## The Thoughtful Proclaimer Message Preparation Worksheet

The most important thing that proclaimers of God’s Word can do is find God, the Commander’s, intent for scripture and let it transform their lives. Then, they must make that intent clear and memorable to others showing them how to live transformed lives in light of God’s message to them and offering them motivation to live out God’s intent through the power of the Holy Spirit based on a grateful response to Christ’s sacrifice.

This worksheet is a template for you to use in sermon or teaching preparation. Photocopy these pages or download a Microsoft Word file of this document for your use from our website so you can edit it and make your own worksheet that fits your thoughtful exegesis and message-writing style.

You will not write down answers to every question. The questions are to guide your thoughts and keep you from missing something important. Not every question will be needed from every passage. Many of the questions are answered at or near the beginning of your sequential teaching through a book of the Bible.

**Date to speak: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

**Passages under Consideration for Message: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

**Specific Key Portion to Proclaim: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

**The Commander’s Intent: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

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**The Point for Proclaiming: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

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**The Point for Proclamation Catchphrase: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

**Anchor Image:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

**Message Title: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

Do not hesitate to proclaim the whole will of God. (Acts 20:27)

If scripture is my authority and the gospel is my motivating call for change, I can speak with full conviction and confidence.

## Prepare Yourself—You Are on Holy Ground

The first step in message preparation is messenger preparation.

1. Confess sins and examine yourself, your motives, your doubts, your family and church problems, the chips on your shoulder that will affect how you read and apply this passage, and consider anyone you need to forgive or ask forgiveness from.
2. Plan and portion your scripture for preaching. Remember to choose large portions, usually about a chapter or more. (See “Questions for Picking Passages” at the end of chapter 4.)

Choose a book and divide it into sections. Ask questions of the author and book of the Bible. Note: this need to be done only for the first passage you teach on as long as you can keep it in mind.

#### Book-Level Questions

* Who wrote this book, and what can we say about the human author?
* Who was this book written to?
* When was this book written?
* Was this book written to or about a special occasion, event, or occurrence?
* Why was this book written? What purpose did the author have?
* What was happening in Israel’s, or the church’s, or world history at the time this book was written?
* What was happening or was about to happen?
* What is this books place in the cannon of scripture? History?
* What would be missing from the Bible if this book were not there?
* How does this book fit into the story of salvation?
* How was this book originally meant to be used? (Preached, sung, used for festivals, read aloud, read personally, read in church?)
* How did the author or editors organize or divide this book? Why?
* What is the main message of this book I have chosen to speak on?
  1. Choose the parameters for the section you will preach or teach on this week.
  2. If your passage is very long (several chapters), consider which specific section is the most representative of the larger message. This may help make your task more manageable.

#### Practical Preparation Questions

* What is the passage under consideration this week for my message?
* What are the boundaries of the text to be preached, and why did I choose them? (Generally speaking, ignore chapter and verse and focus on the message of story.)
* Does my passage carry a complete thought? Does it carry the important idea for this section, or is the idea here subordinate to other ideas in the text. If so, do I have a big enough idea?[[1]](#endnote-1)
* Can the surrounding passages stand on their own, or should they be included in this passage I am speaking on?
* Will I be speaking on the same subject next week? Should I combine the two passages?
* What specific portion is meant to carry the main emphasis for the larger passage?
* What is the main message of this passage?
* What verse or phrase contains the Commander’s intent for this passage? (Note: it may be way too early for this question, but begin to think about it.)
* Should I include verses from the next passage or previous passages to complete the thought of the passage?
* Do I need to use the spiral-cut method, or does the passage contain a full-enough idea on its own to convey a large idea of the author?
* What are the broad confines of the message? Which verses are included? How much scripture can I include to support the main message and not get off the topic?
* Are there key words, repeated phrases, or ideas that continue through past my chosen section?
* Am I fairly conveying the author’s message in the way I’ve divided this passage?

1. Remind yourself that you are aiming to find God’s intention for this passage rather than finding a passage that you hope supports your idea.
2. Pray for wisdom and guidance from the Holy Spirit as you prepare. The Spirit anoints the preparation as well as the proclamation in a special way. The message preparation is preparing your heart first and foremost.

## 

## Listen—Contemplative Exegesis

For the first reading or two, just let the Bible speak and respectfully and humbly listen. Don’t write anything down.

