

Preaching the Epistles in a Genre Sensitive Way

The epistles often feel familiar to us as preachers. The content is familiar, and the logical argumentation of the epistles can feel very similar to our systematic theology reading. But epistles are a specific genre with specific ways of achieving the goals of the original author. How can we read and preach the epistles so that we maximize their genre-specific strengths? What does it mean to preach the epistles well?

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I. Genre Sensitive Preaching:

- A. Expanding our understanding of expository preaching

- B. Content & form cannot be severed

- C. A high view of Scripture demands attention to literary and rhetorical features

II. Understanding the epistles:

- A. Familiar terrain for preaching

- B. The spectrum from "letter" to "epistle"

C. Epistles as “occasional theology”

1. Grasping the occasional nature of the epistles

a. The necessity of historical research

b. The value of historical research

c. The limits of historical research

2. Grasping the theological nature of the epistles

a. Designed for wide circulation

b. Arguments built on ultimate truths

D. Logical flow enriched by a miscellaneous of sub-forms & “citations”

E. Means of “re-representation” or “presence-in-absence”

1. The weight of the author’s ethos

2. Mitigated directness

III. Preaching the Epistles:

- A. Grasp the narrative backdrop

- B. Preach the epistles systematically

- C. Anchor the imperatives in the indicatives

- D. Explore, enjoy and exploit the sub-forms

- E. Get in tune with the tone of the passage

- F. Preach dialogically

- G. Land the theology

Suggested Readings:

Jeffrey D. Arthurs, *Preaching with Variety: How to re-create the Dynamics of Biblical Genres*. Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 2007.

Greidanus Sidney, *The Modern Preacher and the Ancient Text: Interpreting and Preaching Biblical Literature*. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1988.

Steven W. Smith, *Recapturing the Voice of God: Shaping Sermons like Scripture*. Nashville: B&H Publishing, 2015.