

SUGGESTIONS FOR YOUNG PREACHERS

BY ZACK M. GUESS

INTRODUCTION

This is September 20, 1995. Today I will begin to put together some ideas that I hope will be helpful to young men who may feel that God is calling them to preach. I do not consider myself to be some great standard. I was ordained to the full functions of the gospel ministry on April 9, 1967. It is hard for me to believe that. I have been engaged in this great work for almost thirty years. The Lord has been very good to me as I have tried to preach and to pastor. I have not always been as faithful as I should have, but I have never regretted devoting my life to this great calling. I feel as Paul expressed himself in Ephesians 3:8, "Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ."

MY CALL TO PREACH

I struggled for some years with my feelings about being called to preach. When I was about fourteen or fifteen years old, several able young preaching gifts began to be made manifest among the Primitive Baptists. These men were so gifted that there was no doubt in anyone's mind that they had been called by God. Two of these young men were Joseph R. Holder and Sonny Pyles. My brother, Lewis, and I spent some time in the summer with Joe Holder, who lived on a farm with his parents near Booneville, Mississippi. I was so impressed with how much time Brother Joe spent in the Bible. He read it in the morning. He read it while we were sharpening our hoes in the field. He read it at night when we got through with work. He talked about the Scriptures all the time. He was always thinking about Bible answers to questions. He was always asking questions of ministers and other older, more knowledgeable brethren. He had the advantage of being very close to two very able ministers in our area. One was his uncle, Elder J. D. Holder. The other was Elder J. M. Bullard.

I had a good mind and had been very interested in the things of the Lord ever since my baptism on July 18, 1954 when I was thirteen years old. Many people began to think that maybe I had a call to preach. They would put me up to what we called "introduce" the services. This practice consisted of calling on some brother to precede the preacher by reading some portion of Scripture, maybe commenting on it, and offering prayer. I did this a few times and people in general seemed to be edified by my efforts. In time I began to back off from this because I was shy about it, and was not sure I was called, and did not want to be presumptuous. In time my pastor, Elder E. C. Holder, did not call on me as much. Now and then, over the course of the next few years, I would have urges that maybe I should be a preacher. Most of these urges were because of desires that I had to see the churches prosper in their service to God. I remember on one occasion I was in attendance on the Friday session of an associational meeting. This was the business session. There were not very many people in attendance, and the ones that were there did not seem to have any enthusiasm for what they were doing. They seemed to be just going about a routine. I became alarmed. The thought struck me that these dear people were in a spiritual slumber. I wanted so badly for someone to call on me to speak. I wanted to exhort them. I wanted to challenge and encourage them. I wanted to say something like this: "Brethren, we serve a great God. He has all power. Let us diligently pray for Him to send us a revival. Let us wake up from our spiritual slumber, and serve our dear Lord with all our might." Of course, no one could read my mind. No one but God knew how I felt. No one called on me to say anything. This feeling soon diminished, but on several occasions I felt much the same way.

I began to go to college with the aim of becoming a schoolteacher. In the back of my mind, I believe that I had a suspicion that the Lord might yet call me to the work of the gospel ministry, and I knew that as a teacher I would at least have the summers off to devote to church. In these days it was very rare for any Primitive Baptist to believe in, much less teach, that a pastor should give his full time to the work of preaching and pastoring. One thing that I did in college I believe the Lord providentially led me into, that is the study of New Testament Greek. I took eighteen semester hours of Greek under Dr. Roy Watkins. I will say more about the study of Greek later, but it would be hard for me to overestimate the blessing it has been to have some knowledge of the language the Holy Spirit originally wrote the New Testament in! I believe the statement to be correct that "the best commentary on the English New Testament is the Greek New

Testament."

As I went further in college, I proved to be a very apt student, and I loved the world of academics. I was very impressed with the study of history, and I was strongly influenced by several brilliant history professors that I studied under. I decided to pursue a Ph. D. degree in history and to become a college professor. All this time, however, I remained active in my church. Almost all my friends were church friends. An older cousin, James Allen Rushing, who subsequently became a Primitive Baptist preacher, was my best friend for several years. Most of my extracurricular activities were church related. I remained very interested in the prosperity of God's church.

