

Practical Thoughts on an Enduring Ministry, Part 2

Scripture: 1 Timothy 5:17

Code: A224

Yesterday, we began by looking at the first three of ten practical suggestions for sustaining an enduring pastoral ministry. Today we will consider the next three.

4. Study to know God, not just to make sermons. The key to avoiding debilitating weariness in ministry is personal spiritual renewal. If your heart first and then your preaching is passionately alive to spiritual things, then you can expect your congregation to be passionately alive to spiritual things. Such passion, of course, must come first and foremost through your concentrated study of the Word of God. And here's the key: Don't study to prepare sermons; study to know the truth, to rejoice in the glory and grace of God, and to be conformed to His will. Sermons should never be the primary goal of your Bible study; they should only be the overflow of it. When you study, seek an accurate understanding of who God is and what He expects—first and foremost, this is for your own devotion and holiness. And then, from the abundance, instruct your people, urging them to follow you as you follow the Truth, written and Incarnate.

5. Be thankful and be humble. As a servant of the Chief Shepherd, you need to be grateful for the flock that Christ has entrusted to you, and regularly tell both them and the Lord of your deep gratitude. Contentment begins with confidence in God's providence. Your church may not be as big or as financially well-off as the church down the road, but you can be content if you trust that God has sovereignly placed you exactly where He wants you to be. It also helps to always remember that, no matter your circumstances, you are unworthy of what you've been given.

Don't think you deserve a bigger ministry than you have. It is grace that has placed you in such a noble calling. Learn to define success in terms of faithfulness, and not in terms of popularity. The measure of your ministry is not determined by numerical growth, but by adherence to truth in life and message. While many preachers seem to work for earthly glory, godly preachers humbly labor for the glory that is yet to be given to them, in the presence of their Lord.

6. Don't lose sight of the priority. As a pastor, your duty is to shepherd your flock—this means nourishing them on the Word of God, leading them toward Christ-likeness in tender affection, while protecting them from error. You are a pastor. You are not primarily an event coordinator, a financial analyst, a vision-caster, or even a leader. Your ultimate responsibility is not to innovate or administrate but to disseminate divine truth. Only in that way will you be training up people within your congregation to live and serve effectively and obediently for the honor of God and the impact of the gospel. A church environment dominated by the Word and the Spirit will produce a congregation that will serve alongside you so that you will be able to concentrate on what you are called to do: teaching the Word while humbling yourself before God in dependent prayer.

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