

# CHAPTER 7: PREACHING THE WORD

## SUMMARY

It is common to see the inspiration and authority of Scripture as a church's stated belief, but the church's normal practice seems to undermine the sufficiency of Scripture. Among other places, this is betrayed in their preaching. A message begins by giving passing platitudes to a text, but what is expounded is another idea altogether or a concoction of worldly wisdom. The underlying current is that Scripture is not sufficient and must be supplemented. This is not to say that ideas and insights cannot be used to round out a message, but the sermon or teaching must be based on what the text says. The role of the preacher is to dive into the text, mine the depths and reveal the truth that is there in the Scripture.

The Holy Spirit always uses the revealed Word of God to open the eyes of both the unbeliever and believer to the wonders of the gospel. The preacher should not feel as if he is carrying the burden of life change; he merely carries the burden of faithful exposition and the robust proclamation of the text at hand, trusting that God's Word will never return void (Isa. 55:10–11).

## AUDIT

*Individual*

1. How much anxiety do you carry when preparing to teach or preach?
2. How much of your time in preparation do you spend trying to make your teaching creative or relevant? How much time is spent on the text itself?
3. Is there a joyful seriousness that marks both your study and delivery of the Word of God?

4. How often, when preparing messages, do you find your affections stirred by the truth you are discovering?
5. Are you guilty of studying to learn for other people without letting the gravity of the text bear its weight on you? Explain.
6. How often are you the “hero” in your sermon illustrations? What is the last struggle you shared?
7. Since all Scripture points to Jesus, do all your sermons point to Jesus? Why? Why not?

*Group*

1. How have your recent sermons pointed people away from themselves and toward God? Explain.
2. Have your recent sermons pointed to Jesus? Why? Why not?
3. How often do you teach out of the New Testament compared to the Old Testament?
4. Is it difficult for you to preach the gospel from the Old Testament? Why?
5. Do you feel like you have a good understanding of redemptive history? How is that fleshed out in your sermons and teachings?

6. How often do your pastors and teachers share their own struggles and difficulties?
7. In what ways are the delivery and tone of your sermons and teachings affecting your church's culture?

## **RENEWAL**

### *Individual*

1. Ask a few respected peers to evaluate your most recent teachings or sermons. Have them consider the following questions: Did the teachings point people to Jesus as their only hope? Did the teachings stick to the text? Who was the hero in the illustrations? How would the tone affect, nonbelievers, struggling believers and mature believers?
2. Listen to gospel-centered teaching from Tullian Tchividjian, JoÚ Piper, Tim Keller, etc. Take notes on how they handle the text and keep the gospel at the center of their sermons.
3. Take a topic that you are passionate about (abortion, homosexuality, marriage, parenting, etc.) and create a teaching on it that is biblical and gospel centered.
4. When preparing for your next sermon or teaching, check your heart and consider the following questions: How did the truth of the text stir your affections for the Lord? Are you sticking to the text? Is your message centered on the gospel? How does it apply to you personally? How can you teach out of your own struggles and weaknesses?

## *Group*

1. **Do an audit of the songs that you sing in your worship services. Are they based on Scripture? Are they doctrinally accurate? Think through ways to help your people understand that the songs they sing are another way to proclaim the truth of the gospel.**
2. **Consider preaching through a book of the Bible, perhaps from the Old Testament. Begin to think through the ways this book teaches the gospel and connects into redemptive history.**
3. **Share struggles related to the topic and themes of the upcoming sermon or sermon series. Think about specific ways you can preach out of these struggles, being transparent and honest with your people, possibly through illustrations that don't make you the hero.**
4. **Evaluate recent sermons and teachings in the church. Consider the following questions: Did the teachings point people to Jesus as their only hope? Did the teachings stick to the text? Who was the hero in the illustrations?**
5. **Based on the evaluations, create a checklist of ways that future sermons and teachings can be more biblical and centered on the gospel.**

## **PRAYER**

*Father, we thank You for Your Word. We thank You that You would give us this guide, this truth, that is breathed by You and useful for teaching, for reproof, for correction and for training in righteousness. Help us to preach in a way that is true to Scripture and that proclaims the good news of the gospel. Find us obedient, dear Lord. Amen.*