

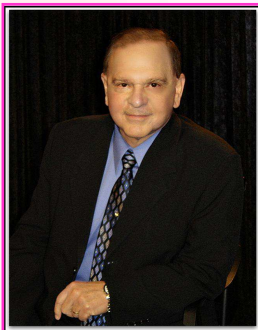
the INFORMER newsletter

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER
PARAGON CHRISTIAN ALLIANCE INT'L (PCAI)
AUGUST 2022 ISSUE

IN SEARCH OF THE GREAT SERMON



Every preacher is unique, but most preachers don't know this. He/she spends hours preparing what is believed to be a "great sermon" only to learn that the audience did not *receive the message* because there was "information overload." As a preacher, how many times have you experienced this? I've experienced it many times, having spent days studying and praying only to deliver a sermon that fell on deaf ears. Although I thought it was a "great sermon," the people were looking for something else. Because I preach in many different churches, sometimes I find it challenging to adapt to a different style of delivery – one to which the congregation is accustomed. For example, traditional Pentecostal churches may turn a deaf ear if you do not preach "loud" and with "lots of passion." They believe this is the "anointing." Although not my preference, I'm not opposed to this style when it's



Dr. Henry Harbuck,
PCAI Int'l General
Overseer

genuine. So what are some of the major points to preparing a "great sermon?"

First, a minimum of *one hour* of sermon preparation should be spent for *every minute* of the sermon when delivered. If your sermon takes thirty minutes to deliver, thirty hours of study and preparation are necessary. And this time schedule does not include fervent prayer and meditation on capturing the mind and heart of God concerning the sermon.

Once you're in the pulpit, preach from the "overflow" of what you've prepared. Don't stay glued to your notes, or your delivery will surely bomb. Eye contact with the audience is critical. Be dramatic and use your hands to express yourself. And don't stand in the pulpit with a stone-face. On the other hand I've also observed antics that have no place in the pulpit. Male preachers often condescend to screaming and shouting to

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"The **INFORMER** Newsletter" is a free monthly publication of P.C.A.I. - Paragon Christian Alliance International & PCAI Clergy Association

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By Rev. Mike Taylor, Raphah Ministries President

Come Quickly Lord Jesus

The bible says, “for we know in part, and we prophesy in part.” (I Corinthians 13:9) NKJV. No one but God has the full picture. I am however seeing more and more of this picture coming together as God gives us each new puzzle piece.

I think from a big picture perspective we can go back in history and see some things playing out again in America and the world. We have the first century church and how they had to battle against tyranny and persecution. You have the French Revolution and our own Revolution in 1776. The final straw in the start of the French Revolution is when they took away the people’s bread. We had a Civil War in

America, today we are having an uncivil war, but could another Civil war be in the making? Although there is nothing new under the sun the pace of apocalyptic events worldwide is startling. There have been a few other events recently that I feel are significant. At one point it seemed that the main players were in place for America, Israel, and the UK. All that has changed now. We have a new president in the United States. Israel had a change in Prime Minister and now is getting ready to change again. The Prime Minister of the UK just resigned. The Pope is talking about retiring. The former leader of Japan was assassinated. This is just a small list of changes but as it relates to end time scenarios, they are significant.

These kinds of changes have taken place all through human history. What is different now is the pace in which change is coming and the key nations and players involved. I believe

as we come to the end of the age and soon return of the Lord things will change so fast it will be impossible to keep up. The Lord said in Matthew 24:24 (NKJV) “For false Christs and false prophets will rise and show great signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, event the elect.”

A few years ago, the Lord told me there would be many martyrs and blood in the streets. This continues to take place all over the world but in the last few years we are seeing an increase in America. The Lord also said that the political battle will go more underground. We would have guerrilla warfare and bombings. This has always been the case around the world but is also increasing in the streets of America. He also said that we would be like Ireland. Ireland is two nations in one. Northern Ireland is connected with the UK and the other is the Republic of Ireland. I’m not sure where this is going but it seems like

Matthew 24:24 NKJV
“For false Christs and false prophets will rise and show great signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, event the elect.”

we already have two Americas. Red states verses blue states. Will we end up in a formal split? Like Ireland will there be two countries in the same country? God only knows where all of this is going.

