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THE CHARACTER OF THE PREACHER AND  
HIS PREACHING MINISTRY

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A Thesis  
Presented to  
the Faculty of  
The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary

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In Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
Doctor of Ministry

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by  
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December 2016

**APPROVAL SHEET**

**THE CHARACTER OF THE PREACHER AND  
HIS PREACHING MINISTRY**

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This work is dedicated

To my parents, Willie and Betty Langley.

You first taught me the importance of a holy family life.

To our children, Zackery and wife Hannah, Cameron and wife Kirstin,

Chase, Olivia, and Zoey,

And our grandson, Evan,

You helped construct the crucible in which this document was forged

and are the greatest of blessings in my life.

To my beautiful and encouraging wife,

Mysty.

You are a precious gift from God.

Your sacrifice, commitment, and support are worth more than anything

this world has to offer.

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## PREFACE

I would first like to thank my parents, Willie and Betty Langley, who first laid a foundation for moral family life. They taught me that my life should be an example for others to follow. I wish to thank them for their continued love and support. I am also grateful for the legacy of my grandfather, Rev. Luther Calvin Holcomb. I pray that the legacy of faithful biblical preaching can live on in me. I am also grateful for other faithful Christian examples in my family, including my in-laws, John and Arlene Meredith, who have encouraged me and prayed for me along life's journey; my sister, Andrea, and her husband, Pastor Chris Barrow; and a host of other family members who continue to pray for me regularly.

I am also thankful for the men of God that the Lord has placed in my life to mentor me and mold my skills and character for ministry. First, I would like to thank Joe Holder. He believed in me as a young man and taught me how to relate to others in the church. Second, I would like to thank Major Tom Allen, United States Army. He challenged me and began my interest in the theological truths of the Bible. His passion for the Scripture is contagious and sparked a fire in me that still burns today. Finally, I would like to thank Dr. Glenn Bien. He taught me how to do church, from administration and planning to funerals and hospital visits. He is still a support to me, offering his expertise and time to proofread and offer suggestions on this thesis. He has been a great father in the faith and an invaluable friend to me for many years. Although other men have influenced me, these have had the most profound impact. Thank you for taking time to help a young man grow in Christ.

I am also grateful for the faculty of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. The staff of the Professional Doctoral Office were helpful throughout the writing process. Dr. Hershael W. York has been a constant help in supervising this thesis. He has been a source of encouragement, being available to answer questions, talk on the phone, and meet in person. He has helped to shape the direction of this work and offered advice and ideas for additional sources. Mrs. Marsha Omanson has also helped to clarify issues regarding style and grammar. Her input was a valuable resource at the end of the process to make this document acceptable for submission.

The members of First Baptist Church of Lepanto, Arkansas, have been a source of great joy and support for me during my entire tenure as pastor, but they have gone above and beyond the call of duty to help me along this educational journey. I want to thank them for several reasons. First, they have faithfully prayed for me throughout the process. Second, they have given support to ease the financial burden of pursuing a doctorate. Third, my yokefellows in the ministry, the deacon body and staff, helped carry on the task of ministry at times when my school work kept me busy or away from the ministry field. Thank you, church. Without your help this work would not have come to fruition.

The most important person in my life is my beautiful and supportive wife, Mysty. I have never known a more helpful person. Most people do not understand what stress being a minister brings to a family. Mysty never complains, although she has reason. She has always been my most faithful supporter and constructive critic. My family life is an ethical example for the church to follow because my wife is equally committed to help others grow in Christ, beginning with our children. My life is a joy because you are in it, Mysty. Thank you, and I love you. Our children, Zackery (and wife, Hannah and grandson, Evan Michael), Cameron (and wife, Kirstin), Chase, Olivia, and Zoey are a true blessing from God. Thank you for your regular obedience and willingness to grow in Christ. Thank you for helping your parents to maintain a godly example for

church members to see and follow. I look forward to seeing each of you grow into godly examples as you have families of your own.

Finally, I would like to thank the Lord for all he has done. My words could never accomplish the task of true gratitude, but I pray that I have offered my life as a living sacrifice. I would like to thank him for opportunities for growth and service, for financial stability, for my family, and for gifting and calling me to preach. I pray that I have glorified him through the obedient way that I have sought to live my life. I pray that many come to the faith and grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord through my ministry and faithfulness to Jesus. Most of all, I would like to thank the Lord for the cross of Jesus Christ. The cross is the central theme of redemption. I pray that my preaching never strays from Jesus or his cross. I pray my life is centered on sharing the truth of the gospel and its transforming effect on world.

Anthony P. Langley

Lepanto, Arkansas

December 2016

## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

Preaching is the primary tool in the church for the Word of God to penetrate the hearts and minds of the people of God. Several factors contribute of the preacher's effectiveness in communicating the biblical text to his congregation. Some of these factors are the faithfulness of the preacher to exposit the Word of God, the preacher's ability in sermon delivery, and the preacher's familiarity with the congregation. The preacher can be faithful in his exposition and engaging in his delivery, but fail to communicate because he does not put into practice the truths that he preaches. The people of God will not receive his teaching as transformative for their lives if his life is not actively being conformed into the likeness of Christ. Spurgeon said that the minister ". . . is not to be content with being equal to the rank and file of Christians; he must be a mature believer."<sup>1</sup> Spurgeon also explains that the pastor must be vigilant in maintaining his character and passion for the work of ministry. The preacher is expected to be more spiritually mature than every other believer in the church. His life should reflect this.

Another aspect of the preacher's character that impacts his preaching is his leadership in his family. The preacher's family is the primary example of a godly family for the church. Graham Patrick states, "We must acknowledge that marriage and the family life can, in itself, be of great enrichment to the work of a minister."<sup>2</sup> Likewise, the pastor's family life can also be a great hindrance to his ministry. The preacher cannot urge men to lead their homes effectively if he does not lead his own home. Paul urged

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<sup>1</sup>Charles H. Spurgeon, *Lectures to My Students* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1954), 13.

<sup>2</sup>Graham A. Patrick, "The Pastor's Problems: The Pastor and His Family," *The Expository Times* 93 (1982).

Timothy to allow only men who effectively managed their households to be overseers (1 Tim 4-5). Paul gives the reason for this in verse 5 when he says that a man that cannot rule his own house cannot rule in the church.

While most universally recognized that the pastor must practice what he preaches to be effective, several recent events of pastoral suicide reveal the immense pressure that pastors endure to appear godly to their congregations. The preacher must not lead his flock to believe that he is sinless. He must help his people to understand that he is not only a sinner who has been justified before God but also still in the process of sanctification. One method to show his people that he is not perfect is authenticity in the pulpit. The preacher is to be honest about his sin before his people. However, he must balance transparency with appropriateness, and he should also guard his reputation as the primary godly example of Christ-likeness in the church. How much should the preacher share about his personal struggles from the pulpit?

The church needs preachers who are not only effective in the pulpit but also men of character who lead their families well, and as a result, can lead their congregations well. The church also requires preachers who adequately care for their families in a way that provides the congregation with an example of a holy family life. Additionally, the pastor should be honest in the pulpit about his struggles with sin, while maintaining his integrity as a model for Christian manhood in the church.

### **Familiarity with the Literature**

Several books have been written describing the importance of the preacher's character to his ministry. Many of the works explain the importance of character in the life of the preacher to his leadership, his care ministry or his counseling ministry, but few relate the impact of his character specifically to his preaching ministry. The works described in this section will help build the framework of thought for this thesis.

Charles Spurgeon's book *Lectures to my Students* is a work comprised of transcribed lectures that Spurgeon presented to ministerial students.<sup>3</sup> Of particular interest to this paper is the first chapter, "The Minister's Self Watch."<sup>4</sup> Spurgeon urges the minister to place piety and character as a priority for their lives. A man cannot stand before the congregation and preach the gospel effectively if he is harboring sin in his life. The importance of the ethical standing of the preacher is displayed in that Spurgeon chose to begin with this lecture. Other chapters in the book deal with committed study, earnestness, and preaching.<sup>5</sup> These chapters point back to the lecture on the character of the preacher and help to clarify Spurgeon's view of its importance.

In his book *The Christian Ministry: With an Inquiry into the Causes of its Inefficiency*, Charles Bridges examines the contributing factors of ineffective ministry.<sup>6</sup> First he addresses the causes of weak ministry and then describes how the minister can be more effective. In part 3 of the book, Bridges deals with the causes of ineffective ministry related to personal character.<sup>7</sup> He examines issues such as pride, covetousness, and lack of self-denial. In chapter 11 of part 3 Bridges explains a lack of connection between the minister's work and his family as a contributing factor to weak ministry.<sup>8</sup>

*Leading with Integrity: Competence with Christian Character* is a part of *The Pastor's Soul Series*.<sup>9</sup> In the book, Fred Smith's teaches pastors and other church leaders that integrity and strong Christian character are an important part of overall leadership of

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<sup>3</sup>Spurgeon, *Lectures to My Students*.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., 7-21.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid.

<sup>6</sup>Charles Bridges, *The Christian Ministry: With an Inquiry into the Causes of Its Inefficiency* (East Peoria, IL: Versa Press, 2006).

<sup>7</sup>Ibid., 103-83.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid., 165-73.

<sup>9</sup>Fred Smith, Sr., *Leading with Integrity: Competence with Christian Character* (Minneapolis: Bethany House Publisher, 1999).

a church. In the first section of the book, he deals with the internal nature of integrity. He specifically explains that one key to maintaining character is to have a proper understanding of how to evaluate your own character.

Brian and Cara Croft tackle the issue of living life as a pastor's family in their book *The Pastor's Family*.<sup>10</sup> Their goal in writing the book is to encourage pastors and their families to work together to accomplish the task of ministry. The book is written from the perspective of both the husband and the wife. They show the importance of a family taking on God's work knowing that they are not alone in their feelings of isolation and discouragement. They also present information on how the pastor is to lead and shepherd his family. Proper shepherding of the family leads to a greater ability to shepherd the church.<sup>11</sup>

William H. Willimon's book *Calling and Character: Virtues of the Ordained Life* is a call for preachers to move away from an attitude of ministry as a profession and to one of a calling from God.<sup>12</sup> His premise is that a professional is better than others in some area. All Christians are called to live a life of strong character and integrity. While the pastor is not a professional, a successful ministry will be one in which the pastor leads with integrity and strong character. He applies this to his moral life and even sermon preparation. The strong character of the preacher enables him to accomplish his duty well including being committed to preaching God's truth rather than pleasing men.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>10</sup>Brian Croft and Cara Croft, *The Pastor's Family: Shepherding your Family through the Challenges of Pastoral Ministry* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2013).

<sup>11</sup>Ibid.

<sup>12</sup>William H. Willimon, *Calling and Character: Virtues of the Ordained Life* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2000).

<sup>13</sup>Ibid.

*The New Guidebook for Pastors* is a how-to book for all sorts of issues in pastoral ministry.<sup>14</sup> James W. Bryant and Mac Brunson have compiled helpful information and advice for the pastor. Chapter 5 covers the pastor and his family. The authors state, “The pastor’s family can be his credibility or it can be his liability. It certainly is his vulnerability.”<sup>15</sup> The authors offer biblical support for the pastor’s priority in the care of his family. They then provide some practical advice for maintaining a godly family. In chapter 16, Bryant and Brunson describe the role of ethics in the life of a pastor using two types of ethics, personal ethics and professional ethics. They describe several ways that a pastor can maintain an ethical character. One way is for the pastor to develop personal accountability by having someone outside of his family to hold him accountable.<sup>16</sup>

In his article “The Pastor’s Problems: The Pastor and His Family,” Graham A. Patrick describes the problems that the minister’s neglect of family issues can have on his ability to minister effectively.<sup>17</sup> He also describes the profound impact that the pastor’s stable marriage and well-adjusted children can have on his influence in preaching and counseling. The minister knows from first-hand experience the joys and sorrows that are a part of family life. People will listen more closely if his family life matches his biblical teaching and counseling. Patrick’s conclusion is that the family influences pastoral authority in every area of ministry.<sup>18</sup>

Charles L. Campbell explains the difference between what he calls “quandary ethics” and “character ethics” in his article “More Than Quandaries: Character Ethics and

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<sup>14</sup>James W. Bryant and Mac Brunson, *The New Guidebook for Pastors* (Nashville: Broadman and Holman Publishing Group, 2007).

<sup>15</sup>Ibid., 51.

<sup>16</sup>Ibid.

<sup>17</sup>Patrick, “The Pastor’s Problems.”

<sup>18</sup>Ibid.

Preaching.”<sup>19</sup> Quandary ethics ask the question, “What ought I do?” Character ethics ask the question, “Who should I be?” Most ethical and moral decisions are made everyday with little consideration because these decisions arise from a person’s character.

Campbell views this as significant because it implies that the pastor is to be building character in every sermon. Sermons on specific moral issues are only part of what the preaching is seeking to accomplish in building character.<sup>20</sup> He shapes ideas that will influence everyday ethical situations in the life of his listeners.

In his essay “The Pastor and His Personal Life,” Owen Carr defends the proposition that God is more concerned with the minister than the ministry.<sup>21</sup> A modern philosophy of ministry states that the minister is equal to his people. Carr shows that throughout the Bible God has set men over institutions and required them to lead by example and with integrity. Although all Christians are called to live in this way, the pastor has a greater obligation based on his influence over people through the authority of his position. God’s emphasis is not on the results produced in the preacher’s ministry but the character of that minister. He goes on to give detailed instructions about integrity and character in the essay.<sup>22</sup>

### **Void in the Literature**

In much of the literature addressing the preaching ministry, the ethos of the pastor is described in only brief detail with perhaps a chapter or paragraph devoted to character of the pastor or his integrity. Many of these works deal with the implementation of pastoral ministry rather than God’s work of molding the man’s character to shape his

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<sup>19</sup>Charles L. Campbell, “More Than Quandaries: Character Ethics and Preaching,” *Journal for Preachers* 16, no. 4 (1993).

<sup>20</sup>Ibid.

<sup>21</sup>Owen, C. Carr, “The Pastor and His Personal Life,” in *And He Gave Pastors* (Springfield, MO: Gospel Publishing House, 1979).

<sup>22</sup>Ibid.

ministry. Likewise, most of the works that address the tough issue of the pastor's family do so from the perspective of the pastor's care for his family. Very little is discussed in regard to how the preacher's character impacts his ability to preach biblical truths or the ability of the congregation to receive those truths based on his life as an example. Although a variety of literature has been published on the character of the leader or pastor as an example for the congregation, very little has been written in regard to the authenticity of the preacher in the pulpit. The gap in the literature is in the importance of the character of the pastor and his family to his ability to lead through expository preaching while remaining authentic in the pulpit about his own transformation and sin.

### **Assumptions**

This thesis is written from the perspective of several assumptions. First, the pastoral role is reserved for men. While many denominations recognize female pastors, the Bible only presents men in that role. Second, the preferred method of preaching for the scope of this paper is expository preaching. Other methods may have positive, discernable effects, but the text should drive the sermon. Expository sermons usually take longer to prepare and require the preacher to teach on texts that may be uncomfortable to him. Third, preaching is primary in the ministry of the pastor. All other responsibilities are subordinate to preparation and the preaching moment since the pastor has been called by God to equip his flock. Finally, this paper refers to good leadership as a man living in integrity, preaching with authority derived from his credibility, and producing gospel-centered results. While some pastors can lead with the pretense of integrity and produce seemingly good results, this paper will focus on real integrity and authenticity in pastoral leadership and preaching. These assumptions will not be further supported as that is beyond the scope of this paper.

## **Thesis**

As the preacher walks through daily life with his congregation, his character will directly influence his credibility to lead through his preaching ministry. The pastor's stable integrity and family life give him the confidence to preach God's Word, and his faithful example as a godly man helps his congregation to receive the truths he preaches as he remains authentic before them as a transforming human being.

## CHAPTER 2

### THE PREACHER'S CHARACTER

#### **Introduction**

The man who occupies the pulpit of the church has a unique opportunity to lead the church through his preaching. God has given him that position through a special calling, and the church has affirmed that call on the man's life. All preachers should want to be effective communicators in the pulpit, but what are the characteristics that make preaching more effective? What are the causes that prompt the audience to believe that the message the preacher delivers is both credible and valuable for their lives? The foundational reason that his message should be credible and valuable is the source of his message, God's Word. However, his sermon will not be received as transformative if the pastor has moral failures in his life or if his character does not match what he preaches. On the other hand, if the preacher's character is exemplary, his sermons will have greater influence.

Charles Spurgeon notes, "Holiness in the minister is at once his chief necessity and his goodliest ornament."<sup>1</sup> All of his activities, whether preaching, ministering, or counseling, should flow from his godly character. Greg Heisler says, "Preachers who desire to see God's hand on their preaching must first desire to see God's hand shape their character."<sup>2</sup> Spirit-led preaching is only possible if the man of God is being changed by the Spirit of God.<sup>3</sup> If the pastor has godly character, his message will be received more

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<sup>1</sup>Charles Spurgeon, *Lectures to My Students* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1954), 18.

<sup>2</sup>Greg Heisler, *Spirit-Led Preaching: The Holy Spirit's Role in Sermon Preparation and Delivery* (Nashville: Broadman and Holman Academic, 2007), 81.

<sup>3</sup>*Ibid.*, 80-83.

effectively because of two influences. First, the people will respect him, more likely trusting that what he proclaims is true. Second, the preacher can develop sermons that have greater spiritual impact if he is being transformed in his walk in the Spirit. He can preach greater messages based on his experience with God.

Classical rhetoric establishes three basic categories, logos, pathos, and ethos. R. Kent Hughes discusses how these categories apply in preaching. He states that preaching cannot be classified in specifically classical rhetorical terms because in preaching, God is the one speaking.<sup>4</sup> James Murphy observes, logos can be defined as “thought plus expression . . . thought is useless without a way to convey it and mere expressive ability is worthless if it has nothing to convey.”<sup>5</sup> Hughes explains that logos in preaching is based on the authority of the Word of God plus the work of the Holy Spirit in preaching.<sup>6</sup> The Bible is the content of the message delivered. The preacher expounds the Bible based on his view that it is the authoritative Word of God.

Pathos is best understood as a “state of feeling” in which the speaker knows or experiences the content he is seeking to convey to his audience.<sup>7</sup> Hughes considers the pathos of the preacher to be a “Spirit-directed” passion.<sup>8</sup> This passion cannot be derived from the preacher himself or a false passion conjured from over-excitement. True pathos in preaching is a heart that has been enflamed by the text the preacher is presenting to his congregation. His goal is to transfer that passion to his audience so that they can develop a similar passion.

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<sup>4</sup>R. Kent Hughes, “The Anatomy of Exposition: Logos, Ethos, and Pathos,” *The Southern Baptist Journal of Theology* 3, no. 2 (Louisville: The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1999): 46.

<sup>5</sup>James J. Murphy, *A Synoptic History of Classical Rhetoric* (Davis, CA: Hermagoras Press, 1983), 4.

<sup>6</sup>Hughes, “The Anatomy of Exposition,” 46-49.

<sup>7</sup>Murphy, *A Synoptic History of Classical Rhetoric*, 45-46.

<sup>8</sup>Hughes, “The Anatomy of Exposition,” 53.

The focus of this thesis is on the ethos of the preacher. Ethos affecting the quality and reception of the speech is not a new idea. In classical rhetoric the ethical character of the speaker is considered to be important in supporting his argument. Aristotle wrote, “Persuasion is effected by means of moral character, when the speech shall have been spoken in such a way as to render the speaker worthy of confidence.”<sup>9</sup> He believes that “the speaker’s ethos is itself a kind of proof and that a good speaker will build up his credibility by arguing certain ways.”<sup>10</sup> Hughes applies ethos to the preacher and explains, “Ethos has to do with the condition of your inner life and with the work of the Spirit within you, especially as it relates to your preaching.”<sup>11</sup> He continues by revealing that preaching works best as the preacher “invites the Holy Spirit to apply the text to his own soul and ethical conduct.”<sup>12</sup>

This chapter examines what the Bible teaches about the character of the pastor and shows how it affects the reception of his preaching among his congregation. The first section will examine specific commands in the Bible related to the qualifications and character of the preacher. The second section will discuss some areas where an unethical character can lead to ineffective preaching. The final section will explore how godly character can make sermons more effective.

### **Biblical Rationale**

The idea that the pastor should practice what he preaches is a logical concept. Why should the pastor ask others to order their lives according to his teachings if he is unwilling to do the same? The primary motivation of the preacher to display an exemplary character is the command of God found in Scripture. In this section, I will

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<sup>9</sup>Aristotle, *Aristotle’s Treatise on Rhetoric* (London: George Bell & Sons, 1894), 12.

<sup>10</sup>Murphy, *A Synoptic History of Classical Rhetoric*, 71.

<sup>11</sup>Hughes, “The Anatomy of Exposition,” 51.

<sup>12</sup>*Ibid.*

examine three Scripture passages in which the Bible outlines the qualifications, character traits, and motives of an overseer/elder in the church. The Scriptures that will be surveyed are 1 Timothy 3:1-7, Titus 1:5-9, and 1 Peter 5:1-4. In the Timothy and Titus texts, the character of the pastor's marriage and family is addressed and will be the foundation for the next chapter.

### **1 Timothy 3:1-7**

In 1 Timothy, Paul is writing to his young apprentice Timothy with instructions related to church oversight. In 1 Timothy 3:1-7 he identifies the characteristics that an overseer must display in his life to be called out in a position of leadership in the church.

The saying is trustworthy: If anyone aspires to the office of overseer, he desires a noble task. Therefore an overseer must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, sober-minded, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, not a drunkard, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money. He must manage his own household well, with all dignity keeping his children submissive, for if someone does not know how to manage his own household, how will he care for God's church? He must not be a recent convert, or he may become puffed up with conceit and fall into the condemnation of the devil. Moreover, he must be well thought of by outsiders, so that he may not fall into disgrace, into a snare of the devil. (1 Tim 3:1-7)

Paul gives several specific attributes that should be present in a man that is called to be a pastor. These attributes are measurable and external. However, they reflect the inward character of the man of God. The theme that is present throughout both the 1 Timothy and Titus texts is reputation. How do people in the church, as well as people outside the church, view the pastor? This section will examine both the virtues that must be present in the pastor's life and the vices that he must avoid in 1 Timothy 3:1-7 as the foundation for the preacher's godly character and reputation.

**Virtues.** The attributes that Paul states positively address the level-headedness of the pastor and denote a man who is able to remain calm in difficult situations to speak God's grace into the lives of the people in his charge through both his words and his example. In verses 2 and 7, one sees two positive attributes that form bookends for the

qualifications of the overseer. First, the pastor is to be “above reproach.” Calvin summarized this concept:

He must not be marked by any infamy that would lessen his authority. There will be no one found among men that is free from every vice; but it is one thing to be blemished with ordinary vices, which do not hurt the reputation, because they are found in men of the highest excellence, and another thing to have a disgraceful name, or to be stained with any baseness. In order, therefore, that a bishop may not be without authority, he enjoins that there shall be made a selection of one who has a good and honourable reputation, and not chargeable with any remarkable vice. Besides, he does not merely lay down a rule for Timothy what sort of person he must select, but likewise reminds every one of those who aspire to that rank, to institute a careful examination of himself and of his life.<sup>13</sup>

George Knight explains that the concept of being above reproach is that the preacher is “not open to attack or criticism in terms of the Christian life in general and in terms of the characteristics that follow in particular.”<sup>14</sup> William Mounce argues that the concept of being above reproach is the description of the basic character of an overseer and the other commands that follow in the text are what being above reproach entails.<sup>15</sup>

Second, in verse 7 Paul writes that the pastor must have a “good reputation with outsiders.” If a pastor has a poor reputation outside the church, he reflects poorly on the church and the gospel that he professes. Lea and Griffin say, “The behavior of the leader should provide an example of integrity and commitment to the gospel he professes.”<sup>16</sup> He is not to be a disgrace to the church or to the God he professes to serve.

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<sup>13</sup>John Calvin, *Commentaries on the Epistles to Timothy, Titus, and Philemon* (Grand Rapids: Christian Classics Ethereal Libraries), accessed September 5, 2014, <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/calvin/calcom43.iii.v.i.html>.

<sup>14</sup>George W. Knight III, *The Pastoral Epistles*, The New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1992), loc. 2705, Kindle.

<sup>15</sup>William D. Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 46 (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2000), 169. In his commentary, Mounce compares the character of the preacher with that of the opponents of Timothy in the church at Ephesus. “Because the office of overseer is such an important position, those who fulfill that role must be of a certain character – above reproach. The opponents were leaders in the church whose character and behavior had been so horrendous that they were dragging the church down into disrepute; a true overseer must be a type of person whose personal behavior will counter that of the opponents and help the church regain its credibility.”

