

# The Basics of Expository Preaching

by Alistair Begg

---

*Alistair Begg emphasizes the importance of expository preaching as a means to convey the relevance of scripture to contemporary life and engage congregants effectively.*

**Duration:** 1:00:22

**Scripture:** Nehemiah 8:9-12, Luke 13:10-35, Romans 1:16-17

**Topics:** "Expository Preaching"

---

## Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of understanding the foundation of the preaching of the word of God. He acknowledges that sometimes preachers focus so much on telling people about Jesus coming into their hearts that they neglect the fundamental principles of the faith. The speaker also discusses the danger of approaching sermons with a fixed framework, which can hinder a true understanding of the text. He encourages preachers to engage in observation and to explore the various genres and elements of the text, such as narrative, parable, and lyrical or dramatic elements. The sermon concludes with a humorous remark about the tendency to focus on personal feelings rather than the deeper meaning of the scripture.

---

## Transcript

Nehemiah chapter 8 and we'll read the the opening verses. When the seventh month came and the Israelites had settled in their towns, all the people assembled as one man in the square before the water gate. They told Ezra the scribe to bring out the book of the law of Moses which the Lord had commanded for Israel.

So on the first day of the seventh month, Ezra the priest brought the law before the assembly which was made up of men and women and all who were able to understand. He read it aloud from daybreak till noon as he faced the square before the water gate in the presence of the men, the women, and others who could understand. It's an interesting little phrase that isn't it, and the others who could understand.

It's, I think it's a guide to us in terms of the way we structure our worship and learn how to banish the squawking children from our midst and encourage our our young parents to understand the same, that the benefit to them of this fledgling monster that they have on their lap is not going to be peculiarly beneficial neither to them or to the other members of the congregation. And you get into all kinds of difficulties with Jesus, you know, you're like the big bad disciples that sent the children away and all that kind of stuff. But I've long since decided I'm quite happy to be a big bad disciple in that respect because I think that the

whole point is that the nurturing of these children at their mother's breast and at the tutelage of their parents is a unique prerogative within the home and there comes a time when they do understand.

For some it will be sooner than others, but for the tiny infants they don't understand a thing and the benefit to them is small. You couldn't build a doctrine from here in NMA, at least I couldn't. We could make an attempt at it, but it is interesting, I think, that it identifies, you know, it's not a mention of Labrador dogs or something, but it was all who could understand.

And all the people listened attentively to the book of the law and Ezra the scribe stood on a high wooden platform built for the occasion. Beside him on his right stood this group of individuals and then Ezra opened the book and all the people could see him because he was standing above them and as he opened it the people all stood up and Ezra praised the Lord the great God and all the people lifted their hands and responded amen and amen and they bowed down and worshiped the Lord with their faces to the ground and the Levites whose names are there instructed the people in the law while the people were standing there and they read from the book of the law of God making it clear and giving the meaning so that the people could understand what was being read. And Nehemiah the governor and Ezra the priest and scribe and the Levites who were instructing the people said to them all this day is sacred to the Lord your God do not mourn or weep for all the people have been weeping as they listened to the words of the law.

Well I thank God for his word. Some of us can immediately identify with that final sentence there in verse 10 all the people had been weeping as they listened to the words of the law because our people are routinely weeping as they listen to us make an attempt at understanding the Bible and conveying it. What I want to do in the time that we have this morning which is now until our coffee break at 10 is return with you to some of the practical things in relationship to preaching but before I do I want to get one matter out of hand one practical issue that is that I discovered last evening something that was severely missing from my notes in relationship to Lloyd-Jones and his ministry.

One of my colleagues came to me afterwards and said that he really felt that he had the key to the nature of Lloyd-Jones's powerful preaching and that I hadn't actually fastened on to it at all and so I thanked him for the encouragement and I said well what was it and what I have for you here is a recipe from Martin Lloyd-Jones's wife Bethan who apparently made a very striking rock cake and with eight ounces of flour and four ounces of butter or soft margarine and granulated sugar and apparently Lloyd-Jones would eat seven of these before he preached and that somehow or another this is I think this is this must be the key so I'm I'm just going to give you a copy of that of the rock cake recipe and hey guys we might as well try it you know because some of us are struggling as it is so

there you are take that home and your wife's this is the mrs jones rock cake recipe this is not fictitious we didn't contrive this this is um this is the real mccoys as they say and uh you ought not to treat it lightly there you go now to talk about preaching and that's what I want to do in this 45 minutes is to enter in where angels fear to tread in many ways I want to acknowledge the wisdom of John Wilmer who was the Earl of Rochester in the 17th century in England who said before I got married I had six theories about bringing up children now I have six children and no theories and those of us who have preached for any length of time I think can identify with that when it comes to the matter of preaching the more we go from Sunday to Sunday the less we feel we know and certainly there

