

Pastoral Perspectives

By J. Rob Hutto

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Introduction

A few years ago I experienced one of the darkest periods of my life. My secular job had become nearly unbearable, but the manifestation of my struggle was most pronounced in my ministry. During this time, God provided a mentor who listened to me, advised me, and prayed for me. When I finally began to see daylight, the Lord spoke to me through my mentor. God let me know that the time would come when I would help others in a manner similar to what I had experienced. Little did I know what God had in mind!

Two things have happened in fulfillment of this word from the Lord. First, I have recently had the opportunity to discuss ministry with several “new” ministers. They generally range from those who are in the process of applying for a license to preach to those who have been asked to pastor a church for the first time. Those who are pastoring have been doing so for only a short time. Regardless of which group they fall into, they have more than a few questions to ask. We have discussed a variety of issues peculiar to the ministry. I now have the opportunity to mentor others.

The second thing that has happened is I have felt an urge from the Lord to put in writing lessons that have had a positive impact on my ministry. Because of this, *Pastoral Perspectives* has been written.

This book has been written for ministers, both the inexperienced and the experienced. The inexperienced minister (ministering for less than fifteen years) will find some things here that don't come naturally. I had to learn them, sometimes from the Bible, sometimes in a class, but always from the Spirit.

I hope and pray that this book will be a source of inspiration and information from the Holy Ghost.

Those with more experience in the ministry (fifteen or more years) should find this book helpful as a resource for lessons already learned. Of course, the possibility exists that some of these lessons will be new to them, and this is okay. But the fact is some of the most fundamental principles are the ones that are easiest to neglect. As we grow, we certainly outgrow many things, but some fundamentals are never outgrown. Nevertheless, they may be forgotten in a world and ministry that is becoming ever more busy. It is often helpful to have a reference available to remind us of those fundamentals so that we can continue to do the Lord's work by building on a solid foundation.

To those with considerable experience in the ministry, I want to encourage you to view these lessons, as well as others you have learned, as principles to teach. Please consider mentoring as an important part of your ministry. As you get closer to retirement, your value doesn't diminish. It increases! We need you. Mentor us!

I consider these lessons to be vital. They have made a positive difference in my ministry. I still have much to learn, and, hopefully, will eventually have much more to teach. But these lessons are the beginning. I hope they will mean to you what they have

meant to me. May God teach you and bless you in the ministry for which you have been called.

J. Rob Hutto

Chapter 1:

The Mission of Ministry

I remember the phone call I received from my State Overseer, Bishop Hector Ortiz, which settled the question of whether or not I would pastor a church under his supervision. I had never pastored a church, but I knew I was called to minister.

I had been around ministers all of my life. I had also read a good deal about the ministry. Therefore, I knew that pastoring was a profession in which there was a great deal of work with no clear-cut definition of what the job actually was. And so, keeping my still limited knowledge of pastoring in mind, I asked Bishop Ortiz for a job description! That's right! I asked for the one thing that he could not give me.

He wisely did not attempt to give me a job description, and I never brought up the subject with him again. However, having worked in a number of secular jobs, I understood the value of having a set of job requirements. These requirements would tell me what I had to do in order to be successful. They would also enable me to judge my own success on the job before my supervisor did so for me. Nevertheless, the job of the Pastor, and by extension the minister, is not quite so easily put into one or two pages of expectations. Why is this?

Times, Congregations, and God

There are three things that every minister should keep in mind. First, he or she must realize that the church of today is unlike the church we grew up with.

Perhaps we had the blessing of growing up watching ministers who were good at what they did. They knew when to visit. They were good preachers. They were tactful. They knew what type of programs to initiate. However, we would be in trouble if we attempted to emulate everything those faithful ministers did. They served as good examples, but their methods may have been attractive because they were suitable for the era in which they were used. If they were really good pastors and you were able to set them in the twenty-first century, they wouldn't do the same things that they did in the past. Their methods would be **time-sensitive**. They would know that the church has changed and is changing. In a sense, the church is fluid. This is because the culture around us changes. People respond to different types of stimulation today than they did even twenty years ago.

Second, we must understand that not only do we live in a different culture, but we also live in a world where churches are unique. A pastor may pastor a church and demonstrate a great deal of ability. Because of this, a church in need of a pastor might invite him or her to fill their pulpit as their new pastor. The pastor may expect to again be successful in his new position. However, this is not likely to happen if he has not understood that the new congregation has a unique collective personality. They are not simply an extension of his former congregation. They respond to different stimuli. They

talk differently. They live differently. They have different expectations as compared to the other local church. The successful pastor should be **personality-sensitive**.

With regard to the collective personalities of different churches, I must say that I have only pastored one church. However, due to moving with my parents while living at home, as well as moving my church membership after getting married, I have attended no less than nine local congregations. This is in addition to visits to still more churches over the years. Having traveled so much and seen so many different congregations, I can truly say that each church had its own unique style of worshipping and working together. It doesn't take a minister to see this. It takes two eyes and a visit to at least two different congregations.

Finally, we must understand that the ministry is peculiar. It is God-inspired and God-led. My experience with God leads me to believe that He isn't very interested in my measuring up to a job description. He knows that not all needs are covered in writing. He wants ministers who are available to do whatever He wants us to do at a given time. Of course, in order to know what He desires, we must be **God-sensitive**. We must hear from God and go where He sends us.

Once a month I complete a report that is sent in to my State Headquarters. This is a necessary procedure that gives an account of what is going on in my local church. Many of the statistics you hear concerning churches come from these types of reports. But completing these reports is sometimes frustrating. They could act as a guide for what I am supposed to do. Yet, while I can get a good idea of what is expected of me, there are many things that are not asked for in the report. For example, the report asks how many homes I have visited, but it doesn't ask how many people I watched die. It asks how many sermons I preached, but it fails to ask how many counseling sessions I conducted. It doesn't ask me if I had to get out of bed in the middle of the night to hold someone's hand in a hospital emergency room. It doesn't ask me how many phone calls I made because God moved on me to do so.

Obviously, a job description would be difficult to write for nearly any facet of the ministry. The job changes too much with the passage of time, different personalities, and the wisdom and plan of God. Trying to write such a description would cause more anxiety than it would relieve. Rather than focus on the tasks of the ministry, it seems wise to look at what the Word says about the mission, or goal, of the ministry.

The Mission

The Word of God does a number of things for us, not the least of which is the giving of instructions. It instructs us in the ways of God. The minister will note that some of this instruction involves the ministry. As an Apostle, Paul wrote to ministers about the ministry, and he wrote to churches about his ministry. It is from these passages that we can gain a better understanding of our calling.

The following passage really stands out to me:

Whereof I am made a minister, according to the dispensation of God which is given to me for you, to fulfil the Word of God.

*To whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is **Christ in you, the hope of glory.** Whom we preach, warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom; **that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus.** (Colossians 1:25-28)*

Another State Overseer, Bishop Lanis Lewis, made a very simple statement in a ministers' convention. He said "you (pastors) are successful when Christ is being formed in your members." This is actually biblical according to the scripture given above. If we are helping our members to be more like Jesus, then we are successful.

But how do we do this? This still does not seem to cover such practical activities as visitation and counseling. How do I know **what** to do as a Pastor? What is my job? What is expected of me? Take a look at the next verse in the passage above.

*Whereunto I also labor, striving **according to His working, which worketh in me mightily.** (Colossians 1:29)*

Christian singer Steven Curtis Chapman sings a song on his **Speechless** recording that describes me very well. He talks about how he sat down and made a list of his talents and abilities and worked out a plan whereby God could use those gifts. According to the song, God stopped him. God told him what he wanted from the young man is "**whatever**".¹

Why is a job description so hard to write for a pastor? The reason is simple. My job is to do "whatever" God tells me to do. And if I don't hear a voice or receive Divine Inspiration every day, then I still have the Word. The Word speaks clearly about remembering the poor (Galatians 2:9, 10), preaching even when we don't feel like it (2 Timothy 4:2), visitation (Matthew 25:31-46), and prayer (Acts 6:4).

If I am **Spirit-sensitive**, then I will be better able to hear from God. I will still have to go without specific directions on occasion, but the Word and faith give me plenty to do.

My job is to do the will of God!

¹ Steven Curtis Chapman, *Whatever*, from the *Speechless* CD (Sparrow Records, 1999)

Chapter 2:

There is a God, and You're not Him

When I began pastoring, I thought my job was to straighten the church out. I thought if I could preach good messages and preach them powerfully enough, people would respond and change. Needless to say, I was in for a rude awakening. These people needed more than a good sermon or an eager Pastor.

Please don't misunderstand. These were not bad people. But I was out to change the world. Even though I was fairly mature, I still succumbed to the exuberance of youth. I believed God had endowed me with **THE MESSAGE** the church needed to hear. But what the people needed, if they needed anything, was God!

Dr. Gary Riggins of Lee College teaches two things to remember in conflict resolution that all Pastors need to hear. The first thing he says is "There is a God and you're not Him." The second thing is even more profound. It says, "There is a God, and I'm not Him." Wow! Sometimes restating the obvious is like a new revelation. 1 Corinthians 3:18 says, "But we all... are changed... from glory (the glory of fleshly works) to glory (the glory of a God-filled life), **even as by the Spirit of the Lord.**" Did you see that? Only God can change people on a Spiritual level. But I thought that was my job. But there is only one God, and I'm not Him. There is only one thing that will truly change people who need to be transformed. The people in my congregation and in every other congregation need to be touched by the Hand of God Himself!

The problem is that churches look for the "right" pastor so a dead church can be made alive. A pastor looks for the "right" program to resurrect a dying church. Maybe the "right" evangelist can do the job. Or maybe the pastor and congregation all look to the regional or international headquarters to straighten things out and hand down a blanket program that will get the rest of us on the right track.

I believe very much in good leadership. I believe that the right program (the one given by God) is desirable for any church. However, we often forget that Christ is the Head of the church, and He is the Life of the church, not the pastor or program or any other person.

The pastor is often expected to solve all of the problems of the local church, and certainly he is to facilitate change and growth when such is needed. The pastor must be a leader. He must be willing to initiate some of the programs that are used in the church. He must be willing to make a firm stand on doctrinal issues. However, many pastors approach a new church feeling that the responsibility for Spiritual change is theirs. This way of thinking is encouraged by many congregations.

Let's make one thing perfectly clear. The pastor is neither omniscient, omnipotent, nor omnipresent. He doesn't become any of these with more experience. He cannot see into the hearts of the members of the church and know everything there is to know about them. God can reveal things to the pastor. God can work miracles through

the pastor, but God **NEVER** gives the pastor the ability to be equal with God or to be the savior of the body. These are qualities reserved by God Himself for Himself.

The theme of this chapter is very simple. **You are not the savior of the church!** This should bring a sense of relief to you. You don't have to play God anymore! It is my belief that much of the stress in the ministry is caused by an unhealthy view of the pastor as the one responsible for Spiritual change in the church.

Ephesians 5:25, 26 is clear on this matter. It says,

*Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave Himself for it;
That **HE** might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the Word."*

Only Jesus can sanctify and save the body. Pastoring is one of many gifts God gave to the church for its edification (strengthening.) But the pastor, and the teacher, and the evangelist are helpers, not saviors.

Misinterpretation, Pride, and Power

Why is this even a problem? Why is there any confusion concerning this matter? While I cannot determine what every congregation thinks and feels, I can tell you that these problems generally stem from three sources: misinformation, pride, and power.

Hebrews 13:17 says, "Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves." The word "rule" seems to ascribe a lot of power to the person in charge. Some well-meaning members have taken this to mean the Pastor is always right. One of the consequences is that while one or more members of a church may outwardly respect the Pastor, they may inwardly all but hate him.

If a Pastor reads this scripture incorrectly as well, he or she may begin to get an inflated ego. He may make too many decisions without consulting others. He may step on people's toes too easily. He may develop a haughty or superior attitude. After all, he has been called and anointed by God and appointed by the overseer. Those who are appointed by a local church board may feel a need to gain more power among the members in order to stave off opposition from the board.

No minister is immune to the possibility of this type of thinking, but young ministers seem especially vulnerable. A young minister is eager to prove himself. He wants to show that he can do the job. He wants to be successful, and if that means "taking charge," then so be it. He wants to demonstrate that the choice made to put him in this position was a good one.

It should be noted that the Apostle Peter encouraged "the elders" to "feed the flock of God which is among you...neither as being lords over God's heritage." (1 Peter 5:3) Being "in charge" means being in control. Being in control means having power over the outcome of relevant situations. However, the only One I know Who is truly in control is God. Therefore, if I am being too possessive of power, if I am too controlling,

then I am making myself equal to God! This may be, and almost certainly usually is, unconscious. But this has no place in God's church. Only God can be God.

There is a God. He is good, merciful, powerful, loving, all seeing, all knowing, etc. Obviously, letting God be in control is a good thing (though some members may prefer a weak leader they can manipulate.) God is everything the church needs and more. He is the best administrator, banker, preacher, and counselor. This is refreshing. The Pastor should take comfort that God is God and we are not. We don't have to try to control everything, and couldn't do so effectively if we tried. Whatever work we do must flow from Him. We must never lift ourselves up to even the slightest degree. To do otherwise would be an attempt to be what only God is.

Paul gave us a good example and expressed his leadership this way: "Be ye followers of me, **even as I also am of Christ.**" (1 Corinthians 11:1) Two things are obvious from this verse. First, Paul was getting his directions from Christ. Second, Paul was looking forward to Christ and not back at the people. He didn't neglect the people. We see his care for the churches expressed through his many letters. But his first priority was to look to God. He wasn't strong enough to do the job alone. He needed help! He needed God!

If you get a little tired trying to run things, you need to remember: It's not your job to be God. What a relief!

Chapter 3:

The Spirit of Abram

And there was a strife between the herdmen of Abram's cattle and the herdmen of Lot's cattle: and the Canaanite and the Perizzite dwelled then in the land.

And Abram said unto Lot, Let there be no strife, I pray thee, between me and thee, and between my herdmen and thy herdmen; for we be brethren.

Is not the whole land before thee? separate thyself, I pray thee, from me: if thou wilt take the left hand, then I will go to the right; or if thou depart to the right hand, then I will go to the left.

And Lot lifted up his eyes, and beheld all the plain of Jordan, that it was well watered every where, before the Lord destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah, even as the garden of the Lord, like the land of Egypt, as thou comest unto Zoar.

Then Lot chose him all the plain of Jordan; and Lot journeyed east: and they separated themselves the one from the other.

(Genesis 13:7-11)

The job of trying to lead people in the way that seems best to the leader is difficult at best. Sometimes people can be led with little or no difficulty. Other times the leader runs into the obstacle of traditional, yet erroneous, beliefs and personal desires of the followers.

This is especially true of those leading volunteers. When people are following with the understanding that then can freely leave at any time with no financial loss, and little social loss, to themselves, it takes a great deal of wisdom and patience to lead without causing unnecessary division. The minister would do well to learn an important lesson from the life of Abram.

