

Books on Preaching and Rhetoric Preachers Should Read: A highly personal and unabashedly biased readers guide

by Jeremy Meeks

One can only gain so much from books when it comes to preaching. As the anonymous writer of *Ad Herrenium*, one of the first manuals of rhetoric states, “Theory without continuous practice in speaking is of little avail.” (Ad Herrenium 1.1). In other words, to get better at preaching...you must preach. Theory only gets you so far. At the same time, it is said that Cicero once rejected a speaking engagement because he had not read anything the previous day. (Cassiodorus, *Variae*, XI) These two examples help establish a simple truth reading has an important, if limited, role in a preacher’s development.

Additionally, many parts of many preaching and rhetoric books are not worth reading. This is not particular to books on preaching and rhetoric. Every discipline has material that is either so commonly repeated as to be boring or included because the author feels it is important, without achieving clarity or simplicity in its presentation.

This document is written in service of those hungry for knowledge, short on time, and having fully embraced the Preacher’s wise words in Ecclesiastes 12:12, “Of making of many books there is no end, and much study is a weariness of the flesh.” In brief, no one can read it all and thus finding the good stuff is important.

I have the benefit of having had the time and the curiosity to read widely. A few years ago I decided to do my work for the sake of others. In what follows I select my favorite parts of books on preaching and rhetoric...and suggesting what is worth ignoring. I do not pretend to provide anything other than opinioned opinions. Feel free to disagree. I only ask that you do the hard work of trying to figure out why you disagree, for therein lies the roots of understanding.

If a book is not included and you think it should be, write me (jmeeks@simeontrust.org) and tell me why...in three sentences or less. It is an ever-expanding list, so I may have simply not gotten to the book yet, but I’d enjoy hearing from you.

This bibliography is annotated in the following way:

- Books I have gotten around to annotating are in larger font. Ones on the list, but haven’t been done are in smaller font.
- My most recent book annotated is highlighted
- Overall notes on the book
- Chapter/sections:
 - **Bold chapter/sections** - The important stuff, worth the reading
 - Regular chapter/sections - Maybe useful, especially if it is an area of interest
 - *Italic chapter/sections* – Feel free to skip this stuff

Enjoy the ride. Enjoy the reading. More than anything, preach like you mean it and enjoy figuring out how preaching works. Learn from everyone, pagan and Christian alike. Remain perpetually curious. It is deeply spiritual work. It is deeply intellectual work. The God who made your brain made your heart (in the biblical sense) as well. Use them both and pray that God increases your ability to do so well.

Adam, Peter. *Speaking God's Words: A Practical Theology of Preaching*. Regent College Publishing, 2004.

- Helpfully provides a theology of preaching, assuming that it is not a given that preaching is something that ought to be done. Provides a comprehensive, but compact, argument for the practice of preaching from the bible.
 - 1. God has spoken – The first three chapters make the case that these three statements, fleshed out, provide the theological rationale for preaching. Worth reading all of it, or the piece of the puzzle you are confused about. Nothing revolutionary here, but shockingly sometimes those who have given themselves to proclaiming the word do not know what the word says about proclamation.
 - 2. It is written – See above
 - 3. Preach the word – See above
 - **4. Preaching as a ministry of the word** – Using primarily John Calvin and Richard Baxter as foils, this chapter helpfully demonstrates that there are many ways in which word ministry gets done. It isn't just from the pulpit on Sundays.
 - **5. The preacher's bible** – Helpful deals with 8 challenges to preaching the bible, including – Is it useful? and, Can we ever get it right?
 - 6. The preacher's purpose – Again using John Calvin as an example, this chapter reminds the preacher what they are preaching for. Most helpful on the Calvin stuff.
 - **7. The demands of preaching** – Short, helpful reminders of what preaching costs and why it is worth it. Not worth the price of the book, but helpful reading if you pick it up.

Adams, Jay E. *Preaching with Purpose*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1986.

Alexander, James. *Thoughts on Preaching*

- Mostly a series of letters to younger ministers. They are all generally helpful, but the gold is in his stuff on extemporaneous preaching. You can find the PDF here - <https://www.monergism.com/thethreshold/sdg/alexander/Thoughts%20on%20Preaching%20-%20James%20W.%20Alexander.pdf>
 - Letter I: Devotion to the Work of the Ministry
 - Letter II: The Cultivation of Personal Piety
 - Letter III: The Happiness of Christ's Ministry
 - Letter IV: Clerical Studies
 - Letter V: How to find time for Learning
 - Letter VI: Learned Pastors
 - **Letter VII: Extempore Preaching** – What he means by it and giving encouragement that anyone can do it, without neglecting the need to work at it.
 - **Letter VIII: Extempore Preaching Continued** – Many of the best from the past have done it and done it excellently...so maybe there is something to the practice.
 - **Letter IX: Extempore Preaching Continued** – The crucial one. Preaching itself, and not merely the prep for preaching ought to be an act of faith. A convicting letter.
 - Letter X: Diligence in Study

Aristotle, *Rhetoric*

- A classic in every sense of the word. Short and worth your time. This material is not written for preachers, so some work will have to be done. But, if you are new to ancient rhetoric it will surprise you how much of this material is relevant. You can find a free PDF here - <https://www.bocc.ubi.pt/pag/Aristotle-rhetoric.pdf>
- Here is an outline of the work for those interested in what it covers.¹
- **Rhetoric book I**
 - Ch. 1: Rhetoric as a counterpart to dialectic — dialectically conceived rhetoric is centred on proofs — rhetorical proofs are ‘enthymemes’ — this is neglected by previous manuals of rhetoric that focus instead on emotions, slandering and on other techniques for speaking outside the subject — “speaking outside the subject” is forbidden in states with good legislation — the benefits of rhetoric.
 - Ch. 2: Rhetoric is the capacity to discern the available persuasive potential in any given case — means of persuasion (*pisteis*) based on the art (*technê*) of rhetoric vs. artless means of persuasion — of the art-based means of persuasion (*pisteis*) there are three types:
 - Through the speaker: credibility of the speaker (*êthos*)
 - Through the hearer: the emotional state of the audience (*pathos*)
 - Through the argument: proving or seemingly proving what is true (*logos*)
 - Deductive and inductive types of rhetorical arguments — the enthymeme as the deductive type of rhetorical argument — peculiarities of rhetorical arguments — enthymemes from probabilities and signs — the technique of *topoi* — the difference between generally applicable and specific *topoi*.
 - Ch. 3: There are three genres of public speech:
 - Judicial (or forensic) speech deals with accusation and defence about past events — aiming at the just/unjust.
 - Deliberative (or political) speech deals with exhortation and dissuasion about future events — aiming at the advantageous/harmful.
 - Epideictic speech deals with praise and blame primarily with regard to the present time — aiming at the honourable/shameful.
 - Ch. 4–8: Premises or *topoi* specific to the deliberative speech: Types of advantageous/harmful things the speaker should be familiar with (Ch. 4) — Happiness (*eudaimonia*) (Ch. 5) — what is good/advantageous (Ch. 6) — what is better/more advantageous (Ch. 7) — the various constitutions (Ch. 8).
 - Ch. 9: Premises or *topoi* specific to the epideictic speech: virtue and vice — the honourable and the blameworthy.

¹ This outline comes from Christof Rapp, “Aristotle’s Rhetoric,” in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Edward N. Zalta and Uri Nodelman, Winter 2023 (Metaphysics Research Lab, Stanford University, 2023), <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2023/entries/aristotle-rhetoric/>.

