

Teach Others Also: The Preparing of Men for the Ministry of the Gospel

By Zack M. Guess

Introduction

Historically, Primitive Baptists have been opposed to bible colleges and seminaries in training men for the ministry of the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. They do not believe that these institutions are authorized in the New Testament. They stated objections to these institutions in the *Black Rock Address* of 1832. The writers of the *Black Rock Address* plainly stated that they did not object to a college education, but they did object to the necessity of such an education in training men for the gospel ministry. They specifically objected to Theological Seminaries and Bible Colleges. Space does not permit here to consider all their objections, but I would encourage any interested party to read what they had to say on this subject.

I believe they were correct and Biblical in their objections. There is not a record of a bible college or a theological seminary in the entire New Testament. Our Lord Jesus Christ was not trained in such an institution nor were His apostles. When Jesus taught on one occasion, the people were astonished at His knowledge and commented in the following fashion, “And the Jews marvelled, saying, How knoweth this man letters, having never learned?” (John 7:15). Jesus Christ had been brought up to follow a trade and had not had a rabbinical education or formal theological training.

Peter and John also astonished some Jewish authorities with their boldness and ability. The Jewish Sanhedrin was amazed at these men and expressed this amazement in the following words: “Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were unlearned and ignorant men, they marvelled; and they took knowledge of them, that they had been with Jesus.” (Acts 4:13). This does not mean that Peter and John were stupid, incapable, or ignorant in the sense in which we usually use that word today. It simply means they did not have a formal, rabbinical education.

The Apprenticeship Method

It is plain by both precept and example that the New Testament way of training men for the ministry was the **apprenticeship** method. An apprentice is one who trains and learns from one who has supposedly mastered a certain trade. The master does some formal teaching, but much of the learning process consists in the apprentice watching the master and gradually doing what the master does. The apprentice learns by observing and doing under the supervision of the master.

This precept is plainly set forth in 2 Timothy 2:2, where Paul told Timothy, “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.” This is a minister training ministers. The context is obviously in the setting of the church, which is the “pillar and ground of the truth.”

The examples of this in the New Testament are numerous. Paul constantly seemed to be on the lookout for gifted young men whom he took with him on his evangelistic journeys. The ultimate example is the Lord Jesus, who was the first pastor of His church. He trained the twelve by having them to be with Him constantly, as they learned from Him by watching and listening. This is beautifully set forth in Mark 3:14, “And he ordained twelve, that they should be with him, and that he might send them forth to preach...” What a wonderful expression, “that they should be with him.”

Each Situation Unique

Each pastor whom God blesses to influence young ministers has his own background, preferences, personality, and situation. There will be some common elements in all ministerial training, but each situation will also be unique.

Each pastor must pray for wisdom for the proper way to train and influence the young man the Lord has placed under him. No one can learn it all. The longer most of us study the more we realize we do not know. However, each of us must be diligent in our studies for our entire lifetimes. We must “Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.” (2 Timothy 2:15).

The pastor will have to spend time teaching his son in the ministry. There will be certain subjects he has studied and he will impart this knowledge to the younger minister. There may be certain things the pastor has written and he will have the young minister to read them. There may be sermon tapes he will have the young man listen to.

He may also supervise other areas in his education. For example, he may recommend that he take a correspondence course in certain subjects, for example, *A Survey of the New Testament*. However, he would have to closely monitor this, because not all the theology would be sound.

There are correspondence courses in New Testament Greek and in Biblical Hebrew that could be very valuable.

There may be some Primitive Baptist minister who has studied a particular subject and has become very adept in it. It might be good to invite him to come teach both you and your son in the ministry on this particular subject.

There are a variety of ways in which knowledge can be imparted. The ministerial father must prayerfully seek God’s wisdom. In the final analysis, he is responsible for the young man the Lord has placed in his care and he will answer to the Lord for how he discharged his responsibility.

It is also true that the older minister will no doubt grow very much as he trains the younger minister. When a man has to teach something, he must first have a thorough knowledge of it. In fact, the father in the ministry should provide a good example to the young minister as the older man continues to diligently study until the end of his life. Paul still wanted the “books and the parchments” while he was in prison in Rome awaiting execution. Even when he was an old man, my father-in-the-ministry, Elder Hassell Wallis, constantly studied God’s word. When I would go to his study, he would have his Bible out and books piled all over the table.

Some Common Elements

Even though each situation may be unique, some things should be common to any proper theological education. There should be no branch of theology that is completely neglected. First, there should be a basic acquaintance with each book of the Bible. I have been blessed to have several fine young men train under me for the gospel ministry. I have required that they read the entire Bible through at least five times. I have also required that they write a synopsis of each book of the Bible. In doing this, they must read the book and outline it. They may use study Bibles, Bible handbooks, Bible dictionaries, commentaries, and other helps. I have recently been reading the synopses of one of my sons in the ministry. I have been greatly edified and have learned much myself from his research.

