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THE STATE OF EXPOSITORY PREACHING IN THE  
UNITED KINGDOM: AN EXAMINATION OF ITS  
HISTORY AND CURRENT PRACTICE

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A Thesis  
Presented to  
the Faculty of  
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by  
John Luke Kimber  
December 2022

**APPROVAL SHEET**

THE STATE OF EXPOSITORY PREACHING IN THE  
UNITED KINGDOM: AN EXAMINATION OF ITS  
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John Luke Kimber

Read and Approved by:

Faculty Supervisor: William F. Cook III

Second Reader: Terry J. Betts

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For the glory of God.

To my wife, Grace, and our  
two children, Jessica and Rachel.

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## PREFACE

This thesis is the outworking of a burden I have been bearing for some time now. Throughout my years as a pastor in the United Kingdom, I became more convinced that the key to a healthy church was a firm grounding and rooting in the Word of God. Time and time again, we saw new members joining our church for the simple fact that we were preaching the Bible. Many individuals were sharing that they had had difficulty finding a church fed on the Word of God. This situation was compounded when I visited a number of churches in the local area during my sabbatical from June to August 2018. I was deeply troubled and burdened to discover that there were indeed only a very small number of churches who were preaching on a biblical text. I subsequently listened to sermons by preachers from across the United Kingdom to ascertain if it was a problem limited to the town in which I was ministering. I discovered what seemed to be an epidemic of so-called preaching that was not actually preaching at all. Speeches filled with words of encouragement, self-motivation, and moralism were being sold as sermons in a frighteningly large number of pulpits in the United Kingdom. In many locations, the Bible has been set to one side, particularly in some of the most influential newly established churches in the United Kingdom. In this work I seek, even if only in some small way, to begin to counter this deadly epidemic.

I am thankful to my wife and my daughters for the sacrifices they have made to enable me to undertake my past and present pastoral roles. Without the faithful support of my wife Grace and her loving care and devotion to our daughters, I would not have been able to meet the demands and challenges of the pastorate. The same is true of the sacrifices they have made to enable me to undertake this period of further study.

I am thankful to Portadown Baptist Church in Portadown, Northern Ireland, who for many years granted me the freedom and privilege of ministering the Word of God to them. I am eternally thankful for my fellow elders at Portadown Baptist who treated me as a brother, friend, and even a son. Their support and encouragement will never be forgotten.

I am thankful to the elders, staff, and members at Faith Baptist Church in Rexford, where I have the privilege of pastoring, for their encouragement and support in getting me across the finish line and affording me the time and space to do so.

I thank God for my godly parents who always sought to bring me up in the fear and admonition of the Lord. From the day I was born, they have taught me the things of Christ and supported me in the decisions I have made for the cause of Christ, even when they came at a cost to them.

I am thankful for the time I have been blessed to spend at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. The time spent there was a wonderful time of refreshing and refilling under some of the most godly and humble men and scholars I have been privileged to meet.

Lastly, I am thankful for my brothers who have walked this DMin path with me. Their friendship will last a lifetime, and without them this work would not have been what it has ultimately become. I look forward to continuing to serve the Lord alongside them in the years to come.

John Luke Kimber

Pattersonville, New York

December 2022

## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

The United Kingdom has a remarkable heritage of expository preaching through men such as James S. Stewart, Martyn Lloyd-Jones, and John Stott. In days gone by, men and women longed for a week to pass quickly so they could soon be back under the ministry of the Word of God. People thronged church buildings, hungry for the words of eternal life. But so much has changed. Today, in many of the United Kingdom's churches, the attraction lies not in the ministry of the Word of God but rather in buildings, elaborate staging, colorful lighting, contemporary music, and a plethora of entertaining programs. It seems those attending such churches are content to sit and listen to homilies on moralism, self-motivation, self-improvement, and self-help rather than be taught from the riches of Scripture. A lack of expository preaching is fathering a generation of so-called believers who, while attending church programs and services, are ignorant concerning many of the great doctrines of the faith and illiterate when it comes to the Bible. They know nothing of what it means to hunger for the Word of God. These churches are often little more than social clubs engaging in social activities at the expense of gospel proclamation and biblical teaching.

Evidence of the decline in expository preaching was evident in the time of Martyn Lloyd-Jones, who commented, "Preaching has very largely become a profession. Instead of real Christian sermons, we are given second-hand expositions of psychology. The preachers say that they give the congregations what they ask for! What a terrible condemnation both of the preachers themselves and their congregations!"<sup>1</sup> It is now a

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<sup>1</sup> D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, *Preaching and Preachers* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2011), 88.

significant and very serious problem, particularly among a large number of the United Kingdom's newer, more influential churches, and it must be confronted. Expository preaching needs be recovered in order to ensure that believers are being built up in their faith, are stronger in the face of opposition, and are better equipped for the task of going into all the world with the gospel.

This thesis seeks to expose and address this serious problem in the following manner: (1) I begin by introducing the topic, commenting on relevant literature and highlighting the void in the literature. (2) I define and justifying the need for expository preaching from a biblical, theological, and practical perspective. (3) I make readers aware of the fact that there is a heritage of expository preaching in the United Kingdom, and I draw their attention to the deep concern over its apparent disintegration today. (4) I undertake an examination of sermons by preachers in some of the United Kingdom's most influential newly established churches.<sup>2</sup> (5) Based on my findings in chapter 4, I conclude by considering some of the possible reasons for the decline in expository preaching and the potential implications for the church across the United Kingdom.

### **Familiarity with the Literature**

Of all subject matters pertaining to the Christian faith, preaching is one on which innumerable texts have been written. Suffice it to say, not all books written on this subject are helpful, particularly for those who are aspiring to preach expository sermons. However, there are many excellent volumes both on the homiletical and hermeneutical aspects of preaching and the importance of preaching sermons that are firmly rooted in the text of Scripture. In order to explore the state of expository preaching in the United Kingdom, this thesis consults multiple sources concerning the biblical, theological, and historical foundations for expository preaching, with particular reference to works by

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<sup>2</sup> For the purpose of this thesis, I define a newly established church as one established within the last thirty years.

respected British expositors of the past, including James S. Stewart, Martyn Lloyd-Jones, and John Stott.

Scottish preacher and chair of the Department of New Testament Language, Literature, and Theology at the University of Edinburgh, James S. Stewart contributed much to the United Kingdom's heritage of expository preaching, not least through his writing. The very first words of his lesser-known book, simply titled *Preaching*, are worthy of quotation: "I have chosen the title of this book to stress one fundamental fact, namely that preaching exists, not for the propagating of views, opinions and ideals, but for the proclamation of the mighty acts of God."<sup>3</sup> Chapters on selecting a theme and the preacher's study, technique, and inner life are all immensely helpful. Of particular interest to this thesis is the first chapter of this book in which Stewart focuses on effective preaching in the preacher's world.

An examination of expository preaching in any context would not be complete without consulting the formidable Martyn Lloyd-Jones. It would be unthinkable not to consult him in the context of this thesis as he is not only an exemplary expositor but also a key figure in the great heritage of expository preaching in the United Kingdom. His book *Preaching and Preachers* is a treasured Christian classic that has inspired and encouraged generations of readers in the vital area of Christian ministry. Beginning with a chapter on the primacy of preaching, Lloyd-Jones asks these pertinent questions: "Is there any need of preaching? Is there any place for preaching in the modern church and in the modern world, or has preaching become quite outmoded?"<sup>4</sup> The subjects of the decline and fall of preaching<sup>5</sup> and attitudes in the church<sup>6</sup> are of particular interest and

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<sup>3</sup> James S. Stewart, *Preaching* (London: English Universities Press, 1955), 5.

<sup>4</sup> Lloyd-Jones, *Preaching and Preachers*, 17.

<sup>5</sup> Lloyd-Jones, *Preaching and Preachers*, 19.

<sup>6</sup> Lloyd-Jones, *Preaching and Preachers*, 20.

relevance to this thesis.

*The Life of Martyn Lloyd-Jones: 1899–1981* by Iain Murray proves to be an invaluable resource concerning the man behind the sermons. It also provides insight into the reasoning for Lloyd-Jones’s conviction concerning the importance of expository preaching and his increasing belief that he should put into book form the material he had accumulated, in particular his work on Paul’s Epistle to the Romans: “Letters received from the congregation, instead of complaining at what they had lost, expressed the belief that the world needed to read what they had heard.”<sup>7</sup>

Similarly, Roger Steer’s book on the life of John Stott, *Basic Christianity: The Inside Story of John Stott*, opens a window into the life of a man who will forever have his portrait hung in the gallery of faithful British expositors. Of particular interest to this thesis is the chapter titled “An Urgent Plea.”<sup>8</sup> In this chapter, Stott recalls a conversation he had with two university students who questioned not whether Christianity is true but rather whether it is relevant. They asked, “What on earth does it have to offer us? We live in a world of space travel, transplant surgery and genetic engineering. Christianity is irrelevant.”<sup>9</sup>

John Stott’s *Between Two Worlds: The Challenge of Preaching Today* is something of a modern classic that has stood the test of time as a valuable resource. Stott sets out to accomplish his objectives in eight chapters that logically progress from an apologetics for preaching to practical issues of ensuring relevance in preaching and finally concludes with four contemporary characteristics of effective preachers. Of particular interest to this thesis is Stott’s fourth chapter, which speaks to the necessity of

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<sup>7</sup> Iain H. Murray, *The Life of Martyn Lloyd-Jones: 1899–1981* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 2013), 420.

<sup>8</sup> Roger Steer, *Basic Christian: The Inside Story of John Stott* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Books, 2009), 236–44.

<sup>9</sup> Steer, *Basic Christian*, 240.

not only exposing the biblical text in preaching, but also the importance of crossing the cultural gulf in order to convey “a God-given message to living people who need to hear it.”<sup>10</sup> His section on biblical and historical precedents for “bridge-building” (connecting historical narrative to present-day culture) is extremely relevant to the subject of this thesis, as Stott rightly says we must refuse “either to compromise the divine content of the message or to ignore the human context in which it has to be spoken.”<sup>11</sup>

*The Oxford Handbook of the British Sermon, 1689–1901* provides an understanding of the journey the British sermon has taken in the centuries leading up to the twentieth and twenty-first centuries considered in this thesis. It also proves an invaluable resource when considering the rich heritage of preaching in the United Kingdom.<sup>12</sup>

Alistair Begg’s short work on preaching, *Preaching for God’s Glory*, may seem insignificant due to its size, but it is majestic in its content. While focusing on the nature and benefits of expository preaching, Begg also devotes a large portion of his book to answering the question, “What Happened to Expository Preaching?”<sup>13</sup> He asks and answers, “Why is expository preaching absent from so many of today’s churches? Because of a loss of confidence in the Scriptures, preoccupation with the wrong battles, and a sad lack of excellent role models, many preachers compromise on their calling and revert to the expectations of the culture.”<sup>14</sup> Quoting other great British expositors such as Dick Lucas, Begg considers not only the factors causing a lack of expository preaching, but also the results of its absence.

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<sup>10</sup> John Stott, *Between Two Worlds: The Challenge of Preaching Today* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982), 137.

<sup>11</sup> Stott, *Between Two Worlds*, 145.

<sup>12</sup> Keith A. Francis and William Gibson, eds., *The Oxford Handbook of the British Sermon, 1689–1901* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012).

<sup>13</sup> Alistair Begg, *Preaching for God’s Glory* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2010), 18.

<sup>14</sup> Begg, *Preaching for God’s Glory*, 23.

The responsibility of the preacher is to expound all of Scripture so that God might be glorified and Christ might be exalted. Graeme Goldsworthy's *Preaching the Whole Bible as Christian Scripture* is designed to help preachers apply a consistently Christ-centered approach to all of their sermons, in particular sermons from the Old Testament. Goldsworthy covers basic questions about preaching and the Bible: What is the Bible? What is biblical theology? What is preaching? He proceeds to develop a practical application of biblical theology to preaching. Goldsworthy comments, "We believe that preaching is not some peripheral item in the program of the local church, but that it lies at the very heart of what it is to be the people of God."<sup>15</sup>

Edited by Samuel T. Logan, *The Preacher and Preaching: Reviving the Art* sees eighteen leading pastors and homiletical scholars join to offer sharp analysis, biblical insight, and practical directives in the area of preaching. J. I. Packer's chapter titled "Why Preach?" is of particular interest as Packer states clearly that he proposes to defend preaching and acknowledges that "there has been much nonpreaching in our pulpits. Not every discourse that fills the appointed 20- or 30-minute slot in public worship is actual preaching."<sup>16</sup> Packer breaks down the question "Why Preach?" into two questions, noting that this query is really two questions in one. He comments, "Objectively the question is, what theological reasons are there for maintaining preaching as a necessary part of church life? Subjectively the question is, what convictions should prompt a person to take up, sustain, and keep giving his best to the task of seeking to preach according to these awesome specifications?"<sup>17</sup>

Bryan Chapell's popular volume *Christ-Centered Preaching* has become a

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<sup>15</sup> Graeme Goldsworthy, *Preaching the Whole Bible as Christian Scripture: The Application of Biblical Theology to Expository Preaching* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000), 1.

<sup>16</sup> J. I. Packer, "Why Preach?," in *The Preacher and Preaching: Reviving the Art in the Twentieth Century*, ed. Samuel T. Logan Jr. (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2011), 2–3.

<sup>17</sup> Packer, "Why Preach?," 3.



staple on most preachers' bookshelves. Concerning books on homiletics, this is one par-excellence. Instructions and explanations of how to put together expository sermons are accompanied by a sample sermon and sermon evaluation form. This book is of great significance in defining expository preaching. It also serves as a rubric against which to consider the nature and content of sermons from expositors of old, comparing and contrasting them with sermons of current preachers in newly established British churches.<sup>18</sup>

If expository preaching is the great need of today's church, instruction in expository preaching is the great need of today's preacher. Haddon Robinson has done much to help meet that need. His method has been compiled in book form. *Biblical Preaching* begins as others do, by lamenting the devaluation of preaching today and arguing the case for expository preaching. Robinson comments, "When a preacher fails to preach the Scriptures, he abandons his authority. He confronts his hearers no longer with a word from God but only with another word from men. Therefore, most modern preaching evokes little more than a wide yawn. God is not in it."<sup>19</sup> He helpfully defines expository preaching and then proceeds to take his readers through various forms of sermons, e.g., deductive and inductive arrangements. The process of sermon composition and delivery is spoken of in much detail. Once again, the contents of this book serve as a guide and rubric when examining sermons from the preacher's past and present.

Robert L. Dabney's book *Evangelical Eloquence: A Course of Lectures on Preaching* is a compilation of nineteenth-century lectures given by Dabney on the subject of preaching. His fifth lecture is particularly fitting in the context of this thesis. Dabney states, "There is a profusion of preaching and public exercises; yet there is far less

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<sup>18</sup> Bryan Chapell, *Christ-Centered Preaching: Redeeming the Expository Sermon*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2005).

<sup>19</sup> Haddon W. Robinson, *Biblical Preaching: The Development and Delivery of Expository Messages*, 3rd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2014), 18.

scriptural intelligence among our church-goers than among our ruder forefathers. . . . The people are not grounded in the Scriptures.”<sup>20</sup> The decline in scriptural intelligence is palpable, yet the reality of the preacher’s work remains the same: “We have found no better description of the preacher’s work than that given by Nehemiah of Ezra’s: He ‘read in the book of the law of the *Lord* distinctly, and gave the sense, and caused them to understand the reading.’”<sup>21</sup> One striking quote comes at the end of Dabney’s penultimate lecture, titled “Modes of Preparation,” in which he says, “To preach a sermon is a great and awful task. Woe to that man, who slights it with a perfunctory preparation and a careless heart!”<sup>22</sup> This well summarizes Dabney’s high view of preaching and in turn gives good reason for his inclusion in this thesis.

### **Void in the Literature**

There has been a great deal of literature written on the subject of preaching. Seemingly every aspect of preaching has been addressed, from the preparation of a sermon to its delivery. However, little has been written to help combat the decline of expository preaching, particularly in the United Kingdom. As highlighted in the introduction, concerns over sermon content were already being raised in the twentieth century.<sup>23</sup> So too were concerns over the position of preaching in the church.<sup>24</sup> In more

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<sup>20</sup> R. L. Dabney, *Evangelical Eloquence: A Course of Lectures on Preaching* (Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth, 1999), 81.

<sup>21</sup> Dabney, *Evangelical Eloquence*, 81.

<sup>22</sup> Dabney, *Evangelical Eloquence*, 344.

<sup>23</sup> In 1946, James S. Stewart wrote,

It is deplorable that God’s hungry sheep, hoping for the pasture of the living Word, should be fed on disquisitions on the themes of the latest headlines. It is calamitous that men and women, coming up to the church on a Sunday—with God only knows what cares and sorrows, what hopes and shadowed memories, what heroic aspirations and moods of shame burdening their hearts—should be offered nothing better for their sustenance than one more dreary diagnosis of the crisis of the hour. (*Preaching*, 11)

<sup>24</sup> Martyn Lloyd-Jones asked these questions in 1972:

Why has preaching fallen from the position it once occupied in the life of the Church and in the esteem of people? You cannot read the history of the Church, even in a cursory manner, without

recent years, little, if any, literature has been published addressing the now immensely concerning demise of expository preaching.

For decades, sermons of great British expositors have been transcribed and immortalized into book form. Detailed examinations of those sermons have been undertaken and much has been learned from that process. A minimal number of sermon transcripts are published today. This void in the literature has meant that significantly less is known about current sermon content and structure. While the room afforded to me in this thesis does not allow for transcripts of entire sermons, I quote and comment on content from sermons preached by faithful expositors of the past and by pastors in well-known, newly established British churches.

To my knowledge, there is no literature that takes time to consider the possible reasons for a decline in expository preaching or the potential implications for the church should this downturn in expository preaching continue. I conclude by suggesting possible reasons for such a decline and consider the potential implications for the church across the United Kingdom.

### **Thesis Statement**

My thesis is that while the United Kingdom has a magnificent history of expository preaching, its current practice is in great decline. Although there are still a number of churches that remain faithful to the preaching of the text of Scripture, I am concerned that many churches in the United Kingdom are not preaching on the biblical text. To ensure that believers are being built up in their faith and are better equipped for the task of going into all the world with the gospel, the Bible must be preached. Through a reminder of great British preaching of the past and an examination of preaching in some

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seeing that preaching has always occupied a central and a predominating position in the life of the Church, particularly in Protestantism. Why then this decline in the place and power of preaching; and why this questioning of the necessity for any preaching at all? (*Preaching and Preachers*, 18–19)

of the United Kingdom's most influential newly established churches, I seek to expose this concerning issue.

### **Outline of Chapters**

This introduction has acquainted the reader with the great legacy of expository preaching in the United Kingdom and substantiated the concern for the future of expository preaching in the United Kingdom, particularly in the most influential newly established churches.

Chapter 2 surveys a number of works on the subject of preaching to establish a definition of expository preaching. It considers the various components of an expository sermon, highlighting its distinctives. This chapter also provides a biblical, theological, and practical justification for expository preaching, examining the various pericopes. It concludes with a consideration of the role of man and the role of the Holy Spirit in preaching.

Chapter 3 shows that the United Kingdom does indeed have a strong heritage of expository preaching by providing an overview of the life and ministry of some of the United Kingdom's most remarkable preachers. In the past century, there have been some incredibly influential British expositors including James S. Stewart, Martyn Lloyd-Jones, and John Stott. This chapter focuses on their ministries.

Chapter 4 uses the research conducted in chapter 2 concerning the nature of an expository sermon to examine preaching styles and content in some of the United Kingdom's most influential newly established churches. It also evaluates sermon content using a rubric produced by Michael Pohlman, associate professor of preaching at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. Based on this examination, I evaluate and draw conclusions as to the current state of preaching in the United Kingdom.

Chapter 5 concludes the thesis by considering the reasons for the decline in expository preaching and the potential implications for the church across the United Kingdom.

## CHAPTER 2

### A DEFINITION OF EXPOSITORY PREACHING AND ITS BIBLICAL, THEOLOGICAL, AND PRACTICAL JUSTIFICATION

#### **A Definition of Expository Preaching**

There have been many attempts to define expository preaching. Some have managed to encapsulate the true meaning of the term, but many have not. In the words of Martyn Lloyd-Jones, “The work of preaching is the highest and the greatest and the most glorious calling to which anyone can ever be called.”<sup>1</sup> It should come as no surprise to hear such a lofty definition of preaching from the great preacher Martyn Lloyd-Jones, for to be a preacher is to be the very mouthpiece of God. When the preacher preaches, he is the vessel God uses to speak to his people, the channel through which the Almighty God exhorts, extols, rebukes, and encourages those who are his children.

John Piper understands preaching to be “worshipping over the Word of God—the text of Scripture—with explanation and exultation.”<sup>2</sup> He defines preaching as worship that involves the explanation and exultation of God’s Word. In many churches today, the term worship is downgraded to include only the musical or choral aspect of what takes place in a church service. However, it is clear from Piper’s definition that his understanding of worship is rather more comprehensive. Surely, he is right to include the preaching aspect of a church service in the category of worship, as preaching by definition is (or at least ought to be) the exultation of God’s Word, and the exultation of

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<sup>1</sup> Martyn Lloyd-Jones, *Preaching and Preachers* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2011), 17.

<sup>2</sup> John Piper, *The Supremacy of God in Preaching* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2015), 9.

God himself. James S. Stewart concurs: “Preaching itself is an integral part of worship. The aim of exposition is encounter.”<sup>3</sup>

Piper is clear that true preaching is expository preaching. He states that preaching contains teaching because the content of preaching is the truth of God’s Word.<sup>4</sup> To support this, he quotes the following verses: “All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching” (2 Tim 3:16)<sup>5</sup> and “Preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching” (2 Tim 4:2 ESV). Therefore, in preaching, Piper aims to explain biblical texts and to apply their meaning to people’s lives.

In *Preaching in the New Testament: An Exegetical and Biblical-Theological Study*, Jonathan Griffiths comments, “There can be little doubt that the primary biblical-theological category into which preaching falls is that of the Word of God itself. If preaching is a ministry of the Word, its character must be shaped fundamentally by the nature of the Word itself.”<sup>6</sup> It is clear from this definition that Griffiths considers expository preaching to be preaching that is dependent entirely upon the Bible. Expository preaching is the unfolding of biblical truth; it seeks to expose what is *in* the text, not impose something *upon* the text. According to Griffiths, preaching is a ministry of the Word. The word ministry comes from the Greek word *diakoneo*, meaning “to serve,”<sup>7</sup> or *douleuo*, meaning “to serve as a slave.”<sup>8</sup> The minister of the Word, the

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<sup>3</sup> James S. Stewart, *Exposition and Encounter: Preaching in the Context of Worship* (Birmingham, England: Berean Press, 1956), 4.

