

# (Sermon Preparation) Lecture 05

by Alan Redpath

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*Alan Redpath emphasizes the importance of deep study, personal experience, and structured preparation in effective sermon delivery.*

**Duration:** 49:23

**Scripture:** Matthew 6:33, John 6:28-29, Acts 16:31

**Topics:** "Sermon Preparation"

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## Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of laying down a thesis or statement and explaining it, which can be done through deduction. Deduction involves arguing from established facts and bringing everyone to a specific conclusion. The speaker provides examples of deduction using biblical references, such as the fact that all have sinned (Romans 3), therefore all need Jesus (Isaiah 53), and all can have Jesus (John 3:16). The sermon also highlights the need for careful thought and study in delivering a meaningful message, cautioning against superficiality and the pressure to always deliver a masterpiece. The speaker encourages pastors to commit the word of God to others and reminds them that a text is not the conclusion, but rather a window through which they can share what they see on the other side.

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## Transcript

For the truth of what we've just been seeing, how we thank you for the amazing things that can happen to each one of us and in us and through us when he is Lord. May that be an undisputable fact. May this be a coronation day for the King of Kings in our hearts.

Grant your blessing as we turn to your word and make the book live to each one of us. For Jesus' sake. Amen.

There's another list up there now for Monday, June the 6th. For anyone who would like to come with questions and problems to Willowbeck, you'll find the list just below the other one on the board. That will be at 9 o'clock on Monday week.

It's a bad night for you because you're going home just on a Thursday or something, so I shall quite understand that nobody can come. But if you want to and you can, we'll be glad to see you. Now then, Charles and I have swapped round hours this morning, partly because he's not well.

He's doing the second hour instead of doing the first and third. And I'm doing the first and third because I wanted an extra hour. So it worked both ways really.

And there's so much here to do. And we're going to spend the second hour, that is the third hour of the morning, the second hour getting out a message altogether. That won't be easy, but you'll get your ideas on a passage.

So I'll show you that way from practical tackling one passage, the way to handle it. And the first, this hour this morning, is a bit theoretical because I want you to understand what homiletics really is. And at least you'll get an idea, you'll know the lines to go on.

So really, we're thinking about the making of a message. And this would apply if you're going to speak to a Sunday school class or any class or any congregation or any size. First of all, let me recommend you to two books which are absolutely essentials for anyone in Christian ministry.

One, The Craft of Sermon Preparation, by W.E. Sangster, S-A-N-G-S-T-E-R, The Craft of Sermon Preparation. And the second one, The Craft of Sermon Illustration, by the same author. He was a man who occupied the pulpit of Westminster Central Hall for about 20 years and filled it every Sunday, twice a Sunday, with tremendously powerful preaching.

And those two books are really absolutely wonderful helps, necessary for all of us really. Now, let me just begin by saying, and getting you to put down, you can't escape the discipline of wide reading and hard study. You can't escape the discipline of wide reading and hard study if your mind is to be filled with truth.

Truth which you've made your own in experience. Repeat, you can't escape the discipline of wide reading and hard study if your mind is to be stored with truth which you've made your own in experience. Every preacher or witness, your style will be your own, but it'll always be capable of improvement.

And cultivating preaching style will come through cultivating an inner life with God. Sure. Cultivating preaching style will come through cultivating an inner life with God.

Not just by more fluent language, but by being lifted onto a deeper life in Jesus that produces greatness. By being lifted onto a deeper life with Christ which produces greatness. 2 Samuel chapter 5 verse 10.

David grew greater and greater because the Lord God of hosts was with him. And that's the secret. Sentence I would like you to get down.

Dig deeper into the word. Dig deeper into the word, recognizing its supreme authority. And that will mean growing greater in power to expand it.

Digging deeper, I'll repeat, digging deeper into the word in recognition of its supreme authority will mean growing greater in power to expand it. Now the history of a message. Where does it begin? It begins in your quiet time, where you have your seed thought book, where you have your seed thought book.

I'll tell you what that is in a minute. Seed. Yes.

