

listeners understand the importance of this subject. It is a good idea to show how the topic fits into the Scripture in the introduction but this must be done quickly or you will soon have no time to actually treat the topic!

c. When it is possible, have a theme for the topic...a short statement that will allow you to remind your audience often of the reality of the topic. The theme should be a subject/predicate proposition...the shorter the better so long as it is specific.

d. Develop a precise and logical outline. It is at this point where many speakers lose audiences and sometimes themselves. Basically the outline should consist of statements that will define the subject, show how it is developed in Scripture, emphasize what it means in our lives, and give direction concerning our response to it. Outlines can be used without great emphasis on them while still making the point. The words "first", "second", "third", etc., make good outline point dividers but there are many other ways of doing things. The concept is that the outline forces the attention of the listener to the point of what one is saying! I will ramble on about this and you may wonder what has happened to my outline!

e. Select appropriate illustrations: Biblical, historical, personal, world settings, etc. A good illustration is invaluable...it is amazing how people will remember them more, sometimes, than the point one was making. But--if anything is remembered at all, that is a plus point.

f. Prepare a conclusion that will summarize the topic as treated and challenge the listener to some reaction. Do not bring new material into a conclusion... when you get to that point you should have said enough for the comprehension of the listener. You may review the outline, if that is what you feel will be most appropriate, and you may move through the conclusion to an invitation, a dismissal, a hymn, or whatever. But the conclusion is your "selling point" and needs careful thought so that when you get to it, you do not just quit, you conclude.

### 3. Now for a topical illustration:

So you were just reading along in your Bible as part of the daily practice and you come to the end of John's first letter and you read the pointed text of chapter 5 and verse 21 as it says: "Little children, keep yourselves from idols". Your attention is caught by this advice and while you can't think of any idols you might have you wonder why John stresses it so...you look up the terms "idol" and "idolatry", etc. and you gain a perception that idolatry is just having anything before you that is more important than God. You might say it in a somewhat different manner but you get that idea and your thoughts go to the importance of speaking on idolatry since you know a lot of other Christians who make some things more important than the Lord in their lives. The topic for your next talk then is idolatry.