

Marks of a Good Pastor – Part 2

Sunday Morning – 02/18/2018
Sleater Kinney Road Baptist Church, Olympia, WA

INTRODUCTION:

- It might seem like a Pastor is “supposed” to have so many qualifications, that only a Superman is capable of fitting the bill!
 - o Should a congregation expect to hire Superman as its next Pastor?
 - o In reality, when we consider “lists of pastoral qualifications” (including mine), remember this – **we’re looking for competence, not brilliance**
- Consider a sports analogy; in baseball, the “ideal” athlete is known as a “five-tool player.”
 - o This means a guy who can
 - (1) hit for power,
 - (2) hit for a good average,
 - (3) has good base-running skills and speed,
 - (4) can throw, and
 - (5) can field.
 - o Most guys aren’t “five-tool players.”
 - (1) Most baseball players can do one or more of these things very well, and are competent at the rest.
 - (2) A superstar is generally someone who can do all five (e.g. Ken Griffey, Jr.).
- Some Pastors are “five-tool” guys; they can do everything very, very well.
 - o Most guys can’t do that
 - o And, I don’t think God asks for brilliance
 - o But, I think He does expect competence, and we should, too
- So, let’s continue with our list:

TEXT:

4. He Trains New Leaders:

You then, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus, and what you have heard from me before many witnesses entrust to faithful men who will be able to teach others also (2 Tim 2:1-2).

- Paul was a guy who understood the importance of training new leaders

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- He re-produced himself many times over – Timothy is a prime example, and Titus is another
- In this, his last letter, he commanded Timothy to follow his example, and train new leaders to take over for him, so they could eventually train leaders one day ... and so the cycle continues
- **Who should a Pastor be looking to train?**
 - Well, everybody, in a sense!
 - But, the idea seems to be that Timothy should look for folks with leadership abilities, and help those people along, train them appropriately, and put them into positions of leadership in local churches
 - This can be men and women, because every Christian has a different role he or she can fill in a local church
- **What does this “training” look like?**
 - It could look like a lot of things!
 - But, the crux of leadership when it comes to training is this:
 - **(1)** Look at your candidate pool, and identify eager, enthusiastic, motivated and capable people
 - **(2)** Identify a leadership position that needs a leader – whatever that position might be!
 - **(3)** Match the position to a candidate
 - **(4)** Provide training, guidance, mentorship and support as you encourage the person to exercise his or her gifts in that setting
 - Formal training in teaching principles
 - Conferences
 - Seminary training (e.g. audits, certificates, MA’s, etc.)
 - Book giveaways and personal, follow-up discussions
 - Online resources and personal, follow-up discussion
- Let me be blunt about this:
 - **(1)** In order to train and re-produce leaders, you must be a leader yourself!
 - **(2)** Many people in leadership positions are technicians, not leaders, so this process doesn’t happen
 - **(3)** You won’t feel comfortable training people if you’re insecure about yourself or your abilities,
 - **(4)** Which means if ...

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- (a) you're young,
- (b) naïve,
- (c) spiritually immature, or
- (d) you're a fearful person (or all four),
 - *then you'll fail here – and fail badly!*

5. He is Totally Committed to the Gospel Ministry:

Share in suffering as a good soldier of Christ Jesus. No soldier on service gets entangled in civilian pursuits, since his aim is to satisfy the one who enlisted him. An athlete is not crowned unless he competes according to the rules. It is the hard-working farmer who ought to have the first share of the crops. Think over what I say, for the Lord will grant you understanding in everything.

Remember Jesus Christ, risen from the dead, descended from David, as preached in my gospel, the gospel for which I am suffering and wearing fetters like a criminal. But the word of God is not fettered. Therefore I endure everything for the sake of the elect, that they also may obtain salvation in Christ Jesus with its eternal glory (2 Tim 2:3-10).

- Paul gives Timothy three examples to make a simple point – he must keep a laser-like focus on the Gospel ministry:
 - (1) A soldier on active-duty focuses on the mission, not on extracurricular activities – or else he'll disappoint the one who recruited and enlisted him (i.e. Father, Son and Spirit)
 - (2) An athlete only wins if he obeys the rules
 - (3) A hard-working farmer deserves the first of his own crops
- **What's the point?** A Pastor must be really committed to the ministry, like:
 - (1) a committed soldier under orders,
 - (2) an athlete who obeys the rules while straining and gasping his way to the finish line,
 - (3) and a farmer who breaks his back working his fields

