

The Pastor as... Follower

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Randy is also a family man, who has been married for over 20 years now, with three adult children.

“You, however, know all about my teaching, my way of life, my purpose, faith, patience, love, endurance, persecutions, sufferings—what kinds of things happened to me in Antioch, Iconium and Lystra, the persecutions I endured. Yet the Lord rescued me from all of them.”

–2 Timothy 3:10-11 (NIV)

A few preliminary comments are in order. There is a clear overlap of the pastor as “follower” and the pastor as “mentor,” which was addressed last year. When a pastor mentors another pastor the one being mentored is obviously in the role of a “follower.” The Apostle Paul’s injunction to Timothy can be viewed from within the parameters of a mentoring relationship and so we can consider the concept of “follower” from the viewpoint of the one who is mentored. That would mean our example to “follow” is a living contemporary. Yet, it should be noted that the “other Paul” asked me in this paper to “partly address HOW to learn from dead guys.” So, I will look to both present and past examples in order to draw some lessons in being a “follower.”

We should also note that every “follower” is also an “example” for others to follow. Thus, Paul calls Timothy to be a “follower” but Paul also tells Timothy to be an “example” to others in the very areas he calls him to follow his example (1 Tim 4:12-16). These two aspects are really inescapably linked. Pastors, while being exhorted to follow the examples of other godly people and pastors [like the apostle Paul], do so for the purpose of being an example to those they shepherd.

This paper will first address why Paul would encourage Timothy to be a “follower” and then we will follow the outline of Paul’s exhortation and look at the pastor as “follower” under four areas where one should “follow.” These sections will not receive equal attention in this paper.

1. The Concept of being a “Follower”

a. Choosing who to follow

The context of Paul’s comment to Timothy is a discussion of the impact false teachers were having on the churches through their teaching and lifestyle (2 Tim 3:1-9). Paul emphatically charges Timothy to re-

member Paul's teaching and lifestyle, as a witness and contrast to these false teachers, as Timothy sought to encourage the church in Ephesus through times of persecution and spiritual attack. Timothy is reminded he "knows all about" Paul and his ministry as one, who has closely and faithfully followed Paul. Besides observing Paul's ministry, Knight (1992:438) suggests that in light of 1 Timothy 4:6 Paul implies Timothy has understood Paul's teaching and ministry and embraced it as his own as a "follower" of Paul. The "follower" isn't simply an observant like a CNN field reporter on the scene in Haiti *but a fellow participant entering into a commitment of shared values and joint-labour with the one being followed.* Thus, Paul's command comes in verse 14, "Continue in the things you have learned and become convinced of, because you know those from whom you learned it..."

Mark Dever makes the following comment as he writes about the power of example:

"Example is not the main thing in life—it is the only thing." Through that sentence, the famous medical missionary and author, Albert Schweitzer, stated clearly the importance and power of example. How many of us reading this, have been influenced by the powerful life of some pastor, elder or other Christian that we saw early in our lives. If I mention "a faithful pastor," whose image crops up in your mind? If I mention "a faithful Christian," who do you think of? Schweitzer's statement is an overstatement, of course. Many other things are involved in a faithful life, but they

themselves are all combined into the example someone sets.

God wants us to follow his example and "be holy as he is holy" but he has also *designed life so that we are "followers" whether we acknowledge it or not!*

We don't normally follow someone we don't know or are not acquainted with and we probably shouldn't follow such a person! Timothy was invited to "follow" Paul and chose to do so based on what he had observed of Paul during Paul's short

visits to Lystra (Acts 14:8-20, 16:1-3). The crux of this topic is simple: *"Who we choose to follow will determine, to a large degree, who we become.* If we want to become great Christians, we need to pursue great Christians" (Ingram 2007:54). Joshua followed Moses, Elisha followed Elijah, the Apostles followed Jesus, and Timothy followed Paul. We all mimic other people from an early

age such as our parents, older siblings, teachers, etc., and they become primary influences on our life. This is why we are concerned about who our kids associate with and what they listen to and watch on TV or the Internet. The principle doesn't just apply to our early years but to all of life. We need people to imitate through each stage of life. We learn to pray by listening to others pray and to evangelize by observing others, who are evangelizing. We need godly couples to provide an example for us as new parents as we seek to raise our kids.

Paul, in 1 Timothy 5, addresses younger and older people in the church in terms of being role models and following role models. "God has ordained relationships as the primary medium for

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learning” (Ingram 2007:54). Carson (1996:71) comments, “...many believers will find their lives shaped simply by reading and rereading Scripture. Nor would I want to minimize the powerful, inner work of the Holy Spirit. But the Spirit most commonly uses means, and those means include the modeling that more experienced Christians offer.” We say, “Some things are more easily caught than taught.” The nature of the pattern for role modeling is clear. Paul said to the Corinthians, “Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ” (1 Cor 11:1). Christ is the primary example or role model to follow and those who walk “like Christ” become secondary examples to follow. This means we must study and follow Jesus’ life and character as our starting point in living a life of faith and we must teach others to do so also. My friend, Larry McCall has a helpful little book that addresses this, *Walking Like Jesus Did: Studies In The Character of Christ*.

