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10: THE PREACHING MINISTRY

The need to declare God's truth

The preaching ministry is crucial because these are days where the prevailing philosophy is **existentialism** – that is, the belief that each individual must shape his or her own reality by his or her own choices. Existentialism rejects absolutes, whether religious or moral. People now do not wait to be told what to do; they wait to be engaged in discussion. The mind-set of the 21st century does not want to be instructed about the universe, but to help to form its own. This is the opposite of the preaching ministry, which declares the truth of God and demands response. No matter how unpopular, the Church must not compromise on the preaching ministry.

Paul says: *“For since, in the wisdom of God, the world through wisdom did not know God, it pleased God through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe.”* [1 Corinthians 1:21].

God has decided that the gospel is to be preached. Jesus Himself was a preacher, and Paul declares that it was his calling [1 Corinthians 1:17]. Churches may have many programmes, but they cannot substitute anything for the preaching ministry. They may be involved in social action, and perhaps run hospitals or schools, but none of these can ever be a substitute for the Word of God being preached. Even counselling, Alpha courses, etc. cannot replace God's chosen method of having truth declared.

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The Greek words for preaching are:

Evangelizo: To make known the good news about Jesus and salvation.

Kerusso: To herald the truth of the kingdom, the greatness of God, the power of the cross. The herald goes before the king and declares the imminent arrival of the king, who is following behind. John the Baptist was the King's herald – he opened the door for Jesus. The preacher is a herald who opens the door for Jesus to enter the lives and situations of the people.

Essential foundations of the preaching ministry

1. The Baptism with the Holy Spirit

The Lord commanded His apostles not to go into all the world until they were endued with power from on high [Luke 24:49; Acts 1:8]. The baptism with the Holy Spirit made the apostles witnesses of the supreme victory of the cross. It made them witnesses of Christ and of His death and resurrection, because it united them with the power of the cross. Many people have known the incredible transformation of their ministry through the baptism with the Holy Spirit.

The testimony of D.L. Moody

D.L. Moody was a successful minister but, by his own admission later, he lacked the power in his ministry. One day two women came up to him after a service. They said, "We have been praying for you." "Why don't you pray for the people?" he asked. "Because you need the power of the Spirit", they said. "I need the power! Why", said Moody, in relating the incident years after, "I thought I had power. I had the largest congregations in Chicago, and there were many conversions."

Moody also said that, in a sense, he was satisfied. He was in a comfort zone. But these two praying women rocked the boat. They told him that they were praying for an anointing by the Holy Spirit for him to have a special service to God. He could not get this off his mind and he said, "There came a great hunger in my soul. I did not know what it was and I began to cry out to God as never before. I felt I did not want to live if I could not have this power for service".

After the great fire of Chicago, Moody was working to raise money to rebuild a tabernacle. He said his heart was not in it because he kept crying out to God to fill him. During a visit to New York to raise money,

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he withdrew and prayed; he cried that God would fill him with His Spirit. He described it this way: "Well, one day, in the city of New York -- oh, what a day! -- I cannot describe it, I seldom refer to it; it is almost too sacred an experience to name. Paul had an experience of which he never spoke for 14 years. I can only say that God revealed Himself to me, and I had such an experience of His love that I had to ask Him to stay His hand. I went to preaching again. The sermons were not different; I did not present any new truths, and yet hundreds were converted. I would not now be placed back where I was before that blessed experience if you should give me all the world -- it would be as the small dust of the balance."

The baptism with the Holy Spirit makes us witnesses not just when we are preaching but also when we are living. Jesus said: "**You shall be witnesses to Me**" [Acts 1:8]. By the baptism with the Spirit, there is power without striving, because it is the grace and power of God at work.

2. The Messenger is also the Message

The preacher and the message must be one. The preacher is ministering concerning someone greater than himself, but he is a channel and he must be pure. Just as we want to drink pure water from a clean cup, so too we must hear the gospel through clean vessels. It is true that God can use even a donkey, but this is not His chosen method! The preacher will impart his own heart state; this impacts the hearers when they hear preaching. They can tell if the preacher is in faith, fear, unbelief or frustration. A congregation can soon tell if the preacher is a hard or a loving person. If the preacher talks about something he has not experienced, the congregation will soon realise this. If he is preaching about the baptism with the Holy Spirit, then obviously he must be full of the Holy Spirit.

