

**Sermon Development for Latter-day Saint Military
Chaplains: Book of Mormon Sermons According to
Types, Styles and Elements**



By Nathan Peterson

This is dedicated to my wife, Annalee, for all her patience, support, and sacrifices. Without her, this would have been impossible.

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Sermon Development a Resource for Military Latter-day Saint Chaplains

The purpose of this booklet is to provide Military chaplains from the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints a resource to which they may turn to better understand how to develop and deliver effective sermons to congregations of diverse faiths and understandings. It includes a brief history of Christian preaching from Christ to the Restoration of the Church. It also examines an explanation of sermon types and sermon elements that determine sermon structure, a comparison of those types and elements with Book of Mormon sermons and General Conference talks, and basic outlines for developing sermons according to the defined terms. It is my hope that by better understanding Christian homiletics, Latter-day Saint chaplains will feel more comfortable delivering sermons to those both in and out of the Church.

Latter-day Saint chaplains, unlike those of other faiths, do not typically receive the same instruction and experience in homiletics as other Christian chaplains unless they attend Divinity schools or Seminaries. Brigham Young University (BYU) offers a Master of Chaplaincy degree that allows future chaplains to attend BYU and learn the art of preaching in real situations, but until recently, the program was limited in how many students were admitted. Additionally, BYU may not be the most feasible for those in the military, or those desiring to enter, who may not be in the Provo area. The accessibility of online divinity programs has allowed more saints to complete their master's degree requirements. Yet, those same members may only give a talk to a congregation once a year and, therefore, may not be as experienced as pastors or ministers of other faiths that speak at least weekly.

The inclusion of Latter-day Saint service members in the military has been evident since the Spanish-American war and the military has made room for Latter-day Saint Chaplains since the end of the 19th Century. Falling under the Protestant umbrella, Latter-day Saint chaplains do not serve strictly Latter-day Saint service members, and are more likely to preach in a General Christian setting.

Preaching the gospel is a small part of the Chaplain experience which is mostly ministering and pastoral counseling. However, within the Christian community, many times, chaplain effectiveness is judged by pulpit presence and homiletic prowess. To become and remain prevalent as preachers, pastors and ministers, Latter-day Saint chaplains should seek to add to their sermonic abilities. Leaders in the military typically judge each other by military bearing and professional appearance, and chaplains must consider their pulpit presence as well.

The best way to learn and implement new styles and techniques is likely through studying literature from the preachers and scholars that are effective homileticians. The library of works to search through may be extensive and, therefore, may seem daunting. This booklet is a “one-stop” source that contains the fundamentals that modern preachers and scholars (Fred Craddock, Thomas Long, David Buttrick, John Killinger, and others: see footnotes and bibliography for cited sources) consider most important in sermon writing. Therefore, by using this booklet and further searching the cited sources, Latter-day Saint chaplains can reduce the time spent in seeking the mountain of works on preaching.

Information About Sermon Development

To understand sermon development, it is critical for preachers and chaplains to appreciate the types and elements that create a sermon that enable congregations to easily absorb its contents, to process it, and implement its concepts into their lives. Through the craft of preaching outlined previously in chapter one, certain types, styles, and elements became evident in sermon development, including the sermon's, focus, function, *form*, beginnings and endings, transitions, *movements*, and illustrations. The following sections further explain what these types and elements are and how they apply to sermons.

Sermon Types

Most scholars agree on five general types of sermons based on how the sermon moves, the topic, or scripture passages. These sermon types are exegetical, expository, textual, topical, and narrative and they are the focus

of this section.

Different Types of Sermons

Exegetical Sermons

An exegetical sermon focuses on a scripture passage and strives to understand the context for the sermon with an emphasis on what the original scriptural author meant to say through the process of exegesis.¹ To do so a preacher looks at the biblical world in which the scripture is written. This includes looking at the original audience, the questions asked that resulted in the passage, the original language and nuance used, and any other pertinent contextual data². The challenge in using an exegetical approach to preaching is that the preacher may lose the congregation by focusing on scholarly aspects of the passage that may seem boring or dry.³ When the preacher finally arrives at their message the listeners have tuned out because they lost interest. When done efficiently, however, exegetical sermons allow listeners to walk away with a greater understanding of the scriptures which may allow them to know how to best apply them in their lives. Exegesis and proclamation are separate but connected as they work together as the preacher seeks to establish his or her sermon.⁴

President Russell M. Nelson, President of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints gave a memorable exegetical sermon in the April 2020 General Conference of the Church. Titled “Let God Prevail,” President Nelson explains that while studying the scriptures with two Hebrew Scholars, he discovered that the name *Israel* can be translated into English as “let God Prevail.” He then explains what it means to let God prevail in our lives and how we can apply that thought to ourselves.⁵ This sermon is exegetical because he looks at the context, environment, and language in which the passage was given. Only once he understood the meaning did he find an application upon which he could build his sermon.

1. Michael J. Gorman, *Elements of Biblical Exegesis: A Basic Guide for Students and Ministers*, Revised and Expanded Edition (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2009), 9.

2. Willimon, *Preaching and Leading Worship*, 69.

3. Craddock, *Preaching*, 142.

4. Hayes, *Biblical Exegesis*, 149.

5. Russell M. Nelson, “Let God Prevail,” *Ensign*, October 2020, 92.

Expository Sermons

An expository sermon is also focused on a scriptural passage, but unlike exegetical sermons, the focus is on garnering as much about the passage as application with less focus on the original context of the scriptures.⁶ There is an exegetical element to expository sermons in that the focus is on scripture and dives into context and meaning, however, that is not the main aim of the sermon. Expository sermons transition from scripture understanding to application. Therefore, the exegesis drives application and not understanding. Expository preaching is successful when the meaning of the text is understood and conveyed in a *form* that provides the listeners the best opportunity for understanding and application.⁷

Additionally, expository sermons provide a moving commentary on scriptural texts which is why preachers tend to utilize topical sermons with expository elements.⁸ Killinger further explains that the advantage of expounding scripture is that listeners will develop the habit of learning from scriptural texts, and not just examples of good living.⁹

A talk given in the most recent General Conference (October 2021) by Latter-day Saint Elder Jeffrey R. Holland of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles demonstrates an expository sermon. Titled “The Greatest Possession,” the talk begins with the story of the rich young ruler who approached Jesus to ask what is necessary for him to attain eternal life. The Savior’s response sell all and follow Him left the man sorrowing as he walked away (Mark 10:17–22). Elder Holland expounds upon this passage so those who desire to follow the Savior understand the cost and the worth of the eventual reward. To do so Elder Holland uses other scriptures, examples, and illustrations, and finally exhorts us to avoid being like the rich man from the scripture passage.¹⁰

6. Haddon W. Robinson, *Biblical Preaching: The Development and Delivery of Expository Messages*, Volume 3 (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2014), 5.

7. Greidanus, *Preaching Christ from the Old Testament*, 290.

8. Killinger, *Fundamentals of Preaching*, 53.

9. Killinger, *Fundamentals of Preaching*, 54.

10. Jeffrey R. Holland, “The Greatest Possession,” *Ensign*, November 2021, 8.

Textual Sermons

Similar to expository sermons, the textual sermon focuses on expounding a small scripture passage. The sermon is designed to focus on a few verses with the intention of edifying and uplifting the listener, generally focusing on several related themes. The scriptural passage is the focus, whereas the topics are not.

The challenge of textual sermons lies in the exegesis and preparation involved prior to sermon delivery. Preachers must dig into the scriptures, commentaries, and life experiences to understand the passages, and then they have to construct the sermon in a way that edifies the congregation and teaches correct principles through the scriptures.¹¹

In the April 2021 General Conference, Latter-day Saint Elder Ronald A. Rasband of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, delivered a textual discourse titled “Behold! I am a God of Miracles.” This is a textual sermon because he uses two scriptures as the basis of his talk, and then finds other scriptures, examples, and illustrations to defend the text. His talk lacks an exegetical element; however, he uses 2 Nephi 27:23 and Moroni 7:27 to establish that God was, is, and forever will be a God of miracles.¹²

Topical Sermons

Topical sermons focus on a topic or subject and use various illustrations, examples, and scriptures to expound, explain, and elaborate the message to the congregation. To prepare a topical sermon the preacher will focus on their congregation and determine the message he or she feels they need to hear. The preacher then finds all the resources they need to expound on the topic.¹³ Willimon explains that a common practice is to determine a topic and then link stories and scriptures together to provide substance to the sermon.¹⁴ The challenge that accompanies topical sermons is the tendency to sprinkle opinions in with the message which may result

11. Killinger, *Fundamentals of Preaching*, 54.

12. Ronald A. Rasband, “Behold! I Am a God of Miracles,” *Ensign*, May 2021, 109.

13. W. Floyd Bresee, “Pastor’s Pastor: Should you try topical preaching?” *Ministry Magazine*, November 1991, <https://www.ministrymagazine.org/archive/1991/11/should-you-try-topical-preaching>.

