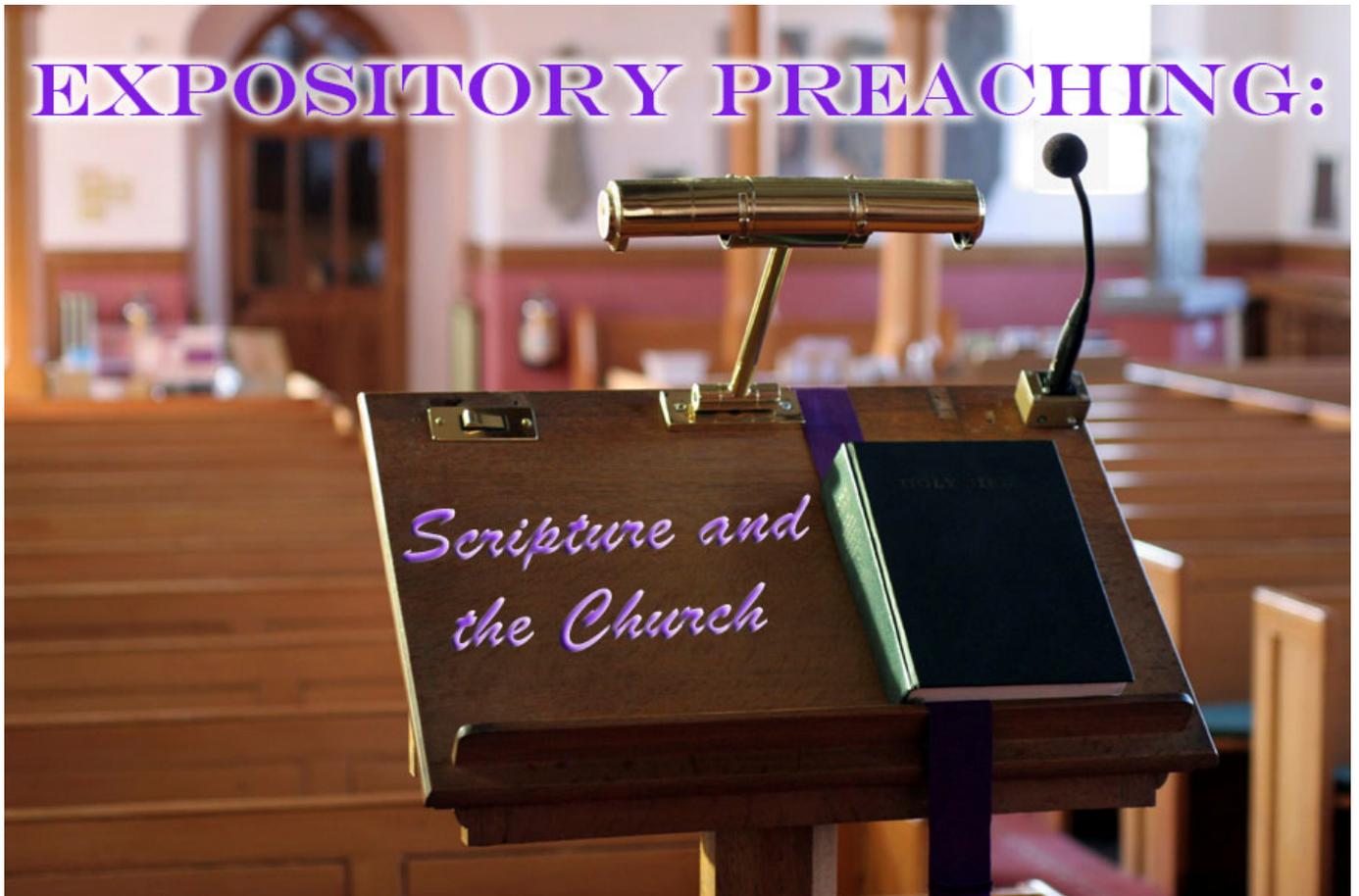


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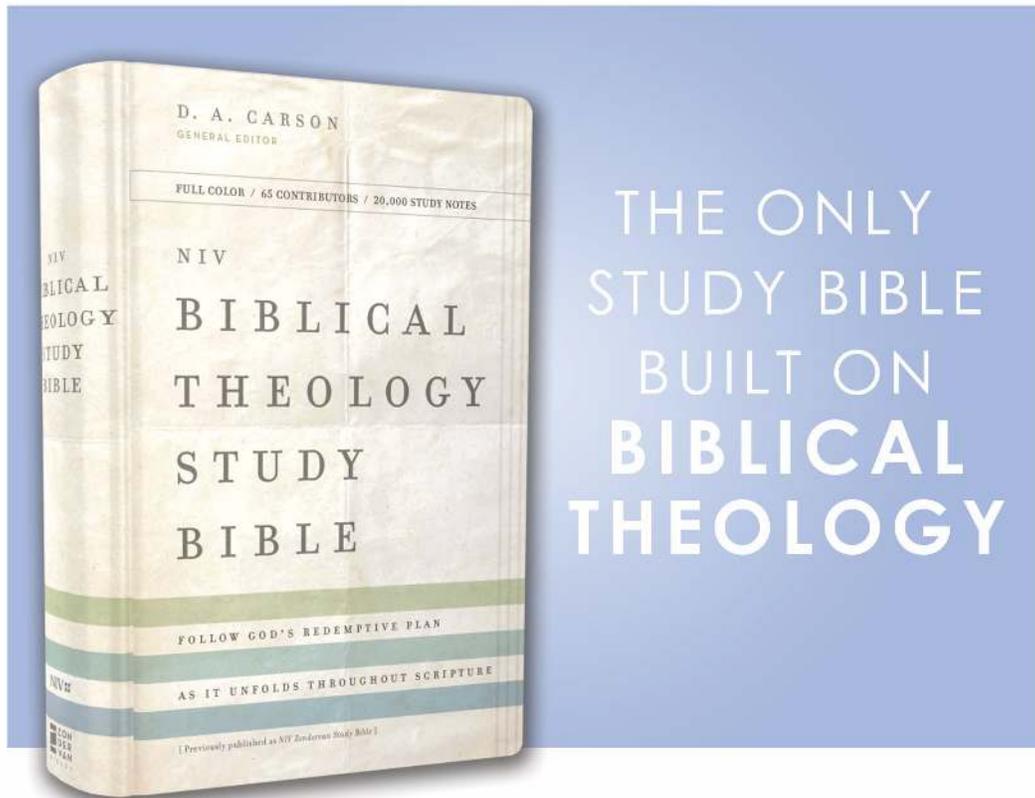
Volume 5 | Issue 3 | Fall 2018

EXPOSITORY PREACHING:



Inside this Issue...

- ***Reading and Interpreting the Old Testament—***
An Interview with Jason DeRouchie
- **Three Errors of “Word of Faith” Preaching**
- **The Importance of Preaching Sound Doctrine**



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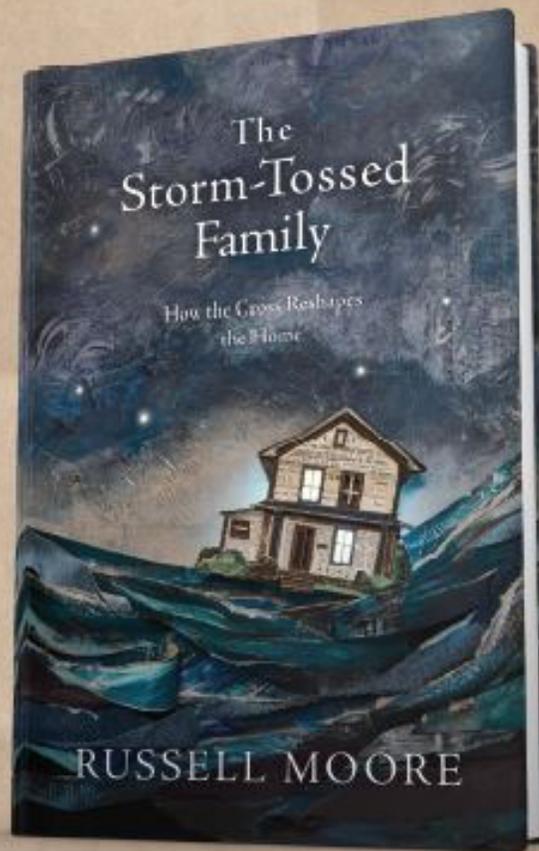
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Editor's Corner

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Preaching is a high and holy task that God's people have been called and commanded to engage in, equipping people for life under and by the Lordship of Jesus Christ. Expository preaching is central to the life and health of the local church. Expository preaching aims to make the teaching of biblical texts clear and point people to the Lord Jesus from the biblical text being preached.

Presently, there are all sorts of preaching models; from preaching "felt needs" to topical preaching, and more. In the Reformation there was a recovery of the pulpit as central to the life of the local Church. Before this, the Catholic Church had made the Mass central to the life of the local Church. By moving *the pulpit* to the central place in the sanctuary of the local Church the message was clear, *the Word* would be primary to the Reformers.

All throughout the world in the present day, there are all sorts of messages about every kind of topic that can distract Christians from biblical truth. From cultural accommodation to entertainment-based approaches to ministry, there has never been a greater need in the history of the Church than ours now, to focus our ministries on the Word of God as preachers and teachers of the Word. With growing challenges across the board, such as the prosperity gospel and biblical illiteracy, preachers have one primary function: to preach the whole counsel of God.

In John 17:14-17, Jesus prays for the Church to be sanctified in the truth. Jesus did not pray for *a program to be implemented*, but for His peoples' focus to be on what is most precious: the Word of God. Today there is a *huge need* to understand this fact, particularly for the reasons already mentioned in this brief editorial. But it's not just issues cropping up out there in the Evangelical Church that are concerning and distracting.

We may think that we can escape the significant issues of our day; but we should understand that, just as Jesus faced down those who sought to take people away from the Lord, so must we too as preachers to the Lord's flock. The Lord's sheep need protection and guidance on matters related to false teaching. That re-

quires a spine and a backbone, along with biblical wisdom to speak to issues that are affecting the people of God. The need of the hour is not for timid men, but for bold men. They must be men who will bravely—with a tear in their eye and with the grace of God—proclaim unashamedly the glory of the grace of God, from the Word of God, to the people of God.

Whether you are a Pastor preaching each week, a Bible study leader teaching weekly, a blog writer, book author, podcaster, or you engage in any teaching function inside or outside the local Church, as Christians we are to preach the whole counsel of God. Paul's charge to the elder at Miletus (in Acts 20) is instructive for Christians today who are tempted to accommodate on issues related to gender, sexuality, and a whole host of topics and compromises. As Christians, we are not to compromise but to stand firm. We have been entrusted with the treasure of the grace of God, through Christ alone. We have also been entrusted as stewards with the Word of God, to declare it in love to everyone, that they might know and grow in the Lord Jesus.

In this issue of *Theology for Life Magazine*, you will learn about expository preaching. We make no apologies for declaring that this is the most faithful way of preaching, and commend this model to our readers. It's because we believe that the Bible is the inspired, inerrant, authoritative, sufficient, and clear Word of God that we commend this approach to preaching to you, because it alone addresses the significant issues of the day—including biblical illiteracy and false teaching.

Whether you are a Pastor, biblical counselor, blogger, podcaster, or a layperson wanting to grow in your understanding and knowledge of the Scriptures, this issue is for you. Throughout this issue, you will learn how the pulpit relates to the counseling office, how to preach the Word faithfully, and much more.

In a day when the gospel is being confused and even denied, and when questions arise from in the Church about whether we need preaching anymore at all, this issue is for you, Pastor/ministry leader/Bible college or seminary student. My prayer as you read this issue is that you will be strengthened to stand in (and by) the Word of God; that you would be strengthened in your convictions about Scripture; and strengthened in the task and work of preaching and teaching the whole counsel of the Word of God to His Bride.

In Christ Alone,

Dave Jenkins
Executive Editor, *Theology for Life Magazine*

The Importance of Preaching Sound Doctrine

By Costi Hinn



Some years ago we did things a little differently at our church than we do now. We had a band that was filled with hired guns and

we paid them to play the lights out every Sunday. To illustrate: our guitarist would tour the world with a famous boy-band, then roll in on Sundays to put on a show for our church—*true story*.

As far as the sermons would go, they were a mixture of some Bible, exciting and emotionally driven stories, and an ending that was designed to move everyone into an emotional response to the message. We were the typically modern, attractional, evangelical church. And make no mistake about it, lots of people were drawing to our doors. But they were not coming for doctrine—they came for the personalities, the music, and the emotion. It was working!

“From big name preachers suggesting we “unhitch” ourselves from the Old Testament...the Church today is in dire need of a strong dose of good ole’ fashioned sound doctrine.”

This is why it seemed like our teaching-pastor had lost his mind when he suddenly got up one Sunday having “fired” all the hired musicians and telling the congregation, “If someone is musically gifted and won’t play for free, this church will no longer be a good fit.” Going even further he started preaching verse-by-verse to grow our church in doctrine, and songs changed from the latest Jesus Culture hit to songs rich in theological truths. Emotionally driven services became clear calls for biblical action and obedience to Christ!

Then, there was an exodus. We went from being a brand-new shiny object—a fast-growing church plant holding multiple services and cruising through the 300-attendance mark—to suddenly having empty seats everywhere. Eventually we grew past where we once were, but this time, it would not be merely numerical, it was spiritual. Sound doctrine (paired with some prayer and patience) did the heavy lifting.

We Need Sound Doctrine

From big name preachers suggesting we “unhitch” ourselves from the Old Testament; to sermon series’ on mere “behavior modifications” from self-help books; to entire services being absent of the Bible, but full of entertainment, the Church today is in dire need of a strong dose of good ole’ fashioned sound doctrine. In short, doctrine matters.

Nothing else will satisfy the deepest needs of the human heart. Nothing else will quench the spiritual thirst of believers who have been transformed by the Gospel, and nothing is more true to the mandate of Christ’s commission in Matthew 28:16-20. Je-

Jesus didn't suggest that *some* of what He taught be passed along in whatever modernized way His disciples saw fit. Nor did He give the nod to whatever methods get people in the door. He said that "making disciples" included "teaching them to observe *all* [that He commanded]" (Matthew 28:20).

When the Apostle Paul was providing ministry instructions to his young protégé in the faith—Timothy—he hammered home imperative after imperative concerning the importance of sound doctrine! From that model alone there is no question of what a good minister of the Gospel is to do. We must be nourished on—and nourishing others on—words of faith (not to be confused with the false teaching movement) and *sound doctrine* (1st Timothy 4:6).

What Exactly Constitutes “Sound Doctrine”?

As easy as it is to pick on the cultural trends of evangelicalism and the foolish antics conjured up to fill church buildings, those who pride themselves on centering

“Much is at stake, but great things are in store if a church stops playing games and bolts the Bible to the pulpit and the pulpit to the floor boards.”

their ministry on sound doctrine need to take a good look in the mirror and make sure they're explaining what doctrine *actually is!* Furthermore, we need to be constantly reminding ourselves and those we serve of *why it matters.*

Sound doctrine in the Christian faith is accurate Bible teaching. “Doctrine” can be defined as the central beliefs that are held by a group of people and “sound” implies that something is reliable. Therefore, when churches spend more time entertaining people and giving shallow sermons, they are not fulfilling what a church is supposed to do and be. We must be preaching and teaching the central beliefs of the Christian faith based on what the Bible teaches—regardless of how the world around us is changing. Like a reliable friend who will tell you what you *need* to hear vs. what you *want* to hear, a reliable church (and specifically the preachers) should be giving you the truth and nothing but the truth.

Why Preaching Sound Doctrine Matters

Much is at stake, but great things are in store if a church stops playing games and bolts the Bible to the pulpit and the pulpit to the floor boards. Sure, some people may not like it, but God's word promises that the blessings will outweigh the backlash. Let's look at five reasons that preaching sound doctrine matters...

1. It is Required of Faithful Pastor-Elders

Do you know a pastor-elder who doesn't want to be faithful in their duty for Christ? Most of them do. Plainly, the pastor-elders who are called to be the servant-leaders of the church are failing in their duty if sound doctrine is not the central focus of the teaching and preaching ministry. Churchstaffing.com does not determine a pastor's job description, nor does any other agency. God has expected, and continues to expect, His mouth-pieces to fulfill His purposes laid out in Scripture. Men of God must be faithful. The New Testament lays out the role of those who oversee the church in no uncertain terms (Acts 20:17-38; 1st Timothy 4:6, 11-13, 16; 2nd Timothy 3:10, 14-17; 2nd Timothy 4:1-5). God commands that His people be served spiritual food loaded with sound doctrine. A pastor-elder can be gifted in many ways, but he is only faithful if in all that he does he preaches sound doctrine.

2. It Saves the Lost

Church growth from disgruntled "transfers" are a dime-a-dozen...especially in America where we treat our churches like restaurants and the customer is always right. But the real deal when it comes to preaching sound doctrine is genuine conversions that happen when the lost come to faith by hearing the Word of God (Romans 10:17). Of course, people transferring from a doctrinally dangerous church to one that preaches sound doctrine is wonderful, but it can be argued that few things are sweeter than seeing new believers come face to face with the awe-inspiring power of the living Word through faithful preaching! From old sinful ways to new creation in Christ, sound doctrine washes over the heart and mind of lost sheep, regenerates their soul, and preserves their faith (1 Timothy 4:16).

3. It Empowers the Saved

Sound doctrine catapults the people of God into spiritual growth because they are building their lives on the bedrock foundation of God's Word rightly taught and rightly applied. They are mobilized and equipped to live mature in their faith and protected from false teaching (Ephesians 4:11-14). Sound doctrine empowers Christians to live high-impact lives because they are living out right relationships with God, fellow believers, and the world.

A right relationship with God means a proper view of the Gospel and His attributes like holiness and omnipotence. A right relationship with fellow believers means serving one another (Galatians 5:13), loving one another (Romans 13:8), forgiving one another (Ephesians 4:32), exhorting one another (Hebrews 3:13), and stir-

ring one another up towards good works (Hebrews 10:24)! A right relationship with people in the world means evangelizing them (Romans 1:16), being a model in your Christian witness (Colossians 4:5), and never compromising the truth (1st Corinthians 16:13). It's incredibly amazing what can happen when Christians are taught sound doctrine and live their lives for the glory of God.

