

Preaching Magazine's 2015 Book of the Year, *On Preaching* is a primer on biblical preaching for pastors, seminarians, church planters, and Bible teachers. Full of energy and formatted into 30 short chapters, it gets straight to the point of how to preach well.

Interested in the whole book?
Select your preferred book seller:

MOODY PUBLISHERS 

APPLE BOOKS



AMAZON



WALMART



TARGET



LIFEWAY



GOOGLE PLAY



CHRISTIANBOOK.COM 

BARNES & NOBLE



CONTENTS

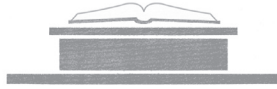
| | |
|--|----|
| Introduction: My Preaching Crisis | 9 |
| Part 1: Preparation for Preaching | |
| 1. Preach the Word! | 15 |
| 2. Theological Training | 20 |
| 3. Finding Time to Study | 24 |
| 4. Developing a Sermon Calendar | 28 |
| 5. Sermon Preparation | 35 |
| 6. Why I Pray before I Preach | 40 |
| 7. What I Pray before I Preach | 44 |
| Part 2: The Practice of Preaching | |
| 8. Using Scripture in Preaching | 50 |
| 9. Selecting a Text to Preach | 54 |
| 10. Consecutive Exposition | 58 |
| 11. Becoming a Better Expositor | 63 |
| 12. Sermon Outlines | 68 |
| 13. Choosing Sermon Titles | 73 |

| | |
|--------------------------------|-----|
| 14. Sermon Introductions | 78 |
| 15. Sermon Transitions | 83 |
| 16. Sermon Illustrations | 86 |
| 17. Sermon Conclusions | 91 |
| 18. Writing Sermon Manuscripts | 95 |
| 19. Preaching without Notes | 101 |

Part 3: Points of Wisdom for Preaching

| | |
|---|-----|
| 20. Being Yourself in the Pulpit | 108 |
| 21. Developing Your Style of Preaching | 111 |
| 22. Pulpit Consistency | 116 |
| 23. Indecent Exposure in the Pulpit | 119 |
| 24. Pulpit Plagiarism | 124 |
| 25. Protecting Your Voice for Preaching | 128 |
| 26. Being a Guest Preacher | 132 |
| 27. Being an Associate Minister | 138 |
| 28. When You Lose Your Cutting Edge | 144 |
| 29. Do You Want to Be Somebody? | 148 |
| 30. The Bottom Line of Christian Ministry | 152 |

Chapter 1



PREACH THE WORD!

What is preaching?

The term Paul used in 2 Timothy 4:2, where he charges Timothy to preach the Word, was originally a political term, not a religious one. It referred to the function of a herald. If the king had a message to get out, he couldn't just call a press conference and have all the news media publish or broadcast his remarks. He would dispatch his herald to deliver his message to his people. When the herald arrived at a city, he would cry out his message in a grave, formal, and authoritative voice. When he spoke, the people did well to listen and take heed. To ignore the herald's message was to reject the king's authority. And the herald would be careful to proclaim the king's message with clarity and accuracy. To misrepresent the king's message was just as dangerous as rejecting it.

This is the picture that naturally came to Timothy's mind when Paul charged him to be God's herald who faithfully proclaims the Word of God. And the assignment has not changed for those of us who preach today. We must preach the Word.

It is God's will to save the lost and sanctify the church through faithful, biblical, Christ-centered preaching. Unfortunately, biblical preaching is not a high priority for many people looking for a

church. Secondary things like music styles, ministry programs, and congregational prominence are often deemed more important than biblical preaching. In some instances, church shoppers consider a congregation's available parking spaces before they ever consider that congregation's doctrinal positions. Consequently, many pastors and churches—seeking either survival on one hand or success on the other—have compromised the centrality of preaching.

But preaching is and has always been the distinguishing mark of the true church of Jesus Christ. Faithful preaching is the essential mark of the true church, because if a church faithfully preaches the Word and allows its life to be shaped by it, everything will eventually fall into its proper place. Conversely, a church's apparent success is only incidental if it does not have a biblical standard of measuring, sustaining, or renewing its ministry. Biblical preaching is the central, primary, and decisive function of those God calls to shepherd the church.

Paul's charge to Timothy is the Lord's charge to every preacher: Preach the Word! This divine command obligates us to preach; moreover, it specifies what we are to preach: the Word. The importance of preaching rests in its content, not in its function. Our preaching is not the reason the Word works. The Word is the reason our preaching works. This is the biblical priority of pastoral ministry. We are charged to carry out a holy function—preaching. And we are charged to herald a holy message—the Word.

