

ARE YOU CALLED TO PREACH THE GOSPEL?

The Preacher's Companion is written for Christian ministers to aid them in preparation for preaching, teaching and ministering.

Concisely elucidating the timeless principles of effective ministry, this book will guide you, the young minister, in preparing for ministry. It will warn you of potential pitfalls and hidden dangers. You will recognize God speaking to you directly from the Bible verses quoted in this book.



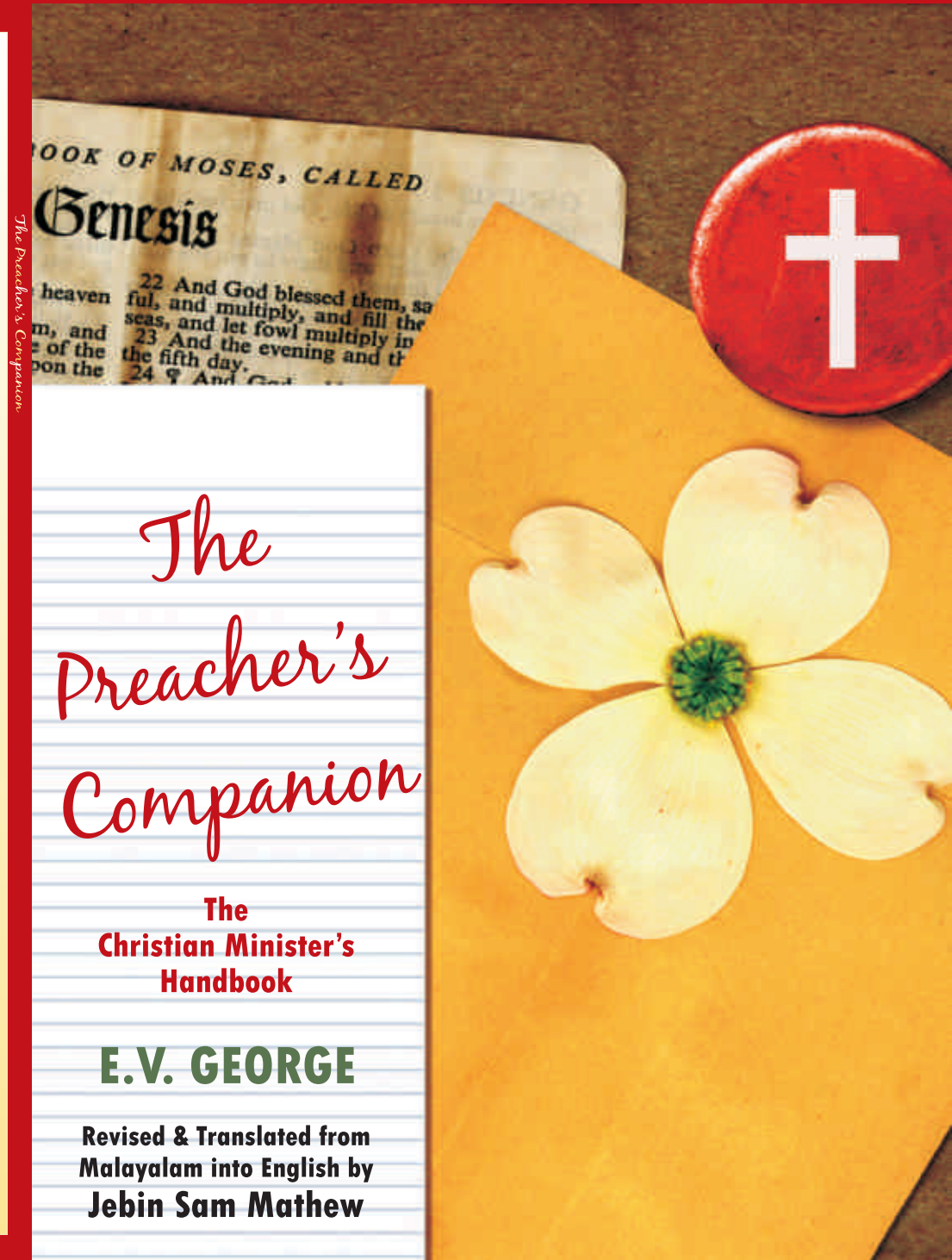
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The Preacher's Companion

E.V. George
Jebin Sam Mathew

The Preacher's Companion

The Christian Minister's Handbook

E.V. George

Revised & Translated from Malayalam into English by

Jebin Sam Mathew

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The Preacher's Companion - The Christian Minister's Handbook
(Original Malayalam title: *Subrithu*)

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Freely I have received, therefore freely I give! (Matt 10:8)

Please share this book with your friends and relatives after reading it.
Help spread the word!

You may use excerpts from this book as articles for your Christian publications such as newspaper, magazine, church bulletin, etc.

Translator's Prologue

This book, originally titled *Subrithu*, was authored by my grandfather, E.V. George, in Malayalam more than a decade ago. I am profusely grateful to my lovely wife, Sherin, for permitting me to spend long hours alone with God and with this manuscript too.

Free distribution of this publication has been made possible through prayer and implicit faith in God without asking anyone but God alone. No financial appeals were made nor collections were taken but I trusted God solely to put into people's hearts to send me what I needed as freewill offerings or as voluntary contributions. It is my deeply rooted conviction that God's work may use money but it is never dependent upon it. A genuine ministry would be desperately reliant only upon the power of the Holy Spirit.

Born in Bahrain to Malayalee parents who are believers, my siblings and I had a very strict upbringing. We topped Sunday school exams and bagged prizes for scripture memorisation regularly. However, in course of time, I had grown disillusioned with 'servants of God' whose preaching did not correspond with their personal and public lives. My testimony here records what I witnessed in a Christendom that strayed from the Lord's teachings. What I saw and heard and witnessed are stark reminders of how **NOT** to be a minister and how **NOT** to do ministry.

The constant pleas for money from the pulpit and in person never seemed to end. Fundraising, as is now, was on top of their agenda and was always marked by deceit, pressure tactics and subterfuge. Corrupt malpractices, spiritual abuse and unsavoury scandals abounded. Malayalee churches in Bahrain and in the other Gulf countries were being literally coerced into inviting preachers from Kerala and arranging visas and lodging. *They just come right out and beg for your money, something Paul NEVER did! – 2 Cor 2:17*

Later, I was enrolled into a boarding school in Kerala, India and the situation fared no better. Paradoxically, *separated* assemblies that touted doctrinal purity and fullness of Spirit and belittled mainline denominations for ritualism and dead orthodoxy, themselves degenerated into ceremonial religion and namesake fellowship. Blatant carnality reared its ugly head time and again – disputes, divisions, schisms, power struggles and discord ran rampant. The lust for money and power apparently had blinded ‘great men of God’ who were *eager to lord it over* and for whom *godliness was a means of gain*. Christian ministries suffered one scandal after another and the name of the Lord was profaned in the land. Inevitably, I started loathing Christian workers altogether and found ministry to be distasteful.

