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Rooted in the Great Commandment (*Matthew 22:36-40*) and the Great Commission (*Matthew 28:18-20*), and recognized by the federal government as an official ecclesiastical endorsing agency, the Associated Gospel Churches (AGC) exists to represent Biblically Christ-centered churches, for the purpose of recruiting, endorsing, educating and supporting ordained men to serve as chaplains—pastors in uniform—in publicly-restricted access institutions.

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FOR CHRIST AND COUNTRY

*υποφέρουν από δυσκολίες μαζί μου, ως καλός
στρατιώτης του Ιησού Χριστού*

– II Tim 2:3



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LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

Greetings in the Lord. Welcome to the *AGC Journal*, a professional publication of the Association of Gospel Churches, an ecclesiastical endorsing agency for Biblically minded Chaplains who come from non-denominational backgrounds. The purpose of this journal is to present articles which cover important topics in Biblical Christianity such as ministry ideas, preaching, theology and history. The topics presented here are to help those in Chaplain ministries find hard to obtain resources, such as book reviews, theological insights and chaplain experiences to name a few. Being an evangelical, biblically inclined chaplain has its unique challenges, and this Journal is here to minister and to be a resource as Chaplains minister to their perspective flocks.

Being a Chaplain with the AGC usually takes on the signature phrase, “a Chaplain is a pastor in uniform,” and part of that responsibility is to not only be a servant of Jesus Christ, but to do the work of an evangelist. Foundational to this aspect of a chaplain’s calling is the belief in the need for the clear presentation of the Word of God to everyone. As a result, the emphasis of this issue is “Preach the Word!” For this reason, this issue has contacted many experts and procured their best thoughts in the preaching and teaching of God’s Word. Read, meditate, study and enjoy the bountiful table of those who have proven themselves to be successful chaplains and preachers of God’s Word. May God be glorified!

ARTICLES IN THIS JOURNAL

Using God's Word as advice in how to navigate difficult Church and State Issues

From last winter's AGC annual conference, Dr. Kevin Bauder brought six sermons on Biblical characters who had to serve both God and Caesar, a delicate topic indeed which every chaplain must deal with. By skillfully using the Bible, Dr. Bauder navigates the challenges of major Bible individuals and gives those who hear his insights into this subject matter somethings to ponder and use in their ministries. A big thank you to LCDR Steven Huebscher for taking the audio portion of these lectures and condensing them down for us in a practical way.

Using God's Word to Effectively Communicate God's Love for Us Today

One of our most repeat distinguished guest authors is Dr. Dick Mayhue. Dr. Mayhue is a Viet Nam Veteran and former daily briefer for former 4-star Admiral Zumwalt. Most readers will recognize him though as the visionary and right-hand man to Dr. John MacArthur. While it was Dr. MacArthur's name which was attached to the Master's University, Seminary and Grace Community Church, it was Dick Mayhue's hand which applied the vision into reality. Navy Veteran, Administrator, Author, Teacher, Theologian, and Pastor, Dick Mayhue has given permission for us to re-publish a seminal work he did while serving as the Provost at Master's Seminary called "Rediscovering Expository Preaching" which tells us the importance of preaching the Word of God.

From Pulpit to the Quarterdeck

Kent Hobi is the oldest first-time AGC chaplain called to serve on active duty. He was fifty-six years old when he accepted God's call into a military chaplaincy. After spending 25 years as the associate pastor of a church, Kent felt the appeal to serve not only his country, but a new flock while in uniform. In this article, Kent tells how his use of the Word of God, especially by using Proverbs yielded practical advice to his questions about changing ministries and making the transition from civilian to Chaplain. His story shows us that in youth and in old age, we are always in full-time service of our Lord and Savior. This is Kent's inspirational story of faith and service for God and country. Enjoy!

Memorial Day

Armando Torralva is a retired Navy Chaplain and Pastor who has written a thoughtful missive about the dead whom the ocean has claimed, past, present and future. He writes and conveys the idea of the resurrection and its relationship to the sea as only a Navy Chaplain can do. Those who have served in the sea services appreciate his descriptive language and truthful theology, but it can also be enjoyed by those who have served and loved their country in other services as well.

BOOK REVIEWS

The Chaplain's Toolbox on Current Affairs

Considering the busy schedules chaplains have, these book reports are here to help the chaplain find and read some of the most current books out there to lend support for ministry. They are here for a quick glance at what is being written in the last year or so to whet the appetite for the one who is wanting to read more on the particular subject.

If you would be interested in doing a book review for the Journal, contact me through the home office.

“Biblical Preaching: The Development and delivery of Expository Preaching” by Haddon Robinson. Review by Chaplain Matt Zajac.

Probably every evangelical Chaplain who has had an expository preaching course in seminary has at one time or another read a book by the great teacher, Haddon Robinson. This 4th and last new edition has some worthwhile insights and tools for the Chaplain who is looking to improve their preaching of the Word of God. Thank you to Chaplain Zajac for laying out the reasons why we all should refresh our preaching skills.

“Preachers and Preaching” by Dr. Martyn Lloyd-Jones. Review by LCDR Izaak Toliver.

Again, another book written by a giant of the faith, this time, is Dr. Martyn Lloyd-Jones. In this seminal book on preaching and the importance of the Word of God in our ministry, the author breaks down the “Why” and the “How” of this aspect of our ministry and gives some sage advice on being the best preacher we could possibly be before the

Lord. Chaplain Toliver has given a good overview and hopefully his pro and con on this book review will encourage anyone who reads this review to pick up the book and use it to become more effective in putting a sermon together and seeing the importance of this part of our calling before God.

“Religion and the American Revolution: An Imperial History” by Katherine Carte. Review by Andrew Lawson

Andrew Lawson is a friend of AGC and has written numerous book reviews for us. As an expert in the religious aspects of the Revolutionary War, he reviews a book which shows some insights into what religious events were going on before and during the war from the British side. Some of what the author has written gives a unique insight into an aspect that is usually not considered when historians write about the war. However, some of what Carte has to say is interesting for those who study the religious angle of the War and this work should stimulate the interest of anyone interested in the subject at hand.

If you have a comment or would like more information on something you may have read, feel free to write and contact me through the AGC.

For God's Glory,

Bob Freiberg, editor

CDR, CHC, USN-ret, M.Div, Th.M, D.D., D. Min.

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WISE AS SERPENTS, HARMLESS AS DOVES

*Six sermons by Kevin Bauder from the 2026 AGC Annual Chaplain
Sustainment Training. Condensed and prepared for
publication by Stephen Huebscher.*

Kevin Bauder is a retired Civil Air Patrol Chaplain, and currently serves as a professor of Theology at Central Baptist Seminary of Minneapolis. Stephen Huebscher is an active duty Navy chaplain endorsed by AGC.

Every year, AGC chaplains gather for annual training (the Annual Chaplain Sustainment Training). For 2026, they asked Dr. Kevin Bauder of Central Baptist Theological Seminary (Plymouth, MN) to be the guest speaker. The conference theme for 2026 was drawn from Matthew 10:16, “Be ye therefore wise as serpents, harmless as doves.” Bauder had six opportunities to preach. He began with an exposition of the Matthew text. He followed this with four sermons exploring a variety of people, situations, and responses, all from the OT. He concluded with an exposition of Paul’s advice to Timothy about his response to outside leadership in 1 Tim 2. What follows is a summary of the individual sermons followed by a general summary. I have also included some of the points in tables, as suggested by Bauder himself.

1. INTRODUCTION, MISSION AND STRATEGY (MATTHEW 10:16-17A)

In the first sermon, Bauder looks at the mission that Jesus has given us: preaching the gospel and maturing believers. He then raises the question,

How can we complete this mission? First, we must **recognize our situation**—that Jesus himself has sent us in the midst of wolves. Does this not strike you as a strange strategy? What kind of shepherd does this? *One who is trying to reach more sheep, but also one who is also trying to reach wolves.*

Second, we must **remember Jesus' strategy**: (1) be wise as serpents, (2) be harmless as doves, and (3) beware of people (10:17a). Being wise as serpents has the idea of being shrewd or canny, or having street smarts. When snakes sense trouble, they generally hide or get out of the way. We need to practice the art of avoiding trouble. If there is a diplomatic way to handle a problem, we should try to find it, though not all situations have a diplomatic solution.

Being harmless (“unmixed”) as doves has the idea of innocence, almost naivete, the kind of person who just expects the best out of life. There is a tension between these being shrewd and being innocent, because although we need to be able to spot the wolves, we need to be careful we don't become a wolf in the process. If you become adept at navigating and negotiating the use of power, it becomes very easy to use that power in wolf-like ways, even when you believe you are defending the truth.

Lastly, Jesus warns us to look out for people. In other words, be careful whom you trust and how far you trust them, *because sometime people who you thought were sheep will actually turn out to be wolves.* All three points, though in tension with each other, are necessary for us to fulfill our missions.

Four Examples of Sheep Placed Under Wolves

Bauder provided four people as examples of how to live as sheep among wolves. In truth, there could be many more examples. These examples were chosen in part because the people faced different kinds of situations and responded in different kinds of ways. The following table shows the first three:

Table 1. Three Biblical Examples of “Sheep Among Wolves”

TEXT	PERSON	PROBLEM	ACTION	RESULT
1 Sam 27-30	David	Discouraged by relentless pressure from king Saul	Move to enemy territory for protection	Ethical ambiguity, divided loyalties, loss of family & property & supporters before finally turning to God
1 Kings 18	Obadiah	Working for king Ahab	Served the common good; served the Lord; acted with prudence	Able to help his country, the animals, and the prophets of God
2 Kings 5	Na'aman	Cure for leprosy was dipping 7x in Jordan River	Humbled himself & dipped 7x in the Jordan River	Na'aman changes from a wolf to a sheep.

2. DAVID WITH THE PHILISTINES (1 SAM 27-30)

This strange text begins with David being tired of the relentless threats on his life by Saul for years on end. Fearing that Saul will eventually kill him, he decides to go over to the enemy, to king Achish of the Philistine city of Gath for protection. Perhaps David has finally decided something like the expression, “The enemy of my enemy is my friend.” The following table lists five categories of relationships.

Table 2. Five Categories of Relationships

CATEGORY	DEFINITION
Lovers	Interested in each other
Friends	Act out of mutual commitment to a good that both people love
Allies	Have some shared interest and are useful to each other
Opponents	Differ over things that can be disagreed on
Enemies	Debase good and beautiful, desecrate the holy, and deny important truths

As the above table indicates, the enemy of my enemy is not necessarily my friend or even my ally—they may still be my enemy. At first, David's scheme seems to work. And although the text never overtly rebukes David, it reveals two problems: (1) David has to stretch the truth and practice duplicity with his new boss (1 Sam 27:8-11), and (2) David faces divided loyalties when the Philistines go to battle (1 Sam 28:1-2). God did provide a way of escape for David (1 Sam 29:4-11), but it proved very costly: Ziklag had been captured while they were away (1 Sam 30:1-2). While his own life was being threatened by his men in their grief, David—for the first time in these chapters— (1) strengthens himself in the LORD his God and (2) seeks the LORD—he prays. Doing this at the beginning instead of the end might have prevented a lot of problems.

3. OBADIAH (1 KINGS 18)

Obadiah lived in the Northern Kingdom during the reign of wicked King Ahab and Queen Jezebel. Obadiah was a strong believer (1 Kgs 18:3b-4). He was the manager of Ahab's household. In other words, Obadiah worked for a bad boss. How can a believer work a secular job for a bad boss? Christians can do this by realizing that (1) the boss still has a God-given position even if they misuse it, (2) God works through common grace, enabling believers and unbelievers to sometimes work together (outside the church) for the common good (human flourishing), and (3) every legitimate calling is its own opportunity to serve God. Part of being a good chaplain is helping our war fighters to be excellent at what they do.

(1) Obadiah served in his position to help the common good. This was his calling in life. (2) He served in his job out of a relationship with the living God (1 Kgs 18:3b-4). If you do the math in today's economy, Obadiah was spending about \$3,000/month for bread to support these 100 prophets, which itself was very risky. Obadiah's faith did not reduce his risk—it enhanced it. (3) In such circumstances, Obadiah weighed the risk before taking action. In other words, he acted with the virtue called prudence.

