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SERMON OUTLINE FOR PASTORS

THE POWER OF PREACHING

Level One of Hearing from God, and How to Get the Most from It

> Preaching is the first level of hearing from God. It is not the greater portion, but it is powerful and available right away, and you can maximize it by choosing good preaching, showing up, and serving, while trusting the anointing to do what only God can do.

MAIN TEXT
2 Timothy 3:14-4:5

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SERIES
We're Rooted in the Bible, Week 2 of 6

BY
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AT A GLANCE

THE MESSAGE

1. Preaching is level one of four levels of hearing from the Lord: powerful and immediately available, but not the greater portion
2. Good preaching equals good results: teaching is proven by what it produces when you go through something, not by how it sounds
3. You have to show up: attendance is the dial you have the most control over, and concentrated environments yield more than week to week attendance
4. The servants know the secret: serving gives access to the behind the scenes insight a curated message cannot carry
5. There is a supernatural element, the anointing, that repackages preaching so it lands as exactly what the hearer needed



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jasonmayfield.com/messages/the-power-of-preaching

PREACHING NOTES

Before You Preach

This is week two of a six-week series on the value "We're rooted in the Bible." Over the next four weeks the series walks through four levels of hearing from the Lord. Today is level one: hearing from God through preaching.

Set expectations early. Preaching is not the highest place a believer can go in hearing from God, but it is powerful, and most people never go beyond it. The goal is to manage expectations and maximize the potential at the same time.

The written notes stop after the first point; the rest of this outline is built from the message as preached. The close turns prophetic: a call to repent of sensational, speculative and politically flavored teaching in our own movement. Preach it as a word to the house, including yourself, not as a jab at outsiders.

Introduction

> **2 TIMOTHY 3:14-17** ESV
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> [14] But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it [15] and how from childhood you have been acquainted with the sacred writings, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. [16] All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, [17] that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.

> **2 TIMOTHY 4:1-5** ESV
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> [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: [2] preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching. [3] 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, [4] and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander off into myths. [5] But as for you, always be sober-minded, endure suffering, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry.

Look at verse 17: "that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work" (2 Timothy 3:17). And at chapter 4, verse 2: "preach the word" (2 Timothy 4:2).

A LETTER FROM PREACHER TO PREACHER

The Holy Spirit wrote 2 Timothy for all of us, because, as we saw last week, the Bible is inspired. But practically, it is a letter from the apostle Paul to Timothy. We often treat Timothy from the pulpit like a child. He was not. He was a grown man in ministry, Paul's protégé, leading the church at Ephesus. Paul wrote near the end of his life, knowing his execution was coming: "the time of my departure has come" (2 Timothy 4:6).

So this is a conversation between two preachers. This is behind-the-scenes stuff.

"Man of God" (*anthrōpos theou*) echoes a title the Old Testament gives to God's messengers: Moses, Elijah and the prophets. On one level, Scripture equips every believer, every man and woman of God. But this phrase shows that the Word is first of all preparing those who preach it. The best preachers preach the Word.

Preachers are the primary way most people hear from God, not by importance but by use. It is not that preachers matter more. It is that most people don't go beyond this level of hearing. Under the Old Covenant, God's people depended almost entirely on priests and prophets. Thank God, in the New Covenant we can "with confidence draw near to the throne of grace" (Hebrews 4:16), and we need no priest to stand between us and God except Jesus Christ. Still, preaching is powerful.

Preaching Is Level One

You have access to more of the Lord than you can get from a preacher. Preaching is powerful, but it is not the greater portion of revelation. It is level one.

So let's manage expectations. If preaching is all you take in, it will be rare for your phone to ring with heaven on the other line. You can live a good, godly life, get direction, and even hear the Lord speak to you in a special way. But you probably won't consume preaching alone and suddenly move mountains. At this level, you get to listen in on the conversation, and that shapes you spiritually.

At the same time, there is a special grace on preaching. You start hearing from the Lord through preaching before you are even saved. It is how you get saved.

> **ROMANS 10:13-17** ESV
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> 13 For "everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved." 14 How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching? 15 And how are they to preach unless they are sent? As it is written, "How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news!" 16 But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Isaiah says, "Lord, who has believed what he has heard from us?" 17 So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ.

Preaching unlocks your ability to receive revelation immediately.

Here are three things you control, and one you don't, to get the most out of preaching.

1. Good Preaching Equals Good Results

> **1 CORINTHIANS 3:10-15** ESV
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> [10] According to the grace of God given to me, like a skilled master builder I laid a foundation, and someone else is building upon it. Let each one take care how he builds upon it. [11] For no one can lay a foundation other than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. [12] Now if anyone builds on the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw—[13] each one's work will become manifest, for the Day will disclose it, because it will be revealed by fire, and the fire will test what sort of work each one has done. [14] If the work that anyone has built on the foundation survives, he will receive a reward. [15] If anyone's work is burned up, he will suffer loss, though he himself will be saved, but only as through fire.

