

The 77 Irrefutable Truths of Ministry

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*To my friend in Christ, Sam Hinn,
whose ministry embodies these truths
and through whom Jesus shines brightly.*

*To my wife Judi whose encouragement
brought completion to this project.*

Dedicated to the Head of the Church—

***Jesus Christ
Ephesians 1:22-23***

List of Truths

"For precept must be upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little, and there a little" (Isa. 28:10)

- 1 A ministry exists to serve not be served.
- 2 A ministry is defined by its people not its program.
- 3 In ministry people are more important than policy.
- 4 In ministry, at times, relationships are more important than being right.
- 5 Growth in ministry is measured by what is given not what is acquired.
- 6 Ministry is a team not a one-man show.
- 7 Without vision, ministry perishes.
- 8 Ministry invests money in God's kingdom not in building man's kingdom.
- 9 Ministry never touches God's glory.
- 10 Ministry is a gift not a possession.
- 11 The mark of true ministry is love not power, success, or size.
- 12 Ministry's best classroom is brokenness. Brokenness is the tuition people pay to be equipped. The only vessels God can use are broken ones.
- 13 Pride is a ministry's undoing.
- 14 God is a ministry's only source.
- 15 Ministry's threefold cord is integrity, faithfulness, and honesty.
- 16 Ministry finds hurts and heals them; finds needs and meets them.
- 17 Ministry is proactive not reactive.
- 18 Ministry spends time starting fires not putting them out.
- 19 Ministry must always decrease; Jesus must always increase.
- 20 Ministry is done with excellence to bring honor to Christ.
- 21 Ministry sows good seed into the good soil of other's ministries.

- 22 Ministry is motivated by a calling not a burden.
- 23 When God is in an idea, ministry takes risks.
- 24 Ministry is built on God ideas not good ideas.
- 25 The greatest asset of ministry is people.
- 26 In ministry money is a means not an end.
- 27 Ministry uses good business practices but ministry is not a business.
- 28 Ministry loves people and uses things; it does not love things and use people.
- 29 In ministry, right motives produce right results.
- 30 Ministry counts the costs before building anything.
- 31 Ministry allows programs to die that have lost their effectiveness.
- 32 Without pure hearts, people serve the ministry instead of serving God.
- 33 In ministry knowledge and experience are simply tools in the hands of godly wisdom.
- 34 You will be tempted to sacrifice your wife and family on the altar of ministry.
- 35 Ministry cannot give what it doesn't have.
- 36 Ministry never promises what it cannot deliver.
- 37 The goal of ministry is to be like Jesus not like another ministry.
- 38 Ministry obeys God's will, in God's Word, in God's way, and in God's timing for God's glory.
- 39 Without prayer, ministry can do nothing.
- 40 Ministry refuses to dominate, manipulate, or intimidate people.
- 41 God gives a set person a vision for ministry; multiple visions split ministries.
- 42 Without unity, ministries falter and fail.
- 43 Ministry is empowered by the Spirit not by might or fleshly strength.
- 44 In ministry, when you are wrong: admit it, quit it, and forget it.
- 45 Ministries that truly love people administer discipline and correction in mercy and justice.

- 46 Ministers must guard their hearts and their tongues speaking life and not death.
- 47 Ministry refuses to be judgmental or critical of others.
- 48 Ministry speaks the truth in love.
- 49 In ministry, promotion comes from God not from man or from self.
- 50 Those who seek a position in ministry miss God.
- 51 The standard for ministry is holiness.
- 52 The best manual for ministry has already been written—the Bible.
- 53 A minister's best message is lived not preached.
- 54 The five C's of ministry are Christ, covenant, calling, commitment, and cross.
- 55 Integrity is what ministry does behind closed doors when the cameras and microphones are turned off.
- 56 A ministry's future depends on what's sown today.
- 57 Ministry spends time building on strengths not covering up weaknesses.
- 58 Without diligent work ministry falters; without rest ministry burns out.
- 59 God leads ministry by steps and by stops.
- 60 Worry never solved one problem in ministry.
- 61 Biblical principles are the planks of the platform on which ministry stands.
- 62 Ministry is an organism not an organization.
- 63 Ministry equips and releases people to minister.
- 64 Ministry includes both Jew and Gentile.
- 65 Ministry is about name-dropping; speaking the name of Jesus at every opportunity.
- 66 Ministry's main thing is salvation, healing and deliverance; keep the main thing the main thing.
- 67 Ministry births Isaac's not Ishmael's.
- 68 Ministry is a joy not a job.

- 69 Position and promotion follow and never precede perspiration, perseverance, persecution and patience.
- 70 Faithfulness in small things is the staircase to higher levels of where God is leading you.
- 71 Teamwork involves working with people who are often very different than you. If those around you are just like you, then someone [perhaps yourself] is unnecessary.
- 72 The primary motivation in ministry is not aspiration; it's action—the action of obeying two words spoken by Jesus to each of us, "Follow me!"
- 73 No matter what the ministry, every ministry has only one bottom-line: souls saved.
- 74 The "key man" in ministry may be a woman; God is no respecter of persons.
- 75 There's something beyond a purpose-driven church—a Spirit-driven church!
- 76 The best survival kit for ministry is covenant community.
- 77 Ministry is already ready for God to show up!

The Reality of Ministry

But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellence of the power may be of God and not of us. we are hard pressed on every side, yet not crushed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed—always carrying about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body.

(2 Corinthians 4:7-11)

An irrefutable truth is rooted in God's Word which is true for all people, all the time, and in all situations.

A myth is true only some of the time,
for some people and in some situations.

Ministry myths abound.
Ministry rooted in God's truth is a precious treasure.

—Larry Keefauver

#1

A ministry exists to serve not be served.

"What I need in my church are more armor-bearers," moaned a distraught pastor. What he really meant was that he needed more people serving him instead of serving God's people. In truth, we exist to serve not to be served. Our pastoral responsibility is fulfilled when we raise up leaders not followers! An effective leader equips believers to do the work of ministry (Ephesians 4:11-16). John Maxwell in *21 Irrefutable Laws* reminds us of this contrast:

Leaders Who Develop Followers	Leaders Who Develop Leaders
Need to be needed	want to be succeeded
Focus on weakness	focus on strengths
Develop the bottom 20%	develop the top 20%
Treat their people the same for "fairness"	treat their leaders as individuals for impact
Hoard power	give power away
Spend time with others	invest time in others
Grow by addition	grow by multiplication
Impact only people they touch personally	impact people beyond their own reach

Servant leadership takes a page out of Jesus' teaching. Note Jesus' emphasis on servanthood. "Yet it shall not be so among you; but whoever desires to become great among you, let him be your servant. (Matthew 20:26).

Stop looking around for someone to serve and begin equipping others to serve Christ. People learn about ministry not so much

through serving the “man or woman of God” but by serving “the least of these.”

Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. (Philippians 2:5-7 NIV)

#2

A ministry is defined by its people not its programs.

"What programs are working for you in your church?" my ministerial colleague asked.

At times we shop for programs like a customer in the drive-through lane reading the fast-food menu. We are seeking to satisfy the appetites of hungry sheep without regard to their nutritional well-being. Instead of low-fat, balanced diets of Word, worship, service and fellowship we serve up the latest fast food that momentarily fills the stomach but fails to provide long-term health and fitness.

Are we seeking programs that will entice, lure and placate sheep, or do we earnestly seek out God's Spirit in His Word to prepare the bread and water of life for meeting deep needs and healing painful hurts? Too often we focus on fine-tuning our programs instead of feeding our sheep.

The Spirit guides us in all truth. Part of that truth pertains to the real needs and hurts of our sheep. Often they cannot discern what's best for them just as children always wanting candy cannot understand that vegetables and fruit are essential to their well being.

Definition is given to ministry as the Spirit of God discerns which entrees from His Word must be served now and which much be stored for later consumption. Serving up a menu of program fast food gives sheep spiritual indigestion, leaving them malnourished and dissatisfied.

Developing programs selected by the Spirit to meet the deep needs of sheep enables ministry to please God by blessing people instead of trying to please people by presenting a programmed, fast-food god.

*For He satisfies the longing soul, And fills the
hungry soul with goodness. (Psalm 107:9)*

#3

In ministry people are more important than policy.

"But that's not in the personnel policy manual," yelled an angry board member.

Yes, bylaws and constitutions need to be followed for the sake of proper governance and order in the church. But some policies derived from bylaws take on the onus of the oral traditions used against Jesus. Jesus commented, "[you are] making the word of God of no effect through your tradition which you have handed down" (Mark 7:13).

Policies are set to protect institutions and people, but sometimes the very things that protect us can also separate and divide us. Our commitment goes beyond written statements on a page. Our commitment is to people, to tending and caring for sheep. When policies do not protect and serve people, then they must be examined, revised or even set aside.

We have a policy not to give more than a few hundred dollars to help in benevolence situations. Yet, there are times when the need is much greater. In once instance, we helped with two mortgage payments and thereby saved a home for a family. The policy was temporarily set aside because the people were more important.

The enemy can use the very policies established to do ministry to become the weapons of strife and conflict. Policies are not established to be used against one another and thereby divide the body of Christ. Policies serve the needs of the body; they do not dictate the ministry of the body.

Finally, policy meetings can rob time from ministry. We can spend so much time in meetings to set policies that we neglect ministry. Are we meeting to meet or meeting to minister?

Never let what you write down as a policy become more authoritative than the living Word of God directing and guiding your steps.

Your word is a lamp to my feet And a light to my path. (Ps. 119:105)

#4

**In ministry, at times, relationships are
more important than being right.**

"I know I'm right and I don't care what anybody else says," the indignant preacher stormed as sheep continued to come in the front door and leave quickly through the back door of the church.

Always having to be right can be an exit door for many relationships in ministry. People who have to be right often become self-righteous, judgmental and condemning. Jesus was always right but rarely condemning. In fact, He became most angry with the religious self-righteous.

In fact, I can be right without severing relationship. I can accept others even when I disagree with their opinions and beliefs. Paul writes, "Accept one another, then, just as Christ accepted you, in order to bring praise to God" (Rom. 15:17 NIV). I value my relationship with you over being right and winning the argument.

There certainly are times when a friend in error continues in sinful behavior or beliefs that finally separates them from us. Even going to them with other believers and confronting them with the truth doesn't bring repentance. Such relationships are severed not because we do not love them but because continual association will cause us to sin. We love the disobedient but not at the expense of becoming disobedient ourselves.

Being right and being righteous may be at odds. Being right can be rooted in me and not Him. In such an instance, I must die to myself so that Christ can live through me. When disagreement arises, I must first consider: *what price am I willing to pay in order to maintain the truth.* Sacrificing truth is too high a price to pay, but sacrificing myself is never too great a price.

For though I am free from all men, I have made myself a servant to all, that I might win the more. (1 Cor. 9:19)

#5

**Growth in ministry is measured by
what is given not what is acquired.**

Common small talk heard in gatherings of church leaders:

"How is the building project progressing?"

"What new program is working for you?"

"How many people do you have in worship?"

"What are the offerings like?"

The tenor may change but the thrust always remains constant in such conversations—performance and acquisitions far outweigh the presence of God and the flow of His Spirit. Rarely does a conversation between pastors who haven't seen each other for a while begin with:

"So what's God doing in your life?" . . . "Are you being faithful to your spouse?" . . . "Are your personal finances in order?" . . . "Have you kept yourself pure?" . . . "What spiritual disciplines are you struggling with?" . . . "How much are you giving away?"

I mistakenly called our church budget process "zero-based budgeting." That's the type of financial system in which every line item each year is set at zero and must be justified in order to be set in place for the next year. I should have said that we have "zero-balance budgeting." Our offerings come in on Sunday and go out on Monday. We rarely have large sums sitting around waiting for a committee to decide how to spend.

We measure growth by how much we gave last year not how much we received. We have buildings and land, but they are not the church. We have financial controls and accountability, but finances do not motivate us to take bigger offering or set higher goals. We give to grow a greater harvest of souls. Building bigger barns for our stuff may impress our neighbors but God remains unimpressed by what we acquire.

*So he said, I will do this: I will pull down my barns and
build greater... But God said to him, 'Fool!....' (Luke 12:17-21)*

#6

Ministry is a team not a one-man show.

"If we can just find the right pastor, then our church will be fine," remarked a concerned member on the pulpit committee.

One-man shows take us back to the day of Dudley Do-Right rushing to the rescue of the damsel in distress. Or, we may picture the Lone Ranger riding into the scene to beat up the bad guys and save the good guys.

Ministry is not about charismatic personalities wowing us with their sermons and television appearances. It's not about rescuers pulling churches out of messes and receiving the loving, lasting adoration of the rescued victims.

The day has passed when one-man ministries pull churches along so that they can make it through another pageant, another building fund or another budget year.

We are in this together. The team consists of us with the Holy Spirit not me alone valiantly fighting in the trenches on behalf of my people. The sheep and the pastors are in the trenches of prayer, intercession, fasting, and spiritual discipline together. The sheep and the pastors are witnessing, teaching, preaching and discipling together.

The operative word for ministry is *together* not *alone*. We minister *with* others not *to* others. The moment we see ourselves separated, alone and apart from others ministering with us, we find ourselves discouraged, depressed and deprived of the very gifts needed to do the work of ministry.

