

Faithful preaching begins by seeing what is in the text, explaining what the text means, and showing people how to respond to God's Word.

Learning Outcomes

- See important details in a passage before trying to preach it.
- Ask basic observation questions about repeated words, commands, contrasts, connecting words, characters, actions, and structure.
- Turn observations into simple interpretation statements.
- State one clear Big Idea/Truth from the passage.
- Build a simple sermon outline with explanation, illustration, and application under each point.

Three-Hour Schedule

Time	Teaching Focus	Practice
0:00-0:10	Welcome and goal: faithful pastors must first see what God has said.	Brief prayer and introduction.
0:10-0:30	Principle 1: Observation comes before interpretation.	Group identifies what can be seen before explaining.
0:30-0:50	Practice 1: Psalm 1:1-3.	Mark repeated ideas, contrasts, and images.
0:50-1:10	Principle 2: Look for the building blocks of meaning.	Teach the basic observation questions.
1:10-1:30	Practice 2: Mark 2:1-12.	Find people, actions, conflict, repeated ideas, and surprise.
1:30-1:40	Break.	Encourage pastors to compare observations.
1:40-2:00	Principle 3: Interpretation explains what the observations mean.	Show the difference between repeating the text and explaining the text.
2:00-2:20	Practice 3: Luke 15:1-7.	Move from observations to interpretation and application.
2:20-2:40	Principle 4: Sermons should follow the passage.	Teach Big Idea/Truth + Points + Explain/Illustrate/Apply.
2:40-3:00	Final Practice: Build a sermon from Mark 2:1-12 or Luke 15:1-7.	Complete sermon-building chart and share one point.

Part 1: Observation Comes Before Interpretation

Principle

Observation asks: What do I see in the text? It is the discipline of noticing before explaining. Many sermons become weak because the preacher moves too quickly from reading the passage to giving advice. Faithful preaching begins with careful seeing.

Teach It Simply

- Read the passage slowly.
- Notice repeated words and ideas.
- Notice commands, contrasts, comparisons, and connecting words.
- Notice people, actions, setting, problem, and movement.
- Write down what is actually in the passage before deciding what it means.

Practice 1: Psalm 1:1-3

Have participants read Psalm 1:1-3 in their own Bible. Ask them to fill in the chart below.

Observation Question	Student Notes
What words or ideas are repeated?	
What contrasts do you see?	
What actions does the blessed man avoid?	
What action does the blessed man practice?	
What picture or image is used?	
What does the tree image teach about the righteous person?	

Part 2: Look for the Building Blocks of Meaning

Principle

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Observation	Simple Question
Repeated words	What words or ideas appear more than once?
Key words	Which words seem most important to the meaning?
Commands	What does the passage tell someone to do or not do?
Connecting words	What do words like for, because, but, therefore, and so that connect?
Contrasts	What two things are set against each other?
Characters and actions	Who is in the passage, and what do they do?
Problem and solution	What is wrong, and what does God do or command?
Result or purpose	What happens because of the action? What is the goal?

Practice 2: Mark 2:1-12

Read Mark 2:1-12. This passage is excellent for first-time observation because the story has clear people, actions, conflict, and a strong Big Idea/Truth.

Observation Question	Student Notes
Who are the people or groups in the story?	
What problem is present at the beginning?	
What do the friends do?	
What does Jesus see?	
What surprising thing does Jesus say first?	
What conflict appears in the passage?	
What question does Jesus ask?	
What does Jesus prove by healing the man?	
How do the people respond at the end?	

Part 3: Interpretation Explains What the Observations Mean

Principle

Interpretation asks: What does this mean? It is not enough to repeat the words of the passage. The preacher must explain the meaning of the words, actions, structure, and Big Idea/Truth in context.

Repeating the Text	Interpreting the Text
Jesus said the man's sins were forgiven.	Jesus addresses the man's deepest need before healing his visible condition, showing that forgiveness is greater than physical healing.
The scribes questioned Jesus in their hearts.	The scribes understood that forgiveness <i>belongs to God</i> , but they failed to recognize Jesus' identity.
Jesus healed the paralytic.	Jesus healed the man publicly to prove that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins and only God can forgive sins. (Jesus is God in the flesh)

Practice 3: Luke 15:1-7

Read Luke 15:1-7. Move from observation to interpretation using the chart below.

