

Main Idea: Because of our desire to be a God-centered church we are joyfully committed to expository preaching at WBC. In this message, we’re going to look at this God-given assignment in 2 Timothy 4:1-5 and then consider the implications for our church.

I. Expository preaching is our God-given assignment (2 Timothy 4:1-5).

- A. Here is the preacher’s task (1-2a).
  - 1. He has a God-given verbal assignment.
  - 2. He is to proclaim God’s Word.
- B. Here’s is the preacher’s target (2b).
  - 1. He will correct those who are thinking wrongly.
  - 2. He will rebuke those who are living wrongly.
  - 3. He will encourage those who are thinking and living rightly.
- C. Here is the preacher’s test (3-4).
  - 1. Guarantee #1: People do not naturally want sound doctrine.
  - 2. Guarantee #2: People will find teachers who tell them what they want to hear.
  - 3. Guarantee #3: People will turn from God’s truth to man’s ideas.
- D. Here’s the preacher’s trust (5).
  - 1. He must not crave the sensational.
  - 2. He must be willing to suffer.
  - 3. He must do the work of making good news known.
  - 4. He must fulfill His God-given ministry.

II. Expository preaching leads to some vital implications.

- A. What is it NOT?
- B. What is it? Expository preaching is making known the biblical author’s intent of a passage so that hearers will understand it and make Christ-exalting application of it in their lives.
- C. What does it take?
- D. What are some substitutes for it?
- E. What are hindrances to it?
- F. What are the benefits of it?
  - 1. You make it clear who the authority is.
  - 2. You address all the issues that God wants us to address.
  - 3. You have a Christ-centered ministry since the Bible is all about Him.

I’m excited to announce a new series today. The title is, “*The Joy of Being a God-Centered Church: The DNA of WBC.*” This summer we want to glorify God by answering the question, “Who are we as a church?” And the answer is this. Simply put, we enjoy being a God-centered church!

This means, simply, that *God* is the basis for how we see ourselves, what we value, and how we function. Since we are His workmanship, individually and corporately (Eph 2:10), we give God glory by working out what He is working in us (Phil 2:12-13). What is it that He has worked into our DNA as a church that now shapes how we function?

Because we value God, we prioritize twelve, God-exalting commitments, which bring us great joy, and which we’ll consider this summer, one per week. And here’s where we begin. *Our Joyful Commitment to Expository Preaching.*

In a sense, all the other commitments rest upon this one. As a church, we cherish the activity of expository preaching. Why? We find the answer in today’s text.

*Scripture Reading: 2 Timothy 4:1-5*

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<sup>\*\*</sup> Note: This is an unedited manuscript of a message preached at Wheelersburg Baptist Church. It is provided to prompt your continued reflection on the practical truths of the Word of God.

<sup>1</sup> For a previous look at this passage, see the message preached at WBC 9/18/11 in our series, “Nine Marks of a Healthy Church.”

There are a lot of churches in our area. Several years ago, I did a quick count of the churches listed in our yellow pages came up with around 140 churches. That's quite a few churches (though not as many as you might think, in light of the fact that there are 80,000 people in our county, divided by 140, that's 571 people per church), and that's a good thing knowing there are so many places where people identify themselves as followers of our Savior, Jesus Christ. And yet, for people who don't go to church, that can be a very confusing thing too. You know as well as I do that while there are some similarities between those 140 churches, there are also some significant differences. And I don't mean the more obvious differences, like how old they are (some, like WBC, have been around for over a century, while others are quite young), the architecture of their buildings, worship styles, the programs they offer, and of course, differences in doctrine.

In Mark Dever's book, *What Is a Healthy Church?*, he identifies nine marks of a healthy church. It's a good book, and I recommend it.

What makes a church a *healthy* church? Sadly, not all churches are healthy. Many are struggling, we might say *sickly*. So what's true of a healthy church?

A healthy church is a joyful church. A healthy church is a God-centered church. The two go hand in hand. When a church is truly God-centered, it will be a joyful church, for God is the source of true joy.

