
How To Plan A Preaching Calendar

Stop me if you've done this; it's December and you're already stressed about your Christmas Eve services when you realize that January is just a few weeks away, and you have no clue what you will be preaching to kick off the new year.

Sound familiar? That certainly hit home for me a few years ago.

Sermon series planning for me came in spurts. When I got inspired, I would jot some ideas down and make that my next sermon series. Sometimes I would not even have the next series planned until the week before it was scheduled to start.

When the series did come together, it was more about what I wanted to preach on instead of what people needed to hear. The only question I was asking was "what do I want to preach that I want people to know?" There was no rhythm to the sermons and series that I was leading our church to do.

If I was inspired, thought the series would be "cool", or it would draw a crowd, we did it. It was certainly not strategic in any way.

This is what I like to call "piss poor planning". I do not recommend it.

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Something that I have discovered over the years through my own failures and the leading of better leaders around me, is that there is a particular rhythm to sermon series planning.

It's not just something that hopefully comes together. There is a way to do it that can help your church grow both spiritually and numerically, all while decreasing your stress when it comes to figuring out, what you will preach next.

Don't Ask The Wrong Question

When it comes to series planning, I often asked the wrong question.

The question I asked was, "what do I want to preach that I think the people want to hear?"

This question would lead me in the wrong direction in terms of deciding the direction of the series that I would preach through.

For example, the answer to this question might lead me to just do a series because another church did it, it seemed cool and it looked like it was a good topic or when I read scripture, I just really wanted to preach that.

Or, it could lead me to do a series answering a question that no one was really asking. Like, what's so amazing about double imputation?

Don't get me wrong; I am all about double imputation, sanctification, and all the other 'tations and 'cations you can throw at me, but 98% of the people in your church are not asking questions about those things.

This lead to a lot of series that may have been informative, but they did not move the scale of spiritual growth for a majority of our people.

Ask The Right Question

The question that I should have been asking and the question I now ask is, **“what are the questions people are asking where we can point them to an answer?”** Start asking this question, and it will change everything.

As I've asked this question more and more, sermon series planning has become a little more clear, but that still does not answer the question of when and where.

The When and Where of Series Planning

Built into every year, there is a certain rhythm. There are things that happen every year that are important to the life of your church like Easter, Christmas, and Mother's Day.

And within that rhythm, the people in your church have a rhythm. They take vacations at certain times of the year, schools have spring breaks, summer breaks, fall breaks, winter breaks, etc. There are other things that may factor in as well, like sports.

How To Plan In Rhythm

Something I learned from a friend and mentor is that certain times of the year, preaching is about development of your people and other times it's about expansion.

Development times are when the people in your church can take steps toward spiritual maturity, growth and preparing to disciple others. The best times for a development series are times when people in your community are less likely to either be thinking about church or when it's a slower season, like summer.

Every church and community is a bit different, so these times may differ for your church. For us, we do development series January to Good Friday, Memorial Day to back-to-school (mid August for us) and mid-October to Thanksgiving.

A development series may be about walking through a certain book of the bible. This past summer, we took a quick, 12 week walk through the first half of Acts. It might be doing a series based on the Sermon on the Mount or prayer.

Done properly and with the right intention, a development series can really push the maturity level of your church.

The other time is called expansion. An expansion series is about inviting your community, taking advantage of “big weekends” and holidays. The best times for expansion series are when people are thinking about church, spiritual matters, holidays and those natural times in the calendar that signal new beginnings.

Expansion series (for us) work best at Easter to Mother’s Day, when school starts back up to October, and again at Christmas or Advent.

A few examples of expansion series may be a 30 Days to Live series, a series on relationships and conflict, sex series or Christmas series.

A Few Sermon Planning Tips

- **Take time to plan.** Mark off a few days in your schedule to sit down, pray and plan out your sermon calendar
- **Ask for input.** Ask people on your team, trusted attenders, or a group of people you invite input from to weigh in with topic ideas, series ideas and passages. Ask them the question, “what do you want to know?”
- **Write it down.** A sermon series calendar does no good if you don’t write it down and then share it with your team. This let’s your worship leaders, creative people, and other ministries align with you.
- **Know the right information.** Get a school calendar to see when the breaks are, when school returns and lets out. Plan accordingly.
- **Refresh and reuse.** Do a sermon years ago at the wrong time of the year and wonder why it didn’t work? Give it a fresh makeover, rebrand it and use it during the right season and see what happens.

Take time to know the rhythm and work within it, and you will see your church take huge steps in maturity, growth, and discipleship.

Senior Pastor Free Resource

Feel like your church should be growing, but it's not?

Ultimately, church growth is up to God. Are we being good stewards of what He's given us? Are we doing everything we can to ensure our church is healthy? How do we overcome the barriers we feel are in front of us?

We know you care deeply about leading a healthy growing church because it means leading more people to Jesus. So we created a free guide to breaking barriers that will bring clarity and help begin to alleviate your frustrations.

Get your FREE copy of the Senior Pastor's Guide to Breaking Barriers today.

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