

**THE PREACHER AND HIS MESSAGE**

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Is the preacher important anyway?

## **Outline**

	<b>Page</b>
Introduction	3
Preaching	4
God	7
Preacher	8
Message	11
Receiver	12
Responding to God's call	19
Conclusion	37
Bibliography	38

## THE PREACHER AND HIS MESSAGE

### Introduction

As the preacher prepares for his message, he is being prepared also in the process. As you prepare to give out a powerful message, you need to draw in power from God for people to see the power of God in your sermon. You give what you have. This shows us that a preacher has a great responsibility in delivering the message. God gives a message but it is the responsibility of the preacher to have a good approach in delivering and prepares the message and packages it well that people will be able to understand it. The secret is seeking God. The preacher is not the one who invents the message, it is God who gives a message and he looks for someone who will take it to where he wants it to go. That is the privilege of man if you are selected to represent God or sent by God with a message. It is a great privilege to be honored by God. You become a representative for God on earth because you are carrying God's word. ***The preacher must not change the message but must change the methods on how to deliver the message.***

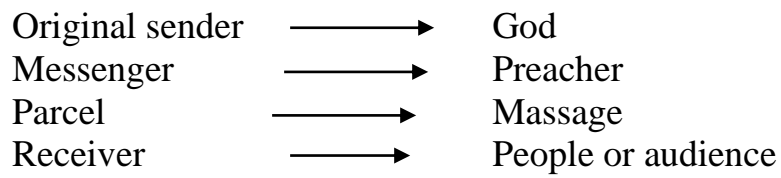
John preached the Kingdom of God is at hand and people must repent. Jesus preached the message. Paul preached the same message. Who are you to change the message? So we have one message but different methods. That's why we have many revelations. It is because different preachers have different ways to present the gospel.

I suggest that the church should have preachers who are so much related to their message because of the relationship that they have with God. Lane also suggested in the same way that the church needs men of God in the ministry because where such men are lacking some people will not be given an opportunity to listen to the command of God.

According to Lane (1987:15), God uses people to convey his message and to bring about his revelation. This to me means that preachers have a mandate to represent God on earth with their life, personality and conduct which should reflect the character of the one they are representing. Lane went on to say that, "Despite our failings, God still chooses to bring truth to men through other man. Phillip Brook described preaching as truth mediated through personality. From Brook's statement it means that effective preaching depends on much more than good speaking, or careful construction of the message and knowledge of methods but much more on the personality of the preacher. You cannot have one and miss the other. Bennett (1991:17) talks of the power of preaching that no one can replace or substitute any conveyor of truth for preaching because preaching is the chief means of confronting fallen humanity with his saving message. This is true but how powerful the message will become will depend on how much effort and dedication you have invested in preparing for the message. The honors and responsibility lies in the hands of the preacher. The power of the message is a reflection of the relationship between the preacher and God. So

the preacher should spend more time with Lord when preparing a powerful message.

I am going to look at the following stages of the message from the original sender to the destination of that message.



## PREACHING

Preaching is a difficult exercise because one has to be acquainted with the right information about the person you are preaching about. In case people ask you, people had different understanding about Jesus. This is the reason why Jesus had to ask his disciples who people think he is and he got diverse interpretations. So a preacher about Jesus should have an in-depth knowledge about Jesus to dispel all the floating information in the society. Jesus said to his disciple, who do you say I am. You need a personal conviction about Jesus.

Preaching is the truth mediated through personality (2 Corinthians 5:20)

(Denis Lane – Preach the Word). Preaching according to me is communicating the message of Christ i.e. him crucified died and rose up in the third day to give us life. The gospel of Jesus Christ should resurrect those who have died or are dead as it brings life into your mortal body.

## WHY WE PREACH

There are several reasons why we preach the gospel of Jesus Christ. Paul said woe unto me if I do not preach. We have been sent, therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptize them in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit and teach them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age (Matthew 28:19).

1 Corinthians 9:16, 17 Paul said, “When I preach the gospel, I can not boast, for I am compelled to preach. Woe to me if I do not preach the gospel! V.17 If I preach voluntarily, I have a reward; if not voluntarily, I am simply discharging the trust committed to me.”

The other reason why we preach is that the laborers are few but the harvest is plenty. The gospel should reach millions of people all over the world but we do have a very short time to do that so we have to partner. We are messengers of the Kingdom of Heaven, which is the highest calling on this earth. Messengers do not change the message or give it their own meaning. They take it as it is so we should sent to the people the original message from God. We are forerunners like John the Baptist. We prepare the way of and for Christ (the Lord is coming-second coming). It is important that when you stand before the people of God, deliver and get out of the way. People should not see you but they should see God in your message. Get out of the way or the Lord will remain hidden in your messenger’s shadow. In your message people should not see more of you in testimonies but they should be directed to Christ. This is the reason why most preachers are known more than Christ because they are simply giving people more of what they can do through Christ other than what Christ can do through them so that people will see the possibility that God can also use them if God can use anyone. Preachers have become barriers to many people because they present the gospel in such a way that people will think these kind of experience

that the preachers is talking about are for great people and they rule themselves out of the race. Preaching is a privilege and a responsibility that you get from God.

### RESPONSIBILITIES OF A PREACHER

Make sure you understand the message first. Make the message a part of your life. Pray for God to give you inspiration and anointing. Have courage to express what you have received from God. Be willing to learn and obey God's word. Be concerned to understand and meet the hearer's needs. Be sensitive to the Holy Spirit Be prayerful. Before you preach to others, preach to yourself first and find out whether it's a relevant message. Check whether you a nice and sweet in your delivery. Practice doing the word first before you tells others to do the word or else you will be a hypocrite.

### PLANNED EXPOSITORY PREACHING

When you preach, you are unfolding God's plan and purpose for humanity. Preaching needs planning, you don't just preach harp hazard, it has to be systematic and consistent e.g. going through a book or concerning a certain topic or subjects etc. Regular expository enables us to deal with some important matters of Christian living in a natural way. As the congregation begins to hear planned expository preaching, they start to think ahead. Ethics, both personal and social, will begin to take their place in the regular teaching. The Old Testament will have its place in planned expository preaching.

## Chapter 1

### God

God is the one who gives the message because he has a plan for his word (how it is going to reach out to the four corners of the world) and a plan for humanity. To help us understand God's plan Lane (1987:16) outlined three important words to describe the relationship between God and the preacher: his command, his messenger and forerunner. His first point is that the preacher should be in the first place be in God's plan for bringing truth to men. If the preacher is in God's plan, God will give him all the confidence needed to stand holding on to faith in order to stand. We are sent in the authority and power of his command. Jesus told his disciples that they would receive power when they receive the Holy Spirit and they will be witnesses in Jerusalem, Judea and all those other surrounding places (Acts 1:8). Witnessing is the responsibility of the preacher to prepare the way of the Lord according to Lane (1987:17). This shows us that the preacher goes in front to prepare his hearers for someone great or vastly more important than him. Nicky Gumbel said in one of his Alpha talks, "The preacher should stand up, speak up and then shut up". The preacher needs to realize that he is not the one people need to see, so he should get out of the way not be a stumbling block or block the people from seeing God. From my own observation, the problem that we have today is that preachers remain on the podium, so visible that people will believe them instead of believing in God. In other words the preacher is trying to take the place of God.

According to Lane (1987:18) the preacher has a special office to occupy and humble service to give. Because they have a special office, we look at them in relation to God, to the message and to the hearers.

## Chapter 2

### Preacher

The preacher should prepare physically, spiritually (prayerfully) and emotionally. He has to work out more on how he is going to present and how he should present and his personal presentation (outlook). He should be prayerful, the better if he can pray without ceasing. For the message to be uplifting, the preacher should be uplifted. The message does something to the preacher before it affects the audience; meaning that the preacher is the first beneficiary. All what the preacher does is to prepare though sometimes painfully and it takes much of his time and effort but they all works better or contribute in moulding the life, and character of the preacher. As though it is the standard, sometimes God works in different ways with different people. He uses preachers for his own purpose without any contribution from the preacher. There was one preacher in the Bible called Jonah. He did not want to go where he was told to go with a message, tried to run away but no help, he was intercepted before he even go anywhere until finally he realize that he will not win and he went with the message. Sometimes it helps to prepare but sometimes God just sent or uses anyone for his glory regardless of his or her backgrounds and interests. God can decide to heal someone without telling the preacher that, that's what he is going to do. He does that so that we may not claim anything as if it is by our own effort. So when he is at work, we should not disturb him.

