

Toward Understanding of the Joy and Power of Preaching

Introduction

A. God is doing some wonderful things around the world. The renewal in many areas is a way in which God is getting our attention and demonstrating His power and desire.

We must ask: How can we as leaders make ourselves more available to the Holy Spirit and deepen the resources He can draw upon?

The Biblical answer is clear: the one controlling and all-important theme of the Bible and therefore preaching is --

The Centrality of Jesus Christ

Preaching must always revolve around the person of Jesus Christ. We must always lead people to Him -- not simply talk about Him.

Preaching must always enable people to fall more deeply in love with the Lord Jesus -- that is the first commandment.

All forms of discipleship and Church programs will eventually fall flat if we do not preach so people will be constantly led into a deep and deepening experience of loving God.

The Lord Jesus said it clearly: *“Apart from me you can do nothing.”* John 15:5

Our Lord is not in the business of establishing and teaching religion. Woe to us as preachers, however, for we have a perverse and irresistible desire to do so.

Teaching religion is much easier.

Teaching religion means we can organize the organism.

Teaching religion means we can be in control.

Teaching religion means our programs become meaningful.

Teaching religion makes us essential and establishes our credibility.

Teaching religion establishes a basis for manipulation.

Teaching religion makes it easier to count noses and nickels.

Teaching religion draws attention to us and our reputation.

Teaching religion means we can shine more brightly in the Church.

1. What must we as preachers do in order to lead people to Jesus Christ?

- a. We must **love Him with all our heart** and model such love, joy, and peace.
- b. We must **worship Him** in private and public and model such worship.
- c. We must **obey Him in full honesty and live without hidden agendas.**

2. We must **cooperate with the Holy Spirit in the goals He has in mind.**

Individually this means choosing to exalt the Lord Jesus in personal obedience, worship, and fellowship. And, we must lead our people to do the same.

3. We must be **deeply involved in the Scripture the Holy Spirit has given us and through which He has chosen to work powerfully.**

We must read, meditate, journal, and study the Bible in many different ways so the Holy Spirit can pour out of Himself through us.

We must preach the Word, and proclaim it in many practical ways, so our people will be disciplined, taught, healed, delivered and enabled to live and serve in the Spirit.

B. We must, therefore, keep before us some significant aspects of preaching.

1. The **goal** in preaching: **always leading people to the Lord Jesus.**

"This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased. Listen to him!" Matt 17:5

2. The **importance** of preaching: **power and freedom comes through truth.**

Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free. John 8:32

3. The **character** of preaching: **supernatural, authoritative and personal.**

My message and my preaching were not with wise and persuasive words, but with a demonstration of the Spirit's power, so that your faith might not rest on men's wisdom, but on God's power. I Cor 2:4,5

4. The **encouragement** regarding preaching: **the promise of success.**

Then the disciples went out and preached everywhere, and the Lord worked with them and confirmed his word by the signs that accompanied it. Mark 16:20

5. The **responsibility** regarding preaching: **we must give an account.**

Yet when I preach the gospel, I cannot boast, for I am compelled to preach. Woe to me if I do not preach the gospel! I Cor 9:16

I. Biblical Preaching Must Reflect the Biblical Contexts.

A. The context of the personal nature of Christianity: Christianity is Jesus Christ.

1. God is a **Person**: He describes Himself in terms of personality.
2. God has **character**: He is infinite in holiness, love, and truth.
3. God has **rights**: He must be respected, acknowledged, loved, worshipped, trusted.

