



*A System For  
Understanding and  
Putting Together A  
Sermonic Close*

# Ending the Sermon Right

*“Celebrating the Sermon Powerfully”*

**Sherman Haywood Cox II**

# Table Of Contents

.....	1
<b>A System For Understanding and Putting Together A Sermonic Close .....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>“Celebrating the Sermon Powerfully” .....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Sherman Haywood Cox II.....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b><u>Table Of Contents.....</u></b>	<b><u>2</u></b>
<b><u>Introduction – Ending the Sermon Right.....</u></b>	<b><u>4</u></b>
<u>Presenter’s Bio.....</u>	<u>5</u>
<u>Where This Came From.....</u>	<u>5</u>
<b><u>Chapter 1: Pre-requisites.....</u></b>	<b><u>7</u></b>
<u>Solid Exegesis.....</u>	<u>7</u>
<u>Solid Sermon Construction.....</u>	<u>7</u>
<u>Good Presentation Skills.....</u>	<u>8</u>
<b><u>Celebration: The Key to a Solid Ending.....</u></b>	<b><u>9</u></b>
<u>Important Points.....</u>	<u>9</u>
<u>Possible Problems.....</u>	<u>9</u>
<u>Emotionalism.....</u>	<u>10</u>
<u>The Dark Side of ‘Whooping’.....</u>	<u>10</u>
<u>Spending Too Much Time Worrying About Style.....</u>	<u>10</u>
<b><u>Raw Materials to Construct Celebration.....</u></b>	<b><u>12</u></b>
<u>Hymns.....</u>	<u>12</u>
<u>Poems.....</u>	<u>12</u>
<u>Gospel Songs.....</u>	<u>12</u>

Scriptures.....	12
Stories.....	13
Spirituals.....	13
Nature.....	14
Daily Existence.....	14
Clichés.....	14
<b>Components of Celebration.....</b>	<b>17</b>
Emotive Dimension of Humanity is the Emphasis.....	17
Based in the Intellectual Truth of the Message.....	17
Assumes There is One Truth Given.....	17
Assumes that People Understand the Message.....	17
Celebration without Understanding is Simply Noise.....	18
<b>Tools to Promote Celebration.....</b>	<b>19</b>
Becoming the Actor.....	19
Reduce Caveats and Explanations.....	20
Reduce Vocabulary.....	21
Celebrate What You Know.....	22
Increase Vocal Intensity.....	22
Allow Space for the Congregation.....	23
More Simple Sentences.....	23
<b>Conclusion.....</b>	<b>25</b>

## Introduction - Ending the Sermon Right

I want to thank you for purchasing the Ending the Sermon ebook.

My name is Sherman Haywood Cox II and I am the director and primary contributor to [SoulPreaching.com](http://SoulPreaching.com). I would encourage you to go to [SoulPreaching.com](http://SoulPreaching.com), look at the resources that we have there. There's a ton of resources there to help you in your preaching including three of the last seminars.

The ebook will have the following form:

- We are going to go into the presenter's bio.
- Then we're going to look at some prerequisites for a solid ending of the sermon.
- Then we're going to look at celebration as the key to a solid ending. Celebration - what is that concept? We're going to talk about it. We're going to discuss it.
- Then we're going to go to celebration components. What are some of the components of the celebration that we are saying is the key to a solid ending.
- Then we're going to talk about some of the raw materials that we can use to construct this celebration.
- And finally, we're going to look at tools for celebration.

*Heavenly Father,*

*We thank you for allowing us all to come here to learn more about how to preach to Thy people. We ask that You would enlighten our minds that we might learn something that we need, that we can help those who have come to hear from us.*

*Bless us and keep us.*

*In the Name of Jesus Christ,*

*Amen.*

## Presenter's Bio

Who am I? I am Sherman Haywood Cox II. I am an African-American Preacher's son. Yes, I am a PK. I've definitely seen much preaching from a very young age. Not only am I an African-American preacher's son but I am an African-American preacher. I've engaged in African-American preaching.

