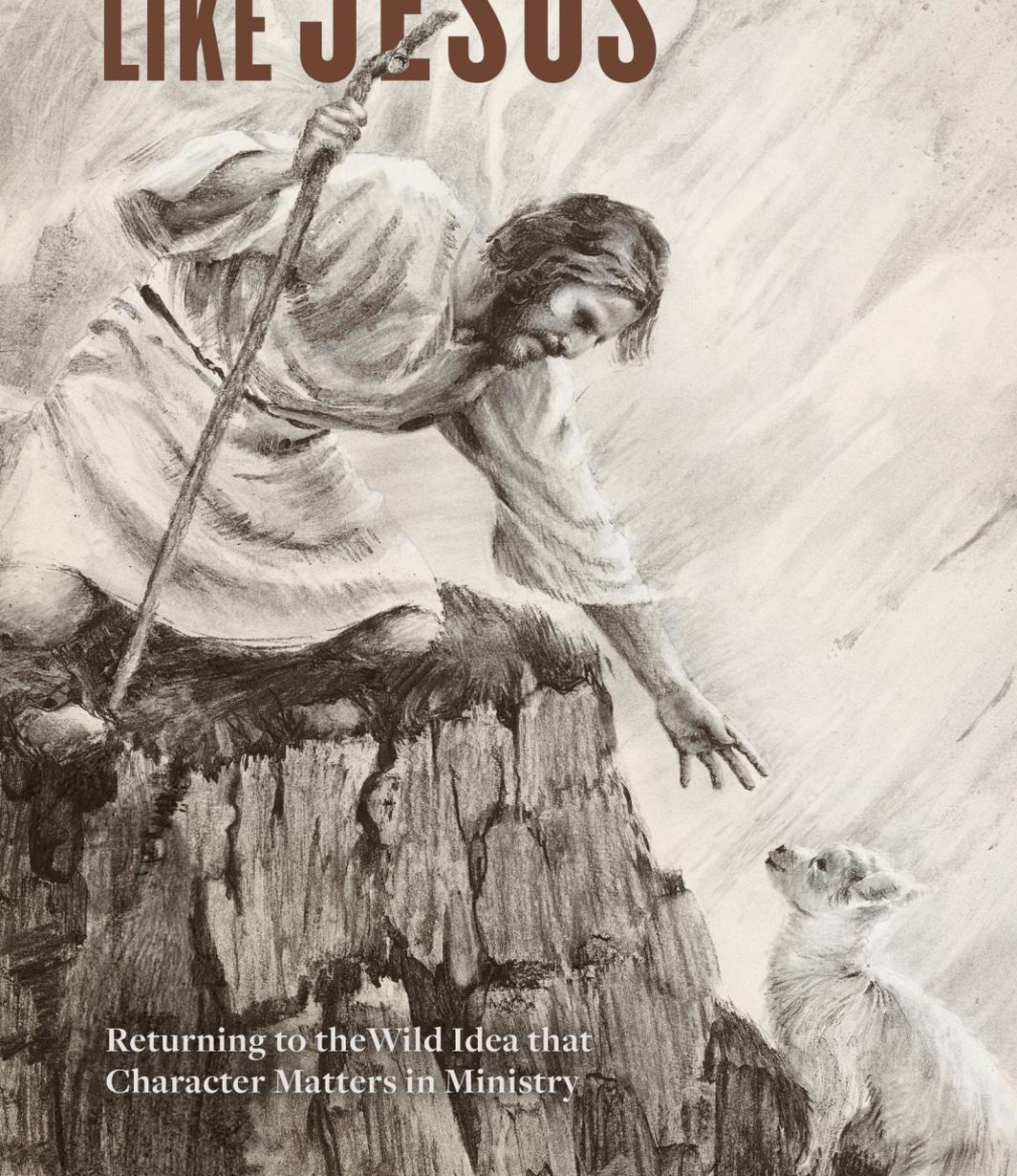


ANDREW HÉBERT

SHEPHERDING LIKE JESUS



Returning to the Wild Idea that
Character Matters in Ministry

In *Shepherding like Jesus*, Dr. Hébert has written a refreshingly countercultural book for pastors, pastors in training, and congregations who know something isn't quite right with leadership in the church today. With the Beatitudes as his guide, and with input from veteran pastors around the country, Hébert's work will do much to bring needed reform to pastoral ministry in America while encouraging pastors who have been wearied under the weight of far too many worldly expectations for their ministry.

Michael Pohlman, PhD, associate professor of Preaching and Pastoral Theology and chair, Department of Ministry and Proclamation, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, Kentucky

Shepherding like Jesus is exactly the kind of book we need right now, and Andrew Hébert is the perfect person to write it. Bringing the Beatitudes to bear on our calling, Hébert reminds us of the character necessary for pastoral leadership and the spiritual power that comes with it. In a world that places emphasis on all the wrong things, books like this give me hope that we can be what God intends us to be. Read it well, brothers. It is food for your soul!

