

Preaching the Gospel

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

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SO YOU WANT TO BE A PREACHER?

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Preaching is a life of serving

A preacher is often called a “minister.” That is an apt term, and is the word oft used in the Scriptures to describe both spiritual and physical service. “...*the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many*” (Matt. 20:28). There were certain women “*who, when he was in Galilee, followed him, and ministered unto him; and many other women that came up with him unto Jerusalem*” (Mark 15:41). In these two passages, we have both spiritual and physical service under consideration.

I have discussed much of the spiritual ministering under the topic of teaching. What about the physical side? There are many situations where a preacher is called upon to be a servant. Sometimes this is abused, as some members look upon the preacher as the “gofer” guy. He is the one called upon to run (“go for”) all sorts of errands for the members.

While the concept of “ministering” can be abused, the preacher must also recognize there are genuine needs that he can fill when others are not available. By the fact that he is not tied down to a 9 to 5 clock, he may be called upon to take someone to the doctor. And there are other situations when both a spiritual and physical need may be combined. I once was called at 2 or 3 a.m. to go get a young man and take him to the hospital. He had tried to commit suicide and needed to be admitted to the psychiatric ward of a hospital. That trip entailed some 90 miles altogether. Not only did he need hospital care, but he needed someone with whom to have a conversation about some serious spiritual concerns.

Do you enjoy visiting hospitals? That may not be the most pleasant task—to be around sick and dying people. I do not suggest that visiting hospitals is *the preacher’s* job. All Christians share the same responsibility to visit the sick and give aid and encouragement. But once again, by reason of having time available, preachers often may be able to go when others cannot. And who knows what may be accomplished by such visits?

Once I was talking with a young woman we had converted. Her father was dying of cancer. I asked if he would talk to me. She asked, and he agreed. Coincidentally, he was on the same hospital floor where his daughter Jennifer worked. We had a pleasant visit, and I elicited from him the fact that he was not ready to die. He was a Baptist in his youth, but had not practiced religion for some time. We talked about the plan of salvation. The room began to be filled with nurses and family. I said I would be back. Two days later I came to talk with him. He said, “Preacher, I don’t know you very well, but I would like for you to say a few words at my funeral.” I said I would be glad to do so, but I would also like to say something at his new birth. “OK,” he said, “I’m ready.” We made arrangements to baptize him in a pool in the rehab

unit Friday at 11 a.m. He died the next day at noon. That was not the first time I had baptized someone in such a circumstance.

How often have you driven 100 miles round-trip to pick someone up for services? Or 50 miles? On more than one occasion I have regularly gone to pick up people who lived a good distance away. Sometimes others would offer to help, but it was usually my job. Was it sometimes inconvenient? Yes. But I suspect our Lord and the apostles also encountered some inconvenience on more than one occasion. Did you ever sit up all night with a sick child in the hospital so the parents could get some rest? Do you visit the aged and shut-ins?

Have you ever mowed a sick person's yard? Have you had Bible studies in a jail? Have you gone to the jail to see a member's son? One preacher told the congregation that if their son ended up in jail, they were not to call him. I guess he failed to see the word "service" in his job description.

Gospel Sermon Preparation and Delivery Advice (especially for new speakers)

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1. Before any attempt to speak in public, unless in a training class, one needs to "sit at the feet" of Jesus, Paul, Peter, John, etc., for some time and learn from them (See Luke 10:39; Acts 2:42; James 3:1; Hebrews 5:12).
2. Also, it would be good for you to be taught by "faithful men" (See 2 Tim. 2:2); even by a located evangelist with some experience, consistency and organization in his teaching. (One of the problems with a "mutual ministry" concept is that there is little balance and consistency with the teaching program). [The term "mutual ministry" is used to describe a system when all, or most, of the men in the congregation take turns preaching. PKW]
3. Prepare well. Like a good cup of tea, your sermon is much better when it has time to steep. If you can't take the time to prepare, you have not earned the right to speak or to take the time of the audience.
4. First write out rough notes and then add more thoughts to those notes over the steeping period (this might even take few weeks).
5. When you think the lesson is pretty well steeped, put it in a more formal outline with points and spaces (your notes will be easier to pick out).
6. Choose a certain topic and stick with it. There will be other times to speak on other topics. In other words, don't ramble all over the place.
7. Choose a simple topic that you know quite well or that you will take the time to research. To know your topic well and to prepare an intelligent, organized lesson will require you to use a Bible, a concordance, a Bible dictionary, and to put in a lot of study.
8. Chose a subject that, if possible, you might be able to give a couple of personal short stories about (this may not always be possible to do).
9. Give an illustration or two somewhere in your material (this may not always be possible to do; but try).
10. Don't choose a subject that is "over your head." Rather, prepare and then present simple lessons. Don't try to be novel!
11. As a new speaker on any subject don't speak too long: 15 or 20 minutes is usually enough. (As you become a more accomplished speaker, the length of the sermon can be expanded somewhat).
12. A speaker's audience is a captive audience, don't take advantage of it (like "This is the word of God I am speaking...you will have to listen till I am finished!")
13. Don't think that you have to speak till you fill out the full hour/time.

