

# Homiletics: The Preacher's Prayer Life - Part 4

by Tim Conway

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*Tim Conway emphasizes the critical role of prayer in the life and ministry of preachers, highlighting its necessity for effective preaching and spiritual vitality.*

**Duration:** 27:26

**Scripture:** Luke 5:16, Acts 6:4, 2 Corinthians 2:16, Philippians 4:6, James 5:16

**Topics:** "Prayer Life", "Holy Living"

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## Description

This sermon emphasizes the vital importance of prayer in the life of a preacher, highlighting the need for deep communion with God, dependence on Him, and the cultivation of a strong prayer life to handle the Word of God effectively. It stresses the significance of living a holy and distinct life, walking closely with the Lord, and seeking His guidance through prayer in all aspects of ministry.

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## Transcript

The next thing I want to talk about, which really, at the end of talking about our holiness, we could say if we're going to be teaching, we need to live close to God. And you know the reality is even if you're leading a Bible study, you're going to prison, you're going to a nursing home, whatever, you have to live different than other people live. Even other Christians.

You can't do what they can do. You have to live a different life. And you need to walk especially close with the Lord.

You're going to be handling the Word. You're going to be trying to rightly divide it. You want to walk close to the Lord with regards to prayer.

And I just want to talk about the prayer life of the preacher momentarily. The preacher's prayer life. And remember, I guess the verse that I just want to repeat to you all the way through talking about prayer.

You remember the Apostle Paul saying in 2 Corinthians 2, who is sufficient for these things? He was looking at the weightiness. You remember the context. When we set forth truth, it is an aroma or a fragrance of death unto death, life unto life.

Some, it's their death sentence. Some, it's going to compound their guilt when we preach. It's going to be more tolerable.

You think about it. It's going to be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah than for these folks who have heard what you said. That's not only what Jesus says in Matthew 11 to those who heard Him.

He speaks the same thing to His disciples and says that reality is true when you and I bring the Word. We set forth truth that is death unto death, that is life unto life. He says who's sufficient for these things? These things are huge.

What we're seeking to do when we open up God's Word, it is a big deal. And you remember, the guys specifically, they set aside deacons or forerunners to that anyways. Why? Because they said, it's not right that we serve tables.

We're going to give ourselves to the Word. We're going to give ourselves to prayer. You see, the guys giving themselves to the Word are guys that are giving themselves to prayer and they're making those things a priority in their lives.

Here's Lloyd-Jones. He says prayer is vital to the life of the preacher. Read the biographies and the autobiographies of the greatest preachers throughout the centuries and you will find that this has always been the great characteristic of their lives.

And I don't know if you've ever heard what Lloyd-Jones' own wife said about him, but because most of his sermons that were recorded were the ones that he did in the morning that were basically preaching through the epistles and for the people of God, he often is seen as this Bible expositor to saints, but his wife said of him, he is first and foremost, I forget the order she put it in, he's an evangelist and he's a man of prayer, or she said he's first a man of prayer and he's then an evangelist. And you see, they didn't record, we don't have the evangelistic messages from the evening, but he was quite the soul winner, but he was a man of prayer. He says they were always great men, these best preachers through history, always great men of prayer and they spent considerable time in prayer.

We've got to cultivate prayer. Look, every one of us are wired different. If we're going to handle the Word of God, we've got to be in prayer more than most Christians are going to be in prayer.

Why? Because we're handling the Word of God. We're doing something they're not. Who is sufficient for these things? You are taking upon yourself something you are not sufficient for.

You need the Lord. You're not sufficient for these things. We've got to cultivate this.

Some are morning people, some are evening people. But look, however it is, you need to be praying not only for yourself, you need to be praying that God would give you the ability to rightly divide that Word and you need to be praying for your hearers. And as Brother Andy has said, if you're going to pray for all the people that are listening to you, you can't do that in three minutes.

We've got to spend time, due time, adequate time, length of time, quality time. And whether it's in the morning or whether it's in the evening, you've got to cultivate this. Many of you know, John Wesley said that he was determined that when he went to pray, he was going to pray until he prayed.

