

Pastor's Self-Evaluation Questionnaire

by Tim Keller and David Powlison

Pay close attention both to yourself and to your teaching; persevere in these things; for as you do this you will save both yourself and those who hear you. 1 Timothy 4:16

The questions that follow help you to pay close attention to yourself and to your teaching. The purpose is to bless you and those you seek to love and serve. For the vast majority of readers, it will help you set a positive, personal agenda for growth as God's instrument. The Great Shepherd of the sheep will by His grace continue to develop you in His image. Conduct your self-evaluation in the light of His love.

Perhaps for a few readers it will prove to be a pass-fail test for your current ministry. Perhaps God has not given you certain gifts. Perhaps you are walking in some disqualifying pattern of sin. Even in these cases the questionnaire serves a positive purpose. The Lord has another place for those gifts that He has given you. The Lord has a way of repentance and renewal for sins that sabotage pastoral integrity and effectiveness. Remember the grace of the gospel.

So set your heart on Christ, on His gospel of mercy, on His high call, on His abounding riches of grace, on His honor in your life and His church. Here are some suggestions on how to profit from this study.

- *Read the questions carefully.* Pages 36-40 pose the questions. Pages 41-43 provide work sheets. The questions range widely over the pastor's role. If you are not a pastor, you can still profit. Ignore the questions that do not apply in your situation.

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- *Think hard.* Answer each question honestly after taking time to ponder. Set aside a day or several evenings to reflect on your life and ministry. Wherever possible give concrete examples of fruitfulness or failure, of growth or struggle.

- *Pray.* Pray for wisdom to know God and yourself better. Pray for wisdom to serve God more effectively. Pray to know yourself before the eyes of the God who is both light and love.

- *Seek counsel from others.* Many of the questions are difficult to answer about yourself. This self-evaluation questionnaire will be most useful when you combine it with feedback from others. Ask other leaders, friends, spouse, co-workers on a ministry team, and so forth.

- *Plan.* The work-sheets will guide you in practical planning.

- *Acknowledge that others have gifts that complement yours.* The second half of the questionnaire deals with pastoral skills. You may have limitations which God covers by providing others on the pastoral team with complementary gifts. In acknowledging personal weaknesses, ask yourself whether or not your pastoral team as a whole is covering all the bases.

Remember, the goal of this self-evaluation is to guide you in the path of growing holiness and growing pastoral skill. The questions are divided into these two major sections: personal holiness and pastoral skills. Effective ministers demonstrate holiness by humility, love, integrity and spirituality. Effective ministers are skilled in nurture, communication, leadership and mission.

Under each category you will find several questions. Notice that each question is two-sided. This captures that you fail either by omission or by commission. For example, biblical love is neither careless detachment from others nor obsession with others. You will likely find that you tend towards one side of each question. Let the questions stimulate you to ask further questions. They are not exhaustive. Some will apply to you; some won't.

Part I. Personal Qualifications of Effective Ministers: Holiness

A. Humility

1. *Do you acknowledge your limitations and needs out of confidence in Christ's gracious power?*

Are you honest enough? Do you demonstrate a willingness to admit your limits, mistakes, sins and weaknesses? Are you defensive, guarded, hypersensitive? Do you model that the Christian life is the open life? Do you demonstrate that the Christian life is a work in process rather than a completed product? Do you deal forthrightly with the common temptations you face: anger, anxiety, escapism, love of pleasure, self-love, materialism, perfectionism, and the like?

Are you too open? Do you wear your heart on your sleeve, indulging and wallowing in your limits, mistakes, sins and weaknesses? Are you morbidly or 'exhibitionistically' confessional? Or have you learned to speak of your weaknesses in ways that (1) point to your confidence in Christ, (2) genuinely seek help from people who can help, and (3) edify others?

