

Why God Used Stephen F. Olford

by E.A. Johnston

This sermon highlights the profound impact of Stephen F. Olford's life and ministry, emphasizing his commitment to revival and the Lordship of Christ.

Duration: 11:22

Scripture: Romans 12:1

Topics: "Biography"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker discusses the life and ministry of Stephen F. Olford, a servant of God who was mightily used by Him. Olford's effectiveness in preaching and bringing glory to God was attributed to his consecrated life and surrender to the Holy Spirit. He prioritized his devotional life, spending time in prayer and seeking God's presence. Olford also lived a life of surrender, allowing Christ to be the Lord of his life. His holy walk with God and international focus on praying for revival were key aspects of his ministry. The speaker emphasizes that while revival is a sovereign work of God, believers must position themselves to receive it by being consecrated, surrendered, and focused on God's will.

Transcript

Dr. Stephen Oford went to glory in 2004. He was my homiletical mentor, and I was one of the first graduates of his school of preaching. He was my friend and colleague.

We wrote a book together on his homiletical mentor, W. Graham Scroggie, entitled, Oford on Scroggie. Stephen Oford greatly influenced my life, hence this tribute to him. God used Stephen Oford in remarkable ways.

As an evangelist, pastor, bible expositor, and teacher, thousands were saved under his evangelistic ministry, and thousands of pastors and preachers were trained by Dr. Oford through the years. He had a profound influence on many in ministry. Two men in particular come to mind, Billy Graham and Jim Elliott.

Billy Graham was just a lanky young man when he went to a Stephen Oford meeting and was moved by Dr. Oford's powerful anointed preaching. Billy Graham asked Dr. Oford to teach him about the Holy Spirit and the anointed life. They holed up together in a hotel room, and it was from that point forward that God began to use Billy Graham in a worldwide ministry.

Jim Elliott, the missionary martyr to the Alka Indians, was a student at Wheaton College in 1948 when Stephen Oford preached there. In Jim Elliott's diary, he mentions how Stephen Oford influenced him to have a more regular and vital quiet time with the Lord each day. Stephen Oford mentored hundreds of other ministers through the years, men like Alan Redpath and John Phillips.

But I bring this message today on why God used Stephen F. Oford, because he was a man of revival. This man lived and breathed revival. He prayed regularly for it, and he wrote wisely on it and preached often on the subject of revival.

His book, *Hearcry for Revival*, published in the 1960s, is a Christian classic. This is what Stephen Oford had to say about revival, taken from the foreword he wrote for my book, *Reality's Revival*. Listen to his wise words.

I am forcefully reminded of an expository sermon on revival I heard from the lips of the great Dr. G. Campbell Morgan during my theological studies in London, England many years ago. What the doctor had to say has helped me to understand how God and man come together in this holy business of praying down revival from heaven. Let me paraphrase what I heard and remember.

Revival is a sovereign work of God, Jesus declared. The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear the sound of it, but cannot tell where it comes from and where it goes. So is everyone who is born or revived of the Spirit.

Only God can command the revival wind, but we must set ourselves to catch that wind when God blows. There you have it. We cannot produce revival, but we can ready ourselves to receive it when it comes.

Well, friends, I bring you this message why God used Stephen F. Oford, and I pray it will bless your heart as it has blessed mine. There are some choice servants in the kingdom of God whom heaven has smiled upon in a remarkable way and enabled them to be mightily used of God to bring him glory. These choice servants share a common denominator, a consecrated life in full surrender to the Holy Spirit.

One cannot think of Dr. Stephen Oford without acknowledging the power of the Holy Spirit upon his life and ministry. In fact, it was the Holy Spirit who anointed him and gave him such powerful unction in the pulpit. But this power in the pulpit comes with a price, a sacrifice, a life of prayer, surrender, cross-bearing.

Because of his holy walk and his priority on prayer, Stephen Oford knew God, and he could preach Christ crucified with power, power that would transform the hearts of those who heard him preach with such Spirit-anointed power. He was a man small in stature, yet when he ascended the pulpit and began to proclaim God's message, he appeared to be a giant speaking to mere mortals. Stephen Oford lived his life in accord with the following verse of Scripture, I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me, and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.

One word sums up the life and ministry of Dr. Stephen Oford more than any other, and that is the word Lordship. The message of the crucified life preached in full power, Christ not only saves from the penalty of sin, but Christ saves us also from the power of sin, full salvation. Therefore, the following summation of what God used Stephen Oford is in the form of an acrostic which spells Lordship.

God used Stephen Oford for the following reasons, L. Love for others. He not only had a burden for the lost, he had a passion for helping believers live the victorious Christian life. On his desk in his private study

lay a little plaque that read one word, it said others.

He knew he was a servant serving others all to the glory of God. The next letter is O. Obedience to Christ. One cannot attain greatness and accomplish much for God unless one is obedient to the commanding officer.

God knew that he could trust Stephen Oford with much because of his instant obedience to the master's voice. Dr. Oford possessed a remarkable ability to be sensitive to the leading of the Holy Spirit, and he always yielded in obedience to him. The next letter is R. Revival burden.

Stephen Oford literally had a heart cry for revival. God honored this in his life by displaying his manifest presence among his people on many occasions. One can think of the revival on the campus of Wheaton College, which began with broken Stephen Oford out of bed all evening and on his knees crying out to God in prayer.

Stephen Oford was a man of revival. The next letter is D. Devotional life. Stephen Oford was a man of prayer.

He knew the importance and priority of the quiet time, the time set apart for God in prayer early in the morning. His little booklet, *Manna in the Morning*, is a testimony to how he ordered and prioritized his time with the Lord. The great power he had in preaching was an overflow of the time spent on his knees in prayer.

The next letter is S. Surrender to God's will. It has been said of Stephen Oford that he lived his life in the springtime, meaning that he was always pressing on with urgency to serve his master with great expectation as to what God would do. But one cannot have this life of faith without a life of surrender.

Christ resided on the throne of his life in complete lordship. The next letter is H. Stephen Oford maintained a holy walk with God throughout his life, and God honored this in his servant holiness was the most important thing in his relationship to God. On the wall of his private study was a plaque which quoted his hero, Robert Murray M'Cheyne, which read, Lord, make me holy as a safe center can be.

Stephen Oford was very much like M'Cheyne in this regard. He had a holy manner about him in and out of the pulpit. This holy walk allowed him to exhibit authority, which was a demonstration of the spirit of God in the man.

The next letter is I. International focus. Dr. Oford was an international man who served and represented a global God. His ministry was not local, but international, far reaching across the globe from Africa to Japan, from Italy to Trinidad.

Far too many of us limit God by limiting our field of focus. With Stephen Oford, the world was open territory to proclaim the gospel of Christ. The next letter is P. Passion for preaching.

Few men have exhibited such a life devoted to the preaching ministry as Stephen Oford. In fact, when it came to preaching, Stephen Oford had a fire in his belly for all to see. Few men have preached with such God anointed power and authority in expository preaching.

He knew the critical times in which he lived where expository preaching had to be proclaimed and taught because of what was in the balance if this art died away. Teaching expository preaching to others was a

passion for him as well as preaching in an expository fashion. Many great preachers themselves were challenged when listening to Stephen Oford preach.

All of the aforementioned spell lordship, if one desires to know why God used Stephen F. Oford so mightily, the answer can be found in that word. Well friends, I hope you've been blessed by this message today as we study men of revival. Until then.

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