respondents. Second on the list was Warren Wiersbe with almost seventeen percent (16.6%). Chuck Swindoll was third with thirteen percent. Eleven percent mentioned David Jeremiah, while ten percent mentioned Charles Stanley as an example of a contemporary expository preacher.

All of those responding to this question mentioned more than one preacher. Ten percent mentioned Stephen Olford. Eight percent mentioned Billy Martin. And five
percent mentioned Jerry Vines. Other preachers mentioned include: Adrian Rogers, Haddon Robinson, W. A. Criswell, John Philips, Lehman Strauss, Robert Delnay, John McCormick, and Harold Sightler.

Question number five asked the respondent about the greatest difficulty he faced in preparing expository messages. They were given five options to choose from. Only five percent said understanding the text was their greatest difficulty, while ten percent listed finding supporting material. Over seventeen percent (17.7%) mentioned applying the passage to their audience as their greatest difficulty.

The two most common responses consisted of developing an outline from the text and the amount of time involved in preparation. Twenty-five percent mentioned developing an outline, while almost half of the respondents (47.9%) listed the amount of time involved as the greatest difficulty they faced in preparing expository sermons. A few write-in responses consisted of having enough time for the message, getting bogged down in it, and knowing what to leave out.

The respondent was then asked if the difficulty of preparation affected the amount of expository preaching he did. Almost seventeen percent (16.6%) responded by saying yes. Just over eighty percent (80.2%) responded by saying no.
Question eight addressed the congregation’s attitude to expository preaching. The respondent was given three options to choose from: favorable, unfavorable, or neither. Eighty-four percent responded by saying their congregation’s attitude was favorable to expository preaching. Only two percent responded by saying that it was unfavorable, while twelve percent responded by saying their congregation’s attitude was neither favorable nor unfavorable.

A follow-up question to the congregation’s attitude to expository preaching was the question of whether or not that attitude affected the amount of expository preaching they did. Twenty one percent said that it did, while over seventy percent (71.8) said that it did not.

A series of questions was then asked to assess the respondents educational background and influence in the area of expository preaching. Regarding their educational background, only four percent of the respondents had no formal training. Fifty-nine percent had Bible college training, while thirty-three percent had seminary training.

The next question asked the respondents that had been formally trained if they felt that their formal training had been adequate in equipping them to become an expositor. Fifty-two percent said yes. Almost forty
percent (37.5%) said that it did not. Fifty-five percent of those responding said they had preached prior to being trained, while almost forty percent (39.5%) said they had not preached prior to training.

Question twelve asked the respondent what had been the most help to him in learning to become an expositor. He was given four options from which to choose. The two most common answers were: a college or seminary class, and books on preaching. Interestingly enough, the exact same number of respondents (32.2%) mentioned both of these. Almost twenty-three percent (22.9%) said being personally discipled had helped them most. A similar answer, having a mentor, got almost eighteen percent (17.7%). Several other answers were written. Among them were: hearing others preach expository sermons, listening to tapes of others, seminars, and doing it.

The question was then asked regarding which books had been the most helpful in the area of expository preaching. The top four authors mentioned were, Haddon Robinson, Jerry Vines, Walter Kaiser, Jr., and Jay Adams. The book mentioned most was Haddon Robinson's book, Biblical Preaching. Over thirteen percent (13.5%) said that this book had been the most helpful to them. A Practical Guide to Sermon Preparation, by Jerry Vines, was mentioned by seven percent of those responding. Both, Kaiser's, Toward an Exegetical Theology, and
Adams' *Preaching with Purpose*, were mentioned by five percent of those responding.

Several other books on preaching were mentioned. John MacArthur Jr.'s book, *Rediscovering Expository Preaching* was mentioned by three percent of those responding, as was John Stott's *Between Two Worlds*. On *The Preparation and Delivery of Sermons*, by John Broadus was mentioned by two percent as well as a little-known book by Douglas M. White, *The Excellence of Exposition*, and *Fire in Your Pulpit*, by Robert Delnay. Other books mentioned included Charles Koller's, *Expository Preaching Without Notes*, F. D. Whitesell's, *Power in Expository Preaching*, Virkler's book on hermeneutics, and Bernard Ramm's *Protestant Biblical Interpretation*.

Several commentaries and sermon books were mentioned by the respondents. Commentary helps included such works as Ironside's commentaries, Wiersbe's series, *Barnes Notes*, and word studies by Wuest and Vincent. Several mentioned sermons by Spurgeon, MacClaren, and Barnhouse as particularly helpful.

The last four questions were designed to determine specifically the need for a project such as this. Question fourteen asked for the average Sunday morning attendance. The respondents were given six categories from which to choose. Six percent said they have an attendance ranging from zero to fifty. Twenty-nine
percent, (the largest number), marked the fifty to one hundred range. Almost sixteen percent (15.6%) have an attendance between one hundred and one hundred fifty. Only seven percent marked the range of one hundred fifty to two hundred. Over fifteen percent (15.6%) range from two to three hundred, while a little over ten percent (10.4%) range from three to five hundred. The smallest numbers were the five to seven hundred range with only three percent, and the seven hundred plus range with only four percent.

Following this, the question was asked if the respondent had, either in the past or currently, any laymen in the church who had been called to preach. Seventy-eight percent said yes, while almost sixteen percent (15.6%) said no. The question was then asked if the respondent had in the past, or was currently training laymen to preach. Almost forty percent (37.5%) said no while fifty-nine percent said yes.

The final question asked the respondents if they would welcome and benefit from a layman's guide for preparing expository messages. Two responded that they were unsure until they had seen the manual. Only six percent said they would not. An overwhelming eighty-one percent (81.2%) said they would welcome and benefit from such a manual.
Interview With Dr. Mark Corts

The purpose of this interview is to bring to light the experience and advice of a seasoned pastor in the area of expository preaching. Dr. Charles Mark Corts began preaching at the age of sixteen without any formal training. He then went on to Trinity College in Clearwater Florida, Wake Forest University in Winston-Salem, and Trinity Evangelical Divinity School in Illinois. He worked with Youth For Christ for two years, from 1961 to 1963.

Dr. Corts has been the senior pastor of Calvary Baptist Church in Winston-Salem North Carolina since July of 1963. The average Sunday morning attendance has grown from 184 in 1963 to approximately 2500. Dr. Corts preaches weekly on ShareLife, the television ministry of Calvary Baptist Church. An edited transcript of the interview can be found in appendix one.

When asked about the major factors contributing to the growth of the church, Dr. Corts mentioned four turning points. One was when he decided to turn the Sunday school into a small group ministry. Another was the decision to train laymen to become soulwinners, rather than doing it all himself. A third was the decision to reorganize the church in order to give away his ministry. Interestingly enough, the first turning point mentioned by Dr. Corts was his decision to become
an expository preacher.

In 1965 I made a very fundamental decision which transformed my whole ministry - that I was going to spend three mornings a week in the study, preparing to be an expository preacher.¹

As a result of this decision, Dr. Corts moved his study books out of the office at church and began studying at home, free from interruptions. According to Dr. Corts, that change was, "responsible for much of the growth."

There are two things Dr. Corts has done in the past to help prepare laymen for a preaching ministry. He has conducted lay missions trips since 1967. In preparation for the trip he teaches them how to prepare evangelistic messages. Dr. Corts estimates that they have taken as many as 1500 laymen overseas on these missions trips.

Calvary Baptist also has an internship program with a budget of about $60,000 per year for college and seminary students. Dr. Corts works with them personally to help them prepare for the pastoral ministry. He takes them into his study and teaches them how to prepare messages. He has them do the exegetical work and then goes over it with them. He then asks them to consider what difference the truth of the passage will make in the lives of the hearers.

¹ Dr. C. Mark Corts, interview by author, Tape recording, Winston-Salem NC, 19 October 1994.
About 99 out of 100 of Dr. Corts' sermons are expository. He does very little topical preaching. He defines expository preaching based on the treatment of the text. "For me, expository preaching is bringing insights out of the scripture itself and letting the truth and the application arise out of the text." He then goes on to mention the fact that expository preaching can be done from a single verse. He also mentions thematic and biographical exposition.

When asked about what helped him most in becoming an expositor, he mentioned Charles Kollers', *Expository Preaching Without Notes*, and "all of Haddon Robinson's books." He also mentioned a series of taped lectures on preaching from "Christianity Today." Especially helpful to him were the lectures by Fred Craddock and Henry Brandt. Dr. Corts says, "Craddock gave me fantastic insight on using illustrations...."

Dr. Corts was then asked about the steps he takes in preparing an expository message. He starts with several good translations to get different points of view, interpretations, and to define the paragraph. He then moves to exegetical commentaries, then devotional commentaries. He writes down notes from each of these texts, then looks through the text itself for ideas. He then attempts to get a theme out of the paragraph. Following this, he goes back to his notes looking for
key words or items to develop the outline. He then fills in the outline with his people in mind.

The most difficult part of preparing an expository message for Dr. Corts is to do exegesis and not eisegesis in light of the people's needs. He says:

The most difficult part for me is nailing down a faithful purpose statement that is consistent with what the author intended to say and is equally consistent with what I hear him say and what I think the people need to hear him say - to be authentic and not end up doing eisegesis. I think that is particularly a challenge with epistolary literature.

Dr. Corts refers to this as being "true to the text and true to society." He says, "The application must be a first cousin to the interpretation."

When asked what advice he would give to a layman who wishes to become a Bible expositor, Dr. Corts made four suggestions. First, he would encourage them to build a good library of translations and versions. Second, he would encourage them to do the same thing with commentaries. This should include both exegetical and devotional commentaries. Third, the layman should spend time studying with a pastor who is a Bible expositor. Dr. Corts says, "Expository preaching is like evangelism - it is more caught than taught. His final word of advice is to take every opportunity to preach. The best way to learn is by doing it."
Interview With Dr. Billy Martin

Dr. Billy Martin is currently a full-time evangelist and conference speaker. He pastored for thirty years before going into conference work where he has been for the past fourteen years. Eleven of those fourteen years he was with Evangelical Baptist Missions. He also taught homiletics at Piedmont Bible College for about five years. Dr. Martin began preaching at the age of fifteen. He is a graduate of Piedmont Bible College and Bob Jones University. Eight percent of those surveyed mentioned Dr. Martin as an example of a contemporary expository preacher. An edited copy of the transcript can be found in appendix two.

When asked for a definition of expository preaching, Dr. Martin responded by saying:

> It is that type of preaching in which the Bible speaks for itself. You try to the best of your ability not to get in the way of the scriptures, putting your bias, or your culture in, but the Word of God itself speaks, and you let it speak. ... The sermon itself rises out of the passage rather than supporting a particular idea or concept.²

Dr. Martin estimated that while he was in the pastorate, about eighty percent of his messages were expository. He estimates that in his current ministry, he preaches expository sermons about sixty percent of the time.

² Dr. Billy Martin, interview by author, Tape recording, Winston-Salem NC, 6 December, 1994.
When asked about what influenced him to become an expository preacher, Dr. Martin mentioned his love for the text of scripture and dissatisfaction with preaching that veered away from the text, or paid no attention to the text. Much of the preaching he heard as a young boy was mere storytelling, scolding, or the preaching of opinions. He was "exposed to a lot of preaching that was just wind." He decided as a result, that he would take a different course.

Five different things have helped Dr. Martin in his goal to be an expositor. A homiletics class he took as part of the M.A. program at Bob Jones heads the list. He also tries to read a different book on homiletics each year. He has found John Stott's book, Between Two Worlds, especially helpful. Teaching homiletics at Piedmont Bible College was also helpful. Dr. Martin also mentioned the fact that he tried to study the preaching of great pulpits, to determine what enabled them to communicate better than others. Finally, he mentioned a good role model, William Ward Ayer, who would preach for him about every two or three years.

Dr. Martin was then asked about his own method of preparing expository sermons, he mentioned several things. First, he tries to determine what the principle words in the passage mean. He then looks for the natural divisions of the text. At a given point he
begins looking for the big idea. He then moves to a skeleton outline and develops the message through the exposition, illustration, argument, and application.3

When asked what he thought was the most difficult part of preparing a sermon, Dr. Martin replied, "Sometimes the brain goes dead and the thing is just flat. It has no life." Almost any preacher can identify with that experience. When that happens, Dr. Martin looks for time sequences, height and depth, different characters and personalities, and other homiletical tools to generate ideas. Sometimes he has to leave the passage for a while and come back to it at a later time.

Finally, Dr. Martin was asked what advice he would give a layman who wanted to become an expositor. He would recommend two things. First, he would suggest the layman build a library of good study tools. He needs a good concordance and Bible dictionary, as well as a good one or two volume commentary. He recommends the layman build his library as he uses it. Second, the layman

3 In a telephone conversation four days later, Dr. Martin shared with the author a seven-step plan he uses in sermon preparation: 1) Choose the text, 2) Place the text in its context, 3) Spell out the meaning of the text through proper exegesis, 4) Put yourself into the text, 5) Seek the internal unity of the text through a proposition, aim, and key verse, 6) Uncover the dynamics of the text, i.e. the interactions within the passage, and 7) write a paraphrase of the passage. He then writes out the finished outline.
should set aside time daily to study and work on a text. If he is preparing for a lesson or message, he should go beyond what he might give the class in a lecture. He should find out more about the passage than he needs to know for a lesson or sermon. This will enable him to learn how to use his study tools.
CHAPTER FIVE

A PLAN FOR PREPARING EXPOSITORY MESSAGES

THE EXEGETICAL STAGE

As stated in chapter one, it is the purpose of this project to offer the reader a methodical procedure for preparing a series of expository sermons from a New Testament epistle. There is little difference, if any at all, in having a plan for preparing expository messages, and having a basic plan of administrative procedures, problem-solving techniques, or counseling approaches to follow. Once the basic steps are learned, the student should become much more competent and creative in the over-all process of preparing a series of expository messages.

This is a method adopted by the writer and taught in a one-on-one discipleship setting, and in a Bible institute setting on at least two different occasions. The writer has made some brief revisions in the process for the purpose of this paper. The plan consists of eight steps divided into two stages. The first stage is the exegetical stage and guides the interpreter through the process of developing an understanding of the
passage and the book from which it is taken. Stage two is the organizational stage and guides the reader through the process of developing an expository sermon outline based on the exegesis of the text. In this chapter the writer will discuss the steps involved in the exegetical stage. The organizational stage will be discussed in chapter six.

Step One: Historical Background

The first two steps of the process are designed to help the layman gain an understanding of the book from which he will be preaching. First, the layman must develop an understanding of the historical background of the book. He must then gain an understanding of the contents of the book. Grant Osborne refers to these two areas as "historical context" and "logical context." One usually thinks of context, however, as the verses surrounding a passage of scripture. For this reason, and to avoid confusion between the two, the writer will refer to "historical background," and "contents."

The historical background of a book refers to the setting in which the book was written. Moises Silva writes:

Every written document should be read 'historically'; that is, we ought to take into

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account that it was written by a particular individual (or group of individuals), in a particular time in history and that it was motivated by some particular occasion.2

David Black, as well as others, refer to the epistles as "occasional documents." By this, he means they were "occasioned by some special circumstance either from the author's or the reader's perspective."3 Studying the historical background gives the interpreter an understanding of what those special circumstances were.

An understanding of the historical background of a book is important for several reasons. First and foremost, it is essential for an accurate interpretation of the passage. Walter Kaiser writes, "It is virtually impossible to locate the book's message in space and time without this essential material."4 Sidney Greidanus likens it to listening to only one end of a telephone conversation where one hears the answers but doesn't know what the questions are.5 A study of the historical

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background is an attempt to find out the questions behind the letter.

Such an understanding can also protect the interpreter from misinterpreting a passage of scripture. Henry Virkler warns his readers:

"Unless we have a knowledge of the writer's background ... our tendency is to interpret his writings by asking, 'What does it mean to me?' rather than 'What did this mean to the original author?'"\(^6\)

Understanding the historical context enables the interpreter to look at the passage in light of what it meant to the original audience, before moving too quickly to the application stage. David Black also issues this warning, "A text has no meaning - or may assume every kind of meaning - outside of this parameter of historical context."\(^7\)

A knowledge of the book's background also gives the reader a feel for the original setting, allowing him to put himself in the original reader's place. This, in turn, enables the interpreter to better apply the passage to his audience because he is able to compare the situation of the original readers to that of his hearers. He is able to visualize real people in real situations.


\(^7\)Black, 92.
The information gained from this background study can be used to explain the text to the listeners. Walter Liefeld says, "The more 'stage scenery' the preacher provides, the more easily the congregation can identify with the biblical circumstances."8 One must be careful, however, not to make the sermon sound like a history lesson. But historical tidbits here and there give the people a feel for the passage as well as a better understanding of it.

Liefeld also urges the use of historical information for illustrative purposes. He says, "Such information will not only help to guide the interpretation of the passage, it will also provide excellent sermon illustrations."9 A study of the historical background therefore, will not only help the preacher, it will also benefit his listeners.

Considering the advantages gained through such a study, one should see the value and need for studying the historical background of the book from which a text is chosen. But what does one study and how does one go about finding this information? Background study in the epistles usually involves the date and place of writing, the author and his readers, and the circumstances and

9Ibid., 29.
purpose of the book. These are the items usually discussed in a good exegetical commentary or New Testament introduction.

One does not, however, turn to these books before looking at the text. The best place to begin the historical background study is with the epistle itself. The layman reads through the book looking specifically for the information mentioned above. He also cross-references names, places, events, and other significant background items in the text. Other letters may be closely related to the epistle one is studying; like Colossians with Philemon, for example. The interpreter must note these relationships.

This naturally leads the interpreter to the book of Acts for information about how the church addressed in the epistle was founded and any other helpful details. Silva sees the book of Acts as extremely important because it provides a basic framework for reading the epistles.¹⁰ As one looks at an epistle in light of the book of Acts, he gains an acquaintance with some of the members and their original circumstances.

Once the layman has found what he can on his own, he then turns to the many reference works that are available. After listing some of the background items mentioned above by the writer, Faris D. Whitesell says, 

¹⁰Kaiser and Silva, 126.
Many of these data can be found in the passage itself, or in the nearby context. Others must be gleaned from Bible dictionaries, encyclopedias, histories, commentaries, and geographies. Grant Osborne refers to introductions to the better commentaries as the best single source of information. He also mentions New Testament introductory works and theologies, archaeological works, atlases, and books on customs and culture. He cautions the reader to use "recent, well-researched works because of the explosion of information uncovered in the last few decades."

Step Two: The Contents of the Book

The second step in this stage is that of gaining an understanding of the contents of the book. This step allows the interpreter to arrive at a theme, and to trace the development of that theme throughout the book. This is what Walter Kaiser refers to as "the book context." It gives the interpreter an understanding of the whole before he looks at the parts. John Philips refers to the "survey principle," and likens it to looking at the picture of a jigsaw puzzle before looking at each individual piece. He says, "We must see the

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12 Osborne, 19.

13 Ibid.

14 Kaiser, 77.
whole before becoming too immersed in its parts."\textsuperscript{15}

Although he refers to the whole Bible, what he says is also true of each individual book.

Such an understanding of the entire book is necessary in order to interpret each verse in its proper context. Kaiser says,

\begin{quote}
Unless the exegete knows where the thought of the text begins and how the thought pattern develops, all the intricate details may be of little or no worth.\textsuperscript{16}
\end{quote}

Haddon Robinson writes, "What a writer means in any specific paragraph or chapter can be determined by fitting it into the argument."\textsuperscript{17} An understanding of the context will also protect the interpreter from erroneous interpretations not intended by the original author.\textsuperscript{18}

It is also important that one has a clear perspective on what the whole book is about before attempting to preach a section of the book. Otherwise, one might find that when he gets to the latter sections of the book, there is an inconsistency with what he said at the beginning. Therefore, an understanding of the


\textsuperscript{16}Kaiser, 69.

\textsuperscript{17}Haddon W. Robinson, \textit{Biblical Preaching} (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1980), 58.

contents of the entire book is essential to preparing a series of expository messages from a New Testament epistle, both for interpretation as well as preaching.

To accomplish this second step, the layman should begin again with the text itself. He reads the book, marking off paragraph divisions. He should have several good paragraph Bibles to help him do this, marking off the differences with each. Kaiser offers a good example of how to chart those differences in his commentary on Malachi.\textsuperscript{19} He then needs to give each paragraph a title that explains its contents. The interpreter then examines the paragraphs to see how they fit together into sections, and titles each section. Following this, he should have an idea of what the book is about and be able to write a theme for it.

