

Preaching



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Discussion

What are some of the features of a good sermon?

What are some of the features of a bad sermon?

Essential elements of a good sermon

Authentic, humble preacher

God's truth / gospel declared

Based on Scripture

A call to belief and commitment

Some aspect of teaching

Principles

God speaks in human words

God has preserved his words in Scripture

God calls people to preach and teach his word

Preaching has 2 sources of authority – both are needed

- The authority of Scripture (2 Timothy 3:16)

- The authority of the Spirit (John 16:8-13)

Preaching is multi-faceted but always gospel oriented

Sermon preparation has two parts

Good exegesis

Understanding the meaning
Figuring out the key theme(s)
Figuring out contemporary
application

Planning to be engaging

Preparing the delivery
Making the message clear
Creating a thirst for
transformation

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Tip #1
Find the key theme (the gospel message)

Any passage within the Bible

Has purpose and cohesion

And so a Biblical sermon

Has direction and cohesion

that is

Governed by the content and form of the passage

Constructing a sermon: Finding the key theme

Soak in the passage

Research the passage

Outline the passage

Summarize the passage

Determine the need addressed by the passage

Clarify the central message

Decide on the key theme (gospel truth)

Workshop

Find the key theme

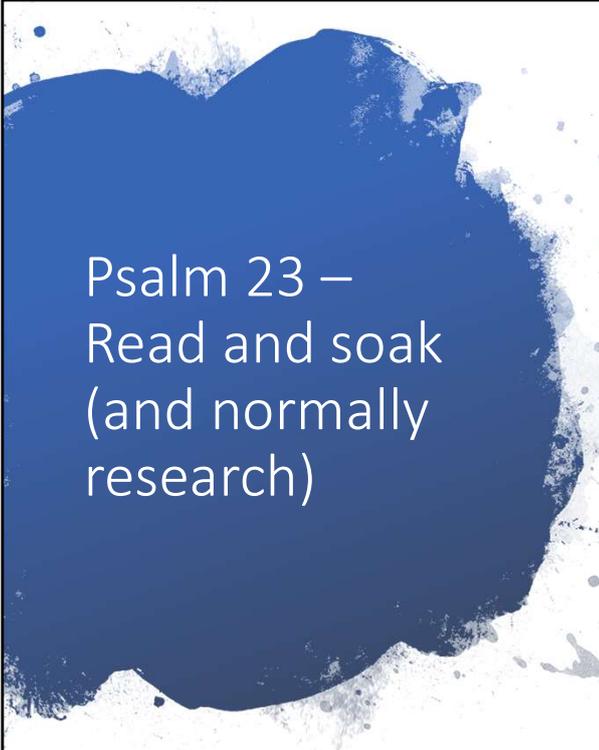
(Let's take 20 minutes to find a key theme)
(Would normally take a few hours)

Read Psalm 23 and soak it in – 7 minutes

Outline the passage – 7 minutes

Summarize the passage, determine the need and clarify the message – 3
minute

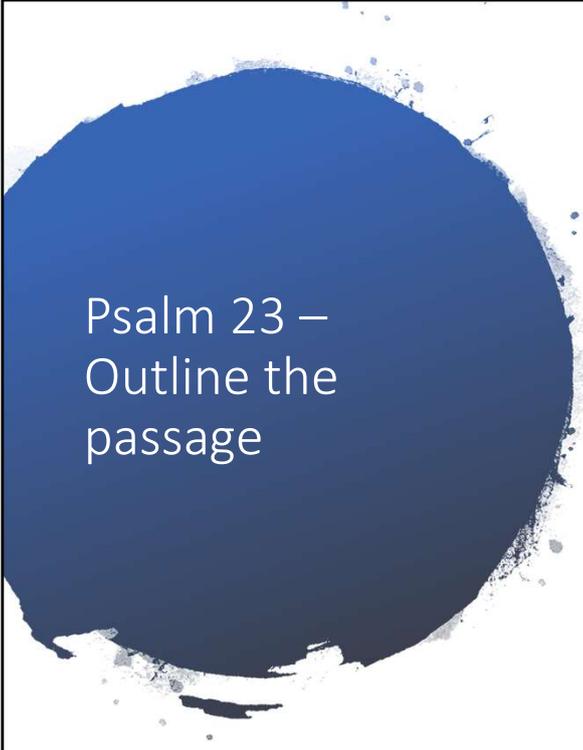
Decide on the gospel truth – 3 minutes



Psalm 23 –
Read and soak
(and normally
research)

