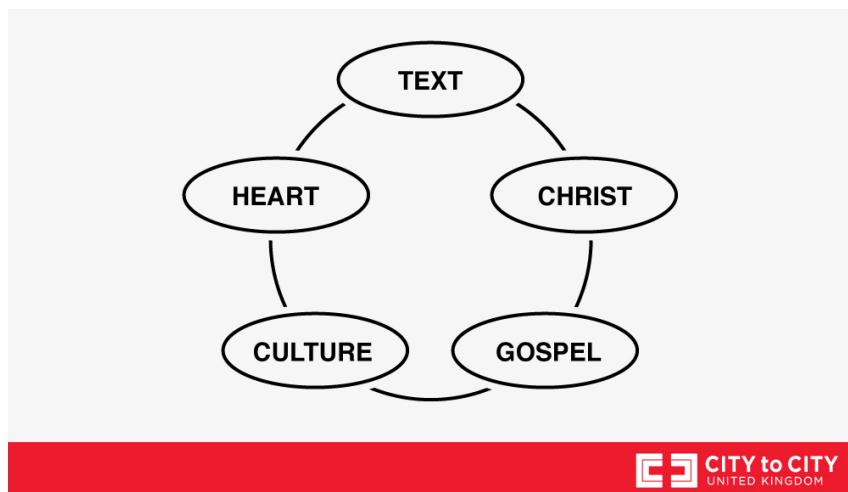


# Gospel Preaching - The integration of 5 essential elements

## Introduction

- a. Preaching the text: Bible-centred, expository, preaching
- b. Preaching Christ: Jesus-centred preaching
- c. Preaching the gospel: Gospel-driven preaching
- d. Preaching to the culture: Highly-contextualised preaching
- e. Preaching to the heart: God-dependent, Spirit-empowered preaching



## 1. Preaching the text: Bible-centred preaching

### a. What do we mean by bible-centred or expository preaching?

Bible-centred preaching is not preaching that **begins** with a passage being read but then heads off elsewhere (usually into the thoughts and ideas of the preacher).

Bible-centred preaching is not preaching that only *uses* the Bible, eg a topical sermon with Bible references.

Bible-centred preaching is preaching whose aim is to explain a particular passage and where the meaning of the passage controls and informs the ‘big idea’ and main application of the sermon.

### **b. Why bible-centred preaching?**

The preacher does not decide what the church needs to hear. Our authority is the text, and our commission is to preach the word.

A *faithful* preacher should serve the text – Bryan Chapell.

And that is actually better for us:

*If we start with our questions and look only to the Bible for answers, we assume that we are asking all the right questions—that we properly understand our need. However, we need not only the Bible’s prescription to our problems but also its diagnosis of them. We may even have maladies we are completely unaware of. If we don’t begin with the Bible, we will almost certainly come to superficial conclusions, having stacked the deck in favor of our own biases and assumptions.* – Tim Keller

### **c. Paul’s warning and instruction to Timothy**

There will be those in the church who preach *false gospels*. Superficially attractive, but without power - 2 Timothy. 3:1-6

Our role as gospel ministers is to preach the word - 2 Timothy 4:1-5

Our role is to be a workman who correctly handles the word of God – 2 Timothy 2:15

### **d. Why might planters be resistant to bible-centred preaching?**

1. To invest considerable time and energy each week in preparing and the preaching bible-centred sermons is costly. Time spent doing other things may have to be sacrificed.
2. To put our confidence in a ministry that appears weak, foolish and ineffective is a battle for planters who are seeking quick results.
  - A desire for *contemporary relevance*
  - A *quest for popularity*
3. We find it easier to try and do the work of God in our own way.

When our goal is to grow a church our need is to attract and therefore the temptation is to find more immediate and attractive ways of communicating.

*For our preaching, the sermon takes on even greater importance as you must be well prepared every week. In general, our experience at Redeemer is that writing sermons*

*takes twice as long as other places. This is because of the need to be clear, concise, logical, winsome, intellectually challenging and personable – all while being accurate.* – Tim Keller

### e. A definition of expository preaching

Bible-centred preaching expounds (explains) the **text** and applies it. So, in expository preaching;

*The preacher's first aim is to discover the text writer's intended meaning in the text.* – Wayne McDill

Why does the writer say it at all?

Why does the writer say it here?

