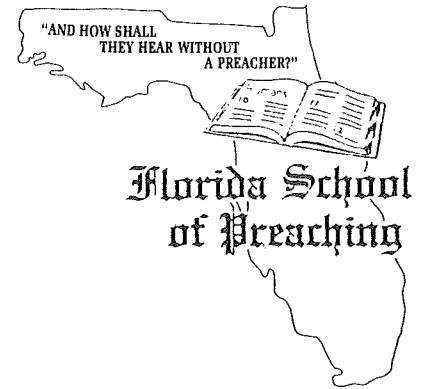


# THE HARVESTERS



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## "Religions Run Short On Recruits for Leadership"

This title is that of a New York Times article written by Peter Steinfeld. It appeared in the *Lakeland Ledger* July 9, 1989, Pages 1A and 12A. The article contains some thought provoking words that need to be considered. A part of the article reads as follows:

*Alarmed by signs that fewer gifted young people are joining the ranks of the clergy, religious leaders are groping for new ways to recruit candidates for religious careers.*

*They warn that if they fail, the nation, not just their congregation, faces a loss of moral leadership.*

*"The spiritual life of the nation is at stake," said Rabbi Gary P. Zola, dean of admissions and student affairs at Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion.*

*Concern over religious leadership ought to be "no less compelling for the society than questions about life expectancy or infant mortality rates or*

*illiteracy." . . .*

*In the mid-1960s, 95 percent of protestant seminarians were male and their average age was 26. A quarter century later, the average age was up by almost 10 years and a third of those seeking ordination in mainline Protestant seminaries were women. . . .*

*Enrollment at the 200 schools accredited by the Association of Theological Schools peaked four years ago, and Leon Pacala, executive director of the association, believes that seminaries have come under increasing pressure to lower standards.*

In view of the suggestions in the article and with regard to training preachers there are some lessons for us.

### 1. Influence

God intended for his people to make an impact upon society. Jesus refers to the faithful as lights to the world and the salt of the earth (Matt. 5:13-16). Too often, as with

Israel of old, the influence has worked in reverse. The people of God may become like the nations about them. When they do so it is to the shame and degradation of all.

The roll of women has often been a subject of controversy in the denominational world but was a minor problem among brethren. Informed souls know that the role of women in the church today is a major problem to be faced. Who is having the greatest influence upon us? The Bible or the world?

Where are the "great minds" today who will uphold the truths of the Bible. In days past it was not uncommon for those who directed schools supported by brethren and edited papers supported by brethren to be in the forefront of the battle for truth and in opposition to evil. Will such leaders today oppose perverting the worship, or will they raise a voice of opposition to women preaching?

How many will lift their voice in opposition to the Crossroads-Boston philosophies that undermine the organizational structure of the church?

## 2. Indifference

We, like the world, are often more concerned over the questions about life expectancy or infant mortality rates or illiteracy" than we are about spiritual matters.

We do not expect the world to be alarmed at the low rate of spiritual matters, but we do know that it is the duty of faithful brethren to teach others to be faithful (II Tim. 2:2). It may be that many in the world are more concerned with the fate of society than are members of the church. If the world can see the need for spiritual values surely we can—are we indifferent?

## 3. Recruiting

If the sectarian world is having a problem here we may expect the same. If we are true to God we can not turn to the world for recruits. If we are faithful we can not turn to the sectarian world to meet the needs of the church. If we do we will accelerate the process of spiritual deterioration. To whom shall we turn?

**Congregations** must become involved in training leadership. If congregations which are faithful today are to remain faithful in the next generation they must give attention to securing faithful preachers, teachers and leaders.

**Parents** must become interested in motivating their children to serve God to the best of their ability. Is it not true that our greatest duty is to

serve God with all our heart, soul, mind and strength (Matt. 22:32-40). If this is true then surely parents play a vital role in encouraging their youth to become leaders in the church.

