

The Least of the Work of the Evangelist Advice to Men Who Will Fill the Pulpit

Last week we completed the four part series on *The Work of an Evangelist*, based on 2 Timothy 4:5. Paul said, "...do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry." A proven, there are many responsibilities of the evangelist, including from Evangelism, Education, Encouraging and Equipping. The time an evangelist spends in the pulpit is the least important of his responsibilities.

Sunday, February 26th will be my last time in the pulpit as the evangelist at this congregation. It has been a good fifteen year run, but has come to an end. You, the "corporate evangelist", will assume my responsibilities to the best of your abilities. I am impressed and encouraged by your willingness to sign up on the sheets at the back of the auditorium. I am also encouraged with the list of scheduled speaker found at the back of the lobby. The elders came up with the list men from the congregation who will do the pulpit preaching for the next ten months following my departure.

Though I have been deemphasizing the preaching side for four weeks now, in this lesson I would like to address the men who are scheduled to preach. Though it might be the least of the work of an evangelist, when you stand at this pulpit and deliver a message on the first day of the week, it is to be regarded with the utmost respect. The title of this lesson is, "*The Least of the Work of an Evangelist: Advice to Men Who Will Fill the Pulpit*". I want to issue a charge to all them who will be taking on this task, TAKE IT SERIOUSLY.

1) You are expected to diligently prepare.

There are many men in the congregation who are on that list. Each of them come from a different background and have different styles of preaching. One thing for sure, you are expected to study hard in your preparation for the job of preaching.

- a. Acts 17:11, "Now these were more noble-minded than those in Thessalonica, for they received the word with great eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily *to see* whether these things were so."
- b. 2 Timothy 2:15, Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, accurately handling the word of truth.

I have found over the years that the average sermon requires about ten hours of studying, writing, practicing and proofing. Before becoming a preacher it took nearly fifteen to twenty hours of the same. I could have easily put about an hour or two into a sermon, but you would not have been happy with it. Even though preaching is the least of the responsibilities of the evangelist, you are expected to diligently prepare. If you lack the time to diligently prepare a sermon for the congregation, then put it off until you do. You are expected to diligently prepare.

2) You are expected hold to the Word.

The Christian can trust the words of the Bible for they are inspired by God, have been proven historically reliable, is backed up by the works of the Spirit, is filled with wisdom and carries the

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promise of eternal life. *2 Timothy 3:16–17, All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; ¹⁷ so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.*” We have a powerful book with a powerful plan for the powerful people in Christ.

The words you say from this pulpit must be taken seriously. James emphasized the importance on what comes out the mouth of man concerning the Word of God. *James 3:1-2, “My brethren, be not many masters, knowing that we shall receive the greater condemnation. ² For in many things we offend all. If any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man, and able also to bridle the whole body.”* It should be important for any man who assumes the pulpit hold tight to the word, lest he lead someone further from Christ. They must *contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all handed down to the saints* (Jude 3).

Bible First, Opinion Second

There is no way a speaker can completely avoid all his opinions when he preaches. We all have varying perspectives and depths of knowledge of the scripture. We must make sure to be extremely careful to not put our opinions ahead of what the Bible says. Don’t misrepresent the scriptures for we do it at our own peril.

- Proverbs 30:6, “Do not add to His words Or He will reprove you, and you will be proved a liar.”
- Deuteronomy 12:32, “Whatever I command you, you shall be careful to do; you shall not add to nor take away from it.”
- Revelation 22:18–19, “...if anyone adds to them, God will add to him the plagues which are written in this book; ¹⁹ and if anyone takes away from the words of the book...God will take away his part from the tree of life and from the holy city, which are written in this book.”

Preaching a sermon might be the least important responsibility of the work of the evangelist, but make sure to hold to the Word of God ahead of the word of man. If you feel you are not able to do so at this time, then it would be best to wait until you can.

3) You are expected to look presentable.

