

DUTIES OF THE MINISTER OF THE GOSPEL

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As a minister of the gospel of Jesus Christ, I do well to remember simple and essential truths from Scripture regarding my duties. I know myself and my tendency to veer off course, to pursue hobby-horses, and to do what's comfortable and to neglect what's difficult. But to remember God's glorious, gracious, wise and clear precepts for me to follow as a pastor benefits me and the flock that God has called me to shepherd. Furthermore, it glorifies God for me to remember my God-given duties and my blessed responsibilities as a minister of the gospel. In this essay, **I'll list 5 of them.**

1. Pursue God Supremely. *(Pursuit)*

The Apostle Paul exemplifies a shepherd-like heart with a supreme pursuit in his ministry. He noted that his preeminent desire is to know Christ and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings (Phil 3:10). Thus, a pastor's primary pursuit must not be to build the church, to preach good sermons, to be well-liked, or to be famous and desired. His ultimate ambition must lie solely in the glorious and blessed pursuit of God — and Him alone. Nothing else satisfies. Nothing else is as deep, as worthwhile, as exuberant, as heart-stirring, and as profitable as the pursuit of God! So, as a minister of the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ, my heart, my affections, and my time must be geared toward the supreme passion for God!

2. Study Scripture Faithfully. *(Preaching)*

Perhaps the ultimate responsibility of a shepherd is the faithful feeding of the sheep (2 Tim 4:2). He is to provide the food, guide the sheep to the food, and ensure that it is good, healthy food that will enhance their growth. Similarly, a minister of the gospel must sit himself in the chair as he prayerfully, daily, hungrily, and eagerly studies Scripture for his own heart and then so he can feed God's flock through the preaching and teaching of Holy Scripture. This demands that I spend a bulk of my time alone, in a room, in the spirit of prayer, with my Bible open, searching, studying, praying over, convicted by, entreating God for illumination, filled with divine happinesses in my study of Scripture. I must study well to preach well to feed God's precious sheep faithfully.

3. Shepherd Saints Patiently. *(Pastoring)*

One of the twelve disciples who lived life with Christ and journeyed with him in his public ministry was Peter who later exhorted the elders to "shepherd the flock of God among them" (1 Pet 5:1-2). To pastor well requires time, sacrifice, diligence, intentionality, love, care, and honest concern. To refuse to visit the sick, mourn with the hurting, and care for *all* of God's flock is to neglect a vital and commanded part of pastoral ministry. No man can minister the Word effectively from the pulpit who is disattached from the flock of God personally. I must know them so as to minister the Word well to them. I must visit them, teach them house to house, meet with them, counsel their hearts, and point them to the Chief Shepherd!

4. Disciple Men Intentionally. *(Passing on)*

I am replaceable. No minister of the gospel is irreplaceable. We all pass on but the gospel does not pass away. Faithful ministers of the gospel must take God's Word and disseminate it to God's people so that faithful men are entrusted with the Word to teach other faithful men. The baton must be passed on. No man should labor alone. I must prioritize the discipling, the instruction, and theological truths to other men who can lead well in their own homes (with their wives and children) and then lead well in the local flock. Leadership is a shared ministry, never a one-man show. To glorify God, I must prayerfully, intentionally, and expectantly pour myself into other faithful men to see God grow them and use them for His glory!

5. Seek God Prayerfully. *(Praying)*

Can a man be alone? Can he be alone with integrity? Can he be on his knees frequently and for long periods of time? Does he believe in prayer? Does he believe that his fervent prayers actually move God and change things? If not, he has much to learn about the glory of God and the power of prayer. Let a minister seek God prayerfully for his own heart, for his purity, for his study, for his family, for his effectiveness, for the Spirit's unction and empowering, and for the Lord Jesus Christ to exude forth in his life, conversations, messages, and counseling. Let every faithful minister remember Isaiah's words to "give God no rest" and to learn from Hannah who "poured out her soul before the LORD". Let us happily do likewise!