What does it mean to be a God-centered church? That's the question we want to address this summer, for His maximum glory, and our maximum joy.

For the next twelve Sundays we are going to open our Bibles and identify twelve commitments of a God-centered church. These commitments are the DNA of WBC, which God Himself has worked into the fabric of our identity. They identify who we are, why we spend our time and money the way we do. And through them we experience joy. Here they are, and we'll be looking at one per week, the Lord willing.

*Our Joyful Commitment to Expository Preaching*

*Our Joyful Commitment to Preaching the Whole Counsel of God*

*Our Joyful Commitment to Sovereign Grace in the Conversion of a Sinner*

*Our Joyful Commitment to God-centered Evangelism*

*Our Joyful Commitment to Church Membership*

*Our Joyful Commitment to Biblical Church Leadership*

*Our Joyful Commitment to Growing Disciples through Progressive Sanctification*

*Our Joyful Commitment to Targeted Discipleship (Biblical Counseling)*

*Our Joyful Commitment to Church Discipline*

*Our Joyful Commitment to Prayer*

*Our Joyful Commitment to Spiritual Reproduction*

*Our Joyful Commitment to Fulfilling Our Mission, Locally and Worldwide*

So where do we begin? Because of our desire to be a God-centered church we are joyfully committed to *expository preaching* at WBC. What does that mean? In this message, we're going to answer that question in two ways. First, we want to look carefully at this God-given assignment in 2 Timothy 4:1-5. Then secondly, we'll consider the implications for our church.

#### I. Expository preaching is our God-given assignment (2 Timothy 4:1-5).

Paul wrote this letter from a dungeon prison cell. He's facing execution, and he has one consuming thought on his mind. What's going to happen to the gospel after I die? That's why he wrote to his young associate, Timothy. In chapter one he urged

Timothy to guard the gospel. In chapter two, to train men for gospel ministry. In chapter three, to persevere in the gospel. And that brings us to chapter four.

Notice verse 1, “I charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by his appearing and his kingdom.”

These are solemn words, literally, “I affirm solemnly.” The term has legal connotations. It means to testify under oath. Friends, what Paul exhorted Timothy to do carries huge implications for every person today who calls himself a minister of the gospel *and* for every church where ministers serve.

This is what a pastor is to do, and this is what a church is to expect a pastor to do. Paul left no room for misunderstanding when he told Timothy, “I charge you.” Paul spells out four guide-posts for the preacher.

**A. Here is the preacher’s task (1-2a).** The apostle begins verse 2, “Preach the Word.” Those three words make two things perfectly clear for the church leader and the churches they serve.

1. *He has a God-given verbal assignment.* That’s crucial to see in our visually driven society. Some are saying these days that preaching is out, that if we’re going to reach people for Christ, we need to get rid of the pulpit, cut the sermon, and use drama and video clips and discussion groups.

We’re not opposed to using ministry aids at WBC, but we really believe what the Spirit of God is saying through Paul in this verse. We believe that God has given the church a *verbal assignment*. God has chosen to use the ministry of proclamation to rescue sinners and transform saints. So the preacher, if he is to be faithful to his God-given task, must *preach*.

Interesting word, *preach*. It’s the Greek *kerysso*. It means to herald a message, to proclaim it before the public. In Paul’s day, they didn’t have newspapers and television and radio and internet. So if a ruler had some information he wanted to pass on to his subjects, he assigned a special herald to make the announcements to the people. The herald would travel to a city, as the Emperor’s representative, and make a proclamation in a loud, clear voice, so everyone could hear. He wasn’t to negotiate the message. He was simply to *preach* it.

Right there is the job description of every pastor. First and foremost, he is a herald. His task is to preach. But preach what? What’s the subject matter he is to herald? His thoughts on current issues? What the latest experts are saying? No.

2. *He is to proclaim God’s Word.* You mean, God has spoken? Indeed He has. Hebrews 1:1-2 says (NIV), “In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son.”

Where do find these words that God has spoken? Paul just answered that question for Timothy in the previous chapter. He gave this reminder in 2 Timothy 3:14–16, “But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have become convinced of, because you know those from whom you learned it, and how from infancy you have known *the holy Scriptures*, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. *All Scripture* is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness.

