

Polishing The Pulpit, 2007

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Since 1995, preachers, elders, their wives, and interested members of the church have gathered at various places for an event known as "Polishing The Pulpit." The work is overseen by the Jacksonville Church of Christ in Jacksonville, Alabama, and the directors are David Barker from Trinity, Alabama; Eddy Gilpin from Salem, Virginia; Mark Howell from Atwood, Tennessee; and Allen Webster from Jacksonville, Alabama. (Many people across the country both members of the churches of Christ as well as non-members know of the Jacksonville Church of Christ because they publish the *House To House/Heart To Heart* periodical that goes into 2.5 million homes six times per year).

The week-long gathering is especially designed to benefit those men who occupy the pulpits in churches of Christ and the elderships who oversee their work. Classes are also available for the ladies and wives. (You don't have to be a preacher or an elder to attend). It has grown every year to the point that this year there were almost 500 registered participants. Among the outstanding preachers and presenters this year we were privileged to hear Alan E. Highers, former preacher for the Getwell Church of Christ and editor of *The Spiritual Sword*.

Recently, at Getwell we were studying "The Rich Man and Lazarus" from Luke 16:19-31. Prior to his leaving Getwell as the pulpit preacher, Alan preached a sermon he entitled "Five Minutes After Death" in which he originally was responding to questions he had received on "The Truth In Love" radio program. He developed the material from his radio lesson into what he admits is his favorite sermon to preach, and one of his sermons to which perhaps there has been more interest generated over the years. This year he preached it again at "Polishing The Pulpit." Those of us who did not hear it when it was originally delivered have had

the opportunity to hear it on cassette tape, but it truly was thrilling to hear it directly from brother Highers.

When he concluded, in view of the audience consisting of so very many faithful gospel preachers and dear friends of his, he took a minute to talk about using materials gleaned from others in our preaching and teaching and, with emotion in his voice, said to those present that in the event they could use this lesson to bring one soul to Christ, "It's yours."

For just a few minutes before two evening sessions we were given the opportunity to speak on behalf of the Gospel Broadcasting Network. Those present were informed about the news of GBN coming out on the two most powerful satellite networks, DirecTV and Dish Network, for a full hour every morning beginning around September first and the breaking news of Time Warner Cable Company granting GBN our own channel in the very near future. The plans to raise one million dollars through the fifth Sunday collection of over 7,000 churches of Christ to pay the \$240,000 for the DirecTV and Dish Network air time and to complete the World Communication building in Ringgold, Georgia was also urged.

During these golden moments I was able to tell of the supportive work for GBN that the Spiritual Sword Media represents. Eight to ten programs are produced in our fledgling studio located at the Getwell building in Memphis. After an evening session we caught Alan Highers in front of the GBN display and asked him for his thoughts about the project. He said, "I've been associated with the Getwell Church of Christ in Memphis for over forty years, and the church there has been involved in so many good works. The Getwell Church sponsors the Spiritual Sword Lectureship in October of every year, publishes the Spiritual Sword Journal, and is now very involved in the Spiritual Sword

Television Ministry and doing programming for the Gospel Broadcasting Network. And, when I think about how many better means we have today to proclaim the gospel I'm truly thrilled. In the past we had radio; we've had television; but now the opportunities are limitless—beyond anything we ever anticipated in years past. So, I'm so happy to see this kind of work flourish."

We, too, are happy to realize the interest and support of brother Highers who has been such a significant part of the ongoing work of the Getwell Church of Christ over the years and continues to be through his brilliant editorship of the quarterly journal, participation during the annual lectureship, and his love and support of the church generally.

The Gospel Broadcasting Network provides the means to accomplish the Great Commission on a scale commensurate with the global challenge. A young preacher named Scott McCown who preaches for the Parrish Church of Christ in Parrish, Walker County, Alabama, stopped by the GBN booth to tell me about brother Ronnie Mullinax, a member of the Parrish Church of Christ who works in management for a coal mine in the mining country of Walker County. Ronnie's work schedule does not permit him to attend worship services some Sundays, so Scott told him about the possibility of getting GBN via the internet down in the mines. Ronnie and his crew, most of whom are not Christians, watch GBN every Lord's day he is working hundreds (maybe even thousands) of feet below the earth's surface in the coal mines. Beaming the 24/7 Bible programming electronic signal up into the sky 30,000 miles to the AMC-6 satellite it bounces back to the earth and is now being viewed by teeming millions on and even hundreds of feet below the surface of the earth! Thus qualifying brother Highers statement, "Now the opportunities are limitless—beyond anything we ever anticipated in years past."

We encouraged every man present to prepare himself to get in front of a camera and microphone and preach the ancient Jerusalem gospel that it might be heard around the world!