



Homiletics: The Art and Science of Preaching

Welcome to a comprehensive journey through the essential discipline that shapes effective biblical communication. This manual serves as both theoretical foundation and practical guide for Brazilian theology students and ministers seeking to master the sacred art of homiletics.

01

Origins and Etymology

Understanding the Greek roots: homilia (association, company) and homileo (to speak, converse), revealing the communal nature of preaching as divine-human dialogue.

02

Historical Development

Tracing the evolution from 17th–18th century Enlightenment terminology through Augustine's foundational work to modern evangelical practice.

03

Triple Definition

Homiletics as science (theoretical foundations), art (aesthetic beauty), and technique (practical execution) – the complete framework for gospel communication.

The Foundation of Biblical Communication

Etymology Revealed

The term "homiletics" emerges from three crucial Greek words that illuminate its essence:

- **Homilos** – multitude, assembly of people
- **Homilia** – association, company, fellowship
- **Homileo** – to speak, to converse intimately

This linguistic foundation reveals preaching as fundamentally relational – not mere information transfer, but sacred communication within community.



Historical alternatives like "Keryctica" (from keryx, herald) and "Halieutica" (from halieos, fisherman) were proposed but didn't achieve the comprehensive acceptance of "homiletics" – the discipline studying gospel message analysis, structure, and delivery.

Relationships with Sister Disciplines



Hermeneutics

The science and art of correctly interpreting God's Word within its original context and cultural setting.



Exegesis

The science and art of exposing biblical ideas through careful textual analysis and theological investigation.



Homiletics

The science and art of communicating the gospel effectively to contemporary audiences through biblical preaching.

Paul's warning resonates clearly: homiletics without biblical hermeneutics becomes "a trumpet of uncertain sound" (1 Corinthians 14:8), while homiletics without biblical exegesis reduces to mere humanistic and lifeless communication.

Historical Development Through the Ages



Contemporary Challenges in Preaching

Despite God's Word being "living and active, sharper than any double-edged sword" (Hebrews 4:12), modern preaching faces significant obstacles. The problem isn't Scripture itself, but often lies in how it's proclaimed by preachers who haven't acknowledged their homiletical limitations.



Inadequate Preparation

Many assume they can prepare biblical messages in just hours without rigorous exegetical and stylistic work. This shortcuts approach undermines the profound depth Scripture deserves and congregations need for spiritual growth.

Lack of Unity

Congregations lose interest when messages become mere collections of disconnected biblical verses without unifying themes or organizational coherence that guides understanding.

Disconnect from Life

Preachers may live in sanctification yet present overly theoretical messages using technical terms unfamiliar to common people, creating barriers rather than bridges to understanding.

Missing Practical Application

Messages may be doctrinally sound but fail to show practical implementation.

They build theological castles but don't demonstrate how to live biblical principles in real-world situations and contemporary challenges.

Unbalanced Text Selection

Over 95% of Brazilian evangelical sermons focus on New Testament texts, particularly evangelistic passages, while neglecting the rich theological and practical content of Old Testament scriptures.

Liturgical Misplacement

When preaching becomes an afterthought in lengthy services filled with musical performances and announcements, the Word loses its central position in worship gatherings.



Essential Characteristics of Biblical Homiletics

Charles W. Koller defines biblical preaching as "that unique process through which God, through His chosen messenger, enters into human community and places people face to face with Himself." This divine encounter involves three essential participants forming a sacred triangle.

God - The Author

Divine inspiration, authority, and ultimate recipient of worship. God speaks through His Word and listens to the hearts of both preacher and congregation.



Preacher - The Communicator

Faithful messenger who directs attention both to God in preparation and proclamation, and to listeners with pastoral concern and biblical fidelity.

Congregation - The Receivers

Active participants who receive God's message through preaching while maintaining direct relationship with Scripture through personal reading and study.

The nucleus of this triangle is the crucified Christ (1 Corinthians 2:2) – the central message that gives meaning to all biblical preaching and transforms mere human communication into divine encounter.

The Content and Authority of Homiletics

Divine Foundation

Scripture provides our preaching content. We proclaim God's Word, not human wisdom. As Peter instructs: "If anyone speaks, let him speak as the oracles of God" (1 Peter 4:11).

