

Agros: Find, Train, Support
Sermon Prep Workshop
Session 1 “Build the Frame” – 1 Corinthians 2:1-5

And I, when I came to you, brothers, did not come proclaiming to you the testimony of God with

lofty speech or wisdom. For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him

crucified. And I was with you in weakness and in fear and much trembling, and my speech and

my message were not in plausible words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of

power, so that your faith might not rest in the wisdom of men but in the power of God.

Build the Frame Worksheet

1. Write your Essence of the Text in a Sentence (ETS).

This is how you would summarize *what truth* this passage teaches. Try to combine all of the study you did in the previous hour into one sentence that captures one main point of your passage. Because it comes from God's Word, it gives your sermon *authority*. Because it summarizes all the parts of your passage, it gives your sermon *unity*.

2. Reflect on the Fallen Condition Focus (FCF) of the original audience.

This is how you would summarize *why* this passage teaches this truth. Meditate on what sins or suffering the original audience was experiencing. It might be the people to whom this was written or the people about whom it was written. It could come from their sin (e.g. pride, lust, greed) or from living in a fallen world (e.g. despair, injustice, weakness). Ask yourself: What problems were they facing? What emotions were they feeling? What were they lacking that this truth fills? What were they choosing that this truth condemns? What were they desiring that is inferior to this truth? Write specific, concrete answers.

3. Identify where the FCF of the original audience overlaps with your audience.

Now consider where your congregation's sins or suffering overlap with those of the original audience. Write down the feelings and challenges that we share in common with them. Record any circumstances or situations where we also need this same truth. From these reflections, choose a part of our fallen condition you will focus on. Because it identifies a problem, it gives your sermon *purpose*.

4. Combine your ETS with your FCF into one sentence to make your sermon's "big idea."

In this step, it is important to write something that will be clear to you. It does not need to be catchy or easy to remember for your congregation. That may come to you later. In order to have a frame that the rest of your work can build on, make sure that your "big idea" thoroughly and clearly contains both your ETS and FCF.

5. Summarize 2-5 sections of your passage with main points that unpack your "bid idea."

Ask yourself how each smaller section of your passage unpacks, clarifies, supports, or develops your big idea. Keeping them connected to your big idea will give your sermon unity. Perhaps a point answers a question (Who? What? When? Where? Why? How?). Perhaps it gives a practical example of the FCF. Perhaps it gives a logical argument for believing the ETS. Write each main point below here.

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Session 1 “Build the Frame” – 1 Peter 4:12-19

Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery trial when it comes upon you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you. But rejoice insofar as you share Christ’s sufferings, that you may also rejoice and be glad when his glory is revealed. If you are insulted for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you. But let none of you suffer as a murderer or a thief or an evildoer or as a meddler. Yet if anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in that name. For it is time for judgment to begin at the household of God; and if it begins with us, what will be the outcome for those who do not obey the gospel of God? And “If the righteous is scarcely saved, what will become of the ungodly and the sinner?” Therefore let those who suffer according to God’s will entrust their souls to a faithful Creator while doing good.

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Session 1 “Build the Frame” – Acts 11:19-26

Now those who were scattered because of the persecution that arose over Stephen traveled as far as Phoenicia and Cyprus and Antioch, speaking the word to no one except Jews. But there were some of them, men of Cyprus and Cyrene, who on coming to Antioch spoke to the Hellenists also, preaching the Lord Jesus. And the hand of the Lord was with them, and a great number who believed turned to the Lord. The report of this came to the ears of the church in Jerusalem, and they sent Barnabas to Antioch. When he came and saw the grace of God, he was glad, and he exhorted them all to remain faithful to the Lord with steadfast purpose, for he was a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and of faith. And a great many people were added to the Lord. So Barnabas went to Tarsus to look for Saul, and when he had found him, he brought him to Antioch. For a whole year they met with the church and taught a great many people. And in Antioch the disciples were first called Christians.

