

The Principles Of Expository Preaching

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I love what Martyn Lloyd-Jones says about preaching. He says, “The most urgent need in the Christian church today is true preaching,” this is what the Church needs the most, he says, “and as it is the greatest and the most urgent need in the Church, it is obviously the greatest need in the world also.” Now, why is this the greatest need in the Church and subsequently the greatest need in the world also? Because it meets the need of the soul. Remember that today, that it meets the need of the soul—biblical expository preaching. It meets the need of the soul because it feeds the soul.

Now, we know God’s promise to His people in Jeremiah 3:15, He says, “And I will give you shepherds according to My heart, who will feed you with knowledge and understanding.” God’s heart is that the people would be fed; that they’d be fed the Word of God. That is the primary responsibility of a shepherd, that they would feed the people with knowledge and with understanding. We find that in the Old Testament, and then we find that also in the New Testament when Jesus restored Peter back into ministry and said, “Peter, do you love Me?” And then He said, “Feed my sheep.”

What is the call to ministry? To feed the sheep of God’s people. Remember this: God honors the teaching and proclamation of His Word. There are many people that think of different methods or they strive to build the ministry, but God honors the teaching and preaching of the Word of God more than anything else because when the Bible speaks, God is speaking to His people. The man who honors the Word of God, God will honor that man. And, the ministry that honors the Word of God, God will honor that ministry.

We know that in every generation, the Church of Jesus Christ rises or falls on the pulpit, so that’s why we’re here because we believe in the pulpit ministry. I like what Martin Luther said, “The pulpit is the throne for the Word of God.” What happens at the pulpit? The Word of God is being preached. No church, no denomination, no ministry, no pastor—notice—rises higher than the proclamation of the Word of God. You want the ministry to continue to be fruitful, to be alive, to be profitable? Then, it never rises above the proclamation and preaching and the teaching of the Word of God. I love what Pastor John taught on the theology of preaching because we all must have a high and holy view of the Word of God.

If today you leave, and this week you leave, with a high view of Scripture and a high view of God, you’re going to feed the people what they need to receive from God’s Word. We need to have a high and holy view of God. For your listeners in the congregation receive the truth attentively, your preaching demands holy reverence, and so you must know that what you are having in your hands and what you are possessing and what you’re studying is the very spoken, inspired, infallible Word of God. Once you have a high, holy view of God, then guess what you can teach the people—to also have a high and holy view of God because the congregation will never respect the Bible any more than you do. They will only respect the Bible as much as their pastor does as well.

I want to invite you, that you would open your Bible to the book of Nehemiah. We're going to look at one verse and then we're going to look at different principles of preaching today, this afternoon. And, why this is important is that here in Nehemiah we see a response, we see a revival from the preaching and proclamation of the Word of God. We find that the Lord used Nehemiah to restore the walls of Jerusalem, but then the Lord used also Ezra the priest to come and to preach the Word of God inside the city.

In Nehemiah 8:8, you're going to find this to be a verse that will be repeated throughout the entire week. It says, "So they read distinctly from the book,"—what is necessary as we congregate and bring the people together? To read from the Book, that there would be public reading of the Word of God. "So they read distinctly from the book, in the Law of God; and they gave the sense,"—you already know what that means, it means to give the meaning, that you would give the meaning of the text. "They gave the sense,"—they helped people, notice—"to understand the reading."

Do you know what your objective should be—your heart, your desire—as a pastor? Not that you would be known, not that you would be gifted, not that you would be skilled, not that you would be funny in the pulpit. Do you know what it would be? That'd you'd be helpful to the people. Look at the word there, they " . . . helped [the people] to understand." What is it that we desire to do? To help the people understand. Did you know that the same Hebrew root word of "teach" is the same Hebrew root word of "learn"? That means that if the people are not learning, then you're not teaching.

