

The Reflector

"We cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard" • Acts 4:20

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So You Need A Preacher?

Connie Adams

Every few years preachers either decide to move or else the brethren decide it would be best for them to move. This is not all bad. Neither is it all good. It depends on the circumstances. If a man is not teaching the "whole counsel of God," is not continuing to study and stay fresh in his preaching efforts or is not providing a suitable "example of the believers", then either he ought to decide to change or else move. If he is too lazy to study or is not setting the right example then his problem is not geographical. He has a serious problem before his God and changing locations will not solve it. Repentance is required. Brethren would be well advised to try to help a brother come to repentance before he goes elsewhere and compounds his sin.

Sometimes brethren in all sincerity think it would be best for the work and for a local preacher, to make a change. Such judgments should never be left to the biases of the weak, worldly and untaught brethren. Godly living and straightforward preaching without fear or favor will be an affront to such people and they will feel accused by such combination of living and preaching and will either come to repentance or create discord to have their way.

The changing of local preachers is always a critical time for congregations. It is critical for the man leaving. He is naturally nostalgic about the work to which he has devoted a sizable part of his life. He is concerned for the future of the work. Pulling up roots is hard for him and his family. The decision to move to another place is not always easy. There are unknowns in every work until you are on the ground and the "honeymoon" is over. It is a critical time for the congregation. Some have become so close to the present preacher and his family that they have determined not to ever "get close to another preacher and family". Nobody else

will ever suit them as well. Any man who comes to labor in the gospel will be compared to the standard of the beloved brother now moved away. Every man is different. The personalities of each member of his family are different. Constriction of the heart is a terrible disease. Christians ought to have hearts that expand to receive and accept others who labor in the gospel even as our hearts expand to receive and love additional children in our families.

A Local preacher's Role

Anytime a congregation changes preachers, serious misconceptions surface concerning the role of a full time preacher of the

Our Regular Services

Sundays:

Bible Classes 9:45 A.M.

Worship 10:45 A.M.

Worship 6:00 P.M.

Wednesdays:

Bible Classes 7:30 P.M.

Fultondale Church of Christ

2005 Elkwood Drive

A Critical Time

gospel in a local church. He is to be provided wages to meet his needs while he labors in the gospel, teaching publicly and from house to house (2 Cor. 11:8-9; Phil. 1:5; 4:15; 16; Acts 5:42). If he spends his life providing spiritual things for others, then he is entitled to receive the material things necessary for living (1 Cor. 9:10-16). His role is not to displace any other Christian in the discharge of his God-given responsibility. He is not to supplant the elders, nor assume the duties of a deacon. He is not to be the vortex around which whirls the social calendar. He is not a church "coach" to coordinate the recreational activities of the young. He is not to be a sponge to soak up all the rumors and gossip of the congregation. He is not a psychiatrist to analyze and solve marital disputes. He is not the official visitor of the sick on behalf of the whole congregation. While as an individual Christian, he may share in common with others in activities which are appropriate for all Christians, none of these involve his role as a preacher of the gospel.

Then what is he to do? He is to "preach the word in season and out of season with longsuffering and doctrine" (2 Tim. 4:2-4). He is to "give attendance to reading" that he may have something to say, rather than arising having to say something (1 Tim. 4:13). He cannot teach what he does not know and he cannot know without plenty of time in study. He must seek out opportunities to preach the blessed gospel publicly and privately. He needs to get down out of the ivory tower of professionalism and look the people in the face. He needs to have common sense. He needs to know something of the everyday problems with which people live. He must preach, not to please the

people, but to seek to elevate them to the standard of divine revelation. He is the Lord's servant and will give account unto Him who stands in the midst of the lampstands. He must speak so as to be understood, not only in volume, but in language. Forget trying to impress sophisticates in and out of the church with your great learning and wisdom. Fill your mind with the word of the Lord, find out what portion of it the people need, and then get up and speak clearly so all will understand. Feed the babes and stimulate the more mature. Don't be a "specialist." Be a "general practitioner." Preach with fervor and let the sinner know somebody cares about his soul. Gently lead the timid. Reprove and rebuke sin and error and don't bother to ask anybody if they think it is all right for you to do that! Expect some lumps but don't go looking for a fight. If you get mistreatment from some, then "endure hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ" (2 Tim. 2:3) and count yourself fortunate to be thought worthy to suffer in the name of him who suffered in your place. Don't get sour and bitter. Just keep on preaching the truth and trusting the Lord for the harvest. The Lord himself did not melt all impenitent hearts and you will not either.

