

PREACHING COHORTS

A BROTHERHOOD MODEL FOR COACHING PREACHERS



THE REPHIDIM Project

Lifting up those who spread God's Word

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Serve God with such education as you have and thank Him for blowing through you if you are a ram's horn, but if there be the possibility of your becoming a silver trumpet, choose it rather. (C.H. Spurgeon, "The Necessity of Ministerial Progress," *Lectures to My Students*, London: Marshall, Morgan and Scott, 1973, p.209).

COHORT TEAM LEADERS' GUIDELINES

VISION: To establish cohorts of pastors who covenant together to develop and improve their skills in expository preaching through joint workshops, mutual encouragement, and personal accountability.

COHORT: A cohort is a group of 6-10 preachers who commit to the cohort for eighteen to twenty-four months.

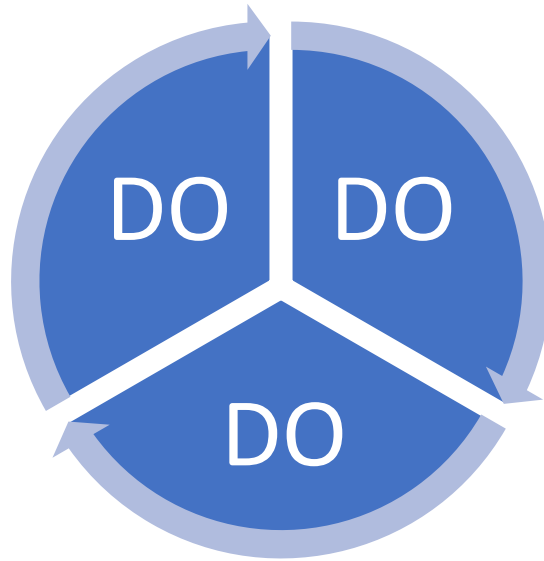
COHORT TEAM LEADER: Each Cohort Team Leader should have proven group leadership skills. He should be an able expository preacher in his own right but wanting to encourage expository preaching in others while sharing, guiding, and personally growing.

- Cohort Team Leaders shall establish regular meetings of their Cohort. At the minimum, meetings should be once a quarter to facilitate the follow-through and encouragement to all participants in the Cohort group.
- At these meetings, the preaching of one or two group members will be analyzed in a collaborative fashion. (see the *SERMON FEEDBACK GUIDE* available on the website)
- The Cohort Team leaders will determine the best means for this such as video, audio, or live preaching.
- The Cohort Team leaders will provide preaching tools and resources to fellow team members supplied through our resource partners. The Rephidim Project will cover the cost of these materials up to \$200 per member.

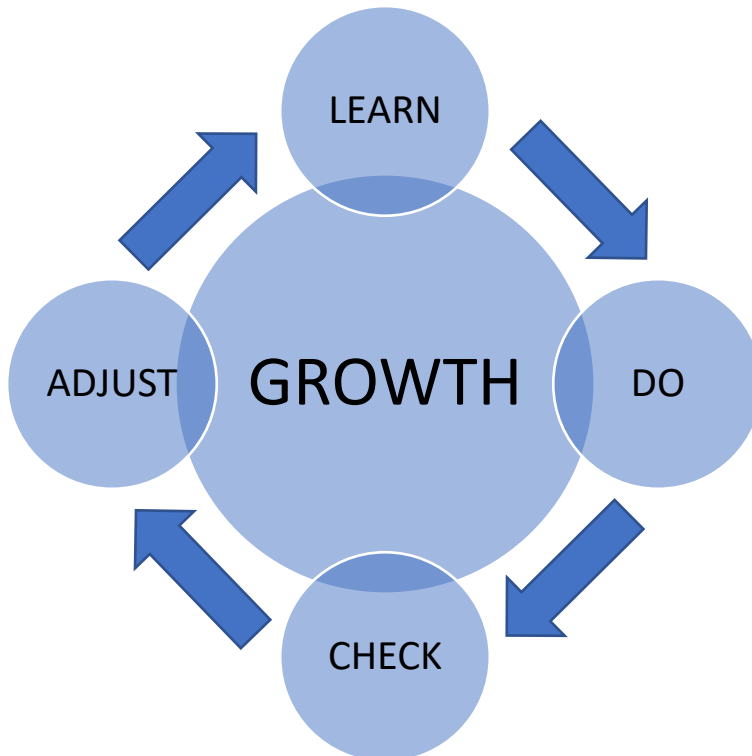
COHORT MEMBER COMMITMENT:

- ✓ Cohort members agree to work with each other in prayer and mutual encouragement on a regular basis for eighteen to twenty-four months. The Rephidim Project will be available for encouragement and prayer via phone on a regular basis.
- ✓ Cohort members agree to periodically share sermons with each other for constructive criticism and personal accountability understanding that if we never measure our preaching, we will never improve our preaching.
- ✓ Cohort members agree to read and study preaching resources and share insights with each other on a regular basis. The Rephidim Project will develop, provide and suggest resources for personal growth to the members of the cohort. Many resources are available on our website.
- ✓ A cohort agrees to attend a larger EPI-Center Institute or workshop in their geographical area whenever possible. The Rephidim Project will organize and schedule institutes and workshops as desired in any given region.

