UNDERSTANDING BIBLICAL HOMILETICS

THE ART & SCIENCE OF PREACHING
A Foundational Study in Biblical Sermon Preparation, Development & Delivery

Foundational Scriptures:
2 Timothy 2:15; 2 Timothy 4:1–5; Nehemiah 8:8; 1 Corinthians 2:1–5; Titus 2:1

INTRODUCTION: THE SACRED RESPONSIBILITY OF PREACHING

"PREACHING IS NOT SIMPLY THE ABILITY TO SPEAK BEFORE PEOPLE; IT IS THE SACRED RESPONSIBILITY OF FAITHFULLY COMMUNICATING WHAT GOD HAS ALREADY SPOKEN!"

The pulpit is not a platform for personal opinions, emotional performances, or the promotion of human personalities. It is a sacred place of stewardship where the minister is entrusted with the responsibility of accurately interpreting, faithfully proclaiming, and properly applying the Word of God. **A preacher must never become so consumed with the art of preaching that they neglect the accuracy of what is being preached.** A sermon can be eloquent yet biblically unsound, emotionally moving yet spiritually shallow, and powerfully delivered yet poorly interpreted. The true measure of effective biblical preaching is not merely how loudly people respond, but whether the Scriptures have been faithfully communicated, Christ has been honored, and hearers have been called to respond to God's truth.

Key Principle: We are not called to make the Bible say something powerful. We are called to faithfully communicate the power of what the Bible actually says.

2 Timothy 2:15 (KJV)
"Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth."

LESSON 1: UNDERSTANDING BIBLICAL HOMILETICS

I. What Is Homiletics?

Homiletics is the theological discipline concerned with the **art and science of preparing, organizing, and delivering sermons** that faithfully communicate biblical truth. The word *homiletics* comes from the Greek word *homilia*, associated with conversation or discourse. Within Christian ministry, homiletics refers to the principles and practices of effective biblical preaching.

Homiletics combines two essential dimensions:

- **The Science of Preaching:** The systematic study of biblical interpretation, research, sermon structure, organization, and sound theological reasoning.
- **The Art of Preaching:** The skillful communication of biblical truth through clarity, illustrations, vocal expression, appropriate emotion, and effective delivery.

Important Distinction: The science helps the preacher understand and organize the message correctly. The art helps the preacher communicate that message clearly and effectively. Neither replaces the work of the Holy Spirit.

II. The Biblical Purpose of Preaching

2 Timothy 4:2 (KJV)

"Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine."

Biblical preaching is intended to reveal God's truth, strengthen believers, correct error, call sinners to repentance, and equip the Church for godly living. The preacher is not simply communicating information but serving as a steward of divine revelation already given through Scripture.

The primary purposes of preaching include:

- **Proclamation:** Declaring the truth of God's Word.
- **Instruction:** Teaching believers sound doctrine.
- **Correction:** Confronting sin, deception, and spiritual error.
- **Exhortation:** Encouraging obedience, faith, and spiritual maturity.
- **Edification:** Building up and strengthening the Body of Christ.
- **Evangelism:** Proclaiming the Gospel of Jesus Christ and calling people to repentance and faith.

Key Principle: Biblical preaching must be rooted in Scripture, centered on God's truth, and directed toward a faithful response.

LESSON 2: THE DIFFERENT STYLES OF BIBLICAL PREACHING

There are several recognized approaches to organizing and presenting sermons. Each style has its strengths, but every approach must remain governed by accurate biblical interpretation.

I. Expository Preaching

Expository preaching explains and applies the meaning of a particular biblical passage, allowing the main message and structure of the text to govern the sermon.

Example: Preaching Psalm 23 by explaining the Lord as Shepherd, His provision, His guidance, His protection, and His abiding presence.

- Begins with a defined passage of Scripture.
- Examines the historical and literary context.
- Explains what the biblical author intended to communicate.
- Draws the sermon points from the text.
- Applies the passage to the lives of the hearers.

Key Principle: Expository preaching allows the Scripture to govern the sermon rather than forcing the Scripture to support the preacher's ideas.

