



THE JOHN MACARTHUR

*Pastor's Library*



# PREACHING

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HOW *to* PREACH BIBLICALLY

JOHN MACARTHUR

*and* THE MASTER'S SEMINARY FACULTY



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PREACHING: HOW TO PREACH BIBLICALLY

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Published in association with the literary agency of Wolgemuth & Associates, Inc.

**Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data**

MacArthur, John 1939—

Preaching: how to preach biblically / Adapted from Rediscovering expository preaching / John MacArthur, general editor, and The Master's Seminary Faculty : Richard L. Mayhue, associate editor; Robert L. Thomas, associate editor.

p. cm.

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN-10: 1-4185-0004-6

ISBN-13: 978-1-4185-0004-7

1. Preaching 2. Bible—Homiletical use. I. Mayhue, Richard L., 1944— II. Thomas, Robert L., 1928— III. Title.

BV4211.2.M16 1992

251—dc20

92-10804

CIP

Printed in the United States of America

3 4 5 6 7 — 11 10 09 08 07 06

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# Preface

In keeping with the purposes of The Master's Seminary, this volume aims to motivate and equip this and the next generation of Christian leaders in providing wholesome spiritual nourishment for God's people from His Word. These materials combine, in a highly condensed form, all aspects of The Master's Seminary program, which is designed to shape men of God to proclaim the Word of God effectively, so that nonbelievers can be evangelized and believers can be equipped to do the work of ministry.

The writers have targeted both the seasoned preacher and the student of preaching/teaching. It has also been written to help serious laymen in their ministry of the Word. We envision the book as a potential textbook in homiletics at the Bible college and seminary levels. Pastors without seminary training can profit from this volume too, as can veteran pastors who, like us, are continually seeking a higher level of expository excellence.

This is *not* intended as an unabridged treatment of biblical exposition. No single chapter exhausts its subject. Rather, the comprehensive scope of the work, dealing as it does with theological, exegetical, and homiletical aspects of preaching, is its intended strength. The flow of the book moves from biblical foundations for preaching through a detailed process of developing an exposition and then to the actual delivery of an expository message. The discussions build a bridge from the study disciplines a pastor learned in seminary to the sermon he preaches in a local church. This volume suggests how to progress purposefully from one phase to the next in readying oneself to minister to God's people.

More specifically, the fourfold aim is

1. To *clarify* the need for and meaning of expository preaching, that is, to answer the question, "*What* is expository preaching?"
2. To *verify* the theological and historical demand for expository preaching, that is, to answer the question, "*Why* insist on expository preaching?"
3. To *specify* the essential elements and steps involved in preparation for and participation in expository preaching, that is, to answer the question, "*How* does one go about expository preaching?"
4. To *exemplify* the reality of expository preaching, that is, to answer the question, "*Who* have been or who are promoters and practitioners of expository preaching?"

Our president, John MacArthur, known worldwide as a gifted expositor, has contributed a significant portion of this book. His colleagues on

The Master's Seminary faculty, with an average of more than thirty years' experience in preaching and in the seminary training of preachers, also have contributed from the treasury of their areas of expertise. The reader will quickly appreciate their united affirmations on exposition that emerge amidst a variety of individual expressions and methodological preferences.

Their unanimity regarding Bible exposition centers in the priority of faithfully, accurately, and effectively imparting the content of the authoritative and inerrant biblical text. Yet the reader will see differences in their emphases on how this is done best. One prefers preaching without notes, while another advocates the use of notes or even a full manuscript. One sees the need for almost all sermon outlines to match the sequence of the text, with another allowing more flexibility for use of nonsequential outlines. One emphasizes the importance of presenting a solution to each difficult interpretive problem; another leans toward telling an audience frankly when sermon preparation has not yielded a conclusive answer. One stresses the importance of not neglecting the overriding message of Old Testament narrative sections, but another features the cautious use of Old Testament narrative characters as illustrations in sermonizing. These are samples of the methodological variety that the careful reader will detect. This volume does not insist on a single, mechanical approach to preaching but rather focuses attention on *essential* dynamic elements of Bible exposition for any age; in other words, primary concentration is on the Scriptures and the central place of Christ in declaring their meaning.

The reader will also note a diversity in the "levels" of treatment of the different topics. At one extreme are the chapters whose documentation is copious, and at the other are those in which documentation is minimal. This diversity is, to some extent, a consequence of the nature of the subject and, to a lesser degree, the choice of each contributor. Each has handled his phase of exposition in the manner he deemed wisest.