- What does it mean to be a sheep? What does this say about God's people and what does it mean to follow him? What does it mean to be a good guest? What does it mean to be a good shepherd and a good host? What does this show us about God's nature?
- Am I content? Do I really believe that I have all I need? Do I trust that God is blessing me? Why do I sit and dream about material things? And how can God be blessing us and still letting us walk through dark valleys? How do I reconcile these thoughts?
- I hear God saying: trust me, follow me, I will be with you. I will protect you. I will guide you. I will provide for you... When hasn't he in the past?!
- I know in my heart that God does provide all that is needed but I realize that I forget that in my heart when I stop pausing and looking to him, as a sheep must. I remember that material things are so empty when compared to the relationship offered by a shepherd and host God to his sheep and guests.

Major Journal Activity 1-34



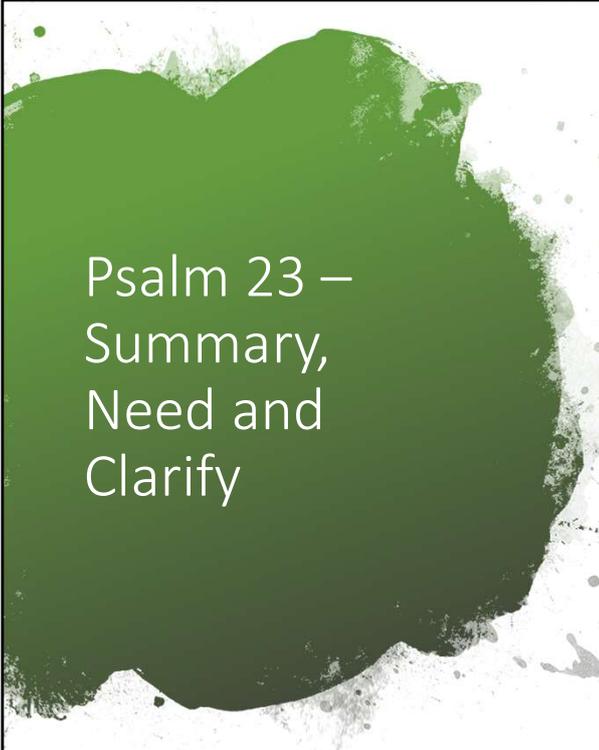
Psalm 23 –
Outline the
passage

God is shepherding me and providing all good things that I need for my rest and strength (1-3)

As a good shepherd he protects me even during the dangerous times and gives me comfort (4)

As a good host he provides endlessly for me in every way (5)

And as a faithful and eternal God he will continue to pour out love to me now and forever into eternity (6)



Psalm 23 –
Summary,
Need and
Clarify

Summary - The Lord leads, provides, blesses and protects me always, everywhere and in every circumstance.

Need - We are lost, lonely, overwhelmed and pessimistic

Clarify - God will always lead, provide and be with those who know that they are lost without him.

Psalm 23 – The Key Theme (Gospel Truth)

God provides everything necessary for life for his followers.

Sermon preparation has two parts

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Figuring out contemporary
application

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Preparing the delivery
Making the message clear
Creating a thirst for
transformation

Tip #2
Develop a flow / structure that leads to the key
theme

This is the hardest part!

Many approaches

One good approach – a sermon made up of “scenes”

“Scenes” are the typical way we tell stories

A story contains scenes – each scene contributes to the story

Each scene forms a complete unit – it stands by itself (even though all the scenes are needed to make sense)

Each scene can have a different form, content and context

The story develops and progresses both through the scene and within each scene

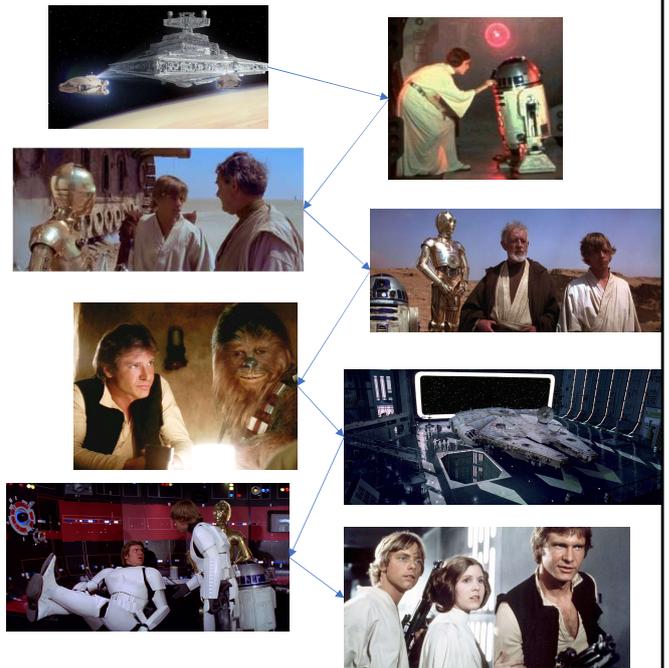
The first scene forms the introduction; the last scene the conclusion

