

Four Steps in Effective Preaching

There is a perception in many churches that preaching is about motivating people, stirring people up or inspiring them. This is a false perception. Preaching is about making God known as he is revealed in the Scriptures. It is the work of the Holy Spirit to motivate, inspire and stir up.

This of course does not mean that we should not exhort, implore and charge our people, but it does mean that people should not be motivated by our wisdom, passion or appeal or manipulated by the arguments that we make. Let the Word of God do its work by the power of the Holy Spirit.

If this is the case, then an important part of your preaching is reading, studying and applying the Word of God. If you are called to preach you are called to read, to study and to research. You are called also to pray and wrestle through the text and

your thoughts for the most appropriate words (Ecclesiastes 12:10).

Sermon preparation is hard work. It takes time and lots of mental, spiritual and emotional energy.

Broadly speaking there are four areas of work that the preacher needs to think about. He needs to read carefully, research deeply, wrestle prayerfully and write intentionally.

- 1. Read the text carefully**, and make sure you are reading each word consciously. There can be so much meaning hidden behind the most common words, like prepositions or conjunctions.
- 2. Research the text deeply**, looking at each word carefully in the context of the passage.
- 3. Wrestle prayerfully through the text**, seeking a spiritual understanding of the text. There is an intellectual understanding of Scripture and a spiritual understanding. Praying through the text will embed it into your soul with spiritual benefit to yourself and your hearers.

- 4. Write your sermon intentionally,** making sure that what you intend to say can be easily connected to the text. Don't get lost in your own thoughts or ideas. Your sermon should not just reflect the text accurately, but present the text simply, with a clear flow of thought and with application that is directly relevant to your congregation.