"We need a Preacher"

Brethren sometimes reveal some very immature, if not unsound, thinking in their efforts to locate a preacher to work with them. Arbitrary standards have been set by some which would make the apostles, were they alive today, unacceptable. Why, the enemies of Paul said "his bodily presence is weak." Some thought he was a better writer than he was a preacher. He wasn't even married and everybody knows that a congregation needs a stable, family man! Besides all that, he had been arrested and imprisoned. And all the brethren know "and Gashmu saith it" that "where there's smoke there is bound to be fire." He was only the ideal age for a short time. And what about Peter? Why it is common knowledge that he was impetuous, sometimes spoke before he thought and acted hypocritical that time at Antioch. Even the Sanhedrin perceived that the apostles were ignorant and unlearned men. Further, they contended for what they believed and some of the brethren just could not have "a fighter." Why Paul even wrote to Timothy and taught him to "fight the good fight of faith." Better mark Timothy off the list! He was probably influenced too much by Paul!

Our Next

Gospel Meeting

September 22, 23, 24

Speaker:

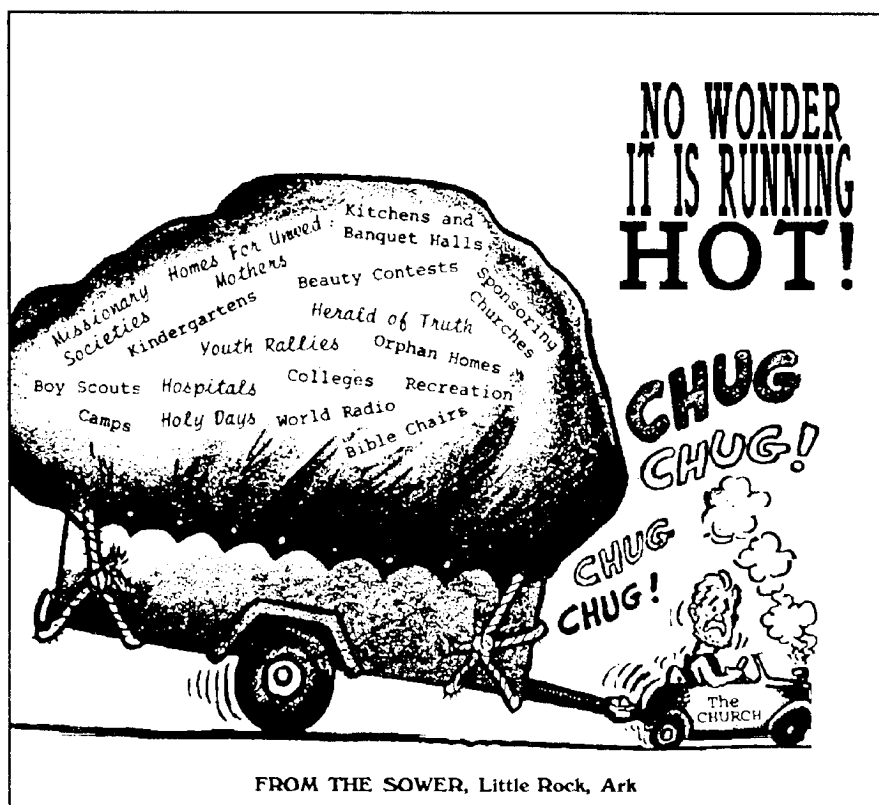
Max Shearer

Then there is the "tryout." What folly this has engendered. It is not wrong for brethren to have a man come and preach a few times and meet the congregation. But that becomes the determining factor in all too many cases. Certainly a man who preaches the gospel ought to think enough of the importance of his work to take some pride in his appearance. And what preacher is not going to lay out his best "samples" of sermons under such circumstances? How did the young people like him? Were his eyes set too close together? Did he have the right amount of hair of the right color? Were his clothes the latest fashion? Was his car so old the brethren would be ashamed to have it park in their driveway? Or was it so new or sporty looking as to make the brethren envious? What about his handshake? Would you believe that one young preacher was told, after one of these "tryouts", that someone said they did not like his handshake? Well, it happened. Did he have the right number of children? Are they exactly the right ages?

