**Long Range Sermon Planning and Collaborative Sermon Preparation**

Goal: By His grace in this session I trust that God will give us some tools to take our preaching to a higher level. Specifically, I trust that He would enrich our long range sermon planning and He would help us look at a very efficient and effective way to enhance this planning and improve our weekly preaching through collaborative efforts.

**Long Range Sermon Planning**

Description - Prayerfully and Strategically planning what passage(s) will be preached, on what dates and by whom, and, if possible, providing a preliminary idea of the main thrust of the passage.

**You must know:**

Know God’s Word Know your people

So that you can prayerfully bring

those together. What portion of God’s Word is

best for the local body that I serve as pastor?

*So- how do you do it? Here is “a” plan*

**Long range planning of a Book Series**

1. Start with the Text.

Choose a book that matches the strategic need in your congregation

1. Decide on an exegetical outline of the book.

Consult several and then make it your own.

1. Establish the preaching pericopes.

Vary according to exegesis and length of series.

1. Taking one pericope at a time write down the :

Exegetical idea of each pericope - exactly what the text says

Expositional idea (Purpose, hermeneutical idea, meaning) What the text means for

all believers

Homiletical idea - What this text says to us today

1. Create an overarching title for series - Try to make it appealing and applicational

Exodus,

A walk through Exodus,

God redeems Israel, God redeems us.

From a Groaning Family to a Glorifying Nation,

Transforming your groaning about life into a glorifying life,

God draws us out to draw us in. (Village church)

1. Coordinate this with church calendar, taking note of special days.
2. Publish in a form that best suits your setting.

**Long-range Planning of a Topical Expositional Series**

1. Start with a topic - be sure it is a Biblical topic and is of high interest to your people.
2. Decide on key passages that speak to the subject.
3. Establish the preaching texts for each sermon.

Strive to have one central passage for each sermon.

1. Taking one sermon at a time write down:

Exegetical idea

Expositional idea

Homiletical idea

1. Create an overarching title for series.
2. Coordinate this with church calendar, taking note of special days.
3. Publish in a form that best suits your setting.

Examples: Separate handout

**Collaborative or Team Sermon Preparation**

Scripture has many examples of team ministry.

"If I have seen further it is by standing on the shoulders of giants." *- Isaac Newton*

"Many ideas grow better when transplanted into another mind than the one where they sprang up."

- Oliver Wendell Holmes

(http://www.ideachampions.com/weblogs/archives/2010/07/35\_awesome\_quot.shtml)

**What is collaborative sermon preparation or preparing sermons with a team?**

A small group of fellow believers working as a team to create, together, a specific level of sermon preparation.

It is not just brainstorming; it is accomplishing a specific task.

Qualifier - When it comes to the actual preaching, you, as the pastor, have the final say and responsibility.

**Essentials**

1. A clearly defined goal is essential.

Pastors group - Sermon idea for each passage or more

Lay group - Evaluate the clarity of thought and make suggested applications

Pastoral staff- to create a homiletical idea to pass on to worship teams

1. A leader is essential.
2. A set time

**Different types of teams**

1. Different pastors from different churches

Agree to work on a sermon plan and rough draft of a plan for each one

1. Pastoral staff of one church

Weekly worship planning

1. Lay people

Weekly input on sermon dry run

**How do you create a team of pastors to create sermon plans?**

Networking - find out who might be interested

Plan an informational meeting.

Common values

Common theology

Common hermeneutic

Common homiletic

Some Essentials

Leader

Each member has a task

Specific time and place

Agreed upon goal

Allen, Ronald. *Preaching and the Christian Year*, (pp.236-244). Handbook of Contemporary

Preaching. Broadman, 1992.

Blackwood, Andrew. Planning A Year’s Pulpit Work. Abingdon, 1942.

Duduit, Michael. *Sermon Series, (pp.416-418).* The New Interpreter’s Handbook of

Preaching. Abingdon, 2008.

Larson, Craig. *Getting the Most From the Sermon Series*, (pp.439-443). The Art & Craft of

Biblical Preaching, Zondervan, 2005.

Ortberg, John. *The Compelling Series*. (pp.446-448). The Art & Craft of Biblical Preaching.

Zondervan, 2005.

McClure, John. The Round Table Pulpit. Abingdon, 1995.

Pearson, Calvin. Collaborative Sermon Preparation Teams, 1999 Dim Project Gordon- Conwell.

To obtain a copy contact Cpearson@swbts.edu.

Robinson, Haddon. *Planning For A Richer, Deeper Sermon Series,*(p.587). In, The Art &

Craft of Biblical Preaching. Zondervan, 2005.

# Rummage, Stephen. Planning Your Preaching. Kregel, 2002.

# Sebring, Lane. *The Preacher’s Guide to Preparing Sermons in a Team, on* The Preaching Donkey, Feb 24, 2015.

# http://preachingdonkey.com/the-preachers-guide-to-preparing-sermons-in-a-team/

Vanderwell , Howard. *Long-Range Sermon Planning,* (pp.323-234).The New Interpreter’s

Handbook of Preaching. Abingdon, 2008.

Walter, Roger. A Collaborative Sermon Preparation Team at the Seventh-day Adventist Community

Church of Vancouver, Washington. 2012. Dmin Project Andrews University

Wilkerson, F. *Trends in Sermon Series*. (pp.443-446). The Art & Craft of Biblical Preaching.

Zondervan, 2005.

**An Informal Guide**

**Creating a Collaborative Sermon Preparation Team**

**Calvin F. Pearson, DMin. PhD.**

**2017**

**Stage 1: One person is interested**

Before a CPT can start, it must have a leader. Without a leader teams have little chance of forming. As you look through the pages of Scripture or history, groups of people had a leader. At this stage you know that you are interested in starting a team. You have to be the one who helps others become interested. But first you need to know enough to get you started.

**Overview of this stage**

What you need to know.

An individual starts a team.

That person needs a basic understanding of teams.

What you need to do.

Read.

Informally talk with others who might be interested.

Attend an existing CPT.

How long will it take?

1-6 months.

**What you need to know.**

Teams have to be started. There must be a person or an authority that brings people together at one time and place. In the world of business the boss forms teams. People can come together because it is part of their job. But even there, it takes a person to coordinate schedules. If you would like to be a part of a team then chances are that you will have to start one. A team is dependent upon its members for existence. No amount of work on your part can make a team. You need other members, but some how the members have to come together. Coordinating pastors’ schedules to bring them together is hard work. You will need a high level of commitment to get this team started.

Basic understanding of teams. The next stage will give you more details as to how to start one. Right now you need to be sure you understand a few basic principles of teams. If you are going to start one you need to know something about a team and more specifically a CPT. The appendix has a list of seven principles for effective teams. (This appendix is Chapter Three in this thesis). These principles are drawn from reading on the use of teams.

Many pastors have an awareness of small groups. This is a great foundation to build upon. If you need more information, let me recommend, MacBride’s How to Lead Small Groups. This book covers many different kinds of groups. A CPT is a specialized group, so all the concepts won’t apply, but many will. A book that is more focused on teams is Katzenbach and Smith’s Wisdom of Teams. This is a very readable book filled with clear guidelines for teams.

**What you need to do.**

**Read.**

This will be different for each pastor. You don’t have to be an expert in teams to get one started. Start one and learn as you go. Take advantage of the resources. Three are mentioned above.

**Informal conversations.**

Begin to talk about this with other pastors. They might be interested and want to help or at least be a part of the group.

**Attend an existing CPT.**

Unfortunately there are very few in existence. At the writing I only know of three. The best way to find one is to network with fellow pastors and seminary professors.

**How long will it take?**

If you are coming to this with an extensive background in teams then you may be ready to move to the next stage. Most pastors will want to prepare themselves to lead a team. How long that takes is up to you. When you feel you know enough about teams to begin starting one, then go for it. In your informal discussion you may find someone else eager to start a team and would be willing to help you get this started, so much the better. As you read through the following steps, delegate various duties to this other interested person.

It is possible that this other person has the time or aptitude to lead the group. If this happens you must decide who the leader will be. At all stages the group can have only one formal leader. As the team develops each member will take initiative at times, but there can be only one formal leader.

**Stage 2: A group has to become interested**

Without interested members a team cannot form, so you must find and develop potential members. In stage 1, you began to talk with others who might be interested. From these and others you might come across, you will need to make a list of potential team members. Not every one who is interested in being on a CPT will fit into the team you are forming. There are common elements that each person needs to have in order to form a good team. At this stage you will strive to find 12-15 interested pastors who are good potential team members. This list of 12-15 will probably decrease to 5-9 in the team due to availability and interest. If 10 or more remain interested after stage 3, then you may want to start two teams.

**Summary of Stage 2**

What you need to know.

