

PREACHING: PREACHER, KNOW THYSELF

According to Parker Palmer, a noted writer in the field of education, “we teach who we are.” It is also true that we *preach* who we are. Just as teachers must know themselves before they can teach with integrity, preachers must also be intentionally self-reflective. If we preach who we are, we must first *know* who we are—or we risk coming across as disingenuous, or even hypocritical.

Why? Because what’s on the inside is going to make its way to the surface, and affect our preaching—our listeners—whether we know it or not. Our biases (acknowledged or not), our wounds (attended to or not), our faith (or lack thereof) will affect how and what we preach. It is no lie that all preaching is, at some level, autobiographical! The messenger is part of the message.

If we preach who we are, and we seek to preach intentionally (which the good of our assemblies require), then we must attend to the forces and relationships which have shaped us: our linguistic and preaching ancestors; our past life and work experiences; our “gifts, wounds, joys, fears” and our “interests, associations, achievements, failures” in an intentional manner. Schlafer’s book (listed below) is an excellent tool for exploring these issues individually... or as a community. Perhaps groups of deacons and their wives may want to work through this book together?

Resources:

Palmer, Parker J. 1998. *The Courage to Teach: Exploring the Inner Landscape of a Teacher’s Life*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers.

Resner, André, Jr. 1999. *Preacher and Cross: Person and Message in Theology and Rhetoric*. Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company.

Schlafer, David J. 1995. *Your Way with God’s Word: Discovering Your Distinctive Preaching Voice*. Cambridge, MA: Cowley Publications.