

SERMON NOTES:

Perilous Waters | *Navigating the Dangerous Currents Shaping the Church*

Part 7: When Pastors Become Celebrities

BIG Idea: When the Church measures spiritual leadership by popularity instead of faithfulness, both pastors and people lose sight of Christ.

Application: Evaluate spiritual leadership according to Scripture rather than popularity or personal preference. Encourage faithful shepherding, resist personality-centered Christianity, and keep your faith anchored in Christ.

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When the Church measures spiritual leadership by popularity instead of faithfulness, both pastors and people lose sight of Christ.

1. When we make pastors into personalities, we forget that the Church belongs to Christ.

1 Corinthians 3:4-9 (NLT)

⁴When one of you says, “I am a follower of Paul,” and another says, “I follow Apollos,” aren’t you acting just like people of the world?

⁵After all, who is Apollos? Who is Paul? We are only God’s servants through whom you believed the Good News. Each of us did the work the Lord gave us. ⁶I planted the seed in your hearts, and Apollos watered it, but it was God who made it grow. ⁷It’s not important who does the planting, or who does the watering. What’s important is that God makes the seed grow. ⁸The one who plants and the one who waters work together with the same purpose. And both will be rewarded for their own hard work. ⁹For we are both God’s workers. And you are God’s field. You are God’s building.

1 Corinthians 3:21-23 (NLT)

²¹So don’t boast about following a particular human leader. For everything belongs to you— ²²whether Paul or Apollos or Peter, or the world, or life and death, or the present and the future. Everything belongs to you, ²³and you belong to Christ, and Christ belongs to God.

A pastor may be a gift to the Church, but he must never become its center.

2. When approval becomes more important than faithfulness, pastors lose sight of whom they ultimately serve.

1 Corinthians 4:1-5 (NLT)

¹ So look at Apollos and me as mere servants of Christ who have been put in charge of explaining God's mysteries. ² Now, a person who is put in charge as a manager must be faithful. ³ As for me, it matters very little how I might be evaluated by you or by any human authority. I don't even trust my own judgment on this point. ⁴ My conscience is clear, but that doesn't prove I'm right. It is the Lord himself who will examine me and decide.

⁵ So don't make judgments about anyone ahead of time—before the Lord returns. For he will bring our darkest secrets to light and will reveal our private motives. Then God will give to each one whatever praise is due.

2 Timothy 4:3-4 (NLT)

³ For a time is coming when people will no longer listen to sound and wholesome teaching. They will follow their own desires and will look for teachers who will tell them whatever their itching ears want to hear. ⁴ They will reject the truth and chase after myths.

A congregation that rewards only what it wants to hear shouldn't be surprised when its leaders become afraid to say what it needs to hear.

3. Christ gives pastors to equip His people, not to build a following for themselves.

Ephesians 4:11-12 (NLT)

¹¹ Now these are the gifts Christ gave to the church: the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, and the pastors and teachers. ¹² Their responsibility is to equip God's people to do his work and build up the church, the body of Christ.

Pastors aren't called merely to gather an audience. They're called to equip disciples.

1 Thessalonians 5:12-13 (NLT)

¹² Dear brothers and sisters, honor those who are your leaders in the Lord's work. They work hard among you and give you spiritual guidance. ¹³ Show them great respect and wholehearted love because of their work. And live peacefully with each other.

John 3:26-30 (NLT)

²⁶ So John's disciples came to him and said, "Rabbi, the man you met on the other side of the Jordan River, the one you identified as the Messiah, is also baptizing people. And everybody is going to him instead of coming to us."

²⁷ John replied, "No one can receive anything unless God gives it from heaven. ²⁸ You yourselves know how plainly I told you, 'I am not the Messiah. I am only here to prepare the way for him.' ²⁹ It is the bridegroom who marries the bride, and the bridegroom's friend is simply glad to stand with him and hear his vows. Therefore, I am filled with joy at his success. ³⁰ He must become greater and greater, and I must become less and less.

The goal of Christian ministry isn't to make people dependent upon the minister. It's to help them become devoted disciples of Christ.