14. Realize that you cannot give the audience all the Bible at once (there will be other times to speak, even on the same subject).

15. Don't use more than one or two scriptures to make a point. A few select scriptures are often better than a dozen.

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16. "Preach the word" (See 2 Timothy 4:2).

17. And preach nothing but the word (See 1 Corinthians 3:1-2).

18. Be confident, but not arrogant.

19. Speak with conviction on the subject you have chosen (Acts 4:13).

20. Preach your lesson as though the audience had never heard it before.

21. Don't choose lessons which belittle or unfairly criticize the church. (Young speakers often seem to think they know exactly how everything should be.)

22. Speak, as it has been said, "when you have something to say; not because you want to say something."

23. Always "speak...the truth in love" (Ephesians 4:15); not with harshness or sarcasm.

24. Don't let your voice trail off. If it is important enough to say, say it loud enough so that all can hear. On the other hand, there is

no need to shout.

25. Speak with a certain amount of authority and boldness (Acts 4:13; Ephesians 6:19; Matthew 7: 28-29), but don't give your opinions.

26. Use fitting hand and body gestures but do not flail the arms or rock the body or pace back and forth (this is distracting and unnecessary).

27. Learn to use some fluctuation in your voice (see Galatians 4:20). Learn to pause when appropriate, etc., to add emphasis.

28. As your confidence grows, work on giving some eye contact (Mark 3:5).

29. Any love for speaking to an audience must be motivated only by a love to declare the truth (see John 8:32) and a love to reach souls (see 2 Corinthians 5:14), and not because we love to be before an audience.

30. Realize that it is a great honour and a wonderful privilege to address an audience (you owe the audience everything).

31. You might like to put tabs in your Bible for the verses that you have chosen or fold over the corner of the pages. This adds confidence and helps relieve any nervousness.

32. Don't look for praise after you speak; if it comes don't let it go to your head.

33. Dress with dignity and speak with reverence; remember, you are a messenger of the King of kings and Lord of lords.

33. Finally, good speakers "stand up, speak up and shut up."

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Searching the Internet

Searching the internet is an essential skill for everyone these days, including preachers. We have to stay up-to-date with the latest in false teaching and what others are saying about those teachings.

I remember when I was called on to teach a class about Methodism. I studied several library books which the Methodists had written about their teachings and beliefs. I thought I had a good idea of what the Methodists believed. But after I finished explaining what they believe, an older man corrected me. “No, you are wrong. Methodists don’t believe anything anymore.” He was right.

Books are wonderful, but they get out of date quickly. The internet also has a lot of out-of-date information, but it has up-to-date information too. You have to check the source of what you are reading to know how good it is.

If you search Google for “Calvinism”, the first result is from Wikipedia. Wikipedia is an online encyclopedia which generally has useful information. The problem with Wikipedia is that anyone can edit the entries, so depending on who edits the article, it may be colored one way or another. Check for sources at the bottom to see how authoritative the article is, and read it with caution. The article on Calvinism (at the time I read it) is actually pretty good. At the bottom of the article, you can find links to other good websites about Calvinism.

The second result under “Calvinism” in Google is from spurgeon.org which is primarily an archive for historical documents on Calvinism from Charles Spurgeon and others. The article Google links to is one by R. L. Dabney and at the top it tells us that this is an old article. So while it can give us insight into where modern Calvinist thinking comes from, you cannot be sure that this agrees with the current thinking by most Calvinists.

The fifth result is from Bible.ca which is run by our brother, Steve Rudd. He has some good material to combat the doctrine, although as always you should be careful when you use someone else’s material. I do not believe that all of his points are valid when discussing with a modern Calvinist.

The best resources I found for up-to-date thinking by Calvinists were blogs that some of them run. A blog is a website that is updated regularly with new thoughts and information and usually has visitors to the site commenting about what is written. You can find debates among them on limited atonement and other topics that not all modern Calvinists accept or think of the same way. This is very valuable if you are planning to discuss Calvinism with someone who has grown up being taught about it and arguing about these things with his peers. It helps you to get inside his mind. This is much better than only studying a book or two on the subject. Learn to use the internet wisely and it can really help you to help others.

The Websites of Paul Williams: www.knowyourbible.co.za; www.headcoverings.org