



*Learning the  
Principles of Power*

*Yes*

*You Can Preach!!!*

# Preacher's Sermon Blueprint

*"Building a Sermon of Excellence."*

# Sherman Cox

## Introduction

You have to preach a sermon, but you don't know how! You need a system. You need someone to take you by the hand and walk you through the planning, preparing, and preaching of a sermon.

This ebook is my attempt to do just that. I will walk you through my whole homiletic system in these thirty pages. If you need further help than this ebook, I would strongly encourage you to sign up for our [Supercharge Your Sermons 2.0](#) preaching training program.

I pray that this book will help you place your sermons into overdrive and bless the saints.

To your Preaching Success,

Sherman Haywood Cox II

## Who Am I?

I am Sherman Haywood Cox II. I am an African American Preacher's son. I've grown up in the church. I've heard Black Preaching for much of my life under my father and under other preachers.

I've engaged in African American preaching for the last twenty years. I am an award-winning preacher. I won the Florence Conwell Prize from Vanderbilt University Divinity School. In addition, I made African American Preaching a special study while I was attending Vanderbilt Divinity School for the Master of Divinity. I took ten courses; thirty graduate school hours on preaching.

I made a special study of the African American preaching tradition including closing the sermon. I made study of C.L. Franklin and his work in closing the sermon. I made a special study of whooping and celebration.

Finally, I teach Black Preaching on the web. You may have seen SoulPreaching.Com where we celebrate the African American Preaching Tradition.

I have also taught preaching at Supercharge Your Sermons 2.0. This is the second incarnation of our online interdenominational preaching course.

Yes, I thought was important that I spread the knowledge that I have obtained from seminary on both SoulPreaching.Com and [Supercharge Your Sermons](#).

This free book is a continuation of that as we teach the overview of my whole homiletic system. I thank you for reading it and please feel free to let me know of your success with it. You can contact me at <http://soulpreaching.com/contact>.

## SEVEN SECRETS

Now we want to move on to our main subject which is the Seven Secrets to Supercharge Your Sermons: Placing your sermons into overdrive.

### **Difference Between Good and Great Sermons**

The first thing I need to emphasize is that the difference between good sermons and great sermons is not as large a chasm as you might think. The difference between a good sermon and a great sermon is in doing little things. Learning these little things can take your sermons to the next level. These little things can help your congregation really understand and apply the message. This presentation is really about emphasizing these little things.

Here we will begin talking about the things that great preachers accomplish in their sermons. Specifically we will discuss seven secrets of the great preachers. Once you incorporate these secrets, your sermons will of necessity go from good to great!

So let's begin.

## Secret #1: Purposeful Planning

The first thing that we can do to push our sermons from good to great is to have purposeful planning. Many times, we put together our sermons on a week-by-week basis. We finish our sermon and then at that point, we start to think about what we are going to preach next week.

Sometimes, we may think a little further ahead when we put together a sermon series where we know what we're going to talk about for the next three or four weeks.

However, what I'm talking about here is to plan much further out and to do it with a purpose. What we do when we have purposeful planning is that we **create directions, we create avenues for our future sermons.** We have in mind what we are actually going address in our future sermons. When we do this, we **make sure that we address the real needs of the congregation.**

So the first thing that we must do, the first secret, if we're going to take our sermons from good to great is to address the real needs of the congregation through purposeful planning.

### Steps in Purposeful Planning

The steps in purposeful planning are to first look at yourself as the preacher: Who are you as a preacher and what are the things that you are confronting in your own life? What are your struggles and problems and pains? What are your successes?

Oftentimes, the preacher can push her or his issues on the congregation. So if a preacher is dealing with a particular problem, then that preacher is more likely to believe that the people are dealing with that particular issue and that preacher may preach sermons that are directed to the preacher and not necessarily to the people. So the first thing, if we're going to do purposeful planning, is to look at yourself and your issues.

