

Introduction to Relational Biblical Preaching

Effective biblical preaching and teaching involves certain technical skills in biblical interpretation and spoken communication. But at its core preaching is a relational ministry. This introductory session seeks to offer a relational paradigm to help make sense of the preaching ministry, while maintaining a high view of Scripture as God's Word. Whether you preach a sermon, teach a class, lead a Bible study, or offer a thought at an event, this session makes sense of what is going on. We will clarify the four absolute commitments of true Bible teaching and offer a relational framework for effective biblical ministry.

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There is no greater privilege than opening up our Bibles and being transformed
as we are captivated by the God who gives of Himself there,
then opening up the Bible to others so that by it, and by the grace of God,
their lives are transformed for now and eternity!

I. Expository Preaching Definitions

"Expository: that which sets forth or explains (exposes) the meaning or intent."

- A. "Expository preaching is the communication of a biblical concept, derived from and transmitted through a historical, grammatical, and literary study of a passage in its context, which the Holy Spirit first applies to the personality and experience of the preacher, then through the preacher, applies to the hearers."

Haddon Robinson, *Biblical Preaching*, 21.

- B. "Preaching is . . . the event of God bringing to an audience a Bible-based, Christ-related, life-impacting message of instruction and direction from Himself through the words of a spokesperson."

J.I. Packer, *Authority in Preaching*, 199.

- C. "To present the true and exact meaning of the biblical text in a manner that is relevant to the contemporary listener. (Listen to what God is saying . . . to us!)"

Donald Sunukjian, *An Invitation to Biblical Preaching*, 9-10.

- D. "Preaching is the oral communication of biblical truth by the Holy Spirit through a human personality to a given audience with the intent of enabling a positive response."

Vines & Shaddix, *Power in the Pulpit*, 27

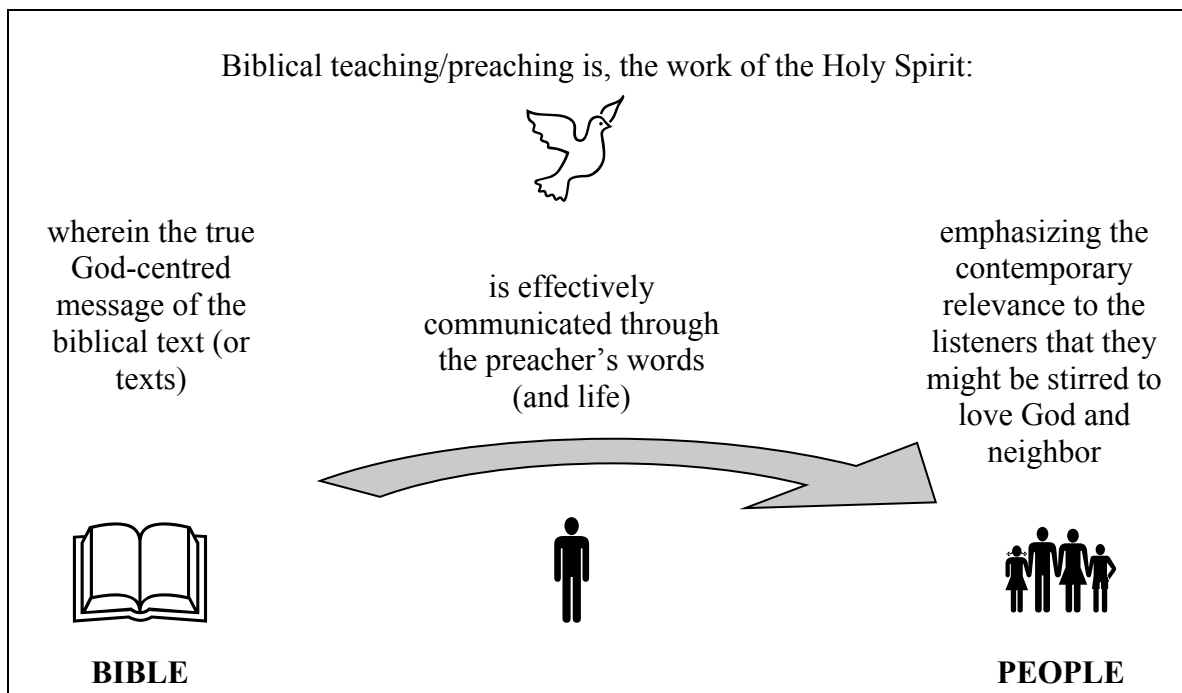
- E. "Biblical exposition is communicating the inspired text with such faithfulness and sensitivity that God's voice is heard and his people obey Him."

John Stott, *Between Two Worlds*.

Question – What are the consistent elements in these definitions?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.

