**Of the Preaching of the Word**

<https://www.covenanter.org/reformed/documents/the-directory-for-the-publick-worship-of-god#word>

PREACHING of the word, being the power of God unto salvation, and one of the greatest and most excellent works belonging to the ministry of the gospel, should be so performed, that the workman need not be ashamed, but may save himself, and those that hear him.

It is presupposed, (according to the rules for ordination,) that the minister of Christ is in some good measure gifted for so weighty a service, by his skill in the original languages, and in such arts and sciences as are handmaids unto divinity; by his knowledge in the whole body of theology, but most of all in the holy scriptures, having his senses and heart exercised in them above the common sort of believers; and by the illumination of God’s Spirit, and other gifts of edification, which (together with reading and studying of the word) he ought still to seek by prayer, and an humble heart, resolving to admit and receive any truth not yet attained, whenever God shall make it known unto him. All which he is to make use of, and improve, in his private preparations, before he delivers in public what he hath provided.

Ordinarily, the subject of his sermon is to be some text of scripture, holding forth some principle or head of religion, or suitable to some special occasion emergent; or he may go on in some chapter, psalm, or book of the holy scripture, as he shall see fit.

Let the introduction to his text be brief and perspicuous, drawn from the text itself, or context, or some parallel place, or general sentence of scripture.

If the text be long, (as in histories or parables it sometimes must be,) let him give a brief sum of it; if short, a paraphrase thereof, if need be: in both, looking diligently to the scope of the text, and pointing at the chief heads and grounds of doctrine which he is to raise from it.

In analysing and dividing his text, he is to regard more the order of matter than of words; and neither to burden the memory of the hearers in the beginning with too many members of division, nor to trouble their minds with obscure terms of art.

In raising doctrines from the text, his care ought to be, First, That the matter be the truth of God. Secondly, That it be a truth contained in or grounded on that text, that the hearers may discern how God teacheth it from thence. Thirdly, that he chiefly insists upon those doctrines which are principally intended; and make most for the edification of the hearers.

The doctrine is to be expressed in plain terms; or, if anything in it need explication, it is to be opened, and the consequence also from the text cleared. The parallel places of scripture, confirming the doctrine, are rather to be plain and pertinent, than many, and (it need be) somewhat insisted upon, and applied to the purpose in hand.

The arguments or reasons are to be solid, and as much as may be, convincing. The illustrations, of what kind soever, ought to be full of light, and such as may convey the truth into the hearer’s heart with spiritual delight.

If any doubt obvious from scripture, reason, or prejudice of the hearers, seem to arise, it is very requisite to remove it, by reconciling the seeming differences, answering the reasons, and discovering and taking away the causes of prejudice and mistake. Otherwise it is not fit to detain the hearers with propounding or answering vain or wicked cavils, which, as they are endless, so the propounding and answering of them doth more hinder than promote edification.

He is not to rest in general doctrine, although never so much cleared and confirmed, but to bring it home to special use, by application to his hearers: which albeit it prove a work of great difficulty to himself, requiring much prudence, zeal, and meditation, and to the natural and corrupt man will be very unpleasant; yet he is to endeavor to perform it in such a manner, that his auditors may feel the word of God to be quick and powerful, and a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart; and that, if any unbeliever or ignorant person be present, he may have the secrets of his heart made manifest, and give glory to God.

In the use of instruction or information in the knowledge of some truth, which is a consequence from his doctrine, he may (when convenient) confirm it by a few firm arguments from the text in hand, and other places of scripture, or from the nature of that common-place in divinity, whereof that truth is a branch.

In confutation of false doctrines, he is neither to raise an old heresy from the grave, nor to mention a blasphemous opinion unnecessarily: but, if the people be in danger of an error, he is to confute it soundly, and endeavor to satisfy their judgments and consciences against all objections.

In exhorting to duties, he is, as he seeth cause, to teach also the means that help to the performance of them.

In dehortatios, reprehension, and public admonition, (which require special wisdom,) let him, as there shall be cause, not only discover the nature and greatness of the sin, with the misery attending it, but also shew the danger his hearers are in to be overtaken and surprised by it, together with the remedies and best way to avoid it.