What is necessary in a potential team member?

Common homiletic

Common view of Scripture

Common theological base

Common esteem for other members

Proximity

What you need to do.

Network

### Phone calls

Send a letter laying out purpose, necessary qualifications, and asking about interest.

How long should it take?

3 months to 1 year

**What you need to know.**

**Necessary commonalities in a potential team member.**

In order for the team to work together its members must have enough in common. For a group of pastors to come together and swap ideas, requires little common ground. You can take what you want and leave the rest. But if a team is to create a certain level of sermon development as a team, they must be working towards the same goal with the same process. A pastor who preaches expositionally would not be able to work collaboratively with a pastor who does not.

**There must be a common homiletic**.

How you develop sermons must be similar. What is the source of authority for the sermon? What place do the Scriptures play in the sermon? How does the potential member define preaching? These are difficult questions to answer. One way to solve this is to have a standard. A well-known book can be this standard. Often theological schools and denominations will have a standard homiletic text. My circles of evangelicalism would have Robinson’s text. An older generation would have Broadus’ On the Preparation and Delivery of Sermons (1944) or Davis’ Design for Preaching (1958).

As you talk with potential members mention this specific book and author as the philosophy that the team will be using. Let them know that they need to have a preaching philosophy and system of preparation that lines up with this standard.

**There must be a common view of Scripture**.

How do they view the authority of Scripture? Is it inerrant? What version do they use? A person, who believes that the KJV is the only acceptable translation, wouldn’t fit on a team with someone who uses the NIV. How do they interpret Scripture? What is their hermeneutic? Again, this is a difficult area to test.

A standard for the authority of Scripture may be a doctrinal statement from a seminary or denomination. For example Dallas Seminary, Trinity Seminary, and Gordon-Conwell Seminary have some differences, but they are fundamentally the same. Pastors who hold to any of these statements of faith on the Bible are like minded enough to be a team.

The standard for hermeneutics is similar. Schools and denominations seldom have written statements of hermeneutics. So a standard needs to be found elsewhere. In Robinson’s definition of expository preaching there is a hermeneutical statement: “ . . . the grammatical historical literary interpretation of a passage in its context.” This could serve a common hermeneutic.

As you talk with potential team members, mention what view of Scripture the team will have and the basis for interpretation. If those you talk with have common theological training, then you could use that as a standard. However, even if all the potential team members went to the same seminary, it will be helpful to review your view of Scripture and your hermeneutics.

**There must be a common theological base.**

This will be relative to what level of preparation the team will do together. There must be enough in common theologically that the agreed upon level of sermon preparation be achieved. If you were only discussing various passages and their possible meanings, then theological base line can be very broad. Since you are trying to create together an exegetical idea and homiletical idea, then a common theological base will be narrower. Again, a school’s or denomination’s statement of faith can provide a standard. Even within those there will be occasions where the team will have to agree to disagree and share ideas rather than try to create the ideas as a team.

For example a charismatic and a non-charismatic can collaborate in creating ideas for most passages. Passages that deal specifically with tongues would be handled differently. Both could share their views and benefit from listening to each other, but to collaborate in creating common homiletical ideas on the use of tongues is unlikely. They may settle at a sharing of ideas rather than a team creation of a new idea.

**Members must esteem other members**.

This attitude is critical for each member. In a true team, members view each other as peers and colleagues. Members will be different, but all are of equal importance to the team. If there is an underlying superiority complex, collaboration can’t take place. It is not just a toleration of each other’s view, it is a valuing of another view. Each member should be anxious to hear another view because this helps the team create something new and better. It needs to be stated as a necessary element of a team and let potential members decide if they want to be on a team that requires mutual esteem.

**Potential members must have geographical proximity.**

The members must be able to meet together. For some this will mean living within two or three hours drive of each other. The simple issue is that the members have to be able to meet together.

**What you need to do.**

**Continue networking as in stage 1.**

**Make phone calls.**

Using the contacts made in stage 1, call each person asking if he or she would be interested in receiving some information on a CPT preliminary meeting. Strive to make about 15-18 calls, hoping to have 10-12 who are interested. The phone call should articulate the requirements for a potential team member.

**Set a preliminary meeting date and location.**

If this can be held at a location that involves another pastor it helps with the sharing of responsibilities.

**Send Letter**

This is sent to the 10-12 who expressed interest and should include a RSVP card. This letter puts into writing what you have been talking about in phone conversations. Be sure to include a definition of a CPT (cf. P.63 of this chapter). Also include the time, place and cost if any. The preliminary meeting should take about three hours or less.

**How long will it take?**

This stage could take 3 months to a year. The key is developing interest in enough people to have at least 10-12 invited to the preliminary meeting.

**Stage 3: The group meets to organize itself.**

Finally the group of potential members comes together. This meeting has two parts. The first part is primarily informational, so it will not be like a team meeting or even a small group meeting. There will be a high level of content and a low level of relationships. As the team later develops this will change, but for now, be content to get some important foundational information and assignments behind you. In the second part of the preliminary meeting the team will begin to function as a team. Decisions will be made as a team.

**Summary of Stage 3**

What you need to know.

Essential elements of team organization.

Importance of a demanding challenge: why the team needs to form.

Clear purpose: what the team produces.

Clear process: how the team does it.

Shared duties: each member has a role.

What you need to do.

Prepare for meeting.

Lead the meeting.

Lead team to make role assignments.

Lead team to set date for first team meeting.

Lead team to decide passage from which sermons will be prepared.

How long will it take?

Actual organizational meeting: 3-4 hours.

Preparation for meeting: 10 hours.

Time until team has first sermon preparation meeting: 3-6 months.

**What you need to know.**

**Four essential elements.**

These elements are essential to communicate to the potential team members. If you leave out one of these the team will be less effective. This is a check-list of what must be covered at this organizational meeting.

**(1) A** **Demanding Challenge**

Pastors face the demanding challenge of preaching an accurate, relevant, and interesting sermon to basically the same congregation every week. When the potential sermon team members are reminded of the challenge they face, it could motivate them to work together. Teams are best formed when there is a demanding challenge in front of them. Another challenge is that of fellowship for senior pastors at a peer level. This team can provide that. While it is not the driving purpose it is a benefit that comes out of working as a team.

**(2) A Clear Purpose**.

The broad purpose is to prepare sermons together. This purpose needs to be defined in terms of a specific goal or product. Sermons are prepared at different levels. Your team needs to have a level in mind that they hope to achieve. As the leader you will need to suggest some possible specific products. Fifteen sermons prepared to the level of homiletical ideas could be a specific product. This purpose needs to be defined by the team. This is one of the decisions the team will be making at this meeting. In the future the team may change what they produce, but there must be an agreed upon product.

The benefit of fellowship needs to be mentioned here. Fellowship and support is not the purpose of the team. These things happen as a part of working as a team. They may be more beneficial in a pastor’s life than the sermon preparation. For most pastors, fellowship will be a motivating factor to meet. As important as it is, fellowship is not the purpose of the group. Fellowship and support are not specific goals that a team can work towards. While fellowship and support are important and worthy of working towards achieving, they are difficult to measure. How do you know when you have achieved the goal of fellowship? When it becomes the purpose, the team has a fuzzy focus. Without a clear goal teams don’t function well. As the team works towards a specific goal, fellowship and support are frequently a by-product.

**(3) A Clear Process**

This is something that will undergo changes as the team learns to work together. It will also change when the team works on different passages. In the beginning the team should agree on a clear outline of how the work will get done. A sermon preparation form can give the group a set process for each passage. My current team uses the following form. John Reed, Pastoral Ministries professor at Dallas Seminary, originated it more than ten years ago in a group he called a “Homiletical Ideation Session.” We have used and refined it over the past 10 years.

Text: ­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Exegetical Idea:

Expositional Idea:

Homiletical Idea:

Title:

I want my congregation to:

believe more deeply

feel more strongly

do more readily

Introduction and Conclusion:

Worship Theme:

Songs:

This form provides specific goals for the team to achieve. The team can choose a level of preparation on the form that they will create together. At the other levels they may want to simply make suggestions. This form is only a suggestion and is based upon the homiletical process that my team uses. Your team may have a different form, but a form of this type will help the team have a process to follow.

**(4) Shared duties**

Each member of the team needs to feel that he or she is vital to the team. To help with this, appoint each member a specific task to do on the team. These tasks are in addition to actively participating in creating sermons.

Here are some suggested duties.

1. Food Organizer- responsible to see that food is provided and prepared for the retreat.

2. Housing- responsible to be sure a location is secured.

3. Recorder- responsible to take notes during the team meeting. He or she will probably need a lap-top.

4. Communications- responsible to communicate with the team in between meetings.

5. Worship- responsible to organize some informal worship times at the team meetings.

6. Team leader- he must make sure everything gets done to have the meetings. This will probably be the person who is organizing the preliminary meeting.