14. Willimon, *Preaching and Leading Worship*, 65.

in incorrect teachings or may degrade the sermon experience.¹⁵

Buttrick, however, believes that topical preaching is flawed because it is too romantic and liberal which causes listeners to fail in understanding gospel applications.¹⁶ Topical sermons, many times, are the type of messages members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints frequently hear from the pulpit each Sunday and especially during the Semi-Annual General Conferences held every six months in the Conference Center in Salt Lake City, Utah. Those giving the talks receive assignments to speak on a subject and then find scriptures, quotes, examples, and experiences that elaborate or support their topic.

President Dallin H. Oaks of the First Presidency of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints gave a talk titled “Defending Our Divinely Inspired Constitution in the April 2021 General Conference. He begins his talk by stating that he felt inspired to speak on the Constitution of the United States.¹⁷ He then uses examples and scriptures to explain how the Constitution came to be and what it means to Americans. This talk is a prime example of a topical sermon in focus and *form* as President Oaks has a subject, states it clearly, and then expounds on the topic.

Narrative Sermons

The final sermon type that preachers use is the narrative sermon. What makes the narrative sermon unique is that there is a topic, but it is not stated at the beginning of the sermon. Instead, the preacher begins by illustrating a story that twists and turns through examples and imagery taking the listener through several steps until they arrive at the final point which is the topic. Until the end, the listener is left trying to determine the point and the illustrations are meant to paint the picture in a way that may not be obvious. David Buttrick expresses that narrative preaching brings God closer to the congregation than either topical or expository preaching, both of which have relevance in providing doctrinal themes or a scriptural

15. Willimon, *Preaching and Leading Worship*, 65.

16. Buttrick, *Homiletic*, 17.

17. Dallin H. Oaks, “Defending Our Divinely Inspired Constitution,” *Ensign*, May 2021, 105.

foundation, respectively.¹⁸

This sermon style is also often used by many Latter-day Saints in their discourses. There is a topical focus, but the point is to provide a narrative that allows the listener to receive inspiration and direction for application. If the preacher can draw the congregation into the narrative and move them with anticipatory ease, listeners will likely be edified. However, care must be taken to ensure the narrative is not overly complex, filled with too many images or flowery terms, or leads in several directions at once. If the listeners get lost, they will tune out and the preacher is left telling a story that no one hears. Care must be taken to speak at the listener's level and to keep the sermon simple in delivery.

Homiletic scholar Eugene Lowry speaks of narrative sermons as being similar to TV shows and movies that begin by introducing characters and plot lines until the moment of critical suspense that leaves the audience wondering what will happen to reconcile the characters and plot at the end.¹⁹

In the October 2020 General Conference, Sister Cristina D. Franco, former counselor in the Primary General Presidency, gave a talk titled "The Healing Power of Jesus Christ." Her manner of delivery was narrative in nature as she initially spoke of the trials and tragedies surrounding the world at the time, including the Covid -19 Pandemic, earthquakes, fires, floods, and other tragedies. She then told the story of her experience of purchasing a broken piano that, upon delivery, subsequently after icy conditions caused it to fall. Her husband told the piano company that he would take the broken piano, and that it was an accident. The husband and the company argued back and forth regarding whether a new piano would suffice or the broken one. The manager finally explained that once a piano is broken in that manner, it would never sound the same, regardless of repairs. Sister Franco related the broken piano to humans who sin and cannot be made clean and whole without Jesus Christ as the true healer. Initially, the congregation did not know where she was taking the story, but she drew them in until she, at last, arrived at her point which she then

18. Buttrick, *Homiletic*, 17.

19. Eugene L. Lowry, *The Homiletical Plot, expanded edition: The Sermon as Narrative Art Form*, (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001), 12.

backed up using scripture.²⁰ Her sermon is a narrative sermon on display.

With an understanding of sermon types, the next aspect of sermon delivery to consider is the focus, function, and *form* of the sermon as well as the other aspects of a sermon. These elements, applied to the sermon type, topic, or scriptural passage, *form* the body of the sermon.

Sermonic Elements

Focus

The focus of the sermon is best described as the message the preacher intends to deliver to the listeners.²¹ Through scriptural exegesis and understanding the congregation a preacher determines what they need to hear. Following this determination, the preacher should write a statement that best expresses the common and controlling theme of the sermon.²² Focus drives the sermon and, when correctly identified, helps listeners to carry the feeling of the sermon with them, even when the sermon itself is lost.²³

Function

If the focus of the sermon is what it intends to say, then the function is what the sermon intends to do.²⁴ A function statement then becomes the anticipation and hope of what the sermon will do for the hearers.²⁵ The focus and function of the sermon are related to each other in that what the sermon says is not as important as how the sermon motivates the listener to action in some *form*.²⁶

20. Cristina B. Franco, "The Healing Power of Jesus Christ," *Ensign*, November 2020, 60–61.

21. Buttrick, *Homiletic*, 39.

22. Long, *The Witness of Preaching*, 127.

23. Stephanie Paulsell, "Pulpit Supply," in *From Midterms to Ministry: Practical Theologians on Pastoral Beginnings*, ed. Alan Hugh Cole (Cambridge: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2008), 42.

24. Long, *The Witness of Preaching*, 126.

25. Long, *The Witness of Preaching*, 127.

26. Craddock, *Preaching*, 124.

Form

The *form* of a sermon is expressed as the manner it is delivered and how the preacher implants their message into the spiritual memory of the listeners.²⁷ Willimon explains that preachers are challenged to deliver sermons that are balanced in style and substance, and the content of the message.²⁸ An aspect of *form* is delivery which combines the preacher's character and talents with their training and experience to make effective preaching.²⁹ Additionally, *form* should match the text used by the preacher.³⁰ If the text is about the misery of death and the sermon is in a *form* that focuses on joy, the message may seem incongruent to the *form*. The *form* is the map that takes the sermon from the beginning, moves listeners through different aspects, and then ends by tying the *movements* together.³¹

Long provides several suggestions of *form* types that preachers may consider applying in the individual *movements* or in the sermon as a whole. These include, but are not limited to,

"If this... then this ... and thus this."³²

"This is true... in this way ... and also this way ... and in this other way too."³³

"This is the problem ... this is the response of the gospel ... these are the implications."³⁴

"This is the promise of the gospel ... this is how the gospel is applied."³⁵

Long also provides additional *forms* that preachers may use in sermons to best relay their message to the hearers.³⁶

27. Willimon, *Preaching and Leading Worship*, 77.

28. Willimon, *Preaching and Leading Worship*, 77.

29. Willimon, *Preaching and Leading Worship*, 78.

30. Craddock, *Preaching*, 84.

31. Long, *The Witness of Preaching*, 171.

32. Long, *The Witness of Preaching*, 189.

33. Long, *The Witness of Preaching*, 189.

34. Long, *The Witness of Preaching*, 190.

35. Long, *The Witness of Preaching*, 190.

36. See Long, Thomas G. *The Witness of Preaching*, pages 189–192. In the analysis of Book of Mormon sermons, similar forms are used by the Prophets analyzed in the four sermons.

Movements

When delivering a sermon, the preacher deliberately transitions from point to point so that listeners can follow the flow of the sermon. These different stages are called *moves* or *movements*, and an effective sermon transitions from *movement* to *movement* in a manner that is obvious and easy to follow. If the preacher were to jump around or pass through subjects quickly listeners would become disoriented and eventually become frustrated.³⁷ To be effective, *movements* organize images, scriptures, and commentary, under a greater topic, thus bundling information into a format that is easy to comprehend.³⁸ Although there is no specific rule to the number of *movements* in a sermon, to avoid too much complexity and to allow for the proper length of a sermon,³⁹ preachers typically maintain three *movements*, not including the introduction or conclusion.⁴⁰

Organizing *movements* is a process that requires study and planning so that the preacher provides listeners the best opportunity to learn from their message and that planning begins with the focus and function statements.⁴¹ Therefore, *movements* will fit together and build upon each other to form the message in minds of the listeners.⁴² Buttrick further explains that clarity is key to expressing and understanding *moves* in a sermon.⁴³ When preachers find doctrinal teachings that cause internal opposition or strife, designing *moves* that deal with those oppositions will help them cope, and then teach them productively.⁴⁴ As an example, when teaching tough doctrines like the fall and Adam's transgression, the preacher could break apart and analyze the separate aspects of each. By addressing bite sized chunks, the doctrines become more palatable and easier to digest.

