

A Soldier's Handbook

Behave Thyself

A Ministerial Manual for the Man of God in the Perilous Times of the Last Days

“But if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to **behave thyself** in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth.”
I Timothy 3:15

I give thee charge in the sight of God, who quickeneth all things, and before Christ Jesus, who before Pontius Pilate witnessed a good confession;

That thou keep this commandment without spot, unrebukeable, until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ: Which in his times he shall shew, who is the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords; Who only hath immortality, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto; whom no man hath seen, nor can see: to whom be honour and power everlasting. Amen.”
I Timothy 6:13-16

“Thou therefore endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of this life; that he may please him who hath chosen him to be a soldier.”
II Timothy 2:3-4

“I charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom;
Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine.”
II Timothy 4:1-2

Introduction

The Lord Jesus Christ is “as a man taking a far journey, who left his house, and gave authority to his servants, and to every man his work, and commanded the porter to watch” (Mark 13:34).

The house in this short parable stands for the kingdom and local churches of Jesus Christ, as many Scriptures affirm (Eph 2:19-22; I Cor 12:27; I Tim 3:15; II Tim 2:20; Heb 3:1-6; I Pet 2:5).

The servants given authority are the ministerial offices of the New Testament – apostles, prophets, evangelists, and pastors and teachers (Eph 4:8-11; I Cor 12:28; Rom 12:6-8). The office of bishop is the object of our study here, since the other three offices ceased with the end of the apostolic period.

The two offices of the church today are bishop and deacon (I Tim 3:1-13; Phil 1:1). The modern notion of an evangelist as an itinerant cheerleader is heresy (II Cor 10:12-16). Each bishop does the work of an evangelist, rather than invent a new office to fleece the flocks of other men (II Tim 4:5).

The porter, being a doorkeeper of a large house, building, or castle, is commanded to be vigilant in protecting and preparing the occupants for the arrival of the master. And this is the bishop’s goal – the perfection of his hearers for the Second Coming of the Lord Jesus Christ (Col 1:28-29).

While this short and simple parable introduces our subject, it is primarily the Pastoral Epistles of our beloved brother Paul to Timothy and Titus that fill in the details as to the authority, work, and vigilance required in office. Furthermore, in the explication of these Pastoral Epistles, we see the rest of the Bible filling out the sense of these instructions and warnings.

Every bishop is a soldier at war. Jesus Christ is your Captain and King. Satan, the world, and your flesh are the enemies. Your Captain has left you with instructions and warnings to fight a good fight and war a good warfare. Endure hardness as His good soldier and receive a crown from Him!

We are clearly living in the perilous times of the last days, when an effeminate and worldly form of Christianity threatens the saints and churches of Jesus Christ (II Tim 3:1 – 4:5). Every God-called man must stand on the word of God alone against the creeping and compromising teachers that are leaving the truth for fables and entertainment on every side (I Tim 6:3-5).

Therefore, in order to provoke the hearts of His true ministers and remind them of their calling and duties, this little manual is being prepared with the certain knowledge and humility that the writer has an equal or greater obligation to consider these lessons himself.

May the Lord bless this effort to collect the Bible’s instructions and warnings for pastors to help those men assigned the important role of building and protecting the kingdom and churches of God.

May Jesus Christ be praised!

Instructions and Warnings for Ministers

Given to Hospitality

02/12/2007

Hospitality is not an option or suggestion, especially for ministers (Rom 12:13; I Tim 3:2; Titus 1:8; I Pet 4:9). It is a command for all saints and a qualification for the ministry: you must love it and be given to it, as an example to the flock. It is a duty and privilege, and it will bear ministerial fruit. What is hospitality? Entertaining others with room and/or board (Heb 13:2; Gen 19:1-3; I Tim 5:10). Abraham entertained the Lord for a fine meal (Gen 18:1-8). The great woman of Shunem added a bedroom to her house for the man of God (II Kgs 4:8-10). Aquila and Priscilla kept Paul (Acts 18:1-3), took Apollos home with them (Acts 18:24-28), and hosted a church in their house (I Cor 16:19). Lydia kept Paul, Luke, and others in Philippi (Acts 16:14-15), and David entertained the whole nation with a fine meal of bread, wine, and meat (II Sam 6:19). How important is it? The Lord will remember every act of it, no matter how small, in the Day of Judgment (Matt 10:40-42; 25:31-46). Who are the best to entertain? Those least able to repay you ... the difficult and ugly (Luke 14:12-14)! Is there a better time to illustrate a happy marriage and godly family than around a meal or a night in your home? Is there a better time to show faith-based living, the importance of frequent prayer, or how to hold devotions with children? How can you better show brotherly love than by serving them food and providing lodging? Here is a golden opportunity to get to know strangers and church members, win them by personal affection and service, and show them the love and righteousness of Christ! Your family and finances must be ordered around this duty. Your house should have room and furniture to keep guests comfortably. Your budget must allow for this necessity. Your wife should be a cheerful and eager participant, even if you must press her to it. Young children must be trained or kept by another to avoid disrupting things. Older children should cheerfully entertain any children of your guests in a godly and spiritual way. Hospitality includes dining in a restaurant or renting a hotel room (when you pay the bill), and it includes providing food and lodging in your home. Your pleasure in these acts of kindness and service should be obvious. As a servant of Christ, your life is not your own, and you should be eager to share the pleasures of a meal or overnight lodging with the same spirit of sacrifice our Lord had for your redemption.

Spiritual Mindedness

02/05/2007

Few saints are more spiritually minded than their pastor. Few families are more than his family. Most default to worldliness by a poor pastoral example. But many will follow, if his zeal for Christ and heaven is clear in and out of the pulpit (I Tim 4:16). You must increase spiritual mindedness – directing a person's affection and life away from earth and toward heaven (Col 3:1-4). You have failed, if you are carnally minded in word or deed (Rom 8:6-9; Gal 5:16-25). Assemblies should obviously be spiritual. But do you eschew foolish chitchat before and after services about weather, politics, jobs, sports, news, and other vanities to focus on Christ, scripture, joy, souls, the fear of the Lord, heaven, and other spiritual topics? Do you use the pulpit exclusively to lift up Jesus, the words of scripture, the grace of God, the hope of heaven, and other related themes? Are announcements a necessary evil (they should be), or do they carry equal weight with worship? Make sure everything before, during, and after public assemblies is pointed heavenward. Despise and fear hindrances to the holy objective of casting all other thoughts aside to think on God, His

Son, our great salvation, the truth of the gospel, and the general assembly above (Heb 12:22-24). However, there is another world of influence for you outside public assemblies. Is the rest of your life – the 97% you are not near the pulpit – just as dedicated to spiritual things? It should be! It must be! Of course, ministers eat, sleep, and maintain their homes, transportation, etc. But everything beyond those needs should be directed upward! Why would an ambassador from heaven socialize? Every contact with members should include exhortation, praise, reading of scripture, or prayer. Life is too short, the cause too great, and the distractions too many to talk of earthly things with members. Help them follow you away from belly worship – minding earthly things (Phil 3:13-21)! Men could not believe when Job laughed, for he was sober and wise, as you should be (Job 29:20-25; Titus 2:7-8). Are your phone calls short, to the point, and spiritual? How about your emails? How about your visits to members' homes? The hospitality you show in your home? Even in a restaurant you can keep conversation spiritual, and you can end with a sanctifying verse and prayer. A pastor is not a buddy: he is a spiritual example and leader. Fulfill your calling!

All Things Honest

01/01/2007

Provide all things honest in the sight of all men, especially in matters pertaining to money. Paul was very careful in this duty, because the reputation of the gospel and the confidence of saints were at stake. It is a shame, but men often care more about how their money is handled than they do how the truth is handled, even among the saints of God! In receiving the collection from Corinth for poor saints in Jerusalem, Paul sent Titus and two other highly esteemed brothers, all three of whom he praised as worthy of their total trust (II Cor 8:16-24; I Cor 16:3-4). And it is from this lengthy description of a financial matter that we learn the mandate – provide things honest, in the sight of God, and in the sight of men (II Cor 8:21). Though specified for the ministry here, the same rule of wisdom is also applied to church members (Rom 12:17). Leave nothing to doubt, question, or criticism. Tell more rather than less. If full disclosure is important and necessary for worldly contracts, it is much more important in financial transactions in the house of God. God's ministers must avoid even the appearance of evil (I Thess 5:22). If this requires extra effort or time, so be it! Be specific and clear. There is no place for doubtful projects, vague goals, or confusing reporting. Keep things simple; keep them straightforward; and keep them communicated. You can hardly repeat yourself too often in monetary matters. Put things in writing when possible. If a paper trail is good or necessary for accountants, how much more for the servants of Christ. An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure – a little care in details up front can protect against accusations or questions later. It is a ministerial obligation to oversee financial matters in such a way that there is no room for grumbling or murmuring, as at Jerusalem (Acts 6:1-6). It was for this reason and their higher calling that the apostles ordained deacons over the financial business of the church. Even in financial matters, elders are not to be accused without two or three witnesses of a specific crime (I Tim 5:19). If a minister must be found at fault, let him be found at fault for preaching the scriptures as God has revealed them to him. Let him be accused of heresy by those who have turned from truth to fables; but never let him be accused of embezzlement or mismanagement of finances. Such a travesty can be avoided by careful honesty in all financial matters.

Misplaced Charismatics.

11/13/06

Charismatics can say, “I don’t care what the Bible says: I have the Spirit.” Misplaced Charismatics, a subtler variation, say, “The Spirit showed me this is right.” Or, “The Spirit interprets the Bible for me.” Or, “Following the Spirit is more important than details.” Or, “I could feel the Spirit in that church.” All five statements are heresy. They deny the purpose or work of the ministry (I Tim 4:13-15; II Tim 2:15). They assume apostolic gifts of discernment and wisdom long after the apostolic period (I Cor 12:4-11; 13:8-10). They neglect the rule to prove all things (I Thess 5:21; I John 4:1-6). They reflect a view of truth not taught anywhere in Scripture. They ignore the danger of deceiving spirits. They are excuses for men who value feelings over scripture. They lead to heresy, for without the Bible, a spirit’s leading is subjective and dangerous (Deut 13:1-5). The Charismatic movement of the 20th century spawned the error that the Spirit still teaches by direct inspiration. But many far removed from the Charismatics rely nearly as much on feelings, leadings, and other deceptive impressions. They are misplaced Charismatics! But God’s true ambassadors are different! Instead of dreams, they preach the hammer and fire of God’s word (Jer 23:28-29)! What is the chaff to the wheat! They know written scripture is more sure than God’s voice from heaven (II Pet 1:16-21). They love noble hearers, who search the scriptures to confirm truth rather than wait for the leading of a spirit (Acts 17:11). There is more than one spirit, and all alternatives are devilish (II Cor 11:3-4,13-15). Sober saints scoff at blather about the Spirit that contradicts or minimizes the Bible, for they know the Spirit wrote the truth in a book, and that is where they are to find it. As a servant of Jesus Christ, it is your solemn duty to preach only the word, trust only the word, and test all spirits by the word ... not the other way around. The attitude, warmth, or zeal of a church or man does not verify doctrine or practice. The Word of God is the final authority for all such questions. Only the Lord Jesus Christ knows when a candlestick is present or not. Mere mortals are to measure by the Scriptures, lest some spirit lead them into darkness (I Kgs 22:23; Is 8:20; Gal 3:1). The Holy Ghost will never lead you anywhere the Word of God cannot take you; for the Bible is His book, and He has never led anyone contrary to it. With God’s will in writing, reject all other alternatives!

Calves of your glory.

11/06/06

It is God’s will for you and your church to give thanks for everything (I Thess 5:18; Eph 5:20; Col 3:17). You fail God’s revealed will, if little praise or thanksgiving goes up to God. He does not want calves of the stall, as in the Old Testament; He wants the calves of your lips; He wants you to bring words (Hos 14:1-2). Instead of the glory of Solomon’s temple, He wants the glory in your mouth – your tongue (Ps 16:9; 30:12; 57:8; 108:1). Give Him glory with your glory! Give Him the calves of your glory! Giving thanks was and is better than sacrifice (Ps 69:30-32). Giving thanks is a sacrifice of your lips that should be done continually (Heb 13:15)! He delights in the thanksgiving of His saints (Ps 34:1; 92:1). Being thankful is not enough. Thankfulness is not giving thanks. Giving thanks is the verbal expression of thankfulness. He wants to hear it! And it should be loud and joyful (Ps 98:4)! David wrote psalms, many with thanksgiving, to teach you how to think and speak in praising God. Which is your favorite? It is your duty to exemplify, promote, and require giving of thanks. What more could He do for us? We are bound to give thanks always for salvation and the truth of it (Gen 32:10; I Cor 15:57; II Thess 2:13). We are to speak about his unspeakable gift (II Cor 9:15)! But there are many other blessings also (I Tim 2:1-3; 4:10)! Do you bless the Lord in your assemblies? Often? With all your might, as David danced? Do you encourage your men to rise and bless the Lord, which was done under Paul’s oversight (I Cor 14:16-17)? Do you encourage feasts, like America’s Thanksgiving Day, to worship the Lord with praise and thanksgiving (Deut 14:26; II Sam 6:18-19; Neh 8:1-12)? Instead of the filthiness, foolish talking, and jesting of these

perilous times, let us use our lips for giving thanks (Eph 5:4). Every time we take food, we should give thanks (Acts 27:35; I Tim 4:3). You need not wonder why your prayers are not heard, if you do not give thanks (Phil 4:6-7; Col 4:2). The true faith of Jesus includes abounding thanksgiving (Col 2:6-7). Praise and giving of thanks are contagious and uplifting (Ps 34:2-3), and it is a joyful way to speak about the Lord to draw God's gracious attention (Mal 3:16-18). Delight yourself in Him, and He will give you the desires of your heart (Ps 37:4). Be stingy with thanksgiving and praise, and He will miserably destroy you (Deut 28:46-67; Rom 1:20-27). He is worthy of much (I Cor 4:7).

Protect Ancient Landmarks.

