

LESSON 7

THE MATERIALS OF THE SERMON

After the preacher has prepared the foundations of the sermon and has developed an outline, he needs to know the sources of materials to complete the building or development of the sermon. These same sources also provide the ideas for sermons. Many of the ideas and materials discovered during his study are not used immediately in the preparation of a specific sermon, but need to be stored for future use and then made easily accessible when needed.

The Bible

The Bible provides the major source of ideas and material for the sermon. It should be consulted and utilized for the suggestion, the basis, or the content of the message. The messages in the Book of Acts reveal that the apostles quoted Scripture and explained their fulfillment in Christ and that they related the events in the life of Christ and interpreted them in the light of the needs of their hearers.

The preacher might discover sermon materials in his devotional study of the Bible, although his primary concern should be his personal communion with the Lord and his spiritual edification. He should set aside a time in the early morning or late in the evening before retiring to read the Scriptures and possibly a daily devotional book to guide his reading; to meditate on what he has read and on the Lord and His ways; and to pray, confessing his sins and failures of the day, thanking and praising God for His daily mercies and care, and asking for his daily needs and guidance and for the needs of others. After his daily devotions, the preacher should jot down on note cards any thoughts on the Scriptures, any insights in his meditation with the Lord, and any answers to prayer.

However, the preacher ought to discover most of his sermon materials through a systematic study of the Bible. He should prayerfully plan to study the Bible book by book, possibly beginning with Genesis in the Old Testament and Matthew of the New Testament, reading some from the Old Testament and some from the New Testament week by week. He would be wise to set aside a portion of time each day for Bible study. He should have one or more study Bibles with a reference system and study aids,

[Empty box for notes]

The major source of ideas and material for sermons is the \_\_\_\_\_

(Bible)

AFTER READING THIS PARAGRAPH AND THE NEXT ONE, WRITE IN DEVOTIONAL STUDY AND SYSTEMATIC STUDY IN THE CORRECT BLANKS BELOW.

The preacher will probably discover more sermon materials through a \_\_\_\_\_ of the Bible than in his \_\_\_\_\_ of the Bible.

(systematic study, devotional study)

[Empty box for notes]

such as the Thompson Chain Reference Bible, the New Scofield Reference Bible, or the Harper Study Bible. He should underline important passages, striking statements, and key words and phrases, and should make notes on the margins of his thoughts and impressions and of sermon subjects, outlines, illustrations, and applications. He might choose to write many of these notations on note cards for future reference and filing. He should also check cross references for further enlightenment on the Scriptures. At other times he should study the Bible by subjects or themes, tracing chain references through the Bible. The results of this type of study should be recorded on note cards or note paper for future use. In his study of the Bible he should consult various translations of the Bible besides the King James Version, such as:

- The American Standard Version
- The Revised Standard Version
- The New English Bible
- The New American Standard Bible
- The Williams' Translation of the New Testament in the Language of the People
- The Phillips' Translation of the New Testament in Modern English
- The Amplified Bible
- The Living Bible
- Today's English Version (Good News for Modern Man)

A study of the Bible in the original languages would be especially helpful and profitable, that is, the Hebrew Old Testament and the Greek New Testament, using interlinear editions if needed. The reading of these texts with the help of lexicons provides valuable word studies that could be utilized in sermon preparation, but several publications are available to assist the preacher who does not have the training in the original languages, such as:

- An Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words by W. E. Vine
- Word Pictures in the New Testament by A. T. Robertson
- Word Studies from the Greek New Testament by Kenneth S. Wuest

Several other parallel editions of the Bible are especially helpful for study and interpretation, such as:

- The Four Translation New Testament (World Wide Publications)
- The New Testament in Four Versions (Christians Today)
- The New Testament from 26 Translations (Zondervan)
- The Holy Bible in Four Translations (World Wide Publications)

*One valuable aid in systematic study of the Bible is a \_\_\_\_\_, in which the preacher should \_\_\_\_\_, and \_\_\_\_\_.*

*(study Bible, underline, make notes, check cross references)*

*Some other aids in study are: various \_\_\_\_\_ of the Bible and publications related to original \_\_\_\_\_ of the Bible.*

*(translations, languages)*

The preacher should first of all study the Bible for himself, consulting concordances to find verses and passages of Scripture, such as:

- Cruden's Complete Concordance
- Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible
- Young's Analytical Concordance to the Bible
- Nave's Topical Bible
- The New Topical Textbook

The latter two provide listings of Scripture under a variety of topics or subjects, which could provide sources for sermon subjects. The Bible dictionaries, encyclopedias, atlases, and introductions provide background information to help in interpreting Scripture. After the preacher has done his own interpretation, he should then consult Bible commentaries and other books that explain Biblical passages (See Appendix C).

