

LESSON THREE

THE PASTOR'S CHARACTER

There are two elements to preaching: TRUTH and PERSONALITY. The gospel is personal; Christ is truth. Thus, truth must be conveyed through the person. The message is delivered through the very life of the messenger. A preacher can never preach a stronger message than that which he lives. His very character and soul speaks to his people in every message that he delivers. The life that he lives before his flock and the example he sets preaches a more convincing sermon to the church than all the words that he speaks. A man cannot lead his flock beyond the point he has gone himself. A man cannot lift his people higher than that pinnacle to which he has climbed himself.

In no other calling or profession is a man's work so greatly influenced by his own person and character. A doctor may be a heavy drinker but still be recognized in the community as a skilled physician; a lawyer may be dishonest but still recognized as the cleverest attorney in the city. But not so with the minister. HE MUST PRACTICE WHAT HE PREACHES. In the ministry "to be" is more important and will carry greater influence than "to do."

In this study we are stating a partial list of qualities describing the character of a pastor. This list of characteristics is taken from the book: *"Making Full Proof of Our Ministry."* (Publishers Note: This book is also written by Ralph V. Reynolds and may be obtained from Alpha Bible Publications).

1. HE MUST BE A CHRISTIAN.

He must be more than a follower of Christ in profession only. He must know Jesus as a personal Saviour having received full New Testament Salvation and be living in full fellowship with his Saviour. He must be a Christian in word and deed. The minister must never stoop to anything that is wrong.

2. HE MUST BE A GENTLEMAN.

He must be courteous to all and thoughtful of everyone. He must be a good mixer, moving freely and at ease among the flock. He must not only be able to move with ease, but he must possess the ability to make those in his company feel at ease. Thoughtful consideration of others is absolutely essential.

3. HE MUST BE AN INDIVIDUAL.

The ministry is no place for a parrot or a machine. He must not be a mere "copy-cat" or "recorder." He must be himself just as God made him.

4. HE MUST BE AN EXAMPLE.

The preacher must always keep in mind that all eyes are fixed on him. The example he sets will have profound influence upon the lives of all. *"But be thou an example of the believers..." (I Timothy 4:12). "In all things shewing thyself a pattern..." (Titus 2:7). "...Examples of the flock..." (I Peter 5:3).*

5. HE MUST BE A LEADER.

The minister of the gospel is a leader. Sheep are to be led not driven. There are many qualities that a leader needs such as confidence, poise, strength of convictions, and power of decision, but in the ministry the greatest qualities of leadership are true love for the people and sincere sympathy for them in all their problems. There can be no substitute for this. Let him always remember that he is a father to the flock, not a bully nor a dictator.

6. HE MUST BE A MAN OF DIGNITY AND GRAVITY.

The Apostle Paul in writing to both Timothy and Titus states that the minister must be sober. He also writes that deacons are to be grave and that even their wives must be grave and sober. This does not mean that the man of God is to be mournful and sad. At all times, even under great pressure he must maintain a cheerful demeanor in public or in private. It does mean that frivolity and nonsense have no place in the minister's life. He is not a clown who will try to pull off stunts to entertain the crowds.

7. HE MUST HAVE A GREAT LOVE FOR SOULS.

The minister's whole life is one of great sacrifice. One of the great compelling forces which will cause him to be willing to lay down his life in love. There is no substitute.

8. HE MUST BE A MAN OF DEEP CONVICTIONS AND SINGLENESS OF PURPOSE.

He must know what is to be done and then allow nothing to interfere or distract him from his purpose. He will know what he believes and be willing to die for his convictions. A man without convictions is unstable and useless in the ministry. At the same time he must maintain a humble and teachable attitude. Strong convictions must not be confused with a "spiritually proud" and "self-centered dogmatic" life.

9. HE MUST BE A MAN OF COURAGE.

Many times he will be called upon to stand alone against fierce opposition. He must stand for truth and righteousness even if it means taking a stand against his best friends and most loyal followers. He must have no fear of man, sin or the devil.

10. HE MUST BE A MAN OF FAITH.

Courage and faith stand together. He will be courageous if he has a living faith in his God. Faith will give him confidence and holy boldness to preach the gospel against all opposition. Faith will give him the victory over the very powers of hell itself.