is no harder place to be than this place this morning when in the company of my peers I have to as it were um acknowledge before you my own peculiar challenges in relationship to these things let me begin by just saying a number of things concerning the task of preaching itself and expository preaching in particular I think that one of the reasons for the disinterest in expository preaching and we alluded to this last evening when I was talking about young seminarians coming out of their studies and not actually doing the hard work of getting down to the text of scripture one of the reasons for disinterest on the part of those who would have the responsibility as well as on the part of those who would listen is surely and sadly that so many attempts at it prove to be so horribly lifeless

and dull and in many cases thoroughly boring in other words there is in many senses a legitimate ground as to why it is that people say I don't like preaching because so much of the preaching is poor and we have to acknowledge that we are the preachers and therefore if the cap fits we must wear it surely we amaze ourselves by our ingenuity when we're able to take the text of scripture which is life-changing which is sharper than a two-edged sword and communicate it in such an ineffectual fashion to do so with all the kind of passion that you would expect from somebody reading aloud from the yellow pages and our congregation sit and say well if that is as much as he is energized by it then it's small surprise that I find myself sitting here wishing there were a window out of which I'd be

able to look now Calvin in contrast to that said that in preaching God deigns to consecrate the mouths and tongues of men to his service making his own voice to be heard in them whenever God is pleased to bless their labor he makes their doctrine efficacious by the power of his spirit and the voice which is in itself mortal is made an instrument to communicate eternal life and the voice which is itself mortal is made an instrument to communicate eternal life that of course establishes the immeasurable significance of the preacher's task and it does at the same time provide an antidote to any potential for pride because the expositor is God's servant submitting to and proclaiming God's word again Calvin I'm not going to quote him a lot this morning but perhaps this is my only other time

Calvin in his commentary on Ephesians says it is certain that if we come to church we shall not only hear a mortal man speaking but we shall feel even by his secret power that God is speaking to our souls that he is the teacher he so touches us that the human voice enters into us and so profits us that we are refreshed and nourished by it God calls us to him as if he had his mouth open and we saw him there in person I think you'd have to say that the average member of our congregations doesn't come to the preaching of the word of God with that kind of picture in mind but rather they come to sit back and relax and enjoy the show and give points for length points for humor points for a structure essentially just to give points and then on their way home and they will adjudicate over lunch

time as to how well we scored on the unwritten list that they keep in the back of their minds so we really need to pray desperately hard that God will break into our congregations to the extent that that may be the case and that God will show himself so strong by his word by his spirit that it will become apparent to ourselves and to our people that what is taking place here is something of a supernatural origin and it is that which has a supernatural impact but we're going to have to labor hard if we're going to get to this position what is expository preaching where does expository preaching begin what would make a man an expositor well first of all expository preaching quite simply is preaching which begins with the text of scripture that's so obvious that it hardly needs to be said

and yet i think it does need to be said it doesn't mean that every sermon that we preach begins with the phrase please turn in your bible to such and such a passage although that is a very good discipline for us

is a discipline for us as preachers to remind ourselves that what we're going to do needs to begin with the text to this so to the extent that it is helpful to you i would be quite happy to have 90 of my sermons begin in that way but whether we begin by saying my text is this or the passage is this or please turn in the bible to this it does mean that whatever our point of departure for the beginning of our message whether it is a current event whether it is the lyric of a song whether it is some contemporary issue that is before the congregation it immediately is clear to our

people that it is the text of scripture which is establishing the agenda of the sermon it is the text of scripture which is establishing the agenda of the sermon it is not that the expositor starts with a great idea or a wonderful illustration and then begins to search for an appropriate passage but rather that they start with scripture itself and that the scripture itself the verses under consideration establish for us and frame the content of what we are conveying that's why john staunt says it is our conviction that all true christian preaching is expository preaching and i think we're immediately on the wrong track and this happens in seminaries all the time here in the states because they teach it in this way we're on the wrong track when we think of expository preaching as a

preaching style which you can choose from a list topical devotional evangelistic textual apologetic prophetic expository choose one from the above and make it your style i would argue not at all that expositional preaching needs to be the standard of preaching whether ever whether our emphasis is devotional or whatever else it may be so that we are always anchored with our people to seeing the text of scripture establishing both the framework and the content of what is being said roy clements for whom we continue to pray rightly says expository is non-terrestrial at all in fact the terms of that which does with seminary hateless or is actually written or spoken first of all it seems the method by which the preacher decides what to say not how to say it that's a very interesting

