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There was a time when no one resigned from the ministry. Or so it seemed. The only ones who left the ministry were those who were “asked” to resign “for cause.”

Times have changed. Ministers are resigning their calls in unprecedented numbers, and many of those who remain—says one survey after another—face discouragement and burnout. In fact, you can find any number of books on the peculiar form of burnout which has afflicted the clergy in the past two decades. Each of them was written by an expert. Each of them offers advice.

This book, Motivation for Ministry, also offers advice, but I have not written a manual on the subject of burnout perse. Rather, this is a book by a parish pastor to his fellow parish pastors about basic attitudes. Having once resigned a call, and having had my share of both discouragement and successes, it seemed good to me to present both halves of this pastoral equation from a theological and practical perspective, tracing how the prime directive of giving God the glory affects our attitudes to ministry.
Accordingly, I have entitled my work, *Motivation for Ministry: Soli Deo Gloria* (to God alone the glory). As you read it, please accent the word *soli*, for I believe that this basic, fundamental attitude of wanting to glorify God alone spells the difference between a discouraged or a successful pastor. This holds true no matter how overworked or unappreciated the pastor himself may feel. In other words, I am convinced that the problem facing ministers today is not one of a mutated ministry grown too difficult to handle; no, rather, the problem is one of *attitude*.

So this book constitutes a call to view modern pastoral duties and motives from the ancient perspective of worship as formulated by St. Paul, “So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God” (1 Corinthians 10:31). I am convinced this worshipful perspective propelled St. Paul to ministerial excellency in spite of the terrific hardships he encountered.

Case histories that illustrate the problems, issues, and peculiarities of the parish ministry are liberally sprinkled throughout this work. They involve my personal experiences as well as those of other pastors. I have taken the liberty to change names and alter circumstances slightly in these stories to ensure anonymity, while at the same time preserving the essence of these cases of casuistry. *Soli Deo Gloria*.

This book is affectionately dedicated to the preparatory, collegiate, and seminary training system of the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod for its patient and priceless instruction of me, and to my wife, Patrice, for her patient encouragement of me.
You Don’t Quit
Even If Your Orange Crate Breaks

In one eye-opening episode of “The Bob Newhart Show” Bob Hartley reminisced about his childhood minister. Wistfully he told his wife Emily, “I remember sitting there in this big pew, looking up at our minister towering over me in the pulpit and hearing his rich, resonant voice booming out at me. I thought he was God.”

In time Dr. Bob came to understand that his minister measured up considerably shorter than God: “Later on, I found out he was only a five foot three inch person standing on an orange crate, speaking through a microphone.”

He went on to tell Emily, “One Sunday, in the middle of the sermon, his orange crate collapsed . . . but as he fell through it, he grabbed the microphone. He disappeared behind the lectern, but he kept right on talking. He must have been thrashing around behind there for ten, fifteen
minutes, Emily. And he never missed a word of his sermon. And when he pulled himself back up, just in time to say ‘Amen,’ we all gave him a standing ovation. I’ll never forget that, Emily. The man never gave up . . . I guess that’s the way I look at the ministry. You don’t quit even if your orange crate breaks.” So while Bob Hartley’s discovery troubled his youthful mind, it also proved helpful. When his minister fell into trouble, Hartley caught sight of his minister’s true stature.

**Fiction Rooted in Fact**

Bob Hartley’s view of his minister as one who always tramples defeat underfoot and rises to the occasion with aplomb comes off as a comic-fiction ideal. However, in real life this idealized version of a parish pastor also finds many subscribers. I can supply you with names of those who harbor such stereotypes, and I’m sure you could also add to the list.

Parishes are loaded with people who entertain, what Edward Bratcher terms, an inflated opinion of their ministers. Bratcher served as a parish pastor for many years and later as a consultant to The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. He, too, watched the episode of “The Bob Newhart Show” in which Bob Hartley idolized his boyhood pastor. His book for ministers, *The Walk-on-Water Syndrome*, fairly howls in protest over such a characterization: “The choice to use this issue—the superhuman nature of ministers—as the basis for a popular TV show indicates the prevalence of such an attitude. The writers assumed, and I believe correctly, that the average TV viewer would understand the setting and would also laugh at the ridiculous attitude which is normally held.”