In addition, I studied at Vanderbilt Divinity School. I received the Master of Divinity from Vanderbilt Divinity School with an emphasis in Homiletics. I graduated with the equivalent of thirty graduate hours which is the equivalent of ten courses in Homiletics. I've studied much in preaching, especially Black Preaching.

Finally, I teach Black Preaching on SoulPreaching.com in audio, video, and text form. You can go to that particular [website](#) and see much of my pedagogical training, pedagogical teaching of Homiletics and Black Preaching. Specifically, I would encourage you to go there but all of these things come together to give me authority—in some sense—to teach on this particular subject. You can also see my teaching at [Supercharge Your Sermons](#) and [Note Free Preaching](#).

So I'm an African-American Preacher, I've studied African-American preaching, I've engaged in African-American preaching, and I teach African-American preaching. All of these things give me the background to teach preaching here.

## Where This Came From

Finally, I wanted to talk about the origin of this work. Well, I took a course entitled **Homiletic Analysis** at Vanderbilt Divinity School and I did a special study of African-American sermons. Specifically, I did a term paper on C.L. Franklin's sermon, Pressing On. I studied the sermon to understand what happens in the celebration. In addition to that course, I have read widely in homiletics literature, especially Black Preaching.

Many of you who have read in the field will quickly learn that I am strongly influenced by both Henry Mitchell and Frank Thomas. If you want to find out more information on these particular ideas, especially of celebration, I would encourage you to look at the book, from Henry Mitchell, **Celebration and Experience in Preaching**. And the book by Frank Thomas entitled, **They Like to Never Quit Praisin' God**. Those are two books that are definitely very influential in my understanding of preaching, in general, but especially in the close of the sermon. I would also encourage you to check out Olin Moyd's book the **Sacred Art**.

## Chapter 1: Pre-requisites

Now we want to go ahead and begin into the meat of our subject which is: How to End the Sermon. Before we talk about that, I need to talk about some pre-requisites for a solid ending. There are some things that you need in the beginning before you can talk about ending the sermon correctly.

### Solid Exegesis

One of these things you must have is Solid Exegesis. You must have solid exegesis of the text if you are to end correctly. Check out my ebook the Four Waves of Exegesis ebook for more information about this. But you can use anybody's exegetical method to help you here. Here are a couple of powerful books to help you with this effort. First is Thomas Long's Witness of Preaching. Long's work is a solid one that provides the fundamentals of constructing a sermon. In addition, check out Paul Scott Wilson's textbook entitled The Practice of Preaching. That is a very good basic preaching text. In addition, you may be interested in downloading my free ebook You Can Preach.

### Solid Sermon Construction

Next is Solid Sermon Construction. So you've got exegesis, and then you must turn that exegesis into a sermon. And you do that with some steps, some concrete steps in taking you from exegesis to sermon. I've written a free ebook that many of you probably already have if you signed up for the Soul Preacher, which is our email magazine, that talks about the Seven Steps to an Effective Sermon, which is the name of our ebook. It's a free download. And one reviewer actually said that if you follow these steps, the sermon constructs itself.

## **Good Presentation Skills**

At any rate, you need to have a solid sermon construction if you are going to have a solid ending. You must have a solid exegesis if you are going to have a solid ending, and you must have Good Presentation Skills. Notice I said, GOOD, and not great. If you know your material and you present your material, you can be a solid presenter of the Gospel. You can be a good presenter without necessarily having to be a great one to get the ideas of God over to your people.

So here are some pre-requisites to solid ending: solid exegesis, solid sermon construction, and good presentation skills.

## Celebration: The Key to a Solid Ending

So what is the key to having a solid ending? The key to having a solid ending of the sermon is, in my thought, celebration.

So what is celebration within the context of ending a sermon? *Celebration is holding up the intellectual truth of the message for an emotional experience.* You are seeking to deal with both the intellect and the emotive dimensions of humanity. In addition, you are seeking to create an experience with the truth of the message.

