

Set up a Preaching Schedule

Another way of saying “Set up a Preaching Schedule” is “Plan what you’re going to preach ahead of time!”

A preaching schedule has several benefits:

1. It lets everyone in the church know ahead of time what you’ll be preaching on. This can help in your members inviting guests. For example, if your people know ahead of time that you’re going to preach an evangelistic sermon (there will be a paper later on that topic of how to prepare an evangelistic sermon), then they will be more likely to invite an unsaved friend on that Sunday.
2. This information is especially useful to your music and worship leaders in planning their part of the worship service. I will devote a separate paper in this series to the topic of coordinating your preaching with the entire worship service.
3. It allows you to involve others in the church to help them feel like they are part of your preaching! Asking people what they would like or need to hear is useful. Involve your leadership team, be they a pastoral staff, your elders and deacons in what they think your church needs to hear on Sundays. Ultimately, you must decide before God what you think *God* wants you to preach!
4. It helps *you* most of all to devote your valuable time to preparing to preach what you have planned, instead of frittering away your time early in the week asking “What am I going to preach next Sunday?”

Having mentioned the benefits of a schedule, always be open to changing your sermon schedule if circumstances change. God is ultimately in charge of our preaching schedule! Let me give you some examples of things that might make you change your preaching schedule:

1. A guest speaker, like a missionary, comes to town unexpectedly. You may not get the opportunity to invite this person to preach for a long time. If you have some flexibility in your schedule already built in, then you can open the pulpit on that Sunday to your guest.
2. Your own study shows that you need more time to deal with a passage. This is especially true when you are preaching thru a book of the Bible. In my recent series in the Book of Galatians, I realized as I studied the last half of Gal 3 that there was too much material to include in one sermon. I needed to break off the last vss of the chapter and preach them as an entirely different sermon. A more flexible preaching schedule allowed me to do that!
3. Your own devotional time with God or your own study of Scripture may lead you occasionally to preach on an entirely different topic than you planned. The freshness you will gain by following God’s leading in this way should delight your people. However, if you do this too often, like anything, it can become tiresome and lose its impact!
4. During the week, there may be some local, national, regional or world tragedy that so overshadows what you’d planned to speak on that you must change your topic and address that event head on. Let me give you a big example from my own life:

The most famous terrorist attacks in U.S. history occurred on Monday morning 9-11-01. That next Sunday I changed my topic from what I had planned to do and taught instead on “Why Did God Allow This Tragedy to Happen?” That question was uppermost in everyone’s minds. I know another pastor who foolishly stuck to his old preaching schedule and spoke on his original topic. Obviously, the Sunday after 911, everyone’s minds were not on his topic but on the tragedy of 911! So, that other pastor wasted a golden opportunity to preach when everyone would be listening!

The bottom line for a preaching schedule is: Be sure you are in control of your preaching schedule, and it is not in control of you! I know a pastor who plans his sermons a year in

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advance. That's helpful because he coordinates his sermons to fit the church calendar and holidays and yearly events like Christmas and Easter. But unfortunately, he follows this schedule so rigidly that he leaves no room for flexibility or variation. If there's a guest preacher, that speaker must fit the pastor's preaching schedule, even to the topic and Scripture passage! It gives no freedom to the guest speaker to preach what is on his heart!

What I am advocating here is a balance between having *no* schedule so that you don't know from one week to the next what you're going to preach to having the kind of rigidity of the pastor I mentioned above.