

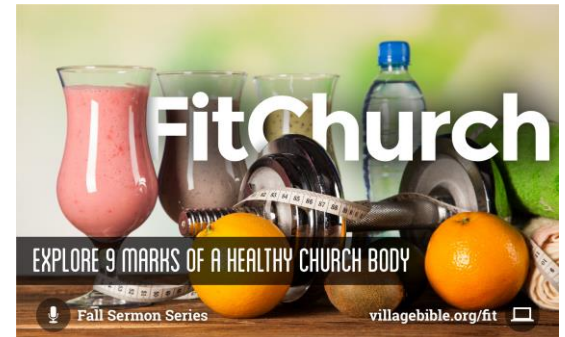


VILLAGE BIBLE CHURCH  
SUGAR GROVE CAMPUS

# Feast or Famine

**FitChurch: 9 Marks of a Healthy Church Body, Part 1**

**Tim Badal | September 21, 2014 | 2 Timothy 4:1-5**



Turn to the Book of 2 Timothy as we kick off a new series entitled: FitChurch. We're looking at nine marks of what a healthy church should look like. In 2 Timothy 4:1-5 we see the first mark of a healthy church: Biblical preaching. Here's what Paul says to his spiritual son Timothy and to us as well:

I 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: <sup>2</sup>preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching. <sup>3</sup>For the time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching, but having itching ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own passions, <sup>4</sup>and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander off into myths. <sup>5</sup>As for you, always be sober-minded, endure suffering, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry.

How are you doing? Did you have a good night's rest? Did you wake up well-rested this morning? Did you find the clothes that you were planning to wear? How did the kids do this morning? Were they all ready, bright-eyed and bushy-tailed, for another Lord's Day? How was the trip here? Did everybody enjoy their ride here? Did you get caught in traffic? Did you have time to stop for your cup of coffee?

How about when you got here? Did you find a good parking space? How about when you got to the front door? Did our people do a good job of greeting you? Did they smile and say hello, trying to remember your name from last week? How about that bulletin you got? Is there enough color? Too much color? Enough pictures? Not enough text? Not enough information? A little ostentatious?

How about when you came into the sanctuary? Does it smell okay in here? How's the temperature? Do you feel like you can sit here for a while? Do the pews make those bottoms of yours feel nice and cozy? How about our worship team? Did they do a good job for you today? Was the music too loud, too soft? Did we sing too many songs, or not enough? Did it look like the singers were excited? Was the drummer a little out of hand? Was the guitar a little too loud? Were the songs we sing the songs that you wanted to sing? Were they sung the way you wanted to sing them? How about our new pastor? Was he welcoming enough? Did he smile enough? Did he make you feel at home? Did he seem knowledgeable, but not a know-it-all?

Then the greeting time comes and you look around. Are these people the people you want to hang out with? Are they your type of people? Are they the type of people you want to do life together with? Let's go back to the kids for a moment. Did you get the kids to children's worship? Was everything done in an orderly way? Were people there to receive them? Are the kids going to have a good time today? Are they going to enjoy themselves?

Then this bald guy gets up and he's going to preach. Is he going to be able to have a balance of good humor and knowledge? Is he able to be relevant and timeless? Is he going to speak to you right where you're at? Even though he's speaking to hundreds of people, is the message going to be custom fit for you so you can walk away blessed? Will he be able to preach in a timely manner so that you will not lose your attention? When you leave this place, do you think you'll come back again?

It is amazing how we evaluate churches. Each one of those things is important when it comes to preferences, but what we haven't answered is, "What makes a healthy church?" What is it about Village Bible Church that spurs us to not only want to be

part of it, but invest in it as we invest our lives into the gospel life of Jesus Christ. What is it that makes Village Bible Church a Biblical church? This series, “FitChurch,” is devoted to that.

Over the next nine weeks we don’t want to answer the question of preferences, but Biblical principles that say what God is looking for in a healthy church. Our viewpoint may need altering. We need to take our eyes off of ourselves and ask God, “What do You require for Your church?” Many of you think you know what is best, but Jesus Christ, God’s Son, says, “I will build My church.” This isn’t my church or your church, this is God’s church. God has a blueprint for how He wants this church to function. He’s given us the Guidebook for how to get involved in this organism, this family, known as the Church. How do we do it?

