



# Topical Preaching (Intro)

## WJM Sermon Préparation

Baptist Ministers of Houston and Vicinity

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In academia, sometimes there is tension between topical preachers and expositional preachers. I want to suggest off the top that most effective preachers alternate between the styles or hybrid them. Sermons can be generally grouped in four types: textual, topical, textual-topical, and expository.

- **A textual sermon** follows the structure of the text of Scripture, allowing the word-flow to provide the sermon points.
- **A topical sermon** is organized around a thought, with the sermon points developed by the speaker and supported by referencing verses or passages.
- **A topical-textual sermon** merges the two, allowing the sermon points to flow either from the text or the thoughts of the speaker.
- **An expository sermon** follows the text of Scripture, and then seeks to draw out the full meaning of it.

**NOTE:** How a sermon is organized isn't nearly as important as ensuring it is biblical and applicable.

**Topical preaching** is concerned with a certain subject or topic, thus the designation: "Topical preaching." **Expositional preaching** is concerned with a certain passage, thus it is considered as "textual" or "verse by verse" preaching. Both are aimed at being faithful to the scriptures. The former is broad (*the whole bible*) and the latter is narrow (*a book of the bible*.) Both are aimed at contemporary and practical applications.

Every kind of **proper preaching** must find its basis in exegesis. We must all avoid "proof-texting." That is referencing a verse or passage without consideration of its context (i.e. out of context.) This is where the controversy comes from; because, many who favor expositional preaching, believe that it is the only ***safe*** way to preach, for obvious reasons. On the other hand, many who favor topical preaching believe it is the most exciting and effective way to preach. Neither is true. A topical sermon can be just as scriptural as an expositional one, and an expositional sermon can be just as engaging as a topical one. Referencing verses to build a pattern or make a point is fine as long as a verse or passage is not distorted from its context. Referencing verses or passages germane to the subject, or the point we are making at the time, is a natural aspect of all our preaching. This is important because citations are the essence of topical preaching.

In summary, Topical preaching looks at what the Bible says about a certain subject; whereas, expositional preaching looks at a certain passage. For these reasons, many pastors alternate between topical and expository preaching. The topical messages allow them to address current issues in society or the life of the church, while the textual and expository messages build on the "big picture" of whole books in the Bible. Both are essential in encouraging balanced growth in the Christian life.

*Adapted from: [www.gotquestions.org/topical-preaching.html](http://www.gotquestions.org/topical-preaching.html)*

THINK YOURSELF EMPTY, READ YOURSELF FULL, WRITE YOURSELF CLEAR, PRAY YOURSELF HOT AND GO PREACH JESUS