



# CODE OF HONOR

Ethics, Personal Standards & Practical Wisdom for Men  
and Women in Christian Ministry

Ashish Raichur

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# **CODE OF HONOR**

## **ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

I started preaching at the age of 13. Growing up, I had to learn many things about Christian life and ministry by just journeying with God. In addition, an important habit I developed early on was to read good Christian books. The reading of these books, along with listening to the preaching and teaching of many ministers of God, and observing people, churches, and ministries, became an extended training ground for ministry. It has been 30 years since that small beginning, and I am still learning. I know I owe a lot to many ministers of God through whom I have been nurtured, even if it has been in an indirect way—by reading their books, listening to their sermons, and observing their lives from a distance. Although I may never meet many of them in person this side of heaven, my heart is always grateful to them. What is shared here in this book is a cumulative result of both my personal journey with God and what I have learned from many ministers of God.

## DEDICATION

It is amazing to see what God is doing all over the world today. He is raising up many young men and women, anointed by the power of the Holy Spirit, filled with revelation knowledge of His Word, and is releasing them to affect communities, cities, and nations. There seems to be a sense of urgency, an accelerated work of the Spirit happening everywhere. What took previous generations a long time to learn, understand, and experience, today takes Christian young people to step into these things so quickly and easily. But along with this arises the need to pass on godly wisdom and practical advice, so that those being raised up do not make the same mistakes previous generations made. This book is dedicated to new and upcoming generations of men and women in Christian ministry. May your lives and ministries flourish, bearing much fruit for His Kingdom—without the pain, shame, delays, and detours that previous generations experienced.

## **THANK YOU, TEAM APC!**

I would like to specially appreciate my team members—the pastors, ministry leaders, volunteer teams—who serve at All Peoples Church, Bangalore and at our outreach churches. It is a privilege to work alongside all of you and labor together in the Kingdom of God. It is such a delight to be among a people who are constantly hungry for more of God, who are pressing into God with all they have, who give their hundred percent for His Kingdom's cause, who pursue excellence, integrity, and purity. You are an amazing team! Thank you for this wonderful opportunity to be on your team!

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## INTRODUCTION

Being a minister of the Lord Jesus Christ is exciting, very rewarding, and yet one of the most dangerous things to be engaged in. The bar is set very high for our conduct in life and ministry. The standards that we must consistently walk in are not easy. In some cases, the consequences and repercussions of violation can be very severe not only to ourselves, but also to the Body of Christ—to hundreds, perhaps millions who may be influenced by our lives and ministry. James states that even the Lord will hold us to a higher standard: *“My brethren, let not many of you become teachers, knowing that we shall receive a stricter judgment”* (James 3:1).

I know that I have not been perfect in my journey thus far. I have had my share of failures, mistakes, falls, and bruises along the way. It is only the mercy of God and the support of God’s people that has kept me going. As I look at what is happening in the Body of Christ worldwide, my heart aches each time I hear of another failure, another misdoing by a man or woman of God. Some of the mistakes I made, and what I see others making, could have been avoided, if only we had been forewarned on how to prevent them—if someone had shared some godly advice, provided some wise guidance that would have kept us away from trouble. In fact, the New Testament is full of godly instructions for the minister of God, which we need to pay attention to. And if we do, we will save ourselves and the thousands who are touched through our lives. It is with this intent that this book is written—to help myself and all of us as ministers of God.

I know that in the Church today, where many of us are pressing in to more of the manifestation of God’s power, anointing, signs and wonders, miracles, and healings, prophetic and the supernatural—a call to godly standards of life and conduct may not be very popular. Preachers and ministers are sought after more for what they can manifest in one hour behind the pulpit, than for the life they live off it. Although Paul preached and worked great miracles—something we must all follow, he dared to challenge people with statements such as *“Imitate me, just as I also imitate Christ”* (1 Corinthians 11:1). He called attention not only to the wisdom and anointing with which he ministered, but he also dared to say: *“Brethren, join in following my example, and note those who so walk, as you have us for a pattern”* (Philippians 3:17). It is time for us as ministers of Christ to re-establish standards of serving *“God acceptably with reverence and godly fear”* (Hebrews 12:28).

Code of Honor

**2 John 1:8**

**Look to yourselves, that we do not lose those things we worked for, but that we may receive a full reward.**

Blessings!

Ashish Raichur

## 1. PERSONAL LIFE

Christian ministry is more than a good show we put on during Sunday services, prayer meetings, weekend seminars, or at crusades and conferences. It is more than an eloquent speech or motivational talk that we deliver to inspire and impress people so that they keep coming back to listen to us. Ministry is really an overflow of what God is doing in us personally. If what we are doing in ministry is not an overflow of our personal walk with God, then it is just another promotional campaign, a cheap self-help motivational talk, or just another event management activity—which any unsaved person can do.

Most of us ministers tend to be very diligent in the early days, when the scope of our ministry is still small, and we are not well-known. We diligently read the Word, pray long, do anything we need to do to get our ministry started. But, once we are well-established, have gained a name and reputation, have crowds of people coming to our services, it is so easy to become slack—especially in the area where it matters most—in our own personal lives.

Ethics has to do with moral code, values, and principles. While a code of conduct can be discussed and documented, the standards of ethics itself does not provide the power to keep them. The power to adhere to moral values and principles comes from within each individual. Our power to walk morally upright comes from our dependence on the Lord Himself and through the grace He provides. No code of conduct, no teaching on ethics, no wise counsel, or set of guidelines can help a Christian minister who does not take his or her personal walk with God seriously. This must come from within us. The deep desire to pursue God and hold oneself accountable in private life cannot be imposed from the outside—but must be a spontaneous response coming from deep within, from a heart that has been gripped by God. The standards that we discuss here are those we must hold ourselves personally accountable to and choose to maintain in our personal lives.

### **Schedule Daily Time In The Secret Place**

**Matthew 6:6**

**But you, when you pray, go into your room, and when you have shut your door, pray to your Father who is in the secret place; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly.**

True ministry is birthed in the secret place, where we are in joyful communion with God through prayer, worship, reading, and meditating in His Word. In the secret place, it is only you and God. There is no one else to impress, to pay attention to, or distract. It is in

the secret place that God deals with us, teaches us, and does wonderful things with us. God has promised that when we seek Him in the secret place, He will “reward” us openly. What happens in public ministry should really be the result of what has happened in private in the secret place. Maintaining a consistent practice of private communion with God inside the secret place is vital to the minister of God. Our communion with God does not end once we come out of the secret place. We carry our secret place with us—in our hearts—wherever we go, all day long. So, we continue in day-long communion with God. Ministry is simply passing on to others what we are receiving and experiencing in our relationship with the Lord.

It takes discipline to maintain a consistent life of secret place communion with God. While there are many forms of discipline, true discipline is the product of pure delight. When we delight in God and fellowship with Him, a consistent life of secret place communion happens “naturally.”

We must always stay hungry for more of God, for more of His Word, His Spirit, and His work in our lives. This will motivate us to continue seeking the Lord personally. Stay hungry for more!

## **Continuously Strengthen Your Character**

### **1 Corinthians 10:12**

**Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall.**

Once we have reached a certain level of godliness in our life, it is quite possible that we tend to think that we will set ourselves in cruise mode and just continue at that level. After all we do not commit the sins that beset the average Christian. Moreover, God is using us for the work of His Kingdom, and we are seeing results. So, we stop exercising ourselves in godliness (1 Timothy 4:7). What happens in the natural when we stop exercising a muscle? The muscle gradually weakens, often without us even realizing it. This is also true in our spiritual lives and character. We must regularly keep a check on how we are faring in our character. Character is our moral fiber. It is the level of godliness we walk in by default, in private, when no one is watching. It is our capacity to choose good and refuse evil. It is our ability to stay aligned to the truth of God’s Word. Character is developed over time as we obey God and persevere through various circumstances (Romans 5:3-4). Our character will never rise beyond the level of our obedience to God. The challenge for us Christian ministers is to keep a careful watch over our character and to keep strengthening ourselves. Rather than assuming that we will remain steady at a certain level, we need to invite the work of God—through His Word, His Spirit, and the influence of godly people—to continuously rise to new levels of strength in our character. We must continuously increase our capacity in this area.

Just because we are in Christian ministry, we are in no way exempt from temptations and invitations to sin. The reality is that there will always be new areas where we need to raise up defenses and be on guard. Hence, we need to continuously strengthen character on all fronts. Paul, the apostle, even after receiving great revelations and doing much for the Lord, said *“Not that I have already attained, or am already perfected; but I press on, that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me”* (Philippians 3:12).

## **Do, Then Teach**

### **Matthew 5:19**

**Whoever therefore breaks one of the least of these commandments, and teaches men so, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever does and teaches them, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.**

A very important point of self-discipline that we must maintain in our ministries is that we will not teach something that we ourselves have not practiced first. Being a minister of the Kingdom of God is not just about telling others what to do and what not to do. It is about first walking with God and aligning our own lives to the voice of His Word and Spirit. Then, out of that experience we share and teach others how to do the same. This is what makes us ministers of God’s Kingdom. The credibility of our message is greatly strengthened when people see that we have been living it. I realize that there are times when we must preach about things that are still ahead, which God is calling us into, and where none of us have gone yet. These are messages to challenge all of us to press forward into the higher realms that God has promised for us. I also realize that sometimes we preach and teach on aspects purely based on the truth presented in God’s Word—although we may not have personal experience in that area. For example, a man of God, who is not married, can preach, and teach what the Bible says about marriage. And then of course all of us have experiences where we have failed, learned from our mistakes, got back on our feet, and then share the truth of the Word—even though we know we have had moments of failure in the past. All of these are perfectly fine—since we are called to proclaim the truth of the Word of God and not our own experience. Yet, in areas where we ought to obey God, it is important that we first practice the Word, have lives that are aligned to the Word of God, and then teach.

## **Be A Voice, Not An Echo**

### **Matthew 10:27**

**Whatever I tell you in the dark, speak in the light; and what you hear in the ear, preach on the housetops.**

In the initial stages of my Christian walk, I remember the Lord instructing me to receive the revelation that He is releasing to the Body of Christ through different individuals worldwide. No one individual knows it all or has all that God is speaking to the Church. So, we need to hear, listen, and receive different parts of what God is speaking through

different men and women of God from all over the world. And I have tried to keep doing this through the years. Learning from other men and women of God is very important. And yet, we must be careful not to simply recite what someone else is proclaiming without first making it a personal revelation. What we hear from others, we must first let it become part of us—assimilate it first into our own lives and our personal walk with God and then pass it on. If we don't do this, we will just be a hollow echo—no life and power in what we preach and teach.

More importantly, God desires to speak and instruct each of us personally. God desires to speak to us “*in the dark*” and personally “*in the ear*”—in the quiet, private, and secret moments. “*The Lord GOD has given me the tongue of the learned, that I should know how to speak a word in season to him who is weary. He awakens me morning by morning, He awakens my ear to hear as the learned. The Lord GOD has opened my ear; and I was not rebellious, nor did I turn away*” (Isaiah 50:4-5). What God speaks to us in secret, He wants us to proclaim aloud in public. When we preach and teach the understanding and revelation, we have received through personally listening to God—these are very powerful. Thus, we are being a voice, not just an echo.

## **Lifestyle—Keep It Simple**

### **2 Corinthians 1:12**

**For our boasting is this: the testimony of our conscience that we conducted ourselves in the world in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom but by the grace of God, and more abundantly toward you.**

There is beauty in simplicity. The apostles lived in simplicity and godly sincerity. We must learn to keep our lifestyle simple. Our life is not a show that is being put on. There is no façade, no pretense. There is to be nothing false in the way we live. What you see is what you get.

There is liberty in simplicity. You are free to be you—who God designed you to be, all the time. You are not bound up in a false pretense of trying to be someone you are not.

While we are to engage the world, relate to it to influence and reach people for Christ, we are not to get entangled with the complexities of the world. “*No one engaged in warfare entangles himself with the affairs of this life, that he may please him who enlisted him as a soldier*” (2 Timothy 2:4). There is no need to pursue a bigger house, a bigger car, more things, latest gadgets, lavish living, and so on, if the objective is to make a statement to people around. If your family is growing, you would need a bigger home and there is nothing wrong with that. If you need a bigger and better car, for smoother travel to transport more people or for the sake of reliability and so on, there is nothing wrong in doing so. If a latest gadget helps you perform better, improve efficiency, makes something more convenient, then use it! But, if we get caught up in the “rat race” and are doing

things for the sake of “showing people” something, we have fallen in the same trap as those who do not know God.

Part of living a simple lifestyle is learning to be content with earthly possessions. While in spiritual things we live with a constant sense of holy discontent, our lives in relation to the things of this world should be *“godliness with contentment.”* *“Now godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. And having food and clothing, with these we shall be content* (1 Timothy 6:6-8). The reason we pursue accomplishing things in this world—success, growth, increase in various spheres—is to further the cause of the Kingdom. Other than this, the things of this world do not impress us. We have set our minds on things above, not on things of the earth (Colossians 3:2).

Sometimes we feel the pressure as Christian ministers to be something we are not. If you are not an intellectual—do not pretend to be one. If you are not wealthy, do not pretend to be rich. If you are conventional, do not pretend to be trendy (unless you want to change and be trendy). People see through these pretenses easily. Do not take pride in “moving with the elite” in society, having contacts in high places, and so on. While we do reach out and impact people in high places—treat them as humans—and do it with simplicity. We maintain our ability to connect with and relate to all kinds of people— the rich and the poor, with people in high places and with those at the lowest rung of the ladder. *“Be of the same mind toward one another. Do not set your mind on high things, but associate with the humble. Do not be wise in your own opinion”* (Romans 12:16).

## **Keep Your Heart Pure, Guard Your Motives**

### **Proverbs 4:23**

**Keep your heart with all diligence, for out of it spring the issues of life.**

One of the big challenges in the Christian life is to maintain a pure and clean heart. Dealing with the externals often is easy—we do not drink, smoke, curse, swear, lose our temper, and so on. However, God not only looks at the behavior but also at the attitudes, desires, motives, and intents of the heart. The Apostle Paul tell us that *“When he comes, he will bring out in the open and place in evidence all kinds of things we never even dreamed of—inner motives and purposes and prayers. Only then will any one of us get to hear the “Well done!” of God”* (1 Corinthians 4:5, Message Bible). As Christian ministers, we seem to be the biggest “culprits” in this area, because while we preach and proclaim the grandest of things, there could be all kinds of evil in the inner recesses of our hearts and minds.

If our motive is to seek glory, fame, and recognition for ourselves through the ministry we do, our hearts are wrong. Jesus said, *“He who speaks from himself seeks his own glory; but He who seeks the glory of the One who sent Him is true, and no unrighteousness is in*

*Him*" (John 7:18). To the extent I seek glory for myself, to that extent there is unrighteousness in me.

Maintaining lustful thoughts is the same as committing the deed (Matthew 5:28). While we can hide our toying with lustful passions from people and appear holy, God still sees our inner-beings and we have sinned in His sight.

While we may shout "Hallelujah!" in front of a crowd, can we do the same when we hear of another fellow minister being used greatly by God, or blessed with a great opportunity? Or are our hearts suddenly filled with envy and jealousy? Do we now scheme and plan on how to compete and catch-up with the other minister?

Do we suddenly become insecure when we hear of another local pastor or church doing much better than us or our own church? Are we insecure when people from our congregation visit services in another church or attend a meeting hosted by another pastor or preacher? Do we then in the name of "shepherding" and "protecting our flock" begin to think of direct and indirect means to prevent people from receiving from other ministers of God? Are we afraid that one of the ministers under our leadership will suddenly rise above us and do better than ourselves? All these are just signs of a heart that is insecure.

I think all of us Christian ministers at some point would have struggled in many if not all the above areas. I know I have. Over the years, I have attempted to always maintain a clean and pure heart. This is the core—the center point from where relationship with God and ministry begins. God looks for truth and purity in the heart (Psalm 51:6) and "*If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear*" (Psalm 66:18). Personally, here is how I try to go about keeping a pure heart. Without becoming overtly introspective and coming under self-condemnation, I judge myself. I need to be true to myself and to God when evaluating the inner thoughts, feelings, motives, and desires of my heart and mind. I do not want to lie to myself or to God, about what is going on within me. Paul taught us that "*if we would judge ourselves, we would not be judged*" (1 Corinthians 11:31). I invite the Lord to help me in this process of discerning the thoughts and intents of my own heart. Like the Psalmist, I often pray, "*Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my anxieties; and see if there is any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting*" (Psalm 139:23-24). As I recognize thoughts, feelings, motives, ideas, desires that are not aligned to the heart of God, I ask the Lord to cleanse me from these. I invite the purifying and refining fire of God, through His Word and His Spirit to rid these from my heart and mind. Sometimes, the release is quick and happens easily. Sometimes I may struggle with something over a few days—but I continue to pray and invite God's grace to empower me in this area. Another thing I also find useful is to meditate in God's Word regarding that specific area where I see the need to stay clean. I take time to read and meditate on related Scriptures and this brings about cleansing and helps me maintain a

clean and pure heart. Personally, I believe, that if we can keep our hearts pure, guard our motives, thoughts, and desires within us—half the battle has been won.

## **Do Not Kill Your Own Conscience**

**Acts 23:1**

**Then Paul, looking earnestly at the council, said, “Men and brethren, I have lived in all good conscience before God until this day.**

**Acts 24:16**

**This being so, I myself always strive to have a conscience without offense toward God and men.**

Our conscience is a God-given built-in regulator that has been placed within us (Romans 2:15). It tells us when we are right and when we are wrong. Our conscience also bears witness aligned to the witness of the Holy Spirit, essentially reinforcing what the Holy Spirit would speak to us (Romans 9:1). Paul writing about those who serve in Christian ministry writes *“Likewise deacons must be reverent, not double-tongued, not given to much wine, not greedy for money, holding the mystery of the faith with a pure conscience”* (1 Timothy 3:8-9). As Christian ministers, we are to couple our ministry with a pure conscience. A clean and pure conscience is necessary for us to walk in reverence toward God, control our tongues, our appetites, and stay free from the love of money. If we begin to sear our own consciences, suppress, and kill the voice of our own consciences, then soon we end up speaking lies in hypocrisy (1 Timothy 4:2) and will not even feel any remorse about it. This is a dangerous place to be.

Why is it that some Christian ministers, having begun well, end up in grievous crimes—embezzling or misusing ministry money, outright lies, murders, scandals, and so on? Slowly there was a departure from keeping a clean conscience. Slowly the voices of their own consciences were suppressed with well-conceived ideas, reasoning, excuses, and theological justifications—until their consciences were no longer heard. Paul warned us that we need to have faith along with a good conscience. If we reject a conscience, we can suffer “shipwreck” of our faith (1 Timothy 1:19)—essentially a major accident in our journey of faith. Can God help us recover from a “faith wreck?” Am sure He can. But if we ensure that we keep a clean and good conscience, we can avoid the shipwreck of our faith, in the first place.

Keep listening to your conscience, do not kill it. It is a small thing but can make a huge difference.

## **Fire Up Your Passion For Purity**

**2 Timothy 2:19-22**

**19 Nevertheless the solid foundation of God stands, having this seal: “The Lord knows those who are His,” and, “Let everyone who names the name of Christ depart from iniquity.”**

**20 But in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and silver, but also of wood and clay, some for honor and some for dishonor.**

**21 Therefore if anyone cleanses himself from the latter, he will be a vessel for honor, sanctified and useful for the Master, prepared for every good work.**

**22 Flee also youthful lusts; but pursue righteousness, faith, love, peace with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart.**

Personal purity is not emphasized very much in the Church today. Personal purity—cleansing ourselves of whatever is impure is necessary, if we are to be vessels of honor in God’s house, set aside, and ready for the Master’s use. We live in a world where personal purity is considered a weakness, an oddity, and not a virtue. The world considers it normal to be “impure,” although “sin” and “impurity” are not called by those names but considered as an individual preference or personal lifestyle choice. Unfortunately, these ideas and the same callousness toward sin seem to have crept into the Church. As Christian ministers, it is easy to get preoccupied with growing congregations, building ministries, preaching messages that attract crowds but get lax in sin. Our busyness in the ministry or sometimes even the success and fruit we see, tend to cause us to “take it easy” when it comes to personal purity. Slowly, we stop preaching on purity because after all everything seems to be going well. We begin to compromise, adjust, adapt to sins we once would not tolerate. Soon these sins we tolerate, begin to dominate our lives. If this does not stop, we will end up on a downward trend that will be disastrous. The only way to guard against this is to keep our passion for purity always fired up. We must constantly remember that the solid foundation of God for life and ministry requires that everyone who names the name of Christ departs from sin. Anything that tolerates sin is an unstable foundation to build on.

## **Set Personal Moral Boundaries**

**Psalm 101:2-3**

**2 I will behave wisely in a perfect way. oh, when will You come to me? I will walk within my house with a perfect heart.**

**3 I will set nothing wicked before my eyes; I hate the work of those who fall away; it shall not cling to me.**

We need to exercise wisdom and prudence to walk in a perfect way before God. Some simple boundaries that we can set for ourselves will help us from falling into unnecessary trouble. Here are a few boundaries that I find useful, that I have set for myself early on in life. There have been very rare times when I have crossed these boundaries, and only with good reason.

Do not meet with a woman alone in a closed area. If a woman needs to talk to you— meet in an area that is open, where there are others around. It is on purpose that our church office is a totally open office where everything is glass—all visible. I have seen some pastors’ offices where the rooms are completely closed (with air conditioning). My

immediate thought is how “dangerous” this place would be if he had to meet with a woman. It unnecessarily puts us in a place of risk.

Another boundary I set a long time ago is that I never travel alone with another woman, other than my wife, in the same vehicle. There have been rare exceptions, but for the most part I have maintained this stand, and perhaps over time become even more firm on this.

I normally do not hug women. I just offer a simple handshake or smile. Hugs for women are reserved only for women in the family—wife, daughter, sister, aunts—or for older women who are like mothers in the faith.

There are several such simple, but effective boundaries that you can set for yourself. We will discuss several other precautions through the course of this book. It is not that we are creating laws and putting ourselves into bondage. Rather, these are safeguards to help us stay out of trouble. These are preventive measures to keep sin at bay. This is walking wisely with a perfect heart.

## **Stay Clean Of All Private Sexual Sin**

### **1 Corinthians 6:12-13,19-20**

**12 All things are lawful for me, but all things are not helpful. All things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any.**

**13 Foods for the stomach and the stomach for foods, but God will destroy both it and them. Now the body is not for sexual immorality but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body.**

**19 Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own?**

**20 For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's.**

### **1 Corinthians 9:27**

**But I discipline my body and bring it into subjection, lest, when I have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified.**

God designed our sexuality. It is part of who God has made us to be. He also has clearly given us the perimeters within which we are to express and experience our sexuality. However, for us men, managing our sexual passions is not easy. Just because we are Christian ministers, we do not become angels. Our sexual passions do not disappear. They are very much there. So, by the help of God's empowering grace given to us through His Word and His Holy Spirit, we need to keep our sexual appetites under control.

The area of our sexuality is a private matter. We normally do not discuss this in public. However, because it is a private area of our lives—it is quite possible that many Christian ministers can be in all kinds of bondages, sins, and compromises in this area—and people

in the audience will not know about this. A little bit of pornography, a little bit of lustful thinking, a little flirting with the opposite sex, homosexual relationships, and so on may “seem alright” and can be kept hidden from the public. But the Bible tell us that sin like “*a little leaven leavens the whole lump*” (1 Corinthians 5:6; Galatians 5:9). In most cases, ministry will continue as usual—and if the Christian minister does not come clean, God will deal with this one way or another. So, it is important as Christian ministers that we stay clean of all private sexual sins. I have had my share of struggles in this area, and I need to continue to keep a close watch over managing my sexuality and keep all sexual passions under control.

Here are some things I practice, to be clean of all private sexual sins. God may lead you differently and show you other ways through which you can keep your body in subjection. Practice whatever works for you—but in the end all of us must ensure that we, through His grace, walk holy in this area as well.

As Christian ministers, some of us may have to travel often and we end up staying in hotel rooms or private apartments. As a precaution, if I am staying alone in a hotel room, I usually do not turn on the television. It is not that I never watch television—it is just that when I am alone, I do not want to unnecessarily expose myself to lewd commercials and so on. When someone else is with me, e.g., if my wife or son travel with me, then immediately there is mutual accountability, and we can be careful as to what we watch.

Another area we need to be careful is in reading newspapers and newsmagazines. We cannot control what is printed in these—but we can control what we read, look at, and absorb. When you turn a page and see an indecent picture in print, your eyes may get a first glance—but that is where I stop. I refuse to allow a second glance. I read the news elsewhere on the page but refuse to let my eyes go back and gaze on what is indecent. We also must be careful in using the Internet. I do not purposely go to sites that contain indecent pictures and so on. However, in case something comes up on my face, I move away immediately and refuse to gaze on it.

Masturbation is another area where many of us struggle. While the Bible does not speak directly on this subject and there are differing views from both the Christian and medical community on this, my personal stand is not to practice it. My point of view is that I do not want my body to be a slave to anything. “*All things are lawful for me, but all things are not helpful. All things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any*” (1 Corinthians 6:12). The question is not whether it is ok or acceptable. The question is whether it is helpful and whether it dominates me in anyway. From this standpoint, habitual masturbation and being enslaved to this habit is a bondage and a sin. The best thing to do is to stop practicing it.

I have learned to declare that my body is not for sin or sexual immorality, but for the Lord. I have understood the power of declaring that Jesus is Lord over my sexual desires. I pray

and consecrate the sexual part of my being to God. I declare that all my sexual desires and sexual appetites are holy and consecrated to God. *“God wants you to live a pure life. Keep yourselves from sexual promiscuity. Learn to appreciate and give dignity to your body, not abusing it, as is so common among those who know nothing of God”* (1 Thessalonians 4:3-5).

## **Be Accountable To God—Every Moment**

### **2 Corinthians 5:9-10**

**9** Therefore we make it our aim, whether present or absent, to be well pleasing to Him.

**10** For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad.

Make “pleasing God” your ultimate objective. People may approve and have high regards for you. But earthly approval does not count for anything in the ratings of heaven if God does not approve of our lives first.

While we respect and encourage accountability to man—whether it be through accountability groups, leaders, mentors, overseers, and so on—ultimately, all must come to a place where our lives are anchored and steadied by a deep sense of moment-by-moment personal accountability to God. The fact that one day I will stand before this awesome God of the universe to give an account of my life on earth—should be significant enough to keep me on the straight and narrow path. If this sense of accountability to God does not grip me, then no other form of accountability that I surround myself with is going to do me much good. All forms of human accountability can be easily circumvented or cheated.

In whatever ministry you do and activity you engage in, carry inside you a deep sense that God above is watching, evaluating, and following you. He sees beyond what people see and examines not only the quality of our work, but the motives with which we did them. It is not enough to do a good work. Good work must be done out of pure motives. Stay accountable to God, every moment.

## **Full-Time Or Part-Time?**

### **Acts 20:33-35**

**33** I have coveted no one’s silver or gold or apparel.

**34** Yes, you yourselves know that these hands have provided for my necessities, and for those who were with me.

**35** I have shown you in every way, by laboring like this, that you must support the weak. And remember the words of the Lord Jesus, that He said, ‘It is more blessed to give than to receive.’

One of the things we must understand is that we are ministers of God all the time. Just because we do something that may be considered “secular” (e.g., working on a job), does not mean we momentarily stop being ministers of God. There are no part-time believers and there are no part-time ministers of God. We are all full-time believers and full-time ministers of God. We are His ambassadors all the time and in every place.

However, very often we see that when someone feels a desire to serve God through preaching, teaching, or in some other form of Christian ministry, the first thing they think of is quitting their job and going into full-time ministry. I do believe God calls people to set aside the opportunity of being employed in the marketplace so that they can devote their time, attention, and energies to specific ministries He has called them to. This is completely true. However, here is what I feel one should do, when they are still considering whether God desires for them to take such a step and are waiting for God’s directive and timing to move into such a place. One should continue working in the marketplace in whatever job or vocation they are skilled at and then at the same time engage in areas of Christian ministry they are called, gifted, and anointed for. There is absolutely nothing wrong in being bi-vocational. Paul the apostle, in many places did this. He worked with his own hands to earn an income to take care of himself, his team, and others, while he continued planting churches and nurturing believers. Earning his own income, was part of what Paul was called to do for the ministry. This gave credibility to his life and the message he preached. This was not something “unholy” that he was doing. Rather it was an integral part of who he was and a highlight of his ministry, so much so that he wrote about it in several places in Scripture.

Going through such a time where one is engaged in a regular job as well as doing Christian ministry is also a good way to prove one’s calling, gifting, and anointing. Once there is fruit that is sustained over a few seasons, and the workload in ministry is increasing and God’s people recognize the fact that one has been called, gifted, and anointed, then with the leading of the Lord, it is wise to make the transition out of a regular job to devote all of one’s time for that area of Christian ministry.

## **Watch Your Diet And Exercise Regularly**

### **1 Corinthians 6:20**

**For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God’s.**

We have all experienced the fact that when both our bodies and minds are doing well, it helps us in our spiritual lives also. We can pray, read the Word, and go about our ministries unhindered. Our bodies have been purchased by God and are God’s property, which we are stewards of. God desires to be glorified in our bodies—not only in terms of keeping them clean and pure from sin, but also in terms of their health and healing.

We do have a significant part to play in maintaining good health. It is our responsibility to eat right and healthy, and to exercise our body. Some sensible things to do would include avoiding overeating, avoiding too much of sweet, salt, and oily/fatty foods, eat on time, and so on. A doctor will be able to advise us on other things that we may need to do, specific to our personal health situation.

