



YOKEFELLOW

WHY DON'T YOU SHARPEN YOUR AXE?

Cliff Goodwin

Preaching the Gospel is not a career in the usual sense of the term. It involves and requires an overall commitment of one's life. Many jobs can simply be left in the workplace when the day is done. At week's end, many employees look forward to a carefree weekend with no second thought about work whatsoever. Preaching is very different. Preaching is an outgrowth of a man's living the Christian life. It is true that not all Christians are preachers in the vocational sense of the term, but it is equally true that all faithful preachers must be Christians in the Biblical sense of that word!



All this is said in order to point out that the work of preaching is very different from secular forms of employment—no doubt about it. However, there is a way in which preaching is quite similar to a variety of secular jobs. This similarity lies in the fact that preaching—like many other jobs—benefits greatly from good and solid training. Some dispute this, but the facts are what they are. I remember this question coming up some thirty years ago, when I was a student at MSOP myself. The wise instructor used the illustration of having to chop down a number of trees with an axe. He said that a man might be able to do that with a dull axe, but it would be much easier and less time consuming if he sharpened his axe first! The point lodged firmly in my mind. Yes, a faithful man can preach the Gospel without any formal training—certainly. But his work will be a great deal easier if he sharpens his axe with some helpful training first!

Focused, Intensified Study

Knowledge is power in virtually any job, but this is especially true in preaching. It is especially helpful for one to have a knowledge base—a solid framework of understanding from which to grow and to continue adding more and more information. No one would ever affirm that he has “learned it all” in preaching school, but such education is a prime opportunity for one to grasp and assimilate the essential fundamentals. Every discipline has necessary fundamentals, and preaching is no different. Preaching school offers a stimulating environment in which one can lay a sure foundation on which he can build the rest of his life.

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WHY DON'T YOU SHARPEN YOUR AXE?

continued

There are so many professions which require certain levels of education and proficiency. None of these have the serious, everlasting impact and potential that preaching holds. Yet some scoff at the idea of preachers needing education and training. This really does not make sense. No one would want to entrust his medical care to a man poorly trained in his field. How many seem to think that we should entrust pulpits throughout our brotherhood to men who are hardly trained at all? We should think seriously about this. A sound, faithful school of preaching provides men with the time, opportunity, and resources whereby they can better equip themselves with a working knowledge of God's Word.

Godly Examples and Relationships

Another benefit of attending preaching school is the time spent around godly men. The work of preaching is far more than the academic side of knowledge and study. There is definitely a practical component when it comes to preaching. For students to have time around faithful instructors, hearing their words and observing their deportment, is a great blessing indeed. The opportunities to come to instructors with personal questions and dilemmas—even “picking their brains” as needed—is a treasure for sure. So much about living the Christian life (and preaching the Gospel) is learned by example.

Finally, there are the friendships that are formed and nurtured during two or three years in preaching school. Still to this day, my very best friend is a classmate with whom I went through MSOP over three decades ago. His wisdom, support, and friendship have helped me many times over the years. I'm sure mine is

not a unique case. Preaching school gives the opportunity for all who attend to form lifetime bonds that will assist and benefit their ministry for years to come. Tell me again, why don't you come and sharpen your axe?

HELP MSOP STUDENTS THROUGH THE MATTHEW PASCHALL SCHOLARSHIP FUND Bobby Liddell



Matthew Paschall, beloved son of Steve and Teresa, and exemplary student at MSOP, passed away on February 2, 2026. Because of his endearing personality, his unfailing readiness to help, and his cheerful, calm demeanor, MSOP awarded him, posthumously, the “True Yokefellow Award.” His father, Steve Paschall, accepted the award on Matthew's behalf, at the recent graduation ceremony (June 21, 2026).

As noted in the May-June, 2026 issue of Yokefellow, the “True Yokefellow Award acknowledges a student's selfless service on an exceptional level. A Yokefellow is, by definition, a comrade, one who is bound; that is, ‘yoked together,’ in labor with his fellows.

