

# **If a Pastor Forsakes All Else, He Must Never Abandon...**

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The Bible speaks in no uncertain terms about the function, role, and duties of a pastor. Much confusion exists, however, if modern church leaders and many pastors set the example of what a pastor is to do. There seems to be a disconnect between what the Bible says a pastor must do and what we often see evidenced by modern pastors.

My goal in this brief essay is to suggest that if a pastor were to forsake anything, even all else, he must never abandon a few essential marks that must exist in every faithful pastor.

## **1. Daily Taking Hold of God in Fervent Prayer.**

The man of God must take hold of God in fervent prayer. Paul says to pray without ceasing. The Bible commands us to devote ourselves to prayer. We are labor and strive together in prayer. The early church continually devoted themselves to prayer. Even the early church leaders and teachers said that they would continually devote themselves to *prayer* and to the ministry of the Word. The man of God who rejects daily prayer and fervent communion with God has removed the foundation upon which all biblical ministry stands. Without prayer, all ministry is worthless and powerless.

## **2. Heartfully Shepherding His Own Wife and Children in the Ways, Works, and Word of God.**

The pastor must shepherd his own family. If the man neglects to pastor his own family then he has disqualified himself from the ministry of Jesus Christ. God requires that a man who serves His bride, the Church, must demonstrate his capability to serve, shepherd, teach, and disciple beginning with his own smaller “family of God” that lives within his own home. Any man that forsakes his marriage because of “the business of ministry” has no right to step foot in a pulpit. A shepherding man in the Church must first and foremost be a demonstratable shepherding man in the home.

## **3. Gazing Regularly at the Glory of God & the Sovereignly Bestowed Redemption of His Own Soul.**

A pastor must gaze regularly at the awesome character of God in the Word of God. If a pastor is not in awe of God then he will burn out of ministry quickly. If there is no towering conviction of the utter supremacy and unrivaled sovereignty of God then the weights, discouragements, fear of man, and pressures of ministry will drive him far from the gospel service of our Lord. This underlies the importance of the practice of daily meditating upon the powerful God and sovereign designer of all things. The God that the pastor preaches must *first* be in awe of God. For if *he* is not in awe of God then he fools himself if he thinks that his people would ever be in awe of God. This is fully and most gloriously manifested in the redemption of his own soul. The pastor must be amazingly awestruck as he frequents himself at the cross of Christ and wonders

why God would ever elect such a hellish rebel such as himself! O the glory of the cross! O the magnificence of the cross! O the unspeakable delight that comes from the love of God!

#### **4. Prayerfully Applying Scripture to His Own Mind, Heart, & Life.**

The man of God as he studies the Word of God should meditate, marinate, muse upon, consider, and contemplate how the Word applies to *his own* life. If he does not do this, then he manifests himself as a hypocrite who expects his hearers to produce changes that he himself, as their pastor, is unwilling to make. As the pastor reads the Word devotionally, as he studies the Word personally, as he prepares sermons studiously, as he prepares Bible studies weekly, he must take the Word and apply the Word to himself. This is not only an intellectual pursuit. He must apply the Word to his own mind as he learns the facts and truth of the Word. Then he must warm his heart with the glory of the Truth and find himself communing with the Triune God in worship because of what he learns. Then that must affect his life — his words, his marriage, his parenting, his thoughts, his motives, and his own conduct of worship.

#### **5. Diligently Preaching His Sermons to His Own Heart Before He Preaches Them to His Congregation.**

A man who does not preach his own sermons to his own heart is a hypocrite. If a man preaches to others that which he does not first preach to himself he dispassionately preaches and hypocritically heralds as he won't take the time to diligently apply to his own heart that which he calls his hearers to apply to their own. But the servant of the Lord who takes the Word of God and the expositions of that Word and faithfully, diligently, and humbly applies the truths to his own heart so as to bring about change, greater holiness, and more love for Christ is the one whom God will use mightily.

#### **6. Intentionally Investing in Other Faithful Men Who Will Be Able to Teach Others Also.**

Biblically, the leaders of Christ's church are to take the Word of God and invest it into other faithful men who then turn and teach others also. The faithful man is the one who disciples others with the view to further discipleship relationships in the Church. In a word, the man of God seeks to reproduce himself. The man of God greatly desires men in the church to be Godly, knowledgeable, passionate, and theological men. So then, a pastor cannot pass this role on to others. He cannot *refuse* to train up others. He cannot *not* invest in men. To say it positively, to be a faithful, biblical, and God-honoring shepherd, the man of God must disciple other men of God with the truth of Scripture so that Christ's church will be strengthened and the masculine leadership in Christ's church would increase.

#### **7. Regularly Visiting Families Entrusted to His Care for Prayer, Bible Reading, Shepherding, and Questioning.**

If a shepherd neglects to care for his sheep, they may have infections, bruises, broken bones, or diseases that he will not find out about until too late. So it is with the man of God. He must regularly care for the individuals, the marriages, and the families entrusted to his care to be a faithful shepherd. He must know his flock. And the better he knows his flock the better he can teach, nurture, care for, and minister to their particular needs. This comes with visitation where he can pray with families, educate them in the Word, instruct them, and see them in their home life. He can read the Word with them, instruct them in the Word and guide them in the truth.