Moves must be organized and have shape to them and to transition

37. Buttrick, *Homiletic*, 25.

38. Fred Craddock, *As One Without Authority*, (Enid: Phillips University Press, 1974), 56.

39. For military chaplains the average length of a sermon should be approximately 15 minutes.

40. Lowry, *The Homiletical Plot*, 9.

41. Long, *The Witness for Preaching*, 158.

42. Buttrick, *Homiletic*, 28.

43. Buttrick, *Homiletic*, 29.

44. Buttrick, *Homiletic*, 32.

from beginning to end, or from problem to resolution.⁴⁵ They serve no purpose if each *move* is unrelated and is a salad of mixed thoughts and ideas. If the preacher's intent is to get through material quickly and not efficiently then the result will be chaotic. The Army has a common phrase of "train to standard, not to time." The intent of the sermon is to edify, and this can only be done through the efficient organization of *movements*. There must be a strategy to the process which means constructing the sermon and *movements* according to the ways humans process information and in a manner that is understandable.⁴⁶

Constructing *movements*, like building the frame of a house, may feel unnatural and awkward, but as the preacher uses intentionality in building the sermon, the *movements* form the structure of what becomes the polished sermon.⁴⁷ Preachers use rhetorical intention to view the sermon spatially, temporally, personally, and socially, so they can see the sermon from all sides and perspectives.⁴⁸ Preachers must take care to create *movements* that vary in design but each should add to and work with the other *moves* like ingredients in a recipe.⁴⁹ If each *move* has the same structure (i.e., statement, point, counterpoint, background, and ending with the application) listeners will be bored with the predictability of the sermon.⁵⁰ However, each *movement* must be unified from within and connected in some way to the rest of the *movements* through effective transitions.⁵¹ Preachers are building sermons and, therefore, all must be done in the proper way and order.⁵²

Beginnings

According to Buttrick, the purpose of a sermon is to establish the focus and implant it into the minds of the listeners.⁵³ The beginning of a sermon

45. Lowry, *The Homiletical Plot*, 23.

46. Craddock, *Preaching*, 156.

47. Buttrick, *Homiletic*, 39, 42.

48. Buttrick, *Homiletic*, 43.

49. Long, *The Witness for Preaching*, 141.

50. Buttrick, *Homiletic*, 49.

51. Buttrick, *Homiletic*, 49.

52. Long, *The witness for Preaching*, 161.

53. Buttrick, *Homiletic*, 83.

can either hook listeners or scare them away so great care must be taken to ensure that the opening statements are efficient and effective.⁵⁴ Killinger points out that both the beginning and ending are important because if the preacher fails to catch the attention of the congregation the message will fall short, and if she or he fails to emphasize the message at the end then it will not stay with the listeners.⁵⁵ Killinger employs the image of a golfer to understand the importance of beginnings by saying “an apt beginning is like a good approach shot to the green: it puts them a comfortable distance from the pin.”⁵⁶ Buttrick likes the analogy of a camera lens that provides focus to the subject of an image while keeping the background in view.⁵⁷

Effective beginnings typically have four common characteristics: they are “brief, arresting, memorable, and conductive.”⁵⁸ Introductions can inform, inspire thoughtfulness, shock listeners, provide a personal element, focus on problems, or pique interest.⁵⁹ With so many ways to open a sermon it is important to know that the introduction fails if it becomes predictable,⁶⁰ e.g., I have been asked to give a talk on charity (Moroni 7:45–47) and then define charity. Additionally, introductions should be familiar to the congregation so they can begin the hermeneutic (context) journey at the same place the preacher does.⁶¹ However, introductions should strive to avoid predictability which is counterproductive to the listening experience. Listeners might enjoy a predictable sermon, but a surprise or shock will have a greater effect and will remain with them longer.⁶²

Within the Church those giving talks tend to begin with a joke or a comment on how they received a call from the bishop or that they do not like giving talks so their message will be quick. However, memorable talks implant upon hearts from the opening moments to the conclusion. In his talk title *Let God Prevail*, President Nelson began his talk by speaking

54. Willimon, *Preaching and Leading Worship*, 74.

55. Killinger, *Fundamentals of Preaching*, 79.

56. Killinger, *Fundamentals of Preaching*, 79.

57. Buttrick, *Homiletic*, 84.

58. Killinger, *Fundamentals of Preaching*, 81–83.

59. Long, *The Witness for Preaching*, 198.

60. Killinger, *Fundamentals of Preaching*, 91.

61. Buttrick, *Homiletic*, 91–92.

62. Killinger, *Fundamentals of Preaching*, 87.

on how long he has served as an Apostle, yet he was filled with delight upon learning something new about the name Israel. What followed was an expository sermon that taught members of the Church what it means to let God prevail in their lives. However, with his beginning, he shocked or surprised listeners by saying that although he has served for so long and has spent countless hours in the real study of the scriptures, and he is a prophet, *he* was studying and learned something new. If the prophet admits to learning something new, the members need to pay attention.⁶³

Conclusions

Like beginnings, to be effective conclusions must find a way to implant the message, so the congregation leaves fulfilled and carries the message into their lives. Without doing so, they walk away unfulfilled and unsatisfied.⁶⁴ Sermon preparation, therefore, must account for the ending with care or the message may fall on deaf ears, and the time at the pulpit is wasted.⁶⁵ Craddock goes so far as to state that the ending should be prepared first before the rest of the sermon.⁶⁶ Scholars have suggested numerous ways to conclude a sermon and each preacher has their default ways to do so, but intentionality is the key—what does the preacher intend the listeners to learn, and what should they walk away remembering?⁶⁷ Additionally, conclusions should tie the *movements* together so that they are connected and ensure there are no loose ends bringing the content of the sermon back into focus.⁶⁸

Endings, to not be predictable, should almost come off as a surprise, as if the congregation is unaware that the sermon is ending.⁶⁹ If the preacher merely repeats what she or he already said then their conclusion becomes apparent as a summary, and the listeners will feel the redundancy.⁷⁰ However, ending without solving the “sermonic riddle” of

63. Nelson, “Let God Prevail.”

64. Killinger, *Fundamentals of Preaching*, 92.

65. Killinger, *Fundamentals of Preaching*, 92.

66. Craddock, *Craddock on the Craft*, 157.

67. Buttrick, *Homiletic*, 97.

68. Robinson, *Biblical Preaching*, 184.

69. Buttrick, *Homiletic*, 101.

70. Buttrick, *Homiletic*, 101–102.

the message will leave the congregation immersed in a plot hole without gospel resolution.⁷¹ Though preachers may describe multiple ways to end a sermon, the consensus is to end quickly, within a few sentences.⁷² Long claims that Luther declared that “When you see your hearers most attentive, then conclude.”⁷³ The ending should not begin a sermon, nor introduce new material. Doing so overwhelms a congregation with information that becomes incomplete as he or she pronounces their final “Amen.” Additionally, caution must be taken in using questions as conclusions. If the question serves as an exhortation, then it remains with congregants. However, congregations will likely delete the question if it is framed the wrong way.⁷⁴ For example if the preacher ends with “will you serve as Christ served?” congregants are not challenged to think about how to do anything and, therefore, will merely answer yes and move on. But if the preacher ends with “Jesus commanded us to love one another and serving others is the ultimate demonstration of love. Therefore, *HOW* will you serve others as Christ served?” The difference in these questions is the thought *after the sermon*. When listeners see themselves in the action of the sermon, they are forced to decide how to act themselves or to reject the message altogether which can be a spiritual dilemma.⁷⁵

Additionally, care should be taken in using quotations as they may detach the listener from the speaker, especially if the quote is long. If using a quote, the preacher must be deliberate in its use which should not necessitate explanation.⁷⁶ Listeners may not connect the quote to the subject, and they may only remember a portion. Therefore, quote usage takes planning and must meet the intention of the sermon.⁷⁷

Conclusions should avoid being abstract and focus on the concrete.⁷⁸ “We should love everyone” has less meaning than “we should love men, women; black and white; bond and free.” “Be good to your families”

