



**believe**” (1 Thess. 2:13). As uninspired preachers, the only way we can be certain to present the “**word of God**” and not the “**word of men**” is through an emphasis upon the text of Scripture.

**4. “Hide Yourself Behind the Cross.”** We used to often hear prayers in which one would ask that the preacher “hide himself behind the cross.” Sometimes I still hear

that said. This is more than a cliché. It is a call to place the emphasis on the message not the messenger. The thought is grounded in Paul’s own declaration, “**For we do not preach ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord, and ourselves your bondservants for Jesus’ sake**” (2 Cor. 4:5). This meant that there were times when Paul’s own preaching was criticized. Some claimed, “**his bodily presence is weak, and his speech contemptible**” (2 Cor. 10:10). This was a conscious choice on Paul’s part, in order that “**faith should not be in the wisdom of men but in the power of God**” (1 Cor. 2:5).

That doesn’t mean that as preachers we should be sloppy or deliberately awkward, but sometimes we must make conscious choices not to do or say things that could shift the emphasis away from Christ and upon ourselves. Personal judgment may differ here. What I see as an illustration of the text you may see as “preaching myself.” Even so, we must consciously seek to avoid this pitfall. May God help us to exalt His grandeur and the power of His word in every sermon we preach!



4700 Andrews Ave.  
Amarillo TX 79106  
806-352-2809  
www.olsenpark.com

Faithful Sayings Issue 16.13 March 30, 2014

*Welcome Visitors*  
**We are so glad that you joined us today.  
Please come again.**

● **Let us know if you have any questions.**

ISSUE

16.13

BULLETIN OF  
THE OLSEN  
PARK CHURCH  
OF CHRIST

# Faithful Sayings

March 30,  
2014

## Services

Sunday: 9:30 AM  
10:20 AM  
6:00 PM  
Wednesday: 7:00 PM



### Elders:

Pat Ledbetter  
Jeff Nunn  
Kyle Pope

### Deacons:

Eddie Cook  
Steve Dixon  
Jack Langley  
Neil Ledbetter  
Brady McAlister  
Walker McAnear  
Lance Purcell  
Rusty Scott

### Evangelists:

Kyle Pope  
Andrew Dow

## The Use of Scripture in Preaching

By Kyle Pope

Over thirty years ago, my wife and I left a large liberal church of Christ in which we both grew up, met, and married. There were many reasons that led us to make this change, but one thing as much as any was at the top of the list—the content of sermons preached. I still remember sermons preached by well-meaning brethren in which one Scripture was read, followed by thirty minutes of illustration, personal experience, and humorous anecdote. Once when an older preacher visited who used “book, chapter, and verse” in his lesson, he was scoffed quietly and viewed as simple-minded, quaint, and “old-fashioned.”

When we left and began to worship with a sound congregation, there was a clear difference in the emphasis upon Scripture. In those years, “book, chapter, and verse” served as the foundation, focus, and sideline of every sermon. Members of the congregation were urged to test each point and follow along in their Bibles. Now, after I have myself been preaching for thirty years, I am worried that this may be slowly changing before our very eyes. More and more sermons preached by (well-meaning) sound brethren (both young and old alike) no longer

put the emphasis upon the text. It is not that the content is unsound, the emphasis is simply not on the text of Scripture.

**Problems with This Approach.** If the content is sound what difference does it make whether a preacher emphasizes the text? First, it *shifts the focus of the message*. If the message focuses upon the text, the message focuses upon the One who revealed the text—God. If it does not, the focus cannot help but shift to the preacher. Second, it *weakens the force of our appeal*. It



makes little sense for us to call the world to go “back to the Bible,” if the text of the Bible plays a secondary role in our message. It matters little what we think or say, but what God has said matters infinitely. Third, it *demonstrates a denominational approach to worship*. Many in the world consider worship something that is observed rather than something in which we mutually participate. Brethren over the last two centuries have demonstrated a distinctive difference in this attitude as we have called upon hearers to test what is said by the standard of God’s word. If Scripture is not the emphasis, we are asking our hearers to trust our word as if we are “clergy” enlightening the “laity.” That is not God’s way!

How can we avoid such pitfalls? Let’s consider four suggestions:

### 1. Ask the Congregation to Turn to Scripture with You.

A good test of whether or not our emphasis is on Scripture is this question—“Would someone who hears my sermon need to have a Bible with them or not?” My wife and I always taught our children (who are now grown) to bring their Bibles to church and follow along with the Scriptures that were read. When they studied with preachers who did not emphasize Scripture, it became unclear to them what they should do. I have seen their eager minds sit with Bibles in their lap—for no purpose. The process of turning the pages of our Bibles to study the lesson presented is a valuable spiritual exercise. It aids in memory. It trains us to teach others. It reinforces the validity of what is taught. Obviously, we must be considerate of

the visitors to our assemblies who do not know their Bibles well enough to follow along, yet consideration of the visitor is not accomplished by placing the emphasis in the wrong place. We want to show the visitor the importance of using the Bible as the sourcebook and authority.

### 2. Limit the Use of Illustration.

Many preachers have been frustrated by the fact that we can present numerous points from Scripture which no one seems to remember, yet when a humorous illustration or personal experience is cited, everyone seems to remember it. It is very tempting to think that since people respond better to these kinds of things we should emphasize what touches people’s hearts. That may or may not be the case. Not all humor, illustration, or personal experience is improper. However, their value rests ultimately in the degree to which they lead us to embrace the text of Scripture, not in their own execution.

### 3. Understand the Purpose of Preaching.

Preaching is a unique work. A preacher is not a public speaker—although he speaks publicly. The preacher is not a salesman—although he attempts to persuade. The preacher is not an entertainer—although the good heart will enjoy the presentation of God’s word. The preacher is a servant of God, entrusted with the task of bringing the message of the gospel to others. Sometimes this message is



embraced. Sometimes it is rejected. We do the best we can to persuade and implant this message in the heart of the hearer, but we must trust the power of Scripture to accomplish this—not our own eloquence or technique. Paul praised the Thessalonians declaring—**“when you received the word of God which you heard from us, you welcomed it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which also effectively works in you who**