There is a practical meaning, for this award, and that is that this brother has exhibited the qualities of a cheerful, productive servant. He willingly made himself the ‘go-to-guy’ whenever the faculty, or staff, needed help. The truth is that one could serve from joyless duty, or, from ingratiating self-promotion, or, from oppression and fear, but the True Yokefellow serves because he follows the humble example of the Lord whom he serves.”

In Matthew's honor, MSOP has established a scholarship: The Matthew Paschall

Scholarship Fund. We hope you will join us in honoring his memory, and providing much needed funds that will go to help other fine men, like Matthew, in their pursuit of the training and education that will equip them to be productive, faithful proclaimers of God's Word.

You may send your fully tax deductible contributions to:

Memphis School of Preaching
3950 Forest Hill Irene Road
Memphis, TN 38125
marked "Matthew Paschall Scholarship."

If you have questions, contact our Financial Secretary, Joyce Phillips, at 901-751-2242.

Thanks, BL

I AM GRATEFUL FOR YOUR PRAYERS **Bobby Liddell**



Thank you so much for your prayers for me over the last several months.

Since September, the doctors and I have been trying to find the cause of my illness and the debilitating pain I have had.

Thankfully, the pain has lessened, and after many different tests, scans, medications, treatments, and a brief hospital stay, the good news is that the doctors have ruled out a number of possible problems.

At the time of this writing, the latest is the oncologist is running tests to learn why there

are two protein spikes in my blood, and what that means. I hope to hear from him soon.

God has been so good to me, and has blessed me with wonderful brothers and sisters who so lovingly, fervently, and faithfully have carried my needs before His throne. I am forever grateful.

And...I am happy and blessed to look forward to continuing to teach and to working with the Graduate Program.

NEW CLASSES BEGIN IN AUGUST

It is not too late to make application to be a student at MSOP, beginning with the next term in August.

Classes are available in our Two-Year Program, for students entering their First Year.

Likewise, for those students who are interested and qualified for our Graduate Program, we will offer two classes, also beginning in August, one in Apologetics and one in Broadcasting. Graduate Program classes in Missions and in Leadership will be offered later.

For more information, see the current Catalog, at msop.org. While you are there, check out recent Yokefellows for more information on the Graduate Program.

HOW DOES ONE APPLY?

At msop.org, you will find a lot more information, plus an online application, but if you have questions, feel free to contact us.

We look forward to hearing from you, and to joining with you in your journey toward being the best Gospel preacher you can be!

WHY I WOULD APPLY TO MSOP

Tim Burroughs

I would apply to the Memphis School of Preaching because they prepare men to preach (2 Tim. 2:2). While one will study every verse of every book of the Bible, the intention of the faculty is also to equip every man studying at MSOP to have the ability to be prepared to step into the pulpit. They will have a reason for every sermon and a purpose for every work. Both will be to glorify our Father in Heaven (Matt. 5:16)



Secondly, I would apply to the Memphis School of Preaching because the faculty has decades of experience in the settings of local work to share with students helping to prepare them to build relationships with the brethren as the preacher of the local congregation. This will help alleviate some pitfalls, bad habits, and failures young preachers experience when beginning a new work (1 Pet. 5:8).

Finally, I would apply to the Memphis School of Preaching because of the faithful stand the director, faculty, and eldership of the Forest Hill church of Christ take on the Truth of God's Holy Word (1 Cor. 15:58). All of these reasons, along with the good attitude and intentions of the student and his family, will lead to the greatest two years of his life.

Because He lives,
Tim Burroughs

SEMINAR IN APOLOGETICS

SEPTEMBER 24-25, 2026

MSOP M.O.S.T. Classroom

9:00 AM -4:00 PM

Make your plans to be
present, if possible. Live
streaming also available. You
will not want to miss it!

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