7. Work manager- keeps the team working on sermons and facilitates dialogue and discussion. He will need to be knowledgeable about team communication. The principles for an effective team in the appendix and suggested reading in the bibliography can help.

These can be combined or divided depending upon the size of the group. Each team member should have a unique task which the team is depending upon them to complete.

**What you need to do**

**(1) Prepare agenda for the meeting.**

The first organizational meeting must be lead by you. Since the group is meeting for the first time, it is dependent upon you to accomplish the goals of the meeting. Prepare with this in mind.

The agenda for the meeting has two parts: information and then assignment. These two can be divided by a lunch break. Those who want to be part of the team can stay after lunch to formally form the team. Those who would rather not be on the team leave after lunch.

Summary of possible agenda:

(a) Prayer

(b) Introductions of each other

(c) Information about CPT

(d) Conclusion of informational portion

(e) Lunch break

(f) Organizing of the team

(g) Prayer

(a) Prayer. This is not just a way to start the meeting. Without God’s hand in the team it can never be what it should be.

(b) Introductions. Since you are potentially forming a team in which long-term relationships will be formed, it is important to know something about each other. Give each person two to three minutes to describe themselves. This is not just an easy way to start the meeting; it gives the potential members a chance to see if they would want to be on a team with each other.

If needs surface during the introduction time, it might be appropriate to pray again for those specific needs. Be cautious at this point. The goal of the meeting is to organize a CPT; don’t let the need for prayer, prevent this from happening. If some needs are mentioned that demand more time, then suggest after the meeting, those interested gather to pray for that specific need.

(c) Information about a CPT.

What is a CPT?

Using the introduction of this manual and your improvements upon it present the idea of a CPT. Allow time for questions and interaction.

What does a CPT meeting look like?

Each team will develop meeting agendas that fit their team, but an idea of what one looked like is helpful. The basic plan is to spend a set amount of time working on each sermon. The following is an actual agenda from a study of the book of Judges.

**Suggested Schedule for the Fall 96 Ideation**

**Monday** Leading

3:00 Prayer and Worship Time Paul

3:30 Theological-Narrative Literature

and Application for today Elliot

4:15 Decide on Preaching Pericopes Calvin

4:30 Pericope #1

5:30 Dinner break

6:45 #2-3

**Tuesday**

Morning #4-6

Afternoon #7-9

Evening #10 - 11

**Wednesday**

Morning #12

10:00 Decide on next date and book

10:15 Closing Worship time Nathan

11:00 Pack up and head out

What is not scheduled is the informal horsing around and sharing of ministry successes and failures. These unscheduled elements make a better team; so while not planned, they are important. Team meetings can not only be very productive for sermons, they can be very enjoyable.

What have some CPT’s produced?

The following four pages are sample products that have come out of a CPT. Some pericopes have more information than others. This was due to the lack of time to complete that pericope. For example, some pericopes have a suggested worship theme others do not. This was due to a lack of time to create one as a team.

What are the benefits?

1. Time saver- Instead of starting with the exegetical idea on Monday morning you are able to start on the sermon structure.

2. You own the ideas- Often I will find a great idea from another’s work that I want to put into my sermons. I do this, but I lack ownership of the idea. It was something I borrowed. Your CPT allows you to own these ideas that the group created because you were part of the creation of the idea.

3. The synergy of collaborative work- Five to nine pastors will have more ideas than one pastor will have. When those ideas are shared, they spawn more ideas.

4. Helps in long range planning. The team can give you 10-15 sermon ideas in advance.

5. Pastoral fellowship- This is not the main purpose of the team but it is a certain side benefit. You will not have the burden of being the only pastor in the group. They all can identify with struggles of pastoring.

6. Convenient time- You will not be gone a full week. Sunday and mid-week responsibilities will not have to be interrupted.

7. Accountability- This is not the main purpose of the group, but often it happens simply because you are together. As you share your struggles and listen to others share theirs, you will not only have burdens shared, but you will have a team who wants you to succeed.

Let me share an example. Bill (not his real name) was struggling in his marriage and ministry. Due to a difficult set of circumstances his wife did not want to be in ministry. After he shared this, the team prayed and advised him to focus on his marriage and perhaps leave the ministry. He did. He moved to another city and focused on his marriage. Now his marriage is strong and he is back pastoring a church. A word of caution: the team meets to work on sermons, but these kinds of things happen when God brings loving concerned pastors together.

What will it require of me?

1. A commitment to be a team player.

This means that you will come prepared and participate fully in the collaborative preparation process. The passage that is selected to work on as a team must be studied before you come. This should be an in-depth study. Read the passage dozens of times, outline it, and check commentaries on difficult areas.

2. A willingness to take on one of the assigned tasks.

You might be the one who takes on the food coordination.

3. Humility.

The team will function best if each member is always looking to learn from the team.

4. A respect and esteem of the other team members.

When this mutual respect exists, new ideas can be affirmed or shot down. Defensive attitudes can be left at the door when one knows that his fellow team members respect and esteem him.

(d) Conclusion of informational time.

After lunch the team will be organized: tasks will be assigned, a passage selected, a date decided upon. If you would like to be a apart of this new team then come back after lunch. If you would rather not be a part of a team like this then it is not necessary for you to return.

(e) Lunch break.

(f) Organizing of the team.

At this stage the group needs to start functioning as a team. As you lead in making decisions ask for input from the members. It is imperative that there be a consensus regarding the passage and date you decided upon.

1. Make task assignments.

Using the list on p.82, ask for volunteers for each position. Be sure they are all filled. You may have to assign two tasks to one person or assign two people to one task, depending on the size of your group. It is important that every member has a specific task.

2. Decide on a passage.

The passage should be able to be divided into about fifteen preaching units. The number is based upon how many sermons you can work on in two or three days. Meeting for two full days means that you would work on seven or eight per day. In my experience this number works well. A variation of this comes at the level of sermon preparation that you want to achieve as a team. If only exegetical ideas are worked on, then the number of sermons can increase. If the level of team preparation goes into structure of the sermon then the number should decrease. At this beginning stage of your team, let me advise working on 12-15 sermons in a Monday noon to Wednesday noon meeting (48 hours).

3. Decide on a date.

You may have to look six months to a year ahead to coordinate all the schedules. Besides availability of the members, another factor to consider is the possibility of inclement weather. A team that was scheduled to start had to cancel because of snow. You may not have a choice, but if you, do stay away from months where weather is likely to be a problem.

4. Decide on a process.

The form presented above (p.81), is a sample. The group needs to decide if they want to use it or create their own. At the beginning, it would probably be wise to use this form and as the team develops it can create its own form.

A related decision is the level of preparation you hope to achieve as a team. If the team decides on the level of a sermon title, then the team would work until a title was created that all agreed on.

5. Discuss a place to meet.

The team members may have ideas and resources to help the member who is assigned this task. The place to meet doesn’t have to be decided at this point, but it could be helpful to ask if anyone had some suggestions. Groups have used vacation homes of people in their congregation or Christian camps.

6. Exchange addresses and phone numbers.

(g) Close the preliminary meeting with prayer.

At this stage if you have the energy a time of corporate prayer could be beneficial.

**How long will it take?**

The preliminary meeting itself should take about 3- 4 hours including lunch.

The time until the team meets will probably be 3 months to a year.

This stage is a turning point. The team leader still checks up on members, but one person can’t make a team. The team either forms or it doesn’t. Up to now an individual did the work. Now the team must work. Therefore each of the team members needs to have a copy of this manual so they can follow the guidelines in stages 4-6.

**Stage 4: The team meets and works on sermons.**

Now the team meets and begins to get the job done. This time is filled with anticipation. Will it work? How will it work? The first meeting will have a degree of awkwardness. After all you haven’t done this before. Be patient as your team gets to know each other. Let the atmosphere be filled with affirmation of each other. As you hear others ideas take every chance to affirm the one presenting the idea. The team leader may want to review the purpose and process of the team.

**Summary of stage 4**

What you need to know.

Teams require teamwork.

Teams take time to develop.

What you need to do.

(1) Worship and pray for each other.

(2) Decide on the pericopes.

(3) Work on the sermons.

(4) Decide on the next passage and date.

(5) Worship.

How long will it take?

2-3 days for the team meeting.

3-6 months until the next meeting.

**What you need to know**

**Teams require teamwork**

The team needs to know about the functioning of a team. “The Principles for Effective Teams” in the appendix (Chapter 3 in thesis), is a helpful summary. Each team member should digest it. Other resources are cited in the bibliography.

