



re**fresh**ing
preaching

biblefresh

It could change your world

All of us would love to see our congregations do better with the Bible. This free e-resource comes as part of the biblefresh movement of churches, agencies, colleges, festivals and individuals who are working together to help the church regain confidence and appetite for the Bible.

Joining biblefresh means making a pledge as a church to raise the standard in each of the four tracks. It is up to you and your leadership team as to how you honour your pledge. There are hundreds of ideas and resources to help you do this and alongside this ebook for example the biblefresh website, and biblefresh handbook offer stacks

of resources. We would love to hear what you are doing - so registering your church on the biblefresh website will be a great help enabling us to pray for you and pass on your good ideas. Together we can help the UK church hear God's word more effectively together.

WE PLEDGE AS A CHURCH TO
READ THE BIBLE

WE PLEDGE AS A CHURCH TO BE **TRAINED** IN
HANDLING THE BIBLE WELL

WE PLEDGE AS A CHURCH TO GIVE TO MAKE
A BIBLE **TRANSLATION** AVAILABLE
IN BURKINA FASO FOR A PEOPLE
WHO HAVE NEVER HAD THE
SCRIPTURES IN THEIR LANGUAGE

WE PLEDGE AS A CHURCH TO PROVIDE THE
OPPORTUNITY FOR PEOPLE TO
EXPERIENCE THE BIBLE IN NEW
AND CREATIVE WAYS



KRISH KANDIAH EVANGELICAL ALLIANCE

WORD FOR THE WORLD

Death row is a surprisingly good place to write letters. Impending death can really sharpen the mind as to what is important, and the task of passing on wisdom to others suddenly becomes urgent.

Who would be the recipient of your last letter? What would you write?

One wise Christian leader facing imminent death decided to pen a letter to an emerging preacher called Timothy. Paul's last preserved letter (2 Timothy) is a confident testimony of a man ready to meet his Maker, but it also recognises the precarious position of their mutual calling. In Timothy's lifetime, preaching was going to become unpopular, unheard and under fire.

It would seem there has never been an easy time to preach God's word. Jesus' parable of the sower shows us that even Jesus' preaching was rejected by most kinds of people. Jeremiah was imprisoned down a well. Stephen was stoned. John was exiled. Paul was hounded out of towns by murderous crowds and eventually his preaching landed him in a prison cell on death row writing his last letter.

Nevertheless Paul presses home the need to invest in the next generation of preacher. He wants to see bold, unashamed labourers who handle the text well, who integrate life and doctrine into one seamless presentation of the gospel, who persevere under persecution, and who

are prepared to correct, rebuke, train and equip others for ministry.

In light of these scriptural imperatives and the changing culture we need to explore an important question: What does preaching need to look like in our multicultural, digital, image-soaked, biblically illiterate, global age? Does preaching need a refresh to be refreshing? We asked a wide variety of preachers and teachers to share their insights with us. We wanted some blue sky thinking, we wanted some nuggets of wisdom and we wanted a provocative kick into the future. We got all three.

In the rest of this book you will see how our contributors answered the call for one piece of advice for the next generation of preachers emerging in the UK. We discover their central passion, bugbears, and wisdom that they can pass on. This compilation is the start of a conversation as part of the biblefresh initiative. We would like you to read, reflect and comment on the biblefresh website. But we would also like you to take up the mantle to "preach the word, in season and out of season," and to equip younger faithful preachers to hold out the word of life.



Krish Kandiah is Executive Director for Churches in Mission at the Evangelical Alliance and chairs the multiagency biblefresh executive team. He is in demand as a Bible teacher, evangelist, lecturer and apologist. He has authored several books which seek to marry faithful exposition with contemporary application.

 WE WANTED SOME BLUE SKY THINKING,
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KICK INTO THE FUTURE - WE GOT ALL THREE. 


BLUE SKY

GEOFFREY STEVENSON NEW COLLEGE EDINBURGH

PROPHETIC PREACHING

If preaching is to accompany a 'Biblefresh-shaped' revival, it will undoubtedly take forms that would seem strange to past practitioners. But as Richard Lischer observed, "Almost every reform movement in the church whether Franciscan, Dominican, Lollard, Brethren, Lutheran, Presbyterian, or Methodist, has meant not only a revival of preaching but a re-forming of its method of presentation." Rumours of preaching's demise may yet prove greatly exaggerated.

Whatever else it does, it will still need to be part of the church's prophetic witness to society. Prophetic preaching would be ill-advised to try to be predictive preaching. Remember the American tele-evangelist Pat Robertson? In 1981 he was asked, "Does the Bible specifically tell us what

is going to happen in the future?" His reply: "It specifically clearly, unequivocally says that Russia and other countries will enter into war and God will destroy Russia through earthquakes, volcanoes." Well, perhaps time will prove him right (although the exegesis seems a little suspicious

to me).

Nor is there much scope in prophetic preaching for castigating society, Amos-like, with threats of divine wrath. The lambasting and criticising of society by 'Disgusted, of Tunbridge Wells' is just too easy, and one suspects it achieves very little but letting off steam. Angry fulminations from the preacher may bind a group together in some ways, but do little to empower them to be God's agents of change. Such hand-wringing also allows Christianity's 'cultured despisers' to pigeonhole and sideline us once again as moaning minnies, impotent if not actually destructive.

Instead of predicting doom or thunderously complaining, prophetic preaching should be attempting to bring witness of God's word to the world. And even then only rarely do we see a prophet-witness in the line of Mandela or Martin Luther King. More commonly, but still with humility and baited breath, forward-looking preachers are called to represent to the surrounding culture two things: the standards of God and the merciful grace of God. Prophetic preaching tells it like it is, refusing to ignore the elephant in the corner that is our hoarded

wealth, our dispirited apathy, our lack of compassion, our blind eye or our ability to walk by on the other side. But instead of reducing us to guilt-ridden wrecks, prophetic preaching also leads people, to use Walter Brueggemann's marvelous phrase, into an "imaginative 'or'". This preaching tells new stories and recasts old narratives to help people re-imagine the future as one that is suffused with God's grace even - and especially in the midst of failure, and marked by redemptive purpose. Prophetic preaching does not claim that the Church is right and society is wrong, nor that faith has all the answers. Prophetic preaching questions and challenges the world to bring all to God; to bring to God its questions, its sufferings, its lack of peace, and its inability to heal itself. And these can be brought to God with the expectation that moving forward with hope in God's mercy is viable and altogether desirable through faith in Jesus Christ.