4. NA'AMAN (2 KINGS 5)

In the story of Na'aman, the little girl stands out as a true sheep, even a lamb. Na'aman is a wolf, about as far away from God positionally as you can be. And the value of the gold that he brings to pay off the prophet is about \$12 million in today's money. He gets angry at the prophet's rude treatment

of him and instruction to dip seven times in the Jordan River. But his servants talk him into giving it a try. So he humbles himself and does it. And when he does, not only does his skin become clean, he has a change of heart: Na‘aman becomes a sheep. This is clearly seen in his request for Israelite soil so that he can worship only Yahweh when he returns to Syria. But he also foresees a conflict between faithfulness to the LORD and being a faithful servant to his king when his king needs his help to worship the god Rimmon. Na‘aman becomes wise as a serpent here. And the striking thing for our purposes is that when he asks God’s forgiveness in advance, Elisha does **not** tell him to take a stand against his king; instead, Elisha tells him, “Okay. Go ahead. Go in peace.” There may be similarities here to the facilitation for other religions that chaplains have to do: we do not agree with their religion, but we help them because it is our job. (Not that everything can be justified like this, but some things rightfully can.)

Lastly, we expect that Gehazi, since he works for the prophet, is a sheep. However, in seeing that \$12 million of gold slip away, his greed, his covetous heart reveals itself, and he goes to Na‘aman and makes an untruthful excuse to ask for some of it. After returning, he is confronted by the prophet. He then lies to cover it up, but it does not work: he is judged by God with leprosy. The one we thought was a sheep turns out to be a wolf after all. This is an example of the kind of thing Jesus was talking about in Matt 10:17a “and beware of people.” Don’t trust people too quickly.

Table 3. Three Types of People in 2 Kings 5

NAME	FIRST APPEARANCE	FINAL REALITY
Little Girl	Sheep/Lamb	Sheep/Lamb
Na‘aman	Wolf	Sheep
Gahazi	Sheep	Wolf

5. DANIEL (DANIEL 1-2, 4-6)

Daniel gives us a range of responses, each of which was right for one set of circumstances. We can learn to be wise in choosing responses.

Table 4. Daniel and Friends as Sheep Among Wolves

TEXT	PERSON	PROBLEM	ACTION	RESULT
Dan 1	Daniel & 3 friends	Couldn't obey the king's command as given w/o also disobeying God	Make a creative alternative; appeal at lowest level; submit to exam; trust God	Their solution worked, and they still met the intent of the king's order
Dan 2	Daniel & 3 friends	Needed to tell the king's dream and its interpretation	Make an appeal; respectful request for reasonable deferral; prayer for a miraculous provision	God answered prayer & told Daniel the dream & its interpretation
Dan 4	Daniel & Nebuchadnezzar	Daniel needs to interpret a dream warning of judgment	Tells the dream; expresses support & even affection; pleads for N. to repent; [maybe helps safeguard N. during the 7 years]	N. gets judged and is punished for 7 years; he then acknowledges God's sovereignty [& becomes a sheep?]
Dan 5	Daniel & Belshazzar	A hand writes a mysterious message on wall, & Daniel needs to interpret it	Plain, blunt confrontation: you've crossed a line and will be judged tonight	Belshazzar makes Daniel 3rd ruler before he himself is killed
Dan 6	Daniel, Darius, & wise men	A law prohibiting worship of gods other than king for 30 days, on pain of death by lions	No panic, no protest, just continues regular prayer	God miraculously delivered Daniel from the lions

6. PRAYING FOR LEADERS WHO ARE WOLVES (1 TIM 2:1-6)

What positive, proactive thing can we be engaged in that will help us in situations where we are sheep among wolves? Starting at the end of this

passage, we first see that God wants or wishes all people to be saved. God has provided salvation for all people, however one may theologically define “all.” We may not be gifted evangelists who see large numbers of people come to faith, but we must be faithful in presenting the good news to people, because that is what God uses. Second, in 1 Tim 2:2, Paul mentions “that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty.” For our faith to be credible, we have to live godly, honest lives, but we also need peaceful society so we can have the freedom to live out our faith without hiding it.

Third, 1 Tim 2:1, we get to the heart of the matter: “I exhort as of first importance that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for all men, for kings, and for all that are in authority.” What is the most positive, proactive thing we can do? Pray. Paul mentions four kinds: (1) regular prayers, (2) supplications, or prayers of desperation or emergency prayers, and (3) petitions or formal requests that you hope God, the real King, will do. (4) Giving thanks. This is what God calls us to do, as sheep among wolves.

SUMMARY OF SERMONS

Christ has given us the calling of preaching the Good News and maturing believers. In order to fulfill this, we must both recognize our (strange) situation—which Christ likens to “sheep among wolves”—and we must recall Christ’s strategy: (1) be wise as serpents, (2) be harmless as doves, and (3) beware of people (10:17a)—who may turn out to actually be wolves when we had thought they were sheep.

Realizing that there is no “one size fits all” solution for how to live out our calling as sheep among wolves, Bauder provided several biblical examples of different people in different kinds of situations responding in different ways. These provide a variety of responses or tools for different circumstances. In 1 Sam 27-30, Bauder highlights that good people under persistent pressure may respond in purely pragmatic ways that can lead to ethically questionable actions. It is better to recognize our own internal state and strengthen ourselves in the Lord and pray. In this way, we may be able to practice a kind of resiliency. In 1 Kgs 18, Obadiah is portrayed as a faithful lay believer, serving God and serving the common good by serving his boss, the wicked king Ahab. Careful prudence enables Obadiah to take significant risks serving God without crossing moral lines. Moving on, 2 Kgs 5 presents Na‘aman the Syrian general as a spiritual wolf. When he humbled himself in response to the Word of God through the prophet, God not only healed his disease, but

also apparently converted him to become a believing sheep. As a new sheep, he foresaw situations that could appear potentially compromising to his new God, so he asked for God's forgiveness in advance. God's message essentially was, "It's okay. Don't worry about it. Go in peace." Unfortunately, the story concludes on a sad note, when the prophet's servant (who should have been a sheep) was revealed to be a wolf and was judged.

Daniel's life provides several examples along the continuum from doing nothing to blunt criticism. In Dan 1, he and his friends are faced with a dilemma: obey the reasonable order of the king and disobey God in the process, or else obey God and disobey the king and bring punishment on their supervisor and themselves. They identified a middle way between these two extremes and proposed an alternative solution to their supervisor, the lowest level in their chain of command. They submitted to a trial run or test of their proposal. When it worked, they were permitted to continue doing it. In Dan 2, king Nebuchadnezzar tests his magi to see how good they really are by asking them to both tell his dream and its interpretation. Only Daniel is able to do this. He makes an appeal and requests a deferral. He uses the time to pray. When God gives him the special insight, he is able to tell the king both the dream and the interpretation.

Dan 4 records another dream by Nebuchadnezzar, which Daniel is requested to interpret. This one is ominous, and Daniel is speechless after he hears it, and has to be encouraged by the king to tell him the bad news. Daniel explains the meaning of the dream, and expresses support and even affection in the process. He also pleads with the king to change his behavior so he can avoid the awful judgment. When the king does not change, he is judged with a kind of insanity for seven years. At the end of the judgment, he regains his sanity and acknowledges the sovereignty of God Most High over even him, perhaps becoming a sheep himself.

In Dan 5, Daniel is called to interpret a mysterious message of judgment to a ruler who, in a drunken state, has foolishly denigrated the God of Israel with all his leadership. Here, Daniel simply delivers the message in a plain, blunt manner: you have transgressed, you have been judged for it, you will die tonight. The ruler does keep his promise and promote Daniel before judgment comes that night. In Dan 6, Daniel must defend himself from the villainous attacks of subordinate government officials. Daniel is faced with death if he continues to worship God. He does not panic, but continues to pray and live as usual. Although Daniel is faced with certain death in a den of lions, God miraculously delivers him.

Bauder concluded the series on Thursday morning by returning to the NT and looking at Paul's instruction to young Timothy, whom he admonishes to pray for leadership in a variety of ways: (1) regularly, (2) in emergencies, and (3) with carefully thought-out requests. We should also pray for circumstances of peace and order so that we can openly live in a way that brings credibility to our faith.

ANALYSIS

In general, Bauder reflected on the inherent challenges posed to government chaplains by the church-state tension as well as the issues of human nature and life itself. By definition, we are all religious personnel, but work for institutions that are non-religious. As such, the threat of government coercion is never fully removed. Bosses may be believers, but more often they are not. Bosses may be unkind, violent, proud, foolish, irreligious, committed to other religions, anti-Christian, debauched, highly successful, paranoid, power-seeking, or vengeful. In the spirit of being doves, we ought to look out for the good of our bosses if possible, and even cultivate a healthy respect and admiration of them.

Bauder argued that being able to think about people in nuanced ways (friends, allies, opponents, or true enemies) can help us to identify ways we can work with different people in different situations. We can look for opportunities to fulfill aspects of our vocation for the glory of God. Situations that are concerned primarily with issues of the common good rather than spiritual or moral truth generally present the most options for us to work with the greatest variety of people. In issues of human flourishing, we can band together with people that we would otherwise have little in common with. The story of Obadiah (1 Kgs 18) offers a prime example. Naturally, in matters of faith, we are more limited to be dealing with fellow believers. Even in dealing with believers, though, we still need to exercise caution, since those we initially believed to be sheep may in fact turn out to be wolves.

Although Bauder did not say it in these terms, he nevertheless pointed out that there is great wisdom in trying to know one's own self, in the sense of assessing how we are actually doing emotionally and spiritually at any given time, but especially when we face persistent danger or relentless evil of one sort or another. The temptation to forget or modify our first principles can be especially alluring in such times of weakness. Unfortunately, the enemies of discouragement and forgetfulness can be devastating, even fatal.

The story of David (1 Sam 27) is particularly trenchant in this regard. The only solution humanly speaking is for leaders self-assess and take appropriate self-correction: recovering our trust in God and his promise to be with us, and the fact that whether we live or die, our lives belong to him. Until he takes us home, we still have a purpose for being here, so we should exploit it (in the best sense) to the fullest.

But even aside from times of high crisis, Bauder reminded chaplains that prayer remains a required practice, a *sine qua non* of the highest order in our arsenal of pastoral practices. Praying for our leadership at all levels is one of our core functions as ministers of the Good News. Societies that are peaceful and flourishing offer better opportunities to openly living our faith commitments. This kind of living, in turn, lends credibility to our faith claims and can help non-Christians come to faith in Christ. Since God desires all people to come to saving faith in him, we ought to pray with those goals in mind as well.

Six sermons is a modest compass to cover any topic, and is far less than some expositors have devoted to the book of Romans. This topic of “harmless as doves” was not too difficult to do a single sermon on, but conversely it required a great deal of time and effort to construct even a modest series that meaningfully engaged with the significant themes and implications of the Matthean passage in a responsible way. Overall, that is what Bauder did: he exposit his texts and engaged his audience well. He refreshed, if not opened up new avenues of thinking about faithful Christian living and pastoral ministry in restricted access institutions—ways that may not have been on our radars before.

Mission accomplished.

Praise the Lord.

Thank you, Sir!

The AGC

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REDISCOVERING EXPOSITORY PREACHING

Richard L. Mayhue

Dr. Mayhue is the former Provost of Master's College (now University) and Vice President of Master's Seminary. He is a VietNam Navy Veteran and has over 100 published books, articles and insights into Christian ministry from theology to pastoral care.

***B**iblical preaching's authenticity is significantly tarnished by contemporary communicators' being more concerned with personal relevance than God's revelation. Scripture unmistakably requires a proclamation focused on God's will and mankind's obligation to obey. With men wholly committed to God's Word, the expository method commends itself as preaching that is true to the Bible. The method presupposes an exegetical process to extract the God-intended meaning of Scripture and an explanation of that meaning in a contemporary understandable way. The biblical essence and apostolic spirit of expository preaching needs to be recaptured in the training of men newly committed to "preaching the Word."*

The Master's Seminary¹ joins with others² in accepting the urgent responsibility for transmitting the Pauline legacy to "preach the Word" (2 Tim 4:2). The current series of articles in *The Master's Seminary Journal* signal

¹ Originally printed in the "Master's Journal" Reprinted here by permission from the author

² E.g. Haddon W. Robinson, *Biblical Preaching* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1980); Walter C. Kaiser, Jr., *Toward an Exegetical Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1981); John Stott, *Between Two Worlds* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982); Samuel T. Logan (ed.), *The Preacher and Preaching* (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1986); Al Fasol, *Essentials for Biblical Preaching* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1989).

an effort to instill in twenty-first century preachers a pattern of biblical preaching inherited from their predecessors.³

Every generation shares the kind of dire circumstances that Amos prophesied for Israel: “Behold, days are coming,” declares the Lord GOD, “When I will send a famine on the land, not a famine for bread or a thirst for water, but rather for hearing the words of the LORD” (Amos 8:11). The last several centuries have proven this need again.