This speaking isn't our own – it's God's gift, a charisma. Through God's power, our words become His words, as Paul testified to the Thessalonians about receiving "the word of God, which also effectively works in you who believe" (1 Thessalonians 2:13).



We are entrusted with "treasure in earthen vessels" (2 Corinthians 4:7) as "ministers of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God" (1 Corinthians 4:1), proclaiming "the whole counsel of God" (Acts 20:27).

The Critical Importance of Homiletics



Church's Foundation

The living church originates, lives, and is perpetuated through God's Word (Romans 10:17). Preaching awakens, confirms, stimulates, consolidates, and perfects faith.



Ministerial Crown

For seminarians and future preachers, homiletics represents the crown of ministerial preparation where all theological subjects converge to create authentic Christianity.



Soul's Nobility

Homiletics is noble because it concerns itself exclusively with souls' welfare – objects of infinite love, redeeming grace, and Jesus Christ's renewing power.

The Nature of Biblical Preaching

Preaching embodies the theory and practice of proclaiming our blessed Lord Jesus Christ's gospel, revealing God's power and righteousness for all who believe (Romans 1:16). The New Testament employs four distinct verbs to exemplify preaching's nature:

1

Kerysso - To Herald

Proclamation, announcement, making known (61 NT occurrences). The herald speaks in his sovereign's name with delegated authority, predetermined message content, and global scope reaching the entire world.

2

Euangelizomai - To Evangelize

Transmitting good news and joyful messages. The gospel bearer announces salvation's good news to humanity corrupted by sin, with universal reach transcending social barriers.

3

Martyrein - To Witness

Testifying and bearing witness to Jesus Christ's power. Witnesses qualify through proven personal experience, giving credibility and conviction to their evangelical mission.

4

Didaskein - To Teach

Instructing and explaining (95 NT occurrences). Jesus' teaching carried divine authority, and apostles recognized teaching as essential for establishing believers and preparing them for service.



The Goal of Homiletical Ministry

What constitutes the ultimate aim of evangelical preaching? Can we remain satisfied with mere preparation and presentation? The objective is creating messages that present God's Word attractively, enabling listeners to understand their responsibilities and motivating them toward obedient action.



Primary Salvation

Every biblical message's primary goal is saving lost sinners (Romans 1:16). Through proclaimed, heard, and believed messages, people are rescued from perdition, sin's bondage, and death.



Spiritual Nurturing

After conversion, emphasis shifts to "things that accompany salvation" (Hebrews 6:9) – nutrition, motivation, doctrine, perfection, edification, consolidation, consecration, and sanctification.



Active Service

Evangelical preaching stimulates Christians toward diverse ministerial, social, and diaconal possibilities (Acts 20:28; 1 Peter 5:2; Romans 12:4–8), embodying Paul's commitment to announce "all God's counsel."

Scripture: The Foundation of Every Sermon

Singular Source

God's Word serves as the unique fountain for biblical preaching. Evangelical preaching feeds, bases itself, originates, inspires, and motivates through Scripture because it contains Christianity's great and inexorable reservoir of truth.

The Bible offers unparalleled literary variety – a complete library containing laws, histories, poetry, prophecies, wisdom literature, narratives, allegories, parables, apocalyptic texts, biographies, chronicles, dramas, enigmas, visions, messages, songs, conversations, letters, teachings, prayers, exclamations, questions, disputes, speeches, and even conventions.



Text Selection Principles



Christological Priority

Not all biblical passages are equally suitable for every occasion. From Scripture's center – Jesus Christ himself – we receive priority guidance for our preaching selections.



Contextual Appropriateness

Different passages suit different occasions – evangelistic services, Christmas, church anniversaries, weddings, or funeral services require thoughtful text selection that serves the specific ministerial purpose.



Comprehensive Approach

Our preaching should be textual (faithful to chosen texts), scriptural (biblical in doctrinal and ethical context), christological (centered on Christ), and practical (applied to real church needs).



Exegetical Method: Unlocking Scripture's Treasures

Rigorous sermon preparation begins with textual transparency through exegesis – the theological process of biblical text exposition. This Greek term (exegesis) means declaration, narrative, exposition, explanation, interpretation.