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Session 1 “Build the Frame” – Luke 18:9-14

He also told this parable to some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and treated others with contempt: “Two men went up into the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. The Pharisee, standing by himself, prayed thus: ‘God, I thank you that I am not like other men, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all that I get.’ But the tax collector, standing far off, would not even lift up his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, ‘God, be merciful to me, a sinner!’ I tell you, this man went down to his house justified, rather than the other. For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but the one who humbles himself will be exalted.”

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Session 1 “Build the Frame” – Matthew 10:26-33

So have no fear of them, for nothing is covered that will not be revealed, or hidden that will not

be known. What I tell you in the dark, say in the light, and what you hear whispered, proclaim on

the housetops. And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather fear him

who can destroy both soul and body in hell. Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? And not one

of them will fall to the ground apart from your Father. But even the hairs of your head are all

numbered. Fear not, therefore; you are of more value than many sparrows. So everyone who

acknowledges me before men, I also will acknowledge before my Father who is in heaven, but

whoever denies me before men, I also will deny before my Father who is in heaven.

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Session 1 “Build the Frame” – Romans 3:21-26

But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law, although the Law and

the Prophets bear witness to it—the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all

who believe. For there is no distinction: for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,

and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God

put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith. This was to show God’s

righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over former sins. It was to show

his righteousness at the present time, so that he might be just and the justifier of the one who has

faith in Jesus.

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Session 2 “Open the Door”

1. Ensure you’re saying what the text says.

After someone prays and reads the passage, start by discussing what the text says. Take turns at your table reading your ETS, and then ask the table to ask you questions or suggest improvements. If you need to revise your ETS, write it below here.

2. Finish the sermon frame together.

Now you want to advance your sermon frame from something *you* can easily understand into something that your *audience* will easily understand. As a table, here are some things you want to be considering: Does the frame make sense? Could it be misunderstood by someone? Could it be clearer? Do the main points clearly connect to the “big idea”? Do the main points clearly come from the text? Taking turns at your table, walk your team through the following steps:

1. Read your sermon’s “big idea” to your team
2. Read your main points, show what verses you got them from, and explain them
3. Ask your team to ask questions or give feedback according to the questions above
4. Allow the team to share constructive criticism
5. Make notes on the feedback below here; if necessary, revise your sermon frame

3. Add to your frames

With the remaining time, begin discussing with the whole group any additional materials that could later be added to your final sermon. If anyone has a particular question about the passage or their sermon frame, start with that discussion. If not, discuss the questions below.

What kind of person or specific circumstances does this truth especially apply to? What part of your daily life needs this truth? What are some ways that we could obey it?

What are some objections that our society might have against this teaching? Since we preach to the minds of people, are there any intellectual doubts that we should address?

Are there sources of confusion in this passage that we should be careful to explain? Perhaps a complex concept, a rare word, a popular but erroneous interpretation, another Bible verse that seems to conflict with this one?

Are there any stories or real-life examples that could help illustrate this truth? What are ways that we could both help people understand and feel this truth better?

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Session 3 “Sweat the intro”

1. Remember our goals and tools.

Our goals:

To show *patience*. You have spent hours thinking about your passage. Your congregation hasn't. Your intro works to meet them where they are and guide them into the significance of this passage for their life.

To show *compassion*. Satan is tempting your congregation to ignore God's Word as irrelevant and boring with hundreds of attention-grabbing distractions. Your intro can help them fight that temptation by calling for their attention.

Our tools: Tension (FCF), Humor, Controversy, Story, Confrontation

2. Brainstorm with one other table member.

For 10 minutes, work with another member of your table and try to identify two or three possible intros from the tools above. Start by reading your passage, your FCF, your big idea, and your main points to one another. Take notes at the bottom of the page.

Here are some questions to discuss:

Does my FCF bring any biblical, historical, fictional, or personal stories to mind?

