

Grace to You :: *esp Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time*

Preach the Word: Because It Makes the Ministry Dependent on God

Scripture: 2 Timothy 4:1–8; 2 Timothy 4:18

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You wouldn't expect to hear a pastor tell his church, "I know better than God." And yet that's what many preachers and leaders today communicate when they focus their ministry strategies on market research and consumer response. Chasing popular trends and whims is a sure recipe for tickled ears, stunted spiritual growth, and congregations full of false converts.

By contrast, a ministry that centers on the preaching of God's Word is a ministry that is, by definition, wholly dependent on God. Rather than relying on gimmicks or ploys, it relies on God Himself for both its content and direction.

Early in my ministry I committed, before the Lord, that I would simply worry about the depth of my ministry, and I would let Him take care of the breadth of it. Needless to say, He has extended it far beyond what I could have ever even thought possible. But the market appeal of this ministry was not something I ever strategized about, trying to think of schemes for how to be popular or how to energize church growth. Instead, the focus was on teaching the Bible—deeply, consistently, and accurately. Beyond that, I simply decided to depend on the Lord.

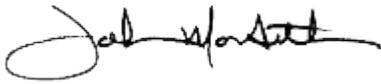
When pastors preach God's message rather than one of their own invention, they demonstrate that they are fully depending on God for results. It is His Word that is taught; it is His Spirit who works; it is His power that convicts and transforms. We simply convey the message faithfully, and when people respond, God receives all of the glory.

And that, ultimately, is why I continue to preach the Word after more than four decades of ministry. The goal of my life, from the outset, has been ministry faithfulness for the glory of Christ. That should be the aim of every pastor. And what could be more glorifying to Him than to exalt His message, bringing it to bear on the lives of His people, and depending fully on Him for the results. As Timothy was charged by Paul, so every pastor—if he is to be found faithful—must embrace his sacred calling:

I solemnly 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: preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with great patience and instruction. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but wanting to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance to their own desires, and will turn away their ears from the truth and will turn aside to myths. But you, be sober in all things, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry. . . . I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith; in the future there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day; and not only to me, but also to all who have loved His appearing. . . . The Lord will rescue me from every evil deed, and will bring me safely to His heavenly kingdom; to Him be the glory forever and ever. Amen. (2 Timothy 4:1–5, 7–8, 18)

Paul's exhortation is directed at preachers, but its application isn't limited to them. The men and women in the pews must place an equally high priority on submitting themselves to the preaching of the Word, and faithfully testing the teaching they receive against Scripture. Like we saw last time, all believers need to be Bereans. It's vital that the pastor teaches Scripture with clarity and accuracy, and it's vital that his congregation stay hungry for that kind of Bible teaching and the spiritual fruit it produces.

It's been a privilege to serve the Lord at Grace Community Church for more than fifty years. Throughout that time, my prayer has always been to be subject to God's biblical agenda, rather than subjecting God's Word to my personal agenda. It is the difference between biblical preaching and motivational speaking, between shepherding and manipulating, and between understanding what God has already said in Scripture and putting new words in His mouth.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jack W. Haystack". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "J" and "W".

(Adapted from [The Master's Plan for the Church](#).)

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