When I moved to Singapore for my higher education and subsequent employment, I was exposed to the gross commercialism of the Christian faith. The crass merchandising which I witnessed in local churches and the hackneyed gimmicks on Christian TV made me cringe. It reminded me of snake oil salesmen of old who peddled their wares with impunity to the unsuspecting public. Ministries operated like profit driven business entities existing solely for and motivated by the desire for private gain. Churches metamorphosed into marketplaces seeking to milk the gullible people by purveying self-help stuff cloaked in religious garb. Focus on ‘numbers’ and *growth* and *seeker-sensitivity* superseded genuine evangelism, true

discipleship and righteous living. Being successful was in. Holiness and righteousness were out.

Christian leaders are so addicted to the love of money that they diligently cash in on the upsurge in godliness and spirituality. The true Gospel is subordinated to the heretical gospel of *bling* and ostentatious opulence. These fraudulent charlatans have no qualms in using the latest fads to make a quick buck.

And godliness is big business worth millions. The godliness market is highly profitable for book publishers & authors, songwriters & record labels, peddlers of silver crosses and lucky trinkets and bumper stickers and mustard seed packets and miracle water bottles guaranteed to bring your miracle in ninety days.

Such benumbing sacrilege and dishonour of the LORD’s name utterly grieved me. I purposed in my heart that I would NEVER go into full time Christian ministry since it carried such stigma and evoked negative connotations among believers and unbelievers alike. Being averse to doing ministry (even part time), I spent my spare time in pursuits which were as diverse as trading forex & financial derivatives, writing for publications to composing music. My pals considered me eccentric since my pursuits were outside my core competency (i.e. Mechanical Engineering). I nursed dreams of making it big in the world of hedge funds *ala* George Soros, Michael Steinhardt, Paul Tudor Jones, Richard Dennis, *et al*. These legendary investing geniuses happened to be my role models. And I was satisfied with Jesus being relegated to my pithy quiet time. But God’s plans were different – entirely different – lock, stock and barrel.

I then relocated to Doha, Qatar and the Holy Spirit taught me many wonderful truths in Scripture – rich and meaty – and my life was being radically transformed. Apparently, Satan’s fury was deeply aroused against me because of this. My conviction is that the LORD

allows this since it is only through such attacks of the Devil that the LORD teaches us humility and draws us closer to Him.

I happened to suffer untold mental agony and unbridled harassment at the hands of a prominent Christian leader, who also happened to be working in my office. He was “a gifted preacher” at his church but a cunning, despotic bully in the office. There is no limit to how low he’d stoop to plot and exact vengeance and tyranny on hapless people who are unlucky enough to earn his ire and displeasure (that includes everyone who does not obey his every whim and fancy). His carnal temper tantrums, outbursts of anger and mindless bullying would even put the vilest unbeliever to shame. The Lord taught me that it was possible to be a gifted preacher but yet have a defeated self-life. God had exposed how a Christian leader like him could be riddled with **gross hypocrisy, honour-seeking, carnality and lust for power**. I’d even doubted if he’d been truly born-again, seeing no apparent fruit of repentance in his life.

Even unbelievers both inside and outside the office have asked in amazement, “How can such a carnal man preach from the pulpit without his conscience pricking him?” Alas, being blinded by money, power, position and spiritual pride, he cannot see that he’d ruined his testimony and is progressively hindering the cause of Christ. However, he self-righteously continues to accuse others of being “proud, arrogant and ungodly”. This personal experience showed that many like him in Christendom preach doctrinally-accurate sermons yet lead hypocritical lives like the Pharisees in Jesus time. But in all of this, God was teaching me to not respond ‘tit-for-tat’ in the face of such unmerciful treatment. I held my peace and never defended myself before him. I always told God that I’d let the LORD deal with him. **God had given me the grace to love and forgive him completely and unconditionally while he continues to slander me even now**. My only prayer is that he

understands his folly and the error of his carnal ways and turns to LORD sincerely with a contrite heart.

God showed me few believers and leaders – ‘a remnant’ – who had not defiled themselves with these corruptions and lived in true fear of God. I did not realise that the LORD was preparing me for His ministry. The transition was gradual, one small step at a time. The LORD finally called me to quit my job in Qatar and go to India for full time Christian service. This was at a time when I was just married and when I had started building my career. God asked me to relinquish my career, my ambitions and the plans that I had chalked out for myself and go to where He will lead me.

The LORD had laid a burden on my heart to start off my ministry as a missionary to the poor in the slums and villages. The LORD told me to lay all my needs and the needs of the work before Him in prayer. The LORD told me to make no solicitations nor collections nor appeals to anyone but to lead a simple and spartan lifestyle – in entire dependence upon Him. He promised me that when I bring my needs in prayer, He will move His children to supply all my needs or open doors for ‘tent-making’ like Paul – to work with my own hands to support myself – as and when the LORD seems fit.

I do not write as one who has attained, but as one who is pressing on towards perfection by the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. I do not always live up to all that is within this book, but I am committed to obeying God’s Word. I am acutely aware of my own unworthiness. But praise be to the LORD that the Holy Spirit continues to instruct me and correct me, even as I occasionally stumble.

I am pleased to offer this publication to you without cost or obligation and pray that it will be a source of blessing, instruction and inspiration to you. Freely I have received, therefore freely I give.

May God bless you richly,

Jebin Sam Mathew

“But Christ has shown me that what I once thought was valuable is worthless. Nothing is as wonderful as knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. I have given up everything else and count it all as garbage. All I want is Christ and to know that I belong to him.”

(Phil 3:7-9, Contemporary English Version)

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CHAPTER 1

The Great Commission

The supreme aim of God is the salvation of all mankind. To accomplish this, God sent his Son into this world. The Son fulfilled the task and returned to the Father. Before ascending to Heaven, Jesus commanded his disciples, “*go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature*” (*Mk 16:15; Mt 28:18-20; Lk 24:47-49; Acts 1:18; KJV*).

This command of our Lord Jesus Christ is quintessentially the *Great Commission*. The Great Commission poses a few questions. Who must preach? Where must a minister preach? To whom must a minister preach? What must the message be? Let us examine these questions one by one.

Who Must Preach?

In the above verse, ‘*ye*’ refers to the ones who have been called and set apart by Jesus. To paraphrase it, the verse is addressed to the disciples who had responded to the call of Jesus and followed him. The persons whom God has ordained to proclaim the gospel of salvation are the ones who must preach. The onus is on the preacher to receive God’s message and to convey it faithfully to men. Being one of the disciples to receive this commission from Lord Jesus, Peter’s exhortation is particularly notable.

But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light (1 Pet 2:9 NIV).

Everyone who has come out of darkness and stepped into this wonderful light applying the truths of the gospel in their lives are duty bound to share the gospel. On the contrary, those who are not born again and those who are disobedient to God's Word are unworthy to share the Good News.

But here is what God says to sinful people. "What right do you have to speak the words of my laws? How dare you speak the words of my covenant!" (Ps 50:16 NIrV).

Well then, if you teach others, why don't you teach yourself? (Rom 2:21 NLT).

Watch yourself and watch your teaching. Keep on doing these things, because if you do, you will save both yourself and those who hear you. (1 Tim 4:16 GNB).

Though sharing the gospel is the responsibility of every born again believer, the duty to '*go and preach*' is entrusted to those who are ordained. The Holy Scriptures noticeably reveals ordained believers with diverse spiritual gifts carrying out the Lord's work in various capacities. We shall look into that later on.

