



INTENTIONAL EXCELLENCE

A SIX-PART SERIES ON PURPOSEFUL SPIRITUAL GROWTH

Sermon Outline Collection

From the heart to the mission: grow with intention in your thinking, habits, relationships, service, and outreach.

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It Starts in the Heart

Daniel 1:1-21

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Intentional Outreach

Matthew 28:16-20

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Concise preaching outlines with Scripture references and brief point summaries. Develop each message for your own congregation.

WEEK 01 | PREACHING OUTLINE

It Starts in the Heart

Primary Scripture: Daniel 1:1-21

Central idea: Excellence begins with inward conviction. What we do flows from who we are, and faithful action grows from a heart settled on honoring God.

Opening direction: Contrast the effortless growth of weeds with the cultivation healthy growth requires. Introduce Daniel as a young believer facing pressure to let Babylon reshape his identity.

1. The Enemy Has a Plan

Daniel 1:1-7

Babylon seeks to reshape the young men through education, provision, and new names. Apply this pressure to the influences that form our identity and redirect our gifts, while remembering that God remains sovereign.

2. Conviction Comes First

Daniel 1:8

Daniel resolves not to defile himself. Establish convictions and boundaries before pressure tests them. The passage does not specify exactly why the food defiled him; its emphasis is his settled commitment to God.

3. Do Right the Right Way

Daniel 1:8-16

Daniel makes a respectful request, listens to the official's concern, and proposes a ten-day test. Firm convictions should be expressed with wisdom and care for others; both our message and our manner should reflect God.

4. Growth Comes from God

Daniel 1:17-21

The young men study and prepare, but God gives knowledge and understanding. Their public excellence follows private faithfulness. Take responsibility for obedience while depending on God for growth.

Closing response: Ask what is taking root beneath the surface. Identify a conviction or boundary to settle before the next temptation, trial, or test, and entrust the results to God.

Scripture references

Daniel 1:1-21; Matthew 22:37; Proverbs 4:23. Allusion: Daniel 6:3 (Daniel's excellent spirit).

WEEK 02 | PREACHING OUTLINE

Change Your Mind

Primary Scripture: Romans 12:1-8

Central idea: The convictions of the heart must be lived out through a renewed mind. God transforms how we live as we surrender to Him and allow Him to reshape our thinking.

Opening direction: Use glasses as a picture of the lens through which we interpret life. A desire to obey God can be hindered by an old way of thinking; move from the heart to the mind.

1. Start with Surrender

Romans 12:1

Paul appeals to God's mercy before calling for a living sacrifice. Offer your actual life to God in response to His grace, surrendering control over your schedule, decisions, abilities, and desires. Worship includes daily yieldedness.

2. Break the Mold

Romans 12:2

Resist the patterns of the present age and submit to God's transforming work. Examine the voices shaping your outlook and pursue renewal through Scripture, prayer, worship, and the Spirit. Seek God Himself as you learn to discern His will.

3. Think Beyond Yourself

Romans 12:3-8

A renewed mind shows itself in sound judgment, belonging to Christ's body, and faithful use of spiritual gifts. Recognize both your need for others and what God has given you to contribute. Develop and exercise your gift for their benefit.

Closing response: Return to the glasses illustration. Name an area of control or an old perspective that needs surrender, and ask God to change the way you see yourself, others, and His purposes.

Scripture references

Romans 12:1-8. Background: Romans 1-11 (God's mercies preceding the call to surrender).

WEEK 03 | PREACHING OUTLINE

Practice Makes Progress

Primary Scripture: 1 Timothy 4:6-16

Central idea: Good intentions become progress through consistent, godly habits. Train intentionally while keeping your hope fixed on the living God.

Opening direction: Compare practicing an instrument or exercising with correct and incorrect technique. Repetition alone is not enough; the right practices, repeated consistently, help us grow.

1. Train for Godliness

1 Timothy 4:6-10

Stay nourished by sound teaching, reject distracting speculation, and practice godliness. Spiritual disciplines have value for this life and eternity. Our habits do not save us; our hope remains in the living God.

2. Live as an Example

1 Timothy 4:11-12

Timothy is to answer dismissal of his youth with consistent character. Develop habits that make you an example in speech, conduct, love, faith, and purity. Private integrity should support public influence.

3. Practice Your Calling

1 Timothy 4:13-14

Give sustained attention to the work God has entrusted to you. Timothy must prioritize Scripture, exhortation, and teaching rather than neglect his gift. Take a concrete first step instead of waiting for ideal circumstances.

4. Keep Making Progress

1 Timothy 4:15-16

Immerse yourself in these practices until progress becomes evident. Watch both your life and your teaching, and persevere when growth feels slow. The aim is continuing formation, not an appearance of instant perfection.