My hope and trust are in Him. The battle is the Lord’s. We just need to do our part. These are exciting times to be alive. With God all things are possible. One thing we can know for sure is that one day the Lord is coming back for His bride, and we win. Timing is always the hard part; I pray for God’s mercy and grace. We will make it if we faint not. Lord, we bless you and praise you. Come quickly Lord Jesus. ♥

From the Files of CLA

Excerpt from Christian Law Association

PASTORS---you still need to be careful when discussing problematic legislation. As the new presidential administration and our current Congress continues to advance extremely problematic legislation and agendas that threaten churches and our religious freedom, it is certainly becoming harder for pastors to resist addressing these bills from the pulpit.

Pastors – please, please be careful. The Johnson Amendment that restricts non-profit entities from engaging in political activity is still the law. Please call our attorneys first before saying anything regarding political agendas and let us help you understand the law.

Make sure your ministry isn’t violating your insurance coverage! A gentleman recently was hired as the new youth pastor. He was surprised to realize the church hadn’t ever put together a written safety policy for the children’s ministry. He was even more flabbergasted to find out their insurance policy actually required them to have a policy regarding the reporting of sexual abuse. Since they didn’t, the church might not have insurance for such a claim.

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Ministries Need to Pay Attention to IRS Updates

From Christian Law Association

Luisa was the office manager for a large Christian ministry and handled the finances. She was uncertain how one specific tax aspect should be handled, but she had found something online dated 2 years ago that explained it for her. To be safe, she called the Christian Law Association to ensure her information was accurate and up to date.

Our attorneys explained that the information was good---until three months ago. The IRS often publishes updates to tax law on their website, and this particular issue had been addressed and updated. It’s vital to stay on top of the ever-changing state of tax law – don’t be afraid to utilize a CPA if you are overwhelmed. □

Parody and Fair Use in the World Copyright Law

From Christian Law Association

Mary is a Christian song writer from Kansas and she has been considering re-writing popular secular songs with Christian lyrics. She knew that there were inherent legal risks associated with using copyrighted tunes, but wondered how she might modify the songs in a way that would protect her legally. That is when she called our attorneys to advise her on her options. A parody is a limited use of copyrighted work, which adds some transformative or critical commentary on that original protected work, and is one of the broadly accepted fair uses of protected works. If you have any questions regarding US copyright law or parody, call our office. □

In Search of the Great Sermon _continued from page 1

capture the attention of the audience if the sermon has little Scriptural content. Notwithstanding, women preachers have their own antics as well. They may try to copy male preachers in style and voice, adopting a loud, deep, voice like John Hagee or Charles Stanley. On occasion, they may go to the other extreme, using a humble, quiet voice tone like Kathryn Khulman in an attempt to be accepted by the audience. None of these maneuvers should be categorized as good or bad, but the question remains, “What about the sermonic content and exegetical insights?” Paul said, “We preach not ourselves, but Christ and Him crucified.” What is Paul saying? “If you don’t preach (exalt) Christ, you are preaching (exalting) self.” Leave your attention grabbing antics at home and stay focused on Christ while you’re in the pulpit.

Second. “Stop imitating TV preachers.” Don’t try to copy them in your preaching. Be yourself. Make an effort to discover who and what you really are. Learn your biblical exegesis (accurate biblical interpretation) so that you don’t appear inept, or lead the sheep (people) off a cliff or into a ditch. A great philosopher once made a profound statement concerning “copycats.” He said, “A person who is imitating another person, and is attracting a big crowd will be deluded into believing that he himself, also, can attract a big crowd. But it doesn’t happen. He fails miserably. He must instead discover his unique identity by reaching deep within his soul to discover his unique abilities. Once he emerges after finding himself, then the big crowds will follow him, because he is finally himself above all else.”