- Ch. 10–14: Premises or *topoi* specific to the judicial speech: wrong-doing and motives for wrong-doing (Ch. 10) — pleasure (Ch. 11) — the state of mind of the wrong-doers and characteristics of their victims (Ch. 12) — kinds of just and unjust deeds, unwritten laws (Ch. 13) — degrees of wrong-doing (Ch. 14).
- Ch. 15: Artless means of persuasion (i.e. means that cannot be invented by the art, but are just given — such as contracts, laws, witnesses, oaths, torture — and need to be used in one way or the other), mostly connected with judicial speech.
- **Rhetoric book II**
 - Ch. 1: Why persuasion through *logos* is insufficient — how persuasion through *êthos* and *pathos* is supposed to work.
 - Ch. 2–11: Particular types of emotions (*pathê*) and their counterparts: anger (Ch. 2) — mildness (Ch. 3) — loving/friendly affection (*philia*) and hating (Ch. 4) — fear and confidence (Ch. 5) — shame and lack of shame (Ch. 6) — gratefulness and lack of gratefulness (Ch. 7) — pity (Ch. 8) — indignation plus two nameless emotions (Ch. 9) — envy (Ch. 10) — emulation or ambition (Ch.11).
 - Ch. 12–17: Different types of character (*êthos*): the character of young people (Ch. 12), of elderly people (Ch. 13), of people in the prime of their life (Ch. 14), of people of noble birth (Ch. 15), of wealthy people (Ch. 16) and of powerful people (Ch. 18).
 - Ch. 18: Transition to generally applicable aspects of persuasion through *logos*:
 - Ch. 19–25: Generally applicable aspects of persuasion through *logos*: *topoi* about the possible/impossible, past and future facts, significance and insignificance (Ch. 19) — examples: factual (report) and fictitious (the parable and the fable) (Ch. 20) — maxims (Ch. 21) — the enthymeme (Ch. 22) — *topoi* for the construction of enthymemes (Ch. 23) — *topoi* for the construction of merely apparent (i.e. fallacious) enthymemes (Ch. 24) — refutation (Ch. 25).
 - Ch. 26: Amplification — transition to *Rhetoric* III.
- **Rhetoric book III, Ch. 1–12: Style (*lexis*):**
 - Ch. 1: Delivery of a speech and why style/diction should be considered.
 - Ch. 2–3: The virtue and the vices of prose style: the excellent prose style is neither too banal nor above the due dignity, but appropriate — the choice of words — the role of metaphors (Ch. 2) — Four deterrent factors (or vices) of style (Ch. 3).
 - Ch. 4–11: Particular ingredients of prose style: the simile (Ch. 4) — linguistic correctness (Ch. 5) — stylistic voluminousness and its contrary (Ch. 6) — appropriateness in style (Ch. 7) — periodic style (Ch. 8) — rhythm (Ch. 9) — urbanity, bringing before the eyes, metaphors (Ch. 10–11).

- Ch. 12: Written and oral style.
- **Rhetoric book III, Ch. 13–19: Arrangement (*taxis*):**
- Ch. 13: Only two parts of the speech are necessary, namely the statement and the proof of the main claim — contemporary authors of rhetorical manuals make futile subdivisions of the parts of speech — introduction of a quadripartite scheme of the speech: (1) proem, (2) statement of the main claim, (3) proof of the stated claim (*pistis*), (4) epilogue.
- Ch. 14–19: Particular parts of the speech: the proem in the three genres of speech (Ch. 14) — *topoi* for slandering (Ch. 15) — narration (Ch. 16) — proof (*pistis*) (Ch. 17) — interrogation (Ch. 18) — epilogue/conclusion (Ch. 19).

Augustine. *Teaching Christianity*. Translated by Edmund Hill. New York: New City Press, 1995.

- This is my favorite edition/translation. Helpful essays and footnotes. The essays are half the length of the volume and are worth reading to get insight on Augustine and his method. This is where Christian rhetoric begins. It is a book that you must read and then read again. At least books 1 and 4. A free online edition that is also good can be found here - <https://archive.org/details/onchristiandoctr00dods/mode/2up>
- **Book 1** – Augustine outlines the content of Christian faith, focusing on love as the center of Christian ethics. Note – Ethics is intimately related to exegesis. Perhaps one of the most important things contemporary expositors need to understand.
- Book 2 – How words function as signs. The benefit of natural sciences to the study of the Bible.
- *Book 3* – How the bible expositor should deal with ambiguities in the text.
- **Book 4** – This is section, written late in Augustine’s life (about 30 years after books 1-3) is the wisdom of a man deeply trained and gifted in rhetoric after decades of preaching. Some of my favorite writing on rhetoric. You just might have to read this to get into heaven.

Bavinck, Herman. *Herman Bavinck on Preaching and Preachers*. Edited by James P. Eglinton. Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, 2017.

- The opening essay, which is the driving force behind the publication, is worth its weight in gold.
- **Eloquence (lecture)** - Wonderful argumentation on the validity and necessity of eloquence in preaching. One of the best and most compelling I have ever read. Per usual with Bavinck, there are many killer lines.
- *The Sermon and the Service* – Not sure why this was included

- The World-Conquering Power of Faith – The only published sermon from Bavinck. Worth reading for that reason. Also worth it for Bavinck fans to see how he put his theology into practice.
- **On Preaching in America** - Biting critique of American religion/preaching in the early 1900's as well – shocking how relevant it is to today.

Blair, Hugh. *Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres*. Philadelphia: Hayes and Zell, 1856

- A well-written book that does a good job of giving confidence to the orator while also grounding the seriousness of the task. Not wholly focused on preaching, but does have some interesting insights into the task. You can find the PDF here - <https://archive.org/details/lecturesonrheto02millgoog/page/n3/mode/2up>
 - **Lecture 1** - Good argument on the need for and power of rhetoric.
 - **Lecture 2** - We all can speak and enjoy good speech, should cultivate it.
 - **Lecture 3** - Criticism is incredibly important to achieve progress in rhetoric.
 - *Lectures 4-9* – The nature of language.
 - **Lecture 10** - The need to strive for clarity and precision in what you say.
 - **Lecture 11** - How you construct your sentences matters more than you might think.
 - Lecture 12-15 – Figures of speech, how sentences work
 - **Lecture 16** - Personification is a powerful way of communicating something in the voice of an imagined character.
 - *Lecture 17-28* – Mostly long-winded takes on piece of writing.
 - **Lecture 29** - Persuasion in the pulpit is harder than in other contexts and is of utmost importance.
 - Lecture 30 – Examining a sermon of a famous preacher of the time
 - **Lecture 31-32** - All the parts of discourse are important to understand on their own and how they work together.
 - **Lecture 33** - How you speak what you want to say goes a long way toward (in)effectiveness.
 - **Lecture 34** - There are many means by which the orator can and should improve over a lifetime. There is no end to learning.

- *Lecture 35-47* – Notes on different kinds of literature, mostly ancient poetry

Broadus, John. *On the Preparation and Delivery of Sermons (Dargan edition)*. A.C. Armstrong and Son, New York 1898

- A free PDF copy can be found here - <https://archive.org/details/treatiseonprepar1898broa/mode/2up> - Note - Do NOT waste your time with other editions, especially the readily available 4th edition. It is a disaster compared to what Broadus wrote. This work, done by Dargan, Broadus' right-hand man for a long time, is very good and much of what is found in the latter part of the book is worth your time.
 - **Introduction** - A really good introduction, especially for those who are suspicious about rhetoric in general. Does a good job of driving at the seriousness of the task, but also driving at simplicity/clarity.
 - *Part 1. 1 - The Text- Selection* – Nothing very helpful here worth reading.
 - *Part 1. 2 – The Text – Interpretation* – Not bad at all, just not worth one's time.
 - *Part 1. 3 – Subjects – Classified* – Not much help in choosing what to preach
 - *Part 1. 4 – Sermons for Particular Occasions and Classes* – Decent material on preaching funerals and revival. Most interesting is his work on preaching to children.
 - *Part 1. 5 – General Materials for Preaching* – Some interesting tips on how to stay engaged in the work of studying for preaching. Rightly assumes that the work is not easy.
 - *Part 1. 6 – Special Materials – Explanation* – Explaining the text is important. It is your job, so do it.
 - **Part 1. 7 – Special Materials – Argument** – Covers a wide range of material regarding types of arguments, why it is important to argue, and how to effectively engage in refutation like you are a Christian and other people matter.
 - **Part 1. 8 – Special Materials – Illustration** – Solid advice on how to illustrate well, giving perspective on a broad range of ways to illustrate.
 - **Part 1. 9 – Special Materials – Application** – Very good material on how to apply AND to what end. Gets at the importance of emotions in application.
 - **Part 2.1 – Importance of Arrangement** – Arrangement is not optional, it is not easy, but it is greatly beneficial to the preacher and the hearer of the preaching.
 - **Part 2.2 – The Several Parts of a Sermon** – Very helpful advice on the overall flow of a sermon. Presses home the concepts while avoiding technical jargon.
 - *Part 2.3 – Different Species of Sermons* – Interesting if only to see his take on exposition.
 - **Part 3.1 – General Observations on Style** – Great advice on how to cultivate one's own written and spoken style. Rightly focuses on style being something in the background.
 - **Part 3.2 – Qualities of Style – Perspicuity** – Wrestles with the need to be concise without being confusing. This confusion often is a result of not explaining/being too brief/assuming too much of our audience.
 - **Part 3.3 – Energy of Style** – Very helpful for preachers who struggle with being boring (to others and/or themselves) and who feel the need to bring variety to their style (Note – this is likely most of you reading this).

