

The Preacher and His Work

Purpose of this Course:

To educate and prepare students for the work they will do as ministers outside the pulpit.

Requirements:

Students will be required to fulfill school policy of class attendance. Three unexcused absences will cause the student to fail this course. Work, illness, weather and church events are valid reasons for an excused absence. Two exams will be given: the sixth week and twelfth week of class. These exams are open-note and take-home. Exams will be graded during the last period. Students are required to read Thomas Holland's book, *The Work of the Preacher is Working*, in its entirety. Reading Assignments are due *before* the class period (except for the first class).

Textbook:

Thomas Holland, *The Work of the Preacher is Working*, 2001, 297 pages.

Class Schedule:

Reading Assignment

| | | |
|-------|---|------------------------|
| 8-24 | Introduction to the Course Ministers and their Spiritual Lives | pp. 55-70 |
| 8-31 | Ministerial Ethics | pp. 153-170 |
| 9-7 | Using Your Time Wisely | pp. 121-132 |
| 9-14 | Building Your Library | pp. 282-285 |
| 9-21 | Weddings | pp. 286-288 115-116 |
| 9-28 | Visiting the Hospitals and shut-ins (Exam) | |
| 10-5 | Deaths and funerals | pp. 107-115 |
| 10-12 | Writing and Bulletins | pp. 105-107 |
| 10-19 | Outreach | pp. 189-206 |
| 10-26 | Counseling | pp. 133-152 |
| 11-2 | Relationships | pp. 171-188 |
| 11-9 | Conflict Take Home Final Exam | pp. 207-224 |
| 11-16 | Strengths and Weaknesses | |

Books You Should Read:

Thomas Holland, *Help and Healing for People Who Hurt*, 1998.

Ira North, *Balance*, Gospel Advocate.

Cleon Lyles, *Bigger Men for Better Churches*, 1971.

Bill Flatt, *Growing Through Grief*, Gospel Advocate, 1987.

Bill Flatt, *Personal Counseling*.

MSOP Alumni, *Rejoice and Weep*, Wedding and Funeral Sermons.

E. W. McMillan, *The Minister's Spiritual Life*, Firm Foundation, 1959.

J. A. McNutt, *Let's Go Visiting*, n.d. (Available at GA)

Other Valuable Books:

Steve Clapp, *Positioning Ministry for Success*, 1986.

Kenneth W. Oosting, *The Christian's Guide to Effective Personal Management*.

Kenn Filkins, *A Comforting Word*, College Press, 1994.

Candy Lightner & Nancy Hathaway, *Giving Sorrow Words*, Warner Books, 1990.

Norman Wright, *Crisis Counseling*, Regal, 1993.

Eugene Peterson, et. al., *Weddings, Funerals and Special Events*, Word, 1987.

James L. Christensen, *The Complete Funeral Manual*, Revell, 1967.

Resource for Weddings:

<http://www.bible.org/docs/pastor/weddings/wedtoc.htm>

Resource for Funerals

<http://www.bible.org/docs/pastor/funerals/funtoc.htm>

Resource for Premarital Counseling

<http://www.bible.org/docs/pastor/weddings/premarriage/toc.htm>

As with all resources, preachers must learn to eat the fish and throw the bones away.

Ministers and Their Spiritual Lives

Gospel preachers have a responsibility to live the life they preach and to maintain wholehearted dedication to the Lord Jesus Christ. Those who challenge others to take up the cross of Christ daily ought themselves to live devotedly to His cause. Romans 2:21-23 should speak to every person who determines to preach the gospel.

You, therefore, who teach another, do you not teach yourself?

You who preach that one should not steal, do you steal?

You who say that one should not commit adultery, do you commit adultery?

You who abhor idols, do you rob temples?

You who boast in the Law, through your breaking the Law, do you dishonor God?

James warns, “Let not many of you become teachers, my brethren, knowing that as such we shall incur a stricter judgment” (James 3:1).