<sup>4</sup> Piper, *The Supremacy of God in Preaching*, 10–11.

<sup>5</sup> Unless otherwise indicated, all Scripture quotations are from the New International Version.

<sup>6</sup> Jonathan Griffiths, *Preaching in the New Testament: An Exegetical and Biblical-Theological Study*, New Studies in Biblical Theology 42 (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2017), 9.

<sup>7</sup> Bible Study Tools, “The KJV New Testament Greek Lexicon–Diakoneo,” accessed September 27, 2022, <https://www.biblestudytools.com/lexicons/greek/kjv/diakoneo.html>.

<sup>8</sup> Bible Study Tools, “The KJV New Testament Greek Lexicon–Douleuo,” accessed September 27, 2022, <https://www.biblestudytools.com/lexicons/greek/kjv/douleuo.html>.

preacher, is to be a servant of the Word. When a preacher ceases to be a servant of the Word and instead imposes his own personal thoughts and ideas on the biblical text, he ceases to be a minister or preacher. James S. Stewart writes,

Eliminate our function as expositors of the Scriptures, interpreters of the Biblical message to our generation, and what is there left for us to offer? Topical disquisitions, philosophical speculations, diagnoses of the human predicament, Pelagian exhortations, ephemeral homilies, essays of religious uplift—in other words, a circumscribed stock of human ideas, necessarily colored by personal particular experiences and preferences and prejudices.<sup>9</sup>

Later in the same work, Stewart writes that “the first function of the expository preacher is to help men and women to rediscover the *relevance of the Biblical message*.”<sup>10</sup>

Speaking of Lloyd-Jones’s understanding of expository preaching, Iain Murray says,

For preaching to qualify for that designation it was not enough, in his view, that the content be biblical; addresses which concentrated upon word-studies, or which gave running commentary and analyses of whole chapters, might be termed “biblical,” but that is not the same as exposition. To expound is not simply to give the correct grammatical sense of a verse or passage, it is rather to set out the principles or doctrines which the words are intended to convey. True expository preaching is, therefore, *doctrinal* preaching, it is preaching which addresses specific truths from God to man. The expository preacher is not one who “shares his studies” with others, he is an ambassador and a messenger, authoritatively delivering the Word of God to men. Such preaching presents a text, then, with that text in sight throughout, there is deduction, argument and appeal, the whole making up a message which bears the authority of Scripture itself.<sup>11</sup>

John Killinger is a man who has a great love for the Bible. We know this because his understanding and definition of a preacher is “one who loves the Bible,” one who “must live in its pages day by day and year by year, until it fairly saturates his or her being.”<sup>12</sup> Expanding on this, Killinger comments,

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<sup>9</sup> Stewart, *Exposition and Encounter*, 5.

<sup>10</sup> Stewart, *Exposition and Encounter*, 7 (emphasis original).

<sup>11</sup> Iain H. Murray, *The Life of Martyn Lloyd-Jones: 1899–1981* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 2013), 307.

<sup>12</sup> John Killinger, *Fundamentals of Preaching* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1985), 10.



The greatest preachers have always been lovers of the Bible. Those who have based their preaching on other texts—on the poets, the news media, their own opinions—have passed quickly from the mind, as though they established their ministries on quicksand. The ones who built their sermons on great biblical ideas and passages have lingered in our memories. It is not that they were more original than the others—perhaps to the contrary—but that there is something solid and enduring about the Scriptures, something capable of rescuing even mediocre homiletical minds from transience and obscurity.<sup>13</sup>

Haddon Robinson defines expository preaching as “the communication of a biblical concept, derived from and transmitted through a historical, grammatical, and literary study of a passage in its context, which the Holy Spirit first applies to the personality and experience of the preacher, then through the preacher, applies to the hearers.”<sup>14</sup>

Bryan Chapell comments,

Expository preaching attempts to present and apply the truths of a specific biblical passage. . . . An expository sermon may be defined as a message whose structure and thought are derived from a biblical text, that covers the scope of the text, and that explains the features and context of the text in order to disclose the enduring principles for faithful thinking, living, and worship intended by the Spirit, who inspired the text.<sup>15</sup>

F. B. Meyer defines expository preaching as “the consecutive treatment of some book or extended portion of Scripture on which the preacher has concentrated head and heart, brain and brawn, over which he has thought and wept and prayed, until it has yielded up its inner secret, and the spirit of it has passed in his spirit.”<sup>16</sup>

In his journal article for the *Review and Expositor*, John H. Leith describes John Calvin’s understanding of exposition:

First of all, Calvin understood preaching to be the explication of Scripture. The words of Scripture are the source and content of preaching. As an expositor, Calvin

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<sup>13</sup> Killinger, *Fundamentals of Preaching*, 10.

<sup>14</sup> Haddon W. Robinson, *Biblical Preaching: The Development and Delivery of Expository Messages*, 3rd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2014), 5.

<sup>15</sup> Bryan Chapell, *Christ-Centered Preaching: Redeeming the Expository Sermon*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2005), 30–31.

<sup>16</sup> F. B. Meyer, *Expository Preaching Plans and Methods* (New York: Hodder & Stoughton, 1912), 29.

brought to the task of preaching all the skills of a humanist scholar. As an interpreter, Calvin explicated the text, seeking its natural, its true, its scriptural meaning. . . . Preaching is not only the explication of Scripture; it is also the application of Scripture. Just as Calvin explicated Scripture word by word, so he applied the Scripture sentence by sentence to the life and experience of the congregation.<sup>17</sup>

According to Jerry Oswalt, expository preaching involves the “consecutive treatment of Scripture in preaching.”<sup>18</sup> He understands the expository method of preaching to be speaking only of the consecutive treatment of Scripture, and he goes on to give instruction as to how the preacher can make an expository plan a doctrinal plan by “ferreting out the doctrine or doctrines in each passage through theological exegesis.”<sup>19</sup>

Mark Dever speaks of expository preaching as “not simply producing a verbal commentary on some passage of Scripture. Rather, expositional preaching is that preaching which takes for the point of a sermon the point of a particular passage of Scripture. . . . Expositional preaching is preaching in service to the Word.”<sup>20</sup>

R. Ames Montgomery wonderfully describes the expository preacher’s role:

The expository preacher purposes above everything else to make clear the teaching and content of the Bible. . . . The preacher seeks to bring the message of definite unity of God’s Word to his people. He discovers the main theme or constituent parts of a book’s message as they were in the mind of the writer. These he unfolds, step by step, until he reaches the ultimate goal. He discovers the universal, organizing elements of thought in the book, and strives to set forth their essential relationship to contemporary life. He is not now concerned with what lies outside this particular book, but with its message. His treatment of words, phrases, texts, portions, is important not for what they may say separately, but as they relate to the main theme of the writer and the end he had in view in writing the book.<sup>21</sup>

John A. Broadus offers his understanding of expository preaching as “one

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<sup>17</sup> John H. Leith, “Calvin’s Doctrine of the Proclamation of the Word and Its Significance for Today in the Light of Recent Research,” *Review and Expositor* 86, no. 1 (1989): 33.

<sup>18</sup> Jerry E. Oswalt, *Proclaiming the Whole Counsel of God: Suggestions for Planning and Preparing Doctrinal Sermons* (New York: University Press of America, 1993), 7.

<sup>19</sup> Oswalt, *Proclaiming the Whole Counsel of God*, 7.

<sup>20</sup> Mark Dever, *Nine Marks of a Healthy Church*, 2nd ed. (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2004), 40.

<sup>21</sup> Richmond Ames Montgomery, *Expository Preaching* (New York: Fleming H. Revell, 1939), 42.

which is occupied mainly, or at any rate very largely, with the exposition of Scripture. It by no means excludes argument and exhortation as to the doctrines or lessons which this exposition develops. It may be devoted to a long passage, or to a very short one, even a part of a sentence. It may be one of a series or may stand by itself.”<sup>22</sup>

James S. Stewart understands expository preaching to be evangelism. This can be seen in his pleading with prospective preachers to “give the strength of [their] ministry to expository preaching. . . . Not only will you always have a hearing, not only will you keep your message fresh and varied, but, in the truest sense, you will be doing the work of an evangelist.”<sup>23</sup>

In *The Preacher and Preaching*, Samuel Logan includes Sinclair B. Ferguson’s definition of expository preaching: “Exegesis is the explanation, or exposition, of sentence, a word, an idea. As an exercise it depends on the prior existence of materials. It may be a creative discipline; but it does not create *ex nihilo*.”<sup>24</sup>

As you can see, there are indeed many and varying offerings when it comes to a definition of expository preaching. Perhaps a consideration of the etymology of the word “expository” will shed further light and provide clarity.

### **Considering the Etymology of the Word “Expository”**

The root of “expository” is *expose*. This term was derived from the Middle English word *exposen*, which came from the Middle French word *exposer*, derived from the Latin word *exponere*. The root *ponere* was combined with the prefix *ex* (“out of, from”), and the resultant meaning of *exponere* came to mean “to put on display.”<sup>25</sup> The

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<sup>22</sup> John A. Broadus, *A Treatise on the Preparation and Delivery of Sermons* (1870; repr., Nashville: Broadman Press, 1944), 145.

<sup>23</sup> James S. Stewart, *Heralds of God: A Practical Book on Preaching* (Vancouver: Regent College, 1946), 110.

<sup>24</sup> Sinclair B. Ferguson, “Exegesis,” in *The Preacher and Preaching: Reviving the Art in the Twentieth Century*, ed. Samuel T. Logan Jr. (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2011), 192.

<sup>25</sup> James Robert Vernam Marchant and Hasmbib, eds., *Cassell’s Latin Dictionary: Latin-*

meaning of the word *exponere* eventually came to mean “to interpret or explain.” Related terms such as *exposition*, *expositor*, and *expository* came to the English language by way of the French language. All three terms were derived from the Latin word *expositus* which means “expounder.” *Expository* is the adjectival form of *exposition*, derived from the Medieval Latin *expositories*.<sup>26</sup>

It is clear that when the word “expository” prefaces the word “preaching,” it is modifying or ascribing some particular characteristic of the preaching. Following this logic, such preaching would be proclamation that displayed or disclosed a view of the subject. Harold Bryson offers,

If the spirit of the adjective’s usage in written and spoken discourse is followed, expository preaching means etymologically a proclamation in which a subject is disclosed to view by means of explanation. Explanation is the dominant idea, and any other element such as interpretation, elucidation, declaration, description, or other element is subservient to the purpose of explanation.<sup>27</sup>

While it is clear that the term “expository preaching” is referring to more than simply the consecutive treatment of Scripture, Bryson notes that “no homiletical term has received as many definitions with an apparent authoritative definiteness than *expository* preaching. . . . Because of the variety of definitions, ambiguity abounds about a clear, authoritative, workable definition of expository preaching.”<sup>28</sup> It is true to say that there is still no generally accepted definition of expository preaching. Despite the many definitions that have been constructed, uncertainty still reigns. At very least, however, it can be said that an expository sermon is sermon which exposes, explains, and applies the biblical text.

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*English and English-Latin*, 248th ed. (New York: Funk & Wagnalls), s.v. “expone.”

<sup>26</sup> Ernest Klein, *Klein’s Comprehensive Etymological Dictionary of the English Language* (Amsterdam: Elsevier, 1971), s.v. “expose.”

<sup>27</sup> Harold T. Bryson, *Expository Preaching: The Art of Preaching through a Book of the Bible* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1995), 17.

<sup>28</sup> Bryson, *Expository Preaching*, 15.

## **Components of an Expository Sermon**

Despite the uncertainty surrounding the definition of an expository sermon, there are some components one should look for in seeking to identify an expository sermon. It is important at this stage to state that expository sermons can be described as topical, thematic, or consecutive in form. Topical and thematic sermons are sermons based on a set topic or theme. Consecutive sermons are those that work their way through a text or an entire book. Although there are different styles of expository sermons, there are key components in all of these varying styles. The follow paragraphs outline some of the key features of an expository sermon, though these features need not necessarily always be found in the order presented.

The first element of an expository sermon is the opening statement or introduction. In this section, the preacher will either bring a relevant story to introduce his theme and engage his listeners, or he may simply explain his theme and proceed to read the relevant Bible text. Having heard this opening statement, the congregation should be aware of the main subject of the sermon, and this will give them a focus as they listen to the exposition of the passage. The preacher must be succinct at this initial point in his sermon. He should be careful not to bring too striking an illustration or story at this point, as what follows may then feel like a disappointment; a preacher should never build a porch that is too big for the house.

After the initial presentation of the sermon's theme and the introduction, the preacher should provide historical background and literary context to the passage on which he is preaching. This is a very important stage in the delivery of the sermon, as a text preached out of its context can so easily become a pretext. If a passage is preached out of its context, it can be preached to mean something that it does not mean at all. Worse still, preaching out of context opens the door to false, and even potentially heretical, teaching. Setting the context ensures the correct understanding, interpretation, and application of the text. Historical background is also important, as the customs,

practices, and immediate situation of the time in which the texts were written have a large impact on the correct and full meaning of the passage. Stewart writes, “Some preachers . . . practically ignore the historical background and what it may yield to the expositor, concentrating entirely on what can be read into the Bible passage in the way of uplift and exhortation.”<sup>29</sup> The preacher should not linger too long in this stage of the sermon, nor should he elaborate the background too profusely. Indeed, as Stewart rightly comments, “A few vivid sentences can be so much stronger and more telling than the most detailed historical approach. . . . It blunts the cutting edge of a sermon to ignore the context. It ruins the perspective to make it all foreground and no background.”<sup>30</sup>

After this groundwork has been established, the preacher should turn to the main body of the text upon which the sermon is based. The main points and subpoints of the sermon need to be clear, and they must all derive from the text itself. The main points are formed from the key elements of the passage, and the sub-points are either points that serve to strengthen the main points or are secondary applications from the text. Observations are made concerning details from the text that are relevant to the main points and the overarching theme of the sermon. Too many observations from the text may cloud the main theme of the sermon. It is essential that one knows what detail to include in the sermon and what detail, however interesting and legitimate it may be, to leave out of the sermon. This is one of the most difficult but essential arts in writing a sermon. Anything that does not serve to reinforce the main purpose of the passage of Scripture may be considered superfluous for the purpose of the sermon, though of course every word of Scripture is given by God for our instruction in various ways and at various times during our lives. It is important that any words or phrases requiring interpretation or explanation are dealt with in the main section of the sermon. Complex

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<sup>29</sup> Stewart, *Exposition and Encounter*, 3.

<sup>30</sup> Stewart, *Exposition and Encounter*, 8.

theological ideas may need to be explained, and doctrinal development should take place through the use of cross-references and key quotes. In this section of the sermon, it is important to make illustrations, when possible, to enhance the understanding of the point made by the preacher. Illustrations also function as an effective way to hold the attention of the listeners and to regain the attention of any who may have momentarily drifted away.

The conclusion of the sermon should not introduce new thoughts or ideas. Any new content at this point has the potential to lead the listeners away from what has already been said. The conclusion needs to either consist of reiteration of the main points by way of summary, or it could be that the conclusion is largely application of the text expounded in the main section of the sermon. I would argue that application at certain points throughout the text is a more effective way of ensuring the main points are easily identifiable and well applied. Applying the text throughout the sermon is also an effective way of aiding the congregation's ability to follow the structure of the sermon, helping them to remain engaged throughout. Long conclusions and unnecessary time spent in summary will not enhance the sermon; in fact, it can detract from the sermon. It is therefore essential to be succinct at this point.

It is vitally important to acknowledge the Spirit's role in preaching. As Stott astutely said, "We must keep the Word of God and the Spirit of God together. For apart from the Spirit the Word is dead, while apart from the Word the Spirit is alien."<sup>31</sup> True preaching takes place when the will of God is entwined with the mind and body of man, and they function in perfect unison. This union is not something that is required only for the delivery of a sermon, but also in its preparation. While much so-called preaching does not display such a mystical union, all true preaching does. Therefore, true preaching can

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<sup>31</sup> John Stott, *Between Two Worlds: The Challenge of Preaching Today* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982), 102.

only take place when the one preaching is filled with the Spirit of God; both the Spirit and man must be present. That being the case, the question could be asked: Does the Holy Spirit have a unique and specific role in the preparation and delivery of a sermon? Likewise, the question could be asked: Does man have a unique and specific role in the preparation and delivery of a sermon? To answer such questions, the following sections consider the following: the preacher's role in sermon preparation and delivery, the Holy Spirit's role in sermon preparation and delivery, and practical ministry principles for sermon preparation and delivery.

### **The Preacher's Role in Sermon Preparation and Delivery**

Scripture makes it clear that God uses preaching as the means through which men are saved: "For since in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not know him, God was pleased through the foolishness of what was preached to save those who believe" (1 Cor 1:21). Likewise, the necessity of preaching for salvation is clear. Paul writes, "How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them?" (Rom 10:14). Understanding that salvation is entirely the prerogative of God, one might ask why God ordained that man should play any part in the process of salvation, especially such a key part. Could God not have simply ordained it to be that he would save those whom he foreknew and predestined to be saved, without the necessity for preaching? The answer to that question surely has to be yes, he could have. Why then is man given this part to play, and what exactly is his role?

First, God spoke through the prophets, explaining to them the significance of his actions that they may convey his message to the people. Second, God spoke in his Son, his "Word made flesh" (John 1:14). Third, God speaks through his Spirit, bearing witness to Christ and to Scripture. This Trinitarian statement of speaking is fundamental to the Christian faith. John Stott exhorts, "And it is God's speech which makes our



speech necessary. We must speak what he has spoken. Hence the paramount obligation to preach.”<sup>32</sup> A theology of preaching begins with the humble acknowledgement that preaching is not a human invention but a gracious creation of God and a central part of his revealed will for the church. We preach because God has spoken.

Preaching is a charge. In 2 Timothy 4:2, Paul instructs Timothy to “preach the word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage—with great patience and careful instruction.” The preacher is to preach the Word. In preaching, the preacher’s role is to expound the Word of God. The preacher must demonstrate and point out the crucial elements of the text so that the hearer experiences the text fully and faithfully. This, says Abraham Kuruvilla, is the reason the preacher is “interposed between God’s word and God’s people.”<sup>33</sup> Preachers stand between the Word of God and the people to whom the Word of God is being directed. They are channels—conduits—through whom the Word of God flows. When a preacher speaks, he speaks as the voice of God at that particular moment; it is as though *Thus saith the Lord*.

Effective, God-honoring preaching is not something that begins when the preacher mounts the pulpit or opens his mouth to utter his first word. The preacher has a responsibility to thoroughly prepare both the sermon and himself before he preaches. He must spend much time in the presence of God and in the Word of God before he ascends the platform to preach. Preparation is essential, but more than that, it is the preacher’s *responsibility*. During the days leading up to a preaching engagement, the preacher must spend much time searching his own soul before the Lord. Woe to any preacher who would stand before the people, exhorting them to respond in a certain way if he had not already searched his own heart and sought to do so himself. For a preacher to be a voice for God, he must have his heart prepared before he preaches. John Piper comments, “I get

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<sup>32</sup> John Stott, *I Believe in Preaching* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1982), 15.

<sup>33</sup> Abraham Kuruvilla, *A Manual for Preaching: The Journey from Text to Sermon* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2019), 31.

up three and a half hours before the first service to spend two hours getting my heart as ready as I can before I come to the church.”<sup>34</sup> A man who has wholeheartedly devoted himself to prayer and the preparation of his own soul is a man God can use mightily in preaching.

Preaching not only requires a great deal of spiritual preparation by the preacher, but also practical preparation. The composition of a sermon is a difficult and often challenging task. Consideration must be given to a number of things when composing a sermon. Assuming the preacher has prayerfully selected the text upon which he is to preach, the genre of that text must first be considered. For a preacher to preach without being aware of the genre and mood of the text means he is likely to interpret the text incorrectly. Adam Dooley comments, “Failing to identify the mood and tone of a biblical text robs listeners of the Bible’s fullest persuasive intentions.”<sup>35</sup> Having selected the passage and considered the genre of the text, time must then be given to consideration of the structure of the passage (and therefore the sermon) and its main point. Stott comments, “As we continue to meditate by prayer and study and jot down a miscellany of ideas, we should be looking for our text’s dominant thought. Indeed, we should persevere in meditation until it emerges and clarifies.”<sup>36</sup> There may be several legitimate ways of handling a text, but every text has an overriding thrust, and every preacher must be sure to identify this key thought. A preacher must be careful not to give the text a stress or twist of its own.

Having established the genre and key point of the selected passage, the preacher must then consider the words, actions, and emotions he will use to convey the message of the text. In some quarters, there is still a general prejudice against

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<sup>34</sup> Piper, *The Supremacy of God in Preaching*, 50.

<sup>35</sup> Jerry Vines and Adam Dooley, *Passion in the Pulpit: How to Exegete the Emotion of Scripture* (Chicago: Moody, 2018), 63.

<sup>36</sup> Stott, *Between Two Worlds*, 224.

contemplating this aspect of preaching. R. L. Dabney, a strong proponent of giving consideration to persuasion, style, and action in preaching, qualifies his position:

Whenever the Spirit breathes, the icy bonds of spiritual death are dissolved, and the hearer's soul is thus enabled to respond legitimately to its proper, spiritual inducements. Human skill in the work of persuasion must obviously be in strict subordination to this divine agency, and in strict conformity to its instrument, divine truth.<sup>37</sup>

Giving consideration to verbal strategies is part of the preacher's work in the preparation of a sermon. He should give thought to his use of vivid language, pithy statements, poignant questions, whether or not he will use intentional exaggeration, his use of humor and repetition, and how he will illustrate his point with carefully placed stories.

As can be seen, the preacher has a significant role in the preparation of a sermon; however, it is vital to realize that none of this can be achieved without the help, leading, and guidance of the Holy Spirit.

### **The Holy Spirit's Role in Sermon Preparation and Delivery**

Without the help of the Holy Spirit in preaching, a sermon is nothing more than a speech. Preaching cannot be called preaching without the presence of the Holy Spirit in both the construction and delivery stages of a sermon. As preachers read the Scriptures in order to prepare a sermon, the Holy Spirit illuminates the text, helping them to understand not only what the passage is about, but also how to appropriately apply the passage to the congregation. A preacher must rely on the Holy Spirit for interpretation of the Word. Jim Scott Orrick, Brian Payne, and Ryan Fullerton are firm in their understanding of the role of the Spirit in preaching: "We must seek the Spirit's

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<sup>37</sup> R. L. Dabney, *Evangelical Eloquence: A Course of Lectures on Preaching* (Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth, 1999), 239.

illumination when we study the Word.”<sup>38</sup> The Holy Spirit not only illuminates the page of Scripture, but also guides and directs the thoughts of the preacher as he considers how best to compose his sermon.

