

Preacher's Pen points

“A Real Job”



The other day I was chatting with an acquaintance at a local store when he asked me if I knew a person who had preached here in the Nashville area in the past. I could not suppress a smile as he told me that this man, instead of being supported by the church, had “a real job”.

I didn't take it personally nor did it hurt my feelings at all; but it did set me to thinking. Most us rarely know what is involved in someone else's work except for the limited interaction we have with them in their day-to-day activities. So it's not surprising to hear someone say preaching is not a real job.

A Preacher's Work

Surprisingly, a preacher's work is in many ways quite similar to what people do in other vocations of life. Of course, preachers “preach”; but what is not always clear is what goes on behind the visual face we put on a preacher's work when he speaks from the pulpit or teaches a Bible class. So consider a few analogies.

Like lawyers, preachers research the law of God to acquire a better understanding of what He has said. Like teachers, they develop from this knowledge lesson plans to present to their classes. Like educators, they often plan and write the textbooks or literature that is being taught. Like journalists, they keep up with current events and write spiritual commentary on what is happening in our culture.

Like salesmen, they seek opportunities to interest others in the gospel, making house calls and presentations. Like web designers, they learn to use computer programs for document preparation and

constructing websites. Like authors, they create reading material for others that will hopefully be spiritually uplifting.

Like doctors, preachers visit sick people and seek to offer spiritual support through prayer and consolation to assist the healing of the body. Like counselors, they often listen at length to people talk about their problems and then offer practical solutions. Sometimes like emergency workers, they are available at a moment's notice to assist in a personal or family crisis. Like social workers, they sometimes listen to the stories of those down on their luck who need some financial assistance and give that assistance.

Like librarians, they collect and catalogue reading materials for future reference and instruction. Like secretaries, they manage files of information and correspond with others on spiritual matters. Like office workers they learn to use computer software to do word processing, e-mailing, database management, research and presentations. Other analogies could be suggested.

Spiritual Work, Not Physical Work

Of course preaching is not like many vocations that involve heavy lifting, skilled operation of machinery, or technical skills involved in building physical things. Yet, even so, preaching involves a substantial commitment of time, learning, thinking, planning, creativity, and mental and emotional energy to produce what may seem to be virtually effortless products. Even though a preacher's work contributes to a spiritual outcome rather than a physical one, of this much I'm certain. Preachers have “a real job”. ;>)

—Johnny Felker (www.truthchasers.com)