Problems Preachers Face:

1. *Financial difficulties.* Preachers who do not know how to manage their financial affairs and who make inadequate salaries, often find themselves in serious financial trouble. Unpaid bills, late payments, and unscrupulous dealings can ruin the reputation of a preacher and the churches he serves. Preachers would do well to learn money management skills and to seek accounting help in paying their taxes.
2. *Laziness.* Some preachers simply do not know how to manage themselves or their time. Preachers may easily fall into the traps of time wasting or of inactivity at those times when they should be busy. Those who pay preachers expect their preachers to be worthy of their hire. Preachers, who fail to study, continually use rerun sermons, and neglect visitation and evangelism, will be looking for employment over and over.
3. *Procrastination.* Sometimes a preacher falls into the habit of thinking that he can do tomorrow what he should do today. A preacher that habitually fails to do his work in a timely fashion does not appreciate the urgency of the gospel. “We must work the works of Him who sent Me, as long as it is day; night is coming, when no man can work” (John 9:4).
4. *Burnout.* Other preachers become workaholics. They feel they must be busy working all of the time. Because they fail to take days off and balance their lives, they soon begin to despise what they are called to do.
5. *Persistent Guilt.* The work of preaching requires many skills and many tasks. Very often preachers, no matter what they are doing, feel as if they should be pursuing some other aspect of their ministry. This anxiety leads to a feeling a failure regardless of what they accomplish.
6. *Family problems.* Preachers must learn to do their work efficiently without alienating their families. Divorce and family breaks are tragic under any circumstances, but they are doubly so in the life of a church leader. As the spiritual leader and head of his home preachers should keep their marriages strong and rear their children with love and discipline.
7. *Sexual temptations.* Because they are men in responsible and visible roles and often come in contact with women, preachers may face serious sexual challenges. Giving in to such

temptation could ruin a minister's career. Preachers must use extra caution never to place themselves in compromising situations.

8. *Criticism.* Some criticisms are just, while others are unfair. In either case, a few loud critics can destroy the effectiveness and reputation of a preacher. Preachers would do well to tape sermons, document hours and visits, and keep records. While some criticisms are unfair, others merit attention. When someone criticizes a preacher, there is usually a reason. Prompt response or apology can often avert more serious problems. Critics are often the preacher's most helpful teachers—especially when the critics are other congregational leaders.
9. *Confidentiality.* Because ministers counsel others and a part of a congregation's leadership, they will have access to privileged information. Ministers who reveal secrets, gossip about others, and embarrass others needlessly will soon lose the trust of the congregation and their usefulness. Preachers must guard their credibility; without credibility a preacher is unable to be effective.
10. *Loneliness.* Preachers often find it hard to develop close, personal friendships in congregations. Because he must be everyone's preacher, he often feels unable to draw especially close to men in their own age group. Continual study and professional role often lead to relational barriers for preachers. Many preachers find their best friends in other preachers. Wise preachers find friends among men's groups.
11. *Frustration.* Churches move notoriously slow, and brethren can often take their faith and their responsibilities for granted. Sometimes preachers expect change and growth in congregations before the congregation is ready. Attitudes and behavior patterns that took many years to form will not easily be changed. It is foolish to think longstanding patterns can be changed with a sermon or two. Preachers must learn patience with weak and struggling brethren.
12. *Anger.* Brethren can be cruel and selfish, and we must learn to love them anyway and not grow bitter. Churches that treat their preachers like "hired hands" rather than brethren can poison their spirits. Preachers must learn to confront those who abuse them and to forgive those who repent.

