

## **ARE YOU READY TO STEP INTO THE MINISTRY?**

**William Myers**

**What is a minister?** He is a man that has a great love for others. He prepares people to face the storms of life, and the tragedies that come with righteous living. He often rows against the tide and finds himself treading water. He is never fully accepted within the congregation.

He is, after all, their hired servant. He has many restless nights focusing on the problems within the church. He spends countless moments preparing lessons, studying, and meditating. His knees are calloused by the many hours in prayer. His wrinkles reveal the many conflicts he has faced.

He is a soldier in battle, and he is a medic to those who are wounded on the battlefield. A thousand times he has pondered on why he entered the profession. He is loved by some, despised by others, and bears the burdens of ingratitude. He holds the hands of the dying, soothes the hearts of the bereaved, and thinks about his own mortality.

**What is a minister?** He gazes at the heavens and sees the face of God. He carries on a sacred duty to spread the gospel. He travels to every foreign shore to deliver a message of hope. He has been spat upon, nailed to a cross, and bruised by insults. He does not look forward to retirement, because it does not exist in this profession. The brethren will ensure his poverty, and the Lord will humble his spirit. He unveils the mysteries of the Bible and brings to light the beauty of Jesus. He is chosen, protected, and enlightened by the words of the Carpenter.

**What is a minister's reward?** A minister's reward is found in the sweet embrace of a child, or the rejoicing over the baptism of a sinner. It is found in the firm handshake of a brother or sharing the tears of one who is distressed. The reward of the evangelist centers on belonging to a fraternity of great men. His feet are blessed (Rom. 10:15). His heart is pure. His vision is clear.

The reward is knowing that every time he teaches a lesson God smiles, and the angels rejoice. In short, what is a minister? The most wonderful, exhilarating, and fulfilling occupation on the planet!

When I first began my ministry, I was naïve. I found out that my training did not prepare me for stepping into the pulpit. I was a rough around-the-edges preacher that thought there was no one better, wiser, or more confident than myself. I WAS WRONG! Sure! I had the diplomas on the wall. Eight college degrees I would achieve in life, but not one of them gave me license to think I was better, brighter, or more competent than others. My education was for the betterment of myself, and not for bragging purposes.

I have often envied men who excelled above me in their abilities to present the lessons, teach Bible classes, and lead the people. Many congregations have been led into error by placing their trusts in a man's education. Let's get real, Jesus and His apostles would not even be hired to preach in most congregations today. They were not accepted by many of the Jews in the First Century. They were ignorant and unlearned (Acts 4:13).

There was Paul. Howbeit, Paul was an exception. He would had been the most logical choice to preach to the Jews, but he became frustrated with them and turned to teaching the gentiles. He took down his diplomas from the wall and gloried in the fact that he was chosen by the carpenter's son to herald out the gospel message.

For years, two men faced off at Freed-Hardeman lectures discussing how the Spirit dwells within men. One was Gus Nichols, a poor farmer from Jasper, Alabama, that never achieved over an associate degree. The other, Guy Woods, a man with a law degree, and a mind as sharp as a tack. Both men respected each other enough to step off that stage at the end of the discussion and shake hands as equals.

I have had the pleasure of serving under fine elders. There was none better than Eldridge Jennings. A man that didn't finish the fourth grade but knew the Bible well. He was unlearned and ignorant, but well versed in the word, and a great supporter of the truth. This manuscript is not meant to frighten you from the greatest job on the planet, but to prepare you for being the best you can be. There will be times when one gets discouraged and wants to throw up his arms to surrender.

There are times you will cry and try to reason why you try so hard for many who seemingly do not care. There will be many heartaches, but also successes. There is nothing like holding a brother's hand as he exits this world. You were there! In the most difficult time of his human existence you remained by his side. You were there, not out of obligation, but dedication. You were there because of the genuine love you have for Christ and the brotherhood.

**So, what is a minister?** We are all aware of the term minister. Peter wrote, *"If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God; if any man minister, let him do it as of the ability which God giveth: that God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom be praise and dominion for ever and ever"* (1 Pet. 4:11). This verse teaches us that the art of ministry is a talent given by God. To progress in the ministry, I had to learn many things. I learned that being an evangelist means that I must sacrifice. I worked with wonderful congregations that did not fully accept me. As a man of the profession, I was a hired servant. I entered a work that promises no tomorrow, little pay, and few earthly rewards. It is a position that fills your heart with joy, laughter, and sorrow. I have laughed with the saints, and I have felt the pain of a lost soul.

I have had many sleepless nights worrying about the plight of the local congregation. Paul wrote, *"Beside those things that are without, that which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the churches"* (1 Cor. 11:28). I have seen new doors opened, and old doors closed. I have been

betrayed by friends, honored by colleagues, and humbled by my Savior. There is no greater profession. Nor is there one that yields the greatest rewards.

Sadly, a great number of men who enter the ministry will not prevail. The sacrifices and demands are more than most can endure. They entered with high hopes believing they would conquer the world for the cause of Christ. Howbeit, they did not comprehend the difficulty of such a task. Limited finances and abilities hinder a man in his sacred walk. You will be at the mercy of men, some who will be selfish, critical, and unapologetic. Why enter such a profession? Because there is no greater work. Though this position does not offer fame and fortune, it opens the vault of heaven.

**A gospel preacher is a servant of Christ.** A position ordained by God. You have the power to save, and to condemn. You are charged to preach the gospel. In so doing, you are constantly on guard. Some of your dearest friends will fall from grace. A few will change their positions and engage in teaching things contrary to Christ. A true servant of God remains constant and holds dearly the doctrines of the Savior.

It is my intent to offer my experience and knowledge to preachers who are wanting to secure a new position. It is sad to say that most ministers will always be looked upon as hired servants and not members. Never, ever, feel that you are secure in your present position. One dissatisfied family can cause the castle to crumble.

When you speak to experienced ministers, you will find some that have stayed in their present position for decades. Others will inform you that they never stayed in a work for over five years. This has to do with two things: (1) the minister, and, (2) the congregation. There are some preachers that find the need to expand their ministry. They are wonderfully suited to come, do a

good work, and then leave. Others are searching for a place to raise their children and stay long enough to retire.

**Concerning congregations**, I have often found that larger congregations find satisfaction in contracting a minister for a certain period. Whereas, smaller congregations like the idea having someone who will commit to a long period. The key is to find your ministerial fit.

I am a firm believer that God leads gifted men to gifted places. It should never be about the money, benefits, or size of the congregation. Ira North began with fifteen souls and build up a congregation of five thousand. Other ministers have preached for small congregations that struggle with growth but treat them with dignity and respect.

I have worked with congregations of fairly large size, and with others that had very few. Where I am presently, the local autonomy has nearly one hundred in attendance. Yet, I have never met a more perfect fit for my family. I can concentrate my efforts mainly on growth, and not have to focus on the various problems that arise in larger gatherings.

**Who is a minister?** He is an imperfect person searching for the perfect fit. When I went into the ministry, I was naïve. I had a zeal to deliver the good news, but unaware of the difficulties in doing such.

My first work lasted only one month. I was on fire and ready to conquer the world. The small congregation I was working with needed to grow. Hence, I knocked the doors and generated studies in the community. Yet, after seeing a brother strike his wife, I intervened. In doing such, the men supported the brother and asked me to leave. Soon after, that brother was charged with molesting his daughter. After the incident, I met up with Billy Nicks, one of the instructors at the

East Tennessee School of Preaching. Instead of commenting on my termination, he held out his hand, and said, “Now you’re a preacher!”

I want to be clear that mistakes are going to be made. Ministers are special people, but they are also vulnerable to the same temptations as everyone else. We learn from our mistakes, and we bear the hurt that comes with making those mistakes.

### **CHOOSING THE RIGHT CONGREGATION**

**How do you choose the right congregation to work with?** The way congregations select ministers today has changed with the times. When I first began preaching, you traveled to a congregation, taught a lesson, preached two sermons, and sat down with the leaders. Most often they would take a week to receive input from the members. Within two weeks you received a phone call stating if you were hired.

In these modern times, finding a position in a congregation is competitive. Three or four ministers are chosen from mailed resumes. Each is brought in and asked to preach two lessons and conduct a Bible class. You are then given the opportunity to sit down with the brethren stating your position on certain topics. Then comes the wait! It may take several months before the brethren decide. By that time, you have begun the process with other congregations. Many congregations have lost the opportunity to hire the right man because of the length of time.

It is important for elders to protect the local autonomy. The wrong man could weaken or even destroy a church. Yet, at the same time, a congregation may suffer more damage by procrastinating in finding a sound gospel preacher. For the minister, it is also necessary to select the right congregation to work with. Make sure you have a list of questions for the brethren.

Underline those questions dealing with doctrine, but also asks question about past preachers. There are some congregations that contract a minister for no more than four years. It is not uncommon in these times for ministers to be contractually hired. However, one must understand that a contract is a legal document that if disputed, it is done in the courts. To do such is in violation of 1 Corinthians 6:1-8. In my opinion, a congregation needs to be cautious in creating contracts that places demand upon the minister and none on members.

**So how does one choose the right congregation? First, you must select a congregation that will provide for your needs.** The average pay for a minister of the church of Christ, according to [www.payscale.com](http://www.payscale.com), is \$58,370.00 (2019). The leadership should know about the cost of living in that area. If there is a minister's home, that's great. However, some of these homes may be in dire need of repair.

What if the funds are lacking for the support of a minister? There are many congregations that are merely surviving. They can't afford a full-time minister, so they hire a man on a part time basis, or they are aided by retired ministers filling the pulpit on Sundays.

Congregations that cannot afford a preacher will minimally exist, but most will eventually close their doors. The Lord's church is about sacrifice. If the funds are lacking asks for support from sister congregations, or find members willing to bear the burden of support.

It is a sad thing to see elderly ministers that have served the Lord diligently for many years exist in poverty. What about the congregations that spend all the funds necessary to maintain the building, whereas, the minister is simply given the scraps that fall from the rich man's table?

**Married couples should decide together.** A minister should never take a position without gaining insight from his wife. She is a major part of your ministry. She may also have special

needs. For example, my wife is a diabetic with several physical problems. It was necessary for us to find a congregation that was near some major hospitals.

**Second, find out what problems the congregation has faced in the past, and the present temperature of the local autonomy.** I am always hesitant when the leadership tells me that no problems exists. All congregations have problems. Once you begin a work, it will not take you long to see problems that have held the congregation back.

**Third, solicit information on what programs have been tried in the past, or are presently being used.** Also, asks questions concerning church growth or membership decline. You'll want to know if they have gospel meetings, or a lectureship. A list of men who have spoken in their meetings will give you an understanding of their soundness.