When I was in my early twenties, the group which became Raleigh Primitive Baptist Church began to meet. One of the leaders in this effort was the man who later became my father-in-law, Brother A.C. (Tony) Machiavello. The man who became the first pastor of this church, Elder Wiley Sammons, began to call on me to "introduce" services at the Friday night meetings which I almost always attended. Brother Tony encouraged me to study and prepare for the times when I would be called on to speak. When I would speak Brother Tony would tell me that he had heard people say that what I had said edified them. I felt so inferior that I found this hard to believe, but this was encouraging to me. I began to study more and more. I began to think more seriously about the possibility that I was called to the ministry.

In my struggles about the call to preach I came across some material in *A Body of Doctrinal and Practical Divinity* by John Gill. Gill was writing of the various elements that constitute a call to the ministry. He wrote of "An internal call; which lies in gifts bestowed, and in the furniture of a man's mind, and in the disposition of it to make use of them in the service of God; for God never calls a man to any service, but he gives him abilities for it; which, when a man is sensible of, and is satisfied God has bestowed a gift upon him, he cannot be easy to wrap up his talent in a napkin, but is desirous of making use of it in a public manner; not by a mere impulse, through vanity of mind, and with ambitious views, and sordid ends; but from a principle of love to the souls of men, and to the glory of God; this is the internal call, of which a man's gifts are an evidence to himself and others." When I read this, it set my soul on fire. This was exactly a description of how I felt. As I began to contemplate this call to preach, I completely lost my interest in being a college professor. I was engaged in writing a thesis in pursuit of my M. A. degree in history. I went to my major professor and told him that I was not going to be a professor, but that I was going to be a preacher. I told him I had lost interest in my studies. I requested that he let me drop the thesis, take two more courses instead, get my M. A. that way, and be through with my schooling. He graciously agreed, and I was free to devote all my mental powers and leisure time to the Word of God! I was thankful and thrilled.

I have related this experience in the hope that it may be of help to others. I am not saying that the experience of everyone the Lord calls to preach will be exactly the same, but I do believe there will be some common elements. The only reasons any man should desire to preach and minister the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ is for the glory of God and for the good of His people!

A Father in the Ministry: It is very important for young men who hope to be gospel ministers among the Primitive Baptists to pray for the Lord to give them access to faithful older ministers who have learned vital things by study and by experience. Primitive Baptists, rightly so, do not believe in Theological Seminaries. These institutions were not set up by Christ. The method that was established in apostolic times for the training of ministers was the apprenticeship method. Jesus, Himself, used this method. The apostles were His companions for the duration of His earthly ministry. They watched how He handled situations. They heard Him preach. They asked Him questions. He often taught them in private settings. They even learned from Him as they heard Him pray. It left such a mark on them that we read in Acts 4:13, "Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were unlearned and ignorant men. They marveled; and they took knowledge of them, that they had ban with Jesus."

From a reading of the New Testament it is obvious that this apprenticeship relation between older and younger ministers was the one designed by God to train preachers. The Apostle Paul referred to this relationship as a father, son connection. He referred to Timothy, Titus, and others as his sons. When Paul knew that he would soon depart this life, he gave Timothy instructions on how to train the future generation of preachers. He said in II Timothy 2:2, "And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also."

Each young man aspiring to the work of the gospel ministry should prayerfully seek out one or more older experienced men to help them in their preparation for this great work. They should watch the older man, maybe taking notes on their observations. They should ask him questions on what he believes about certain Scriptures, doctrines, and practices. They should ask him how he has or how he would handle certain problems. They should ask his advice on books to read, on methods of Bible study, etc. They should go with him as he does hospital visiting, visiting of shut-ins, and other pastoral work. They should ask him if there are any ways in which they might assist him. They should ask him if there are any mistakes that he has made, and that he would be willing to warn them to avoid. These are just a few suggestions on how a young minister could greatly benefit from the advice and example of an older minister.

