

Homiletics: Called to Preach - Part 2

by Tim Conway

The sermon emphasizes the importance of proper interpretation and seeking confirmation from the Lord in preaching and teaching.

Duration: 1:45:20

Scripture: 1 Corinthians 2:4, Ephesians 4:11-12, 1 Timothy 3:1, 2 Timothy 2:15, Hebrews 4:12

Topics: "Biblical Interpretation", "Church Leadership"

Description

This sermon discusses the importance of proper interpretation of Scripture for sermon preparation, emphasizing the significance of understanding the text before preaching. The speaker shares a personal experience of a powerful encounter with God during a sermon, highlighting the impact of being immersed in the Word and preaching. The sermon also touches on the qualities of a true leader in the church, emphasizing the need for supernatural leadership qualities that inspire others to follow. The prayer at the end seeks for healthy foundations, a thriving church, revival, and impactful preaching in the generation.

Transcript

So, I think two weeks from today, we'll try to keep doing this every other week. Two weeks from today, we'll probably actually take up some examples from Scripture about just dissecting Scripture, asking appropriate questions of Scripture, and we're going to look at some interpretation, maybe some hermeneutics. Homiletics, like we talked about before, homily or homileo from the Greek, it's got to do with this idea of speaking in the Greek became more specific over time to be a study of sermons and preaching, and of course, hermeneutics, which is Bible interpretation, that obviously is a component, although I think typically in seminary, you're going to have perhaps a class seminary.

They have homiletics and hermeneutics separate. I see. But of course, sermon preparation is a good sermon is going to be the result of a proper interpretation of the text.

You might preach wonderfully and eloquently, but if you miss the text, didn't interpret it properly, the whole thing comes to naught. So, anyway, I think we'll actually handle some examples next time and we'll wrestle through some of those things, because we need to be asking questions of Scripture. We need to be properly interpreting and figuring out how to get there.

And of course, there's a number of hermeneutical principles to think about, but actually diving into Scripture and properly interpreting text. If there's anything that kills a sermon or somebody's exhortation or

Bible study, in my estimation, it's when they make an assertion that all the red flags go up in my mind. That's not right.

They didn't interpret the text right. And that calls into question everything they say from that point. Probably all of you know what that's like.

You hear something said from the pulpit, and all the alarms go off. And once that happens, I don't know how it is for you, but for me, it's very difficult to profit from that message after that, because now I'm suspect. I'm just suspect.

And a lot of times, a massive failure is when the misinterpretation is actually at the level of the foundation of the whole sermon. I mean, they're basically making this foundational statement upon which the whole message is going to be built, and it's faulty, because now the whole thing isn't going to stand. Anyway, we're going to be moving in that direction.

Last time, I felt like, and this is always going to happen, I know, we don't have to be limited just to four meetings, as was first suggested, but we're never going to cover as much ground as I think we should. One question that came up last time, I think I heard it several times, we dealt with James 3.1 last week, about not being many teachers. You're going to face a stricter judgment.

And the question came up about where is the cutoff? Where is the threshold in teaching? In other words, if we're not going to be many teachers, like I suggested last time, that doesn't mean that men should not be teaching their families. That doesn't mean that because singing is a form of teaching, Scripture tells us that, that only a few of us should sing. And so the question comes up, well, at what point do we actually become the kind of teacher that we should not be many of? Where's the threshold? Does it mean that I shouldn't be a person who facilitates a Bible study if we're actually going to go through a book and the actual teacher is going to be whoever wrote the book? Where's the threshold? Does it mean that I shouldn't exhort a brother and try to correct him from Scripture? Isn't that teaching? Or stir up one another to love and good works? Certainly, there's going to be some aspect or measure of teaching when we seek to do that.

So where's the threshold? And my response when that question has come up, it came up, I think, Alex and Bobby, but somebody else, I've heard it. Patrick asked. I think what's safe to say is this, singing is a form of teaching.

Is James saying, again, think hermeneutics, Bible interpretation. Is James saying not many of us should be singers? We would say, well, that's crazy. Well, why? Why is that crazy? Yeah, we are told to sing.

And we are told to stir up one another to love and good works. There are some general admonitions. There's general instruction given to the church about teaching, which is our responsibility.

Fathers do have a responsibility towards their children. And where we have that responsibility, we need to carry out that responsibility. Where is that threshold, though? When do you come into that realm? Well, just a couple thoughts on that.

One is that we know just as far as gifts go. There is a gift of teaching. Do you all agree with that? We can prove that from Scripture in various places.

You find it in Romans 12. You find it in 1 Corinthians 12. You find it in 1 Peter 4. There is a gift of teaching.

You find it in Ephesians 4. A different assortment of men who in one shape, form, or another are men who are setting forth truth. They're teaching. It's a gift.

But there are these areas where we're all called to do some form of teaching. But let's think about this. Is there a gift of faith described in Scripture? But we would all agree, we're all commanded to believe.

We all have a responsibility to believe. Or how about mercy? Or how about giving? You see, we all should be merciful. We all should be laying up treasure in heaven.

And yet, if you look carefully at Romans 12, what you're going to find is there is a specific gift of mercy. There is a specific gift of giving. So how do we draw that distinction? Well, I would say this, that if there is a gift, it means God has given to you something that the average Christian, and I'm not saying that any Christian in and of themselves is average.

They're all supernatural. But we're talking about as Christians go, a gift is somebody being given the capacity to do that thing above and beyond. Head and shoulders above and beyond.

What all other Christians can do, or the average Christian can do. Right? I mean, that's what we're talking about when we talk about a gift of mercy or a gift of faith. You take a George Mueller or a Hudson Taylor, we would say these men had an unusual faith.

Well, that's what we're talking about with teaching. We're talking about does a person have an unusual ability? And I'm drawing this back to James because I basically would live by this premise that if God says through the inspired author not to be many teachers, and God is the one who gives men to be teachers, and God is the one who gifts men to be teachers, and He says that we shouldn't be many of them, I'm operating by the assumption that it's good, sound logic to say that God is not going to give many men and women the special gift of teaching. All Christians are going to have a measure of responsibility in teaching just like we all have a measure of responsibility.

We all have a responsibility to believe. We all have a responsibility to give. We all have a responsibility to show mercy.

We all have a responsibility to teach within the capacities that God lays that responsibility on all of us. But when we talk about not being many teachers, we're talking about there aren't going to be many in the church that are so designed by God to specifically be those who He is going to use above and beyond the norm to teach, to instruct, to evangelize. There are men, and I think we need to recognize, I would definitely agree with you, that spiritual gifts are not gender discriminant.

I believe women can have gifts of teaching and preaching and shepherding and fill in the blank. Look, there's a difference between gift and office. We need to recognize that.

I am not espousing that we put women into offices of oversight and leadership and pastoral oversight in the church. I'm not saying that. But I believe that the gifts are gender indiscriminate.

And God is going to give those to a few because He says that only few should teach. And what we would be looking for is an ability that goes beyond the average. That's what we need to be thinking of.

Common, special. Common, special. If there's a gift, it's special.

And if not many should be teachers, that which is special is not going to be found in many. It's going to be found in a few. And I think we know it.

