

# YOUR PASTOR & YOU

by Richard W. De Haan

## Scriptural Principles

**I**t has been my wonderful and cherished privilege for a number of years to serve the Lord as a minister of the gospel. During that time, however, I have never been the pastor of a church. I have never experienced the blessing of being the regular preacher to a local congregation. After leaving college and seminary, I joined my father in the Radio Bible Class. And since that time, most of my life has been involved in and dedicated to this work.

Even though I've never pastored a church, my most tender, formative, and impressionable years were spent in a parsonage. I was the son of a pastor, and I shall always remember those days. How could I ever forget the thrilling experiences of my childhood, when, as the very windows of heaven seemed to open, showers of blessing were poured out in such abundance! It seems as if only yesterday, with my head on mother's shoulder, I listened to my father's words as he would plead with lost souls to

flee from the wrath to come. Yes, I shall always treasure those precious memories, and even more so since my father's homegoing. He's now with the Lord whom he loved and served so faithfully.

There are, however, some things I'd like to forget. Although the work of a pastor can be most satisfying and rewarding, it also involves extremely difficult, discouraging, and disappointing experiences that can sap the energy and frustrate the efforts of even the most dedicated servant of God. As the son of a pastor, I was made aware of the unique problems facing those who are called of God into such an honored place of service. Because of this, my heart will always go out to those faithful pastors who so nobly serve the Lord in their high calling.

As good soldiers of

Christ, these men of God continue on without complaint in spite of the temptation to give up and say, "What's the use anyway?" They have my deepest respect. I know that when Jesus comes, their reward will be great.

It is not only the work of preaching, the calling, and the administrative duties that tax the energies and endurance of a pastor but the physical weariness and nervous exhaustion that can result in strained relationships between him and his congregation. When there's misunderstanding and opposition involving honest differences of opinion and earnest convictions on the part of respected members, he feels the pressure of his position most greatly. The inability to please the very ones he loves the most, and the disappointment of being opposed by those he was

depending on for moral support—these are the things that prompt him, on occasion, to throw up his hands in despair.

Sorry to say, in many churches it seems that the pastor just cannot do anything right. No matter how sincere he may be or how hard he tries, there are always some who stand ready to find fault and criticize. Someone has described it this way:

- If the pastor is young, he lacks experience; if his hair is gray, he's too old for the young people.
- If he has five or six children, he has too many; if he has none, he's setting a bad example.
- If he preaches from notes, he has canned sermons and is dry; if his messages are extemporaneous, he isn't deep enough.
- If he caters to the poor

in the church, he's playing to the grandstand; if he pays attention to the wealthy, he's trying to be an aristocrat.

- If he uses too many illustrations, he's neglecting the Bible; if he doesn't include stories, he isn't clear.
- If he condemns wrong, he's cranky; if he doesn't preach against sin, they claim he's a compromiser.
- If he preaches the truth, he's too offensive; if he doesn't present the "whole counsel of God," he's a hypocrite.
- If he fails to please everybody, he's hurting the church and should leave; if he does make them all happy, he has no convictions.
- If he drives an old car, he shames his congregation; if he buys a new one, he's setting

his affection on earthly things.

- If he preaches all the time, the congregation gets tired of hearing just one man; if he invites guest ministers, he's shirking his responsibility.
- If he receives a large salary, he's mercenary; if he gets a small one, they say it proves he isn't worth much anyway.

Now, I realize that this exaggerates the situation, but it does emphasize the general attitude in so many places. It doesn't seem to make much difference where you go or which church you attend, there's always that one group or faction who is "down" on the pastor. Even though he is doing his very best to shepherd the flock faithfully, longing for the rich blessing of the Lord on his ministry, and making an earnest effort to earn

the approval of the congregation as a whole, there is always someone who finds fault, opposes him behind his back, or publicly denounces his actions.

Recognizing that such conditions do exist and that they mar the effectiveness of the local church, which has such a vital role in God's program, I am bringing these lessons on the subject, *Your Pastor And You*. Some may question my motives and misunderstand what I say, but I'm going to speak out anyway and let the chips fall where they may.

## **AN EXAMPLE**

In the gospel of John, three things are said about John the Baptist that are true of every genuine servant of God. And I'm convinced that if these three things were kept in mind by each pastor and every member of

his congregation, much of the difficulty being experienced in our churches today would be avoided.

