

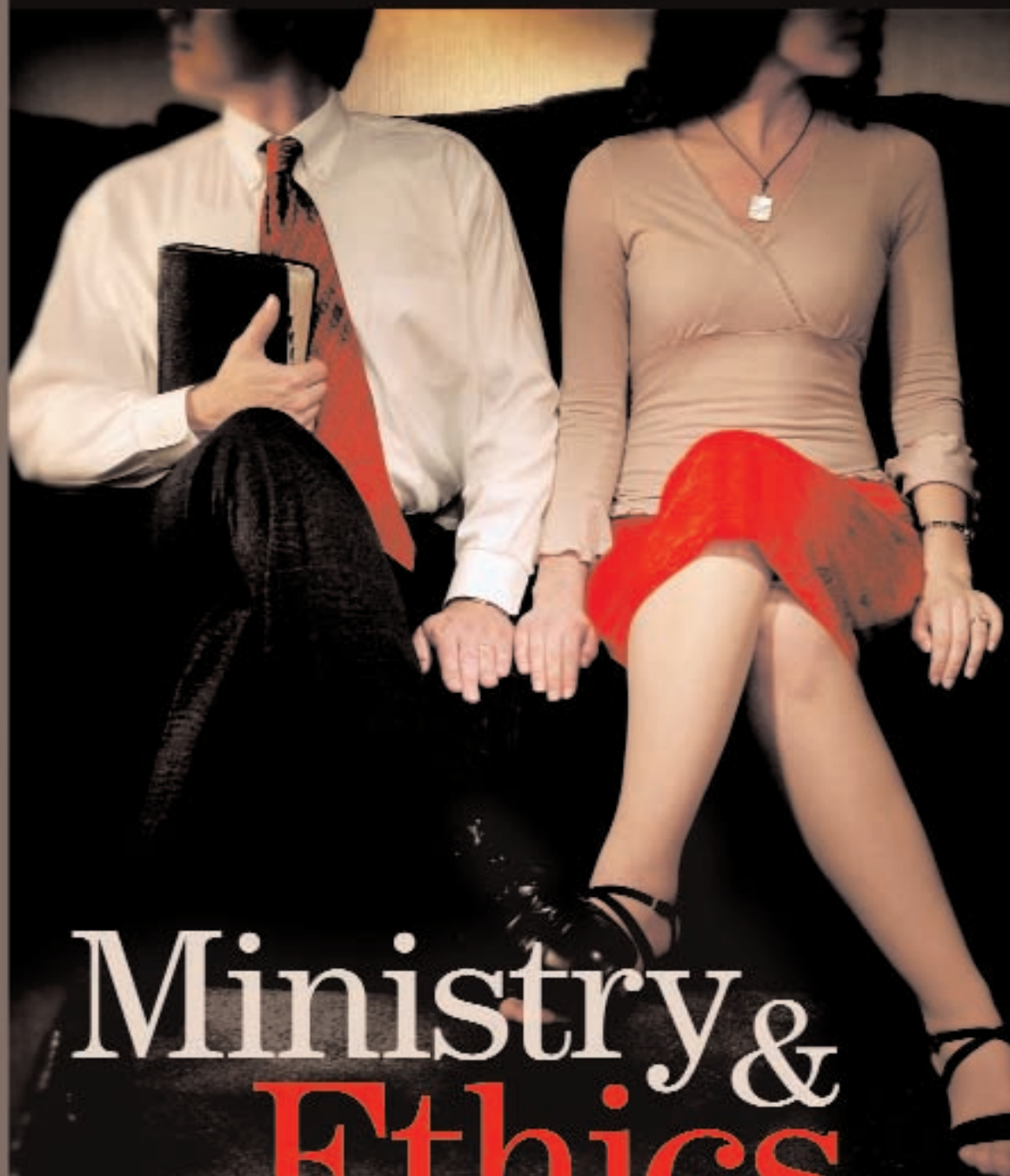
# enrichment

A JOURNAL FOR PENTECOSTAL MINISTRY

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Ministry &  
Ethics  
in  
Crisis

FALL 2004







## SETTING THE STANDARD IN LIFE AND MINISTRY

**E**thics involves our personal behavior and how we treat one another. Nearly every profession uses a standard of ethics to evaluate appropriate behavior and personal interaction. The Christian life has standards of behavior that are provided by the Word of God, and we are to constantly evaluate and align ourselves with that Word.

The ministry is a unique atmosphere where biblical truths, behavior, and personal interaction are under constant scrutiny. Some ministers resent this because they feel it is an intrusion into their personal lives. The Word, however, teaches that we are epistles to be read by those around us. Our behavior and social interaction may not always be perfect, but must be above reproach.

A significant risk in ministry is to separate who we are from what we do. If there is a discrepancy in what we say and what we do, we are no longer leaders. The minister sets the standards. This means ministers may sometimes be viewed as “countercultural.” We are not called to be obstinate, but to raise the bar in our communities and churches. Important ethical issues in ministry include:

### TRUTHFULNESS AND TRUST

Many in our culture expect authenticity and transparency from leaders. Yet, the double lives and secret sins of those we trust are constantly exposed. Once trust is lost it is nearly impossible to regain. Today, most people do not wait to observe restored integrity. They simply move on hoping to find authenticity in another leader. As a minister you may have only one chance to prove yourself trustworthy.

### HOW WE GATHER INFORMATION AND PRESENT IT

Enormous resources of information are available at our fingertips. On the Internet we can find out everything about anything at anytime. We must be careful to use reliable sources to gather information. Then we must give sources proper credit. Plagiarism is wrong.

### WHAT WE SAY IN THE PULPIT

Sometimes in the fervor of preaching we tell stories that are true, but in repeating them over time we may tend to embellish them. This is lying.

### SOCIAL ETHICS AND BIBLICAL STANDARDS

Social ethics may vary over time, during fads, and in different geographic regions. We cannot allow the exhilaration or anger of the moment to influence our standards. The challenge of Christian living is to maintain biblical values and standards regardless of what our environment does. The pressure is on the minister and minister's family to be examples, even when it hurts.

### HOW WE DO BUSINESS

When we conduct business in the community, we represent ourselves, our families, our churches, and often the whole of Christianity. More people in our community know who we are than we realize. Being unkind to a store clerk, being rude in traffic, or not paying our bills on time may damage our ministry.

### HOW WE TREAT OUR FAMILY

We should treat our family with the same respect we give people in the church and community. One minister's wife told me that her husband was a good pastor and treated the people well at church, but from the time they got in the car to go home he was terrible to live with. He also mistreated their children. This kind of unethical behavior brings misery to a family and may provoke one's children to rebellion.

The dynamics of constant social and cultural change can be challenging. If we try to constantly evaluate and adjust our life and ministry, we will become emotionally fatigued. In the pressure and stress of cultural change we cannot let our guard down and lower our biblical standards. The Psalmist warns us to “guard” our hearts for from the heart come “the issues of life.” Guarding our own minds and emotions is critical to helping others learn how to guard their minds and emotions.

I hope this issue of *Enrichment* will be a resource you can use to evaluate current ethical issues, your own ethics, and encourage you to make any necessary adjustments in your life that would enable you to be a more effective minister.

**GARY R. ALLEN**, D.Min., is executive editor of *Enrichment* journal and national coordinator of the Ministerial Enrichment Office, Springfield, Missouri.



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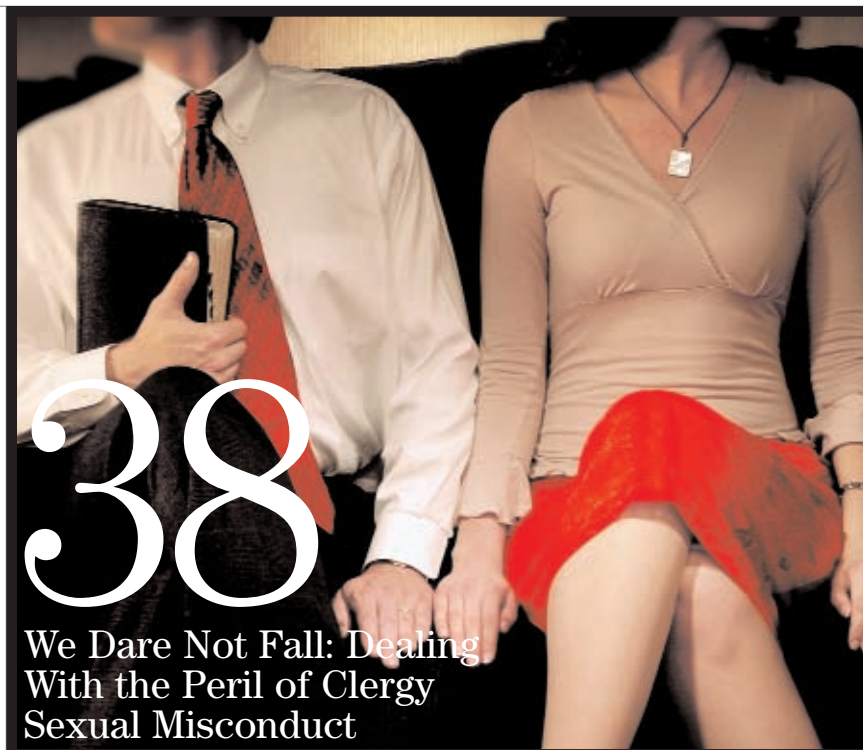
*By Stanley J. Grenz*

Left unbridled, sexual misconduct in the pastorate will bring disastrous results. It will confirm the skepticism of critics, turn seekers away from the doorway of the church, and leave the faithful disillusioned. What can ministers do to avoid falling prey to temptation's snare?

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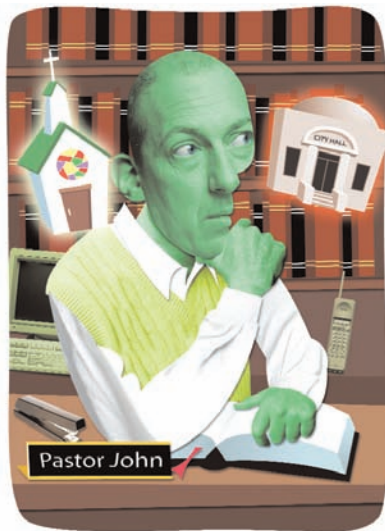
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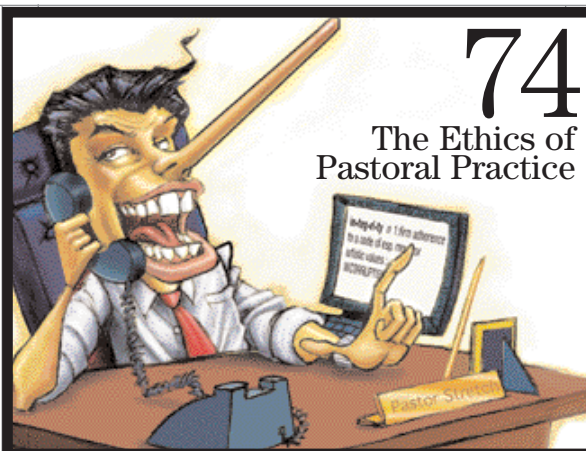
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- Use of the masculine pronoun for pastor is used throughout this issue and refers to both genders.
- Unless noted, all Scriptures are from the New International Version.







# eSHORTS

## THE HIM BEHIND THE HYMN PRECIOUS LORD, TAKE MY HAND

Thomas A. Dorsey was born in 1899 to an African American revivalist preacher and his wife. When his mother rocked him to sleep at night, she had no way of knowing that the baby in her arms would one day rock the world with his amazing musical compositions and performances.

When Dorsey was a child, he was exposed to blues pianists in the Atlanta area and started working in secular “hokum” music as a composer, arranger, pianist, and vocalist at age 11. At age 17, Dorsey moved to Illinois where he attended the Chicago College of Composition and Arranging. As a young adult, he distinguished himself as a successful composer of jazz and blues songs. During this time of fame and success he turned away from the Lord.

But when he narrowly escaped death, the young musician rededicated his life to the Lord. Dorsey then began devoting his musical talent to writing gospel songs and singing in churches.

While holding a service in St. Louis, Missouri, Thomas received a telegram bearing the heartbreaking message that his wife and infant son had died. The news sent him into deep depression. A few weeks later, however, Thomas picked up his pen and felt inspired to pour

out the pain as well as the hope in his heart. The result was a song that continues to provide a vocabulary of trust to Christians nearly a century later.

“Precious, Lord take my hand, lead me on, let me stand. I am tired, I am weak, I am worn. Through the storm, through the night, lead me on to the light. Take my hand, precious Lord, lead me home.”

**GREG  
ASIMAKOPOULOS**

## IN FINE FETTER TELLING THE TRUTH — DOES IT PAY?

People lie for many reasons. First, many lie to get out of trouble. While driving her cousin's car, Candace accidentally bumped it, causing a dent. Her father urged her, “Make up a story.”



Second, some lie to hurt others. For political advantage, candidates routinely exaggerate negative views of their opponents, even when they know these are untrue.

Third, others lie to avoid embarrassing others. “How did you like the dinner?” your hostess eagerly inquires.

Though you were barely able to choke it down with generous quantities of water, you smile, “Delicious.”

Fourth, people lie to prevent a greater evil. Suppose a terrified mother appears at your door clutching two young children, seeking a place to hide. Moments later you hear a frenzied pounding at the door. You open it to find a disheveled man with drug-crazed eyes holding a butcher's knife in his hand. “Where is my family?” he snarls.

Would you say, “I cannot tell a lie. They are in the basement”? Or would you choose the lesser of two evils and lie, mourning this necessity in a fallen world?

Mostly, however, we lie for personal advantage. We plead sickness to get time off from work, exaggerate qualities to sell our products, and list extra deductions to pay less taxes.

## WHY BE TRUTHFUL?

Why should we tell the truth? The Bible commands: “You shall not give false testimony against your neighbor” (Exodus 20:16), and “Speak the truth in love” (Ephesians 4:15). While we may simply follow this standard in a dutiful way, we obey with greater conviction when we grasp the reasons behind it. God gave us His commandments in order “that we might always prosper” (Deuteronomy 6:24).

**STEPHEN LIM, D.Min.**, Assemblies of God Theological Seminary. This was originally published in *Plain Truth*, May/June 2001, and is abridged from the original. Visit: [http://www.agts.edu/resources/subject\\_index/ETHICS.html](http://www.agts.edu/resources/subject_index/ETHICS.html)

# SNAPSHOTS

## WOMEN CLERGY: PERCEPTION AND REALITY

In March 1977, Gallup asked American non-Catholics if they favored or opposed having women as pastors, ministers, priests, or rabbis in their own faith or denomination. Less than a majority — 42 percent — favored the idea, while 27 percent were opposed, and 32 percent said they had no opinion.

Twenty-three years later, in May 2000, Gallup re-asked the question. Seventy-three percent of American non-Catholics favored women in the clergy, 22 percent were opposed, and 5 percent didn't answer or didn't know. Even including Catholics' responses in the 2000 results doesn't change the numbers much: 71 percent in favor, 23 percent opposed. The idea of women in the clergy seems to have become far more acceptable to Americans, regardless of their religious persuasion.

Data from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics show that the number of female clergy members has grown along with the public's acceptance of the idea. According to 2002 BLS data, 13 percent (54,000) of the roughly 406,000 clergy in the United States are women. This denotes a significant upward trend in the last 20 years; in 1983, the number of female clergy was a little over 16,000.

But is the number of women in congregation leadership positions keeping pace with the number of women who identify themselves as clergy more generally? Recent Gallup data suggest that there is a substantial gap. As part of its 2003 congregational engagement survey, Gallup asked members of religious congregations across the country if the leader of their congregation is a man or a woman. More than 9 in 10 respondents (93 percent)

reported that their leader is a man, while only 5 percent reported their leader is a woman.

### BOTTOM LINE

Is there a glass ceiling within American religious congregations? Gallup data suggest that there may be. Religious leaders at the executive or headquarters levels of their organizations may want to consider examining whether women are being offered sufficient opportunities to advance into congregation leadership positions.

**ALBERT L. WINSEMAN**, D.Min. Copyright © 2004 The Gallup Organization. Used by permission from [www.gallup.com](http://www.gallup.com).

# BOOMERS TO ZOOMERS

## RESOURCES FOR WHEN THE RULES OF THE GAME CHANGE

Three huge replacements are occurring today. Modernism is being replaced by postmodernism. Religion is being replaced by spirituality. Personal relationship is being replaced by technology.

Where do leaders turn for resources and skills when the rules of the game seem to be changing, and each generation seems to have a different preference? There are many answers, but there are certain basic assets available to Christian leaders that must remain foundational to any ministry. Fortunately, these are also available to every ministry. ➤



## HISTORY AT A GLANCE

### JOHN OWEN — PRINCE OF PURITANS

#### 320 YEARS AGO — 1684

Puritan pastor, theologian, and statesman John Owen, wrote a treatise on *Meditations on the Glory of Christ*. This series of discourses on John 17:24 was first published in 1684. Completed just before he died, this is the last book Owen wrote. He felt that meditating on the revelation of Christ and serving God in true holiness should be a person's chief aim in life. (See article on Owen, page 162.)

#### 100 YEARS AGO — 1904

Pentecostal evangelist Charles F. Parham began a tent revival in Joplin, Missouri, at 15th and Joplin streets. Many were saved, sanctified, and healed. Blind eyes were reportedly opened. A church was established. This helped spread Pentecostalism to the region of Missouri called the Ozarks. ➤

## SANCTIFIED COMMON SENSE

With the mind of Christ within us (1 Corinthians 2:16), we can observe the culture around us and draw valid conclusions about ministry. During my last year as a pastor, I began preparing my Sunday morning messages in a local coffeehouse frequented by postmoderns. The coffee was great, but even greater was the effect it had on my preaching. Every time I looked up from my computer, I saw lost people. This experience changed how I communicated the gospel. I had to ask myself: "Can Rob understand this?"; "Can Brian relate to this?" My messages became simpler, more visual, and much more evangelistic. The pay-off was watching people come to faith at the altars.

## SPIRIT INITIATIVE AND EMPOWERMENT

We are in the business of responding to the initiative of the Spirit and of serving Christ in the flow of the Spirit's life. Leadership techniques, opinion surveys, and technology cannot become the center of what we do. First and foremost, we are men and women filled with the Spirit. A friend of mine characterizes his successful pastorate as a "miracle on the brink of a disaster every day." Anyone doing leadership "for real" will live in this place of desperation regularly. It is our opportunity to turn desperation into dependence on the Spirit.

God has made available everything you need to accomplish His perfect will as a leader. Benefit from the experts. Learn all there is to learn. But in the end, trust yourself and trust Him.

**EARL CREPS**, doctor of ministry director, Assemblies of God Theological Seminary

## WHAT IN THE WORLD? NFL STARTER TURNED SOLDIER

One of the most celebrated casualties of the conflict in Afghanistan was NFL starter turned soldier, Pat Tillman. Even though Tillman's faith commitment was never articulated in the media, when you look at the circumstances surrounding his choice to enlist as a U.S. Army Ranger, his values and behavior reflect a Christlike example.

Tillman was beginning his fourth season as strong safety with the Arizona Cardinals when terrorists attacked America on September 11, 2001. Tillman's love for his country, a country that allowed him to do what he loved and be paid handsomely for it, overshadowed his love for the gridiron. He wondered how he could make a difference.

In May 2002, the 5-foot 11-inch, 200-pound athlete was offered a 3-year contract with Arizona for \$3.6 million, but he declined it. Using the off-season to ponder his options, the 25-year-old surprised his fans and teammates by announcing he was leaving professional football and an enviable salary to join the Army for \$18,000 a year. As far as he was concerned, being willing to lay down his life for the liberties Americans enjoy (and too often take for granted) was the ultimate way to express his love.

On April 22, 2004, Pat Tillman was killed in a firefight when Taliban insurgents ambushed his unit in Afghanistan. In his death the words of Jesus echo loud and clear, "Greater love has no man than this, that he lay down his life for his friends" (John 15:13).

**GREG ASIMAKOPOULOS**



PHOTO: MICHAEL CHOW, THE ARIZONA REPUBLIC

## 75 YEARS AGO — 1929

The U.S. Stock Exchange collapsed on October 28. Termed as "Black Friday," this collapse began the world economic crisis called the Great Depression, which lasted until the outbreak of World War II.

## 50 YEARS AGO — 1954

J.R.R. Tolkien published the first two volumes of *The Lord of the Rings* trilogy, *The Fellowship of the Ring* and *The Two Towers*. The third book of this Christian classic, *The Return of the King*, debuted the following year.

## 25 YEARS AGO — 1979

Jerry Falwell, a Baptist minister, founded the Moral Majority, a U.S. political-action group composed of conservative, fundamental Christians. It became a rallying point for the New Christian Right and was a forerunner of the Christian Coalition.

**GLENN GOHR**, assistant archivist, Flower Pentecostal Heritage Center

## UP TO THE MINUTE

### CONTEMPORARY WORSHIP TREND

Protestant church worship services have grown more contemporary in the past 5 years, according to a recently released study by Ellison Research, a Phoenix-based marketing firm.

Pentecostal churches reported a significant shift toward contemporary worship styles — 31 percent since 1999 compared to 12 percent of non-Pentecostal churches. Five years ago, 38 percent of all churches surveyed used praise and worship choruses; now that figure is 74 percent.

Since 1999, 15 percent of surveyed ministers said worship in their church has become much more contemporary, while 36 percent said it has become a little more contemporary. Only 5 percent said worship had grown more traditional, while 44 percent reported no significant change.

Larger churches, plus those led by younger pastors, saw the biggest shift to contemporary worship. For churches with 200 or more attendees, 27 percent became much more contemporary, compared to 14 percent of mid-size congregations and 9 percent of churches with under 100 people. In addition, churches led by pastors under age 60 were 16 percent more likely to shift to contemporary music



styles, while only 9 percent of older ministers did so.

Still, 88 percent of all churches surveyed reported that traditional hymns are sung at least once a month. Among Pentecostals, 52 percent reported using hymnals, compared to 99 percent of Methodists, 93 percent of Southern Baptists, and 92 percent of Lutherans.

In all, 93 percent of Pentecostal congregations use praise and worship choruses, compared to 89 percent of Southern Baptists, 88 percent of Methodists, and 59 percent of Lutherans.

The survey sampled 659 Protestant ministers who are actively leading congregations.

**JOHN W. KENNEDY**, *Today's Pentecostal Evangel*

## LEADERS EDGE

### MORAL QUALITIES AMONG THE MOST IMPORTANT FOR LEADERS

A survey released by Ajilon Finance, a global leader in accounting and financial staffing, shows 79 percent of American workers respect their boss a great deal. Thirty-two percent of working Americans, however, feel they could do a better job than their boss. The survey, conducted for Ajilon Finance by Opinion Research Corporation, polled 600 full- and part-time workers age 18 and older.

Most people want a boss they can respect. In fact, when asked to select one trait that is the most important for a manager to possess, more than one-quarter of American workers selected "leading by example." Of all qualities from which they could choose, employees ranked the most important as:

1. Leading by example (26 percent)
2. Strong ethics or morals (19 percent)
3. Knowledge of the business (17 percent)
4. Fairness (14 percent)
5. Overall intelligence and competence (13 percent)
6. Recognition of employees (10 percent)

[http://www.ajilonfinance.com/articles/af\\_bosssday\\_101403.asp](http://www.ajilonfinance.com/articles/af_bosssday_101403.asp).

## CROSSROADS

### THE MINEFIELD

The term diversity is severely limited when we use it to describe racial, ethnic, and color differences. The diversity equation must include some additional facts. Research at the Brookings Institute suggests our nation is morphing itself into three distinct regions.

The Melting Pot region is largely urban, ethnically diverse, coastal, and most impacted by recent immigration. Out of the Melting Pot region is flowing domestic migrants who are creating a present day counterpart to the 20th-century phenomenon of the suburbs.

The New Sunbelt includes states like Nevada and Arizona in the West, and the Carolinas in the East. The New Sunbelt already has 20 percent of the nation's population and is growing twice as fast as any other segment of the new American regionalism.

The third section of the U.S. is known as the Heartland because it is mostly the middle part of





## LEADERLIFE INFORMATION AGE SHOCK TREATMENT

Sometimes a shock is what a leader needs to push him or her to the next level. I recently received three. They reminded me that growth usually stops when the honesty runs out.

the country and is least impacted by immigration or migration from other areas.

Why are these new configurations so important to understand? Because the identity of each region cannot be easily understood from a distance and stereotypes are limiting.

The miscalculations of pollsters and politicians in their evaluations of each region only point out what Christian leaders ought to be readily discerning: unless we are increasingly reliant on the guidance of the Holy Spirit — in clearly understanding the challenges we face — we will continue in mediocrity and wonder why our calculations led us astray.

I am fearful that Christian leadership in the U.S. is creating strategic ministry for demographics that no longer exist. Without a clear commitment to listen for the sake of understanding, one will miscalculate strategic efforts. Without clear guidelines that only the Spirit can provide, we will expend our best effort for Christ in places that no longer require what we have to offer.

**BYRON D. KLAUS**, president, Assemblies of God Theological Seminary

### SHOCK #1 — COMMUNICATION MANIA

I discovered I send 5,200 e-mails per year. This is communication mania. There must be a support group somewhere for those with similar afflictions.

#### LIE EXPOSED

The principle of opportunity costs does not apply to me.

#### LEARNING APPLIED

Strengths turn into weaknesses. As a communication person by background, I found myself using this electronic channel just because it was there. Thus, I need to use e-mail more intentionally to accomplish specific goals.

### SHOCK #2 — COMPUTER MANIA

Recently I was without my laptop for a day and a half while some software upgrades were being installed. I was surprised to find myself feeling angry for the first couple of hours.

#### LIE EXPOSED

The law of the hammer does not apply to me.

#### LEARNING APPLIED

After 2 hours in a zero-computer environment, I was filled with a strange peace and relaxation. I was free. I read. I talked with teammates. I planned and dreamed. It hit me: Jesus did not have a laptop. Maybe this is why.

### SHOCK #3 — INFO MANIA

During an extended period of research I was unable to keep up with my e-mail. When I did return to it, 257 unprocessed messages were waiting for me.

#### LIE EXPOSED

The law of diminishing returns does not apply to me.

#### LEARNING APPLIED

Information had become my master instead of my servant. From now on, I will narrow the focus of my research to concentrate on my specialties.

### MAJOR RECOMMENDATION

Try a technology and information fast day on a bimonthly basis. The T & I fast is the equivalent to the spiritual discipline of solitude. Limit yourself to reading hardcopy books, talking with others (even by phone), and handwritten notes. No computer. No Internet. No e-mail. No PowerPoint. No IM.

You will be surprised how creative you become, how rested you feel, and how focused you will be when technical help is removed and cutting-edge information is not on your mind. Perhaps you will even hear from God.

**EARL CREPS**, doctor of ministry director, Assemblies of God Theological Seminary



# UTHTRAX

## COMBATING SPIRITUAL BOREDOM THROUGH SERVICE

"I'm bored." How many times have you heard that? Boredom is the reason many teens tune out in youth services. It is also why youth push away anything that does not smack with teen pizzazz. Today's teens live in a world of entertainment that flashes, smashes, and dazzles. How can the church compete?

and put their faith in action. They find a new high when they help build a home for a struggling family or minister to the elderly. According to George Barna (Barna Research Group), turning teens on to practical ministry early not only affects them for life — training them to become adult church leaders — but also stems the tide of young adults leaving their faith between the ages of 18 to 24 due to spiritual boredom.

Teens who put their faith into action discover a whole new avenue in which to express their love for God through practical ministry. When youth are encouraged to serve others, it touches a cord in this generation waiting to be unleashed.

**T. SUZANNE ELLER**

Is the answer to ante up the entertainment level? Maybe if we installed more neon lights or upped the fear factor in our youth games, teens would respond. The fact is spiritual boredom is not alleviated by additional entertainment. This just leaves teens looking for the next buzz. Though it is critical that our youth services are teen-friendly, youth are looking for more — or maybe, less.

Many teens say they want to get off the spiritual roller-coaster of entertainment

# FIELD TRIP

## PLANTING HISPANIC CHURCHES

"One of the greatest and most urgent missionary challenges the Church has ever faced" is how missionary Reginald Stone describes the evangelization of Hispanics in the United States. He is not exaggerating. Now topping 35 million, America is the third largest Hispanic country in the world, trailing only Mexico and Spain. Yet, there is only one Assemblies of God church for every 20,000 U.S. Hispanics.

When Reggie's district asked him to draft the "Hispanic Church Planting Vision," he knew the inherent challenges and opportunities. Hispanics experience many cultural differences in America that separate them from Anglos.

Far outweighing the challenges, though, are the cultural distinctives that attract Hispanics to Pentecost: a pronounced sense of community, less individualism and more cooperation, strong family loyalty, deep appreciation for the miraculous, and liberty in worship. These distinctives provide rich soil for church planting.

A multifaceted plan has been enacted in North Carolina — the second-fastest growing Hispanic population in America — to double Hispanic congregations within five years. The plan involves calling for commitment from the 25 Hispanic church pastors and partnering them with the 130 students from the Theological Hispanic Institute. Next, identifying populations of 1,000 or more without an Assemblies of God church, target one community, conduct a site visit and prayer walk, build a ministry team including bivocational leadership, identify a launch strategy (home cell group or rented location), and start a church.

What began as a model for church planting has resulted in the immediate birth of three churches, with tangible plans for 10 more within months. Divine direction and miraculous provision were in evidence throughout the process, and many people were saved in the first services. Duplicating these dynamic results is just a matter of vision.

For more information, contact Reginald Stone through the North Carolina District.

**LORI O'DEA**, doctor of ministry coordinator, Assemblies of God Theological Seminary



## CHURCH COMMUNICATES THE GOSPEL IN INNER-CITY CONTEXT

There was a shooting on one of the bus runs the Sunday night that Terry Raburn, district superintendent for the Peninsular Florida District, spoke at Pastor Tommy Kyllonen's Crossover Church in Tampa. It didn't begin to slow down the church's community outreach.

"Crossover is in one of the most down-trodden, compromised areas of Tampa," Raburn says, "and Tommy sends out buses across that area to bring in kids. The church is very youth oriented, but it offers spiritual growth on a level that every age level can accept. The Spirit of the Lord is incredibly present at Crossover. I don't know how many people would have the chance to see 'Amazing Grace' done with stomp and rap, but at Tommy's church you can."

Crossover Church's sole purpose is to give streetwise teens and 20-somethings a soul purpose. It's been this way since Tommy Kyllonen came to Tampa, Fla., in 1996 and started the "hip-hop" youth ministry at the church with four teens.

The group grew to nearly 200 during the next 6 years. When Kyllonen became senior pastor 2 years ago, the church as a whole transitioned its focus to reaching out to those in Tampa's hip-hop culture.

Sunday morning services at Crossover are like no other. A disc jockey runs turntables, with hip-hop as well as rhythm and blues tunes mingled with praise and worship songs booming from overhead speakers. Remarkable testimonies from former drug dealers and strippers help define the services.

"God made it clear that we were supposed to reach out to what the majority of the neighborhood was, and that's hip-hop," says Kyllonen, 30. But that doesn't mean the gospel is watered down for the congregation, which is 50 percent Hispanic, 25 percent black and 25 percent white.

"We tell it like it is, but we always do it in love," says Kyllonen, noting the church has nearly 20 first-time visitors each week.

Visitors receive a free CD that includes music from various hip-hop and R&B artists who attend the church, as well as an introduction from Kyllonen, who has also recorded five hip-hop albums under the name Urban D.

For the community, Crossover holds quarterly Christian hip-hop and R&B concerts, which include a graffiti expo on a portable wall the church built. The church recently completed construction on a basketball court and, thanks to a \$13,000 grant, a 10,000-square-foot skate park complete with half-pipes, ramps and rails.

"Our church doesn't look like your typical church," says Kyllonen, noting that the church is covered with murals. "The crowd we're reaching doesn't want to come into a place where there are pews and stained-glass windows."

Edward Bayonet, who is known as Spec, says Crossover's hip-hop environment led him to accept Christ as Savior at a youth service in 1998.

"I saw [people] here that looked like dudes from around my block," says the 25-year-old Spec, who as a teen regularly sprayed graffiti on the streets of Long Island, N.Y. "I felt comfortable because I could be myself."

Now Spec puts his love for Christ into his love for art. He is Crossover's media director, designing promotional graphics, fliers and the church's website.

"Hip-hop was all I knew," Spec says. "Hip-hop isn't our god, but we use what we know as a tool for Christ."

Today nearly 300 people from ages 18-50 attend Sunday morning services at Crossover, and the church recently added a second service. On Thursday nights more than 60 teens attend a junior high-only hip-hop youth service that started last year with 15, while 220 senior high and young adults meet in the main auditorium.

Newcomers are plugged into small-group Bible studies. The church has drama teams, a choir, and open microphone and poetry nights.

Youth can purchase Christian hip-hop music from Crossover's CD store. The church also has a hip-hop shop and a skate shop, and produces a magazine.

"New churches establish a new presence for Jesus," says Church Planting Director Paul Drost. "With the diversity of America now, the more churches we have that can target different segments of the population, the greater impact we can have on extending God's kingdom. I heartily recommend churches like Crossover."



**Pastor Tommy Kyllonen**



**Fla.vorFest 2002 2 disc DVD cover**

**ISAAC OLIVAREZ, *Today's Pentecostal Evangel***



## Ask the Superintendent — **ETHICS IN LIFE AND MINISTRY**



**G**eneral Superintendent Thomas E. Trask is known, both inside and outside the church, as a man of integrity. Ministerial ethics is important to him. In his role as general superintendent, he has dealt with ministers who have been derailed in ministry because of a lack of ethics. Because of this, he has a passion for all ministers to exhibit ethical behavior in every aspect of their lives.

In this quarterly interview with *Enrichment journal*, Superintendent Trask discusses the important subject of ethics and shares his insight and passion.

### HOW IMPORTANT ARE ETHICS IN THE LIFE AND MINISTRY OF OUR MINISTERS?

**TRASK:** It is critical that our pastors exhibit ethical behavior. Ethics govern what a person is and what a person does. People assume that a minister of the gospel does what is right. However, that is not always the case because of

one's lack of ethics. There must not be a dichotomy between what one represents — the gospel — and what one is.

### HOW DO WE DETERMINE WHAT IS RIGHT?

**TRASK:** First, the Word of God is our standard. We must ask, "What does the Word say?" It is not what society says, or what I think; it is what the Word says.

Second, the Holy Spirit helps us with ethical checks and balances. When we are presented with a proposition we are unsure about, the Spirit gives us a green light, a yellow light, or a red light. If the proposition does not conflict with the Word of God, we get a green light and feel comfortable in our spirit. If we are unsure, that is a yellow light — the Holy Spirit is cautioning us. There are times when we get a red light — a check in our spirit. We must not ignore these signals because that is how we are directed by the Spirit.

Many times the Lord has spared us from something of which we were not aware. He knew ahead of time. Because we have a sensitivity in our spirit we were able to avoid the pitfall.

### WHAT IS THE ROLE OF A CONGREGATION WHEN A MINISTER'S ETHICS DO NOT REFLECT WHAT THE WORD OF GOD TEACHES?

**TRASK:** A congregation has a responsibility to confront leadership whose actions are unethical. Their concerns should be taken to the board of deacons. Deacons are the church's gift to the pastor. They represent the congregation and should bring their concerns to his attention.

Ministers are called by God and are accountable to Him, but they are not immune from accountability to the Lord and to the people they serve.

Our code of ethics must become our lifestyle. When our lifestyle is right, we do not need to cover our tracks or look over our shoulder. We will not need to worry about someone asking questions. People will put their confidence in a person whose lifestyle models the standards of God's Word.

The pastoral position carries great responsibility because leaders have a powerful measure of influence. Pastors are looked up to and held in high esteem. Their office is a sacred office. When a minister fails, people lose confidence. For some people it can take years to rebuild trust in leadership.

### WHAT ROLE DOES THE ASSEMBLIES OF GOD TAKE IN ADDRESSING A MINISTER'S UNETHICAL BEHAVIOR OR IMMORAL CONDUCT?

**TRASK:** We have a responsibility to look out for the well-being of both ministers and local churches. We never wish to indicate to a congregation that we are unwilling to deal with the difficult matters of moral failure.

Alleged cases of unethical behavior are reported to the district officials. The district has the responsibility to investigate these allegations. The person or people bringing a charge against their pastor must be willing to testify. If they are not willing to testify, the charge cannot be dealt with.

If a moral failure is verified, then the case is brought to the district presbytery. They recommend to either grant or not grant rehabilitation. That recommendation is given to the Executive Presbytery who is the credentialing body for the General Council. The Executive Presbytery then decides to concur or not to concur with the district presbytery.

Our Bylaws contain the guidelines for rehabilitating ministers. Moral failure is a spiritual problem. The goal of rehabilitation is to restore one spiritually, then to his family, and finally to his ministry. But the ministry is not the first priority in rehabilitation.

### **THE WORD INTEGRITY MEANS BEHAVIOR THAT INSPIRES TRUST. EXPLAIN HOW A MINISTER'S BEHAVIOR INSPIRES TRUST.**

**TRASK:** A minister should always be an open book in his personal life and finances, and in the church's life and its finances. Informed people are happy people. When a minister keeps secrets, he creates mistrust and questions in the minds of people. People can trust the pastor if he is transparent with them.

Pastors make a mistake if they go into a church and demand people to immediately believe them and trust them because of their office. A pastor has to establish relationships and earn that trust. When pastors work with people in day-to-day circumstances, the people learn what the pastor says in the pulpit is what he lives. Once a minister has earned the trust of the people they will follow him. Integrity is the ability to be forthright, honest, and to live that way under all circumstances.

### **HOW DOES ONE PERSON'S MORAL FAILURE HARM THE IMAGE OF THE CHURCH?**

**TRASK:** When there is moral failure in a high-profile minister, every minister in the church suffers. Moral failure creates questions in the minds of people. If moral failure is found in this high-profile minister, how can we be sure our own pastor has integrity? This is unfair, but it is reality. This is why we need to examine ourselves carefully and live above reproach.

### **DESCRIBE THE ETHICAL APPROACH TO RELATIONSHIPS WITH FELLOW PASTORS.**

**TRASK:** One problem concerning relationships between pastors is territorialism — the belief that an area in a city or a community where a pastor ministers is exclusively for his outreach. We do not approve of that in the Assemblies of God. If a church is focused on evangelization and reaching the lost, its pastor will not worry about people moving from one church to another. If people are being fed, cared for, loved, provided for, and utilized in their gifts, they will be satisfied with and loyal to their local church.

Another area of importance is honoring your predecessor. When a pastor resigns from a church where he has ministered faithfully for a number of years, the new minister has an obligation to acknowledge his predecessor's leadership. The new minister needs to understand the loyalty the people have for their former pastor. He needs to recognize the former pastor and allow him to come back on special occasions. When men are small in spirit and are jealous, it does not serve them well. A pastor does not lift himself by tearing down someone else.

### **WHAT IS A MINISTER'S ETHICAL DUTY WHEN MEMBERS OF A TROUBLED NEIGHBORING CHURCH LEAVE THAT CHURCH AND BEGIN ATTENDING HIS?**

**TRASK:** The pastor needs to be careful

not to encourage those people to come to his church. There are several factors involved here. Why have they left? If they come because of conflict with the leadership or the church, and if their spirit is not right, they will bring that same spirit with them.

There are times when it is healthy for people to make a change because their personality does not match the personality of that church. The ethical thing to do is to call the pastor and say, "I wanted you to know there are people from your church now attending our church. I have not encouraged them to come, and I wanted you to be aware that they are attending our church. Can you give me any information about them?"

If they have caused trouble, they will probably cause trouble where they attend next. People don't change. It is a fallacy to think that a new church and a new pastor are suddenly going to change these people.

### **WHAT SHOULD A PASTOR DO IF A NEIGHBORING PASTOR DOES NOT SPEAK WELL OF HIS MINISTRY?**

**TRASK:** There should not be any place for that in the ministry. Scripture reminds us that whatsoever you sow you will also reap. If you sow discord, ill will, or slander about someone, it will come back to you. I would hope and pray that pastors do not get caught in that trap.

### **WHAT WOULD YOU SAY IN SUMMARY TO OUR PASTORS ON THE ISSUE OF ETHICS?**

**TRASK:** Today the world's trust in the church has been shaken because of failures on the part of pastoral leadership. There was a time when a minister's word was second only to the Bible. People did not question it. The minister's life was not in question. There is a greater need today for the church to be the standard bearer of truth, integrity, and morality because no other agency in the world is going to represent these virtues. ■



# ministry and ethics **in CRISIS:**

## IMPLICATIONS FOR 21ST-CENTURY MINISTERS

**A**n ethical crisis exists in ministry. Some days it seems religious people are not all that religious. With sexual scandals and abuses, homosexuality, and financial irregularities frequently in the news, the world sees an ethical problem. Of greater concern are the less visible ethical issues that tempt ministers daily in their choices, goals, and obligations.

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B Y R O B E R T J . Y O U N G



The growing ethical crisis in ministry is seen in the increasing number of resources. Twenty years ago ministerial ethics was seldom discussed. Today, a quick survey of the Web reveals hundreds of sites with policy statements, disclaimers, and resources for ministerial ethics.

When ethics is defined and its theological foundations are reviewed, we can formulate reasons why the crisis is important. The nature of the crisis — its internal and external contributing factors — and informed suggestions for recovering ethical ministry based on a biblical foundation also need the minister's consideration.

## DEFINITION

What is ethics? "Christian ethics is the study of good and evil, right and wrong. What constitutes good, virtuous, healthy character? How does one discern and do the right thing in various ethical dilemmas? How do Christian moral values play out in a diverse, multicultural, multifaith world? How does one teach and promote moral character and action?"<sup>1</sup>

Every Christian is an ethicist on a moral quest for virtue and character. It is not enough to identify and support ethical behavior. As Aristotle, an early ethicist, pointed out, *ethica* comes from *ethos*, referring to practices, customs, and habits. Ethics evaluates behavior and asks why we act as we do. How should we determine right actions?

## Ministers must do more than guide others toward ethical behaviors; they must be examples.

Most of us know what it means to be virtuous. We know when we are persons of character and when we are not. We must never be satisfied with legal morality (I technically keep the moral code). Ethics is not only about morality, it is about character and virtue. Ministers are called to virtue.

## FOUNDATIONS

We must recognize the biblical foundations of Christian ethics. Some wonder whether a Christian ethic is any longer possible in a postmodern world that questions the validity of the organizing tenets of Christian ethics. Hauerwas observes that Christian ethics is being called to exist in a fragmented and violent world.<sup>2</sup> Absolutes are still needed in a world that has largely discarded them.

The privatization of religion has made ethical behavior fragile. There is a need for renewed truthfulness in Christian conviction. Abstract ethics is impossible. A familiar behavioral model says behaviors are based on values, and values on the principles or beliefs that in sum make up one's worldview. At stake in the

ethical crisis is the theological base of Christian behavior.<sup>3</sup>

Some maintain that our world needs to redefine ethics lest morality and virtue disappear.<sup>4</sup> No doubt we exist in a world where postmodernism has shaken loose much that was formerly nailed down. We must identify a normative ethic of doing and an ethic of being.<sup>5</sup> In the midst of questions about the biblical foundation of our behaviors we must reestablish moral norms, obligations, and values.

True Christian ethics is founded in solid theology — the sovereignty of God, the lordship of Christ, the new righteousness possible in the new kingdom. Unlike philosophic ethics, Christian character can never be considered apart from its religious nature — connected with God, personal, internal, future-oriented, and universally applicable.

## IMPORTANCE

The importance of the crisis may be seen by asking, "What is at stake for ministry, the church, and the world?"

Much is at stake for those who preach and minister. Understanding how and why ministers act is not easy because humans are prone to rationalization, personalities enter power struggles, and honest self-evaluation is difficult. We must admit that hard questions exist, identify them, and encourage personal reflection.

Ministry is not limited to full-time ministers or church workers. Interest in ministerial ethics expands to many professionals and volunteers who serve the church in a ministerial capacity: elders, deacons, pastoral administrators, pastoral care ministers, spiritual directors, youth ministers, campus ministers, directors of religious education, and teachers.<sup>6</sup> As the secular world gives increased attention to professional ethics, the church must not lag behind.

While ethics and etiquette are connected,<sup>7</sup> ethics in ministry is ultimately about integrity. What is at stake is the integrity of ministry. How can those who are not whole help others toward wholeness? Effective ministry does not demand perfection; it demands integrity.

No subject is more relevant for ministry than exploring how truth, beliefs, and values integrate in Christian living. No ministry can be faithful if it does not help people toward righteous living through the ethical challenges of our time. Ministers must do more than guide others toward ethical behaviors; they must be examples. Ethical standards apply to all Christians, but spiritual leaders have a higher degree of ethical accountability.

### What is at stake for the church?

Churches seldom rise above the moral standards and teachings of the person who regularly provides spiritual nourishment. If the modern church faces a spiritual bottleneck that prohibits the church from pouring itself out into the lives of a

needy world, the bottleneck is at the top. The church needs spiritual leadership that incarnates the life of Jesus before it can understand the challenge of living out the life of Jesus in our world. Virtue influences our choices, goals, roles, and behaviors. Genuine virtue connects faith and behavior. Virtue is a lifetime endeavor. Christian morality is not built solely on keeping rules. Christians shaped by the church community should have a moral shape.

What is at stake for the church may be summarized in three questions: Will we be spiritual or secular? Will we be God's presence in this world with a clear word from God, or merely another siren song? Will we be light and salt?

### **What is at stake for the world?**

One need only observe the catastrophe of ministers gone astray to recognize how closely the world is watching those who claim to follow Jesus, especially those who serve in ministry. For the world, salvation, eternity, the gospel, public morality, and ultimately society itself is at stake.

Societies function and are safe because a level of morality prevails. Generally my neighbors do not seek to rob me, kill me, or take advantage of me. I am safe in society because of a prevailing moral standard. However, increased random violence marks the decay of generally accepted moral standards. Prison populations swell. The dignity of human life is diminished in a variety of ways.

## **THE NATURE OF THE CRISIS**

The ethical crisis is not limited to ministry. Our nation is in a moral crisis. The crisis in ministerial ethics is part of a larger moral crisis in our nation.

The crisis in ministry is evident in three main areas — false spirituality, false evaluation of ministry, and false expectations on the part of ministers, churches, and the world.

Spiritual ministry is easy to counterfeit. Preachers preach and teach with little or no study.<sup>8</sup> Time pressures encourage plagiarized sermons and classes. Bulletin articles are copied without credit, or worse, set forth as one's own effort. Ministers spend too little time in prayer, in speaking to God, in listening to God, all in the name of speaking for God. Some involved in ministry covertly pursue unethical, immoral lifestyles.

Compounding the crisis, our contemporary society does not appreciate that genuine ministry is not dependent on outward appearances nor external circumstances. The rapid transitions of contemporary society have blurred definitions of ministry. In fact, today's world often measures ministry by worldly standards. This encourages hypocrisy and the lack of ministerial integrity. Ministry is in ethical crisis. Heightening the dilemma is the fact the crisis is generally unseen, even by many church leaders and ministers.

## **INTERNAL FACTORS**

How have we arrived at this point? Several internal factors have contributed.

### **Lack of spiritual focus**

Ministry interviews seldom ask about personal spiritual health and growth. Few ministerial training programs require a spiritual-formation component. The significant requirement of spiritual reflection and formation in ministerial training is the exception not the rule. Have we forgotten that spiritual leaders must be spiritual? Are we so busy pursuing God's work by methods proven in the marketplace that we have forgotten God's kingdom work is spiritual? How will unspiritual people minister God's presence effectively in the church when God is barely present in their lives? Without spiritual focus, spiritual famine will come. Genuine ministry is fraught with frailty, frustration, and even failure. The greatest failure, however, may be seeking power for ministry in the physical rather than the spiritual realm.

### **Misguided evaluation**

How should ministry be measured? There are two opposite extremes. On one hand, worldly standards of success often replace spiritual evaluation. Some churches fail to appreciate effective ministry in their demand for numerical results. God's Old Testament prophets would not have fared well in many modern churches.

On the other hand, some churches and ministers fail to understand the power and potential of effective ministry and suffer because of their low expectations. The ultimate measurement of ministry is faithfulness to God. Ministry that is faithful to God never fails. Faithful ministry brings God's power to bear in this world, and God promises increase. His Word never returns empty.

### **Worldly expectations**

Our society and churches often buy into the worldly mindset more than we like to admit. We frequently have expectations that do not appreciate the elastic, flexible nature of ministry. We do not know with certainty whether ministers work for God or for churches. We affirm the former, but often practice the latter. We are more apt to clone preachers than allow valid ministry consistent with the minister's personality.

## **EXTERNAL FACTORS**

How did we get here? The ethical crisis is also a truth crisis. Significant shifts in the behaviors, beliefs, and values of Western culture have contributed to this crisis, including privatization, humanism, relativism, secularization, and pluralism. The result is the moral crisis in our nation. Leaders in government, business, and sports are charged with various illegal and immoral acts. Church leaders are caught in unethical behaviors and



activities. Our nation has lost its moral footing. Clearly, the crisis in ministerial ethics is part of a larger crisis. An examination of the effects of privatization, humanism, relativism, secularization, and pluralism will explain how this moral crisis occurred.

### **Privatization**

Privatization in our Western world moved religion and ministry from the public to the private arena which resulted in a loss of responsibility.<sup>9</sup> The inability to discuss religion in the public arena is one consequence. Once religion is limited to the private arena, sharing one's faith becomes difficult and responsibility is denied. "What I do is my business." This attitude has contributed to the loss of Christian ethics both in the ministry and in the pew.

### **Humanism**

Our teaching of ethics has not kept up with the rapid advances in our world. Our world and our churches have experienced a loss of values through humanism. In the past, the church generally taught ethics by focusing on behaviors more than values or beliefs. For example, when my children were young, I taught them not to play between the sidewalk and the street (behavior). Later, I taught them how to distinguish safe and unsafe places and activities (values). If I know what is wrong but not why it is wrong, I cannot make valid decisions when new options are presented.

The value shift in our society must be addressed.<sup>10</sup> The private availability of immoral materials has increased. Formerly, exposure in the public arena was a deterrent to pornography and other unethical or illicit activities. In the private arena, such checks are removed. Restoring Christian ethics will demand that we clearly connect behaviors (ethics), values, and truth beliefs.

### **Relativism**

Our world and our churches have experienced a loss of truth, an erosion of the principle base through relativism. If truth is relative, there is no objective truth. If there is no objective truth, no one can say with certainty that any behavior is right or wrong. Despite the discomfort of making truth claims that prove other religions, or even other Christian religious groups, false, the church cannot afford to deny the truth. David Wells has outlined the impact on a society and its future when truth claims are lacking.<sup>11</sup> The church must return to the clear pronouncement of objective truth.

### **Secularization**

We have experienced a loss of mystery in the continuing secularization of religion. A poor spiritual focus results from a lack of spiritual training. The ultimate result is a totally

secular version of Christianity, a result I fear may not be far away for some groups.

