

## ***“What’s Cooking?!”***

### **Sermon Preparation: Tips for Preparing Multiple Messages Simultaneously<sup>i</sup>**

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As a Bible teacher, Minister, or Pastor, we are often faced with preparing multiple sermons, teachings, devotions, and talks in a normal week. Just as a chef creates a culinary masterpiece in the kitchen, a pastor “cooks” their messages.

What is our stove? It is the Stove of Devotion located in the Kitchen of our Call.

We all may wish to have an assistant, a robust ministry library, access to helpful Bible software, and our fingers on the pulse of the latest culture trends and current events to help us prepare the sermons. And while we're wishing, why not include an on-call seminary professor? The reality for most of us is that we only have one oven or stove, and it can get stressful when multiple sermons are need to be planned, prepared, and scheduled for delivery all at the same time.

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“Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies: thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over.” ***Psalm 23:5***

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### **For the Joy of Cooking.<sup>ii</sup>**

It is important to recognize that sermon preparation is more than duty or part of the job description. Sermon creation should flow from one’s relationship with Jesus Christ. It is a living extension of our walk with the Lord. The Bible is more than just a recipe or “text” book, it is God’s “Love Letter” to His people. We should have appreciation for the Author’s words to us.

We read and study for personal edification and can store up content for future application. Just like the wise scribe: “Then said he unto them, Therefore every scribe which is instructed unto the kingdom of heaven is like unto a man that is an householder, which bringeth forth out of his treasure things new and old.” (*Matthew 13:52*)

A devotional approach to anything in life, places our hearts in what we do. Whether it is cooking or sermon preparation, having our hearts in the process can make a difference in the quality of what is produced. If we read and study with our hearts, we can be assured that we are inserting God’s Word in our lives. “Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin

against thee.” (*Psalm 119:11*). And then what is in our hearts can be part of the prayerful preparation process. “But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you.” (*John 14:26*) and finally flow out to others in the delivery. “O generation of vipers, how can ye, being evil, speak good things? for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh.” (*Matthew 12:34*).

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“Yea, they spake against God; they said, Can God furnish a table in the wilderness?”

***Psalm 78:19***

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## **Can You Prepare One Sermon and Make Another Message, or Messages, Simultaneously?**

Yes, but there are some guidelines you'll need to follow. First, what is on the menu? As we seek the Lord, let us ask as did Joshua, “What saith my Lord unto his servant?” (*Joshua 5:14*)

We need to determine what the Lord wants us to serve.

Next, preheat the stove by praying. A minister’s walk, just as for any Christian, should abide in an active relationship with Jesus Christ where back and forth communication is frequently taking place.

Recipes. Sometimes inspiration arises from our prayer time, casual reading, or a random conversation. Other times it is through our daily Bible reading or routine study. This becomes the recipe for the message. And just as folks can crave certain foods, some ideas come from an initial thought or desire that can be further developed to a robust sermon topic.

At any time in the Kitchen of our Call, there will be many pots on the Stove of your Devotion. Of these, normally only a few are main message themes, while the rest are other topics that may or may not be developed into a more robust sermon. Some will remain as devotional talks, just as some meals are more elaborate and other meals are simpler, consisting of lighter appetizers and side-dishes. Sometimes what is prepared can become ingredients for other sermons.

Most devotional talks, as in a short message for the Senior Citizen group, are flexible when it comes to preparation. These sermons or sermonettes do not usually require the same amount preparation or varied ingredients of a Sunday morning message. A Sunday sermon is like a holiday dinner that would include meats, veggies, casseroles, baked potatoes, and the like. It may take a little less time for the sermonette to be done, but the “meal” will turn out the same.

Sunday morning sermons, or a seven-part message series for example, are like baked goods, where these require more of a science and each has variable needs to be precise. Study and research are required in order to allow time for the sermon to become ready. All sermon types require continual prayer, just as a chef frequently stirs a pot.