10/30/06

Solomon protected real estate by condemning removal of ancient landmarks – markers for fields (22:28; 23:10). As a man of God, you must protect the truth from being altered (Titus 1:9; Jude 1:3). You labor in the perilous times of the last days, when sound doctrine is compromised on all sides (II Tim 3:1-7,13; 4:3-4). You must identify the apostolic landmarks (II Thess 2:15), lest they are lost and the next generation cannot find the old paths (Jer 6:16; Amos 8:11-13). Once out of the way of understanding, they will die in the congregation of the dead (Pr 21:16). You will be called strange and old-fashioned (I Pet 4:3-5). It is a compliment! Age does not prove a thing true: many heresies are old. But change is dangerous, especially by compromisers. You cannot accept the modifications being made to doctrine and practice. You must hold to the one faith of the N.T. Let seeker sensitive and church growth gurus dilute the gospel until reprobates like it. God will expose their folly as He did Pharaoh's magicians' (II Tim 3:8-9). You are rare in the earth. While other pastors attend seminars for new things, you study the Bible and examine your ministry by its old rules. Do not let scorners ridicule a lack of musical instruments, for they are the ones who changed from the old paths. Quote their heroes to condemn the strange fire. By rejecting Rome's holy days, you are with all fathers in the faith outside the last 100 years. Your peers who hold sunrise services, egg hunts, Baal-tree decorating, and a haunted house can rot in their shame. While they accept any use of water as baptism and ordain women preachers, you keep women silent in your assemblies and preach a literal burning hell. While they watch "The Passion" and "Left Behind," you preach the man of sin as the pope of Rome. While they glorify tongues and healing, you preach the doctrine of reprobation. *Remove not the ancient landmarks!* Let them replace hard preaching and sound doctrine with fables and entertainment. You repeat, "Thus saith the Lord"! While they hold coed swimming parties at summer camps, you keep your women dressed modestly all the time. While they allow easy divorces and honor the single state, you promote courtship, marriage, large families, and child training by the rod. While they bloat their rolls with members who have not attended in decades, you shrink yours by excluding all but the faithful. *Remove not the ancient landmarks!*

Make it Plain.

10/23/06

Can hearers run by your teaching? Or must they creep, unsure of directions? Or are they aimless, not grasping your intent? Here is the rule: "Write the vision, and make it plain upon tables, that he may run that readeth it" (Hab 2:2). You must make the gospel plain, so that hearers grasp the truth and react correctly. How would you preach Christ's incarnate sonship? "The Hypostatic Union Contradicts the Gnostic Theories of Eternal Generation"? A better title would be, "Jesus Christ Is the Son of God," or even better, "Is Jesus a Begotten God?" Of course, the entire sermon should be

as simple as the titles. Your hearers are infants to ancients of both sexes. God charged you to make His gospel manifest – like the simple list of cargo revealing a ship’s cargo. You make the truth manifest by clearly revealing it for all to see. This is being apt to teach, and it is your clear duty (Rom 16:26; II Cor 4:2; Eph 5:13; Col 1:26; 4:4; Tit 1:3). Our brother Paul used great plainness of speech (II Cor 3:12). Do you? Do your people rejoice at easily understanding the truth you make plain and simple? Do they celebrate like those hearing Ezra (Neh 8:5-12)? Though it requires extra effort, the investment must be made. Tear apart and reassemble sermons until you reduce them to points that children can follow. You do not deserve financial support, if only the top quartile of the church grasps a sermon. Constant reduction is your mandate! Continually reduce the complexity of your subject until it is obvious. The dead, dry, and discouraging monologue of a monk is worthless. Your opinion is not the measure of your teaching! The opinion of your hearers is what counts. Teaching is never going through the motions. It is passionately helping all hearers to see, believe, love, and obey truth. Every minute you spend reading commentaries or theologies should be matched by two minutes of breaking the topic down for children. Save your skillful rhetoric and storehouse of wisdom for philosophers at the Areopagus. Jesus may have used parables with His enemies, but He did not with His disciples. Are you feeding His sheep, or entertaining yourself? Are you feeding His lambs, or impressing them with your intelligence? The goal is not appearances, eloquence, impressions, or sound. The goal is understanding and reaction – of your audience! Are your hearers grasping, rejoicing, and reacting to your preaching? If not, you have failed. It is not their fault. It is yours. Stir up your gift and apply yourself. Make it plain, so they can run.

Hold a Higher Standard.

10/16/06

You lay burdens on men’s shoulders – it is your duty (Matt 5:19; Phil 2:12-16; Tit 3:8). But unlike Pharisees, you must live by a higher standard than you teach (Matt 23:1-4; I Pet 5:3). Ministerial hypocrisy has overthrown the faith of many. You must be a pattern for believers by living the gospel more strictly than you preach (II Thess 3:6-9; I Tim 4:12; Tit 2:7). A copy will not be better than the original! God forbid you should open your mouth on any subject and live less than your words (Ps 50:16-23; Rom 2:17-29; II Tim 3:5; Tit 1:16)! You must present God’s ideal in word and deed. Consider marriage. Monogamy is God’s ideal (Gen 2:18-25; Mal 2:15). Yet a polygamist can be a church member, if it were not illegal in most nations. But bishops must be – *present tense* – the husband of one wife (I Tim 3:2,12; Tit 1:6). God allowed polygamy to many, but He denies it to His preachers. They hold a higher standard. Consider wine. Members may drink short of drunkenness (Eph 5:18). Their standard is the lowest. Deacons and aged women must not be given to *much wine* (I Tim 3:8; Titus 2:3). Bishops must not be given to *wine* (I Tim 3:3; 5:23; Tit 1:7). Consider the higher standards for priests in Leviticus 21. They were restricted from mourning dead relatives (21:1-6). They could not marry a divorced woman (21:7-8). Their whorish daughters were to be burned with fire (21:9). The high priest had even stricter rules – he could not even mourn dying parents, and he could not even marry a widow (21:10-15). Men with blemishes or handicaps could not serve in the holy office (21:16-24). Why? Because God is holy, and His men must represent the highest standards of holiness. O man of God! Are you given to hospitality – addicted and greedy for it (I Tim 3:2)? Do you surpass all others? Does the church know this? Is your wife the most cheerful, modest, serving, virtuous, and wise woman in the church? Are your children the best behaved and most dedicated to God’s service? Do you give the most in your church by percentage (I Chr 29:1-5)? Do you honor the Lord’s Day better than others? Do you rule your spirit the best? Is your wife the most privileged woman to be married to you? Do you relate to your children better

than other fathers? Do you outwork the other men in productivity, not merely time? Are you the least interested in money (I Tim 3:3)? Do you take offences better than others? It is your calling!

Believing Bibliology.

10/09/06

Without inspired scripture, you have nothing. You might as well teach the opinions of drunkards. Without scripture preservation, you do not have inspired scripture, for inspiration is only proven by statements from a preserved Bible! Your ministry depends on a sure Bibliology – the literature of the Bible. You must know and defend God’s pure words, or you and your ministry are impotent. With them, you can pull down strongholds and overcome enemies, teachers, and ancients (Job 32:7-10; Ps 119:98-100; II Cor 10:3-6). You must preach the word (II Tim 4:1-2). You must believe it can make you perfect (II Tim 3:16-17). You must divide it rightly (II Tim 2:15). You must trust it at the word-level, as did our Lord and Paul (Matt 22:31-33,41-46; John 8:58; 10:35; Gal 3:16; 4:9; Heb 8:13; 12:26-28). You must believe it is more sure than God’s voice from heaven (II Pet 1:19). The “originals” were never in a book or read by any but a few initial readers, so talk about them is subterfuge. The “original” languages are dead, have as many variations in versions as the English, add nothing to the English, and remove scripture from the laity, as Rome did with Latin. Modern English versions and paraphrases are corruptions with glaring faults. Can you identify a few to cast Dagon to the ground? Can you prove the N.T. canon was together in the first century, or do you rely on the Council of Carthage in 397 A.D.? Do you fully grasp the only support for the canon of 27 N.T. books is faith and fruit – there is no historical, logical, scientific, or other reason for it? Are you confident that faith, fruit, facts, and fools are sufficient to prove the KJV? Faith believes God’s promises to preserve His words (Ps 12:6-7; Is 30:8; 40:8; I Pet 1:25; etc.). Fruit identifies the KJV as those words with 400 years of evidence (Matt 7:15-20; I Thess 2:13; etc.). Facts are the internal inconsistencies and lies of the modern versions (Pr 8:8; John 10:35; II Cor 2:17). Fools are the arrogant textual critics and scribes God promised to confound (Matt 11:25-26; I Cor 1:19-20; 3:18-20). If you are a “man of God,” a bishop-pastor-teacher of the N.T., then the scriptures are primarily yours (Mal 2:7; I Tim 4:13-15; II Tim 3:16-17). This important subject requires you to study and build a believing Bibliology. Rather than use sound bites from a multitude of versions, read God’s inspired words distinctly, give the sense, and cause men to understand the reading (Neh 8:8).

Emulate Elihu.

10/02/06

Ministerial heroes are precious, when they are God’s men, and their histories are inspired! Otherwise, embellished human stories about ministers are trivial. No seminary exalts Elihu, yet they use biographies, names, pictures, relics, and tombstones of men far inferior. Would to God every young man were challenged with Elihu! Who is Elihu? He wrote the book of Job and was the only wise man in it. How do we know he wrote it? Easily. The narrative insert of Job 32:15-16 is in the first person. Modern versions like the NKJV, supplying quotation marks to “help” the reader, make these two verses his spoken words, corrupting the passage. Why is Elihu a ministerial hero? Time will fail in this short space to do him justice. (All references will be to the book of Job.) He had an answer when four very wise men had spent themselves (32:1). He was angry at Job for his self-righteous attack on God (32:2). He was angry at Job’s three friends for their ignorance and false accusations (32:3). He showed holy decorum while four older men traded foolishness (32:4). He

was angered by their ignorance (32:5). He kept silence only for a while due to their age (32:6). He was not afraid of them (32:7-8). He knew that inspired revelation was superior to any man (32:8). He understood that age and reputation do not guarantee wisdom (32:9). He told them to listen to his opinion from God (32:10). He had waited for their answers, but none of them had honored God (32:11-13). He knew he was an outsider, but he had the answers (32:14). These four men could not silence him (32:15-16). He told them it was his turn to give an opinion (32:17). He was full of truth these men had not touched (32:18). He had a zealous spirit that intensely wanted to defend God and truth (32:18-20). He was unafraid to correct these esteemed men (32:21). He had no use for flattering titles for any man (32:21-22). He confidently declared his integrity and knowledge (33:1-11). He gave the answer for the book of Job (33:12-13). He told how God deals with men (33:14-22). He spoke of the value of a true preacher (33:23-30). He told Job he would teach him wisdom (33:31-33). He blasted Job for speaking against God (34:1-37). He blasted Job again for speaking against God (35:1-16). He declared himself perfect in knowledge when defending the integrity of God (36:1-33). He continued in his glorious defense of God (37:1-24). Covet to be like Elihu!

Forgive freely, fully, and finally.

09/25/06

Forgiveness is fundamental to Christianity. God legally forgave His elect by His Son's death (Acts 13:38; Eph 1:7; Heb 10:17). He is also faithful and just to practically forgive any sins they confess (Ps 32:5; Prov 28:13; I John 1:9). Based on this mercy, He expects His saints to forgive one another, as a proof of their religion (Matt 6:12,14-15; 18:21-35; Rom 12:19-21; Col 3:12-13; I Pet 3:8-9). You may preach God's forgiveness, and you should. You may exhort men to forgive one another, and you should. But your forgiveness of others can preach Christ and godliness loudest of all (I Tim 4:12; Titus 2:7; I Pet 5:3). What do you recall about Stephen? His rhetorical skill in silencing his Jewish adversaries (Acts 6:8-10)? His eloquent sermon (Acts 7:1-50)? His tender invitation to those who reprobates (Acts 7:1-59)? Or his forgiveness of his enemies (Acts 7:60)? Members will offend you. It is part of the job. God will make sure of it, for your perfection and the church's example. You can illustrate the gospel of grace by showing mercy to your enemies within and without the church. Sometimes the offences will be publicly known; sometimes they will not. Your private acts of forgiveness will be discussed and praised privately, and your public carriage toward enemies will be measured and discussed publicly. If bitterness and grudges are wrong in church members, how much more in the man of God (Jas 3:14-16; 5:9)? If peacemakers are great in the city of God, then you should be the greatest champion of peace (Matt 5:9; Eph 4:3; Jas 3:17-18). If true love covers sins, then you should cover everything you can (Pr 10:12; 17:9; I Pet 4:8). All men should know you quickly, freely, fully, and finally forgive any sins against you, whether your forgiveness is sought or not. If members detect you are cool, cold, harsh, or standoffish toward any, you have disgraced your Lord and defiled the gospel. If other ministers have wronged you, never wrong them in or out of your pulpit. Forgive them. Bless them. If the children of God love enemies, bless those that curse them, do good to those that hate them, and pray for those that spitefully use and persecute them, then you should always be first in these duties. Make sure you reserve great warmth for your coolest members, or you are no better than sinners of the world (Matt 5:46-48; Luke 6:32-36). Your forgiveness of others will illustrate the gospel and adorn your office for the souls of men.

Reject arguments from silence.

09/18/06

You must avoid foolish and unlearned questions (II Tim 2:16,23; Titus 3:9). Part of this is rejecting arguments from silence. Some argue the Bible allows anything it does not condemn. They claim that Bible silence implies God's approval for women deacons, rock bands, steeples, grape juice and crackers for communion, ruling elders, baptism by deacons, part-time pastors, associations, deacons ordaining bishops, baby dedications, open communion, and other things the New Testament does not specifically condemn. They are wrong. The Bible is a closed system of truth, and silence about alternatives does not justify altering a positive command (Deut 4:2; 5:32; 12:32; Matt 28:20; II Tim 3:16-17). The argument from silence is invalid. Moses smote a rock instead of speaking to it, and it cost him dearly. God had not condemned striking it, but He had commanded speaking to it. David zealously moved the Ark on a new ox cart, but God's command was for priests to carry it. Though no specific law prohibited an ox cart, the positive command ruled it out. The modification cost Uzzah his life. But there is more evidence for this rule. Consider the priesthood. How did God condemn men from Judah being priests? He simply said the priests were to be from Levi (Heb 7:12-15). The silence about Judah condemned men from Judah. How did God prohibit David from eating the shewbread? He said the priests were to eat it (Matt 12:3-4). If God commands something, we do exactly that. If He condemns something, we strictly avoid it. If God leaves a thing to our choice, we cannot require or prohibit it. Some call this the regulative principle for religious worship. A positive Bible command is enough – it condemns any other option. Does the lack of a law against Coke and chips for the Lord's Supper justify trying them? Or does the positive command for fruit of the vine and bread clearly prohibit the experiment? Indeed it does! What made Nadab and Abihu's fire strange before the Lord? What made Uzziah's attempt to offer incense so evil? They violated positive commands, even though they did not violate negative commands. Do not let any man disturb you by arguing from silence. If God addressed the matter anywhere in the Bible, the argument from silence is invalid. If God has not addressed the matter anywhere, it is Christian liberty, and he cannot dispute about it anyway (Rom 14:1). Keep purity and peace (Jas 3:17)!