James Braga calls this the "synthetic approach" and shows his readers how to develop a chart of the whole book.\textsuperscript{20} His six-step process includes: (1) draw a chart; (2) summarize each paragraph; (3) select the main divisions; (4) select the sub-divisions; (5) find the main emphases; and (6) summarize the contents. This chart helps the interpreter to see the whole book at a glance.

\textsuperscript{19}Walter C. Kaiser, Jr, Malachi: God's Unchanging Love (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1984), 115.

\textsuperscript{20}James Braga, How to Study the Bible (Portland: Multnomah Press, 1982), 13-31.
glance, and come up with a theme. As he moves through the paragraphs, sections, and book, the interpreter should be asking "What is the subject" and "What is he saying about it?" 21

The layman is then ready to check his work against those of others. Virkler lists this step at the end of the interpretive process, just before application. 22 To wait that long, however, may require major revisions of the complete work and lead to discouragement on the part of the interpreter. It may also rob the layman of some thought-provoking ideas earlier in the process. For these reasons, it is best for the interpreter to compare his results with those of others before moving on to the next step.

Here again, as with the historical background, the external aids mentioned above are helpful. New Testament surveys and introductions are especially helpful in this area. Bible dictionaries, Bible encyclopedias, and exegetical commentaries are also an excellent source of information. Grant Osborne warns his readers, however, that "it is crucial not to check the secondary sources until we have done our own work inductively at the beginning." 23 As a result of these

21 Robinson, 59
22 Virkler, 243.
23 Osborne, 26.
two steps the interpreter should have gained an understanding of the book. He should have a "feel" for the setting of the book and a bird's-eye-view of its contents. Once completed, these two steps do not have to be repeated, only reviewed, as the expositor moves through the book.

Step Three: Understanding the Structure

Having gotten a broad picture of the author's work, the interpreter is now ready to begin looking at the details. Kaiser writes:

In our judgment, there is an absolutely fundamental and essential work in background studies which must precede the in-depth study of the selected passage.... But in no case should these concerns become so overwhelming that they become a substitute for a direct confrontation with the passage itself. 24

This brings the interpreter to the passage from which he plans to develop the sermon. Two more steps are necessary when it comes to looking at the details of the text. The interpreter must first study the structure of the passage. He then studies the words, phrases, and key theological terms to determine their meaning in their context.

The assumption is made here that the layman will start with the first paragraph and proceed through the book he has chosen, paragraph by paragraph, examining

24 Kaiser, Theology, 42.
each in detail. Therefore, the first place he begins is the structure of the first paragraph. An understanding of the structure of the passage is best gained through a process known as "diagramming." Lee Kantenwein mentions several benefits of diagramming a passage.\(^{25}\) It enables the interpreter to understand the structure of the sentences in the passage, to structure a meaningful and workable outline of the passage, and to observe the thought pattern of the passage. It also forces the interpreter to examine the passage in more detail.

There are several ways to diagram a passage. "Various forms of diagramming have been employed over the years. Needless to say, any form is useful if it helps the analyst to understand the sentence," says Kantenwein.\(^{26}\) Grant Osborne distinguishes between three different types of diagrams - a grammatical diagram, phrase or sentence flow diagram, and block or line diagram. Osborne says the block diagram provides a better overview, and is the simplest method to use. He also says it takes less time than the others.\(^{27}\) For this reason, the block diagram may be the best method for the layman to use.


\(^{26}\)Ibid.

\(^{27}\)Osborne, 28, 29.
The block diagram may appear time consuming to the layman at first, but the benefits make it well worth the investment of his time. Kaiser explains the process:

Each proposition, clause, and phrase is written out in the natural order of the text.... Each syntactical unit ... is isolated on a separate line.... The theme proposition is brought out to the left hand margin.... Syntactical units which directly modify or qualify the theme proposition are slightly indented. Material which modifies or qualifies the syntactical units subordinate to the theme proposition is indented one step further, and so on. 28

Osborne and Woodward break it down into two simple steps: "On a piece of paper, each main statement is written on a line with its modifiers written below the line, directly beneath the word they modify." 29 Though stated differently, there is very little difference in the results of Kaiser's or Osborne and Woodward's design as a few examples will show. Osborne and Woodward go on to diagram 2 Timothy 3:16 and 17 as an example:

16. Scripture is inspired by God
And/ (it is) profitable
for teaching
for reproof
for correction
for training
in righteousness

17. that/ the man may be adequate of God
equipped for work
every
good

28Kaiser, Theology, 99.

29Grant Osborne and Stephen Woodward, Handbook for Bible Study (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1979), 58.
Kaiser provides his readers with eight examples - four from the Old Testament and four from the New. His example of Ephesians 5:15 and 16 is similar to the one above:

15. Careful then
Watch how you walk
not as unwise
but as wise,

16. making the most of every opportunity
because the days are evil

As one can see, a block diagram makes the structure of the passage much clearer and enables the interpreter to see the natural outline of the passage rather than imposing an outline on the passage. As a result of the block diagram, the interpreter should be able to develop a tentative outline of the passage. He develops his main points from the main sentences, phrases, and clauses; and develops his subpoints from the minor ones, and other modifiers. This is not a sermon outline as yet. It is an outline of the contents of the passage and provides the basic framework for the sermon outline. For longer, or more difficult passages, the interpreter may settle for a summary of the paragraph instead of the block diagram, but the diagram is to be generally preferred.

He then ties the main points together to determine the theme of the passage. This is what Robinson calls

30Kaiser, Theology, 179.
"the exegetical idea."31 The interpreter must ask the same questions mentioned above, "What is the subject?" and "What is he saying about it?" to get this idea. Vines says "Analyzing the manner in which the supporting propositions in a paragraph relate to one another around a single theme is my most difficult assignment."32 Though difficult, it is an essential task in preparing a message from the passage. The interpreter then checks his theme with the paragraph title given in the overview of the book and corrects any inconsistencies.

At this point the layman has an idea of the circumstances that gave rise to the book. He has a good understanding of what the book as a whole is about. And now, he has a more thorough understanding of the passage he will be preaching from, as well as an idea of what his theme will be and how he will develop that theme. The next step takes the layman into an even more detailed study of the passage.

Step Four: Understanding Words and Phrases

This fourth step involves the study of the words and phrases in the passage. Kaiser refers to words as "the basic blocks for building meaning."33 Merrill F.

31Robinson, 66.


33Kaiser, Theology, 129.
Unger remarks, "He who has no genuine interest in words and their meaning will never make a good expositor."\(^{34}\) It goes without saying that the words to be studied are those in the original languages and not English. Therefore, a knowledge of the original languages would certainly be an asset. With the tools available today, however, the average layman who has no knowledge of the original languages is still capable of studying the original words of the text.

What is it that the interpreter needs to study? He should study cultural references, geographical locations that are mentioned, main verbs and nouns, figures of speech, and key theological terms. His responsibility at this point is to move through the passage phrase by phrase, and try to clarify anything that is unclear. Much will have already been gleaned regarding geographical and cultural references, from stage one. However, certain geographical and cultural references will still be unclear. They must be clarified before the interpreter can gain a thorough understanding of the passage. Through the use of cross-references, Bible dictionaries, and books on customs and culture, the interpreter gains an understanding of those references and their significance to the text.

\(^{34}\)Unger, 120.
Other words of significance must also be examined. Robert Traina mentions three types of terms that require special consideration:

These are the terms which are non-routine, and they fall into three classes: first, those which are difficult to understand; second the crucial terms of a passage and those ... significant for understanding the statements of a passage; and third, those terms which otherwise might express profound concepts. 35

Difficult words, crucial words, and pivotal words must all be studied and clarified. James E. Rosscup says, "It is important to deal with every word, yet to devote more inquiry to 'key terms.'" 36 The meaning of some words will become obvious to the interpreter as he compares translations, He may also use a concordance and lexicon to help determine some meanings. For other words, however, the interpreter will want to do a word study to determine which of the many possible meanings a word has best fits the context.

John Grassmick mentions five internal clues to discovering the meaning of a word. 37 (1) The writer himself may define the word. (2) The subject and


predicate, or a modifying adjective or adverb may provide a clue. (3) Parallel passages may clarify the word. (4) The writer may use an antithesis or comparison in the text. (5) The nature of the subject under discussion in the context may also provide a clue.

Figures of speech can be very important as well. The "golden rule of interpretation" should be kept in mind here. Unger elaborates:

> When the plain sense of Scripture makes common sense, seek no other sense; therefore, take every word at its primary, usual, literal meaning, unless it is patently a rhetorical figure, or unless the immediate context, studied carefully in the light of related passages and axiomatic and fundamental truths, clearly points otherwise.\(^{38}\)

Unger goes on to say that if there is an inconsistency or absurdity resulting from a literal interpretation of the text, then the interpreter may conclude that it is figurative. But if it is consistent with the context, parallel passages, and the subject under discussion, then the literal is to be preferred.\(^{39}\)

Theological terms require thorough study as well. The New Testament epistles are filled with words of tremendous theological significance. Words like "redeem," "propitiation," "reconcile," and "sanctify," must be interpreted in light of what they would have

\(^{38}\)Unger, 176.

\(^{39}\)Ibid., 177.
meant to the original audience, then in light of what
the entire Bible teaches about the topic. Bernard Ramm
says, "The entire holy scripture is the context and
guide for understanding the particular passage of
scripture."40

This requires the use of parallel passages as well
as word studies. Kaiser mentions two types of parallel
passages - verbal and topical.41 A verbal parallel makes
use of the same words, whereas a topical parallel
passage makes use of the same topic. Sidney Greidanus
writes, "For responsible preaching they [preachers] have
no choice but to compare Scripture with Scripture and to
check for progress of revelation."42 It is also
essential at this stage to consult reliable theological
texts for a more thorough understanding of the
theological terms discussed. Colin Brown's Dictionary
of New Testament Theology would be a good tool to use at
this point, as well as basic theology texts.

The interpreter must then check his work. His
primary source for doing this is a good exegetical
commentary. Fee and Stuart provide their readers with a
section on the evaluation and use of commentaries, along

40 Bernard Ramm, Protestant Biblical
Interpretation (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1970),
105.

41 Kaiser, Exegetical Theology, 125.

42 Greidanus, 333.
with a helpful list. They issue this warning however:

You do not begin your Bible study with a commentary! You go to the commentary after you have done your own work; the reason you eventually consult a commentary is to find answers to the content questions that have arisen in your study. At the same time, of course, the commentary will alert you to questions you failed to ask, but perhaps should have.43

Devotional commentaries also serve a purpose here. They may provide the interpreter with ideas overlooked, more insight into the application of the passage to his listeners, or provide him with illustrative material. Therefore, at this stage of the process, the interpreter needs to consult both exegetical and devotional commentaries. These commentaries allow him to check his interpretation of the passage, to clarify any unanswered questions, and find additional supporting material.

This completes the interpretive process of preparing an expository message. The four steps studied thus far include: studying the background to the book, studying the contents of the book, studying the structure of the passage, and studying the words and phrases found in the passage. Throughout this process, the interpreter has revised the theme and outline of the passage as necessary, and now has a theme and an outline true to the author's intended meaning and purpose.

43 Gordon D. Fee and Douglas Stuart, How To Read The Bible For All Its Worth, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1993), 248.
CHAPTER SIX
A PLAN FOR PREPARING EXPOSITORY MESSAGES
THE ORGANIZATIONAL STAGE

The interpreter now moves to the next stage of organizing the passage into an expository message. He cannot be satisfied with a running commentary on a few words and phrases here and there. He must take all the information he has learned about the passage, determine how it relates to his hearers, and deliver it to them in a clear, logical, interesting, and understandable way.

This is where many expositors fail. Yet this stage is just as important as the first. According to Merrill Unger, preaching that lacks logical organization and homiletical form "fails to qualify as preaching at all."¹ Harry Farra also argues for the importance of properly organizing the sermon when he writes, "Clarity and organization go hand in hand. If ideas are not well organized, people have to work harder to digest them."²


How then, does one go about organizing his sermon? As with the first stage, there are four steps in this stage that need to be taken to lead the layman into the development of the sermon: develop a proposition based on the theme and purpose of the passage, develop the outline, fill in the outline, and finally, prepare the introduction and the conclusion.

Step One: Develop a Proposition

The first step involves developing a proposition. The proposition is described by James Braga:

The proposition or thesis is a simple declaration of the subject which the preacher proposes to discuss, develop, prove, or explain in a discourse. In other words, it is the sermon reduced to one sentence. 3

Robert Delnay says, "The proposition is that key sentence around which you build the rest of your sermon." 4 Sometimes called a theme, a thesis, or a central idea, it is what ties the sermon together and gives it unity. Braga says it is the most essential feature in the organization of the sermon. 5

Different writers develop the proposition differently. Haddon Robinson refers to it as the

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4Robert G. Delnay, Fire In Your Pulpit (Schaumburg Ill: Regular Baptist Press, 1990), 45.

5Braga, 93.
"homiletical idea." He develops it by asking two questions: "What is the writer talking about?" and "What is he saying about it?" This becomes the subject and the complement. He writes, "A complete statement of the idea merely joins the subject with the complement."6 The subject is usually put into the form of a question and the complement answers the question, giving the preacher a complete idea.

Robinson illustrates this approach with Psalm 117. The subject is "why everyone should praise the Lord." The text has two complements: because "his love is strong and his faithfulness is eternal." The complete idea, stated in the sermon would then be, "Everyone should praise the Lord because his love is strong and his faithfulness is eternal."7 Once the idea is stated, it can either be explained, proved, or applied. This leads to Robinson's different shapes sermons may take: an idea to be explained, a proposition to be proved, a principle to be applied, a subject to be completed, or a story to be told.8

Delnay, on the other hand, mentions three necessary elements: a subject, a should or ought word,

6Haddon W. Robinson, Biblical Preaching (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1980), 68.
7Ibid., 41.
8Ibid., 116-124.
and an action verb.\textsuperscript{9} Based on Delnay's method, every sermon begins with a demand that is consistent with the demands of the passage. That demand becomes the proposition. An example of this type of proposition might be, "Every Christian should witness." The problem with this type of proposition is that it often turns out to be too general, disregards the form of the text by turning Bible promises into commands, and leaves the listener with the idea that Christian living consists of a series of shoulds, oughts, and musts.

Lloyd M. Perry suggests three types of propositions the preacher may use.\textsuperscript{10} The proposition may be "a statement of evaluation or judgment." The example Perry gives of this type is "Praying is profitable." It may be "a statement of obligation or duty." This type of proposition corresponds with Delnay's proposition mentioned above. The third type would be "a statement of activity without stated obligation." Here the preacher replaces the word "should" with the word "can." Perry's example is, "Every Christian can tithe."

James Braga expands the list even more. He says there are four types of proposition, and describes them as: declarative, interrogative, hortatory, and

\textsuperscript{9}Delnay, 45.

exclamatory. These are basically the same, except that each has a different emphasis. One declares, one asks a question, one exhorts, and one exclaims. Baumann lists six kinds of propositions, but acknowledges that the first two are inappropriate for the pulpit. The six he lists are: legal fact, past fact, present fact, prediction, value, and policy.

Which of these propositions should the layman use? The answer is - a variety. Using the same proposition all the time can lead to disinterest and boredom on the part of the hearers. With the exception of Braga's interrogative, which is more suitable as a transition anyway, all these propositions can be categorized as one of two types - a declaration, or a demand. The preacher, through his proposition, will either issue a declaration or a demand. He will then, to follow Robinson's approach, either explain, prove, or apply that declaration or demand.

How does one go about finding the right proposition? He starts with the results of the exegetical stage. The layman must now go back to the exegetical outline and theme sentence of the passage, and determine its relevancy to his contemporary hearers.

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11 Braga, 94, 95.

How is he going to apply the theme of the text to his listeners? He should have a theme and outline before him, written out in terms of "them," "there," and "then." He needs to make that exegetical outline contemporaneous by writing it out in terms of "us," "here," and "now." Sidney Greidanus says, "The sermon's theme should assert in summary form the text's message for today." 13

But how does one do this? It may be that the contemporary application of the theme is obvious and the expositor simply needs to change the nouns and verb tenses. Instead of saying, "Paul encouraged the Thessalonians to pray without ceasing," say, "We should pray without ceasing." One must be careful here not to make a command or principle contemporary when God does not intend for it to be so. Jay Adams says,

To preach the Bible faithfully in our time, we must find the equivalent to the original circumstances or situation to which God then (and now) applied the warning, the promise, the principle, or the command. 14

Sometimes there will be a recurring statement or a single statement in the passage that will become the contemporary theme. At other times it might be


14 Jay E. Adams, Preaching With Purpose (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1982), 133.
sandwiched in the middle of a larger passage. Delnay encourages his readers to isolate the one demand that controls all the rest. That one demand, or declaration in some cases, should become the proposition.

Another help in developing the proposition, though often neglected in sermon preparation, is to determine the purpose of the sermon. Jay Adams asserts that:

The amazing lack of concern for purpose among homiletics and preachers has spawned a brood of preachers who are dull, lifeless, abstract, and impersonal. The preacher should ask himself, "What do I want these people to do as a result of this message?" What did the original writer want his audience to do? Haddon Robinson says, "No biblical writer took up his pen to jot down 'a few appropriate remarks' on a religious subject. Each wrote to affect lives." Donald Miller says, "The purpose of the sermon should be the same as the purpose of the scripture on which it is based."

Once the expositor has determined the biblical writer's


16Delnay, 83.

17Adams, 1.

18Robinson, 109.

purpose, he can decide on his own purpose, and develop a proposition in light of that purpose that is consistent with the text.

A final word needs to be said about the proposition. Baumann mentions five characteristics of a good proposition. He says it should be a simple sentence, clear and crisp. It should also be stated as a universal principle. It should be an abridgement of the sermon. And finally, it should be sermonic in nature. Delnay argues that the proposition should be phrased with force. To achieve that force he recommends using an action verb, in the active voice, and stating it in the affirmative. He recommends that two questions be asked of the proposition as a final check — "Is it truly scriptural?" and "Is it spiritually important?"

William Evans says, "Let us have less firing of blank cartridges and more shooting to kill." The preacher who organizes his sermon around a single proposition with a definite purpose in mind, will fire more than blank cartridges.

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20 Baumann, 126, 127.
21 Delnay, 45.
22 Ibid., 46.
Step Two: Develop the Main Points

The second step involved in the organizational stage is the development of the main points of the outline. An outline is the sermon in skeleton form. It is a sketch of the sermon, and absolutely essential to the clarity of the message. J. Daniel Baumann writes:

An outline will aid both the speaker and the listener. It prevents the preacher from rambling. It establishes an order, a direction of thought. omissions, digressions, inconsistencies, misplaced emphases, and unsupported assertions will be sharply reduced. Sermons wander without the safeguards of a well thought out structure.24

Every effective speaker has an outline for the message he delivers. He either has it in his head, or in his notes before him as he speaks. Duane Litfin refers to outlining as "a crucial skill for a speaker, one which will serve you and your audience well if you master it, or will undermine your entire effort if you do not."25

According to Litfin, an outline is designed to do three things. It displays the main points and subpoints of the idea. It reveals the logical relationship that exists between them. It also reveals the chronological order in which they will be treated.26 Walter Liefeld mentions three more functions, equally important. It

24Baumann


26Ibid., 177
groups the information together and facilitates comprehension. It focuses attention on what needs to be emphasized in the text. And it moves the sermon along toward its intended goal.\textsuperscript{27} The outline basically functions as a road map for the preacher. It leads him along, telling him what needs to be said, when it needs to be said, and in most cases, how it needs to be said.

To develop this outline, the expositor should first turn to his exegetical outline and reexamine it in light of his proposition. He must now revise the main points so that they faithfully represent the text, yet are stated in a contemporary fashion - if he has not done so already as a result of studying and developing the proposition. Kaiser warns his readers to avoid dated statements. He advises them to delete all proper names, except God's, as well as anything that focuses the listener's attention on the past rather than the present.\textsuperscript{28}

Jay Adams contrasts a lecture format with a preaching format. In a lecture format, the speaker speaks in terms of then and there, emphasizes the third person, speaks of others in abstract terms, and is informative. In a preaching format, the preacher speaks

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{28}Walter C. Kaiser, Jr., \textit{Toward an Exegetical Theology} (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1981), 157.
\end{itemize}
in the here and now, emphasizes the second person, speaks in concrete terms of the congregation, and is persuasive and motivational. In arguing for a preaching format, Adams is telling the preacher to rephrase his main points into contemporary, universal, timeless truths.

