

GUIDE

The Prophetic Preaching Guide

A comprehensive guide to preaching prophetically on justice, race, culture, and the contested issues of our time -- with theological grounding, pastoral wisdom, and practical method

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Equipping pastors and leaders to serve with excellence, integrity, and lasting Kingdom impact.

What Prophetic Preaching Is and Is Not

Prophetic preaching is the most needed and the most feared kind of preaching in the contemporary evangelical church. It is needed because the church lives in a culture that is reshaping itself with enormous speed in directions that often contradict the Gospel, and someone must speak. It is feared because prophetic preaching costs something -- congregational comfort, leadership popularity, and sometimes the pastor's tenure. This guide equips pastors to preach prophetically without becoming primarily political, to speak with courage without losing pastoral love, and to address the contested issues of the culture from a position of theological rootedness rather than social anxiety.

What Prophetic Preaching Is and Is Not

Prophetic preaching is not primarily preaching about social issues with biblical proof texts. It is preaching from a place of genuine theological conviction about the character of God, the demands of the Gospel, and the specific ways in which the surrounding culture is organizing itself in opposition to both. The Hebrew prophets were not social commentators who occasionally used religious language. They were theologians who had so deeply internalized the character of God and the demands of the covenant that they could not remain silent when the community they served was living in contradiction to both. Their "prophetic" word was not novel -- it was the covenant word, applied with specificity and urgency to the specific conditions of their specific moment. The prophetic preacher today does the same: he does not add new revelation. He applies the existing revelation with the specificity and courage that the moment demands.

How to Identify the Prophetic Word for Your Congregation

Prophetic discernment requires two simultaneous engagements: deep immersion in the biblical narrative and its theology, and honest attention to the specific conditions of the congregation's actual life. The prophetic word is not a generic moral lecture -- it is the specific word that the Spirit is pressing into the pastor's consciousness as he reads the text and looks at the congregation. What is the gap between the Gospel the congregation is being formed by and the Gospel they actually need? What patterns of injustice, idolatry, or spiritual complacency are present in the community's life that the text addresses? What are the specific cultural pressures that are reshaping the congregation's moral imagination in ways that contradict their stated convictions? These questions, brought to the text in prayer, generate the prophetic word.

The practice of prophetic preaching includes: choosing texts that have prophetic weight (the prophets themselves, the Sermon on the Mount, the hard sayings of Jesus, the structural passages of the Epistles that address social relationships); doing the exegetical work to understand what the text was actually saying to its original audience before applying it to the contemporary context; articulating the specific application with pastoral love rather than political partisanship; and being willing to preach the sermon even when you know it will cost you something.

Reflection and Discussion Questions

1. What is the most personally significant insight from this resource for your specific ministry context right now?
2. Where is the greatest gap between the principles here and your current practice? What is one specific step to begin closing that gap?
3. Who in your leadership community needs to engage with this material? How will you bring them into the conversation?

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4. What accountability structure will you put in place to ensure the commitments you are making here are actually kept?

The work described in this resource is not the extraordinary work of exceptionally gifted ministers. It is the ordinary, daily, faithful work of people who have decided to take their calling seriously -- to prepare, to pray, to show up, and to trust God with what only he can do. Do the ordinary things with extraordinary faithfulness. That is the whole of it.

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