

Word Ministry is Everyone's Ministry

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Good morning. It was almost to the day that one year ago today, I was asked to preach for the very first time here at Chisholm Baptist Church. I have been told my whole life that I have a gift of speaking in front of others, but I can assure you that that Sunday morning Sept. 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2018 was probably near the top of one of the most stressful times in my life. I remember not eating anything for breakfast, I spoke very little to my family that morning, and as I kissed Jen good-bye to come up to church early to ensure every detail was right, I thought to myself, "Lord, what on earth have you gotten me into. I am not qualified to do this. I'm taking seminary classes, but I haven't even had my college class on public communication yet?" And yet when I was done, having not yet received any feedback on the sermon, I felt an incredible peace. Not that I did a fantastic job but that I was willing to heed God's calling. Now believe me, I have missed far too many callings and opportunities in my life, but that time, I was faithful. How many of you have experienced that.....the time when everything logical inside you said "no don't do it!! You're not ready for it!! Its gonna hurt!! But you stuck it out, you talked to a friend about eternal matters, you did the honest act even when no one was looking, you sacrificed yourself for the benefit of another without any accolades, none. But after you did that, you felt the peace of Christ in you, and your heart was filled with contentment. My prayer is that today each of you would be challenged and

encouraged in your walk to commit to living out God's calling for your life.

**My very first sermon with you I shared about the idea of our identity and that we should evaluate what we are investing ourselves in.**

We should ask ourselves, "Am I investing in myself or my family or am I investing in Christ Jesus?" **My last time sharing with you we talked about ecclesia or the community of believers and the 3 main aspects of this community or church is what?? That's right, glorification, edification, and evangelism.**

Today we are going to be looking at how we can practically fulfill all 3 of those components in each of our roles within the church. This message also dovetails Pastor Dan's message last week about us being a truth driven church. His final bullet point was the idea that we should each have a deep hunger for God's word.

**Let's Pause and Pray** that God would clearly make known His truths to be proclaimed today.

**Word ministry is everyone's ministry and so my charge to you this morning is that you understand that every believer in Christ should be a preacher of God's word. Romans 10:14 says, "How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching?"** and if we shuffle just a few passages back we see Paul exhorting

the Israelites saying in **verse 8** and I want to read the **New Living Translation**, “**In fact, it says, “The message is very close at hand; it is on your lips and in your heart.” And that message is the very message about faith that we preach:**” Paul was saying that the outpouring response to the transformational process of salvation through faith should be on the hearts and lips of believers. Paul was exhorting some of the most zealous Israelites at the time saying you think you have the knowledge, but you don’t realize that Christ is the fulfillment of the law. Today you and I have the gospel message which proclaims the fulfillment of all that the old testament scriptures talked about. And so what do we do with that?? Accept Christ and live a life of happiness?? Accept Christ and spend every Sunday morning listening to a sermon?? Certainly Not!!

**We know that not everyone is called to be a preacher. When we look at Acts 18 we see Priscilla and Aquilla** a married couple who were friends or I should say, fellow tentmakers of Paul, **teaching the Word of Christ to a man named Apollos in their home.** And the interesting dynamic of this story is that Apollos was a gifted preacher and an incredibly knowledgeable Jew but the scriptures say he only knew of the Baptism of John, he was not preaching Christ and while the Bible gives no evidence that Aquilla or Priscilla ever preached a sermon, **but they were willing to speak truth to Apollos. And God used their willingness to proclaim the truth of Christ to put Apollos on a path to be an amazing Christ advocate as he preached to the Jews.**

Preacher and author **Tim Keller says in his book, “Preaching- Communicating Faith in an age of skepticism.” That “We can discern at least three levels of “Word Ministry” in the Bible.**” We are going to spend some time looking at these three levels this morning and **I want you to listen and discern which level you are currently serving in.**

