PREACHING & TEACHING

Sermon Outline Template

Six different sermon outline templates, because there is no single right shape. Three-point, expository, narrative, one-point, problem and solution, and inductive, each with what it is good at, what it fails at, and the kind of passage it fits. Print the one that suits the text rather than forcing every text into the same frame.

6 templates · 6 segments

Six shapes, one per movement. Pick by the passage in front of you. The nine-movement version on the sermon outline page is the expository one filled in.

BEFORE YOU RECORD

- Preachers tend to have one shape and use it for everything, which is why their congregations can predict the sermon by minute four. Rotating the shape does more for attention than any amount of delivery work.
- Let the passage choose. Narrative texts resist three points and epistles resist narrative shape, and forcing either produces the flat sermon everyone politely endures.
- The one-point sermon is the hardest and the most memorable. If you have never tried one, try it on a passage you know well.

01. Three-point

the default

[most common, most predictable, still works]

Introduction, three parallel points each with text and application, conclusion. Good for teaching a doctrine and for congregations that take notes. Fails on narrative, where chopping a story into three headings kills it.

[hook / point 1 + text + application / point 2 + text + application / point 3 + text + application / close]

02. Expository

verse by verse

[the text supplies the structure]

Walk the passage in order and let its own movements be your movements. Good for series through a book, and it quietly teaches a congregation to read. Fails when the passage has no internal structure, which is more often than preachers admit.

[context / verses 1-4 / verses 5-8 / verses 9-12 / the claim / application]

03. Narrative

the story shape

[for anything with people doing things in it]

Tell the story properly, with its own tension and turn, and hold the application until after it has landed. Good for the gospels and almost all of the Old Testament. Fails if you explain as you go, which is the constant temptation.

[setting / the trouble / what they tried / the turn / what it cost / what it means for us]

04. One-point

the hard one

[hardest to write, most remembered]

One claim, approached four times from four angles, never restated in the same words. Good when the congregation genuinely needs to remember one thing. Fails if the claim is not strong enough to bear twenty-five minutes, which you find out at minute twelve.

[the claim / the claim in story / the claim in the text / the objection to the claim / the claim again, differently]

05. Problem and solution

for felt needs

[useful and easy to abuse]

Name a problem the congregation actually has, dig into why the usual answers fail, then bring the text. Good for reaching people who would not come for a book study. Fails when it turns the Bible into a solution to whatever happens to be bothering us, which is the wrong way round.

[the problem / why the obvious fixes fail / what the text says / what changes / one action]

06. Inductive

withhold the claim

[for a congregation that thinks it already agrees]

Start with a question and do not answer it until the last three minutes. The congregation reaches the claim slightly before you say it, which makes it theirs. Good for familiar passages. Fails if anyone loses the thread, so it needs the clearest transitions of any shape here.

[the question / a first answer, rejected / a second answer, rejected / the text / the claim, arrived at late]

USAGE

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