**Fourth, find out about personal concerns.** Living expenses, insurance, and transportation expenses should be addressed. The congregation I work with at the present is in a well populated area. Two major cities are nearby: Cleveland, and Toledo. Thus, my traveling is expanded because of the choices of the saints in which hospital they trust.

**Fifth, find out their definitions of the duties of a preacher.** Some feel that a minister is hired to sit in an office and study all day. Nothing is stated that renders him time to make visits or evangelize the community. The priority of the minister is to labor in the vineyard. I am not a babysitter, but I am in the healing business. If a brother is going to have surgery, I'm going to be there. If a sick brother needs my prayers, I'm going to offer that prayer to God while holding his hand in his own home. Let's get one thing straight, you have been hired by a congregation to aid the members.



So many of my brethren want to be noticed. They seek gospel meetings and lectureships. Howbeit, you need to work hard for that local congregation for which you agreed to work with. Quit playing the popularity game and start owning up to your commitment.

### **THE PREACHER'S INTERVIEW**

**As a new minister, you must prepare for your first tryout and interview.** It was one of the happiest days of my life to graduate from preaching school. It was also a period of nervous excitement. You send out your resumes from a long list of congregations seeking ministers. After a while you start receiving letters of rejection. You just don't fulfill the requirements they seek. They are wanting a person with years of experience, and a proven track record. You have just graduated with little experience, and zero years in fulltime work.

**When interviewing for a position,** several points come to mind. **First, state your position clearly and without hesitancy.** If it is a question on doctrine, use the Bible. Don't use phrases like, "Some feel," or "I think!" It does not matter how others feel or think, it matters what the Bible says.

**Second, be concise when answering.** When you look up the word concise, you will see the word brevity. Long drawn out answers are not beneficial. "Short and sweet, mild and meek, is what others seek" is the motto that should be memorized. Further, be courteous. The show of respect is a sign of strength. The know-it-all laid back attitude leads to closed doors. A gospel preacher shows honor to others (1 Pet. 2:17). The leadership is looking for someone who will be sensitive to the needs of the congregation. One that will respect the elderly and show kindness to the community.

**Next, show yourself to be a Christian.** If a prayer is not offered before you begin, offer one. Also, never leave the interview without a prayer. If you are asked to lead prayer, show respect by asking if there are any in the congregation that needs to be remembered. Keep in mind that you are a brother if they hire you or not.

**When you proceed to your first interview, be prepared.** There is nothing more exuberating than receiving that first phone call. A small congregation in a place you never heard of is willing to give you a tryout. Just the possibility excites you. You go, preach two great lessons, teach a fabulous Bible study, and sit down to an interview. As you leave, the emotions begin to take over. You ponder on if you said too little or too much. You start adding up the positives and tallying the negatives. Keep in mind there will always be a second phone call. It will be aimed at keeping you updated.

Thirty-five years ago, the process of hiring a minister was much less complicated. After just one meeting with the brethren the decision was made within two weeks. In this present era, it can take up to three or four months before a minister is hired. Why? Because the minister's search is treated more like a talent contest. Men are brought before the congregation, arrayed in their finest apparel, and asked to herald out their best sermons. I have always hated the job search.

When the phone call comes that you have been hired, what then? Many ministers can inform you of the nightmares behind their first work. You eagerly accept a position without weighing the pros and cons. It is best to have options. It is best to wait in deciding until two or three offers are on the table. The selection process is like finding the right pair of shoes. If you buy a pair too large or too small you will suffer the consequences.

With these thoughts in mind, let's talk of the **five questions** that must be answered by your first interview. **First, can my family live on what the elders propose?** If a preacher's home is not part of the package, you need to research the costs of living in that community. I made a comfortable salary in Sacramento, California. However, I had to be paid well to live. Rent alone was nearly two thousand dollars a month.

**Second, does your wife feel comfortable with the congregation?** Never accept a work without your wife's input. She is half of your ministry. Often you will find that a woman has a sixth sense. She can feel and see things that you may be blinded from.

**Third, is the congregation willing to pay for your move?** This does not only entail the cost of the move, but other things that might arise. For example, are they willing to aid in your first month's rent? Most renters not only require one-month rent, but also an extra amount for new renters. Keep in mind that many extra expenses arise like turning on the electric and setting up other necessities.

**Fourth, if you have children, what are the schools like in that area? I live in a community at the present that is one of the worse places in the country for drugs.** My children are all raised, but I may have considered a different work if they were still in school.

**Fifth, what medical facilities are nearby?** This may not seem important to the young family just starting out, but for many of us this is of primary concern. My wife is a severe diabetic, and I have suffered from heart problems for years. Making the move is not easy. You must rent a truck, pack up the belongings, and plan everything, and then head for a new location. I have been lucky in most of my moves because of the brethren.

Communication is the key. By letting them know the details of your move will allow them to be prepared. It is so nice when unloading to have eight or nine friendly faces helping. Take time setting things up. Not everything needs to be unpacked. You're going to need rests to prepare for that first Sunday. The members expect you to be at your best. If your tired, rundown, and exhausted it will show in your class and from the pulpit.

After everything has been set up, make sure to ask for a directory of the congregation. It is wise to make a few drives past member's homes. This allows you to get familiar with the area. It always surprises members when they invite you, and you respond with, "I know exactly where you live!" After a few days of rest, get situated in your position.

**Establish your office hours and post them.** It is also wise to begin a visitation list placed on the board that members can sign. The best way to learn the members is to visit them in their homes. They will be more open, and appreciative that you took time out to be with them. Keep in mind that these visits aim at making introductions. Do not allow the opportunity for gossip to sway you from performing as a Christian.

I remember one elderly lady wanted to give me the scoop on the members. As she proceeded, I asked her if it was alright for me to call these people to let them defend themselves. She quickly switched gears and exhibited a better presence.

In the first few weeks after your move do your best to contact other ministers in the area. This will allow you to build relationships that will be encouraging to your ministry. It will also give you some insight on their beliefs and practices.

Sadly, not all churches of Christ teach sound doctrine, and not all ministers are light bearers. The Honeymoon With every new work there is a honeymoon stage. It is that first six months of

working with a new congregation. It is that period when you start getting to know the members, and they in turn get to know you. It doesn't take long to learn the potential troublemakers. Those are usually the ones that show you the most kindness when you first arrive. They may want to inform you of the problems in the congregation, or who to resist.

You may find people who seem to work the hardest, but to what end? It may be that they like control. It may be that they pushed other members out of positions. The deadliest thing within any congregation is gossip. When I was a young minister, I had often been engaged in it. Now that I am much older, I do my best to stay clear of it, and confront those who spread it. The honeymoon stage is a period of learning. Though it does not last, it will aid you in plotting your course for the future. If you have good leadership, the future will be gratifying. They can serve as a barrier between you and the congregation. They will protect, support, and correct you when necessary.

### **THE HONEYMOON (FIRST YEAR)**

**There are certain things that need to be accomplished during this honeymoon period. First, make sure to place membership on that first Sunday with the congregation.** This openly shows the brethren that you want to be treated equally. Sometimes they fail to realize that you are not a hired servant but a brother that has been asked to come and work with them.

Second, **visit all the members.** If you spend more time visiting some, and not others, your honeymoon stage will be shortened. It will be threatening to your ministry to show favoritism.

When visiting members be kind and attentive. You should never engage in conversation that allows gossip to take root. Listen to their concerns but orate positive statements that will encourage and detour the member from making any derogatory remarks about others.

Third, **do not become stereotyped**. Young ministers can often be drawn to the younger crowd. In some instances, a young minister may act more like a teenager than a gospel preacher. To the seniors you are a pupil. They understand that your knowledge is limited by your experience. Listen, treat them with dignity, and do not be adversarial.

Fourth, **do not seek to impress members**. You will often find that ministers, fresh out of school, want to share their Greek skills. I agree that there are times when a Greek word needs to be shown to unveil the true meaning of a passage. However, you are a GOSPEL PREACHER and not a GREEK SCHOLAR. You are not in a classroom with other men of your profession. You are in a crowd of common folk. Keep the Greek at a minimum and preach the word in simple language for all to understand.

Next, **visit the nursing homes and hospitals**. Most congregations have shut ins. Some members may have residency in nursing homes. You can soften the hearts of many by caring about those who seemingly have no voice.

The mystery of the church is compared to a marriage. Our time on this earth equates to an engagement between ourselves and the Lord in heaven. The relationship between the minister and the local autonomy has similarities or is at least treated that way.

As a minister, I love being loved. I appreciate that honeymoon stage when all is going well. Sadly, that doesn't last forever. After a year at Round Knob, a small congregation in Virginia, I preached what I thought was a great sermon. I gathered the main part of my outline from one of the sermon books I had in my library. I gave it my own twist and felt as if I had preached the greatest sermon ever preached. As the flock was exiting that day, Edith Gallimore stopped me and

said, “That was a good sermon, but Lowell Altizer preached that sermon years ago, and he did a much better job.”

Never be envious of other ministers. Paul addressing the favoritism of the brethren at Corinth, said, “Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers by whom ye believed, even as the Lord gave to every man?” (1 Cor. 3:5). As gospel preachers we are given the duty of heralding out the gospel message. I can only do the best with the talents God has given me. I am so thankful for other brethren who are wiser, and better communicators. I stand humbled before them and honored to be in their presence.

Take note that the pulpit and the podium is a small fraction of your ministry. You are commanded to DO THE WORK of an evangelist (2 Tim. 4:5). Your talents were not given you to provoke praise for yourself but to lead others to Jesus. This ministry is about Him. This life is about Him. This profession is about Him!

### **THINGS TO CONSIDER**

What ends the relationship between the minister and the congregation? It is the recognition that the minister is a hired servant, and not looked upon as a member. Though he may make many friends, and feel a deep appreciation for the congregation, this fact will persist. The day will come when the leaders will ask you to leave. It is not based on your job performance, or your good deeds, but on the belief that they are wanting a change.

Your response is one of dread and defeat. It is like someone had driven a stake through your heart. It hurts when one is asked to leave. You did your best and thought everything was going great; but something went amiss. There are all kinds of reasons for asking a minister to find a new

work. It could be that you offended an elder, or his wife. The congregation might feel that your sermons are too negative. At times, it is just something typical of that group.

My recommendation is to always be prepared and react kindly and lovingly. It is at these periods in our lives that our faith will be tested. How we react will speak volumes to others. Always keep in mind that you are an evangelist. You represent the grandest and greatest occupation on the planet. With that said, when you are asked to leave do it gracefully. You will always be a gospel preacher if you have a pulpit or not. As one of God's servants, He will lead you to another work.

It would be easy to despise or conspire against those who do us harm, but we should not think as other men think. We have been chosen from this world to be representatives of the Kingdom of God. We pray for our enemies. We inspire to do good to those who speak ill of us. It should never surprise us when this happens because Jesus predicted it. Jesus said to His disciples, "*Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you*" (Matt. 5:11, 12).

