

What You Always Wanted To Know
ABOUT YOUR PREACHER,
But You Never Cared Enough To Ask

By
STEVE WILLIAMS

Published by
J.C. CHOATE PUBLICATIONS
Burton Drive
Winona, Mississippi 38967
U.S.A.
1979

© Copyright 1979

**Art Work, Tim Hacker
Typesetting, Singapore
Printing, U.S.A.**

DEDICATION

**This book is dedicated to the
faculty and staff of
Harding Graduate School of Religion**

INTRODUCTION

In writing this book I am not particularly angry at anyone. This book is not my chance to grind an ax on some brethren that have mistreated me. I have never been fired unfairly, or fired, from a preaching job, so I am not trying to get back at anyone. I still have a warm affection for every church for which I have worked and continue to correspond with all of them, sending them Christmas cards and pictures of the babies. Most of what is contained within this monograph is from the experiences of others.

Hopefully this short work will help awaken elders and the church in general to the needs preachers have. There has been great progress in the last twenty years, but many things still need improving.

Sometimes the terminology in a few of the quotations may sound strange to members of the churches of Christ (e.g. the words "clergy," or "Pastor" for a preacher). These were avoided as much as possible, but sometimes it was necessary to use them if we were going to use certain quotes and information. We ask your indulgence in this matter.

As to the use of some statistics from denominational sources, the author realizes that our concept of the ministry is different in some ways. Our terminology is very different. Many of the comparisons, though, are apropos, since parallels are often evident, especially from a sociological viewpoint.

Here I want to kindly thank my wife who helped greatly in the preparation of this manuscript. Also I want to thank the Boone Plaza Church of Christ (Frankfort, Kentucky) for being the kind of congregation that allows their minister enough time to study as he should. Without that time, this

book never could have been written.

Another group of people deserve thanks in this introduction, that is, the families of gospel preachers and missionaries everywhere. Recently a preacher wrote the following letter to the editor of *Firm Foundation* which he reproduced for all to read.

There are more family missionaries than meet the public's attention. I have spent 20 years in mission work and my parents, sister and my wife's kin have made it possible I have not made a living wage for several years, except as they helped us. My father buys me a car (used) every time my old one wears out, and has for ten years. He pays that part of my daughter's college expense that I can't pay, and my sister has bought my clothes and spending money during college. They have not sought any glory for this and only those know it whom I have told and those are few. I believe in what I am doing or I would not let them

During the past three years my father, sister and my wife's family have supplied us with \$8,000 for hospital, college and car expense. I know of others in similar places who have been able to do their work only because of such family help. I am sure that this type of help is more widespread than is generally known. There is not much glory in this type mission work, but the cause of Christ would be far less were it not for them.¹

This great tribute could be paid to the families of many

1 "A Letter From a Missionary," *Firm Foundation*, 11 (August 9, 1977), 11.

a gospel preacher. Here I would be remiss if I did not thank my parents, Mr. and Mrs. James Tillman Williams, my wife's parents, Mr. and Mrs. John B. Boyd, and my sister and brother-in-law, Mr. and Mrs. Gary Hilton Dean, for the help they have given and continue to give to me.

Steve Williams

THE PUBLISHER'S STATEMENT

We need more preachers in the States, and especially around the world. As the church grows and spreads there is even a greater demand for them. But beyond that, and above all, we need good preachers — those who are converted, sincere, dedicated, zealous, and true to the Book. We need young preachers, old preachers, local preachers, and foreign preachers. We need preachers who are searching for the lost instead of a large salary, who are seeking to serve instead of looking for a position, and who are willing to work for a small congregation to build it up rather than to aim for a large congregation to have power and recognition. We need preachers who will condemn sin and exalt righteousness.

Although these needs are ever with us, where are these preachers going to come from in times when young people are not encouraged to preach by their parents or by the leaders where they worship? Even those who are preachers have been quitting for various reasons at a frightening pace. Where are they going to come from when many of our Christian Colleges no longer place the emphasis on preaching that they once did? Many are concerned with this problem; but the answer is not in more money, more professionalism, or even in more schools.

The preachers that we need are going to come from the home, from the church, and even from our Colleges and schools, that is, when we become converted ourselves and begin to place the emphasis where it really belongs. There will be no such thing as a preacher shortage when we get back to first things, to the souls of men, to that of preaching the gospel, to world evangelism. When we give our children to the Lord and rear them as though we mean it, when we give them opportunities to preach and teach God's word and

encourage and help them to continue, when we set a good example before them and present them with the challenges and rewards of such a glorious work, yes, when we do such far out things, then we are going to see our children, our young people, and even some of the older people, respond to the command to go into all the world and to preach the gospel to every creature.

I know that the foregoing will get results because I am amazed that we have as many preachers as we do when we treat them as we have been doing for the last several years. And yet, in spite of all of that, we have still turned out a large number of preachers. But this is just the beginning of what we can have if we will but have the proper attitude, respect for God's preacher, and give him the encouragement and help that he really needs to do an effective work. Under the proper circumstances there will be a flood of people to respond to preach God's word.

Bro. Steve Williams deals with the preacher in this book, the various aspects of his life, his place in today's world, the great need for him, and the problems, needs, and attitudes that surround him. Please read these pages closely and make up your mind that in the future you are going to be a supporter of gospel preachers instead of being an hindrance to them. Believe me, they need your help and cooperation in this the greatest of all work.

Help us to spread this book among members of the church so that they may get in on some of the problems and solutions that involve the preacher. Surely you would be interested since you too worship with a congregation where there are from one to several preachers tied to the local work. This book could be a means of opening your eyes to what is going on, and the changes that need to be made, when it comes to the gospel preacher.

At the same time may we all, as the Lord's people, resolve to be more understanding, sympathetic, and helpful to those who are committed to that of preaching the word. May we likewise be the means of encouraging someone to preach and to help them to prepare to do so. And by all means, let us all preach Christ in our daily lives. May our aim be to proclaim the gospel to the whole world and may our efforts result in just that.

Yours for preaching the word,

J.C. Choate
131 Moulmein Road
Singapore 11
January 16, 1979

CONTENTS

	Page
The Present Crisis	1
Where Do Preachers Get Their Sermons?	10
How Much Do Preachers Get paid?	20
What Is Like Being A Preacher's Kid? (P.K.)	33
What Is It Like Being A Preacher's Wife?	37
Why Does The Preacher Not Come To Visit Me More Often?	44
What Do Preachers Do With Their Spare Time?	48
Does A Preacher Automatically Have A Lot Of Friends?	52
What Happens To Older Preachers?	56
What Can I Do To Help My Preacher.	61
Postscript	65
Other Reading	67

THE PRESENT CRISIS

How many preachers do you know who have left full-time work? How many young men do you know who are preparing for full-time preaching? How many preachers do you know who are discouraged and dissatisfied with their ministry? Many articles have been written about the preacher shortage. Others are asking why so many preachers are leaving the pulpit. Whether or not there is a preacher shortage I cannot say, but it is obvious that many preachers are leaving the pulpit. Let us first review some of the reasons that ministers are either leaving full-time work or are at least discouraged and dissatisfied with their ministry.

One of the major problems is the multi-image a minister is expected to fulfill. Each congregation has as many ideas about what a preacher should do as it does members. If you have 300 members, you have 300 different ideas of what you are to do. That is why someone has written,

A preacher must have:

The strength of an ox,
The tenacity of a bull,
The daring of a lion,
The wisdom of an owl,
The harmlessness of a dove,
The industry of a beaver,
The gentleness of a sheep,
The versatility of a chameleon,
The vision of an eagle,
The hide of a rhinoceros,
The perspective of a giraffe,
The disposition of an angel,

The endurance of a camel,
The bounce of a kangaroo,
The resignation of an incurable,
The loyalty of an apostle,
The faithfulness of a prophet,
The tenderness of a shepherd,
The fervency of an evangelist,
The devotion of a mother.
And then — he wouldn't please everybody.¹

Think of what all a preacher has to do and is expected to do well. He is expected to preach well, and people expect about fifty different types of preaching. He is expected to counsel with many problems, marital and emotional, to conduct weddings and funerals, to teach several classes a week, to edit a church bulletin, to have his own personal devotional life, to keep abreast of brotherhood issues, to visit shut-ins, to visit those in the hospital, to visit members who are well, to visit members who are sick at home, to visit prospects, to participate in good public relations acts such as civic clubs, to associate with other preachers, to attend elders meetings, to attend business meetings, to run the office staff, to do all the office work if there is no office staff, to answer the church phone and talk to anyone anytime they just want to talk, to be at the church building when someone just wants to drop by and chat, to spend time with the youth, to give parties and attend parties, to organize programs within the congregation such as VBS, visitation, or personal work, to do personal work, to write if possible for brotherhood papers, to promote youth rallies, to help colleges in recruiting young people, to train teachers, to continually answer questions from members, to help solve problems and arguments among members, to send out the elders' correspondence, to run

¹ Charles Hodge, *Your Preacher* (Fort Worth: Star Bible Publications, 1972), p. 12. Used by permission.

errands during the day concerning church business, to work on various committees that have charge of different duties, to tend to many upkeep matters related to the church building, to be available to help members or run errands for them, to be friendly to everyone, to be a good mixer, to keep almost everyone happy, and as if he had any time left, to be a husband and father. This does not even count the time a minister usually spends helping those of other congregations, whether it be by way of counseling or of correspondence.

Certainly this diversity of ministry is a great problem with ministers today. As Charles Hodge asked and answered, "What is a preacher? What does he do? This is one gigantic problem! He is to be a good organizer, public relations expert, professional counselor, great promoter and fund raiser, wonderful with youth, superior teacher, eloquent and entertaining speaker, excellent 'mixer,' handy errand boy, experienced business executive, bookworm, substitute song leader, official 'prayer-leader', both 'pusher' and 'puller.' As Bob Mize said, 'He is sometimes a lawyer, often a social worker, something of an editor, a bit of philosopher, an entertainer, and a handy decoration for public functions.' In other words, a preacher wears 'too many hats.' He spreads himself 'too thin' He is to have '30 years of experience' at the age of 25!"²

The image the congregation has of his ministry and the image the minister has of his ministry are rarely the same. In one study 1300 denominational ministers were asked to arrange six roles or functions in their order of importance according to the ideal. Of over 700 that replied, they felt that a minister should be:

1. A preacher

2 Ibid., p. 15.

2. A pastor
3. A priest
4. A teacher
5. An organizer
6. An administrator

Then they were asked to arrange the items in the order of the amount of time they spent fulfilling each. Their order was,

1. Administrator
2. Pastor
3. Priest
4. Organizer
5. Preacher
6. Teacher

These men estimated that during the average work day of 10½ hours (how many of you work 10 hours a day), that an average of 38 minutes was spent in sermon preparation. Administration was given seven times as much time and effort.

Walter H. Adams commented on this saying, "If a similar study were made of our preaching brethren, it is likely that it would reveal that most of them would prefer to be freed from administrative work so that they might give themselves to their primary responsibility — that of preaching and teaching the gospel."³

"Most preachers," though, "are administrators," Jack Grant writes. "They are poorly trained administrators at that. In a small congregation the preacher may do everything from keeping the building to running errands for the members. In larger congregations he sees that everything is

3 Walter H. Adams, "The Coordinator or Administrator," *Firm Foundation*, 93 (Nov. 9, 1976), 8.

coordinated. If he does not type the church's correspondence, he dictates it. The bigger the church the bigger the administration."⁴

Another reason many ministers are discouraged or leaving the ministry is because of a double standard that is placed upon them and their family. Many have higher standards for preachers than anyone else, including elders. Preachers' wives and children are expected to live better; they are expected to excell, and if they are in trouble, the preacher's job is in trouble.

