

PREACHERS AND SPIRITUAL NOURISHMENT

By Bob Young

Preachers like to compare notes. At preacher gatherings, we talk about our ministries and our churches, responses, church growth, etc. A frequent question is “how was this past Sunday?” Was attendance up or down? Were there responses? How was the sermon? (Maybe the wrong person is being asking about the quality of the sermon!) I wonder if one reason for these questions is the desire to preachers for authentication and nourishment!

Preachers are in a unique position. We do not sit and listen at the feet of others very often. Rather preachers must find nourishment from Christ as we sit at His feet, studying the Scriptures, praying for strength and wisdom. Nourishment comes through worship and sharing the Lord’s Table. In the Supper, all Christians nourish one another and we preachers receive as do all. Preachers are also nourished by listening to our own sermons as we preach. I (almost) always enjoy listening to my own sermons and lessons.

An often overlooked source of nourishment for the preacher comes through interactions with church members. God has buoyed my spirit many times through the comments and experiences, the faithfulness and joy of members. I see it again and again and say it with increasing frequency, “Churches build ministers more than ministers build churches.” Preachers have one of the best seats in the house when it comes to seeing what God is doing among his people. Who else in the local church sees and hears as much about God’s work and activity among his people? Who else sees in such an intimate way how God comforts, how God heals, how God changes us, how God saves, how God walks along side? Poor indeed is the preacher who cannot feast his soul on such experiences. The one who is closest to God’s action among his people should drink deeply, growing in faith, hope, and love.

I can tell you from firsthand experience what I have seen—quiet and amazing generosity, dogged service, love blanketing a multitude of sins; brothers and sisters wrestling with the Lord in dark shadows until they limp into the light. Again and again, I have seen God’s people trust Him and only rarely have I seen people turn away under the burden and stress of difficult moments and days.

In preaching, I was always hungry for nourishment. I found it in God’s word and in the opportunity to spend time in the word and with God. I also found it in my interactions with others. God give us hungry preachers—those who are hungry for the things of God. Some hunger for fame, acclaim, and success and have little time for the very people through whom God wants to provide us nourishment, sustenance, and strength. Ministry is service, and service is meaningless without healthy relationships with the people who are being served. That is the purpose of ministry—that is the purpose of preaching. In the simplicity of service, God nourishes the soul. May we not forget.