The scenes are joined by invisible, logical developments that make sense

Any scene may contain the resolution of the story, but often the final scene does

The story keeps on moving without revision of previous scenes

The story is encapsulated in a summary of the themes of the scenes



A sermon can be developed in scenes

Outline your sermon by writing each major scene thought in a rough sentence

Aim for 5 to 7 scenes

Each scene should take 3-5 minutes

When a scene uses a biblical passage, write the verses at the end of the scene (this way it's obvious that the scene draws on the passage)

The outline should form a logical story that makes sense to someone who knows nothing about the passage or sermon

An example - my last sermon was in 7 scenes (church in Laodicea in Revelation 3):

Hot and cold are great, it's the in between temperature that isn't!

The people of Laodicea understood this all too well because they had lukewarm water.

And unfortunately that lukewarm water could be used as a metaphor about their faith where they blended into the society around them (3:15-16).

And the reason for that was because their wealth and health made them forget to rely on God (and so they looked no different than the society around them) (3:17-18).

That is also our potential problem in the church in Australia today.

And so God calls us, like the Laodiceans, to find real sight and clothing through repentance to and reliance on him (3:19-20).

And then he will be with us again.

Another example – my second last sermon was in 8 scenes (7 seals of Revelation 6-7):

Dreams are weird but they're usually pretty meaningless and insignificant.

But let me tell you about a dream or vision that, although very weird, is full of meaning and incredibly significant as it came from God. (1:1-3)

In this dream there was a lamb (who I'm pretty sure is Jesus) who opens seals and a scroll (which represent what's happening in the world) (6:1)

And as the seals are opened we see suffering, and pain and death – and persecution of Christians. (6:2-11)

This is suffering, pain, death and persecution that still happens today – and it will continue, with even worse to come (6:12-16).

In the dream the question is asked "Who can stand?" (6:17)

And the good news that God will help all his people get through this. (6:11, 7:1-4)

So be encouraged and live with courage, knowing that Jesus will make everything right one day.

Tip #3

Make the flow of scenes interesting and engaging

For discussion:

What to most people find more enjoyable?

- (a) Being told facts and explanations and then applying these facts to a problem
- (b) Seeing a problem and then thinking about / hearing about the solution

Deductive or Inductive

Deductive sermons

Move from a statement or general principle, to particulars
Start with the key theme (gospel truth) and then expand on it

Inductive sermons

Move from particulars, questions and examples, and then formulate a
general principle
The key theme (gospel truth) comes towards the end of the sermon as
a resolution or revelation after exploring issues

Deductive pros and cons

Clear structure

Easy to follow

Gospel truth is very clear

BUT

Lack of tension

Lack of congregational involvement

Inductive pros and cons

Congregation more involved
More easily develops tension
Preacher is a fellow learner

BUT

More difficult to structure
Contain less didactic content

Worked example: 1 John 5:13-21

Read 1 John 5:13-21

Outline the Passage

This whole letter was written to believers so that they would know they have and will have eternal life (13)

So be confident that when we pray for things in line with God's will, God answers these prayers (14-15)

And so we can pray with confidence for the forgiveness of children of God (who we know don't normally make a practice of sinning) and the evil one can't touch these children when they commit sin that doesn't lead to death, but remember, there is sin that does lead to spiritual death (16-18)

But we can remain confident that we are God's children who are part of God's kingdom and have eternal life because we believe in God's Son Jesus (19-20)

And so hold firm to that faith and don't let idols take you away from God (21)

Major journal activity 3-3

Confusing parts? Summary. Need. Key theme (gospel truth)

Confusing parts?

Can't all sins be forgiven? What is the sin that leads to death?