The apostle John wrote:

*There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. This man came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light, that all through him might believe. He was not that Light, but was sent to bear witness of that Light (Jn. 1:6-8).*

There are three significant things mentioned in these verses about John the Baptist.

First, we are told that “there was a man.” He was a human being, subject to the same weaknesses and limitations as other people. John was no angel; he was no supernatural creation; he was no hyperphysical emissary from the throne of God. Rather, as the record states it, “There was a man.”

Second, we are told that “there was a man sent from God.” Although he was a man with human limitations, John was distinguished and set apart from others in that he was a specially chosen one. He was “a man sent from God.”

And third, we are told that “there was a man sent from God . . . to bear witness of the Light.” He came to preach Christ, the Light of the world. That was John’s mission. Verse 8 says, “He was not that Light, but was sent to bear witness of that Light.”

From this passage in John 1, we learn the following things about John the Baptist:

1. He was a man.
2. He was a man sent from God.
3. He was a man sent from God to bear witness of the Light.

These very same things can also be said about all

pastors who are genuine in their calling. They are men—they have **human limitations**. They are men sent from God—they have **divine authorization**. They are men sent from God to bear witness of the Light—they have a **heavenly commission**. Their primary work is to present the Lord Jesus, the Living Word, revealed in the written Word. If true to their mission, they preach Christ. Like John the Baptist, they are to “bear witness of the Light.”

So keep in mind these three things about this man of God when you think of your pastor—that is, if he is born again, believes the Bible to be the infallible Word of God, gives evidence of being ordained of God, and is committed to faithful service and the sound preaching of the Word.

Remember, as a man, he

has faults and limitations. As a man with a divine call, however, he should be treated as God’s servant. And, inasmuch as his mission is to proclaim the gospel of Christ, you owe him your cooperation and prayer support to help make his ministry as effective as possible.

What I say in this booklet does not apply to anyone who preaches another gospel, rejects salvation by grace through faith alone, or denies the deity of Christ, His virgin birth, His perfect life, His atonement for sin, His literal resurrection from the dead, and His coming again. One who does not accept these Bible truths could never be called “a man sent from God.” Beware of blind leaders of the blind!

Our purpose in proclaiming the Word of God is, like that of John the

Baptist, to “bear witness of the Light” and to preach Christ—the Savior of sinners, the only hope of a lost and dying world.

## **AN INVITATION EXTENDED**

It was about Jesus that the apostle Paul wrote:

*Who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross (Phil. 2:6-8).*

And the apostle John stated it this way:

*And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us (Jn. 1:14).*

Whereas true ministers of Christ are men sent from God, only the Lord Jesus was the God-man—truly God and truly man. You may ignore what I say and turn a deaf ear to other preachers, but you dare not slight God’s Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. He was God Incarnate, the Word made flesh. He came to this world for the purpose of giving Himself as a sacrifice for our sins.

He said:

*The Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost (Lk. 19:10).*

*For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many (Mk. 10:45).*

And the apostle Paul told us:

*For when we were still without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. . . . But God*

*demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us (Rom. 5:6,8).*

Because the Savior came and provided for our redemption through His death on the cross, salvation is offered as a gift. It is received by faith. The Bible says, “The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Rom. 6:23). And John gave us this promise: “But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name” (Jn. 1:12).

To receive Jesus as your Savior, offer this simple prayer of faith right now:

Lord Jesus, I acknowledge my sinfulness and inability to save myself. But believing that You died and shed Your blood for

my sins, I now receive You as my Savior. I’m trusting You alone for my salvation. Save me.

Did you do that? If you did and really meant what you said, then thank the Lord for saving your soul and claim the promise in Romans 10:13 that “whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.”

Now, if you have accepted Christ as your Savior, you should affiliate yourself with a Bible-believing, Bible-teaching, and gospel-preaching church. It’s not that church membership has anything to do with obtaining salvation. That’s a gift of God’s grace received through faith. But you need a place where you can hear the preaching of God’s Word, enjoy the fellowship of other believers, and find an opportunity for Christian service.

## Human Limitations

All of us, I'm sure, have heard comments something like this:

“Oh, our pastor is a very good man, BUT . . . .”

“Our minister is an excellent Bible teacher, BUT . . . .”

“Our preacher has a wonderful personality, BUT . . . .”