It's never me against them. They are not the enemy. So it's not us and them; it's us together for the sake of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

For as the body is one and has many members, but all the members of that one body, being many, are one body, so also is Christ. For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free—and have all been made to drink into one Spirit. For in fact the body is not one member but many.

(1 Cor. 12:12-14)

#7

Without vision, ministry perishes.

"What are your goals in ministry for the coming year?" the area pastor asked me.

Goals and plans are fine but not critical to the work of God. Solomon reminds us, "There are many plans in a man's heart, Nevertheless the LORD's counsel—that will stand" (Prov. 19:21). How often my yellow pad list of goals and objectives for the church has been shelved by the Spirit of God calling me beyond anything I had planned or imagined!

We cannot proceed forward until we have a vision of where God wants us to go. Vision is not a plan or idea; it's a Spirit-breathed picture that God wants to sketch and then color Himself. Once given a vision, it's important to write it down. God commands Habakkuk:

Write the vision and make it plain on tablets, that he may run who reads it. For the vision is yet for an appointed time; but at the end it will speak, and it will not lie. Though it tarries, wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not tarry. (Hab. 2:2-3)

Why must we write it down? Our minds have a tendency to play with stuff the longer it rattles among our synapses. Our flesh has the propensity to alter the original vision according to our wants and desires. So when we write the vision down, we have exactly what God said, not what we wanted Him to say.

Visions grow, mature, expand and become new. God is always doing a new thing that we must correctly perceive (Isa. 43). Don't get stuck in a past vision when God moves ahead of you into His future.

A vision speaks of our seeing not our doing. Seeing precedes doing. We may cry out, "God, look what I did for you!" But then He asks, "But was it what I showed you to do?"

Write the vision. (Hab. 2:2)

#8

**Ministry invests money in God's kingdom
not in building man's kingdom.**

"Our new building is dedicated to all those who made this possible," intoned the speaker at the building's dedication ceremony.

Walls covered with recognition plaques and walkways inscribed with the names of the donors have long been a mainstay in fundraising. Buy a brick; purchase a stone; build a memorial to yourself or your family. Such are the cries of hawkers trying to sell the kingdom of God one brick at a time.

Buildings are tools not memorials. Churches are people not brick and mortar. Paul preached it this way, "God, who made the world and everything in it, since He is Lord of heaven and earth, does not dwell in temples made with hands" (Acts 17:24).

We may admire the great facilities and campuses housing church institutions, but does God? In our need to build lasting memorials, we may bypass what's truly eternal—the lost. We spend so much time gathering around men that we lose sight of gathering in His name.

Not long ago, my son and daughter-in-love began giving away all that they had acquired at their wedding in order to go to the mission field. Some were aghast that such precious wedding gifts could be so easily given away. "You would think that they might at least store up the sentimental treasures for the day when they would return back home from the field," some protested. But these new missionaries had no thought of either the stuff or returning. Home was "there" where God was leading not "here" where they had lived for years.

Man's kingdom always looks back for memorials. God's kingdom always looks ahead to a new, promised land ready for the harvest.

Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal; but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. (Matt. 6:19-21)

#9

Ministry never touches God's glory.

"Are we carriers or mere handlers of God's glory?" inquired a dear friend in ministry.

The thought had never crossed my mind—much to my discredit. I had so enjoyed the presence of His glory that I had taken too much for granted. Familiarity had bred contempt and I was guilty of assuming His presence instead of seeking Him. I so enjoyed the manifestations of His Spirit that I had foregone communion and fellowship with the Spirit.

Poor Uzzah, he never had a second chance. He touched the glory, handling it as if glory was commonplace and ordinary. "And when they came to Nachon's threshing floor, Uzzah put out his hand to the ark of God and took hold of it, for the oxen stumbled. Then the anger of the LORD was aroused against Uzzah, and God struck him there for his error; and he died there by the ark of God" (2 Sam. 6:6-7).

It's possible to do the right thing in the wrong way. No matter what our good motives and intentions may be, if it's not done God's way then it's the wrong way. Aaron's sons found this out. "Then Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, each took his censer and put fire in it, put incense on it, and offered profane fire before the LORD, which He had not commanded them. So fire went out from the LORD and devoured them, and they died before the LORD." (Lev. 10:1-2).

Handlers of God's glory try to do church according to man's ways. Handlers believe that method outweighs ministry and that style can replace substance. Handlers spend more time talking about God's glory than being changed by His glory. However, carriers of the glory always check with God before proceeding. Carriers know that until a thing is done God's way nothing can be done that's lasting. Carriers are aware of their own limitations and refuse to accept glory that is due to God alone.

But to the sons of Kohath he gave none, because theirs was the service of the holy things, which they carried on their shoulders. (Numbers 7:9)

#10

Ministry is a gift not a possession.

"My ministry in my church is my equipping of my cell group," replied the stuffy lay leader.

Pity the pastor who tries to move that lay leader to another area of ministry. He has his turf staked out, the boundaries set and no trespassing signs posted for any hapless victim who might stumble into his territory. Enter into *his* ministry area and you'll be shot at from all angles!

During a staff meeting, I looked at the five pastors with whose supervision I was charged. Quietly I pulled out a legal pad and began to reassign each pastor to a new area of responsibility. My downcast look and serious demeanor belied my tongue-in-cheek process of taking from one and giving to another.

As I suspected, after the shock and bewilderment, each associate pastor began to protest loudly and intensely. "That is not my gifting," one exclaimed.

"But I have always worked with youth. I know nothing about college ministry," complained another. Each offered sound reasons why *his* area of ministry *had* to remain assigned to him. Each protected his turf with ferocious tenacity never even entertaining the remote possibility that his ministry belonged to God and not to him.

After the firestorm of protests, I finally revealed my motives and disclosed that the whole discussion was just a test. However, I also shared my alarm. Their strong reactions revealed that they regarded their ministries as private possessions. In truth, ministry is a gift and we are simply stewards of a trust so sacred that we must continually do heart checks.

We must never allow the gift of ministry to become our private property. We neither own the sheep nor the sheepfold.

But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellence of the power may be of God and not of us. (2 Cor. 4:7)

#11

**The mark of true ministry is love
not power, success, or size.**

"My church has doubled in size over the past year," confided my colleague. "And I have my own television and radio programs," he added.

Just once at a ministerial conference or gathering, I would like a pastor to stand up and boast, "How I love my people! How my people love the Lord and our community! Our love has grown infinitely in the past few months!"

How does one know that a church has successfully penetrated its neighborhood or city? Simply this, when those who are in that locale speak with favor about those people saying: *how they love one another...and us!*

The true mark of a successful church has little to do with size, power or success. Everything flows from a wellspring of love. Jesus observed, "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another" (John 13:34)

Years ago I sat in a restaurant just a few blocks from a megachurch. As the waitress served me, I asked if she often had customers from that church (pointing to its bell tower). "Yes," she replied, "every Sunday after they have church."

"And what are they like?" I inquired. She paused. "Most of them seem nice enough, but they are poor tippers. In fact, some leave brochures about God instead of a tip. I'm a single mom and it's hard to feed two kids with brochures."

Love walks the talk. Love bears a fruit that the world can recognize and eat. It's kind and generous not rude and stingy. How do the folks working and living close to your church feel about the people calling themselves Christians? Are they marked by love or by worldly power and success?

*By this all will know that you are My disciples,
if you have love for one another." (John 13:35)*

#12

Ministry's best classroom is brokenness.

Brokenness is the tuition people pay to be equipped.

The only vessels God can use are broken ones.

"No one in seminary ever told me that ministry could be so tough," my friend shared.

No matter how much tuition we pay to attend Bible school or a graduate seminary, the real cost of ministry will be paid after graduation. The statistics of those leaving the ministry after only a few years are staggering.

Whatever the statistics, the stark reality is brutal. Ministry chews people up and spits them out. Stress, family problems, financial lack, marital infidelity and mean church folk all seem to play a part in the undoing of a minister. Ministry puts the minister on the cross whether he or she goes voluntarily or not.

The good news is this: *resurrection follows crucifixion*. The Potter lovingly reshapes and molds us according to His plan not ours. "Then I went down to the potter's house, and there he was, making something at the wheel. And the vessel that he made of clay was marred in the hand of the potter; so he made it again into another vessel, as it seemed good to the potter to make" (Jer. 18:4).

Brokenness is not an attack of the enemy. Rather, it's the result of Christ reshaping us into His image. The tools He most often uses to crush us are sheep. They become the sandpaper that smooths our rough edges. Cleaning up their dung and anointing their wounds enables us to become shepherds instead of taskmasters. We come to value sheep for who they are, not for what they can do or give. Our brokenness allows the oil of healing to pour from us as we become wounded healers.

The tears of brokenness cleanse you for ministry. Don't waste your tears. Use them to wash the feet of your people.

The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit, A broken and a contrite heart—These, O God, You will not despise. (Psalm 51:17)

#13

Pride is a ministry's undoing.

"Have you seen my new watch," invited my colleague as he proudly displayed his Rolex.

Please understand me. I have nothing against any brand of watch including the most expensive ones. At times, such watches have been mine and I had the privilege of giving them away. However, my friend wore his new watch like a badge of initiation, moving from the have not's to the have's. He was materially blessed, and he wanted all to know about his newfound prosperity.

Pride can be insidious. It slimes its way into our psyches and muddies the waters of the fountain flowing within. To us it has the taste of sweet victory. To others, pride possesses the stench of decaying flesh.

Pride first arrives when we believe the flattery of the people instead of listening to the Spirit's conviction and correction. Pride mistakenly receives the plaudits of people as being the favor of God. Pride begins to eisegete the texts instead of exegete them. Pride counts the success of ministry in offering receipts instead of souls saved. In pride, ministry increases and Jesus decreases.

Beware of prideful snakes. Wrapping themselves around our egos, these serpents beguile us into believing that when the people are touched by us, God touches them; when they are in our presence, they are changed by Him. The truth is, no one is ever changed in the presence of a man, only in the presence of God.

Certain things keep us from pride: *accountability, repentance, humility, and openness to correction*. Certain things guarantee pride: *isolation, superiority, prayerlessness, superficiality, and stubbornness*.

*Pride goes before destruction,
And a haughty spirit before a fall.
Better to be of a humble spirit with the lowly,
Than to divide the spoil with the proud. (Prov. 16:18-19)*

#14

God is a ministry's only source.

"You know that you have a mistress," the minister over my region revealed.

The truth be known, I had had five mistresses in the years of my ministry. In each of the five cities where I had pastored, I had kept a mistress who robbed me of my time, my emotions and my fervor for both my own family and God's.

Like too many pastors, I served the church instead of the Lord. As a result, my love for my *first love* waxed cold. As Jesus warned, "Nevertheless I have this against you, that you have left your first love" (Rev. 2:4). The church had become my mistress and I worked tirelessly to please her. She became my source for affirmation, acceptance, praise and money. She paid me well and in return I prostituted myself to stay in her good graces.

I have come to recognize that my only source in life and ministry is God. He supplies all my needs and helps me crucify all my wants. What I want to happen in ministry is irrelevant. His desire must become my desperate longing. His presence must be my constant hunger. Drinking from His water and eating of His bread is the only way I can make it from day to day in every aspect of life.

I have seen pastors sacrifice their spouses and families on the altar of ministry. I have seen them do "whatever it takes" to keep the money flowing and the leadership satisfied. The truth must be told—**God is ministry's only source.** Without Him you can do nothing. He is the source of every sermon, teaching, prophecy, deliverance, conversion and healing. Get a grip on your source—God.

The only way to stay connected to The Source is through spiritual discipline—without ceasing in prayer, continually in the Word, faithful in stewardship, always witnessing, and driven by the Spirit.

*And my God shall supply all your need
according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus. (Phil. 4:19-20)*

#15

**Ministry's threefold cord is integrity,
faithfulness, and honesty.**

"Integrity is what you do when you're out of town and nobody's watching," pronounced the keynote speaker.

Without integrity, a minister doesn't have a prayer of finishing strong. Integrity starts with...

- paying your bills on time
- spending more time in the Word than in reading or watching other stuff
- loving people and using things instead of loving things and using people
- walking the talk
- being transparent and honest
- admitting you're wrong when you're wrong
- preaching your own sermons not some else's
- refusing to ask for discounts just because you're a preacher
- raising your children in the love and fear of the Lord
- loving your spouse and your family
- rejecting the bait of Satan
- tithing and giving generously
- trusting God completely and loving Jesus passionately.

Faithfulness starts with your wife, extends to your family and God's family, and continues on with your stewardship and commitment to the Lord. Faithfulness involves loyalty to your staff and your congregation. Faithful love covers a multitude of their sins.

Honesty really means being consistent between your word and your actions; your inner and outer selves; and your walk and talk. Honesty knows that truth is God's absolute truth which applies both to us and them. Honesty avoids exaggeration and embraces simplicity.

Let integrity and uprightness preserve me, For I wait for You. (Ps. 25:21)

#16

**Ministry finds hurts and heals them;
finds needs and meets them.**

"I am so tired of all the *sick* people coming to my church. I wish we could just get some healthy ones once in a while," the pastor across the table shared.