Jamie Dew, PhD, president, New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, New Orleans, Louisiana

I'm so grateful for this work that my friend, Andrew Hébert, has gifted the church. I believe *Shepherding like Jesus: Returning to the Wild Idea that Character Matters in Ministry* should serve as a new generation's "pastoral

manual.” Never have character and integrity in ministry been more important than they are today. In a culture that highlights giftedness and elevates celebrity, Andrew calls us back to the center and speaks to what really matters and what is ultimately most effective—ministering from the overflow of a heart that loves Jesus and is committed to humbly following him. It’s filled with inspiration and practical application, and also includes personal reflections by some of the most respected and seasoned pastors from across the country. I wish this had been available for me to read when I was first called to ministry at age seventeen. I’m grateful it’s available to all of us in ministry now.

Jarrett Stephens, senior pastor at
Champion Forest Baptist Church, Houston, Texas,
and author of *The Always God: He Hasn’t
Changed and You’re Not Forgotten*

Indeed, character does matter in pastoral ministry. Without returning to the primacy of reflecting Christ in everyday living and leading, the desired impact of pastoral ministry will be greatly diminished. This is exactly what Andrew Hébert addresses in *Shepherding like Jesus* as he challenges followers of Christ to reflect the attitudes contained in the Beatitudes. This book will force reflection and bring conviction in the leader’s life.

Michael S. Wilder, PhD, dean of the
Terry School of Educational Ministries
and professor of Educational Ministries, Southwestern
Baptist Theological Seminary, Fort Worth, Texas

Andrew Hébert is 100-percent correct in observing that our church cultures often undervalue the role of character in pastoral ministry. No one would deny its importance, of course. But if we value Christlikeness in our pastors as much as we ought, we will often be swimming against the current! This helpful and edifying book, rooted in both the Beatitudes and real-life pastoral reflections, will help us recover and pursue this desperately needed focus. I highly recommend it for all—especially pastors, elders, and all who serve the local church in some capacity.

Gavin Ortlund, PhD, senior pastor,
First Baptist Church of Ojai, California, and author of
*Finding the Right Hills to Die On: The Case for
Theological Triage* and *Theological Retrieval for
Evangelicals: Why We Need Our Past to Have a Future*

Everything mentioned in the Bible about pastoral qualifications is about the character of the pastor. That is why I am excited about Pastor Andrew Hébert's new book, *Shepherding like Jesus!* This book should be required reading for every pastor and preacher who desires to shepherd like Jesus. Each chapter of the book challenges pastors to be men of character. As a bonus, at the end of each chapter there are "Pastoral Reflections" to further equip pastors in the ministry. Thanks, Andrew, for helping us shepherd like Jesus.

Fred Luter, senior pastor, Franklin Avenue
Baptist Church, New Orleans, Louisiana, and former
president, Southern Baptist Convention

Character is key to leadership. No one can lead effectively without integrity, and this is especially true for pastors. This book identifies and addresses key areas of your ministry and personal qualities that will pay big dividends if you carefully tend to them and bring huge consequences if you don't. Looking at the attributes and ministry of Jesus as the ultimate example, Andrew Hébert has written a book every pastor needs to read and keep in his library.

Kevin Ezell, president, North American Mission Board (SBC), Alpharetta, Georgia

This book gets at the guts of pastoral ministry. In ministry, it does not matter how competent you are, how much capacity you have, or even if you feel called to the pastorate, if you lack the character of a pastor. Andrew Hébert, in this timely book, reminds us of the essential truth in Christian ministry: character still matters. He admits that this is not a novel idea but rather a retrieval of something old that is often forgotten—a retrieval that I believe is necessary.

J. T. English, PhD, lead pastor, Storyline Fellowship, Denver, Colorado, and author of *Deep Discipleship*

True pastoring is more than just preaching—it is a multifaceted ministry that calls for multidimensional pastors. Andrew Hébert helps us see that Jesus calls for pastors to live the multitude of Beatitudes from the Sermon on the Mount. *Shepherding like Jesus* is the kind of book that can

renew a pastor's ministry and, more importantly, their own discipleship with the risen Christ.

J. A. Medders, director of assessment,
Acts 29 Network, host of The Acts 29 Podcast,
and author of *Humble Calvinism*

In an age where charisma, eloquence, and talent draw crowds and prompt many to “aspire” to pastoral ministry, Andrew Hébert challenges us to return to the most important aspect of the pastor's life: his character and holiness. I pray this book stirs your affections and compels you to check your heart and motivations as you seek to shepherd the flock like Jesus.

Félix Cabrera, executive director, Baptist Convention of
Puerto Rico, director, SEND Puerto Rico, and pastor,
Iglesia Bautista Ciudad de Dios, San Juan, Puerto Rico

SHEPHERDING LIKE JESUS

The author's proceeds from the sale of this book will be donated to the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering for International Missions and the Annie Armstrong Easter Offering for North American Missions.

ANDREW HÉBERT

SHEPHERDING LIKE JESUS



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Character Matters in Ministry

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Dedicated to my wife, Amy, “a lily among
the thorns,” without whom I would not be
who I am, where I am, or what I am.

And to my children: Jenna, Austin, Mackenzie,
and Brooklyn. I love you each so much. May
you come to know and love Christ for who he
is, the One who is full of grace and truth.

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Preface

In March 2020, a global pandemic emerged that brought our country to a standstill. The economy came to a screeching halt, local businesses shut down, and churches across the nation closed their doors for three months in light of public health concerns. Amid the shutdown, God laid it on my heart to redeem the time by writing a book for pastors. The words flowed quickly as I put onto paper the things that have been in my heart and mind for some time now.

