



Sermon Builder Toolkit

Four proven ways to build a message, and a simple way to choose between them. Use this page to choose, the path pages to prepare, and the blank pages to draft.

1 Pray and study 2 Find your path 3 The paths 4 Commitments 5 Story Lab 6 Write 7 Pray again

Compare at a glance

	Path 1: Tension, Text, Takeaway	Path 2: Me, We, God, You, We	Path 3: The Three-Point Sermon	Path 4: Head, Heart, Hands
STARTS WITH	A felt problem	Your own story	An attention getter	A scene
HEART OF THE MESSAGE	The text's answer to that problem	The God section, where the text is unpacked	The explained text, point by point	Head, Heart, and Hands in balance
BEST AUDIENCE	Mixed rooms, seekers welcome	Mixed rooms, life topics	Believers who want depth	Disciples, groups, retreats
STORY ROLE	Opens the tension and carries each takeaway	Frames the whole message from first minute to last	One short illustration per point	Carries every transition between movements

If your text is...

Your text or series	Start here	Strong alternative
A narrative or Gospel scene	Path 4: Head, Heart, Hands	Path 1: Tension, Text, Takeaway
An epistle with a clear argument	Path 3: The Three-Point Sermon	Path 1: Tension, Text, Takeaway
A Psalm of lament or praise	Path 1: Tension, Text, Takeaway	Path 4: Head, Heart, Hands
A wisdom text about a life issue	Path 2: Me, We, God, You, We	Path 1: Tension, Text, Takeaway
A doctrine or the character of God	Path 3: The Three-Point Sermon	Path 4: Head, Heart, Hands
A topical series with several passages	Path 2: Me, We, God, You, We	Path 1: Tension, Text, Takeaway
A lectionary reading or a church season	Path 3: The Three-Point Sermon	Path 4: Head, Heart, Hands
A season or formation series	Path 4: Head, Heart, Hands	Path 2: Me, We, God, You, We

Paths are not locked. Blend them when the message calls for it.

1. Pray first, and keep praying

Every sermon should be soaked in prayer. Prayer is the first act of preparation, and it continues through the study, the writing, the delivery, and the days after.

What prayer does for a message. It makes the message prophetic in the biblical sense: God's timely word for this particular people. It invites the Holy Spirit to illuminate the text, bring stories and illustrations to mind, and prepare the congregation to receive it. Test what you sense against Scripture and the counsel of trusted leaders and your own tradition.

Before you study

Surrender the message to God before you open a commentary.

Almighty God, your word is a lamp to our feet. Open my eyes to see wonderful things in your Scripture. Quiet my hurry, humble my pride, and let me hear before I speak. Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

- ☐ Lord, what do you want to say to these people? Let me carry your word instead of my own.
- ☐ Holy Spirit, open my eyes to see what is really in this text.
- ☐ Pray the Lord's Prayer, a Psalm, or the collect for the day, so you begin with the church's prayer as well as your own.
- ☐ Search me. Show me where I am resisting this passage myself.
- ☐ Show me who will be in the room and what they are carrying this week.
- ☐ What is this congregation facing right now that this text speaks into?

While you study and outline

Keep a conversation going with God as the message takes shape.

Lord Jesus, as you walked with your friends and opened the Scriptures to them, walk with me now. Give me clear thought, honest words, and a gentle spirit. Amen.

- ☐ Pray the passage back to God, line by line.
- ☐ Bring to mind the story, picture, or illustration that will make this clear.
- ☐ Confirm the shape of the message. Is this the path you want me to use?
- ☐ Give me words that are simple, true, and kind.
- ☐ Show me what to say more of and what to leave out.

Before you preach

Prepare the room and ask for the Spirit's power.

Holy Spirit, fill this place. Let your people hear your voice and not mine. Make me faithful and clear, and make Christ known. Amen.

- ☐ Walk the room and pray over the seats, the sections, and the people by name.
- ☐ Pray that hearts will be ready to receive the word, starting with yours.
- ☐ Pray for the worship team, tech team, greeters, and prayer team.
- ☐ Ask that Jesus would be seen and heard in this message.
- ☐ Release the outline. Ask the Spirit to lead you in the moment.

