

 THE JOURNAL OF
BIBLICAL PENTECOSTALISM™

Volume 3, Issue 3
Spring 2021-22



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New Orleans, LA, United States of America

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*Journal of Biblical
Pentecostalism
Volume 3
Issue 3
Spring 2021-22*

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Introduction to the Journal

The purpose of the Journal of Biblical Pentecostalism is to bless the church with pentecostal scholarship from the faculty of Bridges Christian College. One part of the journal is exegetical and the other part is more practical in nature. The rationale for such a broad scope is so that there will be literature for the biblical researcher and the ministerial practitioner.

Mission of the Journal

The *Journal of Biblical Pentecostalism* presents biblical exegesis, ministerial training literature, and research of church history through a Pentecostal hermeneutic.

Goals of the Journal

This Journal has the following goals.

1. To present exegesis of the Scriptures with a Pentecostal hermeneutic to help the church understand the Bible and its theological principles.
2. To demonstrate the unity of the Scriptures through intertextual interpretation of the Old Testament and New Testament.
3. To apply Scriptural principles to a Pentecostal, practical ministry environment.
4. To present research of the roots and traditions of the Pentecostal movement throughout church history.

Journal Categories

This Journal will present articles that are separated into the following categories:

1. Biblical Studies
 - This category presents interpretation of the biblical text with a Pentecostal perspective. Various themes and theological principles in the Old and New Testaments will be presented.
 - This section is primarily focused on research on the biblical text.
2. Spirit-Empowered Ministry
 - This category presents articles that provide guidance in modern-day, Pentecostal ministry topics.
 - The biblical text, historical concerns, and Pentecostal doctrines are taken into consideration. The emphasis in this section is on application of the biblical principles to Pentecostal ministry.

THE USE OF SMART GOALS IN PURPOSEFUL PENTECOSTAL HOMILETICS

Christopher Rhoades, M.A., M.Ed.

Preaching has been a primary means of communicating the truth of God’s Word throughout the entire history of the Christian Church. The debate over the best approach to sermon design and construction has filled volumes over centuries of study. The pursuit of these great minds has been to make the sermon the most effective instrument possible. How can this be accomplished within the scope of the 21st Century Pentecostal movement? This paper will explore a biblical definition of the goal of effective preaching, the Pentecostal sermon in light of primary Pentecostal doctrinal scriptures, and propose an interdisciplinary solution to the previously proposed question.

The Goal of Effective Preaching

What is the goal of preaching? Is there only one goal? Multiple scriptures can be used to provide a refined goal for effective preaching. Yet, despite the many goals that may be derived, one core aspect is unmistakable: The sermon must be based on the Word and be true to the Word in content, intent, and execution. This must be the foundational truth of the homiletic process. Without it, the sermon has no truth. Haddon Robinson stated that a preacher who does not preach the Word abandons any authority they have to preach.¹ What clues does the Word give for the intent of a Biblically based sermon?

Paul describes the Word as good for “teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.”² Some authors, such as Dr. James Bradford, have used this scripture as a definition of the types or purposes of preaching that exist.³ This may certainly be the case. However, this scripture also serves to define the goal of the Word applied regardless of the type of sermon: To complete and equip God’s people. This same mentality echoes Paul’s writings in Ephesians, where he described the primary purpose of the offices of the Church as equipping the saints.⁴ An appropriate definition of the Greek word for equipping used here is “to make someone completely adequate or sufficient for something—‘to make adequate, to furnish completely, to cause to be fully qualified, adequacy.’”⁵ This is what the sermon must seek to accomplish. We must be satisfied with nothing less than the complete equipping of the listener to do the work of the Body of Christ.

¹ Haddon Robinson, *Biblical Preaching: The Development and Delivery of Expository Messages* (United States: Baker Publishing Group, 2014), 4.

² 2 Tim 3:16-17, Unless otherwise noted, all biblical passages referenced employ the *Modern English Version* (Lake Mary, FL: Passio, 2014).

³ James Bradford, *Preaching: Maybe It Is Rocket Science* (Gospel Publishing House, 2012), 151.

⁴ Eph 4:12

⁵ Louw, Johannes P., and Eugene Albert Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains*, electronic ed. of the 2nd edition., 1:679. (New York: United Bible Societies, 1996).

