

# Preaching Practicum

Dr. Steve Schell | Online Preaching Class | March 2020

Section A: Understanding Preaching

Section B: Preaching Through a Book

Section C: Preaching Through Romans

## Section A Understanding Preaching

1. Believing the Bible
  - See Article: “Believing the Bible”
  - A faith decision: What do I believe? Is the Bible divine revelation or human speculation?
  
2. The Role of the Preacher
  - Reformation thinking: The Bible is the final authority in all matters of faith and practice. It is God’s Word to us.
  - “The church is the community of God’s people gathered around the preaching of the Word”
  - In a reformed church: pulpit vs. podium, wearing a robe
  - James Daane (Fuller Seminary) “God has already said to His church all that He wants to say. Your job is to let Him say it again.”  
(Homiletics: to say the same thing)
  - We stand at a sacred desk which is set apart for His Word, not ours. We have a sacred assignment: to let Him speak through us to draw the lost and to disciple His children.
  - We become a messenger, not the message. We allow the Bible to disciple the whole church. Jesus, Paul, John, Luke, Peter, Moses, Isaiah, etc. become our teachers. We become familiar with how they think. We step back thousands of years and enter into their world, and then we ask ourselves how do we do that today?
  - Two reasons people stand in front of groups of people: communication or display.
  - Why am I here? Am I here to communicate or be admired?
  - Key: refuse to worry about what people are thinking about you and focus on communicating well.
  - I’m here to explain what the Word says and how we are to obey it.

- God's grace is given freely, but His blessings are earned by obedience. So, by teaching people the Word, I am teaching them how to live under God's covering and in His abundant life.
- Be consistent in quality so people can rely on you and feel safe to invite others.
- Be in the pulpit 40+ times a year. The main service is not the place to train beginners. It takes an effort to go to church, and people must be convinced it will be worth the effort.

### 3. Transformation Precedes Education

- Mt. 28:18-20 "3 baptisms" (See: Ac 19:3-6)
- The inner miracle: Ezk 36:25-27, Jer. 31:31-34
- Christianity is based on a miracle: when the gospel is preached accurately God Himself will transform the hearts of those who believe in an instant. And that miraculous transformation is what creates a disciple even though that person still has much to learn.
- He or she now has eyes to see and ears to hear. Jn 3:3, 5, 6; 1 Co 2:14
- We waste our time trying to disciple people whose hearts have not been transformed. They wear us out; they discourage us.
- Those with a changed heart are inwardly motivated and become a joy to teach because they try to live out what they learn.
- Paul calls this "a circumcision [of the heart] made without hands..." (Col 2:11; Dt 30:6).
- This is why we must regularly minister the gospel, which includes helping people to receive the Baptism with the Holy Spirit.
- Repent (full surrender) and Believe (trust Christ alone) and Receive (the promised indwelling of the Holy Spirit).
- Everything that is taught in the New Testament assumes this miracle has taken place or directs people toward it.
- If we understand this truth, we will preach differently: we will not threaten or bribe. We understand we are speaking to hearts that want to obey God, so our assignment is to teach them how to obey all that Jesus has commanded us.

### 4. Why Preach Through a Book of the Bible?

- The question is: who will pick the topics for my sermons? Me or God?
- By going through a book and not skipping over the hard or unpleasant subjects, we will regularly preach on topics we would never choose to preach on otherwise.
- You will frequently feel the "burden" of what you must preach.
- And yet, you will find that the pain of this process brings you life. You can externally feel His pleasure rest on you as you speak. You sense that you really are God's representative speaking His truth into a troubled world.
- "You shall not muzzle the ox while he is threshing" (Dt. 25:4; 1Co 9:9; 1 Tim 5:18).

