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## So Much More to Say

*3 sermons I regret never preaching.*

*Editor's Intro: Preaching Today is blessed and excited to have Alison Gerber, a preacher and a PhD in Preaching candidate at Truett Seminary, write a regular column for us. Alison's columns will be released twice a month, and in them she is going to challenge us to be more creative in our preaching and help us bring life back into our preaching. So be on the lookout for her upcoming columns!*

Two months ago, I finished up a five year long pastoring and weekly preaching ministry at our local church. As I wrote my very last sermon in the back garden of our parsonage, I began tearing up, struck by the sad realization that this was my last chance to feed these people from God's Word. My overwhelming thought? There was so much more I wish I could say.

Do you ever think on this: the sermons you wish you'd preached already? I wonder, could you learn from the opportunities I've missed, and take care to not miss these important sermons yourselves? Because although our churches may be different in so many ways, there is a good chance your people could greatly benefit from hearing these words too. So, without further ado, these are the sermons I regret not preaching.

### A Sermon Series About Money

I would be shocked if there is a church in America that doesn't need to hear God's perspective on money. Do you see that in your church? In ours, it became evident to me when I announced my departure. At that time, I heard this singular concern time and again: "Will we be okay financially?" I wished then that as a church we had a better sense of God's provision and the role of money in the kingdom of God. But I was too late to instill that in my people. Why, I lamented, hadn't I preached a sermon series on money?

Looking back, my resistance to preaching a series on money came from two places. First, I didn't want to preach sermons that made it seem like I was begging my parishioners for more

money. I grew up near a mega church that was notorious for doing exactly that: A million-dollar church asking for greater offerings from working class people. As an over-correction I avoided the topic of money all together.

What I wish I had reminded myself, is that there is so much more to God's perspective on money than tithing. I could have preached on the gift of money, or generosity, or greed, or covetousness, or materialism, or God's provision, or the transient nature of wealth, or so much more. Why couldn't I have preached one of these topics instead?

That leads to my second reason for not preaching a series on money. I believe it stemmed from a general resistance I have to topical preaching. I've never really preached topical sermons. I've always preached through books or chapters of the bible. I've felt that this is the best way to keep my sermons grounded in the scriptures and away from my hobby horses. Do you resist topical sermons, too?

In retrospect, here's what I wish I had done. I wish I had taken one Gospel and pulled out every passage Jesus spoke about money and preached on that. Or taken the Book of Proverbs and preached a collection of Proverbs that each address the topic of money, and made a topical series that way. That way I would've been both expository and topical. I would have preached sermons grounded in Scripture, that also addressed a need for my congregation. Perhaps this is something you could try.

## More Sermons with Direct Calls to Faith

The second sermon I wish I had preached, or rather, the sermon I wish I had preached more often, is an evangelistic sermon that ended with a direct invitation to respond to the gospel with a decision to accept Jesus as Lord and Savior of their life.

Sometimes I did this, but it was a rare occasion rather than a regular one. Why didn't I preach regular sermons with direct calls to faith? Perhaps it was tradition—in our church it was unusual to preach sermons like that. Perhaps it was a pastoral decision—our church was small, and so I told myself that since we were all Christians here we didn't need sermons of this sort. Perhaps it was a homiletical decision—in our culture there is a move away from writing sermons that invite applications of a specific, explicit kind.

In hindsight, each of these reasons seem merely like poor excuses. The reality is a sermon with a direct call to faith is daunting, awkward, and prone to rejection. But I should've done it anyway. I should've done it a lot.

I met a friend recently who works as an evangelist. He preaches gospel messages at high schools, colleges, and workplaces. He would never give up one single opportunity to make a direct invitation like this. Because he knows something I think we can all use a reminder of: That all people urgently need the gospel.

If it's unusual in your tradition, perhaps warn people that you might do something a little different next week. If you have a church full of Christians, don't neglect those one or two visitors that might sneak into your pews. Don't forget that a call to the gospel can also be a call to a deeper faith, which even your most seasoned Christians can hear. Finally, if culture is leading us away from giving instructions that save lives, perhaps this is a place we need to make a break from culture? Don't do as I did, do as I wish I did, and make more bold, direct calls to faith.

## That Sermon that Is Wild and Creative

In my time at the church, I would occasionally come up with wild and crazy sermon ideas, or sermon series ideas, that I wrote in a file to use at a later date. There were passages I wanted to try preaching as a first-person narrative. There were obscure parts of the Bible that I wanted to learn more about. Occasionally an idea would strike while I did my devotional reading—a particular approach I could take for a particular passage. I had a few sermon series ideas in my file that involved incorporating digital media, literature, or art.

Sadly, I never used that sermon file. There was always something that seemed more pressing to preach. More relevant to my congregation. More about them and their needs, and less about me and my wild and creative ideas. Or so I thought.

What I greatly underestimated, was the value of my creativity and my interest and my passion to the ministry of the church and to my congregation. Preaching one of those sermon ideas from my sermon file would've been life giving to me. What weekly preacher doesn't occasionally need something life giving? Preaching something that I am excited about would've sparked interest and excitement in my congregation. True excitement is contagious. I think of my dear friend who is a read-a-holic and can talk at length with great enthusiasm about classic literature. He makes me want to read books, too!

For this reason, I want to encourage you, if you have a wild and creative sermon idea tucked away in a file someplace, or in the back of your mind, the next time sermon prep is making you weary, or you feel the church could use a change, preach that sermon! It will likely fill you, the church, and your preaching ministry with life.

## Looking Back

Looking back on my preaching ministry, I wish I had preached more about money, more evangelistic sermons, and more of my creative ideas. I plan to make sure I prioritize preaching these sermons at my next church. I wonder, looking back on your preaching ministry, what do you wish you had preached? It might not be too late. Don't let those sermons linger. Preach them today.

Alison Gerber

**Topics:** [Creativity](#); [Evangelistic preaching](#); [Faith](#); [Money](#); [Preaching](#); [Sermon](#); [Sermon Planning](#); [Sermon series](#)

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