

How Can We Identify a True Minister of God? (Part 2)

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In addressing the question, how can we identify a true minister of God, I'll summarize very briefly what we covered last week. First we defined the word "minister", and if you look it up, it's the Greek word *diakonos* and it simply means, in modern English, a worker who serves, the point being that if somebody is ordained to the ministry, they are ordained to a greater level of service—not exaltation but service.

The second point was that a minister must serve God and Christ first, before anything else, and then serve the brethren—not an administration or a corporation or a "work", but serve the people whom God has personally called. What an honor that is, and next to God and Christ, a minister's duty is to serve those whom God has personally called.

The third point was that the goal of a godly minister is to help complete the brethren, meaning help complete them in character so that one day they will be ready to marry Jesus Christ.

The fourth point was that if brethren are to be made complete they have to be fed. We covered the scriptures showing a direct command from Christ to feed the flock—three times, directly to the apostles. Then we read direct commands from the apostles to the elders to do exactly the same thing. It couldn't be more clear, it couldn't be more direct, and it's far more clear than doing some other thing concerning the goal of a minister.

The fifth point was that based on the scriptures, it's very clear that ministers are to be assistant shepherds, taking care of God and Christ's flock. They do the heavy lifting, we are just assistants—not to be exalted or aggrandized, but to help Them serve the flock.

The sixth point, where we left off last time, is God and Christ tell a true minister what he must do and how he must do it. The fundamental scripture we'll turn to is 2 Timothy 4:1, and if you have a marker, you're going to want to place it there. I'm reading out of the New International Version. Paul is telling Timothy, I'm charging you before God and Christ, so we know this is serious business.

Timothy 4:1 ...*who will judge the living and the dead, and in view of his appearing and his kingdom, I give you this charge:*

2) [The very first point of what a minister should do:] *Preach the word;* (NIV)

6A. Preach the Word.

That's point A if you want to outline. It tells us that God's ministry must proclaim and teach the Word of God, not subtracting from it, nor adding to it, and that a godly minister has no choice but to preach the truth no matter the consequences, while all the time

trusting in God to take care of whatever fallout comes from that. A godly minister must do that—preach the truth—for his entire life, as long as he is able, as long as God gives him breath and health to do so. That's where we left off last time. The title of the sermon is:

How Can We Identify A True Minister of God? (Part 2)

We're going to go to point B, still in 2 Timothy 4:2. Paul tells Timothy, before God and Christ, he says, I give you this charge:

6B. Correct.

2 Timothy 4:2 *Preach the word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct ... (NIV)*

The King James uses the word reprove rather than correct. The Hebrew is Strong's #1651; it simply means tell a fault. A minister has an obligation, if he sees somebody sinning or causing harm, to tell them their fault, but we're also told how to do it. Does it have to be done with a rod of iron or is there a better way? Let's go to Galatians 6:1. This is true for all of us, everyone in God's Church, but even more so for the ministry. The subject here is what should be done if somebody is overtaken with a fault. Reading out of the King James ...

Galatians 6:1 *Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, [the Greek word can also mean sin, if he's overtaken in a sin] ye which are spiritual, restore such a one [with what attitude, how?] in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted [or tested]. (KJV)*

This spirit of meekness would apply, in fulfilling 2 Timothy 4:2, to correcting a fault within the Church or with an individual. This tells us that using God's Spirit, a minister must gently reason with the goal that the person who has the fault or sin can see themselves as God sees them. We all like to see ourselves as we would like to be seen, or maybe look at ourselves through rose-colored glasses, so to speak, but the fact is we should all want to be able to see ourselves the way God sees us because that's reality, that's truth. God did that with Ancient Israel. Let's go to Isaiah 1:18, out of the King James. God was trying to reason with Israel so they would understand the consequences of any actions they might take.

Isaiah 1:18 [God Almighty is saying] *Come now, and let us reason together, saith the LORD [YHVH]: though your sins be as scarlet [He says, even though you're sinning horribly], they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool [white as wool].*

19) [How is that possible?] *If ye be willing and obedient, ye shall eat the good of the land:*

20) *But if ye refuse and rebel, ye shall be devoured with the sword: for the mouth of the LORD hath spoken it. (KJV)*

God is saying here, let's reason together, let's talk together. In this context, we're talking about somebody overtaken in a sin or a fault. A godly minister, rather than screaming and yelling and barking orders, would say, why don't you think with me on this, let's talk about this, and we'll go through the scriptures involved. Or a minister might say, why don't you try doing it this way rather than that way—we've had a disaster over here so why don't you try doing it this way and let's look at the fruits of it. The shepherd's staff has a crook in it. The shepherd did not use that crook as a club. He would take the crook and put it around the neck of the sheep and turn it in a different direction and could even walk alongside the sheep to make sure the sheep were going in the right direction. It's not a club, it just gently pulls the sheep in the direction they should go.