My interpretation → this is the sin of not following Jesus as Lord – the sin of idolatory

Summary

You can be sure that you are God's forgiven child who has eternal life if you put your faith in his Son Jesus.

Need

We can either be unsure if we really are God's forgiven children, or alternatively we can forget we need to be faithful followers of Jesus and instead look to the things of the world.

Gospel truth

Being faithful to Jesus brings eternal life; without this faith the final result is death

Work-shop

Formulate an inductive sermon of scenes

Now develop 5-7 sermon scenes using an inductive approach
(Start with a problem or an issue and flow it into a solution)

1 John 5 – My attempt

Sometimes in life we are faced with ideas that we either don't understand or seem too unpalatable to believe

1 John 5 is like this and on first glance it doesn't make much sense – after-all, what is all this talk about sins that do and don't lead to death?

But delve deeper and it becomes clear that being faithful to Jesus brings eternal life

But there is sin that can't be forgiven and this is the sin of not recognizing God

Jesus said something similar in Matthew 12 when he spoke about the unforgivable sin.

This is an awkward truth and unpalatable to hear, but despite this it is worth thinking about if you aren't a Christian

And if you are a Christian, it should give you comfort that you are forgiven no matter what you've done so long as you keep your faith in Jesus

Tip #4 – Construct each scene in full

Once the you have the outline in sermon scenes -> construct each individual scene

Gather ideas for the scene + think about the best to present this scene:

- Does it require explanation and teaching?
- Should specific verses or other Bible passages be talked about?
- What about illustrating the idea with a story, or images or music?
- Does the idea need to be argued for and justified?
- Is there an opportunity to ask for audience participation?
- Is there an application that should be encouraged?

Write out the scene in full

And then move on to the next scene – which should invisibly link up with the previous scene

Tip #5

Different people are reached by different means

Verbal / linguistic --> learning through listening

Visual / spatial --> learning through images

Aural / musical --> learning through music

Physical / kinesthetic --> learning through touch and through doing

Logical / mathematical --> learning through logic and reason

Social / interpersonal --> learning through social interactions and people

--> Being aware of different learning styles helps when constructing your scenes

--> But don't over-use a method or try to fit a square peg into a round hole

Multi-media

Images, music, video, physical objects

Some example

Using a video clip to introduce an abstract idea may grab a person's attention



Using a prop may explain an important concept



Using of a background image when recounting a Bible passage may evoke a desired emotion





Use of story



Is there a story that

- Raises a relevant question
- Demonstrates the idea of the specific scene?



Remember:

- Stories can be powerful
- BUT
- They need to be relevant
- AND
- Appropriate (e.g. not criticizing others or sharing confidential or other people's personal details)



Use of questions

A well placed question

→ Encourages thinking and engagement

→ Wake people up

BUT

A poorly constructed → services little purposes

And a poorly moderated

→ Runs the risk of bad theology or unhelpful answers either going unaddressed or making people feel uncomfortable

Describing didactic knowledge

Spending time teaching facts can be

- Interesting
- Helpful

WHEN they are both relevant and required

BUT can be

- Boring
- Confusing

IF they are either irrelevant or unnecessary

Use of emotion

Appealing to people's emotion can

- Uplift and encourage
- Convict and transform

BUT runs the risk of

- Annoying
- Angering
- Upsetting

Worst sermons of all time (0:40-1:30)

Use of drama

Can speak to people in a way that a third-person monologue can't

BUT

Requires particular skills to ensure it still communicates a cohesive message

Tip #5

Engage People, Don't Offend

People who are angry don't listen

And if a person doesn't hear → the sermon is of no value to him

So think carefully about what you are saying and if what you are saying is likely to cause offense, don't say it, particularly if it is either:

- Unnecessary to say
- Controversial theologically

Exception to the rule

Communicating the gospel is our mission

The gospel can offend people

So if speaking the gospel causes offense, so be it

The Top 20 very worst Christian Sermons of all time!
(3:50-4:15)

The Top 20 very worst Christian Sermons of all time!
(19:48-20:40)

A task...