Geoffrey Stevenson *teaches preaching and communication at New College, Edinburgh as well as freelance writing and teaching. Before his PhD (in homiletics) at Edinburgh he was Director of the Centre for Christian Communication at St John's College, Durham, and he worked for 20 years as an actor, specialising in mime and physical theatre. He has edited The Future of Preaching to be published by SCM in October 2010.*

FORWARD-LOOKING PREACHERS ARE CALLED TO REPRESENT TO THE SURROUNDING CULTURE TWO THINGS: THE STANDARDS OF GOD AND THE MERCIFUL GRACE OF GOD.

GRACE



DEREK TIDBALL AUTHOR OF *MINISTRY BY THE BOOK*, IVP



COMMUNICATING CONTENT

Dear emerging preacher,

You are about to embark on one of the most significant tasks a human being can undertake: to be a channel of the voice of God! Don't believe those who say that words no longer have impact and image is all. That's rubbish, as any one in the public eye knows! Words have a huge impact, especially when filled with the life-changing power of the Holy Spirit.

My concern is that you get the right balance between the twin poles of preaching; namely, communication and content.

We have some brilliant communicators in our evangelical world. They are entertaining and wonderful story-tellers. Their illustrations are to die for and their use of words awesome. They arrest the attention and maintain it throughout. Their angle lines up with contemporary culture brilliantly. They are crystal clear. They are riveting. They are worth studying. Choose a few of them (not just one or you'll be a clone, rather than yourself) as models to improve your own skills of communication. What is it that they do effectively and why? How can you imitate them, while remaining yourself?

The sad thing is that some of these very entertaining communicators have little to say. Their content is thin, if not completely absent. Or it is confused and misleading. They use the Bible as a drunk uses a lamppost: more for support than illumination. They decide how and what they want to say and look around for support in the Bible, often yanking a verse out of its setting and mangling its meaning in the process. I've heard some entertaining nonsense and even heresy preached from some high profile evangelical platforms. And that is dangerous for the church. So, study scripture and study it hard. Be sure you know what you're talking about: not only the particular passage you are dealing with but how it fits in the overall scheme of things. Otherwise you may be true to the passage but wrong about its significance.

Preaching is an awesome responsibility - make sure you know that what you are saying is trustworthy. I wouldn't want a doctor who doesn't know much about medicine, and yet I frequently meet preachers who tell me - even boast to me - that they don't know much about the Bible. That's criminal! The doctor is only dealing with your

physical body. The preacher is dealing with your eternal destiny.

Content is as important as communication. There is no point in being a brilliant communicator if you have nothing reliable to say. Communication is as important as content. There is no point in having the most brilliant (and theologically correct) content if you present it in a boring manner and no one listens.

As different personalities most of us will naturally tend to one of these poles of preaching. Some could talk engagingly about anything. Communication comes naturally. Some are natural scholars and are more at home with ideas than how to convey them. Know yourself and compensate for your natural bias. A famous definition says that preaching is 'the communication of truth through personality'. So it is. But that truth has to be researched and that personality has to be refined, not used as an excuse.

Preaching is heady work, so keep humble. Preaching is hard work, but wonderfully worthwhile. It is humbling to discover how God uses our words to bless others, sometimes only years later. Preaching is holy work. Speaking on behalf of God is not something to be undertaken lightly. But when God calls you, do not disobey.

Keep balanced!

Blessings in Christ,

Derek Tidball *began preaching at 16, in a different world! Since then he has pastored two churches, headed up the Baptist Mission Department, chaired Evangelical Alliance Council, and spent years in theological education, latterly as Principal of LST, until leaving in 2007. He taught preaching at LST and at many conferences. A prolific author, most of his writing is aimed at helping preachers in their task.*



TREAT IT WITH RESPECT AND YOU WILL HAVE A RINGSIDE SEAT AT THE WEEKLY THEATRE OF MIRACLES WHERE GOD TURNS ROCKS INTO DIAMONDS AND INTRODUCES FOREVER INTO TODAY



RESPECT

RICHARD LITTLEDALE COLLEGE OF PREACHERS



BE TRUE

Dear Future Preacher

Since you are a merchant of truth, my best advice to you is to be true in all that you do.

Be **true to the Word of God**. It is your friend, your source, your companion and your master. Do not stand behind it, neglecting your duty as its interpreter. Do not stand in front of it so that it is obscured from view. Stand beside it and point out its beauty, intricacy and depth to all who will hear.

Be **true to the people of God**. Understand them, accept them, tolerate them and love them. You must interpret them at least as much as you do the scripture - and it will be a harder job, for they are ever changing! Unless you seek with all your heart to understand them, you will be unable to build a bridge from scripture into their lives which will bear the weight of eternal truth.

Be true to the Spirit of God. Allow him to ruffle you, to inflate your tired soul or deflate your puffy ego. Listen to him in the quietness of the study and heed him in the pulpit too. His way, even when unpredictable, will always be best.

Be **true to yourself**. God chose you to be a preacher, not some better or more glamorous version of yourself. All the dents and bashes and quirks you have picked up along the way are precious, like the patina on a piece of beautiful old furniture - they add to your value as a preacher.

Preaching is a high privilege and a noble calling. Treat it with respect and you will have a ringside seat at the weekly theatre of miracles where God turns rocks into diamonds and introduces forever into today.

Richard Littledale is a Baptist minister in Teddington, and a tutor with the College of Preachers. He has written two books on preaching for the Saint Andrew Press, with another one due out in the autumn. He is a regular contributor to BBC Radio 2's *Pause For Thought*, and has a fascination with innovative and effective communication. He also writes as a columnist for the *Baptist Times*.