When we talk about these, I want you to envision a pyramid with level 3 being at the top and level 1 is at the bottom. Not because one is better than the other but because it tends to represent the number of people in each of the three levels of word ministry. Level 3 is word ministering from the pulpit or preaching the word, level 2 is prepared word ministry like a Sunday school teacher, and level 1 is conversational word ministry. The interesting dynamic here is that if I was to ask or poll a group of people to what is the first thing that comes to mind when they hear the word proclaiming Gods Word, Preaching from a pulpit would more than likely be the most common image that comes to the forefront of their minds. But when we look at the largest area of word ministry we are talking about the people of the conversation. Now, not every Christian is not called to be a preacher and there is a reason that public speaking seems to be fairly high on any poll of people’s greatest fears in life and I don’t want to in any way downplay the importance of the role of preaching in church but **I do want to emphasize that every Christian is called to be somewhere on this pyramid.**

Let’s dive in and take a closer look at the different levels. Level 3 preaching. Preaching from the

pulpit. One of the most significant texts in regards to level 3 preaching comes from Paul in his letter to the Corinthians. He says in **1 Corinthians 2:1-5, “And so it was with me, brothers and sisters. When I came to you, I did not come with eloquence or human wisdom as I proclaimed to you the testimony about God.<sup>[a]</sup> <sup>2</sup>For I resolved to know nothing while I was with you except Jesus Christ and him crucified. <sup>3</sup>I came to you in weakness with great fear and trembling. <sup>4</sup>My message and my preaching were not with wise and persuasive words, but with a demonstration of the Spirit’s power, <sup>5</sup>so that your faith might not rest on human wisdom, but on God’s power.”** Here is Paul, The Billy Graham of the early church, saying, “Preaching is not about me.....I am weak....I am fearful.....I tremble when I evaluate the magnitude of the task in relation to my ability to accomplish it. But praise God my preaching was from the spirit and my words were not to make me look good but to point you to Christ!”

Much like I mentioned earlier, I bet just about every pastor or speaker can tell you about his or her first time speaking in front of the congregation. I still get butterflies before speaking in front of a group, but they are very quickly replaced by a passion for Christ, a love for his people, and a desire that everyone hears the word of God. Today pastors around the world have the benefit of word of God to lead and direct. And please don’t misunderstand me, God calls preachers of his word to be diligent in their preparation, **2 Timothy 2:15 reminds us to, “Do your best to present yourself to God as**

**one approved, a worker who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth.”** Paul is warning Timothy that he will be held accountable to what he preaches and teaches.

However, we must be careful as church to not place all the weight of spiritual nourishment and heart conversion opportunities solely on the Pastor’s sermons. This is a weight that he cannot bear, and we need to remember that there are several ways that the congregation should be filled spiritually. These areas include level 2 and level 1 word ministry. Keller notes that pulpit preaching is a unique and important way that God speaks to and builds up people, and it sets up the more organic forms of word ministry at the levels one and 2.

**From formal preaching we move on to level 2, what I would classify as prepared word ministering and includes those of you who lead a Bible study, teach a Sunday school class, or small group, or lead other group meetings.** These are more intimate times but still require you to research and prepare some type of lesson plan or at least read and follow a prepared lesson in an effort to guide and direct conversation. For this we look to **1 Peter 4:10-11, “Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God’s grace in its various forms. <sup>11</sup>If anyone speaks, they should do so as one who speaks the very words of God. If anyone serves, they should do so with the strength God provides, so that in all things, God may be praised through Jesus Christ. To**