So there’s the preacher’s curriculum, the God-breathed *Scriptures*, which for Paul referred primarily to the Old Testament and a few available New Testament books. For us, this refers to the completed Bible, both Old and New Testaments.

That's the preacher's assignment. Preach what God has said, not our opinions, not the latest philosophies of men. Preach His Word.

And of course, that's exactly what Paul had been doing for the previous thirty years. Authorized by the King of Kings, he journeyed throughout the Roman world preaching the Word. Sometimes he stayed a few weeks. Sometimes longer. But his task was always the same.

First, the preacher announced the bad news. Hear ye, hear ye, I have a message from the Ruler of heaven and earth, God Almighty. His highness announces that He is not pleased with those He created in His image, for all have turned from Him, and are now under His wrath, doomed for eternal destruction. The wages of sin is death.

Then the preacher announced the good news. Hear ye, hear ye, the Sovereign Ruler announces that in His mercy He has provided a way of escape for doomed sinners. He sent His own Son into the world, Jesus the Christ, who chose to die for sinners and take the punishment they deserve. As proof that His Son's payment is enough to rescue sinners, God raised His Son from the dead in triumph. And now His Majesty offers a full pardon and an invitation to become sons and daughters in His forever family to all who will acknowledge their guilt, repent, and put their trust in His Son. This is the word of the King!

And this is the preacher's task. Preach the Word! Now, a second guidepost.

**B. Here's is the preacher's target (2b).** Notice the rest of verse 2, "Preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching."

Paul uses another military term. Be ready. NIV, *be prepared* [KJV 'be diligent']. It means "to stay at one's post." In other words, we are to preach the Word with the same diligence that a good soldier exhibits when guarding his post.

When should we preach? Paul says to do it "in season and out of season," that is, whether it's convenient or not, and whether it's popular or not. And there will be times when it is *not*.

Now, to whom should we give the Word? Who needs to hear it? Paul uses three commands (*reprove*, *rebuke*, and *exhort*) to identify three groups we need to target.

The first? *Reprove/correct* those in error. The second? *Rebuke* those in sin. The third? *Exhort*/encourage those doing well. This is the preacher's assignment as he preaches. He is to have three types of people in mind and he uses the Word to engage in three specific activities with them.

1. He will *reprove/correct* those who are thinking wrongly. At times, God's Word corrects. God's Word reveals error. God's Word reproves wrong thinking. When doctrinal error is present in the life of a person or church, the preacher must confront it. But he must not confront it by sharing his opinion, or merely citing a theology textbook, but by opening the Word of God.

Speaking personally, as your pastor I must confront wrong thinking when I preach. It's not because I don't love you, but indeed, because I do love you. Wiersbe hit the nail on the head when he said, "True preaching is the explanation and application of Bible doctrine. Anything else is just religious speechmaking."<sup>2</sup>

Friends, this is a distinctive of this church. We have agreed to use the Scriptures to reprove those in doctrinal error. We must do so. The church's joy is at stake, and thus the reputation of Christ.

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<sup>2</sup> Wiersbe, p. 254.

Notice the next verb. This too is the preacher's assignment.

2. *He will rebuke those who are living wrongly.* As a skillful surgeon uses his scalpel to remove deadly cancer cells from a patient, so the man of God must use the scalpel of God's Word to rescue a brother from the cancerous effects of sin. Friends, sin is inevitable. At times, Christians sin. If they repent, and put off their sin, praise God. But what if they don't? God has graciously given this safeguard. He has given preachers to His church who are to "rebu"ke those who have unrepentant sin in their lives. This is never pleasant, but it's so essential.

As the old saying goes, "The preacher's job is to comfort the afflicted and afflict the comfortable." This brings us to our third modifying verb. Exhort/encourage. When the preacher opens the Word...

3. *He will exhort/encourage those who are thinking and living rightly.* Thank God for this precious group of people in the church, people who are thinking rightly and seeking to live rightly! What do they need? They need a word of exhortation, or encouragement, to keep on keeping on. And how do we encourage someone who is already doing well? Give them the Word again!