II. Expository Teaching/Preaching



A. All 4 absolutes are absolutely vital

1. Without God?
2. Without the Bible?

3. Without the teacher/preacher?
4. Without the relevance to listeners?

B. There are only four absolutes

1. What is not included?
2. What is the implication of the 4 not 5?

C. Limits and freedom in Bible teaching

1. Form of presentation – free or limited?
2. Biblical interpretation – free or limited?



D. Variety of forms in expository ministry

Expository preaching can take many forms – what makes it expository is not the form the sermon takes, but the commitment to actually preaching the true meaning of the text itself. Several examples show some of the variety possible:

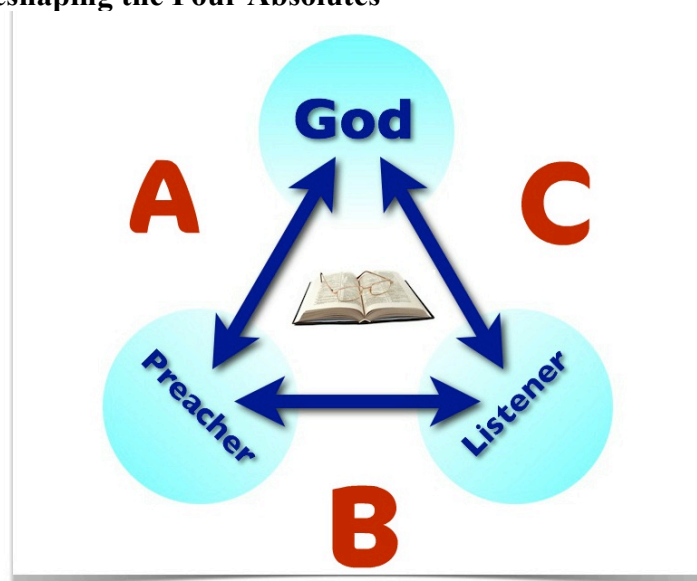
1. Single-passage exposition
2. Expository-thematic – tracing a theme in single book, writer, or whole Bible.
3. Expository-topical – selecting key texts, preached in context
4. Expository-character study – tracing the biblical presentation of a character
5. Expository-first person – preaching a text from the perspective of a character in, or implied by, a text
6. Expository-book study - preaching the main idea and flow of a Bible book

E. Is everything therefore expository ministry?

After all, don't all preachers try to preach the meaning of the text? Absolutely not. Non-expository preaching might include the following approaches to preaching -

1. Anecdotal – *story-telling where the message is not “controlled” by the text, but by the preacher.*
2. Non-Expository Topical – *where the idea and structure come from the preacher and are supported by biblical texts used without reference to context.*
3. Textual/Springboard – *where a biblical text is used as a springboard to get to the thoughts of the preacher.*
4. Liturgical or Theological – *where the text is used to support the proclamation of a system or a creed, but without fair handling of the text in its context.*
5. Pseudo-expository – *where the preacher appears to preach the text, but is incompletely applying the expository process. (Eg. failing to grasp the author's intended meaning of the passage, or failing to apply the passage.)*

III. Relationally Reshaping the Four Absolutes



A. The Relationship of God and Preacher

1. This is a vital relationship, dangers:
 - a. Preacher's gaze on Bible rather than God
 - b. Preacher's focus on finding message rather than hearing God's heart
 - c. Preacher's strength coming from elsewhere resulting in burnout
 - d. Preacher's agenda reflecting personal values rather than God's values
 - e. Preacher's goal being a personal kingdom rather than God's
2. There is great potential here:
 - a. To be cared for and ministered to by God
 - b. To form a community of care with God

B. The Relationship of Preacher and Listener

1. This is a vital relationship, dangers:
 - a. Too much distance through knowledge without vulnerability
 - b. Too much collapsed identification (too vulnerable). Resulting in seeming to have nothing to offer
 - c. The Bible used as weapon or curiosity exhibit, rather than means of access to God's heart
 - d. The preacher failing to value interpersonal communication skills and therefore failing to connect and communicate

- e. The preacher resisting performance and losing importance of interpersonal connection
2. There is great potential here:
- a. To grow interpersonal ministry connections that minister both ways
 - b. To form a community of response to God

C. The Relationship of Listener and God

1. This is a vital relationship, dangers:
- a. Listeners connecting with preacher, but not with God due to delivery without content
 - b. Listeners connecting with preacher, but not with God due to rich content, but lacking spiritual relationality
 - c. Listeners not hearing God's personal care, concern and self-revelation
 - d. Listeners may be presented with a God that motivates distance rather than faith and intimacy
 - e. Preacher's goal may not be relationship with God, but "self-made" or "self-starting" Christians who are both equipped and informed
2. There is great potential here:
- a. To see listeners growing in their relationship with God
 - b. To see listeners forming a community of delight with God, and a community of spreading goodness to others:
 - i. To the preacher!
 - ii. To the church

iii. To the community

iv. To the world

IV. What kind of God shapes your view of Bible teaching?

Recommended resources

See the series of posts on the Preaching Triangle on March 6-16, 2012 on BiblicalPreaching.net

Tim Chester & Marcus Honeysett, *Gospel-Centred Preaching* (Good Book Co., 2014)

Kent Edwards, *Deep Preaching* (B&H, 2009)

Ron Frost, *Discover the Power of the Bible* (Harvest House, 2000)

Darrell Johnson, *Experiencing the Trinity* (Regent, 2002)

Darrell Johnson, *The Glory of Preaching* (IVP, 2009)

Ray Lubeck, *Read the Bible for a Change* (Authentic, 2005)

Michael Reeves, *The Good God* (Paternoster, 2012)

Timothy Ward, *Words of Life* (IVP, 2009)

www.biblicalpreaching.net – daily posts from Peter Mead relating to sermon preparation, delivery and the life of the preacher.

www.cordeo.org.uk – weekly posts from Peter Mead and Ron Frost relating to spiritual formation and applied theology.

www.uniontheology.org – excellent resources, including many on the delight to be found in God as trinity.

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