**him be the glory and the power forever and ever. Amen.”**

Keller notes the differences when comparing Peters statement to the listing of gifts in Paul’s letters and denotes that **there is a whole category of Word ministry gifts that function in ways besides public preaching. It includes personal counseling, evangelism, and teaching classes.** I am going to reveal to you the second most terrifying and growing experience in my life. In 2006, I was asked by Pastor Dan and the then youth director Siri Stolhammer if I would prayerfully consider being the high school Sunday school teacher, replacing Josh Robinson who was the long-time High school Sunday school teacher. Now when someone says prayerfully consider we know it means, pray about it because your starting next week. I joke because my wife Jen used to tell me about when she would ask her mom if she could do whatever high school activity at the time and she knew if her mom said, “well, let’s pray about that.” It was a no. But not a no because her mom said no it was a no because it caused Jen to stop, evaluate, and pray if what she was asking to do was first God honoring, edifying to her and her friends, and second was it just a really stupid idea. And we laugh about it but **often God uses other Christian brothers and sisters to draw out of us the spiritual gifts they see in us.** Now I am not saying that any time someone asks you to do something, that you just need to say yes because it is God saying yes but you should really take the time to contemplate and pray about it. What is stopping you from doing it, if its other ministries, or family, or another calling than that may be

your answer. But if it is simply because you are afraid or feel unqualified than this may be God calling you to step out of your comfort zone.

So I prayed about it and to be perfectly honest I was just recovering going through some pretty dark years in my life. I felt utterly unprepared and utterly unqualified to teach high schoolers anything other than maybe automotive techniques, how to be a firefighter, or how to sail. I was recovering from a spiritually distant time from God and I truly felt like I was the last person on earth to have high schoolers spiritual lives entrusted to. **God, how can I do this, I am just now finally climbing back into your gracious arms?** But that was my only excuse and God quickly told me that a time of distance from him did not mean his spirit was distant from me. So I agreed and All I could do was prepare and trust. We now come to the second most fearful moment in my life, my first day walking into a classroom filled with high schoolers. I remember the day very vividly. It was a beautiful sunny Sunday. I had spent several weeks reading Wayne Grudem’s book “20 Basics every Christian should know.” And had come to the realization that Wayne Grudem’s definition of basic is not the same as mine. But I persevered, read through scripture that corresponded with the book and prepared a lesson plan. The day came.... The high school room at that time was located up in upstairs room down at the end of the hall. It was warm and I immediately felt sweat building in my armpits, I had a hard time forming sentences with the lump in my throat. In addition, the class included Pastor Dan’s second born, Brady....and for those of you who know Brady, know that he is

very intelligent person and also very willing to ask questions and point out errors.

But you know what, God took me on one of the most spiritually growing adventures of my life and 12 years later I have just now handed over the reigns of the high school Sunday school class to Scott Hansen who is now probably going through many of the same experiences as I did. And in those 12 years, I had the opportunity to pour into the lives of so many students. I had a chance to grow in my walk and in my relationship that I know I would have not otherwise experienced. Did I make mistakes.....absolutely. Did I probably at some point misquote the Bible, I dunno you'll have to ask Brady next time you see him. But God doesn't say you have to be perfect. He warns against false teachers, those who knowingly preach false doctrine. **Peter warns in verse 11 that, "If anyone speaks, they should do so as one who speaks the very words of God. If anyone serves, they should do so with the strength God provides, so that in all things God may be praised through Jesus Christ."** But this warning is to not take the responsibility of teaching flippantly. Keller says we are to convey truth as we understand it to be revealed in Scriptures. And for those who have taught for many years, we can look back and see how different verses or portions of scripture can be revealed in different lights. New areas of revelation and insight can bring about different applications of scripture. We're not changing or altering scripture but we can see how it is a living and breathing word that can speak to you as you grow in the knowledge of the Lord.