I've gotten emails where individuals have asked, "What can I do to improve my sermons?" "What can I do to make my sermons more interesting?" "What can I do to make people understand my message better?" And one thing that I usually emphasize in those emails and responses to such preachers is that the number one thing you can do to improve the reception –both the reception and understandability of your messages– is to have celebration.

### Important Points

Celebration is more than application. It is application and experience. In fact, it is *experiencing the application*. Please note that these three points are important:

- **Holding up** the intellectual truth of the message;
- And that it is **emotional**;
- And it is an **experience**.
- Finally, **Celebration** must be connected to the truth.

### Possible Problems

What are some problems when you teach addressing the emotive dimensions of humanity?

## **Emotionalism**

Here is where emotion is disconnected from the intellect. Please note that true celebration is not separating the emotion from the intellect. It is not something that you do at the end of your sermons to salvage them. It does not make up for lack of preparation. Too many times, we can find ourselves in the position of going to flunksville or flunking and trying to use emotionalism to get us over the hump. That is not what I am talking about. Celebration is connected to the intellect. It is the experience from the intellect. In fact, true celebration cannot exist unless you truly understand the message that's presented. The way it works is, during the sermon you present the truth; during the celebration—the celebrative close—you celebrate emotionally the truth of what you have presented.

## **The Dark Side of 'Whooping'**

If you haven't dealt with the intellect in the sermon, then what you are doing is not going to help anybody and it's not going to provide a solid foundation for the people in their daily lives. In fact, you are doing a disservice to your people if you do not deal with the intellect before you attempt to celebrate anything or before you attempt to engage the emotions.

What I'm talking about right now is what Martha Simmons called the Dark Side of Whooping. There are some individuals—it happens more often than we'd like—but some individuals use whooping as a tool to overcome sloth. They just start whooping and have no connection to the particular message.

## **Spending Too Much Time Worrying About Style**

Finally, another possible problem is the individual who expends too much time worrying about style and not enough time worrying about substance. I think we generally find ourselves in one of two boats. Some of us think style doesn't have anything to do with anything and we don't spend any time

at all thinking about or attempting to understand style. But then there are other people where that's the only place they spend their time on—thinking about style. And both of these are problematic because, as we said before, we must have both the intellect and the emotive addressed in our sermons. We need them both together. I would also say that the style and substance go together.

So these are some of the possible problems that we have in celebration. So when we come back, what is celebration? *It happens at the end of the sermon and it holds up the intellectual truth of the message for an emotional experience.*

## Raw Materials to Construct Celebration

Now, what can we use? What is the material that we can use in constructing these celebrative moves at the end of our sermon? What is celebrative material? Celebrative material is material that can help you and your people—emotionally experience the truth of the message.

What are some of the raw materials that you can use to construct your celebrative closes to your sermons?

### Hymns

Try to find hymns that can help you illustrate and celebrate your sermons.

### Poems

Poems are not used as often now, but if you do have one that is appropriate, by all means use it.

### Gospel Songs

Sometimes, Gospel songs (current Gospel songs or Gospel songs from the past) can be used to illustrate and celebrate your points and sermons. Often all one has to do is say a few words of a Gospel song or a hymn and they will touch people very deeply. It's important to recognize that music is a powerful medium. And when the preacher refers to some song, then that song still does its work even though you may not necessarily sing it. You may say it, you may recite it, and you may just refer to it. If it fits in with the truth of your message, it will drive home your point in ways that nothing else will.

### Scriptures

Another thing to use in your sermonic celebrations are appeals to the scriptures. When I say scriptures here, I mean some of the old scriptures that are deep in the tradition of the church as well as the African-American community. Please note

that I'm talking about using these scriptures as celebrative materials reaching into the emotive, not necessarily the intellectual dimensions of humanity. Sometimes you have to deal with these scriptures in your exegesis and that is fine, but here I am talking about using it to close the sermon. An old well worn and well used scripture can serve the same part as a song.