“While many more important benefits can be added to this list, the fact remains, preaching sound doctrine matters— both now and in eternity.”

4. It Purifies the Church

Preaching sound doctrine is important because it not only produces strong believers, it purifies the church of false ones. This may not seem like a very “nice” strategy, but consider for a moment what Jesus did to thin out the ranks of those who were superficially following Him merely for divine favors. Luke records Jesus delivering one of His toughest truths when the crowds were large (Luke 14:25-35). Jesus was dishing out free food, miracles, and wisdom, but the minute He pushed in-to deep doctrine and hard truths, it divided the real followers from the false ones. True converts love God's Word, false converts will be repulsed by it.

Eventually, as books of the Bible are unpacked and the glorious doctrines contained in Scripture are laid bare for all to see, a decision will inevitably be made by those who hear the truth. Their hearts will either turn towards it, or they'll scoff at it and turn away. This is a vital part of a preacher's duty in the ministry of the word. In doing so he is participating in Christ's building of His church, which includes purging it of imposters.

5. It Impacts the Future

Now before you imagine “preaching sound doctrine” as a sort-of boring academic forum in the church each week, remind yourself of what sound doctrine is one final time: reliable and accurate Biblical teaching. Preaching sound doctrine may seem dull and simple, but it's dynamic! If the New Testament church was willing to bet their ministries on it, why shouldn't we? The impact of this is exponential and powerful. When sound doctrine was taught in the early church, it exploded (Acts 2:40-41).

If a generation of believers will preach sound doctrine and stand for the truth, they will be modeling faithfulness for those who will come next. In other words, they'll be discipling the

next generation of disciple-making disciples with the foundation they'll need to glorify God. While many more important benefits can be added to this list, the fact remains, preaching sound doctrine matters—both now and in eternity.

Trendiness, Busyness, and Biblical Illiteracy

An Interview with Andreas Köstenberger

By Dave Jenkins



Dr. Andreas Köstenberger is the founder of Biblical Foundations™ and Research Professor of New Testament and Biblical Theology and Director of the Center for Biblical Studies at Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary.

T4L: Thank you very much for agreeing to do this interview with *Theology for Life Magazine*, Dr. Köstenberger. Can you tell us a bit about yourself, including the current ministries you are involved in?

Dr. Köstenberger: Sure. I grew up in Vienna, Austria, in a Roman Catholic family. Then, as a college student, I had a radical conversion to Christ and immediately sensed a call to Christian ministry. I came to the US to go to seminary, first to Columbia Bible College & Graduate School

for Missions, then to Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, and have taught New Testament for the past 25 years. I am passionate about equipping students and pastors for sound preaching and teaching. I also enjoy writing and speaking on topics such as God's design for man and woman, John's Gospel, Paul's letters to Timothy and Titus, hermeneutics, and biblical theology.

T4L: What an awesome testimony and work of God in your life! That said, let's just dive in here...What are some of the most significant challenges facing biblical interpreters and expositors today as they seek to help God's people understand the twenty-seven books in the New Testament?

Dr. Köstenberger: I can think of quite a few. *Trendiness* is one. In my experience, many get bored with solid Bible study and want something more "exciting". Unfortunately, this often leads to questionable interpretive theories and practices. Something doesn't have to be *new* to be *true!* The same is true for pastoral ministry. Too often, we think we have to compete with those handful of pastors who have a national (or even global) ministry, instead of simply aiming to be faithful to do well what God has called us to do.

Another enemy and potential or real obstacle is *busyness*. The brutal truth is that many, if not most, of us are simply too busy to make a deep impact on others or even to know God well ourselves. We fool ourselves thinking we can do it all when the truth is we can't. We need to scale down, and slow down, and streamline our lives and set proper priorities. This includes both studying God's Word and prayer and (for those who are married) devoting oneself to one's wife and/or family.

T4L: As you've taught future Pastors and ministry leaders, what are some of the biggest lessons, from your vantage point as a Professor of New Testament, which Bible College and Seminary students should aim to learn while they are in school to prepare them for a life of service in the Kingdom of the Lord Jesus?

Dr. Köstenberger: One priority would be for them to develop solid study habits, as well as excellent research and writing skills. This includes being able to survey the state of research in a given field and to argue a thesis compellingly by marshaling all the relevant evidence, with confidence yet humility.

Another priority would be to develop a good rhythm of life with a healthy balance between personal life and family on the one hand, and work and ministry on

the other. I've tried to address some of these matters in my book *Excellence: The Character of God and the Pursuit of Scholarly Virtue*.

T4L: Great insight on that! I hope many will take your words to heart (and practice). As many reading this already know, you are a recognized expert on the Gospel of John. Let's say a Pastor or Bible study leader has decided to begin to preach or teach through this Gospel. In your experience, what is critical to understand as one begins to study and teach through this Gospel?

Dr. Köstenberger: I love John's Gospel because it is so profound theologically and deepens our understanding of who Christ is. No wonder a Church Father called it "the spiritual Gospel"! I'd recommend reading through the Gospel multiple times and taking notes on any pertinent observations. That way you can get a good feel for the Gospel as a whole. Perhaps my survey, *Encountering John* (Baker, 2013), could be of help here.

After this, I'd divide up the Gospel into preaching units, depending on how many sermons you plan to devote to preaching through the book. I'd also consult a good resource on the theology of John's Gospel. I've tried to provide such a resource in *A Theology of John's Gospel and Letters* (Zondervan, 2009).

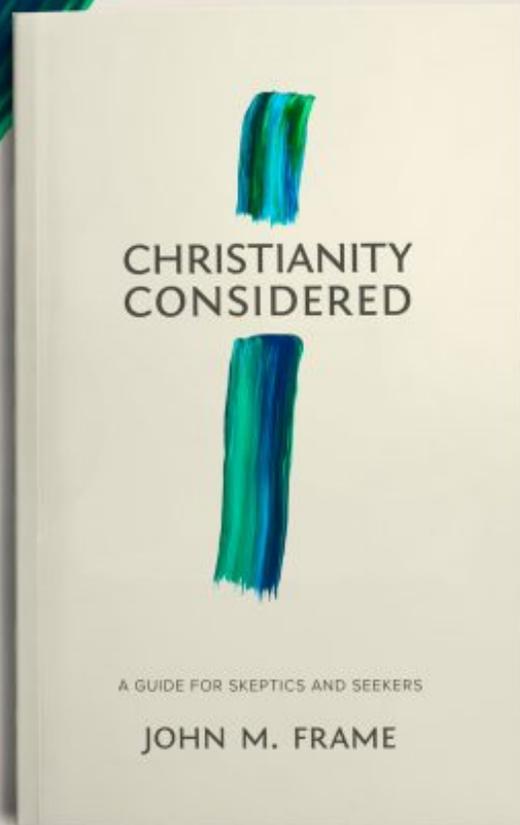
Then, in preparing individual sermons, keep in mind that John wrote his Gospel to instill faith in his readers that Jesus is the Messiah. The various narratives, signs, monologues, and dialogues in the Gospel all serve this overarching purpose. So, preach each sermon to answer the question, "Who is Jesus?" and aim to deepen the faith of the people in your congregation or to stir first-time faith in those who are still seeking for answers.

T4L: As you know, the problem of biblical illiteracy is a growing one. How would you like to see Pastors and ministry leaders address this growing challenge?

Dr. Köstenberger: Well, as a seminary professor, I'd say, encourage people to go to seminary if at all possible. There is no substitute for formal education, especially in the area of biblical languages and hermeneutics. Also, in my ministry with Biblical Foundations (www.biblicalfoundations.org), and now in preparing to launch the Center for Biblical Studies at Midwestern, I've tried to make scholarship accessible to serious students of the Bible. This also includes several new courses on the TGC website on topics, such as hermeneutics or Christian parenting.

It has never been easier to access solid, high-quality biblical content, which is very encouraging. The only problem is that so many voices are clamoring for our attention, which means we need to stay focused and be discerning in choosing quality content. I'm hopeful that we can raise up a new generation of believers who know God's Word well and have a passion to teach it to the next generation. In this regard, a commitment to mentoring and discipleship will be key. This is what Jesus did when He spent most of His earthly life training a small group of followers in-depth for ministry.

T4L: Wonderful points! Thank you so much for taking time out of your busy schedule to do this interview, Dr. Köstenberger!



“Here is an excellent piece to present to non-Christian inquirers, and an illuminating example of how presuppositional apologetics looks in the actual practice of trying to persuade an unbeliever.”

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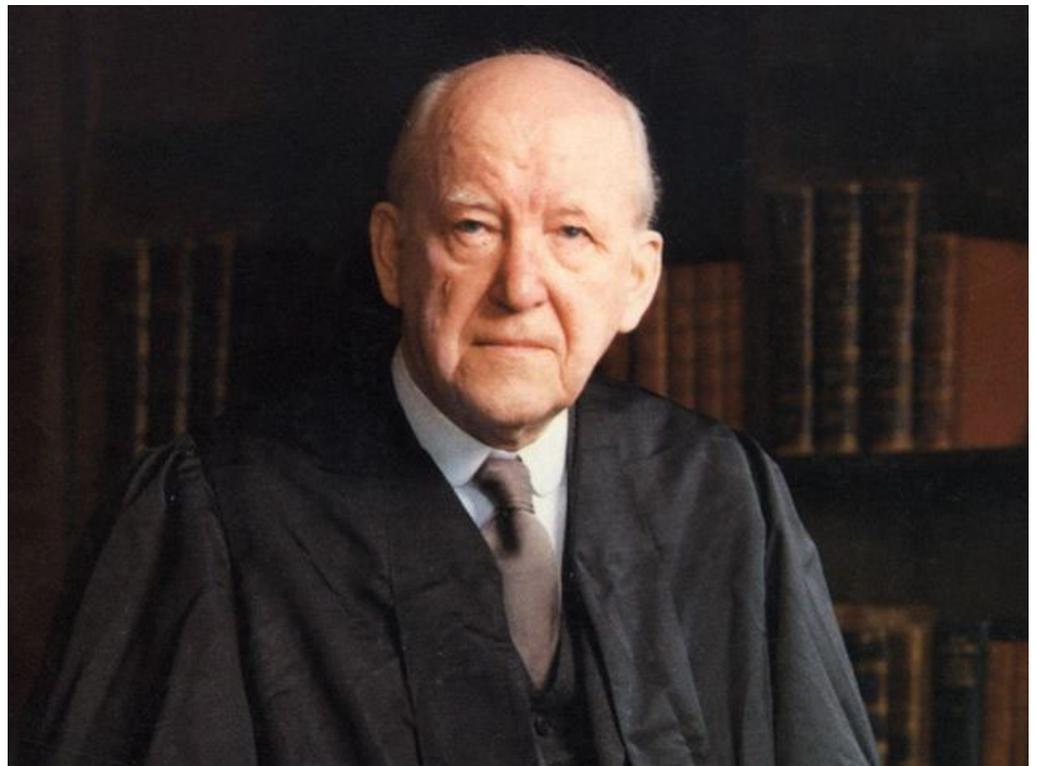
5 Lessons I've Learned From the Preaching of Martyn Lloyd-Jones

By Jason Meyer

I owe more to the ministry of Martyn Lloyd-Jones than I can put into words. In what follows, I will try to summarize some of the most life-changing lessons I have learned from his preaching.

1. Preach the Word

Dr. Lloyd-Jones practiced expository preaching in a day when few practiced it. Through his pulpit ministry, many rediscovered the biblical beauty and necessity of expository preaching. In expository preaching, we humbly put ourselves under the text so that the people see that “what we are saying comes out of the Bible, and always comes out of it. That is the origin of our message.” The Doctor stressed that all preaching must be expository because an expository sermon honors what he called the golden rule of preaching:



At this point there is one golden rule, one absolute demand – honesty. You have got to be honest with your text. I mean by that, that you do not go to a text just to pick out an idea which interests you and then deal with that idea yourself. That is to be dishonest with the text.

2. Preach the Word in the Power of the Spirit

Like Elijah on Mt. Carmel, Lloyd-Jones believed that sermon preparation could prepare the sacrifice in an orderly way, but only God could bring down the fire. The sermon must catch fire to be true preaching. Without the Spirit, a preacher is only reading his notes or repeating words in reliance upon human oratory. He prized the power of the Spirit in preaching:

The most romantic place on earth is the pulpit. I ascend the pulpit stairs Sunday after Sunday; I never know what is going to happen. I confess that I come expecting nothing; but suddenly the power is given. At other times I think I have a great deal because of my preparation; but, alas, I find there is no power in it. Thank God it is like that. I do my utmost, but he controls the supply and the power, he infuses it.

The secret to his success is that he did not separate light and heat, head and heart, word and Spirit. Lloyd-Jones was a student of history and saw this same pattern in history many times.

What was it that turned the world upside down? Was it just theological teaching? Was it mere enunciation of correct doctrine? Over and above that there was this mighty ‘demonstration of the Spirit and of power’. How did those people turn the world upside down? The answer is that in the Book of Acts we have an account of a great revival, of the Spirit out-poured. What happened could not have happened otherwise. How did all these churches come into being? Was it merely that the apostles taught correct doctrine? Of course not! It was the Spirit’s demonstration and power which accompanied the correct doctrine. Correct doctrine can leave the church dead; you can have dead orthodoxy, you can have a church that is perfectly orthodox but perfectly useless. Over and above, there was this demonstration, this unction, this authority, this outpouring of the Spirit’s power. It is the only explanation of the astonishing things that happened.

“Lloyd-Jones never tired of stressing the necessity of the Spirit for the work of ministry.”

Lloyd-Jones never tired of stressing the necessity of the Spirit for the work of minis-

try. He often reminded pastors of “how much more” we need the Spirit today than the disciples did in their day.

You would have thought these men therefore were now in a perfect position to go out to preach; but according to our Lord’s teaching they were not. They seem to have all the necessary knowledge, but that knowledge is not sufficient, something further is needed, is indeed essential. The knowledge indeed is vital for you cannot be witnesses without it, but to be effective witnesses you need the power and the unction and the demonstration of the Spirit in addition. Now if this was necessary for these men, how much more is it necessary for all others who try to preach these things?

This process of seeking the Spirit’s power does not start when the sermon manuscript is complete; it must be the focus from the first moment of the preacher’s preparations. He urges us to seek, expect, and yield to this power as the “supreme thing” and to “be content with nothing less.” Without this emphasis, there is “always a very real danger of our putting our faith in our sermon rather than in the Spirit.” It seems like I need to hear this warning week by week.

3. Preach for the Salvation of the People in the Pew

A monumental turning point took place in 1923 while Lloyd-Jones was a medical student at St. Bartholomew’s in London. He began listening to the preaching of Dr. John Hutton, the minister at Westminster Chapel. There was a spiritual power in this man’s preaching that arrested his soul and made him aware of the amazing power of God to save and change lives. He had never experienced this power at any other church he attended (despite the fact that he had attended church his whole life).

Lloyd-Jones later described his conversion in this way:

For many years I thought I was a Christian when in fact I was not. It was only later that I came to see that I had never been a Christian and became one... What I needed was preaching that would convict me of sin... But I never heard this. The preaching we had was always based on the assumption that we were all Christians.

That experience marked the rest of his ministry. Lloyd-Jones never assumed that the people in the pews were all Christians. The Lord blessed this approach. The Spirit moved mightily through Lloyd-Jones’ ministry for the salvation of both the most outwardly religious and the most outwardly irreligious. People from every walk of life experienced the life-changing power of the gospel. Like Paul, he resolved to preach “Jesus Christ and him crucified” (1st Corinthians 2:1). That was the text for his first sermon and he never moved away from it as his guiding principle. Others in his day thought that the decline in church attendance in many places meant that modern

man needed more modern attractions like drama.

Martyn took a radically different approach. He suspended the drama society. Musical evenings were canceled. He simply preached Christ in the power of the Spirit. He said that Christ was the church's only attraction. His sermon on Psalm 34:8 (on June 28th, 1931) testifies to this conviction: "The business of preaching is not to entertain, but to lead people to salvation, to teach them how to find God."

4. Preach to Awaken the Conscience, Not to Soothe the Conscience

He believed that the first work of the Holy Spirit in the pulpit would be to convict people of their sin and to humble them in the presence of God. One should not try to soothe the conscience of those who do not fear God and are not seeking his mercy. "Present-day religion far too often soothes the conscience instead of awakening it; and produces a sense of satisfaction and eternal safety rather than a sense of unworthiness and the likelihood of eternal damnation."

He believed that the Spirit of God would not own that kind of preaching. In so doing, Iain Murray emphasized that Lloyd-Jones went back to a preaching principle that Charles Spurgeon had owned for his own ministry:

In the beginning, the preacher's business is not to convert men, but the very reverse. It is idle to attempt to heal those who are not wounded, to attempt to clothe those who have never been stripped, and to make those rich who have never realized their poverty. As long as the world stands, we shall need the Holy Ghost, not only as the Comforter, but also as the Convincer, who will 'reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment.'

The church needs to relearn this lesson in every generation. There is nothing new under the sun. The Lord raised up Charles Spurgeon to confront the downward spiral of England into liberalism in the nineteenth century. It became known as the Downgrade controversy. The Lord raised up Lloyd-Jones to deal with the downward liberal slide in the twentieth century. We need more of this kind of preaching in the twenty-first century.

5. Don't Live for Preaching

Lloyd-Jones received a living from preaching, but he did not live for preaching. He testified to this very truth at the end of his life: "I did not live for preaching." He had a higher love. Being a Christian was the most wonderful thing in the world to him. He testified powerfully to this truth at the end of his life.

He became ill and it became very difficult for him to get from his chair to his bed. Friends would come to encourage him and would watch him and become discouraged themselves. They would say, "Martyn, you used to be this powerful preach-

er, a lion in the pulpit, and now you look pitiful—you can hardly make it to your bed. How do you keep from getting discouraged?” He would often quote a Bible verse from Luke 10:20: “*Nevertheless, do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven.*” He would then say, “Why should I be discouraged? I am no less saved today than I was when I was preaching. In fact, salvation is nearer than when I first believed.”

Preachers preach to make Christ’s name known, not our name known. We do not rejoice in ministry successes. Let us rejoice in the *Lord’s work* today, not our own. Let us rejoice in the lavish mercy of Christ towards us that our names are written in heaven!

