

3. Expository Preaching – How?

That brings us to the subject that will occupy us for each of these afternoon sessions in the coming months – how do I go about preparing to preach expositoryly?

I want to stress that there is no simple, one size fits all answer to that question. Almost every preacher, even if he follows a model of one sort or another, will personalise and adapt it, and rightly so. I do not want for one moment to suggest that the model we will use here is the only one or even the best one. However, it is a model that in recent years I have found extremely helpful and which I think disciplines us to give due attention to the various stages of healthy sermon preparation.

My suggestion would be that if you are new to preaching this would be a good model or template to guide you in your preparation and if you have some experience in preaching, you may well find, as I did, that this method will either give you a fresh approach to preparation or help sharpen up your preparation in one or two areas that were needing closer attention.

My plan is to give a quick overview of the seven stages of this method today and then concentrate on each of those stages over the next 7 seminars.

My method is based on an adaptation of a method called Scripture Sculpture which was devised by Ramesh Richard¹ who, among other things, teaches expository preaching at Dallas Theological Seminary. I have significantly adapted and personalised his approach and found it enormously helpful, not only in teaching others how to preach but also in my own sermon preparation over the last two years or so.

Based on the model of the human body there are seven stages that build and give life to sermons that are faithful to the text, structured and clear and which, in the terms of my own definition of expository preaching – *teach the mind, touch the heart and transform the life*.

Stage 1: The Flesh of the Text

Here we spend time studying the details of the text and considering the meaning of those details.

Stage 2: The Bones of the Text

How the author said something is a vital part of fully understanding what he said. It's vital to know how the author put the text together and it's the bones and skeleton that give unique shape and structure to the flesh of the text.

Stage 3: The Heart of the Text

As the heart is to the human so the central proposition is to the text (and later to the sermon). Here we diagnose the heartbeat, the dominant teaching, the 'big idea' of the text.

Stage 4: The Brain of the Sermon

The brain provides the link from the text to the sermon and is crucial if we are going to make the journey from text to sermon, making the text relevant to the specific congregation that we will be preaching to.

Stage 5: The Heart of the Sermon

¹ Ramesh Richard *Preparing Expository Sermons* Baker Book House

Just as the text we are studying and from which we are going to preach has one dominant theme, one big idea, so our sermon must have one main theme and purpose.

Stage 6: The Bones of the Sermon

Our sermon, in order to come alive and come home to our hearers, needs to have shape, structure and form. Just as the flesh of a body needs the skeletal structure to give it identity and usefulness, so does our sermon. This stage will help us develop unity, order and progress in our sermons.

Stage 7: The Flesh of the Sermon

The last stage is actually putting flesh on the bones – the flesh of introduction and conclusion, the choice of the right words and illustrations –and developing notes for our preaching of the sermon

At first, our reaction to the above may be one of amazement at how serious the task of sermon preparation is, to which my response would be – good! One of the weaknesses with so much modern preaching is that it is clearly the fruit of very little serious study, thought and preparation. Indeed, there are those who consider study and preparation as, in some, way unspiritual.

Let me close this session with two comments about expository preaching.

1. *Expository preaching is hard work.*

I will never forget the sight – almost the sound – of the dropping jaws of my Sudanese students the first time I began to encourage them in the discipline of expository preaching. They were amazed that so much study, preparation and time was necessary. Good preaching is hard work and time consuming.

