

The Research Side of Sermon Prep: A Plan with Resources

Full credit to Dr. Tom Long for this excellent framework, which can be found in the chapter “Biblical Exegesis for Preaching” from *The Witness of Preaching*, pp. 69-98.

1. Get the Text in View

- What text?
 - Lectionary: <http://lectionary.library.vanderbilt.edu>
 - Topical: Search <http://bible.oremus.org> or <http://www.blueletterbible.org> for words or phrases
- What translation?
 - Look at several at once! Try using Biblehub.com and their “parallel” feature to compare single verses or whole chapters

2. Get an Introduction to the Text

- What’s going on in this text? Are there any words I should define?
 - Blueletterbible.org for the Hebrew/Greek terms, then go to the Theological Dictionaries of the Old and New Testament
 - Ministry Matters (through Databases@Emory) includes New Interpreters Dictionary of the Bible (Legacy Library)
- What’s the larger context?
 - Note the boundaries of your text (story may not conform to translator’s sections), and use gospel parallels if applicable

3. Listen to the Text

- Given material from steps one and two, create a series of questions, identifying themes, characters, motifs, and conflicts. What is the text *doing*?
- Are there any intra-scriptural references?
- Try re-writing the text in your own words without referencing the text—see what stands out!

4. Testing What You Heard in the Text

- Armed with your list of questions, approach secondary sources with an eye to **historical, literary, and theological** elements in your text.
 - Commentary series:
 - **Feasting on the Word**: breaks text into theological, pastoral, exegetical, and homiletical elements. Keyed to the lectionary.
 - **Anchor Bible** and **Interpretation**: both are solid theological and pastoral commentaries
 - **Hermeneia**: Deep dive into the textual (grammar, redaction, etc).
 - Oxford Biblical Studies (Databases @ Emory), *available to Alums*
 - ATLA: Scripture search combined with search terms, *available to Alums*
- Interpretive Inspiration (and worship planning resources!)
 - UMC Worship Resources: Lectionary Calendar, <https://www.umcdiscipleship.org/worship/lectionary-calendar>
 - Ministry Matters: Preaching Tab
 - The Text This Week, <http://www.textweek.com>
 - Painted Prayerbook, <http://www.paintedprayerbook.com>

5. Move to the Sermon: Which of your questions, using commentaries as part of the weeding process, is the most productive? What does your congregation need to hear? What are you feeling called to say?