Every voice is from a spirit: either God's, man's or Satan's. When we preach we minister the states of our own hearts in some measure. This is why we must make sure that we are in communion with God, and that we are speaking and ministering the knowledge of God. If we are in gross sin in our hearts, God will not allow us to continue in the ministry. He will not have hypocrites representing His kingdom.

3. Judgment Begins at the House of God...and with the Preachers

Peter explains that, when Christ returns, judgment must begin at the house of God [1 Peter 4:17]. Christ describes the Day of Judgment in

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Matthew 24:42–25:46. He begins by explaining that the first people to be judged will be the servants of His house.

The word He uses for His 'house' (in the Greek text of the KJV) is *therapeia*, which can be taken to mean 'house of healing' [Matthew 24:45]. The Church is intended to be a place of healing of wounds; but Jesus describes some servants as inflicting wounds on others [Matthew 24:49]. Preachers can inflict wounds on their hearers. Jesus said that the scribes (or lawyers) laid burdens on people that were heavy for them to bear [Matthew 23:4; Luke 11:46]. He also said that such servants who wound others will be dismembered or cut into pieces when He returns [Matthew 24:51]!

Clearly, Jesus views the preaching ministry as very importance. As James says: *"...let not many of you become teachers, knowing that we shall receive a stricter judgment"* [James 3:1]. Jesus said that if we break the least commandment and teach others to do so, we shall be called least in the Kingdom of Heaven [Matthew 5:19]. Clearly it is an awesome act to stand before people and teach them the ways of God, and His word.

Jesus said in Matthew 24:45 that faithful servants are those who feed His flock the right food in the right season. This means that preachers must discern the right food for the flock, and not repeat their favourite topics! On at least three occasions elders/pastors are exhorted to feed (or shepherd) the flock of God [John 21:15-17; Acts 20:28; 1 Peter 5:2]. The food of the flock is clearly the Word; but this cannot mean mere Bible knowledge, or professors would be the best pastors. Jesus reveals to Peter that the food of the flock is available when a pastor truly loves Him. Jesus did not want to know how much time Peter spent in prayer or how much of the Scriptures he read daily. He asked Peter if he loved Him. If we love Jesus, we will have food for the flock and we will minister healing to the flock as we feed them.

4. The Released Preacher Must First be Released in Prayer

Preaching is not a lecture. It is an interaction between God and people to declare the truth of God. There is of necessity a prophetic dimension to preaching. Not that the word 'prophecy' is the New Testament word for preaching - this would require a strained interpretation of the word 'prophecy'. But the prophetic element in preaching is the declaration of the hidden things of God and the secret thoughts of the hearers. When there is true preaching, congregations feel searched by the word, and exposed under the searching eye of God.

For this kind of preaching to take place, the preacher must be filled with the Holy Spirit and also released or abandoned to the Holy Spirit.

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Some preachers are too 'controlled' - they rely totally on their minds and are never prepared to be spontaneous. The preacher must be gripped by God if he is to lay hold of a congregation by his preaching. The place where this happens is in prayer. The preacher must let go of himself in worship. He does not become mindless, but he does not remain a slave to intellectualism. He knows the place of worship and of communion with God. Paul says that he knew what it was to be 'beside himself' and what it was to be sober or 'of sound mind' [2 Corinthians 5:13]. The faculty of reason must kneel humbly while the spirit soars in worship. There are aspects of preaching that are communicated when a preacher soars with the Holy Spirit. They cannot be manufactured, but they can be prepared by quiet waiting on God, and adoring worship.

5. The Call of God

The greatest calling that a person can ever have is the one God intended for them! It is possible for the preaching ministry to be exalted over all other gifts and ministries. However, it is not possible to *choose* to be a preacher, any more than it is possible to choose to have a prophetic ministry etc. This is God's choice. Martyn Lloyd-Jones said that if you ever meet a man who claims to be called to the ministry' do everything you can to make it hard for him! While few of us will unreservedly agree with Dr Jones on this point, it is nevertheless important to realise that true preachers have come through all discouragements and struggles, to the place where they can fulfil their ministry, overcoming obstacles in order to be a preacher.

