

The Guy in the Tie
Reflections ... *continued*

69. I don't go to the back to shake hands after church. Not because I don't like people but because I do. I don't like to just shake hands with a cursory "howayuh." I really like to question people and dig into who they are. Shaking hands and saying hi to a thousand people is just too frustrating. People intrigue me and I want to know everything about them. I am, however, probably the only pastor of 4000 folk whom you can find in the phone book. I love to sit down over coffee and explore people but I don't like just chatting with anyone.

70. What does a pastor non-negotiably have to be? Have to do?

- Gifted: Studying and communicating must come easily. Your main function can't be laborious.
- Integrity: There can be no stain, no distance between what you know and how you live.
- Orthodoxy: The foundations of the faith of inerrancy – the Trinity, salvation, etc. . . the "pillars" must be in place.
- A virile meditative life: "When your output exceeds your intake your upkeep will be you downfall." Ministry is an overflow of personal devotion.
- Time to rest: The ministry can't become a job and wear a man down. 5 p.m. to 10 p.m. must be wisely protected and spent.
- The ability to delegate: As Moses in Exodus 18, he cannot try to do everything. You delegate your weakness.
- The ability to cast vision: Disciple making cannot be led by laymen. The vision and direction of the church must be led from the pulpit. He must inspire and lead, not threaten and whine.
- An enjoyment of people: Two kinds of pastors fail. Those always with men and never with God and those always with God and never with men.
- Prayerfulness: The success of ministry in the flesh is impossible. Men who don't learn to pray will lower their vision to the physically attainable.
- The ability to make hard decisions. Such as when discipline has to begin, when a firing must occur, or a line must be held, or when a man has to be no respecter of persons.
- Moral courage: It means to speak the truth in the face of a hostile and alien culture.
- Perseverance: A pastor who quits easily will quit early. He must have bulldog tenacity. He must believe in the importance of his message.

71. The church is no longer the home team. There was a day when no one would say that he was not a Christian. A proper American was a Christian. No longer. We are now the "scum of the earth, the dregs of all things." All of the prayers for the non-chalant American church to come to life are possibly about to be answered. Our testing may be beginning. Time to find out who's who. Time to purify ourselves of

the false and the nominal. Time for new heroes to arise. A time when women florists and male pizza deliverers rise to the top.

72. Integrity is one's consistency between what he says and what he does. "Integrate" means becoming one. An "integer" is one number. Integrity is the opposite of duality, of hypocrisy. Integrity is the major quality that men should be proud of.

When your ship goes down and you have something to save by lashing it to your body – that one thing is integrity.

"To thine own self be true."

73. People have asked me, "What are some movies that have something to say." Movies are without doubt right there with popular music (as opposed to classical) as the major art forms of our day. I'm not thinking of overt Christian movies or even "wholesome" movies but movies that are provocative in forcing ideas and values to be examined.

Rebel Without a Cause: Perhaps the first major teen movie that dealt with the angst of post WWII teens . . . i.e. Boomers . . . Look for what plagues Buzz, James, Natalie, and Sal Mineo. Look for the part the planetarium plays. Think through the name "Plato." Look at the three teens' imaginary family. Examine hard the opening scene and the mechanical monkey.

Mosquito Coast: An early Harrison Ford and River Phoenix. Watch two cultures – the sacred and the secular, the scientist and the missionary – try to subdue the wild and establish civilization. Look at the flaws of both. Who starts ahead? Who finishes last?

Cool Hand Luke: Paul Newman's best (in my opinion). It is the classic post-modern existentialist. Luke is the classic anti-Christ. One sees how the world views God and Christ and righteousness. It sets forth perfectly the anti-hero. Note the comparison of Lucius Jackson with Jesus. The comparison is so persistent that it brought criticism at its early showings. And examine "the man with no eyes." Watch the relationship of Luke and God. Also . . . watch close the opening parking meter scene that tips off the whole movie.

2010: The point won't be made until the last scene. I wanted to stand up and preach.

The Dark Crystal: What is "the new age" about? Again the theology is surprisingly revealed in the last scene. Totally erroneous but unmistakable. See how the modern thinks. Fun to watch even though the New Age is passe'.

Citizen Kane: A deliberate statement by Orson Wells. Once again watch the whole movie for the last minute. A profound biblical statement by a pretty unbiblical man. Wells saw where post WWII capitalism was going.

Judgment at Nuremberg: Maybe the most powerful acting on the most powerful subject by the greatest actors of all time. The movie makes the classic interpretation and judgment upon WWII and the transcendence of right and wrong.