PETER MEAD OPERATION MOBILISATION

THE HEART OF THE MATTER

Whether it has the style of the 17th century or the 1980's, a lot of contemporary preaching feels tired. How can it be refreshed? Simply throwing contemporary solutions at preaching will create only temporary and fragile fruit. Preaching can be reinvigorated as we engage afresh with what God is really like, which will refresh our view of the Bible and consequently our view of preaching.

The Will-Centred View

What is God like? For some people it seems like He is essentially defined by His will. God is a supreme being who makes right decisions, and looks to humanity to live up to His standard of decision-making, especially moral decision-making. A God defined by rules and expectations would obviously offer us a Bible that is essentially an instruction manual to be obeyed. This view of God and the Bible will tend to result in preaching that brings pressure. It could be pressure to conform to a bruising presentation of holiness, a tendency to moralise every biblical narrative, or a form of Christianity that defines spirituality by self-focused moral monitoring. It could be pressure through exclusively pragmatic messages offering helpful hints for living (which results in pressure through endless “to-do lists” offered every Sunday).

This is not to deny that God is holy, He does have standards and the Bible gives vital instruction for living well. But surely it must go deeper than the will.

The Mind-Centred View

For some people God is not only a divine will, but also the most glorious intellect. He makes right decisions because He has all the best information. In His grace He offers His mind to humanity that we might be educated and therefore be able to live well. A God defined by intellect and information would give us a Bible that functions as an information dump. As a result of this view of God and His Word, preaching can be viewed as a merely educational endeavour. Thus the sermon is seen as a time to transfer information from God’s mind to human minds. If only we knew more, we would live better.

Again, this slight caricature is not intended to deny the information-rich nature of Scripture, which reflects a

God of revelation. We do need our minds renewed, and knowledge does have a key role to play in the development of godliness. But surely it all must go deeper than the mind and the will.

The Heart-Centred View

What if God is not the pure mind and will offered in some philosophy saturated theologies, but is the others-centred, relational, Trinitarian God offered in Scripture, who is love? What if God is a heart-centred loving and giving God who has always existed in meaningful relationships within the Godhead? Such a view of God would lead us to view the Bible as a heart-to-heart offering of Himself to us. The Bible is therefore not a hard drive our brains need to access by the USB cable of effective preaching. Rather it is a relational Trinitarian God offering captivating and compelling self-revelation for our hearts to respond to relationally. In the sermon there will be information, there will be explanation and application, but at its core there will be invitation to engage with God as He gives of Himself.

Preaching may be refreshed by tinkering with aspects of style and delivery. But genuinely satisfying refreshment will only come when we are deeply captivated by the heart of God offered in Scripture, and then share that with the hearts of listeners that they might also be gripped and transformed from the inside out.

Peter Mead is a minister with *Operation Mobilisation* and mentor with *Cor Deo* - a study and ministry program launching in early 2011. He writes on <http://biblicalpreaching.net> and teaches preaching in local church groups, as well as for *Langham Preaching* and several international Bible schools.

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BRAINS



CHRIS GREEN OAK HILL THEOLOGICAL COLLEGE

GETTING
TO KNOW

GOD'S SCALPEL

One piece of advice for the upcoming generation of preachers? Simple. "For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and spirit, of joints and marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart" (Hebrews 3:13).

The Bible is God's scalpel, a precision-made tool to change lives, hearts, thoughts and wills so that we are changed to be like Jesus. In the hands of a faithful preacher, it achieves its purpose in the lives of lost people, found people, struggling people, busy people, faithful people, exhausted people - in other words, it is God's tool to shape his church.

So, above all, know it. Make it your principal duty to know what it says, and to grow in your understanding each time you open it. This is your highest responsibility, and time spent in its study is the most loving thing you can do for your congregation. I expect the people who repair my laptop to know their stuff, and I expect the same of people who claim to know how to repair my relationship with God and his people. Soak yourself in the Bible until it is in every fibre of your thinking and speaking.

Don't listen to the voices that said you were bad at languages, and get your Greek and Hebrew to the point where you can at least read the original language with help. Know your history and doctrine so that you can spot the errors and heresies that will always float around us. Know your Bible.

The demons, of course, know every word of the Bible too, and it does them no good. Why? Because it does not lead them to repentance and faith. So make your own reading of God's word a Christ-honouring knowledge, one that first of all must change you. The best route to being a preacher who applies the Bible to the hearts and minds of your hearers is to be one who applies it to your own heart and mind first - and then do them the courtesy of assuming that the way it illuminates your life will be the way it illumines theirs. Your struggles with sin will have the same shape as theirs, as will your delight in God's promises.

Then when you stand up and speak, trust God's word. There's an old saying that a preacher is someone with a Bible in one hand and a newspaper in the other. There are various quibbles I have with that. (Why a newspaper?

Why not a painting, or an advert, or an architectural plan, or a TV guide?) But my biggest quibble is this: whatever we choose to put in the other hand, we do not 'read' it in the same way as the Bible. A newspaper is interesting, raises questions, provokes new ideas and informs me; but the Bible is God's word, to be read with fear and trembling. It judges the newspaper (or painting, or whatever), and tells us God's true values over the idolatrous ones our hearts love. So yesterday's paper is irrelevant and lines the guinea-pig hutch, but the Bible is always contemporary because God still means every word of it.

I value many things in a good preacher: clarity, relevance, good communication skills. But nothing, nothing at all, replaces faithfulness to God's word. A preacher who works hard at being fresh, clear and memorable, but whose understanding of God's word is faulty, is only making error fresh, clear and memorable.

And finally, work with God's word until it achieves God's plan for it. He did not inspire Hebrews so that people would leave church thinking, 'At last! I've always struggled to understand the argument of chapter 3, and that sermon was so clear!'. No, the preceding verse to the one we began with says, 'Let us therefore strive to enter that rest, so that no-one may fall by the same sort of disobedience.' Preach the Bible so that it does its deep work in people's hearts, minds and wills, and so they leave church knowing what they must do to obey Christ.