So the message here, closing out point B, is that a minister should correct in such a way that the brethren want to obey, and not because they have a gun to their head. In the Worldwide days, we all thought this was the only Church of God, and if you were disfellowshipped, you were in outer darkness, so to speak. The fact is that was a great pressure, it was the gun to the head, but once you remove the gun people go back to what they were doing in the first place. One of the jobs of a minister is to get the brethren to see what God wants, and to internalize it so they want to obey; not forced to obey but want to obey.

Let's go to the third, shown in 2 Timothy 4:2. Let's go back there, and I'll read from the NIV. The first one was preach the word, be prepared in season and out of season; the second we just covered, to correct; the third, Paul tells Timothy, is:

6C. Rebuke.

Rebuke is a stronger word than correct (from the previous point). It is Strong's #2008, and it means to reprimand or admonish, or by implication forbid. We're told here, there does come a time—it's not often—when a minister has to say, look, you can't continue to do this, this has got to stop. That's a little harsher than what we were covering in point B. It could apply to somebody who is in a pattern of sin like the young man and his stepmother, in 1 Corinthians 5, who created an uproar in the Church. It might have caused other brethren to sin, or it was certainly causing division in the Church. I think we all know the account; there's no sense in going over it now. The point is, Paul was very clear; he didn't hesitate a minute. He said, you have to get the guy out of here. The fact is, even that line in the sand—that you can't do this—can be done without anger, without rancor, without upset.

I've mentioned my good friend Keith Walden before; he was a minister in the Worldwide Church of God. He's dead now but I worked for him for a few years. I had a job in Lubbock, Texas, and he was the pastor. He had the unique ability to handle a very tense situation with humor, the kind where if it turned into a confrontation, he could walk in and diffuse it. He had a smile that would disarm anybody. I may have mentioned before that he asked me to go with him to visit this woman (to this day I don't know what the problem was, he didn't mention it), and we sat down at her kitchen table and had

some coffee. He put his elbow on the table and his hand in his chin, gave her a smile and said, “Darling, you know you can’t keep doing this.” She hung her head and nodded. He said, “What are we going to do about this?” She shrugged her shoulders and he said, “I think the best thing to do is for you not to attend services for a while, and what you need to do is get close to God and study the scriptures, and I’ll help you, and then if you can get back on track, you can come back.” With a grin again, he said, “How does that sound?” She nodded and said, “Okay, I’ll do that.”

End of story; we leave and there’s not some war that went on; the problem was handled and she understood where she stood in the eyes of the Church. He did that without anger, without hatred, without spite, and he didn’t burn any bridges, so that the woman felt perfectly comfortable going back to him with questions, or concerns, or fears, or to ask, “Could you come and visit me? Because I think I have my head on straight now.” It kept that path open. What an example that was to me. In the past, all too often, the rebuke was made with harshness and anger.

I remember going with a pastor in 1978 to visit a lady, a widow; she lived in a trailer out in a trailer court and she was in her late seventies, and there had been an argument between her and another widow in the Church. I wasn’t there, I didn’t witness it, but there had been harsh words and they had gone after each other. The pastor and I went in, sat down with her and he launched in. The longer he talked, the angrier he got, to the point he was yelling and screaming and the veins were standing out in his neck. He made one statement to her that made her mouth just drop open and her uppers fall into her lap. He didn’t miss a beat, he just kept right on going. I was embarrassed for him and I was embarrassed for her; I was embarrassed to even be there, because that kind of conduct is a violation of scripture, it’s a violation of everything that a Christian should stand for. There was nothing I could do except sit there and think to myself that if I ever get in a position like that, this is not the way to do it—there is a better way. We learn over time and the fact is, a godly minister sometimes needs to forbid or rebuke, but it should be done out of love and it should not be done out of harshness, and bridges should not be burned, and a war doesn’t have to ensue—it just doesn’t.

Now a fourth point, point D. Back to Paul’s instructions in 2 Timothy 4:2; preach the word is first, correct is the second, rebuke is the third, and the fourth one, the NIV says:

6D. Encourage

The New King James and the King James say “exhort”, and it’s [Strong’s #3870](#). [Thayer’s Greek-English Lexicon](#) says it means “to strengthen, to comfort and to console”. Encouragement is strengthening, comforting and consoling. Let’s see how that’s done; let’s go to 1 Timothy 5:1. Paul is again giving advice to young Timothy and some accounts say he was in his late teens or early twenties, but he was a very young man, so this advice is understandable.