Really brethren, this is all too silly for words. And yet it is either the spoken or unspoken standard in all too many cases.

The Preacher Parade

Some brethren think the only way to go about finding a preacher is to have a parade of 6 or 8 to come in and preach over a period of several weeks. By the time the last one comes, the congregation will have forgotten what the first two or three looked like, or what they said. There are several things wrong with this practice. One is that it makes competitors out of what the Bible calls "fellow-servants." Deliver me from such parades! I was only in one in my life, and did not know that was the case until after my visit. Had



FROM THE SOWER, Little Rock, Ark

I known, I would not have taken my time or theirs. It tends to cheapen the work of a gospel preacher. Such practice reduces such brief excursions to public relations methods. There are some men who can come in for a week-end and absolutely bowl over the audience and greatly impress the elders in private meetings. And if the past is any sign of the future, they can destroy a church in six months and create wounds it will take 50 years to heal.

Would it not be far better for elders to do their homework on a few men whom they either know or who might be recommended to them by brethren they have great confidence in, find out about their work, manner of life and whatever else they feel would be useful to know, and then approach one man at a time? He might not be interested at all. If not, consider another man about whom you have learned as much. Many

things can be clarified by letter or telephone. If you find a brother who is seriously interested, invite him to come and meet you and speak a few times. Make plans to spend a good amount of time discussing the Lord's work. The sermons and one short business meeting are hardly adequate to learn what elders need to know and for the preacher under consideration to know as well. After such a meeting, he may not be interested. Or the elders may decide he would not be suitable. If that is the case, then do the same thing with another. If both parties are interested, then make a decision one way or the other. It is fine to have feedback from a congregation but elders need to "take the oversight" and should be privy to greater information than the rest upon which a wise decision can be made.

I can tell you that the present practice of these preacher parades

has been the means of discouraging many fine men. Some of the ablest men who do the most enduring work are left out in these weekend blitzes. Many young men are discouraged. Some of the young men today are well trained, capable and committed to the Lord and his work. What are they to do? Shall we place them on the sidelines until they are 30 years old? Or 40? You can learn a great deal about young men from people who have known them all their lives. It is degrading and downright insulting to any man, young or old, to have to traipse all over the country, at the invitation of brethren just to be paraded before some elders and a congregation to be examined like a horse or cow at an auction. After a couple of rounds of that, some young men may decide to forget preaching on a full time basis and program computers and teach a few Bible classes somewhere if the brethren will let them. Meanwhile, older brethren are becoming "too old" for some, others are in failing health and some are passing on. Younger men need to know the truth, be committed to it, determined to avoid untaught questions that gender strife, need to live godly

FLORA MAE SMITH

Since our last bulletin, another member of this congregation has passed away. Sister Flora Mae Smith passed away Sunday Morning, June 11.

lives and NEED A CHANCE. Older men also can contribute much to the work. They have experience which only time and practice can provide. They have studied much, observed much and endured much and are in a unique position to help us all.

So you need a preacher? Are you going to pick him out of a parade? Are you going to idolize him for awhile and then methodically pick him to pieces? Are you going to expect him to do your work for you? Are you going to love him, encourage him and help him, or shun man made standard for him to meet which would have disqualified every apostle of our Lord? Or are you looking for a faithful brother who knows the truth, loves it, preaches it in season and out, lives it and is studying to learn more of the word of life? The answer to these ques-

tions has much to do with the success of any preacher and the congregation with which he works. At the house of Cornelius, Peter said "I ask therefore for what intent ye have sent for me." That is a valid question for preachers and congregations now. Think about it.

- From *Searching The Scriptures*, April 1983

One Way To Handle It.

The church elders in a little New Hampshire town had decided to keep their minister in spite of his radical tendencies. A visitor to the village, knowing their extremely narrow beliefs, commended one of the elders for having taken such a broad view. "Broad view, nonsense!" retorted the elder. "We all know the dominie has dangerous ideas, but we'd rather have him here." The elder winked a shrewd eye. "If he wasn't here, he'd be somewhere else. There people might listen to him."

- *Cornet*



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Edward O. Bragwell, Sr.
Editor

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