

The Dangers [not prohibitions] of Topical Preaching

Based on thoughts by Bobby Wood

1. Danger of forming a viewpoint first and selecting only Scripture which seems to support that opinion. Often topical preaching uses verses with similar wording in an entirely different context.
2. Danger of sticking to a preconceived notion no matter what Scripture indicates.
3. Danger of repeating favorite topical studies while inadvertently ignoring others. Paul implicitly encourages young pastors to preach “the whole counsel of God.” Acts 20.27
4. Starting with a topic results in ignoring sticky subjects or topics which are less relevant. *Joel Osteen preaches entirely from a short list of popular subjects and avoids many controversial topics in order to preach a message of unity, encouragement, and uplifting sermons.*
5. They make the mistake of not allowing the Word of God to dictate the message. They make their preconceived idea explain the Word.
6. The whole sermon is built around the chosen words of the “text for the day” and the context of the verses quoted is inconsequential.
7. Topical sermons are always looking for a snappy or appealing sermon title which seems relevant.
“I stand at the door and knock” . . . context is fellowship with believer’s, not unbelievers
“Where there is no vision the people perish”. . . grossly ignoring context
The message is built around the title.
8. The use of the word “saved” doesn’t indicate salvation from hell
*Acts 27.31 I Tim 2.15 Jas 2? Col 1.13? I Cor 3.16? Acts 4.10-12? Rom 8.14? Heb 2.11 Col 2.10-13 Eph 4.7 Phil 1.6 1.19
Jas 5.15 II Thes 2.16 Rom 8.34 II Cor 5.20 Eph 5.27 Rev 22.5 Phil 1.12 Lk 18.42 I Tim 4.13ff*
9. Skipping over some passages ensures that they will never be preached during the tenure of the pastor, since they don’t fit any of his preconceived sermons.
10. It teaches the pewsitters that opening Strong’s concordance to select-a-text and choosing the meaning they like the best is proper way to use Strong’s in Bible study.
11. I asked my Sunday School class of 25 sixth-graders what they would do if they didn’t understand a Bible verse. Jonathan’s hand shot up and he shouted out, “Google it!” Pastors do it, too. The first solution to sound good is selected without regard to context.
Beware the heretics on the internet. Much of what they say is good—but not all; however, they don’t identify themselves as cultists.
12. Since the explanation the pastor gives seems to agree with the opinion of the pewsitter and what he already knows, he is lulled into believing whatever comes out of the pastor’s mouth.
13. Jim Jones [1978] was an extremely persuasive speaker and he seemed to love his people very much. His illustrations, anecdotes, humor, and knowledge of the Word was inspiring enough to convince 909 Church members to commit suicide in Guyana. Persuasive preaching is so prevalent today, that a pastor must walk very cautiously when using an ending point [the application] as the starting point [topic] of his sermon.
14. Even many regular church goers are biblically illiterate. If they sit under preaching that only has a “high relevancy quotient” from popular topics week after week, they may become inured to the fact that doctrine covers a lot more ground than highly applicable stories.

Cautions:

- Our job as Bible teachers is to teach what the Bible says, not to start with a nice application and look for verses which agree with the usefulness of the application
- Use fewer sources, “expose” each more fully. Preach a paragraph, not just 7 disjointed verses out of different chapters,
- Don’t marry the wrong parts. Exhaust the context of the first passage, then move to other parts of the Word which clearly agree with the context.
F’rinstance:
 - * a discussion about divorce in the Church Age should not begin with Jesus’ words since He is merely commenting on the OT Law.
 - * Rules for divorce started prior to Moses and changed when the Law came.
 - * We are told that prior to Mosaic laws, there was no permission which allowed divorce, “from the beginning [the Garden we assume] it was not so.” Matt 19.8
 - * NT church writings again prohibited remarriage in the epistles.
- Thousands of Gr words can be translated in 6-10 ways. Many of them cannot be juxtaposed. Know what you’re saying. Just because the same English word is used in another book of the Bible, doesn’t mean you are permitted to use it as cannon fodder in your sermon.
- Our generation’s love of change for the sake of change seems to have a significantly greater appeal for any semi-sane new interpretation. Don’t feed your pewsitters a hunger for change. Stick to the simple and obvious reading of Scripture.