1 Timothy 5:1 *Rebuke not an elder ... (KJV)*

The Greek here for *rebuke* is Strong's #1969, and it's a different word than we just read in 2 Timothy 4:2, and it means to chastise. If you look up the root word it means to pound, as if you're beating on somebody. It can also mean to rebuke severely, so it's a very strong word. Paul is saying, don't rebuke an elder, and the Greek word for elder is not talking about the office of a minister. Thayer's says that it means the elder of two people; advanced in life; a senior. The King James margin says *an older man*, so we're talking about age. Here this young man Timothy is being told by Paul, don't go beat up somebody that's old enough to be your grandfather. Don't do that.

1 continued) ... *but entreat him* ... (KJV)

The word *entreat* here is exactly the same Greek word, Strong's #3870, that's translated *encourage* in 2 Timothy 4:2, so they are interchangeable.

1 continued) ... *as a father*; (KJV)

Meaning give him the honor and respect due to your father if you were talking to your father.

1 continued) ... *and the younger men* [entreat or encourage them] *as brethren*; (KJV)

They would be maybe the same age or close to the same age as Timothy.

2) *The elder women* [he says, you encourage them or entreat them] *as mothers* [as you would your own mom]; *the younger* [women, encourage or entreat them] *as sisters, with all purity.* (KJV)

This advice is to not go pounding on people; don't go in with a sword and start swinging it side to side. He says entreat them, encourage them.

Now let's go to Titus, chapter 1. This is going to be out of the New Living Translation. In verse 7, Paul is talking about a bishop, which is an overseer. Going on in verse 9,

Titus 1:9 *He must have a strong belief in the trustworthy message he was taught; then he will be able to encourage others* [same Greek word, Strong's #3870] *with wholesome teaching and show those who oppose it where they are wrong.* (NLT)

By putting these scriptures together it's very clear that ministers should be encouragers of the brethren, strengtheners of the brethren, comforters of the brethren, consolers of the brethren—all of the definitions of those words. Obviously, in order to encourage, or strengthen, or comfort, or console, the minister has got to be there. When people have trials, when people are going through difficulties, he has to be there. Let's go to 2 Corinthians 1:24. Paul makes an important point here. In contrast to what's happened in the past, I've worked for ministers, including one who used to be in this

area, and I remember he read the riot act to a woman who had the gall to leave the apartment she was in, and go rent another apartment without first checking with him to get his approval. That's how controlling some have been in the past in some areas. Let's contrast that with what we read here:

2 Corinthians 1:24 *Not for that we have dominion over your faith, [we don't have dominion over your faith] but are helpers of your joy: for by faith ye stand. (KJV)*

By your faith, in the faith of Christ, you stand. The margin in the King James says *we are fellow workers for your joy*. How can you work to help people have joy? By encouraging them, comforting them, strengthening them, consoling them where necessary. One of the greatest gifts we can bestow on another brother or sister in the Church, when they're going through trouble, is to remind them that with God's help, nothing is impossible. No matter how dark the trial might be, no matter how bad the circumstances look, with God's help all things are impossible. Let's go to Luke 18:27; Christ says that very thing. I've gone back to this over and over and over; when there is a trial, you go to God and you pray to Him: God, I need rescuing—please come over with the helicopter, lower the basket, drag me out of the pit and rescue me.

Luke 18:27 *And he [Christ] said, The things which are impossible with men are possible with God. (KJV)*

Any difficulty can be overcome with God's help. One of the functions of a minister is to encourage people to realize that very fact. We know the very familiar scripture that all things work together for good to those who love God and are called by God to fulfill His purpose—Romans 8:28. One of the prime functions of a minister is to encourage and to let people know that if God is on your side, everything's going to work out alright. We all need encouragement, especially given the atmosphere that's in society, and, if we're honest, the atmosphere that exists in the greater Church of God in many places. We all need encouragement. A godly minister should never pound on the sheep, but a true minister of God should encourage, strengthen, comfort and console. That ends point 6.

Let's go to point 7.

7. God's Word tells the ministry how to do these four things.

Preach, correct, rebuke, encourage. If you look at the scriptures and search the scriptures, God shows us two ways these should be administered.

7A. The first one is a minister should have great patience.