**Teams take time to develop.**

The building of this team will not take place in one meeting. At the end of the first team meeting, there may be a sense of dissatisfaction. This is to be expected. As the team meets a second and third time it will learn how to work as a team and become much more productive**.**

**What you need to do.**

(1) Worship and pray.

The worship helps the team to be unified under the Lordship of Christ. The prayer time allows the team to begin to share each other’s burdens. There must be a degree of sharing of each other’s burdens at the beginning. This develops respect and esteem for each other, which is essential for the team to work well together. A word of caution: there can be too much sharing of ministry or personal problems at this point. If needs surface that demand more attention, then set aside a break time to deal with a particular need. The purpose of preparing sermons must proceed or the group will feel a lack of progress.

(2) Decide pericopes.

This may have been done by the group at its first meeting. The group must agree on the preaching sections of the passage. It works best to do this at the beginning of this first team meeting. This allows the discussion and dialogue to be focused on the content of a passage, rather than losing focus by continuing to discuss how it is to be divided.

(3) Start to work on sermons.

Use the form suggested in stage 3 or a modification of it. The form is to be followed, step by step, down the page. It uses a three-step approach to the Main Idea.

Exegetical idea- exactly what the text says.

Expositional- what it means to all audiences.

Homiletical- what it means to the congregation to whom I will be preaching.

Your group may adopt a form that moves from the exegetical idea to the homiletical. What form you use will be up to the team. Your team must have an agreed upon form or system to follow.

The group should agree on the homiletical idea. By agreeing on the homiletical idea you can focus the discussion on the other elements of a sermon. Without an agreed upon homiletical idea, discussions and dialogue will go in many different directions. After creating a homiletical idea, you can brainstorm ideas for titles, illustrations, introductions, conclusion, and structure. These don’t have to be agreed upon. Just make note of them. After the members return home they can look over the notes and decide what to use and not to use.

The rest of the time together will be spent working on one sermon after another. The team leader needs to monitor the energy level of the team and suggest breaks when needed.

(4) Decide on next passage to preach and next date.

These should be decided at the end of the time together. Be careful to allow enough time for this. The last hour of the meeting should be devoted to this. It must be done. If it is left undone, the logistics of getting everyone together to make this decision is maddening. Be sure the next passage and date are decided upon, even if means sacrificing time to work on sermons.

(5) Close with a time of worship.

After spending hours in the Word of God a team should want to praise Him. A team I was a part of finished the last half of the life of David. This portion of David’s life was depressing and we sensed a need to turn to God. We concluded the team meeting with a time of prayer for God’s protection of our marriages and ministries. Worship takes the academic work and personalizes it.

**How long will it take?**

The team meetings I have been a part of have varied from two days and one night to three nights and three days together. For the group to begin to work together it will need at least two full days, more if possible.

The time until the next meeting can be between three and six months.

**Stage 5: The team continues to grow in its effectiveness.**

Teams need to be growing if they are to be effective. The members grow as individuals and the team grows in its ability to work together as well as in its cumulative knowledge. The relationships are growing as more time is invested in each other’s sermons and lives. This growth needs to be nurtured and encouraged. This stage is an ongoing stage. The team leader is responsible to see that these things take place, but the whole team should participate and even lead in these areas.

**Summary of stage 5**

What you need to know.

Teams need to be learning.

Members need to be held accountable to come prepared.

Teams do end.

What you need to do.

Read books on preaching or related subjects and/or invite special guest to the team meeting.

Find new members as needed.

Remind the team of its purpose.

Refine your process.

How long will it take?

**What you need to know.**

**Teams need to be learning.**

Your team is not a static thing that never changes. It is dynamic. As the members change, so does the team. The team itself therefore changes as you learn to work with each other. The team needs to sense that it is growing. There is the sense of production that comes from sermons being prepared, but the team needs to feel that. Bringing new material to the group for group discussion and dialogue can provide this growth. These are subjects related to preaching. In one team a member had been reading a book on script writing. He shared his insights from this related discipline. This information from his reading gave the team a sense of growing in knowledge and added a new element to the discussions about presenting narrative in our sermons.

**Members need to be held accountable to come prepared.**

One of the challenges for pastors is to make time to prepare for the meetings. The members of the team can benefit from the discussion and dialogue of others without being prepared. This is a temptation that must be resisted. Accountability to the team helps in this area. As members develop a loyalty to the team and each other they feel a greater need to be able to contribute. Teams need to confront members when they are not prepared. It should not be overlooked. A team must expect its members to come prepared. Besides confrontation, members can encourage each other through phone calls or a letter. All the members on the team need to take on this responsibility to insure that members come prepared. The better prepared the members come, the more effective the team will be.

**Membership changes.**

Pastors change churches. That is a reality that effects a team. If a member moves to a location too distant to allow him to remain a member, the team will need a new member.

Use the same criteria for potential members that were used in stage two. Rather than ask the potential member if he wants to be a part of the team, invite him to attend one meeting. Then after he has seen your team and your team has seen him, and the team feels he will be a good addition, then the team can invite him to become a permanent member.

Be cautious in inviting new people. A team I was a part of had a member invite himself not only for a trial, but to be a permanent member. He did not understand the concept of collaboration, nor did he have a willingness to learn from the team. Consequently the team was hurt. At that time the concept of a CPT was so new we didn’t know what to do with him. After a few years he left the ministry and the group. The group should have confronted him and asked him to change or not be a part of the team. While that would have been difficult, it would have helped the group and perhaps the individual as well.

The team may want to expand its size. As noted in the appendix the maximum size for a team to collaborate on sermon preparation is nine or at most ten. If the team wants to increase to this size the same system can be used to add these additional members.

**Teams do end.**

Just as the team decided to form, the team needs to decide to end. Some teams in other disciplines have existed for thirty years. The team members should be experiencing the benefits of the team after two or three meetings. If this doesn’t happen it might be that the team needs to agree to stop meeting.

**What you need to do**

**Read books on preaching or related subjects or bring in special guests.**

The team leader needs to lead the team in choosing a book to discuss. The team needs to be looking out for helpful articles or books that they could share with the team.

Invite a special guest to a meeting. A successful experience my current team had was inviting a scholar to come to the team meeting. As we worked on the book of Judges we invited an Old Testament professor to be a part of the team for that one session. His presence caused the team members to be better prepared. His expertise enhanced our discussions. Not every Old Testament professor could jump into a team like this. It requires willingness to become a part of this team for a short while. His presence helped our team grow.

**Remind team of purpose.**

The team leader needs to remind the team of its purpose. The purpose is to work collaboratively on sermons. This can be done best, by each member coming prepared. If a team member shows a pattern of coming under-prepared then the team leader should lead the team to confront and offer help.

**Find new members.**

When the team loses a member the team leader should ask the team for suggestions for a potential member. The team should agree that a certain person is a potential team member. Someone should be assigned to invite the potential member to a one-time visit to the team. After this, the team can decide if they want to invite the potential member to be a permanent member.

**Refine your process.**

As the team develops the team leader should be responsible to ask how the team could be improved. At the end of a meeting he could lead the team in dialogue about the form that is used. How could it be improved? If a specific area is mentioned the team may want to work towards a specific change. A change in meeting places or days on which the team meets could be improved to refine the team. This refinement is important not only for the actual improvement, but the act of improving as a team gives a sense of growth to the members.

If the team is not growing and improving it might be a sign that the team needs to end. Of course this is a team decision. Teams do end, so if yours is not working well and it seems to have problems that can’t be fixed then it should be ended.

**How long will it take?**

This stage goes on as long as the team exists.

**Chapter 3**

# Principles of Effective Teams

(From Dmin Project- Collaborative Sermon Preparation Teams, Gordon-Conwell Seminary)

“Companies all across the economic spectrum are making use of teams. Self-directed work teams, product design teams, sales account teams, cross-functional teams, process redesign teams- you name it, you are likely to find it” (Katzenbach, 1997, p.83). The business world uses teams extensively.

Simply forming a group of people committed to a common task does not automatically make a team. When a team does not function as a team it is not productive. It can even be counter productive (Katzenbach and Smith, 1993, P.24). If a team is to enhance sermons, it must function effectively as a team.

Over the past decade there have been several outstanding studies of teams. Hackman in Groups That Work and Those That Don’t (1990) wrote about groups, but he frequently called these groups teams. Chris Argyris gives guidelines for more effective communication within teams, in Overcoming Organizational Defenses (1990) and Knowledge for Action (1993). Jon Katzenbach and Donald Smith wrote The Wisdom of Teams in 1993. From their own research and others, they brought together clear guidelines for the effective functioning of teams. Peter Senge wrote The Fifth Discipline (1993) which examines the communication and attitudes of a team. A follow up book to Senge’s is a collection of articles about the practical application of Senge’s principles. Senge is the editor of The Fifth Discipline Field Book (1994). Katzenbach recently published, Teams at the Top (1998) which deals with the particular problems of forming the top leadership of a company into a team. These works form a base from which principles emerge, that apply to a sermon preparation team. Other resources used are cited when needed.

