

SECTION 1

A Portrait of the Minister of God

“A PORTRAIT OF THE MINISTER OF GOD”
(2 Timothy 2:1-7)

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| I. | <u>BE A TEACHER</u> | 2:1-2 |
| | 1. Know where to stand. | 2:1 |
| | 2. Know what to share. | 2:2 |
| | 3. Know who to send. | 2:2 |
| II. | <u>BE A SOLDIER</u> | 2:3-4 |
| | 1. Participate in conflict. | 2:3 |
| | 2. Please Christ. | 2:4 |
| III. | <u>BE A COMPETITOR</u> | 2:5 |
| | 1. Get into the contest. | |
| | 2. Go for the crown. | |
| | 3. Engage with care. | |
| IV. | <u>BE A FARMER</u> | 2:6-7 |
| | 1. Accept the requirement of hard work. | 2:6 |
| | 2. Anticipate the reward of heavenly wisdom. | 2:7 |

SOME THOUGHTS ON THE HIGH CALLING OF THE PREACHER

The task of proclaiming the Word of God and doing the work of the ministry is an awesome task and weighty assignment. To perform the work effectively at times may seem impossible given the expectations of those we serve. In a humorous vein (we trust!) the portrait of an ideal minister was painted, noting all the tasks he must perform and the degree to which he must perform them:

THE IDEAL PREACHER

After hundreds of fruitless years, a model minister had been found to suit everyone. It is guaranteed he will please in any church.

He preaches only 20 minutes, but thoroughly expounds the Word.

He condemns sin, but never hurts anyone's feelings.

He works from 8:00 am to 10:00pm doing every type work from preaching in the pulpit to janitor work.

He makes \$100 a week, wears good clothes, buys good books regularly, has a nice family, drives a nice car, and gives \$50 a week to the church.

He stands ready to give to any good cause, also.

His family is completely model in deportment, dress and attitude.

He is 26 years old and has been preaching for 30 years.

He is tall, short, thin, heavyset, handsome, has one brown eye and one blue eye, hair parted in the middle, left side dark and straight, right side blond and wavy.

He has a burning desire to work with teenagers and spends all his time with the older people.

He smiles all the time with a straight face because he has a sense of humor that keeps him seriously dedicated to his work.

He makes 15 calls a day on church members, spends all his time evangelizing the unchurched and is never out of the office!!!

Cotton Mather, the American Puritan, more accurately assesses the nature of our assignment when he said,

“The office of the Christian ministry, rightly understood, is the honorable and most important, that any man in the whole world can ever sustain; and it will be one of the wonders and employments of eternity to consider the reasons why the wisdom and goodness of God assigned this office to imperfect and guilty man!”

Matthew Simpson likewise caught a glimpse of the majesty and gravity of the ministry of the Word when he noted,

“His throne is the pulpit; he stands in Christ's stead; his message is the Word of God; around him are immortal souls; the Savior, unseen, is beside him; the Holy Spirit broods over the congregation; angels gaze upon the scene, and heaven and hell await the issue What association, and what vast responsibility!”

In the final analysis the preacher must bury deep in his heart and never forget one essential truth:

**“ALL THAT MATTERS IN LIFE (AND PREACHING)
IS THAT I PLEASE GOD!”**

This is our overarching goal and the context in which we do all that we do.

A.W. Tozer understood this when he wrote,

“We must not imagine ourselves commissioned to make Christ acceptable to big business, the press, the world of sports, or modern education. We are not diplomats but prophets, and our message is not a compromise, but an ultimatum.”

-A. W. Tozer, 1946 (quoted in *PrayerNet Newsletter*, Feb. 21, 1997)

Martin Luther also saw this, especially as he considered the needs of human souls and the ability of the Word to meet those needs:

“Let us then consider it certain and conclusively established that the soul can do without all things except the Word of God, and that where this is not there is no help for the soul in anything else whatever. But if it has the Word it is rich and lacks nothing, since this Word is the Word of life, of truth, of light, of peace, of righteousness, of salvation, of joy, of liberty, of wisdom, of power, of grace, of glory, and of every blessing beyond our power to estimate.”

-(Martin Luther, “A Treatise on Christian Liberty,” *Three Treatises*. Philadelphia: Muhlenberg, 1947, 23)

Duane Litfin believes an expositor of God's Word must embrace certain commitments in the assignment to which God has called him. There are other “precommitments” to be sure (e.g., personal life, family, priorities, etc.), but here we find wise counsel as we consider the awesome assignment to "rightly divide the Word of Truth" (2 Tim. 2:15).

The following is an adaptation of Litfin's “Precommitments of an expositor” by Dr. Hershael York, professor of preaching at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary.

PRECOMMITMENTS OF AN EXPOSITOR

- 1. COMMITMENT TO A HIGH VIEW OF SCRIPTURE. (MATT. 5:17-18)**
 - a. What God says, we must say.
 - b. What the Bible says, God says.

