

Pastoral code of ethics

In the current state of our country, accountability is a subject that is bounced all over the media. Car manufacturers, bankers, investors, and politicians are all being examined under a magnifying glass for their roles and accountability in our current situation.

Pastors and church staff are no less accountable in their roles as church leaders. Too many times, pastors and church leaders operate under a sense that they are accountable to no one. This attitude leads to damaged churches and damaged individuals. In an effort to be the pacesetter, pastors and church leaders should consider creating and following a code of ethics.

A code of ethics describes the behavior that is expected on the part of pastors and staff. It is a statement that calls for accountability. A code of ethics provides:

- guidelines which reflect the values of ministry.
- expectations of minister's conduct in relationship to peers and community.
- support and protection to the individual and the minister.
- (in specific relation to pastors) defines the ministerial profession and competence.

(Joe E. Trull & James E. Carter. Ministerial Ethics: Being a good minister in a not-so-good world. pages 194-196)

Guidelines:

In this section, core values of ministry are established. Core values are consistent, passionate, and particular convictions that have a biblical basis for influencing our decisions, driving our ministry, and describing our behavior. They are the penetrating motivators which describe an organization's intrinsic excellence or desirability. They describe the essence of an organization. Written in the present or past tense, they state the pastor's and/or church staff's driving passion.

Core values will remain intact throughout a pastor's ministry. They may be tweaked, but they may not be changed. When creating the core values, one question to ask is: Will these values stand the test of time?

Core values describe the essence of a person's existence. They must be based on biblical principles which reflect God's unique assignment. Can these values be found in scripture? The *Credentials Manual* of the Church of God, Anderson, Indiana includes the following values when considering a person's fitness for ministry. They can also be incorporated in the creation of core values.

1. The spiritual test (Titus 1:8);
2. The ethical test (Titus 1:7);
3. The self-discipline test (Titus 1:7);
4. The confidence test (Titus 2:7);
5. The integrity test (Romans 12:9);

6. The experience test (1 Timothy 3:6);
7. The humility test (Romans 12:3);
8. The graciousness test (1 Corinthians 13);
9. The domestic test (1 Timothy 3:4);
10. The stewardship test (Malachi 3:10; 1 Timothy 1:12)

(*Credentials Manual* Section 2.00)

When considering the domestic test, it should not only cover the handling of family relations, it should also include the proper handling of personal finances.

The characterization of a pastor and/or church staff will be recognized by the stated values and the way in which they are exercised. The values will be congruent and model a consistency of behavior. Does the performance of the pastor and/or church staff reflect the core values?

Expectations of conduct in relationships:

In this section, defines the expectations the pastor and/or church staff are to follow regarding, not only their personal relationships, but also relationships when operating as a representative of the church. These can be defined as responsibilities.

When creating this section, consider creating responsibility sections for each of the following:

1. Self
2. Family
3. Congregation
4. Colleagues
5. Community
6. National, state, and local church organization

Support:

It is essential that pastors and church staff draw individuals around them that they trust to hold them accountable and hold them to task on their code of ethics. The roles of these individuals need to be clearly defined. When creating these roles, keep in mind that one aspect of this group is to provide support to the pastor. Support includes having a group that will provide a listening ear but will keep all that is shared confidential.

Once a code of ethics has been created it is essential that it is followed. The code of ethics should be reviewed frequently. Hard questions need to be asked as to whether or not the pastor and/or church staff is living up to the code.

Examples of a ministerial code of ethics can be found in the ABC's of Church of God Management Manual – Third Edition Block A3 – Directional Statements. You can also see samples at:

<http://www.discipleshomemissions.org/ministers/ministryguidelines/ethics.htm>

http://www.christianethicstoday.com/NonJournalArticles/Ministerial_Ethics-Being_a_Good_Minister.htm

http://enrichmentjournal.ag.org/200404/200404_102_code.cfm