

How to Make Your Pastor Succeed

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From the Wesleyan Methodist

The Church cannot afford to have the pastor fail. If you, and he, and we, and God, all combined, can make him succeed, we have done our best. For this end God always uses all the agencies within His reach, and leaves no force within the promptings of infinite love untrained on this point. We offer a few hints and suggestions for the consideration of the laity.

HEAR HIM

This is not a fair-weather duty. Has not the business of eternity as urgent claims as the business of time? Then it is not too high to let one rule govern decisions in both cases.

The preacher is sent to be heard. He comes to tell the good news. Joy bubbles up in the heart and ripples out over the lips, while sorrow settles, like life's sediment, in the bottom of the heart, to clog its throbbings. His best may not suit you. Remember that there are only a few model preachers. We have read of only one perfect Model, and He was crucified many centuries ago.

You are to hear as those who must give an account to God. Roaming about for the Gospel is as pernicious to character as roaming about in business life would be to a man's fortune. Religious characters follow the same law. Who are the pillars of the Church? Not those who run around after men, but those who stand by the Church.

"BACK" HIM

Be in your place. Battles are won, not by men on the muster roll, but by the men in the engagement. As a rule, sermons are none too warm. An empty pew throws a bucket of cold water over the pulpit. We have seen very good preachers, like very good gophers, drowned out. Every seat in the prayer meeting is occupied. When you are not in your seat there, some evil spirit occupies it, trying to represent you. Is it not too much to ask your pastor to pray in pandemonium? You either go or send a hand.

PRAY FOR HIM

The mother, seeing her son's craft go upon the breakers, kneels on the dripping beach. Many a dead Church has been resurrected by the voice of prayer. The Master's blessing has many a time made a very little bread and fish feed a great hungry multitude. Your prayer will secure that blessing. The great revival that launched the infant Church originated in a ten day's prayer meeting. The Reformation sprouted in the cell of the great German prayer. Methodism grew out of the prayer meeting of a few Oxford students.

PAY HIM

He must have not only bread, but also books. This means money to pay for them, and time to study them. When the hopper is empty, the bread tray cannot long be full.

USE HIM

He is neither a sickle nor a wine-press; nevertheless, if you would gather the harvest and the vintage he must be used. Weak men object to being used. But that is what we are in the world for. Great parties, great organizations, great movements use men for the advancement of vital interests. God's administration in this world consists in using men; and the perfection of human greatness consists in being put to the greatest uses. Your pastor comes with certain ability for the advance-

ment of the cause in your community. Now, utilize this ability. Use him on business principles. Use him along the lines of his strength. Revolve him about his shortest axis. All this means that, by skill that denotes ability, you are to put within his reach the reinforcement of your knowledge, and experience, and judgment. If you lack these, or the skill to lend them, the pastor may be less responsible for not profiting by them.

GIVE HIM AIR

Break up the old-time league between Satan and the sexton. Many a good sermon is neutralized by bad air. You could smother Paul or Barnabas in carbonic acid gas. It is easy enough to ventilate a church when it is empty; but it takes the brain in the community to do it when filled. Door-keeper in the house of the Lord is a high office.

SUPPORT HIM

Make him feel that he is not alone. No man can do much alone. The sense of support is better than support without that sense. Preacher and people are the confronting halves of an arch; separated, they cannot hold up themselves; united, they can hold up the world.

ENCOURAGE HIM

Some people think that it is dangerous to commend a preacher. It is more dangerous not to do so. True, you may inflate him; but if he explodes, it is a slight loss. Not much material would be wasted in him. The thoughtful preacher finds enough to humble him in the failure of his best work. Bishop Simpson was so disheartened on his first circuit that for months he was fully resolved to retire from the work at the end of the year. Judicious encouragement would have saved him many weary hours. The lack of it nearly robbed the Church and the world of a preacher and a prince almost without a peer.

RECOMMEND HIM

Many a moderate preacher is sustained by timely and persistent recommendation. Your approving sentence may turn the scale to a glorious success. Some men refuse to give an opinion until after the case is determined. It is more generous to give the struggling man the benefit of the doubt. It is time enough to bury him when he is dead. Ridicule at your table can prevent his helping your children. Sons go to ruin because fathers criticize the preacher. Criticism is easy. Nothing is perfect, and it requires no great ability to find fault. It rather indicates great perversity of heart. Bees, not blowflies, find honey everywhere.

ILLUSTRATE HIS GOSPEL

When the lives of the believers pull the same way with the words of the preacher, nothing is impossible. The ancients said: "Whose life is lightning, his words are thunder."

"The Gospel moves with slow and timid pace when the saints are not at their prayers early and late."

CONSERVING SPIRITUAL GAINS AFTER REVIVALS

This is the season of the year when many revivals are being conducted over the brotherhood. Our prayer is that each congregation may experience what the early church did in Acts 6:7, "And the word of God increased; and the number of disciples multiplied in Jerusalem exceedingly."

The question has been asked many times: "How can we have a revival today and conserve our gains and not suffer the aftermath of revivals or revivalism?" May I suggest three things that may prove helpful—pastoral evangelist, congregational evangelism, and individual responsibility of maintaining the spiritual glow.

By all means the minister must take the lead in this all important task of evangelism.

Thus: The clearly revealed fact that whatever may be said about the relationship of a sense of purpose and direction with the ability to organize and to keep moving forward, but never too fast for the sheep. It is understood that the pastor has a vital, ever deepening Christian experience with a glowing passion for souls.

Too often, the pastor and the members of the congregation build up to the point of a revival and when the revival is over there is a slump. If we would spend as much time and effort and planning to bridge over and continue the revival spirit, we would soon be spiritual millionaires.

By congregational evangelism we mean the co-ordinating of every department and organization of the church for the primary purpose of witnessing and building up the total church with the spirit of evangelism penetrating every area of each group and of the larger life of the church. We must not only have the Vision, but the Vision must have us.

Expression is one of the central propositions of psychology. The body and mind were made for action. The general psychological law here is: "That which is not expressed dies." According to the Book of Acts, Christ's program for the conquest of the world was through a campaign of simple testimony from heart to heart of what Christ meant.

This is where the individual member of each congregation must feel the share of his part of the responsibility of the work of the Lord. Of course the pastor must know how to stimulate them in the task and harness them for the work. Too often the pastor or several deacons will do the work of ten. Create as many jobs as possible to make people feel a sense of responsibility.

E. Stanley Jones said: "When I arose from my knees in conversion the first thought that leaped into my mind was, 'This is that! Now I must go and tell another this Good News.'" A similar experience ought to characterize every true, born-again Christian.

May we ask ourselves what contribution we are making to keep a steady temper of evangelism in our congregation. I can hear someone say, "Well, pretty well, under the circumstances." Let me ask you, "What are you doing under there?" The victorious Christ wants to give us power to live the circumstances. Let us examine ourselves in the light of Romans 12:9-15.—J. F. L. in Burning Bush.