

***"Oh, you preach
and work
for a living"***

Suggestions for the preacher in secular work

Jeff Archey

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I readily recall the first writing of this material about ten years ago. At that time I stated that one person doth not a book make. There are several individuals I continue to be indebted to for this to be in your hands.

First, I am thankful for our Heavenly Father in whom we have those wonderful spiritual blessings (**Ephesians 1:3**)! His scheme of redemption that we proclaim from His word is the inspiration to encourage others.

Thanks also to the following:

The late Clayton Pepper for his constant encouragement and suggestions. I miss him to this day—what a wonderful friend!

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Fay Cornwell, James Cossey, Tony Ferrell, Doug Parks and **Titus Ward**. You will read about these brothers in the planning chapter.

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INTRODUCTION

Several years ago, a dear lady learned that I preached as well as held a secular job. She looked at me (no doubt she meant well) and with excitement and pleasure expressed, "Oh, you preach and work for a living." A lot of my preaching brothers that are full-time would appreciate that! They laugh as hard as I did and still do. Yes, my friend, preaching is work! It is the greatest work in which one can engage.

There are many who hold secular jobs, yet each Sunday and Wednesday night stand, teach and proclaim the gospel of Christ. A great sacrifice is made and a balance is needed for one such as this to accomplish great things in the kingdom. Along with Sundays and Wednesdays, there are other days and evenings of visiting, hospital calls and phone requests. The phrase "part-time preacher" was created to distinguish between one who works in secular work and preaches and the one who is supported completely by the local congregation as the preacher, but in reality, there is no such individual as a "part-time" preacher. In this book, however, we will continue to distinguish between "part-time" and "full-time" preachers for sake of clarity.

The purpose of this volume is three fold:

1. We wish to assist the brother who is currently involved in preaching while working at a secular job to be more effective in the service of God. It is said that men who are CEO's across this nation are constantly seeking to improve their knowledge in the area they oversee. They are always looking for an edge and as ministering servants, so should we.

2. Maybe you are considering preaching for the "little country church" or there is a congregation who cannot support a man full-time and you wonder if you can help them. In the 2007-2010 catalog of the Memphis School of Preaching, we read on page thirteen: "It is estimated that from one-third to one-half of the churches of Christ do not have preachers to work with them, not to mention needs of mission areas of the United States and foreign countries." My friends, the need is there and if we had some kind of inkling as to how to prepare more men to preach, we would attempt it. Hopefully this book will help accomplish that. Hopefully there will be other brothers who are ready to "rise up and build."

3. We acknowledge our brethren who have been full-time in preaching for years, but are no longer full-time preachers. Possibly you have decided to pursue other career choices, yet you still want to preach. The time available as a "full-time" preacher is no longer available and you are facing a new challenge. The following chapters will help you in your adjustment and growth.

I trust the following pages will be of help as you press onward in the service of our Lord.

Jeff Archey
Cleveland, TN

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WHY DO THIS?

Since I was a little boy, I have always admired preachers. Seeing brethren in the pulpit with God's message to preach, elegantly dressed and looking professional, stood out in my mind and greatly impressed me and I knew that was what I wanted to do.

My goal early in life was to preach for congregations that could not afford a full-time preacher and to engage in secular work. It was from those preachers I heard growing up that this goal was set early in life. I achieved that goal and although now in "full-time" work, I have nothing but great remembrance of those days. I would not be where I am today had I not begun where I did in preaching "part-time" while holding a secular job! What a joy!

Now, this is your goal! Go for it!

You have that goal set, right? You know why you want to preach or you have decided to pursue and grow toward that goal. The following reasons may be yours. If not, they should encourage and reinforce your pursuit of preaching and working for a living (secular job).

- **THERE IS A NEED!** Where there is an empty pulpit, there is a need and an opportunity, and they are all over the country! For example, according to my good friend, the late Clayton Pepper, who has conducted much research in church growth, there are only six states with a church of Christ in every county! Yes, my friend, there are opportunities and open doors! You, my brother, will meet a need for the church! Amen!
- **THE "ADVANTAGE".** I have had numerous full-time preachers tell me, "Jeff, you are doing this the right way," referring to preaching while working at a secular job for your financial support. The "advantage" is if a congregation decides to make a change in preachers, you still have your support from your secular work.

Many full-time preachers have been dismissed for proclaiming the truth. Consequently, they must look everywhere and anywhere to find a place to continue to preach and support their families. With secular work, one's family is already supported.