What about your treatment of the man that took your place? It is not unusual for you to run into him when attending gospel meetings and lectureships. For whatever reason, some members want to share their dislike for the preceding minister. I caution all ministers to be aware of prejudicial statements about past ministers. People tend to justify their actions. Our own Lord was accused falsely. He once said, "*For John the Baptist came neither eating bread nor drinking wine; and ye say, He hath a devil. The Son of man is come eating and drinking; and ye say, Behold a gluttonous man, and a winebibber, a friend of publicans and sinners!*" (Lk. 7:33, 34).



One of the saddest things in the church is comes with the evils of the tongue. So often what can happen among our members would not hold water in the secular world. One would find themselves in a court of law defending their actions before a judge.

James states, *“Even so the tongue is a little member, and boasteth great things. Behold, how great a matter a little fire kindleth! And the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity: so is the tongue among our members, that it defileth the whole body, and setteth on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire of hell. For every kind of beasts, and of birds, and of serpents, and of things in the sea, is tamed, and hath been tamed of mankind: But the tongue can no man tame; it is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison. Therewith bless we God, even the Father; and therewith curse we men, which are made after the similitude of God. Out of the same mouth proceedeth blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not so to be”* (James 3:5-10).

**For ministers, I want to present some questions that should be asked when interviewed.**

1. What is the average that a preacher stays at this congregation?
2. Has this congregation had a split in the past? What were the issues?
3. What translation do you have in the pew, and what translations do you allow in the pulpit?
4. Are there any issues presently in the congregation that is being addressed?
5. What are the elder’s views on marriage, divorce, and remarriage?
6. What are the elder’s views on fellowship?
7. Do the elders require a contract?
8. If there is a contract, what commitments are made to the preacher and his family? Do you include pay increases?
9. How often is the minister reviewed?
10. Does the minister receive any stiffens or funds for lectureships and future schooling?
11. Does the congregation support missions?
12. Is this congregation open to aiding the local minister in doing missions?
13. What are the elder’s views on orphan homes?

14. What are the elder's views on Christian colleges?
15. How often do you hold congregational meetings?
16. How often do you hold business meetings?
17. Are the deacons and minister included in these meeting?
18. How many gospel meetings are held each year? Can you name the preachers you have asked to conduct these meetings in the last four years?
19. How are you Bible classes taught? Do you use printed material, if so, where from?
20. How many classes do you expect the minister to teach?
21. Do you require an activity log to be submitted to the eldership?
22. Does the church have a library?
23. Does the church have a bulletin? If so, who prepares it?
24. Who previews the articles placed in the bulletin if not prepared by the minister?
25. How much vacation is allotted each year?
26. What other ministries does the church participate in?
27. What is the elder's response to smoking?
28. What is the elder's response to drinking?
29. Does the congregation practice withdrawal? If so, when is the last time it was practiced?
30. What is the elder's visitation policy? How often do you visit?
31. Will you be requiring the preacher's wife to teach? If so, what age groups?
32. Do you hold lady days?
33. Does the congregation plan to pay a portion for insurance?
34. Does the congregation have a retirement plan for ministers?

**Here are some questions that you may hear from elders:**

1. What is your view on Marriage, divorce, and remarriage? If someone wanted to get baptized in this state, how would you handle it?
2. What is your view on instrumental music?
3. What is your view on fellowshipping denominations?
4. What is your responsibility to the elders?
5. What is your responsibility to the members?
6. How often do you visit?

7. Do you keep office hours?
8. How many hours a day do you spend studying?
9. What salary do you believe you need to sustain you and your family?
10. Do you plan to spend time in the mission field?
11. What plans do you have for evangelizing the community?
12. Have you had problem in the past working with an eldership?
13. What reason, or reasons do you have for leaving your present work?
14. Looking at your past work, have the congregations you worked with experienced growth during your period with them? If so, what did you do personally to aid in this growth?
15. If a young minister: What do you plan to do to encourage the elderly?
16. If older minister: What do you plan to do to educate the youth?
17. What three ministers have had the greatest impact on your life?
18. If we were to check with the leaders of your last congregation, what might they say negative about you?
19. What might the elders say positive about you?
20. How long do you plan to stay with us if we ask you to come work with us?
21. If no elders, the men may ask what the minister will attempt to do to appoint elders?

### **THE SKILLED EVANGELIST**

**Let's talk about the skill of evangelism.** Anytime you begin a new work, you want to do well. There are a few pointers that may help you be successful in the community. We will call these the ABC's of growing a congregation.

A simple fact is that if a congregation is not growing eventually it is going to expire. That is just common logic. To grow a congregation, you must have **accountability**. This is the willingness to accept responsibility. Movement mentally and physically brings about success. Americans spend millions of dollars each year watching videos and reading books by motivational speakers. Once you step up to the plate and start swinging, swing hard.

Connect with those members who are willing and able to lend a helping hand. You can serve as the example for others to follow. Your enthusiasm, patience, and stamina will be infectious. Being accountable instills within the term a personal prognosis. You must know what works for you.

We so often read books by authors trying to instruct us how to bring about church growth. Methodologies are as numerous as the sands of the sea. What may work in one location will fail in another. For the shy preacher, he may simply have business cards printed out with his personal information on one side, and an invite to services on the other. An elderly preacher may feel more comfortable using what has always worked.

Brother Lowell Altizer would not only carry a business card, but a round tuit. That was a token with a quaint saying, or a bible verse printed on it. One thing is for certain, if you continue to make contacts, results will follow. The key is getting your presence into the community. Care is what brings people to the Lord. When the people view your legitimacy, wonderful things will happen.

Second, **be brave!** Stand firm for the church, the word, and for Christ. Don't be one that compromises to gain friendships. The mission of the church is to save souls. The only way that can be done is through sound gospel preaching. Bravery means standing firm against the critics. There will be many who will seek to contradict what you say. Some will find you to be oppositional. Never forget that the ecumenical religious world tolerates differences. A gospel preacher does not!

Bravery also means to defend Christ and the church. If you have been in the ministry for a few years, it has become obvious that we are despised. It is our obligation to defend our Savior. There

are times when we do not want to cast our pearls before swine, at other times we need to stand tall and bellow out the truth.

Bravery further defines our character. What motivated men who were fishermen to face adversity with such stamina? Whether it be Peter and John before the council (Acts 4), or Paul standing before the Roman magistrates (Acts 23:23ff); they did not yield to compromise. Bravery comes because of our concerns. What we truly believe in, and are concerned with, becomes the backbone of our bravery.

I don't believe that the early Christians wanted to be martyred. They didn't want to see their children devoured by lions, or the bodies of their parents burned at the stake. They had come to believe in Jesus, immortality, and the promises made eternally. The willingness to die for something is based upon the devotion to live for something. It was Paul who declared, "*For me to live is Christ, and to die is gain*" (Phil. 1:21).

Next, being successful as a minister is based on **continuance**. The reason why programs fail in the church is because people fail. Many congregations are notorious of starting programs and then seeing them falter in the ashes.

As a minister, be willing to follow through with your actions. Be actively engaged with the attitude that failure is not an option. When you look at the life of Jesus, we view a man that was able to become the greatest person on the planet in just three years. He said He came to do the will of His Father (Jn. 5:30). That is your mission. You are on the earth to do the will of Jesus. Before you ever begin a new work, God knows the outcome. You are no greater than the prophets. Many of them preached all their lives without a single convert.

Jeremiah was a prime example. When tough times come, and they will, one must be willing to get up and continue the work. You will never be a failure if you do the work that God has assigned you (2 Tim. 4:5). It would be great if after a few years you have filled all the pews. It would be great if the whole city converted to the Lord like Nineveh. However, many ministers see little growth, and feel that the burden falls on their shoulders. Even if you have done all that you could possibly do, remember the words of Christ concerning the profitable servant, “*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*” (Lk. 17:10).

## THE DUTIES

With what we have learned thus far, **what are the duties of a gospel preacher?** Like any profession there are requirements and duties. One of the problems young ministers are facing today is a lack of knowledge concerning what those obligation and duties are. Every minister needs to have a great recollection of three books: **1 & 2 Timothy, and Titus**. These books were written nearly two thousand years ago to underline the duties of the evangelist.

Paul wanted to let Timothy know that once you become a gospel preacher you have entered a war zone. He wrote, “*Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, whereunto thou art also called, and hast professed a good profession before many witnesses*” (1 Tim. 6:12).

The first, and most important duty of a minister, is to **preach the word**. Paul exclaimed, “*Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine*” (2 Tim. 4:2). Those early apostles centered all their teachings on Christ and His resurrection. Jesus. Luke writes, “*And daily in the temple, and in every house, they ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ*” (Acts 5:42).

Next, like the early ministers make your mission **personal**. Don't try to patronize some or try to imitate other preachers. Be yourself! When Paul stood before the magistrates, he told his story (Acts 24-26). Each of these early disciples were special. Think about Timothy, a man who naturally cared for others, and Stephen, a man who courageously lost his life while preaching the good news; both men epitomized the true character of a Christian.

I remember a man who criticized my preaching. He stated that personal stories and examples need to be excluded in sermons. It is correct that a sermon is not about oneself. A sermon is all about teaching the gospel story. However, in order to accomplish that task, one needs to have that personal relationship with Jesus. Paul loved to tell of his conversion. Through it, Paul pointed out the amazing grace of the Messiah.

When you gaze at the four gospels, the lives of so many followers come to light. Their stories are important. Whether it be the choosing of Mary to birth the Lord, or the conversion of Saul of Tarsus; we stand amazed at what those early disciples experienced. It is important to reveal that God is active in the lives of people today. The book *Muscle and a Shovel* has aided in the conversion of many lost souls. I have helped people see the truth through my tract, *My Experience in the Charismatic Movement*.

While discovering yourself don't be afraid to share your amazing story. People need to know that God changes lives. Your living proof of that. Be cautious, and don't center the message about you. Your aim is always to point to the cross. Bill Myers cannot save anyone, but the Savior I serve can!

Also, **care for the needs of the brethren**. The only way you can do that is to get to know the members. Every saint has needs. It would be wonderful if Christians never suffered. We are human

beings. We can suffer from depression, mental illness, physical illness, and sin. A minister is available. He doesn't put off a brother or sister in need. You are the most dependable person in the congregation. When someone is going through hard times, he or she will call the minister before they even call their own families.

The minister's office is a sacred place. You live by the code of CONFIDENTIALITY. That confidential allegiance has limits. I tell everyone that if what they are doing is going to have an impact on the church then my elders need to be informed. If it is a private matter then keep your lips closed, that includes telling your wife.

Further, **keep yourself pure!** "*Lay hands suddenly on no man, neither be partaker of other men's sins: keep thyself pure*" (1 Tim. 5:22). It is imperative that a minister keeps himself in the safety of God's grace. Your failures will be a beacon for others to sin. That may sound ridiculous, but it is true. Womanizing, social drinking, and other negative acts can do great harm to the church.