It seems, in spite of his many commendable virtues, there's always that something else about him they don't like. “He's a capable expositor of the Word,” they'll say, “but such an ineffective evangelist.” “He is a powerful preacher, but such a poor pastor.” “He works well with older folks,” they'll acknowledge, “but the young people just don't seem to like him.” And on and on they go.

Yes, in almost every

church there seems to be at least one group who, although making favorable comments about the pastor, cannot refrain from also publicly pointing out his shortcomings. Because of this, many of God's servants are waging a

*Many of God's servants are waging a difficult and discouraging battle.* 🌿

difficult and discouraging battle. They are doing their best, but because of dissension, dissatisfaction, and opposition from those within the church, the work of the Lord is suffering. Now the reason for this, in many instances, is due to a misunderstanding of the nature and work of the

pastor. So it's my prayer that this booklet, with its special emphasis on the minister and his people, will be used of God to give us a new insight into the proper relationship between the pastor and his congregation. This should foster harmony and love in the local church.

In all of our lessons on the subject *Your Pastor And You*, we are using three verses in the gospel of John as the basis for our study. We read:

*There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. This man came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light, that all through him might believe. He was not that Light, but was sent to bear witness of that Light (Jn. 1:6-8).*

## JOHN THE BAPTIST

In these verses, three things are mentioned about John the Baptist.

First, he was a man. John was no angel or supernatural creature. Rather, he was a human being just like we are. Verse 6 begins with the words, "There was a man."

Second, he was a man "sent from God." He was distinguished from other people in that he was a specially chosen vessel. He was a God-sent one.

And third, he was a man sent from God to "bear witness of the Light." He was sent to testify about Christ, the promised Messiah, the Savior of sinners.

Remember, then, these three facts about John the Baptist:

1. He had human limitations—he was "a man."
2. He had divine

authorization—he was “sent from God.”

3. He had a heavenly commission—he came “to bear witness of the Light.”

These same characteristics mark every God-sent pastor today.

## THE MAN OF GOD

Let’s think, first of all, about the fact that all ministers are men. They are restricted and hampered by the very same human limitations as everyone else. The gospel writer in John 1:6, referring to John the Baptist, told us that “there was a man.” And in this short phrase we have a description of all servants of the Lord. God has so ordained that men, in spite of all their faults and shortcomings, should be the channels through whom the Word should be

proclaimed to others.

I marvel at God’s choice. I never cease to wonder why He should select me, a faltering, stumbling, and unworthy vessel, to bear the good news of the gospel. From the purely human standpoint, He might better have sent angels to minister the Word, or created some special emissaries to proclaim His message. They could have done a perfect job and then no one could complain or criticize. No one could say, “Oh, he’s all right, BUT . . .” And yet God saw fit to choose men!

The Lord takes those who themselves were in need of a Savior and places them in a position of privilege to proclaim the glorious message of redemption to others. The apostle Paul commanded his young friend Timothy:

*The things that you have heard from me among*

*many witnesses, commit these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also (2 Tim. 2:2).*

The fact that our pastors are but men with all the imperfections and characteristics of other human beings should certainly be evident to everyone. This truth, however, seems to be so easily forgotten when making our demands on their lives and ministry. As a result, too many people in our churches are expecting too much and continually criticizing their preachers with comments like: “Oh, our pastor is a wonderful person, BUT . . .” “He’s a good preacher, but he just doesn’t know how to handle people.” “Our pastor is a deep student of the Word, but he’s such a poor administrator.”

One woman told me, “Our pastor is a real man of God all right. He

practices what he preaches. His life is above reproach. But it just seems you can’t get close to him. You know what I mean, he’s the kind of person that—well, you just don’t feel free to call him by his first name.” This woman might just as well have said, “I believe he’s a consecrated, dedicated student of the Word, an outstanding servant of God; but I just don’t like his personality.”

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This woman was supposedly a fine Christian leader. Although she must have known better, she

failed to recognize that her pastor, in spite of his divine call and wonderful, spiritual qualifications, was nevertheless a man, a human being like everyone else, and for that reason he could not possibly conform to the perfect pattern she had cut out for him. And she's not alone. Because of this, when a man is called to pastor a church, he's expected to have almost superhuman qualifications:

- He must a good speaker.
- He must be a deep Bible student.
- He must be a spirited evangelist.
- He must be a compassionate pastor.
- He must have the wisdom of Solomon.
- He must have a pleasing personality and good looks.
- He must be an astute businessman and an effective and efficient administrator.

