

BUCKINGHAM REPORT

**AN IN-DEPTH CRITIQUE BY AMERICA'S FOREMOST
CHRISTIAN ANALYZER OF THE ISSUES, PEOPLE, &
EVENTS AFFECTING TODAY'S SPIRIT-LED LEADERS**

ANALYSIS #4: A SPECIAL FEATURE OF THE BUCKINGHAM REPORT

HOSTING AND COMPENSATING GUEST SPEAKERS AND MUSICIANS

Very few areas of ministry reflect as many differing policies as that of dealing with visiting speakers. That's not unusual. An entire book of the Bible (Third John) seems to have been written to give some guidance on policy. Interested in how that is put into practice in today's jet age, I surveyed 20 representative churches across the nation concerning their procedures in hosting and compensating guest speakers and musicians. This analysis edition is devoted to the results of that survey.

Policies for Honorariums

The majority of churches surveyed did not have a set policy concerning honorariums. Most received a love offering. Some received a love offering plus a "minimum" which came out of the church budget. Nearly all seemed to agree with Jack Hayford of The Church on the Way in Van Nuys, California, who said, "We are committed to generosity. God honors those who honor His servants. We consider honorariums a means of honoring God."

Only five of the churches surveyed had set policies, and most of these were flexible—depending on whether the speaker had another income, whether he came from overseas, whether he had been invited for a special emphasis. Only two churches stated specifically that they had a set amount for honorariums—Ernie Gruen's Full Faith Church of Love in Shawnee, Kansas, and James Beall's Bethesda Missionary Temple in Detroit. Beall was strong in his statement that they felt all speakers—big name or unknown—should be treated with parity.

The Problem with Love Offerings

Few issues cause as many problems, and raise as many questions, as the love offering. Some churches, such as Bethesda in Detroit and Bob Pruett's Harbor Church in Lomita, California, do not receive love offerings. They take honorariums from the general fund. On the other hand, Ken Sumrall at Liberty Church in Pensacola, Florida, receives a love offering at every service in which the guest is speaking.

The key issue, however, is the disposition of the love offering. Does it all go to the visiting speaker? Should it be used for expenses and the balance given to the speaker? If so, what constitutes expenses? Travel? Publicity? Motel and meals? What about the cost of air conditioning and heat for the sanctuary? Of those surveyed, Jack Hayford was the only purist. Hayford feels that a love offering should be just that—a love offering. He feels the entire amount, to the penny, should be given to the speaker.

If there are travel expenses, they are paid out of the church budget—not from the love offering. He feels strongly that to receive a love offering and then give a set honorarium is dishonest.

Others work on variations of this theme. Quentin Edwards at Cypress Cathedral in Winter Haven, Florida, prefers to have all this settled ahead of time in some kind of prior agreement with the speaker or musical group. Others, such as Paul Walker at Mt. Paran Church of God in Atlanta, point out that the honorarium given is usually larger than the average love offering. This is the policy followed by Buddy Tipton at Central Assembly in Vero Beach, Florida, and by Mel Anderson, the business administrator at Grace Baptist in High Point, North Carolina. They feel if the love offering exceeds the amount the church would allocate as an honorarium, the extra amount always goes to the speaker. Anderson states: "Related bills are paid (motel, travel, meals, etc.) out of the love offering. (We inform the church of this when we take the offering.) If not enough is received to make up a generous honorarium, the church adds to it. If more than an 'adequate' honorarium is received, the balance goes to the guest speaker."

Willie Malone at Bethel Faith Center in Elizabethton, Tennessee, says they give an honorarium of \$100 for an out-of-town speaker plus the full amount of the love offering. That way, in case the speaker makes everyone mad and no one gives a dime, he still gets at least \$100.

Several churches said they deduct the speaker's travel expenses, hotel expenses, and advertising expenses and give the balance of the love offering to the speaker—which means, no doubt, the less he eats at the motel the more he receives.

The catch arises in how much and exactly what you tell the church when you receive the offering, and, of course, whether this has been related to the speaker ahead of time so there is no misunderstanding.

Chuck Irish of St. Luke's Episcopal in Akron was very up-front in stating that "although an evangelist is worthy of his hire, we believe the circumstances dictate that the primary reason for the offering is to maintain the work of the church." Irish, however, would not call such an offering a "love offering for the evangelist" but would tell the church the offering was for the "expenses" of the meeting. John Osteen at Lakewood Church in Houston says that although the "love offering" covers travel and expenses, the visiting speaker is aware of this ahead of time.

What About Guarantees?

More and more speakers—and especially musical groups—are demanding guarantees. Some want the host church to sign a contract. The overwhelming reaction on the part of those I surveyed is the one by Ernie Gruen of Shawnee, Kansas, who stated specifically that anyone who demanded a guarantee would not be welcome in his church. Jack Hayford says he will not sign a contract, but other pastors, including Larry Tomeczak, Buddy Tipton, and Quentin Edwards, will sign contracts with musicians but will not guarantee an honorarium, only that expenses will be met.