Does your church feel more like a hospital or nursing home than a dynamic organism reaching the world for Christ? Too often it appears as though all the healthy, happy, "have it together" people are in the world getting rich, going on cruises, and having all the fun.

Jesus puts our complaints to rest by reminding us, ""Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick" (Matthew 9:12). Those who hunger and thirst and those who are desperate will be drawn to the Savior. Those satisfied by worldly comforts feel little need for Christ.

As pastors, we like catching the fish but dread cleaning them. We tire of the endless task of getting people beyond their hurts to their healing and beyond getting their needs met to meeting the needs of others.

The tempter's enticing words to Jesus, "turn stones into bread," also tempt us. The quick fix that comes from meeting immediate needs doesn't last. Too often we are content with treating the symptoms of sin's disease not its root cause.

Meeting real needs and healing real hurts puts people in touch with the real Savior not a plastic Jesus that melts when the heat gets turned up.

Then the righteous will answer Him, saying, 'Lord, when did we see You hungry and feed You, or thirsty and give You drink? 'When did we see You a stranger and take You in, or naked and clothe You? 'Or when did we see You sick, or in prison, and come to You?' And the King will answer and say to them, 'Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to Me.' (Matt 25:37-40)

#17

Ministry is proactive not reactive.

"You won't believe what *they* have done now. My leaders make me so angry," my ministry friend confessed on the phone. His enemies in the church had launched another attack. Helpless, he once again thought of resigning. He was tired of the roller coaster called ministry with all its highs and lows. Oh, *to have a normal life*, he prayed.

Tie your feelings and attitudes to the actions and words of others and ministry will become a stream of ongoing crises. Reacting to what others say and do will render you helpless. Instead of being a victor, you will find yourself ministering as one victim to other victims.

Become proactive. Prophetically anticipate in prayer and the Word what God is doing next. Lead people don't follow them. Solve problems before they arise. Learn from other ministers' mistakes and successes. Some believe that walking by faith is synonymous to walking by folly. Be wise as serpents and gentle as doves.

Proactive takes the long look. Like Elijah, we spend time in both prayer and checking what's on the horizon (1 Kings 18). Your time will be stolen by the enemy named urgent. Are you reactive or proactive? Are you spending your time cleaning up messes that happened because you failed to anticipate their probability of occurring?

Proactive ministry sees the invisible instead of focusing on the visible. Proactive ministry walks by faith a step at a time moving forward not retreating. Stop looking in the mirror. Fix your eyes on Christ going before you. See up ahead the road signs He places along the way. Anticipate the turns in the road before they come. Proactive ministry prepares, plans and prospers.

Be ready for every good work, (Titus 3:2)

#18

Ministry spends time starting fires not putting them out.

"Some days I feel like all I do is put out fires started by lay people gossiping and backbiting," lamented my friend.

James warns, "And the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity" (James 3:6). I have wasted countless hours in ministry trying to put out relational fires started by the tongues of people in our congregation.

Instead of guarding our hearts and our tongues, we seem to use the tongue too often to judge, criticize, put down and condemn our "friends." Some of the lost retort, "I can get slammed in the world. Why go to church, only to get hurt there by people who are supposed to love one another?"

Jesus calls us to be hot, not lukewarm. Starting fires with the Spirit consumes the wood, hay and stubble in our relationships and seeks to edify not demean.

We need God's fiery Spirit (Acts 2) to baptize us with unity, passionate prayer, fiery evangelism and compassionate love. Our calling is to ignite men's hearts not torch their dignity.

A minister in a large metropolitan area became so incensed at the public recognition accorded to another pastor in town that he berated that pastor publicly to his staff. A fire of strife and controversy spread throughout both pastor's churches when the unkind remarks were repeated. Instead of working together to take the city the one pastor was trying to "take out" the other. Finally reconciliation came but not without the cost of people hurt and lost to the kingdom of God.

Instead of putting out fires of the tongue, let's concentrate on people receiving tongues of fire from the Spirit to empower us to reach the lost instead of slamming the saved.

Then there appeared to them divided tongues, as of fire, and one sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance. (Acts 2:3-4)

#19

**Ministry must always decrease;
Jesus must always increase.**

"In the past year we built our new family life building, started a dozen or so new programs, increased giving by 50%, and launched our TV program," boasted the pastor.

Enlarging our territories and moving our tent stakes doesn't mean increasing the volume or size of ministry. I constantly encounter pastors who are running themselves to death trying to do the next big thing, host the next huge conference, or publicize the next new launch of some program or project. We confuse...

- high profile with sound productivity
- blooming trees with fruit-bearing trees
- name recognition with lifting up His name
- flattery with accomplishments
- larger crowds with growing disciples
- bigger offerings with deeper stewardship
- greater exposure with significance
- popular acceptance with gospel penetration of culture

The bottom line is: *does what we say and do magnify ourselves or Christ?*

At the core of our best motives, we want to see Jesus lifted up. Yet somewhere in our pot of inner desires, we also mix in the expectation that His exaltation will also include us. We have difficulty with John the Baptist's confession, "He must increase, but I must decrease" (John 3:30)

Jesus promised, "And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all peoples to Myself" (John 12:32). He did not say, *if "we" be lifted up all people will flock to our services*. In fact, He increases in the lives of others as we decrease and get out of the way, i.e. become crucified to self.

"He must increase, but I must decrease." (John 3:30)

#20

**Ministry is done with excellence
to bring honor to Christ.**

"There wasn't any toilet paper in the bathroom," complained the women.

Small things reflect the level of excellence to which a ministry aspires. Excellence is an attitude cultivated by the desire to give Jesus our best. We are not trying to prove anything to Him or to ourselves. Excellence simply honors Jesus in all things starting with the little stuff. And he [the master] said to him, 'Well done, good servant; because you were faithful in a very little, have authority over ten cities.' (Luke 19:17-18)

The sheep will notice the little things—returned phone calls and emails, smiles, hugs, a hospital call, remembering your people in prayer, birthday and thank you notes, and deep compassion for their personal lives and their families. Your ministry's excellence will be rooted in your faithfulness in the little things.

"Details aren't my thing," a ministry friend confessed. So, make them your thing. Decide that excellence starts with you—an attitude of gratitude, living the message before it's preached, sowing generously before ever expecting a harvest, and certainly, embodying your message in your family relationships so that it'll really mean something in your ministry.

Jesus did everything with excellence from turning water into wine, to feeding 5,000, and including paying his taxes. From your personal cleanliness to the facility's spotlessness, let excellence be your norm. Do a heart check. Ask yourself, "Beyond my best exists a level of excellence that I aspire to—am I really willing to pay the price?"

Finally, excellence can never be an option. Good, better and best are simply not good enough. Beyond our best is a level Jesus calls us to so that the world may see the excellence of His power flowing through us.

*Give, and it will be given to you: good measure, pressed down,
shaken together, and running over will be put into your bosom.
For with the same measure that you use, it will be measured
back to you. (Luke 6:38 (NKJV))*

#21

**Ministry sows good seed into the
good soil of other's ministries.**

"We are giving today's building fund offering to our sister church for their building fund. They have need of it now," remarked our pastor.

We were struggling to save enough money to buy the much-needed plot of land on which we would build our first building. Everyone was weary from the continual setup and tear down work of meeting in a theater. Giving away a building fund offering struck me as another delay in moving toward the goal—building a new church.

Nonetheless, we have continued year after year to sow bountifully into the good soil of other ministries. We have seen God provide all our needs. Instead of building a new church, we acquired one abandoned by another group. We discovered a harvest of blessing from blessing others.

Taking an offering for the saints in Jerusalem when the money is badly needed "here" is always a tough sacrifice. It's hard to feel good about giving when you give out of lack instead of abundance. But giving isn't about feeling good; it's about obedience.

Pastor Tommy Barnett tells story after story of how churches would sow their building funds into the L.A. Dream Center and then later see God more abundantly bless their growth beyond their wildest expectations. Sow into others and discover the great blessings in sowing.

Now may He who supplies seed to the sower, and bread for food, supply and multiply the seed you have sown and increase the fruits of your righteousness, while you are enriched in everything for all liberality, which causes thanksgiving through us to God. For the administration of this service not only supplies the needs of the saints, but also is abounding through many thanksgivings to God, while, through the proof of this ministry, they glorify God for the obedience of your confession to the gospel of Christ, and for your liberal sharing with them and all men, and by their prayer for you, who long for you because of the exceeding grace of God in you. Thanks be to God for His indescribable gift! (2 Cor. 9:10-15)

#22

Ministry is motivated by a calling not a burden.

"You should go to First Church of Sometown," my caller counseled me.

Now First Church had a lot to commend itself to my consideration. The crowds were large, the pay was good, the benefits outstanding, and the people there had heard me preach—and liked it!

Beyond all that, a need existed at First Church. They had been abandoned by their last pastor and desperately needed someone—a rescuer if you will. My need to be wanted began to heat up and my desire to shepherd a new flock of sheep that would heap fresh praise on my old messages was certainly appealing.

And the hurts, they were plentiful. They had been hurt by past leaders and would see me as the healer coming in to apply the comforting salve of my wisdom and love upon their open wounds. So there were many good reasons for going to First Church, but God hadn't spoken. Still, I felt a deep burden for the people and the ministry that was so needed in that town.

Looking for a sign, a green light, a minute confirming word, or anything that would grant me the release to go that I wanted, I asked the Holy Spirit for any small indicator He might graciously bestow. All He illumined in my Spirit was, "Burdened? You feel burdened?"

Then I got it. Ministry is a calling not a burden. Sheep are supposed to go to the Good Shepherd with their burdens not dump them on me. If I take their burdens upon myself, I will find myself victimized by problems I didn't create and certainly cannot solve.

First Church will probably search for and finally hire a hireling. Many good folks are competing for the position there. But for me, I prefer to walk in God's calling for me and give the burdens to Him.

*Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God,
that He may exalt you in due time, casting all your care upon
Him, for He cares for you. (1 Peter 5:6-7)*

#23

When God is in an idea, ministry takes risks.

"Isn't going into that neighborhood with sidewalk Sunday School a little too risky?" the committee member asked.

"Risky for whom?" I wondered. Certainly the at-risk children we would reach needed us to take the risk. Their physical and spiritual health depended on someone bringing good news into their bad news neighborhood. The only thing at-risk was our comfort levels.

After all, some of those kids and their parents might get saved and come to our church. That would change both the ethnic and economic mix of our place. They would also bring their slang, habits, crudeness and rudeness into our place. That too was risky. And they would bring with them their problems and require much extra attention, counseling and benevolence. That might put some of our funds at risk.

God's ideas always put us at risk. In fact, He delights in comforting the afflicted and afflicting the comfortable. Letting God's ideas shape our ministry even puts us at risk. Some of the well-heeled, upper society folks might complain or even leave taking their money with them. And with such an exodus, our exit might become a real possibility. After all, when the attendance and offerings decrease, the easiest person to blame is the pastor.

Ministry puts our ideas, reputations, plans, finances, time schedules and expectations at risk. What is God asking you to risk this moment for His kingdom?

*Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in needs,
in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ's sake. For when I am
weak, then I am strong. (2 Cor. 12:10)*

#24

Ministry is built on God ideas not good ideas.

“Pastor, don’t you think it would be a good idea for us to start _____.”

Almost daily, church leaders are bombarded by scores of good ideas proffered by people, articles, books, and the enemy. Good ideas...

- last for the moment but not for eternity
- make us and others feel good
- promise much return for little investment
- focus on style rather than substance
- please people instead of God
- serve but rarely sacrifice
- treat symptoms not root causes

Good ideas flood in with such abundance that they push out and constantly distract from God ideas. We become so busy doing what’s good that we never accomplish what’s God.

Perhaps Satan’s most effective ploy is the temptation of good over obeying God. After all, the knowledge of good was forbidden, as was the knowledge of evil. Good is always just an approximation of God. We want to “be like God” instead of being under His authority. “For God knows that in the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil” (Gen. 3:5-6).

In trying to be like God, ministry becomes performance-driven. Always trying to achieve what’s good, ministry tries to look good but can never *be* good. Religious pride is about looking good; only the Spirit can produce goodness.

Instead of chasing what’s good, begin to chase God and goodness will become a fruit not a product of your ministry.

Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die. (Genesis 2:16-17)

#25

The Greatest Asset of Ministry is People

"Last year our income exceed over a million dollars and our property assets surpassed five million," boasted the pastor.

Admittedly, I was impressed by the growth of the church. Their attendance and giving had increased significantly over the five years of its existence. But I reserved final opinions until I had been around his people and in the worship services.

*Were the people changed in God's presence
when they worshipped there?
Were they vessels of love?
Were the leaders truly servants?*

Ministry is into people not land, buildings, and budgets as helpful as those assets may be. It's about the people—are they saved, healed and delivered? Are they discipled and equipped for ministry? Is the church growing in spiritual depth and in reaching the lost?

Shepherds are not business leaders, bankers, executives, accountants, managers or hirelings. They are tenders of the flock. One "pastor" I know actually sold his sheep along with his buildings and property to another "pastor" as part of the ministry assets. Needless to say, the sheep scattered.