While I am willing to agree with Bratcher that the superhuman nature of ministers exists in theory only, I also know that parishioners want to set their ministers on pedestals
and picture them as immune to the ordinary sins which be- set other mortals. And no amount of complaining on the part of the clergy will change that perception. Someone has already said it: perception is reality.

It’s rather amazing that public expectations for the Christian ministry overall remain high despite the image problems which the sins of some clergy have created. Recent sex and money scandals, for example, have demonstrated the ordinary, less than superhuman nature of many televangelists, ministers, and priests. Many of these reports sensationalized clergy sins and shenanigans in a style nothing short of uproarious. How some have greeted these scandals with glee troubles me.

Nevertheless, public expectations for the Christian ministry remain amazingly high. Organized religion, according to a September 1988 Gallup poll, surfaced as the institution Americans most trusted.

Why does the public place such a high trust in and expect such great things from the Christian ministry despite the revelations of ministers who have fallen from their pedestals with such thuds? Is the public’s attitude toward the Christian ministry illogical? Unrealistic? I choose to believe that the word hopeful best explains the attitude of the public. I would maintain that Bob Hartley’s never-say-quit minister represents the ideal which many people, church people especially, hope and expect the Christian minister will live up to. Yes, I’m well aware that ministers can complain about this expectation. But I would also argue that ministers should accept this ideal as a reality and then seek to understand why people persist in thinking as they do. My own experience over the years teaches me that parishioners idealize their ministers for good reason.

I believe that Bob Hartley’s idealized minister is not rooted in fiction but is, indeed, based on fact. The idealized minister, the man who keeps going even when his orange
crate breaks, exists. His counterpart exists in the great personali-

ties of the Bible and of history, in the lives of lesser men, and most prominently in the person of Jesus Christ. These four sources contribute to what I call the hopeful ideal of ministry.

Scriptural Counterparts

Do you think it unrealistic or exaggerated to idealize the ministry a la Bob Hartley? If so, have you considered the fact that the Bible itself has contributed to what some may see as this caricature of the heroic minister?

The Bible parades before its readers columns of dedicated ministers, marching like an army through the sacred story. Their exploits sound more like fiction than fact. I think especially about the appalling conditions under which many of these dedicated saints of old labored. These Biblical heroes fed on the food of adversity. Their level of commitment shines through clearly, especially when it is contrasted against the ugly backdrop of their difficulties and heartaches. Their willingness and ability to do their work under extremely trying conditions, to my mind, gives a partial definition to what we might call ministerial competency: they refused to give up.

Moses steered a nation of whiners to the promised land, reaping even his family’s open rebellion along the way. Elijah, in one sense, was his age’s Rodney Dangerfield; from his defeated enemies he could get no respect. Jeremiah found himself the target of death threats when his incisive sermons calling for repentance turned a crowd of clergy and laity into a mob. Hosea married Gomer, a woman of questionable morals, to dramatize Israel’s apostasy. Amos was charged with conspiracy and threatened with death. John the Baptist suffered censure, imprisonment, and decapitation. Paul of Tarsus lived through a whole catalog of sufferings, experiencing everything from political intrigues
to sinking ships. And Rome banished the Apostle John to Patmos.

The staying power of the prophets and apostles under such severe conditions reveals itself as dramatic, heroic, and humbling. Luther, himself a frequent victim of and victor over hardships, had to admit: “I am angry with myself and am ashamed of myself and my life. I regret that after the manifestation of Christ we pay such cold attention to our gifts and believe the Word so feebly. Yet the fathers believed with such great constancy . . . compared with them, we are cold and sleepy amid the abundance and the great glory of the manifestation of Christ.”

Bible readers know full well how it portrays the ministry within its pages. The ministers of the Bible, “faced jeers and flogging, while still others were chained and put in prison. They were stoned; they were sawed in two; they were put to death by the sword. They went about in sheepskins and goatskins, destitute, persecuted, and mistreated—the world was not worthy of them. They wandered in deserts and mountains, and in caves and holes in the ground (Hebrews 11:36-38).”

