



Getting Back to Church

Lesson 6: Expository Preaching

Key Text: 2 Timothy 4:1–2

“I charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by his appearing and his kingdom: preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching.”

If someone asked, “*What is the greatest need of the church today?*” how would you answer? Twentieth-century Welsh expositor Dr. Martyn Lloyd-Jones answered this question this way:

“I would say without hesitation 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.”¹

The church’s greatest need today is a wholesale return to expository preaching. In this lesson, we will define expository preaching, consider its central place in the life of the church, and land the plane with ten biblical reasons expository preaching matters in the church.

What is Expository Preaching?

We believe that the nature of the Bible compels us to expository preaching. Since Scripture is breathed out by God and is profitable for teaching, reproof, correction, and training in righteousness (2 Timothy 3:16), Psalm 19 describes God’s Word as perfect, sure, right, pure, clean, and true, restoring the soul, making wise the simple, rejoicing the heart, and enlightening the eyes (Psalm 19:7–9). God uses His Word to save His people (James 1:21; 1 Thessalonians 2:13) and sanctify them (John 15:3; 17:17). Since God’s Word is all these things, the only biblically and logically coherent method of preaching is preaching drawn from the Word of God. As John MacArthur once said, “The only logical response to inerrant Scripture is to preach expositionally. By expositionally, I mean preaching in such a way that the meaning of the Bible passage is presented entirely and exactly as it was intended by God.”

Definition: Expository preaching is a public act of worship in which God is exalted through the proclamation of the Word of God, through the explanation of the meaning of the text, for the exhortation and application of the hearers. Expository preaching involves teaching, training, correcting, instructing, and shepherding the people of God based on His inerrant Word. Since the

¹ Martyn Lloyd Jones, *Preaching and Preachers*, (Grand Rapids, MI: 2011), 17.

Bible is God's sufficient and inerrant Word, it ought to be preached in an expositional manner to His people.

The Core Elements of Expository Preaching

Dr. Martyn Lloyd-Jones once said, "The primary task of the Church and of the Christian minister is the preaching of the Word of God." If the proclamation of the Word of God is the primary task of the church and is the task that gives God the most glory when we gather together on Sunday mornings, then it is essential that we understand the core components of an expository sermon.

There are four core elements of expository preaching. If you remove any one of these essential parts of an expository sermon, it ceases to be biblical preaching.

Expository Preaching is Worship

All worship flows down from the proclamation of the Word of God.

- **2 Timothy 4:2** — "**preach the word**; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching." The preaching of the word of God is an act of obedience before God. Preaching God's word is a mandate for the church. It is also the climax of the worship service.
- **Colossians 3:16** — "**Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God.**" The church is commanded here to "let the word of Christ dwell in you richly." This command is accomplished through the hearing of God's Word as it is preached and then applied and implemented in the church's life. Notice what the indwelling Word does to the church. It is the basis of teaching and admonishing in wisdom, and it is the basis of all our singing to one another. When the church gathers to sing, it is essentially setting biblical truth to music. We sing what we have learned from God's preached Word. John Newton, the well-known hymn writer of *Amazing Grace*, would often recast his sermons as hymns so the congregation could sing them after he preached.
- **Romans 12:1-2** — "I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your **spiritual worship**. Do not be conformed to this world but be transformed by the renewal of your mind..." Paul teaches that all of life should be offered to God in worship, including the proclamation of His Word. Yet true spiritual worship requires a renewed mind, and Scripture teaches that our minds are renewed through the Word of God. Preaching is itself an act of worship, and through it, worship is deepened in the life of the church.

Expository Preaching is Proclamation

- **2 Timothy 4:2** — “preach the word.” The command to “preach” means to proclaim, to announce loudly, to herald. This is not a “fireside chat”; this is a declaration of “Thus says the LORD.” The mode or manner of preaching is important. The preacher must not strive to be like a lecturer or as if he is giving a TED Talk. There must be a sense of urgency and authority that comes from bringing God’s message to God’s people. Paul tells Titus that he is to make every effort to “Declare these things; exhort and rebuke with all authority. Let no one disregard you” (Titus 2:15).
- **1 Corinthians 1:21** — “For since, in the wisdom of God, the world did not know God through wisdom, it pleased God through the folly of what we preach to save those who believe.”
- **Romans 10:14-15** — “How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching? ... ‘How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news!’” Salvation comes through the proclamation of the gospel in the word of God.

Expository Preaching is Explanation

Explaining God’s Word lies at the heart of expository preaching. To exposit is to clarify the meaning of the text; simply put, it means explaining the Word of God. The preacher does not stand over the text as a creative speaker looking for ideas to support his own message; he stands under the text as a servant charged with making God’s message plain. This requires careful attention to the words, grammar, context, structure, and authorial intent of the passage so that the congregation can understand what God has actually said. Faithful explanation brings the meaning of Scripture out of the passage rather than reading a preferred meaning into it. In this way, expository preaching protects the church from confusion, speculation, and shallow impressions, and it helps God’s people see the truth, beauty, and authority of His Word with greater clarity.

