

Soldiers For God Ministries

STUDYING FOR SERVICE

REVISED 2025

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Dedications: To my lord and savior Jesus Christ of Nazareth, the living son of God, I say thank You for saving me even though I didn't deserve saving. Thank You for picking the foolish to confound the wise and giving me the wisdom You have allowed me to have through Your Word and I pray that it would continue to grow daily for Your glory. Amen.

To my family: Gina, my wife, who has been there supporting me since the beginning Without Jesus Christ and her there would be no ministry, period. She is a faithful servant to Jesus and soldiers for God's Ministry. Thank you for always encouraging me to never give up. My kids: Savannah, I am so proud of you for finishing the New Testament. Please always make your fathers proud: your heavenly father, of course, and me your dad by always staying in the Word. David, my boy, I believe Jesus has such an awesome plan for you. Maybe I don't always show it but you are to me what Solomon was to King David. I believe you are going to do more than you can possibly even imagine for the glory of God. I'll tell you what King David told Solomon "always be obedient to the Word of God." Noelle, my little model, may you be the perfect model that displays the Word of God for the glory of God through your life in Jesus' name. Gia, my sweetheart, may you be sensitive to the Holy spirit all the days of your life, and may the Word abide in your heart for His Glory, and may your prayers be a sweet offering unto God. v Joy, my girl that always brings a smile to my face no matter what I go through, you thoroughly live up to your name. May you bring glory and joy to Jesus by walking in obedience to His Word all the days of your life! Abigail, my little prophet. like God confirmed your name through the Word of God and the spirit of God, which means "the father's joy", may your life always bring a smile to God's face and may you always make His heart joyful as you do mine. To all my church family, I love you guys more than you will ever know. I thank you and appreciate that you believe in me and the ministry that God has given us for His glory. I truly couldn't do it without you guys. Keep up the great work you guys do for the Kingdom of God.

Chapter 1: Know Your Text

Also known as Hermeneutics

“The more you know your text, the more people will know their God.”

Before you can preach deeply and clearly, you must truly understand the text you’re teaching from. “Knowing your text” means being familiar with the full story or passage. This allows you to stay true to Scripture, avoid misquoting, and keep everything in proper context.

For example, if you’re preaching on Lazarus (John 11:1–46), it’s not always necessary to read all 46 verses during your sermon. Instead, you might read a few key verses aloud and explain the rest of the story to your audience. In preaching classes, I was taught to read no more than 10–12 verses at a time so people don’t lose focus. A good approach is to summarize what’s happening between the key verses.

But to do this well, you must first know the text deeply—by reading it several times until the story lives in your heart, mind, and spirit. This prevents you from preaching out of context and helps you communicate the story clearly and powerfully. A practical tool for understanding your text is asking the “Five W’s”:

The Five W’s:

1. **What** is happening in the passage?
John 11 — Lazarus is sick, dies, and is later raised from the dead Jesus purposely let Lazarus die so he could raise him up again. Mary and Martha Lazarus’ sisters were mourning over the death of their brother.
2. **Where** does it take place?
— Bethany, about two miles from Jerusalem; also at the tomb where Lazarus was buried.
3. **When** does this occur?
— There are a few ways you can answer this question four days after Lazarus died, or during a time of religious opposition to Jesus (around A.D.

28–31). Then talk about how it was a different time: no big hospitals, no electricity, no air-conditioning or pain medication to comfort a dying Lazarus.

4. **Why** did this happen?

— Lazarus was sick and nothing they tried worked. Or you could say why didn't Jesus answer the request from Mary and Martha for Jesus to come heal him, he wanted to give them not a healing but a miracle. Or we can say why people die is because sin came in the world and that is one of the consequences of a sin fallen world, but thank God Jesus showed up as the resurrection and the life.

5. **Who** is involved?

— Jesus, Lazarus, Martha, Mary, the disciples, and the community mourning with them.

Staying in context is critical.

I heard some preachers insert ideas that sound good but aren't actually in Scripture. For example, I've heard people say Jesus had to call Lazarus by name or all the dead would've come out of their graves. That's a nice thought, but the Bible doesn't say that—and "Lazarus" was a common name at the time. We must avoid adding to the text.

When preaching a textual sermon (using many verses to support a topic), it's especially important not to take verses out of context. If you were preaching on faith, then you would look for scriptures stories that had to do with faith. We make sure we are not misquoting God's word so when you look up those scriptures, make sure you don't take them out of context and you are not making them say something they are not. Take Philippians 4:19 for example:

"And my God shall supply all your needs according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus."

You probably said "MY God shall supply all MY needs"

But Paul, the apostle wrote "MY God shall supply all YOUR needs"

Many quote this as a blanket promise, but Paul was specifically speaking to the Philippians—because they had generously supported his ministry. This verse was a result of their giving spirit. We should teach it accordingly: God meets the needs of those who put Him first and give sacrificially. The reason he said this is because if you read the whole book or letter addressed to the Philippians, you will see the apostle Paul commend them on giving to the mission and ministry from their church, he commend him for their love and generosity. After that he says my God shall supply all your needs according to his riches and glory by Christ Jesus. He was speaking to them. He wasn't speaking about himself.

You see we quote this verse without realizing that church was a giving church with love and sacrifice that's why Paul said their needs will be provided for by God because they helped and provided for Paul and for others, we have to explain to people the fullness of scripture and context the way you can explain this person in context is to say something like this “ all the possible speaking about them and not himself in this verse the reason people are not being provided for is because we get greedy and we don't want to sacrifice our time talents and resources for God's glory but until we start loving, giving and start sacrificing like the Philippians. All our needs will not be provided for its time to be selfless and not selfish then and only then will God provide all of your needs”.

Another common example is Isaiah 54:17:

“No weapon formed against you shall prosper...”

Can you quote the rest of it out loud?

Now let's read it Isaiah 54:17 ¹⁷

No weapon formed against you shall prosper,

And every tongue *which* rises against you in judgment

You shall condemn.

This *is* the heritage of the servants of the LORD,

And their righteousness *is* from Me,”

Says the LORD.

This is a beautiful promise—but it’s not for everyone. The rest of the verse says, “This is the heritage of the servants of the Lord.” The protection applies to faithful servants, not just anyone who quotes the verse. If you live in disobedience, you step out of God’s covering and forfeit the benefits He offers.

Weapons are formed and they prosper in a lot of people’s lives. Why would this happen if the scripture clearly states that it will be formed and not prosper?

Because we look at a verse and we quote the part we like, without realizing the fullness of the scripture the word heritage in this verse is another word for benefit. This means this promise as a benefit, and only applies to the people who are true servants of the Lord.

Servant of God will go through trials and weapons will form, but they will not prosper because they have benefits from serving God on the other hand when you don’t serve the Lord, you forsake his benefits a good way to explain this verse is like a doctor has benefits like Christmas bonuses paid vacations and all other other parts but as soon as he doesn’t do his job and ignores his priorities and responsibilities, he forsake those benefits because he has cut himself off.

So, whether preaching a story or quoting a verse, make sure it’s in context. To do this, you must study carefully and read deeply.

Read, Read, and Read Again

Once you’ve answered the Five W’s, read the passage again—and again. Read the chapter before and after your main text to gain fuller understanding. If you’re preaching from John 11, read chapters 9, 10, and 12 to catch details that may enrich your sermon. For example, in John 12, we learn Lazarus, Martha, and Mary hosted Jesus for dinner after Lazarus was raised. Mary anoints Jesus with perfume—a beautiful follow-up to the resurrection story.

Even the smallest verses can carry deep meaning. Take John 11:35: “Jesus wept.” It’s the shortest verse in the Bible, but full of emotion. Jesus wept because of the people’s unbelief, His compassion, and His love for Lazarus. You can build an entire sermon around just that one verse.

Sadly, some preachers read a few verses and then start preaching without truly knowing the full story. That's why their sermons can feel shallow or confusing. A good way of not making this mistake is to read the whole chapter and the story your ministering on, but also read the chapters before and after the main chapter. When you study remember, we are studying for our saviors service so take your time and read and know your text. Most people missed all the amazing details because they are in too big of a rush to get through with studying.

Don't rush. Take your time. Read and understand your text fully. Remember,

the more you know your text, the more people will come to know their God.

Additionally over almost 2 decades of teaching and preaching and studying God's word we have found that the Bible is what changes people's lives and brings success in ministry and in life. Soldiers for God ministry is built on the word of God.

The reason people's lives across the map have been saved, changed, sanctified is because we push people to the Bible, people grow because of the Bible, people walk in their calling because of the Bible, people are saved because of the Bible!

We have seen people's lives transformed from the lowest and worst possible scenarios into amazing testimonies because we were able to teach them the truth of God's word that changed their life and saved their soul. Knowing the text is not about head knowledge it's about coming into a deeper relationship with our savior! and the more you know your text the more you will know the workings of the Holy Spirit. And through that people's life will be impacted because you will become a spring of living water if you're willing to dive deeper, apply hermetics, and ask the Lord for wisdom.

Many Jewish rabbis read the majority of the Old Testament by reading it first in a way that looks at the overall text, literally. Then they start looking at the names, certain keywords, places and numbers within the text to find hidden meaning! We are going to discuss all this & More to fully know the text as much as we can to discover what's within the text by dissecting it and finding treasure that we might have not known was there!

Chapter 2: Notice the Names

“God uses names to speak truth and purpose—don’t overlook them.”

Now that you’ve taken time to study and understand your text, it’s time to go deeper. One powerful way to add meaning to your preaching is to study the names mentioned in Scripture. In biblical times, names were not random—they carried deep spiritual meaning. Names often reflect a person’s character, calling, or even future.

In Isaiah 43:1, the Lord says:

“Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by your name; you are Mine.”

And again in Isaiah 45:4:

“...I have even called you by your name; I have named you, though you have not known Me.”

These verses remind us that God chooses names for a purpose—even before we are born.

God Speaks Through Names

In Bible times, people often named their children based on what they hoped their child would become. In fact, many Jews during New Testament times named their sons “Jesus” because they believed the Messiah was coming soon. The name Jesus means “Jehovah is salvation,” and Christ means “Anointed.” Put together, Jesus Christ means “Anointed Savior.”

I’ll prove to you that God speaks through their names Here’s a powerful example of how names tell a story:

From Adam to Noah

The names in this genealogy (Genesis 5) reveal a hidden message. Look at the Hebrew meaning of each name:

- Adam = Man
- Seth = is Appointed
- Enosh = A natural Man
- Kenan = Sorrow
- Mahalalel = The Blessed God
- Jared = Shall Come Down
- Enoch = Teaching
- Methuselah = His Death Shall Bring
- Lamech = the Grieving
- Noah = Rest

Put together, it says:

“Man is appointed mortal sorrow; but the Blessed God shall come down, teaching that His death shall bring the despairing rest.”

That’s a prophetic picture of Jesus—hidden in a genealogy! That’s why we shouldn’t skip over “boring” lists of names. They may hold messages that point to God’s redemptive plan.

It’s like Bible code and it’s amazing if you put together all 70 to 80 names in the genealogy of Jesus, you will see a whole story of the things that happened in the Old Testament that all point to Jesus Christ and it shows you that there are reasons that God puts these names in the Bible and it’s our job to study and investigate so we can get the fullness of scripture and apply it in our teachings.

