



Session 1.2  
Expository and Topical  
Preaching: Can They  
Co-Exist?

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Can Expository & Topical Co-Exist?

- Yes they can ... and they must!
- Because they exist together,  
I intend to show:

**We should be topical *sometimes*.**  
**We should be expository at *all times*.**




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Can Expository & Topical Co-Exist?

**Types of Expository Preaching:**

- Sequential	- Funeral
- Sectional	- Polemic
- Biographical	- Apologetic
- Deep-Drilling	- Current Events
- Seasonal	- Doctrinal/Topical




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### Can Expository & Topical Co-Exist?

- Advantages of Topical Preaching
  - (Some) People like it
  - It can bring complicated subjects into focus
  - It reveals the unity of Scripture
  - It can address timely issues



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### Can Expository & Topical Co-Exist?

- Disadvantages of Topical Preaching
  - (Some) People don't like it
  - It can oversimplify difficult subjects
  - It reveals unity, but not always practicality
  - It allows preachers to focus on pet issues



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### Can Expository & Topical Co-Exist?

- Method of Topical Preaching
  - Prayerfully choose a topic
  - Identify passages to study
  - Study passages in their own context



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## Can Expository & Topical Co-Exist?

- Method of Topical Preaching
  - Identify which passage contains the greatest theological value for your sermon
  - Ask yourself if a single passage would be just as effective



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## Can Expository & Topical Co-Exist?

- Method of Topical Preaching
  - Write a proposition or “big idea” statement
  - Draw as much as you can from the chosen text, using others for support, illustrations, etc.



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## Can Expository & Topical Co-Exist?

- Topical Preaching Case Study
  - I wanted to preach a message on Jesus being the “Light of the World”
  - Step one was to assemble possible passages ... and there were a LOT!



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## Can Expository & Topical Co-Exist?

- Topical Preaching Case Study

– I chose John 3's text and wrote the following proposition statement:

"Jesus Christ is the loving light of World, shining in the darkness of sin and bringing life to those He enlightens."



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## Can Expository & Topical Co-Exist?

- Topical Preaching Case Study

1. The Eternal Light
2. The Ministry of the Light
3. The Light Extinguished
4. The Light In Your Life



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## Can Expository & Topical Co-Exist?

- Two Questions To Ask Before Preaching a Topical Sermon:

1. Could this be done from a single text with the same result?
2. Will this sermon leave the church with a better understanding of the chosen text?



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Can Expository & Topical Co-Exist?

**We should be topical  
sometimes.**

**We should be expository  
at all times.**



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## The Light of the World

### John 3:16-21

*16 For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.*

*17 For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved.*

*18 He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.*

*19 And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.*

*20 For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved.*

*21 But he that doeth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God.*

I can imagine most of you have had at least some experience with insects. There was a time when I found myself staying at a friend's house and I got up in the middle of the night to get a drink. Not being familiar with the kitchen – and not knowing my way in the dark – I made the mistake of turning the light on at about 2 a.m. I immediately wished I could unsee what I just saw.

Even though my own eyes were adjusting to the light I saw dozens – and I mean dozens – of tiny dark shapes making their way off the floors and counters and cabinets, withdrawing from the light and into the dark corners and hidden holes of the room. I thought I could almost hear them skittering away. Certainly I spent the rest of the night thinking I could feel them – the reclusive cockroaches hiding in the darkness. I would tell you I slept with the light on but that wouldn't be true. The light was on, but I didn't sleep.

Listen again to Jesus describing Himself and mankind and tell me if it sounds similar:

*19 And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.*

*20 For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved.*

There can be no doubt that Jesus speaks of us when He's saying that men loved darkness. And there can be no doubt that Jesus spoke of Himself when He said, "Light is come into the world." In fact John's Gospel introduces Jesus this way when he writes in:

### John 1:4-5, 9

*4 In him was life; and the life was the light of men.*

*5 And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not.*

*9 That was the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world.*

As John introduces Jesus, he does so in two ways. You know John 1:1 introduces Him as the eternal Word of God who was with God and was God before creation. (PROPOSITION): Jesus Christ is the loving light of World, shining in the darkness of sin and bringing life to those He enlightens.

I want to speak to you today on the idea of Jesus as the Light of the World.

### **The Eternal Light**

If we're going to see Jesus as the Light of the World it's tempting to start with the most clear proclamation of it. In John 8:12, Jesus stands in the Temple and says, "I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life." But we see that prior to that in John 3 Jesus described Himself as the Light. In John 1, John introduces Jesus as the Light.