### **Pluralism**

Our churches have lost some of their identity through pluralism. In a world of relative truth, secularized religion, lack of mystery, and loss of values, we hardly know who we are or why we exist. We have limited ability to identify ourselves as a Christian colony characterized by Christian behaviors in our effort to be Christ's disciples.

The church can only lose if this truth crisis is not addressed.

## **SUGGESTIONS FOR RECOVERING ETHICAL MINISTRY**

Finding a solution to the crisis in ministerial ethics will not be easy. No panacea exists. Encouraging ethical ministry requires focus in two areas — ministers and ministry. How can we develop ethical ministers and ministries? To begin, we must recognize that ethics is not only a minister issue, but also is a church issue. Churches build ministers as much as ministers build churches. Churches shape ministers and ministry by their expectations and demands. Churches must believe in powerful ministry. Ministers must develop purposeful ministries.

We will not restore ethics in ministry until we understand the reasons for its loss. Ethics sits at the top of the principles-values-ethics pyramid. Our worldview (principle base) informs and supports our values that in turn determine our behaviors. A person's worldview is the assumptions one makes about the universe and how it operates. The foundation of ethics is one's belief system. Changes in worldview occur slowly in cultures or societies through a complicated process. It is unlikely that we will redefine the worldview of our society quickly or reverse the slide into relativity.

Thus the question is asked how ministers and ministry must change and how the required change can be accomplished. Restoring ethics in ministry demands clear belief systems for ministers and churches, and the identification and reaffirmation of Christian values. We must learn to think like Christ to develop Christian values and behaviors.

### **The minister**

First, we must provide better training for ministers. The church must demand adequately prepared ministers. What is an adequate ministerial training model for producing capable, competent ministers? While it is true that every Christian can serve, and many can stand and talk before a class, ministry demands more. Noyce<sup>12</sup> summarizes the responsibility of ministry as three-fold — keeping our promises, honoring our commitments, and maintaining moral lifestyles. A step toward



these responsibilities is the inclusion of ethics in ministerial training models. Our ministry training schools must teach that ministry is principle-based and values-driven. We must help ministers develop Christian attitudes and learn how to live by Christian principles and values. We must demand training that addresses the personal spiritual life; develops a Christian worldview that defines and trains for thinking like Christ; and connects beliefs, values, and ethics. Ministers must emerge from their training with a strong commitment to personal spirituality, blameless character, and morality above reproach.

Second, we must hold ministers accountable for their ministry. Ministry does not always produce the desired results, but ministers should be accountable for their lives, study, and ministry activities. We must encourage a greater openness in those who minister, and willingness in the church to let them be human, confess weaknesses, and receive loving support from the church.

Finally, ethical ministry requires ministers committed to ministry, who know that the rewards as the world measures success may be few, but that the job is worth doing and can be done. Only when I believe in what I am doing can I find the strength to develop the mind of Christ and to live by the principles and values of Christ.

## The church

Churches must commit to developing better support systems for ministry and better understandings of ministers. Churches build ministers more than ministers build churches. The church's interest in ethical ministry extends to every Christian servant. What steps should the church take to help recover ethical ministry?

First, the church must demand the integration of principles, values, and ethics in the lives of those who minister. Ethics is concrete; every Christian is responsible for character.

Second, the church should focus on and demand accountability for the *task* of ministry rather than the *results*. Churches must be prepared to support ministry and to help set reasonable expectations for accomplishment.

Third, churches must strive to develop an open atmosphere that encourages honesty and vulnerability among all Christians, including those who minister, allowing all to be human. Ethical ministry demands that members and ministers go into the world guided by Christian ethics.

Fourth, we must develop better support systems within the church for those who minister.

Fifth, churches must develop a better understanding of ministry. Each fall, I preach at least one sermon on the nature of ministry. My church needs to understand ministry and to understand my ministry. I am accountable to them; they are my support system.

Sixth, the church must develop a fellowship that allows the

minister to become an authentic part of the local congregation.

Finally, the church must ever be ethical in its treatment of ministers, members, one another, and the world.

These simple steps will not solve every problem, but they can start the church down the road to restored confidence in ministry. Ministers will live better, preach and teach better. Ministers will be better ministers. Ministers' families will benefit. Ministers will find a support base from church leaders, a better understanding of their role, and will be better able to meet the challenges of their congregation. The church will enjoy better teaching and preaching. The church will benefit from powerful ministries that touch lives. Finally, the world will be encouraged by ethical ministry to believe in Jesus.

When ministers believe in themselves and churches believe in ministry, the result will be a world that believes in Christ.

## CONCLUSION

Ministers must act responsibly as we wrestle with our theology and ethic of ministry. We are called to be moral guides to help form a moral people.<sup>13</sup> This involves reforming the church and transforming the culture, but it primarily involves forming moral people, beginning with ourselves. ■



**ROBERT J. YOUNG** currently serves as masters of divinity program director at Oklahoma Christian University, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma. He maintains an active website with various ministry resources and is involved in several writing projects. He speaks regularly in seminars, lectureships, and special presentations. He is also involved in several missions efforts.

## ENDNOTES

1. Edited from David Gill, "Christian Ethics" syllabus, Fuller Seminary, online at <[www.fuller.edu/cil/fnc/ecds/034/ET501\\_Gill034.html](http://www.fuller.edu/cil/fnc/ecds/034/ET501_Gill034.html)>.
2. Stanley Hauerwas, *The Peaceable Kingdom: Primer in Christian Ethics* (Notre Dame: Notre Dame Press, 1983), 1.
3. Walter E. Wiest and Elwyn A. Smith, *Ethics in Ministry: A Guide for the Professional* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1990).
4. Vigen Guroian, *Ethics After Christendom: Toward an Ecclesial Christian Ethic* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994).
5. Stanley J. Grenz, *The Moral Quest: Foundations of Christian Ethics* (Downers Grove, Ill: InterVarsity Press 1997).
6. Richard M. Gula, *Ethics in Pastoral Ministry* (Mahwah, N.J.: Paulist Press, 1996), speaks to the breadth of ministry. He explores ethical ministry with headings such as biblical foundations, character and virtue in ministry, and the problems of power, sexuality, and confidentiality.
7. Nolan Bailey Harmon, *Ministerial Ethics and Etiquette* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1987).
8. While not all ministry involves preaching, teaching and preaching will be used interchangeably to describe the task of ministry in this article. Most ministry involves one or the other in some fashion.
9. For a good treatment of this, see Leslie Newbigin, *Foolishness to the Greeks* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1986).
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11. David Wells, *God in the Wasteland* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994).
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# THEME INTERVIEW

WITH H.B. LONDON



## ETHICS & MINISTRY— LIVING ABOVE REPROACH

**W**e are living in a day when ethical behavior is not valued. Business executives value the bottom line over ethics. Newspaper headlines and the evening news reveal the scandals brought about by their unethical behaviors. There is one place, though, where unethical behavior should never appear — in the lives of ministers. Those who have been called to preach the gospel should exhibit godliness and integrity.

*To underscore the importance of ethics and ministry, Gary R. Allen, national coordinator of Ministerial Enrichment and executive editor of Enrichment journal interviewed H.B. London, Jr., vice president of ministry outreach/pastoral ministries for Focus on the Family, Colorado Springs, Colorado. Known as a pastor to pastors, London shares his insight into this vital topic.*

### HOW DO YOU DEFINE ETHICS?

**LONDON:** Ethics reflect who a person is — his conduct, his innermost thoughts, his speaking, teaching, and lifestyle. Christian ethics differ from secular ethics because Christian ethics are linked to the Bible and determined by the unchanging truth of Scripture.

Ministerial ethics is a religious code of behavior that is grounded in biblical truth. The ethical codes for the Assemblies of God, the Church of the Nazarene, or the Baptist church might be different for each denomination. Usually ethical religious codes define a particular group, profession, or an individual. If a person does not have a code of ethics, he almost has a license to behave in any manner he chooses.

### IN TODAY'S PLURALISTIC ENVIRONMENT, HOW DO WE DETERMINE WHAT IS RIGHT?

**LONDON:** People determine what is right and wrong by their value system. The Christian's value system is influenced by scriptural standards, how he applies scriptural truth to his life.

Situational ethics teaches that as long as it does not hurt anyone it is OK. This teaching is doing great damage to the church. In some instances, the majority of people who sit in the pew believe in situational ethics rather than moral ethics. If pastors do not address this ethical dilemma and do not live by obvious moral ethics, they contribute to the dilemma.

### TO WHOM ARE PASTORS ACCOUNTABLE?

**LONDON:** First, I am accountable to God and then to myself — to thine own self

be true. If we regularly ask God “Is it well with my soul?” we will receive the answer for which we are looking.

We sometimes live in a way that is contrary to what we believe because we are trying to advance a program or build our own image. Rather than be true to ourselves we might compromise.

We are also accountable to our congregation, our staff, our spouse, our children, our denomination, and the beliefs of our denomination.

## WHAT ARE THE MAJOR ETHICAL ISSUES IMPACTING PASTORS AND CONGREGATIONS?

**LONDON:** Today, there is much arrogance and self-centeredness in the ministry. It affects our behavior not only spiritually, but also morally and ethically. We need to return to sound biblical doctrinal teaching, preaching, and living. Pastors must be willing to address sin; if they do not, people will not know what truth is.

In my work as a pastor to pastors, I see ethical mistakes, financial integrity mistakes, and men and women disregarding one another and their families because success is so important to them. Sometimes I think we use God as J.B. Phillips describes in *Your God Is Too Small*. When we put God in a box and only pull Him out whenever we need Him, it presents ethical problems. When we speak, teach, and think for God, it is really not for God at all. It is for our convenience. We are simply using God as a crutch.

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*Ethics reflect who a person is — his conduct, his intermost thoughts, his speaking, teaching, and lifestyle.*  
— London

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Another critical issue I see frequently is the church mirroring the world rather than the world mirroring the church. The church is not impacting society like society is impacting the church. The world is in our congregations. If we are not careful, we will downplay the problems of homosexuality, divorce, abortion, euthanasia, or easy believism. If we do not guard the church in the next 5 to 10 years, it will become more of a social institution than a deeply spiritual, moral institution.

I have observed in many denominations that their people are unfamiliar with their doctrinal distinctions. We are not sure who we are anymore. Indecision doctrinally and theologically eventually leads to chaos. The church today has a great deal of chaos because we are not grounded and rooted in Scripture. We have ripped up our roots and traditions to the

point where especially the younger pastors do not have anything to go back to. Without a point of reference we follow the latest book, trend, or fad.

## HOW IS POSTMODERN SOCIETY INFLUENCING ETHICS IN THE CHURCH?

**LONDON:** Postmodern society is influenced by polls, surveys, and popularity. This is one of the trends influencing the ethics of the church today. We have embraced a situational theology. What was relevant truth 10 or 15 years ago is considered outdated today because it no longer stands the test of society. Thus, it has become acceptable to no longer adhere to that truth. Postmodern society has defined sin for us rather than the church defining it. The result is we do not talk much about sin, restitution, or repentance. Sin is handled in a three- or four step process and then everything is fine. Easy believism has affected the church morally as much as anything.

## WHAT IMPACT DOES THE MEDIA HAVE ON PERSONAL ETHICS?

**LONDON:** The media has removed ethical boundaries. Anything goes. We watch sitcoms on television, read magazines, and laugh at the immoral ethics and behaviors that are eroding society. At the moment it strikes us funny. Even though these influences are subtle, they are profound because our young people and our children watch so much television. These immoral ideas are emblazoned in their minds and in their hearts. Media producers have weakened traditional values that were once important to the body of Christ. They have determined that traditional values no longer stand the test of society and consequently are finding new values that will. But these values are always weaker, more liberal, and eventually bring us to a point where we do not have ethical boundaries anymore.

## WHEN ARE ETHICAL PRINCIPLES ESTABLISHED WITHIN A PERSON?

**LONDON:** Basic ethical principles are established when a child and parent can communicate with one another. They begin with learning what is right and wrong.

Beverly and I raised our children by establishing parameters in their lives. We explained to them, “This is always going to be wrong, this is always going to be right, and there are consequences when you refuse to respond to the parameters.”

Ethical principles need to start as early in life as possible. It is difficult to unlearn bad habits. What parents say about

church, government, morality, school teachers, and law enforcement agencies begins to fill the minds and hearts of young people. Children respond to the moral lessons they learn from parents. They also respond to what they are taught at school. Public schools have become liberal and worldly. The ethics and morals of our schools are mostly social and are based less on biblical principles and more on accepted social behavior.

### HOW CAN THE CHURCH HELP PARENTS SET ETHICAL PRINCIPLES AND STANDARDS?

**LONDON:** Parents must commit themselves to the Joshua 24:15 mindset, “As for me and my household, we will serve the Lord.” We must consistently fight for the moral fiber of our home and not allow the world to take one inch of turf. It is hard work being a parent. You must make decisions, be willing to say no, spend time with your children, and make sacrifices.

The church must reflect biblical teaching, not the latest church-growth trend in the body of Christ. I hear horror stories about Christian schools that have their morality on a sheet of paper, but not in practice. The church must stand up for basic values. The church must be willing to take a stand and help the families that do not have fathers or mothers and lack the stability that a family unit with two parents can provide. Within the next 10 to 15 years the church will be

decide early to discuss right and wrong choices in his own home, and do whatever is necessary to reinforce his values on his family. It would not be wrong for him to say to his family, “We are different. You may not understand at your age why we are different, but your mom and dad live by a higher standard with different parameters, traditions, and ethics than the average family. We have embraced these values because of our faith in God, our love for Jesus Christ, and our love for you as our children.”

Some pastors believe that their families must be perfect. But perfection is a goal we can never reach because we are human and prone to error. When striving for perfection it is better to err on the side of striving for perfection than fail by not setting your family standards high enough. A pastor needs to be realistic and measure the ability of each family member to adhere to the tradition and guidelines of the family. God will give us grace, gifts, and strength to do all we are able to do to come as close we as possibly can to reach that standard.

### WHAT IS THE NEGATIVE IMPACT WHEN A MINISTER BEHAVES IN AN UNETHICAL MANNER?

**LONDON:** When a minister behaves unethically it represents failure. Not unforgiveable failure, but failure that reflects on all other clergy and on the body of Christ. It damages one's influence and reputation.



*We can become calloused, jaundiced, selfish, and self-protecting to the point we care more about our own success and security than we do about the message God originally called us to preach. — London*

composed of mothers who have never been married or who are divorced, along with their children. What we have considered as the normal family unit is not going to be the model anymore. The church will need to substitute whatever is absent in that family unit.

### HOW CAN PASTORS BETTER TEACH ETHICS IN THEIR HOME AS A MODEL FOR THE FAMILIES IN THEIR CONGREGATIONS?

**LONDON:** The pastor must be unashamed of the gospel,

A pastor endears himself to people. He may never have met these people, but his reputation preceded him. The damage of moral failure changes his image with the people he has influenced. The congregation that has been harmed by the unethical behavior of its pastor, especially financial repudiation, can wear a scarlet letter for years to come.

Some churches become almost suspicious and mistrusting of their spiritual leader. Pastors come and go, but they never find a place of trust in that congregation because the church has been betrayed to a point where they determine



they will never get close to a spiritual leader again. This not only affects the senior pastor, but also the youth pastor, music minister, and continues its ripple effect within the body of Christ.

I have experienced this in my life. I was 16, a senior in high school, and an only child. I remember an unbelievable sadness that came over me when my parents told me my father would no longer be allowed to pastor the church he was presently serving. We would be moving out of our beautiful house to a walk-up apartment on the outskirts of town until I graduated from high school. I remember looking in my parents' eyes and seeing the shame there, especially in my dad's eyes.

As I grew older and became privy to what other people were thinking, I realized that the influence he once had was significant, but that his failure had disappointed many people. Even though he was restored and became president of a seminary, I saw the shame and the hurt in his life. When he looked at me and my mom, he realized he had done something to us that could never be reversed.

My father's failure continues to shape everything I do. I do not want to hurt anybody the way he hurt me. I do not want to disappoint anybody the way he disappointed me.

#### **SOME PASTORS WHO HAVE FAILED USE DAVID AS THEIR ROLE MODEL. BUT JOSEPH IS ALSO A ROLE MODEL. HOW DO YOU VIEW THESE TWO MEN AND THEIR ACTIONS?**

**LONDON:** David's behavior caused loss of life. Though David was forgiven, he lived in shame in many aspects of his life. His psalms seem to indicate that. On the other hand, when Joseph was propositioned by Potiphar's wife, he ran from the house. He realized the implications of not only the accusations but also the consequences of his behavior. Joseph represents a type of Christ in the Old Testament. David does not.

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*The congregation that has been harmed by the unethical behavior of its pastor, especially financial repudiation, can wear a scarlet letter for years to come. — London*

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David had a great heart for God, but so did Joseph. Joseph also had the ability to forgive those who had wronged him, to be patient and wait for the right moment when God would use

him, and was patient when he was set aside for a short time because of the different circumstances in his life. David's psalms are beautiful, and he may be better known than Joseph because of the psalms. However, in his psalms one can see the agonizing that goes on because of his behavior.

#### **HOW SHOULD A MINISTER RELATE TO OTHER MINISTERS WHO HOLD DIFFERENT THEOLOGICAL POSITIONS AND STANDARDS OF CONDUCT?**

**LONDON:** In 1 Timothy 4:16, Paul wrote to Timothy, "Watch your life and doctrine closely. Persevere in them, because if you do, you will save both yourself and your hearers." A minister can be true to his doctrine and theology and still support and embrace a fellow clergyman who may not completely agree with his theology. Disagreement can make for healthy debate.

#### **CAN UNCERTAINTY IN OUR DOCTRINE AND OUR OWN ETHICAL VALUES CAUSE US TO FEEL INTIMIDATED?**

**LONDON:** When a charismatic/Pentecostal church goes mainstream to be accepted by a world that may not agree or embrace every aspect of its theology or doctrine, that church loses a great deal. It may grow in membership and in numbers, but do the people who attend the church understand the values and traditions of their charismatic roots? I would say that applies to my church, the Church of the Nazarene. I do not think the average person sitting in a Nazarene church understands what the Church of the Nazarene is, where it came from, or why it came into existence.

#### **HOW HAS THE CHURCH MINIMIZED THE ISSUE OF SANCTIFICATION OR HOLINESS?**

**LONDON:** I preach and teach frequently on holiness. The Word of God in Leviticus reads, "Be holy because I am holy" (Leviticus 11:44,45; 19:2; 20:26). In the New Testament, Peter taught holiness (1 Peter 1:15,16; 2 Peter 3:11). In Ephesians 4:24, we read we were "created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness." That is the epitome of what ethics is. Ethics is character. Ethics is who we are and what we are when we are alone, watching television, on the computer, standing before a congregation, with our family, with another group of pastors, or when we are with worldly men playing golf.

God wills us to be holy. I believe He sees us as holy. We may not feel holy or other people may not see us as holy, but God sees us as holy. Our command is to do the will of God.

When I grew up in the Church of the Nazarene, I heard the words *sanctification*, *heart purity*, and *perfect love*

before I even knew what they meant. As I look back, I understand salvation to be when the Lord comes into your life, but salvation includes sanctification — God in control of your life.

In the process of sanctification, I surrender myself to Him as an act of my will, and He takes control of me. Surrendering my will to God does not mean I will never sin again. It means I have the will not to sin so my behavior is consistent with God's will for me. That is how I understood God's will for me. I look at salvation as a relationship — my love for my Heavenly Father and a Heavenly Father's love for me. That love causes me to avoid anything that would embarrass God or bring dishonor to Him.

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## *A minister can be true to his doctrine and theology and still support and embrace a fellow clergyman who may not completely agree with his theology.* — London

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As I grew up in the church I did not always understand the rigidity of the doctrine as well as I should have, but I understood the essence of it. I was to live as close as I could to the will of God, which meant intimacy with God. The more intimate I was with my Lord the more likely I was to please Him and do the right thing.

### WHAT ARE SOME ASPECTS OF THE POSITIVE INFLUENCE OF ETHICAL BEHAVIOR IN THE PULPIT AND THE PASTOR'S HOME?

**LONDON:** The positive influence in the pastor's home is the relief and spiritual well-being gained in knowing you have done the best you can to set an example for your family and have guided them in the nurture and the admonition of the Lord. You can lay your head on your pillow at night and not feel as though you have abused your position as pastor.

The positive influence of ethical behavior needs to be felt in the pulpit. I struggle with what I call ecclesiastical dishonesty. This is an ethical issue. I see so much arrogance and ego in ministry today. It is as though we have replaced "thus saith the Lord," or "to Him be glory and honor," "with listen to me, hear me, buy my books, buy my tapes, and you will learn anything and everything you need to know about life."

We make a mistake when we put spiritual leaders on pedestals so people almost bow at their shrine rather than at the Cross. I see pastors young and old abdicating study, prayer, commitment, and devotion to embrace a book, a tape,

or a paradigm. This harms their own spiritual development and the spiritual development of their congregations.

### HOW CAN WE DIMINISH INDIVIDUALISM IN OUR OWN LIFE AND CONGREGATION WITHOUT NEGATING OUR PERSONAL RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD?

**LONDON:** Men and women should not be falsely humble. There is nothing uglier than that. But every day we need to pray, "Not my will, but Thine be done." We need to begin our day asking, "What would Jesus do?"

The Scripture I pray is that I would become less and He would become more (John 3:30). We must come to a place where we preach with transparency and confessionally. We need to help people realize we are not superhuman. We are human vessels that God has chosen. Jeremiah said that we are cracked pots that God must mold and make into instruments of His service. If people see us as haughty, selfish, or rude (1 Corinthians 13), we need to be reminded of it and let God continue to

mold us. We cannot get to a place in our life where we take the place of God or the Holy Spirit in someone's life. We are vessels. When a vessel is God's vessel, it is to be used the way our Lord would want it to be.

### WHAT WORDS OF ENCOURAGEMENT OR ADMONITION DO YOU HAVE AS WE CLOSE THIS INTERVIEW?

**LONDON:** When I was called into ministry there was a childlikeness about it. There was a giddy excitement about the fact God would choose me. I am just a vessel that many people looked at and thought how could any good thing come from that. But God saw something in me that had value, worth, and could be used. In those youthful days of my call God knew my enthusiasm, sincerity, sensitivity, and intimacy with Him. Those feelings and emotions can be lost. Ministry is tough, demanding, and many times unfair. We can become calloused, jaundiced, selfish, and self-protecting to the point we care more about our own success and security than we do about the message God originally called us to preach.

If I could do it over again, I would go back and recapture some of that childlike innocence that once was so relevant. I would try to take away the trappings of prestige, power, position, and placement and become like Paul, who cried out when his heart was strangely warmed, "O God, here am I. I am not worthy, but use me however You want to use me. I will do whatever You ask me to do." ■













# The Spiritual Formation of the Minister:

## a Growing Concern

### Throughout Western history

the clergy has enjoyed a higher level of public trust than any other professional group. However, the growing number of media reports about clergy abuse of spiritual power, breaches of confidentiality, embezzlement, fraud, involvement in personality cults, and sexual misconduct have provoked marked erosion in that trust. Today's public mood is seen in the permission given to national comedians to entertain audiences with their own comical versions of these events.

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B Y R I C H A R D D . D O B B I N S

Although Americans are becoming jaded by the frequent media exposure of scandalous living among business executives, politicians, entertainers, and sports figures, they are still shocked to discover the frequency with which members of the clergy appear among this infamous group. People understand the minister is human; however, they expect to see in him an image of Christ they can emulate. What are these sad facts saying to us?

## IS THERE A CHARACTER CRISIS IN THE MINISTRY?

The word *character* has an interesting etymology that dates back to the 14th century. One of its roots is found in the Greek word *charassein*, which means “to scratch or engrave.” Among its many definitions, two are particularly relevant to the spiritual formation of the minister: (1) A character is “a conventional graphic device placed on an object as an indication of ownership”; (2) Character is “one of the attributes or features that make up and distinguish an individual.”<sup>1</sup> These definitions are reflected in Paul’s reminder that authentic ministry results in the ownership and likeness of Christ being etched on the hearts of believers (2 Corinthians 3:3).

A person’s character is defined by his attitudes and behavior *over time*. As the Holy Spirit gradually reforms the believer’s conscience through the power of the written Word, his internal decisionmaking process produces a growing reflection of the character of Christ in his life.

The erosion of Christlikeness among Galatian believers alarmed Paul (Galatians 4:19). This is what should concern us most about the startling increase of sexual misconduct among today’s clergy. Until there is a consistent display of Christlikeness among the clergy, we cannot rightly expect to see it among the laity. At the root of this moral crisis in the ministry is the spiritual formation of the minister.

## WHAT IS SPIRITUAL FORMATION?

Although it is not a biblical term, *spiritual formation* is a process that begins with conversion. The speed and intensity with which it proceeds will be determined by the degree to which we expose our hearts to Scripture and submit our wills to the lordship of Jesus, truly becoming His disciples (John 8:32). Paul describes the process this way, “And we, who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord’s glory, are being transformed into his likeness with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit” (2 Corinthians 3:18). The product of spiritual formation is a growing Christlikeness in us (Galatians 4:19).

Theologically, spiritual formation is part of the believer’s sanctification, a continuing work of grace that transforms us through the renewing of our minds (Romans 12:2). Put in more practical terms, sanctification is God’s provision for healing believers from the hurts of their past and delivering

them from habits and other aspects of their carnality that hinder the expression of Christ in their attitudes and behavior.

There has been such a marked neglect of preaching and teaching about sanctification that many believers do not realize the need to be sanctified once they are saved. However, just as the *lost* need to be *saved* from their sins, the *saved* need to be *healed* from the pain and brokenness of their past. The mental template through which they view life has been twisted and distorted by their pain and brokenness. This template needs to be transformed so it gradually conforms more and more to the redemptive view of their history Christ wants them to have (1 Corinthians 13:11). Their conscience needs to be restructured more and more so it imposes a biblical view of morality on their urges, fantasies, and ideas. For example, the relaxing of the guilt-prone believer’s conscience and the constricting of the self-indulgent believer’s conscience should be the healthy outcome of his sanctification.

Since ministers are to serve as examples to the flock, they need to sense an even greater need to be sanctified than the people they pastor (1 Peter 5:3). Because of the expectations people impose on ministers it can be difficult for ministers to humbly acknowledge this need and give it the attention it deserves in their lives.

## WHAT HAS PRODUCED THIS CHARACTER CRISIS?

The factors involved in creating this moral dilemma are numerous, subtle, and complex. We can only briefly address a few of them.

Even though ministers are divinely called, our *worldview* comes from the society we serve. Our character is being formed by moral training from institutions our society has entrusted with that responsibility: the family, the public school, and the church.

Over the last half-century these three character-building institutions have suffered unconscionable spiritual erosion. As a result, the character of those entering the ministry today will likely reflect the results of this erosion. Even a casual overview of the ways these institutions have been affected by societal changes vividly illustrates their impairment as character-building institutions in the lives of our young.

### Breakdown of the family

The breakdown of the two-parent family is a major factor in society’s moral decay. The institution of marriage in America was drastically affected by the throes and aftermath of World War II. This was the longest war in American history (1941–46). The prolonged separation of husbands and wives, the impulsive decisions of sweethearts to marry before one of them went to war, and the unwise mate choices by our troops stationed in other countries combined to produce unparalleled



levels of marital incompatibility and stress.

Once the war was over many of these couples found they had very little in common. When they were faced with the daily stresses of living together and raising children, many of marriages did not survive.

During the war years all of our human and material resources were devoted to the war effort. Consumer products were in short supply. When the war was over, young couples wanted to acquire new homes, new cars, and new appliances.

The government guaranteed a job to all returning veterans and many of their wives and husbands were already employed in the war effort. So, many couples agreed that both of them would continue to work until they acquired the things they needed. Then the wife would return to the home to raise their children during the formative years of their lives.

## **The church has an obligation to God and the public to take a more careful look at the character of those being given the power to become pastors of people.**

Unfortunately, this never happened. Over the years, Americans fell in love with a standard of living that required two incomes. The dual-worker family became the American way of life. As banks began to accept the wife's income as surety for home mortgages, her working was no longer a choice.

The necessity of two incomes placed added financial stress on the family. The wife's contribution to the family income rightly earned her a greater role in the business of the family. Predictably, gender roles began to change radically.

The dual-worker family also created the growing problem with latchkey children. Today, most children in America do not have the luxury of a full-time parent in the home.

These structural changes in marriage and family life caused levels of marital stress that eventually spawned a dramatic rise in the divorce rate. For the first time in American history, divorce was so common that it became socially acceptable to break up families when parents could not tolerate the stress their choices had created for each other.

This radical social change toward divorce was accommodated by new no-fault divorce laws spreading across our nation. Subsequently, broken, blended, and single-parent families became increasingly common in America.

Today, a majority of our children spend their formative years in broken homes or single-parent families. This includes those who will be called into the ministry later in their lives. Consequently, many future ministers are growing up in

broken, divorced, and single-parent families. This is not an ideal environment for producing the strong, healthy character needed to handle the stresses of modern ministry.

Most of us inherit a physically healthy brain from our parents. However, the family environment created by our parents' choices, attitudes, and behavior heavily impacts the formation of our conscience and character. These mental structures that control our view of life and our behavior are formed early in life. This is why parents are admonished to "train a child in the way he should go" (Proverbs 22:6).

A person's conscience and character are predictors of their behavior. Our conscience is formed before we start school. Our character is formed by the time we graduate from high school. A healthy conscience forms the foundation for the development of a strong and healthy character (1 Timothy 1:19; 2 Timothy 1:3).

Children raised in a healthy, godly home benefit from this process. When they choose to accept Christ, they bring a healthier conscience and stronger character into the Kingdom with them. On the other hand, children whose family environment did not provide them with these advantages are highly likely to enter the Kingdom with a less reliable conscience and weaker character structure. The battle for spiritual formation is a challenge for us all, but those raised in a healthy, godly family have a decided advantage in waging it (2 Timothy 1:5).

### **The moral erosion of public schools**

Historically, American public schools have played a major role in the character formation of our children. Principals and teachers have been assigned the responsibility to serve *in loco parentis* during the time our children are under their supervision. In the past, our public school administrators and teachers could be counted on to affirm and reinforce the values of the home.

For example, some of us were taught The Lord's Prayer, the Ten Commandments, Psalm 100, and Psalm 23 by our first-grade teachers. We began our school day by reciting one of these along with the Pledge of Allegiance.

All of this changed in the early 1960s when the Bible and any formal religious references were legally banned from the classrooms. As a result, the school's role in the formation of our children's character has been greatly weakened. Regrettably, then, our children bring their weakened character structure into their adult lives. Future ministers rise from this population.

## **WEAKENED ROLE OF THE CHURCH IN SPIRITUAL FORMATION**

In previous generations, the church often served as the conscience of our society and played a central role in the social life of its members. Today, this role has substantially

changed. The mobility of American families, the loss of confidence in public institutions (the church included), and the heightened self-interests of Americans have pushed the church to the periphery of its members' lives and decreased its influence in the formation of their character and the character of their children.

Even more critical is the weakened control the church has over the spiritual formation of its ministry. The unique nature of the ministry requires the minister to be aware of personal and conversational boundaries at all times. He must guard the confidentiality of those who trust intimate details of their lives to him. He often finds himself in places that require unusual discretion, prudence, and wisdom.

In the past our seminaries and ministerial training institutions were better prepared to provide a disciplined approach to spiritual formation that was more likely to work these virtues into the character of future ministers. For example, administrators had physical control over students for at least the first year of their training. Daily chapel attendance was required. Dormitory life with enforced morning and evening devotional times were part of the ministers' daily training. Today, more and more ministerial students work their way through Bible college or seminary and are subject to little if any imposed spiritual discipline. In addition, more and more of our ministers are gaining their credentials through distance education where their conscience and character are subject to even less impact from mentors or peer groups.

With less focus on conscience and character development in the home and school one would hope the church would have greater control over those preparing for ministry so they could impose the spiritual influence necessary to compensate for the lack of character training in the family and public school. However, today this expectation seems to be unrealistic or even unfair. Nevertheless, the diminished role of Bible colleges and seminaries in shaping the character and spiritual formation of the student minister has become another important factor in the current character crisis in the ministry.

As a result, academic requirements, doctrinal exams, interviews, and references are largely the basis of our credentialing process. Although these sources provide us with important information about the applicant for credentials, they furnish us little or no insight into his spiritual formation. Consequently, an increasing number of people whose character structure and spiritual formation ill equips them for exercising the power of the pastoral office and dealing with the stresses of public ministry are given ministerial credentials.

## THE IMPACT OF SOCIETY'S MORAL DECLINE

Our postmodern society is awash with moral relativism, historical revisionism, and theological pragmatism, none of which

encourages the development of sound personal character. These influences are especially treacherous for those who are called into the ministry.

In addition, the competitive nature of capitalistic materialism largely ignores the spiritual and moral nature of a person's character and focuses almost entirely on a person's ability. Performance is the basis of their reward. When today's society evaluates a leader, the bottom line takes precedence over moral character.

The impact of these social forces on the church tends to produce a results-driven ministry. Numbers and the time it takes to produce them define success. Ministers who can give rise to a rapidly growing church are admired, recognized, and held up by the church as models to be emulated by their peers. Paul warns us of the folly of this kind of evaluation in the Lord's work (2 Corinthians 10:12).

Rewarding ministers who possess such skills leaves those without them feeling obscure, unappreciated, and of little value to the church. In this climate, it is easy for effective performance to take precedence over a godly life in the minister's priorities. More of the minister's time and energy is likely to be spent learning how to build a big church quickly than is invested in his pursuit of a godly life. Thus, the ministry becomes more of a profession than a calling. In this context, identifying someone as a minister tends to refer more to what the person *does* rather than who the person *is*.

Caught in this kind of context many ministers become confused about who they are. Are they skilled leaders in the business of religion? Or, are they called to be servants of God and His people?

## A MINISTER'S DOING SHOULD REFLECT HIS BEING

Being able to preach well may make a minister popular and even earn him the *admiration* ... or *envy* of his peers. However, it is his ability to live well that endears him to the hearts of his congregation. Many people retain very little of what their pastor says, but they will remember the way he lived among them long after he has left their parish.

The wise pastor reminds himself frequently that the way he *lives* before God and among the people communicates a far more important message to them than anything he *says* to them from the pulpit. Living a godly life among the people should be the minister's first priority. This will keep him humble when his congregation is large and encourage him when his congregation is small.

In the long run, it is the minister's life that brings credibility or disrepute to his ministry ... not his performance in the pulpit or his expertise in leadership and church growth. Who he *is* inevitably becomes more important than what he *says* or *does*.

## HOW CAN WE DEAL WITH THIS DILEMMA?

The minister himself must assume the primary responsibility for his spiritual formation. However, the national church also has a threefold responsibility in attending to the minister's character. First, the church is responsible to focus on spiritual formation, the *sanctification* of its future ministers, in educating and training them for the ministry. Second, in the credentialing process the church is responsible for providing local churches with pastors of sound godly character. Third, the church is responsible to the general public in blessing communities with ministers of godly character while protecting them from those who lack it.

The challenge of transforming ministerial students into

candidates for ministry is greater than ever. For reasons we have already stated and more, the character structures of incoming freshmen as well as those preparing for the ministry through distance-education programs are likely to be more damaged than those of previous generations. Therefore, their need for spiritual formation is understandably greater than that of preceding generations. Yet, because of weakened administrative control, encouraging student ministers in the spiritual disciplines of Bible study, prayer, reflection, meditation, and waiting on God is bound to be more difficult than in decades past.

For the benefit and protection of local churches and the general public, character examination and spiritual formation need to be given more attention in the credentialing process.

## EIGHT STEPS TO WAGING SPIRITUAL WARFARE IN YOUR LIFE

Here are some practical suggestions for getting into the battle:

1. Establish the discipline of devotional Bible reading.  
Regardless of how many times you may have read the Bible through, it still is the only Book that can teach you how to live and grow closer to God (Psalm 119:11).
2. Engage in thorough rigorous daily self-examination (Psalm 139:23,24). This should include an honest assessment of your desire for the likeness of Christ to be established in your heart (1 Corinthians 11:28; 2 Corinthians 13:5).
3. Begin this time of reflection by shutting down your mental activity. Quiet your heart before God (Psalm 46:10). Discover Him in the stillness of these personal moments in His presence. You will find this is a demanding spiritual challenge (1 Thessalonians 1:6–10).
  - a. While engaging in this activity you will discover the difference between your brain and your mind.
  - b. Your brain is a marvelous physical organ, but your mind is a remarkable highly complex group of activities that include: observing, perceiving, meditating, reflecting, comparing, reasoning, calculating, judging, and deciding.
  - c. Let the Holy Spirit enable you to bring all this activity to a halt.
4. Become aware of the urges, fantasies, and ideas that normally bombard your mind at unbelievable speeds. Some of these are from God; others are from Satan. Both are battling for expression in your body (Romans 6:16–18).
5. Reflect on the nature of the urges, fantasies, and ideas you discover in this process and practice discerning which of these are from God and which are from Satan (Hebrews 5:12–14). Realize the role your will plays in determining which of them find expression through your body. This exercise helps you develop “an ear to hear” what God is saying to you (Revelation 2:7,11,17,29; 3:6,13,22; 13:9).
6. Trust God to give you strength to resist those urges, fantasies, and ideas coming to you from Satan and express

those coming to you from God (Ephesians 3:16,17). You must allow Him to help you conquer your mental enemies before you can expect Him to be seen in your attitudes and behavior (Philippians 2:12,13).

7. Make prayer a daily part of this warfare. Many people have found the A.C.T.S. model of prayer helpful in this pursuit:
  - Adoration — Begin by glorifying God for who He is.
  - Confession — The transparency and humility of confession leads us to forgiveness and cleansing of our sins.
  - Thanksgiving — This provides an opportunity for us to review our past and thank God for His providential hand in our history. We can praise and thank Him for all He is currently doing in us, for us, and through us.
  - Supplication — God wants us to bring our needs and the needs of others to Him.
8. Practice becoming aware of God's presence with you everywhere all the time. Brother Lawrence, a 17th-century Carmelite friar described some practical ways of doing this in his Christian classic, *The Practice of the Presence of God: The Best Rule of Holy Life*.<sup>2</sup>
  - a. Take little interior glances to seek God's presence in whatever is going on at the moment.
  - b. Repeat a little phrase that love inspires as you go through your daily activities.
  - c. Develop the habit of conversing everywhere with God, trusting the presence of Christ to be with you.
  - d. Pray for an open, all-embracing, contemplative attitude that he calls “the loving gaze that finds God everywhere.”

As you develop these spiritual disciplines, the term *minister* will become more descriptive of who you *are* than it is of what you *do*. Your life will become a manifestation of His life. Your life among the people will validate your presence in the pulpit.

**RICHARD D. DOBBINS, Akron, Ohio**

Those who will experience personal tragedy in the ministry need to be identified so they can receive the help they need to further prepare them for the ministry before they are credentialed. Denying credentials to those whose character is likely to damage people and disgrace the church needs to be seen as redemptive rather than punitive.

Training older experienced ministers to mentor ministerial candidates in the spiritual disciplines would be a welcome focus on the spiritual formation of future ministers. Candidates could have a choice in determining who would be their mentor. At first, this may be done in a voluntary system, but eventually it needs to be a requirement for licensing. The church has an obligation to God and the public to take a more careful look at the character of those being given the power to become pastors of people.

## SPIRITUAL FORMATION

Taking a close look at ourselves can be anxiety provoking. It takes courage to engage in agonizingly honest self-examination before God. However, Paul assures us that if we judge ourselves we will not be judged (1 Corinthians 11:28).

God is the only One who knows more about you than you know about yourself (Psalm 139:1–6). Be open to what He wants to teach you about yourself. The first thing God says to each of us as we begin the process of self-examination is not to think of ourselves more highly than we ought (Romans 12:3).

He does not want us to look down on ourselves or exaggerate our weaknesses. However, He does want us to honestly confess our sins, acknowledge our weaknesses, and allow Him to define for us areas in which we need to grow.

Here are 15 questions that will help guide the self-examination involved in healthy spiritual formation:

1. What three things define you as a man of God?
2. In what areas are you frequently tempted?
3. What are your common sins?
4. What are your three greatest strengths?
5. What are your three greatest weaknesses?
6. When someone doesn't agree with your point of view, how do you feel about him? What do you say to him? What do you tell *others* that you said to him?
7. How would your friends describe you?
8. What is your greatest fear? Why?
9. Typically, what stresses you?
10. How do you deal with stress?
11. What situations cause you discomfort? Name at least two.
12. What drives you? Why?
13. What do you admire in others? Why?
14. What do you dislike in others? Why?
15. What is your vision for the future? How are you planning to achieve it?

**RICHARD D. DOBBINS**, Akron, Ohio

There is an additional step that can be taken to address candidates' needs for spiritual formation before they are ordained. The credentialing body could define goals and

**In the long run,  
it is the minister's life that  
brings credibility  
or disrepute to his ministry.**

objectives related to spiritual formation that candidates must achieve through a 1-year preordination internship program. Experienced pastors can be taught to train ministerial interns. Eventually, if such an internship program is going to have the desired impact on the ordination candidate, serving this internship needs to be a requirement for ordination.

## PERSONAL STEPS THE MINISTER CAN TAKE

Since no one is looking directly over the shoulder of the minister, it is important that he or she be a self-motivated, self-directed person driven by a desire for honesty, self-knowledge, and intimacy with God (*See sidebar "Spiritual Formation."*) Possessed with these attributes the minister will find an abundance of material on spiritual formation available in print and on the Internet. The writings of Richard Foster and Dallas Willard are particularly helpful. Both of them have websites that can prove resourceful for the serious seeker.

Ultimately, the minister must assume total responsibility for his own spiritual formation regardless of the strengths or deficits he may have inherited from his family. Waging the personal spiritual warfare necessary for offsetting the moral erosions of our culture and the trauma rooted in our personal history is essential to the Holy Spirit's producing a growing likeness of Christ in us. (*See sidebar "Eight Steps To Waging Spiritual Warfare in Your Life," page 35.*) This warfare must take priority over all the public functions of our ministry if we are to avoid becoming "cast-aways" (1 Corinthians 9:24–27). ■



**RICHARD D. DOBBINS**, Ph.D., is a clinical psychologist and founder of EMERGE Ministries, Akron, Ohio.

### ENDNOTES—

1. Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary & Thesaurus, Deluxe Audio Edition, 2000.
2. Brother Lawrence, *The Practice of the Presence of God: The Best Rule of Holy Life* (Grand Rapids: Christian Classics Ethereal Library, 2001). Also, <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/lawrence/practice.html>.







# We Dare Not Fall:

Dealing with the Peril of Clergy  
**Sexual Misconduct'**



**E**x-seminary Head Admits to Misconduct,” screamed the headline. John M. Mulder had resigned as president of Louisville Presbyterian Seminary nearly a year earlier due to recent health problems and a desire to devote more time to family. In September 2003, however, the true reason for the resignation became public—sexual misconduct. The highly successful seminary president released this statement, “In the final years of my presidency, I yielded to personal temptation by inappropriately engaging in sexual conduct with adult women outside my marriage vows, my pastoral vows, and contrary to Scripture.”<sup>2</sup>

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B Y   S T A N L E Y   J .   G R E N Z

A decorative flourish consisting of a central vertical stem with two symmetrical, swirling, scroll-like elements on either side, positioned below the author's name.

Despite recent attempts by many churches and denominations to raise the awareness of both clergy and laity to the debilitating effects of sexual misconduct, the list of persons whose ministries have been marred by illicit liaisons continues to grow. The temptation to misconduct honors no gender boundaries. Nevertheless, as the Mulder resignation suggests, the most widespread situation continues to be male clergy who become involved with women in their pastoral care. What is at stake when this particular type of misconduct occurs? What can male pastors do to stem the tide? Clergy need perspective on the phenomenon of clergy sexual misconduct. Perspective can be gained by delving into the deeper dynamic involved; by bringing to light the expanding circle of the victims that sexual misconduct leaves in its wake; and finally by regarding how sexual misconduct can be prevented. This is a realm where we dare not fall.

## WHAT AM I DOING WHEN I FALL?

### Violation of sacred trust

Every pastor is the recipient of a sacred trust. Without that sacred trust effective ministry cannot occur. Engaging in sexual misconduct violates this trust.

The breach of trust in every incident of clergy sexual misconduct includes a violation of the power entrusted to a

exploitation might make her open to maintaining her relationship to this powerful man on sexual terms, especially if she senses that he desires or demands it.<sup>5</sup>

### Violation of power

The congregant's vulnerability makes the clergy-congregant relationship susceptible to the abuse of power. John Kenneth Galbraith pinpoints three aspects of power that may be abused in his monumental study *The Anatomy of Power*.<sup>6</sup> The pastor may coerce the congregant into sexual activity by threatening to sever the relationship. Compelled by this abuse of condign power (i.e., influencing others by threatening adverse consequences<sup>7</sup>), the congregant may agree to sexual contact, hoping to prevent the separation from occurring. Or the pastor may convince the congregant that responding to his sexual advances is the means to obtaining the fulfillment of her hopes, thereby controlling her through an abuse of compensatory power (i.e., promising something that the individual values). The clergy-congregant relationship is especially susceptible, however, to an abuse of conditioned power (drawing on the belief structures of others to lead them to submit to one's will<sup>8</sup>). A congregant generally enters the relationship believing that her pastor would never suggest any morally wrong activity that would violate

# No one — not even a dedicated servant of God — is immune to the temptation of an illicit sexual encounter.

minister.<sup>3</sup> Congregants readily invest great power of influence in their pastor because they believe as their spiritual physician "the pastor knows best." They accept his diagnosis of their spiritual ailments and are predisposed to follow his prescriptions for their cure. They allow themselves to be vulnerable to him, especially in crisis situations. They do this willingly, because they assume their minister will always act in their best interests, even if this requires that he set aside his own needs for their sake. Congregants assume that their pastor views the power they bestow on him as a sacred trust.

Peter Rutter points out that a female congregant brings into the pastor-congregant relationship her "intimate, wounded, vulnerable, or undeveloped parts" which he holds in trust.<sup>4</sup> Her wounds may include sexual or psychological trauma dating back to childhood or a history of being treated as a sexual object. Whatever the cause of her need is, she may seek out her pastor, hoping through a healthy relationship with him she will find healing and a new sense of wholeness. As she develops a special connection to her pastor, she may reveal increasingly more of herself to him. Eventually the conditioned response learned from earlier experiences of sexual

her in any manner. A minister may exploit her ingrained assumption of his integrity to overcome her inhibitions and lead her to submit to his sexual advances. (See sidebar "Clergy Sexual Misconduct: Types of Abusive Ministers.")

Sexual contact does not always arise through an overt abuse of power on the part of the pastor. Occasionally it comes at the initiative of the congregant, perhaps from her misperceptions about the situation. Even then, a woman's sexual advance does not discharge the pastor from his responsibility to keep the boundaries intact. When a congregant under his care offers herself to him sexually, the wise minister assumes there are deeper dynamics at work.<sup>9</sup> If he cooperates with her destructive behavior pattern, the pastor abuses the power she has entrusted to him.

### Violation of sexual trust

The pastor who falls has betrayed a power trust. At the same time, an illicit relationship between pastor and congregant violates a sexual trust as well. Sexual misconduct has become widespread, even among clergy, partly because the church has lost the biblical understanding of human sexuality and consequently its ethical moorings. In a day when inappropriate sexual behavior is destroying lives, many people are

looking to the church to be a place of safety, healing, and wholeness. Pastors play a crucial role in providing the robust affirmation of the sexual ideal that is much needed in a day of infidelity, promiscuity, and sexual opportunism.

All persons who engage in adultery or illicit sex break a sexual trust. They violate their spouse, their sexual partner, and even themselves as sexual beings (1 Corinthians 6:18). And they efface the beautiful picture of Christ's relationship to the Church that marriage is intended to portray. Like any Christian guilty of sexual misconduct, the minister sullies this great theological metaphor. Such an act constitutes an additional betrayal of trust as well. In addition to the trust all

believers share to keep the marriage bed undefiled (Hebrews 13:4), pastors are to live as examples to the flock. They are to instruct the believers not only by what they say, but also by how they live. Ministers are to demonstrate to the community what it means to live with integrity, including sexual integrity. A pastor who engages in illicit sex effaces the ordained office as a model of integrity and thereby betrays his sacred sexual trust.

### Violation of the pure image of God

Above all, clergy sexual misconduct mars the image of God. Central to the Christian faith is the biblical declaration that

## CLERGY SEXUAL MISCONDUCT: TYPES OF ABUSIVE MINISTERS

Clergy sexual misconduct takes many forms: voyeurism, exhibitionism, incest, child molestation, homosexual liaisons, and rape. Clergy sexual abuse usually begins with acts or statements intended to arouse erotic interest, sometimes including harassment. When pastoral power is used to manipulate a congregant to engage in sex relations, the results are devastating.

What type of minister becomes involved sexually with a church member? A *Newsweek* article provided a profile of the minister who strays. He is usually middle-aged, disillusioned with his calling, neglecting his own marriage, and a lone ranger who is isolated from his clerical colleagues. His failure commenced when he met a woman who needed him.<sup>1</sup>

There are many ways to classify abusers. Observers of clergy abuse list as many as seven profiles.<sup>2</sup> Marie Fortune has made a major distinction between *predators* and *wanderers*, to which may be added a third type, the *lover*.

The *Predator* is a person acting as God's representative who actively seeks opportunities to abuse women sexually. Targeting his prey, the predator pretends to be a caring pastor, using his power and position to manipulate his victims. The pastoral predator is "manipulative, coercive, controlling, predatory, and sometimes violent. He may also be charming, bright, competent, and charismatic. He is attracted to powerlessness and vulnerability. He is not psychotic, but is usually sociopathic; that is, he has little or no sense of conscience about his offending behaviors. He usually will minimize, lie, and deny when confronted. For these offenders, the ministry presents an ideal opportunity for access to possible victims of all ages."<sup>3</sup>

In contrast to the predator, the *Wanderer* is not violent, not premeditative in his sexual abuse, and generally less successful personally and professionally. Because he is a vulnerable and inadequate person, the wanderer easily becomes emotionally and sexually involved with a congregant or counselee. According to Fortune, the wanderer "has difficulty maintaining boundaries in relationships and attempts to meet private needs in public arenas."<sup>4</sup> The catalyst for his sexual misbehavior is usually an

equally needy woman who holds her minister in high regard, almost to the point of adoration.

The growing intimacy between pastor and parishioner usually culminates in an emotional moment when inhibitions are cast aside and the two engage in an episode of sexual intercourse. Once the passions have subsided, both begin to feel anxiety, shame, guilt, and a sense of betrayal. The two express regret and swear themselves to secrecy. Although things may seem to return to normal, a trust has been violated and a shadow falls over their lives and relationships.

The *Lover* is another minister who enters the forbidden zone with a parishioner. This spiritual shepherd becomes infatuated with one of his flock. Though a sexual transgressor like the other two, he is motivated neither by the desire to conquer nor the need to overcome personal inadequacies. Whether single or married, the minister knows a sex relationship with a church member is wrong and tries to guard against inappropriate behavior.