2. *Do you demonstrate a flexible spirit out of confidence in God's control over all things, God's authority over you, and God's presence with you?*

Are you flexible enough? Do you adapt faithfully, flexibly and creatively to the unexpected? Do you value and encourage the ideas and gifts of others? Do you insist on your own way, whether forcefully or through subtle manipulation? Do you exemplify confidence in the sovereign control of God down to the details of life? Are you caught up in the various aggressions and fears produced by a drive to ensure your own control? Are you willing to try things experimentally and then reevaluate and make changes? Are you evidently a learner?

Are you too flexible? Do you bend too much? Do you blow in the wind of others' opinions and get overwhelmed by people's demands and agendas? Do you compromise, under-assert, seek to please, fail to push things that need to be pushed? Do you let people or circumstances control you rather than the Lord?

B. Love

1. *Do you have a positive approach to people because of confidence in the power and hope of the Gospel of Jesus Christ?*

Do you give grace to others? Do you love and encourage persons, even when under stress or in the face of an attack? Do you exhibit core biblical virtues: love for enemies, gentleness with opponents, patience with people and circumstances when undergoing trial or suffering? Are you able to confront the failings of others—to discipline your children, to admonish wanderers, to conduct church discipline—in a way that is not punitive, irritable or censorious but breathes the invitations of God's grace?

Can you say hard things lovingly? Is your "speaking the truth" harsh, opinionated, idiosyncratic? Do you create problems by making mountains out of molehills? Do you contribute to destructive conflict or to peacemaking?

Are you too tolerant? Are you naively optimistic about people? Do you massage people's egos with praise and "unconditional positive regard"? Is your "love" limp and truthless? Do you whitewash or minimize problems rather than tackle them? Because of biblical love are you willing to enter into constructive conflict? Are you a peace-lover and conflict-avoider rather than a peacemaker?

2. *Do you show a servant's heart to people because you are first and foremost a servant of the Lord?*

Do you serve willingly? Do you serve yourself or others primarily? Do you truly serve the well-being of others and shepherd them under the Lord? Do you strive for personal glory either aggressively (compulsively driven "on an ego trip") or passively (preoccupied with your "low self-esteem")? Do you manifest the combination of forcefulness and sensitivity, commitment and flexibility, which characterizes servants of the Lord's glory? Do you lord it over other people? Do you resist or avoid serving and loving others?

Do you serve compulsively? Do you serve other people slavishly, kowtowing to their demands, expectations and whims. Do you let others lord it over you? Are you confused about what it means to serve and love others? Do you know how to say "No" realistically, firmly and graciously? Do you regularly rest and lay aside your work?

C. Integrity

1. *Are you responsible to God first and foremost?*

Are you irresponsible? Do you follow through on convictions and commitments? Do you speak the truth firmly, confidently, faithfully? Do you "trim" the truth or waffle on your commitments because of convenience or social pressures? Do you fail to demand of yourself and others things that God demands? Do you follow your impulses, moods and feelings? Are you walking in the grip of a sin: e.g., greed, lust, outbursts of anger, fear of man, drunkenness, pride?

Are you overly demanding? Do you behave in a rigid manner? Do you sledgehammer people because of your commitment to principle? Are you legalistic in your commitments and nit-picking in your convictions? Do you major in minors? Do you make demands of yourself and others which God does not make?

2. *Do you demonstrate a disciplined lifestyle under the lordship of Jesus?*

Are you undisciplined? Is your visible life and behavior disciplined, consistent and attractive? Do you mani-

fest the joy, humility and winsomeness of wisdom and holiness? Would people want to imitate what they see of your faith, your faithfulness, your character? What would people see if they could tag along with you for a week? Do you work diligently or are you lazy?

Are you too rigid? Are you too disciplined, organized, "perfect" on the outside? Does your visible example actually discourage or intimidate people? Are you in effect playing the role of "pastor" or "mature Christian"? Is your visible discipline a mask for hypocrisy, a cover for ignorance of yourself or a denial of a deviant inner life? Are you humbled by conscious awareness that you fight the common besetting temptations of every human heart: pride, fear of man, attachment to money, sexual lust, preoccupation with your own performance, control, judgmentalism, love of various pleasures, and the like? Do you have an active sense of humor? Do you take time to rest or are you consumed with anxious toil?

