

Hard Work: The Spurgeon Way

Jim Elliff

Charles Haddon Spurgeon, the renowned preacher of London in the 1800s, was not only a gifted leader, but was a hard worker. By the time most pastors write a few emails, wrestle with the dates for VBS and read the junk mail, Spurgeon would have completed a mountain of tasks.



For instance, each week he preached several times (often 10), trained pastors in the pastor's college, wrote several hundred letters ("I'm immersed to my chin in letters."), led an elders' meeting, conducted a prayer meeting, counseled numbers of new believers preparing for baptism (on average, 30 persons), read volumes of Puritan theology, edited both his printed sermon and *The Sword and the Trowel*, wrote a few chapters in one of his 150 books, squared off against some heresy, buried a few members, entertained many guests, and visited his orphans at the orphan home established by the church.

"A man cannot be idle and yet have Christ's sweet company," he once wrote. "Christ is a quick walker, and when His people would talk with Him they must travel quickly too, or else they will soon lose His company."

He exhibited his tirelessness in labor when he began preaching as an 18 year-old at Waterbeach. The church at first had only 40 members, but soon grew to 100, with many more guests attending. "I'm 18 tomorrow and hope Sunday to preach for the 188th time since I started about one and a half years ago," he said. By the time he was 20 he had preached approximately 500 times.

He once exclaimed, "The sin of doing nothing is about the biggest of all sins, for it involves most of the othersHorrible idleness! God save us from it!"

But won't too much labor for Christ and the church harm your family? Every pastor and committed Christian worker must be careful about this, it is true. But for every Christian leader who works too hard, there are many more who do way too little.

Once I returned home from several days of public ministry. Saddened that I was going to have to leave again the next day, I was lamenting the whole thing before my wife and young son. After listening to my whining, my son approached me with these words: "Daddy, you have to go for three reasons:

First, God told you to; second, you get presents [meaning that sometimes generous churches would send something back to the kids]; and third, people need to hear what you have to say." Not bad advice for a nine year-old.

I shut up, realizing that my son was not harmed by my hard work. In fact, I think it has been extremely important for my kids to see a dad who believes what he preaches and is willing to labor to get the message out. Soon my kids began helping me in the ministry, and loving it. I worked hard to include them.

Veteran pastor Vernon Higham said this about revival leaders in Wales: "Labor for God was to be respected rather than despised."

Spurgeon stated that he believed in Adam Clark's adage: "Kill yourself with labor, and then pray yourself alive again."

I know that Spurgeon died as a young man. He wore himself out with his labors. But would we have it any other way?

"If I have any message to give from my own bed of sickness, it would be this—if you do not wish to be full of regrets when you are obliged to lie still, work while you can. If you desire to make a sick bed as soft as it can be, do not stuff it with mournful reflections that you wasted time while you were in health and strength. People said to me years ago, 'You will break your constitution down with preaching ten times a week,' and the like. Well, if I have done so I am glad of it. I would do the same again. If I had fifty constitutions I would rejoice to break them down in the service of the Lord Jesus Christ. You young men that are strong, overcome the wicked one and fight for the Lord while you can. You will never regret having done all that lies in you for our blessed Lord and master. Crowd as much as you can into every day, and postpone no work till tomorrow. 'Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with all thy might.'"

"But by the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace toward me did not prove vain; but I labored even more than all of them, yet not I, but the grace of God with me." 1 Corinthians 15:10

Spurgeon quotes from *Quoting Spurgeon*, Anthony J. Ruspantini (Baker: Grand Rapids, 1993)

Copyright © 2008 Jim Elliff Permission granted for reproduction in exact form. All other uses require written permission. Find more free articles at www.BulletinInserts.org, a ministry of Christian Communicators Worldwide: www.CCWtoday.org