Where Must a Minister Preach?

"All the world". Thus answers the Word of God. See Acts 1:8

First in Jerusalem – the place where you live. Next comes Judea – which surrounds Jerusalem – followed by Samaria and finally, '*to the ends of the earth*'.

Today, you will find that many who enter ministry love to go '*to the ends of the earth*' at the outset itself. That is their desire and

that is where they are 'led' to of course. The places will be financially beneficial. That is for sure. They would never dare go to the uncivilised, primitive folks in the '*uttermost parts of the earth*'.

To Whom Must a Minister Preach?

We are commanded to preach the gospel to every creature – men of every religion, caste and creed, the erudite and the illiterate, the affluent and the destitute – to all mankind irrespective of their age.

I am a debtor both to Greeks and to barbarians, both to wise and to unwise. So, as much as is in me, I am ready to preach the gospel... (Rom 1:14-15 NKJV).

What Must Your Preaching Be?

We must preach the gospel. So what is the gospel? Succinctly put, it is the message of God's everlasting salvation through Jesus Christ to restore joy, peace, and eternal life to all mankind, all of which was lost when sin entered the human race, through Satan's deception and guile. The gospel is God's unchanging truth that has stood the test of time and proved itself to be inerrant and infallible.

...Open their eyes and turn them from the darkness to the light and from the power of Satan to God, so that through their faith in me they will have their sins forgiven and receive their place among God's chosen people... I preached that they must repent of their sins and turn to God and do the things that would show they had repented. (Acts 26:18-20 GNB)

Refer 1 Th 2:3,8-9,13,16; 2 Th 1:7; 2:14; 1 Tim 6:3; 2 Tim 2:14-18; Acts 4:12,17-20; Acts 5:30-32,40-42; Acts 8:4,5,35; Acts 9:20,22; 1 Cor 1:23; Eph 3:9; 1 Tim 4:7; Phil 1:15; 1 Pet 4:11.

Keys to Effective Ministry

Though this section is addressed primarily to preachers, it is applicable to every minister irrespective of his role and calling.

Ordination

1. Who appoints you?

For this I was appointed a preacher and an apostle... as a teacher of the Gentiles in faith and truth. (1 Tim 2:7 NASB)

And I thank Christ Jesus our Lord who has enabled me, because He counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry (1 Tim 1:12 NKJV)

I have been appointed to serve the Church in the position of responsibility entrusted to me by God for your benefit, so that I may fully deliver God's Message... (Col 1:25 WEY)

For a preacher to accomplish his ministry successfully, he must have a clear understanding regarding his ordination. Though he may choose to work with an organisation, he must realise that this responsibility of ministry has been entrusted to him by God.

A believer, who is ignorant of this truth or fails to comprehend it fully, is bound to be unfaithful if he steps into ministry.

2. For Whom Do You Do Ministry?

Set apart **for me**...for the work to which I have called them (Acts 13:2 ESV)

Work hard so you can present yourself **to God** and receive his approval. Be a good worker, one who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly explains the word of truth (2 Tim 2:15 NLT)

We sent our brother Timothy to give you strength and hope in your faith. He **works together with God** in spreading the good news about Christ (1 Thess 3:2 NIRV)

From the above mentioned verses, it is explicitly clear that ministry is done for God and not for an organisation or denomination.

It is imperative that this principle should rule a minister's heart and guide his mind. Else, the preacher may eventually suffer from burnout or fatigue. The reason is not hard to determine: it is quite usual to pin hopes and nurture expectations when you 'work for an organisation'. When these expectations are unfulfilled, discouragement sets in, affecting one's ministry adversely.

On the other hand, if you are 'working for God' (there is a great difference between the two), ministry will never be hampered even if a Christian worker does not get honour, or fame, or recognition or financial benefit that is due to him. In addition, a minister will be able to brave difficulties, opposition and persecutions without complaining or being bitter. He will be able to weather the storms by being humbly dependent on God alone.

What Your Responsibilities Are

1. *Burden for Souls*

The preacher should be passionate about seeing souls being saved for Christ and that should be the ultimate objective of his ministry. Preaching should not become an end in itself. Preaching for the mere sake of preaching – waters down the effectiveness of one's ministry.

It is important to have a burden for lost souls. Only then will you be able to lead them to salvation and guide them in their spiritual growth.

Apostle Paul remarks that he had to suffer life threatening perils, toil, difficulties, sleep deprivation, starvation, thirst and lack of proper shelter and clothing. Despite all this, the anxiety of all churches burdened him daily. 2 Cor 11:26-28

2. *Grace*

God's grace is necessary for your ministry to be a blessing.

My message and my preaching were not accompanied by clever words of wisdom, but by a display of the Spirit's power, so that your faith would not be based on human wisdom but on God's power (1 Cor 2:4,5 ISV)

Every word we speak was taught to us by God's Spirit, not by human wisdom. And this same Spirit helps us teach spiritual things to spiritual people (1 Cor 2:13 CEV)

And they were not able to resist the wisdom and the spirit by which he spoke (Acts 6:10; 4:13; Exo 35:31-35; Exo 36:1)

3. *Zeal*

A minister should not be lazy or lethargic. He should neither be fond of sleep. On the contrary, he should be passionate and zealous in serving the Lord tirelessly.

4. *Prayer life*

You ought to pray fervently for open doors for ministry; so that you may receive grace to preach the Word with authority and the power of the Holy Spirit; so that the hearts of the listeners may be prepared; so that the preaching of the Word may begin to lead them to salvation and sustain them in the faith. If Jesus Christ, being the Son of God, spent hours in secret prayer, how much more should we do the same?

See Col 1:3-5,9; 1 Tim 2:1-3; Eph 1:15-19; Phil 1:3-6

5. *Scripture Study (Meditation)*

A minister should be thoroughly well versed with the Scripture to be able to preach the Word articulately. Meditating the Scripture should be made a daily routine in order to accomplish this. You should avoid doubtful and difficult portions of Scripture if you are unsure of its proper interpretation. 2 Cor 2:17; 1 Thess 1:5

6. *Ministry of Reconciliation*

We should be careful in not causing another person to stumble or fall. We should exercise caution in our dealings that it does neither create nor promote schisms or divisions. We have been given a ministry of reconciliation from God. If petty differences do arise, we should seek to reconcile and resolve the matter quickly. 2 Cor 5:18,19

7. *Originality*

The preacher should be original in the sense that he should not imitate somebody else's voice, style, mannerisms (*assuming you already know that blatantly copying somebody else's sermon lock, stock and barrel is totally dishonourable*).

You should have a clear and coherent voice. Your voice should be loud enough for everyone in the audience to hear. Avoid speaking

in a monotonous drone and raise your volume only for portions that require extra emphasis.

It is advisable to have a decent command of vocabulary and idiomatic expressions. Steer clear of long winded, verbose language – the aim of preaching is NOT to impress your audience by showcasing your linguistic abilities.

Don't use 'Hallelujah' and 'Praise the Lord' indiscriminately. They are not as gap fillers. Using them after each sentence is ridiculously awkward. Inappropriate 'Hallelujahs' can bring unnecessary embarrassment to you and dishonour to God. For instance: "*that woman is immoral – Hallelujah! And oh, she commits adultery – Praise the Lord!!!*" This foolishness should not be tolerated; rather this travesty should be nipped in the bud and avoided at any cost.