But what does it mean to preach the Word?

PREACH THE CONTENT OF THE WORD

The herald was on assignment to deliver the message of the king. It was not his message. And he did not have editorial authority over it. He could not change the message to suit the crowd. Neither

can we. The pulpit is not the place for personal testimonies, political speeches, group therapy sessions, motivational talks, self-help advice, worldly philosophies, or scientific theories. The pulpit is the throne of the Word of God. Therefore, the sacred text must be the priority of our preaching.

One noted scholar often says that those who preach should always be pointing to the text. Literally. If you are gesturing with your right hand, you should keep your left hand's finger on the text. If you reverse hands for gesturing, you should also reverse hands for holding your spot in the text. This is a practical way to remember that our preaching should always point to the text. We must preach "the sacred writings" (2 Timothy 3:15). And we must preach "all Scripture" (2 Timothy 3:16). Did you get that? Preach the Bible. But don't just preach your pet topics, hobbyhorses, or favorite doctrines. Preach it all. Strive to end your ministry with the words of Paul: "Therefore I testify to you this day that I am innocent of the blood of all, for I did not shrink from declaring to you the whole counsel of God" (Acts 20:26-27).

PREACH THE MEANING OF THE WORD

We must preach the content of Scripture. But biblical preaching involves more than reading, quoting, or mentioning Scripture in your sermon. The content of our messages must line up with the meaning of the text. Paul wisely counsels, "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" (2 Timothy 2:15).

Scholars are not sure what particular nuance Paul intended when he speaks of "handling the word of truth." But the big idea is clear. The pastor-teacher who is approved by God and needs not be ashamed of his work must have an unwavering commitment to the

faithful exposition of the Word of truth. Ultimately, there are only two ways to preach—by exposition or by imposition. Either your preaching explains the God-intended meaning of the text or it sinfully imposes human speculation onto the text.

Think about it. When you go to the airport to catch a flight, you are clear about the destination, flight number, and time of departure. But there is another key piece of information you need before you travel. You may not think about it until you get to the airport. But when you arrive, the gate number becomes all-important. You don't just go to any gate and hop on a plane. You go to the specified gate, because going to the wrong gate, even if it's just the next one over, can lead you far from your intended destination. Likewise, a lack of precision in handling the Scriptures can lead people far away from God, rather than closer to Him.

PREACH THE FOCUS OF THE WORD

When Paul charged Timothy to preach the Word, he specifically had the Old Testament in mind. The writing of the New Testament canon was still in process, even as Paul wrote the words of 2 Timothy. The Old Testament was the collected body of Scripture from which the early church preached. Yet Timothy's preaching of the Old Testament was to be done as a minister of the new covenant (2 Corinthians 3:6). He was to read the Old Testament texts with New Testament eyes. His preaching was to focus on the divine person and redemptive work of Christ.

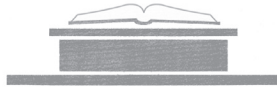
The Lord Jesus Christ was the focus of Paul's preaching. "We preach Christ crucified," he declared (1 Corinthians 1:23). "For what we proclaim is not ourselves," he testified, "but Jesus Christ as Lord, with ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake (2 Corinthians 4:5). Paul preached Christ. And when he exhorted his protégé

to preach the Word, he clearly intended that the message of Christ should be the focus of his proclamation of Scripture.

On one occasion, someone complained to Charles Spurgeon that all his sermons sounded alike. “And so they should,” he replied. “First I take a text, and then I make a beeline for the cross.” Likewise, our preaching should unapologetically focus on the virgin birth, impeccable life, substitutionary death, glorious resurrection, and imminent return of Jesus Christ. “Him we proclaim,” the apostle boldly declares, “warning everyone and teaching everyone with all wisdom, that we may present everyone mature in Christ” (Colossians 1:28). It is not Christian preaching if the person and work of Christ is not the centerpiece of the message. We are to be heralds of the Word and witnesses for the Lord Jesus Christ.

What are you preaching?

Chapter 2



THEOLOGICAL TRAINING

As a boy preacher, my father let me preach one Youth Sunday at our church. After the service, a brother commended my sermon, concluding, “Junior, in a minute you are going to out-preach your old man.” When I later told my dad about the statement, I was shocked by his response. He completely affirmed it, even though the man did not have good intentions for saying it. He warned me that with the opportunities to learn and grow that I would have, I had better be a better preacher than him.

My father was right. When my father was a young preacher, to use the biblical languages he had to learn the biblical languages. There was no Bible software to help him easily get to the meaning of Greek and Hebrew words. If my dad wanted to go to school, he had to go to school. Correspondence and online options for ministerial training were not available to him.