Lloyd-Jones would say that we need to kindle a flame in our own spirit. You guys know what it's like to be dry, to try to pray when you're dry. Look, there are things that stir us up.

I don't know about you, but I can listen to certain things or read certain things and they stir me up. They put me in a frame to pray. We need to do what we need to do at the time of day we need to do it and we need to give priority to it.

And look, if you are a guy who is undisciplined and you cannot give priority in your life to prayer, you should not be preaching. Because basically what you're saying is you really have not grasped who is sufficient for these things if you're not giving due time to prayer. Because prayer is for needy people.

Prayer is for people who are desperate to get God's help. Prayer is for people who say, I'm not sufficient for these things. Lord, help me.

If you can bypass prayer, you're basically being self-sufficient and independent and really prideful and you're in a frame that... Brother Andy said, I think it was about prayerlessness. He said, prayerless preachers are the curse of the church. Who is sufficient for these things? And Brother Andy says, I travel around, I find many preachers who make superficial use of prayer.

And again, he does a message in his leadership training. Half of the message he devotes to secret prayer in the life of the preacher. Some of the best stuff.

I mean, it's as good or better than anything you'll find by even Lloyd-Jones and Spurgeon. I'm amazed at that guy, his ability to say things. But listen to Andy.

He said, men, if the majority of prayer that you offer up when you're preaching is that which you pray right before you teach, that's bad. That's really bad. It speaks to self-sufficiency.

And I'm certain of this. As far as God taking vessels out to use, He's not going to use prayerless vessels. Why? Because that's a blemished vessel.

Because it's self-sufficiency. It's proud. It's arrogance.

Pride. He resists the proud. If you're prayerless, you're one He resists.

Don't think He's going to help you when you go in the pulpit. Some men just have it in their mind. They're so worried about the scholastic end.

They're so worried about simply having all their doctrine correct and being able to say this and define the Greek and go over here and do this and do that and read all the commentaries and have all their points and all their points start with the same letter and they've done all this, and they don't pray. Those He lays His hand upon, well, you've got to know, those He lays His hand upon are the ones who say who's sufficient for these things. They're the ones who believe they're not sufficient for them and they're desperate to get help.

I'm going to read some extended quotes that come from Andy's leadership training. Men, hear me. This is him.

The secret of all deepening vital godliness in the life of the preacher is that he must be a man who lives in the habit and the discipline of secret prayer. The truest barometer, get this, the truest barometer is to the reality and vitality of a man's walk with God is his discipline in and desire for communion with the living God. I would simply implore you men to arrange your schedule and sleep patterns.

And then he goes on to quote Tozer, how Tozer talked about these little saintlets. In other words, you don't want to be that. You don't want to be these little saintlets.

This is not a minor exercise of a few minutes of the preacher. This must be the very air, the very atmosphere, the very place where they live. Luther.

You heard him tell the story. Many of you have heard maybe others tell the story about Luther who said he had so much to do this day he needed to pray an extra two hours. But see, that's the picture of a man who recognizes I've got so much to do, the last thing I need to do is just throw myself into busyness thinking I'm going to accomplish more if I do that.

He recognized I have so much to do, I need to pray an extra two hours. Why? Because look, if you pray that extra two hours and God comes to you when you stand to preach and He inflames that and He empowers that, you're going to accomplish far more than you could have by two hours in your study of just spinning your wheels without God's help. That's the idea.

And listen to what Andy says. He's talking about men who pray. Preachers, specifically, who pray.

And he says these are men who have been crushed of their own self-sufficiency. Hear Paul. Who is sufficient? This has everything to do with self-sufficiency.

Who is sufficient? Who can reach out from the pulpit and grab hold of men's consciences and shape them from one degree of glory to another? Who can show Christ in a way that's powerful? Who can regenerate? Who's sufficient for these things? Men who have been crushed of their own self-sufficiency. These are the men who live in the spirit and posture of prayer. Men who take time, feel a sense of need, orient their schedule and live on their knees, know the anointing of God more than other men.