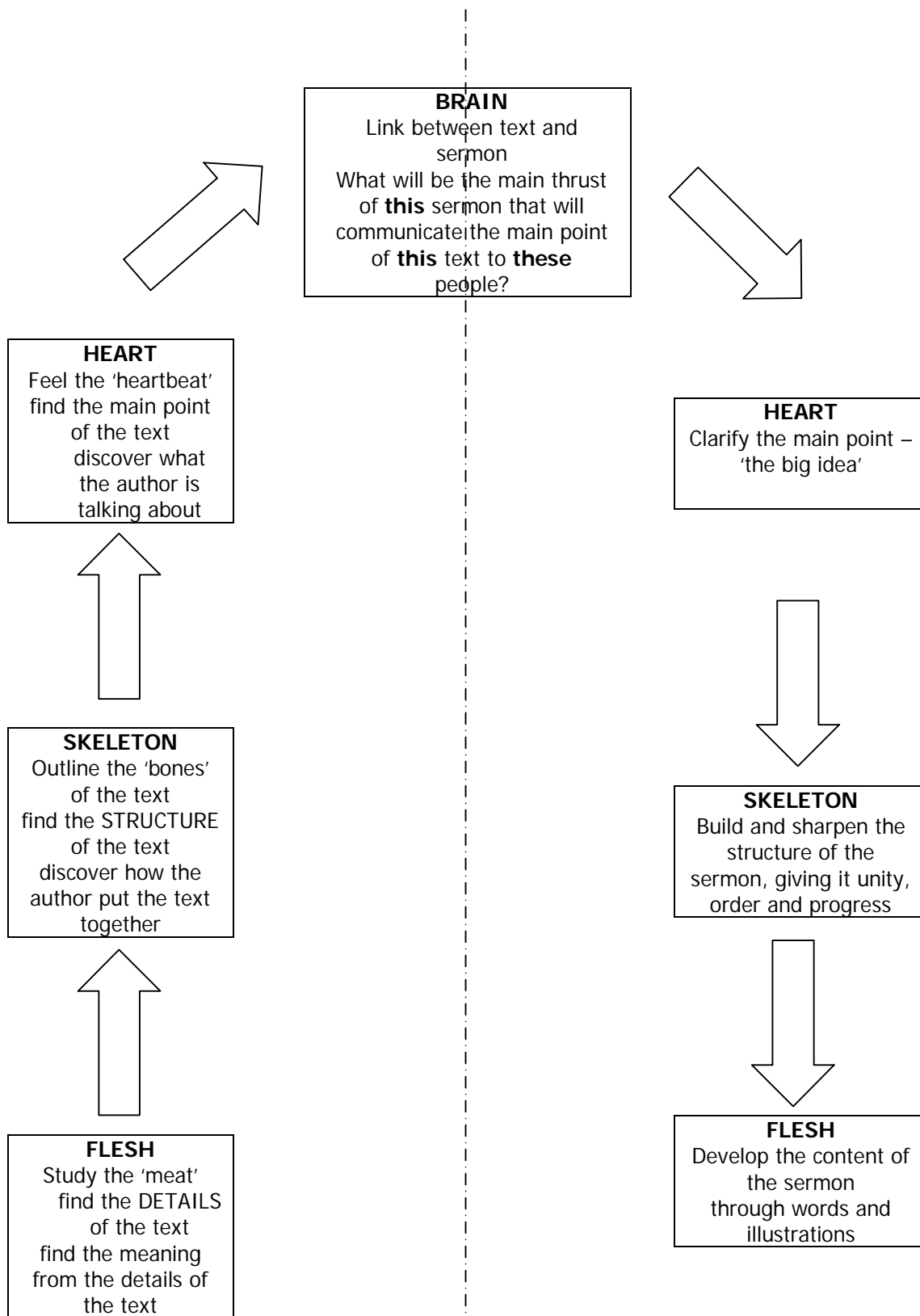
In a recent survey on an Internet preaching blog, a number of evangelical preachers around the world were asked how long it took them to prepare a sermon. On average, the answer was around 15 hours for a 30-40 minute sermon.

2. *Expository preaching is holy work*

To be a faithful expositor of God's Word is to stand before God's people and say, 'Thus saith the Lord'. As well as encouraging Timothy to study *the Word* for preaching, Paul also exhorted him to study *himself* for preaching. "Study to show *yourself* approved unto God"² In the closing session of each future Preach the Word workshop we are going to take time to look at the most important part of preparing to preach – preparing the

² 2 Timothy 2:15

preacher. The most essential part of the preparation of sermons is the 24/7 preparation of the preacher. We dare not approach this task in a formalistic, ritualistic, academic, let alone casual way. Campbell Morgan said, "When our practice conforms to our theory, our effectiveness trebles."



Start: Study the Text

Finish: Preach the Sermon

This is all about *the text*, not the sermon. I need to make sure I understand the text properly ever before I think about what my sermon will look like or what I will say. Start with just a Bible and notebook. Then use whatever helps (commentaries etc.) that you have. *But do your own study first!*

This is all about the sermon. Now I move from what the text says, to what I am going to say - clearly drawn from and based on that text - in order to communicate and apply the message of the text to my audience through my sermon.