distinction but when we grasp that then we realize that expository preaching is not then simply a running commentary on a passage of scripture but that's in the minds of many people well that's the reason i don't do expository preaching i know what expository preaching is it's just a running commentary you say now we're at verse 11 and this is what verse 11 says now lucas verse 12 now we go to verse 13 and that has been held up as a standard model of expository preaching you will not find that as the standard of expository preaching in the uk although you may find it here in the united states now we're not going to get into uh intercontinental wars over the issue but i'm just saying that if you listen for example to a variety of preachers and many from the uk you will find that their

approach to exposition has has a far more comprehensive uh line to it than what has really been presented from a variety of schools what i would call just a sort of a bible study method that can really be done by just about anybody who can read english and who can turn to uh any kind of textual commentary and so anybody can do that kind of thing they can say i was studying this week and i found out this about verse 11 and i continued my studies and i found out this about verse 12 and if you look now at verse 13 i found out this about verse 13 well that exposition well you say well no it's not it's just gets a little higher in his voice you see no that's not it or more passionate no it remains what it is and the distinction in the minds of people and the kind of questions that you get at

seminaries and in conferences like this about what is actually happening in exposition and i say to you again that a certain model has been held up here and that is the model and any deviation from that is something other than exposition but if you go to if you go to the preaching of if you go to the preaching of alexander if you go to the preaching of sinclair phillipson if you go to the chicoid clan if you go preaching of

care at redeemer as we're in new york you are not going to find that thing now the question is are these men engaging in exposition you see exposition begins with the text of scripture it begins by our determining what is going to happen here in this it is not a style it's possible to preach exegetically without preaching expositively because exposition must

inevitably answer the so what question in the listener's mind it is expository preaching which is encouraging the listener to understand why a first century letter to a church in corinth is relevant to a 21st century congregation living in cleveland because exposition then is not going to leave the listener mystified at the way in which the preacher was dealing with the text but exposition is going to fuse the horizons of the world in which the individual is living with the world out of which the scriptures are coming and when we engage in this then we of course face two particular dangers the assumption that the message is irrelevant on the part of our listeners the people sitting out there saying this is irrelevant this is a religious man giving a religious talk i am a 21st century

man i've been dragged in here and frankly i don't have much interest in this at all whatever he has to say however steamed up he is about it it's pretty well irrelevant and therefore as preachers we have to work hard to ensure that we're not simply doing good exegesis helping the listener to understand the meaning of the text but that we're also laboring to establish its relevance to the listener's personal world so for example we may teach on the doctrine of the incarnation and we mustn't contend ourselves simply by ensuring that the listeners have grasped the instruction we will at least have to point out the implications of the principle of incarnational mission thereby establishing the real link so allows the preacher to say something along the lines of the ministry of jesus was one

of involvement not detachment and therefore we must face the fact that we cannot minister to a lost world if we're not in it you see we can deal with the incarnation is just a doctrine over here that god appeared and we've been faithful to the didactic material of course the twin danger is that people are sitting out listening to us believing that the message is immediately relevant and they're sitting out there wanting us to move immediately to application they want to know what this means to them and the pressure that can grip a preacher in relationship to that is the pressure which rushes us to personalize the text to be very very quick to say to people you know i know that you think this is irrelevant but let me show you how relevant it really is and in seeking to get to relevance to

overcome the possibility of irrelevance we actually render ourselves totally irrelevant because we fail to do the kind of exegesis that is necessary to show them why it is relevant in other words before they begin to say what this means to me we have to say to them what this means you know one of dick lucas's wonderful statements he's talking about evangelistic preaching he says to the people yes jesus yes we do need to tell jesus people that jesus will come into their hearts but we first of all need to tell them that jesus christ came to die for their sins so concerned to tell you about jesus coming into your heart today that we missed the whole foundation upon which it is built now there are a number of things that i think will help us in relationship to engaging in this task and for

those of you who would like to have more of this material you can you can get it in the little booklet that i did when i tried to understand the nature of the task for myself it's not particularly good but it's at least a start now what i want to do is move into dreadfully dangerous territory which i did once on the last occasion and said i'd never do it again but i may as well and um this allows me to just show my multi-faceted talents not least of all with the art and uh i can hardly wait to help you to uh to see these things but anyway let me let me uh first of all acknowledge something that i've done before and i want to

do it again and that is that 1984 i came here in 1983 i'd been for two years an assistant in edinburgh for six years in a church of my own i had gone to the church

on my own i began in the book of philippians uh with verse one and i kept going to the end it's a fairly arduous journey but i knew that it only had four chapters and thought that i would be hard pressed to kill the congregation with four chapters and also that i'd read somewhere that it was the epistle of joy and so maybe they would be quite joyful as i did it and that became the pattern for how i did things when i came here to the states in 83 and was given the responsibilities in this congregation i was delighted to discover that this gentleman dick lucas was about to appear in charlottesville virginia and that he was going to give a conference which i think was entitled speaking by listening and so i said to my elders that i'd like to go to this conference and they very quickly