- **2 Timothy 2:15** — “Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who has no need to be ashamed, rightly handling the word of truth.”

We see the explanation of the word of God in preaching throughout the Bible in both the Old and New Testaments.

- **Nehemiah 8:8** — “They read from the book, from the Law of God, **clearly, and they gave the sense, so that the people understood the reading.**”

- **Luke 24:27** — “And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he **interpreted** to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself.” Jesus gives us an example that preaching involves opening up Scripture and explaining the Word of God.
- **Acts 17:2-3** — “And Paul went in, as was his custom, and on three Sabbath days he reasoned with them **from the Scriptures, explaining** and **proving** that it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead...” Paul sets the example that preaching involves explaining the word of God.

Expository Preaching is Application

The final essential component of expository preaching is application. Merrill F. Unger once wrote, “[Expository preaching] is emphatically not preaching about the Bible, but preaching the Bible...” In other words, we are not simply teaching the Bible for information; we are preaching the Bible to change lives. The Bible must be powerfully explained and powerfully applied for a message to be an expository sermon; otherwise, it is simply a lecture.

- **2 Timothy 3:16–17** — “All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.”
- **Colossians 1:28** — “Him we proclaim, warning everyone and teaching everyone with all wisdom, that we may present everyone mature in Christ.”
- **Titus 2:1, 15** — “But as for you, teach what accords with sound doctrine. ... Declare these things; exhort and rebuke with all authority...”

10 Biblical Reasons for Expository Preaching

1. **Expository Preaching submits the soul and the church to the authority of God and the headship of Christ.**

Preaching the Word of God is a command from the Lord to the church. When the church and the pastor insist on preaching derived from the Bible, they are submitting themselves to the headship of Christ over His church. Rather than the preacher’s ideas dominating, the text rules.

- **2 Timothy 4:1–2**: “I **charge** you in the **presence of God and of Christ Jesus**, who is to **judge** the living and the dead, and by his **appearing** and his **kingdom**: preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching.”
- **1 Timothy 6:13–16**: “I charge you in the presence of God, who gives life to all things, and of Christ Jesus, who in his testimony before Pontius Pilate made the good confession, **to keep the commandment unstained and free from reproach** until the appearing of

our Lord Jesus Christ, which he will display at the proper time—he who is the blessed and only Sovereign, the King of kings and Lord of lords, who alone has immortality, who dwells in unapproachable light, whom no one has ever seen or can see. To him be honor and eternal dominion. Amen.”

2. Expository Preaching works in concert with the Holy Spirit to produce sanctification.

The Holy Spirit uses the Word of God to sanctify the people of God. When the church abandons the Bible for secular or extrabiblical methods, it cuts itself off from the only source of true spiritual transformation. Expository preaching delivers that Word systematically and aims to obey the command to preach “the whole counsel of God” (Acts 20:27).

- John 17:17: “Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth.”

3. Expository Preaching produces humility and submission in the preacher and the congregation.

Both the congregants and the preacher must bow to the authority of the word of God.

- James 1:19–25: “Know this, my beloved brothers: let every person be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger; for the anger of man does not produce the righteousness of God. Therefore put away all filthiness and rampant wickedness and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls. But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man who looks intently at his natural face in a mirror. For he looks at himself and goes away and at once forgets what he was like. But the one who looks into the perfect law, the law of liberty, and perseveres, being no hearer who forgets but a doer who acts, he will be blessed in his doing.”

The context of James 1:19–25 is the public proclamation of the Word of God. The preached Word of God is to be received by the congregation with humility and reverence. Likewise, the preacher must submit himself to the authority of the Word of God. Ezra provides a poignant example of a preacher who dedicated himself to submitting to the Word of God in both his personal life and his public ministry.

- Ezra 7:10: “For Ezra had set his heart to study the Law of the Lord, and to do it and to teach his statutes and rules in Israel.”

4. Expository Preaching conforms the thinking of the believer to the mind of Christ.

By explaining Scripture in its proper context, expository preaching renews the mind by teaching believers to think according to God’s revealed truth rather than the assumptions of the world. It trains the church to follow the meaning of the text, to see doctrine in its biblical setting, and to submit every thought to the authority of Christ. Over time, this faithful exposure to God’s

Word reshapes convictions, corrects false patterns of thinking, and forms a people who increasingly discern, desire, and obey the will of God.

- 1 Corinthians 2:16: ““For who has understood the mind of the Lord so as to instruct him?” But we have the mind of Christ.”