So the preparation in terms of prayer, fasting for God to touch people is to the preacher and God will give the message or will reveal his message to the preacher. The more the preacher is connected to God the more people will benefit from God. Even though the preacher is the first to receive message, it is the responsibility of the preacher to be humble and faithful to the message by not changing it. The message is not entirely from the preacher but to God the one who gives the message. If we can look at the life of Jonah, he was given the message to tell the people in Nineveh, even though he did not want to go, he had no choice because he was not given the choice which means sometimes the preacher is just to deliver the message regardless of whether he want or not. So preparation is good but the message depends on the giver.

In preparation, the preacher should be obedient to God in other words to hear from God. According to Lane (1987:16) the preacher should accept his calling. He outlined some interesting practical points from the Bible: to Ezekiel he said, "I am sending you" (Ezk 2:3), to Jeremiah, he said, "I have appointed you" (Jer 1:9). The preacher should be able to know what God has called him to do. Many preachers fail today because they can not stand for what they preach. They can not put into practice the truth they tell members of the congregation. They are not obedient and they struggle in ministry. Preachers should be faithful messengers. Lane (1987:16) describes the character of preachers in two words,



which is glory and humility. According to Lane, “To be a messenger is a great privilege hence there is need for the preacher to humble himself, not to take the glory but to return it to the owner (God).

I am impressed by the way Lane (1987:17) put it across, he said, “A messenger is a nobody sent by someone with a communication” meaning that it is the message that makes the preacher important because the message he is carrying is important. The preacher needs to understand that he is a “nobody” but that he is made a “somebody” by the message he is carrying and sometimes because he is obedient to God. The responsibility of the preacher is to pass on the message as it is. According to Lane (1987:17) the preacher is not important but his privilege lies in the person who sent him. The messenger does not construct the message but he only delivers. Lane went on to say that the preacher should not change the message or try to give the message his own meaning. He should realize that he is a servant not only of the one who sent him but also of the message with which is sent.

What the preacher is determine the kind of message the hearers will receive (Lane 1987:15). In my own understanding, Lane is saying that the personality of the preacher and his personal relationship with God are vital parts of the preacher’s preparation of the message. We can not live carelessly on Monday to Saturday and expect to preach powerfully on Sunday. Though this is what many preachers do but preaching with power will be just a dream to them. They will never experience God but they can communicate with God. When the preacher delivers his message, the hearers should hear God’s words or voice in his human mouth and truth mediated through personality. The preacher is God’s messenger on earth.

According to Relph (1998:78) the vision of the preacher should be carried by faith. In other words Relph is saying that a preacher should be a men of faith, a men who believe God for his vision and word. The preacher takes the word of God seriously.

There are some preachers who do not take the word of God seriously; play magic in a bid to make their preaching powerful but it does not work. Reuters published on the 10<sup>th</sup> of July 2007, a story in the Yahoo News of a Ghanaian preacher who was arrested by police over a stage magic device they fear may dupe people into believing they have experienced miracles. Some preachers when they fail the scripture they try to spiritualize it, which is wrong. We call them irresponsible preachers; they are not faithful people both to the one who gave them the message and those who will listen.

A preacher also builds a message from lifetime experiences, which we call testimonies. Preachers have different convictions depending on their background. Some they become liberal preachers; some are revolutionary preachers and some exhorting preachers depending on their background and how they have experienced God. Robert Speer is one preacher who believed that “Bereavement is the sharpest challenge to our trust in God; if faith can

overcome this, there is no mountain which it can not remove and faith can overcome. Robert Speer knew what it is to walk through the valley shadow of death (Wheeler s.a: 234). Some preachers Robert Speer are preachers of great faith who believe that you have to go through some certain experiences of bereavement for you to qualify to be a messenger of God. People need to understand that God raises people in different ways, so they can not be the same in the way they preach.

According to Rousseau (2007:1) there are seven step processes that the preacher needs to do when preparing the message namely study the text, structure the text, come up with a central proposition of the text, come up with the purpose of the message, structure the message and the preach the message. In addition to what Rousseau has said there is still one fundamental thing which need to be done first, which is prayer. Prayer is key in any preparation of the message because it opens communication with the father in heaven. A preacher should be someone who is prayerful.

## Chapter 3

### Message

The message is the word from God that God entrust to men to pass on to others in the way he wants or in the way the preachers feels like. Lane (1987:18) is convinced that unless we realize the greatness and reality of the living God in the message, the message will carry no conviction. This is because what God has deposited in our hearts is what we feel in our hearts, it helps us then to know in our minds the reality and greatness of God. From what, I can depict from Lane's statement that you can only give what you have meaning what the preacher transmit during delivery of his sermon is what the preacher is feeling and how far God has taken him. If the preacher is empty in terms of the relationship with the Lord, his message will be empty. The strength of the message depends upon the relationship between the preacher and God. So as much as the preacher needs to prepare for the message, he should also prepare to be prepared by God before he delivers the message.

Lane (1987:18) suggested six factors that the message should carry:

1. Concern to understand and meet the hearer's needs.
2. A sense of helplessness apart from God's enabling.
3. A sense of greatness and reality of God.
4. Responsibility to make the message a part of himself.
5. Courage to express what he has received from God.
6. Willingness to learn and obey God's word.

If I can sum up the six principles, I can tell "It is not the preacher who is important but the message because the one who gave the message is great." So the preacher should decrease and the Lord increase as he is on the pulpit. From what Lane suggested, the preacher's message should at least achieve most of the above things to the hearer

## **Chapter 4**

### **Receiver**

Hearers should be able to benefit from the preacher who has a relationship with God. All what the preacher will be trying to do is to redirect the hearers to the direction of God. What the preacher receives from God during his preparation, he will also give to the hearer as he is delivering his message. The message should be able to change someone's life when he or she is convicted of his or her sins by the word of God. This is how the preacher becomes powerful because he has spend sometimes with a powerful God and he was filled with power that as he stand before people he will be full of power

So at the end of the message, the word of God through the preacher should produce in the hearer a sense of greatness and reality of God, sense of helplessness apart from God's enabling (hearer will learn to trust God as the only authority), hearer should identify himself with the message or feels the responsibility to make the message a part of himself, hearer should be able to testify of God's goodness in his life or feel the courage to express what he has received from God and lastly the hearer should swallow his or her own pride and have the willingness to learn and obey God's word.

### **PREACHING IS COMMUNICATING**

God gives us messages as pop ups or revelation but we need to have a strategy on how you are going to deliver or present the information. God's responsibility is to give people what to say to his people but how you deliver is your own bag of maize. That is where most of us have messed up. Saying things at the right time for the right audience is where we struggle all the time. There is need to evangelize so that we reach out to so many people with the gospel of Jesus Christ but we have to have a strategy. We do our part then God does his part. Communication of the gospel of Christ to the person should create a newness of life. The gospel should bring restoration to the backslidden (touch then in a special way).

People should understand what I am saying that the person realizes that I need God. We need to be careful; conscious so that it comes the way we want it to be and has been perceived correctly. Jesus died for me, someone must relate and see the death of Jesus not as ordinary but supernatural. There is mutual exchange of information that is fitting the message in the right audience, simple language (do not use jargon or big words). The aim is not to glorify me but people should hear and see God. We are not seeking novelty but to spread the gospel using the right gestures, illustrations. The aim is to obtain total understanding and get a positive response.

Common understanding between a speaker and the one listening it is important so know your audience. You pace your discussion according to the pace of the last person. You use both language but your day-to-day life should be life changing. It makes a difference. You can be two personalities. People graduate more to what they see than what they hear. This is the moment of truth and we call it customer care. Assume someone is because of who he is and what he is wearing. Your presentation tells a lot about you. It is the impression that you give. Be presentable, your outlook should portray that you are good Christian. Command authority.

One preacher said that the way you present and look does half of your work.

83 % what they see

11% what they hear

3 % what they touch

2 % what they smell

1 % what they taste

Your preaching starts as soon as you are visible. You have to be on time. We communicate verbally (appearance, dress, expression). Your voice, pitch, tone, language itself should be tailor-made, and you do not shout to the audience, you need to minister to them. There is a great difference between preaching and shouting. We normally do shouting at weddings because there is a lot of noise, so people should hear us or because you want to control the noise by getting the attention of people. In church we not shout but we should minister to the hearts of people who are grieved, depressed and pressed by the issues of life. Your message should touch their hearts not to condemn their hearts and they go back home worse than they were when they come. This does not say, you should not talk about sin “NO” but that should be the work of the Holy Spirit to convict people. If someone feels he is judging me then you have failed to communicate but if someone feels you were talking to me then the Holy Spirit will have done his work. Just deliver your message and come out of the platform so that people see God; they will not talk about you but if you remain on the platform they will see you.

Check whether the audience can hear you. Create an impression to someone with your body language. Our body language says a lot more than we say. We give gestures to emphasize eye contact, look at people, watch your audience, are you losing them or are they listening. Whatever you do should compliment what you say.

If you are using technology like PowerPoint, know that it is not using pictures but emphasizing the word. Colors should be good. A revelation presentation should be one point at a time rather than to bring all the points at the same time; people begin to be busy writing.

