

Following God's Lead

Capital Campaign Series

Gather, Grow, & Go

©Pastor Marty Baker

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Today we dig into a new, short fall series appropriately titled **Following God's Lead**. Over the next four weeks, covering the entire month of September, I will step back from our expositional study of Matthew, to show all you what God has been doing here over the last several years, what that all means in the present, and where we are going in the near and far term. Each week I'll teach you our church mission and vision, seeking to get you charged up and re-committed to the things which matter most, and to demonstrate how God has richly and graciously blessed us as we've been committed to these biblical concepts.

Believe me, the last 5 ½ years of my tenure here as a shepherd have been amazing, exciting, humbling, as well as challenging and stretching. I'm sure I speak for the entire staff, paid and volunteer, the elder council, the deacons and deaconesses, along with those of you who been here to share in the Lord's work. Collectively and corporately, God has done things we never dreamed we'd see to the magnitude we've witnessed:

- He has changed countless lives.
- He has allowed us to experience a rich harvest of souls.
- He has given us great, impassioned leaders.
- He has sent us saints who are not afraid to serve inside and outside the church to meet needs.
- He has answered countless prayers in jaw-dropping fashion.
- He has safeguarded our unity so we are not distracted from primary matters.
- He has given leadership much needed and timely wisdom to handle an array of individual and corporate issues.
- He has given us fine individuals in the Master Planning and the Capital Campaign Committees to utilize their expertise in helping us see our way forward.
- He has well, let's stop there and just say He has blessed us far more abundantly beyond what we could ask or think, as Paul reminded the Ephesian church (Ephesians 3:20). So, I think it only right we stop and give Him praise by quoting the words of Paul at the close of Ephesians 3:

"... to Him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations forever and ever. Amen" (Ephesians 3:21).

Don't ever forget to give Him the praise for His work among us. All the wonderful things which have occurred here, all the lessons we've learned, and all the rich blessings which still come our

way are from His good hand; therefore, we rightfully give Him the glory and challenge you to do the same.

I don't know if you realize it, but what has happened around here is an ecclesiastical and statistical anomaly, truly a work of the Spirit of God. Consider the stats:

- Between 2009-2010 we had 26% growth.
- Between 2010-2011 we had 20% growth.
- Between 2011-2012 we had 19% growth.
- Between 2012-2013 we had 11% growth.
- Between 2013-Present we are at 11% growth.
- 2014 is already shaping up to push past the 11% level.

This type of growth, especially in busy, distracted, and tough political and spiritual environment like D.C., just doesn't happen. If a typical church grows two to three percent a year, that is wonderful. To see what we've seen is just mind-numbing.

Supposing we just grow at an eleven percent rate over the next few years, here is how that translates just in relation to our adult worship attendance. Realize the same growth stats are applicable to the children's and youth areas as well, but for our purposes at this juncture, let's just consider a forward look in relation to adults:

- For 2015 average worship attendance should be 1665.
- For 2016 average worship attendance should be 1848.
- For 2017 average worship attendance should be 2051.
- For 2018 average worship attendance should be 2277.
- For 2019 average worship attendance should be 2527.
- For 2020 average worship attendance should be 2805.

Now you can readily see why I said God has done far more abundantly beyond what we could ask or think. He has moved, He is moving, and we anticipate Him to continue to move in and through this body of believers to position us to be a great light not just in Burke but in Northern Virginia and beyond.

All of this leads us, of course, to ask, "Lord, what do you want us to do to accommodate all these folks so they can grow in their knowledge of you and reach their respective spheres of influence for you?" With a worship center containing limited seating, coupled with a building with limited size for adult, college, singles, youth, and children's ministries our Elder Council, Pastors, and Master Planning Committee believe we must build out our building footprint with larger structures better suited to what God is doing. To accomplish this lofty, worthy, and Spirit-directed endeavor we have enlisted the leadership of the Capital Campaign team. During this exciting month, I'll give you specifics regarding our financial commitment to realize this goal, and in our last session of this series, I'll challenge you to make a financial commitment over and above your current giving to help us keep pace with the movement of the Lord.

