

Preparation for Preaching (1830)

by George Mueller

George Mueller emphasizes the importance of prayer, meditation, and simplicity in preparing for effective preaching of the Word.

Scripture: Psalm 119:105, Proverbs 2:6, John 14:26, Romans 10:17, Colossians 3:16, 1 Thessalonians 5:17, 2 Timothy 2:21, 2 Timothy 3:16-17, Hebrews 4:12, James 1:5

Topics: "Preparation for Preaching", "The Role of Prayer in Ministry"

Description

George Mueller emphasizes the importance of prayer and meditation in preparing for preaching, sharing his personal approach of seeking God's guidance for the subject matter. He highlights the necessity of being open to the Holy Spirit's direction, often waiting for inspiration through prayer and Scripture reading. Mueller advocates for expounding the Scriptures in a way that encourages listeners to engage with the Bible, fostering a deeper understanding and connection to God's Word. He stresses the significance of simplicity in communication, ensuring that the message is accessible to all, regardless of their background. Ultimately, he believes that a preacher's effectiveness is rooted in their spiritual life and dedication to prayer rather than eloquence or literary skill.

Transcript

That which I now considered the best mode of preparation for the public ministry of the Word, from deep conviction and from the experience of God's blessing upon it, is as follows: I ask the Lord that He would graciously be pleased to teach me on what subject I shall speak, or what portion of His Word I shall expound. Sometimes it happens that a subject, or a passage, has been in my mind; in that case I ask Him whether I should speak on it. If after prayer I feel persuaded that I should, I fix upon it, yet so that I would desire to leave myself open to the Lord to change it if He please. Frequently however, it occurs that I have no text or subject in my mind before I give myself to prayer. In this case, I wait some time for an answer, trying to listen to the voice of the Spirit to direct me. If then a passage or subject is brought to my mind, I again ask Him, and that sometimes repeatedly, whether it be His will I should speak on it. Frequently it happens that I not only have no text or subject, but also do not obtain one after once or twice or more times praying about it. What I do is to go on with my regular reading of the Scriptures, praying whilst I read, for a text. I have even had to go to the place of meeting without a text, and obtained it perhaps only a few minutes before I was going to speak; but I have never lacked the Lord's assistance at the time of preaching, provided I had earnestly sought it in private.

Now when the text has been obtained, whether it be one or two or more verses, or a whole chapter, I ask the Lord that He would graciously be pleased to teach me by His Holy Spirit whilst meditating over it. Within the last sixty-three years I have found it the most profitable plan to meditate with my pen in my hand, writing down the outlines, as the Word is opened to me. This I do for the sake of clearness, as being a help to see how far I understand the passage. I very seldom use any other help, besides the little I understand of the original of the Scriptures and some good translations in other languages. My chief help is prayer. I have never in my life begun to study one single part of divine truth without gaining some light about it, when I have been able really to give myself to prayer and meditation over it. This I most firmly believe: that no one ought to expect to see much good resulting from his labors if he is not much given to prayer and meditation.

That which I have found most beneficial in the public ministry of the Word is expounding the Scriptures. This may be done in a twofold way, either by entering minutely into the bearing of every point occurring in the portion, or by giving the general outlines and thus leading the hearers to see the meaning and connection of the whole. The benefits which I have seen resulting from expounding are these:

The hearers are thus, with God's blessing, led to the Scriptures. This induces them to bring their Bibles, and I have observed that those who at first did not bring them, have afterwards been induced to do so; so that in a short time few were in the habit of coming without them. This is no small matter, for everything which in our day will lead believers to value the Scriptures is of importance.

The expounding of the Scriptures is in general more beneficial to the hearers than if on a single verse, or half a verse, or two or three words of a verse, some remarks are made, so that the portion of Scripture is scarcely anything but a motto for the subject.

The expounding of the Scriptures leaves to the hearers a connecting link, so that the reading over again the portion of the Word that has been expounded brings to their remembrance what has been said--and thus, with God's blessing, leaves a more lasting impression on their minds. Expounding the Word of God brings little honor to the preacher from the unenlightened or careless hearer, but it tends much to the benefit of the hearers in general.

Simplicity of expression, whilst the truth is set forth, is of the utmost importance. It should be the aim of the teacher so to speak that children, servants, and people who cannot read may be able to understand him, so far as the natural mind can comprehend the things of God. It should also be considered, that if the preacher strive to speak according to the rules of this world, he may please many, particularly those who have a literary taste but in the same proportion he is less likely to become an instrument in the hands of God for the conversion of sinners or for the building up of the saints. For neither eloquence nor depth of thought makes the truly great preacher, but such a life of prayer, meditation, and spirituality as may render him "a vessel...meet for the master's use" (2 Ti 2:21) and fit to be employed both in the conversion of sinners and in the edification of the saints.

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