James Beall says he has not signed a contract in the past but has no hesitancy if it is necessary. On the other hand, Wayne Tucker, the business administrator for Park Avenue Baptist Church in Titusville, Florida, says they have signed contracts with some musicians in the past but will not do so in the future.

Willie Malone tells of a confrontation he had with the business manager of a speaker they had invited who demanded a set fee. Willie told the man he understood his need to cover expenses and receive a guarantee for a minimum amount in honorarium, but it was the policy of Bethel Faith Center to trust the Lord to provide for his servants "according to their faith." He went ahead to say that the church—

which seats less than 400—did not want speakers who could not trust God for finances. Chastened, the speaker came on Willie's terms. The church gave him a love offering of \$3,900—which was more than triple what he would have received had he settled for his guaranteed figure.

Speakers' Offerings and Mailing Lists

High on the list of "objectionables" was the idea of allowing a speaker to receive his own offering. Many evangelists want to receive their own offering, usually by passing out their own offering envelopes after they have spoken. This way they not only receive the offering, they also collect names and addresses which they add to their personal mailing list. They then contact these people via direct mail asking for additional contributions—a matter which most pastors see as not only objectionable but unethical.

As several pointed out, this is a matter which needs to be settled before the speaker arrives. On two occasions in recent years I have had to face this in our church. Once it was with a husband/wife team who said they misunderstood our agreement. When we told them, prior to their arrival, that we would be willing to receive a love offering with all the money going to them, they took that to mean they would handle the offering using their own envelopes. We were not aware they were going to do this until—in the middle of the healing service—they passed out their envelopes and made a **lengthy** appeal. Afterwards they refused to let our people count the money or run it through our books. On another occasion an evangelist—who earlier had confided he was having financial troubles—felt "led" after he stood in the pulpit to preach on tithing. He then received an offering for himself at the close of the service. The next week, after discussing the matter with our staff and our elders, our senior pastor sent him a letter of correction and rebuke. Although he remains a personal friend, his credibility has been severely injured in our church.

Wayne Tucker, in Titusville, Florida, says they have let speakers receive their own offering on occasion, but they tell the speakers in advance that if they are willing to let pastor Peter Lord receive the offering in their behalf they will be better off. Some, invariably, insist on doing it their way and always receive less than they would have had the pastor taken the offering.

Only three churches, Full Faith in Shawnee, Kansas, Central Assembly in Vero Beach, Florida, and Tulsa Christian Fellowship, have no problems with speakers gathering names for their mailing lists. Three other churches said they allowed this "under certain circumstances"—that is, if they knew the speaker was not going to write appeal letters but would use the list only to announce conferences or for other non-appeal reasons. The rest of those surveyed seemed to agree with James Beall, who, when asked if speakers could gather names for their mailing lists, replied, "No! Forbidden."

Declaring Honorariums to the IRS

The Internal Revenue Service is beginning to enforce an old ruling requiring churches and ministries to obtain the Social Security numbers of guest speakers if they are given honorariums. The church is then required to report this to the IRS by filing Form 1099. The speaker is required to declare the amount of his honorarium on his IRS return. This remains a "shady" area, for there is debate as to the difference between an honorarium—which is money received for services rendered—and a gift (which does not need to be reported). If the honorarium is given to the speaker's non-profit ministry, no accounting is necessary. And, of course, there is no way cash gifts can be verified. However, the IRS is beginning to crack down on churches and ministries—and the case of undeclared honorariums is one of the target areas.

Of the 20 churches I surveyed, only six are currently complying with the law. (For obvious reasons I am not calling names in this category.) Four others, however—simply as the result of my asking the question—have written back saying they are going to comply.

Logistics

Most of the larger churches schedule their special speakers at least a year in advance. The smaller ones average three to six months advance scheduling. Some are scheduled as far as two years in advance. All seemed to be open to having a speaker “on the spur of the moment” if the Holy Spirit directed.

The old “revival” pattern of having a speaker in for a full week no longer exists—at least not among those I surveyed. Two churches have guest speakers for Sunday only. The Church on the Way in Van Nuys may have a guest speaker on Sunday and/or Wednesday—the days of regular services—with an occasional Friday. Most guests, according to Pastor Hayford, are used at retreats and camps. The rest of the churches limit their special speakers to three days maximum: Friday, Saturday and Sunday or (and most seemed to prefer this) Sunday, Monday and Tuesday.

Travel Expenses for Spouses

More and more men (myself included) are convinced that too much single travel is not good. The Christian home is under severe attack. Those of us who travel away from our homes are especially vulnerable—not just to sexual temptation, but to the gradual erosion of primary values in the husband-wife relationship. The result is that a number of men in apostolic, evangelistic, and prophetic ministries are saying they need to take their wives with them most of the time. What is the response of the churches to this concept? Will they pick up the travel expenses for a wife who doesn’t play the piano, sing, or tap dance—but only accompanies her husband as his companion?

