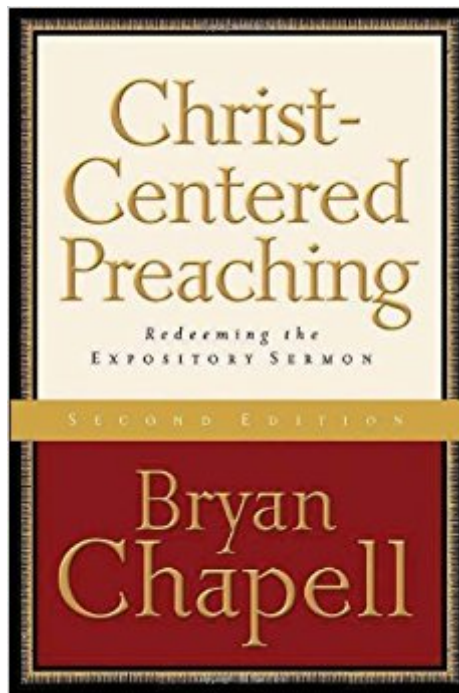




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Christ-Centered Preaching: Redeeming The Expository Sermon



Synopsis

This complete guide to expository preaching teaches the basics of preparation, organization, and delivery--the trademarks of great preaching. With the help of charts and creative learning exercises, Chapell shows how expository preaching can reveal the redemptive aims of Scripture and offers a comprehensive approach to the theory and practice of preaching. He also provides help for special preaching situations. The second edition contains updates and clarifications, allowing this classic to continue to serve the needs of budding preachers. Numerous appendixes address many practical issues.

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Customer Reviews

"Preaching that conforms to the pattern set here will certainly be edifying."

Bryan Chapell, (PhD, Southern Illinois University) is senior pastor of Grace Presbyterian Church in Peoria, Illinois. He previously served as president and professor of practical theology at Covenant Theological Seminary. He is much sought after as a speaker in churches and conferences around the country and is the author of several books.

Great resource, even after having gone through Chapell's course at Covenant Theological Seminary. Much of the content is the same, but having it written is invaluable. The sample sermons, timing guides, etc., made my first two times preaching 1000x more easy. I wasn't worried about getting the message out, and I could concentrate on not spouting heresy!! 100% recommend this book to anyone who will ever step behind a pulpit. Heck, this book should be used for basically all of

public speaking. He really breaks down how listeners hear and process information, and how to use that to connect with them. It really has changed my outlook on delivering sermons, speeches, and lessons and lectures to a large audience. I've applied the principles not only while preaching, but while teaching chemistry to college students, and while leading Bible studies. I cannot recommend this book enough. If you have access, go to iTunes U and search for "Christ Centered Preaching" to find Chapell's lectures about the topic for free download. This book is an excellent companion for the lectures, and it functions well as a standalone introduction to the same concepts.

There is a lot of helpful information in this volume on preaching solid and biblical sermons. His emphasis on a passage's Fallen Condition Focus is especially helpful, but there is almost too much emphasis on it to the point that it rather than the text and wording of the passage itself is controlling the outline. Doing this runs the risk of turning the message into a topical message rather than an expository one. Further, though approaches to preaching such as The Homiletical Plot may be interesting, they cannot rightly be called expository. Such methods may help identify the main point of a passage, but they fail to deal with the real meat of a text. I would also disagree with many of the statements regarding the stating and wording of points redundantly. Let the text be as much of the outline as possible, then tell them what you will tell them, tell them, and then tell them what you told them in the conclusion. Having said that, the book was a help overall. The appendices provided useful helps for a pastor in his various preaching situations, and the example sermon outline at the end helped provide a concrete example of the theory of sermon writing discussed throughout the work. Lastly, the presentation of the Redemptive Historical approach of Old Testament preaching was refreshing and worth rereading. I can certainly recommend the title, but would recommend reading along with Rediscovering Expository Preaching by John MacArthur and the Masters Seminary faculty.

