

Funeral for Sister Aileene Richard

[Comments](#) about my [First year](#) (second appendix)

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I am so thankful that while I was learning members' names here at Sandy Ridge, I had the invitation from Robinette to visit her mother, who was a member—albeit shut-in—whom I had not yet met. Over the course of the next seven months, I had the wonderful opportunity to visit her in her home, or at a hospital, or at Abernathy Laurels, or, finally, hospice some 28 times. I was privileged to see a cheerful, interested, conversant sister in Christ whom I was sure had a healthier and happier life once.

I was struck by her interest in her great grandchildren. I was amazed by her desire to receive guests even though she had to work so hard to listen. I was interested in the obvious grace she was experiencing and the joy that was hers in the midst of pain and difficulty.

Yet...I know that no words could be more poignant, and not sentiment more felt than that of her daughter:

Mom, Aileene Bowman Richard was born the 2nd child of 5 to Earnest and Cleo Bowman on May 30th.

She was a sister to 4. They had their moments as all siblings do, but she loved them all.

She was a wife to 1. She was 23 when she got married at Highland Baptist Church on Nov. 20th, right after the Sunday Service.

She was a mother of 2: A son and a daughter. She loved them both dearly.

She was a Grand-maw to 4: 3 grand-daughters and a grand-son, whom she "spoiled with love".

She was a great-grandmother or "NanNan" to 8. She loved them all and gave great hugs every chance she got.

She was a loving Aunt and great-Aunt to many.

She was friendly to all those she meet and although she was a sweet, quiet-spirited woman. She gave great hugs and smiles to all who passed her way.

In the evenings after her work was done, she enjoyed doing cross-stitching and needle point. It was relaxing to her. When she was finished she would give them to family and friends. It was a "labor of love".

She loved her church family and enjoyed times spent in worship and fellowship with them.

Most of all she loved Jesus. Her Lord and Savior, the One who loved her first, before she ever knew Him. The One who showed her what real love is—"an action word," whether it be a smile, a kind word or a deed done for another without expecting anything in return. The One who saved her soul and the One in Whose presence she now is.

She lived and she loved. To God be the Glory!

I believe my mother is more alive today in heaven with Jesus and family and friends, where our love is perfected in the presents of God the Father and Jesus his son.

Hebrews 2:10-11 For it was fitting for Him, for whom are all things and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons to glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings. 11 For both He who sanctifies and those who are being sanctified are all of one, for which reason He is not ashamed to call them brethren...

Hebrews 11:16 But now they desire a better, that is, a heavenly country. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for He has prepared a city for them.

These two passages of Scripture are phenomenal. In the first one, Jesus, the Son of God loves worshiping with His church—first while He was here; second, when we are with Him there.

In the second one, God loves being with His people for whom He has prepared a city.

However, the more amazing thing is not the generality of the principle that Jesus loves His people and God loves His people, but that...

1. Jesus loves singing and worshiping and glorying with Aileene.

2. God loves revealing Himself to Aileene. We know that “shame” often meant there was a sort of covering up. Adam and Eve in the garden made that very clear to us. Yet, God has no sin (1 John 1:5) and no taint whatsoever of this sin-cursed world. So when we know that “shame” makes us cover up, we know that when these Scripture say: 1. God drew many to glory; and 2. **God is not ashamed to be called their God**, it takes us to two very awesome corollaries:

A. Aileene is known by God. He **is not ashamed to be called [her] God**. You see, the big deal is not “do you know God?” or “do you know Jesus?” as much as it is “does God know you?” (Matthew 7:21-23).

We have concocted a very strange religion in America where “going to Heaven is a whole lot better than going to Hell” and this comes through in the way we plead with people to “get saved so you don’t burn in Hell” or “get saved so you can see your loved ones” or “get saved so you can have a new body.”

These are all wonderful benefits for those who have been born again, but they actually almost provide this allusion that you can be saved from the penalty of sinfulness but not be saved from the power of selfishness. In other words, getting saved is one more way for you to look out for number one.