Adams then contrasts two different outlines. One follows the lecture format and discusses the source, function, and purpose of spiritual gifts. The other, based on the same text, follows a preaching format and discusses the fact that God gave you a gift, He gave it to you to use, and you are to use it to benefit others. He then says:

The preaching format continually cues the preacher to be personal, to address his congregation, to bring them face to face with God and His requirements.... Notice the abstract terms 'source, function, purpose' in the first outline. Words like these put congregations to sleep. They do not say anything helpful. They are abstract and analytical and squeeze all the juice out of a text and its truth. ... These are not preaching outlines; they are outlines of analytical studies of a topic.

Perhaps the simplest way to determine these main points is to follow Robert Delnay's approach. He suggests that the proposition be a demand. The natural

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29 Adams, 51.
30 Ibid., 52-53.
31 Delnay, 47.
response to a demand is a question. Why should I? How can I? The preacher therefore looks through the text to see which of these, or any other questions like them, are answered in the passage. He then develops his main points based on those answers. For example, suppose the proposition is, "Every Christian should witness for Christ." The expositor then prepares a series of columns with the words, "why?, how?, when?, where?, and any others that may be asked. He then checks the passage to see which of these questions the passage answers most. The column with the most answers is chosen and the answers become the main points of the message.

One word of warning is in order regarding the use of this approach. One must be careful here to follow the teaching intent of the passage. Donald Miller correctly says, "The points should be an outgrowth of the passage of scripture on which they are based." The goal at this point is not to just get an outline. It is to produce an outline that is faithful to the text and relevant to the hearers. The expositor may find himself doing eisegesis and not exegesis in an attempt to develop an outline from the text.

Fred Craddock offers an appropriate critique of this approach when he says:

Perhaps it is enough at this point to alert

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32 Miller, 96.
ourselves in advance about the seriousness of altering form, which may alter function, which may alter content. If 'blessed are the poor in spirit' is allowed to become 'we ought to be poor in spirit'... then many true and Christian things can be said in the sermon, but the preacher may be taken to court for violating a text.\textsuperscript{33}

Is it the intent of the passage to provide the reader with "ways to witness," or "reasons why he should witness?" If not, then the expositor must continue to look at the passage until he is sure that his outline is consistent with his exegesis, and accurately reflects the teaching intent of the passage. In spite of this weakness, however, Delnay's approach is perhaps the simplest and quickest way for the layman to get an outline from the text.

This approach naturally leads into a transitional sentence as well, complete with a key word. If the expositor has discovered answers in the text to the question of why Christians should witness, his transitional sentence will be, "There are four reasons found in this text why Christians should witness." If he has discovered answers to the question of where a Christian should witness, it will be, "There are three places where Christians should witness." The question of how would be answered with ways. The question of why would be answered with reasons, and so on.

Lloyd Perry suggests using the term "because of" in the transitional sentence. For example, "Christians should witness because of the arguments set forth in this passage," or "because of the commands that are given in this passage." Delnay argues, however, that using the term, "because of," weakens the force of the message because it "points toward a meaning, but it doesn't state it." For this reason, it is best to say "There are three arguments in this passage," or "There are two commands in this passage," as opposed to, "because of" the commands or arguments set forth.

As the preacher delivers the message, his main points should allow him to take the people through the passage from which he is preaching. Every main point should be followed by a passage of scripture that supports that point. David Black says, "Be sure to construct your homiletical outline in such a fashion that the listeners can follow the sermons in their own Bibles." As he leads them through the passage, they should get a sense of "Yes, I see that now." Such preaching focuses their attention on the authority of the Word of God as opposed to the ideas of the preacher.

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34 Perry, 49.
35 Delnay, 48.
As the expositor goes through the steps of the sermonic process, several outlines will probably end up on his paper. How will he know when he has an outline good enough to develop into a message? Faris D. Whitesell says, "In a vital outline the points deal with challenging truths of a timeless nature." Liefeld is also helpful here. He suggests four tests for an outline. Is it faithful to the text? Is it obvious from the text? Is it relevant to the hearers and goal oriented? And finally, is it dynamic, stimulating a response, and moving toward a climax? An outline that meets these tests is one that deserves to be preached.

**Step Three: Fill in the Outline**

The next step in the organizational process is to fill in the outline with supporting material. At this point the expositor can take one of two approaches. Kaiser recommends the same method used in determining the main points. The preacher goes back to the block diagram of the passage and develops the minor points of the diagram into subpoints in the sermon outline. This approach would make an excellent teaching outline, but

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38 Liefeld, 127.

39 Kaiser, 159.
may not be the best for preaching. It would be too easy for the preacher to become bogged down in the details of the text, and fail to adequately convey the message. Charles Koller recommends that the subpoints be like the main points of the message. He suggests that the subpoints be complete statements, parallel in structure, and mutually exclusive, just like the main points. 40 Using this approach, each subdivision becomes another division of the main point.

For example, if the proposition is "Every Christian should witness," and the first main point is "by living an exemplary life," then the subpoints might be a further division of what constitutes an exemplary life. An exemplary life is "a life of purity," or "a life of consistency," or even 'a life of faithfulness." Each of these three could possibly become three subpoints of the main point. The danger with this kind of subpoint is that the sermon may become a series of sermonettes on related topics. The discussion of the main point becomes a sermon on an exemplary life, instead of how an exemplary life relates to witnessing.

This writer's experience has been that it is best to develop the subpoints based on a different pattern. Rather than trying to preach on every detail of the

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passage, or alliterate the subpoints, it is best to
develop the main points based on what John Broadus
calls, "the functional elements of the sermon." These
elements, as given by Broadus are: explanation,
argument, application, and illustration. Alfred P.
Gibbs quotes Martin Luther as saying:

> When he preaches on any subject, a man must
first distinguish it. Secondly, he must define,
describe and show what it is. Thirdly, he must
produce sentences from the Scripture to prove and
strengthen it. Fourthly, he must explain it by
examples. Fifthly, he must adorn it with
similitudes. Lastly, he must admonish and arouse
the indolent, correct the disobedient and reprove
the authors of false doctrines.

Perhaps this is where Broadus came up with his four
functional elements. Using this approach, the preacher
announces his main division, then explains, proves,
illustrates, and applies it to his audience.

The first subpoint is an explanation of the text.
It should not be necessary here to explain the main
point itself, but only to explain the passage and how
the preacher came up with this main point from the
passage. This takes the preacher back to one of the
primary functions of expository preaching - to explain
the text. Broadus says, "To explain the scriptures

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would seem among the primary functions of the preacher."\textsuperscript{43} He issues two words of warning here though: "Do not undertake to explain what you do not understand," and "Do not waste time in explaining what does not need explanation."\textsuperscript{44}

Careful exegesis takes care of the first warning. The second leads to the question of how much the preacher needs to explain. This was one problem mentioned by several of those surveyed. Robinson says that it is better to define too many terms than too few. In his usual, memorable way, he says, "A mist in the pulpit becomes a fog in the pew."\textsuperscript{45} Grant Osborne, on the other hand, says this:

\begin{quote}
Each element must flow into the next and details must be paired down so that the hearers are not bored by needless data that adds little or nothing to the real message of the text.\textsuperscript{46}
\end{quote}

Robinson, in a later text, probably offers the best advice. He writes, "The basic principle is to give as much biblical information as the people need to understand the passage, and no more."\textsuperscript{47}

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\textsuperscript{43}Broadus, 130.  
\textsuperscript{44}Ibid.  
\textsuperscript{45}Robinson, 191.  
\textsuperscript{46}Grant R. Osborne, The Hermeneutical Spiral (Downers Grove, Ill: InterVarsity Press, 1991), 360.  
\textsuperscript{47}Haddon Robinson, Bill Hybels, and Stuart Briscoe, Mastering Contemporary Preaching (Portland: Multnomah Press, 1989), 57. 
\end{flushright}
Argumentation allows the preacher to provide proof for his assertion. James Braga mentions several ways he can do this.\(^{48}\) Obviously the primary source of argumentation is the Bible itself. If the preacher has done an adequate job of explaining his text, the listeners should already be convinced of his main point from the passage under study. At this point, however, he needs to turn to other biblical statements and examples that lend further support to his assertion. Regarding scriptural argumentation, Broadus says, "In general, no other argument can be so appropriate or be so effective with the people."\(^{49}\)

Logical reasoning, statistical facts and data, and testimonies of others are also a means of employing argumentation. Quotations, when used of perceived authorities, can add both impressiveness and authority to the message.\(^{50}\) Illustrations from real life are also helpful. The preacher needs to anticipate questions and doubts on the part of his hearers, and use the method of argumentation to carry on an imaginary conversation with his listeners. He does this by simply saying, "Now you may be asking...." He must have a good answer, however, otherwise, this can backfire on him.

\(^{48}\) Braga, 145, 146.

\(^{49}\) Broadus, 163.

\(^{50}\) Robinson, Biblical Preaching, 143.
Illustrations can be used at any stage of the development of the sermon. It may be that the preacher uses an illustration to explain or to argue. But at some point in the outline, he needs to illustrate the truth he is communicating. Perry recommends using only one illustration for a single idea.\(^{51}\) That should be a minimum. How many more illustrations the preacher uses should be determined by how well they will help him explain, argue, or apply the passage to his hearers.

Of all the material covered in the development of the sermon, the illustrations will probably be remembered best.\(^{52}\) Therefore it is important that the preacher choose illustrations that help him communicate his message, rather than use an illustration for its own sake. His purpose is to elucidate the passage through the illustration, not to call attention to the illustration itself.

Broadus recommends the preacher be thoroughly acquainted with the illustration and practice telling it before he gets in the pulpit.\(^{53}\) This will prevent him from having to explain it and possibly keep it from falling flat on the ears of the people. Baumann says,

\(^{51}\)Perry, 59.

\(^{52}\)L.P. Lehman, How to Find and Develop Effective Illustrations (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 1985), 99.

\(^{53}\)Broadus, 163.
"Like a joke, it either lives or dies by its own merits."\(^{54}\) For this reason, it is better to use an illustration that is clear, and to leave it alone and move on to the next point, once it is told.

The final subpoint becomes the application. This does not mean that this is the only place the preacher seeks to apply the text. Baumann says, "Application may appear at any point within the sermon."\(^{55}\) It may come at the beginning, in the middle, or at the end. In the method proposed here, the application appears in all three areas. It appears at the beginning, either through the introduction or the proposition, in the middle as a subpoint to each main point, and in the conclusion as the preacher drives home his point.

A word of caution is in order here. According to Jack Kuhatschek, the application must be consistent with the interpretation of the passage. Kuhatschek writes: "If an application does not arise out of the divine and human author's intent, then it does not carry the authority of God's Word."\(^{56}\) Also, it is important that the application be made with the people in mind. Chuck Swindoll says this:

\(^{54}\)Baumann, 54.

\(^{55}\)Ibid., 252, 253.

\(^{56}\)Jack Kuhatschek, Taking The Guesswork Out Of Applying the Bible (Downers Grove, Ill: InterVarsity Press, 1990), 149.
I think of teenagers and that world they have to survive in. I think of the abused wife. I think of the broken-hearted or the emotionally disturbed young person or older person. I think of those who are divorced and lonely.  

Perhaps his popularity as a speaker is due to this approach to applying the Word to people's lives.

The four elements mentioned above enable the preacher to adequately deal with the contents of the passage, while at the same time, avoid rabbit trails. There will, at times, be an overlapping of these functional elements. An illustration may be used to explain, prove, or apply a point, for example. The goal of using these materials, as well as any others, as part of the subpoints is to make the explanation and application of the passage itself clear.

**Step Four: The Introduction and Conclusion**

The final step in the process is to develop an introduction and a conclusion to the message. The introduction comes as part of the last step because it is not until then that the preacher knows what he is introducing. Preparing both the introduction and the conclusion at the same time and tying them together, "wraps up the entire sermon in a way that gives it unity and force," says Jay Adams.  

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57 Chuck Swindoll, "How to Win the Battle Against Boring Sermons," in *Ministries* (Fall, 1984), 37.

58 Adams, 64.
Baumann mentions four specific purposes for the introduction.\textsuperscript{59} The introduction should first of all, secure the attention of the listeners and arouse their interest. Otherwise, the preacher loses them before he gets started. Second, the introduction should establish the direction of thought. The hearers should get an idea of the direction in which the preacher is moving. It should also allow the preacher to make the transition from the natural to the spiritual. The preacher should begin where the people are and move them into the spiritual realm. Finally, the introduction should show the people the relevancy of the message to their lives. Delnay reminds his readers that the introduction should fit the sermon, and lead easily to the proposition.\textsuperscript{60}

The introduction has been used by many preachers, perhaps effectively, to primarily introduce background information about the text. William Evans lists eight different sources for the introduction, all of them relating to the text or context of the passage itself.\textsuperscript{61} While this may be helpful to the understanding of the passage, to start off with background data is to disregard the fact that in order to communicate effectively, one must first gain his hearer's attention.

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\textsuperscript{59}Baumann, 136, 137.
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\textsuperscript{60}Delnay, 114.
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\textsuperscript{61}Evans, 66-69.
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For this reason, Adams says, "The first factor is to begin with the congregation itself."62 The preacher can use an illustration, a story, a startling statement; ask a series of questions; or make a series of comments with which his hearers can identify. But he must start where they are. Along this same line, Fred Craddock writes:

One does not begin, therefore, with an indictment... or with a mini-lecture on history.... To lead someone out means to take him or her by the hand and then move.63

The introduction then, is prepared after the outline of the sermon itself has been prepared. It is prepared with the people in mind, and attempts to direct them to the topic of the message. The preacher begins with the hearers, gains their attention and interest, and then moves to his proposition. Once he has the introduction in mind, he should begin writing the sermon outline out on a sheet of paper, thinking through the introduction, and the main points, in preparation for the conclusion.

Though the conclusion is the last part of the sermon outline prepared, it is by no means the least important. Regarding the conclusion, Walter Kaiser advises preachers "to severely limit their work on the

62 Adams, 62.
63 Craddock, 185.
introduction and to devote that time...to an expanded and clearly-thought-out conclusion." 64 James Braga says, "The conclusion is the climax of the whole sermon in which the preacher's one constant aim reaches its goal in the form of a forceful impression." 65

The purpose of the conclusion is stated succinctly by Grant Osborne, "The goals are to sum up the message, drive home the main point, and motivate the audience to action." 66 Haddon Robinson vividly writes, "The sermon itself moves the guns into position; now is the time to fire the shot at the listener's mind and emotions." 67 How does the preacher fire that shot? By simply following Osborne's advice. First, summarize the message. This is not the time to introduce new material, but to simply recapitulate the proposition and main points, restating them in different words.

Second, the preacher drives home the main point. This is where the preacher tells his hearers again what action they should take and how they can take it. He tells them how to put Sunday morning's message to work in Monday morning's world. 68 Adams refers to this as

64 Kaiser, 163.
65 Braga, 195.
66 Osborne, 361.
67 Robinson, Biblical Preaching, 171.
68 Ibid, 170.
"implementation," and says Bible-believing preachers "have been good at telling congregations what to do, but notoriously poor at telling them how to do it."\(^{69}\) The conclusion is a good time to spell out specifically, with examples even, how the hearers can implement the truth of the message into their lives.

Finally, the preacher should conclude by motivating his listeners to act on the message. Adams says, "It would be foolish for the salesman to explain all about his product and then fail to ask the prospective customer to buy it."\(^{70}\) He goes on to remind his readers that:

> There remains a biblical obligation to "urge," "persuade," "encourage," and "authoritatively instruct" (cf. the pastoral epistles) the listener to believe and do whatever God commands.\(^{71}\)

The preacher who calls upon the listeners to make a decision, perhaps even issuing an invitation, recognizes that scripture was written for the purpose of changing lives, not just filling heads.

One often hears a preacher say, "May God the Holy Spirit apply this message to your hearts and lives." Through the use of illustrations, examples, arguments, questions, and pointed sayings, the preacher will make

\(^{69}\)Adams, 138.  
\(^{70}\)Adams, 69.  
\(^{71}\)Ibid.
it much easier for the Holy Spirit to do just that. J. Daniel Baumann says, "Many sermons just seem to end; they grind to a halt." A sermon with a carefully planned conclusion, consisting of a summary, specific directions, and a call to action, will do more than grind to a halt. It will cause the listener to go away with an understanding of what God has said in the text, and what and how he can do something about it.

This completes the second stage of the process of preparing expository messages. The writer has explained a plan for preparing expository messages consisting of eight steps in two stages. Upon completing these eight steps, the layman should have an outline, written out, that is not only true to the text, but is also relevant to the hearer. The expositor should then spend time meditating and praying over the message, trusting God to bless His Word. A training manual can be found in appendix five which illustrates these eight steps and guides the layman through the rewarding work of preparing expository messages.

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72Baumann, 142.
CONCLUSION

The writer has presented a plan that is designed to help the layman prepare expository messages from epistolary literature. This plan, with the exception of the limitation to epistolary literature, was taught in a Bible institute setting for one semester in the Spring of 1993. The class consisted of four students. For the purpose of this project, the writer did a survey of the class to determine the effectiveness of the plan. The survey consisted of eleven questions.

The first five questions asked the student to identify the influence of the course in five specific areas. They could respond with decreased, no change, increased, or increased significantly. All four students said their ability to interpret the text had increased significantly. Three of the four said their ability to find an outline within the text had increased significantly, while one said it had increased.

One said his ability to make the text meaningful to his audience had increased. Three said it had increased significantly. Two said their confidence as a Bible expositor had increased, while two said it had
increased significantly. Finally, all four of the students said their desire to preach expository messages had increased significantly.

Questions six through eight were designed to assess the practical value of this approach for the student. Question six asked the student to rate on a scale of one to ten, the effectiveness of this approach in helping them develop a practical approach for preparing expository messages. One responded with a nine. Three responded with a ten. Question seven and eight asked the students to what extent they had preached expository messages in the past and how it would compare to the future. One student went from 0-25% to 75-100%. Two students went from 0-25% to 50-75%. One student went from 50-75% to 75-100%.

Question nine asked them for the weaknesses of the approach. One student did not list any weaknesses. Another student mentioned the difficulty of the approach itself and the time it takes to develop it. Two students mentioned the amount of time required for using this approach to develop sermons. Question ten asked the student to list the strengths of this approach. One student said, "You preach the Word instead of opinions." Another student responded, "It makes you preach the Word." Other responses were, the text becomes more effective, and a better understanding of the scripture.
A final question asked the student what was the most important principle gained from the course. One response was simply, "2 Timothy 2:15." Another response was, "To expose the meaning of the text." One student said, "Understanding the scripture has no shortcuts." And finally, one student said the most important lesson he had learned from the course, was "learning to preach what the Bible truly says, and not just what we want it to say."

The results of the survey indicate that this plan is helpful to those who are willing to take the time involved in using it. Just as there is no shortcut to learning scripture, so there is no shortcut to preaching the Word of God! The writer has offered the reader an eight-step plan for preparing expository messages that will help him stay true to the scriptures and relevant to the hearers. Merrill Unger says:

People who attend upon a sermon want to be inspired, challenged and moved. They want their hearts warmed with heavenly fire as well as their heads filled with heavenly wisdom. It is the job of the expository preacher to do both, and his task is the most glorious that was ever committed by God to man.¹

This writer believes that as a result of this project, the layman who senses the call of God to preach, will be better equipped to fulfill that most glorious task.

¹Merrill F. Unger, Principles of Expository Preaching (Grand Rapids, 1955), 255.
Interview: Dr. Mark Corts
Pastor, Calvary Baptist Church in
Winston-Salem, North Carolina
Noted expository preacher

This interview was conducted by the writer in Dr.
Corts’ office on October 19, 1994. Dr. Corts is the
pastor of Calvary Baptist Church in Winston-Salem North
Carolina, a Southern Baptist church which has a Sunday
morning attendance of approximately 2500. Dr. Corts is
also on a weekly television ministry, and a frequent
speaker at Bible conferences and retreats.

Interviewer:

Dr. Corts, how long have you been in the ministry?

"About 35 years."

Interviewer:

Did you start preaching as a lay preacher?

"You know, I started out, Steve, I think when I was
sixteen. I broke my shoulder in football, and I
realized I was not going to be an All American football
player and work my way through college. I had come from
a poor family. I yielded my life to the Lord and
shortly thereafter preached my first sermon. I started
preaching when I was sixteen without any training, of course. Although, my Dad was a lay preacher, he always had another job. He preached at small churches and pastored small churches. So that's how I got started."