REVIEWING RECENT TRENDS

In an explanation of Heb 8:10, the Puritan commentator William Gouge (1575-1653) remarked,

Ministers are herein to imitate God, and, to their best endeavor, to instruct people in the mysteries of godliness, and to teach them what to believe and practice, and then to stir them up in act and deed, to do what they are instructed to do. Their labor otherwise is likely to be in vain. Neglect of this course is a main cause that men fall into as many errors as they do in these days.⁴

To this editorial by Gouge, Charles Spurgeon (1834-1892) adds a word about nineteenth-century England:

I may add that this last remark has gained more force in our times; it is among uninstructed flocks that the wolves of popery make havoc; sound teaching is the best protection from the heresies which ravage right and left among us.⁴

John Broadus (1827-1895) decried the death of good preaching in America, too.⁵ G. Campbell Morgan (1863-1945) noted,

³ See the initial articles by John F. MacArthur, Jr., “The Mandate of Biblical Inerrancy: Expository Preaching,” *The Master's Seminary Journal* 1/1 (Spring 1990) 315 and Robert L. Thomas, “Bible Translations: The Link Between Inerrancy and Expository Preaching,” *The Master's Seminary Journal* 1/1 (Spring 1990) 53-73. Subsequent issues of the *Journal* will carry additional essays.

⁴ William Gouge, *Commentary on Hebrews* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1980 rpt.) 577-78. ⁴C. H. Spurgeon, “Sermons ‘Their Matter,’” *Lectures to My Students* (Lecture 5, Book 4; Grand Rapids: Baker, 1977 rpt.) 72.

⁵ John A. Broadus, *On the Preparation and Delivery of Sermons* (Grand Rapids: AP&A, n.d.) x.

“The supreme work of the Christian minister is the work of preaching. This is a day in which one of our great perils is that of doing a thousand little things to the neglect of the one thing, which is preaching.”⁶

The following typical laments evidence that little improvement had been made by the mid-twentieth century:

Except for the growing worldliness of its members, the pulpit is the church's weak spot.⁷

But the glory of the Christian pulpit is a borrowed glow. . . . To an alarming extent the glory is departing from the pulpit of the twentieth century. . . . The Word of God has been denied the throne and given a subordinate place.⁸

Yet it remains true that “whatever be the marks of the contemporary pulpit, the centrality of Biblical preaching is not one of them.”⁹

In a tradition that focuses on the centrality of the written Word few subjects are more important than the interpretation and proclamation of that Word. Everyone stresses the necessity of a solid exegesis of the text, but few are adept at providing such an exegesis and preaching effectively from it.¹⁰

By the mid-1980's a national Congress on Biblical Exposition (COBE) convened to urge a return to true biblical exposition.¹¹ COBE's recurring theme demanded that the American church must return to true biblical preaching or else the western world would continue its descent toward a valueless culture. Commenting on the uniqueness of America in

⁶ G. Campbell Morgan, *Preaching* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1974 rpt.) 11.

⁷ Jeff D. Ray, *Expository Preaching* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1940) 14.

⁸ Merrill F. Unger, *Principles of Expository Preaching* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan,

⁹ Nolan Howington, “Expository Preaching,” *Review and Expositor* 56 (Jan 1959) 56.

¹⁰ Klyne R. Snodgrass, “Exegesis and Preaching: The Principles and Practice of Exegesis,” *Covenant Quarterly* 34 (Aug 1976) 3. For other comments on the decline of expository preaching in America, see Lloyd M. Perry *Biblical Preaching for Today's World* (Chicago: Moody, 1973) 9-12.

¹¹ Brian Bird, “Biblical Exposition: Becoming a Lost Art?” *Christianity Today* 30/7 (Apr 18, 1986) 34.

contemporary culture, Os Guinness noted with concern that ". . . in all my studies I have yet to see a Western society where the church pews are so full and the sermons so empty."¹²

John MacArthur's review of preaching patterns in the late 80's led him to observe:

Specifically, evangelical preaching ought to reflect our conviction that God's Word is infallible and inerrant. Too often it does not. In fact, there is a discernible trend in contemporary evangelicalism¹³ *away* from biblical preaching and a drift *toward* an experience-centered, pragmatic, topical approach in the pulpit.

As the 90's dawn, an irresistible urge for a focus in the pulpit on the *relevant* seemingly exists, with a resultant inattention to God's *revelation*. Siegfried Meuer alerted the 1960's to the same "contemporary danger."¹⁴ He likened the direction of his day to the earlier trends of Harry Emerson Fosdick who wrote in the 20's, "The sermon is uninteresting because it has no connection with the real interests of the people...The sermon must tackle a real problem."¹⁵ Meuer noted that Fosdick opened the floodgate for philosophy and psychology to inundate the modern pulpit with unbelief.

Fosdick's philosophy sounds alarmingly similar to the advice given in a recent publication on relevant contemporary preaching:

Unchurched people today are the ultimate consumers. We may not like it, but for every sermon we preach, they're asking, "Am I interested in that subject or not?" If they aren't, it doesn't matter how effective our delivery is; their minds will check out.¹⁵

The implied conclusion is that pastors must preach what people want to hear rather than what God wants proclaimed. Such counsel sounds the alarm of 2 Tim 4:3: "For the time will come when they will not endure sound

¹² Ibid.

¹³ MacArthur, "The Mandate" 4.

¹⁴ Siegfried Meuer, "What Is Biblical Preaching?" *Encounter* 24 (Spring 1963) 182. ¹⁵Harry Emerson Fosdick, "What Is the Matter with Preaching?" *Harper's Magazine* 47 (July 1928).

¹⁵ Bill Hybels, *et al.*, *Mastering Contemporary Preaching* (Portland: Multnomah, 1989) 27. A similar comment is, "The wise interpreter begins with a human need today and chooses a passage that will enable him to meet this need" (Andrew W. Blackwood, *Expository Preaching for Today* [New York:: AbingdonCokesbury, 1953] 13).

doctrine; but wanting to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance to their own desires."

What is the necessary response? We assert that it is to rediscover and reaffirm expository preaching for the coming generation of preachers facing all the spiritual opportunities and Satanic obstacles of a new millennium. We agree with Walter Kaiser's appraisal:

Regardless of what new directives and emphases are periodically offered, that which is needed above everything else to make the Church more viable, authentic, and effective, is a new declaration of the Scriptures with a new purpose, passion, and power.¹⁶

REVISITING SCRIPTURE

When warnings about a drift away from biblical preaching sound, the only reasonable response is a return to the scriptural roots of preaching to reaffirm its essential nature. In a reexamination of the heritage of biblical proclamation, two elements emerge: the mandates to preach and the manner of preaching.

Mandates to Preach

The gospels, Acts, the epistles, and Revelation provide many examples and exhortations to preach the truth in fulfillment of God's will. As a reminder of the apostolic legacy and a reaffirmation of the scriptural authority for Bible-based preaching, five significant mandates are representative of the larger number of passages.

Matt 28:19-20: "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age."

I Tim 4:13: "Until I come, give attention to the public reading of Scripture, to exhortation and teaching."

I Tim 2:2: "And the things which you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, these entrust to faithful men, who will be able to teach others also."

¹⁶ Kaiser, *Exegetical Theology* 242.

2 Tim 4:2: "Preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with great patience and instruction."

Tit 2:1: "But as for you, speak the things which are fitting for sound doctrine."

Manner of Preaching

In his discussion of *khrrsv* (*kryss*, "I preach," "I proclaim") Friedrich notes at least thirty-three different verbs employed by NT writers to portray the richness of biblical preaching.¹⁷ In the following discussion, the four most prominent of these are examined briefly:

Kryss sees general use throughout the gospels, Acts, and the epistles. John the Baptist (Matt 3:1), Jesus (Matt 4:17), and Paul (Acts 28:31) all engaged in the action of preaching as indicated by this verb. To Timothy, Paul commended this same activity, telling him to preach the Word (2 Tim 4:2).

Eaggelzv (*Euaggeliz*, "I preach the gospel") is practically interchangeable with *kryss* (Luke 8:1; Acts 8:4-5). Paul and Barnabas preached the good news of the Word of the Lord (Acts 15:35).

Martyrv (*Martyre*, "I testify," "I bear witness") is a legal term picturing the communication of truth from one who has a first-hand knowledge. John the Baptist bore witness to the light (John 1:7-8) and John the Apostle testified to the Word of God (Rev 1:2).¹⁸

Didskv (*didask*, "I teach") focuses on the purpose and content of the message transmitted, without excluding elements of the three previous verbs. As part of the Great Commission, Jesus commanded His disciples to teach (Matt 28:20). Paul recommended teaching to Timothy (1 Tim 6:2; 2 Tim 2:2). Teaching is sometimes associated with *kryss* (Matt 11:1)

¹⁷ Gerhard Friedrich, "khrrsein, et al.," *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1966) 3:703.

¹⁸ See Klaas Runia, "What Is Preaching According to the New Testament," *TynBul* 29 (1978) 3-48, for further information on *khrrsv*, *eaggelzv*, and *martyrv*.

and *euaggeliz* (Acts 5:42). The content of what is taught focuses on the way of God (Matt 22:16) and the Word of God (Acts 18:11).¹⁹

In addition to these four prominent words, there are many others that significantly enhance the biblical manner of communicating God's Word. For example, the Ethiopian eunuch invited Philip to "guide" (or "lead" [dhgv *hodge*]) him through Isaiah 53 (Acts 8:31). Paul "explained" (or "laid out") (ktuhmi [*ektithmi*]) the kingdom of God (Acts 28:23; cf. 18:26). Paul told Timothy that he was to "entrust" (or "commit") (paratuhmi [*paratithmi*]) what he had heard from Paul to faithful men that they might teach others also (2 Tim 2:2).

Jesus's interaction with the two disciples on the road to Emmaus adds further dimensions to biblical preaching. He "explained" (or "interpreted") (diermhnev [*diermneu*]) the things about Himself in the OT, from Moses to the prophets (Luke 24:27). They in turn marveled at the way He had "opened" (or "explained") (dianogv [*dianoig*]) the Scriptures (Luke 24:32; cf. 24:45).

A study of additional words such as naggllv (*anaggell*, "I announce, declare") (Acts 20:27), naginskv (*anaginsk*, "I read") (1 Tim 4:13), parakalv (*parakale*, "I exhort, comfort") (1 Tim 4:13), jhgomai (*exgeomai*, "I declare") (Acts 15:12), lav (*lale*, "I speak") (John 3:34), dialgomai (*dialegomai*, "I discuss, argue") (Acts 17:17), and fuggomai (*phtheggomai*, "I utter") would be profitable. Yet this brief survey is enough to conclude that the one common link in all the biblical terms in their contexts is a focus on the things of God and Scripture as exclusively central in the preacher's message. Without question, this feature alone marks the uniqueness of scriptural preaching. A biblical and theological content is the *sine qua non* of NT proclamation.

With this biblical foundation, an identification of the contemporary mode of NT preaching is possible.

DEFINING EXPOSITORY PREACHING

Discussions about preaching divide it into three types: topical, textual, and expository. Topical messages usually combine a series of Bible verses that loosely connect with a theme. Textual preaching uses a short text or passage that generally serves as a gateway into whatever subject the preacher chooses to address. Neither the topical nor the textual method represents a

¹⁹ For an expanded discussion of didskv, see Homer A. Kent, Jr., "A Time to Teach," *GTJ* 1/1 (Spring 1980) 7-17.

serious effort to interpret, understand, explain, or apply God's truth in the context of the Scripture(s) used.