II. Topical Preaching

Topical preaching develops a sermon around a specific biblical subject using carefully selected Scriptures to establish and explain that subject.

Example: *The Power of Prayer*, using Luke 18:1, James 5:16, and Philippians 4:6–7.

- Begins with a clearly defined biblical subject.
- Gathers relevant passages.

- Studies each passage within its proper context.
- Organizes the biblical findings into major points.
- Presents a balanced scriptural understanding of the subject.

Important Warning: Topical preaching must never become an excuse for collecting disconnected verses to support a predetermined opinion.

III. Textual Preaching
Textual preaching develops the primary divisions of a sermon from a short passage or verse of Scripture.

Example: Philippians 4:13
"I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me."

Possible sermon divisions:
- The believer's dependence upon Christ.
- The strength supplied through Christ.
- The ability to endure every circumstance through Christ.

The surrounding context, particularly Philippians 4:10–12, establishes that Paul is speaking about contentment and endurance in varying circumstances, not unlimited personal achievement.

Key Principle: A short text must still be interpreted within its full biblical context.

IV. Narrative Preaching
Narrative preaching communicates biblical truth through the careful explanation of biblical stories and historical accounts.

Example: David and Goliath — 1 Samuel 17.
- Establishes the historical setting.
- Identifies the central conflict.
- Explains the actions and responses of the characters.
- Reveals the theological message of the narrative.
- Applies biblical principles without inventing meanings or allegories.

Important: Not every detail in a biblical story is intended to carry a hidden spiritual meaning.

V. Evangelistic Preaching
Evangelistic preaching focuses on proclaiming the Gospel of Jesus Christ and calling unbelievers to repentance and faith.

Foundational Scripture: 1 Corinthians 15:1–4.
- Explains humanity's need for salvation.
- Proclaims Christ's death and resurrection.
- Presents salvation through God's grace.
- Calls hearers to repentance and faith in Jesus Christ.

VI. Doctrinal Preaching

Doctrinal preaching systematically explains the essential teachings of the Christian faith.

Example Topics: Salvation, sanctification, the Trinity, the resurrection, spiritual gifts, and the Second Coming of Christ.

- Establishes doctrine through careful biblical study.
- Considers the whole counsel of Scripture.
- Corrects theological misunderstandings.
- Strengthens believers in sound doctrine.

Titus 2:1 (KJV)

"But speak thou the things which become sound doctrine."

Key Note: These categories are not mutually exclusive. An expository sermon may also be doctrinal or evangelistic. The first four primarily describe how a sermon is developed, while the last two emphasize its purpose or content.

LESSON 3: THE FOUNDATIONS OF SOUND SERMON PREPARATION

I. Prayer and Spiritual Preparation

Acts 6:4 (KJV)

"But we will give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word."

Before a minister prepares a sermon for public delivery, there must be personal preparation before God. Prayer does not eliminate the responsibility to study; rather, prayer and study work together in faithful ministry.

- Seek God for wisdom and understanding.
- Examine personal motives and spiritual condition.
- Submit personal opinions to biblical authority.
- Pray for the spiritual needs of the hearers.
- Depend upon the Holy Spirit for wisdom, conviction, and boldness.

Key Principle: Prayer is not a substitute for preparation, and preparation is not a substitute for dependence upon God.

II. Biblical Interpretation: Hermeneutics

Hermeneutics is the discipline of interpreting Scripture accurately. It is foundational to homiletics because **a preacher cannot faithfully communicate a passage that has been incorrectly understood.**

Nehemiah 8:8 (KJV)

"So they read in the book in the law of God distinctly, and gave the sense, and caused them to understand the reading."

Every minister must learn to ask:

- Who wrote the passage?
- To whom was it written?
- What was the historical and cultural setting?
- What is the literary context?

- What did the passage mean to its original audience?
- How does it fit within the broader teaching of Scripture?
- How should its truth be faithfully applied today?

Critical Warning: Never confuse what a Scripture means with what you personally want it to mean.