Look, if that's true, that should compel you. If that is truly a reality, that the men who live on their knees know more of an anointing of God when they stand to preach, why would you not want to pray? Why would you not be men of prayer? Why would you not cast self-sufficiency to the wind? Who is sufficient for these things? Cling to the Lord. Pray.

Give your best time to this. Brothers, desperate men pray. That's why people that don't come to the prayer meeting, it's like you're not desperate.

You don't recognize how badly you need God to save your children, how badly you need God to give you the things in your life that you think you need to grow into the image of Christ, to be advancing in love, to be advancing in humility, to be advancing in Christ's life, to be advancing in all these things. I'm just talking generally about people who are trying to struggle over the importance of a prayer meeting, but how much more a preacher that would struggle with whether or not he ought to be spending due time in his prayer closet. Desperate men pray.

Desperate men who have been crushed and broken. This is Andy again. We must dwell in the presence of God so that when you come out of that place, the Shekinah glory of God is on your face so that men sense and smell the aroma of Christ.

Men, you must live in the place of prayer. I can tell you this, I know one young man, very given to prayer, very given to prayer, by the name of John Dees. And I know that somewhere, I must have got an email from somebody that had a question and they were commenting on John Dees and the preaching that got

put up on the Internet.

And somebody was just saying, what's the deal with that guy? It's like the power of God is on his preaching. You know, he's a guy that you might look at and say, well, his gift is not extraordinary, but I'll tell you, he prays. You put men in the pulpit that are men of deep prayer and deep contrition and deep brokenness who lay hold and cling to the Lord, and is thinking, we would do well if we prayed as much as we studied before we went to teach.

I suspect that every preacher would bemoan that they fall short in that. But Andy says, if you're a preacher and handle holy things, you must press through the veil. Do you pray for the people to whom you preach? Or do you pray only for yourself? That ought to be convicting.

And he says, what I quoted before, if you pray for them, do you think you're going to do that in three minutes? There's little prayer in the lives of preachers today. Do you need to see the box out back? Ruby, do you want to show them the box right out around the corner? Keep Rex from attacking him? Andy says, there's little prayer in the lives of preachers today. He's a man that trains men.

Give your best hours to prayer. Don't think it is wasted effort. If you're too busy to pray, you're too self-dependent.

Your priorities are not right. We just think about our Lord. Our Lord was the preacher of all preachers.

You know the text. Rising early. Jesus drew power from His Father.

He went to His Father. Prayer was clearly a priority in His life. Do you want to do an interesting exercise? Just read the book of Luke.

Luke especially likes to call attention to prayer. He likes to look at Christ in praying. Christ often slipped away to that lonely place to pray.

Man, we've got to be like that if we're going to handle the Word. This is not just about reading the systematic theology and having some scholastic grasp where I can verbally explain the difference between superlapsarian and that which is not infra or sub. Look, this is one of the big problems that I see in Bible schools and seminaries.

In many ways, they can cultivate pride. There's a knowledge that puffs up. And there is this pride that is cultivated.

If men are being exposed to these doctrines and it humbles them, and it breaks them, and it crushes them, that is the right posture to take before men. But young men who simply get puffed up learning a bunch of doctrines, they are not the men we need to be putting in our pulpits quite honestly. And I'm not saying that everybody that comes out of seminary is like that, but I'm saying that seminaries and any kind of studies, even like a theology study, those are the kind of atmosphere... okay, those can be atmospheres where we're not seeing them as we ought.

We're not seeing these doctrines as we ought. Look, these doctrines that make God big should be making us small. And that should be making us feel very insufficient and very little in our own estimation.

And if we're in some kind of climate where we're studying and it's not producing that, then I'll tell you this, pride does not produce praying people. It does not produce desperate people and broken people. And that

is what we need.

I mean, even Jesus Himself, you think about Him as a man. He desperately needed His Father. Desperately dependent.

It was the practice of the Son of God to be off and to get away from the crowds. That needs to be us. How much more should it be us? He wasn't characterized by any sin.

We've got our own failures. And the reality is, no matter how holy you're trying to live, no matter how good your marriage is, you get the bumps in the road. No matter how you strive to be humble, there's pride that comes out.