Comparisons, therefore, of what was once to what is now are inevitable. Every minister will be measured by the biblical ideal; the comparisons prove themselves inescapable. The present day minister who would pick up the prophet’s mantle cannot escape the prophet’s shadow.

**Historical Counterparts**

You can also trace the hopeful ideal of the Christian minister to the testimonies of church history. Great men leave behind great legacies; denominational heroes create for would-be disciples an historical ideal. I think of Luther and Chemnitz and American Lutherans like Walther and the brothers Pieper, to name a few; they shape my version of the historical ideal. Luther Rice, Spurgeon, and many oth-
ers form this ideal for Baptists. Episcopalians think of Cranmer, Trench, and Seabury. Methodists have the Wesleys and Whitefield, while Presbyterians look to Calvin, Knox, and Beza. Every denomination of the Christian Church numbers its great men as contributors to the historical ideal of ministry. Every minister of the Christian Church, consequently, eventually feels himself inextricably compared to the standards of his denomination’s stellar performers.

**Lesser Counterparts**

More than likely the hopeful ideal of ministry exists in every community. It was my incomparable professor of English at Northwestern College, the late Dr. Elmer Kiessling, who confirmed this truth in a way that I have never forgotten. He had us Juniors reading Geoffrey Chaucer’s *Canterbury Tales* in the original old English, an initially trying task, but one which we came to enjoy because the characters and the stories proved so engaging and unforgettable, and the studies in human nature proved so timeless.

One pilgrim on the way to Canterbury, the priest, impressed me more than any other. Since I was involved in preministerial studies, the character of the priest hit home, and it stayed with me long after I had exiled my copy of *Canterbury Tales* to the attic. I hope you might share my enthusiasm for the character sketch of the man whom Geoffrey Chaucer described as the quintessential model of ministerial competency. He paints an affectionate portrait of him: “There was a good man of the church, a poor parish priest, but rich in holy thoughts and works. He was also a learned man, a cleric, who wished to preach Christ’s gospel truly and to teach his parishioners devoutly. He was benign, wonderfully diligent, and extremely patient in adversity, as he had proved many times.”
Poor, overworked, and unrecognized, Chaucer’s anonymous parson ministered competently, working like a true shepherd. “He was a pastor and not a mercenary. And yet, though he himself was holy and virtuous, he was not contemptuous of sinners, nor overbearing and proud in his talk; rather he was discreet and kind in his teaching. His business was to draw folk to heaven by fairness and by setting a good example.”

Chaucer’s parish pastor labored in obscurity, preaching and living the gospel. He set a standard for others—a standard which Chaucer recognized and recorded. Chaucer’s praiseworthy description of the priest fits men I have personally encountered as well as others whose worthy reputations I have learned about. Often, when I pull on my robes and mount the pulpit and face a sea of faces, a feeling wells up in me which says: “I’m standing in a pulpit once occupied by other men whose work and dedication give meaning to the term pastor, whose sermons are still bearing fruit, and whose expertise won them recognition as men of character, and boy, I had better measure up.” I admit I enjoy the thrill of the challenge, and I wonder whether others have ever experienced that same sensation and how they have dealt with it. Chaucer ended his description of the priest by saying, “I don’t believe there is a better priest anywhere. He cared nothing for pomp and reverence, nor did he affect an overly nice conscience; he taught the lore of Christ and his twelve apostles, but first he followed it himself.”

Do Chaucer’s glowing words describe the minister who preceded you in your present charge, or do they fit the man who inspired you to enter the ministry? Do they also become you? You and I certainly enjoy models of the hopeful ideal of ministry both in the ranks of our predecessors and among our contemporary colleagues. May you and I aspire to be numbered among them as well.
**The Christlike Counterpart**

We all, of course, recognize Christ as the ideal minister. We also identify his attitude as the one forming the essence of pastoral competency: he became less than he was to serve sinners. Humility marks the spirit of Christ because, even though he was the Son of God, he stooped to serve. Paul says of Christ that he “made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death—even death on a cross” (Philippians 2:7,8)! As ministers of Christ, you and I wish to become less than what we are to serve others in his name. This means we can never escape the inevitable comparisons to the Christ who humbled himself. I can see no other way around it. If you and I are to grow in competency as ministers, then we must be willing to calibrate all of our attitudes by the standard which guided Christ—humility.

