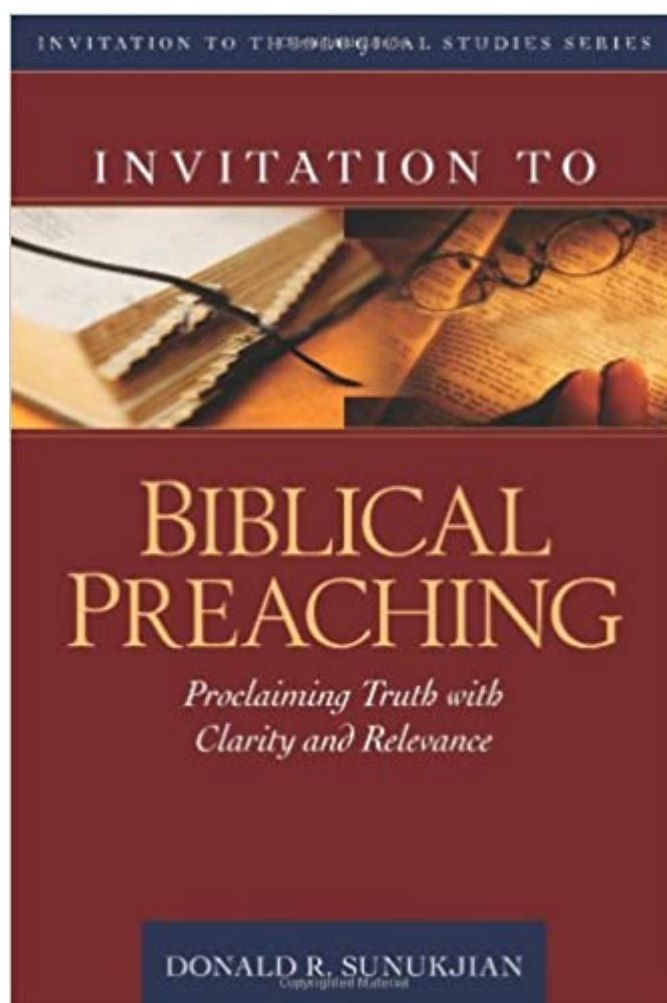


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Invitation To Biblical Preaching: Proclaiming Truth With Clarity And Relevance (Invitation To Theological Studies Series)



Synopsis

Written in a conversational style with profuse examples to illustrate all concepts, *Invitation to Biblical Preaching* takes the reader step-by-step through the entire process of preparing a biblical message, from studying a passage with skill and integrity to delivering a message with persuasion, accuracy, passion, and relevance. An experienced pastor and homiletics professor, Donald Sunukjian provides budding pastors with wise counsel that is sure to stay with them throughout their ministries.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

“If Donald Sunukjian writes something about preaching, I read it. He is a master at understanding how ideas work and how to develop them. If your messages have ever been less than crystal clear, read what he has to say.” — Craig Brian Larson Editor, *PreachingToday.com*

“Filled with examples, appended with helpful samples, and written in the vernacular of the people, *Invitation to Biblical Preaching* will take its rightful place among the homiletics textbooks of our classrooms and in the stacks of refreshing readings for experienced pastors.” — G. Charles Sackett Professor of Preaching Lincoln Christian Seminary

“*Invitation to Biblical Preaching* guides readers with proven principles stated in a fresh way. If every seasoned preacher will study this book and every novice take it as a primer, our pulpits would resound with a clear and authoritative, “Here is what God is saying . . . to us.” — Calvin Pearson E. Hermond Westmoreland Chair of Preaching Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary

“Provides succinct instruction and numerous concrete examples. . . . The chapter on oral clarity is worth its weight in gold. I heartily recommend this book for serious students who wish to handle God’s Word well.” — Kenneth E. Bickel

Professor of Pastoral Studies Grace Theological Seminary • A practical guide to developing twenty-first century sermons that are biblically faithful, clear, and engaging. This is not ivory-tower theory; Invitation to Biblical Preaching offers down-to-earth insights and enough examples to spark dozens of great sermon ideas for any preacher! • "Michael Duduit Editor, Preaching magazine Invitation to Biblical Preaching takes the reader step-by-step through the entire process of biblical preaching" from biblical study to planning to delivery. Both current pastors and those training for the pulpit will especially appreciate the book's original content, profuse examples, and clear instruction. Two complete sermons (one from the Old Testament and one from the New Testament) reinforce the text's principles. Donald R. Sunukjian (Ph.D., UCLA; Th.D., Dallas Theological Seminary) is professor of preaching and chair of the Christian Ministry and Leadership Department at Talbot School of Theology. He is a frequent contributor to various preaching books, magazines, and Web sites, including PreachingToday.com.

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Summary Donald Sunukjian's book Biblical Preaching is divided into two major sections, representing his two-part burden of the book: "Look at what God is saying" and "Look at what God is saying to us!" Sunukjian's method of sermon preparation involves beginning with the biblical text and progressing from exegesis to theology to relevance, so that the result is a sermon that is faithful to the original text and God's word for us today. In the format of the book, Sunukjian moves quickly through the opening section on exegesis, assuming the preaching student is developing those skills through other resources and courses, and comments only briefly on commentaries, context, and method. Where he does choose to devote some significant time early in the book is on the topic of outlining well, both in the development of a textual outline and a theological outline, focusing on how to state the main points as sentences so they relate accurately to the sub-points. The second section of the book is focused on how to flesh out the sermon outline in ways that are relevant to the listener "what is God saying to us? This is focused on asking the right questions: What do I need to explain? Do we buy it? What does it look like in real life? These three questions, which get at understanding, belief, and behavior, form the backbone for Sunukjian's method of fleshing out the sermon. Those

elements of the sermon that do not aid answer these questions, or which answer them redundantly, are destined for the cutting room floor. The latter part of the book devotes chapters to a variety of specific preaching related questions, such as how to know whether to use an inductive or deductive sermon method, and how to craft helpful introductions and conclusions.