Now get this, if that occurs; if that is salvation; if that is the so-called “new birth”, then we could potentially have a Heaven full of people who don’t love God, don’t love Jesus, and don’t love holiness. Theoretically, there could be not a single person in Heaven that loved God because God did not ensure that those saved would ever be saved from the power of their sin.¹

The flip side of that is that we could have people in Heaven who hated singing to the Lord here, hated reading the Scripture here, hated godliness here...somehow...somehow loving Heaven once they get there. Or to say it worse, “Heaven could theoretically be filled with people who didn’t look like they belonged there throughout their entire lives on planet earth.” Preposterous!

Aileene showed a “desire for that country” long before going to “that country” (11:16a): not just the benefits did she have, but the quality she possessed before going.

B. Aileene is at this very moment seeing God as there is no higher glory than that of God Himself. Hebrews 2:10 says it was His objective in sending Jesus: to “bring many sons to glory.”

3. God has constructed a dwelling place for Aileene. 20th St NE has had my attention for many months now, and I have admired the brickwork around the property as the outdoor oven and dog box and the chains around the large limbs of the tree out front telling stories of swings. I have thought about the work that went into caring for that home these almost 60 years and I can tell you that she has had an upgrade. As a church in our travels through 2 Corinthians, we have noticed in chapter 5 her upgrade to a “body not made with hands” and we discuss that her address is changed and her citizenship has changed and her duties as a daughter of God have changed. Again, as a church we have noticed twice in sermons from the book of Revelation that God’s people serve Him in that city.

In conclusion: May we not forget that this same book of Hebrews says that those who have salvation are “heirs of salvation” (Hebrews 1:14) and that this is “a great salvation (2:3), and that Jesus’ work on the cross demolished death (2:15-16) and that it as well, as all of the benefits of this salvation, is gained through faith alone (3:19) in the Gospel alone (4:1). Nobody goes to Heaven without trusting the one who “by Himself purged our sins” (1:3). Furthermore, if we see that as not enough, there is “no more sacrifice for sin” (10:26), but rather a fear of judgment to come (10:27).

May the Lord grant us such stalwart and saving faith that believes all the way “to the saving of the soul (10:38-39) and produces holiness that shows we belong in Heaven (12:14).

¹This is perhaps the biggest draw towards “Unconditional Election.” Just like the theoretical absurdity that there would not be a single person in Heaven who loved God in case of the “false Gospel” is the notion that Jesus could have died without the assurance that one person would believe on Him.

MY FIRST YEAR AS PASTOR AT SANDY RIDGE BAPTIST CHURCH²

Introduction

This project is a philosophy of approach regarding the first year as pastor of a church just east of Nashville. During July of 2014, this project was approved by the above-mentioned professor to bring focus to the ministry of this paper's author. The author of this paper was one of two finalists in a search that began with over 100 resumes. At any rate, consideration about "what would I do as the Pastor of New Hope Baptist Church" had been on the author's mind for months. After the approval of this project, the author was notified that he was not selected to be the pastor of the church. The thoughts need not be discarded as wisdom seems non-geographic in its specificity. To quote Terry Much, "The first factor to consider is your stage in ministry. The axiom proves true: Don't make major changes in the first two years of ministry; establish trust first."³ This means the major things a pastor should be concerned with are not necessarily "administrative in nature."

A church may put up with a lot of things, but it is much easier to be "without a pastor" than it is for a church to tolerate a pastor that seems to be emotionally unattached from the circumstances surrounding the people from whom he is, by nature of his newness, already socially unattached. Let there be no mistake that there is a "honeymoon" phase for a church and its pastor and there needs to be enough credibility for the pastor to endear himself to his people for years. This "honeymoon" is that time when "minor mistakes are overlooked as long as major embarrassments do not occur."⁴ Well, when should "embarrassments occur" anyway? These risks must be mitigated through a paced, deliberate time of getting acquainted. There are three basic things which the reader will consider: Population Assessment; Predecessor Assessment; Membership Assessment