If you are using props, make sure it is relevant. Speak like a speaker not a writer. Speech differs from writing. People should get it the first time while in writing they go over and over again. In fact you can start from the conclusion

going back to introduction. Speaking require short clear sentences and constant repetition. Your talk should have consistence (transition). Summarize what you have said. It is important to prepare your talk well. Do not relate what happened to others to this audience. It is important to find out as much about your audience. If possible know or attend the previous talk so that you can refer to the last talk. Tune your talk to relate to your audience.

Know the color, race and bring jokes that are relevant. Pray as you prepare your talk. Speak for the people to hear in their language. Reach the unknown using the known.

When we are making illustrations, let us light in especially some difficult areas. You need to tell a story. Use examples that people can understand and assimilates. Quick thinking, some thinking comes as you speak know how to fit it into the whole picture otherwise you loose focus. Use testimonies emphasize your illustration with emotion.

It is also advisable to use the language that people can understand. The use of language is appropriate to your audience.

When you are concluding, make sure you make an appeal to all learning styles. Renew their strength. Maintain the interest of the people. Start with a bang and end with a bang. Pay due attention to all the people. Look at the audience (their behavior). Pray about everything and prepare everything. Practice; rehearse (to check your time, so that you do not loose people). It will give you the confidence. Do not give bones to children. Your message should be relevant.

### **Why Spreading the Gospel**

The major reason why we preach is that man is lost and there is an urgency that has to be applied to bring the message of hope, healing and transformation to someone before he or she dies. People should die after receiving Christ Jesus as their personal savior. This gospel is intended to reach the whole world so that together we may meet Christ on the last day when our names are being called as his wish.

The gospel was given as a Great commission by our Lord Jesus Christ before he went to heaven after his resurrection (Mathew 28;16-20). He gave his life for us so we need to give our lives to others in sharing his suffering. He died for us that we might become people; we should also die for the gospel for many people to be saved. We need to pass on what we have learned Christianity is not private affair. Where you keep to yourself what you know. We need to pass on because we have received. We are the light of the word. It is a command from someone. The first reason why we tell others is because it is the great commission.

Jesus said 1 Go to the lost sheep.

- 2 Go and tell John
- 3 Go and invite all you meet
- 4 Go and make disciples

In Mathew Jesus is showing us that he has the final authority on earth and in heaven. The emphasis is passing on what you have learned.

b There are needs

We tell others because there is desperate need for people to hear the good news of Jesus Christ. If we look at the situation in our country right now, people are pressed down and the only hope is the good news of Jesus Christ. Jesus is the answer. He is the only one who can satisfy the thirsty hearts of men and women. People have tried all sources but they have failed and the only solution is to turn to God. A good example is of people who have money will never be satisfied, they make a lot of money but they still need some more. They will have more money but no peace. There is a gap that money cannot fill [thirstiness] but can be filled by the truth

c There is an urgent desire to pass it on [good news travel fast]. Normally when we receive good news, we do not want to keep it to ourselves but there is an urgent desire to let others know about it so that we may share the joy. I will give an example of my wife. When my wife gave birth to our first born baby boy I was so excited that we phoned people that we had not communicated with for a long time. This got them by surprise. From the list that I have compiled when I sent the message to Tsano before I tried the other relatives already they knew because Tsano passed the message before me. Good news travel fast I did not pay Tsano to pass the message but I guess he was bursting in joy, which compelled to pass on the message.

### **The Danger of insensibility**

Story –There was a guy who was so active in church and loves God.

When he was praying for a life partner he felt God saying something towards sister Rose He went straight to sister Rose and pour out his feeling but sister Rose told him that he should wait until God says something to her concerning the issue [Relationship]. The problem of this guy was the approach. It's one thing knowing something and it is another thing being sensitive. This demands us to be sensitive.

When I got saved I was so excited about what had happened that I had longed for everyone else to follow suit. I felt like everyone who has not received Christ is lost. One day at our family gathering; I was privileged to be asked to give a speech and a closing prayer; I said this is my chance to tell them the truth. I

started to tell people that Christian life is good; exciting and pointing out that some people like my brother need Jesus in your life.

My brother Elijah drinks like fish. I started telling him that; that was the reason why his marriage was in trouble. Though it was time that my brother needed Jesus but it was not good approach in terms of place and time it was said. It was more condemning .If telling others there is a danger of being insensitive. We do not consider the feeling of the other person and at the same time or sometimes it spoils our good message.

### **b Fear**

There is a time life where you will be ashamed to even talk about Jesus to those who are not Christians. A good example is at a wedding. Normally at a wedding meeting; the people who have a lot of money have more say and command a good respect from Christians. Whatever they say people will be willing to compromise without problems .Why Christians keep quite is because they are afraid that if we tell them the truth of the gospel they will withdraw their services. In buses sometimes people say bad things about God in our presence and we keep quite .We are afraid to take the name of Jesus on our lips.

One important thing that we need to understand is that telling others come out of a relationship with God. Our walk with God becomes the starting point. It is easy to talk about a relationship than to talk to people about God. We do it with the help of the Holy Spirit.

### **5 Ps**

#### 1) Presence

We are called to be the light and the salt Mathew 5 vs 13-16

#### a) Characteristics of salt

salt is important in our everyday life. Before refrigeration salt was used more often as a preservative for meat ; to make food taste. We are called as Christians to stop society going bad. Our contact is more important; the way we talk; moral standards and issues. We should be good citizens who do not throw litter everywhere [cleanliness is next to godliness]. We should aim to create better social structures; working for justice; freedom of dignity for the individual and by helping to abolish discrimination. To help the casualty of the society .Do not be negative about being positive [TV advert]

#### b) Jesus calls us to be the light –

We are the light of the world. Jesus calls us to be the light to allow the light of Christ to shine through us. Jesus talks about loving your neighbor as yourself .The purpose of light is to light where there is darkness so that people can see clearly.



- Light should be on top so that it can provide light to everyone in the house.
- Light chase away darkness.
- Action speaks louder than words. What you do should preach more than what you say.
- at work people should notice our consistency ; honesty; faithfulness; hardworking ;reliability ;avoidance of gossip and desire to encourage other people.
- At home; parents; family and classmates will be influenced by our services to others; our patience and our kindness; far more than by our words.
- When Peter was talking about marriage he emphasized the issue of conduct of wife to save the unbelieving husband [1Peter 3 vs 1]. The behavior of a believing wife can preach to the husband far more than she could say.
- Being lights in the world does not involve only our lifestyle but our lips. When people ask us questions we should be able to open our lips and answer . But it is good to wait until they ask
- 1 Peter 3vs 15 Peter writes always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who ask you to give the reason for the hope that you have .Do this with gentleness and respect.

## 2) Persuasion

Persuasion is a practice where one uses all kinds of tactics or skills to draw the attention of someone and get a buy in. the gospel in bible is never interesting so we have to try to present it in a way that will persuade someone to receive it with so much joy not as a burden. Because we know it is good news of Jesus Christ; we need to persuade people to Jesus Christ (2 cor 5vs 11).

Acts 17 vs 2-4. When Paul went to Thessalonica he reasoned; explained and proved from somewhere that the Christ had to suffer and rise from the dead. Some of the Jews were persuaded.

Acts 18 vs 4 in Corinth; while working in fields during the week; every Sabbath he reasoned in the synagogue trying to persuade Jews and Greeks.

-Work out the answers to common question.

-in the course of conversation about Christian faith ; objection will often be raised and we need to be equipped to deal with these questions .

-John 4 when Jesus met the Samaritan woman whose life was in a mess and he offered eternal life. She wanted to give excuse about the place of worship but Jesus was ready to answer them. This is a good example to follow.

-Usually when people ask for theological questions; they are looking for answers. Questions like ‘why does God allow suffering ‘ and what about other

religions. We should be ready to answer them in a way that will persuade them to come to Christ

### **3) Proclamation**

The heart of telling others is the proclamation of the good news of Jesus Christ. Proclamation is announcing; communication and proclaiming the extra faith to those outside faith. There are many ways in which this can be done.

1 You can invite a friend or relative to hear the gospel explained by someone else than you trying to explain it .

-John 1vs 39 come -----and you will see .

-John 1vs 42 the greatest service that one can render another.

John 6 vs 8; 12 vs 22 Andrew had a record of bringing people to Jesus but we do not hear much about him.

-Sometimes we are given the opportunity to explain the gospel ourselves. One good way of doing this is to tell the story of what has happened to us.

-Acts 26 vs9-23 we see a biblical model in Paul 's testimony. Three things 1 v9-11 what was before?

12-15 what it meant to meet Jesus.

19-23 what it meant for him.

-We are not all called to be evangelists but we are all called to be witnesses John1 v 41.