- **Part 3.4 – Elegance of Style** – Achieving elegance in style is a matter of balance, striving for that which is clear and natural. He helpfully insists on always having reason for/being aware of why one is doing what they are doing.
- **Part 3.5 – Imagination in Preaching** – The task of utilizing and cultivating the imagination is urgent in our day. He rightly encourages time spent in nature, looking at art, and reading good literature (especially poetry). This single chapter is worth reading above all the chapters.
- **Part 4.1 – The Three Methods of Preparation and Delivery** – He surveys the methods of delivery (reading, recitation, and extemporaneous or free speaking), landing hard (and correctly) on extemporaneous. This does NOT mean speaking without preparation, but how to go about utilizing one's preparation to greatest effect. His arguments are sound and compelling, with solid advice for how to do so well, without shying away from the challenges. If you are at all in doubt you must read this chapter.
- Part 4.2 – On Delivery, as Regards the Voice – Some interesting, if not wholly novel advice on how to use your voice. For those struggling with this subject it is worth reading. Don't let mics/amplification lead you to disregard this advice.
- Part 4.3 – On Delivery, as Regards Action – Worth reading if you are at a complete loss regarding what to do with your body in preaching...like Ricky Bobby (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YZtiDJqVYwk>)
- *Part 5 – Conduct of Public Worship* – Just some general pieces of advice on how to run a service.

Bray, Gerald. *Preaching the Word with John Chrysostom*. Bellingham: Lexham Press, 2020.

Campbell, George. *The Philosophy of Rhetoric*. Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1988.

Chapell, Bryan. *Christ-Centered Preaching: Redeeming the Expository Sermon*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2005.

- This book has proven helpful to many. Just please don't fall into the trap of using Chapell's method as an empty box to shove every text through. It makes for awkward and incredibly predictable and boring preaching. This is not Chapell's fault, but those who use him poorly.
 - 1. Word and Witness – Preaching the Word is a great task. The Word is powerful and you should strive to be an excellent person.
 - **2. Obligations of the Sermon** – A sermon is not just a bundle of truth, but a unified proclamation applied to the hearers.
 - This is where his Fallen Condition Focus is introduced. Probably one of his greatest marks on contemporary preaching. Not bad, just not a shortcut to the perfect sermon.
 - 3. *The Priority of the Text* – How to choose a text and what to do with it. A very brief overview of these things.
 - 4. Components of Exposition – Historical, homiletical, and attitudinal components of exposition.
 - **5. The Process of Explanation** – How a sermon is fit together. For those who are completely lost, this is a helpful place to start.
 - 6. Outlining and Structuring – a lot of principles on how outlines work and how to do it.
 - **7. The Pattern of Illustration** – How illustration works, how to do it, and to what ends.

- **8. The Practice of Application** – He drives home the importance of application, focusing on applications that hit What, Where, Why, and How.
- 9. Introductions, Conclusions, and Transitions – Some helpful tips on how to do these things well.
 - The stuff on **transitions** is particularly helpful.
- 10. A Redemptive Approach to Preaching – Preach Jesus as a remedy for our fallen condition, don't be moralistic.
 - Note – This is particularly what many misread, cutting out a life of discipleship and any notion of Christian ethics altogether. Chapell doesn't, and neither should you.
- 11. Developing Redemptive Sermons – Putting all the pieces together.

Chapman, John. *Setting Hearts on Fire: A Guide to Giving Evangelistic Talks*. St Matthias Press, 1999.

- Chappo is one of my preaching heroes, especially when it comes to evangelistic preaching. This book is mainly for those who know next to nothing about preaching but there are a few chapters really worth reading for seasoned pros.
 - 1. *What is preaching?* – Not bad, just very basic stuff.
 - 2. *What is the gospel we preach?* – If you are a preacher and asking this question there is something seriously wrong.
 - 3. **What is evangelistic preaching?** – Few preachers are good at evangelistic preaching. Unbelievers usually live in our blindspots. This one is helpful in laying some groundwork.
 - 4. **What is the aim of evangelistic preaching?** – We are not just giving unbelievers information, we should be seeking to convert them into disciples of Jesus.
 - 5. What is God's part and our part in preaching? – Refer to my comments on #2.
 - 6. **How to select material for evangelistic preaching from Old Testament, Gospels, and Epistles** – Some helpful tips here. There is plenty of good preaching from the other parts of the bible, but if you are just getting your feet wet in evangelistic stuff this is some solid stuff.
 - 7. **Preparing the talk: the body of the talk** – It is always interesting to see someone's method. His is insightful and brief.
 - 8. Preparing the talk: the use of illustrations – If you are bad at these then read it. Not the most earth shaking chapter, but still...
 - 9. Preparing the talk: the conclusion and introduction – fine stuff. He helpfully provides an example.
 - 10. *Practicing the talk* – Not much here by way of importance.
 - 11. *Immediate follow up after the talk* – See above.
 - 12. **Choosing the right kind of talk and right length** – Not every talk is the same. Really gets to the importance of being focused and considering audience.
 - 13. **Some general comments: nuts and bolts** – Short, punchy insights from decades of doing the work.
 - 14. **Speaking with passion** – It isn't enough to feel for people...it has to show in your face, words, etc.
 - **Appendices** – 4 sermons from him. Study these like game film. Super insightful. Worth the price alone.

Cicero, *On the Ideal Orator*

- A classic, foundational text. While Cicero was not thinking of preachers, there is plenty of gold in the writings. He writes it as a dialogue between three people, so it can take some getting used to, but it is worth the work. I have included here an outline of the entire project. I find the book works best as a reference guide to a particular question/area of rhetoric I'd like to get a handle on.
- You can find the free PDF here - https://archive.org/details/isbn_2900195091983
 - Book 1
 - Sect. 1-23 Introduction
 - Sect. 1-5 Cicero Replaces Former Treatise; The Orator's Broad Education
 - Sect. 6-15 Rarity of Great Orators
 - Sect. 16-23 Requirements for Oratory
 - Sect. 24-29 Scene Set for the Dialogue
 - Sect. 30-95 The Nature and Range of Oratory
 - Sect. 30-34 Crassus: Oratory Vital to Society
 - Sect. 35-44 Scaevola: Influence of Orators Limited
 - Sect. 45-57 Crassus: Oratory Requires Wide Knowledge
 - Sect. 58-68 Crassus: Oratory Requires Knowledge of Political and Moral Science
 - Sect. 69-73 Crassus: Orator Compares to Poet in Expressiveness and Range; Style Reveals Orator's Education
 - Sect. 74-79 Scaevola: Such Wide Knowledge Beyond Orator's Grasp
 - Sect. 80-95 Antonius: Broad Knowledge Impractical, Abstract; Reported Debate on Philosophy vs. Rhetoric
 - Sect. 96-112 Crassus Urged to Expound
 - Sect. 102-109 Crassus: Is There an Art of Rhetoric? Only by Reducing Experience and Observation to a System
 - Sect. 113-262 The Requirements of an Orator
 - Sect. 113-136 Crassus and Antonius: Natural Ability; Orators Subject to Critics

- Sect. 137-147 Crassus: Conventional Oratorical Training:
 - Oratory's Purpose
 - Classification of Subjects
 - Determining status
 - Three Kinds of Oratory: forensic, deliberative, panegyric
 - Five Divisions of Rhetoric: invention, arrangement, style, memory, delivery
 - Parts of an Oration
 - Rules of Diction
- Sect. 148-159 Crassus: Necessary Oratorical Exercises:
 - Speeches on Subjects from Real Life
 - Written Compositions (for style, matter)
 - Paraphrasing Poetry and Prose
 - Training Voice and Gesture
 - Memory Techniques
 - Public Speaking
 - Reading and Analysis of Literature
 - Debating pro and contra
 - Studying History, Law, Politics
 - Making Notes
- Sect. 160-204 Crassus: Dignity and Force Required
- Sect. 205-218 Antonius Rebutts Crassus: Oratory Requires Speaking Convincingly, Not Wide Knowledge
- Sect. 219-233 Antonius: To Affect Emotions, No Philosophy Needed
- Sect. 234-239 Antonius: Knowledge of Law Unnecessary, Only Eloquence
- Sect. 240-250 Antonius: Only General Principles of Law Needed
- Sect. 251-262 Antonius: Practice More Crucial Than Wide Knowledge History, etc.
- Sect. 263-265 Crassus: Antonius Shows Refuting Skill, Invites Further Exposition
- Book Two
 - Sect. 1-11 Introduction: Crassus and Antonius Learned and Experienced
 - Sect. 12-27 The Second Day's Debate Begins
 - Sect. 28-38 Antonius: Oratory Not Reducible to a Science; Some Rules from Observation and Experience

