**LOCATED PREACHERS**

*Preliminary note from Lanny: There are a small handful of brethren who believe that “located preachers” are not authorized in Scripture. When I lived in Kentucky, this was certainly an issue among some brethren. Even here at Fishers, I still occasionally receive questions about this topic. Since I was looking for an idea for the bulletin, I thought I’d share a recent response I gave on the issue of “located preachers” …*

As I have said many times, the authorization for a located preacher is simply a matter of ***human judgment;*** there is no Biblical requirement to have one. Churches exercise human judgment on a whole host of matters: having a building, having Bible classes for all ages, having multiple cups, how the communion is distributed, how the collection is taken, how many services per week, etc. Choosing to have (or NOT have) a located preacher falls under the same category. There is no issue of right or wrong here. ***This is precisely why you do not find a “command” for a located preacher! If it were a command, it would no longer be optional!***

But these “no located preacher” folk act as if there is only ONE way to preach, and that is to have every member do this work. One article I read said it like this: ***“there is no other system of preaching and teaching authorized by the New Testament other than one fully utilizing every capable male member.”*** What verse do they cite to prove this? NONE! They cite passages about every member doing his part (e.g. Ep.4:16) – but that principle is not limited to preaching!There are many other ways to do your part in the body of Christ. Examples include waiting on the table, leading prayer, leading singing, serving as elders or deacons, maintaining the facilities, teaching Bible classes, and helping with visitation or benevolent work.

Should a preacher be paid? Yes! In fact, Paul argues that a preacher may ***derive his entire living*** from preaching the gospel (1Cor.9:14). Is ***every*** male member supposed to quit their secular job and preach for a living? Obviously not, for several reasons: 1) The local church would not be able to afford to pay every male member enough to live on in exchange for his preaching work (1Cor.9:14). 2) Not every male member is talented enough to preach (Rm.12:6-8). 3) Not every male member SHOULD preach (Jm.3:1).

The article noted above asks, ***“But where, O man of God, can we find the authority to limit public service preaching and teaching to one or two men of a congregation attended by hundreds?”*** To which I reply, “If we can’t limit pubic service preaching and teaching to one or two men, then what about limiting it to ***three*** men? ***Four*** men? ***What is the minimum number of preachers allowable in a church?”*** They cannot answer, for there is no minimum. And that is precisely why this is a matter of human judgment!

May a preacher stay in one place and preach? Yes! Paul was at Corinth for a year and a half (Ac.18:11), and at Ephesus three years (Ac.20:31). Philip the evangelist was at Caesarea for about twenty-five years (Ac.8:40; cf. 21:8). Timothy was told to “remain in Ephesus” to preach (1Tm.1:3); and he stayed about four years (2Tm.1:16-18; 4:19). These verses provide ample authorization for a “located preacher.” ***Who*** that preacher is, ***how many*** preachers are used, and ***how long he (or they) will stay,***and ***how much he (or they) will be paid,*** are matters of human judgment.

I do not find fault in these brethren for choosing not to have a located preacher; ***but I DO find fault in their attempt to BIND their opinion about this on others*** (Jm.4:12). They cite many “abuses” with respect to having a located preacher. I could do the same thing with respect to NOT having a located preacher: I have seen how their “travelling evangelists” sometimes wield excessive authority and influence over the various churches where they preach. And I have seen brethren spiritually starve to death via “mutual edification.” But citing abuses does not negate the basic principle involved, which is that each church has the liberty to decide whether they will use or a located preacher or not. Men on either side can and have abused their practice; and they will each be held accountable (2Cor.5:10).

--Lanny Smith