

Minding Your Manners in Ministry

by Dr. Gary S. Linton, Ph.D.

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Introduction

There has not been much said in the church concerning ethics in the ministry. One of the few things I know of that has been written about the subject is “The Ministry What’s Right and What’s Wrong” by my Pastor Dr. Paul E. Paino, which is an excellent book on the subject. Most of what I will be sharing on this subject I have learned either from him or through my own personal experience. While covering some of the same things, I will also be dealing with a few different issues and taking a slightly different slant on the subject. In this book, I will be dealing with the following:

The call to ministry, the pastor’s responsibility to the church; The church's responsibility to its pastor; how guest ministries should conduct themselves when coming into another minister's church or ministry; and how the church and pastor should treat guests when coming to minister in their church or ministry. Paul wrote to Timothy, a young pastor under his oversight, and said, “I write so that you may know how one ought to conduct himself in the household of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and support of truth” (1 Timothy 3:15). The church, (whether it be the pastor, the people or incoming guest ministry), like never before, needs to learn how to conduct themselves in the house of God. This is what I will attempt to set forth in the pages to follow.

The Call of God

Hebrews 5:4 says “No man takes this honor unto himself, but he that is called of God.” No one should even think of entering the ministry unless they are convinced they have been called of God. To enter the ministry without being called by God is to do an injustice to the church, the cause of Christ and one’s self. If you are not absolutely sure of the call of God on your life to full time ministry, the best thing you can do is get a good profession and get behind a particular church or ministry and support it with everything you have.

The ministry can be full of joy and excitement, but it can also be very difficult. Only those called of God will survive it and even at that there are those getting out of the ministry at alarming numbers. The ministry should be entered into with great caution. The following are some reasons we should be sure God has called us before entering the ministry, whether it be as a pastor, evangelist, musician, missionary or any other form of ministry or church leadership.

Greater Judgment

The call to the ministry is both an honor (Hebrews 5:4) and a grave responsibility. According to James 3:1 those who have yielded to the call to preach and teach the Word of God will be held to a higher standard of judgment. This is why no one must ever take on this responsibility lightly. We must enter our calling with the understanding that God will hold us accountable for what we preach, teach and do. That is why it is so important we don’t just preach what we hear from another, get our message from a book, or just throw something together last minute. We must

“Study to show thyself (ourselves) approved, a workman that needs not be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth” (2 Timothy 2:15). We are to equip ourselves through prayer, study (research), and meditation, “As good stewards of the manifold grace of God”, that when we speak, we do so “As the oracles (utterances) of God” (1 Peter 4:10-11).

In our day it is getting increasingly more difficult to minister the clear and unadulterated Word of God. Paul prophetically stated, “The time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but wanting to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance to their own desires” (2 Timothy 4:3). I recently watched a Christian program that was interviewing ministers. There were many who were pastors of large churches saying people simply are not interested in hearing about the judgment of God or anything that was offensive. As a result, they chose to give them what they wanted. I was glad to hear R. C. Sproul say, “we must not offend for the sake of offense, but we must also be careful not to take away the offense that is clearly in the Word of God.”

Jesus often offended (John 6:60 and 66). This is why Paul charged Timothy and us who are called to preach to, “Preach the word; be instant in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort with all longsuffering (patience) and doctrine” (2 Timothy 4:2). Paul also said, “But as we were allowed of God to be put in trust with the gospel, even so we speak, not as pleasing men but God, which tries (examines) our hearts”(1 Thessalonians 2:4). We must be able to stand before God and say the same.

There is not only greater judgment before God but also man. When you accept the call to follow the Lord in full time ministry you will find you are suddenly under man's magnifying glass and scrutiny. People will criticize, condemn and talk about you for the least little thing. They don't like this or that; the way you did something or a decision you made. You will have to come to your own convictions and determine not to bend to man's every whim. Remember, "Not as pleasing men but God which tries (examines) our hearts" (1 Thessalonians 2:4). Paul said, "For if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ" (Galatians 1:10). This must be our stance and yet with a heart of love for those to whom we minister, "Imparting not the gospel of God only but also our own souls because you (they) are dear unto us" (1 Thessalonians 2:8).

It is also important that we take great care not to offend if we can keep from it. James wrote, "If any man offend not in word the same is a perfect man" (James 3:2). We mustn't be offensive if we can help it. If we offend some one in our congregation and lose them, we have cut off all opportunity to minister into their life. Let's be careful not to offend unless truth or the vision God has given us is at stake. Our main purpose is first and foremost to please the Lord and then to encourage and grow our people in their faith.

The Spiritual Battle

We are all in a spiritual battle. The moment we get saved we are in a fight with spiritual wickedness in high places. The Bible says, “We wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places” (Ephesians 6:12). When you decide to get involved and let God use you to make an impact for His kingdom, you enter another level of spiritual conflict. When one yields to the call of God on their life to full time ministry, with a passion for doing the will of God at all cost, that is when you begin fighting the battle in the spiritual realm at the highest level. The powers of darkness are upset when you get saved and even more so when you decide to get off the sidelines to let God use you. When you surrender all your life to God’s service in a full time capacity, Satan is really ticked off.

I think of Moses, the moment he decided God was leading him to deliver the children of Israel from the bondage of the Egyptians, he immediately came under attack. Paul, shortly after his conversion on the Damascus Road, began proclaiming Christ boldly and the battle started and never ended. Peter was so committed to the cause of Christ he was ready to go to prison and even die for Him (Luke 22:33). Though he fail short of his commitment, I believe he meant what he said and proved it years later by laying down his life for Christ. It was because of his commitment to following and being used of God that Jesus said, “Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat” (Luke 22:31). If you have committed your life to His service, to doing the will of God for your life at all cost, Satan desires the same for you.

The good news is what Jesus said afterwards, “But I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not, and when you are converted, strengthen thy brethren” (Luke 22:32). Let me encourage you, when you dedicate your life to the service of the Master, you have the guarantee He is praying for you. “Whither (Where) the forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus” (Hebrews 6:20).

“Wherefore He is able also to save (deliver) them to the uttermost (forever and completely) that come unto God by Him, seeing He ever lives to make intercession for them” (Hebrews 7:25).

“Who is he that condemns, it is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us” (Romans 8:34). He’s praying for you as you fight the battle in the spiritual realm and you can be sure that His prayers will be answered.

So much so that even if you go through some failure as did Peter, you can be sure Jesus’ prayers will see you through it to ultimate victory and He will continue to use you. Get the words of Jesus, “When you are converted (have turned) strengthen your brethren” (Luke 22:32b). You see, often we have to go through the battle and even failure before we are adequately equipped to do what Jesus has called us to do. It’s only after we have been schooled in life’s difficulties, by the Holy Spirit, that we are really ready to strengthen our brethren “With the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God” (2 Corinthians 1:3-4).

Discouragement and Disappointment

One of the greatest battles those in the ministry fight is disappointment and discouragement. Nearly all God's prophets and ministers fought with this at times. Elijah said, "Lord they have killed thy prophets, and digged down thine alters; and I am left alone, and they seek my life" (Romans 11:3 and 1 Kings 19:10, 14). After a great victory, Elijah fled from Jezebel and laid under a juniper tree and said, "It is enough; now, O Lord, take my life, for I am no better than my fathers" (1 Kings 19:4).

After many battles and set backs on his second missionary journey, Paul fell into some discouragement after arriving at Corinth. Though discouraged, He continued ministering as we also must do. There will be times when you slip into the pit of despair and yet you must keep pressing on regardless of the way you feel. It may be from criticism, things not turning out or coming along as well as you had hoped (unfulfilled vision), personal problems, or failure but in the midst of it all the call of God does not change (Romans 11:29).

The devil's biggest job is to get us to give up but that is not an option. Jesus said, "No one having put his hand to the plow and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God" (Luke 9:62). We must keep pressing on toward the purpose for which God has called us and the goal (vision) He has given us (Philippians 3:12-14). Paul told the elders of Ephesus the Holy Spirit testified to him that in every city bonds and afflictions awaited him. After which he said, "But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, that I might finish my course (race) with joy, and the ministry, which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify of the gospel of the

grace of God” (Acts 20:24). God has a course for you. You must not let anything move, sway or detour you from that course. You must continue pursuing the course and ministry you received from Him.

When at Corinth, God brought three things to Paul in order to encourage him and bring him out of his pit:

1. Friends (Acts 18:1-3).
2. Fruit (Acts 18:8).
3. Fresh vision (Acts 18:9-10).

I’m sure the friends and fruit helped Paul, but it just didn’t seem to be enough. Sometimes we get so far down that not even great friends and fruitfulness in our ministry can bring us out of it – and God has to intervene. “The lord said to Paul in the night by a vision, Do not be afraid any longer, but go on speaking and do not be silent; for I am with you, and no man will attack you in order to harm you, for I have many people in this city” (Acts 18:9-10).

Though there will be times of discouragement in the ministry, God will do whatever is necessary to keep you on course. It may not be until you are in your night (darkest) hour and nothing seems to help, but you can be sure God will speak to you bringing a word and freshness of vision that only He can bring.