In applying comfort, whether general against all temptations, or particular against some special troubles or terrors, he is carefully to answer such objections as a troubled heart and afflicted spirit may suggest to the contrary. It is also sometimes requisite to give some notes of trial, (which is very profitable, especially when performed by able and experienced ministers, with circumspection and prudence, and the signs clearly grounded on the holy scripture,) whereby the hearers may be able to examine themselves whether they have attained those graces, and performed those duties, to which he exhorteth, or be guilty of the sin reprehended, and in danger of the judgments threatened, or are such to whom the consolations propounded do belong; that accordingly they may be quickened and excited to duty, humbled for their wants and sins, affected with their danger, and strengthened with comfort, as their condition, upon examination, shall require.

And, as he needeth not always to prosecute every doctrine which lies in his text, so is he wisely to make choice of such uses, as, by his residence and conversing with his flock, he findeth most needful and seasonable; and, amongst these, such as may most draw their souls to Christ, the fountain of light, holiness, and comfort.

This method is not prescribed as necessary for every man, or upon every text; but only recommended, as being found by experience to be very much blessed of God, and very helpful for the people’s understandings and memories.

But the servant of Christ, whatever his method be, is to perform his whole ministry:

1. Painfully, not doing the work of the Lord negligently.

2. Plainly, that the meanest may understand; delivering the truth not in the enticing words of man’s wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, lest the cross of Christ should be made of none effect; abstaining also from an unprofitable use of unknown tongues, strange phrases, and cadences of sounds and words; sparingly citing sentences of ecclesiastical or other human writers, ancient or modern, be they never so elegant.

3. Faithfully, looking at the honour of Christ, the conversion, edification, and salvation of the people, not at his own gain or glory; keeping nothing back which may promote those holy ends, giving to everyone his own portion, and bearing indifferent respect unto all, without neglecting the meanest, or sparing the greatest, in their sins.

4. Wisely, framing all his doctrines, exhortations, and especially his reproofs, in such a manner as may be most likely to prevail; shewing all due respect to each man’s person and place, and not mixing his own passion or bitterness.

5. Gravely, as becometh the word of God; shunning all such gesture, voice, and expressions, as may occasion the corruptions of men to despise him and his ministry.

6. With loving affection, that the people may see all coming from his godly zeal, and hearty desire to do them good. And,

7. As taught of God, and persuaded in his own heart, that all that he teacheth is the truth of Christ; and walking before his flock, as an example to them in it; earnestly, both in private and public, recommending his labors to the blessing of God, and watchfully looking to himself, and the flock whereof the Lord hath made him overseer: So shall the doctrine of truth be preserved uncorrupt, many souls converted and built up, and himself receive manifold comforts of his labors even in this life, and afterward the crown of glory laid up for him in the world to come.

Where there are more ministers in a congregation than one, and they of different gifts, each may more especially apply himself to doctrine or exhortation, according to the gift wherein he most excelleth, and as they shall agree between themselves.

**Westminster Larger Catechism Q and A 97-99**

**Q97: What special use is there of the moral law to the regenerate?**

A97: Although they that are regenerate, and believe in Christ, be delivered from the moral law as a covenant of works,[1] so as thereby they are neither justified [2] nor condemned;[3] yet, besides the general uses thereof common to them with all men, it is of special use, to show them how much they are bound to Christ for his fulfilling it, and enduring the curse thereof in their stead, and for their good;[4] and thereby to provoke them to more thankfulness,[5] and to express the same in their greater care to conform themselves thereunto as the rule of their obedience.[6]