3. *Are your family commitments a proper priority under the Lord?*

Do you give yourself to your family? Are you over-committed to your ministry and under-committed to your family? Do you love your family in such a way that they willingly become committed to your ministry and really stand with and behind you? Are they being sacrificed to "ministry"? Are they being dragged along behind you? Do you give to them significantly, substantially, willingly?

Are you over-involved in your family? Are you over-committed to your family so that they provide an improper refuge, distraction and excuse to avoid ministry? Is family life an excuse for selfishness?

D. Spirituality

1. *Do you demonstrate personal piety and vigor in your relationship with God?*

Is your piety genuine? Is your communion with God rich and growing? Is your personal prayer life both spontaneous and disciplined or are you mostly a public pray-er? Do you apply the Bible searchingly and encouragingly to yourself or only to your hearers? Do you praise, enjoy and thank God with heartfelt integrity? Do you know God, rely on God, seek God, praise God genuinely? What does Christ mean in your life on a day-in, day-out basis? Are you significantly prayer-less, Bible-less, praise-less, God-less, Christ-less?

Are you 'pietistic'? Do you escape into pious cliches and misuse the spiritual disciplines? Do you use "I'll pray about it" or "I need to study the Bible" in order to avoid problems for which you feel inadequate? Do you pray too much (Matthew 6:7) or self-centeredly (James 4:3) because you do not know God very well? Is your

Bible, praise and prayer life a hypocritical diversion in a life far from God?

2. *Do you demonstrate faithfulness to the Bible and sound doctrine?*

Are you biblically and theologically careful? Are you orthodox, faithful to the whole counsel of God? Do you have clear, definite and thought-out biblical positions on the central issues of life? Do you have theological quirks or hobby-horses which upset the balance of truth? Do you articulate core biblical truth clearly and consistently, with a working feel for its personal and pastoral application? Are you ignorant? Fuzzy? In error? Unbalanced?

Are you a theological nit-picker? Are your theological convictions abstract, theoretical and scholastic? Are you narrowly dogmatic, combative, critical, reductionistic, overly precise in your interpretations and applications of Scripture? Are you simplistic or superficial in your understanding of contemporary life and of human nature? Do you recognize the broad range of questions on which Scripture bears? Do you recognize the many variables which influence the application of Scripture to particular situations?

Part II. Functional Qualifications of Effective Ministers: Pastoral Skill

A. Nurture

1. *Do you show involved caring that comes from genuine love in Christ for your brothers and sisters?*

Do you involve yourself with the needs of others? Do you keep people at a distance? Are you able to develop relationships of honesty and trust through which you can comfort and challenge persons? Are you approachable? Do you create frequent conflict? Do you approach people warmly? Do you communicate care for people in ways they can sense?

Do you become overly absorbed in people? Do you become overly involved with people, caring too much because of a desire to be liked or a savior-complex or a fear of failure? Do you seek relationships as an end in themselves rather than as a component of pastoring people unto godliness?

2. *Do you counsel people the Lord's way?*

Do you counsel biblically? Are you skilled in helping people respond to and solve personal problems using biblical principles? Do you counsel biblically both informally and formally? Do you use unbiblical conceptual categories and methods? Is what you say in your office congruent both with what you say in the pulpit and with how you yourself live? Do you get involved constructively with troubled people, or do you disdain them, refer them, avoid them? Are individuals encouraged in

godliness, amid their sufferings and sins, through your personal ministry?

Do you go overboard on counseling? Do you become overly centered on problem people and focus on one-on-one remedial counseling to the detriment of more positive, preventive, upbuilding and corporate aspects of the ministry? Do you tend to turn the church into a counseling center or therapy group?

3. *Do you disciple others into maturity in Christ and use of their gifts?*

Do you help others productively serve the Lord? Do you demonstrate skills in nurturing growth in grace in individuals and in developing their gifts? Does your ministry have a positive, equipping thrust to it? Do you develop leaders and team ministries?

