

The Sermon Handout Uses, Abuses, Ideas, and Samples

By Craig Webb

Good Uses of the Sermon Handout

I attended a conference almost thirteen years ago where I learned the value and the method of a sermon handout. A sermon handout (you might call it something different) is a sheet of paper you handout to the congregation which helps them follow along with your sermon. It could include the title of your sermon, the main points of your sermon with fill in the blanks, and printed verses of scriptures and scripture references.

Here's what I like about using these handouts...

1. It encourages people to **participate and engage the sermon** by writing something down. This is an added level of learning.
2. It **eases the tension** of persons who were unfamiliar with the Bible and are afraid of the clumsiness of finding a particular Bible reference.
3. It allows me to share **different translations and paraphrases** of familiar passages.
4. It provides a **take home reminder** of the content of the sermon. Members and attenders can share these with family or co-workers. At one church I served, we provided notebooks for members to keep sermon notes.

While the sermon handout takes time, forethought, and effort, I believe it is a worthwhile investment and continues to be fruitful and helpful. However, there are pitfalls.

Possible **Abuses** of the Sermon Handout

In years of providing sermon handouts, these three issues troubled me.

1. Some persons who might have developed the skill of taking more **detailed notes only filled in the blanks** (often there is little room for other notes).
2. Many people **stopped bringing their Bibles** to church.
3. **I got in a rut** with how I did these outlines. My rut was three statements, which included fill-in-the-blanks, each followed by one or more printed scriptures.

Ideas for **better** handouts with **samples**

This past year I have been experimenting with some new ways of using this valuable teaching tool. I would like to share some of the methods and principles along with some sample handouts that I hope will be helpful.

1. Provide an **answer key** at the bottom of the page.

You'll be surprised at how many listeners are uptight about missing one of your "fill-in-the-blanks." A simple answer key at the bottom of the page may relieve their anxiety and allow them to listen more closely.

The example on the next page (Jesus on Judgment) is a traditional "fill-in-the-blank" outline with scriptures. Notice the very simple answer key at the bottom of the page (look closely, you might miss it).

Jesus on Judgment: The Foundation of Seeing Clearly, Matthew 7:1-6

4 reasons not to judge...

Do not judge, so that you won't be judged. For with the judgment you use, you will be judged, and with the measure you use, it will be measured to you. Matt. 7:1-2

1. You will be _____ the same way

Why do you look at the speck in your brother's eye but don't notice the log in your own eye? Or how can you say to your brother, "Let me take the speck out of your eye," and look, there's a log in your eye? Matt. 7:3-4

2. The sin of _____ is a "beam sin"

My "beam sins" _____

Hypocrite! First take the log out of your eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your brother's eye. Matt. 7:5

3. My pride clouds my _____

Don't give what is holy to dogs or toss your pearls before pigs, or they will trample them with their feet, turn, and tear you to pieces. Matt. 7:6

4. Big difference between judging and _____

Answer key: 1. measured 2. pride 3. vision 4. discernment

2. Present a **questionnaire, checklist, or invitation.**

This will help your listeners interact with your sermon and engage in self-evaluation. I preached a sermon called "Five Things to Do While You Wait." On the back of the handout, I listed things that people might be waiting for. I enlisted the help of co-workers as I compiled this list.

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Waiting for your pain to stop | <input type="checkbox"/> Waiting to find out about a strike |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Waiting for your depression to go away | <input type="checkbox"/> Waiting on a better marriage |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Waiting for your parents to get better | <input type="checkbox"/> Waiting to find a friend |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Waiting for results from a medical test | <input type="checkbox"/> Waiting to understand a situation |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Waiting for an answer to prayer | <input type="checkbox"/> Waiting to get pregnant |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Waiting for a business deal to close | <input type="checkbox"/> Waiting for your child to be born |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Waiting for a house to sell | <input type="checkbox"/> Waiting for a soldier to return |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Waiting for a better living situation | <input type="checkbox"/> Waiting to get out of debt |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Waiting for a check in the mail | <input type="checkbox"/> Waiting for retirement |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Waiting for an education degree | <input type="checkbox"/> Waiting for a better job |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Waiting to get a certification | <input type="checkbox"/> Waiting for a promotion |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Waiting for vacation | <input type="checkbox"/> Waiting for your spouse to quit drinking |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Waiting for the weekend | <input type="checkbox"/> Waiting to find the right man or woman |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Waiting for the workday to end | <input type="checkbox"/> Waiting for your children to grow up |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Waiting for a day off | <input type="checkbox"/> Waiting to have financial security |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Waiting to travel somewhere | <input type="checkbox"/> Waiting on reliable transportation |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Waiting to get back home | <input type="checkbox"/> Waiting on a dream |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Waiting for school break | <input type="checkbox"/> Waiting for your new business to get started |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Waiting to learn a new skill | <input type="checkbox"/> Waiting on your children to come home |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Waiting for better income | <input type="checkbox"/> Waiting to see how your children will turn out |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Waiting to find out about layoffs | |

In another sermon called "Jesus on Influence" (Salt and Light) I **posed the question** on the study outline, "Where do you have the biggest influence?" I then **listed several options**, many of

which they may not think about. On the bottom of the outline, I called for a **specific response** to the message of the sermon under, "My commitment today." I used it during the invitation. Here is a sample of that handout:

Jesus on Influence:

The Foundation of Doing Good

"You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt should lose its taste, how can it be made salty? It's no longer good for anything but to be thrown out and trampled on by men."