That's the American revised version. Seed thought. You know what that is? I'll tell you in a minute.

Seed thought book. You should all, all of you, without exception, whether you never preach a sermon in your life to anybody, you should all have a seed thought book. That means going to the bookshop and

getting one.

You've got one. Good, that's fine, that's good. Please don't make me laugh.

Oh dear, that's fatal. Um, are you going away today? I'm very, very sorry. I really, I miss you.

I don't know what I mean. I'm sorry, it's just a stupid English sense of humor. A seed thought book.

By that I mean in your quiet time when you're reading the word of God, suppose you set 30 minutes for it and suppose you spend 15 minutes of it reading the word of God. In that time you will only probably read one chapter and you'll ask yourself those questions that I suggested yesterday about each chapter. And the answer to those questions will go down in not only a seed thought book but in another book, exercise book, which one day will be right that high, many books, because all the books of the Bible will be covered in it, and you've got your own commentary.

But the seed thought book will contain the answer to one question. One question that I suggested you would put to yourself was, if I never saw this verse or this psalm or this chapter again, what would be my favorite verse? I mean, what verse has really hit me? See, and you put that into your seed thought book, Psalm 1 or whatever, John 1, whatever it is, seed thought book. Down it goes, John chapter 1. And the next day you do the same.

And during the next, sometime during the next day, during that day, you come back to that seed thought and you come back to that favorite verse. And you say, now Lord, what does this verse remind me of? Is there anything else in the Bible that's saying this? Can I compare some other verse with it? And you begin to put other verses around it, and it will begin to build up, that seed thought. And it gradually builds up.

You've got all sorts of material there. And the next day, having done the same thing in your quiet time, you have another seed thought for the next day and the next day. And then about three months later, somebody says, do you mind speaking at our Bible class tomorrow or next Sunday? Oh, you say, I just love it.

Thank you. And you go to your seed thought book and say, now Lord, what do you want me to say? And you go through page after page. And one will suddenly jump and say, I want to get out of here.

My turn. And then you turn over another page. And they say, no, I want to get out.

And then you go a bit further. No, I want to get out. I've been here longer than anyone.

Come on, let me out. And you suddenly get yourself absolutely excited. Now, which of these am I going to speak about? And by the time you're ready to go, boy, oh, those seed thoughts are crowding in.

See? That's who your sermon is. Got it? Thank you very much. That's the history, at least the origin.

That means, that means that the origin of your message is being, has been given to you by God, not by some commentator, by God to you personally. Now, it will require study of commentaries, some of which you probably won't agree with. And it will require careful thought and study in all sorts of ways.

But it begins there. And therefore, it's your own message. Do you get me? Oh, yes, amen.

Yes. Excuse me. But if, if when you're giving a testimony, and speaking, if you're a pastor, you see, let, let your mind wander six days a week on anything except the things of God.

Then your whole message will be superficial and poor, won't have anything in it. Then what happens is you suddenly find yourself faced with the responsibility of speaking to other people on Sunday, and you've nothing to say, but you've got to say something. And you're embarrassed.

I've said a great deal about the man behind the sermon. I don't want to say any more now. But beware of thinking that every time you stand up to speak, it's got to be a masterpiece.

Introduction, three points, conclusion. No, no. It can be like that, but it needn't be.

Don't get bound by that, especially points beginning with the same letter. It could be, but not necessary, not necessary. If you do that, if you get bound by that, you get tied up with the idea that somehow I've got to speak to that fowl twice a week.

And it seems impossible. But, but if you're building up your preparation in your personal life with the Lord, it's impossible for me to believe that by the time a Sunday comes, you're just not bursting to get it out. And your heart becomes full of what God has said to you in private, what you've heard in secret, you're eager to tell other people in public.

And what you say will come in this order. First, it will be of what you know of people you're going to speak to, of their need. Your concern for them, your love for them, your desire to see them blessed.

That will be your first priority. The second concern in your ministry will be to avoid what I call butterfly preaching. That means just jumping in anywhere, like a butterfly.

