

A Ministry of the Word of God

Tyndale Theological Seminary
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The Pastor as a Preacher

I. The Primacy of Preaching

1. It is foundational

42 And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. Acts 2:42

2. It brings wisdom and understanding.

9 And so, from the day we heard, we have not ceased to pray for you, asking that you may be filled with the knowledge of his will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, 10 so as to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God. Colossians 1:9–10

3. It is a stewardship according to God's grace.

25 of which I became a minister **according to the stewardship from God** that was given to me for you, to make the word of God fully known, 26 the mystery hidden for ages and generations but now revealed to his saints. 27 To them God chose to make known how great among the Gentiles are the riches of the glory of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory. 28 Him we proclaim, warning everyone and teaching everyone with all wisdom, that we may present everyone mature in Christ. 29 For this I toil, struggling with all his energy that he powerfully works within me. Colossians 1:25–29

4. It's content is the Word of God.

16 All Scripture is breathed out by God and **profitable for teaching**, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, 17 that the man of God may be competent, equipped for every good work. 2 Timothy 3:16–17

5. It is a responsibility to be taken seriously.

1 I charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by his appearing and his kingdom: 2 **preach the word**; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching. 3 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, 4 and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander off into myths. 2 Timothy 4:1–4

See Al Mohler’s article

II. The Practice of Preaching Defined

A. NT words used for preaching (Preaching is the setting forth of God’s Word)

1. Κηρυσσο Ro. 10:15; 2 Tim 4:2

15 And how are they to **preach** unless they are sent? As it is written, “How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news!” Romans 10:15

2 **preach** the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching. 2 Timothy 4:2

to publicly announce religious truths and principles while urging acceptance and compliance—‘to preach.

2. Καταγγελλω Col 1:28

28 Him we proclaim, warning everyone and teaching everyone with all wisdom, that we may present everyone mature in Christ. Colossians 1:28

To tell, declare. To declare plainly, openly, or aloud.

3. Ευαγγελιζω Ro 10:15

15 And how are they to preach unless they are sent? As it is written, “How beautiful are the feet of those who **preach the good news!**” Romans 10:15

To evangelize, proclaim the good news, preach the gospel. It was at the time that the first Christians were “scattered abroad, and went about preaching the Word” after the martyrdom of Stephen (he being one of the seven), that the verb *euaggelizō* (2097), to publish the good tidings or good news, was used by Luke in Acts 8:4, 12, 25, 35, 40.¹

4. Προευαγγελιζομαι Gal 3:8

¹ Zodhiates, S. (2000). *The complete word study dictionary : New Testament* (electronic ed.). Chattanooga, TN: AMG Publishers.

8 And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, **preached** the gospel beforehand to Abraham, saying, “In you shall all the nations be blessed.” Galatians 3:8

To preach the gospel or the good news. To proclaim the gospel beforehand. Only in Gal. 3:8.

5. Προκαρυσσο Acts 13:24

24 Before his coming, John had **proclaimed** a baptism of repentance to all the people of Israel. Acts 13:24

To herald, preach. To proclaim beforehand. In the NT generally to announce or preach beforehand; in the past tenses, to have announced or preached before.

6. Πληρωω (Not in class outline)

17 But the Lord stood by me and strengthened me, so that through me the message might be fully proclaimed and all the Gentiles might hear it. So I was rescued from the lion’s mouth. 2 Timothy 4:17

To relate fully the content of a message—‘to proclaim, to tell fully, to proclaim completely.’

B. Preaching is foolishness to the world

21 For since, in the wisdom of God, the world did not know God through wisdom, it pleased God **through the folly of what we preach** to save those who believe. 22 For Jews demand signs and Greeks seek wisdom, 23 but we preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and folly to Gentiles, 1 Corinthians 1:21–23

C. Preaching is food for the believer (what are the results of preaching?)

Col 1:28 warning

28 Him we proclaim, warning everyone and teaching everyone with all wisdom, that we may present everyone mature in Christ.