Great patience. If we go back to 2 Timothy 4:2, we'll notice it's the very next thing that Paul brings up.

2 Timothy 4:2 *Preach the word; be prepared in season, out of season; [preach the word, that's number one] correct, rebuke, encourage [he tells us how to do that, he tells Timothy how to do that] with great patience ... (KJV)*

Not a little patience, not some patience, but *great patience*. The Greek word for patience is Strong's #3115 and it means forbearance, longsuffering; some commentaries say it literally means to put up with. We're all humans, we all have our good days, we all have our bad days. Sometimes somebody can come in kind of prickly that particular day, so what does patience do? It helps us put up with each other and not get deeply offended. In the past, the quick and dirty way to get rid of a problem was to disfellowship somebody or run them off. That was quick and fast. It didn't solve anything, it didn't help anybody except maybe make the minister's life a little easier, if he didn't have a conscience. I can remember a Feast in Edmonton back in 1995, when there was turmoil in the Church and there was a minister who now claims to be the only apostle standing on this earth, and a man came up and asked him a question and then another question. The man wasn't hostile but he wasn't syrupy either and that minister disfellowshipped him on the spot, at the Feast, just to get rid of the problem; he didn't want to deal with the problem so he sent the man packing. That's not God's way. Let's go to 2 Timothy 2:24, back two chapters. Paul continues his instruction to Timothy but notice what he says.

2 Timothy 2:24 *And the servant [the Greek word *doulos* can mean "slave"] of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all [the word *men* has been added], apt to teach, [notice the last word] *patient ... (KJV)**

The Greek word for *strive* is Strong's #3164 and it means to war, or figuratively to quarrel, dispute or fight. Paul is saying a minister of God can't be that way; he can't have such a short fuse that he is ready to start swinging the sword at a moment's notice. The Greek word for *patient* is Strong's #420. It's interesting; it means enduring of ill, that is, forbearing, meaning putting up with ill.

Sometimes brethren—a brother or a sister—can lose it with a minister. It might be through stress, it might be through pain, it might be through sleep deprivation, it might be through grief, and what I've found, the majority of the time when somebody loses it, they're angry at themselves over their own sins. Deep down they're angry with themselves but they take it out on all the people around them and if you're trying to deal with them as a minister sometimes they will take it out on you.

We're told here that a minister has to patiently take it while they lose it and not get offended. Not come back harshly, because you have to give people a chance to repent, or, after they've calmed down and maybe gotten some sleep, and had a chance to think about it, they might realize, I really blew it yesterday. They might come and of all things, apologize. I remember that happened to me one time, years and years ago, and ten years after the incident the member came back and said, "I'm sorry. I'm really sorry, it's been bothering me for years." That can't happen if the minister gets angry back and you burn a bridge. Then there are accusations back and forth and it escalates to the

point that the bridge is not only burned, it's torn down, never to be repaired in this life, and then maybe when that person sees themselves and wants to repent, the bridge is so destroyed they can't go back. So one of the jobs of a minister is not to burn those bridges at all, and one of the ways to do that, despite the attitude of the other person, is to be very calm, very patient, and give them a chance to come to themselves down the road. So that is the first instruction from Paul about how we should administer this, how we should do it.

The second is:

7B. Careful instruction.

Back to 2 Timothy 4:2; Paul gives those four charges to the ministry but he doesn't just stop, he tells us how God wants it done.

2 Timothy 4:2 *Preach the word; be prepared in season, out of season; correct, rebuke, encourage with all great patience and careful instruction. (KJV)*

The New King James says *careful teaching*. In other words, very carefully, very calmly, teach how it should have been done. This is what Christ says—have you considered this rather than what you did or what you said. In other words not coming at the person with a whip and a chair as though you were some kind of lion tamer, or with a rod of iron. Let's go to 1 Thessalonians 2:7; Paul is talking to the Church in Thessalonica and he's reminding them how he behaved when he visited them. I'll be reading from the New International Version.

1 Thessalonians 2:7 [Paul is referring to himself] *But we were gentle [the Greek means mild or kind] among you, just as a nursing mother cherishes her own children ... (NIV)*

A loving mother will gently, carefully teach the child. One of the things I just cringe at and I think I hate worse than anything is to see a mom yelling at her kid. That shouldn't be. I mean yelling in anger, venting to a little child who just doesn't know. The little child just needs instruction but instead the mom is venting her own frustration about who knows what at her little child. Careful instruction. It kills me when you see that because that is not God's way. We've seen how a minister should preach the word, correct and encourage and rebuke—he does so with great patience and very careful, loving, kind instruction.