God's Word does all this. By ministering the Word of God, the preacher can reprove those thinking wrongly, rebuke those living wrongly, and encourage those thinking and living rightly. And when he does this he must do it all, "with great patience and careful instruction," or as the KJV puts it, "with all longsuffering and doctrine."

Think of it this way. Ministering God's Word is like planting seeds, not shooting bullets. Our task is to teach truth, then water it with prayer, then more truth, more prayer.

This is what expository preaching is all about. We expose our hearers, not to our opinions, but to what God has said in His Word. The preacher's task is to preach the Word. But it's not a shot-gun approach. The preacher has a target in mind. He proclaims God's Word so as to reprove, rebuke, and exhort his various hearers.

Awhile back I went to the home of a person who had just visited one of our worship services. I thanked the person for coming, and they said they enjoyed it. But then they asked me a question about our music, with this comment, "You know, it's the music that makes the church."

What you think about that statement in light of our text? I love music. I love to sing, and hear you sing, Christ-exalting music. And we do a lot of singing as a church. That's a given, and a good thing. But do you think that Paul would agree that music is what *makes* the church?

It's interesting that though Paul talks about singing in other places, he doesn't mention music in his parting letter to Timothy. He doesn't say, "Timothy, make sure you teach the churches how to put together a dynamic music ministry. That's essential for reaching lost people, and for growing the saints too."

He doesn't say that. What he says, what he charges Timothy to make priority is this. Preach the Word. This is what is indispensable in God's church. Not fellowship dinners, not quality programs for the kids, not music that stirs the soul.

By the way, we ought to have a vibrant music ministry, and meaningful fellowship, and excellent children's ministries in this church, and we should do everything we can to make them as excellent as possible. But why? Not because they *make* the church, but because these are the kinds of things the preaching of the Word produces in a church. It's God's Word that calls us to exalt Christ through Spirit-filled singing (Eph 5:19), through meaningful fellowship (Acts 2:42), and through ministries that care for the little ones (Matt. 18:5).

I don't believe I'm splitting hairs here. There are many churches these days that are about a decade away from losing the gospel. Why? Because while they affirm the gospel, but aren't making it priority to *preach* it. And what we assume today, we will lose tomorrow. How do I know? It's the very subject Paul addresses next with Timothy.

A third guidepost. The preachers' task, the preacher's target...

**C. Here is the preacher's test (3-4).** "For the time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching, but having itching ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own passions, and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander off into myths."

This is serious. Paul just gave us three guarantees.

1. *Guarantee #1: People do not naturally want sound doctrine.* Most of you are here today because you have a love for the truth. You hunger to hear and know and live the truth of God's Word. But I must remind you, beloved, that this is not natural. You desire the truth because the Lord has graciously given you an appetite for it. This began when He gave you a new heart, and that happened when He regenerated you.

Last week our daughter Julie sent us a text informing us that our ten month old grandson had his first taste of walleye and perch. I chuckle, for this is the child that wanted only peanut butter and jelly sandwiches. Tastes are developed. A good parent understands this. It's why you're careful about what you give your children to eat, for what you give them creates a taste for more of the same.

Friends, people do not naturally crave the clear, careful teaching of the Bible. For some, it's because they've never experienced the new birth, and therefore don't long to hear the voice of the Savior, for He's not their Savior. For others, it's because all they've known, to put it plainly, is spiritual junk food. They've never learned to cultivate an appetite for the good food their Father knows they need.

This brings us to Paul's second guarantee.

2. *Guarantee #2: People will find teachers who tell them what they want to hear.* Watch carefully. Paul didn't say the time would come when people would quit going to church. Rather he said that people would quit going to church to hear the Word of God.

There are two types of people that are in great danger this morning. First, there's the person who right now is at home, slouching in front of his TV, with his coffee in one hand, and the remote in the other. He doesn't think he needs church, and is pretty sure he's okay on his own, and yet he's in great danger spiritually.

