

Practical Thoughts on an Enduring Ministry, Part 3

1 Timothy 5:17

A225

Over the past few days, we've considered six practical suggestions for maintaining an enduring ministry. Today we will conclude by looking at four more.

7.Expect to work hard. If you're faithful to your calling, you will find it to be a difficult and relentless task. Pastoring is not like an assembly line that stops and lets you walk away. It is a kind of blessed bondage that requires discipline and sacrifice. Still it brings the purest joys and most lasting, even eternal satisfaction.

Enduring pastors are not undisciplined people who show up on Sunday for an improvised pep rally. Nor are they men with a few years' worth of sermons who take them from church to church. Rather, they are disciplined men whose lives are brought into line so that they can invest their physical and spiritual energies into the flock God has given them. It's a consuming task, but it comes with the promise of long-term impact as your congregation is taught the truth and sees it lived out over decades. They will trust you and you will find them your crown of rejoicing. Moreover, being forced to keep studying and preaching through Scripture will expand your own understanding of divine revelation so as to increase your usefulness and the body of your life work. This will bring the blessing of learning from others because it requires that you be a diligent and constant reader of the best of biblical, theological, and biographical material.

8.Trust the Word to do its work. People in churches today are starving for theological, expository preaching, but don't even know it. To be sure, they realize the vacancies in their life, the shallow places, the lack of insight, the absence of understanding. They realize that they cannot solve their numerous problems and dilemmas. They're looking for divine answers, and they're being offered human, artificial substitutes that can't help. Long-term exposition will satisfy their hearts and, at the same time, increase their appetite for more. And God has given us the deep treasuries and fresh truths of His Word, the riches of which no amount of years can exhaust.

9.Always depend on the Lord. Obviously, a ministry that rests solely on human strength, cleverness, or survey strategies, even if successful numerically, is doomed to be short-term and superficial. A lasting spiritually transforming ministry must be built by God's power released through His truth. And He always blesses His truth and the labor of a true man of God. When you realize that you can't resolve all the problems in your church, that you can't save the unbelievers who attend your services, that you can't cause spiritual fruit in your people—you will fully rest on God who can, accepting your weakness and inadequacy, and relying solely on the power of the Word through the Spirit.

10.Don't leave just to leave. When you approach your pastoral ministry as a life commitment and serve your flock as I have described, you will find it hard to leave. We are, generally, not called away *from*, but called *to* a people. Leave your current ministry for another only if you have a true calling to

that other place. The fact that a new opportunity pays better, has a larger facility, promises respite from current problems, or provides a platform for greater influence, doesn't necessarily make it a right move and can play to ambition. So make sure that when you leave, your reasons are spiritually compelling. And also, do your best to ensure the flock you leave behind is well taken care of before you go. That is a vital part of your legacy.

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