

Missional Communication: How Do We Communicate Biblical Content Effectively to Non-Christians?

This is a conversation for Christian preachers, teachers, writers, artists, social media content creators and all who transmit biblical truths to groups of people. In this seminar, we will be invited to consider an approach to communication that bridges four common evangelical divides. In short, we will consider how we can communicate biblical content effectively to non-Christians.

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“The prayer of many of us is that God would raise up a generation of expository evangelists; preachers who understand biblical exposition in missional terms; preachers whose hearts burst with love for sinners; preachers who no longer dismiss biblical exposition when they think of engaging culture; preachers who no longer expound the Bible with disregard for the unchurched people around them.”

—Zack Eswine

Introduction and Framework:

We should always avoid generalizations, but I think it is right to observe that preaching in church services across the world, including Europe, is mostly oriented to Christians.

Many hold the common view that preaching that takes place in church services on Sundays should be focused on the edification of Christians, whereas preaching to non-Christians should occur in evangelistic initiatives such as special events, campaigns or even evangelistic services. Most homiletic literature actually promotes this perception.

Preaching exclusively to Christians in Sunday services is seen in the way we prepare our sermons, in the content we present and the language we use.

This approach to Sunday sermons seems to highlight four divides in the contemporary preaching of church services:

1. A divide in the audience to whom we speak.
2. A divide is between preaching the Bible and preaching Christ.
3. A divide in the application of apologetics is often embraced by many of us.
4. A divide is related to the contextualization of the message we preach.

By eliminating each of these apparent divides, I would like to suggest a four-part model for weekly preaching—an expanded approach to congregational preaching:

I. Expand the Audience: Preach to Both Christians and Non-Christians

- a. Biblical Foundation.
 - i. 1 Corinthians 14:23-25 (the earliest window to some aspects of the Church gathering).
 1. inquirers (*idiōtēs*, ἰδιώτης) and unbelievers (*apistos*, ἄπιστος).
 2. Paul reveals his concern that the message communicated in the meeting must not be exclusively oriented to believers, but must also appeal to and reach the unbelievers that might show up in the meeting.
 - ii. Absence of New Testament descriptive or prescriptive passages on preaching in church gatherings.
- b. Church history:
 - i. The first three recorded post-apostolic sermons in church history:
 1. *2 Clement* (early second century),
 2. *Peri Pascha* (second half of the second century) by Melito of Sardis
 3. *Quis dives salvetur* (late second or early third century), by Clement of Alexandria.
 - ii. Puritans.
 - iii. More recent Bible scholars.

II. Expand the Hermeneutics: Preach Both the Bible and Christ

- a. Christ-centered hermeneutics.
 - i. Definition: “Preaching sermons that authentically integrate the message of the text with the climax of God’s revelation in the person, work, and/or teaching of Jesus Christ as revealed in the New Testament.” Sidney Greidanus
 - ii. Biblical foundation.
 1. Luke 24
 2. Colossians 1:28
 - iii. Application (7 ways of preaching Christ from the Old Testament, according to Greidanus):
 1. *Redemptive-historical progression*
 2. *Promise-fulfillment*
 3. *Typology*
 4. *Analogy*
 5. *Longitudinal themes*
 6. *New Testament references*
 7. *Contrast*

III. Expand the Use of Apologetics: Preach Apologetic Sermons

- a. A case for the use of apologetics in our congregational sermons.
- b. Biblical foundation.
 - i. The Bible's general use of apologetics.
 - ii. Acts 17 (Paul in Athens)
- c. Some practical ideas.

IV. Expand the Contextualization: Preach Contextualized Sermons

- a. What is contextualization?
- b. Religious Context and Secularization in Europe
- c. Practical Recommendations for Sermon Contextualization:
 - i. Use accessible or well-explained vocabulary.
 - ii. Give additional layers of background and context.
 1. The Engel Scale
 2. *The Diagnostic Scale*
 - iii. Introduction that engages with the whole audience.
 - iv. Openly acknowledge those in the audience who may not be Christians.
 - v. Communicate biblical authority inductively.
 - vi. Use influential cultural authorities to strengthen and illustrate key points.

Suggested Readings:

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