Some Suggestions for Building Your Spiritual Life:

1. Do not let the urgent keep you from the important. Read, study and meditate on God's word daily. Discipline yourself to spend 30 minutes to an hour per day in reading for your own spiritual well being. Preachers too need spiritual food. Make your relationship with God a daily priority (1 Tim. 4:7-8). One can read through the entire New Testament in less than 13 hours. There are only 260 chapters in the New Testament; and by reading three chapters per day, one may read the New Testament four times within a year.
2. Great preachers are always men of fervent and frequent prayer. If Jesus needed to pray each day to keep close to God and to keep his task in focus, certainly we need to do the same. Study the prayer life of Jesus Christ and imitate Him.
3. Never allow complaining, cynicism, or bitterness to ruin your spirit (Phil. 4:8; Heb. 12:14-15). Seek out people who will keep you enthused and focused.
4. Read good and helpful books. In your reading, be careful not to eliminate devotional and character-building books. Read faith-building periodicals that encourage and uplift.
5. Concentrate on building a virtue each year. Study love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, gentleness, self-control, goodness, and godliness. Grow in virtue. (2 Cor. 13:5)

6. Get away two or three times a year to lectureships, retreats and seminars. Hear great men speak on vital topics that will build faith, hope and love.
7. Take a day off and rest now and then. Do some things for the fun of doing them. Jesus told his disciples, “‘Come away by yourselves to a lonely place and rest a while.’ (For there were many people coming and going, and they did not even have time to eat.)” (Mark 6:31). The Lord values his servants.
8. Take time for your family. Sing and pray with them. Play with them. Love them. It is sad for a man to serve the Lord his entire life with such vigor that he has no time left for family. "For what does it profit a man to gain the whole world, and forfeit his family?" Set a family night once a week and keep it a priority. Preachers must learn to say “No,” rather than neglect their families.
9. Exercise! Get physically fit and stay that way. A run-down preacher will often fail to do what he is expected, because he does not feel up to it. The stress level of preaching can sometimes be quite high; exercise is an effective way to work through stress and keep the body fit.
10. Get involved in doing good for others. It is more blessed to give than to receive. Learn to give and serve others with joy and love.
11. Continue to educate yourself as long as you live. Continue to study and grow in your thinking. Develop new skills that will enhance your ministry.

Guard Your Credibility

Aristotle viewed credibility (ethos) as a combination of good character, good will, and high intelligence.

1. Watch your language; never say things that are off-color, cynical or abusive. Do not embarrass others as a means of humor. Show great respect to your family.
2. Do not lie or tell a misleading half-truth.
3. Keep your promises, even when they cost you greatly. Don't make promises you can't keep.
4. Never reveal confidential information.
5. Pay your debts on time (Rom. 13:8).
6. Never use the good news of our salvation to abuse others. Do not rub salt in other's wounds. Love does not rejoice in unrighteousness.
7. Pursue continuing education through courses and challenging reading. Develop a good library for researching of Biblical questions.
8. Learn proper grammar and use it. Be sure to edit whatever you write.
9. When you write, cite sources. Give credit wherever credit is due. Do not plagiarize.
10. People don't care how much you know, until they know how much you care. Develop an affection for the people you serve. Get involved in their lives.

Ministerial Ethics

Setting Up Safeguards

Developing a personal ministry code of ethics

by Archibald D. Hart

To function with optimum effectiveness, preachers must set up strategies to safeguard themselves against such personal pitfalls as wasting time, abusing authority, satisfying a hungry ego, giving in morally, or even becoming a workaholic. Each preacher needs to develop a personal code of behavior or ministry ethics.

An Essential Ethic

Paul says it well in Ephesians 5:15: "So be careful how you act; these are difficult days" (*The Living Bible*). We all face temptation regularly, and should not expect to determine our proper responses anew each time we encounter a potential pitfall. We need some guidelines to help us uphold our ethics as we work with people daily.

