

Notes to Young Preachers

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Pastor Stevens can be seen weekly on cable television stations throughout the United States. Call us for information regarding programming in your area.

All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise noted, are from the King James Version. Italics for emphasis are ours.

GRACE PUBLICATIONS

P.O. BOX 18715

BALTIMORE, MD 21206

Printed in Baltimore, Maryland, U.S.A.

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Grace Publications is a ministry of
Greater Grace World Outreach, Inc.

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INTRODUCTION

“This is a true saying, If a man desire the office of a bishop, he desireth a good work” (1 Timothy 3:1).

“For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe” (1 Corinthians 1:21).

“And they went forth, and preached every where, the Lord working with them, and confirming the word with signs following” (Mark 16:20).

“Whereunto I am ordained a preacher, and an apostle, (I speak the truth in Christ, and lie not;) a teacher of the Gentiles in faith and verity” (1 Timothy 2:7).

The word “preacher” in 1 Timothy 2:7 is translated from the Greek *kerux*, which means “herald.” *Kerux* comes from *kerusso*: “to make proclamation; to herald.” Preachers are entrusted with the duty of proclaiming and an-

nouncing the Word of God. Therefore, it is very important that the preacher is properly prepared for his vocation. Preaching is an extremely serious commission. God has chosen it to be the method by which souls are won to Him (1 Corinthians 1:21). With these truths in mind, this booklet is written so that the young preachers might be more effective in the ministry of His Gospel.

This publication was taken from special sessions held for young men who desire to be preachers. I think you will find the information contained in these booklets to be highly practical. It is drawn not only from books and learning (both of which are very important in the education of any preacher), but also from experience.

My hope is that these pages will help young pastors avoid some of the difficulties and setbacks that often befall beginning preachers. The booklet is intended to give a broader picture of the pastor's office and his tremendous responsibility.

Chapter One

PREPARING TO PREACH

Seeing the Need

The first step in preparing a sermon, message, or Bible study is to find a need. It has been said that necessity is the mother of invention, and it is the factor that provides impetus for a message. In order to see a need, the pastor must know and love his people. He must understand that those who sit under his teaching are not there by chance or coincidence. Each member of the congregation has been appointed by God to the pastor's charge. This does not mean that he rules over them like a dictator. No, the members of his congregation are given so he can share the love and grace of the Lord.

After noticing a need, the preacher goes to the Word of God. Through the counsel of God in the power of the Holy Spirit, he will find the exact message to communicate. The power of

God cannot be underestimated. He is faithful and just. He hears and answers prayer. The preacher who prayerfully studies and considers the Word of God will always have a word in season for his congregation. Other resources (such as commentaries, word studies, and books) will be very useful, but it is important not to diminish or sacrifice the commentary and counsel of God's direction that impresses the heart through the Bible.

After realizing the need, the preacher is to make a simple outline. He should not be so detailed as to pre-write the entire message before reaching the pulpit. A rough outline will lend order to the message. Charles Spurgeon, who became the pastor of his first church at the age of 18, never preached from notes. He was called the "prince of preachers." Those who have read any of his sermons cannot deny him this title. His secrets? Preparation and prayer. This introduces the next point: The preacher should be consumed with the message from the first moment of study until the delivery from the pulpit. Spurgeon immersed himself in his sermons because he knew that the truth was relevant to his life as well. A preacher cannot effectively communicate the importance of his message unless

it is important to his own life.

Not with Wisdom of Words

“For Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel: not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of none effect” (1 Corinthians 1:17).

Throughout his preparation, the preacher must constantly consider those whom he will be addressing. He should allow the Holy Spirit to impress their names and faces before his mind’s eye so that he can love and pray for them and think where they are coming from. As he does this, the pastor should concentrate on the one great truth he will present. It is a misconception to think that a message has to stimulate a person’s intellect. The preacher’s aim is to make available one great truth that will produce an eternal change in the hearts of the people. He will sacrifice the so-called great message for the privilege of communicating one great truth. The preacher should not attempt to be sophisticated or overcomplicated, using big words. His job is to make plain the Good News. Every pastor should be creative in his vocabulary. If, however, he uses an uncommon term, he must explain it for the congregation’s sake. In short, he should

not emphasize words; rather, he should emphasize truth *with* words.

