

Aspects of Preaching (i)

Truthful, Varied, Bold

Preaching the truth means committing ourselves to a lifetime of *exegesis*.

[1] What is exegesis?

Exegesis is the discovery of *the intended meaning* of a passage of Scripture:

~ the author's intended meaning, but also the Author's intended meaning.
~ the meaning intended for the original hearers, but also the one intended for *us*.

Hermeneutics are the principles that we apply to discover that intended meaning. These were previously known as 'principles of interpretation'.

Exposition is the explanation & application of the passage to the people in front of us.

[2] Why is exegesis so important?

Without thorough exegesis I will preach what I *think* the Word is saying rather than what it is *actually* saying. I will be preaching my own ideas rather than the Word itself.

It is therefore essential that we reject all wrong approaches to this subject (e.g. superstitious, allegorical, dogmatic, rationalistic, mythological, etc.) and that we learn to become responsible and accurate exegetes.

But that is not enough. There is a distinction between *intellectual understanding* and *spiritual understanding*. The first is the fruit of study alone. The second is the fruit of study *and* of a personal heavenly visitation. It is vital to grasp this, because where there is no spiritual understanding there is no true preaching.

[3] Can you give us any easy-to-remember rules to guide us?

- Yes! There are three:
- (1) Examine the whole book first.
 - (2) Study the passage itself.
 - (3) Refer to the rest of the Scriptures.

[1] Examine the whole book first

(i) Step into the writer's shoes

- What sort of world is he living in, and when?
- Who is writing; and to whom?
- What is his purpose?

(ii) Sort out what sort of literature he is writing

- History
- Prophecy
- Poetry
- Apocalyptic
- Wisdom Literature
- Letters

[2] Study the passage itself

(i) Where does it come in the book?

(ii) Does it contain any figurative language?

- Common Bible figures Is 5:1ff, Hosea 10:1ff, Luke 20:9-18, Jn 15:1-5
- Simile Ps 103:13, Prov 26:14, Is 53:7, Matt 23:37
- Metaphor Ps 23:1-2, Mal 3:10, Eph 2:19-20
- Personification Prov 8:22f
- Anthropomorphism Ps 119:73, 34:15
- Parable Matt 13:31-32, 33, 44, 45-46
- Allegory 2 Sam 12:1-6, Ezek 23, Matt 13:24-30, 36-43

(iii) What does a careful study of individual words reveal?

- The mood of the verbs Jn 5:39, 14:1
- Their tenses Jn 5:24, 1 Cor 3:3, Romans ch.7
- Emphasis Matt 5:18, 28:5
- Punctuation Eph 1:4-5, Mk 9:22-23
- Idiom Lk 22:15, Col 3:12
- The meaning of single words:
 - their context Gal 5:22-23
 - their biblical usage 1 Cor 13:10,12
 - their intended sense Acts 9:32 (saints), 1 Th 4:15 ('prevent' AV)
 - and, remember, never draw the meaning of a word *just* from its derivation (e.g. *ekklesia*).

[3] Refer to the rest of Scripture

Here are ten suggestions on how to do this:

1. Use the clear to interpret the obscure. Rev 20:1-6
 2. Use the whole to interpret the part. 1 Cor ch 7 and marriage
 3. Use the N.T. to interpret the O.T. Amos 9:11-15 / Acts 15:13-16 Joel 2:28-32 / Acts 2:16-21
 4. Remember that Christ is the main subject. Lk 24:27,44 Jn 16:13-14
 5. Remember that the whole is a revelation. 2 Tim 3:15-17
 6. Expect to encounter antinomies. Matt 11:25-30
 7. Remember that not everything is revealed. Deut 29:29
 8. Remember that your own understanding is limited. 1 Cor 3:1-3, Heb 5:9-14
 9. Remember that you are not the first to come to this passage. Eph 4:11-12
 10. *Above all*, ask the Author for understanding. Psalm 119:18.
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Aspects of Preaching (ii)

Truthful, Varied, Bold

Everything that God does is characterised by both **unity** and **variety**. The way that we present His Word should reflect this.

[1] Expository sermons

Definition: *ex* = 'out' and *pono* = 'to place'. It is the opening up and explaining of a passage of Scripture. It displays the meaning of that particular portion.

Advantages: It confronts people with Scripture itself; neglects nothing that God has inspired (see Matt 4:4, 2 Tim 3:15-17); provides enough material for a lifetime.

Disadvantages: It can easily become boring ('expedition'!), a running commentary, or a collection of unrelated thoughts and lessons.

An example: 2 Thess 2:13 – 3:5 'True Christianity' – What is a Christian? Why does someone become one? How? What are the characteristics of a Christian? Future prospects? Present duties?

[2] Textual sermons

Definition: The exposition of a verse or so, or less.

Advantages: It puts the actual words of Scripture under the spotlight; can be easily remembered; allows even greater scope for variety.

Disadvantages: The unity of the Bible, the message and distinctiveness of a particular book, the historical and immediate context – all these things are not so apparent.