I think we know it in the church. And sometimes, there is a proverb that basically describes our ability to find fault and to judge things in other people. And I'm not saying it's necessarily a biblical proverb, but we tend to have 20-20 vision when it comes to figuring out other people's strengths and weaknesses.

And sometimes they're very blind to our own. And sometimes it can be pretty easy for us to determine where somebody else's gifts are and are not. It may be more difficult to figure out where our own are.

And I've seen men go wrong in both directions. Many men who are overly enthusiastic about their gift, usually with regards to preaching, and then I've seen others who are less than enthusiastic. And anyway, one of the things that I just will say before we move on too, you know, when you consider the picture in 1 Corinthians 14, you have a picture of the church functioning.

And you remember all these gifts. And Paul says in 1 Corinthians 14, you all come and you have a song, and you have prophetic word, and everybody comes with all this stuff. That's good.

He doesn't knock that. Scripture does not speak of a one-man ministry. Not at all.

There's reform models. There's various models. There's fundamentalist models.

One-man ministry. But that's not a biblical picture. And what you have is Paul basically telling them, look, what you do needs to be done to build up the church.

And it needs to be done with order. And he says, if you're going to speak in tongues, he limits it. Two or three.

Make sure you have an interpreter. Same thing with the prophets. He limits it.

But you see, it seems like in the early church there was a real opportunity for people to stand up. Or perhaps in that day, the posture of the teacher was to sit down. Today, we think of a guy standing up in the middle of the congregation and speaking.

Or standing up and taking the pulpit. Perhaps in that day they sat down. But whichever we're looking at, there is a formal capacity.

There is the reality that when God's people meet together, whether that be in a Bible study or whether it be the whole church, I mean, where you get two or three that are gathering together, there is a formal reality about somebody taking a position, standing up to prophesy or to speak in tongues. Paul obviously is recognizing that a person is taking the floor or a person is taking the focal center of attention in these meetings. So that would be the kind of thing that I believe James is referring to.

This is the special capacity of putting oneself forth as a teacher. Whatever that looks like. You basically have a picture there of Paul limiting.

I mean, he is saying two or three. And of course, the prophets are being subject to the prophets and if one begins speaking, the other one gives place. But there is a place of formality.

And I think we recognize that. We recognize when somebody is setting themselves forth. We recognize when James has a third Sunday, three men get ten minute exhortations, and the man goes up there and he stands in the pulpit.

We recognize something is happening there. There's some sort of platform being given. And I think that that's what James is talking about.

Anyways, the common versus the special. So, on that note, we kind of just ran through it real fast last time, but I want us to think for a second about calling. I can remember when I was being considered for the eldership.

There was one brother in the church that pressed me. Boy, he pressed me all the time. Pressed, pressed, pressed.

And he would tell me he was in the shower and he had this experience and God called him. But he never went into the ministry. So, it was not a valid call.

But he was really pressing me at the time that I needed to have some experience like that. And so, I think different men, if you ask them, men who are in the ministry, how do you know if you're called? I guarantee you ask a hundred men, you're going to get a hundred different answers. And the reason that you will... Look, if you ask a hundred different men about the doctrine of justification by faith, you're not going to get a hundred different answers.

And you know what? You can go to Scriptural texts that give you clear definition on this. The reason you get a hundred different answers from a hundred different men on the call of God is because there isn't a real clear statement in Scripture about the necessity of any specific sort of call. You don't go to 1 Timothy 3 and find that one of the qualifications for becoming an elder in the church, or go over to Titus.

You don't find the qualification for overseer slash elder in the church that one of the pronounced declared qualifications is a call of God that looks a certain way. It's just not there. And yet, you talk to many men and they talk to you like it is there.

And look, most of those men have had experiences of some sort or another. And the problem is that we oftentimes have too much of a problem of making our own experience the rule, the standard. But listen, just listen to these.

Don't turn to them. But this is the Apostle Paul. 1 Timothy 1.12 I thank Him who has given me strength, Christ Jesus our Lord, because He has judged me faithful, appointing me to His service.

Now here's Paul. He could say, I have been appointed to God's service. How? Well, he had his own experience.

None of us have had the Damascus Road experience. None of us had scales fall off your eyes a few days later. None of us had that.

But that's not to say that God doesn't deal with every person that He is calling to proclaim His Word. We're not talking about everybody who's necessarily the guy doing the majority of the preaching in a church. We're talking about somebody that has God's hand on them to preach or teach in the church, man or woman.

God appoints. And listen to this. 1 Corinthians 12.28 God has appointed in the church 1st Apostle, 2nd Prophets, 3rd Teachers.

God appoints them. God appoints teachers. Paul could also say this, speaking of the Gospel, for which, this is 2 Timothy 1.10-11, for which I was appointed a preacher and apostle and teacher.

Now, I recognize he says three things there. But look, he includes teacher. He recognizes he was appointed.

Somebody might want to just focus on apostle and say, well, you know, the apostles, aren't they special? Yes, they're special. But that doesn't downplay the reality of 1 Corinthians 12.28 that God appoints in the church teachers. He appoints.

You can't get away from that truth. He appoints. Of course, the question comes up, how does He do it? And we might make assumptions about how He does it, but He does it.

We know that for starters. Paul could also say this to the Ephesians, of the Gospel, I was made a minister. 1 Timothy 2.7 For this, I was appointed a preacher.

So, I mean, we have that reality. Here's what I would ask men or women. Do you have any confirmation from the Lord? See, I would not press you to have a shower experience.

For one, that wasn't my experience. Did I have subjective things? Yeah, I did. And I was telling one of the young men that's here, I was telling him on Wednesday night about some of those experiences.

But I wouldn't want to say too much about them because I don't want that to be the standard for anybody else. My experience isn't, just like Paul's isn't. Paul's experience isn't mine.

Talk to Paul Washer. He had an experience. Different experiences, different ways that God communicates.

But I would say this, if you're going to be preaching or teaching and God has appointed you to do it, there should be some sort of subjective realization of that. Somehow, God should be communicating that to you. This is the question.

Do you have any confirmation from the Lord that He wants you to be one of those few we get the few based on James 3.1? Do you have some sort of confirmation from the Lord that He has designated you to teach His people? Has God done anything subjectively in your life? Has He put His hand on you? Have you sought the Lord deeply? Prayer and fasting. Too many men take teaching upon themselves in a very haphazard, casual, careless manner. Prayer and fasting.

You know, I have found this, that God really does carry through on His promises to give us wisdom when we ask. I really have found that God is faithful when He says that if you acknowledge Him in all your ways, He'll direct your path. Look, if you have not made up your mind beforehand to teach, see, that's the problem.

Men who make up their mind, they're teachers, and then they go to God looking for proof. But what I have found is if we are really ready and willing to have God's will direct us in our lives, and we go to Him without our agenda already made up, and we ask Him through prayer and fasting, Lord, even at the level of a Bible study, Lord, am I supposed to teach? Would you please give me some confirmation of this? Would

you make this plain? For many, they themselves, they know they want to be in the place of teaching. Case closed.

But that's not how we want to approach this. And then what would you expect? You would expect that God would make it plain to you. Look, God knows many of us are slow.

