

Resources by P-J Smyth

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HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

By yourself...but better together!

You can of course read this book by yourself – I hope that it works as a stand-alone booklet for an individual. However, this booklet is well suited to help train preachers, and works well as a manual to teach and read through in a training context.

Mix with radical faith

Hebrews 4v2 speaks about two groups of people who heard the same message – one group were changed forever and the other group dozed off! The difference was that the first group mixed what they heard with faith, and the other group didn't! So when you read, be like the first group believing that what you read is true and possible for you to do in God's strength. This book, mixed with faith can be a tool for God to develop you in a wonderful way.

And then take action...

Winston Churchill once said, *“Men occasionally stumble over the truth, but most pick themselves up and hurry off as if nothing had happened”*. Don't do that! Seize hold of the truth in each chapter and never, ever let it go.

PART ONE

INTRODUCTION

CHAPTER 1

PREACHING: VERY POWERFUL

A little while ago a man was talking to me about preachers in the various churches that he had visited saying, *“Some were plain useless and a few didn’t put me to sleep.”* How tragic: his highest definition of preaching was that it didn’t put him to sleep! How about you? Do you have a low or high definition of preaching? My guess is that you may have been inoculated into having a low expectation of preaching. Allow the following definitions of real preaching win you back to a high expectation of preaching:

Real preaching cuts to the heart

Peter woke up that morning with no idea that he was going to be up for a preach that day. He had no message prepared. He had no file of pre-preached messages in his bag ready to whip out. He had virtually no preaching experience at all. Then the Holy Spirit comes, and an hour later he is doing a spontaneous open air preach to thousands of people. How did he do? After about 20 minutes his listeners were *cut to the heart* (Acts 2v37). The words of Peter had become vehicles of divine impact. Listening to a human voice had become an encounter with The Ancient of Days and they cried out, *“So what must we do to get right with God?”* After Peter leads them in response, he then presses home his advantage by *warning them and pleading with them* (Acts 2v40). Cut to the heart, warning, pleading ... now that’s preaching!

Real preaching is an arrow of the Lord’s deliverance

When I read this account of preaching under the anointing of the Spirit, I can sympathise with Martyn Lloyd-Jones who reputedly said, *“I feel I have only preached twice in my life... and both were when I was dreaming!”*¹ It doesn’t matter what the topic is, true preaching will result in hearts being cut into every time. It will penetrate into the listeners and provoke a response. Spurgeon said sermons should be like arrows: *‘The sermon preached by Peter at Pentecost was the arrow of the Lord’s deliverance to three thousand, and there is no reason why the Lord should not cause one of ours to be the same’.*²

¹ Michael Eaton. Preaching in 2005 at Pietermaritzburg Christian Fellowship.

² Spurgeon in Spurgeon Gold by Ray Comfort, Pg 16, Bridge-Logos, 2005

Real preaching is amazing

Jesus' Sermon on the Mount ends with Matthew recording, "*When Jesus had finished saying these things, the crowds were amazed at his teaching, because he taught as one who had authority, and not as their teachers of the law*" (Mt 5v29-30). The authority of true preaching amazes people.

Real preaching lights up the Word and makes things clear

It is true that God reveals himself to man in several ways, including through the works of believers³, through creation⁴, through his works in history and through signs and wonders⁵. However, as Piper says, "*none of them reveals God with the clarity and fullness of the Bible. All of them orbit around the sun of God's written Word. And if the central gravitational power of the sun is denied, all the planets fly into confusion.... these manifestations of Christ would be vague and blurry without the written Word to guide our understanding and guard our hearts. We need the Word of God not only to see God in the Word, but to see him rightly anywhere else*".⁶

And, it is primarily preaching that opens up the Word to reveal God⁷. Titus 1v3 says, "*...he brought his word to light through the preaching entrusted to me...*". Did you see that? The Word is illuminated through preaching. Just as a sundial requires sunlight on it for the time to be told, so too preaching lights up the pages of the Word of God. "*They read from the book of the Law of God, making it clear and giving the meaning so that the people could understand what was being read*" (Nehemiah 8v8). Preaching is all about making the Word clear to people, and helping them understand what is being read. Real preaching turns the lights on!

Real preaching is a divine-human partnership

Preaching epitomizes the divine-human partnership of the gospel. It is a thrill and a privilege to speak for God, about God, with the anointing of God, and experience the conversion of human words into vehicles of divine revelation. Phillips Brookes says that "*preaching is truth meditated through personality*". Gerald Rowlands agrees saying, "*A preacher is essentially a communicator. He receives truth from God and communicates it effectively to men. God gives the revelation; man provides the presentation*".

³ Mt 5v16; 1 Pet 2v12; 1 Cor 12v7

⁴ Rms 1v21

⁵ Acts 2v22

⁶ Piper. Chap 7, Pg 95-96, What when I don't desire God; Crossway.

⁷ Nehemiah 8v8

Real preaching gives people a sense of the presence of God

*“What is the chief end of preaching? It is to give men and women a sense of God and his presence...I can forgive a preacher almost anything if he gives me a sense of God” (Martyn Lloyd-Jones). A few years ago I thought that I had preached a great message on the *Humanity of Christ*. After the meeting a seasoned preacher called Gary Strong thanked me for my efforts but said that my message lacked a sense of the grandeur of the God becoming man. What a failure that message was! Although technically sound and well delivered, it lacked the *Wow-Factor!**

Lloyd-Jones said, “Preaching is theology coming through a man who is on fire”. Paul wrote, “My message and my preaching were not with wise and persuasive words, but with a demonstration of the Spirit’s power, so that your faith might not rest on men’s wisdom but on God’s power” (1 Cor2v4-5).

Real preaching wins souls

“How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them? (Rms 10v14). One of the problems is that many of the great books written on preaching have been written by mighty teachers rather than by mighty evangelists. Consequentially, their books are light on this emphasis of preaching to win souls, but we must ensure that our preaching is never light on this emphasis. See Part Six later in this booklet.

How should we respond to this revelation that God intends preaching to be very powerful?

We shouldn’t lower the bar. Preaching is supposed to be powerful. In Thessalonica Paul planted a church through only three Sunday’s worth of preaching – real preaching can do that! Let’s refuse to settle for anything less than seeing people cut to the heart. Prepare and pray with all your might and, like Moses, cry out to God, *“If your Presence does not go with us, do not send us up from here.... What else will distinguish me and your people from all the other people on the face of the earth?”*⁸

Michael Eaton says, *“Do you have books on public speaking? Throw them away. They will not help you preach. Only God can create preachers!”*⁹ Call on God to make you into a real preacher!

⁸ Ex 33v15-16

⁹ Michael Eaton. Preaching in 2005 at Pietermaritzburg Christian Fellowship.

CHAPTER 2

PREACHING: VERY CRUCIAL

Preaching is indispensable

Preaching is becoming less fashionable these days. More and more common on peoples' lips is this kind of talk: "*This is a post-modern generation and attention spans are shorter these days, so it is better to meet as friends to discuss the Word rather than the traditional preaching format*". I will let John Stott answer this nonsense:

"Preaching is indispensable to Christianity. Without preaching a necessary part of its authenticity has been lost. For Christianity is, in its very essence, a religion of the Word of God" (John Stott)

The pulpit will still remain the grand means of effecting the mass of men. It is God's own method, and he will honour it ... In every age, great reformers have been great preachers (John Stott)

Preaching is God's own method

Romans 10v17 says, "*Faith comes from hearing and hearing the word of God*". It does not say, "*Faith comes from discussion, drama presentations, and seeing fancy power-point presentations*". I am in favour of innovative and appropriate ways of preaching and teaching the word, and I believe that discussion groups have their place (see Acts 19v9), but the preaching of the word must remain central. A human voice carrying the truth of God is the method that God has chosen. Now if, like many people in the West, you are losing faith in preaching, the problem is the lack of *genuine preaching* that achieves the remarkable things that we read about in the previous chapter, and not preaching itself. This is why this book is called *The World Needs More Preachers* not *The World Needs To Find A Better Alternative To Preaching*.

Preaching is an agent of revival

Michael Eaton says that in all his study he has not found a revival where God did not start and maintain the revival except through touching preachers, what they said, and how they said it.

CHAPTER 3

PREACHING: VERY BIBLICAL

Here is a selection of scriptures gathered by John Stott¹⁰ that I want you to read through now. Let the weight of them stir you to see the magnificent place of preaching in God's plan to extend his kingdom:

Jesus as a preacher

John Stott says, "*Certainly the gospel writers present Jesus as having been first and foremost an itinerant preacher*". Here is the proof:

*Jesus replied, "Let us go somewhere else, to the nearby villages, **so I can preach there also. That is why I have come.**" So he traveled throughout Galilee, **preaching** in their synagogues and driving out demons (Mk 1v38-39).*

*"Jesus went into Galilee, **proclaiming the good news of God.** "The time has come," he said. "The kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news!" (Mk 1v14)*

*"Jesus went throughout Galilee, **teaching** in their synagogues, **preaching** the good news of the kingdom, and healing every disease and sickness among the people" (Mt 4v23)*

*"Jesus went through all the towns and villages, **teaching** in their synagogues, **preaching** the good news of the kingdom and healing every disease and sickness" (Mt 9v35)*

The disciples as preachers in the gospels

*"Jesus went up on a mountainside and called to him those he wanted, and they came to him. He appointed twelve, designating them apostles, that they might be with him and that he might send them out to **preach**, and to have authority to drive out demons" (Mk 3v13-14)*

*As you go, **preach this message:** 'The kingdom of heaven is near.' Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse those who have leprosy, drive out demons. Freely you have received, freely give' (Mt 10v7)*

"Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy

¹⁰ John Stott, *I believe in Preaching*, Chapter 1, Hodder & Stoughton, 1982.

*Spirit, and **teaching them** to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age” (Mt 28v18-20)*

*“He told them, “ The Christ will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, and repentance and forgiveness of sins will be **preached** in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem” (Lk 24v46)*

*He said to them, “Go into all the world and **preach** the good news to all creation.... Then the **disciples went out and preached everywhere**, and the Lord worked with them and confirmed his word by the signs that accompanied it” (Mk 16v15-20)*

The Apostles in the early church

Peter and the other apostles in Jerusalem ‘spoke the word of God with boldness’ (Acts 4v31).

*“So the Twelve gathered all the disciples together and said, “It would not be right for us to **neglect the ministry of the word of God** in order to wait on tables. Brothers, choose seven men from among you who are known to be full of the Spirit and wisdom. We will turn this responsibility over to them and will give our **attention to prayer and the ministry of the word**” (Acts 6v2-5)*

Paul

Paul, in his three missionary expeditions, planted churches and strengthened churches primarily through preaching & teaching in public places, places of worship and from house to house. Even under house arrest in Rome he is ‘**preaching the kingdom of God and teaching about the Lord Jesus Christ quite openly and unhindered**’ (Acts 28v31). He was a man “...**compelled to preach**. Woe to me if I do not preach the gospel!” (1 Cor 9v16).

At the end of his life, he charges his young lieutenant Timothy to ‘**Preach the word, be urgent in season and out of season, convince, rebuke, and exhort, be unfailing in patience and in teaching.**’ (2 Tim 4v1&2). Paul was totally convinced that the way by which sinners would hear of the Saviour and so call on him for salvation was via preaching: “For Christ did not send me to baptize, **but to preach the gospel**--not with words of human wisdom, lest the cross of Christ be emptied of its power” (1 Cor 1v17). Without preaching he would have despaired: “**And how can they hear without someone preaching to them?**” (Rms 10v14-15)

CHAPTER 4

PREACHING TRUTHS FROM ECCL 12V9-12

Nothing beats preaching about preaching from the bible. Here is a small expository sermon from Eccl 12v9-12 on how to preach a sermon:

Not only was the preacher wise

Wisdom begins with fearing God. This is a sacred calling! Fear God. And seek out wisdom. Listen. Take notes. Read. Learn. Study hard.

...but also he imparted knowledge to the people

One of my favourite black American preachers is Bishop Kenneth Ulmer. I have seen on TV Ken preach many times to his home church of 7000 black Americans where he is one fired-up, pumping preacher who can hardly get a sentence out without the people standing up and shouting affirmation! Two weeks ago I walked into a Church Leaders' Event in Cape Town where to my delight and surprise I saw that Bishop Kenneth Ulmer was due to speak to us - a group of 60 church leaders, 80% of whom were white and from conservative mainline churches. I thought to myself, "This should be interesting". He started to preach and to my amazement he was a totally different animal to the Bishop that he was back at home-base. He wooed us gently, won our confidence and still packed a mighty punch. Like a chameleon he had adopted a style that best served those listening to him and as a result imparted much to us.