### The Experiences from Life

The experiences in the life of the preacher and in the lives of others, especially Christians, are also primary sources of material for the sermon. The preacher's personal experiences, both past and present, afford valuable sermon materials, for his knowledge of himself, human nature, and the world is firsthand and reasonably accurate, though he could be deceived. His experience of salvation, as the Apostle Paul, provides the basis for his knowledge of God and the revelation of God to men (cf. Acts 9:1-19; 22:1-21; 24:10-21). On occasion the preacher's testimony of salvation is appropriate and effective, but so are his other experiences with God and men. This is especially true of experiences in which he has led others to Christ and salvation. The experiences of failures and successes in the Christian life are also useful as are his experiences with others in their sorrows and their joys. However, the preacher must be extremely careful in using these sources for sermon material, guarding against undue emphasis on his own life, and protecting those whom he has tried to help or is presently helping. To avoid offending others, he should only refer to these experiences on occasions that are far removed from the persons involved unless he has asked their permission.

The experiences of other people whom the preacher either knows or has heard testify are also useful for sermon material. This is especially true of testimonies of salvation and service. These include the experiences of loved ones, neighbors, fellow preachers, prominent people, and other personal acquaintances who are reliable. He should avoid revealing personal confidences and using

*Give a source which may be consulted in finding verses and passages of Scripture.*

\_\_\_\_\_

*(concordance)*

*Some experiences from life which may be used in sermons are:*

*The preacher's own \_\_\_\_\_ experience;*  
*His other experiences with \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_;*  
*Experiences of \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ in the Christian life;*  
*Experiences with others in their \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_.*

*(salvation, God, men, failures, successes, sorrows, joys)*

*IS THIS STATEMENT TRUE OR FALSE?*

*In his sermons, the preacher is free to use accounts of his experiences with others any time and on any occasion. \_\_\_\_\_*

*(false)*

the experiences if there is a possibility of embarrassment. He also should use the experiences of his family sparingly. The testimonies of others with whom he is not acquainted personally are also valuable, but the reliability of the experiences should be carefully investigated. Published experiences are usually trustworthy, but care should be taken if there is a reasonable question regarding their truth.

The Resources from Literature

A wide variety of literature provides a valuable resource of materials for sermon construction. This resource includes books, newspapers, magazines, journals, pamphlets, tracts, and unpublished materials. Religious literature is of particular importance, especially books and journals dealing with Biblical, theological, ethical, historical, and practical subjects on the Christian faith. The preacher should strive to build his own personal library with sound Christian literature, especially books on Biblical, theological, and ethical subjects that would be helpful in providing resources for preaching (See Appendix C). One or two standard sets of commentaries covering the whole Bible are necessary, but he should be selective in choosing the best of individual volumes in sets since a number of commentaries are written by a group of authors. Three good books covering each of the books of the Bible would be an ideal collection. He should also attempt to acquire outstanding books on preaching, evangelism, missions, the ministry, counseling, church music, church history, and Christian education. He should also subscribe to sound Christian periodicals, such as Christianity Today, Decision Magazine, denominational periodicals, and one or two scholarly journals if possible.

Other literature also provides useful information in sermon preparation. The preacher should understand human nature and the world about him. His personal observations and formal education provide a good basis for this knowledge, but the information obtained from books and periodicals could greatly enlarge his scope of knowledge. This includes publications about history, biography, geography, politics, philosophy, psychology, sociology, language, American and English literature, science, and the fine arts. The reading of newspapers and popular magazines should keep him abreast of current events. Many of these resources are available to the preacher at local public and private libraries. Radio, television, pictures, films, recordings, and other audio-visual materials provide the same information through other media.

Another source of materials for sermon construction is \_\_\_\_\_.

(literature)

Areas of religious literature that would provide valuable resources are:


(Compare your answers with the text.)

Other areas of literature which are useful are:


What other media provide resources and information?

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

(Compare your answers with the text.)

## The Study of Sermons

The study of sermons can be a profitable way of finding resources for preaching as to method and content. This includes the study of sermons as they are delivered and of printed and recorded sermons. The preacher is cautioned at this point to select his text and subject and to construct his outline before he studies other men's sermons to guard against preaching their messages. Though the Lord has revealed Himself and His way to men in general, He has a specific message to be delivered by a called man of God to a particular people at an appointed time. However, he could learn how God is using other men to preach as he listens to their messages and observes the way in which they preach in person, on the radio, and over television. The preacher ought to take notes of sermon subjects, texts, outlines, illustrations, and applications and to make observations as to their method of delivery, voice, gestures, mannerisms, and appearance. He could learn from the mistakes of others as well as their successes. He should guard against copying another man's style. Rather, he should be himself, his best self, and thus should learn the best way to preach, using the resources of his own personality, his experiences, and the knowledge available to him.

Published sermons and sermon illustrations are available in books and periodicals and could be used as resources for sermon ideas, sermon development, and sermon illustrations. Many sermons are now available on records, reel to reel tapes, and cassettes and could be studied with the additional value of hearing the way the messages were preached. Inexpensive cassette recorder/players are available to record messages for later study. The preacher ought to be on guard against plagiarism, that is, using the material of another without acknowledging the source. Another man's complete sermon should not be preached. If an outline is used or a passage is quoted word for word or paraphrased, the preacher should give credit to the person from whom it originated. He should limit the number of quotations that he borrows and keep the length of quotations brief.

