

Meditations in Scripture and the Great Tradition of the Church

# CALVIN AND EDWARDS ON MINISTRY



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**The Fellowship of Ailbe**

Calvin and Edwards on Ministry  
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## Introduction

Welcome to *Calvin and Edwards on Ministry*, four weeks of readings and meditations designed to help us understand the work to which God has called us as it was pursued by two of the great servants of the Lord from our Christian past.

John Calvin and Jonathan Edwards not only served faithfully and well in their respective parishes, they recorded their insights and urged them on their contemporaries, with a view to strengthening the work of ministry in churches everywhere.

We have much to learn from such faithful forebears, and these readings and meditations can help us to reflect on our own callings in ministry, and point us in directions for growth and improvement.

*Pastor to Pastor* studies combine the resources of Scripture and great Church leaders from the past in a format agreeable to personal or group study. We are happy to offer these resources at no charge to pastors and church leaders, to help you in better grounding the work of ministry in the Word of God and the great tradition and heritage of Christian Church leadership.

*Pastor to Pastor* studies can be used by church leaders as a supplement to their devotional reading or as a resource for leadership training. Daily “Next Steps” and weekly Questions for Reflection or Discussion can help in bringing new perspectives and developing new skills for the task of leading and building the local church.

The entries in this *Pastor to Pastor* study are arranged for a month of readings, one reading per day followed by a series of Questions for Reflection or Discussion at the end of the week.

We hope you will find this study helpful and encouraging as you continue the Lord’s work in building His Church, His Body, His Bride.

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Week 1, Day 1

## The Work of Ministers

*And he gave...the pastors and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry...* Ephesians 4.11, 12

### **Draft Ecclesiastical Ordinances<sup>1</sup>**

*John Calvin (1506-1564)*

“As to the pastors, whom the Scripture also sometimes calls elders and ministers, their office is to proclaim the Word of God, to instruct, admonish, exhort and censure, both in public and private, to administer the sacraments and to enjoin brotherly corrections along with the elders and colleagues.”

In 1538, after three stormy years in his first pastorate, Calvin was run out of Geneva when he tried to impose order on the churches there. It seems Christians in all generations can have a problem with things like authority and structure. Three years later the situation in Geneva had so deteriorated, and the failure of the Gospel effort was in such disarray, that they pled with Calvin to return from exile and help them, to which he reluctantly agreed. He immediately composed the *Ecclesiastical Ordinances* to outline a program of edification and care for the Christian people of Geneva. The next 23 years of his ministry made a worldwide impact for the Kingdom of God. Nothing good happens where things are left to chance or whim. Ours is a God of order, not chaos. And that goes for the work of ministry in all forms.

*What are the most effective aspects – for the edification of the members of your church – of the order by which your church leaders conduct the ministry of your church? What needs improvement? Would you describe your work of ministry as “ordered” according to Biblical guidelines and examples? Why or why not?*

Week 1, Day 2

## Qualifications of Ministers

*For an overseer, as God’s steward, must be above reproach...He must hold firm to the trustworthy word as taught...* Titus 1.7, 9

### **Draft Ecclesiastical Ordinances**

*John Calvin (1506-1564)*

“The examination [of a candidate for ministry] contains two parts, of which the first concerns doctrine – to ascertain whether the candidate for ordination has a good and holy knowledge of Scripture; and also whether he be a fit and proper person to communicate it edifyingly to the people. Further to avoid all danger of the candidate holding some false opinion, it will be good that he profess his acceptance and maintenance of the doctrine approved by the Church...The second part concerns life, to ascertain whether he is of good habits and conducts himself always without reproach.”

The work of pastoral ministry involves the use of three tools: The Word of God, prayer, and one’s personal example. Calvin understood this well. Men called to the ministry must be competent in the whole counsel of God and consistent in their teaching with what has been handed down by our forebears in the faith. They also must be pious, gracious, and generous in giving of themselves for

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<sup>1</sup>All quotations from John Calvin, “Draft Ecclesiastical Ordinances,” in J. K. S.Reid, ed., *Calvin: Theological Treatises in The Library of Christian Classics* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1954), pp. 58ff.

the care of God's flocks. And – note that word, “maintenance” and the present tense of “conducts” – they must be diligent to improve in these qualifications all their lives.

*What rule or procedure do you follow to be always improving in doctrine, prayer, and your personal example?*

*Week 1, Day 3*

## Ongoing Mutual Accountability

*I went up because of a revelation and set before them (though privately before those who seemed influential) the gospel that I proclaim, in order to make sure I was not running or had not run in vain. Galatians 2.2*

### **Draft Ecclesiastical Ordinances**

*John Calvin (1506-1564)*

“Now as it is necessary to examine ministers well when they are to be elected, so also it is necessary to have good supervision to maintain them in their duty. First, it will be expedient that all the ministers, for conserving purity and concord of doctrine among themselves, meet together one certain day each week, for discussion of the Scriptures; and none are to be exempt from this without legitimate excuse.”