Pour your ministry into buildings, property and budgets, and once you're gone, the assets will be sold and the memorial plaques removed. Pour your ministry into people and the legacy you leave will be lasting and blessed.

I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd gives His life for the sheep. But a hireling, he who is not the shepherd, one who does not own the sheep, sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and flees; and the wolf catches the sheep and scatters them. The hireling flees because he is a hireling and does not care about the sheep. (John 10:11-13)

#26

In ministry money is a means not an end.

"Can that preacher take an offering!" exclaimed the person seated next to me in the camp meeting.

The crescendo for this service wasn't the message or the altar call; it was the offering. For this ministry, offerings were everything. They paid for both the overhead and the television time. A vicious cycle of "staying on the air to get money" and "getting money to stay on the air" drove everything in the ministry.

Keeping the doors open or *staying on the air* can force a ministry to make money the end of everything done. Money becomes the driving force behind each plan; manipulation becomes the means to reach that end.

One question can begin a heart check about the role money plays in ministry: *If there were no money in it, would I still do it?* This question leads immediately to others:

- If I couldn't evangelize over the airwaves or in crusades, would I still be as passionate winning souls one on one?
- If I couldn't preach in a nice church building, would I still preach on the streets?
- If I couldn't make a living doing ministry, would I still be in ministry without a paycheck?

Years ago out of conviction, I walked away from a well-paying ministry position. Losing everything I gained it all. Money ceased to be a motivation for ministry; it was just one of many tools to be used for His purpose. When we have to check the budget or take an offering to decide if it's ministry or not, then money has become the end and not the means.

No one can serve two masters. Either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and Money. (Matt. 6:24 NIV)

#27

**Ministry uses good business practices,
but ministry is not a business.**

"Too many ministries seem more like corporations than non-profit outreaches," observed my accountant friend.

One minister frankly told me that he was the CEO of his church. Everything in his church functioned just like a corporate office including the hiring and firing. And predictably...

- the congregants were treated like customers
- the giving statements looked like bills
- the computers answered the phones
- the members were profiled extensively to determine what would "push their buttons" for effective programs
- the ministry positions were treated as jobs
- the staff were simply employees

One day, because of budget restraints, over twenty of the staff were "laid off." The *business of church* produced deep wounds and pains in the lives of both staff and laity.

Yes, excellent business practices should be maintained. Financial controls, constitutions and bylaws that conform to law, meetings that actually go somewhere with an agenda and results are important practices for a ministry.

But a ministry isn't a business; it's a community, a family, sustained by a covenant of love. You enter a business by being hired, an army by being drafted, and a club by being voted in and paying dues. But you are born into a family. Family, not business, is what we become in ministry.

For this reason I kneel before the Father, from whom his whole family in heaven and on earth derives its name. (Eph. 3:14-15)

#28

**Ministry loves people and uses things;
it does not love things and use people.**

"I have good news," reported the senior pastor. "We've talked Miriam into taking the children's ministry."

Good news? Good grief! Recruiting volunteers had become a systematic way to manipulate people into ministry in our church. We were called to involve people in ministry who were in our "spheres of influence." We recruited, trained and worked volunteers until they burned out. Then we brought in a fresh batch of recruits and used them up as well.

We also protected the property at all costs. The laity could only be in certain areas and special rooms were designated "staff only." The grass was protected by "keep off" signs. The parking spots were designated, "staff only." Even the lavatories were specified for staff or lay use. The keys to the property were harder to get than the keys to the kingdom. Security systems protected buildings and certain office suites.

I'm not debunking the need for security systems or the realities of properly directing large crowds of people in and out of buildings. I'm simply wondering out loud, "Do we become so wrapped up in issues of stuff that our people get lost in the process?"

Rick Godwin identified manipulation as a tool of witchcraft in the church. For their sake or the gospel's, we try to justify our use of people to do the ministry. In truth, using people for whatever reason is simply witchcraft. And when "used" people leave or rebel, they aren't bad folks; they're simply burnt out.

Loved people willingly and joyfully serve God. Used people simply crash and burn. How are your sheep faring today? Are they loved and well fed?

So when they had eaten breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Simon, son of Jonah, do you love Me more than these?" He said to Him, "Yes, Lord; You know that I love You." He said to him, "Feed My lambs." (John 21:15-16)

#29

In ministry, right motives produce right results.

"Ministry begins with the heart not the performance," a colleague wisely observed.

We have a tremendously talented worship team. However, during one rehearsal they became embroiled in strife as certain ones were selected to sing solos while others were ignored. On Sunday morning, the offenses still lingered in their hearts. Their singing sounded great but the spiritual atmosphere around them was poisoned with anger.

Our service had started and our pastor had quietly slipped into the back of the sanctuary to worship there quietly and be alone with God. However, a troubled look came on his face in just a few moments.

Without fanfare, our pastor took the wireless mike and moved up to the front. He whispered to each team member after which each one departed the platform and stood with the congregation. Finally, only the pastor and keyboard player were left leading worship. Those with hardened hearts toward God would have time to get into His presence, repent and reconcile before standing on the platform again in front of the people.

Right motives produce right results. Motives that are clouded by the desires to perform or have a position will produce the wrong results of strife, division, hurt and pain.

But the LORD said to Samuel, "Do not look at his appearance or at the height of his stature, because I have refused him. For the LORD does not see as man sees; for man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart." (1 Samuel 16:7)

#30

Ministry counts the costs before building anything.

"Our renovation cost more than twice what was projected," moaned the associate pastor.

It's easy to overspend when listening to people who promise to save you money. Many in the church may offer to give deep discounts by doing the general contracting or providing the products cheaply. Churches trying to save money often end up spending much more than they planned. Planning cheap isn't always the most cost-effective way to go. Before entering any building project:

1. Be certain that your contractor is properly licensed by the appropriate government agencies.
2. Check the references given to you by the general contractor.
3. Obtain three or more estimates from reputable vendors so that the products you buy are both economical and right for the job.
4. Let people outside your church as well as inside the church bid for jobs.
5. Remember that the lowest bid may not be the best bid to meet your needs. Carefully review all bids for the proper specifications and materials to do the job right.
6. Use professional, skilled workers and business executives in your church to contribute expertise, consultation and even work in your project. Let someone who handles building and finances all the time give supervision and oversight to the job.
7. Have safeguards in your contract to keep the project on time and within the budget. (By the way, avoid debt whenever possible.)
8. Know for certain that the architect and contractor are not in collusion with one another.

9. Have a payment, performance and even workmanship bond provided by the general contractor. Check the insurance that the contractor has including workman's compensation and warranties.
10. Make sure that the contractor and architect are familiar with local zoning regulations.

For which of you, intending to build a tower, does not sit down first and count the cost, whether he has enough to finish it. (Luke 14:28-29)

#31

**Ministry allows programs to die
that have lost their effectiveness.**

"Hardly anyone is coming anymore to the weekly fellowship dinner," bemoaned the committee chairman for church fellowships.

Immediately the rest of the committee brainstormed ideas on how to attract more people to the dinner that was heavily subsidized by the church budget. At one time, many people had attended and enjoyed the fellowship before the mid-week prayer service. But over the years, it had been harder and harder for people to get from work to church for the evening meal. Fast food replaced the church dinner so that only a few elderly people were now attending.

Even when programs lose their effectiveness, we try to hold on far beyond the appropriate time for their burial. Bury the program when its time is up instead of trying to pump new life into a dead thing. Yes, a few people may be upset because of their loyalty to that program. But proper explanation and pastoral support can see out the old and bring in the new without excessive pain or grief.

Old, ineffective programs sap people's energies for the essentials of ministry—getting people saved, healed and delivered and then equipping and releasing them for ministry.

Remember, no one's reputation is at stake in an old program. A few egos may be bruised when the ministry is stopped, but those bruises can be healed through understanding, affirmation, and involving those people in new and exciting ministry that does meet real needs. When ending a program...

- Communicate clearly and early the reasons
- Affirm those who have served
- Equip and train the workers in new ways to serve the Lord
- Express appreciation and gratitude for all that has been accomplished for the kingdom

*Behold, I will do a new thing, now it shall spring forth;
shall you not know it? (Isaiah 43:18-19)*

#32

**Without pure hearts, people serve
the ministry instead of serving God.**

"I have served the ministry for over thirty years," remarked the elder.

If what we are doing is just serving the ministry, we will never see God move or empower the ministry. Jesus asserts, "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God" (Matt 5:8). People seeing God and not seeing me is what I want to happen when I preach or lead worship.

Ministry can be a harsh taskmaster if we end up serving it instead of God. Ministry requires endless hours and continual fundraising to make it happen. But God reminds us that it's "Not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit" (Zeph. 4:6).

Serving the ministry puts us into a performance mode. We must continually outdo the last musical, the last sermon, the last pageant, the last set of goals, the last budget, in order to be perceived as "better" this year than last. When we serve the ministry, we're only as popular as our last sermon or the last service.

Serving the ministry, we keep trying to outdo our predecessor instead of honoring him or her. Serving the ministry puts us in competition with other ministries. Serving the ministry means the work is never done and the purpose is always elusive.

Serving the ministry produces more ministry, programs and more institutionalism rather than better equipped people being released to serve.

Those with a pure heart see God, not what He can do for them. The pure in heart desire the Giver not just the gifts. The pure in heart follow Him and see signs and wonders follow instead of following after signs and wonder. Being pure in heart, you will see God and then ministry will follow.

Who may ascend into the hill of the LORD? Or who may stand in His holy place? He who has clean hands and a pure heart. (Psalm 24:3-4)

#33

In ministry, knowledge and experience are simply tools in the hands of godly wisdom.

"I wish I knew more. Then I'd be a better minister," the pastor wishfully pined.

In the quest for knowledge, pastors pursue degrees, attend conferences, devour study guides, pore through commentaries, and read numerous books. Such a quest is not to be belittled, nor should it be overrated. Knowledge has its benefits and limitations. Though knowledge may provide much information about God, it can never bring true intimacy with God. Knowing God comes from relationship (Jas. 4:8).

In the accumulation of experience, we learn from mistakes, trial and error, successes and the communicated experiences of others. Experience is a great teacher but it's not *the* Teacher. Human experience and knowledge reach their maximum potential when applied by godly wisdom.

Godly wisdom sees reality from God's perspective. In human knowledge and experience, we put our own 'spin' on reality to serve our personal agendas and selfish motives. Natural experience and knowledge tend to puff us up and distort our abilities to know the truth that sets us free. Paul describes it this way: "For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ" (2 Cor. 10:46).

Human experience and knowledge without godly wisdom becomes a stronghold. However, God's wisdom can use experience and knowledge as weapons in the hands of the Spirit to offer persuasive apologetics for the gospel and to unmask every rationalization seeking to excuse sin in our lives.

For the LORD gives wisdom; from His mouth come knowledge and understanding; he stores up sound wisdom for the upright; he is a shield to those who walk uprightly. (Prov. 2:6-7)

#34

**You will be tempted to sacrifice your wife
and family on the altar of ministry.**

"I had to divorce my wife to save my ministry," the preacher admitted.

I've been grieved by the number of divorces among high-profile ministers. They even walk away from long-term marriages in order to "save" the career ministries they have worked so hard to build.

That may just be the problem. In working hard to build a ministry, they neglected both spouse and family. The family only got the "left-overs." Everyone was charmed but the spouse. Wise counsel was given to perfect strangers but no counsel given at home. The pastor had "given at the office" and thus came home spent and wasted. Both spouse and children living under the same roof as the pastor become emotional orphans.

Though living under the same roof and worshipping at the same church, pastors and spouses often find themselves estranged and separated by the religious prostitute named 'church' who drains emotions, energy, passion and life from the pastor.

And when spouses complain, they face the insurmountable retort, "God told me to do it." It's hard to fight both a spouse and "god." While the official reason stamped on clergy divorces might be "irreconcilable differences" or "incompatibility" the true stamp might well read, "committed adultery with the church."

One question serves to frame the issue here: "What difference does it make if you help countless marriages but lose your own? What difference does it make if scores of sinners are saved but you lose your own children?"

*For the LORD God of Israel says that He hates divorce, for it
covers one's garment with violence. (Mal. 2:16)*

#35

Ministry cannot give what it doesn't have.

"I don't see how there is such a powerful presence of God on that man's ministry knowing what goes on behind the scenes in his life," confided a close associate.

Yes, it's grace how God continues to use us when there is so much sin and disobedience in our lives. His love is so great that He extends us mercy far beyond our wildest imaginations. For a season, a pastor or ministry leader may "get away" with sin—immorality, deceit, embezzlement, fraud, pornography, etc. But God's warning is always fulfilled, "...and be sure your sin will find you out" (Num. 32:23).

Whatever grace may exist in a ministry for a season, the true heart of a ministry will be exposed under long-term stress and testing. When squeezed, what's in a man or woman of God will be forced out. Jesus observed, "A good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth good; and an evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart brings forth evil. For out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaks" (Luke 6:45).

What is in a minister's heart has been deposited there through the gateways of his eyes and ears. If the deposit is God's Word, sin is resisted. "Your word I have hidden in my heart, that I might not sin against You!" (Ps. 119:10).

But if the eyes and ears have taken in garbage, then the only thing that can ultimately come out of a minister is garbage.