- **Each person must know their calling:** Martyn Lloyd-Jones tells of a man who was a car mechanic but left his work to train as a pastor. He was happy until he went into the ministry, at which point he lost all his joy. He continued on for several years until he realised that God had not called him to the ministry. As soon as he realised this, he returned to his calling as a mechanic and found his joy again.
- **What is the call?** This is difficult to put into words, but it is not a natural gift, even though it does in some measure flow with natural gifts. Although someone with a stammer and a poor grasp of language may be used by God, it is nevertheless true that most preachers have good communication ability. This is the case in the examples of Peter, Stephen, Paul and others in the New Testament. Their ability to speak was not the call of God, but it enabled them to fulfil their calling. The call, then, is an inner compulsion. Paul said: *"For if I preach the gospel, I have nothing to boast of, for necessity is laid upon me; yes, woe is me if I do not preach the gospel! For if I do this*

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willingly, I have a reward; but if against my will, I have been entrusted with a stewardship. What is my reward then? That when I preach the gospel, I may present the gospel of Christ without charge, that I may not abuse my authority in the gospel." [1 Corinthians 9:16-18].

- **The call surpasses every other demand on our life:** when Peter and John heard the call, they left all and followed Jesus. The call was that if they would follow Him, He would make them fishers of men [Mark 1:17]. This does not mean that every called person must leave their employment. But it does mean that when someone is conscious of the call, they must let go of everything that competes with it. Paul said that he had suffered the loss of all things in pursuit of the call to know Christ [Philippians 3:7-14]. The call is not primarily to a ministry, but to a person, whom we are to love and enjoy.
- **We are called to minister to God first and to people second:** Jesus said that the first commandment is to love God and the second commandment is to love our neighbour as ourselves [Mark 12:29-31]. Often ministry is person-centred or need-centred. But Jesus did not minister to needs first; He ministered to Father first, and the outflow of His obedience to the Father was that people's needs were abundantly met. But Jesus did not follow the pressure of need; He followed the guidance of His Father. Even as He left the upper room to go to Gethsemane and the cross, He declared that He was doing it because He loved the Father.

When we get overwhelmed with need, as we surely must, if we concentrate on human problems, we become dry and unable to help anyone. We must concentrate on enjoying and pleasing God. Paul said that if he were a people-pleaser he would not be a servant of Christ [Galatians 1:10]. When Elijah went to the widow of Zarephath, he told her to make cakes for him first, and then for her son and herself [1 Kings 17:13]. This contradicted the obvious need that she had, but the result was that her needs were met in a much more glorious way than could ever have happened if she had put her own needs first. Ministers must take time to sit at the feet of Jesus, listening to Him and to His word, if they are to be effective.

6. Preach Christ and Him Crucified

When the New Testament speaks of the apostles' preaching ministry, it uses strange grammar. Paul says he had resolved to "*preach Christ crucified*" [1 Corinthians 1:23, 2:2]. The apostles did not cease "*teaching and preaching Jesus Christ*" [Acts 5:42]. The normal grammar

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would indicate that they taught ‘about’ Jesus Christ. But clearly it is not within the bounds of normal grammar to explain what happens during the act of preaching.

When a preacher declares the person and work of Christ, the person of Christ should be manifest during the preaching. Paul says in Titus 1:3 that God “*has manifested His word through preaching*”. Because Christ is risen from the dead and present everywhere, then during the true ministry of preaching, congregations should be conscious of God. They should sense the presence of Jesus. He should reach out through the preaching and touch the lives of people present. The preacher himself is to be invisible, as Christ is made manifest. For this to take place, the preacher must himself have fully embraced his own death, so that he is dead to self. It does not mean that he is always apologetic or embarrassed standing in front of people. The person who is truly free from self is free to be confident before congregations; he is not self-conscious at all. He is God-conscious and is liberated to flow in the Holy Spirit. Embarrassment is the sign that we are not free from self!