It begins by looking at some marks of a healthy church. The first mark we want to address is what is preached in healthy churches. It was said once, “Where the preaching goes, so goes the church.” If this is the directional center of a church, what type of preaching produces healthy churches? Preaching messages isn’t the issue. There are thousands of churches across this nation and they usually follow a very simple template. They might have a time of welcome, then a time of worship and prayer, a time of announcements, and then someone will give a sermon. Lengths will be different, topics will be different, the focus of that time will be different. For the majority of churches, sermons are being preached. The question is what types of sermons are being preached?

We want to investigate and understand what a healthy church preaches. We’ve seen the pictures from California of shriveled lakes that have dried up from the drought of the century. Rivers that were once full of forceful rapids are now just a trickle. During this drought, people in the Golden State have been on the edge of a Biblical famine. A famine puts a strain on everything. It puts a strain on the average Joe who tries to keep his yard green. It thins the livestock. It dwindles the harvest of produce. No rain and too much heat leave a place as dry as a bone — a famine.

The prophet Amos said that there was a famine coming, but not a famine that hurts the livestock or vegetation. It would be a famine of hearing the words of God (Amos 8:11). Amos was prophesying about the four hundred years that would take place in between Malachi and Mathew. Amos’ prophecy rings true for our 21<sup>st</sup> century American culture. There is a famine in the land because people fill churches thinking they are hearing sermons, but they are hearing ideas from men and not the voice of God. Are you feasting on the Word of God in this church, or is there a famine? I don’t want to presume that our church has this figured out. We can’t determine whether or not this marks our church based upon our own ideals, but we must turn to God’s Word and ask the question: “Paul, as you exhorted and charged Timothy, we want you to exhort and challenge us. Are we a healthy church in regards to preaching?”

In order to do that, we must look at five things. I’m scaring the daylights out of you, aren’t I? We are going to use these five things as a diagnostic for our church from our Great Physician, God our Father. During this series, our church will get up on the examination table in God’s examining room and He will diagnose us. He will ask us the question, “Village Bible Church, are you a healthy church?” He will tell us what needs to change in order to get there.

## 1. Recognize the mistakes being made

The first thing He wants us to do is recognize the mistakes that are made. It’s not that there aren’t sermons here. There are sermons happening in all different types of churches in all kinds of places. However, in our text Paul recognizes that his time is coming to an end. This is the end of the Apostolic movement. He is handing off the ministry to the first generation of people who had never walked with Jesus or talked with Jesus. They hadn’t personally seen the risen Lord and Savior. In his farewell address to his spiritual son Timothy, he gives Timothy some final words to remember as he leads the church in Ephesus.

In 2 Timothy 4:2, Paul gives a final charge: “*preach the word....*” Now, that imperative, “preach,” means that Paul is calling Timothy to do this. There’s a realization that Timothy could do this, or disobey the command. Those words echo throughout history up until our current day. Paul says to us, “Tim, Village Bible Church, people who call yourselves Christians, preach the word.” We could steer clear of this commandment. By doing so, we would desecrate the mechanism that God has mandated for changing lives in His church and in His people: the preaching of God’s Word. Why would we do that? Paul tells us that we do this to make ourselves more palatable, to make our listeners feel more comfortable. Paul says that the blame for mistakes made in his day — and our day as well — falls on two groups of people:

1. The preacher
2. The people

To put it another way, we can blame mistakes on those in the pew and those in the pulpit. The text says in 2 Timothy 4:3, *"For the time is coming when people (that's you) will not endure sound teaching, but having itching ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers (that's me) to suit their own passions."* Look at what Paul says will take place. It's beginning and it's going to continue as the gospel message goes forth. There will be people who aren't going to quit going to church. He doesn't say, "There will be some who, suiting their own desires, will stop going to church altogether." No, they'll say, "We don't have an issue with church itself. We have an issue with what the church preaches and teaches. We like coming to the building, seeing people, singing songs, the comradery of a Sunday morning gathering. This is all good, but it falls apart when the big guy gets up and starts talking. We've got a problem with that. We won't give up the social aspect of church. We won't give up our calendar date. We'll just change the teaching. We don't like what's being taught so we'll find a new messenger, a new teacher. We'll find someone who will make us feel better." Paul paints the picture of a person with itching ears searching for someone who will tickle them, who will massage them, make them feel good. They become the "customer" whose opinion matters.

