

# First Night

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## Introductory Questions

### Why do we have a Preaching Team?

Born out of desperation; continued because of efficacy and joy!

Community Church distinctive of “collaboration.”

- diversity and creativity: expand breadth of life experience, perspectives, illustrations brought to bear on a passage (*making better sermons*)
- accuracy in community: bias identification and interpretive transparency (*making better preachers*)
- growth in knowledge of the Word, handling the Scriptures faithfully, gift identification and development (*making better disciples*)
- personal growth of participants and preachers through dialogue and even disagreement (*making better people*)
- overflow to create a culture throughout the larger church (*making a better church*)
- the best way of pursuing faithfulness and excellence in the teaching ministry of the church

### Benefits of the Preaching Team

- more interesting and more accurate teaching of the Scriptures on Sunday mornings
- greater ability to connect with a large and diverse congregation
- avoid the ruts, pet issues, and default patterns of a single individual preacher
- we all grow in the Lord as we meet together, even through a diversity of views
- it's always more fun working together!

### Cautions of the Preaching Team

- can mistake democracy for submission to the Word (we can all be wrong together)
- hurt feelings and taking things personally; can affect relationships on the team
- can lead to an elitist or insider mindset; this is a serving role, not a leadership role.

### Accountability and Authority for the Preaching Team

- elders responsible for the teaching ministry of the church, through the Lead Pastor
- lead pastor chooses preachers for any given series
- all preachers are exposed to the input and direction of the larger Preaching Team
- but each preacher is still responsible before God and the elders to make their own decisions
- the Lead Pastor carries weekly responsibility for guarding the pulpit and steering the teaching ministry



## The Preaching Team Process

### Overview

The Preaching Team process has four discrete steps that we attempt to cover at each weekly meeting. What follows is a description of these steps as they pertain to a single sermon that passes through the Preaching Team cycle. The four stages of sermon preparation are: studying, outlining, amplifying, and evaluating.

### Studying

Three Weeks Before a Sermon is Preached

“What is God saying in this text?”

To prepare for this discussion, team members will reflect on and study the text. You should spend time in prayer, inviting the Spirit to illuminate the Scriptures to you as you reflect and study. You should read the passage and its surrounding context to get a sense of the text in the flow of the book we’re studying. You should ask how this text fits into God’s great story of redemption. And you can use any other study tools you have accessible to you (other people, commentaries, original languages, grammatical analysis, etc) to help you with this task.

The goal of your preparation is to identify a single main idea that you would teach if you were preaching this text. You can identify a few possible directions that could be pursued, but try to choose one to defend as the main idea of the selected passage. You should also ask if this is the best text to teach your choice of main ideas, knowing what texts are going to be preached in upcoming weeks.

**Preparation:** You should come to Preaching Team with a single page that includes: (a) a summary of the text in your own words (less than ½ page) that captures the main movements of the passage; (b) an attempt at identifying a single, main idea that could be the basis for a sermon or a Bible Study; and (c) support for your chosen idea from your study of the text.

### Outlining

Two Weeks Before a Sermon is Preached

“What are we going to say based on this text?”

To prepare for this discussion, the preacher for the given text will come prepared with a one-page “ruthless” outline for their sermon based, ideally, on the previous week’s conversation. A single main idea will have been chosen, and the main points (and *only* the main points) of the sermon will be written down, along with how they connect to the main idea.

Accordingly, the majority of the work at this point of the preparation process falls on the individual preacher. There is no “homework” for the Preaching Team members; their role at this stage is to interact with the outline, ensuring it’s faithfulness to Scripture and it’s clarity and logical development. The idea here is to refine the preacher’s work *before* they go through all the work of finding illustrations and writing out a more complete sermon.

**Preparation:** the preacher needs to come with copies of their outline to hand out to the team; the remaining Preaching Team members need to continue to reflect on this text through the week and come prepared to think critically and clearly to help refine the preacher’s ideas.

### **Amplifying**

The Week Before a Sermon is Preached

“How can we best convey this idea?”

The focus of the discussion at this stage of preparation is to fill out the sermon with illustrations and amplifying content that will help to clearly and effectively communicate the previously articulated biblical truth. The preacher will come with a filled in outline that demonstrates a clear, logical thought progression complete with illustrations and supporting material -- as well as places in the sermon where a good illustration might still be needed. This is the final revision before a sermon is preached on a Sunday morning.

