

WHAT IS BIBLICAL PREACHING? by Eric J. Alexander

TO THE GROUP LEADER: This resource is designed to help you lead others to better understand one of the “Basics of the Faith” booklets published by P&R. The numbers in brackets indicate the page number in the booklet. Below each question is an answer based on what the author presents, or advice on how to discuss the question. You have the freedom to adapt the questions to best fit your group.

A good teaching technique is to distribute the questions to the group and have them write down how they would answer BEFORE reading the booklet. After reading, members can refine their answers based on their reading. As a group, members can discuss their views to affirm or modify what they wrote.

1. Describe what comes to your mind when you hear the word “preaching.” (5-6)
Ask the group what they wrote before reading the booklet and what they wrote after.
2. How much confidence do you have that the preaching in your church is making a difference in the lives of the people who attend? (6-11)
The answer to this will be very telling. What must be made clear at this point is the definition of preaching, given by most people, represents methodology – the way a sermon is delivered. What is needed is the understanding that it is not the method by which a sermon is delivered; it is the Word of God which is being expounded. This changes everything! The listener must come to grips with what God has to say regardless of the method.
3. Think carefully about this question: If the Holy Spirit were to leave your church would anything change? In other words, are we doing the work or is *He*? (11-13)
This is a delicate question, but one every church should ask. Churches have Bible studies, worship, small groups, children, youth, and other gatherings, but there is more to it than just a gathering. Is what we are doing truly bathed in prayer, acknowledging our total dependence on God to lead us to do what He wants instead of what we want? If we aren’t, then is the Holy Spirit in what we are doing? The same must be understood by what we mean when we talk about biblical preaching.
4. Read Romans 12:1-2. What should be the goal of all preaching and teaching? (13-14)
The goal must be to reach the mind. From this it must be remembered that it is only as the Holy Spirit opens the mind that spiritual understanding is capable of taking place. Read 1 Cor.2:14 to the group. It is only when of goal of preaching and teaching is set to reach the mind of the listener that the heart and will ever obey the Word.
5. What is meant by expository preaching? (14-21)
There are preachers in liberal denominations who would rather preach from the New York Times than deal with the Bible. But it is only through the Word of God that the Holy Spirit speaks and does His work of saving and changing people’s lives. Expository preaching means taking the Word of God and opening it up for all to fully grasp. It would be one thing to tell people to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and be saved, but if they don’t know Who Jesus is they won’t know what being “saved” means. Expository sermons enable the listeners to go home and re-read the biblical text and know what it means, and it also enables the hearer to know what is expected of them as a result of what God has said.
6. Should preaching be aimed at particular needs or sins in your church? (21-23)
Doing this could backfire. Individuals having specific needs might feel called out by the message. Instead, an expository series preached out of a book of the Bible could accomplish the same goal without anyone

feeling like the message was directed at them. It *is* aimed at them, but by the Holy Spirit and not the preacher.

7. How can preaching also be pastoral? (23-25)

Any true pastor knows his people intimately and personally. Therefore he preaches like a loving, caring parent who desires to see his children grow and mature. It should be evident to the listeners that this man cares about them and only wants God's best in their lives.

8. How difficult do *you* think it is to construct a clear message from the Bible for preaching? (25-27)

It is very difficult, and it takes a great deal of time, study of the Scripture, study of other books, and *much* prayer to put this together, especially week after week. This is one of the reasons members of the congregation should be praying for the pastor. He needs to hear from God what we need to hear from him.

9. How important do you think application is to a sermon? (27-30)

This is one of the weakest areas of preaching today. After you listen to any sermon you must ask yourself: "What am I being told to do with what I have just heard?" The preacher, therefore, must make this clear. Teaching the application of the message to the lives of the listeners shows the pastor doesn't expect them to leave behind on the pew all he has said. Nice information, but, so what? Having something to take away will help us remember the details of what was spoken. But, of course, in the end, it must be the working of the Holy Spirit in our lives for it truly to take effect.

After going through these questions, read the text and fill in the answers in preparation for class, noting other questions you might have. [By the way, if you do have any other questions about what you read, write them down here so you remember them at class time.]

APPLICATIONS

1. Every pastor should be "praying for a praying people." (31) No pastor can do what he is tasked to do on his own. The work of equipping the saints to do the work of the ministry can only be done as the church works as a complete body with all its parts working together. Therefore, as a group, when you pray together, remember to pray for your pastor and his work of hearing what God would have Him say to *you*. Pray that God will take his heart and open it to hear everything God wants him to say. Pray that when you listen on Sunday morning what you hear is God speaking through this man. There is power in prayer, and that power can change our lives.
2. To help you become better listeners, use the following pages each Sunday.

For Further Study

The Heart is the Target: Preaching Practical Application from Every Text, Murray Capill. P&R, 2014.

Sermons that Shaped America: Reformed Preaching from 1630-2001, William S. Barker and Samuel T. Logan, Jr., editors. P&R, 2003.

The Preacher and Preaching: Reviving the Art, Samuel T. Logan, Jr., ed. P&R, 2012.

Find this and more at www.pcabookstore.com.

Dr. Alexander, if you have a better form than the following, please allow us to use it.

MESSAGE ANALYSIS SHEET

Speaker: _____ Evaluator: _____ Date: _____

Title: _____

Scripture Passage: _____

Sermon Introduction:

Proposition (What was the main truth the speaker is trying to get across?):

Body: (Record the speaker's main points and significant features of each.)

General Comments:

Content_____, Structure_____, Delivery_____
(S=Superior, E=Excellent, G=Good, N=Needs Work)

Delivery Concerns (circle or comment):

Volume

Vocal Variation

Distracting Mannerisms

Gestures

Pulpit Use

Eye Contact

Swaying or Pacing

Use of Bible or Notes

Other _____

	EVALUATION					COMMENTS
	YES				NO	
Introduction (Imaginative):						
Did speaker get your attention and interest?	1	2	3	4	5	
Proposition:						
Did speaker establish the main theme?	1	2	3	4	5	
Body of the Message (Analytic):						
Was each point clear and easy to record?	1	2	3	4	5	
Did the points of the message...						
Explained well the meaning of the text?	1	2	3	4	5	
Gave good and helpful illustrations	1	2	3	4	5	
Gave general way to apply these truths?	1	2	3	4	5	
Exegetical Support:						
This message was what <u>this</u> text was about	1	2	3	4	5	
Problems and overall passage content were sufficiently handled	1	2	3	4	5	
Proofs were accurate, understandable, and supported the points made	1	2	3	4	5	
The context and genre of the passage were adequately considered	1	2	3	4	5	
The exegesis was not belabored once the points are sufficiently proven	1	2	3	4	5	
The exegesis seemed designed to aid rather than impress	1	2	3	4	5	
Application (Common Sense):						
Were clear, helpful, and practical	1	2	3	4	5	
Were redemptive and not legalistic in focus or motivation	1	2	3	4	5	
Accurately distinguished a scriptural mandate from a good idea	1	2	3	4	5	
Supported with sufficient biblical proof from <u>this</u> passage	1	2	3	4	5	
Illustrations:						
Contain sufficient "lived-body" detail	1	2	3	4	5	
Truly clarify or strengthen the arguments or overall sermon impact	1	2	3	4	5	
Are in appropriate proportion (number and length) to the sermon whole	1	2	3	4	5	
Take Away Point (Dynamic):						
Did you know exactly what the speaker wanted you to do when finished?	1	2	3	4	5	