

What Shape Should the Sermon Take? A Study in Sermon Form

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A. What is Sermon Form?

“...An organizational plan for deciding what kinds of things will be said and done in a sermon and in what sequence.” (Long, *Witness of Preaching*, p. 93)

Key Question: What is the author’s _____?

“A sermon form is a plan for the experience of listening, not just an arrangement of data, and it is the listeners who are missing from the typical process of outlining.” (Long, *Witness*, p. 95)

Form is the _____ for the sermon.

B. What factors should govern Sermon Form?

1. What is the _____ intent?
2. What _____ must be included in the sermon?
3. What dynamics of the human _____ process should be considered?
4. What type of _____ is it?
5. What is the _____?

What do we raise to the _____?

C. What are some common errors of form?

D. What types of sermon form are available?

1. "Traditional" Preaching

a. Six Parts to the sermon:

Text, Title, Introduction, Proposition, Body, Conclusion

b. Theme or proposition statement is foundational.

c. An outline

Points that demonstrate:

1) _____ – Parts support the main proposition

2) _____ – Each main division should be of equal importance –

3) _____ – Each main division should carry the point forward

Progress

4) _____ – Each main division should be parallel in construction

5) _____ – Each main division should be arranged in an ascending scale of impact

The outline shapes communication, not just information.

d. Strengths

Organized

Logical

Main point evident

Textual

Memorable

Pattern for teaching – This is how to study Scripture

e. Weaknesses / Criticisms

2. Inductive Preaching

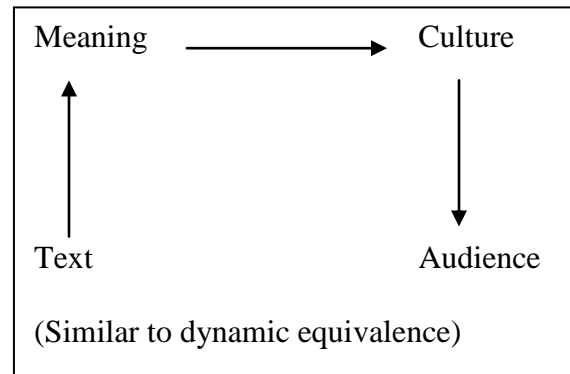
Craddock (*As One without Authority*) – “Problem-solving activity”

Allow the listeners to go through the same process of discovery as the preacher in his exegetical process so that the hearers engage in the same discovery process that culminates toward a climactic ‘aha’ moment for the listener. The listener will then finish the sermon themselves by naming its resolution in their own minds and lives. (Long, *Witness of Preaching*, 98)

Sermons are a Problem Solving Activity

Tends to minimize the text

Tends to allow wandering



3. “Felt Need” Preaching

a. “Surprise” Preaching (Lowry, *The Homiletical Plot*)

Hearers control the sermon – preacher must create a “problem”, or dilemma, or bind so that the hearers feel “ambiguity” and desire its resolution. Create suspense and then resolve the issue.

E.g. funerals create a natural dilemma.

5 movements or stages:

- Upset the Equilibrium
- Analyze the discrepancy
- Disclose the clue to resolution
- Experience the Gospel
- Anticipate the consequences

Create a “Eureka” moment.

- b. Principle Preaching (Bisango, *Principle Preaching*)
- Topical approach
Turn the outline into 'principles'
- 1) State the principle
 - 2) Explain the principle
 - 3) Apply the principle
 - 4) Illustrate the principle
- c. "Felt Needs" of unbelievers (Warren, *Purpose Driven Church*)
- 1) Fundamentally man-centered
 - 2) Fails to proclaim the whole council of God
 - 3) Moralistic preaching replaces the gospel of grace
 - 4) Avoids basic issues of sin and guilt
 - 5) Power of the gospel becomes muted
 - 6) Inadequate for the maturing believer (survey @ Willow Creek)
4. "Motion Picture" Preaching - Buttrick, *Homiletic*
- Human mind works like a camera: focus, background, foreground, type of lens, filters, etc. Sermon points are like a snap-shot. Put them together and a well-constructed sermon makes a motion-picture.
- People listen in 4 minute intervals.
5. Narrative Preaching
- Style, not the type of passage
First person -- Drama, less preaching
6. Road-Map Preaching
- Like a map – there are many ways to reach a destination

Concluding thoughts:

There is an "implicit anthropology" in these methodologies.
(Long, 105 – quoting Lischer)

What is _____, the _____ or the _____?

Who (or What) _____ the sermon?