

Sermon Discernment Worksheet

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Question 1: What text do I want to preach from?

- Focus: To select ***one text*** from which to base the entire sermon on, which gives guidance and direction to the entire sermon planning process.
 1. Is this text a complete unit of thought?
 2. Is this a text that I have preached from recently?
 3. Does this text address a need, doctrine or insight that I am aware of?

Question 2: What did I discover when I read the text?

- Focus: To read the text several times, and in a couple of different translations, simply for the purpose of reading—and hearing—the text as it is presented in scripture.
 1. What is my preferred translation? What other translation(s) did I use?
 2. What observations, questions, initial impressions, or related thoughts did I have?

Question 3: Am I working with a good translation of the text?

- Focus: To determine if the selected translation of the text is rendered well.
 1. Are there any different words or phrases present between the different translations that I am reading from? Are there any differences in how the sentences are constructed?
 2. If so, do these differences affect how I read and understand the selected text?
 3. If not, how does this unity in translation both affirm the centrality of this text in Christian teaching and clarify my initial thoughts about its message?

Question 4: What is the essential section of this text? Where does it start and stop?

- Focus: To establish a clear and coherent text to develop the sermon from.
 1. What are the *natural* breaks in the selected text (Note: The chapter and verse notations were *not* original with the text!)?
 2. How do these parameters influence my initial thoughts about the text's message, especially as I begin thinking about the sermon?

Question 5: What have others said about this text?

- Focus: To integrate biblical scholarship into your own study of the selected text.
 - Note: It is highly encouraged to defer to using scholarly sources until this point.
1. What is the historical background of the selected text?
 2. What type of literature is the selected text (i.e., narrative, prophetic oracle, letter)?
 3. What are the key words, phrases and ideas in the selected text?
 4. What theological, doctrinal, pastoral or spiritual teaching is present in the text?

Question 6: What is my point of contact with this text?

- Focus: To determine where I stand in relation to the selected text.
 - Note: As much as we may enjoy the biblical study process, we must remember that we live in the modern world and must eventually return with a message or sermon.
1. At what level do I engage with the selected text? In remembering that I am “overhearing” the original message, how have I listened to the selected text?
 2. At what point do I identify with the selected text? How has this text spoken to and shaped me as I have engaged with it?

Question 7: How would I communicate this text in my own words?

- Focus: To summarize the content and message of the selected text in my own words.
 - Note: This is not a summary of the sermon, only of the selected text.
1. How would I summarize the selected text in a single paragraph (4-5 sentences)?
 2. How would I summarize the selected text in a single sentence?

Resources

- Craddock, Fred B. [*Preaching*](#). Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1985.
- Fee, Gordon D., and Douglas Stuart. [*How to Read the Bible for All Its Worth*](#), 4th ed. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2014.
- Greidanus, Sidney. [*The Modern Preacher and the Ancient Text: Interpreting and Preaching Biblical Literature*](#). Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1989.
- Kim, Matthew D. [*A Little Book for New Preachers: Why and How to Study Homiletics*](#). Little Book Series. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Books, 2020.
- Wilson, Paul Scott. [*The Four Pages of the Sermon: A Guide to Biblical Preaching*](#), rev. ed. Nashville: Abingdon, 2018.

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