

Let the Preacher First Be Fed



“For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard”
(Acts 4:20).

“For thou shalt be his witness unto all men of what thou hast seen and heard”
(Acts 22:15).

“That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you”
(1 John 1:3).

The early preachers were compelled to speak about what they had seen and heard—things they had personally experienced. They could not stop. It just could not be helped. They understood what Jeremiah meant when he said, “His word burns in my heart like a fire. It’s like a fire in my bones!” (Jeremiah 20:9, *NLT*).

This brings us to one of the dynamics of preaching.

-  God first feeds the preacher.
-  The preacher then feeds the flock.

“So when they had dined, Jesus saith to Simon Peter, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my lambs. He saith to him again the second time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my sheep” (John 21:15-16).

Hopefully you did not miss that. Our scripture begins with, “So when they had dined...” It was only after they had eaten that Jesus ventured to ask Peter a number of questions. Once a man of God has been spiritually fed he is in the best position to feed others. God’s Word should abide in the man of God. He must first be fed before feeding the flock. He needs to keep Himself full of the Word, and be in touch with God.

Jesus asked, “Lovest thou me more than these?”

The Lord may have been referring to Peter’s boat, fishing equipment, and/or his employment as a fisherman. He was wondering if Peter was willing to forsake his material possessions and employment to do the work of preaching the gospel.

Shepherds take care of their flock by providing guidance, protection, and food. When Jesus said, “Feed my sheep,” He was asking if Peter would give suitable food to the flock to keep it healthy, and cause it to grow. The preacher supplies spiritual nourishment to the souls of men.

Warren Wiersbe in *The Dynamics of Preaching* says, "Effective preaching is personal; it's people talking to people about something that is really important to them."

Before God speaks through the preacher, He first does a work in the preacher. God will not use someone in public, until He has taught the person in private. It is difficult to lead others to places we have never been ourselves.

Wayne V. McDill in the *Moment of Truth* said, "Unless he first hears the message for his own life, he will be ill-prepared to proclaim it to others...He is the proclaimer of God's Word, but he is first a hearer!"

Preachers should be able to show their listeners that there is a close association between what is said from the pulpit, and what is lived in their personal lives. Obedience to your own sermon is a necessity.

Alex Montoya in *Preaching With Passion* stated that the preacher's study was for the discovery of truth, and that the pulpit was for the sharing of that truth. He said, "The simmering of the week boils over in the pulpit on Sunday."

Do you get the picture? Preachers are like full pots of water put on the fire. Eventually they will boil over. We should preach with passion what God has been heating up in our lives.

The preparation of the preacher

The biggest challenge in preaching is not in the preparation of a sermon, but in the preparation of the preacher.

As men of God we need to experience what is being preached first. It is often said, "Practice what you preach." A better version is, "Preach what you practice."

One preacher was asked, "How long did it take you to prepare that sermon?"

He received a short, but fitting response, "A lifetime."

Benjamin Franklin wrote in *Poor Richard's Almanac*, "A good example is the best sermon."

Charles McKay in *The Call of the Harvest* claims, "The power of the preaching of the preacher lies in the depth of his spiritual life."

Keep the fire burning, preacher!

C. H. Spurgeon once commented, "I cannot believe that you will ever pluck a brand from the burning, without putting your hand near enough to feel the heat of the fire...I do not think the

preacher ever speaks well upon such subjects until he feels them pressing upon him as a persistent burden from the Lord.”

“Then I said, I will not make mention of him, nor speak any more in his name. But his word was in mine heart as a burning fire shut up in my bones, and I was weary with forbearing, and I could not stay” (Jeremiah 20:9).

In ancient Greek races it was not the one that crossed the line first that won the race. It was the one who crossed the line first, and still had his torch burning.

Dr. Dan Reiland in his article, *Young Leaders in the Local Church* states, “The greatest gift you have to offer is the quality of your own spiritual life. Your spiritual life is your leadership.”

An often-neglected part of a preacher’s life is his spiritual discipline.

Paul said, “I discipline my body like an athlete, training it to do what it should. Otherwise, I fear that after preaching to others I myself might be disqualified” (1 Corinthians 9:27, *NLT*).

“Train yourself for godliness, for while bodily training is of some value, godliness is of value in every way, as it holds promise for the present life and also for the life to come” (1 Timothy 4:7-8, *ESV*).

Preaching should be backed by a godly lifestyle. This includes personal integrity (honesty), holiness in conduct, and in speech. Preacher, respect God’s Word. Preach it! Live it!

What is hypocrisy?

It is a shame and dishonor to the ministry for the preacher to preach one thing, and live another. The word for that is “hypocrisy.”