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5 Benchmarks for Making Sure You are Preaching God's Word (and not Your Ideas)

By Michael Milton



“I charge thee in the sight of God, and of Christ Jesus, who shall judge the quick and the dead, and by his appearing and his kingdom; preach the word; be

instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching” (2nd Timothy 4:1-2, KJV).

My Beloved Pastoral Colleagues in the Gospel of Grace: Almighty God called you to preach.[\[1\]](#) He called you to proclaim the unsearchable riches of Jesus Christ. He called you to do so by being faithful to His Word. We really have no other mes-

sage but the message that He has given us in His Word. Yet, we face a barrage of incoming temptations that, if yielded to, could conflict, contort, and confuse the message of the biblical text. Here are some thoughts as I've observed those temptations in my own life and as I've seen them in the lives of other pastors and have talked about them together with other pastors.

1. Read the text.

This sounds simple enough. Indeed, the Apostle Paul left clear instructions with Timothy that he was to give attention to the public reading of the Scriptures.^[2] He was to be a faithful servant of God by rightly examining the Word.^[3] Yet, temptations to leave the text *unexamined* stalk the preacher like a cunning beast. To begin with, something other than the text might dangle its potential before us.^[4] Of course, you cannot have an expository sermon without beginning with the text.^[5] To begin with anything else, even the subject that you believe is systematized throughout the Scriptures, is to begin with just that: the subject, not the text. Read the text. Pray the text. Question the text. Let the text question you. Be still before the Word. Only in silence can you know how to utter the first sound in a sermon.

2. Create your initial homiletical form from your first encounter with the text.

First impressions are powerful. This is so in preparing to preach. Creating an initial homiletic sketch means *identifying the central theme or thought* arising from your exegetical study. Write it out. Go back to the Scripture. Test your statement. Write it another way. Go back to the Scripture. Write it again.

When I was teaching at the Army Chaplain School, we used a method called the "Post-it-note test".^[6] This was merely a way to force ourselves to write out the exegetical statement and the expository statement—also called the proposition on the big idea—to fit on a Post-it note. You can fine-tune the statements later with symmetry and other literary and homiletical devices that will aid in the delivery of God's message. However, in the beginning, the goal is simply to identify the message that God has given you from His Word. Within this second step, you should also identify the presenting issue. My friend, Dr. Bryan Chapell, calls this "the fallen condition focus (FCF)", as did his teacher, the late Rev. Dr. Robert Rayburn.^[7]

I do like and appreciate Dr. Chapell's method. Nevertheless, I prefer to call the identification of the concern within the periscope, "the presenting issue." Some-

times, the “presenting issue” may not be—explicitly—a fallen condition, but a philosophical question, or an existential conundrum, or even a picture of Heaven or an attribute of God. Perhaps, you can say all of these must still unearth a fallen condition to “set up” the preaching. I urge you to wrestle with this.

Next, identify the presenting issue (the “PI” or “FCF”). Now you have identified not only the presenting issue, but also the exegetical statement, and the expository statement. Survey the text and examine the text naturally using an interrogatory statement following your expository statement. For instance, in John 3:16, the exegetical statement may be put: “Jesus Christ explains the love of God in contrast to a very unlovable and fallen world.” Your expository message may be, “God’s love is

“As you are in pastoral counseling, think about how the text applies in that situation.”

greater than all our sins.” Now you must ask the question that will lead to your “argument” (also called the body of the sermon). The question is a “who, what, how, when, where” type of question. For our example, I might respond to the expository statement by asking, “How does Jesus demonstrate that God’s love is greater than all our sins?”

The answer to your interrogative statement, aided by a keyword, will unfold your argument. For instance, you may ask the question once more, “How does Jesus demonstrate that God’s love is greater than all our sins?” Your answer is the necessary transitional statement that will bind the points of your argument. So, in our example, I might answer the interrogative statement this way: “Jesus demonstrates that God’s love is greater than all our sins with three remarkable revelations.” Then, survey the text and answer the question. Now, you have something to work with for the rest of the week. And that’s what I want to get to next.

3. Spend time in prayer.

Another way to put this is, “Take the rudimentary work that you have done in steps one and two and place them in the providential oven and let them bake.” This doesn’t mean, “Go on about your parish work and forget about the sermon until the end of the week.” What it *does* mean is this: “Go about your pastoral duties with the text *in your mind, on your heart, and on your lips in prayer.*” As you are making a hospital visit, meditate upon the text. As you are at a committee meeting, meditate

upon the text. As you are in pastoral counseling, think about how the text applies in that situation. In your family devotions, remember the text. In other words, live with the text throughout the week. Then, return to your text on, for instance, a Thursday. Remember: *A sermon that has been bathed in prayer will sparkle with power.* Now you're ready to move to number four.

4. Put some meat on the bone.

The foundational work that you have done in identifying the expository statement arising from the exegetical statement and flowing from the presenting issue has allowed you to create a transitional sentence formed from an interrogative statement. Let us suppose that you scratched out three certain “movements” in your argument.

[8]

Now you need to pay attention to the introduction. Introductions can often wander. They can go astray. They can introduce ideas that, in fact, cause the people's minds to run away from the *Presenting Issue* or a heading in the argument. You must be very careful to compose an Introduction based on those key elements that you discovered in your reading and prayerful reflections upon the biblical text.

The first word out of your mouth after reading the Holy Scriptures and praying for the illumination of the Holy Spirit on the Text is this: state the presenting issue. Then move to an illustration that properly opens up the presenting issue. From there, personalize it: with yourself and with your congregation. That leads you to the next link in the introductory chain and that is God's answer or response in His Word to the presenting issue (this part of the Introduction has been called the sequence of “I, thee, and Thou” or (“me, you, God”).[9]

Now, you are ready to move into the exegetical statement. You have written that out on a Post-it note. Now it is time to tie a surgeon's knot in this paragraph. You need not go into all of the details because that is going to be part of your argument. Right now, you are introducing the congregation to the great exegetical statement, which is necessary for you to proclaim the universal truth of Almighty God—the expository or the homiletical statement.

Remember that you cannot move to the expository statement (i.e., the proposition or big idea) until you have clearly stated the exegetical truth. That is the reason for the surgeon's knot. The exegetical statement must be so tightly bound to the ex-

pository statement that none can doubt that this is “the Word of the Lord”. Once you have done secured that knot, then you are able to transition, with one clear, clean sentence, into the expository statement.

Moving from the expository statement, the interrogative statement, the transitional statement with a keyword, you can now make your argument. You have already “roughed-out” the division of your argument derived from the text. Of course, you didn’t make this up! You asked the question of the text. “How did Jesus show that God’s love is greater than all our sins?” You investigated the answers from the Scripture, you “ate the Text”, inwardly digesting the truths therein through prayer and meditation. Therefore, this “product” is what you will preach. Each heading or “movement” (as George Buttrick referred to rhetorical steps in a homily) is supported by its own exegetical statement, its own illustration, and its own application. This is the preaching of the Word of God. A sermon is not your idea as long as it is grounded in and proclaiming, with urgency and conviction, the text, context, and universal truths of the inerrant and infallible Scriptural text before you. And the people themselves must know this is not your word, but it is the word of the Lord. Only then can a sinner be saved, or a Christian be formed according to the message of a respective text in the Holy Bible.

5. Make your conclusion a closing argument.

Your conclusion should not merely be a moving story, a threat, or an invitation. It may be all of those things. It must be each of those things, and yet it must be grounded in the Word of the Lord. An untethered illustration is like an astronaut disconnected from his lifeline, floating aimlessly out into space, enjoying the ride, but likely to be sucked into the abyss of outer space.

As an experienced trial attorney gives his compelling and decisive “closing argument” before a jury. Much the same way, you also are offering the concluding case before the congregation. All are on trial before the Word of the living God, and therefore we ask, “How will you respond?”

Like so many other homiletical teachers, I advise our seminary students to summarize, illustrate, and give the closing charge. The summary is not merely a recapitulation of your points in the argument, but rather should be a conversational restatement of the presenting issue and God’s resolution of the issue. The illustra-

tion must be designed to not only present a positive picture of what life looks like when we obey, receive, or follow God’s word in the text. The illustration must also be tied to the closing word that follows. In this sense, the closing illustration is a “positive picture of life in the kingdom” (in the context of the exposition) that is leading to a response.^[10] Call for that response. No, demand it! Call for the jury to receive the truth of God and to act.^[11]

So much more should be stated about the glorious topic of making sure that we are preaching the Word of God.

These five thoughts may help you in your week-to-week work of preparing sermons. Always remember that if God’s Word goes forward, as you faithfully proclaim it each Lord’s day, God’s mission in the world shall be realized. The kingdom of God will come, and the People can say, “Truly, we have heard from God.”

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- [3] “Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who has no need to be ashamed, rightly handling the word of truth” (2nd Timothy 2:15) ESV).
- [4] “For the time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching but having itching ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own passions” (2nd Timothy 4:3) ESV).
- [5] “for I did not shrink from declaring to you the whole counsel of God” (Acts 20:27) ESV).
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The Relationship between Preaching and Counseling

By Jim Newheiser

“I did not shrink from declaring to you anything that was profitable, and teaching you in public and from house to house” (Acts 20:20).

Many pastors are reluctant to counsel. Some fear that individual counseling

will interfere with the primacy of their calling to preach the Word. They may have been told that faithful public proclamation of God’s Word should eliminate almost all need for private counseling. In addition, many pastors do not feel well equipped to counsel. They feel competent to preach, but not competent to counsel.

David Powlison writes, “Among those who take scripture seriously, ecclesiastical habits focus almost exclusively on the pastor as public proclaimer, team leader and administrator. Skill in the cure of individual souls is optional and sometimes is even discouraged as a waste of time.” Thus, many pastors feel secure inside their office with their books, and in the pulpit with their sermon manuscript, but feel unprepared to get involved in complicated (and unscripted) situations involving depres-



sion, abuse, adultery, self-injury, etc. Some pastors are not even aware of the extent of the messy struggles their people are experiencing. And some avoid counseling because individual soul care can be frustrating and discouraging.

While the public ministry of the Word is primary (2nd Timothy 4:1), the duty of pastors (shepherds) to care for God's flock puts individual—"from house to house"—ministry at the heart of their calling. In addition to the public feeding of the flock, pastors should be concerned about the care of individual sheep (Luke 15:4). All pastors will give account to God for how they cared for the sheep entrusted to them (Hebrews 13:17). Faithful shepherds will be rewarded (1st Peter 5:4), but lazy faithless shepherds will be judged (Ezekiel 34:1-10).

The public ministry of the Word (preaching) and the private ministry of the Word (counseling), rather than being in competition actually enhance one another.

1. **Good preaching can eliminate some of the need for counseling.** Biblical exposition, which addresses the ordinary issues God's people face, may equip them to solve their own problems and help each other. Martyn Lloyd-Jones writes, "True preaching does deal with personal problems, so much that true preaching saves a great deal of time for the pastor. I am speaking out of forty years of experience...The preaching of the gospel from the pulpit, applied by the Holy Spirit to the individuals who are listening has been the means of dealing with personal problems of which I as the preacher knew nothing until people came to me at the end of the service."
2. **Good preaching can awaken sheep to their need for counseling.** Faithful practical exposition raises issues which drive the sheep to their shepherds for individual counseling. Martyn Lloyd-Jones writes, "I have often found that the preaching of the gospel brings people to talk to the preacher and gives him opportunity of dealing with their particular condition." You may take the opportunity to offer individual help to members who are struggling with problems which come up in your text. For example, when I was preaching from Jonah 4 where the prophet expresses a desire to die, I said, "There may be someone here today who feels like Jonah did. You are discouraged and hopeless and feel like you want to die. It may even be that you have seriously considered suicide and thought about how you might do it. We want you to know that we care about you and that if you are feeling this way we want to meet with you so that we can listen in a non-judgmental way and point you to the hope God offers you. Please talk to me after the service or feel free to email or call me at any time." In a larg-

er church one could have trained counselors (men and women) available after the service to pray with you and to offer biblical encouragement.

3. **Faithful preaching makes you a better counselor.**

There is no better preparation for the personal ministry of the Word than the work done in preparation for the public ministry of the Word. When training biblical counselors, one of my favorite expressions is, “How thick is your Bible?” – meaning, how much of the Bible are you able to access and expound in an unscripted counseling situation? Teaching and preaching through books of the Bible equips you to find and faithfully explain relevant passages of Scripture in counseling situations. Jay Adams writes, “One reason why counselors who do not preach fail to become as biblical as they might is that they are not required to do exegesis on a regular basis. That means they can limp along...with whatever biblical knowledge they have or may glean from weekly church attendance. Time that a pastor would devote to the biblical exegesis counselors often spend studying counseling literature and for lack of biblical understanding adopt into their practices ideas that conflict with God’s truth...Most counselors need the enforced discipline of having to prepare sermons every week to keep them studying the Bible regularly in an intensive way. The counselor who preaches every week will grow as a counselor. He will gain new biblical insights from his weekly study that he will incorporate into counseling and he will develop the assurance and sure-footedness that is necessary to counsel with biblical authority.”

4. **Faithfulness in counseling ministry improves your preaching.**

Many pastors who spend almost all of their working hours in their studies preach bookish sermons, which typically connect better to other pastors and seminarians than to the ordinary believer in the pew. Spending significant time helping real people with real problems helps the preacher to prepare sermons which address the practical needs of the congregation. As Jay Adams writes, “The counseling preacher can work preventatively. What he regularly sees in the study he can warn against in the pulpit...Nothing enables a preacher to ring the bell in a Sunday sermon like knowing that in counseling he has already helped five persons with what he is about to say.” Such practical preaching could make people more inclined to come to the pastor for help. Again Adams writes, “The man who puts his exegesis to work, not just on Sunday in the pulpit, but all week long in the counseling room, ministering the Word to those in trouble will rattle his

people's windows when he preachers. They will say to themselves, "he understands!" and they will come for help. Each activity feeds the other"

5. **Faithfulness in counseling makes for better sermon hearers.** Over the years I have found that those to whom I have ministered personally in the private ministry of the Word have become the most attentive during the public ministry of the Word. When they know that you love them, that you care about their problems, and that you are able to point them to biblical answers they are eager to hear you preach.

Conclusion

The public ministry of the Word (preaching) and the private ministry of the Word (counseling) are not in competition with each other. Rather, they complement each other. Each is necessary in a healthy church and each is an essential aspect of a pastor's calling.

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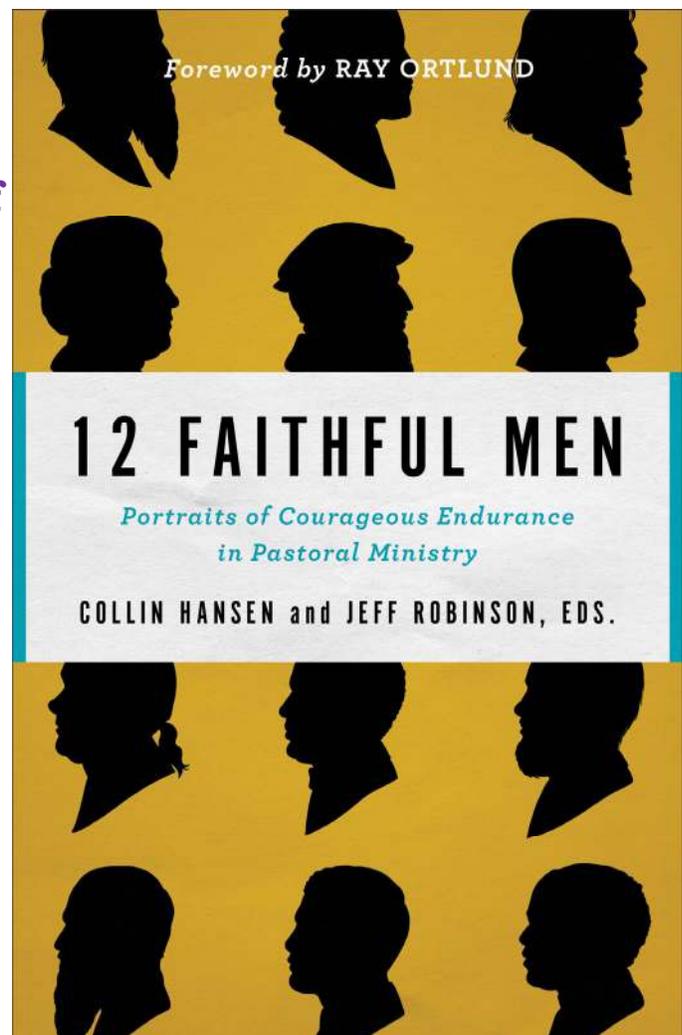
12 Faithful Men

An Interview with Jeff Robinson

By Dave Jenkins

Dr. Jeff Robinson (Ph.D., The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary) is a senior editor for The Gospel Coalition. Jeff also pastors Christ Fellowship Church in Louisville, Kentucky. He is co-author, with Michael Haykin, of the book *To the End of the Earth: Calvin's Mission Vision and Legacy*, and co-editor with Collin Hansen of *15 Things Seminary Couldn't Teach Me*. Jeff and his wife, Lisa, have four children.

T4L: Hello Dr. Robinson! We're excited to have you do this interview with *Theology for Life Magazine*. Can you tell us a bit



about yourself? What ministries are you currently involved with?

Dr. Robinson: I have a pretty busy ministry life at present. Beyond being a father and a husband, I'm most fundamentally a pastor. I serve as lead pastor of Christ Fellowship Church, a Southern Baptist congregation in Louisville. I have the privilege of serving with four elders there. I do most of the preaching and am deeply involved in the shepherding of our congregation. I also serve as a senior editor with The Gospel Coalition, where one of the primary aspects of my job is editing a series of books aimed at young and new pastors—*12 Faithful Men: Portraits of Courageous Endurance in Pastoral Ministry* is part of that series, as is *15 Things Seminary Couldn't Teach Me*, the first series volume published in March by Crossway under the TGC imprint.

T4L: Wow! Sounds like you're a busy guy! As you were editing *12 Faithful Men: Portraits of Courageous Endurance in Pastoral Ministry* was there any particular hero (or heroes) that stood out to you that you learned from/about?

Dr. Robinson: Actually, there were several and that's one of things that so excited about the book. Previously, though I have taught church history survey courses for many years, I had not encountered Janani Luwum and knew precious little about Wang Ming-Dao and John Chavis. Of course, I've taught and written quite a bit about the other figures in the book, but it reminded me that the church has existed for more than 2,000 years, and we've been studying and writing about her history for about as long, but I don't think we've plumbed the depths in terms of the unsung heroes who have walked the Calvary Road of suffering for the sake of Christ and His gospel.