Sworn to Excellence!

09/11/06

You are charged by oaths to excellence as a minister! God expects His ambassadors to be exceptional. You have the greatest office on earth, for the greatest Being in heaven, for the greatest effect on men's lives (II Sam 23:3; II Chr 19:6; Ps 82:1-8). There can be no complacency, lethargy, mediocrity, or retiring on the job. You are sworn to excellence! Do not let Mennonite or Russellite thinking confuse you about swearing, for the Bible is full of it. A charge in God's name is an oath, is swearing, and carries the force of a vow, even if you hear it passively (Ex 22:10-11; Lev 5:1; Deut 6:13; 10:20; I Sam 14:28; I Kgs 8:31; Pr 29:24; etc.). Caiaphas forced our Lord to answer in court by such an oath (Matt 26:62-64). Reject all false notions about this solemn act of worship and method of binding men to duties. Our Lord Jesus Christ, far superior to Levitical priests, was made an high priest by an oath, unlike any of them (Ps 110:4; Heb 7:21). And He directed Paul to charge Timothy by oaths in God's name. Paul charged Timothy before God and the Lord Jesus Christ as coming Judge to preach the word and make full proof of his ministry (II Tim 4:1-5). Meditate on II Timothy 4:1 to grasp the solemnity Paul used to exalt Timothy's duties as a preacher. But there is more! He charged him in the sight of God and Jesus Christ, Who is the blessed and only Potentate, to flee all thoughts of money, follow after great Christian virtues, and fight the good fight of faith (I Tim 6:11-16). Amen! Consider the purpose of these glorious words – to swear him to excellence! Anything less is sin! Paul also charged Timothy before God, the Lord Jesus Christ, and the elect

angels to avoid partiality (I Tim 5:21)! He even invoked the angels! Paul swore Timothy to duties, but Timothy also swore other ministers to their duties (II Tim 2:14)! The Pastoral Epistles swear you to excellence! Your master is great, your office important, your duties crucial, your effect invaluable. Use all your might, passion, vigilance, and zeal. Moses and Jehoshaphat charged judges, but your office is greater (Deut 1:15-18; II Chr 19:5-11). Jesus charged His apostles based on His great power (Matt 28:18-20), and Paul obeyed with greater labor than all others (I Cor 15:10). Stir up yourself and labor for Him today with all your might (Eccl 9:10; II Tim 1:6)! We may not like to be pressed in our duties, but the Lord of the harvest is not an easy taskmaster (Matt 25:24-30)!

God multiplies small lunches.

09/04/06

God's man seeks to serve a banquet and feast every time he takes the pulpit. But this noble ambition cannot discourage, intimidate, or worry you. Your abilities, effort, and time in preparation, study, prayer, and delivery are only part of the equation. Laborers building a house are not the key; alert watchmen in a city are not the key (Ps 127:1)! The LORD Jehovah must build the house and keep the city! Believest thou this? If so, then eschew early mornings, late evenings, and fretting, as if you can fatten your ministry by your labor. Hard ministerial work is a duty and good thing (II Tim 2:3), but it is not the key. Rather than eat the bread of sorrows and add work hours in your own strength, *go to bed and call upon the Lord your strength* (Ps 127:2)! There is no captain like your Captain! This is an order! Obey it! Trust the mercy and promised help! Exchange the faithless bread of sorrows for the faithful courage to give a few loaves and fishes to your crowd based on His blessing (John 6:11)! He can fill every soul to capacity and have plenty left over for visitors (John 6:12-14)! The simple histories of feeding 5,000 and 4,000 should stir your soul to trust your Redeemer, Who will do great things for those who trust Him. Step over the gunwale and walk on the water to Him Who says, "Preach the word!" (Matt 14:28-30; II Tim 4:1-2). Are you out of time this week? Do you have enough faith to spend most of your remaining hours or minutes in prayer and sleep? Go to bed! Let your earnest pleas rise to heaven as you drift off to sleep! Your Lord can do more with a praying and sleeping man than with a fretting and sweating man! The house of God is not built by your might or power, but by God's Spirit (Zech 4:6). Let the God of wisdom guide you between those men who retire on the job and those who think the job depends entirely on them. You will never outwork Paul, so the Bible example is great and sustained diligence. But you must trust the God Who made a boy's lunch more than enough for a great multitude. If you are honest, you know you have less than a lunch to offer, and the need greater than the 5,000 (I Kgs 3:7-8)! But the Lord both planned and knows His ministerial treasure is in your weak earthen vessel (II Cor 4:7). He gets greater glory by you humbly submitting your weakness for His blessing than your strenuous efforts to feed the crowd on your own. The solution is not choosing sloth and prayer: it is choosing maximum effort within reasonable constraints, praying, and going to bed early, in that order!

What is a ministerial call?

08/28/06

No man chooses to be a bishop: God must call him (Heb 5:4; Rom 10:15). The desire for an office proves nothing: Korah and Simon wanted offices (Num 16:1-3; Acts 8:14-24). Schoolboys do not pick it from a college catalog, career handbook, or because of a moving sermon! Desire for the ministry likely shows ignorance of the work or a lust for vainglory. Novices, though zealous, are

rejected (I Tim 3:6). God's greatest ministers never wanted the office (Ex 4:10-13; Jer 1:4-10; I Cor 9:16-17). Jesus calls the rebellious (Ps 68:18)! Earnestly desiring to teach is good, but every man should want to (I Cor 12:31)! The desire in I Timothy 3:1 is not a qualification! The prerequisites that follow rule out most men with desire (I Tim 3:1-7)! How does God call a man? He gives him obvious abilities and/or directs a man in the office to ordain him. Bezaleel and deacons are great examples of the former (Ex 31:1-5; Acts 6:3), and David and Paul are great examples of the latter (I Sam 16:1; Acts 9:10-20). Willingness comes with the abilities, for willingness is a command (Ex 36:1-2; Is 6:8; II Cor 9:7; I Pet 5:2). God calls men by providentially appointing them to vocations (I Cor 7:17-24). Aaron, Jesus, and Paul were appointed as their call (Num 3:10; Rom 1:1; II Tim 1:11; Heb 3:1-2; 5:4,14). The N.T. does not list desire, feelings, conviction, or circumstances as the basis for a call, which are the reasons most ministers give today. Who knows the call? Another man in the office! The man himself or those under the office do not pick the man! A church does not ordain bishops any more than children choose parents or sheep a shepherd. They are not capable of a wise choice for their own good. A bishop knows what the work involves, how to define and apply the qualifications, and how to measure a man's abilities. A church cannot do these things. Jesus Christ gave prerequisites in the Pastoral Epistles, because pastors are to identify His called men and put them in office (II Tim 2:2; Tit 1:5). Do not degrade the office by letting a man choose it for himself, base his call on desire, feelings, dreams, or events, or letting a church call for their fair-haired boy to be ordained, etc. Many men have been ordained without a proper call. If successful war is to be waged in perilous times, able men full of the Holy Spirit and faithful to defend the truth must be identified, proven, trained, and ordained. Lord, help us by calling such men!

Keep yourself from women.

08/21/06

A pastor has a unique and dangerous role with women, thus Paul's careful warning (I Tim 5:2). They see God's well dressed teacher, a verbal and spiritual man with answers, a sensitive and caring man with knowledge, a calm and confident leader, a gracious man who solves problems, an analytical man who cares about details, an inquisitive and loving man even toward children, and the intelligent man their husband and/or father looks to. They hear him preach often, so their hearts or minds can be tempted by his verbal skills and imagery before they or he even knows it. They hear him expound on love and marriage. When they need help, they are often vulnerable with a loveless marriage, a family death, a problem teenager, a pregnancy, a question about their soul, or other emotional situation begging for affection and comfort. Partially seduced women with emotional needs coming to a man who is an object of Satan's wrath is a terrible combination. The danger for sin is enormous, which calls for extreme efforts to avoid lust even starting. Prepare to pluck out your right eye (Matt 5:27-30)! The Lord did not miss the danger. Timothy was to treat older women as mothers and the younger as sisters, with all purity (I Tim 5:2). He was to flee youthful lusts, which includes sexual temptations (II Tim 2:22). A holy personal life is a priority (I Tim 4:16). Fantasies are forbidden (Job 31:1; Pr 6:25)! Keep your heart with all diligence (Pr 4:23; Matt 15:19)! An adulteress can be religious (Pr 5:6; 7:14); and she looks for the precious life, rather than ordinary men (Pr 6:26; Gen 39:7). Soldier! You cannot justify contact with a woman where there is attraction on either side. Run from her like Joseph! Samson was a judge for twenty years, but he fatally erred with women. So did David and Solomon. Protect your soul and ministry. Women should go to each other for advice, rather than you (Titus 2:3-5). If they need more help, they can ask your wife. Paul was not a marriage counselor for women in all the churches. The mechanism of older women and your wife works fine. Conversation with another woman must be open to your

wife, and you should never meet a woman without her, even in public. Emphasize the men in your church. Teach them to solve marital problems. Avoid email or phone relationships with women. Encourage ladies meetings, where women address their problems. Work through husbands and fathers, since they are responsible anyway. Avoid lingering eye contact with any woman. Limit hospitality where attraction exists. Refuse personal gifts from a woman. Do not be a confidant of women like Rome's priests. Keep your marriage alive and exciting for your safety (I Cor 7:1-5). Death and hell are just a skirt away (Pr 2:18; 5:5; 7:27; 9:18). Lord, save us!

Know thy flock.

08/14/06

What are your church members thinking and doing? Are they growing in grace and happy in the Lord, or chafing in grace and happy in the world? Are they thankful for the man God sent to lead them to heaven, or are they frustrated by the man who does little for them? The Preacher told his son to be diligent to know his flocks (Pr 27:23-27). While the text applies directly to preserving an estate, a spiritual application may be made for preserving churches (I Pet 5:2). Do you know your flock? Close your mouth, and open your eyes and ears. You cannot learn by talking. You learn by listening. Rather than hearing what you want to hear, make sure you hear what they tell you by words, body language, and actions. Nurses, like ministers, must constantly gauge the health and needs of their children or patients (I Thess 2:7). Only a fool tells his church what they should think without considering what they are thinking. How skilful are you at knowing your members, and then responding in a helpful way? Your ability to do these two things with your wife and children answers the question. What you think you know is irrelevant! Does your wife believe you know her? Do the children believe you know them? Do your wife and children believe you care? Any negative answer here leads to hopelessness. Many men cannot or will not truly know their wives or children. They live thinking they have things figured out and under control, when everyone knows they are insensitive without the interest, compassion, empathy, or discernment to know or help others. It is your job to assess your wife, children, and church members. You must identify their problems and solve them, but you must first be very attentive to their spirits, words, and actions. Then you must respond accordingly. Many men have their heads in the sand regarding their families and their churches. Each soul – your wife, children, and church members – is precious. You must examine each one, checking them closely for fears, frustrations, or failures. Gaining their trust and confidence, help them see that you recognize their problems, grieve at their pain, and sincerely want to help. You cannot do this preaching. You cannot do this talking. You must listen and observe carefully to pick up the telltale signs of disappointment, frustration, pain, or trouble. Can you do this? Do you do this? Many wives know their husbands do not truly know them and are incapable of knowing them – these selfish men are too infatuated with their own little lives to get outside themselves to learn, pursue, and win another, even their wives. Children end up learning this about their father. And church members often learn it about their pastors. God forbid! Know your flock!

Judge yourself.

08/07/06

Judge yourself, or be judged (I Cor 11:31)! Your dread sovereign walks among the seven golden candlesticks (churches), and He has seven stars in His right hand (pastors). He judges churches by removing their candlestick (His Spirit; Rev 1:4; 3:1; 4:5; 5:6); He judges church members by raising

heresies (I Cor 11:19; I John 2:19; 4:1-6); He judges members by killing them (Acts 5:1-11; I Cor 11:30; Rev 2:23); and He judges pastors now and later (I Cor 3:11-17; Gal 5:10,12; Rev 2:4,14,20). He is measuring you! All things are naked and opened to His eyes (Heb 4:12-13; Rev 2:18)! The church and its members are His; and He holds you accountable for each of them (Matt 18:1-14). They are His heritage, and there will be hell to pay, if you neglect or offend His own (Jer 23:1-2; I Pet 5:1-4)! Two of Paul's oaths to Timothy are sober (I Tim 6:13-16; II Tim 4:1-5)! What are the fruits of your labors? He expects you to know the barren fig trees and be dealing with them (Luke 13:6-9). He expects you to labor mightily to perfect every sheep He has put in your care (Col 1:28-29). He expects you to do the work of an evangelist (II Tim 4:5). Do you dig around and dung the fruitless members with Paul's patience and zeal? Do you strive mightily to present every man perfect in Christ Jesus? Do you unite the brethren into the self-edifying body described by Paul (Eph 4:15-16)? Do your members love Jesus Christ more this year than last? Do they love to be with one another more? Is zeal for spiritual things on an up trend? Are you just holding the status quo or breaking new ground and pressing for the higher ground? Do love, peace, and unity prevail at all assemblies? Are the members increasing in brotherly love and hospitality among themselves? Are they more sober and less worldly than last year? It is a fact that God must change hearts (Acts 16:14; II Tim 2:25-26); but it is also a fact that ministers can move mountains by faithful labor (I Cor 15:10; I Tim 4:13-16; Acts 17:1-6). The sovereignty of God is an excuse only for fatalists. If your church is stagnant, is it due to the weakness of God, lack of zeal on your part, these difficult perilous times, or the will of God? Do not blame God, if you are in a rut, going through the motions, or barely holding on. God's faithful men do not retire on the job! Is there a fire in your heart for the Lord and your people? Can others see and feel your zeal? Do your wife and children have some of that fire? Do you kindle that fire among the saints in your assemblies? Do you kindle it in private? God help you, if you quench zeal, waste sheep, or live easily! Confess your lethargy and destructive habits, and renew your zeal for the Lord Jesus Christ and His kingdom! He is measuring you!

Lead by example.

