# Homiletics

## A Very Short Introduction Under Construction

Current Version: February 21, 2023

Tim Sensing, DMin, PhD

## Sermon

*It was a sermon*
*Not the best but the only one for this day.*
*I could have slept, with some of the others*
*But I did not.*
*I dared not.*
*I never do.*
*I had to stay ready, waiting and ready for his*
    *sentence,*
*Ready for the one sentence that was worth it all.*
*I always come to hear all of it for the sake of the*
    *one sentence.*
*All his preparing and all my listening is for the one*
    *sentence.*
*When he says it, I will hear it.*
*There are thought gaps.*
*Things he leaves out.*
*Space.*
*I fill in the gaps as he goes along.*
*What he does not say to us I say to myself.*
*He does not try to say it all.*
*He leaves blanks and spaces for me to fill in.*
*I do.*
*He does not know when he says his big sentence.*
*I know.*
*It's when all the words become one word.*
*When all the thoughts become one thought.*
*It's when the words become like flesh and blood to*
    *me.*
*My flesh and blood, Lord.*

Herbert Brokering's poem, "Sermon," *Uncovered
Feelings* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1969) 24-25.
Quoted by Roger Van Harn, *Pew Rights*
(Grand Rapids: Erdmans 1992) 159.

W here do preachers come from? The Church. Where are preachers made? The Church. Preachers leave the seminary to take their place where? The Church. Preachers are set apart by the church for ministry. Preachers have been entrusted with a ministry that does not belong to them but belongs to Christ and is given to the whole church.

My career has been dedicated to asking the question, "How do people learn to preach?" I could just as easily ask, "How do people learn to swim?" To both questions, the short answer is: "They just do." Yet, realistically, people don't "just do it." They must "figure it out," to "get the feel" of preaching or swimming for themselves. Both tasks are more easily and safely negotiated if they are not undertaken alone. Preaching is not a solo performance.

Comparing preaching with swimming can be instructive on several points. An understanding of principles in physics, kinesiology, and aquatics is essential for learning to swim. The understanding called for, however, is embodied knowing. Well-organized conceptual schemes of theoretical information are relevant, but they don't help in the water until absorbed into swimming behavior that has become almost "second nature." Even a total recall of principles and propositions, per se, will not keep a would-be swimmer afloat. Mental memory must somehow be translated into muscle memory. Preaching too involves embodied knowing.

Quintillion defined rhetoric as "the art of speaking well". He interpreted "well" in two senses: 1) effectively, and 2) virtuously.[1] All effective preachers are aware of rubrics governing exegesis, interpretation, and communication. But knowledge of exegesis, hermeneutics, and rhetoric do not, in themselves, an effective preacher make. How do you move from knowledge about to knowing how? The following brief guide is designed to guide a beginning preacher in the art of speaking well in Quintillion's first sense. While the fabric of preaching involves pastoral care, a theology of proclamation and witness, techniques and skills about delivery, and the person and character of the preacher, *Homiletics: A Very Short Introduction* is primarily about arranging the words on the page and the scripting of the message.[2] Quintillion's second sense, "virtuously", is essential, first and foremost, but beyond the scope of this guide.

If I had a magic wand, then every student taking an upper-level preaching course would have pre-requisite classes in exegesis, theology, context analysis, and preaching (in that order). But I do not have such a wand, and students often do not have the luxury, time, or situation in life to take courses in that sequence. I teach several preaching classes in the curriculum that assume that a student knows the basics of what is taught in an introductory course. The introductory preaching class I routinely teach is BIBM 604 *Homiletics*. When students take a higher-level course in preaching without the necessary background, then this guide is designed to provide leveling. You might say that *Homiletics: A Very Short Introduction* is a guide to "how to script a sermon for Sensing when I do not know what he wants."

---

[1] Quintilian, *Institutio Oratoria*, 12.1.

[2] Cicero, *De Inventione*, 1.7. For Cicero, oratory is not an art but based on natural talent, training, and practice. He followed the rhetorical tradition of Greece and divided the discipline into five parts. Invention (*inventio*) included exegesis, discovery, the planning of a discourse, and the arguments to be used in it. Invention involved developing an argument to make the case convincing. Arrangement (*dispositio*) was concerned with form, the composition of the various parts into an effective whole. Arrangement ordered and distributed the matter by making clear the place that a thing was assigned (the introduction, or *exordium;* the statement of the case, or *narratio;* the outline of the major points in the argument, or *divisio* (sometimes known as *partitio*); the proof of the case, or *confirmation;* the refutation of possible opposing arguments, or *confutation; and* the conclusion, or *peroratio*). Style (*elocutio*) involved both choice of words and the composition of words into sentences, including using figures. Adaptation of suitable words and sentences to the matter invented including presentation fell under the category of style. Memory (*memoria*) was most useful for preparation for delivery. The retention of the matter in the mind had to do with the words and arrangement. Delivery (*pronuncio, actio*) was concerned with the rules for control of the voice and the use of gestures. Included under delivery were the subjects of graceful regulation of the voice, countenance, and gesture.

# Preaching Intentionally

**Preaching as Professional Discipline**: Preaching is a practice with set rules and standards. Or, should I say, "practices"? On any given Sunday, you will see various types of preaching practiced across denominational lines but also within the same denomination. How is preaching a practice? Specific knowledge, capacities, dispositions, and virtues are practiced within a community where meaning and doing are inextricably interwoven. A practice is made up of patterned activities that are embedded within communities that over time produce habits (or *habitus*). Preachers practice a way of being and acting that takes shape in and for the world.[3]

1. Tools and Techniques–involve the internalization of focused ways of seeing, hearing, reading, and speaking, ways that enable preachers to bring biblical, historical, and cultural texts into stimulating conversation with individual, congregational, and cultural concerns so that God's living and active word can be heard in the interplay. What is the preacher supposed to do?
2. Models and Mentors–how the task is done using different texts under varying conditions. How is the preacher supposed to do it? Preachers begin to "figure out" the process by watching the ways in which it is done (models) by different preachers (mentors).
3. Exploration and Adventure–the first two areas are brought into a relationship as the preacher experiments and explores her own style, as she tries out her own homiletical wings. She tries preaching on for size, modifying, growing, and seeing the future.

    **Preaching as Corporate Worship**: Preaching is not done for or to a gathering of listeners. It is neither a "solo performance" nor a "spectator sport." Preachers must engage in their discipline as a participation in the church's corporate life of worship. A preacher's primary preaching stance is within and among the community of believers.

    **Preaching as Continuing Vocation**: Contrary to the popular adage, practice does not make perfect. Never in worship do we get it right once and for all. God's reign of peace and justice is not yet on earth as it is already in heaven. Our efforts and intentions are only faltering and fragmentary at best. Therefore, preaching entails more than professional discipline but also lifelong learning and growing. It is said that Renoir's last words were: "I think I am finally beginning to learn to paint." Continue to grow and develop. Be open to learning. And we learn that we are all teachers and students of one another.

    While I could easily begin this guide with the how to preach, instead let me begin with more essential questions. What is the "what" of preaching? Or, more accurately, the "who" of preaching? To begin that discussion, let me ask, "What is the purpose of preaching?" There are many wonderful and healthy answers.

    Tom Long in *Senses of Preaching* describes the common scenario of a preacher shaking hands with congregants in the foyer after the Sunday morning sermon. What do you hope people will say? Long goes on to ask what Augustine (Book IV, *On Christian Doctrine*) would want congregants to say. Long bases his discussion on XII.27 "Therefore a certain eloquent man said, and said truly, that he who is eloquent should speak in such a way that he teaches, delights, and moves." Then Augustine added, "To teach is a necessity, to please is a sweetness, to persuade is a victory." Augustine would like, as we all would, to hear "That was a nice sermon" (delight). But even better, Augustine would like, "That was a nice sermon. I learned something today" (delight and teach). But if the parishioner would say, "That was a nice sermon. I learned something today. I am going to do something about it" (delight, teach, and persuade). Long suggests, then Augustine would be satisfied. What is the purpose of preaching? Long would ask, "What difference does the sermon make in the week ahead?" Of all the positive and wonderful ways to answer the question, "Why Preach?"–We preach because preaching is a theological act that persuades people to embrace a divine relationship with God.[4]

    What is the purpose of preaching? My answer is: *Homiletics is a theological witness that transforms the people of God in the image of Christ for the sake of the world.* "The people of God" is the phrase that connects my

---

[3] For more on a definition of the practice of preaching see Long and Tisdale (eds.), *Teaching Preaching as a Christian Practice*.

[4] Tom Long, *Senses of Preaching,* Atlanta: John Knox, 1988. For more insight about the theological purposes for preaching see Jana Childers (ed.), *Purposes of Preaching*, St. Louis: Chalice, 2004.

definition to the communal and contextual practices of the church. Sacramentally, preaching is a priestly ministry that encourages and cares for people as you mediate the presence of God to others and a prophetic ministry that proleptically imagines God's people living in God's preferred future by changing the present. *Transformation* points towards *telos*. When it is all said and done, what is the end of preaching, the fullness of preaching, the denouement of preaching? While some transformations are instantaneous and dramatic, normally communal change develops over time–an ongoing process of becoming (sanctification). The preacher, for me, is a witness who strives to persuade the listeners to be like Jesus.[5]

My definition states that preaching is a *theological witness.* There are other options. Augustine, *On Christian Doctrine,* would shape all sermons around *love.* "So anyone who thinks that he has understood the divine scriptures or any part of them, but cannot by his understanding build up this double love of God and neighbor, has not yet succeeded in understanding them" (Book I.36.40).[6] If every sermon gave witness to the *Shema,* love God and love neighbor, then unquestionably your preaching will be healthy. To choose *love* as the litmus test for all the ways of being, thinking, and doing as a Christian is a profound and aspirational choice.

Ronald Allen, *Interpreting the Gospel,* advocates shaping all sermons around *Gospel.*[7] If every sermon gave witness to Gospel, then positively your preaching will be healthy. To choose *Gospel* as the litmus test for all Christian practice is a sound and inspiring choice. Andre Resner states that all sermons are to be "Gospel Sermons." Therefore, all sermons should have "Gospel Statements." These Gospel Statements convey the theology of the sermon. Of course, the definition of "Gospel" is key. Resner's definition: "What God does on your behalf that you cannot do for yourself that brings about a hopeful and redemptive future."[8] He defines it as an "imaginative, theological, and hermeneutical force that drives the way the preacher conceives, plots, and delivers sermons."[9] He says that one's working gospel "is theologically constructed, biblically influenced, and bears the fingerprints of one's ecclesial and liturgical heritage."[10] A working gospel, he claims, shows the church the way *from* one state of being *to* another. What is the bad news that the good news addresses? If every sermon is governed by a Gospel Statement, your preaching will improve.

I chose *theological witness* as my governing center for preaching because theology is the largest word I know to embrace the breadth and depth of God and God's way in the world. In one sense, I am speaking of a witness to the holistic nature of the Christ event that includes the incarnation of God in flesh, the life and teachings of Jesus. Jesus' death, burial, resurrection, and ascension, Jesus' reign on the throne at the right hand of God, and God's second advent that culminates in new heavens and new earth. And, in the same sense, I am speaking of a witness to the holistic nature of the Trinity that begins in perfect fellowship, creates, redeems, and sustains until all are brought into God's perfect fellowship in the eschaton. Theology includes *love* and *Gospel.* Theology includes Christology,

---

[5] I also define the nature of Scripture as a witness of God's people of their experiences of God's activity. Over time and through the ages, the testimony of God's people becomes Scripture, a sacred Canon, for the ongoing life of God's people. See "hermeneutics" below. See also Nicholas Wolterstorff, "Preaching the Word of God," in *What is Jesus Doing? God's Activity in the Life and Work of the Church.* Edited by Edwin Chr. Van Driel (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2020), 247–69.

[6] Augustine, *On Christian Doctrine*.

[7] Ronald J. Allen, *Interpreting the Gospel*.

[8] Adapted from Resner's class presentation, ACU 1999. See also Farley's three essays "Preaching the Bible and Preaching the Gospel," "Toward a New Paradigm for Preaching," and "Sacred Rhetoric: A Practical Theology of Preaching," 71–106. Jacobsen, "The Practice of Homiletical Theology in a Confessional Mode" Christian Scholars Conference, Nashville, TN, 2017, reflects on Resner's use of the term "working gospel". See Resner's work "Reading the Gospel for Preaching the Gospel," and "Do You See this Woman? A Little Exercise in Homiletical Theology," 19–24.

[9] Resner, "Do You See This Woman?" 18.

[10] Resner, "Do You See This Woman?" 21.

Pneumatology, Ecclesiology, Anthropology, Soteriology, and Eschatology.[11] Theology also includes other precise and particular ways that any passage speaks the living Word of God. For example, that Word of God might be beatitude, lament, silence, story, parable, diatribe, doxology, imprecation, and so on and so forth. And as Scripture is a witness to God, so too is the preaching of Scripture. Theology is a big word with lots of space. The word "theology" is my answer to the question, "What is the 'what' of preaching?"

While *Homiletics: A Very Short Introduction* is not a theology of preaching; my guide is doing theology. I am doing a constructive homiletic as a contextually performative theologian.[12] While a reader will not hear my homiletical theology explicitly in this document, my theology is discernable in practice. While I do not explicate how the presence of God is mediated in a sermon, I do believe that preaching is a sacrament that mediates the presence of God.

**The Purpose of a Sermon**

Once you know your purpose for preaching, you are ready to discern your purpose for an individual sermon. And while it's important to note the diversity that exists in the possible purposes of preaching (and thereby recognizing that no single purpose can be the *only* purpose of preaching), it is equally important to recognize that no single sermon can accomplish all these purposes. Every text of Scripture contains more than one sermon, yet a preacher should only preach one sermon each Sunday. As you prepare a sermon, you will make some choices, both about the specific theological claim you want to make and about the purpose you want that theological claim to have on your audience. Thus, one of the marks of good preaching is that it seeks to say *one thing well*. As you work on a sermon, there will be much that you want to say – many theological claims about God, many aspects of your issue, many implications for your context, and many things you want your hearers to do – but you simply cannot do all of them. And if you try, the odds are likely that you will not do *any* of them. Therefore, ask, "What single theological claim do you want to make, and what specific purpose do you want to attempt to accomplish in your sermon?"[13]

You must know where you are going in order to get there. That maxim is true when driving to the store and preaching a sermon. If you do not know the destination, you should not begin the trip. Sermons are formed from end to beginning. Sermons are not propelled by powerful beginnings but are evoked by significant ends.[14] The theological issue of every sermon is "What right does the preacher have to call for action at the end of the sermon?" The theology of the text makes a claim for the audience in their context. The theology in the text is like a live electrical wire. If you touch it, you will experience it. In some cases, if you touch it, it will kill you. While the historical context of a passage likely will not correlate with today, the live wire of theology will. The live wire shapes the sermonic claim of the sermon. What do you want the congregation to think, feel, or do in response to the sermonic claim? Or to modify Alexander Bain's definition, a sermon signifies belief in such a way that a community is prepared to act.[15]

Language functions as both a performative and a referential speech act.
- Locutionary Act denotes the "meaning" of what was said. The descriptive content. The words denote content. My statement "Jesus is God's Son" asserts a proposition.

---

[11] All of these "ology" words are plurals. I recognize that there are multiple Christologies operating in the Christian world as well as within a single congregation. Yet, mine, and your, theological commitments will necessitate a singular particularity to maintain theological coherence.

[12] See Sensing, *Practicing Theology*, forthcoming. See my bibliography on the theology of preaching and a theology of listening at [HomileticalSensings/theology](HomileticalSensings/theology).

[13] Adapted from Lee's *Core Affirmations*. See also, Wilson, *the Practice of Preaching*, 138, for a guide to making an initial theological read of the text.

[14] Long, "Shaping Sermons by Plotting the Text's Claim Upon Us," 88.

[15] Bain's definition of belief, "that upon which a [person] is prepared to act." See Bain, *The Emotions and the Will*, 505. Peirce cites Nicholas St. John Green as the one who pressed Bain's definition of belief among the other members of the metaphysical club. See "*Pragmatism*," *Essential Peirce,* 2.399.

- Illocutionary Act names the force of what was said. The speaker's intent. My statement "Jesus is God's Son" makes a claim that asserts something about Jesus' divinity, authority, and being.
- Perlocutionary Act signifies the actual effect of saying something. How folks respond. Hearing my statement that "Jesus is God's Son" spurs the hearer to decide.[16] What practices and habits emerge from the theological claim of the text? And over time, through a series of sermons in the life of a congregation, what changes will emerge in the life of the church in the future?

