

The Need for Distinctive Preaching

The role of the teacher is to hold back nothing profitable, but to teach the *whole* purpose of God (Acts 20:20, 27). That is the key to faithfully fulfilling the work of an elder or evangelist, i.e., that we hold back nothing that is *profitable* to the people. Preaching on the love of God is not going to help the young women of the congregation when they fail to hear a sermon directed toward their immodesty. Preaching on grace is good, but not if you fail to preach on how folks frequently absent themselves from worship in favor of their favorite sports or recreational activity. Preaching on mercy is wonderful, but sometimes people need to hear a lesson on social drinking or dancing (prom). Forgiveness is a grand theme, but sometimes brethren need to be warned of encroaching false doctrines and practices. I believe there is a justifiable cause for concern today, not just because of *what is preached* from some pulpits, but even more because of *what is not being preached!* One of my heroes in the faith once observed, "If we *don't* preach on certain subjects, it won't be long before we *can't* preach on those subjects because people will not put up with it." He was right and, in my opinion, we are seeing the fruit of that in our time. Again, the key to faithfully fulfilling the work of an elder or evangelist is to hold back nothing that is profitable. It is not always easy to properly assess and preach to the needs of the people, but by all means do it!

The "old Jerusalem gospel" has a distinctive ring about it. It is a message flooded with Scripture and practical application. It is not always popular, but it is always right when presented with the best interest of the hearers in your heart and on your lips (Eph.4:15).

- by Jim Deason

Parents, You Are The Teachers

Every congregation with whom I have been associated utilizes Bible classes for all ages among them as a means of preaching the Gospel and edifying the church. Well-ordered and systematic Bible teaching is a must for growing Christians and every family needs Bible instruction. No one doubts these congregational efforts CAN be a blessing to the church. Without attention and dedication, however, these classes can also be a waste of time and resources. A congregation's Bible classes are only as beneficial as we intend for them to be. They are a cooperative effort between teachers, parents and students. Everyone has a role to play in the success of these efforts, and all share responsibility for the success or failure of such arrangements.

It is concerning, however, when parents see the church's Bible classes as the sum total of Bible instruction our children receive. The Bible is clear that parents are to teach their own children about the faith. Particularly, fathers are commanded concerning their children to "bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord" (Eph. 6:4). Eunice and Lois, mother and grandmother of Timothy taught him "from childhood ... the sacred writings" (2 Tim. 3:15). Timothy's faith first dwelt in these women (2 Tim. 1:5) and he obediently received their instruction. Parental involvement and ownership of instruction in our children's faith is the Scriptural standard. This responsibility cannot be shifted to anyone else— not even to the church. If we parents depend only on the congregation's Bible classes to teach our children, we are falling short of what is needed by our kids and expected by our God.

Think about it. Twice-weekly church Bible classes are about an hour and a half of instruction in matters of the faith. Is that an adequate amount of time for spiritual learning? School Math and English classes receive far more time each week. Rather than seeing Bible classes at church as the main spiritual instruction experience for our kids, we should see them as supplemental to what our children need to know about God and His Word. These congregational classes are merely an aid to parents (and by extension to the church as a whole) in passing the faith to the next generation. Coupled with sermons, Bible readings, prayers, hymn singing and personal conversations — our children need all the exposure to the Word of the Lord they can receive. The work we do with children in the church can never replace what fathers or mothers must do at home.

- by Mark W. White

Qualified and Disqualified

I am familiar with a man who worshipped in a congregation where several believed having “children that believe” (Titus 1:6) meant two or more, not one or more. Several wanted him appointed as an elder. Because of that qualification which some believed he lacked, some objected. Because there were already elders in place, as well as some valid arguments on both sides of the issue, and seeing that a division would ensue if he allowed his appointment, he removed his name from consideration.

I am also familiar with one whose name was considered for the eldership, and reasonable people objected due to some family considerations. He blew up, called those people some uncomplimentary names, and left the church. Both were seemingly good men in many ways. However, their true motives were not known until tested. In my estimate, one behaved as Jesus commanded; the other did not.

While we should be eager to develop whatever abilities we have to use in the Lord’s service (anything else the Lord calls “slothful” — Matthew 25:26), and be eager to help whether in spiritually public or private work, let us also have the mind of humility. How true the statement is, “True humility is the usual companion of true greatness.”

- by Phillip A. Owens

‘We’re Not Doing Enough’

When a fellow Christian offered his assessment that, ‘We’re not doing enough,’ I was upset and offended. My immediate reaction was negative and defensive. After all, I thought, this man is uninformed of many things that are being done by others, and unaware of a host of activities that have been done in the past. My mind raced to compile a catalog of ‘good deeds’ that would dispel his claim. I was sure that I could prove that his appraisal was completely off base.

As my first blush of anger subsided, and I could ‘see clearly’ again, I began to realize some important points relative to this man’s charge . . .

First, it is true that this brother is oblivious to many things that have been done and are currently being done by others. But we never have to fear that God in Heaven is ignorant of these important deeds. We know that *“the eyes of the Lord are in every place, beholding the evil and the good”* (Proverbs 15:3). Furthermore, we know that our *“labor is not in vain in the Lord”* (1 Corinthians 15:58). So, while other men often do not know all that is being done, we can be sure that God does, and that’s really all that matters.

Secondly, the charge that ‘we’re not doing enough’ is, in fact, true! No one, ever, can honestly say, ‘I’ve done all that I can, I’ve exceeded what is expected, I’ve accomplished it all.’ No matter what we’ve done, there’s always more that can and should be done. Remember the words of Jesus: *“So likewise ye, when ye shall have done all those things which are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants: we have done that which was our duty to do”* (Luke 17:10).

So, while the brother who made the accusation needs to be more careful with his approach, we can still benefit from a re-evaluation of our work in the God’s Kingdom. We can work harder, longer, and smarter – and we should. Think!

- by Greg Gwin