This list of principles for effective teams was formulated with a sermon preparation team in mind. There are other elements of effective teams that apply to different settings.

1. A clear purpose is the most important element of a team.

2. Each member must share the vision of a team.

3. Individual members must carry out their own responsibilities.

4. The organizational elements of the team should encourage teamwork.

5. Teams require communication that ensures teamwork.

6. Teams take time to develop.

7. Teams need leadership.

**Principle #1: A clear purpose is the most important element of a team.**

At every level of an organization there must be a clear purpose. Churches today often need to have a clear purpose. Even sermons are to have a clear purpose. A sermon preparation team must have a purpose. The team should define this purpose. It can vary. The team could produce a homiletical idea, a title and application ideas for each passage, or the product may be a free flowing dialogue about the passage and how to preach it. Whether the purpose is to write specific elements for a set number of sermons, or merely to discuss passages, each group needs to have a clearly defined purpose. Without a purpose there is no reason for the team to exist. Purpose comes from a demanding challenge coupled with a specific goal or product.

This sense of purpose comes from a demanding challenge (Katzenbach and Smith, 1993, p.3). When this challenge is put into terms of a specific goal or product it motivates the members. Members of the team are more likely to commit themselves to the goal and thus to the team when the goal is clear and challenging. A sports team becomes more committed when a championship game lies ahead. For the coach to say, “be the best you can be” to a team playing its last game of a losing season is far less motivating than striving to win a play-off championship game. When a demanding challenge results in the production of a specific product or the achievement of a goal, the team is most effective.

Burlington Northern Railroad had a demanding challenge in 1981. They were at the bottom of the industry in “piggyback” transport. This had always been a problem in the industry due to the history of truckers and railroads seeing themselves as competitors. “Piggyback” or intermodel transport uses trailers that are driven up on a flat car and then transported by rail cross-country. They are then driven to a local destination. Intermodel transport is the combination of trains and trucks working together. Logically it makes sense and good business for the two to work together, but the history of competition created problems across the industry. Burlington Northern had a challenge. They were at the bottom in an area with chronic problems. They formed a team and this team brought them to the top of the industry. Katzenbach attributes this demanding challenge as a major factor in the team's performance. Without this challenge a team may not have formed (Katzenbach and Smith, 1993, p. 30). This challenge helped the team define its purpose.

If a sermon preparation team is to be effective, it must have a demanding challenge. Pastors face the demanding challenge of preaching every Sunday to basically the same people. People are accustomed to creative and innovative communication from the mass media. The pastor must accurately present the truths of Scripture in a fresh, relevant way every Sunday. Preaching one sermon is challenge enough, but pastors do this fifty times a year and some pastors upwards of a hundred times a year. This challenge can give a team a purpose. When a group of pastors feels a compelling need to not only preach well, but to improve themselves as preachers, there exists a basic element on which to build a purpose for a team.

Wanting to preach better is not enough to establish a clear purpose. A specific product or outcome of the team is needed to ensure that there is a clear purpose. Without a clearly defined goal, the team has no sense of purpose for its existence. It is in danger of losing a sense of direction (Katzenbach, 1993, p.156). Defining how a team will improve preaching through a team is essential in establishing a purpose for the group. What will this group accomplish?

A sermon team must decide what it will produce. This will vary from team to team. If a team meets weekly, the purpose could be to produce an outline for a single sermon. If it meets less regularly, the goal could be to collectively produce certain elements of each sermon in a series. For example, a group working on a book series could collectively produce the exegetical and homiletical ideas for each passage, along with a title and illustration ideas. The goal could be to dialogue about each sermon with no intent to define specific homiletical elements.

A clearly defined purpose that comes from a demanding challenge therefore, is the foundation on which to form a collaborative sermon preparation team.

**Principle #2: Each member must share the vision of a team.**

Unless every member buys into the concept of a team, a team cannot function. A pastor should add to his desire to improve preaching the belief that a team could help. One would hope that every pastor wants to improve his preaching. This desire by itself will not aid in developing a team. Each member must be willing to align with others in the group. Peter Senge compares this alignment to a laser beam. The coherent light of a laser uses less energy and is brighter than the incoherent light of a light bulb. One scatters light while the other focuses it (Senge, 1993, p. 235).

Alignment is a group of people functioning as a whole. The Boston Celtics of Bill Russell’s era won eleven championships in thirteen years. It was not because there were super stars on the team, but rather that the team functioned as a whole. In contrast to this is the current powerhouse of the Chicago Bulls. The Bulls are clearly dependent upon Michael Jordan. When he doesn’t play, they don’t win the championships.

When a group of pastors shares the vision of functioning as a whole in order to improve preaching, the team has another element in achieving a clear purpose.

**Principle #3: Individual members must carry out their own responsibilities.**

Individuals make up teams. That simple and obvious fact must be remembered. The team is only as good as its members. Each member must contribute. The level of contribution can vary, but each member must feel that he is contributing to the team and the team must sense that each member is contributing. These individual responsibilities include: (1) willing to learn from the team, (2) a commitment to improving themselves and (3) leadership of the team when necessary.

(1) Each member must be willing to learn from the team. This is more than gaining new ideas from another individual. A team should function at a higher level than simply serving as a resource for new information. When the team gathers there is a collective learning that is greater than one individual sharing his or her ideas. As discussion and dialogue take place, new ideas are generated within the context of the team. Each member must be willing to learn from this collective effort. This attitude is foundational. It creates an atmosphere in which inquiry into ideas is invited and encouraged (Argyris, 1990, pp. 106-107).

As pastors come together with preconceived ideas about a passage and how to preach it, it is important for them to be willing to let those ideas be tested. There must also be a willingness to test the ideas of other pastors. This testing could be withheld out of concern for the feelings of another person. However, when each member is expecting to learn something from the team, ideas flow more freely. The reason a team was formed was to use its collective resources to evaluate and to create new ideas. When a pastor comes expecting to learn from the team, there is a greater chance of that taking place.

(2) Each member must work at improving himself. Peter Senge calls this “personal mastery” (Senge, 1993, p.141). People with personal mastery are always learning more. They can’t get enough information about their work and themselves. This passion for learning creates a climate in which the team can always be learning. This attitude helps the team because when its members are eager to learn not only about a subject, but also, about themselves they are open to change and new ideas.

Pastors may come together to produce a better sermon series, but that must not be the only thing that motivates them. Each of the pastors must desire to be all that God wants them to be. There should be a spirit of constant learning about preaching and pastoring. This desire of each individual improves the team. As members make an effort to learn, they have an eagerness to meet and learn in a way that could not take place without the team.

(3) Each member must be willing to take initiative. In the most effective teams, individual members take whatever steps are necessary to remove obstacles to team performance. Teams have a formal leader, but teams perform best when initiative emerges from many members. This initiative on the part of a member is a temporary shifting of leadership (Katzenbach and Smith, 1993, p.80). This was not a shifting of the formal leader but a short-term shift to solve a particular problem. Formal leadership can also shift. At Dow Corning an engineering team chose the leader of a project based on the member’s area of expertise. There was no assigned permanent leader, but rather the team would decide who would lead as a project came to them (Bender, 1998).

As a team of pastors working on a sermon, there must be a formal leader. Members must not look to that leader however, as the only one with initiative. As a discussion becomes excessively involved and needs someone to summarize and perhaps move on to a new topic, members must be willing to take initiative rather than wait for the team leader. The team leader might be engrossed in the discussion and doesn’t sense the need to move ahead. A temporary shifting of leadership should take place. By being willing to lead, each member takes on a responsibility to be sure the team gets its job done. This makes for a more highly motivated team because each member feels responsible that the team performs well. Formal leadership could shift as well. If there is a sermon series that one member is particularly equipped to lead because of background or education, the mantle of leadership could shift in a formal sense.

There are different forms of leadership. The team needs to agree who is the leader. If there is a formal shift then the team needs to agree. The team must not expect the leader to perfectly lead. At times individuals on the team will need to take initiative to lead the team. This is done with the agreement of the formal leader and the team.

Teams are made up of individuals who are willing to share the load. Members must see that, a team best carries the load. This creates a willingness to learn from the team. They should have a passion for learning and improving themselves, which motivates them to carry the load. They should be willing to take on the additional burden of leadership when needed.

**Principle #4: The organizational elements of the team should encourage teamwork.**

Thus far, the principles have been person-centered. After all, people make up teams. There are some elements of a team related more to the organization or system the team uses. These elements of a team can hinder it or help it. If the best attitudes and action are in a poor structure they will inhibit if not prevent, a team from functioning. When the (1) right number of people come together, with a (2) routine that prompts team work, (3) using a process that leads to a product and a (4) deadline is in place, an effective team is more likely to emerge.