1. Expository preaching points preachers to the biblical text with the instruction ‘begin here...the text itself is the source of the truths we ultimately present.’ Chapell.
2. Expository preaching sticks closely to the text through-out the sermon showing the hearer why and how we have arrived at a conclusion.

## Consecutive Biblical preaching

1. A strong case can be made for expository preaching that works through books of the Bible rather than individual passages.
  - a. The Bible was written in books and the big idea of the book is developed through a series of sermons.
    - Sometimes the idea of the book is explicitly stated eg. 1 John 5:13, 1 Peter 5:12,
    - Sometimes the idea of the book is there waiting to be discovered eg Colossians 2:6-7
  - b. Consecutive preaching models how we sit under the Bible as a congregation. Not picking our favourite verses or passages but working through the whole Bible.
  - c. Consecutive preaching exposes our blind-spots!
2. Expository preaching, once practised, liberates us from the fear of running out of ideas
3. Consecutive expository preaching requires even more work (!)

---

## 2. Preaching Christ: Christ-centred biblical preaching

We might say the goal of every sermon is to show us Christ.

- a. **Every text is there to teach us about Jesus because every part of the Bible finds its fulfilment in Christ.**

*And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he [Jesus] explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself. (Luke 24:27 NIV)*

*For everything that was written in the past was written to teach us, so that through endurance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope. (Rom 15:4 NIV)*

*The Bible is not Christ-centred because it is generally about Jesus. It is Christ-centred because the Bible's primary purpose, from beginning to end, is to point us toward the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus for the salvation and sanctification of sinners.*

- b. **Every text teaches us about our need for Jesus because he is our Saviour and Lord.**

*A sermon without Christ as its beginning, middle, and end is a mistake in conception and a crime in execution. However grand the language it will be merely much-ado-about-nothing if Christ be not there. And I mean by Christ not merely his example and the ethical precepts of his teaching, but his atoning blood, his wondrous satisfaction made for human sin, and the grand doctrine of 'believe and live.' – C.H. Spurgeon*

For example, in any narrative, the 'hero' functions in that story as

- a type of Christ
- a type of believer trusting in Christ
- a type of unbeliever needing to trust in Christ

### **Exodus 2:11-25**

*God's rescuer renounces his royal throne to rescue his brother(s). Heb 11:24-26, Acts 7:23-25*

*God's rescuer is rejected by the very ones he comes to rescue*

He is the greater Moses because he saw the suffering of his people and decided to get involved in our world.

He is the greater Moses because didn't forsake a human throne to come to the aid of his brothers he left his throne in heaven to save us.

He is the greater Moses because he chose to suffer with his people not just in experiencing loss of status and reputation but choosing to suffer to the extent that he gave his life to death on a cross.

He is the true Moses because he delivers his people not just from slavery to Pharaoh but from sin and death itself through his own resurrection.

Jesus is the true and better Moses because he too was prepared by God to deliver his people through suffering.

- c. **Every sermon must therefore centre on Jesus and he is the ‘hero’ of the text. How we ‘get’ to Jesus will vary from week to week as we try to be faithful to the text.**

Jesus may be the fulfilment of a type: the ultimate prophet or priest or King.

He is our Master, our rescuer/deliverer, our friend, our rock (1 Cor. 10:4), and the text is pointing us to him.

- d. **Another way in which we can demonstrate that Christ is the centre and goal of my preaching is to ask how does this text highlight that Christ is my only hope as Saviour, Judge and Lord.**

---

### 3. Preaching the gospel: Gospel-driven preaching

*Justification begets, nourishes, builds, preserves, and defends the church of God; and without it the church of God cannot exist for one hour.* – Luther

- a. **Justification as the heart of the gospel**

The question which the doctrine of justification answers is: *how can a mortal be righteous before God?* – Job 9:2

God justifies the wicked – Romans 4:5

In the gospel, God has found a way to declare those who are guilty to be righteous in his sight.

*God made him who had no sin to be sin for us [God imputed our sin to him], so that in him we might become the righteousness of God [God imputes his righteousness to us].* – 2 Cor. 5:21

By virtue of being united to Christ not only does Christ suffer the penalty for our sins but we receive ALL of his righteousness.