Consider that our Lord and Savior was sinless, yet His message offended many. If He, perfect and sinless, offended with the truth, so will you at some point.

However, we should never use the "advantage" for personal gain. Our preaching needs to be in love and concern for the souls of individuals (**Ephesians 4:14,15**) and never to be mean or vindictive. Allow the truth to be stated clearly and in love.

The "vocational missionary" has an "advantage". Many brethren are transferred in their secular work to areas where the church is not strong. My friend, open doors abound! Not only can one work honestly in one's chosen field, but one can serve the Lord and strengthen His church, too. My brother, this too is an advantage!

Many full-time preachers have great relationships with their brethren and their elders. The difficulties that arise are a small percentage. By no means is the "advantage" meant to belittle or diminish our brethren who are currently full-time. In either case the gospel is preached and we are all on the same side. Since the original print of this volume, I have transitioned to "full-time" work. I have not forgotten the joy of preaching and being in secular work and much of what I learned in planning and scheduling then helps me now...quite honestly, I think it grants me another advantage.

- **THE LORD USES PREACHING.** Through the use of words, God made known to human beings what one needs to do in order to be obedient to Him. Paul in **1 Corinthians 1:21-25** said, "For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of **preaching to save them that believe.** For the Jews require a sign, and the Greeks seek after wisdom: **But we preach Christ crucified,** unto the Jews a stumbling block, and unto the Greeks foolishness; But unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, **Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God.** Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men; and the weakness of God is stronger than men."

Again, Paul in **Romans 10:13-15**, "For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and **how shall they hear without a**

preacher? And how shall they preach except they be sent? as it is written, **How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things!**" (KJV, emphasis mine, JRA).

Why do this? There is a need and an opportunity to proclaim the truth on behalf of our Lord.

Can you do this? YES! With secular work responsibilities? YES!

How?

Read on.

YOUR SECULAR WORK

They are factory workers loading trucks and assembling parts.

They are sales representatives that travel or maybe they work in a store.

They merchandise shelves. They drive tractors. They are from every line of work.

They preach. So will **you**.

The demands companies put forth pose quite a challenge in our personal lives. There are so many challenges facing the employee today, unlike ever before. For example, we read daily in the local newspaper of job "downsizing" and position elimination. Unlike our fathers, who stayed at the same place of work from beginning until retirement, we will probably not have the same opportunity. Employment experts claim that an individual will change places of employment **seven** times in his lifetime.

The apostle Paul stated, "Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God." (**Philippians 4:6**). Worrying about job security will only accomplish aggravation and sadness. If we are not happy with our jobs or places of employment, we will be unhappy in our homes and everywhere else.

As one who preaches and works for a living, you will be quite surprised at the reaction of people in your work place when they find out you are a preacher. Reactions vary from quick apologies for what they might have said to questions about the Bible. People will be watching you and they will note how you handle matters.

I recall one that started a Bible Study session at his workplace. It resulted in two baptisms and the group grew so much that another was begun! Yes, there are opportunities that are afforded you that a full-time preacher does not have on a daily basis.

This chapter is designed to help you make your secular work more effective and to help you in balancing your time.

First, look at the relationship with your boss. This is a relationship that must be at its best. I was very fortunate to have supportive managers everywhere I have worked. The Lord blessed me with managers who were understanding and encouraging.

As a Christian, your immediate supervisor knows you will give your best. You need to develop a relationship that will be helpful if you need to be away conducting a funeral or maybe a gospel meeting.

Always remember that your secular work makes your living and you must give your best effort. A Christian will not give any less.

In April 1997, the following article was printed in VIGIL. The majority of congregations have members either in secular work or retired from secular work. My friend, they need daily encouragement and strength the same as you do. That is the reason for this article. This appropriate article should assist you as you press onward preaching and working for a living.

CHRISTIANITY IN THE WORKPLACE

In **Luke 5:27-32**, we read of Christ choosing Levi (also known as Matthew) as an apostle. Matthew made a great feast in his own house for our Lord and others. This prompted the Pharisees to ask why our Lord would eat with publicans and sinners. The Lord responded, "They that are whole need not a physician: but they that are sick. I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance" (**verses 31, 32**).

Our Lord had a purpose. Please note, he did not partake in others' wrongs, nor did he condone any wrong in others' lives. His purpose was to make a difference for good regardless of the setting.