What a gift he has! And what humility and people-centeredness to become all things to all men that by some means he may influence them! Preaching is not for us; it is for *the people*. Our motivation is love for the people, to help them understand the Word (Neh 8v8). A preacher preaching in order to 'impart to the people' will find illustrations and words to impart knowledge to the people. Paul's continual call was "*that they*" might be built up in God. It doesn't matter so much how much you know, but whether or not you can get others to know it!

He pondered and searched out and set in order many proverbs

Here is a 3 point format for preparation:

- **Ponder:** This means to dwell on, think on, meditate on and assess. Use the bible and prayer only.
- **Search out:** Now that you have allowed the Holy Spirit 'first go' as you pondered, it is now time to research books, commentaries, listen to tapes and bounce ideas off people.
- **Set in order:** Now you need to combine what you have pondered and sought out, and set it out in an order that will serve your listeners well.

The teacher searched to find just the right words

Words are gifts from God to communicate Himself and His ways to people. Words are mighty weapons that we can mobilize and send into battle on behalf of the gospel cause. Christian leaders often pay insufficient attention to the awesome power of publicly spoken words. This maybe due to our desire to 'lean on the anointing' and our fear of 'performing in the flesh'. These are good sentiments. However, the reality is that no leader can influence far beyond his ability to communicate in public. Often the greatest oratory is produced during times of war; for example, Churchill mobilized the English language at sent it into battle against Nazi Germany with speeches such as "*We will fight on the beaches, we will fight in the fields, we will fight in streets, we will never surrender*". Well, we live in a war! Let us fully use the gift of words to mobilise God's army!

Let us also be careful and accurate with our words. Respect the people and their time. Redeem the time. May your speech be seasoned with salt! Preach with a "*soundness of speech that cannot be condemned*". (Titus 2v8)

The words of the wise are like goads, their collected sayings like firmly embedded nails, given by one shepherd

Jesus gave us His Word. We must stick to the Word if we are to represent the shepherd. Firmly embedded nails speaks of 'power preaching' that embeds truth in our listeners. This can best be done by having one main point that you drive home. God's word is like a nail that will hold their lives together in a tough and hostile world. Drive it home well. Part of driving truth home is to be appropriately repetitious. '*Finally, my brothers, rejoice in the Lord! It is no trouble for me to write the same things to you again, and it is a safeguard for you*' (Phil 3v1). '*So I will always remind you of these things, even though you know them and are firmly established in the truth you now have. I think it is right to refresh your memory as long as I live in the tent of this body*' (2 Peter 1v12-13).

Be warned my son of anything in addition to them

Them of course refers to the word of God. Whilst out-and-out heresy is a possibility, a more likely trap that many have fallen into is actually using the bible to illustrate their message, rather than the other way around! Let us be faithful to the text!

CHAPTER 5

PREACHING TRUTHS FROM 1 THESS 1V5

This is an action-packed little verse that reveals 3 crucial aspects to preaching:

*“...our gospel came to you not simply with **words**, but also with **power**, with the **Holy Spirit**, and with **deep conviction**. You know how we **lived** among you for your sake.”*

1. Words

What we say is important. Content is vital. Preparation and study are essential. Ray Comfort writes, *‘It is said that the first time D.L. Moody heard Spurgeon preach, he wept. Spurgeon was able to put into words what most only feel deep within our hearts. He had the ability to take the hammer of eloquence and nail a particular truth.’*¹¹ But good content and well-chosen words need to be accompanied by....

2. Power and the Holy Spirit and deep conviction

Although Spurgeon was by all accounts an amazingly eloquent man, he was under no illusion that words without the power of the Spirit were useless. He said, *‘Let eloquence be flung to the dogs rather than souls be lost. What we want is to win souls. They are not won by flowery speeches.’*¹² *Oh, that we used more the naked sword of the Spirit! I am afraid we keep this two-edged sword in a scabbard, and somewhat pride ourselves that the sheath is so elaborately adorned.’*¹³ *...The Word came to them in its native majesty, in the power of the Holy Ghost; it spoke with a commanding tone to their inmost heart; it threw open the doors that had long been shut up and rusted on their hinges, and Jesus entered to save and reign. These, who had defiantly brandished their weapons, threw them down and surrendered unconditionally to Almighty Love, willing believers in the Lord Jesus.’*¹⁴

3. Authentic lifestyle

Paul now adds the aspect of an authentic life to accompany the words and anointing of a preacher. Spurgeon said, *‘If any man’s life at home is unworthy, he should go several miles away before he stands up to preach. And when he stands up, he should say nothing.’*¹⁵

¹¹ Ray Comfort in Spurgeon Gold, Bridge-Logos, 2005

¹² Spurgeon, from Spurgeon Gold by Ray Comfort, Pg 91, Bridge-Logos, 2005

¹³ Spurgeon, from Spurgeon Gold by Ray Comfort, Pg 104, Bridge-Logos, 2005

¹⁴ Spurgeon, from Spurgeon Gold by Ray Comfort, Pg 104, Bridge-Logos, 2005

¹⁵ Spurgeon, from Spurgeon Gold by Ray Comfort, Pg 111, Bridge-Logos, 2005

PART TWO

PREACHING FOR 1-5 MINUTES

CHAPTER 6

QUICK-START PREACHING: READ, EXPLAIN, APPLY

Preaching truths from Heb 12v26-28

A few years ago, I was asked to teach a group of pastors 'how to preach'. I was utterly daunted and rather than spout the latest methods recorded in preaching manuals, I asked God for a passage of scripture that I could use to actually 'teach' preaching from in a confident and authoritative manner. He took me to Hebs 12v26-28:

²⁶ At that time his voice shook the earth, but now he has promised, "Once more I will shake not only the earth but also the heavens." ²⁷ The words "once more" indicate the removing of what can be shaken--that is, created things--so that what cannot be shaken may remain. ²⁸ Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us be thankful, and so worship God acceptably with reverence and awe, ²⁹ for our "God is a consuming fire." (Heb 12v26-28)

Read, Explain, Apply

In these 3 verses is a principle for preaching that I highly recommend. It is a great way to get started in preaching, and before you know it you will be doing it subconsciously whenever you preach. Here it is:

V26 = **Read** the scripture

V27 = **Explain** the meaning of the scripture using either

- Explanation
- Testimony
- Illustration

V28 = **Apply** the scripture to everyday life

- Therefore, let us

If we stick to this 3-part template, then the worst our message will be is good. It will always be a balanced message. At first it may seem slightly contrived, but after a while it will become habit. Read it, then explain it, then apply it to everyday life. You will not go far wrong!

Tips on reading: Read in a lively, engaging manner with emphasis. It is sometimes helpful to draw the people in by asking them to read it out loud together, or some variation on this such as the ladies reading a verse, then the men and so on.

Tips on explaining / expounding: Your aim is make the meaning plain (Neh 8v8). You can do this by using quotes from other authors / preachers, by using testimony from your own life that brings it alive, or by using a concise illustration or story.

Tips on using illustrations: Stott says, *“the Bible teems with illustrations, particularly similes E.g. ‘You are the salt of the earth’ or the story of the Prodigal Son and Good Samaritan. In this whole matter of using sermon illustrations, we have to find the balance between too many and too few. Illustrations are like windows that let in the light ... but the whole house should not be made of windows!”*¹⁶

Tips on applying: This is a vital part. With weak application much of the power of the message can be lost. Think, who is your audience? What application pointers can you give? Often, all that is necessary is to throw out questions and allow the Holy Spirit to bring application to each person.

The ‘Nugget’ theory

In line with this Heb 12 principle, I have developed something that I call a ‘nugget’. This is a mini-sermon that may be 1-3 minutes long. All our preachers-in-training start off doing nuggets. They may do one on the theme of giving, just before the offering is taken up, or, I may ask several of them to do nuggets back to back for the Sunday sermon. The benefits of starting with nuggets are:

- It teaches you to be faithful with the little
- It forces you to be well prepared: *“I am sorry this sermon was so long but I didn’t have time to make it shorter”!*
- It leaves the church wanting to hear you again
- If you can do a nugget, you can do a sermon, because a sermon is simply a series of nuggets all put one after the other.

Using the read, explain, apply template, you will now learn how to prepare and preach a:

- 1 minute message
- 5 minute message

¹⁶ John Stott, *I believe in Preaching*, Hodder & Stoughton, 1982.

ONE MINUTE MESSAGE

Title: *A Steady Gaze!*

Read: *Heb 12v2a "Let us fix our eyes on Jesus"*

Explain:

Apply:

FIVE-MINUTE MESSAGE

Title: *Free to Run!*

Read: *Heb 12v1b "let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us"*

Explain:

Apply:

Explain:

Apply:

Explain:

Apply:

PART THREE

PREPARING TO PREACH A FULL MESSAGE

CHAPTER 7

HOW IMPORTANT IS PREPARATION?

Very. Very. Very. Here are the 3 main objections to thorough preparation:

1. But I don't want to cramp the Holy Spirit.... Relax. You won't. On the contrary, I find that the better prepared that I am (study time and prayer time), the freer the Holy Spirit seems to be to use me in both the planned and the spontaneous. Very occasionally I abandon my notes at the last minute (usually during the time of worship immediately before the sermon) opting to preach a theme that has emerged powerfully through prophesy, but even then what I say, although guided by the Holy Spirit as I go along, is usually a compilation of morsels of things that I have prepared and preached sometime in the past. More normally, I preach through my text and notes but I am always alert to branch off on a spontaneous detour if I feel prompted. However, beware arbitrary detours! But equally, never place inappropriate confidence in training, preparation and human ability because preaching is a "God-thing". Wise and persuasive words are not enough – we need the Holy Spirit's power!

2. But in Mt 10 Jesus said that we are not to worry because he will give us the words to say... Yes, but that promise is only relevant to Christians suddenly being hauled in front of a law court to give account of their faith.

Stott says, *"Jesus' promise has brought great comfort to prisoners who lack a counsel for their defence; it offers no comfort to preachers who are . . . either too lazy or too proud or too pious to prepare their sermons...I think we must agree with Spurgeon that 'habitually to come into the pulpit unprepared is unpardonable presumption.' What would we think of a lawyer who enters court to defend his client without having prepared his case? J H Jowett quotes the dictum of a distinguished English judge that 'cases are won in chambers.' That is, 'so far as the barrister is concerned, his critical arena is not the public court but his own private room.' The same principle applies to the preacher".¹⁷*

3. But his messages are so simple... Yes, and that is precisely because they are so well prepared. *"I am sorry that my sermon was so long and complicated but I didn't have time to make it short and simple".* In the academic arena, genius is to make the complex understandable, and this principle applies to preaching also (see Neh 8v8).

¹⁷ John Stott, *I believe in Preaching*, Hodder & Stoughton, 1982.

How long should I prepare for?

Three boys are in the schoolyard bragging about their fathers. The first boy says, "My Dad scribbles a few words on a piece of paper, he calls it a poem, they give him \$50." The second boy says, "That's nothing. My Dad scribbles a few words on a piece of paper, he calls it a song, they give him \$100." The third boy says, "I got you both beat. My Dad scribbles a few words on a piece of paper - he calls it a sermon – and it takes eight people to collect all the money!"

John Stott reckons that scribbling a few words on a piece of paper at the last minute is not adequate! He writes, *"I have sometimes been asked by ordination candidates and young preachers, 'how long does it take to prepare a single sermon?' The question has always flummoxed me, because it is impossible to give a simple reply. Probably the best answer is 'your whole lifetime', because every sermon is, in a way, a distillation of everything one has learned hitherto; and is a reflection of the kind of person one has become over the years. A useful rule of thumb is that one needs at least one hour's preparation for every five minutes preached.*¹⁸

¹⁸ John Stott, *I believe in Preaching*, Hodder & Stoughton, 1982

CHAPTER 8

WHAT FACTORS ARE INVOLVED IN PREPARATION?

To answer this question, we first need to ask what factors make up a good message. I think that there are 3 aspects to a message:

1. **Content:** what is said
2. **Delivery:** how it is said
3. **Anointing:** how it lasts / how it changes me....the God-factor!

My experience is that usually each of these effects the other two aspects, so the idea is to make a message strong in all 3 areas and thus, our preparation should focus on each of these aspects.