Note the headlines throughout the country when ministers are caught committing sinful acts. John Waddey, once the director of the school of preaching in Knoxville, made the front page of the local newspaper for soliciting a prostitute. The media stereotypes ministers. Even Hollywood often portrays ministers as evil men seeking power. Howbeit, there are corrupt men in all professions. Why judge all ministers by the sins of the few? Does one corrupt judge represent the entire legal system? Does one greedy policeman portray all those who carry a badge? How one deals with corruption and sin is imperative.

**Always confront the sinner!** Whether he be a fellow evangelist, or an elder. By that confrontation, seek to save the sinner (Gal. 6:1- 4). Never forget that keeping yourself pure aims at keeping others pure.



Fourth, **respect your elders!** Elders are amazing men. If they are biblically qualified, you will be greatly blessed by their guidance. If they are not, they can make your life miserable.

Your position as a minister is to show respect for the leaders of the church, and to guide others to accept that leadership. Though elders rule the congregation, they are subservient to Christ. I once had an elder tell me that discipline no longer worked in the church today. He stated that the church will not accept it. That remark alone warranted rebuke.

In another instance, while I ministered in California, an elder told me not to preach against homosexuality because it was a sensitive issue. Not only did he bring reproach upon himself, but on all those who followed his direction on the subject.

On the other hand, if you have the privilege of working with an eldership that is qualified and motivated, it will be rewarding. They will serve as your guides in becoming a better evangelist. Every young minister needs to begin in a congregation with a strong eldership. The church was never meant to be guided by men's business meetings. A gathering of men so diverse in their commitment to God that it prevails in the decision-making process.

### **SIMPLE THINGS YOU MUST DO**

**There are some simple things to do when you begin a new work.** When I began my first work as a minister, I did not receive a lot of advice on how to reach the community. I basically depended on the local brethren to guide me. That turned out to be a failure because most members feel that winning souls is your job. Even though they had been raised in that area, they do not feel the need to evangelize.

Let's get something straight, many brethren do not evangelize because they either do not care to do so personally, or, they do not know how! They would rather have a tooth pulled than to sit

down at a possible confrontation with an unbeliever. Little do they know that most people do not have this demeanor. A great number are searching for the truth.

**When you begin a new work gather a list of names of the erring, family friends, and neighbors.** It is best to make your first visits with members. The main thing is to get introduced. You will be able to evaluate the meeting for any future visits.

Also, when you start your new position, **keep a calendar.** It is imperative that you make appointments. Visiting members, invites, and dinner engagements should be written down. Your motivation and involvement are the most encouraging thing you can do to light a torch among the members.

**When making your visits include your wife.** She is your greatest supporter and asset. It also makes these visits more suitable to families. At other times, include your elders. It is necessary to build up trust and relationships with those you serve under.

**Also, do not fail to have business cards printed.** You want to present yourself to the community. I usually will print a personal invite on one side of the card. Therefore, when I travel to stores and restaurants, I hand out the cards to people. Keep in mind that shyness is a deterrent to church growth.

**In your first months establish your relationship with the elders.** Listen to their guidance and submit to their authority. The Bible commands obedience to the elders (Heb. 13:17). They are men that have been selected by God and are ordained (Tit. 1:5) for the purpose of overseeing the flock.

**As a minister do your best to set up Bible studies.** The most demanding work for any gospel preacher is setting up and conducting Bible studies. Some of these you will be able to setup on your own, while others come by request. Never deny an invitation. Be submissive to the invite.

When you have the pleasure of doing Bible studies learn all you can about the people present. This allows you to have a plan of action that is meant to lead them to the truth. The best place to begin is to focus on commonality.

You don't want to start off your Bible studies with debate. Focusing on common ground will allow trust to be built up. It will allow you to better navigate the study for the benefit of all.

To ensure the effectiveness of a Bible study, **three necessities** come to play. First, **you must take the lead in the discussion.** The Bible study is a uniquely drawn out plan for conversion and understanding. It is like playing chess. The purpose is to anticipate the opponent.

Second, **listen to what is being asked or implied.** Some ministers make the mistake of flaunting their knowledge. They close their ears as they conduct lessons. It is imperative that you respect the sincerity of the people seeking the truth. As profound as their stories and questions may be, compassion is the key. In my youth, I swayed from the truth into Pentecostalism. Some of the things I believed and taught were ridiculous. It took kindness and love to bring me back to reality.

Third, the Bible study is a **period of learning.** Not only for the pupil, but for the instructor. For example, do not presume that the person sitting in front of you, claiming to be a Baptist, holds to the teachings of the Baptist church. Many people attend denominational churches with no clue on what doctrines are being taught. That is why I always have preliminary questions asked before progressing on with deeper studies.

For example, when I begin a study, I will often ask, “How old were you when you were first saved?” Second, “How long after you were saved were you baptized?” Later in the studies when I speak on baptism, the common response is, “I’ve been baptized!” They are not grasping the reasoning behind it, but the fact of the event. My preliminary questions will reflect that they were not baptized properly.

When preparing for Bible studies **keep the lessons genuine**. People are used to viewing literature that is professionally printed but not personally prepared. Take the time to type up your own lessons. This shows others that you have a personal interest in their souls.

Not only should the lessons be genuine, **but short**. Long drawn out studies will deter the participants. Try not to present a study that last for over thirty minutes. This will allow for a period of questions and answers.

Further, make sure the studies are **simple**. Presenting lessons to potential converts focuses on the abilities of the participants. Some have been raised up in denominationalism. You will find those who had served in some leadership position. Hence, your methodology will center on that fact. Others may have little knowledge of the Bible. This demands an even more sophisticated approach to guide them properly. Remember you are leading them to the truth. You begin with offering a bottle, and then as they grow, you feed them with meat (Heb. 5:12, 13; 1 Pet. 2:2).

Another important feature of conducting Bible studies is **prayer**. Begin and end the study with prayer. It warms the hearts of individuals when their names are mentioned before God. The whole process of conducting Bible studies is centered on softening the hearts of those in the study. Prayer is a good beginning, and a great ending.

Next, when conducting Bible studies, it is imperative that you **allow the person to use their translation**. It is not the time to point out the flaws in a translation at the beginning of your studies. It might had been a bible given to them by a late father or mother. It might had traveled through several generations. Nevertheless, people don't mind having certain words and phrases corrected, but they are highly offended when you negatively react to a translation they have used for years.

A word that is of the utmost importance in studying Bible with others is **ANTICIPATION**. By anticipating what questions might be asked, or what conflicts could arise, will allow you to control the flow of the study. It is so necessary to polish up your skills in teaching others. People are looking for biblical answers. It thrills them to find a person that is knowledgeable at the word and can instruct.

When is it time to teach on the plan of salvation? As a child, I was taught with the Jule Miller Filmstrips. The minister would put a record on the player and switch the pictures on the wall manually when the bell rang. It was over a month before we looked at the series on the church, and shortly thereafter my family was baptized. My philosophy is to teach on the church first, instruct in the way of salvation, and **GET THEM SAVED!** Then continue your studies on the Bible and doctrines.

### **CAUTION CONCERNING BUSINESS MEETINGS**

Preparing young men for the ministry, it is necessary that they are to be forewarned of men's business meetings. I want to be frank, "God never meant for the church to be governed by men's meetings!" It treats the church like a political arena. When critical things are on the table, men show up that typically do not attend. They had received a phone call from a relative pressing them to make the meeting. The issue is brought up, voted upon, and then they walk away for months on

end. This happens because sound leaders have not been established. Elders are spiritual men placed into the leadership by God (Acts 14:23; Titus 1:5; Eph. 4:11).

Also, I want to be fearless by saying that faithless men should never be given the opportunity to lead. I have been in business meetings filled with bullies. Men that get their way because they bully others to follow them. Sadly, the other men allow them to lead. One should never forget that the church is under the oversight of God. A business meeting void of God is a course for failure in any local congregation.

You want to see business meetings embracing the scriptures. Set a budget! Set a goal! Keep the congregation informed, and back everything up with prayer. Never allow it to be said, “It can’t be done,” but, “I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me” (Phil. 4:13).

If you are privileged to have elders, you may be asked to attend the Elder’s and Deacon’s Meeting. This way they can get your insight on things and allow deacons to see how to conduct business. At other times, elders will meet separately. Never allow this to offend you because there are times when they need to meet alone.

For example, if they are discussing your pay raise, or in private conference with a member. Unless there is a scriptural problem, do not converse with others on the qualifications of the men in office. Criticism goes with the office. Respect, honor, and obey these men (Heb. 13:17). I find that elders are the protective wall between you and the congregation. They have the most difficult position in the church. They do not need your praise, but your prayers. They need to instill unity among the members, and most often that starts with YOU!

Do not engage in **backbiting or gossip**. The business meeting is never the place to vent your frustration with members. Always direct the conversation vertically to the right person. When I

was younger, I was pulled into that circle. It was a detriment to my ministry. Now that I am older and wiser, I try to run from such negative conversations.

If you are pulled into conversations stand firm and reject. You want to treat others as you would like to be treated. It is easy to slur a man when he is not present to defend himself. Never forget it is a sin to listen to gossip as well as participate in it (Prov. 11:12, 13, 20:19, 21:23).

### **WORKING WITH ELDERS**

Concerning elders, be an example of obedience to them. It is important to treat them equally. Don't show favoritism for one elder above another. That will only cause hurt feelings and discord among the leaders. I find it important to make visits with elders individually. At other times, making visits with all the elders is rewarding.

For elders there are eight things they need to consider from their position. First, watch out in producing a **petticoat eldership**. Most everyone in the brotherhood understands that statement. Sometimes, an elder's wife wants to run the show from behind the scenes. It is not only dangerous, it is sinful. An elder's wife is to be treated no differently than any other senior woman of the congregation. If she usurps authority over any male member of the church, she is in error.

I love our sisters in Christ, and a good elder's wife is a tremendous blessing to the church. Yet, I have also seen elder's wives accused of gossip, or involved in affairs that harm the church. I have seen them relay confidential information that was orated from her husband's lips. The church must realize that there are qualifications for their wives.

Elders should hold their wives in high regard. They should listen to their counsel but realize that their actions are not to be guided by their wives, but by what is in accordance to the words of the gospel.

Deborah in Judges four was selected to serve as a judge by God because the men were spiritual cowards. Even the commander of the army said, *“And Barak said unto her, If thou wilt go with me, then I will go: but if thou wilt not go with me, then I will not go. And she said, I will surely go with thee: notwithstanding the journey that thou takest shall not be for thine honour; for the LORD shall sell Sisera into the hand of a woman. And Deborah arose, and went with Barak to Kedesh”* (Judges 4:8, 9).