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- In short, Timothy must “**share in suffering as a good soldier of Christ Jesus,**” (2 Tim 2:3):
 - He has to be **completely, absolutely** and **totally committed** to what he’s doing, and why he’s doing it – deliberately assuming the role of leading a Christian congregation day by day, week by week, month by month, year after year
 - Not a supporting role, but the starring role as a Pastor
 - The Pastorate **can be** hard, often thankless, very bitter, very depressing, very demoralizing – and it’s often the exact opposite of all those things, too
 - But, make no mistake, **a guy should do anything else if he can**
 - **(a)** This one reason why I’m not a Pastor anymore
 - **(b)** This is the reason why some Pastors resign and never go back
 - **(c)** It’s also the reason why some Pastors are brunt to a crisp, and seem to have lost their “effectiveness” or “zest”
 - **(d)** It’s also one reason why so many Pastor’s wives are miserable, and one reason why their children might run away from the Lord when they get older – because they’ve seen the toll the ministry takes, they’ve seen the reality behind the pious façade, and they’re running for the hills, away from the hypocrisy and fakery
 - **(e)** I have a friend who’s a pastor who once told me, “If I knew how to do anything else, I’d have left the ministry a long time ago”
 - **(f)** If all you’ve seen or imagined is the romanticized version of the Pastorate, then let me assure you – **it’s not like that at all!**
 - **(g)** I think Bible Colleges, universities, and seminaries would do well to have some experienced men do guest lectures where they try to scare the living daylights out of every young man who wants to be a Pastor
- There are other reasons why Pastors resign, and there are plenty of things churches and Pastors can do to make this burden lighter – but the point is that **a Pastor must be totally committed to the ministry**

6. Always Urges Self-Examination:

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The saying is sure:

***If we have died with him, we shall also live with him;
if we endure, we shall also reign with him;
if we deny him, he also will deny us;
if we are faithless, he remains faithful—***

for he cannot deny himself. Remind them of this ... (2 Tim 2:11-14a)

- These are very simple points (two positive, two negative - both in parallel, meaning the second line always complements the first), but they're things nobody likes to hear:
 - o (1) You'll only live with Christ forever if you're willing to die **for him**, die **with him**, and have **died to yourself and follow Him**
 - o (2) You'll only reign with Christ in the age to come if you endure now, as a faithful Christian who obeys Yahweh (Father, Son and Spirit) because you love Him with everything you have (cf. Deut 6:5)
 - o (3) If you deny Christ, He'll also deny you on the Day of Judgment (Mt 7:21-23)
 - o (4) If you're faithless to believe in Jesus and His Gospel (i.e. [in this immediate context] the call to die with Him, and to endure for His sake), then He'll be faithful to deny you when the time comes
- These are the things Paul wants Timothy to remind his congregation about:¹
 - o He **wants this to be a habit** (the verb is likely iterative); **"keep reminding them about all this!"**
- The Gospel is offensive, and there have always been Christian leaders throughout the centuries who have been afraid to press their congregations towards introspection; towards examining whether they're really Christians:
 - o (1) Maybe they're afraid it will make people doubt their salvation; **Paul disagreed (and so did Peter; 2 Pet 1:1-11)**
 - o (2) Maybe they think it's just not nice to do this; **Paul disagreed**

¹ Some commentators believe Paul is directing this towards Timothy. This makes no sense, because Paul would have no need to frighten Timothy or warn him that Christ may deny him on the Day of Judgment. It makes much better sense to see this as an excerpt from a contemporary Christian hymn or creedal statement; one Paul wants Timothy to remind Christians about.

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- (3) Maybe it's because the Pastors are fearful and timid people; see **Mark #1**
- (4) Maybe they're worried about driving people away; **Paul disagreed**
- The fact is this:
 - (1) God's word commands introspection and continual self-examination
 - (2) Paul commanded Timothy to always remind the congregation about these very things:
 - (a) You'll only live with Christ forever if you've died to yourself, identified with Him and follow Him
 - (b) You'll only reign with Christ in the age to come if you endure now, because you love Him
 - (c) If you deny Christ, He'll also deny you
 - (d) If you're faithless to believe in Jesus and His Gospel, then He'll be faithful to deny you when the time comes
 - (3) If a Pastor won't do this (for whatever reason), if he preaches a cheap, Dollar Tree-like, commitment-less, fruit-less kind of Gospel,
 - (4) then he isn't a Pastor; he's an inspirational speaker – **and these are not the same things**

7. Balanced and Theologically Mature:

... and charge them before the Lord to avoid disputing about words, which does no good, but only ruins the hearers. Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who has no need to be ashamed, rightly handling the word of truth.

Avoid such godless chatter, for it will lead people into more and more ungodliness, and their talk will eat its way like gangrene. Among them are Hymenaeus and Philetus, who have swerved from the truth by holding that the resurrection is past already. They are upsetting the faith of some (2 Tim 2:14b – 18).

