

(Sermon Preparation) Lecture 04

by Alan Redpath

Alan Redpath emphasizes the importance of personal integrity, spiritual discipline, and the thoughtful preparation necessary for effective ministry and relationships.

Duration: 47:30

Scripture: Matthew 6:33

Topics: "Sermon Preparation"

Description

In this sermon, the pastor discusses the importance of choosing the right person for leadership in the church. He emphasizes the need for a leader who is dedicated to their work and treats their responsibilities with integrity. The pastor also highlights the importance of being disciplined and following a methodical approach to studying and preaching the word of God. He encourages believers to be genuine in their faith and to actively engage in making the church relevant to people's needs.

Transcript

Lovely day. Thank you for your presence with each one of us. Now as the day comes to a close, speak to us from your word and make the book live to us.

We ask it for your namesake. Amen. Please be seated, will you? That list of people who have questions, wanting to come down to see us, was filled up very quickly.

So my wife and I have had a summit conference about that together, and we're going to find another evening. It won't be till Monday of the week you're going to leave, so that's rather late. But that's the best we can do with various commitments we have.

So we'll keep that Thursday of next week, after lectures at Willowbeck, for those who have signed the list. And we'll have another list up tomorrow for Monday week. That's June the 2nd, I think.

Isn't it? No, it can't be. June the something, 5th or something. That's OK.

It looks as if Charles is unwell, unable to lecture, so I'll take over from him, I think, tomorrow. Just have to see what's happening about that, not quite sure yet. But at the moment it looks as if I'll have first and third lectures with him.

But I don't know, we'll see how he is. Now let's resume where we left off. We were thinking about the kind of person God wants, and the man who's called, and the man who's choice.

And we were speaking mainly, we got to thinking about the choice of a wife. And I got rather held up on that. And the choice of a husband.

Just let me just say one or two things more about that. Not, as I say, to be a marriage counseling, but it's tremendously important. And God's greatest blessing, this side of heaven, has to be two people of the same heart and mind, and the same sense of vocation and call.

I think when you come to think about it, when the time comes, in my young days it was the panicky thirties. Now it's the panicky teens almost, but certainly the panicky twenties. But before things go too far, may I, as an old man, make one or two suggestions.

One, never play on the other person's emotions. Never play on the other person's emotions. Somebody will get hurt, if you do.

A very good thing is this. On your own, both of you, fellow and girl, prepare a list of what you'd expect from a husband, and what he would expect from a wife. Prepare that list prayerfully.

I could put down about twenty-five things. Put down a number of things that you would expect from a future husband, or a number of things you would expect from a future wife. And prayerfully put them together on your own.

And then, after a month or two, have a time of sharing together those pieces of paper. And see how many of the things are the same, identical. And see how many differ.

And check up together. You'll find that a very interesting exercise. And a tremendous help to you both.

And the sign of a choice person, man of God or woman of God, will be seen not only in the selection of husband or wife, but also in readiness for singleness. Now immediately you could come back at me and say, it's all very well for you. But singleness can be a calling.

Be ready for singleness. I didn't get that. Oh.

I've forgotten them. I would say that apart from this question of life partner, be prepared for singleness because that also might be a calling. A person who's reconciled themselves to that, has been often tremendously used of God.

You think of people, maybe you don't know them, like Helen Rose, dear, and there's Vika. A choice person will also be known by his toilet and dress. I'm going right down the line on this, at the risk of... By the first, I mean, that a lady's attractiveness will not be due to application from the drugstore, but will be... but will be... due to the imparting of Christ and reflection of Christ in her life.

That which will attract the right kind of man, the right kind of man, will not be what you apply from the outside, but what Jesus has put into you on the inside. And it will also be seen by the manner of dress that this is not suggestive, it's not sexy, I'm not appealing for, you know, Victorian type of era, but I am appealing for something that is modest and something which will attract in the right way. You don't know the weakness of the opposite sex.

You don't know. Therefore, you owe it to the person you are dating or going with to dress modestly and in a way that would attract people to Jesus. And be aware, as said before, I have seen case after case of people, fellows and girls, who have come to me in the ten years here, who simply made a mess of it because they have aroused the emotions of the opposite sex and broken their hearts.

And that's not playing the game. It's playing the devil's game. Fellas, it's your responsibility.

A choice person will be revealed in the way he handles, dress and the way he deals with dating and with the opposite sex, equally reciprocated by a girl. And a choice person will be revealed by absence of gossip. Absence of gossip.