I was blessed to have 1 very wonderful father at the ministry, Elder Hassell Wallis. I met Brother Wallis when I was about twenty-four or twenty-five years old. What I found in him was a servant of the Lord who was honest and dedicated. He did not indulge in ecclesiastical politics, as many ministers did. With him the bottom line was not how best to please men but how to please God! He was a very controversial man, and was more interested in being Biblical than in being traditional. He never asked me to do anything dishonest. He always reminded me that God was my final Judge, and that I needed to be careful to find out what His will was and to do it. He did not try to tell me what to do all the time, but he was always ready to give his best advice when I asked for it. We prayed together, and visited the sick together

Then have been several other men who have had a great influence on me and on my development as a minister of the gospel. You need to learn all you can from others.

MEMORIZING SCRIPTURES

I cannot emphasize too strongly the value of memorizing the Bible. There are several reasons why this is a good practice. For one thing, memorizing is good mental work. It guarantees that you will not become mentally lazy. Another good thing about this practice is that it forces you to examine every word of the Scripture you are memorizing in detail. As you do this, you will discover truths in the Scriptures that you would never have seen on a cursory reading. If you memorize, you will be carrying the Bible with you wherever you go. You will have the Bible in your mind, available for meditation, when you are driving, when you are bathing, when you are standing in line at the grocery store, when you are mowing the lawn, and on many other occasions.

Perhaps the greatest value to a preacher from memory work comes from the fact that when the Holy Spirit gives you preaching liberty on some subject, you can preach with much authority when you quote the inspired Word of God to prove what you are teaching. When the Lord Jesus Christ had finished the Sermon on the Mount, it was said of His teaching: "And it came to pass, when Jesus had ended these sayings, the people were astonished at his doctrine: For he taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes." We don't have any authority of our own: but when we accurately quote Scripture, we have behind us the full authority of the inspired Word of God. When quoting of Scripture is done under the leadership of the Spirit of God there is great power in the sermon.

There are two primary ways of memorizing Scripture, and both should be done. Sometimes we should memorize entire books or chapters of the Bible. The first entire book I ever memorized was THE EPISTLE OF PAUL THE APOSTLE TO THE PHILIPPIANS. This was a wonderful experience. As I memorized this book, I studied it. I read it over and over and took notes on my reading. I looked up every word in the Greek. I read several commentaries on the book. I studied the circumstances surrounding the writing of this epistle. I did this by consulting conservative Bible dictionaries, Bible encyclopedias, Bible handbooks, etc. Eventually, I wrote a commentary of my own. I preached sermon after sermon from this wonderful book.

Since that time, I have memorized several other New Testament books, a number of chapters of Old Testament books, quite a number of Psalms, and other passages of Scripture. This has been a great blessing to me and I cannot recommend it too highly. I do not have a great facility for memorizing. For me it has to come by hard and constant work. I will sometimes work on one verse for an entire week! To memorize and stay at it you must set goals. For example, you must determine to memorize a certain portion each year. Carry the Bible with you at all times. Memorize every opportunity you get. Perhaps you can get someone to agree to memorize a portion of Scripture with you, and you can

encourage and-check up on each other.

Another type of memorizing that needs to be done is to memorize by subject matter. Some of these subjects should be doctrinal and some should be practical. Every young Old Baptist preacher should have an intimate acquaintance with the doctrines of grace. He should be ready at all times to give an answer when people ask questions about basic doctrines. Also, if you have memorized several passages of Scripture on a doctrine, you will be amazed as you go over these passages in your meditations, how much the Lord will reveal to you about this truth. I will give several lists of Scriptures on several subjects that may serve as guidelines for you. None of the lists is exhaustive, but each of them is just suggestive.

God's Sovereignty

I Chron. 29:12,12. Psalm 103:19. Psalm 115:1-3. Isaiah 49:9-11. Daniel 4:35. Acts 17:24-26. Ephesians 1:11. Romans 11:33-36. Revelation 4:11.