The associations of a ministry often determine what that ministry can give. If those around a pastor pour in pure water, then purity flows out. But evil associations stop the flow of living water from a ministry. Such wicked associations portray a form of godliness that has no source in the river of God. Paul advises, "from such [evil] people turn away" (2 Tim. 3:5).

*Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the
ungodly, nor stands in the path of sinners, or sits in the seat of
the scornful; but his delight is in the law of the LORD, and in
His law he meditates day and night. (Ps. 1:1-2)*

#36

Ministry never promises what it cannot deliver.

"Well, he was just excited when he said that," excused one minister of another whose outlandish promise was soon retracted.

Under the emotional flush of zealous preaching, we may promise something we cannot deliver and that God is not willing to bless. There's a simple way to deal with false promises uttered in the heat of the moment—repent. In front of the whole church say, "I was wrong."

How difficult it is for those three simple words to roll off our tongues and into the same atmosphere that was so charged by the crowd shouting, "Amen," to our rash promises. So when do we make promises? We promise when...

- God has said it, and His Word has confirmed it.
- Multiple witnesses have affirmed it, and the the Spirit bears witness.
- Prayer and fasting have birthed it.
- Wise counsel from others have asserted it.
- Glory is brought to God not to us or the ministry.

I might never promise anything, you protest. So be it. Heed God's command, "If a man vows a vow to the LORD, or swears an oath to bind himself by some agreement, he shall not break his word; he shall do according to all that proceeds out of his mouth" (Num. 30:2). James counsel to be quick to listen and slow to speak applies to all our words and actions (Jas. 1:19).

If the Father says it or says to do it, proceed. If you haven't heard from the Father, keep your mouth shut. If you desire to make public vows, begin with those suggested by A.W. Tozer (*Five Spiritual Vows*)—never own anything, never defend yourself, never pass on anything about anyone that will harm them, never accept glory, and deal thoroughly with sin.

*A fool vents all his feelings, but a wise man
holds them back. (Prov. 29:11)*

#37

**The goal of ministry is to be
like Jesus not like another ministry.**

"Cloning was happening in ministry long before science discovered it," observed my friend.

Isn't it interesting how ministers flock to the conferences of those who are successful trying to learn how to be just like the "top dog" of today's "Top of the Chart Ministries?" Of course, we can and should learn and glean much great information about ministry from leaders. But our goal is not to be like them; it's to be like Jesus.

In Acts 19, the followers of John the Baptist had to give up their allegiance to a great prophet in order to follow *the true prophet—Jesus*. In his first epistle to the Corinthians, Paul warns of the dangers of following himself or Apollos.

For when one says, "I am of Paul," and another, "I am of Apollos," are you not carnal? Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers through whom you believed, as the Lord gave to each one? I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the increase. So then neither he who plants is anything, nor he who waters, but God who gives the increase. (1 Cor. 3:4-7)

Following Jesus may take us where popular ministries never dare to tread. They may venture into the media while He may lead you into the ghetto. They may buy billboards while He may say, *give a cup of cold water*. They may fundraise while He calls you to sacrifice, fast and pray. They may give publicly while He tells you to give in secret. Follow Jesus. You'll be in good company!

When a ministry promises what it truly has and gives what God says to give, then miracles follow just as when Peter said to the lame man, "Silver and gold I do not have, but what I do have I give you: In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk" (Acts 3:6). Those following Jesus, not others, were marked: *And they realized that they had been with Jesus*.

... we shall be like Him. (1 John 3:2)

#38

**Ministry obeys God's will, in God's Word, in God's way,
and in God's timing for God's glory.**

"I can't understand why this isn't working," my associate lamented. "It worked in my old church. I just knew it would work here."

Transplanting programs can be unproductive and even dangerous or lethal for the sheep. No matter how good a program worked in another setting, the present setting is different. A pastor must hear anew from God for the present.

God says,

Do not remember the former things, nor consider the things of old. Behold, I will do a new thing, now it shall spring forth; shall you not know it? I will even make a road in the wilderness and rivers in the desert. (Isaiah 43:18-19)

We must first hear from God and then obey His will (Heb. 3:7-19). His will never contradicts His Word which gives us correction, reproof, right doctrine and instruction in righteous living (2 Tim. 3:16).

His will confirmed in His Word must be obeyed in His way. "There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death" (Prov. 14:12). His way may seem awkward, humbling, difficult and impossible, but if it's not impossible in our own strength, then it's not God.

Timing is everything. The right thing done at the wrong time works havoc among the sheep. A pastoral acquaintance decided on the right way a church needed to worship, but it was the wrong time to introduce the new way. The end result was a church split. Perhaps the greatest enemy to God's will, Word, way, timing and glory is prideful impatience.

For who is God, except the LORD? And who is a rock, except our God? It is God who arms me with strength, and makes my way perfect. (Ps. 18:31-32)

#39

Without prayer, ministry can do nothing.

"I can't understand why I feel so helpless," cried a pastor.

At the core of powerless ministry is prayerlessness. Empowered ministry begins with powerful prayer flowing from the "head" down. E.M Bounds counseled that without prayer we can do nothing. How true!

Sheep follow the shepherd. As he prays, so they pray. As she worships, so they worship. As he studies the Word, so they study the Word. As she serves, so they serve. Paul writes, "Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ" (1 Cor. 11:1 NIV).

Prayer plants the Word of God both in us and in the soil of our ministry. Without prayer we are powerless either to retain His word or to obey it. Prayer is the language of spiritual intimacy. We get close to God by continual communing with Him in prayer. So Paul writes, "Pray without ceasing" (1 Thess. 5:17).

Prayer ushers God's kingdom into our ministry so that our ministry becomes His. We pray *thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth [in my life] as it is in heaven*. What the Spirit births in prayer through us can then be birthed in the people around us. Prayer becomes the womb of new creation; the oven for fresh bread; the well of living water; the atmosphere for fresh wind; the furnace for fresh fire; and the anointing for fresh oil.

How can we preach before first listening to God in prayer? How can we minister before first ministering to the Lord in prayer? How can we go forward before first waiting before God in prayer? Does your church need a real shaking in the power of God? Then pray!

*And when they had prayed,
the place where they were assembled together was shaken;
and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit,
and they spoke the word of God with boldness. (Acts 4:31)*

#40

**Ministry refuses to dominate,
manipulate, or intimidate people.**

"How can I get my people to do what I want?" asked the frustrated pastor.

In *Exposing Witchcraft in the Church*, Rick Godwin identified these weapons used by the enemy through us to attack and destroy God's people. Too often we become the unwitting devices of the devil at work in undermining the unity and power of the church's mission to be accomplished through the sheep.

One Sunday I confessed to our congregation, "I met the enemy in the mirror this morning!" We must make a conscious decision to be clay in the Potter's hands not ordinance in the enemy's arsenal. Rick Joyner once observed that the accusations of the enemy (Rev. 12) before the throne of God are often brought there by the saints! God help us!

The art of witchcraft has been practiced too often by ministers. Fearing that things will get out of our hands, we control people through domination. Not wanting to leave things in the Spirit's hands, we manipulate people to get the results we desire. Trying to keep people in their "proper places", we intimidate them engendering fear of us instead of the fear of God.

What must we do? The great exchange of the cross of Christ must happen within us. Domination must be exchanged for submission to spiritual authority and accountability. Manipulation must be exchanged for liberty in the Spirit. Intimidation has to be exchanged for respecting and esteeming others above ourselves. "Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself" (Phil. 2:3).

Pray this prayer: *I surrender all...all my need to ride herd over my sheep instead of shepherding them. Crucify my flesh, O God. Amen.*

I have been crucified with Christ. (Gal. 2:20)

#41

God gives a set person a vision for ministry; multiple visions split ministries.

"Everybody in this church seems to be going in a different direction," a lay leader confided in me.

Without vision, the people perish (Prov. 29:18). George Barna has remarked that, "God's vision for your ministry is like a fingerprint; there is no one exactly like it." The vision God gives the set leader or founder of a ministry is unique to that ministry. No one else's vision can exactly duplicate it.

This leads to a few important observations:

1. Only one vision can exist as a ministry's overall focus. Multiple visions cause division, i.e. split or double vision!
2. Vision means seeing ourselves and others the way God does. Our seeing must be corrected by the lens of His seeing and vision.
3. With God seeing for us, we have 20/20 spiritual perspective. Without God's vision, we are the blind leading the blind.
4. It's very difficult for a shepherd to come into another shepherd's vision. Ideally, the new shepherd has been under the existing vision, otherwise, a strange, new minister in the house will likely become a hireling or be seen as a Judas.
5. Vision is imparted by the Spirit of God not voted on by a committee.
6. The vision grows and matures as a ministry grows and matures.
7. Vision helps sheep see where they are going but cannot equip them to go there. Equipping methods and styles must be consistent with the vision but can never replace the vision.
8. Vision needs to be written down and communicated often to sheep.

9. New sheep must first catch the vision before they can enter into the ministry.
10. Vision requires us seeing the invisible and walking by faith.

Pastors always getting new and different visions for their sheep often confuse and scatter them. Walk within God's vision and you will prosper in your ministry.

Your young men will see visions. (Joel 2:28)

#42

Without unity, ministries falter and fail.

"Our staff doesn't seem to be unified on this," observed the Senior Pastor.

Prayer and unity came together before Pentecost. After they had prayed in one accord the Spirit fell with fire. When the pastor doesn't have unity, everything needs to stop. Without unity, the only course is prayer. Unity flows from the pastor on down to the sheep. The Psalmist sings,

*Behold, how good and how pleasant it is
For brethren to dwell together in unity!
It is like the precious oil upon the head,
Running down on the beard, the beard of Aaron,
Running down on the edge of his garments.
It is like the dew of Hermon,
Descending upon the mountains of Zion;
For there the LORD commanded the blessing—
Life forevermore. (Psalm 133)*

With unity comes the anointing oil of God's Spirit and a commanded blessing from the Lord. Without unity, strife and rage rip ministries apart.

The first place to build unity is among the leadership. The way to build unity is through the Word and prayer. The glue of unity is love. The presence of unity ushers in God's Presence. Unity provides the conductivity of the Spirit's power; unity is the copper wire through which the power flows.

Are you feeling disunity among the leadership or the sheep? Stop. Pray. Seek God's together. Don't move forward without unity. Otherwise, any movement forward will bring fragmentation and conflict. Unity is not consensus; it's oneness in Christ.

*For as the body is one and has many members, but all
the members of that one body, being many, are one body,
so also is Christ. (1 Cor. 12:12)*

#43

**Ministry is empowered by the
Spirit not by might or fleshly strength.**

"If I want anything done right in this ministry, it seems I must do it myself," protested a church leader.

Ministry can be a lonely proposition especially when the pastor determines that the only person who can minister is himself. Ministry can be messy, but people can only learn when they are given the opportunity to minister.

Success in ministry comes with a successor. Too many ministries die when the founder passes on. You can multiply yourself and grow a ministry or chose to gather followers who will disperse when you leave.

What preparations are you making to leave a living legacy that will pass on a godly inheritance to your spiritual children's children?

Sow your wisdom, knowledge, experience and passion for Jesus into the next generation. Empowerment in ministry is finishing strong and leaving a living legacy in your seed and seed's seed.

Your strength, might, personality, charisma and dynamism can never insure a legacy. But the Spirit can anoint, empower and perpetuate what you cannot. Follow God's Spirit now in preparing for the future. What's left when you're gone is not human might or fleshly strength—it's spiritual sons and daughters going on mightily in the Lord.

*"Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit,"
Says the LORD of hosts. (Zech. 4:6)*

#44

**In ministry, when you are wrong:
admit it, quit it, and forget it.**

"Do preachers ever admit they're wrong?" asked one of my members.

A noted minister would often quip that his counseling method with people was, "admit it, quit it and forget it." That's a helpful process in ministry—honesty and transparency.

Admit it. When wrong, just confess it. Everyone makes mistakes. When pastors make them, they do so in a very public way. Often the sheep know the pastor is wrong before he or she does. Forget about being embarrassed. It's much easier to admit one mistake than the multiple mistakes that can follow in a cover up.

Quit it. Stop doing whatever it was that was wrong. You have power in the Spirit to eliminate sin habits. Remember that sin creates blind spots in your ministry. Have people around you that will speak the truth to you in love. Readily receive constructive correction.

Forget it. Don't pick up Satan's bait—offense. Once you have dealt with sin, forgive yourself and don't carry an offense against others who helped you identify your transgressions.

Remembering past confrontations can really cloud present and future relationships with your sheep. Get over the past by refusing to bring it up in future conflicts or confrontations.

*Confess your trespasses to one another,
and pray for one another,
that you may be healed. (James 5:16)*

#45

Ministries that truly love people administer discipline and correction in mercy and justice.

"I hate confrontation," admitted the pastor. "Consequently, too many problems and situations go unsolved."

Avoiding rather than facing problems can be spiritually destructive in any relationship especially one at church. Hurting people hurt people. When hurting people are not confronted with the pain they cause and then ministered to so that they can heal, they will continually infect others with pain, offense, gossip and hurts.

Some of the most difficult situations a pastor ever faces involve confronting others with their sin and destructive behaviors. Correction is essential if ministry is to maintain healthy relationships.