At any text, in any portion of scripture, just a shot in the dark, butterfly preaching. That means to say you will seek to bring messages that are related to one another, a chain, a series of words from a book of the Bible. And the third thing will be the burden of your own heart for ministry, the particular burden that God has given you.

Now, that differs in different people. Some have a tremendous burden to preach on the second coming of Christ. Fine.

Some have a tremendous burden to speak on the practical Christian living. Good. Some have a terrific burden to preach just the word of God through and through, keep right at it.

Fine. But they're all different. Therefore, God will lay upon your heart a burden.

And that will be what you speak to others. So first, it will be your concern for people, and second, your desire to balance your ministry, that is to keep it consecutive. And the third will be the burden that God lays on your heart.

Now, as you get down to prepare, how are you going to go about it? It won't be by cramming. It will be by careful, considered study. If you try and give an exegesis of a passage of scripture, which you have not considered at all until you stand up, it may be mighty clever, very clever, but it won't inspire confidence.

It's like a politician just before an election. And one thing that makes me afraid, excuse me saying this, of some preachers who are really brilliant, is that they have the gift of a gab anyway. It's easy for them to

speak.

So easy. As I talk with others and unburden my heart and they unburden to me, their ministry has really cost them something. It's really cost them something.

And therefore, remember that it's always truth coming through personality. And therefore, truth you get hold of on a Friday, and you're going to teach a class on a Sunday, doesn't have time to get through you. See, it comes over you, can't get through you, gets across you.

It's truth, book truth, but not your truth. It is truth, but it isn't lit up by a personal experience of it. That makes all the difference.

The secret, admit the Word of God to your mind, submit to the Word of God in your life, commit the Word of God in your heart, and transmit the Word of God to others. Sure. Admit the Word of God to your mind, submit to the Word of God in your heart, commit the Word of God in your life, transmit the Word of God to other people.

Now, why do you think it is that the usual practice is to get hold of a text and to speak about it? I mean, you can't just tear a page out the Bible and fling it at people. The text is never the last thought on the subject. A text isn't intended to be like a jewel on that wall that stays there, and you admire it.

A text is like a window that I might put through that wall, put in that wall, that I can look through the what is beyond it. See? The text is not the conclusion. It's not something I admire and play around with, but it's a window.

It's a window into which I look and tell people what I see on the other side. Therefore, I'll avoid making a text mean what it doesn't really mean. For instance, here are some texts that I put together and leave you to see what you'd make of them.

Acts 16, 31. Philippians here I had said, what must I do to be saved? Verse 31, believe in the Lord Jesus and you will be saved, you and your household. Right? Put alongside that text this one, John 6, 28, 29.

John 6, 28 and 29. Then they said to him, what must we do to be doing the works of God? Jesus answered them, this is the work of God, that you believe in him whom he has sent. Now, James chapter 2 and verse 20.

I read verse 19, 19 and 20. 19. You believe that there is one God or God is one? Good, you do well.

So does the devil. Even the demons believe, but they go a bit further, they shudder. As a matter of fact, it's interesting, the Greek word there to be translated literally would be, they believe and the hair stands right on end.

That's a wonderful thing, when the devil believes and his hair stands right on end. 22 verse, oh sorry, verse 20. Do you want to be shown, you foolish fellow, that faith apart from works is barren? Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered his son Isaac upon the altar? You see that faith was active along with his works, and faith was completed by works.

Verse 24. You see that a man is justified by works, and not by faith alone. Ephesians 2, 8 and 9. Ephesians 2, 8 and 9. By grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not your own doing, it is the gift of God.

Not because of works, lest any man should boast. For we are his workmanship created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them. And lastly, Romans chapter 4, verse 2. Romans 4, verse 2. If Abraham was justified by works, he is suddenly to boast about, but not before God.

For what does the scripture say? Abraham believed God, and it was written to him as righteousness. Now, put all those texts together on paper, and think them through. And you won't preach on Acts 16, 31 easily.

Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved. You'll find that tough. Now, just think that through, and I'll come back at you with it, about it later.