1. Preparation for content: do this by studying, using the bible and other helpful resources such as your life experience, reference books, audio cassettes of other messages, and notes that you have taken from listening to other messages.

2. Preparation for delivery: do this by paying attention to matters such as pace, pauses, rhythm, clarity, volume, passion, humour and length. I recommend that inexperienced preachers (and even experienced preachers approaching a topic that they are unfamiliar with) practice saying their message to an empty room several times before preaching it to people. This is because:

- Your spirit and brain and mouth need to learn to work together. I don't recommend learning a message off-by-heart, but rather like the three strikers in a football team need lots of time playing together to learn how to flow together whatever the situation is, so too **your spirit, brain and mouth** will learn how to flow together no matter what your subject matter is.
- You will hear whether what you are saying is clear.
- You will get stirred by God (yes, even preaching to an empty room!) and you will get deeper revelation of the message and can make changes accordingly.

3. Preparation for anointing: This of course rests more in the hands of God than the other two aspects, but good content and good delivery backed up by a **godly life** and fuelled by **prayer** seem to result in more anointing than otherwise:

Life

- Much of the weight and power of a message comes from the heart and life of the preacher. An authentic, godly lifestyle will ooze through a message giving imparting to the listeners more than what is merely being said. For example, I have recently spent a day listening to Bill Hybels who leads a massive church in Chicago. I took notes furiously and have come away with excellent practical advice on church leadership. However, although he hardly addressed the following 3 themes, more than anything else I have returned with (a) an increased love for the church, and (b) greater confidence to lead loving and strong, and (c) a passion for evangelism. Why is this? Because these 3 things are what Bill's life are all about. He could have preached on the End Times and still imparted these things!
- Spurgeon said, *'You cannot preach conviction of sin unless you have suffered it. You cannot preach repentance unless you have practiced it. You cannot preach faith unless you have exercised it. You may talk about these things, but there will be no power in the talk unless what is said has been experimentally proved in your own soul. It is easy to tell when a man speaks what he has made his own, or when he deals in second-hand experience. "Son of man, eat this roll." You must eat it before you can hand it out to others.'*¹⁹

Prayer

- See the later chapter all about prayer

One more thing along the lines of 'anointing'

Martyn Lloyd-Jones says, *"What is the chief end of preaching? It is to give men and women a sense of God and his presence...I can forgive a preacher almost anything if he gives me a sense of God"*. How can we give people this sense of God? I doubt there is a formula for this, and I am sure that many factors come into play, but I suggest that whatever our topic or text, there should always be sections when we, like Paul, cannot resist branching off to rave and praise the person and exploits of Jesus! In his epistles Paul can't seem to go more than a few sentences without bursting out some praise to God (Phil 2v5-9 and Col 1v15-20)!

The great Scottish preacher and hymn-writer James S. Stewart said, *"Preaching exists, not for the propagating of views, opinions and ideals, but for the proclamation of the mighty acts of God."*²⁰ Let's not just allude to Jesus, let us present him in his majesty!

¹⁹ Spurgeon, from Spurgeon Gold by Ray Comfort, Pg 125, 2005

²⁰ James S. Stewart from Preaching. Hodder and Stoughton. 1955.

CHAPTER 9

HOW DO I DECIDE WHAT TO PREACH ON?

4 things determine what I preach on:

1. Staple diet: In any diet there are the basics such as potatoes and vegetables that need to be regularly eaten. Similarly, there are some foundational topics and doctrines to which a growing church needs to be regularly exposed. I make sure that about once a year we do a 3-week series on each of the following: The Church, Grace, Evangelism, Holy Spirit, and Several Great Doctrines (e.g. Heaven & Hell, The Sovereignty of God etc). Repeating these themes year after year is not 'samey' because we approach the theme from different angles and use a variety of preachers.

I also like to annually do a series that preaches all the way through one of the books of the bible (e.g. an 8-part series on Ephesians). I also think a church needs to hear a preach on the topic of giving & finance several times per year. So when planning the preaching schedule for the year, I will spread these series over the year, leaving the remaining 60% of the Sundays free for other 'one-off' preaches.

2. Common Consciousness: There are certain times of year such as Easter, New Year, Christmas, Mothers Day, Fathers Day, Valentines Day and so on that can provide good platforms to preach from. When everyone in the church, and more importantly outsiders, have a common awareness about something then it is a great opportunity to capitalize on their openness and teach what God's Word says about these things.

Also, major events often need preaching into such as elections or natural disasters. In the weeks following the first crash of the Zimbabwe dollar there was a necessity to preach several pastoral and stabilizing messages. South Africa is currently under-going constitutional changes regarding gay marriages which also warrants preaching into what the bible teaches about homosexuality. Following the Tsunami disaster themes such as "Why suffering?" and "The Sovereignty of God" would have been appropriate and relevant.

3. The state of the church: Those that lead the church will have an antenna for what the church is lacking. Whilst the 'staple diet' series should do much to promote a healthy body, there will be times when you sense the church needs a message on a particular theme and one should respond by preaching into that. For example, recently several women in our church have asked me to preach into the role of women. They tell me that as a new church we have women from many different backgrounds

and a teaching into this would help everyone. I recently chatted to an elder of a church who told me that he is just sensing that a casualness to sin is creeping into the church that he leads; he couldn't give me hard facts for his feeling but he knew that a message on holiness was in order.

4. Heart stirring: Other times I am just so excited about a particular passage that I will be unable to resist preaching on it! And other times I will feel a prophetic burden to preach on a certain matter. Maybe this is how the Psalmist felt when writing Psalm 45: *"My heart is stirred by a noble theme....my tongue is the pen of a skillful writer....lips anointed with grace"*.

Which comes first, the text or the topic?

Whilst I almost always preach directly from a bible text, in terms of deciding what to preach on, sometimes the text comes first and other times the theme or topic comes first. If the later is the case, then you need to find a text from which to preach that theme. For example, several weeks back I knew that I should preach into the church being a multi-cultural, diverse new community. I then, after quite a lot of debate, decided to use Revelation 5 as my root text, although I would have been equally comfortable using several other texts.

PART FOUR

PREPARING A FULL MESSAGE

CHAPTER 10

PHASE 1: TEXT TO SKELETON OUTLINE

Okay, now that I have decided on a text I move through the following process:

- Phase 1: meditate on the text until the *take-home truth* and the other main points emerge (I call this the skelpeton outline)
- Phase 2: Flesh out each of these main points using the read, explain, apply principle
- Phase 3: Add the introduction and conclusion
- Phase 4: Write/ type out your notes
- Phase 5: Pray yourself hot

The next few chapters address each stage of this process. As you go through the process you will find yourself able to systematically fill in the following template that I use. Sometime the nature of the material doesn't always fit this template (and so I usually adjust the template), but usually it works well and helps me with focus and discipline:

MESSAGE TITLE:

THE TEXT:

THE TAKE-HOME TRUTH:

INTRODUCTION:

POINT 1

Read:

Explain:

Apply:

POINT 2

Read:

Explain:

Apply:

POINT 3

Read:

Explain:

Apply:

POINT 4

Read:

Explain:

Apply:

CONCLUSION:

Meditate on the text

*“Oh how I love your law! It is my **meditation** all the day. . . . I have more understanding than all my teachers, for your testimonies are my **meditation**” (Ps. 119v97, 99)*

Did you see it? David is saying that meditation is the route to understanding.

Piper says, *“The word ‘meditation’ in Hebrew means basically to speak or to mutter. When this is done in the heart, it is called musing or meditation. So meditating on the Word of God day and night means to speak to yourself the Word of God day and night and to speak to yourself about it—to mull it over, to ask questions about it and answer them from the Scripture itself, to ask yourself how this might apply to you and others, and to ponder its implications for life and church and culture and missions.”*²¹

Spurgeon says, *“I would rather my soul lay a-soak in a single verse of scripture than rinse my hands in a couple of chapters everyday”*²²

Stott says, *“Certainly Sunday’s text should, at the latest, be chosen by the preceding Monday, so that something of the incubtion process can go on. The longer this period, the better. Robert Louis Stevenson once said of himself, ‘I ... sit a long while silent on my eggs.’ Read the text, re-read it, and read it again. Turn it over and over in your mind, like Mary the mother of Jesus who wondered at all things the shepherds had told her, ‘pondering them in her heart’ (Luke 2v18,19). Probe your text, like a bee with a spring blossom, or like a humming-bird probing a hibiscus flower for its nectar. Worry at it like a dog with a bone. Suck it as a child sucks an orange. Chew it as a cow chews the cud. To these similes Spurgeon adds two more, the worm and the bath. ‘It is a great thing to pray one’s self into the spirit and marrow of a text; working into it by sacred feeding thereon, even as the worm bores its way into the kernel of the nut.’ Again, ‘let us, dear brethren, try to get saturated with the gospel. I always find that I can preach best when I can manage to lie asoak in my text. I like to get a text, and find out its meaning and bearings, and so on; and then, after I have bathed in it, I delight to lie down in it, and let it soak into me.’*²³

²¹ Piper. Chap 8, Pg 123-4, What when I don’t desire God; Crossway.

²² Bible Interpretation, Newfrontiers Church Planting and Leadership School, Pg 50.

²³ John Stott, I believe in Preaching, Hodder & Stoughton, 1982

Decide on the ‘take-home truth’

Through your meditation on the text, several points should now be emerging, and a primary point should be standing out. It is important to be clear on what your *take-home truth* is because not only will this help you stay on track in your preparation, but as Stott says, “*They will not remember the details. We should not expect to do so. But they should remember the dominant thought, because all the sermon’s details have been marshalled to help them grasp its message and feel its power.*”²⁴ A good test for me to check that I have got my dominant thought correct is to ask “If my hearers only remember and **take-home truth** from this message, what would I want it to be?”

Now decide on the other skeleton outline points

Now that you feel you have your dominant thought, you need to write down some main headings that all serve ultimately to reinforce the dominant thought. To help you catch on, here are a couple of examples of outline texts:

Example 1 (from a message I preached last Sunday)

Title: A Community of Servants and Volunteers

Text: Eph 4v7-16

Dominant thought: Be a servant

My three main points:

- *Jesus has given gifts and jobs to each of us (V7-12)*
- *The purpose of this is that the church might be mature (V13)*
- *Maturity is proven by doctrine and doing (V14-16)*

I fleshed out each of these points in turn, but I took the majority of time fleshing out the final point about what it means to be a doer – a servant. I have preached before on this passage when I have used the same outline but majored on the first point when I unpacked the types of gifts that Jesus has given, and I used points 2 & 3 more as wrap-up points.

Example 2 (from a message by Bishop Kenneth Ulmer that I heard this week in Cape Town)

I am a white Englishman in Africa. Kenneth is a black American visiting Africa. We have different delivery styles but I was delighted to see that we both share a passion to preach directly from scripture. His text was just one verse from 1 Corinthians 10v2 “Israel was baptised into Moses”. His title was *The Forgotten Baptism*. He unpacked this brilliantly making

²⁴ John Stott, *I believe in Preaching*, Hodder & Stoughton, 1982

several points about how God baptises followers into leaders and leaders into followers. Because his original text was a bit light, he was careful to weave in other scriptures from around the bible to support his 'take-home truth' which emerged as the commitment of followers to leaders. His points were:

- What does baptism mean?
- What does it mean to be baptised into your leader?
- What can leaders do to help this baptism?

Due to his wonderful flowing style you hardly noticed that he had 3 clear points, but had them he did!

CHAPTER 11

PHASE 2: FLESHING OUT THE OUTLINE

In terms of the template that I gave you several pages back, by now you should have filled in the text, the title, the take-home truth, and the 3-5 main points. It is now time to flesh-out each of the main points. As you know, I am a Read, Explain & Apply fanatic which I explained in the chapter entitled Quick-Start Preaching: Read, Explain, Apply. Remember, the principle is simple:

Read (or briefly re-read) where your point has come from in the passage
Explain using explanation, illustration or testimony
Apply to everyday life

Here is how I fleshed out my first main point from my message from last Sunday:

Point 1: Jesus has given gifts and jobs to each of us (V7-12)

After briefly re-reading verse 10 & 11, I explained this truth by simply **explaining** that Jesus descended to earth and then ascended back to heaven (so everyone understood the context of these words descended and ascended). I then tried to bring it alive to people by drawing an **illustration** from ancient war when the victor would return home and lavish gifts of conquered treasure on his people. The nature of the message was that the bulk of the exhortation and application was stashed together at the end of the message, but I sneaked in a mini **application** here by saying “*So we mustn’t miss the majesty and gravity of this situation – the Conquering Christ has lavished giftings and callings on you...*”

Here is how Bishop Ken fleshed out his main point from his message last week in Cape Town)

Point 1: What does baptism mean?

