

## CT Sample Teaching Curriculum: Sermon Outlines

In the following pages, you will find four sample sermon outlines on the core Christian doctrine of *soteriology*. These outlines are merely suggestions to help you get started—if you choose to use them, please adapt them to your own ministry needs and cultural context. In particular, each outline includes suggested ideas for the introduction and for various illustrations along the way, but we encourage you to come up with your own for these.

Even though we have provided you with sample outlines here, it is essential that you spend dedicated time in prayer and studying/meditating on key Bible passages in preparation for each sermon. Examining scholarly resources is also helpful after you have done this—note that you have several options available for this in the Logos package given to Tracks students. After the Bible, you will likely find that the three items listed below will be your best resources in preparing to teach these lessons:

- The “Our Sin and Christ’s Atonement” course from your required video lectures
- *Essentials of Christian Theology* by Holsteen and Svigel from your assigned reading (especially Chapters 3 and 4)
- *The Atonement: An Introduction* by Jeremy Treat from your assigned reading

Below are a few additional tips to keep in mind as you go about preparing for each sermon. Remember—when delivering each sermon, be **“text-centered and audience-focused”**!

In working through a text, here are some helpful questions to ask:

- What is this text, functionally? What is it trying to achieve in the context of the book? (Exhortation, prayer, oracle, explanation, example, confession, etc.)
- What is the subject of this passage?
- What is the author saying about this subject?
- What responses might the Holy Spirit want from believing readers of the text?
- How does this passage elicit the intended response?
- How does this passage contribute to the larger picture, the drama of redemption?

Below are some common “bottlenecks” to watch out for, given that they can hinder the effectiveness of one’s preaching:

- Unbelief or little faith: “Preachers who fail to trust God or believe what he has said will not consistently speak for him.”
- Unqualified or disqualified preacher: “Those who have *not* been called and equipped to preach or who have *apparently* been called to do so but disqualified themselves in some way will not be able to preach biblically.”
- Faulty text selection: “By choosing too much text, too little text, or too many texts, [preachers] set themselves up for failure as those called to speak for God.”
- Inadequate understanding of the text: “Those who do not study the preaching text carefully enough to understand it in its context cannot expect to explain it clearly to their listeners or help them respond to it.”
- Inadequate contextualization to the preaching situation: “This bottleneck describes those preachers who understand the biblical text well enough but have not thought wisely and

deeply about how their listeners' worlds differ from that of the first hearers, or (often) from the preacher's world. As a result, they will neither explain nor apply the text appropriately."

- Faulty organization: "Those who have grasped the content and intent of the text for their hearers will blunt the text's impact if their message is poorly organized."
- Inadequate or overused illustration: "Knowing true concepts and organizing thoughts clearly is not enough to drive those truths home to listeners; the thoughts must be expressed both in straightforward declarations on the one hand and in words that create visual images on the other."
- Flawed delivery: "Preachers who let God's Word get through all the other seven bottlenecks will still fall short of faithful biblical preaching if they do not deliver the message as an overflow of who they are in Christ."

The questions and bottlenecks listed above are both adapted from Greg R. Scharf, *Let the Earth Hear His Voice: Strategies for Overcoming Bottlenecks in Preaching God's Word* (P&R Publishing, 2015), 111-121 and 34-36 [respectively].

Alternatively, here is another list of questions which one could ask of a biblical text in preparing to preach. Feel free to use whichever of the two lists of questions you find most helpful, or a combination of the two.

- What does the text mean?
- How do I know what the text means?
- What concerns caused the text to be written?
- What do we share in common with those to (or about) whom the text was written or with the one by whom the text was written?
- How should people now respond to the truths of the text?
- What is the most effective way I can communicate the meaning of the text?

In preparing to preach, the preacher should prayerfully:

- Observe the text (repeatedly, deeply, and in reliance on the Spirit)
- Interpret the text (using the questions listed in this document to interrogate it, and using resources containing the reflections of fellow believers who have dedicated years to becoming experts on this passage)
- Relate the text to the audience (this in many ways parallels and replaces the "apply" step one would take at this point in meditating on Scripture for personal growth, and it considers things such as who needs to hear this, what will make it sink in, and how this passage connects with and speaks to our lives)
- Organize these insights on the text (preparing to preach them clearly, effectively, and in submission to the Spirit)

These two lists above are both adapted from Bryan Chapell, *Christ-Centered Preaching: Redeeming the Expository Sermon*, 3rd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2018), 88-104.

## **Sermon 1 [Add Sermon Title]**

**Topic:** Creation and Sin

**Some Noteworthy Texts:** Gen. 1-3, Col. 1:16-20, Rom. 1:18-23, Rom. 5:12-21, Rev. 21:1-5

**Main Idea:** The goodness of God's creation and the subsequent fall into sin highlight God's character, humanity's brokenness, and the profound hope found in redemption.