Then there's a second type of person. Right now, he's sitting in a "church" somewhere, but his church doesn't value expositional preaching. And that means he's not going to hear God's Word taught clearly today. So in a few moments, he'll go home, perhaps inspired to live better, but not amazed at the great God who makes it possible for him to live better, by His grace, through the work of His Son. Instead of hearing God-centered, "This is what the Lord says," he's hearing a man-centered "talk" on "Helpful Hints for Hurtful Habits."

And the truth is, he likes his church. As Paul explains, he has found a place that "suits his own desires," with teachers that say "what his itching ears want to hear."

Which person is in greater danger this morning? Some would say, "Well at least the second fellow is in church. That's a good thing, isn't it?"

Is it? He is in a church where he is being told week after week that he's okay with the One who says in His Word that he's not okay and in great need of a Savior.

It's not a new problem. In John Bunyan's classic, *Pilgrim's Progress*, Evangelist warns Christian to look out for Mr. Morality. He's dangerous, and subtly so. Why? Because he sounds good at first, and his behavior is so impressive. But he leaves out Christ. This brings us to a third guarantee.

3. *Guarantee #3: People will turn from God's truth to man's ideas.*

That's what verse 4 says. They will "turn away from listening to the truth and wander off into myths."

This is the sixth time in this letter that Paul has referred to the "truth" (2:15, 18, 25; 3:7, 8). The characteristic of people living in the last days is that they are "ever learning but never able to come to a knowledge of the truth" (3:7).

People don't naturally want to hear God's truth. It disturbs them. They'd rather hear something that would make them feel good. And so Paul says they will be attracted by "myths" (fables, man-made legends). They "turn aside," like a ship that's shifted off the right course that leads to the safe harbor, and they're heading for destruction.

Friends, look again at these three guarantees. People do not naturally want to hear sound doctrine. People will find teachers to tell them what they want to hear. And people will turn from God's truth to man's ideas. These realities are the preacher's test, and it's also the test that every church must face. Are we going to do what people don't want us to do, or what God commands us to do?

Again, the fact that people don't want to hear God's Word doesn't mean they don't need it, nor does it mean they can't develop a desire for it. They will, if the Spirit of God gives them a new heart. And what does the Spirit use to regenerate a heart that doesn't want to hear God's Word? James 1:18 tells us, "He chose to give us birth through the word of truth."

Amazing. God's Spirit uses God's Word to produce a new heart in the person who previously didn't want to hear the Word, so that now he wants to hear it!

I remember when He did that for me. Do you? I was only eleven, but I remember how excited I was when I received my own Bible, and took it to my room, and started reading it for myself. I think I started with Zephaniah (since it was only one chapter!). Later it was Hebrews. Then a Sunday School teacher encouraged me to read through the New Testament. And before long, I began to love this Book, because every time I opened this Book I experienced the joy of getting to know better the God who saved me.

There's one more guidepost. So there's the preacher's task, target, and test.

**D. Here's the preacher's trust (5).** "As for you, always be sober-minded, endure suffering, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry." God has entrusted to the preacher, and therefore to the church to whom he preaches, a work to do, a ministry, a trust. This trust involves four responsibilities.

1. *He must not crave the sensational.* Paul begins verse 5 (NIV), "But you, keep your head in all situations." Literally, "You be sober." A preacher cannot base his sermon topics on the whims of people with itching ears.

2. *He must be willing to suffer.* Bible preaching is not popular with the world. It reminds them that the mansion they're building is on a sand bar, and that's not what they want to hear. It offends them, and when they're offended they attack the preacher. So Paul says, "Endure hardship." Yet the preacher can't just hunker down. Even while he's being attacked...

3. *He must do the work of making good news known.* "Do the work of an evangelist," says Paul. It's not just the church that needs God's Word. So do those

perishing in the world. Go after them, says Paul. The preacher (and his people) must do the work that's necessary to make the good news of Christ known to them.

4. *He must fulfill His God-given ministry.* "Discharge all the duties of your ministry," says Paul. In other words, Timothy, put your hand to the plough and never look back until your ministry is finished.