Next, you must really look at the congregation. Sometimes, we make assumptions about what the people actually need. We make assumptions. I know that there are some denominational traditions out there that have problems with, maybe, legalism. Your denominational tradition may have problems with legalism. Even if that is the case, one cannot fall into the trap of thinking that your particular congregational

group has the same problems as the larger group. Legalism may not be your local church's problem. Maybe it's something else. Maybe the congregation needs to hear just a straight gospel more. Maybe they need to hear something else. Maybe something else is the problem. The key is if you're going to deal with the real needs of your congregation, you must do a real look at the congregation.

Next, after you look at the congregation, you want to look at where the congregation needs to go. This is where the preacher looks at the congregation and tries to understand where God is leading that particular congregation.

Finally, you want to create sermons in light of the above analysis. You know where the congregation is right now. You know where the congregation needs to go. You know who you are as a preacher; now you want to connect the dots from where they are to where they are going by coming up with themes, coming up with sermonic themes and issues that you will deal with in your sermons.

When you do this kind of analysis in your sermons, you will address the real needs of the congregation.

So the first thing that one must do, if one is going to directly address the congregation and take their sermons to the next level, one should have purposeful planning.

## Secret #2: Experiential Exegesis

Next. If you are going to take your sermons to the next level, you should perform what I call an “experiential exegesis of the scripture.” Now, if you have purposeful planning, you actually have real needs that you’ve identified in by an analysis of the people’s needs. You’ve got themes that address these real needs. So now you go to the text with these themes on your heart. You **go to the text looking for what this text has to say about these real needs** that they’re dealing with.

When you do this, when you exegete a text in light of real needs, you **make sure that the people will have an experience with the text.**

Now, what I’ve talked about doing is the “Four Waves of Biblical Exegesis.” We want to **exegete the text for an experience.** What am I talking about?

One thing that you can do is go walk in the text. When you are looking at a text, you want to **walk in the text.** If you are reading the text about the Lily of the valley, you want to go up to that lily and smell the lily. You want to look at the lily. How does the lily look? How does it feel? You want to do all of this kind of analysis. Here, what I talk about is ‘walk into the text’ looking for sights in the text.

I was just talking to a SoulPreaching.com reader the other day and he was talking about preaching on the little boy who was demon-possessed. And I told him that, “Before you’re ready to preach this text, you must look at that little boy who is being thrown around by this particular demon. You want to look at the smell. What does it smell like in there? What are the smells that are going on? And what are the emotions, not only in the little boy, but in the parents of the little boy? What are the emotions of the larger family? What are the emotions even that are in you as a reader of the text? You want to look at all of these things if you are going to do an experiential exegesis, for an experiential exegesis will help you to foster a real experience with the people.

Now I also talk about doing a **stylistic exegesis.** Here, you want to look at how the text is conveying what it’s conveying. The text is using elements of style to convey different things. Especially when you look at the Psalms, you’re looking at poetry, music, songs that are being used to convey what is being conveyed. And so if you are going to be true to

a Psalm, then you must use something in your preaching that is true to that stylistic exegesis, to that stylistic presentation that the biblical writer has gone through the effort of presenting. And so, I would say that if you're going to foster an experience and do an experiential exegesis, you must look at the styles that are already in the text.

Next, I definitely want to emphasize that all of this is in addition to what you normally do in exegesis. You can go read many books out there on exegesis and I would definitely encourage you to go look for a book that will help you to learn how to do solid, fundamental exegesis. If you want a free book, you definitely can download my own book, *You Can Preach: Seven Steps to an Effective Sermon*, which is available for free on the web. But you want to **do all that you normally do in exegesis**. You want to look at the historical background of the text. You want to look at the narrative components of the text. You want to look at all of these different dimensions of the text, all of the things that you would normally do. And then, after that, you're going to want to do this kind of experiential exegesis that I am talking about.

Finally, you want to not forget—and this is an important component—because when we begin exegeting a text, we often will lose our creativity. Your creativity is important when you're putting together sermons. But so is exegesis and finding something, finding facts that are in the text. I think—and I've talked about this and many other homiletics teachers have also talked about this: it's important for you to **capture your initial confrontation with the text**; it's important for you to capture your **initial understandings** of what's going on in the text.

And so, you do this by writing down everything that comes to your mind when you are reading a text, writing it all down when you initially read the text. And what's going to happen is over time, you are going to begin to refine your initial observations with real solid exegesis.

