

Sermon Evaluation Form

Four Basic Assumptions

1. Preachers can always improve their ability to interpret and explain the Scriptures (2 Timothy 2.15); and even preachers are called to be humble and teachable, like a child in God's kingdom!
2. Good expository preaching involves both accurate interpretation and careful explanation of the text of Scripture (1 Corinthians 2.1-5, 2 Corinthians 4.1-5).
3. Believers who hear the preached message are able to evaluate it (Acts 17.11, 1 John 2.20).
4. The wise pastor seeks the advice of spiritual leaders to help him improve his ministry. Sharing with them evaluation tools like this form may prove helpful to all. May we be like Apollos who "spoke with great fervor" yet was open to the counsel of Priscilla and Aquila who "explained to him the way of God more adequately." After their counsel, Apollos' ministry was even more effective (Acts 18.24-28).

This form evaluates two parts of the message: the interpretation of the text and the delivery of the message.

Part 1- Interpretation (exegesis)

1. The preacher has understood and explained the main meaning of the sermon text.

What is the main idea that the Holy Spirit is speaking through the human author of the Scripture passage? Has the preacher explained the central themes of the text in a simple sentence? Does the rest of the sermon build on and develop this main theme? For example, if the text is John 3 the main idea would be the "new birth"; sermon points may be: What is it? What is it not? Where does it come from? How do we get it? What are the benefits? etc.

2. The preacher has explained how the text connects to its immediate context.

All of Scripture is related because it has the same Divine Author. Each book has a consistent theme because of its human author. What has gone before? What follows? In our example of John 3, John 2.25 says Jesus "knew what was in man." So, Nicodemus is fully known by Jesus; even a great teacher of Israel needs a new birth. Chapter 4 is a similar personal conversation about eternal life, with a Samaritan woman. This fits the overall purpose of John's Gospel: "that by believing you may have life in his name" (John 20.31).

3. The preacher has explained the historical and cultural setting of the passage.

Each Scripture text was spoken for a particular time of redemptive history to a specific audience in a particular situation. What was going on at the time of this text? Without this knowledge it is not possible to understand its true meaning. In John 3, Jesus has recently begun His ministry; He

has performed His first miracle and cleansed the Temple. The Jewish community has been wondering about this man (verse 2). Opposition against Him has begun and will grow until He is “lifted up” (verse 14). In John 3, Nicodemus, the teacher of Israel, wonders how Jesus fits into God’s Messianic plan.

4. The preacher has helped the listener to understand the key words of the text.

The preacher must first know these key words. Usually, they are words used often in other parts of the same book of Scripture and the entire Bible. They are also words that add important insight into the meaning of key Bible themes. For example, “new birth” is a key word in John 3. It is not used very often in Scripture. But it is a key theme of Scripture, for without this “new birth” a person will not see the “kingdom of God.” Other important words in chapter 3 that are found throughout John’s Gospel are “sign,” “truth,” “spirit,” “testimony,” “believe,” “life,” and “light”.

5. The preacher has explained the author’s purpose in writing this passage.

What did the author want his readers to do/be in response to reading this message? This requires knowing the reason why the text was written. John makes his overall purpose of the Gospel clear (20.31), and chapter 3 is an illustration of the necessity of the new birth for eternal life, even for religious leaders.

6. The preacher has shown that the best way to interpret Scripture is with other Scripture.

This is also called the “analogy of Scripture”. The Bible is its own best commentary. Has the preacher shown the continuity and development of the whole message of the Bible? For example, John 3.14 refers to Moses making a bronze snake to cure the deadly snakebites the Israelites received. As they looked in faith, they were healed. Since the Garden of Eden, Scripture reveals the serpent as an enemy of God’s people. As the old covenant believer looked with faith to the upraised bronze serpent, today life and healing come from the cross of Christ. Destroying the serpent will be part of the believer’s ultimate victory in Christ (Romans 16.20).

7. The preacher has carefully explained the important theological truths of the passage.

Doctrine is the application of Scripture to all areas of life. What does this text teach about the person of God? Of Jesus and His work? The Holy Spirit? Of salvation? The sermon is not to be a lecture on systematic theology. But it is to explain the text and its meaning, which is the centerpiece of theology. John 3 has much theological truth about the kingdom of God, salvation, judgment, and the ministries of Jesus and the Holy Spirit.

8. The message of salvation has been clearly explained.

Any Biblical text can lead a sinner to salvation. The overall purpose of Scripture is to give us “wisdom for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus” (2 Timothy 3.15). The gospel message should be clearly developed from the given text, but it should not be a second sermon preached at the close of the service. Look for great truths about God revealed in the text. Perhaps you may

see His character and how we do not measure up to it; or His grace and mercy so freely given; or His Kingdom established by His Son; or His judgment and how we must be ready. Realize that your sermon may be the only time an unbeliever might hear about how to be saved. John 3 is an easy text to call sinners to repentance and faith. Jesus' emphatic words in verses 3-5 stand for all time and all people. The preacher must passionately make known the necessity of the new birth.

9. The preacher's application of how to respond has been directly taken from the text itself.

When the preacher is the pastor, it is always a temptation to try and make the sermon text speak to the problems that face the congregation that week. But do not twist the Scripture to make it say what it you want it to say. John 3 has many practical applications. Here are a few:

- Jesus and His Word are the only source of truth and salvation
- Human birthrights and religious attainment are no certainty of salvation
- The testimony of Jesus was rejected - ours may be too
- The most wonderful expression of God's love is Jesus
- The world has already been condemned
- We are to shine God's light in the world's darkness
- God's ultimate and eternal judgment is the only evaluation that really matters

The preacher's task is to faithfully make known God's Word. He will apply it to the hearts of His people in many wonderful ways, in ways much better than we could do ourselves.