(A great danger: make Christianity impersonal, impractical, non-supernatural)

B. The context of the one all-inclusive plan of God the Father: Jesus Christ is Lord.

1. The plan itself: **To exalt and glorify the Lord Jesus.**

*He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For by him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created by him and **for him**. He is before all things, and in him all things hold together. And he is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead, **so that in everything he might have the supremacy**. For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him. Col 1:15-19*

2. The revelation of that plan:

- a. The **design** of all creation: *All things were created ... for Him.* Col 1:16
- b. The **affirmations** of our Savior: *"Before Abraham was ... I am!"* John 8:58
- c. The **goal** of the Holy Spirit: *"The Spirit ... will bring glory to me."* John 16:13,14
- d. The **goal** of the Angels: *God says, "Let all God's angels worship him."* Heb 1:6
- e. The **goal** of Redemption: *God ... a people for himself.* Acts 15:14
- f. The **basis** of divine evaluation: *"Every tongue ... Jesus is Lord."* Phil 2:11

C. The context of the character of Biblical Christianity: What is Christianity?

1. Christianity is a **person** -- therefore a relationship.

"Come to me ... I will give you rest." Matt 11:28

2. Christianity is a **revelation** -- therefore an authority.

God ... has spoken to us by his Son. Heb 1:1,2

3. Christianity is a **redemption** -- therefore a dynamic.

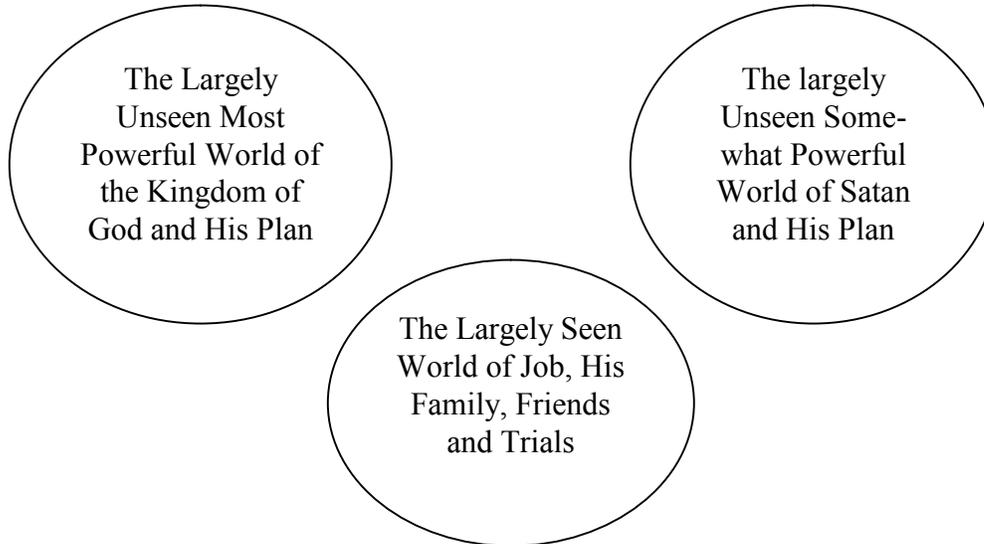
Christ the power of God. 1 Cor 1:24

4. Christianity is an **experience** -- **therefore a decision.**

Now we who have believed enter that rest. Heb 4:3

D. The context of the Biblical Description of reality: **the reality of three “worlds.”**

1. The worlds revealed: **The Book of Job.**



2. The “worlds” explained.

We can only understand Job and his trials **only by knowing how the three “worlds” interrelate.** The revelation of these “worlds” is the presentation of **the true condition of every believer. Ignorance of this truth makes one vulnerable to error and failure.**

3. Some Biblical **evidence.**

*As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, in which you used to live when you **followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient.** Eph 2:1,2*

*For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but **against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.** Eph 6:12*

E. The context of Divine sovereignty in creation: **the “spiritual” and “natural” world.**

The “Spiritual” World	YOU	The “Natural” World
Success determined by knowing the “laws” and cooperating.		Success determined by knowing the “laws” and cooperating.
Highly personal in relationships		Rather impersonal
Ignorance and refusal to cooperate means inevitable failure		Ignorance and refusal to cooperate means inevitable failure
Honesty in worship, faith, love, hope, and life are essential		Honesty in research, reporting, and practice are essential
One cannot manipulate, cheat, and “beat the game.” We don’t make up the rules.		One cannot manipulate, cheat, and “beat the game.” We don’t make up the rules