So the second secret of great preaching is to exegete the text with real issues and problems in mind. This will help to take your sermons to the next level.

## **Secret #3: Sound Structure**

Secret number three is to have a sound structure. And by sound structure, what I'm talking about is to order the points of your sermon in such a way that they have the maximum impact. We are seeking to have maximum congregational impact and you do that by structuring your sermon in such a way for that to happen.

When you order sermons for maximum impact, it **makes sure that the people will experience the sermon.**

### **Three Examples**

Now, I've given three examples. Once again, I encourage you to visit [SoulPreaching.com](http://SoulPreaching.com).

### **Three Points and a Poem**

One of the great ways of structuring sermons is **The Three Points and a Poem**. This is a very often used format.

Basically, the Three Points and a Poem structure include an introductory component. Here you want to get the people on board with the sermon. Give them all they need to understand the points that are to come.

Then you've got your three points. You're going to talk about your three points.

And then you have your celebration which is often called the poem.

And once again, because you're seeking maximum congregational impact, what you're going to do is order these points in such a way that it will have maximum impact.

### **Hegel's Dialectic**

Another approach that is often used, especially among the African American preachers, is Hegel's Dielectic.

- Here, you have a thesis which is God's ideal.
- You have antithesis, which is our reality on earth.
- And then you have the synthesis, which is how can we accomplish God's ideal in light of the realities that we have in this world, which is your antithesis. And the synthesis is your sermon explaining how you can do those things.
- And finally there is a celebration of the synthesis at the end.

So you've got your thesis, your antithesis, your synthesis, and then you have a celebration of the synthesis.

### **Scriptural Structure**

Finally, another structure that can be used for maximum congregational impact is simply the scriptural structure where you just look at the scripture itself. The scripture structures your sermon. The scripture is your outline.

This is actually a very powerful way to present especially in light of the fact that we have been called to preach what's in the Bible. And so when you use the scripture itself, it's a very powerful and important way of structuring sermons.

Now, these are just three ways of structuring the sermon. There are definitely more ways to do a sound structure, but these are three important ways.

One is, as I said before, that I am doing more and more Three Points and a Poem. There was a time there when I was kind of looking away from this particular kind of approach, looking at other approaches, especially in light of...you know, I took all of this homiletics training and seminary, you see all of these other approaches to preaching the scripture that are presented there, all these other structural ways of presenting the sermon. But then, you look out in what's being practiced out in the churches. And you look at some very effective preachers and you find that the Three Points and a Poem is still being used. And not only used, but used very effectively.

If you want to see a very powerful presenter of this methodology, I would encourage you to look at Frederick Douglas Haynes III, who is a Three Points and a Poem masterful preacher. So I would encourage you to look at that.

But there are other methodologies, other structures that you can use. But the important point that I'm making is that you order or place your sermons in such an order and you order it based on maximum congregational impact if you are going to take your sermons to the next level.

## Secret #4: Tantalizing Title

Secret number four to taking your sermons to the next level is to have a tantalizing title. Now there was a time when I just didn't title my sermons. I didn't think that it was important.

It's interesting when you look in the homiletics literature very little is talked about the title. And some people that even address it say it's not that big a deal or it's not that important. But one thing that I have found is that your people are going to remember your title.

Often some title is going to be placed on your sermon even if you don't have a title. I remember one time, I was preaching a sermon back in the days when I didn't give titles, and then I went to go purchase the audio cassette of the particular sermon that I presented and I saw a title on the tape. The sound engineer added a title to the sermon. The point that I'm making is that the people are going to remember some kind of title. It is best if you put the title on it yourself.

Now, what is the title? It's **naming the sermon in such a way that the people understand as well as remember the sermon.** That's a dual focus: you want the people to *understand* **and** *remember* the sermon. Your title, when done correctly, will make sure that the people remember the sermon.

But not only that, the people are **enticed to listen to the sermon!** Then after listening to the sermon, the title helps them to remember the sermon.

A good sermon title **encapsulates either the whole sermon or the main point of the sermon.**

The sermon title is actually **the first move of the sermon before the sermon even starts.** You know, I have definitely heard sermon titles where the people are grabbed simply by the title. You've probably hear them as well. The preacher simply states the title and the people are already on board. They're shouting at the title.

