

Pulpit Ministry

The preaching and teaching of God's Word occupies a central and prominent place in the Sunday worship service of Liberty Community Church. The preaching of God's Word is fundamental to the life and health of the church. Through the preaching of the Scriptures the church gathering receives direction, stability, maturity and growth.

The Word of God stands totally without error (Ps 19:7-9), is completely infallible (John 10:35), and totally sufficient (2 Tim 3:16-17). The Word of God is a perfect refuge (Prov 30:5-6), because the Bible is the very truth of God (1 Thess 2:13). The Bible serves as the ultimate source of truth (John 17:17) and the solid foundation for the life and mission of the church (2 Pet 1:19-21). The Scriptures protect the purity of the church (Eph 5:26-27), protect the church's testimony (1 Pet 2:12), and declare the church's position in the world (2 Tim 4:1-5).

Liberty Community Church believes God's primary means for the delivery of His message to His people is through the exposition of His Word. Expository preaching is when the divine meaning of the text is the ultimate message of the sermon. Christian preaching identifies principles of truth evident in the biblical situation that are also present in ours.¹ A sermon is an explanation of the continuing truth principles evident in the Bible that indicate how contemporary persons should respond to a mutual condition we share with those who were the original subjects or recipients of the text in light of God's response to or provision for their situation.²

Simply put, sermons at Liberty Community Church should be Biblical, accurate, and practical, while being in context and applied appropriately to the modern listener. (2 Tim 4:1-5)

¹ Walter C. Kaiser Jr., *Toward an Exegetical Theology: Biblical Exegesis for Preaching and Teaching*, 152

² Bryan Chapell, *Christ Centered Preaching*, 106

Preaching at Liberty Community Church typically is conducted through a series of sermons through a whole book of the Bible. While there will be times when specific topical sermons are preached, they will cover biblically derived subjects, events, or characters; doctrinal topics; or theological issues. While some sermons may be on a specific biblical topic, the sermon will be rooted in a biblical text and the primary text will be preached in an expository manner.

However, the goal of preaching at Liberty Community Church is not simply the explanation of information, but the desire for heart transformation.

Expositional preaching must actively engage the listeners and compel them in order that their lives might be changed. The preacher not only explains but illustrates and applies the meaning of the text directly to the listener through a personal, passionate plea. A preacher therefore must utilize his whole personality, declaring with zeal, seriousness, warmth, and urgency, a teaching that is accurate to the biblical text, and that persuades and speaks to the fallen nature of the listeners within the congregation.³

Christian preaching at its best desires to give the congregation a sense of God and His presence, with the goal of worship, sanctification, and at times—conviction. While inadequate himself, the preacher must always view himself as handling something that is very great—the Word of God. A preacher must aim to give the listener a glimpse of the majesty and glory of God, the love of Christ, and the magnificence of the Gospel.

True preaching is *not* the opinion of the preacher. Similarly, preaching cannot follow the leading of the world and every contemporary news event dictating its topics. Christian preaching is the faithful exposition of God's Word with accurate and personal application of the timeless truths of God's message. Effective sermon application keeps in sight the fact that the nature of mankind is the same since the fall—we are all sinners in need of a Savior.

Sermon application is not merely a “to do” list for the congregation. Application of the biblical text will only be effective if it falls on hearts responding, worshipping, and controlled by the Spirit of God. For Christian preaching to be worship there must be an understanding in the mind and also a feeling in the heart of the listener. Understanding must always be the foundation of feeling. Feeling without understanding is only emotionalism built on sinking sand. For this reason Liberty Community Church does not engage in “altar calls” or other pre-planned emotional appeals.

³ Preaching & Preachers by D. Martin Lloyd Jones

While a listener must be engaged with thinking, a mere understanding *about* God that doesn't cause the listener to feel *for* God is cold intellectualism and deadness. For these reasons of the heart, the Bible continually calls us to think, to reason (Isaiah 1:18), to meditate, and to delight in the Word (Psalm 1:1-2). Effective preaching will cause the listener to worship in both spirit and in truth.