Wang Ming-Dao's story is a particularly compelling, I think, because he compromised. One of my pet peeves with much history, particularly biography, that's written is that it's hagiography—meaning we portray our heroes as virtually sinless and spotless. As Christians, we know better. These saints of old may have lived exemplary lives, but they are deeply flawed. They are sinners.

At one point, Ming-Dao compromised. He abdicated. His faith was weak. Of course, he repented and was restored, but the compelling part of his story is ugly, but it's a reality to which many of us can relate. To quote a famous children's hymn, "we are weak, but He is strong". Wang Dao's story reminds us of that. Also, with Luwum and Chavis, you get to see that political persecution and racism are nothing

knew. Those things didn't begin with baby boomer America or Ferguson. They've been around since Eden.

T4L: It is quite interesting to hear about such candor in these biographical re-accounts that you've mentioned! How refreshing! Continuing along the lines of lessons from history...As you already know, John Calvin is world-famous for his writing and preaching. What can Pastors, even those very well familiar with Calvin, learn from his approach to sermon preparation and delivery?

Dr. Robinson: I think it's very simple: preach the Word of God and trust the Word of God. Of course, it is well-known that Calvin was exiled from Geneva and then returned in 1541. When he came back to the church in Geneva, Calvin picked up preaching in Psalms where he had left off at the time of his exile. Calvin's confidence wasn't in human ingenuity. It wasn't in his intellectual ability—and Calvin was a towering intellect. Calvin's confidence was in what Paul calls the “foolishness of preaching” the Word of God. That's what we learn from Calvin and the best exegetes from the history of the Church—live in the text, preach the text, trust the text—the seed, to be watered by the Spirit of God to transform sinful human hearts. Calvin certainly did.

T4L: Amen! In the book, Randall Gruendyke talks about Charles Simeon ministering in hard soil. What can Pastors today learn from him when it comes to ministering to difficult and challenging people?

Dr. Robinson: Perhaps more than any figure in the book, Simeon faced a set of circumstances that are common for many pastors. His congregation was irascible. They didn't like Simeon for a long time. I think of what God calls Israel many times in the Old Testament—they were a rebellious house, a stiff-necked people. But Simeon stayed with the work. He persevered and trusted God.

In our here-today-gone-tomorrow culture, it's easy for pastors to want to flee a hard field of service for greener pastures—I know, I've been there. But Simeon trusted that God is sovereign, that God had called him to love that congregation, to shepherd that congregation—regardless of the people's disposition toward him. That's the beautiful part of his story—God gave him persevering grace. That's something I pray for regularly—persevering grace. I don't think we talk about that enough as Christians, and we certainly don't talk enough about that as pastors.

T4L: Spurgeon often faced intense periods of discouragement in his ministry. What advice do you have for pastors and ministry leaders facing periods of deep personal discouragement?

Dr. Robinson: Discouragement and ministry are dance partners and will be until Jesus returns. After the Surrey Music Hall disaster near the beginning of his ministry, in which several were killed, Spurgeon was never the same. He struggled with anxiety. He was often deeply depressed. He nearly quit the ministry. But Spurgeon is one of many, many pastors who have battled depression and chronic discouragement.

Really, discouragement is only as far away as your e-mail inbox or next Monday after you've preached on Sunday. Spurgeon teaches us try and give ourselves entirely to pleasing God. You will seldom, if ever, please the people in your church and your goal should never be to try and please the people in your church. Moses faced discouragement, Paul faced discouragement. If you spend more than a week in pastoral ministry, you are likely to experience discouragement.

T4L: Very true. How does John Newton remind us that pastoral struggles and doubts are not infrequent or unusual but the norm in ministry?

Dr. Robinson: Newton had to wait for a lengthy period of time to undergo ordination and actually enter pastoral ministry in the Church of England. I graduated from seminary and waited two years, which seemed like an eternity after spending so many years preparing for time in the local church. I've had friends wait quite a bit longer than that. I actually knew one guy who had to wait nearly six years. None of us likes to wait, but it is often God's school in which He works sanctification in us at multiple levels, particularly in deepening our faith.

T4L: That is certainly an area of great difficulty to many, myself included. Waiting on anything, while trying to maintain faith in your calling is hard. This is part of the reason why we can find these types of books to be so helpful. J.C. Ryle is well-regarded for his writing, and his ministry—like that of Charles Spurgeon—continues to impact God's people today. How can men like J.C. Ryle and Charles Spurgeon help Pastors today, who are interested in writing for public consumption, learn to develop and grow in their craft?

Dr. Robinson: I tell my pastor friends all the time who show both an aptitude and desire for writing to write. Write about your experiences and how God is using it in your life and ministry. It could be that you start writing in a journal or just a personal blog, but write in ways that will encourage and help other pastors.

They encourage us to write on practical theology and doctrinal issues, especially those we may have spend significant time studying. Writing is like most everything else, the more you actually do it, the better you tend to get at it. I'd encourage pastors to look for opportunities to write and to hone their craft. I think by writing. Often, I don't really know what I think about an issue until I study it and then write about it. Writing and carefully editing what you write will help your sermons, it will help you to crystallize your thoughts, it will make you a more careful thinker, and I think it can even make you a more effective and skilled preacher of God's Word. It certainly can help you communicate better with the people whom God has called you to shepherd.

T4L: Wonderful encouragement, sir! Thank you for taking time out of your busy schedule to do this interview, Dr. Robinson!

Advice to a Regular Pastor

By Landon Coleman



Most pastors are what I like to call “regular pastors”. They don’t pastor mega-churches or preach in front of thousands. They don’t have book contracts or speak at national conferences. They don’t have impressive social media platforms or serve alongside large staffs. Most pastors

are just regular. They serve small to medium sized churches. They preach and teach multiple times a week. They listen and give counsel to their people. They marry, and they bury. They visit hospitals and nursing homes. They meet with deacons and committees. They share the gospel and try to introduce people to Jesus.

I care about regular pastors. I think regular pastors and their regular churches are the heartbeat of Christianity in the United States. I know megachurches get all the good press these days. I know social media celebrates the big, the flashy, and the successful. I know it feels like big churches are getting bigger and small church-

es are getting smaller. I know we've turned megachurch pastors into a sanctified version of celebrity, much like the Pope (a development that is not healthy for pastors or Christians in the United States).

Despite these realities, I think regular pastors and their regular churches have a future in the United States. I'm not trying to bash megachurches or their pastors. I'm simply saying we need regular churches and regular pastors. I want regular pastors to succeed. By "succeed", I don't mean grow their churches to be megachurches. By "succeed", I mean *preach the gospel*. I mean *make disciples*. I mean *shepherd the flock*. I mean *direct God's people to enjoy God's glory*. To that end, here are several pieces of advice I regularly share with regular pastors.

Love Your People

Recently I had lunch with a regular pastor who had recently accepted a call to a new church. In the course of our conversation, he told me something he had shared with his congregation before moving to town. This regular pastor told his new church, "I'm not coming to pastor the church you are today, I'm coming to pastor the church you are going to become."

I think I know what this pastor was trying to say. But as he recounted this tale I could only think one thing, "It's a good thing God loved you before you were lovable and didn't wait for you to make yourself loveable before He loved you." That's the gospel! God loved us when we were a sinful mess.

I'm certain this pastor knows the gospel, I just think he's failed to apply the gospel to his role as shepherd. If you are going to lead an established church, you must love your people and pastor your people regardless of the sin and dysfunction that may exist within the church. Yes, your job as pastor involves leading change within your church. But when you accept a call to pastor a congregation you become their pastor today, in the present. You're not just signing up to pastor a perfected church that only exists in your imagination.

Don't Perfect Your Church

This is a dangerous temptation for regular pastors, especially those who are new to a particular church. For one thing, when you walk into an established church you see things that other people don't see. You notice facility issues and scheduling issues and leadership issues that everyone else has stopped seeing. For another thing, when you walk into an established church you are also walking out of another

church. Maybe you left your home church or the church you attended while at seminary. When you are the new kid on the block, it's always tempting to compare your new church to the church you just left.

Many pastors begin their ministry with a laundry list of things that need to be fixed in their new church. Maybe it's ecclesiology. Maybe it's scheduling. Maybe it's facilities. Whatever the particulars may be, there's always a pull for new pastors to bring positive change to their church. This is a good thing! Pastors should never be satisfied with the status quo, and they should always move to address issues that need to be addressed.

“If you really think your home church or your seminary church was so great, you should go back.”

If your mission is perfecting your church, you're doomed for failure. Your job is preaching, pastoring, leading, counseling, and teaching. God's job is perfecting. If you make it your mission to recreate a previous church experience in your new church, you're doomed for failure. If you really think your home church or your seminary church was so great, you should go back.

Work Hard

Regular pastors must prioritize their family over their ministry. Period. End of story. If you've been around church for any length of time, you've probably heard the same stories repeated countless times. Some pastors fail to take care of their family because they're too busy taking care of their church. The details change, but the basic story is the same. Some pastors neglect their family because they're too busy looking out for their church. In the end, these pastors lose both family and church.

I'm a millennial. I don't know how much this problem was addressed in previous generations. I do know that I've received a steady stream of warnings about this danger from seminary, conferences, books, and blogs. Time and time again, I've been warned, “Don't lose your family by being a workaholic at church.” I think many of the young pastors I know have heard these same warnings. While I appreciate the sentiment behind the warning, I've also seen a disturbing trend among some of my younger pastor friends. Too often I see lazy pastors who justify their laziness by talking about the importance they place on family.

Regular pastors must work hard. You are not signing up for a forty-hour work week. This is no nine-to-five job. There is no time clock. Regular pastors work long,

odd hours. Regular pastors find time to take care of core responsibilities and “miscellaneous duties”. Regular pastors work hard at church and at home.

Join Your Community

Regular pastors must think and live like missionaries. If you’ve ever been around a missionary family, you know what I’m talking about. All of the missionary families I’ve ever met have a deep love for their “people” and their “place”. They embrace the local culture. They learn the local language. They participate in the local activities. And they can’t wait to share their “people” and “place” with anyone who will listen.

Contrast the infectious joy of a missionary with what I hear from many regular pastors. All too often I meet regular pastors who wish they lived somewhere else. They say they’re called to a church, but they don’t necessarily feel called to their city. They’ll try to say nice things about their congregation, but they don’t have much nice to say about the place they live. Maybe the cost of living is too high. Maybe the culture is different. Maybe the town is too big or too small. Maybe the people are too liberal or too conservative. The complaints vary, but too many regular pastors are too negative about the place they live.

“The text tells us that Jehoshaphat was “afraid”.”

God has indeed called you to a specific congregation, but that specific congregation is located in a specific place. We would rightly question the calling of a missionary who hated living overseas and constantly complained about the local people. Why would we treat regular pastors differently? You are called to love your people and your place. You are called to be an active part of your particular community.

Pray for Wisdom

One of my favorite stories in the Bible is found in 2nd Chronicles 20. The king of Judah was a man named Jehoshaphat, and he had a problem. A three-nation army was headed straight for Jerusalem, the capital of Judah. The text tells us that Jehoshaphat was “afraid” (2nd Chronicles 20:3). The text also tells us that this godly king moved from fear to prayer. In fact, Jehoshaphat assembled all the people of Judah to pray for the nation (2nd Chronicles 20:3-4). When the king led the people in prayer he prayed an amazing prayer. My favorite part is in verse 12 where Jehosha-

phat prayed, *“We are powerless against this great horde that is coming against us. We do not know what to do, but our eyes are on you.”*

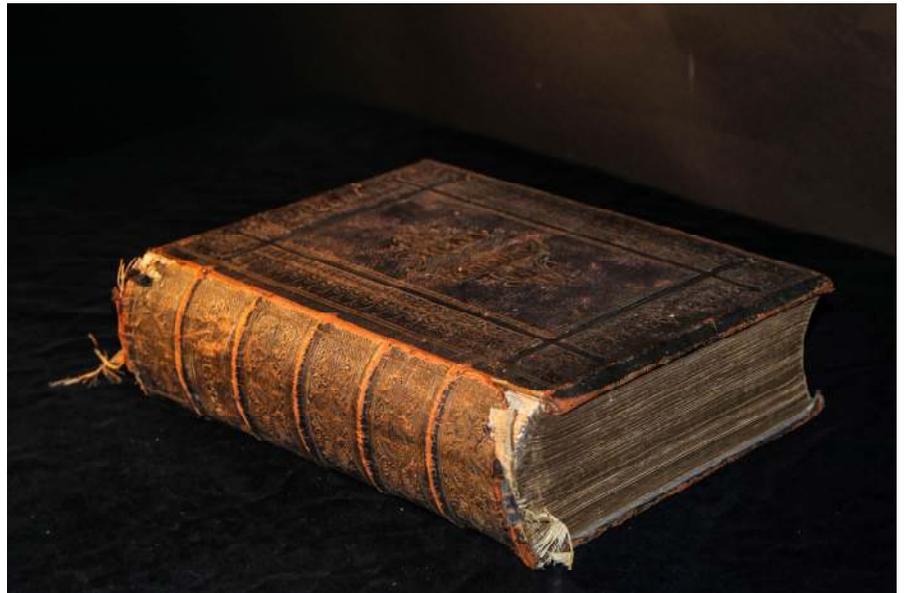
As a regular pastor, there will be times you feel powerless. There will also be times you just don’t know what to do. In these moments, pray what Jehoshaphat prayed! Then pray for wisdom! Passages like James 1 and Proverbs 2 give you rock solid assurance that God will give wisdom to His people when they ask for wisdom and seek wisdom like treasure.

Reading and Interpreting the Old Testament

An Interview with Jason DeRouchie

By Dave Jenkins

Jason DeRouchie (Ph.D., The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary) is a Professor of Old Testament and Biblical Theology at Bethlehem College & Seminary in Minneapolis and an elder of Bethlehem Baptist Church. His resource website is www.jasonderouchie.com.



T4L: Dr. DeRouchie, thank you very much for agreeing to do this interview with *Theology for Life Magazine*. We're looking forward to finding out more about you and your work! Please tell us a bit about yourself, including the current ministries you are involved in!

Dr. DeRouchie: I am a churchman, scholar, husband, and father. I am committed to helping others exalt Jesus and treasure the hope of the gospel from the whole of Christian Scripture—the Old and New Testaments. I have six children, three of whom my wife and I adopted from Ethiopia. I am a former associate pastor and presently serve as an elder of Bethlehem Baptist Church in Minneapolis. I have taught in a number of Christian colleges and seminaries and joyfully serve now as Professor of Old Testament and Biblical Theology at Bethlehem College & Seminary.

T4L: Ah, a man interested in the Old Testament! Why is the Old Testament important for Christians to read?

Dr. DeRouchie: The Old Testament is three-fourths of the Christian Scripture, and it is the only “Bible” Jesus had. It was books like Genesis and Deuteronomy, Isaiah and Psalms that guided His life and ministry as the Jewish Messiah. And it was these Scriptures that He identified as God’s Word (Mark 7:13; 12:36), considered authoritative (Matthew 4:3–4, 7, 10; 23:1–3), and called people to know and believe in order to guard against doctrinal error and Hell (Mark 12:24; Luke 16:28–31; 24:25).

Jesus was convinced that what God declared in these sacred writings “cannot be broken” (John 10:35). He was certain that they bore witness about Him (Luke 24:27, 46; John 5:39, 46), that they would be completely fulfilled (Matthew 5:17–18; Luke 24:44), and that they called for repentance and forgiveness of sins to be proclaimed in His name to all nations (Luke 24:47). Paul too believed the Old Testament was written “for our instruction” (Romans 15:4; cf. 4:22–23; 1st Corinthians 10:11), and he believed those sacred writings are “able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ” (2nd Timothy 3:15).

I love the Old Testament because of the way it portrays God’s character and actions, and serves as a witness to the majesty of our Messiah. The Old Testament is seventy-five percent of God’s special revelation to us, and we need to interpret it rightly because there is no higher need for mankind than to see and celebrate the Sovereign, Savior, and Satisfier disclosed in its pages. For a more developed discussion of this issue, see my “Ten Reasons That the Old Testament Is Important for Christians” in pages 6–11 of *How to Understand and Apply the Old Testament*.

T4L: So true. The Church today has sadly drifted from preaching the whole doctrine of the Word of God. With that in mind, what are some of the principles that guide your approach to biblical interpretation?

Dr. DeRouchie: I will offer four:

1. **Scripture is God's Word** (2nd Timothy 3:16; 2 Peter 1:21). The only way to arrive at what the biblical authors intended is to believe (as they did) that they were reading and writing God's very Word (1st Corinthians 2:13).
2. **Truth in Scripture is knowable.** Peter said, "There are some things in [Paul's letters] that are hard to understand," but then he added, "that the ignorant and unstable twist to their own destruction" (2nd Peter 3:16).
3. **The task of biblical interpretation demands both work and God-dependence.** "The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned" (1st Corinthians 2:14). As such, Paul told Timothy, "Think over what I say, for the Lord will give you understanding in everything" (2nd Timothy 2:7). Rigorous God-dependent thinking is necessary for Bible study.
4. **Biblical interpretation requires that we respond appropriately.** In Paul's words, Scripture is "profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness" (2nd Timothy 3:16). As James said, we must "be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving ourselves" (James 1:22).

T4L: How do we observe in what manner the biblical passage is communicated?

Dr. DeRouchie: To answer how a passage is communicated demands that we observe carefully what is in the passage. Texts convey meaning; they do not produce it. Following God's leading, the biblical authors intentionally wrote the words they did with specific sense and purpose, and they constructed their texts with thought-flow and meaning.

We must identify the start and end of units, properly understand the clause and text grammar, track an author's thought-flow through tracing connecting words like conjunctions and prepositions, and then seek to capture the message by synthesizing the whole in a main idea statement and message-driven outline. Along with tracing the argument, we also need to understand the specific words, necessitating

that we engage in word and concept studies, all in order to ensure that we rightly understand what the author intended. We can rake and get rocks, or dig down to get diamonds. Observing carefully demands that we read for depth and not just distance. For more on this, see chapters 5–7 in *How to Understand and Apply the Old Testament*.

T4L: Quite insightful! How does a growing understanding of biblical theology help Christians understand how the whole Bible progresses, integrates, and culminates in Christ?

