

(Presented at an Indoor Lectureship of coC UNILAG)

Introduction

Each living individual should be “*prepared to meet thy God*” because “*it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment.*” Preparing for worship or service is very important as indicated in Scripture. Under the Old Covenant, the LORD commanded the Israelites to prepare AHEAD for the Sabbath day of worship (Ex 16:20-26, Jn 19:42) and the religious festivals such as the Passover (Ex 12:14-20, Mt 26:19). Of the savior it is written “*Wherefore when he cometh into the world, he saith, Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not, but a body hast thou prepared me*” - Hebrews 10:5. We are to count the cost of discipleship and decide if we are prepared to follow Jesus (Lk 14:26-28-33). We are not only to present our bodies holy, acceptable unto God (Rm 12:1-2) but also study so as to be approved of God and know how to behave ourselves in the house of God; the church of the living God (2 Tim 2:15, 3:15). Besides, we are commanded: “*...be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear*” -1 Peter 3:15. ***All the above show that the Christian life on earth is one of preparing adequately for heaven.*** Since preparation is necessary it should be done adequately or sufficiently not half-way or haphazardly.

Preparing for the Lord’s Day as a Worshipper and/or Worker

Since each Christian is to function in the body in one capacity or another and worship in spirit and in truth (Eph 4:16, Rm 12:5-8, 1 Cor 12:12-27) it follows that each ought to be prepared for service –mentally, materially, etc. as well as in demeanor. One should have organized his dressing, lesson prior to the day and go to bed in time so as to wake up and leave home early enough. The money to be contributed should ideally have been prepared and kept in store (1 Cor 16:1-2) while meditation and conduct at worship and the week before should reflect that one is mindful of the Communion (1 Cor 10:16-20; 11:26-31).

Preparing for any task of godly service requires divine grace or help for our adversary the devil is ever scheming to distract us and make us miss the mark. This calls for ***prayer for wisdom and strength to overcome*** temptations and snares of the wicked (James 1). Fortunately, we are standing on the promises of God, which are assured and guaranteed by work of Christ our redeemer, mediator and intercessor.

While modest, ***decent dressing should be a thing of habit*** (1 Tim 2:9), appearing in public to address/serve others puts additional burden on one to appear respectable in a way that will not offend others conscience or make any blaspheme God. Thus one should not dress as if going to the gym or his/her bathroom when coming to the assembly of the saints.

For the Teacher/Preacher and others who make a speech of exhortation, audience consideration is important. One should consider the:

- Age mix and average educational level of the listeners to gauge their comprehension level vocabulary wise
- Spiritual maturity of the majority of the listeners to assess their perception and ability to handle the truth (Heb 5:10–14) for it is inappropriate to feed adults wholly on milk or to feed babes on strong meat (1

Cor 3:1-2, 1 Pet 2:2). It is necessary to first teach fundamentals to new converts (Heb 6:1- 3) so that they may be grounded and grow unto maturity (Eph 4:11-14).

- Sex of the people; is it mixed or monotone? This may affect the depth of certain discussions and examples to be given. Some issues are best treated amongst people of the same sex or a certain age grade.

Choosing a topic could be affected by what the church needs to know, be reminded of or addressing contemporary issues in society or the assembly so as to give people a proper perspective. Thus scheduled lessons are useful as well as impromptu ones. At times, a question may warrant a whole lesson on a topic in order to clear a misconception or establish the truth thereon.

Developing a lesson is an art as well as a science. It requires skills and basic principles. The first thing is to INTRODUCE the matter and possibly define the key-words. Next, one must have a THESIS OR MAIN-POINT to be passed across possibly with possible examples/applications and eventually round up with CONCLUSIONS or summary. The substance should come from the Bible based on one's research and/or additional material from others which should be credited or acknowledged. We are not inspired as the apostles were (Lk 12:11-12) so it behooves teachers today to be prepared beforehand -2 Tim 2:2,15

Selecting appropriate or relevant Bible passages is extremely important. As much as possible, the New Testament should be the bedrock for Christian practices though the Old Covenant may give background information. We should avoid pre-texting or *reading into a text rather than from it*. Verses should be used in their context, the passage ought to back the thought presented and an explanation should be available if it seems as though there is a contradiction based on some other scripture. While knowledge of the style, timing and cultural background of a book is helpful, they do not override clarify of inspiration (Eph 3:4) or the harmony of God's perpetual truth. If listener(s) is immature, one may avoid using a text that is subject to mis-application and go for direct, clearer passages. A Concordance or Bible software is helpful for finding words and phrases, to locate exact verses and all occurrences. Scripture is its own best interpreter and commentary.

It takes, practice and experience to manage one's time as a presenter. Generally, a 2 Pg lesson could be covered in 30 mins, 3pg in 45 mins and 4pg in 1 hour (each \pm 10mins). Rehearsing is useful especially when using tools such as PowerPoint projections. Keeping to assigned time is a mark of discipline and competence. If a lesson should be multi-part, it should be so stated. ***One has to identify which parts are most needed to be mentioned within an allotted period.***

Conclusion

Failure to make necessary and sufficient preparation towards an event or project could lead to under-performance, avoidable mistakes, embarrassments and outright failure. Our worship unto the Lord and service unto His body should be given the seriousness that they deserve. "Notice-me dressing/attitude" should be avoided in the assembly. The audience are not fools or ignoramuses so a Bible teacher should prepare well and not come to the pulpit to ramble and fumble. Distractions should be avoided including ringing phones. Every one of us must be ready to put in his/her best effort to please the King of kings and Lord of lords.