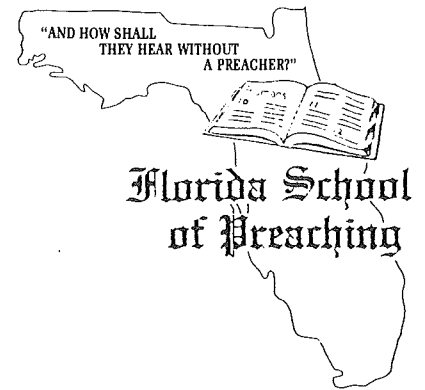


THE HARVESTERS



VOLUME VIII

MARCH 1990

NUMBER 8

"PREACHER SHORTAGE?"

[Being involved in training preachers causes us to be interested in what others say or do relative to the task before us. There is no way we can confirm the statistics contained in the following observations, but we are convinced that many of the comments made by brother Flavil Yeakley will be familiar to the readers of *The Harvesters*. His remarks appeared in *Preacher Talk* (January, 1990), edited by Cecil May, Jr. Editor.]

About 12,000 churches of Christ have been identified in the United States. Of these, about 1,000 have more than one full-time minister. A vacancy in the pulpit position in those churches usually brings from 80 to 100 applicants in the first few days after the vacancy becomes known.

There are approximately 7,000 churches with one full-time minister. Vacancies in the most attractive of these (the largest

ones, with the best support level) also quickly attract large numbers of applicants, though often, from the standpoint of the churches looking, not nearly so many

And the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, Son of man, prophesy against the shepherds of Israel, prophesy, and say unto them, Thus saith the Lord God unto the shepherds; Woe be to the shepherds of Israel that do feed themselves! should not the shepherds feed the flocks? Ye eat the fat, and ye clothe you with the wool, ye kill them that are fed; but ye feed not the flock (Ezekiel. 34:1-3).

desirable applicants.

There are approximately 4,000 churches too small to support a full-time minister. These are usually served by part-time preachers, "tent-makers," but sometimes have help from other congregations for support of a full time preacher.

Churches that are small, even if they are new, have good potential for growth and provide

adequate support, from my observation, have difficulty finding good men to work with them.

My conclusion: career oriented specialists, seeking to move up the ranks through the larger, better-paying and more prestigious pulpits, face a glut of people vying for the same positions they seek. However, generalist ministers, ready to preach, visit, and do personal work with all ages, who want a place to serve the Lord and are willing to work to build a larger church instead of looking for one already larger to move into, have many opportunities to choose from, with adequate support and great fulfillment and personal satisfaction from service to others and the Lord. There is precious little competition for these opportunities.

THINK

Keys To Greatness As A Preacher

By

Jackie M. Stearsman

There is within each of us a self which longs for success or the recognition by others of our worth. We want to be on a winning team; we want compensation for our labor and toil; we desire our talents be appreciated. This is especially true of preachers. It is a factor which all of us must keep in proper perspective lest we betray our trust and expose to all our failures.

Guarded Ambitions

It is vital that we keep in check our longing aspirations. Desiring to preach is commendable, spending too much energy on the pursuit of greatness may lead to failure. The Apostles James and John, with their mother desired greatness and were cautioned by the Master lest this ambition become a defect in their character (Mark 10:35ff.; Matt. 20:20ff.). This defect in character is evident in the Pharisees who permitted the plaudits of men to sway their actions rather than genuine character and service (Matt. 23:1-12; 6:1-18; 5:20). Let us consider the Apostle Paul and reflect upon those Biblical characteristics which he possessed that enables us to consider him as a great and successful preacher. The following expressions set the mind upon an attitude which was deep seated in the Apostle: "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" (Acts 9:6). "And I count all things but loss . . . that I may win Christ . . ." (Phil. 3:8). "For to me to live is Christ . . ." (Phil. 1:21).

Maturity

"But when I became a man, I put away childish things" (I Cor. 13:11). Paul recognized the necessity of growth and development. He could not have used the above illustration if that were not the case. Few things are more distasteful than an immature preacher—a baby in the pulpit. The baby must

have its way. The baby has not appreciation for the needs of the family—only selfishness motivates and drives its ambition. When decisions are made with the "baby" in mind the congregations will be undeveloped and lack spiritual strength. Some preachers need to grow up before their greatness can be genuine.

Mortality

"I conferred not with flesh and blood . . ." (Gal. 1:16). The duties and responsibilities of preaching at times become burdensome. Undue attention to the burden may cause one to become weary in well doing. Preachers who are forever wearing a martyr's brow because of their labor of love will not be the proper motivator for sacrificial living demanded in Christ. Paul only discussed his trials and tribulations when he was forced to do so, and placed it on the level of foolishness lest any misunderstand his motives (II Cor. 11:1ff.). If you want me to be motivated to serve, show me the scars of battle but do not depress me with how poorly the brethren or the world have treated you. Great preaching places the cause beyond a given battle or the scars one may receive in the conflict (Gal. 6:17).