### **Possible Introduction Ideas:**

- Open with a story about the awe and beauty of the natural world, emphasizing the magnificence of creation.
- Share an engaging story about an artist who restores damaged artwork, drawing a parallel to Christ's redemptive work.
- Pose a question: Have you ever wondered why a world so beautifully created contains so much brokenness? Or why a world so broken is still so beautiful?
- Introduce the tension between the splendor of creation and the reality of sin, setting the stage for exploration.

#### **I. The Wonder of Creation**

- A. In Genesis, we witness the unfolding of a flawless world, carefully crafted by God, displaying his power and artistry.
- B. Supporting Scriptures: Genesis 1:1-31, Colossians 1:16
- C. Encourage the congregation to pause and appreciate the world around them as a reflection of God's glory and creativity.

#### **II. The Entry of Sin**

- A. Sin enters the world through humanity's choice, marking a dramatic shift from peace to discord, as depicted in Genesis 3.
- B. Supporting Scriptures: Genesis 3:1-19, Romans 5:12
- C. Invite the congregation to reflect on personal struggles with sin and its pervasive impact on relationships, communities, and systems.

#### **III. The Hope of Redemption**

- A. Despite sin's devastation, Scripture reveals God's master plan for redemption through Christ, promising renewal and reconciliation.
- B. Supporting Scriptures: Romans 5:18-21, Revelation 21:1-5
- C. Challenge the congregation to live in light of the hope offered through Jesus, participating in God's restorative work in the world.

### **Conclusion:**

- Reiterate the initial question, offering a resolution found in the transformative power of Christ.
- Encourage the congregation to see their lives as part of the grand narrative of creation, fall, and redemption.
- Encourage congregation to spend time reflecting on God's creative power and its implications for their lives. For example, what is one area where they can actively participate in God's redemptive work, whether through service, reconciliation, or proclaiming hope?

## Sermon 2 [Add Sermon Title]

**Topic:** Justification

**Some Noteworthy Texts:** Rom. 3:23-24, Gal. 2:16, Eph. 2:8-9, Titus 3:5-7, Phil. 3:9

**Main Idea:** Justification is a gracious act of God, declaring sinners righteous through faith in Christ, which transforms how we live and see the world.

### Possible Introduction Ideas:

- Pose a question: How can it be just for God to declare the guilty righteous?
  - Pose a question: What would it mean for your life if you could be fully accepted and loved, despite your deepest flaws?
  - Briefly outline the tension between human efforts to justify ourselves and the biblical teaching of justification by faith.
- I. Understanding Justification
    - A. Justification is God's act of declaring a sinner righteous, not based on their own merit, but through faith in Jesus Christ. Jesus's righteousness covers us.
    - B. Supporting Scripture: Romans 3:23-24. All have sinned but are justified freely by grace through Christ.
    - C. Reflect on areas in your life where you strive for acceptance and need to recognize Christ's work as your ultimate justification.
  - II. The Foundation of Faith
    - A. Faith, which is also God's gift, is how we receive God's grace in justification.
    - B. Supporting Scripture: Galatians 2:16. Emphasize the distinction between faith and works of the Law/Torah.
    - C. Consider the ways we unknowingly try to earn God's favor and challenge yourself to relinquish them, resting in faith.
    - D. Question for reflection: Are you trusting Christ in faith, or are you still clinging to your own efforts?
  - III. Justification Transforms Our Identity and Actions
    - A. Justification changes how we see ourselves and live, as we are now in Christ and live out of gratitude and love.
    - B. Supporting Scripture: Philippians 3:9. A shift from self-righteousness to righteousness through faith.
    - C. Examine how the understanding of being justified impacts relationships and loving service to others. Our motivation for ongoing obedience to God is not *in order* to be accepted but *because* we have been accepted.
    - D. Illustration Idea: Use the transformation of Zacchaeus (Luke 19:1-10) as an example of justification leading to a changed life.

### Conclusion:

- Reinforce that justification by faith is a gift meant to free us from the burden of self-justification and to reconcile us to God. It invites us to participate in God's way of life.
- Encourage a moment of personal reflection on where God is inviting you to accept this grace more deeply. Then, what does living as justified people look like in practical terms?

### **Sermon 3 [Add Sermon Title]**

**Topic:** Sanctification

**Some Noteworthy Texts:** 1 Thess. 4:3-8, Rom. 12:1-2, Phil. 2:12-13, 2 Cor. 3:18, 1 Pet. 1:13-16

**Main Idea:** Sanctification is the transformative journey where believers become more like Christ through the work of the Holy Spirit, aligning our lives with the reality of our new identity in him.

