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### **AUGUST 2019 “ARE YOU READY FOR MINISTRY (PART 3)”**

Dear Friend,

Imagine you and your family have just moved to a new city and you're looking for a church to attend. You begin searching the internet and come upon the website of a church which shares the following concerning the church's statement of faith, and lists scripture to support its beliefs:

- We believe that the Bible is the inspired Word of God and is without error. It is truth and is the absolute and final authority on all matters of faith and living. There are no other writings or books given by God to humanity that are equal to the Bible.
- We believe there is one God Who created the universe and that He presents Himself to humanity as Father, Son and Holy Spirit.
- We believe that the only way for people to be united to God is through faith in Jesus Christ. Jesus alone is the way unto the salvation offered by God. Those who reject Jesus are living in spiritual death, which is not God's will.
- We believe that the Holy Spirit has been given to be our Comforter, Counselor and Helper. He will indwell and empower Believers to fully serve God. The Holy Spirit presents a diversity of gifts to Believers, and all of those Gifts are in operation today.
- We believe that baptism and communion are important for all Believers.

Do you think you might consider visiting that church? Now consider a conversation you have with a coworker, we'll call him Bob; after you explain you're seeking to find a home church. Bob shares that he attended a special men's weekend conference at a church. It's a church that has many outreach programs and is very involved with the community. At this conference, a very large number of men gathered together and camped in tents on several acres of land owned by the church. Bob begins telling you about the conference:

- After the “get acquainted” service the first night, all the men were directed to go around to the side of the church for refreshments. The refreshments included a staggering number of beer kegs where those attending could drink all they like. Plus, the beer was available around the clock.
- One of the church's main conference speakers used a shocking number of foul expletives during his “sermon.”
- During a prayer line, one person stood waiting for prayer, a two-liter container of beer in one hand, wobbling, swaying, and trying to remain standing because he was so drunk.
- In one service, the pastor was in the pulpit and talked about how some people are critical of their church, at which point he defiantly opened a beer and drank it.

Do you think you might consider visiting the church described by your coworker? I sincerely hope not! But what if I were to tell you that both the statement of faith and the story about the men's conference are from the same church? Yes, it is sadly true; I read the statement of faith at the church's website and I know someone who attended the conference (yes, he was horrified at what he witnessed and did not partake of the beer).

Some might ask, "How in the world could a church be like that?" There is one answer, and one answer alone: it is the pastor's fault. The man pastoring that church is in no way, shape or form qualified to shepherd a flock in God's pasture. His compromise reeks with the filth and stench of pure rebellion to God's Word. This is a church with tens of thousands in attendance, and he is leading them straight into the eternal lake of fire and doing it in Jesus' Name. He is no different from the backsliding priests and prophets in the Old Testament, against who God pronounced harsh and severe judgment for their whoredoms committed with pagan cultures.

The ministry of the pastor is quite possibly the most important and critical of all the ministry callings. Itinerant apostles, prophets, evangelists and teachers minister in a church for a few services, then move on to the next place God sends them. But the pastor is with the congregation continually and has the responsibility to feed the flock of God on a regular basis. A pastor can steer a congregation either toward God or away from Him (see James chapter three).

My experience in over 30 years of ministry is that it seems people claiming to be called to preach want to be pastors more than anything else. Some evangelists begin to realize that not every church can give them offerings of thousands of dollars; so, to try and secure a regular paycheck, they "come off the road" and start pastoring. Some people serving in a church get offended and leave to start their own church. While driving in one city, I counted about a dozen churches in the space of one mile. I could go on and on. Be honest: Do you really think God has instructed for so many churches to exist?

Are you pastoring? Do you think you're called to be a pastor? What's the pastor like at the church you're attending? In no way do I profess to be an expert on the ministry of the pastor. But I have learned a lot during the 25 years I've been a pastor and here are just a few of the crucial aspects of pastoring you need to know, whether you're pastoring, called to be a pastor, or looking for a church to attend (these are not in any specific order of importance).