James 1:22 further provides an overall goal for the role of the Word of God in our lives. James writes: “Therefore lay aside all filthiness and remaining wickedness and receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls. Be doers of the word and not hearers only...” Author James Blackwood calls this the obsession of good preachers.⁶ Using the example of baseball, he calls the audience doing the word of God the home run of preaching. How many times have our parishioners been left on the field when the inning comes to an end because they did not transition from hearing to doing the word? If we adopt this goal as the purpose of our preaching, a new and higher expectation is set for our ministries. It confirms the calling and priesthood of all believers. It necessitates that the entire church be participants in the work of the Church. Passivity becomes a failure, and nonparticipation becomes incompleteness.

By using these two scriptures as a road map, a preliminary definition of the goal of effective preaching can be established. The goal of effective preaching must be to communicate God's Word in a manner that equips the listener to be a doer of God's word and to fulfill God's calling on their life. Yet, this goal and purpose must still be reconciled with the specific context of Pentecostal theology.

The Pentecostal Sermon in Light of Pentecostal Theology

Acts 1:8 provides Christ's purpose for Pentecostal power. The significance of this cannot be overstated since Christ is described by John the Baptist as being the one who baptizes us in the Holy Spirit and Fire.⁷ Luke writes: “But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you. And you shall be My witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.” The purpose of Pentecostal power must focus on Christ's command to be witnesses. If we combine the previously given goal of preaching with the dynamic presented in Acts 1:8, then the goal of a Pentecostal sermon must be to produce witnesses. The doing of the Word of God in light of Pentecostal doctrine is the Great Commission. A Pentecostal hermeneutic that ignores this is not Pentecostal by Christ's definition.

1 Corinthians 12:4-11 also provides a basic classification of Pentecostal gifts meant to operate within and empower the church:

4 There are various gifts, but the same Spirit. 5 There are differences of administrations, but the same Lord. 6 There are various operations, but it is the same God who operates all of them in all people. 7 But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to everyone for the common good. 8 To one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom, to another the word of knowledge by the same Spirit, 9 to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healings by the same Spirit, 10 to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another discerning of spirits, to another various kinds of tongues, and to another the interpretation of tongues. 11 But that one and very same Spirit works all these, dividing to each one individually as He will.

⁶ James Blackwood, *The Power of Multisensory Preaching and Teaching: Increase Attention, Comprehension, and Retention* (United States: Zondervan, 2009), 42.

⁷ Matt 3:11

Consider the intersection of these gifts with the sermon. The gifts of knowledge, wisdom, and prophecy directly relate to aspects of the Pentecostal homiletic process. Knowledge and wisdom are rather self-evident in their coverage. Knowledge addresses what we know, and wisdom addresses how we act with judgment based on the possession of that knowledge. Prophecy goes yet a step further. Prophecy can be best thought of as “a representative declaration of the mind, will, or knowledge of God; especially concerning past, present, or future manifestations of the outworking of His will or other events.”⁸ Thus, prophecy focuses on the divine will of God as the driving force and centering reason for the sermon. We preach in order to declare the will of God as revealed in His Word.

This focus on the will of God revealed through the Word is a foundational tenant of expository preaching. Determining the will of God in a passage is the goal of good exegesis. This directly leads to what Haddon Robinson called the big idea of the text.⁹ The sermon writer must ask the questions: What is God saying to His people through this text? What does God intend his people to do as a result of this text? R. Albert Mohler Jr. makes the profound statement that the listener of the sermon must be forced to decide if they will obey God’s commandment as defined by his Word.¹⁰

The divine nature of prophecy also relates to the divine nature of knowledge and wisdom and the role of the Holy Spirit in their development. Christ points to the Holy Spirit in John 16:13: “But when the Spirit of truth comes, He will guide you into all truth...” Paul further points to the role of the Holy Spirit in wisdom by stating in 1 Corinthians 2 that “Yet we speak wisdom among those who are mature, although not the wisdom of this age, nor of the rulers of this age, who are coming to nothing. But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, the hidden wisdom, which God ordained before the ages for our glory...But God has revealed them to us by His Spirit.”¹¹ The role of the Holy Spirit in prophecy, wisdom, and knowledge is unmistakable. Perhaps this is why Paul reiterates: “...that one and very same Spirit works all these, dividing to each one individually as He will.”¹² The focus of the use of any gift of the Spirit is fulfilling the will of God.

Effective Pentecostal sermons must involve the convergence of all three gifts. True Pentecostal hermeneutics necessitates a realization that it is the Spirit who leads into an understanding of the Word, provides the wisdom to interpret and act upon the Word, and gives the focus for its declaration within the context of God’s purposes and divine will. All of this centers on the will of God through the Holy Spirit. There must be a harmony between these aspects.