Dr. DeRouchie: The Bible is not just made up of books; it's a book with its own frame, form, focus, and fulcrum. I capture these elements in my summary of Scripture's message: *God reigns, saves, and satisfies through covenant for His glory in Christ*.

1. **“God reigns, saves, and satisfies”** relates to God's kingdom and is the *frame* of Scripture—i.e., what it's all about.
2. **“Through covenant”** expresses the *form* of the Bible, which relays a progression of covenants seen most clearly in the distinction of our Old and New Testaments/covenants.
3. **“For God's glory”** is the ultimate end of all things and captures Scripture's *focus*.
4. **“Christ”** is the *fulcrum* around whom all Scripture moves, to whom all Scripture points, and from whom all fulfillment come.

Far too many Bible readers think of the Bible like a wall of beautiful fabrics, each book having its own color and flavor but standing independent of the others. In contrast, I think the Lord wants us to perceive His Word more like a massive quilt, with each “square” (i.e., book) having its own story and placed together into an intentional pattern that proclaims an even greater message.

Jesus said that the Old Testament authors not only wrote about Him (Luke 24:27; John 1:45; 5:39, 46; Acts 10:43) and envisioned Him from a distance (Hebrews 11:13; 1st Peter 1:10–11), but that in Him the foundation gives rise to fulfillment—the new creational light dawning and moving reality from an age of kingdom anticipation into an age of kingdom realization—of hope, healing, and help (Matthew 5:17; Luke 24:44; Acts 13:32–33). He also said that a proper understanding of the Old Testament will lead to magnifying His role as Messiah and the mission

He would spark (Luke 24:45–47; cf. Acts 10:43; 26:22–23).

Only when we know the Bible's storyline (carried along by the various covenants and captured in the narrative books) and read it in light of the accompanying commentary (proclaimed in the prophets, poetry, and letters) are we able to grasp the place of Jesus in God's purposes, and this is why we must engage in the discipline of biblical theology. For more on this issue, see chapter 10 in *How to Understand and Apply the Old Testament*.

T4L: And how should Christians begin to discern how a biblical passage theologically coheres with the whole Bible and then to assess essential doctrines, especially as they have a direction to the gospel?

Dr. DeRouchie: In the process of biblical interpretation, we will come to better understand and celebrate our passage when we engage in the discipline of systematic theology. At this stage in the interpretive process, we pause and consider what the passage we are focusing on contributes to our understanding of the key doctrines of the Christian Church?

- Theology proper (the doctrine of God)
- Bibliology (the doctrine of Scripture)
- Angelology (the doctrine of angels and demons)
- Anthropology (the doctrine of humanity)
- Hamartiology (the doctrine of sin)
- Christology (the doctrine of Christ)
- Soteriology (the doctrine of salvation)
- Pneumatology (the doctrine of the Holy Spirit)
- Ecclesiology (the doctrine of the church)
- Eschatology (the doctrine of the end time or last things)

No single passage of Scripture will address all of these topics, but many will address more than one. For example, if you were studying Moses' intercessory prayer in Deuteronomy 9:25–29, and wanted to know more about the Bible's teaching on prayer and what your passage contributes to it, you would want to look, not only for other instances of *pray* or *prayer*, but also for occurrences of terms such as *confess*, *intercede*, *petition*, and *supplication* and even words like *prostrate*.

You should also investigate other intercessory prayers, such as Moses' parallel prayer in Exodus 32:11–13, his prayer in Numbers 14:13–19, and those in Daniel 9,

Ezra 9, and Nehemiah 9. Once you have identified relevant texts, you then need to classify them—reading the texts, summarizing their points, and organizing them into groups based on distinct patterns or features.

The final step is to synthesize in one or more points what the Bible teaches on your topic and then to identify how your passage contributes to this understanding. If your passage were not present in Scripture, would some crucial knowledge about your topic be missing? For more on this issue, see chapter 11 in *How to Understand and Apply the Old Testament*.

T4L: So, we've learned how to dissect and interpret Scripture, but how does one apply the biblical text to oneself, the church, and the world?

Dr. DeRouchie: There are two main steps here. First, you need to establish the original revealed application (audience, external life issues, information vs. instruction, present vs. future). Second, you must determine the theological significance of the passage. This entails asking, "What does the passage tell us about God and His ways—His character, desires, values, concerns, standards, and purposes?" Then, we also ask, "How does Christ's fulfillment of the Old Testament impact our application?"

For example, does the passage speak directly to old covenant structures that get transformed in the new? How has the progress of salvation history influenced how we hear and may apply the text? How does the passage anticipate Jesus' life and work, the church age, or the consummation? Does the text express time-bound or culturally bound elements that can no longer relate to us on this side of the cross? Does the New Testament quote or allude to the particular text in a way that clarifies its lasting value for Christians?

These are the types of questions Christians need to find answers for in order to faithfully apply the initial three-fourths of our Bible. I discuss these issues and develop them specifically in relation to the Christian's relationship to Old Testament laws and promises in chapter 12 of *How to Understand and Apply the Old Testament*.

T4L: Excellent explanations and instruction! Thank you for taking time out of your busy schedule to do this interview, Dr. DeRouchie.

Let No Man Despise Your Youth: Pastoral Reflections of a Young Pastor

By Michael Cooper



In November 2013, my life changed: I was called by a normative sized local church, with an average age of 70, to be their pastor at the age of 25. My wife and I were the youngest in the church by nearly 20 years. To put this in perspective: The only child in children's church at the time was *my unborn*

daughter. But this local church entrusted me with the greatest privilege a man can have on Earth—to *preach the gospel to them week after week*. For nearly 5 years, I've had the honor to stand in the pulpit, open up the Word, and share with them the Truth. It is a blessing to deliver the Word, week in and week out, to the same congregation. In 5 years, we've seen spiritual and numerical growth, which causes me to rejoice. The Lord has blessed the rural church with resources to advance the gospel locally and internationally. But one thing remains true: the preaching of the gospel is foundational to my pastoral ministry.

In these short 5 years, the Lord has shown me several truths about preaching

and pastoring from 1st Timothy 4:12 that have been confirmed by personal experience as a younger pastor. There are many challenges to pastoral ministry that many, regardless of age, struggle with in a local church. But specifically a young pastor can struggle in his vocation due to his lack of experience. Yet, seeing the timeless truths of the Bible in my own life has confirmed my call to the pastorate. In 1st Timothy 4:12 the Apostle writes to the young pastor Timothy, *"Don't let anyone despise your youth, but set an example for believers in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith, and in purity"* (Christian Standard Bible).

Be an Example in Your Speech

As pastors, we have a lot of responsibilities. During the week, we may have deacons meetings, counseling sessions, and administrative tasks; but when Sunday comes, we have one important assignment: to preach the Word. I'm convinced, as younger pastors, we should obey the Apostle's command to set an example in our speech. I believe this, first of all, applies to our preaching. What we preach drives the local church and impacts lives. We set an example to our brothers and sisters by preaching the Word. Paul reminds the young pastor in 2nd Timothy 4:2 to "Preach the Word: be ready in season and out of season." But secondly, this applies to our personal speech to other believers, whether in the hospital waiting room, the living room, and/or on social media. We should be wise in our speech, reflecting the grace of our Lord Jesus. It is tempting as a young pastor to die on every hill, yet, not every hill is *worth* dying on. We must be wise in our speech, allowing it to be seasoned with salt (Colossians 4:6). Personally, I've experienced the negative results of unwise speech in the church. Making jokes in a large context can be misunderstood as an attack. Using loaded words can be misconstrued to mean something else. As younger pastors, we must know our context and speak graciously.

"If you look at the qualifications for a pastor in 1st Timothy 3:1-7, they speak of godly conduct."

Conduct Must Be Gospel Centered

There is much talk in the evangelical world concerning the need for Christ-centered Preaching. However, I am convinced the Christ-centered Preaching flows from a Christ-centered Life. As younger pastors, we can lead by example in godly conduct. If you look at the qualifications for a pastor in 1st Timothy 3:1-7, they speak of godly conduct. I'm convinced reputation trumps resume when it comes to pastoral leadership. As we seek to preach God-honoring sermons, our lives must be God-honoring. Practically, how does the life of younger pastor communicate God's glory? I

think it is revealed in the way we conduct ourselves in the eyes of the congregation and, most importantly, in the home. As we allow the gospel we preach to impact our own lives, our conduct is conformed into the image of Jesus. I must personally take this seriously if I desire my life to count for the Kingdom. A pastor isn't worth his salt if the testimony of his life doesn't reflect the testimony of his word.

Reflecting Christ's Love

Our preaching and conduct communicate the glorious gospel. This results in a sacrificial love for others. We set an example to those we shepherd by loving them with Christ's love. We are called to love others and sacrificially lay down our lives to make Jesus famous. This kind of love can be seen in the way we serve our church, love our community, and reach the lost. What our churches need to see is a man willingly lay down his pride to serve them. In this aspect, we reveal the heart of the gospel. In a sense, we put on display Christ and His love for them. It is easy for a younger pastor to get so caught up in pastoral work that he forgets his real motivation, which is to love others with Christ's undying love. The Lord has continued to work this into my heart and mind. He desires that His pastors love Him and others. As we walk with our members in love, we show them the gospel of Jesus.

Live a Life of Faith

In times of struggle, it can be difficult to live faithfully, especially as a young pastor. The trials that come with the vocation can be overwhelming. For example, criticism can be crippling. Preaching can become stagnate. Leadership can become weak. But one thing must be the true of the young pastor: his faith in God's Son and his faithfulness to His call. The young pastor's faith is the evidence of God's work in his own life and reflects the need for the congregation to embrace God's Son in faithfulness. If there is one thing that a young pastor needs, especially in my case, it is faith. When the congregation struggles, the young leader can inspire a congregation by his own faith in Jesus, knowing that Jesus will build His church. There have been times during my pastoral work that I've experienced moments of crisis. There have been times that the church has been rocked by various events. But through it all, the Lord has continued to strengthen my faith, God willing, using it as an example to the people I serve.

Pursue Purity

God desires purity of His pastors. He wants them to have a pure heart and mind. This becomes an example to the congregation. The fact of the matter is the pastor is a sinner too. But the redeeming work of Christ is continuing to cleanse the pastor. So as the pastor publically repents, asks for forgiveness, and longs for the

Spirit's work in his life this speaks volumes to the congregation he serves. My prayer is that my personal purity, which comes from Christ, reveals God's heart for His people. This is why that young pastor's personal purity is so important. God wants His people to be pure, which begins with His leaders.

These personal lessons have been a clarion call in my short time as a pastor. Youth can be a stumbling block for some people. I remember early on in my pastoral work, I was having a conversation with a church member over a particular issue, to which the individual stated, "It must be because you are young. One day you'll learn." At first, I was broken and hurt. Why would someone say that to me? Yet, in that moment, I remembered the words of the Apostle, "Don't let anyone despise your youth." So after throwing a youthful pity party, I acted in love and faith, believing the best of the person who made the remark. That moment changed me. Christ could redeem my youth, inexperience, and ignorance for His glory. The good news is this: Jesus loves young pastors.

Fighting Doubt as a Virtue with the Word of God

By Dave Jenkins



Doubt in our day is in fashion. In fact, it is viewed as a *virtue* in our culture. Tell someone what you believe, and they will tell you, “*Your truth is good for you*”. Then they will proceed to tell you their “truth”. On and on you could go, because no one has any ground for truth, according to this view. A former Harvard Professor, Harold Bergman, once said that a religionless law would help no one. By that, he meant that all law is grounded in theology, the study of God. People’s convictions about religion affect how they see and experience the world, which colors how they

interpret the Bible.

In recent days, we have seen people—whether in the news or the church—come out and make statements that leave one wondering, “What is doubt?”, and “Is all doubt bad or is there good doubt?” The answers to these questions are, first and foremost, informed by our convictions. What we believe as Christians informs what we think of the Bible itself. When we come to the Bible, we come to the clear, inspired, inerrant, sufficient, authoritative, infallible Word of God. We do not come to the Bible to question the Word of God. We do not come from a place of unbelief. Instead, we come to the Bible to learn and to submit to what it says. We do not come to question the text as if it’s not trustworthy. We come to the Bible to learn and to ask questions of the biblical text.

There is a difference between questioning the biblical text and asking questions of the biblical text. When I ask my wife a question about computers, it is because she’s an I.T. expert. In doing so, I am asking her for a well-thought-out and knowledgeable answer to a question. When I go to the

“We cannot master the Word.”

grocery store and talk to someone about my car who knows little about cars and chat about what’s going wrong with my car I am getting *an opinion*, likely one that isn’t well-thought-out, nor knowledgeable. When it comes to the Bible, we must understand that it falls into an entirely different category than the two examples I just used. Unlike other areas of life or subjects, there is no “leading authority” on the Bible. Yes, there are authorities on a variety of *biblical subjects*, but no one is the master of the Bible. We cannot master the Word. Instead, the Bible masters us because of its emphasis on Jesus and how He desires for His people to obey His commandments, through the indwelling and empowering presence of the Holy Spirit in their lives.

Therefore, when we come to the Bible, we come not to doubt, or to even question out of a place of unbelief. When we ask questions of the biblical text, we are doing so from sound convictions motivated by a desire to learn more of what the Bible has to teach us. Christians, from Calvin to Spurgeon to Owen and others, were all motivated to ask questions of the biblical text

because of their convictions. In some areas of the evangelical Church today, there are deeply held anti-intellectualisms which reject the idea of questioning as from a place of unbelief.

To these anti-intellectualists, Doubting Thomas is a folk hero. They see how he questioned, and how Jesus responds to him. However, this is not what is happening in that passage. Thomas is *not* the hero of the anti-intellectual movement. He is the hero of those who ask questions with honesty and with reverence to Christ. If you read the Gospels carefully, you can see how Jesus often answers His disciples. Sometimes His answers are sharp, but most often, they are filled with great care. Read through John chapters 14-16, and you'll see this as Jesus ministers directly to the disciples. He is focusing on ministering to them, and they want to know where He is going. They have no eyes to see, nor ears to hear what He is saying. They do not have the Holy Spirit yet. Jesus is teaching them about the coming of the Kingdom in His death, burial, and resurrection, and of the Kingdom to come at His Second Coming fully.

“Whether in our preaching, teaching, or writing, we are saying to people, whether they are Christians or not, *here is the Word of God.*”

Unbelief feeds the anti-intellectual movement at its core. There are those who want you to love God, but they forget that Jesus said that to love God with all you are requires your mind (Matthew 22:39-40). Asking questions of the text is not questioning God. Asking questions of the biblical text is not telling God that you disbelieve Him. Furthermore, it is not attacking the nature and character of God as *unbelief* does. God's Words are in the Scriptures; they have a meaning, which God intended and inspired through the personality and the mindset of the biblical writers.

Asking questions of the biblical text is part of engaging in sound biblical interpretation. For example, as we come to the biblical text, we should ask, “What is the context of this verse?” This should be our first question, rather than, “What does this text mean?” By beginning with *context*, we want to get into the argument and flow of the biblical passage. We are aiming to understand the surrounding context. For example, we might ask, “What period of time is this biblical author writing in?” We should also ask whether this is an epistle, like Paul's, or if it's a Gospel account, like the Gospel of John. Those issues matter because they affect how we will understand

the argument and flow. For example, in his Gospel, John writes as an artist. He says one thing and comes back to the same point later on, weaving and painting a story to help his readers understand the point he is conveying. The Apostle Paul is much more tangible and straightforward. He makes his point, and he will often come back to it to expand on it. However, stylistic differences abound even among the biblical writers, even as they help us know and understand more of the nature and character of God, and the glory of the person and work of Jesus Christ.

Doubt is viewed as desirable in our day. To fight against doubt as a virtue, we must uphold sound biblical and historic convictions about the Bible itself. We fight doubt not by belittling people or chiding them about what they should know. Instead, we are to model for others how to engage the Bible from sound biblical convictions. In other words, the way we interpret the Bible is how we should want others to believe about the Bible itself.

Whether in our preaching, teaching, or writing, we are saying to people, whether they are Christians or not, *here is the Word of God*. Our duty in doing so is not to beat people over the head and bludgeon them with the Word of God. Instead, it is to say, "Here is what God is saying on this subject." We do so motivated by love for the glory of God. We do so to give them space to ask questions of the biblical text even as we challenge their preconceived ideas that lead them to doubt the validity of the Bible. As we provide safe places and are safe people to ask questions of the Bible, not doubt the Bible, our churches will fight against the anti-intellectual tide inside and outside the Church.

The Church has always been full of intellectuals, from Calvin to Owen. Some of those are of a greater intellect than others. Even so, the Church has a long and proud intellectual history that we should not be ashamed of. Christians have helped plant churches, build hospitals, and more to help people because they believed Jesus' words about loving God first and then people. This is but one example of how biblical convictions inform biblical practice. It is also another way to say that Christians are not anti-intellectual, but are rather informed by intellectual convictions that are, as Carl F.H. Henry once said, of Christianity when speaking of it as Christianity as a life-view. Christianity not only shapes our convic-

tions, it shapes our lives. That is why asking questions is not against loving God. It actually loves God with all we are, as Jesus instructed. That is how we are going to fight “doubt as a virtue”—with the Word of God. When we see the Bible itself not as a book to question or doubt, but instead, as a book to be believed, treasured, delighted in, and devoured, because it contains the whole counsel of God that testifies of the Lord Jesus Christ. That is also how we will provide safe places in our churches to combat anti-intellectualism, biblical illiteracy, and more, all for the glory of God.

Why the Local Church Needs Good Biblical Theology

By Nick Roark

Pastors have the weighty and wonderful responsibility of preaching Christ from all the Scriptures. Biblical theology, therefore, is a vital help for pastors to faithfully declare the glorious truth that Jesus is the main point of the whole Bible. How do we know this? Because He tells us so.



Then he said to them, "These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you, that everything written about me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled." Then he opened their minds to understand

the Scriptures, and said to them, “Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead, and that repentance for the forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things. And behold, I am sending the promise of my Father upon you. But stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high” (Luke 24:44–49).

Jesus explains two things in this text. First, He makes the shocking statement that all of the Old Testament—from the Pentateuch to the Prophets to the Psalms—was actually written about Him. In other words, Jesus identifies Himself as the

“In other words, biblical theology is the scriptural road map that leads us to Jesus.”

promised Messiah. Second, He says that His followers will be witnesses of these things to all nations—that is, to all peoples in all places. Simply put, you won’t understand the story of the Bible unless you see that it’s all about Jesus.