But for today, we pause to consider why God has blessed us. I could give you many reasons why, but I think at the top of the list is one simple premise:

We Are Corporately Committed To Mission & Vision

Let's begin, first, by looking at ...

Our Mission

It is one thing to have a mission and vision statement as a church. It is another thing for a local church to work hand in glove to fulfill that mission and vision. Here are BCC we are serious about the mission Jesus gave the Church universal through His Great Commission prior to His ascension into heaven:

“All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth.¹⁹ Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit,²⁰ teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age” (Matthew 28).

Key here is Christ’s command for us to make disciples and share the gospel above all else. We’ve reduced the Great Commission of Christ into this familiar statement:

To Know Christ And To Make Him Known

Our entire church, every facet of what we do from our adult small group ministry to our Quest program for fifth and sixth graders is purposefully structured and evaluated frequently to make sure we are faithful in fulfilling this divine mandate.

To ensure we realize this important mission mandate, we next turn to a pity, strategic vision ...

Our Vision

One of the first things I did when I arrived was to help the staff devise a vision to better implement to the commission of the Lord. Our old house model served us well for the last 5 ½ years; but, as with many things of this nature, it has a shelf-life. Hence, beginning this fall we are re-packaging our vision into the following short, I-can-write-it-on-a-napkin, easy to memorize concept:



As we shall see over the next month, each facet of this new vision articulation supports Christ’s mission mandate. The **Gather** speaks of our commitment to the worship of the Lord, which, in turn, relates directly to discipleship. The **Grow** is intrinsically tied to discipleship insofar as it

addresses God's call for all disciples to spiritual mature. The **Go** represents God's call for us to use our gifting to advance His local church, coupled with His desire for us to showcase the gospel in a spiritually dark world. Again, as we remain committed to giving time and attention to these three concepts, individually and corporately, we will not only fulfill the Great Commission of Jesus, we will, by definition, witness His continued blessing. Put differently, how can a local church not grow if its worship adores God and teaches the Word, if its saints are serious about moving from spiritual babyhood to adulthood, and if those saints are faithful to share the glory of the life-giving gospel of Jesus Christ?

Simply put. We are where we are at in Following God's Lead toward a building program because we have been faithful to God's mission and vision. Looking, therefore, to a time of financial commitment at the end of this month where we will individually and prayerfully consider what we can do to support the leadership of Christ, I think it most prudent and timely for us to get up close and personal with our vision for that vision will be the fulcrum God will use to continue to rain His blessing upon this place in the years to come.

To that end, this morning I invite you to come with me as we take a look at the first leg of our "new" vision ...

We Gather For Worship

This is the entry point, typically, to our church. Sure, folks come into our church in a variety of ways: some through small groups, some through a softball team, and so forth, but the primary point of contact is attendance in one of our worship services. Here new people see a body of Christ in operation, they, as one new lady told me, "sense God in the place," they encounter people who are real and friendly, they see a worship service not a performance, they hear the unadulterated, practical teaching of the Word of God, they see saints remember the death and resurrection of their Lord through communion, they witness people making faith decisions to become disciples of Christ, and they witness new spiritual lives committed to Christ with each new baptism. All of this, of course, brings many of them back again, and eventually, they get assimilated into our vibrant body at other levels outside of worship. But the key for our growth is worship.

Looking at worship, which is highly important and instructive, is best approached in a two-fold format.

Our Foundation

Yes, worship is our strong foundation. Why? Primarily because of two reasons.

