***Articles From the Days Gone By***

**ADVICE TO BEGINNERS by Leslie Diestelkamp**

This is not intended to be an arbitrary directive to young preachers, but based on 1) four-and-one-half decades of experience; 2) close observation of gospel work and workers for all these years; and (3) scriptural principles, it is hoped that these brief words may be received by young men or any others who are just now beginning regular gospel work.

***1. You are an idealist.*** Don’t apologize for this characteristic. You love God and his church and you want to do the very best work you can do in service to God and mankind. Your goals for yourself and for the church are pure and your ambitions are high. Do not allow anyone to deprive you of those goals and ambitions or turn you aside from their pursuit. You have “left all” to follow Christ and you have a “set your affections on things above,” which means you are on the right track.

***2. But you should also be a realist.*** It is often hard to reconcile idealistic and realistic attitudes, but to some degree at least, you will have to find a way to do this if you are to succeed at all. Because of environmental background, differing experiences, and other circumstances, many brethren will not—at least immediately—share your concepts regarding ideals. You may conclude that they are without zeal, unfruitful, or even unfaithful. In turn, they may think that you are visionary and without wisdom. Just as God is “long-suffering“ toward us, you will need to be patient with Brethren.

***3. First of all, you are a Christian.*** If Brethren do not behave in accordance with divine principles, you must still manifest Christlikeness all the time. When others are angry, you should be calm. When others frown, you need to smile. When some become bitter, you ought to find reason for gladness. If others waiver, you must stand, stalwart and true, even if you have to stand alone. Some may say I have set a double standard, and that you, as a preacher, have no more obligation in these matters than do other Christians. Forty years ago, and even 25 years ago, I felt as you may feel now. But now I believe you do have *additional responsibilities.* When one makes a commitment to devote himself to preaching the gospel, I believe God may expect him not only to preach the word but to set the highest possible example and to demonstrate a life of real sacrifice as he devotes himself in service to God and to mankind (1 Tim. 4:12-16; 2 Tim. 4:5-8; Mt. 9:9).

***4. Remember, you are a preacher*** (see Rom. 10:10, 14; 1 Tim. 2:7). You have not given up worldly possessions to become a general handyman or even a church administrator. Don’t let anyone deprive you of the time to read, study, and meditate. Then, when your mind is filled with divine precepts, when your heart is full of love for God and His Word, and when your spirit yearns for salvation for lost souls—then preach!

***Allow Time***

As a preacher you are not commanded to convert the world, but your job is to preach. Many will not hear. Some hear but will not obey. Many who are baptized will fall away. Some who were once strong will become weak. But remember, it is God who gives the increase, and it is His Word that convicts, converts, and sustains. *Give the Word time to work!* Don’t try to accomplish by your own eloquence, your persuasion, or your pressure tactics, that which is the exclusive function of the Word of God.

Especially in dealing with brethren—with elders and/or other leaders of the congregation—do your work well—don’t try to do theirs.

If the people are stingy, you can’t force them to give; but you can teach them how to give and why (2 Cor. 9:6-11; Rom. 12:8; Lk. 6:38). If the church seems to be “at ease in Zion,” wake them up, not with mere criticisms, but with warnings and exhortations from the Word (Rom. 13:11; Col. 3:1,2). Sin, in the church and out of it, must be condemned; but you need to remember to hate only the sin, not the sinner! You will not have gained your objective if the people get the impression that you delighted in their sin so that you have occasion to condemn them. God will use you to gain their hearts and reform their lives if you will preach words of truth with sincerity, humility, and love.

If you are a good man like Barnabas (Ac. 11:24), a faithful preacher like Paul (Rom. 1:14,15) and especially if you are a capable speaker like Apollos (Ac. 18:24), some brethren may praise you so highly that they unintentionally endanger your soul. They will tell you “I never heard it said so well,” or “We have been needing your kind of preaching a long time,” or “Why don’t all ministers preach like you do?” But beware of vanity and pride.

A very few brothers may try to pick your sermon apart. How you respond to criticisms will demonstrate your maturity or lack of such. If you are explosive or indignant and if you are exceedingly defensive, life will be miserable for you. If you would be *fruitful and happy,* you will need to accept criticisms graciously and profit by them. The worst thing to do is to respond publicly to every private critic. Be sensitive to the needs of others, not to your own hurt feelings.