### **4) Powers**

The New Testament the proclamation of the gospel is often accompanied by a demonstration of the power of God. Jesus came proclaiming the kingdom of God is near so repent and believe the good news [Mark 1v15].

-Mark 1v21-28 demonstrated the power of the gospel by the expulsion of evil.

Mark1v29-34; 40-45 healed the sick.

-Jesus told his disciples the works of the kingdom; to heal the sick and proclaiming.

2] Proclaim the good news [3] tell others. People need to be aware that the kingdom is near.

-Luke 10v9.

-1Thess 1v3 Our gospel came to you not simply with words but also with power.

-Proclamation and demonstration goes hand in hand.

-Acts 3v1-10 Peter and John on their way to church. When the blind was healed; following was the proclamation of the gospel

## RESPONDING TO GOD'S CALL

What should be at the centre of our preaching is to deliver people from their sins. Our churches are full of people who come to witness the show and some are judges. Those people commend everything especially dressing. These people are not surprised by the scripture revelation but they are excited by the preacher. The preacher will be talking about the things that they know. You can not jump when you are told what you do not know. The purpose of scripture is to reprove, teach and correct. You can not jump when you are being corrected or when you are taught or being rebuked. So most of the time I wonder what I see some people doing. The church should train more people especially those who are called by his name. The church should commission more people to go out to evangelize to fulfill the great commission. When we respond to God's call, we need then to be faithful to the same call. Jesus does not tolerate sin or unfaithfulness because how can you stay with someone who is unfaithful. A man who sins as a Christian should have a deep pain because that person knows the consequences. It is not easy to say "I have sinned, if your mind sharpened by God knows the ripaction will humble himself before the congregation and openly say, "I have let you down". \par

Those who are called by God have wisdom, knowledge and understanding. \par They are obedient to the Holy Spirit.

If you are called, do not be involved in many things; let not your name be mentioned anywhere. Be a free person to do whatever you feel like because you know you are clean. Psalm 1:1 tells us that blessed is the person who does not follow the advice of wicked people, take the path of sinners, or join the company of mockers. If you are called by God into ministry, do not be involved with bad people, do not be in the company of mockers and do not take the path of sinners because it is not going anywhere other than to lead you to death.

Paul said that if you are not involved in these bad activities you are blessed because you are clean. Politics is dirty because people involved are dirty. \par

For those who have responded to God's call, the driving voice is LOVE. We need to love people. This is reason why the bible talks about teaching and making people disciples. You can not disciple someone if you do not show them love.

Never be satisfied with God, always search for the truth. There is no way you can say, "Now I know my life" Remain open minded or else you cease to grow. Those who have answered God's call experience God in his different manifestations. Today he can be Elohim, the next day he can be Raphael.

As we go out there to evangelize, we meet people like that person at the pool of Bethesda, who wanted someone to push them into the pool before the waters are stirred. Our gospel should stir people to change life. We should inspire people. God's will and presence is incarnated in every situation of our life. It is better to go through the valley with Jesus than to go through the bridge but

without Jesus. David said, "Even if I walk in the valley shadow of death, I will not fear anything". He said this because he knew the Lord was with him. He was his shepherd. As we go out to evangelize, the Lord God is our shepherd and we will not want.

As we minister, we will meet challenges but still in those challenges we will hear the voice of the Lord. People should come to the Lord in great numbers because that is what God expects. Hell should be empty and heaven should be full. The heart beat for God is souls. If one person turns to the Lord, there is noise in heaven. Noise of angels celebrating in heaven. Let's build capacity because God can not stay in situations which are insufficient life because he came to give life and in abundance.

### THE LORD GOD IS THEIR SHEPHERD

As we go out there to minister, we need not to worry about anything because he who called us is able to provide for us. He will meet all the costs. He will make us lie down in green pastures. Greener pastures will be our usual grazing places and he will also lead us beside peaceful waters. We need not to carry food and water because the Lord will lead us there. He is the provider. \par

He will renew our soul but Paul said, "We need to be renewed in our mind" (Rom 12:1). We were just called not out of our own righteousness but because he chose us. His task then is to make sure that he guides us along the paths of righteousness for the sake of his name (Psalm 23:3). The path of righteousness is good for us especially when we meet the valleys. David openly declared that even though I walk through the dark valley of death, because you are with me, I fear no harm. Your rod and your staff give me courage (Psalm 23:4). \par

As we go out to preach, we should sit on high tables. The Lord should prepare a banquet for me while my enemies watch. You anoint my head with oil. My cup overflows (Psalm 23:5). We need God's anointment in this journey of faith and righteousness. We need to be anointed to heal those who are sick. David finally said, "Certainly, goodness and mercy will stay close to me all the days of my life, and I will remain in the LORD'S house for days without end" (Psalm 23:6). One of the most important thing that man needs to understand When we doing pastoral counseling man should accept responsibility, man need to dedicate his life to the truth, man should delay in ratifying things and man need to balance the issues of lights.

Each and every one of us has a project of existence or purpose of existence. When I am saying project of existence i mean the purpose of life. Man was born out of the blue print of God. So man should remain a blue print of God forever.\par

Armenians view says, "Man was not born a sinner but the social life around him causes him to sin." We need to know what energies man. Most man are energized by circular life especially prosperity. So what drives the preacher is not Christ but prosperity. Your sermons are prosperity tuned, your singing the

same. You planting churches is one good example, you might be doing it not with a passion for Christ but that the more the people the bigger your pocket will be.

We should be totally saved. A new man should be born out of our life. A new man is brought about when one totally discards the old life. Christ should be at the centre of your life in any profession. That is what gives you energy. \par Project of life should shift from being self centered to Christ centered and Christ becomes the moderator of your life. Paul encouraged people to be renewed in their minds (Rom 12:1). Renewal of mind is discarding the old dirty things (fleshly desires) and Let Christ be at the centre of your life. In our churches today, pastors, leaders, layman etc are silent about people who are not yet renewed but they are in the church. Why? It is because they also benefit from those people.\par

No pastor under normal circumstance can confront a wealth man after realizing misconduct; they are afraid that they will go away. It is rather better that they leave your church than to let them contaminate your church. If you deal with a case while it is just the beginning, you will be able to control it and the effects that may follow than to let it grow, establish its roots; you will not be able to deal with such a case. These are the situation that causes splits in churches.

Disciplinary action should be taken to anyone who is misbehaving. Paul in issues of immorality sternly instructs people to excommunicate such a person. We do have a lot of scandals in the church almost the same with those cases outside (circular world). \par

The church is a gathering of saints and saints are people called by God, sanctified by the spirit of the living God, born by the blood of Jesus. The saints are people who are always reforming as they walk with God. God is the same yesterday, today and forever but he manifests in different forms so much that we will never come to understand him in any way. So the saints as they discover who God is in their life on a daily basis, they keep on reforming (process of growth). So because the church is a group of people who are always reforming, it should always be reforming not to remain stagnant like water in a reservoir.

If the church remains the same in ten years then that church is dead and the people are also dead. Honestly you can not expect anything from corpse except to decompose. Yes doctrines are there but if the doctrine does not enhance the gospel of Jesus Christ then that doctrine is from people and therefore it is serving the purpose of certain individuals not the body of Christ. Some doctrines are a cover up to sin. They condemn certain things with principles that contradict the Bible. They are not Christ centered but self centered. There are there to manipulate people by condemning what the bible is not condemning. The church as an institution of people who are reforming should reform or else it will die.

Doctrines makes the church to die slowly. They do not allow change but we live in a dynamic world that is always changing. The church has deviated from being the cornerstone that makes the house strong.\par

People should not remain in sin or else they die. You can not mix concrete and let it to dry whilst there. When it dries no one will be able to pull you from that concrete. \par

Normally when we pray, we pray for our blue print and we want God to just endorse it. When God does not fit into your feet we are depressed. God's way does not make sense most of the time that is the reason why we are depressed all the time. Life is not always like roses. Our minds have been corrupt by evil; because we do have an evil desire in us. This is so because the corrupt nature has a hostile attitude toward God. It refuses to place itself under the authority of God's standards because it can't. \par

Those who are under the control of the corrupt nature can't please God (Rom 8:7). Paul went on to say that "But if God's Spirit lives in you, you are under the control of your spiritual nature, not your corrupt nature. Whoever doesn't have the Spirit of Christ doesn't belong to him.

However, if Christ lives in you, your bodies are dead because of sin, but your spirits are alive because you have God's approval" (Rom 8:9-10). There are ups and downs and we have to accept these situations as they come because our hope is in Christ. Self centeredness is the source of all problems in life. Some people have a fixed life. They cease to grow because they can not allow change or anything that is not from their blue print. Our blue print is reserved. Most pastors refuse to go to pastor in the rural areas because they are no benefits. It is not in their blue print. It does not work for good for these people in such a situation and they turn these down. Some they change churches, some they cross borders in search of greener pastures. Paul said that "It works for good for those who are in Christ.