07/31/06

Your greatest influence is not by deep or wide knowledge, flaming rhetoric, passionate dramatics, published works, or authoritative handling of matters. It is rather your example – the living witness of Christ you present by your actions every day. Though oversight, or supervision and management, is part of your duties, you are to be an example rather than a lord over God's heritage (I Pet 5:1-4). Our brother Paul was always a great example of the gospel he preached, and he appealed to it often (Acts 20:33-35; I Cor 4:14-16; 10:32-33; 11:1; Phil 3:17; 4:9; I Thess 2:1-12; II Thess 3:7-9). He told Timothy to be an example to believers – in word, conversation, charity, spirit, faith, and purity (I Tim 4:12). Are you a picture of godly speech, conduct and lifestyle, brotherly kindness, consistent zeal, confidence and patience in God, and holy virtue? He told Titus to be a pattern of good works in all things (Titus 2:7-8). Are you a model of cheerfulness, diligence, gentleness, patience, wisdom, and all things? If the church kept your schedule, watched your television, listened to your music, followed your devotional habits, or trained their children as you do, would it blossom as a rose or wilt like the grass of summer? Be a shining witness of your glorious King and His word! The man of God is a verbal preacher of the everlasting gospel of Jesus Christ, but he is also a living illustration of that faith (Heb 13:7). If a church were to follow every part of your life, would it be closer to or farther from God? In matters of liberty, take the strong position; in matters of ethics, take the conservative position; in matters of mercy, take the generous position; in matters of speech, take the holy position; in matters of controversy, show sober deliberation and wisdom. To various

degrees, the best view of God and the gospel some will ever have is the speech and life of their pastor. This weighty burden should be viewed as a privilege and opportunity to be exploited by the grace of God for the perfection of men. It is not to be used like Peter to carry other men and even ministers into hypocrisy (Gal 2:11-13). Is your wife a model of Christian womanhood, serving you, your family, and the church of God diligently? Are your children leaders in caring for and provoking the youth and volunteering for acts of service? Only a miracle will cause your people to rise above your example. Enthusiastic leadership in doctrine and holy living will convict and motivate saints to follow (Phil 3:17). If you are aloof, boring, carnal, discouraged, frustrated, impatient, lazy, inhospitable, or guilty of any other sin, your church will likely follow. If it is not thriving as it should, look in the mirror of God's word and see if you and your family are thriving!

Let no man despise thee.

07/24/06

The King of kings gave you your office (Eph 4:8-11). You are His ambassador (II Cor 5:20; Eph 6:20). Earthly monarchs defend ambassadors; the LORD defended His (Ps 105:13-15). But Korahs will arise and despise God's ministers (Num 16:1-3). Their speech is the same: "Ye take too much upon you, seeing all the congregation are holy, every one of them, and the LORD is among them: wherefore then lift ye up yourselves above the congregation of the LORD?" By pride and a little Bible reading at home, they envy the pulpit, position, and power of a preacher, no matter how faithful and humble he may be (Num 16:15). Moses tried to avoid his call (Ex 4:1-17), and he was the meekest man (Num 12:3); but Korah and his arrogant friends despised his divine call in their greedy lust for fame. Rejoice in your King! He opened the earth and swallowed the leaders, their families, and everything they owned (Num 16:23-34)! His fiery vengeance consumed 250 fools that had joined them (Num 16:35)! And He ordered their golden censers beat into a covering of the altar to warn others against envying the ministry (Num 16:36-40)! Of course, before the lesson was over, the LORD killed another 14,700 for pitying the burnt or buried rebels (Num 16:41-50)! Then he prospered Aaron's rod for a perpetual testimony against imposters (Num 17:1-13)! Nabal despised David, but the Lord killed him after ten days of torture and gave his beautiful wife to David (I Sam 25:10-11,36-42)! Let no man despise thee! Jesus Christ was despised, but He knew how to shut the mouths of His enemies (Matt 12:22-32). He established the apostles with power to keep others from trying to join them (Acts 5:12-13). Paul was despised, but he learned to boast as a fool to destroy their arrogance (II Cor 11:22-33; 12:1-4; Phil 3:1-7). Due to Timothy's age, Paul warned him not to let others despise him, and he put the Corinthians on notice as well (I Tim 4:12; I Cor 16:10-11). Titus was warned to let no man despise him (Titus 2:15). Let no man despise thee! Jesus Christ ordained you to an exalted office by His will, which you must magnify and defend (I Cor 12:28-29; I Thess 5:12-13; I Tim 5:17-19; Heb 5:4). If ordained properly, you exceed ordinary saints in ability and knowledge like the sun exceeds the moon. If this is not true, you were ordained foolishly, you have been slothful, or you have men to ordain (I Tim 5:22; II Tim 2:2)! However, and let every man in office tremble, you must earn the respect of God and men by diligent faithfulness in the rules of the work (I Cor 9:24-27; 15:10; I Thess 2:1-12; I Tim 4:13-16). Honor and double honor are earned (I Tim 5:17)! All men should despise you, if you are foolish, hypocritical, lazy, or abusive.

Love is the greatest.

07/17/06

To grow yourself, your family, and your church – exalt love. It is the greatest grace in a soul or a church, and it is the greatest measure of a ministry (I Cor 12:28-31; 13:1-3,13; Eph 4:15-16; I John 3:11). Our Lord taught love, not doctrine, for marking true disciples (John 13:35). Faith is good; but devils have lots of it, and it is worthless without works (Jas 2:14-26). Knowledge is helpful, but devils also have it, and it leads to pride (Mark 1:24; I Cor 8:1). Of course, love without knowledge is mere sentimentality, and love with false doctrine is vain. Love full of knowledge and judgment is your goal (Phil 1:9-11). As a bishop of souls, you should exemplify, teach, promote, and enforce love. Love is much more than potluck meals, hospital visitation, tearful embraces, and emotional singing of, “Blest Be the Tie.” You must exemplify love. Do you lead in hospitality (I Tim 3:2)? Are you more interested in others’ lives than anyone else (Phil 2:3-4)? Do you listen as well as you talk? Are you the supreme servant (Acts 20:33-35)? You must teach love. The most emphasized grace in the New Testament is love. You must define it (I Cor 13:4-7; Eph 4:31-32; Col 3:12-15). You must apply it (Lev 19:17; I Cor 4:14; 12:22-26; I Pet 4:8). How often should you blast malice, selfishness, and pride to exalt God’s premium on love? Once a quarter? Once a month? Are you doing it? You must promote love. Commend great lovers in your church (Acts 4:36-37; Rom 16:1-2; Philemon 1:7). Identify ways and remind saints of where they can show love. Be enthusiastically zealous in all matters of affection, kindness, and service. Honor uncomely members publicly when you can. You must enforce love. Cliques must be eliminated, strife settled, and bitterness resolved. Crush any backbiting or whispering. Require reconciliation from both directions (Matt 5:21-26; 18:15-17)! Exclude for a hateful spirit or conduct! The world’s low opinion of love is, “Blood is thicker than water,” meaning family ties are tighter than friendship or marriage. Ours should be, “Blood is thicker than blood,” meaning that union in Christ should exceed even family ties! Brother! You can surpass the apostles by maximizing love in your life and church (I Cor 12:28-31; 13:1-3)! Grasp the force and meaning of the more excellent way! How do you know if you love enough? Do many crave your presence (Pr 18:24; 22:11)? Do you have a loving reputation (II Sam 1:26)? Or are you selfish and talk about yourself too much? Your opinion is totally irrelevant. Others determine how loving you are. Rather than confront visitors with the right Bible version and predestination, let them witness the most affectionate group of people ever together (John 13:35)!

It is a spiritual battle.

07/10/06

Do not get distracted with flesh and blood enemies (Eph 6:12)! The devil wants to divert you to joust windmills! The rulers of the darkness of this world and spiritual wickedness in high places are not politicians – they are devils! Reconstructionists, Dominion Theology, and Theonomists want you to restore constitutional government or install the 613 commandments of Moses in the U.S. and other nations. They will create the millennium, regardless of God’s plans! They are a symptom, not a solution! They see the enemy in Washington, the U.N., the Trilateral Commission, or the poor Rothschild family. They would take you from the word of God and prayer to waste it at abortion clinics, constitutional rah-rah parties, or reading American history looking for religious sound bites from early leaders. They would rather hear quotes from Patrick Henry than the apostle Paul. They would rather pledge allegiance to the American flag than demand immersion. They would rather listen to profane Rush Limbaugh than Bible preaching. Keep yourself and your people focused on the real enemy – the devil and false Christianity (II Cor 11:1-4,13-15)! Consider John, Jesus, Paul, and Peter! Pagan Romans occupied their holy land! Their constitution was the Old Testament! What did they do? John told Roman soldiers to be content with their low pay (Luke 3:14)! Jesus told Jews to pay whatever Caesar required (Luke 20:25)! Paul told saints to submit, obey, pay taxes, give

honor, and pray for Caesar and Herod (Rom 13:1-7; I Tim 2:1-2)! Peter told brethren to submit to Roman laws for the Lord's sake (I Pet 2:13-17)! What does God think of political activism? Worthy of capital punishment (Pr 24:21-22; II Pet 2:10-12; Jude 1:8-10)! Communism is not the enemy! Militarism, political activism, and survivalism are not strategies! Carnal Christianity is the enemy (II Tim 3:1-13; 4:3-4)! Preaching the word is the holy response (II Tim 3:14-17; 4:1-2)! The devil is bringing Gog and Magog to surround the camp of the saints – not with Russian tanks and Chinese soldiers – but with purpose-driven drivel and the NKJV (Rev 20:7-9)! Be sober! Be vigilant! Ignore NATO! Watch out for Presbyterian pedobaptists! Ignore the DNC! Watch out for Baptists joining the Reformation! Ignore the ACLU! Watch out for Scofield's twisting of Bible prophecy! Ignore the NEA! Watch out for James Dobson or Rick Warren in members' homes! Satan cares little for the Arab-Israel conflict. He loves to see you watch television! We may be in his "little season" right now (Rev 20:3)? Are you resisting him? Get armed with truth, righteousness, the gospel of peace, faith, salvation, and God's word! Now get on your knees ... and then stand to preach (Eph 6:13-20)!

Stick to the Bible.

07/03/06

There is one final authority, and you must stick to it, or endless debates will trap you with no profit and hurt feelings. Bring everything back to the Bible. Your authority hardly extends beyond the Bible. Your greatest leverage is to bring the Bible to bear, not reason, emotion, or anything else. Do not exchange opinions with others, for it only tosses vanity to and fro to the hurt of everyone. Fables and unlearned questions generate confusion and sin, which you are to avoid (I Tim 1:4; 4:7; 6:3-5; II Tim 2:14-18). Your efficient use of time is crucial, and lengthy discussions without the compass or constraint of scripture will waste time, exhaust you, and be counterproductive. Every way of a man is right in his own eyes, so he always has excuses for sinful conduct and reasons for neglecting righteousness. Foolish sinners do not deserve honor or a hearing (Pr 26:1-4). It is your job to steer through the smokescreen of their confusion and identify the sin being committed and bring the hammer and fire of the word of God to bear (Jer 23:28-29; II Cor 10:4-6). If the sluggard is wiser in his conceit than seven wise men with reasons, how will you persuade him (Pr 26:16)? You must hew him with the word of God to have any hope (Pr 26:5; Hos 6:5). Scripture can make you perfect, and pursuing any other route with any man will only lead to fruitless frustration (II Tim 3:16-17). The certain words of truth are superior to any man's opinion as light excels darkness (Pr 22:17-21; Is 8:20). It should be known by all that your favorite response is, "What does the Bible say?" And you are not asking a question! Do not get distracted with feelings, opinions, history, results, numbers, tradition, "science," "facts," or anything else. God has spoke in the Bible, and that is all that matters. Our Lord was the greatest debater of all time (Matt 22:46), but He answered the devil's three temptations with the words, "It is written." Rather than what you think, exhort others by, "Thus saith the Lord." David's inspired attitude toward human opinions is your goal (Ps 119:104,113,128). Elihu condemned the speeches of Job, Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar, not with his own opinions, but with inspired wisdom from God (Job 32:1-14). The wisdom that converts the soul, brings rewards, and reveals all defects is from the word of God, not from purpose-driven drivel or any other source (Ps 19:7-11; Jas 1:21-25). The Bible has the greatest laws and wisdom ever known. Never be ashamed of going to the words of God's mouth for the final answers to all questions and the certain solutions to all problems (Deut 4:1-10; 6:20-25; 32:45-47; Ps 119:46).

Be a slave to context.

06/26/06

It is an age of sound bites. The MTV generation is here. Politicians base campaigns on a sound bite – a vacuous phrase to entice moronic voters in lieu of facts or substance. Similarly, preachers take a text, or part of a text, and use its words for a sound, rather than the sense. Rick Warren, in his “The Purpose-Driven Life,” uses sound bites from 18 different versions. He revels in not quoting whole verses. He boasts of his invention. He is a clown, and the crowds prove it (Luke 4:32; 6:26; 16:15). But others closer to home have used texts like this as well, such as Philpot, Spurgeon, and others. Be observant! Be critical! Demand that every text be used according to its divine purpose. The man of God must despise and condemn this foolish and dangerous wresting of scripture (II Cor 2:17; 4:2). Words only have meaning in their context. A lawyer would be in contempt of court, if his arguments were based on mere words out of context from a written document. Jesus Christ will hold every preacher to a stricter standard! A text used out of context is a pretext! It misrepresents the high King of heaven to use His words as sound bites for your ideas! You have had sentences or actions taken out of context and you were indignant that your overall intent was ignored. How much more is the God of heaven angered by His words being used in a willy-nilly fashion? Words only have meaning in context. Godly preaching is to read distinctly, give the one holy sense, and cause hearers to understand the reading (Neh 8:8). Your power as a preacher depends on using God’s words as intended, not the dreamy substitute of sound bites that scratch itching ears (Jer 23:28-29; II Tim 4:3-4). Each inspired word is the Lord’s; and the context is the Lord’s, allowing only the sense the Lord intended! Do not compromise your fiduciary responsibilities (I Tim 6:20-21). The first step to heresy is to use a text to teach the truth, but to use it other than how the Holy Spirit intended it. What is your protection? Context, context, context! What is context? It is surrounding information that puts each word, phrase, and verse in a setting that determines its meaning. We learn the context by answering **Who? Whom? Why? When? What? and Where?** about every word, phrase, verse, chapter, and book in the Bible. A faithful messenger refreshes his Captain and his hearers (Prov 13:17; 25:13). A foolish messenger is a terrible curse to both (Prov 10:26; 26:6-9). Solder! Tremble before using God’s words (Is 66:1-4)! Do not make a pretext of any text by neglecting its context! When was the last time you studied context? Do it again today! Read the chapter on context [here](#).