One, *worship is our strong foundation because of revelatory reality*. In other words, the God who is the great uncaused one, the God who stands outside of our limited space/time continuum, the God who created all there is by the word of His powerful mouth (Genesis 1:1ff), the God who is the Alpha and Omega (Revelation 1:8; 21:6; 22:13) and the Beginning and the End (Revelation 21:6; 22:13, 18), the God who is the First and the Last, the God who reveals Himself as one in essence but functioning in a mysterious, complex Trinitarian form (Romans 1:20; Colossians 2:9), the God who is the great I AM of time and eternity (Exodus 3:15) is the One who desires the individual and corporate worship of those He has carefully and thoughtfully created in His image. From man's placement in the Garden of Eden to the coming of the Christ, God has

informed us, in a variety of ways, of the fact that we were created specifically to worship Him and give Him glory, honor, and adoration.

Not long after God freed Israel from Egyptian bondage, He assembled them at the foot of Mount Sinai to not only give them His Law so they would know how to live before Him and the need for them to worship Him. Deuteronomy chapter 6 highlights this last point:

¹³ You shall fear *only* the LORD your God; and you shall worship Him and swear by His name.

There was no room left for worshipping any other so-called god, no matter how sincere the people of that god were or how committed they were to his worship. True worship had to be given, must be given, to the one and only true God as disclosed in the Holy Scriptures.

God also gave ancient specific instructions how to build their first worship center (Exodus 19-40). He called it the Tabernacle, and it was here He promised to dwell uniquely and personally among His people so they could worship Him. Exodus 33:10 gives us a snapshot of what happened when Israel saw God's presence in the Tabernacle:

⁹ Whenever Moses entered the tent, the pillar of cloud would descend and stand at the entrance of the tent; and the LORD would speak with Moses. ¹⁰ When all the people saw the pillar of cloud standing at the entrance of the tent, all the people would arise and worship, each at the entrance of his tent.

It doesn't tell us what they did for worship, but I'm sure it started with bowing reverently in God's presence. A song probably broke out and rippled spontaneously through the crowd, and people probably stood up here and there verbally giving God glory. I'm sure it was one of those worship moments when you, the worshipper, couldn't help but feel the awe of God.

Later in Israel's history, David would collect the items necessary for building Israel's first permanent worship facility in Jerusalem (2 Chronicles 22:1-5), and Solomon would actually build the structure, and Israel would be challenged to come here to worship the living God based on His specific instructions of how to approach Him, starting with blood sacrifice (Leviticus 1). David, who loved to worship the Lord, gave us many Psalms inviting us to worship this God whom the Temple could not contain:

Worship the LORD with reverence and rejoice with trembling (Psalm 2:11).

Ascribe to the LORD the glory due His name; worship the LORD in holy array (Psalm 29:2).

Come, let us worship and bow down, let us kneel before the LORD our Maker (Psalm 95:6).

Solomon, at the dedication of the Temple, kneeled, prayed, and worshiped before the God whose presence filled the Temple (1 Kings 8:10-61).

Later in the New Testament Jesus, the Messiah, taught us about the importance of worship on the day of His prophesied triumphal entry into Jerusalem. The disciples worshipped him with shouting:

³⁸ BLESSED IS THE KING WHO COMES IN THE NAME OF THE LORD; Peace in heaven and glory in the highest! (Luke 19).

When the Pharisees asked Jesus to rebuke His disciples, Jesus replied in powerful fashion:

I tell you, if these become silent, the stones will cry out! (Luke 19:40).

Worshipping Jesus, and Him alone, doesn't get any clearer than this. God has created us to worship Him, and this is His foremost desire and this is why it is foundational to our church.

Two, *Worship is, also, foundational because of the resurrection*. We don't worship a dead Savior. We don't worship a Savior made of stone or wood. We don't worship a Savior of man's own construction, one which is a watered down version of the true, holy, infinite God. We don't assemble to be entertained or to connect with others. We don't meet on Sundays to check a box so our conscience feels clean the rest of the week. No. We, as Christians, worship the resurrected Savior, the Savior who defeated sin and death at the cross and at His empty tomb. We join with the New Testament Church, as pictured in the book of Acts, in upholding and extolling Jesus, the Messiah, and His glorious, definitive resurrection (Acts 1:22; 2:31; 4:2, 33; 17:18, 32; 23:6, 8; 24:15, 21; 26:23).