Bryan Chapell, who is the president and professor of practical theology at Covenant Theological Seminary, has endeavored to provide a book to redeem the expository sermon (19). Based on a high view of Scripture, Chapell wants to offer practical instructions that bind the expository sermon to Scripture's truths while effectively communicating the gospel (19). It is a tall task for his book titled, Christ-Centered Preaching, but Chapell nevertheless provides a sound argument in his three-part book. Chapell begins his book by providing the reader with the basic understanding of the importance of the Word in preaching. Also in this first part of the book, he works to define his terms (i.e. expository preaching, FCF, ect.), and establish components of exposition as well. The

Fallen Condition Focus (FCF) is an important aspect for the reader, for the author continually refers to it in subsequent chapters. Chapell defines it as, "the mutual human condition that contemporary believers share with those to or about whom the text was written that requires the grace of the passage for God's people to glorify and enjoy him" (50). The author concludes that the preacher must know the FCF in order to really know what the passage is about, even if facts of the passage are known (51). These facets make-up the first part of his book titled, "Principles for Expository Preaching." Part two, which is titled, "Preparation of Expository sermons" delineate the process of putting a sermon together. These chapters could be characterized as the "nuts and bolts" chapters. The author answers many of the "how?" and "why?" questions concerning the process of how to put an expository sermon together. Chapell begins by walking the preacher through the six questions he should pose in preparing a message on a passage (104). Next, Chapell writes about the different types of outlining and structuring of sermons. Additionally, there are chapters on the different components of the sermon like, illustration and application. He provides helpful dos and don'ts for each part of the sermon. Finally, Chapell ends this section teaching his readers how to give a proper introduction and conclusion to a sermon. In this section, the author argues the preacher should explain in the introduction why hearers need to listen, which then indicates the need of the FCF in the intro (241). The third part of Chapell's book focuses on the theology of a Christ-centered message. In this short section, the author makes an argument for a redemptive approach to preaching. Based upon the FCF, this principle allows the preacher to direct every sermon to the redemption elements of Scripture because all Scripture can apply to our fallenness (273). Wrapping up the main body of the book, the author walks the reader through the development of a redemptive sermon by showing the dos and don'ts of this approach. Chapell ends the book with twelve helpful appendixes which cover topics such as, the philosophy of delivery and dress, a philosophy of style, methods of presentation and preparation, special occasion messages and a sample sermon of his. In a positive light, the title and drive of his book (i.e. expository sermons should be "Christ-centered") is supported biblically by Jesus' words in Lk. 24:27. Chapell's thesis is also supported within the wider biblical meta-narrative. Beginning with the protoevangelium of Gen. 3:15, the Old Testament seems to have messianic threads throughout the Scriptures, which points to God's salvific plan in

history. There are several other components of Christ-Centered Preaching that the author provides biblical support for. For example, Chapell finds biblical support for his famous FCF in 2 Tim. 3:16-17 (52). Additionally, in the section regarding application, the author provides 1 Cor. 10:6-13 and Rom. 4:23-25 to persuade the reader that his method is derived from the Scriptures (214, 271). With regards to the importance of application, Chapell says, "the sermon itself is a redemptive event, a present tool of the Spirit to transform listeners' minds, hears, and wills (139). This idea not only supports the importance of application, but seems to mimic the New Testament author's perspective of living the Christian life. In other words, Chapell mirrors the notion the apostles had in the 1st century and that 21st century preachers should have, which is, we are living out the metanarrative of God's redemptive plan. This, added to the broad biblical support for Chapell's ideas, indicates that he is simply following the biblical authors in his desire to feed God's sheep. Secondly, his definition of expository preaching is desirable compared to others that have been presented in the past. Chapell gives a technical definition by saying an expository sermon, "requires that it expound Scripture by deriving from a specific text main points and subpoints that disclose the thought of the author, cover the scope of the passage, and are applied to the lives of the listeners (129). The author does not limit expository preaching to a specific hermeneutical type, but simply states the expounding of the Scripture must be in accord with authorial intent, which would include typological interpretation. Chapell develops a concept from his definition by saying, "As expository preachers, our ultimate goal is not to communicate the value of our opinions, others' philosophies, or speculative meditations but rather to show how God's Word discloses his will for those united to him through his Son (31). This noble aspiration of Chapell does not presuppose a hermeneutical method before the text is even considered nor does it limit, hermeneutically, who fits into the camp of expositors. Along similar lines, Chapell presents many of his ideas in a non-dogmatic fashion. Several times the author reminds the reader that much of what he is teaching can be done differently. For example, concerning how one should divide the components of his sermon, the author writes, "Differences among congregations require pastors to vary the proportions of the expositional components (91). Also, when it comes to outlining, Chapell is simply suggesting methods and wants preachers and students to consider the composition of a sermon as a symphony that "cannot be confined to one form (161). With so much dogmatism with regards to method and structure, it is

