

THE **PENTECOSTAL**
MINISTER



EDITED BY J. L. HALL AND DAVID K. BERNARD

The Pentecostal Minister

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1

The Minister's Personal Life

by Cleveland M. Becton

Cleveland M. Becton is the former general secretary-treasurer of the United Pentecostal Church International, assistant general superintendent of the UPCI, pastor of the First United Pentecostal Church of Nashville, Tennessee, and secretary of the General Youth Division.

- I. Calling
- II. Character
- III. Devotional Life
- IV. Fellowship
- V. Priorities
- VI. Self-Discipline and Self-Motivation
- VII. Continuing Education
- VIII. Stewardship of the Body
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I. Calling

The preacher's supreme task upon earth is ministering to the needs of the world and presenting the gospel to the lost and dying. Although he needs training, no one could ever learn the art of ministering simply by attending a school, class, or seminar. A person can never learn how to be a preacher. Technique can be taught; art cannot. A master chef can give an accurate recipe, but conveying the "feel" in order to make food delicious is a different matter.

The preacher must have a sense of calling, as well as respect for the bidding of the Master, who "came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many" (Matthew 20:28). The apostle Paul expressed his sense of calling: "But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb, and called me by his grace, to reveal his Son in me, that I might preach him among the heathen; immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood" (Galatians 1:15-16).

Every minister should be sure of the divine call that has brought him into the ministry of the Word. Otherwise, he may simply be choosing a career with demands that often seem unreasonable, concepts that are difficult to grasp, and realities that make "success" almost impossible to achieve. Only a divine call of God changes the demands from being unreasonable to reasonable, makes

the concepts easy to grasp, and enables the minister not to be concerned about “success” anyway. A true minister does not labor for plaudits of men but for the approval of God; only eternity will reveal what he has actually accomplished.

The story of Samuel illustrates the importance of hearing and responding to the call of God. When Samuel was serving the Lord under Eli, “the word of the LORD was precious in those days; there was no open vision” (I Samuel 3:1). Samuel, a young boy, had much to learn about the ways of God.

One evening as he lay alone in his room he heard what he thought was Eli’s voice calling his name. Three times he ran obediently to Eli; three times Eli said that he had not called Samuel. Finally, Eli realized that it was the Lord, and he told Samuel what to answer when he heard the call again. “And the LORD came, and stood, and called as at other times, Samuel, Samuel. Then Samuel answered, Speak; for thy servant heareth” (I Samuel 3:10).

Early in my own life, I felt a strong desire to work for God and was even willing to be a minister if it should be His will. I felt that if the Lord could call the boy Samuel to do a work for Him, certainly He could call me too should He desire to use me.

I really wanted a similar experience, thinking perhaps He would come and stand by me just as He had Samuel. I dared to hope for an audible voice and perhaps a bright light to shine on me, or maybe the touch of His hand on mine. The Lord did not grant that kind of experience, but His Word came to me. It was like a still small voice, and

I knew at that moment that I was definitely called into the ministry. I have never had the slightest doubt.

The call may come in a different manner to you, but if He wants to use you in the ministry, be assured that somehow it will come, and you will know it however it may come.

The Bible is filled with biographies of men and women whom God called to do a work for Him. In every case, God moved on the person; the person did not choose the work as a profession or a career.

God confided in Noah His plan to destroy the earth. Just having a strong desire would never have carried Noah through the many years of labor to build something that seemed but a joke to everybody around him. Noah answered the call and built an ark. Although his converts were few, the human race, which now numbers over five billion, was spared from complete annihilation. What an accomplishment!

Although Moses felt that he could not lead the Israelites out of the land of Egypt, he could not doubt the call of God when a voice spoke his name out of a bush that was on fire. Afterwards he led his people out of bondage to the Promised Land, undergirded by the call that came to him in the desert.

In reality, the ministerial call is more than just a call; it means being consumed, possessed, even losing strength and yet finding it again as we meet the Master face to face.

The ministry must never be considered just a chosen profession, or career. The minister must have a divine call directing him into a lifelong work for God. If he does