- He must be creative and original.

And the list goes on.

Pity the poor preacher who fails to live up to all of these requirements. Of him it will be said, "Oh, he has his good points, BUT . . ."

Some time ago I came across an article titled, "Qualifications Of A Good Pastor," and it further underscores the unreasonable demands often placed on God's servants. It reads as follows: "A good pastor must have:

the strength of an ox,  
the tenacity of a bulldog,  
the daring of a lion,  
the wisdom of an owl,  
the harmlessness of a dove,  
the industry of a beaver,  
the gentleness of a sheep,  
the versatility of a chameleon.  
the vision of an eagle,  
the hide of a rhinoceros,

the perspective of a giraffe,  
the endurance of a camel,  
the bounce of a kangaroo,  
the stomach of a horse,  
the disposition of an angel,  
the loyalty of an apostle,  
the faithfulness of a prophet,  
the tenderness of a shepherd,  
the fervency of an evangelist,  
the devotion of a mother,  
—and still he could not please everybody!”

There would be those who say, “Oh, he’s all right, BUT . . . .” Remember, the Bible says, “There was a man.” And as a man, your pastor can’t possibly be proficient in all things, nor can he do everything to perfection. He’s going to have his failings and shortcomings simply because God sees fit to use

a man, and in many cases He chooses the weakest of men. The apostle Paul declared:

*For you see your calling, brethren, that not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called. But God has*

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*chosen the foolish things of the world to put to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to put to shame the things which are mighty; and the base things of the world and the things*

*which are despised God has chosen, and the things which are not, to bring to nothing the things that are, that no flesh should glory in His presence (1 Cor. 1:26-29).*

So don't expect your preacher to be perfect or to excel in every area of the ministry. And try not to act so shocked when you discover that he's not a combination of outstanding Bible teacher, spirited and effective evangelist, compassionate pastor, inspirational preacher, able administrator, and shrewd businessman all wrapped up in one person. The Lord Himself doesn't demand that much. The apostle Paul wrote:

*Therefore I run thus: not with uncertainty.*

*Thus I fight: not as one who beats the air. But I discipline my body and bring it into subjection, lest, when I have*

*preached to others, I myself should become disqualified (1 Cor. 9:26-27).*

With all of these things in mind, then, I would encourage you to pray for your pastor, but don't criticize him. If, however, you just can't keep it to yourself and you must talk to someone about him, talk to God. And while you're at it, pray for him. If anyone needs the prayers of God's people today, it's the man who labors in the pastorate. I don't know of many other occupations that can be so demanding and yet so discouraging. And I can think of very few professions that offer so many opportunities for failure.

The pastor not only faces the temptations of his own sinful nature and the world but also the criticism of unsanctified church members and the

hatred of sinners. Because of this, he is a special target of Satan's fiery darts. So pray for him and encourage him. How long has it been since you took your pastor's hand and, with a firm handshake, expressed your gratitude for his ministry? You'd be surprised, even shocked, if you knew how many pastors go on for weeks and months with very little, if any, encouragement.

Somehow people get the idea that the preacher doesn't need a good word like others do. But just as you appreciate a "pat on the back" for a job well done, so also your pastor welcomes the expression of your thanks and the assurance of your moral support—not praise that would inflate his ego but a word of sincere gratitude for his faithful ministry of the Word.

I hope you'll remember

the lesson suggested by those four words in John 1:6, "There was a man."

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God uses men with all their shortcomings and failures "to bear witness of the Light." They need your prayers. They need your encouragement. And they need your help. Is your pastor getting that kind of backing from you? If he's born again, called of God, and faithfully preaching the Word, he deserves your loyalty and cooperation.

So think about these things. And then be what you should be to your pastor.

## Divine Authorization

**H**ere are a couple of good questions to ask church members from time to time:

Would you have treated your pastor any differently this past week if someone had tipped you off that he was a specially sent “messenger” from the very throne of God?

Would you have criticized your pastor so severely or gossiped about him if you had known that he was chosen and appointed by the Lord Himself for the work he is doing?

I’m sure many would have to admit that their attitude, actions, and words would have been much different toward their pastors if they had been told that God had placed them in their churches for a definite purpose.