F. The context of the Biblical essentials for understanding life: **Five Essentials.**

1. The **personal nature** of Christianity.

“God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in spirit and in truth.”
John 4:4 (Psalm 51: 4; Jer 2:13; Matt 11:28; John 1:12; 14:20)

2. The reality of **the spiritual world.**

“And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel.” Gen 3:15 (Job 1, 2)

3. The reality of **the historical fall** and its devastating effects.

Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all men, because all sinned. Rom 5:12 (Rom 1:1-32; Eph 4:12)

4. The **one divine plan of our Father.**

Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. Phil :9-11 (Col 1:13-19)

4. The **meaningfulness of history and personal responsibility.**

"I the LORD search the heart and examine the mind, to reward a man according to his conduct, according to what his deeds deserve." Jer. 17:10 (Rom. 14:12; II Cor. 5:10)

G. The context of the foundation of virtue and value -- **the character of God and His work.**

1. Because **God is infinite love** -- compassion/love have permanent and supreme value.
2. Because **God is infinite holiness** -- righteousness has a permanent and supreme value.
3. Because **God is infinite truth** -- honesty/faithfulness have permanent and supreme value.
4. Because **God is infinite and unchanging** -- life, science and logic have permanent value.

H. The context of **God's personal desire for every believer.**

1. God's personal desire was illustrated in the Tabernacle.

"Then have them make a sanctuary for me, and **I will dwell among them.**" Ex 25:8

2. God's personal desire was prophesied by Jeremiah.

For as a belt is bound around a man's waist, so I bound the whole house of Israel and the whole house of Judah to me,' declares the LORD, '**to be my people for my renown and praise and honor.** But they have not listened.' Jer 13:11

3. God's personal desire was explained by the Apostle Paul.

For we are the temple of the living God. As God has said: "I will live with them and walk among them, and I will be their God, and they will be my people." 2 Cor 6:16

4. God's personal desire was suggested as a prayer by the Apostle Paul.

*I pray that out of his glorious riches he may **strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith.** And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the saints, **to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge--that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.*** Eph 3:16-19

5. God's personal desire was given the form of a commandment by the Apostle Paul.

*Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. **Instead, be filled with the Spirit.*** Eph 5:18

I. The context of **certain things and people that God loves and treasures supremely.**

A. Consider the rational and significance of this context! Meditate and pray about it.

1. If God treasures a certain type of person -- **then let's be that kind of person!**
2. If God treasures certain virtues -- **then let's learn how to possess them!**
3. If God treasures certain historical events -- **then let's learn from them!**

B. Sample illustrations regarding this context.

1. God loves and treasures His Son, the Lord Jesus.

*For in Scripture it says: "See, I lay a stone in Zion, **a chosen and precious cornerstone, and the one who trusts in him** will never be put to shame."*

1 Peter 2:6

2. God loves and treasures the redemptive events of His Son.

*For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your forefathers, but with **the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect.***

1 Peter 1:18,19

3. God loves and treasures His people.

Since you are precious and honored in my sight, and because I love you, I will give men in exchange for you, and people in exchange for your life. Is 43:4

4. God loves and treasures His Word.

*Through these he has given us **his very great and precious promises**, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature and escape the corruption in the world caused by evil desires.* 2 Peter 1:4

5. God loves and treasures love, faith, and hope.

*But showing love to a thousand generations of those **who love me** and keep my commandments.* Ex 20:6

*Jesus replied: "**Love the Lord your God** with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. **This is the first and greatest commandment.**"* Matt 22:37,38

*And now these three remain: **faith, hope and love.** But the greatest of these is love.*

1 Cor 13:13

J. The context that **Christianity is highly experiential.**

1. The principle: absolutely everything we know comes through the channel of our experience. This does not mean, however, that everything we experience is truth/truth. What we do experience almost always will find its source outside of ourselves.
2. The principle explained: As believers we must keep in mind that our Christian experience is based upon and finds its source in the True and Living God, and His ministry to us.
 - a. Christian experience is based upon God as a Person and a relationship with Him.
 - b. Christian experience is based upon His grace and redemptive work.
 - c. Christian experience is based upon the ministry of the Holy Spirit to us.
 - d. Christian experience is based upon the Word of God.
 - e. Christian experience is based upon our response to God, His ministry to us, and to His Word, in the growing pattern of obedience in faith, love, and hope.
3. The principle illustrated.