shipped me off they said do you think it will help you to preach i said yes they said well then go immediately and uh and stay stay for as long as you like and um so i i went down there to uh skip ryan's church skip is now in the presbyterian church in dallas um park city's presbyterian church in dallas at that time he was down in charlottesville charlottesville and i went down there and um encountered uh dick and also um as steve bickley who just is our most recent member of our pastoral team and that those two days were the most instructive helpful beneficial days in terms of just getting to grips with opening up my eyes to the immensity of teaching the bible and the wonder of what it is that i've never had two days better than those two days in charlottesville since and i've actually

never really moved away from the lessons that i tried to discover there and learn some of the lessons that i mentioned to those of you who were here last time i come back to them with you without any apology whatsoever because the refresher element of things is so important when the the pilot goes to the simulator down in atlanta or wherever else it is they don't teach him you know how to do kami kamikaze you know dive bombing approaches to chicago hair if he wants to do that on his own time that's up to him but what they're seeking to do is say now we want to make sure that you can make this approach into national airport in dc we want to make sure that you can do it under these conditions and under these conditions and under these conditions and they simply go back down the same road

again and again and again and i find myself having to go back to this again and again and again and so these lessons are essentially what we might refer to as lessons from lucas and this gentleman who is over on the other side of the pond at the moment and always says that he's too old ever to come back i hope we can get him back next year and actually have him at our conference so that you could have the real thing for at least a couple of sessions and then you would realize why i'm so intrigued by him but what i want to do is acknowledge uh some of these things and just work through a couple of them with you in the time that we have and i'm going to bounce around and hopefully the benefit of this will be when we come back to it uh in in our next session when we can talk perhaps about

these things mark chapter 7 is often where uh he begins and i want just to turn you there for a moment mark chapter 7 and verse 35 is the story of the healing of a deaf and mute man you remember it jesus takes the man aside away from the crowd in verse 33 he put his fingers into the man's ears he spat and touched the man's tongue he looked up to heaven with a deep sigh said to him if atha which means be opened and at this the man's ears were opened his tongue was loosened and he began to speak plainly of course this is an actual healing miracle that took place on that occasion when i went down there dick said it is also something of a paradigm and a parable for all who would become preachers of the bible but because until our ears are opened and we learn to listen to what the text of

scripture is actually saying we are a danger to ourselves and others when we begin to speak and he said one of the reasons that we are so ineffectual in our speaking is because we're so poor in our listening national public radio this morning as i was driving here had an amazing statistic it said that in their analysis and i don't know quite how they do these things but it said in their analysis of the united states of america they have found that 50 of the population never read anything nothing neither a magazine nor a newspaper and certainly not a book somebody was telling me about a pastor the other day who is in a very very large church here in america they said that his preaching had begun to go south not that he was becoming a heretic but it just was no good and in seeking for an

explanation somebody said essentially he's just stopped listening he just stopped listening you're not listening to what jesus has to say in the bible unless we learn to listen carefully to what the spirit is saying to us in the text of scripture then it really is quite obnoxious of us to think that we can stand up with loosened tongues and begin to speak plainly to people so the task of the expositor is to be speaking by listening and in doing so we're bringing the bible to bear upon our congregation we're bringing the text before them in such a way that they are confronted by it and that they realize that this bible is important and it's worthy of consideration and that some of you will remember from last time allowed me to share dick's wonderful artwork with the large f and the small t

and you may remember this some who were here those of you who were not will just marvel as they did last year at the wonder of this artwork and its implications sometimes i use two colors but this morning i just use the one and f simply stands for framework framework and t stands for text all of us have frameworks it's inevitable there is a way of thinking about things we all think about things we have uh systematic structures and we have uh influences and and frameworks from all kinds of places and we are thankful for those but if the framework so predominates our thinking then what will happen is that the framework will dominate the text of scripture and indeed when we don't really know what we're doing with the text of scripture our congregations will find that we're always reverting

to our framework so for example if you know your big thing is your view of the world is that there's far too much rock music and um and the answer to banishing that is the return of jesus christ in power and great glory then the fact of the matter is no matter what passage you're preaching from you will almost inevitably find yourself saying and that's the problem with the rock music as i mentioned last week and of course the answer to that as i told you for the last 51 sundays is this wonderful glorious return of jesus in glory and so the people are going out saying he's very concerned about rock music and the return of jesus in glory yes but what about the fact that he was actually studying mark chapter 7 oh that's by the way that's by the way he's not an expositor he just launches off

