

Text: Various

Title: Pastoral Advice

Truth: In which your pastor gives some frank counsel.

Date/Location: Sunday June 12, 2022 at FBC

Introduction

What would I tell you if I could be as open, transparent, and honest as possible? What if I did not have to worry about hurting your feelings? What would I share with you?

I. Read your Bible

- A. Read all of it. Read the New Testament all the time. Do not leave the New Testament behind for months on end as you read the OT.
- B. Read it daily, or as many days as possible. A pattern of laxity regarding the word will tend to creep up on you, just like lack of diligence in anything that the flesh does not like—a diet, exercise, daily reading on some academic subject, etc.
- C. Do not worry if you do not understand everything. By virtue of repetition over an extended period, God willing, you will understand more and more. In other words, you do not have to *study* every day. But you should *think* as you read. If you can get more by listening on your commute or walk, do that too.
- D. It is hard to find a Bible verse that commands you to read Scripture every day because almost no one at the time of the writing of Scripture had print copies of it. That is not a problem for us today. Two lines of argument justify what I have just written. One is the example of the instruction to the Israelite kings. The other is the believer's love for God's word.

Deut. 17:18, 19, 20 Also it shall be, when he sits on the throne of his kingdom, that he shall write for himself a copy of this law in a book, from the one before the priests, the Levites. 19 And it shall be with him, **and he shall read it all the days of his life**, that he may learn to fear the LORD his God and be careful to observe all the words of this law and these statutes, that his

heart may not be lifted above his brethren, that he may not turn aside from the commandment to the right hand or to the left...

Psalm 1:2-3 But his delight *is* in the law of the LORD, and in His law he meditates day and night. 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.

John 14:23 Jesus answered and said to him, "If anyone loves Me, **he will keep My word...**

Ps. 119:48 My hands also I will lift up to Your commandments, Which I love, And I will meditate on Your statutes.

If you did not have the word of God, you would drink it up once you got access to it. But by reason of prevalence, we take God's word for granted.

As for the kings, God has made us like them...a kingdom of priests (or kings and priests, depending on your translation).

E. Additionally, the *priests* also were expected to know God's word.

Malachi 2:7 "For the lips of a priest should keep knowledge, and people should seek the law from his mouth; for he is the messenger of the LORD of hosts.

You are not a Levitical or Catholic priest. But you are a priest to God.

1 Peter 2:5 you also, as living stones, are being built up a spiritual house, a **holy priesthood**, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.

1 Peter 2:9 But you are a chosen generation, a **royal priesthood**, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light.

F. Public reading of Scripture is commanded.

1 Tim. 4:13 Till I come, give attention to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine.

II. Focus on Making Disciples

- A. Select a specific person to work on. Pray for them often. Look for and make opportunities for gospel conversation. Read the Bible with them.
- B. Ephesians 4:12. The work of ministry is *yours*, not just the pastor's! He is to do the work of an evangelist as well (2 Tim. 4:5), but that does not excuse you from the task. We pray for the Lord of the harvest to raise up laborers for His harvest field (Matt. 9:38). And God has answered that prayer by raising *you* up from the dead. He has made you His witnesses.
- C. Because it is the spring season, the trees around here are making their seeds and spreading them all over creation. God has arranged to sow bountifully, and He will reap bountifully, even if only a small percentage of those seeds germinate and flourish. If we do not plant gospel seed, we will not get fruit (truth underlying 2 Cor. 9:6). You are the gospel farmers. To succeed as a church, and to be a success in God's sight, *and to save as many souls from Hell as we can*, we must plant seed. There is no other way around it.
- D. Planting seed does not mean merely being a nice and helpful person or being a friend. That may open a door of opportunity, but that is not the preaching of the gospel. You must get around to telling your specific someone what God has done for you, how God did it, and that God calls them to follow Jesus too. We all must uphold God's truth to a dark world so that they can see it.

III. Get an Accountability Partner

- A. We all have blind spots and tendencies toward sin. We need more eyes on the situation (Prov. 11:14, 24:6).
- B. If you are married, your spouse is your first accountability partner. If you are a minor child, or an adult child without a spouse, your Christian parents are perfect for this role.
- C. If you are a man, find another Christian brother. If a woman, find a Christian woman. Invite them to tell you if they see some fault, some pattern, tendency, etc. that is sinful. Talk regularly with

them, praying and going over Scripture. Invite them to ask you any question about how your walk with the Lord is going.