Population Assessment

When a pastor moves to a new area, he will have already, hopefully, conducted a demographic assessment. As he arrives to the new ministry, he will consider whether there are particular factors involved with the people whom he may instrumental in winning to the Savior. This weighing of the population may yield more than one possible way to reach them—understanding that "Developing an effective evangelistic strategy requires a good plan and people who are willing to go 'fishing' with more than one type of lure."⁵ Consider Leith Anderson and his recollection of arriving at his new ministry:

"As a new pastor I studied and analyzed the local subculture immediately. During the candidating process, this cannot be done in depth. But it is essential in the early phase of a new ministry. We cannot discover our church's priorities without understanding the culture in which we minister."⁶

Public Expectation

What does the population expect from the church? What do they expect from the pastor of the church? Now a man may decide he is going to disregard this data, but there must be some perception that a church desires for others to join them. This could not be possible, it seems, without an apparent consideration from this church. This does not, however, mean that a pastor needs to be available to everybody all the time. This will be discussed later, but it should also be understood that a church, if utilizing particular means to get the community into the church will unfortunately need to maintain this means indefinitely to get the same fruit. A church will need to think about whether they are going to make all ministries accessible to all people indiscriminately all the time or not. One of these "ministries" is the counseling function of the pastor. People will consciously or unconsciously take the pastors' time and the pastor needs to be quick about setting the community on notice that

² Renamed for my current church. Was originally a project for my Th.M. in 2014 through LBTS. Obviously, the reader can see I did not end up at the church I intended on serving at the time of the writing of this paper.

³ Terry C. Muck, *When to Take a Risk: a Guide to Pastoral Decision Making*, vol. 9, The Leadership Library (Carol Stream, IL; Waco, TX: Christianity Today, Inc.; Word Books, 1987), 127.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 128.

⁵ Ed Stetzer & Mike Dodson, *Comeback Churches: How 300 Churches Turned Around and You Can Too* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2007), 99.

⁶ Leith Anderson, "I'm the Leader, Now What?," in *Renewing Your Church through Vision and Planning: 30 Strategies to Transform Your Ministry*, ed. Marshall Shelley, vol. 2, Library of Leadership Development (Minneapolis, MN: Bethany House, 1997), 21–22.

the primary availability of the pastor will be to the Lord, then to his family, then to his church. This needs to be spelled out in the philosophy of the pastor to the church right away.

“‘People filters’ make some pastors uncomfortable. ‘I’m in the people business,’ they say. ‘Being available to those in need is what ministry’s all about’. First, a pastor’s job description doesn’t mean being indiscriminately around others. Even Jesus limited his contact with people because of his priorities.”⁷

Then there is this expectation of the community for a pastor to be at certain events. Certainly there is a triteness about “what pastors do,” but are there not regularities with which a new pastor should suit himself? Civic ceremonies? Funerals of community leaders? Weddings of well-known believers? Should there not be an understanding that there are just some things the pastor should be doing—especially within his first year?

On the other hand, is it not a reality that showing up to any and all of these functions may prove to be a sort of rendered approval on the proceedings? Certainly a pastor should not set the precedent that he will allow ceremonies of every kind to be a “golden-calf” where “religious feeling runs high but in ways far removed from what was said on Sinai and done on Calvary.”⁸ So a pastor should do that which is pastoral if, and only if, it can also be called “holy.” This will probably be most easily satisfied if the pastor goes out of his way to “administer Scripture and prayer.”⁹ This is the least a pastor can do if he is the man of God on the scene. What a delicate thing this is for the pastor to know how to portray himself as God’s man to a mostly unconverted community, but this deserves much attention. Perhaps nothing can set the tone quite like a simply cheerful existence in the town’s business settings.