Oftentimes we think, You know what? I just taught such a great study. Well, ask yourself, did anyone learn anything? Because if there was no learning taking place, then you didn't really teach. And, what happens here? They read the Word of God, and then they explain it, " . . . helped them to understand the"—Scriptures.

What is it that makes a message expository? What makes a message expository is that it is exegetical—that it comes from the text, that it breaks the text, that it give the meaning of the text. It's from the Bible. Where you read the text, you explain the text, and then you apply the text. You can teach an expository message in 45 minutes, and you can teach an expository devotional in 15 minutes. Read the text, explain the text, and apply the text. Help the people understand the reading of the Word of God.

Here's another quote from Martyn Lloyd-Jones that connects us to the last session. He asks the question, "What is preaching?" And then, he defines it this way, "It is logic on fire," logic on fire. That's what preaching is. It's not simply giving a lecture. It's not simply sitting in a classroom setting as we are right now, it's different than simply sitting in a classroom setting or having a conversation or sharing biblical truths. That is not what preaching is. Preaching is logic on fire. He says, "Preaching is theology coming through a man who is on fire. A true understanding and experience of the Truth must lead to this." When you have an understanding of the truth of the Word of God it leads to this: that you are on fire, and you are communicating the truths of God, on fire.

We are going to go from the theological foundations of preaching, which is essential and foundational, to six principles of biblical preaching this afternoon. Now, I want you to know what the six principles are. The first, the preacher's priority. Would you write this down? The preacher's priority. Secondly, we have the preacher's preparation. Then, the preacher's proclamation. We'll look at the preacher's passion; then the preacher's persuasion, how can we preach with persuasion, how can we preach with what Martyn Lloyd-Jones calls, "logic on fire;" and then, the preacher's power. My favorite one, the preacher's power.

Let's look at the preacher's priority. What is our priority as we read, explain, and apply the text; as we exegete the text; as we explain biblical truths and theology and doctrine? It is to cause the listeners—notice this—to behold the glory of God. What is your priority? That people would behold the glory of God; that you would be a "big God" preacher! Not a big man preacher, but a "big God" preacher! Do you know the problem oftentimes in churches are that man is very big in the church and God is very small. No, man must be small because God is big. That people would walk out from church and wouldn't say, "You know what? I have such a great pastor." Do you know what the best praise report that people can say as they walk out of church? "I have such a great God!" not a great pastor, but a great God! You're magnifying God.

Every sermon should be a coronation service. Do you know what you're doing every sermon? It's a worship sermon through the teaching. Well, what're you doing? You are crowning the majesty of God before the awestruck eyes of the congregation, and you're standing there to preach as you unveil the splendor that is found in the text and you declare to the people, as Isaiah 40:9 said, "Behold"—here is—"your God!" That is what you're saying, "This is who your God is! He's great. He's faithful. He's omnipotent. He's omniscient. This is who God is." That is a priority of the preacher because God is the chief subject in the Bible—remember that. It is about God, the entire Bible, that means that we approach Scriptures searching for what we learn about God. When you open up and start to study to preach, and devotionally as well, you know what you're looking for? You're searching for what you can learn about God. You're not searching for what you can learn about yourself, you're searching for what you can learn about God—that God is full of power, that He's merciful, that He's jealous, that He's transcendent, that He's full of majesty. That is what we're looking for, so we must preach first and foremost the glory of God before we declare or prioritize anything else from the Bible.

You see, if our preaching is to be powerful, we must be preoccupied with declaring God. It was, again, Dr. Martyn Lloyd-Jones who raised the question, What is the chief end of preaching? What is the end of preaching? That people would become smarter? That people would memorize verses? That people would come to your church? Is that the end of all preaching? No! The end of all preaching is to give men and women a sense of God's presence. Man, we just spend time in the presence of God! That's the end of all preaching, that we would sense the presence of God. You see, the spiritual life of any church is directly shaped by their knowledge of who God is. Do you want to know how healthy your church is? How much do they know God, not are they coming to church or are they bringing a friend. The spiritual health of the church is measured by how much they know God, and your message should always elevate who God is. It should lead people into the knowledge of God, into the knowledge of our

Lord Jesus Christ. What is it that Peter says in 2 Peter 3:18? “But grow in the grace and”—in what?—“knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him be the glory both now and forever,” that we should pursue a greater knowledge and sense of the presence of God, that we would know Him.