He **explained** that water baptism and spirit baptism get lots of mention, but what about this baptism of leadership? He **explained** that in any baptism there is a baptiser, a baptisee and something that you get baptised into. In this case referring to God baptising Israel into Moses.

Go for quality content

‘The sermons that are most likely to convert people seem to me to be those that are full of truth, truth about the fall, truth about the Law, truth about human nature and its alienation from God, truth about Jesus Christ, truth about the Holy Spirit, truth about the Everlasting Father, truth about the new birth, truth about obedience to God and how we learn it, and all

*such great verities. Tell your hearers something, dear brethren, whenever you preach, tell them something, tell them something!*²⁵

Now get your scissors out

Stott writes, *“During our hours of meditation numerous blessed thoughts and scintillating ideas may have occurred to us and been dutifully jotted down. It is tempting to drag them all in somehow. Resist the temptation! Irrelevant material will weaken the sermon’s effect. It will come in handy some other time. We need the strength of mind to keep it till then.”*²⁶

²⁵ Spurgeon from Spurgeon Gold by Ray Comfort, Pg 75, Bridge-Logos, 2005

²⁶ John Stott, I believe in Preaching, Hodder & Stoughton, 1982

CHAPTER 12

PHASE 3: ADD INTRODUCTION & CONCLUSION

The Introduction

A good introduction will include:

1. **Your text:** state it and read it: this honours God's word rather than your own opinions, and will give your confidence. Try to read it with faith, passion and expression. Bring it alive! Maybe even involve the people in reading it out aloud with you.
2. **A great prayer:** Once you have read your text launch into a faith-filled and passionate prayer that God will use his word mightily today.
3. **Establish rapport and acceptance:** Remembering that preaching is team effort of God and you, gives some thought to your appearance and body language: **Dress:** I try to dress for each preaching context in such a way that inspires confidence, but doesn't attract inappropriate attention. **Body language:** Be dignified; be quietly confident & in control; be winsome and smiley; be oozing restrained passion & excitement. Get eye contact with people (especially the back row and to the sides).
4. **Arouse interest in your topic.** This will help them listen with faith ...and not walk out on you too early on!!

Things to avoid

Unhelpful apologies such as "I was only given 1 days notice so..." or "I have not had much time to prepare but God will help me" etc. Just trust God and go for it!

Weak humour: Get people laughing if possible but beware weak or inappropriate humour. Only use jokes or gimmicks if absolutely fool-proof!

Peaking too soon: Don't shoot all your bullets too early. Don't over-promise. Don't start shouting and charging around the auditorium too soon! Be modest and set a pace you can maintain.

Being too long: Remember, this is only your introduction, not the sermon.

Being unprepared: It can be hard work gaining back ground lost in a weak introduction.

The Conclusion

Conclusions are more difficult than introductions. Some preachers seem to be constitutionally incapable of concluding anything, let alone their sermons. They circle round and round, like a plane on a foggy day without instruments, unable to land. Their sermons 'are nothing less than a tragedy of aimlessness'. Others stop too abruptly. Their sermons are like a play without a finale, like music that has neither crescendo nor climax.²⁷

So it is important to prepare the end of your message. I usually try to end with a spurt of exhortation and application, and then eeze seamlessly into a opportunity of people to respond to (a) some aspect of the message (I call this *ministry*), and/or (b) the gospel (I call this *the appeal*). Also, another church leader who has been listening to your message might be better placed to do one or both of these appeals.

The ministry call

Some messages lend themselves more to ministry than others, and ministry can take many different forms such as inviting people forward for prayer, words of knowledge and healings, or simply having a time of worship and prayer where people can respond to God in their own way. The availability of experienced pray-ers, the length of meeting and the amount of space at the front are other factors that would shape the ministry.

The gospel appeal

In our church we always try to go for a gospel appeal after every message. See Chapter 18 on Gospel Appeals & Ministry Calls.

²⁷ John Stott, I believe in Preaching, Hodder & Stoughton, 1982

CHAPTER 13

PHASE 4: WRITE / TYPE OUT YOUR NOTES

Stott says, *“The question now arises whether to write the sermon out. Since God has made us all differently, and given us distinct personalities and talents, there can be no fixed rule for everybody. Nevertheless, there seems to be a consensus that we should avoid the two extremes of complete improvisation on one hand and slavery to a script on the other.”*²⁸

Gerald Rowlands writes:²⁹

No notes: *This style of preaching is spontaneous, and usually presented without notes at the time of delivery. The subject is often given a good deal of careful thought beforehand, and the mind and heart are filled with the vital aspects of the message. This style is often used to deliver the more inspirational type of sermon. Evangelistic messages can also be presented very effectively in this way. The sermon flows from the heart and often carries a strong emotional involvement. There are two potential weaknesses in this style. The first is that it can lack meaningful content, and the spirits and minds of the hearers are not edified. The second is that the delivery may become over-emotional, and become irrational and unconvincing.*

Full notes: *This is when every word is written out before hand. Ads: Thorough. Disads: Can make the preacher over-dependant on his notes.*

Skeleton notes: *This is the most commonly used method and the one, which I feel, is the most effective. Notes are kept to a minimum, affording sufficient outline of the message to prompt the memory. The brief notes form the “skeleton” of the message. They are the bones that give shape and structure to what the preacher desires to say. As he speaks, he puts “flesh” on the bones and a “body” to his sermon. He amplifies the thoughts that his brief notes have stimulated. This method allows the preacher much more flexibility. He is not tied to his notes so much. He is more open to the inspiration that will often come to him while he is actually preaching. His delivery is more spontaneous and interesting, but the framework of his message keeps his mind on track. He is able to give an adequate, well-thought-out coverage of his subject, but his presentation is not hard to listen to. Obviously, some sections that need to be read out (such as quotes) can be written down in full.*

²⁸ John Stott, *I believe in Preaching*, Hodder & Stoughton, 1982

²⁹ Source unknown

CHAPTER 14

PHASE 5: PRAY YOURSELF HOT

Prayer – a preacher’s privilege

I find prayer such a relief! Such a haven! As I pray I find that God purifies my motives, fills my heart with love for him, love for the people, and faith for what he will accomplish through his word. I have found the following sentiments of C.H. Spurgeon to be absolutely true:

“If we were not constrained to pray, I question whether we could even live as Christians. If God’s mercies came to us unasked, they would not be half as useful as they are now when they have to be sought for. Now we get a double blessing – the blessing in the obtaining and the blessing in the seeking. To pray is to bathe in a cool swirling stream to escape the summer sun. To pray is to mount on eagle’s wings above the clouds and get into clear heaven where God dwells. To pray is to enter the treasure-house of God. To pray is to grasp heaven in one’s arms, to embrace deity with one’s soul, and to feel one’s body made a temple of the Holy Spirit. To pray is cast our burdens, to tear away our rags, to be filled with spiritual vigor, to reach the highest point of Christian health.”

Praying ‘over’ the message

Whilst prayer should be the atmosphere of the entire process of preparation, I find a precious time of prayer to be when I sit with my notes complete in front of me. I then pray (with my eyes open!) through the different sections of the message e.g. *“...so God get hold of people with your word as I read the passage...”* and *“I pray Lord you would come on me for this 2nd point that I might burn for you and that you cause people to to get it, God! Deliver them of blindness...”*. And so on. Man, do I get pumped up for the preach! And sometimes I look at my notes and think, *“What a load of rubbish! This is shallow and hollow, and O help me God!”* But as I get into prayer over it then it soon comes alive to me and my faith soon grows.

John Stott says, *“It is on our knees before the Lord that we can make the message our own, possess or re-possess it until it possesses us. Then, when we preach it, it will come neither from our notes, nor from our memory, but out of the depths of our personal conviction, as an authentic utterance of our heart. We need to pray until our text comes freshly alive to us, the glory shines forth from it, the fire burns in our heart, and we begin to experience the explosive power of God’s Word within us. One needs to get the message inside oneself before you can effectively get it inside the listeners... The whole process of sermon preparation, from*

beginning to end, was admirably summed up by a American Black preacher who said, *'First, I reads myself full, next I thinks myself clear, next I prays myself hot, and then I lets go.'* ³⁰

Pray for large numbers

The sermon preached by Peter at Pentecost was to three thousand or more. Three thousand cannot be converted if only a hundred are present to hear; so let us pray for people to come!

Praying for our listeners

Here are some great verses to turn into prayers for your listeners:

"Pray for soft hearts: Preach to a soul strong in untroubled egotism, and it will be like hammering at granite. But bring the gospel to bear upon a soul whose self-trust has been broken, and there before your very eyes the ancient miracle may be renewed, and the glory of the Lord be revealed" (James S. Stewart; Preaching)

"My purpose is that they may be encouraged in heart and united in love, so that they may have the full riches of complete understanding, in order that they may know the mystery of God" (Col 2v2)

Then he opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures (Lk 24v45)

They asked each other, "Were not our hearts burning within us while he talked with us on the road and opened the Scriptures to us?" (Lk 24v32)

I have not stopped giving thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers. I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know him better. I pray also that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, and his incomparably great power for us who believe (Eph 1v16-19)

And this is my prayer: that your love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight (Phil 1v9-11)

Convinced of this, I know that I will remain, and I will continue with all of you for your progress and joy in the faith, so that through my being with you again your joy in Christ Jesus will overflow on account of me (Phil 1v25)

³⁰ John Stott, I believe in Preaching, Hodder & Stoughton, 1982

Finally, my brothers, rejoice in the Lord! It is no trouble for me to write the same things to you again, and it is a safeguard for you (Phil 3v1)

Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me - put it into practice. And the God of peace will be with you (Phil 4v9)

Praying for yourself

And here are some great verses and quotes to turn into prayers for yourself:

'It is along time since I preached a sermon that I was satisfied with. I scarcely recollect ever having done so. You do not know, for you cannot hear my groanings when I go home, Sunday after Sunday, and wish that I could learn to preach somehow or other; wish that I could discover the way to touch your hearts and your consciences, for I seem to myself to be just like the fire when it wants stirring; the coals have got black when I want them to flame forth.' (Spurgeon)³¹

Though you probe my heart and examine me at night, though you test me, you will find nothing; I have resolved that my mouth will not sin (Ps 17v3)

Set a guard over my mouth, O LORD; keep watch over the door of my lips (Ps 141v3)

All spoke well of him and were amazed at the gracious words that came from his lips. "Isn't this Joseph's son?" they asked (Lk 4v22)

Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen. And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption (Eph 4v29-30)

Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them: "Rulers and elders of the people... (Acts 4v8)

"No one ever spoke the way this man does," the guards declared (Jn 7v46)

When Jesus landed and saw a large crowd, he had compassion on them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd. So he began teaching them many things (Mk 6v34)

I have put my words in your mouth and covered you with the shadow of my hand (Is 51v16)

³¹ Spurgeon from Spurgeon Gold by Ray Comfort, Bridge-Logos, 2005

The Sovereign LORD has given me an instructed tongue, to know the word that sustains the weary. He wakens me morning by morning, wakens my ear to listen like one being taught (Is 50v4)

They read from the Book of the Law of God, making it clear and giving the meaning so that the people could understand what was being read (Neh 8v8)

They must keep hold of the deep truths of the faith with a clear conscience (1 Tim 3v9)

He must hold firmly to the trustworthy message as it has been taught, so that he can encourage others by sound doctrine and refute those who oppose it (Titus 1v9)

In everything set them an example by doing what is good. In your teaching show integrity, seriousness and soundness of speech that cannot be condemned, so that those who oppose you may be ashamed because they have nothing bad to say about us (Titus 2v7-8)

Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God's grace in it's various forms (1 Pet 4v10)

Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful. And pray for us, too, that God may open a door for our message, so that we may proclaim the mystery of Christ, for which I am in chains. Pray that I may proclaim it clearly, as I should. Be wise in the way you act toward outsiders; make the most of every opportunity. Let your conversation be always full of grace, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer everyone" (Col 4v2-6)

Not only was the Teacher wise, but also he imparted knowledge to the people. He pondered and searched out and set in order many proverbs. The Teacher searched to find just the right words, and what he wrote was upright and true. The words of the wise are like goads, their collected sayings like firmly embedded nails--given by one Shepherd. Be warned, my son, of anything in addition to them (Eccl 12v9-12)

Since, then, we know what it is to fear the Lord, we try to persuade men (2 Cor 5v11)

I have not hesitated to proclaim to you the whole will of God (Acts 20v27)

On arriving, he (Apollos) was a great help to those who by grace had believed (Acts 18v27)

I have not hesitated to preach anything that would be helpful to you, but have taught you publicly and from house to house (Acts 20v20)

"We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making His appeal through us" (2 Cor 5v20)

“My message and my preaching were not with wise and persuasive words, but with a demonstration of the Spirit’s power, so that your faith might not rest on men’s wisdom but on God’s power” (1 Cor 2v4-5)

We were under great pressure, far beyond our ability to endure, so that we despaired even of life. Indeed, in our hearts we felt the sentence of death. But this happened that we might not rely on ourselves but on God, who raises the dead (2 Cor 1v8-9)

...this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us. We are hard pressed on every side, but not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not abandoned; struck down, but not destroyed ... Therefore we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day (2 Cor 4v7-9)

“If I am to go on living in this tent of a body, this will mean fruitful labour for me” (Phil 1v22). “The God of heaven will give us success therefore we will arise & build” (Neh 2v20)

Eph 3v2 Thank you Lord for gracing me to help them!