Total Depravity

Genesis 2:16,17; 6:5. Job 14:4. Psalms 51:5; 58:3. Proverbs 15:8. Jeremiah 13:23; 17:9. Matthew 15: 18-20. John 5:25; 8:41-44, 47; 10:26. Romans 3:10-19, 23; 5:12; 8:7,8. I Corinthians 1:18; 2:14. Ephesians 2:1-3. Colossians 2:13. Titus 1:15.

Unconditional Election

Deuteronomy 7:6-8. Psalm 65:4. Mark 13:20, 22. Luke 18:7. Romans 8:28-30, 33. 1 Peter 1:2. Romans 9:10-13; 16:13. Ephesians 1:4. Colossians 3:12. I Thessalonians 1:4,5. 2 Timothy 1:9; 2:10. 2 Peter 1:10. Revelation 17:8. Philippians 4:3. Luke 10:20.

Limited Atonement or Particular Redemption

Matthew 1:21; 20:28. John 10:12. Romans 3:24. 2 Corinthians 5:21. Galatians 3:13. Hebrews 9:12, 28. I Peter 1:18,19; 2:24,25; 3:18. Isaiah 53:5,6.

Irresistible Grace

Psalm 110:3. John 3:8; 5:25; 6:29, 37, 44, 63. Romans 8:28-30. 2 Corinthians 4:6; 5: 17. Philippians 1:29. Titus 3:5,6. I Peter 1:21. Preservation of the Saints: Philippians 1:6. John 10:27-30. Romans 8:38,39. Jude 24,25.

THE IMPORTANCE OF DOCTRINE

I cannot stress too strongly the importance of becoming acquainted with the great doctrines of the Bible. To do this become acquainted with books on Systematic Theology. There are several good ones. The soundest one overall is The Body of Divinity by John Gill. You should immediately get this for your library, and begin to become acquainted with it. You should become familiar with great themes such as: redemption, propitiation, justification, sanctification, predestination, etc. You should learn of the great themes that concern the Lord Jesus Christ such as: exaltation, humiliation, His active and passive obedience, His mediatorial offices of Prophet Priest and King. As you can see, there is much to learn and to rejoice in and to teach and preach about!

STUDYING

If you would be a useful minister of the gospel, you must study very much! You must find the time to study. This often means you have to give up some hobbies and other recreations which deprive you of study time. You must, "Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth." (2Timothy 2:15) The people will be encouraged if they can tell you are growing in your knowledge of and devotion to the word of God. You must, "Meditate upon these things; give thyself wholly to them; that thy profiting may appear to all"

(1Timothy 4:15) As you study, make a habit of writing down what you learn, and filing it away for future reference. You will be surprised at what you will forget, if you do not do this As the years go by and you learn more and more, your files will build up and you will have a rich source of study materials

You should make it a habit of doing diligent study for your entire ministerial career; but now, at the beginning of your ministry, is the most crucial time of study. You are now building the foundation for your entire ministry. The Primitive Baptists have been plagued with too many men who were too lazy to study, and who never became able in the Scriptures A lot more could be said about study methods, but I won't go into that here. This is a great subject which deserves a paper of its own. Consult with other ministers about their study methods.

MINISTERIAL LIBRARY

A workman needs tools to adequately perform his job. Some of the most important tools that a gospel minister needs are good books and other sources of information. You need to consult with experienced ministers about what you need. You should begin to build up your library now, because books are becoming very expensive. You will need Bible dictionaries, encyclopedias, and handbooks. You will need concordances. You will need biblical maps, and atlases. You will need good commentaries. You will need good books on the History of Christianity. As a Primitive Baptist minister, it is absolutely imperative that you get as many books as you can which have been written by past and contemporary Primitive Baptist writers. This is just a suggestive list. Many more things could be said but just get started! Much information is available today on computers, and I would encourage any young minister to become acquainted with these useful tools We have several ministers who are very knowledgeable in what is available.

