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College Notes-Advice to Ministers

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COLLEGE NOTES

"ADVICE TO MINISTERS"

1932

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1. College Lecture

The Bible is a live Book and is applicable to life today. You must therefore, know how to apply It to life as it is being lived all about you.

You must therefore study the history and philosophy of life and psychology, so you may know how the human mind works.

You, yourselves will have had personal experiences in the religion you are to present to others. It must with you be a reality. You must know all this, for you, yourselves have interpreted the religion of Jesus into life.

You have believed it, absorbed some of it and as young men, lived in harmony with it.

Until this is your experience you are hardly ready to take up seriously the work of preparation for the ministry.

As you progress, grow in grace in the knowledge of the Lord Jesus, you will get and have a richer religious experience. This ripening process will go on unto the end, providing, of course, that you keep the faith.

Joining with much reading and study of the Scriptures, a minister must be much in prayer.

Make much of this means of grace. Give deep consideration to this means of grace and spiritual enlightenment.

God will often illumine your mind so you will understand the Word, if you will put yourselves in a right attitude toward Him.

Prayer is the source of your strength for the purity of life, for the poise of will, and your guidance so that the mind and heart may be kept.

You must learn how to think. Your feelings may be stirred deeply. If so, pause and think. Take a bit of Scripture and think about it. Make that faculty of your brain devoted to thought and work. Do not permit it to get lazy and lay down on the job. If you will teach yourself to think, you will do that which the average minister fails to do.

Thinking is a process that can be developed quite the same as penmanship or public speaking.

There are many who learn how to speak even before they learn how to think.

There will be value in what you say if you have clarified it by your own thinking. You may not be so verbose but you will really say more and it will have weight, if you have carefully thought through your speech. Mere talk makes but a slight impression upon hearers.

Take the example of Jesus when He began His ministry. He went into the desert and thought through carefully the way and methods He should approach His mission. Study Jesus here as elsewhere, for He is a perfect example.

You must also carefully think through and plan your church program, as well as your own duties. I have known preachers who came to a Sunday morning service without ever thinking about the arrangements necessary.

You must develop social qualities, for the social life of a preacher plays an important part in the success of his ministry. Some young men are diffident and would prefer to remain quietly at home with their books, rather than to go out in society. This is unfortunate and must be changed to the social demands of a minister, if he would succeed.

You must be a good mixer. Study to become affable, courteous and thoughtful when you are at a function of any kind or when meeting men and women at their business or in their homes.

Greet people cordially. Do not neglect young people and children. School yourselves so that you will not overlook children. My habit of speaking to children must have been acquired when back in Illinois, canvassing through the country. Often I would remain over night at a farm home and usually by giving attention to the children, my hosts seldom made a charge for my entertainment.

Do not permit yourselves to speak cordially with a person today and tomorrow hardly notice him.

3.

The most backward and diffident person may school himself so he will be at ease and graceful in any company. It is essential that you be so in the homes where you call. Be as one of those you are with. Always have some pleasant, cheering word bearing such sunshine and joy that people will always be delighted to see you.

Do not be a bore. Never remain too long. The good of many a call has often been neutralized by stopping too long in the home. Leave at a time they would be pleased to have you remain longer.

Always show a real interest in the family upon whom you have called.

I mention and would emphasize these seemingly minor things because they have a vital bearing upon your life and usefulness as a pastor, - meeting with people with whom you live and labor.

Many a minister who could preach well has lost out and had to move on because he failed in his social contact.

Let me urge you to begin this self-culture right now, along with your studies and thus be prepared to go out and mingle with any group or class you may meet.

You must not overlook music and art. These are refining, and develop and delight the spiritual. You cannot get the most enjoyment out of life for yourselves and have your sermons enriched as they might and ought to be without these two elements.

Preparing yourselves for the ministry is a big task. It will require time and singleness of purpose. This work of preparation is no job to play with. You must be in real earnest.

I trust none of you will go from C.C.C. until you have attained a fair degree of efficiency in the art of living and effectually preaching the Gospel.

This is a day when your hearers are thoughtful, discriminating and exacting and will not listen with much patience and will not listen at all unless you have a real vital message and present it intelligently, gracefully and forcibly.

It must conclusively show to your hearers that you, yourselves have had a profound spiritual experience; that you have a clear understanding of the Scriptures; that you are impelled by love, boundless and gracious; love coming to you through your knowledge and love of Christ.

May all who go out to proclaim the unsearchable riches of Christ, go so perfectly equipped for this divine mission that large numbers will come to have a living faith in Jesus and an immeasurable good done through you in His name.

This will bring honor and glory to the church, to Christ the Divine Head of the church and incidentally, reflect upon C.C.C. for the high type of cultural and spiritual training one receives here.

If you are unfortunate in having a disposition that often makes you act ugly and mean, so that you are grouchy, bad tempered, temperamental, as we say, begin right now and here to discipline yourselves.

Your disposition can be trained and tamed. If you are much with lovely companions and especially much with Jesus, your mean, irritable disposition will give way to one that is even, considerate and lovable. It is possible for this transformation to be made.

You can never be a successful minister and permit your mean, grouchy, temperamental disposition to go wild and untamed.

I have known some preachers who would greet you so cordially one day, making you feel so happy, and the next day speak as coldly as if you were a stranger or merely a casual acquaintance.

This will destroy all the good that you have done, perhaps for months, with that individual.

You must be well informed in church history.

While there is much that is disheartening and far from representing the spirit and will of Christ, you must, nevertheless, know it. There is much of value in its study as a background for your preparation.

You must also know our own church history; the movement started by Thomas and Alexander Campbell, Barton W. Stone and others about one hundred and twenty five years ago.

If there are those here belonging to other communions, they must inform themselves in regard to their own church history.

Some great truth discovered and emphasized was the foundation of all of our denominations. Do not follow anyway blindly. Study that way, and you may discover where in some point it is weak and not fully in accord with the Scriptures as we see them in the twentieth century.

We do not have to go far back into the history of the church until we find ourselves repudiating almost every doctrinal position taken by the leaders of that day.