Preach the whole counsel.

06/19/06

Paul taught a ministerial lesson to the elders of Ephesus (Acts 20:20,27). He withheld no profitable instruction; he declared all of God’s counsel! This is your goal! Some say they are better doctrinal preachers, so they neglect the practical. Others are comfortable with practical teaching, so they neglect doctrine. Some crave an intellectual image, so they despise Bible storytelling. Others are so rustic, they could not rightly divide a point of doctrine for anything: gainsayers eat them for breakfast! Still others are so theoretical they never shed a tear or pump a fist in opening a psalm. All are wrong. Your preaching must cover all of God’s word. Take any epistle of Paul, and you will find a wide variety of material, from the doctrinal to the personal. Balance and proportion are not defined by a man, a seminary, a denomination, or public opinion: they are defined by God’s word and the church’s needs. Consider the breadth of God’s counsel. The laws of Moses reveal the mind of God in priceless moral priorities (Deut 4:5-8). The book of Proverbs covers authority, women, child training, marriage, work, savings, wine, risk, whores, and speech among many other practical subjects. Do you share this profitable wisdom with your people? You must, to be like Paul. The historical books provide many examples for warnings and comfort (Rom 15:4; I Cor 10:6-11; Heb

4:11; II Pet 2:6). Do not be ashamed of Bible storytelling, because the Holy Spirit inspired these stories to profit men. The prophecies of Isaiah, Daniel, Haggai, Malachi, Jesus, Paul, and John are an integral part of scripture. If these passages intimidate you, get busy praying and studying. The Holy Spirit offers a blessing (Rev 1:3). The doctrinal epistles of Romans, Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, and Hebrews display the beauties of God's grace in Jesus Christ. If you deprive your people of this profit, you will take your church down and soon give an unhappy accounting to your Captain (I Cor 3:11-15). The gospels are New Testament history about our Lord with doctrinal lessons woven in. The psalms describe the reflections in various circumstances of a very special man. The remaining poetic books of Job, Ecclesiastes, and Song of Solomon deal with life from very different perspectives. It is your duty as the man of God to read and study the whole Bible in order to extract every profitable thing from its entire breadth and give all the counsel of God to your people. Help, Lord! Show us the breadth, and we will preach every angle of it (Ps 119:18,96)!

Be a man of prayer.

06/12/06

The man of God must be a man of prayer. His abilities and blessings are derived from prayer. He cannot study first, or it will be fruitless and vain (Ps 119:18; Is 29:9-14; Eph 1:17-18). He cannot preach first, or it will be powerless and dry (John 15:1-5; Acts 4:31; Eph 6:19; II Thess 3:1). He cannot counsel or exhort first, or it will accomplish nothing (Matt 17:21; Acts 16:14; II Tim 2:25-26). The apostles were the most gifted ministers, yet they protected their prayer time by ordaining a new office to free them up (Acts 6:1-4)! How much more should second-generation preachers emphasize prayer, since they have never tasted inspired wisdom and knowledge! If our Lord was a Man of prayer, how much more should we be, who are greatly inferior in faith, fellowship, knowledge, and wisdom (Luke 6:12; 9:18,28)! God identified five great men for their intercessory success in praying for others (Jer 15:1; Ezek 14:14). Are you one in your generation? David prayed three times daily (Ps 55:17). And so did Daniel (Dan 6:10). Do Paul's statements of remembering persons and churches in prayer intimidate you? Learn his method! He made mention of objects – he did not elaborate about details God already knew (Matt 6:7-8; Rom 1:9; I Thess 1:2). Though prayer is obviously important, your flesh and the devil will work harder to keep you from it than anything else. Why? It is the most powerful activity you can engage in! Men did not open the Red Sea, stop the sun, destroy armies, or cast out devils by study, preaching, or counseling! They did these and other things by prayer. Prayer can change the course of nations, let alone families or souls! If you are not convicted by this lesson and committed to its application, the devil will convince you to work on more productive projects. He lies! Prayer is your most productive activity! Now be bold! You have not, because you ask not, or you ask without fervency (Jas 4:2; 5:16)! Elijah, subject to your temptations, stopped the rain for more than three years (Jas 5:17-18). But consider a better example – Elisha requested a double portion of Elijah's spirit (II Kgs 2:9-15)! That is ministerial endowment! And he got it (II Kgs 13:20-21)! Are you as bold for spiritual gifts and power, such as the Holy Spirit and all the fullness of God (Luke 11:13; Eph 3:14-19)? Shame on you! Get on your knees, soldier! You will accomplish more there than sitting in your study, standing in your pulpit, or walking in the way. May the blessed God convince you of the lesson and confirm you in its power.

Avoid prudish effeminacy.

06/05/2006

God never called sissies to preach. From Elijah and Ezekiel to John the Baptist and James, heaven's ambassadors were graphic speakers. Fair speeches, smooth topics, and a sweet sound mark whores, orators, and effeminate false teachers (Prov 7:21; Is 30:8-11; Acts 24:1; Rom 16:17-18; Col 2:4,8; II Tim 3:6-7; II Pet 2:18)! The Arminian God of mushy love creates a begging and weak ministry. The sissified, sodomitical, and pedophilic priests of Rome are an abomination! Pastors are adored for suave and debonair style, polished and refined manners, dignified carriage, good bedside manner, and charismatic politicking. But these are not Christ's servants! Against this false backdrop, true ministers appear vile, though they are not! God's men mocked Baal, his prophets, and their religion before killing them (I Kgs 18:19-40). If church members sinned, they made them drink golden Kool-Aid (Ex 32:20)! They used God's word like a fire and hammer without sweet stories or dreams (Jer 23:28-29). When condemning religious compromise, they told detailed parables about lustful whores (Ezek 16:1-59; 23:1-49). If speech was the topic, they blasted the tongue as a world of iniquity, an unruly evil full of deadly poison, and a bodily member set on fire of hell (Jas 3:1-12)! If encountering self-righteous teetotalers, they offensively described what happens to things eaten (Matt 15:1-20). If an object lesson was needed, they ate cakes baked over dung and laid on their side for a year or so (Ezek 4:1-17). They could curse child hecklers (II Kings 2:23-25), or they could spit in the eyes of a blind man (Mark 8:23). Their blunt, plain, and powerful sermons astonished people used to polished speeches (Matt 7:28-29). If hearers thought the message too hard, it was repeated to drive them away (John 6:60-67). The Lord at the door of the Laodicean church was also about to spue them from His mouth (Rev 3:14-20). These few examples could be multiplied indefinitely! Paul, the pattern for Gentile preachers, consciously flawed his presentation to leave the gospel and its sound rude in impression (I Cor 1:17-25; 2:1-5)! Scorners will find fault anyway, so you might as well help them out (Pr 26:4-5; Is 29:20-21)! Why the roughness? God is great; sin is terrible; hell is hot; eternity is forever; error is easy; truth is hard; sinners are stubborn; the time is short; the competition noisy; the world enticing; true preaching is war; the mind is easily distracted; deceivers are getting worse; and men are difficult to win. One second after death, every man will wish ministers had been more blunt, graphic, plain, and rude in seeking their attention!

Be a nursing father.

05/29/2006

Men who train under strong pastors, love the Bible's mighty men, enjoy the details of doctrine, and hate false religion may distort their office. (Would to God these four factors were true of all His ministers!) Such men may think pastoring is preaching fire and brimstone. They may think it is authoritarian leadership or intellectual development of seminarians. But what does our Captain say? To please the Lord Christ, you must become a male nurse! Though Moses complained on occasion, he defined his work of caring for his church as carrying them in his bosom as a nursing father would a sucking child (Num 11:12). The Lord Jesus is the perfect example, because He gathered lambs with His arm, carried them in His bosom, and gently led those with young (Is 40:11). Paul, as doctrinal and powerful of an apostle as there ever was, described his ministerial conduct as gently caring for believers like a nurse cherishes her children (I Thess 2:7). And he also described it as a father exhorting, comforting, and charging his children (I Thess 2:11). What a combination – just as Moses described – a nursing father! Here is attentiveness, compassion, love, pity, and service exalted! Here is dedication, foresight, involvement, patience, and protection exalted! If a man cannot empathize, sympathize, and conscientiously care for each saint he meets, he is not very qualified or competent in the ministry, no matter how creative, deep, and impressive his preaching. A nursing father will provide everything a child needs to be happy, develop properly, be safe and

secure, and achieve ultimate success. The nature of children, nurses, and fathers can teach much wisdom. O man of God! Can you gently comfort the feeble-minded? Warn the unruly ... for the tenth time? Empathize with the despondent? Perceive unexpressed fear? Identify consequences ten years away for conduct today? Wait and listen for the reserved person to open up? Praise the deeds of a one talent Christian? Discipline only when needed and in affection? Give physical and verbal affection to the needy? Know what to recommend for the spiritually discouraged? Win the trust of the very young and very old alike? Keep the respect of peers in spite of obvious faults? Dish out correction and rebuke and make them feel good about it? Listen better than anyone else in their lives? Respond to challenges without fear or anger? Lead and rule from an invisible power base? May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ make you a mighty man of valor ... and a nursing father!

The laborer is worthy.

05/22/2006

Without an ox, the crib will be bare (Pr 14:4). Without a full-time pastor, the church will languish (I Tim 4:13-15). But an ox must eat, so the pastor must be fed (I Cor 9:9-11). The true soldiers of Jesus Christ are full-time, fully supported servants (II Tim 2:4). Soldiers have no guilt for being paid, and neither should the servants of Christ (I Cor 9:7; I Tim 5:18). In fact, men work harder when paid generously, as nature teaches. The Lord ordained for Levi to make 120% the annual income of the other twelve tribes (Num 18:20-21). It is not the church's job to keep their pastor humble by giving him barely enough. The Lord will do this job for them, if it is needed. All church members lose, if the man of God is distracted with finances. The office of bishop is not a part-time job. He must give himself wholly to reading, exhortation, and doctrine in order to be profitable (I Tim 4:13-15). Only full-time study meets God's approval and saves from shame (II Tim 2:15). And it is too laborious and time consuming to be done at the end of the ordinary workday of others (Eccl 12:12). It is a church's duty to support their bishop financially, so he can spend his time in study and prayer (Acts 6:1-4; Gal 6:6). And if he does his job well, he deserves double compensation (I Tim 5:17). Some stingy churches have done much harm to the kingdom of God, let alone the poor men and their families. They will answer for it before Christ Jesus. Fruit and growth are by the diligent and gifted efforts of the Lord's ox (Ezra 7:6; Matt 13:52; Luke 13:6-10). And an encouraged laborer works harder than a discouraged one (II Chr 31:4)! Though unpleasant to do, a church must be taught this serious duty, and they should be taught the obvious benefits. These points are part of the whole counsel of God for the profit of the saints (Acts 20:20,27). Church members working to support a dedicated and gifted servant going to God and His word for them on a continual basis is a marvelous exchange (Gal 6:6; I Cor 9:11). The subject must be taught – but rarely. It can be worked into larger studies, like Bible Economics; or it can be chanced upon while expositing I Corinthians! But the minister's habits must warrant preaching on giving and taking compensation. How? He should seek the financial progress of members first, praise the generous, outwork anyone else in the church, be scrupulously honest financially, be continually thankful, live frugally with few luxuries, and be a constant servant. If he lives the life of a bishop and graciously preaches the inspired duties pertaining to one, true saints will do what is needed and then some!

Know your office.

05/15/2006

Know the God-ordained qualifications and duties of your office. Athletes are crowned only if they obey all the rules, and ministerial soldiers must serve their Captain according to His rules (II Tim 2:4-5). There are two offices left in the New Testament: bishop and deacon (Phil 1:1; I Tim 3:1-13). Both require ordination by at least one bishop (Titus 1:5; Acts 6:3,6; I Tim 3:8-13). The great whore added popes, cardinals, archbishops, and priests; but these are abominable inventions (Rev 17:1-6). Rome's Protestant daughters retained extra-scriptural offices, such as archbishops and priests. Presbyterians, and Baptists who copy them, created an office called ruling elder, a non-teaching office that helps the pastor rule, but which they claim is higher than a deacon. If "governments" of I Corinthians 12:28 justify this position, then it is below "helps" and just above tongues! "Elder" is a general designation for older men (I Tim 5:1; I Pet 5:5) or leaders and rulers of all sorts (Gen 50:7; Ezra 5:5; Acts 4:8, Rev 19:4). Peter called himself an elder, though he was an apostle (I Pet 5:1). And John called himself an elder, referring to his age or apostolic office (II Jn 1:1; III Jn 3:1). Any departure from Bible terminology is dangerous, and the vague title of "elder" can distort the office of bishop. If you have a New Testament ordination, you are either a bishop or deacon. If you are a bishop, then you are the ruler and teacher of a church. The Bible does not distinguish teaching and ruling bishops – the one office does both (Heb 13:7; I Tim 3:2,4-5; 5:17). Deacons tend to the financial and logistical needs that distract a bishop from his duties of reading, exhortation, and doctrine; they need not be apt to teach, for they do not teach (Acts 6:1-6; I Tim 3:8-13; 4:13-15). Elders that rule a church with the bishop have an office not defined in the New Testament. Traveling preachers who fill the pulpits of other churches nearly as much as they are at home have invented their role (II Cor 10:12-16). So-called evangelists, who visit a different church every week for "revivals," look nothing like their New Testament namesakes; and they are a disgrace with their entertaining preaching, which is short on substance or problem-solving qualities. A bishop is the pastor and teacher of a church, which is one office (Eph 4:11). The word pastor pertains to his job as the under-shepherd responsible for feeding Christ's sheep with knowledge and understanding (Jer 3:15; 23:1-2). The word teacher pertains to his duties to study and explain the word of God (Neh 8:8; II Tim 2:15; 4:1-2; Titus 2:15; 3:8). Every man should soberly consider his office and duties, so that he might labor zealously according to the laws of Jesus Christ for that office.

Pursue the youth.