***The eldership is no place for cowards.*** These men serve for the betterment of the kingdom, and not for the satisfaction of their wives. Not only are they to have a compassionate heart, but the stamina to hold onto truth. Every husband wants peace in the home, but not through compromising the King of Kings.

Second, the **elders answer to God**. James wrote, *“My brethren, be not many masters, knowing that we shall receive the greater condemnation”* (Jas. 3:1). Paul condemns anyone, including angels, if they stray from the holy book (Gal. 1:8, 9).

Third, elders **shepherd the flock**. The Hebrew writer pens, *“Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you”* (Heb. 13:17). How do they accomplish this task? I submit four distinct ways. First, they **feed** the flock of God. Peter writes, *“The elders which are among you I exhort, who am also an elder, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed: Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; Neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being ensamples to the flock”* (1 Pet. 5:1-3).

Fourth, they **fight** for the flock. These amazing men stand guard against all predators that seek



to destroy the saints. They are shepherds with their staffs drawn and ready to be used. Paul told the elders at Ephesus before his departure, *“Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood”*(Acts 20:28).

Fifth, they **firmly** hold to the *faith*. In order to protect and guide the church, they must be well grounded in the faith. Paul states, *“Holding fast the faithful word as he hath been taught, that he may be able by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers”* (Tit. 1:9).

Sixth, they **fear** for the welfare of the flock. James says, *“Is any sick among you? let him call for the elders of the church; and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord: And the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up; and if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him”* (James 5:14, 15).

As we continue from what elders need to consider, they are obligated to be **unbiased** in their decisions. This is most dangerous to an elder’s reputation if he treats some worse than others. People will see it and lose faith in him.

Personality clashes and anger will topple an elder’s position. If the elders were to require a teacher to print out his lessons and then be viewed by the shepherds before being presented, not demanding this from others, it could be devastating if known by the flock. One may say, *“We question some of the things that he has taught?”* If that be true, that person should not be teaching!

Seventh, the elders must be **servicing as examples** to the flock. You can talk about shepherding, responsibility, and many other aspects of the position, but servitude is their mission. When you look at the qualifications for elders in 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1, it becomes apparent that these men not only show themselves to be Christians among their brethren, but in the home and workplace.

Elders need to know that they are to care for the flock, but they do not own the flock. They work for the Chief Shepherd. Even they could face a millstone around their neck for mistreatment (Matt. 18:6).

The eighth thing that elders need to consider concerning their position is to **support the mission of Christ**. Every decision made must be in concordance with saving the souls of others. Whether it be benevolence, supporting orphans and widows, or propagating the gospel message to the lost; they are accountable for their actions and misdirection's.

We tell the denominational world that they cannot have yard sales, bake sales, or choirs because there is no authorization in the Bible for such. Howbeit, many congregations do things that simply make them feel good with no bible justification. Peter states, *“Neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being ensamples to the flock”* (1 Pet. 5:3).

Ask yourself a question, *“by what authority does a local congregation have to send flowers to a funeral?”* It is a nice gesture! But if you can do that, why not go ahead and pay for the casket, or the vault, or the funeral plot? You reply, *“There is no justification for that?”*

If I am wrong in this area, please correct me. Unveil to me a bible example, an inference, or a direct command for flowers to be given, or any other objects that are not scripturally directed. Some say that tradition is what they follow. Was it not tradition that condemned the Pharisees (Matt. 15:3, Col. 2:8)?

This minister believes it would be better, and in unison with the teachings of Christ, to present that family with a Bible. One lady had told me years ago, *“People don't use them, so why give them one?”* Let's get real, most people are not going to respond in a positive fashion to the gospel, but does that mean I need to stop preaching it?

The elders, who oversee the flock, are in that position because they are to follow Jesus. When

they regress to listen to what the people want, and not the Lord, they fail!!! Most men will not know how to shepherd the flock. That is why God places those strict requirements in the Holy Bible. The decisions of the church are made to spend His money and follow His desires. This is what we depend on the elders to guide us through.

### **PREACHERS AND DEACONS RESPONSIBILITY TO THE CHURCH**

We have discussed the pastor's responsibility to the Lord, but what is the **preacher's responsibility to the elders** as well as **the deacons**. Any minister starting a new work should announce to the congregation their membership in that fold. They need to let the brethren know that they serve under the eldership and are to be treated like any other member.

The relationship between the minister and the elders must be **common goal oriented**. Both need to be on the same page when it comes to their duties to the Lord. This should be discussed before the minister is asked to work with the elders, but sometimes it is not.

Also, the relationship between the minister and the elders must be **advocatory**. An advocate is one that pleads the cause of another. This is so important in a working relationship. The elders stand in defense for the minister if he preaches truth, and the minister stands in defense of the eldership.

One of the finest men I've ever known was Brother Eldridge Jennings, an elder in the congregation at Round Knob years ago. He took me under his wing and became my sounding board when I had problems, and my defender when opposed. Upon his death bed, he remarked that he was saddened that he had to leave me.

Good elders realize that a sound minister is hard to find. Great congregation rise from a leadership that knows how to be harmonious and works to please the Lord. They are also men that understand the necessity of having a minister in the pulpit.

Next, elders must see the need to **use the talents** of ministers. It takes years of proper living to be an elder. It also takes the same, plus grounded instructions to perform the duties of an evangelist. It is surely a fact that many elders know as much, or even more than the young man that stands in the pulpit. At the same time there are many evangelists that have stood firm for many years.

You look at the kings of the Old Testament. Some were terrible, and some were great. One thing is certain, the great kings used the prophets to enhance their knowledge. Men like Elijah, Elisha, Samuel, and Daniel were men of outstanding character and understanding with the willingness to share God's instructions with others.

When important decisions are to be made, elders should solicit the aid of the evangelists to research and prepare plans and lessons. That is what he is trained to do. The more experienced ministers have on occasion ordained elders in local congregations, as well as trained men to take on that position. If they served as advisors for the establishment of elders, why would one think that they lose that advisory capacity once elders have taken office?

Also, elders need to allow **minister to do their work without hindrance**. A true evangelist will not have to be told to have office hours, or that he needs to visit the sick and afflicted. If a man truly is a disciple of Christ, he is attuned to the workings of the position. Not only as an evangelist but a Christian.

At times, an elder may become envious of a minister because of the faith that the congregation may have in him. This is a natural tendency in the congregation to gravitate to the minister in times of trouble and despair. This is not to take away from the workings of the eldership. A man of faith will know that his advice would be no different than the elders.

Many ministers have taken classes or gained years of experience counseling couples and

individuals. It does not make him more qualified, but more appealing to the person seeking biblical help.

Further, ministers and elders need to **trust** one another. Paul stated, “*But if ye bite and devour one another, take heed that ye be not **consumed** one of another*” (Gal. 5:15). The apostles warned the brethren of Galatia not to fight among each other. The same is true in the relationship between the elders and the minister. It needs to be a working relationship.

What about the **elders and deacon’s relationship**? I want to suggest five necessities in this area. First, **elders need to allow deacons to do their jobs**. If they have been assigned a task, let them take the lead. Remember the deacons are future elders. It is a proving ground on their leadership and Christian qualities.

I can recall a deacon given the duty of education. Yet, every teacher ordered their material from various places without his knowledge, and even some classes originated out of the blue because some person wanted to have a class. That deacon did not last long in that position. Why? Because the elders did not give him direction nor informed the congregation of his duties.

In retrospect, everything directly related to education should had been passed through him. If there were questions about his leadership, then the elders needed to react accordingly. There is a lot of truth in the meaning of the word OVERSEER.

Second, **elders need to motivate the deacons to perform their duties**. Most deacons hold secular jobs. Some of those positions call for long and odd hours. When a project or duty is assigned to a deacon, communication needs to be shared. This means if a deacon is given a task work out a start date and finish date. Tell him what is desired and see that he has the support to accomplish the task.

Third, **elders need to invest in the training of deacons**. Whether it comes from a library

created to aid the congregation in knowledge, or if it be a lectureship to train the saints; elders need to do their best to enhance growth.

Take for example the streaming of services on the internet. If a deacon is given the challenge to set this up, he must have some understanding of what is demanded. He should be guided to call in experts to help him with the project. It may be necessary to solicit the help of men in the congregation who are willing to accomplish the task. Even more so, a budget should not be set for this venture without proper research.

Why do deacons fail many times in their assignments and duties? Because they are not given the resources to follow through, or their duties are not specified by the elders. Even in the secular world, the right man for the job gets things accomplished. You would not call a plumber to do electrical work.

Fourth, **deacons need to keep the elders informed.** *The book of Job states, “Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the LORD”* (Job 1:6). Who are angels? They are servants of Jehovah. They come before His throne informing God of their accomplished duties. God already knows of their workings, but they do it out of duty to God. Deacons, like the angels, are servants. They need to be duty bound to keep the elders informed of works completed.

Fifth, **elders need to protect the deacons from insult and gossip.** It is commonplace in the Lord’s church for a few to speak behind a person’s back. Deacons get this a lot when some feel they failed at doing their jobs. Next thing you know, elders are speaking to the deacon informing him of the complaint. There is a word in law that speaks of fairness. The word is fiduciary. It is not fair for an elder, deacon, minister, or member to hear rebuke or insult without that person being confronted first by the person offended.

What about congregations that have no elders? Sadly, there are many local autonomies that are vacant of men qualified. That speaks volumes of the influence of the world on the church. It is imperative that men prepare for these positions in their youth.

This is brought up for the fact that some congregations appoint deacons when they have no elders. There is no scriptural basis for this action.

### **ELDERS QUALIFICATIONS**

In the choosing of elders, how is this accomplished? First, men must meet the qualifications. What are those qualifications? Let's take a close look. First, a man must **desire the office** (1 Tim. 3:1). That desire comes long before he ever takes office. That is why the rest of the qualifications are mentioned after. This is a man working to step into the position.

Second, the next qualification speaks of the man being **blameless**. Most commentators agree that it points to the man not being charged, or proven to be guilty of some crime, or lack of character. Albert Barnes states, *“His conduct should be irreprehensible or irreproachable. Undoubtedly it means that if “any” charge could be brought against him implying moral obliquity, he is not fit for the office. He should be a man of irreproachable character for truth, honesty, chastity, and general uprightness”* (Barnes Notes, 1 Tim. 3:2).

Paul tells Timothy that an elder must be **blameless (1 Tim. 3:2)**, and then adds the word a second time in Titus 1:7 with the commentary, *“As the steward of God.”* Paul said to the brethren at Philippi, *“That ye may be **blameless** and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world”* (Phil. 2:15).

Third, a bishop must be the **husband of one wife (1 Tim. 3:2, Tit. 1:6)**. Many have debated this qualification. Some have supposed that the man could only have been married to one spouse. This would eliminate anyone who was divorced for the cause of fornication (Matt. 19:9). The

difficulty with this view rests upon two things: (1) God, (2) innocence.

