

Able To Teach

**In describing the qualifications of an elder, Paul wrote in 1 Timothy 3:2,
“An overseer, therefore, must be...able to teach.”**

SBC of Virginia church planter candidates have to navigate a robust application process, which includes several online assessments and field interviews. And the SBCV Church Planting Team has recently expounded upon the assessment of a candidate's ability to clearly articulate a compelling Gospel message. Until recently, church planting candidates were assessed on teaching ability simply through their submission of an audio or video recording of them preaching. But in the fall of 2017, a preaching lab was added to the church planting training and is required of all planter candidates.

The preaching lab is a half-day experience attached to the front end of *PLANT* training for church planting candidates. It is designed to give SBCV church planting strategists a look into yet another area of a candidate's elder qualifications. Candidates are given the task of preparing and delivering a 10-minute sermon from a chapter in the New Testament. Romans chapter 5 was used at a recent training. The candidates can select any passage from the chapter and preach it in any way they choose. The church planting strategists pay careful attention to the candidate's preparation, delivery, and content. Each candidate receives feedback and affirmation from the strategists and other candidates in the room.

Another component to the preaching lab experience is learning from experienced preachers in the state. The SBCV is blessed with not only an abundance of gifted Bible expositors, but with many who are gifted and credentialed in equipping other preachers. Dr. Mark Becton was one such pastor in our state, formerly the pastor of **Grove Avenue Baptist Church** in Richmond for 18 years. Becton has taught in two of our three preaching labs.

As he speaks to the candidates, Becton references Phillips Brooks' words regarding

preaching: “Preaching is the communication of truth by man to men. It has in it two essential elements, truth and personality. Neither of those can it spare and still be preaching.” From this definition, Becton highlights three elements of preaching as he warmly invests in the candidates.

First, he discusses the “messenger” and his place in preaching, including the impact of being called, compelled, and created by God to preach.

Next, he speaks of the “message,” highlighting the irreplaceable role of God's truth (His Word) in preaching. Becton shares, “That first means recognizing God's intent for Scripture. Then, how do we discern God's message from Scripture and shape it to help hearers embrace it?”

Finally, Becton highlights the “moment” of preaching. He discusses with the planter

candidates the role of the Holy Spirit in preaching as God's truth is proclaimed through the pulpiteer as His instrument. Related to this reliance on the Holy Spirit's enablement is the role of prayer in preaching. Becton shares with care and compassion, as one practitioner to another, these lessons that have carried him through more than three decades of preaching.

The addition of the preaching lab to *PLANT* training is not the only way in which the SBCV Church Planting Team is highlighting the importance of clearly preaching the Gospel.

In two of the recent Church Planter Network (CPN) Weekenders, preaching was also placed in the spotlight.

Dr. Tyler Scarlett has been the pastor of **Forest Baptist Church** in Forest, VA for 12 years. He is also an adjunct professor of homiletics and pastoral leadership at Liberty University. We asked Scarlett to give a preaching refresher to all of our planters at the fall 2017 CPN Weekender. The other half of the plenary session time at two weekenders was devoted to having eight SBCV planters at each event to prepare and preach 15-minute messages on specific passages along specific themes. This proved to be uplifting for those who received the Word of God and affirming for those who preached it.

The SBCV was founded by pioneers full of faith who stood up for the inerrancy of God's Word and committed themselves to expanding the reach of the Gospel in Virginia and Washington, DC through church planting. SBCV pastors and churches can take great pride in knowing that the legacy of the SBCV is being extended by young church planters who are called and able to preach the Gospel from God's infallible Word.



Pastor Becton addresses the planter candidates.