**Individuals** must be self-starting. When I reach the age of responsibility I must understand that God expects me to come forth and take my post as a good soldier of Jesus Christ (II Tim. 2:3). Not everyone must be a preacher. Each male must search his own soul relative to this duty. The Bible teaches, *To him therefore that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin* (James 4:17). Preaching is doing good. Upon what basis do we refuse to do good?

## 4. Stumbling blocks

We may encourage individuals to preach and we may discourage them to preach. **Agnosticism.** Being uncertain of our convictions relative to spiritual truth and values is a stumbling block to motivating teachers. Peter and others were facing serious decisions relative to their continuing to follow the Lord. Undoubtedly one of the things that kept them faithful was the certainty of the consequences of their actions. They knew that Jesus was the Christ and they knew that there was no where else to turn for the words of eternal life (John 6:66-69). When we are unsure of our position we are tossed to and fro by every wave of error and deceit (Eph. 4:14).

Skeptical people are a stumbling block to preaching the truth.

**Sacrifice** is demanded in living the Christian life. When

we do not motivate the faithful to make sacrifices for the cause of truth and righteousness we are placing a stumbling block in their way. Peter sought to keep the Lord from making the sacrifice essential for our salvation. The Lord told Peter he was becoming a stumbling-block unto him (Matt. 16:21-28). Surely if our children and neighbors see in us the willingness to make sacrifice for truth they will be encouraged to follow the example. It is not uncommon to hear of someone discontinue preaching because they perceive the burdens (sacrifices) have become too heavy to bear. Are we not to be concerned about bearing the burdens of others while at the same time we bear our own burdens (Gal. 6:1-6)?

## Study is hard work.

Preaching is demanding. One of the greatest demands of a preacher is to be informed. We do not gain knowledge by the process of osmosis (an effortless, absorption of ideas, feelings and attitudes).

To be faithful to God we must love Him with all our mind (Matt. 22:37). The mind must be disciplined. It must be trained to think and reason correctly. The mind must not be satisfied with untruth or half truths. The mind must buy the truth and sell it not (Prov.

### *The Harvesters*

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23:23). Only truth will free us from the bondage of sin (John 8:31-32). Every religious doctrine held by men is either true or false. Faithful preachers must preach the truth and oppose the false (Eph. 4:15, 25; 5:11). To place ourselves in the midst of such demands is to place upon ourselves toil that is difficult.

We can not change the nature of truth. We can not change the necessity of searching for and obtaining truth. We must instill in those we teach the significance of truth. If we train brethren to value truth and meet the demands of truth then to study will not be an unfamiliar burden to preachers. To do otherwise is to place a stumbling block in the way of preachers.

### 5. Optimism

We know the gates of hell cannot overpower the cause of truth. This causes us to be optimistic in the battle for right (Matt. 16:18). We know that it is impossible to force someone to love, know and obey the truth. When we have presented the truth to all those we have opportunity to influence we may be optimistic relative to our efforts. When we have done so we may save ourselves and them that hear us (I Tim. 4:15-16).

The cause of truth must have those who love, know, and obey the truth to advance its mission. There is no greater mission for life. When we are convinced of this truth we will enthusiastically encourage others to take up the noblest of all callings—telling the good news of the Christ. [Now notice the

following article written by brother Flatt, Editor.]

## Fewer Entering The Ministry

By  
Dowell Flatt

"Why are not the Christian colleges and preacher training schools turning out more preachers?" Bible department chairmen hear this question regularly. The question is a good one because the present number of Bible majors in our schools is about 50 percent fewer than 20 years ago.

Though the colleges and preacher training schools will have a role to play in changing this situation, the Christian home and the local congregation will have to set the stage. Before they get to college, the majority have already made a decision concerning their life's work.

Freed-Hardeman, with roots going back to 1869, has long been known as an institution which helps train preachers. In the fall of 1988, the F-HC student body numbered 1,169 with 98 Bible majors. An objective survey was conducted among these majors. The results are very interesting.

