



People Spot Missile: A Renewal Pastor

I recently was conducting some training for persons working in renewal. I was being pressed about the role of the pastor. I indicated that I felt renewal in a local church couldn't happen apart from a quality pastor.

It may not happen even with a quality pastor. I have only known of two churches in my lifetime that had sustained growth of more than two years where the lay leadership was strong enough to compensate for ineffective pastoral leadership. I have known of a number of quality pastors who couldn't bring renewal to an old church for a variety of reason.

What are the indispensable characteristics required for a pastor in renewal?

First, and foremost they have to be committed Christians and believe the gospel. I will never forget listening as Elton Trueblood said, "The greatest hypocrisy of all is for a person to accept the salary of a Christian minister and not believe the gospel." You may ask, "Isn't that self-evident?" It should be, but I don't take anything for granted anymore.

The second indispensable ingredient is that the Renewal Pastor loves their people. It is not the only one but an indispensable one. When evaluating a situation, I almost always ask, "Do you love your people?" I listen and watch closely for a response. I don't always get an affirmative answer.

How do the people of a church know the pastor loves them? The pastor treats the people with respect, listens to them, and serves them. Pastors can't just hang out a shingle and hide in the office. We are called to be servant leaders. Jesus said, "if you want to be great, be a servant." When the people know you love them, they will forgive the mistakes that inevitably are made.

In fact, a pastor with limited abilities can compensate and hold a church together and even cover normal attrition for a number of years simply by genuinely loving their people.

Thirdly, if pastors are to grow churches they need to be comfortable with the culture of the community where the building exists. Most culture is benign. Therefore it is not right or wrong. Whenever a pastor bashes the culture of the community, the pastor is communicating to the people that he doesn't love them.

Fourthly, the pastor must have reasonable people skills. I served as an Associate Conference Minister for 31 years. It is clear that the item that brings more grief to pastors than any other is poor people skills.

Jesus gave us this firm instruction in Matthew 7:12 “So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you, for this sums up the Law and the Prophets.” This has been called simply the “golden rule.” To follow this simple instruction will save tons of trouble down the road. Even when someone treats you poorly, treat them as you want to be treated.

Adequate use of good people skills requires flexibility. We have to be willing to adjust our own agendas in order that we might treat others nicely. We may not always get our way or have our day unfold as we desire. There has to be a willingness to make adjustments to the schedule without bashing those around us. My thesaurus lists the following words as synonyms for flexibility: ability to bend, pliability, elasticity, and extendibility among others. All of these are required for good people skills.

Fifth, pastors need to be competent in communication. We need to constantly assess how we are doing at preaching and selling the vision.

Sixth, successful renewal pastors need to be extremely patient. Rome wasn't built in a day. Only a few renewal projects take off quickly. Many renewal projects were on the verge of significant success and died when the pastor became disillusioned because it wasn't moving fast enough and jumped ship. One thing is sure, in most projects, it ain't going to happen over night. It takes years.

If you are working in a renewal project, blessings, because you are working on a long term project. In fact, you may be working on a project 8 years in and discover the church needs to go through renewal again. It is different, not where you started, but just as essential.

Most of the People Spot Missiles may be viewed at www.newlifeministries-nlm.org Click on People Spots.

*I am now available to present “Starting a New Service”, “Churches Have Personalities”, “People Spots”, “Does Your Church Really Care About People?” and “A Christian Perspective on Leadership Skills.” “Stewardship and Managing Debt” jm
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