We know how impossible it is in this life to fully follow the example of Jesus. This can possibly lead us to become discouraged or frustrated. We recognize the foundational role of Scripture to provide us with God’s truth and Christ’s example to guide our life in holiness. Yet, we can and should learn from the lives of all God’s saints the lessons of Scripture that are lived out before us both as what to do and what not to do. The great theologian, Abraham Kuyper came to an understanding of the doctrines of grace from his interactions with a group of individuals of low social class in his first pastorate (Rusten 2003:606). As we humbly follow Jesus we should be ready to learn from other humble servants of Christ. *In “following” another “sinner being saved by grace” we see what God in His grace can accomplish*

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with a flawed earthen vessel. This gives us hope that God can use us despite our limitations for His kingdom purposes and His glory. This being said, it would seem wise and prudent to seek to “follow” those who most closely followed Christ in their lives.

While at seminary in Philadelphia, on numerous occasions I visited the University of Pennsylvania campus and saw a statue of George Whitefield. History has a way of winnowing out the “average” person and “remembering” those whose lives made important contributions both for good and evil and statues are one way we remember the greats from the past. There is spiritual value in learning from those who “though dead still speak” (Heb 11:4) and who were “commended for their faith” (Heb 11:39). How do we know who to follow? *In life, God providentially brings people into our lives that influence us in many ways* both to follow their example and not to follow their example. Ingram (2007:56-57) suggests we “look in the rear-view mirror” to note who are the five people who have most influenced us to our present stage in life. He likens these people to our own personal spiritual

Mount Rushmore [five faces immortalized in our life]. As you note the areas they inspired, taught and influenced you and how God used them you will be able to more clearly see “where they left off

and where you need to find new great people to pursue” (Ingram 2007:57). “As iron sharpens iron, so one man sharpens another” (Prov 27:17). R Kent Hughes recalls the impression made on him by four men and he notes how his remembrance of these men has fuelled his continuance in the gospel. He says, “There is a

powerful link between remembrance and continuance. Such connections are part of God's way of working in our lives" (Hughes 2000:230).

In looking out the front windshield to find role models for the future, who do you look for to "follow"? Howard Hendricks said, "Everyone needs a Paul, a Timothy, and a Barnabas in their life—a Paul to learn from as a mentor and role model, a Timothy to sow seeds into the next generation with teaching and encouragement, and a Barnabas you can be totally open with, an encouraging friend who will go through life with you in the good times and in the sweat and heartache. That will keep you balanced" (in Ingram

2007:66). Trying to apply this might mean we need to try to find some saints from the past who will function as our "Paul" - as our theological guides [a Calvin, Edwards, Warfield etc] as our "Timothy"—as our pastoral guides [a Spurgeon, Lloyd-Jones, Baxter, etc.] and as our "Barnabas"—as our spiritual encouragers [a Bunyan, Ryle, Boice, etc]. Obviously there can be an overlap in these areas and one man like Lloyd-Jones could be a "Paul, Timothy and Barnabas" to you personally! Yet, the point remains that we need to read different authors past and present in these three broad areas to keep us spiritually balanced.

How do we learn from the dead guys? How do we learn from Moses or Peter, those dead guys? Don't we do so by going prayerfully to God asking for grace to understand and then accept what is taught? While recognizing that the writings of Augustine, Calvin, or Spurgeon aren't inspired we must pray for God's wisdom to know and verify that what they teach is in agreement with God's truth and reject

what is not. Just as we are required to know as much as possible about the social, cultural, political, economic and religious background of the biblical writers, so too knowing such background factors are helpful if we are to more fully understand other authors. *Knowing the historical background of past saints helps us to better grasp what they teach and what influences have impacted them and their teachings.* Barry Waugh (2009:50) points out that the study

of a historical figure must move beyond the person's life and thought and particularly concentrating just on what they have written and must consider their personal relationships, church work, and family relationships. Surely

knowing of Luther's family life and even crude comments provides a fuller perspective of the "person" than what is available simply from his theological writings.

As we move through different stages of life we will be helped by finding role models, whose lives reflect the biblical truths that we need to address in our lives as a spouse, parent, pastor, etc. Those whose calling is pastoral ministry will naturally want to find some role models who were or are involved in pastoral ministry. As we grow in spiritual maturity, we realize we need to find those who will take us to a deeper level in our understanding of God's Word. This will mean we will likely see ourselves changing the authors we read and who will become our fundamental influences. John Piper (2000:17) sums up nicely what God intends to achieve in our lives as we become "followers." Piper writes, "God ordains that we gaze on his glory, dimly mirrored in the ministry of his flawed servants. *He intends for us to consider their lives and peer through the imper-*

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fections of their faith and behold the beauty of their God."

b. Criteria for choosing who to follow

Carson (1996:72-95) develops five helpful biblical criteria in deciding who we should emulate or "follow" which he derives from Philippians 2:19-3:21. First, choose to follow one who is interested in the well-being of others, not their own things (2:19-21). Second, follow those who have proved themselves in hardship (2:22-30). Third, emulate and follow one whose confidence and boast is in Christ alone (3:1-9). Fourth, follow those who are growing spiritually (3:10-16). Fifth, follow those who set their affections on eternal not earthly things (3:17-21). These criteria apply to those "living and presently running the race of faith" in ways they won't apply to those who have completed their race.

R C Sproul (2010) comments on the need and importance of having "heroes" to "follow" and why this is an ongoing need in our lives:

When I was a boy I thought like a boy. I behaved like a boy. I understood like a boy. I was deeply impressed by heroes. Mostly, they were figures from the sports world. There was Doak Walker, Charlie "Choo Choo" Justice, Sammy Baugh, Bob Waterfield, Felix "Doc" Blanchard, Johnny Lujack. I hoarded and traded baseball cards.