There are some people, Christian people, that I would never dream of taking into my confidence because I know that before a week is out, it will be spread all over the place. They just can't keep their mouth shut. Evangelical grapevine is a deadly business.

I've suffered from it. I hope I haven't been guilty of it, but I've suffered from it. And when I was going through it very badly on one occasion, at a Bible study in Chicago at Moody Church, I had a blackboard and I put the letters T-H-I-N-K in vertical.

T-H-I-N-K. And I asked anybody who would like to do so to join the Mutual Encouragement Fellowship, MEF. The title of admission to it was Willingness to Ascribe to T-H-I-N-K, which meant, one, is it true? Two, will it help? I, will it inspire? N, is it necessary? K, is it kind? And if it doesn't pass all those tests, I'll shut my stupid mouth.

Think. Is it true? Will it help? Will it inspire? Is it necessary? Is it kind? If not, I'll shut up. We had a tremendous movement of the Spirit of God as the outcome of people who joined that fellowship.

If you apply that, you reveal your choiceness. Think. Got it? And finally, on this question of choiceness, a choice person will be revealed in the way they handle money and paying of debts.

Every shopkeeper who has you as a customer would wish that everybody was like you because you pay your debts promptly. So those are several ways in which the man God wants is choice. He's not only choice, not only cold, but he's chaste.

I'm careful to spell that word. C-H-A-S-T-E That means disciplined. Disciplined.

A man of God in the Christian life faces dangers and he's got to safeguard himself against them. Here are some of them. Self-indulgence, laziness and intemperance.

That is lack of self-control. Self-indulgence, laziness and lack of self-control. And the answer to them all is just one thing, that is communion with God.

Communion with God. Now you would imagine that all Christians would simply enjoy that, but we don't. How often I have to drive myself to pray even after experiences of great joy in it.

How often it can be scamped, forgotten. I recall days when to enter my study, give me a pen, because I saw all the neglected prayer lists. In every arena of battle there has to be an altar of worship.

That's the testing point in your ministry. In every arena of battle there has to be an altar of worship. Win that battle, and heaven opens in blessing.

Be defeated there, and I wonder if you've known this experience, life becomes just a weary, a weary road day after day. The judgment of God upon a prayerless life. If you wait for a sense of urge to pray, you'll never pray at all.

You need to pray when you feel nothing. There are no tricks in attaining maturity. You see, the self-life will never cooperate.

Never. The self-life will never want to pray, will never want to read your Bible, will never want to study God's Word. It hates it, and Satan feeds it constantly.

But prayer should be the key which opens your day in the morning, and locks the day at the end. It would be interesting to know how you go about your quiet time. Maybe some of you have found you've had it shattered.

Maybe with some people it's meaningful. But if we were honest, all of us, I would imagine that the majority would find that even at a Bible school, your personal quiet time has been shattered. You've been too busy, and too much to do.

Now, how are you going to start up again? There's no good waiting until you feel like it. You never will. A simple guide would be, if you've never really begun, or if you've lost the reality of it, start with the Psalms, and with the Gospel of Luke, and Acts, and Romans.

Buy, buy, B-U-Y, at the bookshop, a notebook, and begin with Psalm 1. And have a page for it. And on that page, right at the head of it, Psalm 1. Question 1. What is this Psalm about? Question 2. What does it teach me about the Lord Jesus? Question 3. What sin is there to avoid? Sorry. What question, oh, sorry, what temptation is there to avoid? 4. What command is there to be obeyed? 5. What example is there to follow? Example is there to follow.

And 6. If I never saw this Psalm again, what would be my favorite verse? If I never saw this Psalm again, what would be my favorite verse? I've missed out one, because there should be seven. And the one I think I forgot to give you was, What promise is there to claim? Now, those seven questions, you'll have a notebook, and you'll have all the Psalms, right? You'll go through them. And on every page in your notebook, you'll have the answer to those questions.

Now, that will mean that you'll have to read that Psalm at least three or four times before you can answer the questions. And you'll have to go through it again and again. And as you do so, your Bible will begin to come alive.

It'll begin to live to you. It'll begin to be meaningful to you. Put those seven questions down, get your notebook and start working on Psalm 1, then Psalm 2, or then go straight through to Luke chapter 1. Answer them again there.