1. Read the surrounding chapters.
2. Read the passage in many translations and note translational differences. As you read, jot down the questions you have and the questions your readers will have.

#### Personal Questions Regarding the Passages Might Include

* What stands out to me about this passage?
* Why would God put this passage in the Bible?
* What is this passage about?
* What questions do I have for God after reading this passage?
* What don’t I understand here?
* What parts of this passage or its message don’t I like?
* What about this passage goes in a direction opposite from the way most people suppose it should go?
* What is God saying here that is countercultural?
* What is God saying to me personally in this passage?
* Where do I need transformation to live out what God is telling me in this passage?
* What work does the Holy Spirit need to do in my life because of what I’ve read here?
* What is God saying to me before I am honestly able to say it to others?
* Why did the Holy Spirit inspire this passage?
* What is the Holy Spirit’s message from this passage?
* What are the bright, shiny memory verses in this passage?

1. Personally practice *lectio divina*—meditate on the passage.
   * 1. Lectio—carefully examine and collect the grapes with care. Examine the passage closely. Pay attention to the words and thoughts and how the thoughts are connected. Note their connections and patterns noted.
     2. Meditatio—squeeze the juice from the grapes. Look for the meaning hidden in plain sight in the passage.
     3. Oratio—ferment the juice, talk to God, pray. Ponder in your heart what God’s desire for you is from this passage. Pray that God would align your will with His regarding what He is showing you from this passage.
     4. Contemplatio—taste the goodness of God in this message for you. Claim the message. Write it down.
     5. Operatio—apply the message to your life. Begin to live out this passage. See Chapter 11.
2. Make general observations about the passage.

#### General Observation Questions

* Can I picture the writing or preaching of this passage?
* Do we know who wrote this book? What do we know about him?
* What can we tell about the human author if he is not identified?
* Is the audience this was written to different from the characters in the story?
* Is this book focused on the past, present, or future?
* Did this book cause anything to change or happen when it was written?
* Who are the characters in this story or passage? What are they like? How are they like or different from us?
* What are they doing?
* Where is God in this passage?
* Is this passage written to or for an occasion or circumstance or to address a particular problem? What is it?
* How is this circumstance, occasion, or problem similar to or different from today?
* What do I need to know more about to understand this passage?
* Which questions can I answer from the text and its surrounding context?
* Which questions can’t I find the answers to in the book I’m studying? (Make a note of them.)
* What would I want to ask the author of this passage if he were here with me?
* What appear to be the key verses that convey the main meaning in this passage? (Note: the key verses are not necessarily the bright, shiny memory verses.)

1. What is the Bible saying in one paragraph or less?

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## Contextual Questions

Here are some questions to get you started. Answer those that are relevant and ignore the rest. Add your own questions of the text.

#### Book of the Bible

* Who was this book written to? Who was its audience?
* What appears to be its purpose?
* What do you learn about the purpose of this book from the first and last chapters?
* Why was this book written?
* What was its purpose according to commentaries?
* What do I see as the theme of the book that contains my passage?
* Were the people this book is about or the people it was written to religious? Worshippers of YHWH, of Jesus? Of idols?
* How were the people this book was written to different from us?
* How does the purpose of this book relate to us? What might the purpose of this book be for us today?
* If the book is prophetic, what were the circumstances facing the people?

#### Surrounding Passages

* What do the surrounding passages have to do with the one I am working on?
* If this passage is a story, parable, psalm, or proverb, what other stories, poems, or sayings in the same book relate to it?
* How does the main idea of this passage fit into the larger context of the book it is in?
* What does this passage mean to say in light of the larger context and the book it is in?
* Are there repeated words or ideas that help me find the beginning and end to the story?
* Do other connected stories have the same theme or teaching?
* What is the climax of the story?
* What is the conclusion?
* What seems to be the purpose of the story?

#### Canonical Context

* How does this passage fit into the story of salvation?
* How does this passage relate to the surrounding books of the Bible?
* Why is this book included in the canon?
* What is different about the message of this book than the message of all the other books in the Bible?
* What are the parallel passages in both testaments? What can I glean from them?
* If this book is one of the prophets, what other books expand on the situation, and what do they say?

#### Literary Genre

* What is the genre of this passage?
* What difference does the genre of this book make to its meaning?
* What literary forms are in the larger genre of this passage?
* Why did God inspire this message to be written in this genre?
* How might the literary form change the way I choose to proclaim this message?

