

Handle with Care

"And now beware! Be sure that you feed and shepherd God's flock — his church, purchased with his blood — over whom the Holy Spirit has appointed you as elders" (Acts 20:28, NLT).

Paul warned the elders at Ephesus to carefully nurture God's flock. How can this monumental task be tackled?

Acts 20:28 says we have been appointed. The Holy Spirit leads and guides us into all truth (John 16:13). We have a teacher. We must be eager learners.

"Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth" (2 Timothy 2:15).

The Word of God is to be handled:

- Accurately
- Correctly
- Carefully
- Rightly

2 Timothy 2:15 reminds us of an Old Testament verse: "For Ezra had set his heart to study the law of the LORD and to practice it, and to teach His statutes and ordinances in Israel" (Ezra 7:10, NASU).

Here we learn what is needed for an impacting ministry of preaching and teaching.

1. Prepare the heart for God's Word.
2. Study God's Word.
3. Practice God's Word.
4. Teach God's Word.

The goal of ministry (service) is to please God. Preaching and teaching should meet God's standard of approval. How can this be done? One word reveals the answer, "Study." Why study? We want to receive the approval of God.

While studying 2 Timothy 2:15 several word pictures emerge. (Some may have surfaced in another lesson. You should also find a few new pictures of a preacher.)

Workman

Preachers are workers. Our job is to rightly divide the Word of truth. This is not an easy task. It requires constant Bible study, and communication with our Boss.



Waiter & Servant

A preacher feeds the flock of God. He distributes spiritual food (Job 23:12; Matthew 4:4; 1 Peter 5:2) to those in his care.



Father

A preacher is a spiritual father looking after the needs of his family. He distributes to the church as it has need. He rightfully and skillfully teaches God’s Word that fits the occasion in the local church like a father at dinner time skillfully cutting meat and sharing it to the family.



Manager

“Let a man so account of us, as of the ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God” (1 Corinthians 4:1).



A preacher is a steward, overseeing the affairs of the family of God, and dividing the provisions as needed. The sincere desire of a faithful steward is to please his Master.

We are appointed by God and answer directly to Him for our actions or inactions.

“So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God” (Romans 10:17).

This is not referring to preaching anything that suits one’s fancy. The Word that increases faith is the Word needed at that particular time, in that particular situation.

Road Worker



A preacher makes a straight road in the midst of confusion. He cuts a straight path. Truth is like a straight road. It is not good to swerve to one side or the other. A preacher can be compared to a farmer who makes a straight row. The path we plow, and the roads we build should be cut straight, and be straightforward. There is an abundance of “crooked” preaching. Our people need to be able to know and travel the straight path.

“And you will hear a voice say, “This is the way; turn around and walk here” (Isaiah 30:21, *NLT*).

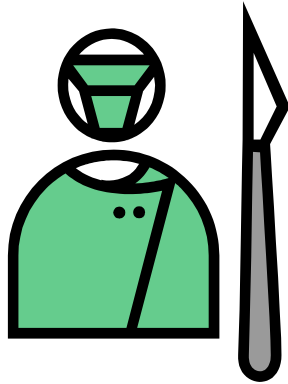
Traveling on the right road is reserved for those who enter at the proper gate. Send people through the right gate and guide them on the heavenward road.

“You can enter God's Kingdom only through the narrow gate. The highway to hell is broad,

Preaching

and its gate is wide for the many who choose the easy way. But the gateway to life is small, and the road is narrow, and only a few ever find it. Beware of false prophets who come disguised as harmless sheep, but are really wolves that will tear you apart” (Matthew 7:13-15, *NLT*).

Surgeon



A preacher is like a surgeon. He takes God’s Word and dissects it properly. This can only be done with a straight, correct message. God’s Word will cut deep into our lives (Hebrews 4:12).

How does a person develop the skill of rightfully dividing the Word of God? He becomes an inseparable friend with God, and His Word. He becomes a Word Handler. Here is a list (adapted from the *Dictionary of Biblical Imagery*) of what should be done with the Bible.

Meditate on it.	Psalms 1:2
Be instructed by it.	1 Timothy 3:15
Obey it.	Luke 11:28
Continue in it.	John 8:31
Keep it.	2 Chronicles 34:21; Psalms 119:67; John 14:23
Hear it.	Jeremiah 31:10; Ephesians 1:13
Receive it.	1 Thessalonians 2:13
Read it.	Matthew 21:42; 2 Corinthians 3:15
Dwell in it.	Ephesians 3:17
Believe it.	John 2:22

Search it.	John 5:39
Hide it in your heart.	Psalms 119:11
Study it.	2 Timothy 2:15
Preach it	2 Timothy 4:2

The Word and people of God are precious. Handle with care!

Study Questions

1. What did Paul warn the elders to do in Acts 20:28?

2. How should the Word of God be handled?

3. What four things are needed for an impacting ministry of preaching and teaching?

4. What is the goal of ministry (service)?

5. In what way is a preacher considered to be a “workman”?

6. Compare a preacher to a spiritual father.