PRIMITIVE BAPTIST HISTORY

There is a shameful and alarming ignorance today among many Primitive Baptists concerning their heritage. This is a very dangerous state of affairs. If we do not know where we have come from, we will not realize the significance of the present, and will have no guidance as to how to prepare for the future. Every PB preacher should be thoroughly familiar with the London Confession of Faith the Kehukee Declaration, the Black Rock Address, and with many other things that concern our past. We should even know of the mistakes and failures of our forefathers, so that we can avoid their mistakes. Every Primitive Baptist preacher should obtain and read *The History of the Church of God* by C. B. and Sylvester Hassell. Buy this book as soon as possible. There are some copies available now, but I doubt if it will ever be reprinted.

BIBLICAL LANGUAGES

I mentioned earlier how great a blessing the study of New Testament Greek had been to me. Not only did I take eighteen hours in undergraduate school, later I took several courses on a more advanced level. There are many language helps available today, both in books and on computer, which make it possible to use a lot of Greek without having studied it, but there is really no substitute for actually studying the language. I will gladly recommend correspondence courses to any who may be interested. I would be willing to teach anyone either in person or by correspondence the equivalent of six semester hours of this wonderful language. It would also be valuable to study the Hebrew of the Old Testament. I once enrolled in a correspondence course in Biblical Hebrew from the University of Wisconsin. I learned some, but I never did finish the course. I regret that now. I do believe that Greek would be more valuable for most preachers than Hebrew but it would be wonderful to be able to do some studying in each of them.

You would actually have to do a little Bible study using Biblical languages to see how exciting and how valuable it is. Doing word studies, alone, opens up a treasure house of spiritual truth!

SPIRITUAL LIVING

Some ministers make the mistake of cramming their heads full of Biblical knowledge, but it has little effect on their lives. This is tragic! God did not call you to be a lecturer, He called you to be a minister of the gospel. You must not only teach the gospel you must live it! You must demonstrate a sweet spirit. You must be humble. You must be forgiving. You must

be easy to get along with. You must live a life of the utmost integrity. You must be morally pure. You must have a very active and warm private prayer life. In short, you must demonstrate to the people of God how to live a Christian life. The people must see that you walk with God!

WIFE AND FAMILY

Every man needs a good wife, but you have got to have one! A minister's wife can either be a great help a great hindrance to him. Not every good, Christian woman is cut out to be a preacher's wife. Most likely, if you are as dedicated as you should be, your wife is going to have to live on a lower standard of living than if you were engaged a some other life work. Some women are not willing to do this. If they are, they may not do it cheerfully. A minister's wife lives in a "glass house." She has to endure a lot of social pressures. In short, it is not easy to be a preacher's wife. You will have to ask God to give you a very dedicated Christian, who loves you and the cause of Christ, and the work you am doing as a minister, or you are going to be in big trouble! Any of you that know my situation know that my wife is a great blessing to me. She constantly encourages me in my work She is very hospitable. It is hard work to extend hospitality. Being hospitable means being willing to do a lot of extra cooking and house cleaning. It means burning a lot of "midnight oil" Many woman are not willing to do this.

If the Lord does bless you to many and children, then you must put a lot of work and prayer into being a good parent. Paul told Timothy that children of pastors are reflections on those pastors. The behavior of your children will either greatly strengthen or greatly weaken your ministry. This is another area in which you need a good wife, who shares your Biblical ideas of rearing children.

FULL-TIME MINISTRY

When a man first begins to preach among the Primitive Baptists, it is very rare for him to be able to devote his entire time to the work of the ministry. Many of our churches are too small to provide full financial support to their pastor. Others could do this but don't, either out of ignorance or covetousness. You must be prepared to "make tents." Some dedicated ministers have to do this for their entire ministerial careers. However, you should prayerfully strive to get to the point where you can devote all your time to "prayer and to the ministry of the word." To do this you need to learn to have a more modest lifestyle than most people enjoy. You may have to rent or buy a more modest house. You may have to drive a used car. You may not be able to dress in name brand clothes. You may not be able to have a lucrative retirement plan. All this may sound a little sobering, but if you are not dedicated enough to the great work that you believe God has called you to, to make a few sacrifices, you are probably not going to have much of an impact on your generation.

