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# PASTOR GENERAL'S REPORT

Greetings, ministers and wives!

The three synoptic Gospels describe a specific confrontation between Jesus Christ and the Pharisees and Sadducees.

Matthew's account reads, "The Pharisees also with the Sadducees came, and tempting desired him that he would show them *a sign from heaven*" (Matthew 16:1).

Christ had just fed about 4,000 people in a stunning, miraculous way. And here, of all things, these prestigious religious people were asking Him for a sign from heaven.

*Clarke's Commentary* says of these people, "The Sadducees had their origin and name from one Sadoc, a disciple of Antigonus of Socho, president of the Sanhedrin, and teacher of the law in one of the great divinity schools in Jerusalem, about 264 years before the incarnation [Christ's First Coming]." These were the highest-ranking spiritual leaders in that area, and they came, with all of their exalted thinking, tempting Christ.

Notice how Christ responded. "And he sighed deeply [or groaned] in his spirit, and saith, Why doth this generation seek after a sign? verily I say unto you, There shall no sign be given unto this generation" (Mark 8:12). Christ didn't take their attitude lightly. There was something they didn't discern, but it was extremely serious. What was so troublesome about their attitude? Christ wanted to teach them, but He couldn't teach them much of anything.

Back to Matthew's version: "He answered and said unto them, When it is evening, ye say, It will be fair weather: for the sky is red. And in the morning, It will be foul weather to day: for the sky is red and lowring. O ye hypocrites, ye can discern the face of the sky; but *can ye not discern the signs of the times?*" (Matthew 16:2-3).

Christ called them HYPOCRITES! *You're great at forecasting the weather*, He said, *but you can't discern the signs of the times!* Why was Christ so critical? And why would He be critical of us if we had this attitude?

I feel God recently has given me a much deeper understanding about the "signs of the times." I have never really grasped the depth of this subject until Christ helped me and gave me the understanding of it. THIS IS CRITICAL FOR US TODAY, FAR MORE THAN FOR THE JEWS OF CHRIST'S DAY.

## ADULTEROUS THINKING

Notice Christ's specific criticism of these religious leaders: "A wicked and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given unto it, but the sign of the prophet [Jonah]. And he left them, and departed" (verse 4). Why would He talk about a "wicked and adulterous generation"?

Essentially Christ was reminding these religious people that, at one time, they were actually MARRIED TO

GOD! How much did they understand about that history? The fact that they were skeptically questioning Christ showed *adulterous thinking*. That history with Christ as their Husband goes right back to the time of Abraham, Moses, Isaiah—all those men who taught about the Old Covenant.

Yet these leaders had rejected their Husband, just as their forefathers had done. Here they were trying to kill Him, and they didn't even understand what He was talking about. Some of them were in danger of losing everything, even though

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they didn't have God's Holy Spirit. God said, *You know who I am, and because you've been shown so much you're going to see the people of Sodom and Gomorrah come into the Kingdom of God, and you yourself cast out* (e.g. Matthew 11:23-24).

These religious leaders were spiritual adulterers! Christ condemned them about as much as a person can be condemned. They couldn't discern the signs of the times. Something really spectacular was happening right in their midst, but they didn't understand it.

Here we are, today, engaged to Jesus Christ—His bride to be married to Him. Spiritual Israel has the greatest history you could imagine! So we, of all people, **MUST DISCERN THE SIGNS OF THE TIMES**, and there's an important reason why.

### WHO WAS REALLY BLIND?

Let's look at a related incident recorded in John 9.

One Sabbath day, Christ came upon a beggar who had been blind from birth. Christ anointed his eyes with some clay and told him to wash in the pool of Siloam. The man obeyed and was healed.

The people had known the beggar his whole life and were awed to see him with his sight restored. They brought him before the Pharisees, who asked how he was healed. The man explained to them what Jesus had done. A contention broke out among them; many thought that because the miracle occurred on the Sabbath, it couldn't be from God.

