

# Too Many Ministers Aren't Qualified for Ministry

In 2002, in a lengthy season of prayer and fasting, I saw a glass ceiling above me and everything I desired in ministry was on the other side—favor, anointing, power, significance, open doors, impact and so on. But while I was gazing at that glass ceiling, God pointed me to the floor and began speaking to me about my foundations and character. He came to test me on a book I had just written called *Soulish Leadership*.

On the heels of several well-known ministers who recently died, among them some who were overcome by sinful lifestyles and vices, this is a sober reminder. God anoints men. Men qualify themselves with character (1 Tim. 3). Men are enamored with anointing, gifts, charisma and talents. God places the premium on character, and He will test you, especially if you are crying out to be like Him.

My father in the faith, the late Kenneth E. Hagin, ministered to thousands of pastors and churches in his lifetime. He told us very few of those pastors qualified for ministry. He even predicted how their children would turn out by how the parents were living. His predictions were 100 percent correct. Character should be the highest priority in life and ministry.

Don't tell me about how great your gifts and anointing are when your marriage and children are out of order. Don't tell me how you're going to conquer the world, but you can't even conquer your lusts and addictions. Today it's common for ministers to be caught in adultery or very unethical practices and continue on in ministry, and their pitifully poor followers continue to defend and worship them as gods and hold up their thou-shalt-not-judge card.

Personally, I think the false concept of judgment is one of

the deadliest in modern day Christendom. It is the reason for such a dirty and defiled version of Christian ministry. Paul knew judgment was in fact the key to keeping the church clean.

*Do you not know that the saints will judge the world? If the world will be judged by you, are you unworthy to judge the smallest matters? Do you not know that we shall judge angels? How much more the things that pertain to this life? If then you have judgments dealing with matters of this life, do you appoint as judges those who are least esteemed in the church? (1 Cor. 6:2-4).*

The least esteemed in the church to judge are those who say, "Thou shalt not judge."

This lack of righteous judgment should break our hearts and send us to our knees to pray for the sad state of much of the body of Christ. Why are we so driven by ungodly success and popularity? Why are we so mesmerized by celebrity style ministry, a stage, bright lights and a microphone? Isn't it because we don't know Jesus very well at all? We have no private life with Him. We don't know Him in the secret place.

By the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, the apostle Paul outlined character qualities for those who aspire to leadership in the church (1 Tim. 3:1-7). Ministers of the gospel and local pastors and elders need to familiarize themselves with these character qualities instead of being so driven by unscriptural success. Even deacons must possess certain character qualities to serve in the church, after first being tested and found blameless.

"And let them first be tested; then, being found blameless, let them serve as deacons" (1 Tim. 3:10).

Blameless! That means there is not to be found anything in his character that could be used against him. Why have we lowered this standard in the church today?

People say, "Well, nobody is perfect."

"We're all flawed and have shortcomings."

"You can't be legalistic."

And of course the infamous "Don't judge ...God is the judge."

Why then are these character qualities listed in the Word? Paul gives us the reason:

"I am writing these things to you, hoping to come to you shortly .. [so that] you might know how you ought to conduct yourself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and foundation of the truth" (1 Tim. 3:14-15).

Paul wanted to deeply impress upon young Timothy that the church is the great defender of the truth in the world, and that the truth which the church is to maintain is of utmost importance. One commentary says this: "This relates to the incarnation of the Son of God, and to the work which he accomplished on earth (v. 16)—a work which excited the deepest interest in heaven, and the true doctrine respecting which it was of the utmost importance to keep up among people."

This great truth is further elaborated on in the next chapter (1 Tim. 4), by showing that the time would come when, under the influence of Satan, these great doctrines would be denied, and the truth would be corrupted and perverted. We are living in that time. Doctrine and character will be forever interconnected.

These character qualities are so basic and foundational to church leadership that it amazes me how far we've drifted from them in the church today. I'm concerned about young ministers today who rise to publicity and popularity so quickly. Many of them are like shooting stars, here one day and gone the next.

It's better to be a shining star and just keep shining day

after day through transformed character, not gifts and talents. Many are mistaking gifts and talents for God's approval and qualifications for ministry. No, gifts and talents are the equipping for the calling. God equips us through His gifts and anointing, but we qualify ourselves through character. If we don't prioritize character, we will be candidates for deception.

During my aforementioned 2002 season of extended prayer, one *rhema* word from Jesus changed my life. He said, "The reason I've not opened the doors that you thought should have been opened is because of My protection. The deception would have increased in you had I opened those doors, and you would have ceased to be a man after My own heart (testimony is outlined in *The Journal Of My Journey To His Holiness*). " I wept like a baby when I heard Him say that, and His love overwhelmed me when I realized He was protecting me from myself.

Then He brought me to a place when I didn't desire public ministry anymore, but only to know His heart and ways and to be obedient to His will. It was a miracle of great transformation because of the mystery of iniquity that is prevalent in man's heart.

God is always ready to use us in great ways according to His calling on our lives, but often we are not ready and qualified by character. We will shoot ourselves and blow up His perfect plan and purpose for us.

Listen to the wise words of Kathryn Kuhlman:

*I looked up and said audibly, "Oh dear Jesus, why didn't you allow all of this to happen to me when I was 16 years of age? I never got tired in body, I could ride those buses all night and then preach all day. Why didn't you let this all happen to me when I didn't need sleep? Why did you wait so long, wonderful Jesus?"*

*There wasn't an audible voice, but He did speak to me, and*

*this is what He said.*

*“Kathryn, had I given it to you then, you would have blown the whole thing!”*

*I knew exactly what He meant.*

The Father knows best. Work on your character, and let Him bring forth the fullness of His will in His own timing.

Bert's books are forerunners to personal holiness, the move of God and the return of the Lord. They also combat the departure from the faith and the turning away from the truth we are seeing in our day.