God knows many of us are like Gideon. God is patient with His children. It's kind of like the fleece is wet, the ground is dry.

Lord, could you show me again? He bears it with His people. He will give you enough evidence. Typically, when God is in something, He will show you ten ways, not just barely one that you have to squint to hardly see.

God will make it apparent when He wants you to take that place. Brethren, I can tell you this, you don't want to go into teaching unless you know God has sent you there. You want that confirmation.

Because I'll tell you this, God is in the business of going with you where He sends you. And He is in the business of not going with you where He doesn't send you. I mean, it's kind of like Moses, you know, Lord, don't send us out there unless you go with us.

That's how you... Guys, you've got to come at teaching that way. Lord, please don't. And I will tell you this, I mean, I did not believe I was called to preach.

I would have not sought preaching in my lost days. Public communication absolutely terrified me. I was the worst in high school.

I dreaded it. I hated it. I turned red.

My knees failed. My tongue went dry. It was bad.

It was bad. And it took God taking me into a situation. Many of you know the story.

There in a juvenile home up in Kalamazoo, Michigan, and I was working with Youth for Christ. And I was a sidekick. I was a volunteer sidekick for a paid staff guy who would lead all these services there at this home.

And he would lead the chapel services. And it was a big home. And there was lots of kids and lots of workers.

And he got sick one day. And I showed up. And here's like seven or eight young people from the college class of a church on the north side of Kalamazoo.

And they came in. And somehow one of them got it in their head. I don't know, maybe the paid staff guy said, have Tim preach.

But the guy probably asked me. He sat down next to me while we're doing the singing. He sat down next to me and he said, you're preaching.

No, I'm not. And he got up and left. And he came back and he sat down.

He said, you're preaching. And I kid you not, he probably asked me seven times. And finally, it was like the importunity of Luke 11.

I caved. And once I said I would, there was still like another song and a half to go before I'd go up. I sat there in utter terror.

I had left my Bible in the car. I had a tract in my pocket by Conrad Murrell. It's that one with the ark.

And there's a smiley face on the side that said, smile, God loves you. My legs barely carried me to the pulpit. And when I got there, such a thing happened as next to my conversion.

It was one of the greatest miracles I ever experienced in my life. What happened right at that moment. Now, I didn't recognize where God was taking me in the rest of my life.

And again, I hesitate to emphasize these things too much because what happened to me is not going to happen to the rest of you. The fire come down from heaven. I felt like wave after wave of liquid love He described it.

This is something that was happening. And again, I recognize that depending on the measure God may use somebody depends on the kind of experiences that they're going to have. But brothers, I'll tell you what that experience did for me.

It showed me that when I went into a pulpit, God would be with me. You want that assurance. If you're sitting in a Bible study with three people, you want to know that that's where God wants you to be and that He's going to go with you when you go there.

Brothers, why would you want to go there? For your ego? So anyway, God makes teachers. And you remember what happened. You remember Moses.

Lord, don't send me. I can't do this. And the Lord said, Moses, I design the mouth.

I make the tongue. I'm the one who creates that. In other words, I give that ability.

I mean, God gives that ability. You remember John the Baptist. He said we can't receive anything unless it's been given to us from heaven.

This is something God gives. This is something... Lay down, boy. Anyway, God will make it clear.

And I want to emphasize that because I get the feeling that some men, they fight and they claw and they strive and they coerce and they maneuver to make it happen. Brothers, but if God's in it, God will guide you. God will show you.

God will direct you. And if you're directed, once you get there, God will help you. That's huge.

Because men, if God has given me the gift of mercy and it's like we can have multiple gifts, but if God has given me the gift of mercy and not the gift of teaching, then you know what? When I go to show mercy, God is going to help me. I would rather go into that realm, in that direction, where I know God is going to help me. I would rather have God help me clean the toilet than me fight, coerce, and maneuver to get in the pulpit, only to get there and not have God's help.

And wouldn't you all agree? I was wondering if I had a comment and then a question. I thought it was noteworthy because I'm thinking about what you were saying. I thought it noteworthy to see that Satan is kind of crafty at creating somewhat of a phony image of what the church does when it calls elders, because you said they're confirmed by the church.

But 2 Timothy says that there's a similar pattern that the world will do and accumulating these creatures that teach according to their needs. So that brought me to this question. It's kind of long and drawn out, but I'll condense it.

So if a man is called and one of his callings that he seems or other people seem to be putting credit in is even within the church, his ability to have a crowd or following. So what I was looking at in 2 Timothy is that what seems to be the indicator that these people, it's them. The fact that they're not the church and they're accumulating these men who teach according to their likes and passions.

So could you look at a man and possibly say, well, he seems articulate. It seems to have right theology, but he's breeding these people that they're not giving fruit. So my question is, could you authenticate or cast off as invalid a man's calling by the kind of fruit his ministry is bringing forth? Yeah, I mean, the thing is, I do look at that.

As I'm watching the church, I watch the men who can get a following. But you know what? That's not always a good thing. Because that's not the only criteria by which we... that's one.

You would expect that if God puts His hand on somebody and they truly have a gift, when they open their mouth, God's people are going to recognize that gift. They're going to be drawn to that gift because they profit from that gift. So you would look for that.

But just because a man gathers a following doesn't necessarily mean that. There's many other criteria that have to be looked at. Let's think about what those are.

I mean, let's just go into that. How does God make it clear? Well, yes, you're going to look for subjective dealings. You're going to look for how God moves you subjectively through prayer and fasting.

How is He leading you? How is He burdening you? You're going to look for providences that come into your life. You're going to look for, if I feel God is leading me to start a Bible study, does the Bible study, do people keep coming to it? Or is it the kind of thing where, well, we start it, and then it kind of fizzles out? Because typically where God's gifts are, it's not going to fizzle out. But I mean, even then, you have to look at certain criteria there.

You can put a very gifted man in a church that has a lot of goats in it, and he begins to preach the truth, and the church goes from 1,000 down to 80. That is not necessarily an indication that he doesn't have a gift. Now, it might be.

I mean, you put a guy in a church that is a terrible preacher, you're not surprised that it would go from 1,000 to 80. I mean, that can happen. See, there's other things to look at besides just how big the following is.

But how does God make it clear? You know, Scripture speaks about a gift of utterance. The ESV uses that in 1 Corinthians 12 when it speaks about an utterance of wisdom or of knowledge. That's basically a word of knowledge.

The KJV uses the word utterance a little more freely. I like that. Utterance.

A man has an ability to speak. This is one of the things that we want to look for. Look, if there's going to be few, then we would say this, if God says there's going to be few teachers, we would reason that He's going to gift a few to be teachers.

And if a few are gifted to be teachers, then we would expect that there are going to be a few people in the church who when they speak, there are going to be abilities that are going to be above and beyond the rest. And we can say this, this is another extremely solid, logical conclusion. That if God doesn't give you a gift of utterance, He has not called you.

No matter what else may be true, He has not called you to preach, to teach if He has not gifted you to do so. We were up there in Shreveport back in 2008. Leadership training.

I always dreamed of having 40 hours and hearing the kinds of stuff that He taught when He goes all over. Anyway, Ruby and I both were given the opportunity to sit. Ruby, you were the only woman? No, there were two or three ladies.