Luther said - *Lord Jesus, you are my Righteousness. I am your sin. You have taken upon yourself what is mine and given me what is yours. You have made me what I was not, by taking to yourself what you were not.*

Richard Hooker commented: ***such we are in the sight of God the Father, as is the very Son of God himself.*** Let it be counted folly or frenzy or fury or whatever. It is our wisdom and our comfort; we care for no knowledge in the world but this, that man hath sinned and God has suffered; that God hath made himself the sin of men, and that men are made the righteousness of God.

### **b. Justification and the Christian life**

*The basic problem is that even Christians do not ordinarily live as if the gospel is true. We don't really believe the gospel deep down. **We are living as if we save ourselves.*** – Tim Keller

It's as if we can't quite believe the gospel is true.

### **c. Justification and the Christian preacher**

Might we fall into the same trap in our preaching?

When we motivate our congregations to 'just do it' and we focus on duty, guilt, fear as the key motivations we are actually putting the wrong fuel in the Christian engine.

*Ultimately, the issue all preachers must confront is what they believe to be the relationship between people's conduct and God's acceptance*

Bryan Chapell ie why am I calling on people to obey?

How does justification enable and energise Christian living?

### **d. Gospel-driven preaching**

1. Trusting in Jesus' perfect death is not just the way **in** to the Christian life but the way **on** in the Christian life.
2. In application, gospel-driven sermons celebrate that the whole Christian life from beginning to end is a work of grace and a work of God. Our justification is a free gift of God, **and** our sanctification (living for Jesus) flows from our justification as the Spirit-enabled work of God in our lives.

*[Gospel] preaching assures God's people that their relationship with him is secure by virtue of God's provision [and] nourishes the faith that becomes the motivation and enablement of true holiness. God's people serve God out of love for him and with confidence of his provision.* – Bryan Chapell.

3. Gospel-driven preaching works hard to avoid both **legalism** and **moralism**

'Obey to be accepted.' Both Christians and non-Christians in their hearts tend to

believe that they need to earn a relationship with God. That we obey in order to be accepted.

The non-Christian listening to your sermon thinks the gospel is one of **legalism**, a message that amounts to ‘obey to be accepted.’

The Christian listening to your sermon thinks the message of the gospel is **moralism** where Christianity amounts to ‘because Jesus has done this for you, you now must do these things for him.’

Either way, your Christian performance becomes the measure of your confidence before God.

The gospel of justification is the message of free grace which reverses the relationship when it says to us ‘because you are accepted, obey!’

#### **Titus 2:11-14.**

Our fuel for the Christian life, is therefore not guilt, nor duty, nor fear but love.

*‘To be found in Christ means you don’t have to prove yourself anymore. Your frantic attempts to find or craft an acceptable identity, or your tireless work to manage your own reputation – these are over and done. You can rest. In Christ. You don’t have to be intimidated by anyone, ever. Who are you? You are in Christ! And you no longer need to fear the judgement of God. When God looks at you, he sees you hidden in Christ. This is freedom. This is confidence. This is good, good news.’* – Rankin Wilbourn

The doctrine of justification liberates me to live a new life. And love is the most powerful motivator.

*If you love me, keep my commands.* – John 14:15

*In fact, this is love for God; to keep his commands. And his commands are not burdensome.* – 1 John 5:3

### **How justification enables our sanctification:**

Justification functions both an **anchor** and a **sail**.<sup>1</sup>

I am in Christ – I am clothed in his righteousness. That knowledge is an **anchor** when we fear or when we fail. The anchor kept us safe in the storm.

Christ is in me – God’s power available to me, is the **engine** that empowers our whole-hearted obedience.

When we fail, or when we are afraid, we have an anchor – we are in Christ.

When we are tired, or when the road looks too long, we have an engine – Christ is in us

---

<sup>1</sup> This illustration is taken from Rankin Wollbourne’s *Union with Christ*.

Gospel preaching purposefully recreate what Tim Keller calls this ‘*gospel-renewal dynamic*.’

We look for the anchor points and the engine points.

How do I know that I have preached a gospel sermon over against a moralistic one?

What fuel am I putting in the engine!

- Have I just told people to obey, just to ‘go do it’? DUTY
- Have they left thinking that the life the gospel calls on them to try harder? GUILT & FEAR
- Or is the heart of my application that the Christian life is a life we cannot live, but Jesus has lived for us and now he begins to live through us? LOVE, JOY & CONFIDENCE that flows out of my justification.

## **So, beware**

Tub-thumping ‘evangelical’ preaching can purposefully or most-likely unintentionally imply a relationship with God that rests on human effort, Through our application we can undermine the very foundations that provide the power for obedience.