**Interviewer:**

"You didn't start Calvary did you?"

"Calvary was started in 1919; it struggled through the Depression; probably reached a peak of about 200-220 in Sunday School about 1958 when Elmer Parker was here as pastor downtown. Three preachers came to me and said don't go to that church, that church will die. I didn't want to pastor, I thought God had called me to be an evangelist. So I thought it would be good experience for me to have to preach every week for a while - good training. And, I was working with Youth for Christ - young people. I was 25. They came to me and said we know you are too young to be our pastor, but please preach for us until we can find a pastor.

After I had been there about three months, they came and said they wanted me three times. I said no three times and that was in July of 1963. They gave me a call, it was a unanimous call, and I told God if there was one vote against me I wouldn't come. That started a long relationship. About 1 1/2 year later we took a big step of faith, borrowed about $96,000 and built the old
chapel and there is nothing that remains of those original buildings."

Interviewer:

So you actually started here in 1963 as pastor? And the membership at that time was about 140?

"That was my first month, and when we were up to about 160, they realized it was going to go somewhere. Our income in the first year was $28,000, and this year it’s about $6 million."

Interviewer:

What is your attendance now?

"Last month we averaged about 2500."

Interviewer:

What would you say has taken the church from 150 to 2500? What have been the main factors in that growth?

"There were four key turning points in my life that were factors. In 1965 ... I made a very fundamental decision which transformed my whole ministry - that I was going to spend three mornings a week in the study, preparing to be an expository preacher. I was a Bible college graduate, so that's how I was trained, to use the English Bible...I had two years of Greek. And, I
went to the church and announced that I would not be sitting in the office waiting for calls. I remember the day that I moved my books out of my office at the church. You don’t see a book in here - a study book, that is."

**Interviewer:**

So you don’t do your sermon preparation here?

"I do no sermon preparation here. I have a study at home and I stay there and my wife protects me from the calls. When I made a decision to be an expository preacher, I made a concurrent decision to use three mornings a week to study in preparation. Basically, by Friday noon, my sermons were prepared for Sunday, even when I was preaching twice and teaching twice and doing four messages, plus weddings on Sunday - which I can’t do any more. That was change number one, and I think responsible for much of the growth. People were hungry for the word of God, and still are, and the practical application of the Bible.

The second thing that happened was, In 1966 I decided I was wearing myself out witnessing five nights a week and I began taking lay people with me to train them. That led to a formal structure, reproductive type training, in which my goal was to spend half the time I was witnessing now training laymen so I could multiply
myself. That led to the development of the Sharelife program which we have been doing since 1969.

The third thing was in 1973, I realized I had a long line of people wanting to see me; wanting me to do all the counseling. We were winning these people to the Lord, but all of them were babies. Babies need their diapers changed, they need their formula mixed and fed. They have problems that need to be solved. These people were lined up at my door, and there is only 168 hours in a week. If you didn’t do anything but see those people you could only see 168. So how was I going to minister to these people? You’ve got to remember, none of this was taught to me. I went to a very fine Bible college, but none of this was taught to me."

**Interviewer**

You learned all of this on your own?

"I was having to struggle for it. How could I learn to reproduce my ministry? And that led me to Exodus 18. Henry Brandt was a Christian psychologist working with Campus Crusade. Brandt was giving a talk to the Christian management school they had on how pastors were to handle their counseling. Only what he saw in Exodus 18 was totally different from what I saw. I saw it as a ministry plan. Jethroe said, you are not doing good Moses, you are wearing yourself out and you
are going to wear the people out standing in line to see you. I'd never heard that before. I had never seen that before. And the Holy Spirit just laid that on my heart. It was June, 1973. And I thought, I've got to start a small group ministry to get my people to minister to each other. Then it hit me. I remember, driving back from Atlanta thinking, No, if there's one thing a Baptist Church needs it is not another ministry. Let me use what I've got - Sunday School. So I did. And I set it up through Sunday School and I broke the whole Sunday School up into tens - put a disciple leader over each ten. That fall I picked out eight things I wanted those people to know about ministering. I preached Sunday night messages on those. Then I had the SS teachers send all their group leaders in, and on Wednesday night I went over that message and showed them how to apply it to Sunday School. And then we put them to work. We divided into groups. That's how this got started. Now we do this once a year. We train our care leaders, our group leaders in those same things - this little manual explains that.

The fourth turning point was what happened two and a half years ago while I was recovering from a heart attack and I began to understand I was going to have to learn ... to give away my ministry. That's when we came up with the reorganization - to build a purpose-driven
church, a function-driven, mandate-driven church. And so we re-organized the staff and lay people into the eight basic ministries of the church."

Interviewer:

Let me ask you about your educational background. What training did you have? You mentioned a while ago that you started preaching when you were sixteen, so you did preach for several years before you had any formal training.

"Yes, I went to Trinity College in Clearwater Florida. Then I went into the Youth for Christ ministry. Then I wanted to go to a university just to find out what it was like so I went to Wake Forest for four years and then I went away to seminary at Chicago Graduate School of Theology. Winona Lake School of Theology evolved into Chicago Graduate School of Theology on the University of Illinois campus which evolved into Trinity Evangelical Divinity School. I went six summers to seminary there."

Interviewer:

Have you been involved any in training laymen, preparing laymen for a preaching ministry? I know you mentioned all these other ministries.

"There are two ways. This is a very missions-minded church. I have done lay missions trips since 1967. I've probably taken 1500 lay people oversees. 
football scholarship. I taught him to preach and we sent him to Cambridge to get a Ph.D. We later ordained him. He came back and preached for me last Sunday."

Interviewer:

Let’s focus in on expository preaching. How often would you say you preach expository messages?

"I’d say 99 out of 100 of my messages would be expository. I do very few topical. Now, let’s get a definition of expository preaching."

Interviewer:

That was my next question.

"We must meet on the same grounds there. For me, expository preaching is bringing insights out of the scripture itself and letting the truth and the application arise out of the text. And for me, expository preaching is primarily a serial text. That is, the paragraph that the writer has put together, as opposed to topical. Now you can do expository preaching with one verse - the verse becomes the paragraph.

Now, one thing that I have had a lot of fun experimenting with in expository preaching is this. About six years ago, I had gotten bored going paragraph to paragraph. I was preaching through Colossians, and I decided to do thematic expositions. And for me that was
a lot of fun where I took the themes of Colossians and bound them together ... like the four times in Colossians that Paul just comes right out and says Christ is adequate, He is sufficient, which is probably the theme of Colossians. I found an exciting way to preach that isn’t boring."

**Interviewer:**

So you would deal with a theme like the all-sufficiency of Christ. Certain passages would become your main point.

"Sometimes those passages made different statements, so they made different points. Sometimes the passages all made one statement. And you know, in expository preaching, (and this is one of the things I show these interns), sometimes you’ve got one point, and the rest of the message is illustrating that one point.

Sometimes you get this theme in a paragraph. I try to keep people on the edge of what I am saying by bringing them down to one point. Another way I use expository preaching is biographical, what I call narrative exposition."

**Interviewer:**

What has helped you most in learning how to prepare expository messages? Have there been certain books or classes you took when you were in college or at Trinity? Or maybe a combination of things – but certainly any books that stand out.
"Do you want the honest truth? I’ve read the old classic that was used in seminary, it was Koller’s Expository Preaching, Charles Koller..."

(Interviewer:)

Expository Preaching without Notes.

"That’s it. That was a classic book in the 50’s and 60’s. That was very helpful. I’ve read all of Haddon Robinson’s books. Martin Lloyd Jone’s, Preaching and Preachers, Spurgeon’s Lectures to My Students; it’s an old classic. But I tell you what, in the last 25 years, what probably most influenced my preaching is a series of taped lectures on preaching from "Christianity Today." There have been four or five preaching seminars that were taped seminars which probably helped me to stay abreast and keep my preaching contemporary but geared to the Book that were more important than any books I’ve read. One was by Fred Craddock. Craddock gave me fantastic insight on using illustrations - and so did Henry Brandt’s tapes.

My people will say there are two specific characteristics of my preaching of telling stories and using common things in life to illustrate spiritual truths - which I think was Jesus’ master point. And the other is taking complexities in scripture and making them simple. I tell all my interns, to aim at a fourth
grade level. I’m preaching through Revelation. Man, I dealt with chapter eleven last week and the two witnesses. How do I explain this on a fourth grade level? That’s the challenge that we expository preachers have. And then to keep it practical."

Interviewer:

Yes, to keep it simple and practical.

"Simple and practical - two things. And Fred Craddock’s power of illustration - have you heard him?"

Interviewer:

No, I’ve read several of his books on preaching.

"I haven’t even read his books, but I’ve listened to every tape he’s ever made. Before my heart attack, I was doing a lot of driving and I would listen to tapes in the car. They have benefited me enormously. And I’ve been one to always distill the essence of my sermon into one paragraph, one sentence. When my interns come to work for me, I always make them do that. I let them do the exegetical work and write down everything they learned, and then sit down with me and go over that. I’d say, let’s pick out of this, what does this scripture say? You are familiar with the old three laws? The law of observation; law of interpretation;
law of application. And what I try to say to my interns, keep it practical. So what does this scripture say. Let’s say this in one or two sentences. Next, I’m going to ask you a question, Who cares? So what? What difference does this make?"

Interviewer:

Do you do a lot of series in books?

"You know, I do the Bible study cruise - been doing it for eleven years now with Jim Henry and Charles Stanley, Adrian Rogers and Kay Erick. Charles and I get together and talk. You know he is very shy, he doesn’t mix with people much. About ten years ago, he told me he stopped preaching through books. I still do a little of it because I am in a little bit more traditional area than he is in Atlanta. But if you’ll watch him and his books, he does all thematic expositions. He stopped preaching through books. He said he can’t hold people’s attention. And so he goes to themes like forgiveness or how to keep kids on your team, or whatever. It is still expository - but that is different even from thematic expositions or theme expositions, there’s a slight difference in the two."

Interviewer:

So when you are preparing a message, what are the steps that you take?
"When I am preaching through a book, I start with wherever I am in the passage. I will pull out four or five versions and the versions are helpful — not just in getting points of view and interpretation. The versions really help me in paragraphing, and knowing when to stop and where to stop and what really makes sense, and what is truth bunched together. That’s where I usually start. I’ve done that for many years. And there are some that are better at that than others. Berkley is a very good translation for paragraphing. Eugene Peterson’s, The Message, is outstanding — very creative. It’s a paraphrase, but the paragraphs, and how he says it — fantastic, just refreshing. I love to get in and read it.

Then, I would go to a couple of good exegetical commentaries on that text. And then I would expand and read four or five devotional, pastoral type commentaries. I would mark those as I read. I’d take a legal pad and write down ideas from each one of those texts. Then I would take the text itself and I would look through it for any juicy things — ideas. Sometimes I will go a step further and check it out in the Greek text. And then I’ll set all that aside and come back and say what is this saying? That’s when I try to come to my paragraph. And then I will go through, if I get a good theme out of that paragraph, I’ll go through my
notes and see what is recurring and what that scripture actually says. Then I’ll go back to some of my translations and pick up key words or items and outline them to get back to that sentence - to expand that sentence. And then I’ll fill in that outline from my notes."

Interviewer:

And you have to keep all your people in mind when you prepare that message.

"And I’ve got to remember that - there they are. And it’s a challenge. Then I outline it. I used to dictate it all. They would take a dictation and I would outline it back from the dictation. Since my heart attack, I have not been doing that. I give a big thorough outline, which I keep in file. I have every expositional sermon over the last thirty years on disk now. I have a homiletics secretary who works about two days a week for me.

If I am not preaching through a series, I keep a list of things that are issues with me (in my daytimer), things I need to preach on - ideas that I’ll get for a sermon - out of a counseling session. I will go to that and see what the Lord might be laying upon my heart. I don’t do like some who take a month or six weeks and
plan the whole year. I do take periodic days, two or three days at a time to work on sermon material."

**Interviewer:**

When you are preparing expository messages, what is the most difficult part of getting that message?

"The most difficult part for me is nailing down a faithful purpose statement that is consistent with what the author intended to say and is equally consistent with what I hear him say and what I think people need to hear him say. To be authentic and not end up doing eisegesis. I think that is particularly a challenge with epistolary literature."

**Interviewer:**

Your application has to come out of a correct interpretation of the text.

"The application must be a first cousin to the interpretation. And I don’t see a lot of that being done. That has been a massive challenge in the book of Revelation. Because everybody wants speculation, not application; they want information, not application. I think that is the toughest thing for the layman, trying to preach an expository sermon, it comes back to that statement of application."
Interviewer:

I would probably agree with you.... How are you going to stay true to the text and yet make it applicable to the people too, without doing injustice to the text.

"True to the text and true to society."

Interviewer:

Let me ask you one last question. What advice would you give to a layman who wants to become a Bible expositor?

"I'd make about four suggestions. First, build a good library of translations and versions. Get all the help from the English Bible you can. Secondly, do the same with commentaries. Get hold of two or three English commentaries - exegetical commentaries and devotional commentaries - one or two of each. Number three, take a day or two of vacation and study with a pastor who is an expository preacher. Expository preaching is much like evangelism - it is more caught than taught. I would ask to go study with my pastor.

And my fourth word of advice is do it, do it, do it; preach, preach, preach. Take every opportunity you have to preach. Let it be known you are available for laymen's day, men's day, men's breakfasts, whatever. Take every opportunity. And if somebody says that they want you to talk about soulwinning in Kenya in the 1890's, turn it into a sermon and make that the side point. Practice your preaching!"
APPENDIX TWO
INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT

Interview: Dr. Billy Martin
Evangelist and Conference Speaker
Winston-Salem North Carolina

This interview was conducted on December 6, 1994, at Piedmont Bible College. Dr. Martin is a noted Bible expositor who was mentioned by eight percent of those responding to the survey. He frequently lectures at Bible colleges on the subject of homiletics.

Interviewer:

How long have you been in the ministry?

"Since 1947. I spent thirty years in the pastorate and almost fourteen years in conference work after leaving the pastorate. Prior to the pastorate as a teenager I did pulpit supply and interim work, spoke at youth rallies, and that type of thing."

Interviewer:

You were with a mission board at one time, weren’t you?

"Yes, I was with Evangelical Baptist Missions after I left the pastorate, for about eleven years."
Interviewer:

That was basically conference work?

"Yes. I did not have particular assignments for them, it was just that they wanted me to mention them when I did revivals and conferences."

Interviewer:

Did you ever go on the mission field and train men on the mission field and things like that or did you just do conferences?

"Well, I have done both. I have taught overseas. I have done the whole range of activities overseas, like speaking in a national church through an interpreter in an evangelistic meeting; speaking to missionaries; a week of enrichment; or teaching in a Bible institute. So I have done all of those."

Interviewer:

Tell me about your educational background.

"I'm a graduate of Piedmont Bible College and Bob Jones University. I did both graduate and undergraduate work at Bob Jones. I also did some work at Elon College. My mother was a school teacher, and I owe a great deal to her. She introduced me to the world of literature and made sure I was involved in reading the best of books. I became a book lover."
Interviewer:

I was reading about Haddon Robinson the other day (he was named after Charles Haddon Spurgeon, I didn’t realize that); and he mentions how literature influenced him. He had read Spurgeon’s biography by the time he was twelve.

"He and I were classmates and were on the same debate team at Bob Jones. He’s four years older than I am, maybe more than that. He was a senior, and I was a freshman."

Interviewer:

So he was a graduate of Bob Jones, too?

"Yes, we were on the debate team together, and the guy was brilliant. He was really sharp. I remember him better than I remember some of my teachers."

Interviewer:

You mentioned a few moments ago that you preached as a teenager. So you preached before you went to school?

"Oh, yes. I started when I was fifteen, and it is very truly the only vocation I have ever had."

Interviewer:

So, you preached for at least three years then before you went to college?

"Yes."
Interviewer:

What was it that helped you prepare your messages?

"Well, back in those days people had more time than they do now. Older preachers helped me. They would just sit down like we are sitting here and help me with a passage and point out the divisions and help me with the outline and provide books for me, loan me books and provide papers. Things like that were a help. I studied preachers."

Interviewer:

Do you mean that you listened to preachers and paid attention to how they preached?

"You try to read them and see how they did. I suppose that is a better answer. My mom put a lot of effort into helping me. As a teenager, it was a normal Sunday afternoon thing for me to read the Sunday edition of the "New York Times." I would read the book reviews and go to the local library where they had a loan service. They thought it was clever for this young kid to come in and want a book with 800 pages. I thought it was heaven on earth to get those things for free, keep them for two weeks and take them back! Anytime there was like a Shakespeare production in Greensboro, Mama would put me on the bus, relatives in Greensboro would meet me, and I would see Shakespeare's Hamlet, Macbeth,
and others. So, I was given some exposure to the world of words and how things are expressed, and ideas are formulated. I owe a great deal to my parents for making that possible and creating that appetite in me when I was young."

Interviewer:

Then going to Bob Jones, you stayed on that same track.

"I survived a course there on Shakespeare. I took Milton at Elon College. I do enjoy good literature. I think it is a process of osmosis, it gets into your system. But, I don't want to overstate those things. I am certainly not a Shakespearian scholar or anything like that. I wouldn't want to teach English, even on a mission field!"

Interviewer:

The literature classes were the ones I probably disliked the most while at Piedmont. Maybe it was because I was already preaching. I guess maybe some of the background I came out of, too; but now I find myself going back and reading some of that and quoting Francis Bacon, for example, "Reading makes a full man, conference a ready man, and writing an exact man." I also like what he said about books, "Some books are to be tasted; other books are to be swallowed, and some few are to be chewed and digested." But then I thought, "I don't need this. Why does a preacher need literature? I'm going to preach the Bible! What do I need literature for?"
"I should mention, too, that I was on the debate team in high school and took public speaking in high school. English teachers seemed to take special interest in trying to help me. I don’t know that they succeeded. But given all the help I was given, I should be far better than I am. I almost hesitate to mention those things because I should be better than I am, having had that help."

Interviewer:

How do you think the literature influenced you? Mainly being able to express yourself better, to speak better, or to see how others have expressed themselves?

"I think it helps in a number of ways. You realize that words are very important, and that the right words are extremely important. So, you learn something of a discipline. It’s not a correct grammatical phrase, but I use it often in my thinking, "the economy of words." We ought to be very careful in our selection of words and how we use them, and not go to the excess, using a lot of verbage. You know, bankers are prudent with money, and public speakers ought to be with words. The great masters never rambled. The subject and predicate were easily located. I think that is probably the best fringe benefit, other than just sheer enjoyment."
Interviewer:

How would you define expository preaching?

"Well, in layman's terms, it is that type of preaching in which the Bible speaks for itself. You try to the best of your ability not to get in the way of the scriptures, putting your bias in, or your culture in; but the Word of God itself speaks and you let it speak. You have to approach it by exegesis. I think that is what we do. That's our digging, and exposition is what we give the people. We are exposing them to the scriptures, and the scriptures are speaking for themselves. The sermon rises out of the passage rather than supporting a particular idea or concept."

Interviewer:

Rather than imposing an idea on the passage, we get the idea out of the passage. How often do you preach expository sermons now, and how often did you preach them in the pastorate?

"Well, in the pastorate I would say that probably eighty percent of the preaching was by technical definition, "expository," that is to say it involved five verses of scripture or more. That was most of what I did, but on special days, it would probably be a topical message. In a series I would bring a message on a Bible character or something to put variety into what I was doing. Just to stay with those technical
definitions, I don’t know what the percentage would be now, maybe sixty-forty. Forty per cent would be topical and textual, and sixty per cent would be expository, in which I would use one paragraph of scripture or maybe one chapter. Often in conferences, topics are assigned, so I really don’t have a lot of liberty."

**Interviewer:**

I should have mentioned this to you before the interview, but I sent out over 200 surveys. Of those that I got back, one of the questions was, "Who would you identify as a contemporary expository preacher?" Some of the names were obviously Swindoll, John McArthur, he headed the list, but about fourth or fifth on the list, I think, was your name. Of course, I sent it out to a lot of Piedmont graduates, and they would know you, but not all of them were. What would you say influenced you to be an expository preacher?