8. *Faithfulness*

Faithfulness in a minister's life is a very vital quality – first to God and then to man.

See Matt 25:21; Dan 6:4; 2 Tim 2:2; Rev 2:10; Matt 24:25; Matt 25:21,23; Lk 16:10,12; 1 Cor 4:2

Obedience through the reverential fear of the Lord is the mark of true faithfulness. For this, absolute surrender and readiness to sacrifice is necessary. Faithfulness to God and man entails being faithful to your obligations and faithful in all your responsibilities.

See Dan 1:8-16; Dan 3:1-30; Dan 6:7,10; 2 Ch 25:14-16; Gen 39:7-23; 2 Ch 16:7; 2 Cor 6:14-16; 1 Sam 15:22

9. *On the Pulpit*

Never preach with your eyes closed. Maintain eye contact with your audience. Only then can you see their response. Have a pleasant

face and an erect posture. Be wary of inappropriate mannerisms and gestures.

What Your Personal Life Must Be

1. *Preaching & Practising (Witnessing from life)*

The preacher should apply his own preaching and faith in his personal life. 1 Tim 4:7,12,16. Instead of practising what you preach which is the world's standard, it is more blessed to preach only what you practice (or at least trying sincerely to practice). It is important to lead a holy life in order to establish a good testimony and be a role model both inside and outside the church.

2. *Self Control & Restraint*

A minister should be careful to exercise self restraint at all times. You must be at peace and never lose temper when your ministry is criticized or when you are ridiculed, falsely accused, slandered or maligned in any way. Be slow to anger. Patience and forbearance are absolutely essential.

Never try to respond to their criticism or reply to their accusations and thereby prove your innocence. In the face of the criticism, just examine and ask yourself whether there's any truth in it. Correct yourself, if need be. Just make sure your conscience is clear before God and men. Leave the matter with Him and remain silent. That's all you've got to do.

See Isa 53:7,9; Matt 26:63; 2 Tim 2:24

3. *Self Examination*

Set aside a regular time daily to examine thoughts, actions, words, attitude, behaviour that transpired throughout the day. Identify shortcomings, failures and mistakes. Determine to rectify

and set things right. Your life and ministry will be more blessed by this ostensibly simple act.

4. *Humility*

Ministry should never be a means of seeking one's own or getting honour from men. The thought that others are not treating us the way we deserve should not even cross our minds. Never 'lord it over' and think you are a 'somebody'. Be humble and meek.

5. *Honourable*

Being an ambassador of Christ, a preacher should be honourable and serious about his ministry. Do not bring dishonour upon yourself by involving in silly issues. Do not engage in idle talk. Do not give others an opportunity to question your integrity or suspect your character. Do not be disturbed by criticism or reply to it.

Be serious and responsible. At the same time, avoid arrogance and self-importance. Do not be an opportunist and steer clear from double-talk. Be moderate in speech even with believers unless the matter is of spiritual significance. 2 Cor 5:20; 1 Tim 3:8

6. *Not Covetous-Not a Lover of Money*

A minister should not be motivated by money. He should be more interested in giving to the Lord's work than receiving in the name of the Lord. Do not make your needs known to any man – reveal it to God alone. Godliness should not be made a means of profit.

Today, many are peddling the Word of God and merchandising their spiritual gifts. Such Christian 'workers-for-hire' prefer to minister where more money is to be made. Those who seek money and are greedy for financial rewards will eventually become ministers of Balaam. Jude 1:11; Rev 2:14.

Therefore, be content with what you have. A soldier on active duty wants to please his commanding officer and so does not get entangled in the affairs of civilian life. This is an important tip to avoid failure in ministry.

Refer 1 Tim 6:5,8,10,11; Phil 4:6,19; 2 Pet 2:3; 1 Tim 3:8; 2 Tim 2:4; 1 Thess 2:5; Mic 3:11

7. *Believing What You Preach & Personal Faith*

The preacher should strongly believe what he preaches and his life should measure up accordingly. Or else, you will end up as a walking advertisement for hypocrisy. Rom 2:21

Hindrances to Effective Ministry

Do not skim over this chapter! This, in my humble opinion, is the most important part of this book. If you understand this chapter and take heed, your personal life and ministry will be revolutionised.

Herein, you will run into the reasons why genuine revival tarries, why churches and ministries grow cold, why the preacher lacks the anointing and fire in his sermons and why many lose their first love and gradually move away from the faith.

Fear of Man

Fearing people is a dangerous trap, but trusting the LORD means safety (Prov 29:25 NLT)

Do not show partiality in judging... Do not be afraid of any man, for judgment belongs to God. (Deut 1:17 NIV)

Then Saul told Samuel, "I have sinned by not following the LORD's command... I was afraid of the people and listened to them (1 Sam 15:24 GW)

Do not worry about how or what you are to say... Do not fear those who kill the body but are unable to kill the soul; but

rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell (Matt 10:19,28 NASB)

Do you think God wants us to obey you or to obey him? We cannot keep quiet about what we have seen and heard (Acts 4:18-20 CEV)

Livelihood Worries

That's why I'm telling you to stop worrying about your life-what you will eat or what you will drink-or about your body-what you will wear (Matt 6:25 ISV)

"Martha, Martha," the Lord answered, "you are worried and upset about many things" (Luke 10:41 NIV)

And don't be concerned about what to eat and what to drink. Don't worry about such things (Luke 12:29 NLT)

But be on your guard. Don't let the sharp edge of your expectation get dulled by parties and drinking and shopping (Luke 21:34 MSG)

No one serving in the military gets mixed up in civilian matters, for his aim is to please his commanding officer (2 Tim 2:4 ISV)

The seeds that fell among the thorn bushes are also people who hear the message. But they start worrying about the needs of this life and are fooled by the desire to get rich. So the message gets choked out, and they never produce anything (Matt 13:22 CEV)

I desire you to be without anxiety..(1 Cor 7:32 MKJV)

In nothing be anxious... (Phil 4:6 RV)

Casting all your anxiety upon him, because he careth for you (1 Pet 5:7 ASV)

Love of Money and the Desire to be Rich

They have wicked minds and have missed out on the truth. These people think religion is supposed to make you rich...we should be satisfied just to have food and clothes. The love of money causes all kinds of trouble. Some people want money so much that they have given up their faith and caused themselves a lot of pain...you belong to God, so keep away from all these evil things (1 Tim 6:5,8,10,11 CEV)

They must not be greedy for money (1 Tim 3:8 GNB)

Everyone who...is covetous... has no inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God (Eph 3:5 ESV)

For men will be lovers of money (2 Tim 3:2 BBE)

Don't worry about anything...with all his abundant wealth through Christ Jesus, my God will supply all your needs (Phil 4:6,19 GNB)

In their greed these false teachers will make a profit out of telling you made-up stories (2 Pet 2:3,4 GNB)

How terrible it will be for them! For they...rushed headlong into Balaam's error to make a profit, and destroyed themselves... (Jude 1:11 ISV)

But I have a few things against thee, because thou hast there them that hold the doctrine of Balaam (Rev 2:14 KJV)