As we grow older, our heroes change, but we don't stop having them. Enter into my home today and it will not take long for you to see who my heroes are now. You can't miss the portraits of Martin Luther, Stonewall Jackson, and Robert E. Lee. You'll see the fading

photographs of my father and my grandfather. You'll see the works of Augustine, Thomas Aquinas, and Jonathan Edwards. You'll hear me speak of John Gerstner. These names are readily apparent in my office—though perhaps a bit incongruous next to the framed portrait of Arnold Palmer.

Strange, isn't it? We need models. We need leaders who inspire us, real people of flesh and blood who embody character traits we admire, for in that admiration and inspira-

tion comes emulation. I know that I shall never be Martin Luther. God and all my golf teachers know I'll never be Arnold

Palmer. I cannot be these men. But I can try to be like them. I can imitate their courage as I face life's challenges. I can be strengthened by their examples.

Sproul notes that while our heroes change over the course of our lives we *need people to inspire us and model for us the traits we admire, so that in deriving inspiration from them we will be motivated to emulate them.*

This explains in one sense why we see people always looking for heroes in sports, in politics, in entertainment and in the church. This need for people who will inspire us is a simple but important point. F W Boreham (1945:59) wrote, "To read the *Life of Francis Xavier* is to be infected by his missionary passion; to read the *Journal of Mr. Wesley* is to be caught in the hot flame of his evangelistic fervour; whilst to read the *Memoirs of Robert Murray Mc-Cheyne* is to share the heavenly glow of his radiant and beautiful soul."

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If we grant that all people are looking for “heroes” then we can surmise that sometimes people don’t know what type of hero they should be seeking! I recall a young woman stopping me at Fanshawe College who told me she was doing a survey about “heroes” and asked me who my hero was and I replied, “Jesus.” I’d have loved to have seen the names on her list! As our society moves further and further away from having any biblical roots underlying its thinking even the way we view heroes will change. John Duncan (2010:65) writes:

But there is a new type of superhero these days. He is conflicted and bitter. He is confused about his duty and can’t decide if humanity is even worth defending or preserving. He is loved and hated by the people he “serves.” Though he possesses great power, he is inconsistent in its use. The result is an unlovable hero and a fickle thankfulness from the people. At the heart of these type of misadventure tales is our desire for a reliable, infallible, benevolent, and just person to protect and lead us.

We do recognize that due to the perversity and sinfulness of the human heart, non-Christians at times will choose as their heroes other depraved sinners to “follow.” Yet, most people want heroes who help us and inspire us, that *we feel we can trust to guide us in the right way and whose lives are worthy of emulation.*

Barbara Curtis (2008) comments on the pitfall of this desire for heroes, “We can see how that unmet need causes problems

in contemporary Christianity. How many ‘stars’ fill the evangelical firmament? Stars so prone to falling. How disappointing—even devastating—it has been to Christians when a swaggering preacher man is revealed to be living a double life, telling us all how to flee from sin while unable to escape it himself.” Dr. Robert K. Rudolph, my theology professor at Reformed Episcopal Seminary, used to say, “He’s not dead yet.” That was his way of warning us that when we begin to follow someone still living we don’t know where his life may go.

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We have seen the turn that Charles Templeton’s life took from being a Billy Graham associate to denying the faith. We can also note the dramatic way Clark Pinnock’s theology has changed over the decades from embracing the doctrines of grace to espousing open theism. We find that our heroes

may change—especially the “living” ones! Do you think Tiger Woods is a “hero” to as many young people today as he was a year ago? Personally, as a young boy I used to watch the New York Yankees and Mickey Mantle on TV on Saturday afternoons. Mantle was my hero but then Jim Bouton wrote “Ball Four” in which he revealed the life of players like Mantle and their womanizing and drinking and Mantle was no longer someone who inspired me and that I wanted to emulate! We know there are no sinless saints so as we choose to follow any other believer [present or past], we should *expect to find out about their faults and not overlook them but learn from them.*

God gives differing gifts to each of his servants and thankfully, people like C.J. Mahaney try to speak to the concerns of

the average pastor. Few of us or maybe any of us (!) are going to be like Spurgeon, Calvin, Edwards, and other noteworthy saints from the past in our ministries. So, as we read about their lives and achievements we can face discouragement and be tempted to depreciate our gifts and God's grace in our lives. Mahaney (2009) wrote,

Normally, biographies are written about unusually gifted men. Edwards. Whitefield. Spurgeon. Calvin. Biographers remind us of exceptional character, extraordinary gifting, and impressive intellects. And I'm grateful to God for these men and the effect of their example on my life.

But at times, reading these biographies is discouraging, rather than edifying, as we are reminded afresh about the difference between the great leaders in church history and our sorry selves. And though we benefit from the example of these men, most of us cannot relate to them because we're aware of our average intelligence, average gifting, and our preaching is—not surprisingly—average as well. (Raise your hand if you're working with that package!)

As I read their biographies I know I should be inspired, but at times I find myself increasingly discouraged (and let me be clear—this is because of my pride). Rather than filled with faith to charge into my day and prepare a sermon, care for God's people, and preach, I feel a bit hopeless.

And while reading these biographies I also hope my church members never read these books because they could only compare

me to this individual and that would prove unfavorable!