<sup>16</sup>Thomas D. Lea and Hayne P. Griffin, Jr., *1 & 2 Timothy, Titus*, The New American Commentary, vol. 34 (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1992), 110.

The text states that if he has a poor reputation, he will fall into a snare of the Satan, which could lead to the destruction of his ministry and harm to his church.

In verses 2 to 7 Paul gives several specific virtues that are the qualifications that help to maintain the “above reproach” character of the man of God. He is to be sober-minded and self-controlled. To be sober-minded means that the pastor does not allow something else, like anger, envy, or bitterness, to control his mind. Much like a drunk has given himself over to the impairing effects of alcohol, the pastor can give himself to emotions that cloud or distort his judgment. While being sober-minded refers to the control of the mind, Lea and Griffin note that self-control refers to “a person who is trustworthy and balanced in judgment.”<sup>17</sup> Self-control is the ability to control outward actions and behavior. The pastor may be emotional about the situation, but he must not allow the emotion to control his thinking or his actions.

Likewise, the pastor must be respectable and hospitable. A respectable pastor displays not only dignity but also an outward stability. The outward attribute should reflect an inward reality. Calvin states, “The ‘hospitality’ here spoken of, is toward strangers, and this was very common among the ancients.”<sup>18</sup> The pastor should treat people equally regardless of socioeconomic status or race. This command indicates that a pastor must not show favoritism to someone because he may benefit by giving special attention to one person while ignoring or mistreating another.

The pastor must also be able to teach. Though not necessarily an ethical consideration, Spurgeon considers the ability to teach as a primary factor that a young man must evaluate before surrendering to the call to pastor: “There must be an aptness to teach and some measure of other qualities needful for the office of public instructor.”<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>17</sup>Thomas D. Lea and Hayne P. Griffin, Jr., *1 & 2 Timothy, Titus*, The New American Commentary, vol. 34 (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1992), 114.

<sup>18</sup>Calvin, *Timothy, Titus, and Philemon*.

<sup>19</sup>Spurgeon, *Lectures to My Students*, 28.

He explains that even though the man may have a difficult time of preaching his first few sermons, there must be in him at least some ability to teach since his primary role as shepherd is to feed the flock.<sup>20</sup> If a man does not have the ability to teach, his congregation will easily see this as a weakness in his life and view him with less respect. Thus, his message becomes less effective.

The virtues reflect an overseer that is respected in the church and community. He should be calm in the face of trials and control his emotions both mentally and physically. People should view him as a leader that treats all people with respect and is not rash. Others should find him to be admirable and respectable. As such, he is an example that can be emulated by his congregation.

**Vices.** The negative attributes in 1 Timothy 3:1-7 further reflect that the man of God should maintain control of himself. The vices pertain to four areas of the pastor's life. First, he must control his body. He is not to be a drunkard. The problem with alcohol in the life of a believer is that it impairs the mind and body so that the drunk no longer controls himself. In Ephesians 5:18, Paul says, "And do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery, but be filled with the Spirit." The comparison between drunkenness and being filled with the Spirit is to show that both of these control the person. An underlying principle is taught in this passage. The man of God is to refrain from partaking of those things that would impair him from maintaining control of his body. He is to be controlled by the leadership of the Spirit of God.

Second, the preacher must be in control of his temper. In verse 3, Paul gives both a negative command for the preacher to refrain from violence and a positive command for him to be gentle. Lea and Griffin explain, "The term 'violent' pictures a quick-tempered individual who would prefer to use his fists rather than a reasoning

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<sup>20</sup>Spurgeon, *Lectures to My Students*, 28-29.

tongue. Such a leader uses the threats of a bully to bludgeon people into conformity.”<sup>21</sup> The gentle leader does not micro-manage the people under his care. They add, “The ‘gentle’ man uses elasticity in supervision and is flexible rather than rigid. Synonyms for ‘gentle’ include yielding, kind, forbearing, and considerate.”<sup>22</sup>

Third, the preacher is to control his tongue. The specific command is that he is not to be quarrelsome. Mounce says that this is a “strong term describing active and serious bickering; it can even refer to physical combat.”<sup>23</sup> The preacher is to refrain from displaying the type of contentious behavior that exacerbates tense situations in his dealing with others. The quarrelsome person inserts himself into a situation for the purpose of causing a dispute. However, the pastor also has the responsibility to preach and teach the truth and protect his flock. These responsibilities will sometimes cause the pastor to enter into conflict with others. His attitude should reflect love and respect. Pastors are to be active peacemakers and intentionally considerate of others while maintaining their stance on biblical issues.

Fourth, the man of God must not be a lover of money. Knight explains, “The implication of . . . ‘not loving money,’ is best ascertained in the contrasting words in Hebrews 13:15 . . . ‘being content with what you have’.”<sup>24</sup> What a man desires in his heart will be what drives him. If money is the motive for serving in the church, he will not be seeking to achieve his calling. He will be looking for ways to profit from the church. Overseers may have control over church finances. It is therefore essential that they be blameless in this area.<sup>25</sup> Paul lists greed as a characteristic of a false teacher in

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<sup>21</sup>Lea and Griffin, *1 & 2 Timothy, Titus*, 111.

<sup>22</sup>Ibid.

<sup>23</sup>Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 176.

<sup>24</sup>Knight, *The Pastoral Epistles*, loc. 2784.

<sup>25</sup>Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 177.

Titus 1:11. The preacher that is consumed by greed will not focus on right teaching and proper protection and care for the congregation because he serves another master. Jesus taught in Matthew 6:24 that no one can serve two masters because he will only love one of them. The pastor cannot love both money and God.

Finally, the overseer should not be a recent convert. The command should be seen as a spiritual command rather than one associated with age. Paul told Timothy that he should not let anyone look down on him because of his age in 1 Timothy 4:12. Mounce says, “Because new converts are not spiritually mature, it is dangerous to place them in leadership positions. If they become proud because of their quick advancement, it is likely that they will fall into the same trap of pride as the devil did.”<sup>26</sup> The preacher should be spiritually maturing, reflecting a life that is being transformed through the Spirit’s work. The people in his charge will not respect the overseer if he lacks knowledge and experience in the Christian life.

The list of qualities for the overseer in 1 Timothy provides both the inward and outward attributes that are to be part of his spiritual life to be considered for the office. For example, the commands that address the inward spiritual life are being sober-minded, not a lover of money, not quarrelsome, and gentle. Likewise, external proof is provided by the behavior of the man. If he is violent, he is not inwardly gentle. If he lacks self-control, he is likely not sober-minded. If he is corrupt in his financial practices, he is likely greedy. The list shows us that it is in inward transformation that produces the outward reality.

### **Titus 1:5-9**

In the book of Titus, Paul is writing to another young elder about issues related to ministry and presents a similar list of qualifications of the overseer as identified in 1 Timothy.

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<sup>26</sup>Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 180.

This is why I left you in Crete, so that you might put what remained into order, and appoint elders in every town as I directed you—if anyone is above reproach, the husband of one wife, and his children are believers and not open to the charge of debauchery or insubordination. For an overseer, as God’s steward, must be above reproach. He must not be arrogant or quick-tempered or a drunkard or violent or greedy for gain, but hospitable, a lover of good, self-controlled, upright, holy, and disciplined. He must hold firm to the trustworthy word as taught, so that he may be able to give instruction in sound doctrine and also to rebuke those who contradict it. (Titus 1:5-9)

Since the several qualities of the overseer/elder appear in both lists, this section will address only those qualities that are recorded in Titus but not included in 1 Timothy. The following table provides an overview of both lists with a clear picture of those qualities that are included in both lists and those that are exclusive to each book.<sup>27</sup>

Paul begins his list in Titus in the same way as his 1 Timothy list by writing that the elder is to be “above reproach.” As stated above, this should be the overarching theme of the pastor’s life. All the other commands that Paul gives help to facilitate this trait in the pastor’s life. This section will address both the vices and virtues that have not been examined previously.

**Vices.** Paul presents two negative attributes of the pastor that do not appear in the Timothy list. First, the elder is not to be arrogant. The pastor who is arrogant will seek to lord his power over others. He seeks his own agenda and does not consider the opinions of others as equal to his opinions. He loves himself and puts his interest above the interests of others. Lea and Griffin explain, “He should be flexible in his own opinions, considerate of the viewpoints of others, and especially open and eager to do God’s will.”<sup>28</sup> God commands all Christians to demonstrate humility (Eph 4:2, Phil 2:4); as such, pastors should lead by example and seek to eradicate all sense of arrogance from

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<sup>27</sup>Table 1 is adapted from Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 156-58.

<sup>28</sup>Lea and Griffin, *1 & 2 Timothy, Titus*, 283.

Table. Qualities of an overseer/elder

1 Timothy 3:1-7	Titus 1:5-9
Above Reproach	Above Reproach
Sober-Minded	
Self-Controlled	Self-Controlled
Respectable	
Hospitable	Hospitable
Able to Teach	Able to Teach
Not a Drunkard	Not a Drunkard
Not Violent	Not Violent
Gentle	
	Not Arrogant
Not Quarrelsome	
	Not Quick-Tempered
Not a Lover of Money	Not Greedy for Gain
Not a Recent Convert	
	A Lover of Good
	Upright
	Holy
	Disciplined
	Hold Firm to the Trustworthy Word

their lives. “The Christian leader should be sensitive to use authority in ways that truly promote God’s work and not any personal agenda.”<sup>29</sup>

Second, the pastor is not to be quick-tempered. This command is very closely related to the commands to refrain from a violent and quarrelsome nature. Pastors will be called upon to handle difficult situations, some of which may involve personal attacks on his family or his character. This is not to say that the pastor may not have strong emotions about a situation, but he is to keep a level head and respond without violence or anger. Lea and Griffin state, “One who cannot control his own emotions cannot exercise proper judgment over church matters.”<sup>30</sup>

**Virtues.** Paul gives five positive attributes that do not appear in his list of qualities in 1 Timothy. First, the elder must love what is good. Mounce states, “It can refer to loving good people or good things, but because of the generality of the phrase, it probably encompasses both here.”<sup>31</sup> The pastor should demonstrate through his actions that he loves what is good; however, this virtue addresses a real love that comes from the heart of the man. He must love and desire those things that are good. Only the man of God can know if his heart is set on loving good things.

Next, Paul pairs two virtues that are closely related, upright and holy. If a pastor is upright, he is committed to doing what is right. To be holy is to be set apart in devotion and service to God. God has called all his children to holiness. “You therefore must be perfect, as your heavenly father is perfect” (Matt 5:48). The life of the pastor must be an example that people can follow. As an example to the body of Christ, the pastor must display the character of God to the people through his life. He must seek to be holy in devotion of God, not in a legalistic sense that looks for the praise of men.

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<sup>29</sup>Lea and Griffin, *1 & 2 Timothy, Titus*, 283.

<sup>30</sup>Ibid.

<sup>31</sup>Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 391.

Further, the pastor is to be disciplined. This virtue is associated with another mentioned previously, self-controlled. While discipline and self-control point to the ability to govern our lives, discipline offers some additional nuances to this concept. The pastor must be able to control his behavior, but he must also practice a disciplined life to maintain his physical and spiritual health. For example, he must maintain a disciplined relationship with the Lord through regular time spent with God in His Word and in prayer. He must preserve a disciplined schedule including time for personal development, church service, and family time. He should maintain his health through regular exercise and disciplined eating habits. Also he must control his sexual appetite. This will be considered more fully in the chapter on the family; however, the pastor should maintain a pure and vibrant sexual relationship with his wife and refrain from activities that would contribute to lustful thoughts and opportunities to act on those thoughts.

Finally, the pastor should be a man who “holds firm to the trustworthy word as taught” (Titus 5:9). Mounce clarifies, “This requirement of church leaders adds a theological dimension to a predominantly moral list of virtues, and this devotion provides the basis for exhortation and rebuke.”<sup>32</sup> This is a command for doctrinal understanding of the teachings given once for all by the prophets, Jesus, and his apostles (i.e., Heb 1:1-3). The pastor is not simply to maintain a specific set of doctrinal beliefs based on the teaching of Scripture; he must use those doctrines in his role as shepherd of the flock. Lea and Griffin note, “Two basic functions of the elder’s role in the church emanate from his own personal devotion to the truth of God’s Word.”<sup>33</sup> These two functions are teaching and rebuke. Teaching is a function of feeding the flock spiritual food from the Word of God. Rebuking is a function of protecting the church from false doctrine as a shepherd protects sheep from predators. The pastor may protect the flock from false teaching

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<sup>32</sup>Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 391.

<sup>33</sup>Lea and Griffin, *1 & 2 Timothy, Titus*, 285.

outside the church, but he may also have a false teacher arise in the church. A strong commitment to the Word of God is required for all those who aspire to the office of pastor. The Word of God is the basis for his calling, his character, his authority, and his teaching.

Both the 1 Timothy and Titus passages present the attributes that the man of God is to display in his life to be considered to pastor a church. In summary, he is to be a man that is “above reproach” that has a good reputation both inside the church and in the community. He should display the characteristics that are taught in Scripture and should be an example for others to follow. These attributes should be produced by an inward spiritual change that has taken place as a result of his salvation and a subsequent close walk with the Lord. In the next section, the apostle Peter reveals the heart and motives of the minister. His heart must fuel his actions and his motives must be revealed in his leadership.

### **1 Peter 5:1-4**

In 1 Peter, the apostle is writing to Christians that have been dispersed throughout the Roman Empire. He encourages them to withstand persecution that they were facing through a strong trust in God. In 1 Peter 5:1-4, Peter gives instructions to shepherds of the flock. These instructions concern how the elder is to lead the people of God and relate closely to his character.

So I exhort the elders among you, as a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, as well as a partaker in the glory that is going to be revealed: shepherd the flock of God that is among you, exercising oversight, not under compulsion, but willingly, as God would have you; not for shameful gain, but eagerly; not domineering over those in your charge, but being examples to the flock. And when the chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory.” (1 Pet 5:1-4)

The first command that Peter gives to elders in this passage is to “shepherd the flock.” J. Ramsey Michaels states, “The command to ‘shepherd the flock of God’ echoes

the command of Jesus to Peter himself according to John 21:16: ‘Shepherd my sheep.’<sup>34</sup> He goes on to describe the church as the Lord’s church and explains that the leadership and care of the flock has been distributed to the pastor as God’s shepherd while Jesus remains the chief shepherd.<sup>35</sup> Thomas Schriener explains, “The words ‘God’s flock’ remind the elders that the congregation does not belong to them. It is God’s church and they are given the privilege and responsibility of shepherding it.”<sup>36</sup> In verses 2 and 3, Peter describes three applications of the command to shepherd in which he contrasts the appropriate ways the shepherd must lead and the inappropriate ways that weaken his leadership.

First, the pastor must exercise oversight willingly in the church. In order to understand what it means to serve willingly, Peter contrasts it with serving under compulsion. The underlying issue with this command is motive. How is the preacher to serve? In their commentary, Leighton and Griffith state, “We are warned against making our ministry into a trade that has to be followed rather than a calling that we choose to obey. We are to undertake the work with a willing heart.”<sup>37</sup> However, the pastor must be careful to avoid removing all duty from service. The verse includes the clarifying phrase, “as God would have you.” The elders should serve the Lord for his glory with not only a sense of duty, but also a willing heart. Michaels says, “Peter knows that the human ego is a severe and unhealthy taskmaster and that ministry all too often becomes a compulsive

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<sup>34</sup>J. Ramsey Michaels, *1 Peter*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 49 (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1988), 282.

<sup>35</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>36</sup>Thomas R. Schriener, *1 & 2 Peter, Jude*, The New American Commentary, vol. 37 (Nashville: Broadman Press, 2003), 233.

<sup>37</sup>Robert Leighton and Griffith Thomas, *1, 2 Peter*, The Crossway Classic Commentaries (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1999), 226.

act of self-gratification. He wants it instead to be a free and joyous response to God's love."<sup>38</sup>

Next, Peter urges the elders to serve eagerly and not for shameful gain. These two ways of service are not natural opposites as the previous set. However, when paired these two concepts, without greed and with eagerness, present the truth that Peter is expressing. As Michaels states, "In one sense, 'greedily' is a weak translation because the word implies not only greed, but greed that satisfies itself through fraud. Yet despite his strong language, Peter is not warning the elders specifically against fraud, only against being 'in it for the money.'"<sup>39</sup> Peter is not suggesting that the pastor is to refrain from receiving payment for his services. His motive should be his eagerness and willingness to serve, not his compulsion or love of money. The two appropriate ways of service combine to present the strong statement that elders should be "ready and willing" to serve, regardless of the financial gain they may receive or any other motive.<sup>40</sup>

Finally, pastors should be examples to the flock, not domineering taskmasters. Schriener explains, "Elders are not to use their positions of authority as an opportunity to oppress those under them. They are not to function as oppressors, but examples."<sup>41</sup> The elders are not to use their positions to advance their own agendas or interests. They have been called as shepherds of God's church, not their own. Pastors must follow the example of Christ, who was God incarnate but never abused his authority. Jesus came to serve others, not to be served. (Matt 20:28) Likewise, pastors must be examples that congregations can follow. Michaels says, "Here the contrast with 'lording it over your

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<sup>38</sup>Michaels, *1 Peter*, 284.

<sup>39</sup>*Ibid.*, 284-85.

<sup>40</sup>*Ibid.*, 285. Michaels continues, "Although the financial support of the congregations may help the elders to fulfill their ministries, Peter insists that it must never become a necessary inducement for them to serve."

<sup>41</sup>Schriener, *1 & 2 Peter, Jude*, 235.

respective congregations' places the emphasis not only on exemplary moral behavior in general, but specifically on setting an example of humility and servanthood."<sup>42</sup>

Domineering pastors will never be respected in the pulpit because they treat people in a way that is contrary to the teaching of Scripture and the example of Christ.

In verse 4, Peter explains that the office of elder is not without reward. While the service of the pastor should never be driven by personal gain or by the accomplishment of a self-serving agenda, he will be rewarded nonetheless. When Jesus Christ returns, the elder will receive "an unfading crown of glory." Elders do not miss out by ignoring personal gain or worldly glory. According to Leighton and Thomas, Peter proclaims that "a crown that is weightier than all of them put together and abides forever awaits you . . . . The crown of glory is pure glory and is not tainted with any pride or sinful vanity and is not in danger of such things."<sup>43</sup>

First Peter 5:1-4 reveals what the heart of the minister should look like. When combined with the lists of attributes of the pastor from 1 Timothy and Titus, 1 Peter 1-4 shows a man that is a genuine believer and truly called by God to serve. He is on the inside what he is to appear to be on the outside. Further, his motives are godly, expressing humility and a servant's heart. This does not mean that the pastor is not firm in his convictions or bold in his proclamations. Pure and godly motives drive a man to love his people, teach them God's truth, and lead them by example.

### **Unethical Character Leads to Ineffective Preaching**

In stark contrast, a lack of strong ethical character in the life of a pastor diminishes his effectiveness in every area of leadership and ministry. Before moving into an examination of how unethical character can lead to ineffective preaching, I must add a qualification. Situations exist where preachers have carried on unethical activities for

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<sup>42</sup>Michaels, *1 Peter*, 286.

<sup>43</sup>Leighton and Thomas, *1, 2 Peter*, 227.

many years without their congregations being aware. In many of these cases, their ministries seem to flourish and preaching continues without diminished results. Usually when the truth comes out the impact of that sinful activity has the same general result as will be described. This thesis will not address the ability of preachers to continue in outwardly successful ministry while their lives are in moral failure; however, it will focus the effectiveness of Word of God not only through his preaching ministry over his congregation but also on his own personal character as a man called by God to preach.

Preaching professor Haddon Robinson includes the Holy Spirit's application of the Word of God on the life of the preacher in his definition of expository preaching. "Expository preaching is the communication of a biblical concept derived from and transmitted through a historical, grammatical, and literary study of a passage in its context, which the Holy Spirit first applies to the personality and experience of the preacher, then through the preacher, applies to the hearers."<sup>44</sup> He continues by saying that God's dealing with the preacher cannot be separated from the message that he preaches.<sup>45</sup> While the ministry of the Word can be effective in the lives of the hearers because of its power, preaching is most effective if it is also transforming the life of the preacher. As a result, the preacher can have an outwardly effective preaching ministry while being involved in private sin. For the purpose of this thesis, this man's preaching is considered less effective if it is not applied to his own character first, and he is growing in Christ.

In modern society, church leaders are no longer respected as leaders with called-out authority from God. They have to earn that trust. Shawchuck and Heuser comment,

As leadership in secular institutions has done, so leadership in religious organizations has fallen into greater distrust and skepticism. And, regretfully, not without cause, for here as in society the expectations and desires of the people have

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<sup>44</sup>Haddon Robinson, *Biblical Preaching: The Development and Delivery of Expository Message* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2001) 21.

<sup>45</sup>*Ibid.*, 25.

been all too often disappointed. In recent years, several highly visible religious television personalities have used their position to deceive and sway their followers to serve their own unethical ends. These travesties cause people, inside and outside the church, to hold all religious leaders in greater suspicion.<sup>46</sup>

As a result, pastors typically begin their ministry at a particular church with at least some respect based on the authority that comes with a pastoral call, but it takes many months or years for the pastor to earn a fuller, deeper trust of the congregation so that he can effectively lead them. In this section, I will address three areas in which the pastor can lose credibility with his congregation. They are pride, indolence, and desire.

### **Pride**

The Bible affirms that pride goes before destruction and a haughty spirit before a fall in Proverbs 16:18. Owen Carr, states, “Pride has nothing to do with externals. It is an attitude of the heart. The poorest, most illiterate, and most untalented can be proud.”<sup>47</sup> Paul wrote in Philippians 2:3 “Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit.” Pride causes a person to look out for his or her own self-interests regardless of the consequences to others. Carr also states that self-exaltation of the man can cause his ministry to be affected in every part. Pastors can be arrogant about their physical talents or achievements. They can think too highly of themselves in regard to material possessions. Carr also says, “If the devil cannot succeed in getting us to be proud about material or physical things, he will infect us with pride about our spirituality.”<sup>48</sup> This section will address two particular manifestations of pride to determine how they affect the delivery or reception of sermons.

When a pastor is more concerned about what others think about him than whether he is following God’s leading, he is manifesting pride in his ministry. Charles

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<sup>46</sup>Norman Shawchuck and Roger Heuser, *Leading the Congregation: Caring for Yourself While Serving the People* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1993), 18.

<sup>47</sup>Owen C. Carr, “The Pastor and His Personal Life,” in *And He Gave Pastors* (Springfield, MO: Gospel Publishing House, 1979), 95.

<sup>48</sup>Carr, “The Pastor and His Personal Life,” 95.

Bridges calls this the “fear of man.”<sup>49</sup> The pastor’s fear of man can be displayed in several areas of his ministry. First, in preaching, he can be afraid of speaking on subjects that his hearers might find too convicting or offending. The motive for this type of activity is that the pastor wants people to like him. However, pastors are not called by God to grow popular; they are called to share the message of God. Bridges also states, “Thus a minister under this deteriorating influence chiefly deals in general truths devoid of particular application – more in what is pleasing than what is direct and useful.”<sup>50</sup>

Second, “man pleasing” can manifest itself in his dealing with others in counseling sessions and pastoral visits. Instead of trying to help people change he may be prone to tell them what they want to hear. Third, the pastor may seek to please others and overcommit himself to different events, activities, and goals. As a result, he is unable to accomplish all that he has promised, and his fear of men has caused him to fail in the area of personal integrity. Finally, the pastor might reveal a fear of men in his conduct in the community. He may be afraid of persecution or imprisonment, or he may be afraid of being labeled a certain way. As a result, he may fear standing for Christ or evangelizing the lost. Bridges explains, “And in defect of becoming Christian boldness, our people, under the influence of our example, will sink into the same benumbed spirit, while their confidence in us will be materially weakened by the manifest evidence of our inefficiency and unfruitfulness.”<sup>51</sup> Fear of men is a result of pride. Further, the minister will have a difficult time effecting change on the life of his congregation if he only proclaims things that they want to hear and never challenges them with the truth of Scripture.

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<sup>49</sup>Charles Bridges, *The Christian Ministry: With an Inquiry into the Causes of Its Inefficiency* (East Peoria, IL: Versa Press, 2006), 122.

<sup>50</sup>Ibid., 123.

<sup>51</sup>Bridges, *The Christian Ministry*, 126.

