



SERMON PREP SERIES

Sermon Building Blocks

A quick-reference guide to the vocabulary and structure behind a well-built sermon: the three basic sermon types, the five-part flow that carries a point home, and where illustrations and poems belong along the way.

Sermon Types	Part Flow	Devices
3	5	2

THE THREE BASIC TYPES

What Kind of Sermon Are You Preaching?

Every sermon leans on one of three basic approaches. Knowing which one you're building keeps your outline, your illustrations, and your application all pulling in the same direction.

- 1 Topical Sermon** — focuses on a particular subject or theme, drawing support from across Scripture to build a case around one central idea.
Example: "The Greatest Love" — a topical look at love, built from John 3:16.
- 2 Textual Sermon** — develops the message from the key words or phrases of one specific verse or short passage, following the verse's own movement.
Example: "A Transformed Life" — a textual sermon built from Romans 12:2.
- 3 Expository Sermon** — explains and applies the meaning of a larger passage of Scripture, typically moving verse by verse or section by section.
Example: "The Lord Is My Shepherd" — an expository walk through Psalm 23.

QUICK TIP *Let the text decide the type — a single verse rich in imagery often preaches best textually or expositively; a broad idea traced across Scripture calls for a topical approach.*

THE FIVE-PART FLOW

How a Sermon Point Is Built

Most well-built sermon points move through the same five beats. Use this as a checklist for each point in your outline.

- 1 Point.** State the biblical truth plainly.
- 2 Explanation.** Explain what the Scripture means in context.
- 3 Illustration.** Share a story, image, or personal example that makes the truth relatable.
- 4 Application.** Show the congregation how to live out that truth this week.
- 5 Transition.** Move naturally into the next point.

SERMON ILLUSTRATIONS

Making the Truth Relatable

An illustration is a story, personal experience, analogy, or example that helps the congregation understand, visualize, or connect with the biblical truth you're teaching. A well-placed illustration turns an abstract idea into something the listener can picture — and remember on Monday morning.

Illustration in action — preaching Psalm 23:4, “Though I walk through the valley...,” you might share a personal season of hardship and how you sensed God’s presence in it. The story illustrates the verse; it doesn’t replace it.

USING YOUR OWN STORY

Your experience can be a particularly effective illustration — but Scripture must remain the foundation. Your story serves the text; the text does not serve your story.

COMMON SOURCES Story · personal experience · analogy · concrete example — pick whichever makes the truth easiest to picture.

POEMS IN A SERMON

Giving A Truth A Voice To Remember

A short, expressive piece of writing — often using rhythm, imagery, or rhyme — used to reinforce the spiritual truth or emotional message of the sermon.

EXAMPLE — PSALM 23, GOD’S FAITHFULNESS

*When I cannot see the way,
My Shepherd guides me day by day.
Through the valley, through the night,
He remains my strength and light.*

REMEMBER

The poem doesn’t replace the biblical teaching — it helps the congregation remember and feel the truth you’ve already presented from the text.

Where A Poem Can Fit

- **In the introduction** — to capture attention and introduce the theme.
- **After a major point** — to reinforce what you’ve just taught.
- **Before the conclusion** — to bring the sermon to an emotional, memorable close.
- **As an illustration** — to make an abstract spiritual truth more concrete.

SERMON PREP FLOW

Truth → Explanation → Illustration/Poem → Application → Transition.