- Sect. 39-73 Rhetoric Makes No Rules for Many Subjects Requiring Eloquence
- Sect. 74-89 Catullus: Uselessness of Theory Without Practice; Antonius: Criticism of Some Rhetorical Rules; Natural Ability Paramount
- Sect. 90-98 Antonius: Constant Imitative Practice Required; The Greek Schools of Oratory
- Sect. 99-113 Antonius: Mastering Facts of a Case Brings Out Main Issue
- Sect. 114-151 Antonius: Establishing Facts; Stating a Case Under a General Proposition
- Sect. 152-161 Catulus and Antonius: Greek and Roman Approaches to Philosophy (Aristotle, Stoicism, Carneades)
- Sect. 162-177 Antonius: The Doctrine of Topics
- Sect. 178-184 Antonius: Securing the Audience's Good Will
- Sect. 185-216 Antonius: Exciting Emotion
- Sect. 217-234 Caesar: Wit
- Sect. 235-247 Caesar: The Laughable
- Sect. 248-263 Caesar: Seven Kinds of Verbal Wit
- Sect. 264-290 Caesar: Nine Kinds of Wit of Thought
- Sect. 291-332 Antonius: Arrangement
- Sect. 333-340 Antonius: Speeches of Advice; Ethos
- Sect. 341-349 Antonius: Panegyric
- Sect. 350-367 Antoinus: Memory Techniques
- Book Three
 - Sect. 1-10 Fate of Characters in the Dialogue
 - Sect. 17-24 Crassus: Style Inseparable From Matter
 - Sect. 25-37 Crassus: Various Styles Admirable
 - Sect. 38-52 Crassus: Purity of Diction

- Sect. 53-96 Crassus: The Ornate Style
- Sect. 56-73 Crassus: Eloquence and Philosophy
- Sect. 97-148 Crassus: Rules for Embellishment
- Sect. 149-208 Crassus: The Ornate Style (detail):
 - Word Choice
 - Order
 - Rhythm
 - Figures of Speech
- Sect. 208-227 Decorum and Delivery

Clowney, Edmund P. *Preaching and Biblical Theology*. Phillipsburg: P&R Publishing, 2002.

- An incredibly short and helpful book. Academic in nature, but really hits well on a few topics crucial to preaching today...first written back in the 60's.
 - 1. What is Biblical Theology? – Introduces the practice of Biblical Theology and mainly deals with debates of its validity. Not too interesting unless one is interested in the debates that raged between the 1940's-80's.
 - **2. Biblical Theology and the Authority of Preaching** – Helpful critique of Bultmann, Dodd, and others, showing how their views of Scripture strip it of its authority (and thus, ironically, the authority of preaching...something they were trying to promote). He proves that preaching in the bible is based on the revealed word and thus is authoritative. The same goes for our preaching. God's word is powerful and thus is the preaching of it.
 - **3. Biblical Theology and the Character of Preaching** – Best chapter. Preaching today lacks the urgency of the apostles because it lacks the eschatological perspective they had. It must be recovered. Contemporary preaching has also lost the missional thrust of preaching to the ends of the earth "between the times" of Christ's two advents. When rightly understood preaching becomes much richer (to ALL kinds of people). Grasping the glory of Biblical Theology helps us preach well, especially preaching Christ. Doing so helps destroy the false dichotomy between the ethical and the redemptive. They go hand in hand.
 - **4. Biblical Theology and the Content of Preaching** – The preacher must first understand the text in light of its original theological horizon before moving to the horizon of redemption. (I cannot stress enough how important...and lacking this is in much preaching today) He uses Jonah as a helpful test case of how to do this well, showing the power of taking each horizon in order. Also helpfully explains the power/function of symbols and how they work in typology. When used appropriately the text itself and what it symbolizes shines bright.

Dabney, R. L. *Evangelical Eloquence: A Course of Lectures of Preaching*. Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1999.

- There is no denying Dabney had terrible views about black people. The deeply sad irony is how well he understood human nature (and thus how to communicate) while being unable to accept the humanity of some people. He is worth study not only because of his insight into human speech, but as an example of how blind we can be to some things while seeing other things so clearly. This book is a series of lectures. He displays an admirable knowledge and use of ancient rhetoric.
- You can find a free copy here - <https://archive.org/details/sacredrhetoric00pabnuoft/page/n11/mode/2up>
 - **1. Introductory** – Solid argument in the first half about the obligation to use rhetoric – obviously a thing the preacher must learn to use well.
 - *Skip the second half* – a basic history of preaching
 - **2. The Preacher's Commission** – Lays down the weighty and amazing task of speaking God's word well to his people.
 - **3. Distribution of Subjects** – There are different kinds of sermons – topical and ethical.
 - Worth checking out his stuff on **the ethic of the gospel** (p.59-62)
 - **4. The Same Topics Continued** – On narrative sermons.
 - **5. The Text** – The preachers job is to preach the bible. Your proposition (main point) must be intimately related to the material of the text.
 - **6. The Text (Continued)** – How to go about choosing a text to preach.
 - Is helpful for thinking about how to **break up a book** of the bible for a **preaching series**.
 - **7. Cardinal Requisites of the Sermon** – This and the next chapter deal with textual fidelity, unity, instructiveness, evangelical tone, movement, point, and order. These things are, to put it mildly, sorely lacking in much contemporary preaching and it shows. These might be some of the most important elements to good preaching.
 - **8. Cardinal Requisites of the Sermon (continued)** – See above.
 - **9. Constituent Members of the Sermon** – Next three chapters deal with Introduction, Exposition, Proposition, Main argument, and Conclusion. If you are not sure what these are or how they work it is likely evident in your preaching. They are all vital parts of speech. These chapters will often leave you smacking your forehead...and improving.
 - **10. Constituent Members of the Sermon – Explication and Proposition** – See above.
 - **11. Constituent Members of the Sermon – Argument and Conclusion** – See above.
 - **12. Sources of Argument** – A deeper dive into the complicated nature of argument. Both its matter and its form.
 - **13. Rules of Argument** –
 - 1. Sermons should be ever rich with scripture
 - 2. All reasoning should recur as closely as possible to the original sources of conviction (the bible) in self-consciousness and intuitions
 - 3. If deductive processes are used, let the steps be few
 - 4. Use many illustrations of your argument
 - 5. Determine correctly on which side the “burden of proof” lies (on you or your antagonist)
 - 6. The prejudices of hearers must be consulted in the order of introducing your proposition and proofs

- You already knew this, right? Follow them.
- **14. Rules of Argument (continued)** –
 - 7. The arguments should follow each other in a natural and progressive order
 - 8. The preacher should see to it that his proof is unanswerable – this raises some additional important points to pull off well
 - 1. Answer the question, In what part of my discourse affirming truth shall objections be considered?
 - 2. Time should never be wasted by citing trivial or unknown objections
 - 3. Opposers should always be treated with fairness and courtesy.
 - 4. It is enough to convince the objector that he was mistaken...you don't have to destroy them.
 - Again, you already know this, but it is often not done...and more rarely done well.
- 15. Division of the Argument – How to divide up the body of the sermon. Three options given: scholastic, textual, or topical.
- **16. Persuasion** – Preaching is for moving hearts, not just filling minds. You must get to the affections.
- **17. Persuasion (continued)** – Moving people is potentially dangerous, so make sure you are moving them to the right ends (loving God/others).
 - Helpful for those who are terrified/skeptical of engaging the affections of the listener.
- 18. Preacher's Character with Hearers – Who you are in and out of the pulpit matters.
- 19. Style – How you say what you want to communicate matters.
- 20. Style (continued) – Don't be a clown in the pulpit, speak like you mean it.
- 21. Action – How you use the action of your voice matters more than you probably think it does.
- 22. Action (continued) – Your gestures matter too.
- **23. Modes of Preparation** – Discussion on three modes: writing (manuscript), writing and memorizing, and extemporizing.
 - Lots to be gleaned here for those who get lost in their notes.
- *24. Public Prayer* – It is important, so do it well.

Davis, Dale Ralph. *The Word Became Fresh: How to Preach from Old Testament Narrative Texts*. Mentor, 2012.

- OT narratives are some of my favorite texts to preach in the bible. Davis is one of my favorite OT narrative preachers. More than anything, Davis helped me realize that getting into the oddness of the text and its function is not only appropriate, but the way toward effective and compelling preaching. In almost the entirety of the book Davis offers numerous examples of what he is talking about from his own work. They are clear and compelling.
 - 1. Approach – A kind of intro to all he is about to do in the rest of the book. Gets at the need of understanding what a text is saying and what it is doing.

