

Guest Editorial: Advice from a pastor to pastors

September 11, 2024

As I reflect back on the many years I was a pastor and then an associational director of missions, I want to encourage “young” pastors.

At my age, “young” is relative. A young pastor could be 50 years old and starting pastoral ministry. Whatever your age, I hope this advice will encourage you.

Calling

Being a pastor is very important.

I remember when I started out, I had a scrapbook I wrote in, and I remember sharing it with my grandmother, and I remember her reaction when I had written in it: “I would rather answer God’s call to be a pastor than to be the president of the United States.”

That calling is the highest calling.

I never remember ever thinking I was somebody. I didn’t deserve it. I certainly didn’t earn it, but it was there.

Love

As far as how I saw my role, first of all, was that I was to love the people.

There were times when I got upset, but I never doubted people will overlook some mistakes if they know you love them and you are serving the Lord by serving them. Love covers a multitude of sins.

I really have felt so blessed through the years that the Lord gave me that feeling of commitment and love to really be a minister and to care for the people. Part of my sense of calling is to try to minister to them and pray with them.

Family

Yet, there were times when, looking back, I was more committed to doing those things than I was spending the balance of time with family. In every family, there are times like that.

Try to keep a balance between your ministry to the church and your ministry to your family.

There will always be church people who think you owe it all to them. At the same time, you just have to love them and go on the best you can.

Leadership

I never tried to be a ramrod. In my favorite ordination sermon, I always tried to point out the difference between being a shepherd and being a trail boss on a cattle drive. Jesus called himself the Great Shepherd. To me, that is a real distinction.

Peter talks a lot about being a shepherd and ministering to people and guarding them.

Treat people the way Jesus treats us—loving us, caring for us, showing respect.

Love again

Three words that stand out as far as our relationship with Jesus are grace, mercy and love. If we as pastors don't show those attitudes, something is missing.

Grace is getting what we didn't deserve. Mercy is not getting what we did deserve. Love covers it all. If you don't have love, mercy and grace, something is missing badly.

I don't care where you are, there's always going to be someone who is hurting, and a minister who chooses not to be there is missing something.

Preaching

If God hasn't called you to preach, then do what you need to do. But if he has, that's where you're going to find your fulfillment.

Preaching is a crucial part of your ministry. It needs to be biblical. We're there representing the Lord. We need to be telling his message, not some pet peeve or using the platform for your agenda. As the prophet said, "Thus sayeth the Lord."

Did God really say this? Is this really what he wants us to know? What is his message to us, and how are we to respond?

Somewhere in the message, you need to be telling the good news. People need to know there's hope and that Jesus saves.

It's easy for some to get sidetracked, and I think we're seeing a lot of that in our day today with the political stuff. There are people who have missed what it means to be a follower of Jesus, and they've tried to make it a political issue, rather than understanding we're here to represent the Lord,

and that we're to represent him well.

The Lord is the one who matters. It's about his glory and his honor.

Endurance

The thing that helped me as much as anything was when the church gave me a sabbatical. There were some people who understood it and promoted it; otherwise, I don't think it would have happened.

A sabbatical can provide relief before burnout starts.

A sabbatical says to a pastor, "We're a hundred percent in favor of blessing you, so in turn you bless us, and to giving you the opportunity to grow and to learn yourself."

You need to have a network with other pastors who can listen and pray for you. You have to be careful, though. There has to be trust developed. If you're not careful, you can share too much, and you wind up with people you thought were close gossiping about you.

You can't just unload everything. You need to have a good listener who is willing to come alongside and share the load a little bit.

Don't be too trusting, but don't be too cautious either.

Calling again

Whatever your age, stay with it, and be faithful to the end.

Editor Eric Black recorded this interview with his father-in-law Glenn Ward on Aug. 25. [Glenn died on Aug. 31](#). He stayed faithful to the end.

Glenn Ward was a pastor for 45 years—37 years at Acton Baptist Church

outside Granbury—and director of missions for Paluxy Baptist Association in Granbury for 11 years. This interview was edited for length.