

The Servant



Newsletter for Under-Shepherds and other Servants of God /5523 Newberry Drive/Raleigh, NC 27609

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The purpose of this newsletter is to pass along information and ideas to help the Lord's servants as they minister to others. Feel free to use any of it in your ministry.

Preaching Opportunities


The Microphone, instead of magnifying the voice of the Church, more often minimizes it. Many men have mistaken the microphone for the ministry. The first century church did not have that problem. While the first churches had no electricity they had plenty of power and no shortage of outlets. The meeting place is not the only place we minister. Today, busy church calendars can place Christians in bondage. Overly heavy schedules can be heavy burdens. It is easy to become incarcerated by over commitment to too many church programs. Our commitment should be to a Person, to Jesus. Where is the Moses who will plead God's cause saying "Let my People go." Today the church does a lot of sitting around. Back then, in the New Testament Church, they needed no license from men, only a love for men and God that made them go.

God has equipped His church with gifts for the work of the ministry. It is true that the early church had gifted men, but God's gifts come from God. It had men who were given a gift and calling of God to preach and teach God's word, but in the early church every member was a minister. The early church did not spend as much time listening as it did living. There were no schools for missionaries or "rookie" camps needed. In those days being a missionary was as simple as telling the next person you met about Jesus.


Peter never went to preacher school. I can't say the same about Paul. While we know that he sat in Gamaliel's class, we have no transcript to show he ever studied homiletics. While some said his speech was "contemptible," he was God's gift to the church. He was God's servant. I am sure Paul, like Peter, could not help but speak the things he had seen and heard. I don't mean to be disrespectful to the dear elder who offered a solution to the palsied preaching he had been hearing of late, but Toast Masters is not the ticket. Remember, while God knew Aaron was the "good speaker,"

he chose Moses (Ex. 4:14). The Apostles, like Jeremiah had "a fire in [their] bones." May our assemblies know again that fire.

If young men would worry less about being "scheduled to speak" and more about speaking Christ at every crossing, not only would they find opportunities abound, but in seizing the opportunity no lack of gift will be found.

At the assembly there may be only one microphone, but there are a million needs that cry out for attention. He that is faithful in little things will find that God will give him opportunity to be faithful in much. 

Show and Tell

The Gospel of Luke was about "all Jesus began both to do and teach" Acts. 1:1. It was show and tell. The "doing" and the "teaching" went together. The best teacher is often an example. The early church was not just Academics it was also Acts. Doctrine is important, very important. But doctrine must be manifest in the doing. And they continued "in the apostle's doctrine..." The great commission charges teachers with the awesome responsibility of "teaching them to observe all things I have commanded..." "To observe" means "to do." Like the admonition of the modern soft drink, we need to be encouraged not to "Do the Dew," but "Do the Do." 

Teach Me, Lord

*Lord, you know I want to learn
From every single page I turn
What is Thy special will for me
As in thy Word I look for Thee.
And if I hear Thy voice today
I promise Lord I will obey*

Preaching Ministry

Deadly Sins

1. Teaching Man's word as God's. (Mt. 15:9)

We all have our heroes. Every group has its leaders. Certain men have a "way with words," and what they say always sounds good. The Hebrews had their champions. There was Moses and then there was Maimonides. The words of Moses and the words of Maimonides and the words of God are not equal. We need to distinguish between good words and God's words. Only God's word is forever. Not everything Moses said was God's Word even when it is recorded in God's Word. Even Peter was so impressed with the sight of Moses and Elijah on the mount that he wanted to make a trinity of booths. In a word he did not lift men up as much as he made Jesus lower. In any given group one hears certain men's names repeated often. Many preachers are only as good as the last good book that they read. Some reach for their favorite modern author, others for an ancient one. Be careful! A good book is never to be a substitute for the Good Book.

2. Being a Well without Water. (2 Pet. 2:17; Lk. 11:11)

Empty words do no one any good. A thirsty soul needs spiritual water. We have all had the sad experience of listening to some "dry" sermonizing where we have been left somewhat parched. Filling the minutes is not the same as filling the soul. Sometimes the well is deep (as the woman of Samaria knew) and we need something to draw with, but no amount of rope will help if there is nothing there when we get to the bottom of the thing. Even the beggar, at the Beautiful Gate, seeing Peter and John going to the Temple, expected to receive something. The Spirit-led preacher knows there is sometimes a difference between what they need and what they want.

Give them what they need and let God deal with what they want.

3. Handling the Word of God Deceitfully. (2 Cor. 4:2; 2 Pet 3:16).

Using God's words to get people to do what we want them to do is outrageous. Beware the topical sermon. A good one can be lovely, but a bad one can be libel. It is not a good idea to start with an idea. Start with a text. If a topic springs to life from the text, then follow it as it flows, and go where it takes you. Be careful however, when you start with a topic and must search "high and low" for a text. That is you working, not God. When the preacher begins with some "intention" his sermon is likely to be his own "invention." God can not be well pleased with such woeful workmanship. Every cult began when some willful man handled the Word of God deceitfully.

4. Hobbies (Acts 20:27).

If you have hobbies (games you like to play, or things that tend to amuse you) keep them away from the sacred work of preaching. And don't turn a particular doctrine or truth into a hobby. As we all have favorite authors we also have favorite subjects. A mature and spiritual preacher serves meat with the milk. Some who have the gift of mercy can preach nothing else. Some prophets are always on Patmos. Good preaching is balanced preaching. My mother made sure I ate my brussels sprouts. They were not my favorite. She was wiser than me.

5. Too Much Self. (2 Cor. 4:5; 1 Cor. 1:23; Jn. 3:30).

This is a hard one. Like each evangelist and Gospel we leave our fingerprints on the text we touch. I preach it differently than you teach it, that is in style not substance. God has ordained that living men preach His Word. Young men too often, have not yet had to live what they preach. This is not to say they should not preach it. They should and must, but we can all tell if the man preaching about Gethsemane has been to Gethsemane

(and by this we don't mean his last trip to the Holy Land). Preach Jesus!

Two witnesses will see the same accident from just a little different perspective, and so it must be unless there has been some sort of collusion. There must be just enough of self to lend credence to the testimony. Too much of our experience, or family, or last vacation is too much, at least too much when Greeks have come saying "sir, we would see Jesus." And when we teach we should try to be more clear than clever. Some so intent on "alliteration" end up with "obliteration" as they force a large foot into some little glass slipper.

6. Woe unto Me if I Preach not the Gospel (1 Cor. 9:16).

Preaching that gets too far from this has gone astray. If someone who has sat at our feet, and who has listened to our "so-called" eloquence, goes to hell because he never heard the essence, we have done him a grave disservice. Every time we open the Book it is the preacher's duty to bring some hearer closer to God.

Shep-herd

Preaching Christ is very serious
and we dare not play with words
nor make simple things mysterious
yet not mix our flocks and herds



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