We could blame the congregation for this, but the congregation has no problem going out and finding someone who will teach that way. The problem isn't just the people in the pew, or the person in the pulpit, the problem lies in everyone. People no longer desire truth. Steve Lawson put it this way:

As the church advances into the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the stress to produce booming ministries has never been greater. Influenced by corporate mergers, towering skyscrapers and expanding economies, bigger is perceived as better. And nowhere is this Wall Street mentality more evident than in the church. Sad to say, pressure to produce bottom line results has led many ministries to sacrifice the centrality of Biblical preaching on the altar of man-centered pragmatism. A new way of doing church has emerged. In this radical paradigm shift, exposition has been replaced with entertainment, preaching with performances, doctrine with drama and theology with theatrics. The pulpit, once the focal point of the church, is now being overshadowed by a variety of church growth techniques: everything from trendy worship styles, to glitzy presentations and vaudeville-like pageantries. And seeking to capture the upper-hand in church growth, a new wave of pastors is reinventing church and repackaging the gospel into a product that is to be sold to the consumer. The famine in the pulpits across the nation reveals a loss of confidence in God's Word to perform its sacred work. While Evangelicals affirm the inerrancy of Scripture, many have apparently abandoned their belief in its sufficiency to save and to sanctify. Rather than expounding the Word of God with growing vigor, many are turning to lesser strategies to resurrect dead ministries. But with each newly added novelty, the straightforward expounding of the Bible is being relegated to a secondary role, further starving the church. You see, doing God's work God's way requires unwavering commitment to feeding people God's Word through relentless Biblical preaching and teaching.

Let's just pause there a moment and ask a few questions:

- Is that what we're all about?
- Are we about preaching God's Word God's way?
- Or, are we about man-centered ideas on church growth, preaching a message that has nothing to do with God and His Word?

## 2. Rediscover your mission in preaching

What is the purpose of preaching? Some of you might think that the reason why we preach is to give me an outlet so that I don't explode. It's not that! It's something far greater than what we could construe in our own minds. God in His Word tells us that preaching the right sermons is the food that allows the body to grow. What does this type of preaching look like? Does it really matter? There are a few things from Paul's letter to Timothy that remind us of the importance of our mission to preach.

### Biblical Preaching is demanded and commanded by God

Why do we preach? The answer is in 2 Timothy 4:1-2a, *"I 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..."* Paul moves Timothy from the worship center to the courtroom. He says, "I am going to charge you with a calling and there will be some witnesses who will see this and remind you of the severity of your mission." Who are the witnesses? God and Christ Jesus.

That's not enough. They're not just standing there. Paul points to them and says, "Let's remember, Timothy, that these Two are going to be the Ones Who will appear and bring forth Their Kingdom. Christ Jesus is going to be the One Who will judge the living and the dead. It could happen at any time. You've got this calling: you are to preach the Word. You must make sure that you are my messenger, and you will be held accountable with this sacred duty that I have given you. You will be judged by it, so you better do it in the way that I've prescribed."

"Well, what am I supposed to preach?" Timothy must have asked, "Should it be a funny sermon? An intellectual sermon? Should it be a serious sermon? A long or short sermon?"

## Biblical preaching draws its content from Scripture

Paul tells Timothy to draw his preaching content from Scripture. This means that we should not preach the latest New York Times best seller. We should not look at the newspaper for the hottest item to talk about. We shouldn't go to the comic section. We shouldn't go to ESPN for the talk of last night's college football game. The job of a pastor, as was Timothy's job, is to preach the Word.