By contrast, expositional preaching focuses predominantly on the text(s) under consideration along with its(their) context(s).²⁰ Exposition normally concentrates on a single text of Scripture, but it is sometimes possible for a thematic/theological message or a historical/biographical discourse to be expositional in nature. An exposition may treat any length of passage.

One way to clarify expository preaching is to identify what it is not:²¹

1. It is not a commentary running from word to word and verse to verse without unity, outline, and pervasive drive.
2. It is not rambling comments and offhand remarks about a passage without a background of thorough exegesis and logical order.
3. It is not a mass of disconnected suggestions and inferences based on the surface meaning of a passage but not sustained by a depth and-breadth study of the text.
4. It is not pure exegesis, no matter how scholarly, if it lacks a theme, thesis, outline and development.
5. It is not a mere structural outline of a passage with a few supporting comments, but without other rhetorical and sermonic elements.
6. It is not a topical homily using scattered parts of the passage, but omitting discussion of other equally important parts.
7. It is not a chopped-up collection of grammatical findings and quotations from commentaries without a fusing of the same into a smooth, flowing, interesting, and compelling message.
8. It is not a Sunday School-lesson type of discussion that has an outline of the contents, informality, and fervency, but lacks sermonic structure and rhetorical ingredients.
9. It is not a Bible reading that links a number of scattered passages treating a common theme but fails to handle any of them in a thorough, grammatical, and contextual manner.
10. It is not the ordinary devotional or prayer meeting talk that combines running commentary, rambling remarks, disconnected suggestions, and

²⁰ Horton Davies, "Expository Preaching: Charles Hadden Spurgeon," *Foundations* 66 (Jan 1963) 14, calls exposition "contextual preaching" to distinguish it from the textual and topical types.

²¹ These ten suggestions are derived from Faris D. Whitesell, *Power in Expository Preaching* (Old Tappan, NJ: Revell, 1963) vii-viii.

personal reactions into a semi-inspirational discussion, but lacks the benefit of the basic exegetical-contextual study and persuasive elements.

Before proceeding further, consider the English word group "expose, exposition, expositor, expository." According to Webster, an exposition is a discourse to convey information or explain what is difficult to understand.²² Application of this to preaching requires that an expositor be one who explains Scripture by laying open the text to public view in order to set forth its meaning, explain what is difficult to understand, and make appropriate application.

John Calvin's centuries-old understanding of exposition is very similar:

First, Calvin understood preaching to be the explication of Scripture. The words of Scripture are the source and content of preaching. As an expositor, Calvin brought to the task of preaching all the skills of a humanist scholar. As an interpreter, Calvin explicated the text, seeking its natural, it's 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, he applied the Scripture sentence by sentence to the life and experience of his congregation.²³

Exposition is not so much defined by the form of the message as it is by the source and process through which the message was formed. Unger poignantly captures this sense:

No matter what the length of the portion explained may be, if it is handled in such a way that its real and essential meaning as it existed in the mind of the particular Biblical writer and as it exists in the light of the over-all context of Scripture is made plain and applied to the present-day needs of the hearers, it may properly be said to be *expository preaching*. . . . It is emphatically not preaching about the Bible, but preaching the Bible. "What saith the Lord" is the alpha and the omega of expository preaching. It begins in the Bible and ends in the Bible and all that

²² Webster's *Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary* (Springfield, Mass.: Merriam-Webster, 1988) 438.

²³ John H. Leith, "Calvin's Doctrine of the Proclamation of the Word and Its Significance for Today in the Light of Recent Research," *RevExp* 86 (1989) 32, 34.

intervenes springs from the Bible. In other words, expository preaching is Bible-centered preaching.²⁴

Two other definitions of exposition help clarify what it is:

“In preaching, exposition is the detailed interpretation, logical amplification, and practical application of a passage of Scripture.”²⁵

At its best, expository preaching is "the presentation of biblical truth, derived from and transmitted through a historical, grammatical, Spirit-guided study of a passage in its context, which the Holy Spirit applies first to the life of the preacher and then through him to his congregation."²⁶

In summary, the following minimal elements identify expository preaching:

1. The message finds its sole source in Scripture.²⁷
2. The message is extracted from Scripture through careful exegesis.
3. The message preparation correctly interprets Scripture in its normal sense and its context.
4. The message clearly explains the original God-intended meaning of Scripture.
5. The message applies to the Scriptural meaning for today.

The spirit of expository preaching is exemplified in two biblical texts:

²⁴ Merrill F. Unger, *Principles* 33. See also William G. Houser, "Puritan Homiletics: A Caveat," *CTQ* 53/4 (Oct 1989) 255-70. Houser proposes that the power of the Puritan pulpit diminished as the mechanical form of the message took precedence over the process of forming the message. Coupled with boring deliveries and exceedingly long messages, Puritan preaching influence quickly declined when these factors became dominant.

²⁵ Ray, *Expository* 71.

²⁶ Hadden W. Robinson, "What is Expository Preaching?" *Bib Sac* 131 (Jan-Mar 1974).

²⁷ R. B. Kuiper, "Scriptural Preaching," *The Infallible Word* (3rd rev. ed., ed. by Paul Wooley; Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1967) 253, asserts strongly, Exposition of Scripture, exposition worthy of its name, is of the very essence of preaching. It follows that it is a serious error to recommend expository preaching as one of several legitimate methods. Nor is it at all satisfactory, after the manner of many conservatives, to extol the expository method as the best. All preaching must be expository. Only expository preaching can be Scriptural.

And they read from the book, from the law of God, translating to give the sense so that they understood the reading (Neh 8:8).

Therefore, I testify to you this day, that I am innocent of the blood of all men. For I did not shrink from declaring to you the whole purpose of God (Acts 20:26-27).

A particular example is Jesus' expounding of Isa 61:1-2 in the synagogue (Luke 4:16-22). He later gave a thematic exposition of Himself to the disciples on the road to Emmaus (Luke 24:27, 32, 44-47). Philip in Acts 8:27-35 expounded Isa 53:7-8 for the Ethiopian eunuch. Stephen preached a historical/biographical expository sermon to the Jews before they stoned him (Acts 7:2-53).

Greer Boyce has aptly summarized this definition of expository preaching:

In short, expository preaching demands that, by careful analysis of each text within its immediate context and the setting of the book to which it belongs, the full power of modern exegetical and theological scholarship be brought to bear upon our treatment of the Bible. The objective is not that the preacher may parade all this scholarship in the pulpit. Rather, it is that the preacher may speak faithfully out of solid knowledge of his text, and mount the pulpit steps as, at least, "a workman who has no need to be ashamed, rightly handling the word of truth."

The preacher's final step is the most crucial and most perilous of all. It is to relate the biblical message both faithfully and relevantly to modern life. At this point all his skill as a craftsman must come into play. We must be warned that faithful exposition of a text does not of itself produce an effective sermon. We need also to be warned, however, that faithfulness to the text is not to be sacrificed for the sake of what we presume to be relevancy. This sacrifice too many modern preachers seem willing to make, producing, as a result, sermons that are a compound of moralistic advice, their own unauthoritative and sometimes unwise opinions, and the latest psychology. Expository preaching, by insisting that the message of the sermon coincide with the theme of the text, calls the preacher back to his true task: the proclamation of the Word of God in and through the Bible.²⁸

²⁸ Greer W. Boyce, "A Plea for Expository Preaching," *CJT* 8 (Jan 1962) 18-19.

UNDERSTANDING THE EXPOSITORY PROCESS

Discussing the biblical foundations and the definition of expository preaching, while essential, is relatively easy. The real challenge comes when one has to move from the classroom to the weekly pulpit. Unless the preacher understands clearly the expository process, he will never achieve his potential in the craft of expository preaching.

As a frame of reference for discussion, we propose that the expository process include four standard elements: preparing the expositor, processing and principlizing the biblical text(s), pulling the expository message together, and preaching the exposition. The four phases need equal emphasis if the exposition is to be fully effective in the sight of both God and the congregation.

Preparing the Expositor²⁹

Since God should be the source of expository messages, one who delivers such a message should enjoy intimate communion with God. This is the only way the message can be given with greatest accuracy, clarity, and passion.

Seven areas of preparation qualify a man to stand in the pulpit and declare, "Thus saith the Lord!":

1. The preacher must be a truly regenerated believer in Jesus Christ. He must be a part of God's redeemed family (John 1:12-13). If a man is to deliver a personal message from the Heavenly Father effectively, he must be a legitimate spiritual son, or the message will inevitably be distorted.
2. The preacher must be appointed and gifted by God to the teaching/preaching ministry (Eph 4:11-16; 1 Tim 3:2). Unless a man is divinely enabled to proclaim, he will be inadequate, possessing only human ability.³⁰
3. The preacher must be inclined and trained to be a student of God's Word. Otherwise, he cannot carry out the mandate of 2 Tim 2:15 to "cut straight" the Word of God's truth.

²⁹ D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones devotes a whole chapter to this subject (*Preaching and Preachers* [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1972] 100-20).

³⁰ James Stalker, *The Preacher and His Models* (New York: Hodder and Stoughton, 1891) 95-99; cf. also John Piper, *The Supremacy of God in Preaching* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1990) 37-46.

4. The preacher must be a mature believer who demonstrates a consistent godly character (1 Tim 3:2-3).³¹
5. The preacher must be dependent upon God the Holy Spirit for divine insight and understanding of God's Word (1 Cor 2:12-13). Without the Spirit's illumination and power, the message will be relatively impotent.³²
6. The preacher must be in constant prayerful communion with God to receive the full impact of the Word (Ps 119:18). The obvious one to consult for clarification is the original author.³³
7. The preacher must first let the developing message sift through his own thinking and life before he can preach it. Ezra provides the perfect model: "For Ezra had set his heart to study the law of the LORD, and to practice it, and to teach His statutes and ordinances in Israel" (Ezra 7:10).

Processing and Principizing the Biblical Text

A man in tune with God's Spirit and Word is ready to begin a process to discover not only what God originally meant by what He said, but also appropriate principles and applications for today.³⁴

1. *Processing the biblical text*³⁵

A man cannot hope to preach effectively without first having worked diligently and thoroughly through the biblical text. This is the only way the expositor can acquire God's message. Two preachers from different eras comment on this essential feature:

A man cannot hope to preach the Word of God accurately until he has first engaged in a careful, exhaustive exegesis of his text. Herein lies the

³¹ Louis Goldberg, "Preaching with Power the Word 'Correctly Handled' to Transform Man and His World," *JETS* 27/1 (Mar 1984) 4-5.

³² Kaiser, *Exegetical Theology* 236.

³³ Charles H. Spurgeon wrote, "If you do not understand a book by a departed writer you are unable to ask him his meaning, but the Spirit, who inspired Holy Scripture, lives forever, and He delights to open the Word to those who seek His instruction" (*Commenting and Commentaries* [New York: Sheldon and Company, 1876] 58-59).

³⁴ Nicholas Kurtaneck, "Are Seminaries Preparing Prospective Pastors to Preach the Word of God?" *GTJ* 6/2 (Fall 1985) 361-71.

³⁵ Specifics of the exegetical process will be outlined in a forthcoming essay in *The Master's Seminary Journal*. See Snodgrass, "Exegesis" 5-19 for a basic nine-step approach.

problem, for competent exegesis requires time, brain power, "blood, sweat, and tears," all saturated with enormous doses of prayer.³⁶

You will soon reveal your ignorance as an expositor if you do not study; therefore, diligent reading will be forced upon you. Anything which compels the preacher to search the grand old Book is of immense service to him. If any are jealous lest the labor should injure their constitutions, let them remember that mental work up to a certain point is most refreshing, and where the Bible is the theme toil is delight. It is only when mental labor passes beyond the bounds of common sense that the mind becomes enfeebled by it, and this is not usually reached except by injudicious persons, or men engaged on topics which are unrefreshing and disagreeable; but our subject is a recreative one, and to young men like ourselves the vigorous use of our faculties is a most healthy exercise.³⁷

1. Principlizing the biblical text 'Preaching does not stop with understanding ancient languages, history, culture, and customs. Unless the centuries can be bridged with contemporary relevance in the message, then the preaching experience differs little from a classroom encounter. One must first process the text for original meaning and then principlize the text for current applicability.'³⁸ One's study falls short of the goal if this step is omitted or slighted.