Eph 3v8 Thank you Lord for grace to preach!

PART FIVE

THE IMPORTANCE OF BIBLE READING AND STUDY

CHAPTER 15

THE PREACHER AND HIS BIBLE

Three quotes to warm us up³²

“The preacher’s life must be a life of large accumulation. He must not be always trying to make sermons, but always seeking truth, and out of the truth which he has won, the sermons will make (Bishop Phillips Brooks in his 1877 Yale Lectures)

‘I would say that all preachers should read through the whole Bible in its entirety at least once every year ... that should be the very minimum of the preacher’s Bible reading.’ (Martin Lloyd Jones in Preaching & Preachers, Hodder & Stoughton, 1971).

‘Be masters of your Bibles, brethren. Whatever other works you have not searched, be at home with the writings of the prophets and apostles. Let the Word of God dwell in you richly.’ (Spurgeon to his students).

Homo unius libri

John Stott rightly says *“Christianity is, in its very essence, a religion of the word of God”*. Jesus is even called the Living Word. The bible is the most precious gift of God to us, for it is primarily through the bible that we know him. My prayer is that God will use this chapter to increase in you an insatiable appetite for the bible so that with John Wesley you would cry out: *“God himself has condescended to teach the way: for this very end he came from heaven. He hath written it down in a book. O give me that book! At any price give me the Book of God! I have it. Here is knowledge enough for me. Let me be homo unius libri” [a man of one book].*³³

Bible gluttons

Charles Spurgeon calls us to be bible gluttons: *It is blessed to eat into the very soul of the bible until, at last, you come to talk in the Scriptural language, and your spirit is flavored with the words of the Lord, so that your blood is Bibline and the very essence of the Bible flows from you.*³⁴

³² From John Stott, I believe in Preaching, Hodder & Stoughton, 1982.

³³ John Wesley; Preface to sermons on several occasions, 1746; The Works of John Wesley

³⁴ Piper. Chap 8, Pg 114-115, What when I don’t desire God; Crossway.

What when we are reluctant to read the bible?

I am a John Piper fan. My appreciation of him lies not only in his outstanding content but also in his honesty and humanity. He writes, *“A thousand interesting things compete for our attention to the Word of God. I confess that after fifty years of loving and reading and memorizing Scripture, I can be lured away from appointed times in the Word by something as insignificant as a new computer device. The illusory pleasure of newness can temporarily trump the far superior benefits of keeping my appointment with the Word of God.... I am not proud of it. It grieves me. At times it frightens me.... I know this sinful inclination must be fought to the death. It is this fight Paul has in mind when he says, “Put to death therefore what is earthly in you” (Col. 3:5). One of the ways we can fight against the inclinations that lure us from the Word of God to computers or television or any other substitute pleasure is to remind ourselves often of the immeasurable and superior benefits of the Word of God in our lives. We must put the **evidence** before us that reading, pondering, memorizing, and studying the Bible will yield more joy in this life and the next than all the things that lure us from it.”*³⁵

Here are 8 pieces of evidence of the worth of the bible to you: Remember that the Word is living and active (Heb 4v12) which means that it has a supernatural life of it's own to change you – all you need to do is to get it into your heart and head and it will begin to operate.

1. Obeying the Word will bring you success. When a journalist asked David Yonggi Cho for the secret of his success Cho replied, “I pray and I obey”. Obedience to the Word must also accompany reading of the Word. If a thing is in the Bible, it is not even to be prayed about; it is to be acted upon.

- As Josh 1 makes abundantly clear: Word + Obedience = Success.
- In Mt 7v24-27 the rock is not the Word, rather it is obedience to the Word.
- In James 1 we are taught that looking into the Word without acting on it will cause you to lack identity and stability in God.

And sometimes the Word of God sounds rather crazy at first, but that does not mean that we should not obey. Peter wrestled with this in Lk 5v1-9 but concluded that because it was *God* speaking then he would obey. Good call, Peter.

³⁵ Piper. Chap 7, Pg 96-97, What when I don't desire God; Crossway.

2. The Word will bring you faith. Rms 10v17 makes this one crystal clear. Do you want the kind of faith that pleases God, causes the impossible to become the possible, moves mountains, destroys satanic strongholds and violently advances the kingdom of God? It comes from *hearing and hearing and hearing and hearing* the things that God has to say!

You can have faith in your feelings, in which case your feelings will govern your life. You can have faith in your fears, and so be paralyzed into inactivity. You can have faith in others, and often be disappointed. Or you can have faith in God's Word, and learn that He is utterly trustworthy in every situation. Smith-Wigglesworth said, "*Except the word of God, everything else is sand. It'll stand forever, it's settled in heaven, not one jot or tittle will fail, it can't be broken or improved upon, and those who believe in it shall be like Mt Zion that cannot be moved*".

3. The Word will bring you victory over the devil. Eph 6v17 and Heb 4 speak about the offensive, sword-like nature of the word. In his hour of temptation, Jesus used what was "written" to overcome Satan. Get into the word and become armed and dangerous!

4. The Word will make you effective and mature. 2 Tim 3v14-17 are a 'must' for memory verses! Just look at all those things that the word will do for you! See also 2 Pet 1v3-9.

5. The Word will help you conquer sin and wrong attitudes. Reading the Word washes us (Eph 5v26) and sharpens our conscience and thinking (Heb 4v12) and keeps us from sin (Ps 119v9-11).

6. The Word will make you wise. Wisdom is different from mere knowledge of the facts. Wisdom means actually making decisions to live life in the way that God intends us to. King David was convinced of the wisdom-giving power of the Word: *Oh, how I love your law! I meditate on it all day long. Your commands make me wiser than my enemies, for they are ever with me. I have more insight than all my teachers, for I meditate on your statutes. I have more understanding than the elders, for I obey your precepts (Ps 119v97f).*

7. The Word is the key to prayer. The bible is a source of massive enrichment for prayer. My favourite way to pray is to pray out of scripture, i.e. allow scriptures to spark-off prayers. This was the way George Mueller loved to pray. He said, "*My practice had been, at least for ten years previously, as a habitual thing, to give myself to prayer, after having dressed myself in the morning. Now . . . the first thing I did, after having asked in a few words the Lord's blessing upon His precious word, was, to*

*begin to meditate on the word of God, searching, as it were, into every verse, to get blessing out of it. . . . The result I have found to be almost invariably this, that after a very few minutes my soul has been led to confession, or to thanksgiving, or to intercession, or to supplication; so that, **though I did not, as it were, give myself to prayer, but to meditation, yet it turned almost immediately more or less into prayer.** When thus I have been for awhile making confession, or intercession, or supplication, or have given thanks, I go on to the next words or verse, turning all, as I go on, into prayer for myself or others, as the Word may lead to it.*

Jesus said “*If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you wish and it will be done for you*” (Jn 15v7). This means that when we ask in line with God’s word then of course we shall be answered – after all those are the things that God wants! Job said, “*I would state my case before him and fill my mouth with arguments*” (Job 23v3-4), and nothing is a more powerful argument than “*I have you on record as saying...!*”

And of course, using bible *prayers* as the basis for our prayers is a wonderful thing. See Eph 3v14-21, Phil 1v3-6 and 11-9, Col 1v9-14.

8. The Word will give you a positive self-image. You need to renew your image of yourself by meditating on what God’s Word says about you. You are unique in the universe, you have no duplicate, and God has set *no limits on your life*. Who would have dreamed that a young shepherd-boy called David would reign as king and write some of the bible? Or that a stuttering, 5 foot guy called Saul would write the most of the New Testament? We need to reject the bias and limits of others! Don’t let them create your world - **let God’s word be the benchmark of reality for you!** Don’t let others be your mirror - let God’s Word be your mirror!

The importance of planning

Piper writes: *Another name for serious intention is planning. Most Christians neglect their bibles not out of conscious disloyalty to Jesus, but because of failure to plan a time and place and method to read it. The result is not spontaneity, but the same old rut. If your longing is to be spontaneous in the way you commune with God, then build discipline into your Bible reading and prayer. It sounds paradoxical. But it’s no more so than the paradox of corn spontaneously growing in a Minnesota field because of the farmer’s discipline of plowing and sowing and guarding the field. He doesn’t make the corn grow. God does. But God uses his farming disciplines as part of the process. The rich fruit of spontaneity grows in the garden that is well tended by the discipline of schedule. So I say again, plan a place and a time when you will read the Bible and think about it each day. There can always be more times during the day. There*

*should be. But let there be one sacred time and place. Put it on your calendar. Treat it the same way you would an appointment with a partner or friend. If someone asks you to do something during that time, say, "I'm sorry, I already have an appointment then."*³⁶

I was recently in a Christian Bookshop and I made a note of all the different type of bibles on sale: *Fruit of Spirit Bible; Leadership Bible; Life Promises Bible; Daily Bible; One Year Chronological Bible; Ultra-thin Bible; Gift Award Bible; Encouragement Bible; Narrative Bible; Family Bible; Dad's Bible; Student Bible; Mum's bible; Parallel Bible; End Times Bible; Spirit-filled Bible; Men of Integrity Bible; Woman of Faith Study Bible; Mum's Devotional Bible; Woman's Bible; Bible for Small Group study Bible; Key-word Bible; Life Application Bible; Living Water Bible for those who thirst; New Believers Bible; Praise & Worship Study Bible; Living Faith Bible; Student Life Application Bible.*

Whatever bible you go for, *the trick is to actually read it!*

When?

The answer is whatever time works best for you. Fortunately God is awake and available all the time, so He will fit in with you! The preference of most Christians is to try and follow the example of King David³⁷ and Jesus³⁸ to meet with God right at the start of the day. It certainly makes good sense to sharpen your sword before going into battle, and it can be risky leaving it until later in the day because it can get squeezed out so easily. Whatever time of day you choose, try and use the same time and place each day so that it becomes a part of your routine. In the busy lives that we lead, we need to be ruthless in setting quality time aside for our important relationships, and no relationship is more important than with Jesus. Piper says, "*Entering the day without a serious meeting with God, over his Word and in prayer, is like entering the battle without tending to your weapons. It's like taking a trip without filling the tires with air or the tank with gas.*"³⁹

Where?

Mark 1v35 records that Jesus chose a "solitary place" to spend time alone with His heavenly Father. Try and find a quiet place where you will not be disturbed.

³⁶ Piper. Chap 8, Pg 115, What when I don't desire God; Crossway.

³⁷ Ps 5v3

³⁸ Mk 1v35

³⁹ Piper. Chap 8, Pg 116, What when I don't desire God; Crossway.

How long?

*The largest living animal is the Rorqual, or Blue Whale. It is 30m long and weighs over 120 tonnes. It is longer than 10 elephants and as heavy as 20. But did you know that it feeds regularly on tiny shrimps? To grow big and strong, your daily appointment doesn't need to be long, but it does need to be regular. It is usually better to have smaller, daily meals rather than a binge once a week.*⁴⁰

How?