Only 30 percent responded with an unqualified yes. Cypress Cathedral in Winter Haven and Park Avenue Baptist in Titusville—both Florida churches—were the only ones to give an unqualified no. The rest gave varying answers. Some, like Paul Walker from Atlanta, said, “On occasion, if the spouse is involved in ministry.” (“Ministry” obviously has more than one meaning in this case, for the Mt. Paran Church generously covered my wife’s expenses when I spoke there—and the only ministry she had was to me.)

A number of others, such as Morris Sheats, Chuck Irish, James Beall and Russ Williamson, said they would pay the spouse’s expenses “on some occasions.” Irish said they would do it if their church made the flight arrangements. James Garrett from Tulsa Christian Fellowship said they would pay expenses “if we invite her (or him) or agree in advance.” Jack Hayford said expenses to California would be paid if husband and wife were “both” invited. He then added an interesting post script: “Or if she travels with him as a policy.” The most intriguing answer came from Larry Tomczak, who said they would pay expenses for the speaker’s spouse “if she ministers or if the Holy Spirit directs.”

Two churches, Willie Malone’s Bethel Faith Center in Elizabethton, Tennessee, and John Osteen’s Lakewood Church in Houston, leave it up to the visiting speaker. They take up a love offering which covers all expenses. If the speaker wants to use this to bring his (or her) spouse, then hopefully there will be enough money to cover expenses. However, this answer is something of a cop-out, for it says the church will not pay expenses, putting subtle pressure on the speaker to travel alone, for he knows his wife’s expenses will come out of his own pocket.

My conclusion: If you prefer to travel with your wife (or husband), say so.

Most churches will probably agree to pay expenses—but will not encourage it unless you put pressure on them.

Traveling First Class

I asked the pastors if they would pay the additional cost if a visiting speaker wanted to fly first class. Ninety percent said no. They seemed to agree with James Beall who said, "Our check covers coach fare—the way we fly." Mel Anderson in High Point, North Carolina, said a speaker's insistence on flying first class would probably be good reason to un-invite him. Two churches said the speaker could take it out of his love offering, just as he could pay for his wife's expenses out of the love offering. Only Jack Hayford responded positively. He said, "If that is their policy and we believe they are to come, that's part of obeying what we believe is God's will."

Unique Problems

Bob Pruett, of Harbor Church in Lomita, California, told of a time when an East Coast speaker padded his expense account. Through a prior agreement he was to stop in Dallas on his way west and speak at a sister church. The Dallas church was to pay him for half of his travel expenses and Harbor Church was to pay the rest. Both churches wound up paying full travel expenses. Later, when Pruett discovered what had happened, he confronted the lying preacher.

Paul Walker says on rare occasions a speaker has solicited names for his mailing list or has taken an unauthorized offering after he has spoken. Such speakers have not been invited back. Charles Irish of St. Luke's Episcopal in Akron, Ohio, has had similar problems—compounded by groups who show up with more people than the original agreement called for.

Buddy Tipton has had problems with musicians who bring their own sound systems and then turn it up so high it blasts normal people out of the auditorium. He's learned to check all this out ahead of time and to reserve the right to control the sound at a concert if he thinks it is too loud.

Larry Tomczak says they never have problems with guest speakers since they only invite those who are personally known to the local leadership. The one exception was with a brother who did not feel "led" to share his topic and the nature of his message ahead of time. Larry says, "We'll never allow that to happen again!"

Delmar Broersma, of Upper Room Christian Fellowship in West Lafayette, Indiana, has had problems with musicians who come to perform rather than minister. Although Delmar feels there is a need for a church to hear a few outside speakers for the sake of healthy "pollination," too many outside speakers can cause confusion.

Quentin Edwards says his only problem has come from inconsiderate speakers who run overtime. Ken Sumrall had one speaker who was renowned for going overtime. Knowing this, Ken confronted him before the service and gave him specific time limits. The man not only spoke for three hours that evening but then began calling out specific and intimate "sins" as part of his ministry in the word of knowledge. After the service Sumrall "gently rebuked" him—and has not had him back at Liberty.

Willie Malone stated his biggest problem has come with "big name" speakers who agree to come and then cancel out as the date nears. In the early life of his

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church, Willie says, he had a number of guest groups. One, a singing group from South Carolina, "performed" beautifully, but the next morning the local police called and informed him they had one of the group in custody. During the night the bass had slipped into the motel room of the soprano for a prearranged concert. His wife had interrupted their sweet music and caused quite a commotion. The fellow wound up in jail that night, and Willie learned that unless he knew a group's walk, their witness would remain in doubt.

The pastor of one of the nation's largest churches confidentially related a similar instance in which he was called by a friendly police captain in the dark hours before dawn. The police had raided a homosexual bar, and one of those picked up had been the evangelist who had preached the night before. Only the grace of God and the wisdom of a sympathetic police officer had saved the church, pastor, and evangelist from sordid publicity. The pastor had to go to the police station before dawn in order to have the man released. He left town before noon, and the pastor had to cover for him at the announced church meeting that night. Despite the man's promise to leave the ministry and seek help, he continues to preach in some quarters. It is sad but ample proof that a pastor should know the shepherd before he invites him in to feed his sheep.

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