

Pastor General's Report



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Dear Ministers,

Each faithful minister of Jesus Christ must ask himself from time to time, "What kind of leader am I?" God has called His ministers to a most important responsibility and He expects us to use the office *according to His will!*

The ministry is an office rooted in service. It was established by Jesus Christ for the purpose of perfecting the saints and edifying the Body of Christ, which is the Church (Ephesians 4:11-16). But simply because hands were laid on a man to set him apart for the ministry *does not mean* that everything he does from that point on is somehow "holy." What it does mean is that he now has an *even greater* responsibility to submit himself to God in HUMILITY so that he *will be* led by God's Spirit and NOT by his *own* ideas, opinions, prejudices, habits and likes or dislikes.

True ministers of Jesus Christ must *live by* the instruction given to elders in I Peter 5:1-6. To be "clothed with humility" is not just a platitude; it is a *way of life* — an *attitude or state of mind* that is grounded in God's Spirit and reflected in one's approach not only to God, but to all other human beings.

Consider how *you* lead the congregation entrusted to you. Are you a "shepherd" who cares for his sheep in compassion, patience and mercy? Are you a faithful leader who can be consistently counted on to be fair and honest? Are you a *listener*—one who makes it a practice never to "answer a matter before you hear it" (Proverbs 18:13)?

Are you spiritually *dependable*, recognizing your responsibility to take the action necessary for the spiritual health of the individual and the congregation? Or are you too fearful to point out sins and spiritual shortcomings when necessary?

On the other hand, how about the matter of

"authority"? Are you like one who reacts indignantly each time he feels someone may be "challenging his authority"? Can a member politely and respectfully disagree with you on a secular matter without your questioning his "attitude" or feeling the need to "correct him" for "insubordination"? Ministers should not presume to give advice or "be an authority" in areas that are not related to their ministerial responsibility.

When you must take disciplinary action with a member, is your deepest concern for the spiritual well-being and good of the member? Do you carefully consider your approach and your words so that you can most effectively *reach* the person in *love*?

Do you like to "tell people off"? Do people you counsel feel "put down"? Or do you pray for the skill and wisdom to show God's begotten children what they need to do to overcome their problems and sins in an *encouraging, caring and positive* manner? We should continually keep I Timothy 5:1-2 in mind.

Do you "talk down" to those you counsel? Do you make them feel belittled? Do you treat them like children in your tone of voice or in your manner? Do you have your mind already made up about a situation before you give them a chance to talk about it? Or do you treat those you counsel with dignity and respect?

If you must suspend or disfellowship a member, do

you do it in love, with genuine concern, being sure to offer them *hope* of being reinstated to fellowship? There is a time to "rebuke them sharply" as Paul wrote to Titus in Titus 1:13. But one must read the entire chapter to realize that Paul was *absolutely not* talking about the average member of the Church!

When counseling, do you frustrate the person you are counseling by continually

interrupting to "seize on" statements or misstatements he or she might make so you can "drive home" the point? Is it your common practice to "put people in their

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Stats at a Glance

	U.S.	Int'l	Total
Baptized members	63,395	25,060	88,455
Congregations	437	343	780
Full-time ministers	406	251	657
Local church elders	575	179	754

place"? Or do those who counsel with you usually feel that you were fair and just with them, that you really did give them a chance to make all their concerns known, that you really did listen and consider what they were saying?

When you have to correct someone, does it often turn into a confrontation? Do you level accusations, or do you make a diligent effort to get *all* the facts and to give the person an opportunity to express himself? Do you give people correction in private, or in front of others? Is it given harshly, or sensibly and reasonably? The motive of correction or criticism should be to help the person to improve--to grow. Consistently giving harsh criticism serves no positive purpose whatever and causes frustration and despair.

And do you *fastidiously avoid* unnecessary discussion of a member's problems with others, even with other ministers who are not directly involved?

What about timeliness? Do you tend to put off the difficult counseling? Do you wait and wait to deal with a "sticky" problem, or do you recognize the need to deal with a matter *before* it becomes even worse?

What about cliques? Are you perceived as having a tight circle of cohorts that leaves the average member feeling on the outside? That kind of appearance will not promote the trust and confidence that members of a congregation must have to feel free to seek the counsel they need. It creates an atmosphere of frustration and discouragement.

How do you work with other leaders in the congregation? Do you ask for and appreciate their advice? Or do you consider it a challenge to your authority when a suggestion is given or a question raised? Do you strive to encourage input and ideas? Have you learned how to use good ideas and politely refuse bad ones?

Pastors, do you make it a point, when possible, to explain to the elders and deacons *why* you have chosen to initiate a certain project, or make a certain change in procedure? People can be a far greater support system to you if you make them feel they are more than mere robots who should carry out every instruction without any understanding.

Of course, there may be times that it would be simply indiscreet or unwise to explain everything. But if your track record is always to share the whys when you *can*, your leaders will understand when you aren't able to. And because of your trust in them, they will be in a far better position to help you carry out the goals of any given project. There is a saying that goes like this: "It's easier to pull your weight when you can see where you're going."

Surely one of the *greatest traps* a minister could fall into would be the trap of EGO. To assume that your

opinion on any subject is unceasingly directly inspired by God would be a tragic mistake. God does lead His ministers and grant them wisdom. But that wisdom comes from carefully following the principles of His Word. It comes from *obeying* God, from being led by His Spirit. It comes from staying in close contact with God. It is not born in vanity, in self-righteousness or in a smug, egotistic attitude. It is certainly not something that comes somehow "automatically" with ordination.

God *hates* pride. But do we hate it when we see it in ourselves? Do we *see* it in ourselves? Do we even *look for it* in ourselves? It is *there!* It is self-righteous vanity to fail to see one's own sins, and to think one is somehow particularly righteous just because he is in a leadership position! Humility is a GOAL that *must be continually striven for!* It is ABSOLUTELY ESSENTIAL for salvation! Have you made it a spiritual goal for yourself?

In short, is the authority God has given you used for the *benefit* of everyone in your congregation? God says, "When the righteous are in authority, the people rejoice" (Proverbs 29:2). Why? Because that authority is used in a fair and consistent manner to see that everyone is given the maximum opportunity for growth.

Jesus said in Mark 10:42-45, "You know that those who are considered rulers over the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them. Yet it shall not be so among you; but whoever desires to become great among you shall be your servant. And whoever of you desires to be first shall be slave of all. For even the Son of man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many."

I've shown you here some of the common pitfalls that any person in a leadership position can fall into. So let's take time out to ask ourselves some of these basic questions. Let's *see to it* that God's chosen ministry serves His people as faithful shepherds, not as mere hirelings who do not have the best interest of the flock at heart.

Serving God's people is a *most serious and profound calling!* We need to remain close to God, diligently following the lead of His Spirit!

Let our sermons reflect Titus 2:1-15. We must exhort God's people to *come out of this world* and to be *zealous of good works*, "looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ" (verse 13).

Times are growing more *serious* daily! Let's be about our Father's business.

With deep love, in Jesus' name,

Joseph W. Tkach