What is the definition of Biblical preaching? Biblical preaching is when a preacher becomes a mouthpiece for the Biblical text. This means that a Biblical preacher is one who opens the Word, explains the Word, applies the Word to people's lives, reminding them always that this is God's Word to them. Paul says, "preach," which literally means, "to herald." We don't have heralds these days, but they would go and get messages from the king. Kings would say, "Alright heralds, I have a message. I want you to take this new message to all my subjects. Your job is to go into the market places and announce exactly what I have told you. I'm going to hold you accountable. Your whole job will be judged by whether the message I gave in my throne-room is the same message that gets to the people."

The preacher's job is not to preach their own message, but to preach what God has shared with him through His Word. A preacher must take it and say, "This is what God says. I'm just the mouthpiece. I'm just announcing. I'm just giving you what I've received through His Word. Here is what God says...." They must preach it in such a way that they can say with confidence, "Thus saith the Lord." You should have confidence that it is not the preacher who is speaking, but God.

If I start saying things that I want to, then I cease to be a herald and take the position of the king. There are far too many preachers who have taken God's place on the throne, announcing to the people their own message instead of being a herald of God. Hugh Thomson Kerr said this regarding preaching the Word:

Because we have been given this charge to preach the Word, we are not to preach sociology, but salvation; not economics, but evangelism; not reform, but redemption; not about culture, but conversion; not about progress, but a pardon; not about a new social order, but a new birth; not words of revolution, but regeneration; not of renovation, but revival; not about resuscitation, but the resurrection; not about a new organization, but the new creation; not about democracy, but the gospel; not about civilization, but Christ. We are God's ambassadors, not His diplomats.

Preaching is supposed to be drawn from the Scriptures.

## Biblical Preaching is done amidst all circumstances

Paul goes on to say in 2 Timothy 4:2, *"preach the Word...in season and out of season."* Preach when it's favorable to do so and when it's not favorable to do so. You need to be ready at all times to share it. When should you share it? Share it when you think you should and when you don't think you should. We ought to share it at all times. That means that a preacher gets up and preaches in times of peace and peril, in times of triumph and times of great tribulation. Preaching happens in plenty and in lack. Biblical preaching will be the same thing here in America as it is in Liberia. The gospel doesn't change. It's not a chameleon that changes to match its surroundings. The gospel of Jesus Christ is the greatest message and it can never be changed because people think they need to hear something different.

The dictates of popular culture, tradition, reputation, acceptance or esteem within any community should never alter a church's commitment to Biblical preaching. That is why you can know that each Sunday, no matter what kind of week we've had, we are going to come to this place, open God's Word and get back to work. We're going to go at it again because nothing in human history can ever take away God's mandate to preach the Word.

## 3. Remember what the message must accomplish

What does a good message convey? This is a huge issue for us. What is a good Biblical sermon? It's an odd thing to be a preacher. Week in and week out a preacher takes his place in the pulpit and preaches. Even before the preacher finishes, he sees scorecards on people's faces. In a sense, people wave them at the pastor saying, "Hey, dummy! You're missing me! Zero! One!" [Those are bad numbers by the way.] The judges begin to ask these questions, "Was it powerful enough? Did it move me? Did I laugh and cry? Did I walk away thinking? Was it relevant enough and trendy enough? Did it shake me to the core of who I am? How did he do with timing? How was his intro? How was his conclusion?"

If I lived by that criteria, I would have lost my mind in the first couple weeks. What one person sitting next to you wants might be the exact opposite of what the person on your other side wants. When we ask the question, "Is our preaching Biblical and healthy?" we must go to God's Word. We must go to God's Word and ask, "Paul, you heard from God. What did God say about

this issue? You're being moved by the Holy Spirit. What did you say?" Biblical preaching will address five questions. If a sermon does not answer these five questions then the preacher has missed the mark. Some preaching will address one or two of these questions, but not all of them. Preaching should always — no matter what the message is — address these five things.

### **Does the message convict your thinking?**

Paul says, "Preach the word when you want to and when you don't want to." What does that preaching look like?

