

## Chapter 9

### Putting the Sermon Together

Before you plan your sermon remember the time. According to a few studies, the average attention span is around 20 minutes. After that the mind may still retain some information, but a lot of it is lost. In the first 20 minutes, most of the information can be processed more readily and stored into memory by the brain.

Don't get me wrong, when I first started preaching I preached for one and a half hours on Christmas Day. It was crazy, but I've learned from my mistakes that a good preaching should be about 20–30 minutes and if you're in a teaching setting it should be 30–45 minutes.

What I have done is I've placed a clock directly in front of me above the front entrance of the church where I can see the time before I preach and figure out where I have to stop. The reason I do this is because you can have a really good word and drag it out and the people get uneasy and restless because they can only take so much information in. One thing you don't want is people to start yawning as you're preaching. Of course be led by the Holy Spirit but remember you don't have to drag it out.

The first thing you should start off with is your introduction, which is your foundation for the sermon. In school they teach you that a sermon is basically done in three parts:

- 1) Introduction: Tell them what you are about to tell them.
- 2) The sermon: Tell them what you want to tell them.
- 3) The closing: Tell them what you have just told them.

So you're basically introducing the sermon you're about to preach. If I was going to preach about Lazarus in John chapter 11, I would do the sermon outline as follows.

#### Introduction

Today we are going to look at the story of Lazarus found in John chapter eleven. I want to show you how you can have resurrecting power in your lives through Jesus and how He can raise up the dead situations in your life! Today who wants the dead situations in their lives resurrected for God's glory? Let's bow our heads and pray.

Pray.

Set Up Text. Explain what's happening in the text then read the verses you have chosen to read.

## Text

"Then, when Mary came where Jesus was, and saw Him, she fell down at His feet, saying to Him, 'Lord, if You had been here, my brother would not have died.' Therefore, when Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who came with her weeping, He groaned in the spirit and was troubled. And He said, 'Where have you laid him?' They said to Him, 'Lord, come and see.' Then the Jews said, 'See how He loved him!' And some of them said, 'Could not this Man, who opened the eyes of the blind, also have kept this man from dying?' Then Jesus, again groaning in Himself, came to the tomb. It was a cave, and a stone lay against it. Jesus said, 'Take away the stone.' Martha, the sister of him who was dead, said to Him, 'Lord, by this time there is a stench, for he has been dead four days.' Jesus said to her, 'Did I not say to you that if you would believe you would see the glory of God?' Then they took away the stone from the place where the dead man was lying. And Jesus lifted up His eyes and said, 'Father, I thank You that You have heard Me. And I know that You always hear Me, but because of the people who are standing by I said this, that they may believe that You sent Me.' Now when He had said these things, He cried with a loud voice, 'Lazarus, come forth!'" (John 11:32–34, 36–43 NKJV)

## Explain the Text in Your Words

Mary and Martha, the sisters of Lazarus, were grieving the death of their brother but then Jesus shows up on the scene and He tells them that, "He is the resurrection and the life," but they are still doubting and not understanding that He can help them. Jesus purposely shows up late to show His power through Lazarus. Lazarus has been dead for four days.

Four represents the world. Mary's and Martha's names represent bitterness and rebelliousness. Bethany means "house of misery" and "house of dates." Lazarus means "the Lord helps."

You can say something like:

In this story Lazarus has been dead for four days and on the fourth day Jesus shows up to resurrect him from the dead. After Lazarus rises from the dead, many people believe in Jesus, so Lazarus became a witness to and for the resurrecting power of Jesus. Also, I have learned that back in those days because of the heat and moisture plus the insects the dead body would be exposed to, the body would start to decompose. In other words, it would begin to rot and it would start on the fourth day.

No matter how bad you think your life is falling apart and no matter how bad it is, if you roll the stone away, allow God to remove the things that are blocking you from the resurrecting power of God, He will put the pieces back together. Because before you can see and experience the resurrecting power upon you and your

house you have to die to the things of the world—then you will rise up to be the witness God has called you to be.

Jesus entered into a miserable situation and changed the atmosphere by resurrecting a dead situation! And He wants to do the same for you. Why? So you can be a witness and bear fruit for His glory [house of dates].