05/08/2006

David said to his children, "Come, ye children, hearken unto me: I will teach you the fear of the LORD" (Ps 34:11). Solomon said to his son, "Give me thine heart" (Pr 23:26). John the Baptist reunited fathers and children to prepare people for the Lord (Mal 4:5-6; Luke 1:17). Jesus encouraged young believers to come to Him (Matt 18:1-6). Paul took young Timothy and trained him into his favorite ministerial understudy (Acts 16:1-3; Phil 2:19-22). John addressed children, young men, and fathers (I John 2:12-14). The future of a church is forecast by its youth. The character of pastor and people is measured by its youth. It reveals how fathers have trained their children, and how the pastor has trained the fathers and children. Fathers must train children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, and pastors must instruct both (Eph 6:4; 4:11-16). While most churches today entertain and flatter their youth with carnality and compromise, you must pursue and perfect the youth under your care. The goal is not to entertain them. The goal is to edify and instruct them. While fathers are primarily responsible for training children, making the training of fathers to be very important, there is the need to teach the youth beyond what fathers will do. Infatuation with children leading to near-infant baptisms is not the point. Be cautious and methodical in catechizing and baptizing children, lest you baptize those without a good conscience or fruit. Since we do not

find “youth pastors” in the Bible, the man of God is responsible for the youth, even if other men assist in teaching them. If a minister is too elevated to relate to his youth, he is too high for his own good. He needs to humble himself and get down. In just a few years, today’s children will be tomorrow’s grandparents. Exalt this long-term perspective and invest in future generations. The vanity of youth and great temptations mean you must work hard to prepare, protect, warn, recover, and perfect them. They must marry in the Lord, and they must train future children in the Lord. You need to help them remember their Creator in their youth (Eccl 12:1). You can preach to the youth in most any assembly, and you can emphasize them periodically, even in assemblies of all ages. And to address them in a gathering of the youth allows you to focus on them.

Despise partiality.

05/01/2006

The man of God must be scrupulously fair, impartial, and just. He must apply justice equally to each member; he must serve every member with an equal application of ministerial love. The warning is severe! Paul wrote Timothy, “I charge thee before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, and the elect angels, that thou observe these things without preferring one before another, doing nothing by partiality” (I Tim 5:21). What name-dropping! Did Paul and the Holy Spirit get your attention? You cannot prefer one member to another member for your time, your effort, your rule, your help, your protection, your mercy, etc. Never show partiality in the discharge of your work! Be the fairest man of God on earth! This warning applies particularly to financial matters and discipline, as the context shows (I Tim 5:1-20). While it is natural to be more compatible and affectionate with some than others, and while some may need more help temporarily than others, you must still be known for utmost fairness and disinterested objectivity in your office. You represent the great God, and there is no room for personal favorites, protecting friends or supporters, respect of persons, or compromising justice. Fairness, integrity, righteousness, and truth must be your controlling ambitions. You revolt at the idea of a bribe to compromise judgment; but do you compromise in any way with your most enthusiastic, loyal, and generous supporters? Faithful men are never moved by rich or poor, friend or foe, majority or minority, neighbor or stranger, young or old, giver or taker, man or woman, family or enemy, white or black. They are intensely zealous to be fair in all dealings with all men. God has spoken (Ex 23:1-9; Lev 19:15; Deut 1:17; 16:19; II Chron 19:6-7; Ps 18:5; Jas 2:1-4)! Of course, church members will vary in every measure of men and saints, but you must look on their souls as all being equally in need of your love, rule, and service. Do not let any personal friendship alter your ministerial conduct. If anything, be more severe on family, friends, and supporters. They can take it, and you want to be known for it! You know your most generous supporters. Tell them in advance and prove to them by actions over time that their largesse will never move your convictions. Earn the trust of your people. Give them the utmost confidence that you have no regard for any man, when it comes to helping, serving, ruling, teaching, and protecting.

Redeem the time.

04/24/2006

Time stops every man of God. It stops him in his studies; it stops him when a meeting must end, and it stops him when he dies (Eccl 12:12; Ps 127:2; Heb 11:32; II Tim 4:6). Rather than depart and be with Christ, which is far better, he would rather stay and labor for God’s elect (Phil 1:21-26; II Tim 2:10). Yet he labors nervously, in order to get as much done as possible before departing (Eccl

9:10; II Pet 1:12-15). He knows he cannot declare the truth in the grave (Ps 30:9; 88:10-12; Is 38:18). Every assembly, conversation, sermon, and prayer is an opportunity. Relish each one. Every hour to study is a dear privilege. Exploit it. You cannot get them back, once gone; but you will give an account of them (Rom 14:10-12). Squeeze as much ministerial labor into your life as possible. You will get a long rest soon! You must redeem time – buy it back – by exchanging other uses for ministerial labors (Col 4:5). Time is your most precious commodity. Since you do not have outside coercion to manage time, it is easy to be slothful and waste it. The perilous times are here, evil seducers are worse than ever, the Lord's coming is near; there is no time for lazy ministerial living (Eph 5:16). Maintain a sense of time urgency, as men do in productive labor in carnal jobs. Men perform better when paid by production rather than time. Be like them. The Lord does not reward for time served; He rewards those who endure hardness, are workmen, and get a return (Matt 25:14-30). Outwork everyone you know, as Paul outworked the other apostles (I Cor 15:10). Keep a schedule. Press for productivity, not just time in the study; press for effect, not just time in the pulpit; press for conviction, not just time in conversation. Talking is worthless, unless productive. There are 168 hours in a week – you might have the attention of your members for 3-4 hours, or about 2% of their time. You must make it count. Every assembly should be packed with intense worship, instruction, and fellowship. You must pray for each assembly and each hearer. Preach as long as the majority can concentrate, and shorten any sermon series, lest you bore your audience or waste precious assemblies. Also be conscious of the time of others. Because your work allows greater flexibility than your members, do not presume they can talk when you can talk, or as long as you want to talk. Be sensitive to their needs, job demands, and physical and family circumstances.

Cultivate ministerial succession.

04/17/06

Fathers perpetuate the true worship of God through sons, and the Bible lists up to five generations (Deut 6:4-9; Ps 34:11; 78:1-8; Is 38:19; Jer 35:1-19; Joel 1:1-3; Eph 6:4). But the church is the pillar and ground of the truth, and the mysteries of the gospel are perpetuated in the earth by the church and its officers (I Tim 3:14-16). The context for this declaration is the qualifications for bishops and deacons (I Tim 3:1-13). But the precise fulfillment is through the preachers, or bishops, who are ordained to transfer God's truth from one generation to the next (Mal 2:7; I Cor 2:1-13; Eph 4:11-16). The Levites and priests maintained the truth and worship from father to son (Ex 27:21; 29:9; Num 3:10; Deut 18:5). But in the New Testament it is from ministerial father to ministerial son, in the manner of Paul to Timothy and Titus (Phil 2:19-23; II Tim 1:2; Titus 1:4). You must handpick these sons by recognizing God's hand upon them by their abilities, faithfulness, and fruitfulness (Ex 31:1-11; Acts 15:36-41; 16:1-3). Men must not pick this office as other careers. Aptitude tests or career counselors' opinions mean anything at all (Heb 5:4). Every man should desire the office, but it proves nothing at all about a call (Ex 4:1-17; Jer 1:6; I Cor 9:16-17; 12:31; I Tim 3:1). Ability, character, and fruit are the keys. Paul commanded Timothy to take his public teaching and commit it to other faithful men, who could in turn teach others (II Tim 2:2). Here are four generations of preachers, commencing with an apostle, who was handpicked by Jesus Christ. The precise things Paul taught publicly were transferred through Timothy and his successors to the present day. This is ministerial succession, and it is God's chosen method for perpetuating the gospel to all ages. The young men under your care with ministerial signs (not desires) should be objects of special affection, care, and prayer. You should encourage them aggressively in the word of God, holy living, exemplary marriages and families, and in thorough assimilation of your teaching. Push them to memorize, answer questions, entertain strangers, follow up with visitors,

exhort brothers, and pray or teach from time to time. You must find the God-called men who will faithfully defend, teach, and transfer again what you have taught them (II Tim 3:14; Titus 1:9). To die without ordaining a successor is to break the gospel chain, unless Jesus Christ denies you the opportunity by not providing any such young men. Pray for this glorious privilege (Luke 10:2).

Be obsessive about words.

04/10/06

Moses told Israel, and Jesus told the devil, that man should live by every word from God's mouth (Deut 8:3; Luke 4:4). Wise Agur declared that every word of God is pure (Pr 30:5). You will never find anything sweeter (Jer 15:16). If Israel and men in general require every word of God, how much more then the man of God, who is the guardian and dispenser of God's words (Mal 2:7; II Tim 2:15)! In these perilous times, when new versions alter many or most of the words of scripture, you must be adamant to defend and teach each one. Job esteemed the words of God's mouth more than his necessary food (Job 23:12). How important are they to you? How can you earnestly contend for the faith once delivered to the saints, unless you are vigilant and passionate for each one (Jude 1:3). The old serpent added one word in Eden, and it damned our race to hell (Gen 2:17; 3:4). Jesus taught the value and validity of jots and tittles – the smallest letter and mark in Hebrew. Jesus and Paul argued doctrine from single words, and your ministry should copy theirs (Matt 22:32,43; John 8:58; 10:35; Gal 3:16; 4:9; Heb 8:13; 12:27). But Paul declared there were many in his day who corrupted God's word (II Cor 2:17). The internal integrity of God's inspired masterpiece depends on every word – alter one, and you corrupt the whole. Ahaziah's age is 22 in one place and 42 in another for the same event, but the reconciliation explains three missing kings in our Lord's genealogy (Matt 1:8). Though you explain "all evil" in I Timothy 6:10 as all sorts or kinds of evil, yet you must defend "all," for it is this cross-reference that provides the sense for I Timothy 2:4 and 2:6. We believe God has preserved our English version and confirmed it with fruit for 400 years, so it is the words in this text we defend. There is no extant Hebrew or Greek text we can trust as readily, and you cannot cross-reference its words internally with as much ability or confidence. It is our duty to read the word of God distinctly, give the sense or interpretation of the words, and cause our hearers to understand the reading – in their language (Neh 8:8). Do not ever preach about the Bible – preach its very words! In fact, learn to speak and think its sound words (II Tim 1:13). The words of God are like a hammer and a fire; they are like wheat compared to chaff (Jer 23:28-32). While you love, learn, and preach God's words, do not foolishly strive about words to no profit (II Tim 2:14-18). God has spoken – that settles it! Do not worry about dictionary definitions – rely on the Spirit's use of words (I Cor 2:13). Jesus showed you how to define the word "neighbor," and you also should use the inspired context large and small to define God's words (Luke 10:29).

Emphasize men and boys.

04/03/06

Focus on your men and boys. False religion often emphasizes women and girls, to the distortion and detriment of home, church, and nation. The woman is the spiritual leader in most homes – and look at the results; she provided the majority of Sunday School teachers for the last 75 years leading to these perilous times; and she has always been the primary object and supporter of the Catholic Church. This emphasis promotes matriarchal homes, churches, and nations, which are dysfunctional and effeminate. Satan went after the woman in Eden, and false teachers use the same device (Gen

3:1-6; II Cor 11:3-4; II Tim 3:6-7). Women in general are more vulnerable to deception than men (I Tim 2:14; I Pet 3:7). But silly women – foolish, ignorant, and weak women – are much more so (II Tim 3:6-7). It is not men buying the magic carpets and miracle oil from Benny Hinn and other television hucksters! Homes, churches, and nations can only truly prosper following God's order. Men must lead homes (Gen 3:16; 18:19; Josh 24:15; I Cor 14:35). Men must train children (Ps 78:1-8; Is 38:19; Joel 1:1-3; Eph 6:4). Men must lead churches (Acts 6:1-7; I Cor 14:34-35; I Tim 2:11-12; 3:1-13). Men must lead nations (Ex 18:21-22). When the men disappear or are socially neutered, it is God's judgment (Is 3:1-8,12). Let the NEA, the PTA, and PETA emphasize women and girls. The destructive fruits of these and related organizations are visible in every direction. You must build strong marriages, homes, and churches; and this is accomplished by training spiritually minded men, who can be the virtuous leaders God intended. Women are not the spiritual leaders in God's plan. Rather than organizing little old ladies for a Sunday School or stroking them with a touchy-feely sermon, the man of God should plan men's meetings with content for building up boys and men. A strong New Testament church that earnestly contends for the faith once delivered to the saints needs a nucleus of strong husbands, fathers, and leaders to provide for and protect the church. Godly women love the emphasis on men, for they know it is right and will ultimately benefit them. The gospel of God preached without compromise is a masculine message, which attracts and develops godly men and women. But the fables and entertainment of contemporary Christianity and Arminian theology exalt women out of their God-ordained roles and effeminize the men.

Learn true humility and pride.

03/27/06

Humility is not hanging your head, talking low and slow, walking slow, being apologetic, admitting incompetence, asking for prayer in each sermon, having a woman's handshake, avoiding naming sins or calling names, or any similar effeminate body language or speech. These are often public acts by a proud heart to seduce (Is 58:5; Zech 13:4; Matt 6:1-6,16-18; Col 2:18). True men of God in both testaments never acted this way. Regardless of appearance, humility is submitting to the word of God without fear of man (Is 66:2; I Pet 5:6), and it is serving men in public or private without seeking public praise (John 13:14; Rom 12:16). Dogmatic preaching of God's words with confidence, enthusiasm, and zeal from an honest and sincere heart is not pride at all. Pride is refusal to submit to God and Scripture, regardless of how low you hang your head or lower your voice (I Tim 3:6; 6:3-5). Our Lord was humility and meekness personified, but His authoritative preaching shocked men (Matt 7:28-29)! He blasted Pharisees, rebuked apostles, and tore into moneychangers! He did not look or act like the bearded lady most men call Jesus! Was Elihu guilty of pride for telling four older men they did not know what they were talking about and he had perfect wisdom for them (Job 32:6-22; 33:1-5; 34:35-37; 36:1-4)? I trow not! Was Paul proud for saying he worked harder than the rest of the apostles (I Cor 15:10)? For saying he was equal to the very chiefest apostles (II Cor 11:5; 12:11)? For cursing any angel or man that preached different from him (Gal 1:6-9)? For calling churches babes and bewitched fools (I Cor 3:1; Gal 3:1)? No! Paul was willing to spend and be spent for men, whether they returned the love or not (II Cor 12:15). He was a humble servant, though he used his office with the authority Christ gave him (II Cor 10:8; 13:10). Ambassadors of the high king of heaven should not crawl to men anywhere! They are to speak, exhort, and rebuke with all authority and not let any man despise them (Titus 2:15). Such conduct on their part is not arrogance – it is humility to obey the word of God that directs them to do it! It is bowing and scraping and fawning men, who will not live or declare the whole counsel of God, who are guilty of pride, for they will not truly humble themselves before God, His words, or His people.

Despise ministerial flattery.