ABOVE REPROACH

This is one area that people do not want to talk about, but we must. Many ministers have made ship wreck of the faith by committing sexual sin. How sad to see a man fall because he succumbed to Satan's temptations. Never flirt with any woman. Do not compliment any sister in the church on the way she looks. Do not tell her you like her dress, or the way her hair is fixed. This is playing with emotional dynamite! Keep your conversation with the opposite sex on a very spiritual level. Be extremely careful when you may be called upon to counsel or advise some woman. I would suggest that you talk this matter over with some experienced ministers and learn safeguards from them.

LOVE THE SHEEP

Remember that God's children are called sheep. Sometimes they can do some exasperating things. They can be stubborn and unresponsive. Resist the temptation of getting mad at them and "chewing them out." Tell them the truth but do it in love. Prove by your constant pastoral care of them that you really do love them. Pray for them often. One of the best things that any pastor can do is to pray over the church membership list a a regular basis. A wise old minister told me many years ago that if you come down hard on God' a people in the preaching, you had better make sure before you do this that they know you love them. Otherwise they will resist your ministry.

COUNSELING

One of the most important parts of your work as a pastor will be in advising or counseling people from the Word of God. People often need help with real problems in their daily lives. Many ministers do not like to get involved in this work, because it is sometimes very difficult and time consuming. Most ministers feel inadequate for this work. Other ministers are willing to do it but they read the wrong books and go about it the wrong way. Counseling is very popular in Christian circles today. The bookstores are full of books on "Christian" counseling. Most of them, however, are very unsound. They try to come up with some kind of mix with the Bible and one or more schools of thought from modern psychology.

Back in the early 1970s I came across a book that I fully believe God directed me to in His marvelous providence. This book set me on fire and showed me the way to counsel using nothing but the Word of God. The book was *Competent to Counsel* by Jay B. Adams. If you will read this book and if you believe the Bible, you will see why it had such an impact on me. It is so clear, it is just self-explanatory. Adams has written many other works on counseling since then, and most of them have been outstanding. One of his books that I consider to be indispensable is *The Christian Counselor's Manual*. You need to learn to do premarital and marriage counseling. You need to help people in their daily living. One of the advantages to reading Adams' books is that you will get many ideas for sermons from them. We live in an ungodly age when the Lord's people desperately need instruction from the Word of God on how to conduct their daily lives. Much more could be said about this, but if you will start with *Competent to Counsel* right now and read a few pages a week, the Lord will lead you into further study. Elder Lasserre Bradley, Jr. is also a proponent of Jay Adams' work, and he has an album of tapes that would be very helpful.

PASTORING

Preaching is only part of a minister's work. He must shepherd or pastor God's people. It is a sad fact that many able Primitive Baptist preachers are not good pastors. One reason for this is that pastoring is hard work. You must commit a lot of time and prayer to this work. It is not as stimulating or exciting as is pulpit preaching. But the work is absolutely vital if the churches of the Lord Jesus Christ are going to be built up. The best way to learn to pastor is to apprentice under an experienced pastor. Watch him. Go with him as he pastors. Pick his brain. A very good book on this subject was also written by Jay B. Adams. It is *Shepherding God's Flock*. Get this book now and begin to read a few pages a week in it. There are many ideas of how to take care of God's people in these pages. You will have to read the book with discretion because Adams is a Presbyterian and some of his ideas on church government are not correct. You can also get some good hints on pastoring from the practical section of *The Body of Divinity* by John Gill. You should make it a lifetime work of always sharpening your pastoral skills

Don't be a "prima donna." Some ministers think that they must always wear a suit and tie and that they are above doing a little manual labor. Do not succumb to this trap. Nothing draws men together faster than working together on a common project. When you are working and feeling close to each other, there is a good opportunity for a brother to "open up" and tell you of something that has been burdening him. I am not a good plumber, but a few years ago I spent a day as kind of a plumber's helper as we were working on a church related project. I handed him tools and helped in other ways. He had had some bad experiences with preachers in the past. I found out later that he had been moved by the fact that he knew there were some preachers who were "not afraid to get their hands dirty." I believe since that time that I have been of some spiritual benefit to him.