The role of the larger Preaching Team at this point is to speak from their own life experience and their perspective and to help amplify the sermon with images, illustrations, stories, quotes and/or other ways of helping to explain, prove, or apply the text. Often, a more lengthy discussion of application takes place in this part of the discussion to ensure that our teaching connects with the congregation in real and significant ways.

**Preparation:** there is no written homework for the Preaching Team, but the continuing expectation is that you will still be reading over and reflecting on the text, as well as reflecting on the outline provided by the preacher as you think, pray, and dream about possible illustrations and application.

### **Evaluating**

The Week After a Sermon is Preached

“How did we do?”

It is a challenging thing to evaluate a sermon. Inasmuch as we can study, outline, amplify and even deliver a sermon well, we also recognize that it is the Spirit of God who does the work of illuminating His Word and working in the hearts and minds of His people. With this caveat established, we are still responsible for striving for excellence in the aspects of preaching God’s Word into which the Lord has invited us.

For the purposes of evaluation, we believe that effective preaching has three aspects to it: **accuracy** (did the sermon say what the text is saying?); **relevance** (did the message matter to our congregation today?); and **engagement** (was it presented in a way that captured and held attention so as to invitee people into the transformation God's Spirit is bringing?).

In our evaluation, we are striving for more than a surface response to the sermon. "I liked it; I didn't like it" is not useful feedback. Specific examples are to be provided when feedback is given. "This part was particularly effective because..." or "I found this part less effective because... maybe a better way to have worded that would have been..."

Additionally, it must be recognized that by the time a sermon is preached, the preacher has invested their whole heart into their sermon, and even their identity is tied closely what has taken place on a Sunday morning. Great care must be taken to love and protect the preacher's heart -- not by withholding sincere constructive feedback, but by presenting all feedback in a spirit of love and appreciation. Receiving feedback on a sermon **after it has been preached** is a very vulnerable place to be.

Over the course of the series, we will continue to learn what constitutes effective feedback by basing our feedback on a general sermon evaluation rubric, that has been included in the appendix of this document.

## **Summary**

Every sermon will ideally pass through all four stages in the Preaching Team process (studying, outlining, amplifying, and evaluating). But on any given single Tuesday night, we will be conducting each of the above steps on **different texts** as we work with the past week (evaluating) and the texts for the three upcoming weeks (studying, outlining, and amplifying). It's a lot to keep track of, and so it is important to review the texts and to adequately prepare for Preaching Team by spending time with these texts three or four times each week.



## Commitments of Preaching

The Bible is the divinely inspired self-revelation of God. As such, the following commitments are important to articulate as they are a direct result of a high view of Scripture as God's eternal and relevant Word. As we study, prepare, and preach, we do so in light of the following commitments.

1. **SOURCE:** The Scriptures are the source and content of what we teach. The goal of preaching is to clearly present what God is saying in His Word to the congregation.

*We do not generate ideas about what WE would like to say, and then search the Scriptures for verses that support our ideas. We are cautious when preaching a topical series to ensure Scriptural faithfulness, and we predominantly teach through books of the Bible as our main approach to teaching at Community Church.*

2. **MAIN IDEA:** For every unit of thought in the text, we will strive to identify the original author's main idea, and faithfully preach that idea.

*Certain parts of the text may resonate with us more than others; it may be easier to preach a secondary assertion in a textual unit; but we will strive to do the hard work of first identifying the main idea of a text, and if we DO decide to preach a subordinated thought, we will do so conscious of its subordination. But our general practice is to preach the main idea of the text.*

3. **FRAMEWORK:** We operate within a redemptive-historical framework, understanding that every text contributes to our understanding of God's great work of redeeming a people for Himself and for His glory.

*From Genesis to Revelation, God has revealed a single storyline for his creation, calling, redemption, and consummation of all things, with a special emphasis on humanity and his redemptive relationship with us through the person and work of Jesus Christ. Where possible and helpful in understanding a text, we strive to highlight this larger framework.*

4. **CONTEXT:** Each text is approached within its literary context (paragraph, chapter, book, entirety of biblical revelation) so as to prevent misinterpretation by isolating a text from its context.

*The Bible has been used (and abused) for generations as people strive to prove and assign divine authority to their own ideas. We will demonstrate diligence in studying texts within their proper literary and biblical context to guard against this very human tendency (see Phil 4:13 and compare NIV1984 and NIV2011 as a simple example).*

5. **SUBMISSION:** We recognize the authority of Scripture over the lives of those who follow Jesus. Therefore, even when we are challenged in our own understanding of issues or ideas, we submit to Scripture and teach what it says.

