

# ***StraitWay***



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## **Overseeing The Flock Part Three (When all will not endure sound doctrine)**

God's elders are always saddened when problems arise in the congregation. Sometimes they will lose sleep and shed tears because things are not going well. It would be wonderful if everyone would do that which is right. An older preacher, while offering encouragement, said, "You will never be able to make everyone do right." This is something an elder must accept and keep in mind. Even so, an elder must be deeply concerned over each member. Paul was concerned about the problems in Corinth and shed tears over them (2<sup>nd</sup> Cor. 2:4).

Elders are to demand truth be taught and practiced. This is properly feeding the flock (1<sup>st</sup> Pet. 5:2). There will be many that support this effort and offer words of encouragement to the elders and preacher. However, Paul warned Timothy that not all would be of this mind, "For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; and they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables."

We are living in a time that "saving the saved" has become a full time job. Many do not want to hear the truth about righteous living, and standing against error. I have heard it said, "I just want to hear sermons that make me feel comfortable." "When folks get a little older they just want peace."

We must not allow weak brethren to dictate what is preached. Elders must lead the way in standing up during times of apostasy and show courage. Elders must not let the congregation forget that being a Christian DEMANDS something of you.

There is the ever-present danger of false teachers, from without and within. This threatens the doctrinal purity of God's people (Acts 20:28-29; Matt. 7:15). It is also the elder's responsibility to see that the flock is informed and warned of the error and name those teaching such. Although many may accept the exposing of error, they will not accept the exposing of those teaching it. They will say it goes against Bible teaching and that we are not showing enough love when names of false teachers are being exposed.

Paul told the Corinthians, "Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ." (1<sup>st</sup> Cor. 11:1). In Matthew 15 and 23 Jesus exposed and condemned the Pharisees for binding traditions. In Matthew 16 Jesus exposed and condemned the doctrine of the Pharisees and the Sadducees, (Matt. 16:12).

Paul was following Christ's example in Acts 13:8-10 when he exposed Elymas and condemned him. He exposed the error of Hymenaeus and Alexander and called their names (1<sup>st</sup> Tim. 1:20).

Just as Christ exposed and condemned error, Paul followed Christ and exposed and condemned error, while naming names. If we are to be followers of Paul as he was Christ (1<sup>st</sup> Cor. 11:1) we must also expose those teaching error and condemn it.

Elders must never compromise or neglect to teach the whole council of God just to keep the numbers. Remember, it is not always bad when some leave.

## Preacher Training

### The Preaching

In this series we are breaking down the work of training preachers into segments for consideration and our hope is that some seed for thought might be encouraged in each area.

#### The Preaching

Any program that does not focus on this area of a preacher's work is not worth supporting. Although I have tried to emphasize with every young man I've worked with that this is NOT the extent of your labor, it certainly IS the major area a preacher will be judged in when he interviews with a congregation for fully supported local work. It is also the greatest area available on a regular basis to teach and influence those with open hearts.

Church growth studies have determined clearly that the single most influential aspect in a visitor's returning is the quality of the worship service. The most influential part of an average worship service is the proclamation of the word. That is not to discount the importance of each part of our worship. It is just a statement of fact concerning where most people will be touched. The skills, knowledge, depth, and passion of a preacher can go a long way in encouraging folks to return and learn more. Likewise, men who fail to develop their talents, deepen their understanding, or develop the traits of our Lord in dealing with people can become a burden to the church and a hindrance to the word.

Preachers who are being trained should be accountable to someone for their lesson organization, their outline and development of thought. If a man gets in the habit of just throwing thoughts out instead of making a rational, logical presentation, his confusion of thought will spread to others in the congregation. An eclectic group of Bible stories may be interesting, but it does not compare in teaching with a chronological, time-line presentation of the Old Testament. So it is with preaching. Story telling and wandering from verse to unconnected verse may fill time in the pulpit, but if a clear presentation of gospel truth is desired, organization and preparation are a must.

Acts 17:2-3 explains Paul's preaching as "*reasoning from the scriptures, explaining and giving evidence...*" In verse 17, again, he is "*reasoning*" in the synagogue. In Acts 18:4, 19 he is "*reasoning*" and "*trying to persuade.*" Reason, explanation, evidence, and persuasion is part of preaching. A man who can't organize his thoughts will not be able to use these tools. At least a minimum number of books on debate ought to be assigned for reading so that the young man has a passing acquaintance with how to present a fair and honest case in argument. The material and biblical studies in past debates is valuable, but so is a study of how that material was organized.