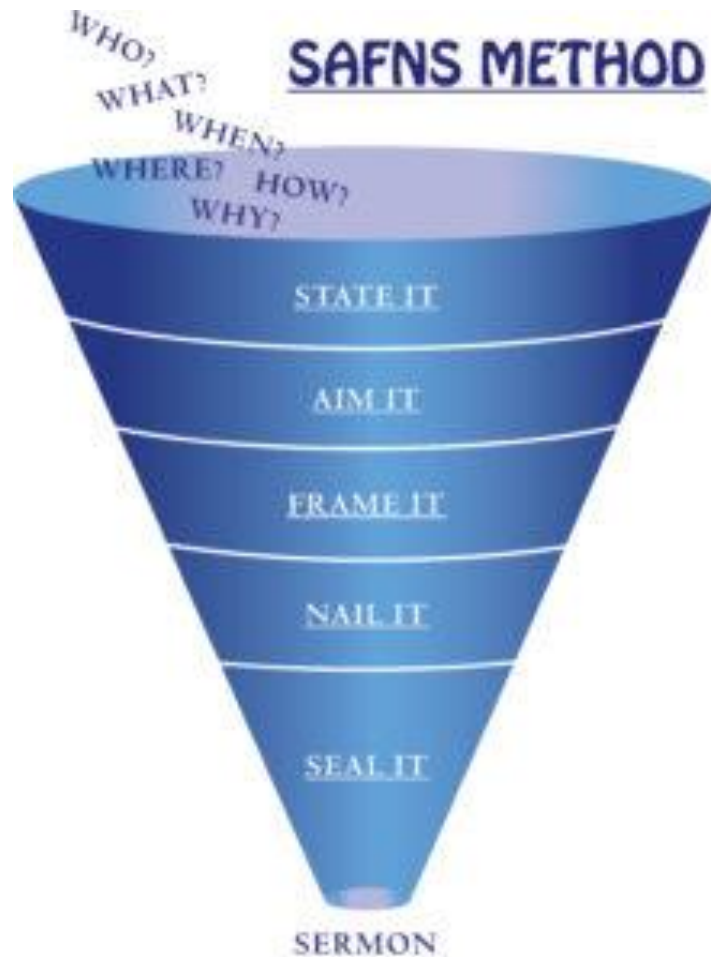
DUMP THE DO – DO - DO CYCLE.



GO FOR THE GROWTH CYCLE



We never improve what we never measure.



Preaching is disciple-making. Our purpose in preaching is to grow fully developed followers of Jesus Christ. We must not neglect the often-forgotten word in the Great Commission given to us by Jesus when he called us to teach the people “to observe **ALL** that I commanded you” (Mt. 28:20). As Paul told the Ephesian elders, “I did not shrink from declaring to you the whole purpose of God” (Acts 20:27). Expository preaching is the best way to achieve the purpose of disciple-making in corporate worship.

Every preacher follows a method. The SAFNS Funnel represents the method The Rephidim Project recommends. Here, in summary, is the SAFNS method along with suggested resources cohort leaders can use for the cohort meetings.

STATE IT – AIM IT – FRAME IT – NAIL IT – SEAL IT!

STATE IT

RESOURCES:

J. Kent Edwards, *Deep Preaching: Creating Sermons That Go Beyond the Superficial*, B&H Publishing Group, Nashville, Tennessee, 2009.

Dale Ralph Davis, *The Word Became Fresh: How To Preach From Old Testament Narrative Texts*, Christian Focus Publications Ltd., Scotland, 2012.

Randal E. Pelton, *Preaching with Accuracy: Finding Christ-Centered Big Ideas for Biblical Preaching*, Kregel Publication, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 2014.

The great temptation we face as preachers is to start our preparation by asking two pragmatic questions. 1) What does this verse mean to me? 2) How can I make it relevant to the audience? In other words, as busy pragmatists, we want to know what will preach. What can I get out of this verse that will make people want to come and hear what I have to say? We are putting the cart before the proverbial horse. The result is often the misuse and even abuse of Scripture in our quest for relevancy. The first question we must ask is not what does this verse mean to us but what did this verse mean to the original author and audience. Our goal is to state it accurately and clearly.