#### Historical Background

* When was this book written?
* Why were these people being written to or about?
* What was the prevailing historical situation at the time? (Was there war, famine, plenty, etc.?)
* What is happening in the history of Israel, the church, or the world at the time this was written?[[2]](#endnote-2)
* What was the geopolitical situation at the time of this book?
* What are the people feeling and experiencing?
* How is the meaning of the passage tied to its historical context?
* What is clearly different about then and now?
* What sorts of interpretation may be needed to apply this text to our context?

#### Cultural Background

* What were the invisible presuppositions that made up their culture that are very different from the invisible suppositions that make up ours?
* What difference do they make to God’s intent and purpose for the passage?
* How are the people this book was written to like us?
* How are they different from us?
* If this takes place in or describes a geographic location, where is it? What does it look like? What does it feel like? How would that affect their culture?
* Did the people this passage was originally delivered to live in a rural or relatively urban setting? How does that affect the meaning?
* Were they settled or nomadic people?
* Were they living in the pretemple times, or was there temple worship?
* Were they pre-exilic, in exile, or postexilic?
* Were they in slavery or free?
* Were they Jewish or Christian or both?
* Were they persecuted or not?
* What were their marriage practices?
* In what types of houses did they live?
* How did they raise their families?
* What is the basic social structure in this book—extended family, limited family, nation?
* What were their invisible cultural beliefs?
* Did they worship YHWH and someone or something else? Why?
* What biblical background information on the culture is relevant to this passage?
* How do these observations affect our understanding of this passage?
* How do these observations affect the application of this passage?

#### Redemptive Theological Questions for Thought

* What passages from the Old Testament further inform me about this passage? What do they say?
* What passages from the New Testament further inform me about this passage? What do they say?
* What does this passage say about God, Christ, and the Holy Spirit?
* What does this text say about God’s love?
* What group or person represents God in this text?
* What does this passage reveal about human brokenness?
* How does this passage point to sin or how we have fallen short of God’s purposes for our lives?
* What does this passage say about God’s work?
* What does this passage say about God’s message to the world?
* What does this text say about God’s will for humankind?
* What is God (in one of the three persons of the Trinity) doing in this biblical text?
* What divine judgment rests on those in this text and why?
* Why did God choose to act in this text?
* What hope does this text imply or offer?
* What does this text say about how God will restore humanity to His purposes?
* What does God do behind the scenes in the larger story of the Bible to accomplish His will regarding the problem in this passage?
* What is said or implied about the future and God’s promises?
* How does the idea of covenant play into this passage?
* Are their messianic overtones or types in this passage?
* Does the passage point to blood, forgiveness, or sacrifice?
* Where is grace displayed in this passage?
* What characters might point in some way to Christ?
* What characters point to the need for Christ?
* Where is Christ or forgiveness portrayed?
* Where might Christ be needed?
* Is there a story of redemption here either secular or spiritual?
* How does any story of redemption in this passage relate to Christ?
* How does this passage relate to Jesus Christ’s earthly ministry?
* What message from God is this passage relaying?
* Where is the Holy Spirit in this passage? (Is He behind the scenes, or empowering characters, or simply inspiring the author?)
* How can the Holy Spirit empower us to do the thing called for in this passage?
* In what way does this passage speak to the person who may be running from God?
* In what way does this speak to the person seeking God?
* How does this passage speak to those who are sick, suffering, or unable to help themselves?
* In what way does this speak to the religious/legalistic person?
* How does this speak to the self-righteous person (vs. righteousness from God)?
* What does God do in this text to provide or accomplish what is needed?[[3]](#endnote-3)
* What is God doing in the larger context, canon, or salvation story to accomplish what is needed?[[4]](#endnote-4)
* What theological truth does this passage convey?
* What does this passage say, imply, or point to about Christ?
* How does this text connect to the cross, Resurrection, or eternity?
* How does our gratefulness to Christ for His offer of salvation cause us to want to live out this text?
* What passage from the other testament might you pair with your passage to deepen your message?

## 

## Dig Deep: Ideas

1. Divide the passage into major chunks by idea or plot movement.
   1. If there is a story, give the plot.
   2. If there is a poem, give the major thoughts.
   3. If there is a prophecy, look at the near and far situations addressed and find the major themes.

