

Preach the Word

Discussion Starters

Vol. 14 No. 6
July/August 2011



Partnering with the Pew

Proclaim Grace Key Issue #5

Use any or all of the following questions for personal reflection or group study. Feel free to pick and choose which applications interest you most; even if you only complete one or two you'll benefit.

On page 1, "Even though preaching casts the Word broadly, under-shepherds with the Good Shepherd's heart (Jeremiah 3:15) desire to make it clear that the Word proclaimed touches the deepest needs and the innermost longings of each sheep before us."

In what ways – related to method – does preaching differ from counseling or conversing with people? In what ways – related to content – does preaching differ from counseling or conversing with people?

Granting the reality of the differences you just noted, what can help us preach in such a way that our sermons have less of a "wholesale" feel to them? What can help our hearers have a clearer sense that the message of that text is indeed addressing their hearts and lives individually?

"Even more than carefulness in speaking, preaching demands accuracy of listening. Yes, that means first and foremost listening to the text, but it also means listening to my hearers. John Stott's book, *Between Two Worlds*, paints the analogy of the preacher placing one foot squarely into the life of the text and the other squarely into the life of his hearers. Our task is to connect the text's "what" to the "so what" and the "now what" of hearers' hearts and lives" (p. 1).

Typically we think of preaching as primarily speaking. Comment on the author's contention that preaching is actually primarily listening – first to our text but also to our hearers.

If listening – including listening to our hearers – is a critical element of preaching, discuss the implications for how we go about our work of preaching.

Preach the Word

Discussion Starters

“One pastor had an epiphany ... after being repeatedly asked questions such as this: ‘Does the synod have books from which you get your sermons?’” (p. 2)?

Make a list of the comments you have heard or the questions you have been asked by listeners that give evidence that at least some of our hearers may not fully understand or appreciate what preaching is all about.

With that evidence in mind, click on the three resources posted at preaching.wlsce.net that were designed to help our hearers grow in their understanding and appreciation for preaching. Identify one idea you’d like to try. Give yourself a deadline and ask a brother preacher to partner with you.

“The greatest barrier to pursuing a richer partnership resides on my side of the relationship. It’s my own pride” (p. 2).

Name a word picture from the Bible—a metaphor, parable, or word definition in an original language—that kills a preacher’s pride while at the same time enlivening his confidence as a proclaimer of God’s Word (for example, “jars of clay,” in 2 Corinthians 4:7).

Perform a word search for “pride,” “proud,” or “boast” limited to the book of Proverbs. Which counteracting, and gracious, encouragement of wisdom best applies to your preaching right now?

From page 3, “Opportunities abound to learn from our partners. In *Liturgical Preaching*, Dale Meyer develops the useful analogy of multiple ministry conversations (*homiliae*) impacting the featured Sunday conversation (*homilia*)”

Below is a list of the ideas for pre-sermon feed-in offered on p. 3. Rank the ideas from 1 (I’d like to try this immediately) to 8 (I don’t think this is for me, at least not right now). In a group setting, encourage those who have experience with pre-sermon feed-in to answer questions and offer feedback. Before ranking the ideas, feel free to add other opportunities for pre-sermon feed-in that you have heard pastors use.

- _____ use your text for sick or shut-in devotions
- _____ discuss the text at a meeting
- _____ listen to the culture
- _____ use part of an existing class to ask for comments/questions on your text
- _____ create an entire Bible class to discuss the text
- _____ seek input from select individuals
- _____ test your writing before taking it into the pulpit
- _____ inaugurate a “take your pastor to work day”
- _____ other idea(s):

Preach the Word

Discussion Starters

“Sermon work begins by listening to text and hearers (page 3). It ends by listening once more to what hearers gained from that text as preached” (p. 4).

List three challenges to post-sermon feedback where you preach, and some possibilities for overcoming them.

Consider any feed-back suggestions on p. 4, your own brainstorming, or suggestions from group discussion. What one or two ideas could be the greatest benefit to your preaching?

*Submit one idea at [Grow in Grace \(wlsce.net\)](http://wlsce.net) related to key issue #7: **Proclaiming the gospel to a storied postmodern culture**. What do you believe assists you in proclaiming law and gospel in ways that communicate to our increasingly diverse and rapidly changing culture?*