The Vision and (Current) Reality

Abram had been called into the land of Canaan by God Himself. When he arrived, God told him that "this land" would belong to him and his lineage. To a limited degree, Abram was sure of the plan of God. Obviously, there were times when he had a problem understanding the will of God, but he could say, "This is my land because God gave it to me."

But there was another side to this story. With Abram had come a nephew who had not heard the Voice of God. He had seen his uncle build altars to God, but he didn' t

know this new God, and he certainly had not heard God' s Voice. It appears that Abram was the leader of this rather large caravan. After all, they were here in the first place because Abram was hearing a Voice. Lot had not heard the Voice, but had come along nevertheless. Perhaps Abram had been watching over the business dealings of Lot ever since Lot' s father had died. By virtue of his age and influence as the elder in the group, Abram was "in charge." But Lot' s experience with God was not the same as that of Abram. In fact, his own experience may have been almost non-existent.

With Abram and Lot had come material wealth and servants. It was necessary to have people to manage their assets. In their culture, it was common for men of wealth to have servants. Though we cannot relate to the ownership of servants, we can relate to one aspect of this arrangement. They were leading servants, but these servants were real people. They lead people, and so do those of us involved in ministry (If you don' t, you will!) Abram and Lot had to manage a multitude of people, and the picture wasn' t pretty.

Abram was leading Lot, they were both leading their households, and flesh raised its ugly head! Whenever you have two or more people together, you have the potential for disagreement. Disagreement is not bad, but the resulting division can be devastating. Not only can division destroy a local church, but it can send an ugly message to those on the outside looking in. Managing this potential is of vital importance to the minister, especially the Pastor.

Sure enough, there came a day when the servants of Lot and the servants of Abram began to argue with one another. While apparently this situation did not cause division between Abram and Lot, they were aware of the problem. A solution had to be found. It fell to Abram as THE leader to offer a solution.

Abram had heard from God. He knew that this land was given to him by God. But he did not stand up and say to Lot, "God has given this land to me, and it' s mine! Now you need to leave and let God' s will be done!" Abram knew the will of God, but he seemed to know something else that we sometimes forget.

God' s Will

While he knew the revealed will of God, he also knew that it was important to avoid division as much as possible. He seems to have known something that Paul reiterated years later. Paul said in 1 Corinthians 7:15, "...God has called us to peace." Abram wanted above all to preserve what would be the defining characteristic of the church. John 13:35 says, "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another." Abram had this to say:

*...let there be no strife, I pray thee, between me and thee,
and between my herdmen and thy herdmen; for we be
brethren. (Genesis 13:8)*

Abram recognized that it was important for them to preserve the peace when possible. The principle of brotherhood was so important that he was willing to back

down from what he knew was the proper way in order to preserve the relationship. He says in verse 9,

"Is not the whole land before thee..." (He didn' t hold back the land God had promised to him, but included it all,)

"...separate thyself, I pray thee, from me..." (He didn' t make any demands, not even demands based on the will of God,)

"...if thou wilt take the left hand, then I will go to the right; or if thou depart to the right hand, then I will go to the left." (He allowed Lot to choose, preferring his brother over himself.)

Having your own way is nice, but it isn' t realistic. Doing God' s will is always preferable, but not everyone is ready for God' s will when you are. God may reveal His way to you and allow you to go before dissenters with the vision to plant a seed. It may be that sometime in the future these people will be influenced by your humility. On the other hand, they are likely to be driven even further away if you pressure them to accept something that they don' t yet see. God may say to you, "This is the way," but he may work on others in the congregation over time.

Omniscience

Another issue that we need to hear is that we don' t know it all just because we are "called and anointed of God." While many of our decisions are prompted by the Spirit, others will probably be prompted by my "good flesh." I may have an idea that seems right and logical, but I have to learn that I don' t know everything. Just because I have the best interests of the local church at heart doesn' t mean my well-meaning direction is correct. There have been things that I wanted for a local church that seemed to make sense at the time. But later I realized that this wasn' t what God wanted.

The fact is, I DON' T KNOW IT ALL! I have at times had a problem admitting this fact. But then I learned that not only wasn' t I not "all knowing", but that this was okay. This was a revelation for me. It freed me from having to prove myself. It also released me from the pressure to force my will on others. Sometimes my primary task becomes trying to shepherd sheep with different senses of direction into the same fold with a minimum of conflict.

Ownership

Jesus said, "Upon this rock I will build **My church....**" (Matthew 16:18) It is common for ministers to refer to the church where they pastor as "My church." This isn' t wrong. It is a simple way to refer to each congregation in a conversation. However, a

problem develops when a minister begins to identify so much with the church under his care that he only sees the work of the church as a reflection of himself. When the work of a church becomes a minister's test of his leadership, there is probably a problem with that minister's perception.

The local church is not a child for you to brag on or discipline. It is not intended to be your living resume. Though it may be a reflection of a minister's style, the church is not a Pastor's possession to be displayed like a photo from a vacation. It belongs to Christ. We are stewards. The work of the church reflects the relationship of the church with Jesus. While we must lead the church, my will must be of secondary importance to the will of God.

There is another fact that is worth noting. While the church belongs to God, the stewardship of the local church may well pass into the hands of another Pastor in the future. Furthermore, most of the people of the church will remain long after you are gone. Especially when the decision being discussed isn't Spiritual (such as what color of carpet to install in the sanctuary), it is often better to be submissive. May God send us examples of men and women who bring their own will under subjection to the church.

Custer's "Last" Stand

There are times when making a stand is very important. Obviously, we don't want to compromise the Word of God. Nor do we want to turn the church over to people who want to paint the walls pink and have hors d'oeuvre before each service. But when we consider making a stand we need to consider several things.

First of all, I remember reading about General George Armstrong Custer. Being somewhat of a history buff, I have read about this bold young man who fought Indians and attempted to bring the West under the authority of the United States government. Unfortunately, after some attacks and successes, Custer made a stand that was famous, not because of his beliefs, but because he lost. If the stand you are making is worth making, it will be worth dying for. If it is worth dying for, your death won't outshine the cause. Your death, or resignation, might be honored, but the stand will be honored as well. There may be times when I need to lay it all on the line, but I don't want it to ever be said I left a church because I didn't like the brand of paper towels used in the bathrooms. In fact, after a while, people may forget WHY I left. But they will remember that I left. If I leave, or if I make that the option, let it be because of some truly noble Spiritual cause that was for the good of the church, for salvation of individuals, or for my family.

The second thing I need to remember is that "we be brethren." If the issue is not going to disturb the peace of the church, then standing on the issue might be a worthy stand. But remember, if this is the case, then it is likely that the church is mature enough to come to a good decision anyway. The problem will be largely non-existent. (But don't count on it too often!)

The key to this chapter is simple. I mentioned it earlier. Paul was very wise when he said, "...for God hath called us to peace." This simple phrase speaks volumes and is a code to live by. Remembering it will solve many of your problems as a minister.

Chapter 4:

Honesty is the Best Policy

“My members expect me to be perfect. I certainly don’t want to disappoint them by showing my real self. If I can just keep my guard up and not let anyone see the real me, I will be okay!”

How absurd! No one is without weaknesses. None of us are completely desirable to everyone we meet. Yet, there is often this separation between the ministry and the laity. Ministers are often expected to be super heroes. Ministers don’t help matters by **trying to BE** a super hero. I’ve already written about how we are not God. But we are also not Superman.

Being real with our congregations is imperative. The best pastor I ever had was available to everyone in the congregation. He was personable. When his father died, he came back to town very burdened. Though he wasn’t one to use the pulpit as his forum, he nevertheless took the opportunity to bare his soul about his loss in front of the church. Guess what! People appreciated his weakness and honesty.

Now wait a minute! You may be saying, “Do you really believe that a pastor should share all of his thoughts and feelings with the people of the church?” Certainly not. However, we must be touchable. We must be reachable. People must know that they can approach us and know we are real.

People can’t relate to Superman very well. They are in awe of him and they are interested in what he can do. But Superman never stuck around long enough to develop interpersonal relationships with real people (except maybe Lois Lane.) People want you to be real. This means you must be able to say occasionally, “I am weak.”

Understandably, this can be taken to the extreme. If all you ever do is talk about your weaknesses and problems, people will become discouraged, if they stay around long enough. But a minister can be honest and inspiring at the same time. The secret is to learn when to share and when not to share your feelings.

Hide and Seek

You remember the game “hide and seek” don’t you? My kids still play it. The goal is for one child to find all of the rest of the players, who are purposely trying to hide from the one who is “it.”

This game is similar to church. There are those who have to be in charge. Then there are those who don’t. Those who don’t may not be as open as the one in charge might like for them to be. It becomes the job of the one who is “it” to coax the members out of spiritual hiding and to be open to the Spirit.

But notice something about this game. The one who is doing the finding gets a break. Somebody else gets to be “it.” That gives the other person a chance to be found. The Pastor occasionally needs to be able to open up to the church to show them that he is not trying to be Supreme. He is, after all, as human as they are, his calling

notwithstanding. Occasionally, he needs to be able to say, “I am weak. Has someone else heard from God?” Actually, grace makes it possible for every member to hear from God and not just the Pastor.

Whoa!

We can't just leave it here, however. I mean, we have to know when to be open and when not to be. I don't mean we should sometimes be deceptive. But we must use wisdom to know when it is appropriate to be vulnerable and when not to be.

Timing and Godly wisdom are crucial. Sometimes Paul seemed to write about his past to show his humanness. He didn't talk about his apostleship to remind people of his authority. He did so to show, in conjunction with reminding them of his past, the great grace of God that had been bestowed on him. However, Paul didn't just talk about himself all the time. He did so when there was a lesson to be learned. He did so when it was edifying to do so.

We must know our people. A speaker I heard a few years ago said the average length of stay for a Pastor at a given church was eighteen months. While I don't mean to sound self-righteous, I found that it took me at least two good years to get to know my congregation. And my congregation is small. As Pastors we must know our people. We must understand their moods, their desires, their expectations, and their disappointments. This knowledge will help us in a number of ways, but it will especially help us know when self-disclosure is appropriate and when it is not. There is a time to tell them you are not a super hero, but that time isn't every time they see you.

Your people need a Pastor who is “real.” They also need one who is able to strike a good balance between self-disclosure and strong leadership. Be real, but be wise. Honesty carefully administered is of great value to the one who would be a good Pastor.

Chapter 5:

Living by Faith and Paying the Bills

When I was first asked to pastor a church, I looked back into my memory at some of the small churches my dad had pastored and churches that I had visited. While I don't know how much my father made from any particular church, I had it in my mind that some churches would only be able to afford to pay a pastor \$200.00 per month.

I thought I would get a church that paid \$200.00 a month. This was okay. I also thought I might have to help the church pay its bills. This was also okay. I was prepared. Actually, things were considerably better than what I had prepared myself to face. I still worked a "secular" job. I wasn't making, in my opinion, enough that I could become a full-time pastor, but what I was getting from the church actually turned out to be extra for me.

But a dilemma began to present itself to me. Shouldn't I be full-time? Shouldn't I step out on faith and let the Lord take care of me? I remember discussing this with a minister whom I respected. He was quick to encourage me that it was okay to pastor and work another job besides. I was not a sinner, nor was I less Spiritual because I worked a nine-to-five job. Nevertheless, there was always this nagging feeling that perhaps I should pastor full-time.

The question is very simple- "When does a pastor need to be full-time?" But while the question is simple, the answer may be a little more difficult.

Hi Ho, Hi Ho, It's Off to Work I Go!

When should a pastor work an additional job? There are several questions, but the first one must **always** be considered whether we consider the other questions or not. The first question is "What does the Lord want me to do?"

Coming up with this answer may not be as easy as some may think. Some people, including some ministers, think a minister should always be full-time regardless of his or her circumstances. Undoubtedly, it is exposure to this type of thinking that causes many would-be pastors to wrestle with guilt over this issue. But just because some person thinks it is right or wrong doesn't make it so. Well-meaning people can be, and often are, wrong. The minister who struggles with this question must look away from the good intentions of those around him for the answer. He must look up!

I worked a secular job for approximately eight years before I heard the Lord say, "Why don't you try pastoring full-time?" Maybe He had tried to say this earlier, but I think I had been relatively open to His voice. I just hadn't heard Him on this matter up to that point. But once God made Himself clear to me, I knew the way to go. I didn't need any person to tell me what to do.

God often uses people to tell us what to do. The danger is that people often tell us what they themselves want to hear. But God can use an individual in such a way that you know it is Him speaking and not that person. However, whether God uses a person to

Speak to us or some other means of communication, the bottom line is **you must hear from God!**

Questions, Questions

Circumstances often dictate what we need to do. The key is to make sure circumstances aren't dictating something that is against God's will. Once we are clear on what God wants, and we can feel comfortable that God is not forbidding us from taking certain actions, we need to make an honest assessment of our situation.

Advice at this stage may be good, but always be careful to note that the person giving the advice is not in your shoes. Listen, learn, and then apply the advice carefully to your situation.

"Can I afford to pastor full-time?" If you can, then much of your struggle is probably over, but not necessarily. A friend of mine told me of being appointed to a church in a town where nearly everybody already attended church somewhere. Evangelism may still have been needed in that town, but the amount of evangelism needed did not preclude him from taking a part-time job to keep him from being bored. So in addition to the financial question, there is the question, "If I 'go full-time', will there be anything for me to do?" God has not called us to idleness. He has called us to preach and to do the other things that come under the umbrella of "ministering."

For me, the best thing about being full-time is being free in emergencies (and being free to keep my son while my wife is working.) I can take care of church business during business hours. I can visit without being tired from a day of work at another job, though I may be tired from some pastoral duties. I don't have to cram a sermon together during precious free time. And I have time to do the things that might otherwise be neglected if I were unavailable ten hours a day Monday through Friday.

Changing Times

I once asked a guest speaker to preach in one of our Sunday morning services. He was a nice guy, and was somewhat inspirational, but one thing he said troubled me. He believed women should not work outside of the home. To him, this was wrong.

The guest minister was against women working outside of the home, but his stand on this issue caused me to consider the day in which we live. The trouble was, his kids were all grown, he had probably paid his home off many years before, and had no idea what a family had to do to make ends meet in the nineties. Times had changed. Housing is more expensive than it was forty years ago. There are no more \$95.00 per month house payments, at least in the USA that I know. Twenty dollars will no longer buy a week's worth of groceries. Though school is paid for by taxes, there are still a lot of out-of-pocket expenses a parent must pay for a child to go to school. Gas is no longer forty-nine cents a gallon. The world has changed in forty years, and often drastically. These changes have had a deep impact on the minister's ability to pay the bills on a Pastor's salary.