2. How are the major themes or ideas organized?

3. Outline the passage or draw its plot noting the rising action, climax of the story, and the conclusion.

4. Underline key words, ideas, and connecting words.

5. Turn your outline or plot into a truth outline.

#### Questions for Digging Deeper

##### Dig Deep—General Observations

* What appear to be key verses or phrases?
* Diagram the key verse or verses if it will help make it clearer.
* What is the mood of this passage? Why was it written in this mood?
* What is the organizing principle of the passage? Is it inductive, deductive, informally arranged, or arranged with the main thought in the middle?
* Why did the writer organize his thoughts in this way?
* What ideas are repeated and why?

##### Dig Deeper by Genre

###### If the passage is didactic,

* After you outline the passage in detail, outline the passage with subject headlines.
* Show how the discussion or argument develops.
* What is the mood of the passage/author?
* Is there any advice? Are there admonitions? Warnings? Promises?
* What are the emphatic phrases?
* Is there figurative language? Why was it used?
* If this is an epistle, what was the situation(s) that are being addressed? Why?
* How are these situations the same or different from our situations today?
* Is the application exactly the same or different today?
* Why did the author organize his ideas as he did?
* What was the most important idea to the author? Where did he put it?

###### If the passage is narrative,

* Where does this story begins and end (different places, characters, or moods may help).
* What is the setting of the story? When does this story occur? Where does it occur? What is significant about these observations as far as the bigger picture of scripture, Israel, or the church is concerned?
* What is the mood of the story?
* Who is the main character or protagonist or principal character?
* Who is the antagonist the one who contends with or opposes the main character?
* Is God a protagonist or antagonist in this story?
* What is the significance of the major character’s name?
* What is the conflict or problem that between the protagonist and the antagonist?
* Does the Bible tell us anything about how the character looked? Why?
* What is the rising action? What major events lead to the turning point or climax of the story?
* What is the turning point or main even between the protagonist and antagonist?
* What happens after that, the falling action, the events that lead to a resolution?
* What is the resolution or the conclusion of the story?
* Who has the power in this story? Who is powerless? Who is excluded from power? How does this affect the meaning?
* How does the story resolve or conclude?
* What is the outcome?
* What ideas are highlighted?
* What brought suspense?
* What words are repeated more frequently than usual?
* Where is God in this story? What is He doing? Is He in front of the camera or behind it?
* What is the theme of the story?
* What is the lesson the protagonist learned?
* What could we learn from this story?
* Whom do we want to identify with? Whom do we not want to identify with?
* What message is the author trying to get across?
* What other passages of scripture link to this story or explain it?

###### If the passage is a psalm or poetry,

* What types of images or figurative language is used? What do they represent?
* Take note of the parallelism—how does it function (repetition, enhancements)?
* Where in the psalter (if this is a psalm) is it? What are the other psalms around it about?
* Note the literary form—how is it arranged? Try to guess why it is arranged that way. Does it start with a call to worship or praise phrase? Is it arranged alphabetically in Hebrew? (i.e., Psalm 119).
* Why is this message in this genre?
* Divide the passage into strophes or chunks.
* Outline the strophes by topic or image.
* Where is the main topic or intent of the passage mentioned? Is it in the beginning, the end, or the middle?
* How are the strophes arranged? Look at the macro arrangement and the micro arrangement of the strophes.
* Is this psalm a community psalm or an individual psalm? What difference does that make to its meaning?
* What is the mood? Is it one more of praise or lament?
* If praise, is it a song of thanksgiving or a hymn of praise?
* If a hymn of praise, is it to the Creator or Redeemer of Israel, or the world, or the ruler of history?
* Is it a storytelling psalm? A psalm of penitence? A psalm of trust and meditation? A royal psalm? A renewal liturgy? A psalm of ascent, a song of Zion, or an enthronement psalm?
* Note the feelings expressed. Get into the writer’s emotions. How was he feeling in each part? Does it change in the psalm?
* Are some of the feelings or phrases troubling to you? Prayerfully note these and then read carefully to see if they are giving emotions to God or are registering trust in His sovereignty.
* Note stories or experiences shared by the psalmist.
* Note key words. How many different words are used for the same basic idea? (Psalm 119 for example has many words for God’s Word.)
* Are there theologically loaded power words (like love or justice) the psalmist uses?
* What is God’s name here (God/Elohim—general word for God or Lord/YHWH—personal name for God)?
* How is God portrayed?
* Note strong illusions or illustrations.
* Can the historical context be discovered? Look up historical or grammatical notes to understand the poetry better.
* Are there any parts that could come from other Near East cultures—mythical references such as water or other gods, etc.?
* Do some parts reflect a simple view of the universe as though chariots pulled the sun across the sky?
* Look up the cross-references or notes to other scriptures. Note that often, other passages will refer to psalms.
* Read the psalms with a Christian perspective. Look for Christ, prophecy, or covenant.