Many servants of God are treated shamefully because we forget that they’re men with human weaknesses, as we saw in our previous lesson. They are men sent from God—that is, if they are genuine in their calling.

This truth is suggested for us in John 1. The apostle wrote:

*There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. This man came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light, that all through him might believe. He was not that Light, but was sent to bear witness of that Light (Jn. 1:6-8).*

### A PASTOR’S CALLING

Three things are mentioned here about John the Baptist. First, ***he was a man.*** “There was a man . . . whose name was John” (v.6). He was an earth-born creature

with human shortcomings.

Second, ***he was sent from God.*** “There was a man sent from God” (v.6). He was different from other men. He was a man, but one who was commissioned by the Lord Himself.

Third, ***he was sent to preach Christ, the anointed Son of God.*** “This man came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light” (v.7).

John’s purpose in life was to testify of the Lord Jesus Christ. And these same three things can be said of every pastor who is born again, called of God, believes the Bible to be the infallible Word of God, and is living in obedience to it. Yes, they are men—they have human limitations. They are men sent from God—they have divine authorization. They are men sent from God to bear witness of the Light—they have a heavenly commission.

## THE CONGREGATION’S RESPONSIBILITY

In lesson two, we stressed the human aspect of those in the ministry, and we emphasized that this should remind us of the pastor’s need for encouragement, understanding, and prayerful support.

The apostle Paul, one of the greatest preachers the world has ever known, recognized his own shortcomings. In 1 Corinthians 9:27 he said:

*But I discipline my body and bring it into subjection, lest, when I have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified.*

And he also declared in Romans 7:

*I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) nothing good dwells . . . O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from*

*this body of death?*  
(vv.18,24).

Remember the words, “There was a man.” Because your pastor is a man, he needs your prayers and encouragement. Not only do we read in John 1:6, “There was a man,” but the verse goes on to say, “There was a man sent from God.” And this truth, when applied to the pastor, is what gives us a balanced view of his person and work. If he’s seen as only a man, some would surely reason, “Since my pastor is human like I am and prone to the same weaknesses and pitfalls, why should I listen to him? He’s no better than I am.” But while it’s true that he is just a man, it’s also a fact that those who have a genuine calling are men sent from God. And as such, they deserve your respect and honor—not because they’re better necessarily, but rather in consideration

of their heavenly calling.

This brings us right back, then, to our opening questions: How would you have treated your pastor this past week if you’d been told he was a specially sent messenger from God? Would you have said the things you did about him? Would you have criticized his pulpit manners? Would you have pointed out his poor delivery and grammatical mistakes? Would you have spoken so unkindly to him? If church members only realized that the pastor, in spite of his weaknesses, is a man “sent from God,” I’m sure much of the petty criticism in our churches would be eliminated.

Some, however, will certainly reply by saying, “But you don’t know our preacher. I wish he were more tactful. At times, he’s so poor at expressing himself. He’s always got his foot in his mouth. And

some of his mannerisms are enough to drive one up the wall. You don't know our pastor."

Oh yes I do. I know him well. You see, I know myself, and he's like I am—a man with human weaknesses. But if he's a genuine servant of Christ, then (as it was said of John the Baptist) he's a man sent from God, and his special "office" calls for your respect. I didn't say you should worship him or place him on a clerical pedestal. He should be respected because of his calling.

In Romans 10 the apostle Paul made the following comments about those who preach the gospel:

*How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall*

*they preach unless they are sent? As it is written, How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the gospel of peace, who bring glad tidings of good things! (vv.14-15).*

Although pastors who are truly men sent from God should be treated with respect, there are times, sad to say, when their lives are inconsistent with the teachings of the Scriptures. Some have deliberately violated the precepts of God's Word, to the extent that they are bringing an open and public reproach on the cause of Christ. But even if that's the case, no believer should ever engage in a personal crusade against the preacher. Rather, he should quietly and privately deal with the problem in loving concern for the minister himself and for the work of the Lord. And whatever is done should be bathed in prayer

and exercised with the greatest caution lest any unjust, uncalled-for, or cruel action be taken against one who is not only a brother in Christ but also a specially chosen servant of God.