#### **Possible Introduction Ideas:**

- Share a brief story or illustration about a piece of art being restored, emphasizing the theme of redemptive transformation and renewal.
  - Discuss the common misconception of sanctification as simply following rules versus the profound, ongoing work of grace.
  - Pose a thought-provoking question: What does it mean to be truly transformed in Christ?
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- I. Understanding Sanctification as God's Will for Us
    - A. Sanctification is not an optional part of the Christian walk; it's central to God's plan for our lives.
    - B. Supporting Scripture: 1 Thessalonians 4:3. This passage highlights that God's will is for us to be sanctified.
    - C. Reflect on areas of life where God's transforming work is taking place. How can we consciously participate in this divine process?
  - II. Inward Transformation and Outward Consequences
    - A. Sanctification involves a profound renewal of both our thoughts and desires, moving away from worldly patterns.
    - B. Supporting Scripture: Romans 12:1-2. We are to offer God our bodies as our minds are renewed.
    - C. Engage in daily practices of renewal, such as scripture meditation and prayer, to align our lives with Christ.
  - III. Active Participation with God's Work in Us
    - A. Though sanctification is God's work, we are called to actively participate in the process.
    - B. Supporting Scripture: Philippians 2:12-13. Our role in working out our salvation involves both effort and reliance on God's power.
    - C. Illustration Idea: Compare this to a gardener who must tend to the plants yet relies on God for growth.
    - D. Identify practical steps to cooperate with the Holy Spirit's work in your life.
  - IV. Reflecting Christ's Glory in Our Lives
    - A. As we are transformed, we reflect the character and glory of Christ more clearly to the world.
    - B. Supporting Scripture: 2 Corinthians 3:18. We become mirrors of Christ's glory as we are transformed.
    - C. Seek ways to let your life be a testament to God's grace, serving as a beacon of faith, hope, and love to those around you.

**Conclusion:**

- Summarize the journey of sanctification as an ongoing process where we are being made more like Christ daily.
- Encourage the congregation to embrace this transformation as a joyful though often painful pursuit that aligns with God's purpose (Luke 9:23).
- Reflect on the closing thought from 1 Peter 1:13-16, urging believers to live holy lives in response to God's call. Maybe encourage congregation members to simply commit to one new spiritual discipline this week that will help foster their growth in sanctification.

## **Sermon 4 [Add Sermon Title]**

**Topic:** Glorification

**Some Noteworthy Texts:** Rom. 8:30, 1 Cor. 15:35-58, Phil. 3:20-21, 1 Jn. 3:2, Rev. 21:1-5

**Main Idea:** Glorification is the final stage of salvation where believers and the entire cosmos are transformed to reflect God's glory fully.

### **Possible Introduction Ideas:**

- Begin with a cultural analysis on how society views perfection, contrasting it with the biblical concept of perfection as full maturity. Use the image of a seed becoming a tree.
  - Introduce the idea of glorification as both a hope and a promise, using an illustration about metamorphosis in nature (e.g., caterpillar to butterfly).
  - Pose the question: What does it mean to be glorified in Christ, and how should this hope shape our lives today?
- I. The Promise of Glorification
    - A. Glorification is the assurance given to all who are justified, a future reality where we will be fully transformed.
    - B. Supporting Scripture: Romans 8:30.
    - C. Live with assurance and hope; our future is secure in God's promise.
    - D. Illustration Idea: Use the analogy of a pregnancy and birth to symbolize receiving something promised after a time of waiting, preparation, and growth.
  - II. The Process of Transformation
    - A. Discuss the nature of "already but not yet" in the gospel. Our transformation involves our spiritual and physical renewal, where our bodies will be imperishable, free from sin and death.
    - B. Supporting Scripture: 1 Corinthians 15:42-44. Discuss how our current perishable bodies will be raised in imperishable glory.
    - C. Encourage living in holiness and hope, knowing that our current struggles have a promised ending point.
  - III. The Fulfillment in Christ's Return
    - A. Glorification culminates in the return of Christ, where we will see him as he is and be made like him.
    - B. Supporting Scriptures: Philippians 3:20-21 and 1 John 3:2. Emphasize the transformation and hope linked to Christ's return.
    - C. Remain steadfast in faith and action. When Christ returns to renew the heavens and the earth, he will bring perfect justice.
    - D. Question for reflection: How does the anticipation of Christ's return shape your daily life and decisions?

### **Conclusion:**

- Reflect on the assurance found in Revelation 21:1-5, which paints a vivid picture of what was always God's intended conclusion for his creation. This is true perfection/maturity.
- Encourage the congregation to consider how they can cultivate a lifestyle anticipating glorification. How can they "practice" resurrection now?