1. [Rom. 6:14](https://biblia.com/bible/kjv1900/Rom.%206.14); [7:4](https://biblia.com/bible/kjv1900/Rom%207.4), [6](https://biblia.com/bible/kjv1900/Rom%207.6); [Gal. 4:4-5](https://biblia.com/bible/kjv1900/Gal.%204.4-5)  
2. [Rom. 3:20](https://biblia.com/bible/kjv1900/Rom.%203.20)  
3. [Gal. 5:23](https://biblia.com/bible/kjv1900/Gal.%205.23); [Rom. 8:1](https://biblia.com/bible/kjv1900/Rom.%208.1)  
4. [Rom. 7:24-25](https://biblia.com/bible/kjv1900/Rom.%207.24-25); [8:3-4](https://biblia.com/bible/kjv1900/Rom%208.3-4); [Gal. 3:13-14](https://biblia.com/bible/kjv1900/Gal.%203.13-14)  
5. [Luke 1:68-69](https://biblia.com/bible/kjv1900/Luke%201.68-69), [74-75](https://biblia.com/bible/kjv1900/Luke%201.74-75); [Col. 1:12-14](https://biblia.com/bible/kjv1900/Col.%201.12-14)  
6. [Rom. 7:22](https://biblia.com/bible/kjv1900/Rom.%207.22); [12:2](https://biblia.com/bible/kjv1900/Rom%2012.2); [Titus 2:11-14](https://biblia.com/bible/kjv1900/Titus%202.11-14)

**Q98: Where is the moral law summarily comprehended?**

A98: The moral law is summarily comprehended in the ten commandments, which were delivered by the voice of God upon mount Sinai, and written by him in two tables of stone;[1] and are recorded in the twentieth chapter of Exodus. The four first commandments containing our duty to God, and the other six our duty to man.[2]

1. [Deut. 10:4](https://biblia.com/bible/kjv1900/Deut.%2010.4); [Exod. 34:1-4](https://biblia.com/bible/kjv1900/Exod.%2034.1-4)  
2. [Matt. 22:37-38](https://biblia.com/bible/kjv1900/Matt.%2022.37-38), [40](https://biblia.com/bible/kjv1900/Matt%2022.40)

**Q99: What rules are to be observed for the right understanding of the ten commandments?**

A99: For the right understanding of the ten commandments, these rules are to be observed:

1. That the law is perfect, and bindeth everyone to full conformity in the whole man unto the righteousness thereof, and unto entire obedience forever; so as to require the utmost perfection of every duty, and to forbid the least degree of every sin.[1]

2. That it is spiritual, and so reaches the understanding, will, affections, and all other powers of the soul; as well as words, works, and gestures.[2]

3. That one and the same thing, in divers respects, is required or forbidden in several commandments.[3]

4. That as, where a duty is commanded, the contrary sin is forbidden;[4] and, where a sin is forbidden, the contrary duty is commanded:[5] so, where a promise is annexed, the contrary threatening is included;[6] and, where a threatening is annexed, the contrary promise is included.[7]

5. That what God forbids, is at no time to be done;[8] What he commands, is always our duty;[9] and yet every particular duty is not to be done at all times.[10]

6. That under one sin or duty, all of the same kind are forbidden or commanded; together with all the causes, means, occasions, and appearances thereof, and provocations thereunto.[11]

7. That what is forbidden or commanded to ourselves, we are bound, according to our places, to endeavor that it may be avoided or performed by others, according to the duty of their places.[12]

8. That in what is commanded to others, we are bound, according to our places and callings, to be helpful to them;[13] and to take heed of partaking with others in: What is forbidden them.[14]