The portrayal of Chaucer’s priest shows a man whose ministerial habits were patterned after those of Christ. And, interestingly enough, you will find the antithesis of this spirit in Chaucer’s characterization of the friar, another clergyman who made the trip to Canterbury. Chaucer says he was “a wanton, merry friar, a licensed beggar and a very gay man. . . . He heard confession very agreeably, and his absolution was pleasant. When he thought he would get a good present, he was an easy man in giving penance. . . . He knew the taverns well in every town, and cared more for every innkeeper and barmaid than for a leper or a beggar. . . . And, above everything, wherever there was a chance for profit, this friar was courteous and humbly helpful. There was no man anywhere more capable at this work.”

The friar lacked what the priest possessed, a Christlike disposition. He was for Chaucer what Elmer Gantry is for us. The caricature of the friar, I firmly believe, merely serves
to underscore the fact that Christian people instinctively expect that true ministers of God will behave themselves as such. Or let me put it this way. Likeness to Christ constitutes an occupational hazard of the shepherd under Christ; the people we serve expect us to be Christlike and expect us to continue to grow in Christlikeness. No minister who serves the flock as the undershepherd of Christ should then imagine himself as someone who is exempt from the inevitable comparisons to Christ, the flock’s Chief Shepherd.

I contend that comparisons to Christ come with the turf. In fact, I find it demeaning to Christ and his church when I hear or read about ministers who complain about their parishioners’ expectations of them in such a way that suggests they are all too willing to water down the model their Lord left them. To argue that we must lower the standards of integrity required of ministers today because the times have changed and that present-day men lack the faith and fortitude of a by-gone age to conform to apostolic models of Christlike competency is to denigrate the Christlike model (Titus 1:6-9; 1 Peter 5:1-4). So those who seek to minister in controversy, who demand that people accept their unscriptural divorces or sexual perversions or soul-destroying heresies, certainly are not following the model the Lord left for them.

Rather than complaining or seeking to diminish or whittle down the hopeful ideal of ministry, we, as pastors, have only one choice. That choice is outlined for us in Paul’s prayer for the Ephesians: “I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith” (Ephesians 3:16,17). You get the picture. It all comes down to faith—a faith created by the Word of God and sustained by it, a faith that promises to keep Christ in the hearts of his children. When you and I feel ourselves buckling under the pressure to conform ourselves to Christ-
likeness, we will consequently return to the Word. I main-
tain that the degree to which a shepherd of Christ grazes on
the Word and believes it, so in proportion he derives
strength in his inner being to model Christ on the outside
for all to see. We are only as strong as the food we eat.

**Unreal but Perfectly Understandable Expectations**

As I have attempted to demonstrate, I believe you can
trace the hopeful ideal of ministry to a composite picture
drawn from Scripture, history, contemporary examples, and
Christ. I believe parishioners are justified in entertaining
the high standards for their pastors modeled by these four
sources.

Yet, it must be noted that parishioners sometimes do har-
bor expectations of their ministers which fall within the
realm of the unreal and of the unfair, yes, even of the
ridiculous. Edward Bratcher comments, “The pastor is ex-
pected to walk on water, and he cannot, and he becomes
angry with himself because he cannot.” You and I, like our
people, have our limitations. But, we also know that many
of our people labor under the delusion that their pastor
must possess superhuman powers since he represents God.
How this works I will demonstrate in the following formu-
la: Christ is omniscient; therefore Christ’s ministers can
also be expected to be omniscient, that is, they must some-
how manage to know what remains hidden to ordinary
mortals. Yes, some people actually think this way. As evi-
dence consider the following pastor’s experience—an expe-
rience that is perhaps somewhat similar to one that you’ve
shared.

“Pastor, my sister was in the hospital all week, and you
didn’t come to visit her,” said the parishioner. He was elder-
ly, red-faced, and upset. He had invaded the quiet of the
sacristy five minutes before the beginning of the worship
service, and he stood towering over the seated minister.
“I was telling my friends yesterday night at the card game what kind of pastors we have, and they thought it was terrible.” His lips quivered as his words rose in anger.