Just as the Holy Spirit has a vital role in guiding the mind and understanding of the preacher in sermon preparation, so too the Holy Spirit has a key role in sermon delivery. For preaching to be effective, the preacher needs the Holy Spirit to not only illuminate the text of Scripture as he prepares but also to apply what is being preached to the lives of those who are hearing the message. In 1 Corinthians 2:14, we read “the person without the Spirit does not receive what comes from God’s Spirit, because it is foolishness to him; he is not able to understand it since it is evaluated spiritually” (CSB). As the preacher preaches, he should ask and expect the Holy Spirit to shed light on the glorious truths being preached. Paul describes the effect of the Spirit’s illumination on souls as he prays for the Ephesians: “I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you” (Eph 1:18a). Preachers must look to the Spirit to help the listeners taste and see that the Lord is good.

A genuine preacher, one who is Spirit-filled and depending on the Holy Spirit, does not speak the words of man, but the very words of God. In 1 Corinthians 2:13, Paul reminds his readers that when we speak, “we speak, not in words taught us by human wisdom but in words taught by the Spirit, explaining spiritual realities with Spirit-taught words.”

No preacher should forget his need for the Holy Spirit in preaching and his conscious reliance on the Holy Spirit of God. Even the Lord Jesus Christ needed the Holy Spirit poured out on him in order to preach the Word of God to God’s people. Acts 10:38

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<sup>38</sup> Jim Scott Orrick, Brian Payne, and Ryan Fullerton, *Encountering God through Expository Preaching: Connecting God’s People to God’s Presence through God’s Word* (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2017), 91.

says, “God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and power.” That being the case, how much more do preachers need the Spirit of God poured out on them?

Boldness in the pulpit is something that comes when a man is anointed and empowered by the Holy Spirit. In the book of Acts, one of the dominant descriptors of preaching is the word “boldly” (9:27–28; 13:46; 14:3; 18:26; 19:8; 26:26). This boldness was given by the Holy Spirit as indicated by the prayer of the apostles who were facing persecution. They prayed, “Now, Lord, consider their threats and enable your servants to speak your word with great boldness” (Acts 4:29). While this boldness comes from the Holy Spirit, it is also important to realize that it must be accompanied by the careful study of God’s Word. A preacher should not imagine that he can stand in the pulpit having made no attempt at preparation and expect the Holy Spirit to give him the words to say along with the boldness to say them, though it is of course within the Spirit’s power to do so. The boldness I am speaking of here comes by the Holy Spirit through personal acquaintance with the risen Lord. Orrick, Payne, and Fullerton posit, “When men hear such preaching, they know it is more than just the authority of a scholar.”<sup>39</sup> The same is still true today. Preaching empowered by the Holy Spirit is bold, authoritative, and powerful. However, we do not seem to be seeing the same level of effectiveness in preaching today as was seen in the book of Acts. Perhaps that is “because we do not expect it. Specifically, we do not expect the Holy Spirit to be powerfully at work in our preaching and in the hearts of those to whom we preach.”<sup>40</sup> We *should* expect the Holy Spirit to be powerfully at work, as this is why the Holy Spirit was sent “to convict the world in regard to sin” (John 16:8 NAB).

The Holy Spirit is fundamental to both sermon preparation and delivery. In the words of John Piper, “How utterly dependent we are on the Holy Spirit in the work of

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<sup>39</sup> Orrick, Payne, and Fullerton, *Encountering God*, 91.

<sup>40</sup> Orrick, Payne, and Fullerton, *Encountering God*, 89–90.

preaching!”<sup>41</sup> Piper goes on to say, “If the goal of preaching is to be attained, we simply must preach the Word inspired by the Spirit of God in the power given by the Spirit of God.”<sup>42</sup> Orrick, Payne, and Fullerton confirm, “The work of the Spirit in our preaching is not a fog or a mist; it is the work of a real person who gives us boldness, light, love, and words.”<sup>43</sup>

### **Biblical, Theological, and Practical Justifications for Expository Preaching**

In 2 Timothy 3:16, Paul reminds Timothy that the Bible is breathed out by God. As Griffiths comments, “Scripture has its origin directly in God such that the words of the Bible are God’s words. . . . God continues to speak today through the words that he once spoke. Scripture is not simply a depository and record or words that God spoke at some time in the past; it is the script that he continues to speak today.”<sup>44</sup> Not only does God still speak through his Word today, but he also acts through his Word and is encountered in his Word. If so much experience of God can be found in his Word, it goes without saying that much time must be spent in the Word of God, and this is especially true in preaching.

The Bible speaks of preaching by using various terms and words. There are three key Greek verbs that function as indicators of preaching in the New Testament: *euangelizo*, *katangelo*, and *kerysso*. These three verbs are usually translated “preach” or “proclaim.”<sup>45</sup> The word *euangelizomai* occurs fifty-four times<sup>46</sup> in the New Testament,

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<sup>41</sup> Piper, *The Supremacy of God in Preaching*, 43.

<sup>42</sup> Piper, *The Supremacy of God in Preaching*, 45.

<sup>43</sup> Orrick, Payne, and Fullerton, *Encountering God*, 103.

<sup>44</sup> Griffiths, *Preaching in the New Testament*, 9.

<sup>45</sup> Harold K. Moulton, ed., *The Analytical Greek Lexicon Revised* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1978), s.v. “euangelizo,” “katangelo,” “kerysso.”

<sup>46</sup> Blue Letter Bible, “G2097–Euangelizō–Strong’s Greek Lexicon (KJV),” accessed September 27, 2022, <https://www.blueletterbible.org/lexicon/g2097/kjv/tr/0-1/>.

the word *katangelo* occurs eighteen times,<sup>47</sup> and the word *kerysso* occurs thirty-two times.<sup>48</sup> The preaching to which these three words refer is usually a gospel presentation carried out by a figure of recognized authority or one who has been commissioned to preach. The New Testament does not call or instruct believers in general to preach, but it does call them to minister the Word to one another. In 2 Timothy 4, we read of Paul's charge to Timothy to preach the Word. As Griffiths points out, "The fact that this charge is given 'in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus' and in the light of his return as judge and king (4:1) highlights its solemnity and significance."<sup>49</sup> Paul instructs Timothy to pick up his [Paul's] baton of gospel preaching and teaching. Paul establishes a traceable line of continuity from his apostolic preaching ministry to the preaching ministry of men such as Timothy and those who follow. The preaching baton that Paul picked up from those who preceded him is one that will continue to be passed on from generation to generation until the return of Christ. The preaching ministry that Paul commissions Timothy to undertake is primarily an ongoing ministry to the people of God. This ministry would certainly have included evangelism, but the main context for Timothy's proclamation is to preach to the people of God, and more specifically, to the church in Ephesus.

The book of Hebrews provides a model for us concerning the form of Christian preaching. Although it does not say much directly concerning preaching, it is generally believed to have originally been a sermon. The central role of the Old Testament is immediately evident in the letter (sermon) to the Hebrews. Old Testament texts and phrases are used to frame the arguments contained in the letter. There is widespread consensus among scholars and commentators that Hebrews essentially constitutes a series

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<sup>47</sup> Bible Study Tools, "NAS New Testament Greek Lexicon–Katangelo," accessed September 27, 2022, <https://www.biblestudytools.com/lexicons/greek/nas/katangelo.html>.

<sup>48</sup> Hobert K. Farrell, "Preach, Proclaim," Bible Study Tools, accessed September 27, 2022, <https://www.biblestudytools.com/dictionaries/bakers-evangelical-dictionary/preach-proclaim.html>.

<sup>49</sup> Griffiths, *Preaching in the New Testament*, 53.

of expositions of Old Testament texts and themes in light of their fulfilment in Christ. Each of the structural units of the letter/sermon consists of an Old Testament text, an explanation and relevant contemporary application of the text in light of Christ, and then an exhortation to respond appropriately. Concerning this identifiable and repeated structural pattern, Griffiths comments that it highlights two key features of a sermon that modern preachers would do well to emulate: “First, it is fundamentally an exposition of Scripture in light of Christ. Second, exegesis and doctrinal teaching always lead to heart-engaging, urgent exhortation.”<sup>50</sup> The writer to the Hebrews believes that in his sermon, he is speaking God’s Word. It begins by addressing the question of how God speaks (1:1–4) and it contains one of the most clear and substantial statements concerning the power of God in the Word: “For the word of God is alive and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart” (Heb 4:12). Griffiths interestingly highlights this fact: “Given that the writer regularly uses the term ‘the word’ to refer to a word or message that comes from God, it is significant to note that on a number of occasions he designates the word spoken or preached by the leaders of the God’s people as ‘the word.’”<sup>51</sup> It is clear that the writer also expects the congregation to encounter God as he preaches the Word. This can be seen in the writer’s theology of the Word, the repeated invitation to approach God, and the portrayal of the heavenly Zion in Hebrews 12.

Griffiths notes,

By its shape and character, the Hebrews sermon highlights the fact that preaching (as least for this NT writer) consisted fundamentally in proclaiming Christ through the exposition of Scripture and exhorting hearers to respond. The writer clearly believes that his proclamation of Christ from Scripture is rightly viewed as a “word” from God (4:13; 5:11; 13:22).<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> Griffiths, *Preaching in the New Testament*, 109.

<sup>51</sup> Griffiths, *Preaching in the New Testament*, 108.

<sup>52</sup> Griffiths, *Preaching in the New Testament*, 118.



We may be tempted to think that such a high view of this discourse is justified purely because it was accepted within the canon of Scripture. However, in Hebrews 13:7, we see that the writer does not view the function of speaking the Word of God as something that is unique to him but as something that is characteristic of all church leaders generally.

Preaching is God's monologue. In 2 Corinthians 5:20, we read, "We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us." Preaching is the God-ordained means to bring people to himself. Since Old Testament times when God spoke through the prophets, he has spoken through men. The fact that God should choose to use sinful men to declare his words of warning, exhortation, love, grace, and mercy, is a perplexing and humbling thought; it should spur the preacher on to diligence in the Word of God and to making every effort to ensure the words he is speaking are indeed from God and not from himself.

It is preaching that God uses to awaken the dead. Paul describes those who are outside of Christ as dead in their trespasses and sin (Eph 2:1). In 2 Corinthians 1:21, we read, "For since in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not know him, God was pleased through the foolishness of what was preached to save those who believe." Colossians 2:13 says, "When you were dead in your transgressions and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He made you alive together with Him, having forgiven us all our transgressions" (NASB 1995). We can see a clear pattern in these verses: we were all once dead in our transgressions and sin; God was pleased to save us through preaching; through this preaching, we have been made alive together with him and have had our sins forgiven. Likewise, in Romans 10, Paul establishes the central importance of preaching in God's plan of salvation for the world. Preaching brings about incredible transformation in the lives of those who believe. The question must then be asked: Will *any* kind of preaching bring about this transformation? The answer is no. Christ must be preached, the cross must be lifted high, and the empty tomb must inspire rejoicing. For

the writer to the Hebrews, there is a real sense that the proclamation of the Word of God facilitates a personal encounter with God through Christ Jesus. In John 6:63, we read, “The Spirit gives life; the flesh counts for nothing. The words I have spoken to you—they are full of the Spirit and life.” The only words that bring life are the words spoken by the Triune God, and these words can only be found in the Bible, therefore these are the words that must be preached. Nothing else will see lives changed, transformed, and renewed. Preaching is glorious because of what it is and because of what it does. Griffiths comments, “The public proclamation of the word of God in the Christian assembly has a clear mandate from the Scripture and occupies a place of central importance in the life of the local church.”<sup>53</sup>

Practically speaking, exegetical preaching is hard work, both in preparation and in delivery. It requires much concentration and focus. The deep meaning of a text is not always immediately clear or obvious and will often require the preacher to dig deep in order that he might first discover the riches for himself and bring those riches to the surface for others to see. For some preachers/pastors, this is too much hard work and too time-consuming in an already busy schedule of administration, visitation, and management. Others, however, have simply not been trained in how to exegete a passage, and rather than basking in the riches of the depth of Scripture, they know only what they find as they skim the surface. While it is true that they will discover wonderful truths even at a surface level, they will never experience the rich and immense Word of God in its fulness, and neither will their people. It is essential that a preacher makes time to search the depths of Scripture. He must plan his time around his sermon preparation and not vice versa. If he is to be a faithful and committed expositor of the Word of God, he must invest himself fully in the study of the Word of God and preparation of the sermon.

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<sup>53</sup> Griffiths, *Preaching in the New Testament*, 133.

## **The Importance and Status of Expository Preaching**

Simply put, there is no other preaching besides expository preaching. While expository preaching can exist in various forms, exposition is the only true preaching. If the church is to be built up and equipped for teaching, rebuking, correcting, and training in righteousness so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work (2 Tim 3:16), then it must be fed on the Word of God through exposition. Just as a herald is a traitor if he does not faithfully explain what the king says, the preacher who does anything other than expound the Word of God in the pulpit commits treason. Nothing can take the place of expository preaching; it is necessary and vital for the edification of the local church. Griffiths comments, “The primary feeding and teaching of God’s people should come from the preaching that takes place week by week in the assembly. That preaching ministry should, in turn, fuel and shape many other ministries of the word, as all believers speak (and sing!) the word to each other and to those outside the church.”<sup>54</sup>

The Bible has much more to say about God than it does about us; therefore, a sermon should also have much more to say about God than it does about us. Sadly, many churches have turned their backs on expository preaching and are delivering homilies more akin to motivational talks, self-help seminars, and lessons in general morality. They offer much advice to help with the conscience and many words that encourage and motivate one to leave the church building feeling better than when they entered, but the deep truths of the Word of God and the reality of sin are seldom being preached. Due to this, we have a new generation of Christians who know little of their Bibles and less of the awesome riches that it contains. Doctrine and theology have been left behind for that which their ears desire to hear. The art of expository preaching is being left behind in favor of something that does not resemble preaching at all. The Word of God is sharper

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<sup>54</sup> Griffiths, *Preaching in the New Testament*, 133.

than a two-edged sword, and it ought to be penetrating to the uttermost, but in many churches today, it is not even scratching the surface. As I write, I am reminded of churches who are indeed faithful to the text of Scripture and its exposition week after week, and I praise God for them, but I am heavy of heart as I consider the many who do not engage in exposition. Many men have been charged with the greatest and most glorious task of all, yet they are failing to undertake that task and are in turn failing their people and the Lord God whom they serve. Are pastors only to blame? As long as church members and attenders are content to live on the milk of the Word of God, one can perhaps see why pastors would not deem it necessary to invest so much effort, sweat, and tears in the preparation of expository sermons. If only the church would be given a new hunger and thirst for the deep truths of the Word of God, then perhaps pastors would respond by giving them the meat that they so desperately need and desire. As Griffiths reminds us, “The preaching of the word of God is God’s gracious gift to his people. It is a gift by which he speaks to us, encounters us, equips us for ministry, and, through the power of his Spirit, transforms us all for his glory.”<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>55</sup> Griffiths, *Preaching in the New Testament*, 133.

### CHAPTER 3

#### AN OVERVIEW OF THE UNITED KINGDOM'S HERITAGE OF EXPOSITORY PREACHING

The rich heritage of preaching in the United Kingdom can be traced over many centuries through the Puritan age, the English Reformation, and the period of the Celtic church. In 1726, around the same time Jonathan Edwards began his noteworthy work at Northampton, Massachusetts, a great spiritual awakening became apparent in two distinct parts of the country of Wales. Howell Harris and Daniel Rowland were two of the Great Awakening's pioneer preachers and the most notable preachers identified with the Welsh Methodist revival.<sup>1</sup> In 1739, England also experienced a great spiritual awakening when George Whitefield, a young Anglican clergyman, began his outdoor preaching at Kingswood Common near Bristol. Several years later, Whitefield was joined by John Wesley, another young Anglican clergyman, and united with him in the work. In 1742, the awakening of religious interest appeared in Scotland in what is now known as the Cambuslang revival. Scottish Pastor William M'Culloch began to preach about the importance of being born again in his Cambuslang church in February 1741. M'Culloch was in communication with Jonathan Edwards in America and received news about the revival taking place in the American colonies, the First Great Awakening. He would read

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<sup>1</sup> Howell Harris and Daniel Rowland laid the foundations of the Calvinistic Methodist movement in Wales. Having been converted at about the same time, Harris and Rowland met for the first time in 1737. They began pooling their resources, effectively creating the Welsh Methodist revival. At the end of 1738, Harris received an unexpected letter from George Whitefield, written as Whitefield was traveling back from the American colonies. Harris replied with a letter packed full of details about the revival underway in Wales, and within a couple of months, Whitefield was in Wales witnessing events for himself. See F. R. Webber, *A History of Preaching in Britain and America: Including the Biographies of Many Princes of the Pulpit and the Men Who Influenced Them*, vol. 2 (Milwaukee, WI: Northwestern, 1952), 537–70.

the revival accounts to his congregation, and the passion for God increased.

Since the days of the eighteenth-century revivals, many great preachers have come and gone: John Nelson (1707–1774),<sup>2</sup> William Grimshaw (1708–1763),<sup>3</sup> John Fletcher (1729–1785),<sup>4</sup> John Newton (1725–1807),<sup>5</sup> Thomas Scott (1747–1821),<sup>6</sup> Charles

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<sup>2</sup> John Nelson (1707–1774) was greatly influenced by the preaching of George Whitefield and John Wesley. Preaching initially to small groups of friends who gathered around him and urged him to preach, he eventually became one of John Wesley’s most valuable assistants, working as a lay missionary in London. As a preacher, he was remarkable; some have declared his power in the pulpit and his influence over people to be second only to that of John Wesley and George Whitefield. Webber, *A History of Preaching in Britain and America*, 2:366.

<sup>3</sup> William Grimshaw (1708–1763) began to study the Scriptures seriously when he was twenty-six years old. He became immensely convicted, and after a considerable period of distress, he found in the gospel the promises of salvation. He rejoiced in the assurance of salvation through Jesus Christ. His preaching improved so greatly that his congregation crowded the church, which had been all but empty before. His words came with force and conviction. The great facts of redemption, which he now declared to his people, brought about an awakening of religious interest in his own parish and in the countryside for miles around. He became known as one of the greatest preachers of the eighteenth century. Webber, *A History of Preaching in Britain and America*, 2:384.

<sup>4</sup> John Fletcher (1729–1785) was ordained in 1757 and ministered in Madeley, a mining village in Shropshire. He preached remarkable, heart-searching sermons in the parish church, and they bore much fruit as many became devoted Christians. He displayed zeal in the performance of his parish duties that is almost without equal. He became close friends with John Wesley. F. R. Webber, *A History of Preaching in Britain and America: Including the Biographies of Many Princes of the Pulpit and the Men Who Influenced Them*, vol. 1 (Milwaukee, WI: Northwestern, 1952), 370–73.

<sup>5</sup> John Newton (1725–1807) was a leading evangelical preacher in London in his day. He preached with intense conviction and always a deep knowledge of the spiritual problems of his hearers. He preached extemporaneously and often preached several times during the week; however, his sermons did not always give evidence of careful preparation. Webber, *A History of Preaching in Britain and America*, 1:407–10; Henry Leigh Bennett, “John Newton: 1725–1807,” in *Dictionary of National Biography: 1885–1900*, vol. 40, ed. Sidney Lee (London: Smith, Elder, 1894), 395–98.)

<sup>6</sup> Thomas Scott (1747–1821) was ordained in 1773. Despite this, he only became a Christian after three years of laborious study led him to yield to the evangelical position. His period of study was brought about through observing the example of his neighbor John Newton. After his conversion, he was considered by many to be an exceptional preacher. Webber, *A History of Preaching in Britain and America*, 1:428–30.

Simeon (1759–1836),<sup>7</sup> James Parsons (1799–1877),<sup>8</sup> and Charles Spurgeon (1834–1892),<sup>9</sup> among others. For the most part, the preaching of these men was evangelistic, biblical, and gospel-centric.

A new wave of expository preaching came to the fore in the twentieth century through men such as James S. Stewart (1896–1990), Martyn Lloyd-Jones (1899–1981), and John Stott (1921–2011), the lives and ministries of whom this thesis will now consider in greater depth.

### **James S. Stewart**

James S. Stewart (1896–1990) was born in Dundee, Scotland, as the third of six children. His parents were John and Agnes Jamieson Stewart, both of whom had moved from Northern Ireland to Scotland, where they met and married. His mother was the daughter of a minister, and his father, William Stewart, worked for the Young Men’s Christian Association (YMCA) in the afterglow of the Moody-Sankey revival that had

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<sup>7</sup> Charles Simeon (1759–1836) was educated at King’s College, Cambridge, where he became vice provost (1790–1792). In 1782, he was presented the living of Trinity Church, Cambridge, where he remained until his death. Renowned as a preacher, Simeon helped found the Church Missionary Society (1797) and assisted the newly founded British and Foreign Bible Society (1804). In his twenty-one-volume *Horae Homileticae*, he annotated the entire Bible for sermon material. In order to ensure the continuity of evangelical teaching, he established the Simeon Trust in 1816 to purchase the right to appoint clergymen to livings. At one of his celebrated sermon parties, held every other Friday evening during term-time, he exhorted his guests to “be most solicitous to ascertain from the original and from the context the true, faithful and primary meaning of every text.” J. H. Jowett, *The Preacher: His Life and Work* (New York: Hodder & Stoughton, 1912), 24.

<sup>8</sup> In the *Dictionary of National Biography, 1885–1900*, James Parsons (1799–1877) is described as

the most remarkable pulpit orator of his time. Trained for the law, he spoke like a special pleader, and addressed his congregation as an eloquent barrister would a jury. His power of holding his hearers enthralled was rarely equalled. His sermons, always most carefully prepared, were perfect in method and arrangement and manifested minute acquaintance with the Scriptures. (Bertha Porter, “James Parsons: 1799–1877,” in *Dictionary of National Biography: 1885–1900*, vol. 43, ed. Sidney Lee [London: Smith, Elder, 1895], 404)

<sup>9</sup> Charles Spurgeon (1834–1892) became known as the “Prince of Preachers.” He preached his first sermon at the age of seventeen and was called to pastor a church in London at the age of twenty. It was not long after his arrival that all of London had heard of him. The construction of the Metropolitan Tabernacle was completed in 1861. It seated 6000 people, and Spurgeon preached there for over thirty years. His preaching was powerful and effective, preaching closely-related Bible truths from his selected text. Webber, *A History of Preaching in Britain and America*, 1:596–637.

swept across Scotland. The Stewart family was known for their commitment to Christ and their service for Christ. After completing post-graduate study in Bonn, Stewart was ordained into the Church of Scotland in 1924. For twenty-three years, he carried on a busy ministry in three successive churches, preaching twice each Sunday, teaching classes, doing pastoral work, and researching and writing at various levels.

