

Your Favorite Famous Preacher

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Renowned preachers of the gospel are immediately accessible on the Internet. Thousands of their sermons can be downloaded for free. Some of these men preach at multiple conferences throughout the year. I have spent time ministering on at least four different college campuses, and one of these well-known pastors is immensely popular, influencing thousands daily through both his writings and online sermons. Whether he is preaching at his home church or elsewhere, crowds swell.



Do you have a favorite famous preacher? Most of us do, but have you ever considered what place he should have in your life? Consider these three guiding principles:

1. Keep learning from him.

God is undoubtedly using certain men in extraordinary ways for the growth of His kingdom. We must not think that the Holy Spirit resides with these men alone, but without question the Spirit is empowering their ministries. I have heard numerous testimonies of individuals who heard the gospel and came to Christ because of listening to these men while driving in their vehicles. I recall one man telling about how he became so convicted of his sin that he began weeping profusely, so he pulled the car over and cried out to God for mercy.

You might testify about how God has used one of these individuals in your life, perhaps at your conversion or in helping you know Scripture and follow Christ. If you find someone's teaching of Scripture extremely helpful, give thanks to the Lord and keep listening. The ease of access to his sound teaching is a gift from God.

2. Love your own pastor(s) more than him.

Think about your favorite famous preacher. Do you love him more than your own pastor(s)? If so, the New Testament would encourage you to rethink your affections. Hebrews 13:7 states, "Remember those who led you, who spoke the word of God to you; and considering the result of their conduct, imitate their faith." That verse is addressed to a specific group of people who would have had in mind primarily certain past leaders from *their own* church—men who carefully taught them (6:1-2) and whose faith was worthy of imitating because they

persevered to the end.

The emphasis in the New Testament is to love, submit to, and encourage the leaders of your own local church. Hebrews 13:17 commands, "Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they keep watch over your souls as those who will give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with grief, for this would be unprofitable for you."

We have turned "big time" preachers into little idols. Not only do we "ooh" and "aah" over their preaching abilities, but we sometimes treat them like their word on a subject or controversial matter is infallible. These men even get asked to autograph Bibles at conferences (I've seen it happen!). Again, we praise God for certain men who know how to speak the truth in vivid and even prophetic ways, but you must not so exalt certain men that you belittle and take lightly the biblically qualified pastors God has placed within your own church. Respect for celebrated preachers is reasonable, but appreciation for your own pastors is commanded (see 1st Thess. 5:12-13). Remember that your pastor will visit you during a crisis, but the famous preacher will not.

3. Pray for him.

Imagine if thousands of people clung to your every word. Think about how important you might begin to think you are. Acclaimed preachers need our prayers! "Pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before stumbling" (Prov. 16:18). If a pastor in a local church falls into sin, the damage done is tragic, but minimal and relatively contained. If a famous preacher falls, the negative consequences are nearly devastating as the Name of Christ is defamed, young believers are confused, mature Christians are hurt, his family is subjected to public scorn, and a watching world says, "See, I told you you're all a bunch of hypocrites!"

Stop even now and pray for your favorite famous preacher. Pray that he would have the heart of John the Baptist who always deflected attention to the great Christ. Pray that, like the angel in Revelation 22, he would refuse to be the object of anyone's worship, and say from his heart, "Do not do that. I am a fellow servant of yours . . . Worship God" (verses 8-9). Pray that as his influence increases, so would his humility. Pray that like the apostle Paul he would not consider his life of any value, if only he would finish his course and the ministry he received from the Lord Jesus, to testify solemnly of the gospel of God's grace (Acts 20:24).

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