A second manifestation of pride is displayed by an inflated ego. The preacher must have a healthy self-image to help others grow effectively in their faith. Trull and Carter clarify that the minister lives between two poles. He is called out by God to speak his Word into the lives of his congregation, yet he is a human being that faces the same problems and temptations as the people he is called to shepherd. Times of spiritual success can lead a pastor to have an inflated ego.<sup>52</sup> The pastor has been given a position of authority in the church by the call of God and the will of the church. Trull and Carter add, “The ability to serve humbly and to live gently and kindly is difficult for those who struggle with massive egos.”<sup>53</sup> A pastor with an inflated ego keeps attention on himself and finds it difficult to share success. He may also insist that the church only follow his ideas while ignoring the ideas of others. The problem of ego can also be manifested in the pastor’s relationship with other ministers or churches by a sense of competition rather than cooperation. Smith explains, “Most strong leaders have strong egos, and ego satisfaction is a character fault in Christian work.”<sup>54</sup>

When a pastor exalts himself at the expense of others, he loses credibility to lead. Pride is an internal heart issue that manifests itself in the interaction of the pastor with others. The sin of pride was the first sin of Satan and Adam. Bridges points out that pride is a serious matter that has its roots in the heart of the person that usurps the glory of God for his or her own glory. The reason that this sin stunts the progress of growth in ministry is that pride sets itself against the character of God.<sup>55</sup> “I am the Lord; that is my name; my glory I give to no other” (Isa 42:8). The Lord chooses to use the weak things of

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<sup>52</sup>Joe E. Trull and James E. Carter, *Ministerial Ethics: Moral Formation for Church Leaders* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2004), 66-67.

<sup>53</sup>*Ibid.*, 67.

<sup>54</sup>Fred Smith, Sr., *Leading with Integrity: Competence with Christian Character* (Minneapolis: Bethany House Publisher, 1999), 57.

<sup>55</sup>Bridges, *The Christian Ministry*, 154.

the world to accomplish his plans. The preacher must never serve with an inflated ego, lest he trample his congregation for the purpose of exalting himself.

### **Indolence**

A second area where the pastor can lose credibility is related to his diligence in all areas of his life. Indolence makes a minister ineffective and causes him to compromise and cut corners to save face with his congregation. Indolence is the act of being idle or lazy. “The desire of the sluggard kills him, for his hands refuse to labor” (Prov 21:25). The pastor’s indolence can be manifested in several ways. This section will examine three.

The most important area that a pastor must not neglect is his own spiritual life. Trull and Carter emphasize, “Continual spiritual growth is as important for the minister as it is for a parishioner.”<sup>56</sup> Pastors should respect the Bible as a rich source of spiritual food that produces growth and transformation in every life. However, the pastor can be so immersed in the study of Scripture for sermon preparation that the Bible becomes familiar. Harmon says, “The Bible becomes a quarry out of which to dig texts, not a reservoir for personal refreshment; prayer is something done for others, not for oneself.”<sup>57</sup> Trull and Carter explain that when a minister becomes familiar with the holy, he can begin to neglect the holy in his own life.<sup>58</sup> Bridges calls it dreadful when a minister preaches an unknown Savior.<sup>59</sup> He also states, “The Roman orator hath told us, that no man can be truly eloquent on a subject with which he is unacquainted. Nor indeed can the exhibition of the unknown and unfelt truth be expected to be productive of

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<sup>56</sup>Trull and Carter, *Ministerial Ethics*, 69.

<sup>57</sup>Nolan B. Harmon, *Ministerial Ethics and Etiquette* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1928), 41.

<sup>58</sup>Trull and Carter, *Ministerial Ethics*, 69.

<sup>59</sup>Bridges, *The Christian Ministry*, 155.

permanent effect.”<sup>60</sup> The pastor must not neglect the intimate time spent with God through personal Bible study and prayer.

Indolence in the area of personal growth and development can lead to all sorts of problems for the pastor. He may fall into temptation more easily. If he is not spending adequate time in Scripture, he can begin to teach false doctrine or a shallow version of the truth. In his counseling ministry, he may not be adequately equipped to help others see their weak areas or lead them to change. Since he must be an example, the pastor should lead people in the growth paths that he has experienced with the caveat that no pastor “has arrived” spiritually. He should be a man that is being transformed before he can lead others to be transformed.

A second area in which a pastor can be lazy is in sermon preparation. Trull and Carter state, “Ministers should see their sermons as an integral part of the worship service and not just a time for them to perform . . . . If the minister merely wings a sermon, depending on the inspiration of the moment, he or she debases the preaching moment.”<sup>61</sup> Pastors are usually busy people that are pulled in different directions by the needs and desires of those in their congregations. Nevertheless, the preacher must arrange his schedule leaving adequate time for sermon preparation. Trull and Carter identify two issues that are involved in ethical preaching, the use of Scripture and plagiarism.<sup>62</sup>

Because Scripture is God’s revelation of himself to humanity and the primary source of authority in the church, the preacher must take seriously the role of studying, interpreting, and delivering its message. The minister should seek to determine the original meaning of the author in the text that he will preach. Trull and Carter argue that the preacher does this by examining the context and literary style of the passage as well

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<sup>60</sup>Bridges, *The Christian Ministry*, 155.

<sup>61</sup>Trull and Carter, *Ministerial Ethics*, 98.

<sup>62</sup>Ibid.

as the historical and cultural setting. He must also ask what the passage says about Christ. Only then, can he determine what the text means for his modern audience.<sup>63</sup> They state, “Eisegesis, reading into the text one’s own meaning, is to be avoided.”<sup>64</sup> If the pastor is unwilling to study the Scripture passage and completely familiarize himself with the text because he is indolent, he may abuse the Scripture and use it to accomplish his own agenda, or he may misinterpret or preach false doctrine because he does not understand the passage.

Since sermons have become so easy to access on the Internet and through printed material, pastors are tempted to use the material of others to save time in sermon preparation. William Willimon observes,

Plagiarism by preachers is a serious matter, not primarily because thereby a preacher has stolen material that is owned by another, but rather because such use of material without attribution is a violation of the community of preachers. The acknowledgement of my indebtedness to the work of fellow Christian is my way of affirming, before the congregation, the communion of saints, my demonstration of dependence upon the community of preachers, living and dead, for my homiletical thoughts. While we may have debates over precisely what usage ought to be given attribution, and how to give that attribution in a sermon without laboriously and unnecessarily overburdening the sermon with overzealous annotation, there ought to be no disagreement that I need to look for ways to show the congregation that my thoughts are not my own.<sup>65</sup>

Plagiarism happens when the preacher attempts to pass off the material of others as his own. The preacher can plagiarize because he desires to make himself look good, which is a sin of pride. However, he can also use the material of others because he is too lazy to practice diligence in sermon preparation. Over the course of his ministry, the congregation will come to recognize the ill-prepared nature of the sermons and the preacher will lose credibility.

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<sup>63</sup>Trull and Carter, *Ministerial Ethics*, 99.

<sup>64</sup>Ibid.

<sup>65</sup>William H. Willimon, *Calling and Character: Virtues of the Ordained Life* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2000), 81.

A third area in which the pastor can be lazy is in his pastoral duties. Since pastors are all gifted with different talents and dispositions, some areas of ministry may come more naturally to one man than to another. Pastoral duties are defined here as the activities of the pastor in day-to-day ministry. This list may include pastoral visits, counseling, or administrative tasks. Indolence can be a factor when the pastor has to labor more diligently in an area where he does not have as much natural ability. Because he has to work harder, he refrains from putting much effort into the task. While church members will understand the gifting of their pastor, that does not mean that they will allow him to neglect the other ministry tasks.

When the pastor is lazy in his spiritual growth, preaching, or pastoral duties, the church suffers and the congregation recognizes that the pastor has not fulfilled his obligation. His congregation will lose respect for him and his authority. As a result, his public proclamations will not be received as authoritative. Why should a church member listen to someone that should be leading but is not committed to work hard in his role? The lazy man's sermons will also lack influence because he has not taken the task of personal growth and preparation seriously. Indolence opens the door for all manner of temptation and sin.

### **Desire**

A third area in a minister's life that can cause him to lose credibility is a lack of control of his personal desires. Pastors are human beings with the same fleshly desires as others. Since God has called the pastor to lead a flock through proclamation and example, he is expected to control his desire in the face of temptation and to order his life so that he avoids temptation. This section will assess how immoral desire can lead to a loss of credibility in the minister by examining sexual sin and greed. While sexual sin is the most prominent sin associated with fleshly desire, the loss of credibility can result

from a failure to deal with any temptation or desire including a quest for power, overeating, or pleasure seeking of any type.

Sexual sin can include lustful thoughts, adultery, fornication, or any other perversion of the biblical teaching of proper sexual union between one man and one woman. Sexual sin can lead to a loss of credibility and even complete destruction of a family and ministry. The cause of sexual misconduct can be innocent at first. Trull and Carter comment,

One *Newsweek* article provided a profile of the male minister who strays sexually. According to this profile, 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 commences when he meets a woman who needs him.<sup>66</sup>

They add that some women find an intimate relationship with a minister alluring since they view him as having power or authority and displaying compassion.<sup>67</sup> Because the pastor has a certain authority over a woman that he may be counseling, she may view him as having the qualities that she has been needing in her own relationships. These issues open the door for temptation.

The minister that is faced with sexual temptation has a choice to make. He must consider the cost of sexual immorality. Trull and Carter describe several consequences. Personally, the minister can lose his spouse, his children, respect in the community, his job, and financial security. The consequences to his relationship with the church are social isolation, blurred boundaries, feelings of inadequacy or perfectionism, and a lack of communication about the issue.<sup>68</sup> Sexual misconduct destroys the trust a congregation has for their pastor and conditions the members to continue to have mistrust for other ministers.

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<sup>66</sup>Trull and Carter, *Ministerial Ethics*, 79.

<sup>67</sup>*Ibid.*, 79-80.

<sup>68</sup>Trull and Carter, *Ministerial Ethics*, 79-80.

In order to avoid acting on sexual temptation, the minister must establish and define relationship boundaries. Trull and Carter note, “Clearly articulated boundaries for ministry relationships would help prevent problems from arising in regard to a minister’s relationships with others.”<sup>69</sup> The responsibility to adhere to those boundaries lies with the minister, as he is the one in authority. He must not put himself into situations where desires may be inflamed and develop into inappropriate actions.

A second area related to desire is greed. As stated above, one of the attributes of the elder is that he is not to have a love for money. The greedy pastor sets his desire on making money rather than serving the Lord. Carr comments, “It is a pity to see a person who has been mastered by his money. He becomes a slave, constantly driven.”<sup>70</sup> He may manipulate situations so that he can receive more income from the church. He also may alter his tax return to cheat the government. Greed may also manifest itself in materialism and the pastor may take out more debt than he can pay. Hamon says, “All the preaching a man will do will not atone for unpaid bills.”<sup>71</sup>

Desires can destroy the credibility of the pastor because the things desired can become the master over the man. If downfall happens, his goal is to fulfill his desire, and his decisions begin to be based on the desire rather than on the will of God. He can become manipulative to fulfill the lust of the flesh. Other desires can master the preacher as well, like a lust for power or fame. Since his actions are determined by his desires, the congregation will begin to recognize what drives him. They will not respect him or his message. Further, if he is trying to fulfill his desire, this may also affect the content of his sermons.

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<sup>69</sup>Trull and Carter, *Ministerial Ethics*, 83.

<sup>70</sup>Carr, “The Pastor and His Personal Life,” 97.

<sup>71</sup>Harmon, *Ministerial Ethics*, 46.

## Godly Character Leads to More Effective Preaching

While talent and natural abilities are an important part of the makeup of a strong leader and effective preacher, great leadership begins with great character. Joe Kutter states, “Thirty-nine years of pastoral ministry have convinced me that the preacher’s authority and credibility are ultimately grounded in the congregations perception of the preacher’s character and integrity.”<sup>72</sup> A preacher will be able to survive the ministry if he is lacking in some talent areas, but without character, he will eventually fail. This section will examine the character of the man called by God to lead in the church in two areas, his integrity and his humility as it relates to a servant’s heart.

Before addressing these two areas, I must offer a distinction between what is known as “quandary ethics” and “character ethics.” Charles Campbell states that quandary ethics focuses on a problem with the question, “What ought I to do?” Character ethics, or virtue ethics, asks, “What kind of person should I be?”<sup>73</sup> As stated in the introduction, the making of a preacher is first the making of a godly man. His sermons, leadership, and decisions flow from his character. Godly character is not as much about making right decisions, as it is becoming a godly person. He says, “The character ethicists remind us, in short, that morality is not an isolated part of life, limited to those moments calling for difficult decisions. Rather, ethics concerns the way we live our lives as a whole.”<sup>74</sup>

William Willimon calls character the “basic moral orientation that gives unity, definition, and direction to our lives by forming habits and intentions into meaningful and predictable patterns that have been determined by our dominant convictions.”<sup>75</sup> The

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<sup>72</sup>Joe Kutter, “It all Begins with Character,” *American Baptist Quarterly* 30, nos. 1-2 (2011): 28.

<sup>73</sup>Charles L. Campbell, “More Than Quandaries: Character Ethics and Preaching,” *Journal for Preachers* 16, no. 4 (1993): 32.

<sup>74</sup>Campbell, “More Than Quandaries,” 32.

<sup>75</sup>William Willimon, *The Service of God* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1983), 28-29.

moral choices of the pastor must be rooted in who he is as a growing and transforming member of the family of God. His actions are based on his convictions and his convictions are based on his spiritual growth. Both integrity and humility are traits of a Christian who is being transformed by the Holy Spirit.

## **Integrity**

The preacher should be a person of integrity not only in his actions, but also in personal character. “It is essential that we understand that the biblical idea of integrity has the root idea of completeness, that a person of integrity is a whole person.”<sup>76</sup> The concept of integrity is joined with the concept of character ethics explained above. Christians are commanded by God not just to act right, but also to be right. Paul says, “Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ” (Eph 4:15). Therefore, being a person of integrity involves every part of the human being. A person of integrity has an inner thought life that matches up to his or her pattern of outward behavior. Simply, he is on the inside the person that he proclaims himself to be. In this section, I will present the attributes of a person of integrity and show how integrity influences the pastor’s leadership through preaching.

R. Kent Hughes presents four traits of a man of integrity in his book *Disciplines of a Godly Man*.<sup>77</sup> First, the man of integrity speaks the truth intentionally. He does not try to manipulate or deceive through his words. This is also true of a preacher in the pulpit. A preacher with integrity may be concerned about a response, but he never wants to manipulate his audience to come forward for the sake of numbers. He is careful with his illustrations and statistics, making sure that they are accurate and takes care to give proper credit for material that is not his own. He is also intentional about speaking the truth in counseling. He is not concerned about playing sides in a conflict to be

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<sup>76</sup>R. Kent Hughes, *Disciplines of a Godly Man* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2001), 128.

<sup>77</sup>*Ibid.*, 129.

admired by his counselees. He speaks the truth of God's word intentionally and with a loving attitude.

Second, Hughes adds that the man of integrity "never cheats or defrauds another, never steals."<sup>78</sup> Some forms of cheating or stealing are concealed from the congregation easily but can weigh on the heart of the pastor as he ministers and preachers. For example, he may steal someone else's sermon without giving proper credit. He could also cheat in financial matters like tax returns or improper use of church funds. Even if the congregation is unaware of these matters, they can affect his preaching because a true believer comes to recognize the sin in his or her life.

Third, Hughes continues, the man of integrity keeps his word. "He never promises to do something that he does not intend to do."<sup>79</sup> A pastor can gain a reputation for always following through when he makes a promise. Likewise, a pastor who routinely makes promises that he never intends to keep gains a reputation for not being a man of his word. If the congregation cannot trust the word of the pastor on routine matters during the workweek, they will certainly not trust his word from the pulpit. When a pastor makes a promise to anyone in his congregation, he must always intend to keep it. Promise keeping requires intentional forethought and the ability to tell someone "no" when the promise is improbable. The pastor must work hard to keep his word.

Finally, Hughes says that a man of integrity is a man of principle. "We must understand that being a man of principle means more than having principles. It means having the courage to stand up for your convictions when it costs you."<sup>80</sup> This can be applied to the pastor in several areas. For example, the pastor is called to preach the whole counsel of God's word. That means that from time to time he will need to deal

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<sup>78</sup>R. Kent Hughes, *Disciplines of a Godly Man* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2001), 128.

<sup>79</sup>Ibid.

<sup>80</sup>Ibid., 129.

with difficult issues, like divorce or homosexual sin. He may have a conviction that these things are sin but refrain from preaching the full truth of God's word to the congregation because he does not want to offend anyone. The man of integrity knows that God's word and God's truth is what is best for his people and preaches the truth regardless of the consequences to him personally.

Integrity is the making of the whole person in both actions and motives. Without integrity, the pastor cannot be trusted. If the man is not trusted, his words, whether from the pulpit or in the counseling room, cannot be trusted. Integrity is an essential character trait of anyone in leadership. Even more, integrity is an essential quality of every man that is called as pastor in God's church.

## **Humility**

When a man is called as a pastor, he must lead the church understanding that God has seen nothing of worth in the man himself. Everything that the pastor is and does has been a gift to him by God. Therefore, the pastor is to lead in humility knowing that he is not worthy of the task that God has called him. However, God has made him worthy to serve by his work in the man's life. Pride has no place in the life of a minister. He is completely dependent on the Lord for every part of his character and abilities. The greatest expression of humility in Scripture is Jesus Christ. He is God and yet condescended to earth to become a man that was ridiculed and crucified. Jesus said, "But whoever would be great among you must be your servant, and whoever would be first among you must be slave of all" (Mark 10:43-45). Jesus expects his followers to live in the same way he did, including pastors. This section will examine servant leadership as the expression of humility in the life of the pastor.

According to Shelp and Sunderland, the term slave in both the Old and New Testaments refers to "one whose individual rights were taken away and whose duty it had

become to substitute the will of his or her master for his or her own.”<sup>81</sup> The preacher should recognize that he has given up his right to lead his own life according to his personal will and has committed to serve the Lord’s will as his own. This seems like a hard saying at first, but Christians come to recognize through their growth that the Lord has changed their personal desire. Spiritual growth produces a new set of desires in the believer that are set on God’s will. As the pastor grows in faith, he begins to desire God’s will above everything else. As a result, he serves others with God’s desire as his only agenda.

What does a servant leader look like? And what is the difference between a leader who looks out for his or her own interests or one who puts the interests of others first? Shawchuck and Heuser state,

Inherent in the call to “servant-first” leadership is to make certain other people’s highest priority needs are met. The best test, but difficult to administer in evaluating one’s own “servant-first” leadership, is to ask if “those served grow as persons? Do they, while being served, become healthier, wiser, freer, more autonomous, more likely themselves to become servants?”<sup>82</sup>

The problem with living as a servant-leader is revealed in the moral failures mentioned above. Pride is at the heart of sin and serving others requires a complete change in thinking and acting. God is the only one that can apply this change to Christian lives.

In his book *Spiritual Leadership*, J. Oswald Sanders identifies six principles that should be present in someone that has a spirit of servanthood.<sup>83</sup> First, he must have a *dependence* upon the Lord.<sup>84</sup> The Lord is the one who holds up the man of God.

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<sup>81</sup>Earl E. Shelp and Ronald H. Sunderland, *The Pastor as Servant* (New York: The Pilgrim Press, 1986), 3.

<sup>82</sup>Shawchuck and Heuser, *Leading the Congregation*, 35.

<sup>83</sup>J. Oswald Sanders, *Spiritual Leadership: Principles of Excellence of Every Believer* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1994), 23-25.

<sup>84</sup>*Ibid.*, 23.

Everything about him from his talents to his wisdom is a gift from God. His ministry should be fulfilled in complete dependence on the Lord. Second, he must desire only the *approval* of the Lord.<sup>85</sup> He is not to be a “man-pleaser” but a “God-pleaser.” Third, he must display *modesty* in his life.<sup>86</sup> He is not to draw attention to himself or take credit for something that God has done. He is also willing to share the spotlight or give credit to others in their accomplishments.

Fourth, his life is to manifest *empathy* for those who are weak and suffering.<sup>87</sup> In the story of the Good Samaritan in Luke 10:25-37, Jesus described two religious men that ignored the plight of another human being. The pastor must model his life after the Good Samaritan who was willing to help another because he could relate to his suffering. Fifth, the servant-leader must live in *optimism*.<sup>88</sup> Pessimism and negativity push people away from the truth. God’s children know the truth. God wins the ultimate victory in the end. Thus, the pastor is to display hope in his service and optimism as he leads others through this life. Finally, the servant-leader must have an *anointing*. No character trait or ability has any power to exact change on the lives of other Christians without the power of the Holy Spirit. Pastors must understand that they are not alone in doing God’s work. He is with them and gives them supernatural power to do his will.

The pastor is called out by God to lead in the church with authority. He has an important role of responsibility to feed, care for, and protect the flock. However, he must always remember that he has been called to lead from within the congregation, not from above them. Noyce, in his book *Pastoral Ethics*, notes that this approach calls for a change in the understanding of the role of pastor in many churches. Instead of looking to

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<sup>85</sup>J. Oswald Sanders, *Spiritual Leadership: Principles of Excellence of Every Believer* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1994), 24.

<sup>86</sup>Ibid.

<sup>87</sup>Ibid.

<sup>88</sup>Ibid.

a man to lead out in the duties of Christian ministry, they look to a man that teaches them to join him in those duties. This does not diminish the role of pastor; it exalts it to servant-leader.<sup>89</sup> He serves side-by-side with other believers that he has trained in the truths of Scripture without “lording it over” them. Humility should be the trait of every pastor. A humble pastor is easily recognized and respected in the pulpit.

A man of character makes a better preacher. As he is growing and God is changing him into the example he has called him to be, his sermons begin to flow from his own life. The character of the pastor should reflect both integrity and humility. His life is whole in both actions and motives. Further, he serves with compassion and dependence on the Lord knowing that he serves the church from within, not above.

### **Conclusion**

Before a pastor can be effective in the pulpit, he must be effective in his personal life. All of the qualities of a pastor in Scripture portray a minister’s character that is to be above reproach, but church members can never fully discern his heart. By examining the minister to determine if he is actively displaying the outward attributes in his life, the congregation can have an idea of his inward character. He is to be a man of integrity and humility that controls the desires of his heart. Albert Mohler states, “Character is indispensable to credibility, and credibility is essential to leadership. The great warning to every leader is that certain sins and scandals can spell the end of leadership. We can forfeit our role as leader and the stewardship of leadership can be taken from us.”<sup>90</sup> Once a pastor loses credibility with his people, they will not allow him to lead them, even from the pulpit. The godly character of the preacher is essential for effective preaching both in the preparation and reception of sermons by the congregation.

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<sup>89</sup>Gaylord Noyce, *Pastoral Ethics: Professional Responsibilities of the Clergy* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1988), 32-33.

<sup>90</sup>Albert Mohler, *The Conviction to Lead: 25 Principles for Leadership that Matters* (Minneapolis: Bethany House Publishers, 2012), 80.

## CHAPTER 3

### THE PREACHER'S FAMILY

#### **Introduction**

While the preacher's godly character is essential to his effectiveness in the pulpit, he must also guard and order his family life to honor God and reflect his commands in Scripture. Jay Adams notes, "No more critical matter can be considered since it is probably in this area that more pastors and more families suffer than in any other."<sup>1</sup> The pastor's family life supports everything he does, and likewise, can also destroy everything he does. It can be a source of strength and blessing or a source of weakness and discouragement.

As previously noted, the pastor is to be the spiritual leader for the church. Comparably, his family life is lived out before the church and functions as an example for right family life, but the pastor's family is not without needs and flaws, spiritual and otherwise. The pastor is the leader of the family commanded by God to care for and guide them. A pastor who cannot manage his household properly cannot lead the church effectively. Adams states, "At the outset, the pastor must recognize that he is a husband first, a father second, and a pastor third."<sup>2</sup>

I will examine what the Bible teaches in regard to the example of the pastor's family and show how it affects his ability to lead effectively from the pulpit. The first section will examine specific commands in the Bible related to the qualifications concerning the pastor's family and Christian family life in general. The second section

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<sup>1</sup>Jay E. Adams, *Shepherding God's Flock* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1979), 32.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

will show how a pastor's marriage influences the effectiveness of his preaching. The final section will explore how a pastor's managing of his household influences the effectiveness of his preaching.

### **Biblical Rationale**

In both the Timothy and Titus passages examined in the last chapter, Paul states that the pastor is to be above reproach. As Lea and Griffin explain, "The home life of the elder must reflect this blamelessness."<sup>3</sup> His true character is displayed in how he leads, interacts with, and manages his household. In this section, I will examine the qualifications of the pastor that were excluded in the last chapter in the Titus and Timothy passages concerning family life. Since the pastor is the primary model for spiritual life in the church, his home life should reflect the commands for the family as communicated in Scripture. Because the pastor is to model Christian life in his family, this section will also survey two passages of Scripture that define what God expects from his people in the home.