First of all, you need to reprove. In the Greek, "reprove" means "to bring something to light." It was a legal term used when the prosecutor took his place before the jury and made a case that a crime had been committed. This is the opening argument of the attorney who urges the jury to do something about a particular crime. Paul says, "The job of the preacher is to convict the listener in their thinking." Therefore the job of the preacher is to present a case against sinful people — desires, wants, actions, thinking — saying, "There's a problem and you have to change it."

Why do you have to change it? The preacher will answer, "Because God says so." So my job is to get you to understand that not all preaching is Biblical preaching. I hope that you grow in your perception of what a Biblical message is all about. We've just finished the Book of Proverbs, from which I wanted to make clear that the wisdom of this world is stupidity before God. It's foolishness. Pursue godly wisdom because if you live apart from godly wisdom, you are going to run into trouble. Therefore Biblical preaching must convict your thinking.

### **Does the message confront your sin?**

It doesn't just stop with conviction. "You have a problem; now let's close in prayer. I don't know what to do about it." No, the preacher moves from there, points his finger and says, "There's rebuking that needs to take place." Once a preacher has established that certain living or thinking is wrong, he doesn't stop and say, "Okay. I know you can't help yourself. God's grace will cover it. Try not to do it so much." Biblical preaching looks at the person, points his finger and says, "You're wrong. What are you going to do about it? You're going to keep sinning. What you need to do is bow your knee to God and repent of your sins."

That makes people uneasy. When they hear that they think, "Who do you think you are Mr. Preacher-man that you can tell me what to do? I'm fine with you saying that there's a problem in general. But when you point your finger, saying that I'm a sinner and need to change, I get angry." Biblical preaching is in your face. It will rock your world. It will call you out.

The best example of these two things (Does it confront my sin? Does it convict my thinking?) is when Nathan confronts David (2 Samuel 12:1-24). Nathan tells the story of a rich farmer who had a big flock, yet he took the only sheep of a poor farmer to feed a guest. David gets riled up and says, "Holy cow! We've got problems in our pastures! We have to address this!" He's as fired up as possible. Nathan could have left it there, but he turns and points and says, "You're the guy. You're that farmer."

Biblical preaching moves from the general and brings it down to the individual saying, "You're part of the problem!" I hope that if you've been attending this church for any period of time and you see me point the finger at you, you know that I have already pointed the finger at myself. Before you think, "No wonder Tim beats on us continually," let's remember something.

### **Does the message comfort you in your obedience?**

I don't get this morbid pleasure from beating the snot out of people. "I let them have it this morning! Whoa, this was great!" Biblical preaching exhorts. It encourages. It comes alongside another and says, "You're doing a good job! Keep it up." For those who have heard this type of preaching, you know that when you sit in the pew and can say, "I've lived that way this week. I've done what God has said," the Word reminds you to keep up the good work. This isn't done in a boastful way. It is to encourage you to do right. It is like the affirmation you give your children, "Good job. Keep it up. Don't stop." Good preaching will encourage people. Keep up the good work. Keep doing what you're doing.

### **Does the message show compassion?**

Is preaching done with complete patience (2 Timothy 4:2)? Preaching is a frustrating thing. It's a lot like parenting because you teach your kids the same types of things repeatedly. You know that you've done a great job at it. You know that they have everything they need. Yet, at every opportunity, they do the exact opposite of what you've called them to do. It's frustrating. Preaching is that way, too.

I've been preaching since 2003. I average about 40 sermons a year. Over ten years of preaching, that's roughly 400 sermons. We've done this 400 times. I can't tell you how many times we have someone who comes into the church office in the middle of

the week and their life is a complete mess. I always pause and say, "Where have you been? We've been talking about this stuff. We've been addressing this." There are times when I want to say, "You know what? You're on your own. May God have mercy on your soul." Paul says to me, "Tim Badal, remember something. You're a knucklehead. You didn't get it the first time, or the second time, or the three-thousandth time. Neither will they. They need to be cared for."