Using Names in Your Preaching

When preaching a Bible story, take time to look up what the names mean. For example, in John 11, Jesus raises Lazarus from the dead and interacts with his sisters Mary and Martha. Look at what their names mean:

- Lazarus = Whom God Helps
- Martha = she was Rebellious
- Mary = Bitter / Rebellious Rebellion

Here's how you could use that in a sermon:

“ Sometimes in the midst of our problems, we can get rebellious and bitter because of things that we feel have died or that we missed out on, but God helps his people! And he's telling you in your situation to roll the stone away (stubbornness) because I want to raise up that dead situation and help you in your time of need! “

Let's look at another famous story in the Bible Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego

In Daniel 1:6–7, we're introduced to three Hebrew men who were renamed by the Babylonians that wasn't their original names

- Original Names:
 - Hananiah = God has favored
 - Mishael = Who is like God?
 - Azariah = The Lord has helped

- Babylonian Names:
 - Shadrach, Meshach, Abed-Nego — names that reflect false gods and worldly influence.

Even though they were given new names by their captors, these men stayed faithful to God. They refused to bow to the golden idol, and God protected them in the fiery furnace.

Here's how you could preach it:

“The enemy will try to label you and the enemy will get others to label you and people might call you garbage, no good, drug addict, adulteress and drunk but no matter what they call you and no matter how much the enemy will tempt you don't bow down to the enemy. The enemy tried to label and change the names of Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah but it didn't work. They didn't bow down no matter what happened, they didn't give in, they didn't give up, and they didn't let go of the promises of God! And if You do the same like the three faithful Hebrew men and not bow to the things of the world the enemy might label you but he can never change the character God has made you. When you apply God's Word people will see God's favor upon [Hananiah] you, they will see how God has helped you [Azariah] and they will see God in you [Mishael] .”

You can even tie the meanings of their names to what happened:

- Hananiah = “God has favored.” God promoted them and showed them favor with the king after they got out of the fiery furnace.
-
- Mishael = “who is like God?” When the king looked in the furnace he said “I thought we threw in three but now there are four and one looks like the son of God.” God wants people to see Jesus in the midst of your fiery trials.
-
- azariah = “Jehovah has helped.” God helped them and took them out of harm's way. And He wants to do the same for you.

One of my favorite sermons to preach is found in the book of 2 Samuel in the sixth chapter. The scene in the story is King David bringing back the ark of the Covenant to the city of Jerusalem. As David was bringing back the ark of the Covenant he placed it on a new cart and brought it from the house of a man by the name of Abinadab. Something happened. As they were dancing and playing music the oxen that were pulling the cart that was carrying the ark stumbled and the ark almost tipped over so a man by the name of Uzzah leaned in to grab the ark and as soon as he touched it he died. So the music stopped as well as the rejoicing. Then David went home angry and discouraged and the ark went to the house of a man by the name of obed-edom and the bible says God blessed him.

Look at the meaning of their names:

- Abinadab = The Father is willing
- Uzzah = Strength
- Obed-Edom = Servant / Worshiper

Here's how you might use that:

“Our heavenly Father is willing to give us His presence (Abinadab), but we can't depend on our own strength to handle it (Uzzah). We must approach God as humble servants and true worshipers (Obed-Edom). That's where the blessing is.”

The Prayer of Jabez

1 Chronicles 4:10 tells us about a man named Jabez, whose name means sorrow. But look at his prayer:

“Oh, that You would bless me indeed, and enlarge my territory, that Your hand would be with me, and that You would keep me from evil, that I may not cause pain!”

And God granted his request.

You can preach this as a message of hope:

“You may have started life with sorrow, but that’s not where your story has to end. Like Jabez, you can pray for blessing, influence, protection, and purpose—and God will hear and respond.”

A Personal Story: Names with Meaning

When my daughter Madison Abigail was born, I was reading about a man named Agabus—a prophet who warned of a coming famine in Acts 11. Later that same day, I read the same story in my Bible reading. Right then, my wife sent me a picture of our newborn daughter. The Holy Spirit prompted me to check the meaning of Abigail. It turns out Agabus and Abigail both mean “The Father’s Joy.” God confirmed her name through a book, the Bible, and the Spirit—all on the day she was born.

This reminded me how seriously God takes names. He uses them to confirm His promises and callings.

Start Noticing the Names

Don’t skip over the names in Scripture. Start looking them up and praying about how they connect to the message God is giving you. Names can unlock new understanding and help your audience connect with the Word in a deeper way.

At the end of your study, you can go to the Resource Page at the back of this book to learn how to look up the meanings of names in the Bible.

When we slow down and pay attention to names in Scripture, we discover patterns that deepen our understanding of God’s Word. Abram became Abraham when God expanded his promise. Sarai became Sarah when God spoke life into

her future. Saul became Paul when his purpose shifted from persecutor to preacher. Names are not just labels; they're assignments.

That same principle applies to us today. The world may label you based on mistakes or circumstances, but God speaks identity and destiny through His Word. The key is learning to stop answering to the wrong name. When you study Scripture, ask: What does this name reveal about God's character and what does this scripture reveal about the character and overall

storyline within THE TEXT ? What does it teach about how He relates to His people?

For example, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah teach us that even if culture tries to rename you, your true identity is anchored in God's favor, God's likeness, and God's help. When you bring that into your teaching, you're not just giving information—you're helping people see how God's story and their story connect. That's the power of noticing the names.

The 12 tribes of Israel, when looked at tell the story of the gospel, and God saving His bride and dwelling with her!

- Judah means "Now I will praise YHVH." (Gen 29:35)
- Reuben means "Surely YHVH has looked upon my affliction." (Gen 29:32)
- Gad means "What good fortune." (Gen 30:11)
- Asher means "Happy am I." (Gen 30:13)
- Naphtali means "With great wrestlings have I wrestled." (Gen 30:8)
- Manasseh means "For Elohim [said he], 'has made me forget all my toil.'" (Gen 41:51)
- Simeon means "Because YHVH has heard that I was hated." (Gen 29:33)
- Levi means "Now this time my husband will join me." (Gen 29:34)
- Issachar means "Elohim has given me my wages." (Gen 30:18)
- Zebulun means "Elohim has endowed me with a good gift, now my husband will dwell with me." (Gen 30:20)
- Joseph means "YHVH shall add to me." (Gen 30:24)
- Benjamin means "You shall have this son." (Gen 35:17–18)

Chapter 3: Keep the Cities in Sight

“Cities in the Bible aren’t just places—they carry prophetic meaning that can deepen your message.”

In this chapter, we’re going to explore the importance of cities in Scripture. When you study the Bible, don’t just skip over the names of cities. Many of them have powerful meanings that can enrich your understanding and make your sermons more impactful.

A lot of preachers like to talk about Judah, which means praise or “He shall be praised.” From that one meaning, you can preach all kinds of truths:

- Build your life in praise.
- Praise brings breakthroughs.
- Don’t have a pity party—have a praise party!

That’s great, but there’s even more depth to be found in other cities if we take the time to study them.

Bethlehem: House of Bread

Micah 5:2 prophesied that the Messiah would be born in Bethlehem Ephrathah, a small town in Judah. The name Bethlehem means “house of bread.”

In John 6, Jesus says He is the Bread of Life, sent from heaven to nourish us. So it’s no coincidence that the Bread of Life was born in the House of Bread.

You could preach it like this:

“God doesn’t make mistakes. He sent Jesus—the Bread of Life—to be born in the House of Bread so that we could be spiritually fed. Are you hungry for Him?”

Bethany: House of Misery / House of Dates

In John 11, Lazarus and his sisters lived in Bethany, which means House of Misery or House of Dates (fruit).

This city name adds depth to the story. Jesus walked into a place of grief and pain and turned it into a place of life and testimony.

You could say:

“Even in the middle of your misery, Jesus can show up and change the atmosphere. He can take your pain and turn it into fruit for His glory.”

Nazareth: The Guarded One / Branch

In John 1:45–46, Philip tells Nathanael about Jesus of Nazareth, and Nathanael replies,

“Can anything good come out of Nazareth?”

Why did he say that? Because Nazareth was a small, unimpressive place—barely a village. It wasn’t known for anything important. Yet God chose it.

The Hebrew root of Nazareth means “branch or shoot.” This connects to Isaiah 11:1:

“Out of the stump of Jesse will come a branch...”

You can preach it like this:

“The world might overlook you like Nazareth, but God sees potential. He can grow a branch out of a dry place and bring greatness from the unexpected.”

In the story of Elisha, getting the double portion of anointing when Elijah departs in the whirlwind into heaven, he goes through a series of different cities and many prophets in each city tell him to stand to the side, but Elisha refuses to stop following

Elijah each city represents, how the Church can’t be satisfied, but has to keep reaching growing and going for the glory of God we can not stop Like Elisha did not stop

(2 Kings 2:1-15 NLT)

GET TO THE CROSS BUT DONT STOP THERE Because Jesus didn't!
One of the First cities we see in the story taking place is Gilgal
Gilgal = "a wheel, rolling". Root word translates to the Greek Word Golgotha!

We all know the cross is enough, but we have to not only thank God for His grace that He gave us because of the cross, but also spread the message of it and show other

people that were crucifying flesh (Gal 5:24-25) and being led by the spirit of God, in the power of His resurrection!

DON'T GET STUCK AT THE HOUSE Don't get caught up in the four walls

The next city was Bethel, and it means Bethel = "house of God"

many Christians think as long as I'm in church I'm OK but the enemy would love for

you to get caught up in just the church activities like a country club as long as you're

a part of it, you think you're good but true ministry is outside the four walls bringing

other people not only in church but a part of the body of Christ many people grow up

in church, but don't grow up in Christ! Jesus was always looking outside the four walls for the lost to bring them to the kingdom of heaven!

DON'T GIVE UP GO FORWARD. Don't give up when the trials happen it's a sign your

closer than ever before the next city was Jericho definition is Jericho = "its moon" Fragrance. When the moon gets closer to the Earth and its cycles, there is unnatural

occurs of tidal waves storms things of that nature when you get closer to your destiny,

there will be trial tribulation and storms, but that's when the anointing/fragrance occur don't give up don't go back go forward like never before.

GET LOW

Know it's not you, it's God! Don't allow yourself to get prideful

The next place you see them Cross is the Jordan and it means Jordan = "descender" to get

down to be prostrated. We can easily be sidetracked and think we have accomplished many

things, but if it had not been for the grace and the Lord on our side, we would not be able to do anything always remember like God told Saul the first king of Israel, “when you were small in your own eyes, you was valuable to me” And we know Saul got prideful, and God had to remove him! Let our prayer be Lord, help us be small in our own eyes and valuable in yours! When you follow this formula receiving the cross, bringing people to the cross, not getting stuck in the house, Not giving into your trial and tribulation and staying humble. You will see the double portion of anointing upon you, your house and your ministry in Jesus name. The greatest breakthrough the church can experience is when people get saved and except Jesus as Lord! Elijah or Eliah = "my God is Jehovah" Elisha = "God is salvation"

Bethsaida: House of Fish / Prison In Mark 8:22–26, people bring a blind man to Jesus in Bethsaida. But instead of healing him right there, Jesus leads him out of the town before performing the miracle. Why?

Bethsaida means “House of Fish,” but the root word also suggests meanings like prison, household, or dungeon. Jesus had actually cursed the city earlier in Matthew 11:20–21 because of its lack of repentance.

“Woe to you, Bethsaida... for if the miracles done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented.”

A tour guide in Israel even told me that nothing grows in ancient Bethsaida today. Here’s how you can connect this:

“Sometimes God has to take us out of a place of spiritual dryness and disobedience before He can open our eyes. If you want vision, you may have to leave your comfort zone and step out of a cursed mindset.”