(1) The number should be between five and ten. The number in the team should be appropriate for the task. Katzenbach and Smith set the limit on a team at, twenty-five and puts the ideal number at less than ten (Katzenbach and Smith, 1993, p.45). As the group grows in size, relationships become more complicated and the logistic decisions for a time and place to meet are multiplied. True dialogue and specific purposes are much harder to achieve as the number grows (Katzenbach, 1993, pp.45-46). Brilhart cites a work done in 1927 which demonstrates that a group of six solves complicated problems better than a group of three. He adds his own research and sees the best size as being five, seven or nine. This allows for the best sharing of ideas from all members. In the larger groups, alliances take place and sub-groups form within the larger group that may hinder the team process (Brilhart, 1974, p.33).

The larger the group, the logistics of bringing a team of pastors together at one time and place becomes increasingly difficult. The size of the group is a balance of a number large enough for teamwork to take place and yet not too big to be a logistical nightmare. Considering Katzenbach and Smith, and Brilhart, it seems that the ideal size would be between five and nine. If a larger group met, then subdividing the sermon preparation discussion would be helpful.

(2) The routine for discussion and dialogue should encourage teamwork. When the team meets, there should be a routine or process that encourages teamwork. Argyris identified a model of organizational behavior that prevents the organization from learning and functioning as a team. This behavior began with advocating a position, then evaluating the other positions and then choosing the best of the ideas. This limits the learning that can take place in the group and encourages defensive behavior (Argyris, 1993, p.52). A routine should be in place that allows presentations of views in such a way that the team will feel great freedom to evaluate the view. The routine of dividing up a problem so that each member has an individual area of expertise encourages defensive behavior. Members with preconceived solutions usually try to prove their findings. A better routine is for all the members to work on the problem with close to equal preparation and expertise. This helps take away the sense of one member being the authority in his or her particular area.

As pastors come together it would be quite logical to divide the sermon up in such a way that each pastor works on a limited number of sermons before hand and comes prepared to present his findings. The assumption is better and more in-depth preparation would take place. While the strength of such a system would result in greater depth of study by an individual pastor on one sermon, the weakness is that it creates a climate for defensive communication. Evaluation would be less likely because the members would want to trust each other. If a certain pastor did the work, then why question him? This type of routine does not destroy the team, but it does set up an obstacle to overcome. Each member should come equally prepared on each of the sermons. This encourages the team to create a new product that comes from the team. It is the team creating, not just accepting and revising a single member’s work. Pastors in a preparation team should not come with final sermons produced but rather an equal amount of preparation done on each sermon.

(3) The process should ensure the production of a product. Focusing on teamwork and team building may build relationships, but it does not produce a product. The team needs to have a meaningful piece of work to do that can be done by a team. It should be something that each member can share in the responsibility to accomplish. When a goal is achieved, the team can have the sense of accomplishment and progress (Hackman,1990 p.10).

The team of pastors should agree upon elements of a sermon that the team can produce. This at least would be a discussion about the passages or topics to be preached. It may go as far as the full outline. The team should agree upon a certain level of sermon development as a goal for each passage. The elements could include: exegetical idea, homiletical idea, title, introduction, conclusion, illustrations, and structure. A clear procedure to arrive at these goals could be a form that the team completes. The elements of sermon preparation would be listed with blanks. It would form a checklist for the team. If not a form, then a clear understanding that each sermon will have certain elements completed before the team moves on to the next sermon. Pastors need to have a specific amount of work that will be completed on each sermon.

(4) Deadlines help team production. Hackman says that without deadlines, teams have fuzzy goals that always lead to problems (Hackman, 1990, p. 480). Many times a team has a deadline that comes from an outside source such as preparing for an inspection or the beginning of a game or a performance. If deadlines are not imposed upon a team it is important for the team to create its own deadlines.

A sermon team has a time frame imposed upon its members by their schedules. This total time is divided into smaller units. These units of time spent on each sermon can vary and yet there must be an agreed upon maximum amount of time for each sermon. Deadlines keep members focused and give members a reason to cut off another member’s chasing of rabbits. The amount of time per sermon depends upon the total amount of time the team has together and the number of sermons with which they will work. After those are agreed upon, it is easy to come up with an average time per sermon. The purpose of deadlines is to help the process. Thus, the team holds to them with a degree of flexibility. One sermon may take longer than another.

Organizing the structure of a team is necessary. Organization allows for better production, which results in a better team, which leads to better production.

**Principle # 5: Teams require communication that ensures teamwork.**

Everyone communicates, but to communicate as a team requires special skills. All people communicate. Many people participate in a discussion or the exchange of ideas in a group setting. Discussions can help people to see other points of view and help them better understand their own point of view. To have a productive discussion the team needs to practice group communication skills. Brilhart’s guidelines for these skills are the foundation for the following list (Brilhart, 1974, pp.53-72).

1- Be open to other points of view.

2- Speak to the group, not to individual members.

There is a tendency for members to speak to the leader of the group rather than the group. A little practice makes speaking to the group second nature.

3- Guard against monopolizing.

Guarding against monopolizing begins with each member, but the group must prevent this from happening by courteously interrupting one who is monopolizing and if necessary even confronting them.

4- Listen to understand.

Be person-centered rather than word-centered. When meaning is not clear, members of the team should use questions and paraphrasing to ensure that they understand another member.

5- Avoid, labeling, clichés and dismissal.

When a label is used it often shuts down discussion. (“That’s a liberal or a fundamentalist view.”) Labeling phrases can cause members to unjustly categorize. Clichés give the false assumption that everyone agrees. (“Well, you know what they say, ‘Haste makes waste.’ ”) This can divert the group into discussing the truth and meaning of the cliché. Dismissal ends the discussion by the group giving up. “It won’t work, so why bother talking about it.”

6- Be as specific and accurate as possible.

A group is not the place to say everything that comes to mind. Thoughts and views should be evaluated by the purpose of the group and then carefully stated.

Senge takes group discussion a step further. He encourages teams to move through discussion to achieve the more productive level of dialogue. Team dialogue is accessing the IQ of the team which is greater than the sum of the individual member’s IQ’s. In dialogue, a team accesses a pool of knowledge that individuals by themselves could not access. Senge states, “All of us have some taste of dialogue- in special conversations that began to have a 'life of their own,' taking us in directions we could never have imagined not planned in advance. But these experiences come rarely, a product of circumstance rather than systematic effort and disciplined practice” (Senge, 1993, p.239). Team members should learn to dialogue.

Dialogue and discussion both take place in the team, but when teams only discuss, the value of the team is decreased. Senge says that the distinction between the two must be understood, so that teams will not only discuss but they will move on to dialogue. Discussion is like a Ping-Pong match where ideas are hit back and forth until one idea wins. This is a valuable part of team communication, but it fosters a competitive spirit because the purpose is to win. In dialogue the team is the one who wins. The purpose of discussion is to find the existing view that is the right one. Dialogue goes beyond that. As the team shares views, it is working towards an understanding that may not exist in the individual members. The team is searching for that idea that comes because of the interaction. In dialogue members gain insights that could not be individually achieved. When the right idea or solution emerges from the team it is not a member who wins. A member may have stated it but because it was in the context of the team dialogue, it is the team's creation. The team wins.

Senge cites conversations that he had with physicist David Bohm, for guidelines in achieving dialogue (Senge, 1993, p. 243).

1. Members should suspend their assumptions. This is not giving up views, but rather putting them out in front for the team to inspect. This suspension of views helps greatly in reducing defensive communication. In that moment the view is free for inspection for it belongs to the team.

2. All members must regard each other as colleagues. This seems too simple to mention, but it must be a conscious act. If ideas are to flow freely there must not be the concern with who said what. If there is a hierarchy then dialogue will be shut down because the members will be hesitant to share views because of results that could follow.

3. There must be a facilitator who insures that dialogue takes place. Thoughts continually move towards discussion. It is natural to want affirmation of one’s view. In seeking to affirm ones view dialogue is cut short. The defender of a view is no longer concerned about learning. He steps into a proving mode. The facilitator reminds the team to strive for dialogue and sets an example of dialogue.

Learning to communicate in a team context while working on a sermon which is at the other end of the communication spectrum will be challenging. The very convictions that cause a pastor to want to better communicate the truths of the Bible could be seen as a hindrance to dialogue. Pastors hold to a set of beliefs, many of which are not up for discussion and certainly not dialogue. But dialogue does not hurt the truth; it rather strengthens one's adherence to it.