*It is tempting to be selective in presenting some texts and not others when teaching about certain controversial issues. We commit to teaching the whole counsel of God's Word, and to have integrity to say what the text says in a non-selective, non-biased way.*

6. **AGENCY:** We readily recognize that the Holy Spirit is the agent of illumination and transformation when it comes to God's Word changing the lives of His people. We commit to prayer and humility before Him in the entire preaching process.

*We will strive for excellence in everything that we do; we have been called to co-labor with God in the act of preparing and preaching His Word. We celebrate this privilege, and approach the task with honest humility and dependency on the Spirit.*



## **Expectations of Preaching Team Members**

1. Maintaining a faithful personal relationship with Jesus, by spending time on a daily basis in prayer and in His Word.
2. Conduct and lifestyle that are above reproach, consistent with Scriptural expectations for growing into holiness,
3. Participation in the life of the church, doing life together with those for whom we teach. Those who teach must be involved in the life of the church, not isolated from it. We teach real people, not just abstract ideas.
4. Attendance at church services on Sunday mornings, being present to hear the sermon (danger: do not disengage from what God is doing through the sermon in your own heart in order to evaluate the preaching). If you miss a Sunday, it is your responsibility to listen to the podcast from the church website before Preaching Team on Tuesday night.
5. Attendance each week on Tuesday nights from 7:00 to 9:30 pm throughout the entire teaching series; coming prepared and with the appropriate resources to participate fully (notebooks, writing instruments, resources, devices, etc).
6. Preparation for full participation in the discussion each week at Preaching Team. Study the texts each week, and complete the appropriate homework for your own benefit and for the benefit of the rest of the team.
7. Contribution to the discussion each week by coming prepared with ideas, illustrations, and experiences to share with the group; taking initiative to proactively contribute to the conversation.
8. Listening to others on the team and making space for others' ideas to be heard; genuinely interacting with others' ideas and asking clarifying questions to fully understand one another (as opposed to just waiting for your turn to talk).
9. Praying for the teaching ministry of the church as a whole, and for the specific preacher each week throughout the series during your entire time on the Preaching Team.





## **STUDY HOMEWORK**

Text: Philippians 1:27-30  
(example)

### **Summary in my Own Words**

Paul is writing to encourage the Philippian church that they should remain faithful to Jesus and to one another, even in the face of hardship and struggles. Speaking out his own direct, firsthand experience, he explains that opposition and suffering are to be an expected part of being a follower of Jesus. But Paul celebrates the fact that in Christ, God has saved his people, and that those who oppose God will be destroyed. In light of this long-term view, Paul encourages them to live exemplary, fearless lives that reflect well on the gospel.

### **Potential Main Ideas**

1. The fearless Christian life is within reach when we take the long-view.
2. Suffering is an expected part of following Jesus.
3. The way we live reflects on the God we love; so live worthy of the Gospel.

### **Selection and Defense**

**“The way we live reflects on the God we love; so live worthy of the Gospel.”**

- grammatically, this is the main proposition of the paragraph; everything that follows is a “result” of this initial instruction / imperative.
- Paul’s definitely trying to get them to expect opposition and suffering, but his main point is not “expect it” but rather, “handle it well when it comes.”
- the body of the sermon has to address suffering and opposition, and accomplish the same thing as Paul does, but it all has to point back to the main idea.

**RUTHLESS**  
**SERMON OUTLINE**  
 Philippians 1:27-30

Introduction:

**The way we live reflects on the gospel we profess,  
 so live in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ. (v.27)**

Movement 1 (v. 27)

**The way we contend for the gospel reflects back on the gospel itself,  
 So contend well: (E)**

Movement 2 (v. 28)

**The way we face opposition reflects back on the gospel,  
 So face opposition well. (E)**

Movement 3: (v. 29-30)

**The way we suffer reflects back on the gospel,  
 So suffer well. (A)**

Tying it Together::

Connect the three movements as a single, escalating experience.  
 Contending → opposition → suffering

Conclusion:

**Restatement: the way we live reflects back on gospel we profess,  
 so contend/face opposition/suffer worthy of the gospel of Christ.**

**AMPLIFIED  
SERMON OUTLINE**  
Philippians 1:27-30

Introduction:

**The way we live reflects on the gospel we profess,  
so live in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ. (v.27)**  
*(summer camp concept of actions reflecting back on an organization)*

Movement 1 (v. 27)

