

Anabaptist Sermon Structure

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1 Disclaimer

This is a brief on Anabaptist sermon structure, and is meant as a general introduction, not every sermon will contain every element, and individual congregations may have their own styles. We encourage you to "test everything; hold fast what is good" (1 Thessalonians 5:21) and to peacefully set aside what does not resonate with you.

2 Introduction

This guide is designed to help pastors craft sermons that are both scripturally sound and relevant to their congregations, keeping in mind the Anabaptist focus on discipleship, community, and following the teachings of Jesus.

Creating an Anabaptist sermon involves a thoughtful approach that reflects the core values and theological perspectives of the Anabaptist tradition. Here's a typical outline for an Anabaptist sermon:

1. Opening Prayer: Begin with a prayer, inviting God's presence and guidance.
2. Scripture Reading: Select a Bible passage that aligns with the sermon's theme. Anabaptists often focus on teachings from the New Testament, especially the Gospels.
3. Introduction: Introduce the theme or main topic of the sermon, connecting it to everyday life and current issues.
4. Historical and Cultural Context: Provide background on the scripture passage, explaining its historical and cultural context for a deeper understanding.
5. Exposition and Interpretation:
 - (a) Break down the scripture, explaining its meaning and relevance.
 - (b) Emphasize Jesus' teachings on peace, community, discipleship, and service.
6. Practical Application:

- (a) Discuss how the scripture can be applied in daily life.
 - (b) Encourage practices like nonviolence, community building, and simplicity.
7. Personal Reflection and Testimony: Share personal experiences or testimonies that relate to the sermon's theme.
 8. Call to Action: Challenge the congregation to apply the teachings in their lives, emphasizing practical steps.
 9. Closing Prayer: Conclude with a prayer that reflects the sermon's message, asking for God's help in living out the teachings.
 10. Hymns or Songs: Incorporate hymns or songs that complement the sermon's message.
 11. Benediction: Offer a blessing to the congregation, sending them out with a message of hope and encouragement.

Opening Prayer

- **Purpose:** To invite God's presence (1 Thessalonians 5:17).
- **Tips:** Start with gratitude (Philippians 4:6), acknowledge God's sovereignty, and request guidance (James 1:5).
- **Personalization:** Include specific intentions, reflecting Jesus' teachings on prayer (Matthew 6:5-15).

Scripture Reading

- **Selection:** Choose passages like the Beatitudes (Matthew 5:1-12) or Jesus' parables (Luke 15:1-32).
- **Presentation:** Introduce context and read clearly (Nehemiah 8:8).
- **Engagement:** Encourage following along in Bibles (Acts 17:11).

Introduction

- **Objective:** Introduce the sermon's theme, grounded in scripture. For instance, if the theme is 'Forgiveness', you might start with a passage like Matthew 18:21-22, where Jesus talks about forgiving seventy times seven times.
- **Connection:** Relate the theme to everyday life (Acts 17:22-31). For forgiveness, you could talk about common situations, such as family disagreements, workplace conflicts, or even larger societal issues, showing how the principle of forgiveness is relevant in these scenarios.

- **Engagement:** Use thought-provoking questions or scenarios (Luke 10:25-37). You might ask, "How do we practice forgiveness in a world that often values retribution?" or present a hypothetical scenario, like a long-standing feud between neighbors, and ask how Jesus' teachings on forgiveness could be applied.

Historical and Cultural Context

- **Background:** Insights into the scripture's time and place (Luke 1:1-4). For example, when discussing a passage like the parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-37), explain the historical enmity between Jews and Samaritans, and how radical it was for Jesus to portray a Samaritan as the hero.
- **Relevance:** Explain how understanding the context enhances the scripture's message. (1 Corinthians 9:20-23). Using the Good Samaritan example, you could relate the societal divisions of that time to modern issues of racial or cultural divides, showing the timeless relevance of Jesus' message of love and compassion.
- **Application:** Draw parallels with contemporary situations (Matthew 13:34-35). For instance, apply the Good Samaritan's principles to contemporary scenarios, like responding to homelessness in your city or aiding refugees, showing how the parable's message of neighborly love remains pertinent in today's world.

Exposition and Interpretation

1. Breakdown and Explanation:

- **Analysis:** Delve into the scripture's language and structure (2 Timothy 2:15). For instance, if examining the Beatitudes (Matthew 5:1-12), discuss the repetitive structure and the significance of the blessings' order, exploring the deeper meanings behind words like "meek" and "merciful."
- **Contextualization:** Relate the passage to its historical and cultural context (Acts 17:22-31). If using the Beatitudes example, can explain the socio-political context of Jesus' audience and how these blessings contrasted with their expectations of a Messiah.
- **Relevance:** Discuss how the scripture is applicable today (Hebrews 4:12). Can apply the Beatitudes to modern-day challenges, such as seeking justice in an unjust world

or finding peace amidst chaos, showing how these ancient teachings can guide current personal and societal issues.

2. **Emphasize Jesus' Teachings:** The four themes of peace, community, discipleship, and service are chosen because they are central to Jesus' teachings and the Anabaptist tradition. However, they are not the only themes present in the Bible or Jesus' teachings. Pastors can certainly choose other themes based on the scripture they are discussing and the needs of their congregation. Other themes might include faith, grace, redemption, love, forgiveness, humility, and justice. The choice depends on the specific scripture passage and the message the pastor wishes to convey. The key is to connect the themes to Jesus' life and teachings, demonstrating their relevance and application in the lives of believers.