The book outlines four broad phases that follow the actual progression of the preaching experience. They include: (1) the godliness of the man who comes to study the Word of God, (2) the ability of the godly man in studying Scripture exegetically, (3) the skill of the godly man in merging all his study materials into a message form that is true to the text and relevantly applies Scripture to his own generation, and (4) the dynamics of the godly man in proclaiming his exposition in a spiritually convincing and compelling way.

An Appendix contains an example of John MacArthur's notes from his exegetical study and his subsequent preaching manuscript. To maximize the benefit of this unique feature, readers may write: Word of Grace Ministries, P.O. Box 4000, Panorama City, CA 91412, or call 1-800-55-GRACE to order a CD of the message Dr. MacArthur delivered from these preaching notes. Then, in addition to comparing his exegetical notes with his preaching notes, readers can hear the way he actually preached the message. Ask for

tape GC 54-47, "The Man of God." In chapter 5, "The Man of God and Expository Preaching," readers can also see how the same material has become a published essay. For further help, request the four-message album, "Insight into a Pastor's Heart: Convictions and Observations about Preachers and Preaching," taken from chapel services at The Master's Seminary.

In the Additional Reading section at the end of the volume, we avoided listing scores of books on preaching that are no longer in print or do not make a significant contribution; instead, we selected several of the best available and affordable volumes on preaching. The inclusion of a work in this list is not intended as an endorsement of everything in that work but reflects the faculty's favorable impressions of its general thrust. Conversely, the exclusion of a title does not necessarily reflect negatively on that work. We encourage the reader to make the listed works his first acquisitions to supplement the material presented here.

Extensive literature related to sermon preparation and preaching is documented in endnotes. For the reader who chooses to pursue these sources, they can be a gold mine for further study. Those who prefer may, of course, read just the body of the text. The Index of Authors will be useful in locating all the references to a particular writer.

John MacArthur and The Master's Seminary faculty pray that the Lord Jesus Christ will be pleased to use *Preaching: How to Preach Biblically* to encourage fellow expositors and to groom a new generation of expositors who will preach with the same passion the apostles had for God and His Word.

*Richard L. Maybue*  
*Robert L. Thomas*



# Rediscovering Expository Preaching

*Richard L. Mayhew*

Biblical preaching's authenticity is significantly tarnished by contemporary communicators who are more concerned with personal relevance than with God's revelation. Scripture unmistakably requires a proclamation focused on God's will and mankind's obligation to obey. With men wholly committed to God's Word, the expository pattern commends itself as preaching that is true to the Bible. Exposition presupposes an exegetical process to extract the God-intended meaning of Scripture and an explanation of that meaning in a contemporary way. The biblical essence and apostolic spirit of expository preaching need to be recaptured in the training and preaching of men who are freshly committed to "preaching the Word."

The Master's Seminary joins with others<sup>1</sup> in accepting the urgent responsibility for transmitting the Pauline legacy to "preach the word" (2 Tim. 4:2). This volume signals an effort to instill in twenty-first-century preachers a pattern of biblical preaching inherited from their predecessors.<sup>2</sup>

Every generation shares the kind of dire circumstances that Amos prophesied for Israel: "'Behold, days are coming,' declares the Lord GOD, / 'When I will send a famine on the land, / Not a famine for bread or a thirst for water, / But rather for hearing the words of the LORD'" (Amos 8:11). The last several centuries have proved this need again.

## REVIEWING RECENT TRENDS

In an explanation of Hebrews 8:10, the Puritan commentator William Gouge (1575–1653) remarked,

Ministers are herein to imitate God, and, to their best endeavour, to instruct people in the mysteries of godliness, and to teach them what to believe and practice, and then to stir them up in act and deed, to do what they are instructed to do. Their labour otherwise is likely to be in

#### 4 Proving the Priority of Expository Preaching

vain. Neglect of this course is a main cause that men fall into as many errors as they do in these days.<sup>3</sup>

To this editorial by Gouge, Charles Spurgeon (1834–1892) added a word about nineteenth-century England:

I may add that this last remark has gained more force in our times; it is among uninstructed flocks that the wolves of p[ro]p[er]ty make havoc; sound teaching is the best protection from the heresies which ravage right and left among us.<sup>4</sup>

John Broadus (1827–1895) decried the death of good preaching in America too,<sup>5</sup> and G. Campbell Morgan (1863–1945) noted,

The supreme work of the Christian minister is the work of preaching. This is a day in which one of our great perils is that of doing a thousand little things to the neglect of the one thing, which is preaching.<sup>6</sup>

The following typical laments evidence that little improvement had been made by the mid-twentieth century:

Except for the growing worldliness of its members, the pulpit is the church's weak spot.<sup>7</sup>