Stewart believed that “preaching exists, not for the propagating of views, opinions and ideas, but for the proclamation of the mighty acts of God.”<sup>10</sup> He set aside up to an hour a day for devotional Bible reading and prayer, taking notes in a journal on any sermon ideas that came to him during those times. His method of preparation was to write down his thoughts on the biblical text and theme and then work to instill some order into his disorganized notes. Typically, Stewart’s mornings were filled with Bible study and direct sermon preparation, but he also spent an hour each day studying a solid piece of theology independently of his preparation for sermons. Stewart’s wide reading, personal devotions, and pastoral work became the raw materials he used as content in his sermons. Though he had a manuscript for every sermon for the first ten years of his preaching ministry, he eventually carried only a single sheet of paper into the pulpit with his outline and any quotations on it. Stewart considered himself an expository preacher. He once said, “The reason I am concentrating to-day on expository preaching is that I am convinced that incomparably the greatest need of the Christian pulpit at the present moment is more preaching of this particular character.”<sup>11</sup> For Stewart, the aim of exposition is to bring about an encounter with Christ. He believed that when the Bible is faithfully expounded, men and women still encounter God in Christ in several ways: in his mighty works, in his words, in his person, and in the missionary proclamation of his

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<sup>10</sup> James S. Stewart, *Heralds of God: A Practical Book on Preaching* (Vancouver: Regent College, 1946), 5.

<sup>11</sup> James S. Stewart, *Exposition and Encounter: Preaching in the Context of Worship* (Birmingham, England: Berean Press, 1956), 5.



mighty acts of redemption. Stewart made passionate pleas for expository preaching:

This is one of the greatest needs of the hour. There are rich rewards of human gratitude waiting for the man who can make the Bible come alive. Congregations are sick of dissertations on problems and essays on aspects of the religious situation: such sermons are indeed no true preaching at all. Men are not wanting to be told our poor views and arguments and ideals. They are emphatically wanting to be told what God has said and is saying in His Word. There is no durable satisfaction in anything less than that. Therefore, we do wrong when we take a text and read our message into it. Let the Bible speak its own message.<sup>12</sup>

Stewart had such confidence in the Word of God alone that he maintained that preaching the text of Scripture would ensure the preacher was delivered from the peril of monotony: “The preacher who expounds his own limited stock of ideas becomes deadly wearisome at last. The preacher who expounds the Bible has endless variety at his disposal.”<sup>13</sup> Stewart was determined in his sermon preparation to open up the riches of the text, bringing to light its buried treasure. He said, “Give the strength of your ministry to expository preaching, and not only will you keep your message fresh and varied, but, in the truest sense, you will be doing the work of an evangelist. . . . You will know that through the Scriptures, God has spoken again, as He spoke to the fathers by the prophets.”<sup>14</sup> Professor John McIntyre analyzed the theological content of Stewart’s preaching in terms that warrant quoting at some length:

I have known expository preaching which was dull in excess, being little more than flat commentary; as I have known pastorally-oriented preaching which did not rise above counselling. But, by the use of imagination, Dr. Stewart gave exposition and pastoral perception new power and relevance. As he described so graphically the situation of the biblical passage, he gradually incorporated his hearers in the situation. They so became part of it that they identified with the persons of whom, or to whom, Jesus was speaking. The nearest analogy I know is the ability of a great artist to draw the viewer into the action he is portraying. But there was more. It was not merely an exercise in empathy. Embodied in the situation, the hearers could not escape the urgency of the words of Jesus directed to them. The Gospel appeal, or challenge, or invitation, was not an integral—an inescapable—part of the whole presentation, directed at each listener.

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<sup>12</sup> Stewart, *Heralds of God*, 109.

<sup>13</sup> Stewart, *Heralds of God*, 109.

<sup>14</sup> Stewart, *Heralds of God*, 110.

In like manner, Reverend Roy Sanderson says of Stewart's preaching,

He did not rely to any great extent on contemporary events to make his preaching relevant; he rather used, and quite delightfully, poetry and literature to illustrate and supplement the Biblical text. He directed his message to the changeless needs of people and confronted them with the Christ, who is the same yesterday, today and forever. As someone once remarked to me—and I agreed with him—"James Stewart's preaching would have been contemporary a hundred years ago and it would still be the same a hundred years hence." That was essentially the strength of its power.<sup>15</sup>

Stewart's pulpit work at North Morningside in Edinburgh gained him an international reputation. People came from far and wide to hear "Stewart of Morningside."

Following his many years in ministry, Stewart then moved to serve as chair of the Department of New Testament Language, Literature, and Theology at New College, Edinburgh University from 1947 to 1966. He was also appointed chaplain to King George V in 1951 and later served as chaplain to Queen Elizabeth II. Stewart authored several books including *A Man in Christ: The Vital Elements of St. Paul's Religion*, *The Strong Name*, and *Heralds of God*. He was well known for his expository preaching and was ranked the best preacher of the twentieth century by *Preaching Magazine* in 1999. He delivered the Warrick Lectures on Preaching at Edinburgh and the Lyman Beecher Lectures on Preaching at Yale. In the introductory memoir of Gordon Grant's book *James S. Stewart: Walking With God*, W. J. G. McDonald wrote of Stewart's transition from ministry to academia:

His movement from the one to the other was, I am certain, directed by the fact that thereby his role and destiny would be to claim further generations of ministers for the work of teaching, persuading, commending, converting, and this would prove to be a greater and more enduring influence than the building up of a single congregation.<sup>16</sup>

Stewart's colleagues in the academic field gave testimony to the quality of his

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<sup>15</sup> James S. Stewart, *Walking with God*, ed. Gordon Grant (Vancouver: Regent College, 1996), 5.

<sup>16</sup> Stewart, *Walking with God*, 4.

scholarship. His scholarly work was exceptional, particularly his writing, so much so that scholars used and regularly recommended his books to others. Despite his outstanding success as a scholar and teacher, Stewart never used it to make life difficult for his colleagues. One such colleague says of Stewart, “He was the soul of generosity to others and appreciative of what they were doing.”<sup>17</sup>

### **Sermon Construction and Delivery**

In constructing a sermon, preachers of a bygone generation almost invariably began by expounding the text’s scriptural setting and historical background. Stewart saw many merits in this approach, as it meant the preacher would then be forced to preach the text in its context rather than imparting meaning to the text. Additionally, Stewart liked the fact that the historical setting helps to illuminate and make doubly relevant the passage of the text itself. In fact, Stewart’s preaching was marked by his insistence on the inherent link between the background of ancient Israel or the apostolic era and the foreground of the present situation based on a Christological interpretation of the Bible. He maintained that since that link is not always apparent, the preacher’s task is to find it. Having said this, Stewart acknowledged that “this may not be the best way to grip your hearers’ attention and secure their interests at the very outset.”<sup>18</sup> Stewart suggested that it might be more effective to start from present-day experience: “Begin where your hearers are. Meet them on their own ground.”<sup>19</sup> Stewart maintained that if you begin with something that almost everyone can identify with, you will immediately engage their attention, touching the very nerve of their own experience.

Alternatively, Stewart suggested that a variant of this method of approach is to

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<sup>17</sup> Stewart, *Walking with God*, 7.

<sup>18</sup> Stewart, *Heralds of God*, 125.

<sup>19</sup> Stewart, *Heralds of God*, 125.

begin with some arresting incident or picture from life or literature. He says such an approach “focuses dramatic relevance of the theme, and thrusts it compellingly upon mind and heart.”<sup>20</sup> Stewart pointed to Christ Jesus as an example of one who adopted this approach, saying, “Instead of beginning with an exposition of the fundamental verities of religious faith, He would begin with the concrete stuff of life, the raw material of familiar experience; and thence would lead on and up to the eternal truth it was His mission to declare.”<sup>21</sup> On the subject of the sermon’s beginning, Stewart suggested that perhaps a judicious combination of these methods might be the most effective way to begin a sermon.

Regarding the main body of the sermon, Stewart advised that slavish bondage to traditional divisions and heading should be avoided: “It is certainly not necessary that all sermons . . . should be divided into three parts. There is no intrinsic sanctity in the tripartite sermon division, nor is it (as some appear to hold) a prerequisite of sound doctrine and essential to salvation.”<sup>22</sup> Stewart encouraged the intentional variation of methods in this section of the sermon, saying that “a sermon ought to be a living thing of flesh and blood: do not, therefore let the bones of the skeleton obtrude themselves unduly.”<sup>23</sup> He spoke of the value of headings, which help to drive home the points of the sermon to the hearers and focus the issue so as the help obtain the verdict; when all else is forgotten, often the headings remain. For this reason, headings must be memorable, and the preacher must have the headings clear in their own minds. Stewart suggested that it is bad psychology to announce the main divisions of the subject and the headings at the outset of the sermon, as was the practice of preachers of former generations: “It gives

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<sup>20</sup> Stewart, *Heralds of God*, 127.

<sup>21</sup> Stewart, *Heralds of God*, 127.

<sup>22</sup> Stewart, *Heralds of God*, 131.

<sup>23</sup> Stewart, *Heralds of God*, 131.

everything away. It holds no surprises.”<sup>24</sup> Despite speaking of the folly of being slavish to a specific number of divisions and announcing headings at the outset, Stewart was a strong proponent of structure and headings that help the listener divide up the text of Scripture in a logical way and remember the content. Stewart wrote, “Far too many sermons wander erratically from one thing to another, going off at sudden tangents perpetrating aimless involutions, anon returning upon their own tracks, moving in circles, with divisions overlapping, heads leading to anti-climax, transitions muddy and blurred.”<sup>25</sup> He suggested that the preacher aim for the cumulative effect, keeping the most telling points to the last. According to Stewart, bathos can play havoc with a sentence and seriously damage the total structure of a sermon. He noted that the preacher ought not to forget that he is striving for a verdict: “You are hoping and praying to leave your people face to face with God in Christ. That goal must never fade from sight. . . . Fashion it with that deliberate design; and please God, it will lead men through the outer and the inner courts to the altar of incense, and the Holy Place, and the very presence of the Lord.”<sup>26</sup>

According to Stewart, a preacher cannot afford to neglect the art of illustration. He said, “Abstract truth has to be translated into concrete terms if it is to impinge upon the average mind. The preacher who will not condescend thus to translate his meaning, who disdains the use of illustrations, considering it undignified and puerile, is being very foolish.”<sup>27</sup> Stewart pointed to Jesus’s use of illustration to substantiate his point. Time and time again, the Lord Jesus told stories and asked questions to illustrate the point he was seeking to make. The stories told and questions asked were always relevant to the subject. Likewise, Stewart stated that illustration should not be dragged in at random and

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<sup>24</sup> Stewart, *Heralds of God*, 134.

<sup>25</sup> Stewart, *Heralds of God*, 134.

<sup>26</sup> Stewart, *Heralds of God*, 135.

<sup>27</sup> Stewart, *Heralds of God*, 142.

needlessly multiplied. He urged caution and careful handling: “Any illustration which is only doubtfully relevant to the main theme ought to be rigorously banned. No matter how vivid it may be in itself, if it does not immediately light up the particular truth under discussion, exclude it ruthlessly. Otherwise, it will simply distract attention and defeat your purpose.”<sup>28</sup> He applied the same rule regarding quotations.

Stewart then moved on to the crucial importance of concluding the sermon, stating that there are many preachers who struggle with the greatest difficulty to draw to a conclusion. He advised against the use of elaborate perorations, saying, “People are rightly suspicious of, and tend to grow restive under, a sermon culminating in a blaze of literary fireworks, like a sonata with a noisy coda.”<sup>29</sup> *Diminuendo*, not *crescendo*, ought to be what the preacher strives for as he brings his sermon to a conclusion. He advised,

Much better you conclude quietly and even abruptly than indulge in any declamatory pyrotechnics. . . . Men are not saved by declamation, nor are souls carried on the wings of peroration into the Kingdom of heaven. Cultivate the quiet close. Let your last words of appeal have in them something of the hush that falls when Christ Himself draws near. . . . If men are able in that silence to hear even though only dimly and far away the challenging and healing cadences of the voice of God, the work will have been done, and we shall not have preached in vain.<sup>30</sup>

When delivering a sermon, Stewart advises against using professionalism of vocabulary or pulpit jargon. He instead stresses the importance of determining one’s choice of language throughout, being simple and direct. He quotes Matthew Arnold as saying, “People think that I can teach them style. What stuff it all is! Have something to say, and say it as clearly as you can. That is the only secret of style.”<sup>31</sup> Stewart spoke of artificial eloquence and sham emotion as dreadful things and encouraged his students to

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<sup>28</sup> Stewart, *Heralds of God*, 143.

<sup>29</sup> Stewart, *Heralds of God*, 137.

<sup>30</sup> Stewart, *Heralds of God*, 137, 140.

<sup>31</sup> Stewart, *Heralds of God*, 149. This saying is commonly attributed to Matthew Arnold, though Stewart does not cite a source.

prefer simple and homely words to those that are abstract and difficult. He was also very keen to make sure that he was understood to be seeking simple speech and not shallowness.<sup>32</sup>

### **Inner Life**

Above and beyond his wonderful gifting as a preacher and scholar, James Stewart was shaped by his personal devotional life. His personal devotion was not undertaken purely for the benefit of sermon preparation; it was primarily undertaken for the benefit of his soul. Commitment to personal devotions was something that could be seen in an inner saintliness and divine sensitivity in Stewart's life. This was observed by all those he met. A professor colleague recalls seeing tears running down Stewart's face after a fellow colleague expressed bitter criticism of others, referring to those tears as "the silent, gentle, but powerful rebuke of a saintly man of God."<sup>33</sup> Those who knew Stewart remark that as he grew older, there was nothing of the distortion of character that sometimes attends old age; his own quiet dignity and courtesy never slipped. According to McDonald, "To pray with him, and to be prayed for *by* him, were experiences not to be forgotten. For he walked with his God."<sup>34</sup> Often, Stewart would assure people that he prayed for them every day, and he meant it. For Stewart, the inner life of the preacher was of such importance that he referred to it as that which "makes the preacher."<sup>35</sup> In his work *Heralds of God*, he writes, "It is a solemnizing thought for any preacher that what he speaks to men in the name of God is going to be mightily reinforced or mercilessly negated by the quality of life behind it."<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> Stewart, *Heralds of God*, 151–52.

<sup>33</sup> Stewart, *Walking with God*, 10.

<sup>34</sup> Stewart, *Walking with God*, 11.

<sup>35</sup> Stewart, *Heralds of God*, 191.

<sup>36</sup> Stewart, *Heralds of God*, 193.

Stewart encourages the preacher to regularly examine himself, particularly when a sermon misfires. When such a thing would happen, Stewart encouraged the preacher to ask himself, “Was it because I had neglected the flame on my own altar? Can it have been that I was so busy preparing my sermon that I omitted to prepare myself?”<sup>37</sup>

According to Stewart, a preacher will be a man who is utterly dedicated to his work, a man of prayer, a man marked by great humility of heart, a man of authority, and a man on fire for Christ.

James Stewart, though lesser known than other men such as Martyn Lloyd-Jones, is a man to be respected and emulated. His godly character and his clear view of the importance of expository preaching mark him as a man every preacher should come to know. Through his writings, particularly his wonderful book entitled *Heralds of God*, this has been made possible.

### **Martyn Lloyd-Jones**

On December 20, 1899, Martyn Lloyd-Jones was born in Donald Street in Cardiff, Wales. He was born to Henry Lloyd-Jones and his wife Magdalene and was one of three boys: Harold, Martyn, and Vincent. At the age of five, Martyn and his family moved to their new home in the village of Llangeitho, Cardiganshire. Martyn’s home life was extremely happy thanks to the immense love of both of his parents. Biographer Eryl Davies notes, “Although Martyn’s mother had an Anglican background, and his father was a Congregationalist, it was more convenient for them to attend this Calvinistic Methodist church in the village.”<sup>38</sup>

In 1913, Martyn decided on a future career in medicine. Factors influencing this decision are unclear; perhaps it was the fact that his grandfather had been a doctor.

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<sup>37</sup> Stewart, *Heralds of God*, 192.

<sup>38</sup> Eryl W. Davies, *Dr. Martyn Lloyd-Jones* (Darlington, England: EP Books, 2011), 14.



Whatever the reason, Martyn's parents were supportive and encouraged him in achieving his ambition. Also, in 1913, the Association of Calvinistic Methodist Churches in south Wales held its summer meetings in Martyn's home church in Llangeitho. Davies says that "the meetings left a deep impression on Martyn and aroused an interest in the early Calvinistic Methodist leaders."<sup>39</sup> Just a few months later, in January 1914, Martyn's father informed his children of their desperate financial situation and their need to relocate. His father initially travelled to Canada, but upon finding no work there, he returned to London.

London would be a significant location in Martyn's life. He was the first to leave Wales to join his father in London. Arriving a few days ahead of his father, he stayed with his uncle, eagerly awaiting his father's arrival. Eleven weeks later, the family reunited in their new home at 7 Regency Street, Westminster.

At the age of seventeen, Martyn was reading the Bible regularly and with increased understanding. His study of the Scriptures was accompanied by effective study for his schooling. Having received impressive examination results, Martyn was able to study medicine at the prestigious St. Bartholomew's Hospital Medical School. His hard work was rewarded, as in 1921, he qualified as a doctor of medicine with distinction.

Over a period in his early twenties, God worked in Martyn's life. Sin began to trouble him more, and he came to accept that man's nature "is not essentially good or even neutral but rather biased and disposed towards sin."<sup>40</sup> His sense of personal guilt before the Lord deepened, and by Easter of 1925, he had become a Christian.

Concerning Lloyd-Jones's call to ministry, Davies comments,

Even prior to Easter 1925, Lloyd-Jones had a conviction that he should be a preacher one day. There were hints that as a teenager he had felt this pull, and certainly he had a sense of the call to preach the gospel before he became a

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<sup>39</sup> Davies, *Dr. Martyn Lloyd-Jones*, 17.

<sup>40</sup> Davies, *Dr. Martyn Lloyd-Jones*, 27.

Christian. However, after his conversion in 1925, this call to the Christian ministry became much stronger and persistent. In fact, it was difficult, indeed increasingly impossible, for him to push this conviction out of his mind.<sup>41</sup>

Lloyd-Jones had already started studying New Testament Greek in preparation for his call to ministry; however, doubts as to whether this was God’s plan for his life set in. Murray writes, “Martyn now found himself in the throes of an intense struggle over whether or not he was right to abandon medicine.”<sup>42</sup> By June 1926, Lloyd-Jones was certain that his future must be as a preacher. Lloyd-Jones says, “You are certain of your call when you are unable to keep it back and to resist it. . . . You try your utmost to do so . . . but you reach the point when you cannot do so any longer. It almost becomes an obsession, and so overwhelming that in the end you say, ‘I can do nothing else, I cannot resist any longer.’”<sup>43</sup>

Feeling drawn back to minister the Word in a poor deprived community in Wales, Lloyd-Jones felt a strong sense of calling to minister in Bethlehem Forward Movement Church in Aberavon, Port Talbot. After preaching a number of times at the church, they unanimously called him to be their minister. He ministered in Port Talbot until 1938, when he received an invitation to serve in a temporary capacity as an assistant to Dr. Campbell Morgan in Westminster Chapel. In 1943, Dr. Campbell retired, and Martyn Lloyd-Jones became the sole pastor, remaining until his retirement due to ill health in 1968.

One of the most notable aspects of Lloyd-Jones’s ministry was his powerful preaching. The congregations in both Port Talbot and Westminster Chapel grew exponentially during his time as pastor. People from the surrounding areas flocked to the churches. Members of the congregations had to arrive at the church building up to an

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<sup>41</sup> Davies, *Dr. Martyn Lloyd-Jones*, 30.

<sup>42</sup> Iain H. Murray, *The Life of Martyn Lloyd-Jones: 1899–1981* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 2013), 57.

<sup>43</sup> D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, *Preaching and Preachers* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2011), 118.

hour before the service started to ensure they were able to find a seat, even for weekday meetings. What was the attraction? The preaching of the Word. In Lloyd-Jones's day, the verbal inspiration of the Bible had been discredited almost universally, and this had brought about a change in faith that most thought could not be reversed. However, Lloyd-Jones was convinced that he must not adopt the emotional, sentimental style of preaching that he had heard throughout his life. He viewed this style of preaching as an "artificial contrivance to secure effect."<sup>44</sup> He viewed similarly the multitude of illustrations and anecdotes preachers used. Murray says that "in contrast to this, his sermons were closely reasoned, with the main theme carefully analyzed. He was certain that true preaching makes its impact, in the first instance, upon the mind."<sup>45</sup> Having said this, Lloyd-Jones did not belong to the more intellectual group of preachers who immediately proceeded to exposition after announcing their text. One of the most striking features of Lloyd-Jones's sermons was the importance he gave to introductions. He commented,

I am not and have never been a typical Welsh preacher. I felt that in preaching the first thing that you had to do was to demonstrate to the people that what you were going to do was very relevant and urgently important. The Welsh style of preaching started with a verse and the preacher then told you the connection and analysed the words, but the man of the world did not know what he was talking about and was not interested. I started with the man whom I wanted to listen, the patient. It was a medical approach really—here is a patient, a person in trouble, an ignorant man who has been to quacks, and so I deal with all that in the introduction. I wanted to get the listener and *then* come to my exposition. They started with their exposition and ended up with a bit of application.<sup>46</sup>

Murray describes it as "a different preaching,"<sup>47</sup> noting that "Lloyd-Jones's approach to preaching was staggeringly different from that to which congregations were

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<sup>44</sup> Murray, *The Life of Martyn Lloyd-Jones*, 97.

<sup>45</sup> Murray, *The Life of Martyn Lloyd-Jones*, 97.

<sup>46</sup> Murray, *The Life of Martyn Lloyd-Jones*, 97.

<sup>47</sup> Murray, *The Life of Martyn Lloyd-Jones*, 85.

accustomed.”<sup>48</sup> Beyond form and structure, the main difference could be found in the content of his messages. For Lloyd-Jones, the Bible was “the sole source of infallible truth and the final judge of all religious experience,”<sup>49</sup> not merely a starting point, from which he might proceed to his own ideas or the latest novel. He had concluded that there could be no significant recovery of preaching without first returning to biblical certainties. All of his hours in the study were devoted to the study of the Scriptures. His primary concern was for his own spiritual well-being; he aimed to read through the entire Scriptures every year. When he preached, he had very few notes with him; most of his sermon was memorized. This was largely possible due to the immense amount of time he spent studying and memorizing the Word of God in his own personal devotions. He began his ministry by preaching on 2 Timothy 1:7. He dealt with the Pauline description of real religion, not “the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of sound mind” (2 Tim 1:7 KJV). “‘If you haven’t this,’ he concluded—speaking of love, and of a sound mind—‘then your religion is probably nothing more than emotionalism, love of tradition, force of habit, or a sense of fear and awe.’”<sup>50</sup> In the months that followed, Lloyd-Jones spoke much on the nature of the life of a Christian and the uselessness of merely nominal religion. Lloyd-Jones largely committed himself to one teaching sermon each Sunday and one evangelistic sermon each Sunday, though there was often considerable overlap, and both types of sermons were preached for the purpose of seeing souls come to Christ.

