



# EQUIPPER

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The monthly e-magazine from the Church Administration and Development team of Grace Communion International.

Dear preacher:

I imagine we all view preaching as both a privilege and a challenge. Thanks for all you do to meet the challenge! We know how much time, angst, sweat (and even tears) go into preparing and delivering a sermon.

As you know, “little things” often make or break a sermon. In this issue, we address some of them, starting here with the sermon’s length. As one of my seminary professors (a renowned preacher) was fond of saying, “Some preachers just don’t know when to ‘land the plane’—they keep circling and circling!”



Mark Twain told a story of being present in a church one sweltering Sunday evening to hear a missionary named Mr. Hawley preach—his goal was raising money for a ministry serving the homeless:

*"Well, Mr. Hawley worked me up into a great pitch. I could hardly wait for him to get through. I had four hundred dollars in my pocket, and I wanted to give him that and borrow more to give. You could see the greenbacks in every eye. But instead of passing the plate then, he kept on talking and talking...and as he talked, it grew hotter and hotter. And we kept growing sleepier and sleepier. My enthusiasm went down, down, down, at a hundred dollars a clip, until finally, when the plate did come around, I stole ten cents from it out of pure spite."*

You'll recall President Lincoln's Gettysburg Address. It had only 300 words. Nobody remembers the other guy who spoke that day (for about two hours!). And nobody gets upset when a preacher finishes early. As Shakespeare wrote, *"Tis better to be brief, than tedious."*

## INSIDE THIS ISSUE

- 1 The privilege and challenge of preaching
- 2 Tips for effective preaching

So here's our first tip for effective preaching (see more on page two): *Keep the sermon short and to the point.* We hope you find these tips helpful, and please share them with other preachers in your congregation.

Serving the living Word with you,

Ted Johnston  
*Equipper* editor

## Tips for effective preaching

1. **Have an effective introduction.** The most important part of a sermon is its first five minutes. For help, watch a short webinar at <http://vimeo.com/45509011>
2. **Make your point clear.** It is common for preachers to try to cover too much information, so pick a point and stick with it. For help, watch a short webinar at <http://vimeo.com/48925622>
3. **Be interesting.** Boring presentations, lifeless information and passionless points sail right over the heads of most members. And “over their heads” misses their hearts. It is imperative that we preach accurate, Biblical content. However, it is equally important that we present it in ways that connect.
4. **Use stories.** When preachers tell a personal story, interest increases. Something about a story causes people to lean in. So try telling a story about every ten minutes—and be sure that it helps clarify your one point (see point #2).
5. **Be consistent in preparation.** Don’t “spin your wheels”—use a simple, consistent process for sermon preparation (like the one shown below from karischurch.org—note its grounding in Scripture).

## Five Steps to Preparing Sermons

from *Faithful Preaching* by Tony Merida

### step five

add an introduction and conclusion

1. **Introduction:** arouse interest, introduce the MPT and MPS, demonstrate the need, and share your expectations; consider sharing a story, asking a question, presenting a problem.
2. **Conclusion:** summarize the content and MPS; also ask for a response to the sermon; consider using stories, questions, or quotations here, as well.
3. **Manuscript:** write out your message fully. Read over it, and pray over it many times.
4. **Prayer:** Pray throughout your preparation, over your final manuscript, and as you head to the pulpit to preach.

### step four

develop the functional elements

1. **Explanation:** explain key words or phrases, the text’s context, an important verse, or key doctrines.
2. **Application:** consider commands to keep, errors to avoid, sins to forsake, promises to claim, thoughts about God to consider, doctrines to store, convictions to hold; remember application can be specific or stored; weave it throughout your outline.
3. **Illustration:** use to explain, help apply, argue for, or intensify a truth, or motivate and inspire your hearers; read, observe, seek stories.

### step three

outline the text

1. **Work on its style:** create your points with oral presentation and personal application in mind.
2. **Remember the goals:** reflect the text’s meaning, support the MPS, and communicate it all effectively.
3. **Choose the best approach:** select from the different acceptable ways to outline.
4. **Choose the best words:** seek to be clear, reiterate your ideas, and progress through your points.

### step two

unify the redemptive theme

1. **Identify the MPT:** look for explicit statements, surrounding context, reoccurring ideas.
2. **Identify the MPS:** consider why the text is important and needed for fallen people, what concerns they share with the original audience, and how the redemptive nature of God is displayed in the text.
3. **Create a title or hook:** express the MPS in a catchy, brief, repeated sentence.

### step one

study the text

1. **Initial Preparation:** Where do I start?
2. **Obvious Observations:** What does the text say?
3. **Responsible Interpretation:** What does the text mean?
4. **Redemptive Integration:** How is the gospel related to this text?
5. **Concluding Implications:** How does this apply to us today?



MPT: a past tense statement about what the text meant in its historical context.

MPS: a present or future tense application of the MPT stated in a single sentence. It is the proposition or the essence of the sermon in a sentence.