03/20/06

Jesus Christ's ministers neither give nor accept flattery. They know they are servants; they direct all honor to Christ; they know other ministers are brethren. Jesus condemned ministers using apparel, accessories, or seating to distinguish themselves, since Pharisees used such shameful things (Matt 23:1-6). Jesus condemned ministerial titles from Father, Rabbi, or Master used in Israel to Most Holy Father used for popes to Doctor, Bishop, Elder, Reverend, or Pastor used today (Matt 23:7-12). Such titles, forms of address, or greetings are unnecessary! They are a tradition from Rome's distinction of clergy and laity. Only God's name is Reverend (Ps 111:9). Only God should be called, "Father," in a religious sense. Only Christ should be called, "Rabbi," or, "Master," in a religious sense. The Bible is strict. The young man Elihu knew with fear and trembling he should not give flattering titles to the four old men he addressed (Job 32:21-22). All the ministers of Christ are brethren and servants, without authority over one another (Matt 20:20-28; 23:8), so Peter called Paul, "our beloved brother," and Paul called Apollos and Timothy, "our brother" (II Pet 3:15; I Cor 16:12; Heb 13:23). Paul was a father to Corinth and Timothy, but they did not call him, "Father" (I Cor 4:15; Phil 2:22). The sin is the titles! The nouns are allowed, but public address to exalt ministers is wrong. Church members should highly esteem their pastors, but flattering titles are not right (I Thess 5:12-13). Why should members use more than "brother"? You are their servant! If you want to teach children respect, they can use "brother" with your last name! Any man who writes a book, has a website, uses letterhead, or has business cards should be careful! There is no need to call yourself or let others call you, "Dr. Jones," or, "Reverend Smith." You are, at best, an unprofitable servant (Luke 17:10)! There is no need for M.Div. or ThD after your name. Why does any man do so? He might as well strap a phylactery on his forehead, turn his collar backward, put on a Dagon fish hat, and don his purple and scarlet cape! When Paul listed his educational or ministerial attainments, he did it to correct erring brethren, and he called it foolish boasting (II Cor 11:17). Be cautious about ministerial introductions. Flattery is of the devil! Fancy chairs (thrones) on a stage are not necessary for a church. Neither pulpits nor platforms have any religious value beyond elevating a speaker (Neh 8:4-5). Song leaders have as much right to "the stand" as any bishop. Special pews or seats for deacons are flattering and frivolous. Do you deserve a designated parking place near the door more than a widow? Soldier! Examine your ministry and despise any thing that even smells like flattery, self-promotion, or designed public distinction. Your rank in the kingdom of God depends on how well you serve, rather than how well you get served or posture!

Delight in the Lord.

03/13/06

The man of God must delight in the Lord (Ps 37:4). How can he exhort others to love God, when it is not obvious that he knows Him well (Job 22:21; Ps 104:34)? How can he expect God's blessings on his life and ministry without this scriptural prerequisite (Is 58:14)? How will he sing in a dungeon at midnight unless joyfulness in God lifts his spirit and body (Hab 3:17-19)? Service to God without joy and gladness is unacceptable (Deut 28:47). Enthusiasm is contagious, and enthusiasm for the glory of God is spiritually motivating (Pr 28:12). Would you have been bored to see David dance with all his might when moving the Ark (II Sam 6:12-19)? David knew that public boasting about God would stir up others (Ps 34:1-3; 69:30-32; 70:4; 119:74). Instead of hiring a

praise or worship leader, you need to glory in the Lord more than anyone else in the church (Jer 9:23-24). It is your duty to make assemblies for public delight in the Lord (Ps 27:4; 63:1-6; 68:24; 77:13), and this includes congregational exclamations of “Amen!” (I Cor 14:16). Our beloved brother Paul could not contain himself at times – inspired outbursts of praise occur in several places in the middle of his epistles (Rom 9:5; 11:33-36; Gal 1:5; Eph 3:21; Phil 4:20; I Tim 1:17; 6:13-16). Do your people know you delight, boast, glory, rejoice, are glad, triumph, take pleasure, and find sweetness in the Lord? God is jealous for His glory, and it is your duty to make sure He gets all of it (Is 42:8; I Cor 1:31). How will you command your people to rejoice in the Lord, unless you are known for it first (Phil 4:4; I Thess 5:16)? If you have lost your joy in Him, then beg for revival to get it back (Ps 85:6). You need to get your heart lifted up in the Lord like Jehoshaphat (II Chron 17:6). More than others, you should be exceeding glad with God’s countenance (Ps 21:1-7). God’s gift of salvation should put gladness in your heart and holy laughter in your mouth (Ps 126:1-3; Acts 13:48; Gal 6:14). You should remind your hearers of God’s wonders and works that stir the soul and fire the passions (Ps 77:11-12; 145:4-12).

Fear no man.

03/06/06

The fear of God is the whole duty of man and a prerequisite for wisdom and righteousness for all men (Eccl 12:13; Pr 1:7; 9:10). But a minister, representing God and His ways to foolish and rebellious men, must fear God above all others (Ex 18:21; II Sam 23:3; II Chr 19:5-10). The fear of God is total devotion to obeying and pleasing Him out of reverential awe and desire to honor Him and terror at the thought of offending Him (Gen 22:12; 39:9; Ex 20:18-21). The more a man fears God, the less he fears man. A man preaching God’s words against the thoughts and traditions of men cannot fear them, even when they are intent on intimidating him into silence or compromise. The fear of man brings a snare, because it traps men in compromise (Pr 29:25; John 12:42-43). God warned Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel to ignore faces and words (Is 51:7,12-17; Jer 1:8,17; Ezek 2:6-7; 3:8-9). He protects his ministers from mocking children or arresting soldiers (II Kgs 1:9-15; 2:23-24)! Peter walked out of prison twice, and the Lord killed his enemy, though a king (Acts 5:17-25; 12:1-24)! Touch not mine anointed, and do my prophets no harm, saith the Lord (Ps 105:13-15)! Rather than cower, God’s man must boldly proclaim the truth, regardless of consequences (Dan 3:16-18; Mark 6:17-29). Let no man despise you, ever, even if you are young (I Tim 4:12; Titus 2:15)! And do not let a majority or crowd sway your judgment (Ex 23:2; I Kgs 18:22). Whether hearers are ready or not is of no concern (Ezek 2:6-7; II Tim 4:1-2). Once the terrified apostles received the Spirit, their boldness was visible (Acts 4:13)! Paul is your pattern, and he did not stop preaching for fear of any (I Thess 2:2; II Tim 3:10-17). After all, what can men do, kill your body? So what (Luke 12:4-5)! Be strong and of a good courage, even if you have to take over after Moses (Josh 1:1-9)! Despise the opposition of men (Acts 5:26-33; 7:51; 17:22-31; 22:21; 24:25; 28:23-29)! Does your wife oppose you? David and Job are your examples (II Sam 6:20-23; Job 2:9-10)! If you have God’s words, you have more than your enemies, teachers, and the ancients (Ps 119:98-100). Preach those words without fear! You represent the Lord Christ (I Tim 6:13; II Tim 4:1)!

Help a church build itself.

02/27/06

As a pastor and teacher, you are a church builder (Eph 4:12). Paul was the wise master builder, and you should be a wise regular builder (I Cor 3:9-17; I Tim 3:15; II Tim 3:14-17; Titus 1:5). The edifice of a local church, which is the temple of the living God, is formed out of the living stones of church members (Eph 2:22; I Pet 2:5). This stone house is edified – beautified and strengthened – by perfecting and polishing each stone until all shine with the brightness and glory of Christ (Col 1:28-29). This is your work. If you follow instead the Spirit’s metaphor of the church as a body, the church members form the bodily parts (Rom 12:4-5; I Cor 10:16-17; 12:12-27; Eph 5:30; Col 1:18,24; 3:15). The body is perfected and made worthy of its Head by the careful strengthening of each part until all measure up to the full stature of Christ (Eph 4:13-15). This is your work. However, a church is also able to edify and increase itself through the effectual working of every joint and part (Eph 4:16; Col 2:19). It is your duty to teach and press each member to fulfill the New Testament’s “one another” duties (I Thess 5:14; Heb 3:12-13; 10:23-25; etc.). This geometrically increases your effectiveness. *Combinations* are mathematical sums of one-on-one pairings in a group. For example, a church of 100 members has 4,950 pairings of two people. *Permutations* are the sums of the “one another” relationships in a group. For example, a church of 100 members has 9,900 relationships of one member to another member. The number of permutations is twice that of combinations, because pairing two people involves two “one another” relationships. A church of 100 members can only be successful to the degree its members are faithful in the 9,900 “one another” relationships. You must teach, remind, and enforce these duties. A church’s prosperity and success is by the care and contribution of each member to every other member, which is the supply of every joint and the effectual work of every part (Eph 4:16; Col 2:19). Only then can it realize the glorious goal Paul described (Eph 4:13-16). You must often stir up members to remember and do their “one another” duties, or a church will be a broken down shadow of what it could and should have been. You must oppose the pride, selfishness, laziness, habits, and comfort zones of members that keep them from pursuing and perfecting the other members in the church.

Preach the word.

02/20/06

Your job is to “preach the word” (II Tim 4:2). Preaching the word is teaching the Bible. This does not mean dreams, anecdotes, illustrations, jokes, poems, songs, stories, plays, or chalk drawings. How many sermon enhancers did the prophets or apostles use? Ezra “read in the book in the law of God distinctly, and gave the sense, and caused them to understand the reading” (Neh 8:8). Such an approach would bore today’s hearers, but it was God’s ordained method, and it worked (Neh 8:9-12)! In the Sermon on the Mount, the Lord took the Pharisees’ doctrines one by one and demolished them (Matt 5-7). Paul quoted seven different texts in just the first chapter of Hebrews and six in the fifteenth of Romans! The flesh craves frothy counterfeits to Bible preaching, and carnal hearers rave about and remember these substitutes more than opened scriptures. You must despise and ignore the popularity of preachers that minimize God’s method to exalt their own. Self-help, positive-mental-attitude chats and exciting storytelling and pompous posturing may get large crowds, but that is proof the methods are wrong (Luke 6:26; 16:15). The truth and its proper presentation will never be popular. We live in the perilous times, when so-called Christians reject sound doctrine for teachers to scratch their ears and satisfy their lusts with entertainment and fables (II Tim 4:3-4). But what the religious world or your hearers want is irrelevant. Paul charged Timothy before God and Jesus Christ to stick to the word of God, for inspired scripture perfectly furnishes the man of God with all he needs (II Tim 3:14-17). And it is only the word of God that builds the faith of hearers (Rom 10:17; 15:4). Let dreamers tell their dreams. What is the chaff to the wheat (Jer 23:28-32)? Let God

be true, but every man a liar (Rom 3:4). Stick to Ezra's method (Neh 8:8). Drop sermon enhancers, and let God's Spirit convert your hearers by His written and preached word (I Cor 2:1-5). Preaching is public teaching – it is not religious entertainment performed by an actor behind a pulpit to please an audience. It must always be teaching – the organized, systematic, informative, passionate, and persuasive instruction of men. How is the skill developed? It is learned by devouring God's word and meditating in it day and night (Ezra 7:6; Pr 22:17-21; I Tim 4:13).

Study for God's approval.

02/13/06

It is easy to misinterpret or misapply a text. It is easy to use the wrong text for the right doctrine – an “innocent” first step to heresy. It is easy to get excited about new ideas. It is easy to convince hearers of most anything. But you must seek God's approval, which is the highest standard of all (II Cor 10:18; II Tim 2:15). Who cares what men think of your studies and preaching (Gal 1:10)? You are a servant of God and a steward of His mysteries (I Cor 4:1-5). Do not settle for less than the most intense efforts to handle His word honestly (II Cor 1:12; 2:17; 4:1-2; I Thess 2:3-4). Who cares if your wife or church shouts, “Hooray!” There are many who wrest the Bible to deceive, and you must vigilantly oppose them and hold fast the form of sound words (Eph 4:14; II Cor 11:3-4,13-15; II Pet 3:16). Do not be content with an answer just because your people are content. Ministers must have a conscience and conviction that their answers satisfy the Lord and the plain teaching of Scripture. Because others are convinced with an answer is no guarantee your answer is correct. Due to superior knowledge of the Bible, you will know whether you have exhausted a subject or simply spouted an easy answer. You have been charged with preserving, promoting, and preaching the faith once delivered to the saints (Jude 1:3). You must be hypercritical of your conclusions, lest you depart at all from the truth (II Tim 1:13; Titus 1:9). Never change an interpretation or a doctrine without much time and labor to analyze it from every angle (Eph 5:15). Haste makes waste in the study of God's words. You were ordained as a faithful man, and you must remain faithful in the careful use of God's word (II Tim 2:2). There is no room for impulsiveness in study or preaching. Ignore the crowd when studying (Ex 23:2). Ignore your enemies, teachers, or ancients when taking a position (Ps 119:98-100). Seek the old paths and hold to them tenaciously, lest you be deceived by others or your own heart in departing from them (Jer 6:16). Subject your ideas to the toughest critics you know, not the friendliest, whether living or dead. New ideas are the origin of all heresies, so be skeptical of them, whether from your or another's study.

Take heed unto thyself.

02/06/06

The man of God must guard two things – his personal life and his doctrine (I Tim 4:16). He cannot relax in either: he must continue to protect both. Vigilant care in these two areas will save himself and his hearers; slothfulness will cost him his holiness and/or his orthodoxy, and his people their godliness and/or knowledge. Taking heed to yourself is diligently maintaining personal holiness, personal devotions, personal love for Christ, strict time management, separation from worldliness, and frequent self-examination of motives, relationships, and spiritual zeal. It does not allow for much pleasure in this life or enjoyment of the world, for these things corrupt men (Luke 8:14; 21:34). David foolishly and lazily stayed home from battle, which led to adultery and murder, causing David, his family, and the nation much trouble (II Sam 11:1-17). The Lord mercifully

preserved his life and his offices of prophet, psalmist, and king; but great damage was done (II Sam 12:14). John Mark allowed homesickness or other distractions to cause him to go A.W.O.L from Paul and Barnabas (Acts 13:13; 15:38). Peter let fear creep back into his life to be a hypocrite and stumblingblock before the Jews at Antioch (Gal 2:11-14). Demas became enamored with this present world until he turned his back on Paul (II Tim 4:10). The soldier of Christ must be self-disciplined, like a top-level athlete (I Cor 9:24-27). He must be moderate and temperate in all things, which is the self-denial necessary to be a champion for Christ and avoid being a castaway. Not only will personal carelessness cost a minister his relationship with the Lord, but he will also corrupt his flock by giving them the wrong example for living (I Tim 4:12; I Pet 5:3). How are you doing, fellowsoldier? When did you last examine yourself? Are you as close to the Lord and thinking, speaking, and walking in holiness as you ever were? Or have you slipped from your own steadfastness (II Pet 3:17)? Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life ... and the issues of your ministry (Prov 4:23)! Are you as virtuous with filthy lucre and wine and as diligent in ruling your family as when you were ordained (I Tim 3:1-7)? Consider it well! In serving others and seeking to perfect them before the Lord, do not neglect your own heart and habits. Take time today for the most important exhorting, rebuking, and warning you can do – to yourself!

