

Windows of Witness (Acts 4:20)
(John Henry Jowett)

50 People Every Christian Should Know (Warren W. Wiersbe)

It is again my great privilege, to share a glimpse from the life of a man who was instrumentally used in service to God. The stories of those who have lived before us are sources of encouragement for our present walk with God. May our Sovereign Lord be pleased to raise up individuals in this day to serve for the glory of His name.

“The greatest preacher in the world!” This is how John Henry Jowett was introduced by the American press as he moved from England and began his ministry at the prestigious Fifth Avenue Presbyterian Church in New York City in 1911.

John Henry Jowett 1864-1923 was born into a middle-class Christian family where he grew up in Halifax, Yorkshire. Jowett had planned to be a lawyer and even possibly enter into politics. Our Lord, however, had other plans for Jowett’s life. The Lord used the influence of his godly home, pastor and church. In fact in Jowett’s words, “At my mother’s knee I gained my sweetest inspirations,” alluding to her faithfulness in sharing with him the Word of God. Jowett also pointed to the preaching of his boyhood pastor, to whom he “listened attentively”. When Jowett later began preaching he admittedly modeled his own preaching after that of his pastor, saying, “He was the finest platform orator it was ever my fortune to hear...Square Church was to me a very fountain of life, and I owe to its spiritual training more than I can ever express.”

As a pastor in New York City, Jowett despised anything that smacked of self promotion. He “never quite adjusted to the American system of ballyhoo.” New York City, was however; desperately in need of solid biblical preaching. In a letter written to a close friend Jowett penned, “What a time this is for the preacher...(where the congregation is) tense, strained, burdened, wanting some glimpse of spiritual things amid this riot of material things, and yearning for a glimpse of the things which abide in all the fierce rush of things which are transient.” (Wow, imagine if he could see America now...)

As a pastor myself, there are a couple of quotes from John Henry Jowett that I love to read personally for my own edification. Jowett said, “Preaching that costs nothing accomplishes nothing.” He said “Preaching is not easy...it costs blood...no one can attend to the deep wants of a church if he is running all over the country.” He constantly battled the subtle thieves that would steal his devotional time. After such a stern charge he followed it by saying, “I love my calling, I have a glowing delight in its service...”. I simply would add, Amen!

I pray for God to ignite such love and desire in us, for our Lord, for His WORD and His WORK!

~ Pastor Tim Hodge