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**THE  
PASTOR'S CALENDAR**

**Ed Nichols**



## Selecting Sermons for One Year.

Choosing biblical and theological sermons for one year may be difficult at first attempt. The construction of such a tool is well worth the time and effort to plan it. When finally in place the one year calendar is a vital tool to a pastor's ministry. The manner in which the pastor chooses sermons and text will depend on the needs of his congregation. Most congregations need to receive a good biblical and theological foundation from their preacher. One of the ways this is accomplished is by the use of a one year calendar filled with weekly topics and text. The preparation of this calendar can be approached from several points of view. Some of these viewpoints are those of Philip Hacking, Lewis Sperry Chafer, Bo Matthews, and Wayne McDill.

For Philip Hacking "Biblical preaching should produce balanced Christians."<sup>1</sup> Hacking states in "Pastoral Preaching" that "we have lost out on the centrality of biblical and expository ministry." Balance for Hacking is the "faithful exposition of God's truth." He believes the "whole doctrine of the church is at stake" and that there is a need for what he calls "systematic teaching." In his opinion, for God's people to hear the Word of God, there must be a "regular teaching sequence." He states that it is vital for God's people to be instructed in the whole counsel of God and not just certain themes or fads. He advocates the teaching in blocks, such as, books of the Bible, biblical themes or characters. He cautions that the preacher should not make the series too long.

Lewis Sperry Chafer<sup>2</sup> in his introduction to Major Bible Themes, has much the same view of doctrine as that of Hacking. Chafer points out that "Bible doctrines are the bones of revelation and the attentive Bible student must be impressed with the New Testament emphasis on 'sound doctrine.'" He adds several Scripture references to back up that position. According to Chafer, "Not knowing the doctrines of the Bible, the child of God will be . . . carried about with every wind of doctrine."

The preparation of sermons weeks or months in advance is an important step in the selecting of subjects and topics. Bo Matthews used the summer months to allow him time to concentrate on sermon preparation for the fall. After that he was able to begin preparation in September for January and then by April he was working on September and the following months. He does block preparation in that he may be working on Acts for the fall and Psalm for the appropriate time the needs of his congregation dictate its use.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Philip Hacking, "Pastoral Preaching" in A Passion for Preaching, comp. David L. Olford (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1989), 99-109.

<sup>2</sup>Lewis Sperry Chafer, Major Bible Themes (Chicago: The Bible Institute Colportage Ass'n, 1937).

<sup>3</sup>Bo Matthews, "He Who Has Ears to Hear . . ." in Biblical Sermons, comp. Haddon W. Robinson (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1989), 113-32.

Saturday nights are not the time to decide what to preach on Sunday morning according to Wayne McDill.<sup>4</sup> It is a disease and includes symptoms like stomach knots and backaches. It does lead to much "fervent prayer" says McDill. McDill states that good sermon preparation has as an initial phase, calendar planning. He believes that putting together a preaching program for a year or a quarter can give the preacher less "discomfort" in their "weekly struggle." His approach (briefly) is as follows: one should take time to plan a yearly or quarterly calendar. Use one calendar sheet for month, date, events and services. Place on the calendar all holidays and emphases. Put special emphasis on the calendar as provided by the denomination. From the church calendar, church activities should be placed on the preaching calendar. In the seven remaining recommendations, the two most important in the opinion of this student are "Plan a book series for one service. Preaching through a book of the Bible is a good way to plan long-term," and, "Plan a theme service for one service."

The best way to describe a one year plan of preaching is to say that it will become one of the most valuable tools of the preacher. Its development will provide much freedom and peace of mind. In the fast paced world of ministering to a congregation, a full year plan is better than waiting until Saturday night to prepare for Sunday.

#### Avoiding Calendar Conflicts.

The relationship between the pastor's preaching calendar and the calendars of other organizations cannot be overlooked.

The relationship which should exist between the pastor's preaching calendar and the calendars of the many other organizations should be one of permitting the preacher's calendar to have pre-eminence over all other calendars. In reality this is just not often the case.

The relationship which in fact exists is that most congregations (people) follow their own calendars. They do not necessarily follow the church's calendar or that of the preacher. Putting a biblical study or great theme preaching on the schedule is not something that most church members will put on their personal calendars. They will, however, make room on their calendars for Super Bowl, car races, fishing tournaments, and any school activity. The Easter Sunday service, morning only, may be penciled in to some calendars of the more devout.

Pastor's preaching calendars can be a nightmare if one is not careful to evaluate all calendars which may take a priority over all church activities. Such calendars which may effect the pastor's preaching calendar are numerous.