Or, you won't understand. No, you won't. But, if necessary, we'll come back at it down at Willowbeck.

Don't handle God's word deceitfully. Never draw out a meaning from a text that you know isn't there. Now, you can put messages, material, that you actually get from seed thoughts, and write out into another book.

And you will call this book, Classification. Sermon, Message, Classification. And this will need, oh, it'll take about 20 years, but it'll need six books in the end.

You can just jot down these headings, and then leave them, and it'll be interesting to see, let me know in 20 years time, if you've got these books. See, here they are. First, Interpretation of Bible.

Messages that interpret. Second, Devotional and Ethical. Devotional and Ethical.

Third, Doctrinal. Fourth, Apologetic. That doesn't mean apologizing for God's word, it means getting behind the book, getting behind it, explaining what it means, apologetic.

The fifth will be Social, and the sixth will be Evangelistic. Now, if you're a pastor, or a pastor's wife, you can tell your husband, get him right along these lines, oh, he will have books like that, headed like that, called like that. Interpretation of Bible, Devotional and Ethical, Doctrinal, Apologetic, Social and Evangelistic.

Now, in each case, they're going to have a structure, and that structure will be, broadly, first, ready for it, Exposition. I'll tell you what these words mean in a minute. Exposition.

Two, Argument. Three, here's a word you've perhaps never heard before, some of you will have, Faceting. F-A-C-E-T-I-N-G, Faceting.

Four, here's another one you won't have heard of before, Categorizing. C-A-T-E-G-O-R-I-S-I-N-G, right? I'll come back to it later, as long as you've got it down. And the last one, Analogy.

A-N-A-L-O-G-Y. Now, each one will not exclude the other. Analogy, Pictures.

Now, just very quickly, let me give you an example. First of Exposition. That word means explaining.

It can be a chapter, one text, one word, or one book. But, get this, the depth, I'm speaking very slowly, the depth of Exposition decreases, the depth of Exposition decreases with the area in which you dig. I'm trying.

I'll give an example. The depth of Exposition will decrease with the area in which you dig. By that I mean, if you take a text, you can go right down to the bottom, like eating a boiled egg, and you come to the end of

it, to the shell, everything.

But if you take a chapter or a book, you can't do that. You won't get so low. You spread out.

So the area in, the depth of your Exposition, going right down to the bottom, will decrease if you dig wider. Get me? Take an example. You can take one text and empty it.

Except, of course, you never really do get to the bottom of it, but you think you have. You can put texts side by side. Let me give you an example of that, which illustrates different aspects of truth.

Take, for instance, Galatians 6.5. Galatians 6.5. Each man will have to bear his own burden. Galatians 6.2. Bear one another's burdens. Psalm 55.22. Cast your burden on the Lord.

All right? You get down to those three verses. Put them together. No need to put thinking out.

How you bear your own load, how you share your load with everybody else, and how you cast your burden on the Lord. Then, another example. You've got those verses? Right? Another example.

Progress of thinking in relation to Jesus. Progress of thinking in relation to Jesus. John 10.20. John 10.20. Many of them said, he has a demon.

He's mad. Why listen to him? John 7.12. Much muttering about him among the people. Some said, he's a good man.

Others said, no, he's leading the people astray. Matthew, that's John 7.12. Matthew 16.16. Matthew 16.16. Simon Peter replied, you are the Christ, the Son of the living God. John 20.28. Thomas answered him, my Lord and my God.

There are the bones of something that you could give on progress of thinking about Jesus Christ. Many other verses, but there's an example. Another method, of course, is from a passage, expounding a passage.

We're going to do that at our next hour together. And the passage we're taking is 1 Thessalonians 1. And you're going to do that, or we're all going to do it. And another method is expounding a book.

But not many books in the Bible, if any, can be dealt with in one session, without your congregation falling asleep. I don't know of any book, in fact, that you could do in one. Well, you might manage Philemon.

He has problems, though. But not many, it would need, going through and through. That's what terrified me when I went to Moody Church.