Although there is no stereotypical perpetrator of clergy sexual abuse, the distinction between predator, wanderer, and lover is insightful. The predator offender moves from conquest to conquest, leaving a trail of victims. The wanderer minister yields to temptation in a moment of crisis and immediately feels remorse over his failure. The romantic minister is drawn to a church member when his passion convinces him he is in love.

Reprinted from *Broken Trust: Confronting Clergy Sexual Misconduct*, Baptist General Convention of Texas. Used with permission.

#### ENDNOTES

1. *Newsweek*, 28 August 1989, 48.
2. See Grenz and Bell's list in footnote four on page 179. Stanley J. Grenz and Roy D. Bell, *Betrayal of Trust: Sexual Misconduct in the Pastorate* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1995), 17.
3. Marie M. Fortune, *Is Nothing Sacred? When Sex Invades the Pastoral Relationship* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1989), 47.
4. *Ibid.*, 156.





humans are made in the image of God (Genesis 1:26). Scripture indicates that God created us with a special task — that we be divine image-bearers (Genesis 1:26,27) by mirroring in our relationships God's own character.

The Bible teaches that God is characterized by a self-giving love that seeks the benefit of others, even when doing so necessitates personal sacrifice. We see this love in the story of Jesus: "though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, so that you through his poverty might become rich" (2 Corinthians 8:9). As Christ's disciples, we are to reflect the loving way in which God relates to us.

provide an example they can emulate. They envision that he will diligently seek to model God's self-giving love in all he does. In short, they expect the pastor to exemplify the divine image. They sincerely believe their pastor will consistently be a means through whom they might encounter God. And they assume that he will never willfully act in a manner that falsely represents the divine character.

The special trust a pastor enjoys offers him great potential for ministry as he carefully cultivates relationships of integrity with others. This dynamic is especially important in sexual conduct. A pastor who is characterized by purity and fidelity

## **The pastor who attempts to rescue every wounded soul yet ignores his own need for healing creates the potential for disaster when he cares for a broken and wounded female congregant.**

Contemporary psychologists declare that healthy relationships are crucial for personal growth. Above all, it is through other people that we learn of God. For many congregants, no one is more significant as a symbol of God than the pastor. Through him they hope to gain insight into God's nature and character. They anticipate that the pastor will be a picture of Christ. They expect his relationships with congregants to

proclaim by his life God's love and faithfulness toward the persons in his charge. With this sacred trust, however, comes the potential for misuse. A minister is susceptible to using his position for his own personal advantage.

### **Violation of the integrity of the pastorate**

Any illicit sexual relationship mars the divine image. Any act

of sexual indiscretion undermines the integrity of the pastorate, sully the model of the divine image that God designed. However, when a pastor has an illicit liaison with a congregant, the sexual misconduct takes an additional, pernicious dimension. The congregant likely came to her pastor in

## Above all, clergy sexual misconduct mars the image of God.

her woundedness to gain a renewed awareness of the faithful and unconditional love of her holy God. When this expectation is met with sexual contact, the pastor-congregant relationship no longer is a means whereby the Holy Spirit can heal her wounds and form her into a mature person. Consequently, the person most violated through the sexual misconduct is the congregant who entered the relationship with the hope of finding healing and gaining wholeness.

### Violation of the identity of the minister

By crossing into the forbidden zone the pastor has violated his own identity as well. Through his sexual indiscretion, he has besmirched his identity as a minister of the gospel, and forsaken his divine calling and vocation as one charged with fostering growth in the lives of his congregants. No longer can others “see” God through him. He has betrayed the divine image and with it, a sacred trust.

## WHO GETS INJURED WHEN I FALL?

Clergy sexual misconduct leaves in its wake a widening circle of victims.

### The congregant who is victimized

The most obvious victim is the congregant with whom the pastor became involved. Although occasionally a seductive woman may seek a sexual liaison, clergy sexual misconduct generally involves a woman who is vulnerable to her pastor's sexual advances. What dynamics foster a sexual relationship between a congregant and her pastor? What kind of woman is susceptible?

### Four types of vulnerable women

J. Steven Muse describes four general types of vulnerable women.<sup>10</sup> The first is the “primarily healthy” woman. In the midst of a personal crisis, she finds in the pastor “the strong and sensitive male she has been longing for who listens to her pain and values her as a person and not only as a woman.”<sup>11</sup> Although the “primarily healthy” woman does not intend to become sexually involved with her pastor, the intimacy that develops can readily become sexualized.<sup>12</sup>

Survivors of incest and sexual assault comprise Muse's second category. Because these women have repressed their trauma to survive, their capacity to identify and assertively draw personal boundaries is badly impaired.

The third type of vulnerable woman is plagued with what Muse calls “borderline personality organization.” These women tend to be possessed by a great fear of abandonment and lack impulse control. Because they have not integrated the opposite dimensions of their own emotional life, they “quickly idealize the persons to whom they are attracted, only to devalue them later for what they perceive as rejection.”<sup>13</sup> Left unchecked, this tendency leads to what the movie industry has marketed as “fatal attraction.” This may lead a woman to become the stereotypical “seductive female.”

The final category encompasses codependent, addictive persons or, to follow Muse's characterization, “women who love too much.” These women did not receive the encouragement and love they needed to affirm themselves during their childhood, and become attracted to men whom they and others perceive as powerful. Lacking a healthy self-image they constantly seek approval from these men, and are too willing to oblige them by shaping themselves to fit their expectations. As Muse notes, “They have trouble distinguishing the assertive, healthy, life-giving ‘martyrdom’ of love from the unconscious life-taking doormat variety.”<sup>14</sup>

### The family of both parties

When the sacred trust these women place in clergymen is violated, it begins the ripple effect of victimization caused from incidents of clergy sexual misconduct. Other people soon join the ranks of the victims. The family members of both parties are usually the next to be affected by the liaison, and each one suffers different, but real consequences of the misdeed.

### The pastor's wife

The family member most directly and immediately affected by the discovery of clergy sexual misconduct is the pastor's wife. For her, his actions likely mean total devastation. Many people assume if a minister has an affair he is not at fault, but the blame rests with the women in his life. If the “other woman” is not a “seductive female,” then his wife must have been the cause of his demise.

Lying behind this assumption is the unbiblical supposition that it is the wife's job to keep her husband happy, and that if he is not happy — as an affair would surely indicate — his wife must be at fault.

The success of a married pastor is partially dependent on maintaining a good marriage. However, we dare not use the erroneous converse to shift the blame for an affair from the pastor to his spouse, thereby minimizing his responsibility. In

fact, the pastor who falls into sexual failure often enters marriage with unreasonable expectations.

Even in the best circumstances, the pastor's wife carries heavy emotional and spiritual burdens, often without the resources usually available to other church members. But when her husband is moving to the brink of the forbidden zone, the difficulties the pastor's wife faces compound. Whether the minister acknowledges it or not, certain women in the church will find him attractive. When this happens he will discover how easy it is to accept their uncritical admiration as a welcome contrast to his wife's more realistic view of him. In response, his affection and intimacy for his spouse may wane at precisely the time when she needs greater reassurance of his love and understanding. Then, as he crosses the forbidden zone, her sense of self-worth wilts.

Once her husband's illicit relationship becomes publicly known, her situation deteriorates even further. She suffers the humiliation of the public scandal, and she finds herself carrying the blame that insensitive congregants place on her. Her struggle is often exacerbated by inquiries that generally ignore her and dismiss her needs as irrelevant. Once his failure is known, the pastor's wife also faces the difficult task of accepting what has happened. Even though she did not will it, her world has changed and will never return to its former state.

The pastor's wife now finds herself confronted by a host of grave questions which she must face squarely if healing is to occur: *What role did I play in his act? Under what circumstances can my marriage be salvaged, or will the situation lead to divorce? How can I get on with life, given the fissure his act has caused?*

Sexual misconduct is similar to, but often more difficult than a death in the family. The grieving pastor's wife finds herself adding up her losses: the destruction of her feelings of self-worth, forfeiture of the ministries she was involved in, a gnawing sense of isolation that accompanies the withdrawal of her support structures, and the shock that paralyzes her into inactivity and prohibits her from getting on with her life. She is experiencing a trauma worse than the death of her husband. Had he died, she would have been the recipient of an outpouring of support; but the disgrace she faces inflates her needs while deflating the level of support that others offer her.

The pastor's wife must also cope with the added burden posed by the discovery that duplicity and deceit lay at the heart of her marital relationship. This causes her to doubt her capacity for making sound judgments. She wonders: *How did I marry a man like this? How did I not sense what was*

## For the pastor's children, an illicit sexual relationship produces long-term devastation.

*going on?* Such questions raise doubts about her ability to make appropriate decisions about her future: *Can we deal with this and keep our marriage intact? Do I even want to keep the marriage together?*

The most difficult task the pastor's wife faces is putting her husband's sexual misconduct behind her and moving on to whatever future she chooses. Above all, she will likely never be as trusting as she once was. This change may be the most difficult issue she must confront long term. Confronting it will require all the resources she can muster. Unless the process of healing allows her to overcome the gnawing distrust that the act of sexual misconduct embedded in her psyche, her wounded spirit could in the end destroy her.

### The pastor's children

For the pastor's children, an illicit sexual relationship produces long-term devastation. When they hear of their father's sexual misconduct, they suffer deep humiliation. As the affair becomes public knowledge, they are aware of the whispers and gossip that follow them wherever they go. Sometimes they also face public humiliation, which can surface in a tragic manner. The church may require the pastor to confess his failure at a public meeting. This may be a horrible experience for his children. To witness their father suddenly being transformed from a much loved and admired pastor to a public pariah can leave emotional scars that may never heal. Several years after it occurred, one pastor's daughter still speaks about the terrible Sunday when her father was required to





make a public confession at the morning worship service. “I felt my life collapsing,” she recalls.<sup>15</sup> The incident resulted in the breakup of her family, leaving her and her sister wards of the state.

If their parents’ marriage does not survive the crisis, the pastor’s children will suffer all the repercussions of divorce, including the loss of a stable family environment. In addition, they will lose their place within the congregation. Even if they eventually settle into a new fellowship, the knowledge of their fallen father may pursue the family, causing a continuing sense of public humiliation and ostracism.

An incident of clergy sexual misconduct also brings long-term effects on the psychological and spiritual development of the children. One potentially affected area is sexual development. A child’s dawning awareness of sexuality is, in large part, dependent on what he or she observes in the home. Their father’s unfaithfulness and the difficulties it creates for their parents’ marriage — whether it remains intact or ends in divorce — jeopardizes the children’s ability to develop a healthy view of sexuality.

In addition, the public trauma that ensues may destroy the children’s ability to trust. This poses grave difficulties for making future commitments, healthy conflict resolution, and intimacy. But more tragic is the potential for them to become disillusioned with the spiritual resources they would normally turn to for counsel and comfort — their parents, especially their pastor-father, and the church. Years after witnessing her father’s public confession, one pastor’s daughter still remains disillusioned about their former congregation: “I’m mad. They could have handled that situation totally different. I have no desire to go back. ... I don’t understand where they’re coming from at all.”<sup>16</sup>

### **The victim’s children**

The ripples radiating from an incident of clergy sexual misconduct extends to the family of the “other woman” as well. They suffer the repercussions the traumatic experience has on her. Clergy sexual misconduct reduces its victim’s personal worth and robs her of her innocence and spontaneity. As a consequence, the other woman’s ability to establish or maintain healthy sexual relationships is impaired. This, in turn, affects others.

The indirect victims include the children of the other woman, who may face many of the difficulties encountered by the pastor’s children — humiliation, destruction of trust, and loss of primary sexual role models. The pastor and his wife might stay together; but if the other woman is married, her marriage is less likely to weather the crisis. It probably was shaky before the sexual misconduct occurred. The trauma of a separation looms on the children’s immediate horizon.



### **The victim’s spouse**

Another indirect victim may be the present (or future) spouse of the other woman, who must cope with the fallout from the illicit relationship. One spouse offers this assessment of the situation: “Too often the church is a perfect place for abusive men. They can parade in sheep’s clothing until in the intimacy of the counseling office, or when they have arrived to comfort a troubled parishioner, they undress and show their fangs and claws.”<sup>17</sup>

The spouse confronts problems greater than his wife’s distrust of the pastor and the church. She may inadvertently view him as if he were that pastor. The husband of an abused congregant explains: “Occasionally an unexpected move, a

misplaced comment, causes a flicker of distrust to register in the corner of her eye and the ghost of another man passes over our bed and leaves us both chilled.”<sup>18</sup> We can understand how the husband of a woman who was sexually violated by her pastor can write so passionately about it: “Does the church you attend or are thinking of attending have a policy of specific action to deal with sexual offenders? If not, stay at home. The male-dominated church leadership has not taken this issue seriously enough. You and your children would be better, physically and spiritually, humming your favorite hymn in the mall on Sunday morning.”

## WHAT CAN I DO SO I WILL NOT FALL?

Left unbridled, sexual misconduct in the pastorate will bring disastrous results. It will confirm the skepticism of critics, turn seekers away from the doorway of the church, and leave the faithful disillusioned. It will stop the ears, dull the conscience, silence the Spirit, and from the human perspective, make the death of Christ irrelevant. We dare not fall. What can ministers do to avoid falling prey to temptation's snare? (*See the sidebar “The Prevention of Clergy Sexual Misconduct,” page 48.*)

### The need of self-awareness

The first line of defense is self-awareness. Our ability to live in accordance with biblical morality and to avoid illicit sexual activity is enhanced by a deep consciousness of who we are. This includes a personal identity that arises from a vital relationship to God in Christ and from a keen sense of vocation derived from a personal divine call to the ministry. To this must be added a cognizance of one's own susceptibility. No one—not even a dedicated servant of God—is immune to the temptation of an illicit sexual encounter. Therefore, the pastor who wants to guard his moral integrity must come to grips with his own susceptibility.

Susceptibility to sexual sin begins with attraction. We are sexual beings and are by nature sexually drawn to many persons. For this reason pastors may find themselves sexually attracted to a congregant. Left unchecked, sexual feelings can precipitate a powerful temptation to express that attraction through overt sexual acts. For this reason, the pastor must be cognizant of his feelings, honestly acknowledge the sexual attraction he senses, and confront at the onset any sexual desires that he develops for a congregant.

### The need to fix everything

In addition, their role as professional caregivers makes pastors special targets for sexual failure. The tendency shared by males in our society to want to fix everything is especially

evident in male clergy. This mystique can be devastating. It may render a pastor unwilling to admit that his personal skills have limits. He may not recognize when a counseling situation lies beyond his expertise. When this subtle pride combines with sexual attraction, the pastor is enticed to maintain a counseling relationship long after he has ceased to provide positive spiritual care to the congregant.

### The need to rescue

The male mystique coupled with the pastoral office may lead a minister to become a rescuer. The rescuer goes beyond what is appropriate to help and assumes full responsibility for providing the solution to the sensed needs of another. Rescuer-pastors are susceptible to sexual failure because they are drawn to see themselves solely as healers, rather than as persons who also need healing.

The pastor who attempts to rescue every wounded soul yet ignores his own need for healing creates the potential for disaster when he cares for a broken and wounded female congregant. Teresa Tribe and Douglas Wilson capsule the danger: “A male pastor placed in such a situation with a distressed female parishioner may experience a strong temptation to personalize the relationship. He may find himself crossing over healthy boundaries and fulfilling his own personal needs by imagining that he alone is the one who can rescue this woman.”<sup>19</sup>

### The need for healthy self-esteem

Many personal factors can make a pastor a candidate for sexual failure. The most crucial is his deep-seated insecurities. These emerge in the dual dynamic of unacknowledged sexual needs and power needs. His low self-esteem produces a sense of powerlessness, and he may attempt to bolster his self-esteem through the perversion of power he hopes to find in an illicit sexual liaison. The debilitating demands of the ministry and his need for affirmation—sometimes compounded by difficulties in his marriage—can combine to set him up for sexual failure that his caregiving relationship with a congregant provides occasion. Vulnerability may be fueled by the pastor's unresolved questions about his own sexuality as well. Like other people, church leaders often carry deep wounds from their past. The pastor who guards his moral integrity realizes the lure of forbidden sex may be a symptom of a need for healing for his own wounded sense of self.<sup>20</sup> Aware of this aspect of his life, he needs to take appropriate steps toward personal healing.

### The need for support systems and accountability

Where can a minister go to take the steps toward the healing he needs? The answer is: to the support systems and lines of accountability in which the pastor participates.



These accountability structures take many forms. Marriage is one major aspect of accountability. In addition, when a minister senses he is susceptible to a sexual temptation arising out of a specific situation, he needs to consider forming an ad hoc support system consisting of one or more clergy peers or congregational leaders. Yet, even more important for one's overall ministry is an ongoing accountability group consisting of ecclesiastical mentors, clergy peers, or lay church leaders. Don Basham pulls no punches when he declares, "Any minister who has not found and submitted himself to some form of personal oversight, which can provide not only encouragement but also correction, is in danger of rebellion and deception."<sup>21</sup>

### **The need to maintain distance**

Perhaps no aspect of the ministry provides a more powerful context for sexual temptation than the pastor's role as

erotic feelings are awakened.<sup>23</sup> It is not unusual for a wounded congregant to develop feelings for her pastoral caregiver. J. Andrew Cole points out the forces at work in counselor-counselee relationships: "Erotic feelings can easily arise in a therapeutic relationship, where two people meet alone and discuss the most intimate details of life. The patient may view the clinician as the most kind-hearted, stable, wise, reasonable, and calming presence he or she has ever met. Naturally, under these circumstances, the clinician becomes important to the patient and erotic experiences can unavoidably become part of the situation."<sup>24</sup> What the pastor perceives to be awakened sexual feelings in the congregant, however, may only be apparent. More than being a simple case of sexual interest in him per se, her expressions may mask deeper longings and needs. For this reason, Pamela Cooper-White offers this warning: "If a parishioner acts out sexually, the minister

## **Our ability to live in accordance with biblical morality and to avoid illicit sexual activity is enhanced by a deep consciousness of who we are.**

a caregiver, especially in counseling situations. Because of their wounded condition and client status in the relationship, counselees are often unaware of the importance of maintaining distance. They are not always able to perceive when the boundary of proper intimacy has been violated. Consequently, the minister providing pastoral care must ascertain what constitutes the proper balance between closeness and detachment, and then maintain that balance when he is faced with the tug toward improper intimacy. Hence, in any caregiving relationship the responsible pastor must establish an appropriate and safe distance to avoid crossing the boundary into improper intimacy, and to ensure the effectiveness of the caregiving ministry. At no time is maintaining appropriate distance more crucial than when the congregant evidences a sexual attraction for the pastor. This is the point in the counseling relationship that sexual exploitation is most likely to occur.<sup>22</sup> The pastor's response will largely determine whether the relationship is transformed into a source of healing or degenerates into an exploitative and abusive situation that can only exacerbate the congregant's woundedness.

### **The need to understand the dynamics of therapeutic relationships**

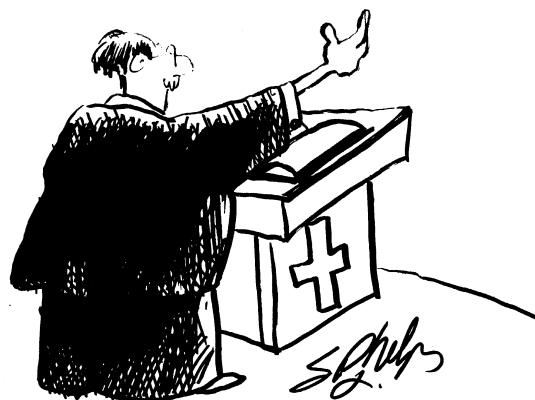
The pastor who ministers with moral integrity and fosters healing in the life of the congregant under his care must understand the deeper forces at work when a counselee's

should recognize it as a clear cry for help. The last thing he should do is read it as a valid invitation."<sup>25</sup> Rather than enhancing the pastor-congregant relationship, allowing her sexual feelings to occasion his sexual advance jeopardizes any healing his ministry might otherwise have facilitated in her life.

The reason is simple. Thirty to 70 percent of women who seek psychological treatment report a history of sexual abuse.<sup>26</sup> The woman with whom a pastor senses an erotic

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**"For those of you who wish to come down front to the altar take the exit marked commitment, catch the prayer room shuttle, and get off at the stop named chancel."**

# THE PREVENTION OF CLERGY SEXUAL MISCONDUCT

Clergy sexual misconduct has not reached epidemic proportions, but most experts agree that the number of incidents is increasing. Reliable research over the past 15 years concludes that about 10 to 12 percent of ministers have engaged in sexual intercourse with members of their congregation, and about 25 to 35 percent of clergymen have admitted to sexually inappropriate behavior with parishioners.<sup>1</sup>

If sexual misconduct by the clergy is so common, and if virtually all ministers are tempted to sin sexually, what can be done to prevent this destructive behavior? Why do some ministers fall and others do not? Are there preventative measures that can help ministers and churches nip in the bud this breach of power and trust?

A better approach for preventing clergy sexual misconduct is to equip ministers and churches to understand negative influences and encourage positive resistance. Clergy and churches must refuse to succumb to the demons of denial, ignorance, and minimization, which usually foster secrecy and collusion. Research indicates that ministers who withstand sexual temptation understand their own personal susceptibility, recognize the danger signals, and build strong support systems. Churches assist in prevention by perceiving the dynamics of the clergy role, encouraging methods of accountability for its ministers, and developing wise policies.

## PERSONAL AWARENESS

For perpetrators, victims, and colluders, the first step in the prevention of clergy abuse is a personal recognition of the actual problem.

Awareness of the dynamics of clergy sexual abuse is basic to all other prevention strategies. Every minister needs to realize that he is at risk to cross the boundary into the forbidden zone every day. The male pastor is not exempt from sexual attraction to congregants. He must be aware of his feelings and honestly acknowledge the sexual urges he senses.

In addition, as a professional caregiver, the minister is a special target for sexual failure. Some ministers have difficulty accepting their limitations, especially in counseling members of the opposite gender. Pastors who see themselves as rescuers

may create a codependent relationship that is dangerous. A rescuer-healer minister is susceptible to sexual failure because he may cross over healthy boundaries to fulfill his own personal needs.<sup>2</sup>

A minister must be aware of personal susceptibilities which make him more prone toward sexual abuse. Deep-seated insecurities, which easily surface as sexual and power needs, often

**CLERGY AND CHURCHES MUST REFUSE TO  
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fuel misconduct. Unresolved questions relating to a pastor's own sexuality, especially destructive experiences from the past, can contribute to the exploitation of others. Sexual addiction is a critical influence upon some abusers.

What positive lessons can be learned from this summary of significant factors related to clergy sexual misconduct? First, ministers inclined to harass or abuse urgently need personal therapy. For them, the personal and professional risk of ministering to women is too great.

For pastors who do not sense a vulnerability toward abusing parishioners, but who do recognize the reality of sexual temptation, the dynamics of the pastor/congregant relationship may offer another lesson. Peter Rutter observes, "Every forbidden-zone relationship in which sexual tension appears also presents an opportunity to heal."<sup>3</sup> The male minister holds the power to move the arousal of sexual feelings beyond temptation into an opportunity for the healing of deeper wounds. He alone can turn an impending disaster into a life-giving moment.

## WARNING SIGNS

Knowing the warning signs of clergy sexual abuse can aid the prevention of it. Lebacqz and Barton insist that ministers should be aware of their boundaries and always seek to maintain those borders. "Even if the boundaries for sexual intimacy are the same for pastor and layperson, the responsibility for maintaining those boundaries fall to the professional person."<sup>4</sup>

Ministers need a "warning system" that will alert them when they are approaching unacceptable levels of intimacy with

parishioners. Lebacqz and Barton have proposed a checklist of signals that warn ministers when they are headed for trouble:

- the “publicity” test: what would others think?
- physical arousal — one’s own or the other’s;
- inordinate sexual fantasy;
- sexual gestures or body language;
- intuition, instinct, or not feeling right;
- wanting to share intimacies that are not called for;
- a parishioner wanting too much time or attention;
- wanting to shift the focus to a sexual subject.<sup>5</sup>

Marie Fortune has developed a list of questions which pose the possibility of sexual misconduct: Is the minister doing a lot of counseling beyond his or her scope of responsibility? Is the person not taking care of himself or herself, canceling vacations, neglecting time with family? Does the person tend to sexualize conversations? Are mechanisms of accountability being ignored? Is lay leadership discouraged? Does everything in the church focus on the pastor?<sup>6</sup>

The vulnerability of the counseling process has led some to conclude that pastors should not counsel at all or restrict their counseling to the same sex. However, counseling across gender lines is an inevitable part of pastoral ministry. A better approach is to establish some necessary precautions which help prevent sexual misconduct. Guidelines for pastoral counseling usually stress: (1) Always have another person nearby when counseling; (2) Develop a method which prevents total privacy in the counseling office (unlocked door, glass panel, etc.); (3)

## ONE OF THE BEST WAYS TO ENSURE RESPONSIBLE SEXUAL BEHAVIOR IS FOR THE MINISTER TO BUILD STRONG SUPPORT SYSTEMS.

Publish counseling guidelines; (4) Create a referral list for persons needing long-term counseling; (5) Decide in advance and indicate to counselees how much touching is appropriate.

Grenz and Bell offer six warning signs which indicate boundaries are being violated:

- The conversation becomes increasingly personal, as pastor talks unduly about himself;
- The pastor’s physical contact has moved beyond greetings to inappropriate pats and hugs;
- The pastor fantasizes about a sexual relationship with the congregant;
- The pastor offers to drive the congregant home;
- The pastor arranges meetings with the congregant outside of the normal counseling time;
- The pastor increasingly hides his feelings for the parishioner and his meetings with her from his accountability systems, especially his wife.<sup>7</sup>

### SUPPORT SYSTEMS

One of the best ways to ensure responsible sexual behavior is for the minister to build strong support systems. Accountability

relationships offer a crucial antidote for misconduct.

A wholesome marriage reinforces sexual fidelity. The research of Balswick and Thoburn revealed, “Over one fourth of the pastors cite their relationship with their wife as the most important

## RESEARCH INDICATES THAT MINISTERS WHO WITHSTAND SEXUAL TEMPTATION UNDERSTAND THEIR OWN PERSONAL SUSCEPTIBILITY, RECOGNIZE THE DANGER SIGNALS, AND BUILD STRONG SUPPORT SYSTEMS.

reason for sexual fidelity.” The study also concluded, “Marital dissatisfaction coupled with work boredom is the kind of situation that has been conducive to the most fantasy and openness to actual liaisons.”<sup>8</sup>

A good marriage provides a wholesome context for sexual expression. It enhances intimacy and facilitates honest communication, while reminding the married church leader that he is accountable.

Colleagues and personal counselors provide another support group. A pastor should not hesitate to seek personal counseling from a qualified therapist when he needs inner healing and emotional health.

An important supportive contribution is made by models and mentors. Many pastors have formed accountability groups who meet regularly to develop trust, offer encouragement, and hold one another morally accountable.

The greatest role model for ministers is Jesus, who ministered to women without moral compromise. He viewed each woman He encountered through God’s eyes, not as objects for selfish gratification, but persons with deep needs and spiritual aspirations. As disciples of Christ, pastors are to minister to women as Jesus did.

Adapted from *Broken Trust: Confronting Clergy Sexual Misconduct*, Baptist General Convention of Texas. Used by permission.

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# *A Covenant of* CLERGY SEXUAL ETHICS

## INTRODUCTION

This covenant calls [Assemblies of God] ministers to commit to God and the congregations they serve to be faithful to the biblical sexual ethic of fidelity in marriage and celibacy in singleness. Because sexual integrity is foundational to Christian life and ministry, we encourage ministers and congregations to discuss this or similar ethical covenants in the context of the theological foundations and definitions expressed below, and we urge ministers to sign and adhere to a covenant of sexual ethics. We suggest that signed covenants be kept by ministers with copies given to church officers.

## THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS

Human sexuality is a good gift of God through which we become partners with God's creative intent for humanity (Genesis 1:27,28,31). Faithful sexual practice expresses the loving commitment of marriage and embodies the mutual intimacy between husband and wife (Genesis 2:18–25).

When we misuse our sexuality, God's creative intent is supplanted by destructive consequences. Raised to the status of idol, the good gift of sexuality mutates into the power of exploitation, selfishness, anger, and domination.

When sexual sin and abuse occur, Christian practice calls us to engage the work of justice, reconciliation, and healing. The work of justice involves repentance, restitution, and restoration. Justice builds the foundation for reconciliation by establishing conditions in which alienated and injured parties have the opportunity to heal. Healing can occur when the possibilities of justice and reconciliation are realized.

The relationship between ministers and congregants is based upon trust. In difficult times, church members turn to ministers for comfort, support, guidance, and assurance, expecting the minister to act as a pastor, shepherd, counselor, and friend. Church members trust ministers never to take advantage of them or to manipulate them, especially when they are most vulnerable.

The purposes of a covenant of sexual ethics for ministers are threefold: (1) to provide a framework for upholding sexual integrity among ministers; (2) to support and protect ministers by defining ethical norms; and (3) to establish a process for achieving justice, reconciliation, and healing.

## DEFINITIONS OF SEXUAL MISCONDUCT BY MINISTERS

- Sexual relations outside of marriage;
- Unwanted or inappropriate physical contact;
- All other sexually oriented or suggestive behaviors; such as overt and covert seductive speech and gestures;
- The use of pornography.

## PREAMBLE

As a disciple of Jesus Christ, called by God to proclaim the gospel and gifted by the Spirit to minister to the church, I dedicate myself to conduct my ministry according to the ethical guidelines and principles set forth in Scripture and this covenant, in order that my ministry may be acceptable to God, my service beneficial to the Christian community, and my life a witness to the world.

## COVENANT

As a minister called to serve God and God's people, I commit myself to the following norms of ethical conduct, for which I am accountable to God, to my colleagues in ministry, and to the church in which I serve.

- I will demonstrate sexual integrity in ministry by understanding, respecting, and observing the boundaries of sexual misconduct as defined above.
- I will nurture my physical, emotional, and spiritual health, maintain enriching friendships, and build strong relationships with my spouse and family.
- I will develop relationships with God, my spouse, and close friends who encourage accountability and protect against temptation.
- I will recognize the special power afforded me in the pastoral office by never abusing that power in ways that violate the personhood of another human being, by assuming responsibility for maintaining proper boundaries in church staff/church member relationships, and by acknowledging that the congregant is always in a vulnerable position.
- I will avoid all forms of sexual exploitation and/or harassment in my professional and social relationships, even if others invite such behavior or involvement.
- I will not seek or accept sexual favors.
- I will exercise good judgment in professional and private conduct by avoiding situations that create the appearance of sexual misconduct.
- I will assume responsibility to report any reliable evidence of sexual misconduct by another minister to the appropriate person or committee.
- I will submit to the policies and procedures of the church when an allegation of sexual misconduct has been made, recognizing the importance of justice and due process procedures.

## CONCLUSION

As I seek to fulfill my responsibilities as a minister, I will strive to embody servant-leadership in all my relationships and to pattern my life and ministry after the example of Jesus Christ.

SIGNED \_\_\_\_\_

DATE \_\_\_\_\_

relationship emerging and consequently with whom he is tempted to have a sexual relationship may be like Kathi Carino. As a child she was deeply wounded by a father who took her into the basement “where he stripped me naked and whipped me with his belt before raping me” and who “dressed me like a saloon girl at age 10 and took pictures of me while a young man ‘made love’ to me.”<sup>27</sup> The deep wounds that scarred Kathi’s young life left her with both a deep distrust of people and the need for acceptance. She writes, “If I could have a nickel for each time I have asked my therapist if he hated me or each time I asked him to promise not to leave me, I would be a wealthy woman.”<sup>28</sup> Were her pastor to interpret her attraction to him as the license for a sexual indiscretion, his act would be yet one more step in the downward spiral destroying her sense of person and yet another stark reminder that men in authority are not trustworthy.

### The need to take the necessary precautions

Counseling across gender lines is an inevitable part of the pastor’s vocation. Therefore, the solution to the problem of susceptibility is not to wish the pastoral role were different but to take the necessary precautions to preclude falling prey to sexual temptation. Above all, precaution means knowing and being alert for the signs that the relationship is approaching the forbidden zone. Violation of proper intimacy boundaries rarely occurs imperceptibly, but is generally preceded by ample warning signs.<sup>29</sup> For this reason, the pastor who ministers with moral integrity must be alert to the signals that indicate he is violating the proper boundaries in his relationship with a congregant under his care. Anything that blurs the distinction between a therapeutic relationship and a nontherapeutic relationship or between the roles of caregiver and friend is a warning signal. When a pastor perceives he is beginning to blur these roles — even in his mind, let alone in overt action — the time has come for him to take stock of his ability to continue to provide pastoral care to the congregant. Because he can easily refuse to acknowledge a growing sexual interest in a counselee, the married pastor should entrust to his wife the right to veto a long-term counseling relationship with any female congregant. It is also wise for the pastor to inform the counselee when counseling begins that sessions will be limited to a specific number.

### The need to rely on the power of the Spirit

The lure of illicit sex is not to be minimized. Living in a society that focuses on sexual encounters, minimizes the biblical ideals of fidelity in marriage and abstinence in singleness, even ordained ministers are not immune from the

powerful pull posed by sexual temptation. Pastoral care situations provide occasion for clergy sexual failure. But no pastor needs to succumb. Indeed, we dare not fall. And the good news of the gospel is that by the power of the Spirit we need not. On the contrary, male pastors can minister with integrity to women under their care, and actually turn the moment of temptation into an occasion of healing for their congregants as well as for themselves.



**STANLEY J. GRENZ** is Pioneer McDonald professor of Theology at Carey Theological College, Vancouver, B.C., and professor of theological studies at Mars Hill Graduate School, Seattle, Washington.

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# THE HEART OF THE MINISTER'S PERSONAL LIFE

Pastor Joe Jones proposed an ambitious outreach plan to the church. The church board and the church body had reservations about the plan, but decided to adopt it.

Why did the church adopt a plan they had reservations about? The adoption of the plan was not due to its merits, overcoming the reservations members had about the plan, or because the questions were satisfactorily answered. The plan was adopted because the people trusted the pastor and believed he was a person of integrity.

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B Y J A M E S E . C A R T E R

A minister's integrity is the heart of his personal life. When a minister faces an ethical issue, how that issue is resolved will be directly influenced by the minister's personal integrity.

The word *integrity* is derived from the mathematical term *integer*, which means "whole" or "one." The person of integrity has a life characterized by unity and wholeness. Integrity is built on the minister's personal and continual relationship with Jesus Christ, is not incidental, but intentional, and is expected of a minister. An effective, ethical minister is a person of integrity.

A minister faces a number of personal issues: relationship to self, family, finances, power, sexuality, and influence. How these issues are resolved rests on the minister's integrity — who he or she is.

My college religion professor, R.H. Whittington, repeatedly warned his students, "Boys, pay your bills and do not put

On the other hand, some ministers suffer from a lack of assertiveness. Their ego is so small that humility becomes a vice. They have difficulty leading a congregation and confronting persons with the demands of the gospel or the specifications for a job.

The problem of role identity plagues those who cannot find personal identity outside their ministry. They define their lives entirely in terms of their ministerial vocation. These individuals face difficulty when anything jeopardizes their ministry or when they face retirement.

Ministers with healthy self-esteem recognize they have worth, value, and dignity apart from the ministry. Their identity rests in who they are as persons more than in what they do.

Physical health is also important for a minister. A minister should not work to the point of exhaustion. Neglecting to take days off or vacations may seem commendable, but it is a foolish

expenditure of strength.

To lose your health is to lose your ministry. If dedicated ministers pace themselves, care for their bodies, and guard their

## A pastor's self-esteem should not command attention from others, or demand authority over others.

yourself in a situation where you compromise sexually." He identified sex and finances as major areas of potential problems. Richard Foster proposed a triple ethical threat to Christian discipleship: money, sex, and power.<sup>1</sup> In *Time* magazine, Billy Graham wrote that Satan attacks God's servants in the three areas of sex, money, and pride.<sup>2</sup> To develop and maintain integrity, the minister must monitor his personal life in these areas: self, family, finances, power, and influence.

### INTEGRITY AND SELF

You were a person before you were a minister. A positive self-concept and appropriate self-esteem are essential for a healthy, effective minister. Walter E. Wiest and Elwyn A. Smith remind us, "Persons called to the clergy profession live always in tension between two realities: their humanity — who they are and what they are, their best and their worst, their gifts and their limits — and the special demands of their calling."<sup>3</sup> That tension can affect a minister's self-esteem if it is not handled properly. Ego and role are two areas that demand attention.

An inflated ego is a problem for many ministers. A pastor's self-esteem should not command attention from others, or demand authority over others. Humble service and a gentle, kind manner are difficult for those who struggle with massive egos. This is evidenced in their unwillingness to share credit or attention with fellow church members or staff, in assertiveness that leaves little place for initiative from others, and an insistence on their own views.

health, they will expand their ministries rather than cut their ministry short by failing health or early death.

Nutrition, rest, exercise, and recreation combine to enrich your health. These may seem secondary to high-energy, high-achieving, hard-driving persons. However, good health habits extend a minister's life and enrich his ministry. A day off each week and a vacation each year contribute to the overall health of a minister. Recreation or hobbies that provide enjoyment and divert the mind from ministering tasks are important for a balanced life.

A minister's lifestyle should confirm the gospel he proclaims. The minister's personal lifestyle is an important part of his witness to Christ.

It is not consistent to preach restraint and personal discipline while practicing conspicuous consumerism. To ask for sacrificial giving and personal commitment from church people while refusing to give sacrificially or to alter personal plans to meet another's needs is not a convincing testimony of Christlikeness. To preach morality and to secretly practice immorality is not honest.

The minister is a pilgrim of faith as well as a ministering person. Continued spiritual growth is as important for the minister as it is for the church member. A well-known proverb states "Familiarity breeds contempt." Few ministers treat the Bible or spiritual disciplines with contempt, but some ministers may treat both the Bible and spiritual disciplines with such familiarity that they lose some of their mystery and wonder.

Ministers handle spiritual things regularly and can easily become too familiar with the holy. The spiritual disciplines they teach others become perfunctory to them. A serious



ethical issue arises when ministers require of others what they do not practice themselves, or practice a spiritual discipline so routinely that it loses all real meaning.

A minister's education does not end with graduation from seminary. Learning about the Bible, God, and the relationship between God and humanity is a lifelong activity. Your understanding of God, spiritual matters, and theology should grow as you experience life. These spiritual matters always have a challenge and an element of mystery about them.

The common spiritual disciplines ministers recommend to others must also become their practice if their lives are to ring true. You do not need to look for esoteric methods or hidden keys to spiritual growth. Spiritual growth comes from the regular practice of prayer, Bible study, worship, and Christian service. For a minister to be effective in one place for an extended period of time, he must continue to grow spiritually and relate personally to the people he serves.

## INTEGRITY AND FAMILY

For many years a billboard on Highway 1 north of the city of Natchitoches, Louisiana, contained a message from the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, "No other success compensates for failure in the home." This quotation should be prominently displayed on every minister's desk.

In America, the general assumption in non-Catholic churches is that the minister will be married with a family. That assumption is reinforced with the ministerial qualifications for both pastors and deacons given in the Pastoral Epistles (1 Timothy 3:1-12; Titus 1:6-9). Some churches require that clergy be married and have children before they are eligible for ministerial leadership positions.

For many years, divorce in a minister's family was unthinkable. Troubled clergy marriages continued in quiet desperation or armed truce. Today some of these marriages are being terminated. The incidence of divorce among clergy couples is still not well accepted. The failure of a clergy marriage is considered a tragedy; in many cases a fatal tragedy as far as ministry is concerned.

Divorce is not the only problem in the minister's family. The quality of the marital relationship must also be considered. For his doctoral dissertation a Mississippi Southern Baptist pastor did a research project on marital satisfaction among pastors' wives. He discovered four factors that caused less satisfaction in their marriages: the disruption of time together, the state of anxiety brought on by church expectations, loneliness, and fewer days of dual devotions.<sup>4</sup>

These were not ministers who had terminated their marriages, but people who experienced less satisfaction in their marriage than they desired. The primary relationship in the clergy family is the relationship between the husband and wife. The husband-wife bond must be stable and strong.

Add to that need the problems ministers often have with their children, and the significance of the ministers' home life increases. Ministers' children are not different from other children. They face the same stresses, temptations, disappointments, and failures. But they also have the same achievements and accomplishments as others. The incidence of ministerial problem children is not likely any higher than other groups, but may be more apparent due to the high visibility of ministers' families.

When a minister has satisfying relationships with his spouse and children, he will be more effective in ministry and more fulfilled as a person. Ministers find it difficult to fight the devil in the world, the deacons at church, and the darling at home at the same time. Marital satisfaction adds to the personal peace and satisfaction of the minister.

Part of the challenge for the minister in his home life is that his marriage is considered a model for church families. It can model how a couple can remain in love, stay married, and function as a Christian family even with stress, long work hours, inadequate income, and the demands of children. But the minister's marriage can be a problem when the model is negative rather than positive.

**Ministers with  
healthy self-esteem recognize  
they have worth,  
value, and dignity apart from  
the ministry.**

Time together is the key ingredient for a happy home life. And time together is a difficult feat for a ministerial family. Time can be reserved for the family by scheduling it and protecting it.

Commitment is the major factor in successful family life. No question should exist about the personal commitment in love that each one has made to the other.

By the nature of ministry, ministers are often placed with persons of the opposite sex other than their mate. This calls for a high degree of trust by the spouse. The minister must be a person of absolute integrity. He must also be trusted because of the commitment to his spouse. Commitment to one another is undergirded and strengthened by commitment to Christ.

## INTEGRITY AND FINANCES

"Boys, pay your bills," the professor warned in the college classroom. The warning was well deserved for many ministers have not developed the ability to manage money. So notorious have clergy been in financial mismanagement that in some financial circles people are warned against lending money to them.

Yet, when all the evidence is in, ministers have not done so badly in money management on their limited incomes. Their



groceries cost as much as anyone else's, college tuition for their children is just as high, and utility companies do not give professional discounts. The executive director of the Ministers Financial Services in Lubbock, Texas, observed that when the minister's salary is compared with the median income of people across the nation with graduate education equivalent to seminary, many ministers "could be significantly underpaid."<sup>5</sup>

Given the fact the minister's salary is below average and his or her family has the same needs as other families in the community, many ministers have performed the financially miraculous in adequately feeding, clothing, and educating their families. Enough examples exist, however, of ministers who have owed money to merchants in their town, who have been late in paying their bills, or who have expected discounts, gifts, or favors, that the belief that ministers cannot manage money persists.

The discipline to plan a budget, the ability to live within that budget, and the art of balancing a checkbook, are all essential skills for ministers. To handle finances responsibly may be more of a spiritual discipline than many clergy have

thought. The failure to handle finances properly has diminished the witness of too many church overseers.

The minister should practice the basic principles of money management, beginning with stewardship. For many clergy the tithe (Malachi 3:10) is considered a biblical standard and a minimum starting point. The minister should handle debt responsibly. Some think Romans 13:8 teaches that a Christian should have little or no debt. A disciplined savings plan, conservative spending, and avoiding conspicuous consumerism are all important factors in money management.

Richard J. Foster refers to "the dark side of money" and "the light side of money." By the "dark side of money" he means the way money could be a threat to our relationship with God and the radical criticism of wealth found in many of Jesus' words. The "light side of money" refers to the way money can be used to enhance our relationship with God and bless humankind.<sup>6</sup>

Above all, the minister should practice what he preaches concerning stewardship. All that the minister is, as well as all that the minister owns, is a trust from God. How that trust is managed is stew-

ardship. The practice of stewardship by the parson as well as the parishioner is essential. The minister's message on stewardship will not ring true if he has not practiced it.

## INTEGRITY AND SEXUALITY

Most ministers are persons of integrity who behave ethically in sexual matters. However, some do not follow ethical practices. Recent revelations of sexual misconduct and cover-ups by Roman Catholic clergy have brought national attention to the issue. National statistics on sexual misconduct by ministers are not available. The research of G. Lloyd Rediger led him to assert that 10 percent of clergy are guilty of sexual malfeasance and another 15 percent are approaching the line of misconduct.<sup>7</sup>

What causes these actions? Some ministers, unfortunately, are sexual predators who prey on women in the church. Many of these would be considered sexual addicts who may have a deep-seated emotional illness as well as a moral problem.

Some people are intentionally seductive and attempt to lure their minister into sexual activities. In this group are those

who view the pastor as a person of power. The sense of power, or intimacy with a power figure, is attractive to them. For the emotionally insecure person, sexually seducing a minister gives a sense of pseudo-satisfaction. Some may feel a more intimate relationship with God through intimate contact with a minister.

Another reason for frequent sexual problems is that many ministers who

counsel people do not understand the concepts of transference and countertransference and how to deal with these issues. Most counselors receive training and understand transference and countertransference. Ministers often do not receive adequate training in these areas and are more vulnerable to sexual misconduct.

Sexual misconduct by a minister damages the minister personally, damages the abused survivors, the church, the ministry at large, and the larger work of Christ. It does not matter whether the minister whose sexual escapades are publicly revealed belongs to your denomination. All ministers are hurt when one minister fails. The public loss of faith in ministers and the ministry affects all clergy.

A minister can prevent sexual misconduct through recognizing his own sexual vulnerability. As human beings, each of us is vulnerable. Restraint and responsible sexuality are a must.

One of the best ways a minister can ensure responsible sexual behavior is to build a strong marriage and have a healthy attitude toward sexuality. Another resource is ministerial accountability. Ministers are accountable to God, to the church, to the community, and to their family. Ministers can also make themselves responsible to a support group, a church committee, or a mentor.

Morality is intentional. A minister is a moral person because he intends to be moral and seeks to safeguard that morality throughout ministry. (*For a more thorough discussion of clergy sexual misconduct, see the article in this issue, "We Dare Not Fall: Dealing With the Peril of Clergy Sexual Misconduct" by Stanley J. Grenz, page 38.*)

## INTEGRITY AND POWER

A minister as a professional and as an authority figure has power over other persons. Roman Catholic ethicist Richard M. Gula wrote, "In the pastoral relationship, the use of power is the key moral issue. We inevitably have power over those seeking pastoral service because we have something they need."<sup>8</sup> Ministers represent not only themselves and society, but also God. As a minister, your presence exerts a measure of power.

Power is "a measure of a person's potential to get others to

do what he or she wants them to do, as well as to avoid being forced by others to do what he or she does not want to do."<sup>9</sup> With that as a working definition, ministers certainly have power as a part of their ministry arsenal. From an ethical perspective, the use of power is a key factor. Wayne Oates believes

## The discipline to plan a budget, the ability to live within that budget, and the art of balancing a checkbook, are all essential skills for ministers.

"the integrity of a Christian leader is measured by his or her sense and use of power in relation to others."<sup>10</sup> The major problem with power is what it does to relationships. Richard J. Foster observed, "Power hits us in our relationships. Power profoundly impacts our interpersonal relationships, our social relationships, and our relationship with God."<sup>11</sup> When ministers use the power they possess in a destructive manner or to gain control over others, power has destroyed the relationship and hurt the person. Ministers always live with the realization that they risk misusing the power they have with people.

Power begins with the way we view ourselves. If we see ourselves as persons of authority who have the power to do and obtain what we want, even if it is directed toward church goals or spiritual ends, we have misused power. Simon Magus attempted to buy the power of the Holy Spirit to use it for his own purposes. Simon Peter rebuked him for that (Acts 8:9-25). The attempt to use the power that one has as a minister for personal gain or to display personal strength must still be rebuked.

Power, however, can be constructive. The power a pastor uses to bring unity to a divided fellowship, to heal the hurts between two friends, to help people work together rather than to pull against one another is the power of moral persuasion rather than coercion.

As a minister you have power. That power can be used wisely or unwisely, destructively or constructively. "The task of the pastor is to use the authority image that he carries as a professional and to use it properly ... it is his by virtue of his profession, and he is therefore responsible for its use."<sup>12</sup>

## INTEGRITY AND INFLUENCE

The minister is a person of influence. Like power, influence can be used positively or negatively.

True leadership is a positive element in the influence a minister has with others. The leader convinces rather than coerces, persuades rather than pressures.

In a study of world leaders, former U.S. President Richard M. Nixon noted, "Great leadership is a unique form of art, requiring both force and vision to an extraordinary degree."<sup>13</sup> Robert D. Dale asked, "What do leaders provide?" After defining



leadership as an action-oriented, interpersonal influencing process, Dale answered his question by saying that leadership is roughly equal parts of vision and initiative. "Vision defines the task and provides the content for the leadership setting. Initiative allows followers to be approached and designs the interpersonal processes for the group or organization." He also observed that effective congregational leaders tend to be "visionary and people-approachers, dreamers and doers."<sup>14</sup>

Another form of influence is the example you give to others. Writing to Timothy, Paul advised, "Don't let anyone look down on you because you are young, but set an example for the believers in speech, in life, in love, in faith, and in purity" (1 Timothy. 4:12). Years ago, I learned from a Boy Scouts leadership manual that you should never ask anyone to do anything that you are unwilling to do yourself.

Trust is essential to the minister's leadership and example. Church work is different from other occupations because the members are not only clients or customers, but also colleagues. The clergy minister to church members, but they also work with them. In a single staff church, many church officers function as church staff would function.

How important is trust? The Book of Ruth is the beautiful story of Ruth the Moabitess who followed her mother-in-law Naomi home to Israel. When Ruth pledged her love to Naomi, she said Naomi's people would be her people, Naomi's home would be her home, and Naomi's God would be her God (Ruth 1:16). Ruth believed in Naomi's God because she had first believed in Naomi. People will believe in the minister's program, project, and preaching because they have first believed in him.

In a community, a minister works as part of the community team to bring help, hope, and healing to the community. In the hospital, the minister is part of the healing team ministering to persons in need. As a part of both the community team and the healing team, a minister exerts influence in the community and in individual lives.

The minister, then, is a person who must be emotionally mature, spiritually mature, and ethically responsible as he

preaches, teaches, leading, and counsels. In these ways the minister exerts tremendous influence.

Aware of this influence, an effective minister must monitor his dependence on God and maintain a healthy, growing, ongoing relationship with Him.