And all the rest were men. And it was leadership training and He told that room full of men that it can be certain if God hasn't gifted us to teach, He certainly has not called us to teach. And this gift of utterance, I mean, what does it look like? Power.

I mean, a demonstration of the Spirit and power, Paul said that. I mean, this isn't artificial. And as I think I brought this up last time, a man can have power even when he whispers.

But there's a power of God. There's a gift of utterance in the sense that He has a command of Scripture. He has a command of language.

He has authority when He speaks. I was struck listening to everybody speak for five days, eight hours a day. Maybe we cut short, especially on Friday, but the better part of 40 hours listening.

How many times? This is all about preaching and teaching. That's the big focus of these modules that he held up there. He used the term authority so many times.

It really made me sit back and say, what's with authority? What's big on that? And you start thinking authority. What is authority? I mean, a man who stands in the pulpit and when he speaks, it's not his own opinions. It's not, well, I think it might mean this or in my opinion, or he's hemming and hawing.

I mean, one of the things he was talking about is the man who stands in the pulpit or he's speaking, he's constantly saying, and hesitating. And he said typically you can tell a man who the Spirit of God is moving upon to preach because he said it's like when the man speaks, it's the word that he's speaking has to get out of the way of the next word that's coming out of his mouth because they're coming one after another. It's like something actually describes at times, I know this feeling where you stand back.

It's almost like you're listening to yourself preach. It's like where is this coming from? The Spirit of God is stirring something. A man has an ability.

There's a, I know I made this word up, but there's a listenability. I mean, when people listen, there is a, and you know, you can listen to a John MacArthur. You can listen to a Paul Washer.

You can listen to differences there in their preaching style. And yet there is something. There is something that is captivating.

There is something that is commanding. And that's the kind of thing. I mean, look, we're looking for a sense of God's ownership.

That's the issue. That's what we want. Not that we're all cookie cutter copies of, you know, we don't want that.

We want diversity. We don't want a bunch of Tim Conways in the church. We don't want that.

We want diversity. We want preaching gifts. And there are a variety.

There is an utterance of wisdom. There is an utterance of knowledge. There is an exhortation.

There is a prophet. There is a teacher. There is a preacher.

There seems to be differences. Different nuanced variations of this variety of speaking gifts. We don't expect everybody to be the same.

But what we expect is when a man or a woman opens their mouth, there is a sense God owns that. There is some ownership. Just thinking of the kind of broad definition of the spiritual gift there in 1 Corinthians 12, 7. It's a manifestation of the Spirit.

You know, to each it's given a manifestation of the Spirit. So, if the gift is there, I mean, is there the, is it there witness that God is owning that? God is behind it. That's a display of the Holy Spirit there.

Not just a display of intense wisdom and eloquence. Right. Yes.

That's what we want. A manifestation. And, I mean, we need to be honest about that in the church.

Because, look, what we don't want is we don't want to be encouraging men and women who don't have a manifestation. And then there are some who there is a manifestation. Now, there may be different degrees.

But where we see a manifestation, we need to encourage that. We need to really encourage that. Brethren, this goes beyond eloquence.

I mean, if you're looking for somebody that God is owning, and somebody that God is calling, and somebody that God is gifting, remember, remember how 1 Corinthians 14, or 1 Corinthians 13, excuse me, how that starts. You can have gifts that go through the roof. But what does Paul say is essential? Love.

You know what? You don't want to find, you want to look not just for men and women who are just eager to get in the pulpit, or get the platform. The reality is that God is going to put desires, not just a desire for fame, not just a desire to be heard, to get somebody's opinion out. But you know what you find is a hallmark of those who God is putting His hand on? There is a burden, there is a desire as God fashions such a man or woman that they care, they care about the fact that people know so little about the true God.

They care that God's glory is not more known. They care that God's people are in the ignorance that they're in. They have a burden that people are lost, that people are in the dark.

They have a burden about that. They have a burden when they look at the church. Why are people not living up to the light that they have? They have a burden that people walk around, some are bruised reeds, that people are fainthearted, that people are weak, that people are undisciplined, that people are as ungodly as they are, that people are not living more according to the Word of God.

There is a burden in people that when they go into the pulpit, there is a burden. There is a burden for the people. Let me tell you, one of the things that happened when I stood in that pulpit that first time is my legs barely carried me into the pulpit.

When I got there, it was like such a sense of peace descended upon me. All my faculties, my mind was absolutely clear, strength was in my legs, and my mouth was ready to speak. The thing is, as I looked at those people, as I looked at those young people, such a burden came over me for their souls.

Such a burden came that I had a truth that they didn't know that I needed to impart to them. You see, that goes way beyond just wanting a platform. You just want to be heard.

You want to be famous. You want to make money. You want to be popular.

You want to be the showman. You want to entertain. You want to be the comedian.

But there's a burden to impart something to the people. Let me tell you another indication. An uncommon hunger for the Word of God.

Listen, if God puts His hand upon you to teach, He puts His hand upon you to teach His Word, you're never going to be able to teach His Word unless you know His Word. You're not going to know His Word unless you've spent lots of hours in the Word. And the thing is, that is not just a matter of willpower and discipline.

God actually gives some men and women a hunger for the Word above and beyond. It's kind of like mercy and giving. That all of God's children should abide in... Jesus said to the Jews who believed in Him, if you abide in My Word, right? I mean, that's a reality for all who are true Christians.

But there is just a reality that those who God puts His hand upon to teach and preach, they have an unusual hunger. And typically, if you look at that man's or that woman's life, even back to when they were first converted, they had an unusual hunger. It's rare that you will ever find a day that they have not been in the Scripture, and typically multiple times.

They want to know. They want to learn. They're hungry.

They can't get enough. The Word is living. It's alive to them.

And they are drawn to it. They have a hunger for it in a special way. Because to be a teacher in the church of God is to be a person who has to be a man or a woman of the Book.

Look, God knows how to create a preacher. The last thing we need is men and women in the pulpit, or on a platform, or leading in any kind of teaching scenario who don't know the Word of God. And you know God knows how to equip His people.

And if they're going to be those who are under that mandate, that charge to preach the Word, you know He is going to so design them as to be those who are going to overflow with it. And as was brought up, the common good. There's a manifestation of the Spirit for the common good.

And we just have to ask ourselves, is there good coming from that? And I know we talked about that somewhat last time, but that needs to be a question. Because what we're talking about is, how do we know when God is calling us? How do we know when God is leading us? And when we speak, is there good? Are God's people built up? And God's people will know when they're being built up. God's people are going to have a sense of that.

And I would just say this, the demoniac does not contradict what I'm saying. I personally think the demoniac can be overplayed. Look, the demoniac was one man who at one time in history asked the Lord that he might be with him, and the Lord told him to go back and proclaim the mighty works that the Lord had done for him.

Go back to wherever, the Decapolis, ten cities or villages. Go back and proclaim among his family and friends. That is not a call that all people lead Bible studies in the church.

That is not a call that everybody be a teacher. It's just not that. Look, I would say this, I don't even know that that is a call for all Christians to necessarily go home or to their own city and stand up and take the platform and proclaim.

