“Seldom does one encounter a book that blends the disciplines of hermeneutics, discourse analysis, biblical exposition, and homiletics. In *Preaching the Farewell Discourse* my friend and colleague Scott Kellum does exactly that, and he does it well. In the future when I prepare to preach from John 13–17, this book will be ready at hand. It is an excellent resource for any pastor committed to rightly dividing the Word of Truth.”

—Daniel L. Akin, president, Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary

“*Preaching the Farewell Discourse* is a faithful bridge between the past world of the New Testament and our present situation. This book is informationally grounded, connecting each sermon to the narrative discourse with expertise. It’s also formationally challenging to the heart of a disciple today. The content is theologically robust, weaving together the biblical themes of John. It sets the preacher up to preach to a particular place and people in their current context. Each of our four live preachers at our campuses has put this book to immediate and fruitful use in our preaching and teaching.”

—Daniel Montgomery, lead pastor, Sojourn Community Church, Louisville, Kentucky

“A beautiful medley of hermeneutical, exegetical, and homiletical insight. For the preacher preparing sermons on the Farewell Discourse (John 13:31–17:26), this volume will prove invaluable.”

—Robert L. Plummer, professor of New Testament Interpretation, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary

“In *Preaching the Farewell Discourse*, Scott Kellum challenges pastors and students to explore the contribution of discourse analysis to the exegetical process. Adopting the well-established methodology of semantic and structural analysis, he breaks down each pericope of Jesus’ final words to his disciples into suggested units for preaching. Kellum provides a thorough interaction with the commentary literature including discussion of major textual variants, yet he is not afraid to make his own views known. Regardless of whether one ultimately adopts Kellum’s approach, readers will greatly benefit from his years of dedicated study and careful exegesis of the Greek text.”

—Steven E. Runge, scholar-in-residence, Logos Bible Software
“It has been rightly said that if a man is going to stand up and say, ‘Thus saith the Lord,’ then he had better know what the Lord saith. As both a New Testament scholar and a faithful preacher, Scott Kellum affirms and models the indispensability of contemporary sermons being derived from and driven by a right understanding of God’s counsel as recorded in the biblical text. *Preaching the Farewell Discourse* is a clinic on how to start with a text of Scripture and allow it to give birth to relevant, prophetic sermons that maintain the integrity of speaking on God’s behalf. This is the heart of authentic expository preaching. Additionally, Kellum’s laboratory of John 13:31–17:26 offers rich insight into both the expositional process and some of our Lord’s most intimate, practical, and profound instructions to his followers. Pastors, teachers, and all who love God’s Word will benefit from this work.”

—Jim Shaddix, professor of Preaching, Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary; pastor of teaching and training, The Church at Brook Hills

“Like Augustine’s *De Doctrina Christiana* written more than 1,500 years ago, Scott Kellum’s *Preaching the Farewell Discourse* brings together in an inextricable unity both the *content* of hermeneutics and the *contour* of homiletics. The reader is escorted into the sermonic laboratory of this New Testament biblical scholar and effective homiletician to learn the *what* and the *how* of expository preaching, being greatly assisted by practical sermon examples provided from the author’s pulpit work. The one who reads this volume will unquestionably be informed by its matter, inspired by its manner, and enriched in not only preaching the Farewell Discourse of Jesus but also the whole counsel of God.”

—Robert Smith Jr., professor of Christian Preaching, Beeson Divinity School
L. Scott Kellum

Preaching the Farewell Discourse

AN EXPOSITORY WALK-THROUGH OF

John 13:31-17:26
For my Mom,
who went to be with the Lord in 2010,
the year of my greatest loss,
and to the dad she temporarily left behind.

We are all still learning to move on without forgetting.
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I would like to take a few moments to thank the special people who helped me produce this work. First, I would like to thank my precious bride, Cathy Kellum, who puts up with me while I write, re-write, and write again. She is a precious gift, and I was blessed when the Lord put her in my life. Hannah, Joshua, Rachel, and Elijah get some props in this hour as well.

I would also like to thank those in my office complex for their help. My secretaries who spent time proofing this document are deserving of double honor. Carol Thompson was first, then Laura Reid finished up. Both caught errors and made suggestions that vastly improved this work. Laura did yeoman’s work in having to proof the whole document. I am especially grateful for her “eagle-eyes.” I assure the reader that any remaining errors are completely my own. My colleague David Beck also reviewed the conclusion for me, and his selfless attention has made be a better professor and writer.

Finally, I would like to thank President Danny Akin, the trustees, administration, and faculty of Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, who provide a God-honoring, stimulating environment of learning and preparation.
### Abbreviations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Full Form</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AB</td>
<td>Anchor Bible</td>
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<td>ABD</td>
<td>Anchor Bible Dictionary</td>
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<tr>
<td>BBR</td>
<td>Bulletin of Biblical Research</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BECNT</td>
<td>Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bib</td>
<td>Biblica</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BSac</td>
<td>Bibliotheca Sacra</td>
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<tr>
<td>BT</td>
<td>The Bible Translator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BWANT</td>
<td>Beiträge zur Wissenschaft vom Alten und Neuen Testament</td>
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<tr>
<td>CH</td>
<td>Church History</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CTR</td>
<td>Criswell Theological Review</td>
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<tr>
<td>Enc</td>
<td>Encounter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ETL</td>
<td><em>Ephemerides théologicae lovanienses</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EGGNT</td>
<td>Exegetical Guide to the Greek New Testament</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FRLANT</td>
<td>Forschungen zur Religion und Literatur des Alten und Neuen Testaments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HCSB</td>
<td>Holman Christian Standard Bible</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ICC</td>
<td>International Critical Commentary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Int</td>
<td>Interpretation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ITQ</td>
<td>Irish Theological Quarterly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JBL</td>
<td>Journal of Biblical Literature</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JSNTSup</td>
<td>Journal for the Study of the New Testament: Supplement Series</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NAC</td>
<td>New American Commentary</td>
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<tr>
<td>Abbreviation</td>
<td>Full Name</td>
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<tr>
<td>NCB</td>
<td>New Century Bible</td>
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<tr>
<td>Neot</td>
<td>Neotestamentica</td>
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<tr>
<td>NICNT</td>
<td>New International Commentary on the New Testament</td>
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<tr>
<td>NIV</td>
<td>New International Version</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NovTSup</td>
<td>Supplements to Novum Testamentum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NTS</td>
<td>New Testament Studies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NTSup</td>
<td>New Testament Studies Supplement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ÖTKNT</td>
<td>Ökumenischer Taschenbucher-Kommentar zum Neuen Testament</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PNTC</td>
<td>Pillar New Testament Commentaries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SBJT</td>
<td>Southern Baptist Journal of Theology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SBLDS</td>
<td>Society of Biblical Literature Dissertation Series</td>
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<tr>
<td>SBLMS</td>
<td>Society of Biblical Literature Monograph Series</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SIL</td>
<td>Summer Institute of Linguistics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SNTSM</td>
<td>Society for New Testament Studies Monograph Series</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SP</td>
<td>Sacra pagina</td>
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<td>TBT</td>
<td>The Bible Today</td>
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<tr>
<td>TNTC</td>
<td>Tyndale New Testament Commentary</td>
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<tr>
<td>TynBul</td>
<td>Tyndale Bulletin</td>
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<tr>
<td>WBC</td>
<td>Word Biblical Commentary</td>
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**Introduction**

The book that you hold is the culmination of many years of thinking, practice, and writing on the topic of the practical application of the study of the New Testament. In 1985 I began a journey as a twenty-one year-old graphic design student who left that career path to undertake God’s calling in ministry. I started taking Greek in the University of Mississippi’s classics department to prepare for seminary as I finished up college. I took all the Greek and Hebrew I could in my seminary career because I was convinced that it was necessary to preach the Word of God.

As I transitioned from student to pastor, the question of how to use the Hebrew and Greek without boring my people to tears or constantly appealing to “secret knowledge” became a priority for me. At first, I was attempting to be a running commentary—offering lots of content without much application. I have preached through books of the Bible serially—that is, each sermon was but on the text in sequence—but not really covering the book as a whole. I have done word studies, theological studies, and the occasional topical study, all in the pursuit of preaching the Word of God. It was always my intent that while I may not have a lot of amusing anecdotes and great illustrations, my people would get the content of the Bible. I believed, and still do, that cute without content serves no one. But how do you preach an expository sermon? I didn’t really have a rigorous way to preach one when I was pastoring churches.

My next transition was to doctoral studies to pursue a calling in teaching. I continued to preach and teach in churches, and I was very interested in taking what I do as a professor of New Testament and Greek and applying it in the pulpit. Now my answer to the question, “What is an expository sermon?” has grown over the years. For a sermon to be an exposition of the text, everything about the text must be reflected in the sermon. The main idea and purpose of the text should be the main idea and purpose of the sermon. Furthermore, the
major movements of the text ought to be the major movements of the sermon. In other words, the structure of the text should also be the structure of the sermon. Evangelicals are particularly adept at three-point sermons, but not every text has three points. Evangelicals are particularly adept at “how-to” sermons, but very few texts are actually procedural texts. We can do better if we can be shown, at least, a place to begin and a procedure to follow, adapt, and perfect. This book intends to be a place to begin.

I intend to take you through the hermeneutical process to the shaping of an outline of an expository sermon. I will not spend a great deal of time on the domain of the homiletician in the body of the book, for that is outside of my expertise. However, I do intend to show a way to take a certain genre of Scripture and craft an outline that matches the outline of the text. Our job in preaching is to discover the outline, not come up with one. In a way, this book is a “walk-through” for pastors and teachers of the Word.

I have chosen to narrow our focus to the Farewell Discourse of John’s Gospel for space reasons. This section was chosen because I have been working in it for years. My doctoral dissertation was an investigation of author attribution in the Fourth Gospel. Many of the structural arguments in chapters 3–6 are a revision of parts of my dissertation. Many of the spiritual insights the Lord gave me in the deep study of that passage were not appropriate for that project. I am thrilled to find a place for them here.

