

Introducing: The James River Center for Expository Preaching at AGTS

by Dr. Doug Oss

Dr. Doug Oss (class of 1980) will join the AGTS faculty as director of the James River Center for Expository Preaching in fall 2005.



As Paul faced the end of his life, he knew he needed to leave words of advice for Timothy. He advised his spiritual son about the best way to respond to a degraded culture (2 Tim. 3:1-13) and the best strategy for leading followers of Christ to increased maturity (3:17). He also instructed Timothy to maintain his non-negotiable commitment to biblical preaching (4:1-2) and sound doctrine (4:3). In doing so, Paul specifically addressed the role of expository preaching (1 Tim. 3:1-4:5) and its value in culture and the church. When times become turbulent and numerous voices call people to many paths, there will always be one source for centered, stable church leadership: God's Word. Paul's solution to these issues, in his last words to Timothy, was promoting the growth of the church through biblical, expository preaching.

The current debate over postmodernism in our universities points to the same issue. Cultural geography shifts along the fault lines of the latest trends, and, in short order, philosophical paradigms become specters of the past. But the truth of Scripture—God's Word—endures forever. Expository preaching, then, is all the more vital for today's generation-in-flux, both in raising a prophetic cultural voice and in leading the church to grow in Christ. The James River Center for Expository Preaching and the new Master of Divinity (M.Div.) concentration in expository preaching are being designed expressly for that purpose.

Origin

Pastor John Lindell and the leadership team at James River Assembly (JRA, Ozark, Mo.) have long been passionate about the revolutionary effect of expository preaching, which has produced growth in their church and has infused a passion to see ministers educated and coached in the skill set of Bible exposition.

Concurrently, AGTS had been considering ways to place a higher emphasis on expository preaching. Pastor Lindell's idea for an expository preaching center was readily accepted at AGTS. After some time in conversation, the JRA and AGTS leadership teams developed this unique partnership. JRA made a generous financial commitment to jump-start the center and to launch the new M.Div. concentration in expository preaching for fall 2005.

Vision

The vision of the center extends in two related directions. The first is to provide a course of study that fosters the development of exegetical and homiletical skills, including the use of technology and multi-media to enhance the presentation of the message. Our graduates will have an approach to expository preaching that crushes the stereotypes (e.g., boring and arid) and demonstrates that well-conceived expositional messages are relevant, interesting and perhaps even hip. In addition, built into the DNA of the program is its focus on the work of the Holy Spirit in the event of preaching and the results of that synergy between Spirit and preacher in real life settings.

The second finds its realization outside the classroom among people whose lives are impacted by the leadership of our graduates. Embracing a pragmatic worldview, today's generation is increasingly eschewing models of pulpit ministry that it perceives as shallow or not substantially connected to Scripture and to

“real life.” As both believers and unbelievers search for God and the truth about Jesus, they have developed a strong appetite for all things real, including the full-on substance of biblical truth. Therefore, leadership in the church, and prophetic leadership in culture, will increasingly fall to those who have developed the skills to preach the Word, in season and out, correcting, rebuking and encouraging with careful instruction (cf. 2 Tim. 4:1-5).

While circumstances sometimes call for other approaches to preaching, and AGTS does teach them, we strongly believe in expository preaching and have great love and passion for it; therefore, we have decided to provide graduate education for ministers who share this passion.

The Assemblies of God Theological Seminary and James River Assembly are passionate for the future of our partnership in expository preaching. We want to partner with you as well. We are optimistic that God's word can call a generation to follow Christ, and that biblical truth never returns empty. This investment is, in the end, all about the lives that will be revolutionized by the power of the Lord Jesus Christ. 