Colossians 1:28

Ro 10:15 salvation

15 And how are they to preach unless they are sent? As it is written, “How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news!” Romans 10:15

2 Tim 3:16-17 growing as a believer

16 All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, 17 that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work. 2 Timothy 3:16–17

D. Preaching is an act of worship. (This is not in the class outline)

If it is not, then it will call attention to itself or to the preacher, and not to God. When preaching is not an act of worship, there is the danger that the congregation may worship the preacher and not God.

Expository preaching is central, irreducible, and nonnegotiable to the Bible’s mission of authentic worship that pleases God. John Stott’s simple declaration states the issue boldly: “Preaching is indispensable to Christianity.” More specifically, preaching is indispensable to Christian worship—and not only indispensable, but central.

The centrality of preaching is the theme of both testaments of Scripture. In Nehemiah 8 we find the people demanding that Ezra the scribe bring the book of the law to the assembly. Ezra and his colleagues stand on a raised platform and read from the book. When he opens the book to read, the assembly rises to its feet in honor of the word of God and their response to the reading is to answer, “Amen, Amen!”

(<http://www.albertmohler.com/2005/08/09/expository-preaching-and-the-recovery-of-christian-worship-part-one>)

5 And Ezra opened the book in the sight of all the people, for he was above all the people, and as he opened it all the people stood. 6 And Ezra blessed the LORD, the great God, and all the people answered, “Amen, Amen,” lifting up their hands. And they bowed their heads and worshiped the LORD with their faces to the ground. Nehemiah 8:5–6

3 And they stood up in their place and read from the Book of the Law of the LORD their God for a quarter of the day; for another quarter of it they made confession and worshiped the LORD their God. Nehemiah 9:3

16 to be a minister of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles in the priestly service of the gospel of God, so that the offering of the Gentiles may be acceptable, sanctified by the Holy Spirit. Romans 15:16

When a man has a high view of preaching, he will reach higher in his preaching. Paul looked upon his ministry as that of a priest at the altar: "... to be a minister of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles with the priestly duty of proclaiming the gospel of God, so that the Gentiles might become an offering acceptable to God, sanctified by the Holy Spirit" (Rom. 15:16, NIV).

If our preaching is an act of worship, we will want to give God our best. We will also seek to honor him, not glorify ourselves or try to show people how learned or clever we are. Furthermore, the sermon will then fit into the total context of worship so that everything in the service will point to the Savior.

"You can never make a sermon what it ought to be," said Phillips Brooks, "if you consider it alone. The service that accompanies it, the prayer and praise, must have their influence on it."²

III. The Power of Preaching the Word

A. The power of God inherent in the Word

One of the mysteries of the Word of God is how it has a life transforming impact upon those who come under its influence. Timothy is charged to "preach the Word" precisely because it is the Word that makes the difference.

Dr. Bryan Chapel notes the below power which is inherent in the Word of God. (Christ Centered Preaching, p. 27)

1. *Creates* 3 And God said, "Let there be light," and there was light. Genesis 1:3
9 For he spoke, and it came to be; he commanded, and it stood firm. Psalm 33:9
2. *Controls* 15 He sends out his command to the earth; his word runs swiftly. 16 He gives snow like wool; he scatters frost like ashes. 17 He hurls down his crystals of ice like crumbs; who can stand before his cold? 18 He sends out his word, and melts them; he makes his wind blow and the waters flow. Psalm 147:15–18
3. *Convicts:* 28 Let the prophet who has a dream tell the dream, but let him who has my word speak my word faithfully. What has straw in common with wheat? declares

² Wiersbe, W. W., & Wiersbe, D. (1986). *The elements of preaching : The art of biblical preaching clearly and simply presented* (21–22). Wheaton, Ill.: Tyndale House Publishers.

the LORD. 29 Is not my word like fire, declares the LORD, and like a hammer that breaks the rock in pieces? Jeremiah 23:28–29

4. *Performs its purpose:* 10 “For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven and do not return there but water the earth, making it bring forth and sprout, giving seed to the sower and bread to the eater, 11 so shall my word be that goes out from my mouth; it shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose, and shall succeed in the thing for which I sent it. Isaiah 55:10–11

5. *Overrides human weakness:* 18 What then? Only that in every way, whether in pretense or in truth, Christ is proclaimed, and in that I rejoice. Yes, and I will rejoice, Philippians 1:18

B. The power of the Word manifested in Christ

God reveals the power of his word uniquely when he reveals Christ in the New Testament as the Logos of God that has now been made manifest among us.

