

WHEN YOUR PREACHER LEAVES: Interim Services for Churches Between Ministers

September, 2009, #38



Jerrie Barber and John Parker



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Jerrie and John this Month

Dropbox

by Jerrie Barber

I am thankful and excited about an idea shared by a friend from our Dalton, Georgia, days: Norman Patterson. He wrote on his *Facebook* page on August 26, 2009, about *Dropbox*. I installed the program and have been using it since then. I have access to my files on all my computers. The price is free up to 2 G. You can get up to 3 G more by inviting friends to download the program.



This is helpful to me because I use three computers regularly. I no longer have to email files to myself or remember to get an updated flash drive to carry from one location to another. Photos, as well as word files, can be shared.

This would also be handy for people who are working together on projects. You can set up a "Shared Folder" where people you give permission can share documents. The information will be updated as each person adds to the project.

This is the easiest issue of *When Your Preacher Leaves* for me. I have been able to work on a paragraph or two at home, go to the church building and add something else, then add some thoughts when I am at my house in Bellevue. One night I found pictures

that I would use. Today, I am adding them to the *Word* document and to the *AWeber* autoresponder which mails out our newsletter.

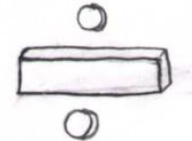
If you have an interest, you can email me at jerrie@barberclippings.com . I will invite you and you can decide if this would be helpful for you. If you respond to my invitation, you and I will get an additional 250 MB. If you prefer, you can go directly to <https://www.getdropbox.com/install> without receiving bonus storage.

Again, the price is free. This tool has received my “2009 Practical and Economical Tool” award!

Church Divisions at Corinth

by John Parker

Paul established the church in Corinth on his second tour (Acts 18), converting fornicators, idolaters, adulterers, homosexuals, thieves, drunkards, coveters, and swindlers (1 Cor. 6:9-10). Yet he refers to them as “the church of God,” “sanctified in Christ Jesus,” and “saints by calling.” However, coming from such a diverse background and young in the faith, they soon fall into divisions and arguments (1 Cor. 1:10-17). Paul writes 1 Corinthians to deal with these problems.



Churches today sometimes fight and divide over some of the same issues as the church in Corinth.

One issue of division is loyalty to preachers. The Corinthians split up into parties claiming to follow Apollos, Paul, Peter, and Christ. Paul quickly observes that only Christ died for them, and that they were baptized only into Him (vs. 13).

One of the major issues today that sometimes lead to church conflict is loyalty to preachers. Most preachers by their nature are loving, helpful, comforting, and pleasant. They are also regularly present in churches and homes, and most people grow to love and appreciate them, as well they should. After several years, people grow very attached to them.

Now all of this is good. Preachers with this esteem can and do provide major service to the congregation.

But sometimes the people develop such love for their preacher that they come to equate him with the church. They can be happy only if he is there. If he leaves, or if some problem arises concerning him, they may divide into conflicting parties as did the church at Corinth.

Ironically, good preachers are the first ones who would be opposed to such a development. Paul, Apollos, or Cephas would have never wanted such a situation, and neither do faithful preachers today.

Ironically again, it is the very goodness and faith of some preachers that attracts such loyalty. When the time inevitably comes that they retire, leave for another work, or die, the people are so shocked that they will not accept anyone in their place. “No one will ever take brother Smith’s place” becomes their attitude, and they program themselves to resist the inevitable change in situation and personnel, especially the appearance of a new preacher. They divide over his replacement, and a situation like Corinth’s develops. The ministries of some of the most well known and beloved preachers in our brotherhood history were followed by periods of strife primarily because of this tendency.

A further cause of church division is rift over doctrine. In the twenty centuries since the first, this problem has resulted in Catholicism and Protestant denominationalism. And even within the congregations devoted to restoring the New Testament church, there have during the last century been divisions over such matters as the formation of missionary societies, the use of instrumental music in worship, premillennialism, church cooperation in benevolence, and others. Perhaps more than any other cause, doctrinal dispute has rent the church.

Another cause of division is dispute between blood families. Churches sometimes experience tensions between members of extended families.

Recently, a cause of tension has been over worship styles. Some churches have had such unrest over preference for traditional versus contemporary worship styles that they have chosen to offer alternative services depending on taste.

And a final cause of division is personal conflicts. People have differences and then fail to admit fault or communicate with each other, resulting in continued bad feeling. Jesus gives the remedy in Matthew 5:23-24; 18:15-17.

What does the Bible say about division between brethren?

To the Corinthians, Paul said, “Now I plead with you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment” (1 Corinthians 1:10).

Psalm 133:1 says,

Behold, how good and how pleasant *it is*
For brethren to dwell together in unity!

According to Luke’s description of the early church, “the multitude of those who believed were of one heart and one soul” (Acts 4:32). And Paul urges the Romans, “Be kindly affectionate to one another with brotherly love, in honor giving preference to one another (Romans 12:10). To the Philippians he writes, “Only let your conduct be worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or am absent, I may hear of

your affairs, that you stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel (Philippians 1:27).

God hates division and condemns those who cause it (Galatians 1:8-9; Proverbs 6:19). But he loves those who are peacemakers (Matthew 5:9) and those who promote unity. May all Christians strive to keep “the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace” (Ephesians 4:3).

