

Learning Homiletics (One Method Exemplified)

Reason to do Homiletics:

- A dictionary definition of homiletics is “the art of preaching.”
- It involves outlining a passage of Scripture, determining its focus, and deciding upon application that can be drawn from it.
- It is useful in giving you confidence to understand a passage more thoroughly.
- It can be translated into a sermon, devotional, or lecture on the passage.
- It will help you draw out answers from a small group.
- I find to be a very helpful way to conduct personal Bible study.

Steps in Homiletics:

- Prayer(most important step): any and every time we approach God’s Word we should remember that God is living and His Word is living and He wants to INTERACT with us as we read it.
 - Confess known sins.
 - Ask God to speak to you through his Holy Spirit.
- Read the passage. Then, work through the following steps (each is exemplified on the following pages). This represents just one method of homiletics.
 - Content
 - Divisions
 - Subject Sentence
 - Aim
 - Applications

General Tips:

- If you try to be too creative, you’ll probably miss the focus of the passage and you may even end up in error.
- Be as clear, brief and simple as possible.

Below is a model of the way this method of homiletics narrows down a passage to a single focus, then broadens back again to apply each main division to daily life.

-----CONTENT-----

----DIVISIONS----

SUBJECT

AIM

----APPLICATION---

Content

- Your content is a summary of what you've read. You can read the entire passage first or you can write as you read.
- Make a list of the different events, topics, and conversations in the passage. It doesn't matter if you write in complete sentences, phrases, use abbreviations, make slashes, etc.
- It's helpful to look for repeated words or phrases that seem to characterize the passage as you go along and underline them in your content list.
- Regardless of the length of your passage, limit the number of "bullets" in your list (ideally 10-20), so that you're not simply rephrasing the entire passage.
- The following shows an example of "content" on Genesis 3.

- Verses 1: Crafty serpent asked the woman if God forbade eating from all trees in the Garden.
- Verses 2-3: Woman replied they may eat any but middle tree, nor touch it, or die.
- Verses 4-5: Serpent denies "die", rather suggests God knows it will make them like Him.
- Verses 6-7: Woman examined fruit and ate/gave also to husband who ate/eyes opened, realized naked/sewed fig leaves to cover
- Verses 8-10: Man heard the Lord in garden and hid. Lord called and man replied he was afraid since naked and hid.
- Verses 11-13: Lord questioned regarding eating from tree, but both shift blame.
- Verses 14-15: Lord cursed serpent to crawl, have enmity w/woman: her Offspring crush serpents head, serpent strike her Offspring's heel.
- Verses 16: Lord foretells woman's pain in childbearing, desire (turning) to husband so he rules over her
- Verses 17-19: Lord tells man ground cursed because of him/until he dies and returns to ground (as he is made of dust): to eat will be to sweat.
- Verses 20: Adam named wife Eve (mother of all living).
- Verses 21-24: Lord made garments from skins to clothe them, banished them from Garden, and placed cherubim and flaming sword to guard way back to "tree of life."

Divisions

- Good concentration in doing the content is the key to finding your divisions easily.
- Make 2-4 (five at the most) divisions based on change in scene, topic, character, time, etc.
- Write a sentence to describe each division and list the verse numbers from the Bible that are covered next to the sentence.
- If you were making an outline for a term paper, these would be your primary roman numerals (your paper's main divisions or topics).
- The division sentences should be complete sentences. It is helpful to the next step in the process if you have the same subject or verb in each division sentence, but that isn't always possible.
- As an example, the content of Genesis 3 from page 3 has been separated into three divisions below.

- Verse 1: Crafty serpent asked the woman if God forbade eating from all trees in the Garden.
- Verses 2-3: Woman replied they may eat any but middle tree, nor touch it, or die.
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- Verse 20: Adam named wife Eve (mother of all living).
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- The next page shows two examples of division sentences made from this content. The first example contains more informative division sentences. The second example shows simpler sentences and nearly the same subjects in each sentence.

Division Sentences Example 1:

- I. **Ge 3:1-7** Following Eve's interaction with a crafty Serpent and her examination of the fruit God forbade, she and Adam ate the fruit and covered themselves with fig leaves.
- II. **Ge 3:8-19** The Lord confronted Adam and Eve, cursed the Serpent and the ground, foretold the miseries resulting from Adam and Eve's sin, and hinted at future deliverance.
- III. **Ge 3:20-24** Eve was named, she and Adam were clothed with skins, and both were banished from the Garden.