Kadesh-Barnea: Holy, but Stuck

In Deuteronomy 1:1–8, God tells Moses to tell the Israelites,

“You’ve stayed at this mountain long enough. It’s time to move.”

One of the places they camped near was Kadesh-Barnea, which means “Holy.” But the root word also suggests movement—like quivering, shaking, tottering, or wandering. It even connects to the idea of an earthquake.

You could preach it like this:

“Holiness isn’t just a position—it’s a movement. Sometimes God needs to shake us out of our comfort zone and into His will. If you’ve been stuck too long, maybe it’s time to move forward in obedience.”

This message became very real when I was scheduled to preach in Washington, D.C. on August 24, 2011. The day before I preached on Kadesh-Barnea and shook, an earthquake hit the region—a 5.8 magnitude. That made the message even more powerful.

Use the Meaning of Cities to Enrich Your Sermons

When you prepare a sermon, look up the meaning of the city names in your text. It may add a whole new layer of meaning to what you’re preaching. City names often tell a story. They can show transformation, warning, promise, or purpose.

Pastor Anthony has an important sermon about the woman at the well. And in this story, we find the name of the city called Sychar that is translated to drunkenness, and the root word is translated into False hood or split mind (schizophrenia) , so one of the points of the sermon is that God will meet you in your drunkenness. God will meet you in your crazy situation!

“Cities in the Bible aren’t just locations, they’re lessons. Bethlehem shows God’s provision—the Bread of Life in the House of Bread. Bethany shows transformation—Jesus turned misery into testimony. Bethsaida gives a warning—sometimes you have to leave a place of unbelief to see clearly. When you study, ask: What does this city teach about God’s plan? The names of cities can turn a story into a lesson your people can live by

Chapter 4: Numbers Add Up

“Numbers in Scripture aren’t random—they can add insight and power to your preaching.”

Numbers appear all throughout the Bible. Whether it’s the number of days, years, people, or events, they often carry deep symbolic meaning. When you notice these numbers and understand what they represent, you can make your sermons richer and more impactful.

This practice of studying biblical numbers is sometimes called biblical numerology. Though people sometimes take it too far—trying to predict end times or hidden codes—the Bible clearly uses certain numbers consistently to communicate important truths.

In this chapter, we’ll explore the basic meanings behind many common biblical numbers and see how they can connect directly to the text you’re preaching.

What Is Biblical Numerology?

In both Hebrew and Greek, the letters of the alphabet also represent numbers. This means that every word in the Bible has a numerical value. For example, the Greek name Jesus (Iēsous) adds up to 888—a number often connected to the Holy Spirit and new life.

There are many websites and books that explore this in detail. One helpful source is CARM (Christian Apologetics & Research Ministry), which breaks down number patterns in Scripture. Another resource is the classic book *Number in Scripture* by E.W. Bullinger.

While we don’t want to build doctrines solely on numbers, they can help confirm truths that are already clear in the text.

Common Biblical Numbers and Their Meanings

Here is a list of commonly accepted meanings for many numbers found in Scripture:

Number	Meaning
1	God, unity, new beginnings
2	Union, witness
3	Divine completeness, perfection
4	Creation, the world, directions/seasons
5	Grace, God's goodness, the Pentateuch
6	Man's weakness, sin, imperfection
7	Completion, spiritual perfection
8	New beginnings
10	Order, responsibility, testing
12	Government, authority

40	Trials, testing, preparation
50	Holy Spirit, Pentecost
70	Universality, judgment and restoration
666	Number of the Antichrist
888	Jesus, Holy Spirit, resurrection
1000	Divine completeness, glory

Using Numbers in Sermons

Let's look at some examples of how numbers can bring extra insight into a passage:

The Number 4 — The World and Creation

In John 11, Lazarus had been dead for four days before Jesus raised him. Four is the number of the world: four directions, four seasons, four corners of the earth.

By the fourth day, the body would've begun to rot—a clear picture of brokenness and decay in the natural world. But Jesus, as the Resurrection and the Life, steps into that decaying situation and brings restoration.

You could preach it like this:

“Even when something in your life is completely falling apart, Jesus has the power to raise it up again. When you allow Him to remove the stone and

bring light into your darkness, He can make all things new—even what’s been dead for four days.”

The Number 5 — Grace and Redemption

In 2 Samuel 4:4, Jonathan’s son Mephibosheth was five years old when tragedy struck—his father and grandfather (Jonathan and Saul) died in battle. As the boy’s nurse fled, she dropped him, and he became crippled.

Later, in 2 Samuel 9, King David brings Mephibosheth into the palace—not to punish him but to show kindness (grace) because of his promise to Jonathan. David restores his inheritance and invites him to eat at the king’s table continually.

Here’s how you might preach it:

“Maybe you’ve been dropped. Maybe you’ve been broken. But God’s grace finds you, even in your condition. He doesn’t invite you based on your perfection—He invites you based on His promise.”

The Number 8 — New Beginnings

In 2 Peter 2:5, Noah and his family—eight people in total—were saved during the flood. Afterward, they stepped into a completely new world and began again.

Eight represents new beginnings, and in the story of Noah, it reminds us that God can give us a fresh start.

Preaching idea:

“No matter how much destruction surrounds you, God can lift you above the flood. If you remain faithful like Noah, He’ll give you a new beginning.”

The Number 18 — Bondage and Freedom

In Luke 13:11–13, Jesus heals a woman who had been bent over by a disabling spirit for eighteen years. Jesus says she had been bound by Satan.

Eighteen is often associated with bondage in the Bible. Israel was under oppression by enemies for 18 years more than once. But when Jesus touched this woman, she was immediately set free.

Sermon angle:

“It doesn’t matter how long you’ve been bound—Jesus can free you today. He is the same yesterday, today, and forever.”

One Final Thought: Add Meaning, Don’t Force It

Not every number in every passage has a symbolic meaning. Sometimes, a number is just a number. But when you see a number repeated or used in an important context, take a moment to look it up and pray about how it might support the message God is giving you.

Even if the number doesn’t change your sermon, it might add a layer of insight that makes the story more powerful and memorable.

in John 21 Jesus tells the disciples to cast their nets and they pull up an amazing number of fish much more than they anticipated 153 , seems unimportant until you look it up and you will find that 153 in Hebrew means

"I am God" (Ani Elohim)

There is no coincidence with God he aligned things together for his glory. When I went to Israel, the tour guide told us that there was 153 different species of fish in the time of JESUS’ day it may represent bringing in all nations to the kingdom of heaven in the net, which represented the kingdom of heaven, in one of Jesus’s parables

Chapter 5: The Original Language

“Digging into the original Greek and Hebrew opens up powerful truths that are often lost in translation.”

In the last few chapters, we looked at how names, cities, and numbers can add depth to your Bible study and preaching. In this chapter, we’re going to explore another vital layer: the original languages of Scripture.

Most of the Old Testament was written in Hebrew, and the New Testament in Greek. When we study the Bible in English, we’re reading translations. While most are good and trustworthy, certain words in Hebrew or Greek carry meanings that don’t always come through in English. Sometimes, one word in the original language has several layers of meaning—and understanding that can help you preach the full truth of the passage.

Example: “Hate” in Luke 14:26

Jesus said in Luke 14:26:

“If anyone comes to Me and does not hate his father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, yes, and his own life also, he cannot be My disciple.”

This verse can sound confusing or even harsh in English. But the Greek word for “hate” here also means “to love less”.

Jesus wasn’t telling us to be cruel to our families. He was teaching that our love and loyalty to Him must come before everything and everyone else.

You could say it like this:

“Jesus isn’t calling you to hate your family—He’s calling you to love Him more than anything or anyone else. If you can put Him first, then you’re truly His disciple.”

Example: “Witness” in Acts 1:8

Jesus told His followers:

“You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me...” (Acts 1:8)

The Greek word for “witness” is *martys*—where we get the English word *martyr*. It refers to someone who is willing to die for their beliefs.

This means Jesus wasn’t just saying “go tell people about Me”—He was saying, “Be prepared to give everything for Me, even your life.”

Sermon idea:

“To be a witness isn’t just about talking—it’s about living. It’s about standing strong even under pressure. We may not be called to die for our faith, but we’re all called to die to ourselves.”

The word “power” in that same verse is *dunamis*, where we get the word *dynamite*. It refers to explosive, supernatural power.

You could say:

“When the Holy Spirit fills you, you’re not just encouraged—you’re empowered with dynamite strength to be a bold, effective witness.”

Example: “Believe” in John 3:16

We all know John 3:16:

“For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.”

But the Greek word for “believe” is *pisteuō*, and it’s deeper than just mental agreement. It means:

- To commit yourself to something
- To entrust someone with your life
- To honor and respect with action

It's the same word used in Romans 10:9:

“If you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved.”

So instead of just saying “believe,” you could preach it like this:

“To believe in Jesus isn't just about saying the right words. It's about committing your whole life to Him—trusting Him with everything and showing respect through obedience.”

Example: “Infirmity” in John 5

In John 5, Jesus heals a man who had been sick for 38 years at the Pool of Bethesda. Verse 5 says the man had an “infirmity.”

The Greek word here is anesthetos which is related to the English word anesthesia. It means:

1. To be numb
2. To forget
3. To cover pain
4. To be put to sleep

Think about that. This man had become spiritually numb, emotionally asleep, and stuck in his pain.

Here's how you could preach it:

“The enemy wants to numb you to God's voice, make you forget His promises, and keep you asleep in your pain. But Jesus asks, ‘Do you want to be made whole?’ If you're ready to stop making excuses and start believing, He can raise you up today.”

Also notice the pool's name—Bethesda—means “House of Mercy.” There were five porches (five = grace). That adds even more depth to the story.

Example: “Diligently Seek” in Hebrews 11:6

Hebrews 11:6 says:

“Without faith it is impossible to please God... He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.”

The Greek phrase for “diligently seek” is *ekzēteō*, which means:

- To investigate or study deeply
- To search with intensity
- To crave or long for
- To demand back what is yours

That gives you a four-point sermon:

1. Investigate: Study God’s Word when facing a problem.
2. Seek: Go after God through prayer and wise counsel.
3. Crave: Hunger for God’s presence and truth.
4. Demand back: Take back what the enemy has stolen.

You could say:

“To seek God diligently is to go after Him with all your heart—through study, prayer, passion, and persistence.”

Example: The Golden Calf – What Does Your World Revolve Around?

In Exodus 32, the people made a golden calf to worship while Moses was on the mountain.

The Hebrew word for calf is ‘ēgel, and its root word means “to revolve.”

You can use this word study to ask:

“What does your world revolve around? Is it God—or something you made with your own hands, like money, pleasure, or approval?”

Preaching point:

“When we revolve around idols, we break God’s commandments. But when God becomes the center of our lives, He brings truth, order, and purpose.”

Even the Tablets Were Written Front and Back

Here’s a little detail you may have missed: In Exodus 32:15–16, it says the Ten Commandments were written on both sides of the stone tablets.

We often see pictures of them only written on one side—but the Bible says otherwise.

Lesson:

“Don’t just read the surface. Dig deeper. Look at the front and the back of the text. Don’t settle for someone else’s opinion—let God show you the meaning for yourself.”

Revelation Is Meant to Be Uncovered

The Greek word for revelation is apokalyptō, which means:

- To uncover
- To reveal what has been hidden

- To pull back the veil

When you take time to study names, cities, numbers, and words in their original language, you're allowing God to reveal truths that have always been there—just waiting to be uncovered.