God said in the book of Isaiah, “*Thus saith the LORD, Where is the bill of your mother's divorcement, whom I have put away? or which of my creditors is it to whom I have sold you? Behold, for your iniquities have ye sold yourselves, and for your transgressions is your mother put away*” (Isa. 50:1). And then He declared to Jeremiah, “*And I saw, when for all the causes whereby backsliding Israel committed adultery I had put her away, and given her a bill of divorce; yet her treacherous sister Judah feared not, but went and played the harlot also*” (Jer. 3:8).

To state that a man is not qualified to lead the congregation because he had been divorced for fornication directly attacks God's position in His engagement to the church and His putting away Israel for spiritual fornication. That would be ridiculous.

Second, to prohibit a man from his desire to be an elder, having a scriptural divorce, would endorse punishment to the innocent party. God does not punish the innocent!

So, why did Paul emphasize one wife? Obviously, there would be those who were living in adultery for not putting away their wives properly. As well as those still engaging in polygamy. The church at the time was in transition. They had just departed from Judaism. She had also engrafted the heathens into the Kingdom through the obedience to the gospel.

Even further, a scripturally divorced man who remarries has only one wife. He would be placed in the same category as a man that had lost his wife to death.

Third, a man desiring the office of bishop must be **vigilant**. This implies that the man must be careful, watchful, and diligent in his service to the faith. Peter's instruction in his epistle sheds light on the meaning, “*Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour*” (1 Pet. 5:8).

Fourth, the man desiring the office of an elder must be **sober** (1 Tim. 3:2, Tit. 1:8). The man



must be of “sound mind.” Albert Barnes writes, “*σώφρονα sōphrona* Properly, a man of “a sound mind;” one who follows sound reason, and who is not under the control of passion. The idea is, that he should have his desires and passions well regulated. Perhaps the word “prudent” would come nearer to the meaning of the apostle than any single word which we have” (Barnes Notes, 1 Tim. 3:2).

Fifth, the man must be “**of good behavior.**” This refers to the man’s disposition and treatment of others. He is mannerly, polite, and always conducts himself like a Christian. In Paul’s letter to Titus, he uses the word to speak of elderly Christian ladies, “*The aged women likewise, that they be in **behaviour** as becometh holiness, not false accusers, not given to much wine, teachers of good things*” (Titus 2:3).

Sixth, an elder must be given to **hospitality (1 Tim. 3:2, Tit. 1:8)**. Paul tells Titus that these men must be “*lovers of hospitality.*” The literal meaning is that the Bishop must be a lover of strangers, and the brethren. How can a man shepherd the flock if he wants nothing to do with the flock?

Seventh, an elder must be **apt to teach (1 Tim. 3:2)**. To Titus Paul gives clarification, “*Holding fast the faithful word as he hath been taught, that he may be able by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers*” (Tit. 1:8).

Paul is not saying that a man must be teaching a class, but that he can do such. Yet, how proficient should that person be? He must have a firm hold on the truth and can share it with others.

Eighth, the office of a bishop demands that the man **abstain from strong drink (1 Tim. 3:3, Tit. 1:7)**. One cannot presume that a man was totally prohibited from the drinking of wine. There would be times when wine was used for medicinal purposes (1 Tim. 5:23). Yet, the

drinking of alcohol for socializing or for the effect it brings is prohibited, not only to elders, but to all the saints.

Ninth, a bishop must not be a “**striker.**” An elder is given to peace and not quarrelsome. He is not a man that demands to get his way, or for others to obey his every command. He is a peacemaker.

Tenth, an elder must not be a **lover of money (not greedy of filthy lucre) (1 Tim. 3:3, Tit. 1:7)**. This phrase is used five times in the Bible (1 Tim. 3:3, 8; Tit. 1:7, 11; 1 Pet. 5:2). Adam Clarke comments, “*μη αισχροκερδη, not desirous of base gain; not using base and unjustifiable methods to raise and increase his revenues*” (*Adam Clarke’s Commentary on the New Testament*, 1 Tim. 3:3).

Without a doubt it would be dangerous for a man who shepherds the flock to have a lust for money. He could rob from God and bring shame to the saints.

Thirteen, one that desires the office of a Bishop must be **patient (1 Tim. 3:3)**. He is the opposite of a quick-tempered man that likes to quarrel. His patience in dealing with trials and people is a great asset for any saint.

Fourteen, one that desires the office must not be a **brawler (1 Tim. 3:3)**. This falls in line with the word “temperate” used in Titus 1:8. Paul, speaking of Timothy’s responsibility as a minister writes, “*And the servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient*” (2 Tim. 2:24). A man’s temper will often lead to his downfall. It will cast fear upon some, and cause hardship on others.

Fifteen, a man stepping in the office as an elder must not be **covetous (1 Tim. 3:3)**. This statement is similar of being desirous of filthy lucre. The latter speaks of the lust of base gain and being covetous speaks of the desire and love of silver and gold.

Sixteen, an elder must “**rule his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity**” (1 Tim. 3:4). The apostle gives commentary on this requirement, “*For if a man knows not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God?*” (vs. 5). To Titus he writes, “*having faithful children not accused of riot or unruly*” (Tit. 1:6). Paul uses the word “gravity” in Titus 2:7, “*In all things shewing thyself a pattern of good works: in doctrine shewing uncorruptness, gravity, sincerity.*”

What is being taught by Paul concerning this qualification. The understanding of this passages focuses on the children being in the home. A man cannot rule his son’s home if he has left and married a wife, and now has his own children to manage (Matt. 19:4-6).

Second, it does not mean that all the children in the home must be Christians. The word faithful is clarified by Paul when he writes, “*not accused of riot or unruly.*” If a man has three children in the home, two of them who are at age respond to the gospel, and the other is not old enough; is he disqualified? No! The proof is in his ability as a faithful Christian man to raise the children under the umbrella of God’s grace. He knows how to discipline and nurture his children.

Seventeen, one seeking the position must not be a **novice**. The term means “one new to the faith.” This is the only place in the Bible wherein this term is found. Howbeit, it makes sense that a man with little understanding of the faith will be incapable of leading the flock.

What will happen to a newly planted Christian placed in such a position? He could easily become prideful which parallels the reasoning behind Satan’s fall from grace.

Eighteen, a man considering the position must have a **good report from those outside the church** (1 Tim. 1:7). A man that lives for God is a shining example to the community. Whether it be in the assembly or in the workplace, a dedicated Christian man is loved.

What if a man is placed in this position that lacks this quality? *“Lest he fall into reproach and the snare of the devil”* (1 Tim. 1:7). The novice falls into pride, whereas, the man lacking a good report brings reproach upon the church which is a crutch for Satan to smear Christ and His Kingdom.

Titus adds four more words for the qualifications of elders: **Just, holy, not self-willed, and a lover of good men.** Each one can be easily defined. They are all the attributes of a follower of Christ.

### INSTALLING ELDERS

*“And when they had ordained them **elders** in every church, and had prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord, on whom they believed”* (Acts 14:23). *“For this cause left I thee in Crete, that thou shouldest set in order the things that are wanting, and **ordain** elders in every city, as I had appointed thee”* (Tit. 1:5). In both these passages, it is the apostles or the evangelist that ordains elders in the churches. That may seem offensive to some, but it is the truth.

However, what does it mean to ordain elders? How could Titus go into a congregation and pick and choose men to serve in that position? To make it simple, he didn't. Both Timothy and Titus presented the qualifications to the churches, and they in turn had men to step forward to be elders (1 Tim. 3, Tit. 1).

When the time came at the Willowdale congregation to appoint elders, I called Perry Cotham for advice, as well as other ministers. What I extracted from these wise men were five necessary actions in establishing and eldership.

First, before anything else, **prepare a lesson on the subject defining each of the qualifications.** Let's talk about establishing an eldership. Communicate the idea that an eldership needs to be established and anyone that feels they meet these qualifications should make it known.

The man himself needs to step forward. It should not be through another member believing his or her friend should hold that position. Remember each man must examine himself. You will be amazed when you ask members to pen names of people they would like to serve in the position. I have seen the names of men that were not even married submitted by friends to fill the position.

Second, **present the names before the congregation asking them to consider these men**, and if any problems, see these men privately (Matt. 5:21-26, 18:15-20). Without a doubt, individual bias will be prevalent. It is hard to find anyone, including the minister, to be liked by everyone. Keep in mind that the choosing of elders is not a popularity contest. By providence, God has already selected men to serve.

Third, **give the brethren the time to confront these men**. Several weeks should be allotted. This period will weed out those who are not qualified.

Fourth, after the time given for confrontation, **bring these men before the congregation**. DO NOT HOLD A VOTE! There are some who believe that the congregation must vote citing Acts 1:26. Yet, no voting took place in the choosing of an apostle. They cast lots asking God to make the decision.

Albert Barnes writes, “*Some have supposed that this means they voted. But to this interpretation there are insuperable objections: 1. The word “lots,” κλήρους klērouς, is not used to express votes, or suffrage. 2. The expression “the lot fell upon” is not consistent with the notion of voting. It is commonly expressive of casting lots. 3. Casting lots was common among the Jews on important and difficult occasions, and it was natural that the apostles should resort to it in this*” (Barnes Notes, Acts 1:26).

**Why not a vote?** It was a vote that hung Jesus on a tree. Pilate presenting a choice to the crowd was the biggest mistake of his life. The audience had been influenced by the Pharisees.

This could easily happen with the church. If you engage in voting, the process of appointing elders becomes political.

Bringing them men before the congregation is simply introducing them as the new shepherds. Once they have sat down, preach a prepared lesson that speaks concerning their authority, and their duties to the saints. Exhort them, and at the same time warn them against becoming lords over God's Kingdom.

Fifth, **pray for these men before the saints.** The minister needs to conduct the prayer in a manner that shows humility and praise. It is also a way to show his submissiveness to the shepherds and his affection for the position.

### **MEN BEING ADDED TO THE ELDERSHIP**

When an eldership is established there will come a time when other men are wanting to step up. It is not my desire to tell leaders how to conduct themselves when this happens but let me share some insight.

First, **elders should not select men to be elders.** Once again, it falls back on an individual's personal desire. If you throw a man into the position by pushing and shoving, disaster will follow. It is good to speak to certain men and encourage them, but only they know if they meet the qualifications. That area is not a guessing game.

Also, **elders should be cautious in showing prejudice.** At times, men who have had clashes with the elders are often categorized as troublemakers. Howbeit, if that person has bent the elder's ear for concern of the truth, he should be exhorted.

Elders can sometimes be egotistical. Their authority and office go to their heads missing their hearts. They want the saints to be concerned but fail when they harbor personal detachment to

some. This is not often the case for I find most of the men serving as elders give glory to God by their wisdom and compassion for the church.