Preachers can benefit from taking into consideration three important principles as they develop this professional code of behavior:

- *Accountability.* We must all be accountable to someone. Those who fall almost invariably develop attitudes of arrogance and isolation; they unwisely choose to go it alone. Accountability demands that every leader have a regular meeting with a board or group of peers—for the sole purpose of honestly sharing feelings, revealing temptations, and identifying problem areas in personal and spiritual growth. Such practical accountability forces us to see how vulnerable we are and how easily we can be deluded into thinking we are above temptation.
- *Responsibility.* All preachers should maintain the highest standards of professional behavior. The truly healthy leader is able to balance this quest for professional excellence with a broader sense of responsibility that encompasses personal roles and relationships. The preacher must learn to balance the demands of church leadership with the demands of family and personal life. A lack of this broader sense of responsibility leads to an unbalanced life.
- *Integrity.* Foremost is the issue of how we use our power as preachers. Do we share our power? Do we use it with compassion? Is our use of our power ego motivated? Second to power is the issue of honesty. True integrity requires not just uprightness with regard to finances, but also justice in the application of authority, graciousness in what we take credit for, and compassion in how we gain and use privileged information.

Ethics in Action

How do these principles translate into daily action? Here is a leader's safeguard checklist that can help preachers do daily ethics evaluations. Test yourself at the end of each day and then make whatever changes your answers suggest.

- Have I been totally honest in all my dealings with people this today?
- Have I acted appropriately toward members of the opposite sex?

- Have I indulged any unsavory thoughts or sexual images, or fostered any uncharitable feelings toward others?
- Have I been totally above reproach in all my financial dealings?
- Have I fulfilled all my obligations without compromise and with a willing spirit?
- Have I worked too long or too hard without evaluating my true motives?
- Have I spent sufficient time with my family today?
- Have I taken care of my family's spiritual needs?
- Have I attended to my own emotional and spiritual needs and integrated them into my daily walk with God?
- Have I harbored any unconfessed sin or unforgiven hurts?

Archibald D. Hart; *Leadership Handbooks of Practical Theology, Volume 3, Leadership and Administration; Setting Up Safeguards*; pp 166-167. Used by permission of Baker Books, a division of Baker Book House Company, copyright © 1994.

Maintaining Moral Purity in Ministry

No matter how many times I hear it, it still shocks me: A minister announces his resignation because of adultery. Often it's with someone within his congregation, sometimes even someone actively involved in ministry, such as a Sunday school teacher.

As Christian leaders, we need to be above reproach. Paul wrote, "Don't be so naive and self-confident. You're not exempt. You could fall flat on your face as easily as anyone else. Forget about self-confidence; it's useless. Cultivate God-confidence." (1 Cor. 10:12, Msg)

Here are some standards for maintaining moral integrity with people other than your spouse:

- Thou shalt not go to lunch alone with the opposite sex.
- Thou shalt not have the opposite sex pick you up or drive you places when it is just the two of you.
- Thou shalt not kiss any attender of the opposite sex or show affection that could be questioned.
- Thou shalt not visit the opposite sex alone at home.
- Thou shalt not counsel the opposite sex alone at the office, and thou shalt not counsel the opposite sex more than once without that person's mate. Refer them.
- Thou shalt not discuss detailed sexual problems with the opposite sex in counseling. Refer them.
- Thou shalt not discuss your marriage problems with an attender of the opposite sex.
- Thou shalt be careful in answering emails, instant messages, chatrooms, cards, or letters from the opposite sex.
- Thou shalt make your secretary your protective ally.
- Thou shalt pray for the integrity of other staff members.

“But among you there must not be even a hint of sexual immorality, or of any kind of impurity, or of greed, because these are improper for God’s holy people.” Eph. 5:3 (NIV)

Reasons To Maintain Moral Purity

The following is adapted from a list developed by a minister* who would review it whenever he felt vulnerable to sexual temptation. He cited the following as reminders of the negative consequences a wrong moral choice could produce.

