

Lesson
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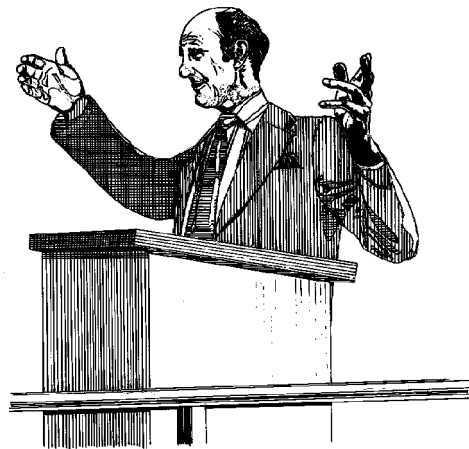
Churches Preach the Word

The Word of God is given a place of preeminence or honor in churches that recognize its authority. Pastors of these churches faithfully preach the message of God's Word to the people. Their sermons are full of its truths.

Paul, the experienced evangelist and church-planter, placed strong emphasis on preaching. He urged Timothy, his young assistant, to preach the message (2 Timothy 4:2). He also wrote about elders who work hard at preaching (1 Timothy 5:17-18).

There is no substitute for the preaching of the Word of God. Its message must be given both to believers in the church and nonbelievers outside the church. The opinions and beliefs of all people must be corrected and judged by its teachings.

In this lesson you will learn about the message that is preached. You will also discover why this message is preached and the effects it has on the lives of those who respond to it.



In this lesson you will study . . .

The Message Must Be Preached
Preaching the Word Brings Faith
Preaching the Word Strengthens Believers

This lesson will help you . . .

- Explain what message is to be preached and why it must be preached.
- Describe how preaching the Word stirs up faith.
- Realize the power of the Word strengthening your own spiritual life.

THE MESSAGE MUST BE PREACHED

Objective 1. *Identify characteristics of the message we are to preach.*

“Someday I would like to be a preacher like our pastor,” said Timothy to Mary after a Sunday morning service.

“Why?” asked Mary.

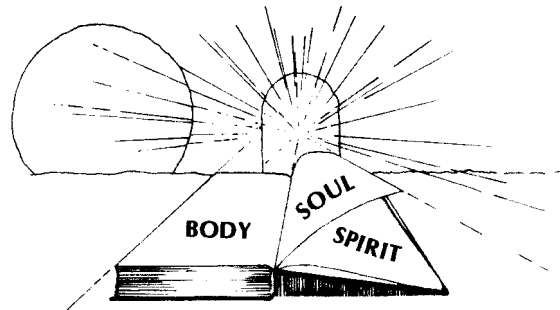
“Because I think it would be great to have God give me a message from His Word to give to people,” said Timothy. “Besides, there was a Timothy in the Bible who was a preacher.”

“You can!” Mary encouraged. “I know you can because I heard someone say that we must all preach or tell people about Jesus.”

Preaching is proclaiming a message in such a way that it commands a hearing. Its purpose is to persuade people to trust in Jesus as Savior and Lord. The apostle Paul emphasized both the basic need of mankind and the grace of God to meet that need. That meant of course that his message proclaimed the good news of salvation through faith in Christ.

The message must be Christ-centered. To the church at Corinth Paul wrote:

I want to remind you, my brothers, of the Good News which I preached to you, which you received, and on which your faith stands . . . I passed onto you what I received, which is of the greatest importance: that Christ died for our sins, as written in the Scriptures; that he was buried and that he was raised to life three days later, as written in the Scriptures (1 Corinthians 15:1, 3, 4).



The message must be *Bible-centered*, including all Scripture, and must meet the need of the whole person—body, soul, and spirit. It offers salvation for people’s souls, healing for their bodies and minds, and the baptism in the Holy Spirit to set aflame their spirits. Added to this, the gospel offers the glorious hope of the second coming of Christ. What a message!

Such a message includes not only the life of Christ as recorded in the Gospels, but the action of the book of Acts. When we preach Christ risen, we remember His promise to send the Helper (John 14:16). This promise was fulfilled at the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost. A Bible-centered message includes the whole Bible.

Preaching this message isn’t just for full time pastors or evangelists who usually preach in a formal manner. Millions of believers give the gospel in an informal way. The early church did this. Scattered by terrible persecution, laymen fled to Antioch in Syria. There they preached the gospel to Gentiles (non-Jews), telling them the good news about Jesus. As a result, a great number of people believed and turned to the Lord. These lay folks caused the founding of a new church, the first among the Gentiles (Acts 11:19-21).

A modern-day example of lay preaching comes from Ivory Coast, West Africa. Spirit-filled farmers and teachers, during their off season from work, gave several days a week to evangelism. Under the direction of their African pastors, groups went to various outposts. Dividing into small teams, they shared the good news with families sitting under shade trees. Villagers hearing the gospel from lay people like themselves accepted Jesus as Savior. As a result, many new churches were started.

Churches preach this message not only in their sanctuaries, but also in homes, in marketplaces, in evangelistic campaigns held in tents or halls, in prisons and hospitals, and in homes for the aged or for the mentally ill. We have also preached in services held on board ocean freighters, inside stone houses in mountain villages, in booths along crowded streets, and in high-rise apartment buildings of Oriental cities.



For You To Do

- 1 Which three words below would describe the message about Christ which Paul preached (according to 1 Corinthians 15:3-4)?
 - a) Born
 - b) Crucified
 - c) Buried
 - d) Risen
 - e) Ascended

- 2 Circle the letter in front of the correct completion of the sentence. A Bible-centered message is one that
 - a) begins with a passage of Scripture.
 - b) branches out from a Bible story or parable.
 - c) applies the truth of Scripture to people's needs.