You say, why do you say that? Because there were some that came to Jesus and said, I'll follow you, and he said specifically the opposite. Don't go home. And I'll say this, if the Lord sends you to go do that, he's going to enable you to go do that.

Now look, we all have to have an answer for the hope that's in us. We all need to be evangelistic. We all need to be lights of the world and salt in this earth.

We all need to be that. And I'm not necessarily saying that there isn't a place for all of us to go to our families and go to our workplaces and go to our schools and to proclaim the great and the glorious things that the Lord has done for you. I'm not saying that.

But what I'm saying is this, don't take the demoniac and make it a standard for everybody. Because he's the only one who gets saved who is ever told that to. So don't make it necessarily a standard when it's not necessarily put forth as a standard in Scripture.

And I would say this, even if it's normative for us, it's not a beck and call and command that everybody needs to go start a discipleship program or a mentorship program in the church, or that everybody needs to gather a Bible study in their house and take it upon themselves to teach and be teachers and preachers in the church. It's not that. That would fly right in the face of James 3.1. It's not that.

Let's not make it that. I think it gets overplayed. Jesus deals with different men in different ways.

What's the difference between being a teacher and one that just shares? You share the Gospel, you share your testimony. Alright, that's what we're talking about. I think we all recognize when somebody takes a platform, when you have a church meeting and you have two or three who are supposed to speak in tongues with an interpreter, or two or three who are supposed to prophesy, you have an idea when somebody's taking the floor that way over against a general responsibility to sing or to admonish one

another or to stir up one another with love and good works.

I think we have an idea about two different categories here. And I recognize there is a place where we kind of merge. Everything isn't always so cleanly compartmentalized.

I recognize there is a center point somewhere where we kind of have to say, is it crossing that line? But I think when you come to these other factors, that even if you're getting close, we need to be asking, do you do it well? And does it help people? And is God owning it? Because if it's not, then we should kind of... Right, we should all have an answer for that hope. We should all be lights in this world. Look, I will allow that the demoniac could be normative.

I'm just saying this. That's the only guy that Jesus told that to. And there were others He specifically told not to go home.

Now, that doesn't mean He wanted them quiet concerning the Gospel. He recognized home was a snare for some of them and go preach the Gospel in that direction, not back here. I recognize that that's what's taking place.

I just want to be careful that we don't take the demoniac and say, you know, look, here's a novice. Here's a guy that was just saved. And so, we ought to be trying to put anybody and everybody in the pulpit all the time.

And I just feel like sometimes that is stretched and pushed and used as a justification for using men in certain capacities that we just should be cautious about putting them in. Question from the room. There's a gift of administration clearly in Romans 12.

And 1 Corinthians 5, you would recognize that there are elders who rule well, and there are elders who specifically seem like they're going to be more given to the Word and preaching. And so, I would say yes. I believe that generally as an overseer, overseer has the idea of administration and leadership.

If you just think about the terminology, shepherd, overseer, you're going to get ideas of leadership, ideas of feeding, ideas of teaching. Yeah, I guess I'm just thinking about a MacArthur message I listened to. He was speaking about leadership.

And he was saying in a way, you don't want to have somebody who's out there, I'm a leader now, and I'm expecting everybody to come follow him. But he was saying that a true leader would be someone who men naturally want to follow this person. And I guess in order for someone to be an elder, would you want to see those qualities that men naturally follow? Not naturally, supernaturally.

What you want to see is that God has given a gift of leadership where God's people are willing to follow. But like I say, it's not just that. You want to consider the other things.

Is there a gift of utterance here? Does he have a desire? I mean, does he have a heart? Is he burdened because people are in darkness? Is he a man who has an uncommon hunger for the Word of God? Is he a man who has the character qualities to go along with? You'll know them by their fruits. I mean, you see a man that people are following. I'm going to look at the fruit.

I'm going to look at who's following him. I mean, are the most godly people in the church following him? Or are the most ungodly people in the church following him? I mean, what is the character of such a man? So

you're going to look at all of these. And if you find weaknesses in any of these areas, then there may be checks there as far as how far you're going to allow or encourage or endorse that man to go.

Yeah, bro? I'm not already good on this, but I'm just asking for maybe more clarification. If you have a man who's educated, college educated, and he's able to write well, he has a gift of writing. And he has a gift of public speaking.

And you can combine those two to deliver anything in a way that's fluent and clear. How do you distinguish that between the utterance of wisdom and the utterance of knowledge when their content is sound? And what would you look for to distinguish those two? As though he's not called of God? I mean, if what he writes, if what he communicates, I mean, we go back to all these criteria. Is it building up the flock? Is God using it? Is it owned? Does it come with power? Does it come with conviction? Does it come with an ability? I mean, a knowledge of Scripture.

A command of Scripture. A command of language. Does God use it to move His people? To convict His people? To change His people? To save the lost? Is God owning it? Is there good fruit? And while this guy's gifts to do all these things are evident and prominent, is it coupled with a godly life? I mean, is there godliness in this man or in this woman? And so, I think you look at... you know them by their fruit.

You want to look at the whole picture. Hey brother, I know you kind of moved on from it, but I had some thoughts about when you were talking about power and authority. And I just had a thought that there are certain men who I've heard preach, and they preach in such a way it's like it arrests your attention.

And I've heard other men preach, and at least for me, on the other hand, I've had to really make a conscious effort to not agereng. And even though they're like preaching from the Word, it just seems like there's something lacking in it. Whereas with other men, like Hal Harris, they said about him when he preached on the wrath of God, it was like he had seen it.

And I think there's like something in that like where men can preach, and it's like they've seen what they're talking about. Like 1 Thessalonians 1-5, like our gospel came, not in word only, but in power and the Holy Spirit and the full conviction. And I think that's something that's like... Right.

We're going to touch... There are aspects to what you just said that touch on a man's prayer life, the time he's spending in the presence of God. We're going to get to that. Because you definitely... I believe that men and women who are specifically called to preach and teach in the church, you will find them to be men and women of prayer as well.

Men and women who walk with the Lord and talk with the Lord, but not just in the Word a lot and have an uncommon hunger for that. There are also people who have an uncommon hunger to commune with God in prayer. But I want to talk about that separately at another time.

And also, just on that note too, you know, Paul does say to Timothy to stir up the gift that you have. You can be called of God, have God's hand upon you. And it doesn't mean that you just sit back passively and everything is going to happen naturally.

You've got to study to show yourself approved. You've got to work. Any man who preaches and teaches well or woman who preaches and teaches well, they have to work.

They have to stir up the gift. And I can tell you this, there are ways of communicating that captivate men's attention. And there are ways of communicating that put people to sleep and cause people to daydream.

And if you're going to be a good communicator, you need to be thinking about what those things are. Now, I would view preaching somewhat like sanctification. You know, when you're regenerated, there are certain changes that take place in you.

There are certain sins that God may put away out of your life altogether. Much the same in preaching. When God calls a man to preach and gifts a man to preach, there are things that He gifts, He energizes, He changes, He makes real in the man.

But then like our sanctification, there are things you have to work at, you have to strive at, you have to fight through, you have to amputate. Same thing in preaching and teaching. There are things God gives you in the very beginning, and there are things that He gifts to you and graces you with as you fight and work and strive.

