

THE KIND OF PREACHING NEEDED TODAY

J.J. Turner, Ph.D.

Just when I thought I'd heard it all relative to the kinds of sermons some preachers preach, I read this headline, *Why I Did a Funeral for a Dog*. Tom Buck, a Baptist preacher, told why he chose to stand in his church's worship center, filled with civilians and law enforcement officers, prepared to preach at a memorial service—for a K-9 dog named Ogar. The preacher went on in his article sharing all the reactions, emotions, and lessons he learned in accepting the challenge. (www.christianitytoday.com/Leadership Today/3/2/2016).

I am not the judge of this man's heart, God does that (Hebrews 4:12), but I join those who question the negative light this sheds on the church, preachers, and preaching. What do you think?

Then there is the popular video on YouTube that has received over 976,201 hits. The title of the video references the preacher as "throwing a hissy fit." In his sermon the preacher degraded members, saying about (and to) one person in the audience, "You're one of the sorriest church members I have—you're not worth 15 cents." The preachers also goes back in the audience shouting "don't go to sleep" and rebukes and shakes a member.

Another YouTube video titled, "pastor goes off on members," has received 1,046, 913 hits. It features a preacher preaching on love. During his message a baby starts screaming and an extra loud cell phone starts ringing. The preacher goes back and grabs the cell phone and smashes it on the floor and returns to preaching on live. No joke!

In *Our Thoughts Determine Our Lives: The Life and Teachings of Elder Thaddeus of Vitovnica (1914-2002)*, we read this dynamic quote that rebukes the above attitudes and actions by preachers while preaching: *"One should preach from the heart. Only that which is from the heart can touch another heart. One must never attack or oppose anyone. If he who preaches must tell people to keep away from a certain kind of evil, he must do so meekly and humbly, with fear of God."*

I could go on and on with examples like these. Examples of preachers acting less than Christ-like and using the pulpit as a place to intimidate, embarrass, shame, and rebuke members. Sadly, preaching like this has caused people to drop out of congregations. There are other

examples, not as extreme as these, which cast a negative light on preaching. No wonder preaching has fallen on hard times; no wonder fewer men desire to prepare to preach.

The question is, “What kind of preaching do we need today?” C.S. Lewis warns, “A man who first tried to guess ‘what the public wants,’ and then preached that as Christianity because the public wants it, would be a pretty mixture of fool and knave” (*Letters to Malcom: Chiefly on Prayer*). The kind of preaching we need today is the kind God wants, sinners need, and the church must present by “*speaking as the oracles of God*” (cf. *1 Peter 4:11*)

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Again, the kind of preaching we need today is the kind God wants. Period. Yet, this is easier said than done. This is what God told Jonah to do: “*Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and PREACH to it the message that I tell you. So Jonah arose and went to Nineveh, according to the word of the Lord...*” (*Jonah 3:2, 3*).

Paul wrote to the young preacher Timothy about what he should preach—what God wanted preached: “*Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching*” (*2 Timothy 4:2*). Prior to this admonish to preach the word, Paul reminded Timothy that inspired Scriptures were his source for preaching (cf. *2 Timothy 3:14-17*).

Imagine with me for a few minutes this picture. There is a dead spiritual man (cf. *Ephesians 2:1-3*) lying on a gurney. The challenge is to resurrect this dead spiritual man—to bring him back to life spiritually. Efforts to resurrect and save the man begin. A psychologist comes and tells the man that his problem is conflict with his “inner child.” The man replies that he is not pregnant. A musical group comes and plays all kinds of music trying to entertain and bring the dead man back to his feet. They grow tired and walk away leaving the dead spiritual man. An investment broker comes next and assures the dead spiritual man that the answer to his condition is financial. After investing all he has, the dead spiritual man is still dead. A media preacher affirms to the dead man that if he will only follow the 10 rules he has developed, the dead man would come back to life. All these attempts to raise the spiritually dead man failed; just as pseudo preaching of less than the Gospel can’t raise a spiritually dead man today. Finally an older farmer comes forward and asks if he can try to raise the dead man. He leans

over the dead man and tells him how much God loves him (John 3:16), and shares the Gospel—the only power unto salvation (Romans 1:14-16). The dead spiritual man is *“buried with Christ and raise to walk in newness of life (Romans chapter 6).*