71. Lowry, *The Homiletical Plot*, 91.

72. Buttrick, *Homiletic*, 103.

73. Long, *The Witness for Preaching*, 218.

74. Buttrick, *Homiletic*, 104.

75. Buttrick, *Homiletic*, 104.

76. Buttrick, *Homiletic*, 104.

77. Killinger, *Fundamentals of Preaching*, 96.

78. Buttrick, *Homiletic*, 106.

becomes “be good to your spouse, your sons, your daughters, your parents, and your siblings.” Thus, their individual faces become the picture of the listener’s experience. Language should be to the point, deliberate, uncomplicated, personal, familiar, and understandable.⁷⁹ Parishioners should not be on their phones looking up the words preachers say so they can finally understand the point. When preachers use large, complicated, or uncommon words, they should be drawn out in a manner that listeners can easily determine the meaning of the phrase, if not the word. Latter-day Saint Apostle Neal A. Maxwell was famous for his use of words, but even he knew the limits of congregational understanding and used alliteration and other poetic devices so that those listening could capture the message even when his words were confusing.⁸⁰

Due to the extensive ways to end a sermon, a concise list is not presented at this time. However, Craddock and Buttrick provide great ideas for conclusions and the analysis of the Book of Mormon sermons will determine which endings each prophet used.⁸¹ Additionally, the Doctrine and Covenants provides the injunction for sermons within the church to expound the scriptures and exhort the Saints.⁸² Therefore, the pattern of Latter-day sermons, talks, and discourses should involve the use of exhortations which, though not locked into conclusions, are nonetheless effective as a means for ending a sermon.

Transitions

When a preacher moves from *movement* to *movement*, they must do so with care so that listeners do not become lost and to ensure that the sermon flow is not interrupted. The moments between *movements* are called transitions. Thomas Long explains that transitions fill in this space by providing closure in one *movement* and indicating the content of the next *movement*.⁸³

79. Buttrick, *Homiletic*, 108.

80. Bruce C. Hafen, *A Disciple's Life: The Biography of Neal A. Maxwell* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2002), 542.

81. See Buttrick, *Homiletic*, and Craddock *Craddock on the Craft of Preaching* for ways to conclude sermons. They provide great examples and explanations that may provide chaplains with new and fresh ideas for concluding their sermon.

82. See Doctrine & Covenants 25:7; 71:1; 73:1.

83. Long, *The Witness for Preaching*, 214–215.

Illustrations

Preachers use illustrations to paint pictures in the congregation's mind and homiletic processes lean toward images.⁸⁴ Illustrations come in many forms including anecdotes, stories, allegories, parables, firsthand experiences, or even actual illustrations or diagrams. The use of illustrations contributes to the overall understanding and edification of the congregation and allows listeners to recall messages based on the stories they heard, making the obscure plain.⁸⁵ However, illustrations will lose the audience if they are long, complex, or outside the bounds of their understanding. Preachers must speak at the level of their listeners so if they speak rocket science or calculus, the message will be lost. Additional caution must be taken to avoid piling illustration upon illustration because doing so gives the audience the impression that the preacher has nothing of her or his own to say.⁸⁶ The litmus test for illustrations is whether they contribute to the message or not.⁸⁷ Killinger further explains that balance must exist between illustrations and abstractions thus allowing listeners to hear and learn from the preacher in the way that is common to them.⁸⁸ Not everyone needs illustrations to understand concepts, but many people do and they serve as a means to explain or prove a topic⁸⁹.

There are rules for the use of illustrations. First, most sermons should only incorporate a couple of illustrations drawn from life experiences.⁹⁰ When ministers draw extensively from their own experiences, the congregation becomes aware of his or her strengths and weakness, which can come off as pride, or may cause the preacher to lose credibility within the church. Additionally, intense, or traumatic illustrations may overwhelm the congregation or overshadow the message. If the congregation hears a harrowing message that is memorable, they may forget the overall intent of the illustration. Lastly, illustrations are like jokes: if they miss the mark

84. Buttrick, *Homiletic*, 29.

85. Buttrick, *Homiletic*, 127.

86. Willimon, *Preaching and Leading Worship*, 92.

87. Willimon, *Preaching and Leading Worship*, 92..

88. Killinger, *Fundamentals of Preaching*, 106.

89. John A Broadus, *A Treatise on the Preparation and Delivery of Sermons*, (New York: Hodder and Stoughton, 1898), 226.

90. Willimon, *Preaching and Leading Worship*, 93.

and require explanation then they should not be used.⁹¹

Some scholars believe that illustrations should be connected in some way to each other, and others believe they should vary.⁹² There are advantages to both methods and it becomes the responsibility of the preacher how to use multiple illustrations together. However, illustrations should make concepts clearer to understand and interesting to hear.⁹³ When preachers properly use personal examples the emotional atmosphere of the sermon is enhanced and elevated.⁹⁴ In the final analysis, illustrations bring focus to ambiguity.⁹⁵

When examples are used as illustrations in a sermon they must be balanced against the body of the sermon to ensure they fit the sermon and they must not trivialize God in any way.⁹⁶ Preachers should be cautious using examples so they do not become the sermon.⁹⁷ The details in the example must be real and credible so that the mind understands how it applies to the topic or passage of scripture, yet it cannot become overcomplicated.⁹⁸ Chained examples can distort the sermon. Now that we understand the types and elements and structure of a sermon, the following texts and applications from talks delivered by Book of Mormon Prophets are analyzed to demonstrate effective sermon construction.

Book of Mormon Discourses Analyzed

The following are the four sermons examined from the Book of Mormon that demonstrate application and the principles and concepts discussed in this paper. Investigation of sermons consists of looking at the following elements: sermon type, focus statement, function, *form*, beginning, transitions, illustrations, and conclusion. Additionally, a brief overview is provided to give the context for the sermon, and a *movement*

91. Willimon, *Preaching and Leading Worship*, 93.

92. Willimon, *Preaching and Leading Worship*, 93.

93. Killinger, *Fundamentals of Preaching*, 107–108.

94. Killinger, *Fundamentals of Preaching*, 109.

95. Buttrick, *Homiletic*, 30.

96. Buttrick, *Homiletic*, 131.

97. Buttrick, *Homiletic*, 131.

98. Buttrick, *Homiletic*, 132.

outline that demonstrates the topics and “*moves*” to each sermon.

2 Nephi 9–10

Overview

Shortly after splitting from the body of Lamanites, Nephi asks his brother Jacob to deliver a sermon to all the Nephites regarding Isaiah 49:22–52:2. Known as one of the most extensive works on the atonement of Jesus Christ, Jacob delivers an articulate sermon that looks back to the time of Isaiah and forward to Jesus Christ.⁹⁹ Another Latter-day Saint scholar points out that this sermon is strategically placed between two passages from Isaiah 49. By doing so both Jacob and Nephi draw attention to Jesus Christ in a way that is palatable to the ears.¹⁰⁰

This sermon begins in 2 Nephi 6 as Jacob explains his call to the work, and then reads the words of Isaiah.

Type

This sermon is both an expository and topical sermon. Though his message is on the need for an atonement, Jacob refers directly to the words of Isaiah for the body of his text, and he continually explains what Isaiah is saying. Due to the length of the passage cited, and the lack of demonstrated exegesis, this remains expository in nature. Jacob knows the words as he was taught them by Nephi and they are written on the Brass Plates. However, he provides little insight into the context of the scriptural passage. The sermon is also topical because Jacob is speaking with the intent that his people will understand that they are dependent on Jesus Christ to overcome the effects of the fall.

Focus Statement

Jacob’s focus is a two-part statement taken from two separate pas-

99. D. Kelly Ogden and Andrew C. Skinner, *Verse by Verse Book of Mormon 2-in-1* (SLC: Deseret Book, 2012), 381, eBook.

100. Joseph M. Spencer, *The Vision of All, Twenty-five Lectures on Isaiah in Nephi’s Record* (Draper: Greg Kofford Books, 2016), 126–127.

sages—one before the Isaiah chapters, and one after—and his meaning is clear: the focus of his sermon is to review the words of Isaiah so that you may learn from and “glorify the name of your God” (2 Nephi 6:4) and that you “might know concerning the covenants of the Lord” which He has made to all the house of Israel (2 Nephi 9:1).

For the next two chapters, he will review the words of Isaiah and prove, through them, that all humanity is fallen and requires a Savior in the form of Jesus Christ.

Function

Jacob states his purpose for his sermon by saying “I speak unto you that ye may rejoice, and lift up your heads forever, because of the blessings which the Lord God shall bestow upon your children” (2 Nephi 9:3). Jacob’s intent is to give humanity a reason to rejoice because of the life and death of the Christ, which is the name given to Jacob for the Savior and Redeemer of humanity (2 Nephi 10:3).