Now, you know what's awesome when you prioritize yourself and dedicate yourself to preach God? You also become a trinitarian preacher. Oftentimes we don't hear that. How often have you heard anyone give a message or preach on the Trinity? Are you a trinitarian preacher? It's been said of this before, when it comes to preaching about God, the trinitarian nature of preaching, do you know what it is? The trinitarian nature of preaching is that we proclaim the glory of God the Father, we declare the cross of God the Son, and we do it in the power of God the Holy Spirit. Become a trinitarian preacher—you declare the glory of God the Father, you declare the cross of God the Son, and you do it in the power of God the Holy Spirit. You see, our preaching should be saturated with the awesomeness of who God is—that we declare that God exists, that God reigns over all creation, that He towers over the nations, that He rules over every human life and eternal destiny. The Lord reigns must be heard from every pulpit—the Lord reigns. What happens when the people know that the Lord reigns? They're comforted. They have peace. They grow. They know who their God is. They find peace. They're led into the presence of God and fall in love with Jesus. That's the preacher's priority.

Look at the preacher's preparation now. Let's look at the preparation of the preacher. Why is this important? Because before you prepare a sermon, you have to prepare your own hearts. We're going to talk throughout the week, and you're going to look at awesome outlines and observations on how to develop a sermon, but notice, you have to learn how to prepare your heart before you can prepare your sermon. It's not simply about preparing the sermon, it's about preparing the preacher.

Now, do you notice what happened to Ezra in the book of Nehemiah or in the book of Ezra before he got to Nehemiah 8? That Ezra was preparing his heart before he had the opportunity to preach. You see, the moment was prepared for the man because the man was already prepared for the moment. The moment was prepared for the man because the man was prepared for the moment. Ezra 7:10 says, “For Ezra had prepared his heart.” There's nothing better than going to the pulpit with an exercised heart. Has your heart been exercised or have you been trying to exercise it in the first five minutes of your preaching? You're trying to warm up the heart. No, your heart should come warm already. Your heart should come on fire already, that you saturate it, you're marinated in the presence of God. You prepare the heart already.

Now, “Ezra had prepared his heart to seek the Law of the LORD, and to do it, and to teach”—all the—“statutes and ordinances in Israel.” Why is it important to have a prepared heart? Because your life must be right before your sermon can be right. Your life must be right before your sermon can be right. As a result, you are wholeheartedly engaged in your pursuit of knowing God, and then you walking in obedience. Preparing your heart means that you want to know who God is personally, and you want to walk in obedience. You're pursuing a holy life.

What is preaching? What is ministry? It's an overflow of your time with God. Your sermon is an act of worship—I'm going to say it again, I want you to pay attention to that. Your sermon is an act of worship because you've been spending time in the presence of God.

You know what your first job is as a pastor? Your first ministry as a pastor, do you know what it is? To hear from God. Your first job isn't administrative duties, your first job as a pastor isn't to answer the phone, your first job as a pastor isn't to do a hospital call, your first job as a pastor is to hear from God because if you can't hear from God, then you have nothing to say, then you have nothing to say. Think about it, no preacher can take the listeners anywhere where he spiritually hasn't gone himself. You can't teach what you adequately have not learned and have not lived. That's why Paul told Timothy, "This is a part of being diligent," 2 Timothy 2:15, "Be diligent to present yourself approved to God," present yourself approved to God. Prepare yourself, and a part of preparing yourself is preparing your heart.