Chris Green *is ordained in the Church of England, has worked in various churches, and is currently Vice Principal at Oak Hill Theological College, where he teaches preaching, mission and church leadership. He has written commentaries on 2 Peter, Jude, 2 Timothy and Acts, and among other books has edited a volume of essays on preaching. Chris is married to Sharon, with two sons, Edward and Alex, and enjoys music, reading and watercolour painting.*

PREACH THE BIBLE SO THAT IT DOES
ITS DEEP WORK IN PEOPLE'S HEARTS,
MINDS AND WILLs

PREACH



DAVE NEWTON YOUTH FOR CHRIST

THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO STARBUCKS

Having sat most Sundays in many churches over 36 years of life, I have probably been submitted to 149,760 minutes of preaching, not including the many conferences I have attended.

So why is it that when I sit in the car on a regular 3 hour journey, the first thing I do, after fastening the seatbelt, is select the latest preaching podcast? It's not because I welcome self-inflicted torture, in fact most of the time I really enjoy listening and if I'm honest, when I'm not listening to others I tend to be having a go myself on a church platform, school hall or prison chapel. All this said, is it time we hung up our preaching boots, turned off our microphones and found another way to communicate the Christian tradition?

I was provoked recently as I read and hung out with Leonard Sweet who took some time to apply and explain his E.P.I.C. theory to the context of preaching. Sweet believes that anything that is going to survive in the

'Postmodern Storm' will have these four key principles at their core:

E Experiential

People need more than cognitive understanding of God and who He is, they need to encounter and experience Him. '(1) *Jesus is not a two dimensional, make believe deity... He leads us into all-consuming experiences of life*' Our preaching needs to do so much more than talk about God. We need to carry with us the person of Jesus into our communication; allowing people to experience Jesus Himself.

P Participation

We need to look at ways of not simply entertaining, or even just engaging others in our preaching: we have to aspire to achieve genuine involvement. We need to think about how themes, content, style and the physical location of the preacher(s) journeying and learning together from many rich and diverse traditions rather than many being told to agree with one.

I Image Rich

How do we take our communication beyond a predictable film clip and a simple PowerPoint presentation (often badly produced with one or more typos and low resolution images)? Sweet suggests as a church, we need to drink

deep on the wealth of imagery in the biblical text. We must find 'Killer Metaphors' that resonate and stick with the listener/participator. Paint verbal pictures, display quality images, create authentic works of art. If a picture really does tell a thousand words, how short could our preaching be? Our preaching needs to go far beyond clever Audio Visuals to take people to a place where they see, sense and encounter the richness of God, who he is and what He has for us.

C Connected

People long to connect, know where they fit in and share their ideas, thoughts and experience with others. It is interesting that much of our preaching today is one directional, we sit people in rows for minimum interaction and place the 'PREACHER' on a stage to ensure they are at a safe distance. In his book Sweet (2) talks about the coffee company Starbucks not only providing you a personalised drink in a well presented cup but also allowing you full access to a community living room to enjoy the contents of that cup with others.

As I speak to young people and young adults up and down the country my desire is to communicate in a way that causes the listener to join in and recognise that they are not a spectator but a participant in the mission of God. I see it as part of my role to expand people's vision of God, encouraging them to imagine and experience His power in a way that stirs them to action. I want to get people talking about God on the doorsteps and the high streets, I believe in a future of preaching that looks like this!

Dave Newton is the Director of National Ministries for Youth for Christ He has 16 years of experience in youth work having worked in various settings including local authority, church and Christian organisations. He is passionate about mobilizing and motivating young people in mission and has recently completed his Masters Degree in Mission and Evangelism, with Cliff College and Manchester University. He enjoys speaking on a range of issues including youth ministry, leadership and mission.

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RICHNESS

[1] Sweet, L. *Gospel According to Starbucks*, Water Brook Press 2007 p32

[2] Ibid, p131

DOTHA BLACKWOOD MOORLANDS COLLEGE



DELIVERING
PIZZA

When I was asked to write this, I first thought – BUGBEAR!!!! Yes, that’s what I’ll focus on – a chance to talk about the things that really get me going, negatively. Then that word ‘negatively’ smiled at me (metaphorically that is), and so I thought (re-thought) why not accentuate the positive? There are so many positive encouraging things to say that I am taking the liberty of saying more than one.

When I was at college, a fellow student, Karl Martin, (now Minister of Morningside Baptist Church, Edinburgh) shared in Chapel that his dad (the late Roger Martin) always seemed to go away when the difficult passages were to be preached and when Karl asked his dad about this, Roger would often say: ‘Son, just tell them God loves them.’ Good advice I think, and one that I sometimes reflect on and remind myself of when faced with those difficult passages.

However, although that is a good thing to pass on, it’s Roger and Karl’s thing. So I thought about what things I would want to pass on, and I came up with a few:

1. Read the Bible. Just read it. Get familiar with the stories, how they fit together and as you read, read yourself into the story. That is, put yourself in the shoes of one of the characters in the story or the hearers – live it. These were real people with real emotions and facing real life situations. How would you react if it were you? Scriptures come alive for me when I ‘enter the text’ in this way.

2. When you do preach whichever passage/message you choose to focus on, remember you are just the ‘Pizza delivery boy or girl.’ In my view, sometimes we want to not only deliver the pizza (the message), but we want to enter the homes of our hearers, cut up the pizza and tell them

how to eat it and which bits to eat first. Trust God with that job. He does it better anyway. Take seriously Peter’s advice: ‘If anyone speaks, he should do it as one speaking the very words of God...’ (1Peter 4:11a); remembering that God’s word will not return to him empty but will accomplish *his* desired purpose (Isaiah 55:11). Please note however, that the actual ‘making of the pizza’ involves hermeneutics, exegesis of the text, seeing the text in its context, (historical and literary), finding the focus and function of the passage and being faithful to the text.

3. Finally, my dad said it best when he said, if God gives you a two-minute word, do not preach for an hour!

Dotha Blackwood is currently a lecturer in Theology and Biblical Studies, and Director of Practical Training at Moorlands College in Dorset. She was born and educated in Jamaica, moving to England in 1993 to become Director of the International Accelerated Mission’s Bible School in London, where she was also Church Leader with New Life Assembly at Dalston before becoming an Associate Minister at the Dulwich church. Dotha is a Graduate of Spurgeon’s College, with a Masters degree in Christian Doctrine after successfully completing her BD there.