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“O taste and see that the Lord is good: blessed is the man that trusteth in him.”

***Psalm 34:8***

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Just as a chef will take a taste test to see if the item is ready, so does a minister in the sermon preparation process. Some items need to simmer longer or even moved to the back burner, as other sermons become done, some sermons more seasoning, and others are ready to be delivered and ingested by God’s people very quickly. It is important to remember that sermons become ready at different times. Some sermons may stay on the stove for months.

When a chef stirs multiple pots with the same spoon, a shared flavor of theme can result. This may be where a similar concept or supporting text can be interwoven through several sermons just because the messages were prepared in relatively the same time period. Sometimes if the main message has a very strong flavor or theme, much like garlic, we need to be sensitive. If that's the case, it's best to prepare these messages separately and more independently so the serious flavors don't cross or bleed over to other “pots.”

### **Ingredients for a Great Sermon<sup>iii</sup>**

Great ingredients make for great meals. A good chef has a well-stocked pantry. What essentials should you have in your study for great sermon and message preparation?

- The heart of the pastor should first be made receptive for the task of sermon preparation.  
“Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me. Cast me not away from thy presence; and take not thy holy spirit from me. Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation; and uphold me with thy free spirit. Then will I teach transgressors thy ways; and sinners shall be converted unto thee.” (*Psalm 51:10-13*)
- Ensure a healthy diet of balanced content. A chef or pastor may have a signature dish or specialty “favorite dish,” but people need variety. Providing a healthy meal is always the goal regardless what is served.
- Whenever you can, use the highest quality supplies and fresh ingredients for your recipes. You should avoid exclusively using canned or other’s “pre-packaged” message material. The home-made flavor difference will always come through in your finished product.

- The main course. This is God’s Word. God’s Word, not public opinion or personal impressions, should comprise the main stock material of our sermons. If we are not careful we produce only a snack or a low-quality “fast food” meal instead of a message with substance that will “stick to a person’s ribs!”  
“And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.” (2 Timothy 3:15-17)
- Check to ensure the sermon is “done.” There should be a caution on an “under cooked,” “over done,” or “well done” message.
- Watch your portions. For example, you can have too little meat or too much “meat” to deliver in the time allotted. Perhaps you need to make a two-part or even several sermons out of the content and not try and pack it all in at one sitting?
- Side dishes. Just as a good meal will have a supporting cast of side dishes, so the sermon should be reinforced with solid supporting texts and cross-references.
- Spice and flavor. A sermon could have an illustration or some humor, just ensure that the final version is not too spicy and filled with too little substance. For example, too many illustrations may dilute or take away from the substance of the meal. We need to remember to season the message with salt to ensure good taste.  
“Ye are the salt of the earth: but if the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be salted? it is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men.” (Matthew 5:13)
- Motivation, spirit, and attitude. Delivering the sermon is also important. It is not just what we say, but how we say it. Just as your grandmother may prepare a special meal from her heart, the minister should “speak the truth with love.” (Ephesians 4:15).
- People may not like or even reject the meal, but that does not mean that they reject the chef, or the messenger.
- Serve the message fresh. There is nothing like a meal that is “hot off the griddle.” This means the message is timely and relevant to the audience. Even if serving leftovers and recycling a previously used sermon, take time to review and prayerfully modify the message to ensure that this is what “the Spirit is saying unto the churches.” (Revelation 2:7).