John Piper writes, *"There are many ways to read the Bible. Any is better than none. Coming to the appointed place and time with no plan for how to read the Bible usually results in a hit-and-miss approach that leaves you feeling weak, unreal, and discouraged."*⁴¹

Method 1: Systematic reading through the bible

George Mueller aged 71: *Now . . . I would give a few hints to my younger fellow-believers as to the way in which to keep up spiritual enjoyment. It is absolutely needful . . . we should read regularly through the Scriptures, consecutively, and not pick out here and there a chapter. If we do, we remain spiritual dwarfs. I tell you so affectionately. For the first four years after my conversion I made no progress, because I neglected the Bible. But when I regularly read on through the whole with reference to my own heart and soul, I directly made progress. Then my peace and joy continued more and more. Now I have been doing this for 47 years. I have read through the whole Bible about 100 times and I always find it fresh when I begin again. Thus my peace and joy have increased more and more.*⁴²

Piper writes, *"For many years I have read through the Bible once each year following "The Discipleship Journal Bible Reading Plan." The month is May as I write this chapter, and I have just read this morning sections from Mark, Galatians, Psalms, and 2 Samuel. The design is to read daily from two Old Testament and two New Testament books. I find this variety helpful. Others don't, and would rather use some other approach. That's fine. The one great benefit of "The Discipleship Journal Bible Reading Plan" is that it gives you assignments for only twenty-five days out of the month. This means that any failures to keep up can be overcome each month in the makeup days. This is a wonderful dose of realism for the average sinful reader (including me). And if you are already up-to-date at the end of twenty-five days, then you have five or six days to do special memory work or to read some other part of the Bible that you have been*

⁴⁰ PJ Smyth. From Get Started – A 6 part discipleship course for new believers.

⁴¹ Piper. Chap 8, Pg 117, What when I don't desire God; Crossway.

⁴² Piper. Chap 8, Pg 118, What when I don't desire God; Crossway.

*missing.*⁴³ (This method can also be adjusted so that you read through the bible in 2 years).

Method 2: Bible Reading Notes

Some people like to use Bible Notes (available in most Christian Bookshops) which suggest a different passage to read each day, and also help you understand what the passage means.

The importance of a leader's daily devotions

*The whole point of a devotional life is connecting with God. This is our primary antidote to the counterfeits the world holds out to us. If you do not have God, and have him deeply, you will turn to other lovers.*⁴⁴

How important are they really? Leaders need to have daily devotions for the myriad of reasons that any Christian needs to: he needs to imitate Christ (Mk 1v35); he needs to worship and enjoy Jesus; he needs to eat daily 'bread'; he needs to submit himself to the creative power of God's word and allow himself to be taught, rebuked and trained so that he may be thoroughly equipped for every good work (2 Tim 3v16); he needs to enjoy presenting prayers and petitions, with thanksgiving to Christ (Phil 4v6); he needs to soak daily in the undisputed grace of God. What a privilege to access Jesus alone! Such is the quickening of the new-man at this prospect, no wonder the terrible triplets of the 'world, the flesh and the devil' do their worst to hinder us from such delight!

But there is a graver compulsion upon a leader to secure authentic, regular, personal time with Jesus. The reason is leadership. The nature of leadership is influence. The nature of Christian leadership is Christian influence. In the leader's life, the absence or presence of authentic, regular, personal time with Jesus now impacts not just himself, but many others. The stakes have been raised. Is this not the warning of James 3v1 "*Not many of you should presume to be teachers, my brothers, for you know that we who teach will be judged more strictly*".

Truth 1: The Private Purpose. The purpose of your daily devotional time is *not* to prepare sermons or bible studies. It is concerned exclusively with your personal worship, enjoyment and growth in God. It keeps you anchored daily into Christ as your personal Lord and Saviour, rather than your employer. It keeps you pure and unstained by spiritual professionalism. The moment you begin to regard your time with Jesus as a passport to better public ministry, you are sliding into deep trouble.

⁴³ Piper. Chap 8, Pg 117, What when I don't desire God; Crossway.

⁴⁴ John Eldridge, Wild at Heart.

Ministry has become your idol. Ministry has become your intermediary through which you relate to Jesus.

Truth 2: The Public Blessing. However, it is *because* of the pure, intimate and authentic nature of a daily devotion, that your devotional life will *of course* be the primary source of your ministry effectiveness! It was *because of* Jesus' frequent withdrawals that he chose the right leaders, and that the words he spoke were so mighty.

“Don't you believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? The words I say to you are not my own” (Jn 14v10)

“For I gave them the words you gave me and they accepted them. They knew with certainty that I came from you, and they believed that you sent me” (Jn 17v8)

“I do not hide your righteousness in my heart ... I do not conceal your love and truth from the great assembly” (Ps 40v10)

“What I tell you in the dark, speak in the daylight; what is whispered in your ear, proclaim from the roofs” (Mt 10v27)

What is a helpful pattern to follow?

A pattern that I often use is: 20 minutes of worship & prayer. Then 20 minutes of reading the word. And then 20 minutes of writing down insights (even sermon outlines) that have come to my mind as I have been reading.

CHAPTER 16

THE PREACHER AND HIS STUDY

In John Stott's brilliant book *I believe in Preaching*, his chapter on *The Call to Study* is my highlight of the book. Here are several quotes that he gives regarding the importance of study:

There is a freshness and a vitality about every sermon which is born of study; without study, however, our eyes become glazed, our breath stale and our touch clumsy. (John Stott)

'None will ever be a good minister of the Word of God unless he is first of all a scholar' (Calvin)

"He who has ceased to learn has ceased to teach. He who no longer sows in the study will no more reap in the pulpit" (Spurgeon)

"I've preached too much and studied too little." (Billy Graham - speaking to about 600 clergy in London in November 1979)

"If I had only three years to serve the Lord, I would spend two of them studying and preparing" (Dr Donald Grey Barnhouse)

When should we study?

Whenever you can. If you are full-time in the ministry then it will surely be lack of self-discipline rather than lack of available time that might hinder you from steady study. Some people prefer the steady drip of an hour a day. Others prefer a blitz of a morning or day a week. Still others store it up for a few days a month. Stott feels that even the busiest pastors should be able to manage at least *"every day at least one hour; every week one morning, afternoon or evening; every month a full day; every year a week"*.⁴⁵ Stott cites Alexander Whyte penetrating words, *"We cannot look seriously at one another's faces and say it is want of time. It is want of intention. It is want of determination. It is want of method. It is want of motive. It is want of conscience. It is want of heart. It is want of anything and everything but time."*⁴⁶

In addition to the bible, what should we study?

Study no book more than the bible. The previous chapter was devoted to that, but let us now look at the value of studying other books.

⁴⁵ John Stott, *I believe in Preaching*, Pg 204, Hodder & Stoughton, 1982.

⁴⁶ John Stott, *I believe in Preaching*, Pg 209, Hodder & Stoughton, 1982.

Reading books will change you

Charles Jones said that *“you are the same today as you will be five years from now except for two things: the people with whom you associate and the books you read”*.

Conversing with amazing people

Rene Descartes said the *“the reading of all good books is like conversation with the finest men of past centuries”*. When I was in my final year at school I had the privilege of sharing a meal with a man who was tutored by C.S. Lewis at Oxford University. He shared how Lewis was a brilliant teacher and how he had the capacity to memorize entire books, probably with a photographic memory. I was so impressed with what this man said about C.S. Lewis that I started to read books by C.S. Lewis such as Mere Christianity and The Chronicles of Narnia. And now, strangely enough, I feel like I know C.S. Lewis quite well myself!

Should I read all books in the same depth?

I don't think so. I have some books that are my favourites that I return to read again every couple of years, and others that I speed read to catch the overall message, and others that I focus on particular sections. Francis Bacon summed it up well saying, *“Some books are to be tasted, others to be swallowed, and some few to be chewed and digested; that is, some books are to be read only in parts, others to be read but not curiously, and some few to be read wholly, and with diligence and attention.”*

Should I only read easy, modern books?

John Piper writes, *“If a book is easy and fits nicely into all your language conventions and thought forms, then you probably will not grow much from reading it. It may be entertaining, but not enlarging to your understanding. It's the hard books that count. Raking is easy, but all you get is leaves. Digging is hard, but you might find diamonds.”*⁴⁷

He goes on to quote Mortimer Adler: *“Books must make demands on you. They must seem to you to be beyond your capacity”*

He then quotes C.S. Lewis: *“There is a strange idea abroad that in every subject the ancient books should only be read by the professional, and that the amateur should connect himself with the modern books...This mistaken preference for the modern books and this shyness of the old ones is nowhere more rampant than in theology....Now this seems to me topsy-turvy. Naturally, since I myself am a writer, I do not wish the ordinary reader to read no modern books. But if he must read only the new or the old, I would advise him to read the old.... It is a good rule, after*

⁴⁷ Pg 27-29 in God's Passion for his glory, Inter-varsity Press, 1998, John Piper.

reading a new book, never to allow yourself another new one until you have read an old one in between. If that is too much for you, you should at least one old one to every three new ones...we all need the books that will correct the characteristic mistakes of our own period.... The only palliative is to keep the clean sea breeze of the centuries blowing through our minds, and can be done only by reading old books.”⁴⁸

Reading books specifically about the bible

John Piper says: *I have the profound sense that many people who complain of not being able to rejoice in God treat the knowledge of God as something that ought to be easy to get. They are passive. They expect spiritual things to happen to them from out of nowhere. They don't grasp the pattern of the Bible expressed in Proverbs 2v1-6:*

If you receive my words and treasure up my commandments with you, making your ear attentive to wisdom and inclining your heart to understanding; yes, if you call out for insight and raise your voice for understanding, if you seek it like silver and search for it as for hidden treasures, then you will understand the fear of the LORD and find the knowledge of God. For the LORD gives wisdom; from his mouth come knowledge and understanding.

Look at all those aggressive words: “receive . . . treasure up . . . make your ear attentive . . . incline your heart . . . call out . . . raise your voice . . . seek . . . search” - if you do these, then knowledge of God will be yours. Not because you can make it happen. The giving of the knowledge is still in the hands of God: “For the LORD gives wisdom.” No, the pursuit of the knowledge of God is not because you can make it happen, but because God freely chooses to bless seeking with finding. The pattern is seen in 2 Timothy 2:7 where Paul says, “Think over what I say, for the Lord will give you understanding in everything.” You think. The Lord gives. Our thinking does not replace his giving. And his giving does not replace our thinking.⁴⁹

Piper goes on to quote C.S. Lewis: “For my own part, I tend to find the doctrinal books often more helpful in devotion than the devotional books, and I rather suspect that the same experience may await many others. I believe that many who find that ‘nothing happens’ when they sit down, or kneel down, to a book of devotion, would find that the heart sings unbidden while they are working their way through a tough bit of theology with a pipe in their teeth and a pencil in their hand”.⁵⁰

⁴⁸ Pg 27-29 in *God's Passion for his glory*, Inter-varsity Press, 1998, John Piper. *The Reading of Old Books in God in the Dock* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co, 1970, Pg 200-207)

⁴⁹ Piper. Chap 8, Pg 126, *What when I don't desire God*; Crossway.

⁵⁰ Piper. Chap 8, Pg 127, *What when I don't desire God*; Crossway.

PART SIX

THE IMPORTANCE OF EVANGELISM IN PREACHING

CHAPTER 17

EVANGELISTIC PREACHING

A problem

One of the problems is that many of the great books written on preaching have been written by mighty teachers rather than by mighty evangelists. Consequentially, their books are light on this emphasis of preaching to win souls, but we must ensure that our preaching is never light on this emphasis! For me, Spurgeon is an inspirational provocation for all preachers to ensure that they do the work of an evangelist ⁵¹, so this chapter will be peppered with words from Spurgeon.

Also, this chapter is written for a local church context. It is imperative that the entire structure of the church is geared for evangelism (not just some lone preacher), so let us start by looking at some general points pertaining to this:

How can we keep our churches and preaching evangelistic?