"A lady was once very critical of a preacher for a certain type of recreation in which his family participated. It required no immodesty or wrong doing. In less than a year she was condoning her son's participation in that very type of recreation. Verily the legs of the lame are unequal."⁵

"They are leaving full-time work because of *frustration*. The task which is given to the local preacher is an impossible task. He has so many jobs to do that he never gets through, and he has great difficulty in deciding what to leave undone. He worries because he cannot find time for his own family. He worries because he cannot get the time needed for relaxation and to keep physically fit. His strength is often sapped because of the attitude of indifference characteristic of the brethren.

"They are leaving because of *disappointment*. The preacher loves the word of God and the souls of men. He trained himself to be an efficient student and teacher of the

4 R. Jack Grant, "There Is More Than Local Work," *Firm Foundation*, 93 (Nov. 16, 1976), 3.

5. Robert R. Taylor, "Why Preachers Move - Congregational Focus," *Words of Truth*, 13 (Dec. 31, 1976), 4.

Bible. He believes that the world's greatest need — in the church and out — is for men who can and will spend their lives in studying, teaching, and preaching the word of God. He did his background preparatory work with the thought in mind that his life would be devoted to studying, teaching, and preaching the Bible. Then — he finds himself in a situation where he has precious little time for study, and where what to him is of greatest importance is to the congregation of least importance. There is the great conflict between the preacher's conception of his work and the members' conception of it.

“They are leaving because of the *limited period of usefulness*. Preachers know that their usefulness beyond fifty years of age is very, very limited and uncertain. They believe they *must* be concerned about the future. They have taught others that one should pray for something, and then work to that end. They believe this applies to themselves also. They feel they should pray for God to care for them, but that they have an obligation to work to that end. Preachers are not ‘lovers of money,’ and they are not leaving local work in order to have more money for themselves *now*. They simply know that every penny they make in preaching is consumed in living expenses. They cannot save a dime for old age. Consequently, many are leaving the local work in order to try to have some assurance of a living in their old age.”⁶

Some preachers quit for more security. “Preachers should trust in the Lord,” someone says. They do, and they remember that the Lord told them to plan ahead, counting the cost. Would you apply such a pious platitude to yourself, using it as a reason to stay in a job with little security? We must realize that for many preachers there is little security.

6 Roy Deaver, “Problems of Gospel Preachers (No. 9),” *Gospel Advocate*, 105 (April 4, 1963), 216.

As Robert R. Taylor put it so well, “And brethren, we might as well be realistic and face it – local preachers have about as little security as does a football coach in the wake of a losing season.”⁷

Some preachers turn away from the ministry because they were not adequately prepared for it. They were told only the good side in school. Maybe they were raised in a congregation that treated its preacher fairly, and they assumed it was that way across the brotherhood. Our schools need to train our young ministers more thoroughly on what to expect. Psychological tests should be given on their capability. Methods of coping with problems and difficulties should be stressed.

Some preachers probably quit, not because the brethren are too hard on them, but because they are too hard on themselves. As a preacher they continually wonder if they have done enough to please the elders, to please the older ladies, to please the teenagers, to please the deacons, to please the ladies Bible class, and, yea verily, to please the Lord. The question is, “Did he pray the right prayer for the sick? Is he getting to the heart of the needs of his people in the Sunday sermons? Who is sick and in need of his care and expects him to know of it through extrasensory perception? Why was that particular man gruff to him in saying, ‘I haven’t seen you lately. Aren’t you seeing people any more?’ ”⁸ The brethren set up roles for preachers to fulfill, fellow ministers set up roles for us, and worst of all, preachers expect too much of themselves. I have known a few lazy preachers. Most, though, were workaholics and drove themselves too hard.

7 Robert R. Taylor, “Why Preachers Move – Congregational Focus,” 1.

8 Pastor X, *How To Murder A Minister* (Old Tappan, New Jersey: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1970), p. 25. Used by permission.

Another very disappointing and discouraging thing is the attitude people have toward a minister. They think he has nothing at all to do except preach twice on Sunday. "One minister had been up for most of three nights and was eating an early breakfast in a local restaurant. He nearly dropped his coffee cup when the typical early morning group gathered for their coffee and one of them said for all to hear, 'What's the preacher doing out this early? Preachers don't have to get up!' This is such a well-known phrase that most readers will not find it difficult to supply at least a dozen such situations from their own experience."⁹

In light of this constant myth that the preacher has nothing to do, a myth perpetuated by members of the church more than outsiders, Robert R. Taylor concluded, "I have about decided that many brethren do not believe the preacher does anything because of one of two reasons: (1) They judge the preacher's work for the Lord by what they do and this is practically nothing. (2) They judge the preacher's work by what they would do were they in his place!!"¹⁰

Many more reasons could be given for the present crisis of preachers leaving the pulpit or being dissatisfied while staying. The list could be endless. Some of the reasons already mentioned will be treated further in later chapters. Others not mentioned will also be discussed. For example, many preachers are leaving the pulpit for family reasons. The pressures upon and stereotypes of a preacher's family, therefore, deserve discussing.

We need to face this crisis in the ministry. Joe Barnett said, "There was a time when a large percentage of young men wanted to be preachers. Not any more. Our young

9 Ibid., p. 18.

10 Taylor, "Why Preachers Move," 1.

men are afraid of it afraid to enter a field where one wrong sentence, one social blunder, one unintentional slight can spell their doom if it 'ruffles the feathers' of an influential member (or his wife)."¹¹ Something must be done to take away this crisis in the ministry.

11 In the introduction to Hodge, *Your Preacher*, p. 4.

WHERE DO PREACHERS GET THEIR SERMONS?

One of the greatest disappointments to a preacher is the attitude people take toward his preaching. A preacher takes preaching seriously. One can hunt through the pages of the *Firm Foundation*, the *Gospel Advocate* and other brotherhood papers and find many quotations and titles to articles on the greatness, the majesty, the importance, and the nobility of preaching. Preachers are sold on preaching, or else they would not endure all of their torment in order to do it.

After spending years in school and years in study, though, a preacher is only aware that he does not know very much. He must continually study every week. It really hurts, then, when someone does not take his preaching seriously. One man used to ask me to speak at a certain place about every two or three months. I did not mind him asking, but I requested that he give me at least a one week notice. Rarely did he ever do it, though, saying, "Why you're a preacher. You do not have to get ready. All you have to do is get up there and talk."

Robert R. Taylor spoke of this when he wrote, "Nearly everyone is amazed to learn that efforts are required before one ascends the pulpit and delivers a helpful message to the auditors therein congregated. We have long been a people who recognized that preachers are not supplied currently with an instant message when they enter the pulpit and yet seemingly multitudes of our people ignore the realistic facts that much study goes into every worthwhile sermon. Many seem shocked to learn that a preacher needs to spend several

hours in study every week if he is going to do his job well. Some have told us, 'Oh, you do not need any time to study, you already know it.' How full of mistaken notions such people are!"¹

These mistaken notions are heightened by the fact that nearly all people consider the most important job of a preacher to be that of delivering the two Sunday sermons. Actually all things we do in worship, whether giving, the Lord's supper, singing, or praying are just as important as preaching for they are all God-given activities for Christians to engage in, but in the minds of most people, the sermon emerges as the central part of the worship services. One Gallup poll revealed that 97% of the people in this country consider the sermon to be the most important element in corporate worship. This means that a preacher who does poorly in his pulpit work will be criticized more than a preacher who is weak in some other function as a minister.

Preaching is often hindered by the facilities in which a preacher has to work. As Daniel Walker explains, "The minister's study is usually too small, poorly designed to inspire creative thought, and badly located. It is set up as an office rather than a study and designed for administrative work and counseling rather than for the thoughtful preparation of sermons. It is usually near the areas of heaviest foot traffic and the busy rumble of the church office with its ringing phones and whirling mimeographs. This means death to preaching, and is clear evidence of the fact that the preacher's role as administrator has crowded out his function as preacher. The study should be large enough for a man to pace the floor without getting dizzy. It should be remote from distracting sounds and sights, and its walls should be

1 Robert R. Taylor, "What If You Were The Preacher?" *Words of Truth*, 9 (May 2, 1975), 1.

lined with bookshelves which, hopefully, the minister will keep busy with books.”²

Most members of the church just do not realize the amount of study it takes to perform one's teaching tasks well. The saying that preachers use the most is that it takes one hour of preparation for every one minute in the pulpit. Personally, I am tired of hearing preachers piously declare such cliches when we all know that many come nowhere near that amount of time in study. If two thirty minute sermons were preached each week, that would be sixty hours of study a week for the sermons alone. That leaves almost no time for the hundred remaining duties that face a minister. How many ministers really spend thirty hours on every sermon? From the sermons I have heard and from what I know of many preachers' study habits, my guess would be that they spend three hours in a sermon book or two hours looking over a Herald of Truth sermon sheet.

In looking at my own record, I have few sermons that have taken over thirty hours to prepare. I can count those on my fingers with ease. There is another side to the coin, however. When a preacher uses an old sermon outline, he often revises it, restudies it, and retypes it. That old sermon he preached three years ago often sounds shallow and simple when he looks at it the second or third time, so he reworks it. In this way some sermons continually get better and better and continually have more and more time invested in them.

Also, a person is greatly mistaken if they think a preacher only spends time studying for his sermons and his classes. If a preacher only studied for that purpose, to preach and teach,

2 Daniel D. Walker, *Enemy In The Pew?* (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1967), pp. 86-87. Used by permission.

he would soon have problems in his ministry. Every Christian needs a private devotional life of prayer and scripture reading. It is no different with a preacher. Most preachers spend several hours a week reading brotherhood papers and journals to keep informed on current issues. I personally receive seven brotherhood journals regularly at the present and two denominational ones. My plans are to receive more very soon.

Furthermore, a typical preacher who is performing his task well spends many hours studying things which do not directly affect his preaching or teaching content. A preacher today is expected to be able to counsel a variety of problems. Almost no preachers have adequate training in this regard, so they are forced to do a great deal of reading in psychology and counseling. Many, many other types of study are often engaged in by the preacher.

A preacher should spend several hours a week studying current events in order that his preaching might be fresh and relevant. I read a newspaper every day and go to the library at least once a week and look over such periodicals as *Newsweek*, *Time*, *U.S. News and World Report*, *Commonweal*, *The Christian Century*, *Harper's Magazine*, *The Atlantic Monthly*, *The New Yorker*, and, of course, *Sports Illustrated*. Good old *Reader's Digest* is always a good standby. Of course I do not read all of these, but I do keep up with the news and find occasional useful items for bulletin articles or sermons.

To add to all of the above, a minister who is in a town where religious journals are available at a public or school library should continually check several religious journals for their current articles. Some of the ones I check are *Christianity Today*, *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society*, *Bible Translator*, *Biblical Archaeologist*, *Expository Times*,

Restoration Quarterly, and *Evangelical Quarterly*. Reading such journals is important to a preacher to broaden his outlook from whatever the contemporary issue may be in the brotherhood and to give him a scholarly depth behind his study.

Ministers who are able need to write. The brotherhood has dozens of journals which need quality writing. Sunday school literature needs to be written. Books on many topics are needed. Tracts are always needed for a variety of subjects. Bulletins need something more than the proverbial "selected" or "copied." Also a preacher should attempt some writing, since the practice of writing will improve his English skills, his vocabulary, and his ability to organize his thoughts. What writer does not continually consult the dictionary? Such practice cannot but help him in the pulpit in the long run.

When one realizes the many things a preacher must constantly study, one can begin to see where a great amount of an effective preacher's time goes. Few actually spend one hour for each minute in the pulpit, but actual study for the two sermons constitutes only a small part of a preacher's necessary study. Brethren need to realize the preacher's need to study and attempt to free him enough, so that he can spend the appropriate amount of time in study. We need preachers who will keep their nose in a book more often.