Lloyd-Jones’s sermons were always based on a particular passage or verse of Scripture. With the exception of holiday periods, when a number of regular attendees were likely to be away, he preached in consecutive series. His messages were thoroughly

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<sup>48</sup> Murray, *The Life of Martyn Lloyd-Jones*, 90.

<sup>49</sup> Murray, *The Life of Martyn Lloyd-Jones*, 98.

<sup>50</sup> D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, “2 Timothy 1:17” (sermon preached February 6, 1927), quoted in Iain H. Murray, *D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones: The First Forty Years, 1899–1939* (Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth, 1982), 137.

biblical, and his sermons were expository in nature. Through his expositional style of preaching, Lloyd-Jones introduced his congregations to many new aspects of doctrine and theology including that of a reformed, Calvinistic nature. Murray stated, “His preaching demanded thought on the part of the hearer, yet it was not preaching from which the more intelligent present could gain the most. He pitched the level of his argument and paced its development in a way which many children present could generally follow.”<sup>51</sup> Repetition, something Lloyd-Jones regarded as essential for good preaching, formed part of his preaching style. He understood that it was not sufficient to simply state the truth, but that one needed to consider and meditate upon it. As is the case with much great preaching, the message was both profound and simple. To leave the consideration of expository preaching here would leave unsaid the most important part of what Lloyd-Jones was in the pulpit. He believed that one could

possess the natural ability and the understanding of the truth necessary to follow the expository method, and yet still never be a preacher at all. The Holy Spirit must be active in true preaching, active not only in owning the truth as it is heard but active in anointing the preacher himself. Only then is his heart as well as his mind rightly engaged and the result is speech attended by liveliness by unction and by an extemporaneous element. As with prayer this element cannot be produced to order. It has nothing to do with the emotion affected by the actor for effect (a preacher of that type is “an abominable imposter”). But it is the Holy Spirit with love for God and man, that the messenger himself is lost in sympathy with his message and with his hearers.<sup>52</sup>

Lloyd-Jones had a very clear understanding of the nature of true preaching, defining it beautifully as he commented “preaching is theology coming through a man who is on fire.”<sup>53</sup> He believed the only right condition for preaching was to “be so absorbed in what you are doing and in the realization of the presence of God, and in the glory and the greatness of the truth that you are preaching, that you forget yourself

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<sup>51</sup> Murray, *The Life of Martyn Lloyd-Jones*, 307.

<sup>52</sup> Murray, *The Life of Martyn Lloyd-Jones*, 308–9.

<sup>53</sup> Lloyd-Jones, *Preaching and Preachers*, 97.

completely.”<sup>54</sup> He rightly commented, “The business of preaching is not to entertain but to lead people to salvation, to teach them how to find God.”<sup>55</sup>

Passages of Scripture expounded by Lloyd-Jones include a short series of six sermons on Habakkuk, a series on the Sermon on the Mount, eleven sermons on Psalm 73, 260 sermons on Ephesians, and perhaps his most well-known series of 380 sermons on the book of Romans, which he preached over a period of many years. Realizing the importance and value of what they were hearing, not only for themselves, but also for future generations, many of Lloyd-Jones’s congregation encouraged him to put his sermons into book format. Thanks to their foresight, we now have much of what the great Martyn Lloyd-Jones had to say concerning the Scriptures immortalized in written format.

### **Sermon Construction and Delivery**

Not only was Lloyd-Jones an exceptional preacher, but he desired that others too would learn the art of preaching. That being the case, he wrote one of his most well-known books entitled *Preaching and Preachers*. In this book, Lloyd-Jones talked about all aspects of preaching, from preparing a sermon to its delivery. He was concerned about emphasizing the distinction between the message and the delivery of the message. He was also concerned to point out that it is possible to have good preaching even with a poor sermon; there is an essential distinction between these two elements of what a man is doing in the pulpit. He stated, “There is a sermon which he has prepared; and then there is the ‘act’ of delivering this sermon.”<sup>56</sup>

For Lloyd-Jones, preaching must always be expository, while “not simply being a running commentary on, or mere exposition of, the meaning of a verse or a

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<sup>54</sup> Lloyd-Jones, *Preaching and Preachers*, 264.

<sup>55</sup> D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, “Psalm 34:8” (sermon preached June 28, 1931), Murray, *D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones: The First Forty Years, 1899–1939*, 130.

<sup>56</sup> Lloyd-Jones, *Preaching and Preachers*, 69.

passage or a paragraph.”<sup>57</sup> It must be theological and gospel-centric (a preacher must preach the gospel, not about the gospel) and spirit-led without being structureless.

Concerning the construction and structure of a sermon, Lloyd-Jones began with the Bible text, saying, “I believe . . . that in preaching, the message should always arise out of the Scriptures directly and not out of the formulations of men, even the best men.”<sup>58</sup> Lloyd-Jones strongly sought to give the Spirit freedom in his preparation of sermons, and as such, he could not see why both preaching a series of sermons on a passage or book of the Bible, as well as preaching on a text that he has been led to, was a problem. Some men had very strong views on one particular style of preaching over another, but Lloyd-Jones did not. To this matter, he said,

We must not be in control. . . . We must not decide in cold blood, as it were, what we are going to do, and map out a programme, and so on. I am sure that is wrong. . . . We are subject to the Spirit, and we must be careful to make sure that we really are subject to Him, I argue that He may lead us at one time to preach on odd texts and at another time to preach a series of sermons.<sup>59</sup>

Lloyd-Jones’s main concern was that, above all, the text was dealt with honestly. The preacher must deal with the meaning of the text. Lloyd-Jones, urged him to be “honest with your text,”<sup>60</sup> lest a preacher twist the text to help him arrive at the subject he has chosen to preach on and in turn distort the true meaning of the text. The preacher should strive not for a scholarly understanding of the text, but for the spiritual meaning of the passage. In order to arrive at this, Lloyd-Jones said that questions must be asked of the text, questions such as “Why did he say that? Why did he say it in this particular way? What is he getting at? What was his object and purpose?”<sup>61</sup> Lloyd-Jones believed so

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<sup>57</sup> Lloyd-Jones, *Preaching and Preachers*, 83.

<sup>58</sup> Lloyd-Jones, *Preaching and Preachers*, 201.

<sup>59</sup> Lloyd-Jones, *Preaching and Preachers*, 203.

<sup>60</sup> Lloyd-Jones, *Preaching and Preachers*, 212.

<sup>61</sup> Lloyd-Jones, *Preaching and Preachers*, 215.

strongly in the importance of sticking to the Bible text that he wrote, “You must sacrifice a good sermon rather than force a text.”<sup>62</sup>

Lloyd-Jones referred to the delivery of a sermon as “the second great aspect.”<sup>63</sup> The delivery of a sermon is of course better known as preaching, and Lloyd-Jones concurred with others as he commented that preaching is something that is very difficult to define. He commented, “It is certainly not a matter of rules or regulations; and much of the trouble I think arises because people do regard it as a matter of instructions and rules and regulations, of dos and don’ts. It is not that.”<sup>64</sup> He simply concluded that preaching is something that one recognizes when one hears it, so rather than defining it, he simply made certain observations about it.

The first thing Lloyd-Jones spoke of with regards to the delivery of a sermon was personality: “The whole personality of the preacher must be involved.”<sup>65</sup> He highlighted the fact that all of one’s faculties should be engaged in preaching, including the whole body from head to toe.

Secondly, Lloyd-Jones emphasized a sense of authority and control the preacher should have over the congregation and the proceedings. His conviction was that the preacher should never be apologetic, tentatively putting forward suggestions and ideas. Rather, a preacher is “there to ‘declare’ certain things; he is a man under commission and under authority. He is an ambassador, and he should be aware of his authority.”<sup>66</sup> Behind this lies the preacher’s awareness of the fact that he is an ambassador of God. To balance this, Lloyd-Jones made it clear that this is not a matter of self-

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<sup>62</sup> Lloyd-Jones, *Preaching and Preachers*, 215.

<sup>63</sup> Lloyd-Jones, *Preaching and Preachers*, 95.

<sup>64</sup> Lloyd-Jones, *Preaching and Preachers*, 95.

<sup>65</sup> Lloyd-Jones, *Preaching and Preachers*, 96.

<sup>66</sup> Lloyd-Jones, *Preaching and Preachers*, 97.



confidence; that is always deplorable in a preacher.

Lloyd-Jones referred to other aspects of preaching with respect to delivery: (1) freedom (though a sermon should be prepared carefully, the preacher must still have freedom to move as the Spirit leads and in response to the congregation as he delivers his sermon), (2) seriousness (preaching is not superficial or trivial), (3) zeal (a preacher must always convey the impression that he himself has been gripped by what he is saying), (4) warmth (ensuring that the preacher is not simply aiming to say and do everything correctly, in a clinical way, but delivering the sermon with feeling and at times even genuine emotion), (5) urgency (there is a sense of urgency between God and men—the preacher speaks between time and eternity and there must be a sense of urgency in his preaching), (6) power (Lloyd-Jones believed if there was no power, it was not preaching. This power comes from God by the Spirit), and (7) persuasiveness (“The preacher does not just say things with the attitude of ‘take it or leave it.’ He desires to persuade them of the truth of his message; he wants them to see it; he is trying to do something to them, to influence them”).<sup>67</sup>

At various times in history, the anointing of the Spirit upon the preacher has been identified with things such as the tone of the voice, gestures, mannerisms, or even mere volume. Iain Murray writes,

Dr. Lloyd-Jones was careful to warn against a confusion between pulpit style and powerful preaching. He knew that liveliness in preaching will not always take the same form; all he stipulated was that the expression of passion in the pulpit should be natural to the individual. In his own case he began a sermon quietly and calmly, in the tones of an ordinary conversation. The voice usually rose gradually and quickened as the subject was opened until—as the message gripped the speaker and hearer alike—his animation added its own expression and emphasis to the message. There was movement and gesture in such harmony with what was being said that the hearer was scarcely conscious that the two things were not the same. The preacher and the truth became one. Dr. Lloyd-Jones repudiated the deliberate use of oratory as a means to condition or persuade people. At the same time, he knew that no subject was more worthy of true oratory than the Word of God and he believed that the truth needed to be presented in a form which could attract the interest of the

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<sup>67</sup> Lloyd-Jones, *Preaching and Preachers*, 105.

non-Christian. Preachers are responsible for making people listen.<sup>68</sup>

### **Inner Life**

With reference to the inner life of the preacher, Lloyd-Jones turned his attention to Acts 6:3 where, even in the matter of appointing deacons, it was insisted that they be men “filled with the Spirit.” Lloyd-Jones saw this as the first and greatest qualification.<sup>69</sup> In addition, Lloyd-Jones looked for men who had a degree of assurance with respect to their knowledge of the truth and their relationship to it. He then turned his attention to Titus 2:6–8 and, in line with this text, spoke of the importance of being self-controlled, one who sets an example by doing what is good, one who shows integrity, seriousness, and soundness of speech that cannot be condemned. He went on to say, “These are basic qualifications. A man may be a good Christian, and he may be many other things; but if he is lacking in these qualities he is not going to make a preacher.”<sup>70</sup>

Martyn Lloyd-Jones will go down in history as a spiritual giant and one of the United Kingdom’s greatest preachers; it must be said that this title is rightfully his.

### **John R. W. Stott**

John Robert Walmsley Stott was born to Arnold and Lily Stott on April 27, 1921. John’s father served as a major in the Royal Army Medical Corps in the First World War but had since returned to civilian life and established his own department of electrocardiography at the Westminster Hospital. He was a highly regarded teacher. A month after John was born, the Stott family moved from West Kensington to Harley Street where Arnold established his own consulting rooms.

John was raised by a lady who came to be affectionately known as Nanny Golden. She was a cheerful Christian who taught John and his sister Joy to sing hymns

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<sup>68</sup> Murray, *The Life of Martyn Lloyd-Jones*, 308.

<sup>69</sup> Lloyd-Jones, *Preaching and Preachers*, 122.

<sup>70</sup> Lloyd-Jones, *Preaching and Preachers*, 122.

and choruses. As John was growing up, he developed his father's love of music, learning to play the cello and later playing in the school orchestra. However, Arnold's greatest impact upon John's life could be seen in John's interest in the world of nature, especially birds.

It was John's mother Lily who chose their local parish church, All Souls, Langham Place, as the family's place of worship—though Arnold only attended two or three times a year. As the television age emerged, properties beside the church in Langham Place were demolished to make room for the new television studios. Arthur Buxton, the rector at All Souls, was quick to form links between his church and the British Broadcasting Corporation, leading to regular broadcast talks on Sunday evenings. All Souls, Langham Place became a well-known and influential church across the United Kingdom, as it still is today.

When John was nine years old, his parents made the decision to send him away to preparatory school as a boarder. They chose Oakley Hall, near Cirencester in Gloucestershire. John settled well and was a promising student, but his behavior left a little to be desired. He once wrote to his mother informing her that he had been beaten six times, receiving twenty-five strokes of the cane since he had been at school.

On half-days, John had a habit of creeping into the smaller Memorial Chapel, located next to the impressive school chapel. He sat there in the quietness, looking at the images in the stained-glass windows. He often looked for little devotional books that were left in the chapel by the chaplains for the boys to read. John regularly attended the Wednesday and Thursday night services but struggled with the fact that he was only able to work up some sort of religious feeling and not a meaningful relationship with God. On Sunday, February 13, a few weeks before his seventeenth birthday, John "opened the door of his heart to Christ."<sup>71</sup> It came about through an invite to the Christian union from a

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<sup>71</sup> Roger Steer, *Basic Christian: The Inside Story of John Stott* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP

man named John Bridger, a talented sportsman who was a year older than John. The preacher's name was Eric Nash, or "Bash" as he was known. Bash's preaching had a great impact on Stott, and later that night, John wrote to Bash telling him of his conversion to Christ.

During John's second year in sixth form, he informed his headmaster that his thoughts were now firmly fixed on ordination to ministry in the Church of England. As war broke out, John, through his reading of the Scriptures and particularly his reading of the Sermon on the Mount, was beginning to take a strong pacifist position. He questioned how one could be a Christian and fight when the Scriptures teach of turning the other cheek and loving one's enemies. As long as John's mind was set on ordination into the Anglican church, he was entitled to exemption from military service without having to appear before a tribunal as a conscientious objector. This was something his parents and the entire family struggled with, believing he should complete some form of national service.

John's parents were not in agreement with him concerning his ordination at this time; his father was away, fighting in the war effort. They saw much potential in him, particularly with his flair for modern languages, and they hoped for a diplomatic career. In light of his mother's hesitation and his father's refusal to agree (he sent a letter to this end), the bishop wrote to John to inform him that he could not consent to register him as a candidate for Holy Orders. Sometime later, John wrote a nine-page letter to his father, explaining the reasons for his decision to train for ordination. The first of his given reasons was his sense of obedience to God's call: "I have a definite and irresistible call from God to serve him in the church."<sup>72</sup> After John and his parents exchanged a number of letters, he eventually received a telegram from his father on May 19, 1941, which read.

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Books, 2009), 34.

<sup>72</sup> Steer, *Basic Christian*, 45.

“Am consenting but with great reluctance and unhappiness. Stott.”<sup>73</sup> For two years following this, Arnold hardly spoke to John. Ironically, a number of years later and after deeper study of the Bible, John came to believe that the pacifist position was not the only possible position a Christian could hold.

John moved to Trinity College in Cambridge to study Part I of the Theological Tripos and graduated with a bachelor of arts after his first year of theology. He was among twenty-three individuals to receive a First (first-class result). He remained at Trinity as a post-graduate student until the summer of 1944; he then moved across to Ridley Hall, also in Cambridge. Though his time as Ridley Hall was not straightforward (particularly as his father continued to oppose his study there, eventually refusing to support John financially), John was an exceptional student. John was eventually able to leave Ridley Hall with a double first-class honors in 1945, though he was delayed by one term due to the events of the war. It was provisionally agreed that John would join the All Souls staff in December of that year. On December 21, 1945, John was ordained and made deacon in St Paul’s Cathedral. A few days later, he learned that he had been awarded the Pilkington Prize for his papers in his ordination exam. John took up his duties in All Souls at the end of December 1945. He went on to become a curate in All Souls (1945–1950) and rector of All Souls in 1950, a position he remained in until 1975, when he retired. He preached his first sermon in the parish of All Souls at St Peter’s, Vere Street, on the first Sunday in January 1946. Stott wrote his sermon notes on tiny five-by-three-inch cards; he did this for most of his preaching life. The text of his first sermon was Romans 3:22–23, and “his notes reminded him to emphasise: *Important face sin, as then appreciate remedy.*”<sup>74</sup> A few weeks later, he preached on abiding in the vine from the passage found in John 15. During his time as curate and then rector of All Souls, Stott

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<sup>73</sup> Steer, *Basic Christian*, 48.

<sup>74</sup> Steer, *Basic Christian*, 66.

made preaching the Word of God a priority. He remained in All Souls as rector emeritus until he died on July 27, 2011.

During his lifetime, Stott wrote over fifty books, many of them commentaries on specific books of the Bible. One of his most popular books was written during 1980 and much of 1981: the highly respected and much revered book titled *Between Two Worlds*, later retitled *I Believe in Preaching*. This work is a masterpiece on the importance of preaching and the essential responsibility of every preacher to ensure he is preaching with relevance and application.

For Stott, all true Christian preaching was expository preaching. In Stott's own words:

Exposition refers to the content of the sermon (biblical truth) rather than its style (a running commentary). To expound Scripture is to bring out of the text what is there and expose it to view. The expositor prizes open what appears to be closed, makes plain what is obscure, unravels what is knotted, and unfolds what is tightly packed. Our responsibility as expositors is to open it up in such a way that it speaks its message clearly, plainly, accurately, relevantly, without addition, subtraction or falsification. In expository preaching the biblical text is neither a conventional introduction to a sermon on a largely different theme, nor a convenient peg on which to hang a ragbag of miscellaneous thoughts, but a master which dictates and controls what is said.<sup>75</sup>

John Stott turned the words of Bible sentences into windows onto glorious reality by explaining them in clear, compelling, complete, coherent, concise, fresh, English sentences.

### **Sermon Construction and Delivery**

Stott had a very clear method for the preparation of a sermon. He always began by selecting a text. As a rule, he preached systematically through books of the Bible, believing that it was best for the steady diet of his people. He did, however, make exceptions from time to time. For example, Stott would often leave his consecutive series

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<sup>75</sup> John Stott, *Between Two Worlds: The Challenge of Preaching Today* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982), 126.

to preach on the incarnation at Christmas and the death and resurrection of Christ at Easter. He also believed it important to address external circumstances when they weighed heavily on the minds of the public. When there were special needs within the church, or when Stott had discovered truths which specially inspired him, he would often take time to address those matters. He encouraged preachers to keep a notebook nearby to scribble down ideas, insights, illustrations, and other thoughts that came to mind for sermons. When such thoughts came to mind, he recorded them immediately, as he was liable to forget should he not record them. Whenever possible, Stott planned out texts weeks or even months in advance. The reason he did this was so that he might benefit from *subconscious incubation*.<sup>76</sup>

Once Stott's passage had been selected, he spent much time meditating on the Bible text; this he called *concentrated incubation*. According to Stott, this stage of the sermon preparation process should begin at least one week before preaching and should involve the following aspects: read, re-read, and re-read the text, ensuring that the preacher understands what it means. The dominant thought of the passage should be isolated. The sermon should convey only one major message, and all details of the sermon should be marshalled to help the congregation grasp that message and feel its power. The dominant thought ought to be able to be expressed in one short, clear, vivid sentence. Stott was a master at using the English language succinctly.

Having established the key point of the text, Stott encouraged preachers to do their own interpretive work and strongly warned against the use of commentaries until specific interpretive questions for which answers were needed had been formulated. Once the interpretive work of preparing the sermon was complete, Stott pointed in the direction of commentaries and additional resources, stating that they could be of benefit in

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<sup>76</sup> For Stott's view on Leslie J. Tizard's concept of "subconscious incubation," see Stott, *Between Two Worlds*, 220; John Stott, *I Believe in Preaching* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1982), 221.

providing clarification and confirmation to the interpretive work the preacher has already conducted.

Stott encouraged his readers to brood long over the application part of sermon preparation. How a text applies to the people, to the culture, and to the preacher, is of utmost importance. While Stott urged continual prayer for illumination of the text, he especially urged continual prayer for the text's application.

Once the bulk of the material is gathered, Stott then encouraged preachers to become akin to stonemasons, chiseling at their material until something beautiful can be seen. Chiseling and shaping material means that some of the material must be ruthlessly discarded, particularly all material irrelevant to the dominant thought. All remaining material must serve the dominant thought; the preacher must subordinate the remaining material to the dominant thought by using that material to illuminate and reinforce the dominant thought.

According to Stott, the structure of the sermon should be suited to the text, not artificially imposed. The preacher must avoid structure that is too clever, prominent, or complex. Careful consideration should be given to rhetoric; the preacher should choose words that are precise, simple, clear, vivid and honest. To help in this process, Stott encouraged preachers to stick to short declarative and interrogative sentences with few, if any, subordinate clauses.

Once the bulk of the crafting is complete, the preacher, according to Stott, should seek to illustrate and give examples that will help to explain the text and to convict. A wide variety of literary devices may be used at this point: figures of speech, images, retelling biblical stories in contemporary language, inventing fresh parables, retelling true historical and/or biographical events, to name a few. Stott encouraged preachers to keep a file of such things, particularly if they do not come easily to the preacher. He warned against making illustrations and examples so prominent that they detract from the dominant thought. Likewise, he warned against applying such methods



inappropriately or overusing them.

The final part of the sermon preparation process, according to Stott, is adding the introduction and the conclusion. The introduction should not be elaborate but enough to arouse curiosity, whet appetites, and introduce the dominant thought. Stott made suggestions of how this can be done by a variety of means, including explaining the setting of the passage, story, current event, or issue. He believed that the conclusion should not merely recapitulate the sermon, but it should apply it. In Stott's opinion, if there was no summons, there was no sermon.