Christian preaching in our culture must be engaging with the application of the Biblical truth occurring frequently through the sermon. A typical sermon at Liberty is approximately 40 minutes, but on occasion and where needed can last 1 hour. Preaching must be bold and direct and the preacher must trust that the proclamation of God's Word will not return void. (Isaiah 55:11)

Effective Christian preaching will not simply explain for the sake of facts alone. Effective preaching won't illustrate just for the sake of entertainment. Effective preaching won't give application that becomes a rant. God honoring, church sanctifying Christian preaching will communicate God's purpose, God's provision, and God's promise to His people.

Therefore, preaching the Word of God accurately and clearly is vital for the life of the church. Christian preaching with practical, accurate application is a pillar and support of the truth in a dark and confusing world (1 Tim 3:15). The primary audience for preaching at Liberty Community Church is the believer and the saints who fellowship there. There however, must always be a gospel focus, as the meeting of the church has the potential to convict those who do not yet know Christ that God is really among us (1 Cor 14:24-25).

Without the effective preaching of the Word, the church can lose its witness and grounding in the truth. Effective preaching ensures the church does not become a bunch of distracted consumers focused on self-help, or sidetracked by worldly solutions to worldly problems. The gospel has a message to individuals, not social systems. Liberty Community Church does not advocate a social gospel or social justice focus on topics such as race and ethnicity, manhood and womanhood, and human sexuality. The Bible's teaching on each of these subjects is being challenged under the broad and somewhat nebulous rubric of concern for "social justice". If the doctrines of God's Word are not uncompromisingly reasserted and defended at these points, there is every reason to anticipate that these dangerous ideas and corrupted moral values will spread their influence into other realms of biblical doctrines and

principles.⁴ Effective Christian preaching focuses on the true gospel as the only answer to humanity's eternal problems.

Preaching at Liberty Community Church to the gathered church is conducted by men (1 Timothy 2:12), who are gifted in preaching and teaching, under the authority of the elders. Not every man is called to preach, nor is every man capable or gifted in preaching to the assembled church. The elders of the church are responsible for the care, guidance and direction of the preaching and teaching from the pulpit. Preaching of God's Word at Liberty Community Church is given primarily to an elder designated as the Teaching Elder, chosen by the other elders. The Teaching Elder serves on a full-time basis, and must be devoted, gifted and diligent in preaching and teaching (1 Tim 5:17).

Preaching is also done by the other elders (1 Timothy 3:2), by other men in the church who have the demonstrated gift of teaching, and guest speakers. But the majority of the preaching and teaching at Liberty Community Church is given to a designated Teaching Elder. There is value and stability in a man whose calling and giftedness is afforded the time and opportunity to study the Word and have multiple weeks to preach in sequence, especially in light of Liberty's commitment to expositional preaching.

Any man who preaches God's Word at Liberty Community Church must have a strong commitment and agreement that God has spoken in the Scriptures, both Old and New Testaments, through the words of human authors. As the verbally inspired Word of God, the Bible is without error in the original writings, the complete revelation of His will for salvation, and the ultimate authority by which every realm of human knowledge and endeavor should be judged. The preacher must believe in all that the Bible teaches, have a desire to communicate obedience in all that it requires, and implore others to trust in all that it promises.

The doctrinal teaching perspective of Liberty Community Church is from a reformed, literal-grammatical-historical hermeneutic, historical (apostolic) perspective (faith delivered to the saints once-for-all), (Jude 1:3, Titus 1:9). Further, a preacher should exegete the text from a cessationist (1 Corinthians 13:13-14:1-3; 1 Corinthians 14:21-22 1 Corinthians 13:8), and biblical-election predestination (Romans 8:29-30) perspective. While these doctrinal perspectives are important in the overall context of the preaching ministry, they should not be routinely overemphasized or especially focused on outside

⁴ The Statement on Social Justice & the Gospel, Introduction

of the confines of the particular text being preached, so as to overshadow the most important truth— the saving truth of the gospel.

Liberty does not want these topics avoided by any means, but they should be taught as they come up in the text, as should be done with any other “controversial” topic, such as social or other modern controversial moral topics (2 Timothy 4:2). Simply put, Liberty Community Church wants to uphold and teach a Biblical Christian worldview and framework first and not merely “put ourselves in a camp” by falling prey to labeling ourselves unnecessarily as reformed Calvinist cessationist, for example, and making those terms merely on their own, our distinctive brand. In all things, the preacher should be Biblical. The preaching perspective of Liberty Community Church is gospel focused and expositional in style.