READ THE BIBLE. JUST READ IT. GET FAMILIAR WITH THE STORIES, HOW THEY FIT TOGETHER AND AS YOU READ, READ YOURSELF INTO THE STORY. THAT IS, PUT YOURSELF IN THE SHOES OF ONE OF THE CHARACTERS IN THE STORY OR THE HEARERS – LIVE IT.

CHARACTERS

CHRISTOPHER BLAKE CLIFF COLLEGE

WHAT SHOULD WE DO?

My Dear Sam,

I was so thrilled to get your letter this morning and to read that you are feeling called by God to train as a preacher. I have prayed for you – and for all my great nephews and nieces – every day since you were born and I will be praying especially for you as you begin your training over the coming weeks and months.

It was so kind of you to write and tell me the news and especially kind of you to remember the times when you have listened to my sermons in years gone by. I fear that you are over generous in your praise. I do know that anything I have done as a preacher has not been in my own strength but in the strength of God who called me to that task and who has now called you in a similar way.

You ask if I have one key piece of advice for a new preacher. That's a hard question. There is much that I could pass on to you – most of it learnt the hard way through my own mistakes! – but as I've thought about your question there is perhaps one important truth that I do want to pass on to you – and that's about making sure that you preach in such a way that enables people's lives to be changed.

As I think about this, I go back to that first sermon preached on the day of Pentecost – I'm sure you know how it goes – but it's in Acts chapter 2 if you want to look it up. Peter preaches his heart

out – making links between the actions of the Holy Spirit that the crowd has witnessed and the words of what we call the Old Testament and leading the crowd to see the real significance of the life of Jesus. At this point the crowd calls out “What should we do?” Peter’s explanation of how they should respond led to some mass baptisms and three thousand new members of the group of followers of Christ!!

I’ve always tried to keep that question in my mind and to imagine as I’ve prepared my sermon for the next Sunday that the congregation will shout out to me “What should we do?” and I’ve always tried to give an answer to that imagined question. The answer will be different week by week of course – and often in the same congregation different people will be challenged by God to respond in different ways – but to leave the question unanswered can mean that what is spoken in the pulpit is more of a lecture and less of a sermon.

For a sermon to be a sermon there must always be the application – that moment when an answer is given to the imagined question “What should we do?” At times that response will be seen in a renewed commitment to prayer and Bible study, at other times it might be expressed in more involvement in social action or in campaigning for justice – and always it should include the possibility that for someone in the congregation, the action that is required is to take the first step of faith.

Well, your old great uncle has rambled on too long. But thank you so much for your letter – I thank God for his call on your life – there is nothing more challenging – but nothing more worthwhile than the role of a preacher. I will continue to pray for you and don’t forget that cry from the crowd “What shall we do?”

With love as always

Great Uncle Jim

Christopher Blake is Principal of Cliff College, an Evangelical Bible College set in the Peak District National Park. Chris is a Methodist Minister who has previously served as an Industrial Chaplain in East London, as Minister of a growing church in Dorset and as a Methodist Regional Minister in Cornwall. He is particularly interested in the study of preaching and apologetics.

SIMON STEER LONDON SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY



THE HEARER'S PERSPECTIVE

When I was pastoring a church in the States, my fellow ministers and I made a point of meeting with a family or a small group of single folk in the church a week or two before we were due to preach on a particular bible passage.

We would ask the family or group to read the bible passage and to respond to it in any way that they chose: raising questions, doubts, insights, personal stories illustrating the passage, applications to their own lives. The pastor due to preach on the passage would then spend an hour or so with the family or group (in their home, workplace, a café or wherever but not at church), listening, taking notes, prompting further questions.

I found this an incredibly useful part of my preparation as it gave me a 'hearer's' perspective on the passage. I was compelled to consider how the passage related to the everyday concerns of different individuals: their working lives, their relationships, their moral and spiritual challenges. When meeting with a family, I was made aware of different generational and gender perspectives, while meeting with a group of singles would (at least sometimes), highlight the concerns of a group who can often be marginalised in church life. The process also brought to my attention points of confusion or misunderstanding that I otherwise would not have been aware of and highlighted the teaching role of the preacher. More positively, I was often amazed by the remarkable insights

into the biblical text, frequently from the most 'unlikely' people, (including those who were not yet followers of Jesus), a valuable reminder that the Bible is the people's book before it is the preacher's. From the congregation's point of view, I believe the process encouraged a genuine sense of participation in the preaching ministry of the church and encouraged at least some to be more attentive sermon listeners! While I would not say that this process determined my approach to preaching any given text, it undoubtedly enriched my thinking and provided fresh angles and perspectives. As a bonus, of course, it was a great way of building relationships.

Simon Steer is the Principal of London School of Theology. Previously he served as the Principal of Redcliffe College in Gloucester, Education Director at the London Institute for Contemporary Christianity (LICCC), a pastor of two churches in the United States and with mission agencies in Indonesia and India. A keen sportsman, Simon enjoys playing cricket, golf and tennis and is a lifelong supporter of Chelsea football club. He also completed the 2009 London Marathon.

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ED MOLL ST GEORGE'S CHURCH WEMBDON

SCREWTAPE ON
PREACHING

My dear Wormwood

I see that your patient has become a Preacher. This is a serious development which will require very careful handling. Act shrewdly and he may be turned from serving the enemy and become useful to our father Below. Pay very close attention to the advice I give you here:

Remember that a preacher must first of all be a functioning Christian. Therefore keep doing all you can to undermine his faith; separate him as far as possible from his regular Bible reading and stop those prayers which make us Below shudder so. *We* know that a preacher is still an *ordinary* Christian, but there is no need to let your *patient* in on this. Rather, persuade him if you can that he is a *superior* kind of believer who need not bother with the ordinary disciplines of Christian discipleship and holy living. That will be a good start.

