

Blog > Leadership > How to Write a Sermon: A Simple Step-by-Step Guide

How to Write a Sermon: A Simple Step-by-Step Guide

Looking for tips on How to Write a Better Sermon? Seasoned pastor? Young preacher? Here's a simple step-by-step guide on how to write a great sermon.

CATEGORY

LEADERSHIP

PUBLISH DATE

July 13, 2018

AUTHOR

Tithe.ly



Getting in front of your church and preaching every week is challenging mentally, emotionally, and spiritually. It takes hours and hours of thinking, writing, praying, and practicing to prepare what God has put on your heart to preach.

Studies show that, on average, it takes 10 to 18 hours to prepare a sermon for preaching -- and that's only one sermon, not an entire sermon series or simple [church donation letter](#).

And that estimate is based on being a seasoned sermon writer, not a beginner! If you're a full-time pastor, there's a good chance you're spending between 400 to 720 hours per year in sermon preparation. In other words, you'll spend nearly 17 to 30 days in preparation. You might be able to do this more efficiently with a [great sermon writing tool](#), but there's more to it than a simple tool.



If you're a seasoned pastor, you probably have your own approach and process. But if you're green behind the ears (new to preaching), you may be asking "where do pastors get their sermons and topic ideas from week after week so they can develop a sermon that resonates with their congregants?"



And that's the point here.

Below is a simple step-by-step process we use to teach pastors and budding preachers how to prepare a sermon.

In this post, we're going to break down the following steps for how to write a sermon:

- Strategy
- Study
- Sticky
- Style
- Solidify
- Sabbath
- Say
- Speak

For your church service, use these basic steps to writing a sermon as checkpoints for you in your sermon preparation or entire [sermon series planning](#). Work through our process and then make it your own as you write more and more sermons.

If you follow this process, you'll come out with a biblical and memorable message from God's word.

Let's dig in!

How to Write a Sermon

Strategy

One of the most helpful things you can do as a preacher is to get ahead in your sermon preparation. Instead of waking up on Monday trying to figure out what you're going to preach on Sunday, plan your sermons out at least a month in advance (or more if possible).

Strategizing what you're going to preach is one of the most transformative things you can do for your preaching.

Strategizing will allow you to have a big picture of what your preaching will probably look like for the month, the quarter, six months, or a year. I emphasize "probably" because things happen and sometimes God will lead you in a different direction as a new sermon series approaches.

So one month to a year before you preach, you'll want to focus on these three big things:

1. Write down the name of the sermon series your sermon is a part of
2. Choose your biblical passage
3. Work through and write down the big idea of the biblical passage

Writing a sermon or [new year sermon](#) from this starting point rather than from scratch is a big difference maker. So work hard to strategize and get ahead.

Now, as for the rest of the process and effective sermon prep, they're broken down into a 7-day process. If this process doesn't jive with your schedule, what you can do is add the steps together.

For example, you can knock out days 1-3 at whatever time you set aside to write your sermon.

Keep mind that this guide on how to write a sermon is based on lots of practical research and observations.

Day 1: Study

Goal: Understand the biblical passage and be able to recognize its nuances so that you can handle God's word well.

Step 1: Personal study

questions:

- Does it line up with what you wrote down a month to a year ago?
- Are you seeing something different now?

It's also a great idea to read the surrounding textual context. If you're reading an epistle or shorter book of the Bible, read the entire thing. If you're reading from a more extensive book of the Bible, consider reading the one or two chapters before that passage and the one or two chapters after that passage. Keep in mind that doing this may spark other sermon ideas or even full [sermon series topics](#).

By doing this, you'll have a better understanding of the flow of the particular biblical passage you're preaching on.

Step 2: Formal study

What have others said about the biblical passage you picked?

In this step, you'll need to consult things like:

1. Original language
2. Commentaries
3. Books
4. Sermons
5. Articles

When you consult these various tools, it's going to be essential to write down your findings.

Now, you likely won't use everything you learn, but all the learnings you gain will help build into your mind and heart the meaning of the text.

Step 3: Finalize the "big idea" of the passage

As you've studied the text in more detail, has the big idea of the passage changed from what you wrote down?