One of the books in the Bible, the book of Esther never mentions God by name, but you see

God all over it, but you have to look at the city, the names, the places, and the numbers to

actually see the whole gospel message. We will look at the names and cities of the king the

queen that was rejected the new queen that was excepted, which was Esther and her caretaker

Mordecai also the enemy in the story Haman and the numbers that are connected to the story

1 Xerxes Ahasuerus = "I will be silent and poor"

1 title of the king of Persia, probably Xerxe. LION KING. from the lexicon

Vashti = Beautiful also Wolf. The original Queen was rebellious against the King and did not

want to submit representing the rejected angel Lucifer, which became the enemy also known

as the wolf of the sheep.

Ester = star / wood / tree.

Jesus was seen by the wisemen following a star and gave him gold, frankincense and myrrh,

which represented a king born to die. And he died on Calvary Cross, a tree!

Susa means Lily (Explain)

THATS the season the enemy was destroyed when the Lily's grew

March/April. Also Jesus is the Lily of the valley! (songs of Solomon 2)

Mordecai = "little man" or "worshipper of Mars" thy Rebellion/ persecution.

Mordecai was the one that was not willing to bow before the enemy in the story, and Esther made intercession for him and the nation of Israel, just like

Jesus makes

intercession for you and for me a rebellious people but now we can boldly enter the throne

room of Grace and receive mercy in a time of need! Hebrews 4:14-16 NLT
The name of the enemy was- Hamman = "magnificent". move noisily, confuse,
make a noise,
discomfit, break, consume, crush, destroy, trouble, vex
Remember, you have access to the throne room of grace do not allow the enemy
to vex,
hinder or trouble you to destroy your witness, but we have authority and power to
trample
over the enemy and destroy him like Haaman was destroyed in the story so you
can destroy
the work of the enemy! (Luke 10:19. 1 John 4:4, Col 2:15)
Also, Esther received favor on the third day of her fast and was able to rescue all
of the Jews
in 120 Providences!
In a book that did not have the name of God you see the gospel message the
cross, the death,
the resurrection and also Pentecost for on that day, 120 was filled with the power
of the Holy
Spirit that changed the world!
you could be missing out on such important truths of the Bible by not going
deeper into the original languages, you and the people you are teaching or
preaching to can be brought deeper into amazing understanding

Chapter 6: Stories That Bring Glory

“Jesus used stories to connect heaven to earth—we should too.”

When Jesus preached, He often used parables—simple, earthly stories with deep spiritual meaning. In fact, Matthew 13:34 says:

“Jesus spoke all these things to the crowd in parables; He did not say anything to them without using a parable.”

Jesus knew that stories capture people’s attention. They help us understand spiritual truths in a way we can remember. In the same way, using real-life stories in your sermons can help people from age 7 to 70 grasp and apply the message.

One minister put it like this:

“The people need commercial breaks.”

That means if your sermon goes too long without a break in pace, people might start to zone out. A good story brings them back in.

Use Stories with Purpose

I personally try to include two stories in most of my sermons—one somewhere in the middle and one near the end, often leading into the altar call. Sometimes I even start the message with a story to grab attention.

But here’s the key: make sure your story supports the message. Don’t just tell a funny or emotional story that doesn’t connect. Your goal is to help people remember the truth you’re teaching—not to entertain them.

Stories of God's Love:

After a few of the usual Sunday evening hymns, the church's pastor slowly stood up, walked over to the pulpit and, before he gave his sermon for the evening, briefly introduced a guest minister who was in the service that evening. In the introduction, the pastor told the congregation that the guest minister was one of his dearest childhood friends and that he wanted him to have a few moments to greet the church and share whatever he felt would be appropriate for the service. With that, an elderly man stepped up to the pulpit and began to speak: "A father, his son, and a friend of his son were sailing off the Pacific Coast when a fast approaching storm blocked any attempt to get back to shore. The waves were so high, that even though the father was an experienced sailor, he could not keep the boat upright, and the three were swept into the ocean as the boat capsized." The old man hesitated for a moment, making eye contact with two teenagers who were, for the first time since the service began, looking somewhat interested in his story. The aged minister continued with his story, "Grabbing a rescue line, the father had to make the most excruciating decision of his life ... to which boy he would throw the other end of the life line. He only had seconds to make the decision. The father knew that his son was a Christian and he also knew that his son's friend was not. The agony of his decision could not be matched by the torrent of waves. "As the father yelled out, 'I love you, son!' he threw out the life line to his son's friend. By the time the father had pulled the friend back to the capsized boat, his son had disappeared beneath the raging swells into the black of night. His body was never recovered." By this time, the two teenagers were sitting up straight in the pew, anxiously waiting for the next words to come out of the old minister's mouth. "The father," he continued, "knowing his son would step into eternity with Jesus, and he could not bear the thought of his son's friend stepping into an eternity without Jesus. Therefore, he sacrificed his son to save his son's friend. How great is the love of God that He should do the same for us. Our heavenly Father sacrificed His only begotten Son so that we could be saved. I urge you to accept His offer to rescue you and take a hold of the life line He is throwing out to you in this service." With that, the old man turned and sat back down in his chair as silence filled the room. The pastor again walked slowly to the pulpit and delivered a brief sermon with an invitation at the end. However, no one responded to the appeal. Within minutes after the service ended, the two teenagers were at the old man's side. "That was a nice story," politely stated one of the boys, "but I don't think it was very realistic for a father to give up his only son's life in hopes that the other boy would become a Christian." "Well, you've

got a point there,” the old man replied, glancing down at his worn Bible. A big smile broadened his narrow face, and he once again looked up at the boys and said, “It sure isn’t very realistic, is it? But I’m standing here today to tell you that *THAT* story gives me a glimpse of what it must have been like for God to give up His Son for me. You see ... I was that father and your pastor is my son’s friend.”

Here's another one:

In past times when a drawbridge keeper was needed to act as a ‘switchman’ for trains that crossed above large rivers, one truly awful incident stands out. Most of the time, bridges were kept in a position to let ships pass freely in the water but at certain times of day, trains also had to travel and cross the river, using the drawbridge. The switchman’s job was to make sure to extend the bridge for the train at certain times, then get the drawbridge back out of the way again so that water vehicles could travel as normal. One day, a switchman noted the approach of the train and began to operate the appropriate controls to lock the drawbridge into place. He watched the train headlights get closer, and double-checked the drawbridge, only to notice that the locking mechanisms weren’t actually locking like they should! If these were not locked properly when the train began to cross the river, it would jump the track and crash far down below, into the river. He noted that, according to his schedule, the particular train in question happened to be a passenger train, and this further heightened his dilemma. Luckily, the drawbridge keeper had been trained for emergency situations, so he knew he could simply dash from the control room and to a control box nearby, to hold a specific lever into place and lock the drawbridge manually. He’d noticed the flawed lock in time, so he dashed outside to manually lock the drawbridge, relieved that he’d been taught this safety tactic. With the level held firm, the train neared and the rumbling of engine and wheels on the track grew, and the switchman knew he should brace himself soon for the train. Just then, he heard a sound which made his blood run cold! “Daddy...Daddy where are you?” It was his 5 year old son, crossing part of the tracks to come find him. “Run, son - RUN!!!” the father shouted. But the train was fast approaching and the father’s words were caught up in the thunder of the train’s noise. He released the lever for a moment, in order to run and grab his son - but realized that the train was approaching with much greater speed than he had anticipated. He’d never be fast enough to run to grab his son, then make it back in time to hold the drawbridge lever in place again before the train reached the river crossing! If he

didn't hold the lever, all the passengers on the oncoming train would crash into the river, most likely, all would die from a plunge of that distance overhead to the river below. With an agonizing cry, he grasped the lever as the train sped forward. Nobody aboard the train ever noticed the tiny, broken body flung violently and mercilessly into the river by the train. Nobody ever hears the dreaded splash of the young body plunging into the river. Nobody was ever aware of the sobbing man, still hanging on to the lever long minutes after the train was gone and out of sight. Nobody saw the man as he walked home, more slowly and dejectedly than ever before, to tell his wife how their son died. If you can comprehend, at all, this man's loss and heart, maybe you can begin to understand the feelings of Our Father in Heaven when he sacrificed His only Son in order to bridge the gap between us and eternal life

Example: Don't Let Go of the Rope

Here's a story that can connect to a sermon about holding onto God during trials:

A young boy climbed up a tree and couldn't get down. He was scared. His dad came and told him to jump—he'd catch him. But the boy refused. After several tries, the dad left and got a flashlight. He shined the light and told the boy again to jump.

The boy said, "I still can't see you, Dad!"

The father replied, "You don't have to see me. I can see you. Trust me."

The boy finally jumped—and his father caught him.

Preaching point:

"You may not see how God is going to catch you—but He sees you, and He never fails. Trust Him and take that leap of faith."

Example: God's Word Lights the Way

If you're teaching on Psalm 119:105—"Your Word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path"—this story works beautifully:

A man was walking through a dense forest with only a small flashlight. He could only see a few feet ahead, so he moved slowly and carefully. When someone asked if he was afraid, he said:

“As long as I can see my next step, I know I’m going in the right direction.”

That’s how God’s Word works. It may not show you the whole path, but it gives you just enough light to take your next step in faith.

Example: Obedience Over Outcome

Use this story when teaching on trusting God even when things don’t make sense:

A military commander sent a soldier to deliver a message in a dangerous area. The soldier didn’t ask questions—he just obeyed. After he returned, the commander told him:

“The message was a decoy. The real mission was to test your loyalty.”

Obedience mattered more than the message itself.

Preaching point:

“Sometimes God asks you to obey before He explains. Your willingness to follow matters more than understanding the outcome.”

I tell the following story when I’m at a funeral preaching a sermon or if I’m talking about how Jesus destroyed death, hell, and the grave. You can also use it with the story of the raising of Lazarus in John chapter eleven. About the Sting of Death A vacationing family is driving along in their car, windows rolled down, enjoying the warm summer breeze of the sunny day. All of a sudden a big black bee darts in the window and starts buzzing around inside the car. A little girl, highly allergic to bee stings, cringes in the back seat. If she is stung, she could die within an hour (or sooner). “Oh, Daddy,” she squeals in terror, “it’s a bee! It’s going to sting me!” The father pulls the car over to a stop, and reaches back to try to catch the bee. Buzzing towards him, the bee bumps against the front windshield where the father traps it in his fist. Holding it in his closed hand, the father waits for the inevitable sting. The bee stings the father’s hand and in pain,

the father lets go of the bee. The bee is loose in the car again. The little girl again panics, "Daddy, it's going to sting me! The father gently says, "No honey, he's not going to sting you now. Look at my hand." The bee's stinger is in my hand! 1 Corinthians 15:55 "Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting?" Jesus says to us, "Look at my hands." He has Satan's sting, the sting of death, the sting of sin, the sting of deceit, the sting of feeling worthless. Jesus has all of those stingers in His hands. When you see that nail-scarred hand, realize that, on your behalf, Jesus took all the pain that Satan could throw at Him. He reduced Satan to a big black bee that has lost its stinger -- all Satan can do is buzz around. Because we have the power his power has been stripped and he has been made a public mockery. Colossians 2:15 Having disarmed principalities and powers, He made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them in it. That's the victory that Jesus won for you! [Author Unknown -- from Bill Champion