The Pastor's Responsibility to the Church

The privilege and responsibility God gives pastors is to shepherd those who belong to Him. It's a great honor, and also a heavy burden. It's incumbent on us to take our calling seriously.

1 Peter 5:2 says that pastors or shepherds must “feed the flock of God.” In Acts 20:28 Paul challenged the elders of Ephesus to “be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood.”

What a proof text for the divinity of Christ! It was Jesus who died on the cross, yet Paul said God paid the price for the church with His own blood. Jesus, who was God, paid the penalty for our sins on the cross. Let's not take it lightly.

If the church was so valued by God that He shed His blood for it, we should always give it our best. “I write so that you will know how one ought to conduct himself in the household of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and support of the truth” (1 Timothy 3:15).

Here are a few things Pastors must do:

1. Feed the Flock

We must make sure the church gets a healthy diet of God's Word. This is why Paul told Timothy to "study to show yourself approved a workman that needs not to be ashamed, rightfully dividing the Word of truth" (2 Timothy 2:15). If you are going to properly feed God's people you will have to spend much time in diligent study. Don't just throw a message together. God and His people deserve better.

I believe expository teaching and preaching accomplishes this best. Even when preaching on a specific topic you can find a passage that deals with that particular topic and give an exposition of it. If you take your people through a book of the Bible, verse by verse, you will be forced to deal with everything in it, and will give your people a balanced diet of the Word. You will also be protecting yourself from extremes.

This takes a lot of work, but is one of my favorite things to do. I especially like those passages that are hard to deal with, the ones most preachers tend to skip over. When doing an exposition of a passage I typically use at least 3-7 commentaries. I take one passage at a time and thoroughly study each commentary.

I write down everything that seems significant then read over the notes while prayerfully meditating on the passage. Little by little, the Holy Spirit gives me an understanding of the text and how it applies to the church, people's lives, and the vision God has for that local body.

A general outline for study should include the background, setting and customs of the time, the meaning of the passage, practical applications, and the exhortation to put what they've learned into practice. Your people need to understand the Word, but they also need to see how it applies to their lives.

Much of our time should be spent in practical application. The background and interpretation prepares the way for the application and exhortation. There is one interpretation of scripture but many applications. Let's properly equip ourselves to feed the flock of God.

Another way to insure your people are properly fed is through guest ministries. Let's face it, people need something fresh once in a while. Bring in individuals and groups you know will minister well to your church body. It's good to have varying styles to give them some diversity.

Music as well as preaching and teaching ministries can be used. Bringing in guests will help your church grow. Guest ministries and special events are easy ways for members to invite people to the church. If done regularly, over a period of time, people will start to see something is happening at your church.

Training leaders in the church is another way to make sure your people are being fed. 2 Timothy 2:2 says, "The same impart (entrust) to faithful men, who will also be able to teach others." You can't do it all yourself. God will give you people who are gifted and with your help will be able

teach and preach the Word of God alongside you. It's important to make sure people you raise up are faithful to your ministry (Luke 16:12). If not, division could arise.

It's easy for people to let things go to their head. That's why Paul said leaders should not be a novice or new convert lest they "become conceited and fall into the condemnation" (1 Timothy 3:6). Warn, encourage and watch over them. You can train leaders in a small group setting or by giving them an opportunity to minister in a public service. Start with an offertory or brief devotional then gradually move them to full messages. An added benefit is having people who are equipped to fill in when you're on vacation or out of town.

2. Guard the Flock

Paul, when leaving Ephesus, gathered the leaders together and said, "Be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God, which He purchased with His own blood. I know that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock, and from your own selves men will arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them. Therefore be on alert" (Acts 20:29-31a). Jesus made it clear that an identifying factor of a true shepherd is that they defend the flock against wolves (John 10:12-13).

There will be those who attempt to lead your people astray. It's up to us as pastors to properly feed and train our people to have discerning spirits so that when someone is being deceptive or divisive they will be able to stop it before anyone is affected. It's up to the pastor to fight against such wolves with every thing he has. If we don't stop it right away, the turmoil that will be ahead of us will be overwhelming.

Be alert and watch, you never know when they may rise up or who they may be. It may be someone who just finished pledging their support and loyalty to you, so beware. Shortly after the people praised Jesus on Palm Sunday the very same ones were crying out "crucify him, crucify him" (Luke 23:20).

Paul and Barnabas, after the lame man was healed, could barely restrain the people from sacrificing to them as gods. When they were not allowed to sacrifice to them, they wanted to stone them (Acts 14:8-19). The one patting you on the back today could be stabbing you in the back tomorrow.

Often it isn't someone coming from outside bringing in false doctrine, but someone from within trying to plant negative seeds and cast doubt about leadership. It will often go something like this, "What do think about the pastor's message today? What do you think about the direction the church is taking? What do you think about the worship leader? I really think it'd be better if they did it like this. I'm not sure if this might have been a better way to go. Did you hear this about so and so?"

We must teach people to look out for things like this and put a stop to it immediately. By the time it gets to the pastor, the damage has probably already been done. Negative seeds, even if not believed, have a way of coming to fruition. Romans 16:17 says, “Mark them which cause division and offenses contrary to the doctrine you have learned; and avoid them.”

This battle usually begins with envy, bitterness, or a desire for power, to be noticed and feel important (James 3:13-17). Once it moves from the heart and through the tongue, a fire has erupted that will soon blaze out of control if not quickly extinguished.

James 3:5-6 says, “Even so the tongue is a little member and boasts great things, behold how great a matter a little fire kindles. And the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity, so is the tongue among our members that defiles the whole body, and sets on fire the course of nature and is set on fire of hell.”

Gossip and negativism will defile the whole body. It begins with a few people, but quickly spreads until the entire church is destroyed. The devil knows it’s not the battles that come from outside the church that destroy us – they usually make us stronger. It’s the battles from within that get us.

James 3:15 says, “This wisdom descends not from above, but is earthly, sensual and devilish.” When someone tries to draw people away, remember where it’s coming from and

don't allow the devil to take advantage of you by being "ignorant of his devices" (2 Corinthians 2:11).

Sources of false wisdom:

- Earthly. It comes from this world, not from above.
- Sensual. It originates from our fleshly desires, not the Spirit of God.
- Devilish. It comes straight from the devil himself.

3. Give Yourself to the Flock

To minister in a way that pleases God you must give yourself for those to whom you minister.

John 15:13 – "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends."

John 10:11 – "The good shepherd gives his life for the sheep."

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

1 Thessalonians 2:8 – “So being affectionately desirous of you, we were willing to have imparted unto you, not the gospel of God only, but also our own souls because you were dear unto us.”

Paul gave his heart to those to whom he ministered. For many, being a pastor is just a job. It's not a calling, but a vocation or occupation for them. This must not be the case. If we aren't called of God, we shouldn't be there. We must not preach the gospel only, but in doing so we must also give our heart and soul to them.

This is not easy and has with it much danger. When we give people part of us we become vulnerable. It's easy get hurt. When people criticize, gossip, get mad, or leave the church it rips your heart out. This is why many pastors just “do their job” – It's safer! We must allow the Holy Spirit to tenderize our heart so we can give ourselves to the church, following His example (Ephesians 5:1-2). God expects nothing less.

4. Total Dedication is Required

If God has called you into the ministry, total dedication is required. In Luke 14:25-33 Jesus demanded full surrender and commitment in every area of our life.

God must be first in:

- Our relationships (Luke 14:26).
- Our flesh and personal ambition (Luke 14:26).
- Our possessions (Luke 14:33).

Matthew 6:24 – “No man can serve two masters, either he will hate the one love the other, or he will hold to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon.”

It’s difficult to be in the ministry and work a secular job at the same time. Your interest will inevitably be divided. Paul is usually cited as being a tent maker, but he only did so for a few brief periods of time then promptly went back to full time ministry.

Some pastors need to be bi-vocational for a while, but it shouldn’t be for very long. As soon as the ministry begins to grow, you must take a step of faith. Often either the church isn’t willing to make the commitment to their pastor, or the pastor isn’t willing to step out in faith and leave the security of his job. There will be lean times and times of blessing, and we must make the commitment of faith to trust God in it all.

2 Corinthians 5:7 – “We walk by faith, not by sight.”

Hebrews 10:38 – “The just shall live by faith.”

In Mark 1:16-20, when Jesus called the disciples they immediately left everything and followed Him. In 1 Kings 19:19-21, when Elisha was called while plowing, he sacrificed the oxen and burned all the implements and followed Elijah. He burnt all bridges to the past so there was no turning back. Peter asked in John 6:68, “Lord, where shall we go?”

5. Go After the Wayward

The Bible makes it clear that people are prone toward drifting and falling away.

Isaiah 53:6 – “All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way.”

1 Peter 2:25 – “You were continually straying like sheep.”

This is a heavy responsibility on pastors. We can’t make people come to church and be faithful, but we do have a responsibility to go after them and bring them back into the fold when they stray. Jesus made this abundantly clear in the parables of the lost sheep, coin and son in Luke 15. Once we’ve done all we can, we must “commend them to God and the Word of His grace” (Acts 20:32).