### **Family Qualifications for the Pastor**

Both 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-9 contain two basic qualifications for the pastor in regard to his family life. First, the pastor is to be the husband of one wife, providing an example of fidelity and loving care for his bride. Second, he is to manage his household well. This command is directed toward children but includes the other areas of family life as well. Since each passage contains similar language and focus in regard to the family qualifications, both will be addressed together with only minor attention given to distinctions of each.

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<sup>3</sup>Thomas D. Lea and Hayne P. Griffin, Jr., *1 & 2 Timothy, Titus*, The New American Commentary, vol. 34 (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1992), 110.

**The husband of one wife.** In both 1 Timothy 3:2 and Titus 1:6 Paul states that the elder must be the husband of one wife. Scholars propose four basic interpretations of this phrase concerning the right marital relationship between a pastor and a wife. First, the pastor must be a married man. Mounce notes that this interpretation is not acceptable because “it runs counter to Paul’s teaching that being single is a better state for church workers”<sup>4</sup> (cf. 1 Cor. 7:17, 25-38). Mounce explains that according to this line of reasoning, if this phrase were implying that the pastor must be married, then later, when Paul mentions the pastor’s children in 1 Timothy 3:4, it would require that pastors have at least two children.<sup>5</sup> “The husband of one wife” cannot be interpreted to mean that the pastor must be married when compared with Paul’s personal marital situation and his teaching elsewhere in Scripture on the subject of singleness.

The second interpretation of “the husband of one wife” proposes that this is a command against pastoral polygamy. Lea and Griffin state, “Such a practice would be so palpably unacceptable among Christians that it would hardly seem necessary to prohibit it.”<sup>6</sup> While the language of the text indeed prohibits polygamy by the pastor, this interpretation as the primary meaning of the text is not supported by the practice of Christians at the time. Mounce comments, “Even if polygamy existed among the Jews, evidence is lacking that it was practiced by Christians.”<sup>7</sup>

A third interpretation of “husband of one wife” emphasizes the word “one,” and suggests that the phrase means the pastor should have had only one marriage. In this view, churches would exclude a man from consideration from ministry because of remarriage after being widowed and after a divorce of any kind. Knight offers,

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<sup>4</sup>William D. Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 46 (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2000), 171.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid.

<sup>6</sup>Lea and Griffin, *1 & 2 Timothy, Titus*, 109.

<sup>7</sup>Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 171.

It would be strange for the apostle of liberty, who considered widows and widowers "free to be married ... only in the Lord" (1 Cor. 7:39) and who used this principle of freedom to illustrate his teaching on the law (Rom. 7:1-3), to deny this freedom to a potential church officer whose spouse has died. Likewise, the freedom to remarry granted to the "innocent" party when a marriage has been terminated as a result of sexual unfaithfulness (as I believe Mt. 19:9 should be understood) or when an unbelieving spouse has abandoned a believing spouse (1 Cor. 7:15) does not seem to be restricted so that they could not apply to a potential officer.<sup>8</sup>

Knight, therefore, concludes that a man who has been divorced for biblical reasons of infidelity or abandonment, on the part of his wife, is eligible to serve if remarried based on other teachings in the New Testament. Mounce agrees that this phrase does not rule out the possibility of remarried men serving as pastors.<sup>9</sup>

The final interpretation seems to be the most likely for "husband of one wife" and concerns the pastor's faithfulness to his wife. Lea and Griffin comment, "The Greek describes the overseer literally as a 'one-woman kind of man'"<sup>10</sup> The focus of Paul is on the man's faithfulness to his wife. The pastor is not to be sexually promiscuous or flirtatious. This qualification is closely associated with the previous statement in both Titus and Timothy that the man of God is to be above reproach. Mounce believes that "marital faithfulness also has the advantage of being a positive way of stating the requirement (as opposed to the negative, not divorced/remarried) that parallels the rest of the positive statements in the verse(s)."<sup>11</sup> Knight states that this interpretation "positively affirms sexual fidelity couched in monogamous marital terminology . . . . It is analogous, therefore, to the command, 'You shall not commit adultery,' which is also couched in marital language but encompasses other sexual sins, as the outworking of that command in the chapters following Exodus 20 evince."<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>8</sup>George W. Knight III, *The Pastoral Epistles*, The New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1992), locs. 2736-40, Kindle.

<sup>9</sup>Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 173.

<sup>10</sup>Lea and Griffin, *1 & 2 Timothy, Titus*, 110.

<sup>11</sup>Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 172.

<sup>12</sup>Knight, *The Pastoral Epistles*, loc. 2748.

The phrase “husband of one wife” is best understood to mean that the pastor is to be a man that displays a loving fidelity to his wife. While it is best that he has only had one marriage, the text does not specifically state that a remarried man is excluded. Lea and Griffin say, “Had Paul clearly meant to prohibit divorce, he could have said it unmistakably by using the Greek word for divorce.”<sup>13</sup> So then, each church or denomination must weigh the issue and decide what it is willing to accept.

**Manages household well.** In 1 Timothy 3:4-5, leadership and caring abilities of the pastor to his church are compared to the same abilities in his home. As Mounce states, “An overseer must be able to manage his own household as a prerequisite for managing the household of God.”<sup>14</sup> When compared with the family, this management is related to caring for and leading rather than ruling or lording over. He adds, “This double nuance of leadership and caring is visible when Paul asks how someone who cannot manage his own household can be expected . . . ‘to care for’ God’s household. Leaders are not to be autocrats; they are to be servant leaders, following the model of Christ as a leader who serves.”<sup>15</sup>

Paul goes on to clarify his meaning of “managing the household well” with two statements. First, the pastor’s children are to be in submission to him. Second, he must maintain dignity through the process of household management. Knight notes, “The subjection shown by the children must reflect the character of the father’s leadership.”<sup>16</sup> Mounce describes this submission in terms of the general posture of the children towards the leadership of the father. If his children are disobedient and incorrigible, the father

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<sup>13</sup>Lea and Griffin, *1 & 2 Timothy, Titus*, 110.

<sup>14</sup>Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 177.

<sup>15</sup>Ibid., 178.

<sup>16</sup>Knight, *The Pastoral Epistles*, loc. 2798.

should not be allowed to manage in the church.<sup>17</sup> In Titus 1:6, Paul states that the children are to be believers, or faithful, and not open to the charge of debauchery or insubordination. This further clarifies submission of the children in the home. Lea and Griffin state, “The additional requirement that the elder be capable of influencing his own children to become Christians demonstrates Paul’s conviction that effective spiritual leadership in the home suggests the probability of effective spiritual leadership in the church.”<sup>18</sup> Does this passage imply that men who have spiritually lost children are not eligible to be pastors? An implication like this would suggest that the father has some control over whether or not his children believe. God is the one who saves, and children are the ones who believe or reject the gospel. The father’s job is to lead and train the children in the way of the Lord. As Mounce says, “It may simply mean that a Christian leader should have Christian children.”<sup>19</sup> So then, the text is interpreted to mean, as a general principle, spiritual people produce godly offspring who are submissive to spiritual leadership. This type of spiritual leadership should translate into the church family.

Paul uses the phrase “with all dignity” as a characteristic of a household that is managed well. Commentators argue that Paul could have used the phrase “with all dignity” in reference to the behavior of the children or the father. Since God has given the father the responsibility of leading the family, he is obligated to be the one who maintains the dignity of the home through his own actions and interactions with his family. Dignity is used to describe deacons, their wives, and believers in general in the New Testament. Knight affirms this position by stating, “Perhaps Paul sought to describe that which characterized the relationship from both sides. Submission on the part of the children

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<sup>17</sup>Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 179.

<sup>18</sup>Lea and Griffin, *1 & 2 Timothy, Titus*, 282.

<sup>19</sup>Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 389.

marked by a relationship of dignity and seriousness is that which reflects on the ability of a man to be a bishop.”<sup>20</sup>

Paul’s question in 1 Timothy 3:5, “For if someone does not know how to manage his own household, how will he care for God’s church?” implies a negative answer. Mounce argues, “There is a direct connection between a person’s ability to manage his own family and his ability to manage the church.”<sup>21</sup> As noted above, the pastor is “to care” for the church. “The personal and thorough care given by the Good Samaritan, the only other NT occurrence of the verb, cannot help but serve as a pattern, even though the contexts differ.” The care given the church is the same care that should be given in the home by the father. So then, a man’s qualification to serve as a pastor can be evaluated by how he manages his household.

### **Biblical Teaching on Family Life**

As described in the preceding chapter, the pastor is the spiritual example for the church by nature of his position as chief shepherd. This role also includes the example of his family life before the church. Upon accepting the call to the pastorate, he becomes the primary example of a godly husband and father for his church members. Likewise, his wife and children also become an example to the other wives and children in the church for a model family. This section will look at commands given in the New Testament in regard to the family in Ephesians 5:22-6:4 and Colossians 3:18-21. When the pastor and his family live out these commands in their daily lives, they become a godly example for the church to follow.

F. F. Bruce states that the family had been a long established unit of society. At the time of the writing of the passages defining family life in the church, the body of

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<sup>20</sup>Knight, *The Pastoral Epistles*, loc. 2816.

<sup>21</sup>Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 180.

Christ was a new covenant family.<sup>22</sup> A godly family life taught and modeled in the church teaches the broader implications for this new covenant family. The passage in Ephesians contains an analogy between the relationship of Christ to the church and the husband to the wife. Commentator Andrew Lincoln says, “To be sure, the primary aim of the pericope is to give instructions about marriage, but he (the writer) bases these on assertions about the relationship of the heavenly bridegroom, Christ, and the church.”<sup>23</sup>

The new covenant does not change the structure of the family, but changes how the family interacts within the covenant. In his commentary on Colossians, F. F. Bruce states this concept:

The church was God’s new creation and provided a setting in which the principles of the new creation could be put into practice. In the church, therefore, women had equal status as men and slaves with free persons, just as Gentiles had with Jews. But the structure of the family was already in being . . . . The structure, hierarchical as it was, was left unaltered, apart from an introduction of the new principle, “as is fitting in the Lord” – which indeed was to be more revolutionary in its effect than was generally foreseen in the first century church.<sup>24</sup>

The way the family interacts should model the transformation that the gospel brings to the individuals who make up the family, and in turn, make up the church. Thus, the pastor’s family becomes a model of gospel transformation for the church.

**Commands regarding wives.** Paul begins the directives for the family in both Ephesians 5:22-6:4 and Colossians 3:18-21 with the command of submission for the wife in regard to her husband. Even though he specifically provides this command for wives, in Ephesians 5:21 Paul instructs all Christians to submit mutually to one another.

Submission is the attitude with which believers should relate to all people, and this verse

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<sup>22</sup>F. F. Bruce, *The Epistles to the Colossians, to Philemon, and to the Ephesians*, The New International Commentary On the New Testament (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1984), 163.

<sup>23</sup>Andrew T. Lincoln, *Ephesians*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 42 (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1990), 352.

<sup>24</sup>Bruce, *The Epistles to the Colossians, to Philemon, and to the Ephesians*, 163.

is a hinge on which Paul takes the commands for all and applies them to family in the following verses.

Lincoln notes that Paul “asks wives to voluntarily subordinate themselves to their husbands.”<sup>25</sup> He also says that some commentators point out different levels of submission so that a distinction must be made between whether Paul means submission or obedience. He uses the example of two different Greek words being used for the subordination of wives and the obedience of children later in the passage.<sup>26</sup> Lincoln clarifies his argument by stating, “To be sure, ‘to submit’ is the broader term, but to subordinate oneself to another may well entail being willing to obey that person, and such obedience would certainly have been seen as part of a wife’s role in relation to her husband most in parts of the ancient world.”<sup>27</sup> Paul states that her submission to her husband is to be in the same way that she submits to the Lord. Bruce says, “The implication... is that Christian wives’ submission to their husbands is one aspect of their obedience to the Lord.”<sup>28</sup> This is supported by Paul’s clarification of the wife’s submission in Colossians 3:18, “as fitting to the Lord.”

In Ephesians 5:23, Paul gives the reason for the wife’s submission, which is the authority of the husband given by God. The husband’s authority is not based on his superiority but rather on his God given role as the head of the home in the same way that Christ is the head of the church. John MacArthur says, “The wife’s supreme motive for submitting to her husband is the fact that he is her functional head in the family, just as

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<sup>25</sup>Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 367.

<sup>26</sup>Ibid.

<sup>27</sup>Ibid., 367-68.

<sup>28</sup>Bruce, *The Epistles to the Colossians, to Philemon, and to the Ephesians*, 384.

Christ also is the head of the church.”<sup>29</sup> F. F. Bruce compares the role of the husband’s headship to the wife with the creation story in that Adam is the source of Eve’s existence.<sup>30</sup> Since the creation of humanity, the husband was to have authority over the wife. With the coming of the new covenant, believers are being transformed into the likeness of Christ and are called by God to be conformed to his image (cf. 1 John 2:6). As a result, the family in the new covenant should be modeled after Christ and his relationship to the church.

Paul further states in Ephesians 5:24 that the wife should submit to her husband in the manner in which the church should submit to Christ, “in everything.” This requires that the wife submit completely to her husband. As Lincoln states, “There is to be no limit to the submission expected of wives, just as there is no limit to the church’s obedient service of Christ.”<sup>31</sup> The ideal model of submission for the wife is that her husband is obedient and faithful to the Lord. Her submission to such a man would not conflict with her submission to the Lord. However, the wife’s submission to the husband is not predicated on his obedience to the commands that are given to the husband in Ephesians 5:25-33.

**Commands regarding husbands.** In both passages, Paul commands the husband to love his wife in the same manner as Christ loved the church. The pattern of love is that of self-sacrifice. Bruce notes, “The believing community is here compared to a maiden for whom Christ laid down his life that she might become his bride.”<sup>32</sup> Lincoln observes that since wives are commanded to submit, one might expect Paul to command

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<sup>29</sup>John F. MacArthur, *Ephesians, The MacArthur New Testament Commentary* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1986), 288.

<sup>30</sup>Bruce, *The Epistles to the Colossians, to Philemon, and to the Ephesians*, 384.

<sup>31</sup>Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 373.

<sup>32</sup>Bruce, *The Epistles to the Colossians, to Philemon, and to the Ephesians*, 386.

husbands to rule their wives.<sup>33</sup> The analogy follows that Christ is the head of the church and the husband is the head of the wife, the leader. Rather than ruling over her in a domineering manner, he should lead her lovingly.

The call of the husband to love as Christ loved the church is a radical departure from the type of role that the husband might have been expected to have in the world to which Paul was writing. Lincoln describes the extent of the command:

The exhortation to sacrifice one's own interests for the welfare of others, which is so necessary for the harmony of the community, now finds a more specific application in the husband's role in contributing to marital harmony. Husbands are asked to exercise the self-giving love that has as its goal only their wives' good and that will care for their wives without the expectation of reward. It can only now be seen clearly that for this writer the exhortation to wives to submit is not to be separated from this call to husbands to give themselves in love and that any exercise of headship on the part of the husbands will not be through self-assertion but through self-sacrifice. The parallel to the love of Christ for the church means, of course, that the husband's love is one that will make even the ultimate sacrifice of life itself.<sup>34</sup>

Examining Ephesians 5:25-23, John MacArthur explains that the text describes four manifestations of love that the husband is to have for his wife when compared with Christ's love for the church. First, the text shows that the husband is to have a sacrificial love.<sup>35</sup> As noted above, the husband is to be willing to give up even his own life for the sake of his wife.

Second, he notes that the husband is to have a purifying love.<sup>36</sup> In his exhortation, Paul reminds the readers of the purpose of Jesus death on the cross, which is to sanctify the church and make her pure so that she can be united with him in a relationship. The sacrificial love is based on a purifying purpose of love. "Divine love

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<sup>33</sup>Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 373.

<sup>34</sup>Ibid., 374.

<sup>35</sup>MacArthur, *Ephesians*, 291-305.

<sup>36</sup>Ibid.

does not simply condemn wrong in those loved but seeks to cleanse them from it.”<sup>37</sup>

MacArthur explains that when a husband loves a wife in this way he seeks to help her to refrain from and overcome anything that may defile her. Further, he will seek to protect her from anything in the world that would contaminate her.<sup>38</sup> The leadership role of the husband is not simply that of a decision-making provider. He should also be the spiritual leader in the home seeking to lead his wife and family in the ways of God. In order to accomplish this, he must first be close to God and then be willing to lead out in purifying love.

Third, MacArthur addresses a caring love.<sup>39</sup> In Ephesians 5:28-30, Paul states that the husband is to care for his wife in the same way he cares for his own body. Bruce says, “That it is natural to love oneself is evident from the way in which most people care for themselves, especially their bodies . . . . It is natural conduct that is in view in the present context: just as a man provides for his own comfort and well being, so he should provide for his wife’s.”<sup>40</sup> The husband will provide the care his wife needs, whether physical care, emotional care, or spiritual care. MacArthur adds, “Something is basically wrong if she is looked at only as a cook, housekeeper, occasional companion, and sex partner.”<sup>41</sup> She is a precious gift from God that must be cherished and nurtured.

Last, MacArthur clarifies the bond described in the text between the husband and the wife as unbreakable.<sup>42</sup> Paul quotes a passage of Scripture from the Old Testament. “Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh” (Gen 2:24). As the couple leaves their families of

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<sup>37</sup>MacArthur, *Ephesians*, 299.

<sup>38</sup>Ibid., 300.

<sup>39</sup>Ibid., 301.

<sup>40</sup>Bruce, *The Epistles to the Colossians, to Philemon, and to the Ephesians*, 391.

<sup>41</sup>MacArthur, *Ephesians*, 301.

<sup>42</sup>Ibid., 302.

origin, they should “hold fast” to one another. Bruce identifies a response of Jesus in Mark 10:6-8 that also quotes this verse and shows that Jesus intended it to describe the permanence of the marriage institution.<sup>43</sup> Mark 10:9 sums up Jesus’ argument. “What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate” (Mark 10:9). So then, marriage is seen as a lifelong commitment between one man and one woman in which the love is unbreakable.

In Colossians 3:19, Paul describes the manner in which husbands are to love their wives overall. Husbands should not be harsh with their wives. Peter O’Brien describes this negative command as a correlation to the positive command for the husband to love his wife as Christ loved the church.<sup>44</sup> He states, “Christian husbands are not to become angry or incensed against their wives either in thought or deed.”<sup>45</sup> The command is to love regardless of situations inside or outside the home. Further, the husband is to love his wife regardless of whether or not she submits to him.

The husband is commanded by God to lead his wife in the same manner as Christ lovingly leads the church. His love should be sacrificial, even willing to give up his life for the sake of his wife. The husband should seek to purify his wife in love, protecting her, and helping to cleanse her from anything worldly that would defile her. He is to care for her as he does himself even placing her needs above his own. The union between the man and woman should be built on a love that is permanent. Further, he should never have a harsh demeanor towards his wife. Christ is the perfect example of the manner of the husband’s love for his wife.

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<sup>43</sup>Bruce, *The Epistles to the Colossians, to Philemon, and to the Ephesians*, 393.

<sup>44</sup>Peter T. O’Brien, *Colossians-Philemon*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 44 (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2000), 223.

<sup>45</sup>*Ibid.*, 223-24.

**Commands regarding children and parents.** Each member of the family has responsibilities under the new covenant to submit to one another. In Ephesians 6:1-4 and Colossians 3:20-21, children are instructed to obey their parents, and parents are commanded to bring their children up in the instruction and discipline of the Lord without exasperating them. Parents have authority over the children, and children should subordinate themselves to the parents in all things. Lincoln states, “Elsewhere in the Pauline corpus, disobedience to parents is considered a sign of Gentile depravity (Rom 1:30) or a sign of the evil of the last days (2 Tim 3:2).”<sup>46</sup>

The manner in which Paul calls children to obey their parents is “in the Lord” (Eph. 6:1). Lincoln argues, “It is to be carried out not simply because the other party has superior authority or status but as part of their Christian discipleship and therefore ‘as to the Lord’ or ‘as to Christ.’”<sup>47</sup> He adds that the relationship between parents and children provides an environment in which children can serve the Lord.<sup>48</sup> In Colossians 3:20, Paul also says that the children’s submission pleases the Lord, which further supports this principle.

Paul further substantiates his command for the children’s obedience by quoting the fifth commandment of the Decalogue in Ephesians 6:2-3. Bruce comments, “The ‘promise’ which accompanies this commandment is the promise of prosperity and long life; no such promise is attached to any of the four preceding commandments.”<sup>49</sup> The commandment to give honor is directed toward both parents. Lincoln emphasizes, “It was understood as involving not only a respectful attitude, but also care for the parents’

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<sup>46</sup>Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 402.

<sup>47</sup>Ibid.

<sup>48</sup>Ibid. Lincoln also describes the Jewish understanding of children’s obedience as being a form of service to the Lord. While the Gentiles to whom Paul was writing would not have understood this connection, the principle is established for the new covenant people by this passage in which children obey their parents as if they are obeying the Lord.

<sup>49</sup>Bruce, *The Epistles to the Colossians, to Philemon, and to the Ephesians*, 398.

physical needs when they became old.”<sup>50</sup> Bruce states, “The chief point of the quotation of the fifth commandment may be to confirm that obedience to parents is right because it is enjoined to the law of God.”<sup>51</sup> The honor and obedience rendered to parents is in keeping with the nature of Christian submission in all Christian relationships both in the family and without, as noted above. Children are to honor and obey their parents “as to the Lord” because this is in keeping with the Law of God, since obedience is required to maintain mutual submission of all Christians to one another.

In both of the passages examined, the last command given in regard to the family is focused on parents, and states that fathers are not to provoke their children to anger. Lincoln notes that the command is directed to fathers since they are the responsible party as the head of household for the upbringing of their children.<sup>52</sup> O’Brien concedes that the principle applies to both parents, but fathers are specifically in view because the father had ultimate authority in the household in the Roman culture to which Paul was writing.<sup>53</sup> Bruce explains that parents “are urged not to irritate their children by being so unreasonable in their demands that the children lose heart and come to think that it is useless to try and please their parents.”<sup>54</sup> Colossians 3:21 reveals the reason that the parents should not provoke the children, so that they will not become discouraged. When this passage is compared with the husband’s duty to the wife, the command is very similar. The husband lovingly leads both his wife and his children. He does not rule over them in a domineering manner that provokes resentment. He leads them in a way so that

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<sup>50</sup>Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 405.

<sup>51</sup>Bruce, *The Epistles to the Colossians, to Philemon, and to the Ephesians*, 398.

<sup>52</sup>Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 406.

<sup>53</sup>O’Brien, *Colossians-Philemon*, 225.

<sup>54</sup>Bruce, *The Epistles to the Colossians, to Philemon, and to the Ephesians*, 165.

they respect him and gladly follow his leadership, although sometimes they may not agree with his decisions.

Ephesians 6:4 states both this negative command to avoid provoking the children and a positive command to bring them up in the instruction and discipline of the Lord. MacArthur says, “Discipline has to do with the overall training of the children, including punishment.”<sup>55</sup> He adds that instruction is more closely associated with teaching and correction and focuses on the right attitudes and behavior.<sup>56</sup> Lincoln comments that Paul clarifies that the instruction and discipline “is that which is in the sphere of the Lord and has the Lord as its reference point.”<sup>57</sup> This command means that not only should the parents live an example of Christian faith before their children, but also, they should instruct them in the teaching and discipline of the Lord. The positive commands, when taken with the negative, suggest a balance between aloof and aggressive parenting. The parents should take an active role in parenting their children instructing them in the ways of God and disciplining them when they disobey without discouraging with excessive, overbearing demands.

The commands taught in Scripture reflect a family life that honors God and can translate into effective leadership in the church. The husband has the authority as head of the household and is obligated to lead his family lovingly while maintaining fidelity to his wife and with godly instruction and discipline to his children. The wife is commanded to submit to her husband in all things. The children are required to honor and obey their parents. All of this is done in mutual love and submission to one another. A man that cannot manage his household in this manner will have great difficulty managing the affairs of the church as a pastor.

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<sup>55</sup>MacArthur, *Ephesians*, 319.

<sup>56</sup>Ibid.

<sup>57</sup>Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 408.