That leads to the eighth point.

8. A godly minister must treat all brethren with dignity and with respect.

There have been horrible abuses of this in the past. In one area of the country when I first came into the Church, a very wealthy, well-dressed businessman came in for the first time (I had been in the Church about two years) and we heard that somebody

“important” was going to be joining us for the first time—God was calling him—and this guy was dressed in the finest suit and pulled up in a Cadillac, or whatever, and the ministers rushed to meet him. Just had to meet him, get to know him. The fact is, there was preferential treatment there.

Those with little education or little money were many times, too many times, looked down upon. I know this because a friend of mine walked into the Feast wearing overalls—flannel shirt, overalls, work boots—that’s all he had. He didn’t have anything else. The boots were polished, the overalls were clean, the flannel shirt was clean and it was the best he had. Yet two high-ranking ministers (both of them now heads of other groups) were obviously very uncomfortable around him to the point they ignored him. He would ask a question, and they would turn, look away and begin talking with somebody else in an obvious way that meant, I don’t want anything to do with you. Why? They didn’t know the man, they didn’t know his character, but they saw how he was dressed, and they saw he didn’t have much money and as a result they were uncomfortable. Let’s go to James 2:1. You know where we’re going here. This applies to all of us but particularly the ministry. James is talking to the brethren:

James 2:1 *My brethren, have not the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory, with respect of persons. (KJV)*

Here’s the perfect example, what we were just talking about.

- 2) *For if there come unto your assembly a man with a gold ring, in goodly apparel, and there come in also a poor man in vile raiment;*
- 3) *And ye have respect to him that weareth the gay clothing, [it shows you how the definition of the word gay has changed over the last few years] and say unto him, Sit thou here in a good place; and say to the poor, Stand thou there, or sit here under my footstool:*
- 4) *Are ye not then partial in yourselves, and are become judges of evil thoughts?*
- 5) *Hearken, my beloved brethren, Hath not God chosen the poor of this world rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which he hath promised to them that love him?*
- 6) *But ye [he’s referring to those who have respect of persons] have despised the poor. Do not rich men oppress you, and draw you before the judgment seats?*
- 7) *Do not they blaspheme that worthy name by the which ye are called [using God’s name in vain]?*
- 8) *If ye fulfil the royal law according to the scripture, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself, ye do well:*
- 9) *But if ye have respect to persons, ye commit sin, and are convinced of the law as transgressors. (KJV)*

So this is lack of dignity and lack of respect based on someone’s appearance. The same has happened to those with handicaps. I’ve seen it. The same has happened to those of a different race—looked down upon because they are a different race. Let me give you a personal example. I was in Detroit in the late ’60s and I had started giving

sermonettes, and this was in the time of the race riots—remember the race riots that occurred in Detroit? They had the National Guard in tanks driving up and down the streets and they were setting the city on fire in certain areas and because of all that, we had to have a segregated church, so there was a white church and a black church. I had an assignment of giving a sermonette at the black church, which I did, and as I was giving the sermonette, I was looking out and there were probably three hundred people in that church; it was a sea of black faces and I'm looking at my notes and talking, but in the back of my head it hit me like a thunderbolt—I'm the only white guy in the room. I had never thought of that before and I began to think about it after that, that I got a little taste of what it was like to be a black man in a white man's world—to be in the minority. The black folks were so welcoming and they were so funny and so glad to see me. That doesn't happen to black men and women in a white man's world in this society. We're better now than we were, but it was pretty bad in the 1960's in Detroit.

The reason I bring out these instances is not to bash other people but to show that God does not want this kind of behavior out of any of us, particularly the ministry. This is not the way He intends the ministry to conduct themselves. I'm a fan of Vince Lombardi. He's dead now, but he was the legendary coach of the Green Bay Packers. He was one of the first NFL coaches to hire black players. He was not a respecter of persons and he was absolutely color blind as to race. A few years ago they had a documentary on Vince Lombardi and his life. (I wish I'd saved it). They interviewed a white football player named Bill Curry—well known if you were following football in the '60s. He was a center and he grew up in Georgia. He was talking in this interview and he said he was taught from youth that whites are superior to blacks. He was taught it by his religion, he was taught it by his parents, he was taught it by the neighborhood—that's how he grew up. He was drafted by the Green Bay Packers out of Georgia and he comes to the training camp as a rookie and finds out that several of the veterans are black. He was saying, "I didn't know what to do, I didn't know how to behave around them. I'd never been around blacks before because I went to an all-white school," and he said, "I didn't know what to do."