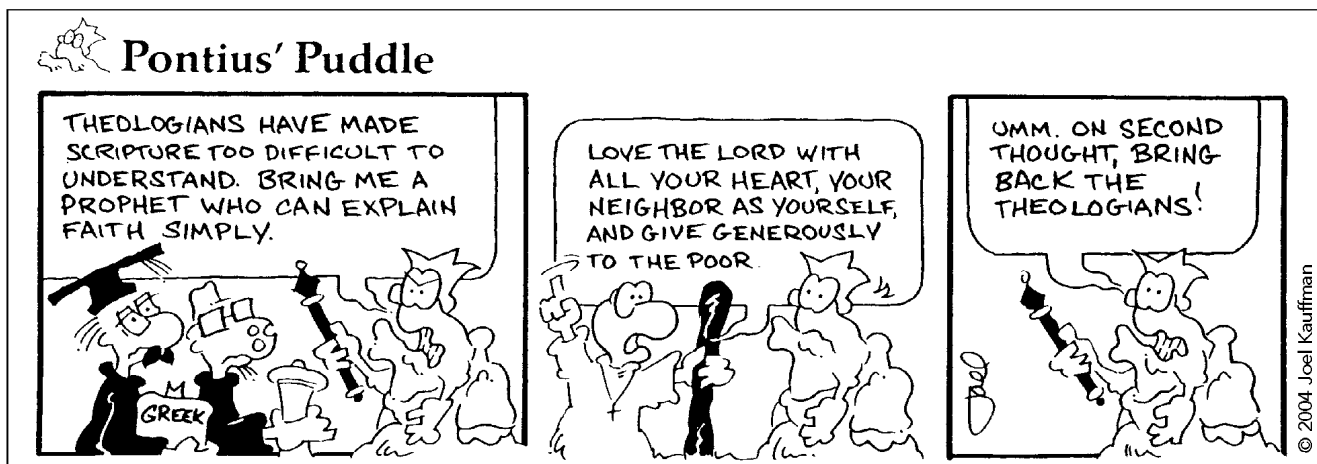
The minister's personal life cannot be separated from the minister. For his ministry to be effective and long lasting, he must take care in that life, particularly in the areas of self, family, finances, power, and influence. ■



**JAMES E. CARTER**, Bermuda, Louisiana, is a former pastor and director, Division of Church-Minister Relations for the Southern Baptist Convention.

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*“Love one another. As I have loved you,  
so you must love one another.” (John 13:34)*





# The Minister's Relation & Ships: The Minimum & Maximum Standards

*Fred Coltriel, my former district  
superintendent in Southern California,  
tells a story about ethics.*

*Little 10-year-old Johnny came home  
one day from school and told his dad that  
his teacher had assigned the class an essay  
on ethics. So, Johnny asked his father,  
a butcher, "What is ethics?"*

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B Y G E O R G E O . W O O D

"Ethics?" his dad replied. "Well, Son, do you remember Mrs. Jones? When she came to buy her meat at the store, suppose she paid me with a brand-new \$20 bill. After she was gone, I realized she had given me two brand-new \$20 bills stuck together.

"Ethics, Son, is this: Do I tell my partner?"

I often think of that story when approaching the subject of ethics because of the temptation to define ethics by our own behavior — "If I do it, it must be right" — rather than norms of conduct built on the objective standards of God's Word.

For those in ministry, two ethical norms control us: "Do to others what you would have them do to you" (Matthew 7:12), and "Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another" (John 13:34). These two texts form a continuum between what is least and most expected. "Do to others what you would have them do to you" is our *minimum* standard of

pastorate: (1) those who did well, (2) those who did so-so (the church neither grew nor declined), and (3) those who leave a mess.

The easiest predecessors to deal with are the ones who either did well or so-so. Honor that man or woman. Bring the former pastor (or his widow) back periodically for a homecoming or a special service. That pastor earned the love and respect of many in the congregation — standing at the side of the grieving, leading persons to Christ, marrying couples and dedicating their children, counseling, interceding, and helping.

When you have your predecessor return to the pulpit, the former pastor's backers and critics will recognize and appreciate your generosity.

Avoid the temptation to be jealous of your predecessor. We are too spiritual to call it that when it occurs in ourselves, but I have witnessed pastors tearing down their predecessor even

though the predecessor did a great job leading the church.

The need to devalue another person arises from our own insecurities. This is particularly true if the church was stronger numerically and financially under our predecessor than it is under our leadership. Do not begrudge the former pastor the friendships that he may yet have with some members of the congregation.

The hardest predecessor to deal with is the one who has left a mess — especially if that mess involved moral failure. Do not be surprised if people are angry or if they distrust you. The failure of a pastor is a severe wound on the congregation and it takes time to heal. The sin has been exposed before your coming — now is the time to begin helping the church toward a process of healing.

If the "other party" still attends the church, your response to that person will depend on the level of repentance. Remember that the church is a place where people find the grace of God.

You will help the congregation heal much more quickly if you focus on the present and the future rather than the past. Help the congregation learn the joy of forgiveness. You will need to work harder than usual to gain the trust of those who survived the mess, and you will gain that trust much faster if you do not dwell on your predecessor's failures.

When Attorney General John Ashcroft was governor of Missouri, I asked him how he got along with his predecessors. He detailed for me a number of ways he had sought to honor them even though they were members of the opposite political party. He said, "Some day I will be a former governor and I trust that my successor will treat me as I have treated those who were before me."

## **For those in ministry, two ethical norms control us: "Do to others what you would have them do to you" (Matthew 7:12), and "Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another" (John 13:34).**

ethics, while "as I have loved you, so you must love one another" is our *maximum* standard of aspiration for behavior toward others.

Let us apply these minimum/maximum standards to the following professional relationships.

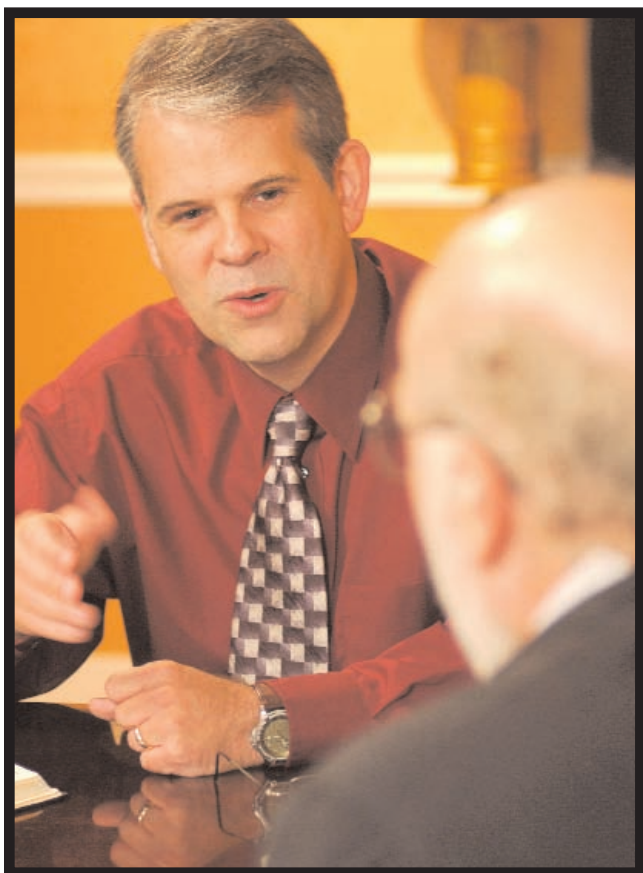
### **PREDECESSORS IN THE PASTORATE**

The old adage is true (and maybe that is why it has been around so long) — "If you cannot think of anything good to say about someone, do not say anything."

Parishioners quickly pick up signals from you concerning your attitude toward your predecessor. Therefore, give genuine praise and recognition for the positive contributions of the former pastor whether you are in private, in board and staff meetings, or before the church. Do not be jealous of his accomplishments or the love the church may have for him. You will receive the same love and support if you show similar character and accomplishment. Tearing down the former pastor will only result in your own destruction. You never build yourself up by tearing another person down. Jealousy is not a fruit of the Spirit. Resist an unhealthy attitude. Bring wrongful thoughts to the Lord in confession.

There are at least three kinds of predecessors in a





## SUCCESSORS IN THE PASTORATE

You have three kinds of successors: (1) those who do extremely well — the church grows much larger and has greater vitality, (2) those who do so-so — the church has neither declined nor advanced, and (3) those who mess up. There is probably a fourth category: those who so change the direction of the church that — while the numbers are the same — the people you pastored are mostly gone and a whole new audience is filling the pews.

The hardest successors to deal with are (3) and (4). If you have been a good shepherd, you have a visceral reaction to the sheep being scattered. Instead of reinvolving yourself in the life of that church, you will need to trust the Good Shepherd to take care of His people. While they may be gone from the church you pastored, they are not gone from the true Church.

Here are some steps to take no matter who follows you:

- Pray for your successor.
- Have in your heart and on your lips a desire for your successor to succeed.
- Keep any negative opinions to yourself.
- Do not attempt to use your influence with the board or church members.
- Clear all invitations to perform weddings and funerals with the present pastor prior to accepting the invitation.

The outgoing pastor bears a heavy responsibility for ensuring that the transition goes smoothly. Leave the church as you would leave your home when it is sold. You lock the door for the last time and leave — truly leave.

I tried hard to avoid using terms like “*my* church, *my* associate pastor, and *my* youth director.” The personal possessive “*my*” connotes ownership. I do not own the church. The church belongs to Jesus. Therefore, when I leave the church I have not left something that was mine. I do not have to go back and repossess it. I can leave it in God’s hands.

Perhaps the most difficult issue for a former pastor to deal with is his friendships with people in the former church. There should be no reason for the friendship to end so long as the friendship does not involve intermeddling into the church via means of the friendship.

Sometimes a church board or congregation requests or mandates that a pastor leave. My counsel to such pastors is to take the high ground. Leave with grace. Do not listen to the siren song of your loyal partisans who want you to start a new church in the community. Such ventures almost never succeed. The best thing you can do is put time and distance between yourself and the disaffected church while demonstrating strong Christian character that blesses rather than reviles.

## CHURCH LEADERS IN THE COMMUNITY

In the community, there are two kinds of church leaders: (1) those who are Christians and (2) those who are not. I must confess that I did not seek out fellowship with local pastors who did not believe in the essentials of the gospel: the Virgin Birth, the sinless life of Jesus, the Atonement, the Resurrection, Ascension, and Second Coming.



I did my best to treat them with respect as fellow human beings, but I had no grounds for fellowship with apostates from the faith.

This becomes a difficult issue when we deal with involvement in a local ministerial fellowship. If the fellowship predominantly consists of liberal pastors, it is a matter of individual choice and the Holy Spirit's guidance as to whether you should take it as a mission to infiltrate that group and help the minority become a majority; or break away and form an association of fellow ministers who believe the gospel as you do.

I found it easier to relate to local Catholic priests than liberal Protestant pastors because at least the Catholics believed in the Apostles' Creed and the sanctity of human life.

If you take the view that you are pastor to the entire community and not just your local church, then you are going to ultimately develop broad community contacts. Among those contacts will be other local church leaders. Our friendship and involvement with them can help them shed many caricature ideas they have of Pentecostals (and our frequent caricatures of them), as well as providing opportunities for mutual

encouragement and enrichment.

Thomas F. Zimmerman, the great Pentecostal leader and statesman, served as an excellent model in this regard. He made friends across the spectrum of the broader church world and thereby greatly benefited the Pentecostal church at large. The high opinion others held of him spilled over into a high opinion of the Assemblies of God and the broader Pentecostal church.

## NEIGHBORING CHURCHES

(PENTECOSTAL AND NON-PENTECOSTAL)

I tried to live by several principles relative to neighboring churches.

The first principle was to not get jealous. That was my hardest lesson. I began pastoring in southern California just as Costa Mesa Calvary Chapel was getting started. Ultimately they would grow 10 to 15 times larger than the church I pastored. I kept wondering what Chuck Smith had that I did not.

I received two great answers: (1) I was driving by Calvary Chapel one day and happened to catch my face in

# THOSE HAVING GONE BEFORE

A church's history has various chapters written by its former pastors. The church you serve may have a vivid history.

This is true of many churches. The exception is a church planted and pastored by you alone.

Paul, the founding pastor at Corinth, wrote, "By the grace God has given me, I laid a foundation as an expert builder, and someone else is building on it" (1 Corinthians 3:10).

You are building on a foundation laid by other pastors. How are you treating your predecessors? Do you speak well of them, include them, and remember them?

### HONOR THEM

The first few months after assuming a pastorate are particularly challenging. You are accumulating information about people, the community, the facility, and the current condition of the church. You are also developing a vision. All of this takes time. However, in the first few weeks send a brief letter of introduction and appreciation to former pastors of the church, even if they served a relatively short time. By this simple act you acknowledge and honor their service with the congregation. Your letter may not only build new bridges, but it may also restore damaged ones.

A minister can honor his predecessor in a number of ways. If the church keeps a list of parishioners' birthdays or anniversaries, update the list by including former pastors and their spouses. They will delight in receiving a note from those who have labored beside them in the past.

Honor their families. In recent years the wives of two former pastors of our church died. These couples faithfully ministered and touched lives in our community many decades ago. Few people (myself included) knew them. However, it was important for the congregation to send words of appreciation and condolences, and send flower arrangements to their memorial services.

If a former pastor visits the church, do not ignore him. Have him greet the congregation, and if appropriate bring a message from the Word. In doing this, you will seldom damage your own relationship with the church family. In most cases, you will enhance it.

### SPEAK NO EVIL

In the pastoral lineage of your church, there may be persons who either distinguished themselves or disgraced themselves. The appropriate response to both is the same — speak no evil.

Following a particularly effective ministry has its challenges. Some pastoral predecessors have wonderful abilities and gifts that people in your community found outstanding. It is easy to become insecure when comparing yourself to those who have gone before (and pastors, myself included, can at times be insecure). Yet, you must remember that God, in His perfect timing, led the previous pastor to another place of ministry, and provided you opportunity to pastor this church. Your abilities will certainly be different, but God will use them to add another layer to the ministry that was built before you.

my rearview mirror. I felt the Lord say to me, "I like you George Wood just the way you are. You do not have to be Chuck Smith or Calvary Chapel. You can be you." That was such a breakthrough moment for me. (2) I realized that Jesus said there was an uneven distribution of talents in His disciples: some had five, others two, and another only one talent. Why should I get upset with the five-talent person if I have only one? My job was to develop my one talent, not the other guy's five. Such a perspective will enable us to rejoice when other churches in the community grow faster than our own.

Early in my pastorate we called all the Protestant and Catholic churches in our community and asked each two questions: (1) What is the seating capacity of your sanctuary? and (2) how many people are in those seats on an average Sunday morning? We learned there were about 12,000 seats and 24,000 people in those seats (multiple services). That meant 81,000 people in our community were, on average, not

## You will help the congregation heal much more quickly if you focus on the present and the future rather than the past.

in any church on Sunday morning. That meant 77 percent of our community was effectively unchurched.

That percentage would be common, if not greater, across the United States. With that many unchurched, there is no need to proselytize from other Pentecostal or non-Pentecostal churches. There is no need for territorialism in view of the size of the harvest. It makes no sense for one church to claim a franchise over a whole area.

Member transfer almost always presents an ethical issue. Early on in the growth of the church I pastored I received a warning call from a pastor 15 miles away. Some of his parishioners had left, and he heard they were coming to our

Remember, Joshua followed Moses — not an easy assignment. Yet God used Joshua in a unique way that influenced the people of Israel for the generations that followed.

Different times and different challenges require different tools. Regardless of how greatly God used other people in the past, be assured that He desires to use you in different and greater ways in the future. The person who stood in the pulpit before you may have done things differently or even better, but do not dismiss their abilities or diminish their accomplishments. Hurting them will only hurt you. Accept their successes, acknowledge them, and proceed with the task at hand.

Following a less-than-successful ministry presents a different set of challenges. The church body may be divided or demoralized. It will take much prayer and grace to bring healing to the church. Our Savior who heals broken people will do it. However, healing will not come by pointing out the faults of those who have gone before. Your predecessor may have hurt the church in a variety of ways; do not reopen those wounds.

You may have many opportunities to disparage former pastors. People will want to better inform you about the previous pastor. In those moments, refer to the healing available in the present and the growth and victories that lie ahead. Your forward-thinking attitude will be infectious.

When Nehemiah was rebuilding the broken walls of Jerusalem, he looked to the future, and was not preoccupied with the failures of the past. We must accept the fact damage may have been done, but look to Jesus and get on with the task at hand.

### INFORM THEM

In the church I serve, there are several former senior pastors still living. Their tenures cover from the early 1950s to the early

1990s. Some served for many years, others for only a few. But each person had an important part in the spiritual formation of many who still attend. Those pastors may have sacrificed a great deal to see the church grow. They may be no longer involved in the ongoing ministry of the congregation, but they still want to know about the people they served. Keep them informed of significant transitions within the church body.

When people who grew up in the church marry, send your predecessor a copy of the wedding program. When a long-time member of the congregation passes away, send the former pastor a folder of the memorial service, or a copy of the newspaper obituary. A former pastor may have led the deceased to faith in Christ or disciplined that person — they should be made aware of the person's passing.

Each year, send a copy of the annual report to former pastors. It takes little more than an envelope and postage to keep them regularly updated on the progress of the church. They will be delighted to be included in this way. If you have a secretary, instruct him to regularly send these items to all living former pastors.

Remember, should the Lord delay His return, someday *you* will be a former pastor of that congregation. Seeds sown now will be fruit enjoyed later. How you are treated as a former pastor will in large part be determined by how you treat those who have gone before. When that time comes, may you also be honored, respected, and informed.

**GARY D. WILEMAN** is senior pastor of First Assembly of God, Aberdeen, South Dakota. He also serves as the South Dakota District secretary/treasurer.



church. He warned me they were troublemakers. I was not convinced his assessment was correct so I decided to carefully evaluate these people on their own merits. The several families involved, over time, became pillars in our church — wonderfully productive Christians. It turns out that the other pastor had been the troubler. We lived by this rule of thumb: do not steal sheep, but feed any sheep who come.

On the other hand, there are disgruntled members who move about. Some have been disciplined in other churches. Be on your guard with these people. You may wish to take the following actions:

- Insist they return to their former church and repent of wrong actions.
- Refuse to receive them into membership unless they

have the approval of their former church.

As I travel from church to church on Sunday, I find many churches pray for a different church in their community each Sunday. That kind of mutual public support serves as a powerful witness for Christ and promotes a sense of “we are in this together” among the Christian community.

It is always easier to blow up a bridge than to build one, and we can promote the health of the body of Christ in our localities as we build bridges of friendship, trust, support, encouragement, and prayer with our fellow Christians and fellow Assemblies of God churches.

## CHURCH STAFF

I have heard it said by a staff member of his pastor, “The closer I get to him the further away I want to be from him.”

Why would a good staff member have such an attitude? Poor ethics by the pastor.

The first obligation of a senior pastor to his staff is to be a good role model: “Follow me as I follow Christ.” As the senior pastor, if I expect the staff to work hard, I must work hard.

It is the senior pastor’s responsibility to mentor and motivate staff members to excellence in life and ministry. Staff are not the servants or slaves of the pastor, they are colleagues in ministry — deserving of respect, consideration, and the gift of attention.

Staff members tell me, “My pastor never communicates with me.” That is an easy problem to solve. Have weekly staff meetings. Meet one on one. Set objective goals. Review performance. Encourage. Correct with gentleness

(if possible). Do not take financial advantage of the staff member and spouse by underpaying them, or expect them to neglect family for work, or try to get two workers for the price of one. Do not show favoritism toward staff. Handle conflict fairly.

I always felt it was important to have a personal bond with my staff. After all, we are not a corporation — we are a church. We not only do the business of the church — we are the church. What we model in our relationships with our staff is what our people will become. The people I trusted and leaned on for help were my staff. Each week we met and reviewed our work, and planned ahead; but we also talked with one another, prayed together, and ate together. Collegiality in ministry, from a biblical perspective, follows a team model rather than a hierarchical model for organization.



I would not let our people make end runs around a staff member and get to me. If they had a conflict with a staff member, I would send them — per Matthew 18 — back to the staff member to see it ironed out; and if not, it came back to me. I supported the staff and they supported me.

Psalm 133 compares unity to the high priestly anointing oil and the dew of Hermon. I was thinking one day about these metaphors and wondering why the Spirit inspired the Psalmist to choose these examples. Then it dawned on me: the anointing oil used to invest a high priest came once in his lifetime, and Mount Hermon is so far from Zion (Jerusalem) that its dew does not even reach Zion. So, unity among brothers (staff) can be as rare as once in a lifetime, or never occur at all. Therefore, when it occurs it is “precious.”

If we will, however, aspire to that kind of unity in staff — genuinely loving rather than lording over one another — the Holy Spirit will help us develop harmony in leadership that blesses all affected by it.

One difficult season for staff members comes during a pastoral transition. Many church bylaws call for the resignation of the entire staff when a pastor leaves. This might work well for smaller churches, but typically does not help larger churches. An incoming pastor of a large church should consider evolution rather than revolution — that is, make changes gradually rather than cleaning house. Incremental adjustments and realignments will be appreciated by staff, board, and members.

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It is vital that staff be supportive and loyal to the senior pastor. If the senior pastor ethically, morally, or doctrinally departs from the requirements of the Fellowship, the staff member should notify the district superintendent.

I have counseled staff members over the years to leave with grace if they cannot support the senior pastor. Why stay and be frustrated and angry?

It is no sin to have disagreements — and some

disagreements bring a parting of the ways. Paul and Barnabas parted ways over whether or not to include John Mark on staff for the second missionary journey (Acts 15:39).

## **GUEST MINISTERS**

(EVANGELISTS, MISSIONARIES, AND OTHERS)

Early in my pastorate I had a guest missionary. I gave him guidelines for the amount of time he could take, asked him to report on the work in the field where he ministered, and told him I would receive an offering for him at the end of his

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presentation. He went way over the time limit, preached instead of relating his ministry experiences, and then took his own offering at the end. It was a small offering. I confess I did not add anything to it. My guest had violated the ethical standard expected of him.

On the other hand, missionaries and evangelists have told me horror stories of offerings taken but not sent to them (“the check is in the mail”), or receiving only a portion of the offering specifically taken for them, or being housed in a less than inviting place.

I remember one time when I was traveling the church put me in the cheapest motel in town (even though the church had means). I happened to be going through a discouraging time in my life at the moment, and it did not help to be in a dirty room with crud in the shower. And to make the night complete, a huge cockroach crawling up the wall.

Pastors, check out the motel or hotel before you put guests in it. Give the missionary, the evangelist, or the guest speaker warm hospitality. Unless the guest minister is a personal friend who wants to stay in your home or parsonage, give him the freedom of personal space by putting him in a motel or hotel.

Place the honorarium or missionary check in their hands before they leave. Make sure you have covered their travel expenses. In regard to the honorarium, it is not just for the services they spoke at, but for the day or two it took of their time to travel back and forth. You can never err by being overly generous. The Lord loves a cheerful giver.

For evangelists, remember that no one schedules them at Thanksgiving and Christmas and certain downtimes of the

summer. A full-time evangelist may only preach 40 to 45 weeks a year. This means that in those weeks he must have enough income to last him 52 weeks, plus pay his own social security, medical insurance, and other expenses. Factor that into what finances you provide.

## THE DISTRICT

When I became assistant district superintendent, I made it a

goal to talk to pastors who were uninvolved in the district. One of them, who pastored a large church, told me he felt the brethren had nothing to contribute to him and that is why he kept his distance.

I did not get angry with him, but I wish I would have said, “But, you have something to contribute to us. Look at this wonderful church that has grown under your leadership. You have so much to give the rest of us.” He had chosen to be an island unto himself.

# ETHICAL SELF-EXAMINATION FOR CLERGY

## TOWARD GOD

- Do I have the witness of the Spirit that I am a child of God?
- Are there any unfruitful habits that God has been gently exposing in my life?
- Do I give a full and daily effort to the study of the Bible and to prayer?
- Is there any way that I could be taking greater advantage of the means of grace such as worship, the ministry of the body of Christ, and Scripture?

## TOWARD MY CALLING

- Do I consistently take God’s Word, apply it to my own life, and share it faithfully with others?
- On a scale of 1 to 10, how would I rate my daily striving for excellence in all that I do?
- Is there reason to believe that any of my personal or professional relationships are improper?
- In what ways am I consistently “loving God with all my heart” and “loving my neighbor as myself”?
- Have I been willing to compromise occasionally in the area of doing what is ethically right?

## TOWARD MY CHURCH

- Is the quality and quantity of spiritual care and instruction in God’s Word that I give in my ministry adequate for sustained spiritual growth?
- Am I faithfully following and communicating on a regular basis the vision that God has given to me for His church?
- Am I seeking and using opportunities to personally lead people to a relationship with Jesus Christ?
- Is my personal integrity at a level that invites respect and trust from people in my church? My community? My family?

## TOWARD MY FAMILY

- What percentage of quality and quantity time do the members of my family receive from me during the week?
- Is my home a “dumping ground” for my frustrations with other people?

- What am I doing to show love to my children and to develop a godly relationship with them?
- What am I doing to deepen and enrich my love relationship with my mate?

## TOWARD OTHER MINISTERS

- Do I ever see other people in the vocational ministry as competitors?
- What comments have I been willing to make about those who preceded and those who followed me in my ministry?
- What is my attitude toward those who are appointed in ministry over me?
- What have I really learned from other ministers with more experience than I have?

## TOWARD MY DENOMINATION

- Have I proactively found ways to affirm and support the ministries and the mission of my denomination?
- Have I found myself speaking negatively about my denomination?
- Is the authority of the church over my ministry something I easily accept?
- In what ways have I actively shown my commitment to my district?

## TOWARD MY COMMUNITY

- What have I done or said that reflects the fact that I have adopted this community as my own?
- What organizations and activities am I personally involved in that demonstrate the love of Christ and open doors for the gospel?
- In what ways am I being an ambassador for Jesus in my community?
- Am I taking a responsible biblical position in political and social issues of significance?

**DR. KEN HEER, REV. KERRY KIND, and REV. WAYNE RICHARDS**, The Wesleyan Church. Used by permission.



Several years ago I had the opportunity to visit the church in Wittenburg, Germany, where Martin Luther preached almost every day for 30 years. On the walls of the church hang the priceless paintings of the Reformation artist, Cranach. He attempted to put the preaching of Luther onto canvas. The pastor touring me through the church had led it for 30 years — all during the communist rule. He showed me a portrait of Cranach's version of the Last Supper and asked me to note the position of Judas' foot. Judas sat at the table with others, but his right foot was pointed toward the door. The foot telegraphed his intentions.

The pastor told me that during the communist years he would bring his young people to the painting, show them the foot of Judas, and say to them, "Do not point your foot toward the door; do not follow Judas and leave the Christian community."

We are in this together. Do not relate to your district as Judas did to the community and to Christ — with a foot already pointing toward the door. In the revised words of John F. Kennedy, "Ask not what your district can do for you, but what you can do for your district."

It is the ethical thing to be a supportive and involved

member of the district. Hebrews has a good word for us even though that word is often neglected in our democratic style of church life: "Obey your leaders and submit to their authority. They keep watch over you as men who must give an account. Obey them so that their work will be a joy, not a burden, for that would be of no advantage to you" (Hebrews 13:17).

## THE DENOMINATION

Is the Pentecostal fellowship of which you are a member perfect? By no means.

**The best thing you can do  
is put time and distance between yourself  
and the disaffected church,  
while demonstrating strong Christian  
character that blesses  
rather than reviles.**

During my years as a student in an Assemblies of God college, I found myself growing critical of what I perceived to be hypocrisy in others. Since then, I have found that I spot hypocrisy in others far more quickly than in myself. But, right before I graduated I sat down and wrote a long epic poem to myself reviewing my college years. One line I have

never forgotten — it cast the right light on the entire 4 years — “There was too much good to reckon with the bad.”

## **We lived by this rule of thumb: do not steal sheep, but feed any sheep who come.**

Yes, you can find things wrong with the Pentecostal fellowship to which you belong. I certainly can. But, I believe you will find far more things right than wrong.

Our Fellowship never asks for blind loyalty. I trust we can all learn something about “critical loyalty” — the practice of an ethic that allows us to question and make changes where correction is needed.

Criticism plays a valuable function in the development of excellence. Show me an athlete never criticized by a coach, a musician never corrected by a teacher, a student never challenged by an instructor, and I will show you less than mediocre athletes, musicians, and students. But, criticism must be offered within the context of loyalty.

I have absolutely no regard for ministers who are given credentials through the Assemblies of God, use their credentials to get a position as a pastor, and then proceed to alienate the church from the very Fellowship that credentialed them. Such persons have no ethical standards at all.

But, we value the person who loves this church so much that he is willing to suggest changes that will make it better.

I will never forget what J. Robert Ashcroft did for me at one General Council. I was a relatively young minister at the time. At this particular General Council I had been on

the floor speaking on too many issues. I had all the vigor and impetuosity of youth (my being general secretary today is owed to kindly mentors who had faith in me despite myself).

I sat at the table for a Saturday morning prayer breakfast with this great man of faith. He had been my college president when I was a student, and later my boss when I served as campus pastor at the same college. He knew me well and had observed me flailing away on issue after issue at the General Council.

He said to me, “George, I have a word from the Lord for you.” That stopped me in my tracks. In all the years I had known him he had never had “a word from the Lord” for me.

He took out a clean, white 3- by 5-inch card and wrote these words:

*Let your emphasis be on the creative and constructive  
above  
the critical and corrective.*

He said, “George, there is nothing wrong with being critical and corrective. However, you must keep your emphasis on the creative and the constructive.” I realized immediately he was right, and indeed did have a word from the Lord for me.

## **What we model in our relationships with our staff is what our people will become.**

If any of us put the focus on being critical and corrective, then we become negative persons — and I have yet to see a negative person who was greatly used of the Lord.

Creative and constructive loyalty will help this wonderful Pentecostal family become more effective for Christ in the days that lie ahead, should Jesus tarry.

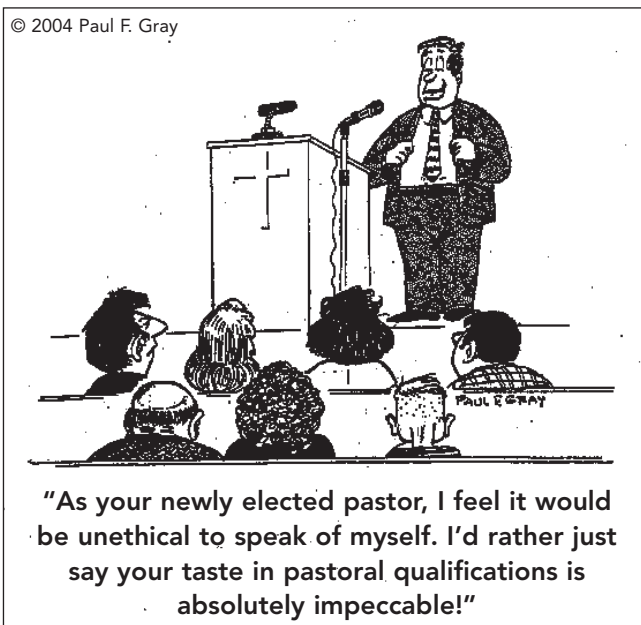
### **CONCLUSION**

We have looked briefly at eight areas of ministerial ethics. How well we do in each of these will be determined by how faithful we are to the minimum and maximum standards given by Jesus for the treatment of others.

*The minimum* — Do to others what you would have them do to you.

*The maximum* — As I have loved you, so you must love one another. ■

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**GEORGE O. WOOD**, D.Th.P., is the general secretary for The General Council of the Assemblies of God, Springfield, Missouri.







ILLUSTRATION BY: SONNY CARDER



# the *ethics* of pastoral practice

What are acceptable pastoral  
practices, and when have we  
crossed an ethical line?

Ministerial ethics is not an oxymoron.

Notwithstanding ethical failures among  
ministers, ethics and ministry should be  
synonymous; in fact, they must be.

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B Y   W A R R E N   D .   B U L L O C K

Yet, we cannot ignore the failures. During my years as a district superintendent it was my sad responsibility to confront peers in the ministry concerning the following behaviors:

- Misappropriation of church funds for personal use.
- Spousal abuse.
- Dabbling in or addiction to pornography.
- Unfaithfulness to marriage vows.
- Misuse of pastoral power.
- Deliberately undercutting another's ministry.
- Abuse in soliciting funds.

To sum up this litany of offenses, the salient word we are looking for is *sin*. We may describe the above behaviors as moral lapses, moments of weakness, or errors in judgment, all of which may be part of the truth. But at the core of these euphemisms is sin, and sin never bears good fruit. It wounds people, destroys relationships, creates mistrust, ruins reputations, nurtures cynicism toward ministers, and divides families and churches. Sin is always destructive.

But for every failure in the ministry, scores of ministers have not fallen prey to temptation. Out of 32,556 Assemblies of God ministers in 2002, only .48 percent were dismissed, and another .20 percent were undergoing rehabilitation.<sup>1</sup> More than 99 percent of our ministers, while not perfect, are endeavoring to walk in integrity.

What is our ethical relationship to our congregations? What are acceptable pastoral practices, and when have we crossed an ethical line? When our overriding goal is to please God, what types of actions must we avoid? When the Scripture is not totally clear as to what is right or wrong, how do we know what to do? These and other questions are unavoidable, but a clear understanding of what we mean by ethics and integrity can help us.

## KEY DEFINITIONS

What is meant by the term *ministerial ethics*? *Merriam-Webster's Online Dictionary* defines ethics in part as "the discipline dealing with what is good and bad and with moral

**Who we are is  
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do, and yet what  
we do reveals who we are.**

duty and obligation; a set of moral principles or values; the principles of conduct governing an individual or a group."<sup>2</sup> The minister's moral principles and values are derived from the Word of God. Ethics are not situational. Scripture governs them.

*Merriam-Webster's* definition of *integrity* is: "Firm adherence to a code of especially moral or artistic values; an

unimpaired condition; the quality or state of being complete or undivided."<sup>3</sup> Integrity is the application of ethics in daily life. It results in personal wholeness that disallows any division between what is said and what is done. It enables us to walk the talk, to practice what we preach, to live consistently in every area of life.

**I have pastored  
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give it to me.  
That is why I never asked.**

Author Howard Hendricks provides a classic definition: "Integrity is long obedience in the same direction."<sup>4</sup> Integrity is long because it is not attained overnight. It takes a lifetime to develop a godly reputation. Obedience is essential because violation of a moral code destroys integrity. Long obedience must always be "in the same direction" because integrity keeps the moral compass pointed toward God and heaven.

Paul reminded Timothy "the overseer must be above reproach. ... He must also have a good reputation with outsiders" (1 Timothy 3:2,7). Interestingly, these two characteristics — above reproach and good reputation — are the first and last of those qualities Paul deems as mandatory for the church leader.

## THE POWER OF ETHICAL EXAMPLE

If the leadership gurus of our day are correct in saying that leadership is influence, then what is inherent in leadership that creates influence? One answer is example. Pastors are in the public eye. We can see that as negative — "I do not like living in a fishbowl." Or we can view it positively — "Somebody's watching. I can show them how to live for Christ." Whether we have a positive or negative attitude about the high visibility of our position, the public pastoral role provides opportunity for major influence in the lives of our congregants and in our communities.

Paul told the Corinthian church, "Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ" (1 Corinthians 11:1). When a pastor says that, he is then burdened to live as Christ would live. Even if the pastor never echoes Paul's words, people will still follow his leadership, particularly as to character. Who we are is more powerful than what we do, and yet what we do reveals who we are.



## THE ETHICS OF COMMUNICATION

### Honesty

Talking is our trade. You cannot be a preacher without words. And the essence of being ethical in communication is to tell the truth. Do what you say you will do. Do not make promises you cannot keep. If the message on your answering machine says, "I will call you right back," then do it. If you promise, "I will be praying for you," then be sure that you follow through. Lapses in areas that we deem trifling create a lack of trust that can impact people's desire to follow us in greater matters.

**Integrity is the application of ethics in daily life. It results in personal wholeness that disallows any division between what is said and what is done.**

### Confidentiality

Our personal ethics demand we *not* say certain things. Maintaining confidentiality is critical in some sensitive situations. However, we may need to let those involved know the limits of our confidentiality. When someone asks me, "I want you to promise me that you will never tell anyone," I qualify my response by indicating that I cannot make that promise until I know what he or she is going to say. If the person reports a crime, threatens suicide, or provides information about the molestation of a child, I cannot keep that confidential. When I was a district superintendent, I could not keep a ministerial confession about infidelity confidential. We want to keep confidences. But those with whom we are dealing need to know in advance the parameters of our confidentiality.

Ministers must guard against the compulsion to tell their spouses everything. First, emotionally shielding our spouses is our responsibility. Our mates are better off not knowing about certain issues. Second, confidentiality between the minister and the person sharing the confidence does not include the spouse. Saying anything to our mates is off-limits in those cases. We do not want to curtail intimate communication between husband and wife, but sometimes our best communication is no communication.

### Preaching

A minister's primary form of public communication is preaching, which must also conform to ethical standards.

One of our district camps scheduled two speakers, one for the first half of the camp, the other for the last half. In one of his sermons the first speaker used an illustration, which he told in the first person as if it were his own experience. The second speaker later preached exactly the same sermon, using the same illustration,

using the first person as if it had happened to him.

The speakers were unethical on two counts. First, they plagiarized their sermon, using another preacher's materials without acknowledging it. Second, they were dishonest in purporting to have had an experience that in fact happened to someone else. Needless to say the credibility of those two preachers was null and void.

Rare is the preacher who does not utilize or benefit from the study and expertise of someone else. Most of us are not so original that we do not need to dip into other sources for material. But credit should be given, even when we may have

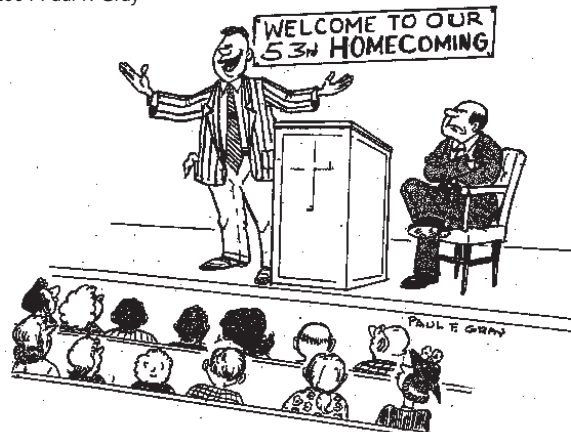
reworked the material to match our own preaching style. Some sources, such as lexicons and Bible dictionaries, are specifically provided for resource material with the understanding they will be used in, or as background for, messages we deliver.

Staying true to the text and the context may not seem like an issue of integrity, but it is. We are untrue to the Word and the Holy Spirit who inspired it, when we make the text say what we want it to rather than proclaim its obvious meaning.

### When we fail

"If anyone is never at fault in what he says, he is a perfect man" (James 3:2). If we fail to keep our word, even for good reasons, we need to try to make it right with the person with whom we had an agreement. I have forgotten appointments I had made. At the first opportunity, I have offered my

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**"As your former pastor, it is a real treat for me to preach today because I know you could use a 'square meal' once in awhile, Amen!"**

apologies and sought to rectify my error. In most cases, people were forgiving, knowing that my word is usually better than my memory. If my failure is sin, then my confession needs to be to our forgiving Lord.

## THE ETHICS OF POSITION

### Power

Each position holds some level of power. The President of the United States is called the most powerful man in the world, not because of the man, but because of the position. But a father in his home holds more power over his family than the President does.

The power or authority of the pastoral position derives

from many sources. The:

- pastor is a biblically defined gift to the church (Ephesians 4:11).
- pastor has received enabling gifts from the Holy Spirit (Romans 12:6; 1 Corinthians 12:11; 1 Peter 4:10).
- position requires certain credentials.
- position requires specific education.
- position requires experience.
- position usually involves the vote of a congregation.

These elements and more provide positional power. So the question is not whether the pastor has power, but how he will use it.

### Manipulation

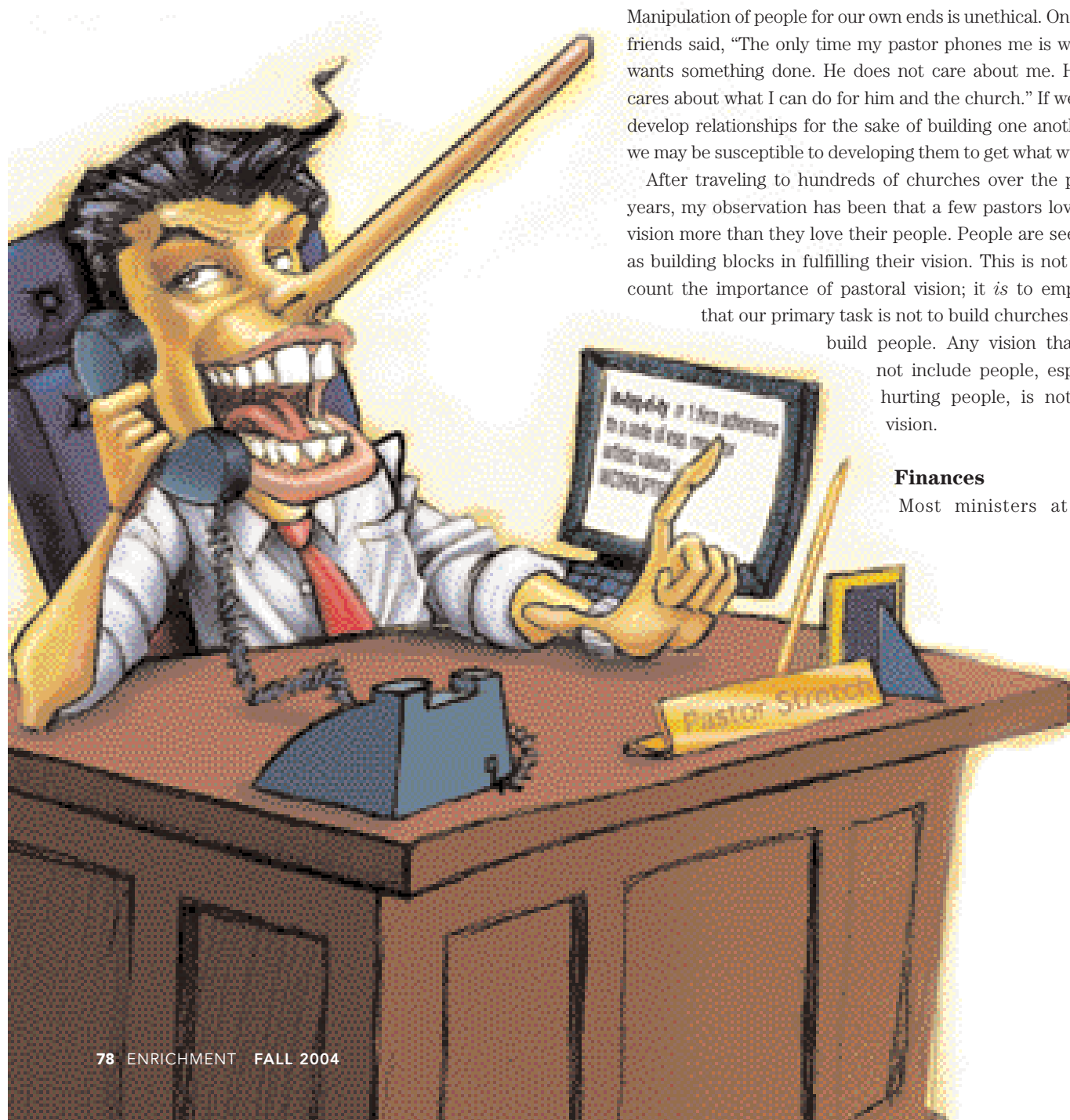
Manipulation of people for our own ends is unethical. One of my friends said, "The only time my pastor phones me is when he wants something done. He does not care about me. He only cares about what I can do for him and the church." If we fail to develop relationships for the sake of building one another up, we may be susceptible to developing them to get what we want.

After traveling to hundreds of churches over the past 14 years, my observation has been that a few pastors love their vision more than they love their people. People are seen only as building blocks in fulfilling their vision. This is not to discount the importance of pastoral vision; it *is* to emphasize

that our primary task is not to build churches, but to build people. Any vision that does not include people, especially hurting people, is not God's vision.

### Finances

Most ministers at some



point have done their work at great financial sacrifice. The temptation, both to those who are now doing well and those who still are not, is to use the power of our position to provide perks, justify extravagance, and pad our financial future. We do a disservice to the position and the Lord who called us when ministry becomes a means to an end instead of an end in itself.

One of the greatest exercises of power is not using it. I have pastored some wonderful people who loved and trusted me so much I could have asked for anything and they would have tried to give it to me. That is why I never asked. I did not trust myself to ask. My carnal desires might soil the holy position I held. The motives of my heart might be turned to what I could get out of the position rather than what I could give to the position. Those who have exercised this kind of restraint could testify that Jehovah-Jireh has more than met their needs. We did not have to ask something of our people; we only had to ask our Provider.

### **Preaching**

The pastoral position is seldom more powerful than when the pastor is in the pulpit. It is an awesome task to preach the gospel, and we have been honored that God has called us to such a worthy pursuit. But the power of the pulpit can be misused to achieve our own ends.

During church conflict when the pastor may be under attack, the pulpit is not the place to wage war. During conflict everything the pastor says, in or out of the pulpit, is interpreted in the context of the internal strife. Sometimes what the pastor says does not need interpretation because it is obviously a bold and aggressive attack against those who are opposing him: "But I am just preaching the Word." Yes, but we know the Scripture well enough that we can easily select

power, but often the position too. The strategy of pulpit power to win church wars rarely succeeds.

**When we are being assailed from every side, and we respond by using the Word as a club instead of a sword, we are guilty of violating a key principle that Jesus set forth.**

We can free ourselves of anxieties about using preaching as a weapon if we will preach Christ. When the apostles were under duress, arrested, in jail, or on trial, their defense was to preach Jesus. We are wise to follow their examples.

### **A Lesson in Power**

King Uzziah is linked three times in Scripture to positional power. Second Chronicles traces a sequencing of power as Uzziah moved through his years as king.

- "He had become very powerful" (2 Chronicles 26:8).
- "Until he became powerful" (2 Chronicles 26:15).
- "After Uzziah became powerful" (2 Chronicles 26:16).

At each of these points in Uzziah's reign, power had either good or bad consequences. At the end Uzziah went into the temple to offer incense, usurping the role of the priests. Extending his power into areas for which he was not called or anointed did not seem wrong to him. In fact he went into a rage when the priests confronted him. His misuse of power left him in the leper's house.

Wise and judicious use of positional power will result in building both the work of God in others and in us.

**We are untrue to the Word, and the Holy Spirit who inspired it, when we make the text say what we want it to rather than proclaim its obvious meaning.**

passages that play to our side of the issue and bring correction to the opposers. Such is a misuse of the Holy Word and the preaching office.

When we are being assailed from every side, and we respond by using the Word as a club instead of a sword, we are guilty of violating a key principle that Jesus set forth: "Whoever wants to save his life will lose it" (Mark 8:35). To preserve ourselves by using the power of our position, we effectively ensure that we will ultimately lose, not only our

### **THE ETHICS OF ADMINISTRATION** **Hiring Pastoral Staff**

Few decisions are more important for the pastor than selecting those who will become part of his team. It is as difficult as it is important. Making the wrong decision can have far-reaching consequences. At what point do ethical issues cross the hiring process? (See sidebar "Hiring Family Members," page 81.) We will highlight two of these intersections.

*The prospective staff member.* Honesty mandates that we will not tout the position and its importance for more than it really is. We will not make assurances about salary and benefits that we cannot fulfill or blame the church board for their lack of fulfillment. We will maintain confidentiality up to the parameters mutually agreed on. If other candidates

are also being considered, we will acknowledge that fact without identifying who they are. We will not use bait-and-switch tactics, changing the job description after the new staff member arrives.

*The prospective staff member's senior pastor.* Recruiting staff gets stickier when the candidate holds a

## THREE CHALLENGES IN MAINTAINING AN ETHICAL MINISTRY

### THE CHALLENGE OF COMPARTMENTALIZATION

Compartmentalization is putting one set of behaviors in one box, a second set in another box, and assuming that the contents of the two boxes never mix. It can be illustrated in many aspects of life.

- In politics — “What I do in my personal life has no bearing on what I do in my public life.”
- In sexual relations — “What consenting adults do in their bedroom is nobody’s business as long as it doesn’t hurt anyone else.”
- In sports — “As long as I keep scoring 20 points and pulling down 10 rebounds every night, it doesn’t matter how much alcohol I drink.”
- In the church — “Just because I play the lottery doesn’t mean I can’t be effective on the worship team.”
- On the church board — “I may not tithe, but I can still make good financial decisions for the church. Even if I don’t tithe, hasn’t God blessed me financially anyway?”
- In the ministry — “I still preach with the anointing. People got saved last Sunday. Surfing porno sites on the Web hasn’t hurt my ministry one bit.”

Compartmentalization is like a crack in the foundation of a home. At first it doesn’t seem to have any effect on the house. Nobody notices any external change. But more compartmentalization creates more cracks. They soon become noticeable. Close friends comment on them, even warn about them. Finally the foundation crumbles, and the house falls.

### THE CHALLENGE TO COMPROMISE

Challenges to our integrity should be expected. We should not be blindsided by some assault from the enemy against our consistent ethical behavior. Adam and Eve were tested to determine whether they would adhere to God’s Word. They flunked the test, and we have all been impacted by their failure. Achan thought he could hide his treachery, but loss of integrity can never be totally hidden. Ahab allowed his wife to murder Naboth, assuming that his own hands would be kept clean. Demas allowed the world to become the focus of his love. All of these biblical characters faced challenges to violate ethical conduct, and so will we.

We are all challenged to compromise. Compromise is the erosion of principle in daily experience. It’s the temptation to shave the edges of truth. It is silent amid antichrist sentiment.

It does what is workable instead of what is right. It provides plausible explanation for its behavior. It ignores the pleas of conscience. It fudges on ACMR statistics. It is willfully inaccurate on IRS Form 1040. It excuses R-rated movies. It massages biblical interpretation to justify its conduct. Compromise is the enemy of integrity.

As a pastor I had people in the congregation who seemed to be sincere, consistent Christians. They attended church regularly, tithed faithfully, occasionally were involved in ministry, and gave no outward indication of inward spiritual slippage. Then I would hear that they not only were leaving the church, but were involved in behaviors that were totally inconsistent with their Christian confession. They may have been having an extramarital affair, or been charged with a crime, or cheated clients out of their money.

These revelations seemed to come out of nowhere. And yet I learned that what seemed to be sudden inconsistencies was in fact the end result of a series of compromises over time. The final, shocking, overt sin was the product of spiritual attrition.

As ministers, we cannot assume that because we traffic in the holy we are immune to compromise. “When tempted, no one should say, ‘God is tempting me.’ For God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he tempt anyone; but each one is tempted when, by his own evil desire, he is dragged away and enticed. Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death” (James 1:13–15).

### THE CHALLENGE OF CONVERGENCE

Convergence is more than a challenge. Where compromise and compartmentalization exist, convergence is inevitable. That means the false wall between two separate compartments in my life is broken down, and the two converge. The private life and the public person meet. Darkness meets light. Secret sin is disclosed. Long-harbored desires meet opportunity. Sin is the result.

Convergence is inevitable because God created us individually as one person. God has designed only one will for our lives. There is one glorious destiny — that we might be like Christ. When we try to divorce one part of our lives from another, we frustrate God’s purpose to make us one with Him.

WARREN D. BULLOCK, Kirkland, Washington



position in another church. The key question that has to be answered is, “At what point do I or the candidate inform the senior pastor that exploratory talks are taking place about a position on my staff?”