Discipline involves teaching. Correction sets a right direction away from sin and toward righteousness. Correcting sheep never involves putting them down or treating them in a demeaning manner. Rather, correction and discipline are administered in mercy and justice.

Mercy demonstrates God's compassion to His sheep. Justice reconciles the one corrected with God and those whom he has offended.

At the core of this truth stands repentance. Without genuine repentance, correction and discipline will not be received. Without repentance, mercy goes unappreciated and justice is viewed as punishment. Without repentance, reconciliation is impossible.

Refusing to discipline and correct unrepentant sheep will reap a harvest of rebellion, strife and offense within your flock.

Now I rejoice, not that you were made sorry, but that your sorrow led to repentance. For you were made sorry in a godly manner, that you might suffer loss from us in nothing. (2 Cor. 7:9-10)

#46

**Ministers must guard their hearts and their tongues,
speaking life not death.**

"I can't believe the language that man used...especially since he's a pastor," the clerk confided in me.

As a student intern, I was in a state of shock the first time I heard my pastor curse me with a stream of profanity that I hadn't heard since my locker room days. Obviously, he hadn't guarded his heart or his tongue.

Jesus never said anything that the Father didn't first tell Him to say; nor did Jesus do anything unless the Father told Him to do it. We should minister in the same way. "Then Jesus answered and said to them, "Most assuredly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of Himself, but what He sees the Father do; for whatever He does, the Son also does in like manner" (John 5:19).

Unless God tells you to say it, don't speak. Unless the Father tells you to do it, don't do it. Whatever you say needs to line up with Scripture and be applied with the Father's love. In the tongue is the power of life and death (Prov. 18), consequently you want to bless people not curse them.

One particular area of guarding our tongues is in dumping on our spouses. When we take the negative feelings we have about others in the church and dump them on our spouses, we may feel better temporarily but they then must carry our garbage. Such dumping gives rise to very negative attitudes toward church members. In time, these negative attitudes may develop into resentment and bitterness that arises due to our tongues speaking death not life.

Determine to speak with love about others and to take your negative feelings to the Lord in prayer. Guard all that you say and feel making certain that you renew your mind with the mind of Christ.

*Death and life are in the power of the tongue,
And those who love it will eat its fruit. (Prov. 18:21)*

#47

**Ministry refuses to be
judgmental or critical of others.**

"Have you heard about Pastor So and So? He certainly won't continue in ministry after having done that!" remarked my colleague.

Judging the morality and criticizing the style of other ministers has become a ministry pastime for some. We can always see the speck in another's eye while overlook the log in our own.

"Judge not, that you be not judged. For with what judgment you judge, you will be judged; and with the measure you use, it will be measured back to you. And why do you look at the speck in your brother's eye, but do not consider the plank in your own eye?" (Matt. 7:1-3)

Too much of our criticism is either gossip or it's focused on style not substance. Perhaps some of it arises out of jealousy. The apostle Paul reflected that the only right he had as an apostle was to build people up and not tear them down. "Therefore I write these things being absent, lest being present I should use sharpness, according to the authority which the Lord has given me for edification and not for destruction" (2 Cor. 10).

Leave criticism and condemnation to the pharisaical spirits that overpopulate our churches. Choose to speak well of others. Find ways to affirm and edify fellow colleagues in ministry. When you hear criticism of them, cut it off at the root and then have the critic go face to face to your colleague.

We have too much to do in the Kingdom to spend time and emotional energy gossiping, condemning or slamming others in ministry. What we say about others reflects on both our ministries and theirs.

*There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in
Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but
according to the Spirit. (Romans 8:1-2)*

#48

Ministry speaks the truth in love.

"He fell because those around him were afraid to tell him the truth," observed an insider in the ministry."

Surrounding ourselves with those who flatter and try to please will only lead us to believing that our perceptions are reality. We need people to speak the truth to us about our attitudes, opinions and actions.

Loyalty to a leader doesn't mean that we praise their strengths while ignoring their weaknesses. Love speaks the truth. Surround yourself with leaders who will:

- Hold you accountable to scriptural truth
- Speak what's true not what you want to hear
- Love you in spite of your weaknesses
- Affirm you behind your back
- Be persons of integrity and honesty
- Admit to you when they are wrong
- Forgive you when you're wrong
- Maintain covenant relationships
- Will confront sin and iniquity in themselves and others
- Serve selflessly
- Be spiritually disciplined in stewardship, prayer, Bible study, worship and witnessing
- Guard their hearts and their tongues
- Purify themselves in holiness

Speaking the truth in love enables us disarm the enemy and advance the kingdom of God while giving no foothold to the enemy.

We should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting, but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head—Christ. (Eph. 4:14-15)

#49

**In ministry, promotion comes
from God not from man or from self.**

When asked if I would submit my resume and become a candidate for the position of Senior Pastor, my response was, "Anyone who would candidate for the position should not be considered."

Those seeking ministry positions fail to understand that ministry is not about position but calling. God promotes us in ministry. Man's promotion is meaningless.

Many desiring ministry are self-promoters. They boast of their credentials and seek to obtain numerous recommendations which would commend them for certain jobs. Such promotion may secure a position but it never validates a calling.

God calls. God promotes. God ordains and God puts us in ministry. Man can only recognize what God has already done. Israel recognized David as King but she did not select David. A ministry may acknowledge the call on a person's life but it can never issue that call.

Over the years, I have heard that such and such church called Rev. Smith to be their pastor. If there truly was a sacred call, then God called Rev. Smith and the congregation simply heard God's voice and recognized the call.

You did not choose Me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit, and that your fruit should remain, that whatever you ask the Father in My name He may give you. (John 15:16)

#50

**Those who seek a position
in ministry miss God.**

"I want so badly to be on the worship team...it's my dream," the woman said in a petitioning way to me.

Seeking a position is much different than ministry. Some seek a position on the staff of a church. Others seek to be recognized in a particular church ministry. No matter what the position, it does not convey the anointing for ministry.

Ministry is birthed within us by the Holy Spirit. He gifts us to do the ministry of Jesus. He bears fruit within us to be like the person of Jesus. One does not need a position or recognition to do ministry. Ministry simply loves and serves others in the name of Jesus.

A young person approached me and asked, "When can I be ordained so that I can start my ministry?" Ordination doesn't empower one to be a minister. Ordination simply recognizes someone whom God has empowered as a minister.

Much confusion exists today over positions, offices, job descriptions and responsibilities in ministry. A staff minister once commented, "I can't do that job; it isn't in my job description." Ministry has become a profession instead of a life confession that Jesus is Lord and I am serving others in His name.

Positions are sought not for ministry but for recognition. We love titles, praise, and public notice. But real ministry is often done in secret where God, not man, is the only audience watching. The next time you see someone in need, serve that person in Jesus' name. When you meet someone who doesn't know Jesus, help him become reconciled to God through Christ. At that moment, you've entered the ministry.

Now all things are of God, who has reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation, that is, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses to them, and has committed to us the word of reconciliation. (2 Cor. 5:18-19)

#51

The standard for ministry is holiness.

"Is there a ministerial code of ethics that I must follow?" queried the new graduate school student.

Yes, it's holiness. The code of ethics begins with "In the beginning..." and ends with "Maranatha." God has prescribed our code of ethics in the Scriptures by commanding, "...be holy for I am holy" (Lev. 11:44-45).

Being holy is to be set apart, separate from the world. As pastors, we often walk too close to the edge. We have one foot in the world and the other in holiness. We want to blend in with others so much that we become more "like them" than "like Christ."

We watch the same violent, sexy movies and television shows as the world. We covet the same stuff, we gossip and backbite, and we talk and look just like the world. We compromise holiness to be accepted by our sheep and our worldly neighbors.

What the world needs is to see a line drawn distinctly between holiness and worldliness. The world desperately looks for examples of purity, integrity, honesty, morality, spirituality, and faithfulness. Servant leaders must be holy examples able to say with integrity like Paul, "Imitate me as I also imitate Christ" (1 Cor. 11:1).

Pastors have a distinct aroma about them. The room and those around them smell different than the world. "For we are to God the fragrance of Christ among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing" (2 Cor. 2:15). To the world, we smell like death for we have died to ourselves. But to the saved, we smell like life for we have the life of God in us.

When Israel worshipped God in the tabernacle, the smell of holiness permeated the atmosphere. Everyone knew that the holiness of God was in that place. So what of you? Do you smell like Christ, *a sweet smelling aroma*, a holy sacrifice unto God (Eph. 5:1-2), or is the stench of the world still lingering in the garments of your life?

You shall therefore be holy, for I am holy. (Lev. 11:45)

#52

**The best manual for ministry has
already been written—the Bible.**

“What is the best ministerial manual I can buy?” asked the newly ordained pastor.

Of course, he already had it. But what we seek for the doing of ministry is often a prepared outline of someone else’s experience so that we don’t have to dig too deep or work too hard for our own.

As a result, we continually drink stale water from the wells of others while never satisfying our thirst for the Word and the Presence of God. Another preacher’s outline may suit us and our people well since we are used to instant food, quick fixes, 30-second sound bites, and easy solutions.

Nevertheless, chasing God requires more than the next book by a Lucado, Tinney, LaHaye or Yancey or the next CD by Hillsong, Vineyard, Integrity, etc. Chasing God requires *the Book* and more—an insatiable hunger for more fresh bread, fresh water and fresh wind of the Spirit.

The best manual on pastoring ever written is also the best manual on worship, prayer, evangelism, social ministry and church growth; it’s the Bible. Go there first for information and inspiration. Go there first for correction, reproof and doctrine. Go there first and listen.

If the God of the *Book* sends you to another book or song, then obey His voice. But first, know the standard before you try to interpret the times, seasons and signs of your ministry.

All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work. (Tim. 3:16-17)

#53

**A minister's best message
is lived not preached.**

"What is a good book of sermons?" asked the pastor whose preaching well was about to run dry.

My colleague was looking for new material—new illustrations, new insights, new outlines and new jokes to spice up his repertoire

What his people needed to see was a new creation. He preached change but never changed his bad habits which included laziness, not returning phone calls and criticizing his sheep to other pastors.

The best messages we will ever preach flow out of our life experiences in which we encounter the living God. The best stories are our stories and the best illustrations come from our daily walk with God.

Certainly the quotes we quote and the stories we tell that come from the writings and experiences of others can augment our message. But the gospel must be incarnated in us before it can be authentic in our preaching.

During one mid-week service, my pastor looked at me in worship and said: "Do whatever. I need God." Then, he went into a corner of the room, fell on his face before God and began to weep loudly and pray intensely.

The people and I don't remember anything I said or taught that night and it doesn't really matter. The message that night was preached in the corner of the room by a life not by a sermon.

For our gospel did not come to you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Spirit and in much assurance, as you know what kind of men we were among you for your sake. And you became followers of us and of the Lord, having received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Spirit. (1 Thess. 1:5-6)

#54

The five C's of ministry are Christ, covenant, calling, conviction, and cross.

"I need to know what I must do to be credentialed and confirmed in the ministry," asserted the caller.

Too often when people aspire to ministry they think the 5 C's of ministry are:

- *Credentials* – What must I do to get accepted by the church, denomination or network?
- *Confirmation* – Who will actually confirm me—a pastor, bishop, presbytery or what?
- *Candidate* – Where can I apply for a position? What is the process by which I will be discovered, interviewed and hired?
- *Compensation* – How much will I get paid? Will it be enough to support the lifestyle I want?
- *Certainty* – Will my future be secure? Can I be certain that the church that hires me will be the right one for me? Is there a good severance package in case things don't work out?

In truth, the 5 C's of servant leadership in ministry are:

1. **Christ** – If Christ has called you, He will make a way for you to be trained, equipped and released into ministry.
2. **Covenant** – Am I in a holy covenant relationship with Christ, my spouse, my family and my church so that whatever I do in ministry is blessed?
3. **Calling** – Have I heard from God? If it's God, I will never be able to leave ministry. If it's not, I will never be able to last in ministry.
4. **Conviction** – Is ministry for me a deep conviction or just a preference? Do I prefer this job above all others or am I convicted that I must do this and nothing else!

5. **Cross** – Have I died to my calling, my vision, my dream, my ministry, and myself so that I might live for Christ?

If you can leave the ministry, get out now. If you can't, then eliminate these C's from your ministry: complaining, compromise, confusion, curses and contradictions.

For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain. (Phil. 1:21)

#55

**Integrity is what ministry does behind
closed doors when the cameras
and microphones are turned off.**

"How do I look?" asked the excited guest right before we left the green room and went on the set on a popular Christian talk show.

How we really look has nothing to do with image and everything to do with character and integrity. Most anyone can make a good appearance. But when the show or performance is over, what are they really like?

Integrity has also been defined as *what we do in another town where no one knows us*. A local pastor was filmed coming out of an "X-rated" porno shop in another city. That footage caused quite a stir in his local church. So much so that he lost his church and his family.

Without integrity, a ministry is doomed to fall. It may take years for the cancer of incongruity and disingenuousness to eat away at integrity, but in the end, lack of integrity will be a ministry's undoing.

