

Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary
Preaching: Principles and Practice
in Preparing Relevant and Biblical Sermons PR 601
Dates: Sept. 16-17, Oct.14-15, Nov. 11-12
Syllabus: Fall 2011

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Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary
Charlotte Campus
Office Hours by Appointment

I. Course Description

This course is designed to enable the student to construct an expository sermon based upon the skills of exegesis. In addition, students will gain experience explaining a biblical passage and delivering a biblical sermon without notes. A year of a biblical language and/or NT 502 Interpreting the New Testament are prerequisites for the course.

II. Course Relationship to the Curriculum

This course is an introduction to the principles of preparing relevant biblical sermons. Lectures and exercises cover a stage-by-stage explanation of how preachers think as they prepare to preach. The aim of the course is to help students understand what is required to preach effectively and to practice what they understand. Practice sessions provide opportunity for students to preach and have their efforts recorded on video for playback and critique by the professor.

III. Course Objectives

As a result of this course students should be able to deliver a sermon without the use of notes derived from the biblical text. In order to accomplish this, the student will: (A) Have a basic procedure that moves one from the biblical text to a sermon based on that text. (B) Give an explanation of a term or the meaning of a segment of scripture; or be able to explain how a passage fits into its context; or the implications of a particular text for theology or action. This will be measured by an exercise in class. (C) Develop skill in constructing a clear outline consisting of full, declarative sentences that relate to a basic idea. The outline should also show transitions in parentheses between the major points and if necessary the supporting points. This will be measured by handing in an outline of the explanation exercise and the final sermon for grading. (D) Have a working definition of expository preaching.

(E) Understand the basic elements in sermon construction and what they should accomplish -- introduction, central idea (based on an exegetical idea), transitions, illustrations, development of the sermon, and conclusion. (F) Begin to develop a skill in writing a sermon manuscript geared to the way audiences listen. (G) Listen to three [3] taped sermons and determine what makes an effective sermon.

IV. Course Textbooks

Required:

Haddon Robinson, *Biblical Preaching*. 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2001). ISBN 081022622

John R.W. Stott, *Between Two Worlds*. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1982).ISBN 0802835422

Ed Rowell, *Preaching with Spiritual Passion*,(Bethany House Publishers,1998)

ISBN 0801091772

Keith Willhite and Scott M. Gibson, eds. *The Big Idea of Biblical Preaching: Connecting the Bible to People*. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998).ISBN 0801090660

Recommended:

A. Duane Litfin, *Public Speaking: A Handbook for Christians*. 2nd. ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1981, 1992).ISBN 08010567561

B. Donald Sunukjian, *Invitation to Biblical Preaching: Proclaiming Truth with Clarity and Relevance*, (Kregel Publications, 2007) ISBN 9780825436

V. Course Requirements and Grading

1. Attendance at lectures and exercises. Students are expected to be *on time* for class.
2. Read Robinson, *Biblical Preaching*. Rather than read the book in a single sitting or two, you will profit more through reading it section by section as it is discussed in class.
3. Read Stott, *Between Two Worlds*. A report is due on **October 15**. Please consider the following: a. What is the central idea of the book? b. What did you find in the book that was new to you? c. With what do you disagree? Why? The assignment should be no more than five (5) pages.
4. Read Willhite and Gibson, *The Big Idea of Biblical Preaching*. Write a three (3) page (maximum) review using the following questions: a. Do you think the book has a central idea? What do you think it is? b. Summarize the thrust of the editors' argument. In light of this, why did Willhite and Gibson select the chapters from other authors to be included in the book? c. What have you learned from reading the book? d. Discuss at least three things you learned from reading the book. **Report is due on November 12.**

5. Reading report is due on November 12.

6. Prepare an *outline* for the explanation exercise.

7. Prepare a *manuscript* for an explanation exercise. You will explain a passage or aspect of a passage so that the audience understands it. This will be a ten (10) minute explanation without notes. The manuscript & outline are due the day you speak. NOTE: This exercise is NOT a sermon. It is a clear lecture. You will explain something from your text. Typical topics (examples are from Luke 19:1-10) include:

- a. A *word or phrase* (what does “Son of Abraham” mean?)
- b. A *cultural practice* (how did the Romans collect taxes?)
- c. The *arrangement/flow* of the text (why did Luke include Jesus’ statement at the end of the periscope?)
- d. The *context* (how does an understanding of the context help us feel what is taking place in Luke 19.)
- e. A *literary feature* (who is a protagonist?)

8. Prepare a manuscript and an outline for a complete sermon that both explains and applies to the passage. This will be a fifteen (15) minute message without notes. The manuscript and outline are due the day you preach.

9. Listen to three taped messages and answer the questions provided in the syllabus.

VI. Course Administration

A. Attendance Policy

Attendance is required for the class. If a difficulty arises, please see the professor. Please make every effort to be at class on time.

B. Due Dates and Late Penalties

All late work will be penalized a full letter grade every day past due date. No work will be accepted after the last day of class.

C. Assistance

Please come to see me with your questions. Call for an appt.