I know the sports biographies I read as a young boy were not going to change the fact that I'll never dunk a basketball and never hit a baseball 400 feet! So, I will never be another Michael Jordan or even a Nate Robinson [listed as 5 ft 9 and the defending NBA Slam Dunk Champion] or another Mickey Mantle or even a Freddy Patek [listed as 5 ft 4]! Mahaney's review of D.A. Carson's biography of his father, *Memoirs of An Ordinary Pastor: The Life and Reflections of Tom Carson* reminds us though that God is pleased with his "unknown servants" who are faithful to their calling. It also reminds us *our calling is to be faithful and leave the fruitfulness with God*. Thankfully, none of us know what will be the impact of our lives and like a Tom Carson we may influence someone that God will use to influence many others, such as he did with his son, D.A. Carson!

Kirk Wellum noted in his paper last month, "We desperately need *leaders* today, not just theological clones" [his emphasis]. God made each of us different in gifts, personality and for different kingdom purposes. *There is no "one size fits all" role model other than Jesus!* A number of years ago, one Sunday morning after the service a young man who was attending for the first time asked me, "Who do you read or follow?" This young man was strictly devoted to John Piper's teaching and sadly he eventually stopped attending our services. I guess I just wasn't Piperian enough! I told him I read from a variety of authors. With all due respect to Piper and Jonathan Edwards, why would one limit oneself to just these men when God has provided an innumerable host of saints, who've gone before that can be of help and encouragement? The Spirit lists a number of examples for us to follow some named and some unnamed in Hebrews 11 and

says they are all “witnesses” or “inspiring examples” for us as we run with perseverance the race of faith (Heb 12:1). We need all the inspiration and motivation we can get in living a Christ-like life and God has provided the body of Christ [past and present] who can inspire us by their example. Yet, as Luther reminds us, just as we enjoy the fellowship of a few “special” friends in a closer relationship so too we should limit our selection of theological books and seek to read the best of them. Luther says, “...for many books do not make men learned, nor does much reading. But reading something good, and reading it frequently, however little it may be, is the practice that makes men learned in the Scriptures and makes them pious besides” (in Piper 2000:95). Read the best and forget the rest!

Who we choose to follow will also be determined by what we believe Scripture teaches. It will also to some degree be determined by the providence of God in our lives and who we have been exposed to in our family and church circles. When I attended Reformed Episcopal Seminary, one of the students was the grandson of G. Campbell Morgan. Do you think he read his works and was a “follower” of him? I think so! Now that I am moving in a different denominational circle than before, I hear the names of A.W. Tozer and A.B. Simpson more frequently than when I moved in Baptist circles where I heard the names of John Gill, C.H. Spurgeon and T.T. Shields, which I never hear now. *Our doctrinal convictions play an important role in deciding those we will choose to follow.* Our theological convictions will impact which systematic theology texts we buy and read

and whether we read Lorraine Boettner or John Wesley or even Charles Finney! How many here read the works of G. Campbell Morgan, Harry Ironside and J. Vernon McGee? Yet, I’m confident many are reading the works of A.W. Pink, Martyn Lloyd-Jones and James Boice. I don’t believe our choice has anything to do with the godliness of those six men but more to do with the fact that we find our theology more in line with one group than the other group.

2. The Contours of being a “Follower”

We need all the inspiration and motivation we can get in living a Christ-like life and God has provided the body of Christ who can inspire us by their example.

a. Preaching

The first and primary area where Paul exhorts Timothy to be a “follower” of him is in teaching or preaching. The context makes clear this is Paul’s emphasis as Paul advances this theme by reminding Timothy of what he has

learned from childhood (3:14-15), of the inspiration and usefulness of God’s holy Scriptures (3:16-17) and giving him a charge to preach the Word patiently and carefully particularly since the false teachers already mentioned are turning some away from God’s truth (4:2-4).

Why does Paul put such great emphasis on Timothy “following” his teaching? He tells us we must follow his teaching because the teaching of holy Scripture is essential to making one “wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus” (3:15). This is a matter of life or death, eternal salvation or eternal damnation! The preaching of God’s truth is also the means God has provided for sanctifying his saints (Jn 17:17) and equipping them for service to God and mankind (3:17).

Joe Boot (2005:19) says “no human being can avoid thought plagiarism” remind-

ing us we all are those who follow the teaching of someone and *we are "all the products of our key influences."* Not everyone can have the benefit and blessings of preparation for ministry by sitting under godly teachers in a seminary but there are other ways to get a theological education and prepare for pastoral ministry.

Consider two prime examples of this truth in the 20th century. Dr. Martyn Lloyd-Jones after his conversion and giving up his medical practice gave himself to reading the works of John Owens and Jonathan Edwards. This laid the foundation for his distinguished expository pulpit ministry. Auden Wilson Tozer left school after grade six to work on the family farm but after his conversion he would disappear to the basement for a few hours each day and behind the furnace read the Bible and Christian classics and pray. Tozer had a positive impact on many lives through his thirty-one year ministry in Chicago and his radio ministry [Moody Bible Institute's radio station WMBI] despite no real formal education and no theological training. They were influenced by those they read and so are we!