In the pages that follow, I will show you how I employ discourse analysis to analyze a text and to shape a sermon outline. Chapter 1 is a description of my expository theory and some foundational tools to begin the journey from text to exposition. I will lay out a process to go from text to sermon outline. These steps do not have to all be done in the sequence I outline, but they should be done by any serious exegete who is not faced with crushing time constraints.

Chapter 2 is a description of how I employ discourse analysis to a hortatory document (like the Farewell Discourse). I have adapted the “semantic and structural analysis” (SSA) of the Summer Institute of Linguistics (the academic branch of Wycliffe Bible Translators) to analyze this genre of text. It is detailed and the analyses can be daunting to view, but when we look at it one step at a time it is really very simple. I have found it extremely helpful in discovering the meaning and structure of a text. The presentations in the body of the book are simplified to define the major movements of the text and to make them easier to grasp. I always suggest looking at the left side of the SSA to see the major movements.

Chapters 3–7 are the actual implementation of the theory on the Farewell Discourse of John’s Gospel. I express the overall process in three sections: Analyzing the Text (where we look at the structure of the text), Interpreting the
Text (where we do the spade-work of hermeneutics), and Preaching the Text (where we produce the sermon sketch). It is my hope that these will be valuable illustrations of the process I am advocating.

Finally, two appendices include (1) my suggestions for preparing your study with reference resources and (2) detailed outlines for a sermon series through the Farewell Discourse that includes application and illustration. Scripture translations throughout are my own unless otherwise indicated (usually HCSB).

At the end of the day, it is my purpose to encourage you to preach and teach biblically. It is my hope that you will digest, appropriate, and adapt the process I describe to preach and teach the Bible clearly. I have become a better man for the study; I pray the process benefits the reader as well.

Soli Deo Gloria
L. Scott Kellum
Wake Forest, North Carolina
There is an unmistakable and disturbing gap between our hermeneutics and our preaching. We see this clearly in Christian publishing. Most commentaries are not bought by the professor in the ivory tower but by the professional in the workplace. I dare say preachers and students training to be preachers buy most of the commentaries published. Yet, most of these commentaries (especially academic commentaries) never seem to have in mind the need for preachers to present the text to an audience—that is, the preaching moment.1 We seem to be writing for each other. Preaching commentaries may be a rich mine for illustrations and outlines but often do not offer the depth for serious students of the Word. The value of these commentaries diminishes in proportion to their slim handling of the Word. An outline that “will preach,” but is imposed on the Word, is still poor handling of the Word of God.

Similarly, most hermeneutics textbooks do not deal with the preaching moment. They discuss general hermeneutics (theory in general) and special hermeneutics (dealing with different genres and covenants), but rarely does one find a treatment of how to express the text’s meaning in a sermon.2 To be fair, preaching the text is not usually one of the objectives of a hermeneutics textbook. In like manner, most homiletic textbooks do not treat the exegesis of the text in any great detail. For example, Haddon Robinson’s Biblical Preaching—standard in the field—is an excellent work that has had profound

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1 An exception to this is the Exegetical Guide to the Greek New Testament (EGGNT) series from B&H Academic. Each volume provides a detailed analysis of the Greek text and also offers homiletical helps for preachers.

2 The recent work by my mentor Andreas J. Köstenberger includes a chapter I wrote at the end of the book to deal with this need. See A. J. Köstenberger and J. Patterson, Invitation to Hermeneutics (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2011). The Zondervan volumes Grasping God’s Word (2005) and Preaching God’s Word (3rd ed., 2012) are also a welcome exception although hindered by a strict reliance on the TNIV.
influence in our pulpits. Furthermore, a great deal of what follows in this book agrees substantially with Dr. Robinson’s work. Yet, the gap between hermeneutics and homiletics is still evident. His book only devotes one chapter to the study of the text and a scant four pages to the nuts-and-bolts of exegesis. Likewise, Stephen Olford’s fine book *Anointed Expository Preaching* does more (about thirty pages), but the gap (while narrower) is still present.

Neither hermeneutic textbooks nor homiletic textbooks are designed to be one-stop shops for the preacher. Each is dependent on the other to complete the task, but it is disturbing that seldom do they work in tandem. The hermeneutics writer and the homiletics writer may not have similar exegetical philosophies, homiletical philosophies, or even core beliefs. This mismatch may be substantial or minimal, but it is inevitable between independent individuals. This bifurcation is also evident in our seminaries and Bible colleges. We have Bible experts and preaching experts who teach their respective courses but seldom collaborate. Such distance has inevitably led to a similar problem in Christian pulpits. This is, of course, nothing new. A generation ago, Walt Kaiser noted this gap.

**The Present Need in Christian Preaching/Teaching**

*(Bridging the Gap between Hermeneutics and Exposition)*

In 1954, Merrill F. Unger made a plea for expository preaching:

The greatest single need of the contemporary church is undoubtedly the strengthening of the local pulpit. This fact is not difficult to realize in the light of distressing present-day conditions in this phase of the Christian ministry and in view of the key place pastoral preaching holds in the carrying out of the divine program. The progress of God’s work depends primarily on the local church, and the local pastor has the most strategic position for weal or woe in this important activity. In no way can the individual pulpit be strengthened for its momentous task than by a diligent return to the Bible injunction: “Preach the Word.” The benefits of such a ministry are incalculable.

Dr. Unger goes on to list several benefits to the church and the preacher of an expository sermon. He was obviously attempting to persuade his audience to be expository in their preaching.

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So, what do I mean by “expository”? It is not topical (i.e., a moral encouragement not necessarily based on specific Scripture) nor theological (i.e., a description of biblical theology based on numerous passages). By “expository” I mean a pastor/teacher (as in Eph 4:11) teaches his audience the meaning intended by the author (as would be understood by his original audience) of a specific text of Scripture and then applies it to the present situation.

The good news is that Dr. Unger, and those like him, seem to have convinced conservative evangelicals of the primary place of such preaching in the pulpits. Unfortunately, few do it well. Forty-five years after Unger’s work, Thomas Schreiner noted, “It seems that almost everyone trumpets the importance of expositional preaching, and yet genuine and powerful expository preaching seems to be in short supply.”

I concur with both Unger and Schreiner in this regard. Expository preaching is best for the steady diet of the believer, and those who do it with skill and power are few and far between. So what is the cause of this gap between what we believe and what we produce? Several reasons come to mind beyond the impasse in publishing previously mentioned.

First, we confuse sermons based on the Bible for expository preaching. This is a matter of definition. Preaching verse-by-verse does not make a sermon expository. Honestly, a passage can be dismembered verse-by-verse just as well as any other method. This happens in both interpretation and application. Regarding the former, we all have seen an interpreter miss the point of a passage (verse-by-verse). I have personally developed quite a list of passages that are routinely preached out of context. Hebrews 4:12 immediately comes to mind. How many times have we heard a preacher defending the power of the Word of God by citing Hebrews 4:12 by memory? Quite often, I would imagine. However, if we read it in context, it is not an abstract defense of the power of the Word but a concrete basis for a warning. We are laid bare and exposed before the Word of God. When we reduce it to a convenient proof-text, we domesticate the text and make it serve our purposes. This is quite an indictment for a people who claim to have a high view of Scripture!

We also can dismember the application of a passage. To be fair, it usually happens as a result of poor exegesis. I have heard sermons that were spot-on regarding interpretation but then moved into questionable applications. Can we preach Matthew 28:18–20 and then apply it only to meeting the goal of a global missions offering? We can, and have, but it is certainly not the only (or even the best) application of the passage.

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We can even preach through a whole book without preaching a single expository sermon. The problem here is that we preach serially through a book without any regard to the bigger picture. No single passage in the Bible is an isolated entity. Each passage works toward the book’s larger purpose literary structure (beyond sermon-appropriate sections). How many sermons have been preached on Nicodemus in John 3 apart from those who “believe but don’t really believe in John 2:23–25?” I dare say most of them. However, Nicodemus is the prototypical example of one who believes but does not have a saving faith. “Rabbi,” Nicodemus says, “we know that You have come from God . . .” (John 3:2, emphasis mine). Even worse, we almost never contrast Nicodemus with the woman at the well in John 4. The whole section actually highlights what saving faith truly is, but because we never look at how the larger structures work together, we lose a grand opportunity. Yes, we can preach the whole book without preaching a book, but a series of sections. When we do this we, at the very least, teach our people to read the Bible in a way certainly not intended.

Some err in another direction. They preach a running commentary on the text. They parse every verb, comment on textual variants, do word studies from the *TDNT*, and even cite academic commentaries. Some of these preach verse-by-verse until time runs out and then close the service with “We’ll pick up verse 12 next week.” The problem is that this is not a sermon but a commentary. In other words, it may be expository, but it certainly ignores the preaching mandate to apply the text and call for a response. Definition, expectation, and application go hand in hand to produce a gap.

The second way we display a gap between what we believe and what we produce involves a lack of skill in biblical interpretation. Here the problem is not about our assumptions but our abilities. The problem is multifaceted. Some preachers really do not have a good grasp of how to interpret a book of the Bible. This person simply has no clue about the Bible as a work of ancient literature. This fellow is rarely a seminary graduate. He does exist, however. Far more common is the man who relies completely on English resources to interpret his text. He may have taken Hebrew and Greek, but for whatever reason (whether through neglect or never really learning the languages) he never looks at the original languages while composing his sermon. As will be seen in the pages that follow, I am no proponent of spouting off this or that Greek word and giving the

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8 The HCSB renders πιστεύω at 2:23 as “trusted.” This is undoubtedly to have a consistent rendering of the Greek word used at both 2:23 and 24. They “trusted in His name,” but Jesus did not entrust himself to them. John is clearly making a play on words here that is difficult to express in English.