The Pharisees asked the beggar what he thought, and he said plainly that **CHRIST WAS A PROPHET!** But they couldn't accept that. They asked the man's parents about the miracle, but they were afraid to answer, knowing that speaking out against the Pharisees would get them cast out of the synagogue.

"Then again [the Pharisees] called ... the man that was blind, and said unto him, Give God the praise: *we know that this man [Christ] is a sinner.* He [the beggar] answered and said, Whether he be a sinner or no, I know not: one thing I know, that, whereas I was blind, now I see. Then said they to him again, What did he to thee? how opened he thine eyes? He answered them, *I have told you already, and YE DID NOT HEAR: wherefore would ye hear it again? will ye also be his disciples?*" (verses 24-27). This man **STRONGLY** spoke out against the Pharisees. He was inspired by his faith and what God had done for him!

"Then they reviled him, and said, Thou art his disciple; but we are Moses' disciples. We know that God spake unto Moses: as for this fellow, we know not from whence he is" (verses 28-29). They said, *We know Moses, and Moses taught the truth. We don't know about this fellow.* Think about that! They were talking about the **SON OF GOD**.

"The man answered and said unto them, Why herein is a marvellous thing, that ye know not from whence he is, and yet **HE HATH OPENED MINE EYES**" (verse 30). This man was dumbfounded. *You are the top spiritual leaders of the land, and this man opened my eyes, and YOU DON'T KNOW WHERE HE'S FROM. That's remarkable!*

The Pharisees said they were Moses's disciples, but were they really?

### MOSES'S PROPHECY

Moses himself prophesied of Jesus Christ—and not just the powerful Christ of the Second Coming. Deuteronomy 18:15 reads, "The Lord thy God will raise up unto thee a Prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me; unto him ye shall hearken." Two passages in the book of Acts (Acts 3:20-23; 7:37-38) repeat and expound on that prophecy.

Moses said God would raise this Prophet from *among them*. This is not the Second Coming the Jews were looking for. They were in captivity; they wanted a powerful Messiah, not the Messiah of the First Coming. But that's what Moses said would happen.

The Pharisees said they were Moses's disciples and that Moses taught God's Word. They believed they kept God's Word that Moses taught. But did they really? Christ said they didn't. "Search the scriptures," He told them, "for in them ye *think ye have eternal life*: and **THEY ARE THEY WHICH TESTIFY OF ME**" (John 5:39).

We need to take that admonition personally: *Search the Scriptures*. Christ is saying that to all of the Laodiceans and all of the Philadelphians today. *Search the Scriptures, because you think you have eternal life, and in too many cases, you don't. You think you know what you're doing spiritually, and you don't.*

"How can ye believe, which receive honour one of another, and seek not the honour that cometh from God only? Do not think that I will accuse you to the Father: there is one that accuseth you, even Moses, in whom ye

trust. For *had ye believed Moses, ye would have believed me: for he wrote of me*—many times. “But if ye believe not his writings, how shall ye believe my words?” (verses 44-47).

Christ was telling them that they didn’t understand Moses. *If you really understood Moses, you would be able to discern the signs of the times!*

In Matthew 22:24-34, the Sadducees were quoting Moses, and Christ told them, “Ye do err, not knowing the scriptures, nor the power of God” (verse 29). That’s a remarkable accusation! Then He told them that He was the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. *I am that God, the self-existent God, the Eternal God*, He said. They’d read all about that God, but they couldn’t recognize Him when He was right there among them.

### ABRAHAM’S CHILDREN

These religious people also talked about Abraham all the time. “Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him, If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free. They answered him, We be Abraham’s seed, and were never in bondage to any man: how sayest thou, Ye shall be made free?” (John 8:31-33). Notice their attitude. They were absolutely certain they were free. The whole world tends to think like that—especially religious people.

“They answered and said unto him, Abraham is our father. Jesus saith unto them, If ye were Abraham’s children, ye would do the works of Abraham. But now ye seek to kill me, a man that hath told you the truth, which I have heard of God: this did not Abraham” (verses 39-40). How could these people say they were the followers of Abraham while they were trying to kill the MESSIAH that Abraham prophesied would come? It’s scary to consider how people can think they’re so righteous and know so little!