1. The men in the survey come from seven countries: The Bahamas, Jamaica, New Zealand, Nigeria, the Philippines, South Africa, and the United States. Twenty-one states in the U.S. were represented. Students came from Montana to Florida and from California to West Virginia.

2. Sixty-nine percent had begun by the age of sixteen to think about being a preacher.

Eighty-three percent had thought of it by the end of high school. Only 11 percent after the age of 21 first thought about being a preacher.

3. Twenty-four percent said that they had really decided by the age of sixteen to become a minister. Fifty-nine percent had decided by the age of eighteen. Two years of sixteen to eighteen seem to be critical. Many long-range decisions are made during this short span.

4. Twelve percent decided to preach while in grammar school. Forty-eight percent chose to be a minister during the high school years. Thirty-three percent made the decision during college; only seven percent decided after college.

5. Thirty percent said that their fathers had influenced them to become a minister. Twenty-five percent said that it was the local preacher. The mother was listed by thirteen percent and a missionary by six percent. Only two percent said that it was an elder. That last figure should cause sadness among us.

6. Thirty-two percent of their fathers were preachers. Six percent were elders.

7. The next question was quite revealing: "Were gospel preachers generally (A) praised in your home, or (B) criticized in your home?" Eighty percent said that they were praised.

8. The following question was interesting: "When you decided to preach, were your parents (A) encouraging to you, (B) neutral, or (C) discouraging to you?" Seventy-three percent checked encouraging. Only seven percent checked discouraging.

9. The same question was asked about the home congregation. Seventy percent said that the local church was encouraging; only six percent listed discouraging.

10. The students were asked about how many preachers had come from the home congregation during the last ten years. Forty-six percent checked one or more. That answer is very disturbing.

11. Twenty percent had come from rural congregation; eighteen percent came from a town of less than 10,000. Only ten percent came from cities of more than 500,000.

12. Sixty percent thought that their parents were happily married. Another eighteen percent thought that their parents were fairly happy. Twenty percent came from homes where the parents were either separated or divorced.

13. Nineteen percent said that the annual family income was less than \$10,000. Another twenty-one percent stated that it was less than \$20,000. Only four percent came from families where the yearly income was above \$50,000.

Some key observations can be seen from this data.

A. If we expect to grow more preachers, we must begin

to plant this precious seed into the hearts of young boys.

B. When a young man decides to preach, there must be encouragement from his home and his home congregation.

C. Fathers and local preachers greatly influence young men to become preachers.

D. Elders need to provide more encouragement for young men to preach.

E. Families with larger incomes need to help produce more preachers.

May these preachers have that burning fire in their bones that will not be contained (Jeremiah 20:9). They can have an effect on eternity! (Brother Flatt is Chairman of the Bible Department of Freed-Hardeman College, Henderson, Tennessee. This article was reproduced from *Words of Truth* (September 15, 1989), David Wade, Editor.)

## FALL SEMESTER 1990

Registration will be Friday, 7:30 p.m., September 7, 1990. The first class will meet Monday, 8:30 a.m., September 10, 1990.

The following classes will meet in chronological order on the days indicated:

### Monday

8:30 a.m. English Grammar  
1:00 p.m. Old Testament History

### Tuesday

8:30 a.m. Greek  
1:00 p.m. Gospel of John  
7:00 p.m. Old Testament Survey

### Wednesday

8:30 a.m. Church History  
1:00 p.m. Acts

### Thursday

8:30 a.m. Major Prophets  
1:00 p.m. Personal Evangelism

### Friday

8:30 a.m. Books of Poetry  
1:00 p.m. Educational Program of the Church

### Daily

10:00 a.m. Break  
10:15 a.m. Devotional  
2:30 p.m. Break

July 8, 1990



*It is always good to hear from you and about the good work you are doing. I will continue to support the work there as I can afford to. May the Lord Continue to bless you and the work there.*

*Christian Love,*

*Eunice M. Perry*

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