“Why did you wait until Saturday to complain to your friends? Why didn’t you call me during the week and let me know—I didn’t know,” responded the frustrated pastor.

“Come on!” protested the parishioner, unconvinced. He wheeled on his heels and blew out of the sacristy, while the tolling of the bell reminded the pastor that the time had arrived for the service to begin.

It’s maddening, I know, at times to hear your limited attributes confused with Christ’s attributes. Sometimes you don’t know what to do—laugh or cry.

I also think of what happens when parishioners expect you to duplicate the abilities of your predecessors. Some people take it for granted that your predecessor’s talents will be transferred to you somehow, a la Elisha inheriting Elijah’s spirit (2 Kings 2:9,10), when you pick up the cloak of succession.

As many have discovered upon entering a new charge, the tribute Chaucer penned for his parson can likewise be inked, with both admiration and exaggeration, on the memory of a recently departed predecessor. Perhaps you know from experience how hard it can be to follow in the footsteps of a man who served a parish with distinction. The hopeful ideal of ministry can be distressing to the minister who finds himself haunted by the ghost of a predecessor’s competency, especially if it is a grossly inflated one.

I suspect that frustration and anger are the normal reactions to these unreal expectations. While the grinding and gnashing of teeth describes hell’s peculiar sounding music, does it not also find a toothy chorus among ministers who grow resentful of their parishioners’ expectations?

I would caution that this sort of parishioner expectation and confusion comes with the territory. People have put to-
gether their ideals of what ministers are supposed to be like for a reason. The model of Christ the Good Shepherd has had something to do with this, and so have the models of those competent, Christlike servants who have gone before us and in whose footsteps you and I are now walking. So when you encounter expectations which strike you as unreal, grant yourself a measure of peace by understanding why people entertain them. Instead of automatically responding to these unreal expectations as criticisms or insults or put-downs, train yourself to recognize these expectations as compliments. Recognize these unrealistic hopes as forms of praise—that people would think us worthy in the first place to be included with such lofty predecessors!

Of Majors, Minors, and Motives

Written a generation ago, the Christian Minister’s Manual contains a timeless bit of advice for today’s minister: “Conscious that he is the representative of Christ and his church, the minister should look, speak, act, and live the part.”¹²

The minister’s “part” actually contains many parts. The typical pastor of a parish is called upon to perform many distinct and varied duties. (You may want to page ahead briefly to pages 96 and 97 and locate there an impressive list of thirty pastoral activities which were compiled by one expert.)

Managing these parts, allowing each of them ample time, prioritizing them—this, I would say, points to yet another definition of competency. Some ministers, in managing their many pastoral duties, seem artfully able to steer a course around the obstacles which block competency. Others seem doomed to lurch about, to crash against the obstacles, and eventually to careen out of control pell-mell. Do those who fail attempt too much? Do those who succeed attempt too little?
Failure and success in managing pastoral duties can, of course, be traced to the abilities a person possesses. However, I also believe that this involves more than just native talents. In fact, I hope to demonstrate that motives, correct ones, keep ministers going when programs and goals crash under their feet or, conversely, when they succeed past their wildest dreams. How this involves the glory of God you might well imagine, but I will leave no room for speculation as this introductory chapter draws to a close.

**The Ministerial Menu**

“The sermon ought to receive the top spot on his [the minister’s] weekly list of priorities,” say Schuetze and Habeck, authors of *The Shepherd under Christ*, a Lutheran textbook for pastoral theology. A statement like this, loaded with code words such as “top,” “weekly,” “list,” and especially “priorities,” should be interpreted by novices, like seminarians, to mean that the ministry promises more than sermons. Until they actually become settled in parish life, seminarians possess little inkling of just how many priorities they will encounter in the ministry; the inkling, when it comes, is often unsettling. The duties of the typical parish pastor spread before him such an array of possibilities that they are guaranteed to create mixed sensations in him. It’s like being in the situation where the waitress hands you a menu so thick with possibilities that you’re unable to decide what to order first; you want to eat, but you don’t know where to start. “Truly,” say Schuetze and Habeck, “being a pastor is a many-sided assignment.”