The power of the resurrected Christ was Peter's story (Acts 2:32). It was Stephen's story when the Pharisees martyred him:

⁵⁵ But being full of the Holy Spirit, he gazed intently into heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing ^{at} the right hand of God; ⁵⁶ and he said, "Behold, I see the heavens opened up and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God (Acts 7).

It was Paul's story (Acts 9:3-5):

³ As he was traveling, it happened that he was approaching Damascus, and suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him; ⁴ and he fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to him, "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?" ⁵ And he said, "Who are You, Lord?" And He said, "I am Jesus whom you are persecuting ... (Acts 9).

The resurrection is my story, your story, and our story and that is why it is utterly foundational to our commitment to gather. We gather to worship the living Savior. You might need to hear that again. We gather to worship the only living Savior, Jesus, the Christ and our corporate worship of Him is merely a culmination of our personal/private worship of Him throughout the week. Let me say, when folks make a given worship service their point of entry into this local church, and when they encounter a group of loving, caring people committed to and excited about the Savior who lives, that experience, in and of itself, is catchy, memorable, moving, and it will motivate them to come back for more.

Several years ago, my best friend, Rick Sealy, the former Captain of Homicide in San Joaquin County in California, took Liz and I on one final trip before cancer took him home to be with Christ. For the first leg of our trip, he wanted to go to the worship event at Disneyworld in

Orlando with the likes of Third Day and Chris Tomlin leading in worship. Standing there in that massive, reverent crowd for several hours, hearing the Lord glorified through the Word and through song, was one of those moments of worship awe, you know, one of those times you just knew God was in the house. We truly didn't want to leave that evening, knowing something special and amazing had just occurred. Ever been there?

What we sensed that night, is what I've sensed many times in this house of worship. That sense of the presence of the resurrected Christ, that sense He basked in and enjoyed our praise as His devoted disciples. Believe me, when a church is committed to the foundational aspects of vibrant worship, when it is apparent, more often than not, that God is in the house, growth happens by default.

We are firmly committed and will remain committed to this worship foundation of all foundations. From the foundation naturally flows what I'll call ...

Our Features

Every church has them. What are they? They are what that church, based on the (limited) freedom Christ has given to them, determines should be their worship foci. Of the many things we focus on during a given worship service, I can safely say that two items are always central to us as we pray and plan:

Contemporary verses traditional. I grew up in a conservative Baptist church. We started many a service singing, Holy, Holy, Holy, sang hymns usually to the accompaniment of an organ (played by my piano teacher), had a choir in silky robes just to the right of the pulpit, and we typically closed with the same hymn to permit the pastor to walk the isle to the back so he could personally greet each and every parishioner. I never saw drums on stage, or electric guitars (... they were reserved for Jimmy Hendrix and Led Zeppelin), or a bass guitar. No, it was organ music from beginning to end, with a smattering of piano music every now and then when someone sang a special number. The only time I encountered a guitar in any form of worship was in our innovative youth program where one guy would play and we would sing some cutting edge choruses; you know *Pass It On, Bind Us Together* to name a few.

I loved the worship back then, and many of those old hymns are still my favorites and a number of them are tied, forever, to key events in my life. For instance, *His Eye Is on the Sparrow* is one I can still hardly sing. Glenda Fletcher was the mother of my college roommate, Brent, and I lived with them one summer between my junior and senior year at APU. She contracted ovarian cancer that summer and a year later she was in the Lord's presence. We sang this hymn at her funeral because it was one of her favorites, and because it has consoled her many times during her battle with the deadly disease.

Why should I feel discouraged, why should the shadows come,
Why should my heart be lonely, and long for heav'n and home,

When Jesus is my portion? My constant Friend is He:
His eye is on the sparrow, and I know He watches me;
His eye is on the sparrow, and I know He watches me.