“Then said the Jews unto him, Now we know that thou hast a devil [demon]. Abraham is dead, and the prophets; and thou sayest, If a man keep my saying, he shall never taste of death. Art thou greater than our father Abraham, which is dead? and the prophets are dead: whom makest thou thyself?” (verses 52-53).

These are pretty strong words! Notice how Christ responded to them: “Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day: and he saw it, and was glad” (verse 56). As the Word, the God of the Old Testament, Christ had actually been there with Abraham. And Abraham loved being with and walking with God—totally the opposite of these men who were trying to kill Christ.

“Then said the Jews unto him, Thou art not yet fifty years old, and hast thou seen Abraham? Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I AM” (verses 57-58). That was a shocker! It caused some of them to fall over like they were dead. They had read all about “I Am,” but they didn’t really know Him, did they?

How did they respond? “*Then took they up stones to cast at him: but Jesus hid himself, and went out of the temple, going through the midst of them, and so passed by*” (verse 59). These people were so certain about their religion! They were certain they were the children of Abraham and Moses. **THEY PRACTICALLY WORSHIPED THE OLD TESTAMENT. BUT THEY DIDN’T OBEY IT!**

Abraham knew all about the Messiah’s First Coming: so did Moses, and so did the prophets. Isaiah talked about a *child* being born (Isaiah 9:6). When did that happen? These scholars just overlooked that. They didn’t want a child or a human Messiah. They wanted a God with power! And as a result, they didn’t discern the signs of the times.

### THE LAMB OF GOD

Notice how John the Baptist responded when he saw Jesus: “The next day John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, *Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world*” (John 1:29). That is reality!

These carnal Jews were looking for a sign, and He stood right there before them! Jesus Christ was Himself the biggest sign you could possibly imagine! Christ was the MESSIAH who would take away the sins of the world. He was to be sacrificed for all of us. Every one of those Old Testament sacrifices and offerings that the Jews knew so much about pointed to the Lamb of God, but they didn’t even know who He was when He came. Some of them knew He was a teacher from God, but they wouldn’t dare tell the people that.

The Lamb was a sign—the sign of signs! What more could you ask for than for the Lamb to come right there among them? He was about to sacrifice Himself for those wretched Jews and every other sinner on this Earth—and they didn’t even know what was happening. Wasn’t it right that Christ should have been upset? **THEY DIDN’T**

UNDERSTAND *ANYTHING*—AND THOUGHT THEY UNDERSTOOD *EVERYTHING!*

*You have to be careful with an all-knowing attitude.*

These Jews were given the Old Testament to preserve, yet how little of it they understood. Oh, they could talk about Moses and Abraham, but they couldn't accept the Son of God.

### JOHN THE BAPTIST

“Again the next day after John stood, and two of his disciples; And looking upon Jesus as he walked, he saith, Behold the Lamb of God! And the two disciples heard him speak, and they followed Jesus” (verses 35-37). These two disciples heard John the Baptist speak; they were taught the truth by him. Who were they?

“Then Jesus turned, and saw them following, and saith unto them, What seek ye? They said unto him, Rabbi, (which is to say, being interpreted, Master,) where dwellest thou? He saith unto them, Come and see. They came and saw where he dwelt, and abode with him that day: for it was about the tenth hour. One of the two which heard John [the Baptist] speak, and followed him, was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother” (verses 38-40).

You can begin to see what was happening here: There was Andrew (Simon Peter's brother); the other disciple was no doubt John, who wrote the Gospel of John. They were following Christ because they had listened to the one who was preparing the way for Christ. So when Jesus Christ came on the scene, they knew precisely who He was.

Why was it so different with the Jews? The Jews didn't like John the Baptist, who happened to have the truth and who was preparing the way for Christ.

