
WE ARE THE CHURCH

Marks of a Healthy Church

EXPOSITIONAL PREACHING

A message presented by Pastor Marc Minter
to First Baptist Church of Diana, TX on January 7, 2017

INTRODUCTION

Is preaching outmoded and outdated, or is there some value left in preaching still? Pastor Marc argues that preaching has more than just some value. In this message, we shall begin a new series on the marks or features of a healthy church. The first and most important of these is Expository Preaching. In fact, healthy churches delight in expository preaching, because healthy churches delight in God and His Word.

PASSAGE BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

Paul wrote this letter to Timothy during the later period of his life. Paul was imprisoned and awaiting his death by execution; it was no time for unimportant words. The urgency of the moment and the fatherly relationship between Paul and Timothy, stirred Paul to write of the importance of preaching.

Of all the things he could have mentioned, why preaching? The reasons are many, but suffice it to say that Paul knew what all Bible-hungry Christians know. He knew that God is known and enjoyed in His Word, and those who explain and apply God's Word to God's people are a gift from Christ Himself.

MESSAGE MADE SIMPLE

“Preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching” (2 Timothy 4:2).

Monologue preaching is a thing of the past. No one wants to listen to someone talk at them any longer. Furthermore, Bible-thumping lectures are only going to cause division and derision. The fastest way to make your church irrelevant to this culture is to preach lengthy Bible-centered messages. “The Bible says” simply does not matter anymore. At least that's what many people are saying.

Even many people inside of American Evangelicalism are leaving Bible-explaining and doctrine-rich preaching behind. But is this shift compatible with the Word of God and the church that Word creates?

There is one question that will clear away all our confusion: “Has God spoken?”

If the answer is “no,” then let every man and woman do as they please. But if the answer is “yes,” then how dare we do anything else but expose ourselves to God’s Word as fully and as regularly as we are able?

“Preach the word” is the command of God upon every preacher. And this command has implications for the listener too. God is known in His Word, and every Christian who delights in God will delight in His Word and delight in hearing His Word eagerly explained and illuminated.

2 TIMOTHY 3:16-4:8 (ESV)

16 **All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness,** 17 that the **man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.**

1 **I charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus,** who is to judge the living and the dead, and by his appearing and his kingdom:

2 **preach the word;**

be ready in season and out of season;

reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching.

3 **For** the time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching, but having itching ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own passions, 4 and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander off into myths.

5 **As for you,** always **be sober-minded,** endure **suffering, do the work** of an **evangelist,** fulfill **your ministry.**

6 **For** I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure has come. 7 I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. 8 Henceforth **there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness,** which **the Lord, the righteous judge, will award** to me on that day, and **not only to me** but also **to all who have loved his appearing.**

THE POINT I'M AIMING AT TODAY

Healthy churches delight in **Expositional Preaching**, because they delight in God and His Word.

SOME ASSUMPTIONS YOU ARE GOING TO HAVE TO GIVE ME TODAY

1. A local church is people, not a building.

- a. Never once in the NT is a building called a church.
- b. The word comes from “*ekklēsia*” (lit. called out) [*Acts 5:11, 8:1, 12:1, and more than 100 other times in the NT*] or “*ekklektos*” (chosen or elected) [*Rom. 8:33; Col. 3:12*].

2. A local church is made up of born again (spiritually alive) people, not good people or nice people or familiar people or any other kind of inconsequential designation of people.

- a. Only saved people, born again people, spiritually alive people are different than all other people!
- b. Only saved people are new, reformed, and being transformed!
 - i. See *John 3; 2 Cor. 5:16-21; Rom. 6:1-11*

3. Christ owns and rules every local church.

- a. Every local church is a church OF CHRIST (*Rom. 16:16*).
- b. Christ, who has all authority in heaven and on earth, is WITH or AMONG His people (*the church*) as they make disciples in His name (*Matt. 28:18-20*).
- c. Christ leads, rules, and governs His people by/through His word (*Col. 3:16*).

