FREE TRAINING BOOK

Preparing a Sermon

From the text of Scripture to a message the people can carry home

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Welcome — what this book is

This is a free house teaching book about preparing a sermon: choosing and studying a passage of Scripture, finding its one true message, building it in an order hearers can follow, and preparing the preacher as well as the sermon. It stands beside the Daily Devotional on this platform as house teaching — a help for those who are learning to preach and teach the Word of God.

The pattern it follows is the one commended in Scripture itself: "Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth" (2 Timothy 2:15). Preparation is not a lack of faith in the Spirit; it is how a faithful workman honours the text and the people.

Chapter 1 — Begin with prayer and the text

A sermon begins on the knees and in the Book, in that order. Pray first — for the people who will hear, for your own heart, and for light on the passage. Then choose the text. For a beginner, one short passage — a paragraph of Scripture, a psalm, one episode from the Gospels — is better than many verses scattered like seed on rock.

Read the passage slowly, several times, in more than one sitting. Read it aloud. Read what stands before it and after it, because a verse out of its context can be made to say almost anything, and the preacher's first duty is to let the text say what it says.

Chapter 2 — Study the passage honestly

Ask the text plain questions, and write the answers down:

- Who is speaking, and to whom?
- What is happening — what came before, what follows?

- What is the main thing being said or shown?
- Are there words I must look up, places I must picture, customs I must understand?

Use the tools available to you: a Bible dictionary, a concordance, other translations, and cross-references — the verses Scripture itself links to your passage. Study until you can explain the passage in simple words to a child. Until then, you do not yet own it; you are still borrowing it.

> *Practice: take one short passage this week. Write its meaning in three plain sentences. If you cannot, study more — the pulpit is not the place to discover what the text means.*

Chapter 3 — Find the one message

A sermon is not a basket of good thoughts; it is one message, carried by one text, aimed at the hearts of particular people. From your study, state the passage's main truth in a single sentence — the **burden** of the sermon. Everything else in the sermon must serve that sentence or leave.

Then ask: what does this truth ask of us? Comfort for the grieving, courage for the fearful, correction for the wandering, hope for the weary — the application grows out of the text, not out of the preacher's mood. A sermon that teaches the mind but never reaches the life has stopped halfway.

Chapter 4 — Build the sermon in order

A clear structure is a kindness to the hearers. A sound, simple pattern:

- **Introduction** — open the door: a question, a picture from daily life, or the need the text answers. Earn attention honestly; never with noise.
- **The text read aloud** — let the people hear the Word itself, read well and slowly.

- **The body** — two or three main points, each drawn plainly from the passage, each explained, illustrated, and applied before moving on.
- **Conclusion** — gather the one message, press it home gently and clearly, and end with prayer or a call to respond.

Write the sermon out, at least in full notes. Writing exposes weak thinking that speaking hides. Then practise it aloud, standing, at preaching pace — a sermon is heard, not read, and only the ear can judge it.

Chapter 5 — Illustrations: windows, not walls

An illustration is a window that lets light into the text: a story from daily life, an example from nature, a moment from the Bible itself. Rules for honest windows:

- The illustration serves the point; it never replaces it.
- Keep it short. When the window becomes the view, the house is forgotten.
- Use only what you believe is true. A preacher who invents stories will eventually invent doctrine.
- Draw from the people's own world — farming, trading, family, journeys — so the truth lands at home.

Chapter 6 — Prepare the preacher

The sermon is carried by a life. In the days of preparation:

- Keep your own heart right with God; confess what must be confessed. An unclean vessel flavours the water.
- Rest. A tired preacher rambles; a rested one is clear.
- Pray through the sermon itself, section by section, naming the people who will sit before you.

- Arrive early, test your voice in the room, and have water near you.

Dress and manner should help the message, never distract from it. The people came to hear the Word, not to watch a performance.

Chapter 7 — In the pulpit: delivery

Speak to be understood: slower than conversation, clear in your consonants, with pauses that let truth settle. Look at the people — all of them, section by section. Vary your voice as the message varies: gentle where the text is gentle, firm where it is firm.

Hold your notes loosely. If you lose your place, pause, breathe, find it, continue; the congregation forgives a pause far more readily than panic. Watch the time and honour it — ending when promised is part of faithfulness, and a sermon that will not end teaches people to stop listening before the Word does.

Chapter 8 — After the sermon

The work is not finished when the preaching ends.

- Note, the same day, what was strong and what was weak — while memory is honest.
- Receive correction graciously, especially from those who love the Word. Weigh every criticism against Scripture, keep what is true, and release the rest without bitterness.
- Pray for the hearers by name where you can. The seed is sown; God gives the increase.
- File your notes, dated. A preacher's archive is a growing treasury — and a record of God's faithfulness to teach the teacher.

Closing — a workman that needeth not to be ashamed

Prayer, honest study, one clear message, a kind structure, a prepared heart, and humble review — this is the craft of sermon preparation. It is learnable, step by step, by every willing workman. Take the next passage God puts in your hands, and begin.