“technical meaning” (more often such language means the interpreter is squeezing a word for more than it can bear). Nor am I suggesting that we all sight-read our Greek New Testaments. What I am suggesting is that we should be proficient enough in Hebrew and Greek to use intelligently the basic tools to craft our sermons. When we were building our house, I was surprised that the plumber spoke to his hispanic employees in Spanish. He took time to learn Spanish because he considered it vital for his work. His example should inspire us. Basic skill at Greek and Hebrew is vital to the preacher’s task of exegesis. Let’s take the time to use it well in the work. Great expositors are good grammarians.

I suggest, finally, a third reason for the gap between our intentions and our product is the constant demand on our time. The Lord’s Day pursues the preacher like a bloodhound. It may only come once a week, but it is relentless in its pursuit. Sunday is always coming, but the schedule is not always consistent. Chaos can happen at any moment. Deaths, sicknesses, and family emergencies rarely are scheduled in advance. A time-consuming outreach project can chew up time scheduled for sermon preparation. We will not even mention conflict, crisis, and complex administrative needs. On top of all this is the truth that good exegesis alone takes time; to shape the exegesis into an expository message, even more. There are those who have forty hours a week to work on their sermons, but few of us are pastors of mega churches who have multiple staff members to help carry the load. In fact, most pastors are the only staff at their churches. They do all the funerals, visitations, education, and some poor souls must even lead the congregation in worship. In this environment it is very tempting to have a few “sermons-you-can-preach” books on the shelf (or links to favorite websites!). When overwhelming need meets crushing constraints, the temptation to preach someone else’s study can be powerful.

That is not to say that there is something wrong with studying other people’s sermons. There is everything right with listening to sermons or reading the great preachers of the past to get suggestions or insights for your own sermon. There is everything wrong with preaching their sermons as your own. I well remember a youth group trip to a neighboring state when I was a youth minister in Vidalia, Louisiana. Being good Baptists we picked one of the mega churches to attend that Sunday morning. As we attended Sunday school, the regular teacher introduced a guest speaker. This guest preacher stood up and preached a sermon that I recognized. It was Robert G. Lee’s “Payday Someday” (one of the most influential sermons of the twentieth century). I remember being shocked as much by the speaker’s hubris as the fawning praise of the adult hearers.

10 I am well aware that there are quite a number of subscription services to deliver sermons to pastors with the intent that they are preached wholesale. We will not stoop to listing them here.
So what's wrong with preaching another person's work? Well, for starters it robs the hearers of a preacher who has drunk deeply from the wells of Scripture and has grown spiritually from the exercise. The fellow borrowing the sermon has not wrestled with discovering the outline or the structure of the text. He has not been convicted by the Word of God about his own failures. Consequently, passion for the topic of the Scripture is nearly impossible to express. It is in every sense of the word, stale.

Another problem is that the Scripture is not applied to his local situation. I remember listening to a fine example of an expository sermon by W. A. Criswell from the 1950s. I was somewhat amused that the application dealt with tithing, social drinking, and dancing. I remember thinking, “I wish that social drinking was the biggest problem we had.” There is only one meaning to the Scripture but many specific applications. As time, location, and culture change, the application of a text is going to change even though its meaning will not. Preaching another’s sermon often involves taking an irrelevant application to your hearers.

Yet another problem is the dishonesty of the matter. Are we really comfortable standing before our people and presenting another person’s sermon as our own construction? Are we going to steal their glory for our own? Does it not foster laziness and dependence on another’s study (or lack thereof)? Let us remember that the false prophet preaches other men’s messages (Jer 23:30). Our commitment should be to do the best we can in the time we have.

I say these things not to shame my brothers but to encourage steadfastness. Exegesis is a skill like any other. The more proficient we are with Greek and Hebrew, the more we are familiar with good reference works, the more we prepare sermons, and the more we walk with God, the less trial and error we go through. Practice will speed things up. Stick with it. An oak tree started as an acorn.

**The Aim and Theory of This Book**

The book that you hold is intended to start filling the gap between hermeneutics and exposition. In the pages that follow I will take a beloved passage of Scripture (the Johannine Farewell Discourse) and lead us from interpretation to exposition. In terms of the gamer, it is a “walk-through.” I will examine each section of John 13:31–17:26 verse-by-verse and suggest the meaning of the text. Then, I will transition from interpretation to exposition. I will suggest a sermon outline based on the outline of the text. Sometimes I will offer several possible outlines. It is not my intent to produce a series of sermons for you to
preach, but to show you how to exegete faithfully a passage and to convert that study to an expository sermon.

At this point, I think a disclaimer is warranted. I do not consider myself a preaching guru—far from it! My expertise is in biblical studies: specifically the New Testament, Greek, and hermeneutics, among a variety of other academic interests. This is why I will not deal particularly much with the development of the sermon beyond the outline. I will leave that to the homiletic experts.

That is not to say that I am a stranger to preaching. I have been steadily preaching as both pastor and pulpit-mercenary for over twenty-five years. This involvement has led to the desire to put my experiences to paper. I do not particularly consider my sermons to be all that great (my former parishioners will attest to that!). My enunciation may not be the best (foiled by a southern accent), my projection could be better, and my delivery could be vastly improved (I tend to read my notes more than I should), among a host of other things that are in the preacher’s domain. These things are important; the preacher should not get in the way of his message. Stumbling, mumbling, and boring your people certainly do that.

However important these things are, it is a mistake to allow them to trump biblical content. Frankly, I have experienced more than one sermon (some I preached!) that was “cute without content.” It was plainly evident that the speaker spent more time attempting to force some illustration, make a dramatic object lesson (like a dirty shirt under a dress coat), or play an amusing YouTube video to make a point than he spent wrestling with the content of the text. Avant-garde, cutting edge, or cute is only helpful if it supports legitimate content that we communicate.

This is a lesson that Hollywood has learned. Multimillion-dollar blockbusters full of CGI special effects, explosions, and world-class monster effects do not guarantee a good movie. If the story is poorly executed, the movie will most-likely flop. The same is true for the sermon. The bells and whistles do not make the sermon. When I am sitting in the pew, I am looking for a few things from my preacher. I am looking for quality exegesis of the text, passion for Christ and his people, and a man who has wrestled with the implications of the text in his own life. Bells and whistles are only useful when I find these.

We should dwell at the point of faithful biblical content. The Word of God will change lives. Will a person’s life be changed if we make them laugh? I long to see them tremble. Will a person’s life be changed if we stave off boredom for thirty minutes? I long to see them hunger for the Word of God. Will a person’s life be changed if he thinks we are great preachers? I would rather see a transformed life than hear “I enjoyed the sermon, Preacher.” Let us cast off
the desire to entertain as if it were a jacket infested with lice. We have only one thing to offer that is life changing: the Word of God. Our time, our effort, our highest prioritized goal should be a faithful exposition of the Word of God. Then we capture the attention to point to the meaning of the Word. To this end, this book is humbly offered.

I am of the conviction that the majority of evangelical preachers aspire to be expository in the main of their preaching. Occasionally, a visionary series (describing the mission or vision of the church) or a series through this or that topic of biblical theology would lend itself to other forms of preaching. In the main, however, men who aspire to be expository preachers fill our pulpits. This is a great encouragement to me, and I hope the work that follows will be a great help.

From Text to Sermon

In an expository sermon everything about the text should drive the framework of the sermon (in both structure and concept). By this I mean that the outline of the text should be the outline of the sermon. The purpose of the text should be the purpose of the sermon. If our text is deductive, our sermon should be deductive (i.e., arguing from general to specific). If our text is inductive, our sermon should be inductive (arguing from specific to general), and so forth.

So where do we begin? For most of us it is a familiar place, interpreting the text correctly. The study of the New Testament is the study of documents written thousands of years ago to people who have long since died. The distance between a modern reader and the ancient text is sometimes quite a space, whether it be cultural, chronological, or even covenantal. The job of the interpreter of Scripture is to interpret the message correctly so that even though we may not enter the mind of the writer we may attempt to understand the text as well as any other contemporary reader would. We must infer the meaning from the linguistic clues the writer used. Admittedly, this requires us to understand the cultures, languages, and literary canons of antiquity. The preacher of God’s Word must first have a clear understanding of the hermeneutical task that

11 This entertainment mentality has infected almost every area of our worship. A person to lead in worship who really understands a theology of worship is hard to find because (1) we do not train our young people in this (and model it) and (2) we confuse musical talent for skill in leading worship. Frankly, most of the worship wars that have erupted in our churches are about entertainment and personal preference rather than about authentic worship.

12 This begins with gathering good information. To this end, I have compiled some suggestions in an appendix: Preparing Your Study.
underlies his message. Below, I will briefly sketch the task of interpretation rather broadly for the sake of space.

**What Are We Looking For?**

The interpreter’s first task is to understand for what he/she is searching. In other words, where is the location of meaning—the author, the text, or the reader? Hans-Georg Gadamer introduced something of a revolution in hermeneutics with his book *Truth and Method*. The basic contours of his theory are as follows: Truth cannot reside in the reader’s attempt to get back to the author’s meaning because being in the past cannot be being in the present. The reader and the text are both autonomous; meaning comes in the fusion of the horizons of the text and the reader. As the reader interacts with the ancient text, he runs along the hermeneutical circle to create meaning in his own horizon. Since there are multiple “fusions” (i.e., readers’ contexts), multiple valid meanings will arise. Since Gadamer a host of hermeneutical theories have grown up that decry propositional truth in favor of interpreting communities that deconstruct the text through the interplay of words. As a result, the evangelist encounters people who will appeal to “my truth” and “your truth.” When giving our testimony we hear people respond, “I’m glad that worked for you.” In other words, we live in a postmodern society that is trying to embrace individualized truth, usually dressed up in shortsighted pragmatics.