- **2. Quirks** – The best chapter if you aren't in love with the way narratives in the bible work. Davis takes the things that normally bother us about this kind of communication and shows why it is pretty great.
- **3. Theology** – Helpful lays the groundwork that the ways stories are put together actually tells us stuff about God and his world. Not just the content, but the way that content is presented.
- **4. Packaging** – Very helpful stuff on literary context and structure. His stuff on structure is insightful, especially for those who have a tendency to get lost because they get myopic. His focus is on the major moves and flow of a narrative, helping the preacher make sense of the story for those hearing the sermon.
- **5. Nasties** – Some of my favorite passages to preach in the bible are the ugly ones. But they aren't easy. Davis gives some great advice.
- **6. Macroscope** – Decent treatment of an idea like the Simeon Trust's melodic line instruction. Each book has a unique message. Understanding the big message helps you understand the parts.
- **7. Appropriation** – One of the trickiest aspects of preaching OT narrative is application. Davis does a great job giving ways to apply the text without making everyone David or Elijah, providing helpful examples along the way (as well as those that go overboard).
- **8. Center** – There is great benefit in keeping God and his acts at the center of interpretation in OT narratives. It helps you from getting sidetracked by crazy details.
 - **Note** – This chapter is especially important to read and consider carefully if you (I believe rightly) have a Christocentric bent. I think he is correct that much Christocentric preaching forces texts to do things they do not do. I'll wait till I write my own book to flesh out how to make a way forward that takes Davis and others like him completely seriously while also preaching Christ, but for now, let Davis haunt you.
- **9. Synthesis** – An example of his methods on Exodus 1-2. Worth reading, but he has done such a good job in the previous chapters it is not wholly necessary.

Davis, Henry Grady. *Design for Preaching*. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1958.

- A favorite of mine. While not worth reading in its entirety necessarily it is one of the few books on preaching that is mostly worth reading. I must give Kent Hughes credit for turning me on to it some years ago.
 - **1. Substance and Form** – Sermons are more than words, they are words in a particular order, and they have form. This is NOT a fixed form, but a form nonetheless. The form is important.
 - **2. Footnote on Terminology** – An explanation of terms he uses often in the book.
 - **3. Anatomy of the Idea** – The sermon is the driving home of one idea. If you don't have it you have no hope of clarity, because you aren't driving anywhere particular.
 - **4. The Text as Source** – Get your argument from the bible and what IT is trying to say.

- 5. What's in a Subject? – There is the idea...and then what you want to say about the idea.
- **6. The Expanding Thought** – Imagine the main point like a piece of popcorn. Add heat and the thing blows up. It is all, in some sense, contained in the main idea. If you have it right then the sermon explodes out of it naturally.
- 7. Functional Forms: Proclamation – Preaching is for the proclamation of the gospel according to the Bible.
- 8. Functional Forms: Teaching and Therapy – Preaching is also for teaching Christians how to live and therapy (affecting change in the listener) according to the bible.
- **9. Organic Forms** – There are many broad forms that sermons can fall under. The text goes a long way toward helping you determine which form to use.
- **10. Continuity: Nature and Types** – Very important discussion on the difference between reading and hearing and how to shape the sermon to help the listener follow along.
- **11. Continuity: Introduction and Conclusion** – How to get started well and land the plane. Most preachers are terrible at one or the other. Except for those who are bad at both.
- 12. Tense and Mode – Both of these things affect our preaching and we are often unaware of them.
- *13. Process in Interpretation* – A view into Davis' interpretive method. Not hugely helpful.
- 14. Forms of Development – Different ways thoughts are developed within the body of a sermon.
- **15. Writing for the Ear** – A key chapter in my own development. It all comes down to crafting words and sentences for the ear. Most preachers never learned to write this way...and it shows.

Dorani, Daniel M. *Putting the Truth to Work: The Theory and Practice of Biblical Application*. Phillipsburg: P&R Publishing, 2001.

Fénelon, François. *Dialogue on Eloquence*

- “A Roman Catholic takes up Cicero's style of writing in dialogue...” Sounds like the setup to a joke for rhetoric nerds, but it is the fact of the matter. This is a very interesting and helpful, short work on rhetoric from a 17th century preacher. If you are around the Simeon Trust much, then much of this is quite familiar, for he focuses on speaking well, but without being a clown, doing justice to the text always, and being simple in the organization of your sermon.
- You can find a good, free PDF copy here - <https://archive.org/details/dialogueoneoque00fnel>
 - **Dialogue 1** – Preaching should not be for the glory of the preacher. Our goal is to make people better (i.e. godly), not impress them. Our preaching should lead to others wanting to hear more preaching, not just hear us.

- **Dialogue 2** – Helpfully describes how preaching ought to be “poetic”. All preaching should match the text one is preaching (he drives home proportionality). Most interestingly, he has a solid argument about NOT memorizing sermons word for word, but rather the general moves so that one can speak naturally in the moment.
- **Dialogue 3** – One of the best treatments of 1 Corinthians 2 I have read. The dialogue format allows him to probe the text and his views on it (which I completely agree with) in very interesting ways. True eloquence relies on God’s Spirit to do the work and appreciates the gifts of speech he has given us. Also a shocking argument for the sequential preaching of bible books, focusing on what the text actually says (as opposed to indulging in allegory).

Fullerton, Ryan, Jim Orrick, and Brian Payne. *Encountering God through Expository Preaching: Connecting God’s People to God’s Presence through God’s Word*. Nashville: B&H Academic, 2017.

Galli, Mark. *Preaching That Connects*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994.

Gibson, Scott. *Biblical Preaching: The Development and Delivery of Expository Messages*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2001.

Goldsworthy, Graeme. *Preaching the Whole Bible as Christian Scripture: The Application of Biblical Theology to Expository Preaching*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000.

Gordon, T. David. *Why Johnny Can’t Preach: The Media Have Shaped the Messengers*. Phillipsburg: P & R Publishing, 2009.

- Short, practical, and biting. Gordon’s clarity and brevity about the dire state of preaching and what to do about it are refreshing.
 - **1. Johnny Can’t Preach** – Making the case that there is a real problem in contemporary preaching and trying to identify the causes.
 - **2. Why Johnny Can’t Preach, Part 1: Johnny Can’t Read (Texts)** – Reading is hard and our tech driven culture isn’t helping. A good short course on media ecology.
 - **3. Why Johnny Can’t Preach, Part 2: Johnny Can’t Write** – More media ecology stuff. Since we can’t read we also can’t write real good.
 - **4. A Few Thoughts about Content** – A strong case for Christ-centered preaching. While I think he does not lean in enough on the need to drive ethics he does deal with challenges.
 - **5. Teaching Johnny to Preach** – Teaching people to preach is possible, and some suggestions on how to do it.

Greidanus, Sidney. *Preaching Christ from the Old Testament: A Contemporary Hermeneutical Method*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999.

Greidanus, Sidney. *The Modern Preacher and the Ancient Text: Interpreting and Preaching Biblical Literature*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989.

Guinness, Os. *Fool's Talk: Recovering the Art of Christian Persuasion*. Downers Grove: IVP, 2015.

Jackman, David. *Proclaiming the Word: Principles and Practices for Expository Preaching*. Wheaton: Crossway, 2024.

Jensen, Phillip D., and Paul Grimmond. *Archer and the Arrow: Preaching the Very Words of God*. Kingsford: Matthias Media, 2010.

Kaiser, Walter C. Jr. *Preaching and Teaching from the Old Testament*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2003.

Keller, Timothy. *Preaching: Communicating Faith in an Age of Skepticism*. New York: Penguin Books, 2016.

Kim, Matthew D. *Preaching with Cultural Intelligence: Understanding the People Who Hear Our Sermons*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2017.

Kuhn, Chase R., and Paul Grimmond, eds. *Theology Is for Preaching: Biblical Foundations, Method, and Practice*. Lexham Press, 2021.

King, David M. *Your Old Testament Sermon Needs to Get Saved: A Handbook for Preaching Christ from the Old Testament*. Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2021.

Lloyd-Jones, D. Martyn, *Preaching and Preachers*. Grand Rapids, Mich: Zondervan, 2012.

Long, Thomas G. *The Witness of Preaching*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2016.

Lowry, Eugene L. *The Homiletical Plot, Expanded Edition: The Sermon as Narrative Art Form*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2000.