4. God's big goal for you (particularly members of this local church), is your holiness.

- a. God grants us life in Christ, and this means He has “*called us into His own glory and excellence*.” Christians become partakers of God’s own “*divine nature*,” escaping the “*corruption and sinful desires*” of this world. We are commanded to “*make every effort*” to lovingly pursue virtue, knowledge, self-control, steadfastness, and godliness... in the context of “*brotherly love*.” We are warned that anyone who lacks such things is “*so nearsighted that he is blind, having forgotten that he was cleansed from his former sins*.” Therefore, we are told, “*be diligent*” to practice these qualities and thereby confirm that you are one of God’s children (*2 Peter 1:3–11*).

MESSAGE OUTLINE

(1) WHAT IS EXPOSITIONAL PREACHING?

(2) DELIGHT IN GOD IS CONNECTED TO DELIGHT IN HIS WORD

(3) HEALTHY CHURCHES ARE CONTENT WITH EXPOSITIONAL PREACHING

(4) APPLICATION: 4 TIPS TO PROFIT BEST FROM EXPOSITIONAL PREACHING

MESSAGE

(1) WHAT IS EXPOSITIONAL PREACHING?

- **First, let me say what it is not.**
 - EP is not merely “*the stuff a preacher says...*”
 - Preachers might say all kinds of things.
 - Most of what passes as preaching today does not even deserve to be called “preaching.”
 - EP is not simply referring to the Bible
 - This is better than a “life-coach” motivational message.
 - But, preachers who merely refer to the Bible will often use verses out of context to support a message drawn from their own minds and experience.
 - EP is not just reading from the Bible
 - Reading a passage (or many of them) from the Bible is fantastic!
 - This would be a dramatic leap forward among many churches and preachers today.
 - But, reading from the Bible falls short from fulfilling the preacher’s responsibility to his congregation.
 - EP is not merely explaining the Bible
 - Explaining the text of Scripture is fantastic as well!
 - This too would be wonderful progress in many churches today.
 - But, this still does not complete the biblical task of preaching.

- **So, what is Expository Preaching?**
 - Mark Dever's (and many others) definition:
 - ***Expository Preaching happens when the point of the Bible text is the point of the message.***
 - *The message is **derived from the text.***
 - What does the text say?
 - What does the text mean?
 - How was it understood by the original recipient?
 - What truths, implications, and commands might we draw out of such things today?
 - *The message **stays within the context of the passage.***
 - What verses came before?
 - What verses come after?
 - What is the author's aim throughout the book?
 - How does our passage fit in this structure?
 - *The message **stays within the context of the narrative of Scripture.***
 - What kind of book and passage is this (blessing, cursing, promising, warning, commanding, explaining, describing history, teaching theology)?
 - Where does this part of the whole story fit in the overarching narrative?
 - *The message **stays within the context of God's historical redemptive plan to create a people for His great name through the person and work of Christ.***
 - How does this point to the broad and beautiful picture of the Gospel?

Summary: The point of the text ***should normally be*** the point of the message...

(Segue) ***Why should preaching normally be expository?***

(2) DELIGHT IN GOD IS CONNECTED TO DELIGHT IN HIS WORD

- We should delight in God because He is glorious!
 - God reveals Himself as glorious!
 - Let's see just the attributes of God in this single passage.
 - **God speaks** (3:16)
 - He speaks profitable things
 - His words train or shape the hearer/reader in righteousness
 - His words completely equip the hearer/reader for all good works or good living.
 - **God is present** (4:1)
 - He is near, though He is not seen
 - This is technically called His immanence
 - **God in Christ is judge** (4:1)
 - He is just and the standard by which it is measured
 - He does now and will measure all people by His own justice
 - **God is rewarder of all who love His appearing** (4:8)
 - God owns all good things and is able to reward
 - God graciously rewards those who listen to His promises of hope and await His fulfillment of them
 - And many other implied attributes...
 - **God is creator and sustainer**, else how can He be final judge and rewarder of all?
 - **God desires to be known**, else why would He speak?
 - **God is wise**, else His words would be not be gain.