What other tensions/problems come to mind when I read my sermon frame?

Does the tone of my passage prohibit a specific kind of intro?

What controversies (within Christianity or with the world) arise out of this text?

What stories come to mind when I read my sermon frame?

Does any part of my sermon frame confront you?

3. Write an intro to your sermon

In the remaining time, write an introduction to your sermon. To keep it tight, aim for 10% of your sermon's total time. For a 30-minute sermon, this would be 3 minutes (~300 – 350 words). For a 40-minute sermon, this would be 4 minutes (~400 – 480 words). To build on your previous work, include a transition into your big idea and the sermon passage with your intro.

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Session 4 “Land the Plane”

1. Remember the components of a conclusion.

A conclusion *reviews the main points of the sermon.* This may be direct: stating them as points, or indirect: weaving them through a story. The review seeks to quickly and clearly gather all the material of the sermon to add it to the weight of a final exhortation.

A conclusion *elevates to a climax.* Both *what* you say and *how* you say it should communicate that this is the most significant point of your message. As such, Christ should be part of it.

A conclusion *gives a final exhortation.* Whether it is transformed beliefs or behaviors, a sermon should end clearly with what God’s Word calls God’s people to be and do.

A conclusion *has a clear termination.* Our deliberate preparation can make sure the sermon finishes in a clear and compelling way. Trailing off or multiple endings can confuse and exasperate your congregation.

2. Brainstorm with one other table member.

For 10 minutes, work with another member of your table to determine a good conclusion to your sermon. Read your big idea and main points to one another again. Take notes at the bottom of the page.

Here are some questions to discuss:

How can I connect Christ to this conclusion?

What content could I use for the conclusion (e.g. a story, a quote, an insight)?

How could I fit a review of the main points into that content?

What tone should my conclusion have (e.g. encouraging, warning, urgent)?

What should my final exhortation be?

3. Write a conclusion to your sermon

In the remaining time, write a conclusion to your sermon. One professor recommends a conclusion less than 2 ½ minutes (~250 – 300 words).

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Session 5 “Fill in the Frame”

1. Use the template below to fill each main point of your frame.

Explain your point (1/3 of your time)

- State your main point, and then repeat it
- Locate your point in the biblical text
 - Show them which verses you got it from and consider reading them again
 - Highlight the observations that support your point
- Identify unclear issues
 - Does your passage have any words, grammar, theology, history, culture, geography, or potential conflicts with other passages that you need to address?
 - Does your audience have any confusion, doubts, or skepticism about this topic that you should address?
- Use your tools to make the point clear
 - Repetition – just say it again
 - Restatement – say the same idea with different words
 - Quotes from commentaries or study Bibles
 - Logical explanation/argument

Illustrate your point (1/3 of your time)

- Determine illustration needs
 - Does your congregation need to grasp more clarity and practicality?
 - Does your congregation need to grasp more significance and emotion?
 - Do you need to illustrate any other part of this point besides the main point?
- Use your tools
 - Facts from outside the text (statistics, expert analysis)
 - Quotes from outside the text (poems, hymns)
 - Imagery (metaphors, parables, fictional stories)
 - True illustrations (personal, historical, biblical)

Apply your point (1/3 of your time)

- Clearly unpack *what* they need to do
 - Are we putting off a sinful behavior? Putting on a righteous behavior? Changing a belief? Strengthening a belief? Changing our feelings?
- Clearly unpack *why* they need to do it
 - How does the truth of this passage *motivate* them to obey Christ?
- Clearly unpack *how* they can do it
 - What process should they begin that will lead to increasing obedience? What handles can you give them to climb? What do the baby steps look like?

2. Note any parts of the frame that you feel ill-prepared to fill.

As you work through this process, you will encounter roadblocks that your previous steps did not prepare you for. Write your difficulties down here. This will help you improve the earlier steps of the process for future sermons. You will be more focused in your earlier steps when you know what you will need for this final step.