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“For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat. For every one that useth milk is unskilful in the word of righteousness: for he is a babe. But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.” **Hebrews 5:12-14**

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## Practical Tips:

- The meat of God’s Word is flexible and adaptable. The temperature of the stove determines when the meal will be done. Technically, meat can be cooked at any temperature until it's done. The lower the temperature, the longer it will take and the juicier it will be. In other words, if we bathe our preparation in prayer and not rush the process, we are ensured a better quality sermon.  
“Finally, brethren, pray for us, that the word of the Lord may have free course, and be glorified, even as it is with you:” (2 *Thessalonians* 3:1)
- The most talented chef (say one who works at a four or five-star restaurant) needs also to be adaptable to prepare a “blue plate special.” In other words, a senior pastor who industriously and exhaustively prepares for a Sunday morning sermon should be able to whip up an inspirational brief devotion for an impromptu Youth event.
- If preparing multiple sermons, set your stove’s temperature to the time limit required. Meaning, if the due date for the message is Thursday and today is Tuesday, then the pastor has to work in that advanced timeframe.
- Just as meat and large roasts, such as a ham or turkey, will stay hot for an hour after coming out of the oven, we can plan on preparing the smaller sermonettes, or side dishes, during the time after the main message is complete. We can focus on the larger and more involved topics over a longer time period and address the simpler devotional talks at a more leisurely pace.
- Each kitchen contains different spices and utensils. No oven cooks exactly the same. Some pastors have different capabilities and resources. It is also fine to frequently perform checks to see if the dish is “done.” So as long as your oven set “around” the required temperature and the pastor follows standard preparation principles as a recipe, the “dish” or sermon should turn out fine.
- The kitchen should be clean and sanitary. The utensils and vessels should be holy and ready for preparation.
- Arrange the sermons or dishes so there is enough space between them. As in cooking, air should be able to circulate between all the dishes, so space the messages out accordingly. Sometimes you can serve the same meal at different occasions or for different audiences, or even delivering the message twice at different services on the same Sunday.
- Count the cost. Put the time in and do your homework. Just as a cook produces a “labor of love,” sermon preparation will involve blood, sweat, and tears. Spending time in the kitchen is hard work, but worth the effort. We need to understand that the most delicious meal and message is the product of the preparer and is worked through the life of the minister to produce a true labor of value. People can recognize quality when they taste it. “And whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple. For which of you, intending to build a tower, sitteth not down first, and counteth the cost, whether he have sufficient to finish it? Lest haply, after he hath laid

the foundation, and is not able to finish it, all that behold it begin to mock him,” (Luke 14:27-29)

- What is the occasion? We need to recognize the setting and prepare accordingly. Is it formal affair, a Homecoming Celebration, or a lighter venue, as in a bar-be-que among friends?
- Delivery and Presentation. We need to set the table and create an atmosphere for reception. Just as you would not want to eat a delicious meal served on a trash can lid, so the setting and appearance is important. What to say, when to say it, how to say it-with the correct attitude and presentation is vital.  
“Give us this day our daily bread.” (Matthew 6:11)
- Saying Grace. The sermon meal should be received with thankfulness. May we be thankful for what we are about to receive.  
“For every creature of God is good, and nothing to be refused, if it be received with thanksgiving: For it is sanctified by the word of God and prayer.” (1 Timothy 4:4-5)
- Lastly, just as with any experienced chef, your sermon preparation will get better with time. “Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.” (2 Timothy 2:15)

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“Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me.” **Revelation 3:20**

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May you enjoy the cooking process and provide a bountiful feasts for God’s people! *Bon appétit!*

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<sup>i</sup> Adapted from “Tips for Cooking Multiple Dishes,” by Sarah Brooks.

<http://www.sheknows.com/food-and-recipes/articles/978631/cook-several-dishes-with-one-oven>. Accessed September 17, 2015.

<sup>ii</sup> Title from “The Joy of Cooking.” [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The\\_Joy\\_of\\_Cooking](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Joy_of_Cooking). Accessed February 10, 2016.

<sup>iii</sup> Adapted from “Healthy Ingredients.” © 2015 Harlan Bros. Productions, LLC. All rights reserved. [http://www.drgourmet.com/ingredients/index.shtml#.VfqOr\\_mjOm4](http://www.drgourmet.com/ingredients/index.shtml#.VfqOr_mjOm4). Accessed September 18 2015.

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