My prayer for this book is that it will refresh and encourage the hearts of pastors and other church leaders. I fear that sometimes the model of pastoral ministry that gets the most press in the American evangelical scene is a model with which most pastors do not resonate and cannot replicate. “Celebrity pastor” culture is harmful to our vocation as pastors. It is also exhausting. For a generation of pastors who feel like the expectations for their ministry do not reflect biblical norms, my hope is that this book will be a healing balm. A biblically faithful pastor does not have

to look like the megachurch pastor down the street. His church does not have to triple in size for him to be counted among God's faithful shepherds. He does not have to get ahead or compete with other churches or be a "visioneer," whatever that means. But he *must* be a man shaped and formed by Christ. I hope this book extends both a high calling for every pastor to reflect the character of Christ in the pastoral task and great encouragement that our righteousness and character are produced by Christ alone.

I want to give a few special acknowledgments. First, special thanks are in order for the pastors who contributed pastoral reflections at the end of each chapter. These are men who reflect pastoral character in their ministries and have been a great example to me. I want to thank my father, Allen, for reading drafts of early chapters and providing helpful editorial feedback. He and my mother, Becky, consistently encouraged me during this project. I cannot thank my wife, Amy, enough. She read and edited the entire book. She has been a constant cheerleader and faithful friend for as long as I have known her. I am so thankful for her friendship. I'm thankful for each of my children: Jenna, Austin, Mackenzie, and Brooklyn. They provided needed fun and distraction when I had writer's block. I strive for my public ministry and private life to be consistent so that they will come to love Christ because they see his life in mine. They are one of the great gifts and joys of my life.

Special thanks go also to the man who first stirred up within me a love for the Sermon on the Mount. Dr. Roy

Metts is the best teacher I have ever had. As the long-time professor of Greek and New Testament at Criswell College, he taught me to love the Scriptures. What's more, he shared his life with me (1 Thess. 2:8). I deeply appreciate his mentorship and friendship over the years.

I want to thank several people at Lifeway and B&H Publishing Group. I am so grateful for Ben Mandrell and his encouragement in this work. Without him, you would not be seeing this book in print as it is. The B&H team is one of the best in the business. Devin Maddox, Taylor Combs, and my editor, Logan Pyron, are men whose input and collaboration made this book possible. Thank you all.

Finally, I want to thank the church members who have called me "pastor" through the years. Being a shepherd of a local church is a great calling and privilege. For the congregations I have had the blessing of pastoring through the years and which have, in turn, blessed me and my family, I am thankful. Fairhaven Baptist Church, Direct Baptist Church, Taylor Memorial Baptist Church, and Paramount Baptist Church have taught me so many valuable lessons about faith and ministry. Because of their love and support of our family through the years, my wife and kids have been blessed and not held bitter thoughts about the local church. Thank you.

Andrew C. Hébert
Amarillo, Texas

FOREWORD

What Is “Success” in Pastoral Ministry?

Much has been made of the importance of God’s call on a man’s life to preach the gospel and to shepherd the church of the living God. That call is an indispensable requirement for one who occupies the role of pastor. However, we may have misunderstood that call! Our call from God is to come into a relationship with him. The pastor serves out of that relationship with God. No man should attempt to become a pastor who does not live in a personal and vital relationship with God. God is more concerned about who we are *with* him than in what we do *for* him.

The absolute necessity of a man’s deeply personal relationship with God is a nonnegotiable requirement of the pastor. The principles revealed in these pages apply to you and will enable you to be God’s voice to those who hear

you as you draw upon your personal relationship with God himself.

In 1879, in his remarkable book *The Pastor: His Qualifications and Duties*, Hezekiah Harvey wrote an amazing paragraph:

The men who deal with spiritual things must themselves be spiritual. . . . Spiritual force comes from within, from the hidden life of God in the soul. It depends not on mere outward activities, but on the divine energies acting through the human faculties, God working through the man, the Holy Ghost permeating, quickening all the powers of the preacher, and speaking His voice to the souls of the people. The soul's secret power with God thus gives public power with men, and the mightiest influences of the pulpit often flow from a mere utterance of man: there is in it a power more than human.¹

In other words, *character really matters*. The pastor cannot make it *for* God until he is real *with* God! The world of Hezekiah Harvey was much different from our world today. Life was simple in the midst of two industrial revolutions. Modern travel and technology were nonexistent. Knowledge was expanding rapidly with few of the conditions we live in today. Harvey's words certainly applied to the world of 1879, but think about how much more they

apply in the midst of the many distractions, turmoil, and advancements of the world today.

Today's pastor faces insurmountable challenges far beyond the abilities of human wisdom and energy. The pastor cannot lead people to God in his own gifts. Dependence upon and intimacy with God must be the experience and practice of the pastor. The call to preach is a sacred trust from our sovereign God to those he knows he can trust.

What kind of man can God trust? *The secret lies in one's character.* He must be a man of integrity, purity, and honesty, with compassionate love for others and a passion for the truth of God. In short, it requires a man who lives and preaches according to God's standards alone!