Any sermon can be related to one or more of Jesus' teachings:

- **Peace:** When discussing any passage, explore how it reflects the concept of peace as taught by Jesus. For instance, in narratives or laws from the Old Testament, discuss how they pave the way for the peace Jesus speaks of in the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5:9). Even in passages of conflict or turmoil, consider how they contrast with or anticipate the peace Jesus brings.
- **Community:** Relate scriptures to the idea of Christian fellowship and community. Even passages from the Old Testament, such as those detailing the Israelites' journey, can be connected to the New Testament teachings about community (Acts 2:42-47). Discuss how the principles of unity, support, and love are consistent throughout the Bible.
- **Discipleship:** Link scriptures to the concept of discipleship. For example, Old Testament stories of prophets or leaders can be related to how they prefigure or exemplify aspects of discipleship that Jesus perfects (1 Peter 2:21). Highlight how various characters in the Bible demonstrate or fail to demonstrate discipleship qualities.
- **Service:** Connect scripture to the theme of service. Teachings or stories, whether from the Old or New Testament, can often be interpreted

as examples or calls to service (Mark 10:45). Discuss how the scripture encourages service to others and how this aligns with Jesus' ultimate example of servanthood.

- **Faith:** Connect scriptures to the theme of faith. Highlight how various biblical characters exhibit faith, such as Abraham in Genesis 22. Discuss how Jesus emphasizes faith, such as in the healing miracles (Mark 5:34), and relate this to the necessity of faith in contemporary life.
- **Grace:** Discuss grace as portrayed in the Bible, such as in Ephesians 2:8-9. Explain how grace is evident in both the Old and New Testaments and its relevance in understanding God's unconditional love and forgiveness.
- **Redemption:** Explore the theme of redemption through passages like Isaiah 43:1 or the story of the Prodigal Son (Luke 15:11-32). Discuss how these narratives illustrate God's redemptive nature and apply this concept to personal transformation and societal change.
- **Love:** Reflect on scriptures that discuss love, such as 1 Corinthians 13. Emphasize how Jesus embodies and teaches love (John 13:34-35) and explore its application in personal relationships and community interactions.
- **Forgiveness:** Use passages like the Lord's Prayer (Matthew 6:12) or the story of Joseph (Genesis 45) to discuss forgiveness. Highlight Jesus' emphasis on forgiveness and its role in healing and reconciliation in personal and communal contexts.
- **Humility:** Examine scriptures that speak to humility, such as Philippians 2:3-11. Discuss how Jesus models humility and the importance of this trait in Christian life and leadership.
- **Justice:** Explore the biblical perspective on justice through scriptures like Micah 6:8 or Jesus' teachings in Matthew 25:31-46. Discuss how justice is integral to God's character and how Christians are called to pursue justice in society.

By doing this, you can draw a direct line from any part of the Bible to the teachings

and example of Jesus, demonstrating the consistency and relevance of His message throughout the scripture.

Practical Application

1. Application in Daily Life:

- **Scriptural Principles:** Apply the teachings to everyday scenarios (James 1:22-25). For instance, use the parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-37) to discuss modern issues like helping the homeless or being kind to strangers.
- **Modern Context:** Make connections to current social and personal issues (Colossians 4:5-6). For example, can connect teachings like "love your neighbor" (Mark 12:31) to current social issues such as racial injustice or community welfare.

2. Encourage Anabaptist Practices: Can tie it in to an Anabaptist such as:

- **Nonviolence:** Discuss the biblical basis for nonviolent living (Matthew 5:38-39). For example, can Apply Jesus' teachings on turning the other cheek (Matthew 5:38-39) to discussions on peaceful conflict resolution in personal or societal conflicts.
- **Community Building:** Share ways to foster spiritual community (Hebrews 10:24-25). Could use examples from Acts 2:42-47 to encourage participation in community services or support groups.
- **Simplicity:** Advocate for a simple, unencumbered lifestyle (1 Timothy 6:6-8). Can advocate for a lifestyle focused on spiritual richness over material wealth, using teachings like 1 Timothy 6:6-8, and discuss how this can manifest in choices like sustainable living or prioritizing family and community over consumerism.

Personal Reflection and Testimony

- **Share Experiences:** Narrate personal stories that resonate with the sermon's theme (Psalm 66:16).
- **Connection:** Emphasize the impact of these experiences on faith and life (2 Corinthians 1:4).

Call to Action

- **Practical Application:** Challenge with actionable steps (James 2:17).

- **Encouragement:** Motivate for personal and communal application (Hebrews 10:24).

Closing Prayer

- **Reflection of Message:** Prayer that encompasses core themes (Colossians 4:2).
- **Petitions:** Requests for spiritual growth (Philippians 4:6).

Hymns or Songs

- **Musical Alignment:** Select hymns or songs that complement the message

(Colossians 3:16).

- **Congregational Engagement:** Music for congregational participation (Ephesians 5:19).

Benediction

- **Blessing:** Offer a benediction with hope and encouragement (Numbers 6:24-26).
- **Scriptural Foundation:** Use Biblical blessings (2 Corinthians 13:14).