"I’m not sure I really know. I’m not sure I’ve thought that through. I would suppose that it was not my pastor. My pastor was a tremendous Bible preacher, but I was exposed to a lot of preaching that was just wind – preaching of opinions, anger in the pulpit, scolding people. I guess I just decided that was not the way for me to go. I was a lover of the text, and I would just stay with the scriptures, and let the scriptures speak for themselves. I have found that here in the South, and everywhere else for that matter, there is a desperate need for that. The scriptures are beyond competition. Here are our ideas down here, and the
scriptures are up here. So why not give people the scripture? Someone said the other day it's like having a diamond and exchanging it for a fake ring. It's not easy in that often you are judged on whether you are a good preacher or a bad preacher on how emotional you are and all these things. I have often been described as a "dry Bible teacher." But even if you preach an evangelistic sermon, you just teach it because you stay with the Bible."

**Interviewer:**

More of a teacher than a preacher. I had someone say that about Hank Haubold one time, believe it or not.

"I guess I was influenced by my pastor. I was turned off by other types of preaching. It wasn't really anchored in the Scriptures that I could see. You could talk for thirty minutes and be just a storyteller, not a sermonizer. When you get to digging in the Bible, it's such a big book, you just see there's no bottom. You get excited about that. It lends itself to study, and you want to be a good student. You just get excited about telling people what the Scriptures have to say."

**Interviewer:**

Would you say that preachers have helped you most, seminary courses have helped you most, there are some books that you have read, what has been the
most beneficial to you in becoming an expositor and learning to preach expository sermons?

"There are a number of things. I did have an excellent course in homiletics at Bob Jones in their M.A. program, a terrific teacher and a good course. In addition to that, I have tried to read for many years. I don't know that I've done it every year, but I try to read a new, different book on homiletics every year. I try to absorb whatever I learned from that book that I need to absorb, and correct what needs to be corrected to build on the past. So, I would say this professor at Bob Jones, the reading of these books. Then I had the privilege of teaching homiletics and that was a tremendous discipline for me. That was a great help. In addition to that, the study of great pulpitors to try and determine what helped them to communicate better than other people and how I could profit from that. William Ward Ayer used to preach for me about every two to three years; and he did some work in this area. He was a good role model for me. He had a sense of balance. A number of people have been like that for me; very influential and very helpful."

Interviewer:

You mentioned books while ago. Are there any that stand out that were especially beneficial to you?
"Well, there's nothing like the scriptures. They meet a passing need; they correct something, and I forget even where I got it corrected and move on to the next one. The one that helps me the most is the one that happens to hit areas where I'm weak, so at the time when I read a book, it may not help; and the next year the book really helps."

Interviewer:

So it just depends on where you are at?

"Yes, I think the book by John R. W. Stott, Between Two Worlds, is one of the best books dealing with both pastoral theology and homiletics that I have read. He read 100 books before writing it, and it has a lot of quality in it. Most of his ideas I have read in other places, but it's just good to get them in one book. I guess I have read that book about three times, and plan to read it again this year. I just haven't put all those things into practice. There's a book that appears to be an excellent book that I'm just getting into, called Preaching with Freshness. It's a unique book. The man's last name is MacAlhany, or something like that. But that book is in the form of a novel. It's a guy who is burned out, ready to quit the ministry, and stops by the seminary to spend a little time with the professor of homiletics; and this
professor begins to tutor him. It's a clever way of getting all the techniques out there."

Interviewer:

Have you ever heard of The Sermon Doctor by Harry Farrar? It sort of does the same thing. The pastor is frustrated with his preaching and burned out. He picks up the paper and there's an advertisement for the sermon doctor. So he puts it back down and as times goes on he decides that he needs to go see him. He goes to see the sermon doctor and every visit to the sermon doctor is like that. Each chapter is a kind of episode where he sits them down in the living room and they discuss things. It's pretty interesting. It's a unique approach that I had never come across before.

What are the steps you take when preparing for a message?

"I'll answer that and then probably give you a phone call and list seven steps in short sentences. Let's say I'm looking at a passage I've never worked in. The first thing I'm going to do is try to determine what every principle word in the passage means, using every resource I can find. Hebrew word study books, critical commentaries, preferably, but I like to use any resources I can find and a worksheet like a legal pad. I take the principle words and check them, what they mean, their usage, where else they are found in the Scriptures, things of this nature. I like to check different schools of thought, Lange's commentary is probably the best critical commentary of the 19th century. I'm interested in what people in that period
would say about a passage. Then I'm interested in what people who are not Baptists would say about this; and if I can find a Baptist, what they would say.

I am still at this point not into sermon structure at all. Sometimes things kind of run out of sequence of what I had planned them; and sermon ideas start popping up; and I just start writing them down, so I may have five or six sermon outlines on a passage that I never use. But, I start thinking that way, so I write it down and that gets it out of the system. I go back and just keep working on this passage until I feel like I have completed the work of exegesis and I have determined what the text is saying.

Then I look for, depending on the passage, whether it is narrative, poem, statement of principle, theological passage, sometimes paraphrasing the whole thing. That's usually number six out of about seven things, but it could be number two. The first thing would be to try to determine what every word means and then try to find the natural divisions. I like to use a Bible that has paragraph markings, checking that with the markings in Lange's, to see if they coincide, and if this is the natural flow of the text for paragraphs. Sometimes diagramming comes into play, but I don't use that as much as some men do. At a given point, I would start looking for, as Haddon Robbins says, "What is the
big idea?" For me, I think you can come up with that
too quickly and not have the "big idea" but have your
idea. It's kind of like when I write these sermon
outlines down out of my head to get rid of them. If the
big idea comes too quickly, I write it down to get rid
of it. I think there has to be a certain period of
incubation, or whatever, before you are ready to go to
some steps, the mind races ahead. I follow through on
it and come back.

I look for things like the action within the
passage, motion, etc. Do you have time sequence, like
yesterday, today, tomorrow, past or present? Do you
have conditions like lost and found, cold and hot, or
whatever. I look for all those things - like height,
deepth. I look for word pictures. Does it have eyes,
hands or feet, in the passage? At this point I am still
playing with my notes.

I think there are two areas in which we can and
zealously ought to pursue; one being the context, and I
will say more about that in a moment, number two being
biblical backgrounds. It seems that in the Western
world preaching is especially weak in biblical
backgrounds. The books on it aren't all that good, but
they are better than nothing. So you begin to read
those things. Normally, on any given passage I will
check a book or books on backgrounds. I will check
anything I have on archeology to see if it has something to say. Sometimes that bit of light opens up a whole thought. So, biblical backgrounds in contemporary preaching is very weak.

I pull down the best thing I have on geography and check the rivers and mountains. Sometimes in a wide margin Bible I will draw a map and note the miles between points. I work in biblical geography and archeology and biblical backgrounds to see what light it has to bring, so I won't Americanize the text. It's very easy to dress it up in American clothing. I heard Roloff speaking on the passage in Matthew about the governor, and he talks about the governor in a car. He preached the whole sermon on that. Biblical backgrounds could save us from a lot of embarrassment.

In the matter of context, it seems like in the historical, grammatical end of interpretation, we have arrived at this point. We do not violate the context, but we don't use it. I have found that to use it enhances the passage tremendously. It might mean there are four points in the message, rather than three, when the text itself just gives birth to three. For example, I preach a message on the widow with two mites. Just recently, I used the title for the first time, "Looking at Calvary from the Treasury." Christ is just a few hours away from the cross. If you look at the
context, then that sheds light on what this little lady did. Jesus is going to give everything at Calvary, and the disciples are interested in these buildings. People are all excited about how much people are giving. Jesus spots a lady who gave everything. A small illustration of His larger work, when He would give everything. But the context brings a simple message on giving to where it touches Calvary.

There are a number of scriptures that just open up with a whole new light, and have a tremendous impact, when the context is used as a commentary. It seems like that this is an area in which American preaching could advance. I was told from the beginning, "Don’t violate the context." But I was never taught how to use the context, and how it could serve as a commentary. Helpful people in that area would be Campbell Morgan.

Once I have researched these areas I try to get the normal breaks in the passage and write them out in a sentence and identify them. If there are three or four principle ideas I begin looking for the big idea. There can be more than one idea in a passage, but I want to make sure the subpoints support it. From the skeleton outline I go then to the regular tools of homiletics - exposition, illustration, argument, and application. I put those to work and try to find illustrations. But I want to go with the explanation first."
Interviewer:
Do you keep an illustration file?

"I keep a complete outline but not illustrations. Illustrations have a tendency to be very contemporary. They are like clothing. They get out of date quickly. I find it helpful to read in a number of areas. In the pastorate I was always reading five or six books at one time. Presently, since I’m often working on things by assignment my reading is dictated."

Interviewer:
What would you say is the most difficult part of the process of preparing an expository message?

"Sometimes the brain goes dead and its difficult to find the natural divisions. So I use these little homiletical tools. For example, does it have a time sequence there? Is there a measurement in the passage such as height or depth. How many characters are here? Who are the personalities involved? Sometimes the brain goes dead and the thing is just flat; it has no life. The outline would pass homiletics but it’s not going to pass the Sunday morning service."

Interviewer:
It doesn’t excite you?
"No. I do at times abandon the passage and come back to it later."

Interviewer:

When you were in the pastorate were you involved in training laymen to preach?

"I didn't do any of that one-on-one. I would sometimes have a teacher training class and do this on a very simple level. I used the teaching materials from ETTA and incorporated some of my own ideas into the material."

Interviewer:

In your conference work, do you run into a lot of pastors who have not had any formal training?

"Oh yes, quite a few. But most of them have had training in other schools, even though it wasn't Bible college training. They have been to trade schools, or managed businesses; and bring those skills into the pastorate. I try not to listen to a sermon with the ear of a former homiletics professor, but I do hear a lot of men who really do not know how to prepare a message. They do a good job of loving people and carrying on the work of the Lord, but the sermon lacks unity, and logic, and it doesn't have the force of scripture."
Interviewer:

How long did you teach homiletics here at Piedmont?

"I would say it was four or five years. It was in the late sixties and early seventies."

Interviewer:

How many meetings do you average doing per year?

"You probably should explain that. There are different kinds of meetings and different lengths. Some are Wednesday through Sunday, some Sunday through Wednesday. I don’t know how it would add up this calendar year."

Interviewer:

You’re probably in at least thirty-five or forty churches a year?

"No, it’s more than that. I have for the past thirteen months done forty-six revivals and conferences, but in addition to that I have spoken in eighteen pastor’s conferences, some only one day, many three or four days. I would probably be in over sixty churches a year and in a number of schools. That can vary from year to year, and I don’t like to say a lot about it."
Interviewer:

What advice would you give a layman who wants to become a Bible expositor?

"The first thing I would say he needs is a good Bible and good reference tools. He needs a good concordance and a good Bible dictionary. I think in addition to whatever else he buys he needs a good one or two volume commentary. For a number of years I recommended Wycliffe, published by Moody. Jameison Faucette and Brown I use to like, and then Wycliffe replaced it. Now the two volume commentary published by Dallas I like real well.

I think in addition to that, what I would say to the layman I would say to the young preacher. When I was in the pastorate in addition to study time each day I took one day for study and tried to build a library built around what I did for that day. If I were teaching through Romans on Wednesday night I would devote that day to the preparation for that class. I would do more study than required for the lesson. I might read six books at that time. When I went through the book again, maybe five years later, I would read six more books, and mark the other books so I could check them rather quickly.

A layman would be limited in his time, but he should have a certain period of time each week that is
just his time to study and to work and to go beyond what he might be giving a class. He should build his library as he uses it. That way he doesn’t waste money and the books mean more to him. I would suggest that he get good study tools, and that he use them to learn how to outline a passage."

Interviewer:

So mainly then you would say he should have good study tools and know how to use them?

"Right. It’s amazing what you could help a layman do. If God calls a man to go to school and he doesn’t go, then I think he has crippled himself. But if he doesn’t have that opportunity, and has a good mind, it’s amazing how much he can do with your leadership and help, simply showing him which books, what tools to use, and how to use them."
APPENDIX THREE

EXPOSITORY PREACHING SURVEY

(Please check the appropriate space below)

1. How long have you been preaching?

   1-5 years ___ 11-15 years ___ 21-25 years ___
   6-10 years ___ 16-20 years ___ 26 or more ___

2. How often do you preach expository sermons:

   ___ Almost never  ___ Once a month  ___ Almost always
   ___ Occasionally  ___ Once a week  ___ Always

3. How would you define expository preaching?

   ___ Verse-by verse preaching from the text
   ___ A consecutive treatment of a book of the Bible
   ___ A sermon that deals with more than one verse
   ___ A sermon that focuses on explaining the text
   ___ Other ________________________________________

4. When you think of contemporary expository preachers the
   preachers that stand out are: _________________________

5. The greatest difficulty you face in preparing expository
   sermons is:

   ___ The amount of time involved in preparation
   ___ Understanding the text
   ___ Developing an outline from the text
   ___ Finding supporting material
   ___ Applying the passage to my audience
   Other ________________________________________
6. Does the difficulty in preparation affect the amount of expository preaching you do?  ____Yes  ____No

7. Your congregation's attitude to expository preaching is:  
   ____ Favorable  ____ Unfavorable  ____ Neither

8. Does the congregation's attitude to expository preaching affect the amount you do?  ____Yes  ____No

9. Your educational background includes:
   High school ____ Bible College ____ Seminary ____

10. If you had formal training, did you feel it was adequate to equip you as an expositor?  ____Yes  ____No

11. Did you preach prior to training?  ____Yes  ____No

12. What has helped you most in learning to do exposition?
   ____ College or seminary class  ____ Books on preaching
   ____ Being personally discipled  ____ A mentor
   ____ Other _______________________

13. What books have been most helpful to you in this area?
   ________________________________

14. The church you pastor has a Sunday morning attendance of:
   0-50 ____ 100-150 ____ 200-300 ____ 500-700 ____
   50-100 ____ 150-200 ____ 300-500 ____ 700+ ____

15. Have you had or do you now have laymen in your church who have been called to preach?  ____Yes  ____No

16. Have you in the past or are you now training laymen in your church to preach?  ____Yes  ____No

17. Would you welcome and benefit from a layman's guide for preparing expository sermons?  ____Yes  ____No
APPENDIX FOUR
SURVEY OF LAY STUDENTS

Using the following scale, describe the influence of this course on developing the following five areas:
1=decreased, 2=no change, 3=increased, 4=significant increase

1. Your ability to interpret the text.
2. Your ability to find an outline within the text.
3. Your ability to make the text meaningful to your audience.
4. Your confidence as a Bible expositor.
5. Your desire to preach expository messages.

6. On a scale of 1 to 10 (1 being lowest), rate the effectiveness of this approach in helping you develop a practical method of preparing expository messages. ____

7. To what extent have you preached expository messages in the past? 0-25%____ 25-50%____ 50-75%____ 75-100%____

8. To what extent do you plan to preach them in the future? 0-25%____ 25-50%____ 50-75%____ 75-100%____

9. What would you say are the weaknesses to this approach?

10. What would you say are the strengths of this approach?

11. What would you say is the most important principle or lesson you have gained from this course?
APPENDIX FIVE

A PROPOSED MANUAL FOR
PREPARING EXPOSITORY MESSAGES
FROM EPISTOLARY LITERATURE
A TRAINING MANUAL FOR PREPARING
EXPOSITORY MESSAGES FROM THE EPISTLES

The purpose of this manual is to offer the reader a methodical procedure for preparing a series of expository sermons from a New Testament epistle. It is assumed that the reader already recognizes the need for expository preaching, but lacks a clear plan for preparing expository messages. It is the purpose of this manual to provide him with such a plan.

Following an introduction dealing with the definition, value, and prerequisites to expository preaching, the plan will be explained. The layman will then be led through the plan following a step-by-step, methodical procedure for preparing expository messages, using 1 Thessalonians as an example. It is the hope of this writer that once the basic steps are learned, the layman will become much more competent and creative in the process of preparing expository sermons.
PART ONE
INTRODUCTION

These introductory elements are necessary items that the Bible expositor must be aware of in advance of preparing a series of expository messages. He should know what expository preaching is, its benefits, and the prerequisites to becoming an expositor.

A Definition of Expository Preaching

Traditionally, the definition of expository preaching has been based on the length of the text. Usually, the distinction is made between topical, textual, and expository sermons. A topical sermon is defined as a sermon based on a topic and pulls its main points from different passages. A textual sermon is based on a single text and uses the words or phrases of the text as main points. An expository sermon is based on a passage of scripture longer than a verse or two, and consists of comments on different items in the text. In reality, though, expository preaching has more to do with the treatment of the text than its length.

This writer defines expository preaching as preaching that exposes the intended meaning of a
biblical passage and applies its message to the hearers in a way that is consistent with the original intent of the author.¹ It generally involves an extended portion of scripture, usually at least a paragraph, and is more than a verse-by-verse commentary on the passage at hand. Expository preaching can be topical or biographical, as well as a book study, as long as it exposes and applies the meaning of the text. The pattern followed in this guide, however, is that of a book study. It is designed to help the reader develop a series of messages from a New Testament epistle.

The Value of Expository Preaching

While it is assumed that the reader recognizes the need for and importance of expository preaching, it is still helpful to be aware of its benefits. A survey conducted by the writer revealed that one of the greatest difficulties involved in preparing expository messages is the amount of time involved in preparation. Is the amount of time involved in this method of preaching worth the investment? A review of the benefits of expository preaching will reveal the answer.

¹Haddon Robinson defines it as, "The communication of a biblical concept, derived from and transmitted through a historical, grammatical, and literary study of a passage in its context, which the Holy Spirit first applies to the personality and experience of the preacher, then through him to his hearers." Biblical Preaching (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1980), 20.
Expository preaching benefits both the preacher and those who listen. The preacher who determines to be an expository preacher will preach with more authority and power as he moves through the text. The people will see that his message is not based on his opinions, but on what God's Word says. He will also find that he has an inexhaustable wealth of information from which to preach, and will preach on a variety of subjects as opposed to a few hobby-horses. The preacher who preaches expository sermons will find that his preaching produces well-taught Christians, who evidence maturity in their knowledge of the Word of God.²

Expository preaching requires the preacher to develop the personal discipline of Bible study. As he moves through a book of the Bible, observing and analyzing its message, he gains an understanding of God's Word that he would not gain through a slipshod approach to different texts. He is also forced to deal with difficult passages of scripture he would not ordinarily choose to preach. As a result, the preacher disciplines himself to become a student of the Word, and matures in his knowledge of the Word. Is it worth the time? The answer is an undeniable, "Yes!"

The Prerequisites to Expository Preaching

The biblical requirements for every preacher are found in 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1 and relate mostly to his character and behavior. The nature and function of the position make these requirements necessary. While this is not an attempt to go beyond the requirements of God's Word, it must be acknowledged that there are some additional qualifications for the man who wants to be a Bible expositor.

First and foremost, he must be committed to the Word of God. This is not in addition to, but is consistent with the biblical qualification to, "Hold fast the faithful word as he hath been taught" (Titus 1:9). He must be committed to its complete inspiration and inerrancy. If the Bible loses its authority in any area, be it science or history, it loses its authority. Beyond this, he must be committed to studying the Bible. Merrill F. Unger writes:

The expositor must live in his Bible. Other books he must read, but the Word of God must be his daily food and drink. He must study it, meditate upon it day and night like the Psalmist (Ps. 1:2), and ever delight in its power and freshness. His theology must be a Biblical theology drawn vital and fresh from the pages of Holy Writ....

The Bible expositor must be committed to the Word, to its inspiration, inerrancy, and authority - both for himself as well as those to whom he preaches.

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3Ibid., 62.
Second, he must be a man of prayer. One might assume that no preacher needs to be told that he must be a man of prayer. The truth is, however, that the layman who is already involved with church, a family, and a full-time job, may decide that this is one area he can neglect. Not so. Alfred P. Gibbs says:

A prayerless ministry is both powerless and profitless. Theology must be accompanied by kneeology. Much prayer equals much power; little prayer equals little power; no prayer equals no power. 4

A look at the men of God in both the Old and New Testaments reveals that God's men were men of prayer. The same is true of great preachers throughout church history, as their biographies will reveal. He who plans to speak for God must spend time speaking with God.

A third prerequisite is dependence upon the Holy Spirit. This area is often neglected in homiletics texts. Some would lead the young preacher to believe that he either has to be studious and work diligently at understanding the text, or he has to depend upon the Holy Spirit. The truth of the matter is, he must do both. Believing in the ministry of the Holy Spirit does not negate the preacher's responsibility to study the Word. Nor does a diligent study of the text mean the preacher is neglecting the ministry of the Holy Spirit.