Andrew Hébert has taken the most remarkable sermon ever delivered and brought it down into the pastor's heart and life. It was delivered by our Lord to more than five thousand individuals on a Galilean hillside. It begins: "After he sat down, his disciples came to him. Then he began to teach them, saying . . ." (Matt. 5:1b-2). Thousands heard that sermon, but it was directed to those disciples who would be used by God to change the world as they delivered his message.

That is what this book is all about: God-called men taking his message of hope to a desperate world. These words we call "the Beatitudes" are placed before those uniquely called of God to go from his presence to deliver his message. That includes you and me!

Be blessed as you read. Be transformed as you apply this message from our Lord Jesus Christ. Your assignment is unique. Your strength is inadequate. Your abilities are limited. But out of your relationship with God, empowered by his Holy Spirit within you, you will become all he called you to be through the wisdom and power he channels through you!

Dr. Jimmy Draper

President Emeritus, Lifeway Christian Resources

Introduction

Poor in spirit. *Broken. Humble. Hungry. Sympathetic. Pure. Reconciling. Enduring.* These are not the words that describe the typical picture of the modern-day “successful” American pastor, but these are the words Jesus said should characterize the lives of his twelve disciples, the men who would lead the church after he ascended into heaven. In the Beatitudes of the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus paints a clear picture of eight attitudes his disciples should embrace if they expect blessing. They are backwards, upside down, surprising, and not at all what typical American congregations expect of their leader.

No, if we were to write the Beatitudes today, they would look something like this:

Blessed are the rich, for their needs will
be met.

Blessed are the bold and the beautiful, for
they will be well liked.

Blessed are the self-promoters, for they will
be noticed.

Blessed are the spiritually self-satisfied,
for they already have everything they
need.

Blessed are the ruthless, for they will get
ahead in life.

Blessed are the shrewd, for they will have
the upper hand.

Blessed are the conquerors, for no one will
get in their way.

Blessed are the comfortable, for they will
never experience trouble.

Many modern-day pastors cut a different image from the biblical picture of a local church shepherd. We are dreamers, visionaries, catalysts, ambitious, thought-leaders, influencers, motivators, and change-agents. Much time is spent crafting and sustaining our image, broadening our reach, and extending our platform. Poor in spirit? Mourning? Humble? Not so much. In many circles, the image of what a pastor is or does looks nothing like the picture Jesus paints for his disciples of the character that marks citizens of his kingdom.

This book is a call to rebel against much of what our culture understands pastoral leadership to be and return to being the Christ-shaped shepherd God has called us to be. It's a challenge to swim against the current of much of what passes for pastoral life these days. It's an invitation to recover the most essential element of pastoral ministry: the character of Christ.

I have good news for you. You do not have to be a “catalytic leader” or a “bold visionary” to be a good pastor. You do not have to be a dynamic communicator or a church growth guru. The most essential component for successful pastoral ministry is not ministerial competence or leadership capacity, but character. Representing Christ well as a pastor means reflecting his character in and among his flock. If you succeed in the area of character, then you can be a successful pastor even in the absence of other gifts or abilities. But if you succeed in church growth, preaching, and leadership but fail in character, you have failed in what matters most.

On February 10, 2019, the *Houston Chronicle* published the first part of a six-part series entitled “Abuse of Faith,” a heart-wrenching exposé of sexual abuse in Southern Baptist churches. The investigation traced the stories of more than seven hundred victims, reaching back twenty years, and unveiled an unsettling pattern of sex abuse that, until now, had largely been kept quiet by some churches and church leaders within the forty-six thousand churches of the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC).

Widespread sexual abuse within the Roman Catholic Church had been exposed a number of years before, but for many evangelicals, the *Houston Chronicle* exposé hit much closer to home. It revealed the fact that several hundred pastors had used their positions of spiritual authority to manipulate and abuse those under their pastoral care. Though many of these pastors were appropriately convicted for their egregious crimes, some of their abuse

remained unknown to the churches they served. And in the worst cases, some of the abuse was known but kept quiet. This allowed these pastors to accept pastoral positions in other churches, going from church to church over the years and perpetuating their abuse with other victims.

This scandal rocked the Southern Baptist Convention, causing the SBC president, J. D. Greear, to publicly announce new policies for the denomination to keep this from happening again. Churches, seminaries, and the denomination's Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission immediately began thinking about how to educate pastors and church members to think more carefully and intentionally about the safety of every person within the reach of their ministries.

Across the denomination, the revelation of this scandal was a wake-up call. It didn't primarily reveal a public relations challenge for the world's largest Protestant denomination. It revealed a *character* problem. How could men who claimed to represent God perpetuate these horrifying acts of abuse upon members of God's family?

On the heels of this ecclesiastically earthshaking story, several national headlines broke describing pastors and other Christian leaders across the country who were resigning their positions of leadership due to accusations of extramarital affairs and other inappropriate behavior. There is a *character* problem in the American church today. Many pastors' gifting has taken them where their character cannot keep them. The character of Christ in the life of

the pastor is the most needed aspect of pastoral ministry, but in many cases it is also the most neglected.