But the glory of the Christian pulpit is a borrowed glow. . . . To an alarming extent the glory is departing from the pulpit of the twentieth century. . . . The Word of God has been denied the throne and given a subordinate place.<sup>8</sup>

Yet it remains true that "whatever be the marks of the contemporary pulpit, the centrality of Biblical preaching is not one of them."<sup>9</sup>

In a tradition that focuses on the centrality of the written Word, few subjects are more important than the interpretation and proclamation of that Word. Everyone stresses the necessity of a solid exegesis of the text, but few are adept at providing such an exegesis and preaching effectively from it.<sup>10</sup>

By the mid-1980s a national Congress on Biblical Exposition (COBE) convened to urge a return to true biblical exposition.<sup>11</sup> COBE's recurring theme demanded that the American church must return to true biblical preaching or else the Western world would continue its descent toward a valueless culture. Commenting on the uniqueness of America in contemporary culture, Os Guinness noted with concern that "in all my studies I have yet to see a Western society where the church pews are so full and the sermons so empty."<sup>12</sup>

John MacArthur's review of preaching patterns in the late eighties led him to observe,

Specifically, evangelical preaching ought to reflect our conviction that God's Word is infallible and inerrant. Too often it does not. In fact, there is a discernible trend in contemporary evangelicalism *away* from biblical preaching and a drift *toward* an experience-centered, pragmatic, topical approach in the pulpit.<sup>13</sup>

In the nineties an irresistible urge for a focus in the pulpit on the *relevant* seemingly existed, with a resultant inattention to God's *revelation*. Siegfried Meuer alerted Christians in the 1960s to the same "contemporary danger."<sup>14</sup> He likened the direction of his day to the earlier trends of Harry Emerson Fosdick, who wrote in the twenties, "The sermon is uninteresting because it has no connection with the real interests of the people. . . . The sermon must tackle a real problem."<sup>15</sup> Meuer noted that Fosdick opened the floodgate for philosophy and psychology to inundate the modern pulpit with unbelief.

Fosdick's philosophy sounds alarmingly similar to the advice given in a recent publication on relevant contemporary preaching:

Unchurched people today are the ultimate consumers. We may not like it, but for every sermon we preach, they're asking, "Am I interested in that subject or not?" If they aren't, it doesn't matter how effective our delivery is; their minds will check out.<sup>16</sup>

The implied conclusion is that pastors must preach what people want to hear rather than what God wants proclaimed. Such counsel sounds the alarm of 2 Timothy 4:3, which warns: "For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but wanting to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance to their own desires."

What is the necessary response? The generation of preachers facing all the spiritual opportunities and satanic obstacles of this new millennium must rediscover and reaffirm expository preaching. We agree with Walter Kaiser's appraisal:

Regardless of what new directives and emphases are periodically offered, that which is needed above everything else to make the Church more viable, authentic, and effective, is a new declaration of the Scriptures with a new purpose, passion, and power.<sup>17</sup>

#### REVISITING SCRIPTURE

When warnings about a drift away from biblical preaching sound, the only reasonable response is to return to the scriptural roots of preaching and reaffirm its essential nature. A reexamination of the heritage of proclamation

# Introductions, Illustrations, and Conclusions

*Richard L. Mayhew*

The three "undervalued" components of expository sermon preparation include introductions, illustrations, and conclusions. Due to the complexities of pastoral ministry in general and message preparation particularly, pastors tend to let these three slide. The congregation, in contrast, eagerly looks forward to how its pastor will handle these elements of the message. This discussion, which intends to equip the preacher for a new level of expository excellence, is built around purposes, sources, variations, guidelines, and preparation tips for these three parts of an exposition.

The relationship of seasonings and sauces to gourmet cooking parallels the role of introductions, illustrations, and conclusions in preaching. The main meal, or the message, should never be eclipsed by secondary features; nonetheless, these garnishings can dramatically enhance the flavor/interest level of a meal/message well prepared in other respects.

None of these three elements can replace the Holy Spirit's work of impacting people with the power of God's Word. However, to ignore or minimize these proven features of good communication makes a preacher negligent in exercising his human responsibility to be as effective as possible.

You can usually tell how a pastor's week went by his introduction, illustrations, and conclusion; hectic times tend to crowd out or minimize his time spent on them. Whether they are deemed unimportant to the communication process, excessively time consuming in proportion to their perceived value, or unappealing hard work, slighting them can measurably lessen the potential impact of a message from a purely human perspective. Robinson reminds us, "Introductions and conclusions have significance in a sermon out of proportion to their length."<sup>1</sup> Avoid the deception of underrating their importance.

