

Guidelines for Adventist Speakers and Preachers (revised November 2022)

Dear Speakers,

I want to thank you for your willingness to allow God to speak through you when you preach. One of the challenges of a district pastor is finding persons who are available to speak so I appreciate you giving of your time.

I am sharing with you some guidelines I use as a pastor in preparing to speak. These are based on principles outlined by the Bible, the Seventh-day Adventist Church and E. G. White for those sharing the Gospel as a speaker. I ask that you use them when preaching in my absence.

Preparation:

- Effective sermons are a result of your personal devotional life, Bible study and prayer.
- The Holy Spirit convicts the listener of the truth. The speaker's role is allowing God to speak through him/her.
- The sermon is not about the speaker or our personal theologies. The Bible gives us plenty of material to uncover. You may not use all that you prepared when you actually preach. God may provide a more concise and clear idea in the moment. This doesn't mean your preparation was in vain.

Structure

- Having at least an outline is recommended so you can return to your sermon points, keep pace and if you are distracted at any point give you a guide to come back to.
- End your sermon with a clear summary or statement of the Biblical truth you have outlined.
- If you are making an appeal to the congregation, please be specific. General or ambiguous calls can confuse the listeners.

Content

- The Bible should be the primary source for any sermon as it is our standard for faith and belief. As we believe it is God's word and direction to us, our sermons need to be grounded in the Bible.
- The goal of any sermon is to provide listeners with a clearer understanding of God's word and enable them to point back to scripture for understanding.
- The purpose of illustrations is to connect a biblical truth or principle to a biblical application. Illustrations should be carefully chosen and not drive the sermon or be the point.
- Giving credit: any sources or ideas not original to you should be cited in your sermon. Any fair use extra-biblical resources should also be cited.

Use of the E. G. White writings

- I am giving some specific guidance here about the use of the writings of Ellen White. EGW was very specific about how her writings were to be used and not used (see her direction in the cited works below). Historically as a church and as individuals, we have used her writings as the final word on Salvation rather than reminding us to look to God 'the author and finisher of our faith'. Every part of the sermon should

point to God, Jesus, as the basis of our faith. God will through the Holy Spirit give you the words to speak. The misuse of EGW material has caused harm to some people in the church past and present and is an unfortunate by-product of using her writings in place of the Bible.

- I summarize EGW guidance for preaching (but please read through her numerous writings on the subject in the following documents)
 - Ask God to give you a subject
 - Go to the Bible until you know for sure what the Bible really teaches on that point
 - Then look for further insight, clarity and other scriptures in EGW on the point
 - Preach **only** from the Bible (ie do not quote EGW quoting the Bible or an idea that is evident through prayer and study of the Bible)
- If you use a quote from EGW (i.e. her visions or counsel on a topic) do not say “my favorite author” or “one important author” etc. as your way to cite her work. Please clearly cite her as you would another illustration, author, biblical scholar etc. But do not quote EGW in place of clear, authoritative scripture. Let the Bible speak.
- Specific sermons presenting historical information about the founding of the Seventh-day Adventist Church and/or a specific EGW vision or special counsel original to EGW:
 - Historical in nature demonstrating the prophetic ministry through evidence and the Bible witness.
 - Provide the Biblical context for her vision. The Bible must be uplifted, above all, the listener pointed to God’s goodness and salvation through Jesus.
- Remember that Revelation 19.10, states the ‘Spirit of Prophecy’, this is not EGW or her books, rather this means in the clearest sense the Holy Spirit is the Testimony of Jesus evidenced in a person. The Holy Spirit is the only one to give prophecy Hebrews 1.1 and Joel 2.28 through all ages to whom He chooses. Therefore, Revelation 19.10 is linked to Revelation 12:17 in that the Holy Spirit is responsible for the Testimony of Jesus, empowering the ‘offspring/remnant’ to ‘keep the commandments of God’, clothing them with His righteous character and enabling them to stand on the word of God – the reflection of the Character of God. The presence of the Holy Spirit in a church/remnant produces the Testimony of Jesus – the sign of the true church of Revelation 12. Only by surrendering to God, through the work of the Holy Spirit in our lives, Jesus is then reproduced in us – the Testimony of Jesus – ‘Christ in us the Hope of Glory’ Colosians 1.27.

If you have any other insights that would be helpful I would appreciate you sharing them with me as I continue to refine these principles for speakers and preachers.