refreshing to read that Chapell designates his views as *“tools of the trade”* (161). A part of the author’s theology behind his preaching leads him to warn against *“the deadly beauty”* of the *“tools of the trade”*. This is a unique aspect of the book, which he warns by saying, *“they exhort believers to strive to be something in order to be loved by God”* (289). This concept should be seriously considered before a sermon is preached. The consequences of such sermons is laid out by Chapell (294), but the thought that gets to the heart of what he is saying is found when he writes, *“however well intended, these sermons present a faith indistinguishable from that of morally conscientious Muslims, Unitarians, Buddhists, or Hindus. The distinction of the Christian faith is that God provides the way to himself because we cannot make our way to him”* (294). The distinguishing aspect of the Christian minister is Christ-centered preaching. Lastly, the content of the appendixes was an excellent touch at the end. These snippets of insight are great reference points for beginning preachers and can serve to help form the opinion of those looking to pursue preaching as a vocation. Graphs, illustrations and tables add significantly to the presentation of the book and provide visual aids to the content the author is trying to communicate. There are a couple of critiques that could be offered of the book. Organizationally, it seems that part three, *“A Theology of Christ-Centered Message”* would better serve the reader if it was part one of the book and subsequently the *“Principles for Expository Preaching.”* Many ideas he presents in the first part of the book connected more after I read part three of the book. For example, the FCF is presented mainly in part one of the book, but is fleshed-out pragmatically in part three (272). The author merely describes the FCF in part one, which leaves the reader questioning if they should accept this theory before seeing how it is worked out in practice. It is not until part three that the author shows biblically an example of a NT writer using the FCF concept (271). Furthermore, it seems more appropriate theology should always ground methodology. With the way Chapell presents his material, the reader may think that preaching methodology comes before theology. One aspect of the book which troubled me was the pejorative way the author used the concept of an *“academic sermon”* (178). He writes, *“yet many preachers consider the stories they tell to be a necessary evil that undermines the seriousness, scholarship and spiritual integrity of their messages. Such equivocation cannot be tolerated where souls are at stake”* (178). This idea is tied to Chapell’s continual notion that sermons should be heavy on application and emphasize the FCF (48-49). Chapell’s animosity towards sermons that emphasize teaching is seen

clearly when he commits a non sequitur. He presents information from surveys saying “born-again Christians have high rates of divorce, pornography addiction and other moral failures. From there he makes the leap to say it has something to do with a lack of application in preaching (209-210). It simply does not follow that this is the case. Even if it was the reality, how are we to determine that Christian pornography addiction is due to lack of application? Could it not simply be said that the reason for the addiction is due to a lack of deep doctrinal understanding of idolatry or any other laxity of doctrine? Chapell’s motivation for providing application in sermons is a good one, but it would be most helpful to demonstrate this using biblical example rather than using “academic” in a pejorative way or worse falling prey to logical fallacies. Even with those few criticisms, it must be said that the book should be on every preacher’s shelf. They should have a copy for themselves and also have copies available to give away to men in the congregation who feel called to ministry. It works as a good companion to similar works by Robinson and Stott. Chapell has aided ministers of the Gospel in significant ways by providing a helpful introduction to expository preaching.

I read this book as a mandatory text book in a Homiletic class in seminary. I highly recommend this book because any preaching without Christ is not Christian. Chapell is an excellent preacher, teacher and author. Anybody can follow his writing because he is very clear and plain. I took this class online in Knox Seminary and I had the opportunity to watch Chapel on the recorded videos. He is so good teaching that it is as if you are reading this book. I highly recommend it for any preacher, teacher or pastor.

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