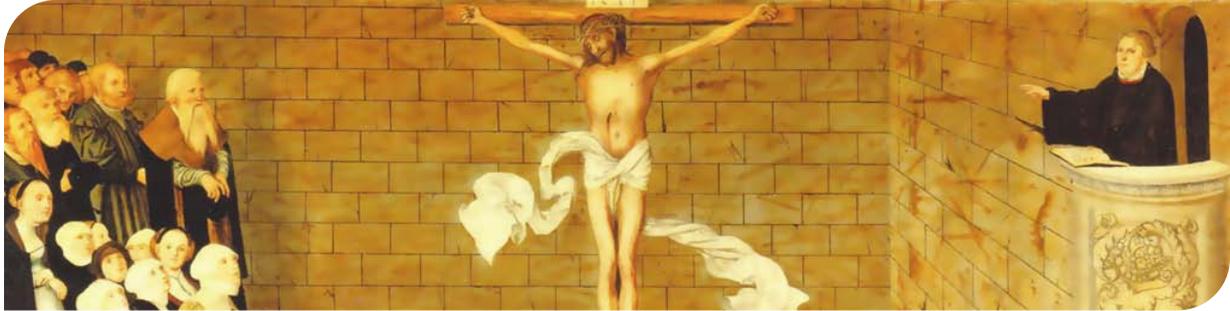# Preach the Word

Discussion Starters

Growing in Sermon Delivery that Honors the Gospel

Proclaim Grace! Key Issue #9

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.

What is the difference between preaching a manuscript and reading it? *How do these look differently? Sound differently? How do they communicate different visual or oral messages?*

"We want to craft excellent, Christ-centered sermons and then deliver them with all the skill God has given each of us" (p. 1). *Which of the following reminders about sermon delivery (p. 1) made the most impact on you?* **Explain why.**

- "While ministers spend hours every week on sermon construction, they seldom give even a few hours a year to thinking about their delivery."
- "It's a strange full-circle conundrum: while an overemphasis on delivery—vainly polishing pulpit reputation— draws attention to the speaker, so does failing to give sermon delivery sufficient attention."
- "Nervous habits we never quite overcame from seminary days can be mischievously distracting hearers from the message of Christ we wish to commend."
- "A mediocre sermon effectively delivered will strike people as a good sermon. An excellent sermon poorly delivered will strike people as an ineffective sermon."

If you have tried (regardless of your degree of success) better preparing your **preaching delivery**, share with others what exactly you've done. *Are you continuing this preparation?* **Why or why not?**

What is the difference between appropriate and inappropriate **displays of emotion** *in the pulpit?*

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When you preach a **sermon** that **lacks authenticity**, *divide the following causes (p. 2) into portions*, stating the percentage that each contributed to a delivery that lacked textually appropriate emotion (your answers should total 100%). Share with the group. Listen to others' ideas that address these concerns.

_____% "Time pressures can lead us to rush sermons to market before they've matured in our hearts."

_____% "Our emotional tank may be on 'E' if we're running ourselves ragged while simultaneously failing to find rest for our souls (and bodies)."

_____% Aversion to Pietism's emotionalism

_____% Fear of becoming pulpit actors

_____% Other

*Challenge yourself or your group to make a list of at least **7 biblical examples of someone delivering a message with emotion**. Consider making a list of 7 for each A and B below.*

- **List A**—Emotion is clearly described in the text (for example, Mark 1:25).
- **List B**—Emotion is clearly evident in the message and its context, but a specific emotion is not mentioned. *Suggest the most likely emotion that was evident in the delivery of that message (for example 2 Samuel 12:7).*

Page three (p. 3) mentioned **three common delivery problems** that can occur when a preacher has not written out a manuscript: 1) a lack of logical flow in the sermon; 2) a failure to probe the text to any depth; 3) falling into stock phrases or paragraphs of law and gospel. Imagine that you are in the pew listening to a sermon by a preacher who has not written a manuscript. *Of the following three potential delivery problems (p. 3), which of them would you most notice if you were:*

- An antsy 7-year-old?
- A distracted teen?
- A curious Bible Information Class participant with little church background?
- A seasoned member?
- A grieving widow?
- A visiting pastor?

What is the difference between an "academic paper" (p. 3) and a sermon?

***Get practical!* Try one of the suggestions under "Breaking the Paper Chain" (p. 4).** Use it for at least three sermons. After selecting your suggested practice, submit to a friend or group your written plan stating exactly when you'll preach a sermon utilizing this practice. *After preaching the three sermons, report back to your friend or group.*