It is impossible to do what God standards demands because of the weakness our human nature has. But God sent his Son to have a human nature as sinners have and to pay for sin That way God condemned sin in our corrupt nature(Rom 8:3). We need to have the spirit of Jesus (Holy Spirit) in us. Paul asked people this question, Does the Spirit of the one who brought Jesus back to life live in you? Then the one who brought Christ back to life will also make your mortal bodies alive by his Spirit who lives in you (Rom 8:11).

The purpose of the Holy Spirit is to comfort, guide, leading, interceding for us, convicts us of sin, and speaks for us by giving us wisdom when we confront situations, to give us peace, to counsel us and above all to comfort us. Blessed are those who have received the Holy Spirit for they do have a shoulder to lean on especially on difficult situations. When the inflation makes people to cry, the Holy Spirit will be there to comfort us. When we are stuck and we do not know what to do tomorrow, or we do not know what our future holds, the Holy Spirit

will lead you and he will give you direction. Those who do not have the Holy Spirit they cry and cry and there is no solution because there is no one to comfort them. If they try a friend, they will find a friend also crying. What brings comfort to me despite the fact that all my enemies are around me is that fact that God is all around me. When I am hearing voices of prize increase everyday, I should hear God's voice also. God's voice has a solution to all our problems in life.

Normally we operate by fear and fear of the unknown. Paul said that we have not received the spirit of fear but because we are God's children the Spirit of God dwells in us and this spirit testifies together with our spirit that we are children of the most high, so we should not be afraid. Children of the kings are not afraid because they are heirs to the throne. Certainly, all who are guided by God's Spirit are God's children. You haven't received the spirit of slaves that leads you into fear again. Instead, you have received the spirit of God's adopted children by which we call out, "Abba! Father!" The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children (Rom 8:15-16). Because of this, it is important that we consider our present suffering that includes prize increases, inflation, shortage not only of cash but foreign currency, sanction, economic sabotage, close down of major factories leading to loss of employment, high unemployment rate, the HIV pandemic, drought, hunger etc Christ should remain at the centre of our life. We should not lose our identity. I consider our present sufferings insignificant compared to the glory that will soon be revealed to us (Rom 8:18). When Paul said that I consider, he was also trying to encourage their spirits so that they see not the challenges but God's hand. What is greater is what was to be revealed later on. The immediate situation will pass away but what we wait for is what is to come. \par

Let us not exhaust our energy on things that are temporary before we receive the permanent one. The permanent will come when we are worn out and we will live a life of regretting and crying.

If we do not wake up to the call of God, we will be trouble with the creation that we were given dominion over. Creation is our subjects and the subjects have no power over their masters. Mandate to evangelize the world was given to man and creation is waiting for the revelation of the son of God so that we may enjoy the glory of God together. If man does not work up to this call of God then creation is in trouble. The great "call" is the commission (Mat 19:28; Mark 16:15). We need to go out there and evangelize, making people believers, baptizing them in the name of the father, Son and the Holy Spirit. Yes praying is good because through prayer, we receive encouragement and power from God so that as we stand proclaiming the gospel, we will proclaim in power, those who are sick will be healed, blind will see and miracles will happen. What is more important is the commission than the preparation. Some people spend most of their time in prayer (preparation) and they forget to go out and evangelize. God is most particular with souls than prayer warriors. Prayer

warriors support those who have responded to the call so much that as they stand God will be on their side. All creation is eagerly waiting for God to reveal who his children are. Man should realize the problem at stake that creation was subjected to frustration but not by its own choice. The one who subjected it to frustration did so in the hope that it would also be set free from slavery to decay in order to share the glorious freedom that the children of God will have (Rom 8:20-21). Do you know what, the revelation of the Son of God is a glorious event this is the reason why the creation waits in eager expectation?

We have to note that it is not only the creation that is in trouble or groaning, even our spirits. We know that all creation has been groaning with the pains of childbirth up to the present time. Paul said, “However, not only creation groans. We, who have the Spirit as the first of God's gifts, also groan inwardly. We groan as we eagerly wait for our adoption, the freeing of our bodies from sin (Rom 8:23). \par

Since there is this eager expectation, let respond to God's call by refusing self, totally discarding the selfish ambitions and set our lives on God the creator of heavens and earth. He is the author of life and perfected of our faith. The writer of Hebrews confirms this.

Our problem is we hope for what we can see and we doubt what we can not see for there is no guarantee for what we do not see. Thomas wanted not only to see but to feel the hands of Jesus so that he may believe. We have a large junk of such people in the church today. They want to go where they are seeing miracles. This then proves them unbelievers because miracles are for non-believers but if we hope for what we don't see, we eagerly wait for it with perseverance (Rom 8:25). If we hope for what we do not see, we have the strength to stand the present situations and challenges but if we only believe what we can see then our hope is thwarted and we will not stand the test of time (no endurance). Endurance comes because we have a solution for our problems tomorrow. We believe life will be better tomorrow. And to pull through these challenges, we have a helper, who is the Holy Spirit. Paul says, “At the same time the Spirit also helps us in our weakness, because we don't know how to pray for what we need. But the Spirit intercedes along with our groans that cannot be expressed in words (Rom 8:26). The truth is that we do not know how to pray, what to pray for and why we pray but he acknowledged the work of the Holy Spirit in his life as instrumental. The Holy Spirit is the key to our success, integrity, character development etc. We should never come to a point where we feel, we have had enough of God because of a situation but we should acknowledge that we are weak so that he takes over all our weakness and begin to pray to God on our behalf. The Holy Spirit searches our hearts, so do not fool yourself to think no one sees you, the Holy Spirit will bring it our. He will convict you of that sin you are hiding so that if you repent you will have a clean heart. Paul said, “The one who searches our hearts knows what the Spirit has in



mind. The Spirit intercedes for God's people the way God wants him to" (Rom 8:27). We do not just approach God the way we want but there is a way desirable to God which only the Holy Spirit knows not us as human being. The Holy Spirit should be fully operational in our lives to lights up and liven up our spirits, so that we will be able to count it all joy when we face trials. Trials are not anything to worry about because they are common. God does not bring anything that has not happened to somebody. Jesus told his disciples not to worry when they are hated because he was also hated, so it brings this to a common thing. So we should allow the Holy Spirit to search our hearts.

We should not despair when we face challenges because they shape our character. We should not be ignorant but know that all these challenges and everything that happens to us are things that work together for the good of those who love God-those whom he has called according to his plan (Rom 8:28). This concept is understood by few, i mean those who are called by God according to his plan. If you are not in God's plan then you want to imitate those who are called, you will be frustrated in the ministry. Some people suffer burnt out. All the hot air in them is blown out by challenges. We need to know that it is working for my good and James said "consider" these present suffering, them "count". This sound too mathematical and those who do not love mathematics do not want anything that has figures. The secret is in knowing that the situations are working to your advantage. You loosing that job is to your advantage because it is either God want to give you another one or he will give you another opportunity far greater than the one you are holding. The problem with human beings is that they do not want "loosing" we always want situations where we are benefiting but those who are clever like Paul gave his testimony when he said that "I lost everything that i may gain Christ". He decided to loose everything because he knew what was waiting him was far greater than what he was loosing. Do not hold on to things but let them go so that new things will come. Those who are called by God are appointed to serve in his kingdom. He also called those whom he had already appointed. He approved of those whom he had called, and he gave glory to those whom he had approved of (Rom 8:30). Those who are circular do not have the glory that those who have been appointed have because they are self centered.

The question is "Who will accuse those whom God has chosen? God has approved of them?" (Rom 8:33) and again who will condemn them? Christ has died, and more importantly, he was brought back to life. Christ has the highest position in heaven. Christ also intercedes for us (Rom 8:34) and the answer is "no one". What can we say about all of this? If God is for us, who can be against us? (Rom 8:31). The honest truth is that if God and his army of angels are on our side that can come against us. We are not too sure whether God is with us. In Romans 8:32, Paul said, "God didn't spare his own Son but handed him over to death for all of us. So he will also give us everything along with him." We should refuse to be separated by situations if we are called by God

and we know God is on our side. Let the situations come and we should remain the same person in those situation. We should not change our colours. Some people change colour when they face challenges. They suit the situation instead that the situation should suit them. Paul after he experiences all these troubles that afflicted his body and soul, he confessed that what will separate us from the love Christ has for us? Can trouble, distress, persecution, hunger, nakedness, danger, or violent death separate us from his love?(Rom 8:35). If the Holy Spirit is with you, then nothing will ever separate you from the purpose of God upon humanity which is the love of God. John3:16, tells us that God loved the world that he gave his only Son so that everyone who believes in him will not die but will have eternal life. God is in love with the world, but we do not know that God loved us and we reject him through what we do, say and think. He called people to go and rescue the world, deliver it from sin that people may receive their forgiveness of sins through repentance and they have eternal life which is a free gift. There is no comforting situation that to know that someone loves you. One lady told me that there is a time when you actually desire to be pregnant especially when you have a husband who loves you. What gives us the peace is to know that we are loved by God and that Jesus died for me and the whole world. Let us not own Jesus, he is not only for you but for everyone, so there is no one who can manipulate Jesus.