Some staff members are reluctant to inform the senior pastor, especially before substantive conversations, because past history with former staff indicates that such information has not been well-received by the pastor. Some interpret any investigation into other positions as a sign of disloyalty to them personally and to the church. Some have fired their associates on the spot upon learning they were exploring other staff possibilities.

So how do you ethically continue to pursue hiring options without jeopardizing the staff member's position? This should be one of the first questions you and the candidate ask and answer. You must come to an agreement on the point at which the senior pastor will be informed. If no agreement can be made with which you are ethically comfortable, then you need to scratch that candidate from your prospect list and move on.

My personal procedure has been as follows: I call the candidate to determine if he is interested in the position we have open. If not, I accept that as God's will made known. If there is interest, my next call will be to the senior pastor. If he asks me not to pursue the minister on his staff, I will comply. Most pastors recognize the extended probing process that is necessary to staff selection. They would not want a staff member to stay if God is directing that person elsewhere.

In some cases, the staff member asks to be the one to first inform the pastor. Once that is done, I then call the senior pastor and explain our desire to continue talks with the staff pastor. Maintaining a positive and healthy relationship with that pastor is one of my goals.

# HIRING FAMILY MEMBERS

It is common to have spouses and other family members help you grow a church. This is especially true in the beginning stages. But when the church has grown and resources are available to hire staff, is hiring family wrong or considered nepotism? What are the positive and negative impacts of placing family on the payroll? What is the recommended procedure in such a case?

## COMMON PRACTICE

It is not unusual to find family members (spouses or parents) on church staffs. Is it unethical? When we look at this issue we need to discuss *nepotism*. The *American Heritage Dictionary* defines *nepotism* as “favoritism shown by persons in high office to relatives.” In fact, the word's origin comes from the Latin *nepos* for “nephew.”

The simple act of hiring family members is not nepotism. Notice the definition says the leader shows *favoritism* toward the family member. Nepotism plays out when an unqualified family member is given a church position.

There are circumstances when we should consider family members. But there are benefits and detriments to considering a family member.

## BENEFITS TO HIRING FAMILY

- The family member may be best qualified and the perfect choice for the position.
- The family member will likely be a loyal staff member. He will probably stand with you through difficult times.
- When you hire a family member, you usually hire someone you intimately know. You understand his personality and whether he would fit well within the team and your leadership style.
- You would be financially helping a fellow family member.

## DRAWBACKS TO HIRING FAMILY

- The family member may not be the best qualified. If he was not a member of your family, would your church hire him?
- The hiring presents an appearance of impropriety. The hiring of a close relative does raise concerns: “I heard he was given the job because he is related to the pastor.” For this reason many organizations today prohibit the practice.
- You use different hiring standards. The family member may not go through the usual hiring process (i.e., submitting a resume and the formal interviewing process). Also, the family member may not be evaluated for fear of discussing candid job-performance issues.
- Hiring a family member may create stress on the staff. Exactly who is that family member's boss? Staff pastor or the senior pastor?

## RECOMMENDATION

Take the initiative and provide a policy that requires a family member being considered for a paid position to be interviewed by the deacon/elder board and obtain their approval before hiring him. This helps protect the pastor, avoids any appearance of impropriety, and safeguards the hiring decision. The church and the prospective employee need to know he was chosen on his own merits.

JOHN P. JOSEPH, J.D., FCBA, Saint Petersburg, Florida

# In the early years of my ministry, I was taught that a pastor should never make friends with members of the congregation. I now view that as bad advice.

## Finances

How church finances are handled will either damage or enhance the reputation of the church and the pastor. (See sidebar “Ten Financial Rules To Protect You and Your Ministry.”) Here are some guidelines:

- Pay church bills on time.
- Do not borrow more money than you can repay.
- If you take an offering for guests — missionaries, evangelists, musicians — give them the offering. If you only plan to give them an honorarium, do not tell the people the offering is for the guest.
- Never drop missionaries from the support list without informing them. Every church’s goal is to continue supporting the missionaries on the support list. However, churches do go through periods where this is not possible. It may not be unethical to drop them without informing them, but Christian courtesy requires we do so.
- Provide regular and detailed accounting of the church finances.
- Never use designated funds for another purpose.
- Do not allow a person of means to use his or her money as leverage to influence the decisionmaking process.
- When taking the offering, do not use overblown language to exaggerate a negative financial situation.
- Be sure that proper internal controls are in place.
- Model in your personal finances the stewardship and fiscal discipline you want your church to have.

## THE ETHICS OF RELATIONSHIPS

When Peter was at Cornelius’ home, he concluded, “God does not show favoritism” (Acts 10:34). This realization was in the context of God’s acceptance of the Gentiles as well as the Jews. The pastor should also endeavor to deal with people without showing favoritism. This does not mean you have the same relationship with everyone in your congregation. But it does mean that you treat everyone with the same dignity, respect, and service that God does with us.

## Former Parishioners

Love for our congregation does not die when we move to a new assignment, but our relationship with it changes. The members of our former post are no longer our spiritual responsibility. So what is our ethical obligation if members

of our previous church call us for counsel or ask us to do weddings or funerals? My decision is centered on the core ethical issue of doing nothing that would adversely affect the leadership of my successor or the health of the church.

Some pastors draw a sharp, clear line by refusing without exception to be involved in any way with former members. Personally, I have not drawn the line quite that sharply. But much depends on how secure the successor is, and whether he feels threatened by your coming back. Sensitivity to each situation may result in different responses in each case. Nevertheless the day will come when you can no longer be connected in ministry to your former congregation, and that day should be sooner rather than later.

## TEN FINANCIAL RULES TO PROTECT YOU AND YOUR MINISTRY

The ministry like no other profession creates vulnerability. A major area of concern for ministerial behavior is financial accountability. These 10 rules will protect you and your ministry:

1. Never have the key or know the combination of the church safe.
2. Never be the recipient of church money or offerings.
3. Never borrow money from church members or attendees.
4. Never allow a family member or relative to be a custodian of church funds.
5. Never solicit ministerial discounts. It is proper to accept discounts when they are offered.
6. Always keep church finances in good order.
7. Always pay your personal bills promptly. Unpaid bills bring discredit to the ministry.
8. Always designate offerings for missionaries and evangelists as announced.
9. Always be certain that a raise or increase in personal income is given with discretion and under the watchful eye of the church board or proper authority.
10. Always fear personal debt. Maturity is the ability to forgo a present enjoyment in light of a future reward. Why pay interest to financial institutions when you could use that money to your advantage?

ERNEST J. MOEN, Sun City West, Arizona

## Present Parishioners

In the early years of my ministry, I was taught that a pastor should never make friends with members of the congregation. I now view that as bad advice. You will be drawn to some in your church by affinity, mutual interest, and compatible temperaments. Friendship can and should develop. But the pastor cannot violate the favoritism principle. Decisions dare not be made out of friendship, but out of what is best for the church. Time must be spent with others in the congregation, not just our friends. We are influenced by what is right, not by what is expedient.

## Other Ministers

What would happen if we all committed ourselves to:

- pray consistently for the blessing and success of other ministers?
- rejoice when God answers my prayers concerning them?
- be happy when their church is growing faster than mine?
- not squelch the vision of a church planter in my town?
- not speak ill of another minister under any circumstances?
- respect their vision?
- never proselytize any of their people?
- give them the Golden Rule treatment?

If we made these covenants with ourselves, ethical concerns would not be an issue.

## Our Families

This is our ongoing delight — building strong relationship with members of our family. However, parents, a husband

or wife, and sons and daughters are the second of life's priorities. Our first priority is to God. The crush of ministerial duties should not keep us from nurturing these caring relationships.

The destructive nature of unfaithfulness and the wounds it creates should be an adequate bulwark against infidelity. But negative motivation is not always enough. Far better to develop such a positive, healthy relationship with my spouse, in which I love her too much to ever cause her the pain of my adultery. Infidelity is always more loss than gain.

## Our God

"To have found God and still to pursue Him is the soul's paradox of love ... justified in happy experience by the children of the burning heart."<sup>5</sup> We have found Him, or perhaps we should say He has found us, for a relationship of intimacy. So we do not spend time with Him to ask Him to honor our endeavors, but we ask what endeavors will honor Him. Prayer does not become a means to an end — church success, powerful anointing, changed lives — though all of these are worthy requests. Prayer is an end in itself because it deepens my relationship with the Lover of my soul. My pastoral passion is not primarily directed at extending His kingdom, but in knowing the King.

Do you see the difference? All that we want and need is in Him. Everything good in my life, my family, and my ministry will flow from Him. So I seek *Him*. When I do, then the answers to my temporal requests are granted. I grow in my understanding of His purposes for me and develop sensitivities that can hear even the whispers of the Spirit. Such pure familiarity will provide needed direction for life's central causes, and the ethical path, the road of righteousness, will be perfectly clear. ■



**WARREN D. BULLOCK**, D.Min., is dean of the School of Ministry at Northwest College, Kirkland, Washington.

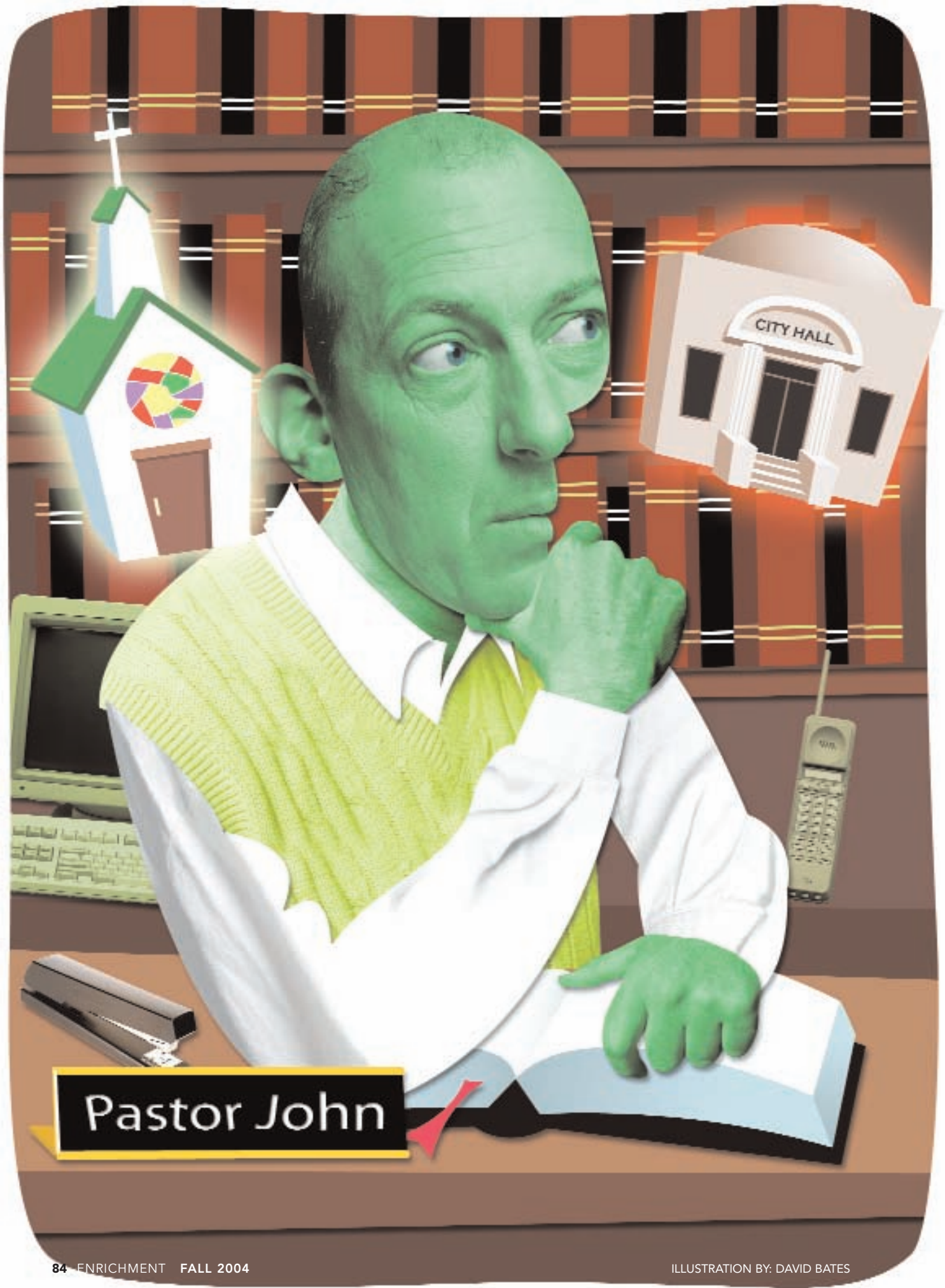
## ENDNOTES

1. Ministerial statistics for 2002 from the General Secretary's Office, General Council of the Assemblies of God.
2. Merriam-Webster's Online Dictionary.
3. Ibid.
4. Howard Hendricks, "The Power of a Promise Kept," *A Life of Integrity: 12 Outstanding Leaders Raise the Standard for Today's Christian Men*, (Portland: Multnomah Books, 1997), 207.
5. A.W. Tozer, *The Pursuit of God*, (Harrisburg, Pa.: Christian Publications, Inc., 1982), 45.

**NOTE:** For further study, see the Ministerial Ethics Resource list on the fall 2004 table of contents page at [www.enrichmentjournal.ag.org](http://www.enrichmentjournal.ag.org)







Pastor John



# a minister's community:

## Obligations & Opportunities

**W**hile I served as pastor of First Baptist Church in El Paso, Texas, a community crisis arose. Unknown to business and professional leaders of the city, a state senator secretly met with Chamber of Commerce officials to solicit their support for legislation. Two days later the senator introduced a bill that would legalize casino gambling in this community bordering Mexico. Rumors spread that organized crime was involved because this urban sprawl of over 2 million people would be an ideal international location.

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B Y J O E E . T R U L L

What should the minister of the largest and oldest Protestant church do? The risks were real. Powerful business and professional leaders believed casino gambling would be a boon to the city's struggling economy. The gambling industry mounted an aggressive campaign. Opponents were threatened. I received phone calls suggesting I disappear. Our church did not need a new battle — we were engaged in a major outreach and did not need this diversion.

Nevertheless, the religious community needed to respond. Within a few hours, ministers representing all major Protestant denominations, a Jewish rabbi, and an envoy from the Roman Catholic archbishop met at our church to construct a joint statement. Before that first Friday was over we held a press conference and read a statement signed by all the clergy. The religious community unified to oppose a threat to the moral and social well-being of its citizens.

This incident raises questions about the minister's ethical responsibilities to the community in which he serves. Some clergy believe the pastor has only one responsibility—to minister to the members of his flock. His calling is from God to proclaim the gospel and build up the church. All else is superfluous.

In addition, some would reject community service or involvement on the basis of their skewed view of society. "Love not the world" (1 John 2:15) is their theme song, believing any participation in secular activities is a compromise with a culture sold out to Satan and sin.

Richard Niebuhr in *Christ and Culture* analyzed the struggle of Christians through the centuries to choose between their loyalties to Christ and the demands of society.<sup>1</sup> Although there is evil to be avoided in the world, Niebuhr accurately noted that this isolationist attitude does not reflect the challenge of Jesus for disciples to be positive influences in a morally dark society (Matthew 5:13,14).

One fact remains. The church is in the world, and the world is also in the church. The minister can see the world as a threat or as an opportunity for ministry. It is no accident that all codes of ethics for ministers have included a section listing the clergys' responsibilities to their community.<sup>2</sup> (*See the article, "A Minister's Code of Ethics: a Higher Level of Commitment and Conduct" by James A. Reasons, page 105. A sample code of ethics is also included.*)

To be God's minister in the world is ethically demanding, for it requires of clergy the dual role of prophet and pastor. The shepherd of God is concerned about community needs and ministry opportunities, as well as public morality. Along with congregation building and pastoral caring, a cleric has a public ministry that is larger than the claims of a particular church.

## BASIS FOR ETHICAL INVOLVEMENT

Is there a biblical basis for the ethical involvement of ministers in their communities? One of the first revelations of Scripture is that God is the Creator of all that is: "God saw all that he had made, and it was very good" (Genesis 1:31). But God's created order did not remain untainted for long — sin corrupted the earth and its inhabitants (Genesis 3). Yet, God, the Creator and Governor of the world, is also God the Redeemer who works and is working to transform the kingdoms of this earth into the kingdom of God (Revelation 21).

This is the major reason ministers must view society as an opportunity for ministry. God has not abandoned the world; neither should the church or its leaders.

The Old Testament prophets proclaimed the need for social justice and community righteousness (Isaiah 1:15–17; Amos 5:21–24). Micah declared, "He has showed you, O man, what is good; And what does the Lord require of you? To act justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God" (Micah 6:8).

The New Testament continued this concern for social justice. Jesus confirmed His intent not to "abolish the Law or the Prophets ... but to fulfill them" (Matthew 5:17). Christians are citizens of a new kingdom and live by a new law — the law of righteousness. Jesus' disciples are to have a positive influence on a darkened and decaying society (Matthew 5:13–16). As God's new covenant community, the Christian church is to be involved in doing what Jesus did, for the Lord said, "As the Father has sent me, I am sending you" (John 20:21).

In teaching about an ethical kingdom, Jesus continually challenged the social order of His time.<sup>3</sup> Jesus was crucified because He threatened the Jewish and Roman religious and

## Modern disciples cannot withdraw from the arenas of politics and economics by saying that the world is too wicked.

political powers of the first century. He identified with the poor, the oppressed, and the outcasts.

Paul's realization that all are equal, that "there is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus" (Galatians 3:28), became a first-century battle cry for breaking down the social walls that divided and destroyed human worth and dignity.

In light of the teaching of Scripture and the witness of Christian tradition, modern disciples cannot withdraw from the arenas of politics and economics by saying that the world is too wicked. Neither can Christians turn their backs on the brokenness in society and say there is no

need for the church to minister to any but its own.

In short, the church is to be in the world, where God put it. Conversely, the world of material and spiritual resources is in the church because God put it there. Every minister, therefore, must ask: *How can I view my community as an opportunity for ministry?*

## COMMUNITY SERVICE

Clergy often have the competence and the professional freedom to engage in community service beyond the demands of the congregation. Public service can be a satisfying but also seductively time-consuming enterprise. A deacon in a nearby church complained that his pastor was spending 20 hours per week as a volunteer firefighter. The problem arose when he told his congregation he no longer had time for visitation.

A minister should never neglect pastoral duties to serve the general public. At the same time, a church usually affirms a minister's unique opportunity to benefit the community. A wise pastor will make sure church duties never take a backseat to community service.

A minister can serve a community in numerous ways, such as fund-raising, civic speeches, or unpaid service on a public board, council, or agency. The motive should always be love of neighbor and selfless service in the name of Christ. A pastor who has been involved in a positive way in community service will have greater credibility when addressing moral issues.

In regard to service on boards or agencies, the minister must be careful. A minister's power and influence should be used in the interest of the public as a whole, not for his own advantage or for a preferred few.

Methodist theologian Gaylord Noyce points out that in several respects the clergy serve as chaplains to the society at large. As ministers invoke God's blessing and offer thanks at meals, let them guard against that bland "civil religion" that implies God's acceptance of all things American, from labor unions to the Ku Klux Klan.<sup>4</sup> At the same time, the minister must respect diversity in the audience and refrain from sectarianism. It may be wise to turn down some invitations.

## POLITICAL INVOLVEMENT

A remarkable increase in political involvement by clergy began in the 1960s. During the civil rights movement, many local pastors packed their bags and headed to Selma, Alabama, or Jackson, Mississippi, or Washington, D.C. Some sought approval from their congregations; some did not. More than a few were jailed. The antiwar movement followed. Ministers who took part usually came from mainline denominations of a more liberal political persuasion. Conservative ministers criticized this effort as a "social

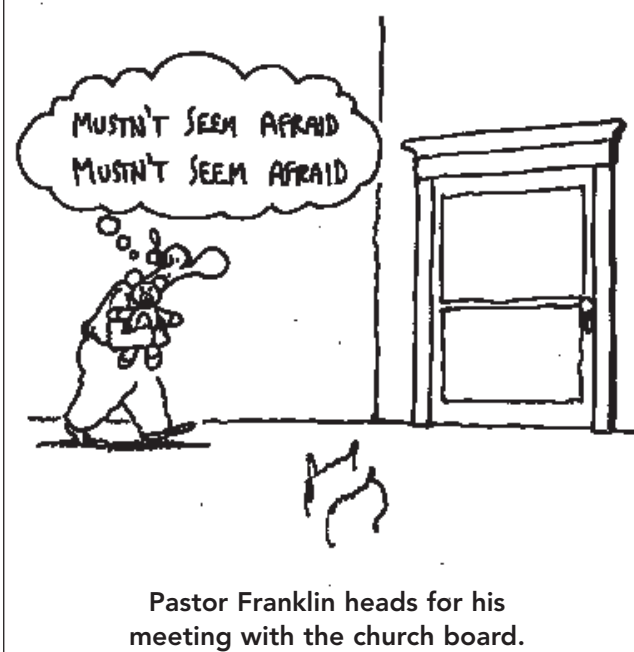
gospel," claiming that the true gospel of Christ changed hearts, not society.

An amazing turnaround occurred in the 1980s. Led by Jerry Falwell's Moral Majority, conservatives reversed the older evangelical opposition to political social action. A new force called the Religious Right brought fundamentalist American Christianity into politics. Although this movement was weakened by its penchant for civil religion and its tendency to baptize all conservative political views as "Christian," it did get conservative ministers involved in the political process.

On April 16, 1963, from an Alabama jail a Baptist minister wrote a letter to eight white clergymen who opposed his strategy for bringing racial justice to the South. Martin Luther King, Jr., explained why he had come to Birmingham, Alabama, from Atlanta, Georgia, saying that as Paul went out from Tarsus, "I too am compelled to carry the gospel of freedom beyond my particular hometown. Like Paul, I must constantly respond to the Macedonian call for aid."<sup>5</sup> King wrote that his greatest disappointment was with the leadership of the white churches. Expecting to find his strongest support from ministers, instead he found "a religious community largely adjusted to the status quo. . . . Yes, I see the church as the body of Christ. But, oh! How we have blemished and scarred that body through social neglect and fear of being nonconformists."<sup>6</sup>

With this historical overview in mind, what can be said about the ethical obligations of a minister in regard to politics? At the level of Christian citizenship, the church shepherd certainly will obey the law, pay taxes, pray for public officials,

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and participate in supporting good government. But how politically active should a minister be?

The public sometimes reacts to ministers meddling in community issues by appealing to separation of church and state. Scripture does teach, by implication, that the state should not control the church, nor should the church control the state, nor should either be dependent on the other (Matthew 22:21). However, the First Amendment was never meant to separate God from government, or religion from politics.

Partisan politics is definitely a high-risk avocation for a pastor. Noyce contends, "Style is part of the answer. The minister cannot [be partisan], if his or her way of politicking is primarily to condemn the other side as evil, un-Christian, or

vicious."<sup>7</sup> Ministers should focus on issues that are clearly moral rather than on partisan positions. Most congregations will support a pastor who takes a courageous stand on the basis of moral conviction.

Clergy who are active in politics should be careful about promoting civil religion. One of the great ethical mistakes of ministers in our day is confusing God and country. Civil religion is dangerous because it assumes that the United States is a Christian nation and Americans are God's chosen people. The temptation is to align Americanism and Christianity with a certain political point of view. Like Nathan of ancient Israel, the modern prophet of God must keep a healthy distance from the king in order to say, "You are the man!" (2 Samuel 12:7).

# IS CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE EVER JUSTIFIED?

Organized protests by Christians against moral evil have been vigorous and vociferous in recent years. In Atlanta, Georgia, and New Orleans, Louisiana, Operation Rescue teams surrounded abortion clinics. Antiwar Christians marched with other activists down Congress Avenue to stage a rally on the steps of the capitol building. Outside an Alabama courthouse Christians preached and prayed (and sometimes clashed) in opposition to the removal of the Ten Commandments monument. Movies portraying an unflattering picture of Jesus have been picketed. Denominational leaders called for a boycott of Disney World because the company affirmed the homosexual lifestyle and produced indecent movies.

These well-publicized acts have raised valid questions. What is the proper response of Christians to social evil? If cultural trends run counter to Christian values, how should believers object? Is civil disobedience ever justified?

These particular issues are not the dilemma. Sincere Christians differ in their understanding of these issues. The sincerity of those who protest is not questioned. Certainly men and women who are willing to suffer ridicule and imprisonment for their moral convictions are admired.

The question, however, is about strategy — how to respond to social evil? Should we make our objections heard in a society that may not share our values?

People in a pluralistic democracy will write books, produce films, and enact laws that offend Christian moral values. As citizens we can protest in many ways: private and public conversation, letter writing, contacting officials, picketing, boycotting, and even civil disobedience. With such a wide range of options, how does a Christian determine what is acceptable and what is best?

Wise Christians will ask a series of vital questions before they protest:<sup>1</sup>

- How serious is the issue? Is the problem an immediate threat?
- How reasonable and clear are the goals of the protest? Does the action intend to raise public awareness, change the law, or pressure offending parties?
- How effective will the protest be and with what side effects?
- What will be the long-range consequences?

Terry Muck asks, "Will the public perception of what we are doing through the protest so poison people's perceptions of Christians that the cause of Christ will be hurt?"

## IF THE GOVERNMENT REQUIRES OBEDIENCE TO A LAW THAT VIOLATES THE HIGHER LAW OF GOD, IT MAY BE GOD'S WILL FOR THE CHRISTIAN TO RESIST.

Beyond these practical questions about the wisdom of organized protests, a larger one emerges. Is civil disobedience ever right for Christians? What does the Bible teach on this matter?

When Paul instructed believers in Rome to obey the government (Romans 13:1), he was referring to a totalitarian system ruled by tyrants. Yet, the apostle encouraged "submission" to the authority ordained by God for humanity.

At the same time the Bible lauds persons who were not submissive. Rahab (Joshua 6), Hebrew midwives (Exodus 1), Shadrach, Meshach, Abednego, and Daniel (Daniel 3 and 6), and Peter and John (Acts 4 to 5) all resisted governmental authority.

How do we rightly interpret this seeming contradiction? The



Should a minister be involved in organized protests and civil disobedience? In a pluralistic democracy such as ours, many books, films, laws, and judicial decisions will offend Christian moral values. As citizens we can protest in many ways, including picketing, boycotting, and even civil disobedience.

In an editorial in *Christianity Today*, Terry Muck urged Christians to ask four vital questions before joining an organized protest:

- How serious is the issue?
- How reasonable and clear are the goals of the protest?
- How effective will the protest be and with what effects?
- What will be the long-range consequences?<sup>8</sup>

A minister should always work for justice. Civil disobedience may be permissible in unique circumstances, but even then it is an exception to the norm of lawful obedience to government. The purpose of such law breaking should be to raise public consciousness, educate, and focus public concern on an unjust law.<sup>9</sup> (See sidebar, “Is Civil Disobedience Ever Justified?” and supporting article

“Confronting the Fear of Controversy” on page 90.)

Is it ever appropriate for a minister to endorse a political candidate? Candidates for public office yearn to list the names of local pastors among their supporters to garner support among their constituency. Members may pressure a pastor to do so. In private conversation, a minister is free to share political convictions if she or he chooses. Public endorsement, however, is rarely (if ever) the right thing to do. It alienates members who disagree and is undoubtedly a misuse of the pastor’s position.

One legal note: Given a 1992 ruling,<sup>10</sup> churches should think twice before endorsing or opposing political candidates. To maintain tax exemption, churches and their personnel must not support or oppose candidates for public office.

## PUBLIC MORALITY

Richard John Neuhaus is alarmed by what he calls “the naked public square” in America — the practice of excluding religion and religious values from the conduct of public business.<sup>11</sup>

CONTINUED ON PAGE 92

Scriptures teach that God instituted government for human good — to maintain social order, punish evil, and provide services to the citizenry (Romans 13:1–7). The believer is to be a supportive citizen (Matthew 22:21).

However, if the government requires obedience to a law that violates the higher law of God, it may be God’s will for the Christian to resist. Rosa Parks refused to obey a law that required African-Americans to sit at the back of the public bus. Martin Luther King, Jr., was jailed many times simply for entering “Whites Only” areas of public places or for peacefully marching in protest to these laws.

Criteria for justified civil disobedience by Christians has traditionally included:<sup>2</sup>

- The law being resisted is clearly unjust and contrary to God’s will.
- The legal means to change the injustice has been exhausted.
- The act of civil disobedience is public.
- The likelihood of success.
- The participants should willingly accept the penalty for breaking the law.

Christians involved in the civil rights movement of the 1960s believed that unjust laws discriminated against African-Americans and the legitimate means of changing the law had been exhausted. To increase public awareness of racial discrimination and pressure officials into changing these statutes, citizens disobeyed these laws. But notice, King always counseled his followers to be peaceful and passive, submitting to authorities and suffering the legal consequences of breaking these laws.

On the other hand, many involved in opposing abortion and closing abortion clinics fail in these criteria at several points.

First, there is no civil law that forbids or commands abortion. The law broken by abortion clinic protestors (that they are arrested for) is an ordinance ensuring free access to businesses. Second, other legal avenues for changing abortion laws have not been exhausted.

In addition, some opposition to abortion is clandestine — opponents have bombed clinics and attacked personnel in

**IN ANY CIRCUMSTANCE, CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE IS AN EXCEPTION TO THE NORM OF LAWFUL OBEDIENCE TO GOVERNMENT.**

secret. Will their actions lead to success? A clinic may be shut down immediately, but long-term success is another question. To many observers, success seems unlikely due to confused goals — changing laws, rescuing babies, educating mothers, discouraging abortion doctors and nurses, or closing clinics.

A Christian must always work for justice and civic morality, and in some cases this may mean public protest or even civil disobedience. But in any circumstance, civil disobedience is an exception to the norm of lawful obedience to government. Any organized protest must be carefully evaluated and cautiously undertaken in light of Christian principles. In the words of Jesus, Christians must be “wise as serpents and harmless as doves” (Matthew 10:16, KJV).

JOE E. TRULL, Wimberly, Texas

### ENDNOTES

1. Terry Muck, “Holy Indignation,” *Christianity Today*, 21 October 1988, 14,15.
2. Stephan Charles Mott, *Biblical Ethics and Social Change* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982), 161–64.

## CONFRONTING THE FEAR OF CONTROVERSY

I clearly remember the first time my church leaders discussed our church's stance regarding pro-life involvement. A small group within our congregation had presented a proposal to the board requesting permission to begin a crisis pregnancy program.

Our discussion was intense. "I will vote in favor of the proposal," said one board member, "only if we include strict guidelines prohibiting any form of public protest against abortion."

Others expressed similar reservations. We eventually approved the group's request, but this was only the beginning of what would become one of the most controversial issues of my 12 years of ministry at Christian Chapel in Tulsa, Oklahoma.

Superheated issues in our society have a way of starting fires within the church walls. Political wars can become church wars. Of no issue is that more true than abortion.

As a pastor, I had been reticent to get involved. In the course of everyday ministry, I take enough shots without asking to be shot. I'm more interested in calming church controversy than creating it. Like most pastors, I like people to like me. The last thing I want to do is make people in my church angry.

In the end, I overcame my fears and got involved in the controversial issue, and I made my church angry. But I learned a lot along the way about how to handle such issues.

### BE OPEN TO GOD

In August 1988, as I watched a national newscast from the Democratic National Convention in Atlanta, the news anchor reported that Randall Terry and a group of anti-abortion demonstrators were using their bodies to barricade abortion clinics. They were arrested and jailed. Many refused to give their names, identifying themselves as "Baby Doe." I questioned their tactics, but I was challenged by their commitment.

After the convention ended, Operation Rescue, as it was being called, passed from the news but not from my thoughts. A recurring question haunted me: *Would I do whatever the Lord asked to end abortion on demand?*

In the ensuing weeks, my inner turmoil deepened. I didn't question whether abortion was right or wrong. Both Scripture and science had convinced me that life begins at conception: therefore abortion is morally wrong, since it is the taking of human life.

The conflict arose over my obedience, my level of commitment: *How would I respond to this great tragedy?*

I had serious reservations about Christians committing civil disobedience. I have a deep respect for both the law and the governing authorities, as prescribed in Romans 13. But I also knew that respect for the law doesn't mean blind allegiance. Blind compliance has historically produced human rights abuses of the most serious kind, including the Jewish Holocaust.

I was also concerned about my relationship with my denomination. Traditionally, we have distanced ourselves from anything political or social in nature. If I became involved in any serious attempt to end abortion on demand, I feared I might jeopardize my ordination, especially if I participated in civil disobedience.

Of equal concern was my relationship with Christian Chapel. I was the senior pastor. I knew how tense the board meeting had been. I anticipated far greater controversy if I myself became involved in some form of public, confrontational pro-life activity.

Less nobly, I feared arrest and imprisonment. What would happen to my wife, Brenda, if I went to jail for weeks or months? How would she support herself if my income was suddenly cut off?

To escape the torment of my conscience, I plunged into my work, initiating new programs at the church and increasing my counseling load. Nothing helped. Like the fugitive in Francis Thompson's *Hound of Heaven*, I encountered God at every turn; He wouldn't let the issue leave my consciousness.

Throughout this time of uncertainty, I did not discuss the issue with anyone in the church. I didn't want to cause any confusion until I was committed to a course of action. Finally, after nearly 9 months of agonizing indecision, I still wasn't decided on what my involvement would be, but I prayed, "Lord, I will take up my cross and follow in whatever way You lead. I will even 'rescue' if that is what You want me to do."

For the first time in many months, I experienced an inner peace. The future was still uncertain; I was no less afraid, but I no longer felt as if I was fighting against God.

### TIME YOUR MOVES

With my new resolve, I decided to preach an anti-abortion sermon. This wasn't my first. At Christian Chapel, we addressed this issue at least once a year, always on Sanctity of Human Life Sunday.

But this was different. This was Mother's Day 1989, not Sanctity of Human Life Sunday. On Mother's Day, the entire family comes to church anticipating a "warm fuzzy" — a tribute extolling the virtues of motherhood.

Instead I broadsided them with a graphic message detailing the horrors of abortion, ending with a ringing challenge to act now.

Why was I so insensitive? At the time I was convinced the Holy Spirit had directed me. Now I'm not so sure. I reasoned that Mother's Day would be a day when our women would be sensitized to the meaning of motherhood and the value of children, and therefore more outraged by the horrors of abortion.

I was right, at least about the outrage part. Several mothers, horrified by my graphic description of aborted babies, fled the sanctuary before I could finish my sermon. I learned later that many others were offended, and at least one family left the church.

Unfortunately, my timing diverted the people's focus from the tragedy of abortion to a discussion of my taste in preaching such a sermon on Mother's Day.

### KEEP YOUR BALANCE

But I didn't give up my desire to demonstrate our commitment to the sanctity of human life, and the congregation and I quickly found ourselves at a philosophical impasse.

Although virtually every member felt that abortion was wrong, we were deeply divided on the church's responsibility. Some argued against legislating morality, saying that free moral agents have the right to make morally wrong choices.

Others, though, argued that no one's "right" to sin gives them the right to take a life, that abortion must be outlawed to protect the innocent. That was also my position.

Still others thought our involvement should be limited to prayer. They reasoned that this was a spiritual issue that could be resolved only through intercession.

I agreed but pointed out, "Historically the church has combined prayer with some form of direct action. In missions, it's prayer and witness. In Christian service, it's prayer and acts of mercy. In fighting abortion, shouldn't we use both intercession and intervention?"

But the complaint I heard most concerned the "needs" of church attenders. Again and again church members said, "People don't come to church to hear about abortion but to have their spiritual needs met."

That complaint gave me pause. I was committed to the needs of my flock. Yet I also felt impassioned about the injustices of society. How to balance the needs of my members with prophetic action became a constant challenge, one I'm not sure I always managed well.

I easily could have become a one-issue preacher during this time. But the pastoral staff and elder board held me accountable and kept me in balance. Abortion is a great evil and one the church must address, but the message of the gospel is still "Christ and him crucified."

My insensitive Mother's Day sermon opened my eyes to the silent needs of some in my congregation. So intent to preach prophetically on the horrors of abortion, I had overlooked the pain of abortion's other victim — the mother. Many women who have made this choice struggle with guilt and regret. Apart from the grace of Jesus Christ, they have no way of escaping the painful consequences of their tragic decision. After counseling several women who had aborted their children, I became more sensitive to their needs in my preaching.

### PREPARE FOR LOVING CONFRONTATION

Christian Chapel soon became known as the pro-life voice for the Christian community in Tulsa. We organized a citywide pro-life rally attended by more than 2,000 concerned citizens. Six weeks later we staged a prayer vigil in front of the local abortion clinic, attended by scores of clergy and nearly 600 pro-life believers.

On the anniversary of the *Roe v. Wade* decision, we held a memorial service in our church yard, attended by 1,500 people of all faiths. In 1991, I chaired the committee for the Rally for Life at the state capital, attended by more than 14,000. Repeatedly, the local television news interviewed me concerning abortion issues, and several colleges and universities invited me to speak.

Our church swung into action. Members of our congregation picketed the local abortion clinics. Others counseled on the sidewalks leading to the abortion clinics, telling the mothers who came for abortions about other alternatives. Still others opened their homes to single pregnant women, and physicians from our church provided their services at no cost to these expectant mothers.

As a result of the loving concern they experienced, many troubled women found emotional healing and committed their lives to follow Christ. Many childless couples adopted babies who,

except for our intervention, would have died at the hands of abortionists.

### KEEP YOUR PRIORITIES CLEAR

As I review the past, I see that the cost of obeying what we felt was our responsibility has been high. Although all the leaders of Christian Chapel supported my efforts, others in the congregation did not. Some of the more imaginative dissenters accused me of having a midlife crisis. Others suggested that if the official board did not censor me, I would lead the church astray. Over a period of months, scores of people left the church.

One of my greatest temptations was to sacrifice my integrity to maintain church unity. Things were going well at the church: attendance, baptisms, and giving — all were up. Why risk rocking the boat over something as controversial as abortion?

I returned again and again to the words of Christ, "Do not suppose that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I did not come to bring peace, but a sword. For I have come to turn 'a man against his father, a daughter against her mother, a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law — a man's enemies will be the members of his own household' " (Matthew 10:34–36).

I finally concluded that God values some things more than unity. Among them are obedience, truth, and integrity.

### STAY FOR THE LONG HAUL

"The race," wrote King Solomon, "is not to the swift or the battle to the strong."

Nowhere is this more evident than in pro-life work. Mobilizing a congregation to pursue any vision — especially something psychologically threatening like action against abortion — takes time. Just as it takes more than one sermon to teach stewardship or prayer, so it takes several sermons over a period of time to lead a church into a controversial issue.

I found that as our members participated in pro-life activities, their commitment increased, gradually rubbing off on others in the congregation. One of the least threatening ways we introduced our people to action was by encouraging their participation in Life Chain, a peaceful demonstration of pro-life supporters who hold signs and link arms in communities across the country the first Sunday in October. We also encouraged members to serve as volunteers in a local crisis pregnancy center.

"When you fill a swamp with stones," said missionary Frank Laubach who pioneered literacy programs in underprivileged countries, "a hundred loads may disappear under the water before a stone appears on the surface, but all of them are necessary."

When confronting controversial issues, our prayers and efforts seem to disappear from sight, seemingly without effect. But I'm convinced that every action I take counts, and the involvement of my church makes a difference.

**RICHARD EXLEY**, Tulsa, Oklahoma, is an Assemblies of God minister, conference and retreat speaker, former pastor, and a best-selling author of more than 25 books. This abridged article originally appeared in *Dangers, Toils & Snares* (Sisters, Oregon: Multnomah, 1994). Used by permission of author.

If Neuhaus is correct, what can contemporary clergy do to influence public morality?

## Prophetic Proclamation

One obvious way ministers contribute to public morality is through prophetic proclamation. The first response by ministers when confronted with the threat of legalized gambling in El Paso was in their pulpits. On the Sunday following the state senator's surprise legislation, the pastor of First Baptist preached a televised sermon asking, "Does El Paso Need Casino Gambling?" Other ministers did the same. Congregations listened and community leaders joined the churches' opposition to the gambling legislation. The *El Paso Times* claimed that the unified response of the religious community, coupled with sermons widely quoted in the media, were among the major reasons this legislation was quickly defeated.

Although prophetic proclamation involves many risks, the faithful herald of God's Word will preach on ethical issues because of the needs of people, the demands of the gospel, and the example of the prophets and Jesus. However, before a minister delivers an ethical sermon, adequate preparation is absolutely necessary.<sup>12</sup>

## Organized Participation

Another way a church prophet addresses public morality is through organized participation in addressing community needs. Why were the various churches and ministers in El Paso able to mount a unified effort against the threat of legalized gambling? One reason was years of cooperative social ministries in the community.

Downtown churches had developed a comprehensive benevolence program that included counseling, food assistance, shelter, job assistance, and literacy classes. Along the international border all churches sponsored mission work,

including numerous medical clinics where volunteers cared for the sick. Several worked with orphanages in Mexico. During the winter, clothing, blankets, and medicine were distributed across the border. Pastors who led their churches to minister to social needs in the El Paso community earned the right to be heard when a moral issue arose.

Genuine love motivates the church to engage in social ministry and social action. A minister must lead his congregation to recognize and meet human need in the community. Many of Jesus' parables are reminders that Christian ministry often begins with those outside the church (Luke 10:25-37; 16:19-31).

## Moral Leadership

For the church to be a moral lighthouse in the community, the minister must be a moral leader. The issues are seldom simple. The pastor may hear two voices when faced with an issue of public morality. One voice is that of the prophet, who calls for a faithful witness; the other is the pastoral voice pleading for church unity. An ethical pastor never allows the possibility of controversy to muzzle his moral responsibility. Nevertheless, he also has a mandate to nurture the growth of the congregation.

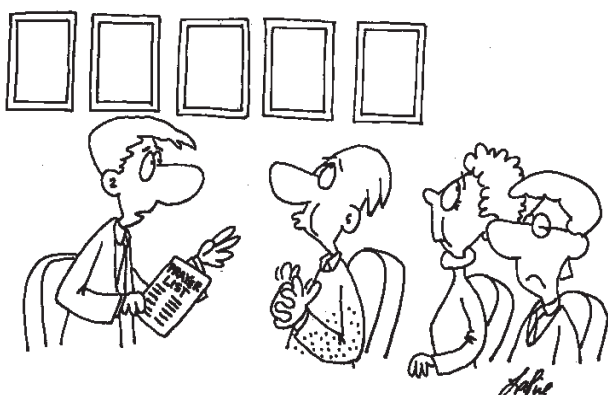
According to Richard Bondi, the minister as a moral leader must live on the edge but remain connected to the center. There is movement and vitality at the edge where the church confronts society. The safe center is a place of power and stability, though it is often isolated from moral struggles in the world. "Leaders who live only on the edge become detached from their communities and unable to lead, whereas leaders who commandeer the center can end up protecting its interests from the dangerous opportunities of the edge."<sup>13</sup> The pastor must learn to live with one foot in the center and one foot on the edge — without falling flat on his face.

Ultimately, for a pastor-prophet to lead a church into community ministry and social action, certain essentials are needed. First, there must be freedom in the pulpit for the Spirit to speak through God's messenger. At the same time, a minister is also part of a covenant community and represents that larger body. Pastoral care of church members is always a top priority. The basis for social action must always be theological, not the latest political or social fad. In addition, the needs of people in the community have a claim on the pastor as they did on Jesus in His ministry.

## LEGAL RESPONSIBILITIES

Ours is an increasingly lawsuit-prone society. Gone is the day when churches and preachers were immune to legal action. Government agencies are scrutinizing churches for

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"Who would like to pray for pastor's safe return from his vacation?  
Anyone? ... anyone? ... anyone?"



tax law infractions. Clergy malpractice suits are increasing. Allegations of clergy sexual abuse by priests and pastors have brought multimillion-dollar lawsuits against both Protestant and Catholic groups. Conferences titled “The Church and the Law” are listed on the program of most major denominational meetings. Although this brief overview simply defines the areas of concern, extensive materials are available.<sup>14</sup>

Lawsuits brought against churches and ministers usually involve allegations in one of five areas: counseling, sexual misconduct, defamation, breach of confidentiality, and child-care issues. The term *malpractice* means falling below the established standards of conduct for a particular profession. However, with our diversity of religious groups and with our doctrine of separation of church and state, there are no established standards for ministers. Nevertheless, clergy malpractice suits are being filed, especially against pastoral counselors.

Should a minister give up counseling for fear of litigation? Ministers who have had little formal training in the field should certainly question their ability to counsel parishioners adequately. Mistakes are sometimes made because a pastor knows neither the basic techniques of counseling nor the legal and ethical obligations.

Oliver Thomas, a lawyer who specializes in clergy malpractice issues, has noted that ministers are not immune from all criminal liability, nor should they be.<sup>15</sup> The rash of lawsuits involving sexual improprieties in recent years should not be defended on First Amendment grounds, for no bona fide religious organization holds beliefs that allow seduction, rape, or other sexual misconduct.

Second in frequency to claims of sexual misconduct by ministers are those involving the publication of false or defamatory statements, usually arising out of church disciplinary proceedings. Like the press, churches and clergy enjoy a qualified privilege in regard to defamation, if the communication is made in the exercise of ministry and without malice.

Another type of ministerial misconduct suit involves the disclosure of confidential communications and other private facts. A pastor should inform all counselees that confidentiality may be broken if doing so (1) would prevent a person from harming himself or herself, (2) would prevent a person from harming others, (3) prevent a crime, or (4) is required by law.

Child care is a sensitive area in the courts today. A mother brought suit against a Memphis church and its staff, claiming that her child had been sexually molested in the day care center. The case dragged on for 5 years. The church was finally exonerated of all charges, but the legal fees alone cost the congregation over \$500,000.

Attorney William Colbert told participants in the Church and the Law Conference at Stetson University that church leaders should take several preventative measures including: written policies, safeguards against hazards, parental consent and waiver-of-liability forms, appropriate church-owned vehicles and drivers, reference checks on all employees and workers with children, and adequate insurance coverage.<sup>16</sup>

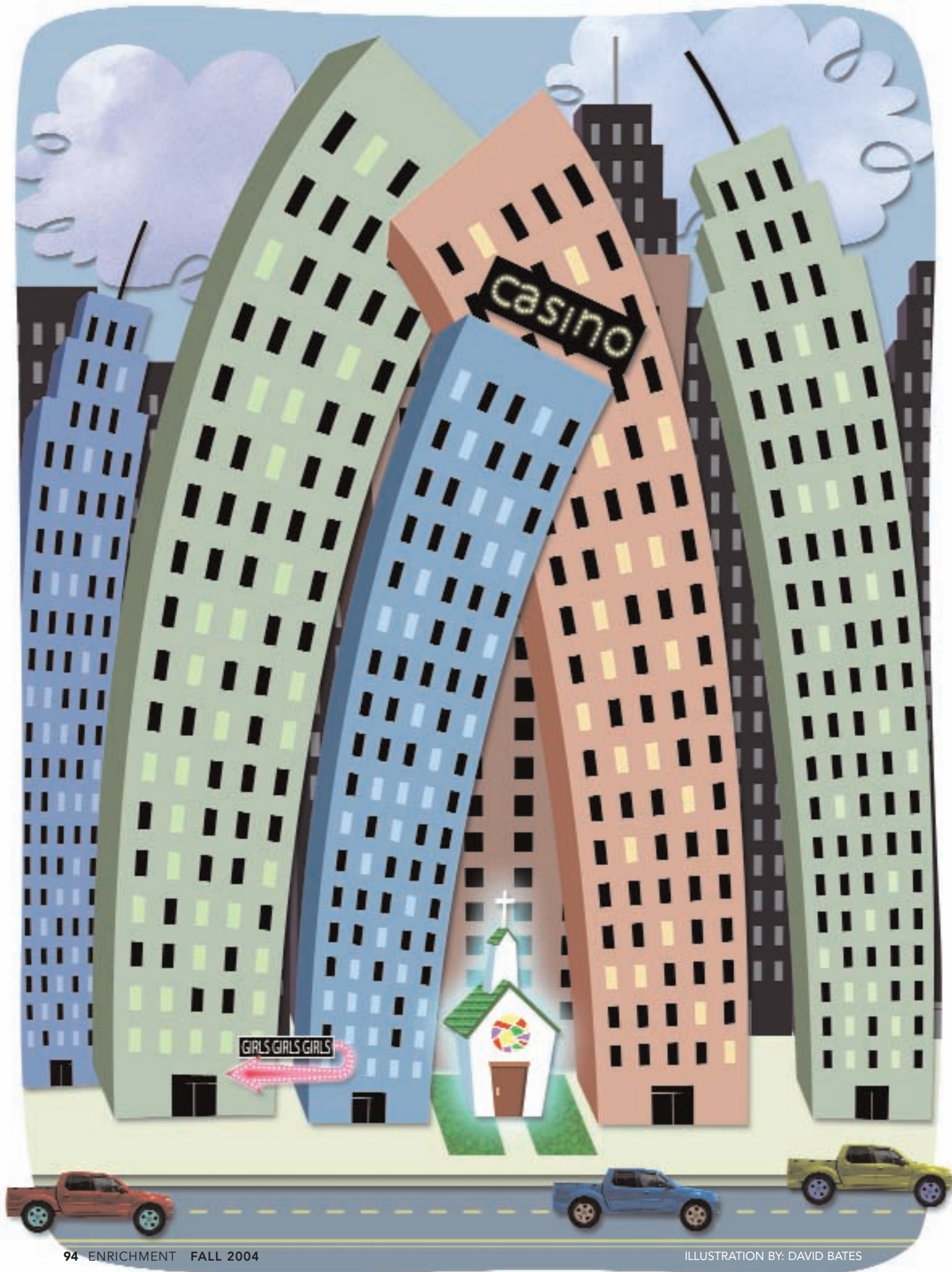
Yes, social action and ministry in the community are risky. But the minister cannot retreat and turn the church into a medieval monastery where he simply conducts spiritual activities. The church's spiritual leader has a unique opportunity — indeed, a biblical mandate. As both pastor and prophet, the contemporary clergy person must be God's minister in the community as well as in the church. ■



**JOE E. TRULL**, Wimberly, Texas, is editor of *Christian Ethics Today* ([www.ChristianEthicsToday.com](http://www.ChristianEthicsToday.com)) and pastor, Baptist Church of Driftwood. From 1985–99 he was professor of Christian ethics at New Orleans Baptist Seminary. He is the author of *Walking in the Way: An Introduction to Christian Ethics*, and coauthor of *Ministerial Ethics* (Baker).