Or not. "Whoever has ears to hear, let them hear." Sometimes these speech acts fall on deaf ears.

~~~~~~~~~~~~~

You may want to skip to the discussion about Focus and Function Statements // Core Affirmations below in order to continue a discussion about the theological live wire of the sermon. Or continue with the next section about dispositions that facilitate the discovery process.

## Interpreting in the Present Tense

Exegesis begins with the Bible and what it means by saying the Bible is Scripture.[17]

> The triune God has bestowed this telos upon the Bible in sanctifying it for the church's sake. In fact, there is no one telos of Holy Scripture, for it has a rich plurality of ends. Its final end is friendship with God: eternal participation in the infinite communion of love that is the perfect life of Father, Son, and Spirit. Its primary proximate end is the awakening of faith; as Scripture is read or heard, God speaks through it the saving word of the gospel of Jesus, a word that is effective, convicting sinners of their sin, bringing them to repentance, and eliciting faith in Jesus as Lord. Scripture, in these two respects, is principally soteriological, eliciting faith in the present that redounds to glory in the future.
>
> But Scripture has other ends as well. Its secondary proximate end is the building up of the people of God. In this respect it exists–and it does so by the ongoing work and presence of the Spirit–to keep company with the company of Christ: to order the life of the saints; to lead them into greater knowledge of the truth; to conform their lives to the image of Christ; to resolve their conflicts and answer new challenges; to judge and rebuke all wickedness, evil, and sin; to conduct them in their mission to the nations; to offer models of good and trustworthy interpretation; to continue drawing readers into the inexhaustible depths of Scripture, there to meditate, contemplate, delight in, and chew on each and every word that testifies to the God who alone is holy, whose name is jealous; to rise in mystical ascent to the vision of God; in a word, to worship him.
>
> Accordingly, the church stands beneath the authority of Scripture. Yet Scripture must be interpreted and interpreted in faithful and trustworthy ways.[18]

Exegesis: to lead out, to explain (Lk 24:35; Ac 21:19; Jn 1:18). Exegesis refers to the process of interpreting what a text meant. It is to be distinguished from translation on the one hand, and from inquiry into the principles of interpretation (hermeneutics) on the other, although they are closely related. From Van Harvey, *A Handbook of Theological Terms* (New York: MacMillan, 1964), 90.[19]

---

[16] Austin, *How to Do Things with Words*, 1–4.

[17] See East, *The Doctrine of Scripture.*

[18] East, "What are the Standards of Excellence for Theological Interpretation of Scripture," 154–55. See Appendix 2.

[19] For a detailed look at exegesis, I recommend McKenzie and Haynes, *To Each Its Own Meaning*; Green, *Hearing the New Testament: Strategies for Interpretation*; Davis and Hays, *The Art of Reading Scripture*. For a basic introduction see Gorman, *Elements of Biblical Exegesis.*

Asking the question, "What did the text mean?" is instructive. It provides the exegete with boundaries. Some meanings are not possible because historical, critical, and literary analyses will not allow those options. For preachers, much of what is learned in exegesis will be left on the desk, find its way into a Bible class, or help with other biblical explorations. It provides background for the sermon. Once the boundaries are discovered, then the question by the preacher is asked, "What does the text mean?" The present tense question is a theological question. It is wedded to the question, "What does the text do?"

Will Willimon, in a class lecture at Duke University, stated, "Exegesis is an artificial way of reading scripture. Scripture is designed to form people." Paul Scott Wilson, *The Practice of Preaching*, speaks about the purpose of preaching – Preaching is for the purpose of experiencing God. He uses terms like "encounter," "event," "an action," "an occurrence," and "something happens." What the sermon does is the key to unlocking the mystery of preaching. Preaching accomplishes something. It forms. It is community-shaping (see 13, 23-24). Exegesis is all about finding the theological claim of the text. The Bible is a revelation of God, God's story, and God's intended future. And theology is for the virtuous benefit of the reader/hearer of the Word.

These terms, exegesis, hermeneutics, and homiletics are so closely related that they cannot be untangled. You cannot talk about one without relating it to the other. For example, we are making hermeneutical decisions when we decide which exegetical approach to use. Some dispositions you will find helpful are:
- Approach the text with intentional ignorance. Read the text aloud. Write down first impressions for it will often be the congregation's first impressions. Write down what the text is doing.–Will Willimon
- Tom Long, *Witness*, says the preacher goes to the text to find discovery, then presents that discovery to the congregation. Use the same process as used in your study. Discover, hear anew, maybe even recover/rediscover. Craddock: Find the "AHA" in the text. Re-present the AHA in the sermon.
- James Sanders: If we read the Bible and conclude that it says what we always thought and are in general agreement with what we discovered, then, read it again because you probably missed the point. Sanders is pressing for epistemic humility.
- Do not remove the scandal of the text. We often explain away the text in such a way that the offense is gone. This is an abuse of the text. Instead, stand in awe of the text. Stand in awe of our God.
- Von Rad: Unwrapping a sermon like dynamite. One string at a time, waiting for it to explode at any time.
- Walter Brueggemann: Approach the text with playful obedience. Do not go anywhere until you deal with the authority of the text.
- Approach the text in such a way that you believe it knows more than you do. Believe it contains the words of life. We are to be prejudiced on the side of the scriptures–a hermeneutic of expectation. I expect to hear a word from God.

Will Willimon, as a guest lecturer at Duke University, stated, "People's ability to limit the text (or misunderstand the text) is limitless." We all come to the text with bias. Presuppositions always shade our interpretations. How does this affect exegesis?[20] Even choosing your method has bias. And while it might be impossible not to read the Bible with modern western eyes, opening oneself to Patristic, non-western, premodern, and other streams and methods allows the Spirit to move as the Spirit pleases.
- Prejudice in exegesis means: a conclusion is reached before the evidence is considered and is often called "eisegesis".
- Our presuppositions or pre-understandings come from our philosophical or theological starting points that come from our religious backgrounds (often called "an interpretive community"). Is this another way of confessing that we all have theological commitments? Embracing (reflexive integrity) our commitments in the exegetical process enhances our coherence. Awareness and intentionality about our theological commitments will enhance preaching.

---

For a detailed look at theological interpretation see, Fowl*, Engaging Scripture,* 1–31; Fowl*, Theological Interpretation of Scripture,* 1–53; Treier*, Introducing Theological Interpretation of Scripture*, 11–55; Volf*, Captive to the Word of God*, 3–40; Vanhoozer, *"Introduction: What is Theological Interpretation of the Bible* 19–25.

[20] See Bultmann, "Is Exegesis Without Presuppositions Possible?" 291.

While I have not given a how-to of exegesis, may these dispositions guide you. And I repeat, for a more orderly and complete consideration of dispositions, see Brad East, "What are the Standards of Excellence for Theological Interpretation of Scripture," (*Journal of Theological Interpretation*, Vol. 14, No. 2, 2020): 149–79.[21]

## Preaching in the Present Tense

There are three broad areas of Bible study: exegesis, hermeneutics, and homiletics. *Exegesis* is the study of what the text meant. *Homiletics* is the study of communicating that message to today's world. *Hermeneutics* is the interpretation of "what the text meant" to be able to say, "what the text means."[22]

Hermeneutics has received a great deal of press because frankly, we do not all read and hear the same. Hermeneutics is the methodology that someone uses to interpret Scripture. We all have a method. Sometimes we are aware of our method; sometimes not. We all have presuppositions when we come to Scripture. Some come to Scripture suspiciously; others come expectantly. The presuppositions, the theological commitments of the reader, will control interpretation. My theological commitments affirm that biblical texts are testimonies that make concrete theological claims about God. These theological claims bear witness to the congregation in order to transform them into the image of Jesus.

The folks in the pew are living. While some of them will be fascinated by a lecture, most gather broken seeking a word of hope. Or they come seeking edification, affirmation, guidance, restoration, wonder, and blessing. Therefore, preach a living word of hope for the people who are breathing in front of you. Do not preach a sermon that addresses the past by explaining what the text meant. Hermeneutics is the art of connecting then to now.

Ricoeur sees hermeneutics as follows:[23]

- **The World Behind the Text** refers to the historical, cultural, social, political, literary, and religious context of the author. What concrete conditions influenced the way the authors expressed themselves? Who comprised the original audience? The preacher uses historical-critical tools to provide boundaries to the possible meanings of the text. Because we are preachers and not academics, we use the tools of exegesis within the mode of expectancy. We anticipate God's Word, the "live wire" of theology, to address us.
- **The World of the Text** refers to the literary, aesthetic, and structural characteristics–literary and rhetorical features of the text and the devices that facilitate how the language works. For example, chiasmus is a device that is used in poetry, narrative, parable, etc. The poetics of the literature open the re-appropriation of possible meanings of the text in a variety of new contexts. One of the key features of reading the text in context is to read the pericopes just prior and after the passage you intend to preach.
- **The World in Front of the Text** refers to what takes place when one reads, between the words on the page and the "real" readers who engage it. So, consider the widow, the single mother of two brats and one angel, a couple married 65 years, the teen who comes alone, the postmaster, the insurance broker, and the nurse. What does the text say in their context? What factors influence hearers as they interpret the words? How do texts inspire them? How do different hearers respond to the theology of the text? How has the Bible shaped history and society in the centuries since it first appeared (giving clues on how others shaped their lives in response to the Word)? In other words, "What is the live wire of theology that still speaks in the 21st Century to the people in front of me?" The theology of the text, if we believe, orients our lives and changes who we are and how we live.

"The world in front of the text" is where hermeneutics and homiletics work. "The world behind" and "of the text" control how the reader/hearer sees/hears "the world in front of the text." When most readers first read, they normally read with the immediate situation in mind ("in front of the text"). As trained readers with various textual critical tools at our disposal, we read "the world of the text" and the "world behind the text" first to make sure we

---

[21] See Appendix 2.

[22] For my understanding of the recontextualization process of hermeneutics see "Wearing Trifocals: Reappropriating the Ancient Pulpit for the Twenty-first Century Pew," 43–54, and "Reimagining the Future: Past Tense Words in a Present Tense World," 199–133.

[23] Adapted from Ricoeur, *Hermeneutics and the Human Sciences*, 140–144.

have boundaries set to interpret "the world in front of the text" appropriately. Remember, the Living Word of God is being preached on a particular Sunday within a time and location that is not repeatable. It is contextual. Therefore, preach in the present tense.

Two scenes from the film version of Alice Walker's novel, The *Color Purple*, illustrate these points.[24] The first scene is set in a world controlled by abuse. Celie's abuse comes from three sources, her father, her husband, and society at large. There is seemingly no escape. The climax of Celie's initial response is seen in her desire to slit her husband's throat. She is on the front porch of the ramshackle house that imprisons her. As she shaves her abuser with a straight razor, she hesitates as she draws the blade near his jugular vein.

In the second scene, Celie discovers a set of long-hidden letters from her missionary sister in Africa. Through reading the letters, she imagines a different life, she experiences the immediate presence of her sister. She imagines what life could have been. She imagines an alternative way of being in the world. Reading these texts, so to speak, from a situation so far removed from her own as to be nearly untranslatable, Celie encounters "a world in front of the letters," a world where black women can write, travel, think, mature, and be free. And when she encounters this world, a world emerging in front of these texts, her own world is enlarged. In the film, it is only after she imagines this new world and its new possibilities that she has the courage and capacity to get off the porch, leave her abuser, and change her world. As the story of Celie moves to resolution, Celie finds redemption. Celie begins to heal and live in a new way of being. The letters Celie reads were written asynchronously, from a different time and place, yet communicated a life-changing presence.

While the mechanics of exegesis and hermeneutics are beyond the scope of this guide, let me add a few more thoughts on hermeneutics. Everyone does hermeneutics whether they know it or not. In some Christian circles, the idea of interpretation is a negative activity. However, interpretation is always happening. If my examples do not connect with you, I know I can find some that do. Recently I was in a discussion about the necessity of anointing with oil. The young man was critical of those who accept some symbols like baptism and not other symbols like oil. Yet, this young man too did not incorporate all symbols found in the NT. He, for example, did not wash feet. I know a woman who pointed at me and said, "you have to obey all the commands of the Bible." Yet, we are commanded to greet one another with a holy kiss five times. She did not kiss me once. We are all making decisions about what is context-bound and what is eternally significant.

1. We bring our enlightened common sense to the text and apply what we can to our own situations.
   a. Compare 2 Tim 2:3 to 2 Tim 4:13.
      i. We apply one text directly – direct transference
      ii. We don't obey the command of the other at all
      iii. Somewhere between the two, we find most texts
   b. We are inconsistent about applying principles because we bring our theological heritage, our ecclesiastical traditions, our cultural norms, and our existential conditions to the Bible. We are using our own selectivity. For example, on what grounds do we reject 1 Tim 5:23?–We rationalize. Let's be honest. We use our reason, our minds, our judgments, and our knowledge. Certainly, we can find some common ground on how we rationalize.
2. The following principles come from William Thompson's, *Preaching Biblically.*
   a. Principle of Simplicity: What is the clear, plain meaning of the text; the natural and obvious meaning? Do not bypass the obvious for some mystical deeper meaning. Know the figures of speech and cultural practices that inform the obvious plain meaning of the text.
   b. Intentionality Principle: God intends something in this text. Why is this text here? What difference does it make if that word is heard or not? What was the circumstance that called that word into being? How does that word interpret us? The text addresses us. The text interprets us. The text intends to change our lives.
   c. Correspondence Principle: Bring the message to today; bridging the gap. What do today's hearers share with the original readers so that this text confronts them both? Is there a valid link between the Word God spoke and the word he wants to speak now? Is there a resonance that still reverberates

---

[24] Sensing, "Being There Even When You are Not: Presence in Distance Preaching," *Religions* 13. http://dx.doi.org/10.3390/rel14030347.

through time and space? There will always be a degree of convergence and divergence with the particular context of every passage. The first *sitz im leben* is the setting the author situates the writing. The second *sitz im leben* is the setting of the first hearers/readers of the writing. The third *sitz im leben* references various settings of the readers/hearers throughout the centuries. How has the church received the writing through the centuries? The fourth *sitz im leben* includes the multiple settings in our contemporary locales. [Note the critique of the bridge metaphor below]

    d. Polarity Principle: What brought about this message? What are the opposing forces at work in this text? What are the tensions both explicit and implicit? Tensions between groups, individuals, philosophies, doctrines, etc. See the plots, the conflicts, the crisis, the resolution, and the denouement. Examine the polarities between the various settings that read/hear the text (see the previous discussion on *sitz im leben*).

    e. Contextuality Principle: Texts are not isolated but living systems. What is going on before and after this text? Historical, political, literary, theological, and cultural contexts.

3. Ernest Best, *From Text to Sermon*, tells us that we are separated from the biblical world in terms of situation, culture, and worldview. Therefore, he offers the following three pitfalls in the journey from then to now:

    a. Situation–the specific situation may be an example of wider concerns and deeper principles. The situation may not correspond, yet the principle will. "Meats, Circumcision, Head Coverings." The situation becomes the occasion for theological teaching.

    b. Culture–There is distance, a gap. One example: In the Hebrew culture, personhood was seen from a community, group, family, or tribe perspective, and the person is seen as a whole being. However, in the Greek culture, personhood is seen from an individual perspective and the person is divided between the body and soul.

    c. Worldview–More philosophical and theological than the culture category above, worldview is determined by background, society, and culture. Maybe we can enter the ancient world vicariously. Stand in their shoes and seek to experience. Maybe not. I find it most difficult sometimes to navigate outside my western and modern worldview. One example: How I think about miracles. I want to think about miracles, following Paul, as solely an act of God in Jesus in the incarnation, crucifixion, and resurrection and never refer to any miracle story or even any indication that the earthly life of Jesus, as recounted by the Gospels, contains about 32 miracle stories (See Boring, *The Gospel of Matthew*, NIB XIII, 245) I opt to see miracles as an eschatological category of the coming Kingdom of God in Jesus (Boring, 249). So, reading a Patristic, Korean, or Pentecostal interlocutor, someone with a different hermeneutical method will keep my heart soft to the movement of the Living Word of God.

4. The categories of clarity, harmony, and finality come from a lecture delivered by Fred Craddock, n.d.

    a. Clarity: not a matter of making the complex simple, but of seeking clarity. Scripture is self-evident, open, and clear. The obvious meaning of the text is preferred. Since God is not an author of confusion, God has revealed himself in everyday speech. Scripture's essence has the quality of public announcement for general consumption. Since there is clarity in Scripture, those who read with an open mind will respond in faith naturally. When Scripture is presented simply and clearly, then the possibility of consensus exists. Interpreters of Scripture have the task therefore to present the text in such a way that today's audience can hear it the same way as the original hearers. Yet, Scripture is not clear to those who lack character, whose hearts are closed by sin, or who are predisposed to disbelief. Faith gives the ability to investigate more than curiosity ever will.

        i. The positive value of this principle is that the preacher enters the pulpit with a high opinion of the congregation to hear and understand. Often, these sermons are easy to remember, easy to retell (*portability*), and easy to appropriate. It is only when the message is finally appropriated that there can be a life-changing experience in one's existence. Then God's presence is real. As believers, we come to Scripture expecting a life-changing word and, ultimately, an encounter with God. Therefore, one cannot come to the Word without changing (Heb 4:12).

        ii. Examples of the clarity principle:

            1. Bible Societies. For the word is self-evident. Leave a Bible without comment or discussion. The Word is a seed and carries its own future.

2. Emphasis on translations from 1826 to 1839, there were six editions of the Living Oracles. Damage can come if you fix yourself to one translation. It is equal to idolatry of the Word. Regrettably, you can tell what kind of person one is by which Bible they bring into the room.
3. This is not equal to exegesis in the pulpit. This creates a distance between the pew and pulpit, making the Bible inaccessible.
4. The preachers in the Restoration Movement had a high opinion of the congregation's ability to hear and understand. They, therefore, had high expectations of the congregation. Structures of sermons were very visible to produce rememberability and portability. It created ownership, dependability, and confidence. People were able to identify where things are, and the predictability of things (*thingafication*).

iii. This basic belief about clarity needs qualifying. First, the nature of language needs to be kept in mind during interpretation. Some language is symbolic. Although it may be fashionable to find only a single point of reference within symbolic language, often there is polyvalent meaning intended by the author (or at least inspired by the Divine). Related to this is the nature and complexity of listening. All of us are made up of presuppositions and motives that obscure what is said. Often, our biases are unknown to us. There is less objectivity among us than we believe. Little is brand new under the sun. All is influenced by something.

iv. Secondly, although Scripture is a public announcement, it is also a concealing word. Much in the text by nature withholds revelation. Much is not self-evident and can only come by a later word in Scripture or by insight granted by the Holy Spirit. Jesus tells his disciples that parables function this way (Matt. 13:13–15). John's use of "misunderstanding" or Mark's use of "Messianic Secret" are two other examples.

b. Harmony: This is Martin Luther's doctrine of *Sola Scriptura*, or "Scripture interprets Scripture." In other words, truth accords with truth. If any two texts are apparently contradictory, once the facts are known, the harmony will be seen: the all-sufficiency of Scripture.

i. J. S. Lamar offers an illustration of the harmony principle:[25] Building a house with blocks and stones. The construction is shaped by the shape of the stones. Measured and numbered and fitted into place until the building is complete. So, the Scripture texts form one coherent truth. Therefore, preach the content of the Bible.

ii. Although there is a danger of reducing Scripture to some sort of propositional rule book (pattern theology or blueprint to truth), I believe there is an overarching theological harmony to the revelation due to Divine inspiration. The Bible is the story of God. This allows the theology of the whole canon and the entirety of salvation history to shape the interpreter's understanding of any given text. This principle often carries a strong and positive teaching force within the congregations that practice it. Yet I have witnessed more abuses here than anywhere else.

iii. This leads to an abuse of the text when the preacher comments on one text and then allows that text to act like a dragnet or magnet. All other texts on that subject are brought to bear on the topic (called *concordance preaching*). Scripture is mounted on Scripture and is working together for a whole coherent truth. A systematic pulling together of otherwise unrelated texts. Flattening out the dynamic of Scripture. Reductionistic. Imposing a symmetry on the text not originally there. If symmetry is not present in the text, it creates discontinuity. Harmonization problems (*paralleomania*) abound. Texts are then read as if they are all flat, of equal level of importance. Proportionality is lost.

iv. Primarily, by use of the principle of harmony, the intentionally of Scripture is ignored. Texts are blurred together without any thought as to historical or literary context. A particular author's theological intent may be lost. This is not the way Scripture presents itself. The interpreter must keep in mind that genuine speech is saying the right thing to the right person

---

[25] Lamar, *The Organon of Scripture*, 39–43.

at the right time and place. Genuine speech is appropriate. The loss of appropriateness is increased when the principle of harmony is treated carelessly (e.g., the two stories of healing blind men in Mark 8 and John 9 make different points and should not be blended).

   v. Also, context can be destroyed if we force the harmonization principle too far. Historical, literary, and theological contexts must be maintained when interpreting any text. If, for example, you wanted to teach a class on the cleansing of the temple, you could get your concordance and find all times it is mentioned in the four Gospels. If you then draw one conclusion and present that as the truth on the whole matter, you have violated the text. Why? Because Mark is using the story differently than John, the same story functions differently in various contexts. Or, for example, a recent sermon on Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem was a wonderful read of Luke's theological emphasis. The problem was that the text read was from Matthew.

   vi. To think in terms of content will only cause the interpreter to ignore how that content is packaged. Scripture is given to us in forms of communication (historical narrative, prophecy, poetry, parable, letter, apocalyptic, etc.). If the preacher ignores these forms, then the possibility of losing the experience of what these forms bring increases. If you alter form, you alter experience as well.

c. Finality: God's revelation to humanity is complete. The cannon is closed. There is no further revelation coming. Jesus is the Christ. He is the ultimate revelation of God (Heb. 1:1). Meaning, therefore, is found in this historical Word. When properly understood within its cultural garb, this Word can speak a timeless message as a living Word. This conviction engenders passion in preaching. This grants the preacher the authority to speak the Word as ultimate significance.

   i. The scientific inductive method turns the Word into a logical system. The number of cases is examined to conclude a principle or rule, then the statements are classified as a general principle, true always. The inductive method becomes final proof when you examine all the cases or all the verses on a subject.

   ii. An overstatement of the principle – State your proposition; expound your proposition; prove your proposition; apply your proposition, sit down and let an elder give an invitation.

   iii. Again, this principle needs qualifying. The danger of moving to polemical preaching and debating is inherent in the principle. We tend to argue. Polemical preaching often does not address contemporary situations. "How does this truth relate to today?" is not asked.

   iv. Secondly, the dependence upon human logic leads the interpreter to a conclusion and the mind closes faster than the canon ever did. The rationality that came from the enlightenment becomes the dictator to interpretation of a book written hundreds of years earlier. The listener becomes passive. The preacher pours reasonable arguments into the listener's ear, and the process is complete. Once the definitive Word has been spoken, the preacher's outline can be re-presented time and time again with no regard to the audience at all. Texts do not have meaning as isolated truths. Texts only have meaning as they reveal God to humanity, opening the possibility of new relationship. For example, baptism is immersion. This is an eternal truth. Yet, it is only a truth when one submits to baptism and is reborn into the family of God. Otherwise, the person only knows the concept and only gets wet.

   v. Finally, the text's multi-dimensions with complexities and nuances of meaning can never be fully interpreted. The complexities of life cannot be limited or made simplistic by a narrow understanding of the dynamic revelation of God. A text always has hermeneutical potential. Texts may bring forth new understandings in light of new situations. This expresses the principle of adaptability of the Word. For example, we live in a different culture with different problems that Scripture does not address. Scripture is silent about smoking. Yet, we find various texts that, due to the living Word's power to transcend time and space, we believe address this addiction powerfully.

Although I have not taken the same digression to talk about exegesis, the same conversation is possible. There are various ways that wise and healthy exegetical processes can serve the preacher. And ways that those same principles can do harm. Yes, these principles help us interpret texts. Yet, these principles are not canon. They have

all the fallibility that the proponents and the users possess. With both exegesis and hermeneutics, a preacher's theological commitments will also determine how words, principles, and practices are defined and implemented. My own theological commitments are evident in the discussion. For example, I am not an inerrantist, although I take the text seriously. I believe in the inspiration and authority of Scripture. The Bible is the church's Holy Scripture. As Holy Scripture, it is a witness to the risen Christ and the church. Subsequently, "testimony" is my primary theological construct for reading the Bible.[26]

