

☞ D. THE PERSON GOD USES (Continued) ☞

II. THE PREACHER'S LIFE: THE MESSENGER IS THE MESSAGE

People love to learn from the personal lives and experiences of other people. When someone has mastered any particular subject, it is far easier to teach what one has learned and applied to life than simply trying to teach lessons from a textbook that one has not yet mastered in life.

Often inexperienced preachers underestimate the impact that their personal lives have on their messages. Through a bad personal example, a good message can be undermined. Through their good personal example, their messages are strengthened. Now it is very important to understand that God's word has its own truth and power, apart from any good-, or bad example on the part of messenger:

- ☐ Mat 23:1 Then Jesus said to the crowds and to his disciples: Mat 23:2 "The teachers of the law and the Pharisees sit in Moses' seat. Mat 23:3 So you must obey them and do everything they tell you. But do not do what they do, for they do not practice what they preach.

However, God requires that anyone who preaches His word, should first apply it to their own lives.

- ☐ Joh 13:15 I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you.
- ☐ Php 3:17 Join with others in following my example, brothers, and take note of those who live according to the pattern we gave you.
- ☐ 1Ti 4:11 Command and teach these things. 1Ti 4:12 Don't let anyone look down on you because you are young, but set an example for the believers in speech, in life, in love, in faith and in purity.

The New Covenant means of communicating truth is "Incarnate Truth". This is "Word becoming Flesh". In other words, Jesus the Logos (Word), took on human form in order to better communicate God as He really is and in such a way that we as human being can understand Him.

- ☐ John 1:14 The Word became flesh and made his dwelling [*tabernacled, pitched his tent, lived*] among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth. John 1:17 For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. John 1:18 No one has ever seen God, but God the One and Only, who is at the Father's side, has made him known* [*declared, explained, "exegeted"*] him.

The apostle John in his first letter, reiterates what he said in his gospel. In his letter he says, he proclaims what he has experienced in his life:

- ☐ 1Jn 1:1 That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked at and our hands have touched—this we proclaim concerning the Word of life. 1Jn 1:2 The life appeared; we have seen it and testify to it, and we proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and has appeared to us. 1Jn 1:3 We proclaim to you what we have seen and heard, so that you also may have fellowship with us. And our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ.

He makes it clear that Jesus did not ONLY give people more teaching or laws. He ALSO personally embodied the message. This made his message accessible to every single person, from the most studied, to the most simple. Jesus did not only preach messages – ‘that which we have heard’. Jesus also showed people how the message should be lived out – ‘that which we have seen’.

Just as with parenting, preaching comes with the responsibility to also set the example for others. This can be taking to be too great a responsibility. But we should remember that people are not looking for perfect examples, just human examples. People whose lives seem to be too ‘perfect’ place godliness out of the reach of ordinary people. People who are sincere and transparent examples show others that godliness is possible. After all if God can do a great work in one person’s life – and God is no respecter of persons – then God can do the same thing for other.

Preachers must not underestimate the influence of their lives. People are never only listening to their sermons. They are also following their example. Even in the Old Testament, before Israel even received the laws from God, God already told Moses to both teach the people his laws, and to also show them how to live:

- ❑ Exodus 18:20 Teach them the decrees and laws, and show them the way to live and the duties they are to perform.

In Jesus’ day teachers all had their own disciples who followed them. The disciples committed themselves to follow the teacher’s way of life also, and not just their teaching. It is this form of discipleship-by-modelling that all preachers and teachers of God’s word must apply to their ministry:

- ❑ 2Th 3:7 For you yourselves know how you ought to follow our example. We were not idle when we were with you, 2Th 3:8 nor did we eat anyone’s food without paying for it. On the contrary, we worked night and day, laboring and toiling so that we would not be a burden to any of you. 2Th 3:9 We did this, not because we do not have the right to such help, but in order to make ourselves a model for you to follow.

“Spiritual leaders are to incarnate what they teach; that is, they are to become flesh and blood models” (Davies).

“Modelling was an important part of the educational philosophy of the ancient world in two aspects. Firstly, any teacher was expected to serve as a model for his pupils. Learning from the teacher’s example was intrinsic to their educational method. Secondly, it was inherent in a father-son relationship. The son would learn from the father by imitating him” (Derek Tidball).

Every preacher must be in their personal lives set an EXAMPLE of their message and MODEL how the word of God should be applied to life. Then they can all others to IMITATE their example, as they imitate the example of Christ.

- ❑ 1 Cor. 11:1 Imitate me as I imitate Christ.
- ❑ Hebrews 13:7 Remember your leaders, who spoke the word of God to you. Consider the outcome of their way of life and imitate their faith.

Pastors and Christian Leaders often are said “to live in a glass bowl”. I.e. just like goldfish, their lives are always in the public eye. This can put a lot of pressure on them. However, Jesus does not require perfection, just sincerity. They need not try to please people, only God.

A leader’s lifestyle among his/her people has a greater long-term impact in shaping the lives of their people than the messages they will preach. Wise leaders will use this to their full potential.

The following areas are all areas of a preacher's personal life that have an effect on the impact of their influence. Every person has been bent into shape or knocked out of shaped by these experiences in their life.