The creative power of God’s Word and the person of Christ come together for us in the NT.

1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. 2 He was in the beginning with God. 3 All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made. John 1:1–3

Christ is the “logos”. 1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. John 1:1

14 And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth. John 1:14

23 since you have been born again, not of perishable seed but of imperishable, through the living and abiding word of God; 1 Peter 1:23

C. The power of the Word applied in preaching (excerpts from Christ Centered Preaching pp. 30 ff)

The fact that the power for spiritual change resides in God’s Word argues the case for expository preaching. Biblical exposition binds the preacher and the people to the only source of true spiritual change.

Preaching addresses the perpetual human quest for authority and meaning. The answer to the radical relativism of our culture and its accompanying uncertainties is the Bible's claim of authority. Without this authority preaching becomes mere man's words incased in fancy techniques, therapies and philosophies.

When we proclaim the Word, we bring the work of the Holy Spirit to bear on other's lives. No truth brings greater encouragement in our preaching and gives us more cause to expect results from our efforts. The Holy Spirit uses our words, but his work, not ours, affects the hidden recesses of the human will.

8 And when he comes, he will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment: 9 concerning sin, because they do not believe in me; 10 concerning righteousness, because I go to the Father, and you will see me no longer; 11 concerning judgment, because the ruler of this world is judged. John 16:8–11

These truths should serve to challenge us and to encourage us. It is not the words we speak which contain power. Rather it is the Word of God preached through God's servant, anointed by the Spirit, which becomes the Word of God that is the power of God for salvation of all who believe.

IV. The Preparation for Preaching

A. Time in the Word

There is nothing that will replace the time you spend in the Word. Read all other resources that you will but they will never have the impact of that time exposed to God's Word. This is not a quick read. It is a period of soaking.

Great preaching is the result of the simmering affect the Word has in our lives.

B. Preaching to self, first

It is a goal of mine to never step in front of people to preach the Word without first having preached it to myself. This does not mean that God has finish finished pressing His Word into my heart at the moment of preaching but that I as a preacher and fellow human am in the process of "make every effort possible to live a godly life" (cf. 2 Peter 1:3-11)

The preacher is a part of the message. He cannot separate himself from it. Phillip Brooks defined preaching as "the bringing of truth through personality". As a preacher not only do I speak forth the Word of God but I am also a witness to the Word. Which means, I have personally experienced the power of the Word in my life and therefore

can share it with others.

C. Keeping the purpose in mind

A pilot must know where he is going to land is apt to land about anywhere. Know what the purpose of the sermon is. What response do you want from the people?

(Excerpt from Wiersbe, *The Elements of Preaching*, p. 25)

If the preacher has done his heart-work and his homework, he should be able to state in one sentence exactly what his message is about and what he wants to accomplish. John Henry Jowett said, "I have a conviction that no sermon is ready for preaching... until we can express its theme in a short, pregnant sentence as clear as crystal" (*The Preacher: His Life and Work*, p. 133).

Teachers of homiletics call this sentence by different terms: the sermon proposition, the theme sentence, the "big idea." This sentence is to the sermon what the spine is to the skeleton, and the foundation to the house: it holds things together and helps to determine what the final product will become.

This proposition should have the following characteristics:

It should be biblical, a timeless truth that is worth preaching about.

It should be important and relevant to the needs of the congregation.

It should be definite and clear, uncluttered by abstract language or literary embellishments.

It should be accurate and honest and not promise more than the preacher can produce. You don't lay a foundation for a skyscraper and then build a chicken coop on it.

It should be interesting so that the listener is encouraged to want to listen to the development of the theme in the sermon.