Instead of principles, an alternative way to talk about hermeneutics is by metaphor.

## Metaphors

We seek out metaphors to understand reality. The study of metaphor can be traced back to Aristotle who defined metaphor as a word in which two literally dissimilar entities are compared. Metaphor is much more than a rhetorical device, however. True metaphor is a bearer of the reality to which it refers. The hearer not only learns about that reality but also participates in it. In other words, language, human thought processes, and experienced reality are largely metaphorically structured and defined.[27] Metaphor is a powerful communicative device whereby, as Janet Martin Soskice says, *"we speak about one thing in terms which are seen to be suggestive of another*."[28]

Metaphors are locomotives of meaning because they compress and compact assumptions and insights accepted in one domain, and transfer them to another domain, often without great cognitive effort on the part of the interpreter. Metaphor transfers meaning, not between two terms, but between two rich domains of content, or "semantic fields."[29] In metaphor,[30] we use one thing – the "vehicle" – in order to speak about another thing – the "tenor."[31] Tenor and vehicle are not isolated words or things but bring with them an entire "network of associations."[32] Metaphorical meaning arises from the interaction of tenor and vehicle as the vehicle, in a sense,

---

[26] See Lose's *Confessing Jesus Christ*, and Florence's *Preaching as Testimony* for a fuller explication of Scripture as testimony.

[27] George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1980), 139–46. See also Raymond W. Gibbs, *The Poetics of Mind: Figurative Thought, Language, and Understanding*. Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 1994.

[28] Janet Martin Soskice, *Metaphor and Religious Language* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1985), 15 (italics hers). See also Janet Martin Soskice, *The Kindness of God: Metaphor, Gender, and Religious Language*. U.S.A.: Oxford University Press, 2008).

[29] Eva Feder Kittay, *Metaphor: Its Cognitive Force and Linguistic Structure* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), 31, 34–38.

[30] The following paragraph is adapted from Johnathan Harris, "God's Justice–Establishing Act in Christ: Justification in Galatians through the Lens of Contemporary Metaphor Theory." (SBL Pauline Theology Section, Nov 20, 2021)

[31] The language of "tenor" and "vehicle" originated with I. A. Richards, *The Philosophy of Rhetoric*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1946), 93–103. Gregory W. Dawes, *The Body in Question: Metaphor and Meaning in the Interpretation of Ephesians 5:21–33* (Leiden, Netherlands: Brill Academic Publishers), 27 defines the tenor as "the subject upon which it is hoped light will be shed," and the vehicle as "the subject to which allusion is made in order to shed that light."

[32] Soskice, *Metaphor*, 49–50. See also Max Black, *Models and Metaphors: Studies in Language and Philosophy.* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1962) 40, who uses the language "system of associated commonplaces." Also, Max Black, "More About Metaphor," *Metaphor and Thought*. Edited by Andrew Ortony. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1962), 28–29 when he describes the relationship as a "implicative complex." Soskice illustrates well the concept of associative network and its possibilities as she discusses her example of a "writing script." She writes: "It may be that as some stage the reader will think of writing in terms of a thing, or things, that write, such as a snake, or a man in pain, or a piece of paper on fire, or possibly all of these, but none would be either an explicit or explicit or a necessary second subject of the metaphor" (*Metaphor*, 47).

organizes our perception of the tenor.[33] In this interaction, metaphor creates new meaning and offers a new conception.[34] Indeed, metaphor, according to Soskice, is "a new vision, the birth of a new understanding, a new referential access."[35] Particularly in its referential function, Paul Ricoeur reminds us, metaphor has the ability to re-describe reality.[36]

The metaphor you choose is a perceptual lens that shapes how you see reality. How does the metaphor shape perception? Change the metaphor and see how perception changes. For example, when choosing a metaphor for the church, there are several options (e.g. body, family, flock, building, army, and bride). Different metaphors, even biblical metaphors, change the understanding you have of the same topic. If you consistently use "body" as your primary metaphor for the church, what is missing in your preaching? What is seen differently when you exchange metaphors? Which metaphor functions best for this sermon?

The most common metaphor used when doing hermeneutics is "crossing a bridge." A "bridge" is a translation metaphor. How do you translate the text from the world of the Bible to today's language? Warren discusses how the transition from text to sermon often takes shape as the search for a method of interpretation to bridge the distance between then and now; their world and ours; between the text and our congregation.[37]

Questions: Which side of the bridge do we start on? The literature almost always says we start on the side of the biblical world and move across the bridge to today. The bridge is often a one-way trip. However, I live in the 21st century. I am an American middle-class male who grew up in Indiana. I always start on the contemporary side of the bridge no matter how often I try to tell myself I do not. Every day when I open the Bible, I open it in Abilene, Texas. My understanding of politics, finances, social media, etc. influences how I read the Bible. My social location biases me in unavoidable ways. To claim otherwise is arrogance. To claim there is some objective stance and neutral zone for biblical interpretation is a myth rooted in the Cartesian notion that absolute truth is obtainable by finite and fallible humans (Romans 11:33–36; Job 40; Isa 40:12ff).

Playing with metaphors–Metaphors help us see more clearly. While the metaphors of bridge and translation are helpful, changing the metaphor is also a way to gain new insights. Hermeneutics is a form of contextualization that helps us become better readers. As readers, we are seeking "meaning" and "significance." [Note: Much of my argument is displayed in the footnotes. Do not neglect my footnotes.]

George Lindbeck states, "Modern scholarship can tell us much about what text did not mean in the past and, with rather less certainty, reconstruct what they mean; but, insofar as it remains critically historical, it provides no guidance for what they should mean in our present very different situations. It tells us at best what God said, not what he says now. There seems to be no exegetical bridge between past and present. This gap, much more than questions about inerrancy and inspiration, is the heart of the current crisis of scriptural authority and the source of the conflict of interpretations."[38]

Richard Lischer proposes[39] that preachers exchange the existential and individualistic language event[40] and embrace community formation. Likewise, he proposes that preachers leave behind illustration and welcome

---

[33] Black, *Models*, 39–41.

[34] Black, "More," 35–38; Lakoff and Johnson, *Metaphors,* 139–46. See also Peter W. Macky, *The Centrality of Metaphors to Biblical Thought: A Method for Interpreting the Bible*. Studies in the Bible & Early Christianity. (Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen, 1990).

[35] Soskice, *Metaphor*, 57–58.

[36] Paul Ricoeur, *The Rule of Metaphor: The Creation of Meaning in Language.* London: Routledge, Taylor and Francis, 1987), 6. See also Paul Ricoeur, "Stellung und Funktion der Metapher in der Biblischen Sprache," *Evangelische Theologie* 34, no. Supplement (1974): 51–52. https://doi.org/10.14315/evth-1974-sh04

[37] Timothy Warren, "A Paradigm for Preaching," *Bibliotheca Sacra* (Oct-Dec 1991): 463–86.

[38] Lindbeck, "Scripture, Consensus, and Community," 13–14.

[39] Lischer, *Theology of Preaching*, 76–88.

[40] Ernst Fuchs (word-event) and Gerhard Ebeling (language event), forerunners of the New Hermeneutic, emphasized Jesus' understanding of human existence, an existential interpretation of the text. This existential

narrative that gives an identity and mission to God's people. And finally, he proposes that preachers discard the hermeneutical metaphor of translation[41] and recover the performance nature of Scripture enacted in worship and witness. Lischer's proposal accords with The Second Helvetic Confession,[42] *the preached word of God is the Word of God*. Preaching is the Word of God in that it participates in God's purpose, is initiated by Christ, and is supported

---

interpretation seeks the patterns of human behavior, the paradigms of existence, and the picture of God's relation to humanity. These truths have timeless significance and applications beyond the historical reference. Lose, "Whither Hence, New Homiletic," 255–266 argues against allowing existential possibilities to dictate the dialogue for homiletics. He warns against, 262, letting homiletical fidelity be measured by existential experiences and equating theology with anthropology. Campbell, *Preaching Jesus* also differentiates between the existential (and thus individualistic) nature of the New Hermeneutics "language event" and the postliberal move toward the performative nature of language. Campbell demonstrates that this difference (creating of an experience vs. transforming lives) is the primary difference between the New Homiletic (and their dependence on the New Hermeneutic) and a postliberal homiletic. For a critique of a postliberal homiletic as proposed by Campbell see, Lose, "Narrative & Proclamation," 22–45, where his restricted understanding of the incarnation provides him an incomplete basis to assess Frei, Lindbeck, or Campbell.

[41] Kelsey, *Proving Doctrine,* 185–192, calls into question the metaphor of "translation" where Scripture is understood as "source" and theology as "translation." A similar critique could be given to the metaphor "bridge." See also, Lindbeck. "Scripture, Consensus and Community," 212, speaking of translation (a method of correlation) as a metaphor "their interpretations tend to replace Scripture rather than to lead to it thus failing to contribute to the formation of a community." Lindbeck, *The Nature of Doctrine*, 118, "Intratextual theology redescribes reality within the scriptural framework rather than translating Scripture into extra-scriptural categories. It is the text, so to speak, which absorbs the world, rather than the world the text." In order to teach the language and practices of faith, Scripture "must be understood in its own terms not by means of translation into another medium," 129.

If not translation or bridge, then what models or metaphors best describe the hermeneutical transaction between text, preacher, and congregation? Utilizing multiple models and metaphors keeps the process dynamic. I have utilized "horizons", "spirals/helix", "contextualization", "dialogue", "triangulation", "witness", and "trifocals" to name a few. Although Farley's thoughts need to be garnered cautiously, his triangulation model is provocative. Three ongoing interpretive activities of critical historical studies, theological reflection, and situational analysis keep the gospel, the kingdom of God, as contemporary proclamation. Farley, "Toward a New Paradigm for Preaching" 173. See also Wardlaw, "Preaching as the Interface of Two Social Worlds," 55–94. See also my theological reflection method articulated in *Qualitative Research*, 339–55.

Allen speaks of this as a theology of mutual critical correlation that he derives from Hans Georg Gadamer that conceives the relationship between the gospel, a text, a preacher, and a congregation as a dialogue. Allen, "Why Preach from Passages in the Bible?" 181.

See Ellingsen, *The Integrity of Biblical Narrative*, 9–12 for an interpretation of Lindbeck, Childs, and Frei for preaching narrative that is correspondingly critical of the "translation" metaphor. He notes the translation metaphor is a method of correlation and labeled as "experiential-expressive model" that translates biblical texts into conceptualities that are more relevant and in so doing changing the conceptual framework of the Bible itself. "For if Christianity's claims always must be correlated with contemporary human experience in order that they be God's Word, then the Word of God can never be said to stand unambiguously over against and criticize contemporary experience," 27. See also Campbell, *Preaching Jesus,* who analyzes and extends Ellingsen's work on Frei.

[42] "The Second Helvetic Confession," 5.004, 55.

by the Spirit within the community and in the world.[43] The Word creates and transforms; establishes and preserves the people of God.[44]

### Three More Metaphors: Witness, Fusion, & Windows

**Witness–**Scripture is a witness. Scripture is the ongoing story of God witnessed throughout history by the people of God.[45] The Bible is the faithful testimony of God's people, of the fidelity of God throughout history as God's story is concretized in their lives. The preacher, as *WITNESS*, beholds, sees, experiences, observes, basks in, becomes aware, and perceives the *BIBLICAL TEXT*, AND THROUGH ITS WITNESS ENCOUNTERS GOD! Then, the preacher, as *WITNESS*, attests, gives out, says, makes others aware, and testifies to the *COMMUNITY*. Therefore, God, by means of the witness of the biblical text and the witness of the preacher, encounters the congregation.[46]

## BIBLICAL TEXT ⬅ PREACHER AS WITNESS ➔ COMMUNITY

The preacher beholds and experiences God through an encounter with God's self-revelation through Scripture. The preacher witnesses God in the text. Then, the preacher gives testimony to the congregation of what was witnessed. The preacher cannot give witness to what has not been witnessed.

**Fusion–**Physics uses the term "fusion" to indicate when two nuclei combine to form a new nucleus. For example, it is the reaction in which two atoms of hydrogen combine, or fuse, to form an atom of helium and, in the process, generate something new. Christian Smith names this an "emergent reality…something new has come into existence that is more than the sum of its parts."[47] Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, proposes the oft-cited metaphor of "fusing the horizons" to explore the task of hermeneutics. Two circles each have a center. As the two circles merge, the two centers form an ellipse. The new center is the intersection of the major and minor axes. The ellipse is a new geometric shape.
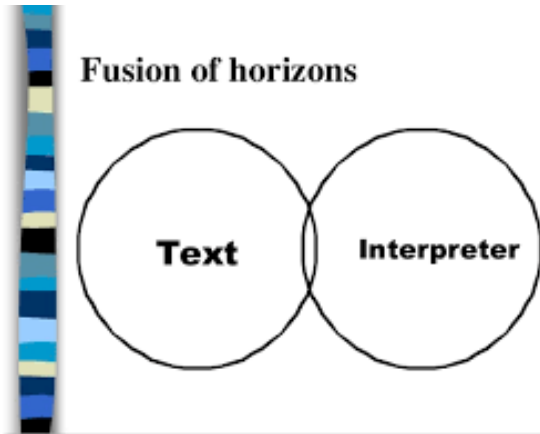
---

[43] Buttrick, *Homiletic: Moves and Structures*, 456. Buttrick cautions the preacher to recall that proclamation of the Word is also an act of humility and bound by our inadequate humanity. McKim, "The Gospel as Empowered Speech," supports Buttrick's reference to the Holy Spirit. He states, 125, "The Holy Spirit thus empowers preached speech to enable it to accomplish God's purposes. … Human speech effects, preaching is a 'performative action,' when empowered by the Holy Spirit." See also Fowl & Jones. *Reading in Communion*, 61.

[44] Lash, "Performing the Scriptures." See also Fowl & Jones. *Reading in Communion*, 62, and Nicholas Wolterstorff, "Preaching the Word of God," in *What is Jesus Doing?* 247–69.

[45] I see the Bible as Christian Scripture. See Brad East, *The Doctrine of Scripture,* (Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2021). Brad East, "What are the Standards of Excellence for Theological Interpretation of Scripture," (*Journal of Theological Interpretation*, Vol. 14, No. 2, 2020): 149–79, provides dispositions that guide how we read the Bible.

[46] See Long's *Witness to Preaching,* Lose's *Confessing Jesus Christ*, and Florence's *Preaching as Testimony* for a fuller explication of the metaphor *witness*.

[47] Smith, *What is a Person*, 27. A brief overview of Gadamer's "fusion of horizons" is found in Swinton and Mowat, *Practical Theology*, 109–110.

Fusion of horizons

I see this like a painter who desires to paint a picture of a white church. The painter visualizes a small white country church situated in a meadow. The scene shows a grand white building all alone in a graveyard on a wintery day.



The painter chooses to paint the church yet situate it in a busy downtown main street. The tall skyscrapers of the metropolis now overshadow the once isolated church from the country. Or maybe the artist moves and even adapts the church's design to locate it in the woods rather than in a graveyard.

The painter has fused the two horizons into one scene. So too, the horizon of a biblical text can be fused with the contemporary horizon. A new emergent theological reality is now possible.[48]

**Windows**–I also sometimes use the image of a window in a room in my house. When you look through the north window you can see the piano on the south wall, the couch sits in the center of the room. On the east wall, out of the corner of your eye, you can see a TV on a table. From the window on the west wall, you can see the TV on the table more clearly and now the piano on the south wall is less obvious. From the new angle of vision, you can now see the fireplace on the north wall, a fireplace hidden from view when looking through the north window. Different windows in the room give different angles of vision. Only when you look through windows on all four walls does the room come into full focus.

After this long and winding road, a detour through the hills of hermeneutics, I realize that my map is still off. My GPS is apt to misguide me. I turn to Acts 13 and listen.

> *¹ Now in the church at Antioch there were prophets and teachers: Barnabas, Simeon called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen (who had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch) and Saul. ² While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, "Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them." ³ So after they had fasted and prayed, they placed their hands on them and sent them off.*

I need to listen in the church to the diverse voices who likewise worship with me, who seek the disposition of listening through fasting and other disciplines, who depend upon prayer, and who keep in step with the Spirit.

*Homiletics: A Very Brief Introduction* began by saying that a sermon must give witness to the theological claim of the text so that the congregation is transformed into the image of Christ for the sake of the world. The section on exegesis and hermeneutics explored ways the preacher could identify the theological claim of the text. Before I begin exploring sermon scripting, let's look briefly at the congregation.

## Preaching to a Living Audience

A study funded by the Lilly Foundation produced four books. *Hearing the Sermon, Listening to Listeners, Believing in Preaching, & Make the Word Come Alive.* You would think that the turn towards the congregation would emerge. However, the concentration of this study was still preacher centered. What would preachers hear if they listened to what people in the pew were saying? The books are organized around Aristotle's categories intended to help speakers understand their craft.
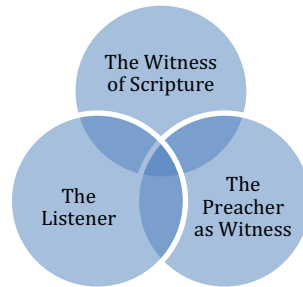
1) But preachers often don't ask congregations what they think about preaching. I believe it is because we are afraid we already know what they might say. We have heard people say it about other preachers. We have heard ourselves say it about other preachers. I know what I sometimes say about other preachers. If we care, and we want to be able to sleep at night, then maybe we are best kept clueless.
   a) If we "care"–care about what?
      i) Self and what others think about us? We all have ego. Most preachers want to be liked. We want to be effective. We want to make a difference. We want to be good preachers. Yes, we care. To not care is dangerous and unhealthy. The church should be leery of uncaring preachers.
      ii) And if we really care, then the spotlight needs to be aimed at you, the listener. For, it is not so much what is said in the pulpit, but what is heard in the pew.
         (1) Preachers often have the experience that what they talk about is not what is reported in the foyer.
         (2) And that is the responsibility of both parties. The message wasn't spoken plainly, or the listeners refused to unstop their ears.
2) The listener has a responsibility too. This task called preaching calls to those who have ears to hear and to listen. Throughout Scripture, God calls humans to listen. Did the preaching of Jesus have an impact on the

---

[48] See Sensing, *Practicing Theology*, 3 states, "When I think explicitly about "what theology" I am doing, it is a constructive ecclesiology as a contextually performative theologian."

hearers? Jesus too recognizes that for impact to happen, listeners had a responsibility to hear. "Whoever has ears to hear, let them hear."

    a)   More than paying attention, hearing calls people to change.

    b)   The demands of the gospel call for transformation – to somehow have an effect beyond the parking lot.

   3)   Fred Craddock often says, "It is not bad preaching people don't listen to, but good preaching."

The fusion of the horizons expands by three angles/windows of interpretation. The listener as person/agent and social location complexifies the hermeneutical task.[49]



Congregational studies analyze the particular context or location where I live and the church dwells.[50] Dr. Sally Brown's Definition of Preaching agrees stating, "A Christian sermon is a theo-rhetorical act anchored in Christian scripture that declares to particular listeners in a particular time and place some aspect of what God has done, is doing, and promises yet to do, to make all things new."[51] Her definition correlates her Core Affirmation format (cited above) and her recognition that context matters.

Our contexts are diverse and intercultural. Homiletics is a practice of witnessing to transform communities of practice into the image of Christ for the sake of the world. Contextual analysis leans into the practices of communal and contextual theology in the public square. Context includes examining the diverse intercultural settings that reside around us. Culture is like the atmosphere we breathe, permeating via capillaries throughout all our human cells.[52] The conversation between my experiences and the culture is hard to differentiate. I am silently and thoroughly formed by culture. The classic definition of culture comes from Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of*

---

    [49] Sensing, *Practicing Theology,* 62–68, proposes a process model, trialogical method, for theological reflection.

    [50] Bush, *Practical Theology in Church and Society*, 94–100, emphasizes the dialogic tension and necessary reflection between "church and society" in his four-quadrant model. He begins with the congregation's presence in a community and its current social praxis. Second, he explores the congregation's preconceptions about society. Next, he brings a congregation's theological commitments into the dialogue. Finally, he explores how the dialogue affects the congregation's practice (organization and ministry). Reflection might begin with either the community's social presence or with the community's current practices. In the chapters that follow he compares five methods that utilize his model: descriptive, reflexive, pastoral cycle, hermeneutical circle, and cyclical theological. By pressing the tensions between church and society, he is engaging the "ecological frame" advocated by Ammerman in Ammerman, "Introduction: An Invitation to Congregational Study," 15–16. A key emphasis for Bush throughout his discussion begins with tension as a way to analyze situations but moving towards "social solidarity" between the church and society.

    [51] Sally Brown, PR class presentation. Cited by Mason Lee, ACU BIBM 693 class presentation.

    [52] Resources that assist cultural analysis are Bevans, *Models of Contextual Theology*; Eagleton, *The Idea of Culture*; Gallagher, *Clashing Symbols*; Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures*; Long, *Theology and Culture*; Matheny, *Contextual Theology*; Pears, *Doing Contextual Theology*; Schreiter, *Constructing Local Theologies*; and Tanner, *Theories of Culture*. Western Christians also need to explore how colonial ways of viewing the world affect our views of Christianity and theology. For example, see Christopher Flanders, "Bringing Shame upon an Honored Missiological Paradigm" where he exposes how Western Christianity misappropriates the language of guilt.

*Cultures* when he describes culture as, "webs of significance" that humanity has spun. Culture "denotes an historically transmitted pattern of meanings embodied in symbols, a system of inherited conceptions expressed in symbolic forms by means of which people communicate, perpetuate, and develop their knowledge about and attitudes toward life."[53] Cultural elements include convictions, values, assumptions, biases, formative symbols, ongoing interpretations, social roles, systemic forces, political structures, philosophies, sciences, and the social sciences. And all these cultural phenomena are connected to various uses of power.[54] The influence of the intercultural forces in my life and the lives of my community exert epistemic weight that reflects a creative God active in the lives of others and society; humanity and earth. Whether recognized or not, this angle provides constructive theological beauty to our way of being in the world.

When considering context, I framed the discussion about *ethos* around the concept of "presence" or "being there."[55] I define "presence" as referring to both "presence in a place" and "presence at a time." When two people are present together in space and time, they can interact, make connections, and exchange ideas, feelings, and objects. Things present in space and time act directly on our sensibility, awareness, and receptivity. Furthermore, Veling, citing Derrida, notes, "The French philosopher Jacques Derrida is well known for his ability to ground his work in the fertile phenomenality of human life. He offers the following reflection on his approach to contextuality: 'This is my starting-point: no meaning can be determined out of context, but no context permits saturation.'"[56] Being absent, or not being present, is being "out of context." Derrida names this situation as "the metaphysics of presence." When Derrida includes temporal and spatial differentiation when describing *différence,* he includes both the notions of "differing" in space and "deferring" or "delaying" in time. Knowledge itself is contextual and changes over space and time. Writers, by definition, would not need to write if they were not absent from readers in both time and geographical separation. Derrida qualifies "presence" by saying there is no "saturation" even when in context.[57] So, it is not just the question "Can the preacher still be present when distant?" but also, "Can the preacher be present when present?" A person is always "other" to another.

If Derrida is right, then, "presence" also must be qualified by noting that even in face-to-face (f2f) contexts, "otherness" exists. Veling, citing Levinas, states, "Every face we encounter is a face of otherness. Every face says: 'Don't kill me; don't absorb me into your world; don't obliterate me by making me the same as you. I am other. I am different. I am not you."[58] Preachers are often absent and not present even when preaching in the same room.

While not citing Derrida, contemporary homiliticians say similar truths. Contextualized preaching, Tisdale says, should be "preaching that not only aims toward greater faithfulness to the gospel of Jesus Christ but also aims toward greater 'fittingness' (content, form, and style) for a particular congregation."[59] Or as Jared E. Alcántara, *The Practices of Christian Preaching,* summarizes "Contextual preachers maintain faithfulness to a gospel that transcends context on the one hand, and they practice fittingness to 'local communities of faith' on the other."[60]

---

[53] Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures*, 89. See Miller-McLemore's *Christian Theology in Practice*, 46–69, for a shifting of the language from "living human document" to "living human web." She explores the web metaphor in terms of our communal, contextual, and cultural ways of being connected to others.

[54] Searle, "The Storm over the University." While ministry is designed to mitigate power by negotiating with the community, power creeps in. Ministry is not neutral. Ministry may inflict harm and epistemic violence. Some ministry actions deform. Be careful as your interpretations define someone else's reality. See also Goto, *Taking on Practical Theology*, who analyzes colonial and privileged power structures in contextual theology.

[55] Sensing, "Being There Even When You are Not: Presence in Distance Preaching," *Religions* 13

[56] Veling, *Practical Theology,* 163, citing Derrida, "Living On," 81. See also Derrida, *Writing and Difference*, and *Positions*.

[57] Derrida, *Positions*, 38–39.

[58] Veling, *Practical Theology*, 123, referencing Levinas, *Totality and Infinity,* 185–219.

[59] Tisdale, *Preaching as Local Theology and Folk Art*, 33

[60] Alcántara, *The Practices of Christian Preaching,* 86.

When studying congregations consider 1) Program: The "what" of a congregation's life; the organizational structures, plans, and activities through which a congregation expresses its mission and ministry both to its own members and those outside the membership. And consider, 2) Process: The "how" of members relating with one another has to do with the underlying flow and dynamics of how a congregation is knit together in its common life and affects its morale and climate. E.g., how leadership is exercised and shared, how decisions are made, how communication occurs, how problems are solved, and conflicts are managed. Consider 3) Social Context: Setting – local and global – in which the congregation finds itself and to which it responds. Finally, consider 4) Congregational Identity: Persistent set of beliefs, values, patterns, symbols, stories, and styles that makes a congregation distinctly itself.

- Know the history of the congregation, its struggle.
- Appreciate their heritage; the heritage gives continuity and legitimization.