No matter how you seek to be believing, there is unbelief that comes out. No matter how we are seeking to do these things, here's Christ the perfect man living constantly in dependence upon His Father. Gardner Springs says this, we will give ourselves to prayer and the ministry of the Word.

That's what the guys said. That's what the leadership said. That's what the men who are going to be handling the Word of God said in Acts 6. And he says this, this is the law of the pulpit.

I love that. This is the law of the pulpit. And Springs says this, if he's not a man of prayer, he's not a man of God.

And it better be anywhere else than in the pulpit. And see, the thing is, if we're going to handle the Word of God in a certain respect, we're going to be more dependent on the Lord than other people. Because we're going to have to depend on Him to do something for us that other people are not depending on Him to do.

And that is to handle His Word for which we're going to have to stand before Him and give a greater accountability and a stricter judgment. Who is sufficient for that? Who is sufficient for judgment day based on handling this Word of God and trying with our puny minds to handle the truth of this book and then to go up before men and accurately, responsibly, truthfully with balance, equal weight, not swinging the pendulum off this way or off this way, with a very balanced view and with the right emotion, with the right compassion, with the right sense of urgency, stand up before men and seek to impart this truth to them. Who is sufficient for such things? And we should be praying all the way through.

We should be praying. I mean, men, we should be praying for what passage to be preaching from or what topic to be preaching from. Look, going into the pulpit and knowing that God has owned the message, there's something to that.

There's something going in the pulpit with a recognition that God is owning this series or has in the study really owned the fact that I should be teaching from this topic or from this passage because He opened it up. Some of you know how Spurgeon talks about in the choice of a text, you want to read a really entertaining chapter, you read lectures to my students on how Spurgeon often would come up with a text. I'm not saying that's how you ought to come up with one.

He had some pretty out there ways. But he talked about hitting that text and having it break open. That's a sense of God's ownership there.

Anyways, I've got numerous things here, but Andy references this in his leadership training and I drew this out of lectures. Spurgeon says this, one bright blessing which private prayer brings down upon the ministry

is an indescribable and inimitable something better understood than named. It is a do from the Lord, a divine presence which you will recognize at once when I say it is an unction from the Holy One.

What is it? I wonder how long we might beat our brains before we could plainly put into words what is meant by preaching with unction. Yet, he who preaches knows its presence and he who hears soon detects its absence. Anyways, look, if you're going to do it... Like I don't understand somebody that wants to go play sports and not seek to do as best they possibly can.

I don't understand that if there's something that somebody is actually going to take the time to do that they wouldn't want to do it with everything. Scripture says whatever whatsoever your hand finds to do, we should do it with all our might. Guys, if you're in a place where God is putting you in a position to teach, I mean, you really have some sense of a calling on your life.

Other people recognize that there is a gifting there. The holiness of your life is sufficient that you should even be in that position. If you're going to do that, God opens up the opportunity.

The door is opened in His providence for you to be able to do so. Why would you not want to do it as best you possibly can? I mean, I'm speaking to myself too. And prayer plays into a huge part.

We underestimate. Listen, ask and you will receive. I mean, how many promises of prayer if we seek, we will find? Brethren, I could tell you of times of being frustrated to the point of tears, walking in this field, wrestling with the Lord over passages, especially I remember in Romans 7, but other places in Scripture where this is one of the things that happens when you preach verse by verse through a letter.

You come to places where, Lord, I need to stand up before Your people and preach this. And I'm moving through Romans and I've got to deal with Romans 7, or I'm moving through Ephesians and I've got to deal with these passages. And Lord, I need help.

I need help. And it's amazing how at times thoughts will come. And it's equally amazing how much help God has been at some times, how prayerless I'll be in other sermons after the help that He gave me in the other ones.

And then not to pray like I did in those times over the other ones. And knowing the help that He's brought and knowing at times the reality of that unction or that do or that assistance that happens when you're in the pulpit. Brothers, we don't want to miss the reality of holiness and prayer and their effect on our power in the pulpit.

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