

Why I Love Polishing the Pulpit

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Reading Time: 5 minutes

Polishing the Pulpit is an annual workshop where Christians come together from all throughout the world to enjoy a week of spiritual renewal. This workshop takes place in Sevierville, Tennessee, on the third week in August, and has been going on for twenty-five years now. The motto for Polishing the Pulpit is: renew, refresh, and recharge. Though the week is packed full of lectures, singing, and fellowship, those who attend are more equipped to take on their task of living for Jesus in the world. There are so many reasons why Christians love Polishing the Pulpit, but here are a few reasons why I love it and plan to attend as long as I am able to do so.

Rich Fellowship

Polishing the Pulpit is great because of the rich fellowship we enjoy there. The early church devoted themselves to fellowship with each other (Acts 2:42). While every local congregation must promote opportunities for fellowship among the members, there are few

occasions when brethren can come together from all over the world. At Polishing the Pulpit old friends reunite, Facebook acquaintances meet in person for the first time, and new friendships are begun (Heb. 13:1). As you go from one lesson to the next, you find yourself stopping repeatedly to say hi or encourage someone you have not seen in years.

Fellowship is about sharing things in common with others. At Polishing the Pulpit I am surrounded by those who share the same faith as I do (2 Pet. 1:1). We share meals together, but we also share the struggles we are facing at our local congregations. Polishing the Pulpit provides an opportunity to spend a week with people who are closer to you than your own blood relatives and helps you prioritize eternal things. The atmosphere at Polishing the Pulpit is one in which Christians are seeking to encourage and uplift each other not to put down or belittle (Heb. 3:13). The fellowship is rich and appreciated because it helps me to refocus on my mission as a Christian when I know I have brethren throughout the world trying to do the same thing (1 Pet. 5:8-9).

Biblically Balanced

Polishing the Pulpit also provides a biblically balanced approach through the lessons that are presented. There are lessons that deal with mental health and others that deal with in-depth scholarly questions. Some of the lessons speak to things certain congregations are doing well and how others could implement the same at their home congregations. There are lessons on evangelism that challenge us as individuals and congregations to take the great commission seriously. Polishing the Pulpit is not a negative or pessimistic program that says the church is not trying to honor God at all. Neither is it a false utopian program that says we are doing everything perfectly fine and have no room to grow or improve. Instead the directors have struck what I believe to be a healthy balance as they highlight both areas of improvement and areas of strength among brethren. Jesus used this exact approach when speaking to the seven churches of Asia (Rev. 2-3).

The lessons I was privileged to hear dealt with how Christians can wisely deal with atheists and point them to God. There are panels that discuss various issues such as: violence, racism, domestic abuse, etc. I also heard great lessons on how families can worship together at home and make Christianity a part of their daily lives (Deut. 6:6-9). Being balanced according to Scripture means that we preach the whole counsel of God and we do not neglect the difficult portions or the familiar sections (Acts 20:26-27). Polishing the Pulpit is refreshing because it seeks to cover the whole counsel of God through its lessons and is always seeking to improve in this area.

The Challenge of Discipleship

The challenge of daily being a disciple of Jesus is a constant battle in the life of every Christian (Lk. 9:23). After a workshop like Polishing the Pulpit, I want to be a better Christian, husband, father, and preacher. I realize that Jesus does not want us to live out our faith in church buildings or convention centers, but instead we must go among the people and live for Him. When I head home from Polishing the Pulpit, I want to be better for Christ and do what I can to reflect Him in the place I work and live. Even while present at PTP, there is a day where visitors are welcomed to come for free and hear a simple presentation of the gospel. More than simply teaching abstract lessons, those who attend are challenged to put things into practice immediately.

Paul warned that some would have itching ears and gather preachers and teachers who would scratch those itches (2 Tim. 4:3-4). Being around those who preach the truth in a loving way but also push me out of my comfort zone is exactly what I need. People that love us will tell us the truth even when it is difficult because that is what we need to be set free (Jn. 8:31-32).

Sound Doctrine

The term *sound* as it is used in the Bible means that which is healthy and wholesome. Sound doctrine is what benefits and builds up the listeners. Polishing the Pulpit is a sound workshop because it seeks to do this very thing. Paul told Titus to speak things that are consistent with sound doctrine and then he mentioned the inter-generational conversations that must be present for a church to be sound (Titus 2:1-8). Polishing the Pulpit does a great job of getting all generations of the church together and involved in each other's lives. There are older speakers that address young listeners, older women teach younger women, and young men are also involved in teaching. I'm told this year many young girls were able to lead a song before the women sessions began as they are learning to put their gifts to use.

A sound church must not simply teach things that are true but they must ensure to the best of their ability that those things will be taught in generations to come (2 Tim. 1:5; 3:14-15). So much work goes into quality Bible classes for the younger children and many volunteer to teach those classes so that parents can attend the sessions throughout the day. Members are using their various talents to the glory of God and this is encouraging (1 Cor. 12:12-24).

Singing to the Glory of God

Singing is the only expression of worship that we will continue to do once we are in Heaven with God (Rev. 15:3). It will be great to sing in the presence of all of the redeemed. However, until we get to Heaven we sing with brethren on earth as we teach and admonish each other and the melody that wells up in our hearts comes forth from our mouths (Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16). The singing at Polishing the Pulpit is great as thousands of Christians come together and lift their voices to God in unison. We do this weekly in our separate congregations, but Polishing the Pulpit allows us to do this in the same building and it a great experience. If we are happy, we should sing and this is exactly what we do at PTP (James 5:13). The entire workshop is designed to honor, glorify, and serve God and this is apparent as we blend our voices together and direct our praise toward Heaven.

If you have never been to Polishing the Pulpit, I hope you make plans to go next year (August 13-20, 2020). Bring your family or several from your congregation--you are sure to enjoy it. If you think you'll be overwhelmed as you come for perhaps the first time, just come for the weekend--you'll want to be back for the entire week. To the elders of the Jacksonville church of Christ who oversee this great work--we appreciate you. To the directors and all those who work behind the scenes to do this each year--we are thankful for your work as well (cf. Rom. 13:7). To all who attend and encourage, let us put into practice what we have learned and try to win the world for Christ!