into oblivion now there are peculiar dangers to it um campbell morgan tells a wonderful story i've told you before of the guy who was a baptist with a big b and he was uh you know he couldn't get away from the fact of baptism and so he was preaching one sunday morning from genesis on adam where art thou and i've i don't i can't even find it in my notes anymore but he is essentially his points were at number one uh where adam was number two how adam got there number three uh how god was seeking him and number four a few words on the subject of baptism and uh but actually the more the more damaging aspect of it the more damaging aspect of it is especially when it when the framework emerges from systematics if we allow a framework to so dominate our approach to the bible we will tend to

preach what i would refer to as propositional paraphrase sermons and it will become possible for us to preach essentially the same sermon from any place in the bible and what happens is that the text of

scripture is not engaged with by the preacher therefore not by the congregation there's very little sensitivity to the literary genre of the material whether it is apocalyptic or whether it is poetic whether it is narrative or whether it is parable all of these elements which are crucial elements then become flattened out to the prosaic level of a theology textbook and then no attempt is made to give any credence or to do any justice to the lyrical or to the dramatic or to the ironic elements of the text and if gentlemen we find ourselves essentially just preaching the same way

whether we're preaching through the narratives of the acts whether we're preaching through the studies in an old testament character like joseph whether we're coming for example to the 13th psalm how long will you forget me oh lord forever how long will i have sorrow in my heart every day how long am i in this dreadful mess if we find that we're able to move through all of these genres and our sermons just come out the exact same way because of the framework from which we're coming and which we bring to it then we're doing a disservice to the text and we're doing a huge disservice to the members of our congregation part of it has to do with observation observation looking at the text in a way that helps us to understand that we don't understand the greatest danger we face is believing

that we understand before we do whoever our favorite commentators are whether it's warren weirsby for a quick wednesday evening bible study or whether it is um the macarthur commentary series with all of the wealth of that exegesis or whatever it might be if we go immediately there or if we have imbibed that kind of material then the chances are that we will never be free enough to look at the content look at the text of scripture and say what's here and the trouble is that when we come to it saying we know what's here there's very little excitement in it for ourselves there's very little discovery in it for ourselves and so our congregation feel none of the excitement and none of the discovery how could there there hasn't been any we're simply trotting it out trotting it out so for

example let's just illustrate this from acts chapter 10 we'd turn to something to again this is one of dick's favorites he like he's got a few of these all through the bible but i chapter 10 i don't know how he finds them all verse 42 this is peter at cornelius's house and he's speaking verse 41 jesus was not seen by all the people but by witnesses whom god had already chosen by us who ate and drank with him after he rose from the dead this is akin to what we're seeing yesterday to peter again we are eyewitnesses of these things now note verse 42 he commanded us to preach to the people and to testify that he is the one whom god appointed as judge of the living and the dead all the prophets testify about him that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name

now we want to have a good look at this notice how the emphasis is on the he and the him first of all he commanded us that he is the one and all the prophets testify about him that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness in his name so first of all there's a very crystal centric peter is talking here about jesus it's the he he him him him as opposed to the me me me and the my my my and my little insight and so on no this is so clearly peter is saying now what we have here is jesus but the remarkable thing is this that he commanded us to preach to the people why do you preach he commanded us to preach to the people and to testify notice that he is the one whom god appointed as judge wow he gave to the apostles a message of judgment look at it we might even miss that unless we're

looking and when we think in terms of the way in which we speak evangelistically and i can almost hear dick saying this now he said you know if you say to the average young people now we're we'd like you to come along uh this evening and we're going to have a wonderful time and we'd like you to come and meet jesus only if you'd like to of course if you'd like to meet jesus jesus we'll be making jesus known and and

there's a possibility that you may actually meet him show up if you'd like and we'll be glad to talk with you that's not what the message was that was given to the apostles their message was not an appeal to come and meet jesus the message was a statement of fact and thank you for coming out this evening we want you to know that you're going to be meeting jesus you're going to

meet jesus there's no question about this young people you're going to meet jesus he has actually entrusted us with a message for you which is that he is going to judge he will separate the sheep from the goats you're going to meet him and the good news is that he has sent us to tell you that you may meet him now as your savior rather than face him one day as your judge now you see observation of what is happening here in the apostolic pattern then corrects faulty exegesis and faulty application and one of the reasons for the absence of authority in so much of our preaching is that we begin from this kind of soft position following on from that go to romans chapter one and this is something that again was a tremendous help to me and i and i hope it is to you in this word of reminder now