The preacher is then fully aware that, though there may be many important subjects to preach about - such as the Second Coming, marriage, the Tabernacle, marketplace ethics etc. yet there is only one theme that grips him as the supreme key to the problems that people face. That one subject is Christ and His cross. The Holy Spirit loves Jesus and is in holy awe about the cross. Therefore, when a preacher talks about these things, the Holy Spirit is filled with holy wonder, and applies them to the hearts of the hearers.

People have created audio and video recording equipment that can replay moments in history. But the greatest recorder of all is the Holy Spirit. He recorded the creation as it took place. He is the witness to the deep things of God, including the cross, and it is through Him alone that these things are made known [1 Corinthians 2:4-10]. It is through the preaching of Christ that He is made known.

The snares of the preaching ministry

The mark of the true ministry is holiness, and a lifestyle that demonstrates the fruit of the Spirit. Jesus said there would be false prophets, but that we would know them by their fruits [Matthew 7:15-23]. Similarly, the marks of the false prophets in Jude and 2 Peter 2, are that they do not resist temptation, but give in to sin.

There are many snares to the preaching ministry; here are the three main ones that are emphasised in the New Testament:

1. Pride and the Idolatry of the Ministry

Some preachers get a buzz from preaching. They enjoy the thrill of being the centre of attention; they enjoy holding the congregation in their control through the power of their preaching. It can become a drug that they cannot live without. Paul said: *"woe is me if I do not preach the gospel!"* [1 Corinthians 9:16], but he was not referring to his own enjoyment of the ministry, but to the divine compulsion to do the will of God. He said, *"for me to live is Christ"* - not preaching [Philippians 1:21]. He was content in prison because preaching was not his life, but knowing Jesus was. If we fall into this temptation we will become arrogant and proud, and may well fall into other equally serious sins.

2. The Love of Money – the Sin of Balaam and Gehazi

[2 Peter 2:15-16; Jude 11]

Balaam preached and prophesied hoping for financial reward [Numbers 22-24]. Gehazi took Naaman's money and contracted Naaman's leprosy [2 Kings 5:20-27]. Not all preachers will find big financial rewards in preaching, but this temptation can arise for all successful preachers. The preacher must not have an eye on the gift he is hoping to receive after the sermon. (Few treasurers will hand over a gift at the beginning of a service or weekend of ministry!) If our preaching is powerful, some people may be delivered or healed, and wish to express their gratitude by giving large gifts. If the preacher mentions his financial needs in the preaching, it is possible that wealthy members of the congregation will want to help him. The preacher must trust God for his support, and not manipulate congregations to give him money. This will require great self-control on occasions. When a rich person asks a preacher with no money in his pocket if there is anything he needs, the preacher must answer faithfully, and not exploit the generosity of the believers.

There is no such thing as a 'poor' preacher. Even if the preacher has no money, he must never complain that he is poor! Imagine telling someone, *"I'm poor, I only have Jesus!"* It would be like a billionaire's wife complaining that she had no money of her own, just her husband to rely on! The preacher has all the resources of Jesus Christ at his disposal, and Jesus will give him whatever he needs and never too late.

Kathryn Kuhlman gave generously to David Wilkerson, so he loved to go and minister at her services knowing that she would give generously to Teen Challenge. After some years, the Holy Spirit showed him that he had been relying on her and not on God, and he learned to go there only when he felt it was the will of God. Some people have made

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great sacrifices to be preachers, but if preachers have little money in their pocket, they can be tempted to give a false witness of their Master's faithfulness. Some may let it be known that they do not have enough money for a holiday or a car. While this may be true, it can be expressed in a way that dishonours God, who is their employer!

One English vicar took the Anglican Church to court, claiming that his pay was too low. The judge wisely dismissed the case, on the grounds that the man's employer was God and therefore beyond the competence of the court!

3. Immorality

Preachers are targets of the devil. If he can make preachers fall then he can ruin their ministry. Proverbs 6:26 teaches us that, "*the adulteress seeks the precious life*" [KJV]. There can be no doubt that the devil rejoices when precious servants of God fall into immorality. Proverbs 6:32–33 teaches that whoever commits adultery "*destroys his own soul*" and "*his shame will never be wiped away*" [KJV]. We may argue, "*Is there no forgiveness for such sins?*" Of course there is forgiveness, and restoration to salvation and fellowship with God and with His people. But the ministry of such men will be permanently damaged; never again will they be able to minister without someone remembering their sin.