In 1 Samuel 26 we read about the time when David spared the life of King Saul, and this example shows us how careful we should be when dealing with someone appointed by God to a position of trust and responsibility. The Old Testament narrative gives us the setting. David had been chosen to be Israel's next king, but Saul was still on the throne. Motivated by an insane jealousy, Saul hounded David continually, wanting to kill him. During the darkness one night, David and his company came into Saul's camp while he was sound asleep. It was a perfect setup. David could

have put his archenemy out of the way, but he refused to do so. Here's the record of his experience:

*David and Abishai came to the people by night; and there Saul lay sleeping within the camp, with his spear stuck in the ground by his head. And Abner and the people lay all around him. Then Abishai said to David, "God has delivered your enemy into your hand this day. Now therefore, please let me strike him at once with the spear, right to the earth; and I will not have to strike him a second time!" But David said to Abishai, "Do not destroy him; for who can stretch out his hand against the Lord's anointed, and be guiltless?" David said furthermore, "As the Lord lives, the Lord shall strike*

*him, or his day shall come to die, or he shall go out to battle and perish. The Lord forbid that I should stretch out my hand against the Lord's anointed" (1 Sam. 26:7-11).*

Now, I realize that there's quite a difference between a king of Israel and the pastor of a church. But even as David so highly respected Saul, the Lord's anointed, we should be careful not to stretch forth a hand unjustly against any "man sent from God."

I can still imagine someone saying, however, "My pastor just isn't doing the job. The church is suffering. He should leave. How can we handle a situation like that? I do respect him and wouldn't want to hurt him for anything." Perhaps this article found in a church bulletin will interest you.

It's titled, "How To Get Rid Of A Pastor."

Not long ago a well-meaning group of laymen came from a neighboring church to see me. They wanted me to advise them on some convenient and painless method of getting rid of their pastor. I'm afraid, however, that I wasn't much help to them. At the time I had not had the occasion to give the matter serious thought. But since then I have pondered the matter a great deal, and the next time anyone comes for advice on how to get rid of a pastor, here's what I'll tell him:

1. Look the pastor straight in the eye while he's preaching and say "Amen" once in a while and he'll preach himself to death.
2. Pat him on the back

and brag on his good points and he'll probably work himself to death.

3. Rededicate your life to Christ and ask the preacher for some job to do, preferably some lost person you could win to Christ, and he'll die of heart failure.
4. Get the church to unite in prayer for the preacher and he'll soon become so effective that a larger church will take him off your hands.

If only congregations would pray for their pastors as men and show respect for them as men sent from God, many problems could be avoided. The church would have a better image in the community, and the children would have a more favorable attitude toward the work of the gospel.

How many times have I heard people say, "I just don't understand why my children have so little interest in the church since they've grown up. They just don't seem to care about going anymore." Is it any

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wonder after all the criticism they've heard? Sunday after Sunday they've had "roast preacher" for dinner. His sermons were torn apart, his pulpit manners laughed at, and his appearance and

dress ridiculed by the parents. And then they're surprised when their children don't have any regard for the church and the preacher! If you have children in the home, be careful about criticizing the pastor in their presence. It's your duty as faithful parents to cultivate respect in the minds of your little ones for the office of those men who are sent from God to serve as under-shepherds of the flock. So don't forget. Your pastor is a man, a man sent from God, and a man sent from God to bear witness of the Light.

Let me say this special word to you if you have never accepted Jesus Christ as your Savior. As long as you look at men, you're bound to be disappointed. Even the best preacher in the world, although sent from God, is subject to human failures.

There is One, however, in whom there is no disappointment. He is the Lord Jesus Christ, the God-man. He alone, of all men, lived a perfect life. He was absolutely sinless and did not need to die as other men, yet He assumed our guilt. He went to the cross, He shed His blood for our sins, and He was raised from the dead. And now forgiveness of sin and life everlasting can be yours if you'll acknowledge your guilt and trust Him for salvation. The Bible says:

*If you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation (Rom. 10:9-10).*

# Heavenly Commission

The most overworked people in the world are those who attend to the basic and urgent needs of mankind. I'm thinking especially about ministers, and in particular the pastors of churches. The demands placed on their strength, physically and emotionally, bring them often to the breaking point.

As we continue our discussions on *Your Pastor And You*, I am not so much concerned with the amount of the preacher's work as I am with the nature of his activities. For example, some time ago I read a magazine article that described the activities of the pastor of a church during a certain day, and it was supposedly typical of his usual schedule. It went something like this:

"Arriving at the church at 8 a.m., he had intended

to spend at least 2 hours studying for his Sunday sermons, a noonday speech to a local service club, and 5 radio messages for the coming week. He was reminded by his secretary that the church bulletin was scheduled to go to press at noon and that he still had to write an article for it. He also had three telephone calls to make, one of them to the chairman of the church finance committee.

