

Preaching the Gospel

A monthly magazine for preachers and those who want to preach.

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GETTING SUPPORT TO PREACH

Les Maydell, Modimolle, South Africa

Would you like to be supported to preach, partly or full-time? These are some things you need to be doing NOW so that one day the brethren will have the confidence to support you.

1. Have a good reputation where you are, Acts 16:1-2. In order to be well-spoken of by brethren you will need to have a good moral character: to be honest, sexually pure, dependable, faithful, knowledgeable about God's word, and hard-working. A preacher must have the self-discipline necessary to work "as to the Lord" (Col.3:23). He must do the Lord's work without anyone standing over him and pushing him. A good reputation is something that is built over time. Do not expect brethren to support you until you prove yourself worthy over time.

2. Have the support of your family. Do not expect churches to support you if your wife is not a faithful Christian (1 Cor.9:5) or if your children that are still living under your roof are sexually impure, or if your family is a bad example in any way, 1 Tim.4:12. Just as people will despise a man who is not what he ought to be, so they will despise a man whose family is not the example they should be.

3. Develop a good knowledge of God's word (doctrine), and be a person who is continually studying and growing in this area, 1 Tim.4:12-16.

4. Develop the ability to rebuke, reprove, correct, instruct in righteousness and exhort, 2 Tim.3:16 - 4:2. Have an attitude of humility so that you are able to do this in a patient, non-contentious way, 2 Tim.2:24-25.

5. Prove yourself capable of doing the job. Barnabas and Saul proved themselves trustworthy, capable servants of God *before* the Holy Spirit commanded the church at Antioch to send them out (supporting them), Acts 11:29-30, 12:25, 13:1-3.

6. Jesus called His apostles when they were busy working at other jobs. Do not expect to be supported to preach because you are unemployed!

7. Be willing to preach without financial reward, 1 Tim.6:8-11. Express your desire to be supported to preach, but do not let lack of support keep you from preaching! If you do good work, and you preach because it is like fire in your bones (Jer.20:9), the Lord will see to it that you get what He feels you need to carry on your work, 2 Cor.9:8.

8. Do not expect other churches to allow themselves to be robbed when the local church is capable of supporting you, 2 Cor.8:13. Even if the local congregation cannot support you

totally, they should be willing to contribute *something* towards your support. If you cannot convince the people who really know you that you are worthy of support, why should others support you?

9. Be willing to sacrifice – financially, physically, and emotionally to prove to others that you are really serious about preaching, 2 Tim.2:3. Every good preacher and his family *will* endure hardship, even if they have adequate support. Notice in 2 Cor.6:4-5 that some of the hardships are due to persecution (stripes, imprisonments, tumults). However, some are simply due to circumstances that befall all preachers (tribulations, needs, distresses) and some are due simply to the fact that the preacher is doing his job! (Labors, sleeplessness, fastings)

10. If you are getting some support from the brethren where you are, but need to write letters to ask for additional support, send references that potential supporters can contact to hear what kind of person you are and the work you do. Send the names, addresses and/or phone numbers of respected brethren who know you well, especially from your home congregation, Acts 18:27, Col.4:7-11, Rom.16:1-2. Local brethren should not recommend you if you are not working hard, if your manner of life is not Christ-like, or if you are living a life-style above the rest of the congregation.

11. Send/give reports of your work to those who are interested, and, if you do get support, faithfully send reports of your work to them, Acts 14:27.

12. Above all, have a sincere love in your heart for the brethren and for the lost, 2 Cor.6:6, 11:28-29, 12:15; 1 Thess.2:7-9. When you are busy from house to house, helping brethren with their spiritual needs and winning the lost to Christ, the brethren and new converts will be encouraged to support you from their grateful hearts. (Phil.4:10,16,18)

SOUND DOCTRINE PRODUCES SOUND CHURCHES DEMANDING SOUND DOCTRINE

Edward O. Bragwell Sr.

"I charge you therefore before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, who will judge the living and the dead at His appearing and His kingdom: Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables."-- 2 Timothy 4:1-4.

A local church is going to be about as strong and sound as the preaching it receives and is willing to endure and support. Paul's solemn charge to Timothy had a sense of urgency about it. Preach the word now, while brethren will endure it, or face a time when they will not.

For several years this writer has been paying particular attention as seasoned brethren (preachers and otherwise) express their concerns about the churches of today. The one dominant concern seems to be the caliber of preaching coming from our pulpits of late. As one old soldier of the cross expressed it to me, "I am getting tired of going to gospel meetings and hearing `fluff'." He went on to explain what he meant by "fluff." Preaching that contained very little real Bible teaching.

Brethren, strong congregations cannot be built and maintained on "fluff." Did you ever buy cotton candy? Then you know what "fluff" is. I remember, as a youngster, that I would spend my dime on a huge stick of it at the county fair. It was spun and displayed so as to make me

think that I was getting a lot more for my money than I was. I soon learned that I had bought mostly fluff--very little candy inflated with a lot of air.