Choosing your text or topic

Let prayer and your people guide what you preach before you study it.

- Preaching through a book? Take the next passage and let the text set the agenda.
- Following the church year or a lectionary, such as the Revised Common Lectionary or the Roman Lectionary? Let the season and the readings guide you.
- Starting from a need? Name the question your people are asking, then look for the passages that speak to it.
- Starting from a topic? Gather every passage that addresses it before you choose one or two to preach.
- Test it: Has God put this on your heart for these people, and will it hold together as one message?

2. Study and choose your text

Begin by choosing your text or topic in prayer. Then do the theological, historical, and cultural work before you choose an outline, so you can rightly say what the text meant to its first hearers, how it points to Jesus, and how it speaks to us now.

1. Read the passage again and again

Read it several times, in more than one translation.

- Mark repeated words, shifts, and surprises.
- Note the genre: story, law, poetry, prophecy, wisdom, letter, or Gospel.

2. Find the original audience

Who wrote it, to whom, when, and why?

- What were these people facing: political, religious, economic, or personal pressure?
- What did they already believe and expect?

3. Enter their world

Historical and cultural background.

- Customs, geography, power structures, and religious practices.
- What would have shocked or comforted them? Use original languages and ancient background tools where you can.
- Compare commentaries from more than one tradition.

4. Follow the literary flow

Context inside the book.

- What comes before and after this passage?
- How does the author's argument or story move?

5. State the original meaning

Say what it meant to them before you say anything about us.

- Write it in one sentence.

6. Listen with the whole church

How has the church heard this text through the centuries?

- Consult the Church Fathers, the creeds, and the confessions or catechism of your own tradition.
- Notice where other traditions read the passage differently, and hold those readings with respect.

7. Read it through Jesus

How does the whole story of Scripture lead to Christ?

- How does this passage fit the larger story and find its fulfillment in the life, death, resurrection, and ministry of Jesus?
- How would Jesus have read it? Look for promise and fulfillment, a pattern, a contrast, or a need only he can meet.
- Let the connection come from the text and avoid forcing it.

8. Name our cultural moment

Where does their world meet ours?

- What parallels or tensions exist? What questions are people really asking?
- Keep three things apart as you speak: what Scripture says, what history shows, and what you observe about today.

9. Then choose the path

The shape of the text now points to a structure.

- Go to Find your path with the text's genre and the congregation in mind.

THE BRIDGE EVERY SERMON CROSSES

What it meant	What it means in Christ	What it means now
To the first hearers, in their world.	In light of the life and ministry of Jesus.	For this people, in our cultural moment.

GOSPEL CENTERED CHECK

- [] I can say what this text meant to its first hearers.
- [] I have asked how it points to Jesus and his ministry, and I am not forcing a connection.
- [] I can say what it means for us now without losing its first meaning.
- [] I can name where this text shows our need for grace and God's provision in Christ.
- [] I have kept apart what Scripture says, what history shows, and what I observe about our culture.

Choose your path, then set the length

Most messages fit in 30 minutes. Some rooms only have room for 15, and some texts and topics need 45 to be fully unpacked. Pick the length on purpose, then use the path finder on the next page.

15 min The focused word A homily within a liturgy, a crowded service, a midweek gathering, an outdoor or mission setting, or any room with limited time. IT DEMANDS ■ One main idea. ■ A few verses instead of a whole chapter. ■ One story. ■ One action step. ADJUST ■ Cut the introduction to about a minute. ■ Keep one word study or one cross reference. ■ Leave out secondary points. They can wait for another week.	30 min The standard message A regular weekend service with time for context, story, application, and a response. IT DEMANDS ■ The full path skeleton. ■ One or two stories. ■ Context in a few clear sentences. ■ A real moment of response. ADJUST ■ Keep research in the message only where it serves the main idea. ■ If you run long, trim the application stories before you trim the text.	45 min The deep dive A teaching service, retreat session, or class, or a text or topic that needs room to unfold, such as a longer passage or a hard doctrine. IT DEMANDS ■ Extra structure so people can follow. ■ A change of pace every 10 to 15 minutes: a reading, a pause, a prayer, a question, or a song. ■ Deeper context and more cross references. ■ A brief recap at each major turn. ADJUST ■ Add length for the sake of the text. If you are stretching, consider splitting the message into a series.
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Which path fits this message?