Preachers (and ordinary believers) should resolve never to be alone in a compromising situation. They should refuse to be alone with a member of the opposite sex. They should refuse to counsel a member of the opposite sex alone, but should seek support from their spouse or other counsellors.

Churches, and particularly preachers, are **targets of the prince of darkness**. In the 1980s it was reported that a band of witches in South Africa had undertaken a 40-day fast to Satan with the intention of destroying Christian marriages. Similarly, in the late 1980s a Church in the UK was targeted by a spiritist, who lived opposite the Church. She hated it, and cursed the marriages in the Church. Sadly, the minister and his congregation were spiritually ill-equipped and inexperienced to deal with the attack. The spiritist sent her daughter to attend the Church and visit the homes of various couples. Every time she left a home, the husband and wife would be screaming at each other. Finally, the minister left his wife and his ministry to pursue an adulterous affair with a member of the congregation. The

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Church is in warfare, and pastors and preachers must be awake to the temptations that can arise at any time.

CONCLUSION: The Lord's servants must care for their own hearts, to make sure they are walking with the Lord in a healthy spiritual state, able to resist the temptations of the wicked one.

Five spiritual keys for preachers

1. Pray as Much as You Read, in Preparation

It is a sad fact that many people trust in the reputation of the preacher, or in his gifts and experience or Bible knowledge. None of these can save anyone. It is only the Holy Spirit Who can take our preaching and make it powerful and effective. Read the following example about the conversion of Spurgeon, in his own words. When he went to a certain chapel, the preacher was unable to get there because of a heavy snowfall. The preacher who took his place was not naturally gifted, but God used him mightily.

I sometimes think I might have been in darkness and despair until now, had it not been for the goodness of God in sending a snowstorm one Sunday morning, while I was going to a certain place of worship. When I could go no further, I turned down a side street, and came to a little Primitive Methodist Chapel. In that chapel there may have been a dozen or fifteen people. I had heard of the Primitive Methodists, how they sang so loudly that they made people's heads ache; but that did not matter to me. I wanted to know how I might be saved, and if they could tell me that, I did not care how much they made my head ache. The minister did not come that morning; he was snowed up, I suppose. At last, a very thin-looking man, a shoemaker, or tailor, or something of that sort, went up into the pulpit to preach. Now, it is well that preachers should be instructed; but this man was really stupid. He was obliged to stick to his text, for the simple reason that he had little else to say. The text was:

"LOOK UNTO ME, AND BE YE SAVED, ALL THE ENDS OF THE EARTH."

He did not even pronounce the words rightly, but that did not matter. There was, I thought, a glimpse of hope for me in that text. The preacher began thus—"My dear friends, this is a very simple text indeed. It says, 'Look'. Now lookin' don't take a deal of pains. It ain't liftin' your foot or your finger; it is just, 'Look'.

Well, a man needn't go to College to learn to look. Anyone can look; even a child can look. But then the text says, 'Look unto Me'. Ay!" said he, in broad Essex, "many on ye are lookin' to yourselves, but

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it's no use lookin' there. You'll never find any comfort in yourselves. Some look to God the Father. No, look to Him by-and-by. Jesus Christ says, 'Look unto Me'. Some on ye say, 'We must wait for the Spi-Spirit's workin'. You have no business with that just now. Look to Christ. The text says, 'Look unto Me'."

Then the good man followed up his text in this way: "Look unto Me; I am sweatin' great drops of blood. Look unto Me; I am hangin' on the cross. Look unto Me; I am dead and buried. Look unto Me; I rise again. Look unto Me; I ascend to Heaven. Look unto Me; I am sittin' at the Father's right hand. O poor sinner, look unto Me, look unto Me!"