The bible talks about a bond servant as being a servant that doesn't need to stay and serve but loves his master and loves the way they are treated by their master; they willingly stay and be willing servants. A lot of the apostles refer to themselves as bond slaves in their opening letters in the bible. A man went down to a slave trade block and noticed an evil hateful looking man bidding on a young black lady, when the kind gentleman saw her fear, he too placed a bid. Soon only these two men were involved in the bidding as the price of the girl rose higher and higher. Finally the evil man bowed out of the bidding when he realized that the price of the girl was more than he was willing to pay. When the auctioneer closed the bidding the kind gentleman paid the price for his purchase, was handed the Bill-of-Sale and turned to leave. The young girl started to follow her new master. He then turned to her and asked, "Where are you going?" "Why, I'm going with you," she responded; "You bought me and I belong to you." "O! You misunderstood," the man said, "I didn't buy you to make you my slave, I bought you to set you free. You are free." "What does that mean?" she demanded. "It means you are free." "Does that mean that I can be what I want to be?" "Yes--you can be whatever you want to be." "Does that mean that I can say what I want to say?" "Yes--you can say whatever you want to say." "Does that mean that I can go where I want to go?" "Yes--you can go wherever you want to go." "Then," said the girl, "I'll go with you." Who was the man? President Abraham Lincoln, who was assassinated not too long after because he wanted the slaves to be free! This story shows that serving God shouldn't be burdensome but we should be willing and wanting to serve Him because He has paid for our freedom with His life because He is a good Master

The following story is about letting go of bitterness and unforgiveness—or any sin that’s in our life—so that people can truly see Jesus in our lives. A good scripture to connect it with is: for we are God’s masterpiece. He has created us anew in Christ Jesus, so we can do the good things he planned for us long ago (Ephesians 2:10 NLT). Just before Leonardo da Vinci began to work on his famous painting “The Last Supper,” he had a bitter argument with a fellow painter. He grew so enraged that he decided to paint the face of his former friend into the face of Judas. Leonardo knew that if he painted his friend as Judas, succeeding generations would look upon the friend with scorn. The face of Judas was the first he completed, and all who saw it knew it was the face of the fellow painter. When Leonardo began to paint the face of Jesus, however, something seemed to hold him back, in spite of his best efforts. Over and over again he tried to paint Christ, only to be frustrated. Finally, he came to the conclusion that his frustration had to do with the fact that he had painted his friend’s face into the face of Judas. So Leonardo painted out the face of Judas and began again to paint the face of Jesus— this time with success. We can’t paint the features and attributes of Jesus into our own lives if we are painting bitterness, hate, greed, and every other sin in our lives.

The following story is one I share when I’m witnessing to people. I use this story in reference to Matthew 6:33 that says, “but seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.” People are too caught up with the things and sin in the world they miss the best thing they could ever receive, and that is the son. A wealthy man and his son loved to collect rare works of art. They had everything in their collection, from Picasso to Raphael. They would often sit together and admire the great works of art. When the Viet Nam conflict broke out, the son went to war. He was very courageous and died in battle while rescuing another soldier. The father was notified and grieved deeply for his only son. About a month later, just before Christmas, there was a knock at the door. A young man stood at the door with a large package in his hands. He said, “Sir, you don’t know me, but I am the soldier for whom your son gave his life. He saved many lives that day, and he was carrying me to safety when a bullet struck him in the heart and he died instantly. He often talked about you, and your love for art. The young man held out his package. “I know this isn’t

much. "I'm not really a great artist, but I think your son would have wanted you to have this." The father opened the package. It was a portrait of his son, painted by the young man. He stared in awe at the way the soldier had captured the personality of his son in the painting. The father was so drawn to the eyes that his own eyes welled up with tears. He thanked the young man and offered to pay him for the picture. "Oh, no sir. I could never repay what your son did for me. It's a gift." The father hung the portrait over his mantle. Every time visitors came to his home he took them to see the portrait of his son before he showed them any of the other great works he had collected. The man died a few months later. There was to be a great auction of his paintings. Many influential people gathered, excited over seeing the great paintings and having an opportunity to purchase one for their collection. On the platform sat the painting of the son. The auctioneer pounded his gavel. "We will start the bidding with this picture of the son. Who will bid for this picture?" There was silence. Then a voice in the back of the room shouted, "We want to see the famous paintings! Skip this one!" But the auctioneer persisted. "Will someone bid for this painting? Who will start the bidding? \$100, \$200?" Another voice shouted angrily, "We didn't come to see this painting! We came to see the Van Gogh's, the Rembrandt's! Get on with the real bids!" But still the auctioneer continued. "The son! The son! Who'll take the son?" Finally, a voice came from the very back of the room. It was the longtime gardener of the man and his son. "I'll give \$10 for the painting." Being a poor man, it was all he could afford. "We have \$10, who will bid \$20?" "Give it to him for \$10! Let's see the masters!" "\$10 is the bid, won't someone bid \$20?" The crowd was becoming angry. They didn't want the picture of the son. They wanted the more worthy investments for their collections. The auctioneer pounded the gavel. "Going once, twice, SOLD for \$10!" A man sitting in the second row shouted, "Now, let's get on with the collection!" The auctioneer laid down his gavel. "I'm sorry, the auction is over." What about the paintings?" "I am sorry. When I was called to conduct this auction, I was told of a secret stipulation in the will. I was not allowed to reveal that stipulation until this time. Only the painting of the son would be auctioned. Whoever bought that painting would inherit the entire estate, including the paintings. The man who took the son gets every thing!" God gave His son 2,000 years ago to die on a cruel cross. Much like the auctioneer, His message today is, "The son, the son, who'll take the son?" Because, you see, whoever takes the Son gets everything.

This is one of my favorites. The following story shows that you cannot do it on your own strength, it's only when you give up and let God take over your life then

you will receive His strength to get you through. There was a man that was on vacation with his family and he decided to go to a water theme park, the only problem was the man couldn't swim. He stood away from swimming in the deep ends of the pools, but as he was walking in the park he noticed a zipline ride. It was where you would hold on to this handle that was attached to a metal cable that was on a wheel bearing that would zip you across the pool and you would let go where you desired to swim, 11ft, 9ft, 6ft, and 3ft. This man figured this is easy, I'll just zip through the deep water and I'll drop off where the 3ft water is. As he grabbed the handle and began to lift off the platform something happened—he slipped and fell in the 11ft area of water! He began to sink down in the water then he began to fight and tried to swim all he could but there was no use he couldn't even get above the water to scream. The man thought within himself and said, "Jesus, I can't. I'm just gonna die." As soon as he stopped trying to swim and gave up and began to sink, a life guard jumped in the pool, wrapped his arms around him, and brought him safely to the top. You see the life guard is trained not to try to help someone when they are fighting and nervous, because if they would try to help when a person's like that the person might get paranoid and take the life gourd down. The life guard waits until the person stops fighting. The point is God wants you to stop trying yourself and understand that He will fight for you because the battles are not yours they're the Lord's! Until you do that you will sink lower and lower in this life but when you give it to Him you will rise above your problems! This is the last story and it represents how we have to align ourselves with the Word of God. There was a minister who received two baseball tickets to see his favorite team as a love offering from one of his congregation members. He and his wife went to the baseball game and as they were walking in the stadium the minister thought within himself, "God, if you allow me to catch a ball I can use it in a sermon as an illustration." After he thought this he got discouraged and said, "I'm not gonna catch a ball." He soon forgot about catching a ball and looked for the seats that were assigned to him. He found the seats, they were great seats, 15th row right on the side of first base and right in back of the players dugout. Something happened, though, the minister saw a couple empty seats a few rows up and he figured we can get really close. As the minister and his wife went to the seats that were empty and sat down, about five minutes later the minister's wife said, "I think we should go back to our seats, it will be very embarrassing if we have to move." The minister hesitated then agreed. As soon as they sat in their original seats, not more than five minutes later there was a fly pop-up and it was like the ball was coming straight for the

minister out of heaven! He winds up getting the ball he asked God for and went home happy as can be and when Sunday came he ministered about aligning yourself with God's blessing. He explained how he tried to move to another seat that wasn't assigned to him, but when he went to the seat assigned to him the blessing fell and he was aligned to receive it. That story demonstrates how we think we know better and we try to move ourselves in places God hasn't assigned us to be but if we look to the Word He has made it clear what He wants from us. If the minister would have stayed where he wasn't assigned he would have missed the blessing, and if we don't align our life to the Word of God we will miss the blessing every time! The last two stories you read were very personal, the reason why is that the man in both of the stories was me! I was at the Chicago Cubs game and caught the ball and I was the person that almost drowned on vacation in Wisconsin Dells.

Make the Story Yours

Some stories are long or detailed. When that happens, don't change the story—just shorten it and put it into your own words. Retell it in a way that feels natural but still gets the main point across. That way, your delivery will be smooth and more impactful.

Be Led by the Spirit

Let God guide you in when and how to use stories. Jesus didn't just use stories to entertain; He used them to reveal the Kingdom. Follow His example. Pray for discernment as you prepare.

The goal isn't to show off your creativity—it's to help people understand God's truth in a memorable, meaningful way.

Remember:

“A good story doesn't just touch the mind—it touches the heart. And when the heart is moved, the spirit opens.”

When you're teaching, remember that stories are not filler—they're tools. Jesus used parables because people remember a picture longer than they remember a principle. But here's the key: the story must serve the Scripture. Ask yourself, Does this story reinforce the point, or distract from it?

A good story does three things:

1. It illustrates truth – Like the boatman with two oars, it shows faith and works in action.
2. It makes the lesson relatable – People see themselves in the boy stuck in the tree, afraid to jump.
3. It opens the heart for response – A story at the altar call helps people step into faith, not just hear about it.

That's why stories matter—they make God's Word memorable, transferable, and practical for everyday life."Also, these stories connect to the simple minded. The ones that are not familiar

with scripture, revelation and even church. Jesus talk to common people and use common stories, earthly stories to connect to kingdom principles for them to relate and for them to receive Him and heaven.!

Chapter 7: Illustrated Sermons

"A sermon people see is a sermon they'll never forget."

Some of the most powerful sermons I've ever preached—or seen preached—were the ones that people could see as well as hear. These are called illustrated sermons. They use visual examples, props, or dramatic actions to bring a spiritual truth to life.

Why do illustrated sermons work so well? Because most people are visual learners. They remember what they see longer than what they hear. Jesus used illustrations constantly—He pointed to birds, seeds, vines, lamps, and more. He used real-life imagery to make spiritual truth clear.

An illustrated sermon takes the message from the mind to the heart.

What is an Illustrated Sermon?

An illustrated sermon is a message that includes a visual element to help drive the point home. You can use objects, short skits, people, drawings, or dramatic movements. It doesn't have to be complex—it just has to be clear and meaningful.

This is especially powerful when you're preaching to young people, but adults respond well to it too.

Example: Taking Off the Old Nature

When I preach about Ephesians 4:22–24

“Put off your old self... and put on the new self...”

—I sometimes bring a dirty, beat-up coat on stage. I talk about how the old coat is filled with sin, anger, pride, and bitterness. Then I take it off, toss it aside, and put on a fresh, clean coat representing Christ—love, mercy, holiness.

People don't forget that. They see the change.

Example: Carrying Baggage

For a message about letting go of your past, I've brought several heavy bags onto the platform. Each bag is labeled—"Shame," "Addiction," "Fear," "Rejection." I start the message carrying them, showing how they weigh me down. Then one by one, I drop them at the altar, as I quote:

"Cast all your cares upon Him, for He cares for you." (1 Peter 5:7)

You can see people crying and responding during this kind of message. The illustration hits their hearts.

Example: The Cup and the Cross

For a message on sacrifice and surrender, I've brought a cup of water and a cross on stage.