Now, realize this. How do you prepare yourself to preach? In prayer. It is possible to be overstudied and under prayed. There's a lot of people that go in overstudied and under prayed into the pulpit. That is the greatest temptation. Remember this: you're nothing except what you are before the throne of God in prayer. You are nothing except what you are before the throne of God in prayer. It was Bethany Jones who said of her husband, Martyn Lloyd-Jones, notice what she said of her husband, quote, "You will never be able to understand my husband as an evangelist until you understand him as a man of prayer." We must be men of prayer. It was Charles Spurgeon who said it this way, quote, "I'd rather teach one man to pray than ten men to preach." Prepare your heart because you will be no good for anyone until you have spent time before the Lord. God will not fill you if you're always in a hurry, and most of us need to repent of our busyness so that we can sit before the Word of God. There are many people that desire to be seen by men when they haven't been seen before the presence of God. Have you been seen before the presence of God? This is the preacher's preparation.

Let's look at the preacher's proclamation now, and we'll look at a few principles within this point. The preacher's proclamation is that the preacher should first of all preach with humility—remember this—to preach with humility. To deliver a powerful message, I want you to know something, you must be under the Lordship of Christ, you must be under the Lordship of Christ. You are not preaching with arrogance. We are not preaching to show ourselves as men who are approved by men, we are preaching because we are under the Lordship of Jesus Christ. We have been summoned with the call to herald a message that is not our own. We are simply ambassadors and representatives of a King. Do you know what that requires? It requires humble submission and pursuing personal godliness. Preach with humility. You know this, 1 Peter 5:5, "God resists the proud, But gives grace to the humble." It is preachers who have died to self that best proclaim the risen Savior. You want to best proclaim the risen Savior? It's those who have died to self can proclaim about the risen Savior.

Someone once said, "The lowliest preacher best heralds a lofty God." Who was a lowly preacher in the New Testament? You know of him, John the Baptist. All he preached was the Lamb of God. All he did is point people to Jesus, so much so that people started going to

Christ instead of him. What did he tell his disciples? "He must increase, but I must decrease." Preach with humility.

How about this: preach with authority. You've already heard this today, and what kind of authority? Is it the authority that you have in a piece of paper that's laminated on a wall in an office? Absolutely not! Is it the authority that you have because you're wearing a lanyard? No, it's the authority that's imparted by Scripture. It's imparted authority. Write that down today, imparted authority. It's the authority that comes from Scripture. Real preaching comes with the force of the authority of the Word of God. What does the authority of the Word of God do? It binds the conscience and it commands the will to respond from the listener. This is the authority of the Word of God, "Thus says the Lord," this is not the man speaking, this is God speaking. You're not preaching from life experience. There are a lot of times, even for myself, I was intimidated to preach in front of people that have lived much longer than I have and experienced much more than I ever have, but the Lord told me and reminded me, "You're not preaching from life experience, you're preaching from the imparted divine authority of God's Word." That is how we are preaching.

J.I. Packer said, "Preaching that does not display divine authority both in its content and in its manner is not the substance but only the shadow of the real thing." It's not the substance, it's only the shadow of the real thing. There is no divine authority that is taking place when preaching happens—notice—it has no power. We should preach with humility. We should preach with authority. But, you know also how you should preach? You should preach with clarity. Preach with clarity. You should be understood when you preach, not simply, you know what you're saying, but do people know what you're saying? Does anyone understand you? You should preach with clarity. In 1 Corinthians 14:8, what does Paul say to the church of Corinth, "For if the trumpet makes an uncertain sound, who will prepare for battle?" No one will respond. Think about it. If a trumpet makes a sound that no one knows, the military would not respond as a call to action. Make a very clear sound so that people can respond to the truth of the Word of God. You see, expository preaching means making God's Word plain. Nehemiah 8:8, "... helped them to understand."