There has never been a time in church history when so many resources have been available to pastors on church leadership, church growth, preaching, and many other practical topics. If you are experiencing a challenge or a question about how to do something, there is a book, an expert, a consultant, a seminary professor, a “thought leader,” or some other guru just around the corner who can give you a quick how-to on whatever problem you face. As someone with a doctorate in leadership, I am definitely *for* these resources and find them necessary and helpful. But I find that many pastors are discouraged when they attend conferences or pick up yet another book telling them how to do ministry in ways most pastors cannot identify with and can never replicate. What if what the church needs most is not another book on the “mechanics” of leadership and church growth? What if what the church *really* needs today is a return to something more basic; namely, a recovery of the character required of spiritual leaders?

The greatest pastoral imperative I have is to adopt the attitude of Christ in my life. It is the most necessary and foundational aspect of pastoral ministry, much more important than making hospital visits, preparing church budgets, or even preaching great sermons. It is the one thing without which ministry cannot succeed.

That is what this book is about. I’ve written about what modern-day pastoral leadership books do not write about enough. It’s the missing ingredient in many pastorates and

the reason so many pastors crash and burn before crossing the finish line. Sadly, embracing the character of Christ means going against the grain of much of what pastoral leadership has become in twenty-first-century churchdom.

But how do we know what the character of Christ should look like in the life of a pastor? I believe that Jesus' Sermon on the Mount, and the Beatitudes in particular, contain a portrait of the character of Jesus, the very character he wants to shape into our lives as Christians and as Christian pastors. This book is not an attempt to provide new insight about how to get your church to double in size or how to become a preacher people can't refuse to hear. Instead, this book is a return to something very old. This is not a book about the competency of a pastor or his capacity, but his character. It is a fresh application of the greatest sermon ever preached to the lives of today's pastors and church leaders. It is a primer on the character of Christ in the life of the pastor.

As we consider these matters together over the pages to come, I have invited a few other pastoral voices into the conversation. After each chapter in this book, I've included a "pastoral reflection" contributed by a number of experienced pastors I deeply respect. I am so thankful for these wise and godly pastors whose ministries have influenced and benefited my own. I want to give special thanks to Jimmy Draper, Russ Barksdale, Steve Dighton, Nathan Lorick, Robert Smith Jr., Doug Munton, Michael Catt, Bobby Worthington, Juan Sanchez, Clint Pressley, Mac

Brunson, and Hance Dilbeck. The insights they share on each chapter's theme are invaluable.

I do not write as a perfect man or a perfect pastor. What I write about here is as much aspirational for me as anything else. The Beatitudes are life-changing, and they are verses I seek to live out in my daily life. But I am still very much "in process." What I share in these pages, I hope will be an encouragement to you as it has been to me. I want to be a faithful pastor who crosses the finish line of faith and ministry and hears, "Well done, good and faithful servant!" (Matt. 25:23). I hope that is your desire as well. If it is, my prayer is that what you read in this book will encourage you to keep running the race with endurance, laying aside the sin that so easily besets us, and "[keep your] eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of our faith" (Heb. 12:1-2). As a fellow pilgrim in the pastoral path, I urge you to look to Jesus' example and his exhortations in the Sermon on the Mount as the starting place for understanding our pastoral task and calling.

CHAPTER I

Pastoral (Bad) Attitudes

For the shepherds are stupid: They don't seek the LORD. Therefore they have not prospered, and their whole flock is scattered.

—Jeremiah 10:21

Pastors are normal people. The shepherd of God's flock is still a sheep himself. As a pastor, I am not a "father" but a "brother," a real brother who is part of the same dysfunctional family as the rest of God's children. I struggle with the same things everyone else does. Pastors wrestle with sin, doubt, failure, discouragement, temptation, heartache, depression, anger, bitterness, pride, greed, jealousy, ambition, hurt, loneliness, and burnout. I have often told people in counseling situations that there is little they can tell me that will surprise me—not only have I heard it before, but in many cases I have been there myself!

The truth is that we have all been there—wanting to throw in the towel, to let a church member know what we really think, and to take the “mask of ministry” off for a minute. We are tired of always having to be “on” when we are in public. I will admit that I have been frustrated at times when I am at the grocery store or eating at a restaurant with my family on my day off, and a church member comes up and sits down at the table to share some “concerns” he has about something happening at the church. I do not always have the most sanctified thoughts. We all have bad attitudes at times.

Sometimes, though, these bad attitudes extend far beyond small frustrations to sinful thoughts, actions, or desires. And sin in the life of a pastor, like sin in the life of any believer, is deadly.

The “Black Ice” of Ministry

As an undergraduate student at Criswell College, I served as a bi-vocational pastor of a church about an hour and a half north of the Dallas-Fort Worth Metroplex. I lived in Dallas and commuted back and forth on the weekends to pastor this small-town church. One weekend we experienced a snowstorm that left the roads icy. Since my hometown is Houston, I had about as much experience driving in ice as I did milking a cow—which is to say, none. As I was making the trip up for the weekend, I hit a patch of black ice that I couldn’t see but was most

definitely there. Before I knew it, my truck began to spin out of control, doing a series of 360-degree turns on the interstate. God protected me that day. Many don't survive that kind of unforeseen danger.

The challenges of pastoral ministry are often unforeseen but always deadly. Only one out of ten pastors who start out as a pastor will finish that way.¹ Whether through moral failure or spiritual burnout, many pastors do not survive the "black ice" of ministry.