11. HE MUST BE A SEPARATED MAN.

The children of God are a separated people. This is necessary to be accepted as His children. *"Wherefore, come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord" (II Corinthians 6:17)*. This is a separation from the world. Then the Holy Ghost separates the minister from the rest of the church for the ministry (Acts 13:2). This constitutes a dual separation for the Holy Ghost preacher.

12. HE MUST BE A MAN OF HOLINESS.

Truth to be effective must come through a man and because of this he must be a godly man. People must sense the fact that he knows God, and God is in his life. His life must be pure and wholly free from wrong habits. *"A bishop then must be blameless" (I Timothy 3:2). "Keep thyself pure" (I Timothy 5:22).*

13. HE MUST BE FILLED WITH THE HOLY GHOST.

It is the Holy Spirit who placed him in the body; it is the Holy Spirit who cleanses, sanctifies and makes him holy; it is the Holy Spirit who separates and calls him to the work of the ministry; it is the Holy Ghost who endues him with the power to preach the gospel. Without the Holy Ghost a man has no business even considering the ministry.

14. HE MUST BE A MAN OF GREAT PATIENCE.

The lack of response that a pastor might receive in his personal and public dealings with his people may sorely try his patience. Let the pastor remember that when he loses patience with confidence in an individual his ability to help and minister to that person is ended. Even when he is called upon to faithfully chastise and reprove, he must do it with patience and long-suffering. Sometimes a minister has to wait years for the harvest after faithfully sowing the seed. It takes patience to be a good fisherman.

15. HE MUST BE A MAN OF DISCRETION AND PRUDENCE.

The minister of the gospel must be a student of human nature and understand how to deal with each other without causing offence. A hasty word sometimes can cause offence, which will destroy the influence of many months of faithful ministry. *"He that winneth souls is wise" (Proverbs 11:30).*

16. HE MUST BE A MAN OF HUMILITY.

True humility is an attitude of the heart. It is just being "himself" with no airs or thought of vain glory. An exalted spirit can obsess any man regardless of his experience, age or degree of success. Let the minister of God keep his self-life nailed to the cross; let him remember that his life is dead. It is only as he remains thus that God will be able to use him.

17. HE MUST BE A MAN OF ABSOLUTE INTEGRITY AND UNQUESTIONABLE HONESTY.

In all financial dealings he must be honest to the last penny. How can he be a "steward of the mysteries of God," if he were unfaithful in the material things of life? The minister's word will be as good as his bond. He will be honorable in all of his dealings with his fellow man, and when he gives his word or makes a promise, he will keep his word even though it means sacrifice on his part.

18. HE MUST BE A CONSTANT STUDENT.

The pastor's great work is feeding the sheep but before he can feed others, he, himself, must be fed by the chief shepherd from God's own Word. If he does not study, his ministry soon becomes stale. It is necessary for him to gather fresh manna from Heaven daily if his ministry is to keep fresh and living.

19. HE MUST BE INDUSTRIOUS.

Laziness simply has no place in the ministry. There is no profession that is as strenuous as the preaching of the gospel. It demands everything that a man has. Here as elsewhere there is no substitute for hard work.

20. HE MUST BE A MAN OF ORDER.

His life must be well regulated. He should have a definite time for rising and retiring. His meals should be regular. He should have a definite time for study and prayer, rest and relaxation, pastoral visitation. Only by keeping to a system and order can he keep from wasting time, which is so precious. Regular habits also tend to keep him healthy and fit. The minister must be punctual and never late for any engagement.

21. HE MUST BE A MAN OF PRAYER.

His whole ministry depends upon his prayer life. A prayerless ministry is the undertaker for all God's truth. It will be the time that he spends in the closet that will make him a power in the pulpit.

22. HE MUST BE A MAN OF UNCTION.

Unction is the rich anointing of the Holy Spirit, which is absolutely essential to all true preaching. Divine unction is one feature that separates the Holy Ghost minister from all other preachers.

23. HE MUST RULE HIS OWN HOUSE WELL.

Much prayer and attention must be given to his home and family. Sometimes the minister is so busy with the problems and needs of others that he neglects his own household with the result that they get out from under his control. When this happens his work in the church is made most difficult.

LESSON THREE

SELF HELP TEST

Name FIFTEEN characters describing the ministers character:

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3. _____
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5. _____
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