The apologist has a duty to answer the challenges brought by postmodern approaches to life, but what about the preacher of God’s Word? Without presenting a full-fledged retort to the new hermeneutic, let me give two fundamental reasons to reject it. In doing so, we will clarify and sharpen our understanding of the task of the preacher.

My first problem with locating meaning in the reader is found in the realm of universal human experience. Writing is an act of communication. When people communicate with one another, they use language (a series of linguistic conventions) to communicate ideas, instructions, praise, rebuke, and much more. Simply put, communication does not happen when the receiver misses the intent of the sender. My oldest daughter is mildly autistic. One of the major struggles she has involves communicating her ideas to us. The difficulty is that she employs language in ways that those hearing her do not understand.

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13 Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method* (New York: Seabury, 1975). Gadamer was highly influenced by his professor at Marburg, Martin Heidegger, and his existentialist philosophy that embraced the validity of nonhistorical meaning in the individual.

14 I once had an encounter with a Buddhist “evangelist” that illustrates the pragmatic nature of many. He adamantly declared that his philosophy of life “really worked!” My response was a bit of propositional truth: it only “works” if it leads to eternal life.

15 This begs the question why a deconstructionist would ever write anything.
So, for example, when asked a question that requires a yes or no answer, she, more often than not, answers, “I know.” It has taken us years to figure out that she is not claiming knowledge but she means, “no.” We have come to the conclusion that she does not navigate homonyms very well. Because of these kinds of “wiring” difficulties, communication with Hannah can be very difficult. Sometimes we have no idea what she is saying. Because she uses words in an autonomous way, communication is difficult, if not impossible. I do not deny that the gap between the writer and the reader creates two horizons. The question is what do you do with the phenomenon? It does not seem reasonable to make the horizon of the reader the magistrate over meaning because it undermines communication.

My second problem builds on the former but adds the dimension of who and what is the object of our investigation. God (the Who) inspired the Word of God (the What) to communicate to human beings (revelation). The idea of an autonomous text and the lack of propositional truth that accompanies many versions of it fly in the face of the doctrine of revelation (which is why we preach and teach the Bible in the first place). The divine, omnipresent, omniscient, transcendent God stands outside of human interpreting communities. He is the ultimate truth, the ultimate proposition, if you will. It stands to reason, then, that his Word that reveals his person, works, and desire does not have a plurality of meaning. Revelation as communication demands a coherent and concrete expression of the truth. If meaning resides in the fusion of horizons between the reader and the text, conflicting results are inevitable.

That is not to say that there is not a horizon of the reader. The classic defense of authorial intent as the location of meaning will help us to understand the horizon of the reader. In his 1967 book, *Validity in Interpretation*, E. D. Hirsch Jr. describes verbal meaning as “whatever someone has willed to convey by a particular sequence of linguistic signs and which can be conveyed (shared) by means of those linguistic signs.” He was describing the communication event involved in writing. We use words (linguistic signs) to convey what we mean. In this transference of meaning the reader does have a part to play beyond understanding the meaning. It is to apply the meaning to his/her own context. Thus, perhaps Hirsch’s greatest contribution is his distinction between meaning and significance. The meaning of a text cannot change; it is what the author intended. Significance, however, can and does change from individual to individual, from context to context. Significance is the meaning based on the message communicated by the author. Thus, as we exegete a text

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17 Ibid., 8.
we understand there is but one valid interpretation (meaning) but many specific applications (significances). The horizon of the reader is about application, not meaning.

So then the first task of the preacher is receptive, not creative. That is, we do not create meaning; we receive it. We are to understand the intent of the author as can be inferred in the text. Kevin Vanhoozer offers a definition of “text” that might be helpful for us: “A text is a complex communicative act with matter (propositional content), energy (illocutionary force), and purpose (perlocutionary effect).”18 In other words, the author uses words, sentences, paragraphs, etc. (propositional content) to perform something (“illocutionary force,” including asserting, promising, excommunicating, exclaiming in pain, inquiring, or ordering) in order to achieve a purpose (perlocutionary effect).

We have to admit that certain things may not be totally available to us. For example, what exactly was the heresy at Colossae? Who exactly was the writer of Hebrews, or for that matter, the recipients? How exactly did the Gospel writers depend on previous Gospels? Did Q really exist? There are other questions whose answers are informed guesses but nothing more. How can we look for authorial intent in this environment? Our lack of knowledge should not bother us at all. What we do have is what is essential for our life and godliness.

Furthermore, the history of interpretation is filled with those who thought they absolutely knew the mind of the biblical writer. Fortunately, the thesis that we should know the writer better than he knows himself has been exposed for the overreaching that it is.19 Instead, we should seek to read the text as well as any informed first-century reader would understand the text.

How Do We Find What We Are Looking For?

So, how do we go about this understanding? My procedure is a list of the basic tasks to complete. I have put them into a logical, though not rigid, order. Furthermore, as you preach a series some tasks have already been done (like reading the whole book) that do not need to be repeated. I have arranged the process into four major movements: Examine Literary Context, Identify Historical Context, Identify Canonical Context, and Proclamation. The first three involve hermeneutics while the last one concerns homiletics.

We shall begin with the investigation of meaning. There are three basic contexts that the interpreter of Scripture should understand: the literary context, the historical context, and the canonical context. I prefer not to use

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commentaries until I am deep into the literary context of a passage. More often than not I will not look at a commentary until after I have made my provisional translation and understand, at least in general contours, the literary context—though occasionally something perplexing will send me scrambling for help before that. There is no hard and fast rule regarding when to use resources. As a rule of thumb, do your own investigation and then look at the commentaries. Far too often we substitute reading a favorite commentary over the Scriptures themselves. Let’s avoid that error.

Examine Literary Context

The literary context should be the dimension of the text where you spend most of your time. Here we ask and answer all the most important questions regarding the author’s message. This includes establishing the text, the text-type, genre, and how the author uses it to produce the message of the whole book. This is where we apply much of what we teach in seminary. To investigate the literary dimensions of a passage is to seek to understand the author’s goals in communicating. There are five basic tasks to complete in this step. The literary context comprises the first five steps in our process. They are as follows.

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<th>Literary Context</th>
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<td>Basic Tasks to Complete</td>
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<td>1. Cursory reading of the whole text (the whole book). Identify the text-type.</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. Identify the genre of your section (narrative, hortatory, expository, or procedural).</td>
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<td>3. Pragmatic translation (establish the text; parse and identify verbal forms; syntactical analysis; basic provisional translation).</td>
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<td>4. Identify the macrostructure (boundary features, including internal cohesion; internal fit).</td>
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<td>5. Identify the flow of thought (semantic structure analysis of an expository/hortatory text).</td>
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1. *Cursory reading of the whole text.* We begin with a cursory reading of the whole book. This is a major step that we often neglect for a variety of reasons. Regardless of the reason for neglect, we should make it our first goal
to read afresh the entire book. As we read the book, we ought to be looking
to identify first the text-type of the book. This is often called the genre of the
book, but I prefer “text-type” to separate it clearly from a later category.

In the New Testament, there are three basic “text-types”: epistolary, nar-
rative, and apocalyptic. Identifying a book as one of these text-types is easy
and intuitive. Letters fall in the category of epistolary, books relating a histori-
cal sequence of events are narrative, and the book of Revelation is the only
tells us what literary conventions we might expect and, perhaps, helps us to
avoid some serious errors in how we approach the text. Our text is the Gospel
of John. We can easily see that it is a narrative—it is telling a story. We will
expect to see sequences of events that (sometimes subtly) make a theological
point rather than just relating bare events.

2. Identify the genre of your section. Assuming we are interpreting a dis-
tinct passage instead of the whole book, we should now identify the genre of
that section. In a narrative text-type the writer will employ a variety of forms to
make his/her points. These are really embedded genres within a larger frame-
work. Within the larger framework of “narrative” we can see imbedded genres
to compose the larger story. For example, a major figure may make a speech,
engage in conversation, tell a parable, or perform certain acts.

A book’s text-type sets up a series of expectations. For example, if we read
“once upon a time” at the beginning of a text, we expect the text to follow the
conventions of a fairy tale. Unicorns, fairies, leprechauns, and the like would
be normal. They would be abnormal, however, in a book that purported to be
a historical narrative. In other words, a piece of literature will employ a series
of conventions that would be familiar to the reader. This familiarity will also
spawn some “genre-bending” as a writer breaks or bends the conventions to
make a point. The convention is, in these instances, the point of departure for
the writer to bend the genre’s rules (often with quite a bit of significance).

For simplicity’s sake I call these forms within a text-type genres. They fall
into four broad categories: narrative, hortatory, expository, and procedural. A
narrative genre is often called a pericope in Gospel studies. It is a self-contained
story, narrative of an event, or a series of events. A hortatory genre is when a
writer/speaker is giving a series of commands to elicit a response or action
from his/her hearers. For example, the epistle to the Hebrews is often called a
hortatory letter because it is a call for endurance. Likewise, many speeches in
the Gospels are hortatory. An expository genre argues a thesis, which is often
intended to cause the hearer/reader to act. This can cause confusion with the
hortatory genre. The difference between the genres is in the writer/speaker’s
method for causing the reader/hearer to act. Is it a series of commands or
a carefully plotted argument that demands a response? The former is hortatory; the latter is expository. Finally, there are procedural genres. These are step-by-step instructions on how to do something. An example would be the instructions on the tabernacle in the Old Testament. Procedural genres are rare in the Bible and do not occur in the New Testament. As a result, we can focus our attention on the first three when we are identifying genres in the New Testament.20

A careful—often repetitive—reading of the section under consideration is necessary to identify its genre. The Farewell Discourse of Jesus in the Gospel of John is best described as hortatory.21 It is a speech of Jesus reported by the evangelist, in which the Lord does not simply argue a thesis but gives a series of commands to his disciples.