**The Jack-of-all-trades**

In my role as a parish pastor I see myself as an ecclesiastical handyman, a general practitioner. I do much more than preach. The great Baptist professor of homiletics, John Broadus, puts it this way: “The Christian minister is not
only a preacher; he is also a teacher, a pastor; an administrator, a counselor, a community servant, and perhaps other things."\textsuperscript{15}

What are some of the “other things” you and I might do? Well, our parish responsibilities may see us doing, in turn, the work of a missionary, author/publisher, public relations director, fund raiser, or worship leader. And so it continues until you could easily compile a list of 30 or more possible pastoral activities. So think of yourself as a general practitioner of spiritual medicine rather than as a specialist. In fact, it’s my opinion that some of the burnout problems of ministers can be traced to a misunderstanding of the general nature of the parish ministry. Some men want to specialize in every facet of the profession—but the day contains only so many hours.

**Musts and Maybes**

The ministry involves duties which a minister must do and others which he may do, that is, if he has the time. In other words, both majors and minors fill his agenda, and temptations to major in the minors or to treat the majors as minors never die.

The temptation to neglect certain ministerial duties can sometimes be chalked up to the special gifts a minister possesses. Conscientiousness, or for that matter even ignorance, can cause a man to major in his strengths and to minor in his weaknesses. Gifted with a talent for chumminess, a minister, for example, may want to specialize in a ministry of visitation or public relations while his pulpit and administrative duties become, as it were, brides left at the altar. The parish minister, by his call, finds himself married, not only to the loves of his ministry, but also to those he finds a lot less desirable.

Scholarship can also throw the delicate equilibrium between ministerial majors and minors out of kilter. Seminar-
ies try to be practical. Some succeed more than others. Still, the ivory tower of scholarship casts its long shadows of theory over the best of classrooms, and some students develop uncompromising mentalities towards the inevitable clash between theory and reality—the parish ministry. Bratcher admits that his college and seminary experience turned him into a specialist. With the mind of a specialist he approached the varied menu of his ministerial duties and found himself unprepared for the shock of reality. He says he felt incompetent to deal with all the things he was supposed to do.

**Pursuing the Ideal**

“He’s not cut out for the ministry,” the man admitted. His son had just dropped out of ministerial training, and he was explaining the situation to his family pastor. “The ministry is a tough row to hoe,” the father said ruefully.

Add the ideal of what a minister must be to the menu of what a minister must do, and the resulting combination proves itself more than some can handle. More and more we hear ministers protesting how difficult they have it. More and more we are witnessing resignations in unprecedented numbers. The zeal and dedication with which so many began their ministries evaporates in time like the haze on the horizon.

How can a minister preserve the zeal that led him into the ministry and at the same time combine it with the pragmatism of his experience so that he not only keeps going in his ministry, but also is happy in it? Answer the question with the word motive.

**Design for Disaster**

Pride is the wrong motive for entering the ministry. Define pride as the sinful desire to advance one’s self. Just as pride led to Satan’s fall from heaven, so it sinks ministries.
Paul wrote to Timothy about guarding against pride: “He [the minister] must not be a recent convert, or he may become conceited and fall under the same judgment as the devil” (1 Timothy 3:6). Notice how Paul connects conceit to Satan’s demise. Define ministerial competency then also as the guarding against pride, for to be a minister means to become less than one’s self—in the spirit of our Lord who humbled himself in the days of his exinanition—and to advance someone else, namely, God.

Unfortunately, the psyche of some ministers insures that purity of motives will be a never ending battle for them. While the selfless nature of Christ stands as the hopeful ideal for his undershepherds, they in reality often imitate the devilish pride of the god of the underworld.

The ministry, as a profession, exhibits an odd knack for collecting more than its share of pride-filled men. I make this claim on the basis of what I have read and witnessed and experienced. I, for one, have been tempted to advance myself in more sinful ways than I care to tell you about.

