



WOW: Word Of the Week

Signature

May 3, 2023

An interesting word! We sign our name—our signature. Music has a time signature, and a key signature. A signature is something that sets apart or identifies, a characteristic. In some situations, fingerprint and signature are synonyms. As an adjective, signature indicates something distinctively associated and identified with someone or something, as a chef's signature dish, a writer's signature style. People are known for what they talk about—what they constantly insert into conversations. In a Bible class, the comments of some are predictable!

Music historians talk about the signature song is for a particular singer. I share a few examples (showing my age!): Tony Bennett singing I Left My Heart in San Francisco (1953), Que Sera Sera, by Doris Day (1956), Crazy, by Patsy Cline (1961), The House of the Rising Sun, by the Animals (1964), What a Wonderful World, by Louis Armstrong (1967), I've Gotta Be Me, by Sammy Davis Jr. (1968), We've Only Just Begun, by The Carpenters (1970).

Preachers have signature sermons, signature themes. Most preachers have a favorite sermon or two. Preachers are often identified by what they emphasize, the message they keep coming back to.

A number of years ago, a group of church leaders invited me to visit their church as the first step toward possibly becoming their preaching minister. I sent the requisite tryout cassette tapes (I told you it was a number of years ago!). I preached one of my signature sermons. In our meeting, one elder commented, "It seems that all you every preach about is Jesus." (I did not get the job!)

Time has sharpened my focus and perhaps broadened my approach, but my signature focus is unchanging—the mission of God in this world, his eternal purpose to bring everything under the Lordship of Jesus in the Kingdom, the church, empowered by his indwelling presence. The message is Jesus—who he is, what he does, the importance of knowing Jesus, the preeminence of Christ as the core of faith.

I am on a lifelong pursuit of Jesus, to understand and explain to others his splendor, majesty, and grandeur. Jesus is my mission in life. The Good News of Jesus has to be the center of the message, the center of what we do and why we do it. The saving work of God through Jesus Christ, the fulfillment of God's eternal purpose, is a mission bigger than any of us. Here is the grandest purpose ever imagined. All else pales in comparison.

Sermons that address life and its challenges often fail to shine the spotlight on Jesus. While such sermons may be helpful, they are but a shadow. Preaching great Bible truths must never omit Jesus. Find a church that is desperately in love with Jesus, a church that hangs on his every word, a church whose whole being is infused with his presence. Find a church that constantly talks about Jesus, a church that is focused on Jesus's purpose, a church that exalts and honors his words. Find a church that believes Jesus, seeks to belong only to Jesus, and is becoming more and more like Jesus. Better yet—be that kind of church!

Preachers, preach Jesus! This is God's message that powerful alters life—my life, your life, and the lives of all in the world who faithfully follow him.