An example: Rom 4:24-25 ‘A true Christian speaks’ – Do you have the same awareness? The same mind? The same will?

[3] Thematic sermons

Definition: The searching out from the entire Bible what God reveals about a chosen topic or theme.

Advantages: It reveals the mind of God on a given subject (most people can't synthesise), impresses people with the unity of Scripture, allows you to be thorough, scratches where it itches, is an excellent way of teaching doctrine.

Disadvantages: It is hard to sustain interest; requires racing around the Bible to look at various references; and can be very exhausting for both preacher and hearer.

An example: Assurance : ‘When is a ‘Christian’ not a Christian? – Some people are not sure that they're Christians when they are. Some people are sure that they're Christians when they really aren't. You can know for certain whether you are a true Christian or not.

[4] Historical-incident sermons

Definition: A particular form of expository sermon which explains and applies an event recorded in Scripture.

Advantages: Everyone loves a story; there is a wealth of material; Rom 15:4 and 1 Cor 10:11-12 are respected.

Disadvantages: It is so easily open to abuse, such as over-spiritualisation, or making unfounded parallels and applications.

An example: Matt 27:38-44 & Lk 23:39-43 “A wicked man in heaven” – The life he lived. The realisations he came to. The faith he exercised. The promise he received. The reason why this incident is in the Bible.

[5] Biographical sermons

Definition: The study of a person’s life, the truths to be gleaned, the lessons to be learned.

Advantages: It vividly reveals to us the true nature of man; teaches us about the dealings of God, emphasising His grace; warns; inspires and encourages. There is a wealth of *very* varied material.

Disadvantages: The temptation to make God’s dealings with a particular person normative for all.

An example: Enoch : Gen 5:21-24, Heb 11:5-6, Jude vv.14-15 – Who was he? What did he do? Where did he do it? Why did he do it? Where did it lead him?



Truthful, Varied, **Bold**

[1] The meaning of *bold*

“In the New Testament . . . this compound word has the meaning to be outspoken, frank, even blunt; to be confident in utterance, and bold in spirit and demeanour” (Dale Kuiper).

Boldness means “freedom in speaking, unreservedness in speech . . . openly, frankly, i.e. without concealment . . . without ambiguity or circumlocution . . . without the use of figures and comparisons . . . free and fearless confidence, cheerful courage . . . the deportment by which one becomes conspicuous or secures publicity” (Thayer).

[2] True preaching is bold

(a) This is *implied*

Boldness is implied by the key words which describe preaching (to herald, to announce good news, to bear witness to facts, to spell out what the message means in practice); by the fact that we must speak about God’s wrath; and by such passages as Eph 6:17-20, Col 1:28, Acts 20:26-27 and 2 Tim 1:7.

(b) This is *commanded*

Boldness is commanded in Luke 24:47, Eph 5:11, 1 Tim 5:20, 2 Tim 4:1-4 and Ezek 3:17-19 & 33:7-9, and many similar passages.

(c) This is *exemplified*

Boldness is exemplified in *Nathan* (2 Sam 12:1-15), *Isaiah* (58:1), *Amos* (2:6-16), *Jonah* (1:2, 3:4), *Ezra* (10:10-11), *John the Baptist* (Luke 3:7-18), *Stephen* (Acts 7:51-53) – and, supremely, in our *Lord Jesus Christ* (Matt 7:13-29 etc.).

[3] What boldness is *not*

You can be bold without being naive (2 Sam 12:1-15); abrasive, sharp, nasty, unpleasant (Matt 21:33-46, Luke 15:11-32); belligerent, aggressive or rude (2 Tim 2:24-26). But you cannot be bold without, in the end, being *confrontational!*

[4] How to be bold

- Be sure of the truth of your message (2 Tim 1:8-13).
- Reflect on the fact that no one can be saved without that message (Acts 4:12, Rom 1:16 & 10:14,17).
- Remember that Christ Himself has sent you (Amos 7:14-15, 1 Cor 1:17 & 12:4-11), you speak for Him (2 Cor 5:20), and that you are answerable only to Him (Rom 14:4 & 12).
- Determine that you will not be less bold than the false teachers are (Titus 1:10-11, Jude 3 & 16).
- Spend time with the Lord (Acts 4:13).
- Get as many people as possible to pray for you (Eph 6:18-20, Col 4:2-4).
- Be filled with the Holy Spirit! (Acts 4:31).

[5] What to expect

At best, you will be misunderstood, criticised, gossiped about and falsely accused (2 Chron ch.18, Matt 5:11), because people who love their sins will not tolerate the light (John 3:19-21) and the devil has no desire to lose

his captives (Eph 2:1-3 & 6:10-20, 2 Tim 2:24-26). At worst, you will be physically persecuted (Jerem 20:1-2) and could even lose your life (Rev 6:9-11).

There is nothing to fear! (Luke 12:4-7). Not only so, but a rich reward awaits you, both in this life and that which is to come (Matt 5:11-12, Luke 12:8, Rev 12:10-12).

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“Watch, stand fast in the faith, be brave, be strong.
Let all that you do be done with love”
(1 Cor 16:13-14).