I have told you this (vine and branch relationship) so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete. John 15:11 (See 2 Peter 3:18)

II. Some Practical Suggestions Regarding Biblical Preaching.

A. Preach **the great themes of the Bible.**

1. Determine to **establish a long-term study of the basic themes of the Bible**: the work of each member of the Trinity, grace, mercy, love, faith, hope, redemption, substitution, priesthood, judgment, commandments, honor, etc. Many of these themes have been listed in the first section of this paper.
2. Determine the **relationship** of these various themes to one another. How is grace related to mercy, to love, to faith, etc.? (Source, basis, characteristic, product, fruit, etc.)
3. Illustrations.

The Believer's Priesthood

The Old Testament Pattern

Chosen -- Lev. 8:1-5
 Washed -- Lev. 8:6
 Clothed -- Lev. 8:7-9
 Anointed -- Lev. 8:10-12
 Dedicated -- Lev. 8:13-30
 Strengthened -- Lev 8:31,32
 Separated -- Lev 8:33-36

The New Testament Fulfillment

Chosen -- I Peter 2:9
 Washed -- Titus 3:5
 Clothed -- Rev. 19:8
 Anointed -- II Cor. 1:21,22
 Dedicated -- I Cor. 1:2
 Strengthened -- II Cor 9:8
 Separated -- John 15:19

(There are many parallel passages)

The Resurrection of Jesus Christ

His Resurrection is **the source and provision for salvation**

*Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us **new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.** I Peter 1:3*

His Resurrection is **the source and provision for newness of life.**

*We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, **just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life.** Rom 6:4*

His Resurrection is **the source and provision for our physical resurrection**

*But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the **firstfruits** of those who have fallen asleep. I Cor 15:20*

His Resurrection is **the source and provision for spiritual enablement.**

*I want to know Christ and **the power of his resurrection** and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death. Phil 3:10*

His Resurrection is **the key to the judgment of hell and death.**

*I am the Living One; I was dead, and **behold I am alive for ever and ever! And I hold the keys of death and Hades.** Rev 1:18*

B. Preach on the **developing structure found in individual books.**

1. The principle: Many of the books of the Bible have an overall message and a number of secondary messages.
2. Illustration: one emphasized truth of I John is **assurance of salvation.**

*I write **these things** to you who believe in the name of the Son of God so that you may **know that you have eternal life.** I John 5:13*

- a. The reference to **these things** indicates a structure or basis of assurance in the book.
- b. Selected **references** that indicates **the basis for the assurance of salvation.**

- I John 2:3-5 -- In regard to **God** -- the evidence of salvation is **obedience.**
- I John 2:15-17 -- In regard to **the world** -- the evidence of salvation is **separation.**
- I John 3:8,9 -- In regard to **sin** -- the evidence of salvation is **freedom.**
- I John 3:14 -- In regard to **the brethren** -- the evidence of salvation is **love.**
- I John 3:24 -- In regard to the **Holy Spirit** -- the evidence is **witness.**
- I John 4:13 -- In regard to the **Holy Spirit** -- the evidence is **understanding truth.**