Third. preach with “passion and polish” in spite of what you believe about yourself. During the first 300 years of early church preaching, few witnesses (preachers) were concerned about “polish.” All that mattered was “passion.” Times have changed. Today, you must have a little “polish” to go along with your “passion.” However, if you must make a choice between these two qualities, “passion” should be your choice.

Put a little of yourself into every sermon and it will become a message. From time-to-time use a personal illustration about yourself. Tell your audience stories about yourself, your spouse, your mother or father, your children, your adventures, your trials and tribulations, etc. This will wake up the audience, hold their attention, and often make them laugh or sometime cry. Remember, your audience wants to know something about you. But never take your calling for granted by failing to prepare your message beforehand. God prepares the person who prepares the sermon. Thus He will prepare the people’s hearts to receive the message. Don’t make the foolish mistake of relying on your anointing to get you through a sermon. If you make this mistake, your “anointing,” may become “annoying” to your audience.

Fourth. there is no such thing as a “great sermon.” Although you may deliver a dynamic sermon with power, passion and polish, there is no assurance your sermon will fall on receptive ears. Stop relying on the “amen” and “praise the Lord” statements as assurance that you are delivering a great sermon. People in Pentecostal churches routinely say “amen” and “praise the Lord.” Of course, some preachers ask the congregation to say “amen” even when they find nothing in the sermon that motivates them to do so. Such verbal responses are not indicators that your preaching is good.

When preaching, you must first do something to lower the resistance of the audience. Don’t go too fast in the introduction stage of your message. Instead, warm up your audience gently to get past their anger, disinterest, personality defenses, or critical thinking.

You may appear more “down to earth” to your audience by sharing some of the issues you have personally faced in life. Be discreet, however, and do not disclose intimate personal matters that may have occurred between you and your spouse, as did one unfortunate soul who was finally forced to close his church. He felt he should tell the congregation all his faults (as well as his sexual hang-ups) from the pulpit. He felt this tactic would cause people to see him not as an exalted pastor, but one with problems just like them. However, this tactic “backfired” on him and wrecked his church.

Martin Luther once said, “Prayer and meditation will give you a sermon, but only temptation (the daily experiences in life) will transform your sermon into a message.” While Luther’s statement is true and a preacher may explain how he overcame temptation. I maintain that a preacher must tread cautiously and not disclose too much of his faults. Proceed with caution and be careful as to how you present yourself.

In conclusion, the “Search for the Great Sermon” is actually a myth. Search for it if you will, but the “Great Sermon” is elusive. Why? Because each person in the audience will respond differently to every sermon you preach. If you prepare a sermon from the Book of Revelation, this doesn’t mean the majority of your audience wants to hear it. Perhaps they wanted to hear about some other subject more relevant to their life. The parents in the congregation may have wanted to hear a sermon on how to improve communication in marriage, how to control their teenagers, or how to overcome inferiority. Although from time-to-time you may preach landmark sermons designed to wake people up, no sermon is “great” if it does not speak to the needs of the people.

But don’t be disillusioned as you search for the “Great Sermon” to preach. There is still hope for you to find that “GREAT SERMON” you’re looking for. ♥

From the Files of CLA _continued from page 2

Insurance policies often have requirements you will be expected to adhere to, and unfortunately not every church has taken the time needed to ensure they are aware of these rules. Call your agent today and make sure your church is in compliance.

Witnessing in a shopping mall? A gentleman had visited his local indoor shopping mall with a little sign that said “Let me pray for you”. He had successfully prayed with several people when mall security approached him and told the man he had to leave. The man complied but was confused-could they really make him stop? He call CLA.

Our attorneys explained that the law regarding free speech in private-owned shopping malls could vary by state. While some states allowed broader free speech in large malls, others treated them no differently than any other private business. In his state, he would need to ask permission first. □

Election Year Information—

Part II *An Excerpt from Church Law & Tax Article*

Is the Johnson Amendment constitutional?

Numerous legal scholars have written law review articles arguing that the Johnson Amendment is unconstitutional. These arguments focus on the Establishment, the Free Exercise, and the Free Speech Clauses of the First Amendment to the US Constitution.

