

the essence of
BIBLICAL 
PREACHING

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SESSION 1

CHRIST-CENTERED & GOSPEL-CENTERED PREACHING

AN EVALUATION

1. Christ-Centered Preaching

A. Proponents

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B. Definition

Christ-centered preaching is preaching that puts Jesus at

_____.

C. Description

- _____

Regarding Jesus in every sermon-

Greidanus writes, "A sermon without Christ is no sermon."¹

Regarding Jesus in every text-

Mohler proclaims, "Every single text of Scripture points to Christ.... From Moses to the prophets, He is the focus of every single word of the Bible. Every verse of Scripture finds its fulfillment in Him, and every story in the Bible ends with Him."²

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¹ Sydney Greidanus, *Preaching Christ from the Old Testament*, 2.

² Albert Mohler, *He is Not Silent: Preaching in a Postmodern World*, 96.

- _____
- _____

D. Strengths

- *First, Christ is the object of preaching in many places in the New Testament.* Christ is the object of κηρύσσω three times (cf. Acts 8:5, 1 Cor 1:23; 15:12). Five other texts Jesus is the object (cf. Acts 9:20, 19:13; 2 Cor 4:5, 11:6; and 1 Tim 3:16).
- *Second, Christ-centered preaching seeks to exalt Jesus.* This model of preaching produces a “heightened awareness of Christology” in preaching and worship.³ We should look for every legitimate opportunity to exalt Jesus when we preach!
- *Third, Christ-centered preaching highlights the unity of the Bible.* The revival or emergence of Christ-centered preaching is somewhat attributable to the rising popularity of biblical theology among evangelicals.
- *Fourth, Christ-centered preaching emphasizes the gospel.* Since the gospel of Jesus is the only way for people to be saved and since it is the only way to gain true peace and fulfillment, proclaiming Jesus is desirable.

E. Weaknesses/Dangers

- *First, proponents of Christ-centered preaching often introduce imported emphases into a biblical text.*
- *Second, imported emphases mute the emphasis made by the biblical author.*

Christopher Wright warns of the dangers of doing this. He writes, “If you approach a text in the Old Testament with the assumption that ‘This must be about Jesus,’ you easily overlook all that the original

³ Jason Keith Allen, “The Christ-Centered Homiletics of Edmund Clowney and Sidney Greidanus in Contrast with the Human Author-Centered Hermeneutics of Walter Kaiser,” Ph. D. diss., The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary (2011), 133.

author was actually trying to say. In fact, you end up putting a gag on the mouth of the original author, in order to make him say what you think his text must be about since it must be 'all about Jesus.' And that is a very bad thing to do to the Bible!"⁴

- *Third, proponents of Christ-centered preaching occasionally force Christ-centeredness.*
- *Fourth, requiring all sermons to be Christ-centered produces a lack of variety in preaching.*
- *Fifth, requiring preaching to be exclusively Christ-centered is not based on sufficient scriptural warrant.*
- *Sixth, Christ-centered preaching sometimes distorts or diffuses important theological truths.*

Three doctrinal beliefs might be distorted:

- *The Trinity*
- *The nature of the _____*
- *A _____ view of _____*

2. Gospel-Centered Preaching

A. Proponents

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⁴ Christopher J. H. Wright, *How to Preach and Teach the Old Testament for All its Worth*, 54.

B. Definition

Gospel-centered preaching is preaching that requires every sermon to declare that _____.

C. Description

- *First, Gospel-centered preaching rests on a Gospel-centered hermeneutic.*
- *Second, Gospel-centered preaching shares many fundamental tenets with Christ-centered preaching.*
- *Third, however, some Christocentric preachers declare that preaching Jesus might not be enough without specifically referencing his death and resurrection.*

Tim Keller states, “It’s possible to preach the New Testament—even passages in the Gospels about Jesus—without preaching the gospel.”⁵

D. Strengths

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E. Weaknesses/Dangers

- *First, Gospel-centered preaching shares the weaknesses of Christ-centered preaching.*
- *Second, Gospel-centered preaching can undermine _____.*

⁵ Timothy Keller, *Preaching: Communicating Faith in an Age of Skepticism*, 63.

- *Third, Gospel-centered preaching superimposes a predetermined outcome on every text of the Bible.*