It should usually be stated in the present tense, what God does for us today and not what he did for Moses centuries ago. "Jesus helped Peter when he was sinking" is a valid statement; but for a sermon thesis, it would better be stated, "In the storms of your life, your Savior is present to help you."

Here are some additional examples:

If you really believe you are going to heaven, then that belief ought to make a difference in your life.

We usually think about the "blessings" of prayer; but have you ever considered prayer as dangerous business?

"The Lord God omnipotent reigneth!" Now, that cardinal conviction will be found, when you explore and examine it, to lead to three results.

—Dr. James S. Stewart

How does the Cross, with its message of forgiveness and healing, affect the memory of sin?

—Dr. William M. Clow

“What think ye of Christ?” Let us go to those who knew Christ, and ask what they thought of Him.

—Dwight L. Mood³

D. Cautions to be aware of

- a) Preaching to please
- b) Preaching for recognition
- c) Misusing personal experience
- d) The need of approval from others.

“If I am to preach effectively I must be freed from my need for people’s applause” John Ortberg

E. Never be satisfied with your preaching

(excerpt from Warren Wiersbe’s “The Elements of Preaching”)

Once you are, nobody else will be. There is always more truth to learn from the Word, as well as more truth to live. We can always grow in our homiletical skills and in our presentation of the Word.

Success can become a great enemy of progress. Don’t believe everything people say about your preaching.

When you find yourself cutting corners on your preparation because you think you have mastered all the skills, then stop and repent.

“I dread getting to be a mere preaching machine,” said Spurgeon, “without my heart and soul being exercised in this solemn duty—lest it should be a mere piece of clock-work.”

How, then, do we improve our preaching?

First, by cultivating our own spiritual life. The work that we do cannot be divorced from the life that we live. “Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine...” was Paul’s admonition to a young preacher.

³ Wiersbe, W. W., & Wiersbe, D. (1986). *The elements of preaching : The art of biblical preaching clearly and simply presented* (25–28). Wheaton, Ill.: Tyndale House Publishers.

Second, by constantly learning about preaching and all that relates to it. Not only must we read again the classic texts, but we must encounter the new books that are coming out, and seek to learn from them. Don't settle only for the writers who agree with you; read some that disagree with you. They may teach you more.

Third, by entering more fully into the lives of our people. We learn constantly from the book of humanity just as we learn from the Bible and the book of nature. The babies in the nursery, the children in school, the teenagers, the young singles, the newlyweds, the people in mid-life, and the senior saints will all enrich your life and your preaching. Whatever makes you more of a human being will help you become a better preacher, if you permit the Spirit to direct you.

Finally, by suffering in the will of God. Luther said that prayer, meditation, and suffering make a preacher, and he was right. The stars shine the brightest when the night is the darkest, and God is able to give us songs in the night.⁴

Conclusion:

Men we have been given one of the holiest responsibilities of all “to preach the Word”. It is not a responsibility to be taken lightly. Nor one to take pride in. It is a calling, a granting by God of his divine power which enables some to be his mouth piece. Let those who have ears hear.

25 of which I became a **minister according to the stewardship** from God that was given to me for you, **to make the word of God fully known**, 26 the mystery hidden for ages and generations but now revealed to his saints. 27 To them God chose to make known how great among the Gentiles are the riches of the glory of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.
Colossians 1:25–27

28 **Him we proclaim**, warning everyone and teaching everyone with all wisdom, that we may present everyone mature in Christ. 29 For **this I toil, struggling with all his energy** that he powerfully works within me. Colossians 1:28–29

I remember about six years ago coming to a particular point in my own ministry. It lingers very clearly in mind even as I speak to you today. God pressed into my heart the greatest sense of confidence that I was fulfilling the ministry he had given to me. And at the same time was this very acute awareness that I in my own strength was unable to fulfill that ministry.

“I have never been more confident of God’s calling in my life and never more aware of my inability to fulfill this calling”.

⁴ Wiersbe, W. W., & Wiersbe, D. (1986). *The elements of preaching : The art of biblical preaching clearly and simply presented* (68–69). Wheaton, Ill.: Tyndale House Publishers.