



EQUIPPER

The monthly e-magazine from the Church Administration and Development team of Grace Communion International

May 2013
Volume 8, Issue 5
MinDev.gci.org

Dear preacher,

This month we celebrate Ascension Day and Pentecost—vivid reminders that Jesus is alive! Though in his humanity he is absent from earth (in heaven), he sends the Spirit to form and gift the church to be his human presence (“body”) on earth.



“No, Mr. Holmes. We’re having an *inductive* Bible study.”

A key calling of the church is to be Jesus’ “mouthpiece”—proclaiming to the world his gospel. A primary gift given to the church by the Spirit to facilitate this proclamation is that of preaching. And like any gift, preaching must be opened, appreciated and put to use. Preaching is a craft that must be developed through practice and study. This issue of *Equipper* offers some resources to help.

Let me note here the importance of audience participation in the preaching event. Some of our small congregations facilitate participation by encouraging the audience to dialog with the preacher. Larger congregations must find other ways.

One approach was offered a couple of years ago in a *SermonCentral* newsletter article by Pastor Larry Osborne of North Coast Church in Vista, California. He noted that in his church, audience retention of the content of the sermons increased significantly when he began linking the focus of the sermons with discussions in the church’s small group meetings. He wrote:

The first thing I noticed was that once we started connecting our small group questions to the sermon, people were noticeably more attentive. I wish I could take credit for improved material, delivery or style. But I hadn’t changed. What had changed was the congregation’s awareness that they were going to discuss the message later in their small group. As a result, they were much more attentive.

(You may read the full article at www.sermoncentral.com/article.asp?article=a-Larry_Osborne_04_16_07&ac=true)

Here are two other helpful articles on preaching:

- *What Really Makes a Good Sermon?* by Tim Spivey
Go to: <http://www.churchleaders.com/pastors/pastor-articles/161304-what-makes-a-good-sermon.html?print>
- *Biblical Text Gives Form to Sermon* by Haddon Robinson
Go to: <http://www.preaching.com/printerfriendly/11671340/>

In Christ’s service,

Dan Rogers, superintendent of US ministers

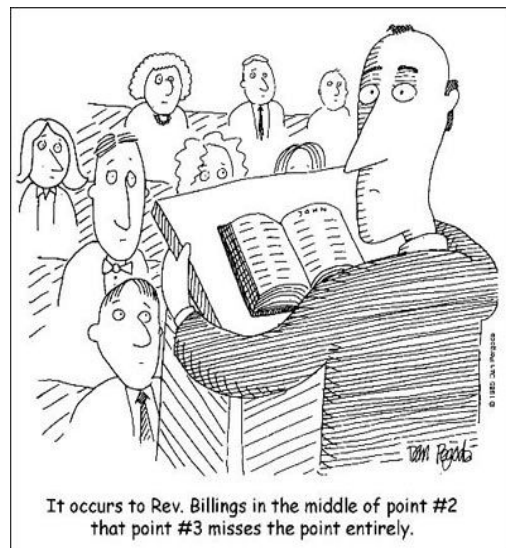
INSIDE THIS ISSUE

- 1 The gift and craft of preaching
- 2 Preaching “deeper” messages
Preaching in the present tense

PREACHING “DEEPER” MESSAGES

A couple of years back an article in *Leadership* magazine told of a survey conducted by a pastor seeking feedback on his preaching. The overwhelming response was that his members wanted “deeper messages.” The trouble was they differed on what “deeper” meant. So he dug deeper and found out that “deeper” meant at least five different things:

1. **Biblical depth:** While people aren't usually interested in the conjugation of Greek and Hebrew verbs and the opinions of commentators, they do value exploring the world of the biblical writers and connecting the broader themes found in Scripture.
2. **Intellectual depth:** Intellectual depth means answering the “why?” questions—exploring the questions raised by the text.
3. **Experiential depth:** Strong preaching not only comments on what God had to say long ago but also invites him to speak in the moment. People need to experience God.
4. **Cultural depth:** This means giving insight into current cultural issues. Thinking through our time and place in history is an essential part of contextualizing the message of Christ.
5. **Applicational depth:** Depth in sermon application provides a concrete way for people to integrate the message into their everyday lives.



PREACHING IN THE PRESENT TENSE

In a *Pastors.com* article a few years back, Warren Wiersbe told of a father who was showing his young son the wonders of the city museum. His son spoke up rather loudly and said, “Dad, let's go someplace where the people and animals are real!” And so they went to the zoo.

Wiersbe noted that though museums are great places to study the past, for most of us, a zoo is more interesting. According to Wiersbe, we tend to treat the Bible like a museum and do all of our preaching in the past tense, where our sermon becomes a history lesson instead of an exciting encounter with living truth.

We are guides in a museum, dusting off the artifacts and explaining the exhibits. And while we are lecturing, our people are saying to themselves, “We wish we could go someplace where things are alive and real!”

Wiersbe noted that preaching in the present tense requires that we exercise our imagination:

Imagination is the ability to take something old and from it make something new. It is penetrating deeper into reality so that we see relationships that we never saw before. There is nothing new under the sun, but there are new ways to understand and apply old truths.

The Bible is a book of symbols, images, parables and other forms of imaginative literature; and it is impossible to interpret it accurately without a sanctified imagination. As we better understand what the Bible record says, we can better apply it to the needs of people today. This is the work of the imagination—building a bridge of truth from an ancient Book to needy hearts today.