

# Elements of Balanced Preaching

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Preaching is one of my favorite subjects to read about, think about, and talk about. In fact, it is one of my priorities in my personal ministry. How great is the priority of preaching for you?

Whereas some preachers say that they hold to a high view of Scripture, they seem to have lowered their confidence in God's Word when they preach it. In general there seems to be a decreasing confidence in the pulpit ministry.

Preachers who experience a crisis in personal identity and who have no clear and bold conviction about preaching often seem to lack a Biblical focus in other aspects of ministry. Powerful preaching begins with the authority of God's inspired, inerrant, life-changing Word .

When the pulpit ministry is on a decline, the church will be on a decline. When preaching is in a crisis, the church will experience a crisis. The effectiveness of the pulpit is directly related to the effectiveness of the church. The content of preaching and the manner of preaching are both important. Preach God's Word with holy passion.

Preaching is unique in that it violates the laws of pedagogy. We preach to people of various ages from various backgrounds, with different levels of understanding, and bring them together in one audience.

I believe that balanced preaching should have four elements. The first element of balanced preaching is explanation of truth. Explain clearly to people what the Bible is saying. With this element we answer the question, "What?"

Preachers may have a right to their own opinions, but we do not have a right to be wrong in our facts. To be a preacher of truth we must be students of truth. Preaching is more than merely performing a textual autopsy. Dig into it tear it apart until you understand it, and then organize it - put it back together in a clearly organized way, and then confidently proclaim it as life-changing truth.

I think it was Spurgeon who said, "Don't just throw seed at the people! Grind it into flour, bake it into bread and slice it for them. And, it wouldn't hurt to put a little honey on it."

The second element of balanced preaching is illustration of truth. Show people how to relate to what happened. With this element we answer the question, "Then what?" Illustrations help clarify a subject, make a truth become clearer, and help people remember the truth preached. The best place to get illustrations is everyday life. Preachers live in the same world as those who listen to preaching. Be observant to the experiences of life. Consider nature, current events, and personal experiences for up-to-date and relevant illustrations.

The third element of balanced preaching is application of truth. Help people understand how they can use this truth in their lives today. With this element we answer the question, "So what?" Many times an average sermon could be improved by giving it a specific aim. Application of truth is easier if the sermon has an aim. If, as preachers, we do not apply truth to our own lives

and filter the truth through our own experiences, then we will not be successful in helping others to apply it. Application clarifies personal responsibility to God relative to that specific truth. The subject or text will determine the truth you want to apply.

The fourth element of balanced preaching is invitation to truth. Show people the importance of responding to the truth preached. With this element we answer the question, "Now what?" Preaching should include teaching, but preaching is more than, and goes beyond, teaching. Preach for a verdict and expect a response. The response may not always be immediate and it may not always be public, but we should always lead up to an appeal. Invitations should be given clearly, earnestly, confidently, courteously, positively, naturally, and compassionately. The truth or text will determine the nature and purpose of the invitation.

Have you ever tried to give verbal directions to your home to someone who has never been in your community and has never been to your home? It's a challenge, isn't it? Well, that's the kind of careful attention needed when preaching God's Word. We want people to understand it, remember it, and use it. Strong and clear Biblical preaching is still possible today if preachers will commit themselves to it.