John the Baptist completed, in type, the same job Herbert W. Armstrong did in this end time. Now, what will God think if we reject what Mr. Armstrong did? A man right at the very end prepared the way for the return of Jesus Christ—and 95 percent of His people don't even really know when Christ is going to return, and don't have an urgent message proclaiming His return to the world. It's as if they don't know anything because they didn't listen to this end-time John the Baptist! We have to discern these things—or we didn't get the message.

“He first findeth his own brother Simon, and saith unto him, *We have found the Messiah*, which is, being interpreted, the Christ” (verse 41). These men were so excited, saying, *We found Him! The one who was prophesied by Moses and Abraham and all the prophets!*

They had been prepared by John the Baptist, as we were prepared by Mr. Armstrong. Now we must find the Messiah. Where is He? Where is His work today, preparing for His Second Coming?

This is part of how John prepared the way for Jesus Christ: by instructing these men. Mr. Armstrong also prepared the way for Christ (and we are a part of the process because we continue his message) by PREPARING US!

And still, 95 percent of GOD'S PEOPLE CANNOT DISCERN THE SIGNS OF THE TIMES! They don't know where the Messiah's work is! They don't know, or they're rebelling against it. Where is the work Mr. Armstrong prepared us for?

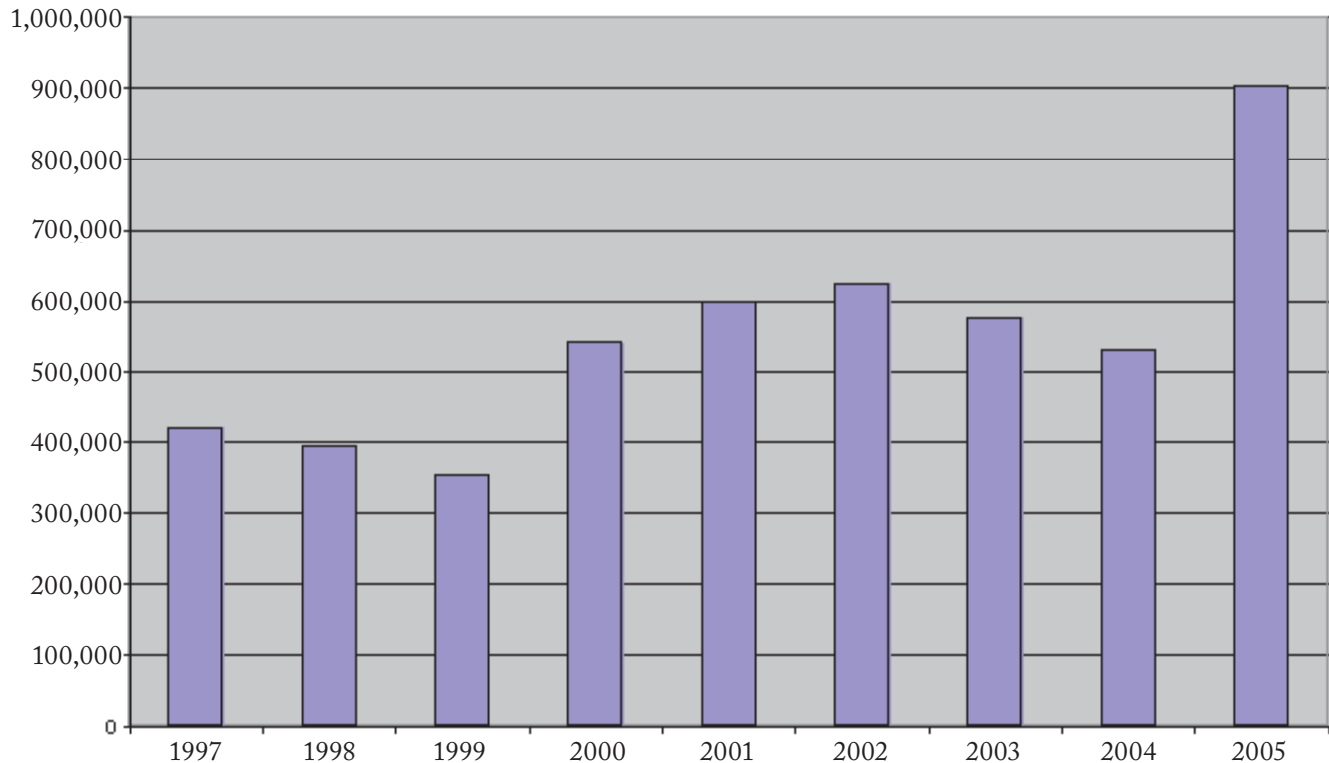
IF WE UNDERSTAND THE SIGNS OF THE TIMES, WE ARE GOING TO BE PASSIONATELY EXCITED ABOUT PUBLICIZING CHRIST'S MESSAGE! Because we know He's coming, and our job is to tell the world! That's why we're here! DO YOU UNDERSTAND THE SIGNS OF THE TIMES?