Stott encouraged the preacher to write down his sermon and pray over the message. He believed that writing out the message forced the preacher to think straight and succinctly. He also believed it exposed lazy thinking and at the same time provided a cure for it. After the preacher is thoroughly familiar with his notes, Stott believed he should reduce them to a small outline, before praying that God would grant the ability to make the message the preacher's own.

This wonderful quote gives a beautiful glimpse into the mindset of John Stott when it came to preaching:

We need to keep together in our preaching the saving acts and the written words of God. Some preachers love to speak about the "mighty acts" of God, and really seem to believe in them, yet what they say tends to be their own interpretation of them, rather than what God has himself said about them in Scripture. Other preachers are entirely faithful in their exposition of God's Word yet remain dull and academic because they have forgotten that the heart of the Bible is not what God has said, but what he has done for our Salvation through Jesus Christ. The first group try to be "heralds of God," proclaiming good news of salvation, but fail in their stewardship of his revelation. The second try to be "stewards of God," dutifully guarding and dispensing his Word, but have lost the excitement of the herald's task. The true preacher is both a faithful steward of God's mysteries (1 Cor. 4:1, 2) and a fervent herald of God's good news.<sup>77</sup>

In sermon delivery, Stott always stood erect at the podium from which he spoke, turning small-sized pages in a notebook and marching steadily through his talk.

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<sup>77</sup> Stott, *Between Two Worlds*, 100.

He did not walk around and hardly gestured, but in his voice was a firm conviction that punctuated the words and phrases that really mattered: sacrifice, truth, crucifixion, mission, world, redemption—and especially, Christ. He did not arrest attention with fancy illustrations, but with the substance of the truth. He did not speak on topics, but about reality. The orderliness of his analysis showed respect towards his listeners and an authentic longing to help people. Underlying it all was an irenic spirit. He was polite not because he was an Englishman, but because the grace of Christ required it. Grace and peace—the keywords of Pauline salutations—were the values that opened the door of credibility to untold thousands of people.

### **Inner Life**

In his book titled *Stott on the Christian Life*, Tim Chester records Stott’s daily commitment to personal devotion in enough detail for it to be very evident that Stott cared much about the condition of his inner life. For Stott, it was vital that the inner life was conditioned and developed as part of the preacher at large; as such, he made personal devotion to God his highest priority. To begin to see to what level Stott’s devotion existed, Chester’s summary of a typical day in the life of Stott warrants quoting at length:

He lived consistently, and with integrity. He resisted the temptation to develop a public persona. He developed core disciplines like Scripture reading and meditation, prayer, work, and rest. Commitment to these disciplines was a feature of Stott’s own personal piety. “Fundamental to all Christian leadership and ministry,” he said, “is a humble, personal relationship to the Lord Jesus Christ, devotion to him expressed in daily prayer, and love for him expressed in daily obedience.”<sup>78</sup> Stott had a number of disciplines he adhered to resolutely. He did not impose them on others in a legalistic way, but they were the framework for his own walk with Christ. His normal pattern was to rise at 5:00 a.m.—a pattern of early rising he learned from Charles Simeon. Stott would greet each member of the Trinity in turn before offering a petition for the day ahead. It was also common for him to recite the fruit of the Spirit or, mindful of the call of Romans 12:1 to present our bodies as a living sacrifice, to offer each limb of his body in service to God. Then he would listen to the news on the radio while washing, before spending an hour reading his Bible and

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<sup>78</sup> Both quotes from John Stott are found in John Stott, *Basic Christian Leadership: Biblical Models of Church, Gospel, and Ministry* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Books, 2006), 101, quoted in Tim Chester, *Stott on the Christian Life: Between Two Worlds* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2020), 132.

in prayer. All his adult life Stott followed the Bible reading plan developed by Robert Murray M'Cheyne, which involved reading four chapters each day—three each morning, one of which he studied in more depth, and one at night. Bible reading was followed by intercession, conducted with the aid of a leather notebook containing names and issues for prayer, and stuffed with letters and pamphlets. Not that prayer was straightforward for Stott—he often spoke of the need to win “the battle of the prayer threshold.” He would imagine God waiting within a walled garden. But in front of the door into the garden stands the devil with a drawn sword, who must be defeated in the name of Christ. “Many of us give up praying,” comments Stott, “before we have tried to fight this battle. The best way to win, in my experience, is to claim the promises of Scripture, which the devil cannot undo.”<sup>79</sup>

Stott was a true wordsmith, a great expository preacher, but more than that, he was a man of God.

Sadly, some of Stott's convictions towards the end of his life have caused some to avoid his teachings and his works; this is a travesty. Stott's works are among some of the most precious gifts to the church and especially to preachers. He should be honored as one of the greatest preachers in British history.

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<sup>79</sup> Chester, *Stott on the Christian Life*, 132.

CHAPTER 4  
AN EXAMINATION AND EVALUATION OF THE  
STATE OF PREACHING IN NEWLY  
ESTABLISHED CHURCHES IN  
THE UNITED KINGDOM

To ensure this chapter would not be swayed by my hypothesis, the churches I examined were selected in the following manner. I asked a number of actively serving pastors in the United Kingdom to share which newly established churches, in their opinion, are among the most influential in the United Kingdom.<sup>1</sup> Respondents suggested a total of twenty-nine churches. Of those twenty-nine churches, twelve were excluded because they did not meet the criteria of being a newly established church or were no longer in operation.<sup>2</sup> Of the seventeen remaining churches, three were selected through random number generation: Victory Church in Cwmbran, Wales; Hillsong Church London in London, England; and !Audacious Church in Manchester, England.<sup>3</sup>

For the purpose of sermon evaluation, I utilized an evaluation tool and rubric produced by Michael E. Pohlman, associate professor of Christian preaching at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary.<sup>4</sup> I evaluated three sermons from each church, preached on the most recent three Sundays at the time of writing: Sunday, July 3, 2022; Sunday, July 10, 2022; and Sunday, July 17, 2022. To view and evaluate these sermons, I consulted each church's respective YouTube channel.

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<sup>1</sup> See appendix 2.

<sup>2</sup> See appendix 3.

<sup>3</sup> See appendix 3.

<sup>4</sup> See appendix 1.

Before an examination of the sermons from each church, I provide some information about each church, including details about the leaders, the church's vision, and any beliefs particularly relevant to the topic of this thesis.

### **Victory Church, Cwmbran, Wales**

Victory Church was established in January 2010 in Cwmbran, in the south of Wales. It grew quickly and is now a multi-campus church with four locations in Wales, one location in Bulgaria, and one location in the Philippines. Their vision statement reads, "We exist to bring Glory to God and Hope to People. Our vision is to see one-thousand people, Filled with God's Spirit, Discipled in God's Word, Impacting their world."<sup>5</sup>

Clyde Thomas has served as lead pastor of Victory Church since 2014. He was saved in a prison cell before training for ministry at Mattersey Hall Bible College, where he met his wife Rebekah. They married in 2008, and they claim that together they are sold out for the cause of Christ through the local church.

Victory Church is part of the Elim Pentecostal denomination. While the congregations within the Elim Pentecostal denomination range from small groups to some of the largest in the UK and Ireland, all of the members share the same set of beliefs, known as "foundational truths." One of these foundational truths concerns their belief in the Bible and is worth noting for the purpose of this thesis: "We believe the Bible, as originally given, to be without error, the fully inspired and infallible Word of God and the supreme and final authority in all matters of faith and conduct."<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Victory Church, "Welcome to Victory Church," accessed September 22, 2022, <https://www.victorychurch.co.uk>.

<sup>6</sup> Elim Pentecostal, "What We Believe," accessed September 22, 2022, [https://www.elim.org.uk/Articles/417857/Our\\_Beliefs.aspx](https://www.elim.org.uk/Articles/417857/Our_Beliefs.aspx).

## Sermon Evaluation 1

On this Sunday at Victory Church, there was no Scripture reading or sermon. In place of the sermon, guest speaker Andrea Williams, who works for an organization called “Christian Concern,” spoke about current cultural challenges faced by Christians in the UK.<sup>7</sup> While the presentation made was informative and relevant to Christians today, I would ask: Is not the proclamation of the Word of God the most important part of a church service? Should a presentation such as the one made by Andrea Williams take the place of the expounding of Scripture? The answer is a resounding no. Nothing should take the place of the public reading of Scripture and the preaching of the Word of God. The information presented on this Sunday morning would have been better suited to a midweek meeting.

Table 1. Sermon 1 details and rubric scores: Victory Church

Sermon Details	
Date	July 3, 2022
Pastor Name	N/A
Scripture Passage	N/A
Sermon Title	N/A
Main Idea/Points of Sermon	N/A
Essential Element	Rubric Score
Exegetical Accuracy	N/A
Doctrinal Substance	N/A
Clear Structure	N/A
Vivid Illustration	N/A
Pointed Application	N/A
Helpful Delivery	N/A
Supernatural Authority	N/A

<sup>7</sup> Andrea Williams, “Christian Concern,” Victory Church UK, July 3, 2022, YouTube video, 1:13:32, <https://youtu.be/ICXyhLQiwII>.

## Sermon Evaluation 2

Pastor Clyde Thomas took the pulpit on this Sunday morning to introduce a new series called “The Why”:

The why is so important; if you don’t get the why, you will never understand the what. The why is so important. Why we do what we do? Why do we spend our energy? Why do we want to give people the best experience when they come into our community? Why do we want to open a grocery store? Why do we want to run supported housing to house men and women? Why do we want to run and minister through hope centers? Why do we want to go beyond the call of duty when we could just turn up, have a nice little sing, and go home to the chicken that’s in the oven? The why is so important.<sup>8</sup>

At the outset of the sermon, I immediately wondered how engaging with the community could be seen as “going beyond the call of duty” when we are commanded to go and make disciples of all nations (Matt 28:19). I also wondered how the outline shared at the outset would connect to the Bible passage mentioned, Galatians 3. It soon emerged that the sermon would not be connected to the passage in any way, with one exception, a brief explanation of the fact that we are all one in Christ. The sermon did not contain doctrine from the passage, though he did speak of people going to hell without Jesus.

The sermon had no clear structure; it was made up of a series of thoughts that flowed one from the other, each point seeming to come from the preacher’s mind as he spoke with no clear preparation of intentional direction. Many stories were told, but none of them served to reinforce a point. The point of the sermon was reiterated throughout the sermon: “We should be the architects of our destiny; God will help us. God is looking for architects, not victims.” He explained that for too long he had had a victim mentality; he never thought he was good enough. He then went on to say there was a time in his life when he realized he needed to be the architect of his destiny; he needed to get rid of the victim mentality. God helped him to do this, and God could help us do the same. The preacher’s delivery was clear, and he spoke with passion, varying pace, and dynamism.

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<sup>8</sup> Clyde Thomas, “The Why,” Victory Church UK, July 10, 2022, YouTube video, 36:45, <https://youtu.be/wNJ2qRPOg7A>.

Two or three times during the sermon he claimed the Spirit was speaking to him to press something home, but the content of what he said lacked spiritual authority due to it not coming from the Scriptures.

Table 2. Sermon 2 details and rubric scores: Victory Church

<b>Sermon Details</b>	
Date	July 10, 2022
Pastor Name	Clyde Thomas (lead pastor)
Scripture Passage	Galatians 3:26–28
Sermon Title	“The Why”
Main Idea/Points of Sermon	We should be the architects of our destiny; God will help us. God is looking for architects, not victims.
<b>Essential Element</b>	<b>Rubric Score</b>
Exegetical Accuracy	2/10
Doctrinal Substance	3/10
Clear Structure	1/10
Vivid Illustration	1/10
Pointed Application	6/10
Helpful Delivery	7/10
Supernatural Authority	2/10

### **Sermon Evaluation 3**

The following week, Clyde Thomas again took the pulpit to preach on “Dietrich Bonhoeffer’s Plan for Community.”<sup>9</sup> After reading the sermon passage, Philippians 2:1–11, he said, “What this passage is basically saying is that Jesus is God, and if anyone had a right to exercise authority on this planet, then Jesus had it. But instead, he chose to be a servant. Instead of exercising the authority, he chose to be a servant to everyone he met.” Directly after saying this, he moved to Deitrich

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<sup>9</sup> Clyde Thomas, “Dietrich Bonhoeffer’s Plan for Community,” Victory Church UK, July 17, 2022, YouTube video, 50:12, <https://youtu.be/nua1svBQdSg>.



Bonhoeffer’s five things that are important for building healthy community: the ministry of holding the tongue, the ministry of meekness, the ministry of listening, the ministry of helpfulness, and the ministry of bearing. There was no connection from the passage read to the presentation of Bonhoeffer’s five things important to building healthy community. While this passage does speak of servanthood, the primary focus of the verses read is the humbling and exalting of the Lord Jesus Christ, not instructions on how to build a healthy community. After the passage was read at the very beginning, it was not expounded or referred to at any point during the sermon. He spoke truths such as the reality of the Spirit of God being everywhere with us in every environment just as he was at creation, hovering over the waters. He then moved on to talking about how that impacts us as disciples.

Once again, the preacher’s delivery was clear, and he spoke with passion, varying pace, and dynamism. However, I felt frustrated as he intentionally paused at around the thirty-minute mark to let the congregation know he had just two more minutes to go and then proceeded to preach for an additional twenty minutes.

Table 3. Sermon 3 details and rubric scores: Victory Church

<b>Sermon Details</b>	
Date	July 17, 2022
Pastor Name	Clyde Thomas (lead pastor)
Scripture Passage	Philippians 2:1–11
Sermon Title	“Dietrich Bonhoeffer’s Plan for Community”
Main Idea/Points of Sermon	Deitrich Bonhoeffer’s five essentials for building a healthy community: the ministry of holding the tongue, the ministry of meekness, the ministry of listening, the ministry of helpfulness, and the ministry of bearing.
<b>Essential Element</b>	<b>Rubric Score</b>
Exegetical Accuracy	1/10
Doctrinal Substance	3/10
Clear Structure	7/10

<b>Sermon Details</b>	
<b>Essential Element</b>	<b>Rubric Score</b>
Vivid Illustration	2/10
Pointed Application	5/10
Helpful Delivery	7/10
Supernatural Authority	2/10

### **Hillsong Church London, England**

Hillsong Church London is a charismatic Christian Pentecostal church and part of Hillsong Church global. Hillsong London was planted out of the Hills Christian Life Centre in Greater Western Sydney, Australia, by Gerard and Sue Keehan in 1992 as the London Christian Life Centre, becoming Hillsong Church London in 2000. Their vision statement is “To reach and influence the world by building a large Christ-centered, Bible-based church, changing mindsets and empowering people to lead and impact in every sphere of life.”<sup>10</sup>

The current pastors are husband and wife, Dan and Jo Watson. They have been part of Hillsong London for ten years, “during which time they have grown and developed a thriving youth and young adult ministry out of a genuine heart to see young people fulfil their God-given potential.”<sup>11</sup> According to their online testimony, “Above all else, Dan and Jo love to see people encounter Jesus, step into relationship with Him, and see them grow in faith and maturity. They are both passionate about seeing this generation really capture the call of God on their life and living it out fully in whatever sphere of influence they’re in.”<sup>12</sup>

A list of the beliefs held by the Hillsong churches can be found on their

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<sup>10</sup> Hillsong Church, “The Vision,” accessed September 20, 2022, <https://hillsong.com/vision/>.

<sup>11</sup> Hillsong Church, “Central London: Welcome Home,” accessed September 20, 2022, <https://hillsong.com/uk/central-london/>.

<sup>12</sup> Hillsong Church, “Central London: Welcome Home.”

website. Worth noting for the purpose of this thesis is their statement of belief concerning the Bible: “We believe that the Bible is God’s Word. It is accurate, authoritative and applicable to our everyday lives.”<sup>13</sup>

### **Sermon Evaluation 1**

On July 3, 2022, Pastor Jonny Ferguson delivered the message titled “Returning Tables.”<sup>14</sup> The preacher began by reading Revelation 19:6–7 and then proceeded to ask, “What is the heartbeat of the church?” He concluded that the heartbeat of the church was the Sunday service, which includes prayer, worship, fellowship, and teaching. He said, “Our gatherings are healing centers for those in physical and emotional pain. They have been maternity wards for the many people who have encountered the risen Jesus and have been born again. A room full of believers in one accord, exalting the name of Jesus, that’s a powerful room to be in.” He then went on to ask what we would do if we could no longer have services. Of course, this happened during the pandemic; the service at Hillsong stopped, and so, effectively (according to the preacher), the heart of Hillsong stopped. He stated that many people thought they had a really good relationship with Jesus, but during this time they came to realize that they actually had a really good relationship with the church.

The preacher then moved to the Great Commission and read from Matthew 28:19–20. He talked about what a disciple is and eventually arrived at the subject of his sermon: the table. He stated that “the table is the thing that people have gathered around for centuries.” He then asked what weight the table carries in the church. In a very confusing section of the sermon, he spoke about the relationship between midweek groups and community, the reason the church exists, the fact that lights and smoke

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<sup>13</sup> Hillsong Church, “What We Believe,” accessed September 20, 2022, <https://hillsong.com/what-we-believe/>.

<sup>14</sup> Jonny Ferguson, “Returning Tables,” Hillsong Church UK, July 3, 2022, YouTube video, 1:01:20, [https://youtu.be/VzOVUd9H\\_g0](https://youtu.be/VzOVUd9H_g0).

machines are not attracting people anymore, and the need for something true and relevant. He said,

It's not because we are cool and have relevant ninety-minute services that we will see a kingdom bound in darkness step into the light, but I truly believe it's when we grasp the power of subversive, counter-cultural pockets of Spirit-filled, Jesus disciples, leavened through the streets and neighborhoods and apartment blocks of this nation—people who are willing to say there is a seat for you at our table, come in, eat with us, and experience the presence of the risen Jesus who will give you rest for your weary soul.

The preacher then turned to Acts 2:42–47, stating that food and the breaking of bread are mentioned three times in this passage. His observation was that the thing that seemed to define the church that Jesus established was this theme of sitting at the table.

Taking us full circle, he returned to his original question: “What is the heartbeat of the church?” and stated that for the early church, it was the table. He talked about communion and the Last Supper and recounted how John laid on the chest of Jesus and therefore would have heard Jesus’s heartbeat. He said, “If we are going to hear the heartbeat of God, we need to be at the table; we need to reclaim this practice of being at the table.”

During his sermon, the preacher did not refer to the passage he read in Revelation 19, nor did he say anything that referred to the passage of Scripture that he read. In the final minute of his sermon, he asked the question, “So why did I start by reading from Revelation 19 and the marriage supper of the Lamb?” His answer: “Because the beautiful vision at the closing of the Scripture. Where are we all sat? At the table of the Lord. So, would you come to the table? Let’s reclaim the sanctity of the table in these days.” The listener would not be aware of anything from the text in Revelation, and the sermon was not based on a biblical doctrine. While some of the preacher’s points were helpful on a practical level, this sermon was deficient of anything resembling biblical teaching and certainly expository preaching. The preacher’s presentation was dull and monotone.

Following the sermon, they offered a prayer intended to help anyone who was wanting to give their lives to Jesus, to do so. Unfortunately, there was no mention of forgiveness or repentance in the prayer.

Table 4. Sermon 1 details and rubric scores: Hillsong Church London

<b>Sermon Details</b>	
Date	July 3, 2022
Pastor Name	Jonny Ferguson (pastor)
Scripture Passage	Revelation 19:6–9
Sermon Title	“Returning Tables”
Main Idea/Points of Sermon	For hundreds of years the church has centered itself around a table; we need to get back around the table if we are going to hear the heartbeat of God.
<b>Essential Element</b>	<b>Rubric Score</b>
Exegetical Accuracy	1/10
Doctrinal Substance	2/10
Clear Structure	1/10
Vivid Illustration	1/10
Pointed Application	5/10
Helpful Delivery	3/10
Supernatural Authority	1/10

## **Sermon Evaluation 2**

At the outset of the sermon on the following Sunday, I was uncomfortable due to my convictions concerning the prohibition of women from taking on an eldership role in the church or teaching men, but I tried to put my convictions to one side and listen to the content of what was being preached and how it was being delivered.

The preacher, Nicola Douglass, began by stating that we all lose our edge at times.<sup>15</sup> She said that losing your edge means you become ineffective. She illustrated this

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<sup>15</sup> Nicola Douglass, “Have You Lost Your Edge?,” Hillsong Church UK, July 10, 2022,

point by speaking of her grandmother who had not lost her edge, as proven by her sliding down a stairway banister despite being in her eighties. In a confusing few moments, the preacher reminded us that we are here on earth as stewards of so many things and that it is in those things we find our edge, but in reality, we do not have much clarity and at times even wonder if God is there. Something is missing. . . . We have lost our edge.

The preacher then took us to the text that would be the basis for her sermon, 2 Kings 6:1–6. While she did not take time to read the passage, she did refer to it as she progressed through her sermon. She gave some background information on Elisha, which led to the story of the floating axe head. She asked the question, “What does God have to say to us through this story? Maybe sometimes for all of our efforts, suddenly our passion is dwindling, and despite our hard work, things aren’t going well. That is not what God intends for us.” She read Jeremiah 17:8 and stated that if we are to get our edge back, we must do these four things: (1) Ask ourselves, have we lost our edge? (2) Identify where we lost it. (3) Acknowledge that we cannot recover it on our own. (4) Play our part in recovering it.

The preacher read many verses from various parts of Scripture, and there was a good focus on the need for repentance and what that meant. She read from verses showing the progression of the presence of God from the first temple to the indwelling of the Spirit of God today (1 Cor 6:19). She stated that the presence of God changed everything and that there was a weightiness that came with the presence of God. She reminded us that the presence of God is with us, and that God is here to be our helper, our advocate.

As she came to the end of her sermon, the preacher encouraged everyone to acknowledge that we cannot recover our edge on our own, just like the man who lost the axe head could not recover his axe head alone. Instead, he went to Elisha. She pointed out

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YouTube video, 56:43, <https://youtu.be/q0ljbSU1vrs>.

that the story of the axe head seems so small and insignificant, but it mattered to the man who lost it, saying, “Therefore, it matters to God.” She encouraged the congregation to cast all their cares on him, acknowledging that we cannot do everything in our own strength. However, we do have a part to play in recovering our edge. She pointed to the fact that in this story, the miracle was done, but the man had to reach out and grab the axe head as it floated. She spoke about how we often we do not like the part God is asking us to play in our story and that sometimes we have to do things that we do not want to do, for example, forgive, trust, and change. She asked, “Are we prepared to humble ourselves and ask God what he wants us to do?” She then explained the story of Naaman from 2 Kings 5:13, focusing on the question the servants asked of Naaman: “If you had been asked to do something great, would you not have done it?” As she drew to a close, she said that if we are to recover what God has for us, then we need to play our part: “Maybe you need to acknowledge that everything isn’t ok. Esther saved an entire generation, but first of all, she had to prepare a meal. David would overcome a giant, but first of all, he had to pick up a stone. Peter had to get out of the boat. Naaman had to get into a river. . . . What is it he’s asking of us this morning?”