- The cup represents comfort, pleasure, control—what people want to hold on to.
- The cross represents obedience, surrender, and suffering for Christ.

I ask the congregation:

"Will you keep holding onto your cup—or will you take up your cross?"

Then I pour the cup out and pick up the cross as a visual choice of surrender. It's simple, but powerful.

Planning an Illustrated Sermon

Here are a few tips if you want to include illustrations in your preaching:

1. Keep it simple.

Don't overcomplicate the visuals. A single object or gesture can be more

powerful than an elaborate skit.

2. Make it meaningful.

The illustration should support your message, not distract from it.

3. Prepare in advance.

Practice with the props or visuals so everything flows smoothly. You want the delivery to be confident and seamless.

4. Be Spirit-led.

Ask the Holy Spirit for ideas. He knows exactly what your audience needs to see and hear.

Involve Others When Appropriate

Sometimes, I bring people up to act out a scene or represent a Bible character. For example, when I preached about the Prodigal Son, I brought someone up to act as the son. I gave them a filthy shirt and then “the father” came running and wrapped him in a clean robe.

That image of the father’s love and forgiveness stays with people.

Illustrations Can Be Spontaneous Too

Not every illustration has to be planned. Sometimes the Holy Spirit will prompt you in the middle of a message. I once saw a preacher preaching about laying down burdens. Mid-sermon, he took off his shoes and laid them at the altar. He said, “I’m not walking in stress anymore.” People flooded the altar right then.

Be open to those Spirit-led moments.

Jesus Was the Master of Illustrated Sermons

Jesus:

- Took a child and placed him in front of His disciples to teach about humility (Matthew 18:2)
- Cursed a fig tree to show the seriousness of fruitlessness (Mark 11)
- Washed His disciples' feet as an act of servant leadership (John 13)

He used actions, objects, and people to demonstrate what He taught.

Final Thought: Show the Message

When people see a truth lived out or represented visually, it makes the message stick. They don't just hear it—they feel it. They take it home. And when the Word comes alive in front of them, it can change their lives.

Remember:

“The more real you can make the message, the more lasting its impact will be.”

An illustrated sermon isn't about putting on a show—it's about making the Word memorable. When you use a prop or a picture, you're giving people something to hold on to long after the service is over. But remember three teaching principles:

1. Clarity over complexity – Don't overload the moment. One coat or one bag can speak louder than a stage full of props.

2. Purpose over performance – The illustration must serve the Scripture, not distract from it.
3. Spirit over script – Be prepared, but also open to the Spirit's leading. Sometimes the most powerful illustrations happen in the moment. If Jesus washed feet and lifted objects to drive the truth home, then as teachers and preachers we should follow His example—show the message, not just say it.”

Also, I want you to remember some illustrations sometimes can hurt your message if you're not careful about realizing everyone has a camera and everyone records now nowadays, and the Internet can be a very cruel and can take things out of context and make the ministry and ministers look bad if it is not done with this in mind. Let me explain. Not too long ago, I did an illustration bringing in a ladder into the service. I also brought a twin size air bed and placed it at the foot of the ladder, and I put all kind of decor around it like plants etc. I was preaching about Jacob seeing the ladder come down from heaven and angels ascending and descending and Jacob said "Surely this is the house of God "Bethel". Gen 28:10-17 The message was about how we try to climb the ladder of success and try to accumulate, gain and get money, materialism, possession and power. Like Jacob trying to get over anyone and everyone that he could to get the blessing! While I was preaching, I was going up the ladder saying we think we're getting ahead. Something is achieved. Something is accumulated and then we take two steps down and I kept repeating this and talking about how in our mind we think this is the way to get things done.

And then, at one point it looks like I got all the way to the top and then I let go of the ladder and fell on the air bed and everything around me. The decor came crashing down and scattered.

And I talked about how this is what happens in our life and we look around and say what happened how did I get here? Why is my life a mess?

Well, there was a kid that recorded this from an angle on the balcony of the church and you could not see what I landed on and all you've seen was everything fly up in the air and it looked like I hurt myself very badly

On top of it, he put some music from a WWE wrestling voiceover and Internet got a hold of it and people said a lot of harsh things and made it look like it was something that it wasn't.

But if it was seen at the level of the camera and a live stream that it was intentionally placed to let them see this angle, you would understand completely the reason for the illustration so people can see what they do in real life and how in the spiritual realm when you try to climb the ladder of success in your own flesh and your own strength without the things of God, everything comes crashing down. But unfortunately, people took the whole message out of context because of that one, twenty second clip.

After I fell on the air mattress, everything came crashing down. I got up and I said "this is why our life is a mess". And then I said we are not to climb the ladder of success. We are to kneel at the ladder because the ladder in the Bible represents the cross (John 1:43-51) an object

between two places suspended in the air, bringing you from one level to another. This is why angels ascend and descend, and this is the way we enter the glory of God and the presence of Jesus. The ladder is the cross. He climbed it for us. He hung on it for us. He died on it for us and that's the only way that we're successful in service to Jesus for what He already did for us!

In my mind, it was a great illustration.

But the Internet got a hold of it, and it went viral for all the wrong reasons.

So keep that in mind when you're doing an illustration remember there's cameras on you, so make sure whatever angle is recorded. It will make sense for those who are there in person and those who will watch on someone else's social media platform. And even if you get everything done, right, people will still make fun and talk, but as long as You know, you were led by The Holy Spirit and not by flesh or some good idea. Remember

Not Every good idea is a God idea!

Chapter 8: Application Applied

“There is no transformation without application.”

When I teach preaching classes, I often ask, “How many of you have left a church service inspired, but not entirely sure what to do with the message?” Without fail, most hands go up.

That’s not a reflection of their willingness to grow—it’s a reflection of the preacher’s failure to bring the message to full application. There is a major difference between inspiration and application. Inspiration is emotional. Application is transformational.

If I am not careful, I can stand up and preach a well-structured, well-prepared message, deliver it with passion and conviction, and still leave my people unequipped for Monday. I may have challenged their hearts, but I haven’t changed their habits. I may have spoken to their spirit, but I haven’t addressed how to apply it . I may have stirred their emotions, but left their decision-making untouched.

That is why the application portion of your message is just as critical as the biblical context. Your job is not just to present what the Bible says—it is also to walk people through how to live it. This is where real discipleship begins.

Every Message Needs Movement

Your sermon should not just contain information—it should result in transformation. That requires movement. When you’re developing your message, don’t just think about how to end it. Ask, “Where is this going? What do I want them to do with this?”

If you’re preaching on faith, then faith in what? Faith that moves what? How will they demonstrate that faith today or this week?

If you’re preaching on forgiveness, who do they need to forgive? What step should they take to initiate that process?

If you're preaching on serving, where should they begin serving? Can they sign up today?

It doesn't have to be overwhelming. Sometimes a single question at the end of a sermon is enough:

“What will you do this week with what you just heard?”

That one sentence can change a listener from a passive hearer to an active doer.

Give Clear Next Steps

Application doesn't mean emotionally manipulating people into action. It simply means providing clarity. Don't assume your congregation knows how to apply what you're saying.

For example, if you preach on prayer, don't just say, “You need to pray more.” That's obvious. Tell them how to build a prayer life. Should they start with 10 minutes a day? Are there specific Scriptures to meditate on? Can they start a prayer journal? Can they connect with a prayer partner. If you're preaching on giving, show them how to give. What does tithing mean practically? Why should they give, they should give the church yes but how can they help others in giving. What's the difference between tithe and an offering, does the amount matter, etc,

If you're preaching on giving, show them how to give. What does tithing mean practically? Can they set up online giving? If you're preaching on repentance, explain how to confess sin and walk in freedom.

Preachers often make the mistake of assuming that spiritual passion will lead to practical action. It won't—unless we give people clear direction.

Let the Spirit Guide Your Application

Application is not a formula—it's a function of the Holy Spirit. As you're preparing your message, ask the Lord:

“How should the people respond to this word?”

Sometimes He'll give you a specific call:

- Invite people to reconcile relationships.
- Challenge them to take a step of obedience.
- Call them to the altar to surrender.
- Commission them to begin something new.
- Other times, He'll lead you to create space for quiet reflection, confession, or writing down a next step.

Trust the Spirit to guide the HOW just as much as He gave you the WHAT

Build Application Throughout the Message

Application doesn't only belong at the end of the message. You can build it throughout the sermon.

For instance, if you're preaching on the woman at the well (John 4), you could say:

“What well have you been drawing from that keeps leaving you empty?”

Later in the message:

“Who in your life needs to hear your story like the people in her village heard hers?”

And at the end:

“What do you need to leave at the well today so you can run back into your world with joy?”

You've now built multiple application points without ever breaking flow.

Use Reflection Questions

Reflection questions are powerful. They stop the listener and make them engage.

Try questions like:

- “What needs to change in your routine this week because of what you just heard?”
- “What’s one habit you need to start—or stop?”
- “Who do you need to call, text, or visit after this message?”

When you ask the right question, the Holy Spirit often answers it in their heart before you finish speaking.

Let the Application Guide the Altar Call

The altar call is one of the greatest moments for application to take root. It’s where what was preached begins to be practiced. So let the altar match the message.

If you preached on laying down burdens, call them to the altar to surrender. If you preached on obedience, challenge them to take a step of action—today. If you preached on the Holy Spirit, ask them to come receive.

This makes the altar a place of action, not just emotion.

Jesus Preached for Application

Jesus never preached just to stir people. He always called for a response:

- “Go and sin no more.”

- “Stretch out your hand.”
- “Pick up your mat and walk.”
- “Sell everything and follow me.”
- “Let the dead bury their own dead—you follow Me.”

He expected movement. He taught the truth, then challenged people to live it.

Final Thought: No Action, No Change

A sermon without application is like a prescription that’s never filled. You might know what’s wrong, and even what could help—but without action, nothing changes.

As a preacher or teacher, your job is not just to open the Word—it’s to help people walk it out.

Preach with passion. Teach with clarity. And apply with purpose.

Because without application, there is no transformation.

When you teach, don’t just ask, What does this mean? Ask, What should they do with it? That’s where transformation happens. If you preach on prayer, give them a plan—five minutes in the morning, five at night. If you preach on forgiveness,

tell them to write down one name and call that person this week. Clear direction turns conviction into discipleship.

Three principles for application:

1. Make it specific – Don't say, 'pray more,' say, 'start with Psalm 23 this week.'
2. Make it doable – One small step is better than a vague challenge.
3. Make it Spirit-led – Trust the Spirit to show you how to call for response. That's how you move people from being hearers of the Word to doers of the Word."

“A sermon without structure is like a house without a foundation—unstable and unable to support lives.”

Before you begin putting your sermon together, remember one critical factor: time. Several studies show that the average adult attention span is approximately 20 minutes. After that point, retention begins to drop significantly. While people may still hear you, much of what they hear beyond the 20–30-minute mark is harder to process or remember.

Let me be transparent—I didn’t always understand this. When I first started preaching, I preached a 90-minute sermon on Christmas Day. That’s right—Christmas Day. It was intense. But over time, I learned from my mistakes. A good sermon should typically fall within the range of 20 to 30 minutes. If you’re in a more in-depth, teaching setting, you can stretch that to 30 to 45 minutes. But regardless of setting, know your time limits.

One practical solution I’ve used is placing a clock in the back of the sanctuary, directly above the front entrance—where I can see it clearly. It helps me track my time while preaching. Why? Because even a great sermon can be dragged out unnecessarily, and when that happens, people get restless. They shift in their seats, lose focus, and start yawning. Not because the message is bad, but because the delivery didn’t honor their attention span.