With love, in Christ's service,



# BUSINESS OFFICE

## Philadelphia Church of God January Donation Income (1997-2005)



# BUILDINGS AND GROUNDS

## HALL OF ADMINISTRATION

The warmer daytime temperatures, before this week's recent cold snap, made it possible for us to make faster progress on the Hall of Administration. The cold temperature always slows people and equipment down. However, the plumbers have made significant progress. They finished all of their underground work and are out of the way for the concrete contractor to finish the slab preparation.

We had some disconcerting news with our electrical contractor this week which ultimately resulted in us having to change horses mid-stream. The decision to change contractors had to be swift since we still had the old contractors working on the underground conduit runs, which needed to be completed so we didn't hold

up pouring the concrete slab.

After some negotiations last Friday, we agreed to have the new contractor start on Monday. One final call before the Sabbath and the old contractor was told we had arranged for a new contractor to finish the job. Both old and new contractors arrived Monday morning to make the transition as smooth as possible. This was a little awkward but we got through it without too much drama.

They started to finish the groundwork and we immediately had to address some code issues that hadn't been addressed by the previous contractor. We had a meeting on site the next morning with the electrical inspector, two engineers and the architect. There were several options being considered and they both had positives and



negatives. After much counsel and fact finding, we had our answers and were able to proceed.

This small delay held up the concrete contractor so we couldn't pour the slab, or at least half of it, by Wednesday. We planned to pour it on Thursday and the concrete pump truck broke down. All of the other companies we tried didn't have equipment available till next week. We are now scheduled to pour on Monday or Tuesday depending on whether the weather wants to cooperate.

These delays shouldn't affect the overall timing of construction since the steel isn't slated to arrive until February 14th or 15th. If all goes well, we could have the erectors here at the same time and start getting some steel up in the air. In the meantime, we still have

quite a few miscellaneous items that need to be taken care of around the building and this will be a good time to take care of those.

### NEW DORMITORY

We received a call from the architect on Tuesday the 25th telling me the dorm plans were finally ready to be submitted. We were also told that they are 10 to 12 weeks out on their approvals. That doesn't leave a whole lot of time before the start of next school year. Prayers in regard to this would be appreciated. We have already started to have contractors look at the prints so they can start quoting. If there are any changes from the fire marshal, they should be minor enough to not affect the quotes.



## REGIONAL REPORTS

### NORTHEAST UNITED STATES

The Northeast Region is newly formed. It is roughly half the area of the former region by that name. Evangelist Marvin Campbell was its former director and is still the Regional Director for the North Central Region (the other half).

The northeast consists of 13 states: Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont, Massachusetts, Connecticut, Rhode Island, New Jersey, New York, Delaware, Maryland, Pennsylvania, Virginia and West Virginia, plus Washington, D.C. There are currently 10 congregations with about 357 attending. Two Associate Pastors serve this area; Herman Barkei in the North and Wilson Magruder in the southern half. In addition, two local church elders serve: Sarafin Icasiano in Randolph, N.J. and Walter Barkei in Bridgeport, N.J.