Pulling the Expository Message Together

At the third stage the expositor has finished his deep study and asks himself, "How can I blend my findings in such a way that my flock will understand the Bible and its requirements for their lives today?" In a sense, the art of exposition commences here.³⁹

³⁶ John A. Sproule, "Biblical Exegesis and Expository Preaching" (unpublished lecture at Grace Theological Seminary, Winona Lake, Ind., 1978) 1.

³⁷ Spurgeon, *Commenting* 47.

³⁸ H. Cunliffe-Jones wrote, "We must be able to say not only 'This is what this passage originally meant,' but also 'This passage is true in this particular way for us in the twentieth century.'" ("The Problems of Biblical Exposition," *ExpTim* 65 [Oct] 5).

³⁹ It is helpful to distinguish between a sermon, a homily, and an exposition. "Homily" comes from the Greek *mola* which, like the Latin *sermo*, means "conversation" or "talk." The Latin word is the basis of the English "sermon," so in a general sense, all three are the same. For the purpose of this article, however, we choose to use the phrase "expository message" or "exposition" so that its source, process, and purpose are unmistakably distinguishable from the other two terms.

Nolan Howington uses a graphic description to relate exegesis and exposition: “Thus an exegete is like a diver bringing up pearls from the ocean bed; an expositor is like the jeweler who arrays them in orderly fashion and in proper relation to each other.”⁴⁰

Titles, outlines, introductions, illustrations, and conclusions enter the process at this stage. The message moves from the raw materials mined by exegesis to the finished product of exposition, which the hearers hopefully will find interesting, convicting, and compelling. The key to this step is remembering what distinguishes exposition: explaining the text, especially parts that are hard to understand or apply. It is equally important to remember not only the text, but the audience as well.

F. B. Meyer offers this advice when thinking of the listeners and what sermon form the message will take:

There are five considerations that must be met in every successful sermon. There should be an appeal to the Reason, to the Conscience, to the Imagination, to the Emotions, and to the Will; and for each of these there is no method so serviceable as systematic exposition.^{41, 42}

Preaching the Exposition

The final decision to be made by the expositor relates to his preaching mode, whether from memory or from notes. This step is perhaps the most neglected in preparation by those committed to true exposition. Too often expositors assume that proper work done in the study will ensure that the pulpit will care for itself. It is true that there is no substitute for hard work in the study, but equally hard work in the pulpit will reward both the preacher and the flock to a much greater degree. James Stalker effectively draws attention to this challenge:

Ministers do not get enough results in the attention, satisfaction and delight of their hearers for the work they do; and the failure is in the vehicle of communication between the study and the congregation's is to say, in the delivery of the sermon. What I am pleading for is, that there should be more work to show for the coal consumed.⁴²

⁴⁰ Howington, “Expository” 62.

⁴¹ F. B. Meyer, *Expository Preaching Plans and Methods* (New York: George H. Duran Company, 1912) 100.

⁴² Stalker, *The Preacher* 121.

At the point of delivery, it is essential for the expositor to be clear in his purpose. Otherwise, the message preached may be far afield from the message studied and the message of Scripture. J. I. Packer makes this point by contrasting what preaching is not with what it is:

The purpose of preaching is not to stir people to action while bypassing their minds, so that they never see what reason God gives them for doing what the preacher requires of them (that is manipulation); nor is the purpose to stock people's minds with truth, no matter how vital and clear, which then lies fallow and does not become the seed-bed and source of changed lives (that is academicism) ... The purpose of preaching is to inform, persuade, and call forth an appropriate response to the God whose message and instruction are being delivered.⁴³

Also of importance is the language used in communicating the message. It should be clear, understandable, picturesque, and most of all, biblical. The following strong warning issued over twenty years ago is still applicable:

I urge adherence to Biblical terminology. Much modern preaching has taken a psychological and sociological turn. It is mysterious and mystical. It sets forth psychiatric ideas, often using the terms of the psychiatrist rather than those of the Christian evangelist. It speaks of repression, fixations, traumas, neuroses, syndromes, and world without end. I claim that in the main these are not terms that the Holy Spirit can use effectively.⁴⁴

Another crucial matter is the dynamics of speech, i.e. audience relationships and communicative effectiveness. Vines and Allen outline three basic principles for every expositor:

In short, effective communication from the pulpit must be informed by Aristotle's rhetorical triad of logos, ethos, and pathos. This involves a thorough knowledge of the subject matter and here is where there is no substitute for thorough exegesis. It involves a thorough knowledge of the speaker-audience dynamic such that the preacher must speak from

⁴³ J. I. Packer, "Why Preach?" *The Preacher and Preaching* (Samuel T. Logan, ed.; Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1986) 9.

⁴⁴ William W. Ayer, "The Art of Effective Preaching," *BibSac* 124 (Jan-Mar 1967) 41. ⁴⁶Jerry Vines and David Allen, "Hermeneutics, Exegesis, and Proclamation," *Criswell Theological Review* 1/2 (Spring 1987) 333-34.

integrity, and his audience must know of his sincerity and genuineness. Finally, it involves a knowledge of people and how they respond to the spoken word.⁴⁶

Above all, the expositor must expound the Word like Paul did in Corinth (1 Cor 2:1-5). He did not come as a clever orator or scholarly genius; he did not arrive with his own message; he did not preach with personal confidence in his own strength. Rather, Paul preached the testimony of God and Christ's death, and this, with well-placed confidence in God's power to make the message life changing. Unless this kind of wholesale dependence on God marks the modern expositor's preaching, his exposition will lack the divine dimension that only God can provide.

In summary, of the four steps of the complete expository experience' preparing the expositor, processing and principizing the biblical text, pulling the expository message together, and preaching the exposition' no phase can be omitted without seriously jeopardizing the truthfulness or usefulness of God's Word mediated through the expositor.

CONSIDERING EXPOSITIONAL ADVANTAGES⁴⁵

Expository preaching best emulates biblical preaching both in content and style. This is the chief benefit. Besides this, other advantages listed in random order include the following:

1. Expository preaching best achieves the biblical intent of preaching: delivering God's message.
2. Expository preaching promotes scripturally authoritative preaching.
3. Expository preaching magnifies God's Word.
4. Expository preaching provides a storehouse of preaching material.
5. Expository preaching develops the pastor as a man of God's Word.
6. Expository preaching ensures the highest level of Bible knowledge for the flock.
7. Expository preaching promotes thinking and living biblically.
8. Expository preaching encourages both depth and comprehensiveness.
9. Expository preaching forces the treatment of hard-to-interpret texts.

⁴⁵ James W. Alexander, *Thoughts on Preaching* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1988 rpt.) 228-53, develops some of these advantages in more detail.

10. Expository preaching allows for handling broad theological themes.
11. Expository preaching keeps preachers away from ruts and hobby horses.
12. Expository preaching prevents the insertion of human ideas.
13. Expository preaching guards against misinterpretation of the biblical text.
14. Expository preaching imitates the preaching of Christ and the apostles.
15. Expository preaching brings out the best in the expositor.

RECLAIMING EXPOSITORY PREACHING

As the twentieth century sets and a new millennium dawns, we must reclaim the method and art of expository preaching for the coming generation. No one said it would be easy. It is quite the opposite. No other method of preaching requires so much work. At the same time, no other method rewards so richly.

If the suggestions which have been offered are well founded, it will be obvious that expository preaching is a difficult task. It requires much close study of Scripture in general, and much special study of the particular passage to be treated. To make a discourse which shall be explanatory and yet truly oratorical, bearing a rich mass of details but not burdened with them, full of Scripture and abounding in practical applications, to bring even dull, uninformed, and unspiritual minds into interested and profitable contact with an extended portion of the Bible` of course, this must be difficult.⁴⁶

While the growing trend among today's preachers is toward consumer satisfaction and contemporary relevancy, we reaffirm that biblical preaching must be first directed toward divine satisfaction and kingdom relevance. Reflect carefully on Mark Steege's clarion call to expository preaching and its note of biblical authority:

Through our preaching the Lord seeks to change men's lives. We are to be evangelists, to awaken men to their high calling in Christ. We are to be heralds, proclaiming the messages of God to men. We are to be

⁴⁶ Broadus, *On the Preparation* 124.

ambassadors, calling men to be reconciled to God. We are to be shepherds, nourishing and caring for men day by day. We are to be stewards of the mysteries of God, giving men the proper Word for their every need. We are to be witnesses, telling men of all that God has done for them. We are to be overseers, urging men to live their lives to God. We are to be ministers, preparing men to minister with us to others. As we reflect on each of these phases of our work, what emphasis each gives to the importance of preaching! What a task the Lord has given us!⁴⁷

Although R. L. Dabney wrote over a century ago, we join him today in urging,

...that the expository method (understood as that which explains extended passages of Scripture in course) be restored to that equal place which it held in the primitive and Reformed Churches; for, first, this is obviously the only natural and efficient way to do that which is the sole legitimate end of preaching, convey the whole message of God to the people.⁴⁸

⁴⁷ Mark J. Steege, "Can Expository Preaching Still Be Relevant in These Days?" (Rest of the quote is Lost. Ed.)

⁴⁸ Robert L. Dabney, *Sacred Rhetoric* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1979 rpt.) 78-79.

FROM PULPIT TO QUARTERDECK

Becoming a Navy Chaplain at Fifty-Six

*Kent Hobl*¹

Kent Hobl is serving in his first Active-Duty Navy Sea Command at the age of 57 after almost 30-years as a pastor.

ABSTRACT

I entered the United States Navy Chaplain Corps at fifty-six, after nearly twenty-five years of serving one congregation as an associate pastor. This article is a reflection on that transition: how the Lord led through ordinary providence, what carried over from pastoral ministry, and what I have had to learn again as a military chaplain. Two biblical ideas have become especially important to me. The first is the distinction between common grace and special grace. A chaplain serves everyone and often begins by doing the ordinary good of listening, comforting, advising, and helping. Yet he remains ready, when God opens the door, to speak of the saving grace found in Christ. The second is wisdom, especially the wisdom of Proverbs. Its brief, memorable, practical instruction fits military life remarkably well. Proverbs has also helped me understand the chaplain's unusual kind of leadership: influence without command authority, earned slowly through character, competence, presence, and time.

¹ The author used ChatGPT as an editorial aid in organizing and revising an original manuscript. The experiences, arguments, theological judgments, and final wording remain the author's responsibility.

WHY NOW?

When I entered the Navy Chaplain Corps at fifty-six, people naturally asked, “Why now?”

Some may have wondered whether I had become tired of pastoral ministry. I had not. For almost twenty-five years, I had the privilege of serving one congregation. I loved preaching, shepherding, counseling, officiating weddings, grieving at funerals, and watching people grow in Christ. Leaving was not an escape from ministry. It was a painful departure from people my wife, Gloria, and I deeply loved. Nor had military chaplaincy been a lifelong dream that I was finally able to pursue. It came to me much later and much more quietly than that.

Our church had entered a new season. The elders and I began to recognize that the church's long-term financial commitment to me could make it harder to provide for the younger leaders who, God willing, would serve that congregation for years to come. These were not easy conversations, but they were honest and loving ones. The elders were thinking carefully about the future of the church, and I needed to do the same.

In the middle of those conversations, military chaplaincy emerged as a possibility. It would allow me to continue doing work that was deeply pastoral while also creating room for younger men to lead and be supported. There was no burning bush. There was providence... and there was wisdom.

Looking back, I can see the Lord using ordinary things: the council of elders, the financial needs of a congregation, gifts developed over many years, an open vocational door complete with opposition (1 Corinthians 16:9), and much prayer. At the time, it did not feel like a clear, dramatic call. It felt more like taking the next faithful step and trusting the Lord to make the path clear as we walked it.

I believe this is a biblical approach to knowing the personal will of God. Perhaps it may encourage another pastor who is considering a transition later in ministry. A new assignment does not necessarily mean the old one failed. It does not mean the years invested there were wasted. Sometimes the Chief Shepherd simply moves one of his under shepherds from one field to another. At fifty-six, I was not beginning ministry all over again. But I was learning how to minister in a very different field.

THE SAME PASTORAL HEART IN A DIFFERENT SETTING

A pastor and a military chaplain do not have the same calling in every respect.