- Narrative preaching is not exactly expositional preaching and Lowry, along with others like Craddock, criticizes exposition in ways that are not exactly fair. While I disagree with all kinds of things in this book I think there are incredibly helpful things to learn in this volume and apply to the task of exposition.
 - Section one: The Sermon as Narrative
 - The Image of the Sermon – Helpful language of thinking of the writing of a sermon as “development as opposed to “construction”. A solid critique of the way sermons are often “built”. Draws a sharp distinction between narrative preaching and preaching an outline.
 - **Getting Started** – The sermonic idea (main point) that is helpful to the preacher is one that addresses the itch and scratch (problem/solution) in the text. There should be a discrepancy that the sermon resolves.
 - Plot Forms – A short description of the sermon’s plot structure that he works out in detail in section two.
 - Section Two: The Stages of the Homiletical Plot
 - **Upsetting Equilibrium** – Very helpful material on how to start a sermon, voicing the ambiguity. This can take place in a variety of ways with helpful examples given. I totally agree on the necessity to engage the listener.

- **Analyzing the Discrepancy** – Gets at the importance of asking about motivations, asking ‘why?’ and not being satisfied with surface/cheap answers. The ‘why’ should be teased out in the sermon, not just quickly declaring the answer.
- **Disclosing the Clue to Resolution** – We must learn from Jesus, especially in the parables, the important element of surprise. Like in telling a good joke, the setup is important and the best punchlines do not go exactly where we expected. Sermons do similar kinds of things.
- **Experiencing the Gospel** – The gospel has to go in the right place in the sermon and do the right kind of work. The goal is to demonstrate how the gospel is the answer to the question raised by the text.
- Anticipating the Consequences – The application leading to change comes in light of God’s acts for us. This leads to hope for real change.
- Section Three: Other Considerations
 - **Variations** – Creating ambiguity in preaching is crucial. But sometimes the moment you are in does the work of creating ambiguity for you. Other times you will have to highlight it for the sake of the audience.
 - *Preparation* – Some decent tips on preparing the sermon.
 - *Biblical Narrative Preaching* – a fitting conclusion highlighting the benefits of narrative preaching.

Massey, James Earl. *The Burdensome Joy of Preaching*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1998.

- A helpful, short book on the struggles and joys of preaching. I return to it on regular occasion to read through my notes.
 - **1. The Inward Side of Preaching** – Preaching is a real, constant struggle. Embracing that is the only way to keep preaching.
 - **2. The Outward Side of Preaching** – Our audience needs to perceive that we care for them and are preaching for their good, it is not enough to have such a sense buried within us.
 - I will say, his stuff on anointing, like that of Llod-Jones’ “unction,” is incredibly nebulous and not something I’m sure is able to be perceived.
 - **3. Achieving Togetherness Through Preaching** – Preaching should be done toward the end of unifying the audience, not just give information or fulfil privatized desires.
 - **4. The Eventfulness of Preaching** – The preaching moment is a unique one, requiring much from the preacher. He ought to expect God to do something in the preaching, aware of the inability to control what God does.
 - **5. The Face of Jesus: A Sermon** – A short sermon to close out the book. Really not sure why it was included. Probably because it is a book about preaching, but a printed sermon works against everything he is talking about in the book. Not that written sermons are bad, but they lack all the important elements Massey speaks about in the book.

Motyer, Alec. *Preaching?: Simple Teaching on Simply Preaching*. Ross-Shire: Christian Focus, 2013.

O'Neill, Lucas. *Preaching to Be Heard: Delivering Sermons That Command Attention*. Lexham Press, 2019.

- I really appreciate O'Neill's insistence that preachers work hard at capturing the people's attention and interest...and to do so from the text in order that they might be fed by what God is saying in his word. He charts a good path between the good desires of getting the text right and communicating in a compelling way. His work on tension is some of the best I have ever read.
 - **1. Preaching that commands attention** – Utilizes many theorists in public speech to show how humans have an innate desire to be drawn into stories and speeches. Explains why this is the case and how it might work itself out in sermons. Focuses on building and releasing tension effectively to gain and hold attention.
 - **2. Discover the problem-solution** – You have to have a main point (big idea), if you have any real hope of capturing attention, building tension, etc. He borrows heavily from Haddon Robinson here. Besides some solid arguments for why this is important the chapter helpfully gives some examples at the end.
 - **3. Determine the structure** – Though not novel, he helpfully combines material on forming an overarching question (which sets the tension) with the sermon's structure. The structure, shaped by the text's exegetical structure, is essentially how you determine to answer the question. Getting a firm grasp on how you are going to preach the text will go a long way toward helping you effectively use tension.
 - **4. Disclose the ultimate solution** – Jesus is the ultimate solution. We must preach him, but not do it poorly (something he thankfully points out is all too common). In preaching Jesus we should not blow apart the meaning of the text. Provides some helpful examples of how to do it well.
 - **5. Introducing tension** – If you don't ratchet up the tension...fast...you are hosed. This is one of the most significant failures of the majority of preaching I hear today. There is all kinds of talk today about how audiences don't pay attention. Much of the fault lies on preachers who don't understand introductions and who don't work to secure the audience's attention.
 - **Extra material** – More helpful and extensive than most books extra material. Some helpful drills for the preacher looking to put into practice what O'Neill is talking about in the book.

Patrick, Dale, and Allen Scult, eds. *Rhetoric and Biblical Interpretation*. London: Sheffield Academic Press, 1990.

Pennington, Jonathan T. *Small Preaching: 25 Little Things You Can Do Now to Make You a Better Preacher*. Bellingham: Lexham Press, 2021.

- A series of helpful, if basic, tips on becoming a better preacher. The sections are so short (less than 4 pages) that they are not worth going through. I found most of them generally helpful. Not a book I would seek out, but worth flipping through if you have got it. Nothing is unique to this book, but it is packaged well...so some of us might actually read about these things.
 - The Person of the Preacher

- Handling Praise Carefully and Gladly
- Handling Criticism Carefully and Humbly
- Band of Brothers Preaching
- Pastoring as Conducting
- Be God's Witness, Not His Lawyer
- Distinguish between Preaching and Teaching
- Encaustic Preaching
- Preparation for Preaching
- Manuscript Writing as Thinking
- Sermon Writing as Sculpture
- Snack Writing
- The Rhythm of Education and the Jigsaw Puzzle
- Kill Your Darlings
- Iceberg Preaching
- "This Sermon Stinks"
- Practice of Preaching
- The First Minute of a Sermon
- The Last Minute of a Sermon
- Preaching the Church Calendar
- Preaching the Cultural Calendar
- The Power of Predictions
- Every Sermon a Story
- Make Music in Your Sermon
- Always Exposition?

- The Unexamined Sermon Is Not Worth Preaching
- At Weddings and Funerals, Be a Guide
- Stealing as Sub-Creating

Piper, John. *Expository Exultation: Christian Preaching as Worship*. Wheaton: Crossway, 2018.

Piper, John. *The Supremacy of God in Preaching*. Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2004.

Plantinga, Cornelius. *Reading for Preaching: The Preacher in Conversation with Storytellers, Biographers, Poets and Journalists*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2013.

- You must read well if you want to have a shot at preaching well.
 - **1. Introduction to the conversation** – Makes a good argument for reading, not to be impressive, but helpful to your audience. Discusses the benefits of reading all kinds of stuff, principally that it brings you into contact with people very different from yourself and helps you craft your sermon work. You would think pastors are readers, but they are often not so...and it shows.
 - **2. Attentive illustrations** – Illustrations should do work in your sermon, not merely please hearers. Come up with your own by being attentive to life.
 - **3. Tuning the preacher's ear** – Pushes for the preacher to work hard in the areas of rhetorical pitch, narrative movement, economy, and evocativeness. At the same time does well to make sure to push the preacher to do this for the good of the congregation they serve.
 - **4. Whatever you get, get wisdom** – The preachers task is daunting and requires great wisdom. We can get wisdom by reading widely to see how others communicate wisely on a whole range of topics. We can and should learn from even the bleakest, least Christian of writers, for even they are a reflection of this world.
 - **5. Wisdom on the variousness of life** – Excellent examples given on how literature expands our views of humanity/the world, often by surprising us and moving us in ways we had not expected.
 - **6. Wisdom on sin and grace** – Some decent stuff on how literature displays both the reality of sin and the need for grace. Most interesting stuff is at the beginning, some good stuff on humor in preaching.

Prutow, Dennis. *So Pastor, What's Your Point?* Alliance of Confessing Evangelicals, 2013.