On my last trip there in December we were able to form Spokesman Clubs in the Randolph, New Jersey and the Warwick, R.I. congregations. In addition, we were able to hold instructional meetings for open/closing prayers, songleading and sermonettes for men who were or might be performing those duties in the near future.

I look forward to getting to know and work with all of those in the region as we head toward our common goal to do the will of Him that called us and finish His Work.

*Craig Winters*

### CENTRAL UNITED STATES AND CANADA

This year's ministerial conference was great as usual and of an ever-increasing standard of excellence we have all come to expect and appreciate. Our only regret is that not every one of our covenant brothers could be in attendance. But they were with us in spirit and that was very palpable this year.

One of the highlights for us as a headquarters family is to have some of God's ministry visit our home for an evening of snacks, drinks and fellowship. The ministers serving in Canada and myself were especially buoyed

up by the good news mentioned in Andrew Locher's lecture earlier that day, that the income in that second largest country in the world had risen substantially this past year, even though most of it came from a large estate that had recently closed.

I long to get back up there in the spring. Most likely I will go west first for the spring holy days as I went east last year. Because I was assigned to the Canadian feast sites this past year, half with my family in Surrey, half without in Gatineau, I did not make my usual fall trips to both east and west. With four ministers spread out across Canada, we are able to service the brethren well enough to permit me to only spend one month per year away from my young family, which is rather enviable given what some of the other regional directors must do.

Since Mrs. Flurry's death, it seemed best to stay closer to home this fall and winter for my family, especially my wife. Come the warmer temperatures and longer days, I know I will again feel the irresistible urge to migrate back north and see as many of the 400 to 450 brethren scattered across this beautiful land of ever higher taxes and ever lower morals.

Even locally, we have not strayed too much. One trip over Thanksgiving to Rogers, Ark. and one up to Wichita, Kan. in December. A trip to the newest congregation in Parsons, Kan., is *tentatively* slated for mid-March but that date already appears to be in jeopardy. Lawton, Okla. and Little Rock, Ark. are patiently biding their time for when there is a lull in activities and commitments here at headquarters—HA!

I am looking forward to updating you throughout this year via this forum, with input from the very loyal men that assist me here and abroad as I in turn assist Gerald Flurry under Christ who is totally submissive to our heavenly Father. Hopefully this will give you a closer 'bird's eye' view of the areas of responsibility these tireless servants labor in and lessons we can all glean as we press forward in service to Christ's embryonic bride, future mother of the not yet begotten Family of God.

*Wayne Turgeon*

# MINISTERIAL TRAINING SERIES

## A LESSON TO TEACH—AND LEARN FROM— OUR SERMONETTE SPEAKERS

By Joel Hilliker

In the speech program at Imperial College, we encourage students to take risks, to try new things, to push themselves beyond their comfort zone. It is a lot like Spokesman Club in that way, but because it is an informal lab situation, they can try things that are even more unusual—speeches that require audience participation or elaborate visual aids, for example.

The second semester of the third-year Homiletics class, however, is different. There, our main goal is to teach the male students how to give sermonettes appropriate for Sabbath services. We begin the semester telling them to take *exactly the opposite approach* in their speaking: Rather than taking risks, the students are to *play it safe*—to be as “textbook” as possible. They are to treat the sermonettes they deliver in class exactly as though they are for Sabbath services. If they have a *question or doubt* about anything, they are instructed to either *not do it*, or seek counsel from the ministry.

In Homiletics, each sermonette assignment—Difficult Scripture, Doctrine, Christian Living and so on—comes with a page of instruction on how to complete it. We cover a variety of rules, suggestions, and do’s and don’ts, and we provide dozens of sample topics from which to choose. To pass a particular sermonette, the men must follow the instructions *precisely*. They must become an expert on that assignment.