But then I want to say this, we need to be a church of men who are content in the way that God has made us. We need to be content with the gifts that God has given to us. I find many men are not content, especially when it comes to the place of speaking.

Many men are not content if it were to be found out that God had given them an unusual gift of serving, or mercy, or compassion, or giving. Contentment. We need to be content.

Listen, God is sovereign in the dispensing of the gifts. By the grace of God, you are what you are. And God has designed you exactly the way you are because He wanted to fit you into the body exactly that way.

And you know what? When you do what you are designed to do, you will find that you are most successful, most fruitful, and most happy. You seek to strive to do something that God has not equipped you to do, and it's like trying to run without legs. You just don't want to do that.

Brothers, we need to be content. Bobby brought up that he felt like he was saying how profitable it was to think on that thought that we don't have to count it failure if we can't preach. Because God is sovereign.

It's not failure. Like I mentioned last time, failure is when I keep trying to preach and God hasn't called me to it. That's failure.

So, brothers, I want to move to... What time do we have? 1024? Okay, I want to move on to this. And I recognize we're dealing with some generalities before we move into some of the specifics on homiletics, but I just want us to think about the importance of what we're talking about. I believe you guys can challenge this.

You can argue this with me or among yourselves. You can debate it, but in my personal opinion, the preaching that you find in a church is one of the primary qualities that make for a good church. I believe that.

I believe that preaching is massively important. I mean, I've told people before, and this is my own conviction and this is my own desire, but if I was not in the position that I'm in, if I was not an officer at GCC, if for whatever reason, I found myself out somewhere and I was having to look for a church, find a

church, I was looking for a good church, I was looking at the quality of churches, I'll tell you, number one on my list is going to be the preaching. You can say, what about the glory of God? What about the emphasis of Jesus Christ and the cross and the Gospel? Yeah, but that all comes back to the preaching.

I want preaching that glorifies God. I want preaching that's powerful. I want preaching that exalts Christ.

I want preaching, I am going to look for that in a church more than I am going to look for anything else. That's not to say that there aren't a hundred other things that are important. There are.

There are. That's not the only thing. Not the only thing by far.

And if a church only had that and lacked everything else, yes, it might be questionable whether that is actually a good church. I recognize that. But it is going to be at the top of the list.

Listen, I want to just read something to you that Martyn Lloyd-Jones said in his *Preaching in Preachers*. He said, just listen, this is his conviction too. This has been the conviction of many.

And feel the burden of this. Lloyd-Jones says, if the people are not attending places of worship, I hold the pulpit to be primarily responsible. I believe that.

I believe it. I believe when you are putting men up, you're giving a platform in the church in all respects, whether it's Sunday school classes, you want to look at exhortations, you want to look at three-man rotations, you want to look at who's heading up grace groups, you want to look at who's heading up Bible studies. Men, if people don't stay, I recognize there are some people that are going to leave if the building's not nice.

I recognize some people are going to leave because the truth is being taught. But where you have good preaching, you generally are going to have a church that is going to grow and that is going to attract people. I mean, that's his opinion.

He says, he holds the pulpit to be primarily responsible. The tendency is, of course, to blame other factors. My contention is that it is the pulpit itself that is ultimately responsible and that when the pulpit is right and the preaching is true, that it will attract and draw the people to listen to its message.

That man is there to deliver the message of God, a message from God to those people. If you prefer the language of Paul, he is an ambassador for Christ. That is what he is.

He has been sent. He is a commissioned person and he is standing there as the mouthpiece of God and of Christ to address these people. In other words, he is not there merely to talk to them.

He is not there to entertain them. He is there, and I want to emphasize this, to do something to those people. He is there to do something to those people.

It's not just get into the pulpit to make it through or to endure. There is a bigger purpose here. He is there to produce results of various kinds.

He is there to influence people. He is not merely to influence a part of them. He is not only to influence their minds or only their emotions or merely to bring pressure to bear upon their wills and to induce them to some kind of activity.

He is there to deal with the whole person and his preaching is meant to affect the whole person at the very center of his life. Preaching should make such a difference to a man who is listening that he is never the same again. Just ask yourself that.

When you go to a Bible study, you go to a grace group, you hear a man give an exhortation, a man takes Sunday school class, a man takes the 11 o'clock. Do you walk away feeling that? That I'm never going to be the same again after hearing that? That is a sense of God's ownership when we are so being dealt with by the Word of God. Brothers, sanctify them by Thy truth.

Thy Word is truth. Sanctification is growth in holiness. It's growth in maturity.

It's growth in Christlikeness. It is growth. You should never be teaching and preaching to leave the people the same.

If somebody preaches a message and you're fighting daydreaming the whole time, that's probably a good suggestion that God is not owning it. It's when people are changed. It's when they are increased from one degree of glory to another.

It's when they're taken up. It's when they're purified. It's when they're changed.

They're not left unchanged. If you are leaving the people daydreaming, falling asleep, thinking about work, thinking about money, thinking about the yard that needs to be cut, thinking about other things, because God isn't taking your words and impacting brains and minds and hearts and souls and changing people. Listen, when people are being changed, they're awake.

When people are being changed, they're being impacted. They may hate it. They may be trying to run inside.

They may be arguing. You know what? Good preaching will leave people arguing with themselves and fighting. And it's not me or I didn't do that.

Or there's conviction. There's a pricking in the heart. This is what He's saying.

Preaching, in other words, is a transaction between the preacher and the listener. It does something for the soul of man, for the whole of the person, the entire man. It deals with him in a vital and radical manner.

It addresses us in such a manner as to bring us under judgment. It deals with us in such a way that we feel our whole life is involved and we go out saying, not, I daydreamed. It leaves people going out saying, I can never go back and live just as I did before.

This has done something to me. It's made a difference to me. I'm a different person as the result of listening to this.

Brothers, we don't go into the pulpit merely to survive. It's like, oh, I've been assigned this and hopefully, I can make it through and in the end receive, that was okay from your wife. I mean, I know Martyn Lloyd-Jones had the hand of God upon him.

I mean, sometimes when the message was done, people would sit there and not move. And I recognize, not every time every man or every woman teaches is it going to leave that same level of impact. But to some degree, that's to some degree, brethren, I am persuaded that this is what the church needs.

Not a bunch of showmanship comedians who preach 25-minute sermons. Brothers, when there is revival in the land, do you know what is revived? The pulpit. Do you know what happened in the Reformation? They moved the pulpit to the center.

They put it up on a platform. They gave it prominence. Not the altar, the pulpit.

That's what happens when God moves. You show me times of reformation and times of revival and I will show you a revival of preaching. Men with power who stand in the pulpit and proclaim the Word of God.

What I'm saying is this, if you show me a good church, and I'm going to show you a pulpit where the Word of God is taken serious, preaching is taken serious, the qualifications are taken serious, where God is owning men and men who are owned of God are standing up and they're proclaiming truth and it's changing people, it's gripping people, it's helping people. This is what we want. We need an emphasis on preaching.

Listen, Charles Spurgeon. Anybody know the story? His biography, the video, somebody made a biographical video of Spurgeon's life with actors and everything. Watch it.