The Bible is full of ideas. There are big ideas and little ideas. Many preachers get caught up in all the little ideas and neglect the big ideas. How do we preach the big ideas in a passage? We ask all the basic questions. Who? What? When? Where? How? Why? The key is what we call “context.” Every passage has many little ideas. The little ideas are interrelated, and we weave them together to preach the big ideas.

Our first step is to weave together the little ideas in our target text. The second step is to weave together the ideas as they relate to the bigger picture of the verses before and after our target text and the overall purpose and plan for the book of the Bible. This is the biblical context. The third step is to weave together the ideas with the purpose and plan for the whole Bible. This is the theological context. We must be able to state the relationship of these ideas to one another clearly before we can move forward in our preparation to preach.

AIM IT

RESOURCES:

Haddon W. Robinson, *Biblical Preaching: The Development and Delivery of Expository Messages*, 3rd Edition, Baker Academic, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 2014.

Phillip D. Jensen and Paul Grimond, *The Archer and the Arrow: Preaching the Very Words of God*, Matthias Media, Australia, 2010.

Keith Willhite and Scott M. Gibson, editors, *The Big Idea of Biblical Preaching: Connecting the Bible to People*, Baker Books, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1998.

The main idea of the sermon should follow the main idea of the biblical passage. The text should drive the sermon otherwise we are in danger of using the text to support our ideas instead of submitting our ideas to the authority of the text. We must first discover the exegetical big idea before we can frame the homiletical big idea. Once we correctly identify the exegetical big idea (State It), then we can frame our homiletical big idea (Aim It). The exegetical big idea informs the homiletical big idea, but it is not identical to it. The preacher must transform the exegetical big idea into the homiletical big idea to get the sermon big idea.

The big idea for the sermon is shaped not only by the meaning of the passage but by the purpose of the sermon, and the purpose of the sermon is directed by the needs of the people in the congregation. Once again, we must ask questions. So what? What difference does it make? We must exegete our people with the same fervor we exegete the passage. We must understand our purpose for preaching this particular sermon to these particular people. What difference does it make to those who are listening? By answering that question, we go beyond the explanation of information to preaching with purpose. Every sermon should be a rifle shot aimed at a target. The target is the people who are present to hear the sermon.

FRAME IT

RESOURCES:

Bryan Chapell, *Christ-Centered Preaching: Redeeming the Expository Sermon*, 2nd edition, Baker Academic, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 2005.

David R. Helm, *Expositional Preaching: How We Speak God's Word Today*, Crossway, Wheaton, Illinois, 2014.

R. Albert Mohler, Jr. *He is Not Silent: Preaching in a Postmodern World*, Moody Publishers, Chicago, Illinois, 2008.

How can I say it so people remember it? At this point in the process, we are ready to shape the material into a sermon like a sculptor shapes the clay into a figure. The material is the same, but the artistry is dependent on the skill of the artist to shape the raw material. The same is true for preaching. Different preachers can use the same raw material and yet one sermon is dull and the other exhilarating. The shape of the sermon is controlled by 1) the passage; 2) the big idea and 3) the purpose of preaching.

The preacher must learn to summarize all of the detail in key points. This ability to generalize is difficult. Listeners don't want vague generalizations but rather significant generalizations. In this age of visual learning, we must use picture language for our points. We want to turn ears into eyes. The preacher must capture the listener's attention by what he/she hears in a way that helps the listener remember the idea, so he/she can take it home. We need to learn the technique of stating our points in ways that are relevant to the lives of people today. How can I say it so the point focuses on the listener? State the points applicationally and in the present tense. It is not just that the big idea for the sermon must be stated in contemporary terms, but all our points should be stated in the present tense as well.

Each point is a pointer! Main ideas point to the big idea. Sub ideas point to the main ideas. Keep the outline as simple, clear and memorable as possible. Here is a simple but time-tested model for framing the sermon. 1) Ask a question in the introduction. 2) Answer the question with your big idea. 3) Introduce a keyword that explains your answer (Three solutions, two lessons, etc.). 4) Use your keyword for each main point in the sermon tying it all together.

NAIL IT

RESOURCES:

Calvin Miller, *Marketplace Preaching: How to Return the Sermon to Where it Belongs*, Baker Books, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1995.

Timothy Keller, *Preaching: Communicating Faith in an Age of Skepticism*, Viking, An Imprint of Penguin Random House LLC. New York, 2015.