This is a profitable lesson for the men in the local areas giving sermonettes, as we instruct them and guide them in better fulfilling their job. You may remember Marvin Campbell talking about this at the 2003 ministerial conference. He said that a sermonette—which is a tool to train leaders in the Church—is actually a TEST. Will a man submit to the guidelines? Will he have enough *humility* to cover the simple difficult scripture subject or the small point of doctrine—something that seems so basic—and give the clearest, most concise explanation of that—rather than trying to preach on something that should only be covered by a minister? There is a larger principle of HUMILITY at work here.

But this lesson of humility doesn’t apply only to sermonette speakers. *It is one we must all deeply internalize as speakers for God.* I am grateful to teach Homilet-

ics, because it continually reminds me of the need to stay grounded and basic in my own speaking. It teaches “sermonette humility.”

In His ministry, in His speaking, Christ exemplified a spirit of humble service toward His Father. We all need to follow Christ’s example, and get His mind as we speak. Like Him, we need to *humbly serve* the one over us—ultimately, God the Father.

### SEEK GOD’S GLORY

This past ministerial conference, we repeatedly heard about the importance of a minister setting the right example. Many scriptures speak of this.

At the same time, we must realize the importance of *FOLLOWING the right example*. Jesus Christ epitomized this attitude: “Verily, verily I say unto you, The Son can do nothing of himself, but what he seeth the Father do: for what things soever he doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise” (John 5:19). It takes real *humility* to think like this.

This is why IC students are told to play it safe with their sermonettes. Christ *played it safe* in this respect: He realized He couldn’t do anything of Himself, so He relied on the Father for everything. He did *only* what He saw the Father doing.

Notice how Jesus Christ would have handled a Doctrine sermonette: In John 7:16, He said, “My doctrine is not mine, but his that sent me.” He wasn’t preaching “original” doctrine. It was right down the line with God’s doctrine in every detail.

Do our sermonette speakers—and do we—have the same humility that Jesus Christ did? Do we make sure *everything* we say is coming from GOD and not ourselves?

Christ continued: “If any man [e.g. among our listeners] will do his [God’s] will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself” (verse 17). If people are right with God, they’ll be able to tell if what we’re saying is coming from God.

Now notice: “He that speaketh of himself seeketh *his own glory*: but HE THAT SEEKETH HIS GLORY THAT SENT HIM, the same is *true*, and *no unrighteousness is in him*” (verse 18).



Consider this profound verse.

Whose glory do we seek when we speak? To preach to God's people, we *must seek God's glory*, not our own. If we want to speak the *truth*—if we want to be found *righteous* as speakers—then we must seek God's glory in everything we say. If a man is up there speaking of himself, he is seeking his *own glory*.

Nowhere does Christ condemn someone for speaking *too simply*, or *too plainly*, or on *too basic* a subject. But there are plenty of places where He condemned the one who speaks of himself.

Whose glory did *Christ* seek when He spoke? He set the perfect example in this respect. “[H]e that sent me is true; and I speak to the world those things which I have heard of him. . . . I do nothing of myself; but *as my Father has taught me, I speak these things*. And he that sent me is with me: the Father has not left me alone; for *I do always those things that please him*” (John 8:26, 28-29). Christ had a penetrating understanding of *whom He was there to serve*.

This is an awesome demonstration of the humility required of us as speakers.

#### A FAITHFUL MESSENGER

Look how effective Christ was because of this approach. Continuing in verse 30: “As he spake these words, *many believed on him*.” He was a great speaker—several biblical examples show how He moved people. And all He was doing was *speaking what the Father wanted Him to speak*. That's where our sermonette men will get their power, if they're going to succeed in their speaking. That's where our power must come from.

John 14:10 shows us the mindset we need. This is the Being we need directing our thoughts: “Believe you not that I am in the Father, and the Father in me? The words that I speak unto you I speak not of myself: but the Father that dwells in me, he does the works.” Our most critical function as speakers, and the most fundamental lesson we can learn and apply, is to **SPEAK WHAT GOD COMMANDS US TO SPEAK**.