- Give a perception of the ways things are.
- How does a congregation use and understand symbols?
- How do they practice group rituals?
- Understand the group's demographic picture.
- Know the group character.
- Identity–what it was, is, and will be (being and becoming); cannot overlook being when you want to introduce change.
- Heritage–A congregation's acknowledgment of the inheritance of beliefs and practices about Christian faith and life and the purpose of the church that it has by virtue of being a Christian church and standing with that particular historical stream.

Tisdale lists several contextual factors to keep in mind, including:
- Education–levels and/or areas of expertise
- Social status–feelings of belonging or shame
- Ethnicity–shared histories, group identification and meaning
- Class–security, authority, and hierarchy
- Age–human development and generational identification
- Gender
- Marital status
- The local theology of the congregation pgs. 80–85
    - View of God, humanity, nature, time, ecclesiology, sin and salvation, and mission
- Power–what can or cannot be said; who has power, who does not; how power is gained, etc.
- Globalization–movement, economics, technology, etc.

Tisdale goes on to describe how congregational ethnographies should include congregational narratives and stories, rituals of congregational life, the community's art and architecture, the community's sages and heroes, folks on the margin of the community, events (celebrations and crises), and more (websites, histories, archives, and demographics).[61]

Sermons in the present tense address the concerns of individuals, congregations, and the larger community. What are the concerns of the people? Such a pastoral list of concerns might resemble your prayer list.[62]

---

[61] Tisdale, *Preaching as Local Theology and Folk Art*, 64–77.

[62] Contextual analysis and the use of theological resources is beyond the scope of this guide. See Sensing, *Practicing Theology*, forthcoming.

1. When writing a sermon, find the correspondence between the "concerns of the text and the concerns of the people." When you have a pastoral list of people's concerns, you can compare it to the concerns of the text that emerged from your exegesis.
2. When you compare your two lists, the spark of sermonic imagination occurs when you notice that, for example, *concern # 6* on your pastoral concern list correlates with *concern # 2* on your text concern list. On a different Sunday with a different text, then a different pastoral concern will correlate.
3. Worksheet:

| Concerns of the People | Concerns of the Text |
|---|---|
| 1. Unease about children's safety at school | 1. |
| 2. Marriages are stressed | 2. The community provides for those who are hurting |
| 3. Millennials are not remaining faithful | 3. |
| 4. Folks anxious about the loss of jobs | 4. |
| 5. The impurity found in social media | 5. |
| 6. Several accidental deaths recently | 6. |
| 7. Etc. … | 7. |

Finally, there are three universal concerns that all people everywhere have: Transcendence (everyone everywhere wants to know that there is something out there bigger than themselves); Community (everyone everywhere longs to love and be loved); Significance (everyone everywhere wants to know that their life counts). Everybody is dealing with issues of identity, belonging, and purpose. There are certain universals of what it means to be human. Questions like, "What keeps us awake at night?" "What are our aspirations, hopes, and dreams?" "What are our fears?" "What do we fear we might lose?" "What tears up our days?" The list not only includes fear of death, condemnation, guilt, and shame, but also struggles with work, family, health, and finances.

All of this requires patience.[63] Pedagogical Patience–People learn in stages and won't be able to accept "D" before they have accepted" A," "B," and "C" … Pastoral Patience–There are dynamics that might set limits on our ability to preach in certain ways in certain contexts. Hermeneutical Patience–Contexts are not static but require constant engagement and a willingness to adjust.

**Exercise in Contextual Preaching:** Luke 13:10-17[64]
- Using the "Core Affirmation"– "Because Jesus sees the woman, we can rest in the truth that we are seen and known by God", explore the following prompts.
- How can we shape the same Core Affirmation to speak to three different settings/contexts?
  - Giving three talks/sermons in one day:
    - At a nursing home for their morning devotional
    - At the area minister's lunch in the afternoon
    - At an area youth event that evening
- How does the theological claim of the Core Affirmation meet the circumstances/experiences of each audience?

---

[63] Mason Lee, ACU BIBM 693 class presentation. See also Mason Lee, *Learning to Speak of God: Patience as a Homiletical Virtue,* Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2023.

[64] Mason Lee, ACU BIBM 693 class presentation.

<p style="text-align:center">~~~~~~~~~~~~</p>

Finally, this brief guide has arrived at detailed instructions about how to write a sermon for Sensing. What are the basics for scripting a sermon? The term "scripting" is intentional. The sermon will be scripted in the same way a storyteller scripts a play or tells a narrative or expresses a plot.

## Preaching Mechanics

Often sermons arise from the contextual experiences of the congregation living in a neighborhood. A topic or theme that names the perceived need becomes the focus of the sermon. The preacher then looks for a text or theological construct to support the topic. When preaching for Sensing, you will not start here but will always start with a text of Scripture.

The old joke rings true. "How many points should a sermon have?" The punch line, "At least one." I have listened to many sermons that make multiple points, but I wonder, what was the central idea I was supposed to take home? Similarly, I have listened to sermons that keep me wondering, "Where is this sermon going?" "What is the sermon's point?" Many times, that question is not answered.

So, preaching for Sensing first and foremost starts here.

What is the living theology that transforms me that will make a difference in my life on Monday. As noted above, "sermons are not propelled by powerful beginnings but are evoked by significant ends." What is that significant end? What is the theological live wire? Therefore, the sermon's engagement with the biblical text should follow the text's lead theologically.

- **STEP 1:** Sermons begin, by stating the theological claim of the text you discovered through exegetical analysis. The theological claim of the text is the basis for the theme and goal of the sermon. The sermon's goal is often called its purpose, aim, or function. The theme is often called the sermon's focus. The focus and function of the sermon are also the destination of the sermon, the denouement of the plot, or the sermon's conclusion, its significant end (telos).

   From the text, a theological focus and function for the sermon emerge,
- **STEP 2:** The preacher will want to say and do in the present tense what the text said and did in the past tense. At this point in the process, the preacher knows where the sermon is going and what the sermon is doing.
- **STEP 3:** The sermon is sequenced in such a way as to lead the audience to that conclusion. Therefore, the focus and function of the sermon must internally cohere as it leads to the climax. The conclusion of a sermon is proof that the focus is maintained, and the function realized. Ways to ensure coherence is to write precise and concise focus and function statements. Afterwards, write those two statements in bold print in the concluding paragraph of your sermon. You may rephrase them to fit the rhetorical needs of the conclusion, but their presence must remain clear.[65]

**Focus Statement of Sermon**: A theologically oriented subject and an active verb that states what the sermon is all about. Be clear and concise. If you are not sure what the theological subject is, start with God and an active verb. "God blesses…" "God gives …" "God invites …" The focus statement is your locutionary act. [See Core Affirmations below.]

**Function Statement of Sermon**: The sermon's intent. Naming the "hoped for change." Format: "To [strong behavioral or affective verb] [identify the audience] to [second active verb] …" Be clear and concise. The function statement performs your illocutionary and perlocutionary acts.

Examples from Mark 2:1-12 (Three sets of focus and function statements from a single text indicate that there are at least three sermon possibilities. Only preach one sermon on Sunday. Remember, there are 52 Sundays every year. Sunday comes every week.)

---

[65] While my use of *focus* and *function* statements may resemble Long's *Witness of Preaching*, I am making some substantial shifts in Long's chapter.

1. **Focus:** God works through the faith of others. **Function:** To encourage the congregation to embrace their faith as avenues of God's action in our lives.
2. **Focus:** God challenges our settled ideas of how God works. **Function:** To invite the congregation to make way for life-changing, divine interventions among us.
3. **Focus:** God uses ordinary people to open pathways to healing and transformation. **Function:** To affirm to the congregation that our own lives are potential avenues for God's work in the world

**Core Affirmations**: [An alternative to the Focus and Function Statements] A **Core Affirmation** is *a single, declarative sentence that announces what God has done, is doing, or promises yet to do and then names the difference this makes in the world of our hearers*. What difference does the divine action of God make in our world of experience? Once the divine action is named, then Core Affirmations move to the difference this divine action makes for the human situation. This is where the call to action comes into play. And this is where the emphasis on invitation and participation comes into play – by starting with what God has done, is doing, or will do, the call for action made in the sermon becomes one of joining the work of God.[66]

Template for a Core Affirmation: "*Because God* has acted [is acting/promises to act] in the following way– [therefore]–*we are able* to do the following … (the sentence finishes with a brief description of some faithful action now made possible for us in the word opened up by God's action)."[67] [Note: Core Affirmations are missing the function verb found above in Function Statements].

Examples from Mark 2:1-12 (Three different Core Affirmations from a single text indicate that there are at least three sermon possibilities. Only preach one sermon on Sunday. Remember, there are 52 Sundays every year. Sunday comes every week.)
1. Because God works through the faith of others, we are able to embrace their faith as avenues of God's action in our lives.
2. Because God challenges our settled ideas of how God works, we are invited to make way for life-changing, divine interventions among us.
3. Because God uses ordinary people to open pathways to healing and transformation, we are able to see our own lives as potential avenues for God's work in the world.[68]

So, if the statement is true, "Sermons are not propelled by powerful beginnings but are evoked by significant ends," then the following statements are also true.
1. Conclusions are formed by your focus and function statements (or the Core Affirmation). In the conclusion of the sermon, did you say and do what you set out to say and do? Does the conclusion cohere with the theological aim/claim of the sermon?
2. Conclusions conclude. If your meaning has not been heard before now [the conclusion], it is too late for it to be heard now. Know your conclusion before you write the sermon. Know your destination before you begin your journey.
3. Conclusions fulfill purpose. Does the sermon do what it intends to do? Conclusions cohere with focus and function. Conclusions achieve the anticipated climax. Conclusions are governed by your intentions.
4. Affect a closure. When you get to the end of your sermon, stop. When you arrive at your destination, park your car. The sermon needs to end! Therefore, use direct, simple, concrete language.
5. Build connections to response. Be direct and personal. Convince people that the message is related to them. Be passionate that the theology of the sermon matters. Be hopeful and expectant. Trust the people to do right.
6. Responses may vary. There is more than one way and one time to respond to a sermon.

---

[66] Lee, *Class Presentation*. Dr. Sally Brown's Definition of Preaching… "A Christian sermon is a theo-rhetorical act anchored in Christian scripture that declares to particular listeners in a particular time and place some aspect of what God has done, is doing, and promises yet to do, to make all things new."

[67] Brown and Powery, *The Ways of the Word*, 142.

[68] Lee, *Class Presentation*.

7. AND, most importantly, the conclusion of the sermon is fully alive when the live wire of theology electrifies the words. The conclusion is formed by the theological claim of the text.

AND, if that is how you write a conclusion, how do you write your introduction? "Light your match on the first strike." Plato stated the obvious centuries ago. Every piece of written or oral communication must have a beginning, middle, and end. Many sermons flop because many preachers do not know where they are or where they're going. Introductions, likewise, are dependent on the purpose of the sermon, the theological claim of the text.

1. Introductions Set the Stage – How will you handle or talk about certain things in certain ways? Introductions need to be interesting, raise issues, and be memorable. In this way, introductions orient the audience. Give the listener the ability to anticipate what the sermon is about. You can do this fully, or only with a hint, but somehow say, "here is the path." Anticipate the whole and show the next step. Point toward the focus and function of the sermon. Promise something the hearers want you to keep. It needs to bear on their lives. The promise should be of value to the congregation.
2. Introductions Communicate a Contract with The Audience – What you can expect.
3. Appropriate Language and Tone–The language and tone of the introduction should create a fair expectation of the language and tone of the sermon.
4. Introductions are Transitions–While the introduction should anticipate the whole sermon, it should also lead directly to the next step of the sermon. The only value in the introduction is how it functions in the sermon. It is a journey beginning "here" with the concept of "there" in mind. Where will this sermon go? Get on with the sermon.
5. Prepare Introductions Last–Prepare after the body of the sermon and the conclusion.

Now you know what you want to say. How do you arrange the words from the introduction to the conclusion? STEP 3 is about the sequence. I have opted for a narratival approach. I will use the words "scripting" and "script" to describe the process. I will use the words "episodes" or "moves" to describe the smaller units of the script.

## Preaching Narratively

The traditional homiletic that developed during the Enlightenment follows a deductive logic and is often given the shorthand description of Point 1, Point 2, Point 3. Often, but not always, the deductive sequence or sermon arrangement is static. It does not move towards a conclusion. A way to test if the traditional arrangement has movement is to rearrange the points. If the sequence of the points does not matter, then the sermon is static in the presentation of the material. The New Homiletic addresses how the listener experiences the sermon.[69] Craddock used stories as a way for the audience to experience the movement of the sermon like the way the Bible itself preaches. Craddock did this often through inductive logic or indirect speech. More so than any other way, the New Homiletic embraced narrative to present the sequence of the content in a dynamic way. Grady Davis says,

> There is one compelling reason, among other reasons, why I shall not rely on the word "outline" to designate the plan of a sermon. The conventional outline is a static and visual plan, whereas the sermon can be properly planned only as an audible movement in time. The proper plan of a sermon, then, the proper sketch of a sermon, the proper design of a sermon, is the design of a time-continuity. And so I shall prefer to speak of the continuity or the movement of a sermon, rather than of its outline. … A sermon is a continuity of sounds, looks, gestures, which follow one another in time. A sermon is not static like a painting. A painting shows itself as a whole in a single instant... A sermon is like a play, not the printed book but the action on a stage, which moves from a first act through a second to a third, and the drama is never seen all at once. A sermon is like a story told aloud, where each sentence has gone forever into the past before the next is spoken... Once I have worked my idea through in its structure and its development, in its generals and its particulars, I can

---

[69] Reid, Fleer, and Bullock, "Preaching as the Creation of an Experience," 1–9.

see it all at once in my mind. It is then like a picture to me. ... If there is ever to be a complete picture in the preacher's mind, he has to see where each piece fits and put the picture together for himself.[70]

Narrative is not the only ontological choice.[71] The Old Homiletic was based more on a western and Enlightenment ontology (a Cartesian philosophical foundation). Yet, narrative is often the ontological choice that governs the New Homiletic.[72]

Davis's words in 1954 did not bring about a homiletical revolution. That did not come until Craddock in the late 1970s. Looking back though, his words lead to a fundamental understanding of narrative as an option for sermon design.

The narrative ontology is described by Buttrick.

*"Deeper still, let's recognize that narrative is built into the nature of human beings. Humans have memory and hope, and they live lives in between. We tell ourselves in stories. Better, we also plot our identity in stories. If we misplot ourselves, no doubt we will mislive ourselves; but we are storied creatures. Human communities also understand themselves by assembling their stories into something we call "history"' thus, communal identity is shaped by narrative. Again, we must note that communities may misassemble their stories. Notice that before 1950, there was a significant absence of blackness to American history, and, not only a lack of black stories but a singular shortage of feminine figures as well. American history was told by stories of white male achievers. As a result, when it came to living in black/white culture, many Americans were socially inept. All of which is to say that narrative is profoundly connected with human beings. We are natural-born storytellers. Thus narrative preaching involved a rediscovery of how people understand themselves."[73]*

Other narrative options are summarized below. Mostly, I will lean into option 2. Narrative Options:

*Preaching and scholars of preaching use the phrase 'narrative preaching' to designate four related but often different approaches of the preaching task.*
1. *For some ministers, narrative preaching refers to sermons that are actual stories containing little if any explanatory material. From start to finish, the preaching employs setting, plot, and characters to tell a story. This telling, without commentary, is how the sermon communicates its message. The preacher may simply retell a tale from the Bible or Christian history. Sometimes such story-sermons are created from the preacher's imagination; at other times, a pastor will tell stories from movies, novels, or short stories, from the lives of the congregation, or from the preacher's own life. Or ministers base such a message on their personal experience*

---

[70] Davis, *Design for Preaching*, 23; 163–64.

[71] See Lischer, "The Limits of Story," 26–38. Lischer provides a corrective to the weight given to story. Lischer notes an imbalance caused by the extreme of some homiletical methods. He desires to limit the reducing (distorting) of human life and divine revelation that comes by using only this one model. The limits fall under the categories of aesthetic, ontological, theological, and socio-political. Story cannot be separated from its context. The exclusive use of story neglects the non-narrative domains of human existence. The exclusive use of story ignores other rhetorical tools available for the purpose of social and personal transformation. I will be using David Buttrick's narrative model. I realize that Buttrick is rooting his narrative model not in a narratival ontology but a phenomenological ontology.

[72] See Hauerwas and Jones (eds.) *Why Narrative*, Eerdmans, 1989. See especially the chapters by Stephen Crites, "The Narrative Quality of Experience," and Michael Root, "The Narrative Structure of Soteriology." Note: Buttrick's *Homiletic* is using a narrative method within the scope of phenomenology as its ontology.

[73] Buttrick, "Story and Symbol, the Stuff of Preaching," 100. For deeper insight into narratival theory see, Hauerwas and Jones, *Why Narrative? Readings in Narrative Theology*. I have often required the first two chapters in coursework.

*but disguise the element by telling the story as though it were about someone else. Occasionally, preachers tell two or more stories together.*

2. *Narrative preaching can signal the conviction that a sermon as a whole should move in a way that is similar to a story, though the content of the sermon is not a single, extended narrative. ... The content may contain conventional biblical exegesis, questions raised by the biblical text and life, quotes from authorities such as theologians or social scientists, critical analysis (e.g., theological, social, political, and economic), and anecdotes from the news and the lives of the congregation and the preacher. While such sermons may contain propositions, syllogisms, and other conventional modes of communication and argument, the preacher arranges the pieces of the sermon to work together so that hearing the sermon is similar to the experience of hearing a story.*

3. *Narrative preaching is occasionally associated with doing theology by telling stories and reflecting on them. This informal and variegated movement is sometimes called 'story theology.' Sometimes these theologians and preachers let the stories do their own work; sometimes preachers reflect upon the stories.*

4. *In more technical sense, 'narrative theology' refers to a theological approach, associated with the contemporary movement of postliberalism, the central conviction of which is that the work of the theologian and the preacher is to retell the biblical story(ies) so as to clarify their claim upon the contemporary world. Many narrative theologians eschew attempts to ground epistemology, revelation, truth, and other concerns in philosophy (or any mode of reflection outside the Bible or Christian discourse) or to interpret the Bible and Christian doctrine in, or correlate them with contemporary categories of thought. Instead, these theologians typically assume that the narratives of the Bible are trustworthy guides to the meaning of life...and they seek to elucidate the story of the Bible on its own terms. The narrative preacher thus seeks not to interpret, but to narrate the congregation into the larger and ongoing biblical story.*[74]

The word "plot" is used above as a primary word to discuss narrative and a key term to describe movement below. Plot is the strategic sequencing of (events, musical notes, arguments, images, actions, etc.) through time. For example, if you rearrange the notes, you change the song. Eugene Lowry has the example of a song that gathers all the same notes together (AAAACCDDDDDFFFFFFGGGBbF#F#F#) without thought to the arrangement. But when he rearranges the notes, you have "Amazing Grace." Form matters. And that leads us to consider the plot, a narrative device that arranges the form.

Narrative & Movement: While your destination is discerned first during the exegetical process, you do not begin the sermon on Sunday at the end. The sermon will begin at the beginning. The sermon is not static like a painting but flows moment by moment through time. The metaphor is not the score of notes on a page but the live performance of the music.[75] The movement of the words through time is plotted sequence that moves from here to there – beginning to end. In the homiletical journey, do not leave the listeners behind.

Aristotle, in *POETICS* (http://classics.mit.edu/Aristotle/poetics.html),[76] identifies the plot as moving from conflict (tension) to complication (the plot thickens) to climax to dénouement. Or as Eugene Lowry often says,

---

[74] Allen, "Theology Undergirding Narrative Preaching," 27–28. Allen and Buttrick fall into category # 2.

The best explorations of option # 4, post-liberal narrative preaching, see Campbell, *Preaching Jesus*. For a counter argument and critique see Lose, *Confessing Jesus Christ*.
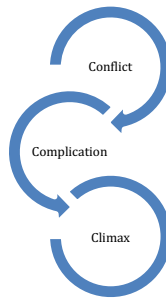
[75] Davis, *Design for Preaching*, 163–164. Davis's text in 1958 moves away from the idea of "outline" when conceiving of a sermon. The classic text is often cited as the beginning of a movement called the "New Homiletic." See Sensing, "After the Craddock Revolution," 211–219.

[76] Sensing, "Aristotle's Poetics," http://www.homiletic.net/index.php/homiletic/.
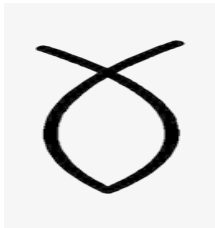
"from itch to scratch."[77] Reversal is a key term in plotting and an essential element to the theological goal of transformation. Often the terms *Orientation, Disorientation, Reorientation* are used to describe moving an audience from where they are to where you intend to take them.

Foster-Harris[78] –recommendations for telling a story that simplifies Aristotle's *Poetics*. He emphasizes the reversal aspect of plot.

1.    Action in narrative is often experienced as conflict. Set the situation and characters in place with no flashbacks until the action is well underway, making sure that you start with action having already happened. Do not begin with description that has no action. Use description only to serve action. [Sensing's Note: the character to first consider is God (Father, Son, Spirit); the action, God's action]

2.    Develop some complication at the beginning arising from the internal conflict and the character's decisions and actions. Do not discuss the emotions; simply show the signs of the emotions in a character's actions or appearance.

3.    Move to a crisis in which the character makes a decision.

4.    Conclude with a climax or an answer or reward.



Lowry's Loop is a shorthand way to describe the plot and is sometimes illustrated as a Valley Sermon. Both images reflect movement and flow.



1.    Descent
    a)    Oops: Upsetting the Equilibrium
    b)    Ugh: Analyzing the discrepancy
2.    Hinge
    a)    Aha: Disclosing the clue to resolution
3.    Ascent
    a)    Whee: Experiencing the Gospel
    b)    Yeah: Anticipating the consequences

---

[77] Lowry, *The Homiletical Plot*, 15–21. The "Lowry Loop" is a description of a common homiletical form that is seen in various textbooks and is summarized concisely by Allen, *Determining the Form.*

[78] Foster-Harris, *The Basic Patterns of Plot.*

Lowry, *Homiletical Plot* (1980); *Doing Time in the Pulpit* (1985); *The Sermon: Dancing the Edge of Mystery* (1997) describe the Loop as a narrative plot.
1. Upsetting the Equilibrium
2. Analyzing the Discrepancy
3. Disclosing the Clue to Resolution
4. Experiencing the Gospel
5. Anticipating the Consequences

Compare to A. H. Monroe's (1948) *Motivated Sequence.* It consists of five steps:
1. Attention: Get the attention of your audience using a detailed story, shocking example, dramatic statistic, quotations, etc.
2. Need: Show that the problem about which you are speaking exists, that it is significant, and that it won't go away by itself. Use statistics, examples, etc. Convince your audience that there is a need for action to be taken.
3. Satisfy: You need to solve the issue. Provide specific and viable solutions that the government or communities can implement to solve the problem.
4. Visualization: Tell the audience what will happen if the solution is implemented or does not take place. Be visual and detailed.
5. Action: Tell the audience what action they can take personally to solve the problem.

The following explanation of Monroe's *Motivated Sequence* by Karisa Workman
1. Attention: Hey! Listen to me, I have a PROBLEM!
2. Need: Let me EXPLAIN the problem.
3. Satisfy: But, I have a SOLUTION!
4. Visualization: If we IMPLEMENT my solution, this is what will happen. Or, if we don't implement my solution, this is what will happen.
5. Action: You can help me in this specific way. Can you help me?
6. Solution:

    The advantage of Monroe's *Motivated Sequence* is that it emphasizes what the audience can do. Too often, the audience feels like a situation is hopeless; Monroe's motivated sequence emphasizes the action the audience can take. Lowry's Loop sees the *Motivated Sequence* as a way to provide sermons with narratival logic.

    Lowry's Loop describes one set way to do plot. However, plotting can take many different forms. Throughout this *Homiletics: A Very Brief Introduction*, I am modifying Buttrick's *Homiletic: Moves and Structures*. Buttrick is primarily doing plot by providing multiple ways to structure the movement through time. Be patient. I will provide concrete and doable ways to script a sermon plot.

## Scripting

If I were a fan of alliteration, I would have three "Fs". Focus, Function, and Form. But I do not like alliteration, so I will not. Most conversations about preaching start with sermon design.[79] However, my training was radically altered when I began to take seriously Craddock's often cited maxim, "It is not how you preach the Bible but how the Bible preaches." Taking seriously the literary genre and rhetorical form of texts has influenced my entire academic career. Paul Ricoeur states, "The mistaken assumption here would be to take these forms of discourse as simply literary genres which ought to be neutralized so that we can extract their theological content … to uproot this prejudice we

---

[79] Homiletics spends more time on sermon forms and structures than any other topic. Textbooks that summarize various sermonic forms in the New Homiletic are Allen, *Patterns of Preaching*; Allen, *Determining the Form*; and Eslinger, *The Web of Preaching.* The first and third of these resources have extended discussions and examples of Buttrick's methodology. For a more extended listing of homiletical resources, see my bibliography @ www.homileticalsensings.com. My website also offers several of my own sermons as examples.