"After finishing with those things, only 30 minutes were left for the preparation of his radio talks, since at 10 o'clock he was to meet with the program committee of the Ministerial Association. But as he began to study, he received word that the mother of the president of one of the women's societies in the church

had died and he was needed at once to comfort the family. This of course caused him to miss the meeting with the Ministerial Association; but he was able to attend the 12:30 luncheon of the Women's Auxiliary. Following this he spoke to a study class. At 2 p.m. he officiated at a wedding. At 3 o'clock he began his regular visits in the city hospitals and finished just in time to go to the men's supper, where he gave the prayer. The supper lasted until 7:30 p.m., allowing the pastor to get away just in time to attend a meeting of the Every Member Canvas Committee. Having done that, his day of service was finally ended and he arrived home about 9:30 that evening."

This was a pastor's own account of the way he spent

an entire day. Was he fulfilling his obligation as a pastor of his church? Is this the way the Lord intended for him to occupy his day? When a man assumes a pastorate, is he justified in spending most of his time in administrative meetings, board meetings, committee meetings, budget-planning meetings, building program meetings, luncheons, dinners, and banquets?

The answers to these questions are suggested by the very same portion of Scripture we used as a basis for our previous lessons in this series.

*There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. This man came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light, that all through him might believe. He was not that Light, but was sent to bear witness of that Light (Jn. 1:6-8).*

### THREE CHARACTERISTICS

In these verses, three characteristics are mentioned about John the Baptist.

First, ***he was a man***, John was no angel; he was a man with human limitations.

Second, he was a man ***sent from God***. Although he was subject to weaknesses of the flesh, he was nevertheless a man sent from God—he came with divine authorization.

Third, he was a man sent from God ***to bear witness of the Light***. His unique occupation was to proclaim Christ. Verse 8 repeats this emphasis on his work. The apostle John wrote, “He was not that Light, but was sent to bear witness of that Light.”

Yes, John the Baptist was a man—he had ***human limitations***. He was a man sent from God—he had

#### ***divine authorization.***

He was sent from God to bear witness of the Light—he had a ***heavenly commission***. He was to preach Christ.

These three things are also true of all genuine ministers of the gospel today. As men, they are subject to human weaknesses and failings, and they therefore need our prayers. As men sent from God, they deserve our respect and should be esteemed because of their divine appointment. Like John, their calling is to bear witness of the Light. And this gives us the answers to our questions about the activities of the pastor.

Even as the work of John the Baptist was to bear witness of the Light, so today the work of those who are sent from God is to present Christ. That, of course, is best accomplished through the faithful

preaching of the Word of God. Expounding the Word must take priority over everything else in the life of those called “to bear witness of the Light.” Anything that hinders them from this task; anything that detracts from their effectiveness in presenting Christ the Living Word through the written Word; anything, I say, which draws them away from that must be carefully avoided.

The high priority that should be given to the ministry of the Word by those servants called of God to preach is made very clear in Acts 6. In this passage we read about a situation in the early church which, if not handled correctly, could have sidetracked the apostles.

*Now in those days, when the number of the disciples was multiplying, there arose a complaint against the Hebrews*

*by the Hellenists, because their widows were neglected in the daily distribution (Acts 6:1).*

Very likely “the daily distribution” had reference to the distribution of money and food to widows in the Jerusalem church. And here’s what they did about the problem:

*Then the twelve summoned the multitude of the disciples and said, “It is not desirable that we should leave the Word of God and serve tables” (v.2).*

As conscientious men, they could not ignore the plight of those poor widows. But they concluded, “It is not desirable that we should leave the Word of God and serve tables” (v.2). You see, serving tables wasn’t their work. That isn’t what they had been called to do. It was their responsibility to give themselves to prayer and the Word. They didn’t

consider themselves too good or too important for that kind of service, but they recognized that this was not the ministry to which God had called them. So please notice what they did. Oh that we might learn a lesson from this! They said:

*Therefore, brethren, seek out from among you seven men of good reputation, full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business; but we will give ourselves continually to prayer and to the ministry of the Word (vv.3-4).*

Seven spiritual men who could be trusted were appointed to oversee the needs of the widows so that the teaching elders might (and I like these words) “give [themselves] continually to prayer and to the ministry of the Word.” And God blessed in

a wonderful way. Verse 7 tells us that “the Word of God spread, and the number of the disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests were obedient to the faith.”

