

The Guy in the Tie Part XXI
Reflections (*cont'd*)

Continuing with the reflections from my ministry in Denton these 40 plus years...

26. Counseling is a relatively simple idea – theoretically.

- People must recognize the choices that have gotten them to their distressed state
- And then the beliefs that fostered such actions
- And then the family, societal, business and cultural forces that have influenced them
- And then what will be the inevitable consequences to continue
- And then the new possibility of a biblical choice
- . . . from a new perspective and system of thought
- Then time . . . to slowly encourage them, guide them and apply pressure and accountability . . .

But 90% of it begins with number one. Most counseling is like getting the last pea on the plate with a spoon. Until there is mourning and repentance there will be no change.

27. Elders (I believe) should not be elected by a congregation.

- The congregation as a whole is not that mature to know what a leader should be.
- Nor do they have an intimate knowledge of who that person is in private.
- Each faction of the church will instinctively put forth their “champion” and rally support. Then . . .
- Each champion and faction will be bitter when rejected.
- There is no precedence for voting in the Bible. It is a democratic concept not a Biblical one.
- In Acts 14, Paul and Barnabas selected elders.
- Paul writes to Timothy and Titus to select and appoint elders.
- A congregation vote is a congregation split.

An elder board should stay at about 12 (I believe) because it's easier to steer a jet ski than a barge. God who knows the hearts of men will make elders identifiable. There is no foolproof system of elder selection but the unanimity of the existing board is the least chance of disaster.

28. What is a pastor's relation to the elders? They are not his rubber stamp and “yes men.” I never make any pastoral move without the elders' approval. If 12 other men know that something is right then I can rest assured in the will of God. I can't imagine leading out without the counsel of good men. But a pastor is not merely part of the elder board. He is given to the church as a pastor – one who feeds,

protects and leads. His leadership is to be sought and honored. The elder board is to be revered in counsel. Together they form the church's guidance.

29. No pastor should have direct access to church finances. Never should he have control over money or the checkbook. To do so is to ask for a scandal. Money causes more problems than anything.
- No one person should be able to write checks.
 - A number of persons should collect the money and count it.
 - At least two persons transport it.
 - Every expenditure by any church staff or representative should be reimbursed only with a receipt and then within a specified time limit.
 - Any expenditure over a specified amount should be cleared by a finance committee just to make sure that the expenditure is for ministry purposes.
 - All giving records should be private except to specified persons.
 - Money should never become a dominant point in the pulpit as it should never be pressured.
 - The church should keep debt at an absolute minimum.
 - The church should have a financial administrator as quickly as needed. You can't afford not having one.

30. If ever a doctrinal, sexual, financial, or any such transgression occurs, the church should never try to cover it up. It may not need to make some things as public as others but within the parameters that the transgression affects, those people need to hear it addressed.

Christians do not have a problem with sin occurring within a church but they do have a problem with cover-ups.

If you address it too broadly it is seen as vindictiveness and that is bad.

If too slow then gossip will spread and then you've got a worse problem. Check it out. Make certain of guilt. Act decisively and mercifully. Restore the guilty all you can.

31. Getting a church to give is no real problem. To get a church to gather to pray is virtually impossible. Only 9-11 was successful.
32. I've pastored young folks with fewer of the old. I've pastored the old with fewer of the young. The latter is easier and more enjoyable. The former is exciting and full of hope. A persistent lack of the latter is also fatal. A lack of the former produces an errant minded young Christian with an unreal view of the church and humanity.
33. We have never had a concern about giving at DBC. We rarely preach on it unless it naturally occurs in the text. But when you feed, enlighten, and encourage the saints, their hearts are full and their joy is expressed in giving.

Christians should be treated like mature sons . . . not like children under rules.

34. A Christian woman in today's culture who can take younger Christian women through the specifics of Titus 2:3-5 can spend the rest of her life impacting the next generation. Too few women, in my opinion, have taken up that cause.
35. Couples with solid marriages can make as big an impact as they want by doing nothing but taking engaged couples through premarital counseling. They can save couples from immeasurable pain.
36. I have never recovered from the proposition of a Bible. A book from the Almighty in human language speaking of every essential issue. I have never understood how a child of God could not have a fervency to know it and meet God in its pages.
37. I have a favorite ministerial verse that has strengthened me as long as I have served Him.
"The eyes of God move to and fro throughout the whole earth that he might strongly support the one whose heart is perfect toward Him."
(2 Chronicles 16:9)

This doesn't mean that God's eyes are searching for that man because God knows where he is. But rather that God is looking throughout the world for the resources to support him. Resources beyond that man's understanding that God will bring. Like Nehemiah who prayed and had the Persian king write him a blank check.

Paul said, "My God shall supply your needs according to the riches of His glory in Christ Jesus." This is the same idea.