One day as a rookie he had a very bad practice. Lombardi was pretty good at screaming at the players and motivating them and he was having a bad day. Everybody else had gone in and he was sitting on the bench with his head between his legs, thinking, I am such a failure. Then Willy Davis, who was a giant of a black man—he was their defensive captain, he was just a rock of a man—walked out and saw Bill Curry discouraged and he sat down and, as Bill Curry described it, "He put his arm around me and said, 'You have what it takes to make this team.'" Then he said (and this shocked Bill Curry), "I will help you get there—I will help you." Curry said that Willy's comments, those few words that he gave him, "changed my life forever. It changed how I viewed blacks, it changed how I viewed myself." Reminds me of the proverb that says a word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in settings of silver. We see here that words of encouragement, at the right time, at the right place, can literally change somebody's life. Willy was not racist. He was not racist at all. Look at the effect of his reaching out to a white kid, look at the effect it had, because it changed this kid's life. For those who refuse to do that, to treat others with dignity and respect, let's see what happens to

them. Let's go to Jude 12; I'll read this out of the NIV. For those who want to elevate themselves or elevate their race or elevate their position or title, this is what awaits. God is not a respecter of persons; it doesn't make any difference if the person is a minister or not a minister, this applies:

Jude 12 *These people are blemishes at your love feasts, eating with you without the slightest qualm—shepherds who feed only themselves. They are clouds without rain [the King James says “clouds without water”], blown along by the wind; autumn trees, without fruit and uprooted—twice dead.* (NIV)

Physically dead, spiritually dead.

16) *These people are grumblers and faultfinders; they follow their own evil desires; they boast about themselves and flatter others for their own advantage.* (NIV)

And, I might add, they create division and dissension in the process. You see, Willy Davis had nothing to gain, he just went and encouraged a kid of a different race and didn't look down on him at all. The fact is that all brethren are children of God; they are called by name by the Father. Let's go to Galatians 3:28. This is something that all of us as ministers need to remember all of the time. Back then there were divisions between Jews and Greeks, between those who were slaves and those who weren't, between men and women—nothing has changed much.

Galatians 3:28 *There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus.* (KJV)

We are all equal because of what Christ has done and we are all equal because God has called us to be in His Kingdom. Therefore, all brethren deserve a minister's respect, even those not of our fellowship. There are those out there who are not of our fellowship but who have God's Holy Spirit, who are walking down the same path we are, so who are we to disrespect them because they don't actually attend every Sabbath with us? We have no business doing that nor does any other group because we are all God's people, the *ecclesia*, the body of Christ. God does not respect human corporations. It just blows my mind that somehow God would say, because you have incorporated over here then that means that's it, and all the rest don't account for anything. You think God would do that? Of course not. Closing out this eighth point, a godly minister must treat all brethren with dignity and respect.

The ninth point—I'm giving more points than usual because this is a two-parter so don't get on me too much ...

9. Love should be the underlying motivation of a godly minister.

Underlying it all, love should be the motivation. Peter is giving us some wonderful advice:

1 Peter 1:22 *Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit [through God's Spirit] unto unfeigned love of the brethren, see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently: (KJV)*

The Greek word for *unfeigned* is Strong's #505 and it means “sincere, without hypocrisy”, in that we just love each other out of deep sincerity and not from hypocrisy where you love somebody because they can give you something or you can get something from them—no. Unfeigned—not fake, not false—love of the brethren. He goes on to say, *with a pure heart*, and the Greek just means “clean” or “clear”. No agenda, not trying to get something, and this especially applies to a minister. How can you minister to sheep if you don't love them or you don't care about them or you're not concerned about them? You can't, that's why Peter says what he says. Christ had a lot to say about this in Matthew 18; we'll start in verse 10. Christ is admonishing the disciples—you'd better not do this, and if you do this you're going to be in trouble.

Matthew 18:10 *Take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones; for I say unto you, That in heaven their angels [these little ones have angels] do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven.*

11) *For the Son of man is come to save that which was lost.*

12) *How think ye? if a man have an hundred sheep, and one of them be gone astray, [the Greek word for astray just means to wander, to wander off] doth he not leave the ninety and nine, and goeth into the mountains, and seeketh that which is gone astray?*

13) *And if so be that he find it, verily I say unto you, he rejoiceth more of that sheep, than of the ninety and nine which went not astray. (KJV)*

He's summing up here in verse 14.