## **Half-time Recap**

Preaching that grows a healthy church . . works hard to make the connection between

- The message of the text as understood by its original hearers (Bible-centred preaching)
- How it is fulfilled in Christ (Jesus-centred preaching)
- How it empowers and enables the new life (Gospel-driven preaching)

---

## **4. Preaching to the Culture: Highly-contextualised preaching**

### **a. Contextualisation in preaching**

The better you understand your culture the better equipped you are to preach.

Tim Keller notes contextualisation means ‘*giving people (1) the Bible’s answers, which they may not want to hear, to (2) questions about life that people in their particular time and place are asking, (3) in language and forms they can comprehend, and (4) through appeals and arguments with force they can feel, even if they reject them.*’

If, in my preaching, I’m offering answers to questions that are not being asked then even if my preaching is biblically accurate am I being faithful in my preaching?

Note for example how differently Paul preaches the gospel of Christ to

- Jews in Pisidian Antioch – Acts 13 (Full of Old Testament quotes and Biblical narrative)
- Pagan farmers in Lystra – Acts 14
- Greek intellectuals in Athens – Acts 17

iii) Contextualised preaching demonstrates an understanding of doubts and objections.

*'Christian communicators must show that they remember (or at least understand) very well what it is like not to believe.'* – Tim Keller.

iv) Employs holistic applications. In a sceptical culture, we prefer to ask ‘tell me that it’s true to show me that it works’. Preaching needs to employ worked through applications in which we show how the whole life is shaped by the gospel. The complexity of modern life means we have to do this consistently and across the board.

v) Corporate Application – Preaching that highlights the difference the gospel makes to Christian life lived out in the community.

---

## 5. Preaching to the heart: God-dependent, Spirit-empowered preaching

*To preach is to woo. The main scope of all [preaching] is, to allure us to the entertainment of Christ's mild, safe, wise, victorious government.* – Richard Sibbes<sup>2</sup>

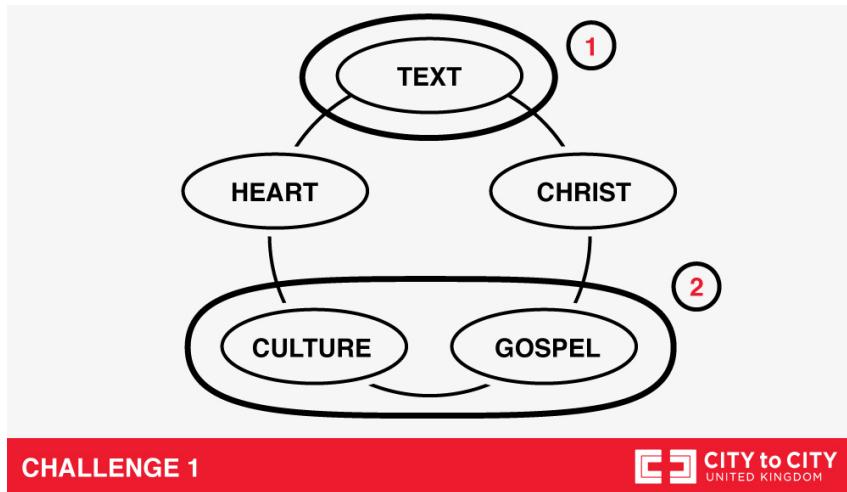
*There is a difference between having an opinion that God is holy and gracious, and having a sense of the loveliness and beauty of that holiness and grace. . . There is a wide difference between mere speculative rational judging anything to be excellent, and having a sense of its sweetness and beauty. The former rests only in the head, speculation only is concerned in it; but the heart is concerned in the latter.* Jonathan Edwards, *The Religious Affections*