Because my predecessor was Dr. Ironside, you've probably heard of him. And I read everything he'd preached, every book he'd written, which were his sermons. And I saw his method, went through verse by verse, verse by verse, starting at 20 to 12, or half past 11, finishing half an hour later, and saying, next Sunday it will continue, and going on to the next verse.

And I thought, I can never do that. Absolutely never. I couldn't see the wood for trees if I tried that.

I'd get myself hopelessly lost. And so, I tried, to find a book of the Bible on which he never preached. And I couldn't find anything he'd preached on Joshua.

So I went to that. And that became what has now been published, Victorious Christian Living. It was my way of escape, really, because if I'd preached like that, I'd have suffered by comparison.

See, verse by verse, that's a tremendous way, but not many people can do it. I'm happier with a section of scripture. I'm not suggesting you should buy the book to have a look at it, but you do.

Bless you. Sorry, you're going. I am, really.

And I'll tell you a thing that thrills me to preach on. Bible biographies, Bible characters. Oh, you would get so excited about a man like Jacob, and a man like Abram, and a man like David, and a man like Saul, and Solomon.

Oh, tremendous. I recommend to you Alexander White, W-H-Y-T-E, on Bible characters. Tremendous book.

Bible biographies. Of course, when you're preaching on Bible biographies, you've got to get to the point when you are no longer examining the character, but you find he is examining you. That's where you get the punchline from.

I'm amazed at the sheer lack of application of the Bible to ourselves. What's it saying to me? That's what God wants to use it for. So when you're preaching on Bible characters, you'll suddenly find yourself looking at a mirror.

Especially if you look at Jacob. Married the wrong woman, got into a business partnership with a pagan uncle, and blew it all. Oh, my.

After 21 years, the Lord said, come on home. I've had enough of this, and he brought him home. But on his way home, remember, he heard that Esau was after him.

I want to ask Jacob, when I get to heaven, why he didn't go and apologize to Esau when he set out? Oh, what a difference it would have made to his life. Family quarrels take an awful long time to die down. But do you remember, he went up, Jabbok, and the thrilling thing is, there wrestled a man with him till the breaking of the day.

Genesis 32. And who was that man? Jesus. Jesus.

Wrestled with him till the breaking of the day. And said to him, let me go, because the day is breaking. And Jacob, desperate by now, said, I'm not letting you go, except you bless me.

And Jesus said to him, what's your name? As if he didn't know. He wasn't asking for information, but for confession. Confession.

Ooh, it was worth studying that book. That man left that encounter with God, limping for the rest of his life. The Lord had lamed him.

And he bore the mark of that encounter for the rest of his days. Bible biography. It's running.

And another one is Bible pictures, or parables. He had a slight dose of that, this term. But if you want a really big dose, and a good dose of it, you will get again Alexander White's book on parables.

A Scottish preacher. Alexander White's book on parables. So there's a passage in the biography, and there's pictures.

I thought it would happen. Hold it one moment. I gave you exposition.

Now there's argument, faceting, categorizing, and allergy. And one minute to go. I'll just give you one word concerning this second one, and then leave it.

Argument. That means laying down a thesis or a statement and explaining it. That's what I mean by argument.

Laying down a statement and explaining it. And you can do that in two ways. You can do it by deduction.

That means arguing from an established fact and bringing everybody to face it. Arguing from a fact and bringing everybody to face it. For instance, all have sinned, Romans chapter 3. Therefore, all need Jesus, Isaiah 53.

All can have Jesus, John 3, 16. All must witness to Jesus, Romans 10, 9. All must press in for a holy life. 1 Peter 1, 15.

That's deduction. Start again. All have sinned, Romans chapter 3. All, therefore, need Jesus, Isaiah 53.

All may have Christ, John 3, 16. All must witness to Him, Romans 10, 9. All must press in for a holy life. 1 Peter 1, 15.

Got those heads? Very, very, very. All must press in for a holy life. 1 Peter 1, 15.

There, there, there. You've enough material. So let yourself go on that.

Stop. Goodbye. Bless you.

See you again about a nice time.

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