must convince ourselves that the literary genres of the Bible do not constitute a rhetorical façade which it would be possible to pull down to reveal some thought content that is indifferent to its literary vehicle."[80] Therefore, I do not want to impose upon the text some predetermined sermon design. Instead, I want the form of the text, how the Bible preaches, to inspire sermon design, the script. I have found Buttrick's *Moves and Structures*, a flexible way to teach sermon design that respects textual form.

Definition of Literary Form: Literary form refers primarily to the structure or organization of a literary unit or passage, although elements such as style, content, and function might also have to be noted when defining a particular literary form. Literary form is related to meaning on the basis of the audience's expectations and form's typical function. The relationship between literary form and meaning is also influenced by the way the author uses the form.

A literary form exhibits a structure that is commonly used, one that is found elsewhere in the literature of the period. It is helpful at this point to distinguish between the "conventional" form and the "organic" form.

- Organic– a unique structure or organization of a piece of literature, that which is invented or fashioned by the author to best communicate the desired meaning…the structures are as diverse as the ideas expressed, as diverse as the author's whims. Almost every piece of literature has some structure, some organic form that the reader can discern.
- Conventional– refers to a standard, widely recognized, and repeatable structures. Certain forms are commonly used in society, and an author employs them, whether consciously or unconsciously because their structure is widely understood and is appropriate to certain content.

*Genre analysis*: "Genre should be conceived as a grouping of literary works based upon both outer form (specific meter or structure) and also upon inner form (attitude, tone, purpose)." Readers come to the text with certain expectations based in part upon their genre understanding. Authors know the conventions and often shape their text and if they violate them…modern reader needs to know how ancient genres functioned. External–overall structural pattern, form, meter, rhythm, narration, style, interrelationships, and content. Internal–cohesive plot, action, narrative voice, setting, and language.

*Genre*: a grouping of literary works based on an outer form, based on a specific metre and structure. Also based on inter form of attitude and purpose. A group of written texts based on distinctive, recurring, recognizable and coherent structures of writing. A category out of which to classify literary works as a whole. The large unit.

*Form*: a small individual unit representing materials out of which the literary works are composed. The small unit.

Craddock states,

"Why should the Gospel always be impaled upon the frame of Aristotelian logic, when his muscles twitch and his nerves tingle to mount the pulpit not with three points but with the Gospel as narrative or parable or poem or myth or song. ... Why should the multitude of forms and moods writing biblical literature ... be brought together in one unvarying mold, and that copied from Greek rhetoricians of centuries ago? An unnecessary monotony results, but more profoundly, there is an inner conflict between the content of the sermon and its form. ... The content calls for singing but the form is quite prosaic; the message has wings but the structure is quite pedestrian."[81]

Wardlaw adds,

"The assumption that preaching as such seems to mean finding sensible, orderly things to say about scriptural texts, rather than letting those texts say things their own way. ... When preachers feel they have not preached a passage of Scripture unless they have dissected and rearranged that Word into a lawyer's brief, they in reality make the Word of God subservient to one particular, technical kind of reason."[82]

---

[80] Ricoeur, *Towards a Hermeneutic to the Idea of Revelation*, 90–91.

[81] Craddock, *Without Authority*, 45, 143–44.

[82] Wardlaw, "Need for New Shapes," 13, 16.

Tom Long suggests exegetical practices needed for the variety of literary forms found in Scripture so the transition from text to sermon will be faithful. His premise is that form and function of the text are inseparably woven and foundational for choosing sermon form and function. To believe that any and every genre of the Bible can be molded to fit one homiletical model does great disservice to the message. Long explores the genres of Psalm, Proverb, Narrative, Parable, and Epistle.

    a) Long supports historical investigation to discover the background of the text. What did it once "mean" in a particular time and place? However, he adds to such historical investigations a literary and rhetorical aspect. He asks the following:

        i) What is the genre of the text? Not wanting just to name it, Long desires to understand how that genre works.

        ii) What is the rhetorical function of this genre? This goes beyond the literary question and asks how the text functions for the reader.

        iii) What literary devices does this genre employ to achieve its rhetorical effect?

        iv) How in particular does the text under consideration, in its own literary setting, embody the characteristics and dynamics described in questions 1–3?

        v) How may the sermon, in a new setting, say and do what the text says and does in its setting?[83] Long's last question leads to the focus and function statements that control the sermon's conclusion.

Long's questions are part of the larger process of exegesis. Once I discern what the text's genre is and how that genre works, I will also want to know how the pericope functions theologically, historically and rhetorically in the book's larger context. In the exegetical process, I am only highlighting genre because it is often overlooked by preachers. Preachers seemingly are unaware of how or why genre is important to sermon design.

**The Integration of Narrative and Sermon Design: Scripting the Plot of the Sermon**. Through your analysis of the passage, you have discerned the theological claim of the text. You have considered the congregational context where the sermon will be delivered. You have written a focus and function statement. Now that you know where you are going, how will you travel? All sermons have structures that are determined by sequence and selection of content. While text form (genre) influences the sermon's form, it is not a prison but an inspiration to the imagination.

I will be describing the process of writing a sermon as scripting the plot of the sermon. The easiest way to visualize the script of the sermon's plot is by using a storyboard. Of the various forms possible, the sermon script below allows flexibility. All sermons preached in my classes must follow the sermon script format. The sermon script resembles the structured episodes found in storyboarding.[84] Buttrick calls each episode in the storyboard a "move." Moves are internally developed primarily using arguments, stories, and images.[85] The storyboard depends upon understanding sermon form as narrative. Narrative is the larger category and "story" is a sub-classification. Of the various ways narrative is used in the literature, I am delimiting the definition to narratival logic or the plotting of thought and action.[86] More on the storyboard method below.

---

[83] Long, *Preaching and the Literary Forms of the Bible*. See also, Wilson, *The Practice of Preaching*, 133, for a guide to making an initial literary read of the text.

[84] See *STORYBOARD* for a link to various templates. Or simply use Google images and search for "storyboard" or "storyboard template." Also see David L. Barnhart & L. Susan Bond, "Homiletix: Using Comics to Teach Buttrick's Model."

[85] See the discussion of "metaphor" (pg. 14) above and my more detailed discussion of "image" (pg. 37) below.

[86] Ronald Allen, "Theology Undergirding Narrative Preaching," in What the Shape of Narrative Preaching? Edited by Mike Graves and David J. Schlafer (St. Louis: Chalice, 2008), 27–28. See my examples of Buttrick's modes in "Preaching Ephesians: The Fourfold Fountain of God" *Restoration Quarterly* 62 (Second Quarter 2020): 81–97. My articles in *Restoration Quarterly* can be found at https://digitalcommons.acu.edu/restorationquarterly/

**Three Modes of Narrative Plot**

**Mode of Immediacy**:[87] The Mode of Immediacy works primarily with narrative texts. With my emphasis on the rhetorical and narratival structures, I can incorporate this mode easily to all literary genres in the Bible. I do this by emphasizing the present tense. The text presses upon consciousness in the present time. It makes connections as it is being preached to my lived experiences. As the sermon progresses through the plotline, the hearer follows and the connections to live experiences continue through time. We hear and are formed by the performative movement of the text. In the mode of immediacy, plot comes from the text.

Example from Ephesian 1:3–14 [The longest Greek sentence in the NT]

| Introduction | 1:3–6 | 1:7–12 | 1:8–14 | Conclusion |
|---|---|---|---|---|

| | You see, God has from the beginning of time desired to bless you with every spiritual blessing. | And all the blessings of God are found "in Christ." | And God did not stop by giving us blessings; God also sealed the blessings by the Holy Spirit. | |
|---|---|---|---|---|

- ▪ This plotline simply follows the Trinitarian pattern found in the text. There are other ways to do this. One could follow the listing of the blessings in each move. Move 1=God chose us; Move 2=God adopted us; Move 3=God redeemed us; etc. …

For another example of the Mode of Immediacy, see Buttrick's example below for 2 Cor 5:17ff below.

Another way to think about how the narrative flow of the text is replicated in the narrative flow of sermon comes from the narrative methods suggested in Lowry, *How to Preach a Parable*.

- • Run the Story: follow the story through, highlight aspects, and amplify aspects. [Buttrick's Mode of Immediacy]
- • Delay the Story: as an answer to sermonic concern or pastoral concern.
- • Suspending the Story: begin with the episode and suspend the resolution.
- • Alternating the Story: divide into sections, episodes, weaving in and out with our contemporary story. Decide whether the biblical story or the contemporary story is the primary plotline of the sermon. If, for example, you choose that the biblical story is the primary plotline, the contemporary story is woven into the fabric of the biblical plotline in a complementary fashion. The caution here is that the back-and-forth nature of going from then to now can give the listener whiplash. The back-and-forth nature of Lowry's Alternating the Story is a changing of point of view. Changing the point of view is tricky and Buttrick advises against the practice.

The Mode of Immediacy mirrors the narrative patterns found in the passage.

**Mode of Reflection**: Buttrick prefers the mode of reflection for non-narrative texts. Hebrews is an example. The Hebrew preacher is reflecting on the story of Jesus concisely outlined in Hebrews 1:1–4. The Hebrew preacher is standing back and considering the story as a whole and making the point about Jesus as mediator of a better covenant based on better promises and a greater priesthood, therefore we should remain faithful to our salvation. It is a reflection on the story not a retelling of the story. The plot of Hebrews is based on reflection of the gospel story and not the gospel genre (Matthew – John). Hebrews has plot and narratival substructure. It uses stories. It utilizes

---

[87] Narrative Modes comes from Buttrick, *Homiletic*, 333–448. Examples of the modes of immediacy and reflection are found in my article "How Lonely Stands the Preacher." *Restoration Quarterly* 59 (Fourth Quarter 2017): 234–246.

an "exemplar, conclusion, exhortation" logic.[88] But it is not told as a story. It is told more like a meditation, "a word of exhortation."

Likewise, Paul's letters are reflections on the story too. The plot of the rhetorical argument given in the text reflects three narratival sub-plots (Paul's story, the recipients' story, and the substructure of God's story).[89] When using the sub-plots, the preacher tends towards the Mode of Immediacy more than the Mode of Reflection. Reflection is not interacting with the movement of the text or the occasion of the writing, but on "the field of meaning in consciousness configured by the text".[90] The sequences of the text (literary and rhetorical structures) are no longer important. This mode is most like systematic theology. This is not static. The reflection still has an intending towards. The reflected thought still is flowing towards an end. In the mode of reflection, plot comes from the theological field of meaning and its intending to do something.

Buttrick gives us an example from 2 Cor 5:17ff.[91] In the Mode of Immediacy, Buttrick scripts the argument of the text as follows (and the sermon moves would parallel the text script).

1. Anyone in Christ is a new creation.
    a. Old things are past. Everything is new.
2. Everything is God's doing: God was in Christ reconciling the world to Godself.
    a. By means of cancelling sins.
3. God has trusted us with the message of reconciliation.
    a. That is to say, we are ambassadors for Christ.
    b. God is making a pitch to the world through us.
4. Therefore, we say, "Be reconciled!"

He expands his analysis extensively in the next few pages and ends with five observations or possible moves in the Mode of Immediacy: Note how each move corresponds with how the text unfolds. If the sermon imitated in a one-to-one manner, the sermon would be in the Mode of Immediacy.

1. Anyone in Christ is a new creation.
2. God was in Christ reconciling the world.
3. Not counting their sins against them
4. We are ambassadors for Christ
5. Be reconciled.

However, he offers the following two different plotlines in the Mode of Reflection as options: (the different moves identified with *)

1. Guess what? We've been forgiven, outright forgiven. All the sins we tabulate have been torn up by God. The past no longer controls us; we have a new start. *What else do you think was going on at Calvary? Even as we showed our sin by crucifying Christ, Christ showed God's mercy by absolving us: "Father forgive!" *Well, reconciliation changes everything! Now, we can live together to run around justifying ourselves. Instead, with a kind of post-mercy innocence, we could love. *Is it worth talking about? You bet! Of course, that's who we are–people who talk about God's mercy. *We are "ambassadors for Christ" in the world. We announce a new-start mercy, saying, 'Be reconciled!"
2. Everyone here in church ought to be wearing a name tag: Your name and underneath, a title, "Ambassador." We are Christ's ambassadors, charged by God with delivering a message to the world. *What's the message? "You can live in a new way, past ancient guilts and old resentments. There can be a whole new social order in the world." *Why? Because we have been forgiven. In mercy, the whole world can begin again. *For, don't you see, at Calvary God-in-Christ forgave us all. *No wonder we have a message for the world: We say, "Be reconciled!"

---

[88] Wills, "The Form of the Sermon in Hellenistic Judaism and Early Christianity," 277–99. See Appendix 4.

[89] Thompson, "Narrative Preaching from Romans," 53–74.

[90] Buttrick, *Homiletic,* 323.

[91] Buttrick, *Homiletic,* 369.

In the Mode of Reflection, Buttrick is focusing attention on a pattern of thought and not on the rhetorical flow of the text. Both plotlines intend towards a field of meaning and have flow and movement. Neither plotline refers to Paul or Paul's intentions. He is not talking about Paul or the text but preaching of a reflected theological conclusion.[92]

**Mode of Praxis**: I handle the Mode of Praxis by incorporating action throughout the sermon. I do not make this a separate category or mode at all. Function statements have strong verbs with behavioral and affective ends. Belief and action in concrete situations are bound and cannot be separated. How one lives in the world as a Christian and how the text/reflected theology connects to our world is the same to me. Here is where Buttrick is the most ahistorical. He does not need a text but only a theological field of meaning. Theological fields of meaning bear witness to situations that affect Christian behavior. He is right. We do this all the time. He is making it overt. However, for me, I want to make the connection between the text and the text's witness to theology overt. In the Mode of Praxis, the plot comes from the situation of our lives and how a field of meaning addresses that situation.

Lowry's Loop (referenced above) or mimesis (referenced below) are other ways to structure a sermon in the reflective and praxis mode.

**Plotline of Sermon**: A plotline, another word for sequence or arrangement, is a way to follow the flow or movement of the episodes of the sermon from the beginning to the ending. Indicate if the sermon is in the mode of immediacy or the mode of reflection. To compose a plotline, write a paragraph consisting of the first sentences of each move (sometimes it might be the first two sentences of an episode). When writing the plotline paragraph, separate the first sentences of each move using an asterisk (*). In other words, write a paragraph that includes a copy and paste of the first sentences of each episode/move.[93]

**Example**: Plotline–"First sentence of the introduction. *First sentence of Episode 1. *First sentence of Episode 2. * First sentence from Episode. *etc. for each Episode."

**Example from Ephesians 4:7–16**.
The sermon focus: God in Christ blesses the church with the gift of leaders in order for the church to live into its worthy calling. The sermon function: To exhort the unified church to reach its maturity by receiving blessing and therefore giving blessing. The form of the text is paraenesis.[94]

The plotline of the sermon is scripted using five episodes notated as *E1, *E2, *E3, *E4, and *E5. The plotline is illustrated by seeing the flow of the first sentences of each episode. [*E1] *What is the Good Life? Down deep, we all want to be happy. We desperately seek fulfillment.* [*E2] *Our longing for fulfillment is not unique. There was something lacking also within the community at Ephesus.* [*E3] *So what now? Now that we are made alive in Christ by God's resurrection power, how do we mature into that full and flourishing life as God's united community?* [*E4] *You see, our hands are full of God's gracious blessings.* [*E5] *What is the good life? Look around you. See the fullness of God, blessed by Christ, in every face that has gathered here in order to bring honor and glory to God as you fulfill your worthy calling.*

**Miscellaneous Notes on Plotting:**
1. Point of Entry/Point of View
   a. The plot should have a single point of entry. Do not enter the sermon from multiple places. If you begin retelling the story of the Good Samaritan from the point of entry of a beaten man on the side

---

[92] All of Thompson's sermon examples in *Preaching Like Paul* are in the Mode of Reflection.

[93] Examples of focus statements, function statements, plotlines, and manuscripts are found in "Preaching Ephesians," 81–97. For other examples of plotlines, see the three examples below.

[94] The sermon script here seeks to imitate a paraenetic style of an extended exhortation connected to παρακαλω of 4:1 and the "we must" statements of 4:14–15. Episodes are developed using argument, image, and story. E4 is a longer episode than the others because it carries the weight of the extended argument in the text. See Sensing, "Toward a Definition of Paraenesis," 145–158; "A Strategy for Preaching Paraenesis," 207–218.
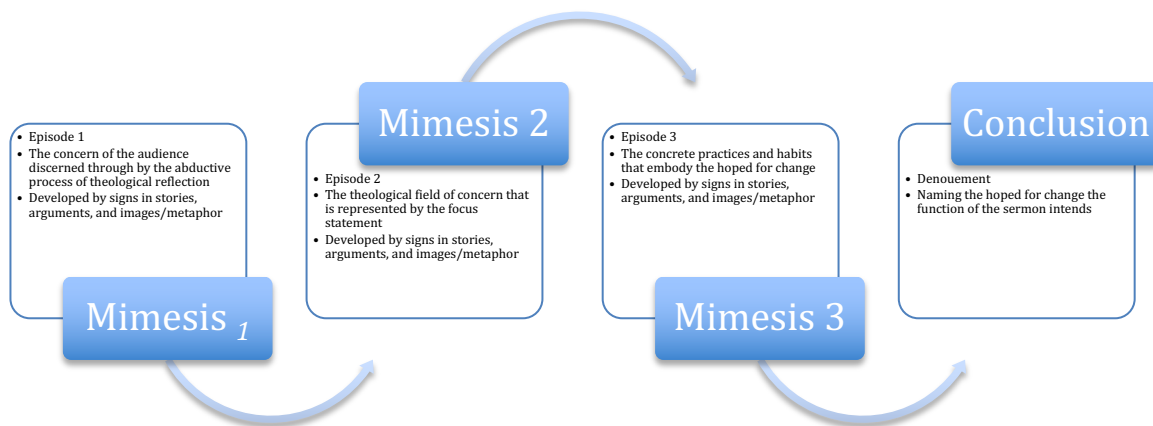
of the road, do not shift the point of view to the Jewish audience member listening to Jesus in Jerusalem. Maintain the point of entry by maintaining the point of view.

    b.    Seasoned scriptwriters often break this rule in movie scripts but only very carefully and intentionally. We have all experienced bad movies that break this rule.

    c.    Once you enter the sermon, it must have movement. Time is ticking for the audience and their consciousness will not stay focused if the sermon becomes static. Let the movement of the sermon flow from beginning to end.

2.    More experienced preachers will be able to re-plot texts without losing meaning.

    a.    Also, you need to follow the logic that is natural to the way we normally think. Like a road map, you can't just string the directions together in any fashion. People have a common way of giving and hearing directions.

    b.    If you think of a playlist on your iPod, other people listening to the songs might not perceive why one song follows another. You put the playlist together according to an internal logic that makes sense to you. If you do not connect the dots, the playlist will be like a maze. The audience might find their way but might not.

    c.    Aristotle would describe episodes that do not follow in a logical sequential order as episodic. His judgment of episodic plays, he says, are "the worst."

    d.    However, episodic sermons are becoming more commonplace. Living as an episodic is exaggerated by Drew Barrymore's character in the movie "50 First Dates." Some of why this is occurring is due to the way we use social media, browsing, and web links.[95]

3.    Different cultures hear differently. And, more and more, our congregations represent a variety of cultures (international, ethnic, generational, gender, education, etc.) requiring the preacher to adapt and evolve.

Tom Long offers a helpful suggestion about emplotment taken from Ricoeur's *Time and Narrative*.[96] Mimesis$_1$ is a prefiguration of the practical field of prefigured time. It includes the meaningful structures, symbolic resources, and temporal character of the world in action. The congregation's way of living in the world, discerned through pastoral ministry, ethnography, and cultural analysis, is the everydayness of their prefigured lives. Mimesis$_3$ is the refiguration of the future. The congregation's way of living is slowly transformed into God's way of being in the world. Mimesis$_2$ is the pivot between the two, it mediates the witness of Scripture to God's life through plot, an emplotment of configuration. If the episodes of the sermons are represented (imitated) by the moves of emplotment of transfiguring Mimesis$_1$ into Mimesis$_3$ by way of configuration, then the following sermon form takes shape:

---

[95] To learn more about episodics, see Tom Long's *Preaching from Memory to Hope*. See Appendix 3 "Being Episodic". To see more on the topic of episodic and plotting from Aristotle, see Sensing *Aristotle's Poetics* @ http://blogs.acu.edu/sensingt/cool-stuff/aristotles-poetics-d/

[96] Long, *Preaching from Memory to Hope*, 27–54. See a concrete example of the configuration process in Gary Selby's "Preaching as Mimesis: The Rhetoric of the African American Sermon," in *And the Word Became Flesh: Studies in History, Communication, and Scripture in Memory of Michael W. Casey,* edited by Thomas H. Olbricht and David Fleer (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2009), 247–66.

The step of configuration Is key. The memetic process of configuration does not rely on explanation but on representation. Take any historical event and notice the difference between the newspaper reporter's depiction and a poe''s. The poet (or musician, sculpturist, painter, screenplay author, and in our case, preacher) shapes the language to create an experience that prompts the imagination and the emotion of the listener. The listener was not there at the historical event. Yet the listener experiences the reenactment through the artist's portrayal. Selby, quoting Woodruff, puts it, "The script has the same effect on you that the actions would have had, if you had believed they were taking place. In this way, the poet's mimesis is aimed at producing a result that is normally achieved by other means."[97] Who has not experienced tears while watching a TV show relaxing on the couch? Or responded in laughter in a quiet museum? Or found their deepest emotions stirred to action while sitting on a pew? So, can I as a preacher, script MIMESIS$_2$ in such a way as to transport/transfer/transform the hearer from their everyday life to God's intended future? Through preaching James 1:27 for example, the man who covets his neighbor's wife now only sees her as a human person worthy of pure thoughts; and an exploitive entrepreneur gives away her profits for the sake of the orphan and the widow.

## Scripting as Storyboard

The diagram above resembles a storyboard, a device used to visualize the plot of the unfolding episodes of a script.[98] MIMESIS$_1$, MIMESIS$_2$, or MIMESIS$_3$ might take more than one episode to fix the thought in the congregation's consciousness. When this happens, the storyboard expands. The storyboard gives the preacher the flexibility to play with selection, sequence, point of view, and alternate plots. The rhetorical shape and literary genre of the text will

---

[97] Selby, "Preaching as Mimesis," 259, quoting Paul Woodruff, "Aristotle on *Mimêsis*," in *Essays on Aristotle's Poetics*, edited by Amélie Oksenberg Rorty (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1992), 91–93.

[98] The plot described above is only one option. If you know where you are going (the conclusion), there are many paths to get there. I can start at my house to get to the store, but I could also start at my office. I could travel the highway, but also take the back road. The plot of a memetic sermon resembles Buttrick's mode of reflection and the mode of praxis, *Homiletic*, 365–448. Buttrick reminds preachers that plots can be replotted depending on what the preacher intends to do, 291–303. Prefiguration to Configuration to Refiguration is often described as Orientation, Disorientation, and Reorientation.

influence the plotline in significant ways at this point in the process.[99] The number and sequence of episodes depends on the particular sermon being preached on that Sunday. Long's use of Ricoeur is an easy way to accomplish Buttrick's mode of reflection.

A Storyboarding Template

| Title: | | |
|---|---|---|
| Focus: | | Function: To |

| 1. | 2. | 3. |
|---|---|---|
| | | |
| Notes: | Notes: | Notes: |

| 4. | 5. | 6. |
|---|---|---|
| | | |

---

[99] My own writings have explored the relationship between sermon form of rhetorical and literary analysis of texts. "Preaching Ephesians," 81–97; "Preaching to Colossians," 207–222; "From Exegesis to Sermon in Romans 12:9–21," 171–187; "A Strategy for Preaching Paraenesis," 207–218; "Toward a Definition of Paraenesis," 145–158; "Imitating the Genre of Parable in Today's Pulpit," 193–208.

|  |  |  |
|---|---|---|
| Notes: | Notes: | Notes: |
| _____ | _____ | _____ |
| _____ | _____ | _____ |
| _____ | _____ | _____ |
| _____ | _____ | _____ |

# The Storyboard Method

1. M. H. Abrams, *Glossary of Literary Terms.* "The plot in a dramatic or narrative work is the structure of its actions as these are ordered and rendered toward achieving a particular emotional and artistic effects."
   a. Key Thoughts:
      i. Selection: Not everything that could be said is said. Only the key elements are selected.
      ii. Sequence: Once the key elements of a story are selected, they are arranged. There is often more than one arrangement possible. Some arrangements make more sense than other arrangements.
      iii. Causality: Examine the logic of the sequence.
      iv. Unity: Examine the coherence of the sequence.
      v. Affective power: How is the plot experienced? If you changed the sequence of the episodes in the plot, would the experience change? The answer is "yes". Which sequence achieves your desired audience experience?
   b. Hint: I have put the episodes of a plotline on index cards. I then can play with sequence by rearranging the index cards. I have often rearranged a student's sermon in class. The class then makes a judgment about if the student's arrangement was best or if my reconstruction is better. For example, once it was obvious the student's sermon did not work. All the content was there. I simply moved the conclusion to the beginning, making the conclusion the introduction. I made one simple change to the sequence. The student and the class agreed. "Now that will preach!"

2. Scripting the whole sermon by way of plot will also require you to pay attention to sequencing thought within each episode. My "Sermon Script Format" does not provide space for the development of an individual episode. The following section describes how you can develop the flow of each episode/move within the larger plotline.

   a. KEY DIMENSIONS in developing thought within episodes–Impressions, Issues, and Interactions [Images,[100] Arguments, and Stories] are fundamental ways of experiencing and communicating. These categories are not mutually exclusive. An Image may supplement or complement an Argument. One of the three will set the context or serve as a point of orientation. And yet each of these particular modes of discourse functions most effectively when the other two dimensions of language and experience are implied or employed in secondary, supporting roles. Determine the primary stance, and then intentionally supplement it with the other two in such a way that the primary thrust is not hindered. From the following, you see how imagination and logic are two complementary dimensions and should not be held in opposition.

      o Impressions [Image]–sensory perceptions, sights, sounds, tastes, smells, tactile/kinesthetic, visceral, and emotional/affective experiences, dreams, and our memories of these experiences, which we communicate in the language of images. I will speak behind you asking you to stop and look and focus on the image. I will therefore shape my language so that it arrests your attention and stimulates the impressionistic aspect of your imagination. (Paul Scott Wilson, *The Practice of Preaching*, p. 48,) You need to be attentive to sensory language and language that describes action. He gives exercises on pg. 51ff about writing for the ear and not the eye.

      o Issues [Argument]–ideas, concepts, assertions, claims, and notions that we formulate in propositions with various levels of abstraction and convey in the language of arguments. If I need to address an issue with you, to generate a dialogue about important ideas and concepts, to encourage you to weigh and consider the strengths and weaknesses of rival truth claims, then I will stand facing you. I am establishing a thesis for your considered judgment. I will orchestrate significant evidence into a convincing case. I will engage the reflective aspect of your imagination.

