

"BALANCE IN PREACHING"

John 1:14-17

An Air Force investigation into what caused the crash of an F-15E Strike Eagle during a night combat operation over Libya last March has concluded that a weight imbalance was a major factor. Investigators said the right wing of the jet was supporting at least 1,000 pounds more weight than the left side at the time of the crash, causing the plane to go into a severe spin. The pilot and weapons officer ejected before the jet crashed. Balance is an important factor in life – especially true in preaching. Jesus: Grace and truth.

I. THE PROBLEM OF IMBALANCE

A. Human beings tend toward imbalance in life

1. We can take truth and over-emphasize it

a. *Martin Luther: People are like drunken peasants, falling off one side of the donkey or the other*

i. *Hosea 7:8 "Israel mixes with other nations; he is like a pancake cooked only on one side.*

2. Truth can have 2 sides that seem to oppose each other

a. *V14 grace and truth...*

B. The imbalance of truth

1. **Things that are true:** Human failings and human responsibilities

a. Some make this their sole emphasis: *More things you're doing wrong/more things you need to do*

1. They take pride in it: *I call it like I see it/I'm a straight shooter/I fried 'em...*

2. **The imbalance of grace**

a. Unmerited favor/the love of God

i. *At the biggest church in the country, Lakewood Church in Houston, Texas, Pastor Joel Osteen preaches to some 25,000 people each week -- and sin is not on the menu. Osteen said his goal is to "give people a boost for the week. I think for years there's been a lot of hellfire and damnation. You go to church to figure out what you're doing wrong and you leave feeling bad like you're not going to make it," Osteen said. "We believe in focusing on the goodness of God."*

C. There are also subjects that tend to produce imbalance

1. **Prophecy:** Overpreached – or presented in an unhealthy way

a. *Everything is a conspiracy of the Antichrist* b. *There is no hope for the world*

2. **Politics:** Maddening to see corruption/agendas in politics

a. Point out the wickedness of abortion-loving, tax-and-spend, welfare-promoting politicians

1. Your people wind up hating everyone! Not having hearts for anyone

II. THE NEED FOR BALANCE

A. Imbalance is unhealthy for people: Imbalanced preaching is unhealthy for people

1. **It produces despair:** *Matt 27:5 So Judas threw the money into the Temple. Then he went off and hanged himself.*

a. *I will never change/I don't have what it takes/God must hate me/God is punishing me for the past*

1. Some people actively make bad choices: *Why not – if I can't change/measure up anyway?*

2. Some people quit trying to change/do right: *What's the use?*

2. Some people quit altogether: *Backslide/leave church*

2. **It produces meanness/smallness of heart**

a. People who feel guilty (real or imagined) try and shift their guilt – put it somewhere else

i. *Scapegoat: You have to put your guilt some place!*

b. They will make themselves feel better by being hard or demanding with others

1. They will have no patience or mercy with people

a. *They delight in telling people off/making demands of people*

3. **It kills a desire to reach out to 'unworthy' people**

a. *People who are obviously sinful* b. *People who are a mess* c. *People with the wrong political beliefs*

4. **It produces a lack of concern about their condition**

a. *No conviction/no desire to change: Stripper in Perth – going to Rhema*

III. STRATEGIES FOR BALANCE

A. The answer for imbalance is preaching truth in balance

i. *John 1:14 And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.*

a. Truth is in tension: Like ropes on opposite sides of a tree – pulling in opposite directions

1. This produces balance – so the tree remains upright!

B. Strategies for balance in preaching

1. **The balance of personal knowledge:** You need to know your people/where they are at

a. *Proverbs 27:23 Be sure you know the condition of your flocks, give careful attention to your herds;*

1. Their history: What has been put into them in the past – their inclinations
 - a. *Legalistic churches would need more grace than truth*
2. Their current condition: Current events may make them tend to more despair
2. **The balance of the third point:** A 2 edged sword cuts to expose – and heal; Hope brings healing!
 - a. *Why it is in your best interest to do right – and God will help you!*
 - b. *It doesn't have to be this way*
 - c. *Examples of people who responded: They changed/were blessed*
 - d. *The nature of God: His patience/mercy*
3. **The balance of truth in tension:** You have to preach opposite truths
 - a. Entire sermons that seem to oppose other sermons
 1. *Patience and judgment*
 2. *Consequences of decisions and the help of God*
4. **The balance of timing:** Things that are true must be said at the right time
 - a. *Isaiah 50:4 "The Lord GOD has given Me The tongue of the learned, That I should know how to speak A word in season to him who is weary. He awakens Me morning by morning, He awakens My ear To hear as the learned.*
 1. *Paul: I have things to say – but you're not able to bear them; It's not time yet!*

Over time you see different people helped by different emphases: Or at different times