The Ten-Step Exegetical Process

01

Prayerful Reading

Read the text aloud multiple times in prayerful spirit, comparing different biblical versions for enhanced understanding (Dr. Campbell Morgan read passages at least 50 times).

02

Personal Reproduction

Reproduce the text in your own words without looking at the Bible, verifying genuine comprehension of content and meaning.

03

Contextual Analysis

Observe immediate and remote contexts, understanding the passage's relationship to surrounding material and the book's overall argument.

04

Literary Structure

Determine the text's literary form (history, miracle, parable, teaching, warning, promise, prophecy, testimony, prayer) and create structural outline.

05

Linguistic Study

Determine exact meaning of each basic word, including origins and usage by the author and throughout biblical testimony.

01

Textual Peculiarities

Note repeated words, contrasts, sequences, conclusions, questions, theses, and make synoptic comparisons for Gospel passages.

02

Historical Research

Research historical and cultural circumstances including era, country, people, customs, and traditions relevant to understanding.

03

Verse Development

Elaborate messages from each verse or main term through parallel passages, core relationships to salvation history, didactic questions, and scholarly resources.

04

Structural Organization

Structure the text according to its main organizing content and secondary sections, creating logical flow and clear progression.

05

Summary Statement

Conclude exegetical work with the statement: "This text's most important subject is..." – crystallizing your interpretive findings.

Meditation: Deepening Textual Engagement

Spiritual Contemplation

Biblical meditation means pondering, reflecting, and measuring spiritual depth of Scripture in Christ's presence. Like Mary who "treasured all these words, pondering them in her heart" (Luke 2:19), we contemplate the living, resurrected Christ.

Meditation begins with prayer, is characterized by continuous prayer, and leads to prayer. It requires quietude, sufficient time, mental concentration, and conscious awareness of Christ's real presence during reflection.



The goal is fructification and enrichment of exegetical work with personal impulse for effective preaching. What we personally appropriate becomes easier to communicate to others.

Application: Bridging Text and Life

1

Textual Foundation

Good application emerges from the main text serving as our preaching base. If application lacks connection to the biblical text, we're no longer preaching God's Word but merely personal experiences.

2

Objective Clarity

Application should be directive rather than legalistic, objective rather than subjective. Show not only what listeners should do but exactly how they can accomplish it practically.

3

Personal Relevance

Address individuals with their specific needs and problems. The congregation comprises diverse people – young and old, mature Christians and new converts, troubled and consoled, hopeful and desolate.

4

Pastoral Heart

Applications should reflect pastoral concern and shepherd's love for the sheep. True pastors don't criticize but love, don't create problems but provide guidance.

Sermon Structure: Building Biblical Architecture

Sermon structure deserves our attention, laborious effort, and patient preparation to create immediate impact on listeners. We study formal elaboration principles: title, introduction, propositions, outline, discussions, illustrations, applications, and conclusion.



Title Selection

The title specifies the subject matter with clarity and relevance to the biblical text. Choose titles after completing exegesis and outline development, ensuring they're clear, pertinent, specific, and attention-grabbing without being scandalous.

Introduction Craft

The introduction prepares listeners' minds and captures interest in the upcoming message. Like aircraft takeoff, it requires maximum effort for successful launch, providing security, tranquility, and freedom for the remainder of the sermon.

Proposition Development

Biblical propositions present, explain, and develop Scripture's great doctrinal, ethical, and spiritual ideas in simple, convincing ways that stimulate listeners to accept and apply them in life.

Outline Construction Principles

1

Theme Correspondence

The outline must correspond to the theme, just as fruits correspond to the tree. It emanates from the theme as the theme emanates from the biblical text.

2

Textual Fidelity

Points should relate directly to the biblical text, with many texts offering natural outlines. Each argument forms an integral part of the entire sermon structure.

3

Distinct Clarity

Individual outline points must be completely distinct, avoiding repetition of thoughts, affirmations, questions, or arguments with similar wording.

4

Progressive Order

Arrange sequentially showing logical thought coherence and progressively for psychological impact, saving the strongest argument for the conclusion.

5

Grammatical Harmony

Use consistent grammatical structures – all affirmations, all questions, or all exclamations, maintaining same tense and parallel construction throughout.