Just as the world has changed, so do our personal circumstances change from time to time. You may start with just your wife and yourself to support, but when children come along, expenses go up. Always be ready to reassess your own circumstances and make necessary changes. You may have to work for a limited time in order to meet a particular need, or you may find it almost impossible to survive on your pastoral salary. Certainly you have a responsibility to your family and yourself in such a situation, and I don't believe it would be sin for you to work in order to meet those obligations.

I remember a story of a minister who left town without paying his bills and presumably without leaving a forwarding address. Now let me ask you, is it better to minister full-time and not pay your bills, or to work a second job in order to fulfill your obligations? Surely this story is an exception, but it makes the point well enough that we must pay the bills even if it means taking on extra work. Not paying your bills and not fulfilling your legal responsibilities is a reproach on the church, a reproach on the ministry, a reproach on your family, a reproach on yourself, and in most cases is a sin against God!

While it is good to pastor full-time, you should listen to God, weigh the circumstances, and then make your own decision. The only sin comes when you disobey God and don't fulfill your obligations, not when you disappoint men.

Chapter 6:

The Star

Everybody knows about it. Jimmy Swaggart and Jim Bakker made news that set the religious world on its ears. Both later confessed to their respective sins. Rev. Swaggart said on national television, “I have sinned!” Jim Baker wrote a book entitled, **I Was Wrong.**²

By now, this news is very old. It seems like a long time ago. The dust has settled, but there is a lingering after-affect. We ministers have suffered the fate of the politicians. Politicians used to get a lot of respect. But when Watergate became public knowledge, people began to seriously doubt the motives and integrity of our representatives in government. Long after Richard Nixon’s resignation, America holds a deep-seated mistrust of government and government officials.

The ministry has not yet overcome the influence of the Swaggart and Baker scandals. We are suffering from the glow of the religious “stars.” People often view ministers with a suspicion that was there less often just a few years ago. While being famous and on television is not bad, when things go wrong to those who are most seen by the public, it leaves scars.

Live and in Person

The electronic age is here to stay. This has some advantages, but it also has some disadvantages. When a media personality “messes up,” it doesn’t take long for the world to hear about it. It doesn’t matter if that person is well liked or hated. The news of a downfall is too hard for news reporters to resist. After all, scandal sells. It is exciting to the viewers. People watch the news, sponsors get exposure for their products, networks make more money, and everybody’s happy. Well, almost.

You see, we are busy people. We would rather lump everyone in a particular group together regardless of differences. It’s easier that way. We don’t want to take the time to charge one and forgive another. This takes too much time. So when one of the group falls, everyone gets blamed.

Another problem is that for all of our decrying the media and its shortcomings, we seem to trust them implicitly. If they say it on the news, it must be true! And while we hope they tell the truth most of the time, we are often all too willing to take their word for something without weighing the options for ourselves. Therefore, if one minister falls, and certainly if two fall, then maybe these guys aren’t so great after all.

Of course, we are not God, and we don’t need to be treated like kings. But it is important for people to be able to feel that they can trust their pastor.

So What!

² Jim Bakker, *I Was Wrong* (Nashville, TN.: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1996).

“So what! I’m not having a problem because of this.” Actually, you may be having more problems than you think. Respect for the ministry is at a very low point. And much of the disrespect takes place behind your back. Now, don’t be paranoid! But please, do be aware! What you do and what you say and how you live is scrutinized very closely by the some of the same people you face from the pulpit. Even worse, people who don’t attend your church are watching you. How you live and how you are perceived determines what many think about God-called ministers. While you can’t control what people think, and while some people would be critical of Jesus Himself, you can determine what people see.

If the world thinks poorly of ministers, it seems logical that we need to show them a real man or woman of God. Certainly we shouldn’t become arrogant. However, if we watch what we say and what we do, and if we are attempting to let Christ live the standard of His Word through us, people will see what the ministry is supposed to be. They will have a higher regard for the ministry, and more important, they will have a higher regard for Christianity.

My Hero

He is number one in my book (below the Lord.) He is full of integrity. People apparently respect him completely. He has been a shining light throughout his ministry. As far as I know, he has been above reproach and his integrity has not been seriously challenged. His organization is above reproach in every way, including financially.

Billy Graham has stood the test of time. Though now in his later years, he has never failed to be a great example of what the ministry or Christianity should be. He is honest and open, and his message is the same as it has always been- Jesus Christ can save your soul! I will probably never be equal to him and will probably never have a ministry quite like his, but I find myself wanting to follow him in his basic Christian walk. He is the real deal, and few really doubt it.

Mother Teresa was another example of someone who was totally committed to what they thought God wanted them to do. She lived sacrificially, lovingly, and honestly. She has left a legacy that few can ever hope to equal.

But their example is in some ways futile if we who bear the load of ministry now don’t pick up their mantle and trust God like they did. Maybe I’ll never preach to thousands of people at one time or shake the hand of a President of the United States, but I can maintain a life of honesty, responsibility, humility, openness, and sacrifice. All of these things are possible through the grace of God.

More Heroes

Heroes intrigue me. I have a collection of articles and stories about people who have made a difference in their worlds. These stories range from Olympic athletes to a school principle that refuses to allow students to use profanity at school. I have stories about people who did the least desirable thing in order to help the team achieve the greatest results. They were selfless, sacrificing, and team oriented. Some made the

headlines, but most didn't make page one. Also, most were heroes because of a single event, but some were heroes because of a consistent stand for what was right.

Heroes inspire. They cause people to take notice of what is possible and what is important. They look beyond themselves to a goal that ordinary people have often missed. They do things they didn't plan to do, but they believed they could do what was necessary, at least when it mattered the most.

It's Up to You

I often pray about my ministry. I ask God to help me be a better minister, but I generally follow that request with one that I feel is of much greater importance. I ask God to help me a better Christian. For me, part of being a good Christian means being an obedient minister since this is my calling. However, if for some reason I am not allowed to pastor anymore, I still have an obligation to let my light shine so that others will glorify God. Most of the people I see through the course of a week don't see me in the pulpit, but they do see me. What they observe as I act and interact will affect them much more than what I say in the pulpit. Furthermore, of those who do hear me preach every week, most will weigh what I say against what I do. If my walk doesn't match my talk, my talk will not have any positive influence over them. Therefore, it is necessary that I live carefully.

Living carefully is the fruit of where I am in Christ. If my relationship with Him is suffering, I will not be able to fool people for very long. If, however, I nurture my relationship with Him like I would my dearest treasure, then the fruit of the Spirit will be seen in my life. Quite simply, I must do the things that I know to do. These are the basics of Christian living, and they are the things that are often a struggle for every Christian. They include Bible reading, prayer, and loving my neighbor as myself. I have to remember the simple rule to be honest in every area of my life. (Unfortunately, too many ministers have nurtured the bad example of Baker and Swaggert by lying!) I have to watch my temper. (Ouch!) If I can't maintain my spiritual walk, I cannot be a hero to anyone. My example will be too poor.

Mother Teresa is gone and Billy Graham won't be around much longer. Billy Sunday is dead. So are the Wesleys. We can honor and revere those who came before us. But they cannot live our lives for us. And we cannot simply continue to point back to them to show the world what true Christianity looks like. We have to live it! We must have a life that is such that our church can brag about us, but so can our family. We have to be an example on Sundays, but our day off should be just as circumspect. People need to see the real thing in a minister. It's up to you! You're the one God called, and you're the one who the world is watching now. Other ministers have influenced what the world thinks about the ministry, some for the worse, some for the better. But now it's your turn. The integrity of the ministry is in your hands.

Don't just preach it. Live it!

Chapter 7:

The Mentor

What do you do when you have a problem at your church and you don't know how to solve it? What do you do when your church doesn't grow? How do you deal with an unruly deacon or lay minister? How do you bring about consensus out of division?

What happens when you have to preach but don't feel like it? What do you do when you are so burned out that you can hardly stand to look at the church building?

Obviously these questions don't begin to cover all of the problems a minister could have when pastoring. But what do you do when...?

Ministry is stressful! Ministry can feel lonely. There are three things that I think are a must for a minister to be effective. They are a right relationship with God, a good wife, and a mentor. Most of us would agree that the relationship with God is an absolute. Most of us would agree that a good, supportive, ministry-minded wife is indispensable, though some ministers have been effective without being married. However, a surprising number of ministers attempt to minister without having someone to teach and support them from a minister's perspective. When things get lonely - and they will - a mentor is a blessing! When things get confusing - and they will - a mentor is a Godsend! When you are tempted - and you will be - a mentor is a necessity!

My Mentor

Many religious organizations have been talking about mentoring for quite some time. Promise Keepers stresses the need for men to mentor men. I have learned from personal experience that men need to **HAVE** a mentor and they need to **BE** a mentor.

A few years ago I was experiencing a great deal of turmoil in my mind concerning my church. That, coupled with politics at my secular job, led to a great deal of frustration and discouragement on my part. I had my share of questions. I needed someone who was wise enough to help me face my situation and get through it without quitting. As it turned out, God had already brought into our district a Pastor with whom I had worked in the past. He had been my unofficial mentor for quite awhile. But now I needed him in a more specific way. I approached him and asked if he would consider pursuing a mentoring relationship so that I could learn from his experience and wisdom.

His response was very wise. He said he would pray about it. He did, and later told me that he felt it was the Lord's will. He wanted to meet with me once a week. And so, we did. We talked about my church, though he never tried to run my church. We talked about my secular job. We talked about all of the issues with which I was dealing at the time. Clinton Fields listened to me when I needed to vent. He advised me when I needed direction. He held me accountable when I was tempted. He was everything a mentor should be.

Whether or not I have had much success as a Pastor or as a person is up for debate, but whatever success I **have** had can be traced to four sources: A merciful and gracious God, loving and wise parents, a supportive and loving wife, and my mentor!

Listening

I don't care what people say or think. Pastoring is a hard job. It is especially difficult for someone is a perfectionist and wants everything in black and white. When the gray appears, you need someone to help you sort through the cobwebs (which are gray) and see more clearly. Just having someone who can **listen** to you and understand what is going on is wonderful.

Most people don't understand the difficulties of pastoring. It really takes another Pastor to truly understand the frustrations, problems, and needs of the Pastor. This is the person who can listen as you pour out your heart. The need to be heard is very important. Too often pastors are appointed to a church or hired by a church and sent out with no line of communication to anyone who is even remotely able to support him. Finding someone who can listen is a great need among ministers. Otherwise, loneliness and isolation can lead to depression, anxiety, and even sin.

I like to use a very simple example to illustrate the need to be heard. I like to think of a balloon. Obviously, a balloon has to be blown up. But what would happen if you just kept blowing (assuming you have strong lungs)? Eventually, the balloon would burst under the pressure of your lungs. People are just like this in that we have to 'let off steam.' We need to 'vent.' If we don't, we run a very real danger of allowing sin to take control of our lives. If we don't talk, we may quit because we are 'fed -up.' We may turn away from God altogether. How many ministries have shipwrecked when all they needed was a listening ear? How many ministers have ended up having an affair because they felt their secret partner was meeting a need that no one else was meeting (and I'm not just talking about sex!) Having a mentor can be a safety net for the minister, whether his ministry is pastoral or otherwise.

Advising

By the way, remember that I said it was helpful to be willing to admit that you aren't Superman to your church? Well, guess what! You also need to be willing to admit it to yourself. You need to be willing to say, 'I don't know how to pastor,' or 'I don't know how to handle this particular situation.' We should be willing to ask, 'Can someone please help me?'

Not only do you need a good listener, but you also need someone who can give good, solid **advice**. From some other things I have said in this book you might get the idea I am against getting advice from others. This is not true. Actually, if you pray and listen to God, He may very well send someone to you who has a Word from the Lord just for you. The right advice from the right person at the right time can be of inestimable value. The church was set up in part so that people can fellowship with each other, and this is true of Pastors as well as the laity.

Accountability

Accountability cannot be overemphasized. When my mentor and I met, he would ask me about specific situations we had discussed the week before. Knowing I had to answer to someone helped me. It didn't make me feel guilty or afraid to sin, it helped me to feel supported.

Weakness is normal, but it helps to have someone who will ask the hard questions. "Have you lied this week?" "Have you studied the Word?" "Have you prayed this week?" "Have you lusted after a woman (or man)?" "Have you been in a compromising situation with someone of the opposite sex?" Obviously, the questions can and should range from the "slightly uncomfortable" to the "most uncomfortable." The challenge is to find someone who knows which questions to ask. Some of the questions given here would be unnecessary in your situation, while other questions would need to be asked but weren't asked here.

Choosing a Mentor

Now let me say something to you right here and now. There are some people who I don't go to for advice. I don't try to get them to listen to me as I bare my soul. I don't become accountable to them except as directed by the Bible. Sometimes you may have to account for your ministry to someone you do not respect. However, not just anyone should be your mentor.

Often times the wrong person can be unduly negative and in worse shape than you are. Some people leave you feeling edified, but the wrong person can leave you lower than before they came along. I try not to call these people. I try not to go out of my way to follow them. When I see them I treat them with as much respect as I can. I treat them like I do most people. But under no circumstance do I ask for their advice or follow their lead. This is because they have proven to me already that they are wild cards. They are loose cannons that approach life without caution. Or perhaps they attack life with too much cynicism. I have too much trouble with pessimism as it is. I certainly don't need anyone to help me get better acquainted with the bad side of life. Be careful and prayerful about whom you choose as your mentor or about who chooses to mentor you.

As I illustrated earlier, when my mentor and I first began a regular series of meetings together, it began with prayer. God did indeed put the two of us together. In fact, the first time I attempted to start a mentoring relationship with an elder minister, he did not feel it was the leading of the Spirit. He was correct. Therefore, we did not begin a mentoring relationship, though we were and are friends. But God put me into a mentoring relationship with the right person, and it was a good arrangement. God certainly knew what he was doing.

We have to be able to lean on the Lord, but He often uses a person to work through. Paul recognized this when he wrote, "And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also." (2 Timothy 2:2)

A final note is essential here- you can be on the giving end of mentoring as well as on the receiving end. It is a good idea to pass along to others the things you have learned. We all need somebody, and we all need to be there for somebody who needs us. Mentoring is a way to support the work of the ministry- both yours and someone else's.

Chapter 8:

Out of Season

Second Timothy 4:2 says, ‘Preach the Word, be instant in season, out of season, reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine.’ Being ‘instant in season, out of season’ has been interpreted by many to mean we, as ministers should be ready to preach a sermon at a moment’s notice. Perhaps this idea is plausible and desirable, for we should always be ready to give an account of the grace of God in our lives. However, this passage in 2 Timothy actually addresses something else.