I once asked my youth pastor, after he endured four horrific years of my teenage life, why he stuck with me. I gave him no reason to stick with me. He responded, "Tim, God taught me a long time ago that people are a lot like popcorn kernels. Some pop right away when the heat's applied. Others take a long, long time."

Some of you have popped and others will take a while longer. One of the biggest blessings of being a preacher at the same church over time is seeing a person who's been a hard kernel for a long, long time all of a sudden pop. It's awesome, but it takes patience. The ESV says preaching takes "*...complete patience...*" Preaching doesn't just happen. You will never hear me say, "This is the message that is going to change the world." It isn't about one message, but the totality of the messages that we preach. Faithful preaching isn't pretty. It isn't something that is going to rock this world, but it will change one life at a time.

### **Does the message confirm the original intention of the author?**

With great instruction Paul tells us that there is a curriculum that we must use. The teaching is the teaching of the Apostles. It is not made up in the mind of the preacher. Years ago, before I was the pastor of this church, one of the most popular sermons ever preached was by a speaker who spoke from Acts 27:29. I wouldn't have ever thought that this passage would have produced a great message. It says:

And fearing that we might run on the rocks, they let down four anchors from the stern and prayed for day to come.

I have in my old NIV Bible the notes from that message. The title was, "How to steady your faith in times of storm." The preacher got up and said that there were four anchors to drop:

1. Faith
2. Hope
3. Love
4. Love, again

He preached the text so beautifully. In my notes I wrote down, "I think the anchors are there to stop the boat. That's it!" To get anything out of that is to go against what is being written by Luke. There's no "faith, hope and love" there — that's in 1 Corinthians 13:13! You want to talk about faith, hope and love? Go to 1 Corinthians! Those sailors didn't drop the first anchor and say, "Ah, that was nice." The second one, "Hope and love!" A preacher's worth is found, not in what he puts into the message, but what he gets out of God's Word. If you sit there and say, "How did he get that?" there's a good chance that what he did wasn't supposed to be done. It wasn't supposed to be drawn out of that passage.

I hope you can see that every time we come to the Word at this church, you're seeing the Word of God being drawn out. I recognize that some of you will say, "I didn't know that was in the Greek." That's study. But you should be able to draw a line from God's Word to the end of my message and say, "There's no dotted line. It's a straight line from one to the other." I must be able to present to you what the author's original intent was. When we move too quickly from the text to application in our own lives, we run the risk of promoting ourselves as the original intention.

When you study God's Word, you're reading someone else's mail. Put it in that context. We are reading Paul's letter to Timothy, not Paul's letter to Village Bible Church. Once we understand Paul's letter to Timothy, we can apply it to our own lives. We need to make sure of that. We want to see a healthy church and Paul tells us that this is what a healthy church preaches. These questions need to be answered.

I know that I am putting myself under evaluation by asking the question, "Have these five questions been addressed in the totality of my preaching?" What is the result?

## **4. Rely on the ministry of the Word**

When the Word is preached right, we can rely on it. In order for the pastor to be a strong preacher, he must first be a strong Christian. Paul tells Timothy, "You have to be ready for some things. This won't be easy, Timothy." When a Biblical preacher does

what is right, he will encourage the listening church to follow his example. There are a few things that will take place when there is Biblical preaching.

### **Good preaching sobers up the congregation and gives clarity**

*"[B]e sober-minded..."* Paul says (2 Timothy 4:5). The idea here is that good preaching always allows the preacher and the congregation to be well-balanced. Being well-balanced means that you're not tossed to and fro. You're not rash, but self-controlled. Good preaching doesn't play the part of Chicken Little saying, "The sky is falling!" There is a lot of garbage going on in this world. It is easy to think that the Lord must be coming tomorrow. The Bible doesn't tell me to get up and say, "Oh my! What's going to happen to us? We're all going to die!" Rather, I must get up and go back to where we were before and preach the Word. I must help people sober up and help them realize that God is in control. While God is in control, our job is to live upright and holy lives. Yes, it's crazy out there. However, the one place it isn't crazy is when we open up the Word of God. That's what we do: we sober up and get clarity from the Word.