Quintilian, *Institutes of Oratory*

- This thing is massive and massively useful. I use it like an encyclopedia. If you have a question on rhetoric, go mining here. Not something to read straight through necessarily, but gold is scattered throughout. I turn to this all the time. My favorite sections are in bold.
- You can read it for free online here (though I would recommend picking up a hard copy and living with it for the rest of your life) - https://penelope.uchicago.edu/Thayer/E/Roman/Texts/Quintilian/Institutio_Oratoria/home.html
- If you want a good PDF copy you can find it here - https://lyceum.institute/wp-content/uploads/2024/09/Quintilianc95-InstitutioOratoria_Reprint.pdf

- Book One
 - 1.1 Elementary Education
 - 1.2 Public vs. Private Education
 - 1.3 Capacity and Treatment of Students
 - 1.4 Grammar
 - 1.5 Purity of Language and Vices of Diction
 - 1.6 Origin and Usage of Words
 - 1.7 Spelling
 - **1.8 Reading, Authors to be Read**
 - 1.9 Composition
 - 1.10 Studies Adjunct to Rhetoric
 - 1.11 Lessons from the Theatre: Delivery, Gesture, Recitation, Gymnastics
 - 1.12 Studying Multiple Subjects Simultaneously
- Book Two
 - 2.1 Rhetoric vis-a-vis Grammar
 - 2.2 Choice of Teacher; The Teacher - Pupil Relationship
 - 2.3 Inferior Teachers
 - **2.4 Progymnasmata (Elementary Rhetorical Exercises)**
 - 2.5 Rhetorical Analysis of Literary Authors
 - 2.6 Declamation - Amount of Guidance for; Imitation
 - 2.7 Declamation and Memorization
 - 2.8 Customizing Methods to Pupil's Abilities
 - 2.9 Students to Treat Teachers as Parents
 - 2.10 Themes for Declamation to have Verisimilitude

- **2.11 Necessity of Rhetorical Instruction**
- 2.12 Untrained Speakers - Pro and Con
- 2.13 Need for Adapting of Rules
- **2.14 "Rhetoric" and "Oratory" Considered**
- **2.15 Definitions of Oratory**
- **2.16 The Value of Oratory Attacked and Defended**
- **2.17 The Art, Morality, and Truth of Oratory**
- **2.18 Rhetoric as a Practical Art**
- **2.19 Nature and Art**
- **2.20 Is Rhetoric a Virtue?**
- **2.21 The Subject of Rhetoric. Oratory vs. Philosophy; An Orator's Broad Knowledge.**
- Book Three
 - 3.1 Greek and Roman Writers on Rhetoric
 - 3.2 Origin of Oratory
 - 3.3 Divisions and Order of the Art of Rhetoric
 - 3.4 Views on the Number of Kinds of Oratory
 - 3.5 Things vs. Words; Questions; Definitions of a Cause
 - 3.6 Stasis Theory (The Status of a Case)
 - 3.7 Panegyric
 - 3.8 Deliberative Oratory
 - 3.9 Forensic Oratory; Parts of a Forensic Speech
 - 3.10 The Nature of the Cause
 - 3.11 The Question, Mode of Defence, Point for Decision, Foundation of the Case, etc.
- Book Four

- **4.1 Parts of a Speech: The Introduction (Exordium)**
- **4.2 Parts of a Speech: The Statement of Facts (Narratio)**
- 4.3 Digressions
- 4.4 Propositions Preparatory to Proof
- **4.5 Parts of a Speech: Partition (Partitio)**
- Book Five
 - **5.1 Parts of a Speech: Artificial and Inartificial Proofs**
 - 5.2 Previous Decisions
 - 5.3 Public Opinion
 - 5.4 Evidence from Torture
 - 5.5 Refutation of Documents
 - 5.6 Taking Oaths: Pro and Con
 - 5.7 Evidence: Documentary, Oral, Witnesses, Supernatural
 - **5.8 Artificial Proofs**
 - 5.9 Signs, Circumstantial Evidence, Prognostics
 - **5.10 Arguments**
 - **5.11 Examples and Instances**
 - **5.12 Arguments, cont'd**
 - **5.13 Parts of a Speech: Refutation and Proof**
 - 5.14 Enthymeme, Epicheireme, and Syllogism
- Book Six
 - **6.1 Parts of a Speech: Conclusion (Peroration)**
 - 6.2 The Judge's Temperament; Pathos, Ethos
 - **6.3 Wit and Humor**

- **6.4 Altercatio or Debate**
- 6.5 Judgment and Sagacity
- Book Seven
 - **7.1 Arrangement**
 - 7.2 Conjecture
 - 7.3 Definition
 - 7.4 Quality
 - 7.5 Points of Law
 - 7.6 Letter of the Law / Intention
 - 7.7 Contradictory Laws
 - 7.8 Syllogism
 - 7.9 Ambiguity
 - 7.10 Status of a Case; Limits of Rules
- Book Eight
 - **8.1 Style**
 - **8.2 Clarity (perspicuitas)**
 - **8.3 Ornament: Merits and Faults**
 - **8.4 Amplification and Diminution**
 - 8.5 The Value of General Reflections in Oratory
 - 8.6 Tropes
- Book Nine
 - 9.1 Figures of Thought and Speech
 - 9.2 Figures of Thought (Detail)
 - 9.3 Figures of Speech (Detail)

- 9.4 Apt Use of Structure, Rhythm, Metrical Feet
- Book Ten
 - **10.1 Reading Curriculum**
 - **10.2 Imitation**
 - **10.3 Writing**
 - 10.4 Correction
 - 10.5 Composition Exercises: Translation, Paraphrase, Theses, Commonplaces, Declamations
 - 10.6 Thought and Premeditation
 - **10.7 Extemporaneous Speaking**
- Book Eleven
 - **11.1 Respecting kairos When Speaking**
 - 11.2 Memory
 - 11.3 Delivery, Gesture, Dress
- Book Twelve
 - **12.1 The Great Orator as Good Man**
 - 12.2 Strengthening Character; Philosophical Study
 - 12.3 The Study of Civil Law
 - 12.4 Orator Prepared with Examples and Precedents
 - **12.5 Firmness; Presence of Mind; Cultivating Natural Advantages**
 - 12.6 The Orator's Age
 - 12.7 Causes to be Undertaken; Remuneration
 - 12.8 Careful Study of the Case
 - **12.9 Not Aiming for Applause; Restraining Invective; Preparation Through Writing and Extemporaneous Speaking**

- 12.10 Styles of Oratory
- 12.11 Retirement from Speaking; Successful Training of an Orator

Reed, Rick. *The Heart of the Preacher: Preparing Your Soul to Proclaim the Word*. Bellingham: Lexham Press, 2019.

Robinson, Haddon W. *Preaching the Old Testament*. Edited by Scott M. Gibson. Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2006.

Ryken, Leland. *The Christian Imagination: The Practice of Faith in Literature and Writing*. Westminster: PRH Christian Publishing, 2011.

Ryken, Leland. *Words of Delight: A Literary Introduction to the Bible*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 1993.

Ryle, J.C. *Simplicity in Preaching*

- **An important and brief pamphlet on preaching.** You should probably read this every year.

- You can find the PDF free here -

<http://www.onthewing.org/user/Ryle%20-%20Simplicity%20in%20Preaching.pdf>

Scharf, Greg R. *Let the Earth Hear His Voice: Strategies for Overcoming Bottlenecks in Preaching God's Word*. Phillipsburg: P&R Publishing, 2015.

Stanley, Andy, and Lane Jones. *Communicating for a Change: Seven Keys to Irresistible Communication*. Westminster: Multnomah, 2008.

Storr, Will. *The Science of Storytelling: Why Stories Make Us Human and How to Tell Them Better*. New York: Harry N. Abrams, 2021.

Stott, John. *Between Two Worlds*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2017.

- Stott was more aware than most that we are preaching to people in the present. This presents all kinds of challenges and opportunities. Stott reveled in both. This is interesting to read today because it is now a generation old, giving insight into how much has changed...and stayed the same.
 - 1. The Glory of Preaching: A Historical Sketch – A basic survey of preaching through time.
 - **2. Contemporary Objections to Preaching** – He admirably confronts three objections: a mood of anti-authority, distraction, and a culture of doubt. Helpful both in content and in strategy.
 - It is kind of hilarious to read him rant against technology like television. He isn't totally wrong.
 - 3. Theological Foundations for Preaching – The preacher must have strong convictions about God, Scripture, the Church, the pastorate, and biblical exposition.
 - **4. Preaching as Bridge-building** – This chapter is gold. We must know what/who we are critiquing and speaking to. He gives biblical evidence of this happening. Only in this way

will we be able to confront and help in the challenging issues facing our world today. The most important chapter of the book by far.