Yes, be led by the Holy Spirit, but understand this truth: you don’t have to drag the message out for it to be effective! You can also explain to them how we can continue this next week or make a sermon series out of whatever message. You really want to get in to the minds and the hearts of your congregation. Also read the room maybe they’re not understanding properly maybe you could shift gears and go into another direction and make it more simple, or use a story that

illustrates the point remember a good story is like a commercial break in the midst of your message that makes them come back and concentrate

Start with Structure: The Three-Part Model

In school, I was taught that most sermons follow a three-part structure:

1. Introduction – Tell them what you’re about to tell them.
2. Sermon Body – Tell them what you came to tell them.
3. Closing – Tell them what you just told them.

It sounds simple, but it’s incredibly effective. This model helps you introduce the message, unpack its truths, and drive the point home before leading to application and invitation.

Example Sermon Outline: Lazarus (John 11)

Let’s say you’re preaching on the resurrection of Lazarus from John chapter 11. Here’s how your sermon could be structured:

INTRODUCTION:

“Today we’re going to look at the story of Lazarus, found in John chapter 11. I want to show you how the same Jesus who raised Lazarus from the dead can raise up the dead situations in your life. If there are broken, lifeless, hopeless areas in your life, today is the day to believe for resurrection power. Let’s pray.”

PRAY.

SET UP THE TEXT:

Before you read, explain the context: what’s happening in the story, who the key people are, and where we’re jumping in.

TEXT:

Read your selected verses aloud—clearly and deliberately. For example:

John 11:32–34, 36–43 (NKJV)

Then, when Mary came where Jesus was, and saw Him, she fell down at His feet, saying to Him, “Lord, if You had been here, my brother would not have died.” Therefore, when Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who came with her weeping, He groaned in the spirit and was troubled.

...

Now when He had said these things, He cried with a loud voice, “Lazarus, come forth!”

EXPLAIN THE TEXT IN YOUR OWN WORDS:

In your own voice, walk your audience through the story. Show them how Mary and Martha were grieving. Explain how Jesus intentionally delayed His arrival so that God’s glory would be revealed. Lazarus had been dead for four days—by then, the body would have begun to decompose. But that didn’t stop Jesus.

Bring in symbolic depth:

- Four days = the number of the world.
- Mary and Martha = bitterness and rebellion.
- Bethany = house of misery / house of dates (fruit).
- Lazarus = “God has helped.”

Jesus entered into a bitter, rebellious, miserable situation—and transformed it. Lazarus became a living witness to resurrection power. And just as Jesus called Lazarus out, He wants to do the same for us. But first, the stone must be rolled away—the stone of pride, sin, fear, or doubt.

APPLICATION:

To live a resurrected life and see the dead things in your life come alive, you must:

1. Believe personally.

Not just that Jesus can do it for others—but for you. Teach about the importance of personal faith.

2. Remove the stone.

The stone represents pride, rebellion, sin, and stubbornness. Jesus told them to roll it away. Teach your listeners that they must be willing to remove the barrier.

3. Hear and obey His Word.

When Jesus said, “Lazarus, come forth,” Lazarus responded. Teach the importance of hearing and applying God’s Word, because it is alive and active—like a hammer that breaks rock.

BRING THEM TO THE CROSS:

Every sermon, especially those rooted in the Old Testament or miracles of Christ, should point to the cross. Say something like:

“Even though Lazarus was raised, he died again. But Jesus—who died and rose again on the third day—conquered death permanently. Lazarus lives forever because of what Jesus did. And so can we.”

Quote John 15:13–14:

“Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one’s life for his friends. You are My friends if you do whatever I command you.”

ILLUSTRATED STORY:

This is the perfect place for a visual or emotional illustration. Use a story like this:

During the Civil War, a man wept on a park bench in D.C. because his son, convicted of deserting, was set to be executed. The father wanted to plead with President Lincoln but couldn't get through the gates. A boy noticed his sorrow and asked what was wrong. After hearing the story, the boy took the man's hand, walked him past the guards, straight to Lincoln's chambers. Why? Because the boy was Lincoln's son.

The father received an audience with the president and a pardon for his son—because the son of the father made a way.

Tie it in:

“That’s what Jesus does for us. Like Lazarus, like that condemned son—we were dead, guilty, and shut out. But the Son intervened. The Son made a way. He’s still doing that today.”

ALTAR CALL:

Transition intentionally. Say:

“If you believe the Son is calling you out, if you’re ready for Him to raise up the dead things in your life—come now. Jesus is calling you out of misery, bitterness, rebellion, and defeat. Come by faith.”

Altar Call Tips:

1. Wind down intentionally. Five minutes before your close, cue the choir with: “As the choir comes...” Give your choir director a song that fits the theme—or at least the heart of the message.
2. Let the moment breathe. This is where people decide. This is where lives change. Don't rush.

3. Don't over-preach at the altar. Let God minister. Your words shouldn't overpower what the Spirit is doing.
 4. Offer a sinner's prayer. Always provide a chance for salvation or rededication. Don't miss the opportunity.
-

Sample Sermon Outline Format:

- INTRODUCTION:
- PRAY:
- SET UP TEXT:
- TEXT:
- EXPLAIN TEXT:
- APPLICATION:
- BRING THEM TO THE CROSS:
- ILLUSTRATED STORY:
- ALTAR CALL:
- PRAY:

Watch Your Filler Words

A word of advice: be mindful of repetitive filler words—like “Amen,” “Praise God,” “Hallelujah,” or “Glory to God”—after every sentence. They’re fine when Spirit-led, but too much repetition becomes a distraction. Let your message carry its own weight without overusing spiritual phrases.

Final Word: This Is Why I Wrote This Book

Not long ago, a close minister friend and I were in a city preaching. Before I was called up, the pastor invited another minister to speak. That preacher had no theme, no structure, and no application. It was confusing and disjointed.

As I sat there, the Lord began to deal with me:

“Write a book to teach ministers how to preach effectively.”

I turned to my friend and said, “The next ministers’ meeting—we’re going to train them in sermon structure.” He said, “Confirmation. The Lord just told me the same thing.”

That’s how this book was born. And I pray it equips you with clarity, wisdom, and confidence to prepare sermons that don’t just move people—but change them.

Chapter 10: The Full Gospel

“We are not called to preach a half-truth. We are called to preach the full Gospel of Jesus Christ—with love and with power.”

Jesus began the book of Revelation by sending seven letters to seven churches in Asia Minor (Revelation 1–3). Historically, these were real churches located in cities within what is now western Turkey. In each letter, Jesus gave a unique description of Himself, addressed that church’s specific spiritual condition, provided correction and encouragement, and then offered a promise “to him who overcomes.”

Jesus sent a different message to each church because each congregation had its own unique strengths, weaknesses, and spiritual battles. He revealed Himself in different ways, delivered both commendation and rebuke, and provided instruction for restoration along with a promise of reward.

This is why we must seek God for the Word He wants us to bring—whether preaching in our home church or elsewhere. God may want to deliver a very specific word to a specific church or person. We need to be sensitive to that.

For example, the church in Philadelphia was commended for their love (Revelation 3:7–13). But the church in Ephesus was both commended and rebuked—they had lost their first love (Revelation 2:1–7). So if I were preaching at a “Philadelphia-type” church, I couldn’t come with an “Ephesus” message. The word needs to match the moment.

Preach the Love and the Fear of God

When we preach, we must deliver both the love of God and the fear of God. There must be balance.

I once discovered something fascinating: salt is made of sodium and chloride. Individually, both are dangerous—poisonous—but together, they create something useful, flavorful, and necessary for life.

That's how it is with the Word. If you preach only the love of God, people will start to think that sin is no big deal and that God overlooks everything because "He loves us." They won't say it out loud, but they'll live like that.

If you preach only the fear of God, people will feel like He's harsh, impossible to please, and they'll live in guilt, shame, and condemnation.

But when you preach both—the love and the fear—you bring balance. You bring salt. Preached separately, they can become spiritual poison. But preached together, they bring life.

This chapter is about being a man or woman of the full Gospel. We are not called to preach a partial message. We are called to preach the whole counsel of God.

"Preach the Word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all long suffering and teaching. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine... But you be watchful in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, and fulfill your ministry."

—2 Timothy 4:2–5 (NKJV)

The Weight of Preaching

Scripture places a heavy responsibility on ministers of the Word:

- James 3:1–2 says that teachers will be judged more strictly.
- Ezekiel 33:8–9 says that if we fail to warn the wicked, their blood will be on our hands.
- Hosea 4:6–7 tells us that when we reject God's knowledge, we're rejected from the priesthood—and even our children suffer for it.

If we don't preach the truth, we will be held accountable—not just for what we say, but for what we refuse to say.

Jeremiah vs. Hananiah: A Picture of False vs. True Prophets

Look closely at Jeremiah 28. The people of Israel had been taken into Babylonian captivity because of rebellion and disobedience. To illustrate this, the prophet Jeremiah wore a wooden yoke to symbolize God's judgment.

Then along comes Hananiah, a false prophet who broke the yoke from Jeremiah's neck and declared, "Thus says the Lord: I have broken the yoke of Babylon. Within two years, God will restore everything."

The people likely cheered. It sounded like favor. It looked like a breakthrough. But it wasn't God's Word—it was a lie.

God responded through Jeremiah:

"You have broken the wooden yoke, but I will replace it with a yoke of iron... because you have taught rebellion."

And Hananiah died that same year.

Haniah's name means: mercy, favor, supplication, graciousness. But he preached favor without repentance—grace without obedience. And it led to greater judgment.

Today, many preachers do the same. They preach blessing, breakthrough, and destiny—but leave out repentance, holiness, and submission.

That is not the full Gospel.

The Message of the Prophets and Apostles

From the Old Testament prophets, to John the Baptist, to Jesus, to the apostles—the message was the same:

"Repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand!"

We must preach repentance—not just blessing. Otherwise, people may clap, but they won't change. And as Hananiah proved, a message that gets applause from people but is not approved by God leads to destruction.

“For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness... we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age.”

—Titus 2:11–12 (NKJV)

Jeremiah: The Appointed Prophet

Jeremiah's name means: “The one whom God has appointed.” His message was unpopular, but it was true. In Jeremiah 18, God says if a nation repents, He will relent. But if they rebel, even His good plans can be revoked.

In Jeremiah 29, God gives a message of hope and restoration—but only after the appointed time, after repentance and seeking Him with all their heart.

Jeremiah's message had three parts:

1. Don't listen to false prophets.
 2. God wants to bless and restore you.
 3. That blessing comes after repentance and seeking Him fully.
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Preach the Truth—Even When It Costs You

You may not always be celebrated for preaching truth. But God will stand with you.

Years ago, I visited a young woman in the hospital who had attempted suicide. She was involved in drugs and fortunetelling. I told her plainly that these things opened the door to demonic forces, and if she died without repenting, she would go to hell.

She wept and said, “But a pastor told me to come as I am.” I explained that yes, God receives us as we are—but He doesn’t want us to stay that way. He calls us to repent.

I had once practiced fortunetelling myself. I had attempted suicide. I understood her pain. But she didn’t want to hear it. I prayed with her and left.

A few weeks later, she was found dead—she had taken her own life.

Afterward, people criticized me. Some were angry that I was “too harsh.” But what if I hadn’t told her the truth?