Charles Hodge spoke of this crying need in powerful words: "A good preacher should spend \$200 - \$300 yearly on books! Snappy Selected Sermons will not get the job done! I judge preachers by their libraries! Would you want a carpenter who would not buy a hammer? saw? This getting sermons up on Saturday night is too disgraceful to be funny! There is nothing quite so hard as sermon preparation. It is easier to be in the study than study The discipline of hard study is too much for many preachers. Too many pulpits

are characterized by having nothing to say.”³

Preachers would make their task much easier by doing three things. First, buy good books. Sermon books have their place. I own a few of them (less than ten and I only use three of them very much). What preachers need most, though, are Bible dictionaries, current commentaries, Greek tools, Hebrew tools, concordances, several translations, theology books, poem books, and even a few illustration books. Concentrate on buying reference books. A preacher who begins his sermon preparation in *Nave's Topical Bible* will be much better off than one who begins in *Skeleton Outlines*.

Second, preachers should develop a massive filing system if they do not already have one. J.D. Bales started me on one year ago at Harding, and I will forever be indebted to him for it. A preacher cannot remember everything, so he should clip out articles from journals and newspapers and file them away. He should write down page numbers and book titles for appropriate notes in a book and file them away. When the time comes to preach on a certain topic, a file of interesting statements, stories, ideas, and scriptures is already collected. I have been able to prepare and type some sermons in about three to four hours when a good file of material was collected. Otherwise, it usually takes about ten hours.

Third, preachers should obtain all of the education that opportunity and finances allow. A typical preacher may be preaching to people who have four, five, or eight years of college and are experts in their fields, whether it be teaching, law, medicine, engineering, or whatever. Why should a preacher not be expected to be an expert in his field of the

3 Hodge, *Your Preacher*, p. 30.

Bible? I would not want to imply that a college education is necessary for a preacher, for such would be unscriptural. It would be putting the church totally at the mercy of our college faculties for trained preachers; but on the other hand, I have nothing but praise, respect, and thankfulness for the education I received at Harding College and Harding Graduate School of Religion. I have said many times that I would not trade those years of education for hardly anything. Most other graduates of our schools feel the same way.

But back to our original question, where do preachers get their sermons? One can see that they can come from a variety of sources. The lazy preacher gets them from sermon books, and his congregation knows it. One preacher even took the outline book itself into the pulpit, much to the dismay of the congregation. The diligent student gets his ideas from the word of God. "This knowledge and experience must be first-hand, gained through prayer, study, and preparation, for us no less than for the prophets and apostles of old. We must first receive the Word into our own life before we can share it with others."⁴ The old battle call "Preach the word" is the answer. That is not to be confused with just quoting scripture, but neither is it to be equated with rehashing someone's sermon outline. Anyone can find a text, make up three shallow points, and add a couple of touching stories.

In preparing a typical sermon, I will consult about thirty books. That sounds like a lot, but it is really not too much. A few Greek words must almost always be checked on. Commentaries take up several more of the books in checking on isolated passages. Reference works are always consulted first after the outline is made and the important scriptures are selected. Only at the last minute before typing is done are

4 Abraham deVries, "Ignorant Preachers," *Christianity Today*, 14 (Jan. 2, 1970), 9. Used by permission.

the illustration books consulted. Too often, though, a preacher finds a good illustration and then hunts for a scripture to go with it. That is not preaching from the Bible, but only using the Bible to cover over one's preaching with a facade of scriptural authority.

Let us look more closely, though, at one problem we have mentioned. One plague of preachers is the use of others' sermons such as those found in sermon outline books or sermon books. Such usage really constitutes plagiarism in many cases. Several reasons are often given for this constant practice. "First is the often cited fact that the preacher is under a nearly impossible production schedule Second, all sermons draw, theoretically, on the same primary sources — the Scriptures Third, a sermon is neither an academic term paper nor a paper to be read at the annual meeting of some learned society."⁵ "These circumstances make genuinely unintentional plagiarism a fact of life for every minister."⁶

George Mitchell reports in the *Wall Street Journal* that about 40,000 ministers subscribe to publishing services which issue "weekly texts or tapes" that preachers can deliver verbatim. Concerning this, one preacher in Chicago said, "Frankly, I don't have the time or the training to produce a quality sermon every week I don't think I'm shortchanging my congregation if I find something suitable from an outside source." "Judging by the popularity of volumes of sermons, ministers' manuals and pulpit digests, many ministers share this " minister's views."⁷

5 Hunter Beckelhymer, "No Posturing in Borrowed Plumes." Copyright 1974 by Christian Century Foundation. Reprinted by permission from the February 6, 1974 issue of *The Christian Century*.

6 Ibid., p. 140.

7 Ibid.

Many then condone their activity as actually being better for the congregation. In this way they do not have to face their own mismanagement of their time or their own laziness. The problem here, though, is not just one of preachers taking the easy way out; but it is an ethical issue. Preachers are using such materials with the impression that they are their own. This has always been a sore point with me, so I always try to give credit. Since it is a sermon and a worship service rather than a scholarly lecture, I do not give details such as publishers, dates, page numbers, or such material. Constantly, though, I will mention names from whom an idea is taken, and even more often I will preface a thought by saying, "As one man said," or "As one man has written," or "As one man has pointed out." In this way I do not give the impression of being original with everything or of trying to impress people with detailed footnotes in sermons.

Rarely do I use a sermon that is directly one from another man. I found out the hard way on this matter. After preaching one of the very few sermons I had taken directly from a book and receiving a cool reception, grins and smiles later informed me that the other minister at the congregation had used that lesson two weeks before in the Wednesday night class. One of the elders was grinning from ear to ear and said, "You two are going to have to get together on your lessons aren't you?" What could I do in that situation? Nothing except say, "Oops," and remember my lesson.

"But weighty as the ethical issue of dishonesty is, a weightier one yet has to do with the minister's calling, vocation and self-understanding. Surely every minister has some sense of his personal responsibility to be a spokesman for God, a mediator of the Eternal to his times. In meeting that dread responsibility he needs, of course, all the human help he can get, from the community of faith and from secular wisdom. But the angle of vision must be his own, and the

synthesis must be the work of God upon his own conscience, heart and mind. 'Is not my word like fire, says the Lord, and like a hammer which breaks the rock in pieces? Therefore, behold I am against the prophets, says the Lord, who steal my words from one another' (Jer. 23:29-30).

" The Lord expects of his spokesmen that they wrestle afresh with his Word and his people's need and proclaim what he gives them to see."⁸

The ministers credibility is at stake. Is his preaching from the heart or just a part of his job that he must do? "There is much evidence that those who hear us also prefer that we roll our own. They can read all the good sermons they want to. Do not our congregations expect from their own ministers that they wrestle honestly and immediately with the Christian faith and the issues of human life, and preach from that inner encounter rather than give a digest of what other ministers have said? It is at this point that the truth-half in Marshall McLuhan's half-truth, 'The medium is the message,' speaks to our condition. The minister standing to preach before a congregation is a medium. If he be *only* a purveyor of other men's experience with the Eternal, or a synthesizer of the secondhand, he is that medium-message."⁹

"The issue, then, is deeper than a student's grade, a distinguished preacher's embarrassment, an undistinguished preacher's pretensions, or a homiletics professor's pedantry in drawing a crooked line of definition between plagiarism and legitimate borrowing. The issue is no less than that of the preacher's vocation and viability as a spokesman for his God."¹⁰

8 Ibid., p. 141.

9 Ibid., pp. 141-42.

10 Ibid., p. 142.

HOW MUCH DO PREACHERS GET PAID?

Perhaps there is more ignorance and more insensitivity shown on the question of salary than on any other issue. In recent years there have been many articles written on the subject, and there are some signs of increased understanding on this point, but the subject remains one of the most obvious signs of a lack of Christian love toward preachers. Elders of one congregation I know of are continually asked to lower the payroll. Members are continually accusing preachers of “preaching for the money,” something few preachers have ever considered. If they were after money, they would not be a preacher. Some churches are struggling and paying the preacher everything they can afford; others are paying as little as they can get by with.

Last year I read an anonymous article in *Firm Foundation* by a preacher saying, “I paid no income taxes last year.” To many that sounds good at first. They think the preacher is really having it easy, since the church usually provides him with a house and since he gets some tax breaks. The reply this man made, though, showed things to be quite different. The fact actually was that in the government’s eyes he made *no taxable income*. He was considered in a category with the poor folks. The next year I could have written the same article, seeing that I paid no federal income taxes or state income taxes.

Though pay is not the major reason for preachers leaving full-time work, it is an important one. Furthermore, it is a source of much unhappiness and discouragement. “Upon receiving a ‘call to another church’ with a pay raise the joke

states, 'Dad is downstairs praying and Mom is upstairs packing.' ”¹ If members only knew the depressed feeling it gives ministers to be treated as somebody that should be kept humble by keeping them poor, they would feel ashamed. As is often said, God will keep the preacher humble; the church will keep him poor.

Brethren think preachers have it easy getting a house rent-free and several tax breaks. Actually these are the silliest misconceptions ever dreamed up about preachers. Let us consider the rent-free house first. If you provide your preacher with a house that the church owns, that is income to a certain extent. He must pay social security payments on the rental value of the house. Also, remember that the preacher is not building up any equity. When he gets to be sixty and the church forgets him, since he is too old, where will he live? He has no home because the church has always “given” him one to live in. The poor man of God is left without a job, without a salary and income, and without a roof over his head. He must then go begging. How disgraceful.

What about the so-called great tax breaks a preacher gets. Let me look back to a recent tax form and use it for an example. I had a \$57.25 deduction in office supplies necessary for my work that the church did not provide, a car expense of \$2,372.53 (few preachers get a car allowance and if they do, it is usually a small one), postage and photocopying expenses of \$126.00, a book and journal subscriptions total of \$269.81 (my lowest in years), and a parsonage upkeep deduction of \$1,300.00. These sound like wonderful deductions to many people. Actually the only real deduction in the above is the parsonage upkeep bill, and part of it is really not a deduction. If one looks at the above items

1 Hodge, *Your Preacher*, p. 51.

maturely, he will realize that all of those are business expenses. The preacher is considered self-employed, and these are his business deductions.

That means that I subsidized my church work by a total of \$4,125.59 last year. That does not even include our contribution for the year. That does not include our \$647.10 hospitalization insurance which most businesses provide for their employees. That does not even include the money I paid for social security and the \$240 invested in a retirement plan for myself. That does not include the other insurance payments which businesses sometimes make for employees. Looking at it from a business viewpoint, my salary is like the gross receipts before the overhead is paid. After the overhead is taken out, over half of my salary is gone. (Preaching is not a very profitable business!) If you add to that my church contributions and benefits I must pay such as hospitalization, my net profit from the “preaching business” is only about one-third of my salary.

Charles Hodge sums it up well by saying, “ we don’t get hospitalization, social security, retirement, fringe-benefits, stock options, a car furnished an expense account, nor Christmas bonus. In fact I have had only 4 Church Christmas presents in 23 years. A preacher barely lives preaching only to find out he cannot educate his children then at 50 years of age he is unwanted! What does he have? No house of his own, no insurance, no retirement – NOTHING! The Church of Christ of the 15 largest religions in the USA is the only one without hospitalization and retirement. We should be ashamed!”²

All elders who are business men should ask themselves, “How many men could I hire if they had to subsidize their

2 Ibid., p. 57.

job with \$4,000 or more of their income?" Or ask yourself, "In addition to this how many people could I hire in business if they also had to pay their own social security, retirement, and hospitalization insurance?" Elders know they could not hire a competent person under such conditions. Any person they did hire would only be using the job for something to barely eat off of until something better came along. Elders of congregations that are able to pay preachers more should weep when they think of how they have paid preachers in the past.