To show the impingement on the pastor's preaching calendar one

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<sup>4</sup>Wayne McDill, The 12 Essential Skills for Great Preaching (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1994).

may look at the denominational calendars. There are three types of calendars which are used in the Southern Baptist Convention. They are national, state, and associational calendars, each with events which cry to be scheduled. Within just these calendars are the demands of Brotherhood, Women's Missionary Union, Promise Keepers, foreign mission studies, home mission studies, Winter Bible studies, Sunday school preparation, World Hunger, and the list goes on and on. In the Southern Baptist Convention calendar, one can count as many as twenty-five of the fifty-two weeks as a special emphasis on just Sundays. In a state convention calendar one can add an additional eight Sunday themes. Adding associational emphasis to the Sunday calendar will take up the rest of the Sundays easily. In addition to the above, one can factor in as many as seven elementary school calendars and three secondary school calendars which are relevant to the parents and students within the congregation. These calendars include all of the sports which can be scheduled, and all the supporting activities connected with the sports. If this is not enough, one can add the whole range of little league sports to most calendars. Summer vacations can mean devastation even to large churches. Local wild animal clubs, such as Lions, Elks, Moose, Eagles and some which are probably extinct or endangered demand calendar time too.

When one notes all of the many calendars of other organizations, of which only a few have been mentioned, which have a bearing on the pastor's preaching calendar the pastor must make some hard decisions in scheduling. A simplistic approach, but at least one which has a degree of sanity still attached to it, begins with the pastor coming to grips with the fact that there are basically two types of calendars. There is a calendar which the pastor can control. This calendar is of course, his own. Second the other calendars which exist are those calendars over which the pastor has absolutely no control. That is these events will take place somewhere as scheduled, in spite of the pastor's input. The importance of understanding what calendar the pastor controls and what calendars he does not control will allow for appropriate pastoral planning.

One must keep in mind when developing a pastor's preaching calendar that the autonomy of the local church permits the pastor to pick and choose those events which fit the congregation best from all denominational calendars. Consequently a pastor can ignore any and all special emphases generated outside of his local church. By selecting the special events which best fit his church, a pastor gains freedom to control his calendar. By selecting and controlling most of the fifty-two Sundays a year, a pastor has room for the needs of his church. Denominational calendars are not cast in stone; they are merely desired emphases of denominational leaders often designed to sell literature of some type.

The pastor's preaching calendar can now be designed to fit the needs of the congregation not other calendars. The givens aside, those individuals who can attend preaching services will be there

most of the time with the exception of time off for hunting season, sports, and grandma's house. Most other events are weekly in nature and have no real effect on the pastor's preaching (Sunday) calendar. The admonition is this, be self-driven when it comes to calendar, and watch out for the pot holes that look like Super Bowl Sunday. That too can be scheduled in the pastor's preaching calendar with the appropriate emphasis.

Pastor's preaching calendar should be sensitive to the Holy Spirit regardless of non-Christian, outside calendars. The power of God is not restrained by the time of man or his meager events. Souls will still be saved in spite of Super Bowl Sundays!

## CALENDAR EVALUATION

Balance is extremely important, especially a balance between Old and New Testament preaching. Preaching from the Old Testament should be more than a historical approach. It should be a means for showing Jesus and the salvation of God's people. The re-telling of an Old Testament story that does not demonstrate God's redemptive call is not preaching. New Testament preaching can have Old Testament quotes of facts or circumstances for a balance.

Balance can be maintained whether the primary text is Old or New Testament. One may cite secondary proof text from the opposite testament for balance within each sermon.

Balance specifically in the calendar can be achieved by remaining sensitive to the whole Word. As one prepares the yearly calendar, one need only determine that texts in the Old Testament are used as needed to provide a well rounded exposure of texts other than epistles. The depth of Old Testament Scriptures need to be explored to develop both the preacher and the congregation.

Evangelism, as important as it is, should not be the only message to a congregation. A steady diet to born again believers on how to be saved will not feed them on the Word. A good example of the proper balance between evangelism, doctrine, and teaching can be found in many of Paul's letters. One example of balance can be similar to that of First Thessalonians. In the first three chapters, Paul discusses doctrine. In chapter four he shifts to the practical or teaching mode. Paul seems to present an evangelistic thrust interspersed between chapters and verses of doctrine and teaching. A good, balanced preaching calendar will contain messages of evangelism, doctrine, outreach, daily living, and other Godly instruction which leads to the winning of the lost and to the development of the whole Christian.

One should attempt to maintained a balance between Old and New Testament preaching. The balance between evangelism and doctrine/teaching may not be easy to achieve. However, one should at least attempt a balance between evangelism and doctrine/teaching.

## PREACHING CALENDAR

SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES	DATES OF FOCUS
Bible Study	
Baptist Faith and Message	March 20 March 27 April 17 April 24 May 1
Colossians	May 15 May 22 May 29 July 3 July 17 July 31 August 14 August 28 September 11
Doctrine of the Bible	October 2 October 9 October 16 October 23 October 30 November 13 November 20
Christian Development	January 7 January 14 January 21 January 28 November 3
Living	April 14 April 21 April 28
Family	July 7 July 14 July 28
Suffering	July 7 July 14
Tough Questions	May 19

