

What Is Preaching?

“And when there had been much disputing, Peter rose up, and said unto them, Men and brethren, ye know how that a good while ago God made choice among us, that the Gentiles by my mouth should hear the word of the gospel, and believe” (Acts 15:7).

Have you ever wondered why God chose “preaching” as one of the major ways He communicates His message to His people? Think about it. What method would you select? Perhaps some sound effects like thunder or a whipping wind. Add in a couple of visual effects such as lightning or fire from above. Maybe a view of aliens from outer space, or even some heavenly messengers (angels) would be convincing. Tap into the latest in internet or information technology, the fastest internet speed, or a few impressive power point presentations to captivate the hearer’s attention. But God chose “preaching” and the “preacher.” He picked a method, and a messenger that people could understand, relate to, and reach out and touch. People who would be able to stand in flesh and blood, and express, “This happened to me. I experienced this. It can happen to you.” God’s method works—past, present, and future.

Angels cannot adequately proclaim the gospel message, and have not been given the divine assignment. They have never experienced salvation or been redeemed. There is strength in a living testimony. Before God chooses to move through a person, He first moves in a person. A man stands in all his weaknesses, knees knocking because of fear, serving a God who revolutionized his life. He speaks a transforming message in words and a manner that others can easily understand. How does he

know the message transforms? It has radically changed his life, turning him from darkness to life, from sin to salvation, and from destruction to a heavenly destination.

With any investigation you need facts. We have a credible witness on hand. Listen in on a brief interview with a man from Tarsus.

“Paul, why not give your thoughts—and God’s thought too—on this important subject? Why did God choose “preaching” to communicate with the world? Why did He choose a frail preacher as the channel of communication?”

“Oh, I prayed several times that God would remove my weakness, my infirmity but finally received an unexpected answer.”

“And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me” (2 Corinthians 12:9).

“God told me His power works best in my weakness. It’s a dynamic combination. We are weak, fearful, and trembling but God moves with a demonstration of His Spirit and power. It is beyond human understanding.”

“And I was with you in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling. And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man’s wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power: That your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God” (1 Corinthians 2:3-5).

“Let me try to explain why God chose “preaching” and the “preacher.”

“For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe” (1 Corinthians 1:21).

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“Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men; and the weakness of God is stronger than men. For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called: But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty” (1 Corinthians 1:25-27).

Welcome back from that quick consultation. There is much more that Paul could have told us but we need to get on with the lesson. Thanks, Paul for your gracious help.

What is preaching? This question sends us to the preaching classics and textbooks for help. You can research later. I’ll do the work for you today. Here is a short list that will lend a hand in uncovering the meaning and purpose of preaching.

Preaching Is...

- “...Communication of truth by man to man.” (P. Brooks, *Lectures on Preaching*)
- “...Proclamation of the Good news of salvation through man to men.” (William Evans, *How To Prepare Sermons*)
- Effective means of communication to “inform minds, instruct hearts, and influence behavior.”
- “...Talking to people about something that is really important to them” (Warren Wiersbe, *The Dynamics of Preaching*)
- “...Helping people hear from God” (Kenton Anderson, *Preaching With Conviction*)
- The message that stands between heaven and hell (Adapted from Scott J. Hafemann).
- Proclamation of truth. (See John 17:17.)

- God’s chosen method of providing light, and bringing truth to the world. “He brought his word to light through the preaching entrusted to me by the command of God our Savior” (Titus 1:3, *NIV*).
- Reaching. If you were to remove one letter from the English word “preaching” you would have “reaching” Preaching is reaching for the lost. If there is no reaching, then there is no preaching. (See Romans 10:14-17.)
- A message from God (Judges 3:20)
- Persuading others (2 Corinthians 5:11; Jude 23; Acts 26:28). Good preaching persuades listeners to be “doers of the Word” (James 1:27).
- “...One soul pleading to another ‘Be reconciled to God’” (2 Corinthians 5:20). (Alex Montoya, *Preaching With Passion*)
- The testimony of Jesus (1 Corinthians 2:1; Revelation 1:2; 19:10).
- Witnessing about things we have seen and heard (Acts 4:20).