## The Invention of Materials

The preacher can supply some sermon materials through his own inventive powers. This includes the selection of certain materials, the arrangement of materials into patterns, and the re-creation of situations through reflection, meditation, and imagination. The inventiveness of the preacher is utilized in the development of seed thoughts from sermon

*A profitable way to find resources for preaching as to method and content is the study of \_\_\_\_\_.*

*UNDERLINE THE CORRECT WORD.*

*A preacher should study other men's sermons (before, after) he selects his text and subject and makes his outline.*

*(sermons, after)*

*Using material of another without giving credit to the person or source from which it originated is called \_\_\_\_\_.*

*(plagiarism)*

*The inventiveness of a preacher in selection of \_\_\_\_\_, arrangement of \_\_\_\_\_, and re-creation of \_\_\_\_\_ is useful.*

*(Compare your answers with the text.)*

subjects to sermons, the creation of outlines, the arrangement of other materials throughout the sermon, and in the development of illustrations, as Jesus apparently did in His parables. By studying background information in the life and times of men and events, including Biblical times, the preacher can often fill in facts to enliven explanations and to depict and describe the Scriptures. The experiences of men are available and need to be worded and utilized effectively in the message. The preacher should never use materials that he has invented as if they were true. He should use words and phrases as Jesus did to indicate a parable or story, as "the kingdom of God is like," or "he spoke a parable unto them." The preacher should avoid highly exaggerated statements and unrealistic stories.

### The Storing of Materials

The preacher needs a simple system of storing and identifying materials that he finds and has accumulated through the years. The simplest method is to store materials in 9 by 12 inch file folders with one-third cut tabs arranged by subject in alphabetical order (See the Study Guide on Pastoral Ministry, by Weldon Viertel). Brief notes, quotations, and sermon seed thoughts could be entered on 4 by 6 inch note cards and filed alphabetically in the same manner as the file folders. This writer has published a book called The Minister's Filing System, based on the Eureka Filing System in which an index is used for cross referencing materials. This system is simple and yet comprehensive, and adaptable especially for the preacher. It is inexpensive and uses ordinary office supplies such as file folders and note cards. A system of filing materials under all the subjects that they cover eliminates the loss of materials filed under one subject.

The preacher should also have a file for his own sermons. One method is to use a full sermon outline written on 8 1/2 by 11 inch lined note paper and to file these in a notebook in Biblical order according to the text. Or brief outlines could be filed on large note cards, and full sermon notes or manuscripts could be filed in file folders in Biblical order (See Appendix B).

LIST SOME WAYS THE PREACHER MAY USE HIS INVENTIVENESS.

(Compare your answers with the text.)

Invented materials should not be used as if they were \_\_\_\_\_.

(true)

GIVE TWO REASONS WHY YOU THINK AN ORDERLY FILING SYSTEM IS VALUABLE.

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_

(Two good reasons would be:

*It makes accumulated materials easily accessible.*

*It prevents loss of materials.*

*Perhaps you have thought of other reasons also.)*

Home Study Exercise

Basic activity (Levels 1, 2, and 3):

1. What is the major source of ideas and material for the sermon? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. Through what types of Bible study can the preacher find sermon material?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. Outline the way the preacher should study the Bible systematically. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
4. Name several good translations of the Bible that should be consulted in the study of the Bible. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
5. What source should be consulted to find verses and passages of Scripture?  
\_\_\_\_\_
6. What are three other sources besides the Bible that provide sermon material?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
7. Name some of the experiences from life that may provide sermon material.  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
8. What are some of the fields of religious literature that provide valuable resources?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

9. What are some of the other fields of literature that provide valuable resources?

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10. What caution should the preacher take before studying sermons of other men?

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11. What is plagiarism?

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12. The inventiveness of the preacher is utilized in what ways in sermon building?

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13. What is the value of a filing system?

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14. Construct a textual or expository sermon outline with the foundational elements and the major points in sentence form.

Text: \_\_\_\_\_

Subject: \_\_\_\_\_

Title: \_\_\_\_\_

Proposition: \_\_\_\_\_

Objective: \_\_\_\_\_

Outline: \_\_\_\_\_

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Supplementary activity (Levels 2 and 3):

Read Chapter IV, pages 66-68 of the textbook.

1. What are the sources of sermon material suggested by the textbook?
2. What are the sources of sermon illustrations suggested by the textbook?
3. Explain the value of preserving sermon material.
4. What types of filing systems are available for storing sermon material?
5. Describe the five sources of the idea of the sermon given in the textbook.

Advanced activity (Level 3):

1. Why is it important to study the Bible systematically using various translations to provide sermon materials?
2. Explain the values of the experiences of people for sermon ideas and materials.
3. What are the values of the inventive powers of the preacher?

Seminar Discussion

1. Discuss the importance of each of the following sources of sermon material: the Bible, the experiences from life, the resources from literature, and the study of sermons.
2. Let each student present his sermon outline and show its relationship to the Scriptures. Use a chalkboard if available. Allow the other students to point out the strengths and weaknesses of the outline.