5. **Expository Preaching prioritizes the glory of God and the majesty of Christ.**

The goal of preaching is to display the glory of God through His Word and to exalt the majesty of Christ, not to showcase human cleverness, personality, or rhetorical skill. Expository preaching keeps the preacher and congregation centered on what God has spoken, so that the sermon’s authority rests in Scripture rather than in the preacher’s creativity. When the text governs the message, God receives the glory, Christ is presented as supreme, and the church is taught to marvel at divine truth rather than human ingenuity.

- 1 Peter 4:11: “**whoever speaks, as one who speaks oracles of God; whoever serves, as one who serves by the strength that God supplies—in order that in everything God may be glorified through Jesus Christ.** To him belong glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.”

6. **Expository Preaching infuses the pulpit with power as the preacher conveys a divine message through the inspired Word.**

The power is in the Word itself, not the ability of the preacher. Martin Luther once said: “God has given the church power, and He placed that power in the Bible.”

- 1 Thessalonians 1:5: “For we know, brothers loved by God, that he has chosen you, because our gospel came to you not only in word, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction. You know what kind of men we proved to be among you for your sake.”

7. **Expository Preaching transforms lives through the Word.**

The preaching of the Word of God is the primary means the Lord uses to convict sinners, restore the wandering, and sanctify His people. Lives are changed through the faithful proclamation of Scripture because God’s Word exposes the heart, confronts sin, comforts the weary, bolsters faith, and calls His people to obedience. The Word is offensive because it tears down every thought, desire, and stronghold that rises against the knowledge of God. Yet its purpose is not merely to demolish; it also builds up, heals, plants, and produces lasting spiritual fruit. Therefore, the pulpit is God’s chief instrument for waging spiritual war and forming a holy people for Himself.

- 2 Corinthians 10:5 –6: “For the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh but have divine power to destroy strongholds. **We destroy arguments and every lofty opinion**

raised against the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to obey Christ, being ready to punish every disobedience, when your obedience is complete.”

- Jeremiah 1:10: “Then the LORD put out his hand and touched my mouth. And the LORD said to me, “Behold, I have put my words in your mouth. See, I have set you this day over nations and over kingdoms, to **pluck up** and to **break down**, to **destroy** and to **overthrow**, to **build** and to **plant**.”

8. Expository Preaching protects the flock of God from false teaching and error.

By remaining anchored to the meaning of the text, expository preaching guards the church from distortion, speculation, and false teaching. It prevents the preacher from using Scripture as a platform for personal opinions, cultural trends, or agendas, and instead requires the message to be governed by what God has actually said. When the Word is explained carefully and applied faithfully, the congregation learns to recognize sound doctrine, discern error, and measure every teaching by the authority of Scripture.

- Titus 1:9: “He must hold firm to the trustworthy word as taught, so that he may be able to give instruction in sound doctrine and also to rebuke those who contradict it.”

9. Expository Preaching produces a theologically deep and dependent prayer life in the church.

A deep knowledge of Scripture shapes both prayer and worship according to God’s revealed will. As the Word of Christ dwells richly in the church, believers learn not only what to believe, but how to pray, praise, confess, give thanks, and intercede in ways that are informed by biblical truth.

- Colossians 1:28: “Him we proclaim, warning everyone and teaching everyone with all wisdom, that we may present everyone mature in Christ.”

Colossians 1:28 gives us Paul’s philosophy of ministry: Christ is proclaimed through warning and teaching so that believers may be presented mature in Him.

- Colossians 3:16: “Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God.”

Colossians 3:16 then shows that philosophy at work in the life of the church: the Word dwells richly among God’s people, which then produces wisdom, mutual instruction, thankful singing, and worship that is saturated with Scripture.

10. Expository Preaching teaches God’s people how to truly love the Lord and obey the first great commandment to love Him with all heart, soul, and mind.

Expository preaching directly equips God’s people to obey the greatest commandment to love the Lord our God with all our heart, soul, and mind (Matthew 22:37 –38). This love is the response of the whole person before God.

- Deuteronomy 6:4–5: “Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart.”

Notice the direct connection: God’s love is commanded, and the path to obeying that love is through internalizing His words in our hearts. Expository preaching excels at this because it is fundamentally a ministry of the Word.

Conclusion

We could list more than these 10 reasons RBC must be committed to the expository preaching of the Word of God, but it is safe to say that the faithful preaching of the Word of God is the highest priority of the church. It is how God has chosen to make disciples of all nations. As churchmen and women, you have a spiritual obligation to insist that your pastors preach expositively. Preaching is how God has chosen to sanctify you and make you more like His Son, Jesus. May we be faithful to keep the charge that Paul gave Timothy: “Preach the word” (2 Timothy 4:2).

Resources for Further Study:

- *Preaching and Preachers* by Martyn Lloyd-Jones.
- *The Supremacy of God in Preaching* by John Piper.
- *Expositional Preaching: How We Speak God’s Word Today* by David R. Helm.