



# Preaching With Balance

ACHIEVING AND MAINTAINING  
BIBLICAL PRIORITIES  
IN PREACHING



Donald L. Hamilton



**MENTOR**





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## Introduction

*Fulcrum* (fool'kram, ful'-) *n., pl. -crums or -cra* (kra) [Lat., *bedpost, from fulcire, to support.*] 1. The point or support on which a lever turns. 2. A centralized means of exerting influence or pressure.<sup>1</sup>

In all likelihood, you've had the experience, though probably not very recently. Your body was thrust upward for a few feet, stopped for a split second, and then almost immediately began to fall toward the earth. Another almost instantaneous stop took place and then you were headed skyward again. You were not alone. A second, very necessary person was involved. While you were going up, he or she was going down; as you made your way downward, that person was on the way up. Up and down the two of you went until one or the other crawled off. Then, gravity took over and the person remaining was stranded in the down position.

We called them see-saws when I was a child. They were also called teeter-totters. It didn't take much to make one. A board eight or ten feet in length and a sawhorse usually did the job. Fancier ones, of course, could be found in public parks and playgrounds. There, the boards were thicker and usually included a handle. The sawhorse was replaced by a sturdy pipe or bar. But the principle and the results were the same.

You may recall that this equipment worked best if the children on each end weighed about the same. If there was much of a difference in weight, a remedy could sometimes be had by sliding the board in one direction or the other. The person who weighed less required a longer portion of the board, or *lever*, on his or her side of the pivot point, the *fulcrum*. The heavier person needed less. The principle at stake was that of balance. Without it, this toy wasn't much fun because it didn't accomplish what it was designed to do. Instead,



the riders either ended up suspended in mid-air, or sat stranded on the ground. Either way, you went nowhere fast!

I sometimes think of see-saws in regard to preaching. If preaching is to be effective in *exerting influence or pressure*, a fair amount of balance is required. Achieving this balance is no simple matter, however, for there are many more factors to consider than physical weight.

This volume is an attempt to offer some practical steps on how to pursue, achieve, and maintain balance in one's preaching ministry. It is intended primarily for those who preach to the same congregation on a regular basis, for this is where the issue of imbalance most frequently becomes an actual problem. It is also aimed in large part at those who are relatively new to the preaching task, for those persons still tend to be finding their way in developing both a theory and practice of preaching. Others – those who are experienced in the pulpit as well as those whose preaching is less frequent or perhaps itinerate – hopefully will find suggestions and perspectives in these pages which are useful in motivating them toward a more effective pulpit ministry. I will be gratified if this is the case.

While this book deals with preaching from the broader perspective of balance, it is also by necessity a discussion of preaching philosophy. In fact, the two subjects are related so closely that it is virtually impossible to separate them.

Every preacher has a philosophy of preaching. In some instances, it may be unarticulated; it may be inconsistently or haphazardly conceived; it may be poorly informed theologically; or it may lack a good foundation in homiletical and communication studies. In other instances, one's preaching philosophy may have been carefully formulated and refined over a significant period of time. It may be integrally related to theological and exegetical foundations and well informed in matters of communication theory, homiletical arrangement, and audience analysis. But regardless of which situation is true – or if the truth lies somewhere in the middle, which is generally the case – each time a sermon is conceived, planned, prepared, and delivered, the preacher's philosophy of preaching is most assuredly informing the finished product.



Furthermore, this finished product, the sermon, along with all the others which constitute one's preaching ministry, will produce results of one kind or another. The point is simply this: developing a philosophy of preaching is not an extra-curricular or extraneous activity for the one called to preach. This philosophy will directly impact the overall effectiveness, or lack thereof, of pulpit ministry.

This is not to say that a carefully thought out philosophy of preaching will assure success, however one may attempt to define it. Other factors and competencies are certainly involved as well. But a sound overall philosophy of the preaching task is foundational, for it informs and challenges everything else associated with pulpit ministry.

This volume is meant, then, to assist preachers who desire to review and refine their philosophy of preaching. This will be done from the perspective of achieving and maintaining balance in one's preaching ministry.

The plan of the book is to focus on seven broad areas related to preaching: the theological perspective, the personal perspective, biblical foundations, preaching purpose, homiletical variety, sermon content, and delivery. These in turn will be broken down into smaller categories which represent many of the basic issues faced by a person desiring to be effective in the pulpit. There are also some appendixes which may prove helpful.

It is impossible to consider every facet of preaching in a single volume. It is hoped, however, that a sufficient number will come under scrutiny so that the reader will review his own existing ideas about the subject and be motivated to consider changes where that might seem necessary or wise. While perfection in preaching is an illusive dream, improvement is within the grasp of virtually everyone. Perhaps considering the matter of balance in preaching will serve as a catalyst in moving us toward this improvement.