Can you say with absolute truthfulness that you are the same at home as when you are before people? Do people really see who you are or do they see a facade that changes with every situation?

With integrity, you walk the talk—behind closed doors, with strangers, in faraway places and with those closest to you. When the public *persona* is "what you see is what you get" and bearing the fruit of the Spirit, then God has a genuine vessel into which He can deposit the treasure of ministry.

For there is nothing covered that will not be revealed, nor hidden that will not be known. Therefore whatever you have spoken in the dark will be heard in the light, and what you have spoken in the ear in inner rooms will be proclaimed on the housetops. (Luke 12:2-3)

#56

A ministry's future depends on what's sown today.

"I can't leave my job and go into ministry. Ministry's future is too uncertain," observed a wealthy businessman.

What we sow is what we reap. We determine our future in ministry by what we sow today...

- Sowing offerings into the good soil of other ministries will bring us a harvest of provision.
- Sowing service brings a harvest of those with servant hearts.
- Sowing worship brings a harvest of intimate worship in the Spirit.
- Sowing a bold witness brings a harvest of souls.
- Sowing prayer brings an open heaven.
- Sowing mercy and love brings loving, merciful people into our lives.

Whatever you need in ministry, start sowing by faith for that today. By faith you can make a deposit today for your future (Heb. 11:1). If your ministry lacks anything today, ask yourself: *did I sow yesterday for what I need today?*

Be aware of how much you sow. Not so that you can keep a tally, but sow enough to plant the field. What farmer would seek to plant 100 acres with only a handful of seed? Sow enough to reap the harvest necessary to accomplish God's purpose.

Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap. For he who sows to his flesh will of the flesh reap corruption, but he who sows to the Spirit will of the Spirit reap everlasting life. And let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart. (Gal. 6:7-9)

#57

**Ministry spends time building on
strengths not covering up weaknesses.**

"I hope nobody finds out how badly I messed this one up," confided a pastor who had just overspent his budget by thousands of dollars.

With his comment, I remembered all the messes I had created. Years ago,

I had really fouled up a building dedication ceremony. The very persons who should have been recognized for all their hard work and giving, I completely overlooked.

They hurt. Not because they were looking for recognition, but because I had completely ignored them. I was so busy with the logistics of the ceremony that I didn't tend to the relationships with my sheep.

We also do the same thing so often in worship. We are so busy with the details of worship that we miss God, the very One we are there to worship.

Passionately loving God and compassionately loving people. That's what ministering to other is all about. But it's so easy to let our weaknesses distract us. Not only do we get distracted, we then try to cover up our weaknesses and thus further miss God and people.

So, when we mess up in ministry—and we will quite often—how do we handle it? Just a few pointers... Quickly admit to your mistakes.

- Don't cover up.
- Build on your strengths.
- Be open to instruction and correction in your weaknesses.
- Forgive yourself and others quickly.
- Refuse to get offended at how others may negatively respond to your weaknesses.
- Surrender both your strengths and weaknesses to God.

*... and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds
blew and beat on that house; and it did not fall, for it was
founded on the rock. (Matt 7:24-25)*

#58

**Without diligent work ministry falters;
without rest ministry burns out.**

"I haven't had a vacation or day off in years," boasted the pastor.

I'm not impressed. So what are you trying to prove and who are you trying to please. Without rest, you, your family and your church will suffer.

Admittedly, some ministers are lazy. They take the flexibility of ministry as a license to do what they want whenever they want. They keep no office hours. They rarely make pastoral visits or calls. They become aloof from their sheep. And they use their office of ministry as a substitute for a life of servanthood.

However, most ministers I meet are tired, stressed out, burned out and overworked. Their churches pay too little and expect too much. These pastors have made a life out of trying to please people instead of pleasing God.

God expects one tenth as a tithe of our substance, but He also expects one seventh of our time to be spent in rest and worshipping Him. Rest is most important to God.

Bottom line? Take your days off. Take vacations. Take time for personal worship, rest and ministering to the Lord instead of just to the people.

Killing yourself with the work of ministry isn't martyrdom; it's suicide.

Work shall be done for six days, but the seventh is the Sabbath of rest, holy to the LORD. Whoever does any work on the Sabbath day, he shall surely be put to death. (Ex. 31:15-16)

The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want. He makes me to lie down in green pastures; He leads me beside the still waters. He restores my soul. (Ps. 23:1-3)

#59

God leads ministry by steps and by stops.

"Don't you know that God leads us by steps and by stops?" asked the saintly Winston Nunes.

As I interviewed Pastor Nunes about his ministry, he began to reflect on how he had learned his greatest lessons from God by having to stop and then go only one step at a time.

God grants us enough grace to take one step at a time in ministry. His Word illumines the next step even when we can't see beyond to the whole journey set before us.

With stops, God allows us to refresh, renew and recommit ourselves to His plan and purpose. With God, stop really means stop. It doesn't mean slow down, yield and then go, or pause and release. When God says *stop!*, He means to hear clearly from Him before we go again.

God's *stop!* is also for our protection. God has already been where we are going so He knows the pitfalls and thieves lying in wait for us.

God's *steps* are illumined by His Word. "Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path" (119:105). Steps keep us from running ahead in our own strength and then stumbling or falling. Steps allow us to prepare for the next step and not miss what God is doing *now*.

In their impatience, some pastors push a church into jogging or running when it's not ready. As a result, the church resents or rebels. A pastor may then become a liability or even past history. Shepherd your sheep the way God shepherds you, by steps and by stops.

Uphold my steps in Your paths, That my footsteps may not slip. (Ps. 17:5)

#60

Worry never solved one problem in ministry.

"I lie awake nights worrying about how we're going to pay for that new building," the young pastor admitted.

Worry never solves a problem, alleviates pain or clarifies God's will. Worry does...

Cloud the issues,
Confuse yourself and those around you
Compromise faith
Contend against God
Complicate the problem
Contemplate the worst
Control your soul
Create new problems
Contribute nothing new
Choke out the Spirit
Castigate and condemn yourself
Cast away the Word
Certify certain failure.

So now tell me, why are you worrying? The church and the sheep belong to God not you. He doesn't need your worry only your prayers and obedience.

The irrational belief that the enemy uses to put a stranglehold on your soul is this: *if something is about to go wrong, I must constantly worry about it.*

The truth that sets you free from worry is: *if something is about to go wrong, I must constantly pray, hear and obey God's voice.*

Don't worry about anything; instead, pray about everything; tell God your needs, and don't forget to thank him for his answers. (Phil. 4:6 TLB)

#61

**Biblical principles are the planks of
the platform on which ministry stands.**

"I just don't know where to stand on that issue," said my confused friend in ministry.

Those who have no place biblically to stand on an issue will certainly fall. For example...

- If commandments are merely suggestions, you will disobey.
- If marriage is just a contract, you will divorce.
- If truth is only situational, you will have no absolutes.
- If love is conditional, you will break off relationships.
- If forgiveness is optional, then offense will be your major stronghold.
- If tolerance is your doctrine, then any lifestyle will be acceptable.
- If peace is to be kept at any cost, then you will fight no battles and have no victories.
- If rules are controlling, then you will suffer with legalism.
- If the voice of the people is the voice of God, then will you spend time pleasing people.

Biblical truth is the rock on which we stand firm against the attacks of the enemy and the world. Without a firm place to stand, we will waste time sparring with the enemy instead of taking possession of the land in Jesus' name (Matt. 11:12).

Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. (Eph. 6:13-14)

He also brought me up out of a horrible pit, out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock, and established my steps. (Ps. 40:2)

#62

Ministry is an organism not an organization.

"We meet constantly to change the organization around here," the church staff complained.

So much time can be spent in organizing and meeting to organize that nothing of significance ever gets done. Either we meet to meet or we meet to minister. Planning evangelism isn't doing it. Planning worship isn't worshipping. Organization is required but not the end product.

Some weeks the church calendar becomes so filled with organizational meetings that the pastors and leaders have no energy left for ministry. At that point, the organism begins to die and life is sucked out of the church and into the abyss.

Journal your time for month. Highlight in yellow what's organization. Highlight in green what's organism—ministry and life. Do the same with the church calendar.

The more yellow you have, the more warning is signaled. Too much yellow leads to life being drained out of the organism. Too much yellow signals approaching institutionalism. Too much yellow should drive you out of the meetings and into ministry.

Too much organizational work leads to a toiling in the night without any results. Ministry takes us to the other side of the boat, working in the light and seeing results for the kingdom of God.

When He had stopped speaking, He said to Simon, "Launch out into the deep and let down your nets for a catch." But Simon answered and said to Him, "Master, we have toiled all night and caught nothing; nevertheless at Your word I will let down the net." And when they had done this, they caught a great number of fish, and their net was breaking. (Luke 5:4)

#63

Ministry equips and releases people to minister.

"There's simply no one else to do the nursery," moaned the overworked, underpaid nursery worker. At the same time, the same kind of complaint was coming from the head of the ushers, the parking attendants, and the youth workers.

Where have all the volunteers gone? Gone to another church... everyone!

Our mindset and paradigm must change. They are *not* volunteers; they are ministers. We have an abundance of people desiring high-profile positions and a dearth of people willing to be ministers.

Ministry serves wherever needed according to the giftings bestowed by the Spirit. Bringing children to Jesus is just as important as singing solos from the platform. Parking cars is a ministry as essential as praying at the altars.

A lack of people trained, equipped and released into ministry is the result of leaders failing to equip people for ministry. The function of the fivefold offices of the church is to equip the saints.

- Evangelists equip more evangelists.
- Teachers train more teachers.
- Pastors produce more pastors.
- Apostles send out more apostles.
- Prophets raise up and release more prophets.

There is no success without a successor; no discipling without disciples; no leaders without launching new leaders. When you're gone for a day or forever, will ministry go on without missing a step?

All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age. (Matt. 28:18-20)

#64

A ministry includes both Jews and Gentiles.

"We are inclusive of everyone even though only whites attend our services," observed the pastor.

Paul asserted in Romans 1 that the gospel must be first preached to the Jews and then to the Greeks or Gentiles. We must first reach out to our own—our families, our friends, our neighbors and those of our own ethnic backgrounds.

We must also reach out to all people of all races and economic levels. The Gentiles for us will be anyone and everyone different from us—even our enemies. We forgive and reach out to the outcaste and the offensive. This gospel for both for the "up and outer" and the "down and outer."

God's people are amazingly diverse and heterogeneous. Churches often start in homogeneous settings and must intentionally become inclusive of both Jews and Greeks.

The color or race barrier may be one of the last walls to come down in the church. For years, the worship services on Sunday mornings were the most segregated settings in our nation. While we believe that to be changing, some statistics indicate that at best, the change is coming very gradually.

Inclusion of all peoples begins with leadership. Are you willing to reach out and reach across the dividing walls of hostility? Ephesians declares:

For He Himself is our peace, who has made both one, and has broken down the middle wall of separation, having abolished in His flesh the enmity, that is, the law of commandments contained in ordinances, so as to create in Himself one new man from the two, thus making peace, and that He might reconcile them both to God in one body through the cross, thereby putting to death the enmity. And He came and preached peace to you who were afar off and to those who were near. For through Him we both have access by one Spirit to the Father. (Eph. 2:14-18)

#65

Ministry is about name-dropping: speaking the name of Jesus at every opportunity.

"You'll never believe who's agreed to come and preach at our conference this year," boasted a well-known pastor.

In spite of who's in the lineup, my prayer is that Jesus shows up. For a number of years, one of my staff responsibilities in a megachurch was to schedule the guest speakers for weekends and conferences.

Big names were always a big draw. But a crowd isn't necessarily a congregation. High-profile speakers should not be the reason people come. I believe that guests who come to minister bring refreshing and fresh bread to a congregation. But it's not about big names, large crowds or great services.

It's all about Jesus. Recently my host read much of my bio before I spoke. I wanted to crawl under my chair. My being there was about Jesus not about me. If Jesus doesn't show up, then it doesn't matter who the speaker is the time is wasted.

Some speakers spend many precious minutes at the beginning of the message trying to warm up the crowd and impress them with who they know or what they've read. It's time we get out of the way so that people can see Jesus. His is the only name that matters!

Let it be known to you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead, by Him this man stands here before you whole. This is the 'stone which was rejected by you builders, which has become the chief cornerstone.' Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved." (Acts 4:10-12)

#66

**Ministry's main thing is salvation, healing and deliverance;
keep the main thing the main thing.**

"I'm really interested in Hebrew numerology," pined the scholarly pastor.

Have you noticed all the rabbit trails we're tempted to follow even while preaching? The main thing bores us so we chase after the erudite, obscure, obtuse and minute points of theology, eschatology and pneumatology.

All the hermeneutics are important; all the doctrines have their place. But the mainstay of the gospel hasn't changed. People saved, healed and delivered is what Jesus did and what we are called to do.

Recently at our mid-week service, everyone appeared saved. It was the same faithful crowd with just a few visitors. Nonetheless, the Holy Spirit prompted me to issue an invitation for salvation. No one seemed to respond. But after the service a woman came to me saying, "I didn't raise my hand but I needed to accept Jesus. Can I do so now?" She was born again right then and there.