Composition of the Church

Then there is the community’s expectation of who belongs in the church. Certainly there has been much harm done by this “come as you are” mentality to the community—a sort of “hey we’re a melting pot” idea in the American church where there is no change necessary. The biggest problem is that this runs counter to the biblical expectation that men should repent (Mark 1:15). Not all are welcome among the “congregation of the righteous” (Psalm 1:6). When a person says “Do I have to dress up to come to your church,” they should not be relieved of the expectation to look respectable when meeting with the Lord in His house with His people. There should not be an expectation that the church is another “community resource.” No, it is not for the unregenerate. It is for those “of the way” (Acts 9:1). This means it is not public property although one may come as a guest if they act civil and do not expect the body of believers to become what they are. They are not assumed to have equal vote on what happens in and among the believers. They should not expect to have a “home church” they do not attend for years on end. “Discipline is a biblical process designed to remove unregenerate persons who may have been admitted into the fellowship of the regenerate.”¹⁰ This, furthermore, should be understood right away by the new pastor. He is available, within reason. The church is for the seeker. The membership for the repentant sinner; baptism for the new convert; transfer to membership for those who come from a church with a suitable errand from the Lord as acknowledged by the overseer(s) of the flock. If the pastor cannot set this tone in a kind and insistent manner, then how else can he protect the atmosphere of the flock?

Staff Changes

In the first year of a new pastorate, the pastor should be able to prayerfully hire new staff. While the church may lobby for a particular type of ministry needing some attention, the pastor—as overseer—must observe the community if he wishes to have a meaningful impact on the community. If there are Christian organizations available to certain community niches; and if the budget allows for only one of several possible

⁷ John Maxwell, “Clearing the Clutter,” in *The Time Crunch: What to Do When You Can’t Do It All*, Mastering Ministry’s Pressure Points (Sisters, OR: Multnomah Books, 1993), 53.

⁸ Eugene H. Peterson and Calvin Miller, *Weddings, Funerals, & Special Events*, vol. 10, The Leadership Library (Carol Stream, IL; Waco, TX: Christianity Today, Inc.; Word Books, 1987), 18.

⁹ Richard Exley, “A Powerful Presence,” in *Building Your Church through Counsel and Care: 30 Strategies to Transform Your Ministry*, vol. 3, Library of Leadership Development (Minneapolis, MN: Bethany House, 1997), 314.

¹⁰ R. Stanton Norman, *The Baptist Way: Distinctives of a Baptist Church* (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2005), 51.

needs, then the new pastor must consider which of the needs is most suited to the growing demographic within the community.¹¹ In the spirit of Revelation 5:9, there needs to be a reflection of the body of Christ in the staff. It may also be observed that the body of Christ may not reflect the people of the community among whom they have been placed to reach. This, too, is problematic, and needs the pastor's immediate attention.

Predecessor Assessment

Invariably, the former pastor will have set certain norms; certain expectations for the membership in the order of mood, availability, work week, etc... It will be necessary to set clear boundaries and make sure that the folks understand the new pastor is different. He has different gifts, family members, philosophies, and more.

The Mood

The mood of the pastor should be, as previously mentioned, cheerful and pleasant with a feeling of self control and moderation. That is to say, there should not be, in the early days, a breakneck speed for record setting. Rather, the folks should see a very paced, enduring settled-ness from the pastor. Consider the musings of Leith Anderson:

First, we may begin to wonder if we're using our time wisely. I felt guilty for not working afternoons during the early days of my first pastorate, even though I studied at the office until noon and attended church meetings in the evenings. It never dawned on me that I didn't have to work from 7:00 A.M. to 11:00 P.M. We are wise to be aware of the emotional tug to be busy, making sure our emotions don't pressure us into patterns of ministry that will raise false expectations. Some pastors, especially in smaller communities, feel the pull to visit every family in their congregation during the first year. This can have enormous value for pastors' immediate credibility, but it also raises expectations that can destroy them later.¹²

This is true. However, this does not mean that the "first year" cannot set a mood for the pastor: "he likes to visit us." It is hard to imagine that the folks will not expect more of what they see in "year one." Therefore, it is incumbent upon the pastor that he thinks to himself, "Can I see myself doing this in year two?"