If the focus of the movement of the gifts of the Holy Spirit must be on the will of God, then the Pentecostal sermon must also be on the fulfillment of this same divine will. We preach not for the purpose of giving direction based on organizational goals and wills. We preach for the

⁸ Brannan, *Lexham Research Lexicon of the Greek New Testament*, Lexham Research Lexicons (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press., 2020).

⁹ Robinson, *Biblical Preaching: The Development and Delivery of Expository Messages*, 15.

¹⁰ R. Albert Mohler Jr., *He is Not Silent: Preaching in a Postmodern World*, (United States: Moody Publishers, 2019), 37.

¹¹ 1 Cor 2:6-7, 10.

¹² 1 Cor 12:11

purpose of the fulfillment and furtherance of God's divine will. This will is accomplished through both the Church as a body and the Church as each member.

What then is the overall goal of Pentecostal preaching? We have established thus far the following: The sermon must be based on the Word. The sermon must be based on God's will. The sermon must produce doers of God's word. We can thus broadly establish that the goal of effective Pentecostal preaching is to communicate the truth of God's Word and the intent of God's will to facilitate the empowerment and equipping of the saints so that they can succeed in their divine calling to fulfill the Great Commission.

Determining the Goal of the Sermon

We have now discussed both the goal of preaching and the implications of Pentecostal theology on his goal. We have established the need to focus on preaching with empowerment for the purpose of fulfilling and furthering God's will. What then determines the goal of the individual sermon itself? Based on the previously examined scriptural premises, it is clear that we look to the understanding of the Word through exegesis that is revealed by the Holy Spirit and the intent of God.

A sermon that is not based on the fullness of God's Word is not a sermon at all. It becomes nothing more than a motivational speech that can extend in strength only as far as man's power can help it.¹³ Bradford rightly makes the observation that Pentecost and exegesis are inseparable.¹⁴ Simply put: A sermon will never be more successful than it is scriptural. Experience and feelings are never replacements for the truth of the Word. We must ask: What is the Word telling each of us? What does the Word require of us? What choice and change must we make today based on what the Word says?

Having determined the mind of God through His Word, we must also determine His will for our listeners. This is never in contradiction to the Word. This must never use the Word loosely to fit personal motivations. Rather, it is the surgical application of the Word to the precise need of the listeners. Perhaps the best way to ask it is to paraphrase the beginning chapters of Revelation: What is the Spirit saying to the church today? Effective Pentecostal homiletics requires the sermon writer to get the mind of God for the body of Christ. We must always be mindful that the flock is Christ's. He paid the ultimate price for their purchase. So then, we might also liken the sermon to choosing the right food to feed the flock. This clarity can only come through seeking God through prayer. Bradford stated that:

...in prayer, I'm asking God to identify what should take place behind His pulpit that day. "What is it that You really want to say to these people this week?" We have to exegete not only the text but what God is doing spiritually among His people and in their lives...no matter how eloquently I vocalize my outline, it's not a good message unless God's Spirit speaks specifically to real issues in people's

¹³ Haddon Robinson, *Biblical Preaching: The Development and Delivery of Expository Messages*, 7.

¹⁴ Bradford, *Preaching: Maybe It Is Rocket Science*, 443.

lives. The Spirit must awaken their understanding. The Spirit must lead them into action.¹⁵

As Pentecostal preachers, we must pray and seek God's will for those who will hear our sermon. During times of confusion and unsureness, praying in the Spirit provides the way forward towards divine clarity. Paul refers to this as a path forward when we do not know how to pray.¹⁶ Bradford would seem to agree when he stated: "Early in my preaching life, I also learned the importance of praying extendedly in the Spirit, sometimes in tongues and sometimes in English as the Spirit led me. I found that even the simple act of praying out loud helped to teach me how to yield verbally to the impulses of the Spirit."¹⁷ Only when we truly have the mind of God about our sermon and His divine will can we deliver a truly transformative sermon.

Intersecting SMART Goals with Homiletics

Knowing now the will of God's Word and the will of God in the context of the flock, how can we be more purposeful about producing Spirit-empowered doers of the Word? How do we move from idea to strategic implementation? The sermon in this mindset becomes a precision implement. Rather than a shotgun blast, it becomes a precision shot. An answer to the problem of strategic goal setting can be found in the use of SMART goals.