Would she have gotten saved later if I hadn't focused on the main thing? Probably so, but the point is this—never miss an opportunity to offer salvation to the lost; healing to the hurting; and deliverance to those in bondage. Whatever detail you may be stressing of the gospel, the main point cannot be sidestepped or ignored.

Not every service is about salvation, healing or deliverance, you protest. Really, then why have a service? Worship always brings us into God's presence. God's presence always reveals the hearts of people with the Word cutting sharper than a two-edged sword and the Spirit convicting us of sin. Our hearts always need saving, healing or delivering. Bottom line: keep the main thing the main thing.

For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, "The just shall live by faith." (Rom. 1:16-17)

#67

Ministry births Isaac's not Ishmael's.

"I can't understand why my new program isn't working," complained the pastor.

Many reasons may be cited, but let's ask an initial question: *Is this your baby or God's?* Abraham and Sarah became impatient with God's plan. So they hatched their own scheme. Sarah's maidservant slept with Abraham and then birthed Ishmael. God was displeased and lasting conflict was birthed.

Isaac is God's way of providing for the future.

Ishmael is my way of getting stuff done now.

Isaac is God's promise for tomorrow.

Ishmael is my want for the immediate.

Isaac is God's seed that's blessed.

Ishmael is my investment for getting rich quick.

Isaac is growth God's way in His timing.

Ishmael is my increase through cute gimmicks
and events.

Isaac is God's plan for a people.

Ishmael is my way to get a crowd.

Isaac is God's test of obedience.

Ishmael is my circumvention of God's commands.

Isaac is believing God for the impossible.

Ishmael is trusting my efforts for the possible.

Isaac is faith seeing the invisible.

Ishmael is holding on to what I can see, touch
and control.

*For I know the plans I have for you," declares the LORD,
"plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give
you hope and a future. (Jer. 29:11 NIV)*

#68

Ministry is joy not a job.

"I am so tired of all this work," complained the pastor.

Ministry involves a lot of hard work if it's done right. 60-80 hour weeks are not uncommon. What robs ministry of joy is...

1. Not spending time with family.
2. Not getting enough rest.
3. Carrying burdens that are not ours to carry.
4. Wasting time on non-essential tasks.
5. Failing to equip and release people into ministry.
6. Not having personal time alone with God and in the Word.
7. Allowing others to waste our time with complaints and offenses.
8. Trying to micromanage everything.
9. Dwelling on negative emotions.
10. Not nipping sin in the bud.

Jobs drain but real ministry fulfills. In a job we work for an employee to receive money. In ministry, we serve God out of love.

If ministry is just a job for you, get out of ministry and find a job. Then you can enjoy the times you minister.

If ministry is a joy, let your face, attitude and body language show it.

Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. (Heb. 12:1-2)

#69

Position and promotion follow and never precede perspiration, perseverance, persecution and patience.

"When will I get to serve on the worship team?" the pushy soprano winned.

I get so weary of people wanting position or promotion without first paying the price or making any sacrifice. It's easy to look at the pastor of a large church and criticize his lifestyle without ever knowing the price that was paid for years to be in his or her position.

Position and promotion are gifts that the Spirit bestows on those who have paid the price of...

Perspiration – Ministry is more perspiration than inspiration. Hard work, study and faithful stewardship form the work of ministry. Do you not mind hard physical, emotional and spiritual labor?

Perseverance – Being there when the weather is poor, the crowd is small or the offering is light indicates a minister with staying power. Being there when you don't feel well or you can't feel the anointing to minister points to one who puts ministry above personal preference. Do you have staying power?

Persecution – In Nepal I had the privilege of praying for church planters who were most certainly going to face persecution and probably be martyred. If the town isn't receptive to your ministry, will you follow Jesus no matter what the opposition?

Patience – Patience in ministry is measured by our attitude of gratitude expressed while we wait. Patience bears the fruit of finishing strong not just starting strong. Patience gets out of the way allowing God to move as He desires.

Let all those who desire promotion and position go into politics or a corporate structure. Let all those whose desire is ministry put themselves on the Potter's will and become willing to be shaped by perspiration, perseverance, persecution and patience. After finishing strong, the minister will hear:

"Well done, good and faithful servant." (Matt 25:23)

#70

**Faithfulness in small things is the staircase
to higher levels of where God is leading you.**

"All the details of ministry are a nuisance," complained the pastoral associate.

The small stuff reveals the true heart of ministry. Jesus commended the good stewards for their faithfulness in the small things. We mentioned a few of these things earlier in this list, but repetition can only help at this point. The small details to which we must pay close personal attention include...

- Returning phone calls
- Answering letters, faxes and emails
- Dressing neatly and modestly
- Having mints for fresh breath
- Praying often
- Memorizing verses
- Keeping to do lists
- Following up on promises
- Contacting visitors
- Making pastoral calls in the hospitals and nursing homes
- Remembering birthdays and anniversaries
- Surprising your spouse with actions and words of love
- Spending time with the significant people in your life
- Cleaning your temple and God's
- Being on time
- Tithing and giving generously to others

These are just a few small things. They oil the wheels of ministry!

*He who is faithful in what is least is faithful also in much;
and he who is unjust in what is least is unjust also in much.*

*Therefore if you have not been faithful in the unrighteous
mammon, who will commit to your trust the true riches? And
if you have not been faithful in what is another man's, who
will give you what is your own? (Luke 16:10-12)*

#71

Teamwork involves working with people who are often very different than you. If those around you are just like you, then someone [perhaps yourself] is unnecessary.

"They could never do ministry here. Their personality is impossible to work with," observed the lay leader.

We often have people in ministry leadership take a personality inventory that reveals the sixteen different personality types. Some people are extroverted. They get emotionally recharged by being with people. Others are introverted. They are renewed by being away from people and doing a favorite activity or being in a special place.

Some leaders are visionary while others specialize in specifics. Some make their decisions by thinking. Others make decisions through internal values and emotions.

Then there are those who like routine schedules and never leave home without their day timers or electronic palm devices. Others are very spontaneous and dislike predictable things.

People are different. Their difference doesn't make them wrong, just different from us. Wise leaders learn to work with various personalities types and thus enrich their ministries and their lives. Threatened leaders try to surround themselves with people of like temperament. People who are all just alike form ineffective teams for ministering to a diversity of needs.

Enjoy the diversity of different personalities. Remember that you need unity not sameness. If you can't work with someone, then find someone who can!

Now Barnabas was determined to take with them John called Mark. But Paul insisted that they should not take with them the one who had departed from them in Pamphylia, and had not gone with them to the work. Then the contention became so sharp that they parted from one another. And so Barnabas took Mark and sailed to Cyprus; but Paul chose Silas and departed, being commended by the brethren to the grace of God. (Acts 15:37-40)

#72

The primary motivation in ministry is not aspiration; it's action—the action of obeying two words spoken by Jesus to each of us, “Follow me!”

“I’ve completed my “To Do” list. What do I do now?” asked the eager intern.

Henry Blackaby in *Experiencing God* suggested that we discover what God is doing in the world and then join Him. I agree wholeheartedly. Jesus goes before us into the world ministering to the “least of these” and calls us to follow Him. Following Christ in ministry means that we don’t follow...

- The crowd
- The people
- The denomination
- The network
- The television Christian star
- The popular author
- The wealthy folks in our church
- The elders or the deacons
- The most needs inside or outside our churches

At times, we are tempted to get in line behind the newest and most dynamic person or thing in ministry. One book really hits the charts and makes an impact and everyone seems to be reading it. One CD has a powerful worship song and everyone is singing it.

We can respond and include all of the wonderful things around us in ministry. But we cannot follow those things. When we follow Jesus, something very wonderful happens—we commune with Him and the devil flees. The last place the Devil wants to be is in line behind Jesus!

Therefore submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-

mind. Lament and mourn and weep! Let your laughter be turned to mourning and your joy to gloom. Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and He will lift you up. (James 4:7-10)

#73

**No matter what the ministry, every ministry
has only one bottom-line: souls saved.**

"Our budget doubled last year," the proud pastor boasted.

Wonderful, but how many were saved? The most important statistic of every ministry is saved souls. But, we're not an evangelistic ministry, you may protest. Ah, but you are.

If you are teaching, it's for the purpose of equipping saints to reach the lost.

If you are prophesying, it's to ultimately reach the lost.

If you are pastoring, it's for tending the cares of the sheep so that they can reach the unsaved.

If you are going out and coming in as an apostle, you still must plant churches and establish ministries to reach the lost.

Stephen Covey says to put "first things first." It matters not whether in business or ministry, putting first things first ensures fulfillment of the vision and purpose. Remember, "God so loved the world..."

When saving the lost is put in the back of a ministry's mind—or out of mind—then the decay begins. The measuring stick in the hand of any ministry must be souls saved. Then the cycle continues with equipping saved souls to reach lost souls.

*For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our
Savior, who desires all men to be saved and to come to
the knowledge of the truth. (1 Tim. 2:3-4)*

#74

**The “key man” in ministry may be a woman;
God is no respecter of persons.**

“Women in ministry is very controversial. Stay away from it,” an editor advised me.

Women serve the Lord all over Scripture. Women are in the genealogy of Jesus the Christ. Women are first to anoint Jesus’ feet and first to the cross. Women are first to the tomb. Women comprise the core leadership group in the upper room during Pentecost.

Keeping women out of ministry eliminates more than half of God’s chosen servants in the church.

Women in ministry are servants not authority figures. Women in ministry are priests not high priests. Women in ministry nurture the body of Christ.

Let’s be clear about this: Jesus came to set the captives free. Among those captive in Jesus’ day were women. Space does not permit us to interpret all the passages about women leaders in the Scripture. So let’s look at one passage that puts the whole issue in perspective.

Paul writes that male and female are one in Christ in the church. How women minister in particular local churches must be decided by the leading of the Holy Spirit. But to keep women out of ministry is to split and divide the body of Christ.

For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus. And if you are Christ’s, then you are Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise. (Gal. 3:26-29)

#75

There's something beyond a purpose-driven church—a Spirit-driven church!

"We've checked out all the models and have decided to become a purpose-driven church," confided the pastor.

There are a number of paradigms or models around for the church:

Past-driven church – The local church's past or denominational history determines its direction.

Personality-driven church – A dominant founder of the church shapes the church's direction.

Policy-driven church – The charter, bylaws and policies determine everything that can or can't happen.

Program-driven church – The programs have a life of their own and function like mini-churches within the church.

Pastor-driven church – The pastor runs everything—don't cross him or her.

People-driven church – A committee or task force exists for everything. The people vote the preachers in and vote them out!

Purpose-driven church – A church determines its vision and purpose and then sticks to it no matter what.

All of these paradigms have their strengths and weaknesses. But one truth must remain: only a **Presence-driven church** will be effective in the kingdom of God.

And He said, "My Presence will go with you, and I will give you rest." Then he said to Him, "If Your Presence does not go with us, do not bring us up from here. (Ex. 33:14-16)

#76

**The best survival kit for ministry
is covenant community.**

"I feel so alone," the minister wept.

We need one another. Ministry is not about us and them; it's about all of us in one body nurturing and fellowshiping together.

How many churches are there in your town? You might answer 20 or 200 depending on the size of your town, but any number you might give except "One" is wrong.

There's only one church. It gathers in many different locations and worships with various styles, but only one church exists. Christ's body is many members but just one body.

Enter into a covenant of friendship with the leadership and members of your congregation. Decide to stick together and stick it out. You are not just a church; you are family for eternity!

Enter into relationship with other pastors and leaders in your community. What a better way to see God moving than to see His presence in the lives of others in your area. By nurturing these kinds of friendships, you'll be enriched and will gain confidence in ministry outside the walls of your facility.

For as the body is one and has many members, but all the members of that one body, being many, are one body, so also is Christ. For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free—and have all been made to drink into one Spirit. For in fact the body is not one member but many... And if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; or if one member is honored, all the members rejoice with it. Now you are the body of Christ, and members individually. (1 Cor. 12:12-14; 26-27)

#77

Ministry is already ready for God to show up!

"If Jesus showed up at your church would you be shocked or ready," the preacher asked me.

God is always doing the unexpected. But, am I ready for Him. Jesus told a number of parables about how we should prepare for the coming of the bridegroom.

Get ready for God to do new things in your ministry. Be prepared for Jesus to come in unexpected ways.

New means...

Change – He can change you and anyone in your church at any time for His purpose and glory.

Fresh – We need fresh wine, fresh water, fresh bread and a fresh wind of the Spirit continually blowing through our ministries.

Belonging – God gives us a new identity. The old titles, ways, forms and rituals give way when the bridegroom comes and gives us His name.

Ask the Spirit of God to empower you to dig new wells in your life so that living water is always springing up for you and your people. Get ready, God will arrive at any moment. Jesus is coming back. As T.D. Jakes shouts,

Get ready! Get ready! Get ready!

"Do not remember the former things,

Nor consider the things of old.

Behold, I will do a new thing,

Now it shall spring forth;

Shall you not know it?

I will even make a road in the wilderness

And rivers in the desert. (Isaiah 43:18-19)

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Lord I Wish My Teenager Would Talk With Me

Lord I Wish My Family Would Get Saved

Hugs for Grandparents

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Smith Wigglesworth on Faith

Smith Wigglesworth on Prayer

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