it's what dick would refer to as getting the melodic line getting the melodic line for example you have a piano over here and you can uh i don't even know if it's open yes it is but we could have um we could have somebody come and go person said well thank you very much for that what was that well it was uh it was some notes from uh from a very uh wonderful hymn i see well thank you for sharing them it hasn't really made much of an impact on me at all i'm not just sure how it all fits well it actually goes so here we are and we're in uh luke's gospel and we're in chapter 14 and we come to verse 6 or whatever else it is we say this is verse 6 and i'd like to talk to you about verse 6 this is an f and i'd like to play it for you this is a b flat and i'd like to play it for you we can do

that and our congregations go through our studies they've got no concept at all of how anything fits together or why god has put it together in that way oh we're being very faithful in explaining what verse 6 means but the chances are that we ourselves are in danger of missing the whole melodic line by not standing back far enough from the text to discover what it is that is taking place here for example romans what is the book of romans about romans is a compendium of theology that's what everybody says isn't it romans is the great theological treatise of paul that paul wrote romans to establish theology the doctrine of justification by faith well of course it is that but is that what it is romans chapter 1 16 i'm not ashamed of the gospel say that should now you're on it alistair that's

right it's about the gospel romans is about the you've gone to the right verse why because it is the power of god for salvation for everyone who believes first for the jew and then for the gentile go to the end of the book romans chapter 16 and verse 26 now to him who is able to establish you by my gospel and the proclamation of jesus christ according to the revelation of the mystery hidden for long ages past but now revealed and made known through the prophetic writings and by the command of the eternal god notice so that all nations may believe and obey him that's what the book of romans is about it's about the universal appeal of the gospel that's the significance of 9 10 and 11 that both jew and gentile are now gathered up under the sovereign plan of god but we can go through romans

and give material on justification and be right and on sanctification and work through six seven and eight explain the place of the jews and everything else get all the way through the 16 chapters and our people never ever realize that what you have in the book of romans is paul's apologia for world evangelization that's the melodic line starts in 16 of of chapter 1 and finishes in verse 26 of chapter 16 but you see if we don't stand back far enough if we don't connect the notes then it becomes a disjointed thing you get the same thing incidentally in true peter as we began there last evening if you turn there for just a moment

what's the significance of true peter well it's there's a lot of heresy going around there's a lot of problems and so on the false preachers and teachers are

kicking around and they need to be addressed of course they do and how does peter address them well he says i want you to grow in godliness the opening part of the book doesn't he says god's divine power has given us everything we need for life and for godliness therefore be godly you get to the end of the book in verse 17 of chapter 3 therefore dear friends since you already know this be on your guard so that you may not be carried away by the error of lawless men and fall from your secure position notice but grow in grace and in the knowledge of our lord and savior jesus christ what is the answer to the confusion and the disruption of the false teachers the holiness of the people of god that they would grow in grace and in the knowledge of the lord jesus that way they will have

stability when all of these crazy people come around with their nonsense and that way they will go on to maturity and it will be their maturity which allows them to withstand all the attacks of the evil one but again we can go through to peter verse by verse and bit by bit and never actually stand back far enough to say now what is the melodic line that runs all the way through this first corinthians 15 what is that oh it's a great chapter on the resurrection why doesn't it stop with verse 57 why do you think verse 58 is there in first corinthians 15 if it's a chapter on the resurrection well it is a chapter on the resurrection he talks so clearly about it there's immense a wonderful instruction but it doesn't finish with 57 thanks be to god he gives us the victory through our lord jesus

christ therefore my friends go out and have a wonderful day and sing to yourself as you're driving home in the car on the victory side on the victory side no he's going to verse 58 therefore my dear brother stand firm what was the challenge that was facing first century corinth that they were becoming unmoored from their foundations that he had to write to them and say jesus christ and him crucified that he had to write to them and say the resurrected christ reigns why because they face the potential of becoming shaky and overturned and disrupted and so he says therefore stand firm do the work to which god has called you now we could go we could go all the way through the place i mean uh you take for example hebrews 13 8 if ever there's a if ever there's a text that we need to be very

very careful of it's hebrews 13 8 and many of us have preached it and we've and we've come away with a sour taste in our mouths when we finished because we said i know that that said a lot of important things but i'm not sure we really dealt with the text jesus christ is the same yesterday today and forever good morning my text is jesus christ is the same yesterday today and forever i want you to know that although you're in the 21st century jesus is the same there were people in the first century had problems and you have problems and jesus is the same do people say well thank you very much but you got to find out why verse 8 in between verse 7 and verse 9 before you preach verse 8 remember your leaders who spoke the word of god to you consider the outcome of their way of life and