- **God is good**, else why would He kindly give us His words?
 - **God uses means to accomplish His ends**, for this is the point of preaching – the preacher is commissioned in the presence of God to preach God’s word to God’s people to the end that they would be equipped for life.
-
- Friends, do you see Him as glorious?
 - Do you know He intends for you to see Him as glorious?
 - Do you know your joy will be most full when you see Him as most glorious?
-
- **But, God’s glory is not known to us apart from the Bible!**
 - God’s glory is on display everywhere!
 - Romans 1:19–20 – “**What can be known about God is plain** to them [humanity], because God has shown it to them. For his **invisible attributes**, namely, his **eternal power** and **divine nature**, have been **clearly perceived**, ever since the **creation** of the world, **in the things that have been made**. So they are without excuse.”
 - But we do not naturally see it...
 - Romans 1:21–23 – “Although they [humans] knew God, they **did not honor him as God** or **give thanks to him**, but they became **futile** in their **thinking**, and their **foolish hearts** were **darkened**. Claiming to be wise, they **became fools**, and **exchanged the glory** of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man and birds and animals and creeping things.”
 - Verse 18 – humans, in their unrighteousness “**suppress the truth**” of God.

- Therefore, we need His word to illumine His glory!
 - Paul, speaking of Gospel ministry says, “having this ministry by the mercy of God, ***we do not lose heart***. But we have renounced disgraceful, underhanded ways. ***We refuse to practice cunning*** or to ***tamper with God’s word***, but ***by the open statement of the truth*** we would commend ourselves to everyone’s conscience in the sight of God. And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing. In their case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God. For ***what we proclaim*** is not ourselves, but ***Jesus Christ as Lord***, with ourselves as your servants for Jesus’ sake. For ***God***, who said, “Let light shine out of darkness,” ***has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ***” (2 Corinthians 4:1–6).

- **Your delight in God is directly connected to your delight in His word!**
 - Do you live and act like God’s glory is revealed by osmosis?
 - Have you expected that God would somehow magically make you delight in Him?
 - Name a single thing in your life that you have come to love and enjoy without spending much effort at all to get to know it.
 - Don’t you know that you are sinful? And that is why seeing God as supremely delightful is hard... YOU ARE BLIND TO IT!

Summary: You need Him to ***illumine His glory in/through His word!***

(Segue) Ah, but ***when you see Him as glorious***, you will ***delight in Him*** and ***in His word***, and you won’t want to ***trifle with lesser things***...

(3) HEALTHY CHURCHES ARE CONTENT WITH EXPOSITIONAL PREACHING

- **Healthy Churches profit from EP**
 - “All Scripture is *breathed out by God* and *profitable...*” (3:16).
- **Healthy Churches are equipped / completed by EP**
 - Scripture “teaches, reproves, corrects, and trains in righteousness, [so] that the man [and woman] of God *may be complete, equipped for every good work*” (3:16-17).
- **Healthy Churches have pastors/elders who recognize the charge**
 - “*I charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus*, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by the appearing and His kingdom... *preach the word!*” (4:1-2).
 - Even when people do not want to hear God’s word preached, “you always *be sober-minded, endure suffering, do the work* of an evangelist... [and in this way] *fulfill your ministry*” (4:5).
 - BECAUSE, “*there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness*, which *the Lord*, the righteous judge, *will award* to me on that day, and not only to me but also *to all who have loved His appearing*” (4:8).
- **Healthy Churches resist the sinful urge to turn away, and instead accumulate the kind of pastors who recognize the charge**
 - “The time is coming when *people will not endure sound* [or healthy] *teaching*, but having *itching ears* they will *accumulate for themselves teachers* to *suit their own passions*, and will *turn away from listening to the truth* and wander off into myths” (4:3-4).
 - My temptation is to say what I want to say... Your temptation is to try to get me to say what you want to hear and how you want to hear it.
 - Make no mistake... You will ultimately have the kind of preaching you want.