Shakespeare Quotations for Ministers, by John Parker

Foolery, sir, does walk about the orb like the sun, it shines everywhere.
Twelfth Night 3.1

Love sought is good, but given unsought is better.
Twelfth Night 3.1

Be that thou know'st thou art, and then thou art
As great as that thou fearest.
Twelfth Night 5.1

Those many had not dar'd to do that evil
If the first that did th' edict infringe
Had answer'd for his deed.
Measure for Measure 2.2.



Mustard Seeds from Favorite Books, Jerrie Barber

Crazy Love, by Francis Chan, © 2008 Francis Chan

We need to stop giving people excuses not to believe in God. You've probably heard the expression “I believe in God, just not organized religion.” I don't think people would say that if the church truly lived like we are called to live. The expression would change to “I can't deny what the church does, but I don't believe in their God.” At least then they'd address their rejection of God rather than use the church as a scapegoat (page 21).



Psalm 115:3 reveals, “Our God is in heaven; he does whatever pleases him.” Yet we keep on questioning Him: “Why did You make me with this body, instead of that one?” “Why are so many people dying of starvation?” “Why are there so many planets with nothing living on them?” “Why is my family so messed up?” “Why don't You make Yourself more obvious to the people who need You?”

The answer to each of these questions is simply this: because He's God. He has more of a right to ask us why so many people are starving. As much as we want God to

explain himself to us, His creation, we are in no place to demand that He give an account to us (page 33).

God is the only Being who is good, and the standards are set by Him. Because God hates sin, He has to punish those guilty of sin. Maybe that's not an appealing standard. But to put it bluntly, when you get your own universe, you can make your own standards. When we disagree, let's not assume it's His reasoning that needs correction (page 34).

Some people claim that we can be Christians without necessarily becoming disciples. I wonder, then, why the last thing Jesus told us was to go into the world, making *disciples* of all nations, teaching them to *obey all* that He commanded? You'll notice that He *didn't* add, "But hey, if that's too much to ask, tell them to just become Christians – you know, the people who get to go to heaven without having to commit to anything" (page 87).

If life is a river, then pursuing Christ requires swimming upstream. When we stop swimming, or actively following Him, we automatically begin to be swept downstream.

Or, to use another metaphor more familiar to city people, we are on a never-ending downward escalator. In order to grow, we have to turn around and sprint up the escalator, putting up with perturbed looks from everyone else who is gradually moving downward.

I believe that much of the American churchgoing population, while not specifically swimming downstream, is slowly floating away from Christ. It isn't a conscious choice, but it is nonetheless happening because little in their lives propels them toward Christ (page 95).

Most of us use "I'm waiting for God to reveal His calling on my life" as a means of avoiding action. Did you hear God calling you to sit in front of the television yesterday? Or to go on your last vacation? Or exercise this morning? Probably not, but you still did it. The point isn't that vacations or exercise are wrong, but that we are quick to rationalize our entertainment and priorities yet are slow to commit to serving God (page 169).

Smile of the Month

Adam and Eve were naming the creatures of the earth when along came a huge animal.

"Adam, let's call him a rhinoceros," suggested Eve.

"Why?"

"Well, he looks more like a rhinoceros than anything else we've seen" (*400 More Snappy Stories That Preachers Tell*, by Paul E. Holdcraft, page 52).



Barber Clippings

I started the *God's Great Servants* leadership class at Hendersonville the first Wednesday night of this month. Thirty-one men are enrolled. This is an interactive class designed to encourage and train men to serve as deacons and elders and/or cooperate and support those who are now serving in those capacities.

I believe in any congregation, we have the leadership we want, the leadership we have prayed for, the leadership we have trained for the last forty years. If we want more effective leaders/servants forty years from today, now is the time to sow leadership seeds that will mature much later. We reap what we sow, more than we sow, in proportion to what we sow, and later than we sow. It's planting time in every congregation!

You can view, download, and use, study, or modify the material we are using in this class at: <http://www.barberclippings.com/214846.html> . If I can be helpful in this or any other area, feel free to contact me.

Ladies Bible class started last Tuesday for this season. Gail enjoys teaching that. We have encouraging people at Hendersonville.

For a good preacher who wants a challenging and rewarding work, I would highly recommend the Hendersonville congregation. Interested candidates please send resumes and credentials confidentially to hcocresumes@yahoo.com .

Jerrie Barber
jerrie@barberclippings.com
www.barberclippings.com
<http://barberclippings.blogspot.com/>
(615) 356-8371
756 Woodland Way
Nashville, Tennessee 37209-5207
Church phone: (615) 824-6622
Cell phone: (615) 584-0512

John Parker

I have completed my fourth month as interim minister for the Fairview congregation. The search committee is receiving resumes and suggestions for their next minister. Please contact:

Search Committee
Fairview Church of Christ
P.O. Box 899
2001 Fairview Blvd.

Fairview, Tennessee 37062

I am honored to be invited for a book release event for ABIDE WITH ME: A PHOTOGRAPHIC JOURNEY THROUGH GREAT BRITISH HYMNS at Homecoming at Freed-Hardeman University on November 14 approximately from 11:00-1:00 outside the sports center. I would be pleased to see any of our readers there. The book is now in its second printing with New Leaf Press. I will have a sample article from the book in this newsletter next month.

I continue to work on producing the first in a series of videos on Shakespeare's plays for students in Christian high schools. Mike Fernandez, Director of Theater at Lipscomb, is directing the video, and Russ Sturgeon is videographer. Some twenty-five Nashville actors have read for the two leading roles. Filming is scheduled for December.

John H. Parker
Johnparker22@comcast.net
www.interimcofc.com
(615) 373-4462

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