Which definition do you think is best? Which one best describes God’s purpose and intention in preaching? A combination of several points is great. If one had to be chosen it would probably be “helping people hear from God.”

“And Ehud said, I have a message from God unto thee” (Judges 3:20).

Preaching has been God’s chosen method of sharing His messages from the beginning. Noah is referred to as a preacher of righteousness.

“And spared not the old world, but saved Noah the eighth person, a preacher of righteousness, bringing in the flood upon the world of the ungodly” (2 Peter 2:5).

The protesting prophet, Jonah finally agreed to go to Nineveh, and his preaching brought

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national repentance sparing them from God's wrath.

"Arise, go unto Nineveh, that great city, and preach unto it the preaching that I bid thee" (Jonah 3:2).

Jesus and His disciples were involved in preaching. (See Matthew 3:1; 4:17; 10:7.)

"He went throughout every city and village, preaching and shewing the glad tidings of the kingdom of God: and the twelve were with him" (Luke 8:1).

Preaching was vital in the Book of Acts—a story about the actions of the early preachers. Its pages contain one thousand verses and three hundred of them (twenty-five per cent) are parts of sermons. The book contains twenty-three sermons or speeches.

"Therefore they that were scattered abroad went every where preaching the word" (Acts 8:4).

A close look at Acts 15:7 reveals God makes a choice in four areas: who preaches, who listens, what is preached, and the preferred response. Haddon Robinson in *Expository Preaching* assisted in understanding this principle.

God made a choice
(Acts 15:7).

"And when there had been much disputing, Peter rose up, and said unto them, Men and brethren, ye know how that a good while ago God made choice among us, that the Gentiles by my mouth should hear the word of the gospel, and believe" (Acts 15:7).

Preacher	"Through my mouth ."
Audience	"The Gentiles should hear ."
Message	"The word of the gospel."
Outcome	They should respond in faith and believe.

"It pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe" (1 Corinthians 1:21). Preaching is God's choice. The preaching task has been turned over to us as an inheritance; a trust.

"He brought his word to light through the preaching entrusted to me" (Titus 1:3, *NIV*).

God brings His Word to light through preaching.

"The entrance of thy words giveth light; it giveth understanding unto the simple" (Psalms 119:130).

Paul told Titus that preaching was entrusted or committed to us. Preachers have a call from God—a commission to preach the Word. Ministry is a trust—an inheritance, and not something we choose for ourselves. God has confidence in His chosen men. How humbling to know God has chosen us as His mouthpiece, to speak His Word to the world.

Preaching is not something a person chooses to do on his own. You do not wake up one morning and think, "Yes, I'm going to be a preacher. Look out world. Here I come." No, God does the choosing. When the choice is made we must preach!

We have just a few seconds left to return to our interview with Preacher Paul. "Do you have any closing comments on the subject of preaching?"

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“For just preaching isn’t any special credit to me-I couldn’t keep from preaching it if I wanted to. I would be utterly miserable. Woe unto me if I don’t” (1 Corinthians 9:16, *TLB*).

Study Questions

1. Why can’t angels adequately proclaim the gospel message?

2. Why are preachers ideal in proclaiming the gospel?

3. How does a preacher know that his message transforms?

4. Paul prayed several times that God would remove his weakness. What response did he receive?

5. How does God’s power work best?

6. Many definitions of “preaching” are contained in this lesson. Which one do you like best?

7. Define preaching according to Judges 3:20.

8. According to Titus 1:3, what happens in preaching?

9. How was Noah referred to in 2 Peter 2:5?

10. What happened when Jonah finally went to Ninevah?

11. Acts 15:7 allows us to know God makes a choice in four areas. What are they?

12. What does the entrance of God’s Word do, according to Psalms 119:130?

13. How is ministry considered to be a trust or inheritance?

14. What did Paul say would happen to him if he did not preach?

15. Why do you think he said this?