Speaker's tools, which also ought to be requested and used, at least to some degree in the first year, would be the use of visual aids like charts, chalkboards, power point presentations, etc. I understand that it is possible to get caught up more in the visual presentations than in the Biblical truth being presented. Especially might this be true in the area of graphic communications like powerpoint and the use of photography and clip art. At the same time, while recognizing that danger, we would be foolish to ignore the fact that we are living in a visual age. Most folks below the age of 40 get more information every day graphically with pictures than they do by listening to a lecture or even by reading. Our culture is trained toward visual interest and bulleted points, not monotone lectures. If one wishes to communicate effectively he needs to learn the language and the language in our culture today definitely leans toward visual supplementation to verbal presentations.

A last point, that surprisingly needs to be mentioned. If you're going to train a preacher, you must let him preach. One congregation I know of was going to hire a young man to train with their older preacher. Their biggest hurdle to overcome however, was allowing the man to speak more than once a month! The older experienced man was easier to listen to, granted, but speaking 12 times in a year will just not allow the young man to prepare himself. A church must encourage him to speak, give him great attention when he speaks, and let him speak often.

The above does not rule out basic speaking arts like gestures, projection, preparation, eye contact, study, etc. But we would hope that one who is going to give his life to teaching and speaking would be encouraged to be the very best speaker he can. Anything less and his lack of devotion becomes a hindrance to clearly communicating the message of the ages. Ecclesiastes 9:10

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## Passing The Sword A Servant

**Timothy: A Truly Dependable Servant:** Beginning with Paul from Lystra, on his second journey, about 50 A.D., being in his middle to upper 20's, Timothy seems to have become Paul's right hand man. He served in this capacity until Paul's execution in a Roman prison some 18 to 20 years later. When Paul was discussing the sacrificial attributes of Christ in Phil. 2:5-11, and his own willingness to give his life in the service of the Lord, Phil. 2:17, he also added Timothy to the list, Phil. 2:19-23. Truly, Paul enjoyed his fellowship with his beloved son in the faith.

**Timothy: A Courageous Servant:** Even though Timothy might not have suffered as severely and as long as Paul, 2 Cor. 11:24-28, nevertheless he suffered greatly, Heb. 13:23; 2 Tim. 1:8; 2:3. Tradition tells us that Timothy suffered martyrdom in Rome.

**Timothy: A Servant For The Future Of The Church:** Paul wrote three letters to two of his young servants. Two to Timothy, and one to Titus. 1 Tim. and Titus a lot alike. 2 Tim. is altogether different. These letters were referred to in 1726 as Pastoral Epistles. The reason for this was because of the contents of the letters that majorly had to do with preaching, church organization, and church work. These letters are highly recommended reading for any young man desiring to be a preacher, an elder, or a deacon in the congregation. Such can also be very good for young ladies that desire to serve the Lord as wives of elders, deacons, or preachers.

**Lessons To Be Learned From This Young Servant Timothy:** The power of early training and preparation. The power of personal influence upon others. Parents upon children. Paul upon Timothy. Timothy upon others. 1 Tim. 4:12. The case of Eunice, and possibly Lois, not marrying believers. 2 Cor. 6:14-18. Not allowing personal handicaps to keep us from serving God. 1 Tim. 5:23; 2 Tim. 1:6,7; 1 Cor. 16:10,11. Are you a servant of God? What kind of servant are you? Are you dependable? Are you a good example? Why not serve God as a truly dependable servant beginning today?

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## Obedience

*"Then Peter and the other apostles answered and said, We ought to obey God rather than men"*  
**(Acts 5:29).**

*"Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered; And being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him..."* **(Heb. 5:8,9).**

*"Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you"* **(Heb. 13:17).**

*"Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently..."* **(1 Pet. 1:22).**

*"Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling"* **(Ph. 2:12).**

*"But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you"* **(Rom. 6:17).**

*"Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city"* (Rev. 22:14).

## **The Deacon's Work**

### **Deacon's Qualifications**

In First Timothy 3 and beginning in verse 8 we have the qualifications or what I prefer to call the qualities of a deacon. The apostle Paul gives this list of qualities to the young evangelist Timothy so he would be able to show the early churches what kind of men is needed to fill this position. I believe it is no less important today for the church to measure men by this standard to appoint to this work. I would like to begin to look at these qualities and try to get a better understanding of each of them.

The first quality one must have is that he is to be grave or reverent. The word in the Greek text used here is defined as one who is *august, venerable, reverend, honorable, grave, or honest*. The NIV renders this as men worthy of respect. In Vine's dictionary it is referred to as a word that combines both gravity and dignity. The man who serves as a deacon as we have discussed before should be an example to others in the congregation as well as the community. A man who fits this characteristic will be such an example. This does not mean that a deacon can never cut up or joke around, but this should not always describe him. The church has work that needs to be done and the deacon must know when it is time to get serious and fulfill his duties. He must also have enough respect to be able to direct those who are helping him with that work. All Christians should strive for this characteristic, but a man who would aspire to be a deacon must have this quality.