Just how far back do you suppose we can go to find Jesus as the Light of the World? Well, let's try:

#### **Genesis 1:1-3**

*1 ¶ In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.*

*2 And the earth was without form, and void; and **darkness** was upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters.*

*3 ¶ And God said, **Let there be light: and there was light.***

Now this is not to even remotely suggest that Jesus was somehow created – for Jesus is the eternal God existing from everlasting in eternity past to everlasting in eternity future. But this light was clearly coming from somewhere, wasn't it? And I challenge you to explain how it might be coming from the sun, moon or stars when the sun, moon and stars weren't created until Day 4.

I have no problem with Jesus being the source of light from the beginning of creation – especially since we understand that is the way it will be again in the future. Revelation 21:23 says "**And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it: for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof.**"

Even Isaiah promised this truth in the Old Testament as he said, (Isaiah 60:19) "The sun shall be no more thy light by day; neither for brightness shall the moon give light unto thee: but the LORD shall be unto thee an everlasting light, and thy God thy glory."

Jesus **is** the Light of the World. He **was** the Light of the World before the world was created and He **will be** the Light of the World for all His people eternally. No matter how far back you go nor how far forward you go, you'll find Jesus as the Light of the World.

It is a truth and a promise found long before the Gospels introduce us to Jesus. It is found in places where the devastating reality of darkness is described. Like Psalm 74:20 which says "The dark places of the earth are full of the houses of cruelty." So often we look to the world around us and find that the cruel darkness is gaining ground.

The darkness of this world is a cruel combination of two different shadows which pass over us. One is the shadow of Satan himself who 2 Corinthians 4:4 describes as blinding our minds so the light of the gospel cannot shine unto them. The other shadow is summoned from our own deceitful hearts. Even without the influence of Satan we've created a world where "every man does that which was right in his own eyes."

Darkness in the world around us; Darkness in our hearts and minds; The prince of darkness blinding those already dark hearts and minds. We are, in many ways, like a blind man, sitting blindfolded in a dark room at night. There is no hope unless someone bursts into the room, opens the shutters, removes the blindfold, grants us sight and shows us what the Light really is. It has always been part of God's divine plan to do exactly that thing for the people who fled darkness. The Psalmist cried out "The Lord is my Light and my Salvation!" Part of the promise of the Savior in the Old Testament is found in:

**Isaiah 9:2**

*The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light: they that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath the light shined.*

Jesus Christ, the Light of Life came to shine in a world lost in the darkness of sin.

**The Ministry of Jesus as Light**

Let us consider the ministry of Jesus as He displayed Himself as the Light of the World. In our text in John 3, I would remind you about the greater context. You'll see in verses 1-2 that a Pharisee named Nicodemus had come to Jesus – daring only to approach in the darkness of nighttime. Jesus told Him he needed to be born again. Jesus taught him about the way the Spirit works. Jesus pointed Nicodemus back to the Old Testament to show that He had come as God's provided means of salvation.

But that brings up the question of why salvation is necessary. Salvation is necessary because – without God's love sending His Son to save people by believing in Him ... they would in fact perish. Isn't that what John 3:16 states? It is so those that believe will not perish – because that's what's going to happen otherwise.

Verses 17-18 expand on that truth. Jesus didn't come to condemn people for unbelief. He came to save those who would believe. He didn't have to condemn unbelievers because they are "condemned already." And here's the condemnation ... here's the very proof or evidence of the truth that they are condemned already:

*19-20 And this is the condemnation, that **light** is come into the world, and men **loved darkness rather than light**, because their deeds were evil. For every one that doeth evil **hateth the light, neither cometh to the light**, lest his deeds should be reprov'd.*

Our deeds are evil. We hated the Light. We didn't want to be found in the light any more than the cockroaches in my friend's kitchen ... because we think we can keep our nastiness unseen. But ultimately we can't. In Job, a wise young man named Elihu said,

**Job 34:22**

*There is no darkness, nor shadow of death, where the workers of iniquity may hide themselves.*

Yet we remain in darkness and Jesus says we're already condemned for it – not because we're passively in the dark or have truth hidden from us but because Light entered the dark world and our reaction was to scatter like the bunch of skittering cockroaches we are!

Oh, but there is mercy and grace in the exposure to that Light! Even if it isn't comfortable for us. How would a blind man, blindfolded in a dark room react if you threw open the shutters, removed the blindfold and granted him sight? Don't you think it would hurt?! Don't your eyes hurt as they adjust when someone flips on the light switch? And if you're saved by faith in Jesus Christ ... how is it that you first felt when the Light of Life illuminated all the darkness of your sin? For my part, it hurt! I despised what I saw. I squirmed in the light.

If you want a good example of this, you'll find it in John 8. I don't know why I always separated these events in my mind until preparing this message this week. John 8 starts with Jesus teaching in the Temple and the Pharisees drag – literally drag – in a woman who had been found in the very act of adultery. There's a thousand things we could say about it, but you know the story. They told Jesus, "Moses taught she should be stoned ... what do you say?" Jesus answered "Sure! Whichever of you is without sin, you throw the first rock."