While an extensive list of pastoral dangers would be impossible to summarize here, there do seem to be some temptations "common to man" (1 Cor. 10:13 NKJV) that especially endanger pastors.

Fame

The Irish poet Dallán Forgaill once wrote: "Riches I heed not, nor man's empty praise." I have found, however, that in ministry it is easy to heed man's empty praise. The temptation of fame can be fatal in ministry. It is a subtle seduction because it can take different forms and is often masked with righteous aims. We want more "likes and shares" of our online sermons so that "we can reach more for Christ," but how many times is there a small dose of prideful arsenic mixed in with our righteous intentions? We all have a desire to be recognized and to be significant. God created us to have God-directed ambition. But sin always twists God's good gifts. The desire for fame often looks like ambition or recognition wrongly directed.

Fame can take the form of ambition. Too many pastors are constantly looking over the ministry fence to see if the grass is greener at another church. Some pastors are obsessed with “climbing the ministry ladder” and, sadly, use their church as a stepping-stone to get to a ministry assignment that is more appealing. Rarely do pastors leave their current churches for smaller or less influential churches. God always seems to call us to larger, more prominent places. Could it be that ambition is creeping into our interpretation of God’s will for our next ministry step? Ambitious pastors are blind to the goodness, grace, and gifts of God. They find discontentment with where God has called them and what he has called them to do. I wonder at times if our obsession with “bigness” does not cloud our view of God’s kingdom work all around us that is happening in smaller ways and places.

Fame can look like a desire for recognition. We all want to be recognized as talented and gifted. We enjoy hearing a compliment and get hurt when we hear a criticism. Both responses can reveal just how much pride and the desire to be recognized have seeped into our souls. Do you feel as joyful when others are recognized as you are when you receive recognition? Do you feel slighted when you do not receive public or private praise? These may be indicators that you desire fame more than you realize. We sometimes believe our own hype and listen too much to our own internal PR spokesperson.

Pastors sometimes want to be recognized as the “man in charge.” As we were loading into the car after church

one day a few years back, one of my kids asked me: “Daddy, are you the boss of the church?” I remember laughing as I thought about how far from the boss of anything any pastor really is. Yet if we are not careful, the “boss of the church” mentality can creep into our mindset as pastors. There is a big difference between “shepherd” and “chief shepherd,” and it is best not to confuse the two. When things do not go our way or when someone pushes back against our leadership, we realize just how much the idol of recognition has crept into our lives.

The “boastful pride of life” (1 John 2:16 NASB) is one of the three original sins of the garden of Eden. Paul warns that a pastor should “not be a new convert or he might become conceited and incur the same condemnation as the devil” (1 Tim. 3:6). Fame is a hunger that will never be fully satisfied. If you are not content with what God has given you at this present moment, you will likely never have enough to be fulfilled. Paul said that he “didn’t seek glory from people” (1 Thess. 2:6). The desire for fame, recognition, and the pursuit of prideful ambition—these are ministry killers.

Infidelity

Sexual temptation is real. Giving in to this temptation will render a pastor’s ministry dead on arrival. One of the danger zones for pastors is treating women we are not married to as anything other than “sisters, with absolute purity” (1 Tim. 5:2 NIV).

Billy Graham famously determined never to be alone with a woman who was not his wife. He would not eat a meal or ride in a car alone with another woman. He would not even walk into a hotel room without first having a staff member check it to make sure there was not a woman hiding in a closet, waiting to catch him in a compromising situation. This protected Dr. Graham's ministry from public reproach and left him uncompromised in his ministry.

We must be so careful in how we relate to the opposite sex. In our friendships, in our pastoral counseling, in our visitation, in our social media interactions, appropriate relationships can quickly become inappropriate if we do not embrace the response Joseph took in temptation: run!

Sexual temptation is a problem in the church. We have all heard of too many pastors who have dropped out of ministry because of moral failure. George Barna discovered a few years ago that 57 percent of pastors and 64 percent of youth pastors admitted to struggling with pornography either currently or in the past.² And that's just the number of pastors who were willing to admit it. Studies show that 37 percent of pastors admit to having an inappropriate sexual relationship with a church member.³ The articles in the *Houston Chronicle* about sex abuse in the church demonstrate that the admonition to be sexually pure cannot be taken seriously enough. The ripple effects of sexual sin extend far beyond any one of us to include our wives, our children, our children's friends, the church, and the community, and can even create regional or national headlines. Lust, flirtation, pornography, adultery, sexual

abuse, and sexual immorality of any and all kinds are deadly dangers for pastors.

Fighting

Perhaps no other ministry danger is more personally draining than church conflict. Several thousand churches close every year, and many of them close because of division and fighting within the church.

Satan loves nothing more than dividing, distracting, and discouraging Jesus' church. Nothing will zap a church of its spiritual vitality or steal a pastor's joy faster than a church fight. Some church members love drama. In fact, they are bored if there isn't something to gossip or fight about. It is sad but all too true.

I clearly remember the first conflict I experienced as a pastor. A member was upset at how long my sermons were. (He had a point.) He called a secret committee meeting to which I was not invited and sought to rally support against me. A few months later he tried to stir the pot again because he disagreed with my interpretation of a biblical text about the end times. I remember being so discouraged that he would try to turn church members against me that I seriously contemplated quitting and going into some other field. Little did I know that it would just go downhill from there. I have experienced conflict in every church I have served. Some are harder than others, but none are more difficult to witness than watching staff members gather people together to leave the church and start something new down the road.