      o Interactions [Story]–intentions and behaviors of individuals, interwoven in a societal and historical context, that are experienced as unfolding life stories, and which we express in the language of narratives. If I desire to engage you in a story, I will stand alongside you. I will shape my language so that you can participate in a movement from conflict and confusion to greater freedom and direction in response to the invitation of grace. I will engage the dramatic aspect of your imagination.

   b. Although a simplified way to describe Buttrick's *Moves*, Allen uses the following description to say something similar about how to develop thought within each episode of a sermon.

      o Each move consists of the following parts: It beings with a ***statement***. That is, a clear indication of the content of the sermon. The preacher must make this statement in two to four short, direct, sentences, each one making the same point, but in different words. The preacher then ***develops*** the statement by explaining it, usually in clear, analytical language. After the development, the preacher offers an ***image*** that pictures the point made in the move. The move ends with ***closure***. Like the statement, the closure is made up of two to four short, direct sentences that make the same point. They summarize the point of the move.[101]

3. Sermons come alive using concrete, significant detail that is appropriate for the audience's experiences. Abstractions communicate understanding but appealing to the five senses motivates the soul. The old writer's cliché is true, "show, don't tell." For example, teaching someone to drive a clutch on grandpa's rusty pickup in the K-Mart parking lot communicates more than "it is like learning to drive." A concretization is a story or image that enables people to experience the gospel in the present tense. For example, what illustration do I use to communicate the theology of transformation? Many preachers opt for the illustration of a butterfly's metamorphous lifecycle. But does talking about caterpillars make any difference to Agnes on Tuesday? She may understand the theory better, but does cognitive clarity change her heart? Instead, find a concretization about the transforming power of God in someone's life.

---

[100] See the discussion of "metaphor" (pg. 14) above. My discussion of how metaphor functions is the same for how I see the term "image" function here. To evaluate the image or metaphor ask, "Does the image have the depth to carry the theological weight of the semantic field it represents?"

[101] Allen, *Patterns of Preaching*, 88.

a. One litmus test for concreteness is to ask, "How does this help people to live differently tomorrow?" Or "If people took the claim of the text seriously, what difference would it make in their lives?" Much of the "nitty-gritty" is found through an active pastoral ministry where you discern individual, community, and congregational needs and concerns. Seek correspondence between the concerns of the text and the concerns of the audience (see below).

b. If you do not know the congregation's situation, then you can rely on these three universal concerns: transcendence; community; significance. Most people care deeply about how they relate to the Eternal; how they relate to one another; and how they relate to themselves. So, respect those concerns with concrete language.

4. Think about a sermon as a road map that is seeking a destination. Go down this road, take this turn, stop here, and turn left then right, until you reach your goal.

A map is like a directed, purposeful conversation that follows not the rules of logic but the less predictable contours of human thought. Each new road you take when following directions is an episode. There might be a different set of directions that would get you where you are going, but that would be a different route or a different plotting of the directions. The model of a road map is a conversation that is headed toward a conclusion. You are trying to get somewhere. The quality of the end of one idea suggests the turn to a new idea; therefore, the turns or transitions are important. You always start with the end in mind. Once you reach your destination, STOP! Don't park next door, don't circle the block seven times, simply stop because you have arrived at your destination.

5. Moves are more like a movie than a picture book. The arrangement of thought is more conversational in development; it is a series of interlinked assertions, not proofs. It is a combination of deductive and inductive movements. There is a thesis but, because it is a metaphor, you don't know what the movie means until the end. Although the sermon is teeming with images, arguments, examples, and stories, the scaffolding of the progression is simple.

a. Transitions are key. If the turn on the road is difficult to see, you might need to explain how the red barn functions as a marker so that people will not miss it. However, some transitions are simpler. What is it like to stop at a red light? Imagine it. Smell it! NO–People know this experience. One simple sentence makes this transition. We stop and we turn on red.

b. People are able to shift scenes and follow the change in episodes and sequences. Trust your audience to move with you. These turns are common in literature and media.

c. Transitions are sentences that bridge one subject to another without abruptness. Moving from one part or division to another. Transitions contribute to the progressive movement of the sermon. Samuel Proctor, states, [use] "transitions that allow them not to know when you shifted gears."

· Make sure there is closure before you transition to something new.
· Transitions point to the path, the direction you are heading.
· Transitions connect to the next (and, but, yet, if, then, reconsider, etc.)
· Transitions anticipate content of the next step.

# Sermon Examples

**Example 1: A Buttrick Sermon**

Buttrick uses Matthew's birth story as an example.[102] His point of entry is the wisemen chasing a star. The logic of the sequencing below follows closely the logic of the original story as it unfolds in Matthew (Mode of Immediacy).

Buttrick's Sequence:

> **Move 1**: Where is he? Asked the Wisemen. They belong in our world, for they sought a Savior. [Building on the idea that we all long for a new order of things]

> **Move 2**: Where is he? Asked Herod, but he wanted to kill. God will always threaten entrenched power. [The logic is contrast and is natural to human consciousness]

> **Move 3**: Well, guess whom Herod turned to. To us religious people, that's who.

> **Move 4**: Well, it worked – Christ was crucified. [Buttrick is assuming that this text foreshadows the cross. The logical jump, in my opinion, needs more attention].

> **Move 6**: But, good news, Christ rose again and still comes as threat and promise.

> **Move 7**: So how do we respond? We worship and we offer sacrifices [like the wisemen who also worshiped and offer gifts].

**How can we "test" the basic structure of the plotline?**
- Can the basic structure be read out loud in sequence and make sense?
- Does one phrase follow another naturally without strain or non sequitur?
- Are all phrases simple, non-compound sentences?
- When read aloud, does the entire sequence seem to come together in consciousness and make meaning?

*Where is he? Asked the wisemen. They belong in our world for they sought a Savior. *Where is he? Asked Herod, but he wanted to kill. God will always threaten entrenched power. *Well, guess who Herod turned to. To us religious people, that's who. *Well, it worked – Christ was crucified. *But, good news, Christ rose again, and still comes as threat and promise. *So how do we respond? We worship and we offer sacrifices.*

[*The asterisk represents the different moves.]


**Example 2: Loving My Neighbor** (No Shirt, No Shoes, No Service)

See http://blogs.acu.edu/sensingt/2015/09/no-shirts-no-shoes-no-service/ for the entire sermon.

1. **What you believe about God alters how you act towards others.** [I set out the focus statement early in the tradition of the African American sermon style. I state concisely what I intend to say.]

   ❑ We all have favorites. So, it's not that hard to suppose if someone who is not like us comes into our assemblies that they are odd, different, and unacceptable. [I offer a contrapuntal. When people think about favorites, they normally think about good things. A contrapuntal begins with how people might normally think about a topic and then says, "I'm not talking about that.]

2. Opening of the Move: Now let us suppose an ill-clad person comes into our sanctuary and sits on the back pew.

   ❑ Development of the Move through story, image, and argument.

---

[102] **"**Basic Structures of Plotlines," Buttrick, *Homiletic,* 309ff.

❑ Closing of the Move: So, it's not that hard to suppose if someone who is not like us comes into our assemblies that they do not belong. [My opening line and my closing line are very similar. Yet, when I say the closing line, I have moved the audience to think about the topic differently.]

3. Opening of the Move: Now let us suppose some of these folk came into an assembly where Jesus preached.

   ❑ Development of the Move through story, image, and argument.

   ❑ Closing of the Move: So, if these folks came to church where Jesus preached, we know they would have been received with open arms. [My opening line and my closing line are very similar. Yet, when I say the closing line, I have moved the audience to think about the topic differently.]

4. Opening of the Move: So how does that play out in our churches?

   ❑ Development of the Move through story, image, and argument.

   ❑ Closing of the Move: The value of every person is determined by blood, not mud. [Not quite a restatement of the opening line but it is an answer to the question of the opening line.]

5. Opening of the Move: So, in our churches, what law do we follow? The royal law or the law of favoritism?

   ❑ Closing of the Move: **"What you believe about God alters how you act towards others."** [Not quite a restatement of the opening line but it is an answer to the question of the opening line. And it is an inclusion of the first line of the sermon. My focus of the sermon is clearly articulated in the final Move.]

Assessment:
▪ Does the plotline flow? Re-read the opening lines in sequence. I believe they flow nicely. *What you believe about God alters how you act towards others. *Now let us suppose an ill-clad person comes into our sanctuary and sits on the back pew. *Now let us suppose if some of these folk came into an assembly where Jesus preached. *So how does that play out in our churches? *So, in our churches, what law do we follow?
▪ I use the simple transitions of "now let us suppose" and "so" because I do not think the turns are hard to follow. I will need to pause, shift to the other side of the pulpit, etc. to emphasize that I am making a rhetorical turn/shift. Otherwise, words and sentences might run together. Delivery helps the transitions.
▪ Do I fulfill function? The Function Statement for this sermon is "To exhort the congregation to treat people by the law of love." I think I do, but the proof of effectiveness is how people hear the sermon and practice the sermon. On paper, I think it fulfills purpose.
▪ Note: throughout this sermon I freely employ the phrasing of James. James says it well. Now I do not say, "Let's re-read verse # x." "Look down at your Bibles and recall what James says." That is a movement to the past tense. It is making congregational consciousness move back and forth between then and now. By keeping the language and the focus in the present tense, I am preaching a contemporary sermon to living people. I am proclaiming the Word not explaining the Word. There is nothing wrong in explaining if you can do it in the present tense for the audience sitting in front of you.
▪ Is the sermon theologically faithful to the text?
▪ Is the genre of the sermon influenced by the genre of the text? James uses stories, two conditional case studies ("Let us suppose") in order to make a didactic point about faith and works as defined by love. Both of James's cases were social justice-based, which relates to one of his recurring themes about the rich and poor.

**Example 3:** *Renting the Land*

Preached by Tim Sensing at the Buffalo Gap Church of Christ in 2009.

***Matthew 21:33*** *"Listen to another parable: There was a landowner who planted a vineyard. He put a wall around it, dug a winepress in it and built a watchtower. Then he rented the vineyard to some farmers and moved to another place. 34 When the harvest time approached, he sent his servants to the tenants to collect his fruit. 35 "The tenants seized his servants; they beat one, killed another, and stoned a third. 36 Then he sent other servants to them, more than the first time, and the tenants treated them the same way. 37 Last of all, he sent his son to them. 'They will*

*respect my son,' he said. 38 "But when the tenants saw the son, they said to each other, 'This is the heir. Come, let's kill him and take his inheritance.' 39 So they took him and threw him out of the vineyard and killed him.*

*40 "Therefore, when the owner of the vineyard comes, what will he do to those tenants?" 41 "He will bring those wretches to a wretched end," they replied, "and he will rent the vineyard to other tenants, who will give him his share of the crop at harvest time." 42 Jesus said to them, "Have you never read in the Scriptures: " 'The stone the builders rejected has become the cornerstone; the Lord has done this, and it is marvelous in our eyes'? 43 "Therefore I tell you that the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people who will produce its fruit. 44 Anyone who falls on this stone will be broken to pieces, but anyone on whom it falls will be crushed." 45 When the chief priests and the Pharisees heard Jesus' parables, they knew he was talking about them. 46 They looked for a way to arrest him, but they were afraid of the crowd because the people held that he was a prophet.*

Lectionary Scripture Readings: Matthew 21:33–46 [The Parable of the Tenants]; Isa 5:1–7; Matt 5:1 – 11 [Throughout the sermon, I referenced all three readings thus allowing my exegesis of the liturgical calendar and the three lectionary texts to guide my preaching].

Focus Statement: God holds God's people accountable.

Function Statement: To warn God's people to be faithful.

Introduction: Matthew 21. When I was invited to come today, I thought the text was Matthew 20, a beautiful story of God's grace even to those who arrive late. Then I read the email again. Matthew 21:33–46! Oh my! Who wants to preach this text? How do I back out of coming?

1. You remember the story. [Tell the story again. Emphasize the care the landowner takes in preparing the vineyard for service. Emphasize the fruits that were expected by the landowner, and that he turns it over to new renters who he still expects fruit.] We remember the story because it is not unlike what we experience in Texas.

2. I get this story. My dad rents his pastureland. He has certain expectations. Not only do they have to pay the rent price, but they also have to keep the fence repaired, mow the field at least once each year, and field test, fertilize and lime the field. In exchange, the renters can cut hay, let cattle graze, and use the facilities (e.g., the stalls, loading chute, salt stands, etc.)

    a. And if the agreement is broken, my dad can terminate the renters' permissions, and can subsequently rent to someone else.

    b. If there were problems terminating the agreement, my dad could go to court, secure an eviction notice, and have the renters forcibly removed by the legal authorities because my dad owns the land and can rent it to whomever he wants.

    c. We all get this. We understand this story.

3. And it's this renting to someone else that catches my attention in our story today.

    a. I understand, and you do too, the point of the story. No one missed the point. *45 When the chief priests and the Pharisees heard Jesus' parables, they knew he was talking about them. 46 They looked for a way to arrest him, but they were afraid of the crowd because the people held that he was a prophet.*

    b. Religious Israel rejected Jesus, God's Son, and put him to death. Therefore, God offers the gospel to others. The Jews were to be stewards of God's amazing plan of grace. Through them, as promised to Abraham, all nations would be blessed. Paul says it clearly in Romans 15:8–12. So now, the gospel is offered to all, Jews and Gentiles, to fulfill God's original intent.

*8 For I tell you that Christ has become a servant of the Jews on behalf of God's truth, so that the promises made to the patriarchs might be confirmed 9 and, moreover, that the Gentiles might glorify God for his mercy. As it is written: "Therefore I will praise you among the Gentiles; I will sing the praises of your name." [b] 2 Samuel 22:50; Psalm 18:49 10 Again, it says, "Rejoice, you Gentiles, with his people." [c] Deut. 32:43 11 And again, "Praise the*

*Lord, all you Gentiles; let all the peoples extol him." [d] Psalm 117:1 12 And again, Isaiah says, "The Root of Jesse will spring up, one who will arise to rule over the nations; in him the Gentiles will hope."* [e] Isaiah 11:10

    a. We are now in covenant agreement with God as stewards of God's good news. The church, us, we are the tenants now on God's vineyard. And if God can stop renting to one, and rent to another, can God not do that again?

    b. I do not want to be a renter. I want to own the land. It is this renting part of the story that bothers me.

4. Matthew 21–We don't like texts like this. We want texts of reassurance, hope, and grace. I'm a preacher from out of town; let me speak words of kindness, affirmation, and blessing. We don't like texts that hold us accountable to the covenant. I don't like preaching from these texts. So, I don't think I will. Let's see, do you have another text for today? Yes, Matthew 21 is a Word of the Lord that was assigned to me, but I'm not sure I want it to be my word. And if you had a preacher like me, I think you ought to fire him. And then hire another preacher.

    a. We, the church, now have the privilege of being the tenants of God's covenant field and the responsibility to produce fruits. It is by grace we have been given this vineyard to tend. It is by grace that we have the responsibility to produce fruit on God's behalf. And those fruits are the practices and habits of doing God's will rather than just claiming to do so.

    b. Judgment texts are always hard texts to hear. Whether it be prophetic oracles of judgment or judgment parables. We expect parables to be the kind of stuff we do at VBS. But along comes this parable of the vineyard, a sobering parable that calls us to reflection and action.

    c. What are the fruits that bring forth to God, the property owner of our vineyard? If I hear Matthew's kingdom call correctly, we are to live out our righteousness in our daily habits and practices. For example,

        Blessed are the
        1. Poor in spirit
        2. Mourners
        3. Meek
        4. Ones who hunger and thirst after righteousness
        5. Merciful
        6. Pure in heart
        7. Peacemakers
        8. Ones who persevere through persecution

    d. Preachers, elders, Bible school teachers, and the like who won't be faithful and accountable to the landlord, who do not appropriately tend to God's vineyard or shepherd God's flock and subsequently do not produce fruits in God's Kingdom, should just be tarred and feathered, and run out on a rail. For they are rejecting the capstone; they are crucifying the Son of God all over again. The people of God should not put up with such!

    e. And our parable says, "God won't put up with such nonsense either."

    f. And I don't like that, but it is "The Word of the Lord."

ASSESSMENT:

Plotline: * When I was invited to come today, I thought the text was Matthew 20, a beautiful story of God's grace even to those who arrive late. Then I read the email again. Matthew 21:33–46! *You remember the story. *I get this. My dad rents pastureland. *And it's this renting to someone else that catches my attention in our story today. * Matthew 21. We don't like texts like this.

    ▪ Does the plotline work? Buttrick acknowledges that sometimes it will take the first 2–3 sentences of the opening to capture the thought of the Move.

- Do the opening lines of each Move correlate with the closing lines of the Move? Is there closure in the Move before transitioning to the next Move?
- Are the transitions smooth? Do the transitions lead to the next Move?
- Are the Moves developed by appropriate images, stories, and arguments?
- Is the sermon theologically faithful to the text?
- Is the sermon preached in the present tense?
- Does the concluding Move fulfill the promise of the focus and function statements?
- I'm not preaching a parable, but I'm preaching using narrative logic and hopefully with the impact of a parable. Frankly, I'm not smart or talented enough to write parables that work. I'll leave that creative genius work for Jesus. See Tim Sensing, "Imitating the Genre of Parable in Today's Pulpit." *Restoration Quarterly* 33 (Fourth Quarter 1991): 193-208.

# Sermon Script Format

<div style="border:3px solid black; padding:20px">

<p align="center">***SERMON TITLE***<br>
(Sermon Text)</p>

**Rhetorical and Theological Argument of the Text**: Approximately 200 – 300-word summary. Identify the form and function of the genre. If the pericope has a significant literary device (e.g., parallelisms, inclusio, diatribe, chiasmus, etc.), then describe how the device is working.

**Focus Statement of Sermon**: A theologically-oriented subject and an active verb that states what the sermon is all about. Be clear and concise. [OR, see footnote 3 below]

**Function Statement of Sermon**: The sermon's intent. Naming the "hoped for change." Format: "To [strong behavioral or affective verb] [identify the audience] to [second active verb] …" Be clear and concise.

**Core Affirmation:** An alternative to the Focus and Function Statement given above: What difference does the Divine action of God make in our world of experience? "*Because God* has acted [is acting/promises to act] in the following way–[therefore]–*we are able* to do the following … (the sentence finishes with a brief description of some faithful action ow made possible for us in the word 'opened up' by God's action)."

**Plotline of Sermon**: A paragraph consisting of the first sentences of each move. Indicate if the sermon is in the mode of immediacy or the mode of reflection. When writing the plotline, separate the moves using an asterisk (*). [First sentence from the introduction. *First sentence from Move 1. *First sentence from Move 2. * First sentence from Move 3. *Etc.].

**Describe**: Mode of Reflection or Mode of Immediacy, Point of Entry, & Point of View

<p align="center">***SCRIPT***</p>

Introductions indicate intention toward but do not solve or provide resolution. Makes a promise to the hearer about the nature and focus of sermon. Should indicate the direction the sermon will take. The need for the sermon, the "itch" (antithesis, trouble, or tension) is highlighted. The introduction is a transition from the liturgical setting to Move 1.

**Move/Episode 1** [Do not use a sub-heading to name the Moves].
- The *TRANSITION* or connector.[1] First sentence of the move [same as the first sentence of your plotline].
- Description of the move indicating development: argument, image, and/or story (50 words).[2]
- Closing sentence [an inclusio of the first sentence of the move]. Make sure you affect closure of an episode before transitioning to the next.

**Move/Episode 2**
- *TRANSITION*: First sentence of the move [same as the second sentence of your plotline].
- Description of the move indicating development: argument, image, and/or story (50 words).
- Closing sentence [an inclusio of the first sentence of the move].

**Repeat** the pattern for the remaining moves and/or episodes.
- *TRANSITION*: First sentence of the move [same as the next sentence of your plotline].
- Description of the move indicating development: argument, image, and/or story (50 words).
- Closing sentence [an inclusio of the first sentence of the move].

Last paragraph of the conclusion: The climax must cohere with the focus and function statements.

[1]The *TRANSITION* is a connector. A connector could be a pause, a repeated refrain, a transitional phrase, a summary statement that completes one move and leads to the next, or a transitional story or example. Often, transitions are the most difficult parts of sermons to write, and if you find that you cannot find an appropriate connector to tie two parts of a sermon together, then the problem may lie in the logical flow of the sermon.
· Make sure there is closure before you transition to something new.
· Transitions <u>point</u> to the path, the direction you are heading.
· Transitions <u>connect</u> to the next (and, but, yet, if, then, reconsider, etc.)
· Transitions <u>anticipate</u> content of the next step in the homiletical journey.

[2] Include 4–7 analytical footnotes explaining why you do what you do (specifically relating to, theology, exegesis, genre, and homiletical method). Include 4 – 7 footnotes connecting the sermon to a specific contextual analysis.

<p align="right">—Tim Sensing, DMin, PhD</p>

</div>

# Appendix 1: Scripting Exercises

Sensing's Note: I offer the following exercise because it is an example that follows my pattern with precision. On the surface, it is excellent work. Yet, the guiding questions below will allow you to critique the decisions the preacher has made. In the critique of an excellent sermon, you will find great gain.

<div align="center">

*CAN WE TRUST GOD?*
(Acts 15:36–16:40)

</div>

**Rhetorical and Theological Argument of the Text**: Acts 15:36–16:40 is the beginning of Paul's second missionary journey.[103] It is a longer narrative section[104] set in the honor and shame culture of Roman society.[105] Within that

---

[103] Previously, Paul and Barnabas had completed a missionary journey together (Acts 13–14) before attending the Council of Jerusalem and delivering their letter back to Antioch (Acts 15:1 – 35). The council and their decision not to require the circumcision of gentile believers is later referenced in Acts 16:4.

[104] Robert C. Tannehill, "The Gospels and Narrative Literature" 11. Longer narrative sections such as this assist in the character and plot development of Acts. Part of the narration includes imagery (15:39; 16:26) and dialogue (16:9,17–18,20, 30–31, 35–37.

[105] Michal Beth Dinkler, "The Acts of the Apostles," in *The Gospels and Acts*, ed. Margaret Aymer, Cynthia Briggs Kittredge, and David A. Sánchez, Fortress Commentary on the Bible Study Edition (1517 Media, 2016), 328, https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctt1b3t6xx.16, http://www.jstor.org.acu.idm.oclc.org/stable/j.ctt1b3t6xx.16; Bruce J. Malina, "Acts 16:16-34 (35-40)," *Holy Textures*, April 2007, https://www.holytextures.com/2007/05/acts_161634_354.html; James M. Freeman, "Citzenship," *BibleTruth*, n.d., https://bibletruthpublishers.com/citizenship/ljm22610; Heinrich Meyer, "Commentary on Acts 16," *Meyer's Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament* 63–67. This passage is placed in the Roman world, an honor and shame culture. The context makes the story even more shocking as Paul and Silas did not follow the cultural expectations of the day. For after being publicly shamed and being subject to the shame of jail, they didn't submit to the government to save face but rather held to Christ. Additionally, the fact the jailer accepted Christ after seeing the danger (literal and societal) Paul and Silas faced goes against this culture. Yet, the fact that when converted, both the Jailer and Lydia's households were saved does fall in line with a culture where family is everything, and the head-of-house dictates all things. Paul and Silas' lack of conformity was a message from the author - Christians do not behave as expected. The author also uses situational irony throughout the passage to further impress how unexpected following Christ is. Examples include the fact that Paul freed someone from a demon but was sent to jail; Paul and Silas were beaten in jail but responded with praise and singing; an earthquake freed them, but they did not escape. The Gospel turns common reasoning and reactions upside-down. Heinrich Meyer emphasized that the rejection of societal expectations is why Paul and Silas made sure to return to Lydia's house before leaving town. They needed to be encouraged (16:40). In an honor and shame society, having a member of your group being put in jail would shame everyone, not just the people in prison. The Greek word "*parakaléō* ("personally make a call") refers to believers *offering up evidence* that *stands up in God's court*.–to encourage, exhort, console." (Discovery Bible, "3870. *parakaleo*," *Bible Hub*). Paul offered evidence that the Gospel message is the truth they should still follow in the face of cultural suffering. Also culturally referenced in this passage are roman citizenship benefits, which would include being exempt from imprisonment without a trial, to be bound in stocks, beaten, or denied a trial. These were denied to Paul and Silas, who are revealed to have citizenship in a plot twist at the end of the chapter Meyer highlights the fact that Paul and Silas did not protest but submitted to illegal persecution, showing their commitment to submitting to God. Then by mentioning their citizenship at the end (Acts 16: 37), the author further highlights how God is in control of all things.

framework, there are substories of controversy,[106] wonder, commission epiphany,[107] conversion,[108] and persecution.[109] Through these stories, the author has accomplished three main things. First, they[110] legitimized Paul to other Christians as a devoted and Spirit-filled believer.[111] Secondly, they demonstrated that salvation was being spread to the ends of the earth.[112] Lastly, they testify to the power of the Holy Spirit, which was poured onto the believers in Acts 2:3.[113]

**Focus Statement of Sermon**: God is actively working in and through Christians' lives to minister among the nations.

---