C. Preach on **the events of the Bible that are warnings.**

1. Develop how so many events of the Bible are **revelatory events.**

2. The principle stated:

*They were all **baptized** into Moses in the cloud and in the sea. They all **ate** the same spiritual food and **drank** the same spiritual drink; for they drank from the spiritual rock that accompanied them, and that rock was Christ. Nevertheless, God was not pleased with most of them; their bodies were scattered over the desert. **Now these things occurred as examples** to keep us from setting our hearts on evil things as they did. **Do not be idolaters**, as some of them were; as it is written: "The people sat down to eat and drink and got up to indulge in pagan revelry." **We should not commit sexual immorality**, as some of them did--and in one day twenty-three thousand of them died. **We should not test the Lord**, as some of them did--and were killed by snakes. And **do not grumble**, as some of them did--and were killed by the destroying angel. **These things happened to them as examples and were written down as warnings for us, on whom the fulfillment of the ages has come.** I Cor 10:2-11*

3. The principle explained.

a. Many of these serious events are given a **commentary effect** in the Bible. By using the concordance/computer find such passages. Such commentary passages present tremendous insights.

b. Illustration.

1). The event: **the unbelief/fear at Kadesh Barnea.** Num 13,14

*"How long will these people **treat me with contempt**? How long will they **refuse to believe in me**, in spite of all the miraculous signs I have performed among them? Num 14:11*

2). Some parallel passages of a commentary nature.

Deut 1:26 -- It was an act of **rebellion.**

Deut 1:32 -- It was an act of **unbelief.**

Deut 9:23 -- It was an act of **rebellion, unbelief, and disobedience.**

Ps 106:24,25 -- " "

Heb 4:1-3 -- It was an act of **devaluing the gospel -- of unbelief.**

3.) Consider the serious nature of **rebellion, unbelief, disobedience, and devaluing the gospel** -- almost all the nation were placed under judgment and died without receiving God's promise -- and entering the Land of Canaan!

D. Preach the **great themes of individual books.**

1. The principle: certain books of the Bible were written because of a specific occasion and were to achieve a specific purpose. Understanding such a theme will give one insight as to the structure of the book and how to present the underlying themes.
2. Illustrations.

Deuteronomy: “The second law” - to warn from the past and prepare to enter Canaan.
The believer is God’s inheritance and secure in His providence.

Jeremiah: The final warning before the Babylonian Captivity -- “why” of the Captivity. The believer has access to God as “living water.”

Hosea: The final warning before the Assyrian Captivity -- “why” of the Captivity.
The believer is loved by God in spite of moral and religious defilement.

Galatians: The correction of false teaching regarding Jewish legalism.
The believer has freedom in Christ to live in the Spirit.

Colossians: The correction of false teaching regarding Jewish Gnosticism.
The believer is indwelt by God and complete in Christ.

Hebrews: The warning regarding turning back to Judaism.
The believer has a Great High Priest.

Illustration: **Jesus Christ as Our Priest is the Guarantee of the Better Covenant**

1. He is our Guarantee because **He has an Unchangeable Priesthood.**

*Now there have been many of those priests, since death prevented them from continuing in office; but **because Jesus lives forever, he has a permanent priesthood.***
Heb 7:23, 24

2. He is our Guarantee because **He has a Powerful Priesthood.**

*Therefore **he is able to save completely** those who come to God through him, **because he always lives to intercede for them.*** Heb 7:25

3. He is our Guarantee because **He has a Holy Priesthood.**

*Such a high priest meets our need--**one who is holy, blameless, pure, set apart from sinners....*** Heb 7:26A

4. He is our Guarantee because **He has an Authoritative Priesthood.**

*Such a high priest meets our need ... **exalted above the heavens.*** Heb 7:26B

5. He is our Guarantee because **He has a Vicarious Priesthood.**

*Unlike the other high priests, he does not need to offer sacrifices day after day, first for his own sins, and then for the sins of the people. He sacrificed for their sins once for all **when he offered himself.** Heb 7:27*

6. He is our Guarantee because **He has a Perfected Priesthood.**

*For the law appoints as high priests men who are weak; but the oath, which came the law, appointed the Son, **who has been made perfect forever.** Heb 7:28*

E. Preach through a book **textually -- emphasizing texts relevant to the basic theme.**

1. Illustration: The titles given to the Lord Jesus in the Book of Hebrews.
2. Illustration: The description of the Lord Jesus in the Book of Revelation.
3. Illustration: The reference to the Law of God in the Book of Galatians.
4. Illustration: The benefits given to the believer in the Book of Ephesians.

