

LEADER CONVERSATION GUIDE

Derwin Gray on Sermon Series Planning - Episode 244

Preaching Best Practices for 2022 (Part 2)

In Part 2 of our series on Preaching Best Practices for this season, Tony sits down with Derwin Gray, the founding and lead pastor of [Transformation Church](#) (Indian Land, SC) and a former football player in the NFL, to discuss how he approaches sermon preparation, sermon series planning, and more.

The Future of Preaching: Interview with Derwin Gray

Tony: How do you approach message preparation? What does that journey look like?

Derwin: You don't rise to the level of the moment, you rise to the level of your habits. I'm always in the process of filtering scripture, but I also want to be aware of culture, so I work alongside our communication teams, creative teams, production teams, etc. and I currently have my sermon series planned out until the end of the year. That gives our teams time to prepare, time to pray, and time to create scaffolding for the message.

Tony: How do you balance the time needed to prepare a weekly message alongside your other responsibilities as a senior pastor?

Derwin: The best coaches have a meticulous routine, so I have a very meticulous routine that I go through. On Monday, I'm sending my sermon outline to the team. On Tuesday, before staff meetings, I'm marinating in it, and then we launch it to the creative and communications team. Wednesday I'm still marinating in it and by Thursday I'm fully pouring into it. Friday is my Sabbath. Then on Saturday morning, I'm at Starbucks going over and over it. By that time, it's just seeped up inside of me.

Tony: Why do you share the teaching load with others? Is that intentional?

Derwin: I would recommend that every primary preacher makes sure that they're cultivating and developing others to teach and preach. It's very important because you need rest, but it's also a way of multiplying and investing in the next generation. Developing other teachers is really

important and it's not programmatic; it's relational. And one more thing: I believe that if you're not willing to clean toilets, then you shouldn't be in the pulpit either.

Tony: How do you decide what to teach in a particular series? In other words, what drives the selection of topics and biblical passages you are unpacking in a particular series?

When I go on a study break in the summertime, I read the Bible and from that, most of our sermon series are developed. I'm also involved in pastoral care, hearing about what's happening and what the needs are from our care team and by talking to other pastors and ministry leaders. So ideally I want to use a topic to draw people to Jesus through the text and I think it's super important that we have an ear to the needs of the people around us.

Tony: Any final encouragement you'd like to give pastors as it relates to their teaching and preaching?

Derwin: To those who teach and preach, I'm for you and I'm with you. I know the last few years have been hard and what I want to say to you is: First and foremost, you're not a preacher. You're not someone who's just created to teach. God recreated you in Christ to be his beloved and to live in the belovedness of God, not in church attendance, not in budgets, not in buildings, and not in Instagram followers. Everything that's true about Jesus is true about you—regardless of the impact of your ministry.

Secondly, the greatest message you ever preach is your own personal holiness. The way you love your spouse, the way you love your children, the way you apologize, the way you walk in humility, may be the greatest sermon that you and I preach.

Free Webinar: Preaching Best Practices on May 19 @ 1PM

Looking for more innovative approaches to preaching and teaching? Join Tony Morgan, Clay Scroggins, Dan Lian, and Jason Anderson on May 19 for a free 1-hour webinar on “Preaching Best Practices.” Learn more and [register here](#).

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