Unfortunately, in a fallen world, conflict is inevitable where two or more are gathered together. But fighting becomes deadly, and the hurt within churches becomes more intense when the pastor gets involved. Pastors should always take the high road—there is less traffic there. But from time to time, pastors give in and join the fight. At times they will even throw around their weight to try to win. Sadly, if a pastor has to remind the church that he is the pastor, it usually means he has lost his leadership in that congregation. In our digital age, this fighting spirit may even show up outside the walls of the church and end up on the walls of the pastor’s social media pages. I am sad to say that I have participated in a number of these unhelpful social media feuds from time to time myself.

This is not to say that the pastor should *never* participate in a fight. A pastor friend once encouraged me during a difficult time of church conflict in this way: he said that a pastor should rarely draw his sword, but if he does, he ought to make sure he is the last one standing and then be willing to stay long-term to put the broken pieces back together. There are times when a pastor is called to “contend for the faith” (Jude 3). There are times when a pastor should drive out wolves from the flock (Titus 1:9–14). There are hills worth dying on. The problem is when we make mountains out of every molehill and are eager to fight. There is a difference between standing for what is right and going around picking fights or engaging in church disputes with the wrong spirit and the wrong aims.

Paul says that a pastor must not be “a bully but gentle, not quarrelsome” (1 Tim. 3:3).

When a pastor has a combative spirit and is eager to put on the boxing gloves every time there is a differing point of view, not only does he fail to exemplify the character of Christ, but it almost always spells the end of his ministry within that church or, at a minimum, ends the effectiveness of his ministry. When we fail to be agents of unity, we do not represent Christ well.

Finances

Finances can present a world of problems in ministry. As those who lead ministries that operate entirely upon the generosity of God’s people, pastors have to walk carefully through the minefield of personal and church finances. Financial missteps affect not only the church’s life but also the reputation of Christ in the community.

Finances present multiple challenges and dangers for pastors. Perhaps the most obvious and egregious is the embezzlement or misappropriation of church funds. We have all heard of churches who have suffered because of this. Sometimes it happens through an elaborate scheme where the pastor steals the church’s money a little at a time or a lot all at once. Sometimes the crime is less blatant. Perhaps the pastor uses a church credit card for nonapproved personal expenditures, getaways, or personal golf games. Whatever the case, this is stealing.

Another financial danger is when a pastor mismanages the church’s finances. This is not always intentional, but it

does happen. Perhaps it is due to ignorance, negligence, or risky stewardship practices. Financial mismanagement is a land mine. Few pastors are prepared to steward the budget of the church by themselves. Committees provide great protection in this regard. Committees can keep us from making unintentional, but still unwise, mistakes. I heard of one pastor whose church was in hard financial straits, so he took church money to Las Vegas and gambled it away in an attempt to multiply it and save the church with this one last-ditch effort. Truth is sometimes stranger than fiction. A practice one pastor suggested to me many years ago and that I have embraced ever since is never to touch the money. Even if a church member comes up to hand me their tithe check, I won't take it. I will simply direct them to put it in the offering box or in the mail. I want to remain above reproach. A reputation takes a lifetime to build but only a moment to lose.

Financial misappropriation and mismanagement are more common than any of us want to admit. Yet most pastors will not experience either of these land mines. Much more common is the land mine of financial greed. Brothers, we must be so careful about our motivations in ministry. Paul says that he did not have "greedy motives" (1 Thess. 2:5). Peter exhorts the pastors of the Diaspora to "shepherd God's flock . . . not out of greed for money but eagerly" (1 Pet. 5:2).

We all have the responsibility to provide for our families (1 Tim. 5:8). I want to make enough money to provide for my wife and kids, to be generous to the Lord and to

others, to save for the future, and to enjoy the good gifts God allows us to enjoy. But if that is *why* I'm doing what I'm doing, then money is my master, not Jesus. If I am in the ministry for the money, my motives are mistaken. The truth is, there is no amount of money the church could pay me to make up for the stress, headaches and heartaches, lost sleep, interrupted vacations, and conflict that go with the territory of being a pastor. If my motivation is to be compensated adequately for the work I do as a pastor, I am going to be disappointed. My motivation must be more than money.

Our motive in ministry should be to love the Lord, the Word, the church, and the lost. A pastor friend once humorously told me why the church does and does not pay him. He said the church does not pay him to preach or to make hospital visits. He loves preaching and loves people and would do those things for free. He said the church pays him to manage the darn staff. I'll leave that one right there. We do it all for the Lord.

We must be aboveboard in all things related to finances. Few things hurt the witness of the pastor or the church in the community more than the pastor's misappropriation, mismanagement, or misplaced motivation in regard to money. The love of money truly is the "root of all kinds of evil" (1 Tim. 6:10). A lack of integrity in the area of finances is a clear and present danger in ministry.