Friends, this is the kind of pastor that the churches in America need today, men who do not crave the sensational, are willing to suffer, will do the hard work of making the good news known, and are in it for the long haul.

A young preacher once complained to the famous nineteenth century British pastor, Charles Spurgeon, that he did not have as big a church as he thought he deserved. "How many do you preach to?" Spurgeon asked. "Oh, about 100," the man said. To which Spurgeon wisely responded, "That will be enough to give account for on the day of judgment."<sup>3</sup>

So, this is where the joy begins for us as a church. Expository preaching is our God-given assignment. That being the case, let's talk about some implications.

## II. Expository preaching leads to some vital implications.

When I say that the first mark of a God-centered church is *expository preaching*, that should raise some questions in our minds. I want to address six questions. The second is, *what is expository preaching?* But let's back up and answer this question first.

**A. What is it NOT?** There is a lot of preaching that's called *expository* that in my opinion is *not* expository preaching. Here are a couple of examples.

1. *It's not just using the Bible in a message.* Just because a preacher opens the Bible does not mean he is delivering an expository message. Frankly, you can use the Bible to say just about anything you want to say. Politicians do it from time to time. And so do preachers. The preacher comes up with a message and then goes looking for Bible verses to support his message. That's not what Paul told Timothy to do. That's not expository preaching.

2. *It's not just going verse by verse in a message.* While expository preachers often preach through books of the Bible, the mere fact that a preacher is going verse by verse does not mean he's exposing the intent of that passage. A preacher can read a verse, then springboard to his own ideas, then move to the next verse, then springboard again to his own ideas, and work through an entire passage and never even begin to expose the biblical author's intent. That's not expository preaching.

**B. What is it?** Here's my definition. I'll say it once and then back up and work through it phrase by phrase.

*Expository preaching is making known the biblical author's intent of a passage so that hearers will understand it and make Christ-exalting application of it in their lives.*

Now let's break it apart...

*Expository preaching is making known the biblical author's intent of a passage* -- That's the preacher's task, and that's what you should always expect of the person who's opening God's Word to you, whether it's your pastor or Sunday School teacher or Youth Leader. The task is to communicate the intent of the person who wrote the passage. A moment ago I preached to you from 2 Timothy 4. The primary issue isn't, what does this passage say *to me*, but what does it *say*? What did Paul mean when he wrote those words? What's his point? There's power in a text when we get the point of the text.

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<sup>3</sup> Wiersbe, 254.



But it's not just a history lesson. If all I do is tell you what Paul told Timothy, I haven't preached an expository sermon, for Paul didn't write this text just for Timothy. The Spirit of God guided him to write these words for the good of the church, for us.

So, expository preaching is making known the biblical author's intent of a passage *so that hearers will understand it and make Christ-exalting application of it in their lives*. Both are key. We preach so hearers will *understand* AND *apply*. And not just apply to others, but *in their own lives*. And not just apply in some self-help sort of way, but with *Christ-exalting* application.

That's expository preaching, and that's what we're joyfully committed to at WBC. From this pulpit, in our Sunday School classes, and throughout our ministries. If a person is opening the Scriptures at WBC, his intent must be to make the biblical author's intent known in a way that helps hearers understand and apply it for Christ's honor.

**C. What does it take?** Here are three essentials.

1. *It requires a refusal to be novel and trendy.* Friends, there are things we must choose *not* to do if we are serious about expository preaching, and this is a big one. We must refuse to be novel and trendy. Frankly, it's impossible to stay up with the trends.

Several years ago I was having dinner with a group of pastors. One of them asked another at the table, "Do you twitter?" I was glad he didn't ask me. I thought I was on the cutting edge because I had been using Facebook! Twitter? You mean I've got to start twittering if I'm going to reach certain people for Christ? And then later, someone told me it's not "twitter" but "tweet".

I can't tell you how many mailings and phone calls we have received at the church over the years from companies trying to market their teaching materials. I remember as a young pastor thinking, "Wow, if our church is going to be relevant, we'd better get that DVD series, or that new small group series, etc." But it never ends. There's always another product to try.