By way of practical application, we have limited time and resources for reading and so we want to use our time and money wisely and *it is particularly wise to listen and "follow" the advice of those we consider godly and more mature than us in Christ.* As a new believer, I had a friend who gave me several books to read and as a new believer at seminary I sought out his advice before buying books. He encouraged me when I asked about buying and reading Lorraine Boettner's, *Reformed Doctrine of Predestination* and Arnold Dallimore's, *George Whitefield*. Those two books were very significant in shaping my theology at an early stage of my Christian walk. We can and should recommend authors to

those who "follow" us and even provide books as we are able.

Reading authors from the past like Athanasius, Augustine, Luther, Calvin and Machen to name a few can help us to *discern principles in handling doctrinal controversies in the church.* Sometimes we need to learn from the mistakes of others. T.H.L. Parker said about Calvin's handling of the death of the heretic, Servetus, "He should never have fought the battle of faith with the world's weapons" (in Piper 2000:36).

The very fact that we are all blind to some of our faults makes it imperative that we study the lives of those who have gone before us that we might not make the same mistakes. Recall George Santayana's famous saying, "Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it." We would do well to strive to be like Charles Simeon, who "wanted to be above all theological labels, biblical" (Piper 2002:86). Yet, as J. Gresham Machen noted, "Every true revival is born in controversy, and leads to more controversy" (in Piper 2006:30).

Recalling the preaching of men of faith can be a wonderful encouragement to us to faithfully preach God's Word today. The sermons of many preachers from the past are available to provide inspiration and models of preaching. One can draw encouragement from the topical preaching of men like C.H. Spurgeon or from expository preachers like Wallie Amos (W.A.) Criswell or Lloyd-Jones or John MacArthur. Criswell [1909-2002] at the beginning of 1945 started preaching in Genesis and continued preaching expository sermons for 17 years and eight months and preached through the whole Bible ending in 1963. The leaders at First Baptist Church in Dallas, TX were concerned that people would not come to hear expository sermons. Yet, the church grew from a membership of 8,322 members to 13,291 (Cooper 2002:40-41). Interestingly, Criswell near the end of his

pastorate at First Baptist Church of Chickasha, Oklahoma said he felt he was running dry in his preaching. In his next pastorate at First Baptist Church of Muskogee, Oklahoma he learned from the sermon notes of his predecessor, Dr. A.N. Halls [provided by Halls' widow] that Halls had preached through virtually the whole Bible. This would change Criswell from a topical preacher to an expository preacher (Allen 2002:57-58). Criswell has been credited with being a formidable force in breaking ground for expository preaching in the Southern Baptist Convention (Allen 2002:74). He had a long and fruitful ministry preaching for 56 years and six months at First Baptist in Dallas.

Calvin was a great expository preacher and preached for years through some books of the Bible not just on Sundays but during the week as well, such as 353 sermons on Isaiah. Calvin believed that the continuous exposition of biblical books was the best way to prevent the abandonment of God's Word (Piper (2000:139-140)!

b. Practice

A second area where Paul encourages Timothy to follow his example is in his practice of ministry. This is indicated in the two expressions "my way of life" and "my purpose." "Way of life" (*agōge* only here in the NT, cf. Est 2:20) is a comprehensive term expressing one's upbringing and conduct in a broad sense and for Paul it points to his life and call to be an apostle of Jesus to the Gentiles.

The next term "purpose" (*prothesis*) is used elsewhere by Paul only for God's

purposes but here points to Paul's plans for ministry (Knight 1992:439).

While looking to Scripture for our ministry principles, we will often look to those in ministry to observe the practical outworking of those principles. Today there are many ministry models one can observe and that may vie for our acceptance including the Willow Creek model, the Purpose

Driven model, the Emergent Church model, the 9 Marks model, the Harvest Bible Fellowship model, etc. There are critiques available of the different models and the current state of the church, such as Gary Gilley's two short works, *This Little Church Went to Market* and *This Little Church Stayed Home*. We

We will want to consider and follow the ministry principles that we consider biblically based but never try to mimic the personalities or even pastoral style of those we consider worthy of following.

should never forget that each congregation is unique just as each person is unique. The elders leading each congregation bring a unique mix of personalities and giftedness to each congregation. *We will want to follow principles not personalities*. We will want to consider and follow the ministry *principles* that we consider biblically based while recognizing we should not try to mimic the *personalities* or even pastoral style of those we consider worthy of following.

There is value in considering the manner in which other pastors of previous eras ministered and were blessed by God. Some newer ministry models don't have a "history" or we might say a proven track-record unlike ministry models that have been followed for decades or longer. *It is to our benefit to observe how others prior to our generation applied biblical principles in ministry*. Ian Murray (2008:3-28) provides a helpful overview of six legacies left by

Martyn Lloyd-Jones in his ministry. Murray notes that Lloyd-Jones' ministry illustrates: (1) an example of what a Christian minister ought to be [a calling not career, self-sacrifice, humility and disdaining the pursuit of fame]; (2) that Christianity is a God-Centred religion [the majesty, holiness and sovereignty of God as pre-eminent]; (3) the local church as the primary means of evangelism [not para-church agencies, every believer a Spirit-empowered witness/evangelist]; (4) true preaching of the Word has life-changing power [his sermons in audio and print form continue to impact lives]; (5) the key to the times is the state of the church [the need for the church to address her own life—faith, repentance, discipline, and revival within, not looking for ecumenical unity but unity found in a common understanding and commitment to the gospel of faith alone by grace alone]; (6) the growth of the church depends on the presence and power of the Holy Spirit [evangelical scholarship and apologetics are valuable but regeneration is from God]. Murray (2008:27-28) says, "In a sentence, it could be said, the message of his ministry was, 'Cease from man' and the corresponding conclusion: Not unto us, O LORD, not unto us, but unto thy name give glory, for thy mercy, and for thy truth's sake (Psa 115:1)."