Now, this is difficult to come up with such a sermon title and I would, by no means, say that you will hit the mark every time. The important point, however, is to *attempt* to hit the mark every time. Try to hit a homerun every time and then maybe you will get a single. So the

tantalizing title is an important component especially in our tradition, in the African American Preaching Tradition.

## Secret #5: Inviting Introduction

Secret number five. And this is really related to the title in that the introduction serves some of the same purposes as the title only the introduction is a little longer. The title can actually be placed in the bulletin; it can be talked about ahead of the time. So it is actually the first move of the sermon, as I've said, before they even get to the sermon.

But now, the secret number five to take your sermons to the next level is to have an inviting introduction. So you have a tantalizing title. And now you want to build on that by creating an inviting introduction.

What is this sermon introduction? It is a **section of the sermon that invites the people to hear and understand what the sermon will be.** These are two important components:

**To hear.** You are grabbing the people, you are setting the people in front of you, and you are saying, "Listen to this!" Your introduction should grab the people and say "Listen to this!" But not only that, it should place them in a position where they can understand the sermon; so they are hearing and they are understanding.

Now what am I talking about when I'm talking about understanding? Well, let me first talk about hearing. This is to **make sure that the people listen to the sermon.** If you don't get the people in the beginning, then the people are less likely to come with you down the road of the sermon. I've seen congregations where it looks like the people have disengaged until it's time for the whoop. And then they come back in for the whoop. But if you want the people to be with you on the whole journey, you've got to grab them in the beginning. And this is the hearing component.

**To understand.** But more than that, you want the people to understand where the sermon is coming from. And how do you do that? You **limit the distance between the past and the present.** By that, I mean you are attempting to help the people to be in a position where they can understand what the text is saying. It's one thing to talk about the biblical characters, to talk about the Promised Land, Sabbath day's journey, and all of these things that are in the bible that our people may not understand. Yet when we talk about these things today, the people

are wondering what in the world that is. There is a great distance, there's a chasm between the past and the present. And so it is your job as the preacher, in the introduction, to lay the groundwork so that the people can understand what it is you are talking about. And you do that by connecting the past to the present in some way.

As I said before, an inviting introduction, a good introduction is going to **bring the people into the sermon**. It's going to grab them and throw them into the sermon. It's going to **arise interest** in the people. The people are going to be really ready to listen to the sermon.

Finally, it's going to **acclimate the people to the text**. As I've said before, it's going to limit the distance, acclimate the people to the text. It's going to make it so that they are in a position where they can hear and understand what the text is saying. That's secret number five.

## Secret #6: Celebrative Conclusion

This secret is, in my estimation, one of the most powerful and important ones. You need to have a Celebrative Conclusion if you are going to take your sermons to the next level. What is a celebrative conclusion? It's **the culmination of the sermon where the truth of the sermon is celebrated experientially.**

In this celebrative conclusion, you want to take the truth of the gospel that you have **intellectually presented** in the sermon. It is important to have an intellectual component to your sermons. We have too many people who are preaching sermons that only have this celebration or only this experiential dimension without the intellectual. But you need the intellectual and the experiential together. In fact, your experiential should be based on the intellectual.

So it's the culmination of the sermon where the truth of the sermon is celebrated. During the sermon, you've intellectually laid down the positive, the points of the sermon, the positive gospel truth of the sermon. Now it is time to celebrate that which you have already presented. And if you've presented the good news, if you've presented the gospel, then you've presented something worthy of celebration. And so at the end of the sermon, you're going to **celebrate the truth of what you have already presented.** What does this do when you have a celebration of the truth of the sermon? What it does is that it makes sure that the **people experience the sermon's gospel truth in the emotive dimension.**

Now I talked about the emotive when we only deal with the emotive, but there's also the other issue, the other problem when we deal in the intellectual. Sometimes, we think that intellectual understanding alone is enough. Some of us—not all of us—but some of us believe that only the intellectual dimension is important. But if you are going to deal with the whole human being, if you're going to preach to the whole person, which includes the intellect but also includes the emotions and the emotive dimension of humanity, then you must push the people to experience the sermon's gospel truth. And this word again, experience, is important. Experience here, experientially, because you remember in the very beginning where we talked about you need an experiential exegesis. That's secret number two, I believe. You need experiential exegesis

when you go to the text and seek to experience the text, then you are going to take that experience text into your structure of your sermon. You're going to take it into your title and to your introduction. And you're also going to take it into your conclusion, this experience that you have done. And so, the preacher experiences the text and now encodes that experience into the sermon. And then as we get to the next point, it's going to present that experience with the people.