This story reassures that we have a purpose in the world, especially in our place of work. What a great opportunity to make a difference in the lives of people who are spiritually sick and looking for answers to the questions of life. Again, we are not to partake in the things of the world (**Ephesians 5:11; I John 2:15**), but we are to help the spiritually sick as our Lord did (**I Peter 2:21**). Remaining in **Luke 5**, may we notice four things we need to be in our workplace.

First, we need to press to hear the word of God (**v. 1**). Our Lord had a message that people wanted to hear. They practically imposed themselves on Christ to hear what he had to say. Our desire needs to be the same. Our faith

will grow (**Romans 10:17**) if we hunger after the word of our Lord (**Matthew 5:6**). Attending services faithfully and serving in Bible School, either learning or teaching, we need to press to hear the word!

Second, we need to respond to the word of the Lord (**v. 5**). Although Simon Peter fished all night, at the word of the Lord, he let the fish net down only to pull in a full net of fish! Not only do we need to press to hear the word, but we need to apply what we have learned (**Matthew 7:24-27; James 1:22-25**) in our lives and put the word in action in the workplace. If we will prepare ourselves for the workplace with knowledge of God's word as well as living God's word, then we will be prepared when questions arise. How many times have questions on instrumental music, "once saved, always saved," and the meaning of baptism been asked of you? Were you ready with an answer? (**I Peter 3:15**). Hearing the word of the Lord and responding to it will help us to "be ready always."

Third, we need to pray (**v. 16**). Our Lord spent time in prayer. There were times he left the multitudes to spend time in prayer (**Matthew 14:23; Mark 1:35**). When was the last time you prayed for a co-worker who causes you so much unhappiness because of attitude? Praying for our situations in the workplace can make a big difference in our lives and in others' lives as well.

Fourth, we need to seek means (**v. 18**). Those with the man stricken with palsy did not quit! They sought means to get the man near Jesus so the Lord could heal him. In other words, they did not and would not quit! We need this same attitude! We must never cease our effectiveness in the workplace. We must "give diligence to make [our] calling and election sure" (**II Peter 1:10**).

As Christians, we have a prime opportunity to reach those with whom we work. Opportunities arise and we need to be ready for them. If we will desire to hear the word of God and apply it, spend time in prayer for our efforts, and never quit being the example we need to be, we can make a great difference in the workplace. Let's be about our Father's business and take advantage of opportunities that abound every day!

YOUR WEEKLY SCHEDULE

They are Fay Cornwell, James Cossey, Tony Ferrell, Doug Parks and Titus Ward. Combined together, they represent over one hundred years of preaching while in secular work. These brothers, and many others, have shown that preaching and working for a living can be done.

However, it is not easy, but it is not as difficult as many think. It can be difficult unless one organizes and plans! This is vital!

It has been said that "one will plan to fail if he fails to plan" and that is true. Bob Love, formerly a senior vice-president for Russell Stover Candies stated it best by saying, "If you don't know where you are going, any road will take you there."

This chapter will suggest the roads one needs to travel in order to arrive at the destination of preaching and working for a living.

I inquired of the brothers listed at the beginning of the chapter. Many things they stated are included in this chapter. They returned a survey that dealt with daily study habits, family time and how to battle burn out with one's work. To make reading easier, first names will be used. A summary of their work habits in this chapter is designed to help you plan your schedule and make time a premium. You must structure your time carefully! It will work!

TIME FOR STUDY. This is the first priority in preaching. Adequate reading and studying are essential. We must give our best as we take the pulpit. The better one is prepared, the more effective one will be.

Your study time can be worked around your secular work schedule. Lunch breaks are valuable study times. Even while working, make certain you keep a pen or pencil with you and a pad or piece of paper. This will be your "impulse pad" to use in order to write down ideas that may come to mind. These small times can add up to a large amount of idea preparation during the week. Fay developed memory work everywhere he traveled by carrying scriptures that deal with the basic Scriptures on the plan of salvation, the church, Christian living, worship, etc. Again, these ideas will help you in using your time wisely.

Early in the week (preferably Monday), formulate ideas for sermons the following Sunday. Your ideas can come from a variety of places: "impulse pad", current event, a certain text or passage of scripture.

Your study time will vary. The writer spent one to two hours each evening. With an afternoon shift, Tony studies from 11:30 PM to 2:00 AM after arriving home. Arising earlier in the morning to study before one goes to work is an option. Setting a certain time allows you to move at a steady rate in your study and research.

Your day off from secular work allows you to spend a little more time in study. Whatever your day off may be, it becomes a work day for finalizing lessons. The most common day off is Saturday. Fay and Titus use the afternoon and evening whereas I used the morning and afternoon.