In conjunction with preaching what God wants preached, here are some contributors to effective biblical preaching:

1. We need preaching today that is saturated with **PRAYER**. Jesus set the example as a praying preacher. He prayed early in the morning, at special events, and sometimes all night. Even on the cross He uttered a prayer to the Father. In prayer the preacher seeks to share God’s will. A preacher dares not enter the pulpit without a prayer saturated sermon.
2. We need preaching that is filled with God’s **WORD**. The words of Paul ring continually in the preacher’s ears: *“Preach the word” (2 Timothy 4:1-6)*. This is not about or around the word—but the WORD—Scriptures.
3. We need preaching that is **LOGICAL**. A rambling of disconnected remarks without a specific outline—Introduction—Discussion—Conclusion—will be difficult to follow and remember. Clearly delineated points aid great communication.
4. We need preaching that is spoken from a heart of **LOVE**. One person said, “If you tell me I am going to hell at least you could have a tear in your eyes.” Truth *“spoken in love”* guides the proclamation. Love can’t be hidden—it shines through messages.
5. We need preaching that is **ORIGINAL**. By this I mean preaching that is not a sermon quickly downloaded from the inner net. It is preaching that evolves from long hours of prayer, study, and practice. It is gold mined from the mind of God—His word.
6. We need preaching that is from the **HEART**. *“Out of the abundance of the heart, the mouth speaks.”* It quickly shows up if a preacher isn’t pouring his heart out in a sermon. Sterile and have-to messages have no power to touch the hearts of listeners (cf. Acts 2:37-47).
7. We need preaching that has a specific **APPLICATION**. Some sermons leave the hearer guessing relative to what should be done as a response to the sermon. It’s the “so what? Question. Suggested applications are usually appreciated.

8. We need preaching that is properly **ILLUSTRATED**. An illustration is a window that sheds light on the subject. Jesus was the master at illustrating messages. He used the popular method of parables to shed light on His subject and which opened the minds of hearers.
9. We need preaching that is **RELEVANT**. The preacher must ask and answer this question: What diet or portion of the Word do members need to know? What do teens need? Senior members need? Singles? Young married? Bereaved and hurting? This takes knowing the people. It takes listening and observing.
10. We need preaching that is **ENTHUSIASTIC**. An ice cube in the pulpit will cast a frost on the pews. Preachers need *“fire in their bones” (Jeremiah 20:9, 10)*. The root word for ***gospel*** is *dynamite*; thus it *“creates an explosion” in the lives of hearers*. It *“pricks hearts”* which cannot be silent (Acts 2:37, 38).
11. We need preaching that is **APOLOGETIC**. This relates to Christian evidences. It is proving biblical truths with evidences. It is *“reproving, rebuking, and exhorting”* with God’s word. The Christians faith must not be taken for granted.
12. We need preaching that is **BALANCED**. Some preachers are what I call “Johnny-one-note,” they stay on the same subjects over and over. They continually preach on certain sins, issues, pet doctrines, etc. Balanced preaching includes topical sermons, expository sermons, doctrinal sermons, devotional sermons, biographical sermons, textual sermons, etc.

These 12 suggestions relate to the kind of preaching we need today. These have numerous subsets. Hopefully these will create an awareness and intentional commitment to preach better sermons.

NOTE: If you would like to have a textbook, *Standing Before an Audience*, written by Dr. Turner on the subject of preparing and preaching sermons. It is available for purchase. It is ideal for a training class on public speaking and preaching.

It can be purchased from *amazon.com*