III. Exegesis Versus Eisegesis
These two concepts are essential for every minister to understand.

Exegesis is the process of drawing out the intended meaning of the biblical text through careful interpretation.

Eisegesis is the practice of reading one's own ideas, assumptions, or desired meanings into the text.
- Exegesis asks, "What is the Scripture saying?"
- Eisegesis asks, "How can I make this Scripture support what I want to say?"

Important Note:
"THE PREACHER'S RESPONSIBILITY IS TO DRAW TRUTH OUT OF THE TEXT, NOT FORCE PERSONAL IDEAS INTO THE TEXT!"

LESSON 4: THE BASIC STRUCTURE OF A BIBLICAL SERMON
A well developed sermon should have a clear direction, logical progression, biblical substance, and practical application.

I. The Sermon Title
The title identifies the subject or central emphasis of the message.
A good sermon title should be:
- Clear and understandable.
- Consistent with the biblical text.
- Relevant to the central message.
- Memorable without becoming sensational.

II. The Foundational Text
This is the primary passage upon which the sermon is built. The text should be read carefully, interpreted correctly, and consistently connected to the message being preached.

III. The Introduction
The introduction establishes the subject, captures attention, creates interest, and prepares the congregation to understand the central message.

An effective introduction should:
- Establish the subject clearly.
- Connect the subject to the biblical passage.
- Explain why the message matters.
- Lead naturally into the main points.

Important: A strong introduction should create a desire to hear the Word, not merely showcase the preacher's speaking ability.

IV. The Sermon Proposition
The proposition is the central truth or controlling statement that the entire sermon seeks to explain, establish, and apply.

Example:
Text: James 1:22–25
Title: *Beyond Hearing: Becoming a Doer of the Word*

Proposition: "Spiritual maturity requires more than hearing God's Word; it requires responding to His Word through obedience."

Every major sermon point should support this central truth.

V. The Main Body and Sermon Divisions
The body is where the preacher explains and develops the message through clearly organized points.

Each major point should contain:
- **Explanation:** What does the Scripture mean?
- **Biblical Support:** What does the passage teach?
- **Illustration:** What example helps clarify the truth?
- **Application:** How should the hearers respond?

Sermon points should flow logically rather than functioning as unrelated statements.

VI. The Conclusion
The conclusion brings the message to a clear and meaningful close.
An effective conclusion should:
- Reinforce the central truth.
- Summarize the major lessons.
- Call for an appropriate biblical response.
- Encourage obedience and spiritual transformation.

Key Principle: A sermon should not simply end because the preacher has run out of things to say. It should conclude with clarity and purpose.

LESSON 5: THE ART OF EFFECTIVE SERMON DELIVERY
1 Corinthians 2:4–5 (KJV)
"And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power: That your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God."

Effective delivery is not about theatrical performance. It is about communicating biblical truth with clarity, conviction, reverence, and appropriate expression.

Essential Principles of Sermon Delivery

1. Clarity of Speech

The congregation must be able to understand what is being communicated. Avoid unnecessary complexity, confusing language, and excessive repetition.

2. Voice and Tone

Learn to use appropriate volume, pacing, emphasis, and pauses. Constant shouting does not automatically communicate spiritual authority.

3. Confidence and Conviction

Preach with confidence in the truth of Scripture, not confidence in personal charisma or ability.

4. Appropriate Illustrations

Use illustrations that clarify the biblical message rather than distract from it. Never present fabricated stories as factual testimonies.

5. Congregational Awareness

Be attentive to the spiritual maturity, understanding, and needs of the congregation without compromising biblical truth.

6. Sensitivity to the Holy Spirit

Remain prayerfully dependent upon the Holy Spirit while exercising self-control, discernment, and faithfulness to Scripture.

7. Time Management

Respect the allotted time. A sermon does not become more anointed simply because it becomes longer.

Teaching Statement: The effectiveness of preaching is not determined by volume, vocabulary, personality, or emotional response, but by faithfulness to God's Word and the Spirit's work through that Word.