- ***<sup>1</sup>Therefore leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto perfection; not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith toward God, <sup>2</sup>Of the doctrine of baptisms, and of laying on of hands, and of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment. (Hebrews 6:1-2)*** A pastor should be able to explain the principles of the doctrine of Christ, the foundation of repentance from dead works, of faith toward God, baptisms (plural), the laying on of hands, the resurrection of the dead and eternal judgement. These are all foundational subjects that should be taught to every Christian.
- A pastor should be able to explain that the 1 Corinthians 12:1-11 Gifts of the Spirit are NOT ministry callings. He should also be able to detail how each of the Gifts manifests and their purpose.
- A pastor should be able to explain that the ministry callings are revealed in Ephesians 4:7-12 and that there are NO ministry callings outside of those in this passage. He should

also be able to teach what each calling encompasses, how each will operate, and how a person can discover his or her ministry calling. A pastor should never, *ever* use some kind of point-value personality profile to help Christians discover their calling.

- Pastors should understand and clearly teach that the bishop, deacon and elder are **NOT** ministry callings, that they are appointed positions of service and what their functions are in the local church.
- A pastor should be able to thoroughly explain why the Baptism of the Holy Spirit is needful, what are the various manifestations of tongues, why praying in tongues is helpful and what such prayer produces in the life of a Believer.
- All pastors – no exceptions – should also have the ministry calling of teacher and be able to teach the Bible in a line-upon-line, precept-upon-precept manner (doing this does not require that the pastor be a Greek or Hebrew scholar). Isaiah 28:9-13, 2 Timothy 3:15 and 3:16-17.
- ***But he answered and said, It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God. (Matthew 4:4)*** Pastors should **NEVER** allow religious traditions, denominational dictates, or some kind of church council to control what is taught. Traditions are a hindrance and barrier to the full work of God's Word and render the Word of God of none effect: Mark 7:13. The measure of a church's value is not in its number of members or in how often the Gifts of the Spirit manifest, but in the truth it teaches.
- A successful pastor is one who obeys God's instructions, not who builds the biggest church and has the most members. A person pastoring a church of 20,000 may be completely out of God's will. But someone pastoring in a village on the Amazon or in a rural church of 20 people may be in the very heart of God's will. Years ago, I was concerned that the church I pastor was not growing as I had hoped. During prayer, the Lord told me, "I didn't call you to build a church. I called you to build people, My Kingdom and to teach people who will receive it." From that time on, I have never once been frustrated or despondent over the size of our congregation.
- A pastor is never to be and do everything in the church. Sadly, many pastors and congregations seem to think just the opposite is true. But a do-it-all pastor is shackling himself with an overload of false responsibility. This never works and leads to various levels of frustration, anger, and burn-out. People in the church are supposed to help get things done, such as cleaning, maintaining the grounds, simple building maintenance, teaching classes, etc. God told Moses how the tabernacle was to be built, but Moses was not the one to build it; many others performed the labor (Exodus 31:1-11, 35:10-35). In the book of Acts, many new converts needed to be fed, but the apostles made it clear their responsibility was not to serve tables, but to give themselves continually to prayer and the Word; other people stepped up and handled the distribution of food (Acts 6:1-7). You must transfer responsibility as the Lord leads to stay in the Word and prayer. The more a pastor tries to do it all, the less he is able to seek God. A major component of a Christian's born-again life is the desire to serve in the Kingdom; unfortunately, too many Christians sear their conscience to that desire, then blame the pastor if things aren't getting done.