Now listen to what happens next:

**John 8:10-12**

*10 When Jesus had lifted up himself, and saw none but the woman, he said unto her, Woman, where are those thine accusers? hath no man condemned thee?*

*11 She said, No man, Lord. And Jesus said unto her, Neither do I condemn thee: **go, and sin no more.***

*12 Then spake Jesus again unto them, saying, **I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life.***

Being brought to the Light is gonna sting. It might, in fact, feel like one of the most hurtful experiences of your life. Just like this woman – having your sin exposed and being seen for what you are isn't going to be pleasant. But there is the glorious truth that those who are brought to the Light are changed by Him forever. Go and sin no more! ... I am the Light of the World – follow me and stop walking in darkness but have the light of life!

Can it really be that such life-changing brightness is found in the person of Jesus Christ? We can only find out by those who saw Him. The Bible gives witness to Jesus as the Light of the World. The Old Testament

promised that Light. John introduces Him as the Light. Jesus proclaimed Himself to be the Light. And the disciples – a few of them – were privileged to witness that Light in a way no others were.

Jesus took the closest three disciples – Peter, James and John – up a mountain alone. What they witnessed there became known as the Transfiguration.

- Matthew 17:2 “And was transfigured before them: and his face did shine as the sun, and his clothes became white as the light.”
- Luke 9:29 “And as he prayed, the fashion of his countenance was altered, and his clothes were white and glistening.”

It is difficult to say exactly what this looked like. What we can say is the wording in the Gospels describes the bright, shining Jesus – not as reflecting light but as being the very source of the light. If you remember when Moses went up the mountain to speak with God, he returned with a face shining with God’s glory so that the people had him put a veil over his face. Jesus is no Moses. He is not reflecting the glory of God He is the very brightness of God’s glory. And when that glory began to shine through His human flesh the disciples said a smoky fog rolled in, protecting them from the blinding light of the Savior.

How could we begin to describe how bright a light they saw? Well imagine this. Imagine being in the desert at noontime, the sun beating down directly on you and reflecting up at you from the white sand. Can you imagine how bright that is? Then understand that is exactly the situation a man named Saul found himself in the book of Acts. As he tells that story, he says, traveling through that desert: “*At midday ... I saw in the way a light from heaven ... above the brightness of the sun ... and I said ‘who art thou Lord? And he said, “I am Jesus whom thou persecutest!”*”

Jesus is the blinding light that can arrest a man in his tracks – that’s how bright He is. However, even after the Transfiguration, Jesus warned that Light would not shine on them forever – at least not in the same way.

**John 9:5 - *As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world.***

**John 12:35-36 – *Then Jesus said unto them, **Yet a little while is the light with you.** Walk while ye have the light, lest darkness come upon you: for he that walketh in darkness knoweth not whither he goeth. **While ye have light, believe in the light, that ye may be the children of light.*****

How could the Light of Life – existing before creation – promised throughout history – and revealed in the Gospels – how could that Light only be with us “a little while?”

### **The Light of the World Extinguished**

After three years of ministry – after 3 years of proclaiming Himself as the Light of the World – 3 years of drawing people into that Light of Life, Jesus stood in the darkness of the Garden of Gethsemane while other little lights approached. The torches and lanterns of a band of soldiers and Temple police lit the night only as much as they could stand – only enough to allow Judas to betray the Light of Life.

Dragged through the darkness, Jesus was led to the home of the high priest where he was mocked and accused. They blindfolded the very Light of Life and struck Him in the face asking if He could tell who struck Him. One of his disciples who dared follow warmed himself by the fire and even there succumbed to the darkness, denying he ever knew the Lord of Glory whose face he had seen shine on that mountaintop.

He was condemned by the Jews. He was condemned by the Romans. Mocked. Tortured. Beaten. Crucified. Jesus the eternal Light of the World was dying for a world of sinners to save them from the darkness of sin. I have to wonder if the words of Jesus returned to the disciples' thoughts, "*Yet a little while is the light with you. Walk while you have the light, lest darkness come upon you.*" Perhaps they thought of that as the sun itself was hid from view.

#### **Matthew 27:45**

*Now from the sixth hour there was darkness over all the land unto the ninth hour.*

There, while Jesus was nailed to a Cross, the entire land was covered in darkness as the sun was hidden from view and the very Light of the World was extinguished. They thought nothing more of it than they would of snuffing a candle. For three years they had recoiled from the Light Jesus brought – but now at last all the sinful insects could roam free in a world without the Light.

He was taken from that Cross and His body was placed in a black hole in the ground – the final shadow falling as they rolled the stone over the door of the tomb. And they no doubt expected it would stay black forever ... ..