Division Sentences Example 2:

- I. **Ge 3:1-7** Adam and Eve sinned by eating forbidden fruit.
- II. **Ge 3:8-19** The Serpent, Eve, and Adam were judged by the Lord.
- III. **Ge 3:20-24** Adam and Eve were banished from the Garden.

Subject Sentence

- Use your division sentences to make one sentence of limited length (10 words or less is ideal) that summarizes the content.
- The subject sentence is NOT like a catchy phrase used for titles, outlines, or headings.
- The subject sentence should be the thrust of the whole content and it should identify what makes the passage unique in the Bible.
- If need be, start with a longer sentence and wean it down.
- The subject sentence should represent a factual summary of the passage. It is not a lesson to be taken from the passage.

After Adam and Eve sinned, they were judged and evicted.

Aim

- The aim is the single summarized lesson to be taught (or learned) from the passage. Ask yourself, "Why did God put this passage in the Bible?"
- Determine the main lesson you want an audience to learn (or you need to learn). You may find it helpful to begin with the phrase "To cause the audience to..."
- The aim a statement that focuses on changing one's thinking about something related to the passage.
- It should be short and definite.
- The aim shouldn't be *so general* that it doesn't relate specifically to the content of your passage. However, it shouldn't be *so specific* that you cannot tie it to each one of your divisions.

Cause the audience to consider that sin promises much while denying the gravity of consequences.

Application

- Write one application question for each division. The questions should motivate you (or the audience) to put the aim into *action*. While the aim attempts to change *thinking*, the application questions propose changes in *behavior* (in other words, “What will you *do* about what you now know?”).
- Try to make an application to *real life* situations – professional, family, spiritual, emotional, physical or other practical needs. The questions should be pointed enough to “nail your audience (and yourself) to the wall”! This is where the rubber meets the road – not just *knowing* more about the Bible but putting what you know into *action* in your life. (As James 1:22 says, be “doers” not just “hearers” of God’s Word.)
- Your questions should be based on precisely what the passage teaches. Ideally, they should relate to both the content in each division and your “aim.”
- If possible, avoid questions that have only a “yes” or “no” answer.
- Deciding on good application will demand time and energy of you.
- Answer your own questions for yourself in writing.

I. What is presently your greatest temptation? What is it “promising” you?

II. How will the people closest to you (your family members? your co-workers?) be affected by your decision if you give in to this temptation?

III. What kind of offensive steps are you taking to guard your heart against sin?

The following shows the completed homiletics on Genesis 3.

CONTENT:

- Verses 1: Crafty serpent asked the woman if God forbade eating from all trees in the Garden.
- Verses 2-3: Woman replied they may eat any but middle tree, nor touch it, or die.
- Verses 4-5: Serpent denies “die”, rather suggests God knows it will make them like him.
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- Verses 8-10: Heard the Lord in garden and hid. Lord called and man replied he was afraid since naked and hid.
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- Verses 14-15: Lord cursed serpent to crawl, have enmity w/woman: her offspring crush his head, he strike her offspring’s heel.
- Verses 16: Lord foretells woman’s pain in childbearing, desire (turning) to husband so he rules over her
- Verses 17-19: Lord tells man ground cursed because of him/to eat will be to sweat until he dies and returns to ground (as he is made of dust).

- Verses 20: Adam named wife Eve – mother of all living.
- Verses 21-24: Lord made garments from skins to clothe/banished from Garden, placing cherubim and flaming sword to guard way back to “tree of life”.

DIVISIONS:

- I. **Ge 3:1-7** Adam and Eve sinned by eating forbidden fruit.
- II. **Ge 3:8-19** The Serpent, Eve, and Adam were judged by the Lord.
- III. **Ge 3:20-24** Adam and Eve were banished from the Garden.

SUBJECT SENTENCE: After Adam and Eve sinned, they were judged and evicted.

AIM: Cause the audience to consider that sin promises much while denying the gravity of consequences.

APPLICATIONS:

- I. **What is presently your greatest temptation? What is it “promising” you?**
- II. **How will the people closest to you (your family members? your co-workers?) be affected by your decision if you give in to this temptation?**
- III. **What kind of offensive steps are you taking to guard your heart against sin?**