Circle the closest answer for each question. Then add the points for each path and see which total is highest. A close second place tells you what to borrow.

1. What is your starting point?

☐ I am preaching through a book, passage by passage.	P1 +1 P3 +3
☐ A problem or question my people are facing right now.	P1 +3 P2 +2
☐ A life topic with several passages behind it.	P1 +1 P2 +3 P3 +1
☐ A story or scene from the Gospels or the Old Testament.	P1 +2 P4 +3

2. What should people do when you finish?

☐ Understand and believe something clearly.	P1 +1 P3 +3
☐ Decide or respond to God today.	P1 +3 P2 +1
☐ Take concrete steps in daily life.	P2 +3 P4 +1
☐ Practice a rhythm and be changed over time.	P2 +1 P4 +3

3. Who is in the room?

☐ Mostly longtime believers who want depth.	P3 +3 P4 +1
☐ A mix of believers, guests, and skeptics.	P1 +2 P2 +3 P4 +1
☐ Seekers and newer believers.	P1 +2 P2 +3 P4 +3
☐ A discipleship group or a retreat.	P3 +1 P4 +3

4. Where are you strongest right now?

☐ Explaining the text clearly.	P1 +1 P3 +3
☐ Telling personal stories.	P2 +3 P4 +2
☐ Building a tension that makes people lean in.	P1 +3 P2 +1
☐ Painting scenes and moments.	P2 +1 P4 +3

5. How much room do you want for story?

☐ Light. A few short illustrations.	P1 +1 P3 +3
☐ Moderate. A strong opener and a few scenarios.	P1 +3 P2 +1
☐ Heavy. Stories open, bridge, and close.	P2 +3 P4 +2
☐ Story is the frame for the whole message.	P2 +1 P4 +3

6. What kind of text are you preaching?

☐ An epistle or a passage built on an argument.	P1 +1 P3 +3
☐ A Psalm, a proverb, or a single passage that answers a question.	P1 +3 P2 +1
☐ A theme that runs through several passages.	P1 +1 P2 +3
☐ A narrative, such as a Gospel scene or an Old Testament story.	P1 +1 P4 +3

7. What season is your congregation in?

☐ Steady and hungry for deeper teaching.	P3 +3 P4 +1
☐ Facing a real crisis, question, or decision.	P1 +3 P2 +1
☐ Welcoming new people and new believers.	P1 +1 P2 +3 P4 +1
☐ Longing for renewal and lasting change.	P2 +1 P4 +3

YOUR TOTALS	Path 1: Problem to answer	Path 2: Story to Scripture to action	Path 3: Teach the text in its own shape	Path 4: Narrative formation

FOR NEWER BELIEVERS

Story and vulnerability connect fastest with newer believers, and deep theology can pass over their heads. Lead with a real story, then present the theology as a way to see that the biblical reality matches the reality everyone already lives. Teach one idea at a time and tie each one to common experience.



Tension, Text, Takeaway

A problem-to-solution structure for single passages.

Open a real question, let Scripture answer it, then show what changes.

CHOOSE THIS WHEN

- You can name a problem your listeners feel this week.
- One passage speaks directly to that problem.
- Guests, skeptics, or new believers are likely in the room.
- You want a clear decision at the end, such as an altar response, a time of silence, or Communion.

STRONGEST WITH

Single passages that answer a question: Gospel encounters, Psalms of lament, wisdom sayings, and Jesus' teaching on a felt need.

WATCH FOR

Manufacturing a tension the text never raises. Let the passage set the true size of the problem.

THE SKELETON

1. Tension

Make them lean in because they need the answer.

- Open with a question or a short story.
- Name the conflict in one sentence.
- Raise the stakes: what does this cost people or society?

2. Text

Let the Bible speak to the tension.

- Read the passage and show where it meets the problem.
- State what the passage mainly says. That is your main point.
- Distill it into one sentence people can repeat.

3. Takeaways

Answer "So what?" and "Now what?"

- Apply the solution the text gives.
- Tell a story or scenario for each application.
- Reach the mind, the heart, and the hands.

4. Close

Connect to the gospel and invite a response.