- 2. CONVICTION OF THE PROFITABILITY OF ALL SCRIPTURE. (2 TIM. 3:14-17)**
 - a. No one area of the Bible is any more inspired than another (i.e., The words of Jesus are no more authoritative than the words of Paul. The epistles are no more inspired than the genealogies of the Old Testament.) - (There is equal inspiration, but degrees of importance.)
 - b. Preaching, therefore, must be lashed to the Scriptures, not rooted in something else.

- 3. CONSEQUENT VIEW OF WHAT PREACHING IS (AS A RESULT OF #1 AND #2)**
 - a. If you cannot say, “thus saith the Lord,” it is not preaching.
 - b. The purpose is to lay bare the meaning of a passage.
 1. What the author is saying
 2. What difference it should make in the hearer's life
 3. Why God wants the hearer to know this
 - c. Expository preaching is the communication of a biblical concept derived from and transmitted through a historical, grammatical, literary study of a passage in its context, which the Holy Spirit first makes vital in the personality of the preacher, and then through him applies accurately to the experience of the congregation. As a result the congregation has an experience with God through the accurate application of the Word energized by the Holy Spirit which conforms them more to the image of Christ. (adapted from Haddon Robinson, *Biblical Preaching*, 19)

4. **COMMITMENT TO DO SOME CLEAR, HARD THINKING ABOUT WHAT SCRIPTURE MEANS, HOW IT APPLIES AND HOW PEOPLE PERCEIVE.**
 - a. The expositor must think hard and think well.
 - b. He must be thorough and hard working.
 - c. The thinking must be done at the perceptual level, not just the conceptual.
 - d. The expositor must understand thinking, how thoughts work, the nature of thought itself and how the members of the congregation will understand and incorporate truth.

5. **WILLINGNESS TO BE CONFINED TO THE INTENTION OF THE AUTHOR**
 - a. What he is saying is what the expositor must say.
 - b. If it is outside the author's intent, it is outside the intent of the Holy Spirit and therefore outside the realm of divine authority.
 - c. Authorial intent constitutes the authority of God.

EXAMPLE:

Is it legitimate to preach on the necessity of personal witnessing from John 4 (Jesus and the woman at the well)? What is the valid meaning of John 4? The divine author's meaning is the human author's meaning is the meaning the expositor should adopt and proclaim.

Never just preach the event. The text always carries more intent than the event. The event itself is mute. The text gives us "interpretive events" not just events.

It is legitimate to say, "This is certainly not John's primary meaning, but it certainly reminds us that..." It is not necessarily true that just because Jesus did something that it is an example for us and that we should do it. When Jesus is stated as an example, we are also told what aspect of His character is to be imitated.

(Note: the congregation will ultimately treat and interpret the Scriptures in identical fashion as their pastor.)

Dr. Wayne McDill of SEBTS has 9 convictions that he believes undergirds the preaching task:

1. Sermon preparation is a supernatural endeavor.
2. Effective preaching is not a mystery talent for only the most gifted.
3. Anyone can learn the methods used in the preparation of good sermons.
4. Preaching is a science before it is an art, calling for discipline before freedom.

5. Old habits resist new methods and require objectivity and discipline.
6. The greatest weakness of preaching is fuzzy, ill-defined ideas.
7. The preacher is a word crafter who clarifies his ideas carefully and precisely with the right words.
8. Biblical preaching allows the text to shape the sermon.
9. The Bible is a rich and unlimited source of fresh, timely preaching.

- *(The 12 Essential Skills for Great Preaching)*

“SOME CLOSING OBSERVATIONS CONCERNING PREACHING”

“There is perhaps, no body of men so guilty of frittering away their time in trivialities, in a fussy parade of being busy, as ministers of religion.”

-Samuel McComb (quoted in *Voice*, Nov/Dec 1997, page 27)

“What you are after is not that folks shall say at the end of it all, ‘What an excellent sermon!’ That is a measured failure. You are there to have them say, when it is over, ‘What a great God!’ It is something for men not to have been in your presence but in His.”

-J.H. Jowett (quoted in *Context*, Dec. 1, 1997, page 2)

“Preaching is itself an act of grace, making clear God's initiative toward us in Christ. Preaching is one means by which the redeemed bear witness to the one who saves. That message of divine salvation, the unmerited act of God in Christ, is the criterion by which all preaching is to be judged... All human speech is rendered mute by the incarnate Word of God. Yet, at the same time, the incarnation allows us to speak of God in the terms He has set for Himself - in the identity of Jesus Christ. Preaching itself is incarnational. In the preaching events a human being stands before a congregation of fellow humans to speak the most audacious words ever encountered or uttered by the human species. God has made Himself know in His Son, through whom he has also made provision for our salvation.”

- R. Albert Mohler, “A Theology of Preaching,” in *Handbook of Contemporary Preaching* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1992), 16.