That's the way Christ was. God could trust Him implicitly. He was a faithful messenger. “As the cold of snow in the time of harvest, so is a faithful messenger to them that send him: for *he refresheth the soul of his masters*” (Proverbs 25:13). Even our Pastor General, in the highest human office of God's Church, has called himself a mere “messenger boy.” How much more should our sermonette men, or we ministers, have that mentality in fulfilling our speaking assignments?

Matthew 24:45-46. “Who then is a faithful and wise servant, whom his lord hath made ruler over his

household, to give them meat in due season? Blessed is that servant, when he comes shall find so doing.” We're talking about having a humble, servant mentality as you feed God's household.

*Adam Clarke's Commentary* gives a pretty good explanation of the various duties of a minister of Christ, as listed in this verse: “1. He is appointed, not by himself, but by the vocation and mission of his Master. 2. He must look on himself, not as the master of the family, but as the servant. 3. He must be scrupulously faithful and exact in fulfilling the commands of his Master. 4. His fidelity must be ever accompanied by wisdom and prudence. 5. He must give the domestics—the sacred family, their food; and this food must be such as to afford them true nourishment. And, 6. This must be done in its season. There are certain portions of the bread of life which lose their effect by being administered out of proper season, or to improper persons.”

Each of those points is worth studying. Do we have the *humility* to be that kind of *servant* in our speaking?

“Blessed is that servant, whom his lord when he comes shall find so doing. Verily I say unto you, that he shall make him ruler over all his goods” (verses 46-47). Of course God is pleased when we faithfully follow through with his desires—when we give those of His household what he wants them to have.

#### LET THIS MIND BE IN YOU

The easiest pitfall a sermonette man can stumble into is trying to make his message more than it should be, going beyond the purpose and intent of the sermonette.

The mindset that leads a man to try to give a sermon in 10-15 minutes is also present *in us*. It isn't the way Christ approached His speaking.

“Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: who . . . made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: and . . . humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross” (Philippians 2:5-8).

Christ didn't try to be impressive and original; He worked to be *precise* and *faithful*. He strove to fulfill His Father's instructions and guidelines—to deliver His Father's message accurately—in the finest detail. He was totally unconcerned with status or position. His whole ambition in life was to please *God* and fulfill *His* will. He gave up His glory as the Word so He could live a physical life and die—the biggest “riches to rags” story in history—in order to dutifully serve His Father and His Family.

That's the mind we need in us.

As ministers, we all serve, and work hard at serving. Our sermonette men all surely work hard to give good messages. The trouble is that, too often, there's a lot of *self* in our service. We have to root that out and replace it with Christ's servant mind.

Romans 6:16 shows us the single greatest factor that servants are noted for: their *obedience!* That's what God wants—as verse 17 says, cheerful obedience *from the heart*. Christ was God's slave in this sense. He lived by the saying, *Not my will but yours be done*.

Think about this in relation to our speaking. A sermonette man shouldn't think, *How far can I take this?* He should think, *How closely can I follow these guidelines? How perfectly can I fulfill this assignment?* We need the same approach in all our speaking. Let Christ's obedient, submissive, slave-like mind be in you!

Remember what Mr. Flurry told us at this latest ministerial conference: *We must fill this Church with God*. He spoke about how we need to get all the people filling this Church with God. Let's help our sermonette

men do the same. This is roughly what he said: When a minister says, *This is what the people need, so that's what I'll speak on*, God blesses that every time. That minister is just trying to feed the people what they need. He doesn't want to impress people with his speaking ability—he just wants to *fill the Church with God!* That should always be the goal of each one of us: to bring God in.

Just as a sermonette is a test, so too are all of our speaking opportunities. God says that if we are faithful in the little things, He will give us many, many, *grand, impressive opportunities* in the future. It is a matter of perspective. All of us—sermonette speakers, the brethren, the ministry—need to realize that what God is giving us now is just a little thing. What office today, what opportunity today, is comparable to being a *king-priest?* None. Christ said that John the Baptist was less than the least in God's Kingdom.

So let's always remember to pray for and hold on to the *humility* required of our sermonette speakers.