Sunday afternoons can be used for Sunday night preparation, but avoid this if possible. Last minute preparation usually "pressures" the preacher. This is a good time to review the lesson, but not necessarily for preparing it. Also, Sunday afternoons have a variety of opportunities such as nursing home services, area singings and other gatherings. For example, when in local work, Doug was involved every Sunday afternoon conducting a service at a local nursing home or directing and attending county wide singings.

The preacher will usually teach Sundays and Wednesdays, too. Fay spent more time in class preparation; this helped him as he began getting the sermon in order. This is an excellent time-saving idea and it will strengthen a point made in a Bible Class. Titus restudied his Sunday morning lesson early on Sunday morning and prepared Wednesday evening lessons on Tuesdays. The writer used to rise on Sunday morning at four o'clock to conclude class preparation and attend to final details for that day.

What time you choose to study that is best will work, whether morning, afternoon or evening. Schedule your time first for study and nothing else.

TIME FOR VISITING. This must be flexible due to the variety of visits: hospital calls, visitors, erring members. Nobody plans to be sick and depending on your location of the church building, you may have a large number of visitors.

Personal visits are good, but with such limited time, consider the phone. Take an evening, either Monday or Tuesday, to make your calls. However, if one

has surgery on Thursday, call on Thursday evening. Phone usage for one hour and keeping each call brief covers a lot of ground.

Personal visits, however, are best in the following times:

On your way to or from your secular work.

For hospital visits, this is a good time saver. For those having early surgery, try stopping by that morning for prayer. On the way home, a quick stop can be effective.

In the evenings between 7:00 and 8:30.

One, let everyone finish the evening meal.

Two, arrive early and leave early in case little ones need to be put to bed.

Three, call ahead or arrange a time while talking after worship to drop by for a visit. An exception would be if you wanted to talk to someone about his soul. In that case, a brief "drop by" would catch him at home. However, if he knew you were coming he may not want to discuss his circumstances. Sometimes, due to his embarrassment, he may put you off.

Four, a personal visit for prospects or visitors makes this time profitable. Consider the following:

- When members of the congregation visit first-time visitors from the community within 36 hours and stay about 15 minutes, 85% of them will return the next Sunday.
- When the visit is made within 72 hours 60% will return.
- Make it seven days later and 15% will return.¹

This is powerful and impressive!

On your day off, preferably after 2:00 PM.

After 2:00, patient's tests are completed and patients have had their baths. Those at home are up and about, for it is possibly their day off, too.

¹ Clayton Pepper, Church Growth in the 90's (Denver, CO: Christian Development Publications, 1991), p. 181.

Sunday afternoon.

Chances are you may preach at a place that is of considerable distance. Some brothers will go for an all day trip and use the afternoon for visiting. This may be your best approach.

TIME FOR WRITING. Small, personal notes or letters of encouragement, appreciation or acknowledgement can make someone's day! It can also make your day by doing such and will keep you in contact with the members with whom you labor in your local work.

By way of summary, consider the suggestive schedule below to use as a guide. You make the adjustments needed to fit your work schedule.

See, you can preach and work for a living!

SUNDAY	Rise early...review. Preach two lessons. Teach Bible Class. <i>Keep Flexibility for afternoon study and review, any type of visit and any Sunday evening after worship plans.</i>
MONDAY	Planning for the week and sermon ideas for Sunday. <i>Prospect visits and phone calls.</i>
TUESDAY	Prepare Wednesday night class.
WEDNESDAY	Wednesday night Bible Study.
THURSDAY	Sunday AM class <i>Follow up phone calls.</i>
FRIDAY	Sunday PM sermon...utilize a "Sunday Night Scripture Series" here...preach from a book of the Bible
SATURDAY	Sunday AM sermon; Sunday class. <i>Obviously if your day off is another day, you would "flip it."</i>

OPPORTUNITIES TO GROW

The "full-time" preacher obviously has more preparation time and more flexible time than the "part-time" preacher. Nevertheless, we must search out ways to study and to seek materials at our disposal. At a time where the world is literally at our fingertips and materials are prevalent, opportunities to grow spiritually within our very homes abound!

For sermons, class ideas and to build a practical library, consider the following.

LECTURESHIPS. In every month of the year except December, good, sound lectureships are available throughout the country. Close to one hundred scripturally sound lectureships are conducted each year. One can order the lectureship book (if printed), order the audio or video tapes or attend if time can be arranged.