14) *Even so it is not the will of your Father which is in heaven, that one of these little ones should perish. (KJV)*

That's an admonition, that's a warning. I looked up the Greek for *little ones* and it's the word *mikros*; that's where we get the English word micro (like in microscope) and it means “least, less, small in dignity”. In other words, they don't think a lot of themselves. A little one is humble, a little one is small in his or her own mind and yet sometimes little ones get confused and they need guidance or help or direction. They don't need to be kicked to the curb is the point. The scripture is not referring to those who leave the flock throwing hand grenades—it's not talking about that—or those who have an agenda to cause division, or those who promote or condone heresy, but rather those who are legitimately confused, maybe have lost their way for a period of time, maybe Satan has gotten to them.

At the end of the day, a minister must ask himself, have I done everything within my power to rescue them? Have I done everything within my power to bring them back to God? A minister has to stand before God and answer that question. I personally don't

want to stand before God with my knees knocking, where He's pointing out, you didn't do it to this one, and you didn't do it to this one either. Let's go to 1 John 3:14. We've been talking about reading scriptures about God and Christ; fifteen or twenty years ago I read this scripture as though I had never read it before and it just launched itself off the page. I'm ashamed for reading it so many times and not listening to what it says:

1 John 3:14 *We know that we have passed from death unto life, [how can we know it?] because we love the brethren. He that loveth not his brother abideth in death. (KJV)*

I read that and I said, wait a minute, the stress was on ruling and commanding, and barking orders and domineering and all of that, but that's not what this says. If you want to know whether you are passing from going into the lake of fire to entering the Kingdom of God, one way to know is to ask yourself how much you love the brethren. All that a minister does should be what is best for the brethren, helping them along the walk that leads to the Kingdom of God. Love is doing best for them. It's not always what they want, but it's what is best for them. God does the same for us. We pray that we want a certain thing. Sometimes God doesn't answer in the way we want. God knows, if I give you that, it's not going to be good for you. Here's what I want to give you and then you go run with that. As imperfect and as human as ministers can be, the goal should always be to do what is best for the brethren.

Okay, the tenth and the last point.

10. A true minister must exhibit all of the fruits of God's Spirit.

What a responsibility—love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness and temperance—of setting an example in all of those areas. He's got to demonstrate those characteristics described in Galatians 5; a minister has to demonstrate those fruits in being a shepherd. He also has to demonstrate those fruits in his personal life, in his family life, in his home life. If he does that then those fruits can be reflected towards the brethren. It's difficult because the minister has to take care of and pay attention to his family—his home life, his marriage, his children. If they're a disaster, that will absolutely negatively affect his service to the brethren, setting a poor example in the process. Let's go to 1 Timothy 3:4. We're breaking in to Paul telling Timothy the qualifications of an elder and Paul is saying, look, there are responsibilities towards the family:

1 Timothy 3:4 [Paul says a minister is] *One that ruleth well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity; 5) (For if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God?) (KJV)*

The fact is, looking back over the decades, it seems to me that some of the unhappiest wives and unhappiest kids were the minister's wife and the minister's kids. I'm not saying that happened in the majority of cases but it happened enough, even with the

“upper crust” ministry, back in the Worldwide days in the '60s and '70s. It's because there's a continual battle in the mind and the time of the minister to balance the needs of the brethren with the needs of the family and sometimes that can be very difficult. Sometimes it becomes “either or” just because of the stresses involved. Ministers have a responsibility to work that out according to God's will, but the bottom line is a minister must be blameless. Turn to 1 Timothy 3:2; we were just there a second ago in verse 4.

1 Timothy 3:2 *A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, vigilant, sober, of good behaviour, given to hospitality, apt to teach;* (KJV)

A lot of qualifications here but the focus is on *blameless*. That's true for all of us, but as I said earlier, all the ministers at some point or another are going to have to stand before God, my guess is naked, each one of us by ourselves, and you want to be able to say to God that you were blameless: Yes, I made mistakes but I repented, and then I changed my behavior and didn't repeat them again. It's not unusual to make a mistake or to sin, in the sense that we are all human, but what God wants us to do is see the sin, recognize it, repent of it and then change ourselves inside so that we don't repeat it again. In that way, we can stand before God blameless, because we can tell God, I haven't repeated that, I haven't made that same mistake or that same sin from that point forward. A minister needs to be blameless—that should be our goal because how can we set an example if we're not behaving in a Christlike manner? The key to that is humility. The key to fulfilling the true role of a minister is humility. Let's turn to Philippians 2; I'm going to read this out of the New King James. Paul is saying underneath it all, underneath what happens in dealing with the brethren, in dealing with fellow ministers, in dealing with our family, this should be underlying it all:

Philippians 2:3 *Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself.* (NKJV)

One of the reasons Pacific was founded was that we came out of an organization that was filled with politics: back-biting, cutting people off at the knees, gossiping, trying to get advantage, trying to get the ear of those at the very top, and finally you just have enough of it and you want peace. If we have no selfish ambition or conceit but rather we have lowliness of mind and we esteem others better than ourselves, peace breaks out. People get along, people are happy—what a concept. Yet at the same time, many ministers back then and today feel threatened if somebody asks a question, that somehow the person is threatening their authority or threatening their knowledge or threatening their position.