If a preacher fails to gain his audience's attention with a captivating introduction, he has probably lost them for the rest of the message. If his main points are not clarified or made memorable with quality illustrations,

then the effect of his message can be short-lived. If he bypasses concluding his remarks with a review or exhortation, the purpose of the message will probably not be achieved. The ensuing discussion describes how to avoid these common pitfalls.

## INTRODUCTIONS<sup>2</sup>

By definition, "to introduce" means to acquaint or to bring into play for the first time. The introduction is to a sermon as an opening kickoff and run-back are to a football game, as the initial volleys of gunfire are to a battle, or as a departure from a harbor is to an ocean voyage. It is a time for everyone to acclimate to what follows the initial situation and to gain a sense of direction.

Someone has said that the introduction to a sermon may be likened to the prelude to a poem, the preface to a book, the portico to a building, or the preamble to the statement of a case in court. The prelude introduces us to a poem, suggests its method and meaning or message. The preface to a book also does that. . . . An introduction, then, must introduce.<sup>3</sup>

### *Purposes*

The element of *ethos*, that is, the preacher's perceived credibility in the mind of his audience, can be markedly influenced by the kind and quality of his introduction.<sup>4</sup> This is especially true in cases where listeners have no previous acquaintance with their preacher. As the adage goes, "First impressions are lasting impressions." The initial impact of the introduction may even shape the final effect of a message.

Listed below are some of the major reasons why introductions are important and what a preacher can accomplish with them. Not every introduction will necessarily incorporate every reason. The setting, the relationship of the preacher to the audience, and the kind of message determine the appropriate combination of these purposes. Overall, the introduction will put the preacher and his hearers mentally in step with each other:

1. Capture and redirect the audience's attention to focus on the preacher and his message.
2. Enhance the audience's goodwill toward the preacher.
3. Create audience interest in and anticipation of the body of a message.
4. Demonstrate the biblical importance of a message.
5. Answer every listener's unspoken question, "Why should I listen to this message?"

6. Orient listeners to the preacher's wavelength.
7. Make the preacher's intended course of discussion clear to his audience so that they can follow along and not get lost on the preaching journey.

### *Variations*

Only a preacher's imagination and creativity limit the kinds of effective introductions. The introduction used, however, should be tailored to fit a speaker's relationship to his audience, the occasion for the message, and the intended outcome of the sermon.

Consider the following examples of effective kinds of introduction.<sup>5</sup> These suggestions assume that the expositor reads continually for fresh ideas and insights into both the biblical text and life itself.

1. Current statistics which highlight a contemporary problem to be addressed in the message.
2. Historical illustrations that serve to acquaint listeners with the message theme.
3. Humor.
4. Current events that relate to the message.
5. Careful reading of the biblical text from which the message comes.
6. Real-life stories.
7. Biographical illustrations.
8. Striking quotations.
9. Rhetorical questions directed to the audience.
10. Personal experiences of the preacher.
11. References to current, well-known books.
12. Life-related problems for which biblical solutions will be forthcoming.
13. Contemporary confusion over biblical teaching to which the preacher will bring correction and clarity.
14. Highly interesting personal correspondence.
15. Appropriate prayer.
16. Fictional stories.
17. Modern-day parables.
18. Personal testimony.
19. Hymns related to the message.
20. Asking an audience for their response to a hypothetical situation.

### *Guidelines*

Every introduction should have a clear purpose—both to the preacher and the congregation. It should never be hastily prepared or indiscriminately tacked on to a message. Use these factors to evaluate the appropriateness and effectiveness of your introduction:

## PREACHING: HOW TO PREACH BIBLICALLY

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"The greatest eras in church history are those marked by the greatest preachers who towered over their times—Luther, Calvin, Knox with the Reformation, Edwards and Whitefield with the Great Awakening. That sacred mantle in this day now falls to John MacArthur and the skilled faculty at The Master's Seminary. These men are *the* standard bearers in this generation for expository preaching. Here is the finest theological institution in the world for training biblical preachers. Read well their words in this volume."

—DR. STEVEN J. LAWSON, *Senior Pastor, Christ Fellowship Baptist Church, Mobile, Alabama*

*Preaching: How to Preach Biblically* presents in one volume the essentials of biblical preaching. This book is a comprehensive introduction to the science and art of creating sermons, ranging as it does from the biblical foundations of preaching all the way to the actual delivery of a sermon.

The contributors to *Preaching* have written for beginning ministerial students and seasoned pastors alike. This volume will serve as a textbook in homiletics for students, and it will provide ministers with a new look at their weekly practice of preaching. It is the perfect resource for anyone who seeks a higher level of expository excellence.



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ISBN-10: 1-4185-0004-6  
ISBN-13: 978-1-4185-0004-7



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