## **Stories**

A story can do the same thing. There are many type of stories: they may be novels, they may be television programs, they may be movies, they may be stories from your own life, they may be myths... any story that can drive home your point can be used. It's important, however, to recognize that at this point, we are looking for material that addresses the emotive. Once gain, keep in mind that we are not talking about "teaching" but "celebrating."

Another thing that you can do is complete a story that you began earlier in the sermon. If you introduce a story earlier in the sermon, when you get to the close, the people already know the story. Or maybe there was just a hint of how the story was going to end but the story ends in a way that's going to help the people emotionally experience the truth of the message.

## **Spirituals**

You can also use spirituals. There's something about spirituals and I think that we don't use spirituals as much as we ought to, especially those of us who are younger preachers. We don't go back to the spirituals enough. It's important to recognize that spirituals reach us on a very deep level. There is something "African" going on when you talk about the spirituals. There is something in this interaction between Africa and America. Something deep is going on in the spirituals. The hope of freedom clashing up against the reality of slavery, there is something powerful going on in the spirituals. And this tension is something that is deep within them that we, as preachers, don't use enough.

Not only as preachers, but on a side note, our worship leaders oftentimes will go running to the latest praise anthem or

to the latest praise theme when there is something very powerful, something very innate in the spirituals. And I think that we need to reclaim them. There are definitely some of us who definitely use them, some of us definitely deal with them, but I think we, as African-American preachers, have a responsibility to reclaim the spirituals and to use them as raw materials, especially in the celebration.

## Nature

Nature can celebrate our points as well. What's going on in nature? The sun going up and the sun coming down: if it inspired the songwriter, it can inspire our celebrative moments. Snow, the rainbow at the end of rain, the blade of grass that comes fighting up through the ground... we can use many things from nature to help us.

## Daily Existence

And finally, I have on here daily experience as something else that we can use as raw materials in our presentation.

## Clichés

Another raw material is the cliché. You remember the clichés from the black church: *God is good all the time. All the time, God is good.* There are certain clichés from the African-American tradition: *He may not come when you want Him but He's right on time.* There are certain clichés from the African-American tradition that can be used as raw materials for putting together the celebrative close to the sermon.

## QUESTIONS:

- \* \* \* \* \*

### *Can you give a list of important spirituals?*

As far as the list of the old, popular spirituals, you can look at the internet. Go to google and type in spirituals. But let me

also say that All African-American preachers need at least two hymnals.

- One is the Hymnal from your denominational tradition, whatever it is. You need that to do some basic worship planning and hymn choice.
- Secondly, you need the [African-American Hymnal](#). It has in it Gospel songs; it has in it spirituals; and it has in it a scriptural index. So you've got a particular scripture that you are dealing with, you read it, you look it up, and then you go to that hymnal, and then you can see spirituals that relate to it and other Gospel songs that relate to it from the African-American tradition.

So I would definitely encourage you to go there for a list. And also, it has in there the words, the lyrics, and everything. In addition, you can go to Google, type in Negro Spirituals. I believe there is a website called [NegroSpirituals.com](#) or something like that. I would definitely encourage you to go there and you'll find much of the same information there.

- \* \* \* \* \*

***Can't you use these raw materials throughout the sermon and not just the end of the sermon?***

That is definitely true. These resources, all of these raw materials can be used in the sermon to illustrate your points.

It's important, however, in the celebration, that the celebration materials you choose to use become more prominent. They take a bigger seat. They are there to celebrate the truth of the message. So before we are using them during the message to illustrate the sermon, you use these stories, you use these spirituals, (etc.) and you are illustrating the points of the sermon, but when you get to the celebration, you are doing more than illustrating; you are celebrating.