What does it mean? Make God's Word plain. It doesn't matter how precise you are or profound your sermon is, if it is unclear to the listeners. You would say, "Man, do you look at those words I used today? I really blew them away. Oh, you know what? I was right in my doctrine. I was right in my theology." It doesn't matter how right you are, how profound you are, if you're unclear to the listeners. What is it that G. Campbell Morgan said, we've said it before, "The three essentials for great preaching are truth, clarity, and passion," truth, clarity, and passion. What does that mean? Think about what you're going to say because you're a steward of the Word of God; think about what you're going to say and then the wisdom of Ecclesiastes is think about how you're going to say it so that you can be clear.

Ecclesiastes 12:9-10, I love this verse. Most people don't recognize this as a verse for preaching, but it is, "And moreover, because the Preacher was wise, he still taught the people knowledge; yes, he pondered and sought out and set in order many proverbs." I love that. Do

you know what he did? “. . . he . . . set in order”—all—“the proverbs;” “. . . because the Preacher was wise.” If you’re wise, do you know what you’re going to do? Set the things in order so that people understand. “. . . because”—he—“was wise, he . . . set in order many proverbs. 10 The Preacher sought to find acceptable words.” In the New Living Translation it says, “The Teacher sought to find just the right words”—would you seek out to find just the right words as a wise preacher?—“and what was written was upright—words of truth.”

You see, it’s important that we be clear in our proclamation, that we be humble in our proclamation, that we be authoritative in our proclamation, but that we would be clear in our proclamation. We mentioned it earlier that our thinking should be linear. What does that mean? We’re taking people somewhere. We’re not just going around in circles in our mind and saying a lot of things that are true and good but have no actual clarity or pattern or structure. Oftentimes we just say everything that comes to mind. That’s the danger of preaching with no notes, that you’ll say whatever comes to mind and then you’re scattered instead of structured. Now, there are some people that are just gifted by the Holy Spirit to do that, they know how to preach effectively without notes, they’re not scattered. They are gifted by God and very structured and effective.

But what do we know in our proclamation of preaching? That plain preaching is a priority for any effective sermon. You want to have an effective sermon? Then, you have to preach plainly. And, clarity of content begins with a single, easy-to-recognize theme. You’re going to talk about that tomorrow. You want to make it plain that everyone should understand what your theme is, that at the end of the message you would ask someone, “What was the message about?” and they could say it in one sentence because you drilled that single one theme. Every message has a single thrust, that everyone understands what it’s about. So, don’t become so focused on the micros, that you forget the macro. Preach with humility, preach with authority, preach with clarity, preach with simplicity.

Now, I’m going to give you a commentary of what I just did here. Do you know what that’s called? An internal summary. You’re helping people arrive at the place that you want to take them. It’s like a guide that is saying, “We’ve been here. We’ve made it here to this place, but now we’re going over here,” so that when we arrive we all get there. Some pastors get there on their own, and they’re all happy we arrived. The people were lost along the way. So, we’re preaching with simplicity as well.

What does that mean? We’re preaching with simplicity, it means that you’re making the things that seem hard, you’re making them very simple. You see, an effective preacher is one who can explain a profound truth in a simple way. Make it plain where it’s very plain what you’re saying, but it’s also very simple. It’s been said before, “To make hard things seem hard, it’s within the reach of all,” to make hard things hard, is within the reach of all, “but to make hard things seem easy and profound is high attained by very few speakers,” by very few speakers.

We want to preach with simplicity, we want to preach also with continuity. What does that mean? We want the message to have flow. We want the message to begin in one place and

continue all the way through; that you're taking people somewhere, as we just mentioned, with unity, order, and progress. As you look at your outline, does it show that you're taking people somewhere because that's what a sermon does. It's what many people call, and you'll hear Pastor John mention it, sermonic flow. That everything is connected—every main idea, every main point, every subpoint is connected, one to the other, right?