Form

Jacob utilizes a *form* that combines an investigation of the problem faced by humans, and how the gospel of Jesus Christ responds to the human condition and states the implications of life with and without Jesus Christ. In Long’s definition, this is the “this is the problem ... this is the response of the gospel ... these are the implications.”¹⁰¹ Each *movement* within his narrative demonstrates the fallen nature of humanity, establishes the human inability to overcome their own nature, and determines that a mediator must intercede on behalf of all humanity. The resulting condition of humanity is a state of hope that relies on faith and repentance to gain access to the full partaking of the divine gift of Jesus Christ.

Another author considers sermons such as Jacob’s as a deliberative sermons that motivate the people to action in the future which requires remembrance and renewal of covenants.¹⁰² This is similar to what John

101. Long, Thomas G. *The Witness of Preaching*, 190.

102. Kennedy, George, *Classical Rhetoric and its Christian and Secular Tradition from Ancient to Modern Times* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1980), 19.

Welch calls a coronation and the requirements that come with this form of a sermon.¹⁰³ Jacob wants to provide incentive for Christian living and cleanse himself from the sins of his people by bearing testimony to them of what the gospel of Jesus Christ does in the lives of those who hear and answer the call.¹⁰⁴

Beginning

Jacob begins by establishing his authority and calling from Nephi then he gives a short synopsis of the scattering and gathering of Israel prior to reading from Isaiah 49:22–52:2. However, the true beginning of his sermon is located in 2 Nephi 9:1 when he establishes his focus and function, which he gives to the congregation directly. He then jumps into the content of his sermon by providing two opening facts: first, all humankind must die and, “our flesh must waste away.” Second, “in our bodies we shall see God” (2 Nephi 9:4). In one verse Jacob establishes the paradigm humans are in—all must die, yet all will see God in their own body. His congregation must have heard the hole in the middle of his statements and wondered, like Jacob’s son Enos, “how is it done?” (Enos 1:7). Jacob’s beginning implants a question into the minds and hearts of listeners as they struggle to see how to cross the chasm of death.

Jacob chose to shock his audience and plant the great soteriological question in their minds. His beginning applied to all and promised to enlighten them, even if they all knew the answer, for he delivers his sermon in a way they have not heard before. This is an effective introduction because it is short, to the point, and leaves the listener wanting more.

Movement Outline

Jacob gave his sermon over the course of two days and, therefore, his sermon was longer than most sermons that a chaplain will give to service-members, which is important to know because the typical chaplain sermon will only have three to four *movements*. Whereas Jacob’s sermon contains

103. John Welch, *Reexploring the Book of Mormon*, edited by John W. Welch (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book and FARMS, 1992), 66–68.

104. Richard D. Rust, *Feasting on the Word: The Literary Testimony of the Book of Mormon* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1997), 113.

at least nine *moves*. However, all *movements* are included in this analysis so readers can see how they flow, and how they contribute to the design of this sermon. The basic *movement* outline for 2 Nephi 9–10 is as follows:

1. Introduction
2. Death & judgment
 - The fall and its effects
 - The resurrection
 - The judgment
3. Deliverance through Jesus Christ
 - The purpose of “the law”
 - What is wisdom?
4. Pronouncing of wo’s
5. Exhortations
6. The purpose of Jacob’s calling
7. The covenant
 - Scattering
 - Gathering
 - Promises to Zion
 - Responsibility of Nephites (and by extension Israel, and us)
8. Exhortations
9. Conclusion

Even without the text of the sermon, Jacob structured it to flow from one crisis to the next and so on, until he reaches the climax of the life and mission of Jesus Christ. Jacob delivers this sermon over two days which poses a slight difficulty for he begins twice and ends twice. Therefore, he ends both times using the same *format*—exhortations. He begins the second day by transitioning to the Covenants of the Father unto the house of Israel and he relates that covenant to the people of Nephi being the “righteous branch” and he provides an additional focus to the sermon as a promise that “God will be merciful” and their “children shall be restored” (2 Nephi 10:1–2).

Transitions

Jacob makes his transitions easy to follow in his sermon by stating

the problem of the fall, death, and judgment of humanity. When he states a problem in one *move*, he begins the next by initially rejoicing in God, and then explaining why he rejoices. He does this by simply starting the *move* with “O” sentences. “O the wisdom of God,” “O how great the goodness of our God,” or “O” how great the plan of our God” and more (See 2 Nephi 9:8, 10, & 13 respectively. Jacob continues his use of “O” statements in verses 17, 19, & 20). He then pronounces “wo’s” upon those who fail to partake of the sacrifice of Jesus Christ (2 Nephi 9:27–38) and then returns to “O” phrases as a form of exhortation (2 Nephi 9:39–46). In the second half of his sermon, he changes his transitions away from “O” phrases, and instead uses “wherefore” and “therefore” statements to indicate transitions between *moves*.

Illustrations

Jacob is overt in his use of illustrations. He does not provide a concrete illustration that listeners could look at to envision their fallen state. However, he elaborates so completely the image of fallen humans that those who heard or read his words in the manner he intended them, that they are drawn to a position so far below the God above. He focuses on death and separation so that listeners paint their own picture of their fallen condition. His use of “the flesh [shall] rise no more” and our spirits becoming subject to the devil and becoming like him, “shut out from the presence of God” and eternally stuck to the devil “in misery like him” (2 Nephi 9:8–9).

Conclusion

Jacob concludes his sermon by first pronouncing wo’s upon those who fail to believe in, trust, and follow Jesus Christ. He then leads to a string of exhortations. Beginning in 2 Nephi 9:39 and ending in verse 46 he delivers ten exhortations, four of which exhort them to remember different aspects of God’s love toward humanity (See 2 Nephi 9:39, 40, 41, and 44). The other six are instructions to “Give ear to [Jacob’s] words,” “come unto the Lord,” “Turn away from your sins,” “Shake off the chains that would bind you fast,” “come unto that God who is the rock of your salvation,” and “prepare your souls for that glorious day” (See 2 Nephi 9:39, 40, 41, & 45 respectively).

In his second and final conclusion he summarizes that he has shown the Nephites why they need Jesus Christ and that they can have joy in and through Him. He once again provides exhortations to “cheer up your hearts, and remember that ye are free to act for yourselves—to choose the way of everlasting death or the way of eternal life” (2 Nephi 10:23). He exhorts them to “reconcile [themselves] to the will of God” and to “remember that [they]are reconciled to God” (2 Nephi 10:24). Finally he concludes with a blessing that God will raise them from death through the resurrection and the atonement of Jesus Christ so that He can receive all humanity that become reconciled into His Eternal Kingdom (2 Nephi 10:25). With his conclusion he fills in the hole he left open in his introduction—the gap between our death and our coming before God in our bodies.

Jacob is skilled in how he constructs this sermon. It is impressive that he delivers this sermon over two days, yet it seems seamless in his delivery. It is one of the only true expository sermons in the scriptures as he refers to the chapter in Isaiah and expounds upon their meaning. He also applies the revealed expound/exhort pattern revealed to the modern Church through the prophet Joseph Smith. He does not say how long he had to prepare for this sermon, but it seems unlikely that it was delivered extemporaneously. However, Jacob also demonstrates his knowledge of the scriptures as he learned them at his father’s knee, and at Nephi’s side.

Mosiah 2–4

Overview

At the Beginning of the book of Mosiah a prophet king named Benjamin delivers an articulate address to his people that becomes what one author considers “the most effective sermon ever recorded.”¹⁰⁵ The result of his sermon is the complete conversion and commitment to follow his teachings of all those who came to hear him speak.

King Benjamin towards the end of his life decides to speak to his people to leave his final teachings and to name his son Mosiah as the new Nephite king (Mosiah 1:10). The people come together and surround the temple with the doors of their tents facing the tower from which King Ben-
105. Rust, *Feasting on the Word*, 101.

jamin will speak (Mosiah 2: 5–6). The people are righteous for the most part and are prospering in an age of peace (Mosiah 1:20). Yet, King Benjamin fears that his people could fall into transgression and become cut-off from God, like the Lamanites (Mosiah 1:13). King Benjamin has worked among his people, and they love and respect him as a prophet so they are intent to listen to him (Mosiah 2: 10–17). Additionally, as Latter-day Saint scholar Brant Gardner points out, there appears to be a division between the Mulekites, or people of Zarahemla, and the ethnic Nephites which may be the cause for King Benjamin uniting his people under one name.¹⁰⁶ In a way King Benjamin is striving for a condition where there aren't "any manner of -ites: but they [are] one, the children of Christ, and heirs to the kingdom of God" (4 Nephi 1:17).