## **The Impact of Marriage on the Effectiveness of Preaching**

Although Scripture does not forbid a pastor from living a single life, some individual churches place an expectation of marriage on pastoral candidates. Daniel Langford states, “Evangelical churches . . . almost always insist a male pastor come packaged with a family.”<sup>58</sup> Doreen Moore, former staff member for Campus Crusade for Christ, affirms, “Being married can increase one’s effectiveness in ministry.”<sup>59</sup> Because the pastor is the example for the church, his family is also expected to be a model for other families in the church to follow. Bridges insists that the pastor “must expect not only his personal character, but his household arrangements . . . to be the subject of a most scrutinizing observation.”<sup>60</sup> If his family, as a general rule, meets the qualifications and commands as laid out in the section above, they can become a source of joy, strength, and encouragement in his ministry. Patrick affirms this idea by stating, “We must acknowledge that marriage and family life can, in itself, be of great enrichment to the work of ministry”<sup>61</sup>

Likewise, if the pastor’s family does not meet the qualifications and commands as laid out in the section above, they become for him a burden, source of discouragement, and weakness in his ministry. Bridges argues that people are more influenced by what they observe than what they hear. “If the parsonage does not show the pattern as well as the doctrine, exhortation from thence will only excite the ridicule of the ungodly, and confirm them in their habits of sin.”<sup>62</sup> He continues by observing that if the minister’s

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<sup>58</sup>Daniel L. Langford, *The Pastor’s Family: The Challenges of Family Life and Pastoral Responsibilities* (New York: The Haworth Pastoral Press, 1998), 6.

<sup>59</sup>Doreen Moore, *Good Christian Husbands: Leaving a Legacy in Marriage and Ministry* (Fearn, Scotland: Christian Focus Publications, 2004), 141.

<sup>60</sup>Charles Bridges, *The Christian Ministry: With an Inquiry into Causes of its Inefficiency* (East Peoria, IL: Versa Press, 2006), 167.

<sup>61</sup>Graham A. Patrick, “The Pastor’s Problems: The Pastor and His Family,” *The Expository Times* 93 (1982): 361.

<sup>62</sup>Bridges, *The Christian Ministry*, 168.

wife is more concerned with the things of the world, she will preach compromise with the world more effectively than her husband can preach denial of the world in the greatest sermon.<sup>63</sup>

The pastor must have a marriage that meets the commands of Scripture to be most effective in the pulpit. The purpose of this section is to show the effects of marriage on the preaching ministry. I will present three case studies that examine the marriages of three pastors and the effects of their marriages on their preaching ministry. In the first, I will inspect a pastor with a failed marriage that did not reenter the pastorate. The second will focus on a pastor with a failed marriage that reentered the pastoral ministry. The subject of the final case study is a pastor with a successful and long-term marriage.

### **Failed Pastoral Marriage: A Case Study**

Daniel Langston is a 54 year-old former pastor.<sup>64</sup> The names of both husband and wife have been changed for the purpose of discretion. Daniel was married to his first wife, Jennifer, for thirteen years while pastoring churches in Mississippi and Alabama. His marriage ended in divorce after his wife was involved in extramarital affairs at two of his churches. Daniel worked hard to reconcile his marriage, but in the end, he lost his wife and his pastoral ministry.

When Daniel and Jennifer married, he was 27 years old. The marriage seemed to be destined for great things in the Lord's work. Daniel felt a call to enter the pastoral ministry, and she had always planned on marrying a pastor and assumed that she would love this role. After Daniel's first two-year pastorate, Jennifer soon understood the role of pastor's wife in a new light. Daniel states that Jennifer had always pictured herself in the role as a first lady of the church, playing the socialite and having a prestigious position

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<sup>63</sup>Bridges, *The Christian Ministry*, 168.

<sup>64</sup>Daniel Langston, telephone interviews by author, July 19-20, 2015. The couple's names have been changed for privacy. Daniel wanted to share his story with the desire to warn other pastors about the potential danger of a failed marriage and help them to recognize the early warning signs.

that people in the church esteemed and even envied. Daniel was like other pastors and began his ministry in smaller churches. The salary the churches provided for the couple was not sufficient to meet Jennifer's desire to furnish her home or fund her lifestyle, so Daniel worked part-time jobs to meet the Jennifer's perceived needs for the family. The added funds did not overcome her discontentment with being a pastor's wife, which she would soon confess. Still, Daniel believes that she did not want to hurt her husband's future ministry, so she endured these feelings. She told Daniel that she felt he was much less of an esteemed pastor and man than she had desired, and she secretly had wanted out of the marriage.

Daniel should have seen the early warning signs that his marriage was beginning to unravel; however, he had never been married and assumed that this was the way that a young marriage was supposed to work. He saw no signs in their personal relationship that suggested that she was unhappy even though they were present. Daniel began to feel the pull between two loves, his family and his ministry, including the preaching moment. He was quick to confess his unwavering love for both, but clearly one would suffer some neglect at the expense of the other. This neglect began to take its toll on the family.

When they moved to his third pastorate in Mississippi, the church began to grow significantly. With greater responsibilities, Daniel was required to spend a substantial deal of time focused on the ministry, and the couple was also in the process of building their home. During the time of construction, Daniel and Jennifer, with their first child, moved in with some church members. This arrangement put a considerable strain on the marriage. Because she was unhappy, Jennifer became involved with another man in the church and began an affair. Daniel and Jennifer were close friends with the couple and spent time with them regularly. The other man's wife confronted Daniel with the news that their spouses were involved in a relationship.

Daniel's emotional life spiraled into deep agony, fear, and discouragement. He tried to handle the situation discreetly by confronting his wife with love, forgiveness, and reconciliation. She also agreed to meet with the deacons and confess her sin to the church. They enrolled in counseling and sought reconciliation. The counselor took the approach that Daniel was a neglectful husband, even though Daniel now believes that he had done much to love his wife as Christ loved the church. Nevertheless, Daniel would do whatever the counselor or Jennifer asked to save his marriage. The other couple left the church, and Daniel and Jennifer's marriage survived for another few years of ministry at that church.

Daniel left this church after five years of ministry and moved to Alabama to fill the call of a larger church that demanded an even greater investment of time from Daniel. The marriage seemed more alive than ever as they began this new ministry, but the story repeated itself. Daniel believes that Jennifer was involved with another man although she never admitted it. He reached out to some wise counselors from his past and to *Focus on the Family* ministry, which advised him to confront her with a "tough-love" approach. He lovingly challenged her to recommit to an exclusive marital relationship. Daniel initiated a deadline by which she would have to decide if she would repent and recommit to the marriage. He proposed a time of separation to seek God and come back together with a fresh start. Jennifer called him to the prayer room at the church two weeks later and presented him with divorce papers.

The whole experience profoundly affected Daniel's pulpit ministry. He poured himself into pastoring the people and avoided lengthy sermon preparation. He describes what some call the agony of the soul that a preacher experiences when crying out to God for a deeper understanding of what God wants him to preach and expound to his congregation about a specific text. Daniel described that as a pastor experiences personal

problems or depression, “this agony of the soul becomes an agony of a wounded soul”<sup>65</sup> before God. Rather than crying out to God for help in sermon writing, Daniel found himself reeling from his guilt and despair. Preparing sermons became emotionally painful, so he poured himself into what was for him the easier part of ministry: making visits, going to the hospitals, and caring for the people. In this way, he could forget his own problems.

Daniel subscribed to an expository method of preaching and usually spent at least six hours in sermon preparation. After his marital problems began, he would spend considerably less time focusing on the text and knew that he was preaching less effective sermons because of this lack of preparation time. He felt that his flock sensed that he was not putting as much effort into his preaching and knew he was distracted. After his family problems became public, Daniel did not feel that his congregation had any serious complications receiving his sermons because he sought to maintain a biblical response to his troubles. He felt as if they respected him for the way he handled himself, but everyone sensed that his focus was on his family problems more than it was on his role as pastor and equipper.

Once Daniel revealed to his church leadership that he had been served with divorce papers, they immediately began distancing themselves from him. Jennifer kept teaching Sunday School for several months after he was asked to resign. The chairman of deacons called a meeting and told him that they could not have a divorced pastor, so he should know what he needed to do. He recalls that on the day he announced his resignation, he went to the back of the church into a bride’s room just off the foyer. He found himself on his knees sobbing and needing comfort. Several church members were standing in the foyer watching his emotional outburst. All of them walked away without

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<sup>65</sup>Langston, interviews.

saying a word except one person, who came in to provide comfort. Daniel believes that this is the point that he was considered damaged and no longer useful to them.

Daniel remained single for ten years and went into the secular work force. He has worked in different types of ministry, but not as a senior pastor. He filled the pulpit as needed at different churches. When asked how people view him since his divorce he replied, “As damaged goods.”<sup>66</sup> He went on to clarify that many view his thoughts as conversation rather than authoritative pastoral advice. People are gracious, but he wonders whether they also feel this way when he enters a pulpit.

Daniel is now remarried and is amazed at how fulfilling a marriage can be with a loving, supportive, and godly wife. He is considering a return to a regular pulpit ministry. Daniel pondered his most valuable lesson of his journey. “I am convinced that if a man does not have a godly wife to stand behind him, he cannot be the godly man God has called him to be. Behind every godly pastor is an equally godly, or even more so, wife to support him.”<sup>67</sup>

Daniel’s story illustrates that an unhealthy or failing marriage can negatively impact the ability of the preacher to focus on the equipping ministry of preaching. While he did not sense an impact on his congregation’s perception of him as a leader while his marriage was still intact, he observed a noticeable difference in how people perceived him after the divorce. This case study shows the negative effects that a marriage can have on the preaching ministry of the pastor. At the same time, the case study reveals that a pastor can endure the pressure of a failing marriage and sustain his ministry for a time while he works to reconcile, but the strain takes an emotional toll on him that distracts him from his task.

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<sup>66</sup>Langston, interviews.

<sup>67</sup>Ibid.

## **Failed Pastoral Marriage and Return to the Pastorate: A Case Study**

Gary and Pam were married for 23 years and had six children when their marriage ended.<sup>68</sup> Gary had been in the ministry for over twenty years had been pastoring for the last eighteen at the time his marital troubles began. Gary described his marriage as a great marriage. Pam was the godliest woman he had ever known. She was a homemaker and always strove to make the home a safe-haven for her husband in ministry. While four of their children are biological, they had recently adopted two older children from another country. The family's focus was ministry, and for the most part, they worked together to serve the Lord in the church.

Gary never had any indication that Pam was unhappy or wanted out of the marriage. They served at four churches as pastor, and the second church proved to be very difficult time of ministry for the couple because of various struggles and demands placed on them by the leaders of the church. After a tough three-year ministry ended at his second church, Pam disengaged from most of church life at the next two churches where they served and moved into a solitary role, supporting her husband. She attended Sunday morning services but was not involved in any other ministry, although she did some visiting with Gary. In most areas, Gary perceived his family as rock solid.

Everything seemed wonderful to Gary when Pam announced that she was going to visit family to get away and recover from depression. He had known that she was experiencing some loneliness because of her disengagement from the church. Pam did not have many friends and usually only had one close friend in the church. After two weeks, the couple came back together for what Gary describes as a "second honeymoon experience." During this time, the couple spent many exciting moments together going on dates, visiting church members, and being with the kids. Gary felt as if the passion was

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<sup>68</sup>Gary Mason, interview by author, Newport, Arkansas, November 13, 2015. The couple's names have been changed for privacy. Gary wants his life to be an open book to help other pastors in their ministry.

back in their marriage. After three weeks, he returned home to find her bags packed and the car loaded. Pam was heading back to visit family. From this point, she cut almost all communication with the Gary and the kids. Two weeks later, Pam's brother called and asked Gary why they were divorcing. This moment was the first that Gary suspected that she was unhappy with the marriage, so he immediately dropped everything to go and confront her and ask her to come home. When he met with her, she confirmed that she wanted a divorce because of her unhappiness.

Gary believes his wife had a mental breakdown because she began acting like a different person than the one who had been his partner for twenty-three years. When he looks in her eyes, he does not see that woman that he had loved. He tried to stay married for as long as he could, but eventually he agreed to the divorce. He resigned his church, which had an average attendance of 1000, and moved near his family. Pam gave up custody of the children and does not have much contact with them now. Gary would have done anything to restore his marriage, but Pam would not consider it as an option. He was able to secure employment in a music ministry position that allowed him to focus on personal healing for himself and for the children. Since the divorce he has remarried a widowed pastor's wife and returned to the pastorate.

When asked how his marriage affected his pulpit ministry, Gary stated that marriage could have both positive and negative effects. As stated, his first marriage was mostly ideal. Pam felt her main calling was to create a safe haven for her husband's ministry. She helped to provide an environment of low stress in the home so that he had plenty of time to prepare sermons. He explains that when the marriage is stable, that carries over into Sunday preaching. The preacher cannot focus on his sermon if he has had a fight with his wife. On those rare occasions in which they had a Saturday night fuss still unresolved by Sunday morning, he noticed that he was distracted and even

discouraged in the pulpit, which affected his sermon delivery and thought process. Gary notes, “I cannot preach a strong sermon if I am not right with my wife.”<sup>69</sup>

Gary also believes that the pastor has greater credibility if he has plenty of positive illustrations to draw from his own life and family. When people are able to see a pastor’s marriage as a strong godly example, then they develop a greater desire to follow Christ. When Gary began to have marital problems, even though the congregation did not fully understand what was going on in his family, he felt that he had a credibility problem because his people did not know what to believe about his situation.

When Gary first began to have marriage problems, he had an experience with the Lord. He believes the Lord supernaturally strengthened him for the trials he would face. He preached only a few more times before he resigned his church and moved home, but he felt as if he preached some of his stronger sermons during this season. Gary has recently returned to the pastorate of a church that averages about 200 and is a long established church in the South. He received a 100 percent vote after sharing his complete story several times with the congregation. He has sensed no credibility issues, and his new wife is supporting him through this transition. He feels like he is back doing what God has created him to do and loves it.

### **Successful Pastoral Marriage: A Case Study**

Nathan and Amelia have been married for forty-four years and have served in the ministry for most of those years.<sup>70</sup> Nathan describes their marriage as an ideal ministry marriage. From the time they began dating, God was a part of their relationship. Nathan felt a call to missions at seventeen, and Amelia was content with dating a future missionary. His ministry consisted of a five-year pastorate and then international mission

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<sup>69</sup>Mason, interview.

<sup>70</sup>Nathan Russell, interview by author, Lepanto, Arkansas, November 12, 2015. The couple’s names have been changed for privacy.

work for ten years. Upon returning from overseas, he pastored another church for twelve years, and then served as an associational missionary for the next twelve years, preaching regularly. Amelia feels that her job is to support her husband; she earned a teaching degree so that they would not be solely dependent upon the church for income. Since she has worked outside the home, they balanced the household responsibilities so that they both shared in the work. The marriage has always been a team effort to serve the Lord.

Because the marriage was healthy and God-centered, Nathan said that their home was like a home base and a place of safety. When he returned home from some difficult days of ministry, he found a place that he could be refreshed and revived. He never had to worry about unseen troubles with his wife. They were a team that worked together to follow God. Nathan has observed one difficulty in ministry that has come from having such a successful marriage. Sometimes he finds it difficult to understand the problems couples are going through because he has never experienced these difficulties.

Marriage has enhanced Nathan's preaching ministry through the credibility that a godly marriage produces in the pastor's life. "The family always becomes a source for illustration, and my family was always a positive resource to draw from."<sup>71</sup> Amelia always gave Nathan plenty of time to prepare sermons, and she provided emotional stability that kept him from being distracted by his family. Nathan believes his marriage has never been a hindrance to his preaching ministry. He quickly pointed out that their marriage is not perfect, but he has always had strong support. He adds, "If a marriage does have some difficulties, it is hard to fake it. It just slips out."<sup>72</sup> Nathan views integrity as essential because true credibility is dependent upon it. "How can you faithfully counsel and proclaim when you are wrestling with family and marriage."<sup>73</sup>

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<sup>71</sup>Russell, interview.

<sup>72</sup>Ibid.

<sup>73</sup>Ibid.

## Case Study Implications

The powerful influence of a pastor's godly marriage on his ministry and reputation should not be overlooked. His wife becomes an essential helper to him in ministry, which results in efficiency in accomplishing tasks and a stable emotional environment for his study and activity. Their example in marriage also helps lend credibility to the sermons he preaches. James Whitmire described working with Adrian Rogers for over thirty-five years by calling him "a man of his word."

This sentence has a two-fold meaning. First, he is a man of His Word; he loves God, loves the Word of God, believes the Word of God, and lives the Word of God. Second, he is a man of his own word: he keeps his vows and his word to his wife and family, to his staff and church, to his friends and creditors, and to his Lord. I have seen him in all kinds of situations (sad, glad, and mad) for forty-one years, and I know he lives what he preaches . . . . Our lives and our children's lives have been changed through his preaching from the pulpit and his preaching by the example of a life well lived for Jesus.<sup>74</sup>

The success of Rogers's pulpit ministry was greatly enhanced because he had a godly woman who supported him and helped him through his ministry. The influence of a pastor's godly marriage certainly goes beyond the pulpit. He is able to teach the people without words from his example which causes his words spoken in the pulpit to have more credibility. People receive the teaching of a minister when he practices what he preaches.

Based on these case studies, a failing or faltering marriage can have several negative influences on a preaching ministry. A strained or failing marriage can cause the pastor to become discouraged and impeded in the ministry of the Word. He can become disheartened in his walk with God and fail to prepare adequately for the preaching moment. Cameron Lee and Jack Balswick say, "For the minister to acknowledge marital problems, however, may provoke disillusionment, anxiety, and doubts about the minister's spirituality. His congregation may view him as damaged goods and his

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<sup>74</sup>James Whitmire, quoted by Joyce Rogers, *Love Worth Finding: The Life of Adrian Rogers and His Philosophy of Preaching* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2005), loc. 2448-60, Kindle.

teaching as less authoritative.”<sup>75</sup> A pastor may present himself without trouble from the pulpit even though his marriage is falling apart and still have a successful pulpit ministry for a time, but all of the men interviewed believe that his negative marriage relationship will effect him in some way. Gary Mason even stated that he received supernatural support from the Lord through his troubles, but his credibility was still affected.<sup>76</sup> For this reason, a pastor must guard his marriage from sin, neglect, or anything that may damage his relationship with his wife. Without a healthy marriage, he cannot lead the way that God has called and commanded.

### **The Impact of Household Management on the Effectiveness of Preaching**

Children can be a great blessing from the Lord to a pastor and his wife; however, children can also bring a tremendous burden to the marriage relationship and the pastor’s ministry if they are undisciplined and rebellious. Jay Adams notes five reasons for which the pastor must manage his household well:

1. The principles and skills of management are the same wherever they may be applied.
2. If he has failed with fewer persons, how can he succeed with the increased managerial burdens occasioned by managing a whole congregation?
3. If his own home is poorly managed, this will create intolerable burdens for him that, together with the regular tasks of the pastorate, will destroy his effectiveness as a pastor.
4. If he fails as a manager in his home, there is no way that he can become the example that so many members of the flock so desperately need to show them concretely how to manage their homes.
5. If he is allowed to assume the pastorate under such circumstances, he is being encouraged to reverse God’s priorities. Instead, he must be exhorted to put first things first. He is in no shape to perform the second task until he has displayed ability in performing well at the first.<sup>77</sup>

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<sup>75</sup>Cameron Lee and Jack Balswick, *Life in a Glass House: The Minister’s Family in a Unique Social Context* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1989), 60.

<sup>76</sup>Mason, interview.

<sup>77</sup>Adams, *Shepherding God’s Flock*, 33-34.

Adams moves through a logical progression by noting that leadership principles apply in the home as well as the church. He arrives at the same conclusion that is stated in the scriptural qualifications of a minister. If a minister cannot lead a fewer number of people in his home effectively, how can he lead a larger number of people in the church? As his list continues, he shows the incredible burden that failure to lead effectively in the home can have on the pastor's ministry.<sup>78</sup> This section will support these conclusions concerning household management specifically related to the rearing of the pastor's children by looking at the issue of the pastor's potential neglect of his family including its consequences and the priority of instruction and discipline of his children without provoking them to anger.

### **Neglecting the Family**

In Adams's list, he states that the ineffective leadership of the pastor in the home will create intolerable burdens that, when combined with normal duties in the ministry, "will destroy his effectiveness as a pastor."<sup>79</sup> The pastor has been given the great task of effectively shepherding the flock of God at a specific local church. Many times the priorities of the pastor get reversed. The Crofts argue that he faces a regular temptation to address the needs of his congregation above the needs of his families.<sup>80</sup> Even though the pastor's family is not without flaws, he should strive to provide an example of godly family life for his flock, as discussed in chapter two. For this reason, he should make them his first priority in shepherding. When he fails at this task, his family life can deteriorate. A disrupted family life can cause the pastor to lose focus on ministry and lose credibility with his congregation.

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<sup>78</sup>Adams, *Shepherding God's Flock*, 33-34.

<sup>79</sup>Ibid.

<sup>80</sup>Brain Croft and Cara Croft, *The Pastor's Family: Shepherding Your Family through the Challenges of Pastoral Ministry* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing, 2013), 26.

According to Brian and Cara Croft, the pastor faces significant demands to perform well before his flock that can lead to the neglect of his family life.<sup>81</sup> A pastor can sometimes feel pressure to have the approval of those he leads. This pastor can also feel the need to meet the expectations of those people from whom he desires approval. Sometimes those expectations can be unreasonable. Nevertheless, according to the Crofts, he wants to be successful, so he may work more diligently to keep his people from seeing anything in him that they may not like.<sup>82</sup> Although congregational expectations are legitimate, based on his role as their leader, some are greatly exaggerated by the pastor's own sinful heart. They note, "The problem stems not from the demands the pastor faces but from the way he and his wife choose to respond to those demands."<sup>83</sup>

A response to the demands of ministry in sinful ways can be based on an inward struggle in the pastor's heart. He may wrestle with pride. This happens when he seeks glory for himself that should only belong to God. Pride is usually manifested in the heart as selfish ambition to advancement in ministry rather than accomplishing God's purpose. The Crofts emphasize that he may also fear man, being more concerned with keeping his job or keeping people happy than doing the will of God.<sup>84</sup> Barnabas Piper, son of John Piper, describes it this way: "Since the pastor is seen as doing 'God's work' in some unique way, it becomes okay for him to work seventy- and eighty-hour weeks, even though such excess would be frowned upon and maybe even rebuked if the bond

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<sup>81</sup>Croft and Croft, *The Pastor's Family*, 31-46.

<sup>82</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>83</sup>*Ibid.*, 43.

<sup>84</sup>*Ibid.*, 45-46. The Crofts discuss several demands that a pastor faces and provide a list of ways that those demands can manifest themselves in a pastor's sinful heart. For further discussion, see the chapter called "The Problem," on pp. 31-46.

salesman did it.”<sup>85</sup> Although John Piper’s ministry has flourished, his son acknowledges the toil an involved ministry can have on family life. Responding to the demands of ministry in selfish ways, the pastor can neglect his family for the sake of meeting the expectations and fail in his responsibility to lead his family well.

A chaotic and disrupted family life can signal to the pastor that he has neglected his family. The Crofts relate, “Conversations I’ve had with PKs (preacher’s kids) and MKs (missionary’s kids) over the years have led me to believe that some of their rebellion against their parents and their disenchantment with the church came from broken promises, promises their parents made over the years and failed to keep.”<sup>86</sup> He continues by explaining that the pastor’s pattern of breaking promises and neglecting his children leads them to question his credibility. The Crofts maintain that the pastor should never underestimate his power to influence his children because their view of their father shapes their view of God.<sup>87</sup>

The results of a neglected family life are comprehensive. Bryant and Brunson state, “If a pastor regularly neglects his family, he, his family, and his ministry will pay for it dearly.”<sup>88</sup> As noted above, the pastor may lose his marriage and in the process, normal interaction with his children. He may also lose the heart of his children, being no longer able to influence them because he has lost his credibility with them. Graham says, “Children, especially when young, come to resent having a father who never has time to play and relax with them.”<sup>89</sup> His children may rebel or act out to get his attention;

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<sup>85</sup>Barnabas Piper, *The Pastor’s Kid: Finding Your Own Faith and Identity* (Ontario: David Cook Distribution, 2014), 100.

<sup>86</sup>Croft and Croft, *The Pastor’s Family*, 138.

<sup>87</sup>*Ibid.*, 138-39.

<sup>88</sup>James W. Bryant and Mac Brunson, *The New Guidebook for Pastors* (Nashville: B & H Publishing Group, 2007), 52.

<sup>89</sup>Graham, “The Pastor and His Family,” 360.

consequently, rebellious children can affect his emotional stability and distract him from his purpose in the church. Nathan Russell states that when his son was arrested for driving under the influence, it crushed him emotionally. He explained that even though it was never really discussed in the congregation, people knew about it. He cannot believe that when children rebel that the congregation does not notice that the pastor is distracted.<sup>90</sup> Rebellious children can also affect the credibility of the pastor, particularly if the pastor does not handle the problems well. If the pastor cannot lead his family adequately, even in difficult times of rebellion, how can he teach his flock to do the same in their families?