#### ENDNOTES

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2. For a representative compilation of early and contemporary codes of ethics for ministers, see Joe E. Trull and James E. Carter, *Ministerial Ethics: Moral Formation for Church Leaders*, 2nd Ed. Revised and Expanded (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2004), Appendices B, C, and D.
3. See John H. Yoder, *The Politics of Jesus* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1972) for the proposal that Jesus' public ministry was primarily a political statement.
4. Gaylord Noyce, *Pastoral Ethics* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1988), 168.
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7. Noyce, 166.
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# the ethical responsibilities to of ministers social concerns

**t**he 21st-century world poses numerous challenges for the Pentecostal minister, not the least of which is the turn from moral authority to moral relativism. At one time a minister could assume the moral fiber of the community was somewhat in line with biblical revelation. Today that is no longer the case. In most communities the accepted standard for ethical decisionmaking is the autonomous self. Any attempt to bring an ultimate standard to bear on issues is rejected out of hand.

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B Y J A M E S H . R A I L E Y



Each day the news reminds the perceptive person that the world in which we live faces serious ethical challenges. The rate at which Americans abort their unborn still hovers close to 1.5 million each year, the number of homeless people grows more serious, the siren calls of easy prosperity through gambling can be heard clearly, and the biblical and traditional understanding of marriage is challenged with each court decision. These and a host of other social concerns haunt the minister of the gospel, begging for a clear response. Today, ministers need to speak with the prophetic voice by asserting that the sovereign God still has expectations of human behavior and will judge deviant actions.

Will ministers rise to today's crises with the Word of God? Should they be concerned with social issues, but choose to focus only on the people in their congregations? How can they decide which social concern is worthy of their time investment?

Several biblical passages provide an answer to these questions. One of the more troubling passages is Matthew 25:31–46. Jesus describes a future judgment where the verdicts rendered are based on the involvement of people with the social issues of their day. While this passage does address the fate of nations and may fit well into an eschatological perspective, we cannot dismiss the call of Jesus to be involved in social concerns. Jesus calls for ministries to meet the physical needs of people — hunger, thirst, clothing, and sickness — and to meet the needs of those imprisoned. The specific concerns in the passage do not merely provide a limited checklist, but probably hint at greater involvement with the ethical crises of our world.

The minister has an ethical responsibility to address social concerns. This ethical responsibility can be seen, first, in the needs of people and, second, in the needs of the world system. In addressing these two serious responsibilities the minister must bring the gospel to bear with clarity and love. There are also some cautions we need to take to ethically interact with our world.

## MINISTERING TO THE NEEDS OF PEOPLE

The fear of succumbing to the temptation to reduce the powerful gospel message of Pentecostal churches to a social message often hinders our proper response to the needs of the people who live in our communities. We must move beyond that fear and allow the full gospel to be just that. James K. Bridges, general treasurer for the Assemblies of God, points out that the church is the *ekklesia*, the called out ones, but that the church “is not called out of the world to be separated as an island isolated from the mainland, but ‘separated unto the gospel of God’ (Romans 1:1, KJV), that it may be returned to the world as a blessing, as salt to season and as a light to show the way (Matthew 5:13–16).” He continues, “The minister must understand that the conciliatory role the Church has been given — ‘the ministry of reconciliation’

(2 Corinthians 5:18) — is to be carried out in the community of which it is a part.”<sup>2</sup> The needs of that community beyond the specific members of the local church beckon the minister who is committed to finding the “other sheep” Jesus spoke of (John 10:16).

Murray Dempster noted that traditionally, Pentecostals have limited their moral witness to the personal work of sanctification. They certainly saw sanctification as a work of the Holy Spirit, but did not see the work of the Spirit leading them beyond the personal realm. This has resulted in the failure of Pentecostals to see the communal significance of Spirit baptism for social morality.<sup>3</sup> Dempster called for the Pentecostal church “to express the ethical content of the gospel in terms that are understandable to the world [and that] requires that the church translate the good news that it preaches in its *kerygma* and models in its *koinonia* into service programs that minister to the needs of hurting people, regardless of race, culture, gender, economic status, or religious credo.”<sup>4</sup> The empowerment of the Holy Spirit not only provided the needed impetus for the early believers to witness to others the truth of the life and message of Jesus, but it also propelled them to social concerns — the needs of people.

Twice in the Early Church, Acts 2:42–47 and 4:32–37, Luke described its ethical concern in strong language — they sold their property and used the money to ensure the needs of people were met. Luke noted they “gave to anyone as he had need” (Acts 2:45), so “there were no needy persons among them” (Acts 4:34). When the conflict arose over the distribution of food, the leadership of the congregation did not halt involvement with social concerns, but appointed men full of the Spirit to oversee the effort (Acts 6:1–6). This Pentecostal church preached the gospel with power and fervor, and met the needs of people.

With the transfer of the Spirit from Jesus to the disciples and the Early Church at Pentecost came the responsibility to carry on the ministry begun by Jesus. Dempster notes, “When the Holy Spirit came upon Jesus, He was anointed to proclaim the gospel of the kingdom of God and to inaugurate God’s right to reign through His ministry. When the Holy Spirit was transferred from Jesus to the Early Church, the disciples were empowered to continue Jesus’ mission and ministry of proclaiming the good news of the kingdom of God.”<sup>5</sup> In the words of Isaiah 61 read by Jesus in the synagogue in Nazareth, that Kingdom included preaching “good news to the poor,” proclaiming “freedom for the prisoners,” providing for the “recovery of sight for the blind,” releasing “the oppressed,” and proclaiming the “year of the Lord’s favor” (Luke 4:18,19). During His earthly ministry Jesus never shirked His ethical responsibility to meet the needs of people, and He expects His followers to emulate His example through the power of the Holy Spirit.

Ministers must take the call to meet the pressing needs of



the community in which they minister seriously. As representatives of the kingdom of God, they are charged to do the work of the Kingdom and that work includes meeting human needs. Further, as Bridges correctly notes, “the pastor is the key to making his a community-conscious church.”<sup>6</sup>

As the minister models and preaches the ethics of social concern, the congregation will catch a similar vision. The converse of this is also true — if the minister does not lead, the congregation has no one to follow.

The prophetic voice of the minister must challenge God’s people to become increasingly more involved in meeting the needs of the local community. As community leaders see the church lovingly engaged in meeting the needs that challenge budgets and imaginations, the gospel will go forward in meaningful ways.

Today’s ethical concerns provide opportunities for the church to stand as sentinels guarding the truths of God. But, for the truth of God to go forward without interference, the prophetic voice must remind God’s people to express His love in all their dealings, especially with those outside the church. Our stand for right ethical decisions must be made in the same love that prompted God to send His Son to suffer the cruel death of crucifixion at the hands of sinful humans. The love of God expressed through the believer can melt the hardened opposition to the ethical expectations of God.

The prophetic voice of the minister must be accompanied by modeling ethical involvement before the congregation. The minister must not only speak with a prophetic voice; he must also do the work he is calling the church to do. It is not possible for the minister to be involved in every ethical issue — there simply is not enough time. The Early Church leaders

minister must both be aware of and willing to confront.

## MINISTERING TO THE SYSTEM THAT NEEDS CHANGING

Pentecostal ministers are uniquely positioned to rise to this ethical challenge. The Book of Acts connects Spirit baptism with the church’s mission in society in at least two ways. “First, Spirit baptism is linked with the believing community’s spiritual mission to proclaim and to initiate participation in a new order of life in Jesus Christ. Second, Spirit baptism is linked with the believing community’s moral mission to incorporate this new redemptive order of life within the structure of its own *koinonia* as a witness to the society of the reality of the gospel to change lives, transform values, and restructure relationships.”<sup>7</sup>

Dempster notes that Luke organized Acts around the baptism in the Spirit, evidenced by tongues, to assert that the Spirit empowered the Early Church to provide both a spiritual and moral witness to the world. The spiritual witness focused on the work of redemption through faith in Jesus Christ, and the moral witness focused on the *koinonia* of the community as the visible representation of the new social order the kingdom of God brought. This Spirit-empowered new social order must be seen in today’s church as it confronts a world social order corrupted by sin.<sup>8</sup>

The church needs to integrate the worshiping, fellowshiping, evangelizing, and serving ministries. They cannot be mutually exclusive, but must be vitally integrated. If worshiping, fellowshiping, and evangelizing are not made flesh in service, they will soon become hollow. However, when our service to the world, visibly portrayed in deeds of social concern and action, matches our claims, we will impact the

## As the minister models and preaches the ethics of social concern, the congregation will catch a similar vision.

provided an example in Acts 6 when they chose to give themselves to prayer and the Word and delegated some responsibilities to other Spirit-filled leaders. But, if the minister does not back up the prophetic voice with prophetic living and engagement, the congregation will soon see the disconnect and become discouraged in their labors.

The minister has the ethical responsibility of ministering to, and leading the congregation to minister to, the needs of people. Fulfilling this ethical challenge, however, does not end the expectations placed on the minister. The second arena of ethical responsibility is the systems of society. There are systemic effects on society, such as legal and/or court decisions, that create ethical issues the

world with the gospel. As Dempster correctly observed, the church has been “called into existence to provide a visible social witness to the good news, the church aims to model in its own shared life the patterns of social existence that God wills for all of human society.”<sup>9</sup>

This moral call on the church will be realized as ministers understand their role includes responding to the social evils that directly conflict with the nature of the kingdom of God. Nolan Harmon made this relevant observation: “The minister not only has the right but is obligated to speak upon purely moral questions, in the pulpit or out of it, be the political or social implications what they may.”<sup>10</sup>

This call to engage the declining moral fabric of society

demands the minister accept a dual role. Lowell Erdahl calls for the minister to not only be pastoral, but also prophetic. "Prophetic ministry expresses care and concern not only for those suffering injustice and oppression in the parish, but also for others in the wider community and around the world."<sup>11</sup> He notes that the call of God that we be stewards of His creation "also involves commitment to justice — liberation from oppression, illness, ignorance, and all that causes human suffering."<sup>12</sup>

Joe Trull and James Carter, agreeing with Erdahl's challenge to ministers, note that "the community poses for the minister both a threat and an opportunity. At times a pastor leads the congregation to minister in the community, as friend to friend. At other times, when social evils raise their dragonic heads, the prophet must go forth like a medieval knight to battle the forces that ravage human life. To be God's minister in the world is ethically demanding, for it requires of the clergy a dual role of pastor and prophet."<sup>13</sup>

Several Old Testament prophets serve well to illustrate the prophetic role that is necessary for today. Amos stands as a prime example of one who declared God's message to a troubled world.<sup>14</sup> To appreciate the prophetic role Amos assumed, we need to be reminded of the society in which he served as God's messenger. By his own notation, he served during the reigns of Uzziah in Judah and Jeroboam II in Israel, and brought a warning from God to the northern kingdom, Israel (Amos 1:1).

The reign of Jeroboam II, told briefly in 2 Kings 14:23–29, illustrates the decline of Israel toward its ultimate destruction. Jeroboam's father, Jehoash, reigned for 16 years and continued in the sinful path that had been set for him by Jeroboam I, the first king of Israel. Jeroboam II succeeded his father Jehoash, and the slide toward destruction continued unabated during his reign. The writer of Kings sums it up: "he did evil in the eyes of the Lord and did not turn away from any of the sins of Jeroboam, son of Nebat, which he had caused Israel to commit" (2 Kings 14:24). Those sins included idolatry and the corruption of the priestly caste.

## With the transfer of the Spirit from Jesus to the disciples and the Early Church at Pentecost came the responsibility to carry on the ministry begun by Jesus.

Amos faced a world that presented him with many challenges similar to those being faced by ministers today. The military was/is strong, the financial markets were/are rebounding, the blessings of God were/are evident, and yet oppression still was/is rampant. Today, the unborn are increasingly threatened, the institution of marriage is under challenge, and corruption is found at almost every level of society. The idolatry of the autonomous self with the mantra of tolerance encourages an individual to turn away from the old paths that called for service to God in favor of self-realization.

Amos began his message to Israel with the powerful assertion that God has a word for all people, and His word is not limited merely to the people who accept His lordship over them. In Amos 1:2 to 2:5 the Lord announced His intentions toward seven people groups before addressing His main interest, Israel. Six of those people groups had no real contact with the God of Israel and were not following His precepts, but the Word of the Lord was directed to them nonetheless. The prophetic role will address all peoples.

When the direction of God's message turned from other people groups to Israel, Amos declared that God was displeased with the way His people were living. Amos identified the propensity to idolatry, the negative results of greed expressed without constraint, the ease they felt when they tried to coerce prophets to pronounce what they wanted to hear, the desecration of proper worship — and all of this within the second chapter. The ethical failure of God's people

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**"Grace this! Grace that! You keep preaching  
that stuff and you're gonna wind up with one  
of those lovely-dovey churches!"**

is brought to light where it can be dealt with and forsaken. In Amos 4:6–11, the prophet interprets the series of disasters that had befallen Israel in recent years as God's efforts to bring the people to repentance, efforts that had failed. No doubt the hearers were amazed to learn that God had been trying to speak to them through troublesome times.

While it is not feasible to list all the possible systemic ethical evils that need to be addressed, perhaps noting some of the successful work being done in this arena

## **We must be careful to understand societal issues before becoming vocal.**

will suffice. Exodus Ministry, led by Assemblies of God chaplain, Jerry Groom, provides housing and training to help former prison inmates re-enter society. While the ministry is nondenominational, it is a radical Christian approach to the serious problems faced by people who are trying to return to life outside of prison. Frightening statistics indicate that nearly two-thirds of released inmates are returned to prison within the first 6 months. Exodus Ministry is meeting this serious societal concern.<sup>15</sup>

When a local Pinckneyville, Illinois, establishment advertised the formation of entertainment that would appeal to the baser instincts of people, Pastor Paul Ritter of Trinity Assembly of God felt he needed to address this major societal concern. He and other local ministers collected 460 signatures asking the town council to adopt an ordinance banning lewd entertainment. His effort was rewarded with the passing of the ordinance.<sup>16</sup>

## **Ministers need to speak with the prophetic voice by asserting that the sovereign God still has expectations of human behavior and will judge deviant actions.**

In the summer of 2003, five students from North Central University, Minneapolis, Minnesota, biked over 2,500 miles in Europe to raise \$25,000 for Cry Africa, the Assemblies of God response to the HIV/AIDS crisis. This effort raised awareness of the AIDS pandemic in Africa and provided a tangible means to express ethical concern for this societal

problem.<sup>17</sup> The single adults of First Assembly of God, Fort Wayne, Indiana, are playing a vital role in a weekend ministry to the city's homeless. The ministry provides coffee and doughnuts, toiletry items, and a Sunday morning worship service for those who society too easily neglects.<sup>18</sup>

California pastors Chip Worthington (Rohnert Park Assembly of God) and Charles Mattix III (Barstow Assembly of God) are leading community action and lobbying groups to combat the spread of casinos into their communities. They

have spoken before their respective city councils, organized citizens' groups, led petition drives, and lobbied in the nation's capital. Their conviction that the spread of gambling is both against scriptural injunctions and has a negative impact on the fabric of society has driven them to express their ethical concerns in the public square.<sup>19</sup>

### **SOME CAUTIONS**

Some cautions need to be observed by ministers as they begin responding to the ethical responsibilities that attach themselves to their calling. Bridges warns about partisan politics, but asserts that the minister "need not hesitate to take a stand on moral issues during a political campaign. A minister of Jesus Christ, motivated by Christ's unselfish love, will be a concerned citizen of his country."<sup>20</sup> Electioneering and overtly campaigning from the pulpit might turn into a negative instead of the intended positive.

We must be careful to understand societal issues before becoming vocal. This requires listening, study, and reflection. If we misrepresent the nature of the issues or the positions being taken by those who support them, we guarantee an ineffective voice in opposing them. A commitment to understanding will be blessed by recognizing the aspects of the issues that have value, giving us clear prophetic license to point out the areas where correction is needed.<sup>21</sup> Harmon reminds us, "When a minister speaks or preaches on burning moral questions as wound up in political or other alignments he must understand thoroughly every phase of the situation. It should be remembered that he has constituted himself a judge, jury, and as far as possible, an executioner. The town, the city, the nation, sitting as a higher court, is going to review his judgment. It will wish to see the evidence on which he based his decision."<sup>22</sup>

The minister is also to be a law-abiding citizen. The laws that have been duly enacted should not be carelessly broken,

even for a good cause. The resort to civil disobedience should come only when all legal means have been exhausted. When we actively assert the moral expectations of God in our world, we need to check out the laws and as much as possible work within them.

## CONCLUSION

God has provided us with an accurate and inspired record of what He expects, and the principles of His Word are applicable in the varied arenas of 21st-century living. Ministers must lead their congregations to properly understand the Bible and show them how the revelation of God speaks to the manifold ethical complexities they face. The wonderful people who sit in our pews will follow the ethical guidance of someone. They need the prophetic voice of the minister to provide the correct direction for them.

Specifically, as the prophetic voice is heard from the minister announcing God's expectations and directions for living in an increasingly secular world, God's people must be challenged to pray without ceasing and with intensity. The struggle is not against flesh and blood, but is spiritual. If we disregard the most potent spiritual weapon at our disposal in favor of human efforts to engage the ethical issues we face, we will be abandoning the only hope we have for success. The power of God's people in prayer is great, and legislation and judicial decisions pale by comparison. Even devils tremble when the congregation of believing saints comes with fervor and unity before the throne of God on behalf of a nation sliding away from godly principles.

Ministers have been called to participate in the present

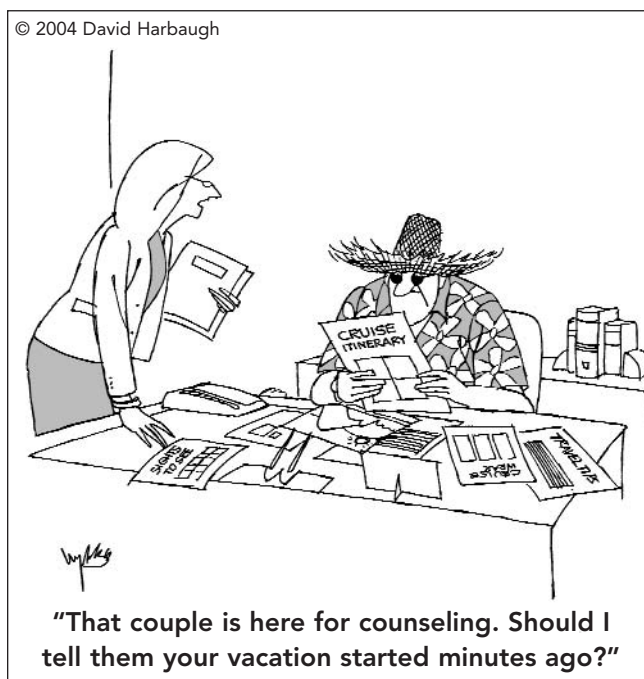
extension of the kingdom of God, a Kingdom of justice, mercy, and love. This participation demands that we carefully manage the ethical responsibilities we are given on behalf of others and to the systems of society that are not aligned with Kingdom moral principles. It must be acknowledged that we live in between the inauguration of the Kingdom and its fulfillment. In this time of tension, there will be successes when Kingdom values are adopted and failures when the systems of the world refuse to bow to those values. The goal of the minister is not to always conquer every evil, but to live and work so one day the King will exclaim, "Well done, good and faithful servant." ■



**JAMES H. RAILEY**, D.Th., chair, Bible and Theology Department, Assemblies of God Theological Seminary, Springfield, Missouri.

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Code

ed by God to proclaim the  
pastor the church, I dedicate  
according to the ethical guidelines  
a code of ethics, in order that my  
to God, my service beneficial to the  
and my life a witness to the world.

to self  
in my physical and emotional health through  
good eating habits, and the proper care of my

nurture my devotional life through a regular time of  
reading of Scripture, and meditation.

will continue to grow intellectually through personal study,  
comprehensive reading, and attending growth confer

4. I will manage my time well by properly  
obligations, church duties, and  
observing a weekly day of

Rev. John

Minister's Code of Ethics

# A MINISTER'S **C O D E** OF ETHICS:

## A HIGHER LEVEL OF COMMITMENT AND CONDUCT

**T**oday's newspaper headlines and the lead stories of televised newscasts beg an examination of ministerial ethics. From the high-profile disgrace of clergy sexual abuse to the common daily dilemmas of making good decisions, ministers clearly need to work on their behavior. While ministers regularly teach congregations the biblical mandates of right living, some fall prey to the tongue-in-cheek admonishment, "Do as I say, and not as I do." As a public proponent of morality, a minister's credibility is contingent on his ability to regulate his personal ethical behavior.

Religious bodies have traditions and unspoken expectations for ministerial behavior. However, few have assimilated these assumptions into a written standard of ethics. Since denominational and ecclesiastical structures rarely offer such a code, the responsibility falls on the local ministerial staff to self-impose behavioral regulations. Therefore, the minister needs to address three questions:

- What is a ministerial code of ethics?
- Do ministers need a code of ethics?
- How do ministers compose a code of ethics?

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B Y J A M E S A . R E A S O N S

## WHAT IS A MINISTERIAL CODE OF ETHICS?

The role of the minister encompasses a maze of responsibilities. He is expected to be the compassionate counselor, articulate preacher, spiritual mentor, efficient business administrator, and studious scholar. Plus, these roles regularly overlap. A minister counsels while preaching. He employs biblical scholarship for inspiration with his administrative tasks. He attends social gatherings, only to find himself spontaneously offering advice to the confused, providing biblical insight to the curious, or justifying the latest administrative decision to the critiquing congregant.

Within these countless experiences of daily living, the field is ripe for ethical dilemmas. The minister must be alert in his quest to do the right thing. Acutely aware of any potential pitfall, the minister has foremost in mind the question, *What ought I to do?*

A code of ethics is a set of principles for ministerial behavior. The laws of society provide a general standard; many people believe if behavior is legal, then it is ethical. This is not always true. It is shortsighted to equate legality with ministerial ethics.

Law is essentially the minimum standard for public order, while a code of ethics presents a higher level of commitment and conduct. The law must be respected by society to steer a community's behavior down proper societal pathways, but law is not equivalent with a code of ethics. Ethics clearly demand obedience to the law—but that is only the beginning. A code of ethics requires far more.

A minister's code of ethics calls him to rise above the minimum. As a prophetic voice in the quandaries of parishioners' daily lives and a spokesman for the community at large, the minister must stride confidently on the road he calls others to travel.

## DO MINISTERS NEED A CODE OF ETHICS?

Every minister who has sludged through the quagmire of ethical confusion realizes the need for ethical guidelines. Ethics for professionals is not a new topic of discussion. Since the early attempts to establish rules for medical practitioners, many professions have made an effort to regulate the behavior of their members. In the majority of cases, the primary method used to govern conduct has been a code of ethics. Businesses now employ ethical experts to instruct and educate employees on vendor/supplier ethics. The downfall of many modern-day corporations serves as a constant reminder of the slippery slope of ethical failure.

A valid code of ethics for ministers must contain a key internal ingredient—integrity. Many professions have a code of ethics that contributes to the ethical environment by providing professionals a general understanding of what is expected. They are nonetheless missing this essential element.

In its biblical uses, integrity is wholeness and completeness. To be whole is to make all areas of life consistent with internal values, commitments, and allegiances. Regardless of the

meticulous details of a code, a list of rules cannot produce wholeness in an individual. Codes supply basic rules for external action but cannot forge the steel of one's internal character.

In ministerial ethics, integrity is the wooden forms that ethical decisionmaking is poured into constructing the concrete certainty of God's call. Wholeness and completeness are the bedrock of a covenant of faith between the minister and God. A code of ethics mutually agreed upon by clergy and congregation gives reasonable assurance to both when they plan how the structure will be built.

In summary, a written code of ethics cannot affect a character change. Only internal integrity, the righteousness and the godliness of a minister, will chart his course through dark, murky waters. Even so, a code of ethics is a sieve through which gray areas with seemingly no clear delineation of right and wrong, are exposed to light. A code of ethics is extremely helpful in the minister's quest to do the right thing. Yet, without the basic, internal commitment of integrity to his calling, the code becomes only another set of rules to digest.

## HOW DO MINISTERS COMPOSE A CODE OF ETHICS?

The need for ethical standards is increasingly apparent. Internal integrity is paramount to the ethical constitution of the minister. Given these observations, how should a minister compose a code of ethics?

### Authorship

Since most denominations do not have a written code of ethical behavior, individual pastoral initiative can fill that void. If the minister has a staff, their collective input will facilitate the task and offer a sense of ownership as the standards become effective guidelines. Deacons, governing boards, and administrative bodies can also assist in the formative process.

The minister must willingly seek the counsel of others. Established and accepted standards of behavior not only free the minister to live his calling, but also keep him from struggling alone and confused in a deluge of ethical predicaments.

For example, confidentiality can be a prickly problem. Most ministers know the huge responsibility they have to keep the confidences of their congregation. Yet, they also expect the constant barrage of pointed questions that come their way. "Did you know that Alice and Bob are having marital troubles?" An instant internal struggle ensues—the minister *does* know of their problems, but only in strictest confidence. Ethical guidelines not only help the minister anticipate such questions, but also prepare the congregation that their minister may gently refuse to answer awkward questions. Undoubtedly, a consensus of clergy and laity facilitates the implementation of an ethical code.

### Content

A ministerial code of ethics must be specific enough to give



# SAMPLE CODE OF ETHICS<sup>1</sup>

## PASTOR OR SENIOR MINISTER CODE

(Includes basic obligations for all ministers)

### PREAMBLE

As a minister of Jesus Christ, called by God to proclaim the gospel and gifted by the Spirit to pastor the church, I dedicate myself to conduct my ministry according to the ethical guidelines and principles set forth in this code of ethics, in order that my ministry may be acceptable to God, my service beneficial to the Christian community, and my life a witness to the world.

### RESPONSIBILITIES TO SELF

1. I will maintain my physical and emotional health through regular exercise, good eating habits, and the proper care of my body.
2. I will nurture my devotional life through a regular time of prayer, reading of Scripture, and meditation.
3. I will continue to grow intellectually through personal study, comprehensive reading, and attending growth conferences.
4. I will manage my time well by properly balancing personal obligations, church duties, and family responsibilities, and by observing a weekly day off and an annual vacation.
5. I will be responsible in my finances by paying all debts on time, never seeking special gratuities or privileges, giving generously to worthwhile causes, and living a Christian lifestyle.
6. I will be truthful in my speech, never plagiarizing another's work, exaggerating the facts, misusing personal experiences, or communicating gossip.
7. I will seek to be Christlike in attitude and action toward all persons regardless of race, social class, religious beliefs, or position of influence within the church and community.

### RESPONSIBILITIES TO FAMILY

1. I will be fair to every member of my family, giving each the time, love, and consideration each needs.
2. I will understand the unique role of my spouse, recognizing that his or her primary responsibility is as marital partner and parent to the children and secondarily as church worker and assistant to the pastor.
3. I will regard my children as a gift from God and seek to meet their individual needs without imposing undue expectations upon them.

### RESPONSIBILITIES TO THE CONGREGATION

1. I will be a servant-minister by following the example of Christ in faith, love, wisdom, courage, and integrity.
2. I will faithfully discharge my time and energies as pastor through proper work habits and reasonable schedules.
3. In my administrative and pastoral duties, I will be impartial and fair to all members.
4. In my preaching responsibilities, I will give adequate time to prayer and preparation so my presentation will be biblically based, theologically correct, and clearly communicated.
5. In my pastoral counseling, I will maintain strict confidentiality, except in cases in which disclosure is necessary to prevent

harm to persons and/or is required by law.

6. In my evangelistic responsibilities, I will seek to lead persons to salvation and to church membership without manipulating converts, proselytizing members of other churches, or demeaning other religious faiths.
7. In my visitation and counseling practices, I will never be alone with a person of another sex unless another church member is present nearby.
8. I will not charge fees to church members for weddings or funerals; for nonmembers I will establish policies based on ministry opportunities, time constraints, and theological beliefs.
9. As a full-time minister, I will not accept any other remunerative work without the expressed consent of the church.
10. In leaving a congregation, I will seek to strengthen the church through proper timing, verbal affirmation, and an appropriate closure of my ministry.

### RESPONSIBILITIES TO COLLEAGUES

1. I will endeavor to relate to all ministers, especially those with whom I serve in my church, as partners in the work of God, respecting their ministry and cooperating with them.
2. I will seek to serve my minister colleagues and their families with counsel, support, and personal assistance.
3. I will refuse to treat other ministers as competition in order to gain a church, receive an honor, or achieve statistical success.
4. I will not speak disparagingly about the person or work of any minister, especially my predecessor or successor.
5. I will enhance the ministry of my successor by refusing to interfere in any way with the church I formerly served.
6. I will return to a former church field for professional services, such as weddings and funerals, only if invited by the resident pastor.
7. I will treat with respect and courtesy any predecessor who returns to my church field.
8. I will be thoughtful and respectful of all retired ministers and, upon my retirement, I will support and love my pastor.
9. I will be honest and kind in my recommendations of other ministers to church positions or other inquiries.
10. If aware of serious misconduct by a minister, I will contact responsible officials of that minister's church body.

### RESPONSIBILITIES TO THE COMMUNITY

1. I will consider my primary responsibility to be pastor of my congregation and will never neglect ministerial duties in order to serve in the community.
2. I will accept reasonable responsibilities for community service, recognizing that the minister has a public ministry.
3. I will support public morality in the community through responsible prophetic witness and social action.
4. I will obey the laws of my government unless they require my disobedience to the law of God.

CONTINUED ➤

## SAMPLE CODE OF ETHICS CONTINUED

5. I will practice Christian citizenship without engaging in partisan politics or political activities that are unethical, unbiblical, or unwise.

### RESPONSIBILITIES TO MY DENOMINATION

1. I will love, support, and cooperate with the faith community of which I am a part, recognizing the debt I owe to my denomination for its contribution to my life, my ministry, and my church.
2. I will work to improve my denomination in its efforts to expand and extend the kingdom of God.

### ASSOCIATE MINISTER CODE<sup>2</sup> (Education/Music/Youth/etc.)

1. I will be supportive of and loyal to the senior pastor or, if unable to do so, will seek another place of service.
2. I will be supportive of and loyal to my fellow staff ministers, never criticizing them or undermining their ministry.
3. I will recognize my role and responsibility to the church staff and will not feel threatened or in competition with any other minister of the church.
4. If single, I will be discreet in my dating practices, especially in relation to members of my congregation.

### PASTORAL COUNSELOR CODE

1. I will have a pastor/counselor to whom I can turn for counseling and advice.
2. I will be aware of my own needs and vulnerabilities, never seeking to meet my personal needs through my counselees.
3. I will recognize the power I hold over counselees and never take advantage of their vulnerability through exploitation or manipulation.

4. I will never become sexually or romantically involved with a client or engage in any form of erotic or romantic contact.
5. I will demonstrate unconditional acceptance and love toward all counselees, regardless of their standards, beliefs, attitudes, or actions.
6. If I am unable to benefit a client, I will refer him or her to another professional who can provide appropriate therapy.
7. I will maintain good relationships with other counselors and therapists, informing them and conferring with them about mutual concerns.
8. I will keep confidential all matters discussed in a counseling setting unless the information is hazardous for the client or another person or by law must be disclosed.
9. I will offer my assistance and services to fellow ministers and their families whenever needed.
10. I will support and contribute to the ministry of my church through personal counseling, seminars, lectures, workshops, and group therapy.
11. I will seek to support the policies and beliefs of my church without unduly imposing them on any counselee.

#### ENDNOTES

1. This sample code is a generic example of numerous ministerial codes, and it has been edited to include the most significant emphases, both principles and specific guidelines, in each category. To write a code, a minister should evaluate his own ministry obligations in light of the text discussion, then utilize this sample code as a broad statement of possibilities for a personal code of ministerial ethics.
2. The "Sample Code" of the associate minister and pastoral counselor that follow will include only those obligations in addition to the Senior Minister Code which uniquely apply to each special ministerial role.

*Adapted from Ministerial Ethics by Joe E. Trull and James E. Carter, (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1993), 253–256. Used by permission.*

real-life application but broad enough for the inevitable unaddressed issues that arise. A code of ethics cannot address every potential conundrum. That would be as futile as it is cumbersome. Instead, the code should offer general guidelines that uphold core values for a variety of unforeseen situations.

Keep in mind that the integrity of the minister must always be front and center. The starting point for any code is defining the values that are integral to the minister's decisionmaking. First, brainstorm the list of core values, truth, honesty, and respect that will define the preliminary code.

Second, develop principles that present these values in an understandable way. For example, the value of truth might be written, "The minister must always speak the truth and should be intentional that the perceptions of his actions are truthful." These principles are positive assertions of how the minister fleshes out the value.

Third, when composing the code, apply the principles to actual situations. The minister might apply the principle on the value of truth to his preaching. Hence, one of the canons

of the code might be: "The minister must preach sermons of his own authorship and give credit to original sources where applicable." In other words, the minister must not plagiarize.

The content of the code will enlarge as more stated values lead to more written guidelines. From this exercise, the code begins to spell out actual expectations of behavior. No code is exhaustive, but the exercise itself will assist the minister in anticipating future dilemmas. This work in progress will continue to expand as situations warrant.

A minister encounters unique situations for which no specific black-and-white rule exists. His personal integrity (wholeness), coupled with a growing code of ethics, will maintain the equilibrium needed to minister in life's unique circumstances. Only with character and a well-defined code can the minister complete God's calling for his life. ■



**JAMES A. REASONS, Ph.D.**, senior minister, Fifth Avenue Baptist Church, Huntington, West Virginia.













































































































# WORDS THAT CATCH THE WIND

A sermon by Earl Palmer taught me an indelible lesson about the spiritual impact a few words can have. Palmer's message explored the sixth commandment — "thou shalt not kill" (Exodus 20:13, KJV). "This sixth commandment," said Palmer, "tells us not to cross over the right of another person to life. We are not willfully to harm. We are to weigh someone else heavy; we're not to weigh them light."

The phrase "weigh others heavy" riveted my attention. It captured a world of meaning in a few creative words.

As we prepare for some sermons, it can be worth spending from 30 minutes to 1 hour developing such a key phrase. We are looking for canvas to hang from the mast, for words that catch the wind.

Although keen emphasis on one phrase doesn't suit every sermon, the search for the best term clarifies our thinking, enhances our insight into the text, and forces us to look at the daily world of our listeners. If nothing else, we have our sermon title. And if we do find words that catch the wind, a sermon can almost write itself.

Here are some criteria for choosing the best words.

- **Serious.** The temptation is to be merely clever. I want words with the weight of York barbells, words that offer credibility and importance (though not necessarily gravity). There is heft in terms like *Promise Keeper*, *Experiencing God*, and *fully devoted follower of Jesus Christ*, that have captured the imagination nationwide.
- **Fresh.** Fresh doesn't mean slangy or offbeat. In one sermon, I wanted a contemporary definition of true discipleship. I decided on "A passion for growth in Jesus." Even new Christians could understand it, yet it challenged longtime believers.
- **Inspired.** I want words that kindle a desire to obey God, so I hunt for terms that appeal to a listener's noblest aspirations. In search of the central phrase of this column, I generated some three-dozen options. I chose "Words that catch the wind" because it links with the biblical idea of inspiration from the Spirit and pictures the positive metaphor of sailing. I quickly rejected one

alliteration, "Terms that have torque," because, besides being clunky, it smacks of mere technique.

- **Insightful.** Effective phrases elucidate the biblical concept. They provoke thought and summarize the sermon's big idea. Earl Palmer's phrase, "weigh others heavy," increased my understanding by giving a tangible feeling for what it means to regard others as worthy of all respect.
- **Energetic.** Words that catch the wind appeal to a listener's five senses. That rules out most abstract, academic words.

A large sail hoisted to the mast, though, is not enough. We must do two things with that key phrase:

**1. Develop it.** To fill the phrase with significance and emotion, tell a story, explain a word choice, illustrate, offer background, show relevance, give scriptural exposition. Though we should try to select words that already carry significance, treat the phrase like the black lines of a coloring book that require work with chestnut brown and evening blue crayons.

**2. Use it at key points.** The introduction is almost a must; further opportunities are in transitions, main points, the conclusion, or as a refrain. A telling phrase can serve as the organizing framework for the message.

I've found that words in inspired combination can catch the trade winds of the Spirit and move people forward.



**CRAIG BRIAN LARSON** is editor of *Christianity Today International's* preaching resources — *PreachingToday.com* and *Preaching Today* audio — as well as pastor of Lake Shore Church (Assemblies of God) in Chicago. He is coauthor of *Preaching That Connects* (Zondervan, 1994).

# IN THE SCHOOL OF DEATH

## DEATH IS SUCH A CAPABLE INSTRUCTOR. WHAT LEADERSHIP LESSONS CAN IT TEACH US?

**M**y father died recently. After a 10-year struggle with Alzheimer's, Dad was sent home from the hospital to spend the rest of his life with his family. It has been a long time since he knew who I was. But I knew who he was, and that is what counted.

The final season of his passing lasted about 5 days. I flew to Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, to be with him and the rest of my family at the end. One afternoon my mother called us from the patio into the former parsonage where I grew up. My father's life had ended quietly in a hospital bed parked in the living room.

Everyone was there. We took time to say good-bye before the police/EMT/funeral home part of things started up. About an hour later, the hospital bed was empty and our new lives had begun, minus our father.

Until this time, I was unaware that death was such a capable instructor. What I learned from being with Dad at the end is more about questions than answers.

### THIS IS ALL OVER IN A HURRY

My father spent 42 years in pastoral ministry, 30 of those years in the same church. Yet, the decades rushed to a conclusion before anyone knew it. Pet owners speak of "dog years." Perhaps we need a new category called "leader years" to express the velocity of life for those guiding organizations. I'm 51; my watch is over in about 14 years. How will I spend that time?

### ALL I HAVE IS WHAT I REMEMBER

For about the last 5 years my father had great difficulty recognizing his immediate family. In one sense, then, everything he accomplished as a leader had been erased from his mind because he lacked the ability to recall it. It does not take Alzheimer's to achieve this condition. I often seem to dash through the present as if only the future matters. What am I running from?

### A SENSE OF HUMOR IS A GOOD FRIEND

I recall the telephone conversation with my father when he confused me with a church secretary from many years ago. I felt guilty about the impulse to laugh out loud. But after many conversations with my mother, we both laughed about Dad's newfound idiosyncrasies. I concluded that humor is a grace from God. Why do I not laugh more?

### JOHN MAXWELL NEVER COVERED THIS PART

After watching my father struggle to breathe on his deathbed, I cannot believe that there

are 21 irrefutable laws of anything any more. I believe passionately in the transformation leaders experience with quality training, but we have to find a way to operate organizations spiritually, rather than mechanically. What would that look like?

### I AM SO HUMAN, AND I AM NOT HAPPY ABOUT THAT

I almost did my standard newsletter this month as if nothing happened to me. I am still largely in denial. But I have been trained to soldier on as if transcending life-events for the purposes of ministry is some form of heroism. In those last 5 days, my father taught me that life and leadership must be integrated. His living will requested no extraordinary measures because of his experience dealing with the terminally ill. He knew there are many things worse than dying. What kind of newsletter will I do next month?

### THE END PUTS THINGS IN PERSPECTIVE

The funeral sermon was jolting. Every time the preacher mentioned "Earl Creps" (I am the 3rd), I felt like she was talking about me. It made me wonder about my funeral. Perhaps the preacher will be one of you. What will you say?

### ETERNITY COUNTS MORE THAN ANYTHING ELSE

The Monday morning after Dad's final weekend as a pastor, the phone stopped ringing. All the people who were desperate for his attention, who loved him, despised him, and consumed him were suddenly absent. His retirement years were about the same. What I do as a leader must count for the Kingdom because people are too conditional. One day it will be only my wife and me. How much of what I do now is to earn the approval of others?

### HAVING THE RIGHT REGRETS

Several years before his Alzheimer's set

in, my father told me his two regrets about the ministry: (1) that he had spent so much time at work, and so little time with us in the living room where he would die, and; (2) that he could not do it all over again. So, regrets are not bad by definition. If I had to answer the same question right now, what would I say?

## A PREVAILING CHURCH IS LED BY THE HUMBLE

I came to faith in the Lutheran stream of the charismatic renewal. Those days gave rise to an enduring vision for spiritual revival in the church in my father's heart. Sadly, his funeral was attended by the last 25 members of his former congregation. These were the remnants of a thriving, multiservice enterprise that developed a facility covering half a city block. In January, the survivors will vote on whether the church should formally cease to be and release their interim pastor to move on to another situation. I

have struggled to reconcile this congregational deathwatch with the scale of my father's investment as a pastor. Was it all a waste? Is all (my) ministry ultimately a waste, too? At Dad's funeral I met Pastor Battle, the woman whose pioneer congregation began meeting in the church's main sanctuary on Sunday, October 13. Nia (Swahili for "purpose") Community Lutheran Church is an African-American congregation that will reboot Dad's original vision for impacting the community. My mother will attend this church and probably head up their prayer ministry. The church can prevail when founders, transitioners, and innovators work together. Do we (I) have the humility?

## I HAVE LOOKED THE TIGER IN THE EYE

With Dad's passing, there is no remaining "firebreak" between eternity and me. I am now looking down the barrel of my own mortality. It is OK. Having seen the end, maybe I will be a little less worried about what people think of me in the present, a little less manic about work, a little more reflective about life, more appreciative of the community of people around me. I have a hunger to deepen my personal spirituality, to grow closer to God, and then let the chips fall where they may. Does anything else matter?



**EARL CREPS**, doctor of ministry director, Assemblies of God Theological Seminary, Springfield, Missouri.



# WHEN PEWS ARE FEW

BY WAYNE M. WARNER

## GROWTH COMES IN CANS

**M**y district superintendent asked me, “Would you consider helping a small congregation keep its doors open?”

*Would I? But who wants a ministry no one has been able to turn around?*

My previous 26 years in ministry had been full-time by choice. *This will not enhance my career*, I thought as I wrestled with a choice I knew others believed to be futile. This opportunity was not what I really wanted, but I was anxious for a change, and what would God say? I knew I was not the first person to ever face such a choice. I agreed to consider it.

When I met with the congregation I found a handful of members whose self-image was decidedly negative. Industrial transition had deployed core families elsewhere, and their primitive facilities had discouraged other stouthearted warriors. Moreover, the church could no longer compete for experienced leadership. Unfortunately, some of their best-intentioned decisions in recent years had only mired them more deeply in their suffocating situation. Finally, no leadership remained.

Even though they were discouraged, I discovered a delightful dozen who were so warm and responsive I decided to return with my wife for a second visit. Our educational experience had taught us to serve rather than be served. Much of our ministry had come out of similar pleas. We agreed to help for a few months.

### HELPING THE SMALL CHURCH SEE THAT GROWTH COMES IN “CANS” IS A CALLING WORTHY OF THE MOST CAPABLE LEADERS.

In America there are islands of growing megachurches surrounded by established smaller churches. Many of these smaller churches have plateaued without reaching their growth potential. A few serve in limited-growth communities. Seeing this picture, a denominational growth consultant assured me, “Our calling is to preach, pray, pastor, guide, encourage, and lead the small church to desire to be faithful in mission, ministry, and outreach *so it can become more effective*” (italics added).

Helping the small church see that growth comes in “cans” is a calling worthy of the most capable leaders. Most churches are small at some point.

The challenge of resident pastoral leadership was an immediate concern. We were committing ourselves to an 86-mile commute twice weekly. By driving to and from our church we continued to provide our own primary support. We intended to help the church gradually assume ownership of its ministry role.

We renegotiated our terms of



leadership a few months later, changing from a drive-in pulpit supply to part-time minister while we continued to build toward full-time residency.

A second need became obvious. Church records revealed that when the congregation filled their small chapel to capacity without expanding or relocating they experienced a downtrend. Records further revealed their roller-coaster attendance patterns ended right back where they started; location was a problem.

When a new General Motors plant moved to town, the seldom-used rail spur running beside the 50-year-old church was reactivated. We then had long pauses during the offering while the nickel-plate went through. Waiting through a long series of warning

whistles at the corner crossing during the pastoral prayer did little to enhance worship. The new employer, however, brought new families to the community and new people to the congregation. We renewed our site search in spite of prior failures to agree on a place to relocate.

The opportunity we wanted came after a year of praying and searching. We negotiated for 5 acres. We now had 300 feet of highway frontage on the southeast edge of the city with an option to purchase more acreage. We eventually secured all 66 acres.

The potential for church growth was good, but required further pastoral commitment. I became the full-time resident pastor while my wife lived at our home an hour away and maintained her employment. We converted the parsonage. I occupied bachelor quarters, and we used some space for a needed office and Christian education purposes.

This life was not easy. Nevertheless, over the years the seven ladies, two men, and a handful of children bloomed into a vibrant, growing church family. Two Sunday school classes multiplied four times. Church attendance tripled, and the income

multiplied to three times the amount received 4 years earlier.

This allowed us to spend several thousand dollars to improve our facilities while we pursued planned goals and prepared for the eventual sale of our facility. We became givers rather than receivers by choice. We also achieved an all-time high in missions giving. Congregational morale reflected the new joy of achievement. Seeing a need to further strengthen lay leadership, increase new member enlistment, and improve pastoral support we pursued plans for funding a new facility as we edged toward our fifth anniversary together.

## CHANGED PEOPLE ARE THE ULTIMATE PRODUCT PRODUCED BY THE CHURCH.

We outlasted the effects brought about by losing our community's largest employer. This was made more noticeable by my wife's retirement. We passed the age at which most people retire, faced the problems of the plateaued small-town church, and established interesting guidelines for other small congregations that wish to take church growth seriously.

We established the following guidelines to turn this small congregation around and realized that with God all things are possible.

### PRIORITIZE YOUR MISSION

We searched diligently for the apostolic sense of calling to church growth found throughout the Book of Acts. Recognizing the worth of maintenance ministries, we found that God both wills and gives growth. Therefore, the choice was ours; we could plan and prepare for continuing growth, or plan not to grow.

### FOCUS ON PEOPLE'S NEEDS

God's grace attracts people and that translates into growth. Changed people are the ultimate product produced by the church. We concentrated on seeing people through God's eyes and loving them wherever we found them. Hurting, sinning, self-indulging, striking out, and worse, they needed what God had to offer. Every individual crossing our path represented a challenge for a changed life. Church members became gifted ministers offering salvation and a commitment to a potentially new life.

### REMAIN ENTHUSIASTIC

We approached our problems positively and enthusiastically. We found God's stepping-stones to maturity and growth turned a few months of planned ministry into 17 years. Positive enthusiasm and living in God uplifts people and helps them discover new options when they have had prior frustration and failure.

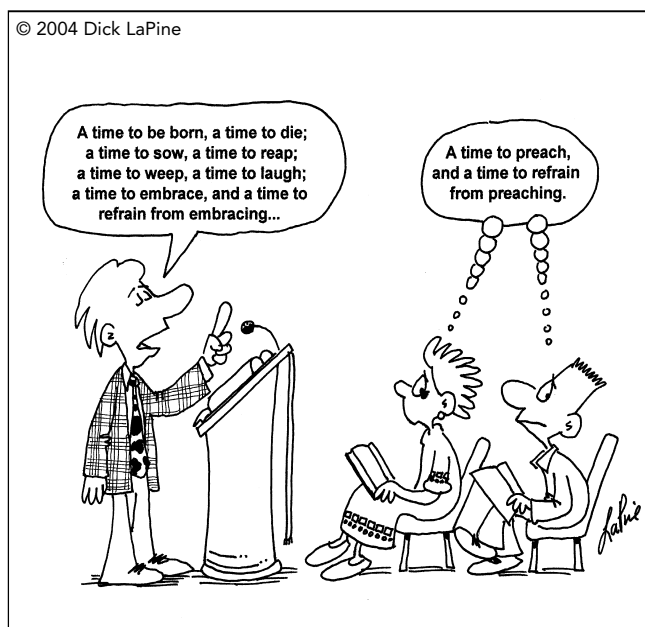
### STAY FLEXIBLE

Traditional programs, methods, and schedules often conflict with growth as people insist, "We've always done it this way." Using diagnostic objectivity and constant evaluation we worked at remaining flexible and avoiding rigidity, believing God blesses this kind of commitment to growth.

### BE ACCOUNTABLE

When I was younger I was too embarrassed to share my financial

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needs with the church. After subjecting my family to a quarter century of insensitive demands for full-time-or-nothing ministry for an inadequate salary, I have become less hesitant to make my needs known to the congregation. Although it did not completely resolve the problem, I assumed a bivocational role when necessary. In addition, I gave more recognition to my spouse's role as the congregation's primary means of financial support for the pastoral team.

Congregations that want a full-time minister, but are unable to pay full-time wages, may have no justifiable option other than to allow the minister to supplement the congregation's lack of income through outside employment. The church should not expect the spouse to do it.

## STAY CONSISTENT WITH YOUR PURPOSE

If the church is to reach the lost, it will require planting more new churches, many of which will be small. However, this will require a new acceptance of, appreciation for, and tolerance toward bivocational ministry.

As I served as an armed security officer at a busy downtown bank for the first 5 years of our pastorate, I made friends with a cross section of people I would not have reached as a full-time minister. Moreover, I watched my minister-wife effectively reach people of all persuasions in her role as a district manager of a fast-food chain — from touching pimps and prostitutes, to business professionals who were unchurched.

It required purposeful and persistent planning to keep our family relationships happy and healthy. During occasional low tides, I wondered *Why, God, didn't You*

*lead me into a larger church with more of the benefits I could enjoy?* But God did amply reward me and helped me understand that another small church had celebrated its second century from a new campus — although it was ready to close its doors when it called me.

Whether or not this church ever becomes a mega-ministry, I know I left it with new leadership and a new future. Finally, I know that growth comes in cans, because I found with God all things are possible

**WAYNE M. WARNER** is a retired pastor and freelance writer who lives in Battle Creek, Michigan.





# FIFTY MESSIAHS AND STILL WAITING



**M**any deceivers who do not acknowledge Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh, have gone out into the world. Any such person is the deceiver and the antichrist” (2 John 1:7).

The Jewish bookstore proprietor, Mr. Golden, was adamant with me. “Jesus *cannot* be the Jewish Messiah. The world is still in virtual chaos; children are hungry; diseases kill millions; and war and terrorism are tragic realities. Where is the world’s universal peace and prosperity that originate from the Messiah’s coming? These did not accompany Jesus, did they?”

The normally gentle Orthodox Jewish bookseller did believe that a messiah would ultimately come based on his confidence in Jewish sages and rabbinic opinion. For example, the outstanding 12th-century theologian, physician, and philosopher, the famous Rabbi Moses Ben Maimon (“Rambam”) mandated in his “Thirteen Articles of Faith” the daily Orthodox Jewish recitation of, “I believe in the coming of the Messiah; and though he tarry, yet will I daily wait for him.”

Yet Rambam also strongly warned Jews against following false messiahs in his *Letter to Yemen* (1192) where he recounted the histories of four recent messianic claimants. These false messiahs had not only met with tragic fates; they also had brought shame, ridicule, and catastrophe on the Jewish world. Messiahs ranged from reportedly being miracle-working charismatic dreamers to messianic draftees compelled by Jewish people desperately needing national redemption. All told, since the time of Jesus, more than 50 documented Jewish messiahs have led Israel down the

same dead-end street to amplified grief and depressing disillusionment.