Methods of paying preachers often reveal practices that are very unethical. A friend of mine moved to help a church, taking a cut in his already low pay temporarily until the attendance and contribution went up. His car was not big enough to carry everyone he was bringing to church in one load, so he traded for a bigger, but older car. It cost him more, but his payments were still the same, just being extended out for a longer period of time. When the brethren saw him in a bigger car, they immediately assumed that he did not need a raise. And one of those elders who was rich gave \$5 a week. All elders are not this way, but too many are.

Gus Nichols told me privately just a few years before he died that as a young minister I should always make sure the church paid me enough to live on. He said he and his wife had had some hard times over the years where they would have to squeeze a nickel so tight that the buffalo would cry out. How many preacher's wives are tired of cooking beans, tired of buying second hand things or receiving hand-me-downs? How many preachers would like to buy their wife a nice gift, but are not able? More than you think.

George Q. Lauterbach, an elder, asked an important question, "Have you taken the pulse of the preacher market

lately?" He then continues by asking, "Have we been so tight with the amount of salary that talented men are hard to find among the ranks of those who preach? There was a time when public school teachers and preachers received about the same financial consideration, but this is no longer true in our part of the country. A beginning teacher starts at about \$7300 annually and can with additional preparation and experience earn up to \$17,000 yearly on the salary schedule (he wrote this in 1973). In addition to the base amount cited such fringe benefits as life insurance, retirement and hospitalization are given, not to mention permanent tenure after three years of successful experience. Please do not misunderstand, this is not an attempt to convey the idea that teachers receive too much, it simply raises the question, have we kept pace with salary advances for those who help to serve our spiritual needs? No wonder young men would rather prepare for the overcrowded teaching field than serve as a minister.

"These lips have also asked, 'Why can't we find a man who will be willing to work?' Is the lack of activity on the part of a preacher caused by little desire or could the reason be discouragement? A man who feels he isn't being treated fairly doesn't usually put his whole being into the task at hand. Or, dare we even ponder the thought that the able and ambitious are rarely found among the applicants who wish to be considered for an opening?

"If these remarks bear any resemblance to truth, who is to blame for such a regrettable situation? Brethren, this writer firmly believes that we, the elders, must step forth and accept the responsibility. We have not encouraged the capable young men to preach! You do not agree, do you? Sure, we have all given lip-service, but have we as the saying goes 'put our money where our mouth is'? We have not! Oh, in a few cases this is not true, but in general we have not made

the life of a preacher attractive. Fellow elders, how would you like to care for your family on the salary now being received by the minister in your congregation? How would you like to have the knowledge that next year you must move your family to some unknown destination, probably not determined by your choice, but by what is available at the time? How many of us would trade places with our present preacher?

“Again the question, ‘Have we been so tight with the amount of salary that talented men are hard to find among the ranks of those who preach?’ If your minister is truly ministering, should he not be rewarded abundantly?”

“This elder has concluded that: if we are going to have a bountiful harvest, we are going to have to sow bountifully (2 Cor. 9:6). Brethren, we have been ‘bargain hunting’ too long. You know, our wives might be right — maybe we do ‘get what we pay for.’”

“We just might be wise to increase monthly support and pay out less on moving expenses for our preaching brothers.”³

Oh, if only all members and elders had the insight this man does. He realizes that preachers get discouraged by their small pay and, therefore, do not work as well as they are able. Many others never go into the ministry for that reason. Still others quit it every year for this reason. In one survey as to why ministers were leaving the pulpit, 12.2% gave financial reasons as the major issue. However, 42% said financial reasons had something to do with leaving the ministry. In this denominational survey 65% indicated that they received an inadequate salary and living arrangements. The

3 George Q. Lauterbach, “Why This Market Is Not Rising,” *Firm Foundation*, 90 (Feb. 6, 1973), 6.

denominations pay a little better than the church, so our percentage might be even higher for those receiving inadequate salary.

In this survey, upon leaving the ministry those aged from 30 to 50 reported that 55% of them received some or much improvement in salary. For those over the age of 50, 47% reported an improvement in income. The overall indication was that they were much better paid after leaving than before.⁴

What hurts the most, though, for many preachers in the church is to see how denominational groups treat their preachers in comparison with the Lord's church. In one study written from their viewpoint, the writer concludes, "It's no accident that for most pastors their pay is intolerably low."⁵ This sounds normal, but the depressing thing is when he makes a statement like this about car allowances: "Unfortunately, few congregations assume that full responsibility. Instead they pay the pastor \$1800 a year and expect him to pay for his costs with that."⁶ He talks as if such is normal among denominational churches. It may or may not be, but it surely is not normal among the churches of Christ. Few preachers get a car allowance at all, and an \$1800 car allowance is the kind of news that can spread like wildfire among ministers.

The article continues, "Clergymen without adequate health insurance coverage are running a risk of bankruptcy or becoming real welfare cases."⁷ And how many preachers in

4 Charles M. Clodfelter, "Why Preachers Quit," *Gospel Advocate*, 116 (Oct. 31, 1974), 694-95.

5 Manfred Holck, "The Pastor's Pay," *Your Church*, (Sept./Oct., 1973), 29. Used by permission.

6 *Ibid.*, p. 28.

7 *Ibid.*

the Lord's church are running that risk every year, because the brethren will not pay him enough to purchase adequate coverage or else purchase it for him.

Much more could be said, but just a few general comments are in order. When a preacher goes to preach in a meeting, he is often caught between two "bargain hunting" congregations. The congregation he is engaged in a meeting with wants to know if he is losing his pay back home while he is gone. If he says, "No," he can rest assured that he has just lost \$200 or more. Back home they may be wanting to know how much he will get paid for the meeting, so that they can cut down on his salary and save. Others do not pay their preacher at all when he is away for a meeting. "Surely elders do not do such things," you say. Not all of them, or even the majority of them, but too many of them do this.

Though we will discuss the preacher's wife in another chapter, let us mention her here in the issue of preachers' salaries. When some elders hire a preacher, they think they have hired a family. They think they are getting two for one, or maybe even more if the preacher has grown children. One preacher was asked, "Can your wife teach, handle ladies class, visit, etc.?" He asked, "Are you going to hire her too?" He did not get the job as you probably have already assumed.⁸

Firing a preacher sometimes is done in less than ethical ways. Some congregations tell a preacher that he will have three months or more to find another place and that they will be hunting for a new man. Some even attempt to arrange such a move during the summer for children and school's sake. Often, though, it is otherwise. Some are fired because they preached a sermon that really needed preaching. Others are fired because some influential member turned

8 Hodge, *Your Preacher*, p. 58

against the preacher and swayed the elders with his big contribution.

Robert R. Taylor asks a very pertinent question. "What if you were the preacher? You had worked by day and prayed by night to help build a strong, sturdy, mission-minded church fully set for the defense of the gospel and its extension into the hearts of humanity. Attendance was good, the contribution was at an all time high, people were studying more, prayer was more in evidence, spirituality was ascending and a greater work for Jesus was being done than at any time in the congregation's past. Suppose you were away preaching in a gospel meeting or speaking on a lectureship (barely getting expenses) and needed to have a free and unfettered mind to concentrate on the work at hand. A distressing call came late one night from your wife informing you that a group had met secretly working for your immediate release or an infamous petition was being circulated by your critics seeking instant dismissal. Were you the preacher and had been sound in your preaching and upright in your life, how would you like to finish a meeting or lectureship with this on your mind? How would you feel toward coming home to this type of problem? Suppose she spared you while in the meeting but met you at the door with this type of news? Many preachers who read these lines could tell you from first-hand experience how one feels. Some could write a small volume of sorrow on this very score. How would you like to be in the place of the preacher's wife when this developed? Would you like to be in the place of the preacher's children and not know from one school day to the next if this would be the last day before moving? How would you feel, as their Daddy, if their first question after each business meeting was, 'Daddy, do we GET to stay or do we HAVE to move?' Each time that question was asked there was hurt in their hearts and tears in their eyes?"⁹

9. Taylor, "What If You Were The Preacher?" 1.

Though it will constitute some repetition of previous ideas, a long quotation will now be given. Tom C. Brown wrote a "Survey of the Personal Financial Support for Ministers" which appeared in the *Gospel Advocate*. We quote it almost in its entirety for we could not improve on it.

He writes, "In preparation for a report given in connection with the David Lipscomb College Winter Lectures for 1972, this writer made a survey of the financial support given to ministers of the church of Christ. Some two-hundred congregations were selected to be included. For the purposes of this survey, these congregations were divided into three groups: those under 500 members; those with 500 to 750 members; and those with more than 750 members. The very strongest congregations in each grouping were selected, and for this reason, the results may not be typical in many respects. These represent some of the best men in our brotherhood, many of them with the very highest educational backgrounds and with many years of experience. The results are as follows:

"The average base support (excluding all allowances) was \$11,620 per year. For congregations under 500 members it was \$10,490; for congregations with between 500 and 750 members it was \$11,220; and for those with more than 750 members it was \$13,152.

"About 76 percent of these ministers live in homes owned by the congregations for which they preached

"Only one preacher out of the 200 surveyed received the use of a car owned and maintained by the congregation with which to do his work. Only 21 percent received any car allowance at all and the average allowance received was \$828 per year. Only 2 percent of those receiving an allowance felt that their allowance was adequate to meet actual expenses.

“Less than half of the ministers (48 percent) indicated they received an annual raise in support. Most of those reporting a yearly increase indicated that it was only a token \$5 per week. On the average, ministers went for two years between raises.

“About 20 percent of those surveyed received some type of retirement benefit. While 90 percent were covered by Social Security, of these only 57 percent of the congregations participated. Only about 20 percent received any type of health insurance benefit, and only one minister in the survey group received a book or clothing allowance.

“Of these ministers, 16 percent were forced to take part-time work to meet expenses, and 28 percent had wives who were forced to work. Some 34 percent of these ministers had income from other sources.

“You can see from the above results of the survey taken that these ministers, who by reason of education, experience, specialized training and degree of responsibility should have been receiving support on the par with those of similar education, experience, specialized training and responsibility in the business world — their support did not begin to compare!

“We are all aware of inflation and the effect it is having. The cost of living has been increasing at a rate of from 5 percent to 7 percent per year, sometimes faster. An annual increase in support for the minister is imperative. If he is not given an annual raise in at least an amount equal to the rate of inflation, his support is actually being cut. To wait for two years between raises and then to make the raise only a token one is shameful! It is no wonder that so many preachers do not feel they have the support of the leadership of the congregation — they do not even get it in a financial way!

“The survey indicates that if a preacher needs an increase in support, he must move to a larger congregation to receive any significant increase. Perhaps this is in part the reason why so many preachers move each year, wasting millions of dollars, and why the average preacher will move once about every three or four years.

“Every congregation ought to provide a realistic car allowance for its minister. The token allowances that have been given in the past are entirely inadequate. A study recently conducted by Rep. Seymour Halpern indicates that the cost of operating a car for four years is \$11,000 for a car that initially costs \$2800. This figures out to about \$2750 per year and is a realistic figure on which to base the minister’s car allowance. What we have now is a situation where ministers are actually subsidizing their work in the amount of over \$2000 per year and more! No business would expect this from an employee. For a more realistic figure in regard to base support, this amount should be subtracted. In other words, for a preacher who received \$11,000 in base support, but no car allowance with which to do his work, has actual support of only \$9,000 or less. But congregations report it in financial reports as \$11,000 for that looks so much better. Brethren, this is wrong!