Christ as God has the entire world as His servant and at His command. And it is His to give to us. So I don't ever want to not trust God to fulfill His plans.

38. The church is not a business. It can't be evaluated like a business nor can it be run like a business. It is a family. It is a kingdom of priests who pray and preach and trust the sovereign providence of God to convert then develop His people. The bottom line is the maturity of the people.
39. Staff in a church cannot be run like a business. When I meet with staff it is not to discuss gas receipts and budget expenditures. Nor is it to count noses as to how many are coming to their events. The only questions I ask are, "Who do you have in discipleship?" "How are your small groups?" Numbers are not necessarily indicators. We come together as a staff to study, be exhorted and pray. To rekindle holy passion.

I am not interested in when they show up in the office or what their dress code is. I expect them to be as passionate as I am. I have never been asked in 40 plus years to

work harder or do more. My problem has been depression from emotional exhaustion, from overworking and trying to do too much. I don't need staff that has to be kept tabs on. I don't have time to keep tabs on people who are not zealous for Christ.

40. A church must, as must the individual saint, always be visionary. To be as David, wondering if there is a Mephibosheth out there who needs to know of the mercy of God. Is there a Nahash the Ammonite who needs to be comforted? To say as Paul, "I hope to see you in passing and to be helped by you on my way to Rome." To always ask, "What else O God can we be doing?"
41. The pulpit is the place where the Bible is exalted and proclaimed. It is the place that the Biblical and ethical standard of morality or righteousness is clarified. Where men distinguish the clean from the unclean. It is also the place where the gospel is continually clarified and magnified. And it is also the place where vision is cast. A place where the church's duty to enact the Great Commission of evangelism and discipleship is exhorted. It is the prow of a ship cutting through hostile waters.
42. Most pastors are prepared for the entrance of cults and heresies. But cults are not the great problems. A cult is easily identifiable and easily refuted. The greater problem is not departing from scripture but adding to scripture. It is those who do not merely hold to personal ideas but who canonize them, and hold that all others must as well. And then to make life miserable for those of different opinions, and become a divisive and schismatic force in the body. In other words, the Pharisee.
43. For a man to be a pastor or for any person, man or woman, to be in the professional ministry there must be certain things that are in place.
 - He must be orthodox in his view of inerrancy and historic Protestantism. God will not bless what is offensive to the truth of heaven.
 - He must be spiritually gifted. God will equip a man to build what God has commanded. He will not make men build bricks without straw. Study and preaching must come easily.
 - He must be morally upright. God will not bless a hypocrite.
 - He must be passionate. The ministry is not a rational or just career decision. A man preaches because God has inflamed his soul. It is passion that drives you and carries you.
 - He must be proven. He doesn't go from 0 to 60. He must have won people to Christ, disciplined them and led Bible studies.
 - He must be shown to be a team man and a servant. He must work and play well with others.
 - The leaders of the body of Christ, the elders, of an existing church must have seen him as faithful in the body.
 - He must be visibly social and enjoy people. Pastors who don't like to be around people will not generally succeed in relating to them from a pulpit.

44. One of the pressing inquiries I hear is, “How do you know the will of God?” When people ask this they do not mean the revealed will of God or the moral will of God. Not the right or wrong will of God but rather the right or left. The non-moral or unrevealed will. Should I buy this car? Should we wait to have kids? Should we move to Virginia to take this new job?

How do we find the right or left will of God?

- Number one is that you don’t have to make an unrevealed thing a revealed thing. You don’t have to get a sign or have a dream or see a vision. You don’t have to turn your Bible into a crystal ball or a deck of tarot cards and get mystic symbolic inferences. God does not ever in scripture tell us to “find” an unrevealed thing. God doesn’t hold us accountable for non-moral choices.
- Secondly, how would we find it? What means would you have in appropriating God’s mind?
- Thirdly, how would we *know* our finding was true?
- Fourthly, God gives us freedom in non-moral areas. Does He have a providential plan that oversees our free choices? Certainly. But that is **His** area of guidance. Not mine. Part of being human and in the image of God is a sense of freedom. The freedom to do what I desire as long as it does not contradict revealed truth.

As Nathan said to David, “Do what you wish for God is with you.”

- Fifthly, there *is* a fact of God “placing upon my heart” a longing. (Neh. 2:12) Or as Paul said to the Romans, “for I long to come and see you.”
- Sixthly, get counsel – indeed “an abundance of counselors” – before you make a decision. Because no decision is unique – others have had to make it.
- No one in the Bible is ever held guilty for a non-moral or non-revealed choice.
- God can still open or close doors to guide our choices (Romans 1, 15).
- Right and left decisions do not get us into serious trouble. Immoral decisions do.
- Neutral decisions can turn out painful but that is not to be avoided. Such is life and such is learning.
- Also make durn certain it IS indeed neutral. Ask a wise Christian. What one thinks is neutral choice may not be.