What follows is a summary of some of the legal arguments for how the Johnson Amendment appears to violate each clause.

The Establishment Clause

The Establishment Clause prohibits excessive entanglement of the government with religion. The IRS cannot enforce the Johnson Amendment without an IRS agent parsing the speech of a church or a pastor's sermon or other speech to determine if it crossed the line into a Johnson Amendment violation.

The US Supreme Court has held—in more than one case—that a law that requires pervasive government surveillance and monitoring of religion results in excessive entanglement of the government with religion.

Put simply, the government cannot enforce the Johnson Amendment without intruding into the internal activities and speech of a church to determine whether the church violated the law. Such enforcement of the Johnson Amendment would unconstitutionally entangle the government with religion.

The Free Speech Clause

The Free Speech Clause prohibits “content-based” restrictions on speech. This kind of restriction is one where the government must review the content of speech to determine if it violates the law. In cases like this, courts hold the government to the highest constitutional standard in order to justify why it needs to review the content of speech.

The Johnson Amendment certainly requires the IRS to review the content of a church's speech. In fact, there is no way to enforce the Johnson Amendment without reviewing the content of a church's speech. This content review, coupled with the vagueness of the Johnson Amendment's text, gives the government broad censorship power to prohibit speech.

Content-based restrictions on speech are highly disfavored and are usually unconstitutional because these kinds of restrictions give the government far too much power to censor speech it does not like.

The Free Speech Clause also prohibits a speech restriction that creates an unconstitutional condition. Stated simply, the Johnson Amendment forces churches to give up their speech rights in order to retain their tax-exempt statuses—even though the Constitution (by virtue of the First Amendment's Establishment Clause) requires the government to exempt a church from taxation.

Think about it this way: Would it be okay for the government to tell churches that they can retain their tax-exempt statuses only if they provide free housing for military troops (barred by the Third Amendment) or only if they allow the police to search their buildings without warrants (barred by the Fourth Amendment)? Those kinds of restrictions would be instantly condemned—and rightly so—as unconstitutional. Yet the Johnson Amendment says churches can retain their tax-exempt statuses only if churches forfeit their First Amendment rights of speech—an unconstitutional trade-off.

The Free Speech Clause also prohibits vague restrictions on speech. The reason is that vague restrictions may result in self-censorship and a chill on speech. As we have already discussed, the Johnson Amendment is full of the type of vagueness to create such a chill.

TO BE CONTINUED IN PART III

ANNOUNCEMENT

UPDATE ON MILEAGE RATES

(Excerpt from Christian Law Associates)

Due to seeming never-stopping rise in gas prices, the IRS has responded by upping the mileage rate for 2022 by four cents for most types of business use. If you compensate staff and volunteers for mileage at IRS rates, this relatively substantive increase is worth being aware of to ensure you don't inadvertently go over budget.

AS OF JULY 1st:

- ⇒ 62.5 cents per mile driven for business use, an increase of 4 cents from the rate set on January 1, 2022
- ⇒ 22 cents per mile driven for medical or moving purposes, up 4 cents from the rate set on January 1, 2022
- ⇒ 14 cents per mile driven in service of charitable organizations—this remains unchanged because it can only be altered by an act of Congress.

Can the Church Reimburse Me for Networking?

(Excerpt from Christian Law Associates)

Attorneys see this question quite a bit – many pastors will go above and beyond to try and ingrain themselves in their local communities, and this type of consistent social networking at local clubs often brings with it fees and dues of many sorts.

Unfortunately the tax code is clear – no deductions are allowed for membership dues in any “club organized for business, pleasure recreation, or other social purpose.” That said, professional organization dues can potentially be excluded from this ban. □

Do HPPA Laws Apply to Your Ministry *(From Christian Law Associates)*

Except for rare occasions the answer is no. Some have been concerned sharing prayer requests violates the HPPA guidelines. Normally this does not but CLA strongly cautions that before speaking regarding anyone's health or wellbeing you should secure written permission from them. □