This should be the natural tendency of a shepherd. Jesus said, “What man among you, if he has a hundred sheep and has lost one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the open pasture, and

go after the one which is lost, until he finds it? And when he has found it, lays it on his shoulders, rejoicing” (Luke 15:4-5). There would be a lot more rejoicing in the church if we could bring back all those who have drifted away and slipped through the cracks.

This indicates that the shepherd grabbed the sheep while it was still running away. He grabs the sheep, throws it over his shoulder and brings it home to the fold while it was still offering resistance. There are so many people who have gone through problems, discouragement and even fallen into sin, and no one has gone after them.

I’m not referring to those who leave the church mad and go down the road to another church. You should never go after those folks. I’m talking about those who have fallen out of church and drifted from the things of God. Those you must go after.

Many people who once loved the Lord have fallen away and haven’t even received a phone call from the church. I realize the pastor can’t call on and go after everyone himself, especially as the church grows, but people should be trained to help the pastor go after wayward sheep.

As the church grows, leaders should be raised up with people under their care. When they see a member has missed a number of weeks, they should give them a call and set up a time to meet with them. They should find out if anything is wrong and ask what they can do to help.

This will take commitment and organization. Faithful shepherding has become a lost art in the church today. The pastor or someone on the pastoral staff should stay in touch with the leaders to make sure they are remaining faithful to the task given them.

6. Flee Temptation

The enemy knows that if he's able to strike the shepherd the sheep will be scattered and left without protection. Paul told Timothy to "flee these things" (1 Timothy 6:11) and again "flee youthful lust" (2 Timothy 2:22).

The devil knows your areas of weakness. You must be on guard continually, especially when you think you're on top of everything. 1 Corinthians 10:12 says, "Wherefore, let him that thinks he stands, take heed lest he fall." Things pastors and church leaders must avoid:

Discouragement. Discouragement is the greatest threat people in the ministry face. It doesn't just hit small, struggling ministries, it also targets large, flourishing ones. It comes from a myriad of different places and sources. It may be like Elijah that we feel alone (Romans 11:3) or believe we can't fulfill the vision the Lord has given us.

It's important to have a support group of pastors you meet with regularly for prayer and encouragement. One church I planted was not going well and it was the weekly time I had meeting for prayer with a small group of ministers that pulled me through.

It's also good to have regular times with your wife where you simply enjoy yourselves and have fun together. Yes, pastors and their mates can have fun together. Foolish is the man or woman who thinks they are so spiritual they don't need this.

Always draw your strength from God. It's easy during these times to get overwhelmed and want to give up. When the temptation is there to sink into a pit of despair, you will have to do as David did when he had lost all and everyone was blaming him for all their problems.

1 Samuel 30:6 says, "But David encouraged himself in the Lord his God." Giving in to this temptation will cause you to miss out on all God has for you. It was shortly after this that David became king. What would have happened if he had given up? Never give up!

Financial indiscretions. In your ministry, make sure everything is always above board and that you are free from accusation. I know many have no choice at the beginning of a ministry but to handle the finances themselves.

As soon as possible, get an administrative assistant or someone to take care of the books under your oversight. Always have two ushers count the offering together and have a slip each signs verifying the amount.

The bookkeeper should also count the offering and give a report to the pastor. This gives multiple checks and balances cutting down the chance for accusation. Also, make sure you clear all expenditures beyond the general operating expenses through the board with signed minutes on file in case any questions arise. This way you cover yourself and silence any accusations.

As for the minister's personal finances, do your best to stay clear of debt as much as possible. Ministry positions offer deductions that aren't available for many other professions. Make sure you have a good accountant familiar with clergy tax laws that can lead you through this process. Keep copies of any correspondence you have with the IRS. If you don't have things in writing, it can easily come back to haunt you.

Sexual temptation. I don't care who you are, what you look like, or how charismatic you may or may not be, there will be temptations. Some people will be attracted to you just because you are in the ministry. Most people in the ministry are there, at least in part, because they have a passionate personality. This makes you particularly susceptible to this area of temptation.

Ways to avoid sexual temptation:

- **Have an open door policy.** Never have a lock on your office door. Let it be known that anyone can enter your office at any time.

- **Beware of flattery and excessive praise.** As men, we have an ego that not only likes but also needs to be ministered to. Stay away from anyone of the opposite sex who flatters you beyond a brief word of encouragement. Women see the pastor caring for the people and often see in him everything their husband isn't or that they think he should be. Run from this as fast as you can!

The temptation will be there to want to soak it all in, especially if you aren't getting this kind of attention at home. Wise is the wife who builds her husband up at home so he has no need to look for it elsewhere. The same holds true for women in the ministry, except women tend to develop more emotional attractions, which can be just as damaging as a physical affair.

- **Beware of social media traps.** It's very easy to access pornography and temptation online. It's also easy to get involved in an online affair, and no one knows, or so you think. I have friends who have paid a huge price because of online indiscretions. Another trap is spending too much time participating in social networks like Facebook, Twitter and Instagram, etc.

This also includes exchanging personal emails, texts and messages. I know pastors who became addicted to their "virtual" world. Eventually, a relationship developed which led to a physical affair. Just ask the thousands of pastors and their wives whose churches and lives were destroyed after photos, emails, texts, Facebook posts, and cell phone logs were distributed to the congregation.

- **Maintain intimacy in your marriage.** There is no better way to thwart off sexual temptation than having a good sexual relationship with your mate. The more open and free you can be with one another the better. I believe, with all my heart, God meant for it to be this way between a husband and wife. The sad thing is, few couples in the ministry have such a relationship.

If you don't this type of openness and sexual freedom in your marriage, you are in serious danger, no matter how spiritual you are. If we don't take care of each other spiritually, emotionally and physically, someone or something else will. Work on it, get help, do whatever is necessary to get your sexual relationship where it needs to be before tragedy has an opportunity to strike.

7. Maintain Confidentiality

Whether in counseling or casual conversation, confidentiality for the pastor and his wife is imperative. Every precaution must be taken to keep everything told to you in confidence. Pastors must never get caught up in gossip of any kind.

A pastor's entire ministry can be ruined if he doesn't keep things to himself. At the very least, trust in you and your ministry will be greatly damaged if you ever violate confidentiality. This can make or brake your ministry. Ministry hinges on your people's ability to trust you.

When I was young in the ministry I started two youth outreach centers for non-churched, at risk, youth. One of the centers was located above a music store. There were also other businesses located around us. Being upstairs, it was hard to keep a close eye on the kids once they left our place.

Some of the businesses began to complain about kids hanging around outside. They weren't doing anything wrong, they were just lingering outside. After the surrounding businesses complaining to our landlord, he asked us to find another place for our center. This was potentially devastating to our ministry. Our place was very reasonably priced, and we hadn't been able to find any place else that we could afford at the time.

While praying over our dilemma, I felt led to ask two local detectives for help. They liked what we were trying to do for the kids so I thought I would ask them to vouch for us with our landlord so we could remain where we were.

When I approached them, they asked if I would do something for them as well. They asked me to keep my ears open and to tell them if I ever heard of the kids being involved with anything illegal. I said, absolutely not! If I did the kids wouldn't trust me and I wouldn't be able to help them. I told the officers I would always encourage them to do the right thing, but I couldn't divulge anything told to me in confidence. They understood, respected our commitment to the kids and went to the landlord on our behalf. Consequently, we were able to stay where we were. Confidentiality is a must!

8. Set Office Hours

To properly shepherd your people you must be there for them. You need to have regular office hours so they know how and when they can reach you. This also protects your home life. If people know there are set times when you are in the office, they are not as likely to bother you at home.

Some might think, “what I am I going to do in the office all those hours?” You might think about:

- **Preparation.** Study, read and research. This is where much of your preparation is done to properly feed your people. Study the Word and research books of the Bible, use commentaries. In my first few years as a pastor I taught through a different book of the Bible every service and we had three services a week. I also studied works on theology and taught it to my people. This laid a wonderful foundation. I don't have the time I did back then and that time of study gave me resources I can draw from today.
- **Praying.** Jesus said “My house shall be called a house of prayer” (Matthew 21:13). What better place to start than with the pastor who is to be setting the example and leading the way. 1 Samuel 12:23 says, “As for me, God forbid that I should sin against the Lord in ceasing to pray for you: but I will teach you the good and the right way.”

- **Planning.** Use your time in the office to plan, organize and develop vision for the church. You should be continually thinking of new ways to structure and restructure your church to allow for continued growth. During these times, the seeds of new and fresh ministries can be birthed to better enable you to meet the ongoing needs of the congregation and community.

9. Continue to Tithe

Pastors must set an example in tithing for their people if they want the blessing of God to be on their life and ministry. You can't expect your people to do what you are unwilling to do. God expects nothing less of His ministers. This should be one of your first priorities, your firstfruits (Proverbs 3:9-10).

This brings with it personal financial blessing (Malachi 3:8:10), blessing in ministry, spiritual insight, vision, and an understanding of the Word of God. Jesus said, "If you have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will commit to your trust the true riches" (Luke 16:11)?