- A pastor is never to be the financier for the church. There are stories in abundance about pastors who falsely believe that it is their responsibility to pay for almost everything “to keep the church going.” The result is that pastor after pastor has put his family in financial hardship, running short on food, getting behind on bills, having utilities shut off, ruined his credit...and still the church struggles financially. When God told Moses to build the tabernacle, He gave Moses specific instructions that he was to tell the people to bring offerings as they purposed in their hearts for its construction; Moses was not responsible for personally supplying what was needed (Exodus 25:1-8, 35:4-9, 36:1-5).
- A pastor must never allow political correctness, social trends, cultural or ethnic customs, or current religious and church trends to be the foundation for what he preaches. He must always and without fail make God’s Word, especially the doctrine of the apostles, the only foundation for what is preached (Ephesians 2:19-20). God will only work with and honor truth. You must be willing to watch those who rebel against truth leave your church and never return (John 6:60-66). The more a pastor compromises truth is the more he is compromising his spiritual life in Christ.
- Every pastor absolutely must have a voice of spiritual authority in his life. This means God may lead a pastor to submit to an apostle, prophet or other pastor for leadership, guidance and counsel. Some pastors want to “partner” with anyone who comes along and stirs their emotions...this is wrong beyond description and opens the pastor and congregation to division, strife, doctrinal error, and Satanic influence. Additionally, some pastors seem to think those in leadership in their organization, fellowship or denomination are automatically to be their “spiritual fathers,” which is just as wrong. Pastors need apostolic pastoring in their lives that comes from people who are living and teaching the uncompromised Word of God in line-upon-line context and who aren’t afraid to bring correction when needed (this will typically involve a very small number of ministers, rarely more than four or five). 1 Corinthians 4:15-16
- As a pastor, you are a New Testament type of watchman on the wall. It is your responsibility to let your congregation know they will be judged for their lifestyles on Earth (2 Corinthians 5:10), and that if they incorporate certain sins in their life, they face an eternity in the lake of fire (1 Corinthians 6:9-10, Galatians 5:19-21, Ephesians 5:3-7, Revelation 3:1-6). They must be told that repentance from sin is demanded by God (Revelation chapters two and three). Pastors who refuse to do these things, then have Christians in their church turn from God, will have the blood of the backslider laid to their own account and judgment. If you doubt this, you need to meditate very closely on Ezekiel 33:1-9 and 34:1-10.
- Pastors must be **EXTREMELY** cautious about who they promote in their church. Promoting a novice to any place of ministry is planting seed for a crop of strife, division and conflict within a church. Faithfulness alone is **NOT** the functional qualifier to promote people in your church. You must know that person’s life and maturity in the Lord. Consider what the Apostle Paul wrote in 1 Tim 3:1-16. It is far easier to give someone a title than it is to take it away.
- God makes it very clear in His Word that there is wisdom in the multitude of counselors (Proverbs 11:14, 24:6). However, the emphasis is on the word “counselors.” That word

comes from the Hebrew “ya’ats” and it means, to advise, counsel, admonish; to direct; to resolve, decide; to devise, plan, purpose; to consult with one another, counsel together.” It does not mean “control, dictate, determine a final course of action.” A pastor absolutely **MUST** be spiritually mature enough to pray and hear God’s instructions for the church he is pastoring (Proverbs 3:5-7). There is nothing anywhere in the Bible indicating that a church is to have a board, council, or committee instructing the pastor what decisions he must make for the church. Likewise, there is nothing anywhere in the Bible mandating that a pastor is to let a congregation vote on what a church is supposed to do. Can you imagine Moses allowing the Israelites to vote on where they were to go? Can you imagine Jesus asking the apostles to vote on where He was to minister? If everyone in the church had the mind of Christ, then each vote would be a unanimous “Yes” or “No;” however, you and I both know that just isn’t going to happen as it should.

There is so much more a pastor must know concerning that ministry calling. Do you believe you are called to pastor? Are you currently pastoring? I highly recommend that you meditate on the content of this letter; it will also be of great benefit to listen to my 16-part teaching series, “The 23<sup>rd</sup> Psalm Shepherd.” It is available in MP3 format for free download at my website, [www.jmmgrace.com](http://www.jmmgrace.com). You can also order a CD of my sermon, *Make Full Proof of Your Ministry* by using the order form below.

Do not let man define what God has called you to do. Lay aside all traditions, experience, and what you have seen in others; press into God, remain teachable, and He will lead you step-by-step into you calling and its fulfillment. He will never lead you astray!

In His Grace,

*Jim*

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☐ Check this box to receive a CD of the sermon, *Make Full Proof of Your Ministry*.

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