**The way we contend for the gospel reflects back on the gospel itself,  
So contend well:**

- contend: effort, wholeheartedness, bringing A game. E  
*(illustrate with sports analogy)*
- well: honors and respects others as we contend E  
*(illustrate with Lausanne statements).*

Movement 2 (v. 28)

**The way we face opposition reflects back on the gospel,  
So face opposition well.**

- face opposition: analysis of culture of 'tolerance' to explain hostility P  
*(illustrate with Carson's argument)*
- well: fearless, with courage, not backing down, and not retaliating E

Movement 3: (v. 29)

**The way we suffer reflects back on the gospel,  
So suffer well.**

- suffering: not just reflecting on the gospel, but a chance to incarnate it.
- well: identifying with Jesus, suffering *for* those who cause our suffering  
*(illustrate: Paul, "same suffering I had, for the same purpose")*  
*(illustrate: Jesus' own suffering, "Father forgive them"*  
*"do your worst; we shall still love you.")* A

Tying it Together:

Connect the three movements as a single, escalating experience.  
Contending → opposition → suffering

Conclusion:

**Restatement: contend/face opposition/suffer reflects back on Jesus.**  
Jesus as a contender, facing opposition, suffering.  
Be like Jesus, for Jesus' sake.

**RUTHLESS SERMON WORKSHEET**  
(a one-page outline for deductive sermon)

main idea: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Introduction \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

First Assertion: verses \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
( E / P / A )

Second Assertion: verses \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
( E / P / A )

Third Assertion: verses \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
( E / P / A )

Conclusion: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_



## PREACHING EVALUATION

**PREACHER:** \_\_\_\_\_ **DATE:** \_\_\_\_\_

**TEXT:** \_\_\_\_\_

### ENGAGEMENT

### ACCURACY

#### Introduction

- Did it get the attention of the listeners?
- Did it connect with a need in the listener?
- Did it orient them to the thesis?
- Did it lead into the body of the sermon?

#### Thesis

- If it was a deductive sermon, what was the homiletical idea?

#### Structure and Form

- How was the sermon structured (inductive, deductive, narrative) and was it executed well?
- Was the structure well suited to the thesis?
- Was the structure appropriate based on the nature of the text?
- Was the structure clear without being an imposition or distraction?

- If it was an inductive sermon, what was the tension raised? Was it clearly resolved?

#### Supporting Material

- Were the illustrations effective in helping the congregation understand the ideas?
- Was the supporting material appropriate, truthful and accurate?
- Did they illustrate the most important movements in the sermon?
- Was there variety among the illustrations?
- Were they designed to connect with the congregation or were they about the preacher?

#### Content

- Did the preacher say what the text says?
- Did the preacher demonstrate that the ideas came from the text?
- Were the ideas arranged to help facilitate understanding?
- Could you follow the argument or flow of the sermon?
- Did the preacher convince you of the thesis?

## RELEVANCE

### Application

Was there sufficient connection and relevance to our lives today (did the sermon matter)?

Was there sufficient direction given to help people continue to grow?

### Conclusion

Did the sermon build to a discernible climax?

Was there an adequate summary of the ideas and restatement of the thesis?

Did the plane bounce on the runway? crash to the ground? or was their a clear and intentional landing?

Did the conclusion leave an impact on the listeners?

### Delivery

Was there vocal variety (pitch, volume, pace, pause, emphasis)?

Was the preacher's body language / expressions appropriate and helpful?

Were there mannerisms and gestures that distracted from receiving the message?

Did they use grammar and vocabulary accurately, words and names pronounced correctly?

Was the preacher conversational and easy to listen to (as opposed to sounding forced or contrived)?

“He who has EARS to hear, let him hear!”

-- Jesus, Mark 4:9

## SPIRIT

### Integrity

Was the preacher able to "be themselves" as they preached?

Did the sermon demonstrate creativity and/or depth of insight?

Did the sermon build trust by being well researched and thorough?

Was the message consistent with what we know of the preacher's own character and conduct?

### Impact

In what ways did you perceive the Holy Spirit to be at work during the sermon?

Have you had any interactions with others in the congregation who shared how the sermon was used by God in their lives?

Did you perceive what the Lord may have been doing in your own life, in the life of the preacher, or for us together?

### Overall Impression

Was the sermon well received by the congregation?

Was the sermon effective in your own life, allowing God to work through His Word to transform you as a preacher?

## KEY

√√ = strength

√ = present

○ = growth area