Refrain:

I sing because I'm happy, I sing because I'm free,
For His eye is on the sparrow, and I know He watches me.

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What a wonderful, moving, encouraging song of worship. You can readily see why Glenda loved it, and why I love it still.

As meaningful as hymns like this are, it is our conviction that God has given us the freedom to create worship to suit the needs of the contemporary man. Think about it. Of all the songs David wrote in the Psalter, none of them come with the melodies. All we have are the words. Don't you find that intriguing? In a latent way I think God tells us the instruments weren't as important as the words. God also tells us that different instruments could be employed in different ages if the people so chose. What mattered was that God was worshipped, not how they traditionally sang a given song. Too often, I fear, we think the form of the music is inspired, along with the words. Such is not the case. Hymns from days of old merely represent one way to worship the living God, but this method did not come down to Moses on Mount Sinai. Freedom and flexibility are on God's mind, all within the confines of sound, theological wording, of course.

God is a God of new worship music. You can't read through the entire Bible and fail to see this:

Sing to Him a new song; play skillfully with a shout of joy (Psalm 33:3).

Note, God didn't say what you had to play skillfully with, just for you to enjoy a new song for Him with what is appropriate for the day and moment.

Here's another:

⁹ I will sing a new song to You, O God; Upon a harp of ten strings I will sing praises to You ... (Psalm 144).

Don't you know there must have been talk when David switched from a five string to a ten string harp? If this did occur, do you think it bothered God? No. Not for a moment because God sang to Him.

Even in heaven we'll be learning new songs. John tells us this much:

⁸ When He [Jesus] had taken the book, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb, each one holding a harp and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the ²saints. ⁹ And they sang a new song, saying, "Worthy are You to take the book and to break its seals; for You were slain, and purchased for God with Your blood *men* from every tribe and tongue and people and nation. ¹⁰ You have made them *to be* a kingdom and priests to our God; and they will reign upon the earth" (Revelation 5).

Interesting. The highest order of angels and the twenty-four elders, who rightly represent the Church, will sing a new worship song at this moment. Don't ever think God doesn't like new worship music.

Pragmatically, all this means is God gives us the freedom to construct worship services which we feel best create worship for us in this culture at this point in time in history. Sure, we

will work the great ol' hymns in here and there. How could we not? But contemporary worship songs are, and will continue to be, the order of the day, with Pastor Darren rightfully introducing new songs to help us lift up and adore our risen Savior and Lord. And we'll continue to utilize all the instruments we can, performed with skill and expertise, in order to bring fitting worship before God's holy throne. Appropriate backgrounds and backdrops, which are important in our day, will also be employed to facilitate our worship and to help tie us into God's presence. And prayer will also be strategically interwoven throughout the service to assist us in tapping into God's power and presence, and to enable us to corporately show Him the honor and adoration due His holy name.

Contemporary versus traditional worship is one of two worship features we are concerned about. A second is this ...

Teaching Versus Topics. Some pastors never stay any longer than four to six weeks on any given topic they feel needs to be talked about during worship. They also are skilled at jumping from verse to verse in both Testaments to string together points to support their conclusions. Those who tend to preach in this fashion also typically steer clear of texts and topics which might ruffle the feathers of the flock, or raise a few carnal eye-brows here and there. Instead, they'll stay in safe zones with a goal of making little or no waves. They'll also not get into the real meat and depth of the Word of God for fear of losing people intellectually and physically. Better, in their approach, to preach and teach always on the lighter side.

While there is some validity to topical preaching, I'm not convinced it is necessarily the best homiletical model, especially for our ever-darkening, Christ-rejecting, truth-rejecting culture. At Dallas Theological Seminary, I was trained with their motto from Paul's pen in mind:

... preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with great patience and instruction (2 Timothy 2:4).

Preaching the Word means preaching the whole counsel of God, from Genesis to Revelation. It means to teach expositorily the books of the Bible and to make your topical teaching expositional as well.