###### If the passage is prophecy,

* How was this prophecy original offered—preached, spoken, illustrated, written?
* Is there figurative language?
* Can you identify what the figurative motifs are meant to point to?
* Who are the characters?
* What subgenres are included? Why?
* Why did God give this message to the prophet?
* What forms is this prophecy presented in?
* Is it addressed to a priest, a king, or a group of people? What significance does that have?
* If addressed to a group, is it a nation, and international group, or the kingdom of God?
* How was the prophecy fulfilled in its day?
* Does this prophecy also point to a future fulfillment (for example, a return to the land or a messiah)?
* Does this prophecy point even further to the future (for example, the Day of the Lord)?

## 

## Dig Deep: Words

1. What word or words needs to be studied because they carry a lot of weight in the passage, are used repeatedly, or have theological significance? Check the words you underlined in your outline.
2. Compare that word to see how it is translated in several good translations.
3. Study the original word’s meaning. See which meaning fits in the passage at hand. See how that word is used in other places in scripture (particularly in the book you are studying and other books by that same author). What words in Hebrew (if your word is Greek) or in Greek (if your word is Hebrew) have similar meanings? Look up your word in the Theological Wordbook of the OT (TWOT) or the Theological Dictionary of the NT (TDNT). See chapter 8 for more details and help on this.
4. Using all your translations, your outline, and the things you have learned in this section, write a paraphrase of your passage or the key sections of your passage if it is very long.

## Live—Transform Your Heart and Mind

### Consider Your Audience

1. Identify with the skeptics and doubters. Ask their most challenging questions for them.
2. Go over an imaginary list of listeners—those in your audience and those you wish were. How will they hear this passage? What are their needs, and how does the passage apply?
3. If there are difficulties for you in believing your passage, consider taking a little leap of faith to better apply the passage.

#### Questions for Exegeting Culture and Our Listeners

* What kinds of people make up my congregation?
* How does my congregation differ from me in their thinking and understanding of scripture?
* What has been happening in the world lately that this passage reminds me of?
* What things will my audience have difficulty understanding?
* What things in this passage will my audience disagree with?
* Where does this passage differ from popular theological ideas my congregation or society holds?
* Who is going to stop listening to me and tune out?
* Why should they listen to me?
* Why should they hear this?
* How will I gain their attention or interest?
* What do they need? Do they know they need it?
* How can I make their need for this message clear to them?
* Why is this idea better than the others in other religions or in secular society?
* Could my message sound judgmental, hypocritical, politically incorrect, or mean spirited? How can I address that?
* Would a parable-like story or some other image of the application make the message palatable for my hearers?
* Do I need to translate some ideas or common Christian or biblical words and phrases into a language that laypeople will understand?
* What invisible cultural belief or norm is touched on in our passage?
* What unknown assumptions underlie the way this passage will be understood or make it difficult to accept?
* How can I address those underlying assumptions?
* Where are the hurts in our culture?
* What assumptions in the culture just aren’t working? How does Christianity speak to that problem?
* How does Jesus Christ, salvation, or the application of our passage run counter to culture?
* What about this passage points to a need for personal change?
* What are the biggest issues facing our culture today?
* What do people consider the biggest justice issues?
* How does this passage support and affirm those issues?
* How are the people this passage is written to at cross-purposes with the Commander’s intent for this passage?
* How does this passage help us see the cultural issues of today in a new light?
* How can living out the purposes of this passage help us live better lives?
* How does this passage cure the social ills of today?

