

## THE PREACHER'S PLACE IN THE COMMUNITY

The things we are going to talk about now are not things that are dictated by any passage from the word of God; they are things within the realm of judgment. But it is the judgment of one who has been preaching full time for more than forty years, thirty years of which has been with the same congregation.

In order to accomplish the most good, the preacher must maintain, as much as possible, the respect of the community in which he lives. In this session we will discuss some practical matters that will tend to help the preacher maintain that respect.

### DISCUSSION

#### I. THE PREACHER'S DRESS

- A. Recently a segment on a television newscast in Birmingham dealt with the increased degree of respect people command merely by dressing up.
1. Two men dressed in casual clothing went into a department store and browsed. The sales people, who were not at all busy, largely ignored them. Several minutes passed before anyone offered to assist them. The same men came back later dressed with coats and ties, and were approached immediately by a sales person.
  2. Two ladies dressed casually drove onto the lot of a new car dealership. They looked around for a few minutes, and no sales person ever approached them. They later came back in dress clothes, and were approached by a sales person as soon as they stepped out of the car they were driving.
  3. Try it yourself. See if you are not treated with more courtesy and respect, even in a super market, if you are in dress clothes.
- B. Those in the business world recognize this fact.
1. Look at the way the successful salesperson is dressed, whether insurance, real estate, business machines, or janitorial supplies.
  2. Look at the politician who is campaigning for office.
- C. The preacher should show respect for the dignity of the work he is doing by dressing with dignity. That means with coat and tie, and shoes that are shined.
1. There are times for dressing casually, of course: when working in the yard or the garden, on the golf course, or at a ballgame, etc. But not when visiting the hospital, or calling on prospects, or attending a PTA meeting, or a meeting of the town council.
  2. Dress so that members of the church will feel good to introduce you as their preacher.
  3. I have not lived in all parts of the country, and I hear some say, "Here where I preach people do not expect that." Still I wonder if a preacher is not detracting from the dignity of his work by dressing like a tramp, no matter what part of the country he is in. How do the professional people dress in

that community?

D.Consider buying fewer suits, but better suits. (I try to watch for sales on Hart-Shaffner and Marks suits.) Wear clean shirts that have been ironed.

## **II.BE COOPERATIVE, BUT AVOID INVOLVEMENT THAT WOULD UNNECESSARILY HINDER YOUR WORK**

A.Nothing wrong with joining the Chamber of Commerce, or some civic club.

1.But these can monopolize one's time, if he is not careful

2.These also sometimes engage in activities that are immoral, such as sponsoring dances or raffles.

B.Avoid actively campaigning in a purely political race.

1.If a moral issue is involved, then actively campaign for morality.

2.If two or more candidates are running for office, and one of them obviously stands for uprightness in morals and the others do not (Say one is adamantly opposed to abortion and the others call themselves"pro-choice), then urge people from the pulpit to use their influence to promote moral uprightness, but do not call the names of the candidates. And emphasize in that sermon that you are not making a political speech. (it may still cost you your job.)

C.Coaching a ball team

1.If our children are involved, we naturally want to be involved, and it is right for us to be so. Preachers should be good fathers. Not only so, but coaching the team may help put one in a position to enlarge one's circle of prospects.

2.But before deciding to coach, be sure doing so will not demand so much time that you must neglect your work.

3.Be sure the elders (or other leaders) of the church approve of your decision to coach.

4.Be sure you have the ability to maintain your composure at all times. In a close game, it is easy for a coach to display an attitude which could do great harm to the good influence of a preacher. And when it happens, it usually happens in front of the very people he is trying to influence for good.

D.Engaging in business activities

1.Most preachers could use more money than they are paid by the churches where they preach. Consequently, they sometimes involve themselves in secular pursuits.

2.If you are going to be engaged in some secular money-making activity, be sure those who hire you know you plan to do so at the time you are hired, or at least before you begin your extra money-making activities.

3.Be sure the activities you are engaged in are honorable and upright, and be sure your actions are always ethical beyond question.

4.It will be better if you can get by on what the church pays you.

## **III.BE CARING, BUT UNCOMPROMISING**

A.People in the community where you preach will appreciate and respect you, even though

you preach the truth, if they know you to be a caring person.

1.Be friendly with all the people, the ones you know and the ones you don't. Greet people with a smile. Don't be thought of as a grouch.

2.Don't go to extremes, lest you be thought of as trying to show off.

3.Avoid the possible accusation that you are being flirtatious with women.

4.As much as is possible, show interest in what people are doing, their interests, their sicknesses, their children.

5.As much as is possible, visit them in the hospitals, or when there is a death in the family.

B.A pleasant disposition does not mean compromising one's convictions. But standing on one's convictions does not mean being unkind or discourteous or grouchy.

1.Brother Hugo McCord is an example of being firm in standing for what is right, but being kind and gentle.

2.Our Lord was firm, but never unkind.

3.Many preachers have been fired for preaching the truth. But many who think they were fired for preaching the truth were actually fired for being unkind, discourteous, and rude in their presentation of the truth.

## CONCLUSION

I long to see the day when churches quit furnishing houses for the preachers. Instead, pay the preacher enough to buy his own house and become a part of the community.

This will not only give the preacher and his family some security, but it will also give him greater motivation to stay with the congregation through thick and thin, and to try to help the church be what God wants it to be, instead of moving on when the going gets rough.