Charles Spurgeon once said, "He who will not use the thoughts of other men's brains proves that he has no brains of his own." Yet it was Spurgeon who vigorously warned his students against trying to preach without depending upon the Holy Spirit:

"If you study the original, consult the commentaries, and meditate deeply, yet if you neglect to cry mightily unto the Spirit of God, your study will not profit you."

He himself maintained a proper balance between diligent study and dependence upon the Holy Spirit. The layman who aspires to become an expository preacher would do well to maintain that same balance.

The final prerequisite for the man who would be a Bible expositor is a good library. That does not necessarily mean a large library. Regarding books, Faris D. Whitesell says, "It is better to have a few good ones and use them than to have many ordinary books of limited value." The Bible expositor must choose his books carefully and avoid wasting money or book space on books that will be of minimal value. A. T. Robertson says, "The man who has the best tools, other things

6Charles Haddon Spurgeon, Lectures To My Students (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1972), 188.
being equal, will do the best work."⁸ There are some books however, that are essential for the expositor to have on his bookshelf.

The layman should have several translations available for comparative purposes. He needs a concordance, a Bible dictionary, encyclopedia or handbook, and a Bible atlas. He should also have a dictionary of both Old and New Testament words, and a good one-volume theology text. Finally, he needs two good commentaries for each book he studies. One should be a commentary that explains the text and gives him the background information and outline of the book, in addition to a verse-by-verse explanation of the text. Commentaries that provide this type of information are generally known as exegetical commentaries. The other should be a devotional commentary that sparks preaching ideas as he prepares his messages. From there he should build his library based on his individual needs.⁹

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⁹James F. Stitzinger has a very helpful chapter on selecting the right study tools, complete with an up-to-date bibliography in Rediscovering Expository Preaching, eds. Richard L. Mayhue and Robert L. Thomas (Dallas: Word Publishing, 1992), 177.
PART TWO

THE PLAN EXPLAINED

In this section the writer will explain the basic process of preparing an expository sermon. The plan itself consists of eight steps divided into two stages. The first stage is the exegetical stage and guides the interpreter through the process of developing an understanding of the passage and the book from which it is taken. Stage two is the organizational stage and guides the reader through the process of developing an expository sermon outline based on his study of the text in the exegetical stage.

Stage One: The Exegetical Stage

The first stage of this process involves an in-depth study of the passage - usually referred to as exegesis ("to lead out" the meaning of the text). It is designed to give the layman an accurate understanding of the passage he is studying. It consists of four steps. The first two steps of the process provide the layman with an understanding of the book from which he will be preaching. Step three and four take him into a more detailed study of the passage itself.
Step One - Study the Background

Before one can accurately interpret a passage, he must have an understanding of its background. The historical background of a book refers to the setting in which the book was written. Moises Silva writes:

Every written document should be read 'historically'; that is, we ought to take into account that it was written by a particular individual (or group of individuals), in a particular time in history and that it was motivated by some particular occasion.¹⁰

The goal here is to gain an understanding of who the author was, the circumstances under which he wrote, his purpose in writing, and to whom he was writing.

It may seem like a great deal of work, but there are many advantages to be gained from a historical background study of a book. The goal of the interpreter is to discover the author's intended meaning. What did he intend to say? What would the original readers understand it to mean? To discover that meaning, the interpreter must have an understanding of the author's and readers' circumstances. If the reader came across a statement which read, "He is gay," how would he know what it meant unless he had some indication of who said it, of whom it was said, the circumstances under which it was said, and even the date it was said?

Without an understanding of the background, an accurate interpretation of the passage is impossible. The interpreter tends to look at the passage through twentieth-century glasses. He must put on first-century glasses and try to read the text through the eyes of the original readers. To do so will protect him from misinterpreting the text, and provide him with a feel for the original setting and circumstances of those addressed in the passage. This in turn, will help him to better apply it to his hearers. The temptation exists to bypass this step. The interpreter who does so, however, is robbing himself of some valuable information, essential to the understanding of the text.

Considering the advantages gained through this background study, what specifically does one study and how does one go about finding this information? There are six areas that are essential:

1. The author and his readers.
2. The date (approximate) and place of writing.
3. The circumstances and purpose of the book.

The best place to begin the historical background study is with the epistle itself. The interpreter should read through the book looking specifically for the information mentioned above. He jots down the reference and what it says about each of the categories mentioned. He then summarizes, in paragraph form, what
the epistle itself says about each of these six areas. He then cross-references names, places, events, and other significant background items in the text. At this point, the book of Acts becomes particularly helpful.

As a final step, the interpreter turns to his reference works. He may need more information about the author, the city in which the readers lived, its location, or the date of the epistle. For this he turns to a Bible dictionary, Bible encyclopedia, an atlas, handbook, or an exegetical commentary that provides the reader with background information. Regarding these reference works, Grant Osborne cautions the interpreter to use, "recent, well-researched works because of the explosion of information uncovered in the last few decades." The interpreter then summarizes all this information under the six areas mentioned above.

Step Number Two: Survey the Book

The second step in this stage is that of gaining an understanding of the contents of the book. This step allows the interpreter to arrive at a theme, and to trace the development of that theme throughout the book. John Philips refers to this as the "survey principle," and likens it to looking at the picture of a jigsaw puzzle before looking at each individual piece. He

says, "We must see the whole before becoming too immersed in its parts." 12 Although he refers primarily to the whole Bible, what he says is also true of each individual book.

Every interpreter understands the importance of the immediate context of a passage. This step gives him an understanding of the context of the entire book. Such an understanding is necessary in order to interpret each verse in its proper context. Walter Kaiser says,

> Unless the exegete knows where the thought of the text begins and how the thought pattern develops, all the intricate details may be of little or no worth. 13

An understanding of the context is absolutely essential to an accurate interpretation of the text. It will protect the interpreter from misinterpreting the text, and provide him with an overall picture of what the whole book is about before attempting to preach a portion of the book.

To accomplish this second step, the layman should first compare different translations that group the text according to paragraphs, and mark off the paragraph divisions. He lists at the top of a sheet of paper the name of each translation. He then charts the paragraph

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divisions of each, under the translation they represent. As a result, he has a chart of how the different translations divide the book into paragraphs. In the last column on the chart, the interpreter writes his own paragraph divisions. These paragraphs will later become the basis for his messages.

The next step is to list each paragraph and give it a title that explains its contents. The interpreter then examines the paragraphs to see how they fit together into sections, and gives a title to each section. Following this, he should have an idea of what the book is about, and be able to write its theme. He should check his work at this point, through the use of a Bible dictionary, handbook, or an exegetical commentary. An introduction to the New Testament is also helpful, both in this area, and with background.

One helpful way to visualize the results of his study is by drawing a chart of the book. James Braga calls this the "synthetic approach" and shows his readers how to develop such a chart.14 His six-step process involves: (1) draw a chart; (2) summarize each paragraph; (3) select the main divisions; (4) select the sub-divisions; (5) find the main emphases; and (6) summarize the contents. Some of the best examples of

this type of chart can be found in Irving L. Jensen's, Survey of the New Testament.

The reader may question the need to do all this work himself when it has already been done by others. He may be tempted to go immediately to the reference works. To do so, however, would be to rob himself of some valuable interaction with the text, and make him dependent upon others. For this reason, Grant Osborne says, "It is crucial not to check the secondary sources until we have done our own work inductively at the beginning."¹⁵ As a result of these two steps the interpreter should have gained an understanding of the book. He should have a "feel" for the setting of the book and a bird's-eye-view of its contents. Once completed, these two steps do not have to be repeated, only reviewed, as the expositor moves through the book.

Step Three: Study the Structure

Having gotten a broad picture of the author's work, the interpreter is now ready to begin looking at the details. This brings the interpreter to the passage from which he plans to develop the sermon. It is at this point that he focuses on the structure and outline of the passage. His goal is to find the natural outline and emphasis of the passage, without imposing his own

¹⁵Osborne, 26.
upon it. An understanding of the structure of the passage is best gained through a process known as "diagramming."

Lee Kantenwein mentions several benefits of diagramming a passage.\textsuperscript{16} It enables the interpreter to understand the structure of the sentences in the passage, to structure a meaningful and workable outline of the passage, and to observe the thought pattern of the passage. The author has found that it also forces the interpreter to examine the passage in more detail.

There are several ways to diagram a passage. The method learned in English classes in high school is helpful in understanding grammar and parts of speech. But the purpose here, is to visualize the flow of thought in the passage, not to dissect the parts of speech. For this reason, the writer recommends the "block diagram." It is the simplest method, and takes less time than the others.\textsuperscript{17} The block diagram may appear difficult at first, but once the layman becomes familiar with the process, he will find it well worth the investment of his time.

Osborne and Woodward break it down into two simple steps. "On a piece of paper, each main statement is


\textsuperscript{17}Osborne, 28, 29.
written on a line with its modifiers written below the line, directly beneath the word they modify. The writer was first introduced to this method through Walter Kaiser's book, *Toward an Exegetical Theology*. It has been one of the most helpful steps the author has found for developing an outline from the text. A few examples will help. Osborne and Woodward diagram 2 Timothy 3:16 and 17 this way:

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Scripture  is inspired
  all  by God
And/ (it is) profitable
  for teaching
  for reproof
  for correction
  for training
  in righteousness
  that/ the man may be adequate
  of God
  equipped
  for work
  every
  good
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Walter Kaiser provides his readers with eight examples - four from the Old Testament and four from the New. His example of Ephesians 5:15 and 16 is similar to Osborne's:

15. Careful then
    Watch how you walk
    not as unwise
    but as wise,

16. making the most of every opportunity
    because the days are evil

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18Kaiser, 99.


20Kaiser, 179.
As one can see, a block diagram makes the structure of the passage much clearer and enables the interpreter to see the natural outline of the passage rather than imposing an outline on the passage. As a result of the diagram, the interpreter can develop a tentative outline of the passage. He develops his main points from the main sentences, phrases, and clauses, and may develop his subpoints from the minor points. This is not a sermon outline as yet. It may become the sermon outline. But for the time being, it is only an outline of the contents of the passage. Merrill Tenney does basically the same thing without the arrows. He refers to his diagram as a "mechanical layout." ⁴¹

The interpreter then ties the main points together to determine the theme of the passage. This is what Robinson calls "the exegetical idea." ⁴² The interpreter must ask two questions of the text: "What is the subject?" and "What is he saying about it?" This exegetical idea is basically a brief summary of the passage. The interpreter then checks his theme with the paragraph title given earlier and corrects any inconsistencies.

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At this point the layman should have an idea of the circumstances that gave rise to the book. He has a good understanding of what the book as a whole is about. And now, he has a more thorough understanding of the passage he will be preaching from, as well as an idea of what his theme will be and how he will develop that theme (the outline). The next step takes the layman into an even more detailed study of the passage.

Step Four: Study the Words and Phrases

This fourth step involves the study of the words and phrases in the passage. Kaiser refers to words as "the basic blocks for building meaning."23 Merrill F. Unger remarks, "He who has no genuine interest in words and their meaning will never make a good expositor."24 The interpreter will fall short of his goal here if he relies on the English word used in the translation. Therefore a knowledge of the original languages would certainly be an asset. With the tools available today, however, the average layman who has no knowledge of the original languages is still capable of studying the original words of the text.

What is it that the interpreter needs to study? He should study cultural references, geographical

23Kaiser, 129.
24Unger, 120.
locations that are mentioned, main verbs and nouns, figures of speech, and key theological terms. His responsibility at this point is to move through the passage phrase by phrase, and try to clarify anything that is unclear. Much will have already been gleaned regarding geographical and cultural references, from step one. Certain geographical and cultural references, however, will still be unclear. These terms must be clarified before the interpreter can gain a thorough understanding of the passage.

Figures of speech can be very important as well. Herbert Lockyer says, "No other writings can compare to the metaphoric imagery and illustrative similes of the Bible."25 E. W. Bullinger lists hundreds of figures of speech under three different divisions - figures involving omission, addition, and change.26 The most common, however, are similes and metaphors. A simile uses the word "like" or "as" to draw a comparison. A metaphor draws a comparison without using "like" or "as." For example, when Jesus saw the multitude as sheep without a shepherd, He used a simile. When He said, "I am the door," He was using a metaphor.

25Herbert Lockyer, All About Bible Study (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1977), 118.
When interpreting these figures of speech, the interpreter must keep in mind the "golden rule of interpretation." Merrill F. Unger elaborates:

When the plain sense of Scripture makes common sense, seek no other sense; therefore, take every word at its primary, usual, literal meaning, unless it is patently a rhetorical figure, or unless the immediate context, studied carefully in the light of related passages ... and fundamental truths, clearly points otherwise.27

Unger goes on to say that if there is an inconsistency or absurdity resulting from a literal interpretation of the text, then the interpreter may conclude that it is figurative. But if it is consistent with the context, parallel passages, and the subject under discussion, then the literal is to be preferred.28

Theological terms require an even more thorough study. The New Testament epistles are filled with words of tremendous theological significance. Words like "justification," "righteousness," "redeem," "elect," "propitiation," "reconcile," "predestinate," and "sanctify," must be interpreted in their immediate context. The interpreter must first examine these words in light of what they would have meant to the original audience. He then examines them in light of what the entire Bible teaches about the topic. This is sometimes referred to as "progressive revelation." Bernard Ramm

27 Ibid., 176.

28 Ibid., 177.
says, "The entire Holy Scripture is the context and guide for understanding the particular passage of Scripture." 29

How does the interpreter define these terms? He starts by looking in the text for any explanation of the term. Sometimes the writer himself will define the word by means of a clause, a modifying adjective or adverb, or a comparison. 30 For example, the death Paul describes in Ephesians 2:1 is explained as spiritual death by the phrase, "in trespasses and sins." "Perfect" is further described in 2 Timothy 3:17 as "thoroughly furnished unto every good work."

The meaning of some words will become obvious to the interpreter as he compares translations, compares references found in his concordance, and uses his lexicon to look up meanings. For other words, however, the interpreter may need to do a word study by consulting a concordance for possible meanings of the word, then determining which meaning best fits the context of the passage.

Some terms will require the use of other reference tools. For example, theological terms, need to be


consulted in a theological wordbook or good theology
text, to get a clear picture of the particular doctrine
under discussion in the text. Geographical terms will
require the use of a Bible atlas. Cultural terms will
lead the interpreter to reference works on customs and
culture. The interpreter should have a reasonable
explanation for every term used in the text by the time
he concludes this study.

If he has not done so already, the interpreter may
now turn to his commentaries. Fee and Stuart provide
their readers with a section on the evaluation and use
of commentaries, along with a helpful list. They issue
this warning however:

You do not begin your Bible study with a
commentary! You go to the commentary after you
have done your own work; the reason you eventually
consult a commentary is to find answers to the
content questions that have arisen in your study.
At the same time, of course, the commentary will
alert you to questions you failed to ask, but
perhaps should have.31

The interpreter's immediate purpose is to check
his interpretation of the passage and clarify any
unanswered questions. His primary source for this is a
good exegetical commentary. Devotional commentaries
also serve a purpose, however. They may provide the
interpreter with ideas overlooked, more insight into the

31 Gordon D. Fee and Douglas Stuart, How To Read
The Bible For All Its Worth 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids:
application of the passage to his listeners, or even supporting material for the message later. Therefore, the interpreter consults both exegetical and devotional commentaries and jots down the ideas he gains from them.

This completes the exegetical stage of preparing an expository message. The four steps studied thus far include: studying the background to the book, studying the contents of the book, studying the structure of the passage, and studying the words and phrases found in the passage. Having done a thorough study of the passage at hand, the interpreter is now ready to develop a sermon that is consistent with that study.

Stage Two: The Organizational Stage

The interpreter now moves to the next stage of organizing the passage into an expository message. He cannot be satisfied with a running commentary on a few words and phrases here and there. Nor can he be satisfied with just an exegetical outline of the text. He must take all the information he has learned about the passage, determine how it relates to his hearers, and deliver it to them in a clear, logical, interesting, and understandable way.

This is where many expositors fail. Yet this stage is just as important as the first. According to Merrill Unger, preaching that lacks logical organization and homiletical form "fails to qualify as preaching at
Harry Farra also argues for the importance of properly organizing the sermon when he writes, "Clarity and organization go hand in hand. If ideas are not well organized, people have to work harder to digest them." How then, does one go about organizing his sermon? As with the first stage, there are four steps in this stage that need to be taken in the development of the sermon: develop a proposition based on the theme and purpose of the passage, develop the outline, fill in the outline, and prepare the introduction and conclusion.

Step One: Develop a Proposition

The first step involves developing a proposition. Perhaps the clearest explanation of the proposition is given by James Braga:

The proposition or thesis is a simple declaration of the subject which the preacher proposes to discuss, develop, prove, or explain in a discourse. In other words, it is the sermon reduced to one sentence.\(^{34}\)

Robert Delnay says, "The proposition is that key sentence around which you build the rest of your sermon."\(^{35}\) Sometimes called a theme, a thesis, or a

\(^{32}\)Unger, 250.


\(^{35}\)Robert G. Delnay, Fire In Your Pulpit (Schaumburg Ill: Regular Baptist Press, 1990), 45.
central idea, it is what ties the sermon together and gives it unity. Braga says it is the most essential feature in the organization of the sermon.\textsuperscript{36}

Different writers develop the proposition differently. Haddon Robinson refers to it as the "homiletical idea." He develops it by asking two questions: "What is the writer talking about?" and "What is he saying about it?" This becomes the subject and the complement. He writes, "A complete statement of the idea merely joins the subject with the complement."\textsuperscript{37} The subject is usually put into the form of a question and the complement answers the question, giving the preacher a complete idea.

Robinson illustrates this approach with Psalm 117. The subject is "Why everyone should praise the Lord." The text has two complements: because "His love is strong and His faithfulness is eternal." The complete idea, stated in the sermon would then be, "Everyone should praise the Lord because his love is strong and his faithfulness is eternal."\textsuperscript{38}

Robert Delnay argues that every passage in the Bible, except for the genealogies, makes a demand on the readers. Therefore, the proposition should be a demand

\textsuperscript{36}Braga, \textit{Bible Messages}, 93.

\textsuperscript{37}Robinson, 68.

\textsuperscript{38}Ibid, 41.
that is consistent with the demands of that passage.  

An example of this type of proposition might be, "Every Christian should witness," or, "You should rest in Christ." The problem with this type of proposition is that it often turns out to be too general, disregards the form of the text by turning Bible promises into commands, and leaves the listener with the idea that Christian living consists of a series of shoulds, oughts, and musts. Fred Craddock offers an appropriate critique of this approach:

Perhaps it is enough at this point to alert ourselves in advance about the seriousness of altering form, which may alter function, which may alter content. If 'blessed are the poor in spirit' is allowed to become 'we ought to be poor in spirit'... then many true and Christian things can be said in the sermon, but the preacher may be taken to court for violating a text.  

Lloyd M. Perry suggests three different types of propositions the preacher may use. The proposition may be "a statement of evaluation or judgment." The example Perry gives of this type is "Praying is profitable." It may be "a statement of obligation or duty." This type of proposition corresponds with Delnay's proposition mentioned above. The third type would be "a statement

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39Delnay, 33.


of activity without stated obligation." Here the preacher replaces the word "should" with the word "can."

Perry's example is, "Every Christian can tithe."

Which of these propositions should the layman use? The answer is - a variety. Using the same proposition all the time can lead to disinterest and boredom on the part of the hearers. Which proposition the preacher uses depends on the text. The truth of the matter is that all of these propositions can be categorized as one of two types - a declaration, or a demand. The preacher will therefore, through his proposition, either issue a declaration or a demand to his hearers.

How does one go about finding the right proposition? He starts by reviewing the theme of the passage discovered in the exegetical stage, and asking the question, "How does this apply to my listeners?" The answer may be obvious because of the practical nature of the text or a command given in the text. He should have a theme and outline before him, written out in terms of "them," "there," and "then." He needs to make it relevant to his hearers by writing it out in terms of "us," "here," and "now." Sidney Greidanus says, "The sermon's theme should assert in summary form the text's message for today."42

But how does one do this? Again, it may be that the contemporary application of the theme is obvious and the expositor simply needs to change the nouns and verb tenses. Instead of saying, "Paul encouraged the Thessalonians to pray without ceasing," say, "We should pray without ceasing." One must be careful here that he takes into account the culture of the original readers, and avoids making a command or principle contemporary that was not intended to be. For example, The Christian should not be commanded to greet others with a holy kiss (1 Thess. 5:26). A holy handshake will work just as well. Jay Adams elaborates on this when he says:

To preach the Bible faithfully in our time, we must find the equivalent to the original circumstances or situation to which God then (and now) applied the warning, the promise, the principle, or the command.  