Finally, when it comes to the preacher's proclamation—I love this—you are to preach with sobriety. Does that mean that we mean not be influenced by outside substances? Well, that is the given already, "And do not be drunk with wine . . . but be filled with the Spirit." But what I mean by this is that we should deliver the sermon as though all life in eternity—heaven and hell—are hanging in the balance. That you'd be serious about what you're doing. That every word is weighted with gravity, that you understand the seriousness of preaching. You're preaching for eternity. You're an ambassador of Christ the King. You're representing the Sovereign One, not yourself.

What has God called you to do? God has called you to be an expositor not an entertainer. There has to be a seriousness about the things that you do. When you take the Word of God serious, the people will also take the Word of God serious. The way you preach the Bible is the way that you are teaching them how to read their Bibles on their own. You're teaching the people how to read the Bible by the way that you preach. You're teaching the people how to read the Bible by the way that you preach.

So, that's the preacher's priority, the preacher's preparation, the preacher's proclamation, but let's look at the preacher's passion here. What is the preacher's passion? Well, you have to have passion when you preach as well. You're not simply talking about solar panels. There's nothing wrong with that, either. You're not simply talking about the game last night. You have to preach the Word of God that has been exercised in your heart and soul and mind with fervency. There has to be passion in your preaching. It's not a lecture. It's not a talk. That's the difference between teaching, lecturing, and then preaching.

You're not preaching simply to the mind. Do you know what you're preaching? To the hearts. You're pulling on the strings of the heart. You almost want to reach over from your pulpit and grab people and pull them out of the lackadaisical spiritual state of where they're at, to wake them up, as listeners, because your preaching matters. Think about it, every sermon you give, every time you walk up to the pulpit, that one sermon, can be the turning point of someone else's life. So, passion is absolutely necessary to any pulpit presentation of the truth.

What happens when you have no passion when you preach? The sermon becomes dry as a dust lecture could ever be. You have to be energized when you preach the truth of God. It has to burn in your heart, if it's ever going to burn in the heart of the listeners. Does your message burn in your heart? Have you worked it in your hearts so that it's contagious to those that are listening to the message?

It's been said before that dispassionate preaching, do you know what it reveals? It reveals the

preacher's lukewarm heart towards the truth, lukewarm heart towards the truth. Preaching in a monotone is not preaching at all, it's a dull delivery, and it's only preaching in name, it's not preaching in reality. Do you know what we're doing when we're preaching with passion? We're making the sermon compelling. Now, it's not artificial; now, it's not an act; it's not something that you pretend to be like someone else. But do you know what passion does? It's like the end or tip of the spear that gives the message a very sharp point to penetrate the hearts. Is your preaching sharp or has your preaching been dull lately?

There are times that I watch the message that I have preached, and I look at it and I'm like, "Man, I need a little bit more fire in my heart here. I need to communicate the truth of the Word of God and exercise it in my heart so that it can go into the hearts of the listeners." Now, know this, the sufficiency and the power is in the Word of God, but as we preach not simply to the mind, but to the heart and the will, we have to preach with some fervency. That's what we have to preach.

But, not only fervency, how about this: preach with urgency as well. Are you preaching with any type of urgency in your message? Our preaching must come with a compelling sense of urgency. It means that you are impressing upon the listeners, those that are listening, that they must respond to the message, and they have to respond today. Don't make it seem like, "You know what? This message is okay, and if you like it, you like it; and if you don't like it, then too bad, just come next week." I've heard pastors go up and preach that way. It shouldn't be on the pulpit. Or, if your pastor asks you to preach, don't ever come up and say, "Do you know what? Well, my pastor just asked me to cover him last night." That's your fault that you're not that ready because you should be ready in and out of season, and you should still preach with passion, and you should still preach with fervency, and you should still preach with urgency.