I hope I'm being clear here. But the emphasis is slightly different. In the sermon close, you are no longer illustrating. You have already illustrated all you are going to illustrate. You have already described all you are going to describe. You have

already dealt with the intellect in such a way that, now, we just need to celebrate the truth you presented. And sometimes, the best way to celebrate this truth is by hitting that spiritual, hitting that hymn, you know, hitting these songs. And there is an emotional release that happens here because you are not illustrating the point, you are not illustrating the sermon, you are celebrating the truth of the sermon.

So I think that it is important, as we said before, that these things should be used all the time and they should be used in your illustration, and everything I said about the spirituals should be kept in mind throughout the sermon. But when it gets to the celebration, we are simply about celebrating the truth.

- \* \* \* \* -

***Can the spirituals help to connect with an older generation?***

Yes. In fact, it would be nice to reclaim these spirituals so that it can connect with everybody. But at any rate, if you are having problems (just on a side note) interacting with the older generation, when you hit your celebration, use some spirituals up in there, use some hymns up in there, use some scriptures from the past up in there and they will connect with the older members in powerful ways.

# Components of Celebration

Now, we've talked about the raw materials. What are the components of celebration? And some of this is going to be a repeat, but the components are:

## **Emotive Dimension of Humanity is the Emphasis**

Remember when you put together your sermon conclusion that you are attempting to address the emotive primarily and not the intellectual. But remember that this is not merely emotionalism.

## **Based in the Intellectual Truth of the Message**

Another thing to remember is that the conclusion is based in the intellectual truth of the sermon that has been presented. Don't bring in something that you have not presented.

## **Assumes There is One Truth Given**

Effective sermons have one main point. There are other sub points, but there is one main point. What is the number one point of the message that you are giving? This is one of the big problems that many people face. Somebody sent me a sermon outline to evaluate before they preach their particular sermon. And as I looked at the sermon outline, I told the budding preacher that 'this is not a sermon outline, this is a sermon series outline, because you have got way too much information in this outline for one sermon.'

You are presenting one truth. Any other point you give should be supportive of and subordinate to that one truth. And finally, when you celebrate, you celebrate the truth of that one truth. It's one point. That is what ties the whole thing together.

## **Assumes that People Understand the Message**

Finally, another assumption that I'm making, especially in the components, is that the people understand the message. There is one truth. When you hammer that one truth, when you

push that into the people, the people will understand it. And before celebration can happen, before genuine celebration can happen, there should be one truth, the people understand that truth, and then the people celebrate that truth.

Let me say it again: The preacher presents one truth, the people hear and understand that one truth, and then the people celebrate that one truth. That is the basic steps to bring to celebration.

### **Celebration without Understanding is Simply Noise**

Finally, celebration without understanding is simply noise. And it does not help anybody. Now this is a categorical statement. Certainly, if God can use a donkey to teach the Gospel, to teach God's message in the Bible, then certainly God can use us when we go up there half-steppin'.

But true celebration will, as we said before, come from one truth. The people understand that truth and the people celebrate the truth of that presentation.

## Tools to Promote Celebration

Now what are our tools? How can we actually turn the raw materials into a celebration? These are some explicit tools that you can use for promoting celebration in the close. We've got raw materials here: hymns, gospel—we've written them down—how can we use them to construct a powerful celebrative close?

### **Becoming the Actor**

The first tool to construct a sermonic close is to become an actor. This can be helpful when you have a metaphor for your whole sermon, a controlling metaphor for your sermon.

These sermons, that you can become the actor in, should ask the people to do something or promote something.

The preacher becomes the chief obeyer of the message. I have a couple of examples here:

First is a sermon that I preached that you can find on SoulPreaching.com where I told the people to come down with me into the Jordan. Here, I was going to obey the truth in the message. This was a message about Naaman, the leper who went down into the Jordan and was cleansed. And at the close, I pretty much said that I'm going down in the Jordan and I'm asking you to go down in the Jordan with me. I became the actor. I was the leader of the people down into the Jordan. The main metaphor of the sermon was to go into the Jordan or being washed in the Jordan.