Suspending assumptions is a difficult stance to learn to take. Your assumptions are tied closely to your deepest beliefs and values; if anyone challenges them, he is challenging the feelings closest to your heart. Normally, you protect your assumptions from inquiry, instead of saying, for example, “Go on. Can you help me see something else about my deepest beliefs that I’m not now seeing?” Implicit in the willingness to suspend assumptions is a sense of confidence; that if your deepest beliefs are worthwhile, they’ll withstand inquiry from others, and if they’re not, you’ll be strong enough and open enough to reconsider them. (Bryan Smith, in Senge, 1994. p.379)

Dialogue requires a humble spirit. As pastors come together they will need to revisit their belief that God is sovereign and His truth will stand. They need to affirm their belief that God is at work in them and other pastors. Pastors can take this concept of dialogue a step further. It is not only that team members can learn from each other, but God has structured His church in such a way that teamwork is expected. Pastors can experience dialogue without fear of losing the truth, but rather through dialogue, truth can be better understood and applied.

Pastors will need to learn to communicate as a team. This will take practice. The team members should become familiar with these skills through independent reading. (See Chapter Five for suggested books). They should also make a concerted effort to dialogue at the team meetings.

**Principle # 6 Teams take time to develop.**

A team is not static; it grows. If it is not growing then it is not functioning. As the team members interact they grow in knowledge as they gain new insights. Their communication grows more effective as they better understand each other. The team itself gains momentum as it achieves goals. The teams that perform best have members who have a high degree of commitment to each other (Katzenbach and Smith, 1993, p.65). How long does it take to build commitment? Real teams emerge when the members take risks involving conflict, trust and interdependence, and hard work (Katzenbach and Smith, 1993, p.109). All this growth takes time. Groups *become* teams; they don’t start out that way. This process of becoming a team takes an informed effort over a period of time.

How long does it take to do these things? It is difficult to put an exact time schedule on the growth of a team. Katzenbach and Smith suggest spending several three-day retreats together for the team to learn to function as a team. This is followed by regular meetings in an office setting (Katzenbach and Smith, 1993, pp.125-126). Isaacs and Smith suggest agreeing to meet three times before deciding to disband (Isacs and Smith in Senge, 1994, p.380). Becoming a team takes time.

Pastors will need to give time to the team. As the team first meets more time should be given to informal relationship building. As these relationships are built, more time can be given to the formal task of producing a sermon. Lyman Coleman calls this the ribbon cake theory. A ribbon cake has a mixture of chocolate and vanilla. At one end of his cake there is a mostly chocolate and at the other mostly vanilla with a gradual change in between them. The group should start out with a higher percentage of time devoted to relationship building and gradually increase the time given to production of a product (Coleman, 1976, p.24). The first two or three times a group meets the production of sermons may not be totally satisfactory. The quality and quantity should improve as the group continues to meet.

**Principle # 7: Teams need leadership.**

Teams are wonderful things, but in order to have a team there must be a leader or leaders. A team has to have a beginning point. It can’t do anything until it comes together. After it comes together it needs guidance to maintain the team process and accomplish its purpose. A team must have leadership.

The leader sees himself as part of the team but with a specific function to perform. The leader sets aside the mantel of leadership in order to be a true member of the team. When the team strays from the purpose or becomes bogged down in unnecessary discussion he puts that mantel back on in order to serve the team. Leaders do not see the team as needing them but rather the leader needs the team. The team is the hero and the leader’s goal is to see it succeed. Katzenbach lists the duties of a leader (Katzenbach and Smith, 1993, pp.139 -145). Based upon his list the following list of duties can be applied to a sermon preparation team leader.

1. Keep the purpose, goals and approach relevant and meaningful. Many times the team will stay on course and not need the leader to step in. The leader may just sit and watch it happen. When necessary a short reminder of purpose can turn the group back to meaningful dialogue. At times a team will lose energy. The leader may step in and speak of the importance of preaching and the lives that will be changed.

2. Build commitment and confidence. As members of a team take initiative in discussion and dialogue, they become vulnerable. As a member presents an idea or makes a comment, the team evaluates it. Members need encouragement to continue to share their thoughts. Whenever possible, the leader should affirm them. As a whole the team needs to hear that it is functioning as a team. The leader should set an example of encouragement. The team needs to hear that it is working and that each individual is contributing. This positive feedback to individuals and to the team builds confidence.

3. Be responsible to manage relationships to outsiders. The team can communicate to itself as a team, but to those outside the team, communication and relationships are non-team. These outsiders are not on the team and thus outside of the team relationships. Thus, the leader speaks on behalf of the team. This involves the logistics of setting up meetings, inviting guests to the meetings, or any other communication with someone outside the team.

4. Be responsible to maintain communication with members when the team is not meeting. In between meetings, things change. A meeting place may change or there might be a crisis in the life of a team member. Some changes or events should be communicated to the team members as soon as possible. If it is that kind of information, the leader must be responsible for necessary communication with team members when the team is not meeting.

5. Start the team. A team cannot call itself into existence. There must be someone who selects potential team members and sets up a meeting. The leader takes the initiative.

Bringing people together as a group calls for work. “When” and “where” to meet must be decided. They must be motivated to come. Activities for the group must be planned and carried out. This work is just the beginning of a team. To move the group into the synergistic advantage will take a commitment to these principles. The improved product that a team can produce is worth the effort. **References**

Argyris, Chris. (1993). Knowledge for Action. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Argyris, Chris. (1990). Overcoming Organizational Defenses. Needham Heights, MA: Simon and Schuster.

Bender, David. (1998). Personal interview.

Brilhart, John. (1974). Effective Group Discussion. Dubuque, IA: Brown.

Coleman, Lyman. (1976). Encyclopedia of Serendipity. Serendipity House.

Hackman, Richard, ed. (1990). Groups that Work (and Those that Don’t). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Katzenbach, Jon (1997). The Myth of the Top Management Team. (1997, Nov/Dec). Harvard Business Review.

Katzenbach, Jon. (1998). Teams at the Top. Boston: Harvard Business.

Katzenbach, Jon and Smith, Douglas. (1993). The Wisdom of Teams. New York: Harper Business.

Senge, Peter. (1993). The Fifth Discipline. New York: Doubleday.

Senge, Peter. (1994). The Fifth Discipline Fieldbook. New York: Doubleday.