Attending lectureships gives you access to book display rooms and great fellowship. Vacation time or "personal days" can be used for lectureships. Arrange ahead of time with your boss or supervisor and reserve your motel room in advance.

BULLETINS. Get on as many church bulletin mailing lists as possible...if you have email, get them sent to you via email. Ideas for sermons, illustrations and good writing await you. These are most advantageous!

PERIODICALS. Many periodicals are reasonably priced and some are free. The writer has increased his personal library with periodicals. A suggested list is in the appendix.

AUDIO CASSETTES/CD'S. Lectureship tapes were previously mentioned. Listening while traveling is time management! Learning memory work from cassettes is an advantage. Think about the songs we learn from listening to the radio. This same concept works while memorizing. In other words, enroll in "Car College" or "Auto University"!

VIDEO CASSETTES/DVD's. View a lectureship, a debate or a class in your living room. Also, you can use them during Bible Class. It will become a

lesson you will not teach and the class can learn from a variety of brethren, too.

INTERNET. Many "web" pages of good, sound information are available at the touch of a fingertip for those "on-line".

SCHOOLING. The first question: Where is the time?

Most schools of preaching have "full-time programs" that are excellent, but obviously not practical for the man preaching and working for a living.

The Nashville School of Preaching and Biblical Studies is located at the Crieve Hall Church of Christ in Nashville where the writer once served as an instructor. Beginning in the mid-1960's, the school meets three nights a week. This arrangement began for one in secular work to prepare to preach. There are brethren who are full-time laborers in the kingdom that are school graduates.

In relocating to the Chattanooga area, it is a joy for me to be associated with the Chattanooga School of Preaching and Biblical Studies that meets at the Green's Lake Road church of Christ. Brethren from southeast Tennessee, north Georgia and northeast Alabama attend these classes.

In 1997, the Video Bible Institute was begun in Maxwell, Texas. This effort affords classroom instruction in the privacy of your own home.

Seek out schooling ideas and balance a workload of classes if necessary, but never overload yourself. See the appendix for more information.

A GOOD BASIC LIBRARY. Solomon said, "...of making many books there is no end..." (**Ecclesiastes 12:12**). Good, sound books and reference tools are helpful to the preacher.

The following is not a complete list. A library should never stop growing. However, the books listed will help any beginning or experienced preacher to build an effective library.

Basic Reference

- A good translation of the Bible (KJV, NKJV or ASV).
- Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible.
- Halley's or Dehoff's Bible Handbook.
- Smith's Bible Dictionary.

- Nelson's Illustrated Bible Dictionary.
- Dehoff's Preacher's Manual (An old classic, this is a must for the beginner. Plenty of suggestions are available concerning conducting of funerals and weddings.)
- **Sermon Design and Delivery by Tom Holland.** (Any book on preaching by Tom Holland is well worth the study.)

Commentaries

- Dehoff's Commentary.
- The Gospel Advocate Commentary Series.

Languages

- Thayer's Greek English Lexicon of the New Testament.
- Theological Dictionary of the New Testament (Abridged).
- Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament (two volumes).

Lectureship Books

- Any book from the Schertz Lectures, Schertz, TX also known as the Denton Lectures, Denton, Texas, especially the Old Testament books..

Complete ordering information is in the appendix. A combination of the aforementioned books will over time afford you the opportunity to grow in your knowledge of the Word of God.

We must always desire to grow in our knowledge (**Matthew 5:6**). Plan carefully and study effectively so that you may preach fervently and solidly.

Do not forget...you work for a living, too.

FAMILY LIFE AND "BURNOUT"

The family is in a challenge mode today! The preacher's family is not immune to challenges.

Financial restraints are usually the number one burden in a marriage. We have witnessed the deterioration of the home over the years. Divorce records outnumber marriage announcements in many newspapers!

Obviously, no family is immune to the factors listed above. We must rise up against the god of this world (Satan--**2 Corinthians 4:4**) and keep our family intact. The one that preaches and works for a living has a greater balancing act.

For forty-four years, Titus has preached and worked for a living. He lives by two words concerning his family and his efforts. I call them "make" and "take" as in: **Make** time for your family life and **take** vacation time and plan activities with the family.

My brothers, this is so important! That is why I love these two words, **make** and **take**. It means that **you take the lead and make it work**. It is your family and nobody else's!