Paul felt that he was being killed everyday when he looks at what was going on in his life. At Liconium, they almost killed him, infact they thought he was dead. In Thessalonica, he was whisked out through a basket; there are a lot of these situations that he faced and that made him to confess that he was in a furnace (being killed everyday). The Scripture says: "We are being killed all day long because of you. We are thought of as sheep to be slaughtered." (Rom 8:36). He was like a sheep to be slaughter for the sake of the gospel and the heart for people that they may come to the faith in Jesus Christ. The amazing thing was that someone was always there with him through thin and thick. He understood that the one who loves us gives us an overwhelming victory in all these difficulties (Rom 8:37). So because he knew that the one loved us is always there with him, he was quite convinced that nothing can ever separate us from God's love which Christ Jesus our Lord shows us. We can't be separated by death or life, by angels or rulers, by anything in the present or anything in the future, by forces or powers in the world above or in the world below, or by anything else in creation (Rom 8:38-39). He says "nothing" can ever separate him with God meaning that he was deep rooted in Christ. Are we convinced, not to live marriage because of problems? Some people called quit to life because of challenges. Can you be separated with your loved one because there is no bread on the table? This will show that the love was not genuine. Paul proved that he was genuine because he was prepared to die for the sake of saving people to Christ. Today we are running away from challenges, persecutions, we want to be smart and we miss out on God.

As we go out to preach, those who believe in Jesus or those who have answered to the voice of God by turning away from their sins won't be condemned. But those who don't believe are already condemned because they don't believe in God's only Son (John 3:18). This is why people are condemned: The light came into the world. Yet, people loved the dark rather than the light because their actions were evil. People who do what is wrong hate the light and don't come to the light. They don't want their actions to be exposed. But people who do what is true come to the light so that the things they do for God may be clearly seen (John 3:19-21). God gave his only begotten son that through him; they who believe in him will not perish but have everlasting life.

### **COUNTING IT ALL JOY**

Our duty is to help people not to remove their problems but for them to be able to co-exist with problems. We give them the strength to be able to embrace challenges. James says, "Count it all joy when we enter into temptation" (James 1:2). We all want joy but not when things are bad. Joy symbolizes happiness or happy moments of life. So James encouraged his brothers and sisters, to be very happy when they are being tested in different ways because such testing of faith produces endurance because God will be on their side. Those who are fighting will be fighting a losing battle, because the war was won already. This is delayed match and we can not change or alter the score board. So because of this fact, they needed to endure until their testing is over. The testing comes and there is a time when they will pass away but when they pass away then they will be mature and complete, and they won't need anything. If we run away from troubles, then we will remain weak. What tests the strength of a team is when they play a good side. If they manage to stand still then they are a strong team. What kind of player are you, who does not want to be tested in the pitch but still want to remain great. Paul clearly gives us the outcome of testing that makes us to be mature and complete people. Mature and complete in the sense that Jesus will be perfecting our faith everyday in order that our faith may grow.

The reason why we run away from trials or temptations is because we lack wisdom. We are not sure whether if we face reality God will be able to rescue us from the problem other than in the problem. God does not deliver people from their problems but in their temptation meaning to say that God will allow you to be tempted but still he will be in control. He will not allow situations that we can not handle. The solution is to ask for wisdom from God who gives generously. James made a call to everyone that, "If any of you needs wisdom to know what you should do, you should ask God, and he will give it to you. God is generous to everyone and doesn't find fault with them." The problem of humanity is that they doubt what they ask for because there is no relationship with God. People do not have history of God, what he did for the children of Israel, what he did with the apostles especially at Pentecost and what he did

with Martin Luther king and what he is doing with us today. If you do not have this history, it will be difficult for you to believe. So James told them that "When you ask for something, don't have any doubts. A person who has doubts is like a wave that is blown by the wind and tossed by the sea. A person who has doubts shouldn't expect to receive anything from the Lord (Rom 1:6-7). Such kind of a person will not receive anything from God. Now you know why you can't get your share from God, it is because of doubt. Remove all the fears and doubt in your hearts, and then believe in the word of the Lord for your salvation. A person who has doubts is thinking about two different things at the same time and can't make up his mind about anything (James 1:8). Do not be double minded and what makes you to have double mind is the fact that you do not know what you want and if you do not know what you want, you can not do what you can do best.

Whatever happens in our life, we need to understand that God allowed it for his own purposes.

#### THOSE WHO RESPOND TO GOD'S CALL ARE RICH

When we talk about being rich, normally people think of owning, mansions and mansion, having a lot on your name as assets. That is being materialistic, yes we might have part of that but our purpose is to have heavenly riches because they last forever. All these material things will come and go or can vanish anytime but heavenly riches are for eternity. We will be rich when we reach heaven where we find streets of gold and everything there is of gold. In heaven there is no more crying, no more sorrow and that is what we strive for as an achievement in life. Even though Paul lost everything to benefit Christ, he even becomes more rich than before. \par

As we go out there, we need to tell people the right gospel, those who want to be rich use scripture like Malachi 3, that talks about tithing. I want you to take a careful look at this scripture and you will find out that the background to this scripture is judgment not blessing. The Lord says, "I will come to judge you. I will be quick to testify against sorcerers, adulterers, lying witnesses, and those who cheat workers out of their wages and oppress widows and orphans. I will also testify against those who deprive foreigners of their rights. None of them fear me," says the LORD of Armies (Mal3:5). These people were cheating on God, thinking that God is like man. They started being adulterous, practiced sorcery, liars and they oppressed their workers of their wages and they also oppressed the widows and orphans but they were expecting a share of good harvest from God. To me they thought of themselves as clever people but they did not know that they were heading for a show down with God. God was preparing judgment for these Israelites. Maybe we might be like these people with double standards, we should be aware that judgment is awaiting us. God is not like man that he can be fooled so easily and foolishly like that. We need to know that our God does not change, the way he handled the Israelites in the

desert is the same way he is going to deal with us. Paul told the church at Corinth that God was not pleased with most of them, so their dead bodies were scattered over the desert and these things have become examples for us so that we won't desire what is evil, as they did (1 Cor 10:5-6). Today we need to know that the LORD, never changes (Mal 3:6), he is still the same, yesterday, today and forever (Heb 13:8). That is why you descendants of Jacob haven't been destroyed yet. Judgment came so that they may return to him as their God. They have forsaken their God for idols, departed from the laws of God because of adultery and the love of money. God reminded that since the time of their ancestors they have turned away from his laws and have not followed them. As a result of their stubbornness God gave them his back but because of his mercy, he is calling them again to return to him, so that he will return to them. This is what the LORD of Armies say to the children of Israel. Their question in respond was "But you ask, 'How can we return?' Can a person cheat God? Yet, you are cheating me! "But you ask, 'How are we cheating you?' How can people ask such a question when they do not bring a tenth of your income and other contributions (Mal 3:8). This was a question and answer session with God. Israel had too much of lip service. We should not be people who are more on lip service. Let us demonstrate what we believe. Let us not cheat God like the Israelites. These people did not have a heart for the work of God. They knew they were supposed to bring something to the house of God but they did not. This was a deliberate sin, willingly committed but they wanted to get away with it thinking that God is so dull. They were supposed to bring a tenth of their income and other contributions to further the work of God. The work of God needs to be funded. So judgment comes as a result of their unfaithfulness. God pronounced a case upon the whole nation.

So a curse is on you because the whole nation is cheating me! Bring one-tenth of your income into the storehouse so that there may be food in my house. Test me in this way," says the LORD of Armies. "See if I won't open the windows of heaven for you and flood you with blessings (Mal 3:9-10). You can not receive those riches in heaven if you are cheating God. These people lived by the law, so God used the same principle that they know. This is was most appropriate for the time not now. We need to understand the period of dispensation. What was the time like that time? We are no longer under the law but under grace and we are justified by faith in Jesus Christ. In the Old Testament they did not pay tax but we are paying tax. The law was fulfilled in Christ; it was complimented in Christ. He is the fulfillment of the law. The time we are living now even the prophets desired to see what we are seeing now because it is now complete. In Hebrews 11, some people died believing by faith the things that we are experiencing now. The word "test me" means obey my commandments and God was prepared to open up windows of heaven and to flood them with blessings.