- Show how the tension finds its answer in Jesus.
- Offer a response: the altar, silence, or Communion.
- Pray.

MINUTES BY MESSAGE LENGTH (BAR SHOWS THE SPLIT)

15 min	Tension 2.5 Text 7 Takeaways 4.5 Close 1.5	Keep the Tension to about a minute, teach one cluster of verses, and use one scenario for the Takeaway.	
30 min	Tension 4.5 Text 13.5 Takeaways 9 Close 3	Use the full skeleton.	
45 min	Tension 7 Text 20.5 Takeaways 13.5 Close 4.5	Add a second Text movement for context and cross references, a fuller Takeaways with a story, and a real response time.	

WHERE THE STORIES GO

A story opens the Tension. Short scenarios carry each Takeaway. An optional closing story shows the tension resolved.



Me, We, God, You, We

Inspired by Andy Stanley's communication approach.

Start with your own struggle, widen it to everyone's, let God's Word speak, then make it doable.

CHOOSE THIS WHEN

- The topic is a life issue such as money, anxiety, marriage, forgiveness, or work.
- The room is mixed, including people who rarely open a Bible.
- You are comfortable being honest and vulnerable in the first five minutes.
- You are building one main idea for a series on real life.

STRONGEST WITH

Topical series with several supporting passages, or one passage with a strong life connection.

WATCH FOR

Spending too long on Me and We. The God section is the heart of the message, so protect its time.

THE SKELETON

1. Me

Set a conversational tone through your own story.

- Tell a short, honest story about how you struggle with this.
- Introduce the main idea through that experience.

2. We (part one)

Show that everyone shares the struggle.

- Move from your story to theirs: "Have you ever...?"
- Use a story, a statistic, or a cultural moment.
- Help people see themselves in the message.

3. God

Spend the most time here.

- Read the main passage.
- Explain what it says, with context, word studies, and cross references.
- Connect it clearly to the main idea.

4. You

Make it concrete and doable.

- Offer specific action steps.
- Give options for different situations.
- Challenge without overwhelming.

5. We (part two)

Paint a picture of a transformed community.

- What changes in a life, a home, a church, a city?
- What would the world look like if everyone lived this way?
- Be specific about the difference.

MINUTES BY MESSAGE LENGTH (BAR SHOWS THE SPLIT)

15 min	Me 1.5 We 1.5 God 7 You 3 We 2.5	Merge Me and We into one short story, then give one action step in You.		
30 min	Me 3 We 3 God 13.5 You 6 We 4.5	Use the full skeleton, and protect the time in God.		
45 min	Me 4.5 We 4.5 God 20.5 You 9 We 7	Add a second story in We, a deeper God section with context and cross references, and a pause for reflection in You.		

WHERE THE STORIES GO

Your story opens Me. A shared story or statistic opens We. A scenario carries each action in You. A picture of transformation closes the final We.

The Three-Point Sermon

The classic expository outline. Two to four points all work.

Let the passage's natural divisions become your points, each one explained, illustrated, and applied.

CHOOSE THIS WHEN

- You are preaching through a book, passage by passage, or following a lectionary reading.
- The text has clear divisions or builds a logical argument.
- Your people are hungry for depth and clear teaching.
- You are teaching a class, a doctrine, or the character of God.

STRONGEST WITH

Epistles, doctrinal passages, Proverbs, lists, and any text that moves in clear steps.

WATCH FOR

Points that come from your outline instead of the text. Check each point against a specific verse. With newer believers, tie every point to an experience they already know.

THE SKELETON

1. Introduction

Win attention and set direction.

- Attention getter: a story, statistic, question, or current event.
- Bridge to the main idea.
- Preview where you are going.

2. Point 1

Explain, illustrate, apply.

- Explanation: what does the text say?
- Illustration: a story, metaphor, or example.
- Application: how does this meet life today?

3. Point 2

Explain, illustrate, apply.

- Explanation: what does the text say?
- Illustration: make it vivid and memorable.
- Application: a practical life connection.

4. Point 3

Explain, illustrate, apply. Add a fourth point only if the text demands it.

- Explanation: unpack the Scripture.
- Illustration: help them see it.
- Application: help them live it.

5. Conclusion

Gather the points and call for a response.