LESSON 6: COMMON ERRORS EVERY PREACHER MUST AVOID

James 3:1 (KJV)

"My brethren, be not many masters, knowing that we shall receive the greater condemnation."

James reminds those who teach that handling God's Word carries serious accountability.

Ministers must guard against the following errors:

- **Scripture taken out of context:** Using a verse in a way that contradicts its intended meaning.
- **Poor biblical preparation:** Depending on enthusiasm while neglecting careful study.
- **Doctrinal inaccuracies:** Teaching ideas that cannot be established through sound biblical interpretation.
- **Emotional manipulation:** Attempting to manufacture spiritual responses through pressure or theatrics.
- **Self-promotion:** Making the preacher's personality more central than Christ and His Word.
- **Excessive spiritualization:** Assigning symbolic or prophetic meanings to passages without biblical justification.

- **Plagiarism:** Presenting another minister's sermon, interpretation, or original material as one's own work.
- **Lack of practical application:** Giving information without showing how biblical truth should shape Christian living.

A SERMON CAN BE POWERFULLY PRESENTED AND STILL BE BIBLICALLY INCORRECT. This is why sound doctrine, careful preparation, and spiritual integrity must remain nonnegotiable.

LESSON 7: PRACTICAL SERMON PREPARATION WORKSHOP
From Biblical Text to Finished Sermon

CLASSROOM EXERCISE
Assigned Text: James 1:22–25
Sermon Title: *Beyond Hearing: Becoming a Doer of the Word*
Central Proposition: True spiritual maturity is demonstrated through obedience to the Word of God, not merely exposure to biblical teaching.

Sample Three-Point Sermon Outline
Point 1: Hearing Without Obedience Produces Self-Deception
James 1:22
The believer must recognize that hearing God's Word without responding to it creates a false sense of spiritual maturity.

Point 2: The Word of God Reveals Our True Spiritual Condition
James 1:23–24
James compares the Word to a mirror. Scripture exposes what needs correction, but revelation without response leaves the individual unchanged.

Point 3: Continuing in the Word Produces a Life of Obedience
James 1:25
Spiritual maturity develops when believers consistently receive, remember, and obey the Word of God.

Conclusion and Application:
The purpose of hearing God's Word is not merely to increase biblical knowledge but to produce a life shaped by obedience to Christ.

Student Assignment
Each minister must prepare a 10–12 minute sermon containing:
1. A biblically appropriate title and foundational text.
2. A clear introduction.
3. One central proposition.
4. Three major sermon points supported by Scripture.
5. At least one relevant illustration.
6. Practical application.
7. A strong biblical conclusion.

Evaluation Criteria: Biblical accuracy (30%), interpretation and context (25%), organization and clarity (20%), practical application (15%), and delivery (10%).

FINAL CHARGE TO MINISTERS: HANDLE THE WORD WITH INTEGRITY
2 Corinthians 4:2 (KJV)
"But have renounced the hidden things of dishonesty, not walking in craftiness, nor handling the word of God deceitfully; but by manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God."

The call to preach is a call to stewardship, discipline, integrity, and accountability before God. Never allow the desire to be impressive to become greater than the responsibility to be accurate. Never become more interested in developing a preaching style than developing a sound understanding of Scripture.

The preacher must be a student of the Word before becoming a messenger of the Word.

Final Charge:
"DO NOT JUST STUDY TO HAVE SOMETHING TO PREACH.
STUDY SO THAT WHAT YOU PREACH IS TRUTH!"
"DO NOT SACRIFICE BIBLICAL ACCURACY FOR PREACHING POPULARITY!"
"THE PULPIT IS NOT A PLACE TO DISPLAY HOW MUCH YOU KNOW, BUT A PLACE TO FAITHFULLY DECLARE WHAT GOD HAS SAID!"

Final Reflection Question for the Class:
If every emotional expression, impressive illustration, memorable phrase, and element of personal charisma were removed from your sermon, would there still be enough biblical truth remaining to instruct, correct, and strengthen God's people?

That is a question every minister must be willing to answer.