Three Primary Sermon Forms

Thematic Sermon

Division extracted from the theme, independent of specific textual structure. Easiest to divide and organize logically, maintaining better unity while adapting well to moral, evangelistic, and occasional messages.

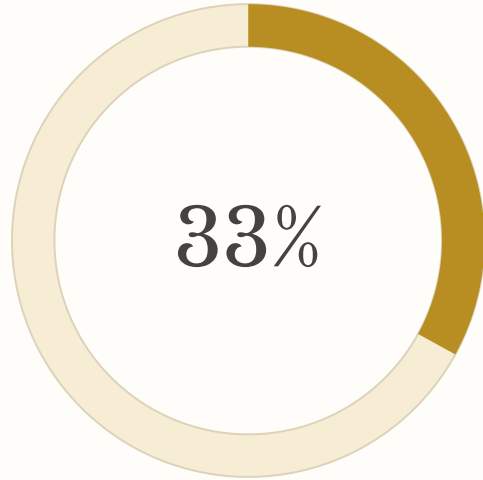
Textual Sermon

Division based on the biblical text itself. Three modalities: natural (following original text declarations), analytical (using interrogative questions), and inferential (reducing textual sentences to synthetic expressions).

Expository Sermon

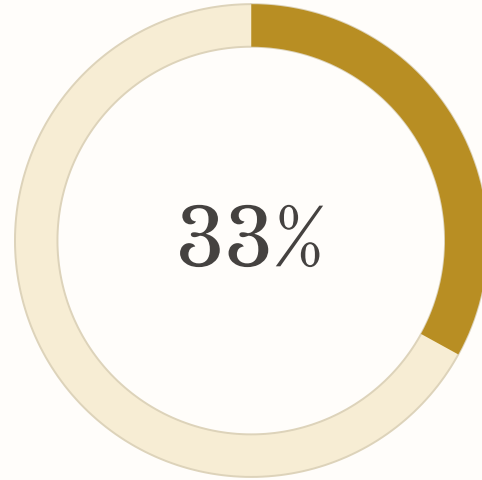
Main arguments derived from complete exegetical exposition of more extensive Scripture portions. Most difficult method, appreciated by those dedicated to daily Bible study, requiring deep spiritual power and theological culture.

Sermon Presentation Methods



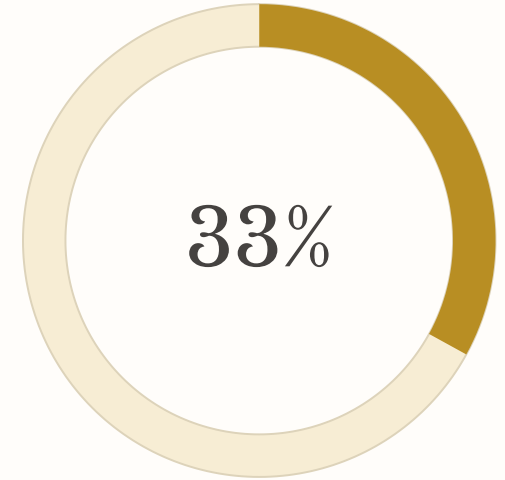
Reading Method

Complete manuscript reading ensures accuracy and perfect style but may reduce audience connection and gestural freedom.



Partial Memorization

Written, memorized, and partially recited messages combining manuscript benefits with natural presentation freedom.



Free Delivery

Most sublime and difficult homiletical art, requiring exceptional preparation but allowing maximum psychological contact and Spirit-led spontaneity.

Evaluating Sermon Effectiveness

Critical Assessment Purpose

Serious, objective sermon evaluation helps preachers recognize exegetical, homiletical, hermeneutical, stylistic, rhetorical, grammatical, psychological, or phonetic failures. Cultured preachers remain willing to listen, learn, and improve their homiletical knowledge and practice.

The primary goal is sermon improvement through sincere, loving criticism that overcomes homiletical problems. Good evaluation serves as theological recycling and ministerial self-awareness about pulpit effectiveness.



Methods include evaluation by others (seminary classmates, ministry colleagues, congregation members) and self-evaluation through audience response observation, post-sermon reflection, manuscript review, and recording technology utilization.