1. [Psa. 19:7](https://biblia.com/bible/kjv1900/Ps.%2019.7); [James 2:10](https://biblia.com/bible/kjv1900/James%202.10); [Matt. 5:21-22](https://biblia.com/bible/kjv1900/Matt.%205.21-22)  
2. [Rom. 7:14](https://biblia.com/bible/kjv1900/Rom.%207.14); [Deut. 6:5](https://biblia.com/bible/kjv1900/Deut.%206.5); [Matt. 5:21-22](https://biblia.com/bible/kjv1900/Matt.%205.21-22), [27-28](https://biblia.com/bible/kjv1900/Matt%205.27-28), [33-34](https://biblia.com/bible/kjv1900/Matt%205.33-34), [37-39](https://biblia.com/bible/kjv1900/Matt%205.37-39), [43-44](https://biblia.com/bible/kjv1900/Matt%205.43-44); [22:37-39](https://biblia.com/bible/kjv1900/Matt%2022.37-39)  
3. [Col. 3:5](https://biblia.com/bible/kjv1900/Col.%203.5); [Amos 8:5](https://biblia.com/bible/kjv1900/Amos%208.5); [Prov. 1:19](https://biblia.com/bible/kjv1900/Prov.%201.19); [I Tim. 6:10](https://biblia.com/bible/kjv1900/1%20Tim.%206.10)  
4. [Isa. 58:13](https://biblia.com/bible/kjv1900/Isa.%2058.13); [Deut. 6:13](https://biblia.com/bible/kjv1900/Deut.%206.13); [Matt. 4:9-10](https://biblia.com/bible/kjv1900/Matt.%204.9-10); [15:4-6](https://biblia.com/bible/kjv1900/Matt%2015.4-6)  
5. [Matt. 5:21-25](https://biblia.com/bible/kjv1900/Matt.%205.21-25); [Eph. 4:28](https://biblia.com/bible/kjv1900/Eph.%204.28)  
6. [Exod. 20:12](https://biblia.com/bible/kjv1900/Exod.%2020.12); [Prov. 30:17](https://biblia.com/bible/kjv1900/Prov.%2030.17)  
7. [Jer. 18:7-8](https://biblia.com/bible/kjv1900/Jer.%2018.7-8); [Exod. 20:7](https://biblia.com/bible/kjv1900/Exod.%2020.7); [Psa. 15:1](https://biblia.com/bible/kjv1900/Ps.%2015.1), [4-5](https://biblia.com/bible/kjv1900/Psa%2015.4-5); [24:4-5](https://biblia.com/bible/kjv1900/Psa%2024.4-5)  
8. [Job. 13:7](https://biblia.com/bible/kjv1900/Job.%2013.7); [36:21](https://biblia.com/bible/kjv1900/Job%2036.21); [Rom. 3:8](https://biblia.com/bible/kjv1900/Rom.%203.8); [Heb. 11:25](https://biblia.com/bible/kjv1900/Heb.%2011.25)  
9. [Deut. 4:8-9](https://biblia.com/bible/kjv1900/Deut.%204.8-9)  
10. [Matt. 12:7](https://biblia.com/bible/kjv1900/Matt.%2012.7)  
11. [Matt. 5:21-22](https://biblia.com/bible/kjv1900/Matt.%205.21-22), [27-28](https://biblia.com/bible/kjv1900/Matt%205.27-28); [15:4-6](https://biblia.com/bible/kjv1900/Matt%2015.4-6); [Heb. 10:24-25](https://biblia.com/bible/kjv1900/Heb.%2010.24-25); [I Thess. 5:22-23](https://biblia.com/bible/kjv1900/1%20Thess.%205.22-23); [Gal. 5:26](https://biblia.com/bible/kjv1900/Gal.%205.26); [Col. 3:21](https://biblia.com/bible/kjv1900/Col.%203.21)  
12. [Exod. 20:10](https://biblia.com/bible/kjv1900/Exod.%2020.10); [Lev. 19:17](https://biblia.com/bible/kjv1900/Lev.%2019.17); [Gen. 18:19](https://biblia.com/bible/kjv1900/Gen.%2018.19); [Josh. 24:15](https://biblia.com/bible/kjv1900/Josh.%2024.15); [Deut. 6:6-7](https://biblia.com/bible/kjv1900/Deut.%206.6-7)  
13. [II Cor. 1:24](https://biblia.com/bible/kjv1900/2%20Cor.%201.24)

14. [I Tim. 5:22](https://biblia.com/bible/kjv1900/1%20Tim.%205.22)

Question 1.—Is the preaching of the word, being the power of God unto salvation, one of the greatest and most excellent works belonging to the ministry?

Answer.—Yes. Tit. 1:3; Rev. 14:6. Clearly, preaching of the word is that instrument ordained by God to be the power of God unto salvation, 1 Cor. 1:21; Rom. 1:15, 16. It is one of the greatest and most excellent works entrusted to those in the ministry, 1 Cor. 9:16; 2 Cor. 2:12. Indeed, other duties of Gospel ministers are accounted of lesser importance in comparison, 1 Cor. 1:17.

Question 2.—Ought it to be so performed, that the workman need not be ashamed, but may save himself, and those that hear him?