Brain Croft notes that in conversations he has had with respected older pastors, they commonly speak with a regretful heart. Their main regret is that they had placed ministry priorities above family at times and wished they had spent more time with their wives and children.<sup>91</sup> Likewise, the pastor who neglects his family for the sake of ministry can contribute to the embitterment of his children toward the things of God and the church.<sup>92</sup>

Jonathan Edwards provides an example of a structured and godly family life that leaves behind a considerable legacy. Doreen Moore gives the following:

A study of 1400 descendants shows 100 lawyers, 66 doctors, 13 college presidents, 30 judges, 65 professors, 80 public office holders, 3 senators, 3 governors, 1 vice president, 25 officers in the army and navy, and many pastors and missionaries.... Jonathan Edwards also poured his life into the work of ministry, 'spending and being spent' for the salvation of others. Yet he was one man who was able to keep in perspective the tension between commitment to the 'cause of Christ' and the commitment to his family.<sup>93</sup>

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<sup>90</sup>Russell, interview.

<sup>91</sup>Croft and Croft, *The Pastor's Family*, 140.

<sup>92</sup>Ibid., 138.

<sup>93</sup>Moore, *Good Christians Husbands*, 97-98.

In his biography on Edwards, Murray argues that the evidence shows that Edwards's children viewed him as available and attentive to their needs. He spent regular time with them in activities such as horseback riding and measuring mountains.<sup>94</sup> Even though on most days he spent thirteen hours in his study, his children could visit with him almost any time.<sup>95</sup> Edwards was a man who attended to the needs of his ministry and made adequate time for his family and left behind a massive legacy.

Brain Croft offers some suggestions to pastors to help them avoid neglecting their families. First, he urges the pastor to take a day off every week and be intentional about spending weekly time with his wife and children. Second, he encourages pastors to use all of their vacation time.<sup>96</sup> “When you fail to use all of your church-approved vacation time, you rob your family from receiving from you an extended, focused time of care.”<sup>97</sup>

Third, Croft exhorts pastors to enjoy all their time with their families. Pastors can be distracted by the stress of their ministries when they are with their families. Croft is expressing a real need for pastors to focus intentionally on their families during the time that they are with them. Fourth, he says that pastors should let their phones ring when they are with their families. Taking phone calls during dinner or when spending time with children makes them feel as if they are not as important as the call. Likewise, when a pastor allows the phone to ring the family understands its value to him. Finally, Croft prompts pastors to evaluate their lives for balance. This will require communication with the wife and children to determine their specific needs as well as an evaluation of

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<sup>94</sup>Murray, *Jonathan Edwards*, 186.

<sup>95</sup>*Ibid.*, 184.

<sup>96</sup>Croft and Croft, *The Pastor's Family* 141-43.

<sup>97</sup>*Ibid.*, 143.

ministry needs within the church.<sup>98</sup> Only then can the pastor develop a schedule with the intentional purposes of caring for both his family and his church.

### **Instruction and Discipline of the Children**

A pastor must bring his children into submission by instructing them and providing discipline when they fail to respect the standards that he has put into place for his home. The training of children involves three elements that work together to help them develop to be well-behaved and growing members of the kingdom of God and examples for other children in the church to follow. First, the pastor must lead in instructing his children about the things of God and rules for life. Next, he must provide an example of a godly man for his children to follow. Finally, he must discipline them providing correction and guidance without provoking them to anger.

Children require instruction because they are not capable of making decisions for themselves. J. C. Ryle comments, “Children are born with a decided bias toward evil. Therefore, if you let them choose for themselves, they are certain to choose wrong.”<sup>99</sup> Children cannot be left to themselves. Parenting can be seen as guiding children into maturity so that they can make decisions for themselves and flourish as mature adults. Ryle states that parental leadership is accomplished by taking the soul of the child into consideration first.<sup>100</sup> This perspective prompts the pastor to see that his children are trained in the ways of the Lord. Since the problem of sin is a heart problem, the child must be trained with a focus on changing the heart. Voddie Baucham, noted pastor, church planter, and conference speaker, argues that addressing the real needs of the

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<sup>98</sup>Croft and Croft, *The Pastor’s Family*, 144-47.

<sup>99</sup>J. C. Ryle, “Primary Obligations of Parents,” *Free Grace Broadcaster* 204 (Pensacola: Chapel Library), 11. *Free Grace Broadcaster* periodicals can be accessed at <http://www.chapellibrary.org/broadcaster/>.

<sup>100</sup>*Ibid.*, 12.

children will move beyond the issue of right behavior to focus on the need for right hearts that will produce right character.<sup>101</sup>

After teaching the children about the things of God and the rules of the house, the father must live a proper example for his children to follow. If the father does not practice what he preaches, he will experience difficulty having his children take him seriously in those matters. Arthur Pink states, “Children are particularly quick to detect inconsistencies and despise hypocrisy.”<sup>102</sup> This does not mean that the pastor must be sinless in all things. Baucham points out that the way children learn to address sin in their own lives is by watching how their parents handle it.<sup>103</sup> The pastor must live as a growing and maturing example for his children.

Pink states that the father should establish authority in the home from an early age for his children.<sup>104</sup> “No family can be properly brought up without household laws, which include reward and punishment.”<sup>105</sup> Appropriate discipline of a child requires balance. Discipline must fit the misconduct by effectively punishing the child without provoking the child to anger. D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones warns of the danger of going to extremes.<sup>106</sup> Fathers must neither neglect their children nor excessively discipline them to the point of abuse.

Lloyd-Jones offers five principles for governing appropriate discipline of the children in the home. First, the parent should always be in control when disciplining a

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<sup>101</sup>Voddie Baucham Jr., *Family Shepherds: Calling and Equipping Men to Lead Their Homes* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2011), 119-20.

<sup>102</sup>Arthur Pink, “Fatherhood: Responsibility and Privilege,” *Free Grace Broadcaster* 228 (Pensacola: Chapel Library, 2014), 5.

<sup>103</sup>Baucham, *Family Shepherds*, 130.

<sup>104</sup>Pink, “Fatherhood,” 6.

<sup>105</sup>Ibid.

<sup>106</sup>D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, “The Art of Balanced Discipline,” *Free Grace Broadcaster* 204 (Pensacola: Chapel Library, 2013), 24.

child.<sup>107</sup> “If you try to discipline a child when you are in a temper, it is certain that you will do more harm than good.”<sup>108</sup> Second, he states that the discipline must not be unpredictable.<sup>109</sup> The child cannot correct his/her behavior without a clear and consistent understanding of expectations and consequences. Third, Lloyd-Jones says that the behavior of the parent must be consistent with the rules expected of the child.<sup>110</sup> As previously stated, the parent must set a good example for the child to follow. Fourth, he adds that the parent should not be unreasonable. “In other words, it is a thoroughly bad parent who will not take any circumstance into consideration at all or who will not listen to any conceivable explanation.”<sup>111</sup> Last, Lloyd-Jones emphasizes that the discipline must never be too severe,<sup>112</sup> such as striking a child without cause or demanding a behavior that a child cannot achieve and then punishing the child for that failure. He adds, “Discipline must always be exercised in love.”<sup>113</sup>

The consequences of the pastor’s failure to discipline and instruct his children properly are also comprehensive. Untrained and undisciplined children are rebellious and disobedient. Unruly children cause the pastor to lose credibility with his flock. Rebellion and disobedience are often very public sins in family life that will be obvious to the flock. The pastor’s congregation may view him as incapable of speaking truth into their family lives if that truth has not changed his family life. His children may also become a source of discouragement and worry, which will distract him from sermon preparation.

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<sup>107</sup>D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, “The Art of Balanced Discipline,” *Free Grace Broadcaster* 204 (Pensacola: Chapel Library, 2013), 24.

<sup>108</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>109</sup>*Ibid.*, 25.

<sup>110</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>111</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>112</sup>*Ibid.*, 26.

<sup>113</sup>*Ibid.*

Therefore, a pastor must instruct his children in the ways of the Lord by teaching them and providing an example to follow. He must see to it that they have a clear understanding of the expectations of the home. When the children do not follow the rules, they must be disciplined consistently in love. This discipline should not be overbearing and should not provoke the children to anger, thus embittering them towards the father or the things of God. A stable management of the household, including the instruction and discipline of his children while providing a godly example, will have a positive impact on his sermon preparation, preaching, and overall ministry.

### **Conclusion**

Scripture defines a clear expectation of the qualifications of a pastor and his family life. He must be a husband that is faithfully committed to his wife in love and manages his household well. The Bible also clearly establishes the plan for a healthy family that glorifies God and teaches mutual respect for husband, wife, children, and parents. The pastor is to meet the qualifications and live out God's standard in his family as the primary example to his congregation for family life. This means that the pastor is to love his wife as Christ loved the church, the wife is to submit to her husband in all things, the children are to obey and honor their parents, and the parents are to refrain from provoking their children to wrath.

When the pastor lives out this example consistently before the church, the pastor's pulpit ministry is more effective. Because his people see his family as a source of encouragement and strength for their own lives, his words carry more weight as authoritative in the pulpit. He is able to support his sermons with illustrations from his own family life. Even though his family is not perfect, the pastor who deals with his family problems in an honest and biblical manner can increase his credibility as spiritual teacher. The pastor with a properly functioning marriage and submissive children is not distracted by the discouragement of a struggling family life. His wife and children

become a source of encouragement, support, and strength for him. He is able to focus on the task of ministry and preaching rather than on piecing his family back together.

Sermon preparation is a joy because he is focused on his text rather than his chaotic family situation. Godly family life as defined in this chapter is a great blessing for the preacher, his ministry, his sermon preparation, and his credibility in the pulpit.

## CHAPTER 4

### CHARACTER AND AUTHENTICITY IN PREACHING

#### **Introduction**

This thesis has focused on the character of the preacher in his personal life. Most in the church understand that the preacher must practice what he preaches to be effective; however, men of great character can be less productive in the pulpit if they are unable to connect with the congregation on an authentic level. Robert Reid states that the preacher must “speak in ways that connect . . . his faith experience and understanding with that of the listeners.”<sup>1</sup> Although he is required to be a person of character, his audience will find it difficult to apply his teaching to their own experience if the preacher presents himself in a way that shows he does not struggle with similar problems as his people. Likewise, if he reveals too much about his personal struggles, he might embarrass his audience or mar his image as a primary example to be followed in his walk with Christ.

This chapter will address how the preacher presents himself to his congregation in his preaching ministry. A tension exists between displaying a life of godly character to the flock and presenting a growing, authentic struggle with personal sin that determines how well the congregation receives the message of the preacher. I will examine both the benefits and dangers of the manner in which the preacher displays his person from the pulpit. First, this chapter will address the manner in which the preacher presents his personal character to his congregation. Next, I will discuss the manner in which the preacher presents his personal struggles with sin to his flock. This

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<sup>1</sup>Robert Stephen Reid, *The Four Voices of Preaching: Connecting Purpose and Identity behind the Pulpit* (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2006), 197.

chapter assumes that the preacher maintains good character but is also a transformative human being leading from within the body of Christ, not from above.

### **Character in Preaching**

Many other professions use public speaking as a means to accomplish the goals of their profession. In preaching, personal character is essential for meeting the goals of the role. Nolan Harmon comments, “The preaching is measured by what the people know of the person; the work is tested by the character shown.”<sup>2</sup> A lawyer with a sketchy character may still be a good lawyer, but a preacher with known sin in his life can never be considered a good preacher. This section will highlight the importance of sustaining good character before the congregation in the preaching ministry. I will also examine the dangers associated in the manner in which the preacher presents his character, including the preacher who seeks to maintain a false or self-righteous image.

### **Maintaining an Example**

Expository preaching is communicating the truth of a Scripture passage in an oral form with the goal of having the audience believe the message and apply it to their lives. Richard Ward, noted speech professor, states,

Effective speaking is a transaction between the speaker and an audience in which an audience comes to trust the speaker and thereby accepts the speaker’s message . . . . Christian preachers take note: your congregations yearn for such trust . . . . Effective preachers are those who are credible witnesses to the gospel and who communicate that truth to their listeners.<sup>3</sup>

The preacher is no different from his congregation in many ways. He has the same aspirations and desires, and the same struggles and trials in his life. Nevertheless, he must stand before his congregation week after week preaching messages that expose his own life to scrutiny. Homiletics professor Arndt Halvorson explains that the preacher

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<sup>2</sup>Nolan B. Harmon, *Ministerial Ethics and Etiquette* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1987), 31.

<sup>3</sup>Richard F. Ward, *Speaking from the Heart: Preaching with Passion* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1992), 66.

must stand emotionally naked and revealed before his congregation.<sup>4</sup> Pastors spend personal time with their flock through church activities, pastoral visits, counseling sessions, and community events. These encounters can take place as joyous events or in the most tragic times of life. The pastor develops relationships with his people through these activities, yet the greatest opportunity for them to see him week after week is in his preaching ministry. How does the pastor maintain his character in the pulpit as an example to be followed? How does he present himself to his people?

In 1 Corinthians 4:16, Paul urges the believers at Corinth to imitate him. What authority does Paul have to make this statement? In verses 14-21 he explains his authority and his motive for this bold command. His goal is to admonish the church as beloved children. In his commentary, Mark Taylor explains, “His purpose is to correct their behavior, not put them to shame.”<sup>5</sup> Paul calls himself their spiritual father and has developed relationships with them. As such, he has earned the right as their teacher to call them to follow after him. Taylor also notes that Paul has earned the right to call them to imitate him based on his founding of the church, his spiritual status as father, and his role as an apostle, all points that he argued in his letter to the Corinthians.<sup>6</sup> In verse 17 Paul is calling them to imitate him as he follows the way of Christ. Commentator F. W. Grosheide states, “Paul had lived in Corinth and everyone had seen his conduct.”<sup>7</sup> He continues by stating that since Paul’s life was ruled by the way of Christ, he called his spiritual children to imitate him.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>4</sup>Arndt Halvorson, *Authentic Preaching* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1982), 12.

<sup>5</sup>Mark Taylor, *1 Corinthians*, The New American Commentary, vol. 28 (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishing Group, 2014), 124.

<sup>6</sup>*Ibid.*, 125.

<sup>7</sup>F. W. Grosheide, *Commentary on the First Epistle to the Corinthians* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1953), 114.

<sup>8</sup>*Ibid.*

Even though a man has been called as a minister of the gospel, he must continue to work diligently at maintaining a godly example. Paul describes this truth later in his letter to the Corinthians. “But I discipline my body and keep it under control, lest after preaching to others I myself should be disqualified” (1 Cor 9:27). Paul is concerned that not living as a godly example before his congregation will disqualify him from salvation. His godly spiritual life shows that his salvation is real, which also qualifies him to be a proper herald of the gospel, but a preacher whose life implies that he has not received salvation cannot be considered a proper herald of the gospel. Grosheide also states that the best way for Paul to show the office of minister with respect is by means of his own personal conduct. He defines the Christian life as unity in which he functions as a teacher and equipper as well as presenting a Christian life of righteous conduct.<sup>9</sup>

For the preacher to call on his people to imitate him, he must have a life that is worthy to be followed. Jay Adams notes that shepherds are regularly referred to as leaders in Scripture.<sup>10</sup> His leading includes tasks like preaching, guiding, or administration, but godly leading cannot take place in the teaching tasks without an example to follow. Adams further argues that Scripture identifies leaders as participants in the activities in which they lead.<sup>11</sup> “They are never looked upon as armchair theorists, but rather as themselves down there in the plain, up there in the mountains, traveling the paths trod by the sheep themselves.”<sup>12</sup> Although the pastor has been given a position of authority in the church, he does not lead his flock from above but from within. Norman Shawchuck and Roger Heuser also support this claim by arguing that the pastor cannot lead from where he has not been. They further explain that the congregation will not

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<sup>9</sup>Grosheide, *Commentary on the First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 114.

<sup>10</sup>Jay Adams, *Shepherding God's Flock* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1979), 322.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid.

<sup>12</sup>Ibid.

move beyond the pastor's leadership.<sup>13</sup> This does not mean a pastor must be divorced to lead people through divorce, but it does mean that the best leadership comes through the pastor that is growing in Christ. "In forming the congregation's spirituality, the pastor's own companionship is his . . . best resource."<sup>14</sup> The pastor is one of them that can best lead his flock from within by example.

This chapter is a call to character and authenticity in preaching, but simply presenting godly character from the pulpit does not make the preaching more effective. Since the preacher is a growing member of the body of Christ and the Word of God is powerful, he should be influenced by the text he has prepared to preach and the gospel that he has been called to proclaim. This transformation produces integrity in the man that springs forth through his preaching with a passion not easily counterfeited. Richard Baxter presents this idea in his work *The Reformed Pastor*. "They will likely feel when you have been much with God: that which is most on your hearts, is like to be most in their ears."<sup>15</sup> He encourages pastors to keep their faith lively and to preach their sermons to themselves before they preach to their congregations.<sup>16</sup> In an interview, pastor Nathan Russell states that pastors will find it difficult to counterfeit real transformation. He believes that false integrity will "slip out" though the pastor's personal life, encounters with church members, or through his preaching ministry.<sup>17</sup>

Failing to present a godly character can lead to inconsistency in the message preached. If the pastor preaches against a sin that he is involved in and this sin is made

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<sup>13</sup>Norman Shawchuck and Roger Heuser, *Leading the Congregation: Caring for Yourself While Serving the People* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1993), 126.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid.

<sup>15</sup>Richard Baxter, *The Reformed Pastor* (Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth and Trust, 1974), 61.

<sup>16</sup>Ibid.

<sup>17</sup>Nathan Russell, interview by author, Lepanto, Arkansas, November 12, 2015.

public, he loses his credibility. Baxter identifies the problem here as laying a stumbling block before the people.<sup>18</sup>

It much hindereth our work, when men are all week long contradicting to the poor people in private, that which we have been speaking to them from the Word of God in public, because we cannot be at hand to expose their folly; but it will much more hinder your work, if you contradict yourselves, and if your actions give your tongue the lie, and if you build up an hour or two with your mouths, and all week after pull down with your hands.<sup>19</sup>

He also clarifies that it may be one simple action that ruins many sermons.<sup>20</sup> Trust is earned little by little, but trust is earned back much slower after it has been lost.

Since the pastor is given authority by God to lead in the church and equip the saints through preaching, he should do so with confidence in his authority. Max Weber makes an important distinction between power and authority. Power is coercive and does not need the consent of those over whom it is exerted. Authority lies within the ability of the person given a position to earn the right to have his discernment taken as authoritative.<sup>21</sup> While these definitions do not always apply in today's culture, they still apply in the church. A pastor is given a position of authority, but he has to earn the right to speak truth into the lives of his congregation. Character plays a vital role in his ability to earn that right. If he earns their trust, they accept his leadership. He must do this by presenting himself as their spiritual leader that is growing in Christ, and he must call his flock to imitate him.

### **Dangers in Displaying Godly Character**

When a pastor displays Christ-like character, he shows that he is practicing what he preaches; however, he must guard against taking his image of good character to

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<sup>18</sup>Baxter, *The Reformed Pastor*, 63.

<sup>19</sup>Ibid.

<sup>20</sup>Ibid.

<sup>21</sup>Max Weber, quoted by Harris W. Lee, *Effective Church Leadership: A Practical Sourcebook* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Press, 1989), 75-76.

extremes. The preacher must be careful of three temptations in presenting his personal character to his congregation. Gaylord Noyce calls the first danger moral self-righteousness.<sup>22</sup> Pastors give in to this temptation when they preach against the sin of others and fail to see their own sin. Jesus rebuked his listeners for judging others while failing to judge themselves by the same standards in Matthew 7:3-5.

Why do you see the speck that is in your brother's eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye? Or how can you say to your brother, 'Let me take the speck out of your eye,' when there is the log in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your brother's eye. (Matt 7:3-5)

The temptation to become judgmental can come from years of practicing religion. The problem for the pastor that has taken on a stance of moral self-righteousness is that he begins to take on the tone of “us against them” in his preaching rather than that of a loving spirit of humility and grace. Or worse, he can begin to preach from an attitude of superiority over his own congregation. The preacher is called by God and given responsibility over his people to preach the truth, but as Thomas Swears states, “The decisive question for preachers then becomes how to assume such responsibility for others without also assuming authoritarian power over them at the same time.” Instead of gospel transformation in these situations, the congregation may ascribe to a legalistic form of religion in which following the pastor is about following rules and not about real gospel transformation from the inside out.

The greatest danger of moral self-righteousness is when the pastor sets himself up as a perfect man. This pastor believes that he can never show any weakness or fault before his congregation. He puts undue pressure on family to ascribe to this same perfect lifestyle. The result is that the pastor is always wearing a mask before his congregation and is never free to be himself. Gary Mason explains that this danger can cause the congregation to fail to see their pastor as a real person. They may feel as though they

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<sup>22</sup>Gaylord Noyce, *Pastoral Ethics* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1988), 63.

could never attain that state of righteousness in their lives and say, “Why even bother trying?”<sup>23</sup> Gary is also concerned that if a pastor is unwilling to present himself as a real Christian struggling with sin, what is he really hiding from the congregation?<sup>24</sup>

In some cases, this perfect image can lead to disaster when the pastor falls into sin. Since he has created such a great burden on himself to appear sinless before his congregation, he may not understand how to address his sin or find reconciliation. In a recent news story, *The Washington Post* reported that New Orleans Seminary professor and pastor John Gibson committed suicide as a result of being revealed as a user on the Ashley Madison website.<sup>25</sup> This site enables users to connect with other users for the purpose of having a sexual affair.

As a minister and a professor at New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, the possibility that his secret life might have been exposed in the leak was simply too much . . . . The shame is particularly acute for members of church leadership who build their lives on guiding followers in moral, and in John Gibson’s case, Christian lives.<sup>26</sup>

The tragedy is that this type of fall happens often because pastors put themselves in a position of superiority that they are not equipped to handle emotionally. Gibson’s wife Christi went on to diagnose the problem as she saw it in her husband. “I think what happens to someone who is a minister is that they start thinking of themselves as having to be perfect . . . . They start believing that in order for them to help others, in order for them to lead others and minister to others, they have to be flawless themselves.”<sup>27</sup> The reasons that motivate the man of God to present himself as the perfect man are numerous. Pride can be a factor, but many become trapped in this lifestyle by the pressure that is put

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<sup>23</sup>Gary Mason, interview by author, Newport, Arkansas, November 13, 2015.

<sup>24</sup>Ibid.

<sup>25</sup>Abby Phillip, “Why the Wife of a Pastor Exposed in the Ashley Madison Hack Spoke out after His Suicide,” *The Washington Post* (September 19, 2015).

<sup>26</sup>Ibid.

<sup>27</sup>Ibid.

upon them by their congregations and the false pressure that they put upon themselves that has been previously discussed in this thesis. The outcome of this type of leadership can be disastrous.

Clyde Fant, a former Baptist seminary professor, discusses the burden of moral self-righteousness in the life of a pastor. “Confessing our humanity is the only way we preachers can prevent despair in ministry. Only when we can say, ‘I am human. I can make mistakes. I can fail,’ are we able to eliminate the burden of divinity. That burden is simply too heavy to bear.”<sup>28</sup> The stress of always living up to an image of perfection can take its toll on the emotional state of the pastor and even on his family.

The congregation of the man who presents himself as sinless can also become stunted and deeply affected by the moral failure of their pastor. Gerald Llyod states that christians have made the mistake of assuming “that just because a minister has a message from the Lord, he is somehow super-spiritual and abundantly victorious in all his internal struggles.”<sup>29</sup> The congregation can put pressure on the pastor to hide any evidence of sin in his life by failing to distinguish that he is also a human being. He further comments, “Because of the calling on his life and because of our own need for a hero, we elevate him to a position where he cannot make a mistake.”<sup>30</sup> As mentioned above in 1 Corinthians 9:27, Paul understood that leaders in the church can easily be tossed aside for moral failure. Likewise, he can be elevated to a status of hero-of-the-faith. This process can create a cycle in which the pastor wants to display an image of perfection and his flock holds him in high esteem. Failure in these cases can have a lasting negative impact on the church.

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<sup>28</sup>Clyde Fant, *Preaching for Today* (San Francisco: Harper & Row Publishers, 1987), 96.

<sup>29</sup>Gerald G. Loyd, *Preachers Are People Too: A Prescription for Wholeness in Christian Leadership* (Shippensburg, PA: Treasure House, 1994), 24.

<sup>30</sup>*Ibid.*, 24.

Included in the idea of moral self-righteousness is the prideful and narcissistic minister. A narcissistic pastor tells only stories that make him look good and begins to feel that he is above the people spiritually. Reid and Hogan claim, “No preacher plans to become a narcissist in the pulpit, but as these personal stories collect over time, parishioners learn to view the preacher as the hero who knows how to see God in action much better than they do.”<sup>31</sup> They continue by arguing that a preacher can become attracted to the power of influence from the pulpit and begin to share a message that is at odds with his purpose.<sup>32</sup> He can forget that the preaching moment is about proclamation of God’s Word, which is the power of salvation, and make the preaching moment about him or his family.