Yes, the ministry collects egotistical individuals like a porch light does bugs, not because the holy office creates pride, but because proud men have always been attracted to the power-filled possibilities of the office. So, “Know thyself” becomes advice which aptly applies to ministers and their motives. Ministers need to grapple with the realization that the ministry does attract some power seeking, selfish, anti-social individuals, just as it has always done. And while Eli’s sons are long rotted in their graves (1 Samuel 4:10,11), their lascivious and self-centered agendas live on in too many instances. And so it would be foolish to dismiss this psychological profile, which unfortunately fits some.

While the falsely motivated pastor—who, much like one of Eli’s sons, surfaces as a marginal or full blown sociopath—is indeed rare, yet, consider the common egotist. He is just as destructive to the parish and to the reputation of the
gospel, plying away in his calling with the hope of increasing his own significance. It is not pleasant to contemplate, but it is, nevertheless, true. Some men desperately pursue the hopeful ideal of ministerial competency simply because their jacked-up egos enjoy and want the limelight, prestige, and power that comes with the job.18

Lack of humility kills ministries; pride sets ministers up for the big crash. F. LaGard Smith in *Fallen Shepherds, Scattered Sheep* writes that ministers “fall so hard because they have built their pedestals so high.”19 The gospel, with its requisites for holy living, in a sense sets ministers on a pedestal (1 Timothy 6:11; 2 Timothy 2:24; 1 Peter 5:2,3). Pride, however, in the tradition of Babel, wants to build that pedestal still higher.

I wonder if this could help to explain why some men resign from the ministry. Could frustrated plans for self-aggrandizement contribute to a minister's disenchantment with his calling? If pride motivates a man to be the best he can be, I can see the possibility of that individual growing bitter if his parishioners fail to respond to his plans or actions with the praise he was expecting. Now, I am not suggesting that all who quit the ministry do so because their egos got in the way. What I am saying is that you and I must always be attentive to what motivates us to do what we do. And I am promising that we will feel more fulfillment and less bitterness if we always strive to advance God alone in all our pastoral pursuits. Come what may, I make this promise without any qualifications.

**The Superseding Motive**

Call pride the big, false motive for ministry. But then recognize also that many correct motives for serving Christ and his church obviously do exist. As I pointed out earlier, ministers have an array of duties in their parish work to balance and perform. Each duty demands a corresponding ability,
Take counseling as an example. A man with a tender heart wants to help people. And because God has blessed him with that soft and sympathetic heart, he feels drawn to the ministry. God has blessed a second man with a good set of lungs and a gift for gab. He feels led to enter the ministry because he believes he can preach effectively. A third man wants to teach. A fourth wants to evangelize. All of these motives involve personal decisions to use God-given abilities in such a way that they build up the church. All are legitimate for ministry.

Know, however, that one grand and glorious motive exists which supersedes all secondary motives for ministry, one motive alone which gives purpose to the Christian ministry as it also defines the reason for all created existence—the glorification of God. Jay Adams says, “The one overall goal that we must set for everything we do is the glory of God.” Adam’s assertion can only be understated, never overstated, for Paul wrote to the Corinthians, “Whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God” (1 Corinthians 10:31).

How should the ministry purpose to glorify God? Will the ministry promote God’s glory as just one among many glories? Is God’s glory to stand preeminent among lesser glories—like Jacob’s sheaf of grain standing among the gathered and bowed sheaves of his brothers (Genesis 37:7) or like a feudal lord standing among his vassal barons? Will the ministry seek God’s glory while also seeking its own glory?

For the Society of Jesus, which he founded, Ignatius de Loyola coined just one such statement of purpose: maiorem Dei gloriam (for the greater glory of God). Loyola’s aim for his Society of Jesus raises the obvious question: whose glory, besides that of God’s glory, is to be promoted? Does God’s Word command ministers of Christ to pursue a multi-layered plan of glorification? Is God’s glory to be shared with any other? Are ministers of God to seek the “greater glory of God” or to seek the “glory of God alone”?
“Whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God” (1 Corinthians 10:31) ultimately limits all motives and purposes of ministry to the glorification of God alone. As its highest ambition, the ministry, by apostolic command, aims to glorify God. Christian ministers then will minister soli Deo gloria (to the glory of God alone). Soli (alone) is the key. The soli of soli Deo gloria unlocks the door to ministerial competence and personal happiness—a matter of doctrine and practical theology which I aim to unfold in the pages to come. In my first division I explain the doctrine of God’s glory, and in the second I indicate its practical application.

