

STRENGTHENING CHURCH MINISTRIES

3 Practices Every Pastor Must Apply

If you (as a pastor) want the support of a majority of your church then there are at least three things that you must do faithfully.

There are many pastors that have hung themselves by not doing at least these three things in their ministries to the church members. Though there are responsibilities of the church members also to the pastor, he should not forsake his basic responsibilities to his flock. In a healthy church the pastor and the members share and take part in their responsibilities to each other from the Word of God.

I. Feed the Flock (People):

(John 21:15-17) So when they had dined, Jesus saith to Simon Peter, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my lambs. He saith to him again the second time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my sheep. He saith unto him the third time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me? Peter was grieved because he said unto him the third time, Lovest thou me? And he said unto him, Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee. Jesus saith unto him, Feed my sheep.

If Jesus only said it once it would be enough but it was to get Peters attention that the sheep needed to be fed. In many churches the sheep are not fed much on a regular basis because the shepherd has not been fed himself from the Word of God. You cannot give out what you have not taken in from the Word and the Holy Spirit's filling you up each day. Please don't make the mistake of letting your sermon preparation take the place of your daily devotional time with the Lord. Try to keep good and balanced in both studying for sermons and your devotional time with the Lord on a daily and weekly basis. Now to what and how do you feed the sheep.

1. Feed them the Word of God fully – this may seem obvious but many times preachers (notice I did not say pastors), say they are preaching the Bible but do not use much of it in their sermons. Use little of other materials when feeding the flock and more of the Bible which is the only spiritual food for sheep. Keep the stories, illustrations, commentaries, quotes to a minimum and “preach the word” (2Tim.4:2). Get a preaching system that works for you and be sure to preach the “whole counsel of God” book by book.
2. Feed them the Word faithfully – again this may be without question a given, but too many times the shepherd is more than willing to let someone else feed his sheep. Today many shepherds are not feeding the sheep on a regular basis because they are trying to be all things to all people. The main work of the shepherd is to take care of the sheep and feeding them is one of the most important things that a shepherd has to do for them. Don't let your assistant or anyone else try to feed the sheep that God has given to your care.
 - Plan your sermons ahead of time.
 - Prepare your sermons as much ahead as possible.
 - Preach your sermons as if you are feeding the hungry soul.
 - Practice your sermons before your people.

(1Tim. 4:12) Let no man despise thy youth; but be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity.

II. Love the Flock (People):

Remember shepherds have been known for giving their life for the sheep, Jesus said;
(John 10:11) I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep.

In this Jesus gave His life for the lost sheep as the pastor must give his life also for the saved sheep. This does not mean that a pastor physically dies for the sheep but give his life in service to his sheep. This giving of the pastor to his sheep comes from a heart of love for the sheep; love is the motivator for giving love when they are not lovely or respond to your love.

(1John 3:16) Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.

If the pastor follows the example of our Lord then he will love his people first, this means that before the feelings of love come he loves his members anyway. This is not done but feelings (emotions) but by the act of the will to be obedient to the Word of God. It's surprising that when we are obedient to the Word by faith and choice then the feeling (emotions) follow along. When the pastor loves the sheep he is just showing how God is dwelling in and through him to perfect (mature) him in the Lord.

(1John 4:10-12) Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another. No man hath seen God at any time. If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and his love is perfected in us.

Let us remember also that talk is cheap and that the pastor needs to do more than just preach a sermon, he must by the grace of God live it. It would be good to read and study 1 Cor.13 often to be reminded of how love is put into practice towards others. If the pastor preaches "forgiveness" then by love practice forgiveness, if he preaches "service" then by love serve others and you can get the rest of the message here.

(1John 3:18) My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth.

If a pastor is real with his love for the sheep they will know it and for the most part will respond with love towards him. If he tries to fake it they will also know it and will respond accordingly. If he has lost or is lacking in loving the sheep, ask the Lord for a renewed love for them and then by faith start loving them according to the scriptures. The Lord will most certainly answer this prayer and help you to love His sheep. Remember that real love can do great things for both, the one who gives the love and the one that receives the love.

(Pro. 10:12) Hatred stirreth up strifes: but love covereth all sins.

(Pro. 17:9) He that covereth a transgression seeketh love; but he that repeateth a matter separateth very friends.

(1Peter 4:8) And above all things have fervent charity among yourselves: for charity shall cover the multitude of sins.

Someone said that "faults are thick where love is thin" may we show more love and see less faults.

(John 8:7b) "He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her."

(John 13:35) By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.

It may do the pastor good to ask, how can I love the sheep more than ever before.

III. Be willing to admit wrong and ask forgiveness from your Flock (People):

There is one thing that will bring down the pastor quickly if he allows it to take root in his life and ministry – PRIDE.

(Pro. 8:13) The fear of the LORD is to hate evil: pride, and arrogancy, and the evil way, and the forward mouth, do I hate.

(Pro. 11:2) When pride cometh, then cometh shame: but with the lowly is wisdom.

(Pro. 13:10) Only by pride cometh contention: but with the well advised is wisdom.

(Pro. 14:3) In the mouth of the foolish is a rod of pride: but the lips of the wise shall preserve them.

(Pro. 16:18) Pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall.

(Pro. 21:24) Proud and haughty scorner is his name, who dealeth in proud wrath. {in proud...: Heb. in the wrath of pride }

(Pro. 29:23) A man's pride shall bring him low: but honour shall uphold the humble in spirit.

We shouldn't say that we don't have any problem with pride, because all of us who are honest will say that they are beset with this sin on a daily basis. It's not that we are tempted with it, but allow it to go unchecked in our lives and ministries. There are some pastors who even enjoy and promote pride in their church and ministries.

No one is fully mature in their spiritual life and can say that have no issues with pride. I will admit that there are times that in the front of the whole church I have asked for forgiveness. Now don't think it was something that would keep me out of the ministry, but just not having the right spirit in the way things were said.

(Pro. 10:19) In the multitude of words there wanteth not sin: but he that refraineth his lips is wise.

If a pastor can admit that he has made a poor choice or mistake he will by example lead others in leadership and the membership of the church to do the same. Asking forgiveness is weakness but a strong character in a person's life that shows the grace of God at work through humility.

(James 4:6) But he giveth more grace. Wherefore he saith, God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble.

(1Peter 5:5) Likewise, ye younger, submit yourselves unto the elder. Yea, all of you be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility: for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble.

This doesn't mean that every misunderstood thing that a pastor is accused of is right or dealt with in the same manner. If a pastor is loving as said above he will have a forgiving and loving church family that is more than willing to understand with a right heart attitude. A pastor as well as the people need to see themselves in Christ and His forgiveness unto them so they can do the same unto others.

(Eph. 4:32) And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you.

If these three things are practiced and applied in the pastoral ministry of our churches there would be more long term pastors in the work of God and to His flock. May we all pray that we can grow in these practices in the future of our ministries.

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