1. Get desperate and stay desperate. As leaders, simply resolve that not winning the lost is unacceptable. *'Preaching the gospel is to us a matter of life and death; we throw our whole soul into it. We live and are happy if you believe in Jesus and are saved. But we are almost ready to die if you refuse the gospel of Christ.'* ⁵² *'Our great object of glorifying God is...to be mainly achieved by the winning of souls. We must see souls born unto God. If we do not, our cry should be that of Rachel 'Give me children or I die!' If we do not win souls, we should mourn as the farmer who sees no harvest, as the fisherman who returns to his cottage with an empty net, or as the huntsman who has in vain roamed over hill and dale. Ours should be Isaiah's language - uttered with many a sigh and groan - 'Who has believed our report? And to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed?'* ⁵³

2. Commit to prayer. *'Perhaps if there were more of that intense distress for souls that leads to tears, we should more frequently see the results we desire. Sometimes it may be that while we are complaining of the hardness of the hearts of those we are seeking to benefit, the hardness of our own hearts, and our own feeble apprehension of the solemn reality of eternal things, may be the true cause of our want of success.'* ⁵⁴

⁵¹ 2 Tim 4v5

⁵² Spurgeon, from Spurgeon Gold by Ray Comfort, Pg 81, 2005

⁵³ Spurgeon to pastors in Lectures, Pg 337

⁵⁴ Hudson Taylor from, A Retrospect, page 50-51.

4. Keep the leadership of the church personally involved with unsaved people. What is in the head will be in the body.

5. Ensure that your church is exposed to genuine evangelists who can help you shape your church to evangelism, and equip you to evangelise.

6. Ensure that your church is exposed to the provocation of apostles and prophets who will constantly lift your eyes to the harvest, and protect you from introspection.

7. Make sure that you have the structures to cope with new souls, such as discipleship courses and especially a Small Group system.

8. Consistently run a systematic soul-winning programme such as Alpha. Organised evangelism is a good thing because it shows determination to keep the main thing the main thing. So be organised. 'To send an evangelist to some deserted, disorganized chapel...and then expect valuable results in a week, is like sending a man to gather apples in the Sahara Desert!' (Gipsy Smith: From the Forest p.143)

9. Commit to doing a gospel appeal at every Sunday meeting. If we go weeks without a response then it provokes us to cry out to God more rather than stop doing them because it 'doesn't work'. *'I contest very strongly and urge that there should always be one evangelistic service in connection with each church every week. I would make this an absolute rule without any hesitation whatsoever.'*⁵⁵ Paul wrote, "Be wise in the way you act toward outsiders; make the most of every opportunity" (Col 4v5).

On preaching that connects with non-Christians Lex Loizides writes: *We need our members to know to the depths of their being that "It doesn't matter what the topic or passage of Scripture is today, I know there will be something relevant for my non-Christian friend." This will take time, consistency and integrity to model but if you get there surely your church will grow! As we earn the trust of our people with their non-Christian friendships they will bring people along. My contention is that you can preach the gospel from any verse in the Bible – or at least, apply any verse with relevance to the non-believer.*

On Acts 5v12-16, Lex Loizides writes: *Their church meetings were available to and relevant to the non-believer: They met together in Solomon's portico, in the temple courts. It was a public place mentioned in Acts 3:11 where many people were able to gather and Peter preached to the people after the healing of the beggar. Most commentators tend to*

⁵⁵ Lloyd-Jones, Preaching and Preachers, Pg 151, Hodder & Stoughton, 1971

miss the evangelistic aspect of their meetings, having a purely pastoral model in mind. But this is a new thing – the NT church has burst onto the scene! Miracles are happening and Jesus is being preached. And there are non-Christians everywhere! A Biblical emphasis on reaching the non-believer need not rob us of worship, teaching, charismatic gifts etc – just look at this passage!

Rick Warren gives 3 reasons why members do not bring unbelieving friends to Sunday meetings:

- *The target of the message is unpredictable (but this need not be; every message can serve both the believer & unbeliever).*
- *The services are not sensitive enough to unbelievers (but note that I believe in full-on spirit-power in these meetings that, when coupled with sensitive leadership, sees unbelievers exclaim that God is truly amongst us).⁵⁶*
- *Members may be embarrassed by the quality of the meeting.*

How can a preacher be effective in evangelism?

1. You must be desperate for souls. *‘I would freely give my eyes if you might but see Christ, and I would willingly give my hands if you might but lay hold of him’.*⁵⁷ *‘My anxious desire is that every time I preach, I may clear myself of the blood of all men; that if I step from this platform to my coffin, I may have told out all I knew of the way of salvation.’*⁵⁸ This desperation will be reflected in the way you live your life, your prayer and preparation and delivery of your messages.

2. You should pray without shame for large numbers. The sermon preached by Peter at Pentecost was to three thousand or more. Three thousand cannot be converted if only a hundred are present to hear. So let us pray for people to come! *“How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them? (Rms 10v14)*

3. You must be crystal clear in your presentation of the gospel. *‘If we want men to be truly converted, we must set before them the plan of salvation very clearly and distinctly. I meet with hundreds of persons who have had some kind of work upon their hearts; but they tell me that they walk in a mist. They have not quite understood it...if there be a mistake*

⁵⁶ 1 Cor 14v25

⁵⁷ Spurgeon, from Spurgeon Gold by Ray Comfort, Pg 90, 2005

⁵⁸ Spurgeon, from Spurgeon Gold by Ray Comfort, Pg 102, 2005

here, it may be fatal.⁵⁹ The preacher should make his hearers clearly understand that there are some who fear God and some who fear him not - some who are still dead in trespasses and sins, and others who are alive unto God through the quickening power of the Holy Spirit. It would be a very wicked thing for me to delude you with the notion that you are all saved.⁶⁰

4. You must be bold. *'Perhaps you have been too quiet and too silent. Get up and speak for Jesus, and see whether the honey does not come into your mouth at once.'*⁶¹

5. You must be confident in the power of the gospel. *'Brethren, we have only to have faith in God's Word, and speak it out straight, and we shall see proud rebels yielding. No mind is so desperately set on mischief, so resolutely opposed to Christ that it cannot be made to bow before the power of the words of God.'*⁶²

6. Pursue the evangelistic gift. Even if you are a better teacher than evangelist, you must not withdraw from evangelism. *'I would sooner bring one sinner to Jesus than unravel all the mysteries of the Word, for salvation is the thing we are to live for.'*⁶³

7. Be confident in the power of the gospel. *The gospel will be found equal to every emergency; an arrow can pierce the hardest heart, a balm that will heal the deadliest wound. Preach it, and preach nothing else. Rely implicitly upon the old, old gospel. You need no other nets when you fish for men; those your master has given you are strong enough for the great fishes, and have meshes fine enough to hold the little ones. Spread those nets and no others, and you need not fear the fulfilment of His Word, "I will make you fishers if men."*⁶⁴

⁵⁹ Spurgeon, from Spurgeon Gold by Ray Comfort, Pg 19, Bridge-Logos, 2005

⁶⁰ Spurgeon, from Spurgeon Gold by Ray Comfort, Pg 59, Bridge-Logos, 2005

⁶¹ Spurgeon, from Spurgeon Gold by Ray Comfort, Bridge-Logos, 2005

⁶² Spurgeon, from Spurgeon Gold by Ray Comfort, Pg 104, Bridge-Logos, 2005

⁶³ Spurgeon, from Spurgeon Gold by Ray Comfort, Pg 107, Bridge-Logos, 2005

⁶⁴ Spurgeon, from Spurgeon Gold by Ray Comfort, Bridge-Logos, 2005

CHAPTER 18

GOSPEL APPEALS & MINISTRY CALLS

Gospel Appeals

These calls for salvation and returning prodigals can be done at any point in the meeting, but the most common time is after the message. Some principles include:

1. Keep them short. Either God will touch people or he won't, and a lengthy 'second sermon' seldom helps.
2. Until you are very experienced and gifted, prepare them carefully.
3. Include repentance. Don't dodge it. Shoot straight and hard.
4. The 'hooking' of fish requires gifting, practise and skill. Some seem more anointed in this, but every 'up front' person must be able to do a good altar call at the 'drop of a hat'.
5. Have a fool-proof method of making contact with the new converts.
6. If you are unskilled in how to do a gospel appeal, get a tape with a sermon on where you remember there being an effective appeal. Learn it off-by-heart and get going!
7. If you are doing the appeal during worship, it is often helpful to pick up on a line of a song and lead into the call from there. This gives a context to what you are saying and prevents a 'jolt'.
8. It is good to have several scriptures up your sleeve that you can use in the call (e.g. Ps 32v2 & 32v5 – what amazing verses!).

*'If we want men to be truly converted, we must set before them the plan of salvation very clearly and distinctly. I meet with hundreds of persons who have had some kind of work upon their hearts; but they tell me that they walk in a mist. They have not quite understood it. They felt that they were on a rock, but they were not quite sure what the rock really was. It is a good thing that our zeal for God should be according to knowledge, that we know what we believe, and why we believe it, and know that we are saved and how we are saved and why we are saved; for if there be a mistake here, it may be fatal'*⁶⁵

⁶⁵ Spurgeon from Spurgeon Gold by Ray Comfort, Pg 19, Bridge-Logos, 2005

Ministry Calls

- Keep them short. Either God will touch people or he won't, and a lengthy 'second sermon' seldom helps.
- If you are doing the call during worship, it is often helpful to pick up on a line of a song, or on the back of a prophecy, and lead into the call from there. This gives a context to what you are saying and prevents a 'jolt'.
- The main wisdom required is whether to invite people forward, or allow people to 'do the business' where they are. This depends on (1) your time factor and (2) availability of pray-ers and (3) the nature of the call.

PART SEVEN

A FEW FINAL GEMS

CHAPTER 19

TOPICAL MESSAGES

The most common messages that I preach are (a) expository messages, meaning directly out of a passage of scripture, or (b) topical messages such as the example below. Occasionally I preach other types of sermon (such as a 'biographical sermon' – teaching about the life of a bible character).

TOPICAL MESSAGES

Here the preacher aims to present a specific topic to his congregation. For example, he may take the subject of *Justification* or *Overcoming Temptation* or *God and Politics* or *Homosexuality*. In our commitment to preach directly out of scripture, we are sometimes still unable to find one solid passage that does justice to certain themes or topics. These topics are served best by discovering everything the Bible has to say on the subject, and then arranging the scriptures into an orderly format under some clear headings. Here is an example of sermon notes for a topical message:

TITLE: OVERCOMING TEMPTATION

Be prepared

Read 1 Peter 5v8-9. You know that the devil will attack in your weak areas in your weak times.

Learn how to run

Read Genesis 39v10-12. When Joseph was tempted to be sexually immoral he “ran” away right at the start of the temptation before it got a hold of him. Learn how to RUN when you in situations of temptation. Don't try to be a hero, just run!

Avoid places of temptation

Read Proverbs 7v6-9. This young man was foolish because he even walked past the prostitute's house! The best drivers are not the ones who show off how clever they are by driving fast near the edge of the cliff, but rather those who avoid the cliff by many metres!

Be ruthless with little sins

Read James 1v13-15. Little lions become big lions and big lions eat people! Ruthlessly put to death small sins in your life because they quickly grow to become habits that entangle you.

When you fail run to God immediately

Read 1 John 1v8-10. When you fall into sin don't feel condemned, but rather run to God and say “Father, I am so sorry to have sinned. I ask now that you would forgive me and wash me of this sin. Thank you Father that you never stop loving me even when I mess up. Amen.”

CHAPTER 20

EVALUATING A MESSAGE

As preachers we must be able to listen uncritically to a message in order to relax and get the most out of it. But we should also have some kind of template by which we can evaluate ourselves and others in order to steadily grow in our gifting.

I have a simple template:

- **What was the content like?** Was it bible-based? Were there helpful references to other authors or preachers? Was the vocabulary accessible to the people? Were the illustrations helpful?
- **What was the delivery like?** Body language? Eye-contact? Enough movement? Too much movement? Too fast? Too slow? Too long? Boring or rousing?
- **Was it anointed?** Difficult to assess this one so tread carefully!

When evaluating someone else's preach, try to mention 3 good things for every one thing that they could improve on.

When being evaluated by others, don't get defensive or grumpy or depressed, and remember....you will soon be evaluating them!

CHAPTER 21

PACING YOURSELF AS A PREACHER AND LEADER

This section is pertinent mainly to those who find themselves leading a local church and also being responsible for much of the preaching. C.J. Mahaney says that the toughest thing is to lead a church and to also carry the primary preaching burden. Bill Hybels says that leaders and preachers spend much of their lives with the switch 'on' (referring to the majority of hours when we are leading, motivating, interacting with people, and especially preaching), and that we must ensure a certain amount of time 'off' if we are to keep our emotional pot full enough to keep overflowing out during the 'on' times. If we do not spend enough time 'off' then we soon start doing the 'on' times out of duty but not enjoying it much. And if this pattern is maintained then staleness occurs and even burnout can kick in.