Contentment

"I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound . . ." (Phil. 4:12). The key to living a life of contentment while preaching is given in the next verse. Paul received his sufficiency from Christ who provide for him. Becoming detached from the role of teaching the truth due to circumstances has caused some to fail to be great preachers. The preacher who understands and lives with Christ as his Master need not fear abundance, and neither will he fret when being

abased. Some preachers will never be great by God's standard because they have sold out to the world. Abundance has blinded the eyes of some and some have sold out because of hardship. Let us never forget that God intends to try this building and this includes preachers (I Cor. 3:12ff.). Preachers, can it be said of you, you can not turn my feet from His way by hunger, and neither can you quench my zeal for Him by hardship? Surely we see that this is a key to greatness in the life of Paul.

"I Am . . ."

Informed students of the life of Paul will recognize this expression and immediately attach it with those three great concepts—"I am a debtor," "I am ready," "I am not ashamed." (Rom. 1:14-16). Paul understood fully the obligation the deposit of truth placed upon him. It was not for his race or nation alone but for all men everywhere. He had no excuse for not meeting his debt—he stood ready to discharge his every obligation. The courage essential to greatness is reflected in his not being ashamed of that gospel truth. No preacher will be great by Paul's measurement until he has fully mastered self. Is not "I" the greatest hindrance to excellence?

Sacrifice

"For I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for

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TRAINING PREACHERS SINCE 1969

my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh . . ." (Rom. 9:3). Such expressions as this causes no little problem to those who seek to explain what Paul had in mind. It is disturbing to the indifferent. This is upsetting to anyone who feels that sacrifice is not required in carrying the truth to those who have no love for the truth. Perhaps no passage conveys how much Christ's will had become the driving force in Paul's life than this verse. Greatness demands expenditure. Paul's life was that of a living sacrifice. We cannot expect the rewards of his greatness unless we are willing to pay the price.

Courage

"I withstood him to the face . . ." (Gal. 2:11). The religious world is in the confused state it is in today because those who have the truth will not confront the opposition. This is a major problem in the church. Paul confronted Peter because Peter was lost, and because Peter and those with him were leading others into sin. On the lips of "would-be-great-preachers" of today there is no greater sin than to face the opposition and point out the wrong. The Creed of many is that if a person has been baptized then it is evil to point out any sin in his life, unless it be the "sin" of calling attention to sin.

Unrecognized

It must be understood that greatness is rarely recognized immediately. Paul had to defend his right as an Apostle of the Lord to those of his day. The greatness of the Christ was not recognized by his own age. The greatness of the prophets was recognized after their death (Matt. 23:29-32). Some think they are great, but they are not (Rev. 3:1-6; 3:14-22).

Conclusion

Greatness is within the reach of all who desire it. If we preach the truth in love to those within our sphere of influence we are great

preachers in God's sight. More than any other single factor preachers need to focus on service. It is the key to greatness. Was this not a contributing factor to Paul's worth? His great service was made possible because of his maturity, his own mortality disciplined, his contentment, his willingness to meet his every duty, being unashamed of the gospel truth, his sacrifice for the cause to which he was committed, and his willingness to confront even a fellow apostle if the apostle was not walking uprightly according to the truth of the gospel.

When we are prone to desire greatness as a preacher may we ever recall the cost. Let it be remembered that the evaluation of our position before the Great I Am will not be by man's estimate (II Cor. 10:12, 18). Let it also be known that true greatness may never be recognized in this life. We may rest assured that it will not go unnoticed, for the works of the faithful will follow them into the eternal state (Rev. 14:13). There, once and for all, the issue of greatness will be determined (II Tim. 4:6-8).

FROM THE FIELD

SEVEN BAPTIZED -- ONE CONFESSION

We rejoice as seven put on Christ in baptism this month and one made confession of sin in her life and asked God's forgiveness. The church at Nu'uuli is growing with an average attendance now of 80 for Bible study, Sunday morning worship, and Sunday evening worship. To God be the glory.

Of the many baptisms this month, we are really excited about the possibilities of where one in particular may lead. Brother Mataio's wife was baptized during the WORKSHOP. They are from the island of Tuvalu and are excited about the Lord's church being established in their island. Plans

are made for the second week in January to pursue this. Please Pray for our efforts.

*Jimmy B. Hill
American Samoa*

1-26-90

Dear Brother Carr,



Just a note to say thanks for the lectureship. I was encouraged, strengthened and motivated by the lessons.

I have enclosed a small check and hope to help more through the year. Keep up the great work. Our prayers are with you and all in the school.