Christ Himself, the promised King, is the one who holds everything together (Colossians 1:17), including the grand story of Scripture itself. The Old Testament points forward and prepares the way for the coming of the King. The New Testament proclaims the arrival of the King and His mission to all nations. But to read the Bible faithfully, we need the proper tools. The discipline of biblical theology is one of those helpful tools. Biblical theology, therefore, is a way of reading all of Scripture as the story of God’s King and His glorious plan to rescue and redeem for Himself a people for His praise.

How Good Theology Serves the Church

Keeping Luke 24 in mind, let’s briefly consider four ways biblical theology can serve pastors in their teaching ministries in the local church. From Genesis to Revelation, Jesus is the hero and the point of the story.

1. Biblical theology helps us read, understand, and teach the Bible the way Jesus said we should.

Jesus Himself says in Luke 24 that He is Scripture’s interpretive key. So if we fail to read and understand Scripture in a way that leads us to Jesus, then we will miss the point of the Bible, and as a result we will teach others to commit the same error. The bottom line is this: missing the point of the Bible’s story produces false gospels and false churches. What we need now is a framework for understanding the whole Bible. Biblical theology provides that framework because it guides our reading of the Bible and therefore guards against bad interpretation. Biblical theology is an approach to reading the whole story of the Bible while keeping our focus on the main

point of Scripture: Jesus Christ. In other words, biblical theology is the scriptural road map that leads us to Jesus.

2. Biblical theology helps clarify the Bible's main purpose.

Some people approach God's Word as if it were a collection of independent stories, or an assortment of advice and counsel, or even a universal cookbook with recipes for "the good life" scattered across its sixty-six books. But these approaches fail to bring to light the central purpose of Scripture. In the Bible, the triune God explains who He is and what He is, like and how He's at work throughout history by His Spirit and in His Son, Jesus Christ the King, and how we ought to glorify Him in this world. Biblical theology helps us to grasp this main purpose by looking at each passage of Scripture in light of the whole Bible so that we understand how every part of Scripture is related to Jesus.

"Sharing the good news with those who are unfamiliar with Christianity requires explaining much more than "four spiritual laws" or the "Romans road"."

From Genesis to Revelation, Jesus is the hero and the point of the story. What's more, you won't understand who Jesus is unless you understand the larger story that's all about Him. Jesus is the interpretative key to the Bible, which means a careful Bible reader will find him in the beginning, middle, and end of this story. God has revealed for us in the Bible the King's purposes, the King's plans, and the King's promises. As they're worked out in history, we need to pay attention to this story and read it as Jesus says we should. God's story is a grand story—the grandest of them all, in fact—and it's centered on His plan of redemption in the person and work of Jesus Christ.

3. Biblical theology helps us in our evangelistic outreach.

Sharing the good news with those who are unfamiliar with Christianity requires explaining much more than "four spiritual laws" or the "Romans road". People first need to grasp that the Christian worldview accompanies a total transformation of mind-set. In our evangelism, we must start with God and creation to see what's gone wrong. From there, we're able to follow what God has been doing throughout history, which will help us discover why He sent Jesus and why that matters today. Not until we rightly understand these past events in their proper contexts will we be equipped to uncover what God is doing right now and what He'll do in the future.

4. Biblical theology helps guard and guide the Church.

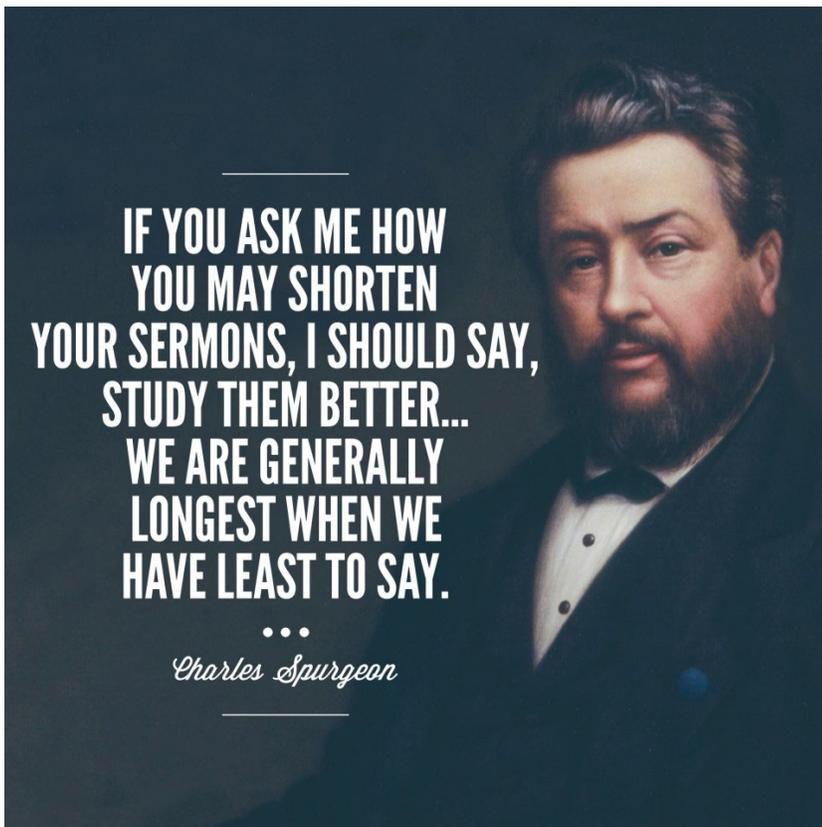
Reading Scripture rightly means knowing where each book fits into its overarching narrative. And knowing the overarching narrative helps us read and understand accurately each event, character, or lesson that's been given to us as part of

God's progressively revealed Word. Understanding the whole story of Scripture clarifies who Jesus Christ is and what His gospel is. God has promised to rescue a people from every tribe and nation and tongue for His own glory through His Son and by His Spirit. These redeemed people are members of Christ's body, the Church.

What is the Church of Jesus Christ supposed to be and supposed to do? Jesus said to His followers—those who've repented of their sins and trusted in Him alone—that the Scriptures testify “repentance for the forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem” (Luke 24:47). So the proclamation of Jesus Christ ought to be at the heart of the Church's mission to disciple the nations. In this way, biblical theology guards the Church from the deadly error of proclaiming a false gospel and guides the Church toward keeping the proclamation of the true gospel as the centerpiece of its mission to the world for the praise of God's glory. May all of Christ's shepherds feed the flock of God by proclaiming the glories of the Chief Shepherd from all the Scriptures until He comes.

Charles Spurgeon and a Theology of the Holy Spirit in Preaching

By Dave Jenkins



IF YOU ASK ME HOW
YOU MAY SHORTEN
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STUDY THEM BETTER...
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...
Charles Spurgeon

Charles H. Spurgeon’s understanding of the connection between the Holy Spirit, prayer, and preaching can be paradigm shifting.

His understanding of the connection between preaching and the ministry of the Holy Spirit is not new, but it does need to be brought to the forefront for the modern reader. John Broadus, in his book, *On the Preparation and Delivery of Sermons*, stated that, “The ultimate requisite for the effective preacher is complete dependence upon the Holy Spirit.”¹ Bryan Chapell teaches that

the biblical description of the Spirit’s work challenges “all preachers to approach their task with a deep sense of dependence upon the Spirit of God.”²

There is little attention given to the Spirit in relationship to preaching and teaching. Zachary Eswine explains that, “Spurgeon’s intentional explicitness regarding the work of the Holy Spirit in preaching offers reasonable explorations into deeper caverns of intricacy, which may enable an infant theology on the Holy Spirit to take more steps.”⁴ Spurgeon believed that “the Spirit of God was precious to the people of God, and therefore sought to make the person and work of Christ the main focal point of his preaching and instruction to other preachers.”⁵

Biblical Foundations

The biblical foundations for understanding the ministry of the Holy Spirit in preaching comes from John 14:16-17. Jesus, in this passage, identifies the Holy Spirit as the “Spirit of Truth”. The *Spirit of Truth* is sent by the Father, at the request of the Son, and indwells believers as a resident minister, who guides believers into

“Spirit-led preaching comes into alignment with the Spirit’s ministry of glorifying Jesus Christ by proclaiming the written Word in order to glorify the living Word.”

all truth. Jesus describes the Spirit as the guide into all truth as he said in John 16:13, “When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth, for he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak, and he will declare to you the things that are to come.”

Jesus identified the Spirit’s ministry as a continuation of His own ministry; in fact, John 14:16-18 makes it clear that the Holy Spirit is of the same

kind (deity) as Jesus. The Spirit reveals and glorifies Christ by magnifying Christ’s teaching, Christ’s gospel, and Christ’s work as the grand fulfillment of God’s redemptive plan.⁷ The Bible is united in its testimony to Jesus Christ, and the Spirit’s joy is giving witness to this testimony to the people of God. Spirit-led preaching comes into alignment with the Spirit’s ministry of glorifying Jesus Christ by proclaiming the written Word in order to glorify the living Word.⁸

Greg Heisler notes, “Spirit-led preaching is the biblically defined ministry combined with the theological relationship between the Word and the Spirit. This combination demands Christ-centered preaching.” He explains, “The biblical and theological foundation for the Word and Spirit in preaching is seen in the fact that the Scriptures are Christ-centered, the Spirit is Christ-centered, and the preacher is to be

Christ-centered.”⁹

The Scriptures are Christ-Centered

John 5:39 says, “You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that bear witness about me.”

Luke 24:27 explains, “And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself.”

John 20:31 states, “Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.”

The Spirit is Christ-Centered

John 14:26 exhorts, “But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you.”

John 15:26 says, “But when the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth, who proceeds from the Father, he will bear witness about me.”

John 16:13-14 adds, “When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth, for he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak, and he will declare to you the things that are to come. He will glorify me, for he will take what is mine and declare it to you.”

The Preacher is to Be Christ-Centered

2nd Corinthians 4:5 states, “For what we proclaim is not ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, with ourselves as your servants for Jesus’ sake.”

Acts 28:31 says, “Proclaiming the kingdom of God and teaching about the Lord Jesus Christ with all boldness and without hindrance.”

1st Corinthians 1:23 reminds, “But we preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and folly to Gentiles.”

By the Spirit’s Power

Spurgeon understood the importance of preaching the Gospel in the power of the Holy Spirit, which is why he notes that:

*The gospel is preached in the ears of all; it only comes with power to some. The power that is in the gospel does not lie in the eloquence of the preacher; otherwise men would be converters of souls. Nor does it lie in the preacher's learning; otherwise it would consist in the wisdom of men. We might preach till our tongues rotted, till we should exhaust our lungs and die, but never a soul would be converted unless there were a mysterious power going with it the Holy Ghost changing the will of man. Oh Sirs! We might as well preach to stone walls as preach to humanity unless the Holy Ghost be with the Word to give it power to convert the soul.*¹⁴

John Stott notes that “preachers must be humble in mind (submissive to the written Word of God), have a humble ambition (desiring an encounter to take place between Christ and His people), and a humble dependence (relying on the power of the Holy Spirit).”¹⁵ Preachers must aim to be faithful to God’s Word by lifting up the glory of Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit. The confidence the preacher has must come from heartfelt knowledge of the Word of God by dwelling richly upon the Word, which is truth. Only in this way will the preacher know the Truth he professes and be able to bear testimony about the cross in demonstration of Word and Spirit.

In 2nd Corinthians 4:12, Paul gets to the heart of why preachers and teachers of the Word of God must be surrendered wholly to the Lord when he says, “So death is at work in us, but life in you.” The challenge of preaching is to grow in the task while giving it away, being willing to die for people so that they may live.¹⁶ Death-to-self is demanding, but necessary in order that the preacher may become like Christ, who died so that His people may live. Furthermore, if preachers will not die to self, the people they minister to will not live. The pulpit is a place to present a translucent soul laid over the vicarious suffering of the Lord Jesus, modeling His sacrifice.¹⁷

In a letter to a friend, Robert Murray M’Cheyne left the following encouragement:

*“Remember you are God’s sword—His instrument—I trust a chosen vessel unto Him to bear His name. In great measure, according to the purity and reflections of the instrument will be the success. It is not great talents God blesses so much as great likeness to Jesus. A holy minister is an awful weapon in the hands of God.”*¹⁸

Spurgeon’s spirituality emerged from the Word of God. As Raymond Brown ex-

pressed it, “His spirituality was essentially a Biblical spirituality.”¹⁹ Spurgeon was a man deeply influenced by the Puritans and as such believed that the Gospel was for all of life. Spurgeon “believed in a disciplined spirituality which to him meant diligent, meditative study of the Scriptures.”²⁰

Understanding the theology of the Holy Spirit in the life and thought of Spurgeon is important, but it is equally vital for preachers today to know how seriously Spurgeon took his own spiritual growth. What Spurgeon sought to demonstrate was a ministry that was grounded in the Word of God and prayer, and fueled by the Holy Spirit. Spurgeon was a man of God, set ablaze with a passion to declare the majesty of God in the person and work of Jesus Christ.

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Christians and the Public Square: The Necessity of Apologetics in the Marketplace of Ideas

By Dave Jenkins

Acts 17:16-34 is a model of the Great Commission proclamation, matched to an apologetic in defense of Christian truth.

In that passage, Paul is standing at the center of apologetic ministry in the first-century city of Athens. Athens was the



most intellectually sophisticated culture in the ancient world, but its glory at that time of history was retreating. Even though Rome held political and military preeminence, Athens stood supreme in terms of cultural and intellectual influence. The cen-

terpiece of Paul's visit to Athens is his message to the court of philosophers at the Areopagus, also known as Mars Hill.

The important thing here and the focus of this article is on how Paul went to the marketplace to proclaim *the gospel*. The marketplace here is likely the ancient agora, the central meeting place of most cities in ancient Greece, although it could also have been in one of the smaller public squares. Either way, Acts 17 notes Paul reasoning in the public square meaning he did not shy away from going public with his views both to the Jews in their synagogues or to the general population in the public square. The message of the gospel compelled Paul to share the truth of what Jesus has done in His death, burial, and resurrection.

“In the same manner, as Paul did in Athens and likely in many other places throughout his missionary journeys, Christians today are called to declare the truth of Scripture in the public square.”

Speaking the Word in the Public Square

In the same manner, as Paul did in Athens and likely in many other places throughout his missionary journeys, Christians today are called to declare the truth of Scripture in the public square. Christians are called to be a people of God's Word and to speak that Word in love to those around them. This gives shape to the reason why Christians need to defend and contend for the faith in the public square.

Christians, throughout church history, have cared about the “public square”. They have entered into the fray of moral and intellectual debate and discourse. They have not retreated, but rather have spoken up for the sake of the gospel. They have stood on the Word of God and declared its truths to a lost and dying world.

The reason Paul spoke in the public square was because he was provoked in spirit (Acts 17:16). Paul saw a city full of idols and it seized him with grief. It was that grief which turned to gospel proclamation. Christians declare God's Word because they have been claimed by the gospel and are daily being transformed by the Holy Spirit. Christian preaching is a matter of spiritual concern. A dying world languishes in spiritual confusion, and God calls His people to proclaim His unchanging Word to the culture. Paul models Christian proclamation in the public square in Acts 17:17. Paul went to the synagogue and to the marketplace each day, presenting

Christ to Jews and Gentiles. The goal of apologetic preaching is not to win arguments but to win souls to Christ.

The Necessity of Apologetics

The example of Paul in Acts 17:16-34 establishes a pattern for the necessity of apologetics in a postmodern age. Christians must constantly seek to turn people's spiritual hunger toward the true food of the Gospel of Christ. God had placed that

hunger within lost persons so they might desire Christ.

“People must first understand God the Creator before they will understand God the Redeemer.”

Christians bear the stewardship of proclaiming the gospel. We must muster the courage to confront a confused, postmodern-centered society with the reality of their spiritual ignorance. Paul never allowed this ignorance to become an excuse. Just as the Athenians of

Paul's day, Americans are feeding on a false diet of superstition and myths. This clear spiritual hunger is a place to start. Our challenge is to preach Christ as the only answer to that hunger.

Paul established his preaching of Christ upon the larger foundation of the knowledge of the God of the Bible, Maker of Heaven and Earth. Every preacher of the Gospel must structure his proclamation of the message in this postmodern-culture just as Paul did. People must first understand God the Creator before they will understand God the Redeemer.

The great Reformed theologian, John Calvin, organized his systematic theology, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, around what he termed the “*duplex cognitio domini*”, translated as the twofold knowledge of God. The preacher must start with the knowledge of God as Creator, but this is not sufficient to save. John Calvin notes that it is one thing to feel that God our Maker supports us by His power, governs us by His providence, nourishes us by His goodness, and attends us with all sorts of blessings, and another thing to embrace the reconciliation offered us in Christ. Seeing people come to faith in Christ the Redeemer begins with seeing them come to grips with the fact that God is their Maker.^[i]

Christian Preaching Must Confront Error

Christian preaching confronts error (Acts 17:29). Preaching, apologetics, and polemics are all related. Error must be confronted, heresy must be opposed, and false teachings must be corrected. Paul was bold to correct the Athenians with a firm admonishment given they made idols out of marble and precious metals. Paul rebuked this practice and proclaimed that the Divine Nature is not like gold, silver, or stone. Furthermore, God is not an image formed by the art and thoughts of man.

False theologies abound no less in the postmodern marketplace of ideas. Americans have revived old heresies and invented new forms of pagan practices. The ecological mystics believe that *the world* is God, the so-called *Gai Hypothesis* (where “Mother Earth” is worshipped). New Age devotees believe that God is infinite empowerment. Our culture is filled with images of gods formed by art and the thoughts of men. Our confrontation must be bold and biblical. We have no right to make God in our image.

Christian Preaching Affirms the Totality of God’s Saving Purpose

Christian preaching affirms the totality of God’s saving purpose (Acts 17:30-31). Paul brought his presentation of the gospel to a climatic conclusion by calling for repentance and warning of the judgment that is to come. He proclaimed Christ as the appointed Savior, who will judge the world and whose identity has been clearly revealed by God raising Him from the dead.