Closing response: Ask: What habit should I remove? What habit can I begin today? Are my habits helping me become who God has called me to be? Choose a repeatable step and stay with it.

Scripture references

1 Timothy 4:6-16. Allusions: Acts 9:1-19 (Saul's conversion); 1 Corinthians 6:19-20 (the body as a temple).

WEEK 04 | PREACHING OUTLINE

Look Beyond Yourself

Primary Scripture: Hebrews 10:19-25

Central idea: God works in us so He can work through us. Drawing near to Him should lead to intentional relationships that strengthen and encourage others.

Opening direction: Invite the congregation to consider how unfamiliar and awkward church can feel to a first-time guest. Familiarity should not keep us from noticing those outside our usual circle.

1. Draw Near

Hebrews 10:19-22; James 4:8

Access to God rests on Jesus' blood and priestly work, not our performance. Draw near in faith and devotion. As our hearts become aligned with God's heart, indifference toward the people He loves should give way to compassion.

2. Hold On

Hebrews 10:23

Hold firmly to hope because the One who promised is faithful. God often strengthens people through other believers. Your presence, listening, testimony, and encouragement can help someone else persevere through difficulty.

3. Consider Others

Hebrews 10:24-25

Give focused attention to others and deliberately stir them toward love and good deeds. Gather to encourage and contribute, not simply to receive. Look beyond familiar circles, notice the isolated, and use words to build faith.

Closing response: Use the picture of a coal losing warmth when separated from the fire. Invite people to reconnect and identify someone they can notice, encourage, pray with, or welcome this week.

Scripture references

Hebrews 10:19-25; James 4:8. Allusions: Proverbs 18:21 (the power of the tongue); Matthew 27:51 (the torn temple veil).

WEEK 05 | PREACHING OUTLINE

Give God Your Best

Primary Scripture: Colossians 3:12-24

Central idea: Because we belong to Jesus, every word and deed should honor Him. Give Him your best with a loving heart, sincere effort, and a willingness to keep growing.

Opening direction: An artist's signature identifies work that represents its maker. Connect that image with doing everything in Jesus' name: even ordinary tasks can become expressions of devotion.

1. Why We Serve

Colossians 3:12-14

We serve as people already chosen, holy, and loved. Put on compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, patience, forgiveness, and love. A finished task cannot excuse a harmful attitude; even necessary correction should come from love.

2. How We Serve

Colossians 3:15-23

Let Christ's peace rule and His word dwell richly within you. Serve thankfully in His name at church, home, and work. Read the household instructions in this context of love, never as permission for cruelty. Work sincerely when unseen, giving your best and remaining teachable.

3. Who We Serve

Colossians 3:23-24

People receive the benefit of our service, but Christ is our ultimate Master. Work heartily for Him rather than for recognition. His promised inheritance gives significance to faithful service, even when earthly circumstances are unfair or no one offers thanks.

Closing response: Examine the spirit and effort behind your service. Identify where you need to stop cutting corners, grow in skill, or treat people with greater love. Offer that work to Jesus.

Scripture references

Colossians 3:12-24; Luke 16:10. Allusion: Galatians 5:22-23 (the fruit of the Spirit).

WEEK 06 | PREACHING OUTLINE

Intentional Outreach

Primary Scripture: Matthew 28:16-20

Central idea: Our growth is meant to help others follow Jesus. His authority sends us, His commission gives us direction, and His presence sustains us.

Opening direction: Place an empty chair in view to represent someone who needs the gospel or help growing in faith. Connect the series' inward growth with an outward mission of making disciples.

1. Trust His Authority

Matthew 28:16-18

The risen Jesus commissions disciples even as some struggle with doubt. Begin with His authority rather than your own confidence or expertise. The mission exceeds our ability, but it never exceeds His authority.

2. Make Disciples

Matthew 28:19-20

Go to people, share the gospel, baptize, and teach obedience to Jesus. Pray about whom to approach, listen to their story, and explain why Jesus' death and resurrection matter. Stay involved as they learn to follow Him; an invitation is a beginning, not the whole process.

3. Count on His Presence

Matthew 28:20

Jesus promises to be with His people throughout the mission. Keep praying, loving, learning, and speaking when opportunities come. His presence sustains faithful action when conversations feel awkward or growth takes longer than expected.

Closing response: Return to the empty chair. Ask, "Who am I helping take a step toward Jesus?" Write down a name, pray, and choose a specific next step: a conversation, a meal, or an invitation to sit together.

Scripture references

Matthew 28:16-20 (especially vv. 18-20).