I mean, there's a narration that's taking place and they talk about his life and they go through it. It's accurate. You know what you'll find? Spurgeon preached at the New Park Street pulpit.

They had him fill the pulpit. They basically show you a picture of, I don't know, seven, eight, ten people in the crowd. That's how it really was.

Do you know that by the evening service of that very same day, the place was packed? You say, oh, it was Spurgeon. Yeah, but here's my point. You know what brought the people? Not the love of the brethren for one another.

And I'm not downplaying that. You need to hear me. It wasn't their missionaries' eel.

It wasn't all the missions they were doing in faraway China. That's not what brought the people in. Now, I recognize you can get people, you know, they talked about John Piper when he preached at three separate campuses, but there were certain people that followed him to each one of them, rather than being devoted to just one of them and pouring themselves into the people there.

Look, there are many other factors that need to be considered in a healthy church. And obviously, we're not just looking for God's people to simply, you know, follow the famous preachers around. But my point is this, what packed the house the very same day was there was a preacher in the land who spoke with the power of God upon him.

That draws God's people. Yes, it may draw the curious. It may draw the onlookers.

Why does it draw people? Because it powerfully moves. It transforms. It helps.

Brothers, if you have sat under a powerful sermon, you know it helps you in your life. It helps you in your faith. It helps you in your perception of God.

Weak preaching doesn't do that. Weak preaching, bad preaching is a waste of time. And so don't go if you're not sent.

Because if you're sent, God will not let it be a waste of time. God will let it to some degree have this impact on people. Brothers, now, you know, I'm basically telling you about Spurgeon.

I'm telling you about Martyn Lloyd-Jones and his opinion on this. But listen, when you think about the life of the early church, you think about like four of the components of a healthy church that you maybe have there in Acts 2.42. What's the first one? The Apostles' Doctrine. I mean, those who can set forth, they were setting forth the Apostles' Doctrine.

You go to the pastoral epistles, I know throughout the epistles, there's many qualities to a healthy church. But when you specifically are looking at Timothy, Timothy is being told, Timothy, I'm writing these things to you that you might know how to behave yourself in the household of God. We're talking about the church of the living God.

How to behave yourself. And he gives him instruction and Titus likewise instruction to preach. To preach the Word.

To rightly divide the Word. To study. To show yourself approved.

To give careful attention to your teaching. To your doctrine. This is emphasized.

This reality. Listen, this isn't just historically a reality. God puts a preeminence on the pulpit.

Why? The pulpit. Preachers. Preach the Word.

Preaching is the mouthpiece of God. You know what you find when you find healthy preaching happening in the church? Is you find the voice of God ringing forth clearly. Times of darkness.

Dark ages. What is it that characterizes the landscape? It is the people are shrouded in darkness where they are not hearing the voice of God. The voice of God is the voice of truth.

The voice of God is the voice that transforms. The voice of God is the voice that saves men and pulls them up out of that darkness. Yes, we can have churches where they love each other.

Yes, we can have churches where they're concerned about evangelism and concerned about emissions and they're stirring up one another to love and good works. We can have churches that partake of the Lord's Supper and they have prayer meetings. But brethren, we need the voice of God being trumpeted.

It is the voice of God that sounds as thunder. It's the voice of God that changes. It's the voice of God that's truth.

It is the truth that sets men free. It is the truth that sanctifies. It is the truth which is the seed by which men are born again.

We need this trumpeted and not for 25 minutes and mixed with a bunch of jokes. We need men who have a burden, who know what they're going to say, who go in the pulpit with a burden because they've got a message from God to deliver because they've walked with Him in prayer and they go into that pulpit. These are the men and women that the church desperately needs.

We don't want to play at this if God hasn't sent us to do this. And I'll tell you, where you go into churches and you've got this kind of thing happening, it attracts people. People want to be there.

Churches grow. Good churches grow. I recognize megachurches may grow because they've got ear ticklers in the pulpit.

I recognize that. But when you have men who are speaking the solid truth and you see expansion, something is happening in the pulpit. Something is attracting.

Men, we have a commission. We have something committed to us. You think about what's being said in Scripture.

Think about what Jude says. The faith that's once and for all been delivered to the saints. There's this package.

You know how it's said to Timothy? He is told to guard something. You know what he's told to guard? Anybody know? The deposit that has been entrusted to him. Men who have a deposit entrusted to them.

When you have a deposit entrusted to you, it doesn't mean you hide it away in that bathroom. It doesn't mean you put it in the cellar. Put it up in the attic.

That's not how you guard it. You guard it by letting it ring forth, clarion call from the pulpit, and you guard its purity. You guard its truthfulness.

You guard its accuracy. You guard it as being the Word of God. You guard it from any taint of error.

That's how you guard it. You guard it from any deception. You guard it from any lie.

You guard it from any of the influence of this world or of the devil or false teachers. You guard it so that it is purely God's Word. And there is a deposit that has been entrusted to us.

Men, do you know about that deposit? I can guarantee you this. This comes back to whether God has called you or not. Do you have a sense of something that God has given to you? An entrustment, an endowment, this faith once and for all delivered to the saints which you have a responsibility to communicate.

This is God's Word in an ocean of darkness, in this landscape that is controlled by this One who is the Prince of the Power of the Air that has this whole world in His domain. This is His dominion which we find ourselves amidst so much darkness and this kingdom of darkness and this present evil age. And here we are as grains of salt dropped upon the earth as these beacons of light.

Do we have this entrustment? Do we know what it's about? How can we think to preach or teach if we don't know about this? We don't have a concept of this. Brothers, you've got to know the Gospel if you're going to think that you can preach or teach in any capacity. The Gospel.

Do we know what the Gospel is? Do we know what man's greatest need is? Do we know what true Christianity is? Do we know how to distinguish between true faith and false faith? True repentance and false repentance. Can you articulate what repentance is? Can you articulate repentance in a way that it is not a work that saves you? Can you articulate propitiation? Do you know justification? Do you know how to distinguish justification from sanctification? Do you know what regeneration is? Can you articulate it? How is it different from sanctification? Do you know these things? We've got to know these things. If you don't know these things, you'll deceive yourself and you'll deceive those you teach.

Listen, I hear men who say things, it isn't right. It isn't true. They want to be counselors.

They want to instruct others. And they sit down and they're novices. They're immature.

They're novices. They don't know about what they speak. And they speak and they speak with authority.

I mean, their own authority. And yet, they know not what they say. Brothers, we've got to be able to articulate this.

Conversion. You want to boil it down? You could boil it down to this. We're to repent and believe the Gospel.

Can you articulate the most basic answer to the question that is the question of the ages? What must a man do to be saved? There's the Philippian jailer. Can you answer that man? Can you answer him in such a way that it would be complete enough, full enough, scriptural enough, that God would actually use your message to save that individual if he's one of the elect? And you hear what I'm saying when I say that. I recognize we can articulate the truth at times and God doesn't save.

Not because the message was inaccurate. They're not one that God purposed to save. But I can tell you, you might have one of God's elect, but God isn't going to use you to save them because what you articulate isn't full enough to save them.

