

# Expectations

BY JAMIE BUCKINGHAM

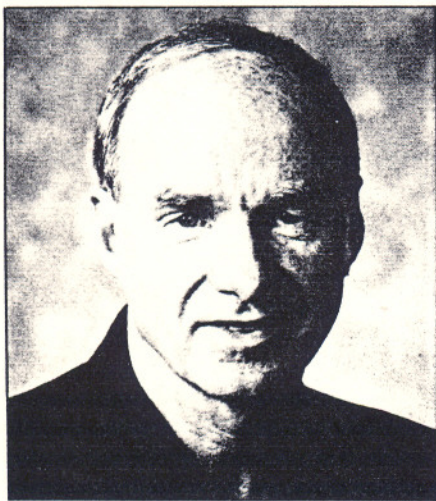
**T**he two stories were side by side on page one of the morning newspaper—both with glaring headlines.

One said, "SLAIN PASTOR'S DOUBLE LIFE ALLEGED." The other: "ACCUSED SHOPLIFTER WAS 'GOOD MINISTER.'"

The first story was of an admired Methodist minister in Texas whose body had been found in the back of his van near the town where he pastored. He had been beaten and strangled. The police said there may have been a chance the 55-year old pastor had been living a double life and was deeply involved in drugs and illicit sex.

That was all the *Dallas Morning News* needed. They waited until Sunday—of course—and ran the article on page one.

The second story told of a 41-year old Roman Catholic priest in Illinois who along with a 60-year old woman was accused of stealing \$9,000 worth of gold jewelry, books, greeting cards and other trivia at a shopping mall. The priest had been arrested Wednesday but the Chicago



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papers waited until Sunday to print the story. Our editor printed it alongside the first story in the Monday edition.

Why this obsession on the part of newspaper editors to give extra publicity to ministers who are accused of going bad?

In fact, anyone claiming to be a Christian runs the risk of newspaper crucifixion if it is discovered he is a sinner.

Several years ago when an elder in our church was accused of mishandling funds in his investment company, the story appeared on page one under the head "CHURCH ELDER ACCUSED." His misconduct, though, had absolutely nothing to do with his relationship with our church.

Recently a noted pornographic magazine printed photographs of a deceased congressman, showing him in compromising poses with a prostitute. The pornographer gleefully pointed out the congressman claimed to be a Christian.

Is this obsession on the part of media people simply a battle of Good against Evil, with Evil doing everything it can to discredit God's people? Or is there something far deeper at work here?

Last year when Lebanese militia sneaked past Jewish guards into a Palestinian refugee camp and murdered hundreds of women and children, the media laid the blame on the Israelis. At the same time, when the Jews did heroic and sacrificial things, the happenings went unreported.

Why does the press love to crucify Jews—and Israeli Jews in particular? Is it merely anti-Semitism, or does it go much deeper?

When you've been persecuted as much as the Jews, it's natural to believe all the world is anti-Semitic. This same syndrome often affects Christians. When a Christian writer recently interviewed a leader of the "discipleship" movement and asked certain questions, the pastor exploded in a violent rage over the phone, accusing the reporter of wanting to "build a case" against his organiza-

tion. Although his paranoid reaction was understandable (there have been a lot of false accusations in the past), it was unnecessary. The writer was not "out to get him," she was just asking honest questions.

It's easy to blame the press. Why don't the media have harsh things to say about the Iranian bloodbath or about the way the Syrians and the Jordanians have treated the Palestinians? Lots of people live double lives but their exploits aren't publicized. So why, then, when a preacher falls, do editors plaster it on page one? Why do they wait for the Sunday edition—which has the largest circulation? Why jump on a noted TV evangelist who rents an expensive room at Disney World, when the publisher of the newspaper not only buys expensive condos—but keeps them full of call girls? Why single out the TV evangelist?

The answer lies in a principle outlined in James 3:1. "We who teach will be judged more strictly."

It is a matter of expectations.

The world—including the Arab world—realizes the Jews are God's chosen people. That is the reason Jews are always under the magnifying glass of the press—not because the press is anti-Semitic as much as it simply expects more of those who have been chosen by God.

The world is not threatened by godliness as much as it is hurt when those who purport godliness sometimes turn out to be just as they are. The revelation of "Why, you're no better than I am!" is a painful one to bear. The reaction is often anger.

The world is longing for true heroes, but they want their heroes to be better than they are. The only way to prove they are made of genuine stuff is to try to tear them down. In short, then, don't say you are God's chosen unless you are ready to pay the price of scrutiny.

And don't complain when you are attacked, misquoted and sometimes hung out to dry in public—it's all part of the package. ☪