Those who travel in ministry know that it is not possible to regulate what food is served to you and when it is served. Usually, you must eat whenever there is time in between services or at the end of the service, which would be late in the evening. These are unavoidable. Hence, when I travel, I try to eat light and eat small quantities. There is the temptation to overeat when we travel, because our hosts want us to have the best and taste all the delicacies of their towns. While we must be courteous and kind to our hosts, we must also remember that we wish to take care of our health. So, in a kind and tactful way, we can ensure that we enjoy their food, without overloading our bodies with too much of it.

Practicing healthy eating habits and regular exercise will help us serve God and His people better and longer. For me personally, I envision living long, should the Lord Jesus tarry, and living a healthy life right through. I want to serve God as long as I possibly can and stay fit and healthy right through till the very end. Staying healthy saves us time and money that would otherwise have been spent inside hospitals and on medical care. We can use our time and money on more beneficial things. And all it takes is consistently eating healthy and exercising regularly.

My father has been a great inspiration and encourager in this area. For the last 40 plus years, he has been exercising regularly. He is now 79 years old and is still strong and energetic. He goes for walks and to the gym regularly. He still jogs, stretches, and lifts weights. I have learned the importance of regular exercise from him and hope to keep doing the same till I am well into my later years. I want to be preaching and teaching God's Word, raising up men and women of God in God's Kingdom till the very end.

## **Have A Personal Management Plan**

### **Titus 1:7-8**

**7 For a bishop (a spiritual leader) must be blameless, as a steward of God, not self-willed, not quick-tempered, not given to wine, not violent, not greedy for money,**

**8 but hospitable, a lover of what is good, sober-minded, just, holy, self-controlled.**

### **2 Timothy 1:7**

**For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind.**

The word translated “sound mind” literally means discipline or self-control. The Holy Spirit fills us with boldness, power, love, and discipline or self-control. The Holy Spirit gives us the power to keep ourselves—spirit, soul, and body—under discipline.

With the help of the Holy Spirit and given the situations and circumstance within which you live and operate, you need to have a plan on how you are going to order your life, use your time and the resources given to you. You need to determine where you will invest what God has provided for you. If you have a predetermined personal management plan or a predetermined set of priorities, it will help you stay focused on what is important and keep you moving ahead with God’s purposes. Otherwise, it becomes easy to get distracted with several different things. Distractions result in wasted time and energy. Distractions produce delays which further weaken you in the pursuit of your primary purpose. The book of Proverbs teaches us that “*A person without self-control is like a house with its doors and windows knocked out*” (Proverbs 25:28, Message Bible). Having a personal management plan will help discipline the use of the resources God has given you.

Here are a few things that are part of my personal management plan:

### **Daily Schedule**

I like to have a daily schedule. This helps me know what I must do and when. My daily schedule essentially has set times for different things I need to do, e.g., time in the morning with the Lord, time for working out in the gym, breakfast time with family, time at the office, and so on. When I travel, I’ll have to adjust this schedule, but as soon as I return home, I am back to my “default” daily routine.

### **Priorities**

There are some things I hold more important than other things, such as personal time with God, time with family, and time to exercise and rest. I focus on doing things that I am gifted and called to do and let others in my ministry team engage in other areas where they are gifted and called. I try to stay out of their way so that they have the liberty to do what they must do, while I provide guidance as needed.

### **Accepting Ministry Invitations**

It is not humanly possible to fulfill all invitations for ministry that come my way. I am cautious in choosing ministry engagements. Rather than randomly accepting invitations, I try to give my time into areas where I feel God has called me, and where there can be strategic benefit for the Kingdom of God. I also try to assess if people are just looking for

a speaker to fill in a slot or are genuinely eager to receive of the gift and anointing God would release to them.

### **Meeting Church People**

Right from the very beginning of my ministry, I made it a practice in our church that if people wanted to meet with me, they would need to come and meet me at the office. This ensures that they genuinely have something to talk about and helps save my time. Only in specific situations would I go and meet with them in their homes. Also, in the same vein, I do not accept all invitations to visit peoples' homes for dinners, birthdays, and other special occasions. With a sizeable congregation like ours, it is practically impossible, and our congregation too understands this.

### **Solving Problems, Meeting Needs**

There will always be "needs" all around us. There will be many worthy ministries asking you to support them. There will be many genuine people who need assistance in different areas of life. While we can be moved with compassion and desire for something to be done, we must remind ourselves that we are not God and we are not the Savior of the world. I need to remind myself that I am not here to solve every problem and meet every need. Only God can do that. My responsibility is to respond to what God prompts me to do and enter only into those situations that God has made me responsible for or stirs me to respond to. While I may be emotionally moved by some need or a particular situation, I must learn to follow the Lord, and this requires spiritual discernment and restraint.

### **Life Plan**

One other thing I have done in ministry is to listen to God and get a sense of what He would want me to focus on each ten-year period. So, I have divided my life into different decades or ten-year periods. Each decade has a specific objective—something I focus on and work toward in that decade and build toward the next decade. When the next decade comes, I transition into working toward the next objective. It has been amazing to see how each of these decades has unfolded. What I dreamed about in Decade Two (Age 12-Age 22), I saw God preparing me for in Decade Three (Age 22-Age 32) and then saw this unfold and begin to take shape in Decade Four (Age 32-Age 42). I am now journeying into greater things that are up ahead. I am not suggesting that you should follow the same decade-by-decade life plan. What I would recommend is that you too get a sense of divine purpose for your life from the Spirit of God, and then develop a plan to seeing that fulfilled.

Live life with a divine purpose!

## 2. FAMILY

For many of us in Christian ministry, we have not been successful in balancing our call in the family with our call in ministry. For most of us Christian ministers, some of our major battles have been fought behind closed doors, in the privacy of our homes, with our spouse or children who went astray, while we were busy saving the world. This is sad, but true. What makes it even more ironic is that many of us Christian ministers counsel and guide other marriages, while we are struggling with our own marriage, home, and family life.

The requirement of a Christian minister is stated explicitly, in no uncertain terms. The Christian minister must be *“one who rules his own house well, having his children in submission with all reverence (for if a man does not know how to rule his own house, how will he take care of the church of God?)”* (1 Timothy 3:4-5). My wife and I have gone through difficult times in our marriage. It is only the mercy of God and the support of a few people who stood by us that has seen us to where we are today. Our marriage is not perfect, and we do not have a perfect home. There have been some hard lessons to learn. Hence, some of the lessons below come out of the crucible of our personal struggles and failures. I think it would be wise to heed to these lessons. While many of the lessons listed below come from the perspective of a man in Christian ministry, they can be readily adapted for women in Christian ministry as well.

### Three Postures, One Life

**Luke 14:26**

**If anyone comes to Me and does not hate his father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, yes, and his own life also, he cannot be My disciple.**

**1 Corinthians 7:29-35**

**29 But this I say, brethren, the time is short, so that from now on even those who have wives should be as though they had none,**

**30 those who weep as though they did not weep, those who rejoice as though they did not rejoice, those who buy as though they did not possess,**

**31 and those who use this world as not misusing it. For the form of this world is passing away.**

**32 But I want you to be without care. He who is unmarried cares for the things of the Lord—how he may please the Lord.**

**33 But he who is married cares about the things of the world— how he may please his wife.**

**34 There is a difference between a wife and a virgin. The unmarried woman cares about the things of the Lord, that she may be holy both in body and in spirit. But she who is married cares about the things of the world—how she may please her husband.**

**35 And this I say for your own profit, not that I may put a leash on you, but for what is proper, and that you may serve the Lord without distraction."**

**1 Timothy 3:2-5**

**2 A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, temperate, sober-minded, of good behavior, hospitable, able to teach;**

**3 not given to wine, not violent, not greedy for money, but gentle, not quarrelsome, not covetous;**

**4 one who rules his own house well, having his children in submission with all reverence**

**5 (for if a man does not know how to rule his own house, how will he take care of the church of God?)"**

There are three, seemingly contradictory postures we are being called to maintain in relation to our family. The Lord Jesus said that if we do not "hate" our wife and children we cannot be His disciple. In the book of Corinthians, the Lord instructs us through Paul that he who is married should live as though he is not married, so that he is not distracted. And then again, in the book of Timothy, the Lord instructs us through Paul that a spiritual leader must take care of his wife and children and have his home in proper order. Sometimes, we think that we can pick one of these postures and we are fine. So, some of us may decide to "hate" and totally detest our wife and children and give ourselves "fully" to the Lord's ministry. Some others may choose the posture that though we are married, we live as though we are not married! And then perhaps some of us are constantly striving and struggling to develop our relationship with our wife and children and nurture our home and family life.

I believe that these three postures are something that we fulfill simultaneously all the time. First, our love for the Lord Jesus supersedes our love for wife and children or all earthly relationships. Therefore, when the Lord calls us, we are willing to make sacrifices and not excuse ourselves on the pretext of earthly relationships. Second, even though we are married, we learn to keep a laser-sharp focus on the Lord Jesus, so that while fulfilling our family responsibilities, we are not distracted from our focus of ministering to the Lord and pleasing Him above all else. Third, as spiritual leaders, we do our part in growing and nurturing our family and home in a way that the Lord will be glorified. At any given time, we are to fulfill all three requirements. To live this kind of life takes the grace of God and much spiritual wisdom and understanding.

## **Nurture Your Relationship With Your Spouse**

**Ephesians 5:28-29**

**28 So husbands ought to love their own wives as their own bodies; he who loves his wife loves himself.**

**29 For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as the Lord does the church.**

"He saved the world but could not save his own home!" What a shameful remark and yet this seems to be the case with an increasing number of our ranks as men and women of God in Christian ministry. A primary cause for this is that while we are busy nurturing people in our congregations or in other areas of ministry, we tend to neglect our own

spouse. We assume that either God will take care of our spouse, or our spouse will automatically take care of her own needs and will not lay upon us the additional burden of the home. Both these assumptions are wrong. God has placed on us the responsibility to “nourish and cherish” our spouse. Our spouse is just as human as all the people we minister to, and needs our time, care, and affection. Nurturing our relationship with our spouse is a command and is as important a command as any other in the Bible. We must recognize that ministering to our own family is as important a ministry as ministering to the world. We are called to do both.

## **Nurture Your Relationship With Your Children**

**Ephesians 6:4**

**And you, fathers, do not provoke your children to wrath, but bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord.**

As parents we have the responsibility of bringing up our children in the training and ways of the Lord. What we see happen very often is that if the man is involved in ministry, the burden of nurturing the children falls entirely on the wife. Or in cases where both the husband and wife are busy in ministry, it seems as though the spiritual nurture of their children has been abandoned to the congregation. These “ministry parents” hope that somehow their kids would get trained up in the ways of the Lord. None of these are right. As parents we must understand that we have a responsibility toward our children to train them up in the ways of the Lord. This will not happen by just telling them what to do. We need to have a relationship with them—and through that relationship we can impart training and nurture in spiritual things. If we are too busy to build a relationship with our kids, we can forget about being able to impart spiritual things into their lives.

So, take time to develop a close relationship with your children. Do not neglect this. It is not worth seeing the world come to listen to your sermons, while your own children are indifferent to your preaching of the Word of God. You have only one chance to give into the lives of your own children, do not miss it. And do not delegate the responsibility of nurturing your children to someone else. Do it yourself. There can be no greater joy than to see your own children walking in the ways of the Lord and fulfilling His highest and best for their lives.

## **Work To Provide For Your Family**

**1 Timothy 5:8**

**But if anyone does not provide for his own, and especially for those of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever.**

These are very strong words made by Apostle Paul. Failing to provide for our own household is unacceptable before God. I realize that there may be patches of tough

financial times, especially in the early days when we start off in Christian ministry. However, if things do not change on the ministry front, I do not see anything wrong if the man or woman who has dedicated himself or herself for full-time ministry, takes up a job for a season. You can continue working on the ministry front in parallel for it to grow, but there can be sufficient funds through the job to take care of the family.

Unfortunately, a lot of families—primarily the wife and children at home—go through undue suffering, because the husband is unwilling to go out and take up a job for a temporary period, to meet the basic needs of the family. The husband stays very adamant on his call to full-time ministry, while evidently there is insufficient money coming through the ministry to take care of the family's needs. The husband refuses to take up a job thinking this is a sign of unbelief, or "looking back" after putting his hand to the plough. The husband may even say that he has no leading from God to take up a temporary job. Personally, I think God has already declared in His Word what He desires for the man of the house to do—to provide for the family. I think it is a matter of obedience to the written Word of God to get a job to provide for the family in difficult times. This is acceptable to God.

## **Pursue God's Purpose As An Individual**

### **Matthew 10:37-38**

**37 He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me.**

**38 And he who does not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me.**

This point here may be a sudden shift from all the importance we have been placing on the family and home in earlier sections. But the point I wish to make here, is that while we maintain the importance due to the family and home—we cannot at any point compromise on our love for God and obedience to His call. I cannot use family as an excuse for not pushing forward in the call of God. What we are called to do is to be the God-kind of man or woman to our spouse, be the God-kind of parent to our children, and while doing this, continue to walk ahead in the plans and purposes that God has for us in Christian ministry. All of these are interlinked and enhance each other. My call as a husband, as a father, and as a minister of God is all interlinked. Each role strengthens the other. Success in one area will provide strength to see success in another area. So, continue to pursue God's call on your life, while fulfilling His call at home as a husband and father.

## Encourage Your Spouse To Pursue God's Purpose

### Psalm 128:3

**Your wife shall be like a fruitful vine in the very heart of your house, your children like olive plants all around your table.**

The “fruitful vine” symbolizes several things, one of which is in the fruit of the wine—which stands for “joy and pleasure.” God has ordained that your wife be a source of joy and pleasure to the home. However, this will not happen, automatically. In addition to nurturing your wife, you will need to encourage her to find her life of satisfaction and fulfillment. If your wife is dissatisfied or feels unfulfilled in life—this will reflect in “sour grapes,” figuratively speaking, and there will be no joy or pleasure at home. What happens with us Christian ministers is that we get so busy pursuing our calling, doing the great and mighty things we feel God has called us to do, that we forget that God has a call, plan, and purpose for our spouse too! We think her only role is to be a support, while we go out to do the great exploits. This is wrong.

In some cases, the husband and wife are called toward the same kind of ministry, and are therefore able to work together, side by side. This is great and an amazing sight to behold. However, not every married couple is made that way. There are situations where the husband and wife may be called to engage in things that take them to different places and areas of involvement. This is not easy to manage, and it takes a lot of wisdom to ensure that both spouses are encouraged to grow in their respective callings.

What I have attempted to do is to support my wife to fulfill what she feels God has called her to do, in as much as I receive her support for me to fulfill what God has called me to do. This means, that there are times when I adjust my schedule, change my plans, and so on, so that my wife can have the time and space she needs, to do what she feels God has graced and called her to do. Apart from being a husband and father, there are two main areas of involvement that I had outside the home. I am pastor of All Peoples Church in Bangalore and, I also owned and ran a software development company that was focused on healthcare software and services. I have had these two roles since the beginning of 2001 to 2014. Currently I am serving full-time in the ministry as pastor of All Peoples Church. Similarly, outside the home, my wife works full-time as a medical doctor in a mission hospital in Bangalore and is part of the prayer team of the women's ministry at church. I have not placed any pressure on my wife to be what people would consider a “typical pastor's wife”—someone taking care of Sunday school for children, leading women's ministry, and so on. My objective is to give her the liberty to pursue what she feels is God's calling on her life, and not to live up to people's expectations.

## Encourage Your Children To Pursue God's Purpose

### Psalm 139:16

**Your eyes saw my substance, being yet unformed. And in Your book they all were written, the days fashioned for me, when as yet there were none of them.**

God has designed each one uniquely and for the purpose He has in mind for them. This is true about your children also. As a parent it is your responsibility to help your children identify their God-given gifts and talents. You then need to guide them in the direction where they can maximize who God has designed them to be for the sake of the Kingdom and for the glory of God. Children are not “photostat copies” of their parent. Children have their own unique gifts.

We must give up the idea of molding our children into what we want them to be, and instead encourage them to become what God wants them to be—whatever it might be. Yes, it surely is wonderful when children follow in the footsteps of their parents. When the son becomes a preacher, just like the father, it is wonderful. But remember God is creative and does not need duplicates. We must not pressure our children to become like us and do what we are doing in the ministry. This is a self-defeating effort to engage in. Instead, recognize and nurture whatever God has placed in them. If they are designed and called to walk in our footsteps in life and ministry that is wonderful. If God has designed and called them differently—that is wonderful too, and we must encourage them to pursue God's purpose for their lives.

## Set A Godly Example At Home

### 1 Timothy 3:5

**(For if a man does not know how to rule his own house, how will he take care of the church of God?).**

### Proverbs 17:6

**Children's children are the crown of old men, and the glory of children is their father.**

### Isaiah 38:19

**The living, the living man, he shall praise You, as I do this day; the father shall make known Your truth to the children.**

Our life speaks all the time, even when we are not preaching from behind a pulpit. Our life within our home may be noticed only by a few family members—our spouse and children—but is nevertheless extremely important. When God called Abraham, one of his reasons for this, was *“For I have known him, in order that he may command his children and his household after him, that they keep the way of the LORD, to do righteousness and justice, that the LORD may bring to Abraham what He has spoken to him”* (Genesis 18:19). God wanted the man he chose to lead his household after him—in the example he set, to

follow in his footsteps, into the ways of the Lord. Abraham's calling and destiny were tied into this role that he was to fulfill.

Imagine, even if there are thousands of people who admire and appreciate our public ministry, but if we do not set a good example at home and hence drive our children away from the Lord, have we really succeeded as a man or woman of God?

I desire that the life I live within the four walls of my home become an inspiration and a compelling draw for my family to walk with God. I want my children to pursue God, not because I forced them with my words, but because the life I lived before their eyes gave them no better option. If I live a life that makes my children proud of me, it will be the most natural thing for them to want to follow my footsteps in living a life that glorifies God.

## **Do Not Preach To Your Spouse**

### **1 Peter 3:7**

**Husbands, likewise, dwell with them with understanding, giving honor to the wife, as to the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life, that your prayers may not be hindered.**

While it is great to be able to discuss and share the Word of God, testimonies, and revelations that we receive, with our spouse—it is also important to listen and talk about regular day-to-day things of life. We must not make the mistake of making a sermon out of every conversation. No one wants to be preached at.

Your spouse needs you to communicate on normal, natural terms. Have fun. Crack jokes. Laugh. Play. You do not have to be a preacher 24/7. Your spouse is married to you as a person, not to a preacher. If something goes wrong at home, do not spout out a sermon to correct it. Reason, share, discuss, and talk it out in a simple meaningful way. It is not necessary to quote chapter and verse every time. The worst time to quote chapter and verse is in the middle of a heated argument. It will only turn someone off from what you are saying. Avoid doing this.

## **Talk Personal And Family Issues Before Ministry**

### **Proverbs 25:11 (Message Bible)**

**The right word at the right time is like a custom-made piece of jewelry.**

One of the things I try to avoid taking back home are church or ministry-related discussions. I like to first find out about things that concern each one personally. When my children were living with us—how did the children do in school, how did things go for them on that day, and so on. I talk about things that the family is interested in and then

only talk about relevant and necessary things about church and ministry. These would be sharing some special events that are coming up, my upcoming schedule if I am travelling, anecdotes that are insightful, and so on. At home, I do not discuss my personal meetings with individuals, counseling sessions, or mentoring meetings that I had that day. Through all of this, I am ensuring that the home is a place for family. It is a place where I leave aside the role of being a pastor of a church and just be the husband and father in the family. It also communicates the message that the needs of my family members are important, and I am here at home to listen and address those needs.

## **Spend Time With Your Children**

**Proverbs 22:6**

**Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it.**

As ministry grows and expands, and the demands on our time increase, one of the first areas we tend to cut out time from is the time we spend with our children. After all, how could playing games, reading storybooks, talking “child talk,” be important to God? What is the use of spending time laughing and playing with our children when there are millions who need to hear the Gospel? I realize that many times, we use similar reasoning to take the time we spend with our children and use it in ministry activity. However, God has given us the responsibility to train our children and nurture them in the faith. This kind of training and nurturing cannot be done without first spending time with our children to build a relationship with them and earn their love, trust, and respect. It is only through such a relationship that we can really impart and influence their lives.

In spending time with children, we need to just be around them, with them, and be interested in things that matter to them. It is not that every moment that we spend with them we are “talking spiritual stuff.” Often it is just us being around, watching, and listening that matters to them the most.

## **What Is Important To Them Should Become Important To You**

**2 Corinthians 12:14**

**Now for the third time I am ready to come to you. And I will not be burdensome to you; for I do not seek yours, but you. For the children ought not to lay up for the parents, but the parents for the children.**

As parents our interest is not in what our children can offer us or do for us. Instead, we are here for them—to give in to their lives, to look out for them, to invest into them, and create for their future. This means that we need to engage with them and get interested in their lives. What is important to them should become important to us. We must talk to them in their language at a level that they can understand and relate to.

In the lives of my two children, I have always tried to engage and talk about things that they are interested in. Both are very different and have different interests. My daughter, who was 13 years old at the time of writing this book was interested in spending time with her friends, doing crafts, cooking some small things on her own in the kitchen, playing tennis, reading story books, and so on. These may be small things to us, but these were the things I needed to get involved in, with her to connect with her heart. My son, who was 16 at the time of writing this book, was passionate about things he did on the computer, reading biographies of entrepreneurs, playing the guitar, and soccer. So, these were areas I needed to engage in so that I could connect with his heart. What is important to him must become important to me. When our children see that we are genuinely interested in things that interest them, then they pay attention and interest in the things that interest us. We have now gained the right to speak into their lives and write upon their hearts.

One thing I really enjoyed doing was to tuck my children into bed at night. I may get to spend a few minutes sitting alone with each one before praying over them, hugging them, and kissing them good night. But these were priceless moments. These are moments when we had special “heart-to-heart” talks. I could listen to what is really on their minds, and these were moments when I could speak into their lives—short sentences, simple things, but things that would settle into the core of their beings.

Use teachable moments spontaneously. When you see something happen and you feel you can share a simple truth surrounding that event/situation/happening, then use that and teach God’s Word to them. Keep it simple and speak in short sentences. Do not preach a long sermon. They will tune out. Just make the point in about four to five sentences and end it there. Teach your children spontaneously and yet be intentional about it. Any time of day, any place you are, is a good moment to share and impart eternal truths. The Lord taught us to do so: *“Write these commandments that I’ve given you today on your hearts. Get them inside of you and then get them inside your children. Talk about them wherever you are, sitting at home or walking in the street; talk about them from the time you get up in the morning to when you fall into bed at night”* (Deuteronomy 6:6-7, Message Bible).

There were times, when I was with my children and I saw the opportunity to share some spiritual truth. Many times, these would be genuine prophetic moments when God was telling me to speak something into their lives. Of course, I did not say “Thus says the Lord!” Rather, in a simple way, I communicated what the Lord has stirred up in my heart and they got it.

Remember to schedule time for family vacation once or twice every year. I realize that it may not always be possible due to financial constraints or other commitments. But whenever possible, plan on taking regular family vacations each year. Our objectives for

family vacations are primarily to rest and get away from busy schedules, but also to create memories. One of the greatest gifts we can leave with our children is the pleasant memories of their growing up years at home. These are priceless and they will carry with them long after they leave home. Every day we have opportunities to create these memories for them. And then, there are those special times like family vacations, birthdays, and so on, that leave lasting memories.

Just a note, for us busy Christian ministers. It is not a “sin” or a worldly matter to take a break from our schedules to rest, get away from ministry, and go on family holidays. In fact, it is very important to do this. Look at Jesus. He was thoughtful about this matter and attempted to create moments of rest in between busy schedules. *“Then the apostles gathered to Jesus and told Him all things, both what they had done and what they had taught. And He said to them, “Come aside by yourselves to a deserted place and rest a while.” For there were many coming and going, and they did not even have time to eat. So they departed to a deserted place in the boat by themselves”* (Mark 6:30-32).

## **Maintain Your Family Altar**

### **Psalm 78:1-7**

- 1 Give ear, O my people, to my law; incline your ears to the words of my mouth.**
- 2 I will open my mouth in a parable; I will utter dark sayings of old,**
- 3 Which we have heard and known, and our fathers have told us.**
- 4 We will not hide them from their children, telling to the generation to come the praises of the LORD, and His strength and His wonderful works that He has done.**
- 5 For He established a testimony in Jacob, and appointed a law in Israel, which He commanded our fathers, that they should make them known to their children;**
- 6 That the generation to come might know them, the children who would be born, That they may arise and declare them to their children,**
- 7 That they may set their hope in God, and not forget the works of God, But keep His commandments.**

Other than praying together before meals, which most families do, develop the practice of coming together regularly for a time of worship, sharing, and prayer. In our home, when our children were living with us, we kept this time in the evenings. We did not do this every day—as some days we missed due to practical reasons. However, most days, we sat together after dinner for our family altar. We kept this time simple, and we kept it fun. We kept it as a time when the children could be involved. We used this time to learn truth from God’s Word. It is important to learn truth rather than just go through the motions of reading a devotional without grasping anything. So, we did different things each time. For example, there was a time when we talked about having God’s dream and purpose in life. We then learned about who we are in Christ. So, we laid these truths line by line, little by little, making it relevant to their age. It is important to keep the family time short, meaningful, flexible, spontaneous, and different from time to time. Sometimes we would just do prayer or pray in tongues together as a family or just have a time of worship. But these are precious moments together.

## **Put Family Before Ministry**

**1 Timothy 3:4-5**

**4 One who rules his own house well, having his children in submission with all reverence**

**5 (for if a man does not know how to rule his own house, how will he take care of the church of God?).**

While most of us Christian ministers know this requirement that we must have our own house in order before we go about ministering in the House of God, we often tend to neglect this. Perhaps the demands, or sometimes the thrills of ministry seem to grip us more than the simple joy of taking care of our own home and family. So, we need to consciously watch over ourselves, our families, and see how we are doing in these areas. If needed, we must slow down or change our ministry schedules so that we minister to our family first. I do not claim to be perfect in this area. I have tried through the years and still try and manage a balance between ministry engagements that I take on, and the time I spend at home. There are some ministry engagements I say, “No” to, simply because of wanting to spend time at home. For instance, it might be good to keep certain times during the week or a given month that are meant for family only. Also, when possible, we can take time away from ministry to rest and be with family.

There has also been at least one season of about 3-4 months, when I was going through personal challenges that I decided not to preach during that time. I took a break from ministry and had guest speakers, and some of our associate pastors preach at our Sunday services.

## **Guard Your Family While Ministering To People**

Being in Christian ministry affects not only you as a minister, but also your family. One of the big pressures that the family (spouse and children) faces is the expectations of people. People automatically expect your spouse to behave in a certain way. Not only do they expect the man of God to be anointed, but they also expect the wife to be anointed, gifted, behaving a certain way, and doing certain things. Similarly, people tend to have all kinds of unreasonable expectations of “preachers’ kids or pastors’ kids,” as though these kids are angels! So, you need to guard your family from the unreasonable expectations of people. Give your family the freedom to be who God made them to be, without trying to meet the expectations of people. I do not want my children to play “church games” just to impress the congregation. This could very well be one reason why so many “pastors’ kids” turn out rebellious once they grow up. Perhaps when they were kids, they were pressured by their parents into doing and being something that they really did not want, just to appear nice in front of the congregation. So later in life, they tend to resent the local church and do not want to have anything to do with it.

Another area to protect is access to your home. I know what I am about to share may not be possible for everyone—nonetheless, this is important to consider. I have tried to keep my home as a “home,” and the office a place where people can come and meet me for church or ministry-related things. Some pastors and preachers keep their homes open to everyone in the congregation. I do not think this is a good idea—just my opinion. The home needs to be a place where the husband, the wife, the children can have time to be together and grow together. But if the home through the day and night, seven days a week, is a meeting place for all members of the congregation, without any personal time for the pastor’s family, this may have its impact on the pastor’s family itself. We do have people spend time with us at home, and we have also had small gatherings, meetings, fellowship-times at home, but these are scheduled events, not something that happens all day, every day.

## **Do Not Step OUT, Do Not Step IN**

### **Genesis 2:24**

**Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh**

A man and woman united in marriage have become one. We can visualize this as a marriage circle inside which only this man and woman are permitted. No other human being is permitted inside the marriage circle. When we honor this marriage circle, we honor God who instituted marriage. For us Christian ministers, we must honor God by making sure we do not step out of our own marriage circle, and by making sure we do not step into someone else’s marriage circle. Regardless of what reasons or needs there may be, this boundary of the marriage circle must not be crossed. We must learn to operate within this boundary. This becomes important especially when ministering to other married couples or to single people of the opposite gender.

## **Get Help As Soon As You Need It**

### **Ephesians 4:16**

**From whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love.**

The fact of the matter is that even those of us in Christian ministry struggle in our marriage and family lives. We face challenges, pressures, temptations, and stress points like everyone else—perhaps more than others, in many cases. Just because we are in Christian ministry it does not mean that we do not need “ministry” ourselves. God has called, anointed, and gifted us in certain areas. But there are others whom He has similarly called, anointed, and gifted in other areas, e.g., to help strengthen marriages, homes and families, help manage finances, help in organization and administration, help come out of

additive behavior and so on—and we need to learn to receive from them. We are part of a Body, where each part contributes to the well-being of the other so that the entire Body can grow and edify itself. This means we must learn to receive from one another.

The challenge for us Christian ministers, first is to admit that we have a need. Often, when we face problems and challenges, whether in our marriages, finances, organizations, addictive behaviors, or character flaws, we tend to spiritualize the problem, blame the devil, and conclude that we are under spiritual attack. While we must not ignore the reality of spiritual interference in these areas, we must at the same time be aware that many of the problems we face can be due to faults and weaknesses in ourselves or in those we interact with, which need to be corrected. It takes a great deal of humility to come to terms with the fact that, we, though called and anointed of God, have our own character flaws, limitations, erroneous behavior which need to be addressed.