Authentic Biblical Preaching in the 21st Century

Authentic Christian preaching both declares and defends the whole gospel. The center of the Christian’s proclamation is Jesus Christ the Savior, who was crucified for sinners, raised by the power of God, is coming again in glory and in judgment, and is even now sitting and ruling at the right hand of God the Father Almighty. Christians must defend the truths of Christ’s deity—the virgin birth, the historicity of the miracles, the truth of the incarnation, the reality of His substitutionary death, and the assurance of His bodily resurrection. Yet, Christians dare not stop at these affirmations, for we must place the person and work of Christ within the context of God’s eternal purpose to save a people for His own glory and to exalt Himself

among the nations. The task of preaching in this postmodern context is comprehensive, even as it is driven by the desire to see sinners turn to Christ in faith.

What is needed today is a generation of bold and courageous preacher-

apologists for the 21st century, a people who will be witnesses to the world of the power of the gospel and who will proclaim the whole counsel of God. What is needed today are Christians who understand, as I have articulated in this article, the need to not abandon the public square given they are called to—that very place to proclaim that the gos-

“Instead, Christians must declare the gospel of the victorious, triumphant, and exalted King Jesus.”

pel is the power of God. Rather than retreat, Christians can engage in the public square today by using every form of media available to them with the unchanging and authoritative Word of God, just like the Apostle Paul did.

Christians are called to the public square for the glory of God and the good of civilization. Christians should proclaim to a culture in need of truth, a message not based on *their ideas*. Instead, Christians must declare the gospel of the victorious, triumphant, and exalted King Jesus. Let the people of God go, therefore, as Jesus commanded, to proclaim the royal message of the King in the power of the Holy Spirit, to the glory of God, so that God may open the eyes of the blind, bring the dead to new life, and raise up new voices to trumpet the gospel in the public square for His glory.

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Answering Two Important Questions about Expository Preaching

By Josh Buice



Many people today hear preachers talking about preaching, and they get lost in the fog of ambiguous theological language. When a congregation hears a pastor reference *expository preaching*, often there are members in attendance who have no idea what *expository preaching* actually is. This is not only true of members in the average evangelical church, but it's likewise true of many students of preaching, who think they understand what expository preaching is, but fail to truly grasp the different levels and component parts of this central task of the local church. As we consider the health and strength of the local church, it is essential to answer two vitally important questions related to what we call *expository preaching*.

Question #1: What is Exposi-

tory Preaching?

Before we can talk about the importance of this approach to the pulpit, we must first define it. Expository preaching is the style of preaching through the Bible in a verse-by-verse method. Sometimes different language is attached to this style of preaching such as *expositional preaching*, *sequential expository preaching*, and *topical expository preaching* to name a few of the alterations. Haddon Robinson, in his book titled, *Biblical Preaching*, defines expository preaching by saying:

Expository preaching is the communication of a biblical concept, derived from and transmitted through a historical, grammatical, and literary study of a passage in its context, which the Holy Spirit first applies to the personality and experience of the preacher, then through the preacher, applies to the hearers. [1]

In short, expository preaching is a method of preaching that seeks to unpack, explain, define, and expound the selected text of Scripture in the precise way that the original author intended it to be read and explained. Haddon Robinson writes, “Ideally each sermon is the explanation, interpretation, or application of a single dominant idea supported by other ideas, all drawn from one passage or several passages of Scripture.” [2]

A preacher’s duty is to explain the passage of Scripture with such detail that the full intent of the original author is accomplished. John Calvin referred to this process as *expository explication*. This process will involve several different levels.

Preparation (From Desk to Pulpit)

1. Text selection.
2. Read text (and surrounding/related text).
3. Define verbs (and other ambiguous language).
4. Identify the main point of the selected text.
5. Identify supporting points.
6. Organize the structure (follow the natural flow of the text).
7. Consult commentaries.
8. Write sermon manuscript.
9. Add illustration and application to finalize the sermon manuscript.

Proclamation the Act of Preaching

One of the main accusations directed to the category of expository preaching is that it's boring, lifeless, and nothing more than a mundane running commentary read from the pulpit. If that's what people think of expository preaching, they've never heard a proper sermon proclaimed. Certainly many attempts at expository preaching have resulted in nothing more than a monotone preacher reading from his lengthy manuscript in the pulpit. To discredit the entirety of expository preaching based on one or two poor examples, however, would be tragic.

The delivery of an expository sermon is essential. Getting the manuscript nicely organized and precisely developed is only part of the duty of the preacher. Now, the sermon has to be properly delivered to the people. Preaching involves the following layers that make up a sermon:

- Proclamation
- Explanation
- Confrontation
- Exhortation
- Correction
- Persuasion
- Motivation
- Edification
- Illustration
- Application
- Conclusion

Preaching and teaching are *not the same*. Good preachers can do both in the same sermon, but preaching is distinct from teaching. The common Greek words **διδάσκω** (teaching) and **κηρύσσω** (herald, preach, proclaim) help us to see the differences between the two functions. Martyn Lloyd-Jones defined preaching by writing:

What is preaching? Logic on fire! Preaching is theology coming through a man who is on fire. A true understanding and experience of the Truth must lead to this. I say again that a man who can speak about these things dispassionately has no right whatsoever to be in a pulpit; and should never be allowed to enter one. [3]

Therefore, expository preaching, when properly prepared and passionately pro-

claimed, should never be viewed as a boring or lifeless attempt to communicate information. Preaching without passion isn't true biblical preaching—whatever else it might be called, it cannot be classified as preaching.

Question #2: Why is Expository Preaching Essential?

If true authentic preaching is expository preaching, a church built upon the foundation of shallow, topical, and seeker sensitive preaching must be avoided. Albert Mohler writes, “Where the authentic preaching of the Word takes place, the church is there. And where that is absent, there is no church. No matter how high the steeple, no matter how large the budget, no matter how impressive the ministry, it is something else.” [4]

The most biblical way of preaching the Bible is, without a doubt, through the delivery of an expository sermon. Paul instructed Timothy to “rightly handle the Word of truth” (2nd Timothy 2:15). Any mishandling or casual approach to the sacred task of proclaiming the Word of God is forbidden. Therefore, the preacher must care about expository preaching because he will one day stand and give an account to the Lord for how he cared for the flock of God. Certainly, it must be stated that to preach a topical sermon *isn't* sinful. There are necessary times for topical sermons or perhaps a topical series of sermons in the life of a church. However, the main diet of the church should be based on sequential expository preaching through books of the Bible.

The preacher's primary duty that transcends all other job responsibilities is to faithfully feed God's people through the Word of God (John 21:15-17). This responsibility should cause any preacher to approach the sacred task of God with a sense of humility. John Knox once said, “I have never once feared the devil, but I tremble every time I enter the pulpit.” [5]

In addition to the preacher, every church member should care about expository preaching. The people in the church should demand God's Word to be preached properly and with great care. To be a good communicator or to be funny is not found in the qualifications of an elder (1st Timothy 3 or Titus 1). The ability to teach the Word is an essential qualifier. Just as people desire for the Constitution of our nation to be handled with care and not misrepresented, with much more care should members of God's church demand that the sacred Word of God be read, interpreted,

and explained. It would be wise for every church member to do the following:

1. Develop an ear for exposition. Learn to love and appreciate faithful expository preaching through books of the Bible.
2. Track along with the study and consider incorporating a recommended commentary (consider reaching out to the pastoral staff for recommendations) into your weekly reading that follows the sermon series.
3. Seek to encourage your pastor by communicating to him in person, or by letter, in order to show appreciation for his devotion to the grind of faithful expository study and preaching.

Expository preaching will pay great dividends towards healthy church growth. Remain patient and be steadfast in your work as a church member to cultivate a church culture that expects and appreciates expository preaching. Mark Dever, in his excellent book, *Nine Marks of a Healthy Church*, states:

The first mark of a healthy church is expositional preaching. It is not only the first mark; it is far and away the most important of them all, because if you get this one right, all of the others should follow...If you get the priority of the Word established, then you have in place the single most important aspect of the church's life, and growing health is virtually assured, because God has decided to act by His Spirit through His Word...The congregation's commitment to the centrality of the Word coming from the front, from the preacher, the one specially gifted by God and called to that ministry, is the most important thing you can look for in a church. [6]

In the end, expository preaching is the preacher's method of feeding the church faithfully. Although young and immature churches need to develop a taste for such healthy food, over time the church will grow to crave proper biblical preaching for their health and spiritual well-being.

References:

- 1) Haddon Robinson, *Biblical Preaching*, (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1980), 21.
- 2) Ibid, 33.
- 3) Martyn Lloyd-Jones, *Preaching and Preachers*, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1971), 97.
- 4) Albert Mohler, *Feed My Sheep*, Don Kistler, (Grand Rapids: Soli Deo Gloria Ministries, 2002), 18.
- 5) Cited in: Steven J. Lawson, *Famine in the Land*, (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2003), 94.
- 6) Mark Dever, *Nine Marks of a Healthy Church*, (Wheaton: Crossway, 2000), 25, 38.

The Importance of Preaching in the Christian Life

By Dave Jenkins



Recently I've noticed a trend among some Christians who don't regularly attend church, as well as those who do attend regularly, but suggest that they don't need to hear a sermon weekly because they've

“moved” past that stage of their Christian life.

I understand very well why some people feel they don't need to hear a sermon or attend church. Some people have been burned and hurt by the Church. Every Christian needs to listen to a good sermon, which is focused on the biblical text under consideration, and points them to Jesus. To understand the importance of preaching in the Christian life, we'll consider the following points in this article:

- Jesus' use of the scriptures in preaching
- Standing fast for Sola Scriptura
- The authority of the Bible
- Humility and its relation to the Bible
- The importance of preaching in the Christian life

Jesus engaged in what is known today as *expository preaching*, which is preaching the point of the text as the point of the sermon. We should observe how frequently Jesus' teaching involves the exposition of Scripture.

When Jesus began His ministry in the synagogue of Nazareth, He started with a reading from the prophet Isaiah in Luke 4:16-21:

And he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up. And as was his custom, he went to the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and he stood up to read. And the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to him. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor." And he rolled up the scroll and gave it back to the attendant and sat down. And the eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him. And he began to say to them, "Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing."

His great “Bread of Life” sermon in John 6 involved the explanation of the Bible's teaching on manna that came through Moses. Even though Jesus could impress His hearers by performing miracles, He still rested the authority of His teaching on the truth of the Scriptures. It is important that we preach with authority today, and this can come only by presenting the truth of God's Word.

It is because of the authority of the Bible as God's revealed Word that the Puritan Thomas Watson could say, “In every sermon preached, God calls to you, and to refuse the message we bring, is to refuse God Himself.”

Standing Fast for Sola Scriptura

One of the great moments in Church history was Martin Luther's refusal to re-

cant his teaching when confronted at the Diet of Worms in 1521. In the presence of the Holy Roman Emperor, and with the threat of death lingering in the air, his accuser pointed to a pile of books that Luther had written. The Cardinal demanded that he recant his teachings because they conflicted with the Roman Catholic doctrine and criticized the Pope. Luther responded, "Unless I am refuted and convicted by the testimony of Scripture or by clear reason—since I believe neither the Pope nor the councils by themselves, for it is clear that they have often erred and contradicted themselves I am conquered by the Holy Scriptures I have quoted, and my conscience is captive to the Word of God. Here I stand. God help me. Amen."

Luther did not teach or take his stand on his credentials, but on God's plain teaching in the Bible. This established the great Reformation principle of *Sola Scriptura*—that Scripture alone has authority over the faith and lives of God's people. This should be the conviction that guides all our teaching in the Church. John 7:16 states, "My teaching is not mine, but his who sent me."

We should say the same. Preaching on this text (John 7:16), Luther noted, "This is a necessary principle. In the ministry, where the divine Word is concerned, Christ's words, used here, must be followed, so that no one preachers any doctrine unless it is supported and buttressed by the certainty that his doctrine is not his own. Every preachers and teachers authority comes from one place the Word of God."

The Authority of the Bible

People sometimes complain that almost anything can be taught from the Bible. This is not entirely true. Not everything that is claimed to have come from the Bible is, in fact, from the Word of God. So how can we be sure of the truth? With all of this mind, Jesus made a great promise in John 7:17, "If anyone's will is to do God's will, he will know whether the teaching is from God or whether I am speaking on my own authority."

According to Jesus, the key to recognizing God's truth is not found in a book or taught in a seminary. It is found in our hearts, through the conviction of the Holy Spirit. He says that those who seek to do the will of God will know God's truth when the Word is preached.

Notice that all through the Gospels there are two kinds of people. There are those who sit quietly at Jesus' feet to learn. And then there are those like the religious leaders who stood before Him arguing. This is important to help us understand difficult subjects from the Bible.

Whether the subject is God's sovereignty, the Trinity, the biblical roles of men and women, or practically any other disputed matter, the most important issue is

whether or not we are willing to submit ourselves to God's Word. Are we sitting quietly at Christ's feet, or are we arguing over the Bible? This is the question. Over and over again, this is what determines whether we can discern and receive what God has taught. Proverbs 3:5 encourages, "Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding."

Augustine was one of the most brilliant minds ever recorded. He established a rule for himself that whenever he found that he disagreed with the Bible, he concluded that he was the one who was wrong, and therefore submitted to the teaching of God's Word. This is what it means to do God's will—that we are willing to believe and obey what the Bible teaches, even when (indeed especially when) it requires we revise in our thinking and actions.

"This explains why Jesus' hearers did not receive Him in faith."

Humility and Scripture

Our first question must always be to determine what Scripture says and then we must humble ourselves to receive and believe because it is God's Word. Only then may we enter safely into questions of understanding, or apparent contradictions, and God will lead us into the deeper truths of His Word. This is an incredible promise especially for new believers and even seasoned believers.

We all have much to learn. Studying the Bible's challenging teachings will stretch our thinking and build our faith. We must determine when we struggle with the tough teaching of Scripture that we will embrace the truth of God's Word and believe it. John 7:17 states, "If anyone's will is to do God's will, he will know whether the teaching is from God or whether I am speaking on my own authority."

F.F. Bruce comments, "If there be a readiness to do the will of God, the capacity for discerning God's message will follow." Once we realize that we are not schoolmasters but pupils, we have placed ourselves in the right place to be taught by God through His Word.

This explains why Jesus' hearers did not receive Him in faith. It wasn't because of defects perceived in Him or His teaching. They simply were not willing to be taught by God's Word. Joel Nederhood rightly applies this problem to all unbelievers, when he explained, "Those who trust in Christ and are trying to do his will should realize that people around them who reject Christ are doing so because they have not chosen to do God's Will. Those who choose their own will or the will of others who oppose Christ will simply not be able to recognize the truth that Christ has come to

bring.”

Is this the cause of your unbelief or your lack of growth in faith and godliness? Then realize that the Bible is God’s holy Word or it possesses no authority at all. Ex-

“It’s not enough to just *hear* the sermon.”

amine the many proofs of the Bible’s divine authorship and read it with a prayer that God will show you the truth of His Word. And when you have come to this conviction, determined to do the will of God. As you understand the Bible’s teaching, decide to believe it and put it into practice.

Jesus’ hearers resented His rebukes; they were not willing to be corrected by His Word.

This is why they rejected Him, the One who is the true Tabernacle. The same can happen to us if we drift away from the way He wants us to live; we will find that His voice grows ever fainter. Other voices intrude. But as we who have Christ’s Spirit live in obedience to Him, we find our lives enriched immeasurably as Christ’s teaching takes deeper root in our hearts.

Final Thoughts

Preaching is vital to the health and growth of Church and to the Christian life. Jesus used Scriptures to teach us how we are to live our lives. Jesus exercised His teaching ministry to confront the religious who thought they had it all figured out, when, in fact, they didn’t. He also preached to the crowds and called people to Himself. Jesus divided the audience between those who believed and those who would walk away from His harder teaching.

The preaching of the Word of God can either soften or harden our hearts. One of the clearest signs of the Holy Spirit at work in the life of the believer is a hunger and thirst for God’s Word. Yes, you should be reading your Bible daily, but you should also be seeking to apply that Word you are reading into your life.

The same principle applies when hearing the sermon. It’s not enough to just *hear* the sermon. Hearing the sermon is a good *first step*. Now heed it and apply the preached Word to your life. Then your heart will be soft before the Lord, and you will walk uprightly before Him.

The faithful preaching of God’s Word helps us to grow to be like Christ. It helps us to grow in the knowledge of who God is, what He is like; who Christ is, what He’s like; what He demands of us now, and His mission of seeking the lost, and making disciples for His glory. This is why the argument that we “don’t need the sermon anymore because we’ve outgrown it” is the wrong one to make.

We need to sit under the faithful preaching of God's Word; preaching that considers the point of the passage as the point of the sermon. We need to sit under such preaching, that not only takes seriously what the Bible says, but applies the Bible and makes a beeline to the finished work of Jesus. Such preaching will either harden our hearts (and confirm our unbelief) or soften our hearts, bringing along with it the conviction of sin, repentance, and growth in godliness. All of this is why preaching is important to the Christian life.

Biblical Counseling: A Ministry to Serve and Shepherd

By Dave Jenkins



In the past five years, as more and more books have come out on biblical counseling topics, I have consumed

more and more on this subject. The result of this reading has been the opening of my eyes to the need for biblical counseling in the local church. Thus, my aim here is to encourage those who are engaged in the work of biblical counseling, by calling to them to continue in faithfulness in serving and shepherding God's people in the context of the local church.

It has traditionally been thought that the counseling ministry is only the pastor's ministry. This idea is correct—in as far as it goes—but it doesn't go far enough. The pastor is to engage in pastoral care for the people of God. Often, however, pastors can only do so much to help people in their congregation, as their training in seminary equips them to help people only to a certain degree. As a result, they must ask for help by send hurting people out to others who have more training. This is where biblical counseling in the local church comes in.

Biblical counseling best describes the ministry that local churches should be engaged in—that is, taking the Word of God and helping God's people not only learn from the Word, but to submit to and apply the Word to their own lives. Biblical counseling is not an opponent of the pulpit ministry, but an extension of the preaching of the Word, and a means to shepherd God's people.

God's people deserve the best care possible: competent, loving, qualified, and shepherding care. This is why biblical counseling aims to serve and shepherd God's people. It seeks to do so by helping people learn to apply the redemptive story of Christ into every nook and cranny of their lives. The Bible speaks loudly and plainly to problems facing man, and as it does so, it points man to Christ alone.

