

-- Continued from page 3 --

ignoring this high calling might even be sinful (James 4:17).

The Lord calls on His people to implement their abilities in His service. *"Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, let us prophesy in proportion to our faith; or ministry, let us use it in our ministering; he who teaches in teaching; he who exhorts, in exhortation; he who gives, with liberality; he who leads, with diligence; he who shows mercy, with cheerfulness"* (Romans 12:6-8). Those capable of leading should be encouraged to develop the necessary characteristics to be appointed.

Considering the requirements of the office, becoming qualified will take years to accomplish. Therefore, every Christian is urged to keep this goal in mind. From the time a disciple masters *"the elementary principles of Christ"* (Hebrews 5:12-6:3) that disciple should make it his aim to someday become an elder or her aim to be an elder's wife.

Those who truly excel in their capacity as overseers in the Lord's church are worthy of high esteem (1st Thessalonians 5:12-13) and double honor (1st Timothy 5:17) from those over whom they rule. It's a worthy goal.

"The Assembling Of Ourselves Together"

Hebrews 10:24-25

Sunday

10:15 am.....Worship
Las Vegas Library
833 Las Vegas Boulevard North

Monday

7:00 pm.....Acts Study
On hiatus.

Tuesday

7:00 pm.....Ladies' Study
Cory Barajas residence

Wednesday

7:00 pm.....Various Studies
Jerry & Beverly Dockens residence

"Give Attention To Reading"

1st Timothy 4:13

Your reading assignments for this week are as follows:

Sunday.....Leviticus 10-12

Monday.....Leviticus 13-15

Tuesday.....Leviticus 16-18

Wednesday.....Leviticus 19-21

Thursday.....Leviticus 22-24

Friday.....Leviticus 25-27

Saturday.....Numbers 1-3

"Sound Doctrine"

Titus 2:1

HIGHER LEARNING

Bryan Matthew Dockens

A common question visitors seem to think appropriate of preachers, at least in this writer's experience, is "Where did you go to school?" But folks just never seem to know how to react when I tell them about my year at Moorpark College, the community college near my hometown. They expect me to mention some "Bible college" or "Christian university" they've heard of instead. It's time to set a few things straight.

Formal education is not a prerequisite to gospel preaching. Paul wrote the church in Corinth, *"And I, brethren, when I came to you, did not come with excellence of speech or of wisdom declaring to you the testimony of God. For I determined not to know anything among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified... And my speech and my preaching were not with persuasive words of human wisdom... that your faith should not be in the wisdom of men but in the power of God"* (1st Corinthians 2:1-2, 4-5).

Preachers do not need letters after their names to speak the word of God. In fact, the Lord has made rather clear His disapproval of religious titles (Matthew 23:1-12). No Bachelor of Ministry degree is needed, neither a Master of Theology degree, nor a Doctor of Divinity degree. All the degrees a preacher needs are 98.6%! Indeed, the only preacher qualifications set forth in the Scriptures are these: *"faithful"* and *"able"* (2nd Timothy 2:2). If he practices God's word and can impart the same to others, he is qualified. To demand

-- Continued on page 3 --

Volume 1 Issue xxvi

February 3rd, 2008

-- Continued from page 1 --

more than this is to add to God's already perfect word, the punishment for which is severe (Revelation 22:18; Deuteronomy 12:32).

When Paul mentioned the religious education of Timothy the evangelist, did he refer to some seminary, theological institution, or brotherhood school? No! He wrote, *"But you must continue in the things which you have learned and been assured of, knowing from whom you have learned them, and that from childhood you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus"* (2nd Timothy 3:14-15). He learned the Scriptures from childhood. So, who taught him? Earlier in the same epistle, Paul commented that Timothy's faith *"dwelt first in [his] grandmother Lois and [his] mother Eunice"* (2nd Timothy 1:5). Those were his credentials: a proper upbringing.

Religious education begins in the home. *"Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it"* (Proverbs 22:6), wrote wise Solomon. This duty has always belonged to parents, from the Old Testament (Deuteronomy 6:6-9), and even earlier (Genesis 18:19), all the way to the present (Ephesians 6:4).

Beyond the home, religious instruction is the responsibility of the church (Ephesians 3:10; 1st Timothy 3:15). No other institution on earth has received such a commission from God and those that assume such a role will be overthrown (Matthew 15:13).

The scriptures contain no reference to seminaries or the like ordaining men to preach. Rather, when men were sent forth to proclaim the gospel, it was the church that sent them (Acts 13:1-3).

Preachers who obtain their knowledge of the word from their parents, the church, and through personal study (1st Timothy 4:15-16; 2nd Timothy 2:15) are not unqualified. They're not "just winging it" as some would suggest. These preachers' backgrounds most closely mirror those we read of in the New Testament.

With this pattern we should be content. Consider what the preachers of the first century were able to accomplish without modern institutions of higher learning: they evangelized the whole world (Colossians 1:6, 23; 1st Thessalonians 1:8)! It is no handicap to lack what God never required in the first place.

"DESIRE THE POSITION"

Bryan Matthew Dockens

The church as God would have it is one that is led by *"pastors"* (Ephesians 4:11), those who *"shepherd the flock of God"* (1st Peter 5:2), and are alternately referred to as *"elders"* and *"overseers"* (1st Peter 5:1-2; Acts 20:17, 28) – *"overseers"* being the literal meaning of the word *"bishops"* (Philippians 1:1).

A church without such leadership is incomplete. Paul explained to the evangelist Titus, *"For this reason I left you in Crete, that you should set in order the things that are lacking, and appoint elders in every city as I commanded you"* (Titus 1:5).

Since a church without elders is *"lacking"*, it is incumbent upon godly men to develop some ambition and fulfill the qualifications enumerated in God's word (1st Timothy 3:1-7, 11; Titus 1:5-9).

Such holy ambition, the desire to fulfill what is lacking, so that God's sheep will not be without a shepherd (Numbers 22:17; Matthew 9:36), must not be mistaken for power-lust which is a genuine threat (1st Peter 5:2-3; 3rd John 9-10).

Righteous men ought to be encouraged to aspire for such responsibility. *"This is a faithful saying: If a man desires the position of a bishop, he desires a good thing"* (1st Timothy 3:1).

Another *"faithful saying"* which must be *"affirm[ed] constantly"* is *"that those who have believed in God should be careful to maintain good works"* (Titus 3:8). Since the desire to lead is a good thing and good works should be carefully maintained, then honorable men should not shy away from such an important goal. In some cases,

-- Continued on page 4 --

Vegas Valley Church Of Christ

Romans 16:16

(702) 374-9799

VegasValleyChurchOfChrist@gmail.com

P.O. Box 750152, Las Vegas, Nevada 89136-0152