Second, it is vital that you curb any leanings towards a habit of serving others. For reasons we cannot fathom, the Enemy delights in service, and wants his preachers to be servants of the Word and servants of his People. It is very strange, but they really do consider 'slave of Christ' to be a title of honour. Service inspired by the example of Jesus is dangerous in any form. It is especially toxic to us when it is found in public ministry, so stifle this instinct in your patient quickly. If you do not do this, the Enemy who called your patient will equip him for his ministry so that these wretched 'servants' will multiply.

In former days I would simply have given you advice. In this new age of management speak (with which our side has been so successful on earth), I must give it to you as Performance Targets:

You must persuade your patient to stop being faithful to the Enemy's word. He still submits his considerable intellect to Christ's will: we cannot tolerate such abject worship. Our cousins in the schools of theology and of postmodern philosophy have laid the groundwork for you to loosen the roots of your patient's faith. He must seek originality over faithfulness, and see this as a virtue. He must abandon that ragged dictum that as a teacher his

duty is to teach what is true, rather than what is merely new.

You must stop your patient from *servicing* his hearers: he must put himself above them and before the text. He has a dangerous desire to use his labour and learning for *their* good rather than for his: he puts himself in their shoes as he prepares, and asks, 'what can I do to help them see and hear what God says in this passage?' He considers how he can explain the passage using words and ideas that come from *their* world. He connects every day life with the Christian life. He prays for his hearers even as he prepares, asking the Enemy to guide him to the right words, emphases and applications. All this is alarming and must be stopped at once. Show your patient how to preach complicated sermons which go right over their heads; keep him away from touching their world with his explanations and applications; and keep him away from the biblical text which we know to be so damaging to our efforts. Then his hearers will forget what a gracious God they have and delight instead in their clever preacher. This will flatter your patient's pride and drive him further from the servant attitude we find so repulsive here Below.

Your bonus depends on achieving this final objective (our recent successes in separating bonuses from performance only apply to the patients on earth): let your patient believe that his efforts are entirely responsible for any work the Enemy does in hearts and lives. Replace his servant heart with a proud one, and he may yet be ours.

Your affectionate uncle,
Screwtape.

Ed Moll is Minister of St George's Church Wembdon in Somerset and has been in parish ministry for twelve years. In addition to training and mentoring preachers in the context of the local church, he teaches at the South West Gospel Partnership Ministry Training Course, and for several years has trained and mentored leaders on CYFA/Pathfinder ventures for 11-18 year olds. He is a Facilitator with Langham Preaching's Francophone Africa team, having previously served with Project Timothy in Nairobi, Kenya.

REPLACE HIS SERVANT HEART
WITH A PROUD ONE, AND HE
MAY YET BE OURS.

SERVANT

VAUGHAN ROBERTS
PRESIDENT OF THE
PROCLAMATION TRUST

WHAT ARE YOU AIMING FOR?

A sermon should have an aim. It needs to have a clear sense of direction and of what it intends to communicate.

That is not a single point that's chosen arbitrarily from a number of different points that could be made from the passage; it should rather be driven by the thrust of the text itself. I try to follow Charles Simeon's goal: 'my endeavor is to bring out of Scripture what is there and not to thrust in what I think might be there. I have a great jealousy on this head: never to speak more or less than I believe to be the mind of the spirit in the passage I'm expounding'.

In the back of my mind I tend to ask questions such as: 'why is the passage here? What does the writer intend to communicate through it? What is the question it's answering? How would the writer summarise that answer in just a few words?' That helps to ensure the message I prepare is shaped by scripture and not imposed upon it.



CONRAD GEMPF
LONDON SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY

IRRELEVANT PREACHING

Trying to be relevant is like trying to be humble. You don't get there by setting out to do it.

When Jesus really wanted to teach someone something, he would tell them an 'irrelevant' story about make-believe characters! He left it to his hearers to make it relevant.

Cut to the truth of Scripture and you'll be relevant. Sometimes too relevant for people's tastes.

Conrad Gempf teaches New Testament at London School of Theology.

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STORY

ANDY CROFT SOUL SURVIVOR

WRITER'S BLOCK?

Someone recently quoted Charles Spurgeon saying, 'If God has called you to be a preacher, do not stoop to be a king...' A great quotation – but nothing in the world used to stress me out more than having to prepare a talk!

At those times of high stress, I would have had to restrain myself from physically attacking whoever was unlucky enough to find themselves quoting Spurgeon. I'd have paid money to have been anything but a so-called preacher.

As time and talks have gone on though, those moments are becoming less frequent. It's not that I don't have stresses, I do, but I'm learning the process that I have to go through to write a talk. I'm getting more used to the periods of sitting and thinking... dare I say it... I'm even starting to enjoy myself!

These are a few things I've learnt about writing a talk:

I need to be taught how

A few people are born with a natural ability to communicate superbly. For most of us it's a case of learning and developing. I was, and am, being taught how to preach. For the first few years of speaking I went through every talk that I gave word-by-word with a close friend – if I'm honest he wrote most of the talks for me! This isn't anything to be ashamed of, it is discipleship; it's how it's meant to work. Writing a talk as a pair is a great way to grow and improve. Find someone who's better than you, ask them to teach you, write it together.

KISS: Keep It Simple Stupid

Often we can spend hours studying a passage looking for that hidden meaning that no other preacher has spotted. I've learnt through mistakes that we can do this at the cost of the main and the plain. I've found it's more effective to communicate the obvious heart of a passage, but to attempt to do so in a new way. For example, finding powerful illustrations and bringing the passage to life with imaginative descriptions, to draw out the obvious point so it hits people in a fresh way.

Remember the point

The danger of the above is that the talk becomes about the illustrations and not the point you want people to leave with. Sometimes when writing a talk I write a one sentence summary of what I want people to leave knowing/believing and then try to be as ruthless as possible with the illustrations or stories I include. The point of a talk is not clever stories or fun illustrations, it's the point.

It will never be perfect

And that's OK; we're all still learning.