We never used flattery or schemes to make money. God is our witness! (1 Thess 2:5 GW)

Your leaders exchange justice for bribes. Your priests teach for a price. Your prophets tell the future for money. But they rely on the LORD when they say, "After all, the LORD is with us. Nothing bad will happen to us" (Mic 3:11 GW)

Treating Godliness & Ministry as a Profit-Making Business

They think religion is a way to make a fast buck (1 Tim 6:5 MSG)

Unbelief & Unfaithfulness

"O unbelieving and perverse generation," Jesus replied, "how long shall I stay with you? How long shall I put up with you?" (Matt 17:17 NIV)

And he answered them, "O faithless generation, how long am I to be with you? How long am I to bear with you?" (Mark 9:19 ESV)

Jesus answered, "You unbelieving and corrupt generation! How long must I be with you and put up with you?" (Luke 9:41 GW)

Like their fathers they were disloyal and faithless as unreliable as a faulty bow (Psal 78:57 NIV)

Putting confidence in an unreliable person in times of trouble is like chewing with a broken tooth or walking on a lame foot (Prov 25:19 NLT)

Sexual Immorality

Don't let sexual sin, perversion of any kind, or greed even be mentioned among you. This is not appropriate behaviour for God's holy people. It's not right that dirty stories, foolish talk, or obscene jokes should be mentioned among you either...You know very well that no person who is involved in sexual sin, perversion, or greed (which means worshiping wealth) can have any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God (Eph 5:3-5 GW)

Be an example to all believers in what you say, in the way you live, in your love, your faith, and your purity. Keep a close watch on how you live and on your teaching. Stay true to what is right for the sake of your own salvation and the salvation of those who hear you (1 Tim 4:12,16 NLT)

An elder must be blameless, the husband of one wife, stable, sensible, respectable, a lover of strangers, and teachable. Deacons must be husbands of one wife and must manage their children and their families well (1 Tim 3:2,12 ISV)

Always set a good example for others. Be sincere and serious when you teach (Tit 2:7 CEV)

Serving ‘Two Masters’

No one can serve two masters. For you will hate one and love the other; you will be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money (Matt 6:24 NLT)

No worker can serve two bosses: He’ll either hate the first and love the second or adore the first and despise the second. You can’t serve both God and the **Bank** (Luke 16:13 MSG)

CHAPTER 4

Spiritual Gifts for Ministry

It is God’s intention that the Gospel be propagated throughout the world. To this end, God has commissioned every born again believer to proclaim the Gospel. Besides, God has given spiritual gifts to equip believers for different types of ministry. We see in the Holy Scripture that God has ordained ministers with different gifts.

And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; (Eph 4:11 KJV)

1. Apostles
2. Prophets
3. Evangelists
4. Pastors
5. Teachers

In addition to the above, the following have been ordained too:

1. Deacons – *See* 1 Tim 3:8-13; Acts 6:3; Phil 1:1
2. Elders – *See* Acts 11:30; Acts 15:2; 1 Tim 5:17; Tit 1:5
3. Bishops or Overseers – *See* 1 Tim 3:1-7

Purpose of Ministry Gifts

1. Unity – Eph 4:12-16
2. Christ-likeness
3. Maturity
4. Restoration
5. Spiritual growth
6. Avoid deception
7. Discern false teaching
8. Perform the ministry of the Spirit (New Covenant) – 2 Cor 3:6
9. To reveal the truth – without deceit or adulterating God's Word – 2 Cor 4:2

Requisite Qualifications

1. Apt to teach – 2 Tim 2:24
2. Wisdom – Exo 35:31-35; Exo 36:1; Acts 4:13; Acts 6:3,10; Gal 1:11,12; 1 Cor 2:4,5,13
3. Good reputation – Acts 6:3
4. Spirit-filled – Acts 6:3
5. Spiritual gifts and revelation – 2 Tim 1:6; Acts 9:10-16
6. Spiritual (not carnal) – 1 Cor 2:15
7. Led by the power of the Holy Spirit – Acts 6:10; 1 Cor 2:12,13
8. Holds firmly to the message which agrees with the doctrine – 1 Tim 1:18,19; Tit 1:9
9. Does not corrupt or tamper with the Word – Tit 2:8; 2 Cor 2:14-17; 2 Cor 4:2

10. Praying continually – Dan 6:10; Psal 55:17; Eph 3:14-19; 1 Th 3:9,10; 2 Th 1:12; 2 Tim 1:3,4; Phil 1:3-11
11. Ready to face the threat of tribulation and persecution – Matt 10:16
12. Does not take credit for self but understand that capability comes from God – 2 Cor 3:5
13. Performs the ministry of the New Covenant – 2 Cor 3:6
14. Recognises that ministry has been received through God's mercy – 2 Cor 4:1
15. Not discouraged (does not lose heart) – 2 Cor 4:1
16. Renounced secret and shameful deeds – 2 Cor 4:2
17. Does not act deceitfully or practice craftiness
18. Reveals only the truth
19. Never ashamed of ministry but takes pride in it knowing that it is a God-ordained commission – Col 1:25
20. Faithful (trustworthy) – 1 Tim 1:12
21. Never quits ministry but endures hardship yet remains a loyal soldier of Christ to the very end – 2 Tim 2:3;
22. Does not let his ministry fall into reproach or be blamed – 2 Cor 6:3-10; Matt 10:17-23
23. Willingly suffers for the cause of Christ – 2 Tim 1:12; 2 Tim 2:3-4; 2 Tim 4:5
24. Forbearing & patient – 2 Tim 2:24
25. Renounced anxiety and cares of this life – 2 Tim 2:24
26. Not motivated by reward (gifts, money) – Gen 14:22; 1 Kgs 13:7,8; 2 Kgs 5:15,16; Dan 5:17; 1 Pet 5:2

27. Does not hold life dear to oneself – Acts 20:24
28. Does not give an occasion for stumbling – 2 Cor 6:3-10
29. Does not take sides (not given to factions, prejudice, partiality, favouritism) – 1 Cor 3:3-9; 1 Tim 5:21
30. Prevents divisions & strife among believers (fosters unity) - 1 Cor 3:3-9
31. Not quarrelsome and argumentative – 2 Tim 2:24
32. Peace-maker
33. Humble and meek
34. Self-controlled – 2 Tim 4:5
35. Has a clear conscience – 1 Tim 1:18,19
36. Service-minded – 2 Tim 2:1,3
37. Turns away from wrong-doing – 2 Tim 2:19
38. Practises good deeds – 2 Tim 3:17
39. Hospitable
40. Good character
41. Sets a good example and be a role model – 1 Tim 4:12,16; Tit 2:7
42. Good reputation, blameless – 2 Tim 2:24; Matt 26:63; Isa 53:7,9
43. Neither accepts flattery nor flatters others – 1 Thess 2:4,5
44. Not double-tongued – 1 Tim 3:10
45. Gentle – 1 Thess 2:7
46. Bold – Acts 4:13
47. Husband of one wife – 1 Tim 3:2,12