This sermon was delivered with passion and zeal, and there were many references to Scripture, but Scripture was used to support the point the preacher was trying to make rather than the key point of the sermon being derived directly from Scripture.

As was the case the previous week, following the sermon, a prayer was offered that was intended to help anyone who wanted to give their lives to Jesus, to do so. Unfortunately, once again, there was no mention of forgiveness or repentance in that prayer.

Table 5. Sermon 2 details and rubric scores: Hillsong Church London

<b>Sermon Details</b>	
Date	July 10, 2022
Pastor Name	Nicola Douglass (lead pastor)
Scripture Passage	2 Kings 6
Sermon Title	“Have You Lost Your Edge?”
Main Idea/Points of Sermon	1. Have you lost your edge? 2. Identify where we lost it. 3. Acknowledge we can’t recover it on our own. 4. Play our part in recovering it.
<b>Essential Element</b>	<b>Rubric Score</b>
Exegetical Accuracy	5/10
Doctrinal Substance	4/10
Clear Structure	5/10
Vivid Illustration	5/10
Pointed Application	7/10
Helpful Delivery	7/10
Supernatural Authority	6/10

### Sermon Evaluation 3

Continuing the line of thought introduced by Pastor Jonny Ferguson two weeks prior, Pastor Rocky—who stated that he had also had the vision of a table laid on his heart—asked the question, “Who is invited to the table seen in Revelation 19?”<sup>16</sup> He pointed his listeners to Matthew 22:8–10. This passage relates that those who were invited did not deserve the honor. Instead, the honor was given to anyone and everyone; all were invited to come, good and bad alike. He took the congregation back to Genesis 12, where the table is set only for the children of Abraham, and then to Exodus 19, where the table gets a little bigger to include the Israelites, and finally to John 3:16, where, in the preacher’s words, “God blows the framework of who his people are wide open.” He

<sup>16</sup> Rocky Nti, “Who’s Invited to the Table?,” Hillsong Church UK, July 17, 2022, YouTube video, 58:44, <https://youtu.be/vHC3iv3v-B0>.



spoke for a while on the topic of everyone being invited. Moving to Matthew 28:19, he highlighted the command to make disciples of all nations, stating that it is clear that everyone should be invited to the table.

Having established the point that everyone is invited to the table, the preacher then continued to talk about the tension that is often present with everyone being invited to the table. He pointed out that this includes people we do not like, people we do not understand, and people who have different theological views; this can lead to frustration. He commented, “If we are not careful, this frustration of sitting at the table with others that we don’t like can lead to anger.” He moved to Luke 15:25–27, the story of the prodigal son’s brother who was angry and refused to go in when his younger brother returned. He commented, “This frustration pushes us to make the table smaller until the table is full of people who look, sound, and agree with everything we do. So instead of a wedding feast, we have a one-on-one with someone who is like us and makes us feel comfortable.” He amplified this point by saying, “The tension found at the table can produce prejudice, pain, and pridefulness,” and “The attendance at God’s banquet becomes more directed by my preference and my own discernment and my own rationale rather than God’s direction.” He then stated that this line of thought leads to racial segregation.

As he began to conclude his sermon, he arrived at the topic of love, stating that fundamental to love is choice. He said, “We have to make the decision to extend the invitation anyway and to be used as instruments of God’s love. God tells us to invite our brothers and sisters to his table, not ours. God tells us to love others the way he has loved us.” The preacher ended his sermon by reading from John 14:15–21, saying, “It’s not our love that we have to extend at this table; it’s God’s. And we don’t have to do it in our strength; it’s God’s.” The final words of his sermon before asking people to stand and

reflect were from John 14:15: “Loving me empowers you to obey my commands.”<sup>17</sup>

Once again there was no mention of the passage read in Revelation 19 and no exposition of the key text selected for the sermon. This was a sermon designed to help people see the inclusive nature of Christianity and the call of God to the lost, but it failed to deliver at multiple levels, largely due to the topic being imposed on the Scriptural texts rather than the topic proceeding from the biblical text.

Following the sermon, a prayer was prayed that was intended to help anyone who wanted to give their lives to Jesus, to do so, and this time it did include an aspect of confession of sin and repentance.

Table 6. Sermon 3 details and rubric scores: Hillsong Church London

<b>Sermon Details</b>	
Date	July 17, 2022
Pastor Name	Rocky Nti (pastor)
Scripture Passage	Galatians 5:25
Sermon Title	“Who’s Invited to the Table”
Main Idea/Points of Sermon	Who’s invited to the table?
<b>Essential Element</b>	<b>Rubric Score</b>
Exegetical Accuracy	2/10
Doctrinal Substance	4/10
Clear Structure	2/10
Vivid Illustration	1/10
Pointed Application	6/10
Helpful Delivery	5/10
Supernatural Authority	4/10

<sup>17</sup> Pastor Nti referenced passages from *The Passion Translation* in his sermon. Brian Simmons, *The Passion Translation New Testament: With Psalms, Proverbs, and Song of Songs* (Savage, MN: Broadstreet, 2020), <https://www.thepassiontranslation.com>.

## **!Audacious, Manchester, England**

!Audacious Church is one church with multiple locations. Their Central Manchester campus is the main hub for activities within the Greater Manchester area, and it is also the home for their offices servicing all locations. They have seven different locations: Central Manchester, North Manchester, South Manchester, Chester, Sheffield, Cardiff, and Geneva in Switzerland. Their vision statement is “To be a church, numerically so large that we transform our communities one person at a time.”<sup>18</sup> Their purpose statement is “To demonstrate the extraordinary God.”<sup>19</sup>

Glyn and Sophia Barrett are the senior pastors of !Audacious Church. They have been married for over twenty years. In September 2007, they began the journey of building what they refer to as “a nation-shaking church”<sup>20</sup> in the heart of Manchester. The Central Manchester location, where Glyn and Sophia are based, has an active congregation of four thousand people. In May 2019, Glyn was appointed as the national leader of the Assemblies of God denomination within the UK. Along with his national team, he now oversees more than five hundred churches across Great Britain and their leadership.

!Audacious Church states that their beliefs come from the Bible and that they understand the Bible to be the inspired Word of God.<sup>21</sup>

### **Sermon Evaluation 1**

Once again, I found myself in an uncomfortable position when listening to this sermon due to my convictions regarding the biblical role of a female in the church, but, as

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<sup>18</sup> !Audacious Church, “Our Vision and Culture,” accessed September 20, 2022, <https://audaciouschurch.com/vision-and-culture/>.

<sup>19</sup> !Audacious Church, “Our Vision and Culture.”

<sup>20</sup> !Audacious Church, “Our Senior Pastors,” accessed September 20, 2022, <https://audaciouschurch.com/senior-leaders/>.

<sup>21</sup> !Audacious Church, “What We Believe,” accessed September 20, 2022, <https://audaciouschurch.com/our-beliefs/>.

before, I sought to focus on the content of the sermon and its delivery.

The preacher, Leonie Smith, began by reading the Scripture passage, 2 Kings 4:1–7, in full.<sup>22</sup> Following this, she put the story into its historical context. She expanded on the concept of captivity, saying, “Perhaps this morning you’re feeling trapped, like you’re in captivity.” She went on to speak about the yoke, describing it as a common weapon of the enemy, locking us to problems in our lives so that we cannot be free; yet she reminded us that the Bible says who the Son sets free is free indeed and that we were never designed to be yoked to sin. She commented on how, if we are yoked to sin for too long, that becomes our new normal. She talked about how the woman in 2 Kings 4 was not going to allow her yoke to define her and that her yoke was the fact that she was a widow. She further explained that this widow was no ordinary woman; she was an incredible woman of faith who knew exactly what to do to resolve the issue in her life.

The preacher presented five points directly derived from the widow. Point 1 challenged listeners: “Decide who you’re going to turn to first.” When she was going to be thrown into captivity, she turned first to God. As a point of application, the preacher asked, “Where do you go to in times of trouble? There is so much uncertainty in the world, but there is one who never changes—God.” She commented that what defines us as Christians is who we turn to first. She read from Psalm 91:4, speaking of the fact that there is refuge found under his wings. She concluded her point by asking, “Are you willing to come under the wings of God?”

The preacher’s second point was “Identify your most valuable possession.” She commented on how the widow was asked what she had of value. The widow’s response was that she had nothing—only a little bit of oil. The preacher, by way of application asked,

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<sup>22</sup> Leonie Smith, “It’s in the Oil,” !Audacious Church, July 3, 2022, YouTube video, 25:13, <https://youtu.be/H1jfScp0x9I>.

What do you have of value in your life? . . . Oil was the most precious commodity of the day. We always have a little bit of oil, and that oil is the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit will snap the yoke off of your neck. He will free you. You will get your breakthrough, not in your own strength but by the Spirit of the Lord. It's time to be reacquainted with the oil.

The preacher's third point was "Always be looking for empty vessels." She stated that when the woman found her oil, Elisha told her to go and find as many vessels as she could find. She asked the question, "Are we so focused on our own emptiness that we've lost sight of all of the empty vessels that are lying around our lives, everywhere we go? People we work with, in our own families, our workplaces, in this church, people all around you who are dying for want of the oil that is inside of you." She commented on how the miracle only flowed as long as the widow was finding empty vessels, saying, "Maybe we need to take our eyes off of our own emptiness and begin to look at the emptiness around us, looking at ourselves as the solution to their emptiness." She concluded this section of her sermon by pointing to the fact that when he was on the cross, Jesus was still doing what he could to fill empty vessels.

The preacher's fourth point was "You have to start pouring." She noted that the prophet did not pour the oil for her; instead, she had to pour it for herself. By way of application, she said, "We need to realize that we ourselves are the answer to our problems—stop looking for others to do the miracle in our lives. Partnering with the Holy Spirit, the oil on the inside, we really see ourselves step up into a supernatural lifestyle." She then spoke about the concept of pouring, which is used often throughout Scripture with reference to the Spirit. She stated that the Holy Spirit does his best work when he is poured out; she encouraged the congregation to serve and to love just as Jesus did. She observed how the pouring of the Spirit starts with a drip and then becomes a torrent. She proceeded to ask, "Are we going to let fear stop us pouring out the Spirit of God? . . . Empty vessels are crying out for what you have."

In her fifth and final point, the preacher challenged the congregation: "Flood the marketplace with oil." She commented that the miracle could have happened in the

home of the widow, and it could have stayed in the home of the widow, but the oil is not intended to stay in. Rather, it is intended to flood the marketplace. She applied this thought by saying, “God desires you to spread the oil. It was never intended to stay in your life. You have the solution to every need. There are all kinds of yokes that need to be broken—we need to take the oil into our communities. Start with a little oil, and God will bring the flow. God desires to use you to touch the lives of many.” She concluded by asking, “Are you willing to be used by God—poured out, knowing that when you come back into his presence, he will fill you again? A little bit of oil is all you need.”

The preacher was well structured and dynamic. Her delivery was at a fast pace, but I appreciated her desire to keep referring to the Bible passage that she read at the beginning of her sermon, even if some of her applications were a little dubious. When reading this story, I understand the key point to be God’s faithful provision for a destitute widow through the prophet Elisha (God’s Word at that time). The correlation of the oil to the Holy Spirit is not entirely invalid. As the preacher said, there are many references to oil and the Spirit, but in this case, I do not believe that it is the primary meaning of the text. The preacher’s structure was clear, and she had direct applications for each of her points.

Table 7. Sermon 1 details and rubric scores: !Audacious Church

<b>Sermon Details</b>	
Date	July 3, 2022
Pastor Name	Leonie Smith (pastor)
Scripture Passage	2 Kings 4:1–7
Sermon Title	“It’s in the Oil”
Main Idea/Points of Sermon	We have the oil (the Spirit), and we need to keep pouring it out.
<b>Essential Element</b>	<b>Rubric Score</b>
Exegetical Accuracy	6/10
Doctrinal Substance	5/10

Sermon Details	
Essential Element	Rubric Score
Clear Structure	9/10
Vivid Illustration	2/10
Pointed Application	8/10
Helpful Delivery	7/10
Supernatural Authority	7/10

## Sermon Evaluation 2

The preacher, Mark Foster, began by introducing a new series on the subject of rest and then read Matthew 11:28 and Hebrews 4:9–11.<sup>23</sup> The preacher then prayed, asking God to teach the congregation from the Bible about rest and that all who hear the message may enter into it.

After praying, the preacher spoke about the busyness of life. He shared about a time that he was about to leave for the airport but had forgotten his passport (something which really matters) because he was so busy. He stated that people today present busyness as a sign of achievement and importance. Our culture values busyness more than it does productivity; it values busyness more than effectiveness; and it values busyness more than personhood. He talked about how we can get caught up in the rat race of busyness and then made a counter claim, saying, “But the Bible is clear—God values rest.” He took the congregation to Genesis, highlighting the fact that God rested from all of his work on the seventh day. He then took the congregation to Exodus 20:8–11, showing that rest was enshrined into the law.

For his first point he stated, “Rest is the antidote for exhaustion.” He stated that God was refreshed from his rest. He proceeded to give scientific facts about rest and the

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<sup>23</sup> Mark Foster, “Restology,” !Audacious Church, July 20, 2022, YouTube Video, 26:18, <https://youtu.be/79bMm4JqYxs>.

importance of rest. He highlighted the fact that in the Bible, animals and the land also rested.

His second point was “Rest is the antidote to acquisition.” He commented, “Rest is saying to ourselves that we do not worship work.” He then went on to talk about the principle of the Sabbath and how it is a separation from work. He stated that we are commanded to rest, just as God commanded the Israelites to rest after their hard work as slaves in Egypt. In a more pointed section of his sermon, he said, “When we stop, we are saying we do not worship busyness but that we worship God. Busyness can be an idol—the thing we worship—but we need to stop to say, ‘God, only you, I worship you.’”

Point 3 emphasized that “Rest is the antidote for anxiety.” He went back to Genesis 2:1–3 and highlighted how God blessed the seventh day and made it holy. The point he made at this time was that while we stop, God continues to work for good. He said, “Rest is like putting new glasses on for the first time—it gives clarity. Through rest, you can tune your ear to God. Through rest, we separate ourselves from our work systems and we come to God, and we worship him.”

This sermon spoke accurately on the importance of rest, and it directed the listener to relevant passages of Scripture, but once again it felt like the topic of the sermon had been set and the Bible verses were proof texts serving to make his point. The words “acquisition” and “anxiety” were not explained, and I struggled to connect the headings to the content of what he was saying. The preacher himself was clearly spoken and dynamic.

Table 8. Sermon 2 details and rubric scores: !Audacious Church

<b>Sermon Details</b>	
Date	July 10, 2022
Pastor Name	Mark Foster (pastor)
Scripture Passage	Matthew 11:28, Hebrews 4:9–11
Sermon Title	“Restology: The Study of the Theology of Rest”



<b>Sermon Details</b>	
Main Idea/Points of Sermon	1. Rest is the antidote for exhaustion 2. Rest is the antidote to acquisition 3. Rest is the antidote for anxiety.
<b>Essential Element</b>	<b>Rubric Score</b>
Exegetical Accuracy	3/10
Doctrinal Substance	2/10
Clear Structure	8/10
Vivid Illustration	4/10
Pointed Application	5/10
Helpful Delivery	7/10
Supernatural Authority	5/10

### **Sermon Evaluation 3**

On the next Sunday, Pastor Paul Reid continued the theme of rest by telling the congregation that the title of his sermon, “Restopraxy,” was a word made up by the leadership team at !Audacious.<sup>24</sup> He defined it as “the practice of rest.” He read Exodus 35:2 and Matthew 11:28–30 from the New Living Translation and the Message paraphrase respectively.

After the Scripture reading and by way of introduction, the preacher told a story about a penknife and how it was (according to him, at least) the ultimate thing to have a few years ago. When he was attending a stag do, there was a tin of beans that could not be opened. The preacher had his knife on him, but he had no idea how to use it. He sought to apply this story by saying, “Rest is a gift, a tool, that will equip us and help us, but we don’t know how to use it.”

After the introduction, the preacher introduced his first point: “Real rest is extraordinary.” His catchphrase for the first point was “Work is ordinary; rest is extraordinary, and it’s something God wants you to have.” The preacher asked everyone

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<sup>24</sup> Paul Reid, “Restopraxy,” !Audacious Church, July 17, 2022, YouTube video, 27:34, [https://youtu.be/e\\_MRICRHRxk](https://youtu.be/e_MRICRHRxk).

to stand, close their eyes, and raise a hand if they needed a job, so that they could be prayed for. He also asked those who need a breakthrough at work to raise their hands. He then called a lady named Laura, the central regional pastor, to pray for those with their hands raised. Without any further expansion of the point, the preacher then moved on to his second point, saying, “Ice pops are finished, we’ve got to get to the end of this message.”

The preacher’s second heading was “Rest is hard work.” He took the congregation back to Exodus 35:2 and showed them the Sabbath regulations as recorded in the Old Testament. He highlighted that there was a requirement for a day of *complete* rest. He did not expand on the relevance (or irrelevance) of the Sabbath for today or on the meaning of *Sabbath*. He simply went on to say that there are lots of things competing for our time and attention, but we all need one of the most precious commodities—space. He stated that Jesus wants us to know how to take a real rest but acknowledged that it can sometimes be hard. He encouraged his listeners to make sure we have margin for rest. Following this (and still within his second point), he raised the subject of anxiety without explaining what he meant by that term. Once again, he returned to the idea of needing space, saying that we are always looking forward to a quieter time but that we are always chasing it.

Having spent a significant portion of his time on his second point, the preacher rushed through his final three points without much elaboration. His third point was titled, “Real rest is a commitment.” He said little more than “we must commit to rest when it gets busy.” His fourth point was “Rest is a rhythm.” In this slightly confusing point, the preacher said, “We need to rest when we’re awake so that we can sleep when we’re asleep.” He explained what he meant by this and concluded his point by stating that rest and sleep are two different things.

In his fifth point, the preacher claimed that “Rest is rewarding.” He talked about how rest is a way to eliminate stress and reduce the chance of diabetes. He also

referred to and read Lamentations 3:22–24. He spoke about how God will replenish us if we take a real rest. By way of application he said, “You sometimes have good intentions, but your willpower is not an infinite resource, but God gives it to you every morning.”

As he drew the sermon to a close, the preacher asked, “How can I be less stressed by not doing the things that need to be done?” Referring to an axe that needed to be sharpened, he commented that it is not about being more active; it is about sharpening the blade. He concluded by saying, “Rest is where you actively do the things that you know sharpen you.”

Despite the delivery being clear (the preacher had good diction and articulation), this sermon was very confusing. Although the preacher had three clear headings, at most points it was hard to understand where the preacher was going when he was in one of those points.

Once again, the subject of rest did not come from a specific text; rather, a few texts were introduced, each of which spoke about rest. There was no mention of our ultimate rest being found in a relationship with Jesus (Col 2:17). The Sabbath is no longer something we observe, as our rest is now found not in a day, but in Christ. The Sabbath was a foreshadow of the ultimate rest we now find in Jesus; Jesus is the fulfilment of the Sabbath. By not mentioning this, the preacher missed a key application, namely, that it is only in Jesus that true rest can be found.

Table 9. Sermon 3 details and rubric scores: !Audacious Church

<b>Sermon Details</b>	
Date	July 17, 2022
Pastor Name	Paul Reid (pastor)
Scripture Passage	Exodus 35:2, Matthew 11:28–30
Sermon Title	“Restopraxy”
Main Idea/Points of Sermon	God wants to show you how to take real rest.

<b>Sermon Details</b>	
<b>Essential Element</b>	<b>Rubric Score</b>
Exegetical Accuracy	1/10
Doctrinal Substance	2/10
Clear Structure	3/10
Vivid Illustration	5/10
Pointed Application	4/10
Helpful Delivery	5/10
Supernatural Authority	2/10

### **Conclusion of the State of Preaching in Newly Established Churches in the United Kingdom**

My thesis was that while the United Kingdom has a magnificent history of expository preaching, the current practice is in great decline. At the beginning of this thesis, I stated that while there are still a number of churches who remain faithful to the preaching of the text of Scripture, I was concerned that many churches in the United Kingdom are not preaching on the biblical text. Sadly, from the examination of sermons from the selected churches in the UK, it is clear that my concerns were valid: they are not being fed on the riches of the Word of God.

To ensure that believers are being built up in their faith and are better equipped for the task of going into all the world with the gospel, *the Bible must be preached*. In every sermon I examined, the message did not proceed from the biblical text. When Bible verses were incorporated, they were used to reinforce a point being made by the preaching, rather than the preacher allowing the biblical text to speak for itself. In almost every case, the sermon was about the need for increased community and outreach to the community. While these are noble tasks, this begs the question: What are we going to reach the community with if it is not the Word of God? Most of the sermons examined were devoid of the need for repentance and forgiveness, despite many of them speaking

of the need for Jesus. What is the need for Jesus if one does not understand the need for repentance?

At the outset of this thesis, I came with a burden I hoped would be lifted, even to some degree. Instead, I feel a greater burden than ever concerning the lack of biblical preaching in our churches today. If the Word of God is not being proclaimed, the voice of God is falling silent. Men and women across the United Kingdom need to hear the great doctrines of Scripture and God proclaimed and preached from their pulpits. It is God who will draw people to himself, not seeker-friendly messages, colored lights, smoke machines, contemporary worship, or even a desire for community. The single desire of every church body across the United Kingdom should be the proclamation of the Word of God in the form of expository preaching—true expository preaching that will, by nature, clearly present who Jesus is, why he came, and what that means for mankind.

## CHAPTER 5

### POSSIBLE REASONS FOR THE DECLINE IN EXPOSITORY PREACHING AND POTENTIAL IMPLICATIONS FOR THE CHURCH ACROSS THE UNITED KINGDOM

This chapter begins with suggestions as to possible causes for the troubling decline of expository preaching in the United Kingdom. It then considers possible implications for the church across the United Kingdom should this downward trend in expository preaching continue.

#### **Possible Reasons for the Decline in Expository Preaching**

As long ago as the late 1800s, men such as Charles Haddon Spurgeon observed the worrying trend of the decline of expository preaching along with the tidal wave of liberal theology. There is no single reason to blame for this, but many things may have contributed, some of which I now consider.