Below this letter you will find an excerpt on EGW’s personal guidance about using her writings in an interview with H.M.S. Richards Sr.’s father who asked EGW the specific question about using her works from the pulpit.

God bless you and keep you,

Pastor Robert Zegarra

Guidance from the White Estate and E.G. White about the use of her writings in sermons.

Dear Pastor _____,

Thank you for contacting the Ellen G. White Estate. I know exactly the passage you have in mind, but you won't find it in Mrs. White's writings. Rather, it comes from H. M. S. Richards, Sr., who told the story about the time his father, H. M. J. Richards, asked Mrs. White about this very thing. The story was part of an interview published in Ministry magazine, October 1976, pp. 6, 7. After telling about an occasion in which his father as a young preacher had met Ellen White, Richards recounted:

My father asked her, "Now, Sister White, there's something else that I'd like to find out. How should I use your writings in preaching?" She replied, "Here's the way to use them. First, ask God to give you your subject. When you have the subject chosen, then go to the Bible until you know for sure what the Bible really teaches on that point. After that, turn to the writings and see what you can find on the same subject and read that. It may cast light on it or guide you into other scriptures or make some point clearer. When you go to the people, however, preach to them out of the Bible."

For more counsel from Mrs. White to pastors, a couple of good sources are the books "Testimonies to Ministers and Gospel Workers" and the recent compilation "Pastoral Ministry."

I hope this is helpful. Thank you for writing, and God bless!

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Further, EGW writing usage in sermons:

Presentation of the Spirit of Prophecy

New Believers to Have Clear Understanding—As the end draws near, and the work of giving the last warning to the world extends, it becomes more important for those who accept present truth to have a clear understanding of the nature and influence of the Testimonies, which God in His providence has linked with the work of the third angel's message from its very rise.—Testimonies For The Church 5:654 (1889). {Ev 255.2}

God's Present-Day Instruction—In ancient times God spoke to men by the mouth of prophets and apostles. In these days He speaks to them by the testimonies of His Spirit. There was never a time when God instructed His people more earnestly than He instructs them now concerning His will, and the course that He would have them pursue.—Testimonies For The Church 5:661 (1889). {Ev 255.3}

Frequently Neglected—Ministers frequently neglect these important branches of the work—health reform, spiritual gifts, systematic benevolence, and the great branches of the missionary work. Under their labors large numbers may embrace the theory of the truth, but in time it is found that there are many who will not bear the proving of God. The minister laid upon the foundation, hay, wood, and stubble, which would be consumed by the fire of temptation.—The Review and Herald, December 12, 1878. {Ev 256.1}

Not to Take Place of the Bible—The testimonies of Sister White should not be carried to the front. God's Word is the unerring standard. The Testimonies are not to take the place of the Word. Great care should be exercised by all believers to advance these questions carefully, and always stop when you have said enough. Let all prove their positions from the Scriptures and substantiate every point they claim as truth from the revealed Word of God.—Letter 12, 1890. {Ev 256.2}

Testimonies Not Ahead of Bible—The more we look at the promises of the Word of God, the brighter they grow. The more we practice them, the deeper will be our understanding of them. Our position and faith is in the Bible. And never do we want any soul to bring in the Testimonies ahead of the Bible.—Manuscript 7, 1894. {Ev 256.3}

Purpose of the Testimonies—The Word of God is sufficient to enlighten the most beclouded mind, and may be understood by those who have any desire to understand it. But notwithstanding all this, some who profess to make the Word of God their study, are found living in direct opposition to its plainest teachings. Then, to leave men and women without excuse, God gives plain and pointed testimonies, bringing them back to the Word that they have neglected to follow. The Word of God abounds in general principles for the formation of correct habits of living, and the Testimonies, general and personal, have been calculated to call their attention more especially to these principles.—Testimonies For The Church 5:663, 664 (1889). {Ev 256.4}

The Greater and Lesser Lights—Little heed is given to the Bible, and the Lord has given a lesser light to lead men and women to the greater light.—The Colporteur Evangelist, 37 (1902). {Ev 257.1}

Illustration: Presenting the Spirit of Prophecy—Elder _____ enters into no controversy with opponents. He presents the Bible so clearly that it is evident that anyone who differs must do so in opposition to the Word of God. {Ev 257.2}