*The Register of the Company of Pastors in Geneva* during the time of Calvin provides fascinating reading and offers penetrating insights into the work of a body of ministers as they cared for the flocks of God in their city. Ministers need other ministers for friendship, counsel, spiritual and moral accountability, and for improving their use of the various tools and gifts of ministry. Where such accountability is lacking, the wellbeing of the Body of Christ in a community suffers.

*Do you meet with other ministers for ongoing mutual accountability? Would other ministers benefit from your meeting with them?*

*Week 1, Day 4*

## Shepherds of the Flocks

*“Then I will gather the remnant of my flock out of all the countries where I have driven them, and I will bring them back to their fold, and they shall be fruitful and multiply. I will set shepherds over them who will care for them, and they shall fear no more, nor be dismayed, neither shall any be missing, declares the LORD.” Jeremiah 23.4*

### **Draft Ecclesiastical Ordinances**

*John Calvin (1506-1564)*

“[The] office [of the elders] is to have oversight of the life of everyone, to admonish amicably those whom they see to be erring or to be living a disordered life, and, where it is required, to enjoin fraternal corrections themselves and along with others.”

The people of Geneva elected the elders who would visit them in their homes and watch over them in their daily lives. Elders were to relate to their flocks “amicably” and in “fraternal” ways, not lording it over them or bullying them about. Elders are shepherds, and God signaled His intention of using shepherds to care for His sheep and build His Church. Jesus outlined, in John 10, the six important tasks of the Good Shepherd. These are presumably, in some way, the work every shepherd must pursue in caring for the flocks of God.

*Meditate your way through John 10. Can you identify the six disciplines of the work of a shepherd? Are your shepherds doing this work?*

*Week 1, Day 5*

## Servants of the Body of Christ

*“Therefore, brothers, pick out from among you seven men of good repute, full of the Spirit and wisdom, whom we will appoint to this duty.” Acts 6.3*

### **Draft Ecclesiastical Ordinances**

*John Calvin (1506-1564)*

“There were always two kinds [of deacons] in the ancient Church, the one deputed to receive, dispense and hold goods for the poor, not only daily alms, but also possessions, rents and pensions; the other to tend and care for the sick and administer allowances to the poor. This custom we follow again now for we have procurators and hospitaliers.”

The word, *diakonos*, originally referred to those who “waited tables” and who kept a close eye on the diners in their charge, to make sure that they lacked for nothing. Pastors and elders need deacons to complete their work of shepherding God’s flock. Deacons are also shepherds, but their primary concern is with the *physical* and *material* needs of the congregation, whereas the elder/shepherds pay attention to their *spiritual* condition. Tim Keller’s excellent book on diaconal ministries, *Ministries of Mercy*, is must-reading for every pastor, deacon, and elder. His vision for the diaconate reflects the way Calvin practiced it in Geneva, and shows the potential of diaconal ministries for spreading the grace of Jesus around in a community.

*How do the deacons in your church help with the physical and material needs of the congregation?*

*Week 1, Day 6*

## Duties of the Deacons

*For those who serve well as deacons gain a good standing for themselves and also great confidence in the faith that is in Christ Jesus. 1 Timothy 3.13*

### **Draft Ecclesiastical Ordinances**

*John Calvin (1506-1564)*

“It will be [the deacons’] duty to watch diligently that the public hospital is well maintained, and that this be both for the sick and the old people unable to work, widowed women, orphaned children and other poor creatures...Moreover, care for the poor dispersed throughout the city should be revived, as the procurators may arrange it. Moreover, besides the hospital for those passing through which must be maintained, there should be some attention given to any recognized as worthy of special charity.”

We sometimes hear disquieting and foreboding comments about where the doctrines of Calvinism can lead. But looking at Calvin’s ministry shows us something more charitable, pastoral, and efficient for the care of God’s flocks that what many imagine. Under the oversight of pastors, elders and deacons, care for the poor, the sick, the elderly and orphaned, and the widowed came through the

offerings of the people of God, not the civil government. Calvin worked all his ministry in Geneva to keep the magistrates out of the business of the Church, and he worked just as hard to make sure that the Church cared for her own. No wonder men flocked from all over Europe to study with Calvin and learn to be ministers of the Word.

*Is there a correlation between the Church's lack of effective order, community by community, and the growth of civil government?*

*Week 1, Day 7*

## Ministers as Overseers

*The saying is trustworthy: If anyone aspires to the office of overseer, he desires a noble task.* 1 Timothy 3.1

### ***Draft Ecclesiastical Ordinances***

*John Calvin (1506-1564)*

“The ministers must on their side enquire whether there be any lack or want of anything, in order to ask and desire the Seignoury [civil government] to put it in order. To do this, some of their company with the procurators [deacons] should visit the hospital every three months, to ascertain if all is in order.”

