



Ecclesiology: The Study of the Church

Lesson 24: The Purpose of Expository Preaching

INTRODUCTION

1. What is the purpose of listening to sermons? _____

2. What is not the purpose of listening to sermons? List several examples. _____

God grows and gives life to His people through His Word. Since God’s Word is all-important for Christian life and growth, we need to understand what good preaching is and how to benefit from good preaching. These aren’t just topics for seminary students. Every Christian should have an eternal interest in good preaching. In this study, we want to think specifically about the purpose of preaching and the related question, “what makes a good sermon good?”

MAIN IDEA

God’s people need to hear from God. Therefore, good preaching is preaching that places its highest priority on faithfully communicating God’s Word.

DIGGING IN

Let’s begin near the beginning by thinking about what went wrong in the world and why fallen humanity is in the condition it is in.

Genesis 2:16–17

1. How does God describe Adam’s failure? _____

2. In discussing Genesis 3, we often focus on the sin of pride, or the sin of wanting to become like God, which are ways of characterizing a heart problem. But it’s also important to see that these “heart failures” showed up in Adam as “ear failures.” What then do we learn from this passage about sin generally? Using the language of this passage, how will the temptation to sin show up in our lives? _____

3. If we, as fallen humans, are continually tempted to set our desires on hearing from voices other than God's, what kind of preaching will we wrongly desire to hear? _____

4. As people listen to sermons, what are some ways in which they show more interest in voices other than God's? _____

The apostle Paul was someone who knew well the importance of listening to God's Word as opposed to false teachers, humanly devised philosophies, or any other competitor. In one of the last letters of his life, he writes to his longtime disciple Timothy about the importance of preaching God's Word.

2 Timothy 3:16–4:4

5. According to verse 16 of chapter 3, where does the Bible come from? Why should this cause us to believe and obey everything it says? _____

6. According to verses 16 and 17 of chapter 3, what will the Bible do for Christians? _____

7. In light of these two verses, how would you characterize the purpose of preaching? How would you answer the question, "What makes a good sermon good?" _____

8. In chapter 4 and verse 1. Paul starts with the words, "I solemnly charge you..." By what or by whom does Paul charge Timothy? What does this say about how serious Paul is about what he is about to say? (Keep in mind that Paul is probably nearing his death and sitting in his prison cell as he writes to Timothy.) _____

9. Here at the end of his life, what is Paul most anxious to charge Timothy to do (4:2)? _____

10. What exactly is it that Timothy must preach (4:2)? What else might Timothy be tempted to preach? _____

Because God’s people need to hear from God, and because God charges preachers to preach His Word, preachers should realize they have nothing truly valuable to say other than what is in God’s Word. That is the job—to faithfully say again what God has already said in His Word; to explain it and apply it to the congregation so that, by the power of the Spirit, their lives will be conformed to God’s will.

What makes a good sermon good? A good sermon is one that faithfully proclaims and applies the meaning of God’s Word.

11. What might distract Timothy—or any pastor—from fulfilling this charge? _____

12. What do you think Paul means by “in season and out of season” (4:2)? _____

13. How do verses 3 and 4 in chapter 4 remind you of our meditation on Genesis 2 and 3? _____

14. Should good preaching be measured by its outcome or its content? _____

15. What should churches be looking for in their preachers?¹ _____

¹ Adapted from Bobby Jamieson, *Hearing God’s Word: Expository Preaching*, ed. Mark Dever, 9Marks Healthy Church Study Guides (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012), 25–28.