

GOING FROM EXEGESIS TO EXPOSITION

Exegesis -- deriving the meaning of a passage of Scripture

Exposition -- presenting the meaning of a passage of Scripture to someone else - Communicating the Scripture to others

Expository preaching (or teaching) is the most demanding, the most time consuming, the most (over-all) beneficial, and probably the most rewarding communication of the Christian message in which one may engage.

Biblical exposition requires that the communicator be both a careful student of the Word and that he or she be sensitive to the mind-set and needs of the audience.

The goal of expository preaching is to ascertain the meaning which a particular passage of Scripture had for its inspired author, and then to repackage the truth of the passage in such a way that it will speak in a fresh new way to a new audience, the one you are addressing. Thus the expositor must be faithful to: 1) the text (and context) which is being passed on, 2) to the needs of the audience addressed. The communicator must constantly be asking: "how can this message meet the real needs of the congregation in a way that is consistent with the purpose and function of the text?" It is God's Word that is being handled!

At this point I have four principles for converting insights derived your private study of a Biblical text into a spiritual meal for your listeners.

1. We must immerse ourselves in the text until it speaks to us who aim to expound it. We will have utilized the techniques of observing and interpreting what it is saying in its context, paying attention to key terms, contrasts, comparisons, repeated phrases, etc. If using the Hebrew or Greek text, we will pay attention to the formation of words, to tense (in Greek), order of the words, etc. As we do this prayerfully, the message of the text will begin to unfold to us. The danger at this point is to start applying the message of the text to our anticipated audience and missing the message the text has for ourselves. Every sermon we preach to others should first be preached to ourselves. It must get into our bones and become part of us. The text must speak to us first. Someone has said that preaching occurs when the congregation overhears the dialogue going on between God and the preacher's own soul.
2. Expository preaching allows the text to establish the structure of the sermon. The main points in our outline are derived from the Biblical passage. Furthermore, we will seek to determine dominant themes of our Biblical passage and give these prominence in the outline of our message. We will observe how the Biblical text utilizes these main points (whether they be contrasts, cause-effect statements, climaxes, or whatever else) and seek to reflect this same shape of the Biblical text in our own outline. We will support that outline with content from the passage itself, supplementing it all of course with illustrations and points of application.
3. Biblical exposition has a clear aim in view with respect to the audience. One should preach for a verdict. (Even the expository teacher should have this in view.) Someone has said that if we aim at nothing we will hit it every time! "Power in preaching results from a clear objective in view which burdens the heart of the preacher" (Alan Redpath in We Prepare and Preach, ed. C.S. Roddy, 1959, p. 135).

Thus, the Christian communicator will not wish to ramble through his own commentary on a passage, but will structure his address so that it is interesting and has coherence and unity.

4. Perhaps 50% of the expository sermon (less for a "lesson") should be devoted to application. Charles Spurgeon is supposed to have said that the sermon begins with the application. The temptation is to unload all of the gems you have mined from your exegesis of the passage onto the congregation! A few insights go a long way when properly communicated. Too many will appeal more to the "head" than to the "heart."

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