Context: in the chapters before this, the church in Corinth was arguing over which preacher was better and which one was right. In this passage, the builders are preachers. Paul laid the foundation, Jesus Christ, and others build on it.

There are two kinds of building material:

- gold, silver, precious stones;
- wood, hay, straw.

We tend to read "the Day" here as the final judgment. But the passage ends, "he himself will be saved, but only as through fire" (1 Corinthians 3:15). Whatever this fire is, it does not cost the person his salvation. Thank God, even if you have some wood, hay and straw, the cross is enough.

Paul is talking about the teaching people bring to the church. So read "the Day" this way: it is the day you go through something. On that day, the teaching you received, invested in and committed yourself to will be tested, and you will find out whether it was good teaching or bad teaching.

Jesus said of prophets, "You will recognize them by their fruits" (Matthew 7:16). Not just how they behave, but what their teaching produces. If you invest yourself in teaching that produces nothing, the day will disclose it. You will walk through a fiery trial and find that it does not work.

So know the difference between preaching that sounds good and preaching that is good. Good preaching is not the preaching that makes you feel the way you want to feel, and it is not preaching so deep it confuses you. **If it is the Word, it is good preaching. If it produces fruit, it is good teaching.**

- I believe God wants you to prosper. But much of what passes for prosperity teaching produces no results. Anyone can rent a suit and a car and look like they have it together, then go home and lie awake worried about groceries. That is not prosperity.
- Paul warned that people would "accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own passions" (2 Timothy 4:3). Most of the time that is not someone saying sin is okay. It is teaching that is wood, hay and straw: sincere, maybe, but it goes nowhere.

- Paul warned Timothy again and again in 1 Timothy not to get pulled into myths and pointless controversies (1 Timothy 1:4; 4:7; 6:4, 20), because that is the temptation.

What is the obsession with teaching that does nothing, goes nowhere, produces nothing, and leaves you the same as you showed up? You don't have to leave the way you came in.

2. You Have to Show Up

> HEBREWS 10:24-25 ESV
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> [24] And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, [25] not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.

We used this verse to get people back to church after COVID, but it tells us something important: when we come together, we are encouraged. **There is something about showing up that releases the anointing of preaching in your life.** Some of it is the teaching. Some of it is the oil that is spread in the room.

Showing up is the dial you have the most control over. You may not be able to research every teacher. But you can show up.

I am the result of showing up: Sunday morning, Sunday night, Tuesday night, Wednesday night, Thursday rehearsal. I knew the church had more for me than anywhere else.

If you only live at level one, this is your lifeline. For some of you, church is the most spiritual activity of your week. Don't let it become the most spiritual activity of your month.

> ACTS 20:7-12 ESV
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> [7] On the first day of the week, when we were gathered together to break bread, Paul talked with them, intending to depart on the next day, and he prolonged his speech until midnight. [8] There were many lamps in the upper room where we were gathered. [9] And a young man named Eutychus, sitting at the window, sank into a deep sleep as Paul talked still longer. And being overcome by sleep, he fell down from the third story and was taken up dead. [10] But Paul went down and bent over him, and taking him in his arms, said, "Do not be alarmed, for his life is in him." [11] And when Paul had gone up and had broken bread and eaten, he conversed with them a long while, until daybreak, and so departed. [12] And they took the youth away alive, and were not a little comforted.

There is power in a lot of preaching. Turn up that dial and it will make some things die in your life, bring some things to life, and turn up your passion.

Illustration: the orange juice. Coming to church once a week is like getting one orange. You get a little shot of fresh orange juice. Come back every week and you collect oranges until you can make a tall glass, as long as the first ones haven't gone bad. Come every other week or once a month, and it takes a

long time to make a glass. But get into a concentrated environment, a revival or a conference with session after session, and you can collect a whole bag of oranges and make a big glass in one setting. Week to week you get instruction, morality, insight and principles. In concentrated environments you can receive a significant word from God.

Illustration: the conference at sixteen. At 16, already called to ministry, I went to a conference and soaked in every session: morning, afternoon and evening. In that season God gave me distinct insight for my future that I would never have received if I had not been in a lot of preaching.

TIPS FOR SHOWING UP

- Bring a physical Bible.
- Put your phone away.
- Bring a notebook. You never know when the Lord will speak something you need to write down.