The sad thing about it all is that many churches had rather have "fluff" than real spiritual food. As long as churches demand it, there will be those who are willing to be paid to spin it out for them.

Sermons and classes with real doctrinal content are held in disfavor by many of today's churches. The demand is for more "relevant"(?) matters. Themes more suited for psychologists and sociologists are replacing basic Bible topics. Topics that address so-called "real problems" and "real life concerns" of "today's Christian" are replacing those that deal with what the Book says about man's basic spiritual problem, sin; and his real basic needs--conviction of sin and the salvation of his soul. Lectures aimed more at enhancing man's present happiness and welfare than ensuring his eternal well-being are by far the most widely received. Preachers that entertain and make brethren feel good about themselves, rather than producing godly sorrow leading to repentance or any real depth of scriptural knowledge, are given the most favored status among brethren. Sermons that really teach the Bible are considered, "uninteresting", "too-structured" and even "crude" by some. All too often preachers who resort to such are asked to find some place else to do their preaching. We have observed a rash of this lately.

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Subjects more suitable for a civic club seminar than for a gospel meeting are commonly announced. Sunday after Sunday, if what I hear is accurate, talks that would be

welcomed in any denominational church in town are passed off as gospel sermons. Unfortunately, as the title of the old country song put it, "*What Lola Wants Lola Gets?*"

So, all too often, preachers and elders bow to the pressure of those who want this "fluff." We know a good preacher, who is capable of making Bible studies interesting, who began a study of Isaiah (with its emphasis on the Messianic prophecies) for a college-age class. There was so much opposition to it by some members of the class that the elders saw fit to set up an alternate class--so that those who wanted to could study something more "interesting" and "relevant." As my daddy used to say, "Now isn't that a pretty come-off?"

A congregation constantly fed on "fluff" will not develop an appetite for sound doctrine. Any who may have had an appetite will soon lose it. Without a desire for sound doctrine churches are vulnerable to all kinds of fables.

Neither motivational hype nor emotional manipulation is gospel preaching. Such may produce increased activity of a sort. It may even build and inspire audiences after a fashion. It may enhance the speaker's standing with brethren as a dynamic speaker. But, it will not produce a well-grounded faith based upon a "thus saith the Lord."

Brethren, our preaching must follow the pattern that Paul outlined to Timothy. In form, it must have a well-rounded combination of convincing (reproving--KJV), rebuking and exhorting (or encouraging). In substance, it must have teaching (doctrine) at the base. It is no accident that Paul, in the preceding chapter, shows the Scriptures to be profitable for doctrine, reproof, correction, and instruction in righteousness (**2 Tim. 3:16**).

Book, chapter, and verse preaching/teaching that quotes or reads scriptures and then makes clear applications of the reading seldom sweeps folks along on clouds of ecstasy. Nor does it flow quite as smoothly as Dale Carnegie trained orations. Nor is it likely to make folks jump up and down with uncontrollable joy nor roll in the aisles with laughter. It will likely cause them to mostly sit and ponder on the validity of the message--comparing it with the Scriptures before them. Once convicted of the validity of the message, they will then be motivated to act with both an intelligent and emotional response to the great message preached. They are then moved by the power of the gospel preached more than the charismatic personal power of the preacher/teacher or dynamic qualities of his delivery.

We need preachers who will preach it just like Paul and other inspired men wrote it. Preachers who will preach the word in season and out, without regard to whether churches will endure and support it.

We need churches who not only *endure* sound doctrine, but *demand* it of those they support in local work, in gospel meetings and throughout the world. Unless we have this we will continue seeing churches slide toward religious error and philosophical foolishness and away from the sound doctrine based on "what saith the Scriptures."

To receive two excellent audio sermons in MP3 format by Bro. Bragwell on the subject of the role of government and community in marriages and divorces, request them by email from me—PKW.

Re: How long did Noah have to build the ark? I received this from my son, Kenneth: I understood what he meant about Shem's age. In the past I have read at least one commentary that pointed that out that fact and observed that Noah had to act in faith, building rooms for his sons who were not even born yet. But I do not think that is a necessary inference. I think it is far more likely that God gave Noah instructions throughout the 120 years and Moses summarized them into the one speech that is recorded in Genesis 6. There are certainly places in the gospels where you can prove that sort of thing was done. The most natural way to understand Genesis 6 is to understand that 120 years before the flood God announced just how angry He was with men and then told Noah to start building the ark. If you do not think the 120 years has that meaning, then what else can it mean? About all I can think of is that God announced to Himself that He was giving men 120 years. That would certainly be strange.

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Be sure to look at my new website dealing with the head coverings of 1 Corinthians 11. Its address is: www.headcoverings.org. (Remember to type "org" at the end.)