[106] Octavian D Baban, "Conflicts in Acts: Luke's Style and Missionary Paradigms," *Journal of European Baptist Studies* 1.3 (2001): 19–38. Luke uses conflicts in his narration for various purposes. Within the section, there are two types of conflicts. The church has an external conflict (16:201–21) and internal conflict (15:36–41). The external conflict "confirms that the Hellenistic towns often adopted a very Platonic policy - by no means a safe or contemplative one–defending Graeco-Roman culture against any foreign corruption." Paul and Silas are treated so poorly because they are foreigners and Jews; thus, being beaten and detained is reasonable to the townspeople. The internal conflict story is a means of characterization and featuring the difference in priorities of the Gospel mission. Barnabas was focused on pastoral concerns, while Paul was focused on building an overseas mission with clear ethical standards. Based on vs. 41, the church affirmed Paul's choice more. This disagreement also affirms Barnabas's character as a son of comfort. He is also a presence in Act's first conflict story of Ananias and Sapphira (5:1–11), who imitated his generosity but only superficially. In Acts 15 conflict, Paul does not attempt to imitate the "son of encouragement" but would seek an opposite measure. These both affirm how unsettling Barnabas' character is in reality.

[107] Tannehill, "The Gospels and Narrative Literature," 8–11. The commission epiphany in 16:6–10 only has two of the traditional components of these epiphanies: the confrontation–the angel gives instructions–and the conclusion–in which Paul follows through. There are two types of wonder stories present in Acts 16. The first is an exorcism (16:16–18) in which the demonic spirit possessing the slave girl is cast out. The second is a controversial wonder story (16:25–33). Even though Paul and Silas are freed in the story, they do not escape; therefore, it is not a rescue story. Additionally, while Paul and Silas are provided for in that the jailer heals their wounds, that is not the focus, nor is it miraculous. Rather, the focus is not on the miracle itself–the earthquake and freeing of the prisoners–but on the fact that everyone does the opposite of what is expected: they stay in prison. Furthermore, the jailer does not die nor is punished for any escaped prisoners; instead, he "comes to life" and is saved.

[108] Besides Lydia and her household (16:15), the jailer and his household are saved (16:34).

[109] Paul and Silas are stripped, flogged, thrown in prison, and put in stocks (16:22–24).

[110] Since authorship is not confirmed I am using they as a gender fluid pronoun.

[111] Dinkler, "The Acts of the Apostles," 328. Paul was commended by other believers (15:40). He was told by "the Spirit of Jesus" (16:7) where not to go and then had a vision form God of where to go in his missionary journey (16:10). He exorcised a demon (16:18). He remained faithful in persecution (Acts16:25) even though he could have avoided it all together by announcing his Roman citizenship (16:37-39). Finally, he strengthened and supported other believers (16:5, 40).

[112] Malina, "Acts 16:16–34 (35–40)." In this missionary journey, they go to Europe, the Macedonia capital, Philippi. And in these places, the message has gone to everyone, from the elite to jailers.

[113] The Spirit is active in 16:6–10 as giving direction to Paul's missionary team of where to travel to. God is said to have opened Lydia's heart to salvation (16:14). By the Spirit Paul exorcised the slave girl (16:18). It is implied the Spirit caused the earthquake as Paul and Silas were praising God when it happened, and no one escaped, but through it, the jailer was saved (16:25–33).

**Function Statement of Sermon**: To affirm the _____ congregation that God is at work, and they can trust God in all circumstances with all things.

**Plot Line of Sermon**: What is trust?* In all situations, including conflict, God can be trusted.* When there is a lack, or a need, we can trust God.* We can trust God not only with our present needs but our future and guidance to get there also.* Even when things turn for the worst, God is there.* If we believe we can trust God, then we should show it.*[114]

*SCRIPT*

Life is hard. Yes?[115] We struggle in relationships, in work, and in general living. And for those who are Christians, we are taught to trust in God through all of it. But friends it is hard sometimes to trust. Yet, this is the foundation of our relationship with God – that we trust God. Trust that God not only came as Jesus Christ and died to restore our relationship with God, but we trust that God is with us now as we live and grow closer to God.[116] So, as we continue our journey in Acts, let's talk about trusting God, specifically trusting God in conflict with friends, in times of need, in times of decision, and in times of hardship.

1. Before we jump into talking about trusting God, let's talk about trust. What is trust? (Engage in reflection activity – have the congregation picture a person they trust. Think about the feelings they have towards them. Why do they feel that way? How do they respond to that person? How is that different than their feelings toward God? Discuss how trust is referencing its historic meaning, how it is key for relationships, and that it is a mental and emotional state) Do we trust God? Do we trust God is at work in our lives?

2. In Acts 15:36–16:40, the passage for the day, we find examples of situations we can trust God in, situations we find ourselves in today. And in this, we will learn that in all situations, including conflict, God can be trusted. (Rhetorical question – have you ever had a fight with a friend or co-worker? Discuss how conflict is hard. Share the story of Barnabas and Paul–Acts 15:36. The start of Paul's second missionary journey starts with conflict. Discuss that they had different callings. Yet God worked in the conflict. Discuss the importance of Barnabas's choice in that John Mark could be Mark who wrote the gospel and is referenced elsewhere.[117] Discuss how churches reached and strengthened doubled because split.) God works through everything, including conflict.

3. Part of the struggle with conflicts is the aftermath – things are left wanting. Maybe parts of work are unfinished or you need a new friend to confide in. Yet, when there is a lack, or a need, we can trust God.

---

[114] The sermon is a mode of immediacy. The point of entry is a question about trust and trusting God. The point of view is as a distant observer focused on Paul's story.

[115] I ask this with a rhetorical question to get the audience engaged. Throughout the sermon, I ask the audience to engage in rhetorical questions and through examining their own lives. That way they can find themselves more easily in the message and hopefully keep thinking about it after the church has passed and think enough that they are led to live it out.

[116] I am repeating the heart of the Gospel message at the beginning not only to emphasize the importance of trusting God, but also so that any non-believers in the audience will know and hear the message first thing. An invitation to trust God by accepting God as a savior will be made before the benediction.

[117] Baban, "Conflicts in Acts: Luke's Style and Missionary Paradigms"; Ryan Nelson, "Who Was John Mark? The Beginner's Guide," *OverviewBible*, 17 April 2019, https://overviewbible.com/john-mark/. Both Paul and Barnabas had different in priorities of the Gospel mission. Barnabas was focused on pastoral concerns, while Paul was focused on building an overseas mission with clear ethical standards. This disagreement also affirms Barnabas's character as a son of comfort. Furthermore, there is the possibility that this John Mark is the same Mark later mentioned by Paul in 1 Peter 5:13, 2 Timothy 4:11, and Philemon 24. Also, John Mark may have been the Mark who is attested author of the Gospel of Mark. All of this possibility is noted because if it happened then what Barnabas did, splitting so he could train and encourage John Mark, was extremely important for the Gospel work.

(Rhetorical question–what needs do you have? Continue story–the image of Paul without someone by his side. Struggles of the road and journey. Paul had a need for a companion – he had Silas. He also had a need for a disciple, great commission–Timothy.) We can trust God will provide.

4. Needs include not just physical things, but guidance or direction. We can trust God not only with our present needs but our future and guidance to get there also. (Share this is my biggest struggle; my desire to race ahead and wonder if I choose right. Struggle with what to do. God communicates and provides direction in different ways. Story of Maggie–God talks in her dreams. Paul–had a vision, Acts 16:7–10. Sometimes God uses the knowledge we have–Paul went to the river to find people because understanding Jewish custom, God led him to Lydia, Acts 16:13. Discuss other ways God leads–prayer, other people, circumstance.) God can be trusted to guide us.

5. Sometimes we question where God leads us because it results in hardships. But even when things turn for the worst, God is there. (Image of Paul and Silas in jail praising God–in prison for doing good. How is it fair? Why did God lead them there? Continue story–provided way out but didn't escape–led to God's glory. We were never promised easy life. We will have hardships – but God's glory will be shown. It's about God's glory, not our comfort.) No matter what, cling to God. God can be trusted in hardships.

6. If God can be shown to be trusted in different situations, then how do we show we trust God? If we believe we can trust God, then we should show it. (Trust is a verb, not just a noun. We are to live out our faith, meaning live trusting God. Discuss how Paul showed trust–1) By following when called to Macedonia 16:10, 2) By not trying to save himself earlier. Explain Roman citizenship and surprise at the end of the chapter. He could have saved him and Silas time in jail, a beating, but didn't. He trusted God to resolve. Reflection activity– Think about life– are you trusting God?) Let us live with the certainty that we can trust God.

What are you facing right now? Are you fighting with a friend? Are you trying to figure out what to do next? Where to move or what job to take? Who to date or marry? Do you need something? Are you struggling to pay your bills? Maybe you need a friend to confide in? Or maybe you need strength to make it through one more day because things are hard right now. No matter what is going on, I want to encourage you that you can trust in God. In fact, trust is most clearly displaced in situations where there is risk and vulnerability. So, take the risk, be vulnerable. and rely on God. How? Start with prayer.[118] Seek God in a relationship. Read God's Word.[119] Talk to people who trust and follow God.[120] Then go forward, do as God leads you, and live with the confidence that God is real, God is with you, and God is working in your life.

---

**Title:** Can We Trust God?
**Focus:** God is actively working in and through Christians' lives to minister among the nations. **Function:** To affirm the ____ congregation that God is at work, and that they can trust God in all circumstances with all things.

---

| 1. *Beginning:* What is trust? | 2. *Beginning:* In all situations, including conflict, God can be trusted. | 3. *Beginning:* When there is a lack, or a need, we can trust God. |
|---|---|---|
| *Middle:* <br> - Reflection exercise: picture a person you trust – feelings, why, response <br> - Defining Trust – key for relationships | *Middle:* <br> - Have you been in a fight with friends? Both believing you were right? <br> - Story of Acts 15:36–39 – Barnabas and Paul splitting | *Middle:* <br> - Reflection: What needs do you have? <br> - Image of struggle on road. Paul had need |

---

[118] Prayer orients our hearts towards God. It is how we communicate to God. God encouraged us to communicate our needs in prayer and rely on God (Matthew 6:9–13).

[119] 2 Timothy 3:16–17, Psalm 119:105, Matthew 4:4–Scripture is important for the Christian life and a connection to God. Therefore, it should be foundational in getting to know and trusting God.

[120] Wise counsel is discussed in various passages in proverbs (11:14, 12:15, 15:22, 19:20–21, 24:6).

*Closing:* Do we trust God? Do we trust God is at work in our lives? That God is who God claims to be?

*Transition: In Acts 15:36–16:40, the passage for the day, we see examples of how we can trust God in all circumstances.*

- o    Different callings
- o    Still God's work done
  - ▪    John Mark – author of Mark perhaps
  - ▪    Strengthening Churches

*Closing:* God works through everything, including conflict.

*Transition: Part of the struggle with conflicts is the aftermath – things left wanting.*

for companion and someone to disciple
- -    Acts 15:40–16:5– Paul with Silas and Timothy

*Closing:* We can trust God will provide.

*Transition: Needs include not just physical things, but guidance/direction.*

---

Notes: Trysta – Old Norse – rely on, make

Strong and safe. Trast/Trost – confidence,

support, comfort[121]

Notes: Struggle with conflicts – sides taken, clearly Antioch

thought Paul chose right vs 40. Still, the fact is God

at work.

Notes: provision looks different in different circumstances

---

4. *Beginning:* We can trust God not only with our present needs but our future and guidance to get there also.

*Middle:*
- -    Personal Struggle
- -    Struggle with what to do– direction
  - o    What direction are you seeking from God?
- -    Story of Acts 16:7–10– Direction to Macedonia
  - o    Direction given directly
- -    Acts 16:13–Direction to the river
  - o    Direction through intuition/knowledge

*Closing:* God can be trusted to guide us.

*Transition: sometimes we question where God leads us because it results in hardships.*

5. *Beginning:* Even when things turn for the worst, God is there.

*Middle:*
- -    Sometimes how God sustains us or helps us isn't what we would expect
- -    Story of Acts 16:16–34
  - o    Attacked for doing good
  - o    Prison–but still praising God
  - o    Way out–but didn't escape
  - o    Reward–household came to faith
    - ▪    Its about God's glory, not our comfort

*Closing:* No matter what, cling to God. God can be trusted in hardships.

*Transition: If God can be shown to be trusted in different situations, then how do we show we trust God?*

6. *Beginning:* If we believe we can trust God, then we should show it.

*Middle:*
- -    Trust is a verb, not just a noun–and it is meant to be two ways
- -    Paul showed trust in Lord
  - o    Acts 16:10– followed leading to Macedonia
  - o    Acts 16:36–39– Roman citizenship, didn't try to get out of things by own power
- -    Reflection: Think about life–are you trusting God?

---

[121] Douglas Harper, "Trust," *Online Etymology Dictionary*.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| | | ***Closing:*** Let us live with the certainty that we can trust God. |

Notes: discernment – asking God for direction

Most important – prayer

Notes: It's hard. Trials – faith tested.

Notes: trust displayed in situations of risk and vulnerability.[122]

**Analyzing the Script and Storyboard of the Sermon: *Can We Trust God***

1. Read the sermon text. Does the sermon reflect a good understanding of the passage exegetically? Theologically?
2. Evaluate the resources cited. Some are strong, others weak. Which resource needs questioning?
3. Evaluate the format of the focus and function statements. Do the two statements need rewriting to conform to Sensing's model? If so, rewrite. Also, write a single "Core Affirmation" that coheres with the focus and function statement.
4. Do the focus and function statements agree with your exegetical and theological reading of the passage? If not, rewrite them.
5. Do the focus and function statements cohere with the conclusion of the sermon?
6. Does the plotline match the movement found in the sermon?
7. Does the plotline flow narratively?
8. Evaluate the mode of the sermon.
9. Did the sermon have a single point of entry and maintain point of view?
10. Does each episode internally cohere and develop according to Sensing's model? If not, rewrite one of the episodes to model the process better.
11. Evaluate the footnotes according to Sensing's model. What footnotes are needed?

---

[122] "Only in circumstances where there is a risk of betrayal and disappointment will people be able to confidently regard their partner's behaviors as voluntary actions motivated by feelings of love. Trust in a close relationship develops as each person demonstrates a willingness to respond to the needs and concerns of their partner at some personal cost to themselves." John K. Rempel, "Trust," *International Encyclopedia of Marriage and Family*.

# Appendix 2: Dispositions for Reading Scripture

Brad East, "What Are the Standards of Excellence for Theological Interpretation of Scripture?" *Journal of Theological Interpretation*, Vol. 14, No. 2, 2020, 149–179.

In what follows, my topic is the standards of excellence for theological interpretation of Scripture. What makes for excellent theological exegesis? What are its virtues, its criteria, its benchmarks? If theological interpretation is in fact distinct from, say, historical-critical interpretation, how does one know and how does one judge? What, in other words, makes such a reading *good*?

The article consists of three parts. The second and third, respectively, discuss theological and hermeneutical standards for theological interpretation. Preceding these in the first part is an overview or précis that roots this division of standards in the unique character of Scripture. For all that may be deduced about the proper modes and judgment of Scripture's reading follows from what it is, what it is for, and the community in and for which it exists, under God.

## Holy Scripture: Nature, Ends, Community, Authority

The Bible is the church's Holy Scripture. As Holy Scripture, it is witness to and instrument of the living voice of the risen Christ in and to his body, the church. It bears the authority of Christ in the church, as the Spirit of Christ who abides in the church uses its words to convict, convert, instruct, guide, heal, judge, or otherwise proclaim the gospel, both within the church and without. Like everything in creation, Scripture has its source, being, and end in the triune God; like everything in the economy of grace, Scripture has a special relationship to the divine will and action. It is not like any other book, nor should it be read as if it were.

1. If how we read is determined by where and with whom and by what standards we read, it is also determined by what we read *for*. The church's interpretation of Holy Scripture has a different telos than that of other communities; the church asks different questions of the text, with different criteria by which to judge success or failure. The theological claim embedded in this difference is that the church reads as it does because it believes its reading accords with the Bible's own telos. The triune God has bestowed this telos upon the Bible in sanctifying it for the church's sake. In fact, there is no one telos of Holy Scripture, for it has a rich plurality of ends. Its final end is friendship with God: eternal participation in the infinite communion of love that is the perfect life of Father, Son, and Spirit. Its primary proximate end is the awakening of faith; as Scripture is read or heard, God speaks through it the saving word of the gospel of Jesus, a word that is effective, convicting sinners of their sin, bringing them to repentance, and eliciting faith in Jesus as Lord. Scripture, in these two respects, is principally soteriological, eliciting faith in the present that redounds to glory in the future.

2. But Scripture has other ends as well. Its secondary proximate end is the building up of the people of God. In this respect it exists–and it does so by the ongoing work and presence of the Spirit–to keep company with the company of Christ: to order the life of the saints; to lead them into greater knowledge of the truth; to conform their lives to the image of Christ; to resolve their conflicts and answer new challenges; to judge and rebuke all wickedness, evil, and sin; to conduct them in their mission to the nations; to offer models of good and trustworthy interpretation; to continue drawing readers into the inexhaustible depths of Scripture, there to meditate, contemplate, delight in, and chew on each and every word that testifies to the God who alone is holy, whose name is jealous; to rise in mystical ascent to the vision of God; in a word, to worship him.

## Theological Standards of Excellence

At last, to the list itself. Here are eight *theological* standards of excellence for theological interpretation of Holy Scripture:

*(1) Doxological*–Scriptural reading is in service of and encompassed by the glory of the triune God. Theological interpretation succeeds when it terminates in the praise of the God of Israel.

*(2) Spiritual*–Scriptural reading is a spiritual affair, which is to say, it is an element in the ongoing work of the Holy Spirit's sanctification of sinful believers. It begins and ends, therefore, with appeal to the Spirit's help to be given an ear to hear "what the Spirit is saying to the churches" (Rev 2:29).

*(3) Evangelical*–Scriptural reading is intimate with the gospel because the matter of Scripture is Jesus Christ,

and the name of Jesus Christ is the good news of God.

*(4) Edifying*–Scriptural reading has, among its ends, the twofold telos of building up the church in love and knowledge of God and neighbor–each in that order.

*(5) Jubilaic*–Scriptural reading is accountable to the divine preferential option for the poor. If such reading ought to be evangelical–announcing the gospel to the world–and edifying–building up the saints in the love and knowledge of God and neighbor–then it ought, too, to be Jubilaic, that is, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor and "good news to the poor" as Jesus does in the Gospel of Luke (4:16–21; 6:20–26).

*(6) Fruitful*–Scriptural reading should bear fruit, that is, issue in living active response and obedience; further, it must be received, considered, disputed, enacted in the community of faith.

*(7) Prophetic*–Scriptural reading is, as I argued in the first section, an occasion for God's people to respond, "The word of the Lord." It is, that is to say, an occasion for human words to bear divine speech, for God's word to be given us, for prophecy.

*(8) Penitent*–Scriptural reading is between the times and so an activity of sanctified sinners on the way. Theological interpretation of the Bible will therefore be ruthless and unguarded about the role of sin in practices of reading: in the way the church has read across time; in the way our communities read today; in the way I myself read. Theological reading ought to be marked by a spirit of repentance; it is, when and where it is faithful, necessarily penitential reading.

## Hermeneutical Standards of Excellence

As for the standards of excellence that comport with hermeneutical matters–with the surface of the text, with its diction and syntax and style and genre and the rest–I will discuss seven. Rather than thinking of them in terms of correctness, a toggle switch between "right" and "wrong" readings, I suggest it is better to frame these hermeneutical criteria in terms of fittingness. Interpretation is an art, and art, though rightly subject to canons of judgment, is not a math equation. It calls for wisdom honed and articulated in and through well-formed acts of imagination, affective reception, patient critique, and humanistic discernment. Excellent theological interpretation will, therefore, in its *hermeneutical* encounter with the signs of Scripture, strive for maximal fittingness in relation to the following:

*(1) Text*–Scriptural reading is just that, reading. So to read a text of Scripture means to do whatever one's community or society understands reading to entail: determining meaning, syntax, grammar, vocabulary, allusions, ambiguities, sense, reference, and so on. What "reading" means is always conventional, that is, it is a customary practice ruled by socially established (but never fixed) rules that one receives, and does not create whole cloth. Which means that reading itself will ordinarily be indexed to just these socially constructed and accepted rules, which may be highly context-dependent and may therefore look very different across cultures, communities, and time periods. Whatever conventions prevail in one's context, however, it is the text that takes pride of place, the text in all its detail and specificity. A proposed theological reading will be assessed with respect to the text read and the reasons offered in support of the reading. Such reasons should have primary reference back to the text, to the way the words run there.

*(2) Context of origin*–Scriptural reading concerns texts written in contexts that are not one's own; it therefore takes into account the origins and circumstances of the text's writing and initial reception, whether these be social, cultural, linguistic, historical, or whatever.

*(3) Canonical context*–Scriptural reading does not stop at the level of the pericope, but locates and makes sense of discrete texts in the larger canonical context and, by extension, in the whole sweep of the divine economy. To read any passage or book of Scripture in permanent isolation, actively divorced from the rest of the canon, is to fail to read theologically. Moreover, it is to fail to understand what that passage or book actually means *as Scripture*.

*(4) Context of reception*–Scriptural reading is not timeless or homeless; it is particular to person, community, time, and place, embedded in a network of relations and inherited histories. This means that the way in which biblical texts are read will rightly be influenced by the context of reading (as every preacher knows), whether this be highly specific issues (one community's struggles) or more general ones.

*(5) Epistemic context*–Scriptural reading is a work of the intellect and therefore rightly makes appeal, in the reading act, to any and all other relevant spheres of knowledge. This was uncontroversial for centuries. Though its application was a matter of learning and prudence, many church fathers allowed that, if a text of Scripture contradicts an item of public or natural knowledge, it need not be the case that the former trumps the latter as a

matter of course.

*(6) Magisterial context*–Scriptural reading happens in a tradition, specifically the tradition of the one holy catholic and apostolic church. It does not happen apart from that tradition, though it is also a participant therein and not merely an observer. It is under authority, and it has a whole host of former readings and teachings to take into account when any one text is taken up to be read.

*(7) Proportion*–Scriptural reading relies heavily on prudence and good judgment regarding the relative importance of texts and their interpretation, and so for their location between the center and the periphery of the faith. Faithful theological interpretation of Scripture will seek to be proportionate, canonically and theologically, giving greater emphasis to "the weightier matters of the law" (Matt 23:23) and lesser emphasis to adiaphora. Fittingness here means considering whether one's reading should be narrow or capacious, dogmatic or pluralistic, bold or tentative. Some texts are clearer than others; some topics are more important than others; some questions are more pressing, considering one's context, than others.

**Conclusion**

Theological interpretation is not immune to judgment. It has standards of excellence to which it is accountable. These standards are twofold, theological and hermeneutical. They follow from the nature of Scripture, its role and authority in the church, and above all its God-ordained ends. These take rise in the pilgrim journey of God's people from resurrection to parousia, from kingdom come at Golgotha to kingdom's final coming at Christ's return.

Tim Sensing, DMin, PhD

# Appendix 3: Being Episodic

A. Episodics have lost the capacity or the will to make meta-plots. To say "lost" is to make a judgment. Maybe, episodics are simply not wired the same way for either good or ill. Another term: Mosaics is a term used for a generation of folk who are suspicious of meta-plots. They live in a world that lives scene to scene. Linked to the evolution of the "shrinking screen"–from community meeting house, theatre, TV, computer, to Twitter.
   1. Preaching to Mosaics: Parables where you make a scene in the pulpit and you move scene to scene or episode to episode.
   2. Clustering where the pieces are fitted together into a Mosaic. Something faithful in how the fragments fit together.
B. The narratival self is often assumed philosophically. One example: "The sequential and progressive nature of Christian growth also acknowledges our basic human existence as beings living within the confines of time. The continuity of the self from moment to moment inextricably links me-in-the-present with both me-in-the-past and me-in-the-future. Even when a person changes, growing to a degree that others describe them as a "different person" they nevertheless remain the same essential self, connected to their own history just as they pursue a future continuous with but different from their present. Our lives of growth are time-bound progressive processes."
C. There are essentially nine properties of episodic memory that collectively distinguish it from other types of memory. Other types of memory may exhibit a few of these properties, but only episodic memory has all nine:
   1. Contain summary records of sensory-perceptual-conceptual-affective processing.
   2. Retain patterns of activation/inhibition over long periods.
   3. Often represented in the form of (visual) images.
   4. They always have a perspective (field or observer).
   5. Represent short time slices of experience.
   6. They are represented on a temporal dimension roughly in order of occurrence.
   7. They are subject to rapid forgetting.
   8. They make autobiographical remembering specific.
   9. They are recollectively experienced when accessed.
D. From psychology–
   1. "Episodic Future Thought: Remembering the Past to Imagine the Future" in *Handbook of Imagination and Mental Simulation*. Edited by Karl K. Szpunar and Kathleen B McDermott. NY Psychology Press, 2008.
   2. Can you imagine for me, you are 68 years old, it is Christmas at your house, grandchildren have come to visit. … describe the scene.
      a) Mental time travel = ability to represent past and future.
      b) The capacity for episodic future thought.
      c) How? Recollection of the past is a fundamental component of envisioning the future. It is intertwining of episodic future thought and recollection of past events.
   3. Philosophically, episodic memory before 1972 was not differentiated from semantic memory.
      a) Episodic memory: ability to remember events from one's personal past.