Third, **the selection of the new elder should go through the same process as the others.** That person's name should be presented before the assembly. The members should be encouraged to confront him over any questions concerning his qualifications.

If the selection and ordination is in the hands of the elders, a few complications will emerge. Most obvious is abusing the office. The Bible informs the reader that God installs elders (Eph. 4:11). If it is left up to the present eldership, God is taken out of the picture. The group can choose whomever they like with or without any biblical guidelines to follow.

Take for example, a man desiring to be an elder. He feels he meets all the qualifications. However, one elder just doesn't like the man. Would it be fair and right for that one elder to keep that man out of the office? Of course not!

Further, **the aim of appointing elders, or selecting new ones, is about harmony.** You don't need an eldership where one elder rules, and the others follow. You need individual thinkers. I've heard men say, "We always agree!" That makes me question the stability of the group. You want to see unity, but you also want to see accountability.

### **AIDS FOR PREACHERS AND ELDERS IN THE PREPARATION OF SERMONS**

Every preacher aims at preparing and delivering great sermons. It is not about the praise, or the building of our egos that should motivate us, but by aiming at the four essentials to preparing sermons and delivery. (INTENT, CONTENT, IMPRINT, and, COMPETENT)

Before you put anything in print, sit down and think about the **intent**. What are you going to try and convey to your audience? The sermon can be topical, textual, expository, or a character

study. Whatever is the case take the time and effort to have a direction to follow and a theme to guide you in your direction.

On occasion, your intent may aim at choosing a topic that will enlighten a certain crowd. A group of teenagers would be treated differently than a group of senior citizens. If you are preaching to a mixture of ages and gender be aware of the specifics and how best to educate everyone.

Second, think about the **content** of your lesson. One of the failures of ministers is their inability to present a lesson that is simple. The pulpit is not the place to prove to the audience that you understand the Greek language, or that you want them to see how well you articulate Hebrew words. That is not to say you can't reveal to them the proper meaning of words from the Bible.

Further, draw up an outline referencing the content to be used in the sermon. Don't plagiarize! Give honor to whom honor is due. People will greatly respect you for your honesty and integrity.

Third, every sermon is meant to **imprint** lessons for the listeners. Clarity and proof from the scriptures opens the hearts of those searching for the truth. Think about Paul in Acts 17. Standing before those philosophers and stoic individuals, the apostle used their logic against them. Unveiling to those unbelievers the identity of Jesus, and the mission of the church.

Take careful consideration what you say and how you say it to an audience. Making a statement of effect can backfire. Telling a joke can also do you more harm than good. Even more damaging is telling a long-winded story that seemingly has no application to the sermon. Anytime you prepare a sermon plan out your strategy, and then once you put it all together, re-evaluate the material.



The last important step in the preparation of a sermon is to be **competent**. This is accomplished through practice, practice, practice. Before you stand before a congregation build your confidence. The better you know the material, the surer of its delivery.

### **SERMON DELIVERY**

Every person has their favorite preacher. I have stood amazed at the sermons presented by Guy Woods, Garland Elkins, and Perry Cotham. All three of these men had such charisma. They were not only well grounded in the scriptures; they had mastered how to deliver a good lesson.

Sermon delivery is captured under eight necessities. First, **volume control** must be maintained. You don't want to be too loud causing people to be annoyed, nor, too low. There will be time you should raise your voice for effect, and other times speak in a clear low voice to perk up the ears of the listeners.

Second, do not use **repetitive words**. "You know," "Okay," "And," will draw the attention of the listeners and distract them from lesson. Always record your lessons so that you can be more aware. Once you note the use of certain words constantly, do your best to avoid them or simply use them occasionally.

Third, use **your native language properly**. People expect the person behind the pulpit to be a man able to teach others. A man that understands how to speak distinctly and non-offensively. This is not to say that a minister is an English professor, but simply one that understands grammar and the proper use it.

Fourth, **proper positioning** is a must for every minister to master. Some ministers feel comfortable behind the pulpit. Yet, position yourself in such a way were there is at least some

movement. Preachers that like to move when they speak will solicit more attention, but they also distract the audience if they move to abruptly.

Fifth, use **hand gestures** to further enhance your sermon. How often have I seen great preachers point their fingers to heaven, raise their fist for effect, and use their hands to bring to life what they have spoken in words?

Sixth, **eye contact** is of the utmost importance. Make every person sitting in the pews feel like you are speaking compassionately to them. I have heard preachers say that they don't look at the eyes of others, but station their gaze at the foreheads of the audience. I am more focused when I can look at a person in the eyes. It reveals to me if they are understanding the lesson, or if they are moved by the contents of the sermon.

Seventh, be not overly emotional but utilize **emotions** in your delivery. How could any minister not feel the impact of the cross when he speaks of the crucifixion? How could a tear not fall when I speak of the grace that God had shone upon me? People need to see a genuine man with convictions in that pulpit. They want to have an emotional relationship with the servant of Jehovah. To share that commonality between the speaker and listener is at the heart of gospel preaching.

Last, but not least, **stamina**. *Merriam-Webster Dictionary* defines stamina as “*the bodily or mental capacity to sustain a prolonged stressful effort or activity : endurance. the moral or emotional strength to continue with a difficult process, effort, etc. : staying power*” (<https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/stamina>).

It takes stamina to stand in the pulpit presenting a lesson that can change a person's life. Every time a minister orates a message from the word of God, the heavens open and God is listening. Never forget that your standing as a servant of Christ seeking to reach the hearts of men.

There are five points that should be avoided when delivering a sermon. First, the **length of a sermon is important**. If a sermon is too short, the audience will feel you didn't put any times in preparing the lesson. If it is too long, you will lose much of the listeners in the pew. Try to keep your sermon no less than twenty minutes, and no longer than forty-five minutes.

The second thing to be avoided is the **usage of stories**. We have discussed the impact a good story will have on the audience, but a story that has no relationship to the thought presented, or the point to be emphasized is disastrous.

Third, never use language that is **offensive**. There are boundaries one does not cross when delivering a message to an assembly. There may be people of different color or ethnic groups. Be aware of things that offend them. The best course of action is to make the sermon and its material universal. For one needs to digest the fact that color, national identity, and ethnicity means nothing in the Kingdom. We are all a body of believers anticipating the Lord's return.

Fourth, to not be **depended on your notes**. It is agitating to see a preacher keeping his eyes on his notes in the pulpit. The people in the pew want to see a minister that has spent hours preparing and practicing his lesson.

Fifth, **be presentable when preaching a sermon**. I don't wear a suit because it is required. I wear a suit because it does not distract from the presentation. Whereas, a man in blue jeans and a tee shirt will be offensive to some. Do your best to avoid walls. We are trying to reach everyone, and not neglect the image of being a gospel preacher.

## MATERIAL AND BOOKS TO USE FOR PREPARING SERMONS

The **Bible** is the number one source you go to in sermon preparation. What translation you use will make all the difference. Be aware that many English translations have discrepancies. Some are written by one person, while others are translated by a group of scholars. This is not to say the Bible cannot be trusted, but not all translations are valid. I once won a mock debate in school. I was giving the wrongful view concerning the use of instrumental music in worship. The gentleman I was debating stated that one could find no translation that said to play a musical instrument in worship. Yet, *Moffatt's* translation, a man who attacked the virgin birth and the deity of Christ, inserts the use of mechanical music in Ephesians 5:19.

Another book used in preparing lessons is the ***Bible Dictionary***. It will aid you in defining words and meanings to Bible characters and events. They are a valuable resource.

**Concordances** are also good to use in sermon preparation. They can give you a listing on the various ways a word is used, and the various scriptures that utilize that word.

Next, if you are discussing a region where a battle took place, or the various journeys taken by the prophets, Christ, and the apostles, a **Bible Atlas** is a must.

Further, many ministers use **Reference Books**. There is a huge selection of books written on various subjects, and by an entourage of men and women.

Also, ministers are accustomed to using **commentaries**. Throughout the ages, men have written manuscripts on the book of the Bible. Many of our sound brethren past and present have penned great works to help in understanding the Bible.

One source I like to use on occasion is the **local newspaper**. It is imperative that we keep up with the times and that we paint a picture of the unchanging world around us. The Bible is not some past philosophical book that has no warrant for man today. Just the opposite, it is a book written by God that is just as inspiring as it was when it was written. Satan is still the god of this world, and sin is the downfall of people and nations.

When preparing a sermon don't forget to utilize **Greek and Hebrew aids**. You don't have to be a scholar in these languages to find books that will help you bring meaning to your sermon. I would not advise filling your sermon with many foreign words that will bore members. Yet, they can be great for giving a proper interpretation of a passage.

One of the best sources in sermon preparation is the **Brethren**. How often I have bent the ear of many ministers searching for the meaning of difficult passages? How often I have used sermons from others to deliver a message of importance to the local church? I greatly admire men that have a keen understanding of the Bible.

## CONCLUSION

There is nothing I have penned that you haven't been taught. I take a special interest in my brethren who have sacrificed so much to preach the good news. I pray nothing I said will scare you from entering this great profession. When I look back at the twenty men that graduated in my class at East Tennessee, only one or two of us are still preaching. I probably would had been the one least likely to stay in the work. Truly, that is the wonder of this profession. The longer you stay in it, the more you desire it. I'm not the best orator, or personal worker, or Bible class teacher; but I love it. God placed me into this ministry for the purpose of making me a better person, and helping others to better themselves. Treasure all you have learned while studying to be a preacher.

Listen to the advice of those that have labored for years in this wonderful work. And please don't forget to keep your feet clean. "And how shall they preach, except they be sent? as it is written, *"How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things!"* (Rom. 10:15).

## EPILOGUE

I have covered a lot of material in this manuscript. Some sporadic, and some repeated points of interest have been scripted. I want to take the time now to speak about the role of women in the church.

For the past many years, I have seen some great things happening in the church. At the same time, I have viewed some disturbing events taking root. One of those areas of interest is the role of women in the church.

## WOMAN IN THE CHURCH

In this present age, it is not uncommon to hear of a woman preacher. It is not uncommon for women to step into leadership roles. Yet, being common or not, it is contrary to the teachings of Christ and His apostles. God does not forbid women to teach, but has restrictions for those who do such.

**Women are not to evangelize in mixed company.** Some have said that women should be allowed to preach to women and men who are not Christians. Paul states, *"But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to **usurp** authority over the man, but to be in silence"* (1 Tim. 2:12). The question is, "What men?" Does this verse state, "Christian men only?" The verse says that a woman cannot usurp authority over any man. Even in Acts 18:26 where Aquilla and Priscilla took

Apollos aside merely shows a husband and wife team working together. You do not find Priscilla acting or teaching men without her husband.