Truth That Saves

Later, while preaching in Toronto, I shared a message about the man at the pool of Bethesda—how Jesus told him to rise up. I warned the people: if we don’t rise now—spiritually—we won’t rise when Christ returns.

I named specific sins, including fortunetelling. Many people got upset—because they practiced it. But weeks later, someone from that service called me to say, “Thank you for preaching the truth. God told me to stop fortunetelling.”

That’s the power of truth. It may not make you popular—but it can save lives.

“If anyone is ashamed of Me and My words, the Son of Man will be ashamed of them...”

—Luke 9:26 (NLT)

“You must give them my messages whether they listen or not... But don’t join them in their rebellion.”

—Ezekiel 2:7–8 (NLT)

Final Word: Minister the Full Gospel

Every time you stand to preach, ask God:

“What do You want me to say?”

Preach the love and the fear of God. Preach grace and repentance. Preach the full Gospel. You may not always get the cheers—but you’ll have heaven’s applause (Hebrews 12:1).

You’re not just a speaker—you are a messenger. Not man-appointed, but God-anointed and appointed.

So rise up. Speak boldly. Tell the truth in love. Lift up Jesus—and He will draw all people to Himself.

Chapter 11 Being a man of the Word

I can tell you that I've been a Christian for 18 years of my life but I've truly been a Christian for seven years. Why would I say that? Well, I was baptized and said the sinner's prayer many times but I was living a life that totally contradicted the bible, like adultery, lust, drugs, drinking, gambling, scamming, stealing, lying, pride, anger, bitterness, and hate.

"Now the works of the flesh are evident, which are: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness, idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies, envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries, and the like; of which I tell you beforehand, just as I also told you in time past, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God." (Galatians 5:19–21, NKJV)

If I died in that unrepentant sin I would have gone straight to hell even though I was in church every other Sunday and claiming Christianity it didn't matter because God called us to be imitators not impersonators! And I was definitely not an imitator of Jesus.

But something happened in 2004 when my mother-in-law came to town for a visit. Really I believe it was by divine appointment because she told me something that day that forever changed my life. She said,

"anthony, you can go to church, you can pray and you can fast and you can sing in choir but if you're not in the Word of God it's all for no reason."

It impacted me because she was a woman of God that showed it in action. I always said she preached Christianity with her mouth shut! Why do I say that? because I used to cheat on her daughter and physically abuse her by beating her up and my mother-in-law never said one negative word to me she would only pray for me.

So I listened to her that day and she gave me the address of a bible book store next to my house, so that day I bought my first bible. It was on October 28, 2004. It was a new living translation bible. I started reading the bible that day. I started in the book of John and my life was never the same after that.

A couple months later God told me through prayer one day to read Joshua 1:8. I didn't know that scripture really because I was still reading in the New Testament so I went and checked the scripture out and it said this:

“This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate in it day and night, that you may observe to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success.” (Joshua 1:8, NKJV)

That day God also told me to start doing bible studies. I received confirmation the following week at a church I used to visit other than my home church from Pastor Walter Johns. He was preaching on Joshua 1:8. Praise God I started the bible studies in the basement of my house with about 15 guys. A year later I finished my first bible cover to cover. It delivered me from all the previous sins I listed above—I was set free and born again:

“Having been born again, not of corruptible seed but incorruptible, through the word of God which lives and abides forever.” (1 Peter 1:23, NKJV)

and in May, 2007, I became a pastor in Chicago, IL, with soldiers for God Ministry. It went from 15 to 150 in three years. My point for telling you my testimony is simply to share how the Word of God changed my life. and it has made me successful and prosperous in the ministry for the glory of God! and it can change yours, too.

Since then until now I have been continually in the Word. I have read the new Testament over ten times and I have read the entire bible three times and am in the process of going through it a fourth time. I do this because the Word sets you free. The Word delivers you, the Word directs you, and the Word makes you born again! so I'm constantly in the Word because I remember what Joshua 1:8 said: “If you continue in the Word day and night and obey Then you'll be successful and prosperous.” Every successful and faithful man was a man of the Word of God.

If you're not a man that reads the Word on a daily basis you will never receive the fullness of what God has for you and your ministry. Paul the apostle said to Timothy,

“Bring the cloak that I left with Carpus at Troas when you come—and the books, especially the parchments.” (2 Timothy 4:13, NKJV)

This was a man that ministered as soon as he was converted and now he was about to die. What was he worried about? His papers, his books, the Word of God!

We can never say we know enough of God’s Word; we should read His Word not just to find something to preach on but to learn how to practice what we preach and to teach others to do the same. Also, we can always have a word to give to God’s people. In the book of first Peter it says:

“But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear.” (1 Peter 3:15, NKJV)

King David said:

“How can a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed according to Your word. With my whole heart I have sought You; Oh, let me not wander from Your commandments! Your word I have hidden in my heart, That I might not sin against You. Blessed are You, O Lord! Teach me Your statutes. With my lips I have declared All the judgments of Your mouth. I have rejoiced in the way of Your testimonies, As much as in all riches. I will meditate on Your precepts, And contemplate Your ways. I will delight myself in Your statutes; I will not forget Your word. Deal bountifully with Your servant, That I may live and keep Your word. Open my eyes, that I may see Wondrous things from Your law.” (Psalm 119:9–18, NKJV)

I’m also in my Word every day because I need my daily bread. Jesus said:

“It is written, ‘Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.’” (Matthew 4:4, NKJV)

Most importantly you need to receive a fresh word every day. Read the following information that I read on an Internet site:

“And you shall take fine flour and bake twelve cakes with it. Two-tenths of an ephah shall be in each cake. You shall set them in two rows, six in a row, on the pure gold table before the LORD.” (Leviticus 24:5–6, NKJV)

The table of shewbread was referred to as the table of the Presence. God's light forever shines on His people. The 12 baked cakes of bread spoke of God's people who were one with Him as the priests joined together for the fellowship of eating the bread and becoming one. Jesus referred to Himself as the bread of life and said if we eat this bread we will live forever.

“And Jesus said to them, ‘I am the bread of life. He who comes to Me shall never hunger, and he who believes in Me shall never thirst.’” (John 6:35, NKJV)

When we sit down and read God's word every day we commune and fellowship with God and because of this we take on the nature of God, the more we do this the more we will take on the characteristics of God. Also the priests were told to replace the bread daily. Do you want a fresh Word for God's people or do you want a stale one?

Well Then you need to understand the importance of daily devoting yourself to a disciplined devotion everyday meeting God and spending time in His Word!

In August of 2011 there was a pastor's meeting In this meeting we discussed the importance of the Word of God and we soon discovered that a lot of the ministers were not reading their bibles on a daily basis, they were only reading to get a message to preach. So we resolved to make a covenant to read the bible on a daily basis. The way we planned to do this is at least three to four chapters a day. The reason why we planned it this way is because if you read three chapters a day and four on Sunday you will read the entire bible in a year.

“For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.” (Hebrews 4:12, NKJV)

I challenge you to start a daily devotion and start from the New Testament and work your way around the bible until you have read it all. You can read three chapters a day and four chapters on Sunday and if you do this you will read the entire bible in a year. You can also read two chapters a day and finish the bible in less than two years. believe me it's a great accomplishment, and after you are done, read it again, and again.

We should never stop reading God's Word, the more seed:the more harvest

“...having been born again, not of corruptible seed but incorruptible, through the word of God which lives and abides forever.” (1 Peter 1:23, NKJV)

...the more fruit:

“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. There is no law against such.” (Galatians 5:22–23, NKJV)

It's time to get in the Word because you need the information to get the inspiration and then to get the revelation!

Also, the Bible says a wise man leaves an inheritance. Yes, we all wanna leave our children, possessions, and wealth if possible, but true inheritance is teaching them. Jesus and exemplifying Jesus. One of the ways you could leave a great inheritance and words of truth is reading true to Bible and leaving notes for your children put one of your children's name on your Bible and while you're reading through it if something catches you that you want to remind him, underline it, put their name there give them a quick note. Tell them you love them. I've been going through the Bible for over 21 years and my goal is to leave one of my children and grandchildren a Bible with their name on it that I personally read through and left them notes. I pray that you would do the same. That's true inheritance. The word of God teaching their children was important. **REMEMBER: GET THE WORD INSIDE YOU AND BECOME A MAN OF THE WORD, BECAUSE JESUS CANT WORK THROUGH YOU UNTIL YOU ALLOW HIM TO WORK IN YOU! THE BEST PREACHING WE WILL EVER DO IS LIVING A LIFE THAT EXEMPLIFIES THE WORD.**

AS JOHN MAXWELL SAID, “WE PREACH WHO WE ARE, NOT WHAT WE KNOW.”

Chapter 12: Conclusion

“We are not here to build ourselves up—we are here to serve.”

As I close this book, I want to thank you for taking the time to read through the pages and receive from what the Lord has shown me over the years. This was not written just to inspire you—it was written to prepare and equip you to serve the Lord more effectively in your calling.

Everything I’ve shared has come from personal experience, study, and correction from godly mentors. And now I want to pour that into you.

It’s All About Jesus

Let me remind you again: this is not about you. This is not about me. It’s about Jesus and His people.

“He must increase, but I must decrease.” —John 3:30

Preaching is not about performance. It’s not about showing off how well you can speak. It’s not about being the next famous preacher. It’s about faithfully delivering the Word of God, being led by the Spirit, and ministering to the needs of the people with love, truth, and power.

You Must Live What You Preach

You can’t just preach the Word—you must live it.

If you preach holiness, live holy.

If you preach repentance, be quick to repent.

If you preach forgiveness, walk in forgiveness.

If you preach deliverance, stay free yourself.

You are not called to be perfect—but you are called to be obedient. And the more you obey, the more God can trust you with His Word and His people.

Study for Service

The title of this book is Studying for Service because that's exactly what you're doing.

You're not just studying to become a better preacher—you're studying so you can serve God and His people with greater wisdom, depth, and power. You're preparing to:

- Feed the sheep
 - Guard the flock
 - Heal the broken
 - Deliver the oppressed
 - Correct with love
 - Encourage the weary
 - And lift up Jesus
-

Let God Use You

God wants to use you—not because you're perfect, but because you're willing. And when you keep yourself in prayer, in the Word, and in humility, He will raise you up in His time and for His glory.

“Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time...” —1 Peter 5:6

If you do it for Him, He will take care of the rest. He will open doors. He will bring the increase. He will anoint your words. He will use your life to make an eternal impact.

Final Challenge

Don't ever forget: you are a servant first. Always.

Preach truth. Preach love. Preach the full Gospel.

Minister with conviction. Minister with compassion.

Stay rooted in the Word. Stay filled with the Spirit.

Serve faithfully—because your reward is in heaven.

And when it's all said and done, may you hear Him say:

“Well done, good and faithful servant...” —Matthew 25:21

So Remember the more you know your text the more People will know their God!

Putting together and most importantly, living out the lessons and applications taught through this book over the years has made me into the man of God I am for his glory, over these past 20 years of studying the word of God learning and going deeper I have realized a few things , the first thing is, I have not scratched the surface of the amazing wisdom and knowledge God has in store for his people!

Another thing I've learned is you can have beautiful church and worship services and meetings and fellowship and all of those are beautiful, but there is no

substitute for the word of God. That's what changes you, that's what saves you, that's what transforms you, that's what regenerates you, it is only the word of God. So if I can encourage you with one thing. Get the word of God every day, have a daily Bible reading, ask the Lord for wisdom and knowledge, and he will give it without measure. Seek his face put him first in all things in your life will never be the same!

Pastor Mark SFGM