Another example of this particular idea is the sermon, Pressing On, by C.L. Franklin. Here, C.L. Franklin talked about a race between a young man and what turned out to be Death, personified. They were in a running race. And ultimately, death personified won. But C.L. Franklin was just preaching the sermon. But at the very end of the sermon, C.L. Franklin talked about how he was going to press on, he was going to run on, he was going to obey the message. And so this is an important way to bring—to celebrate is to become the actor. 'I'm going to go

down. I'm going to press on.' And when you talk about press on, maybe you bring in 'I'm pressing on the upward way, new heights, I'm gaining everyday.' At any rate, you can bring in some of those raw materials that I talked about before to aid you in becoming the actor.

So that's the first way to do this. And I would encourage you to look at some other preachers and listen to how they become the actors. Sometimes, you never hear the preacher talk about 'I' at all until the very end when they say, 'I'm going to do this,' or 'I'm going to take up wings and fly away.' And then they ask you to go and follow them in that. This is where they become the actor, they become—and I don't mean the actor in the sense of acting—but I mean the one who is doing the action.

## **Reduce Caveats and Explanations**

Let's continue on to another tool. This is another interesting component of celebration, the Celebrative Close, is that you reduce your caveats and explanations. In fact, you eliminate your caveats and explanations. What am I talking about? We must describe our points. When you present a point in your sermon, oftentimes you've got to answer objections. Sometimes, you even introduce objections. Many of us have heard preachers say, "Well, what are you talking about, preacher?" And then they talk about it. They introduce objections. They introduce some questions that are in the minds of the hearers when they put down a point. So they put down a point and they introduce objections which may be in the minds of the people so that they can deal with them.

However, when you reach the celebration, you should have answered all your objections. And so now, you don't deal with the caveats and explanations anymore. You just go straight and teach and celebrate the truth of what you had presented in the message.

An example that I'm trying to get here—and I hope this helps you—but it is God's blessing. You may have a point that talks about something about God blessing you, God always blessing you. During the sermon, you may need to need to put a caveat

in there so that people can understand God's blessing, especially in this day and age when some individuals believe that God's blessing is only monetary benefits. You may have to put a caveat in there that says that God's blessing is true even if you don't get the new car, even if you don't get the new house, even if you lose your job. You might have to put these caveats in there and describe them in a certain way when you are in the sermon. However, when you get to the celebration—the celebrating of the truth of the message—you have already gotten over the caveats. You have already gotten over the explanations. And so now, you are just celebrating God's blessing.

But in celebration, the caveats are complete and their explanations are complete, and this goes back to what you're saying before: the intellectual component of the sermon has happened. And now the celebrative close comes, which drives home the intellectual truth. And so now, you are experiencing it, not just with your intellect, but in your emotive dimension. But because both aspects of your being are dealt with, then you are much more likely to hold on to the truth. Frank Thomas said, '*We don't remember what we don't celebrate.*' So celebration is an important component to solidify what we have just presented.

## **Reduce Vocabulary**

Another tool is to Reduce vocabulary. What else can you do or do you do in celebration? You reduce vocabulary. We may have two or three, four, five words that mean the same thing in our sermon. We must talk about these different things. We must break open our Thesaurus and attempt to find exactly the correct word when describing and dealing with a particular issue in a sermon.

During the sermon, we will introduce different words to help make the issue clearer. But in the celebration, we break it down to one word and ride that one word.

Here's an example. C.L. Franklin, in the same sermon, uses the term *press on* to describe—in the sermon, he used 'fighting the good fight'; he used 'finishing'... all referring to the same

point. He used ‘keeping the faith’, all referring to the same idea, press on, to ‘joining the army’. And finally, he used, ‘pressing towards the mark’. All of these were in that particular sermon. But when it got down to the very end of the celebration—certainly, towards the beginning of the celebration, he may still put in a few of these—but when he got to the end, it was basically just one point: press on. It’s just one point, one idea.