In Rick Renner’s book, **Living in the Combat Zone**, he tells in considerable detail how Nero came to power and was worshipped, like some of the previous Roman emperors, as a god. He was so consumed with the desire to have men worship him that he wanted to tear down many of the major buildings of Rome and “remodel” with a statue of himself in the center of every new building.³

However, the Christians refused to worship him, much to his dismay. Obviously, emperor worship did not fit in with the concept of Christianity and One God. Therefore, Nero was upset with the Christians, to say the least.⁴

When Nero wanted to change the look of Rome with statues of himself adorning the major public facilities, the Senate decided enough was enough and said ‘No!’ Nero decided he didn’t need the Senate and simply instructed his servants to burn the city of Rome. A showdown between Nero and the Senate became imminent as the Senate now had to deal with 300,000 homeless slaves and peasants! The Senate called Nero to appear before them. Nero had to do something to save himself, so on the way to the trial, he concocted a plan to save his own neck and get rid of the Christians at the same time. He blamed the Christians for the burning of Rome, and incredibly enough, he was very successful in convincing the Senators that this was true!⁵

Suddenly, the religion known as Christianity went from being one of many accepted religions in the realm to one that was no longer tolerated. The horrible torture of Christians is legendary, and the diabolic madness of Nero can be seen in the many devices of death that were used to supposedly dispose of this “rebellious” band of believers.⁶

What effect did this have on Timothy’s church? We know because of 1 and 2 Timothy. 1 Timothy was written during a time of prosperity and success for Timothy’s church. Paul wrote to him about things such as the positions of Bishops and Deacons. He wrote about dealing with different groups of people in the congregation. 1 Timothy is

³Rick Renner, *Living in the Combat Zone* (Tulsa, OK.: Pillar Books & Publishing Company, Inc., 1991), pp6-10.

⁴Ibid., pp6-10.

⁵ Ibid., pp.11,12.

⁶ Ibid., p. 14.

a good book to read to learn how to deal with a church that is moving in call “the right direction.”

However, 2 Timothy was written during the time of the above-mentioned persecution. While we don't know much about specific situations in the church at this time, it's fair to assume that the picture was not a pretty one. People were becoming afraid and not coming back. People who stayed behind to weather the storm were becoming tired and dispirited. It was more difficult for Timothy to preach with the same kind of fervor that he once had. Where there had once been a season of success, there was now a wintry season of despair, uncertainty, and fear.⁷

Too Burned Out to Preach (or Do Anything Else)

How do you pastor a church that is not experiencing success right at this moment? How do you face another Sunday morning crowd when you think the people would rather be somewhere else and you **know you would**? We call this, among other things, burnout, but the question remains- what do you do?

There are many ways to handle this situation. You might do one or more of the following. You might stop studying the Bible. You might not pray. You might procrastinate. You might withdraw from people. You might transfer to another church. You might want to stop preaching, perhaps leave the ministry altogether.

Keep Preaching

The problem is that even though you might not want to preach right about now, there are people who are headed for Hell if you don't help them. There are saved people in your church who need to hear the truth whether you feel like giving it or not. They still need to go to Heaven, and you are the one appointed to show them the Way, Jesus Christ.

Paul's solution to Timothy's predicament was straightforward, though it might be a little difficult to swallow. Paul simply told Timothy to **keep preaching!** Though this was anything *but* a season of anointing, Paul wanted Timothy to fulfill his ministry. Paul knew that if Timothy quit preaching, Satan would still seek to get his message out to the people. The church still needed leadership. In fact, they needed it now more than ever.

If you're feeling bad, it is possible that the people are feeling bad, too. So you preach for their spiritual welfare. You continue to help them. They need to hear the truth now when they need to experience it the most. You preach even though you want to run and hide. You preach for them even though you only care about yourself. You keep going!

⁷ Ibid., pp.16,17.

The Right Spirit

What if I'm so bitter and frustrated that I want to yell? Then you preach with what Paul calls "longsuffering." Especially now you must make sure that you preach with a good spirit.

A woman once told me about going to hear a Pastor preach the first Sunday after a state convention. While at the convention, this Pastor had seen many things that had troubled him. He had seen people who seemed to him to be compromising the Gospel. When he got up to preach the following Sunday morning, he was angry. How did this lady know he was angry? Because he preached angrily! He didn't just preach hard. He let his anger drive his sermon.

It isn't sin to get angry. However, the Bible gives us ways to deal with our anger so that it doesn't become bitterness. Paul wanted Timothy to be careful and not let his emotions determine his actions, including his preaching. Longsuffering is a careful approach to preaching that seeks to check our emotions before we preach. God helps us bring our frustration to the altar rather than the pulpit. By His grace we can preach what the people need to hear without tearing them apart.

The Importance of Doctrine

Another thing Paul does here is to emphasize doctrine. In other words, get back to basics. When we are ready to give up, it helps us to get back to the basics of what the Bible is all about. It is helpful, and even necessary, to get back to what our ministry is all about. Preaching doctrine does more than give us something to preach. It refreshes our vision. It does the same for the congregation. It reminds us of why we are here. It reminds us of our purpose. It gives us a reason to keep going.

What is doctrine? You might think of doctrine as your organization's statement of beliefs. This interpretation is not entirely incorrect, but it seems that Paul was referring to the fundamental principles of Christianity. Some of your organizational teachings may not deal directly with basic principles. This is fine, but the important thing to remember is to focus for now on the most basic Christian teachings.

Once when I needed to be refreshed I developed a sermon that addressed what I saw as the fundamentals of Christianity. I borrowed a title from a book and called it **These Necessary Things**.⁸ I listed and then discussed the five most necessary elements for us to know and believe as Christians. They were as follows:

- (1) *God is real;*
- (2) *Jesus is real, He shed His blood to pay for the sins of the whole world, His blood washes away our sin, and He lives in and through those who believe in and submit to Him;*

⁸ *These Necessary Things* (Cleveland, TN: White Wing Publishing House, 1960).

- (3) *The Holy Ghost is real and dwells in those who receive Him;*
- (4) *The Word of God is infallible and inviolable; and*
- (5) *There is a real devil, or satan.*

Obviously, any one of the elements of this message could have been turned into one or more messages. However, what I needed was something basic and directly to the point. This sermon seemed to help not only me, but the church as well.

There are times when it is helpful to take a vacation, or take a break by having someone preach for you on a limited basis. However, while you are working on long-term solutions to help you get energized, you must keep preaching and not allow satan room to work in your church because you have given up. Be instant in season, but be instant out of season as well!

Chapter 9:

Leaving On My Mind

There may come a time in your ministry when you will transfer between churches. It may be your choice, or it may be a choice made for you. If the latter is true, you really have no choice but to submit. But if you have a choice, you need to choose very carefully. How do you know when to leave one congregation for another?

My Story

In 1991 I was appointed as Pastor for a small congregation just outside of Atlanta, Georgia. I was excited and nervous. It was my first pastorate, and I wanted to make a good impression. I wanted to succeed, a desire that is admirable.

However, 1995 saw me being reappointed with what seemed to be very little potential for anything but the “same old thing.” In four years we had not grown very much, and I didn’t know what to do. I was appointed in July of ‘95, but in September it began to really get to me. I began asking myself if I should remain as Pastor of this church. The people were faithful for the most part, but I felt “stuck.” To top it all off, I began to see what I thought were signs from God that it was time to go.

First of all, I couldn’t seem to preach with any anointing. It was hard to preach in my church. I really struggled. To make matters more “apparent”, I had a couple of opportunities to preach at other churches. In those instances, I was very blessed and anointed, but when I returned to my congregation, no anointing! It was maddening! I couldn’t seem to do what I needed to do no matter what happened.

Something else related to my preaching happened. I was talking to an overseer (not mine) about my struggle and he said this was usually a sign that it was time to leave. This seemed to be confirmation of what I was feeling.

Sometime during this period I was at a state park in north Georgia where I met a minister from another denomination. Somehow we began talking, of all things, about him transferring from one church to another. What a sign, I thought. Surely God was telling me it was time to move on.

I even had a scripture that I felt was leading me to transfer. It is found in 1 Kings 17:1-7. In this passage, Elijah is sent to a brook to hide from Ahab. While there, he was nourished by food brought by ravens and by the water from the brook. However, the brook dried up and Elijah was sent somewhere else. My brook was dry and I just knew God was saying my time here was up.

I remember talking to my overseer in my home when he visited our church. I told him how I was feeling. I made sure he knew that I might not make it until appoint time! I wasn’t threatening. I was simply bearing my ragged soul to a caring supervisor. (It seems only in the church is such an unlikely situation possible! However, don’t assume you can do this with EVERY overseer!) During this time my wife and I had even been looking for a house. We were examining our options and trying to plan ahead. We were

strongly considering not pastoring anywhere. Our heart's cry was, "Just get us out of this mess!"

Appointments were to be made in July of 1997. In May of 1997 I was at a seminar sponsored by our organization. This gave me an opportunity to talk with the overseer and finalize our move. He and I had already talked on the phone about a couple of churches where he could send me. But at this meeting, he told me there were some Pastors wanting changes, but essentially they wanted a change for the same reason I did. The bottom line was that he could send me to one of these churches and I would have maybe a six-month "honeymoon" period, but then I would likely be right back where I was. He said I might need a six-month "honeymoon," but this was all he could offer. I told him I could be miserable where I was! I would stay put.

Changed Attitude, Changed Church

An amazing thing began to happen. When my wife and I settled this issue once and for all, the Lord began to bless the church. Later in the year, I took a one-month sabbatical. This was unheard of in our organization. However, I got a needed rest, which included attending another church in order to hear someone else preach. Also, the church continued to be blessed. I asked another minister, a lay minister, to pastor my church for one month.

The night I returned to the church, it was the visiting minister's last service. Service had already started. As I walked in, a retired minister who was sitting on the back pew jumped up, ran back to me, shook my hand, and let me know he was glad to see me! No, he wasn't glad to get rid of the visiting minister! In fact, he told me the lay minister had done a good job. But he was genuinely glad to see me. Praise the Lord!

Two Things I Know

So how do you know when to go and when to stay? When do you transfer to a new church and when do you stay put? Every church is different and every person is different. Therefore, I must give you two principles that should guide you in your decision.

The first thing to remember is that the obvious way is not always the right way. Acts 18 tells us of Paul's experience in Corinth. He had preached in the synagogue to Jews and they had rejected the Gospel. If ever anyone had a reason to leave, it was Paul. He had preached to his own people, the Jews, and they had rejected him. But the obvious way wasn't God's way. He wanted Paul to stay and preach.

The second thing to remember is that God speaks to His people. He told Paul specifically,

*Be not afraid, but speak, and hold not thy peace:
For I am with thee, and no man shall set on thee to hurt
thee: for I have much people in this city. (Acts 18:9, 10)*

Did you catch the significance of these verses? God actually spoke to Paul. Grace opens the door for every one of us to hear from God. God deals with each of us on a personal, intimate level. We must listen.

When I was first asked about being active in the ministry, I was asked to pray about filling a position in the state office. This was exciting, and for awhile as I prayed, I felt this would be God's will. But as I continued to pray, God seemed to take away this good feeling and left me feeling I should not take this particular road. Then the overseer and I began praying about pastoring a church. This was God's will, but I did not have a message from God. I did, however, feel a nudge from God in this direction. The time for appointments drew near and I was appointed. Though I had not heard the Voice of God, I had sensed His direction.

The Sunday after the appointments were made the Lord spoke to me and said He had opened a door that no man could shut. The Lord had dealt with me on an intimate level to bring me to this place in my ministry, and He confirmed the decision. He had led me through dark passages where I had never been before.

An overseer once told me that God doesn't deal in generalities. He is specific. I have found this to be true. The Voice, or the confirmation, may not come when you think it needs to come, but God will guide you and help you to know His will. I believe that if you are sensitive to the Lord, He will help you to make the right decision with or without a Voice. But His confirmation will come, and he will help you to make the right choices.

The System

There is something interesting to note here. In the eleventh verse we find that Paul preached at Corinth a year and a half. We like round numbers. My organization used to appoint Pastors every twelve months. Then we went to every twenty-four months. Now we are in the process of instituting a new system whereby the Pastor is evaluated every four years. There is nothing inherently wrong with a systematic approach to Pastoral tenure. But the passage of scripture concerning Paul's work shows that God doesn't always think in terms of round numbers. He may want you to pastor for the duration of the time set by the organization. But sometimes God moves a person from one place to another before the appointment expires. He may move you before a convention is held or a committee meeting is convened.

So what do you do if God's timetable seems to be different from man's. What do you do if you have a deadline to meet with an Overseer, Superintendent, or church board? I recommend that you walk softly before the Lord. Listen for His Voice. If you don't hear Him, He may be trying to get your attention another way. For me it was a feeling. Feelings can be deceiving, but God knows how to direct those feelings when we are humble before Him. But under all circumstances should we be submissive to whatever governmental system is in place. Remember from chapter three that I said, 'the Pastor's job is to set an example and **submit**.'

A fellow Pastor told me of going to a church when he knew it wasn't God's will. He was in a place where God was truly blessing. However, the Overseer assigned him to another church. The time spent at the new church wasn't his most productive, but he

went with a submissive spirit. He stayed until another opportunity presented itself. He didn't backslide! He didn't quit! When he finally moved to a third church, God blessed him wonderfully. I believe that if you will be submissive God will bless you. Too many have quit the ministry! Too many have quit serving God! Don't be one of them!

What happens if you hear from God and He says move before your current assignment is up? Can this happen? Does this happen? It seems He does occasionally move this way. I have known several men of God who have heard the call to move at inopportune times. But God blessed. No, these were not ministers living on the fringe of Spirituality. They were truly men of God.

There seems to be no one way to appoint pastors. But it does appear that Paul stayed as long as God needed him to stay. I am not suggesting that we should ignore whatever system we are working under. I am suggesting that we should always be sensitive to the Spirit. He may be finished with us before the church is. He may have something else in mind for both you and the church. Work within the system, but always be open to what God wants you to do. His Voice is unmistakable. His sheep know His Voice according to John chapter ten.

A Big Mistake?

So why did I think I was hearing from God when I wasn't? I was too focused on myself. It is difficult to see the Hand of God or hear the Voice of God when all you see is your own predicament and all you hear is your own pity party. Listen to God. When you can't seem to hear from God for yourself, get someone to help you pray. Ask your mentor to pray. Ask your wife to pray, though she may be too close to the situation to hear anyone but you (or herself.) As the prayers of others are heard, and as your own prayers are heard, you'll be more Spiritually sensitive. Then listen for the still small Voice.

The Still Small Voice

In 1 Kings chapter nineteen, Elijah has run away into the wilderness to escape the wrath of Jezebel. He is feeling tired from an all day service in which he has destroyed the prophets of Baal. But now Jezebel is threatening to kill him. He does what many of us do. He runs away and goes to sleep. A brief vacation or break is acceptable, even necessary, but he wanted to quit.

God takes him to a mountain and shows him a spectacle that is dramatic. Yet God was not in the wind, or the earthquake, or in the fire. But He was in the still small Voice. You see, God was trying to tell Elijah not to depend on the things that are obviously strong. Elijah had become convince that he was fighting the battle alone. God wanted him to understand that he and God were plenty for the task at hand.