Depend on God

I don't mean this in a generic '... and then it'll all be OK' sense. I mean this in a deep and conscious survival-choosing way. Peter stood up on the day of Pentecost and preached his first recorded talk, I've read it, there are no illustrations and I haven't managed to spot a joke. It's simply the clear gospel message. Yet 3000 people responded. Why? I think the same reason why Billy Graham is probably the most successful evangelist of our times. He preached simple gospel truth – but he preached dependent on the power of God. Without the power of God we will never be effective. Depending on God even the lamest talk, the saddest jokes and the weakest insights can shape lives, win souls and strengthen God's people. As I sit in my room and attempt to cobble together something that I long to influence eternity, it's ultimately depending on God that is my hope and is what keeps me going.

Andy Croft is Associate Director of Soul Survivor. He studied theology at Cambridge and now spends most of his time helping young people and 20 somethings get into God's Word. He wanted to write something cool in this bio but couldn't think of anything so has decided to list a number of trendy sounding activities - break-dancing, skydiving, fire-juggling and astronaut training. He doesn't necessarily do any of these things.



DOT TYLER EMERGING CULTURE

JUST  **BE**

Just be. We are often asked to be 'the preacher' or 'the leader' and asked to assume various roles. What I have learned through both experience and mistakes, is that instead of assuming roles, just be. Be yourself, be honest and be real. People relate to real people with messy lives who are on the same journey of getting to know Jesus and loving Him more.

As preachers we have the huge privilege of sharing life with a group of people who will listen to us when we're authentic and honest. We don't need to know the answers or have outrageous stories. We don't need to be the best orator or have the funniest jokes. We don't want to become preachers who have such dramatic stories and lives that they leave us as a distant character at the front of a church.

From personal experience, it is the times when a preacher has shared their life and the great news of Jesus, that I have been deeply impacted and changed by the word of God.

One of the young people I work with and who is developing as a preacher put this very simply and I am a huge fan of going back to basics. We could have huge theological debates about preaching, the art of preaching and the purpose of preaching, but I would like to share the wisdom of a fresh, young voice.

"Preaching is just another word for standing on behalf of God and speaking His heart. I don't believe it should be gleaming with impressive words or anything but rather it should allow the word of God to change the person from the inside out."

The honour of preaching is a beautiful balance between allowing the word of God to work in power and being an effective vessel through which God will touch people's lives. Every time you preach, preach your message to yourself first and allow God to challenge and change you. If you're about to talk about a passage which makes no impact on your life, people will notice and will be less attentive to your message, no matter how many visuals and activities you include.

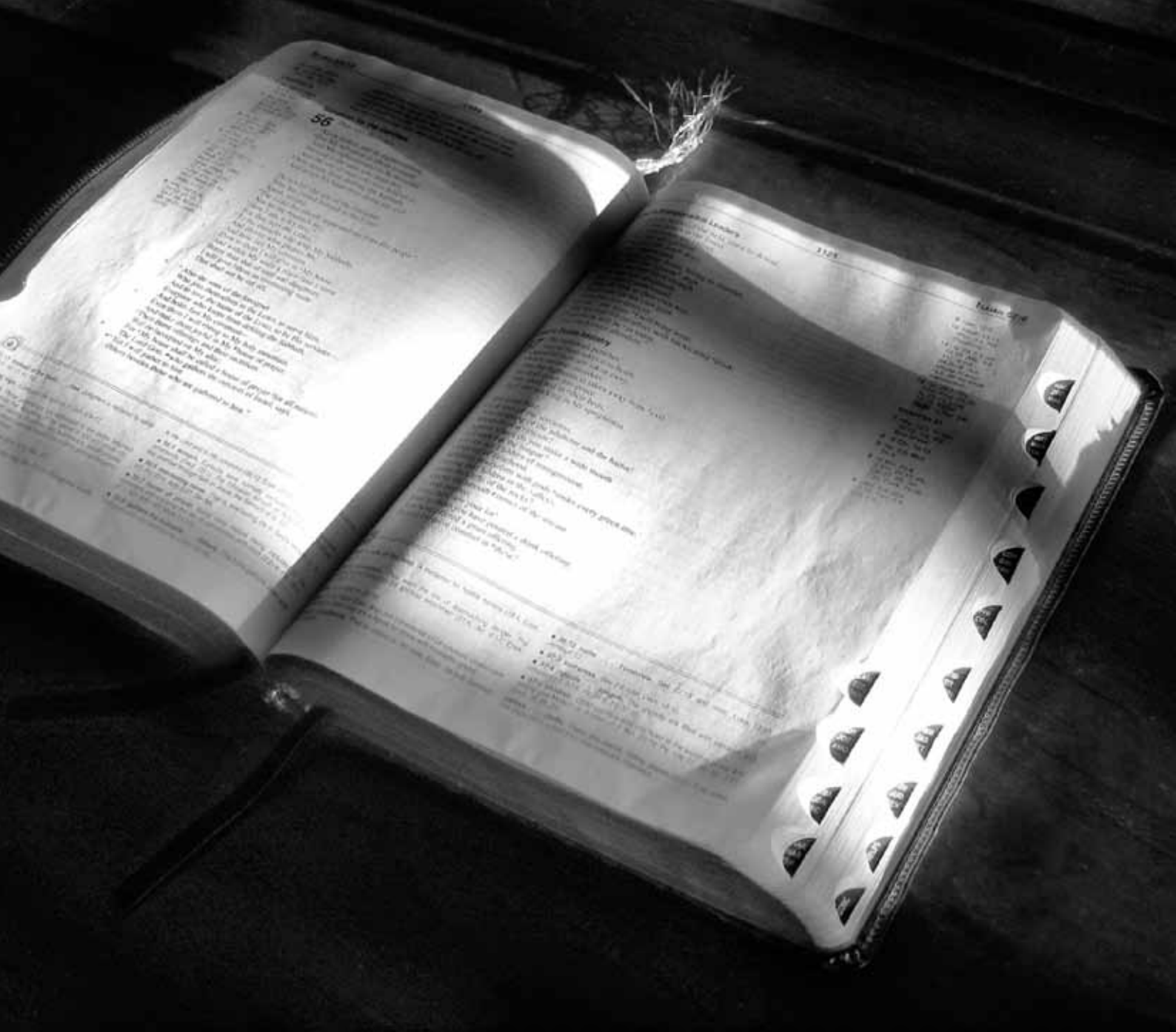
You are on the same journey as the people who are listening to you preach, so just be. Be yourself, be honest and be real.