“Churches should pay ministers an adequate housing allowance rather than providing a home. This way he would be assured adequate housing without penalty. As conditions now are, ministers are buying the homes for the congregations, but when the home is paid for, the church owns the home and not the minister. And when the minister is old he has no roots, no equity, no home – nothing. Notice also that any allowance paid should consider the actual cost of housing in the community.

“Finally, all congregations should be sensitive to the

needs of ministers in their old age. Some retirement benefits should be provided — paid for by the congregation. This has been the policy of many businesses, educational institutions, and government for a long time. Health insurance should also be provided, as well as realistic allowances for other expenses that are normally incurred by the minister in the performance of his work.”¹⁰

In this survey let us remember that these were the cream of the crop congregations. In most congregations I know of, it is much worse. Finances are a sore spot and too many preachers are afraid or ashamed to speak up about it. If they do, people can easily accuse them of being a hireling or “preaching for the money.” One old experienced minister, though, noted that congregations using a minister whom they have to pay nothing, since he is employed at secular work, rarely grow in numbers, faith, or dedication. A group that is not willing to sacrifice to support a preacher will not grow, he concluded. Preachers must not be embarrassed to talk about finances. The spiritual well-being of the congregation is at stake, not just your wallet. Your members must learn stewardship and sacrificial giving. This may be the only way to teach them.

10 Tom C. Brown, “Survey of the Personal Financial Support for Ministers,” *Gospel Advocate*, 114 (May 25, 1972), 324-25.

WHAT IS IT LIKE BEING A PREACHER'S KID? (P.K.)

Being the child of a preacher is not always easy. They even have initials given to them which every one knows — “P.K.’s.” Jokes are made about children of preachers. Preachers’ children are placed under a spotlight even more than those of the elders whose children are under the spotlight even more than those of the deacons.

Furthermore, the children of preachers are often stereotyped. These stereotypes are more often derogatory than commendatory. Wayne T. Hall writes, “Many times a minister’s child is portrayed as being neurotic, unstable, and warped.”¹ Hall goes on, however, to point out that there are some definite advantages to being a P.K. Among these are the fact that he will probably be taught the word of God more than the average child, he will probably see more prayer in the home than others, he will more than likely travel a lot, he will have access to many fine books, and he will probably learn more about human nature because of the diversity of situations he will be involved in.

P.K.’s are stereotyped very often, though, and this causes some of them to rebel. One extensive survey said, “In the public mind, the children of clergymen are stereotyped to a greater extent than are the offspring of almost any other professional group.” The study then continued with a list of common stereotypes, many of which were a surprise to me since they were so favorable. In their analysis “so-called P.K.’s

1 Wayne T. Hall, “The Advantages of Being a Preacher’s Child!” *Gospel Advocate*, 117 (Jan. 30, 1975), 76.

(preachers' kids) are academically superior and highly motivated to achieve. Their upbringing is supposed to have given them firm moral values and a commitment to serve mankind. They are regarded as taking a liberal and humanitarian outlook, being concerned with social problems, and having an optimistic attitude about their solution. In addition, it is assumed that many P.K.'s are, to some degree, rebels against their parents and that this rebellion is manifested in a tendency to reject the religion they were raised in and to indulge in 'wild' behavior. Another bit of the folklore is that P.K.'s are social outcasts, isolated from their peers."² Such, then, are the stereotypes of the children of preachers.

To check such stereotypes against the actual facts, Student Information Forms of 250,000 students entering college in 1969 were checked. About 2,200 of these had a minister as a father. These were compared with the other freshmen in general to check the validity of the P.K. stereotype. The results were very interesting.

They found that children of ministers had "no particular tendency to rebel against their background to the extent of changing religions."³ Among the P.K.'s was a "particularly strong" feeling that their parents "were deeply concerned about their children and had high aspirations for them."⁴ The stereotype that ministers' children were unusually high achievers was found to be correct. Their grades, their positions in their class, their study habits, their scholarships, and their participation in extracurricular activities attested to this fact. Only in two areas did they fall below the norm, that of

2 Alan E. Bayer, Laura Kent, and Jeffrey E. Dutton, "Children of Clergymen: Do They Fit the Stereotype?" Copyright 1972 by Christian Century Foundation. Reprinted by permission from the June 28, 1972 issue of *The Christian Century*.

3 Ibid., p. 709.

4 Ibid.

sports and art competition. In some areas they especially excelled, such as in musical ability.⁵

As to their typical behaviour, they were more religious than their peers. "Contrary to the image, they were less likely to indulge in 'wild' behaviour"⁶ Sons of ministers showed a tendency toward political involvement. Their academic aspirations were much higher than those of freshmen-in-general. Their preference toward a future field was more "service" oriented than others, i.e. "those that involve helping others and dealing with people rather than things" and they "rejected such lucrative and prestigious fields as business and engineering."⁷ In their life goals they gave a higher priority to a "meaningful philosophy of life" than their peers.⁸ Though there were exceptions, the survey found that preachers' children took a conservative stance on political and social views.⁹

So in conclusion, the authors of this survey found that P.K.'s fit the stereotype very well. The fallacious parts of the stereotypes were their supposed liberal political philosophy, their being social outcasts, and their rejection of their parents' religion. Instead they were conservative politically, their behaviour was seen to be conventional, and they readily accepted their parents' religion. The survey was actually enough to make most young preachers whose children are not grown yet "bust the buttons off their jackets" with pride thinking of how good their children will probably be.

Such a survey shows that the stereotypes about P.K.'s being rebels is especially wrong, but that image has been

5 Ibid., pp. 709-10.

6 Ibid., p. 710.

7 Ibid., p. 711.

8 Ibid., p. 712.

9 Ibid., pp. 712-13.

around so long that preachers have made up a standard reply: "Our kids are bad because they have to hang around with the elders' and deacons' kids." Maybe the problem comes from the fact that the occasional rebel child of a preacher gets much more attention and gossip than the rebel child of a "regular member." The double standard is obvious. If a member's child leaves the church, a multitude of reasons are brought forth to explain it. If a preacher's child turns away from the church, it is because he is a P.K. Is it any wonder that some preachers' children feel as if they are in a glass bowl under inspection all of the time?

One difficulty of being a preacher's child is this glass bowl existence in the church. The preacher's child is supposed to be the supreme example of what a Christian child at their age should be. Preachers' children often find out that they are being used in this way. They find out that parents are saying, "Brother Jones' son, the preacher's son, doesn't do that." Or maybe it is, "Brother Smith's son, the preacher's son, read the scriptures so well in the worship services last Sunday. I wish you would try reading some Sunday." This sometimes makes other children resent the children of a preacher, and animosity will slowly build.

Back to our original question of what is it like to be a preachers' kid, though, we can answer in a positive way. If the preacher is a typical preacher and the home is a typical preacher's home, it should mean that the children will probably be above average in many respects. Most children of ministers, then, are outgoing, well-balanced, and emotionally secure individuals. Maybe this is simply because most of our preachers are putting Christianity into practice in their homes, not just in the church building as so many people do.

WHAT IS IT LIKE BEING A PREACHER'S WIFE?

Who are the women that marry preachers and what is it like being married to this strange creature called a gospel preacher? What are they like, the women ministers marry? To describe them would take a book, and William Douglas of Boston University School of Theology has written it. Out of his experience as husband of a MW and from his survey of nearly 5,000 others, he has demonstrated in *Ministers' Wives* (Harper & Row) that they are committed Christians happily involved in church activities despite the frustrations they frequently encounter.

“Although Professor Douglas found similarities among the women he surveyed, their individuality was unmistakable and as variable as their personal situations. In fact, the more material he accumulated, the more variable MW’s situations appeared and the fewer generalizations about them seemed valid.”¹

The joys of being a minister’s wife can be numerous. Many of the wives are able to share in their husbands’ achievements and accomplishments. Some enjoy being their husband’s private counselor, for even a minister needs someone to talk to. Others have husbands who respect their opinion very highly, so they are able to have quite an input into his ministry. Some even give him sermon ideas.

The burdens of a minister’s wife are many and varied,

1 Janet Rohlet, “The Women Ministers Marry,” *Christianity Today*, 13 (Jan. 31, 1969), 41. Used by permission.

however. For example, ".... they work for a happy, secure, well-organized home that is a background of comfort and inspiration for their husbands. The fact that the minister's schedule is irregular and his hours are long may force his wife to assume more responsibility for their children than she might otherwise take."²

The burden of limited financial funds is difficult on the wife in trying to make ends meet. Many minister's wives must become financial wizards at grocery shopping while despising the continual second-hand parade of everything around the house such as furniture. At church she must be a super-mother for any disturbance by the minister's children is greatly frowned upon. To add to that difficulty, her husband is usually not around during worship services to help, for he is in the pulpit preaching.

If a preacher's wife wears too many new clothes, people are apt to talk about her expensive habits. If there is a church squabble, the preacher's wife is usually not immune from emotional stress that surrounds such troubles. She is quizzed when away from her husband for any information one might obtain from her.³

The biggest problem a minister's wife may have to face, though, is neglect from her husband. A typical minister can be so dedicated to his work and so involved in it, that he neglects everything else, including his family.

Other work related problems can plague the minister's wife. Since a preacher often counsels with couples who have troubles, the fear of emotional women transferring their affection to her husband can be very great, for this has hap-

2 Ibid.

3 Many of these ideas are from Rohlet, "The Women Ministers Marry," p. 41.

pened many times. A minister should make sure his wife knows that nothing such as this is ever happening. If all of his counseling is done at the church office, and if a secretary is present in the building all of the time, this should help.

Another problem some minister's wives have to face, one that too many preachers are probably guilty of, is a lack of patience toward their wives while showing unending patience toward others. This double standard can hurt very much. A preacher may remain very subdued in public so that his image will not be hurt by any outbursts. Hostility will slowly build up in him and be released upon his wife at home, since his image is safe there. A preacher needs his home as a place to "let his hair down", but unkindness is not to be condoned. After all, a minister should realize that he is the only preacher his wife might be able to turn to. He should attempt to show her the same courtesy and patience he shows others.

Preachers, then, should spend more time praying, talking, communicating, taking little trips, and sharing things with their wives.⁴ A wife can make or break a minister, and a minister with little consideration for his wife, or a congregation with little consideration for her, can put her in the hospital with nerve problems or an ulcer very easily.

Another important consideration that a preacher must bear in mind is not to burden his wife unnecessarily with church problems. From time to time he needs her as his private counselor, but often she is better off not knowing about church problems. For example, my wife was spared much worry by me not telling her about a very difficult situation between several people in a congregation — a

4 The ideas from these last three paragraphs are mostly from Ralph M. Smucker, "The Minister and His wife." *Christianity Today*, 13 (June 20, 1969), 3-4.

situation that had caused a lot of tension and hurt feelings. Only a year later after moving to another state did she learn of it. A minister, then, should protect his family from church problems to a certain extent.