imitate their faith and don't be carried away by all the kinds of strange teachings what is the emphasis of the book of hebrews it's on the finished work of christ it's on the sufficient word of god and any exegesis of hebrews 13 8 that doesn't bring us to understand that the whole point of hebrews 13 8 is in emphasizing the the fact that jesus is the same in his finished work and in his final word don't be carried away by all these kinds of strange teachings because jesus has completed it he has seated himself so any explanation of hebrews 13 8 that doesn't deal with the high priestly work of christ may be a good devotional sermon we're not going to convey untruths to our people but we probably missed the point it's so easy to do let me give you just one final one and i want to say one

other thing and then i'll wrap this but in luke chapter 13 i found myself almost trapped in relationship to these things we're going through luke at the moment and we came to luke chapter 13 in verse 10 you have another of these stories of jesus on the sabbath day teaching in the synagogues and there's a lady there who's been crippled for 38 for 18 years she's bent over and she can't straighten up you remember the story i'm sure and i studied that i had we'd got to verse 9 and so we were picking up at 10 and i just so i just looked at my niv and i said oh well there's a sermon here about the the whole sabbath thing again and healing on the sabbath then i've got a sermon on the mustard seed and the yeast then i got one on the narrow door then i got one on jesus sorrow for jerusalem look

out be careful remember these divisions are implanted you know these are not divine and the more i studied through the week i couldn't figure out how you get from uh the healing of the the healing of the woman on the sabbath to jesus asking the question what is the kingdom of god like because after all what what you've really got in look is a great unfolding of the look for passage isn't it today these things are fulfilled in your hearing he has sent me to preach good news to the poor and delivery of sight to the blind and and so on today this is fulfilled in your hearing what is the kingdom of god like and so i suddenly realized that if i was to disengage these two little parables from the incident that luke gives us here uh in the in the healing of this woman i could still do stuff

about the parables that would be okay and i could still deal with the text on the healing of the woman that would be okay but i think that i would have missed the whole point that jesus is speaking to the people then he comes into the synagogue he comes into this uh uh teacher's uh location in the synagogue and and out of all the people who are there he picks out this woman who is completely uh marginalized she's a disabled woman who is both noticed and unnoticed she was on the on the fringes of society she certainly wouldn't have been a key person in the synagogue at all and all of the people are there and the teacher comes and he says i'd like you to come out and i want just to speak to you she was bent over and she couldn't straighten up and jesus says you're set free from your

infirmity he puts his hands on her immediately she straightens up and praises god and the stupid pharisees can only get steamed up about what's happening on the sabbath so they are humiliated his this his disciples are delighted with all the wonderful things he was doing and jesus said hey what's the kingdom of god like you see what just happened here fellas in the synagogue it's what the kingdom of god is like today the scripture is fulfilled in your hearing i'm about the business of taking people who are bent over and straightening them up so that they might praise god i know it doesn't look particularly dramatic i know that this lady is not a local uh a tennis star on the circuit i know that she is not necessarily going to have a tremendously powerful testimony in many ways but after

all what is the kingdom of god like it's actually like a mustard seed which a man took and planted in the garden it's actually like yeast which is working very silently and quietly and unseen in ways that is not immediately apparent to everyone and he's teaching his disciples so when you and i find ourselves saying i don't think there's much happening here you know i've been preaching and teaching for some time and there's only old old mrs so and so she became a christian but you know who's who's old mrs so and so you know she's been on the fringe of things for years what's the kingdom of god like well listen i just want to give you one other one other thing and then and then we can uh interact on these things there there's essentially more where this came from i mean we could go with a

whole of these and then we rescue uh secure outings and swims to change and then another in what we for an airplane that all of our preaching comes in which we will have the text has to pretend to frame what

we did and it is framed that that and it's great information to just pull that out and to uh just just allow the text to constrain it there may be one point there may be 12 points there may be three points you know the puritan who the puritans who were known for the vast number of points the fella gets up in his evening service and he said because because my sermon this morning had 47 points my sermon this evening will be pointless and um some some of us have some of us have got that down pat but um let me just let me just give you probably my favorite uh piece of artwork that i

inherited from from dear dick and that's it right there i'll leave i'll leave it up in case any of you want to take photographs of it afterwards because there's no question that it is impressive and um that as you can see is a line and the importance of the line being up there is to remind us in dealing with the text of scripture to hold the line to hold the line to stay on the line the line being the plain instruction of scripture itself preventing us from going above the line and saying more than the bible says preventing us from going below the line and saying less than the bible says so below the line we could put if you like liberalism um a kind of partisan neo-evangelicalism church growth pragmatism it's all below the line i think above the line fanaticism pietism emotional

pentecostalism and anything else you'd like to put up there we're supposed to speak the truth the whole truth and nothing but the truth and so when we have put our material together we need to be constantly saying is there anything here that needs just to be chopped out and taken away and thrown on the floor because frankly i've just gone above the line or is there some reason why i have determined that this particular verse here i'm just going to try and leapfrog over it as fast as i can because after all old brother smith you know he's got a he's got a thing about that verse and so we just drop down below the line or even worse because of circumstances in our congregation that have to deal with the very necessity of discipline we've now unfortunately in our series of studies come to the