Do you know what you're conveying when you preach with urgency and passion? The immediacy of the moment—this moment, right now, matters. What does the Bible say? Today, ". . . is the day of salvation." Now, is the time, right now. Do you notice the immediacy there? If you're not sensing and you're not communicating a sense of urgency, the people listening are not going to care to respond. You're pressing for a response as a preacher. Let's think about this, it's like a lawyer that addresses the jury and is calling for a verdict—today. That's what we're doing, we're calling for a verdict right now. You've seen it happen in altar calls. You've seen Pastor John do it, "And you must do it publicly, and you must do it now. You must do it publicly and say it, and you must do it now." What is that? Urgency. Do it right now. Do it right now.

Let's talk here not only about the priority, the preparation, the proclamation, the passion in preaching, but what about this: the persuasion of the preacher, the preacher's persuasion. We have to preach with persuasion. The Bible tells us as Paul wrote to Timothy in 2 Timothy 4:2, "Preach the Word,"—that's the charge—"Be ready in season and out of season,"—notice the persuasion—"Convince"—whoa! When he says the word 'convince' that means persuade. Convince them. Win the argument. What are you doing when you're preaching? You're setting up an argument about the truth of the Word of God. That's what you're doing. You're building a

case. From the introduction all the way to the conclusion, guess what you're doing? You're building a case. "Preach the word . . . Convince,"—them, persuade them and—"rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching."

How do you convince or how do you persuade? First, confront the carnal. In order for you to persuade anyone, you have to confront those people that are living in sin. That should be one of the chief concerns of every preacher—to expose sin in the life of the listeners—that you would talk about sin, that you would talk about the ugliness of sin, the depravity of sin, that you expose the sin that exists as you see it, as mentioned in the Bible. If you were to be a preacher like Jesus Christ, you must confront the personal sin in the lives of people, and it's critical that you apply it in every aspect of the message because until sin is exposed and addressed, the truth remains at a very superficial level. Do you know what you're doing? You're bringing the truth to a very deep level. How do you teach and preach with persuasion? You confront the carnal.

Secondly, you also warn the wayward, warn the wayward. Your preaching has to have an element of warning. You're confronting, but you're also warning people. It has an element of warning people and caution them of the pain, of the destruction of disobeying the Word of God that they're receiving. In 2 Timothy 3:16, "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God,"—and if you are a person, a man today that believes in the inspiration of the Word of God, you would know that it's—"profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness," so warn the people that are wayward. Warn them, right?

Confront the carnal, warn the wayward, but how about this: comfort the downcast. Are you comforting anyone in your message or does your message have one pitch the whole time, "Repent! Repent! Repent! Repent!" Do you know what it should have? It should have, "Yes, repent," but also, "Today, if you're discouraged, I want to encourage you and I want to remind you that God is still faithful. He is still present. He is still good, that God is full of mercy." You must be willing and able to comfort people in the preaching because there are hurting hearts, and they will apply Scripture and bring God's peace into discouraged souls. You have to bring a comfort message and know when it's important to bring that comfort message. Right now, maybe you're going through a series and you would think, You know what, I need to take a break from this series on this Wednesday night or this Sunday morning because as a pastor I understand that the people need a message that's going to bring comfort.

Your message has to confront the carnal, warn the wayward, it must also comfort the downcast, that you're purposely seeking to comfort troubled souls. People are going through things. They're going through death, they're going through trials with their children, they're going through loss of jobs. As you preach, what're you doing? You're comforting those that are downcast. But you also—notice—you're strengthening the weak. Pastor John talked about this earlier. Do you know what you're called to do as you preach? You're called to build up with spiritual fortitude. You're called to edify people. The people should not leave the service thinking, Man, we really got it today from the pastor. You know what? That was all heat. That was all conviction. Those are all good things, but remember you're called to edify, to bring

spiritual fortitude in their lives.