VII. Course Calendar

September 16

Introduction to each other and the Course
The Worlds of the Expositor
What is Expository Preaching?
Read: Robinson pp. 1-32.

September 17

What's the Big Idea?
Read: Robinson pp. 33-46.
Due: Questions on pp. 47-50.

The Essentials of An Effective Sermon
Read: Robinson pp. 51-72.

Due: Select one passage for your two exercises to be preached. Hand in the passage on a 3 x 5 card with your name on the card.

Do I Have Anything to Preach?
Read: Robinson: pp. 73-100 on the developmental question.
Due: Exercises on pp. 97-100.

The Exegetical and Homiletical Idea
Read: Robinson pp. 101-113.

Before next time: Prepare an outline and manuscript for an explanation exercise. You will explain a portion or element of a biblical passage. The outline should be in proper form and should be as detailed as necessary for a ten (10) minute exercise.

Please note: The exercise will be *no more than ten (10) minutes* in which you will explain an element of your biblical passage. Be sure that you communicate a clear idea and the structure of the passage. Deliver the exercise without notes. Be as enthusiastic as possible as you deliver the message.

October 14

The Shapes Sermons Take

Read: Robinson pp. 115-137.

Making Dry Bones Live

Read: Robinson pp. 139-164.

October 15

Getting Off to a Good Start

Read: Robinson pp. 165-175.

All's Well That Ends Well

Read: Robinson pp. 175-182; 229-245.

Words on Target

Read: Robinson pp. 183-199.

Dynamics of Delivery

Read: Robinson pp. 201-224.

Report on Stott

Ten Minute Explanation Exercise

Before next time:

**Three (3) recorded sermons
and questions answered.**

November 11-12

Fifteen Minute Sermons

Note: You are to bring to class a blank VCR tape. Please place your name and box number on the tape and sleeve. Thank you.

Due: Sermon Tapes Analysis

December 14:

Attached Record Sheet
Reading Report
Report on Willhite and Gibson
Report on Ed Rowell

VIII. Your Sermon Will be Judged on the Following:

A. Content

- a. Is the sermon clear? Is it well organized? Does it flow easily? Does the audience understand you?
- b. Does the sermon have effective content? Is it based on sound exegesis? Does it have good supporting material and relevant illustrations?

B. Delivery

- a. Does your delivery sound as though you really want to communicate? Does your voice have variety? Are you enthusiastic?
- b. Does your body support what you are saying? Do you have eye contact that is direct and personal? Do you use gestures?
- c. Do you want to be heard? Do you demonstrate conviction and sincerity?

IX. Classroom Conduct

Students are expected to attend class, be on time, and not leave early unless absolutely necessary. Sloppy deportment (such as wearing of caps in the classroom, sleeping, reclining, eating loudly, distracting behavior) is to be avoided. Respect for the professor and students is expected. Examples of disrespect include lateness for class, talking as an aside to someone, even in quiet tones, whenever someone else is speaking as part of the classroom discussion, demeaning remarks towards others, and rudeness. These guidelines are intended not to curtail anyone's freedom in an academic community, but to provide a wholesome atmosphere for learning as befits Christian leaders.

X. Taping of Class Sessions

Students may tape a given class for use by a fellow student who may be absent at that class or for their own personal use only. No duplication of the tape or distribution to others are to be done.

XI. Questions to Consider When Listening to or Reading a Sermon

For the assignment: Please write out each question followed by your response. Please be specific — give examples for what is asked.

1. What do you think is the main idea or concept the preacher was trying to get across? Can you state it? Y/N Analyze and comment.

2. When through with the introduction, did you want the preacher to go on? Y/N Did it capture interest so that you would want him/her to continue? Y/N How did he/she do? Analyze and comment.

3. Did he/she illustrate? Y/N If so, what did he/she do? — to explain, prove or apply? Did he/she succeed? Y/N Why or why not? Analyze and comment. Please provide specific examples of how the preacher explained, proved, or applied the text.

4. Do you think the conclusion drove home the main idea of the sermon in a way that caused you to want to respond? Analyze and comment.

5. What do you think that you as a listener might do, think or change as a result of hearing the sermon?

6. Do you think the delivery helped or hindered the presentation? What were its strengths? What about weaknesses? Analyze and comment.

7. Do you think that the sermon grew out of the biblical text? Or was it imposed on it? Analyze and comment.

Name _____

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**Fall 2009
Dr. Rodney L .Cooper**

- How many class sessions did you attend? _____ (check if all)
- Have you read Robinson's *Biblical Preaching*? _____ (yes/no) (5%)
- Report on Willhite and Gibson, *Big Idea* _____ (grade). 5%
- Report on Stott's *Between Two Worlds*: _____ (grade). 5%
- Report on Ed Rowell _____ (grade). 5%
- Explanation Exercise and manuscript _____ (grade). 20%
- Outline for Explanation Exercise _____ (grade). 10%
- Sermon Tapes Exercise _____ (grade). 10%
- Fifteen Minute Sermon, Outline & Mss. _____ (grade). 40%

(Late work will be penalized.)

Course Grade _____