- The preacher must spiritually be fed by the process of feeding others. In fact, we are the primary recipient of each message.
- We deliberately set ourselves on a course of lifelong learning, of growing continually deeper in understanding and faith.
- As you gather the information needed to understand a book, suddenly passages in other books or confusing concepts make sense. You discover a “key” that unlocks a hidden truth.
- You develop personal relationships with the people you are studying. You “ride along in their pocket.” You watch Jesus, Paul, Moses, David, etc. They become your mentors. You begin to understand how they think. You fall in love with them. And as you preach, so does your congregation.
- When you preach through a book, the responsibility for what you are saying shifts off of you and onto the Bible. You didn’t pick this topic; the Bible did.
- You are the messenger, not the Source of the message, and people feel that.
- This is very empowering. You wear a yoke of authority. It overrules other factors that might undermine your authority (youth, lack of formal training, etc.).
- Common objections to preaching through a book: we only have the average person for three years, so if I spend years preaching through a book, they will miss many important themes taught elsewhere.
- Actually, you can’t teach through any book of the Bible without addressing most or all of the major themes.
- Won’t people get bored? Only if you stop applying each lesson to their lives. If you teach but don’t apply, you will bore people no matter what you preach.
- The real reasons: 1) It is hard work. It requires many hours each week in study and prayerful reflection. This requires careful scheduling and equipping others to do much of the pastoral care. 2) It depends on God to reveal new insights every week and that requires faith that He will and the personal disciplines to stay in the Spirit. 3) We recognize that there are passages in each book we don’t have a clue what they mean and are afraid that when we come to those passages we will look like fools.
- We must become convinced that the effort to research these difficult passages is worth it, and that there is life in every verse of the book; God wants us to understand all of it and is committed to helping us at every step in the process.
- What about special seasons, local and national events, special needs in the congregation? These interruptions to preaching through a book are not a problem whatsoever. They are part of the life of a healthy church. You simply return to the book you are teaching when they pass.

## 5. Types of Sermons

- The sermon gets its topic and points from a few verses.
- The sermon gets its topic and points from an extended passage.
- The sermon gets its topic from the next unit of thought and then the preacher identifies the points that will be needed to explain and apply that topic.

- The preacher picks a topic and looks for passages that talk about it.
- The preacher preaches along through a passage of Scripture turning every verse or statement into a separate short sermon.

## 6. Forming a Sermon

- Stick to only one topic in a sermon. Resist preaching 2-3 sermons at one time. This dilutes the effect of any one of them and makes it very difficult for your listeners to remember what you talked about.
- Identify the next logical unit of thought. Where does it start? Where does it end?
- Go through the three steps:
  - What does it say?
  - What does it mean?
  - What does it mean to me?
- The Bible provides its own stories. Watch for opportunities to describe what was taking place. Tell the story in a way that allows us to picture it in our minds as we listen. Use vivid language.
- As you study, watch for a truth that touches your heart. If it doesn't move you in the study it won't move them in the sermon.
- State that truth in one simple, short declarative sentence. In other words what are you going to talk about?
- Then list the questions you must ask of this statement to understand it. The answers to those questions become your main points.
- Always introduce your topic by showing us how it applies to our "felt needs" (practical or spiritual). "How will your sermon help me?"
- An old saying: "Tell them what you're going to tell them. Tell them. Tell them what you told them."
- Always apply the topic. Always minister for a decision. Always invite people to respond.
- Roy Hicks, Jr. "The sermon builds a platform for you to stand on and minister to the people."
- Never skip this final step. This is where the sermon moves from information to heart change.
- Schedule sufficient time during the week to prepare and study.
- Write out your introduction, transitional sentences, points, note illustrations, and conclusion (See: Section B.2).

## 7. Delivering the Sermon

- Prepare yourself spiritually.
- People are evaluating you while you speak: Do you personally believe what you are saying? Do you say this because you love us or for another reason? Does your message make sense? Am I learning something valuable?
- Adrenaline: anxiety before speaking does not mean that you are not called or gifted to do this. Nervousness can help to focus the mind.

- Faithful preachers pay a heavy price. G. Campbell Morgan said: “Every week I feel like a sheep led to the slaughter.”
- Learn to slow down the rate at which you speak. Enunciate your words carefully (this doesn’t sound silly to us).
- Speak to the back of the room.
- Train your voice, use your diaphragm.
- Both men and women: lower your voice as much as possible. A lower voice has more authority.
- Practice singing alone: Deep, full voice.
- Take charge of the service: sound, lights, seating, oxygen, temperature.
- “Read” the room while you preach. Are people tired, unable to hear you, distracted, suffocating in heat and CO2?
- Dress modestly and respectfully.
- Stand up straight, but appear relaxed.
- Make eye contact, keep shifting your gaze to all areas of the congregation.
- Don’t point at the congregation.
- Open with prayer and announce your text, not jokes, rambling thoughts greeting friends, announcements.
- Hopefully the worship beforehand will “warm” the room before you preach.
- As you speak, concentrate on your message, not what your listeners think of you.
- Don’t yell. Keep your voice gentle but loud enough to be heard.
- Vary the volume based on what you are saying. Vary the range: high to low. Vary the pace: fast to slow. Give place to reflective pauses. Never monotone.
- Don’t try to be funny, but let humor naturally emerge.
- Never use vulgar language. It undermines you.
- Don’t scold. Never preach something until you can preach it kindly.
- Never preach at the whole congregation because you want to correct one person or a particular group. Talk to them privately.
- Always leave people with hope. Discouragement is the greatest obstacle.
- Always think yourself as the primary recipient of each message. This is God’s Word to us, it’s not me telling you what to do.
- Don’t be afraid to preach something you personally need to hear. Many likely need to hear the same thing.
- Be careful in sharing your personal struggles. Don’t talk publicly about your sexual life or troubles in your marriage.
- Roy Hicks Jr: “After the resurrection Jesus showed the disciples His scars, not His bleeding wounds.”
- Don’t avoid the hard topics that the Bible brings up. Pray for God to show you how to deliver it and to apply it to our lives. These will become some of your most life-changing messages.
- Every sermon is personally costly. We must break the alabaster vial to release the perfume (Lk. 7:37, 38).