48. Able to manage his own family well and whose children obey and respect him and are believers
49. Stable-minded (unwavering)
50. Responsible and has a sense of duty – John 10:12
51. Not self-seeking and wanting one's own way
52. Not violent – 1 Tim 3:3
53. Not short-tempered – Tit 1:7
54. Not looking to fight – Tit 1:7
55. Not a new convert – 1 Tim 3:6
56. Able to lead and rule well – 1 Tim 5:17

Duties

1. *Teachers* – to teach (to instruct)
2 Tim 2:24,26; Matt 28:20; Jas 3:1
2. *Preachers* – to preach (the gospel; 'evangelist')
Matt 10:7; Mk 16:15; Rom 10:14,15;
3. *Pastors*
 - a. To shepherd (to feed) – Jer 3:15; Jer 23:4; Ezek 34:12,23; Jn 21:17; Acts 20:28; 1 Pet 5:2; 1 Tim 5:17
 - b. To keep watch (to guard) – Isa 62:6; Jer 6:17; Ezek 3:17; Ezek 33:6; Heb 13:17
 - c. To exhort (to encourage/comfort) – 1 Tim 4:13; 2 Tim 4:2; Tit 1:9; Tit 2:15; Heb 3:13
 - d. To encourage the fainthearted, to support the weak – 1 Thess 5:14
 - e. To heal the sick – Ezek 34:16

- f. To seek the lost – Ezek 34:16
- g. To nurture gently – 1 Thess 2:7,8
- h. To bring the scattered together again – Ezek 34:12
- i. To bandage those that are hurt – Ezek 34:16
- j. To lead and rule well – 1 Tim 5:17

The Unfaithful Minister

Pastors (*as Shepherds*)

Shepherds who destroy and scatter the sheep – Jer 23:1,2,11; Jer 12:10,11

Shepherds who do not know to guard, each turning to do as they please and seeking to make a profit – Isa 56:11

Shepherds who cause the sheep to go astray – Jer 50:6

Shepherds who transgress (rebel/sin) – Jer 2:8

Shepherds who feed themselves – Ezek 34:2,3

The worthless shepherd who abandons the flock – Zech 11:17

Those who are not shepherds but merely HIRED MEN – they leave the sheep and flee – John 10:12,13

Sadly, many pastors in Christendom are like this – *hired men* – labourers for wages or salaried employees. Many *grumble* or quit if they are not given a wage/salary or if it does not meet their expectations. Many *prefer* to minister in rich countries, pastor rich churches, and shepherd rich believers. **They are NOT shepherds!** They are no different from those salaried employees looking to fulfil the bare minimum in their employment contract or those wage-earning labourers who are anxious for the close of day.

Pastors (*as Watchmen*)

His watchmen are blind, they are all without knowledge; they are all dumb dogs, they cannot bark; they lie around and dream, they love to sleep – Isa 56:10

Everyone, great and small, are covetous, eager to make money, greedy for gain – Jer 6:13

Prophets

Prophets who give false teaching – Isa 9:15

Prophets who prophesy by Baal – Jer 2:8

Prophets who prophesy falsely – Jer 5:31

Prophets who deal falsely or act deceitfully – Jer 6:13

Prophets who speak or prophesy lies – Jer 14:14; Zech 13:3

Prophets who speak a vision out of their own heart and not out of the mouth of the LORD – Jer 23:16; Ezek 13:2-7

Prophets who **never expose sin** and see false visions and prophesy lies – Lam 2:14

Prophets who grieve the heart of the righteous and strengthen the wicked – Ezek 13:22

Prophets who see false visions and make false predictions saying, *Thus saith the LORD* when the LORD God have not spoken to them – Ezek 22:28

Prophets who minister to those who pay them – Mic 3:5 GNB

Prophets who give their revelations for money – Mic 3:11 GNB

Prophets who are irresponsible and treacherous – Zeph 3:4 GNB

Prophets who come to you in sheep's clothing but are really cruel wolves – Matt 7:15

False prophets who shall deceive and lead many astray – Matt 24:11

False prophets who will perform miracles, signs and wonders – Mk 13:22

False prophets – 2 Pet 2:1

Teachers

Teachers who teach commandments, rules or precepts of men as their doctrines – Matt 15:9

Teachers who teach a different (false) doctrine – 1 Tim 1:3

Teachers who have turned away from loving out of a pure heart, good conscience and genuine faith – 1 Tim 1:6

Teachers who teach lies, following the doctrines of devils – 1 Tim 4:1

Teachers who teach a different doctrine which disagrees with the correct and godly teaching of the Lord Jesus Christ – 1 Tim 6:3 CEV

Teachers who tell people, who will not listen to sound doctrine, to follow their own desires; Teachers **who please people** by telling them what they are itching to hear – 2 Tim 4:3

Teachers who ruin whole families by teaching what they should not teach in order **to make money** – Tit 1:11 ISV

False teachers – 2 Pet 2:1

Sermon Preparation

Any sermon or discourse should be based on a theme (at least loosely).

Key Verse

1. Keep the audience in mind while choosing the key verse, taking into account their spiritual, physical, mental needs. This will help in getting their attention and establishing a rapport. Since your preaching is based on the Word of God, you can speak authoritatively and boldly. There is no need to be timid or apprehensive.
2. You should be careful not to preach the same sermon (with the same outline – word for word) to the same audience twice. It will prove useful to jot down the sermons preached and the corresponding date and venue.
3. The key verse and the topic should suit the circumstance – time and place. Do not select a topic that would be inappropriate to the audience.

E.g. Do not select the verse, “*Judge not, that you be not judged*” when speaking to a group of judges or jurists. Similarly, neither

quote John 4:18, "For you have had five husbands and the one you now have is not your husband. What you have said is true." (ESV) and expound it on wedding occasions!

4. The preacher should choose a verse that he is capable of handling. Avoid controversial topics and try not to select verses whose interpretation is contentious, dubious or apparently contradictory.
5. Never choose incomplete verses or portions of Scripture and build a sermon solely on that.

Young people, enjoy your youth. Be happy while you are still young. Do what you want to do, and follow your heart's desire. (Ecc 11:9 GNB)

Let some stranger steal my wife from me. (Job 31:10 CEV)

Come on! Let's make love all night long. We'll be happy in each other's arms. My husband isn't at home. He's on a long trip. (Pro 7:18,19 GNB)

You say to each other, "Let's drink till we're drunk! Tomorrow we'll do it again. We'll really enjoy ourselves. (Isa 56:12 CEV)

I am convinced that we should enjoy ourselves, because the only pleasure we have in this life is eating and drinking and enjoying ourselves. (Ecc 8:15 GNB)

6. Do not deviate from your topic. Organise your message in such a manner that it is consistent with your topic and relevant to your key verse.
7. Do not copy somebody else's sermon and pass it off as your own. Not only is it shameful, you will also lose credibility and trust. Being original does not mean that you should be the first to preach the topic in a particular manner. It is acceptable to borrow a few words or phrases or be inspired by another sermon

or book but unashamed copying is bad. Neither mimic somebody else's voice, style, mannerisms.