But on the third day, the Son arose. The angelic army of light that proclaimed His birth to the fearful shepherds had not forgotten their Creator. They would once again come to His service.

#### **Matthew 28:2-4**

*"And, behold, there was a great earthquake: for the angel of the Lord descended from heaven, and came and rolled back the stone from the door, and sat upon it. **His countenance was like lightning, and his clothes white as snow:** And for fear of him the keepers did shake, and became as dead men "*

Jesus rose from the grave. He defeated darkness so that all who believe in Him will have the eternal Light of Life. He says, "Believe in the Light that **you** might be children of the Light." By faith in Jesus Christ you not only leave behind the darkness and enter the Light, you also become a part of the very family of Light. You are a child of God of whom John says, "is light and in Him is no darkness at all!"

#### **The Light in Your Life**

When I've seen the darkness of my sin. When I understand the blackness of my heart. When the Light of Life has shined into my life and exposed me for what I am ... what's a cockroach like me to do?

**First**, maybe it would help to recognize the creative act that happens when a person becomes a born again believer. The Apostle Paul compares the act of creation and the act of salvation in

**2 Corinthians 4:6**

*For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.*

The very God who said “let there be Light” is the same God who makes a new creature every time He saves a blind sinner. Instead of looking over the shapeless black void of the earth and saying “Let there be light” He has looked into the black hearts of sinners like you and me and said “Let light be there!” And there is light! It is the light of the knowledge of Jesus so that we see His face shining with the glory of God and know there’s never going to be any turning back to the darkness for us!

We are ready to walk in the Light and become the children of Light!

**Secondly**, we need to understand our jobs as children of Light.

**Ephesians 5:8**

*For ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord: walk as children of light:*

There is a “walk” or a “manner of life” which we should display as children of Light. If God has shined in our hearts we should not walk in darkness – we should “go and sin no more.” But our job as children of Light goes far beyond refraining from sin. We must also actively show good works.

**John 3:21**

*But he that doeth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God.*

If we live in the Light we should have deeds – actions – which are obviously works of God. Here’s how Jesus described the same idea in the Sermon on the Mount.

**Matthew 5:14-16**

*14 Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid.*

*15 Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house.*

*16 Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.*

Now at first this may seem contradictory. The same Jesus who said, “I am the Light of the World” just said in the Sermon on the Mount “You are the Light of the World.” But it becomes obvious when we listen to His examples.

The cities in that day were made of buildings from clay that would dry in the sun and become a light white color. If you were traveling from a distance and looked up at a city, those buildings would reflect the light of the sun. So Jesus says, “A city that is set on a hill cannot be hid.”

He then uses the example of a candle. You don't put the candle under a cover, but put it on a lamp. The practice inside those same homes made of light white clay was to set a candle in the corner where it would light the room by reflecting off the inside of the walls. Jesus says, "You put it on a candlestick and it lights the whole house."

When Jesus says, "You are the light of the world," both of His examples are of reflected light. When we talk about Jesus as the Light of the World, He is the source of light. When He says we're the lights of the world, He's saying we're to be reflecting the source of light. That is clearly the case since the glory for the good works isn't ourselves, but God.

*16 Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.*

### **Conclusion**

How much would things change if Christians actually started to do this? What would it be like if each of us embraced the light of Jesus Christ and had it penetrate every area of our lives so that there were no more places of shadowy uncertainty ruled by our corrupted logic and there were no more places of dark despair ruled by our fickle emotions?

What if we spent half the energy we devote to covering those places in our lives where sin has been exposed and instead turn those efforts into devoted service to God and reflecting the Light of Jesus to others? It's time to let go of that sin and step out of the darkness. Paul said (1Thessalonians 5:5) "You are all the children of light, and the children of the day: we are not of the night, nor of darkness."

Except that perhaps some of you are part of the darkness. If you are one of those who Jesus said are not believers and therefore condemned already – this message may well have proven uncomfortable for you because Jesus is the Light of the World that exposes sin and "everyone that does evil hates the light!"

This is true of all lost sinners – and for some of them they are given the blessing of having that hate spread a little further. They stop hating the Light because it exposes their sin – but instead hate their sin because they see it for what it is. Nicodemus came to Jesus by night and John 3 shows him shrinking back into the darkness ... but later the same man embraced the Gospel, came to Pilate publically and begged the body of Jesus ... doing service for his Savior and we see his deeds made manifest that they we wrought in God.

You must also step out of the darkness. You must know Jesus did not come with the purpose of condemning you (for you are nothing more than a condemned cockroach already) but He came that everyone who believes in Him will have everlasting life. Or, as He said in John 8:12, "I am the light of the world: he that follows me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life." Turn from your sin, flee from the darkness and come in faith to Jesus Christ – the Light of the World.