Incidentally, it can be very powerful if that one idea that you are writing is actually your sermon title. That can be a very powerful way to help people remember the sermon. But at any rate, you want to reduce complexity of your vocabulary in the sermonic close. Here, we are largely talking about—including with reducing caveats and explanations and reducing vocabulary—we are talking about reducing complexity. We are going towards simplicity.

## **Celebrate What You Know**

Another important point that we need to keep in mind when we are talking about celebration is celebrate what we know. You should only celebrate that which you are convinced of. If you are not convinced of something, do not celebrate it.

Examples: Someone says ‘you may have lost a job but God has a better job around the corner for you.’ If you are convinced of that, then go ahead and say it. But many of us may not be able to say that. And so we may say something like ‘you may lose your job but God has a better day coming.’ See what I am saying? Whatever you are sure of, that’s what you celebrate. You don’t celebrate what you don’t know.

## **Increase Vocal Intensity**

Let’s go on to the next point. Another thing to do in celebration is to increase vocal intensity. And I have talked about this in the book, **Starting to Whoop**. Increasing vocal intensity can be done in many ways. Many of us only do it with volume. We just get louder and louder and louder and then our

voice could possibly give out. But there are other ways to increase your intensity, to increase the intensity of the sermon:

- One is by speeding up or slowing down.
- One is by repetition.
- One is by cadence, you know, you hit a certain rhythm, it raises a repetition.
- Cliché. You talk about some of the great clichés.
- Music. This goes back, if you are using a spiritual or something along those lines, it will increase the intensity of the sermon.
- Scripture.
- Changing of pitch which includes whooping.

The important point that I want to bring here is that you need to let your content do the yelling. There is definitely a time to raise your voice but let your content do the yelling, let your content push forward the intensity of the sermon, especially—and I have talked about the [Whooping Curve](#) (you can go to [Soulpreaching.com](http://Soulpreaching.com))—but as time goes on, the intensity goes up. And then, when the whoop begins, the intensity goes down before it starts to go up again. This is the basic whooping curve. And if you are just yelling and yelling and yelling, you may find yourself, when you get to the celebration, not having anywhere to go. But if you can play around with some of these other ways of increasing your intensity, the sermonic intensity, then you can find that you can celebrate much more effectively.

## **Allow Space for the Congregation**

In addition, you need to allow space for the congregation. You and the congregation, during the sermon as a whole but especially during the celebration, should have a rhythm between you and the congregation: back and forth; call and response. It actually can become very predictive. Just allow space for the congregation in your celebrative close.

## **More Simple Sentences**

Another thing you need to do is reduce the complexity of your sentences in the sermonic close. Here's an example: You may be on the way to the road to start walking. Becomes. You

go!!! You have simple sentences when you hit that close, when you get to the very end.

## Conclusion

In this particular presentation, we presented some of the raw materials for putting together a celebration. In addition, we talked about how we can actually construct such a celebration. And we talked about complexity, the big ideas, the complexity of the sentences and that type of thing goes down—even the words, word choice goes down, complexity goes down—in the sermonic close as the intensity of the sermon increases.

### Questions and Answers

- \* \* \* \* \*

*Can we introduce what we will celebrate in the beginning of the sermon?*

You asked can it be introduced in the beginning? Yes. Must it be introduced in the beginning? No.

There are different ways of thought. There are two big overriding ideas in homiletics. One idea is a deductive method where you tell the people what you are going to say in the beginning. You say it, and then—I guess—in the African-American tradition, you would celebrate what you have just said. Another way to do it would be to keep people in the dark until the very end or later on. And then at the end, you let them know what the sermon was fully about and then you celebrate it as well. That would be a more inductive approach. So I would definitely say that, yes, you can do that.