## 

## Decide on the Commander’s Intent

1. Decide on the Commander’s intent; see chapter 10 for help here.

#### Questions for Deciding on the Commander’s Intent

* What does the passages structure, the first verses (or the middle or final verses) tell us about the purpose of the passage?
* What are the key verses in the passage?
* What themes are repeated (words or ideas) throughout the passage?
* What is the main subject of the passage, and what does the passage say about it?
* What is the underlying theological principle of this passage?
* What is the message of the surrounding chapters?
* What is the stated purpose of the book containing your passage? Is it mentioned in the first and last chapters as well as the book introduction given in a study Bible?
* What does the rest of the Bible and theology say about the main themes in this passage?
* What is the purpose of this passage in salvation history and the big story of redemption?
* What principles can you draw from your passage?
* What truths can you identify in your passage?
* What was the purpose of the original author for this passage?
* What is the purpose of the Holy Spirit for breathing out the passage?
* What is the purpose that the Holy Spirit had in mind for this passage when read in our time and culture?
* What is the purpose of the passage for my personal transformation?
* What is the purpose of the passage for my audience’s transformation?
* What is the purpose of the book in salvation history and the big story of redemption?
* What does God want us to know, do, or be that caused Him to include this passage?
* What do God’s actions surrounding this text imply concerning our actions?[[5]](#endnote-5)
* What action is suggested for our community and our relationship to our neighbor?[[6]](#endnote-6)
* Are there implicit or explicit command of God here?[[7]](#endnote-7)
* What worldly ideals are exemplified in this text?
* Does this passage show us an example that is opposite of what we consider God’s commands or that is opposite of loving our neighbor as ourselves? How do we rectify that example?
* Is someone’s faith or actions a model for how we should live?
* Do events in this text correlate to situations I come in contact with? What are some examples?
* What are the needs of your audience or congregation that God intended to speak to with this passage?

1. Look for Christ in this passage. Where do we see the gospel, Jesus Christ, salvation, or the need for these things in this passage?
2. Write the Commander’s intent in a single sentence.

## 

## Let the Commander’s Intent Permeate Your Life

1. Take time to meditate on the Commander’s intent.

##### Thinking about the Commander’s Intent

* Do all the verses/paragraphs/strophes in my passage support my Commander’s intent?
* How does the rest of scripture support my Commander’s intent?
* Does my Commander’s intent contradict any other scripture? If it does, how can I rectify this?
* How does my Commander’s intent support or reject the cultural ideas of people today where I live?

1. Don’t forget to rest. Have fun. Have you had a day of Sabbath this week?
2. Live out the Commander’s intent.

##### Questions to Think about While You Perk

* What has God been saying to me personally this week from this passage?
* What specific applications can I imagine for me and my people regarding the Commander’s intent of this passage?
* How is living out the Commander’s intent working for me?
* What am I wrestling with God about concerning living out His message?
* What difficulties have I had living out the Commander’s intent for my passage?
* What has been the hardest part of living out the Commander’s intent?
* Have I experienced any place where the Commander’s intent needed altering after I’ve thought about it a bit?
* As I begin to live this out, can I think of some universal or specific application?
* What illustrations of the Commander’s intent have I seen in the news or in things I’ve read or watched?
* Where have I seen the application of the Commander’s intent in action recently?
* What are people talking about or what happened in the news recently that needs to be part of my message? Any holidays?

1. Practice creative meditation on the passage.

##### Creative Meditation Exercises

* Visualize what is happening in the passage.
* If the passage is a sermon, how did it sound when it was spoken or read aloud to its early audiences? Read it aloud in the translation of your choice.
* If the passage contains a story, visualize the setting, think of the beginning, the climax of the story, and the end. Why was it written the way it was?
* Tell the story in your own words. Consider telling the story as if it were happening today. Think about the weather, the smells, the sounds.
* If the passage is theological instruction or a letter, explain it in your own words as you would to a friend who doesn’t know the Bible. Better yet, go out to lunch with a friend and tell him or her what you think you will say. What is the reaction? What questions does he or she have? What doesn’t he or she agree with?
* If the passage is an argument or part of an argument or a sermon, map out where this particular point in the argument or sermon is in the greater argument being made. Why did the writer craft the message this way?
* If the passage is Hebrew poetry, attempt to visualize the concrete images the author has written.
* Write down verses that stand out to you personally and meditate on them for a while or memorize them.
* Think deeply about phrases or words that remind you of other Bible passages and Bible stories, creation, nature, events in your life or that of others dear to you, and any other connections that come to you.
* Make your Commander’s intent image driven; find one simple anchor image that illustrates or reminds people of your main point. This can be a slide if you do slides. Otherwise, plan how to describe some sort of image.
* If you will do slides or video clips, begin to gather pictures and videos along with collecting illustrations.

## 

## Love—Compose a Relevant and Redemptive Message

1. Decide on the point for proclamation from the Commander’s intent for including this passage in the Bible and the people you will be speaking to with this message.