King Benjamin stands upon his tower and delivers one of the most beloved discourses within the pages of the Book of Mormon. He speaks on the importance of service and then transitions to obedience to God and the consequences of rebellion against Him. Mosiah 3:19 (the natural man) is likely one of the most quoted scriptures by Latter-day Saints due to its doctrinally framing of fallen humanity. He continues by addressing Jesus Christ as the means for overcoming the fall, and humanity's individual sinful natures.¹⁰⁷ One trait of this sermon is the fact that Benjamin reflects back on a visit from an angel who taught him what he was to say, so these words are angelic.¹⁰⁸

Type

King Benjamin's sermon is a topical sermon that consists of multiple topics with narrative overtones. He has a scriptural background, but he does not take a scriptural passage and expound it, therefore it is not exegetical, expository, or textual. It is not a pure narrative because he speaks directly to the topic of good Christian living. However, he does provide a narrative to his reasons for delivering this sermon and talks from his own perspective to provide context for his topics. Narrative sermons begin with

106. Brant Gardner, *Second Witness: Analytical and Contextual commentary on the Book of Mormon, Vol. 3: Enos through Mosiah* (Draper: Greg Kofford Books, 2011), 107–108.

107. See chapter headings for Mosiah 2–4 for an overview of their content and teachings.

108. James E. Faulconer, *Mosiah a Brief Theological Introduction* (Provo: Neal A. Maxwell Institute, 2020), 19.

a story and end with the topic, and topical sermons begin with the topic. Benjamin begins his sermon by speaking on his own service and the work that he has done, without relying solely on the people for their support. Once he reminds them of this fact, he then teaches the principle of service to others (Mosiah 2:11–17). Had this been a solely topical sermon he would have started with the principle of service and then backed it up with examples.

Focus Statement

Benjamin does not provide a focus within the body of his sermon. However, as he explains to Mosiah the purpose of his sermon, he says that first, he will designate Mosiah as his successor as the king of the Nephites (Mosiah 2:10). Second, he will give his people a new name “because they have been a diligent people in keeping the commandments of the Lord” (Mosiah 2:11–12). Finally, he expresses concern over the future of the Nephites who are currently righteous. He does not want them to fall into transgression, knowing that the Lord will preserve them if they remain righteous (Mosiah 2:13). Therefore, the focus statement for King Benjamin’s sermon could be to teach the Nephites how to live a Christlike life, how to avoid transgression, and to expound the mysteries of God.

Function

Benjamin implies that the function of his sermon in Mosiah 2:13 is to teach the Nephites the gospel so they can remain highly favored and avoid falling into transgression and thus avoid becoming like their brethren, the Lamanites, who are cut-off from the Lord. Unique to this sermon is there is evidence to demonstrate how Benjamin spread his influence while talking to his people. At the end of his sermon, the people commit to living according to the principles he taught, that is following Jesus Christ. Mosiah 5 records their covenantal language and how Benjamin’s words affected them. Reading their words confirms the function of his sermon and provides the motivation that his people felt.

Form

The *form* of King Benjamin's speech is complicated by the fact that he says so much over the course of three chapters. However, Long provides a close comparison *form* in "This is the promise of the gospel ... here is how we may live out that promise."¹⁰⁹ Benjamin provides his people with a promise of the gospel incorporated in good ways to love and serve others. Additionally, he adds the role and mission of Jesus Christ in taking humanity from a carnal state to a celestial state. John Welch considers this sermon to be a traditional farewell address according to ancient Israelite traditions containing a summons, a mission statement and discharge of duty, notification of near-death, exhortations, warnings, and blessings.¹¹⁰

Welch also considers the sermon as a prophetic lawsuit or judgment speech based on the multiple times, he refers to their guilt and their eventual covenant to correct living after his sermon.¹¹¹ As an arbitrator looking at their case, King Benjamin is the righteous judge who provides counsel and direction, so they avoid condemnation. Both forms would result in the same conversion and the people likely saw the sermon in both lights. As their "common judge" Benjamin had the authority from God to give his sermon, and the congregation respected and sustained him in his position.

To complicate this sermon even further, Welch also describes its *form* as being covenant speech which is designed to remind the congregation what God has done, add greater commitment to the commandments, and provide a warning of what will happen if they fail to obey.¹¹² This sermon fulfills the requirements for this *form*, as do the other *forms*, so it depends upon the reader how she or he hears this sermon and applies it to their own life.

Beginning

To begin his sermon Benjamin declares the calling he received to

109. Long, *The Witness of Preaching*, 190.

110. John W. Welch and Stephen D. Ricks, *King Benjamins Speech* (Provo: Foundation for Research and Mormon Studies, 1998), 89.

111. Welch, *King Benjamins Speech*, 226–227.

112. Kennedy, *Classical Rhetoric*, 123–24.

preach to them and the invitation to the congregation to open their ears, hearts, and minds that they may hear and understand what he intends to say (Mosiah 2:9). He then takes the time to help them see that although he is their king, he is just like them, suffering and struggling through the pains of life (Mosiah 2 10–12). In this moment he endears his audience to him; he connects on a personal level with each person and they reciprocate their love in return. He draws them in close and then surprises them with the statement that “if ye should serve [God] with all your whole souls yet ye would be unprofitable servants” (Mosiah 2:21). For his introduction he brings them in close; draws them in softly; lulls them into a state of pleasant bliss. Then he shakes them to the core by telling them that no matter how much they do for God they will be unprofitable. He has their attention now and he continues by saying “all that he requires of you is to keep his commandments” (Mosiah 2:22). Now they know what he will cater his message to—becoming profitable servants through obedience.

Movement Outline

King Benjamin appears to have prepared his sermon in advance of his actual delivery as evidenced by his telling Mosiah his intent in speaking to the people. Comprising most of four chapters at the beginning of Mosiah, he structures his sermon according to this intent and adds to it the teachings he received from an angel. Though longer than sermons delivered by military chaplains and delivered to a congregation larger than most typical congregations, the *movements* build upon each other so that from start to finish listeners learn how to take the name of Christ upon themselves.

1. Introduction
 - Calling
 - Life of service
 - Serve one another
2. Praise God
 - Obedience
 - All things come from and belong to God
 - Reiterating calling and purpose of gathering
 - Obedience continuation
 - Only children are innocent before God

- Disobedience equals rebellion against God
 - Rebellion against God is the same as being an Enemy to God
 - Condition of fallen humanity
3. Speaking of things to come – revealing the mysteries of God
 - The coming of Jesus Christ
 - His life
 - His suffering
 - His death
 - His resurrection
 4. What is a righteous judgment?
 - Prophets taught the law of Moses after teachings of Christ were rejected
 - The law points to Christ and is worthless without Him
 5. No one could be saved if it were not for Jesus Christ
 - Not even children
 - No one else can do what Jesus does
 - Humans are damned unless they come unto Christ and overcome their fallen nature
 - Natural humans are enemies to God
 - All must know of Christ
 - Testimony against fallen humanity
 - Judgment
 6. Conversion and covenant of the people
 7. The type of person who receives salvation
 - Salvation through the atonement of Jesus Christ
 8. Final testimony and exhortations
 - Joy in repentance
 - Effects of joy from redemption
 - Serve others
 - Status as beggars before God
 - Charity and service
 - Exhortations
 - Warnings against sin
 - Spiritual birth
 - Results of being born again
 - Know the name by which ye are called
 9. Final exhortation

Transitions

The transitions in King Benjamin's sermon do not follow the pattern explained by Buttrick and Long. Benjamin leads from one *movement* to another without closure or a following opening phrase. Instead, he indicates his transitions through transitional statements that indicate he is moving on to a new aspect or condition. The transitions in his sermon begin with several "I say ..." statements that provide the listener with the knowledge that what was just said leads into what he will now say. He also uses yet, but behold, and now, wherefore, and, therefore. Because of the nature of the sermon and the fact that the *movements* are all connected to create a bigger sermonic picture. King Benjamin does not need to tie up loose ends and introduce new elements. A leads into B which then leads into C, etc. The conclusion then becomes critical to the final understanding of the sermon.

