

Phone Your Pastor

By Edwin B. Wallace, in "Wesleyan Methodist"

We are living in a complex age—an age characterized by plaguing phobias, perplexing problems, emotional exhaustion, nervous disorders, mounting pressures, maddening speeds; yet, withal, we are a people drugged by the soporific of worldly pleasure and plenty, the which spawn spiritual stagnation in the morass of moral disintegration. Men need help! And yet, thousands in dire need are failing to take advantage of the guidance and counsel—the effective help that is closest at hand. Even church members turn to psychiatrists, marriage consultants, family-guidance experts, and others, in time of trouble, without it ever occurring to them to see their pastor. Yet, today's clergymen are equipped to render more effectual help and guidance than many people think possible.

When Should I See My Pastor?

By all means, see him sooner than later. He'll be of more help if he isn't the last resort. A young wife came to this writer, the other day, seeking help. She was greatly distressed because her husband had deserted her for a fling at the frothy fun of an irresponsible life with like-irresponsible companions. For some months she had noted an increasingly marked change in his attitudes toward her and life in general. At times he would appear in the throes of severe inner conflict manifested by unaccountable weeping. But he finally stifled the voice of conscience and went the way of wrong.

"Pastor, I wanted to call you long ago," said the young woman, "but I just didn't do it. Oh, I wish that I had contacted you much sooner."

Now the situation looked nearly hopeless. Had the matter been brought to the pastor's attention at the beginning of the trouble, the outcome most likely would have been different. How often in marital discord the clergyman is consulted after the couple have become virtually irreconcilable.

Don't wait. Phone your pastor as soon as you feel you need him. If you wait, you may lose your courage and in turn forfeit your opportunity for help in time to thwart more serious difficulty.

Of course, you will not call him in the middle of the night, unless the need is extremely urgent. And if your minister keeps regular hours for study and sermon preparation, you will respect his time and not interrupt without good cause. His time is valuable . . . and limited. But remember, at any time night or day—if you feel you need him, phone your pastor.

What Should I Discuss With My Pastor?

Anything that troubles you. Let the "man of God" help you as you wrestle with your more important decisions, or with spiritual problems, or inner conflicts. Share with him the burdens and concerns of your heart. If you are carrying some weight of woe, some burden of guilt, or you are in genuine doubt as to the right and wrong of a given situation, lay it all before him. He won't be shocked. He has had other cases like yours—and worse. Rest assured, he is under professional commitment to keep his ears open and his mouth shut.

Bring to your minister your spiritual uncertainties, your social relationships, emotional up-sets, illness, the need for hospitalization, the imminence of death. He understands these intense inner struggles or the adjustments requisite in personal and family life. He knows what pain and frustration are; what fear and guilt are; what doubt and confusion do to the soul. He knows the meaning of life "seen in the eternal perspective." His professional training and varied experience have equipped him with the "frame in which particular problems can

best be viewed." He can help you. He wants to help you. Phone your pastor.

But Will He Not Come Without Being Called?

Yes, your pastor will come—that is, if he knows that he is needed. But keep in mind, he is not omniscient. Too often he does not know that you need him, and just as your doctor cannot help you with your physical pains if he does not know that you have them, so your pastor cannot help you with your spiritual ailments if he is unaware of your need. You phone your physician when you need him. Then phone your pastor, likewise. He can do great things for you if you will give him the opportunity.

Should I Contact the Pastor About Other People?

Most certainly. Of course, you will never trouble him with matters of no concern to him, or with worthless gossip. But when a new family moves into the neighborhood; when someone in the congregation is ill, or facing a hospital experience, or death, or some other peculiar hardship; when neighbors or friends show an interest in the church, or express their desire to enroll their children in Sunday school; when you know of unused talents among church members which might be of spiritual benefit both to the individuals themselves and to the ministry of the church—phone your pastor.

A Unique Task

Your minister has a unique task—a job that no one else can do. His specific and peculiar mission is to deal with the things of the spirit . . . with eternal verities. Thus, he must be relieved of duties that could as well be performed by lay members. Every hour he spends doing what others can do is precious time stolen from what he can uniquely do.

Are you in need of help? Phone your pastor. He, the "man of God," can uniquely aid you!

PERILOUS EXTREMES

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tecost, where 3,000 unconverted men and women in attendance at the service were gloriously saved and were immediately made members of the same church!

Jesus Christ was "not of the world," but he was certainly not an isolationist. He fully accepted the responsibility of living in the world. He was everlastingly at the job every day of his life, doing every legitimate thing he could to turn men and women to God. He rubbed shoulders with sinners in the market places. He was thronged by them all day long, and far into the night. He lived above them, but did not shun them. He came to lift them to a higher plane. He did not consider himself contaminated by contact with them.

To sum up these perils we face: We can compromise with the world, be like them, and one with them in a wrong sense, and lose the favor of God. He that will be a friend of the world is an enemy of God.

On the other hand, we may keep clean, live right, walk straight, and be unworldly, but though a false idea of sanctity, isolate ourselves to the extent that we lose our contact and favor with men, and consequently lose our field of service.

In the same chapter of Acts, that tells of Pentecost, we also read, "And they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart, praising God, and having favour with all the people." And, it was when this favor was enjoyed by the early church, that it could also be said about them, "And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved" (Acts 2:46, 47).

—Pilgrim Holiness Advocate