question of discipline and so we decided that we better just bob down below the line because if we stay on the line it's clear to us and to everybody else that we're going to have to do something with this and that of course brings us to the question of do you want to lead your congregation or do you want to be liked by your congregation and if we're driven by a desire for acceptance and for likability and stuff then we'll find that you know we'll be bumping up and down all over the line but to hold the line is imperative if we're going to deal with the scriptures themselves jonathan fletcher has four questions that he said are important to ask in coming to the text of scripture in doing our exposition and they're these what is the bible actually saying why is it here why is it saying it

in this way because for example you can find the bible addressing the same issues in different ways so paul may tackle something in one way and james may tackle it in another they're actually tackling the same issue so it's a valid question to say why why why is the writer tackling it under the inspiration of the spirit in this way and fourthly what is surprising about it what is surprising about it and i think perhaps more than any other thing this is where dick has been a help to me in not looking for novel things i'm not talking about trying to find novelties but in actually being surprised by the bible this is a surprising thing this is remarkable and that sense of wonder and and surprise then fuels our further investigation you know 2 timothy 2 7 says reflect on what i'm saying for

the lord will give you insight into all of this you know think about it and don't just start preaching it think about it the absence of reflection in many of our busy lives is a significant absence similar to the absence of meditation i think brethren under the instruction of the spirit of god and under the the guidance of of god uh there is there is tremendous we're not talking about esoteric weird insights we're just talking about the

kind of reflection that that renders us not only students of the bible but those who are bowing down underneath the bible someone has facetiously said that in contrast to those four questions the kind of post-modern questions that are asked and are suggested for students of the bible are instead of what is it actually saying the question is how does it

make you feel instead of why is it here what does it remind you of that you'd like to share instead of why is it saying it in this way if you'd been there what would you have written what is surprising about it is replaced with what would you like to change now that's only partially funny because i've got a sneaking suspicion that there's many a sermon that emerges from asking the the bottom four questions rather than to talk for questions because when you listen to the preaching it just sounds like that doesn't it how does it make you feel i was reading my bible this week and i felt this way and so that people think that christianity is a glandular condition that the work of the word is first of all affects your glands it affects your lymphatic system or something you know that god is

working through your kidneys and it reminded me of something that i'd like to share with you this morning i don't want to preach to you i don't want to unsettle you i don't want to speak authoritatively to you i don't want to be prophetic in any way that's why i don't have a pulpit and that's why i don't have a bible that's why i don't have a tie and that's why i just look like such a perfectly ordinary person you look like a clown frankly the businessman's not impressed by that stupidity neither are teenagers teenagers said dad you look like a dork the businessman says what does he think he's doing dressing like that i mean i understand about going to work doesn't he understand about going to work i mean is it is is pastoral ministry just one big hawaiian holiday he gives me the

impression that he's just horribly casual about everything that it doesn't really stir him very much at all and it reminded me of something i'd like to share with you and you know what the thing i want you to think about this morning as you leave is this not so much did this actually happen or not exactly why was it where it was and what did it mean but i'd like you to think as you go away as you're driving away in your car if you'd been there what do you think you would have written down what kind of stupid question is that but that's the question our kids are being asked they come home and do papers on that whether the declaration of independence was a declaration of independence whether it's really there whether it was really written by historical characters is secondary to the

question what do you think you would have written if you'd written the declaration of independence totally irrelevant question it's post-modernism and you know as you're driving home in the car what just think about the passage we read this morning and see if there's some things that you would like to change in it and let me know next week and i'll try and work you in later on father i do pray that that you will make us students of the bible that you will help us to benefit greatly from all that we have learned from others and that you will enable us so to come with expectant hearts and minds to the text of scripture that we may not come as the authority but that we may come to the authority that we may not come to tell the text what it means but that we may come to the text to discover

what it means so that our people may sense from us this genuine sense of discovery and expectation as the word of god does your work so then help us to hear so that we might speak for jesus sake amen that concludes this message thanks for listening to truth for life if you'd like information on ordering additional messages from alistair begg and truth for life then call our resource line at 1-888-58-truth or write to us at post office box 39 8 000 cleveland ohio 4 4 1 3 9 truth for life where the learning is for living

---

Audio: <https://sermonindex1.b-cdn.net/18/SID18992.mp3>

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/alistair-begg/the-basics-of-expository-preaching/>

# *Grow in Your Walk with Christ*

---

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

**[www.sermonindex.net](http://www.sermonindex.net)**