The second quality the apostle Paul gives for a deacon is one who is "not doubletongued". This is talking about a person who tells different stories to different people in an effort to deceive someone. This type of character is in opposition to the first quality we discussed. The person who, as we sometimes express it, talks out of both sides of his mouth will not be looked up to or thought of as dignified. A deacon needs to be trusted as someone who will give you the straight story every time. A deacon may have to work with businessmen in the community to obtain goods and services for the church. It would not do the church well in business or reputation to have a man in that position that could not be trusted to tell the truth. This is a quality that should not be a problem in the Lord's church, but unfortunately just as in the days of Paul there are some who seek to deceive others for their own gain. This is another qualification that we must use to measure a man's fitness to be a deacon.

The third quality that Paul gives to us is "not given to much wine". There has been much debate about what the apostle means when he gives us this qualification for a deacon. If one looks at the words in the Greek text it literally means just what the scholars have translated it as. A man that wishes to serve as a deacon is not to be given or prone to drinking much wine. Several have given lengthy explanations as to why this is not talking about alcoholic wine, but I can find no validity in those arguments. The apostle is telling us that deacons should not be known to drink a lot of intoxicating wine. In saying this I do not advocate nor am I teaching that the apostle Paul is advocating the use of intoxicating drink. Because he says they are not to drink much that does not give permission for them to drink a little. I personally can find no New Testament passage that deals with the issue that is known as social drinking. I do know that a lot of my brethren have strong convictions against this practice. I believe we have to hold the pattern given in Romans 14:21 where Paul said if drinking wine caused one to stumble he would not do it. I have written in previous articles that a deacon should be an example to other believers. If there are members who are struggling with this issue a deacon has the responsibility to set the best example he can before that weaker brother. I believe a deacon should abstain from any alcohol based on the example he would set before others. A deacon should try to set the best example he can before others in the church as well as those in the world.

We will continue to examine the rest of the qualities that Paul told us we should look for in a man who wants to serve as a deacon in the next couple of issues. I hope that we can all profit from this study of the deacon and his work.

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## **“Home”**

### **Home Involves A Scriptural Marriage**

In the International Standard Bible Encyclopedia under the definition of “Family” in a section titled: MONOGAMY, THE IDEAL RELATION, is the following quote. “The race is introduced synthetically as a species in the incoming of life. "And God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them" (Gen. 1:27). But with the first particularization of the relation of the sexes to each other the great charter of monogamy was laid down so clearly that Jesus was content to quote it, when with His limitless ethical scrutiny He explained the marriage relation. "And the man said (when the woman was brought to him), This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man. Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh" (Gen. 2:23, 24). It is well to pause and look at the grammatical number of the nouns: "a man," "his wife." The words of the charter hold the sexes to monogamy. The subsequent words make marriage life-lasting. "They twain shall be one flesh." A dualism becomes an individualism. So said Christ: "Wherefore they are no more twain but one flesh" (Mt 19:6 the King James Version). Nothing but death separates a man from his own flesh. Nothing but life-monogamy can find place in the language of this charter.” (Electronic Edition STEP Files Copyright © 1998, Parsons Technology, Inc) Indeed, this is what God intended and we keep emphasizing this principle ONE man (who has never been married) and ONE woman (who has never been married) are united for life. This is a scriptural marriage, because it is what God revealed as his plan for man and woman in the Scriptures, the Bible, the Word of God.

Without controversy, the above is God’s rule for marriage. However, as with most “rules” there are exceptions to the rule. In 1Cor 7:39, Paul, in discussing this matter of marriage says: “The wife is bound by the law as long as her husband liveth; . . .” In Matt 19:9 Jesus explained a situation that would enable one who has been married to Scripturally marry again. Jesus said: “Whosoever shall put away his wife, except it be for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery; and whoso marrieth her which is put away doth commit adultery. And Mk 10:11,12 makes it clear that the same thing applies to both the man (husband) and woman (wife). It is made clear that death severs the marriage bond, so that when one’s spouse is dead the surviving mate can be Scripturally married again as long as the one whom they marry has a scriptural right to be married. It is also clear that unfaithfulness to the marriage bond (fornication or sexual immorality) entitles the innocent mate to be Scripturally married again. We emphasize again, as long as the one whom they marry has a scriptural right to be married. The word “except” in Matt 19:9 is what gives the innocent mate the right to marry again. If one puts away their mate and the reason for the putting away is not fornication a subsequent marriage is unscriptural, that is, it is not sanctioned by God’s word even if the person they marry has a Scriptural right to be married. Jesus said such a marriage constitutes adultery. However, when one puts away their mate and the reason for the putting away (divorce) is fornication (unfaithfulness to the marriage bond, i.e. sexual immorality) the subsequent marriage is not adultery, if the person they marry has a Scriptural right to be married. Therefore, it is a Scriptural marriage.