Same questions. And by the time a few years have gone, you've got your own Bible commentary. Better than Matthew Henry, because you've got it for yourself.

And your Bible has begun to live. Something you've dug out of the Word for yourself. Have you got those seven questions? Okay.

See, they're based on Scripture Union. If you read Scripture Union Bible study notes, you'll find questions something like those that they ask you. And they're based on this.

A drastic prescription for the church's organizational minister is this. Fling him into his office. Tear the office sign from the door and nail on it study.

Take him off your mailing list. Lock him up with his books. Get him all kinds of books and his typewriter and his Bible and force him to be the one man in our surfeited communities who knows about God.

Set a time clock on him that will imprison him with thought and writing about God for 40 hours a week. Shut his garrulous mouth spouting remarks and stop his tongue always tripping lightly over everything non-essential. Bend his knees in the lonesome valley.

Fire him from the PTA. That's the Parent Teacher's Association. And cancel his country club membership.

Rip out his telephone. Burn his ecclesiastical success sheet. Refuse his glad hand.

Put water in the gas tank of his community car. And compel him to be a minister of the Word of God. That's what it takes.

Nothing less than that. And if I mean business, that's what I've got to give my life to. And it costs.

It cost me when I trained for rugby football in order to attempt to play for England. I never made it. When I played for one of our counties, it cost me getting up at 5 o'clock in the morning and running 10 miles round London.

And after work was over and business, running for 10 more miles round Battersea Polytechnic running track. 20 miles a day. 20 miles a day.

5 days a week. After I finished running, skipping for an hour. Then changing into ruggie clothes, football clothes and putting on just a... In Britain we don't wear armour plate.

We just have a jersey and shorts. And pushing with one shoulder against one corner of the wall of my apartment. Push, push, push with this shoulder.

Sticking my legs right out behind me and push. And then with another shoulder pushing with this one. With another corner pushing with that one.

Until I had two shoulders like concrete. Ooh, it hurt. Nobody watching except my landlady who thought I was nuts.

But doing that every day. Every day for months on end. Without exception.

I was as fit as a hill. And I knew that when I turned out on a Saturday afternoon to the real battle. If anybody tackled me once they wouldn't want to do it again.

And it worked. It worked. Because I was 100% fit.

How much more should Jesus have of my body? What are some of you fellows and girls doing with your body? I am honestly and serious about this. Is it, is it a temple of the Holy Spirit? Really? Or is it a playground of hell? What are you doing with your body? Is it lazy? Intemperate? Won't get out of bed?

Lazy? Hmm. I beseech you therefore brethren by the mercy of God that you present your bodies.

Romans 12, chapter 1, verse 1. Don't eat too much. Get regular exercise. Learn to say no to social requests.

Talk to your body. I talk to my body three times a day. It's awfully interesting.

One sided conversation. I say to it, good morning body. I'll come with you three times today to eat.

But you are coming with me three times to pray. I like to make it clear who's boss. I'm not going to be pushed around by this 190 pounds of flesh.

That's not me. I just live in it. I live in it.

Talk to your body. Talk to it. Let it know who's in charge.

Let the Holy Spirit control your physical appetites. Yes, the making of a man of God is a costly business. But changing gear altogether.

What a change is going to take place in your lives within the next few weeks or few months. What a change. What a change takes place in your life when for the first time you commence Christian ministry or service or Sunday school teaching or what have you.

What a change. You've been at the receiving end. You'll suddenly find yourself at the giving end.

What a change. Other people have ministered to you. Now the situation is reversed.

Others will begin to look to you for guidance. And so they'll suddenly come into your life the sobering joy of responsibility. And we'll discover that something we've tucked away in our mind as useless suddenly emerges and appears as the one thing we need.

Something you've tucked away and heard somewhere. I can't remember where. Maybe.

You suddenly discover this is the one thing you need. And you'll find there's the joy of being trusted and the joy of being responded to. You're at the giving end.

And there's a new sacredness to communion with God. Because you'll be going to Him not only about personal needs but you'll be going to Him with the burden of other people's needs too. And that means what the missionary books call anthropology.

Let me just give you one or two principles of this. Recalling that ministry preaching or witness is communicating truth through men to men. The human element is essential.

Jesus, it was said of Him, never man spoke like this man. And therefore when I have responsibility for people I've got to start thinking the way they think and try and discover in what way I can approach them and win their confidence. No use just blurting out a text.