- Paul wants Timothy to lead the people in the congregation to not split hairs about stupid things (“disputing about words”); **what does this mean?**

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- In his context, he's referring to controversies about Jewish genealogies and arcane, minute interpretations of the Mosaic Law
- In general, though, he wants Timothy to urge Christians to not **think about, care about, worry about, or waste energy pondering** stupid things that don't matter at all:
 - **(a)** John "Blood Moon" Hagee
 - **(b)** Date-setting for Biblical prophecies
 - Hal Lindsey's *The 1980s - Countdown to Armageddon*
 - Hal Lindsey's *Planet Earth 2000 A.D. Will Mankind Survive* (published 1994; tagline reads "twenty-five years after 'The Late, Great Planet Earth,' and the startling realization that it is all coming true ...")
 - **(c)** The identity of the antichrist
 - **(d)** Donald Trump = Savior of America (e.g. [Robert Jeffress of First Baptist Dallas](#))
- An obsession with stupid and pointless controversies will only ruin the hearers, make them unbalanced, and lose sight of the Gospel and Jesus Christ – **which is supposed to be the focus of your ministry!**
- A Christian is supposed to avoid these pointless and senseless arguments, and a Pastor has even more responsibility
 - But, if you're a Christian, you've known people and/or Pastors who:
 - **(a)** go to sleep at night with visions of prophecy charts dancing in their heads
 - **(b)** spend every waking hour fighting on FaceBook about whether the KJV is the best Bible translation
 - **(c)** are obsessed with hating Calvinism, even though they probably don't understand it
 - **(d)** hate Muslims (e.g. I once saw a missionary's wife call Muslims "bastards of Abraham" on FaceBook)
 - **(e)** only want to talk about music in church
 - **(f)** or who can tell you every minute detail about the pre-tribulation rapture theory, but don't know any doctrine about Christ
 - There's a pop-culture fad called "[Six Degrees of Kevin Bacon](#)," where people will name any movie and try to connect the actors back to Kevin Bacon (through co-workers, etc.) in as few steps as possible

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- In a similar fashion, you can spot an unbalanced Pastor by paying close attention to how many minutes it takes him to bring any Biblical discussion (no matter what it is!) back to his “pet issue” (e.g. “Six Degrees of the Rapture,” etc.)
- Here’s a tip – *if you’re more known for your theological or cultural hobby-horse than for your glorifying your Savior, then you’re unbalanced and theologically immature!*
 - If a Pastor isn’t theologically balanced and mature, he’ll lead his congregation right off a cliff, because “the issue” (whatever it is), may eventually become more important than the Gospel
 - As Paul said, it “**does no good, but only ruins the hearers,**” (2 Tim 2:14)
- **How do you know what’s important to worry about? How does a Pastor know what’s worth fighting about?**
 - That’s the whole point, isn’t it!?
 - A Pastor has to be an educated guy, who’s theologically mature enough to:
 - (a) understand what the real issues are,
 - (b) and to steer people away from stupid, senseless controversies,
 - (c) and from heresy that will only ruin your faith and ruin you
- Remember what Paul wrote:
 - **“Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who has no need to be ashamed, rightly handling the word of truth. Avoid such godless chatter, for it will lead people into more and more ungodliness, and their talk will eat its way like gangrene,”** (2 Tim 2:15-17a)
 - (a) This doesn’t mean a Pastor can’t have opinions on issues;
 - (b) it just means he’s mature and balanced enough to keep things in proper perspective
 - e.g. preaching about Christ from the Gospel of Mark is *more important* than planning a 38-part series on why the mid-tribulational rapture is wrong

8. Spiritually Mature:

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So shun youthful passions and aim at righteousness, faith, love, and peace, along with those who call upon the Lord from a pure heart. Have nothing to do with stupid, senseless controversies; you know that they breed quarrels (2 Tim 2:22-23).

- Timothy was a younger guy; we don't know for sure how old – perhaps late 30s
- Paul reminded him to:
 - o (1) Run far away from youthful passions – **what does this mean?**
 - This isn't very hard to figure out – what do you younger men struggle with?
 - (a) Anger
 - (b) Impatience
 - (c) Arrogance
 - (d) Sexual immorality
 - (e) etc., etc.
 - A Pastor has to be spiritually and emotionally mature enough to handle himself in these areas – **which means I'm very, very, very, very skeptical a 22 year-old guy with a BA from a Bible College or Christian University is spiritually or emotionally capable of meeting this requirement**
 - He may be able to preach ...
 - o (a) but his sermons likely won't have any depth (like popcorn, a good taste but little substance),
 - o (b) because he probably hasn't lived long enough to have much depth yet – and that's not his fault!
 - It's also highly unlikely he'll have ...
 - o (a) the leadership capabilities,
 - o (b) the force of personality,
 - o (c) the capability to use the tools he learned during his formal training,
 - o (d) the ability to identify and train new leaders,
 - o (e) the years of Christian experience to be theologically balanced and mature,