Let's go to James 3:17. We're instructed on how to handle that and I've seen in the past a brother or sister go to a minister and he just blows them off. Doesn't answer their question, doesn't listen to their question or has such a fast answer it's obvious he hasn't even considered the question. It's a threat to some.

James 3:17 *But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, [no agenda, no hidden motives] then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated ...* (KJV)

The New Living Translation says, willing to yield to others, listen to what they have to say, consider their opinions.

17 continued) ... *full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality* [there we go again], *and without hypocrisy.* (KJV)

All of us are in the same boat—we're imperfect human beings trying to be like Jesus Christ. Our goal is to follow the example He set when He walked this earth. Whether you're a minister or not it makes no difference, we are all in the same boat. We are imperfect, trying to follow the example of Jesus Christ, trying to obey God our Father. The goal of a minister is that the brethren should see Christ in the minister, not self-exaltation. You look at somebody—and it can happen to any of us—I've looked at brethren in a tight situation and they've handled it with such godliness that I said to myself, that's the way it ought to be done, that's the way it should be handled, and if I ever get in a situation like that I hope I can follow her example or his example. It's a weightier responsibility to live our lives in such a way that the brethren can see Christ in us, the mind of Christ in us.

Let's finally conclude this two-part series. Several years ago, I gave a sermon, not exactly like this but similar to what we've talked about these last two Sabbaths, stating these truths (this was twenty years ago maybe), and some in authority came down on me like a ton of bricks because they didn't want a minister to be referred to as a servant. They wanted a minister to be referred to as lord and master, so to speak. They wanted a minister to bark orders and rule with a rod of iron, and have people "hop to" so that everybody was afraid of the guy. They wanted a minister to sit in an ivory tower and be above the "payers and the prayers" as the brethren were called; they were the ones who pay and pray—"pay and pray and get out of the way" was the common refrain.

I took a lot of heat about that because they did not want it preached openly that a minister is a servant, and that an ordination to be a minister is an ordination to greater service, not to some kind of greater rank. The fact is, I had to confront some people about this; these truths come from God and come from God's Word—not my opinion, not anybody else's opinion—this is what God's Word says. That the goal of a minister is not to exalt himself or have great power or great authority but we find the goal in 1 Thessalonians 2:19; this will be a final scripture. A minister should do all in his power to fulfill this scripture. Paul is saying, "what's the end of it all, what should be the result?"

1 Thessalonians 2:19 *For what is our hope, [Paul says] or joy, or crown of rejoicing? [Now he gives us the answer] Are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming?* (KJV)

That is the goal of a minister: to help complete the brethren, to help and serve the brethren so that when Christ comes they are ready to marry Jesus Christ. He can stand before God and say, I've done all in my power to help them along the way. At the end of

the day it's up to each one of us, yes, but the point is the goal of a minister is to be there and watch as crowns of glory are put on the heads of all the brethren he has served.

One of the hopes I have in giving these two sermons is for those who have had negative experiences in the past, I hope you find it a little easier to talk to a minister or maybe to trust the ministry a little more, or to respect the ministry a little more because of their service, and certainly not to be afraid of the ministry, but rather to feel comfortable and safe in the presence of a minister. Not to be on guard, not to be nervous, not to be looking over your shoulder but to feel comfortable and safe in the presence of a minister.

The other thing I hope is that all of us come to see that a true minister is a servant and he is put there by God, not by his own doing or any other force, he's put there by God to help the brethren walk the path to the Kingdom. The office, the work of a minister is designed by God is to be an assistant shepherd to God the Father and Jesus Christ. Yes, that's true for the ministry, but these principles apply to all of us as well, every one of us as to how we conduct ourselves. I hope that you're encouraged by the fact that God cares enough for the brethren, for all of you, that He has provided a ministry. He created it, He came up with the thought, the idea, and He's provided specific instructions as to how a minister should conduct himself for the benefit for all of the people He has called. That then will help you to identify a true minister from a false one.