The pastor's tithe can be given to the church in the general offering like everyone else. However, many feel that the pastor's tithe should be given elsewhere, otherwise the pastor is giving into his own ministry. Tithing options for pastors and ministers:

- Set aside your tithe for guest ministries that are coming into the church. This enables you to increase the offerings you take up for the itinerant ministry so they are well taken care of.
 - Give your tithe to the fellowship or denomination your are affiliated with. Many feel this is scriptural since it is your spiritual covering.
-
- If you pastor an independent church, you might consider giving your tithe to a ministry you look to for personal feeding, encouragement and counsel. This too falls under the scriptural precedent since you are deriving at least part of your spiritual nourishment from this ministry. However, it is best to maintain consistency with one ministry.

10. Develop a Sanctuary

To balance total dedication and love, pastors and their families must have a place of sanctuary. Typically, this is your home. A church parsonage sounds like a great deal, but the home being a place of sanctuary is nearly impossible in this scenario.

Usually the parsonage is next to the church making it easy for congregants to stop by unannounced at any time. This makes it very difficult to have any down time or personal space, which you and your family desperately need.

At a pastor's conference a number of years ago, my overseer in the ministry was speaking on this subject. He said he lived twenty miles from the church on purpose. He went on to say, in jest somewhat, "What am I suppose to do, let you kill me?" He was overstating the point a little, but declaring a truth none the less.

Pastors need to make sure their home is set apart for them and their family. Without this they can easily get burnt out. Everyone needs a degree of privacy and the pastor's household is no exception.

They should be able to have alone and intimate times together without worrying about being interrupted. I wonder how many ministry marriages have been greatly damaged or even fallen apart for this very reason.

The Church's Responsibility to its Pastor

It's not just the pastor who has a responsibility to the church, but the church also has a responsibility to their pastor and his family. Paul requested of the Thessalonians, "Appreciate those who diligently labor among you, and have charge over you in the Lord and give you instruction" (1 Thessalonians 5:12). All too often churches have lost good and dedicated pastors because they have felt neglected and unappreciated in one way or another.

When pastors give their heart and soul for the church and its people, without feeling anything in return, they will often lose heart, become discouraged and give up. When this takes place, it's usually not long until the church has lost a good pastor. This can be avoided if the church will make the pastor feel it is as much behind and dedicated to him as he is to them. Allow me to share a few things pastors need from the church and its people.

Cooperation and Support

The Bible says, "Obey them that have rule over you, and submit yourselves unto them; for they watch over your souls, as they that must give an account, that they may do it with joy and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you"(Hebrews 13:17). Notice, you can make their job a joy or grief by your cooperation or lack thereof. One will be profitable to you and the other will not. I don't mean that you should ever submit in a blind obedience as with Jim Jones and the Jonestown massacre.

A pastor should never rule in a dictatorial way. Peter said, “Neither as being lords over God’s heritage but examples to the flock” (1 Peter 5:3). In other words, getting behind the pastor and his vision, following his leadership and direction – as long as his leadership is consistent with scripture and not contrary to it. If you don’t totally agree, pray for him instead of criticizing, complaining and talking negatively. Let God deal with him. The Holy Spirit can do a much better job than we can. After all, God’s the one your pastor is suppose to be accountable to and getting his vision from.

God works through headship and not the other way around. God’s economy is not set up as a democracy as our nation is. God’s government is more like the military. There are many different levels of headship over various areas which are all ultimately subject to the commander-in-chief. Your pastor is in a headship position over the church, under Jesus, the chief shepherd (Ephesians 4:11-16). Actually, the pastor could be likened unto the central nervous system. He receives messages from the head (Jesus) and directs them to the different members of the body to be carried out. When this is reversed, problems inevitably arise.

When my daughter was giving us our first granddaughter. Her labor seemed to be going on and on, even after being fully dilated. The doctor came in to check her and discovered the baby was breech and probably had been so for a while. Without surgery it could have been tragic for both of them. After the birth, there was a period of time they thought her baby might have to wear a brace on her hip because of the position she had been in with both her head and feet pointing upward. Thankfully everything turned out fine and she didn’t need the brace after all. The God-

given birthing process illustrates, ever so clearly, how dangerous it is when the body tries to lead the way instead of the head as intended by God.

When your pastor presents a vision, project or need, get behind it. If everyone would do so, there would be no end to the encouragement and enthusiasm it would produce in your pastor and the church as a whole. When volunteers are needed, it'd be great to be inundated with volunteers and have to turn people away. It would thrill the pastor, excite the body, build the kingdom, and be a tremendous witness to any visitors that might be looking on.

Prayer and Spiritual Battles

Your pastor needs dedicated people standing behind him in prayer. The spiritual battles and pressure they face are unprecedented. That's why Paul urges believers to pray for all in positions of authority (1 Timothy 2:1-2). This includes your pastor. Samuel said to his people, "Moreover, God forbid that I should sin against the Lord in ceasing to pray for you" (1 Samuel 12:23a). This is not only applicable to leaders praying for their people but also the people praying for their leader. It's a sin not to pray for them. We have no reason to ever complain or criticize when we see a leader go through a difficulty or failure if we haven't been praying for them regularly. Those who say the most are usually those who have almost never lifted up a prayer for them.

Can you imagine the feeling of support, encouragement and strength that's infused into a leader when they know their people are praying for them. I think of two occasions in the life of Peter. The religious leaders had threatened him and when he reports it to his company "They lifted up

their voices to God in one accord” (Acts 4:24). Imagine being him, feeling the pressure of the threat just issued and all your people begin to cry out to God in a thunderous fashion. Again, Peter is arrested and thrown in prison, “But prayer for him was being made fervently by the church to God” (Acts 12:5). He’s miraculously released by an angel and goes to Mary’s home “Where many were gathered together and were praying” (Acts 12:12). Upon seeing this, he knows they are the reason he has been set free from prison and delivered from certain death.

Make sure your pastor knows you’re praying for him/her. What a difference it will make in them. In the churches I’ve pastored, we usually have had a prayer meeting before each church service. I can tell you that when I have heard people audibly lifting their voices to God, praying fervently for the service, and for me, it literally supercharged me. It gave me boldness and courage to stand and minister with confidence. I could tell the difference in the entire service. Strengthen and encourage your pastor through prayer and the anointing of God will remove every burden and break every yoke of bondage (Isaiah 10:27).

Loyalty and Faithfulness

What a blessing faithful and loyal people are to a ministry. Nothing compares to it. The sad thing is that there are fewer faithful people in a body than those who are not. In fact, scripture gives every indication that it has been this way from the beginning. Paul in writing to the Ephesians addresses them as the “To the saints which are at Ephesus, and to the faithful in Christ Jesus” (Ephesians 1:1). It is estimated that 20% of all the people in a particular church carry all the load (financial, involvement, and attendance). It could even be less today. That’s a sad commentary on

our society. It should be the opposite and if it were the church would be doing phenomenal things for the glory of God. The problem is everyone is committed everywhere else but to their local church. If the pastor is to accomplish anything of what God has called him to do, he must have faithful and loyal people behind him. He can't do it himself. The Psalmist said, "Help, Lord, for the godly man ceases to be, for the faithful disappear from among the sons of men" (Psalm 12:1). That is an indictment against our day if there ever was one.

Many talk a good talk but aren't there when you really need them. There are few people you can really depend upon. The Word of God declares, "Many a man proclaims his own loyalty, but who can find a trustworthy (faithful) man" (Proverbs 20:6)? Down a little further the psalmist states that these false declarations end up being a snare to us both spiritually and in the natural realm as well. "It is a snare for a man to devote rashly something as holy, and afterward to reconsider his vow" (Proverbs 20:25).

How often have you vocalized a commitment to something and afterwards ran into some difficulties and failed to follow through on what you said. This becomes a snare to you. God takes it serious when we commit to something and your pastor does too. He's depending on you and when you don't follow through, he wonders what happened. This can produce a sense of hopelessness, thinking there's no one he can depend upon. Let's be men and women of our word. "Let your Yes be Yes, and your No, No" (James 5:12). If anything, a pastor needs to know that he can trust and depend upon his people. Let's be known as a people who can be depended upon in our attendance, involvement, finances, and fulfillment of all you say.

Loyalty also speaks of your consistent support (standing behind your pastor and the ministry) both during good and flourishing times as well as the hard and difficult times. Many are faithful, dedicated and loyal when every thing seems to be full of blessing, but when things get hard they're gone or at least no longer behind you in full support. There will be difficult times no matter how much God has ordained a man and his ministry. It's during these periods that he really needs you.

What about when accusations are being hurled at your pastor and his ministry? Do you stand firm in his defense? He needs you whether all that is being said is false, true or partially true. If you will be loyal and stand behind him, God will reward you whether he has fallen into error or not. God stands behind him. When you do so alongside of God, as co-laborers together with Him, you can't help but have His support. The Bible says, concerning His called men and women, "No weapon formed against you shall prosper; And every tongue that rises up against you in judgment you shall condemn. This is the heritage of the servants of the Lord, And their righteousness (vindication) is from Me, declares the Lord" (Isaiah 54:17).