- 5. *The Call to Study* – Preachers are called to study. Don't be lazy.
- 6. *Preparing Sermons* – Some basic principles for putting together a sermon.
- 7. **Sincerity and Earnestness** – Two vital traits in effective preaching. These must not just be inside, but displayed to the hearers.
 - Maybe my favorite part is his encouragement to use humor well.
- 8. **Courage and Humility** – If we are going to do what Stott pushes for in Ch. 4 then courage is necessary. I love that he pairs it with humility. If these do not go hand in hand one will either be a jerk or never do the work.

Stott, John. *Pages from a Preacher's Notebook: Wisdom and Prayers from the Pen of John Stott*. Edited by Mark Meynell. Bellingham: Lexham Press, 2020.

Stott, John R. W., and Greg Scharf. *The Challenge of Preaching*. Carlisle: Langham Partnership International, 2011.

Spurgeon, Charles H. *Lectures to My Students*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1979.

- An eclectic classic. If you haven't read it, you must. If you have, there are some things worth revisiting, regularly. Much like his preaching, these lectures are a treasure trove of words used well. His capacity for the effective use of illustration by way of analogy is staggering. You can find it free here - <https://archive.org/details/lecturestomystu00unkngoog/mode/2up>
 - Lecture 1 – The minister's self-watch – Important way to start. Essentially a basics on ethos, playing heavily off Baxter's Reformed Pastor (which you should probably read instead if you are interested).
 - Lecture 2 – The call to ministry – Some interesting stuff about being called. He is convinced it isn't set in stone. Much has to do with practical steps to dispel skepticism.
 - Lecture 3 – The preacher's private prayer – Prayer is important to ministry. You should know this. Decent stuff, but nothing special.
 - *Lecture 4 – Our public prayer* – Pretty subjective stuff on how to pray. Unfortunately rather dismissive of written prayers.
 - **Lecture 5 – Sermons – their matter** – Solid advice on what to preach...AND what to avoid preaching on.
 - *Lecture 6 – On the choice of a text* – There are some hilariously bad examples given, but not much help. Easy solution = preach through books of the bible (something Spurgeon was no fan of).
 - *Lecture 7 – On spiritualizing* – Don't do it...even when Spurgeon says it is fine to do (he's dead wrong).
 - **Lecture 8 – On the voice** – He was well known for his vocal capacity. This is full of practical advice on training your voice and the importance of doing do. Microphones today are no excuse for not working on what the good Lord gave you.
 - **Lecture 9 – Attention** – One of the most important things Spurgeon ever wrote. Just as relevant a topic today...and for all the same reasons. You have no right to assume the attention of your audience. You must gain it and hold it throughout the sermon for your hearers good. If you are suspicious of rhetoric, but love Spurgeon let this chapter be a thorn in your flesh.

- **Lecture 10 – The faculty of impromptu speech** – If you think this is an insane practice then take up and read this chapter. He provides a good balance – we should be impromptu on the words, not the matter.
- Lecture 11 – The minister’s fainting fits – If you thought ministry was going to be easy, or are bewildered about being discouraged or that others are, this chapter is for you.
- Lecture 12 – The minister’s ordinary conversation – Decent advice on being a normal human in public who remembers he is always a minister and acts accordingly.
- Lecture 13 – To workers with slender apparatus – a good word to those who lament that they don’t have every resource on the planet. You don’t need it.
- *Lecture 14 – The Holy Spirit in connection with our ministry* – Even Spurgeon says this is nothing new. If you don’t know this and believe this then there are serious problems.
- **Lecture 15 – The necessity of ministerial progress** – If you think you have “arrived” in ministry then he believes you should quit. I could not agree more. The preacher strives to improve continually in ALL areas of life – from learning, to oratorical ability, to character, to spirituality. Never stop.
- Lecture 16 – The need of decision for the truth – Be dedicated to truth and don’t waiver. Just make sure it is truth you are standing on.
- *Lecture 17 – Open air preaching – a sketch of its history* – Preaching outside is no sin. Lots of people have done it.
- Lecture 18 – Open air preaching – remarks thereon – If you are going to do it do it well. Pick the right place and preach so people can hear you.
- **Lecture 19 – Posture, action, gesture, etc.** – This stuff doesn’t matter as much as the content of your sermon, but these elements of speaking help you get out of the way. Poorly done they are insanely distracting. This and the next lecture are mainly about what to avoid, which is right. Most of these things you notice unconsciously in others and rarely think about in yourself.
- **Lecture 20 – Posture, action, gesture, etc. (second lecture)** – See above.
- **Lecture 21 – Earnestness: Its marring and maintenance** – Earnestness is more important than most of us think, many things hinder it, and we must do all we can to keep it alive. Both the church and the world depend upon it.
- Lecture 22 - The blind eye and deaf ear – Helpful if you are given to the fear of man or tend to get overly concerned with/involved in the problems/gossip of others.
- **Lecture 23 – On conversion as our aim** – Unbelievers often live in the preacher’s blind spot. This is some solid material on how to/the importance of preaching to the unconverted. Especially important for those who ignore unbelievers or think it is not important to speak to them in the Sunday gathering.
- Lecture 24 – Illustrations in preaching – Dependable, if simple/obvious advice on using illustrations. Read it if you think they are useless.
- Lecture 25 – Anecdotes from the pulpit – Use stories in your preaching. Lots of the former greats do so in their preaching (he spends much of his time quoting them). You should be like them.
- Lecture 26 – The uses of anecdotes and illustrations – There are many reasons (he gives 7) why illustrations are helpful/important in preaching. This chapter’s advice is pretty obvious.
- Lecture 27 – Where can we find anecdotes and illustrations? – Illustrations are everywhere. Keep your eyes and ears open. With a bit of practice you can become adept at finding them everywhere.

- *Lecture 28 – The sciences as a source of illustration* – This is Spurgeon’s attempt to apply what he knows about astronomy to illustrations for preaching. Pretty boring.

Thompson, George J., and Jerry B. Jenkins. *Verbal Judo: The Gentle Art of Persuasion, Updated Edition*. New York: William Morrow Paperbacks, 2013.

Topping, Ryan. *The Elements of Rhetoric -- How to Write and Speak Clearly and Persuasively: A Guide for Students, Teachers, Politicians & Preachers*. Kettering: Angelico Press, 2016.

- At less than 100 pages this is a gem of a concise survey of basic rhetorical principles. This book will in no way make you an expert. It won’t even get you too far down the road of understanding. But it will whet your appetite for sure. I re-read this on a regular basis.
 - **1. Logos: Rational Speech** – It all starts with clarity and logic. If you don’t have this then the rest of your preaching is mostly useless.
 - **2. Pathos: Proportionate Emotion** – The “proportionate” part is key. We aren’t putting on one-man plays. But neither are we lecturing. No one likes a lecturer. Don’t be a lecturer. Be a human speaking on the level of real emotions to other humans.
 - **3. Ethos: Credible Character** – You ever think about WHY people should listen to you? What goes into credibility? Read this chapter and find out. It includes more than you think...like how you use your hands.
 - **4. The Aims of the Speaker** – You can teach, please, and/or move in speaking. You have to have the first if you want to have a prayer of doing the others...and preachers need to do all three.
 - 5. The Structure of the Speech – Simple, clear stuff on how a speech is put together.
 - 6. The Garden of Eloquence – Simple list of some popular literary figures and parts of speech that you use, but probably don’t do so consciously.
 - 7. First Thoughts and Last – Some closing exhortations on working hard at persuading.
 - 8. Appendix – Some helpful exercises to put into practice what he teaches.

Truby, John. *The Anatomy of Story*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2008.

Ware, Henry. *Hints on Extemporaneous Preaching*. Boston: Cummings, Hilliard & Co. 1824

- A very helpful and short book on extemporizing. I really appreciate how honest and forceful he is. This book also has hints...just like the title promises to give. It is also very short. You could read this in a day, but you will likely be thinking about it for far longer. You can find a free PDF copy here - <https://ia601601.us.archive.org/24/items/hintsonextempor02waregoog/hintsonextempor02waregoog.pdf>
 - **Chapter 1 – Advantages of Extemporaneous Preaching** – The case is made for why extemporizing is a very good way to preach, while not arguing that preachers should always or must do so.
 - **Chapter 2 – Disadvantages – Objections Considered** – Ware does a great job of naming the criticisms and refuting them very well. Yes, such a way of preaching can make a man lazy, but it need not do so. And...writing is no savior when it comes to laziness.
 - **Chapter 3 – Rules** – By far the most helpful chapter for those who are persuaded to take up the challenge. Some very helpful thoughts on how to begin and how to improve.

Wenham, Gordon J. *Story as Torah: Reading Old Testament Narrative Ethically*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2004.

Wilson, Jim L., and Jeff Iorg. *Illustrating Well: Preaching Sermons That Connect*. Bellingham: Lexham Press, 2022.