*Can the challenge be the celebration?*

We can definitely have a celebrative challenge. In fact, I have strong problems with the idea of separating celebration from challenge. I think that pretty much all of our sermons should have a challenge in them. We should ask people to do

something as a result of our sermon, just about all of them—maybe not all of them, but just about all of them—should have some sort of a challenge.

I definitely also believe that there should be a celebration. So there should be a **celebrative challenge**. Let us celebrate that we are going to do what God wants us to do. Let us celebrate that we are going to stop dealing with the sin that does so easily beset us. Let us celebrate that we are going to set aside the things that hold us down. Let us celebrate that we are going to put aside the world that seeks to overcome and deal with us. Let us celebrate that we are free in Jesus because we are going to do what Jesus would have us do. Let us celebrate that truth of the Gospel.

So I definitely think that we should not separate celebration from challenges. So I would definitely say, yes, the challenge can be celebrative.

*I like dropping a little in the beginning because people have become so visual. A little bit of the celebration in the beginning.*

You know, this is a good tactical idea especially in this climate that we live in. I mean, in the past, you listen to some of the old-time ministers and you can hear how they start real slow... real slow. And in today's world, that kind of approach can be a challenge because a lot of folk "check out" when they hear something so slow.

An idea would be to start big, and then allow the sermon intensity to drop. We are told, especially as public speakers, that we only have a few seconds to grab the ears of the people. And if you don't grab them quickly, then they're gone. And really, to be honest with you, if folks check out...many won't come back till whooping time. But if you can give something in the beginning to grab the people, then it can definitely be helpful. I would definitely agree with that particular point.

*Thanks for the confirmation of giving something to celebrate in the beginning.*

And you know, I would definitely agree. I have written a 6-page paper on celebration where Olan Moyd talked about how the celebration is not only at the conclusion, but the whole sermon is a “celebrative” encounter.

If you listen to someone like Frederick Douglas Haynes out of Dallas, Texas, he uses the Three Points and a Poem methodology. He has an introductory component. And oftentimes, his introductory component has some sort of a celebrative component toward its end. Then you end up in the first point and it has its celebrative component and then it goes down. Then you have the second point and then it goes down a little bit. Then you have the third point and it goes down. Either the third point becomes the celebration or you have your final celebration.

At any rate, you’ve got these celebrations all the way through the sermon. So you have kinda got an “intellect-emotive” introduction, then a “intellect-emotive” move, then an “intellect-emotive” move, and finally an “intellect-emotive” move. And then your final celebration is a ‘show nuff celebration’. If you do this, you better really celebrate at the end.

Now Frederick Douglas Haynes, you know, he is definitely a master. So he does a ‘show nuff celebration’, but at the very end. So I would definitely agree you give some people celebrative moments all the way through the sermon.

*Yes, Frederick Douglass Haynes III is a powerful preacher*

I would definitely encourage you—especially if you are a Three Points and a Poem preacher—that you listen to Frederick Douglas Haynes III. He is a master of the Three Points and a Poem. You will learn a lot about how to use that particular framework to preach. Another thing that’s very good about Frederick Douglas Haynes is that he addresses the communal aspects of the Gospel as well as the individual aspects of the Gospel. He is one of those socially conscious brothers, but also,

one that believes in the spiritual dimension. Yeah he believes in heaven. I think that's a very important combination. So I would definitely encourage you, especially if you are a Three Points and a Poem preacher, to listen to him. You can go to [Streaming Faith](#) and find some of his sermons.

*I can see how celebration is in need because we are an emotional generation.*

I would also encourage you to recognize that celebration is needed because of the holistic nature of humanity, especially African American people. We are not just intellects. That is one of the challenges, especially of the Western tradition, as they really emphasize the intellect to the exclusion of the emotive. However, it's important to recognize that the two go together if we are going to address the whole human being. You must have the intellect and the emotive together because both parts are part of who we are as human beings.

So I would say that it is more than just that we have an emotional generation, but it's more than that. It is that we, as human beings, are holistic. We are emotive beings as well as intellectual beings. And so our sermon should address both aspects.