3. The Servants Know the Secret

Tell the story of the wedding at Cana (John 2:1-11). The wine runs out. Mary tells the servants, "Do whatever he tells you" (John 2:5). Jesus has them fill six stone jars, each holding twenty or thirty gallons, with water, then draw some out and take it to the master of the feast. He tastes the water now become wine and does not know where it came from, "though the servants who had drawn the water knew" (John 2:9).

The people behind the scenes with Jesus knew what was going on.

What you hear from the pulpit is a curated, polished version of what a preacher wants to tell you. But every preacher has a behind-the-scenes version of insight, and people who serve in ministry get to see what others don't. Every preacher has a tap. Get near it while you serve, and something will flow out.

Showing up is the dial you control at this level of hearing from God, but serving is how you tap into revelation at this level.

Illustration: "show up and help me." I once asked a preacher to mentor and disciple me. He said, "The best way for me to mentor and disciple you is for you to show up and help me." I thought that was selfish until I realized it was the same model Jesus used.

If you want to serve, fill out a connect card and let us know.

4. The Supernatural Element

You control the dial of showing up. You control whether you sit under good preaching. You control serving and the behind-the-scenes access it brings. But there is one more factor: **the anointing.** The anointing makes the difference.

> **REVELATION 14:6 ESV**
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> [6] Then I saw another angel flying directly overhead, with an eternal gospel to proclaim to those who dwell on earth, to every nation and tribe and language and people.

"Directly overhead" translates the Greek *mesouranēma*; some translations say "midheaven." In the ancient picture it is as high as the sky goes, right before it crosses into heaven. Here is an angel at the edge of heaven proclaiming the gospel to people on earth.

Almost every preacher has had this happen. Someone comes up after the service and says, "When you said this, it was exactly what I needed today." But you never said it. Offered with a smile as a picture, not a doctrine: it is as if, somewhere between the pulpit and the person, the Holy Spirit takes what was said and repackages it, so that when it reaches the hearer it is exactly what they need. It is as if the preaching is reinterpreted in the air.

That is the power of preaching. I am saved because of it. I am called to ministry because of it. For half of my life in the Lord, I lived at this level. Preaching can take you a long way and do a great work in your life.

But it is still level one. Next week: how to receive from the Holy Spirit directly, in a way you can trust and know without a shadow of a doubt that you are hearing from heaven.

Conclusion: A Call to Repent

In our Pentecostal world, we have given ourselves to sensational teaching. I am talking to myself too. We have sat in rooms where the preacher whipped everyone into a whirlwind of nothing.

- We live on edge, anxious, without peace and without breakthrough.
- We get on people about a negative confession, but what about a false confession: saying "I'm okay" when you are not? If you haven't been okay for 20 years, maybe that teaching was wood, hay and straw. I believe our words shape our world. But many of the people Jesus healed started by telling Him exactly what was wrong: "I can't see." "I have no one to put me into the pool." "My daughter has just died." "My servant is lying paralyzed at home."
- Some of what we take in sounds more like a pamphlet for a political party than a doctrinal statement.
- We send money to prophets who are watching the news more than reading the Word. If you predict something will happen in Israel every 30 seconds, eventually you will be right. Their predictions keep failing, and we keep buying their books because they like our guy.
- Meanwhile our lives are falling apart, and there is no profit in the teaching we are receiving. The cross has accomplished everything you need, and we take in hours of podcasts about everything in the Bible except the cross.

So let's raise our hands and repent. Sometimes the only way to fix a computer is to wipe the hard drive and start fresh.

Illustration: the year of prophetic release. Going into 2024, the Lord spoke to me twice: "This will be the year of prophetic release." I thought it was a word for a church I was invited to preach at. The Lord said, "That word wasn't for the church. It was for you." Months later I was back in pastoral ministry.

I could preach messages on having more friends, being happier, or workout routines, and the church might grow faster. I could prophesy about Israel every week. But I believe God has put an anointing on this pulpit in this season to prophesy against everything that keeps you from breakthrough.

This isn't going to be a church wrapped up in superstition, myths, speculation, dates on calendars, politics and nonsense. We're going to preach the Word. We're going to believe the Word. We're going to receive from God.

PRAYER

Lead the church in a prayer of repentance:

- Thank God that His mercy and grace have kept us, even when we gave ourselves to nonsense, and that the cross is greater than any teaching we have believed that is not taking us anywhere.
- Repent for making much of everything but His Son and His finished work; for teaching we were fascinated by though it produced nothing; for anything we followed in the pulpit because it reinforced our agenda instead of changing us.
- Ask for a fresh anointing: to receive good preaching that equals good results, to receive revelation through serving, and to know the power of being in the room. Ask God to make us picky about the Word and give us a hunger for the gospel of Jesus Christ.
- Close with His promise: His Word "shall not return to me empty" (Isaiah 55:11), and "The sum of your word is truth" (Psalm 119:160).



ABOUT

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