As Charles Hodge put it, "The preacher's family is his own private world – not the church's. Preachers shouldn't dump their church problems upon their wives! They have enough. It is not fair. The preacher's wife should learn about church affairs in the bulletin. Her knowledge of others provokes too many feelings which cannot be concealed. She shouldn't know the privacies of others nor internal church problems. Preachers should not take their 'business home with them.'"⁵

As I have written elsewhere on the subject of confidentiality, "It is best not to burden one's wife with the problems of others. Also, the wife's ignorance will safeguard against her accidentally telling some vital information at a party or at church activities. If the wife is ignorant of these matters, this fact will build confidence in the minister among those who are in contact with his wife. However, the wife must know some vital information like the whereabouts and schedule of her husband, since someone may call his home to reach him."⁶

The relation of the preacher to his family in connection with counseling and church problems was put well by Wayne Oates who wrote that most of the time the preacher "does much better to concentrate the precious time he has with his family or inquiring into their needs and letting them inquire into his than on sharing a great majority of the personal secrets of the other lives in which he has participated as

5 Hodge, *Your Preacher*, p. 67.

6 Steve Williams, "Confidentiality," *Christian Bible Teacher*, 19 (June, 1975), 237.

counselor.”⁷

Just as ministers often have identity crises and often feel phony from attempting to conform to some preconceived image of a minister in the eyes of the congregation, ministers' wives have the same difficulty. One wife of a denomination preacher described herself in these words:

“No one worked harder or more successfully at her profession than I did in those early days. I dispatched my duties as spiritual-life chairman of the women's group with appropriate piety and delivered keynote addresses for special occasions with earnestness and enthusiasm. I cooked, of course — covered dishes for the sick and covered dishes for an endless succession of covered-dish suppers. And I cleaned, of course — the church at times as well as the parsonage, and on occasion even the cemetery. I *got out* the bulletin.

“Since I had a degree in Christian education, I directed Bible schools, organized girls' clubs, trained teachers, and conducted Sunday-school contests And, mindful of community responsibility, I attended meetings of the local garden club properly hatted and gloved. A tremendous help to my husband and beloved by our parishioners, I was the perfect minister's wife.

“And I was perfectly miserable.

“At the time I couldn't understand it. Three dog-eared books stood on my shelves: *How to Be a Minister's Wife*; *How to Be a Minister's Wife and Like It*; and *How to Be a Minister's Wife and Love It*.”⁸ She concluded, “.... the only

7 Wayne E. Oates, “Keeping Confidences in Pastoral Counseling,” *An Introduction of Pastoral Counseling*, ed. by Wayne E. Oates (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1959), p. 94. Used by permission.

8 Meredith Wells, “Thrice I Cried, Or, How to Be a Minister's Wife If You Loathe It,” *Christianity Today*, 18 (Jan. 18, 1974), 7. Used by permission.

way I can be a minister's wife is by being me."

Since the preachers among the churches of Christ are usually on the road to a new location every one to four years, another problem of the minister's wife is that she constantly must be prepared to pack up and relocate. Relocation means the loss of friends, the change of houses, the change of schools for children, the finding of new friends for children and for herself, and many other problems.

With regular moves comes another problem that is sure to bother many ministers' wives – the repetition of the same old sermons. Imagine hearing the same 300 sermons over and over through the years; the same old stories, the same old jokes, the same old illustrations. Is it any wonder that one minister's wife goes to another worship service at least once a week in town at a church that has services at a different time?

Ministers' wives often find that one of their greatest problems is that of having close friends. At a dinner with a group of preachers and their wives, a woman happened to mention the name of a close friend who was a member of another congregation. Someone said, "I didn't know Marjorie was a member of your church."

She's not," the woman replied, "That's why we're friends."

That remark was followed by a "chorus of wry laughter" which "was evidence of the difficulty other ministers and ministers' wives have finding friends in their churches, people they can trust, people with whom they can be themselves, people with similar interests."⁹

Often a preacher's wife must search for her friends in another congregation or even among non-Christians. If one has too many close friends within the congregation, that

9 Ibid., 8-9.

person will be criticized. If a minister's wife gets involved in a clique, her husband's job will eventually be the price. We do not desire to defend cliques within a congregation here, but we do want to stress the loneliness that a minister's wife may be subjected to by a double standard. Very often the majority of a congregation is in a clique or at least has close friends, but this is prohibited for a preacher's wife too often.

Much more could be said, but enough has been said to show that being a minister's wife is not always pleasant or easy. Much is often expected of her. A stereotype is often developed before she even arrives at a congregation. Many a preacher has left the pulpit because of what his work was doing to his wife.

WHY DOES THE PREACHER NOT COME TO VISIT ME MORE OFTEN?

Of all the duties a preacher does, one survey revealed that the most disagreeable task was visitation of members. Can such be the truth? Maybe it is not the visitation of the members that is disliked so much as the amount of it that is often expected of a minister. He continually gets comments such as, "Drop by to see us sometime." If a preacher does not visit some people regularly, they will bad mouth him and slowly ruin his influence and reputation. If the last preacher was of the old parson image, then this will be continually thrown into the minister's face, since "Old Brother Smith used to come by to see us all of the time."

One preacher friend of mine gave me some timely advice that he considered very important to follow. He kept a date book for every day of the year. Every visit or phone call he made he would record in this book. Special errands or duties performed were also recorded. This, he explained, would be needed eventually, for someone in the congregation would complain that the preacher had not been by to see him. The elders would then quiz the minister, and that date book was his concrete defense. Is it not pathetic that a preacher must keep a record to protect himself from criticizing and griping members? Is it not saddening?

I kept such a date book upon his advice for a few months; then I quit. Now I only keep a date book for future tasks and one record book on car mileage. I figured that if my job depended upon such tenuous things as that, then I would be better off moving anyway. I probably will have to do so

some day for this reason, but surely there should be more trust displayed toward a preacher of the gospel.

One young minister straight out of school was diligently trying to be a good minister. He was working hard trying to prepare good lessons and sermons. The result was that they accused him of not doing anything but hiding away in his office. They continually talked about how their former minister was "on the go." "He assured them jokingly that they could not adequately judge a man's ministry by his wearing out tire tread.

"One Monday morning, he told his wife he could not be reached by phone until noon and that this pattern would keep up all week. He used two tanks of gasoline and just rode constantly up and down the roads and streets. He drank enough coffee to ruin his kidneys and he spoke to everyone he could see. This pace continued all week, and sure enough, he was exhausted by Saturday. When he arrived at the church for Sunday school, a deacon motioned for him to come over to a group of men who were talking. When he got to the group he was pleasantly surprised to hear them say that it was the talk of the town that he was really out among the people all the past week. He had been good companionship for practically everyone's coffee break. They assured him that he would have a good pastorate if he kept that up.

"Honest he was, and so he wiped the smile from his face and told the men what he had done, that he had not said a word for Christ, that he had talked of nothing but hunting and fishing and that he had not meditated, prayed or studied. He had simply wanted to show them that they could not judge by a man's much going whether he is working at being a good pastor or not. They got the point and appreciated his real ministry from that day on."¹

1 *How To Murder A Minister*, pp. 81-82.

Where do people get this idea that a preacher should spend most of his time visiting in the homes of members? How many of the members ever visit in each other's homes unless they happen to be friends or unless some church function is being held there? How many of them check on the preacher when he is sick? How many of the members visit in the home of the preacher? The late pillar in the brotherhood, Gus Nichols, once told me that you must let the church know how much time you need to spend in study and in other activities, so that you will not have to, in his words, ".... run over and hold someone's hand every time they have the sniffles."

In a little clipping, the source of which has been lost, some good advice is found. It reads, "Quite often you hear someone say, 'Our preacher never stops to visit in our home.' If this is true, you probably have much for which to thank the Lord!

"It usually means that death has not struck; that no serious illness has laid low the members of your family; that you are not a shut-in; or the surgeon's knife has not threatened you; or that you have no serious family problems to solve; or that you are not really a spiritually delinquent child of God.

"As a rule, ministers do not make 'social calls', for they do not have the time. They would enjoy doing so, as much as you would like to have them, but there are simply not enough hours in the day. But, be sure of this: your minister is willing to come at any hour of the day or night that you call to him for help. Thank God you haven't needed him. Some day you will, and he will be there."

J.M. Powell, a wonderful Christian gentleman, has written appropriate words on this subject: "Elders should not expect the preacher to do all the visiting that needs to be done in the congregation. No preacher can be an effective

pulpit, if he wears himself down pounding the pavement. It is necessary for him to do a certain amount of visiting, as it is for other Christians to do. Much of the visiting can be done by others, leaving the preacher more time for study."² Of course no one is advocating that a preacher make his study an ivory tower and that he remain in it all of the time, but the amount of visitation, rather social calls, that some Christians expect of their preacher is ridiculous.

The two great problems with preachers and visitation are the proxy concept and the expectation to constantly visit members. Constantly visiting members could take every night of a minister's week. He still would not get the job done in a larger congregation, and he would lose his family in the process. The proxy concept is the attitude that the minister is hired to do our work for us. We pay his salary, so he must do our visiting, our teaching, our Christian living, in essence. A preacher is so busy with administration and study that he actually has little time to visit. People are not upset when the elders do not visit, but let the preacher overlook them and complaints will start to circulate. Often you are criticized for not visiting someone in the hospital when you do not even know they are in there. Members will play hide-and-seek with the preacher. He is supposed to have ESP and automatically know where they are. But why the double standard concerning preachers and visitation? It just is not fair. If Christians would spend more time looking outward and serving others and less time selfishly complaining because their preacher is not pampering them enough, the church would win more battles in the world and preachers would be happier. Let preachers spend more time visiting backsliders and prospects rather than chatting with faithful members over a cup of coffee.

2 J.M. Powell, "Preacher-Elder Relationship (Part 2)," *Gospel Advocate*, 114 (June 8, 1972), 354.

WHAT DO PREACHERS DO WITH THEIR SPARE TIME?

The best answer for the title to this chapter, the answer that would fit most preachers is this, "Preachers do not have any spare time." Most people would laugh at this statement, because the concept of preachers being lazy is so entrenched into the minds of people. It is a stereotype that we start teaching our children at an early age around the dinner table on Sunday. Jokes about preachers working only two hours a week are not funny to preachers; they have heard them a hundred times. It only makes them shake their head in amazement that such ignorance and prejudice still exist in the world.

There are slothful ministers just as there are lazy men in any profession, but no more so than any other profession. Most ministers are workaholics. The typical preacher works 60 to 70 hours a week. He does not have Sunday off, since it is spent preaching, studying, visiting, and fellowshiping with the brethren. Saturday, at least Saturday night, is often spent reviewing lessons for Sunday morning. If he takes off a day during the week, some hard hearted brother or sister in Christ will then accuse him of being lazy. Few preachers take off a day at all. Some take off one day during the week. *All elders should require their preacher to take off two weekdays every week!* The minister should not be bothered on these two days except for emergencies.

At one church an elder would loan the preacher his car so that he could go somewhere for rest or relaxation, leaving his own car at the church building, so that the brethren would think he was working. Unless his car was at the build-

ing 60 hours a week, they thought the preacher was lazy. At another congregation the preacher was considered lazy if his car was ever seen at the church building for any period of time. He was not supposed to sit in his office and read his Bible, I guess. What is a preacher supposed to do?

At one congregation the preacher was constantly criticized by one man if he was not in the office by 9:00 a.m. sharp. The fact that he might have to take his children to school, go by the print shop, stop by the religious book store and pick up Bible school literature, stop by and visit a shut-in, stop by the post office, go by the hospital to speak comforting words to someone facing surgery, and finally get some gasoline never occurred to this man. Many preachers work themselves to death trying to convince the brethren that they are not lazy.

The church needs to be fair with their ministers. Members of the church have their companies talking about a four day work week. Preachers usually have not received a six day work week yet. Actually a preacher is on the job all of the time, except when he is asleep. He is constantly meditating and thinking. I have come up with several sermon ideas while on the banks of a river fishing.

When a preacher is away on a vacation, at a lectureship, or in a gospel meeting, he is still working hard. Often when a preacher is away he can get a fresh look at things and find solutions to problems that he could not see when he was in the middle of them. As Charles Hodge has written, "A local preacher also does local church work while away. He can see his own work better when away. I read more books, plan more sermons, write more bulletin editorials, and get more ideas in motels than in the church office! Preachers need a change — not so much a vacation. Meetings serve this purpose. This restores the preacher's balance."¹

1 Hodge, *Your Preacher*, p. 68.

The preacher should be encouraged to have some recreation. A few of the elders in one congregation in Memphis order their preacher to go play golf with them from time to time. Good for them! If a minister does not take some time off and relax, he will slowly kill himself just as the overworked businessman does. The preacher should watch his health, diet, and exercise program closely, for his job is one full of stress if any ever was.