1. **THE PREACHER'S SPIRITUAL JOURNEY:** There ought to be a clear conversion experience, evidence of discipleship, and growth in holiness and Christlikeness.
2. **THE PREACHER'S SOUL:** The soul is the area of our minds, our will, and our emotions. It is also the seat of our personalities. Preachers should have their minds renewed and their wills surrendered to obey God to the best of their personal abilities. Their values should be Kingdom values and they should have saved ambitions. The soul could also be considered to be the area of our relationships. Preachers should be emotionally mature and have developed "relational intelligence". Souls are also the center of our identity. Preachers should have developed maturity in the areas of personal identity in Christ; their self-esteem (their sense of personal self-worth), their self-image (their view of themselves) and their view of their personal competence (their unique abilities, talents and spiritual gifts). Preachers must settle these matters because it is not uncommon to find preachers interpreting the word of God correctly or incorrectly based on their outlook on life. Some preacher carry wounds that they have not yet been healed from, and they leak their emotions through their message. We all need to deal with our personal "baggage" so that our personal lives are not a hindrance to the truth of God's word.
3. **THE PREACHER'S CHARACTER:** Related to our salvation and the maturing of our souls is our characters. All preachers should have integrity: the level of Integrity we have depends on the degree to which there is convergence in our lives of the messages we preach and the lives we live. It is said that all pastors struggle with one of the following to different degrees: Pennies (money and material possessions), Petticoats (women), and Pride. To be aware is to be armed against these areas of attack and personal weakness. Other issues are reputation – reputation is what other people think of us. It is better to focus on integrity than reputation, for none of us can ultimately control what other people think about us. Related to character is the pastor/preacher's work ethic. Leaders are expected to work hard, be diligent and to persevere through trial. Dealing with weekly personal and spiritual challenges ought to develop perseverance and strength of character in our lives
4. **THE PREACHER'S PREPARATION THROUGH MINISTRY IN THE BODY OF CHRIST:** Christ does not need more 'teachers', and neither do people – in the sense that we separate our teaching from our relationships with people. Being a 'teacher' is only one type of spiritual leader in the bible. Others are leaders as spiritual parents; peers, shepherds, and servants. These all show that leaders are relationally-connected to their people. For example, they must care for the needy, show concern for those who stray, and encourage the weak. As servants, leaders must live among their people visiting them, praying with them, and sharing their lives as servant-shepherds. The best applications for sermons will come from having lived with people for some years.
5. **THE PREACHER'S LIFE JOURNEY TO THE PULPIT:** With God, no experience is ever wasted. Every preacher will have a personal testimony and some "stories" to tell. Every person has a different journey in life, and God will require that we walk a road before he give us a platform to speak. Preachers need not be ashamed of anything that God has forgiven them of, and should not hide their messes and mistake they have made. If they have learned from them, other can too. Preachers who pretend to have been born-again in their mother's womb are insecure in themselves because they feel that they need to project some false image of perfection that everybody knows doesn't really

exist. We all have been wounded and carry scars. We all have personal “thorns in the flesh” spiritual opposition that we must continually wrestle with. Paul spoke about bearing the ‘marks of Christ’:

- ❑ Gal 6:17 Finally, let no one cause me trouble, for I bear on my body the marks of Jesus.
- ❑ 2 Co 11:23 Are they servants of Christ? (I am out of my mind to talk like this.) I am more. I have worked much harder, been in prison more frequently, been flogged more severely, and been exposed to death again and again. 2Co 11:24 Five times I received from the Jews the forty lashes minus one. 2Co 11:25 Three times I was beaten with rods, once I was stoned, three times I was shipwrecked, I spent a night and a day in the open sea, 2Co 11:26 I have been constantly on the move. I have been in danger from rivers, in danger from bandits, in danger from my own countrymen, in danger from Gentiles; in danger in the city, in danger in the country, in danger at sea; and in danger from false brothers. 2Co 11:27 I have labored and toiled and have often gone without sleep; I have known hunger and thirst and have often gone without food; I have been cold and naked. 2Co 11:28 Besides everything else, I face daily the pressure of my concern for all the churches. 2Co 11:29 Who is weak, and I do not feel weak? Who is led into sin, and I do not inwardly burn? 2Co 11:30 If I must boast, I will boast of the things that show my weakness.

Every preacher must have ‘earned the right to preach’. They should have conquered personal strongholds of sin; have died to self and died to the world; have fought smaller skirmishes and increasing bigger battles; they will carry with them stories of success and of failures and mistakes. God stores his treasures in earthen vessels (2 Cor. 4:7).

6. **THE PREACHER’S MINISTRY CALL & ITS DEVELOPMENT:** Every preacher should have a clear sense of call. Whether it was as clear as receiving a vision or prophecy or it was a growing ‘sense’ of being called by God, every Christian leader should live with a sense that God has called them. They may feel called to specific group of people and/or feel that they have specific message. With a call comes spiritual gifts with which to minister. Then there is an anointing on those gifts and on their lives. They must be willing to start humbly and do menial things in insignificant places. They must first have proved faithful there, and then God and others will entrust them with greater responsibilities. Only when they have proved reliable – i.e. ‘faithful’ in these areas will they actually discover their true calling. It will be wise for them to serve under seasoned leaders as apprentices. They should also equip themselves by going for formal theological training. They must take personal responsibility for ‘stirring up’ the gift of God that is within them.
7. **THE PREACHER’S DEVOTIONAL LIFE:** One of the greatest challenges that preachers will face is maintaining balance in life. There are often so many demands made of them that leaders can often neglect their walk with God. Even sermons can be prepared more from studying the bible in order to preach than preaching from an overflow of their devotional lives. Leaders must guard their walk with God jealously. God first calls us to walk with Him as sons and daughters and then calls us to minister for him. Preachers must be men and women of pray – spending large amounts of time communing and communicating with God. They should give themselves to systematic bible study and deep personal devotional reading of God’s word. They must walk with God and be led by the Spirit in ministry. They will do well to study the personal devotional lives of men and women of that God uses powerfully in ministry. It will soon become clear that every person that God uses has settled the matter of investing large amounts of time daily and weekly with God.