Learn to fight.

01/30/06

A minister must be a man of peace (Matt 5:9; Jas 3:17-18). He should also be a gentle man with a nurse's compassion (II Cor 10:1; I Thess 2:7-8). Faithful ministers like David avoid and hate conflict (Ps 120:7). But they also know that fighting and war are part of their calling. David, a great lover of peace, thanked God for teaching his hands to war and fingers to fight (Ps 144:1). He knew strange children would creep into the church with lying words and false oaths (Ps 144:7-8,11). Such men must be driven off with the same intensity a shepherd protects his sheep from wolves (Ac 20:29-31; Rev 2:2; Titus 1:10-11). The minister of God is a soldier, and much of his work is warfare (II Tim 2:3-4; 4:7; I Tim 1:18; 6:12). Though his weapons are spiritual, he is definitely at war (II Cor 10:3). His weapons of warfare are mighty through God to pull down strong holds (II Cor 10:4). The enemy is the imaginations, opinions, and thoughts of his hearers (II Cor 10:5). His military objective is to conform all of them to the word of God. And once this goal is achieved, he must stand guard to crush any rebellion (II Cor 10:6). Though a peaceful nurse much of the time, Paul was ready for gospel revenge (II Cor 13:2; I Cor 5:3-5; I Tim 1:20)! Neither you nor your people have a right to opinions – all thinking must be subject to scripture (Is 8:20; I Tim 6:3-5). Rather than puffing them up with the chaff of dreams and pleasant sounds and allowing their errors (Is 30:10; Mal 3:15), bring the hammer and fire of God's word to bear on them (Jer 23:28-29). Consider our Lord's blow-by-blow demolition of the most conservative religious thinking of His day in the Sermon on the Mount (Matt 7:28-29)! When gentleness and preaching has failed, fools and scorners must be rebuked and/or excluded (Pr 19:25; 26:5; Titus 1:9-11; 3:10-11). Foolish questions should be rejected, for they waste time, cause carnal strife, and flatter the skeptic (I Tim 6:3-5; I Tim 2:14,23; Titus 3:9). As Nehemiah of old, you must enforce the word of God upon men with the intensity of a warrior in a life-or-death struggle (Neh 13:23-28; II Tim 4:2; Titus 2:15).

Be a little child.

01/23/06

God must give you knowledge and wisdom to know the mysteries and truth of the gospel (Matt 13:10-17; 16:17; I Cor 2:6-16). He has chosen to reveal these precious things to babes and hide them from the educated and intelligent (Matt 11:25-27). Therefore, it is of enormous importance for the man of God to be a babe! How does he do this? He prays like Solomon and Jehoshaphat, admitting he is only a little child and does not know what to do (I Kgs 3:5-10; II Chron 20:12). He teaches like Agur, confessing he is an ignorant brute by nature (Pr 30:2-3). He writes like Paul, admitting he is less than the least of all saints (Eph 3:8). These men were mighty in God's sight, and He gave them special wisdom. There is a valuable lesson here. God has justly chosen to demolish the wisdom of this world, which is based on human reasoning and puffs up the minds of men (I Cor 1:19-20; 3:19-20). He loves to confuse those who trust in themselves and their learning (Job 5:12-14; Is 29:13-14; II Thess 2:9-12). Revelation exceeds rationalization as light excels darkness. God mocks the educated and intelligent, and He promises to reduce them to fools. Education and intelligence are handicaps and liabilities, unless you despise them in the pursuit of wisdom and truth. Honorary doctorates from men preclude any honor from heaven (John 5:44)! In order to be wise, you must first become a fool (I Cor 3:18). Fellow soldier, pray like a fool! Teach like a fool! Write like a fool! Get down cheerfully and meekly, or the Lord will put you down! He will lift up those who humble themselves under His mighty hand (I Pet 5:5-7). If you have a penchant for religious titles or public esteem, you are in trouble (Job 32:21-22). Jesus Christ's ministers are all brethren, and the greatest of them is the one who serves humbly without public recognition (Matt 23:5-12). Ignore so-called Christian doctors. If you will exalt God's inspired words as the basis for your ministry and wisdom, He will teach you knowledge and understanding beyond any seminary (Job 32:6-14; Ps 119:98-100). God can open your eyes to things in His Word that no seminary professor can ever show you (Ps 119:18). If you cannot humble yourself as a little child, you do not even qualify for the kingdom of heaven, let alone its ministry (Matt 18:1-4)! Be a little child!

Exalt the New Testament.

01/16/06

Jesus Christ made Paul and you able ministers of the New Testament (II Cor 3:6). Whatever glory the Old Testament had, it was inferior to the glory of the New, and it had been done away (II Cor 3:7-11). That is why it is called old (Heb 8:13)! Since Paul called the Old rudimentary, weak, and beggarly (Gal 4:3,9-11; Col 2:20-23; Heb 7:18; 10:1; 13:9), how often should we preach salvation from it? Paul wrote Hebrews to prove that the New was superior to the Old regarding Jesus Christ and salvation! Yes, there is historical and practical value in the Old, but do not go to its darkness to shed light on the Saviour of the New (Rom 15:4; I Cor 10:6,11). The Bible reflects God's progressive revelation to man: Isaiah reveals more than Leviticus, Matthew more than Isaiah, and Hebrews more than Matthew. Any chapter of Hebrews is superior to Leviticus, Isaiah, or Matthew! To reverse this divine order and emphasize the Old for doctrine is a mistake. The prophets of the Old did not know what they wrote, so why go to them to preach the gospel of Christ to saints of the New (I Pet 1:10-12)? Our Lord and His apostles, especially Paul, revealed the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, which had been kept hidden since creation (Matt 13:16-17; Luke 16:16; John 1:17; Eph 3:1-12). Grow up! Men who live on types and shadows from the Old have two problems: they cannot prove what they declare, and their hearers will starve on a skim milk diet. Do not even open a sermon with a sound bite from the Old, like Philpot, Spurgeon, and countless others. The very least damage of such a choice is the terrible precedent of using a text out of context. Paul is the pattern for New Testament ministers (I Cor 11:1; II Tim 2:2; 3:14). Do not move away from his form of sound words (II Tim 1:13). You are an ambassador and servant of Jesus Christ. Why waste

time on the furniture of the tabernacle, when Paul by the Spirit blew it off as shadows imposed temporarily on children (Gal 4:3; Heb 9:10)! Preach the real thing! Why tell a young man about a beautiful girl by describing her shadow? Preach Jesus Christ by name and Him crucified with the historical (gospels) and doctrinal (epistles) details! Forget your ideas about the priests' hems of alternating golden bells and pomegranates (Ex 28:34)! Forget the five points of Calvinism from the five stones in David's shepherd's bag (I Sam 17:40)! Forget trying to see types of Christ in Joseph's life! Preach Christ! You cloud the Bible with such mystery that your people will give up ever understanding it. Paul used great plainness of speech, little of which concerning Christ and salvation exists in the Old Testament (II Cor 3:12). Each sermon may be your last – reach for your best weapon – the Pauline declarations of gospel truth and righteousness without shadows or mysteries!

Preach intensely.

1/9/06

Be instant in season and out of season (II Tim 4:2). To be “instant” is to be pressing, urgent, and insistent (Luke 23:23). It has nothing to do with being quick. It has everything to do with preaching God's word with intensity and zeal. It is good to always be zealously affected in a good thing – and there is no better thing than preaching the word (Gal 4:18). Jesus Christ is a great king; the time is short; the subject important; the consequences severe; the opposition powerful; the competition distracting; truth is at stake; and souls are in the balance. God commanded Isaiah, “Cry aloud, spare not, lift up thy voice like a trumpet” (Is 58:1). You bring the most sober warnings and the most glorious news. Nothing should dull your zeal or hinder your work. Consider Elihu: he was ready to explode with the need to declare his opinion (Job 32:18-20). Paul felt the same in Athens (Acts 17:16-17). Nehemiah was gloriously instant with sinners in Jerusalem (Neh 13:23-31)! God's faithful men pursue and perform preaching like Jehu drove his chariot (II Kgs 9:20). The kingdom of heaven has no place for perfunctory, polished, or polite preaching. Where are Elijah and John the Baptist, when we need them in these perilous times (Luke 1:17; II Tim 3:1)? Paul told Titus to neither back down nor back off (Titus 2:15; 3:8)! However, this kind of teaching is not always welcome (Acts 24:25; II Tim 4:3-4). But conveniences are mere luxuries; preferences are mere lusts. Soldiers of the cross require neither! Preaching should be done whenever and wherever there are hearers. Sometimes they will accept it cheerfully, and at other times they will show resistance for you or God's word; but you must be instant anyway. Like Ezekiel, Christ's servants are to proclaim God's words regardless of their hearers' desires or responses (Ezek 3:4-11). Popularity and public opinion are no measure of the man of God (Luke 6:26; I Cor 4:3). A minister cannot fear the faces of his people (Jer 1:7-8,17-19), nor can he give them what they want (Is 30:8-11). He must declare the full and true gospel message from God regardless of how it is received (Ezek 3:18-19).

Perfect your family.

1/2/06

Your ministry will not exceed your marriage and family. Leading, loving, training, and ruling a wife and children are prerequisites for the office for very good reasons (I Tim 3:4-5,11-12; Titus 1:6). If a man does not do these things well, he will not properly care for a church. If the prayers and spiritual prosperity of ordinary members depend on family relationships, the man of God must work even harder (Mal 2:13; Luke 1:17; I Pet 3:7). How can a man walk with God, if he cannot walk cheerfully with his wife and children (I John 4:20)? These duties are also the closest exercises and

activities to pastoring a church (Num 11:12; I Cor 4:14-15; Gal 4:19; I Thess 2:11). The more fruitful, joyful, and spiritual are the wife and children, the more fruitful, joyful, and spiritual will be the church. A man who cannot listen and does not know his wife or children's souls will never perceive the hearts and needs of church members. A man who wisely discerns and perfects the souls in his house will be able to do the same for others. A man who is impatient and insensitive at home will be impatient and insensitive in the church. If bad habits or stubbornness cause his wife or children to despise him, he will not change things for the benefit of the church. A selfish or spoiled man at home will be the same in God's house. If children are discouraged and provoked to anger by an overbearing father, the church will be discouraged and provoked to anger as well. It is also by family duties that a pastor can provide a practical illustration for other husbands and fathers and an example of righteousness to the world (I Tim 4:12; Titus 2:7; I Pet 5:3). Furthermore, a happy wife and children who walk with God will be great examples and helpers in the church, for they will know more of its duties, problems, cures, and goals than others. Fellow soldier, close your books and leave your office; learn, love, and lead your wife and family; it is part and parcel of your work.

Be creative and repetitive.

12/26/05

Creativity and originality are requirements for pastors, and so are review and reminding. A good soldier does both (Matt 13:52). A man who reads, studies, and interacts with a variety of people will be full of matter (I Tim 4:13-15). This is part of the aptitude to teach (I Tim 3:2). Parents lose children, and teachers pupils, unless they alter approaches to capture attention, raise affection, and provoke growth. Ministers should do the same. Consider the enormous variety in the Bible's 66 books! There is everything from history to poetry, from doctrine to exhortation, from philosophy to apocalyptic warnings! You can review an old doctrine a new way, use new texts in an old sermon, or preach on a brand new topic. You must pray to see new and wonderful things in scripture and study to find them (Ps 119:18). You must ask for new enlightenment (Eph 1:17-19). Long sermon series, though restful to you, can numb your mind and your hearers' ears. Beware! You need stimulating input from Bible reading, books, others' sermons, current events, and ministerial friends to provoke your mind. You must preach the whole counsel of God and hold back nothing that might be profitable for your hearers (Acts 20:20,27). Despise ruts and useless traditions! Question habits! When did you last change the format of your services? Your sermon organization? Drastically alter your subject matter? Preach from the floor? Review and reminding are also important, for sheep forget easily, and they love the old, old story (II Pet 1:12-15). Again, a steady diet of scripture will provide you many things of which to remind others. You need to fill yourself with matter, both new and old; then you will be ready and passionate about sharing both with your audience (Matt 13:52).

Outwork your flock.

12/19/05

The Lord has no use for lazy ministers. Read His harsh words for the slothful servant (Matt 25:14-30). Jesus labored without leisure, and with great time urgency (Mark 3:20-21; 6:31; John 9:4). Let men call you crazy, but you serve God for men's souls with eternity in view. He called men able to work hard, and work hard is what they must do. It is a work (I Tim 3:1). The man called is to endure hardness (II Tim 2:3). He is a workman (II Tim 2:15). And he is compared to an ox (I Cor 9:9-10). The crib will be full, if there is an ox hard at work (Pr 14:4)! Original study is exhausting (Eccl

12:12). Correcting, teaching, and rebuking are tiring. Love them, and do them! Time at the desk is nothing: it must be productive! What is your output? Enough to justify your income, your life, your call? Your people are to give according to your output (I Tim 5:17)! They owe you nothing as base pay! Many justifiably ridicule the ministry as a “non-profit profession,” meaning pastors work less than others. God forbid! Give yourself wholly to reading, exhortation, and doctrine for visible profit (I Tim 4:13-16). Hard work will be seen. You raise your credibility, if it is known you work harder than other men. You create bitterness, if you are merely average. Paul outworked other men and the other apostles (Acts 20:34; I Thess 4:9; II Thess 3:7-9; I Cor 15:10)! If others should work with all their might, how much more the servants of Christ (Eccl 9:10; Col 1:29)? Since work expands to fill the time available for its completion, add duties and goals to your schedule. Read more Bible; pray more; plan more assemblies; write, call, or visit your members; write a commentary; knock on doors; write newspaper editorials; create tracts or pamphlets; build a useful website. Without a boss ruling your time, you must do so yourself, severely! Quit yourself like a soldier! The only limit is Psalm 127:1-2! Few deserve the comfort!