There are opportunities in your labors of which you and your family can take advantage together. Tony and his wife, Linda, travel to lectureships together. They are a team in visiting and conducting Bible studies. My wife, Renita, travels with me to lectureships and meetings whenever opportunities arise.

Fay put it this way concerning the family:

"God first, family second, job third. Your family has to be a part of everything you do. They are your number one supporters. They are your motivation and challenge all rolled up in one package. They have always helped me by enabling me to be able to keep everything going successfully.

It was very difficult to set a time when to do something for without fail something would come up and schedules had to be adjusted.

Preachers must always keep in heart and mind that the family certainly is due their proportionate share of time and energy."

Doug keeps a calendar of school events, and if possible, schedules around them. Although James keeps a busy schedule he takes time each evening to spend time with his family. My brothers, it has to be!

Make and take. This strategy keeps our planning in our hands and we are to make it happen!

The family can also help alleviate a challenge every preacher faces: **Burnout.**

Burnout means exactly what it says. For example, a candle burns out. My brother, what do you see? No fire, no warmth and a clump of wax that needs remodeling. When a preacher loses his fire, he loses his warmth (the result of the fire) and he is a frustrated clump.

Did not our Lord go away to the mountain to pray (**Matthew 14:15-23; Mark 6:45, 46**)? We as His servants need to go away to pray and to rebuild ourselves for His service. We will become weary and we must pause. We cannot quit (**Galatians 6:9**), but we must rest.

Some thoughts on controlling burnout follow.

ATTEND A NEARBY GOSPEL MEETING. Hear another preacher and encourage yourself! Think about it, who is the one preacher that preachers hear the most? That is right--the preacher himself! Others hear in a half hour what you have been developing and writing throughout the week. Why not reverse the effort and encourage yourself?

BAPTISMS AND RESTORATIONS. Preach to bring souls, pray to bring souls to Christ and plan to bring souls to Christ. Seeing a soul come to the Father or returning to the Father is great encouragement! It is worth everything!

CONSIDER NEW CHALLENGES. You have more flexibility than the "full-time" brother. A change of preaching location is easier for you and another challenge, or open door, may be just the opportunity for you.

REST AND RECREATION. Schedule time with your family and allow your family to slow you down. Remember, they love you!

PRAYER. James mentioned this in his survey. Pouring our hearts out and our needs to our Father is necessary.

ADJUST YOUR STUDY HABITS FOR A WEEK. As James stated, back off the "hard-core" subjects. As preachers, our study habits are very deep and by lighting up our study load, we can battle burnout.

EXERCISE. Experts say fifteen minutes a day of some type of exercise will do wonders for the body. A good, brisk walk is always refreshing and helps to relieve stress. Special thanks to James for this great suggestion!

The thoughts in this chapter are crucial in the labor of a gospel preacher. Both preaching and working for a living are challenges that can harm family life and can cause burnout. Balance carefully and plan wisely.

Remember, you are preaching and working for a living!

WORKING ARRANGEMENTS WITH THE LOCAL CONGREGATION

There are two kinds of preachers: ones that are looking for a place to preach and ones pursued by congregations needing a preacher. The writer has been on both sides and has found that discussing working arrangements before beginning will help a work develop and flow smoothly.

Whichever preacher you are, whether pursuing a work or the one pursued, working arrangements are vital! Good discussions in this area will serve as a foundation in which to build your efforts with the local church.

Keep the following things in mind as you interview for a work.

BE AN INTERVIEWER. Not only are you being interviewed but you need to interview the congregation's leaders. Do not be afraid to ask questions. After all, you are a vital cog in their future efforts and many times the past can be a hindrance.

Good questions come with some brain-storming on your part. What do you want to know? What will help you?

Some questions that I have asked are:

- **What happened to warrant a preacher change?** This question will help you note the dissatisfaction (if any) of the previous preacher and to see the response you will receive. Are the leaders upset? Was it amicable? If the previous preacher's work habits were unacceptable you will know what not to repeat.
- **Describe what you need from a new preacher to help the church grow. What are some "pet peeves" that disturb you in a preacher?** This will allow you to see the areas in which you can assist and to see if you can give what is needed.
- **What is your approach to outreach and personal work?** See the leadership's plan for growth.

- **How can your new preacher assist in your Bible School program?** See the depth of the Bible school. Does it reach out to the lost?

Remember, not only are you the one interviewed, but you also are interviewing. Establishing good communication is most advantageous.