Go to: www.rapidtables.com/convert/number/binary-to-decimal.html

Your view on hell

0 – Hell is a physical place of eternal conscious torment for all people who have not been saved by Jesus (traditional view)

1 – Hell is described symbolically in the Bible where death and darkness represent the end of conscious existence without resurrection to life after death for all who have not been saved by Jesus (annihilationism)

Your view on the Green party

0 = Quite like it might vote for it or neutral as I feel environmental protection is really important

1= Dislike it intensely due to its stance on freedom of expression by Christians who hold traditional Biblical moral issues

Your view on: Roman Catholicism

0 = Find its teaching on on Mary, the Saints, purgatory and works very sad and frustrating

1 = Feel generally positive about it because of family or personal experience, or simply generally neutral about it

Your view on Holy War in the Bible

0 = Have difficulty reconciling how a God of love could command such destruction and so find these passages of the Bible troubling

1 = God is sovereign and the wars and destruction described do not pose any tension as those destroyed required judgement for their sins of child sacrifice and idolatry

Your view on Genesis 1

0 = Young earth, 6-day, 24-hour Creationism

1 = Old Earth or Theistic Evolution or something in between

Your view on free-will and predestination

0 – God's sovereignty is key and he has commanded everything that happens, including who will acknowledge him and who will not, as well as disasters and wars / Calvinism

1 – Human free-will is key and God has not ordained who will or won't accept him, nor has he ordained all pain and suffering that occurs but rather allows humans to take our own path / Arminianism

Your view on Israel

0 – The re-establishment of the nation of modern day Israel is fulfilment of Biblical prophecy

1 – When Revelation speaks about Israel, it is using the term symbolically, for example, to talk about the church

Your view on speaking in tongues

0 – Tongues as practiced in most charismatic churches are an important expression of the Holy Spirit in believers today

1 – Tongues as described in the New Testament relate to speaking in known human languages for the purpose of proclaiming the gospel; the common expression of tongues in most charismatic churches today probably represents an emotional state of being rather than direction from the Holy Spirit

Your view on Donald Trump

0 – I think he's a pretty good president who has not started any wars and brought about economic prosperity to a nation

1 – I think he's an awful president who makes remarks with racist and sexist undertones and can't believe anyone would vote for him

Your number

Convert our binary number to a decimal number

Share your number with the group

(Would you say any of these issues are crucial issues in faith and life?)

So for 9 non-crucial issues

We have widespread disagreement!

What does this say about talking about these issues when preaching?

Take-home message:

No one thinks exactly the same as you →

There will be issues that you feel strongly about that someone listening feels equally strong about but with an opposite opinion to you →

Do you need (will it be beneficial) to speak about this issue?

→No – Then don't speak about it

→Yes – Then speak about it with humility (e.g. acknowledge the grey zone)

Workshop

A sermon that requires discussion of a difficult issue

Read Romans 9:10-18

Outline the passage:

- Rebekah was told early on that her older child would service the younger because that was God's decision (9:10-13)
- God is not unfair in making these decisions because the choice is his (9:14-15)
- So our future depends not on our effort but on God's mercy (9:16-17)
- This means that God chooses to have mercy on some people and hardens others (9:18)

Journal activity 4-3

Worked example: Romans 9:10-18

A sermon that requires discussion of a difficult issue

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Journal activity 4-3

Worked example: Romans 9:10-18

A sermon that requires discussion of a difficult issue

Summary:

God's mercy to certain people comes through his sovereign choice, not our effort

Need:

Some Christians think that God basically likes nice/good people

This either produces pride (I have earned God's acceptance) or insecurity (I don't deserve God's grace)

Key theme (gospel truth):

We don't deserve God's goodwill but he gives it anyway because of his mercy

Journal activity 4-3

Workshop: Romans 9:10-18

Now write the scenes for a sermon

My attempt at sermon scenes for Romans 9:10-18

We question God's fairness when we see bad people get let off and good people have bad things happen to them

This troubled people in the ancient world too when they heard stories like that of Jacob and Esau (13)

This is because we have a subconscious beliefs in ideas like Karma

But in reality there's actually no such thing as a person who is good enough to deserve God's grace because we're all sinners

So when God pours out his favour on a person or a community, it isn't because of what the person has done, rather it's because God is merciful (16)

And yes, sometimes we can't work out why God shows mercy to one person, but not another – but that's God's concern and is outside of our understanding (14-15)

Our concern is to not fall into the trap of thinking we deserved God's goodwill, or alternatively that we (and others) are too sinful to ever receive God's goodwill

Worked example - first person drama

Read Luke 14:15-25

Outline the passage:

- Jesus told this story in response to a man who said, “The Messianic feast is going to be great.” (14:15)
- A man who had prepared a great banquet sent out his servant to collect the invited guests. (14:16-17)
- But every one of them made pathetic excuses for why they couldn’t come. (14:18-20)
- So the master sent his servant to collect all the needy people in town and, when there was still room, in the surrounding countryside. (14:21-23)
- But none of the original invitees got a taste. (14:24)

Journal activity 10-3

Worked example – Luke 14:15-25

Summary:

God's kingdom will be thrown open to everyone, but many of those first invited will not enter.