The pastor must remember that he is God's designated instrument to orchestrate His service. He must consider his responsibility and continually recognize the position to which he has been appointed. Looking over several verses and paging through commentaries is not proper spiritual preparation. One has to be hungry and thirsty after God. The heart needs to be prepared. Before he gives a message, the preacher goes to the Lord with humility and meekness in prayer. He considers his strengths and weaknesses, dealing with them at the Cross without intimidation or condemnation.

The preacher must have an awareness of the hour and a sense of urgency in his message. Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 7:29a, "But this I say, brethren, the time is short." James 4:14 is even more explicit with the topic, "Whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away." With this in mind, the minister prepares as though it is the last sermon he will ever preach. It may be the last time an unsaved person hears the Gospel. No message can be treated lightly.

Sizing up the Setting

“For who hath despised the day of small things?” (Zechariah 4:10a).

To some, the setting for the message may seem like a secondary concern. It is vitally important, however, that the preacher know his auditorium and platform. He should familiarize himself with each detail of the room in which he will preach.

First, he should size up the pulpit. This is his platform and he must feel at home. He should note the size and shape of it and the area surrounding it. He should examine the angle and structure. He should examine the audio system in the auditorium, checking to see if there are ceiling speakers. If there are, the preacher will have to choose a topic that he knows well and can dynamically expound. From this location, the speakers push the energy of the sound downward. Therefore, it does not seem like the preacher is speaking face to face with the congregation.

The preacher should also consider the size and shape of the hall. If the building is unusually wide or long, the preacher needs to choose specific spots to focus upon. He also needs to de-

termine the temperature and ventilation of the auditorium. In a hot and humid setting, the preacher needs to shorten his message.

Appearance Makes a Difference

“Let all things be done decently and in order” (1 Corinthians 14:40).

The pastor should dress for his part. That is not to imply that he should be unduly fashion conscious, but he needs to look as good as he possibly can. Why? He represents the King of kings. Appearance is usually an outward manifestation of the heart. Decent attire and a neat appearance will project an attitude of integrity and order. Successful business people almost without exception take care to present themselves properly. Should not those about God’s business do the same? A subtle distraction could prevent someone from receiving the message.

It is important that the pastor makes sure those who share the platform with him also display order in their dress habits. Certainly, the Holy Spirit can overcome all of these potential hindrances, but God also honors those who honor Him by having an appearance of integrity. A decent, orderly platform is impressive. If a pastor takes his call and message seriously,

he must be sure that his chapel projects an air of importance.

A good preacher considers how he felt as a member of the congregation. He remembers mannerisms and expressions that caused him to be distracted or uninterested in a message. He does not step timidly to the pulpit, but he walks with dignity. His message is from the eternal Word of God. Therefore, his countenance and posture should reflect integrity, fervency, and expectancy.

He should also practice making eye contact in his conversations so that it will be a natural part of his preaching style. All of these things will lend form and character to the preaching and enable the congregation to hear the message more readily.

Preparation at Home

“One that ruleth well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity; (For if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God?)” (1 Timothy 3:4,5).

As 1 Timothy 3:5 clearly expresses, God requires that each man who is called to a leadership position in the church first exhibit his

leadership ability in his own household. He will not be an effective preacher if he is not effective in his own home. In his expanded translation, New Testament expositor Kenneth Wuest explained that the phrase "ruleth well" means "presides over in a beautiful manner." The primary authority in the marriage has been given to the man. When he uses this leadership office wisely, he and his family are greatly blessed.

The pastor, like every other man of God, is responsible to love his wife as "Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it" (Ephesians 5:25). A husband should treat his wife like a queen, for she is a gift from God. He is responsible to invest in and edify his wife. If a pastor cannot practice this one-on-one in the home, he cannot expect to be able to do it with an entire church. The preacher must learn to love and cherish his wife as a part of his preparation to preach. As he develops a capacity in her for spiritual things, she will become a tremendous, faithful partner in the Lord's call.

"If a man therefore purge himself from these, he shall be a vessel unto honour, sanctified, and meet for the master's use, and prepared unto every good work" (2 Timothy 2:21). It has been said that preparation prevents prob-

lems. For the pastor, prayer and preparation create poise—a godly confidence founded on the precepts of the Word. “Prepared” is *hetoimazo*, a verb form of the Greek noun *hetoimasia* or “solid foundation; firm footing.” *Hetoimasa*, found in Ephesians 6:15, speaks of the believer having his feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace.