VENTURA, Calif. (ABP) 11-12-98 -- Doctrine, care and sermons top American's priorities when they choose a church, according to a new study by the Barna Research Group.

“A century ago, the church that most Americans attended was virtually arranged for them at birth,” Barna said. “Most people went to the church of their parents, which was the same church their grandparents attended.”

Barna Research Group asked American adults to rank 22 factors people sometimes say they use to choose a church.

Three factors easily outpaced all others, researchers found.

- First was the theological belief and doctrine of the church, which was cited as extremely important by 58 percent of respondents.
- Second was "how much the people seem to care about each other," called extremely important by 53 percent.
- Third was sermon quality, ranked extremely important by 52 percent. (underlining mine)

“It is surprising how stoutly and stubbornly the churches insist upon preachers knowing how to preach. They will forgive almost everything else, but they will not forgive inability to preach....”

“No man who knows how to preach with grace and power need stand idle in the market place a single hour. Churches are scouring the country in search of such a man, and he cannot escape if he would!”

-Charles E. Jefferson, *The Minister as Prophet* (New York: Crowell, 1905), 17, 22.

“Scripture is the foundation of the Church: the Church is the guardian of Scripture, When the Church is in strong health, the light of Scripture shines bright; when the Church is sick, Scripture is corroded by neglect; and thus it happens, that the outward form of Scripture and that of the Church, usually seem to exhibit simultaneously either health or else sickness; and as a rule the way in which Scripture is being treated is in exact correspondence with the condition of the church.”

-Walter Kaiser, *Toward an Exegetical Theology* (Quoting John Albert Bengel)

“The Church and the Scripture stand or fall together. Either the Church will be nourished and strengthened by the bold proclamation of her Biblical texts or her health will be severely impaired.” “Should the ministry of the pulpit fail, one might just as well conclude that all the supporting ministries of Christian education, counseling, community involvement, yes, even missionary and society outreach, will likewise soon dwindle, if not collapse.”

-Walter Kaiser (pgs 7-8)

PERSONAL THEOLOGICAL AFFIRMATIONS OF THE MAN OF GOD

1. I must do more than quote a Scripture and then depart from it; in depth study and exposition of the text is absolutely necessary.
2. The best way to teach biblical knowledge from the pulpit is through expository preaching.
3. Both *kerygma* (preaching) and *didache* (teaching) are essential in gospel proclamation; Scripture and especially the New Testament does not maintain a clear distinction between the two.
4. Preaching and teaching God's Word is the primary responsibility of the pastor.
5. When biblical instruction through preaching is neglected, the pastor's and his people's morals become unclear and/or readily decline.
6. Throughout history God has used the joint elements of preaching and teaching to reform the church.
7. The content of Scripture must not be sacrificed for eloquent sermon structure and delivery, though one complements the other.
8. Since Bible study is waning, the laity must be trained how to study the Bible on their own as they imitate expository methods used by the preacher.
9. Expository preaching equips and inspires people to work and witness.
10. Effective expository preaching demands a high view of Scripture (verbal, plenary).
11. Expository preaching encourages people to bring their Bibles to church; it encourages them to read passages to be preached beforehand and to study them afterwards as well.
12. Through expository preaching, the preacher can deal with important problems in a systematic fashion; sharp and uncomfortable truths are more readily accepted when addressed from the Bible in the natural course of study.

THE BIBLE

This book contains: The mind of God, the state of man, the way of salvation, the doom of sinners and the happiness of believers. Its doctrine is holy, its precepts are binding, its histories are true and its decisions are immutable. Read it to be wise, believe it to be saved and practice it to be holy.

It contains light to direct you, food to support you and comfort to cheer you. It is the traveler's map, the pilgrim's staff, the pilot's compass, the soldier's sword and the Christian's charter.

Here, Heaven is opened, and the gates of hell disclosed. Christ is its grand subject, our good its design, and the glory of God its end. It should fill the memory, rule the heart, and guide the feet.

Read it slowly, frequently, prayerfully. It is a mine of wealth, a paradise of glory, and a river of pleasure. It is given you in life, will be opened at the Judgment, and be remembered forever. It involves the highest responsibility, will reward faithful labor, and condemn all who trifle with its sacred contents.

***'Tis the Book that has for the
ages Lifted man from sin and
shame; That great message
on its pages, Will forever be
the same.'***

Never compare the Bible with other books. Comparisons are dangerous. Books speak from earth; the Bible speaks from Heaven. Never think or say that the Bible contains the Word of God or that it becomes the Word of God. It IS the Word of God. Supernatural in origin, eternal in duration, inexpressible in value, infinite in scope, divine in authorship, regenerative in power, infallible in authority, universal in interest, personal in application, inspired in totality. Read it through. Write it down. Pray it in. Work it out. Pass it on. It is the Word of God.

"All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works." 2 Tim 3:16-17

"Forever, O Lord, Thy Word is settled in Heaven." Psalm 119:89

"Thy Word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against Thee." Psalm 119:11