Resources my father could never have imagined are now available all around us. But we must take advantage of them. There is absolutely no excuse for any preacher to not be prepared to faithfully carry out the call to preach. Here are several helpful hints to

consider as you prayerfully determine what training options and opportunities are best for you.

IF YOU CAN GO TO SEMINARY, DO IT

Not every preacher will have the opportunity to go off to seminary to prepare for ministry. But if you have the opportunity to go to seminary, by all means, do it. Of course, this is not a word from on high. And I understand that you must factor in your present family, work, and ministry responsibilities—not to mention the money. But if there seem to be green lights at these intersections, I would encourage you to prayerfully go forward and begin school.

There are some men who are very disciplined Bible students. And they are equipped for ministry through self-education. But most of us need the accountability and experience of actually being in a class, with all that requires. When you go into the pastorate, you become the resident theologian of your local church. You need to be a man of the Book to be a faithful pastor. And you need to learn how to exegete Scripture accurately to be a faithful preacher. So by all means, go if you can go. And do it before life, family, and ministry catches up to you.

SEMINARY DOES NOT MAKE PASTORS AND PREACHERS

My father used to say that seminary just shines shoes. Guys who shine shoes do not make the shoes. They just shine them. If you don't bring a pair of shoes, they don't have anything to work with. Likewise, seminary does not make preachers. It doesn't make pastors. School can teach a man the biblical languages, systematic theology, church history, and even principles of Christian ministry. But if the Lord has not called you into His service, these things will

not make you a pastor or a preacher.

Make sure you have a clear sense about the call of God on your life first. Get input from your pastor, congregation, family, and godly people you trust. If you are not clear about your call, wait. I would not advise you to go in order to figure out God's call. You may spend four years and end up even more confused! But if you have clarity about the Lord's call, go to school and prepare yourself the best you can for God (2 Timothy 2:15).

GO TO A BIBLE-BELIEVING SCHOOL

I know this may be hard for some of you to believe. Unfortunately, it's true. Some so-called Christian professors and schools do not believe the Bible. They spend more time trying to undermine its authority than teaching its message. So do your homework. And do not waste your time on any school that is not totally committed to the Bible. I don't care how famous or prestigious that school is. It is better to attend a small school where you will learn the Bible than to have a degree from some major institution that teaches liberal theology.

On that same note, I would not recommend that a pastor go to school to major in business, economics, computers, or other disciplines. Of course, this is between you and the Lord. But if the Lord has called you to be a herald of the Word or to shepherd the souls that He has purchased with His own blood, you should use the opportunity to focus on "the queen of the sciences"—theology!

BE A STUDENT—WHETHER OR NOT YOU ARE IN SCHOOL

Charles Haddon Spurgeon, the "Prince of Preachers," did not have formal training. In fact, he was not even formally ordained. He considered ordination to be the laying of empty hands on empty

heads. Yet you would be hard pressed to find anyone who could match Spurgeon's mind for truth, preaching prowess, and pastoral vision.

True leaders are learners. Even if school is not for you now, keep studying. We really have no excuses these days for ignorance. As I mentioned earlier, for my father to learn the languages, systematic theology, and the other disciplines, he had to go to school. But we live in a day where there are so many resources available through various means. One of my favorite Bible teachers and authors admits that he is not a scholar in the languages, but he does know how to use the tools. And that would be my advice to you. You master a trade by learning how to use the tools. Remember, there are no better minds, just better libraries. Study hard and take every opportunity you are given to continue learning.

DO NOT GO TO SCHOOL JUST
BECAUSE YOU WANT TO PASTOR

Many churches require at least a master's degree in their pastoral search process. This priority of having a prepared man is important and commendable. But it can also be misguided. A degree from a school does not tell you if a man has a godly character, a pastor's heart, or a gift to preach and teach. I know men who have finished their formal training, but have been unable to find an opportunity for pastoral ministry. And I know men who have not finished their formal training, but have been given opportunities to serve in the pastoral role. Ultimately, the Lord is the sovereign "Booking Agent" for pastors and preachers. He opens doors that no one can close and closes doors that no one can open. Trust the Lord to assign you where He wants you to be at the right time (Isaiah 40:28–31).

Interested in the whole book?
Select your preferred book seller:

MOODY PUBLISHERS 

AMAZON 

APPLE BOOKS 

GOOGLE PLAY 

TARGET 

WALMART 

LIFEWAY 

BARNES & NOBLE 

CHRISTIANBOOK.COM 