Apt Pupil: The classic depiction of modern man's attraction to atheism but then terror once he truly encounters it. The movie is dark but a wakeup call for modern man.

West World: What happens when Western man has technology but no morality? Technology will turn on man and be his death knell.

74. Ionians

Sophists

Socrates

Plato

Aristotle

Stoics

Epicureans

Christianity...

Neo-Platonism

Augustine

Anselin

Abelard

Aquinas

William of Occam

Wycliffe

Luther

Calvin

Descartes

Spinoza

Liebnitz

Berkley

Locke

Hume

Kant

Goethe

Kierkegaard

Nietzsche

Herbert Spencer

Sartre

Pragmatism

Freud

The New Age or Cosmic Consciousness

If you will, google these or look them up in an encyclopedia and begin to see them in succession or continuity – how one philosophy then its failure leads to the next. You don't need to read them in depth but only in a cursory sense. If you do, you will know and understand the foundations of our present civilization. You will be more insightful than 99.99% of the rest of humankind. Truly intelligent. Take one a day. Three weeks. Get smart.

75. All mankind is looking for the premises of Christianity or the teachings of the Bible.
- Where did creation and its order come from? What is the nature of reality?
 - Where did man in all his uniqueness come about?
 - Where did evil originate and what is the nature of evil?
 - What is the solution to evil or the salvation from evil?
 - What is man's duty or ethical obligations?
 - How do we know any of these? What is the basis for knowing with certainty?
 - Where is history going? Is there a purpose to history?
 - Is man immortal? Does he have a soul? Is there life after death?

All of these questions are the major emphases of the Bible. Without the Bible or when there is a rejection of the Bible, man must find its substitute.

Without the Bible man is a lost sheep looking for a Bible. His brief seeming answers are called philosophy and the religions.

76. There is an ailment that if it infects a church can become fatal. It's called being "fortress minded." It's where a church no longer lifts its eyes to look upon the fields but builds a wall of protection to keep the world out. When separation from sin becomes isolation from sinners. When all a church's money and plans are for the comfort and benefits for those within the walls. All the benefits a church can have are OK if they don't become the focus and intent of the church. When a church is merely *our* building, *our* youth programs, *our* activity center, *our* playgrounds, *our* music programs, *our* AWANA programs, *our* VBS, and *our* retreats – then that church will become self-reliant, prayerless and committed to its comfort. It will rely on slick organization and control. Then it will become the kind of church the modern world makes fun of and SNL does skits about.

77. The first thing you'd better make sure your church does well is to take care of its babies, toddlers, and then pre-school. No matter how great everything else is, no parent will jeopardize his children. Where they are must be clean and safe and well-organized.

Next comes the youth and then all the rest.

78. The gay rights decision in July will be the most destructive act of government since Dred Scott and The Fugitive Slave Law, both which were reversed.

Though much or most of our country sees the present administration as progressive and courageous, Barack Obama will be the most destructive individual to date in the history of America. In time, one will not buy nor sell without bowing to the image of man. And this began in our day.

79. Ministry is keeping many plates spinning – the right plates. But the plate that will stop spinning, and quicker than all the rest, is that of discipleship, evangelism and missions. Because all involve the high price of the commitment of a life. The Great Commission must be taught and explained and exhorted and modeled in leadership. It cannot begin at the level of the layman – laymen will not go where the leadership will not lead. Discipleship and evangelism cannot be a mere staff position and budgetary item. It must be the integration point of all of the church. Meaning that there must be an inside track for those who want to run ahead of the pack. Discipleship must be that higher life and greater purpose of the church.

“Follow Me and I will make you fishers of men.”

Mel and I made a decision early on that we would never have a person leave our church because they truly wanted to know the word to share it and disciple others but we wouldn't enable them. To the best of my knowledge we have never had that happen. People have left for numbers of reasons but never for that one.

80. Democracy is a mixed blessing. It indeed removes the historic failure of monarchies and dynasties. Of men and women, kings and queens who could only be removed by death or revolution of those who would compound their evil were there no restraint.

However, kings did not worry about popularity or job security and being re-elected. They could be committed to only doing right.

Democracy gave the people a say, a vote, and a sense of control. Evil could no longer be a runaway train. The population through checks and balances could inhibit the perceived undesirable. It would now be harder for an individual to have unhindered possibilities to advance their corruption.