- Grieving the Lord who redeemed me.
- Dragging His sacred name into the mud.
- One day having to look Jesus, the Righteous Judge, in the face and give an account for my actions.
- Following in the footsteps of those whose immorality forfeited or crippled their ministries.
- Inflicting untold hurt on my best friend, my wife.
- Losing my wife's respect and trust.
- Hurting my beloved children.
- Destroying my example and credibility with my children, and nullifying both present and future efforts to teach them to obey God (*"Why listen to a man who betrayed Mom and us?"*).
- If my blindness should continue or my wife be unable to forgive, perhaps losing my wife and my children forever.
- Causing shame to my family (*"Why isn't Daddy a preacher any more?"*).
- Losing self-respect.
- Creating a form of guilt awfully hard to shake. Even though God would forgive me, would I forgive myself?
- Forming memories and flashbacks that could plague future intimacy with my wife.
- Wasting years of ministry training and experience for a long time, maybe permanently.
- Forfeiting the effect of years of witnessing to other family members and reinforcing their distrust for ministers. Perhaps contributing to the hardening of their hearts.
- Undermining the faithful example and hard work of other Christians in our community.
- Bringing great pleasure to Satan, the enemy of God and all that is good
- Heaping judgment and endless difficulty on the person with whom I committed adultery.
- Possibly bearing the physical consequences of such diseases as gonorrhea, syphilis, Chlamydia, herpes, and AIDS; perhaps infecting my wife, or in the case of AIDS, even causing her death.
- Possibly causing pregnancy, with the personal and financial implications, including a lifelong reminder of my sin.
- Bringing hurt to my fellow ministers.
- Bringing hurt to my friends, especially those I've led to Christ and disciplined.
- Invoking shame and lifelong embarrassment upon myself.

* Randy Alcorn, "Strategies to Keep From Falling" *Leadership*, Winter 1988.

Using Your Time Wisely **Ephesians 5:16**

A Gospel Preacher

A gospel preacher realizes that his life and purpose is to serve the living God and to tell the story of Jesus again and again. As a Christian, a preacher belongs to the Lord who bought him with His precious blood. A gospel preacher is a man who prays and studies God's Word in the morning, ministers to the hurting and lost during the day, studies with both the erring and the saints in the evening, and meditates on God in the night. He speaks the truth in love and will not compromise his faith or his lifestyle. He weeps over the lost and rejoices at conversion. He shares himself that he might touch the most intimate places in the hearts and spirits of those who hear him.

His foundation is truth, his life is faith, his love is people, and his hope is heaven. There is a fire in bones, which pushes him to speak when others remain silent. There is urgency in his message, passion in his voice, and zeal in his heart. God is his passion, his source, his energy, his rock, his friend, and his life. He never forgets Jesus Christ and him crucified. He realizes God has entrusted him with the power of God unto salvation. A gospel preacher must reveal the unsurpassed love and grace of God, while he exposes the ugliness and tragedy of sin. His work demands fearless conviction, undoubting faith, unchanging love, and inspiring hope.

The work of preaching the gospel may be the hardest and most needed task on earth. Nothing else can change the lives of sinners into saints or melt hardened hearts. Gospel preaching demands great prayer, great wisdom, great commitment, and great love. Weak men need not apply. The Lord Jesus who bore the cross in Golgotha asks faithful men to deny themselves and bear a cross daily for Him. Gospel preachers take up their crosses to find a crown for themselves and for all that will listen to them.

What Churches Expect from Fulltime Preachers

- Two sermons each Sunday and a devotional on Wednesdays
- Classes Sunday morning and Wednesday evening plus a ladies class
- Bulletin articles each week, webpage
- Visitation to sick, hospitalized, grieving
- Evangelistic Bible studies with lost and visits to restore the fallen
- Newslines, radio, or newspaper articles
- Office administration

The challenge of ministry is to use your time wisely and to bring balance to your lifestyle. Studying, visiting, soul-winning, family, private devotions and recreations all have a place in the life of a preacher.

Other Tasks Preachers Are Sometimes Asked to Do

- Weddings, funerals
- Emergencies, deaths, fires, tornadoes, etc.
- Counseling, advice seekers
- Dealing with transients and salesmen
- Speaking engagements, gospel meetings, seminars, retreats, lectureships, workshops
- Church correspondence
- Building maintenance and repair