Answer.—Yes. 2 Tim. 2:15. The preaching ought to be conducted in such a manner as may lend the greatest weight to its matter, Tit. 2:7, 8; Eph. 4:29. The preaching of the Gospel is that great work for effecting the salvation of sinners, Rom. 1:16. Sound teaching and preaching is the appointed means to secure the salvation of both the preacher and the hearers, 1 Tim. 4:16.

Question 3.—Is it presupposed, (according to the rules of ordination), that the minister of Christ is in some good measure gifted for so weighty a service?

Answer.—Yes. Eph. 3:7; 2 Tim. 1:6; Col. 1:28, 29. Though there be degrees in the gifting, 1 Pet. 4:10, 11; yet doubtless it is that those called to the ministry are equipped by God in both natural and spiritual parts for the fulfilling of the requisite service, 1 Tim. 3:2; Eph. 4:7-12.

Question 4.—Should he seek the illumination of the Spirit of God by prayer?

Answer.—Yes. 1 Cor. 2:10-13. If this was the great desire of an apostle, how much more those of meaner gifts and graces? Eph. 6:18, 19. Christ himself was anointed by the Spirit for the purpose of preaching the Gospel, Isa. 61:1.

Question 5.—Should the subject of his sermon be drawn from some text of Scripture, either illustrating some head of religion, or adapted to some special occasion; or expository upon some lengthier portion of Scripture?

Answer.—Yes. 2 Tim. 4:2. Christ chose a text suitable for the occasion, Luke 4:17-21. Thus, Peter on the day of Pentecost preached upon a particular text, Acts 2:16-22. Expository preaching through books or portions of books of the Bible merely contemplates this prerogative of the minister to study the edification of those under him.

Question 6.—Should the introduction to the text be brief and perspicuous, drawn from Scripture?

Answer.—Yes. Acts 13:21. Introductory facts, which help to reinforce the message, ought to be drawn from Scripture, Jude 14. Matters of speculation ought to be avoided.

Question 7.—Should he, if the text be long, give a brief sum or paraphrase, always being diligent to preserve the scope and relevance of that portion to the sermon?

Answer.—Yes. Luke 4:17-29. Oftentimes Christ himself condenses the events spread over larger portions of Scripture in order to advance His argument, Matt. 12:39-42. So, too, run the expositions of the apostle, Acts 13:16-23.

Question 8.—Should he be careful to give more attention to the order of the matter than the words?

Answer.—Yes. Neh. 8:8. Sound interpretation studies the meaning of the text for the edification of God’s people, Luke 20:40-44. For this reason, the matter of the text is of greater import than the mere ordering of words, 1 Cor. 14:5, 19.

Question 9.—What ought the minister’s care to be in raising doctrines from the text?

Answer.—The minister’s care in raising doctrines from the text is threefold: 1.) Be careful that the matter is the truth of God, Gal. 5:11. 2.) That the truth is contained or grounded in the text, that the hearers may discern how God teaches them from it, Luke 4:17-21; Matt. 21:12, 13. 3.) That he chiefly insist on those doctrines which are principally intended, and make the most for the edification of the hearers, Matt. 19:4-6.

Question 10.—Should the doctrine be expressed in plain terms; comparing and confirming it by other pertinent places of Scripture?

Answer.—Yes. 2 Cor. 3:12. This was clearly the practice both of Christ, Matt. 15:3-9; and the apostles, John 12:37-41.

Question 11.—Should the arguments be solid and convincing, and any illustrations such as bring light to the matter?

Answer.—Yes. 1 Cor. 2:4. It is the duty of those who preach to exhort and convince gainsayers, Tit. 1:9. Arguments should be advanced in order to bring about conviction, Acts 17:2-4; 18:28. Any illustrations ought to be such as cast further light on the matter at hand and not such as tend to obscure, John 3:8.

Question 12.—Should the preacher seek to remove those doubts which most obviously arise from the text and, yet, avoid raising other seeming endless and wicked cavils?

Answer.—Yes. 2 Cor. 12:19. It is the duty of the preacher to clarify and illuminate the text for the benefit of those who hear, Neh. 8:8; yet, so as to avoid those pitfalls of addressing needless questions and speculative points, the preacher should be careful to remain silent on those matters not presently contested and those to no purpose, 1 Tim. 1:3, 4; 2 Tim. 2:15, 16; Tit. 1:14.