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- (f) or (to return to this “mark”), the spiritual maturity to consistently flee from the youthful passions
 - There’s something to be said for an apprenticeship!
 - e.g. *Navy Security Force example!*
 - A 22 year-old man probably does not have the spiritual maturity to meet this requirement
- (2) Instead, of falling victim to youthful passions, Paul wants Timothy to aim for righteousness, faith, love and peace
 - (a) **Righteousness:** A way of life that glorifies God, and shows a good example to the congregation, and to unbelievers
 - (b) **Faith:** a life characterized by deep faith in God, His Son Jesus Christ, the Gospel He died to bring us, and the promise that He’ll return one day to set everything right
 - (c) **Love:** a wholehearted love for God, God’s people, and the people God sent us to reach with the Gospel
 - (d) **Peace:** the peace God gave us in salvation, reconciliation, and forgiveness, and the desire for peace and unity among each other (i.e. not fighting about stupid things)
- How do you successfully do all this?
- How can you tell Christians to examine themselves and their faith, preach the Gospel, be committed to the Bible, and aim for love and peace – and actually be successful?
- How do you walk this tightrope, and juggle all these responsibilities?
 - Good question – it’s almost as though a guy has to be:
 - (a) seasoned, and
 - (b) experienced, and
 - (c) theologically balanced and mature, and
 - (d) spiritually mature
 - *to even begin to pull this off, doesn’t it!?*

9. Able to Teach:

And the Lord’s servant must not be quarrelsome but kindly to everyone, an apt teacher, forbearing, correcting his opponents with gentleness. God may perhaps grant that they will repent and come to know the truth, and they may escape from the snare of

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the devil, after being captured by him to do his will (2 Tim 2:24-26).

- There's a lot here, but I'll zoom in on the most overlooked trait in the entire Bible; one **so obvious, so clear, so painfully and blindingly important** that, if a congregation overlooks this, it's shooting itself in the foot *and* the head
 - (a) A Pastor has to be able to teach
 - (b) If he doesn't have the ability to stand in front of people and teach, then he can't be a Pastor, and we can't ask him to be one, either
- Somebody can stand up here and talk all day, but it may not be teaching or preaching:
 - He has to be able to communicate
 - He has to have the combination of skills that allow him to ...
 - (a) read a Biblical passage,
 - (b) understand the passage's historical context,
 - (c) understand the passage's biblical context in the story of redemption,
 - (d) understand the author's context and how he wrote,
 - (e) understand the modern context,
 - (f) and then translate all this into a teaching lesson or sermon,
 - (g) and then actually stand in front of somebody and deliver it in a competent and coherent way
 - **Competent** = he actually has the skills to teach
 - **Coherent** = *his teaching makes sense and flows from the text of Scripture*
 - If you've been in an office-setting, you've heard of the phrase "Death by PowerPoint"
 - A congregation should never suffer through "Death by Guy Who Can't Teach," but they often do
 - A Seminary degree doesn't mean a guy can preach
 - (a) In a typical MDiv program, at best, a guy will present a handful of sermons to a class of his peers,
 - (b) who'll take time offering some critiques (most of which will be useless),

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- (c) and will be graded by a professor who might (or might not) have actual Pastoral experience himself – from back during the First Gulf War
- If a guy doesn't have the ability to teach and preach the Bible, then he can't be a Pastor – *and I know you're thinking of somebody right now who has been in a leadership position in a church, who couldn't preach to save his life, aren't you!?*
 - Part of our job, as a congregation, is to evaluate whether a candidate able to teach the Bible
 - A guy might know the Bible very well, be a nicer guy than Mr. Rogers, might have 20 post-graduate degrees in theology, and might have amazing leadership skills – *but if he can't teach, then he can't be a Pastor*
- Again, Christians are very good today at spiritualizing incompetence because we want to be nice and loving
 - The “nice” and “loving” thing to do would be to not put an unqualified guy into a position he isn't capable of fulfilling; you'll hinder (a) him, (b) his family, and (c) the congregation that has to deal with a man who's a preacher who can't preach

CONCLUSION:

- A Pastor has to be competent (not brilliant) at the following things:
 - (1) He must be a leader, not a coward
 - (2) He must be committed to the Bible
 - (3) He must be educated, competent and capable
 - (4) He must be able to train new leaders
 - (5) He must be totally committed to the Gospel ministry
 - (6) He must always urge self-examination
 - (7) He must be theologically balanced and mature
 - (8) He must be spiritually and emotionally mature
 - (9) He must be able to teach
- Look for these traits, for these “marks,” and you'll do well!