The preacher who prepares properly with reverent respect for God will be on firm footing in the pulpit. He will be consumed with the needs of his people and the message from the Word. As he communicates the truth of God’s Word, people’s lives will be touched and changed.

Chapter Two

THE IMPORTANCE OF PREACHING

“For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe” (1 Corinthians 1:21).

Preaching is a necessity intended by God to draw men unto salvation. However, there are many who view preaching as foolish. Often, overemphasis is placed on verse-by-verse expositions and academic doctrine analyses, where the truth is explained in detail. This is teaching (*didasko*), which is the explaining and supporting of principles of the Word with an emphasis on their practical application. Of course, this is very much needed today, but not to the exclusion of preaching. Preaching (*kerusso*), as used in the New Testament, implies urgency and is designed to change hearts and lives.

Pastors must not limit their ministry to

teaching; they must preach as well. Preaching is the proclaiming of God's will in order to minister to the needs of the people in the congregation. This is not to say that the pastor singles out a weakness or problem area in a person's life, but there may be certain needs that should be addressed. For instance, perhaps members of the congregation are discouraged or going through a time of transition. The preacher who loves his people and prays for them will recognize these things. As he studies the Word of God, the Holy Spirit may impress his heart to preach on a certain subject or passage of Scripture.

The Responsibility of the Preacher

"I charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom; Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine" (2 Timothy 4:1,2).

The above verse provides an excellent picture of the preacher's responsibilities. The epistle of 2 Timothy is generally regarded as Paul's last correspondence. He writes Timothy toward the end of his second imprisonment in Rome, sensing that his execution is imminent: "For I

am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand" (2 Timothy 4:6). Here, he strongly commissions Timothy to take care of the churches he had planted. Paul stresses in 2 Timothy 4:1, "I charge thee"—*diamaturomai* in the Greek, which means "I declare emphatically." This charge, made before God and Jesus Christ, is holy and serious. How was he to fulfill it? According to Paul's instruction, he was to preach the Word of God in all situations.

In 2 Timothy 4:2, the word "preach" is *keruxon*—a form of *kerusso*. The latter Greek term refers to a proclamation made by the king's herald or messenger. In the ancient Olympic games held in Athens, there was competition among the heralds. They were judged in a variety of categories including voice and diction, punctuality, and most importantly, clarity and accuracy. In the last category, the messenger was graded on the precision of his proclamation. There was to be no exaggeration or alteration. The competition required the herald to deliver the king's communication clearly and distinctly, exactly as he received it.

Preaching What He Bids

"Arise, go unto Nineveh, that great city, and

preach unto it the preaching that I bid thee" (Jonah 3:2).

This is an example of God communicating to His preacher. Nineveh was a city laden with immorality, but God had a plan to bring the Ninevites to repentance. Therefore, he told Jonah to "preach unto [Ninevah] the preaching that I bid thee." As it does in the New Testament, the word "preach" in this Old Testament verse means to make a proclamation. What was Jonah to announce to Nineveh? He was to communicate the preaching that the Lord had "bid" him to preach. "Bid" is translated from the Hebrew *dabar*, which is defined as "to prescribe." Keep in mind the ancient duty of the herald.

The preacher, God's messenger to the church, must declare God's message as it is communicated to him. This is clear in chapters 2 and 3 of Revelation. According to the King James Version, the Spirit spoke to each of the seven New Testament churches through an "angel." "Angel" in the Greek text is *aggelos*, which refers to a human messenger. In consideration of these things, the preacher should realize the importance of the Holy Spirit's guidance in his presentation of the Gospel.

The Preacher's Team

“For as we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office: So we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another” (Romans 12:4, 5).

Every pastor must develop a faithful team that will prepare and preserve an atmosphere of order and expectancy in the service. The preacher's teammates should be mature believers, who are “nourished up in the words of faith and of good doctrine” (1 Timothy 4:6b). Through love and investment, the preacher can put together a dedicated, sensitive crew of workers. Ushers, song leaders, soloists, musicians, and nursery workers all play major roles in the church. These are extremely significant positions. Those who diminish their importance lack a comprehension of the spiritual warfare that rages between heaven and hell in the midst of a godly assembly. Satan will stop at nothing to hinder the communication of God's Word.