The next big challenge for us as Christian ministers is getting the help we need—we do not know where to get help and whether the fact that we are getting help in a certain area of life will bring our ministry to a halt. While we may be aware of qualified people who can help us with our problem, we hesitate in going to them because they may be our peers or may not be as prominent as ourselves in the Christian world. Pride comes in the way. Another reason for not disclosing our problems to someone else is our fear—would they be able to keep the matter confidential or would they talk about it all over town, with the news spreading like wildfire throughout the Christian community.

Given these challenges, we usually tend to ignore our private problems hoping that they would just pass away, or we simply hide them under the covers of ministry since we are too embarrassed to ask for help. In most cases, the problem continues to simmer under the surface, until one day, there is a violent eruption that shocks, embarrasses, and stuns everybody. The results can be disastrous both for us and for those looking up to our spiritual leadership, leaving many in hurt and pain. It is important for us not to delay but get help as soon as we see the need. We must lay aside our pride and fear, and prayerfully go to someone who is qualified to help us, take them into confidence and receive the help we need. Give them freedom to speak into our lives without holding back. We must humble ourselves before God and before His servants to receive the correction they may bring into our lives. Receiving this correction could save us and many others connected to our lives. *“He who keeps instruction is in the way of life, but he who refuses correction goes astray”* (Proverbs 10:17). *“Whoever loves instruction loves knowledge, but he who hates correction is stupid”* (Proverbs 12:1).

## **Your Ministry Is Not A “Family Business”**

Isaiah 59:21

As for Me,” says the LORD, “this is My covenant with them: My Spirit who is upon you, and My words which I have put in your mouth, shall not depart from your mouth, nor from the mouth of your

**descendants, nor from the mouth of your descendants' descendants," says the LORD, "from this time and forevermore.**

It is the plan and purpose of God that the faith, revelation, and anointing given to one generation be passed on to the next generation. It is God's purpose that each generation builds upon the foundation of the previous generation. Therefore, it is always wonderful to see entire families and generations of people within a family tree serving the Lord and doing His work. This is always an awesome sight to behold and something to rejoice, and praise God for. Each family member may be gifted and anointed in different areas. Each one is in their divinely appointed place and yet they all work and flow together as one great unit for the Body of Christ. This is truly an awesome work of God.

However, on the other side, we do see the wrong expression of a godly thing that God wants to do. In some churches and ministries, we see all key positions of responsibility filled in by family members. What is worse is that many of these family members may be incompetent without the required gift and grace to fulfill the role they are occupying. However, the whole church or ministry is run as though it were a family business. Outsiders are only given fringe areas of responsibility. Things begin to go wrong in such a "family-run" ministry when family members occupy ministry positions that God has not called them to. Much of this happens for wrong reasons and results in disastrous outcomes, like the sons of Eli (1 Samuel 2:22-25) or the sons of Samuel (1 Samuel 8:1-3).

So, in as much as we are eager to see our children and grandchildren rise up, and follow our steps in serving the Lord, we must remember that they have to follow God's plan for their lives and fulfill His will in their generation. Let each one occupy their set place assigned by God, and not by the whims and fancies of man. *"But now God has set the members, each one of them, in the body just as He pleased"* (1 Corinthians 12:18).

### 3. PEOPLE

As Christian ministers, if we are not careful, we could “miss the whole point” of ministry entirely. We could end up making ministry an exercise in building an enterprise—a well-organized administration with the latest of tools, equipment, and resources; or an exercise in event management—having grand public meetings, good advertising, tactful promotions, clever fund-raising, and so on; or an exercise in networking and public relations—connecting with the most influential people, smooth talking the high and mighty so that they become our chief promoters. All of this is just a fleshly, worldly expression of “Christian ministry” which I think is an unbearable stench before God! Eternity will tell! We miss the whole point that Christian ministry is all about people—touching lives with God’s love and power to see them rescued from satan and brought into the marvelous light of God, nurtured into Christlikeness, and released to fulfill their God-given destiny in life. Christian ministry is not about how many books we write, whether we have the largest gatherings, whether we have the largest following on social media sites, or whether we are on the most popular television networks, or any such thing. Christian ministry is all about people—having them encounter Jesus Christ and seeing them being transformed into His image.

And yet, some of the biggest challenges we face in Christian ministry is in dealing with and working with people. Understanding how to treat people well, to lead, manage, guide, correct, equip, empower, and then releasing people into their destiny is among the most important learning experiences we can have in Christian ministry.

We will make mistakes and perhaps experience some “hard knocks” along this path, but if we do not give up on building people, we will see rich rewards.

#### **Ministry Is All About Building People**

**1 Corinthians 3:9**

... you are God’s field, you are God’s building.

**2 Corinthians 3:2**

You are our epistle written in our hearts, known and read by all men.

**1 Thessalonians 2:19-20**

**19** For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Is it not even you in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at His coming?

**20 For you are our glory and joy.**

Apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians 3, when addressing ministry issues at Corinth, especially in the context of two ministers Apollos and himself, emphasizes that people are “God’s field,” and are “God’s building.” At the end of it all, both Apollos and Paul were building God’s building—people. Both Apollos and Paul were laboring in God’s field—people. So regardless of what kind of ministry we are doing, we are working on God’s field and building God’s building, which is “people.” Christian ministry is all about serving and building people.

Unfortunately, many of us Christian ministers treat people as “objects” to get our own agendas done. We want crowds to come, and people become just numbers in large crowds that we speak to. We want money, and people just become a source for that money. We feel we are called by God and people are there just to serve us and help us fulfill our calling. It is supposed to be the other way around. We are here as God’s servants to serve people and help people (saints) fulfill their ministry. We are here for them. We are here to lift people up—and not for people to lift us up.

People must be written in our hearts. Only then can they see that we are here to serve them and not use them. Our “joy and crown of rejoicing” when we meet the Lord will not be the books we have written, the sermons we have preached, the places we have travelled, the buildings we have built—but rather our joy and crown of rejoicing will be the people whose lives we have served by bringing them to the Lord and helping them grow into His image.

## **Growth Happens In Stages—Journey Together Patiently**

**Hebrews 5:12-14; 6:1-3**

**12 For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the first principles of the oracles of God; and you have come to need milk and not solid food.**

**13 For everyone who partakes only of milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, for he is a babe.**

**14 But solid food belongs to those who are of full age, that is, those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.**

**1 Therefore, leaving the discussion of the elementary principles of Christ, let us go on to perfection, not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works and of faith toward God,**

**2 of the doctrine of baptisms, of laying on of hands, of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment.**

**3 And this we will do if God permits.**

It is important for us, especially for those of us who are pastors and lead local churches, to patiently journey with people into spiritual growth and maturity. We must also patiently journey into the vision and destiny God has appointed for the local church. Minister to people starting where they are and help them take steps to move into higher levels of growth and maturity. The Lord Jesus ministered to His disciples this way. He

spoke purposefully and spoke things they were able to receive at that time and held back things they were not ready to receive. “These things I have spoken to you, that you should not be made to stumble.” *“But these things I have told you, that when the time comes, you may remember that I told you of them.” “And these things I did not say to you at the beginning, because I was with you.” “I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now”* (John 16:1,4,12).

This means that we must be purposeful in our preaching and teaching. We do not preach sermons just to fill up the time during a service. Rather, each sermon is a step in the journey—helping take the congregation forward into spiritual maturity and into our destiny in God.

Know the spiritual level at which people are and minister to them, starting at that level. However, your preaching and teaching must be geared to take them to the next level. Growth happens in stages, so take people up to new levels, stage by stage. You may be at a much higher level—but you need to work patiently with your congregation, helping them grow into the level you are at.

Also remember, we cannot preach what people in the congregation like—because different people would like to hear different things. Some may feel that speaking about the “End Times” is what we need to do. Some others may feel that we need to talk about discipleship and fellowship. Still some others feel that we should emphasize evangelism and missions, and so on. As a pastor or leader in the local church, you cannot be moved by all these demands and perceived interests from different people. You need to be clear on where the congregation is spiritually and where you believe God wants the congregation to grow into and take them there. Journey together season by season, stage by stage. The emphasis in each season is a steppingstone into the next season awaiting the local body of believers.

## **Honor Everyone**

### **Romans 12:10**

**Be kindly affectionate to one another with brotherly love, in honor giving preference to one another.**

### **Matthew 10:42**

**And whoever gives one of these little ones only a cup of cold water in the name of a disciple, assuredly, I say to you, he shall by no means lose his reward.**

We must learn to treat everyone with respect—regardless of their gender, social, economic, educational, ethnic, or cultural backgrounds. We must also respect people and not discriminate against them because of their denominational affiliations. While there may be a myriad of shortfalls, we must learn to see the good in each. When we give our word whether it is to someone small, poor, or socially insignificant, we must keep our

word. Sometimes, we tend to honor people who are socially or economically powerful and influential, while demeaning those who may not be as powerful or influential. In God's Kingdom, the simplest service done to the smallest one because they are part of the family of God will not go unnoticed.

It is easy to tell the difference when someone is relating to people just as a cheap public relations exercise and when someone is relating to people because they genuinely care for people deep down in their hearts. When you reach out to people, do it because you really care for them.

## **Honor Leaders, Elders, Fathers**

### **1 Timothy 5:7**

**Let the elders who rule well be counted worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in the word and doctrine.**

### **1 Thessalonians 5:12-13**

**12 And we urge you, brethren, to recognize those who labor among you, and are over you in the Lord and admonish you,**

**13 and to esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake. Be at peace among yourselves.**

We are called to give "double honor" to those who are our spiritual leaders, especially those who serve by ministering God's Word to us. We must hold our spiritual leaders, elders, and fathers with great respect. Though times change, and with it many other things also change, we must continue to esteem those who are walking ahead of us in this journey of faith, with great respect. Just because we younger ministers are more "tech-savvy" and know how to do things quicker and more efficiently than older ministers, does not make us better than them. We must still respect and honor them, especially for what they have already accomplished for the Kingdom. To have respect is to hold someone in high esteem or high regard, it is to honor them, it is to defer to their decisions rather than insisting on our own way, it is to give them preference and priority, rather than making ourselves equal with them.

## **Show No Partiality**

### **1 Timothy 5:21**

**I charge you before God and the Lord Jesus Christ and the elect angels that you observe these things without prejudice, doing nothing with partiality.**

### **James 2:1-9**

**1 My brethren, do not hold the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory, with partiality.**

**2 For if there should come into your assembly a man with gold rings, in fine apparel, and there should also come in a poor man in filthy clothes,**

**3 and you pay attention to the one wearing the fine clothes and say to him, "You sit here in a good place," and say to the poor man, "You stand there," or, "Sit here at my footstool,"**

- 4** have you not shown partiality among yourselves, and become judges with evil thoughts?  
**5** Listen, my beloved brethren: Has God not chosen the poor of this world to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom which He promised to those who love Him? **6** But you have dishonored the poor man. Do not the rich oppress you and drag you into the courts?  
**7** Do they not blaspheme that noble name by which you are called?  
**8** If you really fulfill the royal law according to the Scripture, “YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF,” you do well;  
**9** but if you show partiality, you commit sin, and are convicted by the law as transgressors.

This is an important instruction to keep in mind when we work with and relate to people. In all our decision making, for and toward people, we must do it without personal prejudice and without partiality. Paul, the apostle, was admonishing the younger minister Timothy to lead and serve God’s people in this manner. It is interesting that in giving Timothy this charge, Paul reminds Timothy that God, the Lord Jesus Christ and the elect angels are witnesses to our relating to people. In other words, this is a solemn and important instruction that we must not avoid, and we cannot hide our violation if any, of how we relate to people.

This is so true for those of us who are pastors and is important how we treat those who come into our congregations to worship with us. James addresses such a scenario and warns us that if we show partiality or differential treatment of people based on their social, cultural, ethnic, or economic status, we are committing sin. We must maintain the same standards for all people that we work with and relate to. For instance, at our local church, from the early days, I made it a practice not to publicly applaud and recognize important people if they came to worship with us. I just let them sit in the congregation and do what they came to do—worship God and receive the ministry of His Word. This is not that I do not acknowledge them privately; but we do not want to do it in the congregation, where all of us stand on level ground before God, regardless of our earthly status. Also, in assigning roles in our church ministry team, I have always practiced recognizing and assigning whoever is called, gifted, with a good heart, and best suited for that area of ministry. There is no difference or discrimination based on gender, cultural, social, or other factors. Similarly, in enforcing discipline and correction we treat everyone equally and fairly. All of us stand on level ground.

## **Be Grateful, Say “Thank you!”**

### **Romans 16:3-4**

**3** Greet Priscilla and Aquila, my fellow workers in Christ Jesus,  
**4** who risked their own necks for my life, to whom not only I give thanks, but also all the churches of the Gentiles.

### **1 Thessalonians 1:2**

We give thanks to God always for you all, making mention of you in our prayers.

We must learn to be grateful to the Lord for the people who He has placed around us. Just expressing thanks to the Lord for people is indicative that we realize we are what we are, not because of our own great efforts but because of God's grace and the assistance of those who are alongside us. We must also be appreciative of people for what they do alongside us. Very often, we ministers "take for granted" the many things that people do for us. It appears that we almost feel it is our right to have people's help, support, and encouragement. Learning to say a simple, "Thank you" to someone who has served, helped, or supported in some way is so important. When someone gives you an offering, do not forget to communicate a "Thank you!" When someone has assisted you in some way, however small, do not forget to thank them for it. People need to know that we genuinely appreciate what they do.

## **What Is Shared In Confidence, Must Stay In Confidence**

**Proverbs 10:19**

**In the multitude of words sin is not lacking, But he who restrains his lips is wise.**

**2 Timothy 2:16**

**But shun profane and idle babblings, for they will increase to more ungodliness.**

As Christian ministers, people often come to us with their personal problems and struggles seeking godly counsel, prayer, and encouragement. Often, they share very personal and private matters with us in confidence. It is important that we do not repeat these matters to others or share them in public. We must use caution when we use that scenario as an example or illustration in our preaching, so that others can learn lessons from real-life situations. As a rule, I do not use my knowledge of people's personal matters/private struggles as illustrations in sermons. It is not good to talk about such things in public, because they have come to you for help, trusting that you will keep things confidential. When we do use interactions with people as examples, we ought to do it in very general terms, without revealing the identity of the individuals. It is best done in settings where the individual is not present so that they are in no way identified by others. We must not even use it in our "gossip" or "idle chatting" with other ministers. What is shared in confidence must stay in confidence. This is how we earn people's trust.

## **Correct People, Lovingly**

**1 Corinthians 16:14**

**Let all that you do be done with love.**

**2 Corinthians 13:10**

**Therefore I write these things being absent, lest being present I should use sharpness, according to the authority which the Lord has given me for edification and not for destruction.**

I have personally found that correcting people is one of the most difficult things to do in ministry. On the one hand we try to be patient with people as they grow into the roles and responsibilities that we have assigned to them. We try to be kind, loving, and gentle, and provide sufficient time and space for people to attempt things, make mistakes, learn, and grow. However, if an individual is going down a wrong path, or is not doing what is required, at some point he or she would require correction lest what is going wrong continues to grow and the damage becomes significant and hurts many others. As spiritual leaders over our ministries, the Lord has given us authority through which we use firmness, and yet this must be done in a way that edifies and not destroys people. I realize that sometimes when we are all “worked up” about a situation, we tend to handle things in a way that we regret later. We may not have been loving and kind when bringing discipline and correction. What I have learned to do is to take a two-step approach—warning and correction. When I see things going wrong, the first step is to warn the individuals that things are not going right, things need to change and go a certain way, explain what is expected and that they will need to take corrective action. Then, I give the individual sufficient time to work on what was said. After I feel that they were given sufficient time for change and yet things have not changed, I take the next step which is to bring loving correction. This is the difficult part, where we need godly wisdom.

The correction that is needed will depend on the “cause and effect” of what is going wrong. If the “cause” (reason) for not meeting requirements has to do with lack of skill, lack of training, lack of proper time management skills, and so on, then I try to remedy the situation by trying to help the individual develop these skills. On the other hand, if the “cause” has to do with laziness, unwillingness to work hard, rebellion, pride, conflicts with people, bad attitudes, selfish agendas, super-spirituality, or high-mindedness, then the correction I bring is quite severe, often in releasing the individual from that area of responsibility—so that they can let God work in their lives. In bringing correction, I also look at the “effect.” What is the impact or effect of the individual’s failure or wrongdoing? If the impact is very contained, on a small scale and can be controlled so that the damage is not very much, then there is the possibility of providing more time and being more patient with the individual, to change. However, if the impact of that individual’s failure is on a wider scale, affecting a certain area of ministry, setting a bad example to several people and so on, then the correction is quite strict, immediate, and will often involve releasing the individual from that area of ministry involvement—so that they can fix things in private without causing too much damage.

The purpose in correction is always to bless—we desire the blessing and well-being of the people we are trying to safeguard, and we also desire the blessing and well-being of the individual we are correcting, although the process of correction itself can be painful. When bringing correction, I try not to destroy my relationship with the individual. I protect my heart, knowing that I am doing what is right before God, even when bringing correction, and that I personally do not have any ill-feeling toward the individual. I remain open to relating to, giving, and receiving from that individual in an edifying manner.

Please note, that in discussing about correcting people, I am not addressing personal issues, that is, we are not talking about personal conflicts between a pastor and a congregation member. Situations like this must be handled differently and the process is different (Matthew 18:15-22; Mark 11:25-26). What I am referring to, is bringing correction when people leading in ministry fail to fulfill their role and responsibility or when someone in the congregation is doing something wrong that is affecting the local body of believers.

## **Correct In Private, Applaud In Public**

**Proverbs 17:9**

**He who covers a transgression seeks love, but he who repeats a matter separates friends.**

**1 Timothy 5:19-20**

**19 Do not receive an accusation against an elder except from two or three witnesses.**

**20 Those who are sinning rebuke in the presence of all, that the rest also may fear.**

Bringing correction for something that has gone wrong is a difficult and painful process, both to those receiving correction and to those who are administering correction. It is not easy. Once done, we must lay this aside and not continue to talk about this to others, gossip, and spread rumors. And surely, we must not talk about people's wrongdoings in public from the pulpit. There may be some occasions, where an action taken to correct an "elder," that is, someone in spiritual leadership, needs to be communicated in public. This must be done keeping in mind the good of the individual being corrected, with the right heart and attitude to protect the local body. However, do this only when necessary.

On the other hand, be ready to applaud people for the good they have done in public. Do this often. This will inspire others to follow good examples. As a guideline, correct people in private. Applaud people in public so that others can be inspired.

## **Have A Personal Strategy For Handling Difficult Situations**

**Proverbs 19:20**

**Listen to counsel and receive instruction, that you may be wise in your latter days.**

It is important that we continually learn from the difficult situations we face in life and ministry and grow through them. We must learn how to work with people, improve our own skills in dealing with difficult situations with people. Over time, we can develop a personal strategy in dealing with and working with people. For example, here are a few things I follow. In day-to-day communication with our church team, I do a lot via email. I do not call for personal meetings, for every little thing. Working via email helps me do a lot of things quicker, faster, and helps put things down in writing, so that things are clear on what needs to be done. Things that are important and need discussion, collective

input, ideas from many people are best done in a team meeting when all sit and discuss together. So, whenever this is required, I call for a meeting only with those who are needed. This is the normal day-to-day approach.

However, when a difficult situation arises, then as a guideline, I would prefer to handle things in person rather than through email or phone. Trying to handle difficult things via emails or phone calls, can only make matters worse. It is easy to assume emotions and feelings that are not there in the first place, when reading an email. So, it is always best to discuss things in person. It is important to “talk things out” which essentially means that I do a lot of listening— listen, listen, listen—to all sides and to God. Once this is done, I decide and communicate that in person.

I did not know some of these simple things earlier and hence have made several mistakes in the way I handled people and situations. I could have done things more wisely if I had known the right ways to work with people. However, this is a learning process, and I continue to keep my heart open to see, reflect, and discover better ways to handle difficult people and situations.

## **Do Not Be A Boss Over God’s People**

### **1 Peter 5:1-4**

**1 The elders who are among you I exhort, I who am a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that will be revealed:**

**2 Shepherd the flock of God which is among you, serving as overseers, not by compulsion but willingly, not for dishonest gain but eagerly;**

**3 nor as being lords over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock;**

**4 and when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that does not fade away.**

The Bible is very clear that although we are spiritual elders or leaders, we must not be “as lords” over God’s people. Instead, as leaders we are to be examples to the flock of God. Unfortunately, while giving honor and serving leaders is good, I feel in many areas, this has been taken too far. In the name of honoring a spiritual leader, the leader misuses and often abuses people who serve them. They use people to do things they should be doing themselves. I find it strange when I see a preacher walking up to the pulpit, with a band of people escorting him, having one person carry his Bible, another person carrying his briefcase, and another person carrying his mobile phone. While I respect God’s anointed, I personally think such preachers should just learn to carry their own Bible and take care of their own belongings! I see preachers ordering people around to do this or that for them—things they could very easily do for themselves. This and so much more abuse that we see in Christendom today, is simply leaders living “as lords” over God’s people and they are in violation of the Word of God. Their lives are not a godly example of Christlikeness and Christlike servanthood.

## **Do Not Control, Do Not Manipulate**

### **2 Corinthians 1:24**

**Not that we have dominion over your faith, but are fellow workers for your joy; for by faith you stand.**

As pastors there is a fine line between protecting God's people and controlling them. We are here to serve people and help nurture them in the faith, not dominate their life of faith by controlling them. In some churches, pastors demand that people check with them and get their approval before making personal decisions concerning their jobs, relocation, marriage, major purchases, and so on. Some pastors do not permit their people to even visit other churches, Christian meetings, or financially support other ministries. They demand complete loyalty and submission in everything. They control and manipulate people's decisions by issuing threats, directives, and so on, right from the pulpit. All of this is simply ungodly control and manipulation of people and a form of "spiritual witchcraft." From the very beginning, at our church we made it clear that I will not make decisions for people. We can teach them, counsel them, and share the Word of the Lord with them but each one will have to make their own decisions and take responsibility for it. We also give people complete freedom to visit other Bible-believing churches, attend meetings hosted by other churches or ministries, and give financially and support other ministers. We do not ask or interfere in such matters at all. One thing we believe and have seen, that people will always return to the place where their heart belongs. And this is what we desire, that people are committed to the local church not because of being controlled and manipulated by the pastor, but because they feel they belong here.

## **Overcome Personal Insecurities**

### **2 Corinthians 3:1,5-6**

**1 Do we begin again to commend ourselves? Or do we need, as some others, epistles of commendation to you or letters of commendation from you?**

**5 Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think of anything as being from ourselves, but our sufficiency is from God,**

**6 who also made us sufficient as ministers of the new covenant, not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.**

Sometimes, we ministers of God carry a lot of personal insecurities and we operate in ministry out of these insecurities. Our insecurities manifest in several ways:

- If I am insecure that some other minister may get all the attention and people may follow him, then I magnify myself continually in the eyes of people. My sermons carry illustrations of how anointed or how powerful I am. My name and pictures are embellished all over, so that people will not forget me.
- If I am insecure that someone else may preach better than me, I keep people from hearing him.

- If I am insecure that people may leave my church and go to another church, I instruct people not to visit any other church. Or worse still, I make sure that from the pulpit, either directly or subtly I tell people that the other church is in error.
- If I am insecure of myself just being a child of God, then I form my identity in me being a minister. I expect to be called as a “man of God,” led to the front seat in the auditorium, given the platform, and so on. I get offended if I go unnoticed or unrecognized as a “man of God.”
- If I am insecure that someone in my ministry may do better than me in ministry, I suppress them, keep them stifled and hinder them from progressing into their full potential.
- If I am insecure in my identity, I talk about all the rich, famous, and powerful people I know, and how I associate with them to impress people that I am in that league.

All these behaviors by us ministers are birthed out of deep-seated insecurity and we need to ask the Lord for His grace to get rid of this from our own lives. We must come to a place like the Apostle Paul, who did not need any recommendation or commendation from man. He knew that his completeness in ministry came from God, who has made us able ministers of the New Covenant. This settles everything and rids us of all insecurities and need for attention.

## **Do Not Provide A Platform For People With A Personal Agenda**

### **Philippians 1:15-16**

**15 Some indeed preach Christ even from envy and strife, and some also from goodwill:**

**16 The former preach Christ from selfish ambition, not sincerely, supposing to add affliction to my chains.**

### **Philippians 2:3**

**Let nothing be done through selfish ambition ...**

Not everything people do in ministry is birthed out of pure motive. Some come to church, want to serve in the ministry to promote their personal agendas. As a leader your responsibility is to discern those who have a pure heart and encourage them, and for those who come in with improper motives—give them time to get their hearts right, before providing them opportunities. If I am not sure about a person’s motives, I usually walk through a period of “testing” with them. This is a biblical thing to do. Paul told Timothy to test people before appointing them as deacons. *“But let these also first be tested; then let them serve as deacons, being found blameless”* (1 Timothy 3:10). I look at how they interact with others. Are they willing to serve under others? Are they willing to work as a team along with others? Are they comfortable with not being recognized or do they want to be up in front speaking? Are they aligned to the vision and direction of the leadership, or do they want to “do their own thing” and not go in the direction that you are leading the people in? Di-vision will lead to division, and hence should be corrected.

There are all kinds of wrong motives that you need to watch out for. People may want to serve because they enjoy being recognized and being popular. People may want to serve so that they get recognition and then later use it to promote something of their own, e.g., their own personal ministry or business. It is better to test people first and ensure their hearts are right before providing them an opportunity to serve. As a leader, both by life-example and in your teaching continually emphasize the need to keep our hearts and motivations pure when serving God and His people.

## **Do Not Fight What You Do Not Understand**

### **John 3:8**

**The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear the sound of it, but cannot tell where it comes from and where it goes. So is everyone who is born of the Spirit.**

### **Acts 5:34-35,38-39**

**34 Then one in the council stood up, a Pharisee named Gamaliel, a teacher of the law held in respect by all the people, and commanded them to put the apostles outside for a little while.**

**35 And he said to them: “Men of Israel, take heed to yourselves what you intend to do regarding these men**

**38 And now I say to you, keep away from these men and let them alone; for if this plan or this work is of men, it will come to nothing;**

**39 but if it is of God, you cannot overthrow it—lest you even be found to fight against God.**

Our God cannot be put into a box. The Bible reveals God, but it does not set the boundaries (i.e., limit) for God. God will never violate His Word, but He is not confined to His Word. God is bigger than the Book that He has given to us. His Book tells us He is infinite. So obviously, there will be new things that God does that will surprise all of us. Often, we expect that God will use only certain kinds of people, or God will manifest only in certain ways and so on. And then God does something that is way beyond our ability to understand or He uses someone we least expected. Our normal reaction is to “fight it” and classify it as “erroneous” or something in that category. This is a wrong way to react. If the unexpected and unusual manifestation that we see does not contradict the core fundamentals of the Word, then we must be careful not to criticize it, just because it does not fit into our way of doing things. We must learn not to fight what the Spirit is doing through people even when it violates the norms we have set.

Sometimes it may not be easy to discern if some “manifestation” we see is the Spirit at work or just people acting out of fleshly zeal. The best thing to do is just stand aside and watch. Give it some time. Wait for the fruit. The fruit will tell you, from where it came.

Another wrong thing to do is to start talking about the unusual phenomena from the pulpit. For instance, if something strange is happening at a certain Christian meeting in town and you are not sure if that is truly of God, or a fleshly man-made manifestation or even a demonic manifestation, then stay quiet and give it some time. Instead, if you start

talking about it from your pulpit, the most likely thing that may happen is that because you have spoken about it, people become curious and will go to see it for themselves. So inadvertently you have given free advertisement for that strange phenomenon and have sent many looking for it. But if that was truly of God and you criticized it, you have found yourself in a place where you are fighting against a true work of God! So, the best thing to do is not to fight what you do not understand. This is God's business, and He knows how best to handle it.

## **Some Things People Say And Do Are Not Worth Your Time**

**Ecclesiastes 7:21-22**

**21 Also do not take to heart everything people say, lest you hear your servant cursing you.**

**22 For many times, also, your own heart has known that even you have cursed others.**

**Proverbs 20:3**

**It is honorable for a man to stop striving, since any fool can start a quarrel.**

We are here to serve people. However, we do not control and are not responsible for people's behavior. We cannot control their choices and decisions. Sometimes in ministry, people easily forget how we served them. People suddenly change their minds about us. Initially they support and encourage us, and then suddenly they criticize and point out all the flaws and shortcomings. People leave. People retaliate. People criticize. People forget. All of this is part of ministry. As ministers of God, we must be strong enough on the inside, and focused on the call of God, that even when such things happen, we continue, strong.

Do not let such things occupy your "thinking-time." Do not let them affect you. Do not retaliate and get into a quarrel trying to defend yourself. Any fool can do that. Instead, learn to pray and release the feelings of hurt or pain to the Lord and keep moving forward in doing what God has called you to do.

I have heard people give me feedback about all kinds of things—how I preach, what clothes I wear, my mannerisms, my temperament, how I lead people, and so on. I listen to them. If what they say has something of value, I adapt it. If it is a criticism that does not bring anything useful, I just let it go. In ministry, we must be strong and not easily moved by what people say and do.

## **Leave Offenses Behind—Not Worth Carrying Them With You**

**Galatians 4:11-12**

**11 I am afraid for you, lest I have labored for you in vain.**

**12 Brethren, I urge you to become like me, for I became like you. You have not injured me at all.**

Apostle Paul could have become very disappointed and discouraged with the believers in Galatia. After he had labored much to get them into the faith, they were easily swayed by some other people who insisted that some of the Old Testament practices of the Law still had to be observed. It seemed that Paul's labor had gone in vain. However, in such a situation, Paul points to himself as a model for them to follow and he states boldly, "*You have not injured me at all.*" Nothing that the Galatians did offended Paul or caused him to get hurt.