The second danger in displaying godly character is a doctrinal self-righteousness. Noyce describes this as belittling the doctrinal beliefs of others while championing your own.<sup>33</sup> The problem with this type of self-elevation is that while a preacher may be biblically correct in his interpretation about a doctrine, he comes across as haughty to his congregation. They may either find this offensive and resent him for it or take on his same superior attitude toward other denominations and doctrinal beliefs. In these cases it is better to teach the doctrine without reference to another denomination and without demeaning people that have different beliefs. The pastor can also ascribe to a type of doctrinal self-righteousness when he brings bipartisan politics into the pulpit. His calling is to herald the gospel and the issues associated with his Bible text. Pastors should be careful when talking politics.

The third danger of displaying godly character is “people pleasing,” which takes place when the preacher is more concerned about what people think about him as a

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<sup>31</sup>Robert Stephen Reid and Lucy Lind Hogan, *The Six Deadly Sins of Preaching* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2012), 34.

<sup>32</sup>Ibid.

<sup>33</sup>Noyce, *Pastoral Ethics*, 63.

person than he is about biblical truth. People pleasing pastors are unwilling to preach the hard truths of Scripture or confront others in their sin. “People pleasing” is birthed out of the sin of pride. In their book *On Being a Pastor*, Derek Prime and Alistair Begg describe this problem as such: “Unconsciously we may give a false impression of superiority, and live for people’s approval and applause, forgetting how ordinary we are.”<sup>34</sup> They further explain that these pastors should remember two realities. First, people could never make much of a pastor if they know him as he knows himself. Second, those who are focused on the thoughts of men have taken their eyes off the Lord.<sup>35</sup>

In Galatians 1:10, the apostle Paul clarifies the sin of people pleasing. “For am I now seeking the approval of man, or of God? Or am I trying to please man? If I were still trying to please man, I would not be a servant of Christ” (Gal 1:10). Timothy George explains that before Paul’s conversion he was a people pleaser on the fast track to leadership in the Jewish rabbinic establishment.<sup>36</sup> After his conversion, Paul sought to please God in his ministry. George asks the question, “What is the constituency for our ministry?”<sup>37</sup> Churches today are competing with so many distractions that pastors can begin to think of the people that attend as consumers to be satisfied. “Paul was reminding the Galatians that the gospel was not a product to be peddled on the marketplace of life.”<sup>38</sup> Paul makes the observation in the verse that those who serve to please men cannot be faithful servants of Christ. George clarifies that the preacher still must seek to win the hearts of his people with the gospel truth, yet his motivation must be the will and purpose

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<sup>34</sup>Derek Prime and Alistair Begg, *On Being a Pastor: Understanding Our Calling and Work* (Chicago: Moody Press, 2004), 305.

<sup>35</sup>Ibid., 306.

<sup>36</sup>Timothy George, *Galatians*, The New American Commentary, vol. 30 (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishing Group, 1994), 100.

<sup>37</sup>Ibid., 100-101.

<sup>38</sup>Ibid., 101.

of God, and not the approval of men.<sup>39</sup> The approval of others can be fickle and tossed about by the changes in the emotional circumstances of the listener and the ever-changing popular culture. Pleasing people can also be a heavy burden on the pastor.

Presenting godly character before the people from the pulpit is certainly important to the example that the pastor is calling his people to imitate. As noted throughout this thesis, the pastor must lead the people by actions in those things he teaches them from the pulpit; however, appearing too perfect from the pulpit is dangerous not only for the pastor, but also for the congregation. Moral or doctrinal self-righteousness and people pleasing can cause the pastor much despair in always trying to live up to an image of perfection. The congregation can also come to revere their pastor in an unhealthy way or become discouraged thinking that they could never measure up. Likewise, the flock may also develop a self-righteous attitude themselves and look down on others. The pastor must present his character in humility and genuineness that leads others to follow his lead and imitate him.

### **Authenticity in Preaching**

The beauty of the gospel message is that God takes what is worthless and makes it worthy. He takes that which has no purpose and gives it purpose. All people in the body of Christ are sinners saved by grace, including the pastor. The inescapable reality of being called by God to shepherd the flock is that the pastor is also a sinner. This sinner saved by grace must stand before the congregation week after week preaching the truth of Scripture. Homiletics professor Arndt L. Halvorson expounds on this truth. “The sermons we preach cannot for long serve as the mask behind which we

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<sup>39</sup>George, *Galatians*, 101.

hide from people. Through our sermons we stand naked and revealed before our people.”<sup>40</sup>

Since the effect of the message is tied to the credibility of the pastor, some of the most serious questions listeners ask include the following: What kind of person is this pastor? What is he like when he is not preaching? Does he really struggle with sin? Weist and Smith explain, “Persons called to the clergy profession live always in the tension between two realities: their humanity – who and what they are, their best and their worst, their gifts and their limits – and the special demands of their calling.”<sup>41</sup> Because the pastor is leading by example, he must also show his congregation through his life how they can struggle through the trials and even sin. The pastor is a real person with real struggles. The pastor must maintain authentic personhood before his people showing that he is a transforming sinner saved by grace without damaging his witness and role as a primary example of spiritual growth in the church. In order to expand on the authentic personhood of the preacher, this section will examine the pastor’s obligation to maintain a healthy level of authenticity and address some of the dangers of sharing too much information about his personal life from the pulpit.

### **Maintaining Authenticity**

The church is a transforming community of believers who should be striving together day by day to become more like Christ. Shawchuck and Heuser comment, “Authentic community is a place where we can be our real selves with God in the presence of one another.”<sup>42</sup> Since real people have real sins, the people of God are learning to address those sins in their lives and hold each other accountable. The pastor

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<sup>40</sup>Arndt L. Halvorson, *Authentic Preaching* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1982), 12.

<sup>41</sup>Walter E. Weist and Elwyn A Smith, *Ethics in Ministry: A Guide for the Professional* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1990), 97.

<sup>42</sup>Shawchuck and Heuser, *Leading the Congregation*, 134.

can lead by example by maintaining authenticity about his personal life and his personal sin before the congregation. In his article, “Authenticity in Preaching” Robert Reid states: “Authenticity in preaching is linked to the hope for change and the desire to experience personal growth or deeper spiritual insight in one’s faith.”<sup>43</sup> He continues by describing authenticity in preaching as a way of connecting with the listeners for the purpose of helping them on their spiritual journey.<sup>44</sup> The pastor must come alongside his people as a fellow believer, not rule from above them.

In his New Testament letters, the apostle Paul never presented himself as a perfect man. His writing portrays him as a weak man who is made strong in the Lord. In 2 Corinthians 12, Paul describes his pleading with the Lord for some physical trial to be taken from him. The Lord answered his prayer by citing that the grace of God is sufficient to strengthen the child of God in his trial. Additionally, the power of God is perfected in his weakness. David Garland states, “The power working in Paul is most clearly seen as coming from God when he appears to be weak.”<sup>45</sup> Paul concludes this section by stating, “For the sake of Christ, then, I am content with weaknesses, hardships, persecutions, and calamities. For when I am weak, then I am strong” (2 Cor 12:10).

Paul’s letters also portray him as a sinner saved by grace. In 1 Timothy 1, he describes some of the sin that he has committed, including blasphemy and persecution of the church. In verse 15, he states, “The saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am foremost” (1 Tim 1:15). Paul was real about his condition before the Lord. In his commentary, Mouce explains that the point of Paul’s argument in 1 Timothy 1:12-17 is

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<sup>43</sup>Robert Stephen Reid, “Authenticity in Preaching,” Academia.edu (2014), accessed November, 5, 2015, [https://www.academia.edu/9829217/Authenticity\\_in\\_Preaching](https://www.academia.edu/9829217/Authenticity_in_Preaching).

<sup>44</sup>Ibid.

<sup>45</sup>David E. Garland, *1 Corinthians*, The New American Commentary, vol. 29 (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishing Group, 1999), 526-27.

that Paul's authority is based on God's unfailing mercy and not any power in Paul.<sup>46</sup> "Certainly Paul must have shuddered whenever he remembered his previous acts of persecution, and certainly this would have produced a continual amazement at the incomprehensible gifts of God's mercy and grace that had been so undeservedly bestowed upon him in superabundant measure."<sup>47</sup> The weakness and sin of Paul pointed to the transforming grace of God. As mentioned, Paul urged believers to imitate him, yet he did not urge them to follow a strong and perfect man who was without sin. He was called by God as an authentic and transforming man to lead others to grow in Christ.

Perhaps the greatest example of Paul's willingness to show himself as authentic in his God-called role of authority is illustrated in Acts 14. Paul and Barnabas were in Lystra and healed a crippled man who had faith. When the crowd saw the healing, they believed that Paul and Barnabas were gods that had come down to man. The priests of Zeus brought garlands and oxen to the gate to sacrifice on behalf of the men. Paul and Barnabas put a stop to this act of worship immediately. "Men, why are you doing these things? We also are men, of like nature with you, and we bring you good news, that you should turn from these vain things to a living God, who made the heaven and the earth and the sea and all that is in them" (Acts 14:15). Like Paul, the pastor must never forget his humanity or his pitiful sinful condition. His weakness and helplessness point to the power of God active in his life to facilitate his spiritual growth. The grace of God at work in his life is what he earnestly seeks to proclaim to his congregation.

Halvorson states that there can be no real power in the pulpit without the authenticity of the preacher.<sup>48</sup> Certainly other elements must be present like the power of the Holy Spirit or communication skills, but the pastor's sincerity and genuineness are

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<sup>46</sup>William D. Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 46 (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2000), 56.

<sup>47</sup>Ibid.

<sup>48</sup>Halvorson, *Authentic Preaching*, 13.

essential to the reception of his message. Speaking of preachers, Hans Van Der Geest, a psychologist and preacher explains, “If we are genuine we present ourselves clearly and quite visibly; we thus become comprehensible and accessible, and it makes us dependable.”<sup>49</sup> His observation is that sincerity and genuineness in the pulpit fosters trust between the congregation and the preacher. When his people trust him, they allow him to speak the truth of God’s Word into their lives. Halvorson agrees with this idea by connecting the authority of the preacher to his authenticity. He explains that Jesus was considered as one that taught with authority, even by those who disagreed with him, because he came to earth as a man, in every way like us.<sup>50</sup> Authenticity generates trust in the preacher.

Halvorson argues, “The authority, the authenticity of the preacher, is the key to preaching effectiveness, yet it remains an elusive quality.”<sup>51</sup> The effectiveness of the preacher is linked to aspects of both the character and skill of a preacher. He must be knowledgeable and able to communicate. Nevertheless, preachers are spiritual beings that must also display their humanness. By themselves, authenticity or powerful oratory skill does not make a pastor more effective. Halvorson argues that what makes a pastor effective is the authority given to him by God.

Our authority is given as a gift when we bring our humanness to God. We are human. That is, we know what it means to doubt, to want, to trust, to disobey, to repent, to think, to lust, to desire, to wonder, to work, to worry, to pay bills. We have the same inner drives and needs as other people. It is not the sameness which is our authority, but our differences. Our difference does not lie in becoming superhuman and wrestling mightily with torments and overcoming them. No, our authority comes when we quit trying to be human and accept God’s verdict on our humanness. It is true: the preacher is a human being, set apart as a type, not above as a model.<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>49</sup>Hans Van Der Geest, *Presence in Preaching: The Impact of Personality in Preaching* (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1981), 40.

<sup>50</sup>Halvorson, *Authentic Preaching*, 16-17.

<sup>51</sup>*Ibid.*, 17.

<sup>52</sup>*Ibid.*, 19.

So then, the pastor is called by God as an authority figure, but he is like his congregation in almost every respect with the exception being his authority. Halvorson suggests that the authority of the pastor is exercised as a human being set apart by his authority as a type, but not ruling over the people in perfection.<sup>53</sup> Only when they see both his humanness and his God-given authority can they imitate him best.

How does the pastor maintain authenticity before his people? Fant claims that participation in God's activity can only take place when we accept our humanness. Additionally, pastors must preach the Word of God while also living in a contemporary world. These two elements combine to make preaching more authentic.<sup>54</sup> "The insecurity of some preachers will not allow them to confess their humanity. The insecurity of other preachers will not allow them to admit their involvement with the divine. Both are afraid of their ministry groups, and both fall into a heresy of ministry."<sup>55</sup> The pastor must constantly keep his humanity before him as a reminder that God is his power in life. Fant also says that the pastor that does not accept his humanness will always deal with feelings of guilt that lead to depression and despair, and he will always feel as if he does not measure up to his calling.<sup>56</sup> Our humanness reminds us that we do not measure up to our calling, but the God who calls us gives us power in the midst of our weakness to accomplish the tasks of preaching and ministry.

Halvorson argues that the authentic life is maintained through the practice of prayer, which is the practice of being in the presence of God regularly.<sup>57</sup> Prayer is the way that the pastor remains close to God. Without a stable devotional life before God, the

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<sup>53</sup>Halvorson, *Authentic Preaching*, 16-17.

<sup>54</sup>Fant, *Preaching for Today*, 99

<sup>55</sup>Ibid.

<sup>56</sup>Ibid.

<sup>57</sup>Halvorson, *Authentic Preaching*, 21.

pastor can only fake his walk in the pulpit. Halvorson states that three aspects of prayer are important to maintaining authenticity. First, prayer is seen as a form of worship.<sup>58</sup> “Worship puts everything in proper perspective.”<sup>59</sup> It reminds the pastor of who he is before God and reminds him of God’s nature and of the grace and mercy he shows to his people. Worship seeks God and his will first and positions the pastor in a place of humility. Only then can his leading and preaching come from a truly authentic walk with the Lord.

Halvorson’s second trait of prayer that maintains authenticity is self-examination.<sup>60</sup> Prayer allows us to come to God and be laid bare to see ourselves as we really are. He says, “Through prayer we can accept ourselves without succumbing to self-worship and be self-critical without self-hate . . . . The Holy Spirit assures us we are God’s children, and when we accept that status, we are freed from the hold of all pretender-priests.”<sup>61</sup> Halvorson adds that Jesus is the High Priest that ministers to us in our prayers, but many other pretenders can derail our growth and shape our identity. He identifies some of these pretenders including sexuality or popular approval.<sup>62</sup> Preaching is not pretending everything is perfect. It is acknowledging that we are broken people in the process of being healed by our great God and helping others to do the same. Halvorson argues that prayer is the method through which we gain courage to stand as authentic people before other sinners and proclaim the gospel.<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>58</sup>Halvorson, *Authentic Preaching*, 21.

<sup>59</sup>*Ibid.*, 22.

<sup>60</sup>*Ibid.*, 23.

<sup>61</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>62</sup>*Ibid.*, 24.

<sup>63</sup>*Ibid.*, 25.

Halvorson offers a third characteristic of prayer that maintains authenticity by stating that it develops community awareness.<sup>64</sup> Regular prayer develops the godly virtue of humility in God's children and reminds them that they are part of a family. "Through prayer we learn to notice the plight of others, to hear their unexpressed cries."<sup>65</sup> As a result, prayer becomes a source of strength for the pastor that enables him to live as an authentic example for his people.

Fant offers several characteristics that foster true authenticity. The pastor must be honest about his humanness.<sup>66</sup> He clarifies that dishonesty about sinful tendencies or authentic personhood only works to deceive the congregation and can lead to self-deception and hinder spiritual growth. After an honest evaluation of their own characters, preachers should be themselves, that is, be natural.<sup>67</sup> Fant comments, "Naturalness means not adding to or subtracting from your personality . . . . Some try to be more than they are; they want to appear holier, or more profound, or more dynamic."<sup>68</sup> Some men are afraid to be as much as they are because they may appear too committed to the Lord. Both of these are deception and are inauthentic.

Fant adds humility to this list of personality traits of the authentic minister. He describes the tension that takes place between ego and humility. Certainly pride has no place in the pulpit, as the pastor is to come alongside his people to equip them in the spiritual journey; however, false humility is equally dangerous.<sup>69</sup> The truly humble pastor will present himself as authentic from the pulpit. In his humility, the preacher allows others to be authentic humans as well. He says, "Allowing others to be persons means

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<sup>64</sup>Halvorson, *Authentic Preaching*, 25.

<sup>65</sup>Ibid.

<sup>66</sup> Fant, *Preaching for Today*, 103

<sup>67</sup>Ibid., 104.

<sup>68</sup>Ibid.

<sup>69</sup>Ibid., 105-6.

respecting the uniqueness of their selfhood. It means never using approaches in preaching that are inappropriate for communication with other persons, approaches that are dictatorial or imperious, artificially sincere or seductive.”<sup>70</sup>

Fant believes that authenticity is fostered in the congregation when the pastor really cares about his people. This truth is obvious but he believes that those ministers who have worked hard to understand the Word of God and what it means for their people will develop a genuine concern for them.<sup>71</sup> He further states that the level of concern that is required for authenticity can only be developed through genuine involvement in the lives of the flock.<sup>72</sup> While the pastor can never fully understand the Word of God or the lives of his people, a lack of understanding on these will disqualify him from speaking truth into their lives. Fant states, “If people suspect you do not care, they will not listen – and properly so.”<sup>73</sup>

The pastor, like the apostle Paul, should present himself in a way that connects to his congregation, but in order to accomplish this fully, he should be real. His authority in the pulpit depends on his ability to be seen as a credible and transforming human being that comes alongside his people to equip them for obedience and ministry. In order to maintain proper authenticity, the pastor must be devoted to God in a prayer life that includes worship, self-evaluation, and community awareness. The devotional life of the pastor will grow him to develop personality traits in the pulpit that include honesty, naturalness, humility, and real concern for his people. If he truly cares for his people and they know it, they will trust him, and he can lead them.

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<sup>70</sup>Fant, *Preaching for Today*, 107.

<sup>71</sup>*Ibid.*, 108.

<sup>72</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>73</sup>*Ibid.*

## Dangers of Authenticity

Although being real in the pulpit is necessary for connection with the audience, sharing too much from the pulpit can be dangerous to the message of the text and the credibility of the preacher. Kenton Anderson, President and professor of homiletics at Northwestern Baptist Seminary, states, “We all know the agony of listening to a preacher who is far too impressed with himself and his own life experiences.”<sup>74</sup> He argues that if a preacher is overly expressive in the pulpit about himself, his personal life, or his sin, he can overshadow the Scripture that he is teaching. “Preachers who highlight their own person and experience run the risk of hindering the object of the Word of God.”<sup>75</sup> Thomas Swears, a pastor and author, notes that “there is a limit beyond which something is too personal and too private to be brought into the pulpit.”<sup>76</sup> Sharing too much from the pulpit results in two general dangers. The preacher can make himself look too perfect to the congregation engendering a type of pastor worship, or he can make himself look too bad fostering a lack of credibility.

Reid and Hogan focus on the problem of self-absorption in preaching and identify the type of preacher that shares too much in the pulpit for the purpose of elevating himself as an egotist.<sup>77</sup> “Egotists operate with self-interests as the guiding principle for their decision making.”<sup>78</sup> Because preachers are the focal point of the teaching each week, they can be lured to focus on the fame and power associated with becoming more eloquent and persuasive in the pulpit. In building credibility, the preacher may begin to magnify himself rather than the message of the gospel or equipping the

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<sup>74</sup>Kenton C. Anderson, *Preaching with Integrity* (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 2003), 138.

<sup>75</sup>Ibid.

<sup>76</sup>Thomas R. Swears, *Preaching to Head and Heart* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2000), 48.

<sup>77</sup>Reid and Hogan, *The Six Deadly Sins of Preaching*, 30.

<sup>78</sup>Ibid.

saints. Pastor and author Donald Macleod notes, “There are two ways to preach: one way is to stand in front of the cross and magnify yourself; the other is to lift up the cross and keep yourself out of sight.”<sup>79</sup>

The pastor can become an egotist in the pulpit in two different ways, by sharing either too little or too much about his personal struggle with sin. As mentioned in the previous section, a pastor can be worshiped if the people think that he is almost perfect. This danger can happen by default when he does not share any personal information about his struggles or his sin; that is, the people can think he does not struggle. Usually this preacher does not have the goal of being placed on a pedestal, but does nothing to change after he has been placed there. When a preacher shares too much positive information about his spiritual life, but leaves out the struggles, he seems to have the intention of building himself up.

Describing the lure of being the center of attention, Anderson states, “Many preachers succumb to that temptation, encouraging this attention through the way they dress and the way they present themselves. The response of the congregation can be mesmerizing. When listeners pay more attention to the preacher than to the message being preached, the contract is broken.”<sup>80</sup> Russell explains that experiences illustrated from the life of the preacher form the basis of good application, but if he shares too much, it begins to become bragging from the pulpit.<sup>81</sup> When the preaching is aimed at elevating himself rather than God, he does not accomplish his role as herald of the gospel. Reid and Hogan mention that the danger of sharing personal or private stories excessively from the pulpit can cause the preacher to fail to connect his interpretation of the text with the listeners. Reid and Hogan note,

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<sup>79</sup>Donald Macleod, *The Problem of Preaching* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1989), 41.

<sup>80</sup>Anderson, *Preaching with Integrity*, 138.

<sup>81</sup>Russell, interview.

Privatistic personal stories are those in which a preacher reveals personal information that has very little or really nothing to do creating an interpretive identification with the listeners. When it occurs, listeners often develop a split consciousness in which they leave the message of the sermon behind as they ponder the meaning of what the pastor has just revealed.<sup>82</sup>

A consequence of self-promotion from the pulpit is that the congregation can begin to worship the preacher and hang on his every opinion. He becomes the foundation of their trust. If he leaves, falls into sin, or even dies, the congregation is shaken because their faith was in a man and not in God. Further, they can see him as perfect and become discouraged believing that he is so far above them spiritually that they cannot attain his standard of spirituality.

Other preachers desire to connect with their people so much that they become too transparent, sharing more than necessary about their personal sin and struggles. These pastors quickly lose credibility and are not taken seriously in their role of authority. Van Der Geest affirms that some preachers pervert authenticity into what he calls exhibitionism. “They are too personal if they tell things about themselves which have an embarrassing or discomfoting effect on the listeners. A limit of what is private exists, and a speaker is not permitted to go beyond it. Things that are too personal bring the preacher too close to the congregation and it turns away.”<sup>83</sup> He also states that the personal information can have the same effect on the listeners if it has no connection to the sermon since it has no value and the people may feel as if they know too much about their pastor.<sup>84</sup>

Gary Mason said, “Sharing too much just becomes awkward! It breaks everything!”<sup>85</sup> The sermon may be going well, but the personal comments create tension in the room and everything the preacher was trying to accomplish gets lost in that

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<sup>82</sup>Reid and Hogan, *The Six Deadly Sins of Preaching*, 35.

<sup>83</sup>Van Der Geest, *Presence in the Pulpit*, 43.

<sup>84</sup>Ibid.

<sup>85</sup> Mason, interview.

moment. Mason also believes that sharing too much creates doubt about the credibility of the preacher. “If he is saying this or that, how much more is he not saying about himself?”<sup>86</sup> Russell views too much sharing in the pulpit as draining for a congregation and over time, they tire of hearing about the preacher’s personal life.<sup>87</sup> Sharing too much can be just as devastating to the credibility of the pastor as a major fall into sin.

The dangers of authenticity are related to sharing too much information from the pulpit for the purposes of either self-promoting or connecting. Both of these are extremes. Self-promotion builds up credibility and causes the people either to think too highly of their pastor to become discouraged that they cannot measure up. Aggressive connection seeks to be real before the people to such a degree that the pastor will share almost anything from the pulpit. This tears down his credibility and leads to doubt.

### **Tension between Character and Authenticity in Preaching**

What is the balance between character and authenticity? How much should the preacher share from the pulpit in order to maintain his example while connecting to his congregation as a growing believer with real struggles with sin? The pastor wants to maintain an example to be followed, but he also must connect with the people as with authentic authority of someone who also is transforming. Swears says, “Authentic communication from the pulpit always exists in the tension between disclosure and distance.”<sup>88</sup>

Swears argues for two guiding principles to help preachers determine what to share from the pulpit. The first principle is concerned with relevance of the personal

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<sup>86</sup>Mason, interview.

<sup>87</sup>Russell, interview.

<sup>88</sup>Swears, *Preaching to Head and Heart*, 49.

information. “What is the relevance of this problem or experience for listeners?”<sup>89</sup> The issue of relevance goes beyond the experience of the listeners to the Bible text. Does the personal information serve to apply or illustrate the Bible text? If not, it is unnecessary and most likely a distraction or even harmful to the sermon.