8. It is not a sin to refer to other men's study of God's Word. On the contrary, the additional insights gleaned will enrich your study. But, outright plagiarism viz. verbatim reproduction in preaching or duplication in writing is a strict NO-NO unless you give credit to the original author or speaker. Just follow this maxim: "Graze on everybody's pasture, but give your own milk!" Or put differently, "Milk many cows, but churn your own butter!"
9. Prepare your sermon prayerfully. You need the Holy Spirit to illuminate the Scriptures so that you can proclaim God's message to His people. So, your sermon preparation should be *bathed in prayer*.
10. Have a clear objective in mind. Prepare your message with a definite aim that hearers must repent and be blessed. Let your message lead them to this objective.
11. Surrender to and depend on the Holy Spirit. Only the Holy Spirit can convict the hearers about their sin and lead them to the truth. Allow the Holy Spirit to guide you as you prepare and anoint your message.
12. Be simple yet awe-inspiring. The message should be simple that even a child can grasp it. Yet, it should inspire people – educated as well as uneducated – and rouse them to leading godly lives.
13. The preacher should be well-versed and thorough in his sermon topic
14. Using illustrations and examples is advisable. You may cite current affairs, technological advances, cultural trends and fads that are consistent with your message.
15. Do not exceed the time limit. Stick to the time allotted to you.

16. Present your explanations in depth to dispel potential doubts.
17. Singing inspirational hymns & choruses appropriate to the theme is useful in reinforcing your message and engaging your audience.

Exegesis

1. *Literary Style*

Identify if the text is to be interpreted literally or figuratively. Analysing the context of verse helps in determining whether literal or figurative interpretation is to be applied. Jesus Christ has used expressions such as allegories and metaphors quite often. E.g. Jesus used expressions like “destroy the temple”, “I am the door”. Jesus also spoke of the ‘bread’ as his body and the ‘wine’ as his blood during the Last Supper.

2. *Context*

Examine the relationship of the key verse to the verses that precede and follow. Some preach that Jesus is able to save even the most depraved sinner based on Heb 7:25. That does not mean that a sinner can be saved without a genuine commitment and absolute surrender.

3. *Meaning of Words*

Probe the author’s intended meaning of the text. Depending on the author’s etymological usage, words can take on a different shade of meaning.

In Exo 14:13, the term ‘salvation’ implies deliverance from danger or protection; in Jas 5:15, the phrase ‘shall save’ refers to physical wholeness or healing. Furthermore, ‘salvation’ in Rom 13:11 signifies redemption whereas in Heb 2:3,4 it embodies the message of the Gospel.

The meaning of certain word usage can be understood by knowing the immediate and broader context. If “go and prosper” in 1 Kgs 22:15 is plucked out of context and taken literally, it will be misleading.

Also, “rise up and go with them” in Num 22:20 does not truly mean that way and it is clearly evident when you compare it with verses 12 and 32. In addition, notice ‘seed’ and ‘ground’ in Matt 13:3-8. The list does not end here.

4. *Original Languages*

The etymological study of root words in original Hebrew and Greek and understanding the breadth of meaning nuances will be helpful. Mastery of the languages, though good, is not compulsory. There are several dictionaries and language tools for such study purposes.

5. *Historical-Socio-Cultural Background*

To faithfully recreate the author’s message, you should take into consideration the historical-socio-cultural background. This refers to the time, geographic locale, and occasion of writing; the identity of the author and the audience; the traits and problems of the readers; distinctive customs and beliefs of their time; the political, geographical, social and spiritual environment of author, audience and other characters.

6. *Cross-References*

Explore cross-references and other supporting verses that lend credence and authority to your chosen theme or topic.

7. *Commentaries*

You may also read what Bible scholars and theologians say about a scripture (e.g. commentaries). Nothing must substitute a direct

and independent study of the Bible. The Bible **MUST** be your primary resource in sermon preparation and preaching.

Sermon Preparation Aids

1. *Regular Bible Study*

In addition to the key verse, you need to integrate other relevant Scripture portions and supporting verses. For this, you need to be thoroughly knowledgeable about the Bible. Regular Bible study and habitual scripture memorisation should be an undeniable part of life.

2. *Reference Books & Study Resources*

You may use secondary exegetical resources such as commentaries, Bible dictionaries, Bible atlas, biographies' etc to enhance, not replace, your personal contact with Scripture. The practice of habitual reading is a valuable asset to the preacher.

3. *Note-taking*

- a. **From Reading:** It would be useful to jot down useful thoughts, ideas, opinions, arguments, propositions, anecdotes and illustrations that you come across during your reading. Keep a diary or notepad. This will help in refining your sermon.
- b. **From Observations:** A preacher should be sharp and meticulous in his observation. Keep a record of first-hand and secondary observations (both visual and auditory), quotes from world leaders and 'sound bites' from leading personalities, newsworthy events.
- c. **From Reflections:** When you are continually exposed to habitual reading, keen observation of sights, sounds and surroundings, conversations and interactions with other people, you are bound to experience spontaneous flashes of interesting ideas and new

thoughts in your mind. Journal these 'flashes' immediately in a diary or notepad before it recedes away from memory. Also, reflect and ponder on these 'flashes' and elaborate and expand on these 'flashes' as and when inspiration strikes. Since you have recorded it, you can refer to it at an opportune moment later on.

4. *Leading of the Holy Spirit*

Since the Holy Spirit weighs the hearts of men and knows their needs and circumstances intimately, the leading of the Holy Spirit is crucial and absolutely essential. Only a sermon that is bathed in the grace of God and preached with the power and anointing of the Holy Spirit can awaken and inspire the people of God. So it is important to be yielded to the leading of the Holy Spirit and maintain an intimate and perpetual fellowship with God. Only a Holy Spirit empowered minister can feed the hungry souls.

Sermon Layout

A typical sermon comprises three sections which are stated as follows:

1. *Introduction*

The introduction opens the sermon and briefs the audience on the theme that is to come. It can make or break a sermon in seizing the attention of the audience. Introductions should not be too long. If well presented, the audience will want to pay attention to the rest of the message.

2. *Description*

This section constitutes the core of the sermon. Organise the explanation of your message into points; the audience will be able to remember it better. Categorising into points will make the

presentation structured and coherent. Points can be arranged based on the following guidelines:

- a. **What (or Which)?** Firstly, describe what your theme is or which topic are you going to preach on. E.g. If you are preaching on ‘repentance’, explain *what* it is. It would be useful to include root meanings of Hebrew and Greek in this subsection.
- b. **Why (or Why Not)?** Secondly, answer the question *why* (or *why not*). Include the reason and purpose (of your subject) in this subsection. To elaborate, you may allude to illustrations, anecdotes and real life incidents. Jesus himself had employed versatile illustrations in his discourses.
- c. **How?** This is the third part of your description section. E.g. *how* can one embrace ‘repentance’? Is it feasible and practicable? If your topic is on ‘being born-again’, describe how one can be born-again.
- d. **What Then?** In the fourth subsection, you will deal with the result(s) or consequence(s) and utility or efficacy of your subject.

3. Conclusion

The purpose of conclusion is to reiterate the highlights of the sermon. This emphatic recap will make your preaching a memorable one to the audience. Before you wind up, you may give an invitation for those who desire salvation or prayer to make a decision.

I Rather Have Jesus Than Anything!

Dear fellow labourers in Christ, let us make this profound hymn our motto in ministry. I have made it mine – Jebin.