Having properly delegated the responsibility of meeting the physical needs of the people to a group of deacons, the apostles, as men “sent from God” to “bear witness of the Light,” gave themselves wholly to their task of praying and preaching. As a result, “The Word of God spread, and the number of the disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem.”

And today whenever you find a church with a born-again, dedicated pastor who gives himself faithfully to prayer and to study and ministry of the Word, you’ll discover a spiritual, vibrant, and growing assembly of believers. But

when a congregation places such exacting demands on its leader that he must officiate at every committee meeting, attend all fellowship functions, and be active in a myriad of civic affairs to the extent that his life of prayer and Bible study is interrupted, you'll find a lethargic, lukewarm or cold, dead church. Oh, it may be filled with activity and have a big program, but that doesn't necessarily produce fruit for eternity. It's possible for a church to have numerous activities, meetings, clubs, projects, and many "wheels going around" without really doing anything as far as its intended work is concerned.

When I look at some congregations, I am reminded of that impressive machine, that has hundreds of cogs, gears, pulleys, and belts which all go around smoothly and swiftly at the touch of a button. When the

inventor was asked about the function of the machine and what it is supposed to do, he replied, "Oh, it isn't supposed to do anything, but doesn't it run beautifully?"

So too, when you attend a church where the Bible is neglected, Christ is not preached, and the pastor is loaded down with administrative responsibilities, you may witness a large organization with many "wheels going around" but no spiritual power being generated. Be sure, therefore, to put first things first. Make certain your pastor isn't burdened down with administrative and civic obligations to the extent that his spiritual life suffers and the ministry of the Word does not remain central in his life and in the church.

John the Baptist, our example for these lessons, came to "bear witness of the

Light.” Your pastor too should be occupied with preaching Christ. And if he’s to do so effectively, don’t expect him to be the church errand boy, drive the Sunday school bus, run off the church bulletins, do the janitor work, take the members of the ladies’ aid to all their meetings, preside at every function, or be out on visitation every afternoon and evening. You see, all of these things may be well and good in themselves. Every pastor who is genuinely sent of God would be glad to perform whatever services he can, but both you and he must be on guard lest these activities prevent him from being a man of prayer and a man of the Book. That could make him miss out on fulfilling his primary mission. Not only will he slip spiritually, but the entire church may well go down with him. Remember,

the spiritual tone of a congregation is keyed to its pastor.

So when you are asked to do something for which you’re qualified and time and circumstances allow, don’t say, “Let the pastor do it; that’s what he’s getting paid for.” Rather, do your part and help the man “sent from God” so that he can more effectively “bear witness of the Light.” Every Christian should want to help his pastor in such a way that together they can fulfill the work of the church. There are the elderly who need attention; the spiritually indifferent need warning and counsel; the poor need companionship; the sorrowing need comfort and cheer. Your pastor can’t do all these things. He and the church need you. And together you can do great things for God.

I would repeat with

added emphasis—whenever you're asked to do anything for which you're qualified, you should give it serious consideration. And if it can be handled without detriment to your family or other responsibilities of equal or greater priority, do it. God will bless you if it's done in His name and for His glory. Help in whatever way you can so that your pastor may be released to perform his ministry in the manner God desires.

## CONCLUSION

In closing this study, I wish to review the responsibilities you have toward your pastor.

1. As a man, he needs your prayers.
2. As a man sent from God, he deserves your respect.
3. As a man sent from God to bear witness of the Light, he needs and deserves your help.

Now, if you're in a church that doesn't have a man in the pulpit who deserves your respect and cooperation because he isn't born again, doesn't really believe the Bible, and doesn't preach it, that's another story. You owe it to yourself and also to your family to identify with a church where there is a God-sent man with God's message.

*This booklet is taken from messages taught by Richard W. De Haan on the Day Of Discovery television program. Richard was president and teacher of Radio Bible Class (now RBC Ministries) from 1964 to 1984.*

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Managing Editor: David Sper  
Cover Photo: Linda Dufurrena

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