- There is often a physical let down afterward. Mondays may experience a mood swing. Embrace it, and don't make any decisions or text anybody.

## 8. The Personal Life

- Understand the spiritual warfare against you. You are a target. You will be tempted intensely.
- Set up clear boundaries to protect yourself: internet, alcohol, drugs, profanity
- Guard against counseling the opposite sex.
- Set clear limits to counseling people. This can eat up the time you need to prepare your sermon and will leave you discouraged and frequently throwing something together at the last minute.
- Daily time in the Word (SOAP).
- Daily prayer: both personal needs and intercessory lists.
- Schedule your whole week carefully and prioritize time for specific activities with your spouse and children. Protect that time.
- Take a Sabbath. To do that, you need to take two days off each week: one for rest, one for chores. Or you will simply work on your day off and grow tired and angry at the church.
- Take vacations as a family. Go places.
- Four weeks off per year is needed for your emotional health.
- Fight to protect the "anointing." When your life gets hectic, this can lift.
- Develop a calendar. Schedule your days. Interruptions happen, but always come back as soon as possible to the schedule the Lord showed you.
- Compulsive people will not respect your schedule. They are looking to people to comfort them rather than God. They will wear you out and harm the church.
- Your schedule starts with the time you go to bed. You must have 7-8 hours per night.
- Your physical health affects your emotional and spiritual life. They go hand in hand.
- You must view yourself like a professional athlete. You are constantly in training: food, sleep, exercise, vitamins, family time, fun, reading, study.
- The anointing on your messages will not be sporadic. This is your birthright. God will meet you every week, year after year. You will never run out of fresh, powerful material to preach.
- You will be fed as you preach and study, so you will continue to grow and mature as the years pass.
- Let's ask ourselves: Am I willing to invest the time and energy necessary, week after week, to really be good at what I do?

## Section B Preaching Through a Book

### 1. Understanding the Three Steps

- Read: “Preaching Through the Bible” and “How to Study Verse by Verse”

#### Step #1 What Does it Say?

- Here is a verse. What questions do we need to answer in order to understand what this verse is saying? Write down these questions.
- Where will you go to find the answer to each question? What books, what maps, what websites?
- What are the key words you must understand in this verse? What was the original Greek or Hebrew word? (Review the process of how to do a word study in “How to Study Verse by Verse”)

#### Step #2 What Does it Mean?

- What is the main truth this verse intends to teach?
- State that truth simply in one short sentence. Write this down.
- This is an important place in the process to pray for revelation. “Lord, please show me what you are saying here.”

#### Step #3 What Does it Mean to Me?

- Where have you seen this truth at work in your own life? Write out how it happened, how it changed you, what you learned.
- Where have you seen this truth at work in someone else? (a person or a group)
- Is there an example of this happening to someone in the Bible? Write down the Scripture reference(s).