Brotherly,

*Charles E. Burch
Brooksville, Florida*

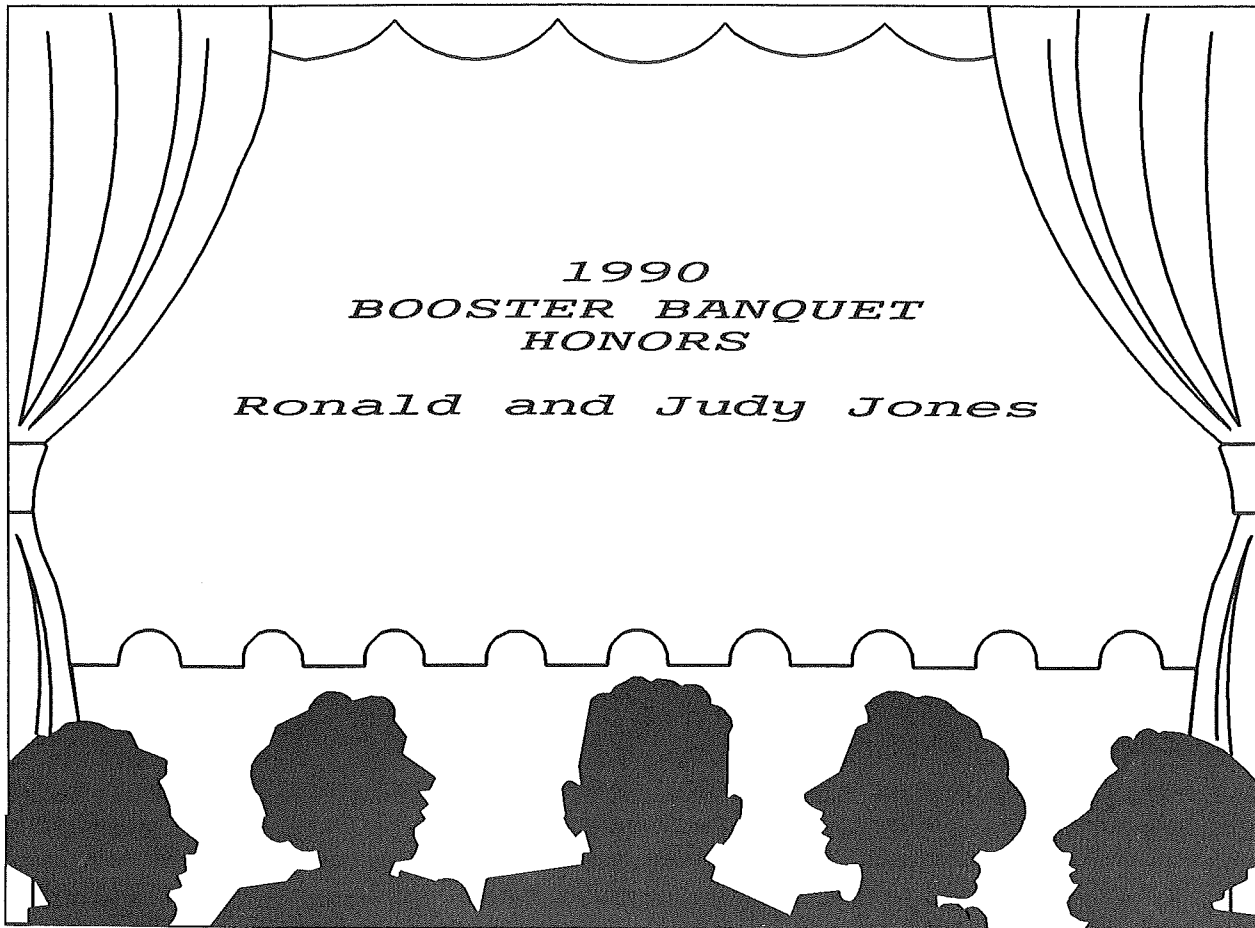
SUMMER SCHOOL SCHEDULE 1990

There will be two classes this summer. Brother Newell will teach a class on the **Inter-testamental period** and brother Stearsman will teach **Basic Logic**.

The sessions will begin May 29, 1990, and end July 26, 1990. There will be no classes the week of July 4, 1990. Each class will meet once per week, and each class will be in the evening. Classes will be from 7:00 to 9:30. **Basic Logic** will meet on Tuesday and **The Inter-testamental Period** will meet on Thursday.

For further information or assistance please write or call the office:

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Each year the Booster Banquet singles out one of the faithful supporters of the **Florida School of Preaching** to say thank you in a special way for the support and encouragement given to the school. This year the Jones' were selected and they are worthy of our special recognition. Over the years they have made generous contributions to the ongoing operations of the school. They are monthly supporters and without such faithful and devoted backers our work would be more difficult.

Those who have received training in the past owe a special thanks to the Jones' for making their training possible. Those presently in school, and those planning to attend in the future owe a debt of gratitude to those like the Jones' who are fellow-workers with us for the truth.

It takes very little to express appreciation. Being grateful is commanded by God (Eph. 5:20; I Tim. 2:1). To be ungrateful is the nature of unbelief (Rom. 1:21). We say thank you to brother and sister Jones for your love of the **Florida School of Preaching** and your charity toward the same.

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