God will deal with all who come against His servants. Let's always stand behind them in full support. God promises His blessing will be upon all those who are faithful. The wise man wrote, "A faithful man will abound with blessing" (Proverbs 28:20a). The blessing will be there, just continue to stand firm with your pastor through the rough times as well as the good. If there's anything that needs dealt with, let God take care of it.

Having a Teachable Spirit

“Reprove not a scorner, lest he hate you, rebuke a wise man and he will love you, give instruction to a wise man and he will be yet wiser, teach a just man and he will increase in knowledge” (Proverbs 9:8-9). Having a teachable spirit is imperative if you are to be a blessing to the ministry and pastor. It’s very difficult to pastor someone who isn’t willing to learn. One of the purposes of having a pastor is that of a spiritual leader and mentor – [Discipleship](#).

The church member or congregant who isn’t willing to learn will never grow wiser or increase in knowledge. They will be a continual thorn in the pastor and leadership’s side. He will fight everything they try to do. If he doesn’t do so outwardly, he will at least do so in spirit. A resistant spirit can be felt. I don’t know how often people have come to me and said they felt something was wrong but weren’t sure what it was. Usually when this has happened there was someone with a resistant spirit I was battling. They didn’t know what was going on but could feel something taking place in the spiritual realm.

The entire essence of discipleship is that of a learner and follower. Jesus is looking for disciples and not religious church members. Many of those that fought so much with Jesus were charter members of the local synagogue. Most of them just wanted to argue and prove their point. There were a few like Nicodemus who really wanted to learn but they were few and far between. The whole point of being a disciple is to learn from one and turn around and teach someone else the very thing you have learned. Paul taught Timothy this principle saying, “The things you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, these entrust to faithful men, who will be able

to teach others also” (2 Timothy 2:2). What any true pastor really wants are disciples who have a thirst for learning and in turn take what they have learned to minister to others. If you want to truly bless a pastor, become a disciple in the truest sense of the word.

This is one of the very reasons many won't lock into a local church and be faithful. They feel as if they have no need of being disciplined. There's simply not much that anyone can teach them. Pride is at the core of this type of spirit. Nothing good comes from it. On the other hand, it is the humble spirit that has a thirst for knowledge and feels he can always learn something from anyone. This is the heart of a true disciple. It's this kind of attitude that is usually a real blessing to its pastor, the church, and its ministries. These are the ones that are always there and can be depended on. These bring exceptional strength and support to the pastor and the church.

How to be a Blessing

The pastor gives of himself because he desires to be a blessing and usually isn't expecting anything in return. However, if something isn't given in return, somewhere down the line, he (or she) may become bitter and feel they are being taken advantage of. The Word is clear that we should bless those who have been a blessing to us. Paul admonishes, “Let him who is taught the word share all good things with him who teaches” (Galatians 6:6); and again, “It hath pleased them verily; and their debtors they are. For if the Gentiles have been made partakers of their spiritual things, their duty is also to minister unto them in carnal things” (Romans 15:27). It is a spiritual principle that we should bless those who have blessed us spiritually. We are in fact indebted to them to do so. This is not just financially but can be in a myriad of different ways.

Here are a few practical ways we can give back to those who have blessed us spiritually through their teaching and spiritual oversight.

1. **Cards or notes.** You'd be amazed what a card, note or email of encouragement will do. Paul said we should "Share all good things with him who teaches" (Galatians 6:6). When he has taught, said, or done something that has blessed you, let him know it through a card, note, email, or brief word. Often the pastor leaves the pulpit feeling like a failure. He walks away from the service and the devil frequently beats up on him for days telling him how bad of a job he did.

One word of encouragement, from someone he has unknowingly touched, will usually break that accusing spirit. Let him know regularly how much of a blessing he and his ministry is to you. When you feel led to forward something you have received via email, make sure you add a brief personal note with it. That will mean much more to him than something that has been sent out to multiple others.

2. **Meals and/or getaways.** Take your pastor and his family out for a good meal. This was how pastors used to receive much of their pay from the church. Make it a good meal and not fast food. Better yet, give him a gift certificate for him to take his family out alone. Either one will let him know you care and are committed to him and his ministry. This can and should be done by different

individuals in the church but can also be done by the church corporately from time to time. In fact, a good gesture might be for the church to pay for a couple days away for the pastor and his wife just to refresh themselves.

Along with covering their motel and a few meals, take up an offering to cover some spending money. You'd be amazed what it will do for him to get out of the spiritual battle for a couple of days. I personally believe every pastor needs a couple of days away at least every quarter, besides vacations, just to get out from under the spiritual pressures of ministry. Most have no idea what kind of battles the average pastor and his family face on a daily basis.

3. **Love gifts for special occasions.** The church should look for occasions where they can express their love with a special offering. There are many such times where the church can confirm it's commitment to their pastor. He and his wife's birthdays, Christmas, vacations, etc. This lets him know all he does for the church and its people hasn't gone unnoticed and that he's appreciated. Make sure when you take up these special offerings that it isn't an afterthought. It should be done enough in advance that people have time to plan ahead for what they are going to contribute.

There should be a couple in the church, preferably leaders, who take charge and make sure it is well thought out and planned and that everyone has an

opportunity to participate. It might even be a good idea to send a letter out with return envelopes so those who aren't always in attendance can participate. It's also a good idea for individuals to periodically just hand your pastor some cash or a check (off the books) to bless and plant a seed into his life for no apparent reason at all.

The Pastor and His Salary

“The worker is worthy of his hire - support” (Matthew 10:10). The word makes it clear that those who spend their time sowing into people's lives spiritual things should be able to do so in hope of reaping material rewards (1 Corinthians 9:6-14 and Romans 15:26-27). Those in the ministry face a lot of pressures in both the spiritual and natural realms most could never begin to comprehend. The last thing they need is the financial burden of trying to figure out how they're going to make ends meet. They also have expenses those out side the ministry don't necessarily have, such as, suits, meeting people out for meals, hospital visits, trips of all kinds where they must eat out, etc. They should be taken well care of.

The pastor should make at least as much as any business man in the church or community. In fact, Paul said, “Let the elders (pastoral elders) who rule well be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who work hard at preaching and teaching” (1 Timothy 5:17). It's clear from the context that the “double honor” he's speaking of is money or salary (1 Timothy 5:18). Double clearly means twice as much as others.

If you take the average salary of the congregation, the pastor, who works hard at preaching and

teaching, should make twice that. I know all churches aren't able to pay that well. It should pay him what is the average salary of the entire congregation at the bare minimum. If you would take each family's or person's annual income and average it out that is what the pastor should be paid, at the very least.

The church that takes good care of its pastor is most usually a blessed church. Every time the churches I've pastored have given me a raise the offerings have increased. This has happened even when the attendance has stayed the same or even decreased. God will always bless the church that takes care of His man/woman. Those who don't He can't bless. Let's properly care for those God has sent to watch over and feed us.

Ministry Expenses

Besides his salary the church should take care of the expenses of ministry. He should not have to take out of his personal finances what it takes to do his job properly. Any expenses it takes to minister or equip him to minister more effectively should be reimbursed to him over and above his salary.

1. **Auto expenses.** If the church isn't able to provide a car for the pastor, along with the expenses to operate the car, it should reimburse him mileage. The IRS has a set amount that's allotted per mile. It's only fare that he receive at least that amount.
2. **Conference expenses.** There are usually one or two conferences per year in

most denominations and fellowships. The pastor and his wife need to attend these for their own personal enrichment, to rekindle vision, for training, and accountability. These are put on to help the pastor in his ministry. This is an expense the church or ministry should take care of. It should cover registration, travel, lodging (not a cheap hotel), meals, and materials. If the church doesn't have a credit card, receipts should be kept and everything that isn't prepaid should be reimbursed.

3. **Housing.** The IRS allows for a housing allowance above pasotr's salary that is nontaxable. The only thing that must be paid on it is social security or self employment tax, unless they have been exempt from social security. Their house payment and many other related expenses can fall under this. The church/ministry should cover their pastor's housing expenses above their salary. An accountant should be consulted to fully utilize this benefit.

4. **Insurance.** The pastor should have insurance like any other professional. This should be provided for him and his family by the church he pastors.

1. **Health insurance.** Health insurance for the pastor and his family is a must. Many a pastor and their family have suffered immense hardship and financial strain because they didn't have good quality health care plan. The church should do its best to provide the best health care it possibly can. It

should be at least as good as what the average business person has. If at all possible his insurance should also take care of prescriptions and doctor visits.

2. **Dental insurance.** Dental insurance should also be provided for the entire family. He deserves no less than those that are a part of a large business or company.

3. **Life insurance.** Life insurance should also be taken out on him in case unexpected tragedy strikes. The pastor's family must be taken care of. God will bless the people who takes care of the person God has given them. There should be a policy on him and his wife both. It should be at least a substantial term policy. If at all possible get them a whole or universal life policy. This accumulates a cash value over time. Make sure the value is sufficient to take well care of the family in case of an untimely death.

5. **Retirement.** Some type of retirement plan should be arranged for the pastor. It can come in the form of a 401K or IRA, etc. It should be taken out in your pastor's name and not that of the church. There have been occasions where these type of retirement programs were taken out in the church's name and the pastor had to leave the church for some unknown reason and he was let go without getting any of it. This should never happen. If these are taken out in his

own name, by the church, this danger is removed.

