

## Preaching and Teaching the Bible Evangelistically

Biblical preaching and teaching are not simply a matter of building up the church by instructing believers. They are a ministry of proclaiming what God has done in Christ. The Gospel should be at the centre of all true preaching. Yet the idea of preaching evangelistically can be daunting. How should we approach preaching the Bible to mixed audiences? How should we seek to proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ to a culture that rejects any notion of Scriptural authority? In this session, we will be given instruction and examples which we will process in our learning community.

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### 1. Biblical basis

We find numerous speaking ministries in the Bible: teaching, exhorting, prophesying, evangelizing, reading, reasoning, persuading and debating. For instance:

Acts 9:28-29: "So Saul stayed with them and moved about freely in Jerusalem, speaking boldly in the name of the Lord. He talked and debated (συνεζήτηται) with the Hellenistic Jews"

Acts 13:16-17: "Fellow Israelites and you Gentiles who worship God, listen to me! The God of the people of Israel chose our ancestors"

Acts 14:15: "Friends, why are you doing this? We too are only human, like you. We are bringing you good news, telling you to turn from these worthless things to the living God, who made the heavens and the earth and the sea and everything in them."

Acts 17:16-34

Paul studies the idols

Paul discerns points of continuity and of contrast

Paul holds dialogues with people at the square (συνέβαλλον)

Paul is invited to a public address

Acts 19:9: "He took the disciples with him and had discussions (διαλεγόμενος) daily in the lecture hall of Tyrannus."

### 2. Preaching evangelistically

Double audience: both Christians and non-Christians

- Preach Christ from every text
- Speak to the mind, heart, and will
- Affirm everyone's presence

- Honor people's intelligence
- Address nonbelievers' concerns
- Welcome them into our "side" ("we" instead of "us" vs. "them")
- Employ a vocabulary of journey to call people to increasing levels of repentance and commitment
- Articulate their thoughts through paraphrase
- Challenge their assumptions
- Quote authorities they respect
- Contrast concepts and worldviews
- Applications for different audiences

Our aim is to avoid the sort of otherworldly, "once upon a time" faith Leo Tolstoy rejected as a young man: "Religion has no place in our lives. In our relations with our neighbors we never encounter it, and in our own existence we never consult it. Religion is sometimes applied far from life and independently of it. If we do come into contact with it, we regard it as an external phenomenon, not at all related to life." Tolstoy, *The Confession*

Examples of illustrations

- Freud: "Love your neighbor as your neighbor loves you."
- Nietzsche's prayer to the Unknown God
- Lady Gaga's Judas
- Paintings of Mary and Martha
- Cosmopolitan cover
- Luc Ferry's contrast of Christianity and Stoicism

### **3. Disciplines to grow in evangelistic preaching**

- Attentive observation
- Diverse cultural diet
- Reading non-Christian authors and fiction
- Learning from preachers who practice it