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## Let's Get Real



by Chaplain George

When I entered the ministry some 30 years ago, the common thinking was that pastors shouldn't "bare our souls" to our congregations, or even to fellow church leaders. While it was OK to talk in sermons about the imperfections and sins of biblical characters, some felt that pastors should not demonstrate that same level of transparency when it came to our personal lives.

While well-intentioned, this approach placed unrealistic expectations on families in ministry. The challenges and dysfunctions in the home — things that *every* family experiences to one degree or another — were never to be revealed. In some circles, to do so could result in misunderstanding, loss of respect and reputation, and sometimes even the loss of a pastoral position. To be secure in ministry meant maintaining secrecy. This attitude fostered a false impression that ministers had no problems at all, that we were above the carnal tendencies of others.

While this approach continues today in some churches, there is also another danger: pastors who "tell it all," seemingly without restraint or discernment. In some extreme cases, this approach has led to pastors exaggerating their own testimonies or even falsely recounting the extent of the sin in their lives prior to knowing Christ. The emphasis is more on "shock value" than redeeming grace.

In the church community setting, the goal is that all things be done to strengthen, build up, and edify those in attendance (1 Corinthians 14:26b). It is not wise, nor does it honor Christ, to be so bold as to "glorify the devil" in regard to past or present behavior.

Thankfully, the apostle Paul offers pastors a positive balance between these two extremes. He was honest about his life before Christ and his present weaknesses, but not cavalier (2 Corinthians

11:29-30). In my own teaching and preaching, I have endeavored to follow this example. Being transparent — and exposing my weaknesses and failures in order to make reference to the glory of His marvelous strength — has proved to be helpful in building others up according to their needs and beneficial to the listener (Ephesians 3:29).

Pastors are ordinary people called into extraordinary service to the Lord. Just like anyone else, we struggle to live balanced lives that honor Christ. This is a message to which our congregations can relate. Appropriate transparency in the pulpit lends itself to authenticity and credibility. In effect, we are echoing the words of the apostle Paul: "Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already arrived at my goal, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me" (Philippians 3:12).

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## Pulse Check



### **The Marriage Exodus**

The State of Our Unions is an annual report that tracks the health and vitality of the institution of marriage. Unfortunately, the most recent edition (December 2012) does not contain encouraging news. The authors conclude that our culture is "witnessing a striking exodus from marriage." For the full details, check out this week's [Pulse Check](#).

Jim Daly

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