### **Good preaching steadies you in crisis**

Paul says, "Endure suffering. It's not going to be easy. Life isn't going to be easy." You won't just hear joy-filled messages that are wonderful and glorious, but you will hear tough messages, too. It's called the work of the Lord, not the fun of the Lord. It will be done in good times and bad. Don't lose your faith when crisis comes. Don't give up. The church, like the preacher, is called to preach in season and out of season. The church must honor and obey God when it's easy to do and when it's hard to do.

### **Good preaching sends you out proclaiming Christ**

We are to do the work of an evangelist. Good Biblical preaching should lead us to see the great thing God has done in our lives. It should cause us to see it as so great and so marvelous that we are so changed by it and therefore tell someone else about it. I hope that when you leave this place, you will be reminded of the truth that God is an unfailing God; God is an unforsaking God; God is a loving and wonderful God Who will judge. Because of that, I hope you feel the need to tell your friends, neighbors and family about the gospel. If you don't, then the truth hasn't changed your heart.

### **Good preaching spurs you on to fulfill your calling**

Preaching should inspire people to take what they've heard and do with it what they should. Evaluate yourself by asking: How does this impact my life? How does it impact my marriage? How does this impact my family? How should it change the way I live in the community? How should it change the way I engage the workplace? It is because of these questions that John Stott says that preaching is the most important job in the world. I have another job, so I think he's right.

## **5. Reap the momentous blessings of preaching**

What are you supposed to do? Before I give you an acronym, please pray for the preaching at Village Bible Church. Pray that God would use it in a mighty way. Also, prepare yourself to hear the Word of God each Sunday. May you be hungry for it and ready to receive it. This is a blessing for those who speak. One of the best compliments our church has ever received from a guest speaker is that you love to hear the preaching of God's Word. Ray Pritchard told me when he spoke here last, "If every church listened like you do, preachers would not be so burned out."

How do you get there? The Bible says, *"...faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ"* (Romans 10:17). Let me close with an acronym that will build your faith. How do you build your F.A.I.T.H. in the right preaching?

- **F**east on it. Fall in love with the preaching of God's Word. I love listening to others preach. I don't know where I'd be as a preacher if I didn't listen to the words of Alistair Begg. I love the opportunities I have to sit and listen to that guy preach.
- **A**pply it. Do what it says. Do it right away.
- **I**nteract with others concerning it. Don't just talk about football. Football is great; sports are great; politics are wonderful. But when was the last time you had a discussion about the teaching of God's Word in your life? Interact with others. It's not just talking with other Christians about it; it's interacting with non-believers as well. Don't preach at them, talk about how it preached to you, how it changed you.

- **T**rain others in it. Second Timothy 2:2, "What you've heard me share, entrust to reliable men who will train others." Don't just be a sponge. When a sponge is full of water it will inevitably get moldy. From time to time you need to wring out the sponge. Teaching others is like wringing out a sponge. You need to wring it out and let others be affected by it. Make the opportunity to share God's Word with others.
- **H**old on to the preaching of God's Word no matter what. There will be a lot of things that will keep you from wanting to desire these things. God says, "Hold on. Hold on to it with all your heart."

As goes the preaching, so goes the church. Are we a healthy church? Elders in our midst, ask yourselves that question every day. Make sure that the preaching in this place is Biblical and godly and growing the people so that they may be able to stand in every test of their faith for the glory of God. Are you hearing God's Word? Praise God for it. Are there things that you need to work on? Then make the changes. Are there things your preacher needs to work on? Pray for me. Pray that I would get it right. Pray that those who fill this pulpit would get it right so that God may receive the glory.

The first mark of a healthy church is Biblical preaching. I pray that as long as this place is called Village Bible Church that would be true for us.

Village Bible Church | 847 North State Route 47, Sugar Grove, IL 60554 | (630) 466-7198 | [www.villagebible.org/sugar-grove](http://www.villagebible.org/sugar-grove)

All Scriptures quoted directly from the English Standard Version unless otherwise noted.

*Note: This transcript has been provided by Sermon Transcribers ([www.sermontranscribers.net](http://www.sermontranscribers.net)).*