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In the New Testament, Jesus talked of giving and giving cheerfully because God loves a cheerful give. We need to give God not to pay God through tithes. Yes we use this concept in order to get money from people rather than to teach people to give God. In shona we say, "Chindiro chinopfumba kunobva chimwe." The reality is that when you give, you expect to receive. God was just trying to say to these people, let us build a relationship. Let us be friends, when you buy me today, I will retain the same love. This is a concept of giving cheerfully because God had blessed us rather than feeling obliged obligatorily. We have people who are frustrated in ministry because they have been taught these principles and they have responded quite well but till today, the windows of heaven are not open and no abundance of his blessing. This is because they give but not cheerfully. Some preacher and some pastors instill fear in people each time they talk about tithing. We are not blessed because we give but we are blessed because of his abundance of grace upon our life. The concept of giving is a social issue other than making it a law. Can i shade more light to this, if you feel you owe God his due (tax), you need to understand that the kings and their families do not pay tax. They are exempted from taxes. So when everyone is being obliged to pay tax and even Jesus before he died was forced to pay tax. It was according to the law but now we are under grace. We are son, heir to the throne, we do not pay tax, but we give, like what we see the president do. He donates to charity and other purposes. So we need to give cheerfully according to what we feel God is compelling us to give other than to do things that bring condemnation. Paul said to the Romans, "There is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ, for the law of Jesus Christ has set me free from the law of sin and death (Rom 8:1-2). So those who are believers in Christ Jesus can no longer be condemned. The reason why there is no condemnation is because the standards of the Spirit, who gives life through Christ Jesus, have set you free from the standards of sin and death. It is impossible to do what God standards demands because of the weakness our human nature has. But God sent his Son to have a human nature as sinners have and to pay for sin. That way God condemned sin in our corrupt nature. Jesus Christ paid for our sins when he died on the cross and because he paid for our sins, we owe him nothing except to accept him as our Saviour.

So this was a call to repentance in anticipation that if they turn away from their sins, he promised them great things. He will stop insects from eating your crops. They will not destroy the produce of your land. The vines in your fields will not lose their unripened grapes," says the LORD of Armies (Mal 3:11). "All nations will call you blessed because you will be a delightful land," says the LORD of Armies. These people were cruel, they used harsh words against God and they asked how have we spoken against you? And that it is pointless to serve God. What do we gain if we meet his standards or if we walk around feeling sorry for what we've done? So now we call arrogant people blessed. Not only are evildoers encouraged, they even test God and get away with it." (Mal 3:13-15).

The people who are being referred to as arrogant, practiced giving and they were receiving. It is all about your network, if your friends are of lower level, you always expect to receive values of lower level but if you are a banker and your network is strong (high level) then you expect much, enough to but what you want. Your network determines your net worth. The Israelites especially at this time where agriculturally based so it was easy to convert into a tenth. Now what do you give as a tenth, is it your income as in salary or anything that you have received. Who is following that perfectly well, who honors God with everything that he receive except other than the salary, believe me not, they are very few. If you break one, you break all. So in concluding this issue I say, this was done so that they may fear God. He pays attention to those who fear him.

Then those who feared the LORD spoke to one another, and the LORD paid attention and listened. A book was written in his presence to be a reminder to those who feared the LORD and respected his name (Mal 3:16). He will spare them as a man spares his own son who serves him so that they may see the difference between righteous people and wicked people, between the one who serves God and the one who doesn't serve him (Mal 3:18).

People are not dedicated to the truth; once people seem to fail there is stress. Some scriptures were written to me but to that generation so we do not use any scripture for doctrine. Let us understand the life situation of that time before we contemporaries. Pastors like the one I know will tell you that you are doing it all wrong bringing condemnation again.

Giving is part of social life and even Jesus said, "give and you shall receive" and do unto others what you would want them to do unto you. Anyone can benefit from this concept of life. One of my lecturer always say, "When you come to college take off your shoes meaning be open minded and come to the truth. We need to come to the truth.\par

## **RESPONSING TO GOD'S CALL IN DIFFICULT SITUATIONS**

Life in Zimbabwe is very difficult so much that many people are hopeless but when you respond to God's call, these life situations will scatter you everywhere. We do different things, hears different things, go to different places, live in a corrupt environment, when things are good and when things are bad, inflation rate, increases of prizes but in the midst of all this, do you remain the same. Will Christ remain central in your life? We should be mastered by one person who is Christ. This is what will differentiate us from the rest that we remain the same. Most of the people can not cope up in these situations. So we suffer because we do not give importance to important things. Put things according to hierarchy of needs (Maslow's law). Do not ignore any of those small items in the mode of existence because they have a part. What you need to do is to integrate them.\par

In difficult situation, you need to know who is leading you. The Holy Spirit guides us into all truth. What can save a man in these situations is to know the

truth and the truth will set him free. Some people in this era are still being guided by the law. Paul reminded the brothers and sisters to realize that laws have power over people only as long as they are alive? (I'm speaking to people who are familiar with Moses' Teachings.) To clarify this he gave an example of a married woman. He said, "A married woman is bound by law to her husband as long as he is alive. But if her husband dies, that marriage law is no longer in effect for her. So if she marries another man while her husband is still alive, she will be called an adulterer. But if her husband dies, she is free from this law, so she is not committing adultery if she marries another man (Rom 7:1-2). The law is good and the law is bad. Even though Paul was quite convinced that God's standards are spiritual, but he was aware that he had that corrupt nature in him and we was sold as a slave to sin (Rom 7:14). And because of the law Paid "I died". He found that the commandment which was intended to bring him life actually brought him death. Sin, taking the opportunity provided by this commandment, deceived me and then killed me (Rom 7:11). So Moses' Teachings are holy, and the commandment is holy, right, and good (Rom 7:12). What gives him joy is that he took pleasure in God's standards in his inner being.

However, Paul saw a different standard at work throughout his body. He said, "It is at war with the standards my mind sets and tries to take me captive to sin's standards which still exist throughout my body" (Rom 7:23). The wars going on inside of him makes him a miserable person and the question then becomes who will rescue him from my dying body? He answered himself by thanking God for the author of life our Lord Jesus Christ rescues him! So I am obedient to God's standards with my mind, but I am obedient to sin's standards with my corrupt nature (Rom 7:25). Paul after having gone through all this troubles, he continued in the next chapter which is a continuation that there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ, for the law of Christ has set me free from the law of death. At least he was free at last.

If you have responded to God's call positively, you will hate sin, as God hate sin. You do not compromise the standard of righteousness demanded by God. You relate to Christ as your father. Develop your own identity or personality. We develop this identity by being openness to new things and the truth. If you stick to one concept, you won't benefit much. Be yourself, so that you can maximize the potential in you. One of my lecturers said, "Do not imitate an ear of the body". We are the body of Christ. Work as you. It does not matter whether, it takes time for people to recognize you, and your time will come. We have seasons and yours is coming.

## **THE PRAYING WITH WISDOM**

Those who have responded to God's call, pray with wisdom. You might be called to preach, or as you visit the sick, they ask you to pray. What kind of prayer do you make? Do you bind the spirit of death or you pray for God



wisdom and will to be done. I have seen people who pray binding the spirit of accidents; we need to understand that we can not bind anything unless it is bound by God. These are mannerism especially by Pentecostals. Some have been pressured to pray because people know you are a man of God and the person they were praying for died. What does that mean to us then, are failures but James said, "The prayer of a righteous has power" Prayers offered in faith will save those who are sick, and the Lord will cure them. If you have sinned, you will be forgiven (James 5:15). The righteous prays according to God's will but most of us we pray that people may approve that we are prayer warriors. We lack wisdom and at the end of the day, we become hypocrites. Let it be according to God's timing. People these days are trying to create miracles to maintain a certain standard but at the end we bring the name of the Lord to shame. We do this to advance our CVs not Jesus.

The wages you refused to pay the people who harvested your fields shout to God against you. The Lord of Armies has heard the cries of those who gather the crops (Jam 5:5). You have lived in luxury and pleasure here on earth. You have fattened yourselves for the day of slaughter.

### **VINE AND THE BRANCHES**

A preacher and his message are like the vine and the branches. You can not separate them, they are one thing and feed from the same source through the roots. We pray to God to inspire both my message and me. If I am inspired I also brings out something inspired. The source is God and the message comes from God through his word and it is the word that I feed on that changes my life.

John the Baptist is one man who went before Jesus in the wilderness to prepare the way for Christ. He testified that he is not the Christ, and he baptize you with water but the one who comes after him, of whom he is not able to untie his sandals who baptize you with fire. He gives us the story of Jesus telling or instructing his disciples before he is taken away that they need to remain in him. Why remaining in him because he is the source of life. If they remained in him, then Jesus will also remain in them. This is means that they will be one thing. Why do we need to remain in him? The word remaining does not mean to be stationary in him but Jesus was talking about fellowship; that they needed to fellowship with him, to fellowship in his anointing or in other words to associate with him. If we associate with him, we adopt his character because friends normally influence one another. This is the reason why the bible talks about bad character corrupting good character. It is the influence that corrupts your thinking pattern, your understanding of things. This is the reason why Jesus emphasized that his disciples should remain in him, in other terms; they should always acknowledge his name in everything that they do.