I hope to convince you—to the degree you understand why God is glorified, to the degree you know how God is glorified in your pastoral ministrations, and to the extent you consciously minister with God’s glorification as your only goal—that you will experience:

1. A sense of accomplishment,
2. The drive to persevere in your ministry,
3. A heightened sense of dedication,
4. A desire to make personal and professional improvements; and,
5. Personal happiness.

Those who minister soli Deo gloria, I am convinced, won’t give up, but will keep on going even when their orange crates break.

Summary

1. Despite screaming headlines about failed ministers, people continue to demand high standards for those who enter the public ministry. People piece together their idealized version of ministers from heroic qualities they have found in biblical saints, denominational giants, average but faithful men, and ultimately Christ himself.
2. The parish pastor faces many duties. Consequently he feels the constant temptation to specialize in those areas which interest him the most or in those areas where he believes his greatest talents lie. The parish pastor, however, is a spiritual generalist. While he may have entered the ministry for a variety of personal reasons, the minister has one superseding goal in his ministry—a goal which gives it eternal purpose, the glorification of God.

3. To the degree that the minister consciously and knowingly seeks to glorify God, he will grow in both professional competency and personal happiness.

4. As I initially define it, pastoral competency means refusing to give up, working like a shepherd, guarding against pride, emulating Christ’s spirit of humility, and managing well the major and minor tasks of ministry.

**Advice**

1. What person has most significantly influenced your style and attitude as a pastor? In what way?

2. Are you currently modeling your ministerial style/methodology after someone? If not, whom would you choose? Consider making an appointment with a neighboring pastor whose ways and habits you respect. Sit down with him, pick his brains, and learn how he came to excel.

3. List on paper all the duties you perform as a pastor. Using a scale from 1 to 10 (1 being lowest and 10 being highest), grade your duties. Which do you like the best? The worst? Where are your talents the strongest? The weakest? Determine if you need to rearrange your use of time to coincide with your priorities.

4. Do you specialize in areas of your ministry which interest you or complement your character/intellectual strengths?
If so, do you get parishioner feedback? Do they approve or disapprove?

5. Do you tend to work hardest in areas of your ministry in which you receive the greatest amount of praise from your parishioners or the greatest amount of criticism?

Endnotes

2 Ibid.
3 Ibid., 49 [Emphasis added].
6 The quotation is taken from the New International Version (NIV), from which all Scripture citations are taken.
8 Ibid.
9 Ibid.
10 Ibid., 5.
14 Ibid., 19.
16 See Paul D. Meier, Frank B. Minirth, and Frank Wichern, Introduction to Psychology and Counseling (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1982), 223. The authors believe that the ministry attracts anti-social personalities.
17 See Minirth, Meier, and Wichern, Introduction to Psychology and Counseling, 224. The authors document their belief that many ministers are
anti-social through research generated by the Minnesota Multiphase Personality Inventory.


Soli Deo gloria is a Latin term for Glory to God alone. It has been used by artists like Johann Sebastian Bach, George Frideric Handel, and Christoph Graupner to signify that the work was produced for the sake of praising God. The phrase has become one of the five solae propounded to summarise the Reformers' basic beliefs during the Protestant Reformation. As a greeting, it was used by monks in cistercian and trappist monastic orders in written communication. Soli Deo Gloria KAL Please use tag SDGkal. Errata: Chart 8 has 9 repeats not 8! Hereâ€™s a link to stitch count sheet made by awesome spockie.Â About this pattern. Soli Deo Gloria Lace Shawl. by Anna Victoria. 425 projects, in 1271 queues. Soli Deo Gloria is the first + only fully accessible property in Paternoster. We won the Lilizela Tourism Award in 2014 & 2015: Best Accommodation Universal Accessible Mobility. We are very proud to be able to accommodate any person with mobility challenges.