Brothers and sisters, I have good news. What could be more relevant than a Book from the God who made us that He says is sufficient for life and godliness?

So, what does it take? First, it requires a refusal to be novel and trendy. Then...

2. *It requires hard and joyful work in the study.* I say *hard* because digging into the Scriptures and developing a nourishing sermon or lesson is work, exhausting at times. Laboring over words, wrestling to grasp what Paul or Peter or David meant, takes time and effort. Doing word studies and checking cross references and outlining the flow of a passage and then consulting commentaries to make sure you're not off base, takes eight to ten, sometimes fifteen or more hours per message. And I say *joyful* because looking into the pages of the Book God gave to reveal Himself to us is the highest of privileges!

It also requires hard work on the hearer's part. Brothers and sister, a sermon or Sunday School lesson won't do you any good if you're not present to hear it. It takes work on your part to arrange your busy schedule to make time to hear God's Word. It takes heart work on the part of nursery workers, and our safety team, and others, who make it possible for us to be in this room digging into God's lifechanging Word.

3. *It requires prayer.* It's not like studying your science book, young people. This book is God's Word, so to get its message we must be crying out to God for wisdom, and then crying out to God so hearers will come and receive its hope-giving message.

**D. What are some substitutes for it?** I'll mention two.

1. *Some churches don't use the Bible.* I spent the first years of my early childhood in a church like that. No one brought a Bible to church. We didn't need to because they didn't use it.

But it's not just liberal churches. There are plenty of evangelical churches today that say they believe in the Book, but don't use it very much.

Friends, there's a reason the pulpit is the central piece of furniture in our auditorium. Though we do other things in our worship, the preaching of the Word is the activity that fuels all the other God-exalting activities.

2. *Some churches use the Bible to preach about the issues they think are important.* Politics. Family. Preserving culture. There's certainly a place for addressing topics at times, and here's the best way to do it. When we preach expositional messages, going through God's Word line by line, we will preach on issues, and we will let the text determine the issues, which means, we will let *God* determines the issues.

#### **E. What are hindrances to it?**

1. *One is laziness.* I touched on this earlier. You can't be a lazy preacher and produce nourishing sermons. And you can't be a lazy hearer and benefit from them.

It takes work to listen to a sermon. Kids, I know it's hard at times to sit and pay attention, but it's worth it! God Almighty has something to say to you personally, and you don't want to miss it!

2. *Another is a high view of ourselves and a low view of God.* When we don't make expository preaching a priority, that's what it boils down to. We're saying we know better than God what we need.

3. *Another is a faulty view of spirituality.* More about this in one of our later messages, but many churches operate with a deficient view of spirituality. They think that *busy* people are spiritual, or talented people. They don't understand that we enter God's family as spiritual babies that need the Word to grow.

#### **F. What are the benefits of it?** Here are three.

1. *You make it clear who the authority is.* Every time we say let's open our Bibles and hear what God has to say to us, we're reminding ourselves that it's God who is the authority around here. Not me. Not the deacons. Not the oldest members. He is our authority, and the more you get to know Him, the more you realize it's a joy to submit to an authority like Him!

2. *You address all the issues that God wants us to address.* When we expose the message of the Bible, that's what *expository* means, we are exposing ourselves to the Book that "equips us for every good work (2 Tim 3:17)."

3. *You have a Christ-centered ministry since the Bible is all about Him.* This is so important. Some say, "Bible teaching is dry." And I say, not if we're teaching the Bible with its intent in mind. Jesus said in John 5:39, "These are the Scriptures that testify *about me*." When this book is properly opened up, and it doesn't matter whether we're talking Deuteronomy or 2 Timothy, we're going to get to know Jesus better. So a Bible-centered ministry will be a Christ-centered ministry.

That's our joyful commitment, dear friends. I invite you to affirm this commitment today. By the grace of God, WBC is committed to expository preaching.

**Closing Song:** #275 "*How Firm a Foundation*" (verses 1, 2, 3, 4)

**Communion**

**June Benediction:** Jude 24-25 (KJV)