**So I am sure many of you are sitting here this morning thinking, "Alright now we're at my level....level 1."** And it is probably true that the largest group of people would be found in level 1. Level one is word ministering in conversation or I would call engaged conversation. And for this we look to **Colossians 3:16 "Let the message of Christ dwell among you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom through psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit, singing to God with gratitude in your hearts."**

**Keller goes on to say that every Christian should be able to give both teaching (didaskalia, the ordinary word for instruction) and admonition (noutheo- a common word for strong life-changing counsel) that conveys to others the teachings of the Bible. This is often the strongest and most effective way to engage with other believers.** The reason I titled this section engaged conversation is that everyone, both believer and non-believer, can have conversations. Talking about the weather or how your kids are doing, is conversation but **we as Christians are called to engage in more in-depth discussion. We are to encouraging others through the message of Christ. We are to instruct each other and hold each other accountable to the truths found in scripture.** Are we living lives together? Are we celebrating and praising God for his goodness, are we encouraging and uplifting each other with God's grace and love? Are we holding each other accountable to the truth's of God's Word? **This level still requires us to step out of our**

**comfort zones and allow Christ's love to overflow in us.** Is our talk saturated with Christ?

Now there are probably some of you feeling a bit defeated at this point because you just realized that you aren't really even at level 1 word ministering. **1 Corinthians 2:14, "The person without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God but considers them foolishness, and cannot understand them because they are discerned only through the Spirit."** God doesn't call us to start reading the Bible to gain wisdom in its words and share it with others like a text book. **There are two parts of word ministering: one is equipping fellow Christians and the other is sharing the saving gift that Christ offers.**

It's understanding that Christ didn't die on a cross to get his name as the dividing measure of time but instead as a gift to everyone that no one should perish. When a person receives this gift they are given the holy spirit that guides and helps them. It is from there that God's truths revealed in scripture come alive and are transformative to our lives. It is from that regeneration that our lives are filled with joy and reason and hope. It is from that regeneration that we boldly proclaim God's truths so that all may hear and believe. And if you're here this morning we want nothing more than to help you get to the point of understanding God's word and being a part of the body of believers. God wants nothing more than to adopt you into his family, and this has been made possible by the work of his son.

**So are you prepared?** I defer to Paul's words to his brother Timothy. A young man whom he was

mentoring to fulfill his calling to boldly preach God's word. **2 Timothy 4:1-2 "I charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by his appearing and his kingdom: preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching."** Paul tells Timothy to be ready in season and out of season. Chisholm Baptist- whether it is the middle of July or the middle of February, whether it is football season or not, whether it is deer season or not, be ready!! Stay in God's word, stay connected to the body so that you can be filled and prepared to engage in word ministry!

The famous apologetics verse **1 Peter 3:15- "But in your hearts revere Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect."** These are action words. We should have the same desire and tenacity to be a better word minister as we do for trying to get to the platinum level American express card because of its perks, as we do for trying to get to the next level of our credit score, as hard as we work to get the skymiles to be a gold class passenger in an airline, or like the progressive commercial, willing to delay giving birth in an effort to not screw up our insurance discount on your car insurance rates that speeding would screw up. **Pastors- are you engaged in God's word that your life is an example of what you preach? You are called to be not just preachers but doers of the word and I pray that you would not be consumed**

**by requirements of the pulpit only to forget your responsibilities to your family and living a life that honors Christ.**

**Deacons or Bible study teachers- have you taken the time pray and contemplate putting a sermon together to share if some reason you are needed at the pulpit or some other assembly? God is at work in your lives and between your testimonies and God's word there are truths that you can faithfully, lovingly, and powerfully share with others. Conversationalists- have you ever prayed about leading a Bible study or teaching a children's class? Or are you stuck in the wheel of church Sunday morning and then the craziness of life for a week and then Sunday**

**again? God wants you to dig deeper, stretch yourselves, commit yourselves to word ministry!** Now please don't misunderstand what I am saying to mean that everyone is called to move to level 3 word ministry. **God has given us all gifts that suit in different areas. My charge is not to become comfortable or stagnant in where you are.** If you know you are called to be the person who comes along side another than do it with fervency because when you do, it is then that God may reveal that he may be calling you to more. While preaching from the pulpit is a cornerstone of word ministry, it is not the building. We are the rest of the building (level 2 and 1) that should with tears in our eyes desire to share Gods word with those around us.