What about meetings? Those staff meetings that can seem like they are being held for their own self justification while others are being held for the purpose of simply affirming the pastor. They can be nonproductive and cold. They can be stifling and build resentment by not allowing people to be heard or by not assimilating usable solutions. Changing the mood of these meetings can be done right away in the first year of the pastor. Think of this simple anecdote from Osborne:

"While the seating was uncomfortable, the lighting poor, and the room a little cold, I gave little thought to how our environment might be affecting these meetings. Then one day, in desperation after a particularly rough meeting, I suggested we hold our board meetings at my home. I figured the change in ambience couldn't hurt, and it might help. As soon as we began meeting in my home, everyone relaxed their body language, terminology, and even dress. When dealing with tough issues, we were noticeably more cordial. When meetings were over, people began to stay and talk. When we meet in an office or board room environment, we are surrounded by symbols of the corporate world, where confrontation and competition are expected. But when we meet in a home, the behavioral expectations are warmth, cooperation, and friendship."¹³

Good ideas are just that. If the pastor makes the final decision, then he needs to gently explain why that decision is to be made, but these counter current decisionism should be scaled back in the first year to the end that he is making everybody feel like they are a part of the decision-making process in some way—even if it is simply as advisors. Often, that is the assumption anyway. Church members have been a part of their ministry for years, perhaps. They should be reasonably sure that the pastor is coming to lead them as a student among them for a little while.¹⁴

¹¹ Anderson, "I'm the Leader, Now What?," 23.

¹² *Ibid.*, 16.

¹³ Larry W. Osborne, *The Unity Factor: Getting Your Church Leaders Working Together*, vol. 20, The Leadership Library (Carol Stream, IL: Christianity Today, Inc., 1989), 25.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 63–64.

The Expectation

If “mood” describes the “feel” of things around the pastor, then what can the church expect from a pastor with an already-established “mood?” They can expect a de-cluttered regimen.

“Clutter is anything that distracts, that takes me out of focus, that keeps me from thinking or doing what I ought. Clutter is weight, baggage, whatever bogs me down. Time wasters, for instance, are clutter. A tiff with a Sunday school teacher that preoccupies me while I pray is clutter. Thinking about my sermon while counseling is clutter. A knock at the door while I’m preparing a sermon is clutter. Trying to remember the five things I’m supposed to do today is clutter.”¹⁵

This comes at a cost. While the members may wish to have a pastor who has their undivided attention, they must also realize that their pastor provides this same undivided attention to others as well. The pastor, in his first year, should help people understand that his phone is not always ringing nor is it always on his belt. They need to know that, while he will promptly return their calls when at all reasonably possible, that does not mean that he will deem it necessary that evening. The cell phone or proximity of the office to the church or parsonage to the church building should be graces available in times of need, not control measures to keep the pastor always engaged.

It is furthermore reasonable that the church should not expect their pastor to have a myriad of hobbies. He did not take that church because he loved all the local sports teams. He did not take a bigger church because it would help his business. He was not hoping for a different ministerial venue so that he could host all his friends from college years. No, the pastor has a concentrated lifestyle to care for his membership, first and foremost; the first members, of course, being his family.

The church should expect their pastor to protect the membership from those who are not converted. That is, he should protect the ordinances of the Lord’s Supper and baptism from the unregenerate. He should protect church business from the unconverted. He should protect long standing relationships by preaching on difficult things and, in the spirit of John 6, preach on them until the false disciples are reasonably dispersed. If men can “creep in unawares” (Jude 3-4), then what about those who make no bones about denying salvation through Christ alone? Should not the church expect their pastor to care for the sheep’s purity first? Consider Norman’s consternation:

“First, new converts seeking membership in our Baptist churches are no longer required to give public confessions of their own faith or to provide public testimony of their conversion. Pastors, evangelists, or other church leaders instead relate the testimony or make the confession for the person. In so doing, Baptists have informally adopted a proxy method for the public confession of faith! When a person does speak, any questions put to the applicant are framed in such a way that the answers are implied in the question or are readily self-evident.”¹⁶

If this is how the predecessor handled public confessions of faith before the new pastor, then the church must get used to the right way of examining the professed believer.

