

## **The Hardest Sermons You'll Ever Have To Preach: Help From Trusted Preachers For Tragic Times**

Bryan Chapell  
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Cancer. Suicide. The death of a child. As much as we wish we could avoid tragedies like these, eventually they will strike our church communities. When they do, pastors must be ready to offer help by communicating the life-changing message of the gospel in a way that offers hope, truth, and encouragement during these difficult circumstances.

Those asked to preach in the midst of tragedy know the anxiety of trying to say appropriate things from God's Word that will comfort and strengthen God's people when emotions and faith are stretched thin. This indispensable resource helps pastors prepare sermons by providing suggestions on how to approach different kinds of tragedy, as well as insight into how to handle the theological challenges of human suffering. Each topic provides a description of the context of the tragedy, the key concern that need to be addressed in the message, and an outline of the approach taken in the sample sermon that follows. Topics addressed include abortion, abuse, responding to national and community tragedies, the death of a child, death due to cancer and prolonged sickness, death due to drunk driving, drug abuse, and suicide.

Bryan Chapell, pastor and president of Covenant Seminary, author of *Christ-centered Preaching* and *Christ-centered Worship*, has gathered together messages from some of today's most trusted Christian leaders. Each chapter provides resources to communicate the life-giving hope of the gospel in the midst of tragedy. In addition, the appendices suggest additional biblical texts for addressing various subjects and provide guidance for conducting funerals. In addition to sermons from Dr. Chapell, contributors include Tim Keller, John Piper, Michael Horton, Jerram Barrs, Dan Doriani, Robert S. Rayburn, Mike Khandjian, Wilson Benton, Bob Flayhart, Jack Collins, and George Robertson.

“Sheep trust the shepherd whom they have learned is good, and we trust our Good Shepherd because he has laid down his life for us. The skillful shepherds of this volume further this trust by taking us often to the place where the Good Shepherd saved us, so that we will trust him to carry us when the darkness is too great to see our way or discern his.” (16).

*The Hardest Sermons You'll Ever Have To Preach* is divided into five sections: Part One - Preaching in Response to Tragedy, includes sermons on abortion, child abuse, community tragedy, and national tragedy. Part Two - Preaching After the Loss of a Child, involves sermons addressing a special needs child, miscarriage of an early-term infant, miscarriage of a late-term infant, newborn loss, crib death young child, and conjoined twins. Part Three - Preaching Funerals with Especially Difficult Causes or Circumstances deals with “lifestyle” consequences, drunken driver, cancer: long-suffering, murder, accidental death, new parent, and special needs adult. Part Four -

Preaching Funerals for Public Figures, speaks to national business leader: cancer and celebrity: unexplained causes. Part Five – Preaching after Suicide, offers hope within suicide of a pastor, suicide of a Christian leader, suicide of a friend, suicide after pastoral scandal, and suicide of a teen.

In addition to the five Parts, the brief Introduction – *The Message of the Cross for the Mystery of Tragedy* – offers excellent insight on the challenges of tragedy, the mystery of tragedy, and a theology for tragedy.

*The Hardest Sermons You'll Ever Have To Preach* will prove to be an excellent resource for pastors/ministers/chaplains called upon to speak words of comfort and encouragement into the lives of families visited by tragedy. As a seminary professor, teaching leadership and pastoral ministry, this book will be added to the arsenal of funeral preparation and will provide, as the subtitle asserts, help for tragic times.