

Lives Worth Imitating – A.W. Tozer

August 24, 2019

Good morning. It's good to be back with you this morning. For the past two weeks J.J. has preached and did an excellent job covering Dietrich Bonhoeffer and Mother Teresa, while I was consumed with camp things. I had a great time at two camps a week ago. 70 5th-6th graders, of which 67 of them were wonderful. And then ManCamp, at which both Randy and Wayne joined me for.

This morning I want to talk about the life of A.W. Tozer. In contrast to many other people we've preached about there's nothing awe inspiring about his life, but his teachings and writings continue to inspire people every day. In my research I discovered a book edited by Lauren Barlow of the Christian singing group: Barlow Girls, in which she has 50 artists and ministers who recount sayings of Tozer that have inspired them. It's called **"Inspired by Tozer"**. It's a very good read.

The Life of A.W. Tozer

- Aiden Wilson Tozer was born April 21, 1897 and died May 12, 1963.
- Tozer was born on a small farm in the mountainous region of western Pennsylvania. When he was 15 a fire destroyed the family house and all its furnishings. Tozer's father suffered a nervous breakdown, and in 1912 the family traded the grinding poverty of Pennsylvania and moved to Akron, Ohio.
- While living and working in Akron, he got very acquainted with the public library and read constantly.
- The Tozers were not church-going people.
- Just before his 17th birthday, Tozer heard a street preacher on a corner in Akron, Ohio, as he walked home from his job at a rubber factory. The preacher shouted, **"If you don't know how to be saved just call on God, saying, 'Lord, be merciful to me a sinner.'"** Upon arriving home, he went up into an attic where he called upon God. He emerged a follower of Jesus Christ.
- He soon found a church and developed friendships and mentors within this church. The pastor tutored Tozer in Scripture and doctrine and trained him in the art of street preaching. A laywoman, Mrs. Kate Pfautz, also took Tozer under her tutelage and led him to a robust view of the Holy Spirit and introduced him to books by some of the great Christian mystics. She also helped find meeting halls and homes where he could preach, and also introduced him to her daughter, Ada, who would become his wife, in 1918. They ended up having 7 children: 6 boys and 1 girl.
- In 1920 he was ordained and he soon accepted calls to pastor Christian Missionary Alliance churches in West Virginia, Ohio, and Indiana. In 1928 he accepted a call the Southside CMA Church in Chicago where he stayed 31 years. During that time the congregation grew from 80 to 800.
- At least 5 days a week, for most of each day, he spent in study, private worship, and prayer – much of it listening to the Holy Spirit. He sang hymns of praise on his knees and frequently fell flat on his face on the floor to pray. He sought to be in the Lords' presence every day.
- He lived a life of radical obedience to the Lord.
- He earned the reputation of a 20th century prophet, crying out for the church to shun materialism, consumerism, and ministry through entertainment. He maintained that the Gospel had been cheapened by hustlers in pulpits who were entertainers rather than prophets.

- He spoke often against the growing trend of churches being run by business models rather than biblical principles.
- He was greatly concerned that many Christians possess a head knowledge of Jesus Christ but have no intimate heart knowledge of Him and thus became very controversial and not very popular with many people.
- He and his wife never owned a car, preferring bus and train travel. Even after becoming a well-known Christian author, he signed away much of his royalties to those who were in need.
- In 1950 Tozer was elected editor of the Alliance Weekly, a CMA newspaper. The circulation doubled almost immediately.
- Tozer was a voracious reader. He read the great classics in religion, philosophy, literature, poetry, the church fathers and Christian mystics. But most of all he read and meditated on the Bible. He never read a book merely to say he had read it. Always reading a book was to lead him on in his quest for God. He often taught that **a person should think 10 times more than you read.**
- In his daily walk and ministry Tozer had a sense of God that enveloped him in reverence and adoration. His one daily exercise was the practice of the presence of God, pursuing Him with all his strength and energy. To him, Jesus Christ was a daily wonder, a recurring astonishment, a continual amazement of love and grace. Toward the end of his life Tozer remarked, ***"I have found God to be cordial and generous and in every way easy to live with."***
- Prayer was of vital importance for Tozer. His writings and preaching were but extensions of his prayer life. He often said, *"As a man prayed so is he."* To him the worship of God was paramount in his life and ministry. He believed that true service would flow out of pure worship.
- At the time of his death, he had written 9 books; two of which became classics: ***The Pursuit of God*** and ***The Knowledge of the Holy***. Since his death 40 books have been compiled from his other writings. The very first line in *The Knowledge of the Holy* is one of his greatest lines. ***"What comes into our minds when we think about God is the most important thing about us."***
- He was buried in Ellet cemetery, Akron, Ohio, with a simple epitaph marking his grave: ***"A.W. Tozer - A Man of God"***

Pursuit of God: Each chapter ends with a beautiful prayer, which would be worth the book price.

1. Following Hard After God

Tozer writes that deep study of God's Word is deeply important in churches and in individual Christians lives. But learning God's Word should never be the ultimate goal. The ultimate goal must be leading us deeper into a relationship with God.

The Bible is not an end in itself, but a means to bring men to an intimate and satisfying knowledge of God, that they may enter into Him, that they may delight in His Presence, may taste and know the inner sweetness of the very God Himself in the core and center of their hearts.

Entering into a relationship with God was never initiated by us. God is always the initiator and we're responders.

The impulse to pursue God originates with God, but the outworking of that impulse is our following hard after Him.