10. The preacher has explained what the text means to people today.

John Stott speaks of sermons as bridges from the text to today (Stott 1982, p. 137). A good sermon has solid connections to both the ancient text and the modern world. The good sermon sounds both like a history book and a daily newspaper. The listener should know clearly that their reception or rejection of this message will have tremendous consequences. John 3 speaks to the "search for truth" in our era; the wrong emphasis we make on external religious activities and rituals; the darkness of human evil in our world; and the light of God which shines, no matter how faintly, and cannot be extinguished.

Part 2 - The Delivery

1. The preacher has effectively communicated the main ideas of the text.

There should be concise sentences, spoken several times during the message, which convey what the preacher is trying to communicate. Listeners should be able to walk away repeating the main ideas. The points of the message should build upon and develop the main ideas.

2. The arrangement of the material is logical and easy to follow.

The sermon is crafted as a declaration from God based on a particular text. Sometimes the preacher may present his points in slightly different order from the sequence of the text. Sermons

are not always running commentaries going from one verse to the next. Yet, the logic of the presentation must be clear and consistent with the text.

3. The meaning of the text has been clearly communicated.

The text of Scripture was presented and adequately explained so that the listener knows the main themes of the passage. The Scripture was not just a springboard from which the preacher soars into the currents of his own hot air! Instead, it was the source and foundation of the sermon. Because of this sermon, the listener has learned the central teaching of this text for their Christian growth and understanding.

4. The main idea of the text has been effectively illustrated.

Illustrations are the windows of the sermon. Carefully chosen illustrations help to reveal the meaning of the text. Illustrations are powerful. Care must be taken that their influence be used to open the meaning of the text, not just entertain listeners or exalt preachers. The connection between the illustration and the text must be very clear.

5. The preacher's style and choice of words is clear, simple, personal, and direct.

The style and presentation should help to communicate the message; it must not be a distraction. The choice of words and tone should fit the theme of the sermon. Words should be simple, warm, and direct. Every listener should be able to understand.

6. The preacher has made an effective use of voice inflection and gestures.

Find the balance between being monotonous and overly animated -- somewhere between calling attention to oneself and calling people to give full attention to the text. Gestures and facial expressions should enhance and adorn the message. Watching a video of the preaching is always a good learning experience for the preacher - and scary too!

7. The preacher has preached to himself and the congregation.

Being under the authority of Scripture means that it applies as fully to the preacher as to any listener. The preacher is a fellow struggler on the King's Highway. The testimony of the preacher must be genuine and not forced or false.

8. Having heard this sermon, I know clearly what God demands of me through this text.

The whole purpose of the sermon comes down to this: that God's people would do/be what the text requires. The message and its delivery must be so constructed that this goal is achieved. You are not just informing; you are calling for a life decision.

9. Having heard this sermon, I can identify at least one area of my life that must change.

The attentive listener should be able to make personal applications from the message. The sermon should include specific ideas for change and growth in the Lord. The Holy Spirit often reveals areas where change is needed.

10. The sermon has helped me to expand my thinking and knowledge as a believer.

Each sermon builds on the listener's foundation of acquired Christian knowledge. The good sermon reinforces, expands, opens new ways of thinking, raises new questions, and challenges accepted opinions. The wise preacher rejoices when the congregation grows in their ability to think for themselves according to the principles of Scripture.

These 20 aspects of the sermon, 10 relating to the content and 10 to the delivery, should provide a balanced evaluation of the message.

Who should be chosen to evaluate the message?

1. Men and women who are growing and are mature in their relationship with Jesus and in their knowledge of Scripture.
2. Men and women who have heard several different preachers in their Christian lives.
3. Men and women who are not strongly opinionated; they can be honest and fair in their evaluations.
4. Men and women with a passion for God's glory to be revealed in His Church.
5. It is ideal when at least four different people evaluate the message and then have time to consult with one another afterwards to strengthen their analysis of the message.
6. It is ideal when the evaluators can then meet with the preacher at a convenient time and share their ideas in a relaxed atmosphere of love, respect, and mutual edification.

Sermon Evaluation Form

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1 2 3 4 5

Reason/Example:

2. The preacher has explained how the text connects to its immediate context.

1 2 3 4 5

Reason/Example:

3. The preacher has explained the historical and cultural setting of the passage.

1 2 3 4 5

Reason/Example:

4. The preacher has helped the listener to understand the key words of the text.

1 2 3 4 5

Reason/Example:

5. The preacher has explained the author's purpose in writing this passage.

1 2 3 4 5

Reason/Example:

6. The preacher has shown the best way to interpret Scripture is by using other Scripture.

1 2 3 4 5

Reason/Example:

7. The preacher has carefully explained the important theological truths of the passage.

1 2 3 4 5

Reason/Example:

8. The message of salvation has been clearly explained.

1 2 3 4 5

Reason/Example:

9. The preacher's application of how to respond has been directly taken from the text itself.

1 2 3 4 5

Reason/Example:

10. The preacher has explained what the text means to people today.

1 2 3 4 5

Reason/Example:

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1 2 3 4 5

Reason/Example:

2. The arrangement of the material is logical and easy to follow.

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3. The meaning of the text has been clearly communicated.

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4. The main idea of the text has been effectively illustrated.

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5. The preacher's style and choice of words is clear, simple, personal, and direct.

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9. Having heard this sermon, I can identify at least one area of my life that must change.

1 2 3 4 5

Reason/Example:

10. The sermon has helped me to expand my thinking and knowledge as a believer.

1 2 3 4 5

Reason/Example:

Other comments about the sermon:

This sermon evaluation form is Appendix C in the book Preach Jesus from the Scriptures by Mark Blair, available on Amazon.