

A Call to Christian Leaders: 'We are Not Celebrities'

Without question, one of the hardest jobs is being a Christian leader, especially a pastor. Close friends leave you, others betray you, social media slams you, the world hates you and demonic forces rally against you and your marriage.

This is why thousands exit the ministry each year.

We are also often stretched financially, relationally, emotionally and physically all while living in a fishbowl for the world to see. Pastor's wives feel it as well, and they are often the unsung heroes in this battle.

Popularity Won't Fix the Problem

To deal with the stress of ministry, we sometimes believe that popularity (celebrityism) will fix our problems: Life would be so much easier if I could just be a mega-ministry pastor and have 100,000 followers and a popular podcast. Trust me, this is NOT the case. Busyness can be a cruel slave master.

If I could go back to having a small church without a national calling, I may jump at the opportunity. The slower pace of life was refreshing. Remaining true to God's call (not mine) is the only thing that keeps me going.

Let God Grow It

Whether it's itinerant speakers requiring Hollywood status, worship teams demanding the rock star treatment or pastors chasing "likes" and "retweets," celebrityism has infiltrated the churches on a scale never seen before.

This must break the heart of God because "no flesh should glory in His presence" (1 Cor. 1:29).

There's nothing wrong with God growing a ministry as long as we remember Who grew it. It's not about your position but your posture ... the posture of your heart.

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American Idol Prevents Revival

We are not celebrities: We are sent to help the broken, the hurting and the lost. We are not building our ministry (let God handle that), we are called to build others. The American Idol mentality will never usher in another spiritual awakening; it will repel it.

Granted, my motives aren't always pure if I don't stay close to the Fountain of Living Water and drink deeply—brokenness and humility must be the fuel that fills us.

The Enemy's Whisper

God took this small-town boy with dyslexia who was often labeled "stupid," and called him to the ministry. God opened enormous doors to air my sermons all across America, write books and speak nationally. For this reason, I must be on guard when the devil whispers in my ear, "Look at everything you've built."

To be sure, there's nothing wrong with godly ambition—we must be disciplined and respond to God's call—but He must get all the credit and glory.

Greenrooms Need to Become Prayer Rooms

I've been backstage in greenrooms, and although not true of all, the spiritual condition of many is sad to witness. We are watchmen, weepers and teachers, not rock stars who need greenrooms full of delights and water chilled to 40°. We are not special, but God is.

Instead of coming to an event and sliding in under the radar, doing our thing, and exiting unnoticed, we need to be among the people whenever possible. It's exhausting but that's what we are called to do—to turn greenrooms into prayer rooms.

His Presence Must be our Pursuit

We must repent of our celebrity status if we are going to see God move in these dire times. His presence must be our pursuit (more on that here.)

Too many focus on posturing, name-dropping and rubbing elbows with superstars. Facebook timelines are full of selfies while prayer closets remain empty—instead of rubbing elbows, we need to be bending our knees.

Many gauge success by the popularity of their social media feeds rather than the fullness of the Spirit and faithfulness to the call. They are active on many platforms, but heaven barely knows their name. And like Samson, “they know not that the Spirit has departed.”

No wonder so many struggle with depression and leave the ministry. You must serve in God's strength rather than your own. His sovereignty will be your sanity.

Don't Lean ... Stand!

In their pursuit of notoriety, many don't notice their drift away from God. When we compromise our character we will eventually compromise the gospel.

Samuel Rodriguez once shared a story where a pastor asked him: “We lean left. What way do you lean?”

Pastor Rodriguez shot back, “We don't lean—we stand!” Amen! I wish that all pastors had the fire of the Spirit within them and stood for the truth. We must seek God's presence not our preeminence, and spiritual power not popularity.

Blinded by pride, we can easily become unteachable and no longer able to hear the voice of God. If we are to kill the cancer of celebrityism “pride must die in you, or nothing of heaven can live in you” (Andrew Murray).

A Man on His Knees

The heartbeat of prayer must regulate every facet of our life. “What a man is on his knees before God, that he is, and nothing more” (Robert Murray M’Cheyne).

We must once again elevate brokenness over “followers” and humility over “likes.” Leonard Ravenhill once lamented, “Everyone wants my mantle, but no one wants the sackcloth and ashes.”

It’s not too late: We must repent of our selfish pursuit of celebrityism and return to our first love. He will re-fill and re-fuel you with times of refreshing from the presence of the Lord. That is our only hope! {eo}

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