**A Biblical Theology of Preaching**

**Jason Myer**

Jason Meyer is pastor for preaching and vision at [Bethlehem Baptist Church](http://www.hopeingod.org/)and associate professor of New Testament at [Bethlehem College and Seminary](http://www.bethlehemcollegeandseminary.org/). He is also the author of *The End of the Law: Mosaic Covenant in Pauline Theology* (New American Commentary Studies in Bible & Theology Book 6). His book *A Biblical Theology of Preaching* is divided into five parts and contains twenty–three different passages. It seems like he is indeed a pupil of John Piper whose book *Expository Exultation* contains twenty–one chapters.

Part one is titled “The Bible Picture: The Theology of the Ministry of the Word.” It is in part one that he provides the thesis for his book: ﻿“My thesis is that the ministry of the word in Scripture is stewarding and heralding God’s word in such a way that people encounter God through his word” (p. 21). For Meyer, preaching belongs in the conceptual category of “the ministry of the Word” (p. 316), which is composed of three different categories: stewarding, heralding, and encountering (p. 21). Meyer does not believe that the Bible is a textbook on preaching, but rather it is a story (p. 35). As such Meyer attempts to show throughout the book how the story of the Bible directly relates to preaching.

As a story Meyer believes the Scriptures have six narrative installments: (1) the Pentateuch (Genesis—Deuteronomy), (2) the Former Prophets (Joshua— ﻿Kings), and (3) the Writings (Ruth—Chronicles), (4) the Gospels (Matthew—John), (5) Acts, and (6) Revelation. Furthermore, the Bible contains three main commentaries that run throughout: prophetic, poetic, apostolic. Meyer states that chapter four is the most important in his book (p. 43). The reason is because it unpacks the role the word plays in the drama of Scripture. As such, Meyer provides a reader’s digest of the overarching plotline of the Bible from Genesis to Revelation. His approach is very similar to Stephen Dempster’s book *Dominion and Dynasty*, whom he often quotes throughout the book.

Part two is the largest section of the book. It contains chapters six through 16, which could be a standalone book. The main intent of this large section? To show that the ministry of the word is intertwined in the major plotlines of Scripture. He frames part two as several paradigms of stewardship. This section serves to set the context for his case for expository preaching in part three. In part three, he explores the *what*, *how*, and *why* of expository preaching. In sum, he writes, “﻿Preaching today has three r’s: re-present, represent, and respond. Preaching must: (1) re-present the word of God in such a way that the preacher (2) represents the God of the word (3) so that people respond to God” (p. 240). Therefore, he writes, “The way to preach an expository sermon is (1) to *share what* the point of the passage is, (2) to *show why* that point is the point from the passage, and (3) to *shepherd* the flock according to *where* the text leads when applied to the present circumstances of the congregation” (258).

Meyer does acknowledge that the term “expository preaching” does not appear in the bible, but the concept is “thoroughly and demonstrably biblical” (271). Meyer is not opposed to topical preaching as long as it remains under the primacy of expository preaching (p. 293). The key word for Meyer is relation to preachers and preaching is “steward.” The reason is because he believes “﻿preachers are not creators of words, but stewards of the Creator’s words.” It is through the faithful exposition of the Word of God that this stewardship is mostly manifested. Overall, Meyer’s reason for writing the book is fueled by his desire to help define what preaching truly is from a biblical standpoint, to revive a desire in others to tremble at the task of preaching, and to empower expositors to persevere in the task of expository preaching (pp. 313–315).

**Critique:**

Meyer clearly attempts to explain the *what* and *how* of preaching by providing a theological framework for biblical exposition. He successfully makes the case for the ministry of the word, which appears throughout the Bible. The ministry of the word, he contends, is not just highlighted in Scripture when words related to the word “preaching” appears in the Bible, especially the New Testament. Meyer believes this approach is way too narrow and makes the case for a broader perspective on the importance of preaching by appealing to the various contours of the narrative of the Bible.

Part two of the book runs like a commentary. Preachers looking for a solid commentary on the overall narrative of the bible will enjoy reading this portion of the book. Though this section could have been summarized in shorter fashion, it contains some very helpful insights for preachers. Meyer believes his book stands apart from other books on preaching. In his view, the vast majority of books on preaching focus on word studies and proof texting (p. 316). However, he does not pinpoint which books he is referring to. For a passive observer one can conclude Meyer believes his approach is better than others. But one must take time to consider that perhaps the books he refers to, which he does not name, did in fact intent to be narrow in their approach. One interesting fact is that Meyer does quote from many books on preaching such as some of the most famous like John Broadus’s *On the Preparation and Delivery of Sermons*, Clowney’s *Preaching and Biblical Theology*, Chapell’s *Christ–Centered Preaching*, and McDill’s *12 Essential Skills for Great Preaching*.

One of the greatest strengths of the book are its substantial references to the Bible. The reader gets the impression that Meyer indeed knows the Scripture and is fully committed to it. Furthermore, his word studies and tracing of the biblical plotline are easy to understand, allowing both trained and untrained readers to get the concepts laid out in the book. Further, Meyer’s case for the *why* of expository preaching is convincing. His six arguments for expository preaching offer a solid case for it. The reader is able to understand that expository preaching is, in Meyer’s own words, “﻿not a narrow method for preaching, but a multifaceted philosophy of preaching.”

As mentioned earlier, part two is helpful, but not crucial to the book. Perhaps it could have been shorter. Further, instead of having “part five,” Meyer could have just ended the book with chapter twenty–three as a conclusion. The book is lengthy in chapters but contains great insights. Perhaps one of the greatest weaknesses of the book is its structure. Students of the Word, however, can find great insight for making a case for preaching from the Bible. Though the book’s structure could be simplified, it does allow readers quick reference to different sections of the Bible and its message on preaching.

