

Enemy in the Pew

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THE PLACE OF PREACHING IN THE CONTEMPORARY CHURCH

What is the problem with regard to the place of preaching?

- preaching has moved away from the practical needs of the congregation
- preaching has become a performance of rhetoric which some members expect but which turns other members off
- the working of the Holy Spirit has not always been evident
- the preacher has not always expected much to happen as the result of his preaching
- a double standard of ethics for congregation and minister has created a barrier between them
- the development of a professional image for the minister has weakened his preaching ministry
- the language of preaching and prayers (religious jargon) has created problems
- the amount of preaching in proportion to other methods of proclamation has sometimes been out of balance (congregations have sometimes been overfed)
- the pastor role and the teaching and preaching role has been confused
- pastors have used pulpit ministry as a tool to control their congregations
- congregations have not been willing to accept the authority of preacher (it is his own opinion and not God speaking)
- the many new translations have had a part in creating problems
- the lack of opportunity for feedback between ministry and congregation has hindered his effectiveness
- some people do not consider preaching as a viable form of communicating the truth of the Word of God
- some preachers have depended too much on books rather than a personal experience with God for their sermons
- the difficulty of trying to meet the needs of congregations with people of varied backgrounds, education, etc.

What kind of preaching will survive?

- relevant preaching which has as its basis the Word of God
- preaching which gives opportunity for feedback
- preaching which expects a verdict or a response
- preaching which is an event in the lives of the congregation

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What kind of preaching will survive? (Cont'd)

- preaching which involves the congregations as a participant in the proclamation of the Word
- proclamation which is relevant to everyone in congregation, even while realizing a wide range of spiritual and intellectual maturity present
- preaching which uses the authority of the Word of God for absolutes, but not to reinforce personal opinions
- preaching which does not confuse the position of the minister with infallibility
- preaching which is born out of personal experience with God and the Bible and with interpersonal relationships with the membership
- preacher should keep abreast of contemporary problems through reading of current periodicals and books
- preaching which presents problems and also solutions (situation preaching)
- preaching which does not attempt to entertain only
- preaching which is willing to be flexible with regard to church order

What kind of response do we expect to preaching?

- we need to try to recapture some kind of spontaneous response
- the preacher needs to establish some kind of communication with congregation for the purpose of feedback on his sermons
- he may have to suggest ways how the audience can respond to his message
- he must expect a response from the audience, but the audience should also expect something of the preaching ministry
- there is a place for cell groups in the church, but these should not threaten the minister
- cell groups or similar trends are not an either/or proposition. It is not a matter of small groups versus large groups or preaching versus other modes of preaching. We need a combination of varied methods.
- dialogue in small groups may become a pooling of opinion and the omission of the authority of the Word of God
- lack of audience response does not necessarily mean anemic preaching