- Recap the points briefly.
- Show where the gospel meets the main idea.
- Name one clear next step and pray.

MINUTES BY MESSAGE LENGTH (BAR SHOWS THE SPLIT)

15 min	Introduction 1.5 Point 1 4 Point 2 4 Point 3 4 Conclusion 2.5	Use two points and one illustration for the whole message.
30 min	Introduction 3 Point 1 7.5 Point 2 7.5 Point 3 7.5 Conclusion 4.5	Use three points with one illustration each.
45 min	Introduction 4.5 Point 1 11.5 Point 2 11.5 Point 3 11.5 Conclusion 7	Use up to four points with an illustration for each, or three points with fuller illustrations, and a short recap between them.

WHERE THE STORIES GO

Each point gets one illustration. Keep each one short so the text stays in front.



Head, Heart, Hands

Inspired by John Mark Comer's approach to teaching.

Design the message like a film in three movements: what to know, what to love, and what to practice.

CHOOSE THIS WHEN

- The goal is formation as well as information.
- The text is a story, or the series is about spiritual practices.
- It is Advent, Lent, or another season of the church year, a retreat, or a discipleship series.
- You want people to leave with one practice for the week.

STRONGEST WITH

Narrative passages, the Gospels, Psalms, and seasons or series built around a rule of life.

WATCH FOR

Letting the story run long and starving the teaching. Story is the skeleton and teaching is the muscle.

THE SKELETON

1. Opening scene

Set the table.

- Begin with a story, an observation, or a cultural moment.
- Name the struggle or question.
- Create hunger for what is coming.

2. Head

Teach the truth.

- What does Scripture say, and what did it mean in its setting?
- How does it fit the larger story of God?
- Where does it challenge the world's way?

3. Heart

Connect emotionally.

- Name the longings, fears, and hopes underneath.
- Show how Jesus meets what people are really after.
- Share how this has shaped you.

4. Hands

Practice the way.

- Offer one concrete practice or rhythm.
- Keep it realistic for a normal week.
- Say how to do it together with others.

5. Closing scene

Invite.

- Call people to one practice this week.
- Cast a vision for life together.
- End with grace and pray for the Spirit's help.

MINUTES BY MESSAGE LENGTH (BAR SHOWS THE SPLIT)

15 min	Opening scene 1.5 Head 5.5 Heart 4 Hands 3 Closing scene 1.5	Fold Heart and Hands into one movement and use a single story.
30 min	Opening scene 3 Head 10.5 Heart 7.5 Hands 6 Closing scene 3	Use all three movements with a story at each transition.
45 min	Opening scene 4.5 Head 16 Heart 11.5 Hands 9 Closing scene 4.5	Give each movement its own story, and add a guided practice or a time of silence in Hands.

WHERE THE STORIES GO

Use one story to open, one to bridge Head to Heart, and one to land Hands. Stories carry the transitions.

The shared core

These 7 commitments belong to every sermon, whichever path you pick. They are written once here so each path page can stay short.

Prayer first and last

Prayer shapes a message that is timely for these people. Pray before, during, and after, and depend on the Spirit while you preach.

- What is the Spirit saying to this congregation right now?
- Who will I pray for by name before I preach?
- How will I depend on the Spirit while I preach?

Rooted in context

Say what the text meant to its first hearers before you say what it means for us.

- Who were the original audience, and what were they facing?
- Where does their world meet ours?

Jesus at the center

Every message is gospel centered. Read the text in light of the life and ministry of Jesus.

- Where does this text reveal our need for grace?
- How does Jesus fulfill what this passage longs for?

One main idea

Whatever path you choose, finish with one sentence people can repeat. The main point of the passage becomes the main point of the message, said with clarity and a refrain that lands at 15, 30, or 45 minutes.

- What is this passage mainly saying?
- How would I say it to a teenager in one breath?
- Where will I slow down, speed up, or repeat a refrain?

The preacher first

Before you preach the sermon, the sermon must preach to you.

- Am I living what I am about to teach?
- What do I need to confess or ask God for before I preach?

Mind, heart, and action

Application reaches the whole person.

- What should people understand?
- What should they feel or long for?
- What is one thing they can do this week?

