

“Preaching from a Pure Heart”

Lloyd-Jones said the preacher’s most important task is to prepare himself, not his sermon. This mimics what Paul said — pay close attention to yourself and teaching.

Preaching should be done with a devotion for Christ. The one who preaches what he does not feel is at best a phony and at worst a charlatan.

I want to take heed to myself; I don’t want to preach sermons with an unclean heart. I don’t ever want to preach when my heart is not right. This is a struggle because ministry is hard and busy... And the temptation will be to preach when unprepared. Where has your heart been all during that time?

Richard Baxter — take heed to yourselves...lest you unsay with your lives what you say with your tongues...he that means as he speaks will do as he speaks...

M’Cheyne — “My people’s greatest need is my personal holiness.” I won’t be a powerful preacher and a grace to my people unless I have a life of holiness.

God has called us to keep the commandment without stain or reproach. God may have used a donkey to speak the truth, but he never intended to fill his pulpits with them.

Cf. 1 Tim. 6 — run from sin and run to righteousness. It is his devotional life that gives his ministry life and power and color.

So how will we consecrate our hearts — *every* week?

Cf. the chapter on godliness in the pulpit in *Preaching and Preachers* (Logan)

SEVEN PRINCIPLES FOR CONSECRATING YOUR HEART AS YOU PREPARE FOR THE PULPIT.

1. Consider whom you preach

The problem with preaching today in the postmodern approach is that sermons are so completely void of the person of Christ. No sane preacher with a clear understanding of the person of Christ can speak superficially of the person of Christ. No one preaches less than they know. If someone preaches a shallow sermon, that is the deepest Christ they can access.

When a sermon bears the marks of flippancy there is unchecked ungodliness lurking beneath the surface. Christ is the apex of our preaching.

Cf. 2 Cor. 4 — We preach Christ as the glory of God. What has happened to this kind of preaching? We preach Christ and not ourselves.

- ✓ Are we anticipating when we come to the text of Scripture the wonders we are about to behold with respect to Christ? That's what Paul did. Cf. 1 Cor. 2:1-5. Are you excited to study the Word of God?
- ✓ Do you work through a text and long to be affected and changed by it? Your preaching will never be the same if that is your longing. Do you think about being affected by that text you study? If not, your indifference will become hypocrisy.
- ✓ Are you humbled and overwhelmed by the privilege of preaching? Does the congregation hear that you are an unworthy servant? Don't let compliment become a temptation to self-intoxication.
- ✓ When I am studying Scripture am I stunned by the generosity of God in Christ? If I can study the Scriptures and consider whom I preach — Christ — and not stunned by the condescension of God to this miserable sinner, then I am not prepared.
- ✓ Is it obvious to my congregation when I preach that the majesty of Christ overwhelms my soul and causes reverence? How can our study be lifeless when it is the glory of God we preach?

Cf. Act 5:42 — they kept preaching Christ as the holy one. Surely that had to impact their moral life! I don't want to be found with the Words of Christ on my lips and not the Spirit of God transforming my heart. E.g., Rom. 5:17.

The preacher must strive to be righteous. 1 Cor. 1:30. He is our righteousness. Why would a preacher spend his time in the mechanics of Christ and not consider whom he preaches. This is the Savior Himself — Jesus Christ the righteous. That's who we preach — A Savior who has no harmony with evil.

1 Peter 1:14ff — I have been redeemed from sin; preach the holiness of Christ and live the holiness of Christ. Add 1 Cor. 1:23-24 — Christ is the *power* and *wisdom* of God. If you are going to preach the power of God, that power ought to transform your life. People ought to see a freshness and growth to the ministry of preaching. They ought to see a progress in our preaching on holiness. And there ought to be an ability in your preaching to help people get there — to become more holy.

In preaching, if we quickly jump to superficial application without showing how we have grown in applying this word, it indicates that our own lives are on cruise control. Do we have a fresh devotional life that is evident in our preaching?

Our sermons ought to most notably be about the glory of God in Christ — the righteousness of God in Christ. And that is a self-purifying activity.

2. Examine our motives for the study

Why am I studying these texts so I can preach on the Lord's day? What are my internal motives? This is practicing Ps. 119:18 — open my eyes that I might behold (see from every angle) wonderful things from your Law.

Cf. Lloyd-Jones on this topic. The danger of a preacher is that he may look for texts for sermons, but for food for the soul.

We do these things because I love this more than anything else. But if we sacrifice meditation for expediency, we drain every bit of fueling passion from the sermon. I want the mind of Christ to transform my earthly thoughts.

Examine your motives. Yes, it's hard. But we haven't been martyred in our striving against sin. We need to stop thinking about what we can't do and come to the Word of God and ask God to change us.

3. Win the battles where no one else can see

1 Tim. 1:5 — there is the mandate for the preacher who instructs. The goal of teaching is the love of the gospel from God to sinners, so we give the sinner what he needs. We preach because we love the gospel and the sinner. Further, we need a conscience that is spiritually sensitized and our faith must be unhypocritical.

When a man falls, he doesn't fall far (MacArthur) — there have been many ongoing compromises that finally culminate in final failure.

Also 1 Tim. 4:1-2 — seared consciences. If you get into the habit of silencing the conscience soon it will sound off and it will be completely unheard. The more we disobey, violating our conscience, those spiritual nerve endings will become deadened... We want highly sensitive nerve endings. We need a truth sensitive inner life.

1 Tim. 1:15; 1 Thess. 2:3ff, 10f— sensitive to the truth in the inner life as testified by the people *and God*. These are sobering statements!

Men rationalize sin. Rationalization builds on itself. That will bring a fatal blow to the life and ministry of that preacher.

4. We are going to have to be brutally honest in confession

Psalm 51 — God desires truth *in the inner man* — that's why David confessed. God defined sin and David wanted to be subject to that standard, and he was cleansed.

Lord, do whatever it takes to cleanse me and my preparation is right and my preaching is effective.

If you cover, God will uncover. Cf. Ps. 32.

5. Yield your will to each truth learned (or that the study yields)

If we study Scripture without yielding our wills, our lives won't change and we are subject to becoming hypocritical. This was the practice of Ezra — study, learn, practice.

Let the principles confront every area of my life. What will that principle change in my life *right now*. *Learn the truths* by applying the principles. Yield the will to the Word of God. That is what sanctification really is.

If your motives for the study is obligation or intellectual pride or curiosity, we will not benefit in our souls. Study and then meditate and then yield moment by moment as we study. Ask the Lord — “am I yielding right there?” What are my habits? You yield to each truth learned. This is very personal!

6. Pray dependently for divine grace

Nothing can happen in your preaching or in your church without the grace that comes from prayer. God must dispense this grace.

The highest activity of the soul is prayer. There's nothing that tells the truth about us as our prayer lives. (Lloyd-Jones)

Do you pray that God will do something in the church? Without alert prayer in the Spirit, we will not have protection, effectiveness, or boldness.

7. Gratefully trust in the Lord's sovereign plan

Don't manipulate or complain about the work of the ministry. It is the Word of God that does the work of God. Be grateful that God is on His throne – if he wants to shelve me, what am I? Just an unworthy slave. Be grateful.

Cf. 2 Cor. 2:17 — we are not like many peddling the Word of God. *We preach Christ in the sight of God*. Every sermon preached He is hearing, and He knows the heart.