#### **The Digital Age**

The decline in expository preaching has been attributed to the changing times we live in. Indeed, times have changed in both the secular world and in the church. The digital age has brought with it a dramatic shift in the way people access information and the efficacy with which they do so. Whereas in the past, people were used to waiting to receive something in person, today we are used to receiving many things instantly and in digital format. This digital age has caused many, especially the younger generations, to fail to develop the habits of waiting and of listening. John Stott comments, “Television makes it harder for people to listen attentively and responsively, and therefore for

preachers to hold a congregation’s attention, let alone an appropriate response.”<sup>1</sup> He justifies his comments by saying, “First, TV tends to make people *physically lazy*. . . . Secondly, TV makes people *intellectually uncritical*. . . . Thirdly, TV tends to make people *emotionally insensitive*. . . . Fourthly, TV tends to make people *psychologically confused*. . . . Fifthly, TV tends to make people *morally disordered*.”<sup>2</sup> He suggests that Christians’ response to this “should seek to penetrate the world of the mass media, and equip themselves as television scriptwriters, producers, and performers.”<sup>3</sup> Fast forward forty years, and today we see many pastors working hard to make their sermons pithy using soundbites and contemporary language, keeping things short, and not going into too much detail. One wonders, if John Stott were here to observe the church of today, would he still offer the same advice? Our attempt to keep up with the times has sadly come at the expense of the ancient text, the living Word of God. In contrast to Stott, Martyn Lloyd-Jones asks the question, “But haven’t times changed?” He remarks, “It is quite simple. God has not changed, and man has not changed. I know that there are superficial changes—we may dress differently, we may travel at four hundred miles an hour instead of four miles an hour—but man as man has not changed at all, and man’s needs are exactly and precisely what they have always been.”<sup>4</sup> Man needs the Word of God, not catchphrases or soundbites. Times will change, but the Word of God will remain forever.

### **Contemporary Objections to Preaching**

In *Between Two Worlds*, Stott builds on this point, highlighting some contemporary objections to preaching, including the anti-authority mood, the cybernetics

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<sup>1</sup> John Stott, *Between Two Worlds: The Challenge of Preaching Today* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982), 46.

<sup>2</sup> Stott, *Between Two Worlds*, 46–50.

<sup>3</sup> Stott, *Between Two Worlds*, 50.

<sup>4</sup> D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, *Preaching and Preachers* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2011), 51.

revolution, and the church's loss of confidence in the gospel. Today, we are witnessing a self-conscious revolt against authority in a way like no other time in history. Stott defines the anti-authority mood:

The prophets of doom in today's church are confidently predicting that the day of preaching is over. It is a dying art they say, an outmoded form of communication, an echo from an abandoned past. Not only have modern media superseded it, but it is incompatible with the modern mood. Consequently, the sermon no longer enjoys the honor which used to be accorded to it.<sup>5</sup>

The authority of the preacher and the Word of God are constantly challenged. Stott also refers to cybernetics, "the radical changes in communication as a result of the development of complex electronic equipment."<sup>6</sup> The depth and impact of these changes were the impetus for Stott to launch a study of the impact of television on society in general. The third point Stott lists as a reason for contemporary objections to preaching is the church's loss of confidence in the gospel. The next section considers this weighty point more fully.

### **Loss of Confidence in the Gospel**

There are many so-called Christians and pastors today who, sadly, do not hold a strong conviction concerning the Word of God. They are happy to accept and preach on certain parts of Scripture, but they reject, avoid, or relegate to history and culture other parts of Scripture. In Acts 20:27, Paul says, "I did not shrink from declaring to you the whole counsel of God" (ESV). The Word of God should be preached in its entirety. The Word of God is exactly what it claims to be—God's Word. God speaks through his Word, and therefore, to cease to preach the Word of God for any reason is to cause the voice of God to fall silent. The full counsel of Scripture must be preached.

Worse still, in an attempt to make certain parts of the Word of God more

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<sup>5</sup> Stott, *Between Two Worlds*, 29.

<sup>6</sup> Stott, *Between Two Worlds*, 41.



palatable and politically correct, some have sought to alter the meaning of the text. Who is man that he should change words given by the creator of the universe? A church lacking conviction concerning the Word of God is a church that will not call for Scripture from the preacher; they will be content with the preacher's soundbites, content to hear the preacher read a verse or two (usually a well-known verse) before he or she moves on to share their thoughts and ideas about life and about God. When the church is not hungry for Scripture in the form of expository preaching, it is easy to see why a preacher would not feel the pull to preach an expository sermon. A lack of conviction concerning the Word of God leads to a lack of conviction about theological foundations needed for preaching. Stott lists the most important of the convictions that a preacher should hold onto as "God, Scripture, the church, the pastorate, and preaching."<sup>7</sup> In short, Stott believed that all preachers should have a conviction about God: his being, his action, and his purpose. He believed all preachers should have a conviction about Scripture: it is God's Word in written form, and God still speaks through what he has written. Stott also believed that all preachers should have a conviction about the church: it is a creation of God, by his Word. He believed all preachers should have a conviction about the pastorate: they should recall the New Testament teaching that Jesus Christ still gives overseers to his church and intends them to be a permanent feature of the church's structure. Finally, Stott believed that all preachers should have a conviction about preaching: exposition is necessary in preaching.<sup>8</sup>

### **Expository Preaching Is Challenging**

This leads to the next possible reason for the decline in expository preaching. Preparing an expository sermon is not easy. It is time consuming and laborious to examine the text, its historical context, and its context within the wider body of the canon

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<sup>7</sup> Stott, *Between Two Worlds*, 63–91.

<sup>8</sup> Stott, *Between Two Worlds*, 63–91.

of Scripture. However, it is when the preacher really begins to dig into the text of Scripture that he begins to find the riches. If there is no digging into the text of Scripture, the preacher will miss much of the wealth that lies under the surface. Even at a surface level, the Word of God by nature contains many beautiful truths. But as one begins to dig deeper, the life-changing, life-equipping wealth emerges in a special way. If the preacher is not doing his job fully by digging into the text, the congregation will not experience fully what God has for them.

### **Failure to Understand the True Nature of Preaching**

Finally, a lack of expository preaching can stem from a lack of understanding of the true nature of preaching. Many preachers in the United Kingdom have not had any amount of formal training. Sadly, some of the United Kingdom's top theological institutions are not teaching preachers how to prepare sermons or how to preach, meaning that many of those who have received theological educations are still not equipped to prepare and preach expository sermons. The United Kingdom has moved a long way from the days of the men like James S. Stewart. He devoted his life not only to preaching expository sermons as a pastor/preacher, but also, as a professor at the University of Edinburgh, he taught students of Scripture how to do the work of an expositor in the study and in the pulpit. Stewart inspired generations of preachers to strive for greater effectiveness in their proclamation of God's Word from the pulpit, as can be seen in his book entitled *Heralds of God*. We need a new generation of James S. Stewarts to rise up and champion the cause of expository preaching in the United Kingdom.

### **Potential Implications for the Church across the United Kingdom**

Should the church in the United Kingdom (and indeed, in any part of the world) continue in its trend away from preaching the Word of God, the implications will be devastating not only for the church but also for the nation and society.

When considering the future and the potential implications of the actions of today, it is of course hard to be detailed and specific. However, based on past similar patterns of behavior recorded for us in Scripture, we can speak with some level of certainty concerning the devastating impact of turning away from the Word of God.

In the Old Testament, when the people of God turned away from him, their punishment was the silence of the voice of God. What preachers seem to fail to realize today is that by not preaching the Word of God, they are the ones inflicting this punishment upon the people of God; the silence of the voice of God is the greatest of all punishments. Each time the voice of God fell silent in the Old Testament, the entire nation, including those who were not followers of God, was oppressed and left to wander aimlessly until God in his grace and mercy raised up a new leader to bring them back to God. If we continue to starve believers and non-believers of the Word of God, we will see fewer people coming to know Jesus, impacting generations of people who will live without knowing Jesus. If we fail to preach the Word of God, the future of the church will include fewer people being disciplined, meaning that fewer people will realize their spiritual potential and impact on the world. If we continue to fail to preach the Word of God, the church will have a lack of cultural effectiveness in the community, despite the view held by many that the Bible is culturally irrelevant. A lack of biblical preaching will lead to a lack of freedom in worship, even as we continue to sing more and more about ourselves and our feelings rather than the deep truths of Scripture and the nature of God. Ultimately, as we move further from Scripture, our knowledge of God's Word will continue to decrease, and the church will forget what it is that distinguishes the church from the world. The church will continue to move towards the world (because that is all it knows) to the point that it blends with the world and is not the light that it ought to be in the midst of the darkness. Eventually, God will tarry no more, and his judgment and wrath will fall.

We need to earnestly pray that God will raise up a new generation of leaders and preachers who hold a high view of the Word of God. We need to pray that this generation is willing and able to boldly proclaim the Word of God in its entirety, even in the midst of opposition from the godless society they live in. We need a generation of godly preachers who will unashamedly preach the Word, pointing people to the reality of their sin, their need for repentance, and to Jesus Christ who came into the world to free us from the bondage of sin and reconcile us to God. We must not fail to

preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching. For the time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching but having itching ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own passions and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander off into myths. (2 Tim 4:2–4 ESV)

That time has now come, and we must be ready to unashamedly preach the words of eternal life to a dying world.

APPENDIX 1  
SERMON EVALUATION RUBRIC

The following is a rubric produced by Dr. Michael E. Pohlman, associate professor of preaching at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, for the evaluation of sermons.<sup>1</sup> A list of definitions for each of the essential elements of faithful Christian preaching follows the rubric.

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<sup>1</sup> The evaluation and rubric were provided to the author by Michael E. Pohlman and are used by permission. Michael E. Pohlman, email message to author, July 29, 2022.

**ESSENTIALS OF FAITHFUL CHRISTIAN PREACHING**  
**EVALUATION RUBRIC**

**Preacher's Name:**

**Sermon Title/Main Points:**

**Location & Date of Sermon:**

1. Exegetical Accuracy: (1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5 – 6 – 7 – 8 – 9 – 10)

2. Doctrinal Substance: (1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5 – 6 – 7 – 8 – 9 – 10)

3. Clear Structure: (1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5 – 6 – 7 – 8 – 9 – 10)

4. Vivid Illustration: (1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5 – 6 – 7 – 8 – 9 – 10)

5. Pointed Application: (1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5 – 6 – 7 – 8 – 9 – 10)

6. Helpful Delivery: (1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5 – 6 – 7 – 8 – 9 – 10)

7. Supernatural Authority: (1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5 – 6 – 7 – 8 – 9 – 10)

## ESSENTIALS OF FAITHFUL CHRISTIAN PREACHING

### 1. Exegetical Accuracy (including Christo-centricity)

Faithfulness to the text and communicating the meaning of that text, including Christo-centricity, so that you are not preaching about the Word from the Word, but preaching the Word. Nothing is more important than getting the meaning right (i.e., grammatical structure, the meaning of words/phrases, author intent). A herald is a traitor if he doesn't explain faithfully what the king says.

### 2. Doctrinal Substance

Every sermon should be full of doctrine. The Bible is more about God than it is about you. It should tell them something about God. What does it tell us about God's nature, God's character, God's attributes, His eternal purpose, what He wants from me, what I owe Him, what He does for me? This makes for strong Christians. What does this sermon say about the greatness of the triune God, the holiness of God, the grace of God, the majesty of God, the power of God, etc.?

### 3. Clear Structure

All of our efforts may be wasted and the opportunity lost if our hearers cannot follow us when we speak and cannot remember afterwards what we have said. The message needs coherence. Expository preaching is about finding the meaning of a passage, its principal idea, making that shape your sermon with a structure that enforces the big idea, the propositional statement. Each sermon should have an introduction, something to say (the body), and a conclusion.

**Introduction:** It sets out to get people interested in the subject you are going to speak about. There needs to be an introduction in (most) sermons because there are obstacles to overcome like apathy, antipathy, incredulity. We have to overcome inertia and bring people to a point where they are ready/eager to hear what we have to say. You have to justify why they should listen to you

for the next forty-five minutes. Two points to keep in mind with any introduction: (1) It should not promise more than the sermon can deliver; (2) It ought not to be too long.

**Body:** To keep us focused and faithful to the purpose statement, and to enable our hearers to understand what it is, the sermon ought to have distinct headings, distinct divisions. This makes it easy to follow. (1) Headings need to be discernible in the text. (2) They need to be easy to remember. Frame them as questions or statements. (3) They ought to be few, typically no more than four (unless, of course, the text yields more than four).

**Conclusion:** It is composed of the remarks that close the sermon. It can drive the truth home or drive it away. (1) The conclusion should be short. No new ideas or new info. (2) Ought to be pointed and an actual conclusion, demanding a verdict and response warranted by the text itself.

#### **4. Vivid Illustration**

It is a word picture that sheds light on something. It turns an ear into an eye so that people say, "I see that!" The purpose of an illustration is to shed light on the truth so that they can respond. (1) It must be clear. (2) Ought to be brief without unnecessary details. (3) Ought to be varied, remember that there are different people with different tastes and interests.

#### **5. Pointed Application**

It is a mistake to preach one-size-fits-all sermons. Pastoral interaction is important because you need to know and love the people. It is more passionate and heartfelt. Sing and sting, wound and heal. Good application moves the sermon into your people's "living room." Application is the essential transition from the Bible's indicatives to the imperatives of Christian living.



## **6. Helpful Delivery**

(1) Be courageous and never apologize for the Word of God. (2) You should be humble; you are only the messenger. (3) You must be earnest in a way that you are not pretending. Believe what you say, mean what you say, and feel what you say. (4) Be courteous and not rude and not angry, never implying that the people are beyond the reaches of God's grace. (5) Good-humored. Don't confuse serious with somber. Use clear language and speak simply and eliminate clichés like "Lay it on the altar," "Let go and let God," and "What would Jesus do." (6) Make eye contact and dress appropriately; nothing should draw the attention away from the message.

## **7. Supernatural Authority**

Are people hearing this as the Word of God?

## APPENDIX 2

### LETTER AND SURVEY TO CURRENT PASTORS IN THE UNITED KINGDOM

Dear fellow worker in the Gospel,

My name is John Kimber. I am from Portsmouth in the UK and I pastored a Baptist church in Northern Ireland from 2008–2018. In January of 2019, my family and I relocated to the USA to enable me to undertake further study at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky.

I am currently writing a Doctoral Research Thesis on the state of expository preaching in the United Kingdom. For part of my thesis, I will be comparing and contrasting preaching from Pastors in newly established churches (within the last 30 years) against preaching from renowned British preachers of the past such as James S. Stewart, Martyn Lloyd-Jones, and John Stott. In order to ensure that I am being unbiased with my sources, I'm asking a number of people to suggest five churches which they feel are among the most influential newly established churches (within the last 30 years) in the United Kingdom today. What do I mean by influential? Which churches are people talking about? Which churches are people looking to for new worship songs, styles, etc.? Which churches are the “in fashion” churches? Which churches do other churches try to emulate? These churches do not need to be part of a specific denomination or affiliation, or indeed any.

I would really appreciate it if you would take a couple of minutes to give the name and location of five such churches and email your response back to me. If you can only think of one or two, I'd be really happy to have those one or two names.

Thank you so much for taking the time to do this; your help is invaluable.

Yours in Christ,

John

johnkimber83@gmail.com

**Name of Church:**

**Location:**

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**Name of Church:**

**Location:**

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**Name of Church:**

**Location:**

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**Name of Church:**

**Location:**

**Name of Church:**

**Location:**

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**Your name, the name of your church, and your position in the church:**

### APPENDIX 3

#### COMPILED RESULTS OF QUESTIONNAIRE AND RANDOM NUMBER GENERATOR RESULTS

The following is a list of qualifying churches compiled as a result of the survey completed by pastors who responded to the letter in appendix 2.

## **Qualifying Churches**

1. Destiny Church, Glasgow, Scotland
2. Life Church, Bradford, England
3. !Audacious Church, Manchester, England
4. New Wine Church, London, England
5. Winners Chapel, Dartford, England
6. Kingsway International Christian Centre, London, England
7. Emmanuel, Lurgan, Northern Ireland
8. Fermanagh Christian Fellowship, Northern Ireland
9. Cornerstone Church, Liverpool, England
10. Victory Church, Cwmbran, Wales
11. Soul Church, Norwich, England
12. Hillsong Church London, London, England
13. Network Church, Sheffield, England
14. Christchurch, Southampton, England
15. City Church, Manchester, England
16. Shepherd Drive Baptist Church, Ipswich, England
17. The Kings Arms Church, Bedford, England

## **Churches Excluded from Qualifying List (Did Not Meet Criteria in Parenthesis)**

1. Holy Trinity, Brompton, England (Est. 1829)
2. Life Church, Bradford, England (Est. 1976)
3. Redeemed Christian Church of God, London, England (Est. 1952)
4. SPACnation, London, England (Closed)
5. Chalmers Church, Edinburgh, Scotland (Est. 1839)
6. Glenfield Church, Cardiff, Wales (Not online)

7. St. Thomas Church, Norwich, England (Est. 1886)
8. Jesmond Parish Church, Newcastle Upon Tyne, England (Est. 1861)
9. Bridge Church, Liverpool, England (Old Church)
10. Rock Baptist Church, Cambridge, England (Est. 1988)
11. Kingsgate Community Church, Peterborough, England (Est. 1988)
12. Woodlands Church, England (Est. 1983)

**Churches Selected by Random Number Generator**

- (10) Victory Church, Cwmbran, Wales
- (12) Hillsong Church, London, England
- (3) !Audacious Church, Manchester, England

APPENDIX 4  
COMPILATION OF SERMON DETAILS  
AND RUBRIC SCORES

The following pages provide a compilation of all sermon details and rubric score data for each of the three churches evaluated on the following dates: July 3, 2022, July 10, 2022, and July 17, 2022.



Table A1. Compilation of sermon details and rubric scores: Victory Church

<b>Sermon Details</b>			
Date	July 3, 2022	July 10, 2022	July 17, 2022
Pastor Name	N/A	Clyde Thomas (lead pastor)	Clyde Thomas (lead pastor)
Scripture Passage	N/A	Galatians 3:26–28	Philippians 2:1–11
Sermon Title	N/A	“The Why”	“Dietrich Bonhoeffer’s Plan for Community”
Main Idea/Points of Sermon	N/A	We should be the architects of our destiny; God will help us. God is looking for architects, not victims.	Deitrich Bonhoeffer’s five essentials for building a healthy community: the ministry of holding the tongue, the ministry of meekness, the ministry of listening, the ministry of helpfulness, and the ministry of bearing.
<b>Essential Element</b>	<b>Rubric Scores</b>		
Exegetical Accuracy	N/A	2/10	1/10
Doctrinal Substance	N/A	3/10	3/10
Clear Structure	N/A	1/10	7/10
Vivid Illustration	N/A	1/10	2/10
Pointed Application	N/A	6/10	5/10
Helpful Delivery	N/A	7/10	7/10
Supernatural Authority	N/A	2/10	2/10

Table A2. Compilation of sermon details and rubric scores: Hillsong Church London

<b>Sermon Details</b>			
Date	July 3, 2022	July 10, 2022	July 17, 2022
Pastor Name	Jonny Ferguson (pastor)	Nicola Douglass (lead pastor)	Rocky Nti (pastor)
Scripture Passage	Revelation 19:6–9	2 Kings 6	Galatians 5:25
Sermon Title	“Returning Tables”	“Have You Lost Your Edge?”	“Who’s Invited to the Table”
Main Idea/Points of Sermon	For hundreds of years the church has centered itself around a table; we need to get back around the table if we are going to hear the heartbeat of God.	1. Have you lost your edge? 2. Identify where we lost it. 3. Acknowledge we can’t recover it on our own. 4. Play our part in recovering it.	Who’s invited to the table?
<b>Essential Element</b>	<b>Rubric Scores</b>		
Exegetical Accuracy	1/10	5/10	2/10
Doctrinal Substance	2/10	4/10	4/10
Clear Structure	1/10	5/10	2/10
Vivid Illustration	1/10	5/10	1/10
Pointed Application	5/10	7/10	6/10
Helpful Delivery	3/10	7/10	5/10
Supernatural Authority	1/10	6/10	4/10

Table A3. Compilation of sermon details and rubric scores: !Audacious Church

<b>Sermon Details</b>			
Date	July 3, 2022	July 10, 2022	July 17, 2022
Pastor Name	Leonie Smith (pastor)	Mark Foster (pastor)	Paul Reid (pastor)
Scripture Passage	2 Kings 4:1–7	Matthew 11:28, Hebrews 4:9–11	Exodus 35:2, Matthew 11:28–30
Sermon Title	“It’s in the Oil”	“Restology: The Study of the Theology of Rest”	“Restopraxy”
Main Idea/Points of Sermon	We have the oil (the Spirit), and we need to keep pouring it out.	1. Rest is the antidote for exhaustion 2. Rest is the antidote to acquisition 3. Rest is the antidote for anxiety.	God wants to show you how to take real rest.
<b>Essential Element</b>	<b>Rubric Scores</b>		
Exegetical Accuracy	6/10	3/10	1/10
Doctrinal Substance	5/10	2/10	2/10
Clear Structure	9/10	8/10	3/10
Vivid Illustration	2/10	4/10	5/10
Pointed Application	8/10	5/10	4/10
Helpful Delivery	7/10	7/10	5/10
Supernatural Authority	7/10	5/10	2/10

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## ABSTRACT

### THE STATE OF EXPOSITORY PREACHING IN THE UNITED KINGDOM: AN EXAMINATION OF ITS HISTORY AND CURRENT PRACTICE

John Luke Kimber, DMin  
The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2022  
Faculty Supervisor: William F. Cook III

This thesis argues that there has been a large and very concerning decline in expository preaching in the United Kingdom. Chapter 1 begins by acquainting the reader with the historical legacy of expository preaching in the United Kingdom and its apparent downgrade today. Chapter 2 provides a biblical, theological, and historical argument for expository preaching. Chapter 3 gives an overview of the rich heritage of expository preaching in the United Kingdom. Chapter 4 examines the content and structure of sermons preached in some of the United Kingdom's most influential, newly established churches. Chapter 5 begins with suggestions as to possible causes for the troubling decline of expository preaching in the United Kingdom and goes on to consider possible implications for the church across the United Kingdom should this downward trend in expository preaching continue.

## VITA

John Luke Kimber

### EDUCATION

Diploma in Theology, Irish Baptist College, 2011  
MDiv, Irish Baptist College, 2011

### MINISTERIAL EMPLOYMENT

Pastoral Student Assistant, Portadown Baptist Church, Portadown, Northern  
Ireland, 2008–2011

Lead Pastor, Portadown Baptist Church, Portadown, Northern Ireland, 2011–  
2018

Senior Pastor, Faith Baptist Church, Rexford, New York, 2020–