The lesson for you is simple. Sometimes you may feel like giving up or leaving a church because you are tired, frustrated, or the only one fighting the battle. You may feel lonely. You may get angry. But when do you leave? You leave when God tells you to! God had been speaking to me throughout my first four years as Pastor to let me know that

I was where He wanted me to be. It wasn't pleasant. It wasn't comfortable. It wasn't easy. But I did not have to let these facts determine my future. Later, thankfully, God kept me from making a rash decision before I could open my heart and willingly hear Him.

Go when God says go. Stay until He says leave. You'll never go wrong. God will make it all worth it in the end. Heaven will surely be worth every heartache if you will just wait on God.

Chapter 10:

Attitude

A merry heart doeth good like a medicine: but a broken spirit drieth the bones. (Proverbs 17:22)

One of my greatest struggles as a Pastor has been with my attitude. Pastors are people, too. We get upset. We get confused. We get burned out. If we're not careful, we'll wear our feelings on our shoulder while we are preaching. The results can be disastrous. If we are not careful, our feelings can become the feelings of the congregation, or they can provoke defensive feelings.

No matter how you feel as the Pastor, no matter what your attitude, you are likely to influence the congregation either for good or for bad. Therefore, it makes sense that you would attempt to develop and maintain a good attitude regarding your church.

As the Pastor Goes, So Goes the Church

Leadership is extremely important. Most churches realize this. They depend on the Pastor to develop programs that are effective in soul-winning, fund-raising, fellowship, and a number of other areas. They often long for a minister who can come in and jump-start a dying church. Or perhaps they want someone who can simply point an eager church in a new direction.

There are many talented Pastors today. Some have a gift for evangelism. Some have a gift for organization. Some are great teachers. Some are great preachers. But a good gift can be spoiled if the Pastor has a bad attitude. If the congregation senses a bad attitude, it will affect their thinking about the Pastor, and by extension, about the church as a whole. If the Pastor can't be positive, it is highly unlikely that the members will be.

In Proverbs 17:22, the latter part of the verse says "a broken spirit drieth the bones." The broken spirit referred to here is not a humble spirit, but a spirit of despondency. When the Pastor gives up in his heart, it shows. When the Pastor has no hope for the local church, it is difficult to hide this. The result is dry bones. Bones that are dry are bones that have had the flesh removed and have been subjected to heat. They have no moisture. They become good for nothing. We throw bones out. Bones are the last things that are left after the body has died. They are the only lasting evidence that something here was once alive but it is now dead.

When the Pastor cannot control his attitude, the effect on the church is death. Instead of being fed, they become preoccupied with the Pastor. They become concerned about the atmosphere of the services. Rather than maturing, they stagnate. The early signs of disease set in. Death becomes inevitable.

A Merry Heart

The first part of Proverbs 17:22 says, “A merry heart doeth good like a medicine...” The antidote to disease is often the right medicine. In this case, a church may simply need the Pastor to change his attitude.

I know all too well about being melancholy. I have a difficult time seeing the positive side of things. But I am also aware of the affect of my attitude on my church. Therefore, I have to be careful to make sure that I maintain a good attitude.

Some people have an easier time with this than others. Some people seem to sit on top of the world no matter what. They seem to be able to be happy regardless of the circumstances. They are positive, and they generate a positive feeling among their members. Positiveness should not become the focus of our ministry, but a positive minister can make a tremendous difference in the outlook of the congregation.

Positive Steps to a Positive Attitude

But what about those of us who struggle with depression? What about those who don't often feel on top of the world? Should we try to imitate those who are charismatic? Should we attempt to be someone we are not? Certainly not! We have to be ourselves. But there are some things you can do to help your attitude.

First of all, your devotional life will make a tremendous difference in your outlook. If you aren't studying the Word and praying, it is going to be more difficult for you to be upbeat. However, when prayer and devotion become important to you, you will find that dealing with trying circumstances will be easier. The result will be a brighter outlook on your part.

Second, I want to stress again the need for the minister to have an outlet for his or her own feelings. A mentor or a friend can go a long way towards relieving your pressure. (The wife may also need to go to someone for release as well, especially if you are sharing the load of the ministry together. Pastor's wives may be one of the most needy and most neglected groups of workers in the church today.) The Pastor and his or her spouse need to have a place to relieve stress. They need a place to go in order to regain perspective, and this may come in the form of another person with whom they can share. (It should go without saying that this person on whom you depend will almost certainly not be a member of your congregation!)

Third, a day off is important. Your church members are coming to church on Sunday, which is their day off. It is their day of rest. But the Pastor gets anything **BUT** rest on Sunday. In fact, Saturday isn't a very restful day for Pastors, either. It is important to have a day away from the church and the work of the church. For me, it is Monday. It might be a different day for you, but take at least one day a week on which you don't work on sermons or classes, visit, or even take phone calls. Occasionally emergencies will arise which cannot be postponed, but this doesn't happen every week.⁹

Fourth, a vacation cannot be overemphasized. Even if you have the luxury of being full-time and having a significant amount of time in which to prepare for Sunday, you need a change of scenery. I like my study, but sometimes I need to see the

⁹ Robert C. Anderson, *The Effective Pastor* (Chicago: The Moody Bible Institute of Chicago, 1985), p. 26.

mountains. I like living in the town where I pastor, but sometimes I need to see the ocean. Sometimes I just need to see **anything but** the town or my study. Leaving town for a few days is refreshing. Having someone to preach in your place and knowing that you don't have to prepare a sermon can be a good feeling. Knowing that if the telephone rings it won't be another crisis is satisfying. Get away!

A fellow Pastor told me that a Pastor needs to get away at least one Sunday per quarter. Some local churches would not accept this, but I have found that three months is about enough for me to pastor without a break. No, I don't take a vacation every three months. I don't even take a break every three months. However, if I can have a guest speaker come in, it relieves some of the pressure I am under. Ideally, it would be good to get away for one Sunday. A trip out of town can be very effective.

Fifth, you must be fed! It is a significant fact to consider that some ministers preach every week, but they never hear anyone else preach. They never hear a class taught by someone else. They never read an inspirational book. They always give, but never receive. We need to be fed. If you can't visit another church occasionally, or even visit a Sunday School class, perhaps you can be fed by reading a book that is uplifting. You can listen to music that is edifying. You can look for other outlets where your soul can be refreshed. But if you don't get refreshed, you are eventually going to become unable to feed your flock. You can't get water out of a dry well!

Take Care of Yourself

The ministry is about giving. We give to our local church consistently. However, we must not neglect ourselves. To do so would be unfair to our family, our congregation, and ourselves. It may be difficult to talk about yourself when your focus is "supposed" to be the needs of others, but it is important nevertheless.

Stress begets weariness. Weariness begets bitterness. Bitterness begets a bad attitude. As we have seen, a bad attitude begets death. It isn't wrong to do something for yourself occasionally. In fact, it is essential to the success of your ministry. Even Jesus had to arrange His schedule so that He could get His own prayer time. Take a look at these verses concerning the life of Christ:

And in the morning, rising up a great while before day, he went out, and departed into a solitary place, and there prayed. (Mark 1:35)

When Jesus therefore perceived that they would come and take him by force, to make him a king, he departed again into a mountain himself alone. (John 6:15)

*And from thence he arose, and went into the borders of Tyre and Sidon, and entered into an house, and would have no man know it....
(Mark 7:24a)*

*...These spake Jesus, and departed, and did hide himself
from them.
(John 12:36b)*

Just as Jesus gave attention to His private life, you should give attention to yours. Your private moments will make the difference in your public ministry. If you neglect those private times, your ministry will dry up and so will your people. But if you go back to the well, the river will flow through you to your people. Take care of yourself!

Introduction to Lesson Outlines

In his book *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People*, Stephen Covey wrote, “. . . I would suggest that you shift your own paradigm (‘the way (you) see the world’¹⁰) of your own involvement in this material from the role of learner to that of teacher.”¹¹ The idea is that the information takes on a different meaning when we know we will pass the knowledge we gain on to others. In some sense, it may even become less intimidating. As I prepared this book, I also prepared an outline of each chapter and visual illustrations so that I could teach this information. I hope that you will have the opportunity to do so as well.

You should keep a few things in mind. I have written these outlines from a personal perspective. Obviously, you will have to change some items because you will not have had the same experiences I have had. Feel free to use your own stories and examples. My outline is simply a guide for you to use while you prepare your own outline. Use as much of mine as you wish, but modify mine freely.

The handouts can be modified and/or copied as well. As a suggestion, you might want to prepare a visual presentation using Microsoft® PowerPoint®. However, I have included my own handouts for those who do not have access to Microsoft® PowerPoint® or for those who simply do not want to prepare handouts from scratch.

Finally, the teaching of these lessons will be hollow and lifeless if you do not first experience the lessons to some degree for yourself. Once you have experienced a revelation from God, you will have both the passion and the example to teach these lessons successfully.

May God bless you as you learn, as you teach, and as you grow in Him!

¹⁰ Stephen R. Covey, *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People* (New York: Simon & Schuster Inc., 1989), p. 23.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 60.

Lesson 1:

The Mission of Ministry

Introduction (Figure 1)

I remember the phone call I received from my State Overseer, Bishop Hector Ortiz, which settled the question of whether or not I would pastor a church under his supervision. I had never pastored a church, but I knew I was called to minister.

I had been around ministers all of my life. I had also read a good deal about the ministry. Therefore, I knew that pastoring was a profession in which there was a great deal of work with no clear-cut definition of what the job actually was. And so, keeping my still limited knowledge of pastoring in mind, I asked Brother Ortiz for a job description! That's right! I asked for the one thing that he could not give me .

He wisely did not attempt to give me a job description, and I never brought up the subject with him again. However, having worked in a number of secular jobs, I understood the value of having a set of job requirements. These requirements would tell me what I had to do in order to be successful. They would also enable me to judge my own success on the job before my supervisor did so for me. Nevertheless, the job of the Pastor, and by extension the minister, is not quite so easily put into one or two pages of expectations. Why is this?

I. Changing Times (Figure 2)

- A. As a **child** how many of you had a Pastor who was really good at what he or she did?
- B. Let's take that same Pastor and put him in a church at the beginning of the 21st century.
 1. Would he do the same things now that he did then?
 2. To a great degree, the answer to that question would be **NO!**
- C. If he or she was really a good Pastor, they were good because they were, and in many cases still are, **TIME-SENSITIVE.**
- D. This doesn't mean they watch the clock on Sunday morning to make sure they finish preaching by 12:00. It means they adapt their ideas, programs, and way of doing things to the times and environment in which they work and live so that they can be more effective.

1. Homecoming at Villa Rica- The people were too busy with work and responsibilities.
2. Wednesday night services- In many cases, the people got off work too late to get to work.

II. Unique People (Figure 3)

- A. How many of you have people in your congregations who are unique? (Now be nice!)
- B. We have to learn something about the people in our particular congregation. If you move from one church to the next, the new church is not going to be at the same place as the old one. They are at a differently level...
 1. Emotionally
 2. Socially
 3. Spiritually
 4. Economically
 5. Doctrinally
 6. Attitudinally
- C. While I have only pastored one church, I know these things to be true because I have attended regularly nine different churches in my lifetime. This has been due to moving, getting married, job changes, etc. You don't have to be a Pastor to see the differences. All it takes is two eyes.
- D. Because congregations are different, you have to be able to adapt to each congregation as much as possible. A Pastor must be **PEOPLE-SENSITIVE**. (However, it must be noted that a job description would be impossible to give for a Pastor because the requirements for effectiveness vary from church to church.) (Figure 4)

III. God

- A. This is a monthly report form. How many of you hate these things? There are a number of reasons why we hate them. **(I use an actual report form printed by my organization.)**
1. Some people aren't paper-oriented.
 2. They are time consuming.
 3. We have to put down a lot of 0s.
- B. Sometimes people put down 0s because they haven't done anything. However, much of the time we hate them because they don't ask the right questions. Here are a few questions they don't ask that we could answer with glowing numbers or in the affirmative:
1. Have you conducted a funeral this month? If so, how many?
 2. Have you been called on in the middle of the night to pray or perform some other service for your church?
 3. Have you held any counseling sessions with anyone from your church?
 4. Have you had to neglect your family for any church-related business?
 5. Have you taught any classes?
 6. Have you been "blessed out" by any of your members? How did you handle it?
 7. Are you a member of your community's ministerial association?
 8. How many people did you actually watch die?
- C. Monthly Reports are useful as a guide as you go about doing your work.
- D. **(Figure 5)** However, it is most important that you be **GOD-SENSITIVE** as you do your job.
1. God knows everything and you don't.

2. God uses us for things that can't be measured in numbers.

IV. Tasks Verses Mission

It is all too easy to worry about tasks which vary from church to church and from time to time when it is much more effective to focus on two things that never change.

- A. Christ
- B. The Mission (as Opposed to the Tasks) of Ministry

V. The Mission

While a job description would be nice, it seems more appropriate to focus on the mission of the ministry rather than the activities.

- A. With such an abstract nature, the ministry is sometimes frustrating to people like me who want a clear direction and goal. God does not give this frustration. He wants trust. Another word for trust is *faith*. We are taught that "faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God." (Romans 10:17) Therefore, I have returned to the Word for a better understanding of what Christ wants from me. The following passage really stands out to me.

Whereof I am made a minister, according to the dispensation of God which is given to me for you, to fulfil the Word of God.

*To whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is **Christ in you, the hope of glory.***

*Whom we preach, warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom; **that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus.** (Colossians 1:25-28)*

- B. Bishop Lanis Lewis said a few years ago, "you (pastors) are successful when Christ is being formed in your members." This is actually biblical according to the scripture given above.

VI. The Practical Side (Figure 6)

We must do the practical things. The following things are important to remember when we are "doing" our job:

- A. We must work according the Power of God working in us.

*Whereunto I also labor, striving **according to His working, which worketh in me mightily.***

(Colossians 1:29)

- B. Steven Curtis Chapman wrote a song that tells of his own attempt to come up with a list of his abilities to present to God to show what he, SCC, could do for Him, God. God's response was summed up in one word, which is the title of the song- ***Whatever!***¹²

The reason a job description is hard to write for the ministry is because we are called to do whatever He tells us to do.

- C. If I don't hear the Voice of God every time I walk out of the house, I can remember the Voice of God directing me to do certain things from the scripture:

1. Remembering the Poor- Galatians 2:9, 10.
2. Preaching Even When We Don't Feel Like it - 2 Timothy 4:2.
3. Visiting- Matthew 25:31-46.
4. Praying- Acts 6:4.

My mission as a minister is to do the will of God!

¹² Steven Curtis Chapman, *Whatever*, from the *Speechless* CD (Sparrow Records, 1999).

Lesson 2:

There is a God, And You're Not Him

Introduction (Figure 1)

When I began pastoring, I thought my job was to straighten the church out. I thought if I could preach good messages and preach them powerfully enough, people would respond and change. Needless to say, I was in for a rude awakening. These people needed more than a good sermon or an eager Pastor.