It may not change much, but is there a better way to say it? Is there a slightly different direction it needs to take?

A "big idea" example

From [Luke 22:39-62](#):

Big idea: Jesus relied on God's strength as he faced the cross, allowing the same disciples who abandoned him to later be courageous in the face of death.

Day 2: Sticky

Goal: Make the big idea memorable so that it sticks with your congregation.

Step 1: Create a "sticky statement"

Take your big idea and write it in a way that is memorable. You want your big idea to stick with your congregation. So you need to ask yourself, "How can I say this in a way so that people can remember it on Monday and moving forward?"

As I've written in [another article](#), here are some strategies you can employ to make a statement stick with your hearers:

- Make it **rhyme**. "There's no win in comparison." – Andy Stanley
- Or make it **alliterated**. "If you want your life to count, be gripped by the God of grace." – from a sermon I preached on single-mindedness
- Or make it **echo**. "You are of infinite worth to the infinite God." – from a sermon I preached on the doctrine of humanity
- Or make it a **metaphor**. "The root of murder is anger. Only God can uproot it from our hearts." – from a sermon I preached on the commandment, *do not murder*
- Or make it **contrast**. "A life devoted to self ultimately leaves you alone." – [Carey Nieuwhof](#)

The key here is to make it precise, make it clear, and make it applicable.

Step 3: Outline your sermon

Now that you have the big pieces to your sermon, you can start writing a sermon outline. We'd use a great **sermon writing tool** like Sermon.ly.

When it comes to writing a sermon outline, there are many options you can adopt. The key is to figure out what outlining method works best for you. No matter what strategy you adopt, you'll want to write down a single sentence that summarizes what each section will be about.

Here are some examples of a sermon outline method:

Traditional 3-Point Sermon Template from Sermonary:

INTRODUCTION

1

Point #1:

EXPLANATION

Explain Point #1

ILLUSTRATION

Illustrate your point

APPLICATION

Apply this word to your audience

"Own the Vision," a 3-point sermon outline from Ministry Pass:

Own the Vision

Big Idea of the Series: This three-week series is designed to accompany a church-wide stewardship campaign. Whether you are raising money for facility improvements, a new ministry, or a building project, this study will help your congregants understand the mission of the local church and the importance of financially supporting it as God's hands and feet in the world. "Own the Vision" is about doing just that—owning the vision that God has given us for our community and the world.

Week 1
Text: Matthew 28:16–20
Topic(s): Evangelism, Discipleship, Mission
Big Idea of the Message: Jesus commanded Christians to live on mission through evangelism, discipleship, and community.
Application Point: Our vision within our local church should include making disciples, not just converts.

Introduction: What does it mean to receive a mission? We may think of a military call to action, or perhaps a top-secret message that will self-destruct in five seconds (like in the *Mission: Impossible* franchise. You might not be a Navy SEAL or a secret agent, but if you are a follower of Jesus, you have been assigned a mission, the most important one: to reach a lost world with the good news of God's love for them. As believers, we carry a message that can mean life or death for many. Jesus commanded Christians to live on mission through evangelism, discipleship, and community. Doing our part to fulfill his commission is the vision of this church.

Point #1: We Are Called to Go (vv. 16–19)

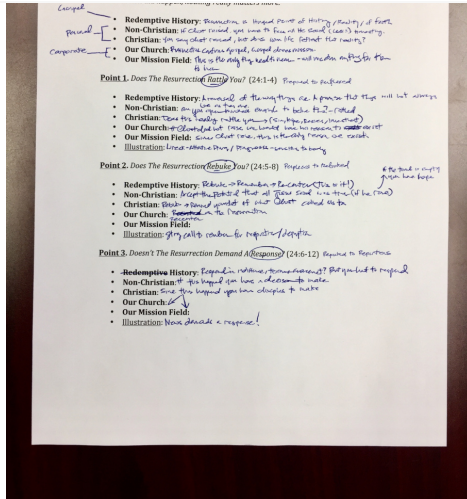
Explanation: Jesus gathered his followers for his last words on earth, a pretty important message. He gave them their final instructions before he ascended into heaven (vv. 16–17). Because Jesus has been given all authority (v. 18), he tells them to "go and tell the world." Because Jesus was victorious over sin and death, his disciples' mission was to go and make more disciples by telling them what Jesus has done (v. 19).