Earlier on, Paul had a situation with Barnabas and John Mark, where because of Paul's difference of opinion regarding John Mark, Paul, and Barnabas parted ways (Acts 15:37-39). Later, as Paul saw John Mark grow and mature, he welcomed him back, made him a fellow minister, and promoted him in the ministry. He did not carry any form of grudge or offense. The thing of the past was left behind. Consider what Paul writes about John Mark in his epistles:

**2 Timothy 4:11**

**Only Luke is with me. Get Mark and bring him with you, for he is useful to me for ministry.**

**Philemon 1:24**

**... as do Mark, Aristarchus, Demas, Luke, my fellow laborers.**

**Colossians 4:10**

**Aristarchus my fellow prisoner greets you, with Mark the cousin of Barnabas (about whom you received instructions: if he comes to you, welcome him).**

As ministers of God, we must learn not to let people's actions offend us. And even if offenses were to come, we must learn to leave them behind and walk in the new thing God is doing today.

## **People Grow, People Change—So Be Ready To Let Go**

God sends people into our lives for a season. People come, but they will also have to go. Only a few will journey with us from start to finish. Most will come alongside us for some duration of the journey, part of the way, for a season. Some may come as little children or young in the faith. We will have the privilege of seeing them grow, mature, and develop in their walk with God and ministry. And then a time will come, when perhaps God would want them to be launched out, released into another area of work and ministry. Some may have ministries that are outside the scope of the local church. Some may go beyond us in the realm of influence. And some may just choose to move on to something else that interests them at that moment. Whatever the situation, we must not hold on to people's lives. Just as we lovingly and readily welcomed them, we must also be willing to bless them and let them go into what God has in store for them. If God sent them in, He also has the right to direct them out.

Sometimes, we hold on to people and do not want to let them go. An attachment forms and we feel that they owe their “life” to us and hence must stay and not go anywhere else. Sometimes we are afraid of the “vacuum” that may be created by their moving on. Perhaps, it may make us feel inadequate or somewhat insufficient that they had to go elsewhere to further themselves in their ministry. All of these are ungodly “soulish” attachments that have a form of spirituality, but really are hindering the purposes of God. We need to guard ourselves against such things and learn to let people go with joy and blessing, as the Lord leads them on. And if the Lord does lead them back, welcome them!

## **Flattery—Do Not Accept it, Do Not Give it**

### **Proverbs 20:19**

**He who goes about as a talebearer reveals secrets; therefore do not associate with one who flatters with his lips.**

### **Proverbs 28:23**

**He who rebukes a man will find more favor afterward than he who flatters with the tongue.**

### **Proverbs 20:19**

**A man who flatters his neighbor spreads a net for his feet.**

It is true that there are times when people are truly blessed through your ministry and they sincerely come and let you know that they were touched and encouraged. This is fine. However, it is quite common to meet people who know how to stroke preachers just the right way. After every sermon they will let you know that it was just the right word, loaded with revelation, and that you were so anointed on that day. They may tell you that you are the best preacher in town, the best pastor, the most anointed evangelist, and so on. It is easy to fall prey to such flattery. If we are not careful, we like to have such people all around us, because they puff us up and make us feel important. Soon we get so accustomed to such talk, that we cannot handle anyone who questions us or wishes to share an idea that goes against our way of thinking. We have become ensnared in a world of flattery. Our feet are trapped in this net.

Whenever someone compliments you, within your heart, turn the praise and thanks over to God. *“Not unto us, O LORD, not unto us, but to Your name give glory, because of Your mercy, because of Your truth”* (Psalm 115:3). Remind yourself that for you personally, you are not here to receive honor from men (John 5:41) and for you, the applause of heaven is more important than the praises of men (John 5:44). Be quick to discern someone who is flattering you. When that person speaks, do not take in what they say. Let it rub off you, as water off a duck’s back. You know that flattery is a dangerous web that can ensnare you. Do not let it even get into you. And by the same token, never flatter anyone. If you want to compliment them, encourage, or congratulate them for a job well-done and do it with all sincerity.

## **You Can Listen to People's Ideas, But You Make the Final Decision**

### **1 Corinthians 3:13-14**

**13 Each one's work will become clear; for the Day will declare it, because it will be revealed by fire; and the fire will test each one's work, of what sort it is.**

**14 If anyone's work which he has built on it endures, he will receive a reward.**

### **2 Corinthians 5:10**

**For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad.**

It is important to involve people in the ministry we are doing and have them share their ideas and suggestions on how to carry out the vision God has given us. On the other hand, as a spiritual leader, it is important to know that ultimately God will hold you responsible for what took place through your life and ministry. People will have many ideas. Sharing an idea is an easy thing to do. But someone must decide which of the ideas God wants us to pursue and how to go about implementing those ideas and seeing them executed through to the end. This is the responsibility of the leadership team and eventually the main leader in a local church or ministry. When I stand before God, I cannot say that I did something because someone out there thought it was a good idea. Neither can I say to the Lord that the reason I did not do something, was because someone suggested that I should not do it. I will have to answer for myself and be accountable for what was done and not done. So, listen to and evaluate all ideas, suggestions, recommendations that come from people with that perspective.

## **Do Not Permit Any Individual To Control You**

One of the things I have learned is to be strong and secure enough, so that I do not let any "powerful" person (in the worldly sense) dictate terms on how I do what God has called me to do. Sometimes powerful people—businessmen, rich people, famous people, intellectuals—directly/indirectly try to ask for opportunities to preach, influence the pastor, or try "in a nice way" to control the pastor or tell the pastor what he should be doing and so on. We must learn to stand our ground. Some of them may be sincere and mean well—but however their approach and motivation are wrong. Unknowingly they think that their success in the world—along with money, influence, position, and experience—entitles them automatically to a place behind the pulpit, or a role to control/influence the pastor, church, or ministry. They cannot be more wrong than this!

As pastors, while we can listen to people's ideas/inputs, we must know where they need to stop and where our jurisdiction begins—an area where we will have to make the final decision and be accountable to God for the vision, the pulpit, church, and ministry. We must also be strong and secure enough to say "no," to let them know where the line is drawn, beyond which they cannot cross.

On the other hand, we do want to encourage and celebrate what God is doing through believers who have money, position, influence, and so on, in the world. God has blessed them with these. We want to empower and equip them to do great exploits for God's kingdom. And yet we must do this—without compromising our place, the ministry entrusted to us, and the jurisdiction that we are responsible for. We must also let believers know that their success in the world does not automatically entitle them to significance in role, position, or voice in the local church and ministry.

I am not advocating leadership that is not accountable to anyone. On the other hand, I firmly believe that as leaders we must remain not only accountable to God and to our families, but also to leaders over us, to governing and regulatory bodies, and the people we lead and serve. Our lives should be such that anyone can examine us about anything, and we should be able to answer them with a clear conscience. We do not live a lie. What I am recommending here, is not to permit any person control you as a leader simply because of the money, position, power, accomplishments, or influence they may have in the world.

Submission to leadership and to one another is necessary and is a godly thing. However, being under the influence of someone to the point where we do their bidding and compromise the ministry, is unhealthy and detrimental.

In a similar manner, we must ensure that we are not controlled by “super spiritual” people either. I thank God for intercessors, prayer warriors, and prophetic people. But sometimes, even such people try to control or influence their leaders by using visions, dreams, and “words from the Lord.” As a pastor, I listen to “words from the Lord” that people bring me. But I am cautious to test it out myself before taking it as a true word from God. I also am cautious not to let any one particular “intercessor” or “prophetic person” become a self-appointed intermediary between God and me—so that I only must listen to them and make decisions based on their prophetic words or revelations.

## **Handle “Spiritual” Ones With Caution**

### **Colossians 2:18-19**

**18 Let no one cheat you of your reward, taking delight in false humility and worship of angels, intruding into those things which he has not seen, vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind,  
19 and not holding fast to the Head, from whom all the body, nourished and knit together by joints and ligaments, grows with the increase that is from God.**

You are sure to meet some “super spiritual” believers who always want to do what the Lord is supposedly telling them—without any regard to God-appointed leadership. When you as a pastor request them to do something or follow a certain procedure you have put in place, their usual response will be something like “I will do as the Lord leads.” They very often prefix their decisions with “God told me ...” or “God spoke to me ...”

While we want to encourage believers to pray and hear from God—these super spiritual ones also need to understand that in the first place, the pastor or leader is also praying, listening to God, and hence has decided to get a certain thing done a certain way. I realize that what we are discussing here is not very pleasant. But I think I have seen several examples to make some comments on this. In my opinion and observation, it seems that many super spiritual people use the words “God spoke to me. ...” or “I will do as the Lord leads ...” as a cover-up for their own desire for independence and insubordination. We must learn to handle such super spiritual ones with caution. I usually avoid entrusting such people with important roles, because they cannot be trusted or depended upon to stay aligned to the vision and direction we are providing under God’s guidance. A person who is genuinely spiritual and walking with God, does not need to impress people that he is hearing from God by using “God spoke to me ...” and so on. He walks in humility and submission. His life and fruit will manifest that He is walking according to the Spirit.

## **Raise Up Leaders**

### **1 Corinthians 4:17**

**For this reason I have sent Timothy to you, who is my beloved and faithful son in the Lord, who will remind you of my ways in Christ, as I teach everywhere in every church.**

### **1 Corinthians 16:10**

**And if Timothy comes, see that he may be with you without fear; for he does the work of the Lord, as I also do.**

Paul, the apostle, did not carry out his ministry all by himself. He raised up many leaders around him. He called them his co-workers or fellow laborers. Timothy is one example of a leader whom Paul raised in the ministry. Paul found him as a young man in Lystra (Acts 16:1-3) and took him along as part of the team. Over time, Paul nurtured Timothy into a minister of God, who could do the work of the ministry the same way that Paul did. Timothy had become one of Paul’s co-workers.

In Christian ministry, it is important to develop leaders around you who can work alongside you. Leaders are like pillars in the house of God (Galatians 2:9). If you want to build a large house, you need many pillars to support the large structure. You cannot build too much with just one pillar. If you want to have a strong local church, you will have to raise many leaders around you who have been taught, trained, and authorized to carry out certain aspects of the ministry. At APC, we constantly reiterate that “every believer is a minister.” We encourage everyone to serve. We work at taking new believers to becoming disciples, disciples to becoming ministers, and ministers to becoming leaders. We emphasize that everyone can become a leader. Leadership is not a position of status or place of eminence among people. Leadership is simply taking on greater responsibility and greater service.

We create opportunities in various areas of ministry for people to be nurtured into leaders. We let them grow. We watch their life-example and heart attitudes. When needed, we bring correction and alignment so that we nurture people into good leaders. We let them take their time and do not rush them into leadership roles. We let people serve first without a title or position. If someone can serve without a title, role, or recognition, they can serve when this is added to their work. We do not elevate people purely based on talent, skill, or charisma. Godly life-example, right heart-attitude, good people relationships, alignment to vision are important things we look for. We emphasize leadership by example.

Having good leaders around you is the key to having a strong ministry. Of course, not all leaders will stay with you for the rest of their lives. God may have a bigger call, a different ministry and hence, when the time comes, lovingly release them to move on into what God has called them to do. When you release leaders, you are also creating opportunity for more people to rise and become leaders to take their places.

## **Stand By Your Leaders**

### **1 Timothy 5:19-20**

**19 Do not receive an accusation against an elder except from two or three witnesses.**

**20 Those who are sinning rebuke in the presence of all, that the rest also may fear.**

Being a spiritual leader is no easy task—especially if you want to do it right. Leaders who serve alongside you and under your leadership must know that they have your full support. They are risking their lives and carrying responsibility with you. So, stand by them, especially when there is any complaint or accusation against them from the congregation. Double check with two or more genuine witnesses. Only after you have verified that there was genuine wrongdoing should you proceed with correction.

All of us make mistakes. None of us are flawless. So even if a leader makes a mistake which is not a moral failure or compromise of godly standards, address it privately and encourage them to correct themselves. Sometimes the leader may repeat the mistake and you need to be patient and encourage them in their journey to get it right. However, if after sufficient time and encouragement has been given and things have not yet changed, then proceed with whatever remedial action would be required. In the case of moral failure or compromise of godly standards, the corrective measures would be more serious. This should be done, with the good of everyone in mind. However, underlying all this, every member in your team should know that you will stand by them through difficult times and see to their restoration and furtherance in God's Kingdom.

## **Do Not Let Inaction Or Negligence Birth “Absalom’s”**

King David was one of the most successful kings in Israel. However, he did not seem to be a very good father for his own family, at least until he had his son Solomon. Among his children, he had Absalom and Tamar who were brother and sister, and there was Amnon who was their half-brother. Amnon loved Tamar and very cunningly succeeded in violating her virginity (2 Samuel 13). The Bible records, *“But when King David heard of all these things, he was very angry”* (2 Samuel 13:21). And yet, king David did not do anything about what had happened. Understandably Absalom was very angry with Amnon for what he had done to Tamar. Perhaps his anger kept growing because David did not address the issue for two full years. Then Absalom decided to take matters into his own hands and killed Amnon. Absalom fled into hiding for three years. After David had mourned the loss of Amnon, he longed for Absalom. *“And King David longed to go to Absalom. for he had been comforted concerning Amnon, because he was dead”* (2 Samuel 13:39). Here again, for three years, David did not do anything. He did not contact Absalom. Imagine now, for five years, Absalom had been carrying the pain of injustice done to his sister inside of him, and David had done nothing as a father to reach out to him in five years. Finally, Joab, one of David’s leaders, convinces David, to bring Absalom to Jerusalem, where he continued for another two years without meeting David. *“And Absalom dwelt two full years in Jerusalem, but did not see the king’s face”* (2 Samuel 14:28). Eventually, Absalom convinces Joab to get him an appointment with his father, king David. *“So Joab went to the king and told him. And when he had called for Absalom, he came to the king and bowed himself on his face to the ground before the king. Then the king kissed Absalom”* (2 Samuel 14:33). Although Absalom finally got to meet his father, seven years after the incident of injustice, there is no indication that David did anything to heal those wounds. Subsequently, in this very area of handing out justice, Absalom worked his way into the hearts of the people. *“In this manner, Absalom acted toward all Israel who came to the king for judgment. So Absalom stole the hearts of the men of Israel”* (2 Samuel 15:6). Having done this, Absalom led a massive rebellion against his own father king David. David had to flee from Jerusalem and almost lost his throne.

What if David had met with Absalom, at the very beginning, when the incident of injustice had happened and dealt with the pain and issues of Absalom’s heart? It is quite possible that the rebellion would have never happened. For seven years, David did nothing to resolve the pain and the issue, and this eventually led to rebellion.

We can learn an important lesson from this about leading a ministry team. If you find a member on your ministry team, having problems and issues, do not ignore it. Have a heart-to-heart talk as soon as you detect this. Listen to their struggles and reasons for discomfort. Help them understand your heart. Resolve issues to whatever extent possible. If they are unable to have matters resolved, then lovingly release them so that they can move out of the ministry team into something else, rather than staying in the team and

perhaps continue seething on the inside. This will be detrimental both to the team as a whole and to the individual. And of course, you do not want to raise an Absalom who would eventually lead a “rebellion” within your own ministry. So, deal with issues as soon as you detect them. Do not put it off. Do not let your inaction and negligence give rise to Absalom’s in your own ministry team.

## **Do Not Be A Partaker Of Other People’s Sins**

### **1 Timothy 5:22**

**Do not lay hands on anyone hastily, nor share in other people’s sins; keep yourself pure.**

### **Proverbs 26:17).**

**He who passes by and meddles in a QUARREL not his own is like one who takes a dog by the ears.**

As a Christian minister, especially if you are a pastor of a congregation, you want to help and assist people in every way possible. It is quite surprising that even within the context of Christian ministry, there can be requests to involve in what is wrong. I remember one instance when one Christian organization was to refund a sum of money back to All Peoples Church, at the end of an event. The person who worked for that organization asked me, “In whose name do you want the check?” This took me completely off-guard. For me, the answer was obvious, and I was taken aback to be asked this question, especially from someone working for a Christian organization. My answer was quite simple. “The money was given by All Peoples Church and it should be returned to All Peoples Church.” And that is what was done. However, this left me wondering what other things could be going on, where money could be misused. There was one instance where a young person who had been attending services at All Peoples Church for a few months, came to me one Sunday after service and informed me that he was applying to go study at a Bible college in America. He wanted a letter from the church stating that he was a staff of the church, serving in a particular area, and so on. What was amusing was that he was asking me to write a letter that was an outright lie! My answer to that was quite simple, “No!” He left the church promptly and was not seen at our services ever since.

Now there are areas where right and wrong may not be so obvious and you need to be very careful. For instance, in a situation where you are asked for a letter whose contents are completely true and valid—but it has been made known to you that it is being used to support something that is wrong, what would you do? If you did not know what the letter was being used for, and it was taken and used by a congregation member to support something wrong, of course this is beyond your control. But if it was made known to you that it was being used to support a lie, then it would be important not to share in that sin. Similarly, as a pastor, you would be called to make statements for members in your congregation in referral checks—either from prospective employers, for marriage proposals, and so on. In such cases, you may feel the pull between giving a very good

report so that the person can have a good future versus facts. I have always made it a practice to state the facts. I cannot do otherwise.

## **Saying, “No” Is Not A Sin**

### **Proverbs 25:16**

**Have you found honey? Eat only as much as you need, lest you be filled with it and vomit.**

There are many things in life and Christian ministry that are good and harmless. However, too much of it can be disastrous. It is good to receive invitations to minister in different places. But you need to know to which ones to say, “yes” and to which ones to say “no” to. As a pastor, you may have many people wanting you to preach at their church. Here again, you need to know which people to say, “yes” to and whom to say “no” to. People in your congregation may want you to come and be a part of everything that happens in their homes—every wedding, every birthday, every anniversary, every house dedication and so on. Once again, in such things, you need to know when to say, “yes” and when to say, “no.”

As Christian ministers, we feel the pressure to say, “yes” to everything. But this is not practically possible. We could destroy our own lives—health, family, and so on—just saying, “yes” to all these kinds of things. I have learned that to say “no” is not a sin. I am admitting the fact that I cannot do everything. When I say, “no” to someone, I am not rejecting them as an individual. I am only saying, “no” to what was proposed—the invitation or idea being considered. I can say, “no” and still love them as individuals, and work with them wholeheartedly in other things at other times. So instead of giving into the pressure of saying, “yes” to everything, learn to say “no” to things that you are not able to be a part of, but do it politely and do not feel guilty about doing so.

## **Do Not Stoop Down To The Level Of Your Accusers**

### **Romans 12:17-18,21**

**17 Repay no one evil for evil. Have regard for good things in the sight of all men.**

**18 If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men. 21 Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.**

### **Titus 3:10 (Message Bible)**

**Warn a quarrelsome person once or twice, but then be done with him.**

We lived in Chicago, for about three years, prior to our moving back to Bangalore, to start the church and business. During this time, we were part of a small local church with about 20-25 people. We helped in whatever way we could at this church. We had the privilege of spending time with the pastor’s parents—Jim and Lorraine Nagle. Mr. Jim at that time was in his late 60s, or thereabouts. He had worked for about 17 years in a large

internationally known Christian ministry and had seen and heard many famous Christian ministers. I enjoyed listening to his stories and experiences in Christian ministry. There were two very important things he taught me, which I keep reminding myself often. Both these were based on his experiences at this Christian ministry. He had shared how after serving for 17 years at this ministry, where he was part of the accounting and finance department, one day he was suddenly asked to leave his job, for no valid reason. He could not believe it. He was shocked. As he went through this painful situation in his life, he was often tempted to retaliate to what he felt was injustice done to him by his Christian brethren. As he looked to the Lord for strength, the Lord spoke to him and challenged him not to stoop down to the level where the other brethren were operating at. God told him to live above that and be bigger than the wrong he was dealt with. So, Mr. Jim decided to do so. He refused to go down to the level of the brethren who were unjust and unfair in their dealing. He decided to walk in a higher level of forgiveness and trust in God. So, Mr. Jim repeatedly told me, "Ashish, whatever you face with people, never go down to their level of wrongdoing. Always live up here, where God wants you to live."

As Christian ministers, we are sure to face a lot of accusations, criticism, gossip, and rumors that will be spoken to us or about us. We have no control over what people say and do. What is worse is that often these things come from other brethren. Sadly, in many ways, our opponents are those of our own household (Matthew 10:36). But we always have a choice not to repay evil for evil. We always have a choice to live at a level above those offending us.

## 4. CONDUCT

Unfortunately, in the Church today, people tend to evaluate preachers by what they do in the one hour behind the pulpit, rather than by the life they live away from the pulpit. This has given rise to preachers whose only focus is to do a “decent job” when they are behind the pulpit, but do not bother about how they live once away from the pulpit.

However, the standards set by God’s Word is very clear. A Christian leader must be blameless, and his life must be an example for other believers. This is what qualifies him to be a Christian minister (pastor, preacher, teacher, prophet, apostle, evangelist, and so on). This chapter addresses some key issues regarding conduct—the life we live when we are not on the platform preaching to people.

### **Be An Example, Set The Standard**

#### **1 Corinthians 11:1**

**Imitate me, just as I also imitate Christ.**

#### **1 Timothy 4:12**

**Let no one despise your youth, but be an example to the believers in word, in conduct, in love, in spirit, in faith, in purity.**

Apostle Paul was very clear that as a man of God, his life example was extremely important and thus challenged people to follow his life example. I wonder how many of us preachers can tell people, “Follow my life example, and imitate how I live life when I am not behind the pulpit.”

The Apostle Paul challenged young Timothy to lead the church in Ephesus by being an example to the believers. A Christian leader must set the standard and example in these areas:

- In speech—how we talk, what kind of things we talk about,
- In conduct—how we live life, how we manage our time, money, relationships,
- In love—how we love and care for other people,
- In spirit—in matters of the heart, the purity of our motives, our attitudes,
- In faith—in our trust and dependence on the Lord, in our courage to obey His Word,
- In purity—our life of holiness and godliness in day-to-day things.

What we must remember is that even the little things we do get noticed and reflect on the Lord we represent. I remember attending a Christian meeting where a respected Christian leader, while sitting on the platform was using his mobile phone, texting messages, and answering calls, when the meeting was in progress! I know we are in a busy world, but this was outrageous in the sense that he did not have respect for the meeting in progress. What kind of an example would this be to the rest of the people who were watching him! This may be a trivial thing, but I think as people in ministry, our conduct should be exemplary! *“Our work as God’s servants gets validated—or not—in the details. People are watching us as we stay at our post, alertly, unswervingly ...”* (2 Corinthians 6:4, Message Bible).

Writing to the Philippians, the Apostle Paul said: “Brethren, join in following my example, and note those who so walk, as you have us for a pattern.” *“The things which you learned and received and heard and saw in me, these do, and the God of peace will be with you”* (Philippians 3:17; Philippians 4:9).

## Your Life Example Speaks The Loudest

### Acts 20:17-19

**17** From Miletus he sent to Ephesus and called for the elders of the church.

**18** And when they had come to him, he said to them: “You know, from the first day that I came to Asia, in what manner I always lived among you,

**19** serving the Lord with all humility, with many tears and trials which happened to me by the plotting of the Jews;

### Hebrews 11:4

**By faith Abel offered to God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, through which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts; and through it he being dead still speaks.**

In his final words of exhortation to the Ephesian leaders, the Apostle Paul points them to his life example, as what they ought to remember and follow. The teaching and preaching of God’s Word are absolutely important. But what “sticks” in the minds of people is the life we have lived in embodying what the Word of God teaches. People will forget good sermons easily, but the life they saw us live and the example we set, will be remembered for a long time. Abel did what was accepted in the eyes of God, and the Scripture says that though he is dead, he still speaks—the memory of his deed continues!

## Work Hard

### 1 Corinthians 15:10

**But by the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace toward me was not in vain; but I labored more abundantly than they all, yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me.**

God gives us gifts and grace, but it is up to us as to how we use the gifts and grace extended to us. To be fruitful in Christian ministry, one must be willing to work hard, stretch beyond what is easy and comfortable, make sacrifices and go the extra mile. It is easy to see when a minister of God is stretching and really working hard for the cause of the Kingdom and when someone is doing just the bare minimum, just to keep things going. The Apostle Paul made it clear that he labored more abundantly than the other apostles. This could very well be one of the reasons why God used him so powerfully to expand the borders of the Early Church.

It is pathetic to see someone using Christian ministry as means to a life of ease and laziness. Some chose Christian ministry because they do not want to work hard in a regular corporate job. Once in Christian ministry, they take things easy, do the bare minimum, and just get by. They have plodded along in every task. Brethren let us not be such kind of ministers but instead give our 100 percent and more for the Lord.

## **Walk Humbly**

**Matthew 5:5**

**Blessed are the meek for they shall inherit the earth.**

**1 Peter 5:6**

**Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time.**

Humility is that heart attitude where we walk in submission to God and man. It is that heart attitude that does not allow us to think more highly of ourselves than we ought (Romans 12:3). It enables us to relate equally to the rich and the poor, without making a difference. It enables us to see ourselves as “just a man” and see that all greatness belongs to God. It enables us to stand on level ground with all other believers no matter what great things have been wrought in our ministries, throughout our lives.

Thus, you do not seek the most important seat in Christian meetings. You do not desire to be recognized and applauded in public. When you walk in such a manner you are walking in humility. Humility does not engage in self-promotion and is satisfied to wait for God to bring exaltation in His time. Humility is true strength. It is the place where God releases even more grace.

## **Pursue Peace**

**2 Timothy 2:23-24**

**23 But avoid foolish and ignorant disputes, knowing that they generate strife.**

**24 And a servant of the Lord must not quarrel but be gentle to all, able to teach, patient.**

**Romans 12:18**

**If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men.**

**Hebrews 12:14**

**Pursue peace with all people, and holiness, without which no one will see the Lord.**

Avoid getting into arguments, contentions, and strife with people. Keep yourself strife-free. Some Christian ministers get consumed with strife. They seem to be in strife with believers in their congregation, in strife with other Christian ministers, in strife with people outside the church and so on. Strife opens the door to all kinds of evil. Strife wastes your time and energy and robs you of doing things that are more important. We end up behaving as carnal man and not as ministers of God. *“For you are still carnal. For where there are envy, strife, and divisions among you, are you not carnal and behaving like mere men?”* (1 Corinthians 3:3).

When someone accuses you, criticizes you, provokes you, harms, or hurts you in anyway, ask yourself if the matter is worth your time. Do you need to clarify a misunderstanding, apologize in any way, or just simply let things pass without paying attention? If you need to respond in anyway, do so in a manner that will bring things to a peaceful conclusion. Do what will promote peace. If you feel that engaging with someone will only fan the flames of argument and strife, just let it go. Do not even go near the matter. Nehemiah set us a great example as he went about fulfilling the call of God on his life, though his opponents wanted to hinder his work. *“Now it happened when Sanballat, Tobiah, Geshem the Arab, and the rest of our enemies heard that I had rebuilt the wall, and that there were no breaks left in it (though at that time I had not hung the doors in the gates), that Sanballat and Geshem sent to me, saying, “Come, let us meet together among the villages in the plain of Ono.” But they thought to do me harm. So I sent messengers to them, saying, “I am doing a great work, so that I cannot come down. Why should the work cease while I leave it and go down to you?” But they sent me this message four times, and I answered them in the same manner”* (Nehemiah 6:1-4). Keep yourself focused on doing the great work God has called you to do. You have no time for strife. Settle matters quickly and peacefully, and keep going on with the work of God. *“Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God”* (Matthew 5:9). Be a peacemaker!

## **Always Be Teachable**

**1 Corinthians 8:2**

**And if anyone thinks that he knows anything, he knows nothing yet as he ought to know.**

Always be ready to learn. Always keep learning. Keep your spiritual eyes and ears open all the time to see what God may be saying to you. Some of us Christian ministers pretend that we know it all—or at least that is what our behavior shows. We will not sit and listen to another preacher, especially if that preacher is not as “big” as we are, or if that

preacher is younger to us in the ministry. We do not necessarily listen to other people who may have the right word or counsel for us, especially if they are “lay people” and do not seem to be as “anointed” as we are. We must understand that God can use anyone, even a little child to speak a “word in season” into our lives. Regardless of how young the preacher maybe, if we will sit and tune our hearts to God, He will speak to us and teach us something. *“He who disdains instruction despises his own soul, but he who heeds rebuke gets understanding”* (Proverbs 15:32).

## **As Far As Possible—Keep Your Word, Or Do Not Promise It**

### **Psalm 15:1-5**

**1 LORD, who may abide in Your tabernacle? Who may dwell in Your holy hill?**

**2 He who walks uprightly, and works righteousness, and speaks the truth in his heart;**

**3 He who does not backbite with his tongue, nor does evil to his neighbor, nor does he take up a reproach against his friend;**

**4 In whose eyes a vile person is despised, But he honors those who fear the LORD; he who swears to his own hurt and does not change;**

**5 He who does not put out his money at usury, nor does he take a bribe against the innocent. He who does these things shall never be moved.**

### **Psalm 15:4 (Message Bible)**

**Keep your word even when it costs you.**

Like our Heavenly Father, we must take our own words seriously. Our word must be our bond, a promise we will keep. I realize that there are times when we will fail since we are human, and our best intentions may be hindered due to practical limitations. However, to the best of our abilities, we must be people of our word. If we promise to do something, let us do our best to make it good. Sometimes this is an area that creates a lot of problem for us Christian ministers. We do not know how to say, “No.” So we promise to do things which we know we will not be able to do, just to please people or just to look nice before people. Eventually, we are unable to keep our word, and then this leads to a lot of disappointment in those who were expecting us to do what we had promised. We then lose our credibility, and this eventually reflects on the ministry. People lose trust, feel hurt, feel let down and may even go away from the local church. Apostle Paul took this seriously in his ministry. Writing to the Corinthians he states, *“Therefore, when I was planning this, did I do it lightly? Or the things I plan, do I plan according to the flesh, that with me there should be Yes, Yes, and No, No?”* (2 Corinthians 1:17).