	May 26
	June 2
	June 9
Christ	
Crucifixion	March 31
Birth	December 8
Christmas Theme	December 15
Resurrection	April 7
Second Coming	November 3
	November 10
	November 17
	November 24
Evangelism	
Evangelizing	April 14
	April 21
	April 28
	October 20
	December 29
Discipleship	February 18
	March 3
	March 24
	March 31
Outreach	January 21
	January 28
	October 6
	October 13
Revival	February 4
	March 3 - 17
Salvation	February 18
	February 25
	March 24
	October 27
Soul Winning	February 11
	June 30
	October 6
	October 13
	October 20
	November 10



	November 24
Witnessing	February 11
General	
Baptism	February 4
Church Planning	October 27
Heaven	January 14
Hope	May 19 May 26 June 2 June 9 June 23
How to:	September 15 September 22 September 29
Judgment	January 7
Prayer	February 25
Special Days	
Senior Adults	May 5 September 1
Mothers	May 12
Fathers	June 16
Men	June 16
Children	August 11 December 15
Youth	August 25
Adults	September 1
Single Adults	September 8
Church Family Rally	September 8

Six Months of Sermon Title and Texts.

BIBLE KNOWLEDGE - GENESIS

Walking With God	Genesis 5.24
The Window of Heaven	Genesis 7.11
The Rainbow in the Cloud	Genesis 9.14
The Success That Failed	Genesis 13.12

BIBLE KNOWLEDGE - MATTHEW

Beatitudes and Blessing	Matthew 5.1-6
Law and Love	Matthew 5.17-48
Looking Good	Matthew 6.1-18
Treasures and Trusting	Matthew 6.19-34
Living at Home in the Storm	Matthew 7.24-25
It is Not an Easy Road	Matthew 7.13-29

CHARACTER

A Man to Remember	Isaiah 9.6
Friend of God	James 2.23
Wonderful Jesus	Isaiah 9.6-7
Your Father in Heaven	Matthew 7.11

CHRISTIAN LIVING

Jesus Came Into My Heart	Titus 3.3-8
Great Is Thy Faithfulness	Deuteronomy 7.11
Have a Good Day	Matthew 6.34
Frustrating the Grace of God	Galatians 2.21

DISCIPLESHIP

Are You a Soul Winner?	Luke 19.10
Sharing the Good News	1 Peter 2.21
Responding to God's Plan	Matthew 27.22
Personal Witness	Psalms 126.6
The Glory of the Big Book	John 5.39

EVANGELISM

And in Hell...	Luke 16.23
The Souls Last Opportunity	Luke 19.41-42
Stranger in Paradise	Luke 23.39-45
If Any Man be in Christ	2 Cor 5.17
Blinded by the Devil	2 Cor 4.3-6

HOLIDAYS

Good News from a Graveyard	Matthew 28.6
God's Eternal Plan	1 Peter 1.18-21
A Great Woman	2 Kings 4.8
God Bless America	Psalms 33.12

## HOPE

Where Could I Go? Phil 4.11-13  
I Never Had a Friend Phil 1.12-30

## LEADERSHIP

The Challenge Numbers 13.30  
God's Plan Acts 13.1-15  
Visionary Leadership Nehemiah 1.2-4  
The Church Matthew 16.13-18

## LIFE SITUATIONS

The Human Condition Romans 3.19  
The Christian and his Crowd Hebrew 12.1-2  
Salvation and Daily Living Romans 6.1-2  
Crumbling Foundations in Life Matthew 7.24-29  
Why God Let the Wicked Live Job 21.7  
Does God Cause Suffering? Numbers 21.5-9  
The Children of God John 1.12

## REVELATION

Sin of Lukewarmness Rev 3.14.22  
Great White Throne Judgment Rev 20.11-15

## REVIVAL

Revival Comes When 2 Peter 3.18  
Prayer for Revival Acts 1.12-14  
Can We Have Revival? Ezekiel 37.1-4  
Sowing In Tears Psalm 126.5-6

## SALVATION

What is Salvation? Acts 4.12  
Climbing to Hell 2 Peter 3.9  
Last of All Matthew 21.37  
Ye Must Be Born Again John 3.3

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**Other writings;**

**Discipleship: An Evangelistic Approach.**

**The Decree of God.**

**The Deity of Christ.**

**Personality of the Holy Spirit.**

**The Ministry of Angels.**

**The Creation and Fall of Man.**

**The Dilemma of Sin.**

**Salvation and Security.**

**The Church.**

**End Times or Last Things.**

**Systematic Theology Synopses.**

**The Birth of Christ.**

**Church History AD 31 to AD 1517.**

**Church History AD 1517 to 20th Century.**

**Evangelism Then and Now.**

**Selected Methods of Expository Preaching.**

**Personal Evangelism.**

**How to Claim a Victorious Christian Life.**

**Church Staff Administration.**

**Brief Studies in the Old Testament.**

**The Old Man and Flesh.**

**The Return of Christ.**

**The Right Foundation.**

**Dispensational Perspective.**

**Biblical Inerrancy.**

**Evangelism Program: From Policy to Procedure.**

**Pastoral Placement Process.**

**A Pastor's Calendar.**

**The Sinless Christ.**