Wayne McDill, *12 Essential Skills for Great Preaching*, 2nd Edition revised and expanded, B&H Academic, Nashville, Tennessee, 2006.

The preacher must stick it to real life. If all we do is generalize, then the sermon becomes vague and fuzzy. Good preaching climbs up and down the abstraction ladder between the abstract and the concrete. Some preachers remain abstract with no life “apps.” Others are all life “apps” but no big principles to guide life. Good preaching consistently moves back and forth between generals and particulars. Our preaching points are the generals. Illustrations and applications make the abstract truth concrete. They nail it to life.

The best illustrations are the ones that people relate to as part of their lives. We touch their lives in some way, so they can nail the abstract principle to the situation they face in life. Imagination helps. Picture language is powerful. To be able to see in your mind what is not there in the physical world is a gift. When we tell a story as if we can see it, then our listeners can see it too. Artists see with their minds and show us what they see with their art. Preachers do the same.

Application without exegesis is like a bowl of plastic fruit. It looks pretty but doesn’t satisfy. Exegesis without application is like a mirage. It looks wonderful but isn’t real. How do we connect the application to the exegesis in a way that communicates a relevant message our listeners today? We start with what it meant to the original listeners. Then we develop a universal principle from that original meaning. A universal truth is something that is true in every age and every culture. These universals form the bridge – the connecting link – between what it meant and what it means.

The universal principle must be nailed down to a current application. Once we have a universal principle, we can look for contemporary life parallels (CLP) between the historical meaning and the current situation. Once we have identified the CLP for our text, we can nail the text to specific situations in life today. One of the key characteristics separating good sermons from poor sermons is the ability of the preacher to identify great CLPs that are true to both life and text. The application chain has six links. 1) Biblical situation; 2) Universal principle; 3) Cement it to the text; 4) CLP; 5) Flavor it with grace; 6) Drive it home.

SEAL IT

RESOURCES:

Wayne V. McDill, *The Moment of Truth: A Guide to Effective Sermon Delivery*, B&H Academic, Nashville Tennessee, 1999.

John R.W. Stott, *Between Two Worlds: The Art of Preaching in the Twentieth Century*, William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, Grand Rapids Michigan, 1982.

Conrad Mbewe, *Pastoral Preaching: Building a People for God*, Langham Preaching Resources, Carlisle, England, 2017.

Every sermon leads to the point of decision. We call it the conclusion. The conclusion is the climax of the message. All roads lead to the conclusion. It is the call to action. We seal the deal! Conclusions should be short, clear and simple. New information must be excluded because we are tying the message together like the wrapper on a gift. We are answering the question “So what?” A good conclusion emphasizes the big idea and completes the purpose. We hit the target we aimed to hit. If we failed to establish a good target, we would never know if we hit the bull’s eye.

The last step in our preparation is always the introduction. Until we know how we are sealing the deal, we cannot know how to introduce the message. A good introduction gets attention, and the best way to get attention is to awaken an awareness of need in the listener. People come to church with all kinds of needs, hurts, and desires. When we touch a need, we strike a chord in the heart. People will listen. Try to touch a need in the introduction and then use the Word of God like a spotlight to highlight the solution for that need in the passage being preached. An effective introduction makes the listener want to go with you into the message and follow you to the end.

Using the SAFNS funnel to guide our sermon preparation will help us make disciples by our preaching.

THE EPI-CENTER

New England is in desperate need of revitalization and revival. Nothing in all of church history has brought people closer to the Lord Jesus than the faithful preaching of God's Word, line upon line, precept upon precept. We believe that a movement is more effective than an event and are committed to investing in such a movement for the glory of Jesus.

EPI-Center is a collaborative effort to bring expository preaching resources and training to New England pastors, church leaders and those who have a call to preach.

We train exceptional expository preachers by providing preaching tools, resources, and teaching. We coordinate intensive preaching institutes and workshops for pastors in New England.

EPI-CENTER INSTITUTES

The Cecil B. Day Foundation began the EPI-Center in 2015 to train preachers in New England. Since that day, over 450 pastors have received training through ministries like Cross Talk Global with Kent Edwards and the Stephen Olford Center. The EPI-Center merged with the Rephidim Project in September 2018 to continue the mission of training preachers in New England.

Institutes are 1-2 day intensive seminars. We partner with established preaching organizations to provide excellent instruction in homiletics by experienced practitioners from around the country. A list of our partner organizations can be seen on the website. If you would like to host an institute at your church, please contact The Rephidim Project and we will work with you to implement and promote the seminar.