Another area in which the church should expect pastoral strength—especially if the predecessor was a poor administrator—is in the area of delegation. They should expect that if there is a staff being paid by general fund tithes and offerings, that the “administrative clutter [that could be done by others] should be done by others. This comes from everyone and everything around us, like debris carried by swirling flood waters, but its real fountainhead is within, springing from the needs, fears, and desires of the leader.”¹⁷ It seems that pastors are either very good at ministerial stereotypes like preaching, public prayers and visitation, or they are good at management and vision. Probably, the previous pastor had noticeable shortcomings and his departure was a relief to many. It will be up to the new pastor to remind the folks how Adamic he is, and that he needs good staff to keep him efficient, rested, and available.

¹⁵ Maxwell, “Clearing the Clutter,” 52.

¹⁶ Stanton, *The Baptist Way: Distinctives of a Baptist Church*, 59–60.

¹⁷ Maxwell, “Clearing the Clutter,” 60.

The Schedule

What should the church expect from the pastor regarding his schedule? They have probably wondered from time to time whether the pastor that just left actually did any work while others were afraid to call him for fear that he was “too busy.” Surely, transparency is paramount here. There needs to be a measure of predictability and understanding as to when the pastor generally does what.

Regardless of what the predecessor did, the ideal of the ministry can always be improved. Therefore, there should be a consistent understanding of what to do with time. And this philosophy is based on the desired direction of the church.¹⁸ Perhaps the schedule could utilize time chunks with each major duty being given a space on the calendar. Probably, once the staff has a certain number of people in it, time should be set aside each week for a review of the previous week’s taskings and a forecast of the need for support in the week to come—reflecting on things with which to assist as the objective dictates. In other words, after the pastor’s own family, the next people that should receive the most nurture and oversight is the staff.¹⁹

Following this, the membership should expect that they will be known—regardless of the size of the church. The pastor should never take on a sort of corporate ideal of a break-in period where he can discount the value of birthdays, children’s names, etc... In other words, in his first year, he can make a schedule which includes correspondence—to include hand-written notes, answer phone calls, or respond to digital messages via email, texting or voicemail.²⁰

Membership Assessment

Now that the new pastor has assessed the needs of the community; now that he has determined what the predecessor has set as expectations from the flock; one can now study the church over which the Holy Spirit has made him and overseer (Acts 20:28). How are they? What are their dreams? What pains do they have? What heartache do they feel?

Vision

Regarding vision, the pastor needs to develop the vision for the church within the simplistic statements of Scripture such as Ephesians 4:11-13. Within the parameters, one should acknowledge that there are a number of ways this can be done. “Though the pastor takes initiative, the vision is honed and further developed by others. The others may be talented staff members or gifted lay leaders who make real the dream God has give—giving it sophistication, expanding and developing it in ways the pastor never could.”²¹ This means, then, that the vision for the church should be good and general at first, but should become more and more specific as God begins to get increased glory through the unique intricacies of the membership. God can use special skill sets of the very flock the pastor is getting to know. These special talents and gifts were supernaturally placed by a Sovereign God into the lives of the people before they were even regenerated. Others discovered these new gifts and loves since their conversion. In any case, the “what” is spelled out in Scripture with very few “how’s.” It is so important that the new pastor is willing to study the flocks and interest themselves in the interests of the people—as it relates to “perfecting holiness” (2 Corinthians 7:1).

In any case, the pastor must be first to voice the vision. “To lead, the pastor must create vision for the local church. Vision has to start with someone, and that someone is often the pastor.”²² The lack of familiarity with the flock at first can be rendered less noticeable if the pastor leads with sensitivity and gentleness.

Incidentally, it is not always clear what the vision has been since the last pastor. Moreover, it may not be crystal clear as to what it means to “get things done” within this particular church, but “the plan for planning should be no secret. It should be a known procedure for getting a ministry event or emphasis on the church’s

¹⁸ Anderson, “I’m the Leader, Now What?,” 15.