FINANCIAL REMUNERATION. Because of your secular work, you are not relying completely on the church for your support. However, as the Lord taught the seventy, "...the laborer is worthy of his hire." (**Luke 10:7**). Negotiating a salary is not as much a priority as it is for a "full-time" preacher who relies completely on his salary.

With secular work and benefits, you are already supported. The congregation with which you will be working has other financial concerns. The congregation may be too small to support, or even need, a "full-time" preacher.

A rule of thumb is to take what is offered. You are making a living prior to accepting a preaching work and you will continue.

I know brethren who graciously refuse pay. This attitude is admirable, but when one accepts, one is allowing brethren to grow in their giving and support of preaching the gospel. If you do not want to keep it, always graciously accept it and return it to the contribution along with what you lay by in store.

Whatever your remuneration, remember it is income and taxes are to be paid. The writer utilizes the "housing allowance" as permitted by the government. See a tax advisor for more information concerning housing allowances.

USE A "LETTER OF INTENT". A letter of intent is not a contract but a working agreement outlining your responsibilities as their preacher. It is to be signed by both parties and can be used with your income tax forms describing your work. A sample of this idea is in the appendix.

ELDERS OR NO ELDERS? If a congregation is very small, the possibility of qualified men (**1 Timothy 3:1-7; Titus 1:5-11**) to serve as elders may not exist. In order for the congregation to grow and move forward a "business meeting" is used.

The purpose of a business meeting is to discuss the work of the church. All areas are discussed and decided by the men of the congregation. As their preacher, you are most definitely one of the areas that will be discussed. You

are part of the decision-making progress as well and you will discuss with the brethren your work and direction.

Where there are elders, they oversee the work (Acts 20:28) and they have decided to employ your services. This body of qualified men will discuss matters with you during your work with the congregation.

Both approaches handle matters differently because, after all, they are different. Your direction, not your preaching, becomes different. Doug states, "I work for a congregation without elders. Many years ago I remember a brother saying, 'If you work for a congregation without elders, you must take the bull by the horns and go.' I have found that advice useful to me."

The writer has found working with elders is a better arrangement. However, I learned about dealing with human nature while laboring with congregations without elders early in my preaching career.

LET THEM KNOW WHAT YOU CAN DO. In your discussions with the local congregation, whether with elders or not, clearly state what you will be able to do. Remember, you also work for a living, so let them know your limitations. You will find that brethren understand this and they will work with you. Doug's advice in this area is simple: "Communicate well with the congregation's elders or leaders about your availability and about any handicaps that your secular job might create."

While in secular work, I labored with a congregation twenty-one miles from my home. I was limited in my work due to mileage and, of course, secular work. Our initial discussions were quite crucial for this work. I was with a congregation much closer to home and I knew I could not give to my new work what I had been doing at my former work. By discussing the needs of the work and effective communication from the elders to the congregation, our efforts were quite rewarding.

I was unable to do everything I would like to do, so I simply did what I was asked to do. Was it frustrating? Certainly, because I would have liked to do more. On the other hand, I was able to put forth one hundred percent in what I was asked to do and I saw the fruits of my labors.

You cannot do it all, my brother, but do what you can. Your working arrangements must reflect what you can do for the congregation. Give those matters full attention and your work will be rewarding!

FINAL THOUGHTS

My brother, you have the desire and you can do this! The Lord needs His servants and the church needs preachers!

Proper balance is the key and properly pacing yourself will keep you in His service for a long time! Go for it!

This material you have read can help you improve. It is by no means the final word. There are probably many other ways to achieve the very thing we set forth. What is submitted are thoughts and ideas to help.

My prayer is that you will have a rich life serving our Lord. May God bless your efforts, my friend!

Jeff Archey

APPENDIX

Available Periodicals

The following periodicals are **free** upon request unless otherwise indicated. I suggest them for addition to your library.

Seek The Old Paths, East End Church of Christ, 102 Edison Street McMinnville, TN 37110 . <http://www.seektheoldpaths.com/stop.htm>

Power, P.O. Box 128, Southaven, MS 38671. <http://www.southavencoc.org/>
(This is free to preachers. All others \$5.00 a year.).

Gospel Gazette. <http://www.gospelgazette.com/>

Fulton County Gospel News, Church of Christ, P.O. Box 251, Mammoth Springs, AR 72554. This publication can be downloaded to you each month. <http://www.fultoncountygospelnews.org> and sign up.

One bulletin that is a must is **Glad Tidings of Good Things**, Jacksonville Church of Christ, 329 Nisbet Street NW, P.O. Box 520, Jacksonville, AL, 36265. jvillecoc@cybrtyme.com.