I’d rather have Jesus *than silver or gold*
I’d rather be His than have *riches untold*
I’d rather have Jesus *than houses or lands*
I’d rather be led by His nail-pierced hand

Than to be the king of a vast domain
And be held in sin’s dread sway
I’d rather have Jesus *than anything*
This world affords today

I’d rather have Jesus *than worldly applause*
I’d rather be faithful to His dear cause
I’d rather have Jesus *than worldwide fame*
I’d rather be true to His holy name

Than to be the king of a vast domain
And be held in sin’s dread sway
I’d rather have Jesus *than anything*
This world affords today

Omission of Sermon Topical Index/Sermon Outlines

The original book contained a sermon topical index with nearly 80 sermon outlines. I have taken the liberty of excluding it in this edition. The original book was written at a time when not much study aids and resources were easily available in Malayalam. Since most of the topical outlines and concordances were in English and they came with a steep price tag, it was well beyond the reach of most Malayalee Christian workers. Apparently, my grandfather had included a section comprising sermon outlines that runs a wide gamut of practical biblical topics for their benefit.

With the advent of the Internet age and a proliferation of bible study tools, commentaries and a plethora of other study aids, I surmise that inclusion of this section would be invariably outdated and lacking comprehensiveness.

However, upholding the spirit of the original book, I would like to share tips and pointers to produce a decent sermon outlines for those who are constrained by a limited budget. If you simply don't have wads of cash to splurge on reference materials, this section will benefit you.

Suggestions

The key to produce a good sermon outline is to do a thorough subject analysis. It does not matter whether it is expository (verse by verse) or topical (thematic). The beauty of this method is that it requires only a Bible, and a concordance and maybe a Bible dictionary too. That's all to it; read on:

1. Once you have a key verse or a theme in mind, read it prayerfully and carefully. I suggest you get a plain Bible without note or comment. Steer clear from the urge to refer to a Study Bible or a commentary at this stage.
2. Most Bibles will have cross-references. Jot it down and refer to those. Identify macro and micro themes and concepts. (What was that? Don't worry, I'll explain) Look at the message of the verse(s), cross-references, (that's micro) and the passage and its context (that's macro). Once you have identified subjects say **GRACE**, **REDEMPTION**, **FORGIVENESS**, et cetera, go to the next step. If you already had a topic in mind, skip this step.
3. Look the subject up in a good concordance. No, I am not referring to the ones provided at the end of most Bibles today. Those are more or less mini-concordance-dictionary. I suggest *Young's Analytical Concordance* or if you prefer a less exhaustive one, *Cruden's Concordance*. For those who like to dig deep and have a proclivity for exhaustive research, you can pick up a *Strong's Exhaustive Concordance*. Some of these have online versions for free use. Perhaps, you have wondered (I have!) at the amazing knowledge of the preacher who quotes so many references for a given subject. *The concordance is one of their closely guarded trade secrets!*
4. Now you have an exhaustive collection of references on teachings or concepts related to your subject. This way, you will know

the mind of God on a particular issue. Based on these, ask yourself questions like What, Why (not), Where, Who, How, What then, etc and determine answers from your search results. Look for important lessons and applications for yourself and your audience.

5. Look up a good Bible dictionary (optional) and search for people, places, theological concepts and themes. You will find a wealth of information especially on history, culture and background. Some of the useful and popular ones that I can think of now: IVP's New Bible Dictionary (arguably, the best one-volume dictionary) and Unger's Bible Dictionary. *Aha, so now you know how that smart preacher could amazingly recount how the houses and culture and customs were in Bible times!*
6. Based on all of the above, develop an outline with 3-4 points to constitute the core of your sermon. You may include personal anecdotes and other illustrations to breathe life into your message. Remember, the indispensable key is fervent prayer and yielding to the leading of the Holy Spirit.

You have just hit the tip of the proverbial iceberg! I have given you some useful tips on how to do a basic Bible study without burning a hole in your pocket. For advanced study, there are excellent tools such as commentaries, Bible atlases, scholarly expositions, softwares, etc.

Conclusion

If God willing, I intend to author a comprehensive book on 'How to study your Bible' in the foreseeable future. This book will examine and explain different study methods with the ultimate goal of helping you "do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who has no need to be ashamed, rightly handling the word of truth" (2 Tim 2:15 ESV).

Perhaps, you are lamenting your inability to enrol into a Bible college; I would like to encourage you that I myself have no formal seminary education. But I diligently study the Word and devote considerable time in '*searching the Scriptures*'. I sincerely persuade you to do the same.

It is worthwhile to remember that many men used mightily by God through the ages, lacked formal theological qualifications, but devoted themselves to a life of fervent prayer and thorough study of the Word like the apostles did.

Jesus *never* picked his disciples from a seminary yet their impact was so profound that it took the world by storm. He *rejected* the seminarians (Pharisees, Scribes and Teachers of the Law) who had all the right doctrines but were spiritually blind and ultimately hell-bound. What the Holy Spirit did to the apostles, He can do the same for you too. Allow the Holy Spirit to be your teacher and illuminate spiritual truths as you dive into its priceless treasures. Our blessed Lord commanded his disciples to '*search the Scriptures*' themselves (John 5:39).

Dear fellow Christian workers, let us earnestly build up a generation of *Bereans* who were ardent students of the Word themselves and NOT a band of *Thessalonians* who were merely sermon-listeners! (See Acts 17:11)

Translations & Original Languages Aids Used

Comments: I have diligently consulted the following translations (and paraphrases) of the Word of God and original languages aids, with utmost scrupulous care and to the best of my humble abilities, in revising and translating this publication. I am including the list for your benefit should you wish to dig further.

Translations & Paraphrases

- AMP – Amplified Bible
- ASV – American Standard Version
- BBE – Bible in Basic English
- CEV – Contemporary English Version
- Darby – A literal translation by John Nelson Darby, 1890
- DRB – Douay-Rheims Translation (Challoner Revision)
- ESV – English Standard Version
- Geneva – Geneva Bible, 1560
- GNB – Good News Bible (Today’s English Version)
- GW – God’s Word

- HCSB – Holman Christian Standard Bible
- ISV – International Standard Version
- JPS – Jewish Publication Society Translation
- KJV – King James Version (Authorized Version), 1769
- LITV – Literal Translation of the Holy Bible by Jay P. Green Sr.
- Message – The Message
- MKJV – Modern King James Version
- Murdock – James Murdock translation of the *Peshito Syriac* New Testament into English
- NASB – New American Standard Bible
- NCV – New Century Version
- NIV – New International Version
- NIrV – New International Reader’s Version
- NKJV – New King James Version
- NLT – New Living Translation
- RV – Revised Version, 1885
- TNIV – Today’s New International Version
- Webster – Webster Bible by Noah Webster, 1834
- WNT – Weymouth New Testament
- YLT – Young’s Literal Translation

Original Languages Aids

- BDB – Brown-Driver-Briggs’ Hebrew Definitions
- Strong – Strong’s Hebrew and Greek Dictionaries
- Thayer – Thayer’s Greek Definitions
- RMAC – Robinson’s Morphological Analysis Codes

One Last Word...

This is my free gift to you! And thousands of free copies are distributed around the world to many others like you.

I trust this book has been a source of blessing, edification and encouragement.

Write to me, I would like to hear from you and pray for you.

Share your prayer requests and testimonies to:

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