

Why Preaching Does Not Make Us Mature: What Does?

If you have sat under good and proper exposition of Biblical texts, you know that there is a dynamic effect in this kind of preaching and teaching. And there is a goodness added to our lives as we faithfully listen to the truth of God's Word and experience the work of the Holy Spirit in teaching us in this way. Yet it can be observed that there are many, perhaps too many Christians, who have experienced this without appreciable growth into maturity. If preaching were intended to be the primary and only method in bringing people to maturity, then preaching is what Jesus would have spent most of his time doing, but he didn't. And that is why we must ask the question, "Why just preach when that is not what Jesus did?" What *did* Jesus do? Where did he spend most of his time? And the answer is: He made disciples. What is the difference?

Tom Streeter has been the teaching elder of the church he began in Zionsville, Indiana, in 1981. Having planted churches in Illinois and Indiana, his 50 years of pastoral ministry has been characterised by a devotion to developing disciples within the context of the local church. Whether training believers in participatory worship, meaningful relationships, cultural engagement, or a vigorous life of the mind, he has a passion for right thinking and authentic living. His lifelong study in theology, the church, and history has included several Reformation tours in Europe along with his wife, Judy.

I. Relying largely on preaching can inadvertently keep a church immature

A. Most effective means of growth in order of importance:

1. In mentoring relationships
2. In small groups
3. In environments where there are shared ideas, participation, and interaction
4. Through preaching and teaching

B. Biblical model:

1. Jesus: Mark 3:14
2. Paul: I Thessalonians 2:1 - 14

II. Preaching is one part of a full-orbed, healthy church life: Acts 2:42

A. Church-life devotedness

1. Apostles doctrine
2. Fellowship (body-life)
3. Breaking of bread

4. Prayer
 5. Praising God (worship)
 6. Favor with all the people
 8. Adding to their number day by day those who were being saved (ongoing conversions)
- B. Belief in Laity: Practicing the priesthood of believers.
1. I Peter 2:5, 9
 2. Revelation 1:5, 6
 3. Revelation 5:10
 4. Revelation 20:6
- C. Right thought and right behavior is taught by role models, not solely by listening to or reading the Word
1. I Thess. 2:1 – 14
 - a. Speech matters
 - b. Behavior confirms and establishes the truth
 2. The outcome is imitation: I Thess. 2:14

III. Discipleship is the goal

- A. Pre-evangelism
- B. Evangelism
- C. Conversion
- D. Maturation
- E. Reproduction