Illustration: For people who decide they can't leave town for vacation but still want to have a special time with family out of the normal routine by doing fun things and resting, they may choose to take a "staycation," a vacation in their hometown. Some ideas for a staycation include finding tourist attractions in your area and making a day trip, loading up on special treats and snacks, watching a family movie projected on a wall outside, and trying new restaurants out of the normal lineup. It's not about the location but about the quality time together. In the same way, many believers might think going on a mission trip is the only way to share the gospel with people who need to hear it. But we can stay in our home town and live on mission, too.

Application: Often, when we see the words "all nations" in this passage, we can be

[Click here](#) to download the entire sermon outline

From [Matt Capps](#), senior pastor of Fairview Baptist Church:



Day 3: Style

Goal: When you're thinking about how to write a church sermon, make sure to Add flavor to the sermon and fill in the outline.

Step 1: Introduction and conclusion

How your sermon begins is crucial.

In the first few minutes, people will decide whether or not they are going to jump on the train. So we want to ask the question, "Why do they need to listen?"

Because here's the thing:

They're wondering why they need to listen to what you're about to say.

Sure, some people will listen because it's a sermon. But not everyone will automatically track with you.

Everyone has a lot of things on their mind that they often bring to the sermon. And you're competing with those things. So you must make the most of those first few minutes.

Likewise, the conclusion is close behind on the importance scale. If you don't arrive at the next train station intact, your congregation won't get to where you want to take them. And they may not show up for the next sermon in the [sermon series](#).

If people don't know what they need to do, you haven't preached a good sermon. So you need to make clear in the conclusion the thing everyone ought to do in response to what has been said.

Writing a sermon well means you know where you're starting and where you're going. You have to make the most of the first few minutes and the last few minutes.

Step 2: Illustrations

Throughout this process, some illustrations have probably come to mind. Plug those into the outline.

If you need more sermon illustrations, check out our [library of sermon illustrations](#).

Step 3: Fill out the outline

Here you need to fill in the rest of your sermon outline.

Don't let any part go untouched.

Fill it all in from introduction to conclusion.



Products ▾

Resources ▾

Pricing

Help

Demo

Church Login

Sign Up Free

Depending on how much progress has been made up to this point, day four may be an easy day of sermon preparation.

Step 1: Finish illustrations

Maybe you've thought of another illustration to plug in, or you need to find another one to plug into your outline.

Do that now.

Step 2: Finish sermon content

You'll need to do two things:

1. Finish filling in your sermon outline if needed
2. Go over your sermon outline and answer the following questions:
3. Is the "big idea" adequately communicated?
4. Is the message practical?
5. Is the message useful?
6. Will it grab people's attention?

If you need to communicate with other staff members about your sermon content (such as for a slideshow), a [church management software](#) can make this step quick and easy.

Day 5: Sabbath

Goal: Take a break from sermon preparation.

On Day 5, let your sermon simmer and don't revisit it. Take the day off from sermon preparation.

It's best if this is the same day as your day off. This day is just as important to writing a sermon as the day we began. Trust God with the work that has already been done, understanding that he'll do far more than we can do.

Day 6: Say

Goal: Practice preaching your sermon.

This is a step that will likely feel awkward the first few times you do it, but it can make all the difference in preaching a compelling, memorable sermon or preaching a dud.

As you go through it, you'll want to take notes on what worked and what you need to change.

Day 7: Speak

Goal: Preach the word!

Over to you! Did this practical guide on How to Write a Sermon Help?


As I mentioned above, there are a variety of ways you can write a short powerful sermons and write a sermon outline. What we provided for you here is a process we've found helpful in teaching pastors and people interested in preaching how to prepare for their sermon.

Looking for more sermon writing resources for pastors?

We've got you covered.

1. The [best sermon writing tool](#) that supercharges your writing with a sermon writing side kick
2. [10 Christmas Sermons to Make Pastors Merry and Bright](#)
3. [Make Your Father's Day Sermon Memorable](#)
4. [How to Write a Sermon: A Simple Step-by-Step Guide](#)

Special Offer


TitheNext

Oct 17th AT 10AM PT

LIVE EVENT

See What's Coming Next in Church Tech!