It is true that we may not be perfect in this area. We may promise something and fail to keep it. In such situations, let us be quick to apologize to people and use it as a lesson to learn, and understand our own areas of limitations so that we do not repeat this.

The Lord Jesus taught us, *“But let your ‘Yes’ be ‘Yes,’ and your ‘No,’ ‘No.’ For whatever is more than these is from the evil one”* (Matthew 5:37).

## **Respect Other People's Time—Be Punctual, Always**

**Ephesians 5:15-16**

**15 See then that you walk circumspectly, not as fools but as wise,  
16 redeeming the time, because the days are evil.**

One of the big areas where I feel that we Christian ministers need to improve is in punctuality. I remember some years ago, reading a full-page advertisement in a local Christian Ad magazine about a full-day prayer meeting that was to be held in a large auditorium in our city. It said that the prayer meeting was to start at 9am. This prayer meeting was hosted by a large church, and the name of the church and its pastors were boldly put on display in the advertisement. I decided that getting together with other believers to pray was a good thing, so I set that day aside to be at that prayer meeting. I arrived at the venue a few minutes before 9 AM. To my disappointment there was no one, even the hall door was locked. So met the security guard and asked him if anyone had come and so on. Then I called the church office asking about the meeting. It was quite an embarrassing moment. The answer I received was to kindly wait there and that the pastor would reach there by 10 AM or 11 AM. I promptly left that place, disappointed.

It is customary in India to announce that a Christian meeting or service will start at a certain time, but the organizers fully intend to start about 30 minutes after the announced time. This is a very bad practice. First, we are lying to the people about the starting time. Second, we are doing injustice to those who come on time, by keeping them waiting for 30 minutes. Third, we are inculcating a wrong habit in our own people—by announcing a time and then starting 30 minutes later. They will also do the same thing, and so this problem continues. We must decide that when we announce a start time for a meeting, we do all our planning and preparation in such a manner that we start on time. Regardless of how many people are in the venue, our responsibility is to keep our word and start on time. If we do this consistently for some time, people will understand that they need to be on time or else they will miss out on parts of the service. Yes, there will be the rare occasions when we are delayed due to difficult situations. In such cases, we must apologize to the people and ensure we do what is needed to avert this in the future.

The same goes for individual meetings that we schedule. If we have given an individual a certain time to meet with us, then we need to be there and meet with that person at that set time. It is unfair on our part to keep that person waiting—regardless of who that person is or how “not as busy” they may be. If there is a situation where we are unable to keep our time, then we need to inform that person as soon as possible, so that they can make changes to their schedule as well.

## **Be Blameless Before God And Man**

**2 Corinthians 6:3-4**

**3 We give no offense in anything, that our ministry may not be blamed.**

**4 But in all things we commend ourselves as ministers of God ...**

**2 Corinthians 8:21**

**Providing honorable things, not only in the sight of the Lord, but also in the sight of men.**

To the best we can, we must conduct ourselves blamelessly before God and men. Our goal is that in both our personal lives and in the way we do things in ministry, we should be blameless. We should live in such a way that we have nothing to hide. Yes, we make mistakes and receive the Lord's forgiveness and correction, and so we put those things behind us and move on. We choose not to continue in wrongdoing. In all things—the way we are at home with our spouse and children, in the way we use our time and money, in the way we minister, and so on—we must show ourselves to be true ministers of the Lord. We must be right not only in the sight of God, but as far as possible, also in the sight of man.

## **Enjoy Life, But Avoid Loose Talk And Foolish Jesting**

**Ephesians 4:29**

**Let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth, but what is good for necessary edification, that it may impart grace to the hearers.**

**Ephesians 5:3-4**

**3 But fornication and all uncleanness or covetousness, let it not even be named among you, as is fitting for saints;**

**4 neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor coarse jesting, which are not fitting, but rather giving of thanks.**

## **Do Not Demand Comforts Or Luxuries**

**2 Corinthians 4:8-10**

**8 We are hard-pressed on every side, yet not crushed; we are perplexed, but not in despair;**

**9 persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed—**

**10 always carrying about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body.**

**1 Thessalonians 2:6,9-12**

**6 Nor did we seek glory from men, either from you or from others, when we might have made demands as apostles of Christ.**

**9 For you remember, brethren, our labor and toil; for laboring night and day, that we might not be a burden to any of you, we preached to you the gospel of God.**

**10 You are witnesses, and God also, how devoutly and justly and blamelessly we behaved ourselves among you who believe;**

**11 as you know how we exhorted, and comforted, and charged every one of you, as a father does his own children,**

**12 that you would walk worthy of God who calls you into His own kingdom and glory.**

It seems to be a common trend today, especially with the upper echelon of “great and mighty,” “anointed” servants of God to demand huge offerings, spacious air-conditioned vehicles for transport, five-star hotel accommodation, and super-hero treatment, when invited to preach and minister at a service or meeting. While I am not against large offerings, good vehicles to travel in, or staying in five-star hotels—I think it is wrong for ministers to make such demands as a pre-requisite to go out and minister. If the host willingly provides such things, enjoy it! If you pay for it yourself, then it is well and good. But to demand and expect such “royal” treatment and make this criterion by which a servant of God will accept or reject an invitation is not anywhere close to being Christlike! If God wants us to go and minister, we must be ready, whether we get to stay in a five-star hotel or sleep in somebody’s home somewhere. Our call is to obey God, not seek after luxury and comfort.

I have also noticed that such ministers will gladly spend someone else’s money and enjoy such comforts. But when asked to pay for it themselves, they immediately downgrade everything to just the basics. We ought not to do such things! Let us value the resources God has given us, be it what is in our hands, or in someone else’s.

Now on the other side, if you are a pastor or someone hosting a conference or meeting and wish to invite a man or woman of God, how should you go about it? I think it is better to know what your organization can afford to spend toward the travel, accommodation, and food for having that servant of God come and minister at your conference. Then along with the invitation, make it very clear what you can afford, example: round trip economy class air travel on such and such airline, stay at such and such place for these number of days, and a gift of this amount for ministering, and so on. If they are fine with these arrangements, they are free to agree or else free to decline the invitation. This way you avoid any wrong expectations and can also be a good steward of the finances you have been given, without pandering to the excesses and luxuries some ministers of God may demand.

Apostle Paul did a whole lot for the Kingdom of God and faced a lot of hardships as he went about preaching, planting churches, and strengthening believers. He did not use the excuse of much travel or a busy schedule to demand luxuries or special treatment from churches and believers that he went to minister to. We need to follow this example.

Paul instructed the Philippians, “*Let your gentleness (“moderation,” KJV) be known to all men. The Lord is at hand*” (Philippians 4:5). The word “moderation” refers to restraint on

the passions, general soberness of living, being free from all excesses. The word properly means that which is fit or suitable, and then propriety, gentleness, mildness. They were to indulge in no excess of passion, or dress, or eating, or drinking. They were to govern their appetites, restrain their temper, and to be examples of what was proper for people in view of the expectation that the Lord would soon appear. [Explanation of the word “moderation” quoted from Albert Barnes’ Notes on the Bible, Albert Barnes (1798-1870)]

## 5. PREACHING

God has ordained that His Word be preached so that lives can be touched. As ministers of God, we know the impact good preaching and teaching can have on people. People are edified, strengthened, and encouraged. We see souls saved, sinners repent, people healed and delivered as God's Word is proclaimed in power. This is just so wonderful to be a part of.

On the other hand, there are areas we need to be watchful about when it comes to preaching and teaching God's Word. In many churches today, the sermon is nothing more than a boring homily, a lifeless speech, and sometimes even a political push for some agenda that someone wants to promote from the pulpit. In some other places, the sermon is nothing more than a cacophony of repetitious "Hallelujah" and "Praise the Lord," interspersed with some disconnected stories, all geared to whip up spiritual frenzy and emotions. At the end of it, you wonder what the preacher was trying to convey or what it was about God that you discovered through the preaching! In some other places, we see the services and sermon becoming "mega entertainment," somewhat like a "Christianized" alternative to a movie in a theatre. The preacher is all geared to impress and entertain his audience, preaching in "contemporary style" using language that would make his speech no different from an unsaved television host or motivational speaker. The Cross is not proclaimed. Words like "sin," "heaven," "hell," "repent" are considered outdated. Signs, healings, miracles, and gifts of the Spirit are replaced with flashing lights, talented celebrities and actors, and decked-up stages. Whatever happened to the preaching of the Gospel of Jesus Christ and the teaching of God's uncompromised Word!

Being a preacher of God's Word is no fancy position or role. It is a response to a higher call. It is a willingness to live by higher standards and to be judged by stricter measures. *"My brethren, let not many of you become teachers, knowing that we shall receive a stricter judgment"* (James 3:1). If we are not ready for this, then we should not be preaching!

### **Establish People In God's Word**

**Acts 20:32**

**So now, brethren, I commend you to God and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up and give you an inheritance among all those who are sanctified.**

**Ephesians 4:14**

**That we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting.**

In Paul's final admonition to the elders from the Ephesian church, he pointed them to God and to God's Word, which was able to build them up. Even so today, one of our objectives as ministers of God is to establish people in God's Word. The Word will build them up and enable them to come into their inheritance. We are not here to entertain, amuse, and make people feel good or impressed by our fine speeches. We are not here to excite minds with our illustrations and stories. All of this will be useless, if at the end of it all, people are not established in God's Word. It is only when God's people are established in His Word that they can be firm and stable, not driven about by every wind of deceitful doctrine that blows.

## **Be Pure, Reverent, Genuine, Wholesome**

**Titus 2:7-8**

**7 In all things showing yourself to be a pattern of good works; in doctrine showing integrity, reverence, incorruptibility,**

**8 sound speech that cannot be condemned, that one who is an opponent may be ashamed, having nothing evil to say of you.**

The Apostle Paul defined the standard we must maintain in the ministry of God's Word. He calls for:

- **Integrity:** pure and without error. I must not preach and teach untruth. I must not proclaim fables and man-made stories. Anything that contradicts the Bible is untruth.
- **Reverence:** respect. The way the message is delivered must be with respect and must elicit respect from the audience. I cannot use cheap words or make light of what I am doing when ministering the Word of God. I am not here to try and "be cool," look nice, and feel accepted by my audience. I must carry a sense of reverence and awe of God and His Word as I minister.
- **Incorruptibility:** genuineness. I cannot preach something I do not believe in. I cannot preach something I am not living by and have not practiced in my own life. I cannot preach something that is only a "feel good" message, a nice idea that is however not entirely reliable and dependable.
- **Sound speech that cannot be condemned:** wholesome words. The words I use and the way I speak must be blameless. Something people cannot find fault with.

## **Preach to Impart, Not Impress**

### **2 Corinthians 2:17**

**For we are not, as so many, peddling the word of God; but as of sincerity, but as from God, we speak in the sight of God in Christ.**

### **2 Corinthians 4:2**

**But we have renounced the hidden things of shame, not walking in craftiness nor handling the word of God deceitfully, but by manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God.**

Our motivation in preaching and ministering God's Word should be to impart truth and revelation that will result in life transformation. If our motivation is primarily to impress people, so that they pat us on the back for a nice sermon, then we have missed the whole purpose of ministering God's Word.

We must refrain from "peddling the Word of God." The idea here is that of a wine shop owner, who would not dilute the wine or mix other substances with genuine wine. So, in the ministry of God's Word—two things are important: no dilution and no mixture. Do not dilute the Word of God, by not stating things clearly. Do not mix in man's ideas, philosophies, nice, and popular thoughts with the Word of God. Stay true to ministering the uncompromised, undiluted Word of God.

## **Address Difficult Topics, Do It With Love**

### **Ephesians 4:13-15**

**13 Till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ;**

**14 that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting,**

**15 but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head—Christ.**

### **Romans 2:3-4**

**3 And do you think this, O man, you who judge those practicing such things, and doing the same, that you will escape the judgment of God?**

**4 Or do you despise the riches of His goodness, forbearance, and longsuffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leads you to repentance?**

While everyone enjoys a nice, positive, uplifting message on hope or faith or success or blessing, we also must address other topics such as personal character, sexual purity, fidelity in marriage, integrity in finances, forgiving others, sacrifice, and so on. Some of these may be difficult to talk about from the pulpit. However, we must speak the truth in love so that we can all grow up in all things to be like Jesus. The key is to do it in love and not in a judgmental way. I have made this mistake several times. When my intention was to teach godly standards, the way I communicated it was judgmental and brought

condemnation on people. Hence, over time, I have learned to be careful, and have attempted to ensure that I speak the truth concerning difficult areas but do it with the goodness of God. Spewing fire and brimstone only drives people away. It is the goodness of God that leads people to repentance.

Also, when addressing such topics, it is important to let people know that we struggle with the same things and that we ourselves are not perfect. We face the same devil, the same temptations, and the same challenges. We have not been made perfect yet but are striving toward perfection and encouraging others to join us in this journey toward Christlikeness. We must be careful not to preach in a manner that makes us appear perfect, as though we have got it all together, and we are speaking to lesser mortals who need help. Here again, I have made mistakes in the way I have communicated things and have had to learn how to speak in a manner that is edifying and not condescending. As it says in Proverbs, “... *sweetness of the lips increases learning*” (Proverbs 16:21).

## **Rightly Divide The Word—Maintain Sound Doctrine**

### **2 Timothy 1:13-14**

**13 Hold fast the pattern of sound words which you have heard from me, in faith and love which are in Christ Jesus.**

**14 That good thing which was committed to you, keep by the Holy Spirit who dwells in us.**

### **2 Timothy 2:15**

**Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.**

### **1 Timothy 4:16**

**Take heed to yourself and to the doctrine. Continue in them, for in doing this you will save both yourself and those who hear you.**

### **Titus 2:1**

**But as for you, speak the things which are proper for sound doctrine.**

This is an awesome responsibility we have as ministers of the Word of God to rightly divide the Word of truth—to correctly break things down, interpret and make it understandable for people, without diluting the truth or mixing other things into it. It is important that we do not conjure up ideas and things based on stories we read in Scripture and preach our own imaginations. It is important that we follow proper rules for biblical interpretation and look at topics in the light of the entirety of Scripture, and not based on isolated references. We must let Scripture interpret Scripture. We are to constantly watch over our own lives and what we are teaching. We need to question ourselves if what we are preaching, and teaching is indeed accurate and sound. If we continue doing so, we will save ourselves and the people who hear us. If you are not sure if something is sound doctrine, then discuss it with someone who is a mature minister of

God and who is strong in the Word. Watch over the things you preach and teach. Maintain sound doctrine.

## **Build Precept Upon Precept**

**Isaiah 28:9-10**

**9 Whom will he teach knowledge? And whom will he make to understand the message? Those just weaned from milk? Those just drawn from the breasts?**

**10 For precept must be upon precept, precept upon precept, line upon line, line upon line, here a little, there a little.**

God works with us like dealing with little children, giving us precept upon precept, line upon line. He gives us a little understanding of truth. And then He adds to it. And continues to do so, as our understanding and experience in that truth grows. This is a good lesson for us to learn. We need to impart truth line by line, little by little, so that people can grow in that truth. This is a journey we are making together into a deeper, clearer revelation of truth.

I am sure many of us have experienced this in our pastoral ministry. The first time we shared on a particular subject, people may have found it hard to understand. There were lots of questions and doubts. When we revisit that same topic after some time and take things to the next level, people are then able to grasp the truth a little better. And so, as you keep coming back and studying, learning, and experiencing a certain area of truth, the light gets brighter and brighter. Things become clearer. People can yield more to what God wants them to do in relation to that truth. We grow in it, step by step.

## **Bring A Word In Season**

**Isaiah 50:4**

**The Lord GOD has given me the tongue of the learned, that I should know how to speak a word in season to him who is weary. He awakens me morning by morning, He awakens my ear to hear as the learned.**

**Proverbs 25:11 (Message Bible).**

**The right word at the right time is like a custom-made piece of jewelry.**

It is important to know what “Word” God desire to release to His people in each season. This is true if you are an itinerant preacher and especially true if you are a pastor of a local congregation. We need to be sensitive to the areas God wants us to focus on, in what areas to build and strengthen people. If we listen to God, He will empower us to bring a Word in season. People coming to listen to you will be expecting the Lord to speak to them. There will be something in it for everybody.

## **Validate Your “Revelations” Before You Preach it**

### **Hebrews 13:9**

**Do not be carried about with various and strange doctrines. For it is good that the heart be established by grace, not with foods which have not profited those who have been occupied with them.**

### **Matthew 13:52**

**Then He said to them, “Therefore every scribe instructed concerning the kingdom of heaven is like a householder who brings out of his treasure things new and old.**

As ministers of the Word, we find ourselves sometimes under “pressure” to bring some “new” and “fresh” revelation. People want to hear things they have not heard before. So, under pressure, we work at coming up with something new—some fresh revelation. Sometimes, we may be right and are able to deliver fresh insight into God’s Word—treasures that were hidden in the Word which we saw for the first time and are able to communicate it to people. However, if we think we have a “revelation” and we are unsure of its doctrinal and Scriptural accuracy, it is important that we “validate” it before preaching it. See if other established ministers of God concur with what you have. Test if that “revelation” holds in the light of the entirety of Scripture. The Spirit and the Word agree (1 John 5:7). So, the Holy Spirit will not reveal something that goes against the revealed Word of God (the Scripture) and against the manifest Word of God (the Person of Jesus Christ). Hold on to that “revelation” till you feel that it is accurate and can hence be released to God’s people. Because, in case something is released and we find that it is incorrect, then retracting it will be quite difficult.

On the other hand, do not be afraid to bring out “old treasures” to preach to people. Many of the truths that I preach today, are truths that I have been preaching since my early teenage years—for almost 40 years. It is the same truth. The truth has not changed. My depth of understanding, my experience in that truth, my confidence and clarity in that truth, and my ability to communicate it has of course grown over the years. But it is the same “old treasures” that I keep preaching. Nothing wrong with that! These are timeless truths! And there are always new people who need to be grounded in these timeless truths.

## **Stay Current—But Avoid Theological Digressions**

### **2 Peter 1:12**

**For this reason I will not be negligent to remind you always of these things, though you know and are established in the present truth.**

The understanding of truth and the application of truth is progressive. So as the Body of Christ keeps maturing, our understanding of truth and our ability to see its application in daily life keeps increasing. And as ministers of God, we need to stay current in “the present truth.” For example, the truth about the baptism of the Holy Spirit was always

there in Scripture. But since the Dark Ages, it was only in the early 1900s with the Azusa Street Revival that people began to experience the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on a large scale. This gave birth to the Pentecostal movement and so on. In the early days of Pentecostalism, people “tarried” hours and sometimes even days to receive the baptism in the Holy Spirit and pray in tongues. With time, people understood how easy and simple it was to pray and receive the baptism in the Holy Spirit and start praying in tongues. Today, it is a regular feature to share God’s Word and help people receive the baptism in the Holy Spirit within an hour. What we do observe here is that the Body of Christ has grown in its understanding of truth and learned how to apply that truth.

Apollos was a strong minister of the Word. However, he only knew truth till the baptism of John the Baptist. So, when he met with Aquilla and Priscilla, they got him “updated” till the finished work of Christ on the Cross. Apollos then became a strong teacher of the New Testament and a pillar in the church at Corinth. *“Now a certain Jew named Apollos, born at Alexandria, an eloquent man and mighty in the Scriptures, came to Ephesus. This man had been instructed in the way of the Lord; and being fervent in spirit, he spoke and taught accurately the things of the Lord, though he knew only the baptism of John. So he began to speak boldly in the synagogue. When Aquila and Priscilla heard him, they took him aside and explained to him the way of God more accurately”* (Acts 18:24-26). Paul did the same thing with the believers at Ephesus (Acts 19:1-6).

Even so, it is important for us, as ministers of God to stay current with the growth *“in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ”* (2 Peter 3:18) that is being experienced by the Body of Christ. We must stay current and learn from what God is releasing to the Body all over the world.

However, in so doing, we need to avoid “theological digressions.” Some internationally reputed and highly esteemed preachers go off on a tangent and begin to preach and teach things that are completely not based on the foundations of Scripture. They deny some of the fundamental teachings of Scripture. Such things happened even in New Testament times when people strayed from the truth:

**2 John 1:7**

**For many deceivers have gone out into the world who do not confess Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh. This is a deceiver and an antichrist.**

**2 Timothy 2:17-18**

**17 And their message will spread like cancer. Hymenaeus and Philetus are of this sort,  
18 who have strayed concerning the truth, saying that the resurrection is already past; and they overthrow the faith of some.**

Theological digressions can come in many ways. If I preach and teach something in an imbalanced manner, without giving equal importance to the rest of the truths contained

in Scripture, it can lead people astray. If I overemphasize a truth and give it more importance than what the Scripture does, that too is dangerous. For example, if I overemphasize blessing and prosperity without balancing it with sacrifice, giving, and contentment, I lead people astray. If I overemphasize grace without emphasizing godly living, purity, and responsibility, I end up with a Gospel of hyper-grace and lead people astray. If I challenge what God's Word says and deny the existence of a literal heaven and a literal hell, I lead people astray. If I dilute the Word of God and say that there are many ways to God instead of clearly stating that salvation is only by faith in Christ, I lead people astray.

As ministers of the Word, we need to guard against such things and make sure we do not get caught in it. We believe in Bible prophecy but let us never get caught up in sign-seeking or date-setting. We believe in moral and social responsibility in our nation yet let us never get caught up with some social or political cause—distracting ourselves from primarily being ministers of God's Word. We believe in signs and wonders, and miracles that accompany the preaching of the Gospel, but let us never get focused on miracles and stray away from intimacy with Him, and the salvation of souls. We believe in the prophetic and hearing the voice of God but let us never get carried away with various and strange "prophecies," rather let our hearts be established in the eternal truth of God's infallible Word of grace.

## **Amplify Truth To Overcome Error**

**John 1:5**

**And the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it.**

**2 Timothy 4:2-4**

**2 Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching.**

**3 For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers;**

**4 And they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables.**

The best way to dispel darkness is to turn the light on. Turn it on real bright until every trace of darkness is dispelled. Similarly, the best way to get rid of error is to amplify the truth. Make the truth plain, simple, loud, and clear, and all error will be removed.

As pastors and ministers of God's Word, it is our responsibility to protect people entrusted to us from doctrinal error, fables and things that turn people away from the truth. The best way to keep people grounded in the truth and from straying into error is to preach the Word, in season and out of season. Preach the truth. Amplify the truth. Convince people of the truth. Rebuke, literally meaning "have arguments presented to convince of the truth" [Albert Barnes' Notes on the Bible, Albert Barnes (1798-1870)]. Exhort or

encourage people to pursue the truth. Do not waste time explaining the error. Instead explain the truth. Truth will dispel error.

## **No Flattery, No Extortion, No Self-Promotion**

**1 Thessalonians 2:3-6**

**3 For our exhortation did not come from error or uncleanness, nor was it in deceit.**

**4 But as we have been approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel, even so we speak, not as pleasing men, but God who tests our hearts.**

**5 For neither at any time did we use flattering words, as you know, nor a cloak for covetousness—God is witness.**

**6 Nor did we seek glory from men, either from you or from others, when we might have made demands as apostles of Christ.**

**2 Corinthians 10:18**

**For not he who commends himself is approved, but whom the Lord commends.**

One of the most disheartening things to see is a preacher using the pulpit for such things as flattery, extortion, self-promotion, and the like. Paul was very clear about his preaching. There would be no error, no uncleanness, no pleasing men, no flattery, no covetousness or extortion, no seeking glory for self in his preaching.

**Flattery:** When a preacher gets behind the pulpit and starts stroking the ego of some “bigwig” sitting in the congregation, maybe a celebrity, politician, or sports personality, talking of how wonderful they are, all he is doing is engaging in flattery! Do not do this. If there are some great people sitting in the congregation, let them be. You do not have to call out their names and puff them up. If they came to sincerely worship the Lord, they will not get offended that you did not call out their name from the pulpit. They did not come to get noticed. They came to worship and pray.

**Extortion:** When a preacher gets behind the pulpit and pulls money from people by announcing things like, “The Lord says to me that 10 people here have to give 100,000 rupees each, those 10 people stand up” or “Take out the biggest currency you have in your wallet” or “Take out everything you have in your wallet and put it in the offering,” he is engaging in extortion! Do not force people to give money in the offering. Just invite people to give to the Lord, whatever they wish to do out of their hearts. And have faith in God to meet your needs! You do not have to pull money out of God’s people!

**Self-Promotion:** When a preacher gets behind the pulpit and brags about himself, about how many places he has travelled, the big crowds he has preached to and so on, he does this to impress his audience and not genuinely to give glory to God. Thus, he is engaging in self-promotion! Do not do this. Just share a brief report of what happened and move on to preach and teach God’s Word and magnify the Lord. You will get your reward in heaven. That is so much better than the applause of men! When you are sharing a

testimony or an incident that happened, ask yourself “why” are you doing this? Check on how you use the personal pronouns of “I,” “me,” “myself.” If your motivation is to make yourself look good in the eyes of people—and God knows your heart—you are engaging in self-promotion. If the “I” becomes the hero of the testimony, you are engaging in self-promotion. Watch over yourself. When sharing a testimony or incident, do it with a pure heart to glorify God, to celebrate what God is doing, to teach, encourage and share real-life stories with people.

## **Do Not Give The Devil Pulpit-Time**

### **Nehemiah 8:4-6**

**4** So Ezra the scribe stood on a platform of wood which they had made for the purpose; and beside him, at his right hand, stood Mattithiah, Shema, Anaiah, Urijah, Hilkiyah, and Maaseiah; and at his left hand Pedaiah, Mishael, Malchijah, Hashum, Hashbadana, Zechariah, and Meshullam.

**5** And Ezra opened the book in the sight of all the people, for he was standing above all the people; and when he opened it, all the people stood up.

**6** And Ezra blessed the LORD, the great God. Then all the people answered, “Amen, Amen!” while lifting up their hands. And they bowed their heads and worshiped the LORD with their faces to the ground.

Consider the reverence people gave to the reading of the Book of the Law. When Ezra opened the book, all the people stood up. They lifted their hands, bowed their heads, and even fell prostrate with their faces to the ground.

The pulpit is a sacred place from where the Word of God is to be proclaimed. We must maintain the sanctity of the pulpit. Do not give the devil any pulpit time! If a preacher uses the pulpit to fight against or speak ill of another preacher, he is desecrating the sanctity of that place. If a preacher uses the pulpit to promote a politician or a political agenda, he is desecrating the sanctity of that place. If a preacher uses the pulpit to promote a business idea (his own or someone else he is in partnership with), he is desecrating the sanctity of that place. And like this, there can be so many abuses or misuses of the pulpit, a place where God’s holy Word is to be proclaimed under the power of His Spirit. We must as ministers of God stay clear of all such misuses of the pulpit and stay focused on the primary assignment.

## **Do Not Draw People To Yourself**

### **Acts 20:28-31**

**28** Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood.

**29** For I know this, that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock.

**30** Also from among yourselves men will rise up, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after themselves.

**31** Therefore watch, and remember that for three years I did not cease to warn everyone night and day with tears.

**John 7:18**

**He who speaks from himself seeks his own glory; but He who seeks the glory of the One who sent Him is true, and no unrighteousness is in Him.**

Being a minister of the Word of God is not an exercise in popularity building. It is not about how many “fans” you have, who like your preaching style and so on. It is not about how many hearts you can steal, so that they become your supporters and stand with you. When you preach and teach the Word of God, keep yourself out of the picture. Yes, you can use your life-examples and experiences to illustrate how you have applied the Word of God, but do it in such a way, that people will not be drawn after you, but will be compelled to go after God and His Word. Through your preaching and teaching, let people see not you, but Jesus.

Be a true minister of God—one who desires that the Lord alone be glorified and nothing of self to be promoted.

## **Do Not Cause Division And Offense In The Body**

**Romans 16:17-18**

**17 Now I urge you, brethren, note those who cause divisions and offenses, contrary to the doctrine which you learned, and avoid them.**

**18 For those who are such do not serve our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly, and by smooth words and flattering speech deceive the hearts of the simple.**

**1 Corinthians 10:32-33**

**32 Give no offense, either to the Jews or to the Greeks or to the church of God,**

**33 just as I also please all men in all things, not seeking my own profit, but the profit of many, that they may be saved.**

As ministers of God’s Word, what we preach can edify and build up the Body or cause offense and division among God’s people. While we may not agree with another Christian denomination’s teaching and practices, making disparaging remarks about other denominations can often do more harm than good. I have made these mistakes myself and must continually watch myself not to speak light, even in an amusing way, of other Christian denominations. I must remind myself to stay with preaching and teaching God’s Word.

## 6. ANOINTING

It is the anointing of God's Spirit upon us earthen vessels that causes things to happen in ministry. People are saved, healed, delivered, and miracles take place because of the work of the Holy Spirit through our lives. The work of the Spirit is so precious. The manifestations of the gifts and the results of seeing believers edified are amazing. And yet, in this very area, there can be many abuses by ministers of God that bring reproach to the name of Jesus Christ.

This chapter calls us to a place where we remain as vessels of honor in the hands of the Holy Spirit.

