

“Preacher, You’ve Got Friends”

Forward

The story our friend, Beulah Morlan, tells in the next few paragraphs is profoundly on point to summarize the spirit of the chapters that comprise this digest of life stories:

I grew up in Southwest Missouri in the 1930’s. My family raised strawberries. In the Spring, we would cut the trees from the new ground. All summer we would pull the weeds and hoe the strawberries. We each took a row. Some of those rows contained stumps where lots of weeds and grass grew.

As a child, it seemed to me, I always got a row with a stump. But my father would finish his row and start back on mine, meeting me at the stump. Together, we would get the work done.

Sometimes in life, we think we have a hard row to hoe. Maybe it contains a stump – a leftover problem or overgrown obstacle. Just remember, our Heavenly Father is at the other end of the row and He is coming back to meet us. With His help and the help of our Christian friends, we can get the work done.

No matter what your ministry or mine may be, all who are called to specialized Christian ministry will face extraordinary challenges...sometimes “hard rows to hoe.” And, therein, lies the heart and soul of this book.

When God called me into an evangelistic music ministry with The Gospel Lads, He obviously had a plan for my life and the lives of my fellow team members to intersect with literally thousands of preachers and church staff members. Through these numerous encounters, the Lord opened the doors for lasting friendships and meaningful brother-to-brother relationships. We have always, and still do empathize with the preacher who battles with major issues in the church, as well as in his own family. We have always sensed a kinship with the preacher who is pouring himself into the lives of the people he loves and serves on a daily basis. Discouragement, disillusionment, disappointment, and relational gut-shots are too often a part of the preacher’s life in ministry. We were frequently able to come alongside preachers who were reeling from blows to the heart thrown at them by other people or circumstances. Our goal was to offer real encouragement, not just words that were tossed out in trite irrelevance. Many times we were helping him fight for his ministry life or standing with him in prayer or, if invited, we took up the sword and shield to go with him into the spiritual fray.

As God's ambassadors over the years of our widespread travels, we have encountered others in ministries, who, like us, have valuable experiences and a driving passion to reach out to preachers. We want to offer real help, so those who are reeling from the battle may conquer their problems and make a continuing impact for the Lord with their lives. This book is filled with chapters of testimonies, practical ideas, heart-felt encouragement, rich relational experiences and, most of all, Holy Spirit engendered wisdom for preachers and anyone in ministry leadership roles.

We asked several Christian leaders from varied backgrounds in missions and ministries to pour out their stories and their most vital life messages onto the pages of this digest. They are opening the inner chambers of their heart in the hope of giving new and extended life to all ministers of the Word. All church staff members, leaders and congregational members can gain significant insight into the preacher's world and can harvest productive fruit for their own lives from the writings of this diverse and experienced group.