Illustrations

Like Jacob, Benjamin does not establish a concrete illustration in his sermon. He speaks of service and provides personal examples to demonstrate how to serve. He also brings the audience into those examples so they can see that they know what he is talking about. When speaking of the filthiness of sin he uses the illustration of dirty garments which he desires to cleanse (his garments) from their sins (Mosiah 2:28). He also uses children as an example of innocence and submission to God's will (See Mosiah 2:34, & 3:19).

Another illustration which he uses is that of a cup or drinking. In Mosiah 3:18 he explains that those who die without repenting "drink damnation to their own souls." In verse 25 he says this again but continues to elaborate by saying that they "have drunk from the cup of the wrath of God." The illustration of the cup and drinking is powerful taken in context with the water of life provided by Jesus Christ, however, Benjamin does not take the illustration in that direction, but he transitions from the wrath of God to the salvation that comes from Christ.

Conclusion

To close out his sermon Benjamin brings the people back to their condition as unprofitable servants and then teaches them how to be born spiritually and become profitable. He has taken them full circle from the shock of their condition, through their conversion, to warnings about sin, and the ultimate reward—being called after the name of Christ. His final exhortation, given after the sermon in chapter 5, provides them the key to profitability: “I would that ye should be steadfast and immovable, always abounding in good works, that Christ, the Lord God Omnipotent, may seal you his” (Mosiah 5:15)

Mosiah 12–17

Overview

Abinadi delivers a skilled discourse to King Noah and his priests after they arrest him for speaking out against the king, and by extension, the people. The priests subject him to a trial and they condemn him. Before they can carry out his sentence, they first pose some questions to him regarding Isaiah 52:7–10 which says that prophets bring good news, and Abinadi did not bring good news, so, therefore, how could he be a prophet. Abinadi, seizing the moment, has the opportunity to explain those verses, and then he transitions to teaching of the coming of Jesus Christ, and the fallen nature of humanity. Outside of the King and his priests, no other individuals participate in the sermon.

Type

Abinadi’s sermon is an expository sermon delivered in response to questions about Isaiah 52:7–10. Therefore, he expounds upon the meaning of the passage and then expands its meaning before the priests. Additionally, by doing so, Abinadi reads and then explains Isaiah 53 which is directly connected with the previous passage in that it reveals the “good tidings” promised in Isaiah 52:7. Mosiah chapters 15 and 16 are some of the most doctrinally significant scriptures in holy writ and Abinadi waxes eloquent in his poignant explanation of the life and mission of the future

Messiah.

Focus Statement

The focus of Abinadi's sermon is to correct the errors believed and taught by the priests of Noah who have incorrectly taught the law of Moses, and who stand condemned for their failure to abide by the law they cling to for protection. According to one author, Abinadi has a mission to fulfill that concerns two points: a call to repentance, and the explanation of Isaiah's message.¹¹³ He then transitions to the coming of the Messiah and His role in their eventual salvation. Therefore, the focus statement for this sermon is best defined as teaching of the coming Messiah and the importance of learning of Him and abiding by His teachings to include repentance, overcoming sin, and reliance upon the Messiah.

Function

Abinadi is quick to point out that the priests are not living according to the values they claim to eschew. They say they preach the Law of Moses, yet they fail to teach or live according to its precepts. Additionally, they fail to see that the Law points to the Messiah and His role as Savior of humankind. Therefore, the function of his sermon is: to correct the wrong interpretation of the scriptures so that the people can look to the future Messiah, know how to avoid sin, and repent when they do sin.

Form

According to Long's description of different *forms*, Abinadi's sermon appears to be following the "here is the prevailing view ... but here is the claim of the gospel."¹¹⁴ Abinadi takes what the priests believe and then transitions their incorrect viewpoint to what the scriptures teach about the Messiah. He does this by first answering their questions and then turns the tables on them by asking them questions. His knowledge of the scriptures, including the application and purpose of the Law of Moses, and his

113. Jared W. Ludlow, "A Messenger of Good and Evil Tidings," in *Abinadi He Came Among Them in Disguise*, ed. Shon D. Hopkin (Provo: Brigham Young University, 2018), loc. 27 of 397. Deseret Bookshelf.

114. Long, *Witness for Preaching*, 190.

understanding of the coming Messiah in the form of Jesus Christ, provides him the ability to deliver an extemporaneous sermon with apparent ease. Because he was arrested for delivering a message of repentance, the homily he gives to the priests was not one he had prepared and written down to deliver. Yet, he provides his prophetic “call to obedience” very effectively.

Beginning

During his first entrance into the city to preach, Abinadi began his sermon by pronouncing a “wo” upon the people. He says, “Thus saith the Lord” which establishes that he is speaking and prophesying as the voice of the Lord. He continues by saying, “wo be unto this people, for I have seen their abominations, and their wickedness, and their whoredoms; and except they repent I will visit them in mine anger” (Mosiah 11:20). Although this is not the beginning to his greater sermon, this is a beginning of “shock and awe.” Those walking past him or stopping to listen would have heard this pronouncement and immediately felt the pangs of guilt or anger. He has their attention because he called them out of their blindness, and even though they disagree with his accusations, they are now forced to listen to him. Their shock and anger then force them to arrest him, but he escapes without incident (Mosiah 11:2–29). Nevertheless, he returns and begins his overall sermon to Noah’s court about the Ten Commandments, the idea that salvation does not come just from the Law of Moses, and that there will be a redeemer, Christ, who comes in the form of a man and brings to pass the resurrection of humankind (Mosiah 13:34–35).

Movement Outline

Abinadi gives one of the longest sermons contained in the Book of Mormon, surpassed only by the risen Savior Himself. Mormon never mentions how long it took for Abinadi to preach his epic sermon, but it covers nearly six complete chapters. He begins amongst the people, is arrested, and then must defend himself in front of the King and his priests. Unique to his sermon is the reality that he went to the city to preach repentance but is cut short when he is interrogated before the priests. From that moment his sermon becomes “off-the-hip” as he answers their questions and expounds the scriptures. The *moves* of his sermon connect precisely and

develop upon his overall theme of teaching that the Messiah will one day come.

Transitions

Like King Benjamin, Abinadi relies on transitional statements to indicate *movement* in and between the separate *moves*, the most common being the conjunction “and.” He transitions by saying “and now ...,” (Mosiah 12:25), and thus ...,” (Mosiah 11:25) “and it shall come to pass that ...,” (Mosiah 12:3) along with “and again” (Mosiah 15:16). However, he also utilizes “but,” “therefore,” and “yet.” These are all used to transition within the *movements*, and between them. For those listening to the sermon they likely would have heard transitions between the topics when he specifically said “and now” which appears to be his transitional marker. (Mosiah 12:25, 13:5, 11, 27, 29; 15:1, 10, 12, 22, 28; 16:6, 13).

Illustrations

Abinadi does not make use of illustrations that are his. Instead, he continues to use, and expounds upon, the illustrations provided in the Isaiah passages from which he derives his sermon. He keeps it simple by sticking to the image of beautiful feet upon the mountains, (Mosiah 15:15–18) and the lamb or sheep as a symbol of the coming Messiah (Mosiah 15:6). He does not add any additional illustrations. In Mosiah 16 he does add the image of “light and life” opposing “darkness and death” to establish the transition available to all those who come unto Christ, repent, and follow His ways (Mosiah 16:9). The lack of illustrations may be attributed to the extemporaneous nature of his discourse which demonstrates that although prepared scripturally and doctrinally, had he been given the time he could have improved upon an already excellent sermon.

Conclusion

The sermon delivered by Abinadi contains most of the elements that scholars agree should be in a sermon. The challenge in his sermon is that it was a result of the interrogation of the priests, and not entirely a pre-planned discourse. That being said, for a sermon that is extensive and time

consuming, the flow is excellent and Abinadi maintains control of how it *moves*, even in response to the questions thrown at him. The study of the sermonic elements of this sermon would be beneficial in demonstrating that expository sermons have a place for military chaplains, especially those who do not share the religious tradition as those to whom they preach.