A way to respond

Give people a door to walk through, and invite them to walk through it together.

- An invitation to the altar, a time of silence, Communion, or a practice for the week?
- How can people live this out together, such as in a small group?
- How will I close in prayer?

Where the core lives in each path

	Tension, Text, Takeaway	Me, We, God, You, We	The Three-Point Sermon	Head, Heart, Hands
MAIN IDEA	Stated at the end of Text	Introduced in Me, restated in God	Previewed in the Introduction, restated in the Conclusion	Hinted in the Opening scene, stated in Head
GOSPEL LANDS	Close	God or the final We	Conclusion, and in each point as the text allows	Heart
RESPONSE	Close	You and the final We	Conclusion	Closing scene

Main idea tester

Write your main idea, then check each line.

■ **Main idea** One sentence people can repeat.

- ☐ It comes from the main point of the passage.
- ☐ It fits in one sentence.
- ☐ A teenager could repeat it after one hearing.
- ☐ It asks for a response of the mind, the heart, or the hands.
- ☐ It leads people toward Jesus.

Story Lab

Stories carry the weight of a message when they are short, true, and aimed at the main idea.

SEVEN STORY TYPES

Personal story	Your own struggle or discovery. Stay human instead of heroic.	Me, Tension, Opening scene
Shared experience	Something most listeners have lived: a Monday morning, a hard diagnosis, a family dinner.	We, Tension
Biblical scene	Retell the passage's own story with sensory detail.	Text, God, Head
Illustration	A short picture or analogy that makes one idea clear.	Each point in a Three-Point sermon, Head
Scenario	Picture two people living the application in motion.	Takeaways, You, Hands
Testimony or case	A real person's story, told with permission and without identifying details they did not approve.	Heart, Close, the final We
Cultural moment	A headline, film, statistic, or trend that names the question.	Tension, We, Opening scene

THE FIVE BEATS (ILLUSTRATION: 90 SECONDS OR LESS, ABOUT 200 WORDS. MAIN STORY: UP TO 5 MINUTES, ABOUT 650 WORDS)

1. Setting	2. Longing	3. Disruption	4. Turn	5. Meaning
Who, where, and when, in one or two sentences.	What did this person want?	What got in the way?	What changed, and what did it cost?	How does it land on your main idea? One sentence.

WHERE STORIES GO IN EACH PATH

Path 1, Tension, Text, Takeaway. A story opens the Tension. Short scenarios carry each Takeaway. An optional closing story shows the tension resolved.

Path 2, Me, We, God, You, We. Your story opens Me. A shared story or statistic opens We. A scenario carries each action in You. A picture of transformation closes the final We.

Path 3, The Three-Point Sermon. Each point gets one illustration. Keep each one short so the text stays in front.

Path 4, Head, Heart, Hands. Use one story to open, one to bridge Head to Heart, and one to land Hands. Stories carry the transitions.

STORY TESTS

- [] It serves the main idea instead of only entertaining.
- [] Its length fits its job: an illustration runs 90 seconds or less, and a main story can run up to five minutes.
- [] Jesus or the text is the hero, and I am not.
- [] It is true, and I have permission to tell it.
- [] It has one specific sensory detail.
- [] The ending leads into the next part of the message.

Draft a story in five beats

STORY LABEL

■ **1. Setting** Who, where, and when, in one or two sentences.

■ **2. Longing** What did this person want?

■ **3. Disruption** What got in the way?

■ **4. Turn** What changed, and what did it cost?

■ **5. Meaning** How does it land on your main idea? One sentence.

Pray and study first

Complete this before you choose a path. Use one page for each message.

■ **What I sense God is saying to this people** From prayer. Test it against Scripture and wise counsel.

■ **Original audience and setting** Who, when, and what they were facing.

■ **What it meant to them** One sentence.

■ **How it points to Jesus** Promise, pattern, contrast, or need.

■ **Our cultural moment** Where their world meets ours.

■ **Pre-sermon prayer notes** Names, needs, and what God showed you.



Tension, Text, Takeaway

A problem-to-solution structure for single passages.

