

October 2014

College Lectures-The Minister in his Relation to the Community

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Recommended Citation

Chapman, Charles C., "College Lectures-The Minister in his Relation to the Community" (2014). *Charles C. Chapman College Lectures*. Paper 28.
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COLLEGE LECTURES

"THE MINISTER IN HIS RELATION TO THE COMMUNITY"

No. 9

November 1

Section ~~IX~~ the note

The Minister in his Relation to the Community.

The minister is recognized as a public or community asset. He is also largely regarded as public property. He is the one man in the community that almost everyone feels free to call upon when in trouble, in sorrow, or desiring gratuitous service.

Many seek his counsel, take his time and even put him to expense, although not contributing a dollar to his salary. ~~His mission is to present a Savior who will give them the abundant life here and eternal life in the world to come.~~

Years ago when in B.F. Coulter's office, etc. - - - - -

The Church stands in the community life as a benefactor. It is an indispensable public institution. It has much to give for the general good and consequently the leader or minister is looked upon as one who is simply living to help others, his chief mission being to serve.

It is therefore evident that the minister must play a big and important part in the life of his community. The complex social life of today, the passion of our people for pleasure and for business as well, makes it far more difficult for a minister to intelligently meet these demands than it was for a preacher to meet those of a generation ago.

While we recognize that the minister's first duty is to his Church, he is also a citizen of the community and owes to it certain obligations. He is looked upon as an influential and helpful factor in the life of the community, not only because of his intellectual ability and his leadership of a congregation, but because he is the recognized exponent of the blessed religion, the very foundation of which in its practical application is to serve.

However strong the pull and the urge is upon you to take up affairs of the community you must not get so interested as to neglect your own Church. With you it must come first. The community does not pay your salary. In fact, seldom makes any contribution to it. You must be cautious even from a less selfish standpoint than that about giving too much time to the general public. ¶ I have known ministers who got so entangled in civic and social organizations that their churches suffered and had reasons to complain. Be on your guard at this point. ¶ When you become identified with any public movement or civic organization you will be put on committees and thus the way is opened, if you are efficient, for other demands on your time. Soon, unless you are resolute, you are devoting too much of your time to outside enterprises.

You must however, be a public spirited citizen, ready to make a reasonable contribution of your time to these enterprises.

In every community are service clubs, - Rotary, Kiwanis, Lions, American Legion, etc. You may make fine and helpful contacts here should you become a member. You should have the interest of the Church so at heart that you will not join any of these orders solely for the good social times you may have. You should have other motives. I think the fellowship you would have, the entertainment and the lectures you would hear would be helpful to you, as they broaden, as well as inform one on affairs of the day.

Should you become a Rotarian, a Kiwanian or Lion, act well your part as a minister. Don't get the idea because you are with a bunch of good fellows that you must in the least compromise yourself by trying to be too frivolous or rough. You are a Christian Minister and while you can enter heartily into all that is clean and dignified, and have a royal good time, you must not say or do anything that is inconsistent with your high calling. Should you stoop to do this, the very men about you who had called you a "jolly good fellow" would have less respect for you for thus compromising yourself. They know something of the high standards of the ministry and with all their worldliness, have high regard for those in it who are loyal and consistent.

Never forget that you are a minister of the Gospel and an ambassador of Christ. I knew a minister who often seemed to forget his high calling, thinking to curry favor with the business and professional men he met at the club. He was bright, scholarly and a good story teller and therefore, made interesting company. These men enjoyed his fellowship, but lost respect for him as a minister.

By using caution not to give too freely of your time, but establishing right relations with those you meet in this social way, and maintaining your self-respect as a minister, you will find these club connections opportunities of personal refreshment and channels of usefulness.

There are organizations looking to the uplift and welfare of the community that must have your attention and sympathy and a limited amount of your time. You are in a position to encourage them in many ways. I refer to organizations for public health, local relief and similar organizations.

The school and public library must have recognition. Every city has its Chamber of Commerce for the purpose of advertising and boosting the town and encouraging civic improvements. Give this your support but only a little of your time.

There are labor organizations, art associations, law enforcement and social service organizations and the Anti-Saloon League, all seeking recognition from you. The Y.M.C.A., Y.W.C.A., W.C.T.U., Conventions and Conferences are continually asking for your support.

Be interested and lend a helping hand, but be cautious about getting too deeply involved in any of them. All of these organizations or movements appeal to anyone who is living to serve, who has a real interest in the welfare of his community and whose help is of ten sought by dear friends in their behalf.

But you must remember your time and best thought belong to the Church. By the very nature of things you can only do a given amount of work and you have just so much time allotted to you and if you scatter over the entire realm of human service you will signally fail in all.

If you are a faddist, taking up one of these and harping on it all the time to the exclusion of every other, you are likely to offend some and bring discord into your Church.

You must not be a recluse. You are a citizen of the community and must be interested in public enterprises. I have known some pastors who lived only for their congregations. They were never seen at any public gathering, save in their own Church. Be temperate and consistent in these matters, as well as in all others.

You must exercise extreme caution concerning politics or taking public part in local elections. Your people may be divided on questions at issue and on candidates and while as a citizen you have a right to your opinions and this will be recognized, you cannot safely from the pulpit, make known your preferences or use your position as minister of the Church to advance them.

When there is a clearly drawn moral issue, you should have the courage to take a decided stand. This will be expected of you. But even here, be sane, temperate and consistent.

You must be a patriot, having sincere love for your country, ever seeking the election of good men to office and the passing of beneficent laws and their enforcement.

If you are invited to the golf course by admiring friends, be careful not to get too deeply interested. Golf is a fascinating game and gets so strong a hold on some men that all else is neglected. I presume the exercise in the open and the mental recreation is most desirable, but wait until you are well along in life before becoming an habitual golfer. I think a preacher when he is young and in good health can get plenty of exercise calling on his flock. I am a member of a golf club, but have not been on the field for three years and never but a few times in my life.

As you go about on errands of mercy or calling upon your parishioners, don't forget or neglect to drop into the hospital. There are those on beds of suffering, those who are lonely and will be greatly helped by a friendly call and a cheerful happy word.

You must be ready to serve at all times and under all circumstances. You are the one man in the community that must not live unto himself. You are Christ's representative in your community and you must be a true and faithful minister of His. You must have His mind so you will see man, frail, weak and sinful as He would and then have His spirit so that you will be impelled to treat him as He would were He here.

Like Jesus, be friendly and kind. Have a smile and a friendly helping hand for all who may cross your path. You will then be loved by many and while you are living for others, you will find others trying to make you happy. You will be honored and loved as the friend of man.

"There are noble titles, noble names,
That he may wear who can,
But the noblest name among them all,
Is simply - Friend o' man".

Be cheerful, happy and optimistic. Wherever you go, carry sunshine and not gloom. A minister should ever and always be affable, gracious, benevolent and friendly. Cultivate these attractive qualities in the spirit of humility.

I am sure if you drink deeply at the spiritual fountain of Christ's love, these most beautiful characteristics will be appreciably developed in you.

So live in the community that your presence, because of the quality of your life, will be respected by all. Not fanatical and sectarian, but tolerant and charitable. Not blustering and combative, but gentle and friendly.

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Not seeking your own glory and pleasure, but the glory of your Master and to do that which will bring happiness and joy to the people.

Your mission is to serve, to give your life for others, all in His blessed name.