Fatigue

Leadership is a high-stress calling. There are no two ways about it. Pastors have all the stresses of any leader with the added weight of spiritual burdens. The hazards of the job include physical, mental, emotional, relational, and spiritual fatigue. Many pastors walk around burned-out without even realizing it, having become so accustomed to perpetual exhaustion that they do not even notice it anymore. It often takes a physical or mental breakdown before pastors realize how tired they are. Sometimes pastors do not realize how susceptible to sin they are in this fatigued state until they make a life-altering decision to give in to one temptation or another in a moment of exhausted vulnerability. We often do not realize what the weight of ministry has done to our souls until it's too late.

Few pastors take care of their own souls in the midst of taking care of the flock. Many lack disciplined rhythms of spiritual, relational, and physical health. The busyness of doing the Lord's work can sometimes crowd out the intentionality of being in the Lord's presence. Most pastors identify with Martha much more than they do Mary.

Some of the fatigue comes from the inescapable responsibilities of pastoral ministry. Sermon preparation, for instance, is a round-the-clock responsibility. I have jokingly said that preaching is in some ways like pregnancy—you give birth to the sermon on Sunday morning and then find out you are pregnant again on Monday morning! There is no real way to leave this work at the office. I carry

the sermon around in my mind and heart all week long, at all times of the day and night. And that's just sermon prep! The constant needs of the people for counseling, weddings, funerals, hospital visits, the need to lead the church staff well, coordinate with church committees, work with church deacons, fulfill responsibilities to the community and the denomination can all be overwhelming and never-ending. There has never been a time in my ministry when I have laid my head down on the pillow at the end of the day and thought, *I finished everything I needed to do today*. There is always more to do. It is exhausting, and there is no way of getting around it.

Some of the fatigue associated with ministry is what ministry does to us, but some of it we do to ourselves through sinful action or perhaps sinful inaction. An unwillingness to be disciplined physically or spiritually often leads to spiritual burnout that is no one's fault but the pastor's. Some pastors have a "hero complex" where they will not take the time off that the church offers for them to replenish their own souls and invest much needed away time with their families. Failing to observe Sabbath rest is as much a sin as failing to observe the Commandments not to commit adultery or murder. A failure to rest is its own type of unfaithfulness, but the mistress is work. It is its own type of murder, where the pastor is killing himself to work. He is also killing his own joy and the joy of his family. John McCallum describes this experience well:

I never had a complete breakdown . . . but I often carried around a low-level depression. I often did my work without enjoying either the work, the people, or God in the process. I do not think the people I have served picked up on that very much. I wore the mask pretty well. In retrospect, however, I realize that in my weariest seasons I deprived the church, my family, myself, and the Lord of my best ministry and my deepest joy. I was serving Jesus as if he was a slave-master rather than a shepherd, as if he was more Pharaoh than friend.⁴

Friends, this is more common than most church members will ever know. Fatigue is often a gateway drug that weakens the pastor's defenses against other sin. Fatigue may reflect sinful habits that don't reflect the character of Christ who "often withdrew to deserted places and prayed" (Luke 5:16). Jesus modeled a rhythm of work and rest that pastors should, but often do not, imitate.

A Call to the Character of Christ

In light of these temptations, what we need most is not another book on the how-tos of ministry. We need nothing less than a return to the character of Christ. Fame, females, fighting, finances, fatigue—these are just a few tools Satan uses to derail pastors from their God-given

ministries. These temptations, like all others, do not create character problems but simply reveal the character problems that were already there. As pastors, and as believers, we are called to more than this. We are called to the character of Christ. Embracing Christ's character is the essence of what it means to be a pastor.

There are many ways of thinking about pastoral ministry. One common way to think about the pastorate is through the lens of *logos*, *ethos*, and *pathos*. *Logos* in ministry has to do with the content of the message we preach, the "good deposit" (2 Tim. 1:14) that has been entrusted to us and which we are to entrust with others. *Pathos* in ministry is about whether the preacher believes the message he preaches. *Ethos* focuses on the believability of the preacher. Is his life consistent with what he preaches? Does he walk the walk or just talk the talk?

Much has been written about the *logos* and even the *pathos* of ministry, but not enough has been written about the *ethos* of ministry. The ethics of pastoral ministry relates primarily to the pastor's character. Does the life of the pastor reflect the character of Christ?

There is no better place to go than Scripture to understand what the character of Christ in pastoral ministry should look like. And there is no better place in Scripture to look than the Sermon on the Mount, the greatest continuous section of Jesus' teaching recorded in Scripture. In the Sermon on the Mount, we have a clear picture of the character Christ wants to form in the life of every believer, but especially in the shepherds of Christ's flock. We are

going to journey into what I believe is the most foundational paragraph of the most famous sermon ever preached to see how the character of Christ can take shape in the life of the pastor.

**POOR IN SPIRIT. BROKEN.
HUMBLE. HUNGRY. SYMPATHETIC.
PURE. RECONCILING. ENDURING.**

These are not the words that describe the typical picture of the modern-day successful American pastor, but these are the words Jesus said should characterize the lives of his twelve disciples. In many circles, the image of what a pastor is or does looks nothing like the picture Jesus paints for his disciples of the character that marks citizens of his kingdom.

Shepherding like Jesus is a call to rebel against much of what our culture understands pastoral leadership to be and return to being the Christ-shaped shepherd God has called pastors to be. It's an invitation to recover the most essential element of pastoral ministry: the character of Christ.



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