### **Anointing And Gifts Are Given To Serve People**

#### **1 Corinthians 12:7**

**But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to each one for the profit of all.**

#### **1 Corinthians 14:12**

**Even so you, since you are zealous for spiritual gifts, let it be for the edification of the church that you seek to excel.**

#### **2 Corinthians 4:5**

**For we do not preach ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord, and ourselves your bondservants for Jesus' sake.**

The gifts of the Spirit are given for the common good and for the building up of the body of believers. Gifts and anointing are not given for one individual to be elevated above others but rather as a channel through which God's people are served. As we move and operate in the gifts and anointing that God has placed on our lives, it is important to keep this fact clear and make this our motivation—to serve God's people. We exercise the gifts given to us to build up God's people and expand His Kingdom.

The mistake most of us make is that when we start operating under God's anointing and gifting, we feel that we are now special, and people must now "serve" us—so that our ministry can expand. The One who was most anointed and most gifted, the Lord Jesus said that He "*did not come to be served, but to serve*" (Matthew 20:28). Should we not

follow His example? The more anointed and gifted we are, the more of a servant we are to be.

## **The Real You Is Who You Are Outside Your Gift And Anointing**

When we are under the anointing, we look “wonderful” in the eyes of people. When the Word comes forth powerfully, gifts flow and miracles happen, it is all so wonderful. People think very highly of us because of what took place when we were up on the stage. But all that happened because of the anointing of God. That was not us! People tend to associate us with what they saw happen. They base our identity as ministers of God by our gift and anointing. They are wrong. That is not us. That was God at work.

The “real us” is who we are when we get off stage and walk on level ground. We must learn to see ourselves for who we really are, earthen vessels and not have a pseudo-identity of what people see of us when we are ministering. The real “me” is who I am when I am not up there preaching and ministering. I must realize that no matter how God may work through me, I am an earthen vessel. I need to walk in obedience to God and humbly before God and man. I need to keep my flesh under control, guard my mind and watch over my words. I must walk through life just like any other believer in Jesus Christ.

## **Your True Spiritual Identity Is Who You Are In Christ**

**Ephesians 2:10**

**For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.**

Often, as ministers of God, we base our identity on our spiritual calling, gifting, anointing, and the good works that have been accomplished. We enjoy the “image” that has been created because of the ministry we have. However, this is shaky ground because all of this can change overnight. People’s perception of us, our anointing, and our ministry can change. So, we must always form our identity on who we are in Jesus Christ. We are His workmanship. We are God’s handiwork, created in Christ. Who we are in Christ—as blood-bought, blood-washed saints of God—will not change! This is our identity. See yourself, not as who you are in your gifting, calling, or anointing, but as who you are in Christ Jesus. Live life from who you are in Christ. Face challenges and overcome obstacles as who you are in Christ.

## Desire The Genuine, Do Not Tolerate Imitations

### Exodus 30:31-32

**31 And you shall speak to the children of Israel, saying: ‘This shall be a holy anointing oil to Me throughout your generations.**

**32 It shall not be poured on man’s flesh; nor shall you make any other like it, according to its composition. It is holy, and it shall be holy to you.**

The holy anointing oil in the Old Testament was a type of the anointing of the Spirit in the New Testament. The holy anointing oil was not to be used for ordinary fleshly purposes and no imitation of it was to be made. It was to be treated with reverence. It was holy. So is the anointing of the Holy Spirit in the New Testament.

The anointing is pure but is expressed through human vessels which are not. The anointing is perfect, but the vessels are not. Hence it is possible that in the expression of the anointing of God through us, human vessels, we contaminate it with our fleshly works, or even sometimes attempt to imitate the anointing in the flesh, even when His Spirit is not manifesting. This is where we must exercise self-restraint, not out of fear of failure but out of reverence for the Lord. We must cast out fear and stir up the gifts of God within us as Paul encouraged Timothy (2 Timothy 1:6-7). On the other hand, we must exercise self-restraint to keep our flesh and fleshly zeal out of the way, so that what manifests through us is the pure work of the Spirit and as He wills. This requires a heart-attitude that seeks to glorify God alone and serve God’s people with all sincerity. It requires a willingness to do only what we see Him do, to move with Him only when He moves and speak only what He declares. This is where true fruit is borne. *“It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing”* (John 6:63a).

## Do Not Run After The Latest “Fad” In Christendom

### John 6:63

**It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing. The words that I speak to you are spirit, and they are life.**

For some reason, we observe all kinds of “fads” or novel ways of doing things in Christian ministry which come and go, repeatedly. Some of these get “mass appeal” all over Christendom through good marketing, media promotions, and so on, and then fade away. Even in the exercise of the anointing, we see all kinds of “novel” ways of ministering—from throwing one’s coat around, blowing in the mic, pushing people on the floor, and so on. If the Spirit of God is truly there in some expression and is specifically leading you to do it, it is well and good. However, if it is just another “novel” thing to do, to be considered the anointed of God, then do not do it. Do not simply copy someone else. The real test is in the fruit that is borne. Whatever is of the flesh—of human invention—will not bring about genuine and lasting transformation. Whatever is truly of the Spirit of God will have

genuine fruit—fruit that results in life-transformation, fruit that glorifies Jesus, and fruit that remains.

## **You Cannot Have Something Unless You Receive It From God**

**John 3:27**

**John answered and said, “A man can receive nothing unless it has been given to him from heaven.**

The fact that anointing can be imparted from one to another and that gifts can be activated through the laying on of hands is without question. However, this does not happen arbitrarily. To receive a “double portion” of anointing from a man of God or even an impartation of the “same portion” of anointing is no small thing. It happens under God’s directive and in alignment to God’s calling on an individual’s life. You can have any number of people lay hands on you for impartation, but if you are not called and gifted by God to a particular ministry, you are not going to be anointed for that ministry. The anointing is in line with the call and gifting on your life. At the end of all that is said and done, you cannot receive anything unless it is given to you from God. So ultimately, it depends on our intimacy with God and our walk with him. So, while getting hands laid on us for impartation is useful, our focus should be to move into greater depths of intimacy with God. That is the place of anointing.

## **Allow Yourself To Be Judged**

**1 Corinthians 14:29**

**Let two or three prophets speak, and let the others judge.**

**1 Thessalonians 5:20-21**

**20 Do not despise prophecies.**

**21 Test all things; hold fast what is good.**

Although the Spirit of God is perfect, the instruments He works through are imperfect. Therefore, whatever is manifested through the imperfect vessel must be judged. We are not judging God, but the manifestation through a human vessel. It is biblical, for believers to judge spiritual manifestations. However, some of us, because we think we are always accurate in our prophecies and always right in the expressions of the gifts, feel offended when people tell us that they need to take time to evaluate what we have delivered under the anointing. On the contrary, we must be happy for such believers who are now taking responsibility to seek God about a prophetic word or spiritual manifestation that was delivered. In fact, the sign of a mature minister of God is that he or she encourages believers to test prophetic and other spiritual manifestations that he or she delivers to them. It is a sign of high spiritual stature in God.

## **Avoid Sensationalism And Hyper-Emotionalism**

I realize that all of us have different temperaments, styles, and methods in ministry. We are not all the same. Some of us have a more sedate, quiet style of ministering, while some are on the other end of the spectrum—loud, grand, dramatic, and full of energy. The Lord made us all different and He works through us all.

However, it is easy to tell when a preacher is being superficial, full of hype, and simply whipping up the emotions and excitement of people. We can tell when there are verbal exaggerations, high drama, and sensationalism. What good will all this do for people at the end of it? Will all this really help people experience the Lord in a genuine way and see their lives changed? Being emotionally charged up about the message you are preaching is good—but whipping up people’s emotions just to make yourself feel something, is not good for anybody. We do not have to do the Holy Spirit’s work for Him. He knows how to move upon people’s hearts, even without us necessarily recognizing it!

On the other hand, we must avoid trying to be sensational through extreme intellectualism, where no one understands what we are saying or where our preaching is so convoluted, that people are so confused. We need to talk straight, simple and with love. Our goal is to get people to experience Jesus and grow in the faith.

## **There Are No Limits, So Do Not Fall Off The Edge**

**Isaiah 64:3**

**When You did awesome things for which we did not look, You came down, the mountains shook at Your presence.**

There are no limits to the power of God, the ways in which He works, the creative new ways in which He manifests Himself. God will do fresh and new things. The anointing of the Holy Spirit will manifest in fresh new ways. Things we have never seen before will happen. Things we were not even expecting will begin to manifest as the Holy Spirit moves amongst us in unusual ways. There is no book, there is no sermon, and there is no human heart that has comprehended all the ways in which He manifests His presence. He is infinite and so are His ways of manifesting His anointing amongst us. The key is for us to pursue Him and let these awesome things for which we did not look for, happen at His prerogative as He moves amongst us. Let us pursue Him and desire for His presence to manifest. But let Him manifest Himself among us as He wills

## 7. RESULTS

The Lord Jesus has called us and ordained us so that we will bear fruit which remains (John 15:16). So, it is only right to look for fruit, results, and outcomes. The Father is glorified when we bear much fruit (John 15:8). In this chapter, we share a few insights in relation to bearing and reporting fruit that is borne through the work we do as Christian ministers.

### Pruned Or Cut

**John 15:1-2**

**1 I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser.**

**2 Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit He takes away; and every branch that bears fruit He prunes, that it may bear more fruit.**

God has designed us to be fruitful. It is normal to be fruitful. God Himself looks to see if we are bearing fruit. God teaches us how to bear fruit in our Christian walk (2 Peter 1:5-8). The Lord Jesus did make a solemn statement that fruitlessness will result in us being cut off. The reward for being fruitful is that He prunes us. He removes out anything unnecessary—anything that is dead, lifeless, and hinders in bearing fruit. He prunes us, so that we can bear even more fruit. So, God works in us, to keep increasing our level of fruitfulness. He takes us from one level to the next higher level of fruitfulness.

### Talents Must Multiply

**Matthew 25:20-21**

**20 So he who had received five talents came and brought five other talents, saying, 'Lord, you delivered to me five talents; look, I have gained five more talents besides them.'**

**21 His lord said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful servant; you were faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord.'**

In this parable, the Lord Jesus illustrates to us that God entrusts us with “talents,” which could be gifts, resources, and callings, and He expects us to see these increase or multiply. Faithfulness in what God has given to us is not about just maintaining those things but making every effort to see them increase and multiply. We are “good and faithful” servants, when we work at increasing and multiplying what God has given us.

## **Fruit Comes In Its Season, Wait For It**

### **Psalm 1:3**

**He shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that brings forth its fruit in its season, whose leaf also shall not wither; and whatever he does shall prosper.**

Different seeds take different lengths of time to grow and bear fruit. There is no set time that is universal to all kinds of fruit. In Christian ministry, as we labor doing what the Lord has called us to do, we must do so with endurance. Fruit will come in its season and we must work toward it faithfully and patiently.

If we are not seeing fruit, then we need to examine if we are doing the right thing—are we in the right place at the right time, where God wants us to be? Are we doing work the way God wants it done or are we missing out on things we are supposed to be doing, either due to lack of knowledge or negligence? What season are we in—a time of breaking ground, a time of sowing, a time of watering what was sown, or a time of harvesting fruit that has been borne? Are we looking for fruit in the right places? Are we looking for fruit at the right time? Are there other things hindering us from being fruitful? These are tough questions, but must be asked, because we are designed to bear fruit in our work for the Lord. Fruit will come in its season. But we need to move toward that season with diligence and endurance.

## **Do Not Exaggerate Testimonies, Just Tell It Like It Happened**

### **John 7:18 (Message Bible)**

**A person making things up tries to make himself look good. But someone trying to honor the one who sent him sticks to the facts and does not tamper with reality.**

It is disheartening to hear exaggerated reports of testimonies and things that supposedly happened. Some years ago, there was a large crusade held in our city by an international ministry. It was massive in scale with huge amounts of money that must have been spent for three days of crusade meetings. When I watched the highlights as reported by that ministry, it concluded with a picture of the Indian flag waving and the words, “India, a nation changed forever.” Now it is true that many things would have happened that were beyond what met the eye. But if I looked at those three days objectively, here is what I observed. A good majority of people who came to the crusade were already believers. No one knows what happened to the decision cards that were supposedly collected after the crusade and how many of the new decisions were assimilated into local churches. In comparison to the huge amounts of money spent for that crusade, the measured outcome was quite disappointing. I know that the very next day after the crusade was over, there was another non-Christian religious gathering on the side of the grounds with people from the nearby village/vicinity gathering there. So not even the village around the grounds was impacted, much less the city in which the crusade was held, and not the

nation definitely! So, for that ministry to report to its supporters that India as a nation was changed forever at the end of that three-day crusade was quite an exaggeration to say the least! Well, I guess God overlooks all these things, and so should we. But can we at least hold ourselves accountable to be accurate in what we report and state facts the way they happened?

Like this, there can be numerous stories of hype and exaggeration, where a good work that the Lord has done has been misrepresented. For what purpose? Does God need our help to impress people? I do not think so. Let us resolve to report results just as they happened and in a way that truly glorifies the Lord. Be an honest reporter, before God and before man.

## **Exact Or Estimate, Please Specify**

### **2 Corinthians 6:3-4**

**We give no offense in anything, that our ministry may not be blamed. But in all things we commend ourselves as ministers of God.**

When a preacher gets excited, even if 50 people came forward for prayer, he can report it as “a revival broke out,” “so many people came forward,” “there was such a mighty move of God in the place with people weeping and crying at the altar,” and so on, and leave it up to people to imagine what happened. In worse situations, the preacher reports it as “hundreds of people came forward” when it was just about 50 people, and the rest being helpers, volunteers, prayer teams who came along with those who responded, so that the crowd looks big. If we know for sure how many responded, then we can give a specific number. If not, let us state that “we estimate approximately so many people came forward,” and stay as close to reality as possible. Let us develop the discipline of being accurate in our speech when reporting results.

## **Acknowledge Another Man’s Labor**

### **2 Corinthians 10:15**

**Not boasting of things beyond measure, that is, in other men’s labors, but having hope, that as your faith is increased, we shall be greatly enlarged by you in our sphere.**

### **Galatians 6:4**

**But let each one examine his own work, and then he will have rejoicing in himself alone, and not in another.**

### **1 Corinthians 3:5,8**

**5 Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers through whom you believed, as the Lord gave to each one?**

**8 Now he who plants and he who waters are one, and each one will receive his own reward according to his own labor.**

It is very rare that anyone does everything on their own. Usually, we work in teams and we have many people who have labored ahead of us, some laboring alongside us, and some laboring behind the scenes. It is important that we give honor to whom honor is due. It is important that we recognize those who have contributed to the fruit that we are experiencing, rather than making it appear as though everything was happening just because of us. Let us not rob the honor due to someone else. To the extent of our knowledge, let us recognize and honor those who have contributed to us bringing in the harvest!

## **Give God All The Glory—It All Happened Because Of Him**

**Psalm 115:1**

**Not unto us, O LORD, not unto us, but to Your name give glory, because of Your mercy, because of Your truth.**

How we give our testimonies and report results is important. It is amusing to see people stand up and make an opening statement saying, “All glory to God, everything happened because of Him!” and then spend the next 30 minutes talking about themselves—what they did, how they moved, and so on. And at the end of the testimony, you are left very impressed with them, and you have heard very little about God! Our motive in giving testimonies and sharing ministry reports must be pure. If it is done to promote ourselves as though we were “someone special,” someone “super anointed,” then our motives are not right. The sharing of ministry reports, and testimonies of people saved, healed, and delivered must be done to glorify God and to bring encouragement and faith in the hearts of people.

## **Do Not Compare, Do Not Compete**

**2 Corinthians 10:12**

**For we dare not class ourselves or compare ourselves with those who commend themselves. But they, measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves among themselves, are not wise.**

When looking at results, size, growth, and scale of ministry, do not compare yourself with others. Do not compete with others in how many people you are reaching or how big your local church is. These things do not matter in the eyes of the Lord. What the Lord requires of us is faithfulness in doing what He has called us to do. Are we giving our best? Are we growing into what God has ordained for our lives? Are we staying faithful to the call? These are what really matter. Stay focused on the fruit that God wants you to bear. Stay focused on the kind of results God is looking for, through your life and ministry.

**Matthew 20:1-16**

**1 For the kingdom of heaven is like a landowner who went out early in the morning to hire laborers for his vineyard.**

**2 Now when he had agreed with the laborers for a denarius a day, he sent them into his vineyard.**

**3** And he went out about the third hour and saw others standing idle in the marketplace,  
**4** and said to them, 'You also go into the vineyard, and whatever is right I will give you.' So they went.  
**5** Again he went out about the sixth and the ninth hour, and did likewise.  
**6** And about the eleventh hour he went out and found others standing idle, and said to them, 'Why have you been standing here idle all day?'  
**7** They said to him, 'Because no one hired us.' He said to them, 'You also go into the vineyard, and whatever is right you will receive.'  
**8** "So when evening had come, the owner of the vineyard said to his steward, 'Call the laborers and give them their wages, beginning with the last to the first.' **9** And when those came who were hired about the eleventh hour, they each received a denarius.  
**10** But when the first came, they supposed that they would receive more; and they likewise received each a denarius.  
**11** And when they had received it, they complained against the landowner,  
**12** saying, 'These last men have worked only one hour, and you made them EQUAL to us who have borne the burden and the heat of the day.'  
**13** But he answered one of them and said, 'Friend, I am doing you no wrong. Did you not agree with me for a denarius?'  
**14** Take what is yours and go your way. I wish to give to this last man the same as to you.  
**15** Is it not lawful for me to do what I wish with my own things? Or is your eye evil because I am good?'  
**16** So the last will be first, and the first last. For many are called, but few chosen.

God decides whom He calls, what He calls them to and how He blesses those He calls.

**Romans 14:4**

**Who are you to judge another's servant? To his own master he stands or falls. Indeed, he will be made to stand, for God is able to make him stand.**

## 8. FELLOWSHIP

As ministers of the Lord Jesus Christ, although we have our unique gifts and calling, and our own ministries that we are engaged in, we are all still part of one Body—the Body of Christ. We are all washed by the same blood, saved by the same grace of God, anointed by the same Holy Spirit, preaching the same Word of God, part of the same Kingdom of God, and all working to build the same Body of Christ. In view of this, we must learn to connect, fellowship, relate, and work together. I realize that we may belong to different Christian denominations that have slight variations in perspectives, but we all agree in the fundamental truths of God’s Word and hence we can have fellowship with one another around the things we do agree on. I also realize that we are all very busy, engaged in doing the work God has assigned to our lives. So, taking time out purposefully to build quality relationships with other fellow ministers is not an easy thing to do. And yet I believe we must do so. We need one another. And it is only when a citywide church is united and strong can a city be transformed. It takes a citywide church to reach a city.

### Be A Kingdom Builder

**Mark 3:24**

**If a kingdom is divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand.**

In ministry, we can get so focused on what we are doing that we forget that, ultimately, we are to see His Kingdom come, His will be done on earth as it is in heaven. The Kingdom of God is much bigger than the scope of our individual ministries. Therefore, it is important that we learn to evaluate what we do in terms of Kingdom building.

Is the ministry I am doing, resulting in the growth of the Kingdom of God, or just the promotion of my own name and work? Is the rule and dominion of the Lord being established in the heart and lives of people, in communities and cities that I am engaged in? Is what I am doing furthering unity among God’s people so that the Kingdom of God is strengthened, or am I working in isolation that what I do does not strengthen other churches and ministries?

A Kingdom builder looks beyond his own individual vision, church, and ministry, and seeks to bless other visions, ministers, churches, and ministries so that God’s rule and reign is extended in the lives of people.

A Kingdom builder is willing to partner with others, step into other people's visions and serve without seeking recognition or opportunities for self-promotion. For a Kingdom builder, "What do I get out of it?" or "what is in it for me?" are questions that are not asked and do not matter, so long as Jesus is glorified.

As ministers of God, we need to maintain a "Kingdom mindset," where we look at things not from "what do I get out of it?" but we think in terms of "how does the Kingdom of God benefit from this?" If the Kingdom of God is going to be furthered, that I will gladly serve. That is being a true Kingdom builder.

## Relate To Other Ministers

**John 4:35-38**

**35 Do you not say, 'There are still four months and then comes the harvest?' Behold, I say to you, lift up your eyes and look at the fields, for they are already white for harvest!**

**36 And he who reaps receives wages, and gathers fruit for eternal life, that both he who sows and he who reaps may rejoice together.**

**37 For in this the saying is true: 'One sows and another reaps.'**

**38 I sent you to reap that for which you have not labored; others have labored, and you have entered into their labors.**

It is very rare in ministry that we work all by ourselves and do everything alone. The norm is that someone else has already gone before us and has sown. God has sent us to enter into their labors. Even when we labor in a city, it is likely that there are churches and ministries already functioning in that city. We must learn to connect, interact, relate, and work with other men and women of God in the city. Ideally, it would be great if we could complement each other's work in the city, and possibly even partner toward the same goals in the city.

Building friendships and relationships with other ministers of God takes time and effort. It is important that we gather for building relationships and not just for ministry-related activity. When we simply share our hearts, our successes, our struggles, our challenges, and pray for one another, amazing things will happen. We can clear our misunderstandings if any, bring healing to broken relationships and bless each other. *"Confess your trespasses to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed ..."* (James 5:16). Out of the strength of relationships that we have, we can then engage in ministry. If we can do this, I believe we will see greater release of God's power and anointing over our towns and cities.

## **Build Bridges Across Denominations**

**1 Corinthians 10:16-17**

**16 The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?**

**17 For we, though many, are one bread and one body; for we all partake of that one bread.**

One of the challenges we face in Kingdom building are denominational walls and denominational mindsets. Most of the time, we feel comfortable to relate to those who are of the same denomination or closely related denomination. Pastors of Spirit-filled, independent churches feel comfortable with each other. Pastors from mainline evangelical denominations seem to feel comfortable with each other. It is rare that we see these lines crossed, and pastors and Christian ministers relating across denominational lines just for fellowship and building relationships.

I realize that there are some doctrinal differences across denominations. However, I believe that we can find common ground and reasons why we can fellowship and relate to one another. As born-again believers, we have all passed through the same Cross, have been washed by the same blood and belong to the same Body. Instead of being fearful of each other, let us build bridges and connect with each other.

## **Learn From Fellow Ministers**

**Proverbs 27:17**

**As iron sharpens iron, so a man sharpens the countenance of his friend.**

As part of building relationships with other ministers, we must be able to learn from one another. We must be willing to listen and not want to speak all the time. Ask questions. Listen to their ideas, thoughts, and experiences. Give them the opportunity to share their hearts. In the process, we can learn a lot. As iron sharpens iron, our lives sharpen each other. Some of the things we can learn in such conversations are invaluable and could perhaps even save our lives and ministries from a lot of harm and heartache. The Lord may even use such simple conversations to guide us and direct our paths into new areas.

Through the relationships we form with other ministers of God we will have some as friends, some as leaders we model after, and some who are mentors who impart into our lives at a personal level. In turn, we may have the opportunity to be friends to others.

We may become leaders that others see as role models. We may have the opportunity to mentor others and see them grow in the Kingdom of God and in their ministries.

## **Be Comfortable Being A Follower—Follow Instructions**

**Matthew 20:26-27**

**26 Yet it shall not be so among you; but whoever desires to become great among you, let him be your servant.**

**27 And whoever desires to be first among you, let him be your slave.**

Most of us have the natural inclination to lead, to be in charge, to be up in front, and give instructions for others to follow. However, when we are in a gathering of fellow ministers, where all are leaders in their own right, we must be willing to follow someone else.

It is quite disheartening to see that some “great” leaders are poor followers. We begin to see a stubborn unwillingness to cooperate and follow instructions because they are not in charge, and someone else is. The true sign of greatness does not lie just in our ability to lead, but to also follow when someone else is leading.

We may be leaders in our own ministries, but when we are among a group of leaders, we must wholeheartedly follow whoever is leading. When they tell us to stand, we stand. When we are told to sit, we sit. That is it. We follow. When we are asked to speak for 10 minutes, we speak for 10 minutes and then keep quiet. We do not throw our “weight” around and keep talking for 15, 20, or 30 minutes.

## **Be Comfortable With Being Unrecognized**

**2 Corinthians 3:1**

**Do we begin again to commend ourselves? Or do we need, as some others, epistles of commendation to you or letters of commendation from you?**

Because we are always addressed and recognized by our ministerial positions, having people always address us as “pastor,” “brother,” “apostle,” “reverend,” or whatever title we carry—we suddenly feel disoriented, lost and out of place, when we are not recognized as such. We need to understand that first we are ordinary believers in the sight of God. When we attend a gathering, we should be comfortable, just sitting in the crowd, worshipping God, listening to the Word, and just doing what all believers do. The problem is that most of us ministers are so used to being called up to the stage, or being ushered to the front row, recognized as ministers of God, that we are unable to be “in the crowd” as ordinary believers. We get disoriented if that happens! There is something wrong in our understanding of our identity if we become uncomfortable when we are unrecognized.

## **Respect Other's Gifts, Anointing, Ministry**

**1 Corinthians 12:4-6**

**4 There are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit.**

**5 There are differences of ministries, but the same Lord.**

**6 And there are diversities of activities, but it is the same God who works all in all.**

God works through each of us his servants in diverse ways. We do not all preach, pray, prophesy, and sing the same way. It is important to respect each other, even when the way we minister is different. There are different operations of God, but it is the same God who is working through each one. No one way of ministry is superior to the other. Yes, some forms of ministry may be more dramatic, louder, more attention-getting than others. But being thus, does not imply more power or more fruit. Let us celebrate all the variety and diversity in ministry that God has placed in His Body. Let us celebrate God at work in each other.

## **Do Not Judge Another Man's Servant**

**Matthew 7:1-5**

**1 Judge not, that you be not judged.**

**2 For with what judgment you judge, you will be judged; and with the measure you use, it will be measured back to you.**

**3 And why do you look at the speck in your brother's eye, but do not consider the plank in your own eye?**

**4 Or how can you say to your brother, "Let me remove the speck from your eye;" and look, a plank is in your own eye?**

**5 Hypocrite! First remove the plank from your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye.**

**John 7:24**

**Do not judge according to appearance, but judge with righteous judgment.**

**Romans 14:4,10-12**

**4 Who are you to judge another's servant? To his own master he stands or falls. Indeed, he will be made to stand, for God is able to make him stand.**

**10 But why do you judge your brother? Or why do you show contempt for your brother? For we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ.**

**11 For it is written: "AS I LIVE, SAYS THE LORD, EVERY KNEE SHALL BOW TO ME, AND EVERY TONGUE SHALL CONFESS TO GOD."**

**12 So then each of us shall give account of himself to God.**

We must be careful not to judge and condemn a fellow minister for their faults and failures. While we recognize what is right and wrong and learn lessons from another's failure—we are not here to pass judgment on another person. When we see a fellow-minister make a mistake or doing something wrong, let us not pass judgment, criticize, and condemn them. We must avoid talking about them critically in public. They are not

answerable to us, but to the Lord who is their Master. We recognize the wrongdoing. We learn from their mistakes so that we do not do the same things ourselves. When asked about them, we acknowledge what is wrong and yet speak grace and mercy on their lives, with the desire to see restoration and righteousness being established. We must continue to see them as ministers of God and respect the anointing that is on their lives.

Sometimes we see the obvious flaws in a minister's life and wonder why God still uses him or her. The answer is quite simple. The reason God still uses them, is the same reason God still uses us. It is His grace.

## **Do Not Gossip—Be Your Brother's Keeper**

### **Proverbs 11:13**

**A talebearer reveals secrets, but he who is of a faithful spirit conceals a matter.**

### **Proverbs 17:9**

**He who covers a transgression seeks love, but he who repeats a matter separates friends.**

### **1 Corinthians 10:24**

**Let no one seek his own, but each one the other's well-being.**

As fellow ministers, we must look out for each other, both when we are with each other and when we are away from each other. In the bonds of fellowship that we build, is an understanding of mutual trust. When we share our struggles with one another as ministers, we expect it to be kept confidential. We do not expect other ministers to make this a matter of gossip and talk about it around town. If trust is lost, it is difficult to fellowship with an open heart.

As a minister of God, we must learn not to gossip about another's weaknesses and failures. Talk about the good things God has done through another man's ministry. Celebrate that. But keep quiet about his failures. If you must talk about it to teach or instruct someone, do so while concealing that person's identity. By doing this, we are preserving our friendship and looking out for the other's well-being.

It is quite possible that sometimes one of our fellow ministers has a moral failure and needs restoration. If we have a bond of friendship and relationship with that person, we can then step in and help get the fellow minister back on his feet again. We do this with love and gentleness. *"Brethren, if a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who are spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness, considering yourself lest you also be tempted. Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ"* (Galatians 6:1-2).

## **Do Not Sow Discord**

### **Proverbs 6:16-19**

**16 These six things the LORD hates, yes, seven are an abomination to Him:**

**17 A proud look, a lying tongue, hands that shed innocent blood,**

**18 A heart that devises wicked plans, feet that are swift in running to evil,**

**19 A false witness who speaks lies, and one who sows discord among brethren.**

Sowing discord among brethren is an abomination—a totally detestable thing—in the eyes of the Lord. He hates this. When we tell tales about other ministers, when we say or do things that promote animosity among ministers of God, we end up sowing discord. If I go to one servant of God and tell him that another man or woman of God said certain negative things about him, I am instrumental in sowing discord and strife. If I have an issue or offense with one brother, and instead of resolving this matter directly with him, I go and talk ill of him with another person, I am sowing discord. The second person's opinion of the brother is automatically influenced by whatever I have said. The Lord is witness to all that happens. He is the silent listener to every conversation. And one thing is certain, He hates it when we do such things!

## **Fellowship Is For Life Transformation**

We end up going for many “Pastors’ Fellowships” or gatherings of Christian ministers for all reasons other than for sharing life to life. What I have noticed is that most often, people come to such fellowships to promote some meeting or conference that their ministry is hosting soon. They come to hand out flyers and solicit involvement for those meetings and so on. Fellowship with other ministers is not a public relations exercise. If the motivation in fellowshiping with other ministers is just to be in each other's “good books,” call others for favors, use this relationship to promote ourselves, and for other political agendas, then we have missed the entire purpose of getting together. Genuine fellowship is “communion,” a sharing together that brings about transformation of life. Let us learn to have genuine fellowship with other ministers of God. Our own lives will be transformed for the better!