- 3 Compare Acts 8:4 with Acts 13:2-5. Complete the following sentence. and preached formally in the synagogue; the who were scattered went preaching informally the message of salvation.

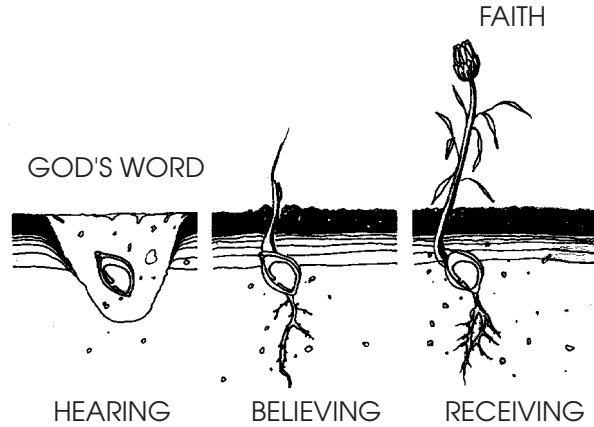
- 4 What are some of the places believers should preach the good news?
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PREACHING THE WORD BRINGS FAITH

Objective 2. *Describe the relationship between God's Word and faith.*

Let us look at Paul's church-planting ministry in Corinth. There "many other people . . . heard the message, believed, and were baptized" (Acts 18:8). First they had to hear the Word of God. The hearing of the Word then created faith in their hearts, and through faith in Jesus Christ they were converted.

God's message is . . . the message of faith that we preach. So then, faith comes from hearing the message, and the message comes through preaching Christ (Romans 10:8, 17).



The apostle John wrote his gospel for the specific purpose that his readers might believe, and that through their faith in Jesus Christ, the Son of God, they might have life (John 20:31).

After preaching a gospel message, an African invited his listeners to accept Christ. Several were converted. One man, however, seemed very distressed. The minister talked kindly to him, then read from Isaiah 53:6, “All of us were like sheep that were lost, each of us going his own way.”

The man exclaimed, “That’s me! I’ve led a terrible life. I’m only fit to be lost!”

“Don’t despair,” the preacher said. “Listen to the remaining part of the verse.” He then read, “‘But the Lord made the punishment fall on him, the punishment all of us deserved.’ Did you understand that? God laid the punishment for your sins upon Jesus the Savior who died on Calvary in your place. Do you believe it?”

“That’s what it says.”

“Then where is the punishment for your sins?” the preacher asked.

“It has fallen on Jesus.” And with these words the man raised his face and exclaimed with joy, “O thank God, I’m set free! Jesus bore my punishment!”

Saving faith for this man rose out of hearing and then believing the Word of God.



For You To Do

5 In your own words describe the relationship between faith and God’s Word.

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PREACHING THE WORD STRENGTHENS BELIEVERS

Objective 3. *State how the Word of God builds up believers.*

When Jesus faced temptation, He used Scripture as a weapon with which to defeat His enemy. For us, too, God’s Word serves as the “sword which the Spirit gives” (Ephesians 6:17) to win the victory. One of the temptations our Lord faced after fasting came in this form:

“If you are God’s Son, order these stones to turn into bread.” But Jesus answered, “The scripture says, ‘Man cannot live on bread alone, but needs every word that God speaks’” (Matthew 4: 3-4).

With that statement Jesus defeated the devil. And with that statement we are told how important God’s Word is to us—more important than our daily food.

We must eat if we are to grow and to keep up our physical strength. We must feed on the Word of God if we are to grow spiritually and to have strength to withstand temptation.

The psalmist put it this way, “How sweet is the taste of your instructions—sweeter even than honey” (Psalm 119:103). Acts 8:8 tells us that after Philip preached in Samaria there was “great joy in that city.”

We all like to be joyful, but joy does more than make us feel good. “The joy that the Lord gives you will make you strong” (Nehemiah 8:10). As we trace it back we see that the source of His joy is in His Word.

It’s His Word that gives us the message of God’s grace, His divine favor (Ephesians 1:6). When Paul was leaving Ephesus after three years of ministry there, he knew that the people would be facing new problems, so he comforted them with these words:

And now I commend you to the care of God and to the message of his grace, which is able to build you up and give you the blessings God has for all his people (Acts 20:32).



For You To Do

6 Circle the letter in front of the correct completions to the sentence. God’s Word is spiritual food that

- a) we need for spiritual growth.
- b) is like a dessert—nice but not necessary.
- c) we should be sharing with others.

7 Why did Jesus say we need God’s Word as well as bread?

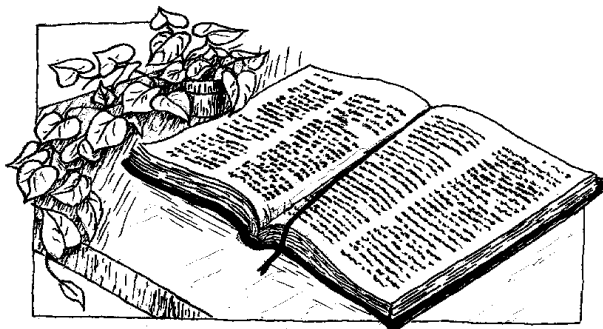
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8 Paul said that the message of God’s grace would

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Check Your Answers

- 1 b) Crucified.
c) Buried.
d) Risen.
- 5 Faith comes from hearing and believing God's Word.
- 2 c) applies the truth of Scripture to people's needs.
- 6 a) we need for spiritual growth.
c) we should be sharing with others.
- 3 Paul, Barnabas, believers, everywhere.
- 7 Bread only nourishes our physical bodies; we also need spiritual nourishment.
- 4 Your answer. You might have listed jails, rest homes, public parks, or your own backyard. As you look for opportunities you will find them.
- 8 build us up and give us God's blessings.