Please don't misunderstand. These were not bad people. But I was out to change the world. Even though I was fairly mature, I still succumbed to the exuberance of youth. I believed God had endowed me with **THE MESSAGE** the church needed to hear. But what the people needed, if they needed anything, was God!

I. Dr. Riggins' Lessons

- A. "There is a God, and you're not Him!"
- B. "There is a God, and I'm not Him!"
- C. **(Figure 2)** 1 Corinthians 3:18 says, "But we all...are changed...from glory (the glory of fleshly works) to glory (the glory of a God-filled life), **even as by the Spirit of the Lord.**"
- D. People aren't changed by you're...
 - 1. Preaching
 - 2. Visitation
 - 3. Programs/Ideas
 - 4. Etc.

II. The "Right" _____.

- A. The Search- Pastors, ministers in general, and churches all look for the "right" something to make their churches alive.

B. What Good Leadership IS and IS NOT (Figure 3)

A Good Leader is...

1. Willing to initiate good programs, but does not consider him or herself omnipotent,
2. Willing to teach and preach doctrine, but does not consider him or herself omniscient,
3. Willing and anxious to preach the Gospel of Jesus Christ, but not fooled into thinking that he or she in any way makes a Spiritual change happen. -

I helped people pray for the Holy Ghost, but the Holy Ghost pointed out to me that I was trying to help people get the Holy Ghost rather than let Him baptize them.

III. The Savior of the Body (Figure 4)

Ephesians 5:25, 26 is clear on this matter. It says,

‘Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it;
‘That **HE** might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the Word.’

- A. Only Jesus can sanctify and save the body.
- B. Pastoring is one of many gifts God gave to the church for its edification (strengthening.) But the pastor, and the teacher, and the evangelist are helpers, not saviors.

IV. Why is this even a problem?

A. The Problem of Misinterpretation (Figure 5)

1. **(Figure 6)** ‘Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves:...’ (Hebrews 13:17a)
2. “And whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your **servant.**”
(Matthew 20:27)

3. “Neither as being lords over God’s heritage, but being **ensamples** (examples) to the flock.” (1 Peter 5:3)
4. The consequence could end up being **something other than respect for the Pastor.**

B. The Problem of Pride (Figure 7)

1. Pastors may misinterpret the scripture as well. The evidence may be seen when...
 - a. He makes too many decisions without consulting the members; Some decisions will require a quick decision and will thus preclude asking the church for their opinion; But there is danger in making all of the decisions without allowing the members to be heard,
 - b. He is too eager to step on people’s toes,
 - c. He exhibits a haughty or superior attitude.
2. The source of some of this prideful thinking is...
 - a. When we consider too much the fact that we are **appointed by the overseer**, a man of authority,
 - b. When we think we are the only ones called by God,
 - c. When our youthful ego convinces us that **we** have the answer exclusive of all others who disagree with us.
 - (1) Youthfulness wants to prove the choice of his appointment was a good one not to be doubted.
 - (2) Youthfulness wants to prove that he or she is capable, and therefore worthy.

C. The Problem of Power (Figure 8)

1. Being Appointed Verses Being in Control- They’re not the same.
2. God is

- a. The Best Administrator
 - b. The Best Counselor
 - c. The Best Banker
 - d. The Best Preacher
3. The Pastor should take comfort in the fact that **God is God** and **we are not**.
 4. When we try to control everything, we are unconsciously attempting to lift ourselves up to the level of God.

V. **The Solution (Figure 9)**

Paul gave us a good example and expressed his leadership this way: “Be ye followers of me, **even as I also am of Christ.**” (1 Corinthians 11:1) Two things are obvious from this verse.

- A. First, Paul was getting his directions from Christ.
- B. Second, Paul was looking forward to Christ and not back at the people.
- C. He didn’t neglect the people. We see his care for the churches expressed through his many letters. But his first priority was to look to God. He wasn’t strong enough to do the job alone. He needed help! He needed God!

If you get a little tired trying to run things, you need to remember: It’s not your job to be God. What a relief!

Lesson 3:

The Spirit of Abram

And there was a strife between the herdmen of Abram' s cattle and the herdmen of Lot' s cattle: and the Canaanite and the Perizzite dwelled then in the land.

And Abram said unto Lot, Let there be no strife, I pray thee, between me and thee, and between my herdmen and thy herdmen; for we be brethren.

Is not the whole land before thee? separate thyself, I pray thee, from me: if thou wilt take the left hand, then I will go to the right; or if thou depart to the right hand, then I will go to the left.

And Lot lifted up his eyes, and beheld all the plain of Jordan, that it was well watered every where, before the Lord destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah, even as the garden of the Lord, like the land of Egypt, as thou comest unto Zoar.

Then Lot chose him all the plain of Jordan; and Lot journeyed east: and they separated themselves the one from the other.

(Genesis 13:7-11)

Introduction (Figure 1)

The job of trying to lead people in the way that seems best to the leader is difficult at best. Sometimes people can be led with little or no difficulty. Other times the leader runs into the obstacle of traditional, yet erroneous, beliefs and personal desires of the followers.

This is especially true of those leading volunteers. When people are following with the understanding that then can freely leave at any time with no financial loss, and little social loss, to themselves, it takes a great deal of wisdom and patience to lead without causing unnecessary division. The minister would do well to learn an important lesson from the life of Abram.

I. The Vision and (Current) Reality/Abram and Lot

- A. Abram went to Canaan because he had heard from God.
- B. But Abram had not come alone. His nephew Lot had come with him. Because of age, Abram was no doubt the leader of this caravan.

- C. Though Abram had heard from God, as far as we know, Lot had not.
- D. Due to the combined wealth of these two men, there were a large number of servants tending to their possessions. **(Figure 2)**
- E. We can't relate to the ownership of slaves, but we can relate to dealing with PEOPLE. After all, this is what these servants were.
- F. Where two or three are gathered together, there is the potential for disagreement and conflict.
- G. Abram knew there was a need to part company. He knew that Canaan was his because God had given it to him. However, he was willing to let Lot choose the way, even though there was a risk that Lot would choose the land promised to Abram.

II. Have You Heard from God? (Figure 3)

- A. Is it possible that you have heard from God but the people under your care are resistant to that will?
- B. Hearing from God does not mean: **(Figure 4)**
 - 1. People will automatically accept His will,
 - 2. You have the right to force His will on people.

III. Abram Dealt with Differences by...(Figure 5)

- A. Recognizing that the first priority is peace among brothers.

“..let there be no strife, I pray thee, between me and thee, and between my herdmen and thy herdmen; for we be brethren.” (Genesis 13:8)

“..God hath called us to peace.” (1 Corinthians 7:15b)
- B. Preserving the peace even if it meant laying aside the promise of God. **(Figure 6)**

‘Is not the whole land before thee...’ (Genesis 13:9)

- C. Not demanding things go a certain way, not even when the choice was based on God's will. **(Figure 7)**

“..separate thyself, I pray thee, from me...” (Genesis 13:9b)

- D. He allowed Lot to choose, preferring his brother over himself. **(Figure 8)**

“..if thou wilt take the left hand, then I will go to the right; or if thou depart to the right hand, then I will go to the left.” (Genesis 13:9c)

III. Omniscience **(Figure 9)**

- A. It is important to remember that I DON'T KNOW IT ALL!
- B. We are free to be wrong, and it is indeed freeing to know that I can say, ‘I don't know!’

IV. Ownership **(Figure 10)**

- A. Jesus said, ‘Upon this rock I will build **My church....**’ (Matthew 16:18). It is His church, not yours.
- B. The church is not a test of your leadership. It is so much more.
- C. The church is not a child for you to discipline or brag on.
- D. The church does not belong to either you or your members, but the fact remains that you may transfer to another church at some point in your ministry. But many of the members will remain long after you are gone. They will have to live with many of the decisions made while you are their Pastor. Therefore, remember to make decisions with that fact in mind. If they are adamant about going a certain way, let them go! They will reap the benefits, and God knows your heart.

V. Custer's Last Stand **(Figure 11)**

Aren't there times when I need to make a stand? When do I make a stand? When should I lay everything on the line and ‘having done all..stand.’ (Ephesians 6:13b)?

- A. George Armstrong Custer is a historical figure who is known for his ‘stand.’ The interesting thing is there are others who gave their lives, but are known for their cause rather than their ‘stand.’

1. Abraham Lincoln gave his life standing for causes he believed in (the union, freedom of all men.) He is remembered for his cause and not his death because his cause was and is a worthy cause.
2. Custer is remembered for a “stand” that resulted in his death, but he is not remembered for his cause, perhaps because his cause is remembered as not being very noble in the first place. Though acting largely under orders, he was nevertheless carrying out orders that were in violation of a treaty (the Fort Laramie Treaty) that was signed by the United States government in 1868. He acted with the blessing of the government, but is remembered for dying, not for standing.¹³

B. Determine the Following:

1. Is the stand I am making worth dying/resigning/laying it all on the line for?
 - a. I don't ever want it to be said that I resigned because I didn't like the vacuum cleaner the church chose to buy.
 - b. If I leave, etc., let it be for the good of the church, the salvation of individuals, for my family, or something of this nature.
2. Is standing for this issue going to have a negative impact on the peace of the church?
 - a. In this case, it is usually wise to make a stand because the church overall is mature enough to handle the situation.
 - b. Since churches are made up of people, be careful of the balance between the mature and immature members in the congregation.

Paul was very wise when he said, “. . . for God hath called us to peace.” This simple phrase speaks volumes and is a code to live by. Remembering it will solve many of your problems as a minister.

¹³ Edward Tabor Linenthal, *Sacred Ground: Americans and Their Battlefields* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1993), p.127.

Lesson 4:

Honesty is the Best Policy

Introduction (Figure 1)

“My members expect me to be perfect. I certainly don’t want to disappoint them by showing my real self. If I can just keep my guard up and not let anyone see the real me, I will be okay!”

How absurd! No one is without weaknesses. None of us is completely desirable to everyone we meet. Yet, there is often this separation between the ministry and the laity. Ministers are often expected to be super heroes. Ministers don’t help matters by **trying to BE** a super hero. I’ve already written about how we are not God. But we are also not Superman. **(Figure 2)**

I. What it Means to be “Real” With Your Church

- A. A former Pastor of mine experienced the loss of a close relative and had to leave town for the funeral. The loss was very tough for him. However, he was able to come home and talk about it with our church, from the pulpit, in a very appropriate manner, and then we were able to go on with being a church.
- B. He was **REAL**. We knew he had problems, too.
- C. Warning! This is not permission to cry on your church’s shoulder every Sunday. That is a good way to drive people away from the church. They don’t necessarily need to know everything there is to know about you. But they do need to know...
 - 1. You are **human**,
 - 2. You are **vulnerable**,
 - 3. You can be **related to and you can relate to your church members**.
- D. Superman was... **(Figure 3)**
 - 1. Interesting,

2. Powerful,
3. Dependable,
4. Always in Disguise When he wasn't Working,
5. Unknowable- He was unavailable for personal acquaintance; He never stuck around long enough to get close to anybody except Lois Lane, and she didn't even know she worked with him as Clark Kent on a daily basis.

II. Hide and Seek (Figure 4)

- A. The goal of the game is for one person to try and find all of the rest of the players. The other players are hiding from the one who is "it."
- B. Spiritual Hide and Seek is similar. The Pastor is involved in helping the members to open up to the Word and what the Spirit is trying to do in their lives.
- C. The Catch- In Hide and Seek, the person who is "it" gets to let someone else be it from time to time. He may be "it" for a long time as some people are difficult to find. Our members don't always want to be "found" and we may be "it" for a long time.
 1. However, inevitably, it comes my time to take a break, and may be at this time that the church will appreciate my willingness to say "I need help."
 2. If we don't be realistic about ourselves, we do what the "it" person does when he has to continually be "it" - we quit the game!

III. Grace Means...

- A. Someone else can get a Word from the Lord for us, and not just us for them all the time,
- B. God doesn't have to have a preacher to speak to His people.

IV. Careful Now

- A. Timing is important

- B. Knowing your people is important.
 - 1. Revealing too much of yourself at the wrong time can be confusing.
 - 2. Revealing too much of yourself too early can give your people the idea that you are a weak leader. We are as weak as any other Christian, but we must be able to demonstrate leadership as well. Honesty well timed will not detract from your leadership role- it will enhance it.
- C. It is about relationship.
 - 1. Your ‘humanness’ will demonstrate that you are one of them.
 - 2. Relationship takes time.
 - a. A few years ago the average length of stay for Pastor’s in one church was eighteen months.
 - b. I found that I didn’t even really know my church very well until I had been there two years!

V. Last Words (Figure 5)

- A. Establish a relationship with your people, human to humans.
- B. Be wise, timely with self-disclosure.
- C. Be brave enough to be yourself, to be real!

Lesson 5:

Living by Faith and Paying the Bills

Introduction (Figure 1)

When Bishop Hector Ortiz first asked me to pastor a church, I looked back into my memory of some of the small churches my dad had pastored and others that I had visited. While I don't know how much my father made from any particular church, I had it in my mind that some churches would only be able to afford to pay a pastor \$200.00 per month.

I thought I would get a church that paid \$200.00 a month. This was okay. I also thought I might have to help the church pay its bills. This was also okay. I was prepared. Actually, things were considerably better than what I had prepared myself to face. I still worked a "secular" job. I wasn't making, in my opinion, enough that I could become a full-time pastor, but what I was getting from the church actually turned out to be extra for me.

But a dilemma began to present itself to me. Shouldn't I be full-time? Shouldn't I step out on faith and let the Lord take care of me? I remember discussing this with a minister whom I respected. He was quick to encourage me that it was okay to pastor and work another job besides. I was not a sinner, nor was I less Spiritual because I worked a nine-to-five job. Nevertheless, there was always this nagging feeling that perhaps I should pastor full-time.

The question is very simple- "When does a pastor need to be full-time?" But while the question is simple, the answer may be a little more difficult.

I. What Does God Say? (Figure 2)

- A. People often think Pastors should be full-time **regardless!**
 - 1. Tradition is often the source of this thinking.
 - 2. It is well meaning.
 - 3. It can also be the source of guilt for a Pastor who is struggling with this issue while he or she is frantically juggling the bills.

- B. My Own Experience

I worked for approximately 8 years before I heard the Lord say, "Why don't you try pastoring full-time?"