¹⁹ Greg Asimakoupoulos, “The Workweek,” in *The Time Crunch: What to Do When You Can’t Do It All*, Mastering Ministry’s Pressure Points (Sisters, OR: Multnomah Books, 1993), 89.

²⁰ Maxwell, “Clearing the Clutter,” 56–57.

²¹ Anderson, “I’m the Leader, Now What?,” 20.

²² *Ibid.*, 19.

agenda.”²³ However the vision was enacted previously, the people should be weighed, valued, and gently steered in the right direction.

Recent News

Finding out the recent news in the life of one’s parishioners is not horribly difficult work, but first one must care to ask things like “Who has experienced a recent loss?” “Do they typically appreciate visits?” It is of utmost importance that people who have had recent loss will feel like their souls are being sought after and cared for (Hebrews 13:8; 13:17). Pastoral prayers should never be considered trite or a “smoke screen” followed by a “quick exit.” Pastors should be quick, especially in their first year, at establishing who some hurting people are and establishing in those peoples’ minds that they have the time of their pastor to some degree—walking with them “through [their] valley of the shadow of death.”²⁴

Sermon selection may need to be geared toward the hurting, or toward participants of recent news. Imagine how this would mean almost immediate credibility to the pastor who cared enough to inquire and tailor the application of his messages to the needs of the flock! Also, these messages may seem only poignant to the degree in which the pastor can genuinely connect with the storms of his own life. Without this, the message has no meaningful context, it seems. The sermonizing can be masterful and “on target,” but it can “lack heart” and be “clinical, not real.”²⁵

Real Leadership

Then, the question for the man studying his flock for his first year before he changes anything would be, “Who really runs this show?” Sure, the Bible answer is “Jesus!” However, there are those who are known as the “unspoken leaders.” Consider a description of the *Entrepreneur* from Shelley:

“Just the opposite of the Wet Blanket, the Entrepreneur is enthusiastic. He’s the first to greet visitors at the church and invite them to his home. Unfortunately, in addition to being enthusiastic about the church, he’s equally eager to sell them vitamins, bee pollen, or car wax.”²⁶

This seems like a man that the pastor would want to know. Good or bad, he has influence. Every now and then, the pastor has to give a good and gentle answer to the “Chucks” of this world with something like “I don’t work for you. I don’t even work *for* Morningside Chapel. I work *with* Morningside Chapel. I’m self-employed—look at my IRS form. I submit myself to the board of elders and the church, but I’m not an employee. I’m an ordained minister, charged with shepherding this flock.”²⁷ Imagine how these kind, firm reminders to those who “really lead” will assist them in their discipleship process.

“Unofficial leadership” is not always bad or even unnecessary. In fact they can, if properly utilized, “become allies in the risk-taking decision.”²⁸ Moreover, these leaders may be able to help the pastor understand others within the flock and know when certain people are properly “prepared for the decision.”²⁹ Part of working together with the “heavy hitters” in the church is being forthright with them about one’s intentions—within reason. If there does not appear to be an injunction by the Holy Spirit, then truth can be shared. Bending facts and manipulation, though, must be viewed as sin—not politicking.³⁰

Strength Exploitation

²³ Charles Tidwell, *Church Administration: Effective Leadership for Ministry* (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 1985), 181.

²⁴ Exley, “A Powerful Presence,” 315–316.

²⁵ Gary Fenton, *Your Ministry’s Next Chapter*, vol. 8, The Pastor’s Soul Series (Minneapolis, MN: Bethany House Publishers, 1999), 99.

²⁶ Marshall Shelley, *Well-Intentioned Dragons: Ministering to Problem People in the Church*, vol. 1, The Leadership Library (Carol Stream, IL; Waco, TX: Christianity Today; Word Books, 1985), 39.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 70–71.

²⁸ Muck, *When to Take a Risk: a Guide to Pastoral Decision Making*, vol. 9, 129.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 131–132.

