

INGREDIENTS OF A GOSPEL SERMON

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A preacher will preach hundreds, maybe thousands, of sermons over a lifetime. It has been a tried-and-true way of communicating the message of scripture ever since Peter and the other apostles did it on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2; 1 Cor. 1:21; Rom. 10:14-15). As long as there is a message to speak and people who will hear it, sermons must continue to be delivered as often as possible. What to preach will depend on the occasion, the audience, and other factors. This often is itself a challenge, but each gospel sermon should contain basic ingredients no matter what the subject matter may be. In cooking and baking, some recipes will contain the same basic ingredients because they are key to that food being prepared. Cakes can come in different colors and with different icings, but the basic ingredients stay the same. So it is with preaching the gospel. Consider the following ingredients in every gospel sermon:

The Gospel – How could one prepare a cherry pie without cherries? How can one preach a gospel sermon without the gospel? The sermon should begin and end with the gospel and be filled to the brim with it in between. The gospel sermon is not the time to discuss politics of the day, or to comment on personal opinions. The sermon is to be an appeal to the word of God as the authoritative source of all knowledge and wisdom. The sermon is an opportunity to inform men of what to do to please God and perform good works of His will. Too many are subjected to sorry excuses for sermons that spout human wisdom, entertainment, and pop psychology. Even in sermons that may examine denominationalism, world religions, immorality, and false doctrines, there must always be an appeal to the authority of God's word by which to judge these matters of God or man. We need to demand more book, chapter, and verse preaching. Preach the man and the plan and expose all error. *"If anyone speaks, let him speak as the oracles of God"* (1 Pet. 4:11).

Boldness – Every gospel sermon needs to be preached boldly. Paul desired prayer that he might open his *"mouth boldly to make known the mystery of the gospel"* (Eph. 6:19). The gospel preacher needs courage and backbone to speak openly and boldly the message of God. Not every ear will want to hear the truth. Everyone's countenance will not be pleasant after the sermon. Yet the word must be preached! *"Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching"* (2 Tim. 4:2). Apologetic, I-feel-so-terrible-to-have-to-say-this, brand of preaching is not effective in moving men and women to repent of sin. Such preaching will not strengthen the faith of Christians. If you don't mean it, don't say it! People can sense insincerity. Preach the truth boldly!

Invitation – I have been hearing more about sermons that rarely, if at all, mention the Lord's invitation. I know that the invitation at the end of the sermon is only one way of "offering the invitation," but it needs to be offered in some way in every sermon. No one should walk off the street into our worship services and not hear what they must do to be saved. They need to hear what Jesus has done for them, and how they should respond in faith. Jesus' invitation is always open, and we need to take every opportunity to bring it to those who need to hear it. Let folks know that they need to respond to that invitation. It

is a very important invitation. We preach to move men to obey God, whether in initial obedience or in faithful living. Let us always be careful to preach the gospel with boldness, offering the invitation of Jesus to all.