In doing this, the young minister becomes acquainted with the entire Bible. I have been amazed and edified at some of the able preaching and teaching which have resulted from these studies.

In addition to a general knowledge of the Bible, the young minister should have a good acquaintance with each principal branch of theology. He should be acquainted with *Theology*, proper, which concerns the nature of God. He should know something of *Apologetics*, the defence of the faith. He should be acquainted with *Soteriology*, the doctrine of salvation. I have required the young men who came up under me to memorize at least ten verses on each of the doctrines of salvation by grace represented by the TULIP.

He should have some acquaintance with *Eschatology*, the doctrine of the last things.

It is essential that the young minister have a knowledge of *Ecclesiology*, which is the identity, nature, and function of the New Testament church. There is a great deal of ferment on this subject today, and the young minister must know where he stands. The very identity of the church is being questioned by some today.

He should know something of *Pastoral Counseling*. I have been both amused and saddened at some of the controversies among our people concerning pastoral counseling. All pastoral counseling consists of is showing the children of God how to practically apply the principles of Scripture to their daily lives. This is easier said than done. To be a wise pastoral counselor requires much study, prayer, and experience. The best way for the young minister to learn this is by observing as his father in the ministry shepherds the sheep the Lord has placed in his care.

The young minister should have a good acquaintance with *Church History* in general. He should also have an acquaintance with *Baptist History* in particular and with the unique *History of the Primitive Baptists*. Many of our brethren, sadly and detrimentally, know almost nothing of where our forefathers have stood on various issues.

It is easy to be overwhelmed when we see the responsibility the Lord has placed on us. There are many other branches of theology I could have mentioned. We must do the best we can to prepare our young men for the great work to which the Lord has called them.

Bibliography

If a man has been preaching very long, he has some books and other resources that have been a blessing to him. He needs to share this knowledge with the young preacher. Some books are very valuable. Some are practically useless, and some are downright dangerous. The older minister should help his son in the ministry develop the library which he will use for the rest of his life.

Dialogue

Some things are learned formally, but many other very important things are learned in an informal setting. Some of the most valuable times I have had with my sons in the ministry is in having long talks with them. They have asked me questions, some of which I could not answer. I have told them of experiences I have had. I have told them of my successes and also of my mistakes and failures. These times of dialogue have been some of the most edifying and valuable experiences in the training of precious young men for the ministry.

Pastoring

Knowing God's word is not enough. We must apply it and make it real to God's people. In other words, we must be diligent pastors. We must do what Paul told the Ephesian elders to do in Acts 20:28, "Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood." We must do what the Lord Jesus Christ told Peter to do when He told him to feed and shepherd His sheep and lambs. (John 21: 15-17). The best way for the young minister to learn to pastor is to watch his father in the ministry pastor and to help him in this task. He must spend time with the older man in this work.

Ethics

Ethics has to do with standards of right and wrong. Some things are just right and some are not. No matter how much knowledge a man may have, it will not profit the cause of Christ unless his behavior is what it should be. The training of young ministers is not complete until they have been taught and had modeled before them proper behavior.

We must exhort our young preachers to live lives that are above reproach. There should never be even the hint of improper behavior towards the opposite sex. Many men have ruined their ministries by improper conduct in this area.

We must train our young ministers to be scrupulously honest in matters of handling money. They should be good stewards of the resources that God places in their hands.

Young preachers should have good manners. Many a man has damaged his ministry by not exercising proper social skills. As Jay Adams pointed out, we should not avoid the offense of the cross, but we should avoid the offense of improper ministerial behavior.

If a young preacher is married, he should strive to be a considerate, loving husband. If he has children, he must be a good father. He must be taught to set an exemplary standard before the flock in these areas of conduct.

Sadly, some ministers play ecclesiastical politics. They behave in a cowardly manner and are so afraid of falling out of favor with some influential minister, they base their behavior on expediency instead of on Biblical conviction. This is appalling. I thank God that my father-in-the-ministry, Elder Hassell Wallis, taught me both by precept and by his own example, not to do this. Brother Wallis counseled me to try to live in peace with all men. The bottom line, however, was to not fear men, but to be honest with God. I thank God almost every day for this sound advice.

There will be times in the life of each minister of the gospel that he will be put under pressure. He will be threatened with loss of fellowship or with the prospect of getting no preaching appointments. The older minister has the responsibility of warning the younger minister that these times will come. He must charge him to always be honest with God, no matter how high the price. He must point him to the words of the apostle Paul in Galatians 1:10, "For do I now persuade men, or God? or do I seek to please men? for if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ."