At this point in the process we have read the whole book again to gain familiarity and identify its text-type. We have also carefully read the section that we seek to interpret more closely. We then determine the specific genre of our text, which will lead us in interpreting it. Next we will dive deeper into our text.

3. Pragmatic translation. We begin our close inspection with a pragmatic translation of the text. I am assuming you have basic familiarity with Greek at this point. If you do not, we can still continue, but you must deal with these issues on a secondary level, depending on what others tell you about the text rather than seeing it for yourself. Use a conservative translation that employs a rather literal approach to the text. Translations like the NIV and the NLT have their place, but my experience has been that they are insufficient when closely examining the text. I prefer a more “formal equivalent” translation like the NASB or an “optimal equivalent” translation like the HCSB.

We are not producing a translation for public consumption. We are translating to see the text in its original language. We want to see the text’s conjunctions, tenses, and syntax (i.e., classify participles, genitives, etc.). We want to be able to see the Greek text behind any translation, including our own. Bible software, websites, and classic language references are indispensable at this stage. At first this might take a long time, but the more you translate the quicker it will go.

20 As evidence of the problem we have with preaching today, it is telling that we have preached hundreds of “how-to” sermons though there is not a single procedural genre in the whole NT!

21 Often “Farewell Discourse” is described as a genre in itself. See my article “Farewell Discourse” in Joel B. Green, Jeannine K. Brown, and Nicholas Perrin, eds., Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2013). There I was following the literary convention of referring to the type of scene in which a heroic figure calls his disciples and gives final instructions as a “farewell genre.” In essence, this is a scene within a narrative that is employing a hortatory genre. Here I am speaking in broader terms.
As we translate we should check for any significant textual variant in the UBS apparatus. We should make prayerful and informed decisions regarding what the original text was. A few caveats are in order here. First, the preacher should never discuss a textual variant from the pulpit. You don’t have time for that, some people are not ready for that, and the ultimate decision is all that is important. That being the case, how do you handle a textual issue? I do one of two things. I either offer my own humble-but-accurate translation (without comment), or I use a version for that day that agrees with me. “Today,” I might say, “I will use the NASB because I feel it translated my text more clearly.” There are venues other than Sunday morning to handle textual variants in the manuscript tradition. The wise pastor will find time to inform his people on these matters at these other venues.

Second, weigh the importance of variant. Almost any stretch of text will have some sort of variant in the manuscript tradition. Most of them do not affect the meaning of the text in any significant way. Read through the options; if it is a matter of spelling, inclusion or omission of an article, uses of synonyms, or other matter that does not affect the meaning of the text, do not address it in the study.

After establishing the text, you should begin to translate it. As you do so, parse and identify all verbal forms. This will tell you a great deal of information about the prominence and type of action being portrayed. Sometimes it makes a great deal of difference whether an action is progressive, discrete, or perfective. Bible software will do this for you, but see the cautions above.

You should also watch carefully for any syntax issues that may affect interpretation. The difference between a subjective and objective genitive, for example, may have great significance for the meaning of a text.

It is here where you will also do any pertinent word studies. Word studies have been the preacher’s shiny coin for many years. He will on occasion pull the coin out and dazzle his hearers with secret and esoteric knowledge. Unfortunately a great many of the word studies I have heard from pulpits have been poorly done and often poorly applied. I could pull example after example of abused Greek words, but space will not permit; instead let me give just a few guidelines.

First, avoid thinking in terms of a “technical sense” to certain words. There are only a few words in the Greek New Testament that appear to have a “technical sense,” but even these may not always have this technical sense. Take, for example, πίστις (“belief”) and its cognates. Yes, it is used in “a technical sense” at certain places for saving trust in Christ—but not in every place. In John 2:23–25 (and other places) there are those who believe but don’t really believe. It is also likely that Titus 1:6 refers to “faithful children” (HCSB),
not “children who believe” (NASB). The same is true of other words such as “justification” and “righteousness.”

Second, avoid anachronisms. Many anachronisms are the result of over-valuing etymology. Don’t think that the etymology (the component parts of the word) exposes its meaning. To be blunt, the etymology of the word is next to useless in determining a word’s meaning. Furthermore, classical usage or modern usage of a word is also irrelevant for a study. Why? Because words change over time. So, when studying the New Testament, look for the meaning of the word roughly between 100 BC and AD 100.

Third, avoid dumping the entire semantic range of a word into a single instance in your text. You should instead choose the range of meaning that fits your context. Occasionally a writer will express double entendre, but it is rarer than usually preached.

Fourth, avoid English cognates. The Greek word δύναμις (dunamis “power”) does not mean “dynamite,” ποίημα (poiema “that which is made”) does not mean “poem,” and οὐρανός (ouranos “heaven”) does not mean “uranium.” Exposing such ignorance does not get us one step closer to a correct interpretation.

We could go on, but let’s get to the point of word studies. Every Greek word of the original text is inspired. Occasionally a word employed by the author has a unique emphasis or nuance that is inexpressible in English. For example, in Hebrews 4:13, after describing the power of the Word of God as a sharp, two-edged sword, the writer warns that “all things are naked and exposed to the eyes of Him to whom we must give an account.” The word “exposed” is a translation of the Greek word τραχηλίζω. It literally means to “take hold of by the neck; . . . , as a metaphor drawn from ancient custom, either of making an enemy face his conquerors by a sword fixed under his chin, of fastening a lock grip on an opponent in wrestling, or of bending back the head of a sacrificial victim, ready for the knife.”2² It is pronounced “trachelizō.” Can you hear “trachea” when you say it out loud? Here is powerful imagery unavailable in English. We are naked, and the Word of God has left us defenseless before God. This is indeed a powerful warning.

While it is probably important for the listeners to hear the Greek word in the example above, normally it will not be necessary to mention the actual Greek word in your sermon. More often than not you can simply say something like, “the imagery presented by the original is . . . ” There is a great need to streamline our teaching to the information needed by the congregation. We

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should resist the impulse to show our learning and/or intelligence; doing so is only self-promotion. Instead we feed his flock.

You should end up with a basic provisional translation of the text. It should reflect the choices you made in your establishment of the text, matters of aspect and verbal tense, and your syntactical analysis. It might be a bit wooden or not sound just right, but it should reflect your reading of the Greek text.

4. Identify the macrostructure. You want to accurately segment your text. By this, I mean we should accurately identify the beginning, ending, and major movements within our text. We do not want to “lop off” the head or the tail of our text. We are looking for the higher-level divisions above the paragraph. We lose major components of the text’s meaning when we pick it up too late or break it off too soon. There are many times when the concluding portion of a macrostructure segment sets the meaning for the whole section. Poor work with macrostructure risks missing the message.

Every text is formed by adding blocks of text (constituent levels) that are arranged in a hierarchical structure. The author gives linguistic markers, or “boundary features,” that indicate these changes. In Greek, major boundary features can be conjunctions (δὲ, διὸ, καὶ, οὖν, τὸτε, etc.), markers of time or space, summary statements, introductory statements, rhetorical questions that introduce a new topic, sometimes a vocative, change of participant(s), changes in verb elements (tense, aspect, mood, or person), chiasm, inclusio, tail-head linkage, hook-words, and repeated noun phrases. Some of these boundary features (such as conjunctions) often signal both higher- and lower-level boundaries (i.e., within a larger segment as well as between larger segments). Close attention to context is essential for recognizing boundary features.

In the next chapter I will describe my methodology for finding the macrostructure of a text. For now, we need to understand the importance of the overall structure. The context of a passage affects greatly its meaning, sometimes in terms of theological emphasis. The genealogy in Luke’s Gospel, for example, is in an unusual place. Instead of being at the beginning (as in Matthew), it appears in chapter 3 after Jesus’ baptism. Unlike Matthew’s genealogy, which begins with Abraham and moves forward chronologically, Luke’s genealogy begins with Jesus and goes backward to Adam. After the genealogy, Luke recounts the temptation narrative with the last two temptations reversed from Matthew’s order. What do we make of this? In my opinion, Luke runs the genealogy backward in time to end with Adam, the son of God. We are thinking of the garden and the fall when Jesus, the Son of God, is driven into

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the wilderness for his temptation. The reordering of the temptation then mirrors the description of the fall in Genesis 3:6. As the fruit was “good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was desirable to make one wise” so too were Jesus’ temptations aimed at appetite, possessions, and personal status. Putting the text in this context leads us to see Jesus as the last Adam, who reverses the fall for us.

Context can also affect the application of a passage. Both Matthew and Mark contain parable chapters (13 and 4 respectively). However, the order of parables is different. I think this is the case because the writers had different purposes. In Matthew, the explanation of the parable of the Sower is followed by the parable of the Tares. Reading the two together suggests Matthew intended an application of the former to be found in the latter. Namely, although there are some who only appear to be Christians, it is not our job to root them out, lest we harm someone unintentionally. When we read Mark, we find the parable of the Lamp under a Basket immediately follows instead. In this order, we contemplate the parable of the Soils in terms of our fruitfulness.

Needless to say, understanding how the writer organized the larger structures of the book is very important. We should work hard at clearly understanding the structure of a text.

5. Identify the flow of thought. Once you have divided your text into its basic macrostructure it is time to identify the structure of the text itself. By structure I do not mean the grammatical structures like independent and subordinate clauses, but how the writer employs these items to build a mental representation (communication) to change the mental state of the reader (purpose). This enterprise is often called “discourse analysis” or “textlinguistics.” It involves identifying the flow of thought at the lower structures (clauses, sentences, paragraphs, etc.) so that you clearly understand what the author/speaker is communicating. Although it sounds complicated, cumbersome, and perhaps annoyingly time consuming, it is (after learning the process) one of the most useful tools for communicating the meaning of a biblical passage.