The problem during the week: Expending significant leadership energy during the week in terms of motivating people, setting direction and pace, attending to the numerous administrations of a local church is in itself a full-time job. But then to have to fit in decent preparation time (quality hours of mulling, praying and study) on top of this is a big ask. And we are not just talking about a few weeks of this, we are talking about sustained quality of leadership and preaching over months and years. Both visionary leadership and preaching are highly creative ministries that require 'down-time' if we are to do our 'up-times' with vigour and anointing.

The problem on Sundays: In many churches, particularly small or newly planted churches, the preacher needs to be involved with many other responsibilities on a Sunday. This can also sap his preaching vitality.

The solution: Our attitude towards preaching needs to be correct. Three weeks ago I was carrying a table back to its cupboard after the meeting, and someone said to me 'Hey PJ, it is great to see you serving on a Sunday!' I laughed along good humouredly, but I made a mental note that without blowing my own trumpet, I need to help people understand that preparation and preaching is of course serving, and in terms of man-hours, is probably the most intensive form of serving on a Sunday. We also need to help people understand that ideally the preacher needs to be relieved of weekly or Sunday duties that may sap his preaching vitality. I don't believe that preachers should be relieved of all 'real life'

responsibilities either during the week or on Sundays, but I do feel that we need to honour the preaching of the word by taking an Acts 6 approach to the matter. Preachers need to be afforded quality time to pray and prepare if they are to preach with joy and effectiveness over a sustained period.

CHAPTER 22

CHARACTERISTICS OF GREAT PREACHERS

This chapter consists mostly of some of my favourite quotes from my favourite books about preaching. Enjoy!

Balance

Paul told the Ephesian elders that he did not hesitate to declare to them the “*whole will of God*”⁶⁶. Preachers have the responsibility to grasp breadth of doctrine in the Word, and must avoid imbalance and over-emphasis of certain truths, no matter how true they are! Don’t be a single-issue preacher. Beware of your hobby-horse. As Spurgeon said, *we should omit neither the terrors of Sinai, nor the love-notes of Calvary... Our path is often narrow as a razor’s edge, and we keep on crying in our spirit while we are speaking, “Lord, direct me! Lord, help me to deal wisely for you with all these souls!”*⁶⁷

Red-hot zeal

Spurgeon said: *‘I have heard of a ship that was fired at by the cannon in a fort, but no impression was made upon it until the general in command gave the order for the balls to be made red-hot, and then the vessel was sent to the bottom of the sea in three minutes. That is what you must do with your sermons: make them red-hot. Never mind if men do say you are too enthusiastic or even too fanatical. Give them red-hot shot.’*⁶⁸

Spurgeon again: *‘One of the first requisites of an earnest, successful, soul-winning man must be zeal. As well a chariot without its steeds, a sun without its beams, a Heaven without its joy, is a man of God without zeal.’*⁶⁹ *If you never have sleepless hours, if you never have weeping eyes, if your hearts never swell as if they would burst, you need not anticipate you will be called zealous. You do not know the beginning of true zeal, for the foundation of Christian zeal lies in the heart. The heart must be heavy with grief and yet must beat high with holy ardour. The heart must be vehement in desire, panting continually for God’s glory, or else we shall never attain to anything like zeal, which God would have us know.’*⁷⁰

⁶⁶ Acts 20v27

⁶⁷ Spurgeon, from Spurgeon Gold by Ray Comfort, Pg 104, Bridge-Logos, 2005

⁶⁸ Spurgeon, from Spurgeon Gold by Ray Comfort, Pg 74, Bridge-Logos, 2005

⁶⁹ Spurgeon, from Spurgeon Gold by Ray Comfort, Pg 38, Bridge-Logos, 2005

⁷⁰ Spurgeon, from Spurgeon Gold by Ray Comfort, Pg 112-113, Bridge-Logos, 2005

Stewart wrote, *“If you as preachers would speak a bracing, reinforcing word to the need of the age, there must be no place for the disillusioned mood in your own life....Maintain yourselves you must: or else don’t try to speak to men in the name of God! For your task is to confront the rampant disillusionment of the day, and smash it with the Cross of Christ and shame it with the splendour of the Resurrection. Therefore I counsel you: let no fog of spiritual defeatism chill your ministry”*.⁷¹

Sincerity and Earnestness

*Nothing is more nauseating to contemporary youth than hypocrisy, and nothing more attractive than sincerity. The sincerity of a preacher has two aspects: he means what he says when in the pulpit, and he practices what he preaches when out of it. In fact, these things belong inevitably together since, as Richard Baxter put it, ‘he that means as he speaks will surely do as he speaks.’ A strangely fascinating power is exerted by those who are utterly sincere. Such believers attract unbelievers, as with the case of David Hume, the eighteenth-century British deistic philosopher who rejected historic Christianity. A friend once met him hurrying along a London street and asked him where he was going. Hume replied that he was going to hear George Whitefield preach. ‘But surely,’ his friend asked in astonishment, ‘you don’t believe what Whitefield preaches, do you?’ ‘No, I don’t,’ answered Hume, ‘but he does.’ (Stott, *I believe in Preaching*, Hodder & Stoughton, 1982).*

Originality

Gentlemen, I return to my rule – use your own natural voices. Do not be monkeys, but men; not parrots, but men of originality in all things ... I would repeat this rule till I wearied you if I thought you would forget it: be natural, be natural, be natural evermore (Spurgeon lectures in the delivery of sermons).

Try not to copy others! God chose YOU because He wants to use YOU. You have some special features unique to you alone, and God has a purpose for them. It is a great mistake to try and copy any other preacher. No matter how effective that person may be, it will not enhance your ministry to try to copy him. To do so would be like David trying to wear Saul’s armour. It just did not fit him, and would have been more of a hindrance than a help! (Gerald Rowlands).

⁷¹ James S Stewart, *Preaching*. 1955. Hodder and Stoughton.

Realism

*You do not need to be eloquent, or clever, or sensational, or skilled in dialectic: you must be real. You will be preaching to people who have been grappling all the week with stern realities. Behind a congregation for worship there are stories of heavy anxiety and fierce temptations, of loneliness and heroism, of overwork and lack of work, of physical strain and mental wear and tear. We wrong them and we mock their struggles if we preach our Gospel in abstraction from the hard facts of their experience. The Gospel is quite shattering in its realism. It shirks nothing. It never seeks to gloss over the dark perplexities of fate, frustration, sin and death, or to gild unpalatable facts with a coating of pious verbiage or facile consolation. It never sidetracks uncomfortable questions with some naïve and cheerful cliché about providence progress. It gazes open-eyed at the most menacing and savage circumstance that life can show. It is utterly courageous. Its strength is the complete absence of utopian illusions. It thrusts Golgotha upon men's vision and bids them look at that. The very last charge which can be brought against the Gospel is that of sentimentality, of blinking the facts. It is devastating in its veracity, and its realism is a consuming fire. This is the message with which we are charged. How grievous the fault if in our hands it becomes tainted with unreality! (James Stewart, *Preaching*. 1955. Hodder and Stoughton).*

Courage

*There is an urgent need for courageous preachers in the pulpits of the world today, like the apostles in the early Church who 'were all filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the Word of God with boldness'. (Acts 4v31, cf v13) (Stott, *I believe in Preaching*, Hodder & Stoughton, 1982).*

From the days of Amos to the present 'Prophecy unto us smooth things' has been an ever-recurring demand; and Gore, to quote him again, once averred that "the disease of modern preaching is its search after popularity...Don't go out for popularity" Spurgeon used to implore his students, "preach nothing down but the devil, and nothing up but Christ!... Therefore, resist all temptation to dilute your Gospel. Your task is not to send people away from church saying, "That was a lovely sermon" or "What an eloquent appeal!" The one question is: Did they, or did they not meet God today? When St. Peter finished his first great sermon in Jerusalem, reported in the Book of Acts, I do not read that "When they heard this, they were intrigued by his eloquence," or "politely interested in his literary allusions," or "critical of his logic and his accent," or "bored and impassive and contemptuous", what I do read is: "When they heard this, they were pierced to the heart." (James S. Stewart from 'Preaching', Hodder & Stoughton, 1955).

Humility

“That was a fine sermon,” said one to Mr. Bunyan. The good man answered, “You are too late; the devil told me that before I left the pulpit.” (Spurgeon in Spurgeon Gold by Ray Comfort, Bridge-Logos, 2005).

Truth to tell, the pulpit is a perilous place for any child of Adam to occupy. It is ‘high and lifted up’, and thus enjoys a prominence which should be restricted to Yahweh’s throne (Isa 6v1). We stand there in solitude, while the eyes of all are upon us. We hold forth in monologue, while all sit still, silent and subdued. Who can endure such public exposure and remain unscathed by vanity? Pride is without doubt the chief occupational hazard of the preacher. It has ruined many, and deprived their ministry of power.... It is more subtle, more insidious, and even more perverse. For it is possible to adopt an outward demeanour of great meekness, while inside our appetite for applause is insatiable. At the very moment when in the pulpit we are extolling the glories of Christ, we can in reality be seeking our own glory...We need to cry out with Baxter, ‘O what a constant companion, what a tyrannical commander, what a sly, subtle and insinuating enemy is this sin of pride!’ (James Stewart, Preaching, Hodder and Stoughton, 1955).

Perseverance

‘You that preach Christ in the streets, go on preaching him. I saw a man preaching the other day with no creature but one dog to listen to him, and I really thought that he might as well have gone home. But I met with a story yesterday, which I know to be true, and it showed me that I was making a mistake. There was a woman who for years had been in such dreadful despair that she would not even hear the gospel. She came to be very ill, and she said to one that called upon her, “You sent a man to preach under my window three months ago, and I got a blessing.” “No,” the friend said, “I never sent anybody to preach under your window.” “Oh,” she said, “I think you did, for he came and preached, and my maid said that there was nobody listening to him. I did not want to hear him; and as he made so much noise, my maid shut the window, and I lay down in bed; but the man shouted so that I was obliged to hear him; and I thank God I did, for I heard the gospel, and I found Christ. Did you not send him?” “No,” said the good man, “I did not.” “Well,” she said, “then God did. There was nobody in the street listening to him; but I heard the gospel, and I got out of my despair, and I found the Saviour, and I am prepared to die.” Fire away, brethren! You do not know where your shot will strike, but “there’s a billet for every bullet.”⁷²

⁷² Ray Comfort, Spurgeon Gold, Pg 37, Bridge-Logos, 2005

CHAPTER 23

6 WAYS TO GET THE MOST OUT OF A SERMON

In the parable of the sower that Jesus told, there is a great deal of emphasis on the state of the soil i.e. the heart of the listener. Here are 6 ways that I believe that we need to participate as we listen to a sermon in order to get the most out of it:

1. **Receive with word with faith:** Heb 4v1-2 talks about two different groups of people that listened to the same message. One group profited from the message, whilst the other did not. The difference? The difference was that one group combined what they were hearing with faith, whilst the other group didn't. We are to receive the word with a 'yes' in our spirits, not a reluctant scepticism. Be child-like in your hunger for truth. Believe it. Drink it in. I am a big fan of the scripture "*I believed therefore I spoke*" so when I am listening to a sermon I grunt, nod, say 'amen', write things down – I get stuck in! I am trying my best to welcome in this seed to my soil by receiving it with faith.
2. **Receive the word eagerly, but don't throw your brain away:** In Acts 17v11 the Bereans were commended for receiving the word eagerly but also checking the scriptures for themselves to check that what was being preached was true.
3. **Encourage the preacher:** In his wisdom, God has ordained it that preaching is the word of God coming to us via personalities – people. So if the preacher is feeling comfortable and encouraged he will probably do a better job in sowing the seed.
4. **Listen with your inner ears:** Jesus was fond of pointing out that we have inner as well as outer ears. Listening with our inner ears means to listen with an attentive and discerning spirit. Ask the Holy Spirit to help you hear and understand the word.
5. **Listen for yourself and others:** Paul told Timothy to pass on to others the things that he had heard Paul preaching (2 Tim 2v2). You are not just listening for yourself, but so that you can pass on truth to others.
6. **Be a hearer and doer of the word:** According to Lk 6v46f and Jms 1v22, listening without doing is a dangerous thing to do, causing us to end up insecure, cynical and eventually in a state of collapse. Take a tip from Nike and *just do it*.