F. Preach through **a series of important doctrinal words.**

1. Illustration: utilize the words designating **revelation** in various passages.
2. Illustration: utilize the words designating **substitution** in various passages.
3. Note: such an approach is an excellent way to teach a doctrinal subject. It's not necessary to take up every reference. Perhaps a series that would cover four messages -- taking two passages a sermon. Consider the benefit that can come to our people by working with them through such great subjects as **faith, love, hope, joy, power, cleansing, as well as the many words that describe sin, depravity, temptation, fear, and death.** The resource for good sermons in such an approach is almost endless.

G. Preach a series developing **a theme related to the life and work of the Lord Jesus.**

1. The principle: prepare your people to understand **significant historical events** as the Incarnation, Crucifixion, Resurrection, Ascension, and Pentecost.
2. Illustration: **preparation for Christmas.**
 - a. Start eight weeks before Christmas. **Plan Christmas to be a celebration.**
 - b. Introduce each sermon with **a biographical sketch** and relate that person to the Incarnation of the Lord Jesus: Wise Men; Mary; Joseph; Simeon, Anna; Elizabeth; Zacharias; and John the Baptist.

- c. Following such an introduction take an important text related to the Incarnation and develop it's message in eight ways.

Example: **The Greatest Story** (Galatians 4:4,5)

1. The Greatest **Preparation**: "*But when the time had fully come.*"
2. The Greatest **Gift**: "*God sent His Son.*"
3. The Greatest **Mystery**: "*Born of a woman.*"
4. The Greatest **Representation**: "*Born under the law.*"
5. The Greatest **Purpose**: "*To redeem those under the law.*"
6. The Greatest **Relationship**: "*The full rights of sons.*"
7. The Greatest **Confirmation**: "*God sent the Spirit.*"
8. The Greatest **Comfort**: "*Father.*"

H. Preach in an **expository manner through a Book of the Bible.**

1. The advantages: give your people an overall understanding of the book. And, you always know what the next sermon is about.

2. Suggestions:

- a. Prepare to preach through a book by studying it a year ahead of time.
- b. Read slowly, meditate, and journal.
- c. Read a helpful commentary. (Please buy the following.)

Fredrick Dale Bruner on Matthew *The Christbook* and *The Churchbook*. (Word)
 David Gooding, *According to Luke* (IVP)
 D. Edmond Hiebert on *First Peter* (Moody)

I. Preach through a **series in conjunction with a study for home groups.**

- a. Principle: develop important themes or doctrines in a variety of ways.
- b. Suggestion: Utilize some doctrines of the Bible as a basis for a series of sermons and **write up a hand-out** on the same subject, with a different approach, including parallel passages, assignments, and application for the various home groups.
- c. Suggestion: preach through a **series of doctrinal words** such as suggested by J.I. Packer *God's Words* (IVP) and have each member of the home group buy the book.

Recommended reading:

Erickson, Millard J. *Christian Theology* (Baker Book House)
 Grudem, Wayne *Systematic Theology* (Zondervan)
 Holmes, Arthur F. *Contours of a World View* (IVP)
 MacArthur Jr. *Expository Preaching* (Word)
 Robinson, Haddon W. *Biblical Preaching* (Baker)
 Robinson, Haddon W. *Biblical Sermons* (Baker)
 Sire, James W. *The Universe Next Door* (IVP)

\Conclusion: A final reminder.

The Meaning of the Preacher's Surrender to God.

1. Surrender is always to God -- to do His will.

*Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God--this is your spiritual act of worship. Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. **Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is--his good, pleasing and perfect will.*** Rom 12:1,2

2. For the preacher the will of God must include a serious dedication to **a life-long priority to study**. There must be adequate time, usually daily, for worship, reading the Bible, meditation, study in depth, sermon preparation, development of a file, workbooks and handouts.
3. The counsel of A.W. Tozer is to the point.