- C. God often uses people to reveal His will to you, but you must always consider advice with much prayer.
 - 1. Sometimes, I'm sorry to say, many well-meaning people will tell you “**what you should do**” when they are really saying what they themselves want to hear. They may be very convinced, but beware of the person who is so convinced he or she is right that they can't seem to truly hear from God.
 - 2. Pray earnestly for your own heart to be open to the Voice of God regardless of what He says.
 - 3. Once you have become willing to hear from God and humble enough to accept His Voice and His will, then determine if the other person agrees with your spirit.
- D. The bottom line is: **You Must Hear From God!**

II. Walking a Mile in Your Shoes (Figure 3)

- A. Once we hear from God, or at least feel that God is ready to help us work out the answer to our question, we need to look at our situation.
- B. Ask yourself, “Would either working a secular job or not working a secular job be against what God is saying or has said to me personally?”
- C. Advice at this stage may be helpful, but remember that the person giving the advice is not in your shoes.
- D. Ask yourself, “Can I afford to pastor full-time?” (**Figure 4**)
 - 1. If the answer is “yes” then your struggle may be over, but not necessarily.
 - 2. Pastoring in a church town where there are almost more churches than people may mean that most, if not, all of the evangelism that can be done has been done. One Pastor told me that in that situation he took a part-time job in order to keep from being bored or idle. This was a Pastor who is usually very busy, but in this particular case there wasn't much that could be done.

III. Advantages of Being Full-time

- A. I am free in time of emergencies without having to ask off work, and this especially good when an emergency may require me to be available for several days.
- B. I can take care of administrative duties during normal business hours without having to worry about neglecting a secular job .
- C. I can visit without being extremely worn out from a day's work on a secular job.
- D. I have much more time to spend in sermon preparation.
- E. I have time to do things that have to be done Monday through Friday between the hours of 8A.M. and 5P.M. These might be neglected if I was unavailable, or I might have to rely on others that are also juggling a schedule.

IV. Changing Times (Figure 5)

- A. I've had a number of guest speakers over the several years that I have been pastoring, but one really stands out. He was against women working and he said so from the pulpit. This particular stand made me think and compare today with the day in which he came up. I am thinking in terms now of whether or not it is alright for a Pastor to work a secular job, but the comparisons certainly apply.
- B. His kids were all grown. It is more expensive now to raise kids than it used to be, and I'm not talking about allowing your kids to wear **Nikes** and driving sports cars. If they are in school, besides simply needing clothes, there is almost always something requiring parental financial support. Raising kids is very expensive these days. College is almost a necessity in order to find a good paying job, and college costs are skyrocketing.
- C. In the past, groceries could be bought for a week with \$20.00. Not anymore!
- D. His house had probably been paid off several years earlier. My dad told me about having a \$95.00 per month house payment in the 1960s, but there aren't any of those anymore. If there are, please let me know!

- E. Gas doesn't cost .49 per gallon anymore! And a dependable automobile costs anywhere from \$2,000 for a used car to \$18,000 or \$20,000 for a new car. Of course, you can pay more for a luxury car, or you can pay less for a car that **might** get you off of the dealer's lot.

V. **Changing Personal Circumstances (Figure 6)**

- A. Children come along.
- B. Unexpected bills come up that may require working for a limited period of time.

I remember a story of a minister who left town without paying his bills and presumably without leaving a forwarding address. Now let me ask you, is it better to minister full-time and not pay your bills, or to work a second job in order to fulfill your obligations? Surely this story is an exception, but it makes the point well enough that we must pay the bills even if it means taking on extra work. Not paying your bills and not fulfilling your legal responsibilities is a reproach on the church, a reproach on the ministry, a reproach on your family, a reproach on yourself, and in most cases is a sin against God!

While it is good to pastor full-time, you should listen to God, weigh the circumstances, and then make your own decision. The only sin comes when you disobey God and don't fulfill your obligations, not when you disappoint men.

Lesson 6:

The Star

Introduction (Figure 1)

Everybody knows about it. Jimmy Swaggart and Jim Bakker made news that set the religious world on its ears. Both later confessed to their respective sins. Rev. Swaggart said on national television, "I have sinned!" Jim Bakker wrote a book entitled, **I Was Wrong**.¹⁴

By now, this news is very old. It seems like a long time ago. The dust has settled, but there is a lingering after-affect. We ministers have suffered the fate of the politicians. Politicians used to get a lot of respect. But when Watergate became public knowledge, people began to seriously doubt the motives and integrity of our representatives in government. Long after Richard Nixon's resignation, America holds a deep-seated mistrust of government and government officials.

The ministry has not yet overcome the influence of the Swaggart and Baker scandals. We are suffering from the glow of the religious "stars." People often view ministers with a suspicion that was there less often just a few years ago. While being famous and on television is not bad, when things go wrong to those who are most seen by the public, it leaves scars.

I. **Live & In Person/The Electronic Age (Figure 2)**

- A. We are in the age of radio, television, satellites, and the ability to see things live from around the world.
- B. We are in an information age. Information doesn't have to be important to sell; it simply has to be interesting.
 - 1. Gossip sells. People are interested in it.
 - 2. When people watch this stuff on television or listen to it on the radio, radio and television stations make money from the sponsors, the sponsors make money because the viewers buy the products, and everybody is happy!
- C. Well, **almost** everybody is happy.

¹⁴ Jim Bakker, *I Was Wrong* (Nashville, TN.: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1996).

1. Obviously, the target of an unfavorable report is likely to be unhappy with this negative attention.
2. However, even people who aren't being reported on sometimes suffer the consequences.
 - a. People are busy. Time constraints cause us to want to trust the nightly news as our source of news on everything. This often precludes attempts to sort out the fact from the fiction.
 - b. Business often precludes our attempts to separate the innocent from the guilty. It is quicker, and therefore easier, to lump groups together.
 - c. The perception becomes,
 - (1) 'If that politician stole money, then all politicians are crooked,'
 - (2) 'If that oil company is cheating people by raising gasoline prices unnecessarily, then all oil companies are cheating us,'
 - (3) And 'If that minister is cheating on his wife, then all ministers are unfaithful.'

II. So What! (Figure 3)

- A. You might say, "Why should this matter to me?"
 1. "I'm not on television or radio."
 2. "I'm not having any problems related to this issue."
- B. Disrespect is likely to take behind your back. (But don't be paranoid!)
- C. People watch you.
 1. Congregation
 2. Outsiders

- D. Respect for the ministry is very low. It therefore follows that in order for the world to gain respect for the ministry, we should show them something to respect.

III. My Hero (Figure 4)

- A. Who is your hero?
- B. Billy Graham is mine (along with Abraham Lincoln.)
1. He has integrity.
 2. He is respected apparently without question.
 3. He has been a shining light **consistently**.
 4. His organization has operated above reproach, even financially. I know this because of Trish's involvement with them through one of her former employers.
- C. Mother Teresa
1. She lived sacrificially.
 2. She loved the poor.
 3. She was committed to her calling.
- D. These and other examples are in some ways futile if we who continue to bear the burden of ministry and example don't pick up their mantle and walk as they did. I may never preach to thousands or shake the hand of a President of the United States, but I must still maintain a life of integrity, honesty, responsibility, humility, openness, and sacrifice. I have to remember that I don't have to be a super hero, but I do have to uphold a standard. This is possible only through the grace of God, **BUT IT IS POSSIBLE!**

IV. More Heroes/The Traits of a Hero

I have a collection of articles and stories about people who have made a difference. Their stories range from Olympic athletes to a school principle that refuses to allow profanity at school. Some traits of heroes include

- A. Doing the least desirable thing for the sake of the team,
- B. Selflessness,
- C. Sacrificial living,
- D. Doing what is right even when it doesn't get you on the front page of the newspaper. (Many of the hero stories I've collected did not come from page one of the newspaper.)
- E. Being Inspirational. They help people see what is possible.
- F. Though they often have a plan, many times a hero is noticeable because he or she did things that weren't planned but were important.

V. **Your Ministry (Figure 5)**

- A. I often pray for the Lord to help me a better minister. But I usually follow that request with one I consider even more important- I ask God to help me be a better Christian!
 - 1. Being a minister is a definite part of my Christian experience, but it is not everything.
 - 2. If the State Overseer gets out of the will of the Lord, or if the local church board gets out of the will of the Lord, or if the Lord plans to take me out of pastoral ministry for awhile, I must still live a Christian life. (Not to mention the fact that the ministry is more than preaching or having a position.)
- B. Those who watch us were listed earlier, but perhaps they can be divided up more clearly into the following two groups:
 - 1. Those Who Hear Me Preach- they watch to see if your "walk" matches your "talk". If it doesn't, they are likely to be unmoved by your ministry, preaching or otherwise.
 - 2. Those Who Don't Hear Me Preach - Most of the people I come in contact do not hear me preach on Sundays. However, they may know I am a Pastor or they may know I am a Christian. Their perception of what it means to be a Christian and/or a minister may be determined largely by you.

C. Living carefully is the fruit of where I am with Christ. If my roots are not being cared for, my fruit will be good. If my roots are taken care of, my fruit will be good. Careful living includes

1. Prayerful Bible Reading
2. Honest Prayer
3. Loving My Neighbor as Myself
4. Being Honest (Unfortunately, too many ministers have nurtured the bad example of Baker and Swaggert by lying!)
5. Watching Your Temper (Ouch!)
6. **Etc.**

Mother Teresa is gone and Billy Graham won't be around much longer. Billy Sunday is dead. So are the Wesleys. We can honor and revere those who came before us. But they cannot live our lives for us. And we cannot simply continue to point back to them to show the world what true Christianity looks like. We have to live it! We must have a life that is such that our church can brag about us, but so can our family. We have to be an example on Sundays, but our day off should be just as circumspect. People need to see the real thing in a minister. It's up to you! You're the one God called, and you're the one who the world is watching now. Other ministers have influenced what the world thinks about the ministry, some for the worse, some for the better. But now it's your turn. The integrity of the ministry is in your hands.

Don't just preach it. Live it!

Lesson 7:

The Mentor

Introduction (Figure 1)

What do you do when you have a problem at your church and you don't know how to solve it? What do you do when your church doesn't grow? How do you deal with an unruly deacon or lay minister? How do you bring about consensus out of division? What happens when you have to preach but don't feel like it? What do you do when you are so burned out that you can hardly stand to look at the church building?

Obviously these questions don't begin to cover all of the problems a minister could have when pastoring. But what do you do when...?

I. The Three Necessary Things for an Effective Ministry (Figure 2)

- A. A Right Relationship with God- An Absolute Must
- B. A Supportive, Ministry-Minded Wife or Husband- (I will, however, readily admit that a few men and women have been effective without the benefit of a companion. But **BEWARE!**)
- C. A Mentor- Of these three necessities, this is the one most overlooked by ministers.

II. My Mentor (Figure 3)

- A. The present focus on mentoring isn't just coming from one organization.
 - 1. Our Organization
 - 2. Promise Keepers
 - 3. The focus of these and other organizations is on **HAVING** a mentor as well as **BEING** a mentor.
- B. My Story
 - 1. I was...
 - a. Burned out in my ministry.

- b. Experiencing serious spiritual problems on my secular job, not the least of which was a political grasping for power that some seemed to be involved in.
 - c. Being hammered on all sides in my life by satan.
2. God had brought Bro. Clinton Fields into our district.
- a. We had a prior relationship, and Bro. Fields had acted as an unofficial mentor for me in the past.
 - b. I asked him if he would feel good about pursuing an ‘official’ mentoring relationship.
 - c. He said he would pray about it.
 - d. He felt good about it and we agreed to meet once per week.

III. Listening (Figure 4)

- A. Bro. Fields listened to me.
- B. Not just anyone can understand what you are saying when you talk about the ministry. It seems to take another Pastor to really understand your perspective.
- C. The Balloon

IV. Advising (Figure 5)

- A. Remember that I said you should be real with your members and help them to understand that you are not Superman? Well, while you are at it, be sure and remind yourself, too.
- B. You should be willing to say, ‘I don’t know how to handle this situation.’
- C. It is humbling, yet refreshing, to be able to ask for help and get advice from a seasoned minister. This is someone who has been there and done that and usually knows what he or she is talking about.

- D. The church was organized in part to promote fellowship. This does not just mean among members. First and Second Timothy were written by a minister (Paul) to a minister (Timothy) and were evidence of a continuing mentoring relationship.

V. **Accountability (Figure 6)**

- A. Weakness is not just your problem. It is normal.
- B. When I have to answer to someone about a particular area of my life, I am more careful about that particular area of my life.
- C. A mentor needs to be able to ask **moderately uncomfortable to extremely uncomfortable** questions. Some examples include:
1. Have you prayed this week?
 2. Have you read your Bible this week?
 3. Have you lied this week?
 4. Have you lusted after a woman (or man) other than your wife (or husband).
 5. Have you been in a compromising situation with someone of the opposite sex?
- D. While all of these questions will not be necessary for everyone to answer, and while other questions could be added, the important thing is to have a mentor who **knows which questions to ask**.

VI. **“Choosing” a Mentor (Figure 7)**

- A. The Wrong Person
1. Too Negative
 2. Too Weak
 3. Not Very Cautious
 4. Not Very Wise
 5. **NOT EDIFYING**

- B. My Introduction to Mentoring
1. Being very excited, I asked the person who was telling me about mentoring if he would be my mentor.
 2. Wisely, he said no.
 3. He explained that the Holy Ghost had to birth this relationship.
- C. My mentoring relationship with Bro. Fields, as detailed above, was birthed by the Holy Ghost and was edifying.

VII. Give and Take (Figure 8)

- A. You **need** a mentor, but you can also **be** a mentor.
- B. **(Figure 9)** 2 Timothy 2:2 says, “And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit **thou** to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also.”

Mentoring is a way to support the work of the ministry- both yours and someone else’s.

Lesson 8:

Out of Season

Introduction (Figure 1)

Second Timothy 4:2 says, “Preach the Word, be instant in season, out of season, reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine.” Being “instant in season, out of season” has been interpreted by many to mean we, as ministers, should be ready to preach a sermon at a moment’s notice. Perhaps this idea is plausible and desirable, for we should always be ready to give an account of the grace of God in our lives. However, this passage in 2 Timothy actually addresses something else.

I. Nero, Timothy, and the Church at Ephesus (Figure 2)

- A. Rick Renner’s Account of Nero and the Burning of Rome¹⁵
- B. The Probable Effect on the Church at Ephesus

II. What’s Happening at Your Church (Figure 3)

- A. Has anybody “blessed you out” lately?
- B. Has anybody gossiped about you?
- C. Has anybody stopped coming to church recently, especially because of something you said, something you did, or something you are?
- D. Has there been any division?
- E. Has there been a fight over money?
- F. Has anyone refused to submit?
- G. Has there been more than the normal amount of criticism?
- H. Have the tithes and first Sunday offerings gone down?
- I. Have some of your church members called the State Overseer lately?

¹⁵ Rick Renner, *Living in the Combat Zone* (Tulsa, OK: Pillar Books & Publishing Company, Inc., 1991), pp. 6-12, 14, 16, 17.

- J. Has your church failed to grow for a long time?
- K. Have things been the same for too long?
- L. Has your church not seen anyone saved in a long time?
- M. Have you not heard from God in a while despite your faithfulness in prayer and study?