Conclusion and Encouragement

It has never been easy to serve the Lord. This is particularly true for ministers of the gospel. In his dying words, Paul told Timothy to "endure hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ." However, in that same

epistle, Paul, who was facing death, was very encouraged. He had a clean conscience, and he was looking forward to meeting the Lord. Peter also gave great encouragement to men who had been faithful in the discharge of their duty as gospel ministers. He wrote in 1 Peter 5:4, “And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away.”

This is a good time to be a minister of the gospel and this is a good time to be a Primitive Baptist preacher. I am not proud to be a Primitive Baptist but I am thankful to be one. We are far from perfect, but we have a wonderful heritage. If God has called you to be a Primitive Baptist minister, He has been gracious to you.

We need to concentrate on the positive and there is much positive to concentrate on. In 1994, the Lord opened a door in the Philippines for the gospel as believed by Primitive Baptists to be preached. The growth there has been phenomenal. In 2000, He opened up a door in India. The growth among the Primitive Baptists in India is hard to keep up with.

We even have some churches in Africa. Two Primitive Baptist ministers have preached in Australia, and we may have a church there someday.

Very encouraging to me is the fact that the Lord is raising up some dedicated and able young ministers among us. Anyone who is knowledgeable knows that there are many difficulties and controversies among the Primitive Baptists today. It could be easy to be discouraged. However, I was talking to Elder Bradley a few months ago, and he said that one bright spot that gave him much hope was the fact that the Lord was raising up a number of courageous and knowledgeable young ministers among us. He said that gave him hope for the future. I agree.

Let us do the best we can to Biblically and properly equip them for the great tasks that face them.

Appendix A

Explanation: A good Primitive Baptist preacher friend of mine asked me to write him a letter of recommendation to a university theological school. I wrote him the letter, but I also wrote him a letter asking that he not go there. I am including excerpts from that letter here. You will see in the course of the letter that I myself attended a seminary for a year. I did so to study Intermediate New Testament Greek. I had previously completed eighteen semester hours in Greek many years ago when I was in college. I wanted to advance my study in the wonderful language into which the Lord inspired the New Testament. I am not against such selective study for a specific reason. However, when I did this I had been preaching for many years and had a degree of maturity and discernment. I would recommend extreme caution for a young man with little ministerial experience doing this. If he did, it would be wise for him to have constant interaction with an older and trusted father in the ministry.

Dear Brother _____,

I have just completed the recommendation form for your application to _____. I gave you high marks, which you were entitled to. I also wrote a very positive letter to accompany the application.

Having said this, I still very much wish that you would reconsider and not go to school there. You are settling for second or third best. I don't know what all your motives are and neither do you because

according to Jeremiah 17:9, “The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?” Part of your motive may be pride. I went through the same thing when I was taking Greek at Mid-America Baptist Theological Seminary. I saw the catalog and thought how impressive the M. Div. or Th. D. would look with my name attached to it. I then thought of several Scriptures that pertain to such things. One of these is in Matthew 23:8, “But be not ye called Rabbi: for one is your Master, even Christ; and all ye are brethren.” There is not a hint in the New Testament of Christ’s ministers having any kind of theological degree. This kind of thing did **not** originate in the church of the Lord Jesus Christ. The Baptists borrowed these kinds of things from others. Brother Guna [of India] was very happy when he realized this.

Neither Jesus nor His disciples had anything that even approximated theological degrees. The Jews, speaking of our blessed Saviour, asked in John 7:15, “And the Jews marvelled, saying, How knoweth this man letters, having never learned?” Don’t you think He is the very best example to follow? The same was true of His apostles. It was said of them in Acts 4:13, “Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were unlearned and ignorant men, they marvelled; and they took knowledge of them, that they had been with Jesus.”

Dear Brother _____, you have got a magnificent library that God has blessed you with. God has also graciously blessed you to be a pastor again. You should cherish this opportunity that God has given you to shepherd His sheep. You need to engage in “20/20” ministry → Acts 20:20, “And how I kept back nothing that was profitable unto you, but have shewed you, and have taught you publickly, and from house to house...” In my humble opinion, you would be **much better** off if you would just spend much time alone with God in prayer as you study His word, using the numerous study helps He has blessed you with. Why should you sit under men who don’t even preach what you believe?

Life is very short as I am becoming increasingly aware, as I grow older. Pray the prayer of Psalm 90:12, “So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom.” If you are to become the spiritual man you need to be, you will be wasting much of your time in travel to class, in preparation for class, etc. You will not have time to **independently** and **prayerfully** study the sacred Word on your own. You may have an intellectually impeccable lesson to present to the congregation at _____, but you will be serving them stale bread in comparison to the fresh bread of life that you could have gotten by **prayerful, independent** study on your knees before God, if you had just had the time you would have had, if you had not tied yourself down to the seminary program.