The Jewish pursuit of messianic pretenders while simultaneously rejecting Jesus as Messiah befuddles many Bible-savvy Christians. Evangelical eschatology holds a substitutionary messianic imposter (an *antichrist*) will yet flash on the global horizon and have immense, though temporary, appeal to the Jewish masses. Yet, it remains a mystery how the people of the Book could entirely miss God’s full messianic revelation in Jesus — Israel’s only God-appointed Anointed One, the Messiah. Paul laid this sin to Satan’s charge, e.g., “The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ” (2 Corinthians 4:4). Only God has authenticated the Messiah Jesus by His resurrection from the dead.

## THE WHO, WHAT, AND WHY OF THE MESSIANIC ANOINTING

The kings since Saul and David and the priests since Aaron in the Hebrew Bible had been anointed for divine service. The verb *mashah* meaning to “anoint” or the “oiling of the body” was applied to the *mashiah* or the “anointed one.” The oil was poured from a *shofar* (ram’s horn) or alternate vessel on the head of the anointed one as God’s chosen means of publicly declaring the One carefully chosen for auspicious divine assignment. The act of anointing conferred *kabowd* or “honor, weightiness” on the recipient and signified the anointed one’s divine authorization to execute his God-appointed commission.

The newly anointed one was to be honored by Hebrew society as a solid “heavyweight” in God’s order. It was not enough for the messianic personality to simply be divinely designated. Rather, the people who stood to benefit from his heavenly ordained administration corporately needed to openly acknowledge him as their God-enabled leader. While



the one so anointed was issued authority and provided protection by divine decree, the people of God were under obligation to submit to God's appointed anointed king or jeopardize their own legitimacy as God's faithful servants. To reject God's anointed king or priest was to hazard the social well-being of God's carefully nurtured faith community.

For example, despising the unique role of God's anointed high priest would make his priestly intercession futile in the wake of communal rejection. Only full dependence on the high priest's ministry would yield the desired and beneficial interaction with God that Israel needed. Likewise, disobedience to the king was insubordination to God. Refusal to walk in submission to God's appointed and anointed king would temporarily nullify the direct benefit of the king's reign that would otherwise be Israel's immediate experience. Certainly no God-defying person or community could expect to inherit the divine blessings associated with the Messianic kingdom in their active hostility to God and His Anointed (Psalm 2).

## THE FOLLY OF FAITHLESSNESS

Rejection of God's true Messiah, Jesus, led directly to the momentary loss of

the riches of God's kingdom blessings on Israel until the day when Israel will embrace Jesus and again fully benefit from faithful obedience to God. Paul certainly anticipated that pending day of corporate repentance when "all Israel will be saved"

## THE JEWISH PURSUIT OF MESSIANIC PRETENDERS WHILE SIMULTANEOUSLY REJECTING JESUS AS MESSIAH BEFUDDLES MANY BIBLE-SAVVY CHRISTIANS.

(Romans 11:26). But in the interim, defiance of God's revelation by religious leadership has yielded a long list of tragic episodes in the annals of Jewish history. Following man-chosen messiahs has led to Jewish grief and pain beyond imagination and well illustrates the maxim, "Truth is stranger than fiction."

### PRETENDERS AND ANTICHRISTS

There have been at least 50 messianic imposters since Jesus' time. Rambam reported that one Yemenite messiah offered proof of his resurrection power by challenging his adversaries to chop off his head and then witness his resuscitation. Duly impressed, they complied. The story ended right there.

The vast majority of Palestinian Jewry followed Simon Bar Kochba from 132 to 135 A.D. when he claimed messiahship and challenged the might of Rome. At the end of his bloody campaign, most of his colleagues and followers were dead, including the famous Rabbi Akiva. Jerusalem's name was changed by Rome to Aelia Capitolina and entry into the Holy City by Jews was punished with death.

Shabbatai Zvi was acknowledged as messiah by some 50 percent of European Jewry in 1665–66. A hallucinating Nathan of Gaza, Zvi's own Elijah the prophet, announced that the 10 Lost Tribes of Israel were presently waiting the signal to gather again with their European Jewish cousins in the Promised Land. Diplomatic confrontation with the incredulous and angry Turkish Sultan led Zvi to convert to

Islam to save his life, much to the horror of his multitudes of loyal Jewish followers. But Zvi's conversion to Islam did not dissuade others from their misguided faith. Some even advocated that the messiah had to sin in this way to bring about global redemption. Zvi ultimately died in prison 10 years later in the wake of massive disillusionment.

Jakob Frank, another messianic imposter, claimed in the 18th century to be the reincarnation of Shabbatai Zvi. Frank advocated that a world of undiminished evil would effectively provoke God to release the messianic redemption and kingdom into being. Religious communities were encouraged to engage in gross communal sin to compel a distraught God to immediate messianic action. After some painfully shattering societal episodes, the rabbis condemned Frank as a heretic. He and many of his followers ultimately found refuge from their fellow Jewish antagonists by religious conversion to Roman Catholicism.

The most recent internationally proclaimed Jewish messiah was Menachem Schneersohn of Brooklyn, head of the

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Chabad Lubavitch movement, who died in 1994. Many thousands of his disillusioned followers anticipated his physical resurrection from his New York grave. For years this led to inevitable religious group factionalism.

The Zvi and Frank episodes generated disillusionment in the Jewish world, and many thereafter totally disavowed any belief in a coming Messiah. Modern Jews were prepared to disassociate from both the biblical promises of a Messiah and traditional Jewish Orthodoxy due to the sad results of Jewish messianism. The majority of the Jewish world today has lost all hope for a coming Messiah and a corresponding redemption. How utterly tragic this is for Jewish people. Jesus is the Promised Messiah, the Anointed One of God, and the One still to bring total redemption and complete fulfillment of the biblical promises to the House of Israel.

## THE SURPRISING ANCIENT RABBINIC CORRESPONDENCE WITH CHRISTIAN TEACHINGS

Both intertestamental apocryphal literature and post-New Testament rabbinical *Targumim* (translations) offer an amazing Jewish perspective on the Messiah. While the *Mishnah* (A.D. 200) does not express messianic hopes, the *Targumim* include the following: (1) The Messiah's kingdom precedes the resurrection and judgment; (2) The Messiah will remain hidden due to Israel's unrighteousness; (3) The Messiah is prophet, Torah-teacher, and king; (4) The Messiah makes a new covenant between God and Israel; (5) The Messiah does not violate the Torah on any point; (6) The Messiah has prophetic gifts because the Holy Spirit rests on Him; (7) The

Messiah's task is to establish righteousness and cause others to conform to God's Law; sinners are hurled into *Gehenna*; (8) The Messiah sanctifies Israel and ushers in peace and prosperity; (9) The Messiah will rule in righteousness and rebuild the temple; (10) Miracles and longevity of man will result from His reign.

But before millions of American Jews, including Mr. Golden, can eyewitness the fulfillment of the prophesied messianic blessings, "All Israel shall be saved." It behooves Pentecostals everywhere to inspire the Jewish trusting embrace of the true Messiah, Jesus.



**RAY GANNON, Ph.D.,** Springfield, Missouri, is national representative for Jewish ministries with the Assemblies of God.

# MANAGING YOUR MINISTRY

BY RICK WARREN

## DOES YOUR CHURCH REALLY NEED A BIGGER BUILDING?

### BUILDINGS SHOULD BE TOOLS FOR MINISTRY, NOT MONUMENTS.

**A**t Saddleback, we use the Internet as a tool to develop, grow and sustain our congregation. While the Internet will never replace face-to-face fellowship, it is a serious mistake to think that everything the church does — worship, discipleship, ministry, evangelism, and fellowship — must be done within the four walls of a church building. In fact, I'm convinced that church buildings can be major barrier to exponential growth and that massive building programs are often a waste of money.

Currently there are several dozen extremely large church buildings being planned and built in America, but I believe they are the last of the dinosaurs. History has proven that future generations never fill the cavernous temples of previous generations. For instance, every time Spurgeon's Tabernacle was rebuilt (three times) it was downsized. A list of empty great cathedrals would be quite long. God wants to do something new in each generation. He blesses anointed people, not buildings.

We also need to remember that the period of fastest growth for Christianity was during the first 300 years — when there were no church buildings at all. Today, many of the rapidly expanding church-planting movements around the world are multiplying without having physical church buildings.

Buildings should be tools for ministry, not monuments. I've said repeatedly to our congregation that Saddleback will never build a building that could not be torn down if it prevented us from reaching more people. Churches should focus on building people, not building buildings. That's what it means to be purpose-driven. It's a people-building process. Build your people before your steeple.

Our resistance to constructing buildings has been one of Saddleback's values since its inception 24 years ago. One of the goals we set at Saddleback was to prove you don't need to build a building to grow a church. That's why we waited until after our congregation was averaging more than 10,000 in attendance before we built our first building. I think we proved our point.

Your church's growth does not justify building a new or larger building. For example: We direct an annual fall spiritual growth campaign called 50 Days of Love. One of the five components was an 8-week small-group Bible study that augmented my sermons. Because all of our adult education (Sunday School) takes place in homes — not buildings on our campus — we were able to start more than 200 new groups in one week.

You read that correctly. We enlisted and connected over 2,000 new people who were not in our existing groups into new Bible study groups in a single weekend. We could not have considered numbers like that if we were trying to place them all on our campus.

I am absolutely opposed to building any size facility that will only be used once or twice a week. It is poor stewardship of God's money to build a facility just because

the pastor wants to speak to everyone at one time.

In fact, here's a little secret: Only pastors like huge church services.

Most people prefer moderate-sized services, large enough to make the singing great, but not an overwhelming crowd. That's why I'd rather have a building seating 200 and hold five services than have a 1,000-seat auditorium that is only filled on Sunday and then left empty the rest of the week.

Yes, Saddleback has a 3,200-seat worship center, but we have seven identical weekend services and minister to more than 17,500 attendees each week without the expense of a giant stadium-style arena.

If you must build, consider making it a multipurpose facility. That is better stewardship of resources. At Saddleback, as soon as our weekend services are over, the seating arrangement in our worship center is taken down and the building is used in a variety of ways every day of the week. This releases an enormous amount of space for programs and money for missions.

I can already hear the critics of this suggestion making a good point for "the grandeur and beauty of worship architecture." I believe in architectural beauty as an aid to worship too, but at what cost? Can anyone seriously give a New Testament justification for billions of dollars spent on debt for sanctuaries that are used for only a couple hours a week — especially when so many around the world have yet to hear the good news?

Experiment and look for ways to reach and grow people faster and cheaper, without buildings. Don't let traditional methodology, or brick and mortar, or the lack of it, keep you from focusing on what matters most — changed lives.



**RICK WARREN**, senior pastor, Saddleback Valley Community Church, Lake Forest, California.

## JOHN OWEN: PRINCE OF PURITANS

WHO WAS JOHN OWEN AND  
WHY IS HE IMPORTANT TO  
TODAY'S PENTECOSTAL MINISTER?

**T**he modern Pentecostal pastor may assume he has little in common with the 17th-century Puritans. After all, were they not rigid, sterile hypocrites who hated dancing, embarrassed sinners with scarlet As, and lived wooden lives devoid of spiritual power?

In fact, the truth is a different story. Probably no group of Christians has spent more time emphasizing the work of the Holy Spirit and the necessity of spiritual experience. Combining profound biblical insight with intense interest in the experiential work of the Holy Spirit, Puritanism (1560–1660) was the high-water mark of the Reformation. The tide has gone in and out since, but from this author's perspective has not yet returned to the level occupied by the English Puritans.

We owe the Puritans a great debt. Their thoroughly biblical worldview supplied the matrix of presuppositions that many of the Western world's rights and privileges have emerged from. Puritanism was the age of Newton, Bunyan, Milton, Cromwell, Locke, Owen, and other generation changers.

For example, in the rich soil of Puritanism with its Christian presupposition of an ordered universe germinated London's Royal Society and modern science. From England's biblically inspired Puritan work ethic the seeds of modern capitalism have taken root and flourished. From the crucible of England's Puritan-inspired civil war (1640s) religious freedom, as we know it today, first appeared on the stage of modern life, and the Divine Right of Kings received a deathblow that it has not recovered from. (The writings of John Locke, a son of Puritans, greatly influenced the American War for Independence.)

It was also an era of deep and profound biblical thinking. John Owen (1616–83), a contemporary of Bunyan and Cromwell, is considered by most people to be the greatest Puritan divine. In fact, many consider him to be England's greatest theological thinker. In the opinion of C.H. Spurgeon, he was “perhaps, the most profound divine who ever lived.”<sup>1</sup> If Puritanism was the high-water mark of biblical theology, and Owen its greatest and most original thinker, his life is worth consideration. Today, 300 years after his death, his works are still in print. Who was John Owen and why is he important to today's Pentecostal minister?

### OWEN'S YOUTH<sup>2</sup>

John Owen was born to a Puritan pastor in 1616. His immense intellect asserted itself at an early age. A child prodigy, his parents enrolled him at Oxford at age 12 where he was awarded his B.A. at age 16 and his M.A. at age 19. He was a man of



iron-willed discipline. He possessed great worldly ambition, but lacked the knowledge of salvation. During his student days he allowed himself only 4 hours of sleep each night hoping by his labors to secure favor and position with men.

When he was in his mid-twenties, God began to work on his conscience. Doubting his conversion he went to hear Dr. Edmund Calumny, a well-known preacher. To Owen's disappointment, an unknown pastor filled Calumny's pulpit that day. His discouraged friends wanted to leave but Owen was too exhausted, so he stayed. The preacher's text was Matthew 8:26, “Why are you so fearful, O ye of little faith?” As Owen listened the Holy Spirit worked powerfully. He emerged a new man.

At this time Oxford was a divided community. Bishop Laud, of Star Chamber fame, had just been appointed chancellor of the university. He was high-church Anglican. He favored State control of the national church, what the Puritan's called “popery” — an emphasis on outward worship such as vestments, incense, bells, the sign of the cross, and prayer books. The Puritan's favored simplicity — adding nothing to worship not explicitly mentioned in Scripture.

Owen sided with the Puritans and immediately fell out of favor with Laud and his party. He left Oxford with his second B.A. (in Divinity) unfinished. At this time the church at the village of Fordham, and later Coggeshall, called him to be its pastor. God blessed his preaching. He regularly preached to Sunday crowds of 2,000 — an immense congregation by 17th-century standards.

During this time he married Mary Rooke. Little is known about their union except that together they birthed 11 children. Ten died in infancy — imagine the pain and anguish. The eleventh survived to adulthood, married unhappily, returned home, and shortly after died of consumption (tuberculosis). Like his Master, Owen was a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief.

## HIS PUBLIC LIFE

During Owen's thirties the English civil war raged between a Puritan-dominated Parliament and King Charles I. John Bunyan served as a foot soldier in Parliament's army, and the genius of Oliver Cromwell asserted itself on the battlefield.

In 1648, when Owen was 32, one of Parliament's generals, Fairfax, moved his headquarters to Coggeshall where

Owen lived and preached. Fairfax attended Owen's church, and they became friends. From that time, Parliament increasingly invited him to preach to their gathered assemblies. Most of those attending were Protestants and they loved good scriptural preaching.

This led to one of the great events of his life. In January 1649, the day after the beheading of Charles I, Parliament asked Owen to preach. It was a thankless job. Tensions were high. Owen was under severe pressure to side with Parliament or the friends of the king. He did neither.

## WE OWE THE PURITANS A GREAT DEBT. THEIR THOROUGHLY BIBLICAL WORLDVIEW SUPPLIED THE MATRIX OF PRESUPPOSITIONS THAT MANY OF THE WESTERN WORLD'S RIGHTS AND PRIVILEGES HAVE EMERGED FROM.

His sermon was published, and he used this occasion to ask England and its rulers to consider religious toleration. Many people take religious liberty for granted, but in Owen's day dissenters were often executed. Owen argued against this practice and for toleration of Christian denominations. He was generations ahead of his time.

## OXFORD YEARS

During the civil wars, King Charles had established his army headquarters at Oxford. The army put the university to severe use and it was now in shambles. In 1650, Parliament appointed Owen dean of Christ Church, one of Oxford's most prestigious colleges, and from 1652–57 he served as vice-chancellor (president) of the university. He reestablished Oxford's reputation by rebuilding its infrastructure and hiring godly men such as John Howe, Thomas Goodwin, Stephen Charnock, and Philip Henry (Matthew Henry's father) to teach the growing student body.

During these years Cromwell often called Owen to London for consultation on issues of church and State. Given these responsibilities, his productivity staggers the faint of heart. In addition to all his other duties, he published *De Iustitia*, a work on the justice of God; *Theologouma Pantodapa*, the substance of his Oxford lectures, *Biblical Theology*, and three well-known works still popular today, *Mortification*, *Temptation*, and *Communion With God*.

One of his enemies described his preaching at this period of his life by writing, "His personage was proper and comely and he had a very graceful behavior in the pulpit, an eloquent elocution, a winning and insinuating deportment and could by the persuasion of his oratory ... move and win the affection of his admiring auditory almost as he pleased."<sup>3</sup>

## LAST YEARS

In the late 1650s, Owen left Oxford and retired in the nearby village of Stadhampton, where he started a church in his home.

In 1658, Cromwell died and the political condition quickly destabilized. In 1660, the Army called Charles II, the son of Charles I, to resume the monarchy of his father. It seemed as if all the principles the Puritans had labored and fought for were soon to be undone.





Charles and Parliament began to persecute the Puritans. Owen suffered from the loss of his financial security and his prestige. He moved to London to pastor a small independent church. He continued in this position for the next 20 years.

## [OWEN] MAINTAINED AN INTENSE INTEREST IN SPIRITUAL EXPERIENCE, HARNESSSED BY THE GREAT TRUTHS OF SCRIPTURE AND RELEASED THROUGH THE POWER OF GOD UPON BIBLICAL PREACHING.

Slowly the spiritual climate began to improve. In 1671, Charles II issued the “Declaration of Indulgence” granting tolerance to Roman Catholics and Independents like Owen. At this time Owen befriended Bunyan. In fact, when Bunyan could not find a publisher, Owen talked his own publisher into printing the first edition of *The Pilgrim’s Progress*.

During these years Owen labored unceasingly. In addition to other works he wrote his monumental multivolume commentary *Epistle to the Hebrews*, a *Discourse on the Holy Spirit*, *Apostasy* (1676), *Justification by Faith* (1677), *The Person of Christ* (1678), and *The Grace and Duty of Being Spiritually-minded*.

In his 60th year, 1676, his beloved wife, Mary, died. By 17th-century standards, Owen was now an old man; his health began to fail. He suffered bouts of gout and stomach problems. But his tremendous work ethic remained unabated. In the year prior to his death he wrote, *Meditations and Discourses on the Glory of Christ*. His printer was editing it as Owen lay dying.

His last letter written to an old friend in August 1683 illuminates his passion for Christ. “I am going to Him whom my soul hath loved, or rather hath loved me with an everlasting love; which is the whole ground of all my consolation. ... I am leaving the ship of the church in a great storm, but while the great Pilot is in it the loss of a poor under-rower will be inconsiderable.”<sup>4</sup> He died a few days later at the age of 67.

### HIS THEOLOGY

Biblical theology was his first love and passion. He would not have considered himself a philosopher or an academic, but first and foremost an expositor of God’s Word. Although a Calvinist by conviction, as were most of his peers, his thought was not dry, but alive with the Holy Spirit’s power. He maintained an intense interest in spiritual experience, harnessed by the great truths of Scripture and released through the power of God upon biblical preaching. Like most great Christian thinkers he focused on major themes — the Trinity, justification by faith, and the glory of Christ. He considered himself first and foremost a pastor of souls, not an academic.

### HIS CHARACTER

Like most great minds he pursued knowledge for the right reasons. Owen’s reason to study theology was to further his secret communion with God. Can we say the same? He writes,

“When the heart is cast indeed into the mould of the doctrine that the mind embraceth; when the evidence and necessity of the truth abides in ... our hearts; when we have communion with God in the doctrine we contend for — then shall we be garrisoned by the grace of God.”<sup>5</sup>

Second, he learned how to rejoice in great trials. Despite the death of 11 children, his suffering and persecution under Charles II, intense responsibilities, and great pressures, he cultivated a cheerful, joyful, grateful attitude.

Third, he had a servant’s heart that showed up in his tremendous work ethic. He gave himself completely to the cause of Christ and His kingdom.

Fourth, his biblical studies led him to develop deep humility. He knew himself in the light of Christ. “The work of faith,” he wrote, “is to fill the soul with such thoughts as these: ‘I am nothing; a poor worm at God’s disposal; lost, if not found by Christ; — have done, can do, nothing on the account whereof I should be accepted with God.’”<sup>6</sup> That was how this great intellect saw himself before God.

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“Yes, we need a volunteer to run our nursery, but perhaps someone who is less obsessed with germs.”

## LESSONS

What lessons can we learn from Owen's life? First, his life demonstrates what can happen when God joins a large intellect with a profound work ethic. His 28-volume work speaks to the value of these virtues. It is deep, meaty, and of eternal value. Most of the Christian literature published this year will be out of print in 10 years, but men will probably be reading Owen 200 years from now.

Second, we see the value of integrating scholarship with pastoral work and responsibility. Like Luther, Calvin, Edwards, and Bunyan, Owen saw himself first and foremost as a pastor. He placed great emphasis on preaching. As was true of Calvin and Luther, his pastoral contact with people provided the balance and perspective that so greatly empowered his theological writing. He kept himself from the distractions of administration and counseling to

invest himself in preaching and writing, work that powerfully changed lives.

Third, Owen's life reminds us that God's discipline produces beautiful fruit in those trained by it. No one may want Owen's trials and sufferings, but should they come, let us bear them cheerfully and with faith.

Owen left us little personal information. After his death, his diaries and most of his letters were lost. You can know Owen by reading his sermons and *The Glory of Christ*. You can buy his works on CD for about \$30 from Ages Software, [www.ages-library.com](http://www.ages-library.com). For several hundred dollars you can buy Owen's 28 volumes published by Banner of Truth. A helpful primer is *John Owen, The Man and His Theology*, edited by R.W. Oliver, Evangelical Press. ■

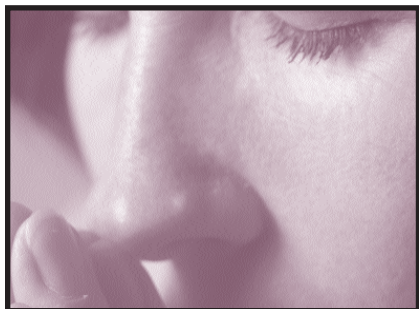


**WILLIAM P. FARLEY** is pastor of Grace Christian Fellowship in Spokane, Washington. He is the author of *For His Glory*, Pinnacle Press, and *Outrageous Mercy*, Baker. You can contact him at 509-448-3979.

### ENDNOTES

1. C.H. Spurgeon, *Metropolitan Tabernacle*, vol. 46, (Rios, Wis.: Ages, 1998–2001), 644.
2. For current biographies see Andrew Thomson, *John Owen* (Fern, Great Britain: Christian Focus, 1996), and R.W. Oliver, ed., *John Owen: The Man and His Theology* (Darlington, England: Evangelical Press, 2002).
3. Oliver, 24.
4. Oliver, 36.
5. *The Works of John Owen*, vol. 12, (Rio, Wis.: Ages, 2000), 73.
6. *The Works of John Owen*, vol. 9, (Rio, Wis.: Ages, 2000), 152 (emphasis mine).

## STIRRED BY A NOBLE THEME —



# THE BOOK OF COMMON PRAYER

*"My heart is stirred by a noble theme as I recite my verses for the king;  
my tongue is the pen of a skillful writer" (Psalm 45:1).*

In January 2002, standing alone in the small chapel of a large church, a worshiper carefully placed his burgundy leather Bible on the Communion table. He opened a matching leather book and began to pray out loud.

"Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ" (Philippians 1:2).

"I rejoiced with those who said to me, 'Let us go to the house of the Lord'" (Psalm 122:1).

"May the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be pleasing in your sight, O Lord, my Rock and my Redeemer" (Psalm 19:14).

"Send forth your light and your truth, let them guide me; let them bring me to your holy mountain, to the place where you dwell" (Psalm 43:3).

"But the Lord is in his holy temple; let all the earth be silent before him" (Habakkuk 2:20).

He paused, letting the silence search His soul, and then continued.

"Yet a time is coming and has now come when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks" (John 4:23).

"For this is what the high and lofty One says — he who lives forever, whose name is holy: 'I live in a high and holy place, but also with him who is contrite and lowly in spirit, to revive the spirit of the lowly and to revive the heart of the contrite'" (Isaiah 57:15).

As the worshiper continued to pray from the little leather book, he repented of his sins and received God's forgiveness. Picking up his Bible, he prayerfully read

from Psalms and the Old and New Testaments. Then, with ancient words from the other little book, he poured out his praise and his adoration to the Lord, rehearsing the revelation of who God is. Next came the Apostles' Creed and the Lord's Prayer. He put the little, leather book down. With his prayer list, he interceded for his family, friends, church, and country with extemporaneous prayers as the Spirit led. His prayers began to sound strange to the human ear, but clear to angels as a heavenly prayer language began to flow from his heart. The Lord's presence filled the little chapel. After a season, he picked up the little book again and concluded his prayer time with carefully crafted prayers for his country, his church, and for a lost world. Finally, he prayed this benediction.

"Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine,

according to his power that is at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen” (Ephesians 3:20,21).

The little chapel was at Suncoast Cathedral in St. Petersburg, Florida. I was the worshiper and the little leather book was *The Book of Common Prayer*.<sup>1</sup> After three decades of public ministry I was skilled at public worship, but I struggled secretly and shamefully with private worship. I never understood how to minister to the Lord in the secret place. I lacked what I supplied those I led in public worship — a service. Through the leading of the Holy Spirit and doctoral work, I discovered *The Book of Common Prayer*.<sup>2</sup>

## SHOULD A PENTECOSTAL PREACHER USE A PRAYER BOOK?

Is this second-class spirituality? Did “we” not come out of “them”? Are these not oldest of old wineskins? Will ancient methods be accompanied by the moving of the Spirit when these methods are used today? These are all good questions. They were my questions as I sought to understand where the Spirit was leading me. Before we deal with *The Book of Common Prayer*, we need to understand written or fixed prayers.

## FIXED PRAYERS ARE BIBLICAL

The Bible is replete with fixed prayers, including the Book of Psalms. The Epistles contain several examples of confessions and hymns<sup>3</sup> that are believed to have been well-known to the readers. It is likely, in addition to extemporaneous prayers and prayers offered in a heavenly prayer language, that the disciples prayed fixed prayers. In Acts 3, Peter and John were going to the temple at the fixed time for evening prayer. In Acts 13, the Bible says they “ministered to the Lord and fasted.” The word used here is *leitourgeo* meaning to

“to perform a service,”<sup>4</sup> and in the context, a religious service. The same word is used again in Hebrews 10:11 in reference to the functions of the priests in the temple.<sup>5</sup> In other words, these New Testament, Spirit-filled, holy-royal priests were ministering to the Lord just as the Old Testament priests had. Surely they used fixed prayers as well as spontaneous prayers and prayer in tongues. Perhaps this was Paul’s idea when he told the Ephesians to pray with “all kinds of prayers” (Ephesians 6:18). It is interesting to note that Jesus, when asked by the disciples for a lesson in how to pray, gave them a prayer.

## FIXED PRAYERS ARE HISTORICAL

By A.D. 100–150 the *Didache*, an Early Church document, recommended the Lord’s Prayer be prayed three times each day.<sup>6</sup> While historical documents do not carry the authority of Scripture, it is clear the prayer the Lord gave was used as a fixed prayer.

## CAN IT BE “PENTECOSTAL” TO RECITE A PRAYER?

Yes, if Pentecostal means to be led and empowered by the Holy Spirit. Some believe the church of the first few centuries was a Pentecostal church. Current scholarship is revealing the hidden history of signs and wonders, gifts of the Spirit, miracles, and healings in the Early Church. Leaders in the Patristic period — the time of the Church Fathers — have much to say to us today. The Holy Spirit used them to disciple believers in a hostile, pagan, relativistic world. They clarified the canon of Scripture, the doctrines of the Trinity, and the dual nature of Christ. How did these pastors make disciples in a hostile climate? One of their methods was daily prayer, fully apostolic — fixed prayers, extemporaneous prayer, and prayer in the spirit.<sup>7</sup>

## FIXED PRAYERS ARE CONTEMPORARY

We have fixed prayers in our services. We argue over preferring the old ones versus the new ones. But no one says they are second-class spirituality, or too “Catholic,” or whether they should be in our liturgy.<sup>8</sup> Why? Because these fixed prayers are called songs. The only difference between reciting an ancient expression of praise<sup>9</sup> and singing “How Great Thou Art” is the music. Should music make that much difference?

## THE BOOK OF COMMON PRAYER

We also owe much to the Reformation fathers. They were empowered by the Holy Spirit to throw off the corrupt hierarchy of Rome, to pursue the purity of Scripture, and to reestablish apostolic worship. They took many different paths toward these goals. The path that has most affected the Pentecostal movement is the English Reformation. We can thank it, its offshoots, and its rebels for the King James Bible, the Sunday School movement, modern missions, the revivalist movement, the Holiness movement, mass evangelism, and even modern Pentecost. Prior to these developments, Thomas Cranmer, Archbishop of Canterbury (1489–1556), supervised the translation of the first English Bible and compiled *The Book of Common Prayer*. These two books became the foundation of the English Reformation.<sup>10</sup>

## PENTECOSTALS IN THE FLOW OF HISTORY

Contemporary leaders do well to look to the New Testament church for answers to today’s challenges. In the first centuries of Christianity Spirit-filled leaders grappled with the same problems we deal with today: hostile, relativistic, pagan cultures outside the church; doctrinal error, false preachers, pride, power, and perversity within the church. A thousand years later, leaders of the Protestant Reformation also sought to reestablish New Testament Christianity by seeking the wisdom and methods of the

## THE BIBLE IS REplete WITH FIXED PRAYERS, INCLUDING THE BOOK OF PSALMS.

original Pentecostals. One of the 16th-century reformers' principles was, *Semper Reformanda* (always reforming). In other words, to keep doctrines and worship pure, the church must live and work in constant reformation, rooting out the influence of man and reaffirming the leadership of the Holy Spirit through the Word of God. *Semper Reformanda* should be the heart of 20th- and 21st-century Pentecost.

Today we have the fullness of apostolic prayer: written, spontaneous, and in tongues. Like the psalmists, the Old Testament priests, the apostles, the church fathers, and the heroes of the Reformation, "My heart is stirred by a noble theme as I recite my verses for the King." ■



**STEVE PHIFER**, worship arts pastor, Word of Life International Church, Springfield, Virginia.

### ENDNOTES

1. "Common" here means, "held in common," not coarse or base. These prayers are for the whole church.
2. There have been several revisions to *The Book of Common Prayer* over the years. I have chosen to use the 1979.
3. Romans 11:33–36; Philippians 2:6–11; 1 Timothy 3:16; 2 Timothy 2:11–13; Hebrews 10:37,38; Jude 24,25.
4. William Arndt, Walter Bauer, and Frederick W. Danker, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 3rd. ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002).
5. See definition(c) of the official service of priests and Levites under the Law, Hebrews 10:11 (in the Septuagint, e.g., Exodus 29:30; Numbers 16:9). W.E. Vine, *Vine's Expository Dictionary of Biblical Words* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1985).
6. The *Didache* gives the Lord's Prayer from Matthew, with a brief doxology and the direction to pray it three times a day. Schaff, *History of the Christian Church* (Biblesoft: Electronic Database, 1999), chapter 8, 188.
7. Ibid., 53. "The Several Parts of Worship. 'They prayed freely from the heart, as they were moved by the Spirit, according to special needs and circumstances. ... At the same time the frequent use of psalms and short forms of devotion, as the Lord's Prayer, may be inferred.' "
8. "Liturgy" refers to the part of the service the people participate in by saying and doing. Literally it means "the work of the people."
9. Examples: "Christ has died! Christ has risen! Christ will come again!" "The peace of the Lord be with you. And also with you." "Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit as it was in the beginning, is now and will be forever."
10. David Garrett, *Thomas Cranmer and the Book of Common Prayer*. <http://www.stpeter.org/cranmer.html>.



# IS FAITH OR WORKS DRIVING YOUR MINISTRY?

*As we examine faith through the lens of work and stewardship, we are faced with many paradoxes.*



One of the most profound Scriptures on faith and works is James 2:17: “Even so, faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone” (KJV). The NIV puts it, “In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead.”

As we examine faith through the lens of work and stewardship, we are faced with many paradoxes. Consider these common competing ministry perspectives:

- Desire for a church to be debt free versus the need to add new facilities to meet expanding ministry needs.
- Wanting to compassionately help those in need versus the importance of not creating dependency on welfare and ruining individual responsibility.
- Counting the cost before embarking on a project versus stepping out in faith with a new ministry, not knowing the ultimate financial implications.
- Carefully and purposefully planning for a church’s future versus letting God order our collective steps.
- Taking a chance and letting an inexperienced person assume an important ministry role versus carefully and deliberately developing those desiring to be in ministry.

The paradox is that for each of these described activities, both perspectives are equally valid.

To put it another way, for any activity we engage in, there is no way of knowing if the outcome will be achieved by faith and God’s intervention or on works and human endeavors.

- In Genesis 2, God created Adam. It was 100 percent His intervention, with no human endeavors. God created Eve. Man participated by giving up a rib.
- In Exodus 14, God parted the Red Sea, but only when Moses stretched out his rod over the sea as God instructed him.
- In Joshua 6, the walls of Jericho fell, but only after the Children of Israel marched once around the city for 6 days, and seven times around the city on the seventh day.
- As the Children of Israel conquered the Promised Land for any given battle, the ratio of God’s intervention to human endeavor was never the same.
- In Ezra, as the walls of Jerusalem were rebuilt, human endeavor carried most of the load, but God multiplied some of the necessary resources.
- In Matthew 14, Jesus multiplied the loaves and fishes and fed the 4,000, but in

Exodus 16, the provision of manna and quail in the wilderness was God’s intervention.

What we learn from Scripture is that for any given enterprise or endeavor we must have faith as if the results are 100 percent dependent on God. At the same time, we must engage our time, talent, and treasure as if the results are 100 percent dependent on our acts of stewardship.

We see this modeled in the theological mystery that Christ was 100 percent man and 100 percent God.

When Jesus was crucified, it was a human endeavor that accomplished God’s perfect will. When Jesus was resurrected, it was 100 percent God’s intervention.

The faith and works paradox is also a way of looking at our personal and corporate life. Both faith and works are necessary ingredients; anything less than a 100 percent commitment to both will limit what God can and will do through your life and ministry. ■



**RANDALL K. BARTON** is president and CEO of Assemblies of God Financial, Springfield, Missouri.

# THE MESSAGE WITH SENSITIVITY

*My understanding of God's Word and my experience have taught me to present the message of God's love to Muslims with sensitivity and power.*

**H**e looked me in the eyes and had a big smile on his face. He was serious and emphatic. What I was hearing was new to me:

"If you had told me you were trying to take me out of Islam to become a Christian, I would have resisted with my life. I would not have talked with you. I would not have come to your house. I accepted the invitation to come to your meetings only because I felt you were good friends with us. I felt you were honest people.

"True, your religious convictions were different from mine, but so what. You always talked about Jesus, but you never demeaned Muhammad or Islam. You used words I could understand and concepts that were familiar to me. No one was offensive or defensive. There was respect and love. I was attracted to what you believed.

"The second time I met with you I could resist no more. Christ's power was too strong to resist; His love and appeal too good to ignore. I came to Christ because of the way you presented Him to me."

This conversation took place a few years after my friend had accepted Christ and became His faithful disciple.

I have no magic formula for bringing Muslims to Christ. But my understanding of God's Word and my experience have taught me to present the message of God's love to Muslims with sensitivity and power.

For many years I have written books and articles, and have traveled around the world speaking on Islam. My main emphasis continues to be sensitivity and power. We can bring Muslims into the kingdom of God and to the light of Christ more readily when our message is sensitive and powerful.

**IN OUR DEALINGS WITH MUSLIMS  
WE MUST OFFER THE MESSAGE OF  
GOD'S LOVE IN WAYS MUSLIMS CAN  
RELATE TO, USING WORDS THEY  
CAN UNDERSTAND, AND NAMES  
THAT ARE FAMILIAR TO THEM.**

In the next issue of *Enrichment*, I will discuss "The Message With Power." This article is "The Message With Sensitivity."

My friend's comment makes it clear — sensitivity in the presentation of the gospel



to Muslims is a major issue. What was the sensitivity to which he was referring? How was I being sensitive? The answer to these questions has three parts. Consider the following:

## HELP MUSLIMS RELATE TO GOD'S MESSAGE OF LOVE

In our dealings with Muslims, we must offer the message of God's love in ways Muslims can relate to, using words they can understand, and names that are familiar to them.

We must also be sure what we say is simple and the meaning is clear to the hearer. Good communication is indispensable if we are to drive home the truths we want people to accept. What do Muslims understand when we say, "Christ"? What do we mean when we say "Christ"? Is He the Christ presented in the Bible, or is He a Christ clothed in the garments of Western civilization, hidden behind cultural traits and expressions that may be meaningless to Muslims at best, or frustrating and disturbing to them at worst?

In my work with Arab Muslims, I use

the Sharif Bible, the first Bible translated into Arabic for Muslims. It was translated by Assemblies of God missionaries and first published in August 2000. This Bible uses words, names, and expressions familiar to Muslims.

For the past 20 years, the Assemblies of God broadcast to Arab Muslims has been the only broadcast that uses a culturally sensitive style. Let me recount one incident related to that broadcast.

I was invited to a dinner in Stockholm, Sweden, on the occasion of launching our radio program from a new station in partnership with a sister Pentecostal group. The invitation was given by a Swedish brother and his Christian Egyptian wife, both leaders in their church. The invitees included a Muslim brother who had come to Christ a few years earlier, the head of the sister Pentecostal group, and me.

After finishing the delicious Middle Eastern meal, someone in the group asked me to play one of the programs set to be aired. When the program started, immediately the Muslim convert had tears in his eyes. "If I had heard this program 10 years ago," he said, "I would not have struggled so hard and long against the gospel." He

then told us how he had resisted the "entire package" of the gospel because of the culturally insensitive way it was presented to him and the foreign-sounding words that were used.

## BE CULTURALLY SENSITIVE

In one Muslim country where I was involved in planting a church, the decision was made to conduct the meetings in a culturally sensitive way that would make Muslims feel comfortable. Those involved in this new work did not want Muslims to see the gospel as a threat to their culture.

## I PERSONALLY REJECT THAT APPROACH AND THE ATTITUDE BEHIND IT. SUCH METHODS FLARE UP ANIMOSITY AND HEATED DEBATES.

Culture is the way a group does things. For example, Chinese eat rice with chopsticks; Westerners eat rice with a fork; some Middle Easterners eat rice with a spoon, and others eat it with their fingers. These are cultural traits.

To be culturally sensitive in our meetings we took off our shoes before entering the room as Muslims do (a sign of respect for a pure, holy God. See Exodus 3:5; Joshua 5:15). We also sat on a rug on the floor, as Muslims do (an act of humility toward God).

These are simple things. Nothing earthshaking. But the Muslims considered them important. One day two members of our underground church, Karim and Noor, invited one of their college professors to our gathering. I thought it was a daring step on their part. The professor came. During the meeting we worshiped Christ as usual; the Word was preached as usual. Everything went well. During the fellowship time after the meeting, I asked the professor: "What did you think of our service?"

I was not ready for his answer, "It was a good meeting. When Karim and Noor invited me, I thought it was going to be an 'American Christian' meeting. But, no — it was not. I liked it. You do things like we do in the mosque."

*We worshiped Christ in our meeting, we sang songs for His praise and glory, we read from His Word and talked about Him alone — these parts of the service did not matter to you?*

*You mean as long as we take our shoes off and sit on a rug on the floor, we calmed your fears and quelled your animosity toward the gospel?*

Those questions ran through my mind as I listened to the professor. Later I got on my knees and asked Jesus to give us more wisdom and practical strategies to penetrate the hard wall of Islam.

## DO NOT BE RUDE

Some people confuse being rude with being bold. A few years ago I was teaching on Islam to a group of Christian leaders. I encouraged my audience to be culturally sensitive in the way they present the message of God's love, explaining that we should use methods of evangelism that encourage our target group rather than hurt their feelings.

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**"Through sickness and health,  
for better or worse, through baseball season,  
football season, and golf season."**

A young minister did not like what I was saying. He enthusiastically announced: "I will proclaim the truth, the whole truth. I will tell groups of Muslims in the marketplace or wherever I find them that Muhammad was an imposter, that Jesus is the only Lord and Savior, that He is the Son of God, and if they do not believe what the Bible says, they will all perish."

## WE CAN BRING MUSLIMS INTO THE KINGDOM OF GOD AND TO THE LIGHT OF CHRIST MORE READILY WHEN OUR MESSAGE IS SENSITIVE AND POWERFUL.

I personally reject that approach and the attitude behind it. Such methods flare up animosity and heated debates. When I talk to Muslims about Christ, I refuse to get involved in arguments. I am not interested in religious debates. Rather, I have a story to tell, and most people are willing to hear a good story. I tell them about Jesus Christ, His power to heal and forgive sins. I recount one of His miracles from the Gospels or from personal experience and explain how He has brought me peace. Muhammad, Islam, and theological issues such as the Trinity and the Crucifixion are off-limits in the early stages of witnessing to a Muslim. (Often, Muslims bring up these issues as a defense mechanism to confuse the person evangelizing them and gain the upper hand of "logic.")

How can I dump 2,000 years of church theological formulations and achievements into the lap of a Muslim I am meeting for the first time (or even for the 10th

time) and expect him to understand? Muslims will grasp Christian doctrine more easily once they have asked Jesus to be their Lord and Savior. Even Jesus' disciples who had been with Him for 3 years refused the idea that He would die on the cross. It was only later that they understood.

When we share the gospel with Muslims with sensitivity, we follow in the footsteps of the apostle Paul, who made himself "all things to all men, so that by all possible means [he] might save some" (1 Corinthians 9:22). ■



**SOBHI MALEK, D.MISS.,** is a noted speaker, author, and visiting professor of Islamic studies in several seminaries around the world. He has translated the Bible into Islamic Arabic and has written several books in Arabic.





## WHAT THE WORLD NEEDS IS JESUS LUKE 2:1-7

### INTRODUCTION

The world wants peace, pleasure, and preservation (a long life). Men will spend billions in a vain search for these things, yet they reject the One who can provide them.

### MESSAGE

#### 1. He can give peace.

- a. He is the Prince of Peace (Isaiah 9:6).
- b. There can be no peace without Him (Isaiah 48:22; 57:21).
- c. When He rules the earth there will be no more wars (Isaiah 2:4).
- d. Even now the believer can have peace within (Philippians 4:7).

#### 2. He can give pleasure.

- a. At His right hand there are pleasures for evermore (Psalm 16:11).
- b. The pleasures offered by the world lead only to mental, moral, and physical decay (James 1:14,15).
- c. The happiness God offers has no sorrow attached to it (Proverbs 10:22).

#### 3. He can preserve us.

- a. Long life is promised to those who abide in Him (Psalm 91:16).
- b. Honoring one's parents also lengthens life (Ephesians 6:3).
- c. Jesus came to give us life more abundantly (John 10:10).

d. Without Jesus there is no spiritual life (1 John 5:12).

e. If this present world that is under the curse is beautiful, think what the new earth will be like (Revelation 21:1). And we will enjoy it forever.

### CONCLUSION

What the world needs in Jesus, but He is locked out of many lives (Revelation 3:20). To ignore the One who knocks at the door is to make the same mistake the innkeeper made at His birth (Luke 2:7).

—Harold V. George  
Glendora, California

## HOW IS YOUR HOME LIFE? GENESIS 2:24; MATTHEW 19:4-6; COLOSSIANS 3:18-21

### INTRODUCTION

If your home is like soap operas and some talk shows, your home is in trouble. God's Word is the guide for marriages and homes.

### MESSAGE

#### 1. Is your home a place where the husband leads in a scriptural way and the others follow? (Genesis 3:16; 1 Peter 3:1; Colossians 3:18)

- a. Sarah was under Abraham's leadership (1 Peter 3:5,6) but that did not mean her input was ignored (Genesis 21:12).
- b. Submitting to each other (Ephesians 5:21).

#### 2. Is your home a place of honor and love between members? (1 Peter 3:7; Colossians 3:19;

#### Ephesians 5:25,28-33)

- a. We can choose to love.
- b. We can choose to honor.

#### 3. Is your home a place where children are disciplined? (Hebrews 12:9; Proverbs 22:6; 29:15,17)

- a. They should be taught obedience (Colossians 3:20).
- b. They should be taught God's Word (Deuteronomy 11:19; Proverbs 22:6; 2 Timothy 3:15).

#### 4. Is your home a place of sexual fidelity? (Proverbs 6:27-29; 7:1-23; Hebrews 13:4; Genesis 2:24; 1 Corinthians 6:15-20)

- a. What do you think when in the presence of the opposite sex (Matthew 5:28)?
- b. Do you take precautions against sexual infidelity?

- c. Do you avoid impure TV shows?
- d. Do you avoid being alone with people of the opposite sex to whom you are attracted (1 Corinthians 7:5)?

#### 5. Is your home a place that operates on a sound businesslike basis? (Romans 13:8)

- a. There must be industriousness (Proverbs 6:6-11).
- b. There must be contentment and no overspending (1 Timothy 6:6-8,10). Have a budget.

### CONCLUSION

Good homes are God's idea. The destruction of homes is the devil's intention. How is your home doing? Strengthen it.

—Ben Richter  
Winter Haven, Florida

## FOLLOWING JESUS FOUR WAYS

### INTRODUCTION

When people gather for church, they usually represent at least four levels of faith and Christian commitment. These four levels can be seen in the life of Peter, who was in the process of progressing to higher levels in Christ.

### MESSAGE

#### 1. Level one: those who are curious.

- a. Peter came to meet Jesus because he was curious. His brother Andrew was excited about finding the long-awaited Messiah, and Peter wanted to see for himself (John 1:35–42).
  - (1) Our witness should attract seekers.

#### 2. Level two: those who are convinced.

- a. Many fair-weather admirers were unwilling to follow Jesus past the miracles. Peter seemed to be saying, “Lord, I’m not staying with you because others are doing it; I’m following you because it is the right way” (John 6:66–69). God revealed this truth to Peter (Matthew 16:13–17).
  - (1) God must do the convincing (John 16:7,8).

#### 3. Level three: those who are crucified.

- a. Peter learned his own strength and wisdom were inadequate. He discovered that following Jesus meant discarding his own ideas and submitting to the lordship of Christ.
  - (1) There are no shortcuts to success in the Christian life.

Before Paul experienced the power of the resurrection, he learned to be conformed to Christ’s death (Philippians 3:7–10).

#### 4. Level four: those who are clothed with the Holy Spirit.

- a. To be endued is to be clothed. Peter was among those who were filled with the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost. It was the beginning of a life of fruitful service through the power of the Spirit (Luke 24:49).

### CONCLUSION

Which level are you at today?

—Samuel Bush  
Jasonville, Indiana

## COMMUNION AS A FAMILY 1 CORINTHIANS 11:28

### INTRODUCTION

The family is one of the most sacred institutions God has placed on earth. The strongest method of maintaining this institution is for the family to be united through service to the Lord.

### MESSAGE

#### 1. Individual examination

- a. Am I the kind of Christian father God wants me to be?
- b. Am I the kind of Christian mother God wants me to be?

- c. Am I the kind of Christian child God wants me to be?

#### 2. Joint examination

- a. How real is Christ in our home and what place does He have?
- b. What are our family goals in serving God?
- c. Where can I help improve Christianity in our home?

#### 3. Joint commitment

- a. We as parents commit our lives and responsibilities to the leadership of God.

- b. We as children commit our lives and ambitions to God’s will.
- c. We as a family, by the emblems of Communion, commit our home and its relationships to Christ.

### CONCLUSION

May we as a family and also as a church family be brought closer together by observing the Lord’s Supper.

—Donald R. Exley  
Waxahachie, Texas

## THE CHURCH PROFILE EPHESIANS 5:25–27

### MESSAGE

#### 1. Called out

- a. Separated from the world (John 17:6–16).
  - (1) Purchased by Christ’s blood (verses 6–10).
  - (2) Preserved from evil (verses 11–16).
- b. Sanctified unto the Lord (Ephesians 5:26).
  - (1) Present your bodies (Romans 12:1).

- (2) Prove His will (Romans 12:2).

#### 2. Sent out

- a. Enlisted by the resurrected Lord (Matthew 28:18–20).
  - (1) Program of the church: “Go ye.”
  - (2) Pledge to the church: “I am with you always.”
- b. Endued with power by the ascended Lord (Acts 2:32,33).
  - (1) Promise of the Spirit (John 7:37–39).
  - (2) Purpose of the Spirit (Acts 1:8).

#### 3. Caught out

- a. The dead in Christ are resurrected (1 Thessalonians 4:16).
- b. The living in Christ are raptured (1 Thessalonians 4:17).
  - (1) The Lord will descend.
  - (2) The saints will ascend.

### CONCLUSION

So shall we ever be with the Lord.

—Nelson Brenner  
Pocomoke City, Maryland

## THE MANASSEH BLESSING: "HE MADE ME TO FORGET" GENESIS 41:51; ISAIAH 61:1-3; 1 PETER 5:5-7

### THEME

God's grace offers restoration and release from the hurts of the past.

### INTRODUCTION

Joseph was 11th of 12 sons of Jacob, but the firstborn of Rachel. Joseph was his father's favorite son. His brothers hated him. Joseph dreamed that his brothers and parents would bow down before him. He made the mistake of telling this to his brothers. When the occasion arose, they sold him to some Ishmaelites who took him to Egypt. But Joseph remained faithful to God even when he was put in prison for refusing to be immoral.

Joseph was 30 years old in Genesis 41:46. This was 13 years after he was sold (Genesis 37:2). He was elevated to prime minister and given a wife. To this union two sons were born, the first Manasseh, which means "to forget" — "For God hath made me to forget all my toil, and all my father's house."

What a marvelous depiction of God's sovereign plans. When things are unfair/unjust God will cover us with such blessings that we forget past hurts.

Compare with Isaiah 61:7:

"Beauty for ashes" (sackcloth/ashes in time of deep sorrow and mourning).

"The oil of joy for mourning" (perfume of the Holy Spirit).

"The garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness" (a new life of freedom).

### MESSAGE

#### 1. God forgives/forgets the past.

- a. In Jeremiah 31, the prophet described the new covenant that God will make with Israel. Unlike the old (Mosaic) covenant, it will be a *heart covenant* (verse 34).
- b. In the Book of Hebrews, this passage is repeated twice (Hebrews 8:12; 10:17).
- c. How could a holy God get past man's sin?
  - (1) Only one solution. God himself

provided a substitute for us.

- (2) "For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him" (2 Corinthians 5:21).
- d. This is the point of beginning.
- e. Sin that has been forgiven is gone forever.