## **There Are No Super-Heroes**

### **Romans 12:16**

**Be of the same mind toward one another. Do not set your mind on high things, but associate with the humble. Do not be wise in your own opinion.**

God is not impressed by the size of our ministry, the significance of our achievements, our reputation, or the number of our fan-following and so on. God is not even impressed by the titles, degrees, and accolades we may have received. None of these impress our Lord. From the smallest to the most famous—all of us are part of the same Body of Christ. We

are all equally important in His Body. When we come to fellowship with each other—we are all on level ground. We stand by His grace and we are here to share, give, and enrich each other's lives. True fellowship can be fostered in such an environment, where people are all standing on level ground. When we get together with other ministers of God for times of fellowship, we must get our "ministry masks" off. Let us leave our titles aside. Let us put our pretenses and ministry statuses aside. Let us be transparent. No one is a superhero. We are all earthen vessels through which His grace and power are flowing.

## 9. MONEY

Money is an important part of Christian ministry.

We must raise funds and learn how to use funds wisely. Sometimes, as Christian ministers we end up becoming “money-minded,” constantly thinking about money. When we do not have very much, we think of how we are going to raise the small amounts we need to keep things going. Even when our ministries are large, and we seem to have everything going—we are still “money-minded” and look for ways to raise more money. It is a challenge in Christian ministry to keep our focus on the Lord and His call and take our attention off money. This chapter deals with a few common struggles we face in Christian ministry with money.

### For The Love Of Money

**1 Timothy 6:10-11**

**10 For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, for which some have strayed from the faith in their greediness, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.**

**11 But you, O man of God, flee these things and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, gentleness.**

When money occupies so much of our thinking—either because we lack money and are wondering how we are going to get what we need, or we have so much but want more—it is easy to slip into a place where we actually “love” money. How can I tell if I am in “love” with money and controlled by it?

- If I am constantly thinking about how to get money—then I am controlled by money.
- If my decision on where I will minister is based on how much money I will get as offering—then I am controlled by money.
- If how much I praise and celebrate God is in proportion to the offering I get—then I am controlled by money.
- If I give more importance to people who give bigger offerings, but not as much importance to those who do not—then I am controlled by money.
- If I am willing to compromise a little on integrity and do unscrupulous things to raise money for ministry—then I am controlled by money.

- If I feel good when I get to move around with celebrities, rich businessmen, and bigwigs because I feel they can make large contributions to my ministry—then I am controlled by money.

## **Do Not Be In It For The Money**

### **1 Peter 5:1-4**

**1** The elders who are among you I exhort, I who am a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that will be revealed:

**2** Shepherd the flock of God which is among you, serving as overseers, not by compulsion but willingly, not for dishonest gain but eagerly;

**3** nor as being lords over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock;

**4** and when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that does not fade away.

### **Acts 20:33**

**I have coveted no one's silver or gold or apparel.**

This might be a strange statement to make, but some people see Christian ministry as an easy way to make money. They think all you must do is preach a couple of sermons a week and visit people's homes and you get easy income for yourself. This notion is wrong. We cannot be in Christian ministry thinking that this is an easy way to make money. This motivation is wrong. Some people set up churches to use that to get financial support from overseas ministries.

Some are in the habit of inviting overseas speakers and offering to organize conferences or crusades for them if they will sponsor them. In the process, they siphon off large sums of money which the overseas ministers are oblivious to. Some people set up charitable Christian organizations as a reason to collect funds and then spend most of it on themselves, and very little on the actual charitable cause. All of these are using the pretext of "Christian ministry" to make money. This is dishonesty! We are not here for dishonest gain.

## **Sow Spiritually, Let People Give Materially**

### **Galatians 6:6**

**Let him who is taught the word share in all good things with him who teaches.**

### **1 Corinthians 9:11,14**

**11** If we have sown spiritual things for you, is it a great thing if we reap your material things?

**14** Even so the Lord has commanded that those who preach the gospel should live from the gospel.

God has ordained that as we invest spiritually into the lives of people, they in turn give back into our lives to help us financially take care of our material needs. In this context, we must learn to sow spiritually first, and then let people be led by God to give back

financially. Sow faithfully. Sow consistently. Give people some time to receive spiritually. Teach them to give for the cause of the Kingdom. The people who we have ministered to spiritually, can then help us reach others for the Kingdom (2 Corinthians 10:15-16).

I realize that this may not be possible in all cases, especially when working among very poor people and in other situations, where those being served and ministered to spiritually may not be able to give back financially to the people who are serving them. In this case, typically we will need the assistance of other believers, a local church, or ministry to take care of us financially, while we invest spiritually in others. This is Scriptural (Philippians 4:14-16; 2 Corinthians 11:8).

## **Keep Your Fund-Raising Clean, Transparent, And Honorable**

### **2 Corinthians 8:21**

**Providing honorable things, not only in the sight of the Lord, but also in the sight of men.**

Raising funds should be kept clean, transparent, and honest. Share the vision that you are called to pursue and then invite people to give. Trust the Lord to move on people's hearts to give. Trust the Lord to cause the release of more than enough provision for the vision He has placed in your heart. Keep proper accounts of what funds have been given to you, and how this money has been used. If you start practicing this when you and your church/ministry are small, it will be easy to continue doing this later as you grow.

Right from the very beginning, when we had about 10 people, we kept accounts of the tithes and offerings that were given in church and how this was being used. Today, as a bigger congregation, we continue the same practice of keeping proper accounts of every amount that comes in and goes out. We have qualified accountants who do our accounting and advise us on what we can do and cannot do with the funds. All our accounts are audited annually. We are open, so that any member of the church is welcome to look at our accounts any time they wish to do so.

Here are some things not to do:

- ✓ Do not claim to "live by faith" and then go around directly or indirectly hinting or even compelling people to give.
- ✓ Do not use "prayer requests" as an indirect means to tell people you need a certain amount of money.
- ✓ Do not go after big businessmen, politicians, and so on, asking them for huge sums of money.
- ✓ Do not force people to give money.
- ✓ Do not emotionally manipulate people to give money.

A few more things not to do in fund-raising are addressed below.

## **Do Not Be Dependent On Foreign Support**

### **2 Corinthians 9:8**

**And God is able to make all grace abound toward you, that you, always having all sufficiency in all things, may have an abundance for every good work.**

For several decades, possibly centuries now, the Church in India has been so dependent on foreign missions and foreign support to do ministry. Times have changed. I believe we have more than enough wealth within our nation to accomplish the task of reaching our nation. We just need to have the right heart and mindset to tap into and properly channel the flow of funds to the right people to get the work done. Cities are power centers and places of wealth. This is not to say there is no wealth in smaller towns or villages. There is. But I feel that, city churches that receive large financial contributions should become mission stations that then support those working in smaller towns and villages, until those churches can become self-supporting. In smaller towns and villages, we should help Christian ministers teach their congregations to consider several options of generating funds locally so that the local church can become self-supporting. I believe that God has placed resources and opportunities everywhere, and it is our responsibility to tap into this intelligently and honorably, so that we will receive His provision to abound in every good work.

While it is not wrong to receive foreign support, I think one should not become dependent on it. If you have friends and donors overseas who wish to contribute to your ministry and you can receive those funds legally, then do so. There is nothing wrong. However, develop your ministry in such a way that should those contributions stop for any reason, your ministry should continue.

From the time we started All Peoples Church here in Bangalore, we purposed in our hearts not to be dependent on any overseas support financially. Ninety nine percent of all that we are doing today as a local church in our city and across our nation is financed through the tithes and offerings we receive within India. A very negligible amount comes from Indians residing overseas.

## **Do Not “Double Bill” Your Projects**

A real serious problem going on in Christian ministry is that some Christian ministers are having multiple affiliations, collecting support from multiple organizations, double billing their projects—and doing all this in a very deceitful way. There is nothing wrong in having multiple affiliations or multiple donors to give into your ministry. The problem happens when this is done deceitfully and without the knowledge of the donors. So, for instance,

a preacher may contact one organization and indicate to them that he would like to affiliate his ministry with that organization and receive their financial and spiritual support. What he may not tell them is that he is already affiliated with another organization and is also receiving financial and spiritual support from them for the work he is doing. So, he then ends up leaving the impression with two different organizations that he is “fully sponsored” by them and is part of their organization, when, he is playing with two organizations. Similarly, it is deceitful if a preacher collects support from an organization, and at the same time is working or doing some business to raise additional income but does not let his donor know that he is doing so. The key here is to be clean, transparent, and honest with those who are providing financial support.

### **Do Not Divert Funds From One Project To Another Without Donor’s Permission**

Another area of abuse when it comes to the use of money in Christian ministry is to raise funds for one “project” or cause, and then to use that for something else. For example, a preacher may raise funds to help orphaned children, but then divert some of the money to hold an evangelistic crusade. Now he may justify this action in various ways saying, “The Lord told me to do this,” “Our children’s choir sang in the crusade and so it is still part of our children’s ministry,” and so on. This is wrong. If the preacher wanted to use part of the funds for an evangelistic crusade, then he should first inform the donors that part of their funds will be used toward such purpose, and secondly it should be permissible legally to take funds received for one project and use it for something else (which will depend on the constitution of the organization and the law of the land).

### **Do Not Rob Overseas Ministries**

**Proverbs 20:17**

**Bread gained by deceit is sweet to a man, but afterward his mouth will be filled with gravel.**

Another common problem we have noticed is some local Christian ministers “robbing” gullible overseas ministers who wish to minister in India. Preachers and ministers coming into India from other countries do not necessarily know the actual costs of getting things done. Hence local organizers can collect stupendous amounts three or four times the actual costs and siphon off these funds for personal use. The local organizer becomes both a liar and a thief, in the guise of being a Christian minister! The Apostle Paul warned, *“For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ: whose end is destruction, whose god is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame—who set their mind on earthly things”* (Philippians 3:18-19).

## **Do Not Mix Ministry And Business**

### **2 Corinthians 6:3**

**We give no offense in anything, that our ministry may not be blamed.**

Mr. James Nagel about whom I have mentioned at the end of Chapter 3, had served as part of the accounting department for a large Christian ministry in the United States for about 17 years. When I mentioned to him that I plan to go back to India to plant a church in Bangalore, and to work in business, he immediately gave me this advice. He said, "Ashish, never mix ministry and business funds. Always, keep them separate." He then gave me several examples of financial misdoings that he had seen where local churches and Christian ministries used ministry funds in business deals and different forms of investments, to "grow" these funds. Many of these suffered huge losses, and not only did the ministry lose funds that were given sacrificially by many people, but also the trust and confidence of many.

As a pastor and Christian minister, you need to be careful not to use ministry funds in business dealings, to fund private business ventures, investments that are not permitted by your organization's constitution. If your spouse or some family member wishes to enter into some business venture, do not "Christianize" it and use ministry funds as "seed" money to fund their interests.

Another area where one needs to be careful about is entering into business ventures with church members. I cannot say this is wrong, but I would say this is risky. If things go wrong, you have not only lost money in business, but it is likely that your relationship with those church members goes sour, and consequently your ministry/church will also be affected. So, it is best to be very cautious, and if in doubt, stay out.

If as a Christian minister, you feel the Lord leading you to start a business venture which could use donors' money, e.g., a school, a college/university, some professional non-ministry related Training Institute, then these need to be identified as such and, management and finances handled separately from the church or ministry.

In my own personal experience, I started a software company in January 2001, and in February 2001, we started All Peoples Church, both based in Bangalore. From the very beginning, the finances for these two organizations were kept separate. The business can contribute into the church, but no church funds go toward the business.

## **God's House Is Not For "Merchandising"—Do Not Be A "Temple Thief"**

### **Matthew 21:12-14**

**12 Then Jesus went into the temple of God and drove out all those who bought and sold in the temple, and overturned the tables of the money changers and the seats of those who sold doves.**

**13 And He said to them, "It is written, 'MY HOUSE SHALL BE CALLED A HOUSE OF PRAYER,' but you have made it a 'DEN OF THIEVES.'**

**14 " Then the blind and the lame came to Him in the temple, and He healed them.**

I realize that the church or ministry is an organization and needs finances to operate. Hence, we cannot give everything for free and so most ministries will sell their DVDs, books, sermon recordings, and other resources. All this is fine because there is a cost involved in producing these resources. Hence to cover these costs and to make a little extra for ongoing operations is perfectly fine. However, when things go beyond this and ministries begin to run a "religious business" of "Christian retailing" selling all kinds of things with huge margins, or even for a "suggested donation" naming a number that is many times the value of the product, then that is bordering on abuse! This seems so similar to those who bought and sold in the temple. They were doing something that was legitimate, exchanging currency, selling sacrificial birds, and animals and so on, for people who were from out of town. This made it convenient, so that those who travelled long distances did not have to carry their offerings and sacrifices with them all the way. However, these temple businessmen typically sold their goods and services at huge margins, taking advantage of the worshippers. Hence the Lord called them thieves! I wonder how the Lord Jesus would react to all the "merchandising" going on by some servants of God today! Let us be true servants of the Lord, not "temple thieves!"

## **Guard Against Greed, You Slide Into It Slowly**

### **Proverbs 1:19**

**So are the ways of everyone who is greedy for gain; it takes away the life of its owners.**

### **Numbers 22:18**

**Then Balaam answered and said to the servants of Balak, "Though Balak were to give me his house full of silver and gold, I could not go beyond the word of the LORD my God, to do less or more.**

### **Jude 1:11**

**Woe to them! For they have gone in the way of Cain, have run greedily in the error of Balaam for profit, and perished in the rebellion of Korah.**

Normally all of us do not start with greed in our hearts. In the early stages of Christian ministry, most of us begin with being very sincere, have our defenses up, guard our motives, are satisfied with whatever offering is given to us, guard our hearts from the love of money, and so on. But as time passes and ministry begins to grow, there are pressures

from every side and slowly we seem to lose our “innocence” as ministers of God. Money is one of those areas where innocence is lost very easily. We go from being satisfied with whatever is given to us in the offering to demanding and expecting huge offerings. We go from not being concerned about money to constantly thinking about how we can get more. We go from being happy with what we have, to wanting opulent and lavish things. We go from the resolve that Balaam initially had of not permitting any amount of silver and gold affecting us, to running greedily after profit. This change of heart usually happens very subtly, very slowly, without us even knowing that we are sliding into this. The only way to prevent this slow slide is to keep a check on our hearts daily. Do simple things that will guard against greed.

Every now and then, when people give me an offering, especially when I know it is a large amount, I choose to give the entire amount away to some servant of God who would be blessed with it. Sometimes, when people bring me an offering, I refuse to take it and request them to put the entire amount in the church offering. Not that I do not have use for money. But I do these things from time to time for my own good, to guard my own heart. If I sense any wrong motive, intent, attitude, or affection developing in my heart—whether toward money or anything else, I immediately confess it to God, receive cleansing and remind myself of what the Word of God says, and if necessary I also do something to counter that attitude.

Guard your heart! *“Keep vigilant watch over your heart; that’s where life starts”* (Proverbs 4:23, Message Bible).

## **Give Financially Into Other Ministries**

**2 Corinthians 9:6**

**But this I say: He who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully.**

**Ecclesiastes 11:1**

**Cast your bread upon the waters, for you will find it after many days.**

One of the best ways to keep our hearts pure and free from the love of money and from being controlled by it, is to give into other lives and other local churches, and Christian ministries. Most of the time, as Christian ministers and local churches, we are in the “collections” mode, busy inviting people to give. But if money only flows in and we become a lake, soon we risk becoming contaminated and a breeding ground for all kinds of wrong. The best way then is not to be a lake, but to be a river. Just as there is an inflow, let there be an outflow. Give to other ministers of God. Right from the very beginning, we have tried to practice this. Till date, we do not have our own land or building, but we have sown into many churches and ministries to help them acquire their own land and property. We have given to help others start new churches, sometimes in the same place

where we were also serving! We have tried to invest in other people's visions to help them either get started in their ministries or help them along the way as they progress in their journey. Of course, we cannot do this for everyone, but to whatever extent God has blessed us, we do our part to give away. And at a personal level, I sow from my own personal finances. It is easy to write a check from church funds to another ministry since it does not affect me personally. But I want to personally be a generous giver and so I give from my own personal finances into the lives of people.

## 10. WOMEN

This chapter is addressed to Christian men in ministry. Aside from money, “women” seems to be a major challenge to us Christian ministers. We frequently hear of casualties in this area, and there may be many casualties that we do not hear about. Attraction to women happens to all—whether it is the pastor of a big church in a big city or even a simple ordinary preacher in a village, we are all tempted in this area. I have met with pastors from very simple backgrounds, who seemingly did not have much in life, and anyone would assume that their major area of struggle would be in finances and making ends meet. To my utter surprise, the problems they shared had to do with women, and their moral failures and mistakes, as they ministered to women. So, I suppose this area of struggle and temptation spares no man—rich or poor, in the city or in the village, deeply prayerful, however anointed, whatever area of calling in ministry, living in a monastery, or in a penthouse. Some of us may already have had failures in this area. We need to arise, get restored, and keep pressing on, while being on double guard. This chapter deals with how we as Christian ministers can prevail in this area.

### **Do Not Sleep In Delilah’s Lap**

**Judges 16:19-20 (Message Bible)**

**19** When she got him to sleep, his head on her lap, she motioned to a man to cut off the seven braids of his hair. Immediately he began to grow weak. His strength drained from him.

**20** Then she said, “The Philistines are on you, Samson!” He woke up, thinking, “I’ll go out, like always, and shake free.” He didn’t realize that GOD had abandoned him.

Samson was called and anointed by God to be a leader and deliverer for God’s people. God had taught him how to live in such a way that he could walk in the calling, anointing, and gifting of God. He was a Nazarene. Yet his love for women was his major downfall. Samson’s indulgence in his weakness caused him to compromise and give away the very thing that empowered him to walk in the call of God. While he slept in the lap of Delilah, his strength drained from him. This did not happen in one night. It happened over a period, little by little, slowly, Delilah succeeded in getting to the very core of who Samson was and then cut off the very source of his strength. Samson was blinded even before the Philistines blinded him. He was blinded by his indulgence for women. He thought his strength would last forever, even as he continued toying with what he knew he should not do. Until one day, God withdrew from him.

Most moral failures happen because of weakness that has developed over a period, in many cases, without the knowledge that this is happening. It is a slow slide into a trap that can be devastating. It begins with deceptions in the mind. The enemy plants thoughts that are seemingly harmless, but we begin to embrace them and act on them. Passing glances on women, brief indulgences of pornography, casual flirting with the “sisters,” and so on. Soon the thoughts and suggestions of the enemy become stronger, and we are defeated in the mind, by an argument or reasoning that seems very convincing. We begin to “sleep in the lap of Delilah.” Slowly our thoughts, imaginations, and reasoning are taken captive. We are blinded to the truth we knew and, perhaps even stood for and preached about. And then comes the fatal blow and we fall.

**Ecclesiastes 7:26**

**And I find more bitter than death the woman whose heart is snares and nets, whose hands are fetters. He who pleases God shall escape from her, but the sinner shall be trapped by her.**

**Psalm 90:8**

**You have set our iniquities before You, our secret sins in the light of Your countenance.**

## **Be Careful Little Eyes How You See**

**Matthew 5:27-30**

**27 You have heard that it was said to those of old, ‘YOU SHALL NOT COMMIT ADULTERY.’**

**28 But I say to you that whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart.**

**29 If your right eye causes you to sin, pluck it out and cast it from you; for it is more profitable for you that one of your members perish, than for your whole body to be cast into hell.**

**30 And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and cast it from you; for it is more profitable for you that one of your members perish, than for your whole body to be cast into hell.**

**Proverbs 6:25**

**Do not lust after her beauty in your heart, nor let her allure you with her eyelids.**

Looking at a beautiful woman is not sin. How we look at a woman is what is important. If we look at her with lust in our eyes—a desire to possess—then we are sinning. Very often we cannot prevent “what” we see. We may be walking down the street and a pretty woman passes by. Or our eyes accidentally fall on a huge billboard with a scantily clothed woman. We did not see it intentionally. However, what we do in the next second is in our hands. We can choose to immediately take our eyes away from the billboard, or we can continue staring at it and let our mind wander into lustful thoughts. It is true that it is not a sin to admire and appreciate beauty. However, with the excuse of admiring and appreciating beauty, most fall into lust—a desire to possess—and then fall into sin. It is very important that at the very moment our emotions seem to be aroused or our thoughts begin to go in the wrong way, we ought to take control of our emotions and thoughts right then.

Remind yourself of God's Word. Rebuke the thought from your heart. Speak to and take control of your emotions right then, from your heart.

Here are a few Scriptures that we must be armed with:

**Job 31:1**

**I have made a covenant with my eyes; why then should I look upon a young woman?"**

**Psalm 101:3**

**I will set nothing wicked before my eyes ...**

**1 Thessalonians 5:22**

**Abstain from every form of evil.**

## **Treat Younger Women As Sisters, With All Purity**

**1 Timothy 5:1-2**

**1 Do not rebuke an older man, but exhort him as a father, younger men as brothers,**

**2 older women as mothers, younger women as sisters, with all purity.**

Timothy was overseeing and leading the church at Ephesus, and Paul in his letters to Timothy addressed several areas of importance in pastoring a local church. One of the important instructions Paul gave Timothy is to treat older women as mothers and younger women as sisters, with all purity. It is inevitable, that as a pastor or minister of God, you will have to interact with younger women in the congregation. You may have to pray for their needs, listen to their problems, encourage them, counsel them, and so on. However, we need to guard our hearts and keep our motivations, thoughts, and emotions pure through the process.

Be honest with yourself. If you sense that the young woman approaching you is doing so with wrong intentions or with affections for you—take a step back. If you sense that your own emotions are being aroused for a young woman who comes to you for help, step back. It is always better to guard and protect yourself and them. As we have mentioned in earlier chapters, have a self-defense strategy. Keep up your moral fences which you refuse to cross, to protect yourself. Guard your heart and mind from being captured with wrong thoughts and emotions.

## **Impart From A Distance, But Leave Mentoring Women To Women**

**Titus 2:3-5**

**3 The older women likewise, that they be reverent in behavior, not slanderers, not given to much wine, teachers of good things—**

**4 that they admonish the young women to love their husbands, to love their children,**

**5 to be discreet, chaste, homemakers, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God may not be blasphemed.**

One of the ways many pastors and men of God get emotionally involved with women is by the idea that they need to “mentor” women in their congregation or ministry. The thought of nurturing and mentoring younger women in ministry seems to be very noble and the motivation seems to be pure. However, this is an area that can be very dangerous if not handled with wisdom. As a man, when you start spending a lot of time with a young woman in the “mentoring” process, there is a high probability that emotional affections will begin to develop. These emotions soon dull the reasoning, weaken the will, and blind the mind. Subsequently, the two individuals can fall into sexual sin.

Paul wrote to Titus, stating that “older women” should be teachers of good things and should engage in teaching younger women. So, we are instructed to leave mentoring younger women in the hands of the older women. As men, we can impart from a distance. Guide, teach, encourage, and create opportunities, but maintain a healthy distance. Let women mentor women.

### **Lead Women Ministers Correctly**

As a pastor or leader of your local church or ministry, God will raise up women who are serving and providing leadership under you, to various aspects of ministry. For example, your children’s church pastor may be a woman. Your worship pastor may be a woman. You may have a woman heading up prayer and intercession for your ministry, and so on. God would have nurtured and raised these women up under your leadership. As they emerge as leaders with their gifts, calling, and anointing, you will need to acknowledge them, honor them as well as lead them correctly.

If a woman minister is married, remember that her husband is her head, and you are not her head. So as a pastor, know your boundaries and do not try to step into areas that are under her husband’s jurisdiction. You can give her instructions and guidance in her area of ministry, but in all other areas, her husband is responsible for her. When pastors are not careful in this area and start doing things and interfering in things where the woman’s husband is supposed to provide guidance, the woman will be confused as to who to listen to—her own husband or the pastor. The Bible however is very clear: “*Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord*” (Ephesians 5:22).

If a woman minister or woman leader in your ministry is not married, then as we said earlier, provide leadership and guidance from a distance. Guard your own emotions. Let other women come alongside her for emotional support and companionship.

## **Treat Them Equal, Yet Be Gentle**

### **Galatians 3:28**

**There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.**

We must remember that God's gifts, grace, blessings, and empowering are given to men and women equally. God does not prefer men over women when He dispenses His anointing, gifts, and grace. Both men and women are heirs together of the grace of life (1 Peter 3:7). So, we need to treat both men and women as equal when providing opportunities to serve, lead, carry responsibility, and so on, in the local church and ministry. We expect them to adhere to the same standards of conduct and accountability. However, with all this, we also understand that we need to be gentle when dealing with women, recognizing both their strengths and weaknesses.

## **Their Weakness Is Your Landmine—Stay Away**

Both men and women have emotional needs. For example, here are common emotional needs: affection, appreciation, admiration, conversation, companionship, and trust. Each individual may find some of these more important than the others. When unmet or unfulfilled, our emotional needs often become our areas of weakness. We then get "attracted" toward anyone who seems to "fill" or meet one or more of those needs in some way.

As a married man who is a pastor or Christian leader, here are some things you should avoid doing for any woman other than your own wife and children. Leave these things to a woman's husband or for other women to do.

- ✓ Avoid complimenting a woman about her looks. Let her husband or other women do this for her.
- ✓ Avoid complimenting a woman about her attire. Let her husband or other women do this for her.
- ✓ Avoid engaging in too much conversation with a woman. Let her husband or other women do this for her.
- ✓ Avoid trying to be a close companion or emotional support for a woman. Let her husband or other women do this for her.

The point here is that never step into a role where you try to fill the emotional needs of another woman. Leave that for that woman's husband or for other women to do. Over the years, I have intentionally maintained a healthy distance from women, although sometimes people may complain that I seem to be "unfriendly" or have an invisible wall.

It is not that I do not have genuine love or compassion. But I know enough and care enough about the call of God on my life, to know where to draw the line.

## **Have A Personal Self-Defense Plan**

**Proverbs 2:10-11**

**10 When wisdom enters your heart, and knowledge is pleasant to your soul,**

**11 discretion will preserve you; understanding will keep you.**

You need to establish certain guidelines for yourself in how you would minister to women, so that you protect yourself and them. Here are some things I do for myself:

- ✓ When praying for women, if I feel the need to lay hands, I only lay hands on their head. If there is a need to lay hands on any other part of their body, I will have them lay their own hand there or get another woman to do so.
- ✓ If I must counsel a woman, I may meet her once or twice and if further counseling is needed, I will direct her to another woman who is able to minister to her.
- ✓ If I need to meet individually with a woman for discussions, I always do so in a setting where others are present in proximity and visibility.
- ✓ I keep a healthy distance and do not engage in too much “casual,” “friendly” conversations with women.
- ✓ I avoid hugging young women and only do a formal handshake. I reserve hugs for family members, and for older women whom I treat with motherly affection.
- ✓ I avoid travelling with another woman (other than a family member) alone in my car, as far as possible. There may be some rare exceptions in case of emergencies or genuine need.

I do not claim to have a perfect “bullet-proof” self-defense plan. I realize that some may not agree with some of the things I have listed above. I am not presenting these as a golden rule for everyone. I just do what I know I need to do to protect myself, to the best I know how, and would only like to share these so that you can adopt whatever you find useful for your own life and ministry.

## **Goodbye Holy Kiss!**

**Romans 16:16**

**Greet one another with a holy kiss. The churches of Christ greet you.**

**1 Corinthians 16:20**

**All the brethren greet you. Greet one another with a holy kiss.**

**2 Corinthians 13:12**

**Greet one another with a holy kiss.**

**1 Thessalonians 5:26**

**Greet all the brethren with a holy kiss.**

“In those early times the kiss, as a token of peace, friendship, and brotherly love, was frequent among all people; and the Christians used it in their public assemblies, as well as in their occasional meetings. This was at last laid aside, not because it was abused, but because the Church becoming very numerous, the thing was impossible. In some countries, the kiss of friendship is still common; and in such countries it is scarcely ever abused, nor is it an incentive to evil, because it is customary and common. Shaking of hands is now substituted for it in almost all Christian congregations” (Adam Clarke’s Commentary on the Bible, Adam Clarke, LL.D., F.S.A., 1715-1832).

I realize that some churches use the Scriptures to continue the practice of greeting one another with a kiss. While I will not judge another person’s practice or preference for method of greeting, we do not do so in our churches, because of the possibility of abuse and emotional ties that this could lead to. My personal persuasion is that it is best to greet women, when necessary, with a simple handshake. We do not follow the “holy kiss” practice.

## **Be On Double Guard During Moments of Great Triumph or Crisis**

**1 Corinthians 10:12**

**Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall.**

**1 Peter 5:8**

**Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour.**

As men, we must be aware of our moments of weakness. As men, we are most vulnerable in times of great triumphs and in times of great crisis. When we have just completed a great conference or a powerful service or a fruitful time of ministry, we tend to let our guards down a little. We want to “relax” a bit. We want to rest. We have a sense of exhilaration, celebration, and success. It is in these moments that we are very vulnerable since we tend to let our guard down. Similarly, when we are going through a crisis where our emotions are “overworked,” when we are strained, emotionally hurt, wounded, and weary, we are also very vulnerable. In such moments, we need understanding, love, encouragement, support, and we tend to go anywhere we can find it. Our reasoning and judgment are not at its best. We make poor decisions and wrong choices.