Perry Cotham was a great mentor. A woman at a congregation in Indiana started a jail ministry. Not once did she attend a lady's prison, but spent all her time holding bible studies in men's jails and prisons. Perry knew the woman and complimented her on the work. I took Perry aside and asked, "Perry would it be okay if I started a jail ministry, and I conducted Bible studies for the women!" He looked at me and said, "Bill! That would not look right, and I would be shunned for doing such!" Then his expression changed, and he said, "I believe that lady is in error for doing such!"

Brethren, it is necessary that we stay clear of creating a double standard in churches. There are many sex offenders, and women with lustful desires, as there are men. Common sense tells you that women need to teach women, and men need to teach men!

Second, **a woman cannot be a deacon nor an elder.** Some proposed that Phebe (Acts 16:1) was a deaconess in the church by the word servant. However, the word is used to talk about her serving the church and not a position or title held by her.

It did not take long for the women's liberation movement to influence some with in the church. I've seen churches allow their women to have their own leadership group which makes decisions for the church. If such a group is formulated, they can only request, and not make any final decisions on any matters of importance. Even if the elders allowed such to take place their difficulty would be in allowing women to usurp authority over those men not in the eldership.

A group was formulated in California at a congregation where I preached that created a group made up of men and women. I was told that they would be used only as an advisory group, but later actually decide to vote and elder out of office.

Third, **stay clear of following the denominational road.** The ecumenical world has opened their doors to the use of women in worship, in the pulpits, and in the leadership. Since then, some of our sister congregations have followed suit. Women youth directors, assistant ministers, and women in praise teams (which is contrary to doctrine) are polluting the minds of the saints. Do not allow what looks good, feels good, or satisfies our ignorance lead us away from the cross.

### **AN ELDER'S WIFE**

*“Even so must their wives be grave, not slanderers, sober, faithful in all things”* (1 Tim. 3:11). Paul speaks of the qualifications of a deacon's wife. Howbeit, where are the qualities of an elder's wife? Without a doubt, these qualities must be found in the spouse of a bishop, and even more so.

*“The aged women likewise, that they be in behaviour as becometh holiness, not false accusers, not given to much wine, teachers of good things; That they may teach the young women to be sober, to love their husbands, to love their children, To be discreet, chaste, keepers at home, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God be not blasphemed”* (Tit. 2:3-5). This passage not only describes and elder's wife, but any woman of age that puts God first.

An elder's wife is to be honored and praised for aiding her husband in not only qualifying for the position, but her image to other women. She is a caretaker at home, and a teacher to women of all ages.



When it comes to an elder's wife, five things I caution them about. **One, be an elder's wife and not an elder.** I have mentioned a petticoat eldership. Any minister with age has witnessed it, and maybe even experienced it within the local congregation wherein they serve.

One of the caution signs is when an elder feel that he cannot decide without confronting his wife. An elder's wife is a great blessing. She can serve as an advisor to her husband in many areas, but not in overseeing the church. A plurality of elders is what shepherds the flock. There is no room and legitimacy for a female shepherd.

Two, **an elder's wife must be careful about crossing boundaries.** A prime example is when deacons have been assigned to specific duties. Let's say for example, a deacon is given charge over education. A good eldership submits boundaries for the deacon and secures a budget that he works under. In many cases, an elder's wife teaches classes. She may find that any questions or decisions must pass through her husband even though a deacon has been put in charge.

Let's be clear, if an elder's wife teaches class, and a deacon oversees education, her directives or questions are to be directed to the deacon. She is required by the law of God not to usurp authority over that man. If she jumps over that hurdle and goes directly to her husband, she has sinned! Elders need to caution their wives concerning this behavior.

Third, **elder's wives should never use their husbands' positions as a crutch.** Do you remember in school when certain students always told the teacher what others were doing? Do you remember how they were despised? Sometimes an elder's wife plays the same game. Everything she hears or questions she tells her husband requesting for his response. Two things will happen when this happens: distrust, and disgust!

### **PREACHER'S WIVES**

I would never be the preacher I am without a good wife. These are amazing creatures that

illuminate a room with their presence, and enhance a man's position in the church. What makes a good preacher's wife?

First, be a **helpmeet** and not a **doorstop!** Your husband has so many eyes watching him. You have also noticed those same eyes staring at you. You are in his life to make things easier for him and not harder. You are his greatest support, his best critic, and the love of his life.

Second, be a **wife** and not a **mother** to him. A mother tells her children what to do, whereas, a wife advises and works in unity with her husband. She understands that situations will arise that cannot be shared with her. That goes with the territory. While at other times, he will need an objective opinion.

Next, be a **sounding board and not a wash board.** Sometimes a man just needs his wife to listen. The washboard comes into play when the wife turns a deaf ear to him.

Further, be **versatile and not cement.** It is no easy thing to realize that your husband could lose his position quickly. That means you must pack up the family and travel to the next area for him to continue his ministry. I've known several men that gave up the ministry because their wives were cemented to an area. It might be that she has a good job that she doesn't want to lose, or she likes the schools her children attend. It is not that she is selfish but comfortable.

The reality is that the ministry is all about sacrifice. Jesus said, "*Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to **lay his head***" (Lk. 9:58). Earlier in this chapter Jesus exclaimed, "*And he said to them all, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and **take up** his cross daily, and follow me*" (Lk. 9:23).

Think about the apostles following Christ. For three and a half years He marched through deserts and countryside's teaching them about commitment. Where were their wives and children? They were not neglected, but came to understand the sacrifice necessary to walk in the steps of

their Master.

Next, as a minister's wife, be **active and not agitated**. It is imperative that you get involved in your husband's ministry. Make visits with him and be an aid when he must counsel women. Most often when this occurs, I would call my wife into the counseling session.

## WIDOWS

*“Let not a widow be taken into the number under threescore years old, having been the wife of one man, well reported of for good works; if she have brought up children, if she have lodged strangers, if she have washed the saints' feet, if she have relieved the afflicted, if she have diligently followed every good work. But the younger widows refuse: for when they have begun to wax wanton against Christ, they will marry; Having damnation, because they have cast off their first faith. And withal they learn to be idle, wandering about from house to house; and not only idle, but tattlers also and busybodies, speaking things which they ought not. I will therefore that the younger women marry, bear children, guide the house, give none occasion to the adversary to speak reproachfully. For some are already turned aside after Satan. If any man or woman that believeth have widows, let them relieve them, and let not the church be charged; that it may relieve them that are widows indeed” (1 Tim. 5:9-16).*

This is an area neglected and misinterpreted by some in the church today. Widows can be found in every congregation. Some are widows indeed, while others are widows with sons and daughters. What Paul sets forth in this passage are several requirements for a widow to be given support by the local congregation.

One of the first area in the church that needed attention was the care of widows. Luke writes, *“And in those days, when the number of the disciples was multiplied, there arose a murmuring of the Grecians against the Hebrews, because their widows were neglected in the daily ministrations. Then the twelve called the multitude of the disciples unto them, and said, It is not reason that we should leave the word of God, and serve tables. Wherefore, brethren, look ye out among you seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business. But we will give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word” (Acts 6:1-4).*

If you take this passage and fuse it with 1 Timothy 5:9-16, several key points are pertinent. The first is obvious, **the widow must be one with no kin to take care of her**. Paul says in verse eight of 1 Timothy five, *“But if any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel.”*

One of the great sins among God’s people has to do with members believing their widowed mothers are to be taken care of by the church. Individuals that do not wish to use their own money, or invest their own time, for the welfare of the mother who bore them. Paul makes it clear that these people are infidels (one without hope).

Second, **a widow cannot be fully supported unless she is sixty or older**. To the Jews old age started at sixty. And even though the world had changed with the establishment of the church, the defining of certain things did not. For example, a man was not considered to be a true teacher until the age of thirty. That would follow through for decades during the times of Christ and well into the preaching of the apostles.

Third, **a widow must have shown herself to be a lady of faith**. Paul said to Timothy, *“Having been the wife of one man, well reported of for good works; if she have brought up children, if she have lodged strangers, if she have washed the saints’ feet, if she have relieved the afflicted, if she have diligently followed every good work.”*

No congregation has the right to fully support a widow unless these criteria are met. Just because a woman is nice, polite, and seemingly obedient does not mean she should be supported. It is obvious that the widows Paul had in mind were women who had proved themselves to be faithful in all areas of living.

## **YOUNG CHRISTIAN WOMEN**

The church needs to recognize these beautiful young women that teach in the classroom, care

for their families, and do their best to build up the kingdom. By the way they dress, act, and show compassion to others make them the most attractive women in the world. However, I want to caution these ladies.

First, **be careful who you date**. I could say the same to our young men. I didn't even trust my daughter with nice Christian boys. Why? Because of the thing called hormones. When one is young, those little creatures are travelling a thousand miles per hour. How could they not when a young boy is around this beautiful young lady that smells good, looks pretty, and sounds sweet.

Ladies, it will not take you long to understand that Satan will work hard when your young to lose what is so sacred to you. John says, "*For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world*" (1 Jn. 2:16). Note those first two dealing with lust. Giving into one's lust will bury one in shame.

I would often demonstrate in a sermon the beauty of the rose. I would bring two roses to the pulpit. I would demonstrate how a rose is simply thorns when each of its peddles were torn off. That is what happens when pre-marital sex happens. That young girl has something taken from her that can never return.

At the end of the sermon, I would bring out the other rose to encourage them to remain pure. We need those lessons in the pulpit. We need them in the classroom. We need Christian mothers educating their daughters, and fathers teaching their sons. Please, don't leave it up to the public schools to teach them about something so sacred.

Second, **be careful who you follow**. Whether it be the crowd, or a young man you think is going to change your life, BEWARE! You may say that the young man comes from a good family, and that he truly cares. This assessment can change over time. That is the base upon all good relationships, TIME!

Give yourself time to get to know that man. Pay attention to his behavior. Make sure he is genuine and loves you for who you are. When Isaac took Rebekah to be his wife, the Bible reads, *“And Isaac brought her into his mother Sarah's tent, and took Rebekah, and she became his wife; and he loved her: and Isaac was comforted after his mother's death”* (Gen. 24:67).

Isaac's wife filled a void. The words, *“he loved her,”* says it all. In return she loved him, and by that he was comforted. It didn't matter what the future might had brought. He would love her if she weighed ninety-eight pounds or three hundred. He would love when her hair turned gray, or if her skin faded with time.

Further, **learn to be good daughter, wives, and mothers.** That verse in Titus 2:5 tells the older women to teach the young girls how to be “keepers at home!” It is not wrong for young girls to have dreams and strive to fulfil those dreams. God is not against you holding a job or managing your own business. He is against it when you neglect your duties at home.

To you young daughters, I salute you for keeping the faith in a world with such indignation toward God. I salute you for caring for our grandchildren, and being wonderful examples of purity, honesty, and compassion.