2017 Preaching Plan

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| DATE | Sermon # | Text | Theme | IDEA | Preaching | Wed. | Mon. |
| **1/1/17** | **1** |  |  | New Year's sermon |  |  |  |
| **1/8/17** | **2** | **Gen 1-­‐2** | Family | Origin of the Family -­‐ God's plan for society |  |  |  |
| **1/15/17** | **3** | **Eph 5:22-­‐6:4** | Family | Order for the Family-­‐ A Covenant: Faith based love and submission |  |  |  |
| **1/22/17** | **4** | **Eph 4:1-­‐7** | Family | Oneness of the Family -­‐ Unity is for the family. ( Titles were borrowed from Tony Evans.) |  |  |  |
| **1/29/17** | **5** | **Jn 1:19-­‐34** | Encountering Jesus | John the Baptist -­‐ This is who I've been waitng for. (Baptism Sunday) |  |  |  |
| **2/5/17** | **6** | **Jn 1:43-­‐51** | Encountering Jesus | Nathaniel -­‐ Skeptic turned student |  |  |  |
| **2/12/17** | **7** | **Jn 3:1-­‐16** | Encountering Jesus | Seasoned sage needs salvation. Communion D-­‐Now |  |  |  |
| **2/19/17** | **8** | **4:1-­‐42** | Encountering Jesus | Woman at the well -­‐ Vulnerability (to Jesus) leads to worship. Rush |  |  |  |
| **2/26/17** | **9** | **4:46-­‐54** | Encountering Jesus | Royal officer -­‐ (Son was healed.) Taking Jesus at His word. |  |  |  |
| **3/5/17** | **10** | **8:2-­‐11** | Encountering Jesus | Woman caught in adultery – Go and sin no more. (overcoming sexual sins) |  |  |  |
| **3/12/17** | **11** | **9:1-­‐41** | Encountering Jesus | Healing of the man born blind -­‐ Only the blind are given sight. Sp Break |  |  |  |
| **3/19/17** | **12** | **11:1-­‐46** | Encountering Jesus | Raising of Lazarus -­‐ How can you not believe? |  |  |  |
| **3/26/17** | **13** | **13:1-­‐11** | Encountering Jesus | Peter-­‐ Jesus washing his feet-­‐ Salvation requires humility to let Jesus serve us. (Baptism Sunday) |  |  |  |
| **4/2/17** | **14** | **18:28-­‐19:16** | Encountering Jesus | Pilate -­‐ Come on Pilate, you have to decide. |  |  |  |
| **4/9/17** | **15** | **19:16-­‐20:1** | Encountering Jesus | Mary Magdalene -­‐ She saw the crucifixion and still believed. Palm Sunday |  |  |  |
| **4/16/17** | **16** | **20:24-­‐31** | Encountering Jesus | Thomas has to touch to believe -­‐ Real faith in a real resurrection Easter |  |  |  |
| **4/23/17** | **17** | **Gen 1** | God Encountering  Culture | True authority -­‐The creator has the authority and perspective to rule. |  |  |  |
| **4/30/17** | **18** | **Gen 2** | God Encountering  Culture | The true family -­‐ Male and female is God's design for a family. |  |  |  |
| **5/7/17** | **19** | **Gen 2, Prov** | God Encountering  Culture | True masculinity -­‐ the Creator's idea of masculinity |  |  |  |
| **5/14/17** | **20** | **Gen 2, Prov** | God Encountering  Culture | True femininity -­‐ the Creator's idea of femininity **Mother's Day** |  |  |  |
| **5/21/17** | **21** | **Proverbs 19** | God Encountering  Culture | True communication -­‐ Encountering honesty in a world of lies Grad Sunday ?? |  |  |  |
| **5/28/17** | **22** | **Rom 1:21-­‐32** | God Encountering  Culture | True worship -­‐ This is the famous homosexuality passage, but this is just one of the problems that comes out of  worshipping creation rather than the creator. (Baptism Sunday) |  |  |  |
| **6/4/17** | **23** | **Prov 23:31, 20:1** | God Encountering  Culture | True thinking (sobriety) -­‐ Encountering a world of drugs |  |  |  |
| **6/11/17** | **24** | **Ps 73** | God Encountering  Culture | True perspective of things -­‐ Encountering the giver VBS week prior |  |  |  |
| **6/18/17** | **25** | **S of S, I cor 7** | God Encountering  Culture | True intimacy -­‐ Sex is for marriage, and marriage is for sex. |  |  |  |
| **6/25/17** | **26** | **Prov 5** | God Encountering  Culture | True control -­‐ Natural desires must be controlled supernaturally. Winshape prior Wk |  |  |  |
| **7/2/17** | **27** | **Exodus 20** | God Encountering  Culture | True freedom encountering God's rules -­‐ They free rather than hinder. |  |  |  |
| **7/9/17** | **28** | **Matt. 11:25-­‐30** | Encountering God | **We** can encounter the **incomprehensible** God through trusting and knowing His Son.  Students at Camp |  |  |  |
| **7/16/17** | **29** | **Rev. 1** | Encountering God | When **John** receives the vision, he encounters the **triune** God. Communion |  |  |  |
| **7/23/17** | **30** | **Exodus 19** | Encountering God | The **Children of Israel** encountered a **Holy** God before He gave them the law. |  |  |  |
| **7/30/17** | **31** | **Judges 7:1-­‐23** | Encountering God | When **Gideon** thought he needed 1000's, he encountered a **self-­‐sufficient** God who  doesn't need anything or anyone. (Baptism Sunday) |  |  |  |
| **8/6/17** | **32** | **Exodus 3:13-­‐14** | Encountering God | When **Moses** wanted to know God's name, he encountered the **self-­‐existent** God. |  |  |  |
| **8/13/17** | **33** | **Job 42:1-­‐6,**  **38:1-­‐** | Encountering God | When **Job** has endless questions, he encounters the **omniscient** God. |  |  |  |
| **8/20/17** | **34** | **Daniel 4:1-­‐37** | Encountering God | When **Nebuchadnezzar** thinks he is most powerful, he encounters the **all-­‐powerful** God. |  |  |  |
| **8/27/17** | **35** | **Psa. 139:7-­‐12** | Encountering God | **David** encountered the **omnipresent** God in the cave and in the palace. |  |  |  |
| **9/3/17** | **36** | **Malachi 3:6,**  **James 1:17** | Encountering God | **Malachi** is pronouncing that God will remain faithful, encounters the **unchanging** God. |  |  |  |
| **9/10/17** | **37** | **II Chron. 33** | Encountering God | When **Manasseh** humbled himself, he encountered the  amazing **grace** of God. communion |  |  |  |
| **9/17/17** | **38** | **1:1-­‐19** | Jeremiah-­‐ Encountering Everlasting Love | Encountering God's empowerment |  |  |  |
| **9/24/17** | **39** | **2:1-­‐10:25** | Jeremiah-­‐ Encountering Everlasting Love | Encountering worthless living **(Baptism Sunday)** |  |  |  |
| **10/1/17** | **40** | **11:1-­‐20:18** | Jeremiah-­‐ Encountering Everlasting Love | Encountering God's expectations |  |  |  |
| **10/8/17** | **41** | **21:1-­‐29:32** | Jeremiah-­‐ Encountering Everlasting Love | Encountering God's correction |  |  |  |
| **10/15/17** | **42** | **30:1-­‐31:26** | Jeremiah-­‐ Encountering Everlasting Love | Encountering God's glorious future for us communion |  |  |  |
| **10/22/17** | **43** | **31:27-­‐37** | Jeremiah-­‐ Encountering Everlasting Love | Encountering God's gift of a new heart |  |  |  |
| **10/29/17** | **44** | **31:38-­‐33:26** | Jeremiah-­‐ Encountering Everlasting Love | Encountering God's faithfulness |  |  |  |
| **11/5/17** | **45** | **34:1-­‐45:5** | Jeremiah-­‐ Encountering Everlasting Love | Encountering obedience to God |  |  |  |

draft (12-­‐13-­‐16)

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **11/12/17** | **46** | **46:1-­‐51:64** | Jeremiah-­‐ Encountering Everlasting Love | Encountering God's desire that all be saved |  |  |  |
| **11/19/17** | **47** | **52:1-­‐34** | Jeremiah-­‐ Encountering Everlasting Love | Encountering God's everlasting and long reaching love |  |  |  |
| **11/26/17** | **48** |  |  | Focus on Baptism and communion Sunday after Thanksgiving |  |  |  |
| **12/3/17** | **49** |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **12/10/17** | **50** |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **12/17/17** | **51** |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **12/24/17** | **52** |  |  | **(Christmas Eve)** |  |  |  |
| **12/31/17** | **53** |  |  | **(New year's Eve)** |  |  |  |



JANUARY -APRIL 2017

Prophecy Fulfilled

#### Aseries of eight studies in Matthew's gospel

***Series Preacher: Mark Dever***

**January s** "From You Shall Come a Ruler"

**January 15** "Out of Egypt I Called My Son"

**January8** Matthew 2:1-12

"From You Shall Come a Ruler"

**January 15** Matthew 2:13-15

·out of Egypt I Called My Son"

**January 22** Psalm 148

February 12

Febrnary 19

1!11l!.rch12

Marcb19 Marcb28 April 16

"They *Are* No Mora"

'He Would Be Called a Nazarene" 'The Voice of One Crying in the

## Wilderness

* A Light Has Dawned"

## "Blessed *Are* the Poor in Spirit"

To Fulfill the Law and tfle Prophets

The Praise of Creation

**January 29** Psalm 34

The Praise of the Righteous

**February 5** Romans 12:1-8

Do Not Be Conformed to This World

**February 12** Matthew 2:16-18

"They Are No More"

**February 19** Matthew 2:19-23

How to Be Happy

### Three studies in Romans 12-13

Febrnary 5 Do Not Be Conformed to This World

#### Preacher: Andy Johnson

**February 26 Love Both Friend and Enemy**

### Preacher: Blake Boylston

April 2 SUbmit to tfle Government

### Preacher: John Joseph

Let Everything That Has Breath

Praise the Lord

***Six studies in the Psalms***

**January 22 The Praise of Creation**

**January 29** The Praise of tfle Righteous

### Preacher: Lyle Wetherston

**Marcb 5** The Praise of tfle Redeemed

### Preacher: Jason Rivette

**April 9** The Praise of God's People

### Preacher: Charles Hedman

Ji.pril :as The Praise of tfle King

April 30 **The Praise of Heaven**

### Preacher: Blake Boylston

'He Would Be Called a Nazarene"

**February 26** Romans 12:9-21

Love 8otfl Friend and Enemy

**Mareb5** Psalm 40

The Praise of the Redeemed

**March 12** Matthew 3:1-4:11

'The Voice of One Crying inthe

## Wilderness"

**Mareh 19** Matthew 4:12-25

"A Light Has Dawned"

**Marebll6** Matthew5:1-16

"Blessed are the Poor In Spirit"

**April 2** Romans 13:1-7

SUbmlt to tfle Government

**April 9** Psalm 65

The Praise of God's People

**April 16** Matthew 5:17-20

To Fulfill tile Law and tfle Prophets

**Aprll 23** Psalm 101

The Praise of the King

**April 30** Psalm 149

## The Praise of Heaven