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Advice from the Apostle Paul

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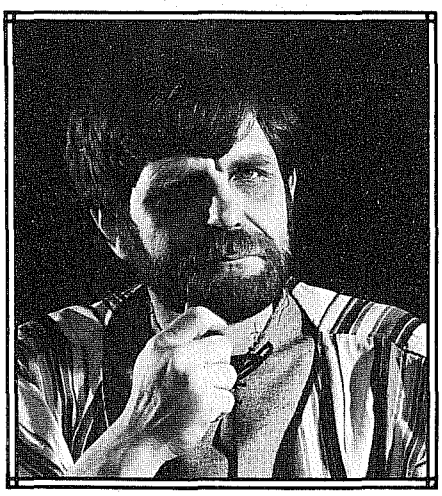
Advice from the Apostle Paul

compiled by Paul R. Fink



Suppose a young man, two months shy of graduating from seminary and full of all the apprehension that comes with entering the pastorate, had the opportunity to seek advice from the apostle Paul. What would the student ask? How would Paul reply? (References have been slightly edited for readability.)

What is the most important thing I can do in starting a new church?

First of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks should be made for all men; including kings, and all that are in authority; that you may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty. This is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour; who will have all men to be saved, and to come to the knowledge of the truth (1 Tim. 2:1-4).

What kind of characteristics should I cultivate in the men of my church?

Men that pray every where, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting (1 Tim. 2:8).

I understand that you use the word "bishop" (overseer) to emphasize the responsibilities of the pastor of the local church. What are the minimal qualifications one must meet to be a pastor?

If a man desire the office of a bishop, he desireth a good work. A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, vigilant, sober, of good behaviour, given to hospitality, apt to teach; not given to wine, no striker, not greedy of filthy lucre; but patient, not a brawler, not covetous; one that ruleth well in his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity; (For if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God?) Not a novice, lest being lifted up with pride he fall into condemnation of the devil. Moreover he must have a good report of them which are without; lest he fall into reproach and the snare of the devil (1 Tim. 3:1-7).

What about deacons? What are the minimal qualifications one must meet to be a deacon?

Deacons must be grave, not double-tongued, not given to much wine, not greedy of filthy lucre; holding the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience. And let these also first be proved; then let them use the office of a deacon, being found blameless. Even so must their wives be grave, not slanderers, sober, faithful in all things. Let the deacons be the husbands of one wife, ruling their children and their own houses well. They that have used the office of a deacon well purchase to themselves a good degree, and great boldness in the faith which is in Christ Jesus (1 Tim. 3:8-13).

I will probably be younger than many people in my church. How shall I seek to be perceived by them?

Let no man despise thy youth; but be an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity (1 Tim. 4:12).

How may I make sure that I am an example of all of those things to the people of my congregation?

Neglect not the gift that is in thee, which was given thee by prophecy, with the laying on of the hands of the presbytery. Meditate upon these things; give thyself wholly to them; that thy profiting may appear to all. Take heed to thyself, and unto the doctrine and continue in them (1 Tim. 4:14-16).

How should I deal with discipline problems? Should I treat everyone the same—or are there special considerations I should give in some situations?

Rebuke not an elder, but entreat him as a father; and the younger men as brethren; the elder women as mothers; the younger as sisters, with all purity (1 Tim. 5:1-2).

How should I react when someone brings an accusation against a fellow pastor?

Against an elder receive not accusation, but before two or three witnesses (1 Tim. 5:19).

What kind of characteristics should I cultivate in the women of my church?

Women that adorn themselves in modest apparel, with shamefacedness and sobriety; not with broided hair, or gold, or pearls, or costly array; but (which becometh women professing godliness) with good works (1 Tim. 2:9-10).

Should women be put into places of leadership in the local church?

Suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man (1 Tim. 2:12).

Why do you hold that view?

Adam was first formed, then Eve. And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived was in the transgression (1 Tim. 2:13-14).

How will women who desire to have any influence in the local church be fulfilled?

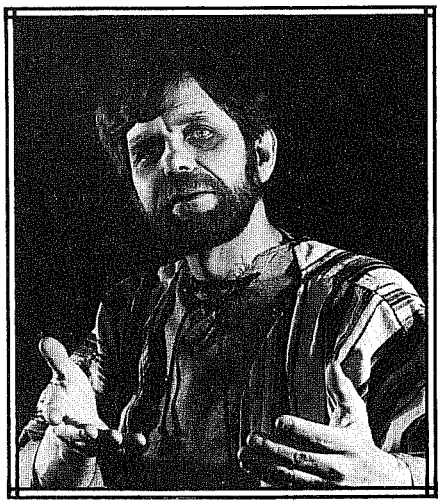
The younger women should marry, bear children, guide the house, give no occasion to the adversary to speak reproachfully (1 Tim. 5:14). The aged women . . . may teach the young women to be sober, to love their husbands, to love their children, to be discreet, chaste, keepers at home, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the Word of God be not blasphemed (Titus 2:3-5).

What about the older godly widows who may be in my church? Is there any way I can use them to enhance our ministry?

But if any widow (be over 60 and desolate) let (her) be taken into the number (of those supported by the church). She should be godly, and should have been the wife of one man, well reported of for good works. She should have brought up children (and) lodged strangers. She should have washed the saints' feet, relieved the afflicted, (and) diligently followed every good work (1 Tim. 5:9-10).

Is it really right for the pastor to be paid a salary?

Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honour, especially they who labour in the word and doctrine. For the scripture saith, Thou shalt not muzzle the ox that treadeth out the corn. And, The laborer is worthy of his reward (1 Tim. 5:17-18).



I probably won't have the highest salary in the world. Should that be a concern to me?

But 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 raiment let us be therewith content. But they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows (1 Tim. 6:6-10).

Where should I devote my energies in my ministry?

Thou therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also. Thou therefore endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of this life; that he may please him who hath chosen him to be a soldier (2 Tim. 2:1-4).

What advice would you give me in conducting my life in general?

Flee also youthful lusts: but follow righteousness, faith, charity, peace, with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart. But foolish and unlearned questions avoid, knowing that they do gender strifes (2 Tim. 2:22-23).

Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth. But shun profane and vain babblings: for they will increase unto more ungodliness (2 Tim. 2:15-16).

As you know, sir, there is quite a bit of conflict between Christian leaders in the community. What advice do you have about separation and unity?

Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves. Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others (Phil. 2:3-4).

Should I have any involvement with unbelievers, Liberals, or the so-called "ecumenical movement?"

Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? And what communion hath light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial? Or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? For ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty (1 Cor. 6:14-18).

Any concluding thoughts?

But watch thou in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of thy ministry (2 Tim. 4:5).

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