Matthew 5:13

What did Jesus mean when he called me salt?

What does "of the earth" mean?

Where do you have the biggest influence?

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> My neighborhood | <input type="checkbox"/> Work / Business |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Online (MySpace, Blog, email, Facebook, YouTube, etc.) | <input type="checkbox"/> School |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Text Messaging | <input type="checkbox"/> Home / Family |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Sports Team | <input type="checkbox"/> Church |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Club or social network | <input type="checkbox"/> Politics |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> Entertainment |

How can I lose my saltiness?

My commitment today:

- I'm salty for God and want to be even saltier
- I've lost my saltiness and want God's help today
- I don't have a relationship with God Jesus but I want to have that kind of relationship

3. Use the back of your outline to provide **practical guides, lists, or practical application suggestions** from your sermon.

I used this principle on the back of my "Jesus on Influence" sermon handout. Notice how I gave credit for my source.

Five Qualities of a Godly Influencer

From pages 23-29 of *Influencing Like Jesus: 15 Biblical Principles of Persuasion* by Michael Zigarelli, B&H Publishing, 2008

1. Be Authentic

This is how we are sure that we have come to know Him: by keeping His commands. The one who says, "I have come to know Him," without keeping His commands, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. But whoever keeps His word, truly in him the love of God is perfected. This is how we know we are in Him: the one who says he remains in Him should walk just as He walked. 1 John 2:3-6 (HCSB)

2. Be Compassionate

Moved with compassion, Jesus touched their eyes. Immediately they could see, and they followed Him. Matt 20:34 (HCSB)

3. Be Honest

But let your word 'yes' be 'yes,' and your 'no' be 'no.' Anything more than this is from the evil one. Matt 5:37 (HCSB)

4. Be Excellent

Whatever you do, do everything for God's glory. 1 Cor 10:31b (HCSB)

5. Be Gentle

All of you, take up My yoke and learn from Me, because I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for yourselves. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light." Matt 11:29-30 (HCSB)

4. Rather than fill-in-the-blanks, list the topic and **leave some room for notes.**

In the "Jesus on Influence" sample on page 5 above I used the following questions and left a little room.

What did Jesus mean when he called me salt?

What does "of the earth" mean?

How can I lose my saltiness?

I believe this method may help your congregation think more deeply about the scripture you are dealing with. It also leaves room for the Holy Spirit to speak into the lives of individuals in areas unrelated to your sermon topic. I want God to have great freedom during the sermon not only to speak through me but even in spite of me. I want to be careful not to communicate that the only message God has today is included on this handout or included in my sermon.

On the next few pages I'll add a **few more samples** that may spark some creativity in you as you seek to proclaim, teach, and disciple.

Jesus on Sin: An Upright Foundation

The Jesus Sermon, Part 4, Matthew 5:33-37

you have **heard** that it was **said** ...

you must **not break** your **oath**

I **tell** you...

don't take an **oath** at all...

let your word '**yes**' be '**yes**,' and '**no**' be '**no**.'

anything **more** than this is **from** the **evil** one.

a background of oaths ...

the key issue for Jesus...

"What comes out of a man is what makes him 'unclean.' For from within, out of men's hearts, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, greed, malice, deceit, lewdness, envy, slander, arrogance and folly. All these evils come from inside and make a man 'unclean.'" Mark 7:20-22 NIV

how this shows up in my life...

My response today to God's Word...

- I thank God for the integrity he has developed in my heart and ask Him to make my heart even more like His.
- My heart is not pure; I need God to cleanse me and purify my heart and lead me to a life of integrity.
- Other _____

Something Bigger:



Will Your Story Be a Part of His Story?

What occupies your thoughts?

War Economy Children Relationships
 Retirement Debt Guilt School Addiction
 Personal Safety Job Home Aging Parents

Now this is what the LORD Almighty says: "Give careful thought to your ways. You have planted much, but have harvested little. You eat, but never have enough. You drink, but never have your fill. You put on clothes, but are not warm. You earn wages, only to put them in a purse with holes in it."

This is what the LORD Almighty says: "Give careful thought to your ways. Go up into the mountains and bring down timber and build the house, so that I may take pleasure in it and be honored," says the LORD. Haggai 1:5-8 (NIV)

I want to be part of His Story

Join GBC Pray Lead Join a group
 Support Teach Serve Encourage
 Greet Clean Care Welcome
 Invite Help Give Other _____

Jesus on Prayer: The Foundation of a Relationship with God

Matthew 6:1-18, Part 6 of The Jesus Sermon series

Whenever you pray, you must not be like the hypocrites, because they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the street corners to be seen by people. I assure you: They've got their reward! (vs. 5)

But when you pray, go into your private room, shut your door, and pray to your Father who is in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you. (vs. 6)

When you pray, don't babble like the idolaters, since they imagine they'll be heard for their many words. Don't be like them, because your Father knows the things you need before you ask Him. (vss. 7-8)

you should pray like this: Our Father in heaven, Your name be honored as holy. (vs. 9)

because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying, "Abba, Father!" Galatians 4:6

How to fall in love with your heavenly Father ...

- Read His love letter, the _____
- Spend time with Him in _____
- Spend time with His children in _____