Or it's so full of error and erroneous thinking that you haven't articulated the Gospel in a way that's really the Gospel. Brothers, do you know how to articulate the responsibility of mankind with all these doctrines of grace hanging over your head in such a way that you're not running around spilling a bunch of wretched hyper-Calvinism out in this world, basically telling men that there's nothing they can do and they have no responsibility and they need to sit down? And can you articulate that without it being a Gospel of works? We better be able to do this because if we're wrong, we're going to deceive people. If we're wrong, we're going to stand in the pulpit and we're going to deceive people.

And listen, you may have Christians that are your audience and you may say, well, they're already saved. And I recognize there may be those who are teachers and they may be called more specifically to minister to God's people, not so much evangelists. I recognize there are different categories and nuances of this utterance, this teaching gift.

But listen to me, the Gospel is food for the child of God and it is the very basis of the child of God's sanctification. And if you don't know the Gospel clearly and can't articulate it accurately, you are going to stunt the growth of God's people just as much as deceive the lost. This is critical.

There is a body of truth that has been endowed to the church. Do you know what it is? Has God given you such a hunger for the Word? And have you spent the time? Remember, those men in the early church, they said, if we're going to give ourselves to this, we are not going to serve tables. We are going to give ourselves to prayer and we are going to give ourselves to the Word.

They didn't play at other things. Listen, I know some men, some women, you may lead a Bible study, you may be called to do a Sunday school, you may have a secular job. I recognize those things.

But look, that may be where God has you right now, but I'll guarantee you this, you're not going to be able to do what other men do. Those men could not do what other men did. And even if it's just leading a Bible

study, you're not going to be able to do what other men can do.

If you think you're going to go home and you're going to be changing diapers on your kids all the time and you're going to share with your wife 50-50 on changing baby diapers, or you're going to have all these hobbies and you're going to get your golf score down really well, you're going to spend excessive time at the gym, or you're going to do whatever. Guys, you can't do that. You can't do that and be responsible.

There is a body of truth. You've got to know it. You've got to know how to set... You remember those priests back in Nehemiah? You know what they did? When the Word of God was spoken, these guys came along.

Whole list of names there in Nehemiah chapter 8. What they did was they explained to the people the meaning. They gave a sense, it says, to the words. You cannot give a sense to something you don't understand.

If you're scratching your head about how this doctrine fits with this doctrine and you can't articulate these things, you haven't wrestled through these, look, you're a novice. You're a novice. That's not sinful.

I'm not saying that you're in the wrong. You're just not ready. Look, there's a time to be a teacher and there is a time to sit and listen.

Because there is a growth. Even for those who may eventually get to the place where they teach, because God's hand is on them, there's a time to listen. There's a time to be taught.

And you've got to be able to grasp the truth. Last thing we need is people in the pulpit, people who are leading Bible studies, who are uncertain. They stand up and they say, well, you know, this might mean this or this.

We need men who say, thus saith the Lord. This is what the Lord says. Not men who can articulate Calvin.

Not men who can articulate this guy out of history or this system. Men who know their Bibles. Not men who simply have read Wayne Grudem and can articulate the systematic theology and what it says about repentance.

Repentance. Can you articulate repentance from the Word of God? Do you know the proof text? Can you go to the passages that show that it's mandatory? That show without it you will perish? That show the nature of this repentance? Can you show passages where repentance is exhibited? Do you know those places? If you say, well, it's basically a turning from sin. Can you prove that from Scripture? Look, there is a faith that Jesus would not commit Himself to.

There is a faith that's no better than demon faith. Do you know the difference and the distinguishing characteristics from that as the other one? Look, when somebody comes along and says, what must a man do to be saved? Give them this little two-minute blurb at the end of your sermon trying to call sinners to faith. Brethren, those things go nowhere.

Nobody ever gets saved through those. You've got to be able to stand up and so articulate things that you speak to men's hearts. That you reach in and grab hold of their... Listen, when Peter preached, there was conviction.

There was something happening in the hearts. The people were shaken. The people were set back on their heels.

What must we do? That's where you want to bring people. What must we do? There's got to be concern. There's got to be things happening there.

We've got to so know the truth. We've got to know this body of truth. But we've also got to know how to apply it to men.

How to appeal to their consciences. How to appeal to their person. How to appeal to their minds.

The church has been entrusted. There is a way we conduct ourselves. And what we want to do is we want to take this body of truth.

Yes, all of us in the church, we need to be studying it. We need to be in our Bibles. We need to be abiding in the Word.

But there need to be men and women who so have a grasp. They have a grip. They have a mastery of this entrustment.

And they take it and they stand up or sit down, whatever the platform is. And they're faithful to this. And they're faithful to men's souls with it.

Listen, do you know what the characteristics of true Christianity are? It doesn't matter if there are people out there that tell you you're being judgmental and judge not and all this garbage. Listen, we need to be clear. We need to be accurate.

We need to know. Scripture talks about the true and the false. Do you know it? Do you know? I mean, can you not simply go through the solas of the Reformation, but do you have a grasp on the Gospels, the four Gospels that you can go in, that you can see how Christ addressed sinners? You can go into the book of Acts and you've studied, you've looked, how did those early preachers address sinners? Brothers, we have a deposit that we are called upon to guard.

And we need men and women that show the calling, the gifting, the leading of God, God's hand is on them, to go forth and guard that. And do it in such a way that there is this that I'm talking about being displayed in the church. Listen to Lloyd-Jones again.

Is it not clear? As you take a bird's eye view of church history, that the decadent periods and eras in the history of the church have always been those periods when preaching had declined. What is it that always heralds the dawn of reformation or revival? It's renewed preaching. Not only a new interest in preaching, but a new kind of preaching.

A revival of true preaching has always heralded those great movements in the history of the church. And of course, when the reformation and the revival come, they've always led to great and notable periods of the greatest preaching that the church has ever known. They go hand in hand.

We need men, women who tremble at the Word of God. They're fearful to say anything that's not true. Who stand up or sit down to proclaim with the help of God.

And I believe it's essential for the church. Whatever else may be true. And I believe you can find that emphasis in Scripture, especially the pastoral epistles.

You find that emphasis. These men, Ephesians 8 says, are gifts of Christ to the church. It's for equipping the body.

And to what degree we give platform to men and women who are not those gifts, it will impact the equipping of the saints to that degree. It's not artificial. You have good preaching.

You generally, they go hand in hand. You're going to have conversions. You're going to have the greatest growth.

It's been true in church history. And there it is in Scripture. Because apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, teachers have been given as a gift to the church to equip the brethren, to equip the saints for the work of the ministry.

This is how the growth takes place. We need such teachers. We need them.

God makes them. God give us the help to determine if we are those, whether we are or aren't, who else in our midst is. So again, I know that this has been somewhat introductory.

We are going to get into actual sermon preparation. But I just think we don't want to get ahead of ourselves. We need foundations.

Father, we pray, give us good, healthy foundations. Lord, we pray for a healthy church. We want that.

We want the time of reformation, the time of revival, and the preaching that goes along with it. We want that, Lord. We know that You breathe into men and women such as produces this kind of thing.

Lord, please privilege us that in our generation we should see such a thing. We pray, Lord, we pray in the name of Your Son. Amen.

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