No use just handing out a tract. You want to bring the truth to them clearly and therefore you must be acceptable to people. You will be though maybe never definitely officially you will be both preacher and pastor.

You'll have someone who's looking for you for leadership and help. And therefore you learn Ephesians 4.15 to speak the truth in love. Put that text in a book where you put the names of people for whom you're responsible.

Your class, your group, whatever. And listen, put this down. Sympathy without truth gives you a weak hold on other people.

Sympathy without truth gives you a weak hold. Truth without sympathy or love makes you the sort of person other people respect but never, never come near you to help, for help. Truth without love makes you the kind of person repeating others will respect but they'll never come near you nor do they welcome you coming to them.

But if your life has got truth and love then you go to a broken heart or broken home and give the truth you know lit up by the love of Christ. How tremendously lacking Christianity today is in that spirit. You go to a church and listen to a crowd of comfortable middle class conservative ladies and gentlemen singing onward Christian soldiers marching as to war that's about as irrelevant as it would be to have a battle air squadron sunbathing on Brighton Beach during World War II.

Absolutely irrelevant. Somehow, somehow a hundred and eighty people ought to determine to get back to a local church and make it come alive and be relevant to people's needs. Let me speak to you just in closing about how you go about this.

The method that you're going to follow. Two dangers here, difficulties one is having no method at all and two is making mistakes. We've sort of inbuilt inbred dislike of rules and systems.

How am I going to go about getting something from the word? Well, I can float over a whole sea of truth in the Bible and take a plunge like a seagull into it on any subject that suits me and get nowhere. Follow a methodical system of testimony. Follow a methodical system of testimony, of witness.

The exposition of a book or the study of Bible characters you'd have a wonderful time in that. I'm going into that more fully tomorrow. Be sure you maintain the balance and that your testimony week by week is wide and covers a lot of aspects of truth.

Not just one thing. But it's mistakes of method I'm concerned about just at the moment. Most of the mistakes people make today arise from a desire to have a gadget.

A desire to sort of have some magical prescription. In this category, lots of things. You can get books entitled, Sermon Preparation Made Easy.

Don't buy any of them. Another book, Humility in How I Attended with six photographs. Avoid it.

There is no substitute for blood, sweat, toil and tears. There is no substitute for blood, sweat, toil and tears. Another mistake is being unfaithful.

Not doing your best with the gifts God has given you. You watch the career of some people in the ministry. Not unkindly, but prayerfully.

Watch it. Somehow, he's not succeeding. Somehow, they're not getting home.

Somehow, the pastor and his wife they've been there nine years, ten years. And you feel, and they feel it's time they left. They haven't got anywhere.

And yet, he's sound. You respect his piety. He seems a good fellow.

Why? You go into his study and watch it. And do you know what you'll find? It's full of half-read books. Get to know the man.

You'll find he's late in getting up and early in going to bed. Slipshod in his devotions. Treats his people with a neglect which no doctor would ever treat a patient with.

The one time you'll find him late at night studying is Saturday night. Right early in the Sunday preparing a sermon for the next day. That's downright dishonesty.

He's paid for seven days' work. Six days' work. He's working half a day.

Giving the last flicker of a week as it passes into history to those who, commercially speaking, are paying him for a full-time job. Downright dishonesty. Many a church crisis could have been avoided if a minister had not done that.

Watch it in your own life. One more thing. The methods of work that you form in early life will be with you to the end.

The methods of work you form in early years will be with you. The important time for a piece of clay is not when it's in shape and hardened, but when it's just being set and still soft. That's why early years given to the Lord are so important.

Never, never allow yourself to think you're equal for the job. Never allow yourself to think you're equal for a job, for this job. If you do, go and visit the toughest family in the church just to keep you humble.

And never say anything in public because of a desire to conform to what people expect, but which you don't believe or experience. Tremendous temptation for a minister, preacher. Let me repeat.

Never say anything in public or private because of a desire to conform to what people expect of you, but which is not real to you and you don't believe at that moment. Therefore, be alive. Vital red blood in your body.

Honesty in your mind and your heart full of Jesus. And get out and lead out where the action is. Now I shall continue on the actual preparation of the message tomorrow morning.

Sorry, but it's nearly eight. Let's just pray. Father, we do pray that some seed thought might have entered hearts tonight and act by the power of your Spirit to deter us from certain actions, to encourage us to others, and above all, to obey the Word of God.

We ask it in Jesus' name.

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