

In Good Company? (Church Hoppers and Unqualified Ministry)

Written by Ben Winslett

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I was reading an article last night on the subject of "Church Hoppers." A Church Hopper is a person who moves from congregation to congregation and never stays at one place for any great length of time. There are varying degrees of this, but it is a problem that exists on a many levels in American Christianity. The Hopper will begin attending, glory over the new church, and stick around just long enough to see some of the flaws in the membership (which all churches have - we are sinners) and then hop to the next congregation or order of faith. This seems to be a product of American culture. We place ourselves as the ultimate judge and authority while at the same time being totally impossible to satisfy.

In the article, the last paragraph contained what the writer thought were legitimate reasons to switch churches. Of course, to me, as a Primitive Baptist, I will attend no other type of church than a PB church. I sincerely believe that the first century Church was a Baptist Church. I believe Primitive Baptists possess the historic form of the Baptist Faith, both in doctrine and practice. It's a simple choice for me, I recommend attending the closest PB Church (or *a close* PB church - if there are multiple congregations) to home. If there is not a nearby church body, move to a location where there is a church body. It's a pretty simple solution and it solves the whole problem.

Among the writer's "legitimate reasons" to swap churches was "unqualified ministry." That provoked me to think "*what is unqualified ministry??*" What qualifies a man to preach? Well, in the denominational word of fast food Christianity (forgive if you must), a seminary degree qualifies a man to be a pastor. With no degree, a man is not "qualified." He is merely a "lay minister." But, is that what qualified the Apostles? Is that what qualified Titus, Barnabas, Silas, or Timothy? No, not at all. Do you know what qualified First Century men to the ministry?

A God-call.

Simple, isn't it!

Now, those men were to spend countless hours preparing themselves for this work by studying God's Word and prayer. But the qualification came directly from God Himself. God "opens their understanding" of the scriptures.

Then opened he their understanding, that they might understand the scriptures... -Luke 24:45

After the call to preach is given, the man studies with his pastor or "father in the ministry". He devotes his time and energy to learning the Bible and exercises his gift to preach by speaking to the church. He grows as a minister **IN** the Church. Where in scripture is the church commanded to outsource this responsibility to a college or university? No where! This is one of the church's

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primary duties! (See Titus 1:5)

But in reading the article, I was prompted to remember just how the Apostles were often received by unbelieving or carnal audiences. Did unbelievers perceive them as able, qualified speakers? Serious question. Notice how they were often accused of being rude, ignorant babblers.

Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were unlearned and ignorant men, they marvelled; and they took knowledge of them, that they had been with Jesus. - Acts 4:13

Then certain philosophers of the Epicureans, and of the Stoicks, encountered him. And some said, What will this babler say? other some, He seemeth to be a setter forth of strange gods: because he preached unto them Jesus, and the resurrection. - Acts 17:18

For his letters, say they, are weighty and powerful; but his bodily presence is weak, and his speech contemptible. - 2 Corinthians 10:10

Don't confuse this with me putting a "premium on ignorance." I am not. I strive to present my sermons in an informed, articulate manner. Yet at the same time, if the carnal person or unbeliever thinks high of a minister, something is wrong! For if the greatest of the New Testament ministers, the Apostles, were perceived in such a light, how then should a normal elder be perceived by the surrounding culture? No better, I am sure.