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PRESENTS

# *My Personal Notes . . .*

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## **ATTITUDE TOWARD PREACHERS AND PREACHING**

I will never forget a comment I heard when I first started preaching, and several times after that, for that matter. I do not remember the sermon but a sweet old lady said to me as she was going out of the building, “You stepped on my toes today. I don’t feel like I have been to church unless I get my toes stepped on.”

That is a comment I am sure is not heard very much these days. Today it would be more like, “You made me feel good.”

There are a lot of reasons the attitude has changed toward preaching and preachers today. We shall not try to enumerate them. Attitudes have gone through a labyrinth of changes these past few years. Nothing has changed about the Bible or the message, but attitudes have changed from, “lay it on me” to “make me feel good.”

## **PREACHERS HAVE ONE JOB**

Preachers have one message, the Word of God. Conscientious preachers will always remember that, and they will also remember that they will not always please their listeners.

Things haven’t changed much in the last four thousand years. Folks sometimes don’t really want to hear what God wants. In the days of Isaiah the prophet God said, “[And now, go, write it before them on a tablet and inscribe it in a book, that it may be for the time to come as a witness forever. For they are a rebellious people, lying children, children unwilling to hear the instruction of the LORD; who say to the seers, “Do not see,](#)”

and to the prophets, “Do not prophesy to us what is right; **speaking to us smooth things**, prophesy illusions, leave the way, turn aside from the path, let us hear no more about the Holy One of Israel.” (Isaiah 30:9-11 ESV Emphasis mine)

Even as late as one hundred years ago, the church was somewhat unfamiliar with “located preachers.” (We also used to refer to them as “loco preachers.”) Most of those who preached did not preach for and was not supported by a local church. If they preached “regularly” for a church, it usually was because they supported themselves by other means. Many were farmers and endured great hardships to be able to speak to others The Word. There were also schoolteachers, accountants, an occasional lawyer and other professions these preachers followed.

### **WHAT HAPPENED TO “PREACH THE WORD?”**

More and more in the church do not want “their preacher,” to “go everywhere preaching the word. They want to keep him at home where he can “take care of their needs.” They want him to be able to attend their dinners, visit them in the hospital, and attend their social activities. In other words, they want a “pastor.”

In every congregation there are a number of people that like the preacher and supports him as long as he is doing right. God bless them! Regardless of what some people think, the preacher needs people to listen to what he says and support him as long as he is preaching the truth. Then there are those who look on the preacher as “an hireling” just preaching “for the money.” While I will admit the possibility of being occasionally true, most preachers can make a lot more money doing something else, if he so chose.

But the attitude that has always intrigued me and upset me at the same time is many think preachers are ignorant of the world, management standards, and if listened to, would lead the church into bankruptcy. This attitude is usually come up when the preacher urges the leadership to “live by faith.” (Romans 1:17; Galatians 3:11; Hebrews 10:38) Do they not realize this phrase is used no less than eighteen times in the eleventh chapter of Hebrews.

One of the problems is that we have so many people in the church today that have not been “fully converted.” We operate on pragmatism rather than faith. Keep in mind that life in the world and life in the church are miles apart. These days, instead of looking for men to serve as elders who are deeply spiritual, we look for men who are successful in life and we think can “lead” people. The problem with this idea is that because a man has been successful in life and business does not necessarily mean he is a success in the kingdom of God.

The reason for the many problems in the church today, as if we needed to add to the list they had in the first century, is that folks in many cases have quit supporting preachers who preach the truth. Too many times the church is satisfied with “fanciful stories.” It seems to make them feel better about themselves but that is not what preachers are commissioned to do.

## **PREACHERS ARE DIFFERENT**

We preachers are an odd lot! For the most part we made the decision to preach because of a great desire to be a “servant of God” in spreading the word. We are focused! Our interest, for which we are sometimes criticized, and our focus is on God’s Word and His church. In most cases we eat, breathe and sleep that focus. It is the first thing we think of when we awake in the morning and the last thing we think when we go to bed at night, usually very late.

If a salesman is so focused he is considered successful. If a ball player is so inclined he is a winner. What is it then if a preacher is so dedicated, many think he is “unbalanced.”

We are human, really. We feel and hurt, laugh and cry, sometimes when no one is watching. We tolerate sometimes more than we should and sometimes less. How many times we have been awake late into the night and early mornings wrestling with how we should present

We work for less pay than most, partly because we think it is expected of us, and mostly because we are not about money. We don’t complain about the money or ask for raises because we don’t want people to think that is what we are about. A few years ago the only way a preacher could get a raise was to move to a place that would pay more.

I am happy it is not that way as much anymore and I have done what I could to help the situation. While I have never asked for raises from my own brethren where I preached, I have advised churches and elders I came into contact with that they needed to pay their preacher better.

Many preachers have never owned a new car. They bought used ones because they were cheaper and in many instances did their own mechanic work because they couldn't afford to hire someone to do the work. And there was a time when no self-respecting preacher would think of putting less than 100,000 miles on a car before he traded. Most never complained about their "lot in life" because they were happy to serve their God.

We've done this happily, energetically, enthusiastically, devotedly because we love God and love the church and people. Glory to Jehovah, our Father, forever and ever.

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