As I said before, there is an **emotive experience of the intellectual truth**. This celebrative conclusion is an emotive experience of the intellectual truth. And I keep emphasizing this over and over again because I don't want you to miss that you need both the intellect and the emotive. You need the emotions and the intellect in your sermons. And the celebrative conclusion is where you are going to emphasize the emotive dimension that is based in understanding and experiencing the intellectual of the presentation that you just presented.

Now how do we do this correctly?

First, your celebration **must be related to the text and the sermon**. Don't come with a celebration that ain't got nothing to do with the sermon you just presented,. If you do that, you are going to totally obliterate the intellectual truths of the sermon that you have just presented. The people are not going to remember your sermon. All they're going to remember is the celebration. This emotive dimension is so powerful that this is the only thing they're going to remember if it's not related to the intellectual truth. So you've got to relate the emotive, you've got to relate this conclusion—the emotive—to the intellectual that you presented. And so, because the emotive is so powerful, then the people are going to go off and they're going to relate and live this experience that they've had which is based in both. So if you're going to preach a supercharged sermon, a powerful sermon in this tradition, you must have a celebration that is related to your text and your sermon.

And what does celebration do? As we said before, it **drives the truth of the presentation, the truths of the message into the minds of the congregation, the people**. This is because celebration taps into the emotive dimensions of humanity, which is so powerful and so strong.

So secret number six, is to have a celebrative conclusion. Definitely, new preachers sometimes miss this particular point where they put together a solid sermon. They put together an intellectually valid

sermon, and yet they kind of miss the boat because they don't turn the corner and connect that to the people to promote this experience by having this celebrative conclusion. So that's secret number six: to have a celebrative conclusion.

## Secret #7: Powerful Presentation

Finally, secret number seven: is to have a powerful presentation. As we said before, you've had this experience with the text and you've encoded this experience into the sermon. Now you need to **embody** that experience, become that experience in the presentation of the sermon. So the **presentation of the sermon should be done in a way to embody the truths of the sermon.**

What this does is that it **makes sure that the people will continue to understand and hear the preacher present the sermon.** You've put a lot of effort into putting together this sermon. You've put a lot of effort into putting together the intellectual and even the emotive dimensions. After putting forth all of that effort, it is important for you to have the people to actually listen to you and hear you.

Now I'm not saying you've got to get up there and yell and throw your arms around or whatever, you should be natural in your presentation. But the point I'm making is that you need to embody the truth of the message that you have presented. Something is wrong if you are preaching the Good News of Jesus Christ and the people can't see that you are happy about that news. You've got to embody that truth. Something is wrong, likewise, if you are preaching some of the more heavy or even the sad portions of the scripture and you're up there smiling. It's important to embody whatever it is that you are presenting in a powerful presentation.

And that embodiment, I'm not going to say as I said before, the embodiment is definitely something that is natural to the different preachers. Different preachers will have different ways of embodying this but all of them will embody that message if they are going to follow this particular secret from the Supercharge Your Sermon System, which is to have a powerful presentation.

Now what are some simple things that you can do? One, **strong eye contact.** Look at the people when you are preaching. Don't look down in your manuscript so much. You want to look up at your people. In fact, I would say that the less dependence on your manuscript that you have, the better. That may not be a full-scale preaching without notes, but it does mean that you know your sermon enough where you are not reading it verbatim. You need to have strong eye contact. Especially

today, there are a number of resources, a number of books out there, there are DVDs on how to preach with limited dependence on notes. And so I would encourage you to go to Amazon. You can even go to SoulPreaching.com and search for [Without Notes](#). At any rate, you want to have strong eye contact whether you use notes or whether you don't.

