

Why Preachers Easily Fall Into This Deceptive Practice

“Shepherd the flock of God that is among you, take care of them, not by constraint, but willingly, not for dishonest gain, but eagerly. Do not lord over those in your charge, but be examples to the flock” (1 Pet. 5:2-3).

If anyone on the planet should hold to the highest standards in dealing with people, it should be those who preach the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Alas. The Elmer Gantrys have always been among us. Those who are in the work for the basest of reasons: money, recognition, other kinds of gratification.

Unto whom much is given, much will be required. A warning if there ever was a warning to those who occupy the pulpits (Luke 12:48).

Lack of integrity permeates our culture.

I had to cancel a credit card this week. The monthly statement showed six or eight fraudulent charges. Where did that come from and how did it happen? I don't know, but no one is surprised anymore.

The radio spot featured Sean Hannity's voice. He had made a great discovery of some product that was making a significant difference in his personal life. The advertisement was classy, exciting and simple. “Four dollars for a chance to try it out,” Sean Hannity said. “What do you have to lose?”

I called the number. A few days later, a box arrived with two bottles of capsules. One contained the stuff Hannity had advertised and the other some kind of men's health supplement. I took as directed for a few days. If they had any effect on

my health or energy, I couldn't tell. But they did get me excited in other ways.

The credit card bill arrived a month later. These had charged me \$ for the first bottle and a second charge for the same amount toward the end of the month. When I called the number on the bill, a woman said, "That was explained on the website, sir. It's a monthly charge for a new bottle each month." I insisted that I had not gone to a website, but merely called the 1-800 number given on the radio, and that I would not pay this and would be reporting them for running a scam. "What was the \$4 about?" I asked. "Oh, that was the charge if you had called quickly and canceled the order."

Sheesh.

The woman said she could cancel my order, but only if I would pay the charges on the statement. "No ma'am, I will not," I said. Finally, as I kept insisting and she kept dropping the charges, she said, "Sir. How about we leave a charge for \$15 on the statement and you pay that? And you will be through with us."

I agreed to that.

And determined never again. You cannot believe these come-ons.

Today, in my morning's email was a pitch offering a simple cure for vertigo. "No pills to take. No medications. Just a few simple exercises is all it takes." I clicked on and listened to the pitch. Throughout the come-on the voice promised that "I'm about to show you. You can cure vertigo in from three to 15 minutes with this simple exercise." "Just stay with me," he would say.

I skipped toward the end of the spiel, knowing full well what was coming. Sure enough, the salesman was not about to show us anything, not without getting into my credit card. "Just click on here to make a small payment and we will show you how." How

much? He didn't say. He kept saying, "Not \$500, not even \$100!"

No thank you. I'm not falling for that gimmick again.

It's dishonest. It's a deceptive way to get people's money. It may be slightly more clever than the usual approach of some rich person in Nigeria—one of the poorest nations on the planet!—dying and leaving me millions. But it's every bit as dishonest.

Do Pastors and Churches Ever Do This?

I wonder if preachers ever hook people in on grandiose promises and only later do the people realize they have been sold a program?

- Do we promise that "salvation is free" and "it's all of grace" and "Jesus paid it all," but once they're in, tell them we're expecting them to pay for the church program? And if you don't pay, you'll be considered a reprobate? I'm just wondering.
- Do we promise programs or concerts or Bible schools "free to all," then once people get there hit them up for contributions? "An offering will be taken" is the honest approach.
- Do we try to make a profit from the very people we should be ministering to?
- When the pastor gets up a group to head to the Holy Land, should he admit to the travelers that he gets a commission from every person he recruited? Something in the hundreds of dollars per head.
- Have you ever heard of a pastor writing a book, then having the church pay for hundreds of copies to use in their outreach program or as giveaways to the congregation? I have. If he foregoes his profit on the book and sells it for what he paid for it, that's one thing. If he's making a profit from each sale, that's

another altogether.

Let those who represent the Lord Jesus Christ be as honest and transparent as He was.

Everything depends on it. {eoa}

Joe McKeever *is retired from the pastorate but still active in preaching, writing, and cartooning for Christian publications. He lives in Ridgeland, Mississippi.*

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