Haddon Robinson, who first got me excited about really applying at Dallas Theological Seminary when I heard him speak at the convention center in Anaheim back in 1980, defines expositional preaching this way:

At its best, expository preaching is "the presentation of biblical truth, derived from and transmitted through a historical, grammatical, Spirit-guided study of a passage in its context, which the Holy Spirit applies first to the life of the preacher and then through him to his congregation."¹

Walt Kaiser, the renowned Old Testament scholar, gives us added insight into the power of expositional, textual preaching in his book *Preaching and Teaching From the Old Testament*:

What separates topical preaching from expositional preaching, observed Ronald Allen, is that expository preaching and teaching unwaveringly begins and

¹ Haddon W. Robinson, "What Is Expository Preaching?" *Bibliotheca Sacra* 131 (January–March 1974): 57.

remains with the biblical text throughout the whole sermon. Rather than beginning with the human need for concern as the impetus for the sermon, the expository sermon deliberately reverses the action and has the sermon originate in the exposition of the biblical text itself. Exposition starts with the biblical text and holds fast to that text throughout the sermon or lesson.²

Later in this particular chapter he adds:

“ ... the conclusion is one of the most critical parts of a message I must issue a royal (i.e., a divine) summons to specific suggestions for immediate action. There must be a call for God to change us in light of the purity of his word. But there must also be a caution here: I must call for specific actions that are based uniquely on one is precisely taught in the passage. All too frequently we call for generically true actions that could have been found in 100 other passages --- but, unfortunately, not in the one being preached at this time.³

I couldn't have said it better.

What all this means is we are a church sold out to the idea that the best way to equip the saints for the work of ministry and for the path of spiritual growth (Ephesians 4:11ff), and a most effective way to introduce the non-Christian the person and work of Jesus Christ is through the systematic, perpetual teaching of the Word of God ... line by line, paragraph by paragraph, chapter by chapter, book by book. Sure, we can, and will, stop and do topical studies here and there, but even those will have exposition written all over them. There is just no substitute for the well-ordered, systematic teaching and preaching of the entire Word of God.

What this all means is we are a church sold out to the idea that people are hungry for the Word of God ... all of it. They want to hear it, even if they might not agree with it. They want to know how to think through it. They want to know answers to its mysterious, problematic sections. They want answers which are definitive and absolute in a culture adrift on the raging seas of moral and spiritual relativism. They want to know how to think their way through problematic, thorny passages. They want lasting hope in a hopeless world. They truly want to hear a “Thus saith the Lord ...” so they can know which direction to head to give God glory and to redeem their fellow citizens wrapped in carnal, godless, misdirected thinking. They want a church where great worship and great teaching/preaching collide so that their Savior is adored and their souls are fed so they are properly prepared to fulfill the Great Commission.

BCC is this kind of church, and because it is God's blessing rests here. No matter what happens in the days ahead, no matter how dark the days become, no matter how many people fall away from sound thinking and the faith, we are determined to be that light which shines in the darkness as we gather for biblical praise and study. I'm glad you are here at this point in time. God is at work in a powerful fashion and we, as His people, are merely excited about following His lead.

² Walt Kaiser Jr., *Preaching And Teaching From The Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2003): 50. Him

³ Kaiser, 58-59.

Additional thoughts on expository preaching from John MacArthur's helpful book *Rediscovering Expository Preaching*:

One way to clarify expository preaching is to identify what it is not.