³⁰ Richard R. Melick, *Philippians, Colossians, Philemon*, vol. 32, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1991), 293–294.

That's why an important part of our task as worship leaders is to involve the entire congregation in the ministry of music. Although the chancel choir, the soloists, and the instrumentalists are all vital contributors to the music of worship, our most important choir is made up of the men and women with untrained voices who sit in the pews.³¹

If a church is strong in worship and weak in Sunday school, the worship must be promoted and expanded first. Later the Sunday school can be nurtured, fed by the resources of a healthy worship service.³²

*An honest review of our first year of ministry revealed to us that we not only had failed to close the back door, but we seemed to have left it wide open, marked with a flashing emergency exit sign... We decided some of our loss was related to style issues...*³³

³¹ Howard Stevenson, "Helping People Sing Their Hearts Out," in *Changing Lives through Preaching and Worship: 30 Strategies for Powerful Communication*, ed. Marshall Shelley, 1st ed., Library of Christian Leadership (Nashville, TN: Moorings, 1995), 235.

³² Leith Anderson, "I'm the Leader, Now What?," in *Renewing Your Church through Vision and Planning: 30 Strategies to Transform Your Ministry*, ed. Marshall Shelley, vol. 2, Library of Leadership Development (Minneapolis, MN: Bethany House, 1997), 22.

³³ Ed Stetzer & Mike Dodson, *Comeback Churches: How 300 Churches Turned Around and You Can Too* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2007), 117.

Funeral Service

If there is ever a time when the people of a congregation are looking for someone who has something poignant to say, it is at a funeral. This is a time for a man to stand up and speak with some authority about the certainty of the world behind death.³⁴

Crisis Care

The pastor of the church will never instill the “old school” way of the ministry any quicker than be being with his people in their times of need (298). So long as the pastor is “the guy who works in the office at the church in a suit and tie,” his effectiveness will be quite limited, but his compassionate care—mirroring the Chief Shepherd (1 Peter 5:4) can be emulated purely!

In the Case of a Lost Audience Member

There is really great opportunity here to expose what is beyond that veil to those who have never given serious thought to the things of God or eternity outside the whimsical ideals of their self-righteousness. They are blind (296), and they have no hope. To view their loved one before them in a state of finality will get the hardest of human beings to think about their Creator.

In the Case of a Lost Deceased

Criswell gives a good idea here to capitalize on the responsibility of those who claimed to be associates and friends to come to grips with the idea that they did not do what they could have done to impact the departed in ways which would benefit them for eternity (297).

The Service’s Location

A believer ought to insist, prior to his or her death, that they are last observed in the place which meant so much to them here on earth (299). The fact is, the testimony of being buried in the church will seem silly if those in attendance know that the person was little more than a name on a membership role or a headstone “out back.”

The Service’s Emphasis

The emphasis on the service should be on the death-less Christ and His work on the cross succeeded by His victory over death and our consequential victory over death as believers (300). This means, of course, that the casket should be closed after the eulogy and memorial portion of the person who has passed away so as not to draw attention away from the second half of the service (299): to bring sinners to the One already “beyond the veil” (Hebrews 6).

This message should have a certain undertone of the gravity of the day and the finality of the decisions of the one lain before them (300). What’s done is done, and those who have passed—“their works follow them” (Revelation 14:13).

Continued Care

The duties of the minister are not over following the funeral. A certain level of crisis care still remains as those who have come from afar will leave one by one, and the person who has experienced this woe must continue on with life. They need help identifying their resources and their friends. If this is not done right, the person can become very disillusioned about the church and their lack of compassion (301).

Conclusion

Criswell then gives some wonderfully helpful sermons and outlines all the way from “To Die is Gain” (302) to “A Final Goodnight” (326). Funerals reek of great opportunity for the man of God, and he should be very careful to fulfill this role as one of the mouthpieces of God (1 Peter 4:11).

³⁴ Criswell, W.A. *Criswell’s guidebook for pastors* (Nashville, TN: Broadman Press, 1980), 295.