Notice that pastors were responsible to make sure that all was well with the flocks of God. Their work included advising the civil government where their help was needed in supplying any want; mostly, however, the churches took care of matters on their own. This system of pastoral oversight and ecclesiastical order helped to make Calvin's Geneva one of the great Christian cities of 16<sup>th</sup>-century Europe. The Church needs pastoral care in order to flourish, and pastoral care cannot be exercised apart from order.

*What goals for growing the church under your care have your pastors, elders, and deacons adopted? How do they oversee their work to make sure those goals are being met?*

### *Questions for reflection or discussion*

1. How would you describe the relationship between the various members of the “pastoral team” as Calvin outlined it in the *Draft Ecclesiastical Ordinances*?
2. Review this week's readings and jot down as many terms as you can identify that describe the goal of this arrangement. Write a single sentence to complete the following, “In Calvin's Geneva, the goal of pastoral ministry was...”
3. How should pastors today maintain ongoing accountability with one another in the areas of Scripture, doctrine, life, and ministry?
4. What's the most important you gained from this brief overview of Calvin's view of the ministry?
5. How are you planning to incorporate that insight to your walk with and work for the Lord?

*Prayer:*

Week 2, Day 1

## The Example of John the Baptist (1)

*“Truly, I say to you, among those born of women there has arisen no one greater than John the Baptist.”* Matthew 11.11

### ***The True Excellency of a Gospel Minister<sup>2</sup>***

*Jonathan Edwards (1703-1758)*

“John the Baptist was not only a burning but a shining light: he was so in his doctrine, having more of the gospel in his preaching than the former prophets, or at least the gospel more plainly exhibited with greater light and clearness, more plainly pointing forth the person that was to be the great Redeemer, and declaring his errand into the world, to take away the sin of the world, as a lamb offered in sacrifice to God...”

John was a great preacher in Jonathan Edwards’ eyes because his preaching turned people to Jesus. He did not attempt to humor people or to condescend to scratch their spiritual itches. He wasn’t funny and he wasn’t particularly attractive to the eyes. John was all business, and the business he was into was Jesus. John called for repentance in view of the coming of Him Who would take away the sins of the world. And when at last He finally came, he insisted that He must increase and all others – including the one greater than whom none had yet arisen – must decrease.

*In what ways does your own preaching resemble that of John the Baptist?*

Week 2, Day 2

## The Example of John the Baptist (2)

*“What did you go out into the wilderness to see? A reed shaken by the wind? What then did you go out to see? A man dressed in soft clothing? Behold, those who wear soft clothing are in kings’ houses. What then did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I tell you, and more than a prophet.”* Matthew 11.7-9

### ***The True Excellency of a Gospel Minister***

*Jonathan Edwards (1703-1758)*

“He also shone bright in his conversation, and his eminent mortification and renunciation of the enjoyments of the world; his great diligence and laboriousness in his work, his impartiality in it, declaring the mind and will of God to all sorts without distinction; his great humility, rejoicing in the increase of the honour of Christ, though his honour was diminished, as the brightness of the star diminishes as the light of the sun increases; and in his faithfulness and courage, thought it cost him his own life.”

John is one of those “minor” characters in Scripture whom it is easy to pass by in seeking examples and instruction for the work of pastoral ministry. John’s greatness was not lost on Jonathan Edwards, and the paragraph quoted above provides a rich catalog of virtues toward which every pastor should aspire. But as great as John was, according to our Lord, we who inhabit the Kingdom of God,

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<sup>2</sup>All quotations from Jonathan Edwards, “The True Excellency of a Gospel Minister,” in Edward Hickman, ed., *The World of Jonathan Edwards* (Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1834, 1995), Vol. 2, pp. 955 ff.

though we be but the least of its citizens, are greater than he. How can this be? Particularly, looking at my life as compared to John's, Lord, how can this be?

*How do you measure greatness in the Kingdom of God? How well do you measure up?*

Week 2, Day 3

## Lights to the Soul

*But when anything is exposed to the light, it becomes visible... Ephesians 5.13*

### ***The True Excellency of a Gospel Minister***

*Jonathan Edwards (1703-1758)*

“Ministers are set to be lights to the souls of men in this respect, as they are to be the means of imparting divine truth to them, and bringing into their view the most glorious and excellent objects, and of leading them to and assisting them in the contemplation of those things that angels desire to look into...by which they may know God and Jesus Christ, whom to know is life eternal.”

The preaching of the Word of God should enable the people of God to see more clearly into any lingering areas of darkness in their souls. It should lift their minds to heavenly matters and tune their hearts to desire the beauties and excellencies of the unseen realm. Preaching fulfills its unique role in the church as it lifts and enlarges the soul, focusing it on God and Christ and inviting it to drink more deeply of the fountain of salvation and eternal life. Preaching that fulfills the true purpose of preaching is like the preaching of John the Baptist: It connects people with Jesus.

*How do you determine whether your preaching “lifts and enlarges” the souls of those entrusted to your care, and connects them with Jesus?*

Week 2, Day 4

## To Refresh Men's Souls

*Yes, brother, I want some benefit from you in the Lord. Refresh my heart in Christ. Philemon 20*

### ***The True Excellency of a Gospel Minister***

*Jonathan Edwards (1703-1758)*

“Ministers are set in the church of God to be the instruments of this comfort and refreshment to the souls of men, to be the instruments of leading souls to the God of all consolation, and fountain of their happiness: they are sent as Christ was, and as co-workers with him, to preach good tidings to the meek, to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound, and to comfort all that mourn...”

When preaching brings hearers into the presence of God, we don't need to burden our messages with frothy formulas for feeling better in the Lord. We don't need to belabor endless lists of possible applications, or to rehearse a litany of every possible sin, just to make sure we leave no one out. When preaching lifts and enlarges the soul, and leads people into the presence of the Lord of glory, He knows how to take that word and apply it for the refreshment of every thirsty soul. And souls thus slaked will overflow with the living water of the Spirit into every area of life (Jn. 7.37-39).

*What to you are the keys to making sure your preaching actually lifts people into the Lord's very presence?*

Week 2, Day 5

## True Piety

*Show yourself in all respects to be a model of good works...* Titus 2.7

### ***The True Excellency of a Gospel Minister***

*Jonathan Edwards (1703-1758)*

“True piety is not a thing remaining only in the head, or consisting in any speculative knowledge or opinions, or outward morality, or forms of religion: it reaches the heart, is chiefly seated there, and burns there. There is a holy ardour in every thing that belongs to true grace: true faith is an ardent thing, and so is true repentance; there is a holy power ardour in true spiritual comfort and joy; yea, even in true Christian humility, submission, and meekness.”

How do we preach to the hearts of people? We tend to focus on the minds of our hearers, wanting them to know the truth and to consider how it applies to their lives. But if we cannot stimulate and excite them to *love* the truth they are coming to know, what's the good in knowing it? True piety – which preaching seeks to nurture – grows from the heart, and we only preach to the heart when we address the kinds of affections which are appropriate for the life of faith. Preach to the mind, yes, we must; but preach to the heart as well. But to preach *to* the heart we must preach *from* the heart – our heart, filled and warmed and impassioned with the heart of Christ.

*What does that mean to you – “preach to the heart”? How do you endeavor to do this in your preaching?*

Week 2, Day 6

## True Light in a Minister

*But these, like irrational animals, creatures of instinct, born to be caught and destroyed, blaspheming about matters of which they are ignorant, will also be destroyed in their destruction, suffering wrong for the wage of their wrongdoing.* 2 Peter 2.12, 13

### ***The True Excellency of a Gospel Minister***

*Jonathan Edwards (1703-1758)*

“When there is light in a minister, consisting in human learning, great speculative knowledge, and the wisdom of this world, without a spiritual warmth and ardour in his heart, and a holy zeal in his ministrations, his light is like the light of an *ignis faturus*, and some kinds of putrifying carcasses that shine in the dark, though they are of a stinking savour. And if on the other hand a minister has warmth and zeal, without light, his heat has nothing excellent in it, but is rather to be abhorred; being like the heat of the bottomless pit; where, though the fire be great, yet there is no light.”

True light in a minister, Edwards is saying, combines Gospel learning with a pious ardor that reaches out to renew and refresh the souls of saints. We must have both: truth and piety, light of mind and light of heart. Leave one or the other out and our ministries will suffer. Edwards leaves no doubt about how important he believes both light and “heat” to be in the minister of the Word. We should be equally as in earnest.

*What would you suggest to a young minister as the best way to stoke both light and heat in his walk with the Lord and his ministry?*

Week 2, Day 7

## Like the Sun

*“...let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.”* Matthew 5.16

### ***The True Excellency of a Gospel Minister***

*Jonathan Edwards (1703-1758)*

“But so are ministers honoured by their great Lord and Master, that they are set to be that to men’s souls, that the lights of heaven are to their bodies; and that they might be the instruments and vehicles of God’s greatest goodness, and the most precious fruits of his eternal love to them, and means of that life, and refreshment, and joy, that are spiritual and eternal, and infinitely more precious than any benefit received by the benign beams of the sun in the firmament.”

The pastor is the sun in the solar system which is his congregation. But Christ is the light, and the Spirit is the power, and the Father is the Giver and Getter of glory. It pleases the Lord to use ministers as agents of light to the souls of His people. Yes, they must read and study their Bibles and join with others to discuss and learn. But the minister is the touch-point of truth to his church. Thus he needs the kind of light and heat which John the Baptist evidenced, and unto which Edwards preached.

*Give thanks to God for the high calling to which He has summoned you, and plead with Him for greater light and heat to serve the people in your care.*

*For reflection or discussion*

1. Why did Jonathan Edwards consider John the Baptist to be a good example of an excellent Gospel minister?
2. What does it mean to preach *from* the heart? What does it mean to preach *to* the hearts of God’s people?
3. In what ways is the pastor like the “sun” to his congregation?
4. What’s the most important insight you’ve gained from Jonathan Edwards about the work of a Gospel minister?
5. How are you planning to incorporate that insight to your walk with and work for the Lord?

*Prayer:*

Week 3, Day 1

## The Work and Business of Ministers

*Jesus answered him, "If I do not wash you, you have no share with me." John 13.8*

### ***Christ the Example of Ministers***<sup>3</sup>

*Jonathan Edwards (1703-1758)*

"The work and business of ministers is as it were that of servants, to wash and cleanse the souls of men: for this is done by the preaching of the word, which is their main business, Eph. v.26. 'That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word.'...it is the duty of ministers of the gospel, in the work of their ministry, to follow the example of their great Lord and Master."

It is typical of pastors today to model themselves and their ministries along the lines of whatever and whoever seems to be the most "popular" or "successful" church and ministry of the day. The result is, increasingly, all worship services are starting to look alike and all pastors are starting to preach alike. And those that aren't, are trying to figure out how they can become like everybody else. But Edwards explained that the only proper model for a minister of the Gospel is our Lord Jesus Himself. Perhaps we should have a closer look at Him?

*Who is your model in ministry? And after what model is your church's ministry determined?*

Week 3, Day 2

## Humble and Heavenly-minded

*...shepherd the flock of God that is among you, exercising oversight not under compulsion, but willingly, as God would have you; not for shameful gain, but eagerly; not domineering over those in your charge, but being examples to the flock.*  
1 Peter 5.2, 3

### ***Christ the Example of Ministers***

*Jonathan Edwards (1703-1758)*

"The ministers of Christ should be persons of the same spirit that their Lord was of: the same spirit of humility and lowliness of heart; for the servant is not greater than his Lord. They should be of the same spirit of heavenly-mindedness and contempt of the glory, wealth, and pleasures of this world: they should be of the same spirit of devotion and fervent love to God: they should follow the example of his prayerfulness; of whom we read from time to time of his retiring from the world, away from the noise and applauses of the multitudes, into mountains and solitary places, for secret prayer, and holy converse with his Father..."

Christ came as a Servant, His mind fixed unswervingly on His Father and His Father's will, and His back bent daily to meet the needs of those around Him. No one can be said to be following Christ Who does not assume this same posture and focus. God has called pastors to serve His flock by the example of their humility and heavenly-mindedness, just as Jesus did. We must not allow the cheap thrills of worldly attention or rewards to influence the work and business we do in the name of the Lord.

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<sup>3</sup> Jonathan Edwards, "Christ the Example of Ministers," in Edward Hickman, ed., *The Works of Jonathan Edwards* (Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1995), Vol. Two, pp. 960ff.

*Are your spiritual disciplines sufficient to help you nurture a clear and compelling heavenly vision? How does that affect your ministry? Would your people describe you as humble in the service of the Lord?*

Week 3, Day 3

## Obedience in All Things

*“Therefore whoever relaxes one of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do the same will be called least in the kingdom of heaven, but whoever does them and teaches them will be called great in the kingdom of heaven.”*

Matthew 5.19

### **Christ the Example of Ministers**

*Jonathan Edwards (1703-1758)*

“Ministers should follow Christ’s example, in his strict, constant, and inflexible observance of the commands which God had given him, touching what he should do and what he should say: he spake nothing of himself, but those things which the Father had commanded him, and continued in thorough obedience in the greatest trials, and through the greatest opposition that ever there was any instance of.”

Pastors have three main resources for the work and business of ministry: The Word of God, prayer, and their personal example (Acts 6.4; 1 Pet. 5.1-3). If any of these fails, their ministry will as well. Especially must pastors be seen to be men zealous for the Law of God, to obey all the counsel of the Lord in His Word and to resist the devil and overcome every temptation. During the last generation, failures of obedience on the part of highly visible pastors have contributed to the Church’s becoming an object of scorn by many unbelievers. We must be diligent in obeying Christ if we would teach others to do so as well.

*What is your practice for recognizing and resisting temptation?*

Week 3, Day 4

## Patient and Charitable

*Love is patient and kind; love does not envy or boast; it is not arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice at wrongdoing, but rejoices with the truth. Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things; endures all things. Love never ends. 1 Corinthians 13.4-8*

### **Christ the Example of Ministers**

*Jonathan Edwards (1703-1758)*

“Ministers should be persons of the same quiet, lamb-like spirit that Christ was of, the same spirit of submission to God’s will, and patience under afflictions, and meekness towards men; of the same calmness and composure of spirit under reproaches and sufferings from the malignity of evil men; of the same spirit of forgiveness of injuries; of the same spirit of charity, of fervent love and extensive benevolence; the same disposition to pity the miserable, to weep with those who weep, to help men under their calamities of both soul and body, to hear and grant the requests of the needy, and relieve the afflicted; the same spirit of condescension to the poor and mean, tenderness and gentleness towards the weak, and great and effectual love to enemies.”

One of the most important efforts any pastor can devote himself to is working out his own salvation (Phil. 2.12) and bringing holiness to completion in the fear of God (2 Cor. 7.1). We can only be the kind of people Christ was if Christ is living in us more and *we* are living in us less. He must increase, and we must decrease; He must grow in us from glory to glory, and we must deny ourselves and sweep our houses clear of every evil and anything that is contrary to the holy and righteous and good purpose of God. Then patience and love will flourish in us.

*Paul commands pastors to maintain a diligent self-watch over themselves (1 Tim. 4.16). How do you keep watch over the progress of your own sanctification in patience and love?*

Week 3, Day 5

## Men of Prayer

*I do not cease to give thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers... Ephesians 1.16*

### **Christ the Example of Ministers**

*Jonathan Edwards (1703-1758)*

“Ministers should imitate their great Master in his fervent prayers for the good of the souls of men. We find it to be Christ’s manner, whenever he undertook any thing of special importance in the work of his ministry, first to retire and pour out his soul in extraordinary prayer to his Father.”

In my work with [The Fellowship of Ailbe](#) I meet many pastors, and we talk frequently about their spiritual lives, and, in particular, their prayers. I can tell you that I have not met many pastors who would describe themselves as men of “extraordinary prayer.” Indeed, many of them feel as though their prayers are, if anything, not even quite “ordinary” for what one might expect of a pastor. As important as our personal example is for the work and business of ministry, the work of prayer matters even more so. Without prayer, without resting and abiding in the Lord through this means, we can do nothing.

*How are you planning to make your own prayer life more “extraordinary” in the year ahead?*

Week 3, Day 6

## Sacrificial Labors

*I will most gladly spend and be spent for your souls. 1 Corinthians 12.15*

### **Christ the Example of Ministers**

*Jonathan Edwards (1703-1758)*

“Ministers should follow the example of Christ in his diligence and laboriousness in his work...So abundant was he in labours, that oftentimes he scarcely allowed himself time to eat or drink...That three years and a half of his public ministry was so filled with action and labour, that one of his disciples that constantly attended him, and was an eyewitness of his activity, tells us that *if all he did should be written, the world could not contain the books*. Ministers should follow the example of Christ, in his readiness not only to labour, but suffer, for the salvation of souls, to spend and be spent for them.”

Every minister of the Word must consider whether he is working hard enough and smart enough according to what the Gospel of the Kingdom deserves. Paul’s idea of “spending and being spent”

clearly derives from his own knowledge of Christ, Who invested all His time and strength in bringing the Kingdom of God among men, and Who was spent through suffering and sacrifice for our salvation. Good shepherds, Jesus explained, must be prepared to lay down their lives for their sheep.

*What does laying down your life for your sheep require of you each week? Are you spending and being spent?*

*Week 3, Day 7*

## The Ministry of the Word

*...preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching. 2 Timothy 4.2*

### ***Christ the Example of Ministers***

*Jonathan Edwards (1703-1758)*

“They should imitate the faithfulness of Christ in his ministry, in speaking whatsoever God had commanded him, and declaring the whole counsel of God. They should imitate him in the manner of his preaching; who taught not as the scribes, but with authority, boldly, zealously, and fervently; insisting chiefly on the most important things in religion, being much in warning men of the danger of damnation, setting forth the greatness of the future misery of the ungodly; insisting not only on the outward, but also the inward and spiritual, duties of religion; being much in declaring the great provocation and danger of spiritual pride, and a self-righteous disposition; yet much insisting on the necessity and important of inherent holiness, and the practice of piety.”

Prayer, personal example, and the Word of God: these are the minister’s primary resources for the work and business of making disciples and building the Church. We must follow Christ in each of these areas. It would pay dividends to our ministry to study the preaching and teaching of Jesus, both as to manner as well as content. Jesus taught much about the Kingdom of God; we hear little of this in preaching today. Jesus preached to expose the sins of men; is this our practice? Jesus held out the precious and very great promises of God, and called men to strive “with violence” to attain them at all costs. How does our preaching match up with this?

*Which aspects of your own ministry of the Word would you say are most like those of the Master? How can you improve in this area?*

*For reflection or discussion*

1. Review this week’s readings and notes. What does Edwards recommend for ministers concerning the life of prayer?
2. How does Edwards lead us to think about the work of ministering the Word of God?
3. According to Edwards, what kind of example should pastors show to their flocks?
4. What’s the most important insight you’ve gained from this week’s readings?
5. How are you planning to incorporate that insight in your walk with and work for the Lord?

*Prayer:*

Week 4, Day 1

## Under Christ, for Salvation

*And he appointed twelve (whom he also named apostles) so that they might be with him and he might send them out to preach... Mark 3.14*

### **Christ the Example of Ministers**

*Jonathan Edwards (1703-1758)*

“Ministers of the gospel are in some respects called and devoted to the same work and business that Christ himself was appointed to... ministers of the gospel, as Christ’s servants and officers under him, are appointed to promote the designs of that great work of Christ, the work of salvation.”

Jesus came to earth with a specific objective in mind. He didn’t come merely to preach, teach, do good, and help the needy. He came to bring salvation to men, and to those who would become saved, a deeper and richer experience of that salvation day by day. Ministers are similarly called. We must be careful lest we fall into the habit of treating the *means* of promoting salvation – which is the proper end of our ministries – as the *ends* of ministry themselves. Our preaching, teaching, training, counseling, visiting, and all the rest must always be *unto salvation* in specific ways.

*How do you plan the work you do in ministry so as to make sure that you are always working toward specific salvation outcomes through your various efforts?*

Week 4, Day 2

## The Virtue of Christ

*Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus... Philippians 2.5*

### **Christ the Example of Ministers**

*Jonathan Edwards (1703-1758)*

“The example of Christ is most worthy of ministers’ imitation. His example was perfect, without error, blemish, or defect; and therefore worthy to be made our rule, and to be regarded and followed without exception, limitation, or reserve; unless in those things which he did that were proper to his peculiar office. Christ’s virtue was not only perfect, but was exercised in those circumstances, and under those trials, that rendered his virtuous acts vastly the more amiable of any that ever appeared in any creature whether man or angel.”

Being clothed with the virtues and righteousness of Christ begins within, in our hearts and minds (Eph. 4.17-24). When we *earnestly desire* to be more like Jesus, we will *devote our minds* to learning what that requires of us – where repentance is needed, how to grow in our understanding, learning to envision our lives as expressing the virtue of Jesus Christ in every situation. Then, as we come to *value* the righteousness of Jesus, and call on His Spirit to clothe us with it, we will find that not even our trials and setbacks will be able to keep us from knowing the presence and peace of Jesus.

*How do you teach new believers to pursue the outline of sanctification which Paul provides in Ephesians 4.17-24? In what ways does that outline reflect your own pursuit?*

Week 4, Day 3

## Love for the Souls of Men

*Now before the Feast of the Passover, when Jesus knew that his hour had come to depart out of this world to the Father, having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end.* John 13.1

### **Christ the Example of Ministers**

*Jonathan Edwards (1703-1758)*

“Ministers should be animated in this work by a great love to the souls of men, and should be ready to spend and be spent for them; for Christ loved them, and gave himself for them: he loved them with a love stronger than death. They should have compassion on men under their spiritual miseries, as Christ had pity on them.”

“Ministry would be great if it weren’t for the people.” I’ve heard variations of that sentiment on many occasions, and, while I know it’s always meant in jest, still, it contains a kernel of truth. Working with miserable sinners is tough, especially since we’re miserable sinners ourselves. But when God puts it in our hearts to love those under our charge, every exertion on their behalf becomes a source of joy and satisfaction, for then we know we are loving with the love of Jesus, and not on our own strength.

*How do you keep the love of Jesus for your congregation active and growing in your soul?*

Week 4, Day 4

## Our Greatest Honor

*For we are God’s fellow workers.* 1 Corinthians 3.9

### **Christ the Example of Ministers**

*Jonathan Edwards (1703-1758)*

“It is not only our great duty, but will be our greatest honour, to imitate Christ, and do the work that he has done, and so act as co-workers with him.”

The calling to ministry is at once a source of great pride and great humility. What a privilege to be set among the flocks of God as an under-shepherd of the Good Shepherd Himself! And yet how much humility this requires of us! Jesus washed His disciples’ feet, even though He knew at that moment that all authority in heaven and earth had already been delivered to Him. We rejoice in the high and holy privilege of our calling; let us also seek the Lord daily for the humility necessary to make that calling work as Jesus did.

*How does the idea of being a “co-worker” with Jesus Christ lead you to evaluate the work you do each day?*

Week 4, Day 5

## To Share in His Glory

*His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and excellence, by which he has granted to us his precious and very great promises, so that through them you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world because of sinful desire. 2 Peter 1.3, 4*

### **Christ the Example of Ministers**

*Jonathan Edwards (1703-1758)*

“Christ has not only *told* us, but *shown* us, the way to success in our business, and the way to victory over all that oppose us in it. And our imitating Christ in our ministry, will be the way for us to be partakers with him in his glory; the way for us in like manner to be approved, and openly honoured and rewarded by God: the way to be brought to sit with Christ on his throne, as he is set down with the Father on his throne.”

The glory of Christ is the presence of Christ in the fullness of His deity – what the apostles experienced on the Mount of Transfiguration. It is a fearsome presence indeed, as John explained in Revelation 1. But it’s where we belong! Ministers especially should know the presence of Christ in His glory, in their times of reading and study, in prayer and worship, as they minister in His Name and power among the flocks of God. Jesus intends for us to share in His glory and to partake of Him by clinging to His promises and reaching out in faith, beyond our strength and abilities, to serve the people entrusted to our care.

*How can you know when you have entered into the glory of Jesus in some aspect of your ministry?*

Week 4, Day 6

## A Warning against Unfaithfulness

*These are waterless springs and mists driven by a storm. For them the gloom of utter darkness has been reserved. 2 Peter 2.17*

### **Christ the Example of Ministers**

*Jonathan Edwards (1703-1758)*

“It will be our great honour that we are called to this work of Christ, if therein we follow him: for therein we shall be like the Son of God: but if we are unfaithful in this office, and do not imitate our Master, our offence will be heinous in proportion to the dignity of our office, and our final and everlasting disgrace and ignominy proportionably great; and we, who in honour are exalted up to heaven, shall be cast down proportionably low in hell.”

We’ve seen plenty of examples of unfaithful ministers in our day – men who’ve allowed their privileged office to become a means for aggrandizing fleshly desires. It’s easy to look askance at such men and to forget that we, too, are susceptible to temptations to use the office of pastoral ministry to make ourselves someone to be respected by men, rather than their servant. The devil will seek our undoing in various ways, and will appeal to pride, the flesh, the need to be unique, or just the need to be needed in order to bring our high calling into dishonor. Be on guard.

*How do you protect yourself against the assaults of the devil and the temptation to use your office for personal advantage?*

Week 4, Day 7

If...

*“And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper, to be with you forever, even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, for he dwells with you and will be in you.” John 14.16, 17*

***Christ the Example of Ministers***

*Jonathan Edwards (1703-1758)*

“If we have the Spirit of Christ dwelling in us, we shall have Christ himself thereby dwelling in us, and then we shall undoubtedly live like him. If that fountain of life dwells richly in us, we shall shine like him, and so shall be burning and shining lights. That we may *be* and *behave* like Christ, we should earnestly seek much acquaintance with him, and be much in secret converse with him. It is natural, and as it were necessary, for us to imitate those whom we are much acquainted and conversant with, and have a strong affection for.”

“If you love Me...” Jesus said to Peter. “If we have the Spirit...” Edwards opined. “If...” Do you sense the invitation to constant introspection suggested by such language? Not “since,” but “if.” Do we really love Jesus? Do we know Him well enough to love Him as we should – as He loved us? Is the Spirit of God truly dwelling in and filling us, as the Lord and the Apostle Paul expect should be the case? We must be constantly circumspect to make sure that the *motives* of our ministry derive from our love for Jesus, and the *power* for our ministry is from the indwelling Spirit, and not our own strength. Then we shall be imitating the Master, indeed.

*What are the most important things you need to reinforce in order to certain that you are following the Master in every aspect of your life and ministry?*

*For reflection or discussion*

1. What are the greatest obstacles you face in daily striving to *be* and *behave* like Jesus? How do you prepare each day to face and overcome these?
2. How might ministers in a local community help one another to be more consistent in fulfilling their high and privileged calling, and in guarding themselves against sin?
3. Meditate on 1 Timothy 4.16. How do you perform this mandated self-watch?
4. What’s the most important insight you’ve gained from Edwards this week about the work of ministry?
5. How are you planning to incorporate that insight to your walk with and work for the Lord?

*Prayer:*

## The Fellowship of Ailbe

The Fellowship of Ailbe is a spiritual fellowship in the Celtic Christian tradition. Our goal is to promote revival, renewal, and awakening, following the teaching of Scripture and the example and heritage of our forebears in the faith.

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Thank you.