Preaching and the Holy Spirit

Paul declared: "My speech and my preaching were not with persuasive words of human wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, that your faith should not be in the wisdom of men but in the power of God" (1 Corinthians 2:4-5).

Audiences constantly evaluate preachers beyond mere words – assessing happiness or melancholy, balance or nervousness, gentleness or rudeness, seeking evidence of love, humility, conviction, joy, and power. Most critically, they sense whether the Holy Spirit operates in and through the preacher.

What They Do

Effective preachers don't merely speak about Christ – they exalt Him, demonstrate His glory, and express admiration and joy. They align with the Spirit's role of pointing to Christ's beauty rather than seeking personal recognition.

Who They Are

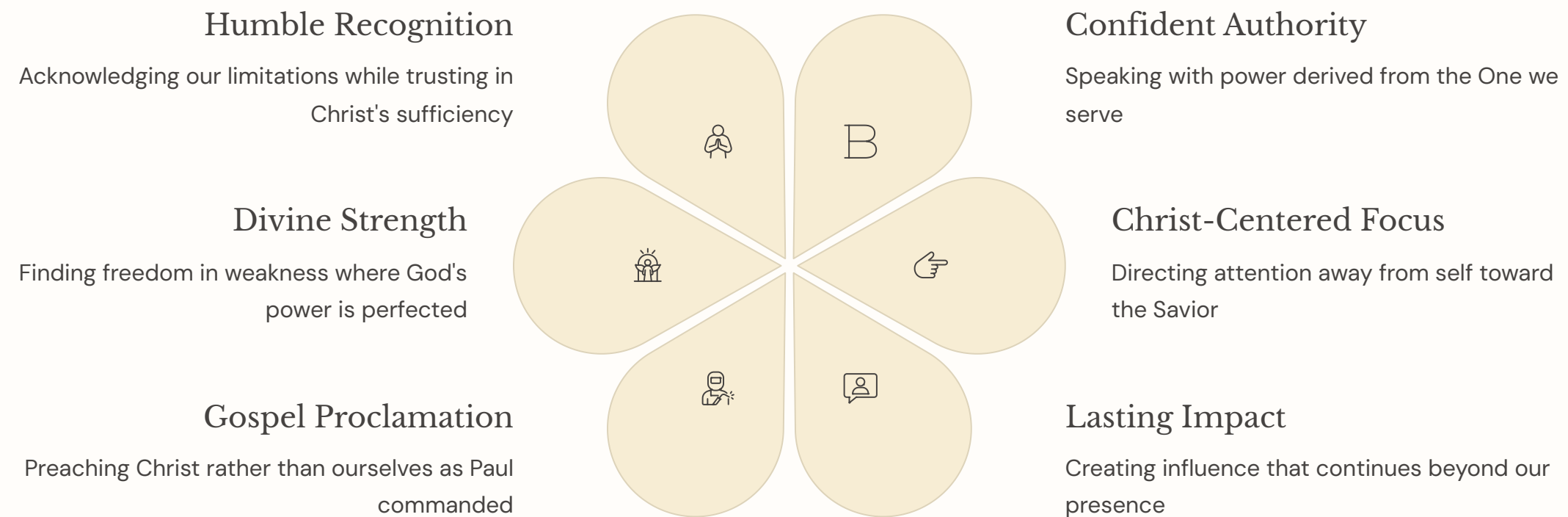
Spiritual grace and character matter more than public speaking talents. While gifts operate even when spiritually immature, the fruit of the Spirit – love, joy, patience, humility, goodness – proves more important for "demonstration of the Spirit and power."

Becoming a Voice Like John the Baptist

"I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness: Make straight the way of the Lord" (John 1:23)

John the Baptist exemplified the perfect balance of humility and boldness. He refused to claim greatness for himself, considering himself unworthy to untie the Messiah's sandals, yet showed remarkable courage before religious investigators.

How could someone so humble be so confident? John answered: "I am a voice. I am merely a voice pointing to the one who is to come." His confidence came not from self-regard but from the greatness of the One he served – the "Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world."



If you proclaim Christ and not yourself, allowing God's Word to reach people through you, you too can become a voice like John. Your weakness becomes an advantage – it was God's power all along! This marks the true beginning of your preaching career and teaching ministry of God's Word.