Swears’s second principle is related to identifying with the audience. “To what extent does this particular problem or experience describe one that is experienced by most people, and thus identifiable to them, rather than one unique to the preachers on experience?”<sup>90</sup> Preachers that do not spend much time in the community can become isolated from their people. When they share things that have no impact on their congregation, the people cannot identify the point he is trying to make. He should seek to share only personal information that connects with their experience, like dealing with an illness or overcoming some discouragement, etc., but sharing about his struggle of pastoring a church or something else irrelevant to their lives only disconnects him from his congregation.

A third principle to help to preserve the tension between character and authenticity is for the pastor to maintain his relationship with the Lord. If a pastor is in the Word and growing in the relationship with the Lord through prayer and obedience, then he will be sensitive to what the Lord wants him to share in the pulpit. He must serve the Lord and obey the Word. Fant, notes, “The great danger is that we will not be servants of the Word but of ourselves; that we will not invest our talents in God’s interests, but in ours; that we will not allow God to use us to preach the Word, but that we will use God to project our own.”<sup>91</sup> He must honor the Lord, seek the Lord, and obey the

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<sup>89</sup>Swears, *Preaching to Head and Heart*, 49.

<sup>90</sup>Ibid.

<sup>91</sup>Fant, *Preaching for Today*, 104.

Lord. If he is doing these things, he will avoid the temptation to share too much about his personal life at the expense of the Word of God.

### **Conclusion**

Authenticity in the pulpit is essential to connecting with the congregation. They need to feel that the pastor is a real person facing real issues of sin and struggle, but he must maintain his role as a man of character as well. He must present himself as a person of great character without giving his people the impression that he never sins. Likewise, he must also share with his congregation that he is growing and dealing with sin and temptation without damaging his credibility as an example to be imitated. What the preacher reveals about himself from the pulpit can either build up and support the message of the text that he is presenting or distract and focus attention on the messenger. The pastor must present himself in the tension between character and authenticity while being careful to remain committed to the message of the text and showing his people how it is changing his life.

CHAPTER 5  
IMPLICATIONS FOR THE PREACHER AND THE  
CHURCH

**Introduction**

The character of the preacher has significant influence on the preacher's ability to communicate the truths of Scripture effectively to his congregation. Some men may be able to live before their people in pretense while their lives are falling apart morally for a while, but the most effective preachers are those who are preparing sermons from a growing and vibrant spiritual walk in which their actions and thoughts are focused on a pattern of godliness. These men not only successfully communicate Scripture, but also provide an example of godliness that can be lived out by their flock. They have ordered their family lives to be a good model for their congregations and have learned to present themselves authentically before their assemblies as growing but not perfect men.

This chapter will address the implications that can be drawn from the research of this thesis with the purpose of showing how the pastor can seek to be proactive in living out a godly life and guarding his personal character, family life, and image that he presents to his people. His congregation can also help to create an environment in which the preacher can guard his character, family life, and image.

**The Preacher Must Strive to Be a Man of Character**

The focus of chapter 2 is the personal character of the pastor, excluding his family life. The personal character and integrity of the pastor are things over which he has control. Although he can lead properly and guide his family, his family members are ultimately responsible for making decisions that can sometimes be out of his control, but only he can make proper decisions and actions that form his personal character. This

section will present the implications derived from chapter two that concentrate on the areas of the pastor's character. I will also present some deductions from chapter 2 that show how the church can help the pastor to accomplish his goal of personal godly character.

The outward character of the preacher should always be a reflection of the inward change that is taking place as a result of his personal transformation into Christlikeness. As previously mentioned, William Willimon defines character as a moral orientation in the lives of leaders that gives direction and forms habits that have been determined by inner convictions.<sup>1</sup> As the preacher gives attention to his own spiritual growth, he will act in ways that reflect the truths he has learned from God and the convictions that he has formed based on those truths. In short, focus on God, the Bible, and spiritual growth establishes conviction, and conviction informs thoughts, actions, and decisions. The pastor must strive to be a man of character inwardly first which will manifest itself outwardly.

### **Responsibilities of the Preacher**

The first area in which the pastor must guard himself is pride. When the man of God begins to think more highly of himself than he ought, he can begin to feel important and place himself in a position of superiority over his congregation in his mind. Once he begins to think this way, he can begin to act in domineering and judgmental ways. In 1 Peter 5:1-4, the Scripture describes how the pastor is to serve in a position of authority over his flock. The pastor must remember that his position of authority is a calling from God and is not based on his own worth as a man. Everything in Scripture points to approaching God in humility. Even salvation begins with acknowledging our sin before God in repentance. God's man must remember that he is like every other believer called by God into his kingdom. He has been given a position of greater authority to help

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<sup>1</sup>William Willimon, *The Service of God* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1983), 28-29.

others grow to become more like Christ. If a pastor's focus is on serving God rather than on selfish gain, as the passage urges, he understands his calling and his place in ministry as a leader who is equal to his people and comes alongside them in their spiritual journey.

In order to maintain humility, the pastor must continue to remain focused on learning from God throughout his ministry. The life of Jesus is an example of servant leadership. He served others even though he had the right to be worshiped as God. Like Jesus, the pastor must put the needs of others above his own needs. This focus will keep his own propensity toward pride in its proper perspective. He must also be willing to surround himself with people who will hold him accountable in areas of pride. This means that when he is called out by his accountability partners, he accepts their criticism with grace, humility, and a willingness to change the behavior.

Several of the characteristics of a pastor listed in both the Timothy and Titus passages flow naturally out of a humble attitude. He submits himself to God in humility and knows that he is seeking to accomplish God's will. For example, a pastor who is respectable and hospitable to others has learned that he should treat others with dignity and generosity which is a result of a humble attitude. True love for others is also birthed out of humility. The pastor is called to love his flock, but some people make this a difficult task. Because he is more concerned with their spiritual need, the pastor is able to love his people and help them move toward Christlikeness.

A second area that the pastor must be diligent to guard is his personal integrity. Christianity is not solely about acting right; it involves being right. As noted, integrity is being a complete person. The man of God should be the same person on the inside that he proclaims himself to be through his actions. The most important aspect of integrity is becoming a person of convictions and principles. R. Kent Hughes states that being a person of principles involves more than simply having principles.<sup>2</sup> The pastor must be

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<sup>2</sup>R. Kent Hughes. *Disciplines of a Godly Man* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2001), 128.

willing to stand for those principles and live them out no matter the consequences. The principles that the preacher affirms are cultivated in his study and in preaching of the Word of God. Because he loves his congregation, he is willing to deal with the difficult issues like divorce or homosexuality. A man of integrity preaches the whole counsel of the Word of God. Once a pastor has become a person of conviction and principles, he will strive to live a life that aligns with his convictions. He does not have to worry about what he has said previously because he is consistently honest and speaking from his beliefs.

A pastor can guard his integrity in at least three ways. First, he must stay committed to study the Word of God and seek a greater understanding of his convictions. He must never come to a place in his life where he believes he can pull away from regular personal Bible study as if he no longer needs it. Second, he must always strive to keep his word, which means that he is aware of his limitations and does not make promises he knows he cannot keep. He needs to have a reputation as a man who always does what he says he will do. Third, he must always be honest. A preacher caught in a lie cannot easily recover his credibility. While it may be difficult to be honest at times because church members may have their feelings hurt, this risk does not diminish the pastor's obligation to tell the truth. If he is living in humility to the Lord, he can tell the truth, even when it hurts, with a loving attitude.

A third area that the pastor must guard is his purity. Pastors are like any other human being and struggle in the area of personal desires. Since he is the shepherd of the flock, he is to lead by example in controlling his desires and facing temptation. The best way to fight temptation is to put measures in place to avoid it. In the area of sexual sin, the pastor can make sure that he never is alone with a woman or a minor other than his family. Although the pastor may not be tempted to enter into a sexual relationship with another woman or a minor, he must be aware that anyone can say anything. Even if the meeting is an innocent counseling session, it can lead to an accusation of misconduct. The pastor must establish boundaries that protect him from being alone with women,

teenagers, or children. When meeting with a child it is a good idea to have a children's worker present in the meeting. If the pastor is counseling a woman, he should have another trusted woman present, perhaps his wife or his secretary, which protects both the pastor and the person being counseled.

Sexual sin is not limited to sexual relationships, but includes lustful thoughts or pornography, which has become easily accessed through the Internet. Internet filters are available to prevent access to questionable sites. These filters are good not only to guard the pastor, but also to protect his family from stumbling upon inappropriate content on the web. Church computers should also be monitored for questionable content. A pastor can also develop some accountability partners if he has ever struggled with lustful thoughts or pornography. As stated in chapter 2, the responsibility to maintain the established boundaries lies with the minister. He must not put himself in situations where he may fall.

Greed is another problem associated with purity. In both the Timothy and Titus passages Paul teaches that the pastor should not be a lover of money or greedy for gain. The greedy pastor's focus is on what he can get out of his church, whether in financial gain or power to manipulate others. Although the pastor has to make decisions about the financial direction of the church, he should never touch the money, write checks, or be alone with the money. He must also guard himself in other financial areas. He must pay his bills and avoid debt. Although many small church pastors do not make enough money, he must learn to be content with what he has been given and live within his means. If he does experience financial difficulties, like car trouble or medical problems, he should be honest with his congregation without manipulation to let them know of his financial burdens. He must also make sure his family understands the financial situation. His wife and children must not expect to have the same things as everyone else in the church, such as newer cars, swimming pools, and the most expensive clothes. If his family is sharing his understanding of the finances, this approach will help to ease the burden to keep up

with church members financially. He must also be generous with his giving to the church and others. This generosity will provide an example for his congregation.

While maintaining humility, integrity, and purity are all important and can be assisted by establishing some external boundaries, the best way to guard personal character is with a close walk with God. Since the pastor has been called to lead his church, he must be diligent in striving to be the person in the church with answers to questions, a working knowledge of the Bible, and a character that matches his knowledge. He can be much more effective in the pulpit if his personal character is not a fraud. He must study the Scripture, spend adequate time in prayer, be held accountable in his personal time with God, and seek God above all. Inward transformation leads to an outward life of good character. Walking with God daily, when combined with established boundaries, can create an atmosphere of growing godly character in the life of the preacher.

### **How Can the Church Help?**

The pastor's church can help him to maintain his personal character by cooperating with his established boundaries. In the area of pride, the church has a responsibility to submit to the pastor's authority, but they must not elevate him to a position of superiority over them. The pastor is the one who is responsible for maintaining his humility, integrity, and purity, but the church can help by not putting excessive pressure on him to make all the decisions. They must respect him, submit to his leading, and accept his role of pastor; however, this respect does not mean that they bow to him as a king. Simply, they must view his leadership from a biblical perspective of servant leader.

Excessive demands for the pastor's time can lead him to overcommit his time and fail to keep his word. While the pastor is ultimately responsible for his time management, church members can be overly demanding of their pastor's time. Members

should refrain from selfish demands. The pastor should be available to help to meet the spiritual needs of his congregation, but sometimes members can unreasonably want to have the pastor's full attention to bend his ear or complain. Sometimes the pastor has time for these types of meetings, but many times he has more pressing concerns to address. Church members also need to be involved in ministering to one another. If every member is seeking to share in the work of the Lord, then the pastor can be freed from smaller tasks to focus on the preaching and counseling ministry while giving adequate time to pastoral and hospital visitation without being overwhelmed.

The church can help the pastor in the area of purity as well by submitting to his established boundaries. The church family could install windows in the pastor's study so that he can counsel women under the watchful eye of another staff member. Congregants must also understand the importance of having a trusted woman present when counseling a woman. If the church understands that the pastor will never counsel children or other women alone, then few will be upset when he will not meet with them alone. The church can also install internet filters on computers, which will also prevent not only the pastor but also others from accessing inappropriate material on the pastor's computer. Although it is ultimately the pastor's responsibility, the flock should seek to help their pastor remain pure by helping him retain his established boundaries of purity.

### **The Preacher Must Strive for Godly Family Life**

Paul's lists of qualifications for pastors in 1 Timothy and Titus include specific calls to godly family life. The preacher must be able to manage his household well, or he is disqualified from leading the family of God in the church. Jay Adams notes that the pastor must be a husband and father before he can be a pastor.<sup>3</sup> Some aspects of family life the pastor can personally control. He can establish the tone for the home as he leads

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<sup>3</sup>Jay E. Adams, *Shepherding God's Flock* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1979), 32.

his wife and children and puts rules in place that are to be followed. He can also control his reactions to situations or crises that arise, but he cannot control the decisions and actions of his wife and children. As a result, his family will never be a perfect family but one that is flawed, like every other family. The pastor's responsibility is to manage his flawed family in godly ways that lead to a pattern of godliness in the family that can be modeled in both application and outcome. In this section, I will present the implications of chapter 3 including the responsibilities of the pastor and his family, and I will show how the church can support the pastor in his goal of godly family life.

### **Responsibilities of the Preacher and His Family**

Like all men, the pastor has the primary responsibility of leadership and authority in the home as addressed in chapter 3. He must establish the solid foundation for his family life that enables the others in his home to fall in line with the biblical commands. He builds this foundation first by providing a godly environment. The preacher is to be a pastor in his home, establishing and maintaining a spiritual environment of discipleship and growth in Christ. He should pray with his wife and children, share the gospel with his children, teach them the Bible, and present a general atmosphere of godliness through his attitude and actions. The pastor is to lead his family with love, but the pastor is not alone in the work. His wife is to cooperate in the spiritual growth and training of the family. In many cases the wife has greater opportunities to influence the children because of her role as nurturer. Pastor and wife work together to move their family toward godliness becoming more and more a model of Christlikeness and addressing the flaws in their family with loving but firm responses that honor God.

The pastor must also love his family and show it by his actions in which he does not neglect his family. In chapter 3 I showed that the Bible states that the husband is to love his wife sacrificially, being willing even to give his life for her as Christ did for the church. Many times pastors will say they love their wives in this way, but their

actions show that other matters have priority over their wives. In the case studies of chapter 3, two of the wives felt that they did not have their husbands' full devotion and wanted out of the marriage, but the husbands believed that they were devoted to their wives. The pastor must guard his marriage by faithfully loving his wife and putting her needs first while not neglecting the ministry of the church. This task requires effective time management and proper understanding of which family priorities take precedence over important church matters and vice versa.

The pastor should not neglect his children either. He must make time to attend events in their lives to demonstrate that their needs are important to him. The preacher should consider the needs of his family, whether spiritual, physical, or emotional, as more important than any member of his church without diminishing the importance of his role as pastor. Balance between church and family is the difficult part of leading the family because of the demands that can be felt by the pastor as he seeks to meet the needs of his flock and family. He is pulled in both directions because he wants to be a good pastor. As noted in chapter 3 the pastor must not exaggerate the expectations of his flock because of his own selfish motives to be glorified in his congregation. He must discern the appropriate priorities in a way that fulfills his role and does not neglect his family.

Part of the love that a pastor has for his children is providing proper instruction coupled with loving discipline for the purpose of bringing them into submission. The rules are set in place to help the children live godly lives. The preacher must hold his children accountable to the rules he has put into place. Children require rules because they are unable to make informed decisions for themselves because of a lack of maturity and experience. When children do not follow the rules, a loving father disciplines his children, but he must not exasperate them with an overbearing nature and excessive discipline that has no purpose. Discipline must fit the transgression. The children must also understand, their responsibility in the family to obey their parents and cooperate in

their own discipleship to grow toward Christlikeness. Specific guidelines for discipline without exasperation have already been presented in chapter 3.

The pastor's wife also has obligations to fulfill to help her husband follow his calling. She is required to submit to his authority as leader of their home. This does not mean that her husband makes all the decisions unilaterally, but she offers her advice and opinion to help him make an informed decision. After the pastor makes the decision, he takes responsibility for it, and she is to support him through the consequences. The wife is to submit to her husband in everything as he leads, and her submission is commanded even if her husband is failing in his responsibilities. The marriage is seen as team work in which the husband makes the calls but only after he studies the situation and solicits appropriate input from family members.

The pastor's family is an essential part of his ministry team. If conditions are difficult at home, then the pastor's ability to lead his church is hindered. He must take the lead in guarding and directing his family life. While his family and church can help him accomplish the protection of the family, God has called the pastor to guard and lead in his home. He must put them first, love them, and be the pastor of his wife and children first.

### **How Can the Church Help?**

The church can help their pastor maintain a godly family life in three ways. First, the church must help their pastor protect his family time. Deacons and church leadership should respect the pastor's days off, vacation time, and routine time spent with family. These leaders should also teach others in the church to respect the pastor's time with his family. The church can respect the pastor's time by adding his schedule to bulletins or other publications to make members aware of his availability. Church leaders could also make themselves available when the pastor is away to deal with crises, like health problems, counseling, or other problems where the pastor may be required.

Second, church members should develop reasonable expectations for their pastor. Although this was mentioned in a previous section, church leaders can help by establishing expectations for the pastor's time like expected office hours and visiting times during the week. A schedule will help the pastor to meet his obligations without feeling the pressure of being constantly available for everything.

Third, the congregation should take appropriate care of the pastor. If a pastor cannot adequately provide for his family, he may struggle to pay his bills or even feed his family. He will feel the pressure to provide a lifestyle for his family that is somewhat comparable to his congregation. When he cannot, it creates a strain on family life. The church must do as much as it can to provide a fair and reasonable salary to compensate the pastor. If they cannot afford to pay him a livable full-time wage, they should allow him to work a second job so that he can provide for his family. This agreement will mean that the church family must adjust the expectations to match the salary. Taking care of the pastor's family also means recognizing milestones like church anniversaries and honoring the pastor.

Further, church members should be careful not to put unnecessarily high expectations on the pastor's wife and children. In the case of the pastor's wife, church members can look at her as a paid staff member since they are paying her husband and expect her to serve in multiple areas in the church. They must allow her to volunteer for or decline positions. Church members also should not expect perfect behavior from the pastor's children. This demand creates an undue burden on them and the pastor if he gives in and expects perfection from his children. The flock must realize that his children are transforming sinners as well and will make mistakes. The important issue is how the pastor responds to his children's misbehavior.

As the pastor cares for his family and as they submit to his loving leadership, the family becomes not only a source of strength and refuge for the pastor, but also a model of godliness for the church. When the pastor's family is moving together toward

God, he can focus on the priorities of the church without the distraction of dealing with serious family problems. His family is a source of joy and a place of refuge that gives him stability to serve God more effectively. The godly family life of the pastor will also support his credibility in the pulpit, and the church can help their pastor live a godly family life as he leads.

### **The Preacher Must Present Himself with Authenticity**

The pastor may be a man of good character, but if he fails to connect with his congregation on an authentic level, they will have difficulty understanding how his messages can apply to them. In chapter 4, I addressed two different extremes and the tension between them. First, the pastor may present himself as only a person of great character, giving his flock the idea that he is so far ahead of them spiritually that they can never attain that type of righteousness. This perception can prevent the pastor from coming alongside his people as a fellow transforming sinner and helping them become more like Christ. Second, the preacher can also reveal too much about his personal struggle with sin and lose credibility with his people. The key for the pastor is to find a balance between presenting godly character and an authentic struggle with sin. In this way he can lead his people to deal with sin and grow by example from within the congregation rather than from above it as if he were perfect.

### **Responsibilities of the Preacher**

Before the pastor can present himself as a person of godly character, he must *be* a person of godly character. While some can fake it for a while, most will find it difficult to maintain a godly example if they are not living it personally. The pastor must first focus on his relationship with God through personal Bible study, prayer, and obedience. Only then can he boldly call on his flock to imitate him as he grows toward Christlikeness. As he maintains a godly character before his congregation, he must avoid three dangers that come in exhibiting character.

First, he must avoid the failure to recognize his own sin while preaching against the sin of others. This is the sin of moral self-righteousness. A result is that the pastor can become judgmental toward his congregation and begin to feel superior. This stance can lead him to begin to feel the stress of being perfect and begin to believe that in order to help others, he must be flawless. As a result, he may become discouraged or fall into despair as he seeks to live up to a perfect standard that he has imposed on himself. He can also become self-centered in his preaching, only sharing stories that make him look good. The danger of forgetting that the preaching moment is about proclaiming the Word of God and not elevating himself is indeed serious.

Second, he must avoid a doctrinal self-righteousness, which is elevating the doctrines he is teaching at the expense of other people or doctrines. This point does not mean that the pastor does not believe that his view is right, but he should teach his people to respect others and try to convince them in love.

Third, the pastor must avoid becoming a people-pleaser. When the pastor is more concerned about his image than about the spiritual condition of his people, he will fail to teach the truths of Scripture that his people need to understand the most. As noted in chapter 4, the approval of others can be fickle, which will cause the pastor to be moving back and forth between what the people most expect from him.

The pastor also must present himself as a flawed sinner that is growing toward godliness. Reid states that authenticity is the way that the preacher connects with the people to help them grow.<sup>4</sup> In this way, the pastor can come alongside his church members in order to help them grow from within the congregation and not from above. The apostle Paul never presented himself as a perfect man, but called himself the chief of sinners. Preachers should learn from Paul who had much reason to boast in his ministry but always presented himself with authority from God but with humility in self.

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<sup>4</sup>Robert Stephen Reid, "Authenticity in Preaching," Academia.edu (2014), accessed November, 5, 2015, [https://www.academia.edu/9829217/Authenticity\\_in\\_Preaching](https://www.academia.edu/9829217/Authenticity_in_Preaching).

In chapter 4, I presented several ways that the pastor can maintain authenticity based on the writings of Arndt Halvorson and Clyde Fant. They suggest that in order to maintain authenticity the pastor should foster a fervent prayer life,<sup>5</sup> cultivate humility, and truly love his people.<sup>6</sup> In addition to these practical helps, the pastor could enlist some men to hold him accountable. Often pastors will not recognize pretentious behavior in their own lives, but godly men cannot only recognize it, but can also share this with the pastor to keep him from moving toward being hypocritical. He could also discuss his ideas for sharing personal information with the congregation with these men. This would give him the opportunity to get feedback on whether something is too personal for the pulpit or useful for the edification of his flock. The pastor should also diligently avoid the dangers of authenticity mentioned in chapter 4 related to self-absorption and self-promotion.

While the pastor should seek to present himself as a person of godly character from the pulpit, he must be careful to do so from a position of humility. This presentation must come from a character that is authentically godly and growing toward Christlikeness. He must avoid the trap of superiority over his flock or others, and the vacillating that comes from seeking to please people. He must maintain an example to be imitated in which his congregation does not see him as the perfect man, but as a transforming Christian. He should be real with them about his personal sin and struggles, but he must avoid sharing things that are not helpful for his flock, might cause them to fall into sin, or are simply too awkward. He should connect with them and maintain his integrity.

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<sup>5</sup>Arndt Halvorson, *Authentic Preaching* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1982), 21-25.

<sup>6</sup>Clyde Fant, *Preaching for Today* (San Francisco: Harper & Row Publishers, 1987), 103-8.

## **How Can the Church Help?**

The church can help their pastor maintain character and authenticity in two ways. First, they must come to understand that the pastor is a sinner saved by grace and moving toward God in sanctification. They should look at him not as a spiritual giant, but as a maturing believer who has been called by God to lead them in authority. They must recognize that he has the same standing as they spiritually, but he is simply called to a greater place of responsibility. Second, they should be gracious with their pastor when he fails. His congregation should come alongside him when he fails and help him to grow through it. In some cases, the pastor's failure will result in his inability to lead the church. The church should be gracious in those cases also, but in situations where the sin is something less serious, the congregation can show the pastor through love and forgiveness how to lead more effectively. If the pastor knows his church will react in this manner, he can have more freedom to show authenticity when he has sinned.

## **Conclusion**

The pastor will be more effective in the pulpit if he maintains stable character and family and presents himself in a way that connects with the congregation. His church will view him with more credibility and with greater faith in his message. Godly character and a stable family life will also aid his sermon preparation. If he is growing himself, he can more easily teach others to grow. The pastor's godly character is an essential trait of long-term effectiveness in the pulpit.

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## ABSTRACT

### THE CHARACTER OF THE PREACHER AND HIS PREACHING MINISTRY

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This thesis addresses the impact of the character of the preacher and his family life on his preaching ministry, including the manner that he presents his character authentically before his congregation. Chapter 1 serves as the introduction.

Chapter 2 investigates the biblical teaching on the character of the preacher and identifies specific ways that character virtues or vices can impact the reception of the sermon as authoritative.

Chapter 3 examines the biblical teaching concerning the family of the preacher and presents studies from the family life of pastors to determine the impact of family on pulpit effectiveness.

Chapter 4 assesses the preacher's presentation of himself from the pulpit. The chapter draws evidence from Scripture that he must be authentic from the pulpit and be a man of character in order to be most effective.

Chapter 5 presents the character goals of the preacher that is most effective in communicating the Word of God.

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