

StraightTalk

Frank answers to honest questions

Q: I'm a pastor who is considering a call to a new church and the finance committee has asked if I will be willing to come for *less* than I'm being paid in my present position. How should I respond?

A: When I "interviewed" for my first pastorate, the finance committee chairman said, "We're paying off a big debt and don't have any money. How *little* can we pay you and you'll still come?"

I went back and talked to my wise pastor at the seminary. He challenged me: "Tell them you'll come for nothing if they'll help you find a job in the community and allow you to set your own hours. If they refuse that, tell them you'll come for anything they pay you, and you'll live at that economic level. If they want you to mow your own grass rather than visit the hospital, you'll do that. If they want you to wear shabby clothes and walk to work because you can't afford a car, you'll do that."

It was wise advice. They paid me \$130 per week. I mowed my own grass and wore the same suit each Sunday until a deacon gave me a new one. What they didn't know was I would have paid them for the privilege of being their shepherd, so strong was my call. We never lacked anything—especially satisfaction and contentment.

Q: Recently a small but vocal group in my church told me they needed a new pastor. They want me to retire, although the vast majority seem to like me. Should I leave?

A: The only time you should be concerned is when all speak well of you. If God put you there, don't run just because a group of dogs are baying up your tree. If these folks want a new pastor, call them in and tell them to go find one—and join his church.

Q: I'm a newly appointed elder in our church, and I see some things about my pastor which I think hinder his effectiveness. These are per-

sonal things, like his dirty fingernails and unpolished shoes. He's a warm, personable man but seems oblivious to these things. Should I tell him?

A: By all means. That's what love is all about. But use a lot of grace and pray for a lot of wisdom. Outwardly he may seem warm and personable, but inside he may be insecure. Many men do not know how to receive correction. They equate it with rejection. Why not prove your love to him first—by getting to know him and being his friend. Take him out to dinner. Buy him a new suit—and perhaps a manicure set. Maybe he'd like one of those electric shoeshine machines. Then, after you've earned the right through love, speak the truth.

Q: I've been a pastor of this church six months. My wife and I are the only Spirit-baptized people in the membership. The people knew we had been fired from our last church for our Charismatic stance, but they were as desperate for a pastor as I was for a place to serve. Now the honeymoon is over. We could stay here indefinitely, but no one is responding. What should we do?

A: It sounds as if God has answered your prayer. You wanted a place to serve, and He gave you a needy flock who need a servant.

I suggest you start where Paul did with the church at Corinth—not with scholarly sermons but demonstrations of power. It's one thing to preach about the power of the Holy Spirit—another thing to demonstrate it.

Call for the sick. Then gather your elders and anoint with oil. Take authority over demons. Not in a Wednesday night prayer meeting, but on Sunday morning. Call for those to receive the Baptism in the Holy Spirit. Lay on hands and pray in tongues. I guarantee your church will come alive. Like Paul, you'll have a riot or revival on your hands. But it will not remain lukewarm.

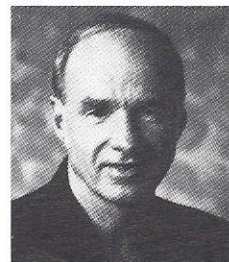
If you are dissatisfied with your lot in life, build a filling station on it—and fill your people with the Holy Spirit. He'll do the rest.

Q: Our minister insists on calling himself "pastor," but he never visits the congregation members' homes or the hospital. He sends an assistant to do the job. Do you think he's a real pastor?

A: Every Christian is a minister. Out of these ministers, the Holy Spirit selects some to be apostles, others to be prophets, some to be evangelists, pastors and teachers. These specialized ministers are commissioned to prepare God's people to be better ministers. They are to the Body of Christ what a coach is to a football team. They are not the players—even though they may be better at the task than the actual players. Their job is to enable others to be better players.

You are right in stating there is a difference between pastor and minister. I, for instance, am not a pastor. I am, however, the "senior minister" in our church. We have others, some on staff and some with responsibilities in home groups, who are true pastors. While I have some problems with a man calling himself a pastor if he is really a prophet or a teacher, you have to call the chief overseer something—and our generation understands the term "pastor."

It seems to me that you want special attention from the chief shepherd, and you are offended that God may be treating you as He had Elisha treat Naaman by sending out his assistant rather than coming out himself. I suggest you listen to the Word of God and get your heart right—regardless of who visits you. ■



Each issue Jamie Buckingham draws on his many years of pastoral experience to answer your questions about various areas of ministry. Send your questions to: MINISTRIES Magazine, Box 2374, Orlando, FL 32802.