

SESSION 2

DEVELOPING RELEVANT THEMES

Sources for Sermon Ideas

Bible-Based

The Bible is the record of God's revelation of himself to humanity. This divine revelation provides a wonderfully varied library of historical record and narrative, drama, poetry, proverbs, correspondence, and apocalyptic literature. Much of the Scriptures tell the story of God as He meets people in the actual experiences of life.

Sources Centering on Needs

For a preacher, therefore, awareness of the needs of people is almost as important as knowing the Bible. Samuel Shoemaker wrote, "Concrete human problems, and the Gospel answer, is the best starting place for sermons."

Concrete human problems and needs are discerned by contact with people in general, as well as... the... congregation. ...Human contact comes from daily routines lived outside the study.

It is disappointing to see great events of national and international importance go unnoticed from the pulpit because they don't conform to the lectionary.

Sources Drawing on Personal Experience

Appropriate sermon ideas are usually the byproduct of pastoral care and love.

Inspirational Input

When a flash of inspiration brightens your mind and heart, write it down immediately. Don't lose it by complacently thinking, "This is such a special moment that I will never forget it." ...If a sudden inspirational moment is unrecorded, it will usually leave as quickly as it came, likely never to return.

Reading Input

Reading in the theological disciplines is acutely important in developing an effective biblical sermon. All of the theological disciplines- biblical studies, archaeology, church history, philosophy, theology, ethics, missions, evangelism, counseling, and homiletics...

Input from Everyday Life

Effective preachers should also follow the example of Jesus by being involved in the everyday affairs of life.

DISCUSSION

1. WHICH TYPES OF INPUT WOULD YOU TEND TO USE THE MOST? THE LEAST?
2. WHAT WOULD YOUR SERMONS TEND TO LACK WITH THE ABSENCE OF EACH OF THESE INPUTS?

Programmed Planning

A planned program of preaching is another valuable device for discovering sermon ideas. A survey of the church and/or secular calendar will alert you to special days.

Textually Defining Sermon Topics

...Finding a sermon idea is only the beginning. The next step is to relate the sermon idea to one or more specific Biblical texts.

By aiming for a complete unit of thought in selecting a Biblical text, the preacher greatly minimizes the possibility of misusing the Bible.

(Option for long text) The preacher could first orally summarize much of the text... and then use a shorter portion...

Here is an **example of how a multiple passage text might be used for a sermon:**

Text 1 John 3:8; John 19:28-30; 1 John 4:4

Title: Why Jesus Came

Outline

1. Jesus came to destroy sin (1 John 3:8)
2. Jesus came to offer Himself as an atonement (John 19:28-30)
3. Jesus came to empower us for victory against evil (1 John 4:4)

Authentically Anchored Preaching

Why should a sermon have a Biblical text as its starting point? ...Since a preacher's aim is to communicate the Word of God, the simplest way to do that is to take a portion of that Word and build the sermon on and around that section. ...How could preaching possibly take place without a biblical focus?

Second, a text prevents the sermon from becoming merely an editorial, or personal comment. ...Personal comment, which reflects no more than the preacher's own conclusions, must be labeled accordingly.

DISCUSSION

1. WHAT ARE SOME WAYS THAT BIBLICAL TEXTS CAN BE MISUSED?
2. WHAT CAN YOU DO TO PREVENT THOSE KINDS OF MISUSE?

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