SMART goals traditionally involve goals focused on institutional improvement. The origin of SMART goals can be traced to organizational behavior and management.¹⁸ However, these goals have been applied to multiple industries. They provide a way to strategically move from the broad idea to the specific action. The acronym SMART stands for Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant, and Timely.¹⁹ How can these aspects be applied to homiletics? How can these aspects be applied to preaching to the individual and the church as a corporate body? (Figure 1 below provides a visual delineation of these thoughts.)

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Rom 8:26

¹⁷ Bradford, *Preaching: Maybe It Is Rocket Science*, 975.

¹⁸ Kenneth Blanchard, Patricia Zigarmi, and Drea Zigarmi, *Leadership and the one minute manager* (New York: William Morrow, 2013); George T. Doran, "There's a SMART way to write management's goals and objectives."; Paul Hersey and Kenneth Blanchard, *Management of Organizational Behavior: Leading Human Resources*, Ninth Edition (Pearson College Div, Sep. 2007).

¹⁹ K. Blaine Lawlor, "Smart goals: How the application of smart goals can contribute to achievement of student learning outcomes," in *Developments in business simulation and experiential learning: Proceedings of the annual ABSEL conference*, vol. 39 (2012).

Specific	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •What specifically is God’s Word calling people to do? •What specifically is the Spirit saying to the Church? •What needs to be addressed specifically in individuals? •What needs to be addressed specifically in the corporate body?
Measurable	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •How will this be demonstrated? •How will you know that they have done this? •How can they know in their own lives that the change necessitated by scripture has been accomplished? •How will their lives be different? •How will your church be different?
Attainable	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Can they accomplish this? •Is the goal specific enough to be actionable or is it still overly theoretical? •What needs to happen within the church in order to facilitate the attainability of this?
Relevant	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •How practical is this? •What applicability is there to their daily spiritual walk? •What applicability is there to the growth of the church towards its calling?
Timely	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •What is the timeliness of the result expected from the sermon? •How can the goal be stated in the short term? •What does the life of the believer look like after obeying and implementing this now? •How can the goal be stated in the long term? •What does the life of the believer look like months or years after obeying and implementing this?

Figure 1: Sample Questions for Consideration in Writing SMART Goals for Sermons

These questions are not meant to be exhaustive. Rather these questions are meant to spark the analysis of the sermon and its goal. Ultimately we are asking ourselves: What will they know? What will they do? How will they do it? How will they know that they’ve done it? From these questions, we now can form goal or objective statements for the sermon:

My listeners will _____ by doing _____?

Our church will _____ by doing _____?

For example, if I were preaching on Acts 2, I might craft a goal like: My listeners will go to the next level in their Christian walk and become empowered to be a witness for Christ by receiving the Baptism of the Holy Spirit evidenced by immediately speaking in new tongues. This is an example of a goal on an individual level. This approach could also be applied to a church or ministry as a whole. Consider the example of a pastor beginning an outreach program focused on ministering to the homeless through action. The pastor could create a goal based on a passage like Matthew 25, in which Christ emphasizes the importance of such ministries. The goal could then be tied to the church's participation in that ministry, both corporately and individually.

SMART goals and objectives can also be used to examine the effectiveness of the sermon outline. Haddon Robinson made the observation that most often, sermons fail in their intended purpose because they have too many unrelated components as opposed to not enough content.²⁰ This is the trap of novice sermon writing. We often feel the need to make sure there is enough content to fill the time allotted. The goal of the sermon centers around a precision implementation targeted for a specific purpose as opposed to a large blast targeting a broad spread, hoping that a target is hit. The SMART goal for the sermon allows us as the writer to evaluate each part of the outline for purposeful alignment. How does this illustration align with the goal and the big idea? How does this application align? How does this major point align? How do the components contribute to a clearly reached goal? If the answer shows nonalignment, then revisions can take place. This does not mean that the content is unworthy of being preached. Rather we accept that it is simply not the best fit for this specific sermon.

Concluding Thoughts

The goal of great preaching is change. There are different levels and types of change, but the Word will not return void.²¹ Preaching must thrive on this expectation. Strategic preaching requires strategic purpose and strategic methods. SMART goals are a potential tool that Pentecostal preachers can use to create purposeful sermons focused on equipping the saints to fulfill God's will as defined by His Word. Our goal is to make equipped and empowered doers of the Word and the Great Commission. We must stop at nothing to accomplish that goal.

²⁰ Robinson, *Biblical Preaching: The Development and Delivery of Expository Messages*, 16.

²¹ Is 55:11