Robert Delnay encourages his readers to isolate the one demand that controls all the rest. This could also be done with a declaration that controls all the rest of what is said in the text. Sometimes the context clarifies what that declaration or demand should be. If there is a single requirement that can be identified in the passage, then the proposition becomes a demand. If the passage simply states a truth, the proposition

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43 Jay Adams, Preaching With Purpose (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1982), 133.

44 Delnay, 33.
becomes a declaration. The question, "What is the one thing the passage requires?" leads to a demand. The question, "What is the one central truth the passage is teaching?" leads to a declaration. The proposition becomes a declaration or a demand, based on the emphasis of the text.

Another help in developing the proposition is to determine the purpose of the sermon. Jay Adams says:

The amazing lack of concern for purpose among homileticians and preachers has spawned a brood of preachers who are dull, lifeless, abstract, and impersonal."45 The preacher should ask himself, "What do I want these people to do as a result of this message?" What did the original writer want his audience to do? Haddon Robinson says, "No biblical writer took up his pen to jot down 'a few appropriate remarks' on a religious subject. Each wrote to affect lives."46 Once the expositor has determined the biblical writer's purpose, he can decide on his own purpose, and develop a proposition in light of that purpose that is consistent with the teaching of the text.

A good proposition is characterized by several things. J. Daniel Baumann says it should be a simple sentence, clear and crisp, and stated as a universal

45 Adams, 1.
46 Robinson, 109.
principle. Delnay argues that the proposition should be phrased with force. To achieve that force, he recommends using an action verb, in the active voice, and stating it in the affirmative. He recommends that two questions be asked of the proposition as a final check—"Is it truly scriptural?" and "Is it spiritually important?"

William Evans says, "Let us have less firing of blank cartridges and more shooting to kill." The preacher who organizes his sermon around a single proposition that is true to the text and relevant to his hearers, with a definite purpose in mind, will fire more than blank cartridges. His cartridges will be propelled by the authority of God's Word, and explode on impact, accomplishing the very purpose for which the original writer intended.

Step Two: Develop the Main Points

The second step involved in the organizational stage is the development of the main points of the outline. An outline is the sermon in skeleton form. It

48 Delnay, 45.
49 Ibid., 46.
is a sketch of the sermon, and is absolutely essential to the clarity of the message. J. Daniel Baumann says:

An outline will aid both the speaker and the listener. It prevents the preacher from rambling. It establishes an order, a direction of thought. Omissions, digressions, inconsistencies, misplaced emphases, and unsupported assertions will be sharply reduced. Sermons wander without the safeguards of a well thought out structure. 51

An outline is designed to do three things. It displays the main points and subpoints of the idea, it shows the logical relationship that exists between them and it reveals the chronological order in which they will be treated. 52 It also focuses attention on what needs to be emphasized in the text, and moves the sermon along toward its intended goal. 53 The outline basically functions as a road map for the preacher. It leads him along, telling him what needs to be said, when it needs to be said, and in many cases, how it needs to be said. Every effective speaker has an outline for the message he delivers. He either has it in his head, or in his notes before him as he speaks.

Adams advises the preacher to develop a "preaching format" as opposed to a "lecture format." A lecturer

51Baumann, 149.


speaks in terms of then and there, emphasizes the third person, speaks of others in abstract terms, and is informative. In a preaching format, the preacher speaks in the here and now, emphasizes the second person, speaks in concrete terms of the congregation, and is persuasive and motivational.  

Adams then compares two different outlines. One follows the lecture format and discusses the source, function, and purpose of spiritual gifts. The other, based on the same text, follows a preaching format and discusses the fact that God gave you a gift, He gave it to you to use, and you are to use it to benefit others. He then says:

The preaching format continually cues the preacher to be personal, to address his congregation, to bring them face to face with God and His requirements.... Notice the abstract terms 'source, function, purpose' in the first outline. Words like these put congregations to sleep. They do not say anything helpful. They are abstract and analytical and squeeze all the juice out of a text and its truth. ... These are not preaching outlines; they are outlines of analytical studies of a topic. 

To develop this outline, the expositor should first turn to his exegetical outline and reexamine it in light of his proposition. It may be that this outline built on the block diagram already suggests the main points of the message. He may simply need to revise

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54Adams, 51.

55Adams, 52-53.
those points so that they faithfully represent the text, yet are stated in a contemporary fashion. One way to make them contemporary is to avoid making them dated statements. Walter Kaiser advises his readers to delete all proper names, except God's, as well as anything that focuses the listener's attention on the past rather than the present.\textsuperscript{56}

If the expositor is not satisfied with the outline from the block diagram, he can then try an approach suggested by Robert Delnay.\textsuperscript{57} Delnay suggests that the proposition be a demand. The natural response to a demand is a question. Why should I? How can I? The preacher therefore looks through the text to see which of these, or any other questions like them, are answered in the passage. He then develops his main points based on those answers.

For example, suppose the proposition is, "Every Christian should witness for Christ." The expositor prepares a series of columns with the words, "why?, how?, when?, where?, and any others questions that may be asked. He then checks the passage to see which of these questions the passage answers most. The column with the best answers is chosen, and the answers become the main points of the outline.

\textsuperscript{56}Kaiser, 157.

\textsuperscript{57}Delnay, 47.
One word of warning is in order regarding the use of this approach. One must be careful here to follow the teaching intent of the passage. The goal at this point is not just to get an outline. It is to produce an outline that is faithful to the text and relevant to the hearers. If he is not careful, in an attempt to develop an outline from the text, the expositor will find himself reading something into the text that isn't there. Or, he may issue a demand from a passage that was intended to encourage. This method can be used effectively, however, as long as the preacher carefully distinguishes between a demand and a declaration.

The expositor then needs to develop his transitional sentence, complete with a key word. If the expositor has discovered answers in the text to the question of why Christians should witness, his transitional sentence will be, "There are four reasons found in this text why Christians should witness." If he has discovered answers to the question of where a Christian should witness, it will be, "There are three places where Christians should witness." The question of how would be answered with ways, and so on. "Reasons," or "places" becomes the key word. Every main point is a reason, place, and so on.

Lloyd Perry suggests using the term "because of" in the transitional sentence. For example, "Christians
should witness because of the arguments set forth in this passage," or "because of the commands that are given in this passage."^{58} Delnay argues, however, that using the term, "because of," weakens the force of the message because it "points toward a meaning, but it doesn’t state it."^{59} For this reason, it is best to say "There are three arguments in this passage," or "There are two commands in this passage," as opposed to, "because of" the commands or arguments set forth.

As the preacher delivers the message, his main points should allow him to take the people through the passage from which he is preaching. Every main point should be followed by a passage of scripture that supports that point. David Black encourages readers to, "Construct your homiletical outline in such a fashion that the listeners can follow the sermons in their own Bibles."^{60} As the expositor leads them through the passage, the hearers should get a sense of "Yes, I see that now." Such preaching focuses their attention on the authority of the Word of God.

As the expositor goes through the steps of the sermonic process, several outlines will probably end up

^{58}Perry, 49.

^{59}Delnay, 48.

on his paper. How will he know when he has an outline good enough to develop into a message? Faris D. Whitesell says, "In a vital outline the points deal with challenging truths of a timeless nature." Walter Liefeld suggests four tests for an outline. Is it faithful to the text? Is it obvious from the text? Is it relevant to the hearers and goal oriented? And finally, is it dynamic, stimulating a response, and moving toward a climax? The preacher should also ask himself, "Does this excite me?" "Does it speak to a real need?" An outline that meets these tests is one that cries out to be preached.

Step Three: Fill in the Outline

The next step in the organizational process is to fill in the outline with supporting material. What is the expositor going to say once he announces his main points? It is at this point that the work of the first stage is especially helpful to the expositor. Sometimes the historical background, or the notes gathered by the expositor on words and phrases in the text will suggest what the subpoints should be. Kaiser recommends going back to the block diagram of the passage and developing the minor points of the diagram into subpoints in the

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61 Whitesell, 83.
62 Liefeld, 127.
sermon outline. This approach would make an excellent teaching outline, but may not be the best for preaching, because the preacher tends to get bogged down in the details of the text.

Charles Koller recommends that the subpoints be like the main points of the message. He suggests that the subpoints be complete statements, parallel in structure, and mutually exclusive, just like the main points. Using this approach, each subdivision becomes another division of the main point.

For example, if the proposition is "Every Christian should witness," and the first main point is "by living an exemplary life," then the subpoints might be a further division of what constitutes an exemplary life. An exemplary life is a "life of purity," a "life of consistency," and a "life of faithfulness." Each of these three subpoints are in parallel form and explain the main point.

The problem with this kind of subpoint is that the sermon may become a series of sermonettes on related topics. The discussion of the main point becomes a sermon on an exemplary life, instead of how an exemplary life relates to witnessing. More importantly, the text

63 Kaiser, 159.
itself does not always suggest such an outline. If it does, then the preacher can use it. If it doesn't, he should avoid it. C. Barry McCarty cautions his readers about subpoints. He writes,

No one is going to follow you down to Roman numeral IV, subpoint C, paragraph 2, item (a)(iii). A thesis and two to five major points are all the general ideas an audience can be expected to juggle.... Keep your outline simple.\(^65\)

This writer's experience has been that it is best to arrange the subpoints around what John Broadus calls, "the functional elements of the sermon."\(^66\) These elements, as given by Broadus are: explanation, argument, application, and illustration. Alfred P. Gibbs quotes Martin Luther as saying:

When he preaches on any subject, a man must first distinguish it. Secondly, he must define, describe and show what it is. Thirdly, he must produce sentences from the Scripture to prove and strengthen it. Fourthly, he must explain it by examples. Fifthly, he must adorn it with similitudes. Lastly, he must admonish and arouse the indolent, correct the disobedient and reprove the authors of false doctrines.\(^67\)

Using this approach, the preacher announces his main division, then explains, proves, illustrates, and applies it to his audience.

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\(^67\) Gibbs, 215.
Therefore, the first thing the preacher does after announcing his main point is to explain it. It should not be necessary here to explain the main point itself, but only to explain the passage so the hearers will see how the preacher came up with this main point from the passage. This takes the preacher back to one of the primary functions of expository preaching - to explain the text. Broadus says, "To explain the scriptures would seem among the primary functions of the preacher."68 He issues two words of warning here though: "Do not undertake to explain what you do not understand," and "Do not waste time in explaining what does not need explanation."69

Careful exegesis takes care of the first warning. The second leads to the question of how much the preacher needs to explain. Haddon Robinson probably offers the best advice. He writes, "The basic principle is to give as much biblical information as the people need to understand the passage and no more."70 If something needs explaining, explain it. If it is not essential to the message of the text, then save it for another time.

68 Broadus, 130.

69 Ibid.

The preacher should then offer proof for his main point. This leads to the second step of argumentation. If the preacher has done an adequate job of explaining his text, the listeners should already be convinced that his main point is from the passage under study. At this point, however, the expositor needs to turn to other biblical statements and examples that lend further support to his assertion. Regarding scriptural argumentation, Broadus says, "In general, no other argument can be so appropriate or be so effective with the people." 71

Logical reasoning, statistical facts and data, and testimonies of others are also a means of employing argumentation. Quotations from those recognized by the hearers as authorities on the subject can add both impressiveness and authority to the message. 72 Illustrations from real life are also helpful. The preacher needs to anticipate questions and doubts on the part of his hearers, and use the method of argumentation to carry on an imaginary conversation with his hearers. He does this by simply saying, "Now you may be asking..." Before he does this, however, he must be sure he has satisfactory answers to the question he raises, otherwise this method will backfire on him.

71 Broadus, 163.

72 Robinson, Biblical Preaching, 143.
Illustrations can be used at any stage of the development of the sermon. It may be that the preacher uses an illustration to explain or to argue. But at some point in the outline, he needs to illustrate the truth he is communicating. Perry recommends using only one illustration for a single idea.\(^73\) That should be a minimum. How many more illustrations the preacher uses should be determined by how well they will help him explain, argue, or apply the passage to his hearers.

Of all the material covered in the development of the sermon, the illustrations will probably be remembered best.\(^74\) Therefore it is important that the preacher choose illustrations that help him communicate his message, rather than use an illustration for its own sake. His purpose is to throw light on the passage through the illustration, not to call attention to the illustration itself.

Broadus recommends the preacher be thoroughly acquainted with the illustration and practice telling it before he gets in the pulpit.\(^75\) This will prevent him from having to explain it and possibly keep it from falling flat on the ears of the people. Baumann says,

\(^{73}\)Perry, 59.

\(^{74}\)L. P. Lehman, *How to Find and Develop Effective Illustrations* (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 1985), 99.

\(^{75}\)Broadus, 96.
"Like a joke, it either lives or dies by its own merits." Therefore, it is best to use an illustration that is clear, and to the point, then move on.

The final subpoint becomes the application. This does not mean that this is the only place the preacher seeks to apply the text. It can come at any point within the sermon. It may come at the beginning, in the middle, or at the end. In the method proposed here, the application appears in all three areas. It appears at the beginning as the preacher introduces the message and states his proposition, in the middle as a subpoint to each main point, and in the conclusion as the preacher drives home his point.

A word of caution is in order here. According to Jack Kuhatschek, the application must be consistent with the interpretation of the passage. Kuhatschek writes: "If an application does not arise out of the divine and human author’s intent, then it does not carry the authority of God’s Word." Also, it is important that the application be made with the people in mind. The expositor needs to think about the struggles, fears, and problems of those to whom he is going to preach. Chuck

76 Baumann, 252.
77 Ibid.
78 Jack Kuhatschek, Taking The Guesswork Out Of Applying The Bible (Downers Grove Ill: InterVarsity Press, 1990), 149.
Swindoll says this:

I think of teenagers and that world they have to survive in. I think of the abused wife. I think of the broken-hearted or the emotionally disturbed young person or older person. I think of those who are divorced and lonely.79

The preacher needs to think about those to whom he will be speaking, and consider the world in which they live. The application answers the question, "What difference should this truth make in my life?"

The four elements mentioned above enable the preacher to adequately deal with the contents of the passage, while at the same time, avoid rabbit trails. There will, at times, be an overlapping of these functional elements. An illustration may be used to explain, prove, or apply a point, for example. The goal of using these materials, as well as any others, as part of the subpoints is to make the explanation and application of the passage itself clear.

Step Four: Develop an Introduction and a Conclusion

The final step in the process is to develop an introduction and a conclusion to the message. It makes sense to prepare the conclusion last, but why the introduction? The introduction comes as part of the last step because it is not until then that the preacher

79Chuck Swindoll, "How to Win the Battle Against Boring Sermons," Ministries (Fall, 1984), 37.
knows what he is introducing. Preparing both the introduction and the conclusion at the same time allows the preacher to look for ways to tie them together. To do so, says Jay Adams, "wraps up the entire sermon in a way that gives it unity and force."\(^{80}\)

J. Daniel Baumann mentions four specific purposes for the introduction.\(^{81}\) The introduction should, first of all, secure the attention of the listeners and arouse their interest. Otherwise, the preacher loses them before he gets started. Second, the introduction should establish the direction of thought. The hearers should get an idea of the direction in which the preacher is moving. It should also allow the preacher to make the transition from the natural to the spiritual. The preacher should begin where the people are and move them into the spiritual realm. Finally, the introduction should show the people the relevancy of the message to their lives. Delnay reminds his readers that the introduction should fit the sermon and lead easily into the proposition.\(^{82}\)

Many preachers will begin their message with background information about the text. Jay Adams suggests, however, that the preacher begin with the

\(^{80}\text{Adams, 64.}\)

\(^{81}\text{Baumann, 136-139.}\)

\(^{82}\text{Delnay, 114.}\)
people. He says, "The first factor is to begin with the congregation itself." The preacher can use an illustration, a story, a startling statement, ask a series of questions, or make a series of comments with which his hearers can identify. But he must start where they are. Along this same line, Fred Craddock writes:

One does not begin, therefore, with an indictment...or with a mini-lecture on history.... To lead someone out means to take him or her by the hand and then move.

The introduction then, is prepared after the outline of the sermon itself has been prepared. It is prepared with the people in mind, and attempts to interest them in the topic. The preacher begins with the hearers, gains their attention and interest, and then moves to his proposition. Once he has the introduction in mind, he should begin writing the sermon outline out on a sheet of paper, thinking through the introduction, the main points, and the conclusion.

Though the conclusion is the last part of the sermon outline prepared, it is by no means the least important. It may, in fact, be the most important. It is here that the listener's are called upon to make a decision based on what they have heard. Walter Kaiser advises preachers "to severely limit their work on the

83 Adams, 60.
84 Craddock, 185.
introduction and to devote that time... to an expanded and clearly-thought-out conclusion." By simply following Osborne's advice. First, summarize the message. This is not the time to introduce new material, but to simply review the proposition and main points. He should review them and restate them in different words. Second, the preacher drives home the main point. This is where the preacher tells his hearers what action they should take and how they can take it. He tells them how to put Sunday morning's message to work in Monday morning's world. Adams refers to this as "implementation," and says Bible-believing
preachers "have been good at telling congregations what to do, but notoriously poor at telling them how to do it." The conclusion is a good time to spell out specifically, with examples even, how the hearers can implement the truth of the message into their lives.

The preacher should close with a challenge for his listeners to act on the message. Adams says, "It would be foolish for the salesman to explain all about his product and then fail to ask the prospective customer to buy it." He goes on to remind his readers that:

There remains a biblical obligation to "urge," "persuade," "encourage," and "authoritatively instruct" (cf. the pastoral epistles) the listener to believe and do whatever God commands.

The preacher should call upon the listener to make a decision, and in most cases, even issue an invitation for the hearer to respond publicly. Glenn O'Neal offers a final word of advice. He writes, "A note of triumph should be obvious in the conclusion," and encourages the preacher to always "end on a positive note."

One often hears a preacher say, "May God the Holy Spirit apply this message to your hearts and lives."

Through the use of illustrations, examples, arguments,

89 Adams, 138.
90 Ibid., 69.
91 Ibid.
questions, and pointed sayings, the preacher will make it much easier for the Holy Spirit to do just that. J. Daniel Baumann says, "Many sermons just seem to end; they grind to a halt."93 A sermon with a carefully planned conclusion, consisting of a summary, specific directions, and a call to action, will do more than grind to a halt. It will cause the listener to go away with an understanding of what God has said in the text, and what and how he can do something about it.

This completes the second stage of the process of preparing expository messages. The writer has explained a plan for preparing expository messages consisting of eight steps in two stages. Upon completing these eight steps, the layman should have an outline, written out, that is not only true to the text, but is also relevant to the hearer. Part three of the manual illustrates this plan from 1 Thessalonians.

A final word of warning is in order here. Warren Wiersbe writes, "An outline lets us maintain order, progress, and purpose in the message; but an outline isn't a message."94 The outline becomes a message when it comes from a burdened heart, is bathed in prayer, and is delivered in the power of the Holy Spirit.

93Baumann, 142.

Based on the plan presented in this manual, the expositor will develop a series of messages from a New Testament epistle. While he may not preach these sermons in succession, depending on his preaching opportunities, he will gain a greater knowledge of the Word of God, as he concentrates all his energies upon a single book. This part of the manual is designed to illustrate the plan presented in this manual, and to help the layman get started with that series. The writer will use 1 Thessalonians 1:2-10 as an example. But first, the reader needs a review of the plan.

A Review of the Plan

I. Stage One: The Exegetical Stage

A. Step One: Study the Background

2. Compare parallel passages.
3. Turn to reference works.

B. Step Two: Survey the Contents

1. Determine the paragraph divisions.
2. Determine the major sections.
3. Decide on the theme.
4. Compare your work with that of others.

C. Step Three: Study the Structure
1. Develop a block diagram.
2. Develop an outline from the diagram.
3. Write out a summary of the passage.

D. Step Four: Study the Words and Phrases
1. Write out the words and phrases to be studied.
2. Look in the text for explanations.
3. Compare parallel passages.
4. Turn to reference works.

II. Stage Two: The Organizational Stage

A. Step One: Develop the Proposition
1. Determine the one thing the passage either declares or demands.
2. Determine how to apply it to the audience.
3. Decide on the purpose of the message.
4. State it in a clear, forceful way, that is true to the text and relevant to today.