The young pastor should begin forming his team immediately upon establishing his church. He needs to plan where the nursery will go. It cannot be in a place where the nursery will be a

distraction during the message. He decides who his song leader and soloists will be. He is not dictatorial or authoritarian, but through encouragement and edification, he develops his team so that it will best complement his preaching. Each of his appointments and administrative decisions are expressed in love through the Word of God. All of this is done to minimize confusion. No matter how small a church is, practical orderliness must not be compromised. The eternal destiny of a soul may be at stake.

Choosing the right ushers is essential to the maintenance of a sharp, attentive atmosphere in an auditorium. The usher has a challenging job. He is to dress neatly and be able to project confidence and integrity. He needs to know where and how to seat people. The usher is not a respecter of persons, but a protector of the congregation. People who tend to be noisy and disruptive should be seated toward the rear of the room or next to disciplined mature people who can help them concentrate. If a person is continually going out and coming in, the usher kindly deals with the situation. With love and understanding, he may suggest to the person that he sit in the back. What is he doing? He is preserving order so "that the word of the Lord

may have free course" (2 Thessalonians 3:1*b*).

The song leader should prepare himself for the service, for it is his responsibility to prepare the congregation for the sermon. If he can, the pastor should let the leader know the topic of the sermon beforehand; then he is able to choose songs that develop the congregation's expectancy toward the message.

A song leader should do just that: lead songs. If he talks too much, the minds of those in the congregation become wearied. All kinds of thoughts are racing through people's minds. Any singer or soloist should concentrate on singing, not preaching. They can make a comment or two, but not more than that, for it detracts from the mood of the service and the preparation for the message.

On occasion, a person will not do his job properly. When this happens, the pastor keeps an attitude of love. He does not rebuke, express his displeasure or criticize in his mind. Such thoughts will lay waste to all of his preparation. Instead, the pastor concentrates on the message, ministers the Word and leaves correction until another time.

Illustrations, Testimonies, and Invitations

Illustrations can be excellent tools that, when used properly, can bring home certain truths. Jesus illustrated many principles through parables, yet one should not allow them to become a crutch. Charles Spurgeon offers a good perspective on illustrations. He referred to them as “windows” that permit the light to shine in. Yet, as he pointed out, no house is made entirely of windows. A sermon cannot be built upon illustrations, for it must have the sure foundation of the Word. Too many illustrations in a message will leave people without the essential objective truth they need for their lives.

Testimonies should be treated similarly. The preacher should not permit someone to testify unless his testimony is legitimate and will benefit the hearers. Some people do not know how to behave when they are given an audience. They are not prepared and the testimony lacks content. Do not allow testimonies to ramble on uncontrollably.

The salvation invitation is the premier moment in any meeting. At this point, the unsaved are brought to the brink of decision. They now have a choice to make. Their volitions are ex-

posed to an opportunity to receive Christ. To some, the invitation represents an anticlimax, and they treat it as an afterthought. This is wrong. Lost souls have been brought face-to-face with their eternal destinies. Pastors must stress the significance of the invitation. There should be silence in the audience at this time. No one should be moving around. People are more likely to respond positively when a quiet mood prevails.

Facing Difficulties

Preachers must be careful not to use the pulpit as a sounding board. The pastor cannot afford to react to someone or to deal with a negative trend during a message. These situations should be dealt with individually and in privacy. An entire congregation should not be subjected to a long sermon concerning a matter in which only three or four people are actually involved. This may hurt others and could detour their minds into negative self-analysis.

At certain times, a trend may begin to spread to the point where it endangers the vision and purpose of the assembly. More than ever, the pastor needs to go to God in prayer in these situations. The Lord will direct him through the

Word and the Spirit toward a gracious, loving, and positive response to the problem.