Being a "follower" doesn't imply we should try to copy every aspect of the "hero's" life or mannerisms. Deveraux Jarratt [b. 1733] heard the sermons of George Whitefield read in a house where he boarded and a Presbyterian minister introduced to him to the writings of Richard Baxter and he was saved and was ordained in the Church of England. He was used of God in the Southern Awakening from 1764-1776

but he was opposed by his fellow Anglican priests and derisively called "a Presbyterian." Why had he sought ordination in the Church of England? He'd heard that both Whitefield and John Wesley were ordained in it (Rusten 2003:370-371)! One must be discerning and not just follow the ways of one's spiritual heroes without considering one's own situation. If Jarratt had considered how the Church of England treated Whitefield and Wesley he might have chosen ordination in a denomination more supportive of his evangelical "enthusiasm."

Reading the lives of others can help us to persevere when we are tempted to give up serving Christ.

Don Carson recounts during his early preaching days his mother taking him aside after a sermon and asking him where he'd picked up his habit of pausing, leaning over the pulpit, dropping his bottom lip and leering. He realized he was

mimicking the facial expression of an older man, who used it unknowingly in prayer and that Carson felt portrayed reflection and thoughtfulness (Carson 1996:67). Likewise, we don't need to develop and organize our sermons in the same manner as the Puritans or Jonathan Edwards but we can benefit from reading their sermons.

Reading the lives of others *can help us to persevere when we are tempted to give up serving Christ.* Piper (2002:19) makes this "encouraging" comment, "Frustration is normal, disappointment is normal, sickness is normal. Conflict, persecution, danger, stress—they are all normal. The mind-set that moves away from these will move away from reality and away from Christ. Golgotha was not a suburb of Jerusalem."

I love that last comment! Charles Simeon [1759-1836] preached for fifty-four years at Trinity Church, Cambridge and in

his first twelve years the congregation refused to allow him to preach the second Sunday service. The church members also locked the pew doors and refused to allow others to sit in their personal pews and this went on for ten years. Simeon also endured thirteen years in which he lost his voice and often could do little more than whisper but he kept preaching (Piper 2002:92-93, 95). Frank W. Boreham ([1920] 1994:42) said if he was tempted to be pessimistic or think conditions precluded fruitful ministry he would reflect on the ministry of Thomas Boston. Boston went to a church in Ettrick with few members and his parishioners could barely speak without profanity and were addicted to lives of gross immorality. Yet, he persevered in teaching and visiting and training the heads of homes to lead family worship. Boston (in Boreham [1920] 1994:49) claimed, "...the great thing I aimed at in my preaching was to impress the people with their sense of their need of Christ" and God blessed his faithful ministry of twenty-five years of preaching Christ.

We can learn from studying the lives of others the *providential manner in which God can call us to ministry and to a specific place*. Calvin was seeking a tranquil life of scholarship in Strasbourg but a war between Charles V and Francis I blocked the road to Strasbourg and caused Calvin to detour to Geneva. As Piper (2000:129) states, "In retrospect, one has to marvel at the providence of God that he should so arrange armies to position his pastors where he wanted them." John Owen tried to get John Bunyan released from prison and failed and in God's providence Bunyan's greatest ministry accomplishment was the writing of *Pilgrim's Progress* while in jail in Bedford (Piper 2006:96).

There are *lessons one can learn about health and overworking in ministry* too and Calvin was known to take only one meal a day and worked night and day with scarce-

ly a break. In a letter from 1546 Calvin laments, "Apart from the sermons and the lectures, there is a month gone by in which I have scarce done anything, in such wise I am almost ashamed to live thus useless" (in Piper 2000:134). So what did Calvin do during that shameful, useless month! Piper (2000:134) notes Calvin gave "A mere twenty sermons and twelve lectures in that month!" Useless!

Adoniram Judson warned potential missionaries that many would die within five years on the mission field and the premature death of many Europeans in the East must be attributed to neglect of bodily exercise (Piper 2009:107, 113). John Owen only allowed himself four hours of sleep but later when his health was affected and he was often sick he regretted that habit of his youth (Piper 2006:85).

c. Piety

A third area Paul notes that Timothy is to follow him in is in his piety or godly life. The four terms listed speak of Paul's character that Timothy has observed—Paul's faith in God that produces faithfulness to Christ and the gospel, his patience or forbearance with God's saints and his opponents, his steadfast love to God and God's people, and his endurance which points to Paul's perseverance in the gospel despite adverse circumstances, hindrances, opposition and temptations as a follower and apostle of Christ. "In place of the familiar 'faith, hope, and love' Paul replaces 'hope' with 'patience' and after 'love' writes 'endurance.' These four words convey the idea of waiting a situation out with steadfastness, an appropriate action for a person who has hope" (Liefeld 1999:278).