Christian Courier <http://www.christiancourier.com/>

Apologetics Press <http://www.apologeticspress.org/>

If you are online, I would encourage you to pull these from the website or inquire if they can be downloaded to your e-mail.

Schools of Preaching

Chattanooga School of Preaching and Biblical Studies, Green's Lake Road church of Christ, 1209 Green's Lake Road, East Ridge, TN 37412, (423) 867-7115. James Lewis, director. (This is a night school with extension classes available). <http://www.glrcc.com/html/church/School/school.html>

Memphis School of Preaching, 3950 Forest Hill-Irene Road, Memphis, Tennessee, 38125. Bobby Liddell, Dean of Admissions. (This school has a two-year, full-time program available). <http://www.msop.org/>

Video Bible Institute, 130 Lantana Lane, Maxwell, TX 78656-4231. <http://wvbs.org/vbi/vbiWelcome.cfm> (This is a self-paced correspondence school with a preacher training curriculum.).

Ongoing training

Polishing the Pulpit (www.polishingthepulpit.com). The author is an attendee and supporter of this good effort under the oversight of the elders at the Jacksonville, AL church of Christ.

Gospel Broadcasting Network (www.gbntv.org) and also available on some cable TV outlets.

Bookstores and Order Houses

Contact these places and secure catalogs for order information.

Christian Family Bookstore, Chattanooga TN, 1-800-782-8175
<http://www.tuckersbooks.com/>

Gospel Advocate Bookstore 1-800-251-8446.

CBD (Christian Book Distributors) 1-508-977-5000. (CBD is not owned and operated by members of the church of Christ. However, for concordances, dictionaries and language references they have very low prices.).

Penmann Press, P.O. Box 611, Brentwood, TN 37024-0611. (This is owned and operated by Tom Holland.).

JADE Books. 615-443-3643 or <http://www.jadebooks.com/>

_____ **CHURCH OF CHRIST**
EVANGELIST - LETTER OF INTENT

General Responsibility

The evangelist works under the direction and oversight of the eldership. The purpose of the evangelist is to preach and teach the gospel to assist in the spiritual development of the congregation, provide leadership and develop a positive environment that promotes Christian growth.

Specific Responsibilities

1. Deliver lessons from the pulpit Sunday morning and evening.
2. Extend invitation on Wednesday evening.
3. Teach in Bible School Sundays and Wednesdays.
4. Provide limited assistance to youth.
5. Direct Lectureship (if planned in future).

Benefits

1. Yearly Salary of \$_____.*
2. Yearly review of work with possible salary increases.
3. Fifth Sundays off with pay.
4. Additional four weeks away for Lectureships, meetings, vacations, etc..)

***Salary**

Salary will be paid \$_____ (weekly, monthly, bi-weekly) on the first of each month designated as housing allowance. No taxes will be withheld based on (preacher's name) acceptance of responsibility to file appropriate IRS documents.

Acknowledgment

This letter is to serve as a working plan and is not a legal contract. This arrangement will be indefinite and reviewed each year.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, the parties to these present have executed this letter of intent.

ELDERSHIP

EVANGELIST

(name)

(your name)

(name)

Date

About the Author



For several years, the author "preached and worked for a living."

Jeff Archey lives in Cleveland, Tennessee and for several years balanced local preaching and secular work. When not in local work, Jeff continued a busy schedule of meetings, lectureships and appointment work along with his work at the Nashville School of Preaching and Biblical Studies located at the Crieve Hall Church of Christ in Nashville where he instructed since 1999-2002.

Jeff has worked with the East Side congregation in Cleveland, Tennessee since December, 2002 as their evangelist. Jeff is also the producer and host of "Focus on Faith," seen weekly on the Gospel Broadcasting Network.

He has also served congregations in middle and west Tennessee. His experience includes radio, television, lectureships, gospel meetings and campaigns as well as serving as an instructor with the Nashville, Middle Tennessee and Chattanooga Schools of Preaching. Jeff served as the director of the Chattanooga area "Spring Formal," a prom alternative for teens in area churches of Christ.

He is a graduate of both the Nashville School of Preaching and Biblical Studies and also the Great Commission School in Nashville. He also attended David Lipscomb and Freed-Hardeman Colleges as well as the Chattanooga School of Preaching and Biblical Studies. He is married to the former Renita Rector of Dayton, Tennessee.