The Importance of Identification

The effective preacher never grows weary of identifying with his congregation. He considers the expectant mother who is experiencing many transitions and emotions in anticipation of a baby. He thinks of the widow or widower who recently lost a spouse. They are battling loneliness and emptiness. Then, there are teenagers who are continually faced with pressure from peers and temptation. By reflecting on people and their situations, the pastor becomes deeply concerned with their needs and goes to God for something to meet those needs. Jude 22 says, "And of some have compassion, making a difference." The preacher who understands the concerns of his people will make a difference with his preaching. Fervency will characterize his message. He is humble before God, therefore people listen attentively because they sense his heart for them. The Holy Spirit ministers through him, and the congregation receives the Word.

It is important that the preacher keeps his heart warm. It must be tender to the Spirit's ini-

tiations through the Word. Paul told Timothy to “stir up the gift of God” (2 Timothy 1:6). This speaks of a rekindling in the heart. The preacher may think of Christ on the Cross, and it will cause him to weep. He may remember a person who accepted Jesus after a sermon and will quietly thank God for choosing him to be His instrument. Thoughts of the faithful laborers on the foreign mission field are likely to warm his heart.

Holding The Attention

Every preacher faces the difficult task of holding the attention of his audience. Capacities for concentration vary greatly from person to person. The college graduate has learned academic discipline, and can sit straight and listen intently. A person who works outdoors may be physically spent. This, combined with the temperature of the room, may cause him to be drowsy. Others simply do not understand the necessity of concentration for it is new to them. Such people may find it difficult to sit for a very long period of time. In this situation, the pastor has to be very patient and careful not to embarrass anyone. At the same time, unnecessary movement distracts and irritates those who

want to listen. Herein lies the dilemma. The preacher cannot turn anyone away, but he, too, must make sure that his sermon is heard. His goal should be to develop a church where anyone from any background can enjoy and receive the message.

The first step toward this goal is for the preacher to learn how to control his own attention. If he is not focused upon the message, how can he expect his audience to concentrate on it? He should decide where he will start and where he will finish. The intensity of concentration deepens as the message progresses. Even the slightest detour disrupts the momentum of the sermon.

The preacher, therefore, must learn to guard his concentration prior to the message. The last thoughts a preacher thinks before he preaches determine the force of his introduction. This sets the stage for the remainder of the sermon. Thus, he cannot afford to be unnecessarily distracted before he preaches. There may be an emergency on occasion, but generally the preacher should avoid anything that would take his mind off the message. He should not receive negative statements before preaching. He should not discuss serious business deals, since an eternal transac-

tion between God and the congregation is about to take place. Perhaps one who is lost will be faced with the Good News for the first time. Preachers must realize the urgency of their work. A lethargic, haphazard sermon could hinder someone from receiving Christ. A person may have come to church ready to hear. Yet, if the preacher was careless in his presentation, there was probably no power in the message. This person may leave the service without making a decision. Only at the Bema Seat of Christ will some preachers realize the extensive damage inflicted by these messages.

“But I say unto you, That every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment” (Matthew 12:36).

A preacher must have firm convictions about what he is preaching. As he steps to the pulpit, he should consider the importance of his sermon and its potential impact. The audience will detect his appraisal of the message almost immediately. People can sense when a preacher has not prepared himself. There is no urgency, and therefore, no power. How can a pastor convince people of the power of God and His Word if he himself is not certain of that power? People need

to see that a pastor believes what he preaches. If he is convinced of the reality of hell enough to weep for the souls who are going there, he makes hell more real to one who does not understand it. If he believes in heaven so much that he appears homesick for eternity, then he will describe it much more magnificently and lead people to want to go there. The more the preacher believes what he is saying, the more he will preach with power.

CONCLUSION

“And he taught daily in the temple. But the chief priests and the scribes and the chief of the people sought to destroy him, And could not find what they might do: for all the people were very attentive to hear him” (Luke 19:47,48).

Preaching, perhaps, has never been more necessary than it is today. Christ’s return is imminent and time is running out. The preacher is to challenge men with truth. The message of the Gospel must be presented with urgency.

People need the Lord, but many have never heard the preaching of the Gospel. With a faithful team of workers, a solid belief in the Word, and an orderly atmosphere, the preacher can proclaim God’s message with power. Even in the best situation, the preacher may face opposition as Jesus did in Luke 19:47 and 48. There will be many, however, who will hear and receive, and whose lives will be transformed. The preacher’s faithfulness to announce the Good

News will not be in vain. God's Word will do its work.

"So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it" (Isaiah 55:11).

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