

a. Select a text.

How do you get it? Well, you have a notebook and in your daily Bible reading you often see a thought and say..."I would like to speak about that some time." So you write the reference in your notebook and you will be surprised how many things will eventually get there. Some problem or some joy might call one of these texts back to your mind but if not....you simply and prayerfully read over your list and select one! Don't wait for a strike of lightning but make your selection careful and prayerful. This is one way of getting a text, at other times you may just go directly to the Bible and read---looking for one!

How long should it be? It may be a verse or more but the important thing is that it is one connected thought. If it is a long and detailed developed thought, one should go to an expository form for preparation.

What is the idea? To drive the truth of the text into the heart of the hearers.

And due to the circumstances of this time, you should likely see the text in several of the modern translations (even if you read Greek) and be able to express it in such a way that the whole gathering is on the same page.

b. Understand what it says. (no further comment needed)

c. See if divisions of thought are suggested in the text. Watch for commas, semi-colons, etc. If none seem to be suggested automatically in the text, study hard and see if you can develop thoughts that will expand and/or explain the meaning of the text.

d. Develop an outline

The outline should be built around the thought of the text. The clarity of the outline is desperately important. One does not have to hammer one's audience with it but without it ---it is similar to walking in a dark forest without a flashlight or a gifted guide. Each point in the outline should be stated clearly but not pedantically. In my personal work I champion a system of outlining that is called "thematic". I have friends who prefer an acrostic outline and various other types. We do not feud over these things if the point of the message is clear and the outline serves to that end

e. Select at least one illustration (Biblical, personal, historical) for every main point in the outline. Illustrations are vital and if anyone doubts this a careful reading of Matthew 5-7 should be convincing. Proper illustration could consume another seminar.