Alma 31-33

Overview

Approximately seventy-five years before the birth of Christ, Alma, the younger, the Nephite high priest, took a journey with his sons and some of his companions to preach amongst the Zoramites. Sensing apostasy and looking to possibly correct their erring ways, Alma sets out to preach the word of God. ¹¹⁵Discovering a proud people who had perverted the Lord's ways, they turn their attention to the poor class of people that desire to worship God but have been banished from their own synagogues. These humble people ask how they can worship God when they do not have the means to do so—or so they think. Alma and his companions then preach to them about humility, faith, and belief on the coming of the Son of God in what one author calls a skilled discourse. ¹¹⁶

Known as the parable of the seed, Alma provides context to the formation of faith on Jesus Christ, which comes before knowledge, and of holding on to the personal testimony each person receives. Both Alma and Amulek lend their voices to this sermon which provides a challenge because their narratives and style differ. However, they were prepared for this sermon so that they transition between each other seamlessly and with ease

Type

This sermon is difficult to identify as a single type because it works in two ways. As Alma begins to instruct the people, he chooses a topical

115. Mark A. Wrathall, *Alma 30-63, A Brief Theological Introduction* (Provo: The Neal A. Maxwell Institute for Religious Scholarship, Brigham Young University, 2020), 37.

116. Rust, *Feasting on the Word*, 135.

style of preaching, as he sets about addressing the questions of the poor Zoramites. Alma sees and understands their struggle as a misunderstanding of what it means to worship God. The wealthy Zoramites stand upon a podium, called a Rameumpton, and proclaim their own righteousness. However, their worship is only permitted for those who have wealth. The poor, therefore, are not allowed to worship in the synagogue and this begins their question-and-answer session with Alma. He then transitions to the body of his sermon which begins as a topical sermon focusing on humility and faith. He then applies one of the most known illustrations in the Book of Mormon—the seed of faith or word of God unto Salvation.

The illustration of the seed will be analyzed further in the illustrations section of this sermon, but it is important to note that due to the length and depth of the illustration it transitions the discourse into a narrative *form*, taking the congregation through the different aspects until they understand that it takes faith to believe that Jesus will save and redeem humanity (Alma:31–33).

Finally, this sermon has a third aspect to it as Amulek, Alma’s companion, steps in to add to the sermon. When he does so, he brings his own voice and style, but with Alma as his mentor, there is little variance. Amulek continues by speaking of the coming of Christ and the redemption available through Him (see Alma 34). Combining the three aspects of the sermon results in a topical sermon with a short narrative section becoming a topical-narrative discourse.

Focus Statement

The reason for this sermon stems from the wickedness of the Zoramites as a whole, leading to poor and humble people who desire to worship God but do not know how, where or the reason they should do so. Alma first addresses their ability to worship which is based on their humility. He then explains how to have faith in the Savior to come. Finally, Amulek teaches them what redemption through Christ does for them. The focus statement, then, would be to teach that humble worship is the beginning of faith and can be had anywhere and at any time which brings about faith which then works on the belief that Christ will come to save human-

ity, resulting in redemption from God.

Function

Alma began his mission to the Zoramites with the intent to correct their errors after they left the Church and body of the Nephites, “had fallen into great errors,” and “did pervert the ways of the Lord” (Alma 31:8–11). His intent is to preach to them using the word of God for it was more successful than war, and he wants to “try the virtue of the word of God (Alma 31:5). Combining his focus and intent, the function becomes: to use the scriptures to preach and teach the Zoramites so that they can be humble, exhibit faith, and know the source of their faith and their eventual redemption.

Form

By stating the problem, providing the context to the gospel, and giving the results of obedience to the same, Alma and Amulek use the *form*, “this is the problem ... this is the response of the gospel ... these are the implications.”¹¹⁷

Beginning

The true beginning to Alma’s sermon occurs after they see and experience the Rameumpton episode, when a crowd approaches him as he preaches of the hill Onidah (Alma 32:4). They ask to know how they can worship when they are kicked out of the synagogues because of their poverty. He takes the opportunity to begin with a question concerning the manner in how they worship God. Alma asks them: “do ye suppose that ye cannot worship God save it be in your synagogue only?” (Alma 32:10 This may seem like an obvious question and maybe that was the point. As they sit analyzing the question, he hits them with a second question which he uses to blow apart their misconception of worship: “do ye suppose that ye must not worship God only once a week?” (Alma 32:11) Their heads must have been reeling for he has asked them a question that was not originally on their minds. They wanted to know how to worship since they were

117. Long, *A Witness for Preaching*, 190.

kicked out of their synagogues. Here Alma talks about worshipping more than once a week, and it sounds like it does not need to be in a synagogue.

With heads reeling from his questions, he questions them one more time by saying, “it is well that ye are cast out of your synagogues, that ye may be humble, and that ye may learn wisdom” which results in becoming “lowly of heart (Alma 32:12). Now he has their attention, even though they may feel somewhat insulted. He shocks them while pointing out the hole in their spiritual lives. He has also told them what he is going to say in his sermon. He will teach them about humility, wisdom, and true worship.

Movement Outline

Chaplain sermons may combine, at times, with sermons from other chaplains, but normally they will stand alone. Additionally, chaplains should prepare their sermons prior to addressing the congregation. This sermon is more extensive than chaplain sermons¹¹⁸ and is outlined in this manner:

1. Introduction
2. Humility and wisdom
 - Humility
 - Faith
3. Faith
4. The word as a seed (illustration)
5. True worship has been taught by prophets (expository section looking at the words of Zenos) Amulek
6. The coming of Jesus Christ
 - The Atonement of Jesus Christ
 - Salvation
 - Repentance
 - Prayer
 - Charity towards others, especially the downtrodden
7. Exhortations
8. Conclusion

¹¹⁸. Chaplain sermons in the military normally last about 15 to 20 minutes.

Transitions

Alma follows the transitional pattern of those before him in that he does not indicate that a *movement* is ending. His intro to a new *movement* also does not provide a transitional statement. However, he uses “now” or “and now” to indicate a new topic or *movement*. The word “now” serves as an audible marker that he is adding to what he has already said, but is speaking about a different, related subject. Understandably, Alma would use this transitional *form* for, though he intended to preach the word, he may not have known how to connect what the Zoramites asked, to what he wanted to say.

Illustrations

Alma’s illustration of the word as seed, which refers to the word as “Christ unto Salvation” and relates to the work of faith to the word, is likely one of the most referenced allegories about faith that members of the Church know and use. Though many times they make the seed equal to faith, members grow up believing that faith, like the seed, grows when we nurture it. However, Alma is speaking about how faith works when believers plant the seed (which is hope that Christ will save them through faith on His name and repentance) and the illustration shows how faith builds Latter-day Saint testimonies of Jesus Christ as our Savior. Alma addresses the Zoramites who, without a synagogue in which to worship, long to know how to worship God. He teaches them they can worship anywhere and anytime, and then teaches them true worship as being planted in Jesus Christ. This illustration works well with the parable of the sower,¹¹⁹ even addressing those who start to believe and then doubt because their knowledge is not perfect. So much more can be said about this illustration, but it is here only pertinent to note that Alma used illustrations in his sermon.

Conclusion

Alma transitions his sermon to Amulek who speaks on the coming of Christ and then exhorts the people to remember the things they’ve been taught, to not deny the coming of the Redeemer, to take upon themselves the name of Christ, to be watchful unto prayer, and to be humble, which

119. See Matthew 13:3–8 and Luke 8:5–8

brings everyone back to where they started—being cast out of the synagogue for their poverty (or humility). Amulek brings them to this point so he can provide them closure with his final exhortation “to have patience and ... bear with all manner of afflictions” and to avoid turning against those who cast them out so that they do not fall into the same sin, and instead have patience in their afflictions “with a firm hope that ye shall one day rest from your afflictions” (Alma 34:40) Amulek ties it all together and then provides closure by ending how Alma began, that is with their desire to worship while being impoverished.¹²⁰

Summary

This literature and information provided demonstrated that chaplains in the military require training in homiletics so that their sermons are effective and edifying. Although chaplains may feel comfortable behind the pulpit, for the most part they are not trained according to the same standards as chaplains outside of the Church. Therefore, this project defines the five most common sermon types as exegetical, expository, textual, topical, and narrative, which chaplains can use singularly or combined with each other.

Additionally, the paper defines and explains the common sermonic elements that scholars agree should be part of sermons. The beginning and conclusion open and close the sermon so that the audience’s understanding is maximized. The *focus* and *function* of a sermon determine what the preacher wants to say and what listeners should do. The *moves* or *movements* of a sermon are the topics the preacher will address, and the transitions *move* the sermon from one *movement* to the next. Illustrations allow the preacher to paint a picture for the listeners, so they see the sermon in their hearts and minds and do not spend the entire sermon hearing words only.

Finally, four Book of Mormon sermons were analyzed using the aforementioned terms as the standard for effective sermons demonstrating that Book of Mormon sermons fit the pattern of effective preaching and should be analyzed as a pattern chaplains can follow when developing their sermons.

120. Killinger, *Fundamentals of Preaching*, 93–94

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