Jesus is the standard, if we stay in him, he will give us his standard, then we will meet the standard of righteousness that God demands from us. Jesus brought the standard of righteousness that God expects from us in us. Which means that we can now meet the standard of God or can exercise the standard of righteous that God desires.

Jesus is the source of life, if the disciples go without Jesus it means that they are disconnected to life meaning that they are dead. Their life will be directionless because where there is no vision people perish. They will be heading for destruction like what Paul explained to the Thessalonians that those who are deceived by the devil who masquerades as the angel of light are heading for destruction. I imagine our situation in life when sometimes we go for a week without water, the situation is a disaster especially when you want to look at how can you maintain the toilets, cooking, bathing etc. the hygiene is our concern, that will be the situation of someone without Jesus. This is the state of someone who is not connected to Christ. Someone who does not remain in Jesus; someone who does not fellowship in Jesus' name. Jesus is the source because he is the creator (John 1:1), in the beginning he was there. Before the world was created, he was there and everything was created in him and through him. So he is the source of life. In 1 John 5:12, John said, "He who has the son of God has life but he who does not have the son has no life." He came that we may have life and life in abundance. The purpose of Jesus coming into this world and dying for us is that we have life and that we may be with him in heaven when he is seated with his father. All of Jesus' preaching's he was trying do direct people to the end of time when we are taken from this body and understand that we should be with him. He loved us so much that he preferred to die for us on the cross. So let us drink from this source, otherwise we will struggle in this life. If we remain in him, we will bear fruit. This is the father's glory that we may bear fruit (John 15:8).

Paul talked about racing and training for the athletes (I Cor 9:24). He said that all run the race and they run it in order to win the prize and that we do not run aimlessly. I said that I beat my body because the body is the stubborn object that that has evil desires, so if you beat it, then you have managed to discipline it to perform according to the way you want. You subject it to your own authority. Running the race is not the problem because it is for everyone but what is important is to win the race. You need to be rewarded for your labour. Matthew once said, "Let your light so shine before men that they may see the good work that you do and they will glorify God" (Matt 5:16). In order for you to win the race, you need quality training, not just training. You need to be physically fit for the race. Do not take drugs to enhance your capacity or efficiency but you simply need to train hard. For you to have a quality training, you also need a good trainer. Who is training to be a good talker, preacher, pastor, evangelist, teacher etc. a soccer team needs a good coach for them to qualify for prestigious competition like Africa Cup of Nations or World Cup.

Preaching is not a problem but you need to prepare for that preaching in the form of researching and praying. If you need to remain in him, you need to have a kingdom mentality. In him there peace, if you are in him, you have peace; in him there is plenty, then you will have plenty also. Do not be like those ten foolish virgins in Matthew 25, who were not prepared for the coming of the Lord Jesus and they were surprised by the event. As Christians we run to win the race, knowing that the one we are following his footsteps conquered, so we are also conquered. Paul testified to the Romans that we are more than conquerors (Rom 8).

To remain in him, is to spend time with God in prayer meaning we need to be connected to him through prayer. Prayer is the way we communicate with God in our everyday life. If we need a crown, we need to be committed to serve him, worship him whole heartedly and to give him all the praise in every situation. James told his readers that they should count it all joy when they enter into temptation (James 1:2).

Philippians 3:2, Paul said to the Philippians, watch out for those dogs. Who are the dogs, he explains it further by saying that, dogs are:

- Evil doers.
- Mutilators of flesh
- Those who put confidence in the flesh.

He said that the church should be on the watch out for these people because they are there in their congregation. Even today, we need to watch out for these people whom Paul described their character as just that of a dog. I was just thinking that Paul should have used a better word that to call them “dogs”. We all know the character of dogs and it will be nasty to relate their character just as that of dogs. We should be on guard for evil.

Paul said, I lost everything that I lost everything that I have worked for for the sake of knowing Christ and the power of knowing him (Phil 3:7). His passion was to know Christ and to experience the resurrection power. Paul as someone who used to persecute the church, he might have seen the power of God demonstrated during his hey days but because he was ignorant as being used by the devil. But now that he has seen the light, he desired to experience that resurrection power that raised people from the dead, that healed those who are sick. If you have seen Christ’s power at work or being demonstrated, do not be jealous but have a desire to also experience the power just as those people. Peter testified that God shows no favoritism, when he witnessed the gentiles receiving the same power that they also received. That was amazing to him and he began to understand God better. Having experienced the power of God to the fullest, still Paul was not satisfied and he testified that I am still in the race. The way he said the racing issue, it seemed to the people as if he had already attained the prize but he openly denied that, “It is not that I have attained the prize but I press on towards the goal forgetting the past.” Why do we seem like we have

already attained the prize. Some people will tell you, I have prayed and what else should I do.

Let us not dwell on history but let's focus on the future. We should not look on the glory that is not shining (the past glory).

Exodus 14:13 Israelites thought of Egypt. What do you feed on because the concept is "Junk in, junk out?" The Bible went on to say, "From the abundance of the heart, the mouth speaketh". It is what you feed, that you release.

Jude 17 Call to persevere

In the last days, there will be scoffers who will follow their own ungodly desires. There are men who divide us, who follow natural instincts who do not have a spirit of God operating in them.

## GRAVE MENTALITY

There are some people who have a grave mentality. They wish to die or wished themselves dead. They always say to themselves, "Ini ndichafa" or "ndapotswa ndafa." They wished them to die but they say it ignorantly. People need to think twice before they say out things. The way people say things shows that they are defeated already before the situation. You shall not die but live to declare the oracles of God. James talked about the tongue, that it is a small thing but it can set the whole body to be in fire. Teachers have a bigger share of punishment on the judgment day. Why? Because they say things that can either save someone's soul or build someone.

Daniel was thrown into the fire not just fire but we call it "multiplied fire". Egypt must know that God lives. This was because he trusted God and the Lord saved his life. Paul said if God is for us who can be against us. God was with Daniel, and Nebuchadnezzar did not know that until he was given sleepless nights concerning the issue. If you are holding on to the vine, branches will always get food. The supply is there and the branch will not die.

Time to go forward, God said to Moses. Stand still and you will see the deliverance of God. Rise up; it is time to move forward. You are crying before God. David was told that how long you should continue mourning for Soul.

Some of the Israelites were born and bred in Egypt now it was a confusing that Moses wanted them to die. It was rather better that they should have remained in Egypt than dying at river Jordan. So they cried to Moses and Moses instructed that they should just be still and believe in God. They were born, grew up, married, worked in Egypt, lived in Egypt, they did not know God but God has remembered them.

Because he lives, I can face tomorrow.

When God takes away things from you, he will replace. If God takes you from a place, he will show you where you should go. In Exodus 14:1 -15, God allowed the Israelites to come to river Jordan. He allowed the enemy to come close.

## **Conclusion**

So the preacher's preparation is as good as the preparation of the preacher. The message depends on the relationship between the preacher and God. The preacher's lifestyles contribute to the outcome of the message and can in some circumstances hinder the message itself. The preacher should be a living example of what he is preaching meaning he has to be connected to God. Paul had to demonstrate the gospel with power. To prove to the people that he has a relation and was sent, the preacher needs to demonstrate the powers of the one who send him. He uses the delegated power. People will respect the message of the preacher not the preacher. The preacher will benefit as a vessel carrying the message because there is no way they can respect what I am saying as a preacher without respecting the one who brought it because at the end of the day, I will sent a feedback. Even though in the OT God used people who were not right before him but it is different in the NT. The preacher needs to receive Christ Jesus as his personal Savior of his life that is the pre- requisite set by God.

I came to understand that from the flow of the message from the originator to the receiver it is not the preacher who is important but the message because the one who gave the message is great. I agree to Lane (1987:15) who calls the preacher a "nobody send by somebody." The preacher is a messenger and a messenger does not change the message or try to give it his own meaning, which means it is the responsibility of the preacher to be faithful to the sender as well as to the message and the hearers.

My conclusion is that as much as the preacher needs to prepare for the message, he should also prepare to be prepared by God before he delivers the message. The preacher is prepared in the process of preparing which becomes a wonderful experience. The truth is a preacher can not stand before he is prepare or preacher should be prepared in order for him to be able to prepare the message even though sometimes God uses people unexpected of the preacher especially in the case of healing. As the preacher is delivering the message God can just touch certain people outside the plan of the preacher.

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