



EXPOSITORY PREACHING

A Definition of Expository Preaching

Webster's dictionary defines the word "expository" as, "the setting forth of the meaning or purpose of a writing." ¹ When it comes to preaching, expository preaching seeks to set forth the true meaning of the Word of God.

Many today seem to think that expository preaching happens when a preacher goes verse by verse and book by book through the Bible. However, true expository preaching is much more than that since it is possible to go through chapters and books of the Bible and never really explain what that passage truly means. The result is that there may be many people who claim to be expository preachers who are not. True expository preaching may be verse by verse and book by book, but it is not limited to this so long as the true meaning of the Word of God is expounded. Expository preaching explains the meaning of the verse or passage, it digs into the text to find out the author's original intent, and then it seeks to apply that passage in a God-honoring manner. Any other kind of preaching is not expository preaching, and falls short of our Biblical mandate to preach the Word.

Richard Mayhue helps us understand expository preaching by giving five elements that identify an expository sermon:

1. The message finds its sole source in Scripture.
2. The message is extracted from Scripture through careful exegesis.
3. The message preparation correctly interprets Scripture in its normal sense and its context.
4. The message clearly explains the original God-intended meaning of Scripture.
5. The message applies the Scriptural meaning today.²

According to this definition, an expository sermon is a sermon that digs deep into the passage of scripture to understand what it meant when it was originally written, the meaning of the passage is explained, and then the passage is applied to the listener. This essentially is expository preaching; Biblical preaching. The heart of the expository sermon is the authority of the Word of God. Expository preachers believe that the Word truly is God-breathed, and because of this belief they seek to expose the Word as best they can to the listeners. Expository preaching does not just preach from the Bible but it preaches the Bible. William Perkins writes:

The Word of God alone is to be preached, in its perfection and in its inner consistency. Scripture is the exclusive subject of preaching, the only field with which the preacher is to labour.³

Because the Word is God-breathed, the expositor seeks to bring forth that Word above everything else. Bryan Chapell writes: The Expository preacher opens the Bible before God's people and dares to say, "I will explain to you what this passage means." The words are not meant to convey one's own authority but rather humbly to confess that the preacher has no better word than God's Word. Thus, the preacher's mission and calling is to explain to God's people what the Bible means.⁴

Expository preachers believe that the Word has more authority than their own personal opinions and anecdotes, and they consider it their divine mandate to herald that Word with boldness and conviction. Expository preaching is preaching that exalts the Word of God so the God of the Word can be glorified.

I believe that the church as a whole is in trouble because it is not committed to expository preaching. The back jacket of the book, "Feed My Sheep" states: Biblical preaching is nearing extermination in our day. There is sharing, suggesting, plenty of storytelling, and lots of preaching to felt needs. But the authoritative, expositional opening of the Word of God is more rare to find all the time.⁵

This is tragic but true. This lack of Biblical preaching leads to unbiblical beliefs and practices; unbalanced churches; liberalism; legalism; churches who are exalting lifestyles of sin; churches who don't believe in Biblical doctrine; churches who are now rejecting the belief in hell; churches who are teaching that all roads lead to heaven and that Jesus isn't the only way; churches who do not know how to interpret scripture; and churches who are filled with people who have never truly heard the Gospel preached! What the church needs today is a renewal of expository preaching from preachers who understand that eternal joy comes by fulfilling this high and holy calling by God. This is what we are called and committed to at Faith Community Church.

1 Webster's Ninth Collegiate Dictionary (Springfield, Mass.: Merriman-Webster, 1988), 438.

2 Richard Mayhue, "Rediscovering Expository Preaching," in Rediscovering Expository Preaching, ed. John MacArthur (Dallas: Word Publishing, 1992), 12-13.

3 William Perkins, The Art of Prophecy (reprint, Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1996), 9.

4 Bryan Chapell, Christ-Centered Preaching (Grand Rapids: Baker Academics, 2005), 30.

5 Feed my Sheep: A passionate Plea for Preaching, gen. ed. Don Kisler (Morgan, PA.: Soli Deo Gloria Publications, 2002)

Faith Community Church

Sunday Services: 9:00 & 10:45 AM, 6:00 PM

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