B. Step Two: Develop the Main Points
1. Review the outline from the diagram.
2. Ask questions of the proposition.
3. Determine the transitional sentence and key word.
C. Step Three: Fill in the Outline

1. Explain the text.
2. Argue the point.
3. Illustrate the point.
4. Apply it to the listeners.

D. Step Four: Prepare the Introduction and the Conclusion

1. The Introduction
   a. Start with the congregation.
   b. Take them to the text.
   c. State the proposition.

2. The Conclusion
   a. Summarize the message.
   b. Drive home the main point.
   c. Motivate the listener to action.

An Illustration of the Plan

I. Stage One: The Exegetical Stage

This stage, the reader will recall, is designed to help the interpreter gain a thorough understanding of the book and passage from which he will be preaching. This stage consists of four steps.

A. Step One: Study the Background

What is the interpreter looking for? He is looking for information about the author and his readers, the general time and place of writing, and the circumstances and purpose of the book.

First, the interpreter moves through the text, jotting down his discoveries. He then summarizes them under the four categories mentioned above.

1:1 Paul identifies himself as the author. Silas and Timothy are also mentioned. The Thessalonians are the addressees.

1:5 Paul had preached the gospel to them.

1:6 The Thessalonians became believers under Paul's ministry and were persecuted because of their faith.

1:9 They appear to have been involved in idolatry before coming to God.

The interpreter does the same thing with each chapter. He then puts this information into summary form.

Author and Readers: Paul is the author of the letter (1:1). He makes reference several times to himself, and to his visit to Thessalonica (2:2-10). The Thessalonians are the addressees (1:1). They came to Christ as a result of Paul's ministry (1:6; 2:13), out of paganism (1:9), and were persecuted because of their faith (1:6; 3:2).

Date and Place: The letter was written while Paul was traveling with Silas and Timothy (1:1). They had traveled to Thessalonica from Philippi (2:2). They traveled to Athens after leaving Thesalonica (3:3), and
shortly thereafter Paul wrote this letter to them.

Circumstances and Purpose: Paul was not able to stay but a short time in Thessalonica (2:17). Therefore he was greatly concerned about the Thessalonians (3:6, 7). While at Athens, he sent Timothy back to Thessalonica to establish and encourage them (3:2). He writes this letter upon Timothy's return (3:6). His purpose appears to be to defend his ministry among them (2:1, 5, 10), confirm and assure them regarding their new faith (1:4), and to establish them in the face of persecution (2:14; 3:10).

2. Compare parallel passages.

Following a summary based on what can be found in the epistle itself, the interpreter should cross reference names, places, and events. As a result, he finds himself in the middle of Paul's second missionary journey in Acts seventeen. A study of chapters sixteen through eighteen will give the interpreter a feel for the events surrounding Paul's ministry at Thessalonica.

From chapter 17, he gets a detailed look at how the church was started and why Paul was forced to leave the city. From Acts 18:5, he learns that Paul was in Corinth when Timothy returned from Macedonia. Among other things, he learns that the letter was written by Paul, on his second missionary journey, from Corinth. This gives it a date of around A.D. 54.
3. Turn to reference works.

The next step is to turn to a Bible dictionary or introduction to an exegetical commentary. Here the interpreter finds additional information about the city and people of Thessalonica. He compares his work in the text with what he finds in the reference works, revises the information, and adds additional information not revealed in the text. He then summarizes this information into a page or two of information which he labels across the top as historical background. He files this information and returns to it as needed. He should review this information from time to time, maintaining a "feel" for the setting, as he works through the book.

B. Step Two: Survey the Contents

The purpose of this step is to help the interpreter gain an understanding of the entire book from which he will be preaching.

1. Determine the paragraph divisions.

A comparison of different translations and paragraph Bibles guides the interpreter in determining those paragraph divisions.

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<tr>
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The interpreter continues to do this through the entire book, charting the different divisions and deciding where he will make the breaks. He then lists each paragraph and summarizes its contents.

1. Greet the Thessalonians
   1:1 Paul greets the Thessalonians
   1:2-4 Paul gives thanks for the Thessalonians.
   1:5-10 Paul is confident of the Thessalonians' salvation experience.

2. Determine the major sections.

   By grouping the paragraphs together, the interpreter can see major sections of material in the book. There are two in 1 Thessalonians, apart from the introduction and closing remarks.
   1:4-3:13 Paul shares his love and concern for the Thessalonians
   4:1-5:24 Paul corrects and instructs the Thessalonians

3. Decide on the theme.

   Because the second coming of Christ is mentioned in each chapter and is a continual incentive to both Paul and the Thessalonians in this letter, a good theme
would be: "Preparing for Christ's coming."

4. Compare your work with that of others.


C. Step Three: Study the Structure

This step leads the interpreter through the process of preparing a block diagram of the passage.

1. Develop a block diagram of the passage.

   **Example One**
   1:2 We give thanks to God always for you all Making mention of you in our prayers

   **Example Two**
   1:2 We give thanks to God always for you all Making mention of you in our prayers
   1:3 Remembering without ceasing your work of faith and/ labor of love and/ patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ in the sight of God and our Father

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2. Develop an outline from the passage.

Example one is a detailed diagram and would lead to a good teaching outline emphasizing the direction of Paul's thanksgiving (to God), the duration of thanksgiving (always), the object (for you all), and the means (in prayer). These might work well as subpoints for some preachers. However, a message based on a paragraph or more need not be this detailed.

A look at example two reveals an even better outline. Notice how "we give thanks" is not indented as much as "making mention," and "remembering." This shows the interpreter that the main emphasis is on Paul's giving thanks for the Thessalonians. The outline suggested by the text is this: Paul gives thanks for the Thessalonians (1) in prayer, (2) as he remembers their works. If the interpreter were to add verse four to the paragraph he would have, (3) being confident of their salvation.

3. Write out a summary of the passage.

This summary is sometimes, nothing more that the outline restated in paragraph form. The summary, or theme, arises naturally from the outline which emphasizes the main points of the passage.

"Paul gives thanks for the Thessalonians as he prays for them, remembering their actions as a result of their faith, being confident of their salvation."
D. Step Four: Study the Words and phrases

This step takes the interpreter into the details of the passage as he examines difficult, crucial, or unclear terms. Anything that is unclear will need to be explained later in the message, and may be crucial to an overall understanding of the passage.

1. Write out the words and terms to be studied.

The first thing to do is list the terms that require additional study. The interpreter goes through the passage listing every term that is unclear, or that may be significantly different in another translation.

1:1 Grace be unto you, and peace
1:3 work of faith; labor of love; patience of hope
1:4 election of God
1:5 in much assurance (NIV - conviction)
1:6 joy of the Holy Ghost
1:7 ye were ensamples (NIV - a model)
1:7, 8 Macedonia and Achaia
1:9 ye turned to God from idols
1:10 the wrath to come

2. Look in the text for explanations

Having identified the terms to study, the interpreter looks for any indication of meaning in the text itself. The only term explained in the text is the term in verse seven, "ye were ensamples". Verse eight explains that they were examples because of their zeal
in promoting the gospel. A comparison of translations will sometimes clarify the meaning of a term. The NIV translates the phrase above as, "you became a model."

3. Compare parallel passages

Take the theological phrase in verse four, "your election of God." This is an important term, yet probably only a small percentage of the listeners will understand its meaning. They will, and should, expect the preacher to explain it to them. In order to do so, he must have a clear understanding of the term himself.

Is there anything in the text that might explain it? No. An important cross-reference, however, can be found in 2 Thessalonians 2:13 where Paul mentions the fact that God chose the Thessalonians to salvation. At this point the layman again uses his concordance to locate any other references on the subject, and draws a conclusion about what Paul meant when he used the term.

4. Turn to reference works

The term, "election of God" will need to be examined in a good theology text. Lewis Sperry Chafer mentions two elections of God: the election of Israel, and the election of the church. Which does Paul refer to here? Does divine election contradict free will? A good theology text helps the interpreter find an answer.

to questions like this. For the phrase, "Macedonia and Achaia," the interpreter needs to look in a good Bible atlas or encyclopedia. The interpreter then uses his commentaries to check his interpretation of the passage as well as to gain additional insight into the meaning of the text.

II. Stage Two: The Organizational Stage

This stage guides the interpreter through the process of developing a message out of the information gleaned from the exegetical stage. The reader will recall that this stage also consists of four steps.

A. Step One: Develop a Proposition

The proposition ties the message together and gives it unity. It will be the last point in the introduction.

1. Determine the one thing the passage either declares or demands.

Look back at the outline and summary of 1:2-4. Does the passage make a declaration or a demand? It seems clear that Paul is simply making a declaration about his own thankfulness for the Thessalonians. If the interpreter takes all of chapter one as a complete unit of thought, however, then the emphasis becomes Paul's thanksgiving for the assurance of the Thessalonian's salvation.
2. **Determine how to apply it to the audience.**

   How do these two emphases relate to the hearers? How will the preacher apply them? The first is a reminder to all Christians to be thankful for one another. The second says something about the believer's assurance of salvation. But which one will he use?

   That leads to the next step.

3. **Decide on the purpose of the message.**

   Does the preacher sense a need to encourage his listeners to be more thankful for one another? Or does he sense the need to assure them of their salvation? If his people lack love and appreciation for one another, his purpose will be to motivate them to be more thankful for each other. If they wrestle with assurance, his purpose will be to assure them of their salvation, or perhaps to provide them with some biblical evidences of salvation to help them with their assurance.

4. **State it in a clear, forceful way, that is true to the text and relevant to today.**

   The proposition might be, "Christians can be thankful for one another." But this lacks punch and spiritual urgency. It is too passive. It becomes more urgent and forceful if the preacher changes it to: "Christians should thank God for one another." To say, however, that this passage teaches that believer's should thank God for one another is to go beyond what
the passage actually says. It only says Paul thanked God for the Thessalonians. He doesn't necessarily tell the believer he must do the same. While it is true that Christians should give thanks in everything (5:18), that is not necessarily what this passage emphasizes in its total context. Verses two to four are more of an introduction to the rest of the chapter.

If however, the preacher takes the rest of the chapter into account, he realizes that Paul gave thanks for the Thessalonians because they displayed evidence of their salvation. Paul is confident of their salvation and then explains why. A proposition based on the entire chapter, (which is only nine verses and a good preaching portion anyway), might be, "Christians can be confident of their own salvation as well as the salvation of others." Sometimes, therefore, the preacher may need to use more than a single paragraph as a text to stay true to the intended purpose of the author.

A second example comes from 1 Thessalonians 2:1-12. This also is more than one paragraph. The theme of the preaching portion, (three paragraphs based on the NIV), is Paul's defense of his ministry. The climax of the section is verse thirteen, when Paul says that the Thessalonians had received his message as a message from God. In defending his ministry, he explains how they presented the word to them resulting in an effective
presentation of the gospel. A proposition from this text might be, "Every Christian can witness effectively for Christ." It is both true to the text, and relevant to the contemporary Christian. It is also a declaration as opposed to a demand.

B. Step Two: Develop the Main Points

The main points should come naturally out of the passage and not be forced. As with the proposition, they also need to be stated in a way that is relevant and interesting to the hearers.

1. Review the outline from the diagram.

Review again the outline from step three in stage one. Paul thanked God for the Thessalonians as he prayed for them and as he remembered them. An outline based on the proposition, "We can thank God for one another," would be: (1) by praying for one another, and (2) by remembering one another. The outline from the first stage often yields some fruitful ideas. In this case, however, it stills lacks force and urgency. Therefore, in this case the preacher moves on to the next step.

2. Ask questions of the proposition.

The writer has already demonstrated that a better proposition can be built on the entire chapter. While no diagram was done on the entire chapter, there are some obvious emphases in the passage. At this point,
the preacher asks questions of the text. The proposition is "Christians can be confident of their own salvation as well as that of others." Which question does this statement naturally raise? How? Now look through the text and note the different emphases. First, there is the emphasis on how the word came with much "assurance" (v.5). This is consistent with the theme of verse four. Then there is the emphasis on following the Lord (v.6). Verse eight emphasizes the way the Thessalonians sounded out the Word of God. And finally, there is the emphasis on the Thessalonians turning to God away from idols (9).

The interpreter notices immediately that these emphases can be used as evidences of salvation. With the exception of verse five, He turns each emphases into a word. His main points, consisting of those three words are: Christlikeness (v.6, 7), Confession (v.8), and Change (9, 10). The hearers see it in the text, and immediately recognize its relevancy to their lives.

3. Determine the transitional sentence and key word.

The transitional sentence carries the preacher smoothly from the proposition to the main points. In this case the proposition answers the question, "How can Christians be confident of their salvation?" This leads into the main points of the message, but before he announces his first main point, the preacher says,
"There are three words drawn from this passage that enable the Christian to be confident of his own salvation as well as the salvation of others." The key word is "words." What then will the preacher preach about from this text? He will talk about how to have the assurance of salvation. What will he say about it? He will give his listeners three words that will enable them to be confident of their salvation.

C. Step Three: Fill in the Outline

There are four "functional elements" used at this point to fill in the outline.

1. Explain the text.

At this point the preacher examines the results of step four in stage one. He looks for ways to explain, as simply and clearly as possible, those terms that were unclear to him. Once he announces his first main point, he should immediately call his listeners' attention to the text. He explains the different phrases found in verse six and seven and then emphasizes how Christlikeness relates to the assurance of salvation.

2. Argue the point.

The preacher then looks for other references to support his point. He might emphasize Philippians 2:5, and having the mind of Christ. He may argue from John 13 when Jesus told his disciples to do as he had done. He may emphasize the ministry of the Holy spirit in
conforming the child of God into the image of Christ (2 Cor. 3:18), or the goal of Christian ministry (Eph. 4). Another argument is Paul's desire to know Christ and to be conformed to his death in Philippians 3:10.

3. Illustrate the point.

The preacher may use a biblical illustration at this point. When the disciples said, "Lord, teach us to pray" (Lu. 11:1), they wanted to be more like Jesus. The preacher should have an illustration file or book from which he can draw illustrations of the points he wishes to make. Walter Knight tells the story of how William Booth's daughter dressed a monkey in a Salvation Army uniform, but then quickly undressed it because the monkey could not live the part. Illustrations should be highlighted in the outline so they more readily catch the preacher's eye.

4. Apply it to the listener.

Here the preacher simply thinks of his hearers and how he can help them apply this truth to their lives. How does Christlikeness show up in the home? At work? In school? He may ask the hearer, "Do you have a desire to be like Christ?" What about that person who is driven by materialism? He must plan these questions in advance or risk failing to properly apply the message.

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D. Step Four: Prepare the Introduction and Conclusion

The introduction and conclusion are ready to be completed only after the outline and supporting material have been put together.

1. Prepare the introduction.

As he writes out the introduction the preacher should move through three basic steps.

a. Start with the congregation.

Start by sharing a personal experience about individuals who have wrestled with the assurance of their salvation. Help the audience to identify with these individuals. Ask them, "Have you ever doubted your salvation?" Or simply start by saying, "Some of you have a friend who is struggling over the assurance of his or her salvation. Some of you have been there yourself. Some of you may still be there. If not, you probably will be one day. I would like to share with you something today that will help you." Speaking to the listener's needs will get his attention.

b. Take them to the text.

Once the preacher has gained the attention of his listeners and established the need for the message, he should move directly to the text. He simply says, "In 1 Thessalonians chapter one, Paul has some helpful advice for those who are struggling with this issue." He may at this point give some brief background information
regarding Paul's relationship to the Thessalonians. Or, he may immediately call their attention to the phrase, "knowing brethren beloved, your election of God" (v. 4), followed by a brief explanation of the phrase.

c. **State the proposition**

Following the brief explanation of the text, the preacher writes out his proposition: "You can be confident of your own salvation as well as the salvation of others." He then writes out his transitional sentence which leads him into his first main point.

2. **Prepare the conclusion.**

As with the introduction, the preacher should also move through three basic steps as he prepares his conclusion.

a. **Summarize the message.**

The first step in the conclusion is to summarize what has been said. The preacher should write out a summary of the message, including the proposition and the main points. For example, he may write: "You can be confident of your own salvation as well as the salvation of others. The evidence can be found in your desire to be like Christ, in your willingness to confess Christ before others, and in the change that took place in your life when you received Christ."
b. Drive home the main point

Here the preacher wants to end up where he started. Therefore he asks, "Are you wrestling with your salvation? Do you have any of these evidences in your life. Are you lacking in some or perhaps all of them? Fanny Crosby's hymn, "Blessed Assurance" would be good at this point, or perhaps another illustration.

c. Motivate the listener to action.

Here the preacher straightforwardly asks the hearer to do something about what he has heard. If the hearer is struggling with his own salvation, then he should be motivated to examine his life for the evidence of salvation. If he knows others who are struggling, he should be encouraged to write down and to memorize the three words that will help other believers with the assurance of their salvation. And finally, if he has no assurance at all of his salvation, he should be encouraged to come forward to receive Christ.
An Outline Built With This Plan

Text: 1 Thessalonians 2:1-10

Title: How To Be Sure Of Your Salvation

Introduction:

1. Can a Christian really be certain of his salvation?
2. What about the salvation of friends, others?
3. According to 1 Thessalonians 1:2-4 the answer is yes. Look at the text.
4. Had Paul been in eternity past? Had he been permitted to look into the book of life? No. His assurance was based on what he saw in their lives.

Proposition: You can be certain of your own salvation as well as the salvation of others.

Transition: How can you be certain? There are three words (key word) that will give you that assurance.

I. CHRISTLIKENESS (5-7)
   A. Followers of us (v.6). The word means "to mimick" The Thessalonians were following Paul and Silas who in turn were following Christ. Their life gave impact to the gospel (v.5). As a result, the Thessalonians had become an example also (v.7).
   B. Paul encouraged the Corinthians to follow his example on a number of occasions (1 Cor. 4:16; 11:1). He evidenced Christlike character. He had met the Lord.
   C. A truly saved person may not be perfect, but he does desire to be like Christ. Vance Havner says a new Christian has to backslide to follow the average Christian. Do you desire to be like Christ? Illustration - Booth’s monkey

II. CONFESSION (8)
   A. The word of the Lord "sounded out" from the Thessalonians. It was like the blasting of a trumpet. Because Thessalonica was on the Egnatian Way and a seaport city, their faith spread "in every place." They could not keep it quiet.
   B. A public confession is the natural result of salvation. It is always exciting to share good news. Paul said the person who believed on
Christ would not be ashamed of him (Rom. 10:11). Look at those who were healed by Jesus and how anxious they were to tell others.

C. A missionary preaching in a small village in Peru was visited by Indians who traveled for nine days through the Andes to make a public profession of faith.

D. Were you anxious to share your decision for Christ? Who was the first person you told? Or have you told anyone?

III. CHANGE (9-10)

A. The Thessalonians turned to God away from idols (9). They had lived in a pagan society built on a pattern of polytheism. Mt. Olympus, home of the gods was in clear view of the city. Their lives had been turned around. They were now waiting for Christ's appearing and deliverance from the coming wrath (10).

B. Jesus specializes in turning lives around, even good, moral ones. Look at Paul on the road to Damascus. Look at the woman taken in adultery. Look at the Corinthian believers (1 Cor. 6:9-11). 2 Cor. 5:17 is still in the Bible.

C. Instead of worshiping idols, the Thessalonians were waiting for Christ. What changes took place in your life when you met Christ? Do you anticipate his coming with dread or delight? Do you long for the things of the world, or for Christ's appearing?

Conclusion:

1. If Jesus were to come today, would you be ready to meet Him? You don't know? The Bible makes it very clear that you can and should know.

2. Is there a desire in your heart to be like Christ? Was there a time in your life when you were anxious about sharing with others a decision you made for Christ? What kind of change has taken place in your life since you made that decision?

3. You may have come to realize that you are not a Christian. You may not be sure whether you are a Christian or not. You may need to share these words with a friend.

4. You need to settle this issue today. As I give the invitation, step out, come down this aisle, and leave this place today with the assurance in your heart that you are on your way to heaven.
Concluding Thoughts

It is the hope of the writer that the layman will be motivated by what he has learned in this manual to become an expository preacher. Charles Haddon Spurgeon said to his students:

If I were forbidden to enter heaven, but were permitted to select my state for all eternity, I should choose to be as I sometimes feel in preaching the gospel. Heaven is foreshadowed in such a state; the mind shut out from all disturbing influences, adoring the majestic and consciously present God, every faculty aroused and joyously excited to its utmost capability....

May the layman experience such a state as he begins the most rewarding task of preparing and preaching expository messages.

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98Spurgeon, 192.
WORKS CITED


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