PREACHING

Of course, if God has called you to preach, this is the most vital part of your work. Do not be artificial. Do not try to copy someone else in your speaking style. Be yourself. But, be yourself. This has been one area of my ministry that I have not worked on hard enough. I usually speak too fast, and do not always enunciate my words clearly enough. Listen to yourself on tape with the intent of detecting and correcting weak points. Ask mature Christians to give you constructive criticism on your pulpit delivery. Always be trying to improve. Remember, however, that the best eloquence you will ever demonstrate from the pulpit will be when you are filled with the Holy Spirit. You need to spend much time in prayer that

God would graciously fill you with His Spirit and that He will give you preaching liberty. You cannot store this up. You must be totally dependent on God each time you attempt to preach. If you must, use an outline or a few notes. However, be sensitive to the leadership of the Holy Spirit as you preach. As you gain experience in the ministry and gain a good bit of Biblical knowledge, you will be able to do more extemporaneous preaching. You will be able to be more flexible as you come to the pulpit.

MINISTERIAL ETHICS

One of the qualifications that you must possess as a minister of the Lord Jesus Christ is to be a "lover of good men." (Titus 1:8) Do not undermine another preacher. Do not try to turn members of his church against him. Treat him as you would want to be treated. If he falls into error, do not be part of a "lynch mob" that gets behind his back and gets others to declare "non-fellowship" with him. Rather, go to him alone and try to help him. Do not become jealous of your fellow preachers. We have different gifts. All the gifts that God has given to His church are valuable if they are used the right way. We need each other. If you think that a brother can preach better than you can there are two things that you can do about it: You can thank God for the gift that He has sent to His church, and you can pray for the brother! You can also start studying, meditating, and praying harder and then you will be preaching better!

Do not play ecclesiastical politics. This has been a curse to the Primitive Baptists. There is no office in the New Testament Church that is higher than the office of local pastor. The Bible does not give higher authority to associational moderators, church paper editors, and popular "traveling elders." There is no New Testament authority for a preacher or a group of preachers to meet and decide who may go preach where, who is orderly and disorderly, and similar questions. We have too many cowards and "yes men" among Primitive Baptist preachers who go against their consciences and their better judgments because they are afraid of offending some influential minister. Do not succumb to this. Be your own man before God!

DEACONS

There are a lot of jokes about the relationship between preachers and deacons, but they are inappropriate. There have been some clashes between deacons and ministers, but this is not how God designed it to be. Deacons ought to be a preacher's best friends and supporters. The office of deacon was instituted to remove an unnecessary burden from the ministers of the gospel. You must help your deacons to study their Biblical qualifications and role. You must help them become filled with the Holy Spirit and with wisdom. I have had, for the most part, very good experiences with deacons. One good deacon brother even taught me how to baptize when the first three people in my ministerial experience made professions of faith! I didn't even know for sure the best way to get them in and out of the water! Brother Will Ed Norton of Pine Hill PB Church, Ripley, Mississippi, spent the afternoon showing me how to do it. He had seen hundreds of baptisms, and he knew just what to do. Many times, some good deacon brother has discovered a need that I or my family has had and has caused the church to respond to that need. Some good deacons I have had the blessing of working with have been brethren Claude Ewing, Tony Machiavello, Kevin Poe, Keifor Beauchamp, and Herman Spicer.

CONCLUSION

These are only a few guidelines. I hope they will be helpful. God deserves your very best. His sheep, for whom He died also deserve your very best!