Today, there seems to be a rift between those who prefer the expository preaching model versus the topical model. Meyer is gracious in his approach to topical preaching. While not denying its ineffectiveness, or demonizing it, he makes the case for expository preaching as the best way that fits the biblical concept of preaching. While it was not Meyer’s goal to provide practical application for preaching, he could have provided a few tools preacher can use for preaching the Bible better. Furthermore, Meyer could have offered a few samples of his sermons to show his readers how he faithfully employs the expository preaching model.

Overall Meyer’s make his intent for writing the book very clear. He tells the reader what to look for and provides a concise definition of preaching. He falls prey to repetition and using the same references verbatim at times (i.e., p. 48 and p. 81). Though he spends more time on unpacking the concept of stewarding and heralding, while not thoroughly examining the element of encountering God through preaching, his case for preaching the Word is well substantiated.

**Significant Quotes:**

* ﻿This book is unique in that I think the whole Bible alone can give a holistic answer to what preaching is. (p. 14).
* ﻿Three big-picture biblical categories best sum up the ministry of the word in Scripture: stewarding, heralding, and encountering. (p. 21).
* ﻿My thesis is that the ministry of the word in Scripture is stewarding and heralding God’s word in such a way that people encounter God through his word. (p. 21).
* ﻿Preaching has an expository dimension because God entrusts the preacher with a specific message. (p. 24).
* ﻿When the truth is preached, the responsibility of stewardship shifts from the preacher to the hearer. (p. 27).
* ﻿This is perhaps the most important chapter in the book because it is foundational for everything else. (p. 43).
* ﻿Scripture is a story in which (1) God rules (what he does) (2) by his word (how he does it) (3) for his glory (why he does it). (p. 44).
* ﻿Therefore, Jesus’s teaching reminds us of the folly of judging the success of a sermon by the immediate responses. His words also warn preachers against hastily gauging success in ministry by the swelling or falling numbers of the crowds. (p. 192).
* ﻿They are right. Jesus cannot save others and save himself. He can only save others by staying on the cross. If he comes down, there will be no salvation to believe in. (p. 202).
* ﻿Preach to yourself often that Jesus has swallowed the wrath of God in your behalf. (p. 204).
* ﻿The cross keeps us from being too inflated by ministry success (i.e., the demons submitting to your name, or people liking your sermons) or being too deflated by a lack of ministry success (i.e., attendance is down). (p. 206).
* ﻿The apostolic ministry of the word centers on two main tasks: evangelistic preaching and authoritative guidance for the churches. (p. 209).
* ﻿A craving for global recognition makes us vulnerable to the snare of the Devil and the stronghold of pride. It is far better to aspire to faithfulness and obedience as an unworthy servant who simply does what he is commanded. (p. 221).
* ﻿The singular passion of a faithful Christian minister is to make much of the name of Christ. (p. 221).
* ﻿The pastor seeks to bring together the two things that he has studied: a specific passage of the word of God and the specific flock God has entrusted to his care and oversight. (p. 225).
* ﻿Our words cannot perform heart surgery, but God’s word can. The solution is to speak God’s word with faith in its ability to cut past all of the defensive layers and discern “the thoughts and intentions of the heart.” (pp. 227-228).
* ﻿The main battlefront for many evangelical churches is not the inspiration of Scripture, but the sufficiency of Scripture. (pp. 233-234).
* ﻿People must first agree on the philosophy of expository preaching if they are ever to agree on the practice of expository preaching. (p. 238).
* ﻿There are three phases of preaching: (1) the stewarding phase, (2) the heralding phase, and (3) the response phase. (p. 238).
* ﻿We need also to distinguish between what God can sovereignly do through preaching, even flawed preaching such as saying the right things from the wrong texts, and what we are responsible to do: preach what is true according to the content and purpose of Scripture. p. 239).
* ﻿Preaching today has three r’s: re-present, represent, and respond. Preaching must: (1) re-present the word of God in such a way that the preacher (2) represents the God of the word (3) so that people respond to God. (p. 240).
* ﻿Scripture is personal and authoritative communication from God to us (again, God preaching). (p. 240).
* ﻿The hearer should come away from a sermon with a sense that the herald really believed he was saying the very words of God. (p. 247).
* ﻿The supremacy of God in Christ is the point of the canon and all creation. (pp. 251-252).
* ﻿In short, we need the supremacy of God as a test for true preaching because people can preach the gospel of God in a man-centered way. (p. 253).
* ﻿If a sermon preached by a Christian is acceptable in a synagogue or a mosque, it is not a Christian sermon. (p. 254).
* ﻿Expository preaching is a philosophy and not merely a method; it is concerned with one’s understanding of the totality of the task of preaching. (p. 257).
* ﻿I would like to make the case that a method for expositional preaching should have three s’s: (1) share, (2) show, and (3) shepherd. (p. 258).
* ﻿… the preacher as steward and herald must say what the text says, and then the preacher as shepherd must lead the people where the text leads. (p. 261).
* ﻿Though the Bible does not contain the phrase “expository preaching,” the concept is thoroughly and demonstrably biblical. (p. 272).
* ﻿I have argued for the primacy of expository preaching, not for boycotting all forms of topical preaching. Topical preaching has its place, but only after it is placed below the primacy of expository preaching. (p. 293).
* ﻿Topical preaching (when done well) brings a great blessing to the body of Christ and should be an occasional part of a powerful preaching ministry. (pp. 293-294).
* ﻿We can always strive to preach the Savior better, but we could never preach a better Savior. (p. 306).
* ﻿Preaching is a high calling. It is not just difficult; it is impossible with man. Thankfully, God does not call the equipped; he equips the called. (p. 310).