(4) APP: 4 TIPS TO PROFIT BEST FROM EXPOSITIONAL PREACHING

- **Don't be a spectator!**
- **DO actively pray for and engage with your preacher!**
 - Whether you think your preacher is the best or the worst, pray for him... he needs God's power to preach just as much as you need God's power to hear and profit.
 - Ask questions... Tell him what you learned... Tell him what you appreciated... Lovingly tell him when he missed the point...
- **Don't be a critic of style!**
- **DO be a contemplator of substance!**
 - If your preacher is worth his weight in sawdust, then he is constantly striving to be a better communicator and preacher.
 - He knows style is important too, but substance is so much more important... for both of us.
 - Before you ask questions like, “Did I enjoy that?” or “Was that moving?”
 - Ask... “Did he say anything contrary to Scripture?”
 - “Did he make his message fit the text or the text fit the message?”
 - “Was his sermon linear... or did he bounce around a lot?”
 - “Did he skip over glaring questions in the passage... or did he faithfully walk us through?”
 - “Did the application flow from the text... or was it disconnected from the Scripture we are in today?”
 - “Was his aim to help me see the glory of Christ today?”

- **Don't listen for *life-tips!***
- **Do listen for God's *promises, warnings, and glory!***
 - How many times do we need to be reminded?
 - The Bible is God's revelation of Himself... It is not about you!
 - Listen for God's promises to you despite your unworthiness.
 - Listen to God's warnings to you, lovingly awakening you to eternal realities.
 - Listen for God's self-disclosure, and marvel at His glory!
- **Don't listen *passively*, as though you are being *entertained or served!***
- **Do listen with an *active mind and heart*, as though your very *life depends* upon your *hearing* and *understanding!***
 - Come on! What are we doing here after all?
 - If your preacher merely ruminates his own wisdom and tells some stories about his own life experience, then by all means... be passive.
 - If your preacher, however, understands his role as God's mouthpiece to you today, then you are a fool to half-heartedly give attention.
 - Proverbs 2:1-10 – “My son, if you ***receive my words*** and ***treasure up my commandments*** with you, ***making your ear attentive*** to wisdom and ***inclining your heart*** to understanding; yes, ***if you call out for insight*** and ***raise your voice*** for understanding, if you ***seek it like silver*** and ***search for it as for hidden treasures***, then ***you will understand*** the fear of the LORD and ***find the knowledge*** of God.

For the LORD gives wisdom; from his mouth come knowledge and understanding; he stores up sound wisdom for the upright; he is a shield to those who walk in integrity, guarding the paths of justice and watching over the way of his saints. Then ***you will understand righteousness*** and ***justice*** and ***equity, every good path***; for ***wisdom will come into your heart***, and ***knowledge will be pleasant to your soul...***”

A.W. Pink said, “I will name some of the criteria by which I measure the helpfulness of a preacher... to my own soul. The one who profits me is the man whose ministry **brings... the awe** of a holy and sovereign God on my heart, **who [uncovers]** my sinfulness and failures, who conveys [good] light on the path of [my] duty, **who makes** Christ most precious to me, **who encourages** me to press forward along the narrow way...”

This only happens when Scripture is on beautiful display, and that is expositional preaching!

From God’s word, the preacher must bring the **holiness of God**, the **sinfulness of man**, the **way of obedience**, and **the precious sight of Christ** to bear upon the **heart** of the **listener**.

This, and only this will **encourage** us to **press forward** along the **narrow way**!

Major Point: Healthy churches delight in Expository Preaching, because they delight in God and His Word.

SUGGESTED RESOURCES

The 9 Marks of a Healthy Church by Various

<https://www.9marks.org/about/>

Why Expository Preaching is Particularly Glorifying to God by John Piper

<https://www.desiringgod.org/messages/why-expository-preaching-is-particularly-glorifying-to-god>

Expository Preaching: the Listener’s Responsibility by R.L. Thomas

<https://www.monergism.com/expository-preaching-listeners-responsibility>

When the Preaching is Bad by Nicholas T. Batzig

<http://feedingonchrist.com/when-the-preaching-is-bad/>

What Role Did EP Play in the Reformation by Michael Reeves

<https://www.9marks.org/article/what-role-did-expository-preaching-play-in-the-reformation/>