Observation	What It Means
Who is listening to Jesus?	
Who is complaining?	
What is the complaint?	
What story does Jesus tell?	
What does the shepherd do for the lost sheep?	
What emotion appears when the sheep is found?	
What does Jesus say this teaches about heaven?	

Part 4: From Passage Meaning to Sermon Structure

Principle

A simple sermon should follow the passage.

- ✓ The Big Idea/Truth of the sermon should reflect the Big Idea/Truth of the passage.
- ✓ The sermon points should come from the movement of the passage.
- ✓ Under each point, the pastor should explain the text, illustrate the truth, and apply the truth.

Simple Sermon Formula

- ✓ Big Idea/Truth: What is the passage mainly saying?
- ✓ Point 1, Point 2, Point 3: How does the passage develop that Big Idea/Truth?
- ✓ Under each point: Explain the text. Illustrate the truth. Apply it to the people.

Example Sermon Setup: Mark 2:1-12

Sermon Element		Example	
Big Idea/Truth		Jesus has authority to forgive sins, and His authority calls us to faith, worship, and mission.	
Point 1		Bring people to Jesus.	
Point 2		Trust Jesus to meet the deepest need.	
Point 3		Worship Jesus for who He is.	
Point	Explanation	Illustration	Application
1. Bring people to Jesus.	The friends overcome obstacles to place the paralyzed man before Jesus. Jesus sees their faith.	Provide a personal illustration here.	Do not let crowds, difficulty, fear, or inconvenience keep you from bringing people to Christ. Pray, invite, serve, and carry burdens.
2. Trust Jesus to meet the deepest need.	Jesus first says, "Son, your sins are forgiven." The man came with a visible need, but Jesus addressed the deepest need.	Provide a personal illustration here.	When preaching and counseling, do not only address pain, poverty, fear, or sickness; Address the deeper need of forgiveness and reconciliation with God.

3. Worship Jesus for who He is	Jesus heals the man so the crowd may know that Jesus that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins. (Jesus is God)	Provide a personal illustration here.	Call people to repent, believe, and glorify God. Encourage believers that Christ's authority is greater than guilt and shame. Jesus can forgive sins because God can forgive sins. Jesus is God.
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Participant Study Sheet

How to Use This Sheet

- Choose one passage.
- Read it at least three times.
- Fill in the charts.
- Do not rush to the sermon.
- First observe.
- Then interpret.
- Then apply.
- Then build the sermon.

Step 1: Passage and Prayer

Question	My Response
Passage being studied	
Where does the passage begin and end?	
Pray: Lord, help me understand and faithfully teach Your Word.	

Step 2: First Observations

Observation Question	Notes from the Passage
What words or ideas are repeated?	
What key words seem important?	
What commands are given?	
What contrasts appear?	
What connecting words appear?	
What people or groups appear?	
What actions happen?	
What problem, tension, or need appears?	
What changes from beginning to end?	

Step 3: Meaning in Context

Interpretation Question	My Response
What is the author mainly talking about?	
What is the author saying about that subject?	
What does this passage reveal about God, Christ, sin, salvation, obedience, or faith?	
What would the original hearers or readers need to understand?	
Write the main meaning in one sentence: This passage teaches that...	

Step 4: Application

Application Category	How Should People Respond?
Belief: What truth should be believed?	
Repentance: What sin should be confessed or turned from?	
Obedience: What command should be obeyed?	
Comfort/Hope: What encouragement does the passage give?	
Church/Mission: How should this shape ministry to others?	

Step 5: Sermon-Building Chart

Sermon Element		My Draft	
Sermon Title			
Text			
Big Idea/Truth of the Sermon			
Aim: What should the listener know, believe, feel, or do?			
Sermon Point	Explain the Text	Illustrate the Truth	Apply the Truth
Point 1			
Point 2			
Point 3			

Step 6: Closing the Sermon

Question	My Response
How does this passage point people to God's grace, Christ's work, or gospel hope?	
What final response should you call for?	
Write one clear closing sentence.	

Optional Final Group Activity

Divide the pastors into groups of three or four. Assign each group one of the recommended practice passages. Each group should complete the Participant Study Sheet and prepare a three-point teaching outline with a Big Idea/Truth, explanation, illustration, and application.

Closing Encouragement for Pastors

Faithful preaching does not require cleverness first. It requires carefulness first. See what is in the text. Explain what the text means. Show people how to respond. Then preach with humility, courage, compassion, and dependence on the Holy Spirit.