There are quite a number of ways to track the flow of thought and do discourse analysis. None are perfect, and a few are based on what I feel are suspect theoretical foundations. Even those from better theoretical foundations (Rhetorical Structure Theory, Arcing, and Semantic and Structural Analysis, to name just a few) have their issues. However, if we are going to do good discourse analysis, our method will have to address some basic issues.

First, good discourse analysis will address the three aspects of discourse: unity, prominence, and coherence. Unity, formed by “identifiable and isolatable
semantic units,” is the hierarchical structure of the text.\textsuperscript{24} Any stretch of text is composed of a series of interrelated hierarchically arranged grammatical structures. The second aspect of communication is prominence. In the structural hierarchy there must also be a hierarchy of importance, if it is a well-formed discourse. The author usually highlights some constituent as important. This takes place on a variety of levels; the highlighting of the overall structure will be referred to as “peak.” In lower-levels we’ll refer to “emphasis” and “highlighting.” The idea of prominence/emphasis is almost entirely missing in the pulpits today. The third aspect is coherence. “In general, by coherence is meant that the constituents of a unit will be semantically compatible with one another.”\textsuperscript{25} A good method will always seek to identify the unity, prominence, and coherence of any span of text.

Second, the individual constituents are identified in terms dealing with meaning and not only grammatical function or subordination. It is not enough simply to indent subordinate clauses and to line up major clauses. Grammatical diagramming is not much better in this matter. Because humans are clever, we may do things with what we say that are not necessarily the content of our words. This phenomenon is called “semantic skewing.” For example, when we say, “If you touch that wire, you will be shocked,” we are probably not describing a simple cause and effect relationship in a conditional sentence. What we are doing with our words is a command. “Don’t touch that wire.” In the other direction, if we say, “If you save your money, you will be wise,” we are advocating saving. Both are actually imperatives in meaning, so we should identify them as such and not as conditional sentences. A sound approach to discourse analysis will take semantic skewing into account.

Third, discourse analysis interprets the text from the top down (higher structures to lower structures). When writers set out to communicate to their readers, they will have a topic in mind, an assignment to write on, a problem to address, etc. The writer then builds an outline of the text and tackles each component part. While it is organized from the larger to the smaller structures, it is composed line by line. It is this phenomenon that we will be tracking.

As mentioned in the introduction, I follow a methodology developed by translators called “semantic and structural analysis” (SSA). I will describe the theory in more detail in chapter 2. For now I want to describe briefly the theory and its benefits for preachers.

Developed by a group of translators for Wycliffe’s research arm, the Summer Institute of Linguistics, an SSA identifies the relationships of meaning in

\textsuperscript{24} Ibid., 20.
\textsuperscript{25} Ibid., 21.
all levels of discourse (hence “semantic”). Beginning with the results of our observations regarding macrostructure, the section under consideration is broken into the building blocks of any discourse, propositions (roughly synonymous to clauses in English). M. Larsen states, “[P]ropositions group together into larger and larger units. . . . In narrative texts, for example, propositions unite to form propositional clusters; these clusters unite to form semantic paragraphs; semantic paragraphs unite to form episodes; episodes unite to form episode clusters; episode clusters unite into parts; and these unite to form a discourse.”

These linguistic elements relate to one another in a hierarchical structure. That is, there is a system of elevation and subordination that arranges the linguistic items into a meaningful expression. This hierarchy should be more than just noted (as simply indenting subordinate clauses does); we should define what they do in communication with a finite set of relations called “communication relations.” At this stage the analyst assigns communication relations to the propositionalized sentences/clauses within the unit. These propositions will group together to form proposition clusters that will relate to one another with the same types of communication relations (because we are dealing with meaning, not simply grammar). We continue with this method through the higher levels until we have mapped the relational structure of the whole text under consideration.

What we generate by this process is a representation of the writer’s rhetorical plan. This rhetorical plan will generate our sermon outline. Thus, instead of some intuitive understanding, what we have is an outline produced through close inspection with methodological rigor. With minimal effort this process can become second-nature to you and extremely helpful in sermon design.

Identify the Historical Context

At this point we have done quite a bit of work with our text and should have more than a basic idea of the meaning of the text. However, there is more work to do. Our second step is to identify the historical context. Ancient texts have a historical context to them that affects their interpretation. When something is said or done is often as important as where it is said. We need to investigate and be familiar with the historical milieu of the text and how that might influence the interpretation of the expressions in the text. The basic tools here are commentaries but especially background commentaries, atlases, encyclopedias, and dictionaries.

Blomberg describes two areas of historical context: “perspective” and “mindset.” Perspective refers to the shared material between writer and reader. Mindset refers to a mental attitude or inclination. To this we will add a third area—historical events that may affect the interpretation.

## Historical Context

### Basic Tasks to Complete

1. Investigate perspective.
2. Investigate mindset.
3. Investigate historical events.

1. Investigate perspective. Here we ask, “What are the shared presupposition pools between writer and reader?” Writers have a series of expectations of their readers. Though these expectations are sometimes more ideal than specific, the writer expects recipients to have certain knowledge. This will shape how the author will address the reader. For example, if the author expects his readers not to know Aramaic, he might translate certain important words (as John does in the Fourth Gospel). On the other hand, if he expects the reader to know a certain language, then he may simply transliterate certain words (as Mark does with Latin terms in his Gospel). The author and the intended reader will also share a series of presuppositions. These are conventions, norms, events, well-known people, or assumptions shared between the author and the reader. For example, a newspaper article written in 2014 can refer to “the president” without identifying which president because all who read will understand the reference to Barack Obama. Likewise, a person writing in 2007 could make the same statement but refer to George W. Bush. The reader and the author share the same presupposition so a longer reference is unnecessary. This phenomenon is particularly acute when dealing with ancient texts because we must work to understand the shared presupposition pool and not import foreign ideas into it.

When references are unknown we must avoid any interpretation based on a guess of the intended referent. For example, I have heard, even from conservative pulpits, that the Colossian heresy was Gnosticism. Thus, when Paul states at 1:19 “That in Him all the fullness (πλήρωμα) was pleased to dwell” and 2:9

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“that in him dwells all the fullness (πλήρωμα) of the godhead bodily” he refers to a Gnostic belief. In certain types of Gnostic philosophy the highest god emits a series of emanations (aeons) that are increasingly less divine until the last aeon deposited the demiurge, the creator god. The pantheon of aeons was called the fullness (πλήρωμα). Thus, Paul is saying that Christ is the πλήρωμα, the fullness, filling the Gnostic doctrine with Christian meaning. Space prohibits discussion of all the problems; however, let us note that the Gnostic doctrine quoted in its fullest form is not known before the second century (many years after Colossians). Furthermore, Paul nowhere identifies the Colossian heresy. We have no grounds to say that Paul’s use of the word πλήρωμα is informed by a Gnostic conflict. Do we not have enough in the statement, as it stands, to understand what Paul is saying? Absolutely. Christ is not a lesser god but the fullness of God in bodily form—as to that we do not have to guess at Paul’s meaning. Guessing at an unknown referent usually leads to error.28

How do we know how to identify such shared presupposition pools? The rule of thumb is to be a minimalist rather than a maximalist. In other words, interpret from the most probable and leave the “likely” or “possible” alone.

2. Investigate the mindset. Here we ask, “What is the cultural environment? What are the relevant political, civic, and religious institutions and how would they affect the meaning of the text?” Sometimes the political world is directly mentioned. For instance, the Pharisees clearly are worried about Rome’s response to Christ at John 11:48: “Then the Romans will come and remove both our place and our nation” (HCSB). At other times it seems to be the environment that may explain some matters. For example, Pilate is known from historical records to be brash, arrogant, and cruel. He seemed not to care what offended the Jews. Yet the Gospel records show him bending over backward and almost forced to crucify Jesus. Some have argued against the historicity of John for this reason. However, when we dig a bit deeper we see that Pilate had a very powerful patron in Rome, Sejanus, the captain of the Praetorian Guard who administered the empire for Tiberius. At the beginning of Pilate’s reign, he was acting under Sejanus’s cover. Sejanus was put to death, however, for treason. Thus by the time of Christ’s arrest the last thing Pilate wanted was civil uproar.29

Knowing how the Idumean Herod became King of Judea also puts the Magi’s visit at Matthew 2 in a different light. Herod was appointed king by the Roman Senate in 40 BC. He won his kingdom by military force in 37

28 To appeal to a Gnostic background here is to run the risk of interpreting Paul to mean that Christ is a lesser deity, since the πλήρωμα was not the substance of the unknowable, highest god.
It does not take much imagination to realize the shock of Persian wise men standing before an appointed king asking, “Where is he who is born king of the Jews?”

3. Investigate historical events. Next we ask, “What historical events may be affecting the text?” One of the biggest mistakes in interpretation on a scholarly level is to identify a reference in historical records with the “background” of a passage or book. One of the most commonly cited references is the birkhat ha minim—“the blessings against the heretics”—and the council of Jamnia around AD 85. Some surmise that this council marks the formal split between Christianity and Judaism. Thus, almost anything that smacks of conflict between Christians and Jews in the NT is dated around or beyond AD 85, most notably the Gospels of both Matthew and John. Yet it is the height of speculation that this council exerted such influence or even existed. This is not to say that historical events have no influence on biblical texts; they do. However, the key is to exercise control and restrict ourselves to events to which the text directly alludes. Some of these historical events are recorded in the Bible. Sometimes these are scriptural allusions (such as a reference to the exodus), or it may be recorded in one of the Gospels or Acts (such as Paul’s mentioning of the founding of the church at Thessalonica).

Identify the Canonical Context

Not only is there a macrostructure to the book as a whole; there is a canonical and theological structure that the book also fits into. This canonical context appears in two dimensions: covenant and theology. The major tasks to complete are to investigate these areas.

CANONICAL CONTEXT

Basic Tasks to Complete

1. Investigate covenantal dimensions.

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2. Investigate theological dimensions.

