

An Introduction to Preaching

Dr. Martyn Lloyd-Jones said in his book titled "Preaching and Preachers" that there are two distinct categories when it comes to what we call preaching. There is the sermon, and there is the sermon delivery. One can be taught, the other must be caught.

In our course we will do our best to teach you how to write an expository sermon, and we will also do what we can to help you in your delivery. But the act of preaching itself is something that is hard to teach. An ember can be fanned into a flame - but the ember must be there, and only God can give it to you.

So, I would like to begin this course by answering this question: "What is needed in preaching?"

1. A foundational understanding of the **definition** of preaching.
 - a. What is preaching? It is the proclamation of the Word of God.
 - i. It is not talking about the Bible. Preaching is not Bible word studies. It is not the discussion of the Word of God, or even the teaching of the Word of God, **Preaching is the proclamation of the Word of God**. It is to, to use the prophetic phrase, to say, "Thus saith the Lord!"
 - ii. Now, all preaching has some teaching, and some Bible teaching has an element of preaching, but we are here to learn how to prepare and preach a sermon, and so we begin with a basic definition. Preaching is proclaiming the Word of God. It is proclaiming it because it is true and people are being called to do something.
 - iii. Preaching is a call to action. At the end of a sermon there should be an obvious question that is hanging in the air, "What do I do now?"

Acts 2:37 *Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do?*

Dr. Martyn Lloyd Jones: "[The preacher] is not there merely to talk to them, he is not there to entertain them. He is there...to do something to those people; he is there to produce results of various kinds, he is there to influence people...preaching should make such a difference to a man who is listening that he is never the same again."¹

- b. This is foundational to understanding the preaching and the role of the preacher. In a sermon, there may be discourse, discussion, and of course teaching, but when we are proclaiming God's Word we are calling people to do something.

¹ D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones. *Preaching and Preachers* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1971), 53.

- c. This call to action is not a sentence or two that is lamely tacked on to the end of sermon, but it is woven into the very fabric of the sermon - the sermon builds up to the call to action in or near the conclusion of the sermon. (Stephen's sermon in Acts 7 is a good example)

Acts 7:51 Ye stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost: as your fathers did, so do ye.

2. A consuming passion for the **object** of preaching

- a. By this I mean God and His Word. You must love Christ and the gospel. You must love the Bible and its teachings. "**We preach Christ crucified**" and if this is your life's calling, you must love Him supremely.

SPURGEON: "We must feel that woe is unto us if we preach not the gospel; the word of God must be unto us as fire in our bones, otherwise, if we undertake the ministry, we shall be unhappy in it, shall be unable to bear the self-denials incident to it, and shall be of little service to those among whom we minister. I speak of self-denials, and well I may; for the true pastor's work is full of them, and without a love to his calling he will soon succumb, and either leave the drudgery, or move on in discontent, burdened with a monotony as tiresome as that of a blind horse in a mill."²

- b. Our love for God and zeal for His Word must be guarded, because as soon as it diminishes, our preaching will also diminish.

→ Sometimes this is worked backwards – preachers know they should be zealous in the pulpit, but unfortunately some start with what they are zealous about and preach those topics instead of starting with the word of God. There's a tell in this – it shows that we are more zealous about news headlines, election results, and virus and vaccine conspiracies than we are about Christ and His Gospel.

3. A tender love for the **audience** of preaching

- a. Ministry is people. Preaching involves people. You must be lovers of souls.

SPURGEON: "The spirit of Elijah may startle, and where it is exceedingly intense it may go far to prepare for the reception of the gospel; but for actual conversion more of John is needed, **love is the winning force. We must love men to Jesus. Great hearts are the main qualifications for great preachers, and we must cultivate our affections to that end.** At the same time our manner must not degenerate into the soft and saccharine cant which some men affect who are for ever dearing everybody, and fawning upon people as if they hoped to soft-sawder them into godliness. Manly persons are disgusted, and suspect hypocrisy when they hear a preacher talking molasses. Let us be bold and outspoken, and never address our hearers as if we were asking a favour of them, or as if they would oblige the Redeemer by allowing Him to save them. We are bound to be lowly, but our office as ambassadors should prevent our being servile."³

² Charles Spurgeon, *Lectures to My Students* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1954), 27.

³ Charles Spurgeon, *Lectures to My Students*, 344.

- b. Christ-like love is the supreme virtue and eclipses our need for study and preparation. We must attend our hearts in this matter and seek to grow in love more than we seek to grow in any other area.

4. A sober grasp of the **authority** of preaching

James 3:1 My brethren, be not many masters, knowing that we shall receive the greater condemnation.

- a. To stand before people and bind their consciences with the word of God is a sobering responsibility. The preacher is like Aaron in Numbers 16, who took fire from the altar, put it into a censer, and ran into the plagued multitude, and in doing so he stood between the living and the dead.
- b. To preach the Word of God is too important to be flippant about. It is one of the greatest responsibilities a human can have. This authority demands:
 - i. A pursuit of holiness. An unholy preacher will be judged by his own sermons. His own words will condemn him. Though we have not attained sinless perfection, we must be engaging in ruthless warfare against our own sin.
 - ii. A commitment to preparation. Your sermon is not your opportunity to be clever with the Bible; it's your responsibility to be faithful to the text. Read it. Pray over it. Study the passage. Preparation styles are different because individuals are different, but whether you prepare on Saturday evening or get it done on Monday, you must be preparing. Preaching is too important to shrug off preparation and shoot from the hip in preaching time.

SPURGEON: "The Holy Ghost is also vexed by laziness. I cannot imagine the Spirit waiting at the door of a sluggard, and supplying the deficiencies created by indolence. Sloth in the cause of the Redeemer is a vice for which no excuse can be invented. We ourselves feel our flesh creep when we see the dilatory movements of sluggards, and we may be sure that the active Spirit is equally vexed with those who trifle in the work of the Lord."⁴

- iii. An appreciation of reverence. A preacher should endeavor to be reverent in his deportment and, if he can, to steer the entire worship service toward a reverential tone - not stuffy and formal, but neither flippant nor casual.
- iv. A devotion to being faithful to the text – expository preaching is inherently faithful to the text. Though preachers disagree on the definition of terms (like topical preaching versus expository preaching) we should all be committed to saying what the text says.

With that in mind, the sermon should start with a text. The next lesson will give you tips on how to choose a text for a sermon.

⁴ Ibid., 201.