Need:

People think that because they have some sort of relationship with God they will get favoured treatment when God does his thing. They think that God prefers them.

Key theme (gospel truth):

God's eternal life is only for those who accept Jesus.

Journal activity 10-3

Workshop: Luke 14:15-25

Imagine you are a character in this story

Write the sermon in scenes

Journal activity 10-3

My attempt at sermon scenes – Luke 14:15-24

I used to be so proud of myself – of my important position in life and my well known family and famous friends

So one day, when I got an invitation to a party from that guy I didn't really want to be seen with, I decided to just not turn up

Later when my friends and I were laughing about how he'd have to cancel the party because no-one wanted to go, I was surprised to see all these other people – unimportant people that I didn't care about – heading off to his house all dressed up

The next day we heard how it was the best party ever – how Jamie Oliver was the chef and U2 had flown in for a private concert and the fireworks were better than Sydney on New Year's – and I realized I missed out all because of my pride

This is a story about heaven – it is going to be to be incredible

And everyone is invited – you included – so don't make excuses and don't miss out – accept the invitation of Jesus!

Tip #6

Be aware of the audience

Who are you talking to?

- On-fire Christians
- Wavering Christians
- Non-Christians – Athiests? Agnostics? People of other faiths?
- Possibly a bit of both

- Kids?
- Teenagers?
- Young adults?
- Older adults?
- A combination?

- A relatively homogenous group of white Australians?
- A very multicultural group?

Worked passage: Speaking to a youth group with many non-Christians

Reads Acts 17

Outline the passage:

- Paul said to the Greek philosophers at Athens: I noticed as I wandered around observing your great spirituality that you have an altar “to an unknown God.” (22-23)
- Let me tell you about this God who is in fact creator and Lord of everything - he doesn't need us but we need him. (24-25)
- He created every nation and governs our lives, living close to us in the hope that we might reach out for him, because we are his children as your poets have noted. (26-28)
- This God is not a human creation, but stands as judge of everyone, demanding repentance and proving his authority by raising Christ from the dead. (29-31)
- Hearing this some sneered at mention of the resurrection, some wanted to hear more, and a few believed, becoming followers of Paul. (32-34)

Journal activity 11-2

Worked passage: Speaking to a youth group with many non-Christians

Summary:

Paul explained to the intellectual elite that the god they thought they might have missed was actually the creator, lord and judge of everyone - wanting a relationship with people and demanding repentance.

Need:

People have a vague idea of God, but they don't really understand who he is or what he wants.

Key theme (gospel truth):

God wants a relationship with you. It's your choice to accept it.

Journal activity 11-2

Workshop: Acts 17:22-34

Develop the scenes for a sermon about Acts 17:22-34 to teenagers
(some of whom are non-Christian)

My attempt at sermon scenes for Acts 17:22-34

One of the things I love about Australia is how we understand that religion is a personal matter of free choice

Back in ancient Athens they understood about religious freedom too and so when a famous Christian visiting the city saw a statue to “an unknown God” he realized that the people were searching for something that they couldn't quite put a finger on.

Now we're not all that different from those people and I reckon that all of us realize that there's something more important than just getting rich and having fun, although we can't always put our finger on what that is either.

So today, I want to tell you what I think life is really all about – I think it's about getting to know God.

I believe that there is a God who both made the whole universe and actually cares for us and I believe we don't need to try and guess what he's like because he came to us as Jesus, to show us what he's like

And I know it sounds crazy, but I believe that although Jesus died, was resurrected and I return one day to take every person who ever lived and sought after him to a new home that lasts forever

And so I reckon that's the real meaning of life – to look for God and to find him.

Let's summarize the tips

- #1 Determine a key theme (Spend time researching and reflecting)
- #2 Figure out a flow (Consider using scenes)
- #3 Make the flow engaging (Consider an inductive style)
- #4 Construct each scene in full (Consider writing out the sermon in full)
- #5 Don't offend unnecessarily (Be humble, gracious and gospel focussed)
- #6 Variety is the spice of life (Use multimedia, story, emotion, drama)

And two more:

#7 Practice

#8 Pray