III. The Effect of Hard Times

Different ministers deal with these various problems in different ways. What discourages one person may have no affect at all on someone else. You may not feel any great concern if one of these things is happening, but you might. However, if several things are happening at one time, you are much more likely to be affected in a negative way. While we may have some positive solutions occasionally, it is all too easy to make bad decisions when we are overwhelmed. Some possible bad decisions might include one or more of the following:

We might...(Figure 4)

- A. Stop studying the Word,
- B. Pray less, if at all,
- C. Complain more often,
- D. Become grouchy,
- E. Try to get transferred to another church,
- F. Stop preaching quite as often,
- G. Preach out of bitterness,
- H. Quit!

IV. Paul's Solution

- A. Keep Preaching! (Figure 5)
- B. Why?

1. satan won't quit.
2. Souls are in the balance.
3. The Church still needs leadership, especially since they may feel as bad as you do or worse.

V. The Right Spirit (Figure 6)

- A. When you're angry, it is easy to preach **ANGRILY!**
- B. The Example of the Post State Convention Sermon
- C. Anger isn't sin, but it has to be dealt with. But how?
 1. Talk to someone not from your church. Your wife is one possibility, and so are your mentor and/or State Overseer.
 2. Matthew 5:22a says, 'But I say unto you, That whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment...'

The idea here is to make sure you have a reason to be angry. Your mentor may be able to help you sort through the issues involved. Your wife may also be able to help you see where you are taking things too personally. An objective person might help you see where you are simply feeling sorry for yourself.
 3. Ephesians 4:26 says, 'Be ye angry, and sin not: let not the sun go down upon your wrath.'

You need to be careful not to sin by becoming bitter or taking your anger out on someone, especially you family. You may also need to go to that member with whom you are having trouble. This isn't true in every case, but sometimes such a move will go a long way toward bringing peace between you and the member, and it will give you a measure of peace.

VI. What Do I Preach? (Figure 7)

- A. Doctrine
- B. Definitions

1. Doctrine- “A principle or body of principles presented for acceptance or belief, as by a religious, political, scientific, or philosophic group; dogma.”¹⁶
 2. Principle- “A **basic truth**, law, or assumption.”¹⁷
- C. An organizational statement of beliefs is fine if the statement deals with the most fundamental issues.
1. Controversial issues may be best avoided for a time until you, and your church, are in a better frame of mind to deal with the controversial doctrines.
 2. For now you should focus on the most basic Christian teachings.
- D. **(Figure 8) My Experience-** Once when I was feeling a need for fresh anointing, I used the following outline, modified here for brevity, as a sermon. I borrowed the title from Acts and the church book of the same name and called the sermon **These Necessary Things**.¹⁸
- (1) *God is Real;*
 - (2) *Jesus is Real and dwells in believers;*
 - (3) *The Holy Ghost is real and dwells in those who receive Him;*
 - (4) *The Word of God is Infallible and inviolable; and*
 - (5) *There is a real devil, or satan.*

Obviously, any one of these sections could be turned into several sermons. However, my object here was not great depth, but fundamentals. Depth would’ve pushed me further than I could go at that time. A basic sermon on fundamentals helped me feel grounded at a time when I didn’t feel very grounded. I think this sermon was helpful to the church as well.

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¹⁸*These Necessary Things* (Cleveland, TN: White Wing Publishing House, 1960).

(Figure 9)

There are times when it is helpful to take a vacation, or take a break by having someone preach for you on a limited basis. However, while you are working on long-term solutions to help you get energized, you must keep preaching and not allow Satan room to work in your church because you have given up. Be instant in season, but be instant out of season as well!

Lesson 9:

Leaving on My Mind

Introduction (Figure 1)

There may come a time in your ministry when you will transfer between churches. It may be your choice, or it may be a choice made for you. If the latter is true, you really have no choice but to submit. But if you have a choice, you need to choose very carefully. How do you know when to leave one congregation for another?

I. My Story (Figure 2)

- A. Four Years of the Same Old Thing
- B. September, 1995-May, 1997- Ugh!!
- C. Anointed Everywhere But Home
- D. Overseer Friend (Not My Overseer) Gives His Opinion
- E. State Park in North Georgia
- F. 1 Kings 17:1-7
- G. Talking with Bishop Lewis. I told him I might not make it to appointment time. I would try not to leave him hanging, but I might not make it. I was ready to quit!!!!
- H. We were out looking for a house to buy and trying to figure out how we could even buy a house.
- I. May of 1997- At Biblical Studies, I finally told Bishop Lewis I could “be miserable” where I was.
- J. God began to bless the church.
- K. I took a sabbatical.
- L. Bro. White welcomes me back at the end of the sabbatical.

II. Two Things I Know

- A. Paul preached to Jews, which should have been easy as he knew how to relate to these people better than to anyone else.
 - 1. The Jews in Corinth actually rejected his preaching.
 - 2. The obvious course to take is to leave, **BUT...**
 - 3. God says to stay and preach. **(Figure 3)**
(Figure 4)
- B. God actually spoke to Paul. **(Figure 5)**
 - 1. Because of Grace, we can each hear from God and we don't have to rely solely on someone else to tell us what to do.
 - 2. How God "Speaks" To Us:
 - a. Sometimes He speaks.
 - b. Sometimes He illustrates.
 - c. Sometimes He leads.
 - d. Sometimes there is a sense that He is moving in the stillness of our hearts to lead us.
- C. A Thought Worth Pondering: "God doesn't deal in generalities."

III. Our Way (Figure 6)

We like "round", predictable numbers.

- A. Appoint Pastors Once Per Year
- B. Appoint Pastor's Once Every Two Years
- C. Committee Evaluates, Overseer Appoints, Committee Reevaluates Every Four Years.
- D. None of these systems is wrong. They do, however, illustrate the fact that we don't do it perfectly.

IV. God's Way (Figure 7)

- A. Paul stayed a year-and-a-half.
- B. God doesn't work according to calendars or round numbers.
- C. God works according to needs.

V. Was I Mistaken?

- A. I was focused on self.
- B. Ask a mentor to pray.
- C. Ask your spouse to pray (though he or she may be too close to be objective.)
- D. Then listen for the still small Voice.

VI. When the System Fails... (Figure 8)

- A. **BE SUBMISSIVE!!!**
- B. Illustration: A Pastor is in the will of the Lord and knows it beyond a shadow of a doubt. His superintendent, however, wants to move him. The Pastor goes. It is quite obvious that this is not where God wants Him to be, but he is submissive. Now, God has blessed him to be in a situation where he is truly in the will of God once again.

VII. The Lesson of the Still Small Voice (1 Kings 19)

- A. Elijah is tired. **(Figure 9)**
 - 1. He feels lonely. He says in verse ten, "...and I, even I only, am left..."
 - 2. He has been threatened. "...and they seek my life, to take it away."
 - 3. He runs away. He isn't seeking a break, which is often necessary. He's trying to quit!

4. He was afraid because he felt like he was the only one fighting and
5. He was being threatened by someone who had the power to carry out her threats!

B. God does two things. **(Figure 10)**

1. He tells him he **isn't** the only one. Verse eighteen says, "Yet I have left me seven thousand in Israel, all the knees which have not bowed until Baal, and every mouth which hath not kissed him." (Incidentally, God did the same thing for Paul in Corinth when He said, "...for I have much people in this city." (Acts 18:10))

Elijah didn't see things as they really were because...

- a. He wasn't God.
 - b. He was too tired and upset and scared to see things clearly.
2. He demonstrates the futility of drama and power and dramatics by themselves. Elijah experienced...
 - a. A great wind,
 - b. An earthquake, and
 - c. A fire.
 - d. But, God was not in any of them. But God Himself spoke in a still small Voice. God uses "foolish things" and "weak things" and "base things" and "things which are despised" and "things which are not" so that all flesh will glory in Him! (1 Corinthians 1:27-31)

C. The lesson is simple: You may be tired and nobody may be supporting you. You may feel lonely and dry and forgotten. You may be at the end of your rope. But this is when God's Power is seen the most clearly.

Don't wish for bigger numbers because of the strength that you think they will bring. Don't seek a new church for the peace you think it will give. When you are tired and weary, know that He is leading you! He will put you where you need to be! He will lead you where you need to go! And He will reward you in the end!

Lesson 10:

Attitude

Introduction (Figure 1)

One of my greatest struggles as a Pastor has been with my attitude. Pastors are people, too. We get upset. We get confused. We get burned out. If we're not careful, we'll wear our feelings on our shoulder while we are preaching. The results can be disastrous. If we are not careful, our feelings can become the feelings of the congregation, or they can provoke defensive feelings.

No matter how you feel as the Pastor, no matter what your attitude, you are likely to influence the congregation either for good or for bad. Therefore, it makes sense that you would attempt to develop and maintain a good attitude regarding your church.

I. The Need for Leadership (Figure 2)

A. Leadership is Biblical

1. *And he ordained twelve, that they should be with him, and that he might send them forth to preach.*
(Mark 3:14)
2. Ordain- "to invest with the functions or office of a minister, priest, or rabbi"¹⁹
3. Mark 3:14 refers to an appointment process.

B. People, like sheep, want to follow someone. They look for someone who can promise, or appear to promise, success, effectiveness, and happiness.

II. The Effect of Leadership (Figure 3)

- A. Leaders are watched.
- B. Personality is influential.

¹⁹From Compton's Interactive Encyclopedia Deluxe © 1999 The Learning Company, Inc.

1. When you hang around a person who is always unhappy, you are likely to become unhappy, or else you will leave that person so you want be brought down with them.
 2. We enjoy hanging around someone that laughs and is full good humor. These people make us feel good.
- C. Because the leader is in a position to be watched, and especially as a preacher who is filling the ears of the congregation, the congregation takes in what the minister has to offer, be it positive or negative.

There is that speaketh like the piercings of a sword: but the tongue of the wise is health.
(Proverbs 12:18)

...but a broken spirit drieth the bones.
(Proverbs 17:22b)

- D. A Pastor has certain Spiritual gifts, just like his members. His gifts can be a real blessing for a local church. However, his gifts can lose their effectiveness if his attitude isn't right.

III. “If Mama’s Not Happy, Then Nobody is Happy” (Figure 4)

- A. In your house, it only takes one person to upset the household.
- B. If that person happens to be one of the parents, the unhappiness hangs especially thick.
- C. The Pastor sets the tone of the service, as well as that of the church overall.

IV. A Merry Heart (Figure 5)

- A. If a negative heart (i.e. grieving, sorrowful, angry) affects the church negatively, a merry heart lifts it up.
- B. *A merry heart doeth good like a medicine.*
(Proverbs 17:22a)
- C. When someone has a disease, the right treatment is sought. Often, the right treatment is the right medicine. A merry heart has a positive impact on the church.

- D. This is easier for some than others. I am a melancholic. Jerry Bryant is not! I have to really work on being positive. If I walk in the church on Sunday morning and find myself getting defensive or down, I retreat to find a place in private to pray.
- E. ‘Positiveness’ should not become the focus of our ministry, and can do so easily. But a positive Pastor can make a tremendous in the outlook of the congregation.

V. Positive Steps to a Positive Attitude (Figure 6)

- A. If you struggle with depression, melancholy, or having a generally positive attitude, then there are things you can do to help yourself develop and maintain a positive attitude.
- B. Imitation is not the answer. You aren’t Robert Schuller. You aren’t Norman Vincent Peale. You’re not even Jerry Bryant. You have to be yourself.
- C. Five Steps That Can Make a Difference
 - 1. Contrary to what many people think about ministers, we have a struggle with prayer and Bible study just like everyone else. **(Figure 7)**
 - a. We get busy, and sometimes you can get so busy doing the work of the church that you forget the purpose of the church.
 - b. Bishop H. E. Carden reported minister’s responses to a survey that asked for their greatest needs in their personal ministries. The number one response was ‘Prayer & Study Time.’²⁰
 - c. Our first priority should be to make sure our inner man is strengthened, and this is done in devotion with Christ.
 - d. When I pray, I find I am much better prepared to handle the circumstances of the day than I am if I don’t pray.
 - 2. Talk to someone. **(Figure 8)**

²⁰ H. E. Carden, *Minister’s Information Response to Present Needs*, from a presentation given for leaders at the Powder Springs, GA Church of God of Prophecy on March 3, 2001.

- a. You and your wife should have someone to whom you can go and bare your souls.
 - b. If you and your wife/spouse share the load of ministry, both of you should find someone (not necessarily the same person) to talk to. Pastor's wives are one of the most needy and at the same time most neglected groups in the church today. They often absorb blows to protect their husband, and the husband may lean on them as well, but they have no where to go for themselves.)
 - c. Obviously, the person to whom you talk should no be someone from your congregation.
3. Take a day off. **(Figure 9)**
- a. The congregation comes to church on their day off, but it is a workday for the Pastor.
 - b. Saturday isn't much better. You are tying up loose ends for the Sunday sermons and worship services.
 - c. During the week you are preparing for sermons, taking care of administrative details, visiting the sick, discouraged, and new or possible recruits for the church.
 - d. Find a day to rest. Don't do any church business (except in an emergency.) Don't visit. Don't do any heavy sermon preparation. You don't even have to take phone calls (as long as you have an answering machine or someone to take messages.)
 - e. My day off is Monday.
4. Take a vacation. **(Figure 10)**
- a. Even if you are full-time, you need a change of scenery.
 - b. You need a time to leave the work behind.
 - c. You need a few days when you can get up every morning and know that you don't **HAVE** to do anything if you don't want to.

- d. A fellow Pastor told me early in my pastoral ministry that every Pastor needs to have one Sunday off per quarter. Some churches would not understand this and might have a problem with the Pastor being gone that often, but it may be necessary. I have found that I can last about three months before I begin to really feel the need to take a rest. While it would be best to be away from the church once a quarter, you could at least have a guest speaker come in and preach for you while you are there.
5. You must be fed! (**Figure 11**)
- a. Some preachers preach every week, some even teach at least one class per week, but never hear anyone else preach. They never read an inspirational book.
 - b. It is dangerous to always give but never receive. After a while, you have given everything you have and you have nothing left to give the people in the congregation.
 - c. There are different ways to be fed.
 - (1) Visit another church once a quarter.
 - (2) Read
 - (3) Listen to music that edifies.
 - d. Remember, you can't get water out of a dry well!

VI. Jesus Took Care of Himself (Figure 12)

Look at these examples of how Jesus took care of Himself.

- A. *And in the morning, rising up a great while before day, He went out, and departed into a solitary place, and there prayed.*
(Mark 1:35)
- B. *When Jesus therefore perceived that they would come and take Him by force, to make Him a king, He departed again into a mountain Himself alone.*
(John 6:35)

- C. *And from thence He arose, and went into the borders of Tyre and Sidon, and entered into an house, and would have no man know it....*
(Mark 7:24a)
- D. *...These spake Jesus, and departed, and did hide Himself from them.*
(John 12:36b)

(Figure 13)

Just as Jesus gave attention to His private life, you should give attention to yours. Your private moments will make the difference in your public ministry. If you neglect those private times, your ministry will dry up and so will your people. But if you go back to the well, the river will flow through you to your people. Take care of yourself!

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