Honor and Respect

The Bible says, “Render, therefore to all their due: tribute to whom tribute is due; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; and honor to whom honor” (Romans 13:7). Referring to those called of God into full time ministry, “No man takes this honor unto himself, but he that is called of God” (Hebrews 5:4). There is an honor in being called by God into the ministry and we are to give honor to whom honor is due. That isn’t to say that they are better than anyone else but respect is to be given for the office and calling they hold. They have been set apart by God for the work whereunto they have been called and that is deserving of our honor and respect. In showing respect for the minister (pastor), ministry, and the house of God we are showing respect for God also.

We live in a day where things are very casual, laid back and unfortunately where respect has been greatly diminished. Respect for those in authority, parents, the elderly, the ministry and the house of God has gone by the wayside. God says they should be honored not because they’re perfect, holy or better than others, but because of their calling and position. Ministers (high priests) are “Taken from among men” (Hebrews 5:1), which indicates they have all the weaknesses, shortcomings, and potential for failure that every other human has. The only difference is the call that has been placed on their life.

There are many areas in which disrespect is shown in the church and for the man/woman of God.

Much of it is done unknowingly. People simply don't realize they are being disrespectful. Some of the reason for this is that it hasn't been exemplified, taught or expected from this generation. We must begin to show respect again by our example, teach others to do so, and expect it once again. We live in a time where people don't carry themselves with respect or expect it. Part of the problem is we want to be on the same level as everyone else.

We are on equal standing as members of the human race and we are all sinners in need of salvation but our calling and standing isn't necessarily the same. We must, once again, begin teaching this fundamental principle to our people and children and expecting it. Still today when the judge enters a courtroom all rise to their feet and they are referred to as the honorable so and so. Why? Because it is expected and demanded. The scripture makes it clear that the church is a higher court. Let's restore the honor and respect the ministry is deserves.

Here are a few areas where improvement is needed:

1. **Being on a first name basis.** It seems nearly everyone is on a first name basis today. There was a time when children addressed adults as mister, miss, or misses. Now you hear children continually calling out to adults, hey, Bob, Jim, Susie, what's up? Children used to address their parents as sir or ma'am. You seldom hear this today. The same is true in the ministry. Everyone is on a first name basis with the pastor. Hey Joe, how's it going? This is a definite show of disrespect for the ministry if we realize it or not.

Part of the problem is with us pastors. We don't expect it. I used to feel the same. I wanted to be on everyone's level. I wanted to be their friend and bud. I found out the hard way this caused many difficulties. When people really need help they need their pastor and not their buddy. It also makes it difficult when you must assert your pastoral authority in a given situation.

People can usually deal with it from their pastor but it's much harder from someone who is just their friend. I don't have any problem with using pastor with the first name. That's at least a step in the right direction. It shows you're not just one of them. There's an element of distinction. On the other hand, I would have never thought of referring to my pastor as Pastor Paul nor would anyone else I know.

He was always Pastor or Dr. Paino. There's simply a different level of respect he has and expects. I recall him telling a story of a young boy approaching him and calling him Paul. He said he calmly picked the boy up, looked him in the eye and said, I'm not Paul, I'm Pastor Paino. He demanded and expected respect and therefore received it.

2. **Not respecting the sanctity of church services.** Reverence and respect for God, the pastor and the ministry should be upheld in all services. God and your

pastor deserve nothing less. I couldn't count the times I've seen and heard of people carrying on conversations during the worship service. They are sitting there gabbing and wonder why they don't understand the message or get much out of the service. This is very disrespectful and distracts from what the Holy Spirit wants to do in people's lives.

3. **Children being disruptive.** Allowing children to be disruptive is also very disrespectful, distracting, and takes away from all the Lord intends on doing in the service. It used to be that kids were made to sit still, but now they seem to be out of control and undisciplined. If kids are constantly getting up and down to go to the bath room and roaming around, the people will be distracted and the purpose of God thwarted.

Ideally there will be a service for children, nursery and up. In the case of smaller and beginning works this is not always possible. In these situations, it is necessary for the parents to control their children. All too often parents just think it's cute when their children are moving around, going up to people during the service and going up and down the aisle. Well, it isn't and the Lord is not pleased with it. They must be made and taught to respect the Lord, pastor, and church.

4. **Disrespecting the platform and alter area.** The platform and alter is an area

where sanctity must be preserved. It is a place where worship is led and the Word of God expounded. This area should be off limits to everyone who is not there to minister. Children should never be allowed to get on the platform. It is not only disrespectful, but there is usually expensive equipment that could potentially be damaged. Besides, they could easily fall off or trip and get hurt. Let's teach all to have a respect for everything that pertains to God.

God always blesses churches that take care of their pastor. He can't bless those that don't.

Let's properly care for the men and women God has sent to watch over us.

Itinerant Ministry Guide

The itinerant or guest ministry has a grave responsibility to the pastor and the local church before God. Much of what is said here can also be applied to associate/assistant pastors and other church staff positions. There are definite things that should and should not be done when ministering in someone in another person's's church. Whether you are a musical, teaching or preaching ministry, etc. there are things that must be observed.

You are in the church to bring blessing to that body of believers and its pastor. A minister is sent to a local body to build it up, unify it, and equip it under the leadership of the local pastor (Ephesians 4:11-13). If that is not taking place then their purpose for being there is null and void. Many have ruined their reputation and shut doors of vital ministry by violating certain principles. Remember, it is the pastor who will most likely bring you back in to minister if you are to be invited back again. To face one's responsibility to the pastor and the church is to build a good reputation, keep open the door to ministry in that local assembly, open up new doors in other churches, strengthen the local church, and build up the kingdom of God. Make no mistake, word will get around about your ministry positively or negatively.

Be Respectful

The pastor is the one who invited you in to minister and should be shown the utmost respect. Part of your job there is to encourage and support the pastor. You should never do anything that might possibly show disrespect toward him, his wife or family. The Bible says, "Render therefore to all

their due: ...honor to whom honor” (Romans 13:7).

Always refer to him as pastor so and so. He is never to be mentioned on a first name basis, especially in front of his people and while on the platform ministering. Many might think, we are peers and should be able to be on a first name basis. This is probably true in your personal dealings with one another, between the two of you. However, when in front of his flock, you must lift him up in the their eyes.

When the pastor walks to the platform the guest minister should also. Stay there throughout the entire service. It is very disrespectful not to support the entire service. Often the guest wants to arrive when it’s their time to minister and leave when their time is over. This should never take place. You should never leave until the service has been dismissed. The guest should be supportive of all that is taking place. If he/she expects to be listened to, he must also listen to what others have to say, in full support. We still reap what we sow (Galatians 6:7).

Not only should you remain in the service but you should also participate, in full support of all that is being done. Your body language and actions tell everyone whether you are behind the ministry or not. If they are worshiping or praying, then you should be in full participation. When an offering is being taken you should always be prepared to give in that offering. When the pastor is encouraging the people in a certain direction, you must lend him your complete support. In short, you should be his biggest Amen Corner.

Never make the pastor or church the bunt of a joke. Often the pastor has been used in a the context of a joke to enhance the message to his personal embarrassment. This should never be done. This does not elevate the pastor and his ministry, but is a show of blatant disrespect. Nothing ever should be said negatively about the pastor, his family, his appearance, or ministry, even in jest. Nothing should be done but that which shows the utmost respect and honor for him and his ministry.

Maintain Doctrinal Unity

You must present a unified front doctrinally. The guest ministry should never address areas of doctrine that he is in disagreement with the pastor on. The Bible says, “Mark them which cause divisions and offenses contrary to the doctrine which you have learned”(Romans 16:17). You are there to support him. Stick with the areas you agree on and not areas of disagreement. The last part of that verse says, “And avoid them.” You can be sure that if you tread on areas that do anything but build and strengthen that body, the pastor, and his position doctrinally, you will be avoided the next time they are considering having a guest in to minister.

Punctuality

Find out what time the pastor needs you to arrive and be there on time or earlier. It is never okay to be fashionably late. There must be time for you to set up any personal equipment or displays. Let the pastor know how much time you need and be there on time. If there is a prayer meeting before the service, make sure you are there in plenty of time for it.

I once had a well known musician in our church and sent someone to the motel to get him. He had ordered food, knowing what time I had said he needed to arrive, and the person had to wait and wait on him. He finally showed up a great deal past the time to pray and still needed time for a sound check and to go over the service with me. He acted as if everything revolved around him, the star. I can't tell you how much stress and strain this put me under. This should never be done. If you need to arrive or someone is to be there to pick you up at a certain time, be there on time. I know that no matter how good he was and how well he was liked I would never have him back after that.

Time Restraints

Always ask how much time has been allotted you and stay within that time structure. Whether it's twenty minutes or an hour. Stop when your time is up. Our church once shared a service with another church. They were to take care of the worship, communion and offering and I was to bring the message. We were at their church and he suggested I should probably keep it within about thirty minutes because of some of the other things that were taking place. I preached and condensed much of what I had to remain within his time restraints. The Lord really moved and we had a great altar time. After the service the pastor said to me, "You didn't take much time." I told him he had asked me to stay within that time period and so I did. His reply to me was, "Yes, but nobody ever does." That should never take place. You must always stay within the time frame allotted you.