1. It is not a commentary running from word to word and verse to verse without unity, outline, and pervasive drive.
2. It is not rambling comments and offhand remarks about a passage without a background of thorough exegesis and logical order.
3. It is not a mass of disconnected suggestions and inferences based on the surface meaning of a passage but not sustained by a depth-and-breadth study of the text.
4. It is not pure exegesis, no matter how scholarly, if it lacks a theme, thesis, outline, and development.
5. It is not a mere structural outline of a passage with a few supporting comments but without other rhetorical and sermonic elements.
6. It is not a topical homily using scattered parts of the passage but omitting discussion of other equally important parts.
7. It is not a chopped-up collection of grammatical findings and quotations from commentaries without a fusing of these elements into a smooth, flowing, interesting, and compelling message.
8. It is not a Sunday-school-lesson type of discussion that has an outline of the contents, informality, and fervency but lacks sermonic structure and rhetorical ingredients.
9. It is not a Bible reading that links a number of scattered passages treating a common theme but fails to handle any of them in a thorough, grammatical, and contextual manner.
10. It is not the ordinary devotional or prayer-meeting talk that combines running commentary, rambling remarks, disconnected suggestions, and personal reactions into a semi-inspirational discussion but lacks the benefit of the basic exegetical-contextual study and persuasive elements.

Before proceeding farther, consider the English word group “expose, exposition, expositor, expository.” According to Webster, an exposition is a discourse to convey information or explain what is difficult to understand. Applying this idea to preaching requires that an expositor be one who explains Scripture by laying open the text to public view in order to set forth its meaning, explain what is difficult to understand, and make appropriate application. John Calvin’s centuries-old understanding of exposition is very similar:

First of all, Calvin understood preaching to be the explication of Scripture. The words of Scripture are the source and content of preaching. As an expositor, Calvin brought to the task of preaching all the skills of a humanist scholar. As an interpreter, Calvin explicated the text, seeking its natural, its true, its scriptural meaning.... Preaching is not only the explication of Scripture, it is also the application of Scripture. Just as Calvin explicated Scripture word by word, so he applied the Scripture sentence by sentence to the life and experience of his congregation.

Exposition is not so much defined by the form of the message as it is by the source and process through which the message was formed. Unger poignantly captures this sense:

No matter what the length of the portion explained may be, if it is handled in such a way that its real and essential meaning as it existed in the mind of the particular Biblical writer and as it exists in the light of the overall context of Scripture is made plain and applied to the present-day needs of the hearers, it may properly be said to be expository preaching.... It is emphatically not preaching about the Bible, but preaching the Bible. "What saith the Lord" is the alpha and the omega of expository preaching. It begins in the Bible and ends in the Bible and all that intervenes springs from the Bible. In other words, expository preaching is Bible-centered preaching.

Two other definitions of exposition help clarify what it is:

At its best, expository preaching is "the presentation of biblical truth, derived from and transmitted through a historical, grammatical, Spirit-guided study of a passage in its context, which the Holy Spirit applies first to the life of the preacher and then through him to his congregation."

In the 1950' ML-J [D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones] was virtually alone in England in engaging in what he meant by 'expository preaching'. For preaching to qualify for that designation it was not enough, in his view, that its content be biblical; addresses which concentrated upon word-studies, or which gave running commentary and analyses of whole chapters, might be termed 'biblical', but that is not the same as exposition. To expound is not simply to give the correct grammatical sense of a verse or passage, it is rather to set out principles or doctrines which the words are intended to convey. True expository preaching is, therefore, doctrinal preaching, it is preaching which addresses specific truths from God to man. The expository preacher is not one who 'shares his studies' with others, he is an ambassador and a messenger, authoritatively delivering the Word of God to men. Such preaching presents a text, then, with that text in sight throughout, there is deduction, argument and appeal, the whole making up a message which bears the authority of Scripture itself. Given such a conception, a faithful discharge of the teaching office necessitates the preacher being able to say, with Paul, 'We are not as many, which corrupt the word of God: but as of sincerity, but as of God, in the sight of God speak we in Christ' (2 Cor. 2:17). If this involves a staggeringly high view of preaching, it was nothing more, Dr. Lloyd-Jones believed, than is required of the ministerial office.

In summary, the following minimal elements identify expository preaching:

1. The message finds its sole source in Scripture.
2. The message is extracted from Scripture through careful exegesis.
3. The message preparation correctly interprets Scripture in its normal sense and its context.
4. The message clearly explains the original God-intended meaning of Scripture.
5. The message applies the Scriptural meaning for today.