

Q-and-A with Dr. Patterson regarding expository preaching

Dr. Patterson answers commonly asked questions related to expository preaching.

Q: What's your definition of Expository Preaching?

A: My definition of expository preaching is helping people read the Word of God. While just about everybody in America reads, there is another sense in which most people do not really read well, so a fine expository preacher opens the text and helps the people to read and understand the Word of God.

Q: Do you believe there are any commands in Scripture that indicate Expository preaching is the only biblical method of preaching?

A: No, I do not believe there is such a command other than that we are told to "preach the Word." However, if the Bible is in fact the Word of God and we preach anything else, then we stand guilty, at the very least, for taking second best and, at worst, for being poor prophets of God. If God has said something on any subject, why would anyone suppose that his own contribution is superior to what God has said? And if God has not spoken to the matter, why would it be the subject of the preacher's discussion? Quite candidly, it is ultimate human chutzpah for the preacher to preach his own thoughtful genius when hungry people have come craving a word from the Eternal God!

Q: Do you believe Expository Preaching has to follow certain mechanics such as line by line, chapter by chapter, book by book, etc?

A: No, I do not believe that is true, although we are responsible for preaching the "whole counsel of God." Consequently, I am more determined about the preaching of all sixty-six books of the Bible during a pastor's career than I am about the mechanics of "classical exposition." The point of preaching, once again, should be to make the emphasis of the text of Scripture understood and applied to the lives of the people.

Q: Some argue that Jesus was a topical preacher. Would you support that statement? How would you argue against it?

A: The first thing to be said is that even if Jesus were a topical preacher, He has that right. After all, He is God in human flesh, and anything He says is, therefore, the "Word of God." That is something that no "preacher" can ever claim. However, in Luke 24 on the Emmaus Road Jesus clearly took the Scriptures "and beginning at Moses and all the Prophets, He expounded to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself." It is almost impossible for anybody successfully to argue that Jesus was not the chief of expositors in that regard. Frequently, he interpreted the Old Testament law and prophets to the people. He may not have followed the conventional standard rules of exposition, but, in fact, that is exactly what He did.

Q: If you had one thing to tell a young preacher desiring to be faithful to God's Word, what would it be?

A: After you have done all of your academic preparation and have your message in hand, then you must marinate it with the presence of God. You must wait upon Him until the fire falls. When the fire falls then you are ready to face the people in the power of the Spirit of God and the message will come from God through the heart of the expositor.