It is never proper to ask for more time in front of the people while you are ministering. To do so

is to upstage the pastor and usurp his authority. This is up to the pastor and he should be the one to take the initiative to let you go longer. Often the pastor is put on the spot by the guest asking him, in front of the entire body, if he could have just a little more time. It is often blamed on the Holy Spirit, declaring, He is moving and not to continue would be to quench what He (the Holy Spirit) wants to accomplish. The pastor is the one who is in charge of that body and the service so it is up to him if he feels the Lord would have the time extended or not. He must never be put in that position. Always be considerate of him and the time structure the church has established.

Be Supportive

I believe, when I am taking part in another person's ministry, it is my job, above all else, to support them. Jesus said, "If you have not been faithful in that which is another man's who shall give you that which is your own" (Luke 16:12). The job of the guest ministry is not only to bring blessing to the body but to back the pastor and support him in every way. This is their responsibility first and foremost.

When I am in someone's church, I make it my passion to uplift and support that local church's pastor with all that I have. I do so because I believe it to be the right thing to do and that it pleases the Lord. You don't know what the pastor may be going through and the pressures he is under. He typically has no one to support him and under gird his ministry. God has most probably sent you, the guest minister, to be that person.

You can support him personally by encouraging the people to be faithful to him, the services,

giving (both in personal gifts to him and to his ministry), their involvement and so on. Be observant. Anything you see or hear that the church is doing or the pastor is challenging them to do or promoting get on the band wagon. Make a note of it and incorporate it into your ministry. I guarantee you will notice the difference in God's blessing and anointing on all you do. Push their vision and challenge the people to get behind them in full support, with all their efforts and energies. Your ministry will be blessed and increased as a result of your efforts.

Mailing Lists and Contacts

A guest ministry should never try and build his ministry and its mailing list off another man's work. This is just not ethical or proper. Remember, WWJD. Well, Jesus Himself wouldn't even do this. He sent a very important message through an angel to his servant John (Revelation 1:1) and had John, the Apostle, convey it to the church through the local pastor. In Revelation 1:16 John describes his vision of Jesus saying, "And He had in His right hand seven stars," and in verse twenty declares the stars were the angels or messengers (pastors) of the seven churches.

Jesus didn't even go directly to the people of the churches in this case but sent His Word to them through the pastor or messenger of that church. In each letter that follows He says, "unto the angel (messenger or pastor) of the church in write." I believe this makes a strong case for itinerant and evangelistic ministries not to build their mailing list off of fellow minister's churches and their congregations.

Let's face it, most mailing lists are put together primarily for the purpose of raising money. When

a ministry is invited into a local church by the pastor to bless that body and its ministry and then the guest draws monies from the people that should be going to support the local church something is wrong. I believe this to be a very unethical practice. One of Jesus' main purposes in coming was to build the church and this does just the contrary. It takes away from the church and drains it of much needed support. Money that should be there to keep local ministries going is suddenly not there. You'd be surprised how many cut back on their tithe and offerings to fund these ministries.

Any mailings done by guest ministries to the churches they've ministered in should be done through the pastor and church. They could either send a copy of the newsletter to the church for the pastor to let them read or send a bundle for the pastor to give out to his people at his discretion. At the very most, if anything is sent to an individual, it should never be done without the express permission of the pastor and they should never be asked in front of the person but in private.

Receiving Offerings on the Side

The church has usually arranged with the guest for an honorarium or love offering that has been agreed upon prior to their arrival. When people have been blessed by an incoming ministry, they will often get them off to the side and give them some extra cash or a check. Often this is done for the attention that is given them. There has usually been an offering taken for him already. They should have given it then, which makes you wonder why they are doing so later. It could be they were struggling with what they should give during the offering and afterwards surrendered

to the Spirit's prompting. In any case, to receive such a gift without the pastor's knowledge would be unethical and improper.

There are many problems that could arise. It can bring the credibility of the guest's ministry into question for one. Also, many times after giving such a gift, the giver will expect a tax receipt at the end of the year. They will often come to the church and request it be added to their end of the year giving record/receipt. This puts the church in a very awkward situation. If they add it to your end of the year contributions receipt, with it not having gone through their books, they are being unethical. If they refuse, tension may arise between the giver and the church and an offense taken.

If you are the giver, the ethical thing to do would be to go to the pastor, usher, or bookkeeper and ask if they could add it to the ministry's check. If you're the guest ministry, you should take the gift to the pastor and give it to him. This clears up any potential misunderstandings that could arise and gives the pastor added respect for you. Most generally, he will either tell you to keep it or will add it to your check. Either way you have done the ethical and right thing.

Counseling Church Members

A guest ministry should never counsel those in another man's congregation without the express permission or request of the pastor. At best, you have a very limited knowledge of that person, their situation, and what they may be going through. Often people come for counsel to get them to put their okay on something they want to do. Without you knowing their background or what

is really going on you may place your okay and blessing on something you shouldn't. If you had full knowledge of their situation, you might counsel them totally different.

Also, with you being in another man's church, ministering for him, you must present a unified front. People can often be divisive without even knowing it. If the pastor has counseled them one way and you come along and give them totally different advice you have been divided and confusion has crept in. They may later tell the pastor, well, they told me this. It has the potential of bringing difficulty to the pastor, ministry, and the local body. It also can bring much confusion into the life of the person you were attempting to help.

It is always best to refer them to the pastor and whether he would like for you to talk with them. If so he can request it. This keeps lines of communication open, presents a unified front and prevents the devil from getting a foothold in the church or causing a schism between you and the pastor. If he decides you should counsel them, he can at least let you know where he stands and some generalities of their situation so you can minister effectively while maintaining unity in the body and with the pastor.

Personal Visits

It is never a good idea to spend personal time with the people in another man's congregation. Everything should be kept on a professional level. People will frequently want to go out to eat with you or invite you to their home. This is usually not a good idea unless the pastor is going with you. Often they want to get to know you on a personal level, but there are times when they

want to get you off alone to voice their opinions on some issue in the church or get you in the middle of something. They might ask you something hypothetical. What do you think about a situation like this, or what would you do if you were in this position? It can often be a trap and will come back to haunt you.

A good thing to do when given an invitation is to say, I'll ask the pastor to come along with us.

Another thing you can say is, Let me check with your pastor. He may have already made plans.

At the bare minimum, never go out with someone or to their home unless the pastor is either with you, has suggested it, or you have his permission and blessing.

I'm not referring to when you're filling in for a pastor, in his absence, and he designates a couple to take you out for a meal, or if he happens to set you up to stay in someone's home. He knows those he can trust and you are doing so at his suggestion.

Always go through the pastor in all you do. This shows him proper respect, consideration and prevents the devil from getting an occasion against you. As we saw in Revelation 1, it is always right to go through the messenger. This is what Jesus did.

Responsibility to Visiting Ministries

This is directed toward the church's responsibility to those ministries that come into its midst to minister, such as, teachers, evangelists, musicians, and the like. These hopefully are not coming in just to earn a living but to bless the church, kingdom of God, and minister into people's lives. Motive is always of the utmost importance. Just as was shared at the beginning, they must first and foremost be sure that they are called to their ministry by God and not merely following a vocation. This will make all the difference in the world in their endurance, steadfastness, and attitude.

Much of this section will also apply to missionaries and other such organizations which come into the local church to raise support. Though most of what's said here will apply to them, there may be some differences since a missionary's main thrust is looking for an open door to share their ministry and hoping to raise ongoing (monthly) support. Their purpose is awareness as to what they are about and involved in, along with developing a financial base in order that they may continue to do what God has called them to.

In these days, many ministries coming into the church have contracts that must be signed and agreed upon before they will come to minister. If this is for clarification, so there are no misunderstandings, it's great. However, if it is set forth concerning those things they insist upon before they will come and minister, I have a problem with that. Where's the faith and trust in God? We need to get back to those basics of trusting God and going wherever He tells us, even if

they aren't able to meet our demands. The problem is we've become too commercialized, especially in America. We see this proliferated especially in the Christian music industry. It has also drifted over into every other aspect of ministry. An acceptable approach would be for them to say, "This is what we really need, if you are unable to meet our need, we will come and trust God to make up what is lacked." In this way, faith is being expressed while the need is being made known. This, I believe, is a good balanced approach.

I do believe there is good reason why many have gone to such extremes. Far too often churches have been negligent in their responsibilities to those willing to come in and minister. When they have been willing to trust God and come for whatever the church was able to do, the church has failed to treat them as they should. After frequently being taken advantage of they've had to do something to protect themselves; thus, the contracts, requirements, and demands. If both sides would trust God and be faithful to their responsibilities before God much of this could be avoided. There probably should be something in writing to assure there are no misunderstandings.

The following are some suggestions or guidelines I believe will help us in properly taking care of those God sends our way to bless, strengthen, and encourage us.