1. Investigate covenantal dimensions. The Bible is both old covenant and new covenant (the word “testament” should be translated “covenant”). Interpreting the different genres of the old covenant requires the Christian exegete to discover both the original meaning and the Christian appropriation of that meaning. In the new covenant (our subject) we are dealing with later progressive revelation, but in many ways it grows from the older covenant. Understanding the old covenant, therefore, helps in finding the correct interpretation. Sometimes understanding the context of an Old Testament quotation or an allusion benefits the interpretation. For example, one does not understand the book of Hebrews apart from the book of Numbers and the wilderness generation. At other times the New Testament reference is a specific fulfillment. When reading apocalypse, people should be prepared to saturate themselves in the Old Testament in order to understand apocalyptic allusions and symbolism. The New Testament is the fulfillment of the promises of the old covenant and is produced in the society that the old covenant generated. We do well to pay attention.

2. Investigate theological dimensions. At this point we should also investigate the theological dimension of our text. Because the biblical book is the work of God as well as a human author, the theology presented will agree across the canon. In the New Testament there exists diversity of perspective and emphases but not diversity of theology. The New Testament is best described as unity within diversity. Check your conclusions with other passages that deal with the same issues. If your conclusion conflicts with simple, direct propositions from other passages, modify your conclusions.

Proclamation

Now we start building a bridge from the exegesis to the exposition, from the text to the sermon. I suggest six major tasks to complete in the formation of the sermon. The first three tasks are transitional; they build the bridge from the world of the text to the world of the hearer. The main elements of the bridge are identify the main idea of the text (MIT); identify the purpose of the passage; convert the MIT into the main idea of the message (MIM). The first two are on the text side of the bridge; the last two are on the sermon side of the bridge. We’ll begin on the text side.
Basic Tasks to Complete

1. Identify the main idea of the text (MIT).
2. Identify the purpose of the passage.
3. Convert the MIT into the main idea of the message (MIM).
4. Use the MIM to develop the outline of the sermon from the outline of the text.
5. Develop each movement of the sermon by explicating, illustrating, and applying the text.
6. Write the conclusion and introduction.

1. Identify the MIT. Sermon textbooks have long suggested that the sermon should have a controlling idea, a point. In an expository message the point of the sermon should be a result of your study and built off the point of the text. Thus, the bridge to the sermon begins with an accurate description of the main idea of your passage. We will call this the MIT.

The MIT should be a single sentence in the past tense that expresses the entire content of your passage. It should not be overly complicated or convey all the detail of the passage; instead, it should be a simple statement that encapsulates your passage. If you get this wrong, the entire sermon will be off kilter at best. Some of the hardest work of the sermon is to get this right.

2. Identify the purpose of the passage. The purpose of the passage should be in harmony with the MIT, but it is not exactly the same. You should be asking yourself, “What is the writer trying to get me to do?” Remember that communication has the intent to modify the state of the reader. So what is the attempt? Is the writer admonishing an action or attitude? Does he prohibit an action or attitude? Is the basic purpose to inform? What does the writer want us to do with the information? Keeping in mind the macrostructure of the whole book and how your passage works within that macrostructure will help keep you on track.

Let me illustrate with a common mistake (one I have committed myself). Luke 8:22–25 relates the familiar story of Jesus stilling the storm. Earlier in 32 See, e.g., Daniel L. Akin, Bill Curtis, and Stephen Rummage, Engaging Exposition (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2011), 129–32, to whom I am also indebted for the terminology “MIT,” “MIM” (below), and “Bridging.” See also Olford, Anointed Expository Preaching, 75. He states: “To craft an expository sermon we must first crystallize the theme of the text or unit of Scripture under consideration, . . . We must capsulize the subject in one word, phrase, or sentence—‘the big idea,’ the core of the message, the sermon in a nutshell.”
my preaching career, I preached this text from the point of view that Jesus cares about the “storms of your life.” Thus, I declared, “Jesus will often still the child rather than the storm.” What I did was twofold: (1) I missed the MIT and the purpose of the passage, and (2) I preached a refrigerator magnet’s message rather than the text.

A closer inspection of the text and the surrounding text could have alleviated this disaster. By examining the text we see the payoff of the pericope comes in verse 25 when the disciples ask, “Who can this be? He commands even the winds and the waves, and they obey Him!” (HCSB). The point is that he has authority over nature. By examining the surrounding text this interpretation is borne out in the sequence of pericopes that follow. They all will comment on Jesus’ authority over different dimensions of reality. The next passage is the story of the Gerasene demoniac: Jesus has authority over the supernatural. The next is the raising of a little girl and the healing of the woman with the matter of uncleanness: Jesus has authority over sickness and death. Who is this man? He is a man with the authority of God.

The MIT of Luke 8:22–25 should be, “Jesus displayed his divine authority.” The purpose of the text was not to reassure Christians in trouble but to reveal who Jesus is. Thus the MIT is not simply a restatement of the event, “Jesus stilled a storm,” but is a distillation of what point the text is making.

3. Convert the MIT into the MIM. On this bridge to the sermon we first convert the MIT into the MIM, a tool to help the preacher express the meaning of the text to the contemporary audience. It should provide the conceptual framework to develop the sermon outline. It should be a statement that is as simple as possible, in the present tense, and often appropriates the purpose of the passage.

In an expository message the MIM is more about expressing the sermon structure than developing it. In other models the preacher is asked to develop the sermon by asking heuristic questions of the MIM (how? what? etc.). I have no problem with this method if the text is actually answering those kinds of questions. More often than not, however, the resulting sermon is at best building off the text and at worst imposing pop religious advice on the text. The former has its place in Christian pulpits; the latter should be avoided. Our task is the expository sermon so the structure of the text is our outline. We simply need to package it for teaching and preaching.

Let’s take, for example, the passage above (Luke 8:22–25). As we convert the MIT (Jesus displayed his divine authority) to the MIM we should appropriate what the author of the text wants us to do. In this case, Luke is telling the story to display Jesus’ authority. While there are subthemes like Christ’s care for his disciples, these are not the main point. The main point is that he is
not merely a man; he displays authority over the wind and the waves . . . and they obey! This truth has implications regarding what we do with the information so that the message will have a strong emphasis on the implications of Christ possessing divine authority. I would state the MIM of Luke 8:22–25 as “People should embrace Christ’s divine authority.”

4. Use the MIM to develop the outline of the sermon from the outline of the text. If we have done our homework in studying the text we have already discovered the outline of our text. In expository or hortatory genres we use a semantic and structural analysis (or some other form of discourse analysis) to map the flow of thought of the argument or injunctions. It is my conviction that the major movements of the sermon (often called “points”) should match the major movements of the text. Continuing with Luke 8:22–25, we should note that its genre is narrative, more specifically a simple problem-resolution story. As such, the outline is fairly simple, and a flow-of-thought diagram is not as helpful. As Young notes, the outline will be along these lines “Setting, Problem, (complicating factor), Resolution, Sequel.”33 I would describe the progression of events as follows:

8:22 Setting
One day He and His disciples got into a boat, and He told them, “Let’s cross over to the other side of the lake.” So they set out,

8:23 Problem
and as they were sailing He fell asleep. Then a fierce windstorm came down on the lake; they were being swamped and were in danger.

8:24 Resolution
They came and woke Him up, saying, “Master, Master, we’re going to die!” Then He got up and rebuked the wind and the raging waves. So they ceased, and there was a calm.

8:25 Sequel
He said to them, “Where is your faith?” They were fearful and amazed, asking one another, “Who can this be? He commands even the winds and the waves, and they obey Him!” (HCSB).

I see three major movements after the introduction: the problem, the resolution, and the sequel (where the theological payoff is in this story). So, my sermon will have three points (or movements). Because the narrative genre unfolds the point, my sermon should as well. If we follow the outline of the text, we will naturally do so. The MIM (built off the MIT and the point of the passage) unfolds the sermon, just like the text unfolds the MIT. My outline of the text is as follows:

I. See the Plight of Man vs. Wild (8:23)
II. See the Might of Son of Man vs. Wild (8:24)
III. Embrace the Divine Authority of Christ (8:25)

At the problem and resolution stages of the pericope the narrator wants us to understand the situation of the disciples and note the solution that Christ brings. I chose to cover both ideas with the applicational verb “see.” I could have just as easily used “understand” or some other verb of knowing, but I want the audience to have a mental picture of the events.

You will also notice that I borrowed from pop culture for the first two movements. Here is an attempt to connect with the everyday world of the audience (esp. ten-year-old boys and their dads) by playing off the title of one of the Discovery Channel’s survival TV shows.

The last movement is the pay off. Christ asks them, “Where is your faith?” and the disciples ask themselves, “Who is this man?” Here’s where we apply the MIM directly. In this movement it is a virtual restatement of the MIM, but it should not be the case in every movement. Sometimes each movement will develop some portion of the MIM. In this case, the text builds to it, so our sermon does as well. To embrace his divine authority is to exercise faith. For the lost, it begins with coming to Christ. For the redeemed it is exercising faith.

5. Develop each movement of the sermon by explicating, illustrating, and applying the text. There are a variety of ways to develop a sermon movement (point). I believe it helps to be as simple as possible. There are three basic elements to sermon development: explanation of the text, application of the text, and illustration of either the text or the application. To deal with these elements I use a method taught by my preaching professor called the “Text-Today” method. It will be how we generally develop sermons in this book. There are times, however, when the text itself makes the application of its movements. It would be redundant, then, to follow this way of development. Most often it works well, but it is important to experiment with developing skills in other methods as well.
In my basic approach, I explain the text in a “text” section. I will give a description of the text. In the case of Luke 8:23 (my first movement above), I describe the situation, the boat, and the weather patterns on the Sea of Galilee.