2. The Blessedness of Possessing Nothing

Matthew 5:3 (NIV) *"Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."*

God's gifts now take the place of God, and the whole course of nature is upset by the monstrous substitution.

In this chapter he refers to **God's ask of Abraham to offer up his only son, the son that he loved, to God.** And Abraham didn't hesitate in his response to this ask. And Tozer believes that God asked Abraham to do this so that his heart might be totally purified from anything that might be a rival to his love for God. And the challenge goes out to each of us - what is it that is a rival to God in our hearts. Is it comfort, safety, family members, our health, how others perceive us, possessions etc.

3. Removing the Veil

He quotes **Hebrews 10:19** which states that because of Jesus' death on the cross we have an invitation to come into God's holy presence - so let's go in. It's our right and privilege. But many Christians stand outside and never enter in. Tozer would daily picture himself sitting in the throne room of God gazing at His magnificent glory and be caught up into this incredible privilege he had.

God wills that we should push on into His Presence and live our whole life there.

He waits to show Himself in ravishing fullness to the humble of soul and the pure in heart.

4. Apprehending God

The Bible teaches us that we can know God as intimately as we can know any human being here on this earth.

As we begin to focus upon God the things of the spirit will take shape before our inner eyes. Obedience to the word of Christ will bring an inward revelation of the Godhead (John 14:21-23). It will give acute perception enabling us to see God even as is promised to the pure in heart. A new God consciousness will seize upon us and we shall begin to taste and hear and inwardly feel the God who is our life and our all.

5. The Universal Presence

God is not out in the remote distance of the universe somewhere hiding waiting to be found. He is right here, next to you and in fact inside of you through the living breathing presence of the Holy Spirit. The key to going deeper in your relationship with God is receptivity to what the Spirit is trying to tell you and show you. The Spirit is given to us to show us Jesus and draw us deeper into a relationship with Him.

Prayer: *O God and Father, I repent of my sinful preoccupation with visible things. The world has been too much with me. Thou hast been here and I knew it not. I have been blind to Thy Presence. Open my eyes that I may behold Thee in and around me. For Christ's sake, Amen.*

6. The Speaking Voice

I believe that much of our religious unbelief is due to a wrong conception of and a wrong feeling for the Scriptures of Truth. A silent God suddenly began to speak in a book and when the book was finished lapsed back into silence again forever. Now we read the book as the record of what God said when He was for a brief time in a speaking mood. With notions like that in our heads how can we believe?

Tozer committed as much time to listening to God's voice through His Word as he study of it.

7. The Gaze of the Soul – Looking to Jesus

Believing is directing the heart's attention to Jesus. It is lifting the mind to "behold the Lamb of God," and never ceasing that beholding for the rest of our lives.

And the beauty of beholding Jesus is that you don't need any special equipment, or skill, or a special place or time – you can do this wherever you are, all day long.

When the eyes of the soul looking out meet the eyes of God looking in, heaven has begun right here on this earth.

8. Restoring the Creator – Creature Relationship

Psalms 57:5 (NIV) *Be exalted, O God, above the heavens; let your glory be over all the earth.*

God's desire is that each of us might make a conscious decision to exalt God over all else. That this might become the daily cry of our hearts.

9. Meekness and Rest

Matthew 5:5 (NIV) *Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth.*

Matthew 11:28-30 (NIV) *"Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light."*

He talks about how entering into an abiding relationship with Jesus frees us from such things as:

- **the burden of pride** (which is easily offended when someone hurts us by not treating us like we think they should),
- **the burden of pretense** (to try to impress people with who we are, or pretend to be)
- **the burden of artificiality** (when we humbly kneel at Jesus' feet we won't care what others think of us so long as God is pleased with us.

10. The Sacrament of Living

1 Corinthians 10:31 (NIV) *So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God.*

We often divide our lives into two areas: the **sacred** and the **secular**. Those are artificial and never meant to be divided. We must offer all of our lives and acts and thoughts and emotions to God daily.

*We can meet this successfully only by the exercise of an aggressive faith. We must offer all our acts to God and believe that He accepts them. Then hold firmly to that position and keep insisting that every act of every hour of the day and night be included in the transaction. Keep reminding God in our times of private prayer that we mean every act for His glory; then supplement those times by **a thousand thought-prayers** as we go about the job of living.*

Closing prayer:

Prayer: *O God, I have tasted Thy goodness, and it has both satisfied me and made me thirsty for more. I am painfully conscious of my need of further grace. I am ashamed of my lack of desire. O God, the Triune God, I want to want Thee; I long to be filled with longing; I thirst to be made more thirsty still. Show me Thy glory, I pray Thee, so that I may know Thee indeed. Begin in mercy a new work of love within me. Say to my soul, "Rise up, my love, my fair one, and come away." Then give me grace to rise and follow Thee up from this misty lowland where I have wandered so long. In Jesus' Name, Amen.*

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- Became a Christian at age _____
- Married _____ Pfautz and had _____ children
- 1920 he was ordained in the _____
- _____ and _____ marked his life
- He challenged the church to _____
- He was concerned with Christians having only _____ knowledge about Jesus.
- Everything Tozer did was an extension of _____

Pursuit of God summary:

Chapter 1: Following _____ After God

Chapter 2: The Blessedness of _____ Nothing

Chapter 3: Removing the _____

Chapter 4: A _____ God

Chapter 5: The Universal P _____

Chapter 6: The S _____ Voice

Chapter 7: The G _____ of the Soul: Looking to Jesus

Chapter 8: Restoring the Creator – c _____ relationship

Chapter 9: M _____ and R _____

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