

BUCKSHOT

JAMIE

BUCKINGHAM



Using each other

Every Christian speaker knows that sinking feeling when someone calls from out of town and says, "We sure can use you, brother."

Usually, that's exactly what happens. The speaker leaves his family and local responsibilities and travels half-way across the nation at his own expense. He speaks nine times, counsels 14 women who have already been counseled by their husbands, pastor, and the last visiting speaker, spends three nights in a cramped garret so the sponsoring group won't have to foot the motel bill, and returns home with a \$35 check in his pocket.

They "used" him.

Because of such insensitive abuses, an alarming number of America's best-known Christian speakers now demand a financial guarantee before they will come to speak. In fact, in order to obtain the services of these celebrities, you have to go through their booking agent. He sends his "client" where he will either get the most money; get less money but draw a larger crowd and, therefore, get more names for his mailing list; or fill in a vacant Thursday night. (After all, it doesn't make sense to have a potential moneymaker sitting idle.)

Now the pendulum has swung. Instead of being used, he (and his happy booker) are "using" the sponsoring group. One well-known celebrity demands \$6,000 per sermon—and he gets it. A famous singing group has just upped its demand to \$10,000 a performance. It's sad.

How do we achieve balance? First, the sponsoring group needs to trust God for a "double portion" to honor the speaker. If it doesn't come in through the offering, it should come out of the pockets of the sponsors. Such are the risks of daring to say, "God told me to invite you."

Second, the visiting speaker should trust God to supply his need. This keeps him pure and removes the accusation that "some of our most famous men are preaching for money."

I personally recommend all Christian groups refuse to invite speakers who demand a guarantee. Most such speakers are like Samson anyway, shorn of the Spirit but sporting some exciting new wigs.

We'll all do better if only those whom God says invite, are invited. They may not draw as large a crowd, and the offerings may be smaller, but the Holy Spirit will be there.