D. James 5:16.

E. When you need prayer to help in your walk with the Lord, your marriage, with your children, these accountability people will be super important. And, you have pastoral help available as well. To put it crassly, you do “pay” for it when you support the church :->.

IV. Fight and Confess Sin. Make No Provision for the Flesh.

A. Galatians 5:17 tells us that the flesh and Spirit are in a battle. If you do not believe so, then something is wrong. If you are oblivious to it, you are losing it. You need to be engaged in the battle. Saying “no” to yourself should be a regular activity in your mind.

B. 1 John 1:9 – one sure mark of a true believer in Christ.

C. Romans 13:14 – Do not give your sin nature the kind of maneuvering room that it wants. You must do this with faith in Christ, but do not pretend that a merely mystical sort of faith will do the job. *Do* something to box out your sin nature. Fill your time with good things, with serving others instead of self. Take care about the type of entertainment you watch or hear and the amount of it. Get away from the phone/tablet/computer and do something else—do not let it become your method of time-wasting or gossip.

D. Pride is an insidious sin. How you think of others and that you think you know more than others can mask a lot of sin in your life. Your pride makes excuses for your own poor behavior to the point you do not see it as poor. Be clothed with humility. One way that pride manifests itself is in the “hero complex.” You think very highly of yourself that you are doing a really good work to help a missionary—after all, helping a missionary gets you *bonus* points with God—or doing something else that gains you recognition from others. How about helping others when there is no recognition for it?

E. Young people: submit yourselves to your elders (1 Peter 5:5). Learn how to live at peace with your parents even if they are imperfect.

This is one of the most important life lessons you can learn. It will help you tremendously over the course of your life.

- F. Learn to do things without complaining (Phil. 2:14).
- G. Learn that interruptions are divine appointments. They may be opportunities to help someone, or chances to practice your patience.
- H. Don't be a jerk. That is, don't be obnoxious.

V. Attend Church, Especially Prayer Meeting

- A. Do not make excuses. If you are in a good church, there is very little that you could be doing at home or elsewhere that is truly more important than fellowshiping with the saints, hearing the Bible taught, and corporately *worshipping God*.
- B. What you do now sets patterns for your children. It is unlikely that they will be more faithful in church attendance than you were.
- C. God commands our attendance together (Hebrews 10:24-25).
- D. What about corporate prayer? There is no shortage of instruction on prayer in general, for example, Luke 18:1, 1 Thess. 5:17.

But corporate prayer? 1 Timothy 2:1 instructs that prayers be made for all men, for kings and all in authority, for a quiet life, and about the salvation of those people. You could take that in an individualized sense, but only until you read 1 Timothy 3:14-15, which says:

14 These things I write to you... 15 I write so that you may know how you ought to conduct yourself in **the house of God**, which is the **church** of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth.

- E. Are you reading your Bible and praying with your family on a regular basis? One way to help accomplish that is to bring your family to church!
- F. "Pastor, so are you saying that I should attend Wednesday night but not Sunday morning?" I did not say that at all! I know that if you desire to come to pray with the church, you will not have to be

cajoled into coming to other services of the church—because you will *want* to do so.

G. The Bible has dozens of “one another” commands. You cannot do all of them in church meetings. But if you are not at those, you are not acquainted with or know the people in your assembly.

Conclusion

I have probably left out a few (dozen) thoughts. Let me know if you think advice on other topics would be helpful. But I am confident that if you focus on basics such as reading your Bible, making disciples, keeping yourself accountable, engaging the battle against sin in your own life, and being faithful in attending church meetings—you will do well. And that reminds me of Acts 15:29, but I hope that none of the problems mentioned there are problems for us today.

A helpful resource if you want to read on these topics and others is Donald Whitney’s book *Spiritual Disciples for the Christian Life*. After I wrote these notes, I looked at his table of contents and found that I covered many of the same topics he does, though he does so in far greater detail.

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