However, “politicians” (the invention of democracy) would now be professionals whose only job security would be to please their constituency and to get re-elected. Principle would give way to utility. All of society now reflect the average. Courageous, unpopular stances would give way to the lowest common denominator of pleasing mediocrity and the average opinions. The people would indeed rule as they put *their* man in. Corruption would no longer be overt but covert, disguised, and secretive. Democracy appears to me to have the problem of removing the extremes of good and evil by insuring mediocrity.

81. Do you know what my prayer and dream is? My hope? For a great movement – spontaneous – beginning among Christian high school students who are tired of modernity. Tired of compromise. Tired of culture's trying to do the impossible – of finding a system of truth to replace Christianity. Tired of people saying there is no God nor final standard and then in the same breath moaning about the failure of the family, the absence of morals, of corrupt politicians, and the need for "law and order" – "right and wrong" – "righteous" leadership.

Kids who are tired of the whining about love after denying the Prince of Peace..

Kids who will say like the child in The Emperor's Clothes, "There's nothing there." Who will say, "All we've been told about no God and no creation and no final truth and no absolutes and no right and wrong – it's all a sham. And we reject it and return in covenantal devotion to the true God."

And then I think of this group as spreading outward from where they first gathered.

I think of them bonding together by blood oath to be pure, to study the Bible daily, to preach the gospel, and maintain obedience to scripture. To be knights of old – to "follow the Lamb wherever He goes and not love their own lives even unto death."

I see thousands of the young beginning to join arms and serve shoulder to shoulder. A Children's Crusade as in the Middle Ages. Youth inspired by no personalities or programs but by sheer discontent with the evil of their day.

Imagine.

82. Abraham Lincoln claimed that his best counsel was from his father Tom Lincoln, who said, "Every man must skin his own skunk." Whenever we have a skunk in our lives we someday are going to get stink all over us.

Best not to conceal a skunk.

83. Young pastors ask me if there is an art to preaching to which I respond. "Yes, Don't! Rather be an expert at examining a text and then clearly explaining its meaning with passion." When you do this you will let the Bible do its own work. The Bible is the most powerful and incendiary document that has ever existed. When it is explained you don't have to be clever. You just have to have the moral courage to communicate its revolutionary ideas.

84. But I do tell young pastors, or for that matter any communicator, male or female, that there are key points to remember in communicating.

- Don't try to teach a number of ideas but rather hammer in one nail. Don't give people too much to remember but rather a few ideas.

- Know how to flow from idea to idea or point to point. If not, your message will be jerky, staccato and non-cohesive. Think through how to proceed. Strive for clarity.
- Anticipate the mind of the listeners. What might they be thinking about what you are saying?
- Always let the text be the reference point. This is your credence. The Bible will testify for itself. The listeners should be able to easily follow your explanation of the text.
- Know where to strum and where to pluck. Strum the contributing points but pluck and accentuate the main ones.
- Keep a sense of time. You've got an allotted portion of time. Spend it wisely. Don't lose time on contributing thoughts. Spend it on main thoughts. Don't look up and only have five minutes to wrap up 20 minutes' worth of remaining text.
- Don't teach everything you know about every aspect of the text. Teach to the degree that each point needs, to clarify the main point.
- Don't cross reference excessively. Once you prove a point don't belabor it.
- Know how you will begin. Know cold your first two minutes. You need to appear that you are authoritative and know your subject as indeed you should. Don't meander, "hum and haw." Get to the point quickly.
- Don't "fiddle" with your hands. Such is an annoying tick. Let your hands rest on the pulpit or lectern. (When you travel to speak make certain they have a lectern.) Don't mess with your hair, your tie, your collar or cuffs. Don't scratch a zit or your nose. Don't mess with your notes or Bible marker. It will drive your listeners MAD.
- Let your eyes move naturally and normally. Don't stare at a spot on the ceiling. Naturally make eye contact.
- Try not to have "verbal ticks." Don't repetitively fill the silence with "um" or "ya know" or "and uh."
- Know how you will finish or know how you will land the plane. Don't circle the runway.
- Never assume you can tell a story. Even though it's a personal story, practice telling it.
- If you're funny, or worse if you think you are, don't drop a funny and wait for a laugh because if you don't get one you'll look stupid. Just move on as though you didn't intend to be funny. Then you appear brilliant, if it really is funny. If not you'll get a drum roll.
- Practice your message. Trusting God doesn't mean you get to be lazy. Be able to think through, very cleanly, each sequence of the message.
- "Don't juggle oranges, throw javelins." Speak with the authority of someone who believes what they're saying. Speak, don't chat.
- If there's any question about it, make certain your sound system will have no glitch. Nothing is more distracting than a continual sound problem.
- Make certain how long they want you to go. Then honor it.