We need to observe the godly lives of others and their practice of living by faith to encourage us as we seek to battle with the world, the flesh and the devil. Elisabeth Elliot has written: "Reading the biographies of men and women whose hearts were gladly given to

God has lit the way for me. Seeing the obedience of just one simple Christian has more than once steered me clear of danger” (in Curtis 2008). Charles Simeon’s life reminds us of the vital role of humility in one’s life and ministry and Simeon wrote of the importance of meditation for growth in grace and that without meditation prayer is an empty service. He gave himself to prayer and the devotional study of the Word for the first four hours of each day (Piper 2002:106). We need to hear men like John Owen tell us, “Be killing sin or it will be killing you” (in Piper 2006:97). Owen started with the premise that, “Our happiness consisteth not in the *knowing* the things of the gospel, but in the *doing* of them” (in Piper 2006:110).

Faithful biographies, not the sugar-coated kind, note the moral and character flaws of God’s saints. For example, Piper (2000: 29, 31) notes that Luther’s language could exhibit crudity and hatefulness and his heated temper could result in four-letter words and foul “bathroom” talk and Luther’s anti-Semitism is a well-known moral flaw. In a letter to Melancthon, while working on the translation of the NT Luther begged for his brother’s prayers and commented on his spiritual struggles with the flesh saying, “I *should* be afire in the spirit, in reality I am afire in the flesh, with lust, laziness, idleness, sleepiness. It is perhaps because you all have ceased praying for me that God has turned away from me... For the last eight days I have written nothing, nor prayed not studied, partly from self-indulgence, partly from another vexatious handicap [constipation and piles]...” (in Piper 2000:105).

Of J. Gresham Machen, George Marsden wrote, “He had a personality that only his good friends found appealing” (in Pip-

er 2006:116). He does seem to have alienated people and likely exhibited a temper fuelled by pride and the privilege he had known all his life. Yet, a “fuller” picture is provided by Barry Waugh (2009:21-51) of Machen, who had considerable wealth, and was a very generous man concerned about and carrying for a Richard Hodges, who had been an alcoholic but became a Christian and depended on Machen’s financial support and encouragement [contra the assessment of Piper 2006:155].

Paul speaks of our lives as being letters seen and read of men (2 Cor 3:2-3) and *godly pastors can and should inspire young men to consider pastoral ministry.* After all, if a pastor is a recluse or a joyless, inconsiderate, “just doing my duty” type of man how many young boys or teens will have favourable impressions of “pastors” planted in their hearts! Donald Grey Barnhouse

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made such a favourable impression on young James Boice, during his trips to the Boice home in McKeesport, PA and through his sermons that Boice heard on the radio growing up, that at age twelve James Boice determined that he wanted to go into pastoral ministry (Rusten 2003:256). How many of us would long to see our son follow us in pursuing pastoral ministry! But do we set an example that would make such a call appealing?

Joe Boot (2005:44) shares how as a young child he wanted to be like his dad and he would assemble a small congregation consisting of his three brothers and a couple friends in the living room and preach a short sermon then serve the Eucharist with fruit juice and cookies. Of course knowing kids with free juice and cookies I’m surprised he didn’t have a larger congregation! The point though is

his father inspired him to consider pastoral ministry as a way to live his life for God.

Our *perseverance in faith is in conjunction with godly means including the encouragement of God's Word and God's people present and past*. Piper (2002:22) after fifty years as a professing Christian wrote, "I see more clearly now that even after years of such growth and stability, shocking coldness and even apostasies are possible. And I have known moments of horrifying blankness that make me realize my utter dependence on the mercies of God being new every morning." Bunyan drew on the encouragement of 2 Corinthians 1:9 to "live upon God that is invisible" during his twelve years in the Bedford jail (Piper 2001:42-43).

d. Persecutions

In verse 11 Paul adds two more things that Timothy knew about, those being Paul's persecutions and the consequent sufferings. Paul just mentions the names of the places aware that Timothy was well acquainted with what happened to Paul in the Roman province of Galatia when Paul sought to preach the gospel in Pisidian Antioch, Iconium, and Lystra (Acts 13:50; 14:2, 5, 19). Stones were hurled at Paul in Lystra and he was left for dead by his persecutors. Timothy likely had poignant memories of this incident and could verify that God in his mercy had indeed delivered Paul from many attacks, including the stoning. Paul reminds Timothy that all who live godly lives for Christ will be persecuted (3:12).

"*God intends for the afflictions of Christ to be presented to the world through the affliction of his people*" (Piper 2009:24) [his emphasis]. Jason Hood (2009:286, 290) argues that teaching on the imitation of Christ crucified is the most neglected aspect of recent

teaching on the NT message of the cross. "Cruciformity" is a term that has been used for "conformity to the cross" in one's life and for what has been referred to as the "imitation of Christ." Ways in which conformity to the cross appear in Paul's writings include cruciform *faith* [faithful obedience], cruciform *love* [self-emptying and giving], cruciform *power* [power in weakness] and cruciform *hope* [the pattern of reversal where we die to live, suffer to be exalted etc]. Hood (2009:293) maintains that the following of Jesus that Paul calls Christians to embrace is to a mimetic discipleship in mindset, mission, mortification and money. Hood (:293) suggests that particularly helpful in this area is John Stott's *The Cross of Christ* where Stott "writes of the implications for cross-imitation and

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cross-bearing in church growth and ministerial service; in cross-cultural mission; in evangelism; in social action; in community building, drawing on Count Nikolaus von Zinzendorf for inspiration; in enemy love; in the creation of personal holiness and in the exercise of hope and patience." Hood (:294) sums up his article by stating, "As Richard Pratt is fond of saying, a Messiah one cannot imitate is not worth having as one's Messiah. *The NT certainly presents its Messiah and his cross as appropriate objects of imitation*" [my emphasis]. Hood (:291) rightly notes that "human imitation is not bare human effort, but the Spirit's work in believers that is the force behind the cruciform life.