Do you focus too much on activism and productivity? Does your focus on gifts and discipleship have an elitist flavor? Are Christians with minimal gifts and energies neglected? Are there certain kinds of gifts which you recognize and encourage to the neglect of other kinds of gifts? Do you tend to move only with the movers?

4. *Do you give yourself to discipline and to patrolling the boundaries of the church which God bought with His own blood?*

Do you protect Christ's honor in the church? Are you committed to church discipline? Are you able to confront winsomely and persistently? Do you recognize the limits of the edification ministries of counseling, care and discipling? Do you stand courageously against real errors and falsehoods which encroach into the body of Christ that you shepherd? Are you realistic that the ministry is a savor both of life and death? Do you try to be so positive that you cannot be properly and biblically negative?

Are you over-absorbed in border patrol? Do you demonstrate a nit-picking, sectarian, vigilante spirit? Are you uncompassionate of people's failings, negativistic rather than upbuilding? Do you create in others a fear of failure and a fear of being found wrong, rather than creating love for ongoing growth in the Lord and love for ever-deepening truth?

B. Communication

1. *Do you preach the whole counsel of God?*

Are you preaching and teaching the Word of God? Are you skillful in expounding the Word of God publicly so that people are convicted, encouraged and edified? Do you use the pulpit effectively? Do you downplay the importance of the pulpit and teaching in your attitudes, practice, and theory of ministry? Is what you say in the pulpit congruent both with what you say in your office and with how you yourself live? Do you take

adequate time and work hard at preparation, or are you casual and presumptuous?

Are you overly absorbed in your pulpit? Are you overly concerned with pulpit ministry to the detriment of other aspects of pastoral care? Does pride puff you up or does the fear of man tie you in knots? Do you envision yourself as a "pulpititeer," to the harm of reaching people where they live? Do you take too much time to prepare for public ministry because of perfectionism, self-trust or fear?

2. *Do you provide education for God's many kinds of people?*

Do you educate all? Are you skilled in identifying Christian Education needs and in helping people learn? Does your philosophy of Christian Education reach all age groups and all different kinds of needs? Is biblical and doctrinal knowledge undervalued? Do you tend to ignore, despise or belittle the educational needs of certain kinds of people? Does your approach to Christian Education effectively combine truth and practice?

Do you overeducate? Do you tend to turn your church into a school? Is education and factual or doctrinal knowledge overvalued in comparison with other aspects of the Christian life? Is the teacher-pupil role the dominant one in the church or only one role among many?

3. *Do you lead others to worship the Lord?*

Do you lead others to worship God in truth? Do you lead people into the presence of God? Is your worship perfunctory and rote? Do you yourself worship God as you lead, or does worship become a performance and task? Do you undervalue worship, viewing it only as a glorified warm-up for the message?

Are you overly absorbed in worship? Do you over-emphasize the "worship experience" to the detriment of truth and the other aspects of church life? Are you overly subjective, gauging the Christian life by emotions and sentiment? Do you use words, music and staging to manipulate experience? Is God at the center of your worship or do you worship the worship?

C. Leadership

1. *Do you lead God's people into effective work together?*

Do you lead groups of people well? Do you help groups develop a biblical vision, and do you motivate them toward biblical goals? Are you confused about what the goals of groups should be? Are you overly absorbed either in personal one-on-one work with people or in impersonal programs and public ministry? Do you function constructively in groups, or do you hamper and divert groups from achieving God's ends? Do you value groups and encourage them to take on significant responsibilities?

Are you overly absorbed in groups? Do you tend to see groups, committees and task forces as a panacea or a substitute for other aspects of ministry? Does a task orientation sabotage other biblical goals such as prayer, worship, caring, and counseling?

2. *Do you administer well, creating a church that is wise in its stewardship?*

Are you a good administrator? Are you skilled in using time, money and people efficiently to achieve biblical goals in the church? Do you neglect or despise administration?