Yes, confront the carnal, warn the wayward, comfort the downcast, but also strengthen the weak. Uplift the souls. Fortify the spiritual stamina. Undergird their faith so that they're strong in the Spirit by the teaching of the Word of God. Do you know what I also love that we can do as well as you persuade? By evangelizing the lost. Are you evangelizing the lost in your preaching? You see, we are charged not simply to be expositors, we're charged to be soul winners. We must preach for life change. What are we preaching for? Life change. Consider the preaching of Jesus. He consistently urged people and unbelievers to commit their lives to Him. What did He say? "Come to Me," He's calling people to follow Him.

Call people to follow Christ as well. You would say, "Well, I don't have the gift of evangelism. I'm a Bible preacher. I'm a Bible teacher." Well, an element of preaching is evangelism. There's an evangelistic side of preaching. What does Paul tell Timothy? I used to be discouraged until this verse just leaped out of the pages and God spoke to me. You notice what Paul told Timothy, a pastor? He wasn't an evangelist, he was a pastor. What does he say in 2 Timothy 4:5? "But you be watchful in all things, endure afflictions"—that sounds like a pastor, just always going through afflictions, right—"do the work of an evangelist." I may not be an evangelist, but I'm doing " . . . the work of an evangelist."

How am I doing the work of an evangelist? I'm calling people to Christ. " . . . do the work of an evangelist"—and—"fulfill your ministry." Make sure your ministry is complete. How does your ministry become complete? By you doing these things—being watchful, enduring afflictions, and calling people to Christ.

Finally, let's look at the preacher's power, the preacher's power. This is my favorite. In true preaching, you know what happens when you are deeply aware of your dependency upon the Spirit of God. All these things are good—they're mechanics, they are principles, they are foundational—but do you know what happens? True preaching happens when you are deeply aware of your dependency upon God, upon the Holy Spirit. All of us have something here in common, each and every one of us regardless of how long you've been preaching—we all are weak men; we all must rest in the all-sufficient energy of God's Spirit. It is what Pastor John mentioned earlier how as you walk up to the pulpit, that you'd be asking the Lord, "Lord, fill me with Your Holy Spirit. I believe in the power of the Holy Spirit." If our preaching is to have power, it must be the power of the Holy Spirit. It must not be artificial. It must not be fabricated personality. It must not be gifted communication. If our preaching is to be powerful, it must be the anointing of the Holy Spirit. It is the unction that enables us to be able to communicate the Word of God to minister to the hearts and needs of people.

Do you know what happens when you are anointed to preach the Word of God? When you've been spending time in the presence of God, that you're preaching the Word of God, and people who have needs that you know nothing about the Holy Spirit is ministering to them. You see, unction is God-given power that enables us through His Spirit to then become a channel by which the Spirit of God can work through. You see, I want to be a channel. I want to be a

vessel that the Holy Spirit can work through. And, you know how you become a channel, a vessel, by which the Spirit of God can work through? By saying, "Lord, fill me with Your Holy Spirit."

You see, Paul knew this when he preached the Word to the Thessalonians. In 1 Thessalonians 1:5 he says, "For our gospel did not come to you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Spirit." The Word of God didn't come simply in words. It didn't come simply because I knew how to craft a good message, and I had all my points, and my conclusion, and my transitional statements, and there was sermon flow and all of it, and it was well crafted. No, you can be preaching a well-crafted outline and it be a dead message because there's no power of the Holy Spirit. An exclusive reliance upon human talent and natural skill where you think, You know what, but I'm good. I don't really need to pray. You know, I've been doing this for a while now. When you're leaning upon your own gift, your own experience, your own talent, you have to remember that that is utterly insufficient to do what God has required for you to do in the pulpit. Your talent, your gift, your experience is not enough. That is insufficient for what God has called you to do in the pulpit. If the preacher is to be filled with the Spirit of God, and you pray and the Holy Spirit's filling you daily, then God will use you and unleash His power through your sermon all by and all because of His grace.

Remember this, God does not use us because of us, He uses us in spite of us. So, rely upon the power of the Holy Spirit, and if you rely upon the power of the Holy Spirit, God will be honored in your expositions. They'll be God-inspired expositions.