Here, once again, I talk about embodying the message. You must **become the sermon rather than simply to present the sermon**. You become the sermon. You are the one who is the embodiment, the ambassador of your sermon as it were. You become your sermon to your people.

And so if you are going to have a powerful presentation—and this is another point—it should go all the way back through your sermon preparation process when you are in your exegesis phase and you are seeing various aspects of the text that are jumping out at you, I would encourage you at that point to think about how you would present this particular idea. It may not end up in the sermon but it's definitely going to help you to begin to understand and to think about how you will embody these different aspects of the text and your sermon.

In addition, I would also say that you need to build up—I said slowly and I don't know how slowly. I know in the past, traditionally, we start it very slow and then move up but we're not really starting that slow anymore and it can be problematic if you start too slow—but you want to build your sermon up. I talked about this as a Whooping Curve. Go to SoulPreaching.com and search for [Whooping Curve](#), where the sermon should kind of go up. You're **building your sermon up to climax** as the sermon moves on if you're going to do this powerful presentation.

## Conclusion

That is how you take your sermons to the next level. You need to follow a sound preaching methodology. But then you must make sure that you do these seven things

1. **Purposeful Planning** – So that you know what is needed in the congregation and verify that you address these very things.
2. **Experiential Exegesis** – So that you can understand the text not just in your head, but in your heart. This will foster an experience with the text.
3. **Sound Structure** – So that the sermon is ordered in such a way to have the greatest congregational impact.
4. **Tantalizing Title** – So that the people will be enticed to listen and then to help them remember the sermon after it is over.
5. **Inviting Introduction** – So that the people will be brought on board in the beginning.
6. **Celebrative Conclusion** – so that the people will experience the gospel truth that was presented.
7. **Powerful Presentation** – So that the people will stay with you as you present the powerful sermon.



Have you enjoyed this ebook? We could only deal very lightly with the subject. But we do have a full scale online preaching course entitled [Supercharge Your Sermons 2.0](#) In that course we will take you step by step through these seven secrets and give you explicit training in how to incorporate each one into your sermons. This will help you take your sermons to the next level.

It is delivered totally over the web and it is a 6 month practical program that provides a weekly lesson in text, audio, and video.

Here are some testimonials from those who took the first edition of the course:

The course taught me a different way to look at the scriptures and it also gave me structure and strategy, but most importantly it gave me a System.

**Aaron Harris**  
**Texas**

Taking the course has enabled me to organize my sermons more effectively by drawing more out of scripture. I also have a better understanding of structure for sermon building

**Eldress Janet Woods**  
**North Carolina**



The course consists of 26 weeks of training. You will learn the fundamentals of planning, preparing, and presenting powerful sermons. Find out more [Click Here!](#)

### **Here are more Testimonials from students:**

Because of the course I am able to structure sermons to have maximum impact. Structure, I've learned is key. Conclusions have always been my weakness, but since taking the course I've gotten much better. I am more conscious of developing the sermon with the

congregation in mind.

**Allen White**  
**Dist of Columbia**

The information from Supercharge your sermon was information that you could use immediately in your sermon preparation and preaching deliverance. It discussed how to be relevant, but still be true to the biblical text.

**Willie Lee**  
**Georgia**

This course gave me a better understanding of how to draw meaning out of the text and also helped me ask questions regarding the text that I had not done before. This course has helped me to better prepare for preaching a message.

**Preston A Brown**  
**Texas**

I am constantly seeking to improve my exegesis of every text I preach, therefore I am always seeking new and fresh ways to approach exegesis. The reason is I never want to be self-satisfied with what I do in preparing to preach. This course has given me a slightly different twist on exegesis which cannot have a value tag placed on it.

**John Carroll Travis**  
**Kentucky**

The value of the course is that, it helped me **prepare more for my sermons** and also get into the science of preaching . It has changed me preaching style forever.

**Joe Benjamin**  
**United Kingdom**

Find out about the course here:

[www.superchargeyoursermons.com](http://www.superchargeyoursermons.com)