A.D. Dennison, M.D., has written important words on this subject. He explained, "Ministers often lead frantic, frenzied lives, and like physicians are faced with intense stresses. They are called to enter into the tragedies, heartaches, and tears of many lives – the very gut-level of existence. These involvements can extract a high price, especially if there has also been neglect of body.

"It is neither selfish nor neurotic to be maturely thoughtful about one's bodily health. In one of his essays Montaigne wrote, 'It is not a soul, it is not a body that we are training up; it is a man, and we ought not to divide him into two parts.' Ministers, and all of us, would do well to re-evaluate our physical condition in this light. My recommendations for good health stem from long years of professional reading, teaching, and research in the leading cause of death, cardiovascular diseases.

"In one of his books Paul Tournier quotes another physician: 'Man doesn't die, he kills himself.' I state further: He kills himself with his stresses and excesses. How many of our American businessmen are on that diabolical status treadmill of security and material success, at great cost to their spiritual, mental, and physical health? Executives tell me that much of today's business is transacted over the banquet table, often after several drinks. When I find their blood pressure elevated and prescribe a simmered-down way of life,

they protest, 'But it will hurt business!' Was man made for business or was business made for man? Similarly, many ministers mistakenly think they give their best to work only by pushing themselves to the limits of their endurance."²

Dennison follows this with several practical suggestions which we will list for convenience sake:

- (1) Exercise – not just golf, but jogging or swimming
- (2) Abstain from nicotine – most preachers do
- (3) Abstain from alcohol – we even preach this
- (4) Do not become overweight – do we ever preach this?
- (5) Limit animal fats in the diet
- (6) Reduce salt intake
- (7) Avoid fatigue and stress – if the brethren will let you

Take a little time off, he suggests, using Mk. 6:31 as an example of this in the life of Jesus Christ.

Back to our opening question, though, "What do preachers do with their spare time?" The answer usually is, "Nothing." They do not have any spare time, but congregations should require this of them or they will, through their pressure to perform and stay busy, be helping their preacher along to an early grave. Would you want to aid someone in committing suicide? Are you not doing that by encouraging your preacher and pressuring your preacher to work himself to death?

2 A.D. Dennison, "Physician to Pastor: Golf Isn't Enough," *Christianity Today*, 13 (Jan. 17, 1969), 5. Used by permission.

DOES A PREACHER AUTOMATICALLY HAVE A LOT OF FRIENDS?

Sometimes it is lonely being a preacher. A preacher making close friends within a congregation can spell trouble, often his doom. Years ago in a course on the theme of "How to Be a Preacher", the professor told us to beware of having close friends within the congregation. He even went so far as to say that you and a close friend within the congregation might have to drive to another town for your families to eat supper together lest the brethren see you and get jealous and angry. It reminds one of the cry "teacher's pet" from school days.

Sometimes preachers can cause trouble by being friendly with a special clique. Especially if a minister is asked to leave, this can cause great friction within the congregation, since that clique does not want their friend to leave. About the only clique a preacher can safely work with in the open without causing jealousy is the youth group. In fact everyone expects this automatically, wanting the preacher to make up for the congregation's lack of action. But is it fair to expect all preachers to be a loner, a separate appendage of a congregation, an outsider within the church?

"A preacher is a lonely man;" writes Charles Hodge, "he wishes to be accepted as others — a common, genuine, authentic human being. He resents being classified as 'neuter gender.' Therein lies the danger — he is a human being — but he is more — he is extra-ordinary! A preacher cannot afford the luxury of 'close friends.' All must be loved yet held at a distance. A preacher cannot 'buddy-buddy' with an elder, deacon, clique, or family. He has no favorites. 'He is a friend

of all and pal of none.' Friends have caused more preachers to be fired than enemies! A preacher's pal must be outside his congregation — yea sometimes outside the church! Loneliness makes preachers prey for friendship — sometimes even from the opposite sex.”¹

Has Hodge spoken too critically? No. He speaks from experience and with love. People put money in the contribution so the preacher is theirs. If he seems more friendly with another person, many are jealous. Also, many are afraid that if the preacher is not kept on the outside of things, he may get to know specific sins and faults too much which will result in embarrassing preaching.

One typical example of this is the way young people treat their minister. August B. Hollingshead, a Yale sociologist, when studying the typical midwestern community called Elmstown found that most ministers do not know what the young people in their congregations are thinking or doing, and the young people are very careful in preserving this gap between themselves and their ministers. He reports that there is a barrier between young people in the churches and the ministers. Continually efforts are made to keep the preacher ignorant of what is actually happening in their world.²

This type of attitude toward a minister is not limited to the youth, but it is practiced by the whole congregation. Where else did our young people learn such practices? Likely it is encouraged by and is a manifestation of the loneliness and despair of our modern era. People do not want to get

1 Hodge, *Your Preacher*, pp. 61-62.

2 August B. Hollingshead, *Elmstown's Youth* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 1949), p. 260, cited in Pierre Berton, *The Comfortable Pew* (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott Company, 1965), pp. 42-43.

too close to a minister, since he is valued by them more if he is aloof. They prefer to keep him as a religious symbol, rather than to get to know him personally, faults and all, and allow him to know them, faults and all. Everywhere in the church we see tendencies that result from people remaining aloof from one another. Confession of sin is rare and always general in nature. We do not trust each other enough to really open up our inner selves. We are afraid and too insecure to expose ourselves in such a manner. The preacher gets the "aloof" treatment as a result of this, wondering all the time if people just do not like him.

"But," you may say, "do not people really open up to a preacher in counseling and reveal themselves? Is not your analysis proven wrong in counseling?" Possibly, but in a counseling situation people are often looking to a preacher more as a professional than a Christian friend. He is "Dear Abby" in person; he is the inexpensive psychiatrist. Furthermore, few people come to their own minister for counseling. If a member wants counseling, they usually go to another preacher at another congregation. When people wonder what their minister does with his time, he is often counseling another congregation's members. At one congregation I noticed that about eight of ten that came for counseling were from other churches or else they were not members of the church. Most of those who were converted placed membership elsewhere but still came there for counseling. Some of this is the fault of preachers not respecting confidentiality, but much of it is a result of the desire not to allow one's own preacher to get to know one so well.

What are we afraid of in the church? Why can we not be more open with one another? Why must a preacher remain an outsider in most congregations? Why do so many ministers feel like they are a person brought in from the outside to do a job for a few years, and they should remain an out-

sider? Why should a friend of mine be able to say that most churches get upset when a preacher begins to settle down and act like he is at home and is planning on staying a while? Serious examination and thought should be given to this problem. Let us remember that a preacher is a person – a human being. He is not just an official or a robot. After calling me “preacher” for a few days, one lady suddenly stopped and said, “You do have a name don’t you.” She started calling me by my name, and somehow that made me feel better.

WHAT HAPPENS TO OLDER PREACHERS?

In 1967 P.D. Wilmeth wrote an article entitled "Sixty, and Too Old to Preach for Us."¹ He tells in the article of that attitude among members of the church. A few weeks later he stated, "Never did I write an article that provoked so many to write me. Letters and oral comments came from far and near The article to which reference is made was: 'Sixty, and Too Old to Preach for Us.' "² He had obviously found a sensitive point – an exposed nerve. One college president wrote to Brother Wilmeth in reply and said, "I am called upon often to help congregations locate preachers and I hear the same remark quite often" (that is, a preacher over sixty is too old).³

Charles Hodge wrote strong words on this subject: "Brethren will work you to death then toss you to the junkpile What happens at 40? The preacher finds himself not in demand (sometimes nearly begging), broke, without a house, without any insurance, without any hospitalization, without any retirement – yea without any thanks. The brethren feel no obligation to him. Things were better 'down on the farm.' After pulling a plow for years my Dad 'retired ole' Red (a red mule). She had the run of the place until she died. She deserved it."⁴

Is this a new problem? Wilmeth noted it as a problem in

-
- 1 P.D. Wilmeth, "Sixty, and Too Old to Preach for Us," *Gospel Advocate*, 109 (July 20, 1967), 459-60.
 - 2 P.D. Wilmeth, "From My Mail Bag," *Gospel Advocate*, 109 (Sept. 14, 1967), 585.
 - 3 Ibid.
 - 4 Hodge, *Your Preacher*, p.80.

1967; Hodge wrote of it in 1972. It was a problem in the 1950's also. Frank J. Dunn asked this question in the *Gospel Advocate*: "Must Old Preachers Fade Away?"⁵ He said, "It has been a cause of deep concern to me to hear intimations that the older preachers are being put on the shelf."⁶ Further research could turn up such quotes in other decades also.

Many older preachers, of course, are to blame for being put on the shelf. They have spent so much time in administration or in trivial activities and have avoided the more difficult work of study that they run out of soap, they are behind the times, their preaching is not fresh. Once this has been said, though, there is probably much blame to be laid on the church because of its treatment of older preachers. Why else do so many preachers quit and attempt to build up some sort of fund for retirement? If the church is going to put most of its preachers on the shelf at sixty, then they should be provided for in their retirement.

The church needs to learn that many older men become more valuable with time. They may not appeal to the young people as much as a sharp-dressing young preacher who knows some very modern up-to-date lingo, but must every preacher have this appeal? (By the way, I am not upset with young preachers. I am only 28). What about the older Christians who could use an older minister as much or more than a young one?

We forget that some of the most remarkable achievements in history were performed by older men. Wilmeth summarizes some of these: "Cato was past eighty years old when he took up the study of Greek. Alfred Tennyson, the sweetest

5 Frank J. Dunn, "Must Old Preachers Fade Away?" *Gospel Advocate*, 98 (March 29, 1956), 303-304.

6 Ibid.

poet of the English language, wrote 'Crossing the Bar' at the tender age of eighty-three. William Gladstone was re-elected the prime minister of Great Britain for the fourth time when he was eighty-three. At the age of eighty-eight Antonious van Loewenhock was still young enough in mind to discover blood corpuscles, Infusoria, and spermatozoa. Kant was past seventy when he wrote some of his profound philosophical works. After his eightieth birthday Victor Hugo was still treating the world with his literature, and when Goethe was past eighty he wrote the second part of *Faust*. At the age of seventy-four Bismarck was still vigorously administering the affairs of the Great German Empire. Monet was painting great masterpieces after his eighty-fifth birthday. When he was in his eighties, Robert Frost continued to write great poetry; and when he celebrated his eightieth birthday, Bernard Baruch had lost none of his skills as a financier."⁷

Wilmeth goes on to mention modern men such as Winston Churchill, Douglas MacArthur, Sam Rayburn, Herbert Hoover, Albert Schweitzer, Supreme Court Judges, and most Presidents. This should make the church stop and take a look at its attitude toward older people, especially older preachers. David Lloyd George once said, "The true test of a civilization is the way it treats its old people." Maybe the true test of a church would be its treatment of its old ministers. Respect for age is found in many ancient pagan cultures, but is it found in the church for its servants who have given their life in preaching the gospel?

What of Bible verses that command respect for age? "You shall rise up before the hoary head, and honor the face of the old man" (Lev. 19:32). The wise man of old said, "The hoary head is a crown of glory", but it is not always that way for an older preacher hunting for a job (Prov. 16:31).