EPI-CENTER WORKSHOPS

Workshops are shorter intensive seminars usually lasting from 2-6 hours covering various preaching topics. These workshops can be either a good jump start on preaching for those with limited training or a refresher for those who have studied homiletics in the classroom previously. If you would like to host a workshop at your church, please contact The Rephidim Project and we will work to implement and promote the workshop. Here is a sample list of workshop topics we can provide.

WORKSHOP TOPICS

1. Hermeneutics: The Foundation for Homiletics
2. Preaching Through the Upper Room Discourse
3. The Bones of a Sermon: Structural Analysis of the Biblical Text
4. Preaching with Purpose
5. Framing the Message: Sticky Notes for Daily Life
6. So What? Contemporary Life Parallels

7. Bringing It Home: Introduction and Conclusion
8. Sermon Delivery: Tips and Topics
9. Topical Expository Preaching
10. Greek Tools for Sermon Preparation
11. Hebrew Tools for Sermon Preparation
12. Preaching from the Old Testament
13. Preaching from Poetry
14. Healthy Pastoral Persuasion

SERMON FEEDBACK GUIDE

NAME: _____ TEXT: _____

RATING SCALE: 1 = Poor; 2 = Needs Improvement; 3 = Satisfactory; 4 = Excellent

INTRODUCTION (Circle one)

Got Attention? 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 Comment:

Length? 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 Comment:

Stimulated Need? 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 Comment:

Led into Subject? 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 Comment:

CONTENT (Circle one)

Clear? 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 Comment:

Practical? 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 Comment:

Illustrative? 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 Comment:

Grammar/Vocabulary? 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 Comment:

What is the Central Idea?

What is the purpose?

CONCLUSION (Circle one)

Planned? 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 Comment:

Length? 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 Comment:

Climactic? 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 Comment:

Appealing? 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 Comment:

DELIVERY (Circle one)

Enthusiasm? 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 Comment:

Rate? 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 Comment:

Volume? 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 Comment:

Articulation? 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 Comment:

Eye Contact? 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 Comment:

Gestures? 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 Comment:

Facial Expression? 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 Comment:

Body Movement? 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 Comment:

Use of Notes? 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 Comment:

Distracting Mannerisms? 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 Comment:

Vocal Pauses? 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 Comment:

OBSERVATIONS/SUGGESTIONS/ COMMENDATIONS

SAFNS TEMPLATE**CHOOSING A TEXT**

1. Does the passage contain one main idea?
2. Can the passage stand alone as an independent thought?
3. Does the passage have a beginning and ending?
4. Does your translation identify your passage as a paragraph?
5. Can your passage be broken into smaller ideas?

STATE IT

1. Where does it fit in the context of the biblical book?
2. Why did the human author write these words?
3. When does the text take place? (Historical and cultural context)
4. Who wrote it and to whom was it written?
5. What are the key words/terms and their meanings?
6. What is the kingdom connection? (Story of the Bible or meta narrative)
7. What does the text teach us about God/Christ?
8. What is the main idea in your passage? (Subject and verb)
9. How does the author structure the text?

STRUCTURAL DIAGRAM OF THE PASSAGE

AIM IT (Central Idea and Purpose)

Restate the main idea in contemporary terms.

1. What am I talking about?
2. What am I saying about what I am talking about?

The Purpose

1. So what? What difference does it make?
2. What are the needs of the people that this passage addresses?
3. Do I want to inform, persuade or motivate the people?
4. What do I want the sermon to do?

FRAME IT (Outline)

1. What are the contemporary life parallels I see in this passage? (CLP)
2. What are the main points as demonstrated by the structural diagram?
3. How do these main ideas point back to the big idea?
- 4.. How can I state the main points in contemporary life terms?
5. How can I state the main points applicationally?
6. How can I say it so people remember it?

NAIL IT (Application and Illustration)

1. How can I stick the biblical principles to real life situations?
2. How do I make abstract truths concrete? (Illustration)
3. How can I answer the questions people are asking?
4. How do I help people see and feel what I am saying? (Imagination)
5. How do I demonstrate that it applies to me first?
6. How do I flavor the message with grace? (Avoid mere moralism)
7. How do I show people that God will help them do it?

SEAL IT (Conclusion and Introduction)

Seal the deal. Call to action.

1. How will I call people to the point of decision (POD)?
2. How will I bring the sermon to a climax?
3. What do I want people to believe, be or do as a result of this sermon?
4. How can I awaken an awareness of need to start the sermon?
5. What's my hook? How can I get people's attention?

SUMMARY

TITLE:

TEXT:

CENTRAL IDEA:

PURPOSE:

OUTLINE: