

COUNSEL TO PASTORS

The nature, importance, duties, and qualifications of the pastor

James Meikle (1730-1799)

Personal Piety

Be much with God in secret—so shall God be with you in public.

Whatever else you read, read a double portion in the Scriptures of truth.

Learn daily more of Christ and more of yourself; else, your other studies will profit little.

Set your affections on things above—so shall spiritual things be your delight and not your burden.

Seek not great things for yourself. Seek not great fame, great applause, great comforts, or a great income. But seek great things for Christ. Seek for Him great glory, many converts, and much fruits of righteousness.

Consider the preciousness of souls, the value of salvation, the weight of the sacred charge, the terrors of the Almighty, the solemn Day of Judgment, and your own utter inability. Then shall you have no vain confidence, but depend on God alone.

Relationships

Do not be ashamed of piety in any company.

Learn to be abused without becoming angry.

Argue coolly and from conscience—not for victory.

Do not pretend a “show of sanctimony” before men.

Do not be much concerned about your own reputation, as long as the truth and the Gospel do not suffer.

Please all men so long as you are consistent with the truth, but do not wound the truth to please any.

Lend your ear to reproaches, rather than applauses. Reproaches may let us see some of our foibles or failings. But commendation is very apt to kindle self-conceit, of which everyone has enough.

Give a pleasant ear when others are commended. But always frown away the friend that would commend you to your face.

Be scant in exhibiting “specimens of your learning,” or comments on the Scriptures in their original languages. For a fine grammarian may be but a novice in piety and the Gospel.

In company, always study to say something for edification. In this way, you preach every day, as well as on Sundays.

Shepherding the Flock

See that the behavior of every person in your family is a pattern to all observers and not matter of reproach to the joy of God’s enemies.

Let your flock be continually on your mind. And not only pray with them in public and from house to house, but carry them to your closet and pray for them in private.

Do not neglect to visit them at all proper times, but especially embrace those golden opportunities—sickness and affliction.

Have sympathetic feelings with the sufferings of all your flock.

With respect to your flock, consider that you are made the steward of a family and therefore must, seeing the great Master allows it, provide food for all—meat for the strong and milk for the weak.

Keep an exact list or catalogue of your flock: who is pious or profligate; who is in affluence or poverty; who is in health or sick—and read it often.

Preaching

In preaching, aim at God’s glory and the good of souls. And then without deviating from that rule, please all men as much as possible.

Let your sermons be always the fruit of much study and application. And never dare to serve God or His people with that which cost you nothing.

Let your life be consistent with your message. What you preach on Sunday, practice through the week.

The World

Do not only press charity on the wealthy; but let your example, according to your ability, show the way.

Be temperate in eating and drinking. Do not, when at a feast, though temperate at other times, be a glutton or a winebibber.

Do not contract many worldly acquaintances.

Do not meddle much with the affairs of this life.

Shun familiarity with the men of the world, else celestial truths, as uttered by you, will be despised. ❧

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