Strengths and Weaknesses

Sunukjian's work was consistently helpful. I rarely found myself wondering what this has to do with the real tasks of preaching; instead, I was focused on how I could do (or avoid doing) what was described in the chapters. What was especially helpful was the repeated use of the same texts and sermon manuscripts throughout the book. The familiarity made it easy to isolate the variable being highlighted, as well as showed how there were multiple ways to cover the same material or application point, such as the options of putting relevancy at the beginning, middle, or end.

Sunukjian does a good job throughout the book anticipating what the objections are going to be, either from his readers or from the congregations they will preach to, and addresses those questions. It was especially helpful when he showed what the objections could be to understanding, belief, and behavior, and how to respond to them. It is clear that he has thought about these questions for years, and is speaking from a reservoir of wisdom.

Learning

Since Sunukjian's book is intended to be helpful to a beginning preaching student, it is interesting to read it after having taken a number of homiletics course, and compare it with other methodologies. While outlining biblical texts is common in exegesis, the practice of outlining the thought order of a biblical text was new to me. I have intuitively rearranged the text at times in sermon, but without a strong plan of how to go about it, aside from inductive or deductive considerations. It makes sense to me to put the sermon together using the thought order of the writer, as much as I can discern that today.

Sunukjian exhorts the reader to develop mental pictures that apply the biblical concept to the listener's every day life, not just illustrate it with descriptions of events that the listener will never experience. The story of the Turkish wrestler is the sort of thing that marks sermon illustration books and websites, but it does little to help actually live out the principles described in the text for people today. I was struck by Sunukjian's effort to be concrete, detailed, and extended in the metaphors for how the application of the text is lived out in the lives of the listeners. I want to grow in this skill, which will require becoming better acquainted with the challenges of people in various life stages and careers within my congregation.

Perhaps the thing I will take away most from this book is the "what not to do" list, which laid waste to the cherished traditions of quotes, statistics, definitions, biblical cross-references, and historical metaphors, among others. There were a few of these I would be happy to see leave American preaching (dictionary definitions chief among them), while others are harder to let go of (especially biblical cross-references). Even

so, I do agree with the importance of making any biblical cross-references more easily readable by the congregation by putting them on the slides. I also want to cut down on the length of the cross-references, perhaps to a verse or less, rather than 2-3 verse passages. There were two resource pieces at the end of the book that I found very helpful: how to write for the ear and how to create oral clarity. Regarding writing for the ear, after years of seminary, I need to practice writing sermons that sound like a normal person again. What was helpful about Sunukjian's discussion of this is that it included specific flaws I can look for in my sermon (passive voice, excessive nouns, dependent clauses, emotionally loaded terms, and SAT words), and replace them with clearer alternatives. Similarly, I printed out the "Oral Clarity Card" in order to improve on the use of restatement, key language, main points, questions, summary of verses, and physical movement.

There is nothing fancy about this book on preaching. But this does not mean it is not an excellent text on preaching. As the book notes, it is serious about preaching the text, but realizes the need to bridge the times to create a relevant message for the church today. It provides a good model for preaching with three words, happened, happens, and happening. This process helps the preacher to move from the text to the testimony of the gospel. One of the best aspects of the book is the practical advice that it provides. It talks about how to set up the text reading. It talks about the need to move shifts of paragraphs, and not focus on the details as much. It is probably one of the most practical preaching books out there. Another strong element is the section on application. It talks a lot about how to do this properly. In one section, it mentions dealing with people rejecting the message because of various reasons. One is not buying the solution, so the minister has to make a case for why the gospel will work in whatever case the minister is teaching on. There is also excellent advice on introductions for sermons. This book is really a "huge how to manual" on preaching. It mostly deals with all of the elements of a sermon. Mostly it will help the preacher to expand his tool box. Too often ministers are not trained in a variety of methods, and only have one or two ways to illustrate, apply, conclude, or open a sermon. After reading this book, you will have a lot more tools at your disposal. This is one of the best, and detailed texts I have read on preaching for a while, and I would recommend this to students in school, and young and old preachers.

The greatest strength of Sunukjian's method presented here is the centrality of the word. He presents a great way to study, discover the centrality of meaning, incarnate the application, and prophetically uncover the practicality of God's word. I am grateful for the personal challenge to

suggest sample ways t text can be lived instead of simply telling what it means. Dr. Sunukjian helps me study the Bible better, become a better Christian, and then strengthens my preaching.

I purchased this book knowing that I did not share the same views as the author regarding the nature of the Bible, interpretative theory or theology of preaching. However, the book had been recommended to me specifically to explore his concept of three outlines of a text - passage outline, truth outline and sermon outline (what I'd relabel application outline for my purposes). What I found was that Sunukjian is very good at giving clear examples and showing step by step he gets from point A to point B. Sunukjian does not make the common error of one homiletic method serves all passages. Rather he takes advantage of what the structure of the text shows us taking advantage of logical and rhetorical structures e.b. abstraction trees, induction, deduction, relevancy patterns (a new concept to me), chiasmus ... For useful information, I could have stopped reading at this point. However, I continued on skimming the sermon building section for two reasons: 1) the emphasis on the oral nature of the sermon 2) the clarity of the communication of the author - seeing how he presents material in this books can help in building "how to" documents of any kind. I can think of only one other book that does so well.

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