The Irreverent Defendant

Many years ago I was forced to take a non-Christian to small claims court for something he refused to pay. I had tried in vain to settle with him, but he simply was not going to listen. The day arrived to appear before the judge. I made sure to appear well-groomed and well-dressed before the judge, wanting to make a good first appearance. The defendant decided to show up with torn blue jeans, a t-shirt, dirty shoes and very poorly groomed. The judge listened to the case and immediately rendered the verdict on my behalf. Even though the law was already on my side, the judge made sure to address the defendant’s appearance as “lacking significant reverence for the integrity of his court”. Hopefully next time the man will display a sense of reverence for that which is important.

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Think of some of the reverent moments of life, like a wedding, a court trial, a funeral or a graduation. Most people will attempt to present themselves with good grooming and attire for these occasions. Why? To show reverence for the moment at hand. They do not want to be a stumbling block for others, like a wedding party, a judge, the bereaved and the graduate. You want to put your best foot forward.

When a man stands up at the pulpit and preaches a sermon, he must make sure that his appearance communicates the message of respect for the King and His people. He needs to treat the hearers, his brothers and sisters, his Father and his Savior with reverence. Don't be like the irreverent guest at the wedding in Matthew 22:11-13. He was not appropriately dressed for the occasion and became a stumbling block to the King and the guests. Be like Paul, who became all things for all men that by all means that he might save some. He did all things for the gospel so that he would become a fellow partaker of it (1 Corinthians 9:20-23). You are to look presentable.

Preaching a sermon might be the least important work of an evangelist, but it still commands excellence. You are expected to be presentable when coming before the assembly. If you are unable to do this when your day comes, then wait until you have resolution in this area.

4) You are expected to preach the gospel.

There is a difference in preaching versus teaching. The apostle Paul wrote in *1 Timothy 2:7, And for this I was appointed a preacher and an apostle (I am telling the truth, I am not lying) as a teacher of the Gentiles in faith and truth* (see also 2 Timothy 1:11; Acts 5:42, 28:30-31 and 1 Timothy 6:2). Teaching is focused on continual education and preaching is centered the gospel of Jesus.

- Philip preached the gospel to the Samaritans (Acts 8:25) and the cities of Caesarea (Acts 8:40).
- Paul and the mission team “preached the gospel” in Asia (Acts 14:7, 15, 21).
- They were called to “preach the gospel” to Europe in Acts 16:10.
- Paul said he was eager to “preach the gospel” in Rome (Romans 1:15).
- More than three dozen times in the New Testament, the gospel is associated with preaching, but not teaching.

The point is that when you get up to preach, you had better have something about the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus. If you cannot draw people closer to the empty tomb of Jesus when you speak from the pulpit, then you have not preached. Make sure to always mention in one form or another the Christocentric message of the gospel.

- 1 Corinthians 1:23, *but we preach Christ crucified, to Jews a stumbling block, and to Gentiles foolishness,*

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- 1 Corinthians 2:2, *“For I determined to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ, and Him crucified.”*
- 1 Corinthians 9:16, *“...for woe is me if I do not preach the gospel.”*
- 1 Corinthians 15:3-4, *“For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, ⁴ and that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures”*

If you are signed up to fill the pulpit, you are expected to preach the word. Without touching on the gospel of Jesus, you only taught. Make sure you never forget to work into your lesson the death, burial and resurrection of Christ. If you are unable or unwilling to do this, then focus on teaching classes instead of preaching. You are expected to preach the gospel.

Closing Challenges:

To the men who will preach to the assembly, including the elders:

- 1) You are expected to diligently prepare.
- 2) You are expected to hold to the Word.
- 3) You are expected to look presentable.
- 4) You are expected to preach the gospel.

To the recipients of these lessons:

Be willing to critique these lessons with the intention to encourage and improve the man, the lesson and the kingdom. There is a stack of critique sheets on the organizer in the lobby. Fill one out and be willing to help these men become who they need to be in the least important job of the evangelist.