Are you overly absorbed in administration? Do you tend to over-administer or retreat to administrative tasks because they are easier or are the squeaky wheel?

3. *Do you mediate fellowship among God's people?*

Do you help people come together? Are you skilled in stimulating the congregation to mutual ministry in love? Does your ministry create one-anothering opportunities and activities among God's people? Do you enhance a family atmosphere in the church? Are you able to teach people how to make significant friendships through your teaching, manner and example?

Are you overly absorbed with the church's social life? Are you so oriented towards "fellowship and family feeling" that the church's fellowship with God and orientation to mission are lost?

4. *Do you create cooperative and team ministry within the church and between churches that honor Christ?*

Are you a team player? Do you work well as part of a ministry or pastoral team, or do you always insist on leading (in overt or covert ways)? Do you tend to stake out turf? Is your leadership based on true biblical wisdom or on personal drive, clerical status and political savvy? Do you build unity and mutual respect among different parts of the body of Christ? Can you cooperate with other evangelical churches and pastors, or do you have sectarian instincts? Are you committed in practical ways to see the work of the local congregation as part of the larger work of Christ? Are you too independent and not enough of a "churchman."

Do you allow the team to shield you from the front lines of ministry? Do you shirk leadership responsibilities out of diffidence or laziness and seek to embed yourself safely within a niche? Do you put your attention too much into the work of presbyteries, synods, general assemblies, conferences, associations, conventions, ministeriums, school boards and the like? Are you a politician and too much a "churchman" rather than a pastor?

D. Mission

1. *Do you evangelize those outside of Jesus Christ?*

Are you active in evangelism? Are you skilled both

in effectively sharing the gospel and in leading the church in outreach? Are you committed in theory and personal practice to evangelize the lost? Do you believe with all your heart that people without Christ remain under the wrath of God? Do you neglect evangelism out of ignorance, love of comfort, fear, prejudice, bad experiences? Do you lead your people to support worldwide missionary efforts?

Are you overly committed to evangelism? Do you overemphasize evangelism or one evangelistic technique to the detriment of the church's overall ministry? Do you create ministry activists rather than godly people? Do you play a numbers game with evangelism? Do your evangelistic methods hold the message of salvation in Christ in proper balance with God's sovereignty in grace and with the call for us to demonstrate genuine love for each other and the lost? Are missionaries idolized as a higher species of Christian?

2. *Do you show social concern for the many needs of people that God desires to address?*

Do you care for the whole person? Are you skilled in applying the resources of the church to the social and material needs of mankind? Do you value diaconal work and the mercy gifts? Do you believe that the gospel addresses the whole man, or do you drift towards a gospel that is a bare verbal message? Do you care in practical ways for justice, or do you tacitly accept the status quo? Can you identify the social needs of your community and mobilize effective modes of addressing these needs?

Are you overly involved in social needs? Do you overemphasize social concerns and drift towards a "social gospel"? Do you ride the hobby-horse of one particular political point of view or one particular social policy issue? Do you tend to view people through the eyes of politics, economics or sociology rather than through the eyes of the God of the Bible?

Application Work Sheet

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2. Do you show social concern for the many needs of people whom God desires to address?

You have looked at yourself, hopefully through God's eyes. Now work with what you have seen.

If you could change in one area in the next year, which would it be? Where do you most need to mature in wisdom? What changes in you would bring the greatest glory to God and greatest blessing to other people?

Confess your sins and failings to God. Jesus Christ is your faithful high priest and shepherd. He is the Pastor of pastors.

"Come with confidence to the throne of His grace that you may receive mercy and grace to help you in your time of need" (Hebrews 4:16). Believe it and do it. The Lord's strength is made perfect in your weakness.

Now what must you do? Prayerfully set goals. How will you become a more godly person and pastor? Are there people you must ask to pray for you and hold you accountable? Are there Bible passages or books you must study? Are there plans you must make? Do you need advice from a wise Christian about how to go about changing?