SERIES

TEXT

MAIN IDEA (ONE SENTENCE)

MESSAGE TITLE

LENGTH (CIRCLE ONE): 15 30 45 MIN

Tension Make them lean in because they need the answer. 15: 2.5 | 30: 4.5 | 45: 7 min

Text Let the Bible speak to the tension. 15: 7 | 30: 13.5 | 45: 20.5 min

Takeaways Answer "So what?" and "Now what?" 15: 4.5 | 30: 9 | 45: 13.5 min

Close Connect to the gospel and invite a response. 15: 1.5 | 30: 3 | 45: 4.5 min



Me, We, God, You, We

Inspired by Andy Stanley's communication approach.

SERIES

MESSAGE TITLE

TEXT

LENGTH (CIRCLE ONE): 15 30 45 MIN

MAIN IDEA (ONE SENTENCE)

Me Set a conversational tone through your own story. 15: 1.5 | 30: 3 | 45: 4.5 min

We (part one) Show that everyone shares the struggle. 15: 1.5 | 30: 3 | 45: 4.5 min

God Spend the most time here. 15: 7 | 30: 13.5 | 45: 20.5 min

You Make it concrete and doable. 15: 3 | 30: 6 | 45: 9 min

We (part two) Paint a picture of a transformed community. 15: 2.5 | 30: 4.5 | 45: 7 min



The Three-Point Sermon

The classic expository outline. Two to four points all work.

SERIES

MESSAGE TITLE

TEXT

LENGTH (CIRCLE ONE): 15 30 45 MIN

MAIN IDEA (ONE SENTENCE)

Introduction Win attention and set direction. 15: 1.5 | 30: 3 | 45: 4.5 min

Point 1 Explain, illustrate, apply. 15: 4 | 30: 7.5 | 45: 11.5 min

Point 2 Explain, illustrate, apply. 15: 4 | 30: 7.5 | 45: 11.5 min

Point 3 Explain, illustrate, apply. Add a fourth point only if the text demands it. 15: 4 | 30: 7.5 | 45: 11.5 min

Conclusion Gather the points and call for a response. 15: 2.5 | 30: 4.5 | 45: 7 min



Head, Heart, Hands

Inspired by John Mark Comer's approach to teaching.

SERIES	MESSAGE TITLE
TEXT	LENGTH (CIRCLE ONE): 15 30 45 MIN
MAIN IDEA (ONE SENTENCE)	

Opening scene Set the table. 15: 1.5 | 30: 3 | 45: 4.5 min

Head Teach the truth. 15: 5.5 | 30: 10.5 | 45: 16 min

Heart Connect emotionally. 15: 4 | 30: 7.5 | 45: 11.5 min

Hands Practice the way. 15: 3 | 30: 6 | 45: 9 min

Use with any path

■ **Gospel in this message** Where will people hear the good news of Jesus?

■ **Understand (mind)** What should they know?

■ **Long for (heart)** What should they want?

■ **Do this week (action)** One concrete step.

■ **Response and prayer** Altar, silence, Communion, or a practice.

■ **Where this preaches to me first** Before you preach it, let it preach to you.

■ **Praying it back: what God showed me as I wrote** Pray, then name what you learned.

■ **Praying it back: who I am praying for as I preach** Names and needs to carry into the room.

7. Pray again

Your draft is written. Before you carry it into the room, hand it back to God.

After you write

Hand the finished draft back to God before you carry it into the room.

*Father, here is the work of my hands. Take what is yours, forgive what is mine, and let your word do what only it can do.
Through Christ our Lord. Amen.*

- ☐ Read the draft aloud slowly as a prayer, and notice where you stumble or resist.
- ☐ Thank God for what he showed you in the text, and confess where you leaned on yourself.
- ☐ Ask the Spirit to remove what is only yours and keep what is his.
- ☐ Pray by name for the people who will hear it and what they are carrying.
- ☐ Release the results. The Spirit gives the growth.
- ☐ Ask for humility, courage, and rest before you preach.

Go in peace. The grass withers, the flower fades, but the word of our God will stand forever.

ISAIAH 40:8 (ESV)

Amen.

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This guide summarizes and adapts common homiletic frameworks for preparation. Path 2 is inspired by the communication approach taught by Andy Stanley, and Path 4 is inspired by the teaching of John Mark Comer. It is an independent resource and is not affiliated with or endorsed by either.