Lodging, Meals and Transportation

Years ago it was expected guest ministries would be staying in someone's home in the church. This should be a rarity in our day. Times are different. Those on the road are typically much

busier and on the road for longer periods of time. They need time alone where they can be refreshed in order to be adequately ready to minister. Pastors and their congregations are also much busier today. With their hectic lifestyles, it's asking a lot to have people staying in their home.

It should be expected that the host church provide a nice hotel room for their guest. You don't have to be elaborate, but it should be nice enough where they can be comfortable. If it could be one that has a restaurant where they can eat without going out, this would be great. If their family and children have come with them, it would be a good gesture to get a motel with a pool to allow for a little family time.

If possible, the church should provide some meals during their stay. The church should at least take the guest out after every service for a time of fellowship and a good meal. If they can provide breakfast and/or lunch also it would greatly help. Remember, they are coming for you and will have to eat one way or another.

At times a guest may fly in and have meetings for multiple nights. Often it is arranged for a number of churches to have a ministry in combined services or a number of services in each church. In such cases, it is good, if possible, to provide transportation for them during their stay. Often there may be a car dealer in the church who can lend the church a car for the guest. Make sure it is a decent and dependable automobile. If this isn't possible, renting a car is always an option. This gives them some flexibility as opposed to being stuck at the motel and dependent on

the pastor and church to take them places.

Ministry Time Frame

Always make it extremely clear of any time restraints that may exist. If you don't want it going past a certain time; let them know it. We can't complain about someone going too long if we don't let them know what restrictions are there. Do make sure you give them ample time to develop their ministry. You invited them in to minister and you need to give them enough time to do a quality job. Be very careful not to fill the service up with non-essentials.

I was at a church to minister once when the pastor was gone and his mother was in charge. They had worship and she had people come up for a time of prayer. This went on and on for an extended period. By the time they gave the service over to me, there was absolutely no time for me to develop my message, nor have any ministry time afterward. I had to give a very brief and condensed presentation and give the service quickly back over to them. I had something, I believe, that could have really blessed the people and brought great support to the pastor and his ministry. As it was, I didn't have time to adequately develop and do what God had called me to do. I truly believe they missed out on something that could have brought great blessing to the body. We will never know for sure.

Honorariums and Love Offerings

If you have agreed with them on a certain amount then you should honor and fulfill your commitment to them. As men and women of God, we must be men and women of our word (James 5:12). In fact, if the Lord has blessed the meetings and you are able to do more than agreed upon, as the Lord may lead, you should do so. If they have agreed to come on a love offering basis, you should make sure the offering is enough to meet their needs. Many think they have agreed to an offering and so that is all they are responsible for. This is true in a legalistic sense but hopefully we are not legalistic but men and women of grace.

I believe that unless the offering is extremely good we should always plan on adding to it. We may not be obligated to do so but in doing so we will be demonstrating love and grace. The worker on the road is still worthy of his hire and support (Matthew 10:10). In fact, just like the pastor, he too is worthy of double honor if he has worked hard at being a blessing and ministering to your people (1 Timothy 5:17-18). As in the case of the pastor, this means twice as much. To be practical, you should never give your guest ministry any less than what you make as your weekly salary. In fact, if at all possible, it should be more. Remember, as a traveling ministry, there are weeks when they have no engagements and therefore there is no pay check.

It is unlikely for churches to have any guest in to minister for weeks surrounding major holidays. As a result, guest ministries won't have any income during those seasons. Most churches have certain ministries in regularly. It's proper to send them an offering for such holidays. It would also be nice to find out their birth date and send them a gift then as well.

When we give sacrificially to a man or women of God, we have the promise of God going out of His way to meet our needs. The Philippians gave a love offering to Paul while he was in prison. His response was as follows: “I have received everything in full, and have an abundance, having received from Epaphroditus what you have sent, a fragrant aroma, an acceptable sacrifice, well pleasing to God. And my God shall supply all your needs according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus” (Philippians 4:18-19). As we look at the context, we see this promise follows their sacrificial love gift. When we do so, we are able to claim the same promise and only then.

When the church is young and/or small and unable to pad the offering special measures should be taken to allow for this. My pastor always encouraged us to put back our personal tithe in order to supplement the offering. I have always tried to do this to the best of my ability. I would usually have my check recorded and then place it in an envelope until the next guest ministry came in. After receiving the offering, I would add what I had accumulated to the offering before writing the check them. This usually made for a fair and substantial honorarium. When we take good care of our guest like this word will spread. Soon more and more ministries will want to come minister for us.

Let me also add that effort must be put forth to challenge our people to give generously. Our people listen to us. If we will challenge them they will respond. This should not only be done at the time of the offering, but also on an ongoing basis. We must teach our people these principles over and over. The Bible makes it abundantly clear, “Let the one who is taught the word share all good things with him who teaches.” (Galatians 6:6) When we do so, we can be assured that “God

is not mocked, for whatever a man sows that he will also reap” (Galatians 6:7).

Also, make sure the guest ministry is given a check before they leave. It is never right to say you will mail their check to them. Often when this has happened, it is weeks before they get the check, if they get it at all. It may be because you thought someone else sent it when they did not or everyone got busy and forgot. Even if it is sent out the very next day, they should never be treated this way. It’s just not that difficult to get it to them before they leave.

Let’s treat our guests right and they will continue to come back. Along with them others will follow. God will make sure of it. As you are faithful, God will bring your way more and more anointed and talented ministries. After a while, you will begin to get a reputation for having in quality ministries, which in turn will help your church to grow.

Promotion and Advertising

It is the responsibility of the church and the pastor to do the best possible job they can in promoting the ministries they invite in. When we do this, it will expand our ministry, encourage the guest, and bless the church. The more often people in your community (city) are made aware of special events going on at your church or ministry, the more attention it will draw to you. In two different churches I began we had those to visit who said they had noticed, over a period of time, things going on and figured something must be happening there so they thought they should visit and check us out. Often their visit was over a year after seeing the advertisements.

You should use all that you are capable of to get the word out concerning your event. Most all newspapers, Christian radio and TV stations will give free news releases or community service announcements. Paid advertisements are great if you can afford it. We are not being faithful stewards if we don't take advantage of the opportunities allotted us.

You should also use fliers and any other means possible. Assign those in your church/ministry to commit to different areas that they will assure fliers will be placed. Each person will be in charge of making sure that fliers are placed in all of the establishments in their region. Be sure you or those you send out ask the owners or managers of the place if they will please keep the fliers up at least until the date of the event. Express your sincere gratitude to them for their help.

A mailing and phone campaign is also good. I always kept the addresses, phone numbers and email addresses of everyone that I've come in contact with or who has visited the church.

Approaching a special event I do a mailing to all on our mailing list approximately two weeks prior to our meeting. Days just prior to our meeting, I make sure everyone on our list is called, reminded, invited, and encouraged to be in attendance and bring someone with them. In the beginning days you often have to do this yourself but hopefully as you grow you can appoint others to do this for you.

Protecting Guest Ministers

There will always be those who will seek to get the guest ministry off into a private conversation. After all, if you have done a proper job of promoting and pushing them, they will likely be

viewed as somewhat of a star in the eyes of the people. There will inevitably be some instant groupies. They will attempt to corner them, just to talk, get some counsel, prayer, or ask them what they think about certain things. This is usually pretty innocent and is okay to a point.

The problem comes when there are those who dominate their time. It is even worse when multiple people do the same. Suddenly they are swamped. No matter how willing the guest is, this can be very draining. Remember, they have just spent considerable time ministering and have already given out most of what they have emotionally, mentally, and spiritually. If you are not able to take them off right after the service, at least look out for them and be ready to rescue them if need be. It is also good to train and teach your people accordingly.

Privacy and Rest

Don't keep them on the run all the time. Often we feel as if we need to entertain our guest. When in actuality they would be glad to just rest and be alone. Ask them what they would prefer and encourage them to be honest. This will make it much easier on both of you. Especially if they are on the road going to place after place, they need time alone with God and to just be alone and rest. Allow them this simple luxury. Be sure others aren't allowed to interrupt them either. To be safe, it shouldn't even be made public knowledge where they are staying. Give them a place of sanctuary. As a minister yourself, you know how important this is. Their ministry to you and your people will be all the better for it. They will also be grateful.

Conclusion

Let's learn "How one ought to conduct themselves in the household of God" (1 Timothy 3:15).

If we will be faithful to all those in the household of faith, we will be sure to have the blessing and favor of God. The Bible says, "A faithful man will abound with blessings"

(Proverbs 28:20a). Sadly, this is hard to find this our day, both in the pew and the ministry. The Psalmist said, "Help, Lord, for the godly man ceases to be, for the faithful disappear from among the sons of men" (Psalms 12:1). What an indictment against our day. Let's not let this be said of us or our ministry. What's right is right. Let's strive to do the right thing. Hebrews 3:5 says, "And Moses verily was faithful in all his house, as a servant, for a testimony of those things which were to be spoken after." Let's make way for a testimony of faithfulness to follow us and our ministry. When we do, we have the promise of His favor and blessing.

May The Lord richly bless you as you faithfully serve Him and His house!