#### Hermeneutical Questions

* Who is my audience, and what are their needs they know about and those they aren’t aware of?
* Why did they come here today?
* Why should they listen?
* What difference does this message make to them?
* How should they live differently?
* What should my listeners do now?
* How can I point to the application without being legalistic, moralistic, or nagging?
* In what way do the culture’s assumptions support this passage?
* In what way are my listeners’ cultural assumptions different from scriptures or my own?
* How do the events in this text correlate to events in my community or in the world?[[8]](#endnote-8)
* How can I show the difference between what we are called to do in this text and what God has already done for us?
* How can I make clear that our goodness and moral actions are not a way to win points with God but are rather done in gratefulness to God?
* How can I show that no one can do the actions called for in this text without God’s help?
* How will I make clear that we have all fallen short of these actions but that we can be forgiven by God’s free offer of grace?
* How can I demonstrate the living out of these actions by the Holy Spirit’s help?
* How do we answer the question that our listener has about our point for proclamation—-“So what?”

1. Consider the seekers, the mature, and immature believers in your audience in regard to an application.
2. Write out the point for proclamation sentence.
3. Write an outline or some sort of structure for your message; see chapter 14 for ideas.

#### Homiletical Questions

* What is the best way to structure this message to get across the Commander’s point for proclamation to this audience?
* Write out your message outline or structure.
* What is my point for proclamation catchphrase?
* What images, stories, references, or illustrations will I use to support the Commander’s intent point for proclamation?
* How will I introduce my message?
* How will I conclude my message?
* How will I make my message stick so the people listening can’t forget it?
* How will I allow for a response to God’s working through my message?

1. Decide on a point for proclamation catchphrase.
2. Find an anchor image.
3. Gather your message resources, pictures, illustrations to point to truths, stories, application examples.
4. Write your conclusion.
5. Write your introduction.
6. Write your message if you choose to speak from a written sheet.

11. Go through and cut everything that doesn’t support the point for proclamation from the message. Check it over with the following questions.

#### Preflight Checklist

* Does my introduction connect with my audience and make them want to listen?
* Does my introduction prepare the audience for the message?
* Do I get on their island emotionally or culturally at the start of the message?
* Is there an action called for in this passage? Did I include it in my message?
* Did I apply generally and specifically the action called for?
* Is it clear why we would want to do the thing called for?
* What are the ramifications of not doing the thing called for in this message?
* Is God’s message my message?
* Did I point out the need for a grateful response to the suffering of Christ on the cross?
* Did I expect people to help themselves or encourage them to call on the Holy Spirit for help?
* Is there any part of me or my opinions that I state as biblical truth and not clearly as my opinion?
* Do I waste a lot of time talking about things not relevant to my message? What can I cut out?
* Does the Commander’s point for proclamation catchphrase lead people away from the meaning of the passage?
* Does the Commander’s point for proclamation truly reflect the most significant point in the passage?
* Is the Commander’s point for proclamation a transformational point, not just a point of fact?
* Is the Commander’s point for proclamation universally applicable?
* Are all the other points in my outline, stories, and illustrations directly in support of the point for proclamation?
* Does the conclusion directly support and distill the point for proclamation?
* Did I explain what the ramifications of not doing what the Bible says in this passage?
* Does my message speak to the younger brother (the prodigal son) and the self-righteous older brother?
* Is the gospel, redemption, forgiveness, or hope explicitly part of the message?
* Are there any cultural, historical, or other differences between then and now that may affect the truth of my Commander’s intent point for proclamation?
* Do I give credit for all quotes, ideas, and illustrations? Do I have permission to use all the images I have on screen? Have I obtained the proper licenses for the use of my video clips?

1. Randal E. Pelton, *Preaching with Accuracy: Finding Christ-Centered Ideas for Biblical Preaching* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel, 2014), 33–37. [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
2. Paul Scott Wilson, *God Sense: Reading the Bible for Preaching* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2001) 31. [↑](#endnote-ref-2)
3. Ibid., 69–71. [↑](#endnote-ref-3)
4. Ibid. [↑](#endnote-ref-4)
5. Ibid., 109–11. [↑](#endnote-ref-5)
6. Ibid. [↑](#endnote-ref-6)
7. Ibid. [↑](#endnote-ref-7)
8. Ibid. [↑](#endnote-ref-8)