

## Elders' Charge to the Graduates

On June 8, 2014, Don Wagner gave the charge for the Karns elders to the Southeast graduates, a practice that began with the first graduating class some 41 years ago. People have asked over the years why the practice was started and why do the elders continue to "charge" the graduates?

The charge to the graduates was initiated by Harold Duncan and Frank Huber, the first two elders to serve the Karns congregation. To my knowledge they did not explicitly state the reason(s) "why" but knowing these two men and having served as an elder with them, I believe they sincerely felt responsible for the graduates and their work for the Lord after they graduated. After all, these two men established the East Tennessee School of Preaching and Missions (ETSOPM), selected the first director, Clyde Findley, the school staff and Bro. Duncan taught a class. Their sole goal was to train gospel preachers. In their hearts and minds, these two men wanted the graduates to faithfully preach and teach God's Word. So, the last words to the graduates from ETSOPM were simply a reminder of this responsibility.

What was the charge given to this first graduating class? I am confident in saying the first charge included some of the same admonitions the apostle Paul gave in his second epistle to the young preacher, Timothy.

*Hold fast to the pattern to sound words which you have heard from me, in faith and love which are in Christ Jesus. (2 Tim. 1:13),*

*Be diligent to present yourself approved of God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth (2 Tim. 2:15), and*

*Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season, with all long suffering and teaching (2 Tim. 4:2).*

Over the ensuing years these verses have been included in the elders' charge many times. Frequently, the elder's last words will also include a charge that the particular graduating class needs to hear.

Why do the Karns elders continue this practice after these many years? This question is one we can answer. The Karns eldership still has a sense of responsibility for the graduates and their work for the Lord after they leave. We have the same concern for those who attend the Bible classes at Karns from preschool to adult. May this sense of responsibility continue.

For the elders,  
Don Denton