When he had gone to about that length, and managed to spin out ten minutes or so, he was at the end of his tether. Then he looked at me under the gallery, and I daresay, with so few present, he knew me to be a stranger. Just fixing his eyes on me, as if he knew all my heart, he said, "Young man, you look very miserable." Well, I did; but I had not been accustomed to have remarks made from the pulpit on my personal appearance before. However, it was a good blow, struck right home. He continued, "and you always will be miserable—miserable in life, and miserable in death,—if you don't obey my text; but if you obey now, this moment, you will be saved." Then, lifting up his hands, he shouted, as only a Primitive Methodist could do, "Young man, look to Jesus Christ. Look! Look! Look! You have nothin' to do but to look and live."

I saw at once the way of salvation. I know not what else he said—I did not take much notice of it—I was so possessed with that one thought. Like as when the brazen serpent was lifted up, the people only looked and were healed, so it was with me. I had been waiting to do fifty things, but when I heard that word, "Look!" what a charming word it seemed to me! Oh! I looked until I could almost have looked my eyes away. There and then the cloud was gone, the darkness had rolled away, and that moment I saw the sun; and I could have risen that instant, and sung with the most enthusiastic of them, of the precious blood of Christ, and the simple faith which looks alone to Him. Oh, that somebody had told me this before, "Trust Christ, and you shall be saved."

The point of the story is that God uses a power that is wholly greater than us. If we rely on God, we will pray more and look to Him to work rather than to ourselves.

2. Be Bold in the Lord

After the lame beggar had been healed at the Beautiful Gate of the Temple, Peter was very bold when he was taken before the Sanhedrin [Acts 4:8-13]. He was not boastful about his gifts and abilities, but he was very bold in proclaiming the person of Jesus Christ.

3. Rely on the Holy Spirit

After the lame beggar was healed, Peter said to all the people who ran to him and John: *"...why (do you) look so intently at us, as though by our own power or godliness we had made this man walk?"* [Acts 3:12]. Peter was quick to let them know that it wasn't himself and John who had healed the man, but Jesus. He took it a step further, to say it wasn't even his faith, but the faith that comes from Jesus [Acts 3:16]. Peter was not afraid to let people know that he was weak without God.

4. Soak in the Bible Passage You Want to Preach from

Prayerfully read and re-read the text and context — both in English and in the original (use as many translations as possible). G. Campbell Morgan said that, before he preached from a passage in any book of the Bible, he read that entire book 50 times. If we give the true sense of the Bible we will be deep preachers, because the Bible is a deep book. It brings to light hidden truths about God and human beings. We will be the best psychologists, the best philosophers, the best counsellors, if we stick to what the Bible says.

5. Challenge the Hearts of the People

A preacher is not speaking to people's heads only, but also to their hearts. Peter had something to say that would change people's lives, so he said: *"... heed my words"* [Acts 2:14]. We must be challenging. Information is needed, but it must be given in a way that can be applied in people's lives. *"... we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip"* [Hebrews 2:1, KJV]. If people don't heed the word preached, they could easily let the truth of God's word slip away from them.

"... faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead" [James 2:17]. *"For indeed the gospel was preached to us as well as to them; but the word which they heard did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in those who heard it."* [Hebrews 4:2]. People will not profit from our ministry unless we get them to put the Word into practice. The Bible says we are to *"consider one another in order to stir up love and good works"* [Hebrews 10:24].

Ten practical keys

(1) Know what you want the people to do after they have heard you preach.

Do you want the people:

- To repent, believe and be saved?
- To receive the baptism with the Holy Spirit?
- To be prayed with for healing or deliverance?
- To worship God?
- To receive greater understanding and take time to digest the new insights you have ministered to them?

You should have a clear object in mind if you want to be effective. You might change your objective during your preaching if the Holy Spirit leads you to do so. But you should have a clear objective in mind from the moment you start speaking.

(2) Be clear - don't keep big surprises till the end of your sermon. Tell people what you are going to talk about, then talk about it, then tell them what you have talked about! Repetition is the art of the good communicator. Make sure you have communicated your main message. Ask yourself, *“What are the main things I want people to remember from this message?”*

(3) Don't use big words when you can use small ones - that is spiritual pride. Speak so that a ten-year-old can understand you. That is what Billy Graham did! If you have been to Bible College and studied the Greek and the Hebrew, this is a great advantage in understanding the Bible. But it is no use trying to dazzle congregations with your great knowledge! Peter spoke Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek fluently, as they were his native languages. But he could not understand the Saviour because of his spiritual dullness, and needed to have things spelt out to him [Mark 8:14-21]. Most people need things to be expressed simply.