We'll share HUGE updates coming to TitheNext's suite of church software and you can win big prizes like an all-expenses paid trip, Macbook, \$500 Amazon gift card, and more!

REGISTER NOW

Search the Blog

Search

You Might Also Like

- What 1 Kings 17 Tells Us About God's Perspective on Provision
- The Digital Transformation of the Church w/ Darrel Girardier
- Breaking Through the Noise: How to Use Highly Tailored and Targeted Messages to Transform Your Church's Marketing
- The Reality of Planting a New Church
- How to Run a Bible Study for Teens

More Resources

Editor's Note: This is a guest post by [Justin Trapp](#). Justin is the co-founder of [Sermonary](#).

Want free stuff? Sign Up for Our Newsletter!

Get weekly updates on church tech, happenings at Tithe.ly, free resources for your church and more. Delivered every Thursday.

First name

Email *

SIGN ME UP

AUTHOR



Tithe.ly
<https://tithe.ly>

Tithe.ly provides the tools you need to engage with your church online, stay connected, increase generosity, and simplify the lives of your staff.

With tools like text and email messaging, custom church apps and websites, church management software, digital giving, and so much more... it's no wonder why over 37,000 churches in 50 countries trust Tithe.ly to help run their church.

From increasing giving, managing your congregation, and engaging your church, our collection of resources will keep up to date on the latest church and ministry trends.

FREE RESOURCES

- Top 10 Best Giving Platforms for Churches
- Top 10 Best Church Apps
- Top 10 Best Church Website Platforms
- Top 10 Best Mobile Giving Platforms for Churches
- The Best Church Text Messaging Services
- Top 10 Best Church Management Solutions

Related Blog Posts



CHURCH TECH

SEPTEMBER 23, 2023

Nourishing the Spirit with SMS: A New Age of Spiritual Connection

Can texting provide spiritual nourishment? The short answer: yes. Here are 5 practical ways to use SMS to pastor your flock.

Written by **Dean Sweetman**



CHURCH TECH

SEPTEMBER 22, 2023

A Church Using AI: Insights from Pastor Peter Haas

Written by **Caroline Morris**



CHURCH GROWTH

SEPTEMBER 21, 2023

Unleashing the Kingdom's Impact: The Critical Role of Mission and Vision

It's key for us to reflect on whether our mission and vision statements are still relevant to our church's current calling. An...

Written by **Brianne Shaw**



Products ▾

Resources ▾

Pricing

Help

Demo

Church Login

Sign Up Free

PRODUCTS

- Church Giving
- Online Giving
- Mobile Giving
- Text Giving
- Pledge Campaigns
- Giving Insights Dashboard
- Custom Church App
- Event Registration
- Church Management (ChMS)
- Background Checks
- Church Website Builder
- Text Messaging and Email
- Tithely Pay Point of Sale
- Sermonly Sermon Writer
- Tithely Print
- Accept Bitcoin and Crypto

- Product Updates
- Integrations
- Pricing

HELP AND SUPPORT

- Help Center
- Get Support
- Schedule a Sales Demo

- Getting Started with Tithely
- FAQ
- Tithely University
- API Documentation
- Platform Status

- Download Tithely Giving App

RESOURCES

- Customer Success Stories
- Tithely Reviews
- Compare Tithely
- Our Partners
- Recommendations
- Free Resources
- Giving Research and Data
- Tithely Launch Kit
- Guide to Mobile Giving
- Subscribe to Our Newsletter

- PODCASTS
- Modern Church Leader
- Church Tech Podcast
- Tithely Backstage

COMPANY

- About Tithely
- Meet the Team
- Careers
- Media and Brand Kit
- Shop Tithely Merch
- Tithe.ly Next
- Contact Us

- TOP BLOG ARTICLES
- Read the Tithely Blog
- Scriptures About Giving
- Tithing in the New Testament
- Bible Verses About Money
- 20 Tithe & Offering Messages
- Why Do We Give Tithes & Offerings
- The Best Church Text Messaging Services
- Top 10 Best Giving Platforms



[Terms of Service](#)

[Privacy Policy](#)

[Help](#)