A pastor shepherds a particular congregation. He preaches the Word, administers the ordinances, counsels, teaches, and serves alongside other elders. The church gathers voluntarily around Christ and the practices he has given to his people to strengthen their faith and conform them into His likeness. While a chaplain serves in an institution that is not the church. The people around him did not gather as a congregation. They are Sailors and Marines, officers and enlisted, Christians and non-Christians, religious and nonreligious. They come from different backgrounds and carry very different convictions.

Those differences matter. A command is not a congregation. The commanding officer is not an elder. A chaplain is not the pastor of every person in the command in the same way that a pastor shepherds the members of a church... and yet there is real continuity.

Both ministries require compassion, courage, discretion, patience, and presence. Both require a willingness to enter the hard places of people's lives. Both require listening. Both require knowing when to speak and when simply to sit with someone who is hurting. I began to realize that the years in the pastorate had not merely come before chaplaincy; they had prepared me for it. Hospital rooms, funerals, weddings, counseling sessions, conflicts, elders' meetings, and thousands of ordinary conversations had formed pastoral habits that I now use every day.

Still, those habits had to be carried into a new setting with humility. I knew pastoral ministry. I did not yet know military ministry. I was experienced and inexperienced at the same time. That is an uncomfortable place to be, but it is a good place to learn.

BEGINNING WITH COMMON GRACE

The distinction between common grace and special grace has helped me understand the work of a Christian chaplain. Pastoral ministry normally takes place in the setting of God's special, saving grace. The pastor proclaims Christ, shepherds believers, and administers the means Christ has entrusted to his church. The chaplain's public ministry often begins in the realm of common grace. He serves everyone.

He listens to a Sailor whose marriage is failing. He sits with a family in grief. He helps someone think through anger, guilt, loneliness, fear, or purpose. He advises leaders about morale, ethics, religion, and the human consequences of command decisions. He advocates for the religious liberty of people whose beliefs may be very different from his own. He tries to

strengthen relationships and contribute to the good of the command. He does not first ask whether the grieving Sailor agrees with his theology. He serves because the person in front of him bears the image of God.

This kind of ministry is not second-rate ministry. Helping preserve a marriage is good work. Comforting someone who mourns is good work. Encouraging a leader to treat people justly is good work. Restraining anger, repairing relationships, and helping people live with wisdom are genuinely good works in God's world. But common grace is not saving grace. Resilience, better communication, and stronger leadership cannot reconcile a person to God. However, in Christ, by grace through faith alone, we are created, "to do good works which God has prepared in advance for us to do (Ephesians 2:8-10). The Christian chaplain does not forget that our deepest need is met only in Jesus Christ.

I have therefore come to describe chaplaincy this way: we often minister first in the realm of common grace while praying and watching for appropriate opportunities to speak of special grace. The order matters.

I do not want to treat people as projects. A Sailor is not an evangelistic opportunity disguised as a person. Love must be genuine. Listening must be genuine. Service must be genuine. At the same time, I want to be ready when an ordinary conversation opens into something deeper. A conversation about marriage may become a conversation about forgiveness. Grief may lead to questions about death. Guilt may lead to grace. Purpose may lead to God. Those transitions cannot be forced. They should never be manipulated. But neither should a Christian chaplain be unprepared for them. Peter tells us to be ready to give an answer for the hope within us, and to do so with gentleness and respect (1 Pet. 3:15). That combination—readiness, gentleness, and respect—describes much of faithful chaplaincy... and it requires wisdom.

LEARNING TO READ PROVERBS AGAIN

One of the surprises of chaplaincy has been learning to read Proverbs again. I had read and preached Proverbs during my years as a pastor. But in the military its usefulness became newly vivid. Nearly every day raises questions such as these:

When should I speak? When should I remain silent? How is trust earned? How quickly can it be lost? How do I respond to an angry person? When should I offer counsel that has not been requested? How should I speak to a

senior leader? How do I receive correction? What kind of speech opens a door, and what kind closes one?

These are wisdom questions, and Proverbs speaks to them, over and over. Proverbs address speech, anger, work, friendship, reputation, humility, correction, diligence, leadership, money, pride, and self-control. These are not small or secondary matters for a chaplain. They make up much of daily life. Proverbs has also helped me see that knowing what is true is not the same as knowing what to do next. The chaplain needs theological conviction, but he also needs to know how, when, where, and to whom truth should be spoken.

Sometimes courage means speaking. Sometimes courage means waiting. Sometimes the wisest ministry is a carefully chosen sentence. Sometimes it is a question. Sometimes it is a Scripture. Sometimes it is silence and presence. The theology I brought into chaplaincy told me what is true. Proverbs is increasingly teaching me how to walk wisely among the people to whom God has sent me.

WHY PROVERBS FITS MILITARY LIFE

Proverbs fits the military unusually well because the military values language that is brief, clear, memorable, and useful. Military communication is an ethos of simple sentences and periods rather than run-on sentences filled with commas. Instructions are meant to be understood, remembered, and acted upon. Proverbial wisdom works in much the same way. The sayings in Proverbs are short enough to carry with you. Much of the book uses two balanced lines that reinforce or contrast with each other. They often make a point by painting a mental picture. The form helps the truth stay in the mind. They are not legal guarantees, but general axioms sown by God into the fabric of His creation as guideposts to a good life. A proverb can be learned in seconds and takes a lifetime to live. Perhaps most importantly, it is enroute to saving grace, it manifests the attractiveness of the author.

A Sailor may not remember a thirty-minute sermon, but he may remember that “a soft answer turns away wrath” (Prov. 15:1). A chief may not recall every point of a leadership lecture, but “pride goes before destruction” (Prov. 16:18) is hard to forget. A young officer facing a difficult decision may remember that plans fail without counsel (Prov. 15:22). That kind of wisdom is portable. It can surface when a person is under pressure—during conflict, temptation, uncertainty, or a difficult leadership decision.

Regulations and instructions are indispensable, but no instruction can anticipate every human situation. At some point, knowledge must become

judgment. Rules must be accompanied by wisdom. Proverbs does not give an exhaustive procedure for every possible circumstance. It forms the kind of person who can respond wisely when the circumstances were not anticipated. Military service repeatedly calls for exactly that kind of person: one who controls his speech, governs his emotions, receives correction, seeks counsel, resists pride, exercises authority justly, works diligently, and makes decisions under pressure.

For that reason, I no longer see Proverbs as merely a source of occasional material for counseling or a brief leadership thought. It is becoming something like a basic grammar book for the life of a chaplain. It teaches me how to enter a room, how to speak when invited, how to remain silent when speech would be foolish, and how to pursue influence without grasping for it.

LEADERSHIP WITHOUT COMMAND AUTHORITY

Rank matters in the military. It establishes authority, assigns responsibility, and makes clear who may give an order and who must carry it out. That clarity is necessary. But rank and influence are not the same thing. A person may have considerable authority and little influence. Another may have little formal authority and great influence. Rank can require compliance. It cannot command trust. Position can secure a hearing. It cannot guarantee credibility.

This distinction is especially important for chaplains. We have rank and serve within the military structure, but most of our ministry is not accomplished by giving orders. We listen, counsel, advise, encourage, persuade, caution, comfort, and sometimes admonish. Our effectiveness therefore depends greatly upon whether people trust our character and judgment. I have come to think of chaplain leadership in this way: it is influence exercised mostly without command authority, and that influence is built through character. Proverbs describes the qualities that make a person's words carry weight: wisdom, skill, gracious speech, self-control, humility, integrity, and a good name. None of these can be awarded at a promotion ceremony. They grow slowly through repeated choices.

A GOOD NAME

“A good name is to be chosen rather than great riches” (Prov. 22:1). For a chaplain, a good name may be one of the most valuable things he possesses. A reputation for discretion, steadiness, fairness, competence, and genuine

concern creates opportunities that no billet description can produce. Military communities notice more than we sometimes realize. Sailors watch...Chiefs watch... Officers watch. They notice whether the chaplain appears only when senior leaders are present. They notice how he treats junior Sailors. They notice whether he keeps confidence, promises or receives correction or complains or gossips, or speaks carelessly about someone who is not in the room. Reputation is built one choice at a time.

Over time, reputation becomes influence. But what takes months or years to build can be damaged in minutes. A careless disclosure, an angry response, or an obvious attempt at self-promotion can squander trust that was slowly earned. A good name is a stewardship. Guard it.

COMPETENCE BEFORE VISIBILITY

Proverbs asks, “Do you see a man skillful in his work?” and says that he will stand before kings (Prov. 22:29). The order is important. The man does not first seek an important room. He first becomes skillful in the work God has given him. That principle applies naturally to chaplaincy. Prepare well. Counsel thoughtfully. Brief clearly. Learn the command. Follow through. Show up. Do small things faithfully... Competence creates credibility. From there, credibility creates access. Do the work well and allow influence to find you. There is a difference between pursuing excellence and pursuing visibility. Excellence wants to serve. Visibility wants to be seen serving. They may look similar for a while, but people usually learn the difference.

GRACIOUS AND RESTRAINED SPEECH

Proverbs says “that the person whose speech is gracious will have the king as his friend,” (Prov. 22:11). For chaplains, words are among our main tools. We speak to Sailors in distress, families in crisis, chiefs carrying difficult personnel problems, and commanding officers bearing responsibilities that few others fully understand. In those moments, how we speak matters along with what we say. There is a way to speak truth that leaves the door open for the next conversation. There is also a way to speak truth that ensures we will not be invited back.

Courage and graciousness are not enemies. The most useful adviser may be the person who can say a difficult thing without being contentious, self-important, or reckless. The goal is not flattery. It is honest counsel offered with such integrity and grace that it can be heard.

Proverbs also warns those of us who make our living with words: “When words are many, transgression is not lacking” (Prov. 10:19). The ability to speak does not require us to fill every silence. Sometimes people listen because they have learned that when the chaplain speaks, he probably has something worth saying.

A WORD TO PASTORS CONSIDERING CHAPLAINCY

What would I say to another pastor, especially one considering chaplaincy later in life?

First, do not assume that pastoral experience will automatically make you effective in the military. It will help more than you may realize, but only if it is joined with humility. You know ministry; you do not yet know military ministry. Learn about the culture before criticizing it. Ask questions. Listen. There is no shame in becoming a student again.

Second, love people before trying to influence them. People know when they are being treated as projects. Learn their names. Listen to their stories. Show up when life is hard. Seek their good and entrust whatever doors may open to the providence of God.

Third, guard your name. Keep confidences. Keep promises. Work hard to be where you said you would be. Do what you said you would do. Avoid gossip and unnecessary quarrels. Treat junior personnel with the same dignity you show senior leaders. A good name is built slowly. Treat it as a stewardship.

Fourth, become a student of wisdom. Theology tells us what is true. Wisdom helps us know what faithfulness looks like here, now, with this person. Learn when to speak, when to ask a question, when to offer Scripture, when to wait, and when simply to remain present.

Finally, do not chase influence. Do your work well. Be present, competent, gracious, and dependable. Sit in the back until you are invited forward. Influence gained slowly is more likely to last. And when someone finally asks, “Chaplain, what do you think?” remember that a hearing is a stewardship.

THE SAME SHEPHERD, A DIFFERENT FIELD

I no longer think of entering the Navy Chaplain Corps at fifty-six as beginning a second career. I think of it as receiving another assignment from the same Chief Shepherd. The setting changed. The dress changed. The

vocabulary and rhythms changed. But the deepest calling did not. Pastoral ministry taught me to love Christ's church, proclaim his Word, shepherd people through suffering, and trust the ordinary ways God cares for his people. Chaplaincy asks me to carry that pastoral heart into an institution that is not the church and must not be confused with it.

The Sailors and Marines among whom we serve are men and women made in the image of God. They marry and divorce. They celebrate and grieve. They succeed and fail. They become angry and afraid. They carry guilt. They bury parents, welcome children, deploy, and return home changed. They wrestle with meaning, mortality, forgiveness, purpose, and God. They need wisdom and ultimately the wisdom that is found in Christ alone... and so does the chaplain.

Perhaps that is why Proverbs has become so precious to me. It reminds me that faithfulness is often ordinary:

Guard your tongue. Control your temper. Seek counsel. Receive correction. Work skillfully. Avoid pride. Protect your name. Speak graciously. Do not seek the seat of honor. These are simple sentences. They end with periods. But living them takes a lifetime.