Dot Tyler *heads up Emerging Culture, a charity committed to mobilising a generation who are dedicated to mission and passionate about justice. Emerging Culture is the teens, twenties and student wing of Share Jesus International. Dot runs a leadership training course for people aged 15-21 called FRESH and produces a free magazine called /thoughts. Dot speaks at events and conferences across the UK and is being trained by the Billy Graham Association and John Maxwell's Million Leader Mandate.*

YOU ARE ON THE SAME JOURNEY
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JOURNEY

ANDY FROST SHARE JESUS INTERNATIONAL



CHALLENGING PREACHING


I sometimes hear a sermon and think, “so that was nice but so what?” Sometimes preaching teaches me Greek words. Sometimes preaching entertains me with great humour. Sometimes preaching reminds me of good Bible stories. And these are all good things. But fundamentally if preaching fails to challenge, then I believe the sermon has failed.


Without being challenged, we will not change and we will not be inspired to change the world around us. Preaching is a call to action. It is a call to come closer to God. It is a call to receive His bountiful grace. And it is a call to engage with His mission.

Preaching must be laced with Biblical prophetic challenge... But this challenge must not only be directed to others, it must also be directed squarely at ourselves. I want to be a preacher who lives what I preach. And so whenever I preach, I stand in the pulpit challenging myself. And when I ask for a response, I know that I must be the first to respond. For if I am not willing to move to action, how can I ask others to do so?

Let's not just teach, entertain and remind... let's be preachers of challenge who call ourselves and others to action!

Andy Frost is a surf-obsessed, movie loving, bible reading, globe trotting Londoner. He is the Director of Share Jesus International and is passionate about seeing how the Church can re-connect with society and culture. Andy has graduated from Billy Graham's Young English Evangelist Institute and has also completed his YWAM Discipleship Training School. He is presently studying for his MA in Applied Theology.


 LET'S NOT JUST TEACH,
 ENTERTAIN AND REMIND... LET'S
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 WHO CALL OURSELVES AND
 OTHERS TO ACTION!


 CHALLENGE



CAUTION

GREG HASLAM WESTMINSTER CHAPEL

GOSPEL

SEMTEX

We live in a frightening *Brave New World* that appears to be in free-fall intellectually, morally and spiritually. This is the fall-out from a chain-reaction of alien ideas that gained momentum from the 1960's onwards.

Amnesiac atheistic secular humanists declared war on our biblical worldview and Christian foundations crying, 'God is Dead!' Fifty years later the results include legalized abortion, family breakdown, playground narcotics, paedophile predators, and drug-soaked self-destruction. The landscape is devastated and the victims are everywhere: the sexually abused, depressed and suicidal, trafficked children, street sleepers, junkies, corrupt city traders, bent politicians, 'wasted' clubbers, and fatherless kids - to name a few.

The only answer to this is the Gospel. The Gospel radically transforms and remakes human lives. It effects a *metamorphosis* - change from the inside out. The Bible preached in all its raw power can accomplish this. The result is 'redemptive lift', the re-creation of damaged lives. Whole communities and cultures can change for the better. Only Christ's Gospel does this.

Preachers wield lightning!

The Church could be preaching this message with lightning-bolt blasts and Holy Spirit power. Instead, we're experimenting with alternative 'quack' remedies. A recent book for church leaders urges us to give people what they want to hear. Its Youth Curriculum includes topics like 'When I see as God sees, I will do as God says', 'Purity paves the way to intimacy', and 'I must consider the interests of others ahead of my own'. This is just moralistic 'fire fighting'!

Where's the Gospel? Why aren't we laying subversive charges of Bible *Semtex* everywhere that blow people's minds - blasts like *Creation, Fall, God's Master Plan, Adam and Christ, The Cross, Trinity and Relationships, Christ's Glorious Achievements*, and much more? Our goal isn't to teach bland moralism but to re-shape millions of minds with God's 'do-my-head-in' story of Creation, De-creation, and Re-creation in Christ. Only then can relationships, moral decision-making, and our brief lives be done fully to the glory of God.

Decayed civilisations are not rebuilt with *How To Steps to Self Improvement* and 'feel-good' *Pic 'n Mix Spirituality*. Paul resolved to preach nothing '...except Jesus Christ and him crucified' among the Corinthians (I Cor. 2:2) - a sordid, broken culture if ever there was one. But this strategy radically transformed groggy Greeks and sex-addicted social climbers! Tragically, the cross is now seen as too gruesome, out-dated, and bloody offensive to do this today. People would faint on the spot if taken there! Better avoid 'tickly' subjects like sin, death, judgment, heaven or hell then, for more 'relevant' messages like 'I'm OK, You're OK'.

The Old Paths

Jeremiah's advice seems pertinent: 'This is what the LORD says: Stand at the crossroads and look; ask for the ancient paths, ask where the good way is, and walk in it, and you will find rest for your souls' (Jer. 6:16). Time spent marinating in and becoming gripped by the message of the Old and New Testaments then loudly trumpeting it, is the best way to re-discover these 'ancient paths'. This is the road to recovery. We never mature beyond the Gospel, instead we mature into it. It is God's only remedy for troubled times.

The Gospel is an announcement of *Good News* not *Good Advice*. It tells us more about what has been done for us than *what we can do*. It calls us to believe and receive, not 'Be good!' and 'Try harder!'. Christ alone can fix us up completely in body, soul, and spirit, because he became sick to death in our place on the cross. God help us if we simply shut up and stop telling people the whole truth one life at a time.

Greg Haslam is Minister of Westminster Chapel in London. He travels widely as a Bible teacher, conference speaker and writer. He has a real heart to bring Word and Spirit together through a biblical theology that is on fire. He desires to see the widespread emergence of healthy churches that can become a credible voice to our declining culture. He is the author of many articles and six books.

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MATURE

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