God did not call you to be a scholar. He called you to feed the flock of God, which He has purchased with His own blood.

Seminary professors did not make you the overseer of the flock. They also did not call you to preach. I call on you to ask God to give you a fresh vision of His calling. Paul did not pursue “formal” theological training after God had called him. He was just absolutely enraptured at the fact that the **Ascended Christ** had called him into the ministry. This is plain from looking at Ephesians 3:7, 8, “Whereof I was made a minister, according to the gift of the grace of God given unto me by the effectual working of his power. 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...”

Brother _____, we need more spiritual power from the pulpit, and that will not come from academic, classroom study. That will come from humble men of God, not looking for any kind of distinction, burning the midnight oil in the privacy of their studies as they pore over the Word of God, and frequently falling on their faces before God with fervent prayers pouring out of their hearts before God. Classroom instruction may have its place but it is a poor substitute for private wrestling over the Scriptures.

You would much better spend your time with the activity described in Isaiah 62:1, 6, 7, “For Zion's sake will I not hold my peace, and for Jerusalem's sake I will not rest, until the righteousness thereof go forth as brightness, and the salvation thereof as a lamp that burneth... I have set watchmen upon thy walls, O Jerusalem, which shall never hold their peace day nor night: ye that make mention of the LORD, keep not silence, And give him no rest, till he establish, and till he make Jerusalem a praise in the earth.”

I will not annoy you and continue to speak with you on this subject. You must make up your own mind before God. However, as your old friend and one of your fathers in the ministry, I would be unfaithful if I did not share my strong feelings and convictions with you on this matter.

I pray that you will do what brought revival to the early church, and what the first deacons were ordained for so the men of God could do what was the **number one** priority→ Acts 6:4, “But we will give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word.”

Your friend in His easy yoke,

Appendix B: Avoiding Extremes

Explanation: It is so easy for fallen sinners to be unbalanced and to go to extremes. Some people place a premium on ignorance and on poor speaking ability. In our Primitive Baptist past, there have been some men who gloried in their lack of education and in their lack of preparation. They just stood in the pulpit, without any adequate preparation, and spoke the first thing that came to their minds. I have even known men to glory in using poor English.

Thankfully this is an extreme that we do not see too much of today. Most of our ministers realize that we are being unfaithful to God if we don't diligently study His word and present it in the clearest and best way possible. Most of our ministers are fairly articulate. However, it is possible to go to the opposite extreme and to look down on men who do not have much formal education and who are a little roughshod in their delivery. This is a great mistake. Our God is sovereign in whom He calls to preach. He calls some men who have formal educations and He calls some who do not. Our God is the one who ultimately prepares men for the ministry. We must not despise any truly God-called preacher, even though he may not fit our mold of preference. When Jesus Christ called the twelve some of them were fishermen, with no formal education. One was a tax collector. Jesus knew what He was doing then, and He knows what He is doing now.

Each of us who are called to preach should strive to do the best we can to develop the gifts that God has given us. We should respect each other and realize that God has called a variety of gifted men to advance His kingdom.

Below I am including a few excerpts that demonstrate that God is sovereign in whom He blesses to be effective in the glorious gospel of the blessed God:

“The doctrine of a crucified Savior, God manifested in the flesh, as the only foundation of a sinner's hope of acceptance, and the only source of sanctifying grace; preached by ministers, frequently, of obscure birth and moderated abilities, and destitute of the advantages of eminent learning or eloquence; sometimes even homely in their appearance and address” (Thomas Scott) Quoted in *Gleanings in Joshua* by A. W. Pink

“When our Lord chose the men who were to be His apostles and ambassadors, He selected not those who occupied eminent stations in the world, nor those who had passed through the schools of learning, but

unlettered fishermen and a despised tax gatherer... The gospel does not depend for its success on human wisdom—a fact lost sight of by the churches today.” A. W. Pink in his *Gleanings in Joshua*.

“Bunyan was but a tinker, yet his book *Pilgrim’s Progress* has been translated into more languages, had a much larger circulation, and been used in blessing to a far greater number of souls, than all the writings put together of the learned Owen and Goodwin! Spurgeon has neither university nor college training, nor was he a graduate of any seminary! Though after God’s call to the ministry, each of them studied hard and long to improve himself! In proportion as the churches have made an idol of education and theological learning in their ministers, has their spirituality waned: that is a fact, however unpalatable it may be.” A. W. Pink in *Gleanings in Joshua*.