7 Wilmeth, "Sixty, and Too Old," 459.

The cry of the older preacher may often be that of the words in Psa. 71:9: "Do not cast me off in the time of old age." We should not forget that elders are to be older men, or at least they should not be spring chickens. Why, then, should we forget and disown our older preachers? Such is a disgrace to the church.

P.D. Wilmeth's words are harsh, but they should be heard again and again: "It is a stubborn fact that we represent about the only significant religious group in the world that makes no provision for its older, inactive workers, who have given their lives to the service of God, and for whom churches received the benefit of their service."⁸ He also said in the same article that in forty years of preaching he had never had a group of elders sit down and go over his retirement plans with him. Upon inquiry with others, he found this was not an isolated case but "the order of the day."

On the finances of older preachers, Roy Deaver wrote, "An elderly preacher — one loved and respected by the entire brotherhood — made the comment: 'I have given my life to preaching the gospel for the past sixty years. Yet, I don't own a home — not even an automobile.' A brother recently said to me: 'A farmer will turn his old horse out to grass, but the church just turns an old preacher out.' Another brother said: 'I have preached the gospel for over twenty years, and today I have not one cent more than when I started. Yet, my financial responsibilities get heavier every year.'

"Considering the buying power (or lack of it) of the dollar many preachers are being paid *less* than they were ten years ago."⁹

8 P.D. Wilmeth, "The Preacher and His Retirement," *Gospel Advocate*, 109 (Nov. 30, 1967), 756.

9 Roy Deaver, "Problems of Gospel Preachers (No. 4)," *Gospel Advocate*, 105 (Jan. 24, 1963), front page.

Churches should aid ministers in their retirement plans. Tax sheltered annuities are available which can be paid for by each different congregation a preacher works for. When the preacher moves, the next congregation takes up the payments. A church will not be obligating themselves to a preacher for his whole lifetime just because he worked for them for a year or two, but they will be doing their fair share in providing him with a retirement plan. Are we the Lord's church? If so, let us treat our older preachers with respect and provide now for them for when they grow old.

WHAT CAN I DO TO HELP MY PREACHER?

The most important thing a person can do to help their preacher is to care enough to ask, "What can I do to help my preacher?" It is well known that the most active members of the church are those who expect the least of the minister. Those who really care are those who pressure and criticize him the least. Those who rarely do anything except show up on Sunday morning expect the most from a preacher and cause him the most trouble. By asking what you can do, you have already achieved half of what you can do to really help your minister. Your attitude is totally the reverse of that of many members of the church, and this alone helps.

The following list of suggestions is random, but these things will make the life of your preacher a happier one. Some may seem stupid or inconsequential and others may appear to be outrageous, but if you practice them, you may find your preacher happier than ever and staying longer than you have ever known one to stay. When a preacher is constantly moving every year, he should examine himself and see if the problem is his own. When a congregation cannot keep a preacher very long, they likewise should examine themselves and see if the problem is theirs. With this in mind, here are some suggestions for helping your preacher.

(1) Give your preacher a raise. If you are an elder, take this up immediately with the other elders. Is your preacher receiving under \$15,000 a year? If he is, he is probably very much underpaid. Does he get a car allowance? Are his office expenses cared for by the church? Is his family cover-

ed by a decent hospitalization plan? Is he able to plan ahead for his retirement? Is he able to save enough to send his children to a Christian college? If he receives no extra benefits, he is receiving only about \$10,000 or \$11,000 while the church thinks he is overpaid at \$15,000. Many preachers who only receive around \$8,000 in income are really receiving only about \$4,000 to \$5,000 after their expenses are taken out. Ask your preacher about these things. Ask him how he is making it financially. If you are not an elder, then go to the elders and ask that they investigate such matters. Then give them this book to read.

(2) Do not constantly criticize your preacher. He is only human, you must remember. A family that has roast-preacher for lunch every Sunday will end up having children that not only do not respect the preacher, but likely will not respect the church, the Bible, and anything connected with religion.

(3) Buy your preacher a book. If you know of a good religious book he does not have, purchase it for him as a present. If you do not know what to buy him, buy him a gift certificate at the local religious book store. You may find that your preacher is very surprised and his sermons may suddenly improve.

(4) Encourage your preacher to relax and have some recreation. Too many preachers almost have to sneak around to have any recreation, for, if the members see them, they will begin talking about that lazy preacher again. Let your minister know that you expect him to take at least one day off. One survey taken among ministers showed that hardly a one had taken a single day off in the last month. A preacher needs some relaxation and recreation, and he knows it. He needs to know that at least some of the members will not criticize him for taking off.

(5) Tell your preacher to spend some time with his family. Too many preachers have been so busy with the members of the church that they have not cared for their families. No one expects elders, deacons, or anyone else in the congregation to be out four, five, or six nights a week doing church work, so why should they expect that of a preacher?

(6) Treat your preacher's wife and his children as if they were any other member of the congregation. Do not be overly harsh or critical of them. Do not use a double standard on them. Do not criticize her husband and their father in front of them.

(7) If you have any suggestions or criticisms for your preacher, give them to him in private sandwiched between two compliments. I have received criticisms from time to time. Some I only ignored because of the spirit in which they were given. Others were given in private in a spirit of love, usually by elders or their wives. These I have followed with great profit to myself.

(8) Encourage your preacher in his preaching and teaching in a constructive way. Do not continually repeat the worn out phrase "I enjoyed that sermon." Say something constructive or say nothing at all.

(9) Show your willingness to cooperate rather than to just request a service from your preacher. If you know of a contact, say, "I have someone I would like to convert. Would you go over there with me one night this week? I can pick you up." That is much better than saying, "I have a friend I want you to go see and try to convert him."

(10) Provide your preacher with adequate study time. Too many members feel the minister has little to do during

the week, so he is used as their coffee drinking partner. Or if one has time to spare, they stop by the preacher's office to chat. If the preacher is busy studying, he may as well forget it, for the brethren expect him to drop everything just to chat. Others continually call just to talk. Church secretaries get more of this than preachers do. It amazed me when I was the associate minister at one congregation at the change in the number of phone calls when the minister and his wife were out of town. The day they would return the phone would return to ringing about thirty times a day. Many of those calls were not important at all.

(11) When you have finished reading this book, obtain a copy of Charles Hodge's book *Your Preacher* and read it.

If you will do things such as this and try to make others aware of such problems, you might be amazed at the power you can have to make or break a preacher. One survey showed that a secretary's greatest desire was to be shown appreciation from the boss. This was desired even more than a raise. When genuine appreciation is shown to a preacher, it means a lot to him. One elder gave me a turkey for Christmas, and the church gave us a beautifully framed print, and another elder and his wife babysat for my wife and I while the third elder took us out to eat. Such acts of kindness make you feel much happier in your work. Such things help to lift a preacher out of his periods of depression. They help renew and revive him for greater service. Appreciate your preacher — that is the best way you can help him.

POSTSCRIPT

Some may think I have been overly harsh on the church in their treatment of preachers. Some preachers will think I have been too easy. Some preachers will think my suggestions concerning their study habits are impractical. There may be overstatement in the suggestions here, but I doubt it. Where we attempted to state a rule, there are always exceptions. There are always some who have treated a preacher as they should have. But for every exception, there are many who have been inconsiderate and sometimes downright unchristian to preachers. We have pointed an accusing finger at everyone in hopes that someone will benefit from it. All the time we realize that there are varieties of congregations and varieties of situations. City congregations are very different from rural congregations. While city congregations may pay better than smaller rural ones, the work load is usually much heavier.

If you as a Christian or as an elder think this book has been unfair or harsh on the church, let a few preachers whom you know read it and get their reaction. Some will not agree for they have it easy and will not want to jeopardize their position by speaking critically, but most ministers can tell tales of woe. You might find that many ministers have been keeping a stiff-upper-lip while their heart was being crushed slowly by inconsiderate brethren.

There is another side to this story, that of mistreatment of the church by preachers, but that was not the subject of this book. Maybe some elder will want to write such a treatise. Many of us know of churches being split by preachers

or other similar problems that come from preachers, but that was not within the scope of our study.

This book has been on the negative side. Another side could have been written on the joys and rewards of being a preacher. There would have to be such rewards and blessings in the ministry to offset the above mentioned problems, or else we would have no preachers. Our purpose, though, was mainly to point to the problems in hopes that people would work toward their correction. I know personally that Charles Hodge's book *Your Preacher* has resulted in some congregations taking a totally different viewpoint of their preacher and his work. It has certainly been a blessing to many preachers. As I send out this short work, it is my hope that it will result in some of the same fruits.

OTHER READING

The following reading suggestions are random in nature. The material available on the subject treated in this monograph is immense. Articles written in papers among the churches of Christ alone probably cover thousands of pages, so our purpose was not to exhaustively treat all such material. The following, though, are a few more interesting items that are not mentioned in the footnotes above.

- Bustanoby, Andre. "Why Pastors Drop Out." *Christianity Today*, 21 (Jan. 7, 1977), 14-16.
- Calian, Carnegie Samuel. *Today's Pastor in Tomorrow's World*. New York: Hawthorn Books, Inc., 1977.
- Crenshaw, Pleasant. "A Preacher's Son Reminisces" *Firm Foundation*, 89 (May 16, 1972), 309.
- Dodds, Elizabeth D. "The Minister's Homemaker." *Pastoral Psychology*, 11 (Sept., 1960), 27-32.
- Dunkleberger, A.C. "Support of Preachers." *Gospel Advocate*, 116 (Oct. 3, 17; Nov. 7, 1974), 625, 630, 661, 707.
- Estes, R. Wayne. "Clearing Cobwebs and Paying Preachers." *Gospel Advocate*, 114 (Nov. 31, 1972), 757-58.
- Guthrie, Harvey. "Group Therapy and Seminary Wives." *The Journal of Pastoral Care*, 15 (Summer, 1961), 101-104.
- Hazelip, Harold. "Getting Ready for Ministry." *Harding Graduate School Bulletin*, 15 (Nov., 1976), 2.
- Healey, Robert M. "The Ministerial Mystique." *The Christian Century*, 91 (Feb. 6, 1974), 121-25.

- Mayor, Stephen. "How Ministers See Their Work." *The Expository Times*, 82 (Oct., 1970), 19-22.
- Meador, Prentice A. "The Majesty and Misery of Our Ministry." *Gospel Advocate*, 109 (Sept. 21, 1967), 593, 601-602.
- Miller, Waymon. "Why Preachers Quit." *They Being Dead Yet Speak*. 1975 Harding College Lectures. Austin, Texas: Firm Foundation Publishing House, 1975, 334-48.
- Mize, Bob. "Hints for Beginning Ministers." *Firm Foundation*, 92 (July 15, 1975), 435.
- Nichols, Gus. "Advice to Young Preachers." *Words of Truth*, 7 (April 23, 1971), 2.
- Rankin, Robert Parks. "The Ministerial Calling and the Minister's Wife." *Pastoral Psychology*, 11 (Sept., 1960), 16-22.
- Rees, Edith A. "Once Married Twice Wed." *Christianity Today*, 8 (June 5, 1964), 13-14.
- Smith, Charles Merrill. *How to Become a Bishop Without Being Religious*. New York: Pocket Books, 1966.
- Smucker, Ralph M. "The Minister and His Wife." *Christianity Today*, 13 (June 20, 1969), 3-4.
- Taylor, Robert R. "Why Preachers Move: Preacher Focus." *Words of Truth*, 13 (Dec. 17, 1976), 3-4.
- Waddey, John. "Advice to Young Preachers." *Gospel Advocate*, 116 (May 23, 1974), 435.
- Walker, Madene. "Thanks." *Firm Foundation*, 95 (Feb. 21, 1978), 118.
- Wynn, John Charles. "Consider the Children." *Pastoral Psychology*, 11 (Sept., 1960), 23-26.