### 2. Writing an Outline

#### The Importance of Writing an Outline

- Don’t copy anyone else’s style. Be you, but have a good outline.
- Start somewhere and end somewhere. Don’t ramble or go off on tangents.
- Example: preaching class at LIFE Bible college: I started requiring the students to present their outlines to the class so they could be corrected a week before the sermon was given. The effectiveness of their sermons changed dramatically. One student commented: “I didn’t think my classmates could move my heart like this!”
- Illustrate each major point with a story or example from the Bible or from practical experience.
- Leave time at the end of each sermon to allow the congregation to respond to what they heard or to present the gospel. Don’t hurry through this important moment. This response is the goal of the sermon: you want to reach their hearts not simply increase their knowledge.
- Here is a form that provides a simple outline for a Biblical sermon. Let’s use the 3 steps we have just completed to fill it in:

# Sermon Outline Form

Opening Prayer:

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Title:

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Text:

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Introduction:

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Proposition:

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Key Question:

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Transitional Sentence:

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Point #1:

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Explanation:

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Point #2:

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Explanation:

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Point #3:

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Explanation:

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Illustration:

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Transitional Sentence:

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Conclusion:

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Ministry Plan:

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Closing Prayer:

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- Title: Write out a title that captures the purpose of the sermon in no more than four words.
- Text: List only the verses you will actually read out loud. Research and practice names so you can pronounce them properly and easily.
- Introduction: Identify the felt need your sermon will address and show us how this truth will help us. Leave us hungry for an answer. Make us want to listen.
- Proposition: What is the main truth this passage teaches us? (What does it mean?)
- Key Question: Write out the question you will ask of the proposition that will be answered by your points.
- Transitional Sentences: Write a statement that moves our attention from the point you just made to the next point.
- Points: Each point should be a short statement that provides one specific answer to the key question you asked earlier.
- Illustrations: Tell a story that lets us “watch” this truth in action. Don’t read this even if you’re telling a Bible event. Relax and let it flow.
- Conclusion: Tell us how God wants us to respond to what we have just heard! What changes do you hope will take place in us if we believe this truth? What blessings can we expect will come to us if we obey it?
- Ministry Plan: How will you help the congregation respond to your message? How will you minister this truth to them?

#### Sharing our Outlines

- Now, who is willing to let us see your outline?

## Section C Preaching Through Romans

1. Read Introduction in *Study Verse by Verse* (p.9). This is the setting in which this letter was written.
2. In-service education. Who in your church or Bible study is likely to have the best understanding of Romans after you have preached all the way through it? This process becomes a form of high-quality in-service education. You are learning Biblical theology straight from the Bible. Ultimately, the apostle Paul has become your teacher, and step by step the Holy Spirit has revealed the deep spiritual meanings of this foundational book.
3. Here are some of the main truths a person can expect will become part of their lifelong thinking after studying through Romans.
  - The nature and extent of sin
  - The danger of religion
  - How to lead someone to salvation
  - What is repentance
  - Why believers struggle with temptation
  - How God sets us free from wrong behaviors and attitudes
  - What is the Baptism with the Holy Spirit
  - What is “predestination”
  - God’s plan for the Jewish people and the nation of Israel
  - How God designed the church to function
  - How a believer is to relate to civil government
  - How God wants believers to relate to each other
  - What is our responsibility to believers who are suffering persecution
  - And much more
4. How to use this book of sermons: *Preaching Through Romans*
  - This book demonstrates that sermons can be found in every passage of Romans.
  - Hopefully as you read these sermons, they will spark ideas for new sermons in you.
  - You are welcome to use any of the material or outlines in these sermons without crediting me (Please don’t say Steve Schell said this. It’s distracting.) I’m giving you permission, so if you find a good point, preach it; it’s not plagiarism.
  - Try to let what you read here be a launching pad to a new sermon. It’s those topics that move your heart that will be powerful when you preach them. As

you read, watch for what God starts to reveal to you. Just remember to organize your material into a good outline.

- I normally preached about 40 weekends a year and would always have special topics on Thanksgiving, Advent (4 weeks), Christmas, Good Friday, Easter, etc. so these 65 sermons took me about 2 years to preach.

5. How would I adapt this approach if I were teaching a men's or women's group, a Sunday school class, or a youth group?

- I would select passages that are descriptions of God at work or passages that provide vivid images. I would read the passage, tell the story, make one point, and then show how that truth applies to the lives of those who are listening to me.

6. Exercise:

- Pick one of the sermons from this book, identify the truth that especially moves your heart, and build an outline on that truth. You are free to use information from the sermon and even its points. But as much as possible, make it your own sermon.

7. When would be a good time to start?

- Good times to begin preaching through a book of the Bible are fall (mid to late September); January (any week); or after Easter.
- It seems there is a 10-week segment in the fall between back to school and Thanksgiving; a 10-week segment between New Year's and the Easter season; and a 10-week segment from Easter to about the end of June.
- I take 3-4 weeks off in July or August, but may keep going through the book on the other weeks. A series could be used in the summer too.