      b) Semantic memory: ability to remember declarative knowledge devoid of a sense of reexperiencing the past. (Tulving, 1972).
   4. Episodic Future Thought
      a) "…simulating the future, we recursively sample elements of remembered events (e.g., people, places, objects, etc.) to help generate a virtually unlimited number of potential future scenarios."
      b) How was it determined?
         (1) Studies of amnesiacs. The inability to recall past events is related to the inability to imagine future events.

                (2)       Childhood development. 4–5 years old before they can start to imagine future possibilities.

        c)       People are able to differentiate between memory and imagination.

        d)       Construction of the event is high when using the imagination.

                (1)       There is an active and continuing construction.

                (2)       While reconstructing an event (also has construction) there is less active thought. Determined by neuro analysis.

E.       Definition as prompted by *To Change the World: The Irony, Tragedy, & Possibility of Christianity in the Late Modern World*, by James Davidson Hunter. Oxford Press, 2010.

    1.       Pg. 209–speaks of the influence of media: transforms time and space, compartmentalizes, represents experience, and the illusion of intimacy. It is a simulated reality that supersedes lived reality. The second point compartmentalizes, and is described as …

    2.       "Second, electronic media such as the radio, television, and Internet compartmentalize the world and place its parts together in incoherent ways, as when a news report on a famine in Africa is followed by an advertisement offering pharmaceutical help for erectile dysfunction, which is then followed by the latest results of the NCAA basketball tournament in Charlotte, North Carolina; the stock market news from New York, London, Frankfurt, and Tokyo; a murder trial in Los Angeles; a trailer for a new coming-of-age movie; and so on. The format of the newspaper also compartmentalizes this way with no overarching narrative structure, but the new electronic media does it more seamlessly, rapidly, and intensely. The fictional and the real, the comical and the serious, the insignificant and the significant, all blend together flattening out the distinctions among them. The net effect is that all content is trivialized." (pg. 209)

    3.       Continuous Partial Attention–"In our day, the personal and even psychological implications are profound. The very nature of modern life is its fragmentation and segmentation into multiple constellations of experience, knowledge, and relationships with each constellation grounded in a specific social and institutional realm of a person's life. Under such conditions, we experience a fragmentation of consciousness–what someone has recently called, "continuous partial attention." This fragmentation is often reinforced by a world of hyperkinetic activity marked by unrelenting interruption and distraction. On the one hand, such conditions foster a technical mastery that prizes speed and agility, and facility with multiple tasks–for example, using e-mail, I-M, the cell phone, the iPod, all the while eating lunch, holding a conversation, or listening to a lecture. But on the other hand, these very same conditions undermine our capacity for silence, depth of thinking, and focused attention. In other words, the context of contemporary life, by its nature, cultivates a kind of absence in the experience of "being elsewhere." (Pg. 252)

F.       Definitions as prompted by Long's *From Memory to Hope*

    1.       Galen Strawson's article http://lchc.ucsd.edu/mca/Paper/against_narrativity.pdf

    2.       Diachronics vs episodics

        a)       Strawson argues that being narratival is the accepted philosophical position in most places. He defines it as being

                (1)       Diachronic

                (2)       Story-telling tendency

                (3)       Form-finding tendency

                (4)       Revisionist

        b)       Episodics

        c)       Abstract: "I argue against two popular claims. The first is a descriptive, empirica thesis about the nature of ordinary human experience: 'each of us constructs and lives a "narrative" . . . this narrative is us, our identities' (Oliver Sacks); 'self is a perpetually rewritten story . . . in the end, we become the autobiographical narratives by which we "tell about" our lives' (Jerry Bruner); 'we are all virtuoso novelists . . .. We try to make all of our material cohere into a single good story. And that story is our autobiography. The chief fictional character . . . of that autobiography is one's self' (Dan Dennett). The second is a normative, ethical claim: we ought to live our lives narratively, or as a story; a

‘basic condition of making sense of ourselves is that we grasp our lives in a narrative’ and have an understanding of our lives ‘as an unfolding story’ (Charles Taylor). A person ‘creates his identity [only] by forming an autobiographical narrative – a story of his life’, and must be in possession of a full and ‘explicit narrative [of his life] to develop fully as a person’ (Marya Schechtman).

3. Strawson argues, people do not perceive themselves as living out a narrative in their daily lives. People do not value much the stories of their own past and do not live as though the past stories form their lives; they prefer to live out an episodic present moment as their own existential identity. See Long, pgs. 10–12.

    a) While knowing that their lives are the present continuation of the past and that their lives will be the continuation of the present does not mean that past/future are significant.

    b) Strawson says, “I have absolutely no sense of my life as a narrative with form. Absolutely none. Nor do I have any great or special interest in my past. Nor do I have a great deal of concern for my future. … The way I am now is profoundly shaped by my past, but it is only the present shaping consequences of the past that matter, not the past as such.”

4. My own memory is episodically remembered but not sequentially remembered. I order memory using different constructs. I rarely know when something happened chronologically or in relationship of when something else happened. I can often know what time it is or how long something is taking, but not know when something happened.

G. Objections (http://mindhacks.com/2010/06/24/against-narrativity/)

1. “Although Strawson refers to a wide range of western philosophy and literature, it is notable that he doesn’t allude to eastern philosophies such as Zen Buddhism in support of his argument. There is a strong anti-representational sentiment in Zen philosophy, which ties in with the claim that Enlightenment is the experience of reality without the mediation of abstract concepts (and thus also, presumably, unmediated by narratives also).

    a) “Only the moving part of the mind (manas in Hindu philosophy) can construct a narrative. Neither the past nor the future is here now. The still part of the mind–Buddhi–has no idea what a narrative is. Our essential nature is surely only available to our awareness in the present. ‘Narrative’, by definition, is a defense against the present (the belief that somehow the past or the future contains the truth about our identity). The question as I see it, is, what is it that we fear from the present?–Where, surely, and only, awareness of our true nature resides.

2. “I think Strawson’s argument against narrativity presumes–incorrectly in my opinion–a narrow and specific definition of narrative as linear. I think there is plenty of narrative possibility for nonlinear or episodic representation. Hypertext literature is one excellent example, but even literature going back to the 1960s provides numerous examples (i.e., Kurt Vonnegut’s “Slaughterhouse Five,” Richard Brautigan’s “Trout Fishing in America,” or William Burrough’s “Naked Lunch.”)

H. Episodic Memory

1. As compared to Semantic Memory

2. See http://www.scholarpedia.org/article/Episodic_memory

3. See http://karlszpunar.com/Karl_Szpunar_Webpage/Publications.html

I. Examples of Episodic Thought Processes

1. Re-mixing of albums

    a) Playlist logic vs. album logic. Meaning is created by the sequencing of songs.

    b) A playlist may mean something to me but not to you. It is a different logic but equal to narratival logic.

    c) Psalms as a playlist?

2. Movies: *Pulp Fiction*, *Memento*, *50 First Dates*.

    a) *Memento:* From Wikipedia *The film's nonlinear narrative is presented as two different sequences of scenes interspersed during the film: a series in black-and-white that is*

*shown chronologically, and a series of color sequences shown in reverse order (simulating for the audience the mental state of the protagonist). The two sequences meet at the end of the film, producing one complete and cohesive narrative.*

    b)  How do you experience these movies?
    c)  Do you reconstruct the narrative?
  3.  TV: 24, (multiple scenes happening simultaneous occurring).

J.  Implications
  1.  What significance does anamnesis have theologically? How does memory of past events relate to participation in Christ in the present tense?
  2.  What significance does a proleptic perspective have theologically? How does imagining future life in the present tense change us?
  3.  What significance does an eschatological worldview have theologically?
  4.  Is being episodic a generational phenomenon or a way people's minds are differently structured? Other ways this question is framed: Ontological or Experiential? Nature or Nurture?
  5.  If a generational phenomenon (GenY, Millennials, etc.) …
    a)  High emphasis on experience/entertainment. Low emphasis on 'boring.'
    b)  Social Networking, multi-tasking (and the myth thereof), computer usage, avatar lives, plastic identities–a present-tense experience.
  6.  How does this conversation about episodics connect to "Topical Preaching"?
    a)  Discursive
    b)  Experientially driven.
  7.  If our churches are composed of multiple ways people phenomenologically process the sequencing of thought, what does that say about preaching?

# Appendix 4: A Word of Exhortation

C. Black, "The Rhetorical form of the Hellenistic Jewish and Early Christian Sermon: A Response to Lawrence Wills," *Harvard Theological Review* 81 (1988): 1-18; Lawrence Wills: "The Form of the sermon in the Hellenistic Judaism and Early Christianity," *Harvard Theological Review* 77 (1984): 277–99.

A.      Acts 13:14–41–A missionary sermon cast in a narrative setting as a typical synagogue homily. Paul was invited to give a word of exhortation "logos paraleseos" (word of exhortation).

I.   Exempla–recounting of salvation history from exodus to conquest (Acts 13:16b–33a; 33b–37 (comparing Jesus to David) authoritative evidence adduced to commend the points that follow. An indicative or exemplary section in the form of scriptural quotations, authoritative examples from past or present, or reasoned exposition of theological points.

II.   Conclusion: (Acts 13:38–39) Paul draws a conclusion; carries the weight of demonstrated truth. A conclusion, based on the exempla and indicating their significance for those addressed using particle (oun, dio, dia, touto).

III.   Final exhortation (Acts 13:40–41). Exhortation expressed with an imperative or hortatory subjunctive and oun.

The progression, then, from exempla to conclusion to exhortation carried a cumulative force that would be well adapted to the oral sermon in the synagogue or church.

Examples in Hebrews: The same pattern is exemplified throughout the book of Hebrews. Note the term "logos paraleseos" (word of exhortation) in Hebrews 13:22.

| Exempla | | |
|---|---|---|
| Introduction | 3:1–6 | 8:1–6 |
| Scripture | 3:7–11   8:7–13 | |
| Exegetical argument | 3:12–4:13 | 9:1–10:18 |
| | | |
| Conclusion | 4:14a | 10:19–21 |
| | | |
| Exhortation | 4:6–16   10:22–25 | |

Example Acts 2

| Exempla | 2:14–35 |
|---|---|
| Conclusion | 2:36 |
| Exhortation | 2:38 [and many more words] |

## The Prayer of Oscar Romero

It helps, now and then, to step back and take
    the long view.
The Kingdom is not only beyond our efforts,
It is even beyond our vision.
We accomplish in our lifetime only a tiny
    fraction of the magnificent
    enterprise that is God's work.
Nothing we do is complete,
Which is another way of saying that
The Kingdom always lies beyond us.
No statement says all that should be said.
No prayer fully expressed our faith.
No confession brings perfection.
No pastoral visit brings wholeness.
No program accomplishes the church's
    mission.
No set of goals and objectives includes
    everything.
This is what we are about.
We plant the seeds that one day will grow.
We water seeds already planted,

Knowing that they hold future promise.
We lay foundations that will need further
    development.
We provide yeast that produced effects far
    beyond our capabilities.
We cannot do everything,
And there is a sense of liberation in realizing
    that.
This enables us to do something, and to do it
    very well.
It may be incomplete, but it is a beginning,
A step along the way,
An opportunity for the Lord's grace to enter
    and do the rest.
We may never see the end results,
But that is the difference
Between the master builder and the worker.
We are workers, not master builders,
Ministers, not messiahs.
We are prophets of a future that is not our
    own.
Amen.

- Archbishop Oscar Romero

# Bibliography

"The Second Helvetic Confession," *The Book of Confessions, The Constitution of the Presbyterian Church (USA), Part I*, Louisville: The Office of the General Assembly, 1996), 5.004, 55.

Alcántara, Jared E. *The Practices of Christian Preaching: Essentials for Effective Proclamation*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2019.

Allen, O. Wesley *Determining the Form.* Minneapolis: Fortress, 2008.

Allen, Ronald J. *Interpreting the Gospel: An Introduction to Preaching.* Eugene, OR: Chalice Press, 1998.

Allen, Ronald. "Theology Undergirding Narrative Preaching," in *What's the Shape of Narrative Preaching*? Edited by Mike Graves and David J. Schlafer. St. Louis: Chalice, 2008.

Allen, Ronald. "Why Preach from Passages in the Bible?" In Thomas G. Long and Edward Farley, *Preaching as a Theological Task: World, Gospel, Scripture*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1992.

Allen, Ronald. *Patterns of Preaching: A Sermon Sampler*. St. Louis: Chalice, 1998.

Ammerman in Ammerman, "Introduction: An Invitation to Congregational Study." In *Studying Congregations: A New Handbook,* edited by Nancy T. Ammerman et al., 7–21. Nashville: Abingdon, 1998.

Augustine, *On Christian Doctrine*, trans. D. W. Robertson, The Library of Liberal Arts. New York: Macmillan, 1958.

Austin, J. L. *How To Do Things with Words*, ed. J. O. Urmon and Maria Sbis. Cambridge: HUP.

Baban, Octavian D. "Conflicts in Acts: Luke's Style and Missionary Paradigms," *Journal of European Baptist Studies* 1.3 (2001): 19–38.

Bain, Alexander. *The Emotions and the Will*. London: Parker, 1859.

Barnhart, David L. and L. Susan Bond, "Homiletix: Using Comics to Teach Buttrick's Model."

Bevans, Stephen B. *Models of Contextual Theology*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2006.

Black, Max, *Models and Metaphors: Studies in Language and Philosophy.* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1962) 40.

Black, Max, "More About Metaphor," *Metaphor and Thought*. Edited by Andrew Ortony. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1962), 28–29.

Brown, Sally A. and Luke A. Powery. *Ways of the Word: Learning to Preach for Your Time and Place.* Minneapolis: Fortress, 2016.

Bultmann, Rudolf. "Is Exegesis Without Presuppositions Possible?" *Existence and Faith*, ed. Schubert Ogden. New York: Meridian Books, 1960.

Bush, Joseph E. *Practical Theology in Church and Society*. Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2016.

Buttrick, David "Story and Symbol, the Stuff of Preaching," in *What's the Shape of Narrative Preaching*? Edited by Mike Graves and David J. Schlafer. St. Louis: Chalice, 2008.

Buttrick, David. *Homiletic: Moves and Structures*. Philadelphia: Fortress, 1987,

Campbell, Charles L. *Preaching Jesus: New Directions for Homiletics in Hans Frei's Postliberal Theology*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997.

Childers, Jana (ed.). *Purposes of Preaching*, St. Louis: Chalice, 2004.

Cicero, Marcus Tullius. *De Inventione*, 1.7.

Craddock, Fred. *Without Authority*, 45, 143–44.

Davis and Hays, *The Art of Reading Scripture*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003.

Davis, Grady. *Design for Preaching*. Philadelphia: Fortress, 1958.

Dawes, Gregory W., *The Body in Question: Metaphor and Meaning in the Interpretation of Ephesians 5:21–33* (Leiden, Netherlands: Brill Academic Publishers), 27.

Derrida, Jacque. "Living On". In *Deconstruction and Criticism*. Harold Bloom et al. New York. Continuum, 1986.

Derrida, Jacque. *Writing and Difference.* Translated by Alan Bass. Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1975.

Derrida, Jacque. *Positions.* Translated by Alan Bass. Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1981.

Eagleton, *The Idea of Culture*. Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2000.

East, Brad. "What are the Standards of Excellence for Theological Interpretation of Scripture." *Journal of Theological Interpretation*, Vol. 14, No. 2 (2020): 149–79.

East, Brad. *The Doctrine of Scripture.* Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2021.

Eslinger, Richard. *The Web of Preaching: New Options in Homiletical Method.* Nashville: Abingdon, 2002.

Farley, Edward. "Preaching the Bible and Preaching the Gospel." 71–106, in *Practicing Gospel: Unconventional Thoughts on the Church's Ministry*. Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 2003.

Farley, Edward. "Sacred Rhetoric: A Practical Theology of Preaching," 71–106, in *Practicing Gospel: Unconventional Thoughts on the Church's Ministry*. Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 2003.

Farley, Edward. "Toward a New Paradigm for Preaching." In Thomas G. Long and Edward Farley, *Preaching as a Theological Task: World, Gospel, Scripture*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1992.

Flanders, Christopher. "Bringing Shame upon an Honored Missiological Paradigm: A Study of Conviction and Elenctics." *International Journal of Frontier Missiology* 37:3–4 (2020): 121–31.

Florence, Anna C. *Preaching as Testimony.* Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 2007.

Foster-Harris, William. *The Basic Patterns of Plot,* University of Oklahoma Press, 1959.

Fowl, Stephen E., and L. Gregory Jones. *Reading in Communion: Scripture & Ethics in Christian Life*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991.

Fowl, Stephen E. *Engaging Scripture: A Model for Theological Interpretation*. Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 1998.

Fowl, Stephen E. *Theological Interpretation of Scripture.* Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2009.

Gallagher, *Clashing Symbols: An Introduction to Faith & Culture*. Mahwah, NJ: Paulist, 2003.

Geertz, Clifford. *The Interpretation of Cultures*. New York: Basic, 2000.

Gibbs, Raymond W. *The Poetics of Mind: Figurative Thought, Language, and Understanding*. Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 1994.

Gorman, *Elements of Biblical Exegesis.*

Goto, Courtney T. *Taking on Practical Theology: The Idolization of Context and the Hope of Community*. Theology in Practice 6. Leiden: Brill, 2018,

Green, Joel B. (ed.). *Hearing the New Testament: Strategies for Interpretation.* 2nd Edition. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010.

Harper, Douglas. "Trust," *Online Etymology Dictionary*.

Harris, Johnathan, "God's Justice–Establishing Act in Christ: Justification in Galatians through the Lens of Contemporary Metaphor Theory." (SBL Pauline Theology Section, Nov 20, 2021)

Hauerwas, Stanley and L. Gregory Jones (eds.) *Why Narrative: Readings in Narrative Theology.* Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989.

Jacobsen, David Schnasa. "The Practice of Homiletical Theology in a Confessional Mode" Christian Scholars Conference, Nashville, TN, 2017.

Kelsey, David H. *Proving Doctrine: The Uses of Scripture in Modern Theology*. Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 1999.

Kevin J. Vanhoozer, *"Introduction: What is Theological Interpretation of the Bible?"* in *Dictionary for Theological Interpretation of the Bible*, ed. Kevin J. Vanhoozer with Craig G. Bartholomew, Daniel J. Treier, and N. T. Wright. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2005.

Kittay, Eva F., *Metaphor: Its Cognitive Force and Linguistic Structure* (New York:  Oxford University Press, 1987), 31, 34–38.

Lakoff and Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1980), 139–46.

Lamar, J. S. *The Organon of Scripture*. Philadelphia: Lippincott, 1860.

Lash, Nicholas. "Performing the Scriptures," in Richard Lischer's *The Company of Preachers: Wisdom on Preaching, Augustine to the Present*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002.

Lee, Mason. *Core Affirmations.* ACU BIBM 693 class presentation, 2021.

_____. *Learning to Speak of God: Patience as a Homiletical Virtue.* Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2023.

Levinas, Emmanuel. *Totality and Infinity: An Essay on Exteriority.* Translated by Alphonso Lingis. Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1986.

Lindbeck, George A. *The Nature of Doctrine: Religion and Theology in a Postliberal Age.* Philadelphia: Westminster, 1984.

Lindbeck, George. "Scripture, Consensus, and Community," *This World* 23 (1988).

Lindbeck. George A. "Scripture, Consensus and Community." *The Church in a Postliberal Age*. Edited by James J. Buckley. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002.

Lischer, Richard. "The Limits of Story." *Interpretation* 38 (January 1984): 26–38.

Lischer, Richard. *Theology of Preaching: The Dynamics of the Gospel*. Durham: Labyrinth Press, 1992.

Long, Stephen D. *Theology and Culture: A Guide to the Discussion.* Cascade Companions. Eugene, OR: Cascade Gooks, 2008.

Long, Thomas and Leonora Tubbs Tisdale (eds.), *Teaching Preaching as a Christian Practice: A New Approach to Homiletical Pedagogy*, WJK, 2008.

Long, Thomas G. *Preaching and the Literary Forms of the Bible*. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1989.

Long, Thomas G. *Witness to Preaching.* Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 1989.

Long, Thomas G. "Shaping Sermons by Plotting the Text's Claim Upon Us," in *Preaching Biblically: Creating Sermons in the Shape of Scripture*. Edited by Don Wardlaw. Philadelphia: Westminster, 1983.

Long, Thomas G. *Preaching from Memory to Hope*. Westminster John Knox, 2009.

Long, Thomas G. *Senses of Preaching,* Atlanta: John Knox, 1988.

Lose, David J. "Narrative & Proclamation," Academy of Homiletics 32nd Meeting, 1997.

Lose, David J. "Whither Hence, New Homiletic." Academy of Homiletics 35th Meeting, 2000.

Lose, David J. *Confessing Jesus Christ: Preaching in a Postmodern World*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003.

Lowry, Eugene. *Doing Time in the Pulpit.* Nashville: Abingdon, 1985.

Lowery, Eugene. *How to Preach a Parable: Designs for Narrative Sermons*. Abingdon Preacher's Library. Nashville: Abingdon, 1989.

Lowry, Eugene. *The Homiletical Plot*. Atlanta: John Knox, 1980.

Lowry, Eugene. *The Sermon: Dancing the Edge of Mystery*. Nashville: Abingdon, 1997.

Macky, Peter W., *The Centrality of Metaphors to Biblical Thought: A Method for Interpreting the Bible*. Studies in the Bible & Early Christianity. (Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen, 1990).

Mark Ellingsen, *The Integrity of Biblical Narrative: Story in Theology and Proclamation*. Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1990,

Matheny, *Contextual Theology*: *The Drama of Our Times.* Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2011.

McKenzie, Stephen L., and Stephen R. Haynes (eds.). *To Each Its Own Meaning: An Introduction to Biblical Criticisms and Their Application*. Revised and Expanded. Philadelphia: WJK, 1999.

McKim, Donald K. "The Gospel as Empowered Speech." In Thomas G. Long and Edward Farley, *Preaching as a Theological Task: World, Gospel, Scripture*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1992.

Meyer, Heinrich. "Commentary on Acts 16," *Meyer's Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament* 63–67.

Miller-McLemore's *Christian Theology in Practice: Discovering a Discipline*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2012.

Miroslav Volf*, Captive to the Word of God: Engaging the Scripture for Contemporary Theological Reflection.* Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010.

Nelson, Ryan. "Who Was John Mark? The Beginner's Guide," *OverviewBible*, 17 April 2019, https://overviewbible.com/john-mark/.

Pears, *Doing Contextual Theology*. New York: Routledge, 2010.

Peirce, Charles Sanders. "*Pragmatism*," *Essential Peirce: Selected Philosophical Writings.* Bloomington: IUP, 1998.

Quintilian, *Institutio Oratoria*, 12.1.

Reid, Robert, David Fleer, and J. Bullock, "Preaching as the Creation of an Experience: The Not-So-Rational Revolution of the New Homiletic," *Journal of Communication and Religion*, 18 (1995): 1–9.

Rempel, John K. "Trust," *International Encyclopedia of Marriage and Family*.

Resner, Andre. "Do You See this Woman? A Little Exercise in Homiletical Theology," 19–24, in David Schnasa Jacobsen (Ed.), *Theologies of the Gospel in Context,* Eugene, OR, 2017.

Resner, Andre. "Reading the Gospel for Preaching the Gospel," in the Collected Papers of the 2008 Annual Meeting of the Academy of Homiletics.

Resner, Andre. BIBM 493 class presentation, ACU 1999.

Richards, I. A., *The Philosophy of Rhetoric*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1946), 93–103

Ricoeur, Paul. *Hermeneutics and the Human Sciences*, ed. and trans. John B. Thompson. Cambridge: CUP, 1981.

Ricoeur, Paul. *The Rule of Metaphor: The Creation of Meaning in Language.* London: Routledge, Taylor and Francis, 1987), 6.

Ricoeur, Paul. "Stellung und Funktion der Metapher in der Biblischen Sprache," *Evangelische Theologie* 34, no. Supplement (1974): 51–52. https://doi.org/10.14315/evth-1974-sh04

Ricoeur, Paul. "Towards a Hermeneutic to the Idea of Revelation." *Harvard Theological Review* 70 (April 1977): 1–37. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1017/S0017816000017600

Schreiter, *Constructing Local Theologies*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2006.

Searle, John. "The Storm over the University." *New York Review of Books* (December 6, 1990): 34–42.

Selby, "Preaching as Mimesis," 259, quoting Paul Woodruff, "Aristotle on *Mimêsis,*" in *Essays on Aristotle's Poetics*, edited by Amélie Oksenberg Rorty (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1992), 91–93.

Sensing, Tim. "Imitating the Genre of Parable in Today's Pulpit," *Restoration Quarterly* 33 (Fourth Quarter 1991): 193–208.

Sensing, Tim. "A Strategy for Preaching Paraenesis*." Restoration Quarterly* 38 (Fourth Quarter 1996): 207–218.

Sensing, Tim. "After the Craddock Revolution: A Bibliographic Essay." *Leaven* 11 (Fourth Quarter 2003): 211–219.

Sensing, Tim. "Aristotle's Poetics: Comparative Offerings to Homiletical Theory and Practice." *Homiletic* 42 no.1 (2017). http://www.homiletic.net/index.php/homiletic/.

Sensing, Tim. "Being There Even When You Are Not: Presence in Distance Preaching." *Religions* 14, no. 3 (March 6, 2023): 347. http://dx.doi.org/10.3390/rel14030347.

Sensing, Tim. "From Exegesis to Sermon in Romans 12:9 – 21," *Restoration Quarterly* 40 (Third Quarter 1998): 171–187.

Sensing, Tim. "How Lonely Stands the Preacher." *Restoration Quarterly* 59 (Fourth Quarter 2017): 234–246.

Sensing, Tim. "Preaching Ephesians: The Fourfold Fountain of God" *Restoration Quarterly* 62 (Second Quarter 2020): 81–97.

Sensing, Tim. "Preaching to Colossians," *Restoration Quarterly* 52 (Fourth Quarter 2010): 207–222.

Sensing, Tim. *Qualitative Research: A Multi-Methods Approach to Projects for Doctor of Ministry Dissertations*. Eugene: OR: Cascade, 2022.

Sensing, Tim. "Reimagining the Future: Past Tense Words in a Present Tense World," In *Preaching Eighth Century Prophets*, edited by David Fleer and Dave Bland, 199-133. Abilene, TX: ACU Press, 2004.

Sensing, Tim. "Toward a Definition of Paraenesis." *Restoration Quarterly* 38 (Third Quarter 1996): 145–158.

Sensing, Tim. "Wearing Trifocals: Reappropriating the Ancient Pulpit for the Twenty-first Century Pew." *Restoration Quarterly* 48 (First Quarter 2006): 43–54,

Sensing, Tim. *Practicing Practical Theology*, forthcoming.

Smith, Christian. *What is a Person?* Chicago, CUP: 2010.

Soskice, Janet M. *Metaphor and Religious Language* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1985), 15

Soskice, Janet M. *The Kindness of God: Metaphor, Gender, and Religious Language*. U.S.A.: Oxford University Press, 2008).

Swinton and Mowat, *Practical Theology and Qualitative Research*. 2nd ed. London: SCM, 2016.

Tisdale, Leonora Tubbs. *Preaching as Local Theology and Folk Art*. Minneapolis: Fortress, 1997.

Tannehill, Robert C. "The Gospels and Narrative Literature" 11.

Tanner, Kathryn. *Theories of Culture: A New Agenda for Theology*. Guides to Theological Inquiry. Minneapolis: Fortress, 1997.

Thompson, James. "Narrative Preaching from Romans." In *Preaching Romans*, 53–74, edited by David Fleer and Dave Bland. Abilene, TX: ACU Press, 2002.

Thompson, James. *Preaching Like Paul: Homiletical Wisdom for Today*. Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 2001.

Treier, Daniel J. *Introducing Theological Interpretation of Scripture: Recovering a Christian Practice.* Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008.

Veling, Terry A. *Practical Theology*: "*On Earth as It Is in Heaven.*" Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2005.

Wardlaw, Don M. "Preaching as the Interface of Two Social Worlds: The Congregation as Corporate Agent in the Act of Preaching." In Arthur Van Seters, *Preaching as a Social Act: Theology and Practice*. Nashville: Abingdon, 1988,

Wardlaw, Don M. "Need for New Shapes," 13, 16.

Warren, Timothy. "A Paradigm for Preaching," *Bibliotheca Sacra* (Oct-Dec 1991): 463–86.

Wills, Lawrence. "The Form of the Sermon in Hellenistic Judaism and Early Christianity." *Harvard Theological Review* 77 (1984): 277–99.

Wilson, Paul Scott. *The Practice of Preaching*. Nashville: Abingdon, 1995.

Wolterstorff, Nicholas. "Preaching the Word of God," in *What is Jesus Doing? God's Activity in the Life and Work of the Church*. Edited by Edwin Chr. Van Driel (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2020), 247–69.