

**THE GOSPEL AND PASTORAL LABOR:**  
**The Five Greatest Heart Challenges In Sermon Preparation**  
**Mike Bullmore**

**Introductory Comments:**

*“The pulpit calls those anointed to it as the sea calls its sailors; and like the sea, it batters and bruises, and does not rest. To preach, to really preach, is to die naked a little at a time and to know each time you do it that you must do it again.” - Bruce Thieleman*

*“Life-giving preaching costs the preacher much—death to self, crucifixion to the world, the travail of his own soul. Crucified preaching only can give life. Crucified preaching can come only from one who has been crucified.” - E. M. Bounds*

**I. The Challenges**

**A. Laziness vs. Happy Labor –**

I Corinthians 15:10-11

II Timothy 2:15

*“What has exceedingly hurt you in time past, nay, and I fear, to this day, is want of study. I scarce ever knew a preacher read so little. And perhaps, by neglecting it, have lost the taste for it. Hence your talent in preaching does not increase. It is just the same as it was seven years ago. It is lively, but not deep; there is little variety; there is no compass of thought. Study only can supply this, with meditation and daily prayer. O begin! Fix some part of every day for private exercise. You may acquire the taste which you have not: what is tedious at first, will afterward be pleasant. It is for your life; there is no other way; else you will be a trifler all your days, and a pretty, superficial preacher. Do justice to your own soul; give it time and means to grow. Do not starve yourself any longer. Take up your cross and be a Christian altogether. Then will all the children of God rejoice (not grieve) over you.” - John Wesley*

**B. Self-Pity vs. Joy –**

Acts 5:40-42 (cf. II Corinthians 4:7-15)

### **C. Manipulation of Scripture vs. Integrity –**

*“We must be honest with our texts; and we must take them always in their context. That is an absolute rule. These other men do not observe that; they are not interested in that, they are always looking for ‘ideas’. They want a theme, an idea; and then they philosophise on that, giving expression to their own thoughts and moralisings. That is utterly to abuse the Word of God.” - D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones*

### **D. Pride vs. “Contempt of Praise” –**

*“It is impossible to acquire this power [preaching] except by these two qualities: contempt of praise and the force of eloquence. If either is lacking, the one left is made useless through divorce from the other. If a preacher despises praise, yet does not produce the kind of preaching which is ‘with grace, seasoned with salt’, he is despised by the people and gets no advantage from his humility. And if he manages this side of things perfectly well, but is a slave to the sound of applause, again an equal damage threatens both him and his people, because through his passion for praise he aims to speak more for the pleasure than the profit of his hearers.” - John Chrysostom*

I Corinthians 4:3-5

### **E. Unbelief vs. Belief**

Ezekiel 37:3

Isaiah 55:10-11

## **II. Things I Have Found to Be Particularly Helpful**

**A. Establish a Rhythm of Weekly Preparation.**

**B. Take Retreats.**

**C. Adopt and Employ Specific Spiritual Mechanisms to Battle Your Temptations.**