We are to share in Jesus' suffering that we may also share in his glory (Rom 8:17). Pastor Tson who suffered in Romania argues Christ's suffering is for *propitiation*; our suffering is for *propagation*, that is *our suffering is for the cause of Jesus' gospel mission* (Piper 2009:15). John Paton's heroic

stand for the gospel on the island of Tanna which seemed fruitless became through his writing of that story “the kindling of the heart of Australian Presbyterianism with a living affection for these Islanders...” and the sending of missionaries to the New Hebrides (Piper 2009:67). Paton’s great courage came from his conviction that God is sovereign or as he said, “I realized I was immortal till my Master’s work with me was done” (Piper 2009:75)! During William Tyndale’s time, the Catholic Church burned people alive for teaching their children the Lord’s Prayer in English. English translations of the Bible were publicly burned and Tyndale watched young men who embraced his teaching burned at the stake as was Tyndale after being strangled (Piper 2009:44-45). Yet, the Word of God and the gospel could not be bound!

There can be an ennobling and emboldening of the spirit as we witness fellow believers suffer for Jesus. James Renwick [b. 1662] having graduated from Edinburgh University watched as Donald Cargill, a field preacher of the Scottish Covenanters was hanged on July 27, 1681. Renwick was so moved that he aligned himself with the Covenanters and prepared for ministry in Holland and then returned to Scotland to preach as a Covenanter. Renwick had a short ministry during the period of 1684-1688 known as the “Killing Time.” This period was the height of the persecution of the Scottish Covenanters. Renwick was hanged on February 17, 1688 before a large crowd in Edinburgh, at age twenty-six. Cargill’s brave testimony to Jesus encouraged Renwick to consider risking his life also for the cause of Christ and the gospel (Rusten 2003:96-97).

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We can be reminded of the remarkable providence of God and *how he uses the suffering of his saints as a testimony for the gospel*. Consider the Reformer, Patrick Hamilton [b. 1503] who embraced Luther’s teachings and left Scotland to avoid further summons from the Roman Catholic Church. In Germany he met Luther, Melancthon, and Tyndale and in returning to Scotland he was burned at the stake on February 29, 1528 for teaching the doctrines of the Reformation. His execution was done in haste and without enough wood or powder so Hamilton suffered a slow and horrible death and a witness noted, “The reek [stench of the smoke] of Patrick Hamilton has infected as many as it did blow upon.” In fact, one of his accusers, Alexander Alexius was converted as a result of Hamilton’s testimony and became a Reformation leader (Rusten 2003:120-121).

Tyndale wrote to his good friend John Firth, “Your cause is Christ’s gospel, a light that must be fed with the blood of faith... If the pain be above your strength, remember, Whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, I will give it you. And pray to our Father in that name, and he will ease your pain, or shorten it...” (Piper 2009:52). How many pastors resign at the first volleys of criticism hurled at them? We are to *accept that some opposition and even persecution is part of the “calling” of all Christians and especially those who will lead others*. William Wilberforce faced public criticism and slander for his stance on the abolition of slavery reminding us that one can receive criticism and opposition for the best of actions (Piper 2002:139). Remembering such men we won’t be surprised when opposition

arises or as likely to write a resignation letter on a Monday morning!

Persecutions and suffering can help pastors grow in love for their flock and for God. Bunyan's writings were filled with evidence of his love for God's sheep and he delighted to minister to them even in jail. He knew personally and taught them that the Christian walk is not a pleasant stroll on a sunny day on a sandy beach (Piper 2001:62-66). William Cowper's depression and sufferings resulted in a theology of suffering in his hymns that pointed the wounded soul to God's grace and glory (Piper 2001:167-169).

Conclusion

God has provided a great cloud of witnesses to encourage us in running the race but ultimately it is a race run with our eyes fixed on our Saviour and "the Lover" of our souls (Heb 12:1-2). It is Jesus that we long to "follow" and to whose arms we run and whose commendation we desire. Whether we are those whose names are remembered in the annals of history (Heb 11:1-34) or whose names are forgotten but whose deeds are known to God (Heb 11:35-38) we long to be among those who "were all commended for their faith" (Heb 11:38)!

For those of us in pastoral ministry, whether God uses us in reviving his church or preaching to a people who will not listen, as Jeremiah did, we surely will be thankful and happy in the final day to

be found to be faithful "followers" of our Master and have a testimony like that of Tom Carson. D A Carson (2008:148) wrote concerning his father's death:

When he died, there were no crowds outside the hospital, no editorial comments in the papers, no announcements on television, no mention in Parliament, no attention paid by the nation. In his hospital room there was no one by his bedside. There was only the quiet hiss of oxygen, vainly venting because he has stopped breathing and would never need it again.

But on the other side all the trumpets sounded. Dad won entrance to the only throne room that matters, not because he was a good man or a great man—he was, after all, a most ordinary pastor—but because he was a forgiven man. And he heard the voice of him whom he longed to hear saying, 'Well done, good and faithful servant; enter into the joy of your Lord.'

Charles Simeon sums up our goal in being "followers" when he wrote, "there are but two lessons for Christians to learn: the one is to enjoy God in everything; the other is to enjoy everything in God" (Piper 2002:113).

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