#### 2. God restores broken/hopeless lives.

- a. Mark 5 has an interesting sequence of miraculous events.
  - (1) The deliverance of the demoniac in Gadara (verses 1-19).
  - (2) Woman with issue of blood (verses 25-34).
  - (3) The daughter of Jarius raised to life (verses 22-24, 33-43).
  - (4) Power greater than satanic power, physical malady, or death.
- b. We cannot ignore Mary Magdalene (Luke 8:2).
  - (1) She ministered to Jesus.
  - (2) She was at the cross (Mark 15:40).
  - (3) She was the first person who saw the resurrected Christ (Mark 16:9).
- c. If we are "made in His image," then He can restore anything broken.
- d. What man could never put back together, God is restoring to its useful and beautiful purpose.

#### 3. God releases from hurts of the past.

- a. Notice the progression: God forgives/forgets — God restores. Then God releases from past hurts.
- b. Joseph could have wallowed in his pain, protected his hurts. But God gave him a son and made him forget.
- c. Some live with a spirit of heaviness while God wants them to be released and wear the garment of praise.
- d. Practical observations

- (1) We must believe that God desires to complete His work of grace.
- (2) We must want God to bring a release from past hurts. Some find security/identity in past hurts.
- (3) We must stop clinging to the past. Do not use the past as an excuse for a lack of faith.
- (4) God does work miraculously, but often that does not mean instantaneously. Easy fixes are not part of God's plan.
- (5) Your personal commitment to move beyond hurts is a conscious decision to focus on the promises of God for your life.
- (6) God will turn even the most terrible hurts into points of glorious victory.
- e. When Joseph finally revealed himself to his brothers, God's blessing had already replaced his hurt (Genesis 45:5-8; see also Romans 8:28,31,37).
- f. Being released from past hurts does not mean we have them erased from our minds, nor does it mean we will never struggle with thoughts of despair. It does mean it will no longer control our spiritual lives and consequent behavior. God's blessings in Christ outweigh the:
  - (1) Guilt of past sin.
  - (2) Pain of undeserved human injustice.
  - (3) Emotion of hopelessness in life.
  - (4) Feelings of rejection/inferiority.

### CONCLUSION

God has a "Manasseh" blessing for you today. You have accepted His forgiveness. Your life has been restored. If there is a "spirit of heaviness" within, God's Spirit will release you from that downcast, defeated spirit and give liberty.

—H. Maurice Lednický  
Springfield, Missouri

## SONGS OF PRAISE EPHESIANS 5:19

### INTRODUCTION

The history of man is punctuated by songs of thanksgiving and praise to God, from the time they sang His praise on the shore of the Red Sea (Exodus 15:1; Psalm 106) to the scene in heaven depicted in Revelation 15:3. The songs echo through time and eternity.

### MESSAGE

#### 1. Creation.

Even at earth's beginning there were songs of praise to the Creator.

- a. When God laid the foundations of the earth "the morning stars sang together" (Job 38:7).
- b. Man was created with breath to praise the Lord (Psalm 150:6).
- c. If men don't praise Him, the stones will (Luke 19:40).

#### 2. Incarnation.

The birth of Christ was announced by a celestial choir praising God (Luke 2:13).

- a. Their song was occasioned by the statement that He would be "a Savior" (Luke 2:11).
- b. Mary rejoiced because God had brought her salvation (Luke 1:47).
- c. Our song likewise is one of thanksgiving for God's "unspeakable gift" (2 Corinthians 9:15).

#### 3. Regeneration.

Because of a new birth (2 Corinthians 5:17) we are able to sing a new song (Psalm 40:3).

- a. We rejoice in salvation today (Psalm 35:9).
- b. Like Jonah we lift our voices in thanksgiving and sing, "Salvation is of the Lord" (Jonah 2:9).
- c. We sing because the lost is found (Luke 15:6,9,23).
- d. Frequent deliverances call for frequent songs of thanks (Psalm 32:7).

#### 4. Consummation.

Amid the thunder of God's judgments we often hear songs of praise in the Book of Revelation. For example:

- a. When the Lamb takes the book, there is rejoicing in anticipation of His forthcoming victory (Revelation 5:9-13).
- b. There is rejoicing when the Lord reigns and the Marriage Supper begins (Revelation 19:7).

### CONCLUSION

"Singing and making melody" will follow if we are "filled with the Spirit" (Ephesians 5:18,19). We have so many reasons for giving thanks; therefore, let us rejoice "in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in [our] hearts to the Lord" (Colossians 3:16).

—Herb Hull

Oklahoma City, Oklahoma

## THE DIVIDED HOUSE LUKE 11:17; 6:38; ACTS 20:35

### INTRODUCTION

The sin of selfishness divides the house. Note: it is not called a home, but rather "a house."

### MESSAGE

#### 1. There are different kinds of marriages; we must choose which kind we will have (emotional bank).

- a. The taker-taker marriage divides the house.
  - (1) Both husband and wife demand their needs be met.
  - (2) When both are takers no one deposits into the account. They both withdraw. Soon the marriage is bankrupt.
- b. The taker-giver marriage divides the house.
  - (1) One is taking, demanding, dominating.

- (2) One is giving, giving over, trying to earn love.
- (3) The giver cannot keep up, so gives up or becomes a taker. Withdrawals are made faster than deposits.

#### 2. The result of the divided house is a fall. It may be external or internal.

- a. The taker-taker house is full of demands and hostility. It cannot stand; it falls.
- b. The taker-giver house is full of demands, disappointment, self-pity, and submissive death. It cannot stand; it falls.

#### 3. The remedy for the divided house is godly principles, the giver-giver marriage.

- a. It is more blessed to give than to receive (Acts 20:35). Both give to meet the needs of the other.

- b. Give and it shall be given to you (Luke 6:38). The giver is given to in return; needs are met.
- c. Good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, shall be poured into your lap.
- d. Both partners make deposits and the account grows so that it can meet the needs of both, and kids too.

### CONCLUSION

We can choose the kind of marriage we want; taker-taker, taker-giver, or giver-giver. It is our decision. We do not have the choice of the outcome of our decision. If we divide our house, it will fall even though it may stay physically together. If we choose to both give and build; it will stand, grow, and bless all within.

—Forest Arnold

Springfield, Missouri

# MINISTRY IDEAS

## BLESSING TENT

A blessing tent is a great way to provide for needs in the community by giving away household items, clothes, and school supplies donated from church members and area businesses, and to tell them that Christ loves them. Church members sort the donations in June and July, and in August we have our blessing tent. This can reduce the costs of sending kids to school and also give parents an opportunity to find items for themselves.

Set up the tent on your church property. Advertise through radio, newspapers, and flyers handed out door-to-door. Anyone can come, but those in need are the primary recipients. The tent is set up like a store. Church members help those who come find the items they need. Once the shopping is over and the clothes and supplies have been bagged, have teens from your youth group perform a human video. The senior pastor then explains the reason behind the tent and invites people to attend church the following Sunday. At the end of the presentation children and teens receive a backpack of school supplies.

—Megan Harshbarger, Brookings, South Dakota

## ONE ROOM — TWO MINISTRIES

Many churches have less than 200 attendees, and economy constrictions are endless. Rooms used for multipurposes create challenges especially in set-up and take-down for each service.

Our youth pastor and children's pastor solved this dilemma. Although there was only one entrance into their joint-use room, one group decorated one wall, and the other group decorated the opposite wall. When students entered the doorway, they turned toward the wall decorated by their group.

Each group meets at different times but shares the same video machine, portable screen, and sound system. After their meeting, each group picks up their folding chairs and equipment and turns them the opposite direction for the next group.

—Norma Sultz, Aurora, Illinois

## MISSIONS STUDY MONTH

Each year our children's ministry department designates one month for intensive missions study. We teach soul-winning basics, faithfulness in giving, and dedication to a call. We learn about the missions projects our church supports and how we can help. Students create maps and artwork of the countries where we have missionaries to decorate the hallways of the church. When possible we arrange for a missionary to speak to our children. If a missionary is not available, we use AIM participants, MAPS workers, missionary children, foreign exchange students, business travelers, or vacationers. We also use videos, letters, and e-mail from missionaries to teach our children about missions.

The students' offerings for the month are used for missions and are presented during the Missions March on the concluding Sunday of our annual missions convention. Students wear costumes, sing a missions song, recite a missions Scripture, or tell about the countries we highlighted.

—Anita Douglas, Berlin, Maryland

## MINISTRY NIGHT

We turn Halloween into a ministry night by ordering and distributing copies of the outreach edition of *Today's Pentecostal Evangel* to people in our city. We meet early on October 31 for training. Here we discuss the importance of being friendly as we present the *Evangel* and say, "Here is a treat from Bella Vista Assembly of God." We then give street assignments. People are sent out in groups of two. We pray for a good reception and for God to bless our efforts. We designate a time to gather back at the church to share testimonies about the people we were able to pray with, and enjoy hot chocolate and great fellowship.

—Jack Glass, Bella Vista, Arkansas



## ORCHESTRA OUTREACH

One way to reach your community is to develop free music classes. These classes can be held after school or during the evening. This can be a great way to boost the support of the church music department. Anyone is welcome to attend. Church orchestra members teach participants the basics of the instrument, and how to play it in individual and group settings. Church members can donate instruments for use. Members from other churches can participate and then bless their music department. These sessions can promote a spirit of unity with other churches. Hold a recital and invite the families of all churches involved to attend.

—Douglas Rose, Grand Prairie, Texas



## THE MASTER BECOMES A SERVANT

Each year at least 60 dog mushers participate in the Iditarod Sled Dog Race. The “Last Great Race” winds from Anchorage to Nome over the treacherous snow-covered trails of the Alaska Range, in the frigid cold along the Yukon River, and through the blinding blizzards that blow inland off the frozen Bering Sea. For more than a week mushers and their dogs travel together, eat together, and sleep together in unbelievably cold temperatures. The sled drivers carry supplies, cook food for their dogs, and massage the animals’ aching limbs. No matter what it takes, the mushers are committed to getting their dogs across the finish line in Nome, 1,049 miles from the starting point. The dogs respond with obedience and perseverance all the while expressing their love for their master.

At the Iditarod Race Headquarters in Wasilla, Alaska, visitors can view a documentary video that explores the close relationship between mushers and their dog team. According to the video, “The mushers’ commitment to their dogs requires them to do whatever is required to care for their needs. The masters are willing to become the servants.”

Similarly, for His creation to reach the destination of an eternal relationship with Him, God the Master became the servant. “The Word became flesh and dwelt among us.”

—Greg Asimakoupoulos, Naperville, Illinois

## FOOTPRINTS

A traveler in the Sahara desert said to his guide, “Nobody can know for certain there is a God.”

Pointing to footprints in the sand, the guide asked: “What would you say made those marks?”

“Why, a man, of course,” the terse traveler replied.

“Well, then,” the guide said, “when I see the sun and the moon and the starry heavens in their beauty, I know for certain that the Creator has passed this way. They are the footprints of God.”

—James Keller, *Make Each Day Count*, Pulpit, November 1964. Submitted by Doug Rose, Grand Prairie, Texas.

## SENTENCED TO THE QUARRIES

Dionysius I ruled one of the richest and most powerful cities in fourth-century Greece. He was unscrupulous, treacherous, and vain. Despite his faults, he was one of the most able administrators of his time and fancied himself to be a poet.

In his search for validation as a poet, he asked the poet Philoxenus for his opinion on the royal verses. When the poet pronounced them worthless, Dionysius sentenced him to the quarries.

But that night the king had a change of heart and repented of his actions. The next day he gave a banquet to honor the pardoned poet. At the end of the banquet, however, the king

read Philoxenus more of his poetry and asked him once again to judge it. Without hesitation the poet asked the king to send him back to the quarries.

Those who profess faith in Jesus Christ must be willing to “go to the quarries” because of unpopular opinions. We may even face persecution for our beliefs. Too many times we choose pardon and acceptance when our beliefs are challenged by the world.

—T. Lee Stephens, Coppell, Texas

## OVERCOMING DISABILITIES

On November 8, 1970, Tom Dempsey kicked a 63-yard field goal enabling the New Orleans Saints to defeat the Detroit Lions. This field goal set a record that still stands today. (The record stands but was tied by Jason Elam of the Denver Broncos in October 25, 1998.)

It is a remarkable record. But it is more remarkable when you learn that Tom Dempsey was born with no toes on his kicking foot, and only one hand. This disability did not stop him from both kicking and playing football.

Tom, like Helen Keller, triumphed despite his disability. Helen’s deafness and blindness did not stop her from being successful. Nor did blindness keep Fanny Crosby from writing many beautiful hymns.

You can overcome disabilities or disabilities can overcome you.

—Croft M. Pentz, Waynesboro, Pennsylvania

## PERSONAL E-MAIL OPENED TO ALL ON THE INTERNET

When the government went after Enron, they took all the e-mails from the company computers, hoping to find evidence of fraud. Now they have published these e-mails on the Internet. The *Wall Street Journal* assigned a reporter to read them for news value. He found people wrote about affairs, divorces, and other personal things “that a reporter like me really had no business reading.”

Apparently the government has to make evidence gathered for a trial public and choose to do it this way. It is always a shock when private lives are exposed to the light. We can sympathize with the people who wrote these things, although we must say it was an ethical stretch for them to use company time for personal e-mails.

Jesus said “there is nothing covered, that shall not be revealed; and hid, that shall not be known” (Matthew 10:26, KJV). Romans 2:16 says one day Christ will judge the secrets of our hearts. Our dirty little secrets will come out. Better now than later. Better before God than man.

—Doug Rose, Grand Prairie, Texas. Source: Interview with WSJ Reporter, National Public Radio, “Morning Edition” (October 7, 2003), KACU FM, Abilene, Texas.

# BOOK REVIEWS

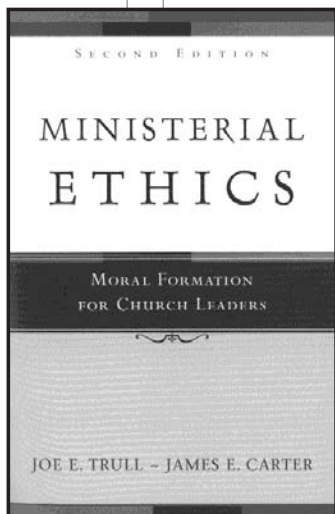
## MINISTERIAL ETHICS

Joe E. Trull and James E. Carter  
(Baker Book House, 288 pp., paperback)

No vocation is as ethically demanding as the Christian ministry. No profession is to model morality as much as ministers. Joe Trull and James Carter have provided the ethical helps pastors need.

*Ministerial Ethics* provides both new and experienced pastors with tools for sharpening their personal and professional decisionmaking skills. The authors explain the unique moral role of the minister and the ethical responsibilities of the vocation and provide "a clear statement of the ethical obligations contemporary clergy should assume in their personal and professional lives." Trull and Carter deal with such areas as family life, confidentiality, truth-telling, political involvement, working with committees, and relating to other church staff members.

Because of our rapidly changing culture, clergy ethics has become more complex. There is a growing recognition today of ethical dilemmas faced by ministers, the concern for professional ethics in ministry in all denominations, and the increasing awareness by religious schools and seminaries for the need to develop moral character in their students. To meet this need, the authors thoroughly updated their previous work published in 1993. This new version contains expanded sections on theological foundations, the role of character, confidentiality. Chapter 7, new to this edition, focuses



specifically on clergy sexual abuse. Appendices describing various denominational ministerial codes of ethics are included.

While no book on ethics can present an exhaustive treatment of the subject, *Ministerial Ethics* provides an overview of the entire scope of

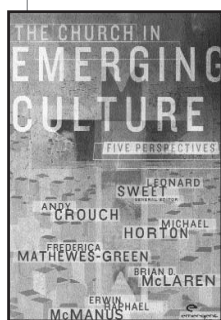
ministerial ethics. This book would make an excellent textbook for ministerial students.

*Baker Book House Review*

## THE CHURCH IN EMERGING CULTURE: Five Perspectives

Leonard Sweet, General Editor  
(Zondervan, 263 pp., paperback)

In the tradition of Niebuhr's classic *Christ and Culture*, *The Church in Emerging Culture* is written to acknowledge that the relationship between the church and culture is still



a burning topic. This volume is a written dialogue between five noted interpreters of the "Church in Emerging Culture." These authors interact and critique one another in each chapter. The result is slower reading, but a more thorough engagement on this provocative subject.

Leonard Sweet's insights on the church in emerging culture solicit the

interaction of keen minds like Andy Crouch, Michael Horton, Frederica Mathewes-Green, Brian McClaren, and Erwin McManus. This volume is not about faddish concepts or slick new strategies to engage non-Christians. *The Church in Emerging Culture* poses the questions of what the church should look like today. What should the focus of its message be, and how should that message be presented? The church serves the mission of Christ in a culture that is less influenced by authority and more influenced by personal experience; a culture that is more attuned to images than to words. This is not a book for the quick solution reader. It requires thorough engagement, but the reward is greater clarity on the huge task of being an effective Kingdom church in the 21st century.

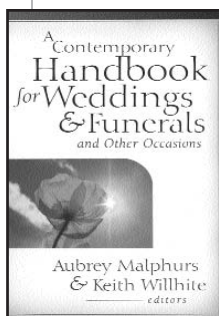
*Reviewed by Byron Klaus, D.Min., president, Assemblies of God Theological Seminary, Springfield, Missouri.*

## A CONTEMPORARY HANDBOOK FOR WEDDINGS AND FUNERALS AND OTHER OCCASIONS

Aubrey Malphurs and Keith Willhite  
(Kregel Publications, 352 pp., paperback)

Most seasoned pastors seem to have their preferences when conducting weddings and funerals. As a young pastor, I collected services from different pastors so I could create my own. Malphurs and Willhite have done the same thing. This book includes services from pastors in different denominations. In the book's preface, the book's aim is stated: to offer an up-to-date, culturally and personally relevant resource, and at the same time honor traditional services. I feel they successfully hit their target.

In the marriage section, a number of sample services are written out completely. Then the editors offer usable



tools for marriage and renewal vows. I appreciated the chapter "Additional Help for Officiates" which gave valuable information and ideas to me as a pastor. The funeral section was also helpful.

The "Other Occasion" section includes services for Communion, child dedication, baptism, Christmas, installation, and other services throughout the year.

Many books I read are placed on my bookshelf and are seldom revisited. I believe this book will be revisited often and will be much appreciated in the future by ministers of many denominations.

*Reviewed by Michael Hilger, senior pastor, Le Roy, Kansas.*

## YOUR FIRST TWO YEARS IN YOUTH MINISTRY

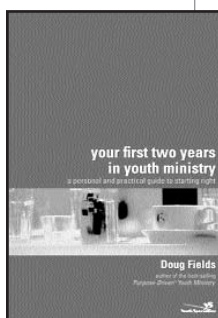
*Doug Fields*

(Zondervan, 304 pp., paperback)

Many people believe youth pastors are some of the most zealous ministers in the body of Christ. Unfortunately, the challenges and trials faced by new, inexperienced youth leaders in their first years of ministry often prove too much for them to handle.

Some, looking for a fresh start, graduate on to new positions; others become discouraged and leave the ministry altogether. I believe there are individuals no longer in the ministry who would be serving the church today if they had read this book before giving up.

A youth ministry veteran for more than two decades, Doug Fields guides, supports, and encourages the new



youth worker. Each chapter contains insights and practices that would also benefit those who have been in youth ministry for years.

The reader will learn how to guard his personal spiritual health, establish a realistic job description, evaluate the effectiveness of a ministry, implement necessary change, and deal with difficult people.

*Your First Two Years in Youth Ministry* identifies the challenges of the early years with amazing accuracy and offers the practical steps to overcome them. A senior pastor who wishes to mentor a new youth leader would also benefit from reading this book.

*Reviewed by Scotty Gibbons, student ministries director, James River Assembly of God, Ozark, Missouri.*

## THE KINGDOM FOCUSED CHURCH

*Gene Mims*

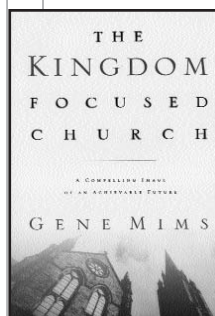
(Broadman and Holman Publishers, 182 pp., hardcover)

Gene Mims, author of *The Kingdom Focused Church*, explains how any church can become a Kingdom-focused church. A Kingdom-focused church exists to transform unbelievers into mature Christlike believers who become Kingdom multipliers by sharing the message of Christ. This concept emphasizes the end result and how to meet people where they are spiritually. It does not emphasize processes or programs. Mims discusses efficient ways to implement this kind of church, through methods he has tried and proven successful. He brings together a rich background of experience as a pastor of small, large, suburban, growing, and declining churches.

Mims tells why the Kingdom-focused church works for all kinds of churches. Jesus' earthly ministry focused on the kingdom of God. To have a Kingdom focus, the leaders of a church or the pastor must understand the true nature of

the kingdom of God just like Jesus did.

Mims discusses the role of open and closed groups within the local church, their structure and importance, and why they must be Bible based.



He describes modern specific examples of successful Kingdom-focused churches and why they are successful. These include the seeker-sensitive church, a seeker-centered

church, and a cell church. He also explains other kinds of successful megachurches.

Mims discusses how Kingdom-focused churches function from Acts 2: evangelism, discipleship, fellowship, ministry, and worship.

I recommend this book to all pastors and leaders.

*Reviewed by Richard W. Rundell, freelance writer, Haskell, Oklahoma.*

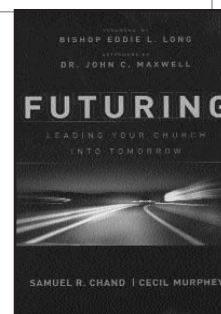
## FUTURING: Leading Your Church Into Tomorrow

*Samuel R. Chand and Cecil Murphey*  
(Baker Books, 197 pp., hardcover)

Chand and Murphey challenge today's pastor to recognize that reaching a postmodern world requires radically redefining ministry. "Futuring"

means being poised to take on tomorrow's challenges without being stuck in outdated thinking and methodologies.

The authors define how "natives" are different from "immigrants" in the church. "Natives" are grounded in traditions while "immigrants" are new to church and unfamiliar with those traditions. Inevitably there is conflict



# BOOK REVIEWS

between the two camps because natives may be driven to preserve the status quo and immigrants are motivated to challenge the church toward flexibility and innovation.

Chand and Murphey explain how the skillful leader must learn to successfully embrace both groups and strike a healthy balance between sociological and demographic changes, emerging technology, and the unchanging message of the gospel.

Another helpful feature is a description of 44 trends confronting today's church that includes: the graying of America, changing concepts in missions, and the imperative of financial accountability.

I appreciated the challenges presented in the book, but it is not written from a Pentecostal vantage point and therefore does not do an adequate job of outlining the role of the Holy Spirit in orchestrating transformation. Nonetheless, I recommend it for leaders willing to embrace change without compromising the gospel.

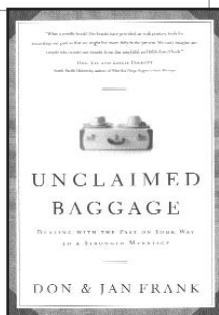
*Reviewed by Joseph J. Saggio, Ed.D., academic dean, American Indian College, Phoenix, Arizona.*

## UNCLAIMED BAGGAGE

*Don and Jan Frank*

(Navpress, 216 pp., paperback)

Everyone has a history. We all have stories, experiences, and "water under the bridge." When many couples get married, they often give little thought about their own history or the history of the person with whom they will spend the rest of their lives. Emotional pain, bad examples, and wrong thinking about marriage are issues many people bring into their



marital relationship. These challenges can be huge. I am convinced that personal history in marriage is one of the biggest challenges couples face.

Don and Jan Frank address this subject in an excellent way. They help people take an honest look at their history. The way we handle money is often learned by observing the way our parents handled money. Conflict resolution, dealing with disagreement, and becoming independent (leaving and cleaving) are all "hot buttons" the Franks discuss.

The authors not only discuss possible marital problems; they offer solutions and solid advice on dealing with the past. They also offer good ideas on how to create a healthy, lasting marriage and give solid biblical advice about how to enjoy positive change. While a couple's history may be full of bad memories, a couple can write a new, wonderful history of a healthy marriage.

This is a great read for all young couples, those who are engaged, or those who are fighting the battle of bad examples in their lives.

*Wayde I. Goodall, D.Min., First Assembly of God, Winston-Salem, North Carolina.*

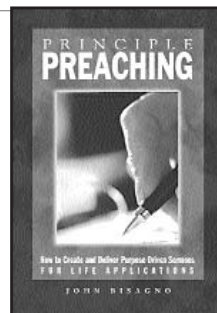
## PRINCIPLE PREACHING

*John Bisagno*

(Broadman & Holman Publishers, 200 pp., paperback)

Most pastors preach a sermon outline that is quite predictable and a bit stiff. The main points regularly contain sound biblical doctrine, but not much life application. In *Principle Preaching*, veteran pastor John Bisagno urges preachers to make the key principles in their sermons the actual main points.

The author argues that in a normal sermon, the outline is customarily more for the preacher than the hearer. However, when pastors preach by principle, the hearer has an instant



connection and remembers what he or she heard much longer. "A sermon outline with three or four life-principles will cause listeners to write them down,

magnet them to the refrigerator door, and say, 'Now I can do that when I get to work tomorrow.' "

Bisagno's book contains far more than preaching theory; he demonstrates his method. For example, the author takes Joshua 1. He states the typical sermon on this chapter might look something like this:

1. The Call of Joshua.
2. The Command to Joshua.
3. The Conquest by Joshua.
4. The Courage in Joshua.

When preaching by principle, the outline might look like this:

1. Don't Get Stuck in Life's Passageways (verses 1,2).
2. God's Already Been Where You're Going (verse 3).
3. God Has a Wonderful Blueprint for Your Life (verse 4).
4. Yesterday's Faithfulness Guarantees Tomorrow's Courage (verses 5-7).

The text for preaching and the passion in preaching does not change. What does change is the instant life application that people hear from their preacher. This book gives over 40 such examples of principle preaching from various texts.

Preaching is at the heart and soul of the church. Our ministries will rise or fall by how we as preachers handle the Word. *Principle Preaching* is a clear book that can help many pastors be more relevant in their preaching.

*Reviewed by Thomas Lindberg, D.Min., senior pastor, First Assembly of God, Cordova, Tennessee.*



# NEWS & RESOURCE

## A/G COLLEGE GUIDE NOW AVAILABLE

The seventh edition of the *Assemblies of God College Guide*, a free resource highlighting the 19 endorsed Assemblies of God colleges, is now available.

This informative, full-color catalog includes current information about each school: tuition costs, majors and minors offered, admission requirements, housing, financial aid resources, ministry opportunities, and extra-curricular activities. A comprehensive chart lists all 19 schools, their academic programs, and the degrees offered. The catalog contains business-reply postcards that can be returned to the schools for additional information.

For free copies of this guide for your church library and college-bound students, contact the Christian Higher Education Department at 417-862-2781, ext. 3315, or [www.colleges.ag.org](http://www.colleges.ag.org).

## U.S. MISSIONS CANDIDATE ORIENTATION

U.S. Missions is dedicated to evangelism in all 50 states, Puerto Rico, and the Virgin Islands. Over 900 missionaries and 5,000 field representatives are working to reach the lost in America. Luke 10:2, however, is still relevant: "The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few."

U.S. Missions fall candidate orientation will be Sept. 12–17, 2004, in Springfield, Mo. Orientation helps prepare candidates for the emotionally and spiritually trying aspects of missions work. This also includes time for interviews, training, and evaluation. For more information, contact U.S. Missions at 417-862-2781, ext. 3252, or visit [www.USMissions.ag.org](http://www.USMissions.ag.org) for information.

## U.S. MISSIONS CHRISTMAS OFFERING

Oct. 24 is the day designated for the U.S. Missions Christmas offering. U.S. Missions is asking Assemblies of God churches to consider giving generously to U.S. missionaries this year.

U.S. missionaries work diligently to bring our nation back to God and the Christian principles on which this country was founded. Funds are often tight during the holidays; a monetary gift for Christmas will encourage them to continue their ministry.

Your sacrificial gift will continue the work of our U.S. missionaries to help reach the spiritually lost.

## SHORT-TERM MINISTER ABROAD PROGRAM

Have you been invited by an AGWM missionary to participate in overseas ministry? Contact the AGWM Short-Term Minister Abroad program for information, overseas travel insurance, and the opportunity for a supporting church to earn World

Ministries credit. For more information call 417-862-2781, ext. 2089 or 2090, or visit [STMA@ag.org](mailto:STMA@ag.org).



## MAPS BUILDERS

Assemblies of God World Missions MAPS Builders sends church and district teams overseas to assist in constructing and renovating churches, Bible schools, Teen Challenge centers, and other ministry-related structures. AGWM missionaries and national churches are grateful for the help they receive from these teams that make many dreams become reality.

How can your church be involved? Contact the AGWM MAPS office to learn about urgent needs, obtain a packet of up-to-date forms and information, and register your team. For more information, call 417-862-2781, ext. 2082, e-mail [AGWMmapsbuilders@ag.org](mailto:AGWMmapsbuilders@ag.org), or visit [www.worldmissions.ag.org](http://www.worldmissions.ag.org) and go to "Opportunities."

## BENEVOLENCES CHILDCARE HARVEST FESTIVAL

Hillcrest Children's Home in Hot Springs, Ark., is scheduling its Fall Harvest Festival for Friday and Saturday, Oct. 1, 2. Highlands Child Placement Services, in Kansas City, Mo., is scheduling its Harvest Festival for Friday, Oct. 15. These ministries invite you to visit them during these events.

For information about these ministries, or to order harvest festival needs lists click on [www.benevolences.ag.org](http://www.benevolences.ag.org), or call 1-417-862-2781, ext. 2182.

For directions to Hillcrest go to [www.hillcrest.ag.org](http://www.hillcrest.ag.org); for Highlands, [www.highlands.ag.org](http://www.highlands.ag.org).

## AGED MINISTERS ASSISTANCE DAY

"I can now buy groceries," wrote a minister's widow after receiving a check from Aged Ministers Assistance.

AMA says thank you in a helpful way to our retired pastors, evangelists, and missionaries for spending their lives in service to the Lord.

Five hundred retired and disabled ministers depend on AMA to help them with their day-to-day expenses. Your AMA Day offering this Thanksgiving season will be an answer to their prayers.



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Sunday, Nov. 14, is AMA Day. Send your offering to: Aged Ministers Assistance, 1445 N. Boonville Ave., Springfield, Missouri 65802-1894.

Christmas Care-A-Van is an opportunity to send a Christmas box to a specific retired minister on AMA. To participate in Christmas Care-A-Van call 1-417-862-2781, ext. 2184, or visit the AMA website at [www.ama.ag.org](http://www.ama.ag.org).

## 2004 NATIONAL MISSIONETTES WEEK IS SEPT. 12-18

“Missionettes: Possible” — to win as many as possible (1 Corinthians 9:19). The fifth purpose of Missionettes is to acquaint girls with the Great Commission. The emphasis of this year’s annual theme is to encourage girls, sponsors, and pastors to see Missionettes as an evangelism ministry. The mentoring and discipleship girls receive in Missionettes grows them spiritually.

If your church has not received the annual Missionettes Theme/Sleepover packet, contact the national Missionettes ministries office for your free materials. The packet contains promotional plans and resources, a Sleepover planning guide, and a new catalog. You may contact the national office at 1-417-862-2781, ext. 4074, or visit [mettes@ag.org](mailto:mettes@ag.org). The Theme/Sleepover packet can also be downloaded from the Missionettes website <http://missionettes.ag.org>.

The purpose of Missionettes is to win girls for Jesus Christ, teach them to obey His commands, and to fulfill the Great Commission. *Club Connection* magazine is part of the national ministry to encourage girls in their commitment to Christ and to have fun living for and telling others about Him. A promotional flyer and order form for *Club Connection* is included in the packet mailed to local Missionettes coordinators.

The National Missionettes Week offering received by the local church during National Missionettes Week services helps the national office cover administration costs and provide resources to over 200,000 girls and sponsors involved in the Assemblies of God Missionettes program.

## 2004 NATIONWIDE MISSIONETTES SLEEPOVER

The annual nationwide Missionettes Sleepover is Sept. 24,25. This year’s theme is “Spy Institute 101.” It is based on Numbers 14:7,8, where the spies returned from the Promised Land. The emphasis is to train Missionettes to be like Joshua and Caleb, to trust the Lord to fulfill His promises, and to share the secret of God’s love. The nationwide Sleepover is a great way to start your new Missionettes year and introduce visiting friends to Jesus. Let them come and spy out Christ and your church.

The annual Coins for Kids offering is received during this

event. All funds collected this year go to the House of Grace Orphanage in Chiang Ham, Thailand. House of Grace is a home for children whose parents have died of AIDS. AIDS is reaching epidemic proportions because of the thriving sex trade. All Coins for Kids funds sent to the national Missionettes ministries office are included in your church’s total BGMC giving.

Every church reporting a Missionettes ministry on the Annual Church Ministries Report receives a combination annual Theme/Sleepover packet. If you have not yet received your packet, contact the national Missionettes ministries office or check the website [www.missionettes.ag.org](http://www.missionettes.ag.org) for a downloadable version.

## NATIONAL MISSIONETTES MINISTRIES SPONSORS MISSIONS TRIP TO THAILAND

The national Missionettes ministries is sponsoring its second missions trip in Oct. 2004. District Missionettes coordinators and other Missionettes leaders approved by DMCs will accompany members of the national staff to the House of Grace Orphanage in Chiang Ham, Thailand. House of Grace is a home for children whose parents have died of AIDS. AIDS is reaching epidemic proportions because of the thriving sex trade. Home directors want to expand their facilities to provide a safe place for the ever-increasing number of AIDS orphans.

## NEW MISSIONETTES LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT UNITS AVAILABLE

Trained leaders are prepared leaders. Continuing development units for Missionettes Honor Sponsors and Honor Coordinators are now available. Units covered are: Missionettes with Special Needs or Disabilities, The Dynamics of Mentoring, and Understanding Learning Styles. Each unit provides leaders with information to help them become better in the clubroom and beyond. The units incorporate Missionettes-specific ideas and suggestions to help leaders determine how each topic relates to them and their clubs.

There is a new level of awarding that accompanies these units. Honor sponsors and coordinators who complete this book and test are eligible for a bronze award. Units for silver and gold awards will be available in the future.

## 2003 NATIONAL PRAYER CENTER REPORT

The National Prayer Center opened Oct. 2, 1994. Sandra Clopine was appointed coordinator. During her 4-year term, 13 satellite prayer centers and 23 national prayer networks were established. On Nov. 1, 1998, Madonna Paulson was appointed coordinator.

The Prayer Center's purpose is to visibly portray our Lord's desire that "His house be a house of prayer" (Matthew 21:13). Prayer must be the focal point of all we do.

The National Prayer Center actively ministers in five ways:

**Satellite Prayer Centers:** The Springfield, Mo., staff coordinates volunteers for prayer and answering telephones through satellite prayer centers. Pastors across the nation express how this ministry blesses their congregations. Satellite prayer centers for 2003 numbered 250. With incoming calls continuing to rise every year, there is need for more volunteers. In 1994, the National Prayer Center received 40,000 calls; in 2003, 643,379 calls. Total calls since the Prayer Center's opening numbers 2,426,090. Currently we receive approximately 55,000 calls monthly and continue to answer about 50 percent, answering calls for prayer 24 hours daily, 7 days a week.

**International and National Intercessory Prayer Network:** Organized prayer groups within churches, and some individuals, pray for the thousands of prayer needs. Prayer requests are sent to 444 churches and individuals. There are 45,000 intercessors.

**Website Ministry:** The National Prayer Center's website receives 252,230 prayer requests. The website is a vital tool in reaching thousands beyond the telephone, fax, or mail. Over a thousand came to Jesus and received God's salvation.

**New Converts:** In 2003, 1,178 salvations were reported.

**Holy Spirit Baptisms:** Many believers request the baptism in the Holy Spirit.

The National Prayer Center received nearly 1,961 praise reports in 2003. Because of prayer and faith in Jesus Christ, we receive reports of healings from cancer, heart trouble, and tumors. Children are returning home, and marriages are being reconciled.

For more information on how your church can become involved in the National Prayer Center, call 417-862-2781, ext. 1551.

## NATIONAL YOUTH MINISTRIES LAUNCHES NEW MEDIA WEBSITE

National Youth Ministries Director Tom Greene announces the launch of [www.nymedia.ag.org](http://www.nymedia.ag.org), a comprehensive media library for Assemblies of God national youth ministries. The site contains brochure information and current press releases as well as downloadable photos, advertisements, and other resources. The site is updated regularly and contains nym-related articles from Assemblies of God publications dating back to 2000.

"The beauty of nymedia is that it can help anyone plug into what's happening in Assemblies of God youth ministries. And the biggest perk of all — it's free," Greene says.

According to nymedia creator and content manager Amber Weigand-Buckley, the text-driven site was manufactured with the user in mind. Articles, news about upcoming national events, and ads can be cut and dropped into church bulletins and flyers.

"Nymedia is a valuable resource for youth ministry event planning. There's some incredible stuff available that will enhance your ministry to teens just a few mouse clicks away," James Pauls, national Youth Ministries public relations coordinator, says.

Greene concludes, "This is one more statement of our desire to enhance every youth ministry in America. Check it out today. If you need more, let us know. Tell us how we can help you win, build, and send students for the cause of Christ. We are here to serve you."

## FREE WEB RESOURCES

In April 2003, the national Sunday School Department launched a website with many free Sunday School resources. In November 2003, the department hired a web editor for upkeep, innovation, and further development of the site. Pastors, teachers, administrators, and laymen can access this site at <http://sundayschool.ag.org> and find libraries of articles, tips for recruiting, and training workers and teachers, planning helps, and promotional ideas. Site visitors will be able to renew a vision for their Sunday School programs and explore ideas on how to turn their Sunday Schools into places where people are Learning together, Including all who come, Finding others who need to know, and Emerging for ministry.

The website averages over 1,800 visitors per day. Plans for the future include: streaming videos for training, web-based certification, more PowerPoints and downloadables, Spanish translations of articles and resources, resources for new church plants, and a whole section devoted to "How To Start a Sunday School Ministry in Your Church." Discover what Sunday School can do for you at <http://sundayschool.ag.org>.

## FREE BIBLE VERSE RESOURCE

According to George Barna, "America's spiritual confusion undoubtedly relates to the fact most people own a Bible but few know what's in it. Research showing that only 4 percent of adults and just 9 percent of born-again Christians have a biblical worldview sheds light on the distorted viewpoints that reign in the U.S."

As the U.S. becomes more multicultural, knowing God's Word becomes essential for children, youth, and adults in our churches.

In preparation for the 2004 National Sunday School Day, Sept. 26, the national Sunday School Department is offering a free Bible memorization resource for children, youth, and adults. The colorful sheet includes 10 LIFE verses on one side

# NEWS & RESOURCE

with colorful photos on the second side. The sheet is perforated so the cards can be separated and easily carried in pockets, purses, and backpacks.

“We want to help people of all ages learn these LIFE verses to help define who they are and what they want to do with their lives,” says Wes Bartel, director of the Sunday School Department. “We believe God’s Word includes many verses that guide and protect us throughout our everyday routines. We hope these 10 convenient and colorful cards will help a growing number of people internalize God’s ways: ways like ‘Do not worry about anything. But pray and ask God for everything you need. And when you pray, always give thanks.’ Or goals like: ‘Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind.’ We want to help increase the percentage of believers who live by a biblical worldview.”

The national Sunday School Department is offering the sheet of 10 LIFE verses, to support the new Sunday School vision called “Learning To Live the L.I.F.E.” To request the L.I.F.E. verse sheet, call 1-800-641-4310 and ask for #714-151. Order as many sheets as you need to distribute to Sunday School students in your church. The free Bible verse resource is supported by Bible memorization and application strategies at [www.sundayschool.ag.org](http://www.sundayschool.ag.org). This offer is on a first-come-first-served basis while supplies last. For more information about the new Learning To Live the LIFE vision or about national Sunday School Day resources, visit [www.sundayschool.ag.org](http://www.sundayschool.ag.org), or call 417-862-2781, ext. 4012.

## HOW TO DISCIPLE CONVERTS

Many church leaders are asking how to close the gap between the number of conversions reported and the corresponding discipleship statistics. The life and ministry of Carl Griffith, the 2004 National Teacher of the Year, provides one example of how those who come to Christ are encouraged to grow in Christ. “Carl is one of those people you don’t hear a lot about from Sunday to Sunday,” says Darlene Rytter, “yet he has made a tremendous impact on many lives — one person at a time.”

Griffith ministers as a Sunday School teacher at Manassas Assembly of God in Bristow, Virginia, pastored by Scott Leib. Several of Carl’s students nominated him for the 2004 Billie Davis Award for excellence in Christian education. “Carl helped transform my understanding of God from just a Bible character to my personal Creator,” Ernest Campos writes. “He opened my eyes to the truth of God’s desire for me, my potential through Him, and my true purpose in life.”

Carl’s personal traits of “extraordinary commitment, tireless effort, endless love, faithfulness, generosity, and dedication to teaching” have drawn back many who had left the church. “I had not been in church for a very long time and was

feeling a lot of shame and guilt about the way I was living when Carl saw me at a local restaurant,” writes one of his students. “He told me that I’d been missed and was so sincere when he asked, ‘How have you been?’ Instead of avoiding me, he and Patty really welcomed me. I felt my life was of value to them. I’ve now been fully committed to the Lord for more than a year.”

Carl is one of the more than 120,000 volunteers who teach Sunday School in the Assemblies of God. Each week these teachers meet with small groups of children, youth, and adults to help them learn to live the life as followers of Jesus Christ. The close personal relationships and spiritual support that develop in Sunday School help people of all ages grow in Christ.

The 2004 National and District Teachers of the Year were announced earlier this year. Carl Griffith and his wife, Patty, were awarded an expense-paid trip to Hawaii by the national Sunday School Department and Gospel Publishing House. During 2004, Manassas Assembly of God will also receive \$1,000 in curriculum from Gospel Publishing House. The 44 district teachers of the year each received a personalized brief bag and a video celebrating their ministry. Ministry sketches of both national and district award winners can be read at [www.sundayschool.ag.org](http://www.sundayschool.ag.org).

If you would like to nominate a teacher for the 2005 Billie Davis awards, download a nomination form from the Sunday School website or request a form by calling 417-862-2781, ext. 4012.

## NEW DISCIPLESHIP DVD

According to statistics collected by George Gallup, the percentage of Americans who want to grow spiritually in the next 12 months increased from 58 percent in 1994 to 82 percent in 1998. This was the largest 4-year increase in the history of Gallup polling. The level of interest in growing spiritually continues at that high level.

At a recent leadership summit, Gallup described interest in “God” as popular but not primary in the lives of many Americans. The problem is not that Americans are not interested in their spiritual lives, but that they are practicing a hardware-store style of spirituality — a do-it-yourself or I’ll-build-it-my-way version of spiritual living.

In this period of high spiritual interest, churches have an opportunity to fine-tune how people of all age groups can learn biblical spiritual living together in Sunday School. Sunday School can be one of the best ways to satisfy the spiritual hunger of people today. This huge ministry is already in over 90 percent of Assemblies of God churches. Every week well over 1 million adults, youth, and children attend Assemblies of God Sunday Schools in the U.S. alone.

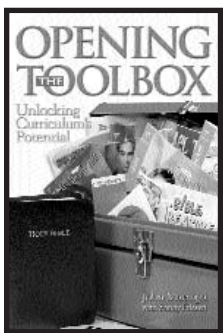
The national Sunday School Department is committed to helping churches increase the visibility and improve the quality of Sunday School. As a part of this ongoing focus, the department is offering a new discipleship DVD. “We want to see Sunday School students learning together to live life as God describes it in the Bible,” says Wes Bartel, director. “This new DVD will help church leaders promote the life-changing ministry of Sunday School to the whole church.” Segments on the DVD will help leaders introduce the “Learning Together” theme for National Sunday School Day, express appreciation for the teaching ministry of the church, and prepare members to express their faith through helping others. The DVD coordinates with an additional free National Sunday School Day planner and other discipleship resources.

You can order the “Learning Together” DVD (\$12.95) by calling GPH at 1-800-641-4310. A VHS version is also available for \$9.95.

To learn more about the DVD and free Sunday school resources, visit [www.sundayschool.ag.org](http://www.sundayschool.ag.org) or call 417-862-2781, ext. 4012.

## NEW STAFF TRAINING BOOK

Gospel Publishing House and the national Sunday School Department have released a new staff-training book entitled *Opening the Tool Box: Unlocking Curriculum's Potential* by John Maempa with Sandy Friesen.



*Opening the Tool Box* is designed to help teachers understand and effectively use Radiant Life curriculum. Radiant Life curriculum has recently undergone many changes to improve its quality. This new training resource details the changes and points out ways to tailor lessons to individual students.

*Opening the Tool Box* can be obtained by calling 1-800-641-4310 and

asking for item #020531 (student book \$7.99) or item #020530 (leaders kit \$39.99). The kit contains a student book, a leader guide, a CD with Spanish materials, and a teachers PowerPoint presentation.

## SUNDAY SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS COMPLETE TRAINING

The national Sunday School Department is introducing a new training program for Sunday School leaders. To date, 16 districts have taken advantage of the training. Now, over 450 leaders have been trained representing over 250 churches.

At these events, leaders are exposed to the various resources available to them, explore the newly released *Sunday School Administrators Reference Manual* (item #714-520), and receive information concerning 10 areas that

help them become more effective leaders.

District Christian education directors and participants are benefiting from the practical nature of the seminars. Many districts are scheduling repeat conferences for the coming year. For more information about these seminars, visit the Sunday School website at <http://sundayschool.ag.org>.

## NEW THEME CONNECTS LEARNING TO LIFE

Learning what is right does not automatically equate with doing what is right. Josh McDowell surveyed church youth members about moral choices. Sixty-five percent say they pray every day and 84 percent attend church at least once a week. Yet, 36 percent had cheated on a test, 66 percent had lied to their parents, and 55 percent had been sexually active — all in the previous three months. Unfortunately, the moral gap extends to Christian adults as well. According to George Barna only 4 percent of all believers and 9 percent of born-again believers make daily choices based on a biblical worldview ([www.Barna.org](http://www.Barna.org)).

The national Sunday School Department has committed to a multiple-year strategy to join with other ministries in closing the gap between what is learned at church and what is lived during the week.

In 2003, the department introduced a new vision called Learning To Live the LIFE. LIFE is an acronym that defines the four life-changing goals of Sunday School — Learning together, Including all who come, Finding others who need to know, and Emerging for ministry. Thanks to a partnership with the Assemblies of God General Council, Gospel Publishing House, and the Sunday School Department over 12,000 LIFE vision videos and booklets were mailed, free of charge, to all Assemblies of God churches in the U.S. The video includes training segments to help Sunday School teachers include the four goals in the Bible lessons they prepare. The Sunday School website, [www.sundayschool.ag.org](http://www.sundayschool.ag.org), provides additional PowerPoint presentations and response sheets for training teachers to use the vision strategy.

During the next 4 years, the Sunday School Department will develop additional resources to help Christians understand how to live “the LIFE” in their everyday routines. The 2004 theme, *Learning Together*, focuses on the interactive, small-group setting of Sunday School. A free 8-page planner is available both in print and as a download from [www.sundayschool.ag.org](http://www.sundayschool.ag.org). Additional learning strategies, LIFE Support Units, and LIFE verse memorization strategies are also available at the website.

To learn more about the LIFE vision and Learning Together, visit [www.sundayschool.ag.org](http://www.sundayschool.ag.org) or call 417-862-2781, ext. 4012.



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## LIVING ABOVE REPROACH

**F**riedrich Nietzsche, the 19th-century German philosopher, reminds us that the higher the level of power, the greater the possibility it can be used for evil or good. The 20th century reminds us what happens when unbridled power is left unchecked. To wit: Hitler and Stalin. More recently, the abuse of power in the Clinton White House and the Catholic Church has left many inherently religious Americans to conclude that ethical leadership in both government and the church demands a return to the moral compass that gave spirited expression to the Puritan faith of our founding fathers.

Richard Neuhaus, founder of the Institute of Religion and Public Life and author of *The Naked Public Square: Religion and Democracy in America*, says that America, from its earliest days, has been a country of destiny. Historically, Puritan tradition is what gave expression to that sense of destiny.

Many of today's mainline Protestant churches "are heirs of the Puritan tradition." And until the middle of the 20th century, mainline Protestantism accepted "the culture-forming task of which Puritanism saw as its vocation for America." Regrettably, the Protestant mainline has essentially abandoned its "culture-forming task" and relinquished this charge to the cultural and social elites. Proof of this is evidenced by the slogan adopted over the past several years by the World Council of Churches, "The world sets the agenda for the Church."

When we set out to discuss moral and

ethical leadership in this issue of *Enrichment*, it wasn't because the leaders of this great Pentecostal fellowship were vigorously waving their yellow flags and lamenting over pastoral misuse of power or ministry-wrecking transgressions. Rather, it is to acknowledge that church leaders, who are in positions of power and influence, face incredibly challenging ethical dilemmas in life and ministry. Furthermore, if we accept the notion that the Protestant mainline is abdicating its culture-forming task, then the responsibility of restoring religious moral and ethical definition back to this country rests primarily with conservative religious leaders.

The conservative Protestant church now stands at the proverbial fork in the road. It can conciliate with the contemporary postmodern world where social reconstruction is the name of the game or it can give rise to a new community of leaders whose lives are untouched and unaltered by the circumstances of the day, who are guided by ethical living and practice, and who are passionate advocates for the return of a moral and ethical society.

In the course of such a mission, the lives of those engaged in pastoral ministry must stand in sharp contrast to the renegade ways of the world. Those to whom conservative Protestant leaders provide bread for daily living must witness an ethical and moral behavior that is not discordant with our testimony. Discharging the duties of the pastoral office must be done in a manner consistent with the biblical model. Unlike other professions, the pastor's professional and personal lives are undeniably connected. What we teach and preach must be congruent with how we live.

Furthermore, we must not underestimate the power of a positive example. Jesus taught that the world could be a better place. He believed the world could be changed one person at a time. We must believe it too. A return to a moral and ethical society begins at the summit of the leadership hierarchy. The significance of ministerial ethics comes into sharp focus when leaders understand that the call to ministry is a call to live above reproach, and that the call touches all aspects of the minister's life. The importance of a renewed call to personal integrity is apparent when we understand the devastating results of a ministry flawed with difficulties and moral indiscretions. A "do-as-I-say-not-as-I-do" religious hypocrisy will do more than discredit the pastoral role in society; it will impede progress toward restoring religious and moral definition to an already flagitious culture. C.S. Lewis said, "When Christians behave badly, or fail to behave well, we are making Christianity unbelievable to the outside world."

Can we say with Paul, "Follow me as I follow Christ"? Living out our theological convictions in a Christ-honoring manner multiplies the work of God here on earth and prepares us, and those we serve, for the Kingdom to come.

**RICK KNOTH** is managing editor of *Enrichment* journal, Springfield, Missouri.





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