---

<sup>2</sup> Richard Sibbes, *A Bruised Reed*

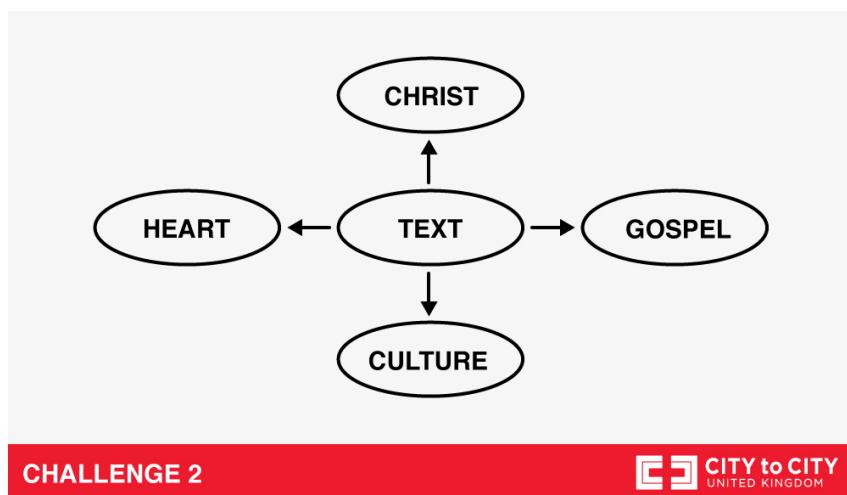
## Challenge 1: Integrating the 5 themes

The challenge then is to preach in such a way as to hold all five elements together - over a long-term period of time, week in and week out with creativity, variety and power. On the broadest scale, there is a danger of a drift into either of two main approaches or streams.

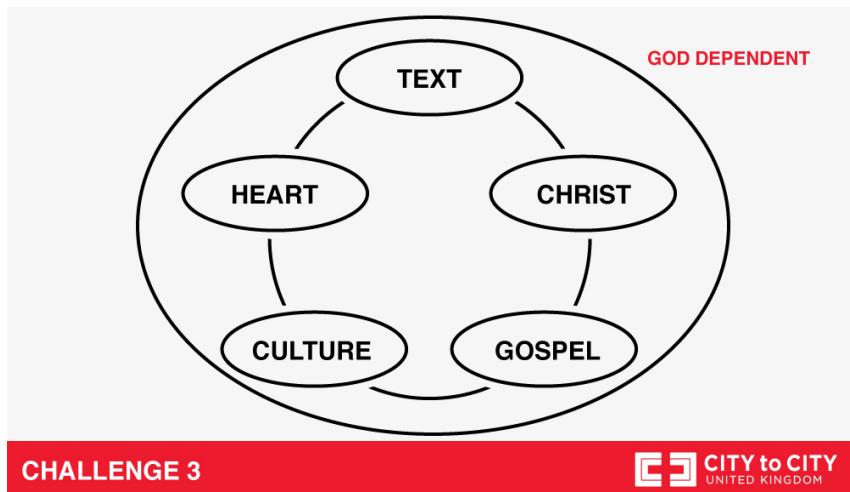


## Challenge 2: The Primacy of the Text

Expository preaching not merely preaches a text but derives the whole sermon from a 'big idea' drawn directly out of the text. We might say there is a priority of the text in arriving at the big idea of the sermon.



## Challenge 3: Preaching in dependence on God



- a. **There was a time when I functionally believed that if I got the sermon ‘right’ it was inevitable that people would respond. I thought growing a church depended on me!**

*To be sure, your listeners are responding to your skills, preparation, character, and conviction in a general sense. And these are critical elements of any good communication, including good preaching and teaching. But for the act of preaching in particular, there's something even more central to persuasion: your listeners' sense of the Holy Spirit working in and through you. – Tim Keller*

*You may not have strong public-speaking gifts, but if you are godly, your wisdom and love and courage will make you an interesting preacher. – Tim Keller*

- b. **A burden in preaching discovered in prayer**

*Give yourself to prayer, and get your texts, your thoughts, your words from God. – Robert Murray Mc'Cheyne*

Every sermon has a date and a post code. What does **this** congregation need to hear **now**.

- c. **Battle your own heart – adapted from Keller, *Preaching*.**

What does the message and tone of your sermon communicate:

1. **Aren't I great** - The speaker is seeking to exhibit his or her skills and promote the products of the church. Preaching as selling.
2. **Isn't the truth great** - The goal is to increase the knowledge of the receivers, so that they can live in a desired way. The subtext is “news you can use.” Preaching as training.

3. **Isn't God great** - It aims beyond information, beyond capturing the imagination, and even beyond behaviour change to the goal of changing what our heart most sets its affections on. Preaching as worship.



**Identity**  
14 May 2019  
[WWW.CITYTOCITYUK.COM/IDENTITY](http://WWW.CITYTOCITYUK.COM/IDENTITY)

**UPCOMING EVENT**