“They made me the keeper of the vineyards; but mine own vineyard have I not kept” (Song of Solomon 1:6).

John Bunyan in *Pilgrim’s Progress* called such preachers, “the parson of our parish, Mr. Two-Tongues.”

When ancient Greek actors performed, they used different masks to represent the character of each person they portrayed. That is where we get the word “hypocrite”—“an actor playing the part of another.” This shows us that the hypocrite is someone whose real self and motives are covered with a mask.

The *Revell Bible Dictionary* outlines Matthew 23 in order to discuss hypocrisy.

- 📖 The teachers of the Law do not practice what they preach (23:3).
- 📖 They put great effort into winning converts and then corrupt them (23:15).
- 📖 They put emphasis on minor details, and ignore the more important issues (23:23).
- 📖 They are more concerned with externals and ignore the heart (23:25).
- 📖 They try to appear to others as holy men, but inwardly they are wicked (23:27).
- 📖 They build the tombs of the prophets but display the character of those that murdered them (23:29-32).

What does God expect from the spiritual lives of His preachers?

“Who may climb the mountain of the Lord? Who may stand in his holy place? Only those whose hands and hearts are pure, and who do not worship idols and never tell lies” (Psalms 24:3-4).

Psalms 15 lists God’s expectations for those who abide in His sanctuary, and dwell in His presence. Surely these can be anticipated from men of God.

- 📖 Walks uprightly with integrity.
- 📖 Works righteousness.
- 📖 Speaks the truth from a sincere heart.
- 📖 Does not speak evil with his tongue.
- 📖 Does not harm his neighbors.
- 📖 Does not speak evil of his friends.
- 📖 Despises persistent sinners.
- 📖 Honors the followers of the Lord.
- 📖 Keeps promises even when it is not convenient.
- 📖 Is consistent—does not change.
- 📖 Does not charge interest on money he lends.
- 📖 Refuses to accept bribes.

Do you walk the talk?

A young convert stopped attending the church. A member met him in the market and asked, “Why have you not been to church lately?”

The answer, “You people do not walk what you talk.”

1. Are you talking the talk?
2. Are you walking the walk?

The word “walk” is used in the Bible to describe character, manner of life, and conduct.

A preacher should have a genuine walk with God. He cannot neglect his spiritual life. It will be maintained through study, prayer, fasting, and godly living.

“He that saith he abideth in him ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked” (1 John 2:6).

Preacher, have a message! Be a message!

Mahatma Gandhi once said that he rejected Christianity because of what he saw—and did not see in the lifestyle of Christians. What was he saying? He rejected the gospel because of the character of those that called themselves Christians. How different from the church at Antioch. They were first called Christians because of how they lived.

People learn least by what you say.
People learn more by what you do.
People learn most by what you are.

Let us bring this lesson to a close with a fitting poem.

Sermons We See

“I’d rather see a sermon than hear one any day;
I’d rather one should walk with me than merely tell the way.

The eye’s a better pupil and more willing than the ear,
Fine counsel is confusing, but example’s always clear.

And the best of all the preachers are the men who live their creeds,
For to see good put into action is what everybody needs.

When I see a deed of kindness, I am eager to be kind.
When a weaker brother stumbles and a strong man stands behind;

Just to see if he can help him, then the wish grows strong in me
To become as big and thoughtful as I know that friend to be.

And all the travelers can witness that the best of guides today
Is not the one who tells them, but the one who shows the way.”

(Author Unknown)

Study Questions

1. Why is it important for God to first work in a preacher before He speaks through him?

2. Explain what is meant by “God first feeds the preacher.” _____

3. Why is effective preaching considered personal? _____

4. What is a preacher before he is a proclaimer of God’s Word? _____

5. What type of close association should a preacher show his listeners? _____

6. According to Alex Montoya what is the difference between the preacher’s study and the pulpit? _____

7. What is the biggest challenge in preaching? _____

8. According to Ben Franklin, what is the best sermon? _____

9. Spurgeon said a preacher doesn’t speak well until what happens? _____

10. What is an often neglected part of a preacher’s life? _____

11. What is the greatest gift a preacher has to offer? _____

12. What is hypocrisy? _____

13. What is the implication or application derived from Song of Solomon 1:6? _____

14. What are three things (out of the six provided) we learn about hypocrites? _____

15. List five expectations of those that abide in the sanctuary.

- 1) _____
- 2) _____
- 3) _____
- 4) _____
- 5) _____

16. What did Mahatma Ghandi say about the lifestyles of Christians? _____

17. Explain the use of the word "walk" in the Bible. _____