

The Gospel Unashamed

"From the cowardice that shrinks from new truth, from the laziness that is content with half-truths, from the arrogance that thinks it knows all truth, O, God of Truth, deliver us."

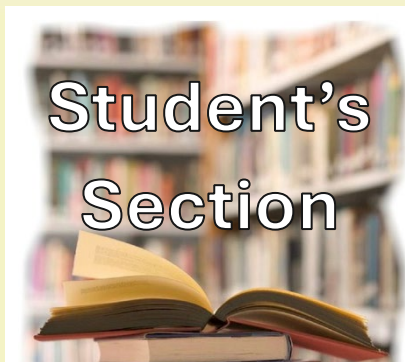
A Controversial Newsletter "The Printed Voice of Summit Theological Seminary"

~ All articles written by Terry Carter unless otherwise stated ~

Vol. 39 No. 1

January 2026

Terry Carter, Editor



Where Have All the Evangelists Gone—or Have We Driven Them Away?

By Dave Webster

Across our brotherhood, one cry is repeated again and again: "We just don't have any young men willing to step up and become evangelists anymore." It is spoken in elders' meetings, whispered in pews, and written plainly in church bulletins announcing yet another vacant pulpit.

But perhaps the more honest question is not where are the evangelists, but rather what kind of men are we actually asking for—and what are we willing to give in return?

In recent months, I have read job descriptions from congregations across the country. Churches large and small, rural and urban. And what I have found is troubling. Many of these descriptions do not sound like a call for a man of God, devoted to prayer and the ministry of the Word.

Instead, they read like listings for a full-time church gopher—someone to preach, yes, but also to manage, organize, counsel, visit, program, promote, attend every event, placate every critic, and somehow still produce dynamic sermons week after week.

All of this, of course, is expected—often for wages that would struggle to support a young family.

A Biblical Role Redefined by Expectations

In the New Testament, evangelists were not spiritual errand boys. Paul instructed Timothy to "do the work of an evangelist" (**2 Timothy 4:5**), and that work was centered on preaching the Word, correcting

error, exhorting with patience, and enduring hardship.

The apostles themselves recognized the danger of being pulled away from their primary calling when they said, "It is not right that we should give up preaching the word of God to serve tables" (**Acts 6:2**).

Yet today, many congregations expect their minister to serve every table—often while criticizing him for not studying enough or preaching deeply enough.

We say we want strong preaching, biblical courage, and doctrinal clarity. But we structure the role in such a way that study and prayer are constantly sacrificed on the altar of busyness. Then we wonder why sermons feel shallow or why burnout arrives so quickly.

We Want More—But We Offer Less

Perhaps the most uncomfortable truth is this: we expect far too much from our ministers while being unwilling to support them adequately.

Scripture could not be clearer. “The laborer deserves his wages” (**Luke 10:7**). Paul goes further, reminding the church that those who preach the gospel have a right to live by the gospel (**1 Corinthians 9:14**). Yet many congregations treat fair compensation as optional, or worse, as a necessary evil.

We would never expect a skilled tradesman, a teacher, or a business professional to work full-time for part-time pay. But somehow, when it comes to ministry, sacrifice is assumed to mean financial insecurity—not just for the preacher, but for his wife and children as well.

If a young man looks at ministry and sees instability, unrealistic expectations, constant criticism, and inadequate support, is it any wonder he hesitates?

A Crisis of Trust and Respect

There is another issue we must address: trust.

Many churches say they want a preacher to lead spiritually, yet resist him at every turn. He is expected to be bold—but not too bold. Biblical—but not uncomfortable. Convicted—but never challenging traditions or cherished opinions. When he speaks truth plainly, he is accused of being divisive. When he softens his tone, he is accused of lacking conviction.

We cannot ask men to “step up” while simultaneously tying their hands.

The Restoration Movement has always prized the authority of Scripture and the courage to stand upon it. If we truly want evangelists shaped by that heritage, we must be willing to allow them to preach the whole counsel of God—even when it unsettles us.

Rethinking the Call

The solution is not complicated, but it is costly.

Congregations must rethink what they are truly calling a man to do. Is he primarily an evangelist and preacher of the Word—or an all-purpose religious employee? Elders must guard his time, protect his focus, and encourage his growth rather than exhausting his strength.

Churches must also rethink compensation—not as charity, but as partnership in the gospel. When we invest in our ministers, we invest in the spiritual health of the congregation.

And finally, we must stop saying, “We don’t have anyone willing to step up,” and instead ask whether we have created an environment worth stepping into.

A Call to the Church

There are men who want to preach the Word in truth. There are men who love the Restoration plea, who long to proclaim Christ crucified and risen, who are willing to labor faithfully.

But they are watching. They are listening. And they are deciding whether ministry is a calling to be

embraced—or a burden to be avoided.

If we want evangelists, we must first be churches worthy of them.

Dave Webster is the evangelist at Delray Church of Christ in Delray, WV. He is also a current graduate student at Summit Theological Seminary.