(4) Make a clear outline with:

- ◆ An introduction
- ◆ Your main points, with examples
- ◆ Your conclusion
- ◆ Your appeal

(5) Study – *“Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth”* [2 Timothy 2:15]. There are certain Bible tools that will help the preacher. They are not expensive, and are useful in widening our

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understanding of the Scriptures. (Here is a brief list: Halley's Bible Handbook, Unger's Bible Dictionary, Strong's Concordance, Vine's Dictionary, *Explore the Book* by Sidlow Baxter).

(6) Memorise the Scriptures - there is nothing more powerful than the Word of God. Peter, in his sermon on the Day of Pentecost, quoted large sections of Scripture. He knew them by heart. God has given the promise that His word will not return to Him void [Isaiah 55:10-11]. It is sharper than any two-edged sword [Hebrews 4:12]. The word will do more in the hearts of people than a preacher ever can.

(7) Use your voice to the full but don't scream - Peter "raised his voice" [Acts 2:14]. But this does not mean that he was screaming! Once, a small child asked, "Why is the pastor so mad at us", referring to the preacher. Equally, we must not use a monotonous voice that will make people go to sleep. Once, a young preacher screamed at the congregation, "We need sermons that will awaken the Church!" A wise old pastor was sitting behind him and said, loud enough to be heard, "What we first need are sermons that don't put people to sleep!"

(8) Don't rely on tricks to get effect - you may use illustrations, but be careful not to undermine your ministry by play-acting. While we may be dramatic in our preaching, we must not pretend.

Campbell Morgan tells of an American businessman who went to hear a preacher in the Eastern USA. During his preaching, the preacher stopped and said: "I can't quite find the right word.... Perhaps it is... or ..." and then he found the right word. The businessman was impressed with the spontaneous manner in which the preacher spoke.

Three weeks later he was in the West Coast of USA and had the opportunity to hear the preacher again. During his preaching, the preacher stopped and said: "I can't quite find the right word... Perhaps it is... or..." The businessman suddenly realised that the man had not been spontaneous at all but had been play-acting! He left the meeting in disgust.

(9) Beware of humour - preachers are not to be comedians, especially if you want the congregation to take you seriously. Some preachers use humour to 'soften up' their congregation. This may sometimes be necessary if there is tension in the congregation. Humour may help you and the congregation relax, but beware! It will be hard to connect with the atmosphere of the Spirit and of heaven if we

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lose ourselves in carnal laughter. Jesus and the apostles did not tell jokes, though there is little doubt that God has a sense of humour. Jesus would have laughed along with everybody else at life's humorous situations.

(10). Know when to stop - the truth is that few preachers know when to stop, especially when they really get warmed up to their subject.

A little boy went to Church with his father. When the preacher came in he placed a Bible, a notebook and a watch on the pulpit. "What are those for?", asked the little boy.

"Well", said the father, the Bible is the Word of God, the notebook is the outline of what the preacher wants to say to us, and the watch? Well, the watch doesn't mean anything at all!"

Sometimes the preacher is not connecting with the congregation, so he may talk on and on, trying to connect. Others have a great connection but do not know when to stop. Remember these guidelines:

- If you drill for oil and don't find it within 15 minutes, stop boring!
- Always leave a congregation wishing you had spoken longer, rather than wishing you had stopped sooner.
- Always remember that some of your congregation have been working hard all week and will be struggling to keep their concentration. You may not be tired, but they may be exhausted.
- Listening is sometimes a harder discipline than speaking!
- There will be a ripe moment to stop. If you miss it, the message of the Holy Spirit may be forgotten. People will be ready to respond, but if you miss the moment, they may be discouraged.
- Honour the congregation and the leaders, even if you are the leader of the Church! Remember that finishing on time will help Sunday School leaders.