#### Application

To live a resurrected life and for God to raise up the dead things in your life you have to allow Him to change your bitter and rebellious situation by doing the following:

- 1) Don't just believe He can do it for others but believe He can do it for you! Talk about truly believing and having faith that Jesus can do it for them.
- 2) Remove the stone. Talk about how the stone represents the sin, stubbornness, rebelliousness and pride in their lives. And how they have to willingly get rid of it because that is what's stopping the resurrection from happening.
- 3) Listen to and apply His Word. When Jesus said "Lazarus arise" Lazarus arose. Basically teach about how important God's Word is and how we have to read it and apply it because His Word is like a hammer that breaks the rock.

#### Bring Them to the Cross

Every sermon you should find a way to bring them to the cross, especially if you're preaching about a story in the Old Testament. Connect it to Jesus. You can say something like this:

Even though Lazarus was resurrected, one day he died again. But because Jesus Himself died and was raised three days later, Lazarus was able to rise up again, this time in heaven for all eternity—and we have eternal life through Him as well because of the cross.

"Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one's life for his friends. You are My friends if you do whatever I command you." (John 15:13–14 NKJV)  
Today, obey what you have heard and you too can live a resurrected life here on earth and then for all eternity!

#### Illustrated Story

Perfect time to tell a story to connect it to your sermon.

A man during the Civil War was sitting on a park bench in Washington, D.C., crying. His son, under great distress, had deserted his post in battle and was to be shot by a firing squad soon. The father had come to the capitol to see President Abraham Lincoln but couldn't get past the front gates. People passed by, but nobody stopped to listen. Finally, a little boy paused and asked the man why he was crying. In his emotional distress, he told his story. He ended by saying that if

he could talk to the president, he knew his son would be pardoned. The young boy asked the man to follow him. When they came to the front gate of the White House, the little boy said to the soldiers, "It's all right, he's with me." The man followed in amazement. They came to the room where President Lincoln was conferring with his generals and cabinet members, guarded by yet another detachment of soldiers. The young boy pushed inside and jumped up on the president's lap. Conversation stopped as the boy said, "Daddy, there's a man I want you to meet. He needs your help." The man was brought in to talk with the president. His son received the presidential pardon because the son of the president took an interest in his plight.

Through Jesus we have access to God—what an incredible truth. We, who are in our old nature corrupt and rebellious and sinful and objects of God's wrath, are suddenly, miraculously, invited. God has pardoned us because His Son Jesus intervened on our behalf.

You can say something like:

Like Lazarus was saved from death and the man's son was, Jesus is the same yesterday, today, and forever; if He did it for them He can do it for you! Because Jesus is interceding for you and me. Jesus would tell you today remove the stone and let Me raise up all those dead situations in your life! You can't do it just like the man in the story couldn't, just like Mary and Martha couldn't, but there's a Son that can!

Altar Call

Tell the people to stand and then you can say something like this:

If you believe that the Son's calling you out and wants to raise those dead situations, get to this altar now! Jesus is calling you out of your situation. If you believe it, get here right now by faith!

At the altar call you should remember a few things.

- 1) As you're winding down to the last five minutes of your preaching call up the choir by saying, "As the choir comes up," get the choir to remember that cue. It's always good for the choir to sing a song that connects somehow with the preaching. Connect with the choir director and let him know what song he should sing and if you don't know a song tell him the theme of your sermon—he should figure it out.
- 2) The altar call should be very smooth because this is where people make a decision, this is where lives change. What's good about the altar call is no matter how bad you think your preaching went, you can make it up at the altar call.
- 3) Don't over-preach at the altar. This is a time for them to connect with God and God to connect with them.
- 4) Remember to offer a prayer of rededication and the sinner's prayer.

## Sermon Outline

Introduction:

Pray:

Set Up Text:

Text:

Explain Text in Your Words:

Application:

Bring Them to the Cross:

Illustrated Story:

Altar Call:

Pray:

Watch your repetitive words that you might use as fillers after every other word like... Amen, praise God, hallelujah, glory to God.

There are so many other ways to set up a sermon outline. I just wanted to teach you one of the ways I usually do it. The purpose of an outline is to keep you from going all over the place in your sermon. As a matter of fact me and a close minister friend I know were in a city ministering. Before I could go up the pastor of that church called up one of the ministers from another church and as he was preaching I noticed he had no theme. He had Scriptures but he was all over the place with no foundation, no structure, and no application.

Right there God ministered to me to write this book you're reading. As God was ministering this to me, my other minister friend turned to me and said, "At the next minister's meeting make a note we are going to teach the ministers how to preach better." I said, "Confirmation. God was just telling me to write a book about how to teach ministers to preach more effectively." This book is going to be a teaching guide for a lot of ministers because God has confirmed it and God has given the vision and the wisdom. So hopefully this will help you in your ministry as well.