At fifty-six, the Lord placed me in a new field and made me a student again. I brought years of pastoral experience and theological education with me. What I am discovering is how much I still must learn about wisdom. Perhaps that is one last lesson from Proverbs: "The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom" (Prov. 9:10).

Not rank. Not age. Not experience. Not position. Not even influence.

The fear of the Lord. That is where wisdom begins. And whether one stands behind a pulpit or on a quarterdeck, that is where faithful ministry must begin as well.

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MEMORIAL DAY

Armando Torrelva

Armando Torrelva is a retired Navy Chaplain and Pastor who currently lives in Texas with his wife. He has served with the Navy and Marines.

Today is Memorial Day. On this day, tens of thousands of Americans will visit military cemeteries across the U.S. to honor the fallen. Some events include formal wreath-laying ceremonies, flag placements at gravesites, public ceremonies and historical tributes. Many years ago, I had the privilege of leading a Memorial Day service at the North Africa American Cemetery and Memorial located in the town of Carthage in Tunisia North Africa where 2,841 American soldiers are buried. Today, I call your attention to the largest resting place in the world, where no one goes to honor the dead. That place encircles the world; it is the ocean.

At sea the dead have no gravesites, no monuments, no flags. No place to leave flowers. No place to conduct a memorial service. No one goes to sea to pay his or her respects on Memorial Day. The sea is the loneliest “cemetery” in the world. James Bruce made a profound observation about the ocean cemetery when he wrote: “All other graveyards show symbols of distinction between great and small, rich, and poor: but in the ocean cemetery, the king, the clown, the prince, and the peasant are alike, undistinguishable” (from *Wrecks and Reminiscences of St. Andrews Bay*).

From antiquity to modern times naval battles have taken place in **all five major oceans** (Pacific, Atlantic, Indian, Arctic and Southern Ocean). Combat has also occurred in many enclosed seas (Mediterranean Sea, Caribbean Sea, South China Sea, the English Channel) claiming the lives of millions while conducting military operations on, under, or above the sea. In the U.S. Navy, the phrase “On Eternal Patrol” is a solemn naval tradition honoring submariners who have died or whose submarines were lost at sea. Because lost submarines and their crews are rarely recovered, the Navy considers them as being “still on patrol.” During WWII, over 50 U.S.

submarines were lost or never returned, leaving over 3,500 sailors still on patrol.

Throughout the centuries, people have lost their lives at sea beginning with the loss of the world's population during the Noahtic flood (Genesis 6-7) that covered the entire world. Only Noah and 7 other family members survived the flood. The Bible also records the drowning of Pharaoh's army at the crossing of the Red Sea (Exodus 14:26-28) as the climatic finale of the Exodus narrative. No one knows how many people have died at sea.

However, on Judgment Day, the Apostle John writes: "The sea gave up the dead that were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead that were in them, and each person was judged according to what they had done" (Revelation 20:13). One day the sea will release the dead buried in its depths including those who died in a shipwreck, killed in naval battles, buried at sea as well as those swept into the sea by a tsunami. The number will be great.

As we enjoy this day with family and friends, keep in mind the many men and women who died for our freedom, the ones who made the ultimate sacrifice on land, sea or air. Memorial Day is about them. We observe this day to ensure their courage is never taken for granted, to acknowledge the immense cost of freedom, and to support the military families forever changed by their loss. "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends" — John 15:13. Amen.

Book Review:

**BIBLICAL PREACHING: THE
DEVELOPMENT AND DELIVERY OF
EXPOSITORY MESSAGES**

by Haddon Robinson

Review by Matt Zajac, CHC, USN

Matthew Zajac is an active-duty Navy Chaplain.

Biblical Preaching by Haddon Robinson¹ has long been regarded as a staple for the shelves and desktops of serious expository preachers. Published originally in 1980, the 2025 fourth edition (edited by Scott Wenig) retains Robinson's practical insights in clear, contemporary vernacular. Throughout his professional career and calling, Robinson constantly sought to discover what made preachers interesting and sermons effective.² His original intent for authoring *Biblical Preaching* was to answer these questions by refining myriad perspectives from seemingly countless decades of preachers into a handbook for modern preachers that gave them an effective foundation from which to build expository sermons. The purpose of this article is to review the fourth edition of *Biblical Preaching* by making general observations concerning its construct and content, presenting

¹ Robinson, Haddon W. *Biblical Preaching: The Development and Delivery of Expository Messages*. Baker Academic: Grand Rapids, 2025. 4th edition; ISBN: 978-1-5409-6791-6. 161 Text pages. Total pages with appendices and exercises 227.

² Robinson, xiv.

perceived strengths and weaknesses, and concluding with an overall assessment and recommendation.

GENERAL OBSERVATIONS AND CONSTRUCT

Biblical Preaching is organized well. The reader, regardless of preaching experience, is able to follow Robinson's argument through a book that progresses his message logically. *Biblical Preaching*, though intended to be read from cover to cover, possesses the impression of a manual and workbook. It progressively works the preacher through Haddon's 11-stages of sermon preparation. Every chapter begins with a section that informs the reader of all the new concepts to be expounded upon in the following pages. This same section also demonstrates how the present chapter will continue to work the preacher through Haddon's 11-stage sermon preparation process. He highlights the stages that have already been covered and lists the stages that are about to be taught. In doing so, the preacher can easily discern where he is in the sermon preparation process.

As each chapter begins in a similar, helpful way, each chapter ends likewise. Concluding every chapter, Haddon includes a section of key words and concepts covered in that chapter with their respective definitions. Additionally, every chapter ends with a valuable list of recommended resources for further reading and study.

Haddon's sermon preparation method is developed through a historical, grammatical, and literary study of the passage being developed into a sermon. Therefore, in sermon preparation, the preacher seeks the objective meaning of his text by discerning the language and context of the original author and audience. He then interprets and develops that message into a sermon for a contemporary audience.³ In interpreting the text, Haddon emphasizes strongly the need for the preacher to understand the subject and complement of his passage, stating that preachers "do not understand what we are reading unless we can clearly express the subject and complement of the section we're studying."⁴ He places equal emphasis on the historical and literary elements of the text in sermon development, while also demanding the preacher remains true to the authorial intent of the Bible.

An additional feature not found in every book on preaching is a several-page section that includes graphics of the mouth, throat, lungs, and torso

³ Robinson, 7-9.

⁴ Robinson, 23-26.

with exercises to strengthen each. Haddon acknowledges that many books on preaching deal only with sermon preparation and not delivery. He incorporates extensive advice on delivery.

Finally, the book concludes with a 14-page sermon example and sample evaluation to aid the preacher in developing and evaluating his own sermons. Preceding the 6-page bibliography for further reading and study, is fifty pages of student exercises. Haddon includes his answers to the student exercises to allow preachers to observe his thought and practical methodology.

PERCEIVED STRENGTHS OF THIS BOOK

Within the first three pages of the first chapter, Haddon establishes the need for biblical preaching, current problems in contemporary preaching, the impact of good preaching to the modern church, and warnings concerning preaching that is not biblical. He lays a firm, discernable foundation for the content and progression of the book from which he never waivers.

Haddon focusses constantly on the relevance of the message to the audience. He uses the example of Paul on Mars Hill to highlight the need for a preacher to package his sermon to the ears and lives of his audience. “Relevance shows up in style as well as content. While we speak the eternal message, it must be in today’s words.”⁵ This sentiment echoes from chapter to chapter. Haddon recognizes that the original audience is not the contemporary preacher’s audience. Therefore, Haddon’s advice to speak the language of the audience is perpetual.

However, Haddon never allows the reader to lose sight of the supremacy of God’s message through His original prophets. Though the transmission of God’s applicable truth to a contemporary audience is Haddon’s end state, that goal is grounded to the foundation of the thought of the biblical writer.⁶

Despite being rigid in his method, Haddon remains appropriately pragmatic in many of his approaches. He is comfortable identifying the wisdom of using different Bible translations to gain clarity and enhance the vividness of a text, thereby enhancing one’s understanding of a passage. He further acknowledges that preaching style is far from one-size-fits-all. Though a sermon is based on one major proposition, it is only effective if it relates biblical truth to life. Truth is the foundation; life-shaping application is the end state.

⁵ Robinson, 140.

⁶ Robinson, 5.

A final strength is that Haddon keeps the supremacy of the Scriptures forefront to his argument. “We are using the Bible to talk to people about themselves. We’re not talking to them about the Bible.”⁷ He focusses deeply on illustrations, identifying need in the audience, introduction, transitions throughout the sermon, and flow of argument, all while remaining true to the Word.

PERCEIVED WEAKNESSES OF THIS BOOK

Haddon focusses greatly on the art of sermon preparation and delivery. Though a strength to his thesis, this inherently invites the criticism of this book lacking a technical element. Though he emphasizes the supremacy of the Scriptures, the book says little about exegetical methods. Though he presents a highly practical approach to sermon preparation and delivery, the reader will find little use on study methods and interpretation.

There are also some weaknesses to Haddon’s communication in this fourth edition. The chapter titles are creative and catchy, but in simply reading them, the preacher will not be able to discern the topic of most chapters. This will make referencing a chapter for a specific topic difficult. Additionally, this addition is riddled with contractions. Though it reads easily in the common vernacular, its casual sense degrades the authority of an otherwise effective communicator.

OVERALL ASSESSMENT AND CONCLUSION:

This author commends *Biblical Preaching* to the shelves of every serious preacher. It is understandable to every beginning preacher and a necessary refresher course for every experienced preacher. Haddon maintains that the foundation of every sermon is the authority of the Word of God. His 11-step sermon preparation process is basically thorough and practical. His focus on audience reception will aid any preacher in keeping his illustration, sermon content, and applications accessible. *Biblical Preaching* will remain in my library through my days in ministry and beyond.

⁷ Robinson, 121.

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Book Review:

PREACHING AND PREACHERS

by D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones

Review by Chaplain (LCDR) Izaak D. Toliver, USN (active duty)

Chaplain Toliver is an active-duty Navy Chaplain currently serving with the Coast Guard as the Sector Houston/Galveston and Sector Corpus Christi, Houston, TX. He has been in the Navy for almost 10 years and has a Master of Divinity from Virginia Beach Theological Seminary.

Dr. Lloyd Jones is a highly esteemed biblical scholar, legendary pastor, and medical doctor. He had a key voice during the 20th century regarding Reformed evangelicalism. He earned his MD from London University and was part of the Royal College of Physicians serving as the Chief Clinical Assistant to Sir Thomas Horder, who was the King's Physician. Dr. Lloyd Jones possessed the rare ability to incorporate both thorough clinical methodology with robust Reformed theology, thereby establishing him as a trusted and authoritative leader in both the medical field and the world of theology. Upon departing from the medical field in 1927, he became the minister of Welsh Presbyterian Church in Aberavon, South Wales. His time there lasted until 1938 when he moved to London and began preaching and pastoring at Westminster Chapel in Buckingham Gate alongside Dr. G. Campbell Morgan. Dr. Lloyd Jones' illustrious ministry lasted for over 30 years before he died in 1981. Some of his works include *The Plight of Man and the Power of God*, *The Sermon on the Mount*, *Spiritual Depression*, *Faith on Trial*, *Authority*, *Truth Unchanged*, *Unchanging*, *Preaching and Preachers*, *God's Way of Reconciliation*, and a whole host of other lectures and essays.

A unique blend of clinical precision, pastoral care, and direct discourse is developed in his work, *Preaching and Preachers*. This work is used by many seminaries and universities as a foundational text in their pastoral theology and homiletics classes, including Westminster Theological Seminary and Reformed Theological Seminary. It is fascinating that it is used as a textbook in homiletics classes as Dr. Lloyd Jones explains on pages 118-119 that homiletics are an abomination, which indeed speaks to his desire for direct discourse.

The primacy of preaching and practice are key elements within this book. Specifically, Dr. Lloyd Jones breaks his book up into two primary sections, the “why” of preaching and the “how” of preaching. The first section is built on four fundamental chapters, and each one builds upon the last, thereby establishing a biblical viewpoint of preaching with the goal of encouraging and at times chastising those who are listening.

Chapter One emphasizes two key ideas. First, Jones presents preaching as the most glorious and highest calling that anyone can receive. Second, he asserts that “the most urgent need in the Christian Church today is true preaching; and as it is the greatest and the most urgent need in the Church, it is obviously the greatest need of the world also” (9).