So, from the above we learn that the only ones who have a Scriptural right to be married is a person who has never been married; a person whose spouse has died; or a person who has “put way” (divorced) their mate because of fornication (unfaithfulness to the marriage bond, i.e. sexual immorality).

Yes, I know this is not popular teaching in our society today, not even among religious people. The religious world in general has sanctioned almost anything that is called a marriage. Some religions even sanction homosexual relationships and call them marriage. However, just because religious people give their approval to a particular action or relationship does not mean God gives his approval. Prov. 14:12 says: “There is a way that seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death.” Our next several articles will discuss the various individuals who compose the home and their distinctive roles or functions in the home.

## Laboring in Difficult Places

Thus far, one of the most rewarding aspects of my work as a gospel preacher has been to labor in a part of the country where there is a tremendous need for New Testament preaching/teaching. Oh yes, it can be discouraging. Moving to a place far away from “home” can be frightening. Things can get “lonely.” And, at times it sure seems the negatives outweigh the positives! The rewards of laboring in difficult places are tremendous! We’ll discuss that in a later article. Sometimes I am disappointed by comments I hear from other preachers in more “comfortable” areas who may feel the negatives of doing such a work outweigh the positives:

*But...It's too far away from my family....* I understand the concern. For the first few years of my work my parents resided 1300 miles away; while my wife’s parents are still 1100 miles from here. We’ve gotten used to 18-20 hour drives “home” once or twice a year. I also understand some men have the need to stay closer to family because of the age and health concerns of close family members. This is understandable especially in light of Paul’s writing in 1 Tim. 5:1-4. What men must guard against however, is having greater loyalty to family at “home” than to spreading the gospel of Christ where New Testament preaching hasn’t been heard as much. Did not Jesus say *"If anyone comes to Me, and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be My disciple.* (Luke 14:26) I know as well as anyone of the pain involved in separation. But the rewards of this kind of labor are worth the sacrifice.

*But... it's cold, windy, and it's a different "culture."* I wonder how many brethren who died in the Lord during the first century are thankful Paul the Apostle did not possess this attitude. Think of his writing in 2 Cor. 11:23-28. One **can** adjust to a “colder” climate. I speak as a former southerner who grew up in southwest Arkansas. One **can** deal with all sorts of weather *if he wants to*. And yes, the culture in the upper Midwest and West is much different from other parts of the country. One will have to spend some time getting used to different ways of thinking; speaking; and mannerisms. In some parts of the country, religion is not woven as deeply into society as other areas. Yes cultural adjustment and weather can be **negatives**. But the **positives** far outweigh them!

*But...my kids could be placed in spiritual jeopardy if I work with a small, struggling congregation.* They could, yes. But this is **not always** the case! I am sure someone could compile statistics and find equal numbers of men who have remained in large, affluent congregations only to see their children turn away from the faith. What’s the key? **Being God’s kind of parent** and not neglecting duties at home! Remember, parents raise the children – not the local congregation! (Eph. 6:4) I once had a brother tell me that I was placing my children in grave danger for taking them away from the “Bible-belt.” Could it be the one who offers such an excuse to stay away from laboring in difficult places has no faith in his parenting skills? Where is his faith in his children, or the providence of God? Consider the **positive** aspects of your children seeing the power of the gospel working in the lives of Christians within the congregation. Consider the **positives** of your children learning about true sacrifice and real commitment. All of these things can inspire your children to bigger and better service for God!

*But...it will be hard to find support.* Not necessarily! The preacher who believes in who he is, in what he is doing, and finds himself willing to express the potential of the group he is working with should have no problem finding financial support. I have found many congregations *looking and praying for opportunities* to have a helping hand in difficult places here in the United States! Some congregations feel more “comfortable” supporting stateside works than foreign fields because of the ease of following up on the work. Remember, **God will take care of those who serve Him!**

Finally, I understand **not all men are cut out for this kind of work**. Each one of us has a special niche to fill. I also understand there are needs everywhere! But please do not rule out the possibility of laboring in a difficult place without giving it some consideration! Remember, there are **negatives** to this kind of work – but the **positives** far outweigh them!