The word “naïve” in Greek means “no evil.” When in reality evil *was* present.

45. All men have a deficiency called “self-respect.” We spend our lives seeking a way to establish our worth and success. Women also have a deficiency called “tenderness” whereby she longs to be treated as honorable.

When a man and woman meet, they instinctively provide this need. The man is tender and chivalrous and kind. He provides the deficiency she craves. The woman is instinctively respectful. She laughs at his jokes and is awed at his brains, talent, and might. Both of them provide what the other needs and they think, “We need a lifetime of this esteem!” They get married based upon the enormous premise that this initial conduct will never change.

The problem is that the other's conduct is an instinct not a discipline. It often is a means of acquiring, not of serving. As a result their conduct now ends once the objective is met. Both of the couple goes into withdrawal. Then they try to manipulate to get that which they experienced earlier. Often they give up and look for someone else who will meet that need. The cycle begins anew. It will continue until the realization that respect and tenderness must be a discipline, a choice, an act of love and service – then deep emotion returns.

It's why the three stages of marriage are:

1. The honeymoon: meaning "sweet month."
2. The disillusionment: It's when you discover the sinner you married.
3. The commitment: It's when a couple matures into the resolve and act of love.

46. Don't despair if your son does not quickly surrender his heart to Christ. It takes a young man time to connect the dots. "God . . . character . . . job . . . money . . . woman . . . car." Boys are all rogue leaders . . . leaders who don't want to follow, until they are convinced in their souls. Don't despair over your downy little eaglet.
47. But don't rejoice too quickly if your young daughter memorizes scripture and sings in the choir. Little girls learn to please. They can appear precociously religious. But some day there may be a man in their lives that they also would like to please in order to be seen as special. Keep praying and don't flatter her in her spirituality. Whisper to her, "Your test is coming."
48. There are a couple of things that every pastor will learn if he is going to survive the ministry. One is that success in the ministry will not come from merely organization, good preaching or discipleship and evangelistic programs. It will come by God's grace. "I planted, Apollos watered . . . but God causes the growth. So neither he who plants or waters is anything but God who causes the growth." (1 Cor. 3:6-7)

The ministry is impossible. "Apart from Me you can do nothing." (John 15) The ministry is magic. It's miraculous. God the Holy Spirit must cause dead men to live, deaf men to hear the shepherd's voice, and blind men to see the glory of Christ. ". . . flesh and blood did not reveal this to you but my Father who is in heaven." (Matthew 16)

Thus we lift up the cross to draw the elect. We pray. We trust God the Holy Spirit to act on our behalf. He will not leave us as orphans.

And there is another thing every minister has to learn. We are not going to win in this world. We are not going to convert the world – that is why we have a Tribulation, because both Israel and the world will reject our message.

Most ministers are secretly post-mil and feel they will bring in the kingdom. If they don't become pre-mil they will suffer discouragement. Also, our flesh will not be changed until the day of Christ when we shall all be changed. Success is that we "keep the faith" and "fight the good fight" and "finish the course." But we won't "win" until the King shows up. Until then we stay true like Robin Hood until Richard comes.

49. I've discovered in experience what the Bible continually preaches in truth. The simpler, more contemplative, more rustic and bucolic that a life is – the better it is. Sin, wealth, possessions, debt and excessive activity – responsibilities and obligations – complicates life. There is something in life that tends to complexity. There is also something, however, that makes us migrate to Walden Pond. To the country and evening shade. To loved ones visiting on the patio swing. To coffee and good books. To fireplaces and good dogs. To grandkids and family and a good meal.

No place was as peaceful and quiet and simple as Eden. Only the eternal city in Revelation 21-22 is as glorious. The Christian is to re-cultivate such love and simplicity.

Protect your early mornings. Reserve them for reading and prayer. Protect your evenings. Wind down. Limit your kid's activities so as not to sacrifice your home. Have a hobby you love. A good book waiting on you. Enjoy time on the couch talking.

Live well. "The fruit of the Spirit is . . . peace. . ." (Galatians 5)

50. Don't expect your teenager to be something you were not. We all have stories of some sort when we were young where we tested the boundaries of independence. Don't try to make your house like "Little House on the Prairie." It won't happen. Recognize that there are few stupider creatures than a teenager. (Think back.) What would you do if your kid was doing half of the things you successfully kept hidden from your parents?
- Raise them the best you can.
 - Stay affectionate.
 - Don't load them down with guilt when they stumble.
 - Let them grow up on their time.
 - Take lots of pictures to laugh at later.
 - Don't despair. You didn't fail.
 - White water is normal for all parents. As Samuel. David. Adam. Joseph and Mary (Remember Mary and Joseph's four other sons? John 7:5).

To be continued...