Chapters Two through Four also stress the importance of true preaching, but here he does this by contrasting it with current substitutes. Dr. Lloyd Jones takes aim at the idea of the Social Gospel. He provides some context for its genesis, then admonishes the church by saying, “the church has been trying to preach morality and ethics without the Gospel as a basis; it has been preaching morality without godliness; and it simply does not work. It never has done, and it never will. And the result is that the Church, having abandoned her real task, has left humanity more or less to its own devices” (35). He addresses changing cultures throughout various timeframes, and although this was written in 1971, the human condition still remains the same. Dr. Lloyd Jones stresses the importance of the church gathering (43) and highlights how easy it is to remain isolated (42).

Having clearly articulated the importance of having a solid foundation in Scripture for preaching, Chapters Five and Six go into detail about training for the ministry. These two chapters, while helpful, at times allow him to stand on a soapbox that he has developed over 30 years of ministry. Parts of this section are helpful, others, not as much. He goes into extensive detail regarding the call of ministry on one’s life, stating that “the only man who is called to preach is the man who cannot do anything else...” (105), and “nothing but this overwhelming sense of being called, and of compulsion,

should ever lead anyone to preach” (107). He discusses his famous phrase of homiletics being an “abomination” (118) and expounds on the idea that “preachers are born, not made. This is an absolute” (118).

Chapters Nine and Ten speak about the preparation for both the preacher and for the message. He moves from the general approach to being more specific regarding how the man will prepare each week for the message (165). In relation to the preparation of the message, he provides suggestions and both good and bad examples from his experience. He says that when one truly is preaching, this is “theology on fire” (97). He sums this up by saying, “true preaching, then, consists of both these elements combined in their right proportions, the sermon, and the act of preaching” (96). He also encourages that pastors be deeply connected to the message that they are conveying and warns against intellectualism when talking to “damned sinners” (95). He conveys the chief end of preaching by defining it as “giving men and women a sense of God and His presence” (97).

In conclusion, chapters Eleven through Sixteen focus on the vital relationship between the pastor and his congregation as well as the importance of the Spirit in the work of preaching the Word. He references the importance of knowing your audience. Even if you have many learned individuals, speak to the “servant maids and children” (128). Regarding the Spirit’s work, he emphasizes that the preacher cannot do the work of preaching without the Spirit’s filling (324).

Although this book was written some fifty-three years ago, it remains a consistent textbook and guidebook to many pastors, church planters, and chaplains. His ability to weave in a clinical mindset with a biblical framework makes this book an essential read for those entering into the ministry who plan on filling the role of teaching pastor.

However, this book is not without critique. Throughout, Dr. Lloyd Jones provided many examples of others who were in error and yet did not provide examples of himself falling into pitfalls or some of his shortcomings after so many years of ministry. It would have been encouraging to see more vulnerability and perhaps a little more humility. Additionally, he did positively quote some of those great preachers of the past, including Spurgeon and Whitfield, but rarely did he defend anyone in his current timeframe who was doing a consistent job of preaching.

In conclusion, although *Preaching and Preachers* is not exhaustive, it remains a key read for those who desire to preach regularly from the pulpit. It is theologically sound and should be used as a challenge to those who share the Gospel from the pulpit.

Book Review:

**RELIGION AND THE AMERICAN
REVOLUTION: AN IMPERIAL HISTORY**

by Katherine Carte

Review by Andrew Lawson

Andrew Lawton comes from an Army family and has his doctorate in American History.

Religious historiography on the American Revolution has often focused on the development of a uniquely American identity through the influence of New England Puritanism or the evangelicalism of the Great Awakening. The Patriot clergy of the American colonies have held a central place in American imagination of the era, from the Black-Robed Regiment to stories of Peter Muhlenberg donning a militia uniform and leading the men of his congregation out to fight. In *Religion and the American Revolution: An Imperial History*, Katherine Carte both challenges this mythmaking as at best an incomplete telling of the historical truth. Even as Carte argues that clergy were not a driving force behind the war, she identifies how the war led to titanic changes in Protestant institutions on both sides of the Atlantic. The Revolution led to the end of what she describes as “Imperial Protestantism,” the structures that promoted the unified Protestant identity of the whole British Empire in opposition to the Catholic threat of France and Spain.

NATURE OF IMPERIAL PROTESTANTISM

The religious establishment of the British Empire took on a new form in 1707, when the Act of Union united the English and Scottish monarchy and

designated the King of England (or Queen, as was the case in 1707) as the patron and guarantor of the rights of the Presbyterian Church of Scotland. The Act of Toleration had already granted Protestant Nonconformists freedom of worship in 1689. The newly formed British Empire would guard the rights of not only the established Church of England, but also Presbyterians, Congregationalists, and Trinitarian Protestant dissenters more broadly. Carte considers the Act of Union the beginning of Imperial Protestantism, a religious system where Trinitarian Protestantism, loyalty to the British monarchy, and hostility to Roman Catholicism united otherwise disparate groups. Not all churches were equal under Imperial Protestantism (dissenters were barred from many societal opportunities in the eighteenth century), but all could operate their churches free of undue harassment from the state.

Prominent leaders of Protestant dissenters on both sides of the Atlantic, such as Jonathan Mayhew and John Wesley, preached loyalty to the Imperial Crown even as they opposed the deficiencies of Church of England clergy. Carte notes that Mayhew's celebrated 1750 sermon against tyranny, *Discourse concerning Unlimited Submission* (often cited as foreshadowing the American Patriots), was actually an address in support of the Glorious Revolution and Protestant House of Hanover against the tyranny of the House of Stuart and their French Catholic allies (78-79). Leaders of the Great Awakening in both Great Britain and the American colonies led the evangelical fervency away from the schism that initially threatened to break apart church institutions (68-69). Wesley deliberately refused to break with the Anglican Church until well after the American Revolution, Jonathan Edwards sought to promote revival alongside peace and unity, and Gilbert Tenant so regretted the schism between New Lights and Old Lights in the Presbyterian Church of New Jersey that he worked tirelessly toward successful reunification in 1758.

Anglicans and Protestant Dissenters of many stripes were committed to cooperation within the framework of Imperial Protestantism in the eighteenth century. Whatever their differences on church government, the doctrine of election, etc., they were considered insignificant compared to unity on Trinitarianism, anti-Catholicism, and the need for legitimacy from the imperial government. Groups such as the Baptists and especially the Quakers existed either on the fringe of this establishment or outside it altogether, which Carte uses to demonstrate how the exception proves the rule of her thesis. The widespread consensus among orthodox clergy before the American Revolution was that, "Protestantism was best served by being British," tied to the institutions of the state in profound and lasting ways

(81). The civil war between Great Britain and the American colonies would shatter these presuppositions.

IMPERIAL PROTESTANTISM IN CRISIS

The structures of Protestant co-belligerence across the Atlantic, what Carte refers to as the “scaffolding” of Imperial Protestantism, were broken by the political upheaval over American independence. Where Carte’s thesis differs from much of the popular understanding of the split between colonies and mother country is by deemphasizing the role clergy played in fanning the flames of war. Rather, church institutions and most clergy across the British Empire were forces of moderation and peace-making. She argues that the Bishop’s Controversy, one of the traditionally understood points of tension between colonial Americans and England, has been given undue significance in historical retellings and never seriously challenged spiritual harmony across the Atlantic (113). The forces driving independence were political, not religious –newspapermen, tract writers, and radical groups like the Sons of Liberty were at the forefront of the Patriot cause, not clergymen, who generally urged caution and peace even as they defended the rights of colonial subjects (126-27).

The scaffolding of Imperial Protestantism worked effectively to discourage rebellion until the climactic years of 1774-75, where Carte marks the point of serious escalation. In response to the hooliganism of the so-called Boston Tea Party, Parliament passed the Coercive Acts, stripping the inhabitants of Boston of their civil rights and shutting down the local economy. The same year Parliament passed the Quebec Act, which took the monumental step of legitimizing the Catholic religion of the British subjects of French Quebec. Though these acts were not closely linked in the mind of British statesmen, they were condemned together as the Intolerable Acts in the American colonies, where many (including clergymen) saw them as enabling tyranny and false Catholic religion, which English tradition had always seen as one and the same (138-47). The same impulses that had kept colonial clergymen loyal to the British Protestant Empire during the previous decade of unrest now litigated for independence.

In Great Britain, the response of religious institutions to the war in America was slow. Consternation over the miseries of civil war was widespread, even among loyalist clergy, who often interpreted the war as God’s judgment on Great Britain (194-95). Initially, amidst hope for either a negotiated settlement or outright British victory, Imperial Protestant

organizations like the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel continued to operate in the American colonies. However, as the war ended and loyalist ministers either returned across the ocean or resettled in Canada, all cooperation ceased. One poignant example is the orphanage George Whitfield had founded in Georgia in the 1740s, which had been maintained after his death by the Countess of Huntingdon. The newly independent state authorities responded politely to her letters expressing continued interest in the institution but were not interested in providing a venue for potential British agents to enter the country, and the project collapsed (231).

FORGING OF NEW IDENTITIES

Politics rather than religion had precipitated the war, and Carte argues that the reaction of American clergymen to the military alliance with Catholic France validates her thesis. Pastors who as recently as the passage of the Quebec Act in 1774 had denounced papal tyranny now hailed King Louis XIV as “His Most Christian Majesty” who sought to free the Americans and his own subjects from civil and spiritual slavery (250-51). One of the bulwarks of the old Imperial Protestantism, opposition to Catholicism, had been discarded. Whatever form public religion would take in the new United States, it would not be explicitly confessionally Protestant.

American independence brought immense change to the shape of British Christianity as well. The guarantee of religious liberty in many of the new state constitutions (and eventually in the federal constitution) inspired many Britons to advocate for Catholic emancipation. Imperial religion had been broadly tolerant of Trinitarian Protestants, but harshly intolerant of Roman Catholics, who were seen as owing worldly allegiance first to the Pope rather than the Monarch. This attitude changed rapidly after and even during the war, in which Irish Catholics did good service in the British army. Catholic Relief was passed by Parliament in 1788, granting toleration to the religious minority, and a push to repeal the Test Acts (which discriminated against Protestant dissenters holding positions in government, the military, or higher education) was nearly repealed in 1791. Final repeal would not occur until 1828, but momentum had shifted away from the eighteenth-century Protestant consensus and toward religious freedom.

The immediate aftermath of the American Revolution saw dramatic growth in two denominations that had not been part of Imperial Protestantism, Baptists and Methodists. Baptists, with their rejection of the role of the civil magistrate in religion, had always stood at best on the

outskirts of the old Protestant consensus. Methodists separated from the Church of England as a direct result of the war, due to the need to ordain new bishops for the American colonies. Both denominations benefitted from the post-war push for religious liberty on both sides of the Atlantic and would become the most prominent churches of the nineteenth century English-speaking world, displacing the Anglican, Presbyterian, and Congregationalist dominance of the previous era. Carte contends that without the societal change wrought by the American Revolution, the end of one religious era and the beginning of another would not have unfolded as it did (344-49).

ANALYSIS

The influence of religion on the American Revolution has been scrutinized by North American historians in recent decades and has always had a powerful presence in popular national myth. *Religion and the American Revolution: An Imperial History* is an original contribution to this study and corrects several misplaced emphases. Katherine Carte is concerned with the role religion played on both sides of the Atlantic during the crisis, not just in the future American states. She pushes back on the idea of early spiritual discontinuity between American colonists and the mother country, noting instead the powerful ties that bound together nearly all British Protestants and that pushed against conflict. Her assertion that American clergy were a moderating force in the crisis rather than driving the Patriot cause is well-defended and sure to provoke further conversation. Understanding how political realities displaced religious fears over an alliance with Catholic France within a handful of years is a remarkable example of swift change-over-time that has not received the attention it is due.

The War of Independence has always been recognized as a moment of dramatic political change by American historians. Carte shows that the war was also responsible for the downfall of a religious system that dominated the English-speaking world since 1707, with profound aftereffects on both belligerents. The following century would be marked by increased religious toleration in Great Britain and disestablishment in the United States, an outcome that was by no means assured. Her thesis is compelling and controversial, and her work ought to be reckoned with by serious students of Anglo-American political and religious history.

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