## Choosing Sides

*“For it hath been declared unto me of you, my brethren, by them which are of the house of Chloe, that there are contentions among you. Now this I say, that every one of you saith, I am of Paul; and I of Apollos; and I of Cephas; and I of Christ. Is Christ divided? was Paul crucified for you? or were ye baptized in the name of Paul?”* **1 Corinthians 1:11-13**

Long ago Paul rebuked the Corinthians because they were following men rather than God. This led to strife and division among the church. Paul condemned these brethren and warned them to correct the cause of strife by following Jesus only. He pointed them to the cross and sacrifice of Christ for their sins. Paul reminded them that none of the men they were following had removed their sin.

One would think with such warnings in the Holy Scripture we would avoid such situations in the church today. Unfortunately this is not so.

Over the last several years I have noticed many men defining their beliefs not with Scripture, but by other men with whom they agree. Such claims have little difference from what Paul condemned among the Corinthians long ago. The subject being discussed may be different, but it is still a case of following men and their ideas rather than diligently following in the steps of Jesus.

Scripture does not give us the option to follow a man in matters of religion. Joshua did not ask the Israelites to follow him He instructed them to choose the gods of men or the God of heaven.

*“And if it seem evil unto you to serve the LORD, choose you this day whom ye will serve; whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the flood, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell: but as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD.”*  
**Joshua 24:15**

Elijah urged the people to choose between Baal and the Lord on mount Carmel. He did not ask them to follow him.

*“And Elijah came unto all the people, and said, How long halt ye between two opinions? if the LORD be God, follow him: but if Baal, then follow him. And the people answered him not a word.”* **1 Kings 18:21**

Paul instructed New Testament Christians to *“Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ.”* **1 Corinthians 11:1** Peter tells us Jesus is our example, *“...that ye should follow his steps”* **1 Peter 2:21**. None of the apostles ask their hearers to agree with them. They wanted all men to follow only Christ. The Bereans were commended because they did not accept what Paul taught until they had verified it was in agreement with what God had left them to follow.

*“These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so.”* **Acts 17:11**

Why do we want to agree with certain men? We must agree with God! If we do not then we must change so that we will agree with Him. It matters not whether we agree with any man if we are not first in agreement with God and Christ. Do not compare yourself to any man. Compare yourself in the mirror of God's Word.

*“But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, **this man** shall be blessed in his deed.”* **James 1:25**

If you match there you can be assured that God is pleased with your service. Be diligent and careful in your study of God's Word.

## How Important Is The Silence Of God?

*"The secret things belong unto the Lord our God: but those things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children for ever, that we may do all the words of this law" Deut. 29:29*

God has not revealed everything He knows, but has revealed *"..all things that pertain unto life and godliness..." II Pet. 1:3*. How important is the silence of God? An illustration will be helpful, *"For it is evident that our Lord sprang out of Juda; of which tribe Moses spake nothing concerning priesthood" Heb. 7:14*. The tribe of Levi was the priestly tribe. Moses did not have to name the other tribes and tell the Jews that no one in those tribes could be priests. God just specified the tribe from which priests would come and that settled the matter. A stranger, one of another tribe, could not draw near to offer offerings to the Lord. Remember King Saul (**I Sam. 13**) and King Uzziah (**26**)? The silence of God is important and must be observed by men.

*"And certain men...taught the brethren...Except ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses, ye cannot be saved" Acts 15:1*. These Jewish teachers were trying to bind part of the law of Moses on Gentile Christians. They were violating the silence of God. The Holy Spirit was silent about sinners being circumcised to be saved.

The Holy Spirit has specified that Christians break bread (**Acts 20:7**) and lay by in store (**I Cor. 16:2**) on the first day of the week. He has been silent about Christians breaking bread and laying by in store on any other day of the week. Because of this silence we conclude that to break bread and lay by in store on any other day than the first day of the week is sinful.

The inspired apostle Paul specified *"...singing..." in Eph. 5:19*. God has been silent about the use of mechanical instruments in worship. They are not named anywhere in the New Testament. For man to introduce them into worship to God is to violate the silence of God.

The New Testament requires that Christians *"...lay by in store, as God hath prospered..."* them (I Cor. 16:2). Tithing, giving a tenth, has not been authorized by God as a requirement for His children. A person may give a tenth if that is according to his prosperity, but to teach that each one is to give a tenth is to violate God's silence, to speak where God has not spoken.

**God has been silent about one church sending money to another church to preach the gospel. So why do churches do it anyway? It is the wisdom of men and the doctrine and commandments of men (Mt. 15:9). God's silence is important!**

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