In the “today” section, I apply the movement to us today. Application is a tricky part of any sermon. I think it is best not to think of every situation to which the text would apply, but to give general areas and certain specifics and trust the Holy Spirit to make specific applications. For example, in the first movement above, “Plight of Man vs. Wild (8:23),” I make the application of human frailty. When it’s man vs. wild, wild will eventually win. Then I unpack that statement in selected specific areas. For instance, we may prepare against natural disasters, but if enough of them come, or one comes at a strong enough force, we die. The same is true for health. We may have iron constitutions, or be health and exercise nuts, but eventually our bodies wear out. The general principle that we are finite creatures works for areas like retirement savings, vaccinations, and rainy day funds.

As for illustrations, they can enhance a sermon, but caution is needed because illustrations are like windows that allow light to enter a room. As House and Garland state, “Windows too large, or too many, can structurally weaken a building. Likewise, illustrations that are too extensive, elaborate, entertaining, or memorable can weaken a sermon.” By “illustration” I mean an example that brings your movement into sharp focus for your people. This can come in a variety of ways. You may want to illustrate with another biblical text. In the case above, the parable of the Rich Fool in Luke 12:13–21 is a good choice to illustrate the application. At times this is impractical because the secondary text requires a great deal of explanation. It may be that you could draw on news reports of those who trusted that they could outwit, outlast, and outplay the principle of entropy that pursues us all.

Other types of illustrations, such as biographies (I especially like missionary biographies) and parables (both from the Bible and elsewhere) are often powerful. When illustrations are not well crafted or presented well, however, they can be trite. I especially avoid poetry of all kinds (except biblical poetry, of course), but some find it useful. Specific historical events may also supply rich illustrative material. Finally, statistics have been overused in our pulpits and often have a chilling effect on the audience. We have all been subjected to misinformation given in the form of statistics. Most of us are familiar with the old saying “figures don’t lie, but liars do figure.” Be very careful when using statistics.

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35 See House and Garland’s discussion. Ibid., 83–86.
The placement of a movement’s illustration is not set in stone. You may want to illustrate the meaning of the text itself as a clarifying tool. You may, instead, want to illustrate the application. Whatever you do, you do not want to clutter your point with too many illustrations; one major illustration per movement is a good rule to follow.

## Types of Illustrations

- Biblical Texts
- Anecdotes (including personal observations)
- News Reports
- Biographies
- Parables (biblical and non-biblical)
- Poetry (including songs)
- Historical Lessons
- Statistics

When using illustrations, be careful to document your source material. Furthermore, because some of the most memorable parts of the sermon are the illustrations, be sure you are illustrating the text. Be wary of forcing an illustration into service when it does not fit. It is better to have no illustration than the wrong one.

Repeat this development procedure for each section of the sermon. Although not a rigid rule, I feel it best to follow the same pattern throughout the sermon that you use in the first movement. Instead of “lather, rinse, repeat,” it’s “explain, apply, illustrate, repeat.”

6. **Write the conclusion and introduction.** The next thing I do is write the conclusion of the sermon. A good conclusion ends the sermon with a powerful appeal so that the end of the sermon is the beginning of a life-changing decision. We do well to prayerfully compose a good conclusion, although as Carter, Duvall, and Hays note, “Unfortunately, sometimes preachers deplete all their energy, discipline, and time in the writing of the body of the sermon and then have nothing left to develop a solid, creative, and powerful conclusion.”

Resist the temptation to “wing it.” I have fouled up many sermons by an ill-crafted conclusion.

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The conclusion should summarize the entire sermon and call for a decision by the hearers. If your outline has been applicational, you’ve been doing this through the whole sermon. Though I like an illustration that encapsulates the MIM, these are often the hardest to find. I quickly try to make a global application to both Christians and non-Christians in my audience.

In sermons where I have already applied and illustrated the main point, as in the sermon outline above, it would be redundant to find another global illustration and apply it. In these cases I move rather quickly into the invitation and appeal.

Finally, I write the introduction to the sermon. We should compose it last because only when we have completed the sermon do we know what we are introducing. We may have an idea of what we are going to do, but the actual composition should come last.

The introduction should be short. The major mistake most preachers make is spending more than half of their allotted time on the sermon’s introduction to the sermon. Invariably this leads to rushing toward the end of the sermon, which is arguably more important.

There are three major components to a good introduction: (1) orienting your audience to the issue you are addressing, (2) communicating the MIT, and (3) presenting the MIM.

The orientation sets the stage for the rest of what you do. It can be something outside the preacher himself—a video clip, dramatic skit, or interpretive dance—but the transition from an external orientation to the sermon is difficult to accomplish and usually runs the risk of being excessively long and irrelevant. “Communicating the MIT” can be as short as a single statement. Finally, “presenting the MIM” makes the point of your sermon and usually transitions nicely to the body of the message.

Again, using Luke 8 above, the MIT is “Jesus Displayed His Divine Authority.” The MIM is, “Everyone Should Embrace the Divine Authority of Jesus.” To introduce the sermon, I want to orient my audience to the situation in which everyone finds themselves. To whom do they place the trust of their souls? I oriented the hearers with an illustration of people who had made the tragic error of misplaced trust, which can be disastrous.
SERMON SKETCH


TOPIC: Life in the Wild
MIT: Jesus Displayed His Divine Authority
MIM: Everyone Should Embrace the Divine Authority of Jesus.

INTRODUCTION

1. Orientation: He lived in Crooked River Ranch, OR. His friends knew him as a young physician affiliated with Mountain View Hospital in Madras, OR. The young doctor convinced one of his friends to allow him to treat a minor problem at his home. It wasn’t long until that friend recommended other friends to see this doctor. He would dispense medicine, treat infections and injuries, and performed at least one out-patient (minor) surgery. Three of the patients saw him in their own homes. I’m sure that these friends each thought it was a great deal. Imagine their surprise when the Redmond Police Department arrested the man. His crime? Impersonating a doctor. Specifically the charges were “one count of second-degree assault, two counts of identity theft and recklessly endangering another person, and a count of manufacturing or delivering a controlled substance.”37 These six people should have known better. First of all, the man pretending to be a doctor was only twenty-two years old—Doogie Howser was a TV character, not a real person. Second, physicians don’t usually do house calls anymore. That’s a quick trip to the malpractice lawsuit. One police officer put it this way, “How many times do you have a doctor at your home do surgery on you?”38 Not only did the impersonator have no affiliation with Mountain View Hospital, he had no medical training whatsoever. They trusted their bodies to someone unqualified, with no authority by licensing boards to practice medicine and no professional training. This had all the makings of a disaster. In whom you trust matters.

This is even more important in the matter of your soul. To whom or what have you entrusted your soul? The Christian answers, “In Christ.” Christ did not just claim to be our Savior; he displayed his divine authority, his credentials. We find one of these demonstrations of divine authority in our text this morning, Luke 8:22–25.

2. MIT: In this text, Jesus displayed his divine authority by his command over nature. Surrounding texts will describe his authority over demons, disease, and death. Altogether his authority is shown to be God’s authority.

3. MIM: Everyone should embrace the divine authority of Jesus. Let’s look at the Bible to see how the story unfolds.

OUTLINE

I. See the Plight of Man vs. Wild (8:22–23)
   A. Text
      2. Jesus fell asleep in the boat.
      3. The disciples were struggling against the waves.
   B. Today
      1. In the struggle against nature we will lose.
      2. We will lose physically (we will die).
      3. We will lose spiritually (we will not be right enough to go to heaven).
   C. Illustration
      Ehow.com contains an article on how to cheat death (difficulty rating: easy). The truth is that death is inevitable unless the Lord returns in our lifetimes. The wild waits at our window for the opportune moment, and it will eventually catch us. But we are not without help.

II. See the Might of Son of Man vs. Wild (8:24)

A. Text

1. The disciples were not asking for a miracle.

   Perhaps they wanted him to bail water! (“Here is water what doth hinder us from bailing?”)

2. He displays his authority.

   The wind and the waves must obey him. There was calm.

B. Illustration: Types of Authority

1. Government (legitimacy—power is recognized).
2. Societal structures (a sanctioned power—voluntary to some degree).
3. Jesus’ power is independent of human recognition. It is innate and overpowering.

C. Today

1. We tend to seek human solutions rather than the might of the Son of Man.
2. His ability/authority is beyond what we can ask or imagine (Eph 3:20).

   Transition: We act this way because we haven’t fully come to grips with this truth. We should . . .

III. Embrace the Divine Authority of Christ (8:25)

A. Text

1. An embarrassing question: Where is your faith? (Suggests that embracing his divine authority is a matter of belief.)

B. Today

1. What would it look like if a believer fully embraced Christ’s divine authority?
a. Doubt would be gone.
b. Faith would be regularly exercised.
c. Risk would be seen in the light of his sovereignty.

2. What would it look like if a non-believer embraced his divine authority?
   a. He would turn from his sins.
   b. He would make Christ the Lord of his life.
   c. He would place his trust in Christ's sacrifice for his sins.

C. Illustration: A Fatal Lack of Trust

The Great Fire of London began on the night of September 2, 1666. The fire devastated the city of London, which was already under siege from the black plague. The magnitude of the property loss was staggering. After burning for four days, some 430 acres—as much as 80 percent of the city proper—was destroyed, including 13,000 houses, 89 churches, and 52 guild halls. Thousands of citizens found themselves homeless and financially ruined. But, amazingly enough, only 16 people died in the fire (some say only six). It should have been less. The first death was completely unnecessary. The fire began “as a small fire on Pudding Lane in the bakeshop of Thomas Farynor, baker to King Charles II. At one o’clock in the morning, a servant woke to find the house aflame. The baker and his family escaped, but a fear-struck maid perished in the blaze.” She refused to jump from an upper story window onto a neighboring roof and burned to death.40

Invitation: Jump! Trust as if your life depended on it!

The above theory will be fleshed out as I walk us through the Farewell Discourse of John’s Gospel. I will first describe my theory of literary structure and thought-flow analysis in more detail. This will be the content of the next chapter.

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