The enemy will usually make his moves, attacks, and in-roads when he recognizes moments of weakness, when we are most vulnerable. In times of great success, you tell yourself, “After all, I have worked very hard for God’s Kingdom, so a little bit of indulgence is ok.” So, if the enemy were to plant a young woman who is “awed” by you, in great

admiration of your success, and strokes your pride, you will fall very easily. Similarly, when you are going through a great crisis and pain, if the enemy were to plant a young woman who empathizes with you, listens to you, speaks comforting, soothing, and encouraging words, it is very easy to fall into an emotional trap at that moment. Hence, in moments of great triumph or great crisis, recognize that these could be times when you are very vulnerable. Be on double guard. Avoid making very important decisions in those moments. Wait till things have “calmed down.” Wait till you have rested. Stay around people you know well and can trust.

## **Guard Your Affections**

**Proverbs 4:23**

**Keep (guard) your heart with all diligence, for out of it spring the issues of life.**

**Philippians 3:3**

**For we are the circumcision, who worship God in the Spirit, rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh.**

You may be a very righteous man, very gifted, and very anointed. But regardless of who or what you are, your flesh is poor and miserable. You can have no confidence in your flesh. So never trust your flesh. The flesh is faithful to do the devil’s job, even when the devil is not around. James tells us so clearly that *“each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed”* (James 1:14). It is our own fleshly desires that draw us away, weaken our will, and lead us into temptation. The devil’s job is to simply work at stirring up our fleshly desires.

While we love, honor, and admire what God is doing in and through women, we must remember, our own weaknesses as men. We cannot trust ourselves in this area. Our only option is to watch over our affections and guard ourselves continuously. Temptations will come, but we will have to continuously watch and pray that we do not fall into temptation in this area.

## **Discern And Destroy “Soulis” Bridges**

**2 Corinthians 2:11**

**Lest Satan should take advantage of us; for we are not ignorant of his devices.**

**2 Corinthians 10:4-6**

**4 For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds,  
5 casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ,  
6 and being ready to punish all disobedience when your obedience is fulfilled.**

The enemy's primary area of attack is the mind. He plants thoughts, ideas, and imaginations that are ungodly and opposed to the knowledge of God. If we yield to fleshly lust and ungodly thoughts, we can forfeit the blessings of God on our lives. The enemy knows that women are an area of weakness for us men. The enemy will try and set you up with "soulish" (emotional) attractions, attachments, and connections (bridges) with women. Be aware of what the enemy's tactics are. Do not go on foolishly. Be sober. Be vigilant. If you find the enemy attempting to do something, discern and destroy any such thing using the God-given weapons you have. Tackle it from your heart. Guard your heart and mind with the Word of God. Rebuke and tear down any work of the enemy that comes against you in this area. Fight the good fight of faith. Lay hold of eternal life and do not let go of it. There is too much at stake. The fight of faith is a fight worth fighting. Fight to win!

## 11. FAME

In this chapter, we deal with the issue of fame, reputation, and popularity—another big area of struggle for most of us Christian ministers. We “feel good” when we are recognized, affirmed, applauded, and invited. Some of us “feel depressed” and not favored by the Lord, when we do not get the recognition and applause from men that we think we should. Our Master lived above what people thought and said about Him. He said, *“I do not receive honor from men”* (John 5:41).

Somewhere along the way, we have strayed from focusing on Jesus and Christendom today has taken on an affinity to slick marketing, promotions, and publicity campaigns. We have become so unlike our Master and the apostles who did not care about fame or defamation. Today, we have preachers showing off their “friendship” with politicians or celebrities on stage to promote their own ministry. Ministry websites, newsletters, magazines are splashed shamefully with pictures of “their man of God.” Everything is about him, his anointing, his fame, his world-wide ministry. Larger-than-life posters and cut-outs of the man of God line the crusade grounds, venues, and even church buildings. Unthinking believers follow the man of God and almost worship him as a demi-god, a “hero” of the Christian faith. You wonder where Jesus is in all of this. The apostles said: *“For we do not preach ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord, and ourselves your bondservants for Jesus’ sake”* (2 Corinthians 4:5). It is time to get back to our Master’s example. Follow Him and the apostles.

### **A Good Name Is Important, But Not Fame**

**Proverbs 22:1**

**A good name is to be chosen rather than great riches, loving favor rather than silver and gold.**

**Ecclesiastes 7:1**

**A good name is better than precious ointment, and the day of death than the day of one’s birth.**

It is important to have a good name. A good name comes because of the life one lives. Great fame can be gained through slick marketing and free social media techniques. A good name comes only through consistent character. A good name is given to you. Fame is what you pursue for yourself. Fame disappears. A good name stays. *“The memory of the righteous is blessed”* (Proverbs 10:7).

Our focus must be to pursue Christlikeness and live as Jesus lived. In the process, we may face ridicule, false accusations, and persecutions. We should not fear defamation, insult, and ridicule. Jesus warned us, *“If they have called the master of the house Beelzebub, how much more will they call those of his household!”* (Matthew 10:25b). With time, those who see the life we live, will see Jesus in us. A good name will come in its time.

Be a shining star, not a shooting star—here today, gone and forgotten tomorrow.

## **Do Not Be A Man-Pleaser**

### **Galatians 1:10**

**For do I now persuade men, or God? Or do I seek to please men? For if I still pleased men, I would not be a bondservant of Christ.**

One of the things we must settle within ourselves, and it is best to do this when we begin our ministry, is that our only desire is to please God. We live for the applause of heaven, and not for the accolades of men. If this is settled in our hearts, we will not struggle with preaching messages that tickle people’s ears. We will not preach to impress but impart. We will not deliver messages that make people want to follow us but will move people to follow Jesus. We will not get easily offended if people leave us, criticize us, leave our church, or stop supporting our ministry. We will not get hurt if no one appreciates, supports, or applauds us. None of these things will affect us seriously, because our heart is set on pleasing the Lord and not men.

Not being a man-pleaser does not mean that we will not listen to people, especially those who care about us, when they correct us, or point out our errors. We pay attention to feedback, correction, and genuine criticism and consider these to improve ourselves. We receive this as one of the ways the Lord corrects us.

## **Do Not Engage in Self-Promotion, Let God Give the Increase**

### **Proverbs 25:27**

**It is not good to eat much honey; so to seek one’s own glory is not glory.**

### **1 Corinthians 3:6-7**

**6 I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the increase.**

**7 So then neither he who plants is anything, nor he who waters, but God who gives the increase.**

### **Psalms 127:1**

**Unless the LORD builds the house, they labor in vain who build it; unless the LORD guards the city, the watchman stays awake in vain.**

Another component of self-restraint that we must exercise as ministers of God is never to engage in self-promotion. Do not promote yourself. Do not try to promote your own ministry. Do not do anything motivated from wanting to become “more well-known,” “more famous,” or “more recognized.” Ask yourself, “Why am I doing this?” Give yourself an honest answer. If it is to seek my own glory, to promote myself as a great anointed servant, and so on, STOP, do not do it!

Purpose in your heart that you will only have the growth and increase that God brings to you. Let the Lord build the house (ministry, church). Let the increase be an overflow of what God does in and through you, and not promoting yourself. When you announce your meetings or conferences, do it with a pure motive—to simply let people know of the event and not to promote yourself. When you do what you do in ministry, let your motives be pure. Do it to bless lives and not to become more popular.

## **Popularity Is No Indication Of Fruitfulness**

**Revelation 3:1**

**And to the angel of the church in Sardis write, ‘These things says He who has the seven Spirits of God and the seven stars: “I know your works, that you have a name that you are alive, but you are dead.’**

It really does not matter how many fans and followers we have on Twitter or Facebook. None of this is any indication of our stature in heaven. It does not matter how many “Likes” we have collected for our sermon. The real questions are: Did we preach the truth and glorify Jesus Christ? How did God rate our sermon? God’s opinion about us could be directly opposite to our Christian popularity rating. We may have a reputation in Christendom that we are alive, but God could call us “dead!” So being popular does not mean we are being useful or fruitful for the Kingdom of God. It is likely that there are many who have never written a book, never made it to the best-sellers’ list, never been seen on Christian TV, never been seen, or heard outside their hometown—and yet these people may get rewards in heaven that will leave many of the famous Christian personalities of today, standing way behind them.

The fact is that we should never look at our popularity index as an indicator of how we are doing before God. The one question we should be asking continually is, “Are we doing the Father’s will?”

## **Separate Yourself From What People Think About You**

**2 Corinthians 6:4,8-9**

**4 But in all things we commend ourselves as ministers of God: in much patience, in tribulations, in needs, in distresses, ...**

**8 by honor and dishonor, by evil report and good report; as deceivers, and yet true;**

**9 as unknown, and yet well known; ...**

One of the strengths we must develop as ministers of God is to not let what people say—the good or the bad—affect us. There will be those who give us honor. And there will be those who dishonor us. There will be those who give a good report of us. And there will be those who make an evil report. As ministers, we must remember who we truly are and where we truly stand before God, personally.

When people applaud you, honor you, speak highly of you—do not let it get to your head. Guard against pride. When people dishonor you, speak evil of you, malign you—do not let it get to your heart. Guard against getting wounded and hurt. We cannot afford to minister either out of pride or out of pain (hurt). You must learn to separate yourself from what people say about you.

**Your Stature Before God Is More Important Than Your Stature Before Men**

Ultimately, who you are before God is more important than who you are before man. Your stature before God is more important than your stature before men. It is so much better to be regarded as a man “dearly beloved of the Lord” than to be endeared by millions of men. It is so much better to be someone for whom the Lord will stand up, than to have the respect of millions of men here on earth. It is so much better to be welcomed into heaven with the words, “Well done, good and faithful servant” than to have the cheers and praises of millions of men.

If our stature before God also causes men on earth to recognize and honor us, that is fine. We are not moved by this or are we living for this. Our hearts will always remain focused on who we are before our God. That is all that matters.

**Teach People Not To “Idolize” You Or “Promote” You**

**2 Corinthians 4:7**

**But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellence of the power may be of God and not of us.**

From the time we began our ministry, we attempted to just be “normal” and not create or build up an “aura” of being a servant of God, that so many do. We let people around us, including those in our congregation see that we are just normal human beings, just earthen vessels that God is working through. There is nothing “super special” about us. It is the gift, grace, and anointing of God at work, nothing about us. We work hard at keeping things this way. We intentionally instruct our media team and others involved in the ministry, not to splash our pictures or names on media materials and so on. We purposely

instruct our ministry team to keep the attention away from ourselves, so that people are not drawn to us.

If we are not careful, our magazines, TV programs, meetings, conferences, buildings, can be so “full of ourselves” that people begin idolizing us, instead of following the Lord Jesus Christ. People who work in our churches/ministries must be instructed not to fill our magazines, TV programs, and so on with pictures or life-size cut-outs that promote us individuals. Our promotional materials must be designed to point people to the Lord, His Word, His Spirit and not draw people to us as individuals.

## **Regardless Of How “Big” You Become, Always Walk On Level Ground**

**Philippians 2:5-7**

**5 Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus,**

**6 who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God,**

**7 but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men.**

Regardless of what heights of reputation and fame we may ascend in Christendom, regardless of how powerful we may become as Christian leaders, regardless of the influence we may gain, we must always walk on “level ground.” We must keep our feet on the ground. Be like our Lord, who made Himself of no reputation and stepped in to be one among man. Let this same attitude pervade our hearts and minds.

Always stay simple. Always stay approachable. Always remain humble. Always remember that you are just an earthen vessel.

## **The More I Have Been Given, The More Accountable I Must Be**

**Luke 12: 47-48**

**47 And that servant who knew his master’s will, and did not prepare himself or do according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes.**

**48 But he who did not know, yet committed things deserving of stripes, shall be beaten with few. For everyone to whom much is given, from him much will be required; and to whom much has been committed, of him they will ask the more.**

There is a simple, yet profound truth concerning God’s Kingdom. In God’s Kingdom, the more we have been given, the more will be required of us. The level of accountability increases when more is given. Responsibility increases with stature. With increase comes a greater level of accountability. This means that the measure of diligence with which I attend to things must increase, as God increases what He is doing in and through me. Generally, people tend to become lax, more careless, pay less attention to detail, as things begin to grow and increase. This then becomes their downfall. We must never forget, that

the more we are given, the more accountable we must become. That is required of us in the Kingdom.

## **The Higher He Takes Me, The Lower I Must Step Down**

**1 Peter 5:6**

**Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time.**

Exaltation comes when we humble ourselves. This means that whenever God lifts us up to a new level, we must move to a new level of humility. Only then can He take us further to higher levels. So, each time God exalts us and takes us to a new level of honor, it becomes time for us to step down further. It is time for us to humble ourselves even more before God and man.

## **The Lesser I Am Known The Better It Is**

Die to every desire for fame, recognition, applause, and appreciation. If it comes, then it is fine. If it does not come, you are not affected in anyway. Here is one important key to preserving yourself when God promotes you. Every time God brings increase, recognition, and exaltation in your life, you take a step lower down and humble yourself before God and man. Every time God takes you up one rung, you step down one rung. The higher God takes you, the lower you choose to walk. The more visible God makes you, the more discreet you choose to become. The more recognition God brings in your life, the more you hide yourself in Him. I have purposed that I will not pursue honor from man. My only desire will be to please His heart. Whatever honor on earth God sends my way that is fine. I will know that He did it for me and I did not pursue fame for myself.

## **Beware Of The “God-Complex”**

**Isaiah 14:12-14**

**12 How you are fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! How you are cut down to the ground, you who weakened the nations!**

**13 For you have said in your heart: ‘I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God; I will also sit on the mount of the congregation on the farthest sides of the north;**

**14 I will ascend above the heights of the clouds, I will be like the Most High.’**

Somewhere along the line, as we evolve and grow as a man or woman of God, and rise in stature as a servant of God, there slowly creeps in very subtly and very unconsciously a “God-complex.” Very subtly, we put ourselves in a certain standing above the Word that we preach, above the standards God has set for His people. We feel that the Word is for others, but we are above that. Slowly we excuse our personal private violations of God’s Word, since we see ourselves above the Word. We make ourselves a “god” unto ourselves. We are answerable to no one in the pretext of being answerable to God only.

When we reach this state, God has already left our conscience, and so now we are really answerable to no one, although we think we are answering only to God! We have made a “god” of ourselves. We will fall into the same condemnation as the devil.

Our constant safeguard is to walk in humility. “*Submitting to one another in the fear of God*” (Ephesians 5:21). If I am in a place where I can submit to others, I know I am keeping myself free from the “god-complex.” Always walk in the spirit of meekness, in a spirit of true humility. Always walk in a manner where God can use even those “below” you, those you lead, to speak into your life.

## **Conclusion**

The call of God and Christian ministry is no small matter. We must walk with godly wisdom as we carry out what God has called us to do. Yet, our confidence does not lie in our strength or ability. Our confidence lies completely in Him:

**Jude 1:24-25**

**24 Now to Him who is able to keep you from stumbling, and to present you faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy,**

**25 To God our Savior, who alone is wise, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and forever. Amen.**

It will all be worth it, when we stand before His glorious majesty and hear Him say, “Well Done!”

## Partner With All Peoples Church

All Peoples Church ministers beyond its own borders as a local church by reaching out all across India, especially North India, with a special focus on (A) Strengthening Leaders, (B) Equipping young people for ministry and (C) Building up the Body of Christ. Several training seminars for young people, and Christian Leaders conferences are held throughout the year. In addition, several thousands of copies of books are distributed free of cost in English and other Indian languages with the purpose of equipping believers in the Word and in the Spirit.

We invite you to partner with us financially by sending either a one-time gift or a monthly financial gift. Any amount that you can send to help us in this work across our nation will be greatly appreciated.

You can send your gift by cheque / bank draft payable to “All Peoples Church” to our office address. Else you can remit your contribution directly by bank transfer using our bank account details.

Account Name: All Peoples Church

Account Number: 0057213809

IFSC Code: CITI00000004

Bank: Citibank N.A., No. 5, M.G. Road, Bengaluru, Karnataka 560001

*Kindly note: All Peoples Church can only accept bank contributions from an India based bank account. When making your contribution, if desired, you can indicate the specific APC ministry area where you would like your contribution to be used. For additional details please visit [apcwo.org/give](http://apcwo.org/give)*

Also, please remember to pray for us and our ministry whenever you can.

**Thank You and God Bless!**

## FREE PUBLICATIONS

A Church in Revival*	Ministering Healing and Deliverance
A Real Place Called Heaven	Offenses—Don't Take Them
A Time for Every Purpose	Open Heavens*
Ancient Landmarks*	Our Redemption
Baptism in the Holy Spirit	Receiving God's Guidance
Being Spiritually Minded and Earthly Wise	Revivals, Visitations and Moves of God
Biblical Attitude Towards Work	Shhh! No Gossip!
Breaking Personal and Generational Bondages	Speak Your Faith *
Change*	The Conquest of the Mind
Code of Honor	The Father's Love
Divine Favor*	The House of God
Divine Order in the Citywide Church	The Kingdom of God
Don't Compromise Your Calling*	The Mighty Name of Jesus *
Don't Lose Hope	The Night Seasons of Life
Equipping the Saints	The Power of Commitment*
Foundations (Track 1)	The Presence of God
Fulfilling God's Purpose for Your Life	The Redemptive Heart of God
Gifts of the Holy Spirit	The Refiner's Fire
Giving Birth to the Purposes of God*	The Spirit of Wisdom, Revelation and Power*
God Is a Good God	The Wonderful Benefits of speaking in Tongues
God's Word—The Miracle Seed	Timeless Principles for the Workplace
How to Help Your Pastor	Understanding the Prophetic
Integrity	Water Baptism
Kingdom Builders	We Are Different*
Laying the Axe to the Root	Who We Are in Christ
Living Life Without Strife*	Women in the Workplace
Marriage and Family	Work Its Original Design

PDF versions of all the above books are available for free download from our church website at [apcwo.org/books](http://apcwo.org/books). Many of these books are also available in other languages. To request your free copy of these books, please send an email to [bookrequest@apcwo.org](mailto:bookrequest@apcwo.org)

\*Available only as PDF

Also visit our church website for free Audio and Video sermons, Sermon notes ([apcwo.org/sermons](http://apcwo.org/sermons)), and many other resources you can use.

## **Attend A Weekend School**

Weekend Schools, held in Bangalore, are geared to train and equip believers in specific areas of life and ministry. These are conveniently held on a Saturday 9am-6pm. Weekend schools are open to all believers from all churches and across denominations, who are interested in being trained and equipped. Below is a list of weekend schools that are currently being hosted.

Weekend School of Prophetic Ministry

Weekend School of Healing and Deliverance

Weekend School on Gifts of the Spirit

Weekend School of Prayer and Intercession

Weekend School on Inner Wholeness

Weekend School on Lifestyle Evangelism

Weekend School on God@Work

Weekend School of Urban Missions and Church Planting

Weekend School on Christian Apologetics

Please visit: [apcwo.org/weekendschool](http://apcwo.org/weekendschool) for current schedule and to register online.

## **Host A Christian Leaders Conference**

All Peoples Church provides Spirit anointed equipping and impartation for pastors, local church leadership, leaders of Christian organizations and others engaging in Christian ministry. In addition to anointed teaching, Spirit-led ministry and impartation, our teams engage in personal interaction and discussions with participants. Each Christian Leaders' Conference runs typically for 2 to 3 days focused on a specific theme. Participants will leave renewed, empowered, and equipped for greater impact and effectiveness in their ministry. Christian Leaders Conferences are typically hosted by a local church, a Christian ministry, a mission organization or denominational head-office for churches and pastors in its area or within its network or denomination. The hosting organization will cover the expenses of the conference as well as inviting participants. All Peoples Church will send its ministry team to serve the participants at the Christian Leaders Conference.

Some of the themes that our teams commonly minister on:

- **Revivals, Visitations and Moves of God**
- **Presence and Glory**
- **Kingdom Builders** (The Kingdom of God and Kingdom Building)
- **Level Ground**
- **The House of God**
- **Apostolic and Prophetic Ministry**
- **Ministering Healing and Deliverance**
- **Gifts of the Spirit**
- **Marriage and Family**
- **Equipping the Saints and Marketplace Transformation**

For additional details and a current listing of themes for Christian Leaders Conference, please visit: [apcwo.org/CLC](http://apcwo.org/CLC)

To schedule and plan a Christian Leaders Conference please email us at: [contact@apcwo.org](mailto:contact@apcwo.org)

## About All Peoples Church

At All Peoples Church (APC), our vision is to be salt and light in the city of Bangalore and a voice to the nation of India and to the nations of the world.

At APC, we are committed to presenting the complete, uncompromised Word of God in the anointing and demonstration of His Holy Spirit. We believe that good music, creative presentations, brilliant apologetics, contemporary ministry techniques, latest technology and so on, can never substitute the God-ordained approach of proclaiming the Word in the power of the Holy Spirit with signs, wonders, miracles, and gifts of the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 2:4-5; Hebrews 2:3-4). Our theme is Jesus, our content is the Word, our method is Holy Spirit power, our passion is people, and our goal is Christ-like maturity.

With our main base in Bangalore, All Peoples Church has several other church locations in India. To get a current listing and contact information of All Peoples Church locations, please visit our website at [www.apcwo.org/locations](http://www.apcwo.org/locations) or send an email to [contact@apcwo.org](mailto:contact@apcwo.org).

## DO YOU KNOW THE GOD WHO LOVES YOU?

About 2000 years ago, God came into this world as a man. His name is Jesus. He lived a perfectly sinless life. Since Jesus was God in flesh, everything He said and did revealed God to us. The words He spoke were the very words of God. The things He did were the actions of God. Jesus did many miracles on the Earth. He healed the sick and suffering. He opened blind eyes, unstopped deaf ears, made the lame to walk and healed every kind of sickness and disease. He fed the hungry by miraculously multiplying a few loaves of bread, calmed the storm and did many other wonderful things.

**All of these actions reveal to us that God is a good God who wants people to be well, whole, healthy, and happy. God wants to meet the needs of people.**

So why then would God decide to become a man and step into our world? Why did Jesus come?

All of us have sinned and done things that are unacceptable before the God who created us. Sin has its consequences. Sin is like a great unsurpassable wall between God and us. Sin separates us from God. It prevents us from knowing and having a meaningful relationship with the One who created us. Therefore, many of us try to fill this void with other things.

Another consequence of our sins is eternal separation from God. In God's court, the penalty for sin is death. Death is eternal separation from God in hell.

But the good news is that we can be free from sin and be restored to God. The Bible says, **"For the wages [payment] of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 6:23)**. Jesus paid for the sins of the whole world when He died on the cross. Then, three days later He rose again, showed Himself alive to many and then went back into heaven."

God is a God of love and mercy. He does not wish that any person be lost in hell. And so He came, to provide a way for the entire human race to be free from sin and its lasting consequences. He came to save sinners—to rescue people like you and me from sin and eternal death.

To receive this free forgiveness of sins, the Bible tells us that we have to do just one thing—accept what the Lord Jesus Christ did on the cross and to believe in Him whole-heartedly.

**"... through His name, whoever believes in Him will receive forgiveness of sins" (Acts 10:43).**

**"That if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved" (Romans 10:9).**

You too can receive forgiveness and cleansing for your sins if you will believe in the Lord Jesus Christ.

The following is a simple prayer to help you make a decision to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and what He has done for you on the cross. This prayer will help you express your acceptance of what Jesus has done for you and receive forgiveness and cleansing for your sins. This prayer is only a guideline. You can also pray in your own words.

*Dear Lord Jesus, today, I have understood what You did for me on the cross. You died for me, You shed Your precious blood and paid the penalty for my sins, so that I could be forgiven. The Bible tells me that whoever believes in You will receive forgiveness for their sins.*

*Today, I make a decision to believe in You and to accept what You did for me, by dying for me on the cross and rising again from the dead. I know I cannot save myself by my own good works, neither can any other human save me. I cannot earn forgiveness for my sins.*

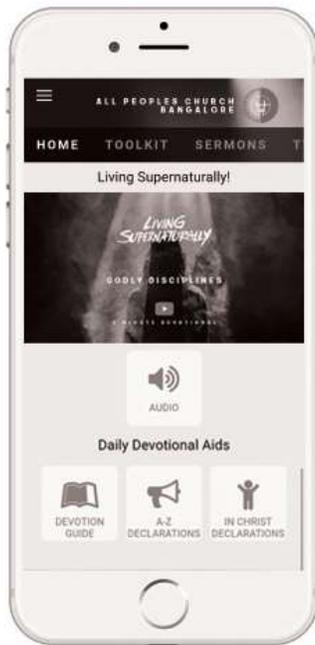
*Today, I believe in my heart and say with my mouth that You died for me, You paid the penalty for my sins, You rose again from the dead, and by faith in You, I receive forgiveness and cleansing for my sins.*

*Thank You Jesus. Help me to love You, to know You more and to be faithful to You. Amen.*

**DOWNLOAD THE FREE APP!**



*Search for*  
**"All Peoples Church Bangalore"**  
in the App or Google play stores.



*A daily 5-minute video devotional.*

*A daily Bible reading and prayer guide.*

*5-minute Sermon summary.*

*Toolkit with Scriptures on various topics to build faith and information to share the Gospel.*

*Resources with sermons, sermon notes, TV programs, books, music and more.*

***IF YOU LOVE IT, TELL OTHERS ABOUT IT!***

## BUILD TO IMPACT: SHARE IN THIS VISION



### Build

APC WORLD OUTREACH & EQUIPPING CENTER in Bangalore will be a world-class state-of-the-art equipping center and missions base serving the Body of Christ across nations.

### Impact

Leveraging cutting-edge technology and tools we will provide Spirit-anointed, Bible-based training to equip, send and support a new generation of Christian ministers, locally and globally. The facility will include a Bible college serving residential and non-residential students, with support for distance learning via live and off-line lectures and a media center to reach people in a connected world. The facility will also include a sanctuary, children, and youth center and a 24X7 prayer center.

As the Lord leads and enables, we invite you to make a contribution of any amount and partner with us in this vision and help us Build To Impact. To contribute towards APC WORLD OUTREACH & EQUIPPING CENTER in Bangalore, and the on-going Build To Impact project, please use the following details.

Wire Transfer	Cheques
Account: <b>All Peoples Church Building Fund AC</b> Account No: 520101021447450 IFSC Code: CORP0000656 Bank Name: Corporation Bank Branch Name: R.T Nagar Branch, Bangalore	In favor of: <b>All Peoples Church Building Fund AC</b> Cheques can be mailed to: All Peoples Church, #319, 2nd Floor, 7th Main, 2nd Block HRBR Layout, Kalyan Nagar, Bangalore 560043, Karnataka, India

We welcome your contribution from an India based bank account into our bank details provided. We do not have facility to accept overseas contributions. For any questions email us at [buildtoimpact@apcwo.org](mailto:buildtoimpact@apcwo.org)

Please visit: [apcwo.org/buildtoimpact](http://apcwo.org/buildtoimpact) for project progress and additional details.



## All Peoples Church Bible College [apcbiblecollege.org](http://apcbiblecollege.org)

All Peoples Church Bible College and Ministry Training Center (APC-BC), in Bangalore, India, provides Spirit-filled, anointed, hands-on training and equipping for ministering in the supernatural power of the Holy Spirit along with doctrinally sound and intellectually stimulating study of God's Word. We believe in developing the whole person for ministry emphasizing godly character, deep roots in the Word of God, and powerful demonstrations of signs, wonders, and miracles—all flowing out of an intimate relationship with the Lord.

At APC-BC in addition to sound teaching we emphasize the love of God in demonstration, the anointing and presence of the Holy Spirit and the supernatural work of God. Several young men and women have been trained and sent out to fulfill God's call over their lives.

We offer three programs:

- One-year Certificate in Theology and Christian Ministry (C.Th.)
- Two-year Diploma in Theology and Christian Ministry (Dip.Th.)
- Three-year Bachelor's in Theology and Christian Ministry (B.Th.)

Classes are held each weekday, **Monday to Friday from 9:00am-1pm**. Day scholars, working professionals, and homemakers can attend these classes and continue with their workday after 1pm. Separate hostel facilities are available for men and women who desire to be residential students. Students participate in field work, special seminars, prayer and worship times in the afternoon sessions, each weekday from 2pm-5pm. The afternoon sessions are optional for day scholars (non-residential students). All students are encouraged to serve at one or more local churches over the weekends.

To **apply online**, and for more information about the college, curriculum, eligibility criteria, tuition costs and to download the application form, please visit: [apcbiblecollege.org](http://apcbiblecollege.org)

APC-BC is accredited by the Nations  
Association for Theological  
Accreditation (NATA).



Ethics has to do with moral code, values, and principles. While a code of conduct can be discussed and documented, the standards of ethics itself does not provide the power to keep them. The power to adhere to moral values and principles comes from within each individual. As Christian ministers, our power to walk morally upright comes from our dependence on the Lord Himself and through the grace He provides. No code of conduct, no teaching on ethics, no wise counsel, or set of guidelines can help a Christian minister who does not take his/her personal walk with God seriously.

In the Church today, where many of us are pressing in to more of the manifestation of God's power, anointing, signs and wonders, miracles and healings, prophetic and the supernatural—a call to godly standards of life and conduct may not be very popular. Preachers and ministers are sought after, more for what they can manifest in one hour behind the pulpit, than for the life they live off it.

It is time for us as ministers of Christ to re-establish standards of serving "*God acceptably with reverence and godly fear*" (Hebrews 12:28). That is what this book is about an easy-to-read collection of ethical values, godly standards a practical wisdom for men and women in Christian ministry. Your life and ministry are sure to be enriched, if you read this book.

This book will be a useful resource for Bible Colleges, Seminaries, Bible Training Centers, and wherever men and women are being trained for Christian ministry. This will also be a good handbook to teach at Pastors' Conferences and Seminar. Pastors and other ministry leaders will find it useful to use this resource as they train and prepare their ministry teams.

Ashish Raichur

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