Part of a pastor's job is to equip the saints for the work of the ministry. They are to shepherd the people of God well, and to help them grow in knowledge and skill with God's Word. Biblical counseling aims to help people learn to handle the Word of God; but instead of standing behind a pulpit, they stand *beside* hurting people with the Word. They walk alongside hurting people to help them understand the truth of God's Word.

Pastors can support the work of biblical counselors by encouraging those who sense a calling to this work to become certified in biblical counseling, through an organization such as the ACBC (Association of Biblical Counselors). Such certification programs help biblical counselors to learn not only biblical doctrine, but also how to

counsel from God's Word, with skill and a focus to help people grow in the application of the Word in their lives.

The counseling office should not be viewed as an opponent of the pulpit. Instead, it should be viewed as a *companion* to the preaching ministry of the local church. Pastors cannot meet with everyone in the church. They need help to care and counsel. This does not mean that pastors should never counsel. Instead, it means they need to have trusted men to counsel men and trusted women to counsel women. They also need to have married couples counseling married couples. Pastors should also seek further training in biblical counseling so they can provide excellent loving and shepherding care to the people of God.

The Church needs men and women equipped to give component care by trained biblical counselors. The need is great, and will only increase, as our culture continues its steadied and continual descent away from God. Biblical counseling is not a ministry to be avoided. Biblical counseling is a ministry where men and women serve under godly male qualified biblical elders, who provide accountability and oversight.

“People need to be equipped with knowing how to handle the Word and equally to understand how to navigate the challenges of life.”

With that said, organizations like ACBC provide excellent equipping, licensure, and training to help men and women to provide competent, professional care for God's people.

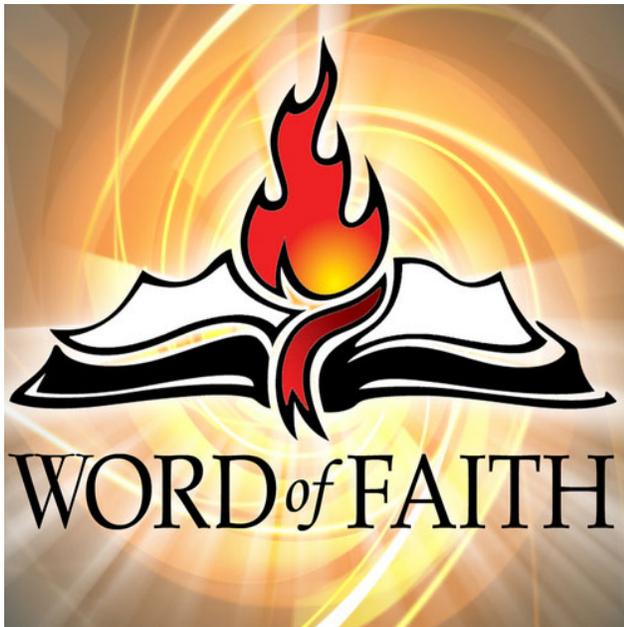
Biblical counseling is a needed ministry in the local church today. It is a ministry of serving and shepherding. It stands not

against the ministry of the Word, but instead seeks to serve as a companion to the pulpit ministry of local churches.

Biblical counseling, combined with biblical preaching, is the need of the hour. People need to be equipped with knowing how to handle the Word and equally to understand how to navigate the challenges of life. Biblical counseling seeks to serve the pulpit ministry, which is why biblical counseling is a ministry to serve and shepherd God's people. Such ministry in the local church will serve to help God's people to carry the load of ministry, free up their pastors to equip and serve the church, and to expand the Kingdom of God for His glory.

Three Errors of “Word of Faith” Preaching

By Josh Buice



The movement known as “Word of Faith” is a branch off of the Pentecostal movement.

In the late 20th century, E. W. Kenyon studied under Phineas Quimby and was taught a system known as “New Thought” that connected the mind with God’s Word in such a way that what we think and speak is brought into reality by God. This is where the “name it and claim it” theology originated. Quimby would pass on his teachings to men like Kenneth Hagin, and he would, in turn, make his own disciples.

Today, the “Word of Faith” movement is enormous—and is the prominent flavor of

theology found on the popular Trinity Broadcasting Network (TBN). When you hear popular voices like Joel Osteen and Joyce Meyer speak, they are employing the tactics of the Word of Faith system. It is one thing to criticize Joel Osteen’s preaching on various different levels—both serious and jokingly (such as on *The Babylon Bee*)—but at the foundation, what’s wrong with this approach to preaching?

Word of Faith Preaching Replaces the εὐαγγέλιον (Good News) with Carpe Diem

The common accent of Word of Faith preaching is centered upon your ability to claim “victory”, “peace”, “happiness”, or—in the words of Joel Osteen—“your best

life now". Rather than preaching the gospel, the Word of Faith preachers major on what can be seized by the power of *a person's will*.

First, unbelievers will die and go to Hell with the "carpe diem" theology. Getting more material wealth and seeking fleshly happiness will not remove the stain of sin. Why do people who embrace the Word of Faith theology go into jails and spend all of their precious time teaching people how to "declare" blessings and speak in tongues as opposed to majoring on their need of the gospel of Christ?

Secondly, the church needs the gospel rather than a message of "do better" or "work harder" to achieve *happiness*. The pulpit must be known for rich expositions of God's Word rather than superficial sermonettes filled with mystical "pie in the sky" theology. One serious critique of this type of preaching must be this question, "*Where is the Gospel?*" The Word of Faith theology focuses on getting people *rich* rather than making disciples through the gospel of Jesus Christ.

"According to the Word of Faith movement, if you speak it, your words have power to create, heal, and — in a negative manner— destroy and kill."

Word of Faith Preaching Replaces God's Word with Man's Word

True biblical preaching focuses on the *text of Scripture* and seeks to explicate the truths of the text in order to present the glorious truths of God before the eyes and ears of men. The preaching of men like Joel Osteen and women like Joyce Meyer focuses on the power of man's words. This position replaces the power of God's Word with the frail words of sinful men. This is a tragic mistake.

According to the Word of Faith movement, if you speak it, your words have power to create, heal, and—in a negative manner—to destroy and kill. Therefore, they major on the power of the spoken word. Regarding sickness, you will hear people who embrace the Word of Faith system talking about "not speaking" about sickness as if the words matter. In sermons by Word of Faith teachers, you will hear them instructing their congregations to "declare" certain words in order to "gain their victory" or "receive their happiness".

In an article about using words to declare victory over depression, Joel Osteen writes:

It's time to use our words to declare good things! Speak blessings over your life and your family. Throughout the day, say things such as, "I have the favor of

God. I am strong and healthy. I'm well able to do what I need to do." [1]

Word of Faith Preaching Replaces the Holy Spirit with Emotions

The worship services where Word of Faith theology is being employed rely on the movement of people's *emotions rather than the power of the Holy Spirit*. The flavor and accent of such preaching strikes at the heart of people's needs. Perhaps they have a disease that needs to be healed or a financial crisis that needs to be resolved; if they will just claim their victory or declare their financial blessing—according to the Word of Faith teachers—they will receive it.

The fuel of this movement is largely emotional, and it feeds upon the needs—often serious needs—of people. Rather than pointing people to a sovereign God who has spoken the world into existence and is capable of providing for the needs of His people, they manipulate people into a trance-like state where they encourage them to make powerful declarations and to believe it by faith. In the case of many like Joel Osteen, their sermon becomes a mixture of motivational speech, psychology, and mysticism.

Elizabeth A. Nixon, in her article titled, "*Are You Decreeing and Declaring in Your Prayers?*" writes the following about using declarations in prayer:

In Hebrew, decree means "to divide, separate and destroy." This definition reveals more of what happens in the spiritual realm. When we decree, "I am blessed" (inspired by Psalm 112:1), we establish the blessing while separating ourselves from anything purposed against it and destroying the plans of the enemy. When we decree, "My children are strong and full of integrity" (inspired by Psalm 112:2), we divide our children's strength from their weakness and separate dishonesty and unrighteousness from within their midst and in their hearts. When we decree, "My home brims with wealth" (inspired by Psalm 112:3), we establish our wealth and destroy the spirits of lack and poverty. [2]

Notice how the language is centered on the raw needs of people in this article.

This *decree* and *declare* tactic of the Word of Faith movement turns God into a cosmic bellhop rather than the sovereign Creator and Sustainer of the entire universe.

True biblical preaching points people to God's Word where they will be led to submit to God and His will. We are led to pray as Jesus taught us and to trust in the supernatural power of our God to accomplish His will. True biblical preaching is text-centered, Spirit-empowered, and God-exalting. True biblical preaching provides us with a proper perspective of ourselves in light of a biblical revelation of God. This approach changes how we look at life, tragedy, praises, and shapes how we pray.

The Word of Faith movement does the exact *opposite*, and for that reason, we must avoid such a model to preaching and worship because it belittles the glory of God, bypasses the sovereignty of God, teaches an improper view of man, and veils the true gospel of Christ.

References:

Joel Osteen, "[Change Your Words, Change Your World, Shape Your Future](#)" [accessed 10/1/17]
Elizabeth Nixon, "[Are You Decreeing and Declaring in Your Prayers?](#)" [accessed 10-17-17]

Practical Goals for Expository Preaching

By James Forbis

Within expository preaching, there are two practical goals worth achieving: conversion and discipleship.

As Paul writes in Romans 10:17, people come to faith in Christ through the hearing of the Word of God. In

2nd Timothy 4:2, he charges his disciple Timothy to use preaching as a means for discipleship. Conversion and discipleship go hand in hand because you cannot be discipled unless you are converted, and you cannot be converted unless a Christian shares the Gospel with you. It is a symbiotic relationship that is grounded in the expositional preaching of the Word of God.

Conversion

A preacher without a love for the lost has no business filling a pulpit. He is charged with shepherding his congregation and fostering their growth. He is also



charged with adding to that congregation by way of leading others to a life-changing encounter with the Savior through preaching. The great English pastor, Charles Haddon Spurgeon, was adamant about the ferocity that preachers should approach preaching to save souls:

“Oh my brothers and sisters in Christ, if sinners will be damned, at least let them leap to hell over our bodies and if they will perish, let them perish with our arms about their knees, imploring them to stay, and not madly to destroy themselves.”

The preacher will rightly labor hard and long for the conversion of a lost person, knowing fully well that the preached Word of God is the means God uses to

save the lost. The preacher must be concerned for the lost and be devoted to the cause of preaching to save the lost, since Jesus himself set this precedent. In Matthew 11:28-30, Jesus says, *“Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.”* Preach-

“Being conformed to the image of Christ is brought about through progressive sanctification and is most easily done through discipleship.”

ing the Word of God enables us to share in His burden for the lost of this world. Luke 19:10 states, *“For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost.”* We do not save people, only Jesus saves people. He has invited us to join Him on His mission to bring the Gospel to the ends of the earth.

Paul understood this better than any of the Apostles because he wrote of it so often. His mission in life was to be an ambassador for Christ and to preach the Gospel to all who would listen. 2nd Corinthians 5:20 exhorts, *“Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God.”* This is our mission, to be an ambassador for Christ. God desires to use us to make His appeal so that people can listen to Him speaking through the Scriptures which point them to Jesus.

Being concerned for the lost is an essential quality to a preacher. Every sermon must have a Christ-centered focus that takes people to the cross and shows them the redemptive work accomplished by Jesus. A preaching ministry that does not take into account the lost does a disservice to Jesus’s death on the cross.

Pastors must preach from the same viewpoint that Jesus had for the lost. To this end, the pastor should be the prime example of a Christian ambassador. The pastor is called to take care of the sheep, just as Jesus took care of His sheep. The

pastor must have compassion for sinners like Jesus did. The pastor must not fear the powers and principalities of Hell because Jesus did not fear these things. Jesus stands in the gap for Christians and lost people alike and thus bridges the gap between eternal damnation and eternal life.

Pastors must preach the Gospel, stand in the gap, and fight for the souls of the lost so that they may see Jesus face to face one day. We preach the Gospel because of what the Psalmist says in Psalm 16, *“You make known to me the path of life; in your presence, there is fullness of joy; at your right hand are pleasures forevermore.”* God makes known to us the path of life. He makes known to us the fullness of joy through Jesus Christ our Lord. This is the most important goal of expository preaching.

Discipleship

Abraham Kuruvilla explained, “Biblical preaching, by a leader of the church, in a gathering of Christians for worship, is the communication of the thrust of a periscope of Scripture discerned by theological exegesis, and of its application to that specific body of believers, that they may be conformed to the image of Christ, for the glory of God—all in the power of the Holy Spirit.”

Being conformed to the image of Christ is brought about through progressive sanctification and is most easily done through discipleship. Discipleship occurs when an older (at least in the faith) believer mentors and encourages a younger (or young in the faith) believer by building them up in Christ. In the rabbinical tradition of the Israelites, a rabbi chose his students for further teaching. The Christian today is prodded by the Holy Spirit to mentor and disciple younger believers.

Preaching is essential for discipleship to take place. Discipleship must continue to rely on preaching because it is through preaching that discipleship flourishes. Without preaching there is no growth from either side, faith becomes stagnant, and eventually the relationship turns into moralistic-legalistic accountability session that is void of the Gospel. This ushers in condemnation, regret, and fear of being vulnerable with someone else.

With the regular preaching of the Word of God, discipleship flourishes so that others are filled up with the grace and truth of God’s love. There is no condemnation from God because He has made us free from it due to the death of Christ as payment for sin. Therefore, discipleship must embrace preaching and preaching must encourage discipleship within the church.

Final Remarks

Since the ultimate goal of preaching is to bring glory to God, then discipleship

fits this framework perfectly. Helping other Christians conform to the image of Christ displays God's glory! Discipleship not only works on a person's character and heart, but also equips them to do the tasks that Christ commissioned His followers to pursue. Someone who is being discipled is following in the footsteps of the apostles, and modeling their lives after Christ. Colossians 1:10 says, "*Walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him, bearing fruit in very good work and increasing in the knowledge of God.*"

Pastors and ministry leaders with these two goals now must ask themselves these two questions, "Has the Gospel been articulated clearly for conversion in your preaching? And how does this sermon that I'm about to preach cultivate discipleship within the church?" If your sermon can successfully do these two things then expect God to do a mighty work in your church in raising up a generation of faithful followers of Christ who will live their lives on mission for His glory.

Recommended Reading on Expository Preaching

This season at Servants of Grace, we've been discussing the primary place of expository preaching for the life and health of the local church. From attacks on the Word of God, to essential biblical doctrines, there are a lot of issues that relate to and affect how one preaches the Word of God.

With this issue of *Theology for Life Magazine*, we have attempted to cover a wide variety of topics within this issue. We understand we haven't covered everything, but hopefully, readers will grow in their knowledge and understanding of the Bible and expository preaching from the Word of God. If you've found this subject intriguing and would like to study the issue further, please check out the recommended reading list below. These books are at the top of their genre in both excellence and readability.

Preaching:

- *Modern Preacher and the Ancient Text* by Sidney Greidanus
- *Preaching Christ from the Old Testament* by Sidney Greidanus
- *Preaching the Whole Bible as Christian Scripture* by Graeme Goldsworthy
- *Rediscovering Expository Preaching* Edited by John MacArthur
- *Preaching and Preachers* by D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, Deluxe 40th Anniversary Edition
- *Between Two Worlds: The Challenge of Preaching Today* by John Stott
- *Christ-Centered Preaching* by Bryan Chapell
- *How to Preach Biblically* by John MacArthur and the Master's Seminary Faculty
- *Feed My Sheep: A Passionate Plea* edited by Don Kistler
- *The Supremacy of God in Preaching* by John Piper
- *Preach: Theology Meets Practice* by Mark Dever and Greg Gilbert
- *Dying to Preach: Embracing the Cross in the Pulpit* by Steven W. Smith
- *Preaching to a Post-Everything World* by Zach Eswine
- *How to Evaluate A Sermon* by Joel Beeke
- *Preaching: A Biblical Theology* by Jason C. Meyer
- *Biblical Preaching* by Haddon Robinson

- *He is Not Silent: Preaching in a Postmodern World* by Albert Mohler
- *Reformed Preaching: Proclaiming God's Word from the Heart of the Preacher to the Heart of His People* by Joel Beeke

Pastoral Ministry:

- *The Cross and Christian Ministry* by D.A. Carson
- *Liberating Ministry from the Success Syndrome* by R. Kent Hughes
- *Brothers We Are Not Professionals* by Dr. John Piper
- *On Being A Pastor* by Derek J. Prime and Alister Begg
- *Preparation for Ministry* by Allan Harman
- *The Reformed Pastor* by Richard Baxter
- *Discerning Your Calling* by Jason K. Allen
- *The Pastor as Scholar and the Scholar as Pastor: Reflections on Life and Ministry* by John Piper and D.A. Carson
- *Encouragement for Today's Pastor: Help from the Puritans* by Joel Beeke and Terry Slachter
- *Dear Timothy: Letters on Pastoral Ministry* edited by Tom Ascol
- *Lectures to My Students* by Charles Spurgeon
- *Preaching the Whole Bible as Christian Scripture* by Graeme Goldsworthy
- *The Christian Ministry* by Charles Bridges
- *Nine Marks of a Healthy Church* by Mark Dever
- *Biblical Eldership* by Alexander Strauch
- *The Trellis and the Vine* by Colin Marshal and Tony Payne
- *Spiritual Leadership* by J. Oswald Sanders
- *Pastoral Ministry* by John MacArthur
- *The Conviction to Lead: 25 Principles for Leadership that Matters* by Albert Mohler
- *The Pastor's Ministry: Biblical Priorities for Faithful Shepherds* by Brian Croft
- *The Pastor's Book: A Comprehensive and Practical Guide to Pastoral Ministry* by Kent Hughes
- *Zeal Without Burnout* by Christopher Ash
- *Dangerous Calling: Confronting the Unique Challenges of Pastoral Ministry* by Paul David Tripp

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I hope you enjoy reading these books as much as I have. I know you will find them helpful in your further study of these subjects.

In Christ Alone,

Dave Jenkins
Executive Editor, *Theology for Life Magazine*

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Landon Coleman serves as the teaching pastor of Immanuel Baptist Church in Odessa, Texas, where he lives with his wife Brooke. They have four children, Emma, Noelle, Amelia, and Clayton. He is the author of *Pastor to Pastor: Practical Advice for Regular Pastors* and *Pray Better: Learning to Pray Biblically*, both of which were published by Rainer Publishing.



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